

# Summer Festival Days

## June 27: Festival Keynotes and Inspiration

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. PST

### **INTERVIEW: Dean Nelson interviews Rabbi Steve Leder**

Dean Nelson Ph.D., an award-winning journalist and founder/director of the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, will interview Rabbi Steve Leder, lead Rabbi at Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles and best-selling author of *More Beautiful than Before: How Suffering Transforms Us*.

Join us for an honest, raw, and compelling conversation between one of our most beloved American journalists and the man that *Newsweek* twice named one of the ten most influential rabbis in America. Addressing a range of topics, including grief, community pain, loss, empathy, and healing, it is sure to be a do-not-miss session.

Please note: Marni Freedman will present Rabbi Leder with the SDWF 2020 Nonfiction Author of the Year Award at 10:30 AM. The interview will occur directly afterward.

**Thank you to our generous sponsor – Marni Freedman, author of *Permission to Roar: for Female Thought Leaders Ready to Write their Book***





## RABBI STEVEN Z. LEDER

After receiving his degree in writing and graduating *Cum Laude* from Northwestern University, and time studying at Trinity College, Oxford University, Rabbi Leder received a Master's Degree in Hebrew Letters in 1986 and Rabbinical Ordination in 1987 from Hebrew Union College. He currently serves as the Senior Rabbi of Wilshire Boulevard Temple, a prestigious synagogue in Los Angeles with two campuses and 2,400 families. Rabbi Leder is currently concluding a 225 million dollar campaign to develop the congregation's historic urban campus encompassing an entire city block. The campus is soon to include a new building by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Rem Koolhaas.

In addition to his many duties at Wilshire Boulevard Temple, Rabbi Leder taught Homiletics for 13 years at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles. He is a regular contributor and guest on The Today Show, writes regularly for *TIME*, Foxnews.com, Maria Shriver's Sunday Paper, contributed a chapter to Charles Barkley's book *Who's Afraid of a Large Black Man?*, and has published essays in *Town and Country*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today* and the *Los Angeles Jewish Journal* where his *Torah* commentaries were read weekly by over 50,000 people. His sermon on capital punishment was included in an award-winning episode of *The West Wing*. Rabbi Leder received the Louis Rappaport Award for Excellence in Commentary by the American Jewish Press Association and the Kovler Award from the Religious Action Center in Washington, D.C. for his work in African American/Jewish dialogue and in 2012 presented twice at the Aspen Ideas Festival.

In the *New York Times*, William Safire called Rabbi Leder's first book *The Extraordinary Nature of Ordinary Things*, "uplifting." Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Wendy Wasserstein said he "is everything we search for in a modern wise man; learned, kind, funny, and non-judgmental, he offers remarkably healing guidance."

Rabbi Leder's second book *More Money Than God: Living a Rich Life Without Losing Your Soul* received critical and media attention, including feature articles in the *New York Times*, *Town and Country*, and appearances on ABC's *Politically Incorrect*, NPR, and CBS *This Morning*.

His third book *More Beautiful Than Before; How Suffering Transforms Us* was reached #4 on Amazon's overall best sellers list in its first week. It remains a best seller in several categories and has been translated into Korean and Chinese. *More Beautiful Than Before* has helped tens of thousands of people suffering from emotional or physical pain and continues to receive prestigious media attention, including CBS *This Morning*, *The Talk*, *The Steve Harvey Show*, and four appearances on NBC's *Today Show*. He is now at work on his next book *The Beauty of What Remains; What Death Teaches Us About Life*, to be published by Penguin Random House in the spring of 2021.

*Newsweek* twice named him one of the ten most influential rabbis in America, but most important to Steve is being Betsy's husband and Aaron and Hannah's dad. He is also a Jew who likes to fish. Go figure.



### **DEAN NELSON Ph.D.**

Dean Nelson is the founder and director of the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego. He writes occasionally for the *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, *San Diego Magazine*, *Westways*, *Sojourners*, and several other national publications. He has won several awards from the Society of Professional Journalists for his reporting, and has written or co-written 14 books. Nelson is a frequent speaker at writing workshops and retreats.

He has traveled throughout the world covering stories of human interest—India, where he wrote about the slums of Bombay; Kosovo, where he interviewed and wrote about victims of terrorism; Tanzania, where he wrote about members of the Black Panther Party who live in exile; Tibet, where he wrote about religious persecution; Central America, where he wrote about poverty and contaminated water; New Orleans, where he wrote about the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina; Haiti, where he wrote about the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake; Iceland, where he wrote about the literary scene there; Croatia, where he wrote about a part of Europe that is trying to reinvent itself after the breakup of the Soviet Union; Rome, where he wrote about the Canonization of Mother Teresa, and elsewhere. He has covered the stunning, the moving, the mysterious, the tragic, the amusing, and the absurd.

His 2019 book with HarperCollins is *Talk To Me: How To Ask Better Questions, Get Better Answers, and Interview Anyone Like a Pro*.

His book on the seven sacraments, *God Hides in Plain Sight: How to Find the Sacred in a Chaotic World*, was published by Brazos Press in 2009.

His book on the big questions of science and faith is *Quantum Leap: How John Polkinghorne Found God in Science and Religion*, published in 2011 by Lion-Hudson Press of Oxford, England. The book is about the life of John Polkinghorne, a world-famous physicist who became a priest in the Anglican Church. It is also about how faith and science do not need to be mutually exclusive.

In addition to directing the PLNU journalism program, Nelson also hosts the annual Writer's Symposium By The Sea, where prominent writers come to discuss the craft of writing. Nelson has interviewed Amy Tan, Anne Lamott, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Gay Talese, Krista Tippett, Rob Bell, Christian Wiman, E.J. Dionne, Deepak Chopra, Anchee Min, Ray Bradbury, George Plimpton, Joyce Carol Oates, Garrison Keillor, Billy Collins, Nikki Giovanni, Dick Enberg, Otis

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Chandler, Kathleen Norris, Donald Miller, Bill Moyers, Jim Wallis, Chitra Divakaruni, Joseph Wambaugh, James Fallows, Barbara Brown Taylor, Eugene Peterson, Philip Yancey, Michael Eric Dyson, Bill McKibben, Chris Hedges, Rachel Held Evans, Luis Urrea and dozens of others. Many of those interviews are available for viewing on this site and on UCSD-TV's website. They have been broadcast worldwide and downloaded or viewed more than 4 million times.



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