

# Conversations with... Jon David



There are many interesting people who I have had the pleasure of conversing with, throughout my writing career. People who are interesting to me are those whose works make a major impact in the lives of their surrounding communities and the people who are connected to them. One of those people is Pastor Johnny Harris. He wears several different hats; however, he wears them well. I sat down with Pastor Harris to find out how he does what he does, without losing the inspiration that motivates him to go on, all while keeping a wife and three kids happy, at the same time. You'd be surprised.

**Jon David:** Pastor Harris, it is a pleasure, sir.

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** The pleasure is all mine.

**Jon David:** Now, I know that you do many different things. What, exactly, is/are your position(s)?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** I am the Senior Pastor of St. Phillip International Church, here in Rochester, NY, [I am] the Rochester, NY District Director and North East Central Regional Minister of Music for the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International, and I am also the Founder of Provision Ministries, Inc.

**Jon David:** Now, there is a mouthful (we both laugh). How long have you, officially, been living in Rochester?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** [I am] officially going on my 5th year.

**Jon David:** What is it that brought you to Rochester?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** Upon graduating from college, I was offered a position as an Engineer for the Xerox Corporation.

**Jon David:** Oh, so we can add being an engineer for Xerox to your list of responsibilities? Good Lord, Pastor (we both laugh, again)! Now, I remember you telling me that you were the president of your gospel choir in college. How did you start getting involved in music? Who are your musical influences?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** There are so many, but to name a few, my presiding Bishop, Paul S. Morton, Pastor William Murphy, III, Elder Rod Lumpkin, Pastor Marvin Winans, Pastor Donnie McClurkin, Pastor Alvin Parris, III, Rhemario Webber, and Bishop James Bowman.

**Jon David:** Wow, those are some gifted and highly acclaimed musical influences. So, you were involved in the music, due to your passion and those influences you just spoke of, but what inspired you to do your first project?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** [It was] an inspiration from God to leave a transparency of legacy. I have been involved with music since I was 7 or 8, and I knew in my heart that I wanted more. So, the Lord took a 4-song demo and made it an 11-song project.

**Jon David:** After working on your project, did that motivate you to branch out, and do more?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** Yes, it did. From there, I started working on my first book, and now, I have two books published and one getting ready to hit the press.

**Jon David:** Interesting- okay, let's take it back, a little. What inspired your first song?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** My first song written was a song entitled, "Take Courage". It was written in what I desired for my life-the bravery to stand for God. From there, I started writing and writing and I would get help from professionals on making sure my writing made sense.

**Jon David:** How'd you feel when you first

## An Interview with Pastor Johnny Harris

heard your music, recorded?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** I was certainly in awe. First, I could not believe that the people around the room, at a recording studio- top name musicians and singers-were actually working on something that I was the executive producer for. Then, to hear it on radio is another thing in itself. To hear them say your name and the title of the song is like, "Wow! That is not Kirk or Cece's name but yours!"

**Jon David:** You currently have a project that is in stores, now, correct?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** Yes, I do.

**Jon David:** Tell me about that.

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** This current project, Forever, exemplifies an urban praise and worship sound that reaches the total man- regardless of age, gender and race. It was recorded right in the heart of New York City, Manhattan, by my long time friend and well-known producer, Rhemario Webber, who has placed such a remarkable sound to the story of Forever.

**Jon David:** How are you promoting it?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** [It is being promoted] through national stores, such as Target and local stores throughout Rochester, Buffalo and surrounding areas, such as Parable bookstores [and] Benders. You can also find it through many well-known websites such as amazon.com, cdcbaby.com, digistation and more. If you google the name Pastor Johnny Harris, you will come right up on much of my material. I also utilize a local marketing agency to book events throughout.

**Jon David:** What is in the future for you and your group of singers, Provision?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** We are looking forward to touring the country with an organization entitled Forsaken Generation, as a part of its Revolution Tour, as well as many appearances throughout the New York State area. That includes churches and many top level bookstores in New York City. I am also hoping to get into many of the universities and colleges. There will be more projects, for sure, and [I am looking forward to] producing some of the fine talent that we have here in the city and surrounding areas. I want to do some old and new school, and just let the nation know we have something special here in the "Roc".

**Jon David:** Now, with all and I do mean all that you do, how do you balance being a pastor, executive producer, husband,

father, etc.?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** I must say, [I have] some of the best administrators and directors of music, this side of heaven. [Also,] I always purposed in my heart that I know where my first ministry is, and that is to my wife of 14 years and my 3 children. They are first and foremost, and I make sure of it. From there, everything else tends to balance itself out, through the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is not always easy, but when you have people that work with you, so you don't always have to be at certain things, it makes life easier.

**Jon David:** What is the biggest obstacle that you face?

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** The biggest obstacle to me is not to do too much. I have so much in me that I want to do, and if I could, I would try to do it all at the same time, but I have to know how to take one thing at a time, and know that there will be enough time to get the other things done.

**Jon David:** Pastor Harris, I know you're a busy man, and I thank you for taking the time to talk with me, today.

**Pastor Johnny Harris:** Again, the pleasure was all mine. I appreciate it. Until I held conversations with these interesting people that I write about, I considered myself to be a rather busy fellow- one that can barely find time to breath. Oh, whoa is me! However, after hearing about the schedules and the projects and the meetings and the families and everything else that these fascinating men and women have to do... I count my blessings. What makes Pastor Harris interesting to me is not his list of accomplishments and who he has worked with. That stuff is not even what is most important to him! He will be the first to tell you that he is not the most charismatic, gifted, and talented musician/speaker/writer, "this side of Heaven", as he likes to say. What interests me is the fact that he is just a man that takes action. If an idea is presented to him that he feels he can run with, he will move on it. He doesn't sit on it, until someone else does it. He takes initiative. If everyone had that mindset, where would we be, in this world? I suppose that is something we can do no more than speculate on.

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