

Michael J. Fox 'Stunned' About Robin Williams' Parkinson's Diagnosis

Robin Williams was suffering from the early stages of Parkinson's disease along with severe depression at the time of his apparent suicide, his widow said on Thursday, drawing public attention to the correlation between the diseases.

Although the gifted comedian had spoken before about his depression, Parkinson's experts have noted how the incurable and debilitating nervous system disorder that causes tremors and slowness of movement also affects people emotionally.

"The neurochemicals that are impacted by Parkinson's disease and the pathways that control motor functions are also integrally involved in the control of mood," said Dr. Irene Richard, a neurology professor at the University of Rochester in New York.

More than half of those who suffer from Parkinson's also experience clinical depression, according to the National Parkinson Foundation, which advises all Parkinson's patients to be screened for depression.

The 63-year-old Oscar-winning comedic virtuoso, whose madcap style and dramatic versatility made him one of film and television's top stars, was found hanged at his home in Northern California on Monday.

Williams' widow, Susan Schneider, said the comedian "was not yet ready to share publicly" his struggles with Parkinson's, which affects about 1 million people in the United States.

'Part of the Disease'

"It is our hope in the wake of Robin's tragic passing that

others will find the strength to seek the care and support they need to treat whatever battles they are facing so they may feel less afraid," Schneider said in the statement.

Between 50,000 and 60,000 people are diagnosed with Parkinson's each year in the United States. It typically affects people older than 50.

"We actually believe that (depression) is part of the disease itself. It's related to the brain dysfunction in Parkinson's disease," Richard said.

Actor Michael J. Fox, boxer Muhammad Ali and singer Linda Ronstadt have all be diagnosed with Parkinson's. Ronstadt said last year that the disease had robbed her of her singing voice.

"Stunned to learn Robin had PD," Fox said on Twitter. "Pretty sure his support for our Fdn (foundation) predated his diagnosis. A true friend; I wish him peace."

Williams, whose starring roles included *Mrs. Doubtfire* and *Good Will Hunting*, had been open about his struggles with alcohol and had gone to a Minnesota rehabilitation center this summer to "fine-tune" his sobriety, his publicist said in July.

Schneider said Williams was sober when he died and was also suffering from anxiety.

Friends of the comedian, who first shot to prominence as a friendly alien in late 1970s TV series *Mork & Mindy*, described him as a man who masked his depression and thrived from performing for a crowd.

"Since his passing, all of us who loved Robin have found some solace in the tremendous outpouring of affection and admiration for him from the millions of people whose lives he touched," Schneider said.

Funeral arrangements are pending, and a full toxicology report will take two to six weeks, local officials said.

Editing by Jonathan Oatis and Lisa Shumaker

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Is Tithing New Testament?

Question: One area that I am researching is the Tithe and offering. I know very well what Malachi 3:7-12 teaches that according to the Law if a believer falls short then they have robbed God and fall under a curse. Paul wrote to the Galatians in Galatians. 3:13 telling them they had been redeemed from the cruse of the Law.

The main point of Malachi 3 is often overlooked. The prophet was telling the Jews to turn their hearts to God and give with love so the ministries would be fully supplied. I know that God wants us to give—and I believe in the law of reciprocity—and I know we need to support our local church, orphans, widows, etc. Here's my question shouldn't support and giving be from the heart and not because we are under a mandatory legal system? What are your views on Tithes, offerings and giving? –Brother Keith

Bible Answer: You asked a great question. I get this question all the time.

Tithing began before the law was introduced. The Law simply regulated the tithe. Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, 400 years before the time of Moses and the Law, and according to Romans 4:12 we are to walk in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham.

If tithing was good for him, it should be good for us, too.

We give tithes like Abraham gave them—not by the Law but by faith. And beside that, if the people of God paid 10 percent before the Law, and 10 percent under the Law, shouldn't we, who live by grace, be doing any less when we have a better covenant (Heb. 7:22)?

There is a passage in Hebrews, which deals with this issue directly. It is Hebrews 7:8:

In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living.

Melchizedek received Abraham's tithe. The Hebrew writer shows that Melchizedek is a prefigure of Christ. We can conclude that just as Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek, we give a tithe to Christ who is declared to be living.

Some people think this is a new issue. It is as old as the second century when more and more Gentiles were being converted. The early Jewish believers had no problem with tithing since they had done it under the Law and gave it to the priests. They simply gave their tithe to the elders of the church and did by love. However, as the church became less Jewish this issue came up to the church fathers. They answered the question of tithing with Matt. 23:23: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."

Notice Jesus said, "You should have practiced the latter (justice, mercy and faithfulness), without neglecting the former (tithing)." The fathers argued, and rightful so, that Jesus word ends the discussion. Since Jesus said not to neglect the former—being tithing—then no believer should

neglect tithing. I wholeheartedly agree!

Some argue that Jesus words are not applicable to us today, because Jesus was under the Law and spoke to those under the Law. Their theory goes something like this: Jesus was giving an instruction to the Jews, so His words are not binding to us.

The problem with this interpretation is that these teachers are bringing Christ down to the level of a Jewish prophet or Teacher of the Law. Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, so this means every word that comes out of His mouth is eternal. He cannot say anything without it being "spiritual law" and everlasting. Jesus emphasizes this point by saying, "Heaven and earth may pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

These supposed Bible teachers are making the words of Jesus pass away—obsolete and out of date. Besides, these same teachers pick and choose which teachings of Christ in the gospels they believe are applicable to us. I notice that even these teachers agree that most of Christ's teachings are for us; however, because they are predisposed against tithing, they have had to come up with an excuse for not obeying the clear word of Christ in Mat. 23:23.

As a believer, you have to show who your Lord is! Is it the teachers who tell you tithing is not New Testament and who tell you that Jesus word on the subject is out of date; or is it Jesus who clearly told us not to neglect tithing? No modern teacher has the right to tell you to disobey Jesus instruction on tithing. Period!

Even if the only passages in the New Testament was Jesus' word, then that would be sufficient, however, I want to present other New Testament passages on the subject. Let's look at Paul's teaching on giving.

Paul also uses the pattern of tithing under the law in 1

Corinthians 9:13-14 and says, "Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel."

Paul argues that just as the priests got their food from the tithes of the people, so the preachers should live the same way. This passage clearly shows the mentality of the apostle and his understanding of carrying over the concept of tithing into the church. The passage often used to contradict this is 2 Cor. 9:7: "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

The argument goes something like this: "Each believer has a right to decide for himself what to give and should not be told what percentage he should contribute."

The problem with this argument is that the above passage is not dealing with giving to support the church, but rather giving to the poor. Under the Law, giving to the poor was a freewill offering. The Law commanded freewill offerings as well as tithes: "But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks" (Deut. 12:5-6).

It is quite inconsistent for people to appeal to freewill offerings yet claim that tithing has been abolished. Both tithing and freewill offerings were incorporated in the Law as the above passage shows, but they preceded the Law, thus they both should be practiced. The burden of proof is placed on those who teach that tithing has been abolished. If so, where in the New Testament does it clearly say that tithing has been

abolished?

One last thing, notice the resemblance of the language Paul uses in the first passage in Galatians and compare it with the Old Testament passage about tithing:

“Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor” (Gal. 6:6).

“And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household. When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied” (Deut. 26:11-12).

Galatians 6 is dealing with giving to the teacher of the gospel and he uses the same language about the Levites receiving the tithe of the people and he calls it “all good things.” This is pretty good internal evidence that the early church tithed to the ministers of the gospel, although, I admit it is not explicit evidence.

Tom Brown is the founder and pastor of Word of Life Church in El Paso, Texas. He and his wife, Sonia, host a weekly television program, The Bondage Broker, available online.

Megachurch Pastor Talks Self-Help, Diets, Israel and

Politics

Clutter influences the way you work, the way you live, and the state of your soul too, argues megachurch pastor Bill Hybels.

Hybels has written a new book, *Simplify: Ten Practices to Unclutter Your Soul* (Tyndale, Aug. 19), focused on helping people take a hard look at their life choices. His 20th annual Global Leadership Summit, which draws national business and religious leaders, began Thursday.

The pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, Hybels talks about how to live a life anchored by the priorities that matter most. His answers have been edited for clarity and length.

Q: Your book is about simplifying your life. There are other magazines and books that recommend people simplify their life. What's especially Christian about that idea?

A: The Bible speaks in several places about how we can misplace our affections. We can get caught up in the deceitfulness of riches. As Jesus was talking to Mary and Martha, he said to Martha, "You are anxious about so many things." The idea throughout Scripture is that our concerns can be spread over a very wide range of issues, some of which are legitimately important, and many of which are not important in the overall scheme of things. What God is saying is of ultimate importance. Do we organize our lives around what's most important, or do we dissipate our energies and start thinking there are hundreds of concerns of equal importance that capture our mind and hearts?

Q: Isn't this another self-help business book with Bible verses interspersed?

A: This is about decluttering your soul. This isn't about cleaning your basement or buying a new Day-Timer. This is

saying, you can have a messy desk and an uncluttered soul and you're in a better shape than the other way around. Some people walk around with enormous anxiety or their pulse racing and if you say, 'Are you doing all right at work?' they're great. Yet they're carrying around an unrepaired relationship. Until they get that fixed, they can't unclutter their lives because relational rifts clutter up our lives and souls.

Q: You mention that you're doing a modified Paleo Diet, focused on meat, nuts, fruits and vegetables. Do you think pastors should be getting more into their congregants' health?

A: The apostle Paul says in one of his writings, "Glorify God with your body." Christ-followers, leaders or nonleaders, who are destroying their bodies by little activity, poor diet, lack of rest, and nobody talks about it, nobody thinks there's a discipleship issue here. I don't put this in the 'Hey, this is the cultural thing to do.' I say, 'The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.' Why do we say that that imperative does not apply to us?

One of my favorite chapters is about scheduling. The great truth in my mind is that a schedule is not so much about what you have to get done, but who you're trying to become. That was one of the greatest simplifying revelations of my life. When you put a schedule together, and before you list all the duties and responsibilities, you say, 'Who do I want to become in the next 12 months?' You plug in the time it'll take you, you fill in the rest with what you have to get done. If that subtle shift can be made, you can be helped in dramatic ways.

Q: You suggest that part of simplifying your life might be by pruning friendships?

A: One of the reasons why pastors are a bit hesitant to talk about this is because it's so easily misunderstood. Yes, Christ-followers are called to love and serve all people. Who is my neighbor? Everybody. Love and serve everybody. However,

when it comes to who you walk closely with who fits the qualifications of the wisdom of Scripture, Proverbs says, 'If you walk with foolish people, you tend to become foolish.' It doesn't say don't love them, don't serve them. It just says, if you include them in your inner circle and expect them to inspire you to greater levels of devotion to Christ, that's not going to happen. When Jesus decided who he was going to change the world with, he started with his innermost circle of Peter, James and John. Then he went to the 12, the 70 and the 120. He would not have allowed just anybody into those two inner rings.

Q: Your wife, Lynne, is very involved on Israel/Palestine issues. Where do you stand on the current situation and conflict?

A: I'm heartbroken over the nature of the current conflict. I actually believe that in the 21st century, Jesus called to His followers to be peacemakers as the cutting edge for discipleship around the world. If we can't speak into conflicts, if we can't try to bring warring parties together, or if we can't attempt to be helpful in reconciling those set against each other, we're not being helpful to the condition of our world. I've been challenging myself and my staff to be become better-equipped, better understand what Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Q: Chicago has a large immigrant population. How does Willow deal with immigrant congregants? What is the next step for the government to do?

A: We have a Spanish-speaking ministry at Willow Creek, and a high percentage of our Spanish-speaking congregation would be undocumented. We deal with this up close and personal every day. You can't have 11 [million] or 12 million people living in limbo. It's not a sustainable model to have that many people unsure if there is going to be a path to citizenship. I've been to Washington several times. I've written op-eds.

I've talked to our congregation. We make the call to people on both sides of the aisle. This is something legislators have to fix.

Our best role as pastors and Christ-followers is to keep the groundswell of pressure going to Washington, saying we need you to face and resolve these important issues. In the meantime, we have a care center; we provide food, clothing, shelter, employment opportunities, English as a Second Language, dental health, optometry, car repair, and we do so for those who are American citizens and those who don't have proper documentation.

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How to Raise Self-Righteous, Selfish Christian Kids

When we emphasize rewards to change a child's behavior, we enter some dangerous territory in the child's heart. Behavior modification works because it takes advantage of a child's selfishness. Too much behavior modification in a child's life actually increases that selfishness. Kids might do what we ask but there's a deeper price we're paying that must be considered.

Let's step back a minute and see the science of behavior modification developed. In the early 1900s, Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov made an exciting discovery as he

worked with dogs. If he consistently rang a bell just before he fed the dogs, he could eventually train the dogs to salivate by simply ringing the bell even without the food. And over the next few years a complete system of behavior modification was born.

In the 1920s, John B. Watson began using the same strategies on people. In fact, it wasn't long before behavior modification became a primary way to help people stop smoking, lose weight, and deal with a host of other behavioral issues. In time, behavior modification influenced the public-school classroom as well, and teachers used it to help children learn. By the 1950s behavior modification had also become the primary tool for parenting. Giving rewards and punishment to children worked quite well to modify their behavior.

Unknowingly to many, however, a problem began to develop in the way people think. Attitudes of selfishness and entitlement often increase in the hearts of kids who are raised on heavy doses of behavior modification. Many of those kids take longer to grow up today because, in the end, behavior modification may get kids to jump through short-term hoops, but it does little to build in kids life skills to handle the adult world. It's time to re-evaluate the heavy use of behavior modification throughout our culture because of its negative impact. Here's why.

A continual reliance on external motivators enhances a person's selfishness as it exchanges a little gratification for a desired behavior. Children raised in homes where external motivation dominated the leadership strategy ask different questions about life such as, "Are you going to pay me for this?" Not only does behavior modification encourage selfishness, but it also removes the moral motivations necessary for healthy and mature decision-making. Kids then tend to ask the question, "What's in it for me?" instead of "What's the right thing to do?"

Of course these children grow up to be leaders in the culture, both inside the church and out. It may be time for a paradigm shift similar to the one experienced by Samuel when God said to him, "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

The problem is that behavior modification embraces humanistic thinking, the belief that people are just a higher form of animals. If you're going to train dogs to salivate, then behavior modification works well. If you're trying to train a child to make right choices, then a whole different approach is far more effective. A biblical worldview leads to different conclusions.

God created people different than animals. He gave each person a spiritual "heart," and that heart affects the learning process. The heart contains things such as emotions, desires, convictions and passion. In short, the heart is a wrestling place where decisions are made. A person's tendencies come from the heart. When a child lies to get out of trouble, that's a heart issue. If a man reacts with anger each time his co-worker is annoying, that's a heart issue too. Simply focusing on behavior may provide some quick change, but lasting change takes place in the heart.

Behavior modification isn't wrong, it's just incomplete, and in the end, lacks the depth for long-term and lasting change. Even God uses reward and punishment to motivate people to follow him. However, He calls us to greater motivations than the fear of hell or the reward of heaven. Love, gratitude and a sense of mission are inner motivations God gave to people in a different way than he does with other forms of animal life.

Moving toward a heart-based approach to change in children and adults instead of relying heavily on behavior modification has several practical implications. For example, some people believe that the key to good parenting is consistency. The more consistent you are, the faster you'll see change.

The emphasis is on performance and can easily result in kids who look good on the outside while having significant problems on the inside. Consistency can teach kids to appear good, clean, and nice, but to help them change their hearts, other strategies must be employed. In fact, consistency isn't as important for heart change as is life experience, dialogue and creativity.

As a home-schooling parent, Karla found a heart-based approach in parenting particularly helpful. "I used to feel guilty all the time because I couldn't be consistent. I have four kids to educate and a house to run. Invariably I'd have to sacrifice consistency in an area with one or more of my kids to accomplish my other tasks. When I realized that there's more to parenting than just being consistent, it freed me up to work on bigger goals with my kids. The consistency trap produced a lot of guilt in me. Now I'm feel freed up to use other tools as well. I'm continually asking questions about my children's hearts, and I'm learning a lot about how to mold and influence them to go in the right direction. I'm seeing more change in my kids with this new approach."

If you're training dogs in a laboratory, then consistency is essential. But if you're trying to raise children, then you want to build character, develop moral strength, and foster a heart that follows after God. Simply threatening children or offering rewards misses the mark.

The heart is where people hold their convictions. It's where they develop operating principles about life. Kids already have convictions, but many of those convictions are incomplete or erroneous.

For example, a child may believe that if my brother is annoying then I have the right to punch him. Or, if I'm unhappy with the situation then my bad attitude is justified. An attitude is fueled by beliefs. If a child believes that his

job description of life is to have fun, then work of any kind can be annoying.

Simply rewarding kids for positive behavior may get them to perform for a time, but giving them a vision so that they understand right and wrong produces greater results. Kids are then more willing to put their hearts into their work and aren't dependent on the latest gimmick.

Too much emphasis on behavior modification encourages young people to become modern day Pharisees. Jesus brought a new message that spirituality is about the heart. We must get that message into our parenting and into our homeschool classrooms. We must become more interested in our own hearts as well, not just our actions. It's not about looking organized and orderly. It's about having a heart that follows after Jesus.

By Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN are the authors of the new book entitled, The Christian Parenting Handbook: 50 Heart-Based Strategies for All the Stages of Your Child's Life. Both the Millers and the Turanskys homeschooled their children who are all grown now.

*They are offering a **free download** of their Family Toolbox to the readers of Spirit Led Woman eMagazine. [Click here to download!](#)*

Chuck Pierce: We Are in a Time of Major Warfare

We are in a time of major warfare. So says prophetic minister Chuck Pierce.

While warfare is raging in the Middle East, Pierce is talking about **spiritual warfare**. He says he plans to send out prophetic words for the next several days until he senses a breakthrough and admonishes believers to be alert and watchful.

“We have entered a dangerous season!” he says. “Even though the enemy would like to knock your legs out from under you and drive you off of your path, decree that the Lord is taking a stand and illuminating your path.”

Pierce then offers this **prophetic word**:

“The confrontation of the enemy is at hand. You must be filled with praise to enter into that conflict ahead. War is stirring in your midst. War is rising. Unless I rise and inhabit your praises, you will not be able to praise in the midst of the conflicts ahead. I am calling you into a place, and I am going before you so that I am waiting to give you victory. I will establish Myself in your midst. When your conflicts arise, praise Me, and I will assure you of victory in your wars ahead.”

4 Ways to Save Money on Everyday Expenses

As Christians, we know God is our ultimate source of provision. For many, the past few years have been a season of shrinking: shrinking incomes, shrinking jobs, shrinking retirement accounts, shrinking consumer confidence, and—as any pastor can tell you—shrinking giving.

And where giving is concerned, certainly no one is happy about

a decline. Pastors nationwide are definitely fatigued over constantly straining ministry budgets, and those feeling pinched in the pews certainly aren't thrilled to give less.

I've found that most of us *want* to give more. As a financial stewardship pastor, I've prayed with a lot of people who are grieved about their giving. Even the unemployed—some with no income at all—can feel wrecked when they don't write a tithe check because there's nothing to tithe on.

That's rare, though. To be honest, most of us could give more if we simply plan for it and make room for it. For every bona fide broke person who really wants to give more, there are 10 others with unaffordable car payments and daily coffee shop and restaurant habits lamenting that they cannot afford to give.

Most of us are somewhere in the middle. We're pinched, but with some fresh ideas and a little financial creativity, we can open our wallets as wide as our hearts.

Giving should be fun. It should bring joy to your heart. "God loves a cheerful giver," concludes a great passage we all should remember in 2 Cor. 9:6-7.

These verses also say if we sow sparingly we will reap sparingly, but if we sow bountifully we will enjoy bountiful returns.

And even if your bottom line doesn't feel bountiful, you can give bountifully and stretch your contributions with some creative thinking. You can:

- Free up extra cash so you are indeed giving more.
- Identify ways the church or ministry can save money.
- Get inspired by the fact that a penny saved really is a penny earned.
- Do work that the church might otherwise have to pay to have done.

Here are some examples in each of these categories to help you be a blessing to others while minding your bottom line.

Free Up Cash—So You Can Give It Away

1. Clip those coupons. I love coupons. I try to never buy anything without a coupon or a serious sale. Challenge yourself to clip enough coupons to save a target amount—say, \$50—at the grocery store. That’s \$50 in “free” money you can give away.

2. Have a garage sale. Better yet, have the Mother of all Garage Sales. Advertise it on Craigslist and post signs at the sale saying, “All proceeds will benefit Grace Community Church” or your favorite charity, missionary or cause. People will be much less likely to try to talk your prices down if they know the money is going to a good cause. Side benefit: cleaner closets.

3. Check your tax withholdings. If you get a big tax refund every year, ask your accountant if you should change your withholdings to get more money in your paychecks. That’s money that is yours anyway that your church could be using to help others in need.

4. Give up something. An average manicure runs about \$30. A pedicure costs about \$45 in my neighborhood. A latte and a muffin? Well, that’s about \$8 a pop. I’ll give you credit that you’re probably not hitting the coffee shop five days a week, but even at twice a week, that’s about \$64 a month. Knowing how far that cash can go to help others in need can make for a pretty sweet sacrifice when you think about it.

5. Donate your perks. Your frequent-flyer miles could pay for someone’s ticket for an overseas missions trip. Debit card and credit card reward points can be used to buy gift certificates for office supply and hardware stores that can be used to purchase much-needed supplies for the church.

Once when I was on a volunteer team, a pastor took us all out to lunch at a restaurant for which I just happened to have a buy-one-get-one-free coupon with no limit on the number of users. There were 20 of us, so I figure that coupon saved the church at least \$60 that day, but it didn't cost me a dime.

Identify Ways to Save

1. Look for leaks. Ask your pastor or a key staff person for permission to spend a Sunday morning walking around your church looking for little money leaks and ways you can solve them. For example, a friend on staff at our church noticed that when our north-facing automatic doors opened on cold winter mornings, which they do about every 20 seconds, our expensively heated warm air was sucked right out of the building into the Colorado cold. He designed a vestibule with a second set of doors that contained the warm air, stopped the suction loss and immediately began saving our church untold tens of thousands of dollars a year in heating costs. Genius!

You don't have to be on staff to spot things like that. Anyone can see a dripping faucet, a constantly running toilet or a door that is open too much and causing energy leaks. Utilities are a huge cost—help reduce them.

2. Make a list of solutions. Everyone is quick to point out problems, but how many people offer solutions? Many nonprofit organizations have areas of waste and duplication that staff members don't see because they're focused on their own work. In our church, we gratefully accept suggestions on ways we can streamline and save money on everything from pens and printing to health insurance. If you humbly and respectfully give your pastor feedback on ways to correct nagging problems and recurring waste, I promise it will be gratefully received.

3. Rally the troops. Is your church about to hire a new staff person to do a job that could be done by volunteers? Take the lead and offer to round up lots of help to fill the role.

Volunteers could work in shifts to answer phones, eliminating the need for a receptionist. Anyone with a few free hours a week could make copies, stuff envelopes and water plants—and churches are happy to use volunteers.

The problem is that it can take more staff time to coordinate volunteers and their schedules and work around the no-shows than it does just to accomplish the task. If you offer to do the scheduling, the reminder calling and fill in for any gaps, you can truly save your church tens of thousands of dollars a year in staff time and new hires.

4. Eliminate an expense. Meeting a need that a ministry typically has to spend money for is an awesome gift. For example, a friend of mine who worked for a company that was going out of business collected dozens of three-ring binders that were about to be discarded and brought them to our church. Those binders retailed for \$8 each—a significant savings for us since binders are always on the supply list.

Perhaps your church needs the very video camera that your neighbor is selling in his garage sale—or maybe his power or lawn tools. The diapers that you can get for free with coupons can be used in the children's ministry and eliminate that expense for a week or two. If you know what the needs are, you can help fill them on the cheap, or even for free.

Do What Needs to Be Done

1. Offer your talents. Most churches spend a big chunk of their budgets on professional services that many congregants could donate for free. A police officer could offer free security. A web designer could serve a few hours a week creating a site for a church plant. A teacher could write and develop Sunday school lesson plans in lieu of needing a staff person to fill that role. A gadget geek could run the soundboard during an event. A CPA could pitch in and help the church's accountant during budget time.

If you have specific skills the church could use, offer them up. And if you don't have the skills, learn! If you see a job you think you would enjoy but don't know how to do, ask someone to show you. You'll get the experience you desire, and they'll be grateful for the help.

2. Show up. Almost as much as money, ministries need hands on deck. Anyone can sort donated clothing, shelve canned food, do office work, make copies or greet guests. Just being willing to help and do some much-needed work can be a huge blessing to your church or favorite ministry project.

3. Get your kids involved. It's important to help kids feel a sense of ownership of their church and find a place in the church family where they can help. Teens can help with younger kids on Sunday mornings. Friendly kids of any age can be greeters.

Children can also take attendance at classes, serve food at events, hand out bulletins and pens, help deliver meals to shut-ins, clean and more. Teens in our church serve food and coffee in our café, help our AV/tech department, run video cameras, serve as "runners" between events and ministries, greet guests, and much more.

As you teach your kids to tithe on their allowance and other earnings, also teach them the value of hands-on work. If your daughter volunteers 10 hours a week doing work that the church would otherwise have to pay someone \$10 an hour to do, help her do the math. She'll see that in addition to her tithes she's "giving" an additional \$400 a month in saving the church a staffing expense. As a result, the church might discover other opportunities where volunteers could help save money.

4. Grab a broom. Chances are your church pays people to clean. Grab your friends and family and help out with tasks such as picking up trash after Sunday services, cleaning bathrooms, emptying office trash cans and wiping windows. You'll help get

the cleaning crew out the door more quickly, which over time can save a lot of money.

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Vilifying Israel's 'Disproportionate' Response Appears Illogical

When observers describe or denounce Israeli military actions against terrorists in Gaza as “disproportionate,” they glibly assume sweeping legal conclusions without sufficient proof or analysis. But the evidence shows that Israel has acted with disproportionate decency, while Hamas has committed war crimes.

Hamas' indiscriminate rocket and missile attacks—which now total about 3,500 in the last month—target primarily Israeli civilians. The effects of Hamas' attacks have been serious—contrary to what most media reports suggest:

1. Increasing premature births
2. Shutting down Israel's biggest airport, blocking 90 percent of incoming and outgoing passengers
3. Forcing about 8 million people to live on the edge 24/7, fearing that if their missile-defense system or scramble to shelters falters, they could die

4. Constant interruptions throughout the day and night with as little as 10 seconds to find shelter

5. Billions of dollars in economic damage

The principle of distinction requires belligerents to distinguish between combatants and civilians. Hamas' violations of this principle amount to a double war crime: first by targeting Israeli civilians, and second by using Gazan civilians as human shields for these attacks, thereby making it much harder for the IDF military response to distinguish Gazan combatants from noncombatants.

Hamas exhorts Gazans to act as human shields, and its combat manual encourages this war crime while admitting that Israel avoids civilian casualties—an avoidance that Hamas exploits for tactical advantage. Legal scholar Alan Dershowitz deftly highlights yet another proof of Hamas war crimes: Hamas chooses to locate its military efforts in the most densely populated parts of Gaza, instead of in the far less populated areas nearby—a decision calculated to maximize Gazan civilian deaths. Cynically breaking all rules, Hamas even uses ambulances to transport fighters and converts Gaza's hospitals into command centers, weapons depots, and rocket-launch sites.

Hamas perfected suicide bombing and is designated as a terrorist organization by the United States and Europe, so its war crimes are unsurprising, even if the media concealed Hamas' barbarism for the last month. But what of the oft-repeated but seldom questioned claim that Israeli military actions are "excessive" or "disproportionate?"

The first duty of any state is to provide security to its citizens. Adjusting for size differences (the U.S. has about 473 times Israel's land mass, and 40 times Israel's population), what would be the U.S. military response if Al-Qaeda took over Mexico and launched about 47,300 projectiles per day at the U.S. mainland, killing 120 U.S. civilians and

2,560 soldiers and causing significant property damage, widespread insecurity, and travel shutdowns? Such a comparative context supports those proclaiming that the IDF and Benjamin Netanyahu deserve a Nobel Peace Prize for their restraint during such a challenging war.

As of August 9, Israel's military has attacked about 5,000 targets in Gaza (4,762 during the first 29 days of Operation Protective Edge and a few hundred more since) resulting in 1,915 deaths (according to the Hamas-run Gaza Ministry of Health). Even if this total were accurate and represented entirely civilian deaths, the strike-to-kill ratio absurdly implies that Israel's military needs about 2.5 attacks to kill one person.

But if Israel's goal were just to kill Gazans, it could kill well over 1,915 with a single airstrike. Why spend so much on intelligence gathering and precision-guided bombs (or force Israeli citizens to endure so many costly weeks of war) when the IDF could raze half of Gaza in an hour? The fact that the IDF has struck so many times with proportionately few casualties shows the extent of its restraint and precision while destroying the terrorist infrastructure threatening Israelis.

Israel has made extraordinary efforts to minimize civilian casualties—despite Hamas' plan to maximize them. Israel aborts airstrikes that will result in excessive civilian casualties, warns civilians to clear areas that will be targeted, and loses ground troops in densely populated areas like Shejaiya to avoid airstrikes that would kill far more Gazan civilians. Israel chose not to target Gaza City's main Shifa Hospital, even though it knew that Hamas leaders were cynically hiding there, and an airstrike could have substantially harmed Hamas' military leadership.

As this article explains, Israel sacrifices blood and treasure to minimize harm to Gaza's civilians. And yet somehow Israel

is still accused of deliberately targeting civilians even when Hamas' misfired rockets are responsible or when an IDF mistake happens. But as Colonel Richard Kemp argues, "Mistakes and malfunctions happen in all fighting armies and in all conflicts. Do those who condemn the killing of Palestinian civilians as deliberate acts by the IDF suggest that ... incidents in Gaza [in which the IDF accidentally kills Israeli soldiers] are also intentional?"

Some of the same media outlets that rushed to portray Israel as using disproportionate force have belatedly acknowledged that fighting-age men are vastly over-represented among Gaza's dead, strengthening Israel's claims all along that it has done its best to target combatants and avoid civilians.

Israel's restraint is all the more remarkable given the genocidal intent of its enemy, as clearly stated in the preamble to Hamas' covenant and demonstrated by Hamas' genocidal missile attacks on Israel's nuclear reactor (for more on Hamas' genocidal plans, see this article by Jeffrey Goldberg). Would the U.S. military be as careful as Israel has been to avoid civilian casualties when confronting an enemy trying to kill millions of Americans and destroy the U.S.?

The knee-jerk assumption that Israel uses disproportionate force oversimplifies complex situations requiring deeper analysis and overlooks the powerful factors limiting Israel's military:

1. Internally, Israeli democracy subjects leaders to checks and balances from a vigorous political opposition, independent investigations (such as the Winograd Commission), and a defiantly free press and protest culture (including anti-war protests in Tel Aviv); so when about 90 percent of a normally fractious democracy supports military action, the country clearly faces very serious and legitimate threats.

2. Externally, the military actions of Israel are more

scrutinized than those of any other country (as Bret Stephens brilliantly highlighted in 2009), and therefore always carry a greater risk of war-crimes accusations, anti-Semitic attacks abroad, and unprovoked attacks from neighboring countries (over a dozen rockets were fired at Israel from Lebanon during the current conflict in Gaza). Such realities compel Israel to use force judiciously.

In the end, Israel must protect its citizens from an Iran-backed terrorist army that is disproportionately willing to kill Israeli and Gazan civilians. It continues to face disproportionate blame despite its disproportionate efforts to defend its population more humanely than any state in history has. Only if Israel decisively defeats Hamas can real peace come to Gaza—one more reason to let Israel's soldiers finish the job before granting them the Nobel Peace Prize.

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Launch Your Adventure by Saying Yes to God

In the book of Ruth, a young widow made a critical decision to turn her back on her people, her country and her gods because her thirsty soul had tasted of the God of Israel. With just a taste, she gave herself to the only true God by leaving her homeland of Moab and following her aged mother-in-law, Naomi.

Ruth abandoned the only life she had known. Some might call it reckless to leave one's people with no hope to be remarried in a strange land. But Ruth abandoned herself to something and to

someone.

She recklessly abandoned herself to the God of all creation: "But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God'" (Ruth 1:16, NASB). Ruth had a determined heart. The Lord honored her faith in moving away from all that was familiar and taking a journey toward the completely unknown.

Ruth did not allow her friends, her old surroundings or her culture's dead faith to keep her from running hard after God. She did not use the excuse of a dark past to keep her from a bright future that began with her first critical choice: reckless abandonment to the Lord God. Foolhardy. Rash. Careless disregard. Withdraw support. Give up. Leave. Do any of these terms make you think of a right posture before God? They are synonyms for the words *reckless* and *abandon* that display the divine irony of our call to submit ourselves wholly unto the Lord.

The apostle Paul called himself a "fool for Christ." Jesus Himself "disregarded the shame" as He hung upon the cross (Heb. 12:2, NLT). As daughters of the King who gave Himself for us, we are to give ourselves to Him, leaving the world, giving up our strategies and withdrawing support from the wiles of the devil and the ways of the flesh. Reckless abandon is how we fling ourselves toward God and utterly forsake our sinful nature.

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The "Shout 'Yes'" Mom

How does a woman display her own reckless abandon to God? Does she have to leave her family, hometown and all her friends to prove such commitment? Well, occasionally God might ask that of someone, but most of the time she simply needs to wake up

in the morning and shout “Yes!” to whatever the Lord has planned for her. (Now, if your family is still asleep, you may want to whisper yes to Jesus.)

In his seminal work, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis described the opportunity we face every morning—and again and again throughout each day—to “get to the ‘Yes’”: “It comes the very moment you wake up each morning. All your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. And the first job each morning consists simply in shoving them all back; in listening to that other voice, taking that other point of view, letting that other larger, stronger, quieter life come flowing in. And so on, all day. Standing back from all your natural fussings and frettings; coming in out of the wind.”

This “shout ‘Yes’” method may seem simplistic, but a teen girl who said yes to God was given the privilege of being the mother of Jesus, our Messiah. Mary was not chosen by God because she was superior to all the teen girls in her neighborhood or youth group. Mary was chosen because God knew she would say yes. Here is a teenager’s response to the angel Gabriel: “And Mary said, ‘Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:38).

In stark contrast to young Mary’s yes to a heaven-sent assignment, the Scripture tells us about an old priest who, six months earlier, struggled to say yes to his miracle when talking to that same angel Gabriel (Luke 1). An adult who was a spiritual leader resisted the prospect of the miracle God was promising—a child given in old age. And here was the consummate irony: Because of his struggle and hesitation to say the word yes, Zacharias (also known as Zechariah), the father of John the Baptist, was struck mute until his miracle son was born” “And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words” (Luke 1:20).

The angel Gabriel spoke with an old priest and a young girl, and the young girl responded with reckless abandon to a most amazing and challenging assignment. Saying yes to God is an act of daily surrender and a display of one's own reckless abandon. Does your daughter know that you wake up shouting yes to God? Is your daughter growing in her love for Jesus? Are you modeling such passion? Does your daughter have the courage to say yes to God's plan over the pressure of her own agenda for her life?

Dateless Friday Night Miracle (or, How to Avoid a Bozo)

Reckless abandon is a level of surrender that unlocks the greatest treasures God has in store for His kids. In fact, saying yes to Jesus has preceded every miracle I have ever experienced during the past 45 years as His follower.

The very message that birthed *Lady in Waiting* arrived on a dateless Friday night in 1972. I said yes to a holy nudge to stay in my college dorm room rather than go to the mall with some of my friends. I said yes to time with Jesus in the Word, and I got an amazing miracle.

Let me tell you about that miracle-producing dateless Friday night.

Before I became a Christian, I dated pretty steadily. Then I became a Christian and the pickings became rather slim.

So, when I got a scholarship to attend a Christian college, I assumed that things would begin to pick up. How surprised I was to find myself dateless on several Friday nights! On the night already mentioned, my choice to stay in the dorm became like a date night with Jesus. As I sat in my room, my clothes were actually out on dates. Several of my cutest outfits had been borrowed so that other girls would look nice for their dates.

In fact, a friend of mine got engaged in one of my favorite

outfits. On her one-year anniversary, her husband asked if she could wear that cute outfit she wore the night they were engaged. She replied, "Sure! Let me call Jackie!" He was taken aback. "Why on earth would you have to call Jackie?" "Well, if I'm going to wear that dress, I need to borrow it, because the dress belongs to Jackie." Ha! My clothes were very busy in college—very popular, always on dates. I, on the other hand, wasn't nearly as popular as my clothes were.

So, back to that fateful Friday night. I was sitting in my dorm room, thinking, "Lord, I don't want to waste this time, and I don't want to feel sorry for myself. I need Your comfort. I need a word from You so I don't have to have these pity parties on Friday nights ... Saturdays ... Sunday afternoons—all the times I assumed I would be dating!"

Although I was a young Christian, I knew the best thing to do when you want comfort. It was not to go to the mall, overeat or call a friend but to open God's Word. So in the dorm room on my date with Jesus, I decided to read the book of Ruth, because the chapel speaker that morning had referred to it as a love story and a story where a young woman broke her family's godless cycle and began a new life with the true God.

In this precious little book of Ruth, God showed me principles that became an outline for *How to Wait for God's Best*. So, what was so miraculous about finding these principles for avoiding Bozo as a life mate? The miracle was (and is) me!

Here is how my family was described on the back of my book, *Free Yourself to Love*:

"As a survivor of severe childhood abuse, Jackie Kendall is an expert on forgiveness. A counselor deemed her family 'one of the top-ten most dysfunctional in America.' Though two siblings committed suicide and others adopted self-destructive lifestyles, Jackie wanted to break the mold and become a

healthy, loving woman.”

My severely dysfunctional background had prepared me to pick a loser—a Bozo! Given my upbringing, my family example and the context of everybody I ran with, my lover was destined to be one. But God took that “given” and gave me something else in its place.

He gave me an outline of His principles to protect me from settling for less than God’s best! And then He gave me the privilege of sharing those principles with other single gals. And then He gave me my very own Boaz.

Many of you know this, but for those who don’t, the key character, the leading man in the book of Ruth, is named Boaz. And as you can see, if you change one little letter in his name, he can go from a Bozo to a winner. God exchanged my prospects for a Bozo with the gift of my Boaz.

On a dateless Friday night, I said yes to a holy nudge to spend extra time with Jesus, and I was spared the living hell of marrying a Bozo. Instead, I have been married to my Boaz for 37 years. Through the message in the book of Ruth, I learned how to break my family’s destructive cycle and embrace, with reckless abandon, God’s best for me. Reckless abandon is how we fling ourselves toward God and utterly forsake our sinful nature.

*Excerpt from © Raising a Lady in Waiting by Jackie Kendall.
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Ulf Ekman Faces His Accusers After Catholic Conversion

It caused more than just a stir when a well-known Swedish megachurch pastor told his congregation he planned to convert to Catholicism. In fact, Ulf Ekman described it as a a “real uproar” in his overwhelmingly Protestant nation and opened the door to “contention and debate.”

Despite Ekman’s well-known and growing fascination with Catholicism over a number of years, Word of Life members were shocked, and some were dismayed. Nevertheless, Ekman doesn’t see how he or the church could have handled it differently. These are among the revelations Ekman shared in a column written for the *Catholic Herald*.

“Yet there were many emotions: criticism, as well as sorrow and feelings of loss and rejection. How could I as a pastor leave my flock? Did I not betray them and my own calling? Didn’t I consider them Christians anymore? Was everything I taught before wrong now? Some wondered how I, who seem to have been standing strong for so many years, could fall for such an outright deception and lie. Accusations were hurled from left and right, and emotions ran high. Some still do,” he wrote.

Ekman made it clear that he’s not rejecting his background or the rich ministerial experiences he has had over the many years as a founder and leader of Word of Life. He stressed that he’s forever thankful to the Lord for that season but is immensely happy to be part of the Catholic Church.

“So now, as we begin this walk, there is so much to explore. Now that all our former duties, obligations and positions are gone, we can, at least for now, live at a pace that allows a more reflective life. We have been used to constantly upholding the ministry, our church. Now the Church lifts us

up,” Ekman wrote.

“The sacraments have become a tangible reality in our lives, and they sustain us in a concrete way. Something—grace, I am sure—is here in a way that it was not before. A fresh breeze is blowing through our lives. We look forward to exploring and fully identifying with all that we now are a part of. It is very exciting to live fully for Jesus Christ—in the Catholic Church.”

1 Easy Step to Getting the Most Out of Life

Matthew 6:33 says, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (NIV). The key to living the abundant life God has for us is learning to make Him our first priority.

So, why do many people seek the “things” first? Many people’s top priorities seem to be jobs, houses, cars or other material things. To seek means “to crave, pursue, to make sacrifices to get, to go after with all of your strength and all of your heart.” It is a mistake to crave and pursue possessions, believing they will give us the lasting peace, joy and contentment that only come from God’s presence in our lives.

Take a moment and ask yourself, “What am I seeking? What do I spend most of my time thinking or talking about? How do I invest the majority of my energy?” These are important questions you need to answer from your heart.

Deep and Wide

I got to a place in my life some years ago where I had a bunch of material things but I still wasn't very happy. Have you ever been in this place? Maybe you've wondered what's wrong with me, like I did. Well, when I asked God that question, His answer to me was, "Joyce, you're shallow. It's time to step out into the deep."

That was a wake-up call. I was a shallow Christian. I wanted the "fruit" of God's Spirit—love, joys, peace, patience—and all operating in my life but I wasn't seeking that, so my "roots" weren't very deep at all. I had it many of us do at times. We want the money, the house, the platform or whatever our thing is. So we pursue that rather than the true treasure of God's presence.

Just like a tree needs roots to go down deep and spread wide in the soil for it to grow strong, healthy branches that can withstand the elements, Christians need to develop deep spiritual roots in Christ. Our lives need to be deeply rooted and grounded in the Word of God and in His love—not our "stuff." We soon find that out when the storms of life come, and our "things" don't to make us so happy anymore. That's because those things can't give us what we truly we need. And it doesn't matter how much stuff you have if you're miserable.

Don't get me wrong; I'm not saying it's bad to want nice belongings or to desire a good life. But we need to examine our priorities when it comes to those things. We need to learn to seek God's face and not His hand. If we will seek His face, His hand will always be open to us.

Cultivate

You may wonder what it means to seek God's face. Maybe you aren't used to hearing that term. It just means we need to take time to cultivate a relationship with get to know Him. We need to learn who we are in Christ and trust what His Word says about us. And with prayer, Bible study and time, we will.

We are to pursue God in prayer, crave time in His Word, and go after a relationship with Him with all of our heart and strength, even if it means sacrificing some of our desires. Because the Bible never tells us to seek things, but instead, “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33 NIV).

Getting What We Really Want Out of Life

It seems that so much of the time, we get it the other way around, going after possessions as if we'll never get what we want if we don't. But I encourage you to think about what it will be like at the end of your life. I know that's not a pleasant thought, but do you really think you'll be concerned about your stuff? Or do you think you'll want family near?

We must establish our lives in Christ. If we are to be truly happy—with or without all the stuff—we must learn to trust our lives to God. If we will pursue His kingdom and His righteousness, we will see what it means to be content in life. As the apostle Paul said, “...I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content” (Philippians 4:11).

The key is to seek the Kingdom first. Pursue God; seek His face and not His hand. Go after a relationship with Him as if it is everything! You will find that if you seek His face, His hand will always be open to you. So, learn to be content in your relationship with God; He knows everything you need.