

24/7 Christian Prayer Movement Sweeps Muslim Indonesia

A powerful prayer movement is rising in the world's largest Muslim nation. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, Indonesian Christians intercede for their country.

It was a scene never witnessed before in Indonesia's history.

"I don't know another nation on earth like Indonesia where the church has become so passionate and united in prayer," Tom Victor, with the American-based Great Commission Coalition, said.

A Worldwide Prayer Call

Last year, more than 9,000 Christians from around the world descended on the Indonesian archipelago for a massive prayer gathering led by scores of Indonesian churches united to see the name of Jesus Christ lifted.

Dr. Bambang Widjaya was a key architect of the event.

"We can see the zeal, not only among the evangelical or **Pentecostals**, but also in the mainline churches and Catholic that we need to spread the Good News of Christ all over the country," Widjaya said.

Global prayer leaders were amazed at the Indonesian believers' unity in praying for their country and the world.

"I just think the Father is looking out on the corridors of heaven and he's saying, 'Hey, Jesus, come here. Look! Look! Look down at Indonesia,'" Victor exclaimed. "Hey, they are really loving each other, they are getting it, and they are fulfilling your prayer. Hey, watch this."

“And he’s blowing [His Holy Spirit across the country] and everything is going to a new dimension, something we don’t understand in the natural,” he continued. “There’s favor, there’s faith, there’s grace and they are transforming a nation.”

Twenty-Four-Hour Prayer

It’s a spiritual transformation that Christians here say is bathed in 24-hour prayer.

Thirty miles outside the sprawling capital city Jakarta sits a multi-story building that serves as a prayer tower for around-the-clock intercession.

“Twenty-four hours a day we are praying for churches in **Indonesia**, all the pastors and lay leaders. There’s not a single hour or day that goes by without prayers lifted up for our country,” Jeffrey Petrus said.

Petrus is caretaker of the prayer tower. For 12 years this simple room with several bunk beds has been his home away from home.

“We take shifts of four hours a day. When people get tired, they come in here, take a short rest on one of the bunk beds, then back to praying,” he said.

Dedi Purwanto works with Petrus as a **prayer** leader. He said the prayer rooms are packed with people at all hours of the day.

Purwanto believes the prayers lifted from this place and other sites across Indonesia are shaking the spiritual foundations of his nation.

“There is power when hundreds of thousands of believers meet in either small prayer groups, houses of prayer, or prayer towers like this one,” Purwanto said.

World’s Largest Muslim Population

Nearly 13 percent of the globe's Muslims live in Indonesia, making the island nation home to the world's largest Muslim population.

Located between the Indian and Pacific Oceans in Southeast Asia, Indonesia boasts a thriving economy and is one of the key political power houses in the region.

"For years we've been praying for our government, the media, and young people. We've also prayed for better relations between Christians and Muslims. God is answering those prayers," Petrus said.

And Christianity is growing despite the occasional reports of Muslim harassment.

Christians credit the massive prayer movement that's connecting some 500 Indonesian cities with more than 5 million intercessors with giving them a deeper passion to see the nation and the world won for Jesus.

"I do believe that there is power in prayer, especially in united prayer, like the body of Christ like this," Rev. Daniel Pandji, who heads up Indonesia's National Prayer Network, said.

In an unprecedented show of unity, Christians filled the country's national stadium last year, with millions more watching on television, as they pledged to reach every village, town, and city in Indonesia with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"All of the churches here in Indonesia believe that Jesus is the only answer for the country," Dr. Widjaya said.

Back at the prayer tower, Petrus and his faithful prayer warriors are on their knees.

"Day and night, weekends and holidays, we'll be here crying out to God for our country and the world," he said. "This is

our calling to be the watchmen on the walls of Indonesia.”

Fired Homosexual Teacher Could Open Floodgate of Discrimination Lawsuits

A Catholic teacher's claim that he was fired after marrying his gay partner soon after same-sex marriage was made legal in California has prompted a Web-based push to see him reinstated.

The petition drive in support of English instructor Ken Bencomo on the website of social advocacy group has gathered over 9,000 signatures from his former students and people as far away as Spain since it was launched earlier this week.

The high school teacher and his partner were among a wave of same-sex couples who married after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in June cleared the way for gay weddings to resume in California for the first time since 2008.

If Bencomo sues, his attorney Patrick McGarrigle sees it as a potential test case of legal protections some religious institutions claim to have in hiring and firing based on principles of faith.

Bencomo taught at the all-girls St. Lucy's Priory High School in the Los Angeles suburb of Glendora for over 16 years, but was terminated in July, a little more than a week after marrying his longtime partner, McGarrigle said.

Brittany Littleton, 23, a former student at St. Lucy's, is leading the online petition, which asks administrators to

“reverse this act of prejudice” against her former teacher and “give him his job back.”

A Beverly Hills resident and yoga instructor, Littleton said her drive is not meant to tear down St. Lucy’s, which she described as pushing students to be “forward thinking.”

“It’s as much a fight for the school as it is for Mr. Bencomo, but we want them to know we do not stand by this decision and are horrified by it,” Littleton said.

Raised Catholic, Bencomo, 45, chaired the school’s English department, helped with the yearbook and served as a dance coach, McGarrigle said. School administrators were aware he was in a same-sex relationship, the attorney said.

But just over a week after his July 1 wedding was written up in the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin, an administrator told Bencomo he was being let go because his marriage was “in public and violated the church’s teaching,” McGarrigle said.

Sister Helen Dziuk, an assistant principal at St. Lucy’s, told Reuters the institution wished to “protect the privacy of everyone involved.”

“The school cannot comment on any of these matters. These are private values and matters and may involve litigation, so we can’t comment,” she said.

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles declined to comment on the grounds that the school is privately run and not under its jurisdiction.

Pope Francis, who was elected in March, this week told reporters on a flight from Brazil that gays should be integrated into society, but homosexual acts are a sin.

McGarrigle said his client wishes to settle out of court, but could file a lawsuit. He said such a case, based in part on the fact that Bencomo’s homosexuality had been tolerated at

school, may become a legal test of what protections religious institutions have in firing an employee for a same-sex marriage.

Thirteen U.S. states now allow same-sex unions, with Minnesota and Rhode Island joining that group on Thursday.

“Clearly he (Bencomo) was terminated because he engaged in a lawful act that the school now believes—or at least asserts—was one step too far,” McGarrigle said.

Karl Manheim, a Loyola Law School professor, said a 2012 U.S. Supreme Court ruling found that religious institutions cannot exempt lay employees from workplace protections.

“To the extent that the church is involved in ordinary business operations, and running a school typically is, they’re going to be subject to state and federal statutes,” he said.

Reporting by Alex Dobuzinskis; editing by Gunna Dickson

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Morality Wins: Porn No Longer Allowed on Army, Air Force Bases

Army and Air Force Exchange Service is removing sexually explicit magazines from its shelves. Morality in Media (MIM) calls it a “great victory” in the effort to stop sexual

exploitation in the military.

While officials claim this change is due to lack of sales, MIM has led the charge to remove these items in light of the military's sexual exploitation scandal.

The development comes after the release of a Department of Defense letter claiming that pornography magazines can be sold on base, even though the Military Honor and Decency Act "prohibits the sale or rental of sexually explicit material on property under DOD jurisdiction." The letter goes on to say that a Pentagon review board approves *Penthouse*, *Playboy* and other pornographic magazines because the board does not consider them to be "sexually explicit."

"It is a great victory that the Army and Air Force exchanges will finally stop selling sexually exploitive magazines," says Dawn Hawkins, executive director of Morality in Media. "Hopefully the other branches will follow suit or Secretary Hagel will order their removal from all bases."

In his order on June 13, Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus called for the immediate removal of all offensive and degrading materials, including pornography, from all work spaces and from Navy exchanges, where numerous pornographic magazines are sold.

God, Can You Please Help Me Get My Kids to Bed?

OK. Seriously. When did bedtime go from a sweet time of books, prayers and song to wailing and gnashing of teeth? I can't remember when the change happened this summer, but happen it did.

Summer is just the worst. Last night my youngest daughters where unwilling to consider bed: "Why is it light outside? Surely that means bedtime isn't for hours yet! You must be mistaken, Mommy!"

Actually, that was my English major translation of our conversation. It was really more like, "Wahhhhhhhhh!"

I think the only thing I'm looking forward to about my children going back to school is a schedule. And if you know me, that might shock you. I start summer loving the unstructured days and night, and the opportunities to be spontaneous, and I definitely like to play with my kids, so sometimes during the summer months, we miss a bit more sleep than we should.

Maybe that's the problem—lack of sleep makes for children who struggle to sleep, which makes for a mommy who's hanging by a ragged thread at 10 p.m. ... well, maybe 9 p.m. ... oh, all right, 8 p.m.

Those are not my most stellar mom moments. I just want them to go to bed already. I mean, really: *Go to bed!* My nights get later and later because after those two—ahem—cuties go to bed, there are still three more people I'd like to hang with! And thankfully they'd actually like to hang out with me!

So, what to do? I wish I knew.

Last night, I actually started bed time at 6:30. It began perfectly. I must have shown my —i.e., weakness—because they sensed it. My two sweeties turned into my two—for lack of an appropriate word—not-so-sweeties!

I've reached the point of being the bad cop mommy consistently when it comes to these issues. They are both old enough to handle bedtime better. Their stalling could actually be an Olympic sport—they have practiced it enough. I've had to lay down laws I never imagined even considering. Only one prayer. Only one kiss (well, maybe two). As the bedtime prolongs, the

laws are laid down with increasing volume, both in number and tone.

Last night, my 6-year-old daughter said, "I want my nice mommy back. I don't like this mommy. Wahhhhh!"

My heart would have melted just a tad if I wasn't chuckling—chuckling on the inside because I can show no weakness. I have to be firmer than I've ever been.

I believe that the bedtime pickle I'm in is my own doing. I'm old and tired.

Honestly, it is difficult being a single parent when you're tired. It is so difficult to be "on" all the time. There are so many people to love on, encourage and train well. I get to the point where I think, "I'm just done. Please go to bed. What do you want? Chocolate? Soda? Ice cream?"

I'm just kidding to a point, but God has shown me something—as He is always doing, thank goodness. I'm always saying that God gave me my two little girls to keep me on my knees. I truly believe that He did, for many reasons. One, because I can tend to believe I have the ability to deal with everything on my own: "Got this, God. Thanks, though." Then, amazingly, I get annoyed when things don't go well: "Really, God? Could just *one* thing go easily?"

All the while, I have only uttered those "hail Mary" prayers: "God, please! Could you fix this?" and "Lord, help!" and "Oh, Father!"

I know God hears them. I know He cares. I also know that He wants more from me. He wants me to talk with Him, give Him my worries and verbalize the struggle—and in doing that, share the burden and allow Him to enter into my life in more intimate and practical ways. That prayer thing ... it's *big*.

I've written about it before. I've shared that I feel called to pray mightily for my children and others. I've said I'm determined, convicted and willing. But I haven't been, really.

I pray a lot, but they aren't thoughtful prayers. They are same ol', same ol' prayers: "Lord, please help this sweet child know Your love, feel Your presence and never doubt her identity is in You." Good prayers, but not really a dialogue.

I believe He wants me to share as I would with my prayer partner. Golly, doesn't that sound silly—the Person we are going to say our prayers to doesn't get the same level of communication as the person I share my prayer requests with? I think I've been missing something.

I love William Carey's quote: "Expect great things from God!" I believe that when I pray expecting great things, God will do great things. I don't believe that He is my vending machine; I believe that He is my Father who loves to be kind to me, my Father who loves me beyond measure, my Father who will always and only do what is absolutely best for me. That, dearest, is a great thing! How can I not want God's best? How can God's best not be great?

So as I prepare for bedtime—and any other time of day—I'm getting down on my knees—really on my knees. And I'm going to share the struggle, allow Him to take my anxiety for the past, the present and the future, and tell Him all about it. And I know—I know—that He is going to listen, love me and answer with great answers! He always does.

And I would ask, if you know me or even if you don't, please challenge me. If you see me or talk to me or want to email me, ask me if I'm being the prayer warrior I want to be. Hold me accountable to all these things I write. And if you'd like, I will do the same for you.

It's time to fight the good fight of faith on our knees—for ourselves, for our children and for each other!

Sue Birdseye is an author and single mom of five kids that range from 4 years old to 17 years old. Her book, *When Happily*

Ever After Shatters (*Tyndale House*) is in bookstores. This is adapted from her blog, .

Tokyo Man Further Distorts Marriage by Wedding Cartoon Woman

When a 27-year-old man from Tokyo fell in love with and subsequently married an animated character from Nintendo's *Love Plus* video game, we might have expected his bereaved parents or concerned employer or landlady to have called for an ambulance with white-coated paramedics waving straightjackets. But nothing of the sort took place.

Instead, he hosted a full-scale celebration before "a priest, an MC, [and] a DJ" with "photo slideshows, wedding music and even a bouquet." Instead of a week in a medical facility for observation, he went on a honeymoon.

As he explained, "I love this character, not a machine. ... I understand 100 percent that this is a game. I understand very well that I cannot marry her physically or legally."

Yet he found this virtual character "better than a human girlfriend."

"Some people have expressed doubts about my actions," he says, "but at the end of the day, this is really just about us as husband and wife. As long as the two of us can go on to create a happy household, I'm sure any misgivings about us will be resolved."

This rational young man has become a living example of what

Internet-addiction expert Hiroshi Ashizake has observed: "Today's Japanese youth can't express their true feelings in reality. They can only do it in the virtual world."

But this malady is not limited to Japan. Nor is it an action without a fallout effect on someone—and not just the draw pile of eligible young boys available for hopeful girls of this island nation.

The victim here is community.

In recent articles in *Africanus Journal*, I have been speculating on the nature of personhood, marriage and interpersonal relations in a future increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence, especially focused in android robotics (simulating human partners in malebots and fembots), as well as disembodied virtual relationships (through the increasing transference of identity into virtual avatars who interact in simulated environments like Internet chat rooms, video games, and meta-erses). The fallout has been the increasing number of real-life divorces naming as the alienating culprit a virtual partner, met, perhaps, in a special interest chat room or in the elaborate, animated virtual metanation Second Life.

The irony is that the offending virtual adulterers may never actually meet in real life, yet the intimate bond of marriage with their spouses in the real world has been supplanted and shattered as irreparably as if they had sneaked off to some sleazy motel with rooms by the hour.

How did we arrive at such a present state of human engagement? Why are we confronting such a future threat to interpersonal relationships? And what on earth can we do about these situations now, before they are epidemic across the globe?

Technology has brought us many blessings, all built on the expansion of communication. Data that once seemed nearly insurmountably impossible to ferret out of unfathomable

archives are now simply a right question and a double-click away. Keepsakes and memorabilia we thought were lost irretrievably in the shadowy memories of our past are now displayed on eBay with prices driven down by competition—sometimes cheaper to buy now than we remember they cost then. Whole virtual communities are built out of interest groups that are global in expanse.

The Internet is all about networking—but the irony is that at the same time it can be isolating.

Let me share one small but, to me, significant example. Years ago, I could pass a sign-up sheet around my classroom and have everyone write down their contact information to add to my roll book. For the last 20 years, despite my pleas, my students have become incapable of passing such a sheet to one another, so that it goes all the way around the room.

This seems like such a minor annoyance, it is hardly worth noticing. I think differently. I believe it is telling me something very serious about their personal skills. I may be training them in what to many may appear to be an abstract discipline—theology—but the point of this topic, as in all their training, is to help them become fully equipped pastors, counselors and lay leaders who can minister to a congregation, a parachurch organization, a client base or a classroom.

What I am perceiving is that they are so used to being at their desks or computer consoles, in their cubicles, working on their laptops, isolated from the cybernaut in the adjoining seat, that libraries, work spaces and classrooms have become, for some of them, merely collections of individuals who are in spatial proximity but not communal propinquity, perhaps relating to someone a world away but essentially ignorant of the person in the next seat. In a classroom of 40, my sign-up sheet may make it as far as the sixth person, but then it sits on someone's desk, filled out but dropped like a new year's resolution into the abyss of forgotten intentions.

Undergirding these isolating or destructive changes are also alterations in the locus of authority to rule on such aberrations. Where in the past, experts were recognized in various fields and sought out to give their ruling on the truth or advisability of a suggestion or an action, today millions look elsewhere for guidance.

When the highly intelligent actor Stephen Fry, who played P.G. Wodehouse's nearly omniscient fictional character Jeeves the butler on the BBC, can sit down at his blog and find himself influencing the political thinking of a half-million daily readers who have possibly confused him with Wodehouse's character, or when the artistically talented Justin Bieber can film himself in his own home and make himself as big a player on the Internet as the heavily investing entertainment industry could promoting the similarly talented Katy Perry, we observe an authority-making shift. The recognized pundits have been superseded by the individual entrepreneur. This is an empowering reality that makes more space on the playing fields usually dominated by well-moneyed organizations. It has elevated the individual, who can virtually run a successful enterprise on one's own—a solitary organization.

In this way, the Internet has distributed power for us by changing the sources of *information* and hyperspacing niche marketing, thereby altering the sources of *authority*. And while this new empowering authority shift spurs competition and free enterprise, it also encourages individualism.

Today, many of us, instead of wandering next door to hail the neighbors when we find we have a spare moment, fix ourselves before our computers, seeking fellowship from disembodied voices in text more real to us than folks strolling up our street, and thereby create a "community" of isolated individuals whom we may never even meet.

Does this mean we are presently looking at a kind of literary "avatarism" that anticipates the complete breakdown of face-

to-face, real-world human interaction and, ultimately, creates the projected technovirgins who prefer machines (e.g., fembots) or game characters as mates over real humans? If so, this is clearly antithetical to what Jesus our Lord intended as Christian community. And it also ultimately undermines the idea of shared truth, making the decision of what is true Christian doctrine subject to each individual's own self (what is called in philosophy *solipsism*, from the Latin word for *solitary*, *solus*, and the word for *self*, *ipse*, indicating oneself alone as the sole, ultimate ruler on all matters of truth).

The gospel according to me becomes the locus of authority for right doctrine; the First Church of Me becomes the determiner of right Christian practice. No wonder Jesus asked his question to resound down the ages: "When the Son of Humanity (*anthropos*) comes, will he find faith on earth?" It is a sobering thing to note that the question Jesus asks employs *ara*, an "interrogative particle expecting a negative response."

Jesus is not expecting a positive answer. Assessing where the future is headed, we can certainly understand why. And we can also understand what we need to do about that prospect. As His church, we need to address it!

In the Great Commission our Lord left His disciples in Matthew 28:18–19, He commanded us who would follow Him to "go, therefore, make disciples of all unbelievers" (the word here, *ethna*, means "non-Jews, Gentiles, pagans, heathen"). Our task is to network everyone into the gathering of followers that Jesus began in His onsite ministry among us. But that task will not be accomplished if we are content to leave everyone to be isolated individuals, no more interacting than infants in a hospital nursery, each one of us consumed with our own needs in our own tiny bassinet.

The book *Creative Ways to Build Christian Community* is exactly

what its title says it is: a very personal, practical response to the present and future prospect of isolation, a treasure trove of examples and suggestions about how to accomplish the Great Commission from community-builders telling how, over the years and the ministries, they have implemented creative ways to build up churches and organizations to develop more intensive Christian fellowship and, thereby, create community.

Its editors have demonstrated a long-term commitment to community building. Jeanne de Fazio is literally networked around the globe, connecting Christians together, as she divides her year between countries. Rev. John Lathrop has been a pastor for many years and is the communications coordinator between participants of the House of Priscilla and Aquila publishing line of Wipf and Stock, the publishers of this present book. Amassed in the list of contributors is a diverse group of leaders who have been building Christian community for decades. This book shares with you the innovative ideas and practices they have used in hopes you will find it a useful tool in your own ministry. It's timely now, and it will be timely in years to come.

Decades ago, I remember hearing of a survey that asked what were the two primary fears Americans had for this new millennium. The first was in the general sphere, and the answer was concern for the environment. The second was in the personal sphere, and the overwhelming response was loneliness—that each one of us would finally end up alone, our children just pictures on Facebook, disembodied voices in hurried telephone calls on Christmas and birthdays, our spouses or peers dead or isolated in senior care units as far away from us as if they'd been locked up in the dungeons of fortress keeps.

As the future continues to isolate us into solitary individuals, the church of Jesus Christ may very well be the chief architect of face-to-face community. Because of our beliefs in a God who met us face to face and walked among us

and calls us to be the body of the Christ, God's anointed One on earth, we may be the only network left standing, able completely to assure humanity that, despite the strides of artificial intelligence, the valuable work of hands, humans alone are made in the image of God and therefore never obsolete, that we are worth more than a handful of bolts.

Creative Ways to Build Christian Community will continually help remind us of that truth, as it helps us ensure a Christian communal future for humanity as well as a recognizable body of believers for our Lord when He finally comes back to gather us up to himself in God's everlasting arms of love.

Editor's note: This is the preface from Creative Ways to Build Christian Community, edited by Jeanne C. DeFazio and John P. Lathrop, available from .

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Gay Couple Sues Church That Won't Host Same-Sex Weddings

Wealthy gay dad **Barrie Drewitt-Barlow** says he and his civil partner, **Tony**, will go to court to force churches to host gay

weddings. He told the *Essex Chronicle* that he will take legal action because, he says, "I am still not getting what I want."

A government bill legalizing **gay marriage** passed Parliament in the U.K. recently, but it included measures to protect churches from being forced to perform same-sex weddings.

"The only way forward for us now is to make a challenge in the courts against the church. It is a shame that we are forced to take Christians into a court to get them to recognize us," says Drewitt-Barlow. "It upsets me because I want it so much—a big, lavish ceremony, the whole works. I just don't think it is going to happen straight away. As much as people are saying this is a good thing, I am still not getting what I want."

The gay couple shot to fame in 1999 when they became the first British same-sex couple to be named on their children's birth certificates. They entered a civil partnership in 2006, and Barrie Drewitt-Barlow has reportedly donated around £500,000 to groups lobbying for **same-sex marriage**.

Last year, the Church of England warned that the government's plans to redefine marriage could trigger legal problems and end the 500-year link between church and state. In January this year, a leading lawyer cautioned that the plans left the Church of England open to legal challenge.

The prime minister was sent a copy of the legal opinion by Lord Carey, a former archbishop of Canterbury. In June 2012, Crispin Blunt, who was then a justice minister, admitted the government's plans could lead to legal issues. He said the government is "seeking to protect, indeed, proscribe religious organisations from offering gay marriage," but he continued: "That may be problematic legally."

Anthony Weiner and 12 Signs of Power-Hungry Leaders

The Anthony Weiner debacle is a microcosm of a greater issue related to why certain people crave positions of power and influence.

In his run for mayor of New York City, Weiner seems to be blind to the incredible humiliation he is bringing upon his family, himself and the office of mayor in general. Why would someone with all this baggage think it would never surface publicly in a very public run for office? I believe these are symptoms of power-hungry people who fit a certain psychological profile that attracts an increasing amount of dysfunctional people to politics while concomitantly repelling seasoned, mature leaders.

God-ordained public service should never be about a person's desire for power but should arise out of a servant's heart to meet the needs of the people they represent. Jesus modeled this when He washed the feet of His disciples and when He said that the greatest in the kingdom of God are those who serve (John 13; Mark 10:43). Of course, we have power-hungry leaders in every sector of society—not just in politics—and this includes the church.

I believe power-hungry people are the cause of numerous problems and divisions within the marketplace and church, and we need to be honest with them and speak into them when necessary, lest they sabotage great organizations. Since their drive for power will stop at nothing to achieve their ends, more mature leaders need to counter their dangerous ambitions instead of continually feeding into them.

The following are some of the signs of power-hungry leaders. (I believe all leaders, because of our fallen nature,

have to deal with some or all of the following issues at times in our lives. But some have totally given in and live out these issues as a lifestyle of choice.)

1. They only relate to other “power” people

Power-hungry people are constantly going to social events, parties, conferences and frequently joining boards of powerful organizations that will connect them with the most influential people—irrespective of whether they truly have the time or talents for it or genuinely want to connect with these people on a human-covenantal level. They are always looking for the next person who can do something to help them climb the social ladders in their spheres of influence, which causes them to use people instead of serving people.

2. They are constantly dropping names and speaking about their accomplishments

There are certain leaders whom I have heard speak several times, and every single time they have spoken, either to me in private or in public gatherings, they have mentioned prominent academic institutions where they received their degrees or dropped the names of high-level leaders with whom they have access. After a while, it becomes obvious they are attempting to flout their power and accomplishments so they can receive accolades or respect from others instead of it being a sincere attempt to give their audience context for their life narrative.

3. They are in competition with other peer leaders

Power-hungry leaders are always jockeying for position, fighting with other leaders they deem a threat to their influence, or are attempting to marginalize others with faint words of praise or outright gossip and slander. (Immature Christian leaders usually don't engage in outright slander but tend to marginalize others subtly when in the company of those they don't know well.)

Essentially, power-hungry leaders will not rest until they become the “big dog” in the organization.

4. They are all things to all people

Power-hungry leaders often are like chameleons who adapt to the color of their environment. For example, I have met political leaders who speak as biblical Christians when they are speaking in churches, but when they are with secular humanists they speak about their anti-biblical values.

The only thing power-hungry people value is their own power. When they are with Christians, they speak religious lingo, and when they are with secularists, they speak secular lingo. I don't think even they know what they truly believe!

Unfortunately, many sincere Christians get fooled by these people's surreptitious words and believe anything they hear. After such people are elected, these Christians are shocked by what they really stand for!

5. They are driven by selfish ambition instead of by love for people

Though they may work many hours visiting their communities and churches and being among their people, their ultimate goal is to be in power, not to meet the needs of the people. This is more obvious when it comes to candidates for an elected office. But pastors and church leaders have also fallen into this syndrome and act this out in the context of their own denominations or congregations.

6. They love the praises of men

At the end of the day, power-hungry people live to hear other people sing their praises. They have such low self-esteem that they need to continually feed their egos by being the center of attention in every event, party and gathering they attend. Consequently, they are easily insulted when they deem others

not bowing down to kiss their rings and can quickly turn on these people.

7. They often compromise their ethical values

Whatever ethical values they have go out the window if they believe it will help them get into a position of power. For example, some prominent political leaders in our nation (Al Gore and Kirsten Gillibrand, to name a few) were once pro-life when it comes to abortion but turned pro-choice when they thought it would help them gain traction in their political party. Also, I know of a prominent pastor who once believed in the inspirational integrity of Scripture who jettisoned his biblical beliefs when he was made the senior pastor of a prominent historic landmark church in New York City.

What good is your position of power if you are not going to follow your convictions of right and wrong?

8. They have few boundaries to maintain personal and family health

Power-hungry people are constantly on the go and have very little time for personal reflection, renewal and emotional health. Furthermore, they often are so driven that they cheat their spouses and children out of the precious quality time they need since they are always on the phone cutting deals, solving problems and trying to accomplish the next big thing.

9. They are only loyal to themselves

Power-hungry people are narcissists who have a need to control their environment, their friends and their futures, which means that, ultimately, they are only loyal to one person: themselves. They only have people in their inner circles who flatter them and never challenge their egos. They usually don't have close friends, hobnobbing mostly with other power people, in which both people know they are merely using one another to obtain or maintain their power.

10. They head up organizations for stature rather than service

They will go from one church to another or one position to another based on which organization will give them the largest platform and most influence. It is never about God's calling but more about influence, public exposure and proximity to power.

Money is another important issue to them; however, they deem position and influence as more important than money because they believe in the long run more influence will bring in more money anyway.

11. They exaggerate their value

When I am with power-hungry people, I usually take every word they say about their influence and accomplishments with a grain of salt since their main objective is to impress me rather than give me an accurate picture of their lives. For example, I have been with leaders who told me about how large their organizations are, but I have never seen them able to draw a crowd of people anywhere near the numbers they tout. They have erected a symbolic house of straw that they tout as if it were the new Freedom Tower that stands in lower Manhattan!

12. They have a superficial inner life

Power-hungry people usually live in denial as to their real motives and, thus, usually do not allow the searing hot conviction of the Holy Spirit to operate in their souls.

Consequently, they do not have much of a prayer life, do not enter into deep worship and rarely read the Scriptures except if they need to put a sermon together or quote passages for a political speech. Furthermore, they attempt to use God for their own ends instead of dying to self and serving God for His own ends and glory. Many actually are so deceived they think God is playing this game with them and is actually

empowering them to get more and more attention and power. Little do they realize that Satan is also involved in their lives and setting them up for a huge failure or fall in the future, which can decimate their lives, families, careers and organizations!

May the Lord help us all to see the above issues we are all grappling with and may all of us be honest with ourselves and our God so we can be delivered from our unholy ambitions and lay down our crowns at the feet of Jesus!

Martin Chernoff: The Father of 20th Century Messianic Judaism

Any student of Israel knows that Theodore Herzl is the father of modern Zionism. His book, *The Jewish State*, called for the creation of a Jewish homeland as the only safe haven for the Jewish people.

Eliezer Ben Yehuda is considered the father of Modern Hebrew, a dead, unspoken language in 1880, now spoken by over 10 million people.

But equally impressive as the rebirth of the Jewish nation and the language of Hebrew is the rebirth of the Messianic Jew—the Jew who professes faith in Yeshua, and, like the first believers, continues to live as a Jew. There are many men and woman who were influential in the Messianic revival.

Moishe Rosen birthed *Jews for Jesus* and raised up an army of Jewish emissaries. Joseph Rabinowitz started the First

Assembly of the Israelites of the New Covenant in 1885. Our own Ari and Shira pioneered spirit-filled Messianic Judaism in Israel with their first house congregation in 1977 and then by birthing the first Hebrew only spirit-filled congregation in 1995. As far back as 1959, Victor Smadja started *Keren Ahava Mishihit* in Jerusalem. My spiritual father, Dan Juster has also played a major role in shaping Messianic Jewish expression through the Tikkun Network and the UMJC.

Martin Chernoff

However, if there is one figure who stands out as the father of Modern Messianic Judaism it would have to be Martin Chernoff. His father, Solomon, fled the Russian army in the early 1900s in order to give his family a better life in America. But, after arriving in Amsterdam, he was broke. For three years he worked and saved in order to buy tickets to cross the Atlantic. However, thinking he had arrived in New York, he was shocked to find himself in Argentina!

After another three years, he and his family took a train through South America to New York City. However, when he got off at the last stop he was in Toronto, Canada, missing New York for the third time! This time, Solomon settled his family in Toronto, as there were already 4,000 Russian Jewish immigrants living there, and continued his trade as a tailor.

A Secret to the Grave-Almost

One day Solomon heard a Jewish believer preaching. He sat down to listen and secretly professed faith in Yeshua. He knew this would send shockwaves through his orthodox Jewish family so he decided he would never tell a soul.

Many years later, their son Martin would make a similar decision, embracing Yeshua as His Messiah, but instead of keeping it to himself would seek to bring as many Jewish people as he could to faith in Yeshua. On his deathbed, his father confessed his secret faith to his son.

Assimilation vs. Jewish Identity

Martin and his wife, Yohanna, worked for many years for an organization seeking to bring Jewish people to faith. He was constantly at odds with them, as he began to realize the need for Jewish believers to have their own meetings in a Jewish context. The organization emphasized winning Jewish people to the faith and then funneling them into local churches to be disciplined (where they would often lose their Jewish identity).

Martin was told he was not qualified to disciple "Hebrew Christians," as they were called then, and once, when he immersed several new Jewish believers in water at a conference, the leader of his organization saw red, as he rebuked Martin, telling him again that it was beyond his scope of authority.

"The Jesus Revolution and the Jews' is the biography that Martin's wife, Yohanna, wrote.

In the midst of a prayer meeting in 1963, just after the assassination of President Kennedy, Martin had the second of three visions. He saw, in addition to scores of Jewish people coming to faith (as in his first vision) a group of unkept and shabby young people—dressed in rags. He had no idea that the coming years would usher in the hippy phenomenon and that God would use his wife, Yohanna and him to bring many of these young Jewish people to Yeshua.

In addition to ushering in the sexual revolution, psychedelic rock and popularizing LSD usage, the hippie movement revealed a deep spiritual hunger inside that generation. In April 1966, *Time Magazine* ran the headline: *Is God Dead?* However, only five years later, after this massive revival, their headline in June 1971 was, *The Jesus Revolution*.

Scores of young Jewish people came to faith in Cincinnati forming the nucleus of the Chernoff's home congregation. Thousands more Jews embraced Yeshua all across the U.S. as God

raised up a leadership for a new thing he was about to do.

From Hebrew Christianity to Messianic Judaism

In 1970 Martin had his third open vision. *“Two electrifying simple words stretched across the sky in the form of a banner.”* He saw the words: Messianic Judaism.

This vision would define the rest of Martin’s life and his legacy. The small group of Jewish believers in Cincinnati confessed:

“We are Jewish believers in Yeshua as our Messiah. We have our own destiny in the Lord. We will no longer be assimilated into the church and pretend to be non-Jews. If Yeshua Himself, His followers and the early Jewish believers tenaciously maintained their Jewish lifestyles, why was it right for them, but wrong now? Gentile converts are not expected to forsake their families, culture, holidays and traditions; nor shall we do so.”

No longer would they call themselves Hebrew Christians, but Messianic Jews.

Despite the fact they were seeing dozens of young Jewish people receive Yeshua, the leader of the organization who paid their salary gave them an ultimatum. They either must disband their congregation and hand over the names to the organization (so these Jews could be placed in churches), or leave.

Marty had a major decision to make: Stay with the organization, get paid, disband their congregation and funnel new believers to churches or resign his position, officially birth congregation Beth Messiah, and trust God to provide for their needs. Other than a few isolated cases, there was no example of a self-sustained, independent Messianic Congregation. It was virgin territory.

After a lengthy discussion between the leaders and the

congregants, it was decided that disbanding was not an option. Martin would become their rabbi and they would support Yohanna and him. Congregation Beth Messiah was birthed.

National Influence

Soon Martin was elected to be president of the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America. More and more Jewish believers were calling themselves Messianic Jews instead of Hebrew Christians. The moniker *Hebrew Christian* emphasized that the believer was of Jewish background, while *Messianic Jew*, emphasized that the believers continued to live as Jews, after believing in Yeshua.

However, changing the name of the HCAA would not be easy. Many old-timers strongly objected to the new Messianic theme and Jewish identity. They didn't like the dancing or the singing of Klezmer (Yiddish sounding) songs with Messianic lyrics. The first vote was defeated, but not without controversy. Rather than fighting, Martin wisely put the issue to rest, realizing that it was only a matter of time.

Two years later, the young *hippie* believers far outnumbered the old guard and the name was changed to the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA).

Beth Yeshua in Philadelphia

Eventually the Chernoffs would move to Philadelphia and take over the "Fink Zoo"—a group of young Jewish believers who met in the home of Joe and Debbie Finklestein. They called their new congregation *Beth Yeshua*.

When I first heard of Messianic Jews in 1984, the orthodox community had declared war on Beth Yeshua and they were fighting for their survival. By 1985, they were calling for a nationwide protest—with the goal of destroying the Messianic Jewish movement. Jews from all over were bussed in to protest and Beth Yeshua was their target. If Beth Yeshua could be

toppled, then maybe they could crush the whole movement.

I drove right by Philadelphia during Hurricane Gloria just before this mass demonstration, as my Long Island-based Bible School released us for our own safety.

The folks at Beth Yeshua were hoping that Gloria would ruin the planned protest. However, Pat Robertson rebuked the storm just before it hit his Virginia Beach-based CBN and Gloria headed out to sea. Pat was happy; the Messianics in Philadelphia were dismayed.

However, when Beth Yeshua took their worship team outside in the midst of the anti-Messianic demonstration, the entire protest was diffused. Some protesters ended up actually dancing with the Beth Yeshua congregants. After a short time, leaders called off the protests and fled.

Legacy

So many leaders that lead congregations today were discipled by Martin Chernoff. His legacy lives on in these many men and women, not to mention his own children Joel, David and Hope, all leaders in the Messianic Movement today.

(All quotes are taken from Born a Jew, Die a Jew, the biography of Martin Chernoff, written by his wife, Yohanna.)

Ron Cantor is the director of Messiah's Mandate International in Israel, a Messianic ministry dedicated to taking the message of Jesus from Israel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Cantor also travels internationally teaching on the Jewish roots of the New Testament. He serves on the pastoral team of Tiferet Yeshua, a Hebrew-speaking congregation in Tel Aviv. His newest book, Identity Theft, was released April 16. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

How to Take God's Appetite Suppressant

Are you suffering from an out-of-control appetite? You're about to get a prescription for a biblical appetite suppressant!

God revealed it to me in Bible study this week. While I was familiar with the scripture, God revealed something in it that I've never seen before. The scripture Proverbs 23:1-3 says:

"When you sit down to eat with a ruler, Consider carefully what is before you; And put a knife to your throat. If you are a man given to appetite, Do not desire his delicacies, For they are deceptive food."

It was the phrase "given to appetite" that caught my attention. A question popped into my mind: "What is the difference between hunger and appetite?" You need to understand this so you'll know why and how the prescription works.

According to the definition, hunger is the stomach's feeling of discomfort caused by a lack of food intake. However, appetite is a strong desire or liking for something, usually food or drink. Appetite is a God-given gift when used the way He intended: to satisfy the body's need for food.

However, your appetite is out of control if you are eating often when your body is not physically hungry. You can find yourself eating whenever the opportunity presents itself, such as from emotional hunger, boredom, or simply because the food is there!

Your appetite becomes the equivalent of an undisciplined, spoiled child who throws a tantrum when it doesn't get its way.

If you are suffering from an out-of-control appetite, what can you do about it? Think about the phrase "man given to appetite, ." When you give something away, you do it voluntarily. You make a choice.

Ask yourself: If you are giving yourself away to appetite, then what are you losing? You see, it takes time to practice overeating or binge-eating behaviors. When you give yourself away to your appetite, are you taking away from:

- Your relationship with God?
- Your family or friends?
- Fulfilling your destiny?
- Pursuing a cherished dream?
- Receiving joy from using your talents and gifts?

You cannot serve two masters (see Matthew 6:24). What if you instead gave yourself away to God instead of giving yourself away to appetite?

If you want to do this, the appetite suppressant in Proverbs says to put a "knife to your throat." That is a strong image! Obviously this is not literal, but here's what it means.

If someone puts a knife to your throat, they will have your full attention, won't they? Not only that, but you'll do what they say! The command is to focus your attention so that you can exercise self-control when your appetite throws a tantrum.

The problem is that many of us, from habit, are used to going unconscious when a thought to eat comes to mind. We'll give ourselves away to the food by placing large portions before ourselves that our body doesn't need, by returning to the kitchen automatically even though our stomach is already full, or if we are feeling emotional unsettled, we'll give ourselves

away to food instead of giving ourselves away to God at that moment.

James 4:6-7 says that it takes humility to obey God's will and His grace: "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.' Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Here are the 5 steps to take back control of your appetite:

1. Make a declaration at the beginning of your day, saying "God, I'm giving myself to you today, not to my appetite." Decide in your heart that you are presenting your body to God (which belongs to Him anyway) for His purpose. Visualize giving yourself away to God as a gift easily and joyfully.

2. Since desire drives the appetite, declare to God in prayer that you want your desires to become His desires. Ask Him to change your desires into Godly ones this day.

3. Declare to God in prayer that you believe His word in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

4. When your appetite tempts you to eat when your body is not hungry, re-affirm your decision to give yourself away to God. Pray to Him, saying that you expect to see an escape route according to His word and that you will wait to see the escape route that He provides. Then, you will take action on that.

In the meantime, start doing something that captures your attention. The mind cannot hold two thoughts at exactly the same time. So I recommend creating a list of 100 things that you want or need to do. A good place to start is those things you've been procrastinating on. Look at the list, pick out a task, and start working on it. Give your full attention to it

and strive to do your best.

If you do this, then you'll learn that purposeful action can captivate you as much as eating used to!

5. Thank God at the end of the day for helping you to control your appetite as His word says. You will feel great when you see that it is possible to control your appetite! God will give you the grace and strength to do it each day. So praise Him.

Jesus says in Matthew 6:33-34, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things ... "

Take one day at a time, one moment at a time even as needed. As you give yourself away to God rather than your appetite, you will experience increased peace and joy in your life—the blessing that comes from right thinking and right living!

Kimberly Taylor is the author of "The Weight Loss Scriptures" and many other books. Once 240 pounds and a size 22, she can testify of God's goodness and healing power. Visit and receive more free health and weight loss tips.

Should You Tithe When Things Get Tough?

Recently a man who attends The Man in the Mirror Bible Study every Friday online asked a question about tithing that I suspect a lot of men wonder about. So with his permission, here's our exchange.

Abe: I have a question about tithing. I have not treated God's money very well over my life. I am 52, married five years and have three very young children.

Unfortunately, I am embarrassed to say we have no savings and about \$38,000 in debt outside our condo mortgage. About \$12,000 of that is credit cards, \$10,000 is student loans, and \$15,000 is from a friend who loaned me money for the condo. We had been giving 5-7 percent of our net income until this year when we upped it to 10 percent. If we did not tithe, we could put that money to our credit cards and pay them off much sooner.

Do you think that would be biblically wrong or does God want us to suffer and pay the price for my immature and irresponsible attitude towards money? Our financial situation is a large source of tension in our marriage. I feel I have let our family down. My wife asked me to shoot you a message to see what you think.

Response: Abe, no one else can tell you what God's will is for anything unless it is specifically commanded or prohibited by scripture. In my opinion, tithing falls into the category that it is commanded in the Old Testament and confirmed by Jesus in the New Testament at Matthew 23:23.

My own story is that, even though I faced bankruptcy every day for seven years, my wife and I tithed every penny we ever earned—actually more. And God has wonderfully provided for us. We have never lacked for anything. And I was spared from bankruptcy.

My advice would be to keep tithing. I know it's counterintuitive, but God honors those who honor Him. You're going to get through this. Make God bless your decision.

Men, I hope you already tithe. But if not, I would like to encourage you to test and see if it's true that, by tithing, God will watch over you as He has watched over me.

Patrick Morley is founder and CEO of Man in the Mirror. After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, he founded Man in the Mirror, a nonprofit organization to help men find meaning and purpose in life. Dr. Morley is the best-selling author of *The Man in the Mirror*, *No Man Left Behind*, *Dad in the Mirror*, and *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines*.