

# But That's Not in the Word!

What do you think of "extrabiblical revelation"?

The reason I raise this question is because in the recent past, we charismatically inclined evangelicals have experienced a number of family quarrels concerning the ministry of certain leaders within our camp. There is no need to mention their names because I do not wish to deal so much with personalities as with principles. As these disputes—many a bit heated—have developed, it has been common for some leaders to criticize their opponents on the grounds that they believe in extrabiblical revelation.

The implication, of course, is that while *they* (the opponents) allow extrabiblical revelation, the one doing the accusing certainly does not. In other words, using that criterion, it's a way of saying, "*They* are wrong, and *I* am right."

I am simplifying this as much as possible because, in my view, what I have just described is a clear violation of Jesus' principle of looking at the speck in your brother's eye but not considering the plank in your own eye (Matt. 7:3). Whoever in our midst feels he or she is exempt from allowing, believing in or applying extrabiblical revelation must be living in some sort of spiritual la-la land.

It is a simple fact that we all believe in the validity of at least *some* extrabiblical revelation.

God did not stop speaking and revealing Himself, His thoughts, His guidance, His desires or His holiness after the Bible was written. He continues to reveal Himself today.

## What About the Bible?

As a starting point, let's recognize that all persons involved in these discussions agree that the Bible is the final,

authoritative, inerrant source for Christian doctrine and practice. The authority of Scripture has not been up for debate in any of our encounters. Since this is the case, it is obvious that no one on either side would accept or admit *antibiblical* revelation. We agree that any purported revelation contradicting the Bible cannot be regarded as valid.

Having said this, how about things we do or teach that do not contradict the Bible but that, at the same time, cannot explicitly be found in the Bible?

Let's first think about what we mean by "the Bible." I'm sure you would agree the Bible has 66 books. But how do we know? Nothing in the Bible teaches it has 66 books. The only way to know that is through extrabiblical revelation! There is no other choice.

How did God go about revealing to us what the Bible should or should not contain? Some will be surprised to find it actually took hundreds of years. In fact, we Protestants didn't finally decide on the 39 books of our Old Testament until the Reformation of the 16th century. That was when the reformers decided to exclude the apocryphal books of the Catholic Bible, which Catholics still include in their canon of Scripture.

A few years ago Ramsay MacMullen, the distinguished Yale University professor of history, wrote a fascinating book called *Voting About God in Early Church Councils*. The title itself reveals a great deal about the process through which the church received new revelation after the Bible was written. While God was revealing Himself on this matter, believers in those days became accustomed to a process of receiving that revelation that was not always as godly as we might assume it was.

The flyleaf of MacMullen's book says it well: "What was it like to be a bishop in the early church voting on what God's

law should be? How did bishops who disagreed about God's law conduct themselves? Often they were raucous, riotous, even violent in settling disputes. ... Drawing on extensive verbatim stenographic records, [MacMullen] analyzes the ecumenical councils from A.D. 325 to 553, in which participants gave authority to doctrinal choices by majority vote."

MacMullen finds that the literal physical battles involved in establishing the church's doctrinal creeds produced no fewer than 25,000 deaths! He says, "It disrupted [people's lives] not only by ending so many of them, once and for all, abruptly, but in other ways as well: through arson, wounds and injuries, displacement, losses of property, rioting, disorders, and deep abiding splits in communities."

To focus more specifically on the Bible you and I have ended up with, let me quote a vivid paragraph by missiologist Jonathan Bonk:

"There is no indication that those credited with penning the Jewish and then the Christian Holy Writ—political leaders, priests, chroniclers, poets, prophets, sages, amateur historians, and apostles—imagined that they were contributing to a body of writing that would one day be incorporated into a single volume universally known as *The Bible*. Nor could they have known that religious and political leaders of a later era—of whom Constantine may serve as a convenient representative—would engage in a prolonged, factious, and at times ethically unseemly effort to determine which writings should be allowed between the covers of this sacred book, and which ones should be excluded. As unsavory to modern sensibilities as was the process itself—to say nothing of the carnal motives and methods of its principals—the result was the book that we Christians now honor in word, if less frequently in deed: *The Holy Bible*."

I know it is shocking, but this vividly describes some of the process through which the body of Christ historically arrived

at its fervent conviction about how many books should be included in the Bible. Once again, it is important to recognize that you and I have received our doctrine of the canon of Scripture entirely through extrabiblical revelation.

But that's not all.

### **What About the Trinity?**

The central doctrine MacMullen traces through the councils is not the canon but the doctrine of the Trinity. I customarily refer to God as the Trinity, meaning that God has always existed as three Persons in one essence—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I believe this is sound biblical doctrine.

Nevertheless, there is no appearance of the word *Trinity* in the Bible, nor is there any single passage that describes God as three Persons in one essence. That is why it took hundreds of years of debate to arrive at our trinitarian doctrinal conclusion. It obviously had to be the result of extrabiblical revelation.

In fact, do you know the phrase "It doesn't matter one iota"? This phrase originated from these controversies concerning the Trinity, which precipitated no fewer than 15,000 official church councils over that era of history. One of the chief items of debate was the difference between the Greek words *homousios* and *homoiousios*. If you look closely, you can see that the second word has an i (iota in the Greek) the first word doesn't have. The first word meant that Jesus was fully equal to the Father; the second word implied Jesus was somewhat inferior to the Father.

Of course, the theological issues were much deeper, but on the surface, the controversies were over an iota! Interestingly enough, neither of the words could be found in the Bible, so it was definitely an extrabiblical debate.

In the end, *homousios* won out. Why? Because it gained more

votes in more councils than *homoiousios*.

I know it is stretching, but this is the way some of our most important extrabiblical revelation was received by the church—revelation that most still hold dear today. As MacMullen comments, “*More trumped less*; there was in the end ‘validation from numbers,’ as a council president reminded a minority who were slow to give in.”

Did this form of revelation come by the Holy Spirit? Those involved thought so. As MacMullen writes, “All the proceedings in councils might therefore be attributed to the presence of the Holy Spirit, at least in the judgment of bishops who approved of the outcome.”

Surprisingly, this is how we received what some church leaders call “the faith once delivered to the saints.” Flawed as it might appear, it seemed to work. We today believe in the Trinity not because of direct biblical revelation but because of majority votes in certain councils—in other words, by extrabiblical revelation. Then when we check it out, we see that it fits with Scripture; it doesn’t contradict Scripture.

### **What About These Practices?**

I have explained the extrabiblical nature of our doctrines of the canon of Scripture and the Trinity in more detail than I will use in the remaining items. My main purpose in compiling the following list, partial as it might be, is to bring to our attention how many of our generally accepted doctrines and practices are founded on extrabiblical revelation. The more we admit this, the more difficult it becomes to point fingers at each other simply because what others do that we don’t like may have come to them through extrabiblical revelation.

- **Christmas and Easter.** My family and I, as well as most churches, habitually celebrate Christmas and Easter as Christian holidays. Yet nothing in the Bible indicates that we should do this. These extrabiblical celebrations

were instituted by human beings hundreds of years after Christ walked the earth.

- **The abolition of slavery.** I am strongly convinced that God abhors slavery as a social institution and that advocating or even tolerating human slavery is an ungodly form of social injustice. However, in both Old Testament times and New Testament times, slavery was a culturally embedded social institution, and nothing in the Bible explicitly condemns this social institution. Our current persuasion on the abolition of slavery is, therefore, extrabiblical.
- **Praying to the Holy Spirit.** I am in the habit of addressing some of my prayers to the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. However, we have no example in the Bible of anyone addressing prayers to the Holy Spirit. I feel it is correct, but that feeling has to come from extrabiblical revelation, not from Scripture.
- **Sunday school.** I feel that Sunday school is a gift of God to the church. However, the idea cannot be found in the Bible. When Robert Raikes introduced Sunday school more than 100 years ago, he was accused by many of being wrong because the idea was labeled extrabiblical.
- **Worshipping on Sunday.** Speaking of Sunday school, I happen to believe Sunday is the principal, God-appointed day of the week (though not exclusively so) for Christian worship. Yet the Bible nowhere teaches this. The conclusion came through extrabiblical revelation.
- **Church buildings.** I am a strong advocate for local churches having their own houses of worship. Nevertheless, nothing in the Bible recommends this. The usual biblical practice was to meet in believers' homes.
- **Using musical instruments in churches.** I believe in using musical instruments in worship services in our churches today, but I cannot justify this by the New Testament practice of the apostles.
- **24/7 extended worship.** I admire and support ministries today that practice 24/7 worship and praise, some having

done so for years. However, I do not find this advocated or practiced by New Testament apostles. This has come by revelation or interpretation after the New Testament was written.

- **Weekly offerings.** I think taking weekly offerings in church meetings is an appropriate ecclesiastical behavior pattern, even though nothing in the Bible says we should do it.

## **What About Prophecy?**

Jesus said, "He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches." (See Revelation 2-3.) While this is in the Bible, note the present tense: "is saying."

As I mentioned earlier, I join the company of those who believe God did not stop speaking to the churches when the canon of Scripture was completed. I believe in the gift of prophecy and the ministry of prophets who receive messages from God and who speak on His behalf. Much of what prophets say is biblical because they quote Scripture in their prophecies. However, much is also extrabiblical, because what God may be showing them cannot be found in the Bible. Through the years, I have received a considerable amount of valuable new revelation from God through prophets—revelation that is not to be found in the Bible.

We need to note once again that nothing we are dealing with here can be *antibiblical*. We cannot affirm any doctrine or practice or purported word from the Lord that would contradict Scripture in any way. Admittedly, this is sometimes a hard line to draw, but it must be drawn whenever necessary.

I hope you will conclude with me that any doctrine or practice with which we may not agree cannot be refuted or condemned simply on the basis that it may be derived from extrabiblical revelation. It may truly be a heretical doctrine that should be condemned, or it may be an ungodly practice that must be

rejected. But if it is either, this has to be argued on reasonable grounds beyond the all-too-common extrabiblical label.

My prayer is that this article will help clear the way for more amicable and higher-level discussions within the body of Christ than might have been conducted in the past.

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Watch three Bible scholars discuss controversies and misunderstandings surrounding the canon of Scripture at

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## **Israel: Freedom Knows No Borders**

The shooting attack at the Jewish museum in Brussels last weekend was another example of the anti-Semitic wave that has been washing over Europe in recent years. This begs the question: Is the State of Israel gradually becoming the only refuge, or should we say ghetto, of the Jewish people?

Does our 2,000-year-old desire “to be a free people in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem” contradict our individual desires to be free Jews anywhere we wish?

“Auto-Emancipation,” an early Zionist pamphlet written in German by Russian-Polish Jewish doctor and activist Leo Pinsker in 1882, warns of the xenophobia toward Jews in Europe. Pinsker wrote that the Jews were a “dead but still living nation” or a “ghostlike apparition” with no homeland or independence, and that was why they appeared strange and foreign.

According to Pinsker, this was the root cause of what he called the “Judeophobia” that the Europeans had developed, leading to displays of anti-Semitism. Pinsker’s proposed remedy was “auto-emancipation,” the establishment of a Jewish state in which every citizen would receive the respect he or she deserved.

More than a century after Pinsker wrote his essay, Mira and Emanuel Riva, both Israeli citizens, were murdered in Brussels. A French woman was also killed in the attack, and a fourth man was critically wounded. The Rivas were tourists like any other tourists.

Tragically, the victims’ Israeli citizenship served to divert the focus away from the growing trend of anti-Semitism in Europe, and instead enabled the event to be attributed to “anti-Israelism”—something that is actually politically correct to express in Europe.

“We have no complaints when it comes to the treatment we receive from the national institutions,” says Raphael Werner, the president of the Flemish Forum of Jewish Organizations. Werner, who traveled to Israel along with the heads of the Belgian Jewish community to take part in the Rivas’ funeral, talks about a comfortable, supportive relationship with the Belgian authorities. “But ... ,” he adds.

The “but” refers to the general atmosphere in the Belgian press, and to several pro-Palestinian remarks made by Belgian ministers. In this atmosphere, Syrian President Bashar Assad

massacres his people and no one mentions it, but when the IDF clashes with Palestinians it is all over the newspapers.

In this atmosphere, activists who happen to be Jewish approach the Belgian education minister to discuss a specific problem in education and he asks them over and over about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is not trendy to be anti-Semitic, but being anti-Israel is very much in vogue these days.

Julien Klener, the president of the official Jewish umbrella organization Consistoire Central Israelite de Belgique, is concerned.

“When I read the papers, I see things that were not there three or four decades ago,” he says. Klener was born during World War II. He hid from the Nazis with his family, and after the war, he lived in a town where his family were the only Jews.

In the decades that followed, he heard few remarks about Jews. During that time everyone knew what had happened and refrained from talking ill of the Jews. Now, Klener is beginning to see those familiar terms in the newspapers again.

“The anti-Zionists use the same terminology once used against the Jews,” he says.

Those who can recall the fate of the ghettos know. The State of Israel must wage a war to the death for every Jew's right to live anywhere without fear.

*For the original article, visit .*

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# Have You Actually Asked God for a Miracle?

“You do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2). If we truly believe the Bible means what it says, *what then* might we have received had we asked? What victory? What healing or provision? What protection, restoration or redemption? What glory and worship might our heavenly Father have received if we had but asked His help in our time of trouble?

*Why then* do we not ask? What prevents us? Is the way blocked to God? Do we suppose Him limited or uncaring?

Quickly we find the open door: “Come boldly to the throne of grace,” the writer of Hebrews exhorts us, “that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God *has prepared* for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9, emphasis added).

The preparation is done, our answer is waiting, if only we come boldly and ask! We have no other precondition or criteria to achieve the answer God has made ready for us except one: we must believe! “Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:24). “Let him ask in faith, with no doubting” (James 1:6).

Notice the vast extent of His invitation: *Whatever* things you ask!” What is overlooked in that majestic word? Is any need? Any concern or fear? Any pain or hopeless circumstance?

The One who answers is ready. The provision has been prepared. His abilities and compassions are limitless. Yet we often do not ask, we do not contend for our miracle, and His wonderful, sufficient response remains in the storehouse of His blessing.

Is it possible that God uses our adversities to teach us the

benefit of asking? Does He let distress and dilemma have their way for a season while He waits to hear our cry? Does He use our desperate need to turn our eyes upward where we will find our Father listening and our answer at the ready?

Ask and you will receive! I know God is willing to move heaven and earth on our behalf. I saw it first as a small boy, as God healed a father who had been crushed beneath a two-ton tree. I've seen that power repeatedly as a pastor and intercessor, watching in silent amazement as God has raised the crippled, spared unborn children from certain death, restored financial fortunes, secured redemption, and healed countless dozens whose cause was written off as lost.

Christians today will do well to once again pray over their families and lives in an audacious manner. The promise to reverse negative circumstances is only guaranteed to those who pray. "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land" (2 Chron.7:14). What does He mean by "our land?" Our land is not only our nation and world but also our lives. He has promised to heal the lives of those who are serious about prayer and righteous living.

Jesus Himself implored us to pray audaciously. "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8). These are not the words of some popular success guru; these are the words of Jesus! What is promised to those who pray and don't lose heart?

- Ask and you will receive
- Seek and you will find what you are searching for
- Knock and doors will be opened to you

The words of Jesus provide a wonderful assurance to those who will take the time to be diligent in prayer. Prayer transcends all religions. Every religion has its own idea of the proper means, times, and reasons for prayer. Various religions pray to a diversity of gods.

What sets apart the prayers of Christians from all others is that, while other religions pray to dead deities, Christians pray to the God that is very much alive.

We often make the mistake of believing that prayer is only about getting stuff from God. While it is true that prayer is the delivery route for things in the life of the believer, it is much more than that. Prayer develops trust in the heart of the believer that God absolutely will perform what He has said. For the believer, all intimacy with God is born out of trust that has been developed in times of prayer. Intimacy leads to faith and audacious praying. Faith and audacious prayer produce the miraculous.

✘ Adapted from “The Audacity of Prayer” by Don Nordin, copyright 2014, published by Charisma House. God still performs miracles and He wants you to experience them in your life now. This book shares the true stories of modern-day miracles that have occurred as a result of bold, daring, courageous prayers. It will encourage and increase your faith to pray audacious prayers that bring results. To order your copy click on this link.

### **Prayer Power for the Week of 6/2/2014**

This week dare to trust God and pray audacious prayers! Ask—believe—and wait in faith to receive what He has promised. He is totally trustworthy and you can be confident that He will answer according to His will and for His glory. Continue to pray for worldwide revival, laborers to work God’s fields, the redemption of our nation and the peace of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 7:14).

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# 7 Ways Your Marriage Can Be More Intimate Without Sex

Overall, I would say intimacy is one of my biggest struggles in our marriage. Even before last year I felt as if I had a whole separate part of me, deep inside, that John knew nothing about. I would share my feelings, as long as they didn't bring up conflict (or even if I thought they had the smallest chance of causing conflict). It was easier for me to put on a happy face, than to pour out my heart—it still is. Intimacy is something that's great to talk about, but it's hard to do.

Couples choose to marry because we want a heart-connection with one other person for life. That's why I married John. But it's hard to make a connection when my heart is surrounded by a solid, brick wall.

One definition of intimacy that I've heard, and I have used in my writing, is: "In-To-Me-See." But this is only possible when there is transparency between spouses—including sharing the truth about past conflicts, pain from former relationships, and personal struggles (both past and present).

I resisted transparency, even after sixteen years of marriage, in part because I was afraid to let John know how sinful I really am. I was sure he'd hate me (although I don't know why I thought that) if he knew all my wild high school years involved. Or if he knew my current day-by-day struggles.

Over the years, it was easier to keep things to myself than to risk seeing disappointment or pain in my husband's gaze. And, I realize now, even though I've been in a committed relationship from the time I was eighteen, I feared love. (Or every example I saw love to be.) I witnessed what it did to my

own parents. I felt what it did with every other past relationship.

And over time I've worked to reveal myself to John, layer by layer. It's a process, but I'm seeing the difference it makes on our level of intimacy. I feel loved after I bear all, and as I witness love in my husband's gaze.

The following steps helped me peel away the layers:

1. **Understand that your wall of protection is a coping mechanism.** God created us with the ability to cope. Yet, now that I was nearly two-decades into a loving, committed relationship, my fear was a coping mechanism I no longer needed. After all, my issues and insecurities came B.C. (before Christ) and before John.
2. **Let go of your guilt.** Guilt never helped me connect. In fact, it just pushed me further from a resolution. Instead, I started looking ahead to the hope and freedom found in connecting with my spouse.
3. **Pinpoint where your fear is coming from.** We have an enemy of our souls who will use anything he can to keep us disconnected from God and from our spouses. I chose to believe God's promise that He is not a God of fear but of power and a sound mind!
4. **Know that God could help.** The closer I grew to God, the more I understood the barriers I'd erected around my heart. Yet God did not leave me to tear them down alone, but worked within me as only He can.
5. **Surrender your fear.** As Abbas said, we can ask God to "help us connect the dots from our head to our heart." I didn't want to let down my guard, so I prayed God would help me release my fear—help me to engage. In return, God answered my prayers by softening all the hard parts of my soul.
6. **Pray with your spouse.** During the time I struggled to

let John into my inner recesses, I discovered I wasn't the only one praying. My husband also prayed for God to show me His love through John. He prayed that his responses would be ones that would draw us closer and make me more comfortable with intimacy in marriage.

7. **Simply talk.** And though I felt God's strength to open myself up more and more to John—not keeping my internal life separate from the external one—it wasn't easy. One thing that helped the most was to talk in the dark of our bedroom, staring at the black ceiling. It also helped John to know I didn't expect him to give me a response, or solve anything—simply feeling him by my side was enough . . . followed by his embrace and whispered affection when I was through spilling my guts.

**Do you have ways that help you to open up your heart?**

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## **Why You Should Wait for a Godly Husband**

After 20 years of marriage, my husband, Jerome Haywood, is still pliable under the hand of God. I don't know if women realize the value of a man whose heart is soft toward God. I think most women value other qualities that are useless in 20 years.

We got married on the first day of spring in 1993.

Just last weekend, we both received prayer several times at our church after the service. The glory of God swept over us. In one moment of God counseling us at the altar, my focus for the purpose of our marriage was restored. God brought us into each other's lives for His glory.

Since that one moment, we've prayed together and went on a date. We have a zest about being with each other. This would not have been possible if my husband didn't have a soft heart toward God.

My advice to young women who want to marry a godly man is to become a godly woman. Marry a man who has a soft heart toward God. A man who hears and responds to God is a treasure to his friends and his family.

And choose a guy based on his potential in 20 years. I see too many woman that want the hunk or the guy flowing in cash. How about the quiet guy at church who serves faithfully and works hard? No, you want the bad boy who just walked into church, or maybe you met him at work and hope he comes to church with you.

When Sarah married Abraham, he wasn't a father of nations.

When Bathsheba married King David, it was after he sent someone to kill her husband.

When Ruth married Boaz, she was a widow in a foreign land.

God called Abraham to be a father of nations and to a land he had never visited. How would you like your husband to come in and say, "Honey, pack your bags! God spoke to me and told me that we were to go, but I don't know where."

Or how about when Bathsheba's first son dies because David killed her husband. How do you handle that tragedy because of your marriage to the king?

Or Ruth, who has to follow her mother-in-law's instructions to the letter to catch Boaz's attention?

These remarkable women married remarkable men. Do you really want a godly husband? Then plan to have no control. Plan to let him lead you to God only knows where because he is trying to figure it out himself. Be resilient, flexible, trusting God.

When I married Jerome, I asked him about his five-year plan. He said his plan was to take care of me and his kids. He had no specifics, but his goal was to be a good husband and father.

I remember his marriage proposal at Shelter Rose Garden in Columbia like it happened yesterday. He shared with me his heart and the calling on his life. Then he asked me if I was game for the adventure: "Will you join me in walking with God?"

Marrying a man who is after God's heart is marrying someone who is walking with God. He is changing and growing in his own walk with God.

There have been moments where I was frustrated with Jerome. But instead of harping on him about my frustrations, I cried out to God. Every time, God would change me. Then my husband would repent of the very thing I was frustrated about. I've always been amazed at how faithful God is to keeping our marriage together.

I think this dynamic of God is a lost treasure for most marriages. Most couples don't even consider God's concerns or cares about their relationship. They are focused on what they want to get out of it.

I know I was self-centered, manipulative and critical when we first got married. The poor guy had no idea what he was getting into. He thought God was answering his prayers, but

was he in for a surprise—I needed to be changed!

Jerome worked in retail, so he came home late at night. I would go out with my girlfriends for coffee and get home around 9 p.m. to throw dinner together. One night he came home to a piece of chicken on a plate.

Jerome never complained. He made himself mashed potatoes to go with his piece of chicken and told me about his day. I'm amazed at how resilient and uncomplaining he has been all these years.

When the kids arrived, he never complained about going out in the middle of the night because we ran out of formula or our son, Alex, who wouldn't sleep without his pacifier. Or when he had to change diapers or stay up with the boys because I was too exhausted to get up at 3 a.m. to feed them.

Girls, if you want a godly man who will be a great dad, look at that guy you're dating and ask yourself if he would go out in the middle of the night to buy a pacifier for your kid. Or does he read his Bible every day and pray? Does the guy have any interest in God or church?

I'm telling you that what you're dating is what will be laying next to you in 20 years. You cannot change him. Only God can change him, but you have to change too.

For the love of a godly man, what are you willing to do to prepare yourself for him?

I believe there are godly men in my church who are always overlooked by gals wanting the flashy types with hardly any character. These guys are not going to be on the cover of GQ magazine, but neither are you going to grace the cover of a magazine. They will go out in the middle of the night to buy the pacifier to help get your child to sleep. Or get up at 3 a.m. to take care of your child so you can sleep.

For the love of a godly man, become a godly woman. Let God have His way in your life now. Trust Him to bring you the person you want to be with. And trust Him completely while you're waiting.

*Adapted from **Leilani Haywood's** blog, *Keeping It Real*. Leilani is the editor of SpiritLed Woman. She is a Kansas City, award-winning writer and columnist. Her work has been published in the Kansas City Star, Metro Voice, Focus on the Family and other publications. Follow SpiritLed Woman on Twitter @spiritledmag or on Facebook.*

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# June 2014: GOD (B)LESS AMERICA

## Cover Story

### **GOD (B)LESS AMERICA**

Why Fox News host TODD STARNES' fight for religious liberty goes beyond America's culture wars.

## Featured Articles

- **The Secret to Holy Sexuality**

Many married Christians struggle to connect God's holiness with their sexuality because of abuse, addictions or faulty mindsets. It's time to discover the truth about God and sex.

- **What Not to Wear: Another Look at Modesty**

Confronting cleavage, carnality and purity in a culture obsessed with showing more skin

- **Sexual Atheism and the Christian Single**

Why the latest Christian dating data reveals a deeper spiritual malaise

- **Moving Beyond Bitterness and Betrayal**

How to heal from the devastation of being betrayed

- **The Gift That Hasn't Stopped Giving**

A radical career change and a response to a newspaper story not only changed one man's family, but is now transforming lives with a biblical truth of generous living

## Inspire

- Sujo John's combats human trafficking industry in India.
- Can being blessed become a curse?
- Philippines missionary wrongly jailed uses experience for good.
- Florida woman forgives after the unthinkable happens to her.

## Empower

- This month's resources: N.T. Wright's *Surprised*, Ted Dekker's *Hacker*, hope after a devastating tornado and more.
- Reviews: R.T. Kendall's *40 Days With the Holy Spirit*, sophomore album from *American Idol* winner Danny Gokey.

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# What to Do When People Lie

# About You

A pastor friend in China was falsely accused. In 1956 the government sent him to prison for nine years and then kept in him on probation another sixteen years. Twenty-five years is a long time to remain falsely accused, forbidden to preach the gospel, or conduct services.

I have visited with this pastor three times in the past several years. For me, he represents the vast sector of the Church outside the Western world where Christians suffer greatly and endure much false accusation solely because they believe in Jesus.

We may ultimately face such a time in America. Before the German Nazis began to exterminate Jews and Gypsies around WWII, they caricatured and dehumanized them through ridicule and false accusation. In America, evangelical believers committed to biblical stands on morality are commonly typed as intolerant, hateful, or even dangerous.

## Hurt

Psalm 7 is written for the believer who has been falsely accused. You sense the pulsating hurt as you pray this psalm with David. An air of desperation prevails; you feel hunted and about to be torn in two. (See vv. 1,2.) The false accusations of betrayal and robbery hang in the air. (See vv. 3,4.)

The rotten treatment given David is undeserved. (See v. 5.) His actions have been blameless in regard to those who have wounded him, and he pleads with God to affirm his integrity and convene the court of justice against those who treat him wrongly. (See vv. 6–9.)

We know nothing of David's nemesis except he was Cush, a Benjamite, Saul's tribe, who had been bitter enemies of David.

(See 2 Samuel 16:5–14; 19:16–23; 20:1–26.)

Pain is hard enough to bear when you are mostly or partly responsible; it becomes a heavy cross when you are not at all to blame.

## **Trust**

Have you been falsely accused or lied about?

Like David, you may be completely powerless to do anything—other than trust in God. That is what you must do: trust.

The pastor in China and suffering saints through the ages survived because they lifted their eyes from their circumstances to the Lord who reigned over the circumstances. Man may be against us, but God is for us.

David begins Psalm 7 terrified and panic stricken; but as he prays, calm and confidence enter. He sees a different future. He would not be torn to bits; God would shield him. Those who hunted him would themselves be targets for the flaming arrows of God. (See vv. 10–13.)

## **Confidence**

David inwardly resolves his pain by knowing those who dug the pit for him would themselves fall into it. Those who sow trouble will reap it on their own heads. (See vv. 14–16.)

How can we be so confident that in the end everything will turn out all right? Because the Lord is righteous, and in the long run He will not let evil prevail. Therefore, with David, we declare our faith even before an external change has occurred in our condition (v. 17).

My friend in China was officially exonerated in 1980. By the time he assumed leadership again of his congregation in 1983, he was seventy-five. The church had dwindled to thirty. Now he

is eighty-seven, and in these twelve years some six thousand adults have been added to the Lord and baptized in water.

Such would have never happened had he not continued to trust in Jesus during the long winter of undeserved imprisonment. But God intended to more than compensate for the lean years by giving him an abundant spiritual harvest at the end of his life. Through nearly ten thousand days of suffering he never permitted vengeance, blame, or self-pity to rule his spirit. If he had, he would have emerged from the experience a useless and bitter old man rather than an incredibly fruitful pastor.

Keep praying and trusting during the period of false accusation and the desperate loneliness. It may not change your circumstances, but it will stabilize your spirit. And, remember, you have a basis for confidence since God himself is righteousness. In the end His justice and fair play will abound toward you as well. So, like David, worship Him even before you see the resolution of your circumstance. Despite your present need you have a great future . . . in Christ.

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## **7 Ways to Be More Intimate in Your Marriage**

Overall, I would say intimacy is one of my biggest struggles in our marriage. Even before last year I felt as if I had a whole separate part of me, deep inside, that John knew nothing about. I would share my feelings, as long as they didn't bring up conflict (or even if I thought they had the smallest chance of causing conflict). It was easier for me to put on a happy face, than to pour out my heart—it still is. Intimacy is something that's great to talk about, but it's hard to do.

Couples choose to marry because we want a heart-connection with one other person for life. That's why I married John. But it's hard to make a connection when my heart is surrounded by a solid, brick wall.

One definition of intimacy that I've heard, and I have used in my writing, is: "In-To-Me-See." But this is only possible when there is transparency between spouses—including sharing the truth about past conflicts, pain from former relationships, and personal struggles (both past and present).

I resisted transparency, even after sixteen years of marriage, in part because I was afraid to let John know how sinful I really am. I was sure he'd hate me (although I don't know why I thought that) if he knew all my wild high school years involved. Or if he knew my current day-by-day struggles.

Over the years, it was easier to keep things to myself than to risk seeing disappointment or pain in my husband's gaze. And, I realize now, even though I've been in a committed relationship from the time I was eighteen, I feared love. (Or every example I saw love to be.) I witnessed what it did to my own parents. I felt what it did with every other past relationship.

And over time I've worked to reveal myself to John, layer by layer. It's a process, but I'm seeing the difference it makes on our level of intimacy. I feel loved after I bear all, and as I witness love in my husband's gaze.

The following steps helped me peel away the layers:

- 1. Understand that your wall of protection is a coping mechanism.** God created us with the ability to cope. Yet, now that I was nearly two-decades into a loving, committed relationship, my fear was a coping mechanism I no longer needed. After all, my issues and insecurities

came B.C. (before Christ) and before John.

2. **Let go of your guilt.** Guilt never helped me connect. In fact, it just pushed me further from a resolution. Instead, I started looking ahead to the hope and freedom found in connecting with my spouse.
3. **Pinpoint where your fear is coming from.** We have an enemy of our souls who will use anything he can to keep us disconnected from God and from our spouses. I chose to believe God's promise that He is not a God of fear but of power and a sound mind!
4. **Know that God could help.** The closer I grew to God, the more I understood the barriers I'd erected around my heart. Yet God did not leave me to tear them down alone, but worked within me as only He can.
5. **Surrender your fear.** As Abbas said, we can ask God to "help us connect the dots from our head to our heart." I didn't want to let down my guard, so I prayed God would help me release my fear—help me to engage. In return, God answered my prayers by softening all the hard parts of my soul.
6. **Pray with your spouse.** During the time I struggled to let John into my inner recesses, I discovered I wasn't the only one praying. My husband also prayed for God to show me His love through John. He prayed that his responses would be ones that would draw us closer and make me more comfortable with intimacy in marriage.
7. **Simply talk.** And though I felt God's strength to open myself up more and more to John—not keeping my internal life separate from the external one—it wasn't easy. One thing that helped the most was to talk in the dark of our bedroom, staring at the black ceiling. It also helped John to know I didn't expect him to give me a response, or solve anything—simply feeling him by my side was enough . . . followed by his embrace and whispered affection when I was through spilling my guts.

**Do you have ways that help you to open up your heart?**

*Tricia Goyer has written more than 35 books, including both novels that delight and entertain readers and nonfiction titles that offer encouragement and hope. She has also published more than 500 articles in national publications such as Guideposts, Thriving Family, Proverbs 31, and HomeLife Magazine.*

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## **Want to Lose Weight This Summer? Try These Four Foods**

Summer is right around the corner, a time to shed the cold-weather layers, step into the sunshine and enjoy cookouts, pool parties and beach vacations!

And given that we'll be out of the A/C and in the heat for these fun festivities, it's also a time that inspires many people to hit the gym more consistently so they can don their tank tops, shorts and swimsuits with confidence.

As you probably know, exercise alone will not yield the summer-ready results you're looking for; a healthy diet paired with exercise is essential for not only successful weight loss, but also for achieving any health-related goal. In this article, I'm going to highlight four in-season foods that can help you look and feel fantastic this summer!

### **Blueberries**

I consider blueberries a fat-fighting fruit because they are low in calories and sugar, high in fiber, and terrific for the digestive system. A one-cup serving of raw blueberries contains just 84 calories, 0.5 grams of fat, 1.1 grams of protein, and 21.4 grams of carbohydrates, including 3.6 grams

of fiber.

The fiber in blueberries, which is not quickly absorbed by our bodies, increases our metabolism and helps us feel fuller longer. Because the body converts excess sugar into fat, the relatively low sugar content of blueberries make them an excellent fruit for weight loss as well. And finally, blueberries possess a substance called tannin, which functions as a natural astringent within the digestive system and helps reduce inflammation within the digestive tract. An efficiently working digestive system optimally processes, utilizes and disposes of food.

Blueberries are also a favorite fruit of mine because they're a nutritional powerhouse! They contain a variety of vitamins, including A, E, B-6, B-12, 36 percent of the recommended daily value of vitamin K, and 24 percent of the recommended amount of vitamin C. The antioxidants of blueberries help prevent the production of free radicals that impair the body's cells and can lead to disease.

Blueberries make great toppings for just about anything, from cereal, yogurt, and oatmeal in the morning to smoothies and salads in the afternoon.

## **Watermelon**

If blueberries don't tickle your pink, perhaps watermelon will! Watermelon is a wonderfully refreshing summertime staple that is also figure-friendly due to its low calories and high water content. (Watermelons are 92 percent water.) One cup of watermelon balls contains just 46 calories.

Arginine, an amino acid abundant in watermelon, might promote weight loss. For a study, researchers supplemented the diets of obese mice with arginine for three months and discovered that doing so decreased body fat gains by an impressive 64 percent. Adding arginine also enhanced the oxidation of fat and glucose and increased lean muscle; the more lean muscle

you have, the more active your metabolism is in helping you burn body fat.

Besides its sweet flavor and hydrating power, watermelon is also a refreshing treat because of something called citrulline. Citrulline, which can be found in the white portion and the rind of the watermelon, is an amino acid that decreases muscle fatigue by helping blood vessels relax. Chop the rind into small chunks and mix it with onions, green peppers, jalapeno peppers, vinegar, lemon juice and seasoning to make a healthy and energizing watermelon rind salsa.

Watermelon is also rich in vitamin A, which does fabulous things like protect us from cancer, cataracts and atherosclerosis, as well as keep our skin, eyes and bones healthy. Watermelon's sizable supply of vitamin C protects our bodies from infection, maintains healthy bones and teeth, quickens the body's ability to repair wounds and lowers blood pressure.

## **Chili Peppers**

Hot peppers such as jalapeños, habaneros and serranos are major metabolism-boosters due to a fiery little chemical called capsaicin, which increases the fat-burning rate in the body and is also responsible for giving salsa, barbeque sauces and chili their kick.

A Korean study found that capsaicin works to lessen the effects of dietary fat, up-regulating some genes and down-regulating others to buffer the fats. They researchers said that "capsaicin can have a significant inhibitory effect against fat accumulation."

A study conducted by the University of Maryland Medical Center concluded that capsaicin can control carbohydrate breakdown for more efficient calorie consumption and energy production. Capsaicin has also been shown to curb appetite, relieve the burning from nerve pain (ironically enough) and even disrupt

the mitochondria of cancer cells while leaving other cells untouched.

Chili peppers can be easily incorporated into myriad recipes, including those for chilled soups like gazpacho, guacamole, chili or salsa. I should add, however, that one should use caution when consuming peppers; while they are perfectly tolerated by many, for others they aggravate the lips, mouth and digestive system. And try not to get pepper juice in your eye!

## **Zucchini**

If hot peppers aren't *cool* with you, then I recommend you try warming up to zucchini instead! Zucchini makes an excellent summertime weight-loss food because it is exceptionally low in calories, especially in comparison to its size; one large zucchini has only 54 calories!

It's old news that taking in less calories than you expend is key to weight loss, so the fact that zucchini, a water-rich vegetable, can be eaten in large quantities without jeopardizing your daily calorie count makes it a go-to for summer grilling.

Zucchini is also diet friendly because they are easy to prepare and don't require added ingredients such as sugar or excessive fats to make them taste great. Brush zucchini slices with olive oil and sprinkle with your favorite spices, then put them on the grill until they are nice and crisp. Alternatively, you can toss zucchini in light, whipped, trans-fat-free butter (a little butter won't hurt you!), oregano, a little parmesan cheese if you prefer, and bake it at 350 degrees for 35-40 minutes, and voilà! You've got a delicious, satiating side dish. Be sure not to peel the skin; that's where most of the nutrients are!

In addition to its weight loss-promoting benefits, zucchini also boasts a host of other health-enhancing properties. A

one-cup serving of zucchini contains 30 percent of the daily recommended intake of vitamin C for women, 25 percent for a man, 12 percent and 9.5 percent of the daily recommended intake of manganese for men and women, respectively. A diet lacking in manganese may put you at a higher risk for arthritis, diabetes, and osteoporosis. Zucchini is also rich in vitamins B-6 and K, the latter of which contributes to the growth, development and maintenance of bones.

While the four foods mentioned above are wonderful waist-whittlers, it's important to keep in mind that *all* of the fruits and veggies God created for us are healthy and helpful for weight loss. Load up this summer on items that appeal to you personally, be it beets, blackberries, tomatoes or tangerines. These are all low in calories and full of flavor, a potent combination when it comes to looking great and feeling even better!

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For the original article, visit [www.dianataylor.com](#).

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## The 9 Ms of Prophetic Diversity

I would love for it to be said of me that I was like Anna (Luke 2:36-38), someone who focused on nothing and nobody except Jesus. In every prophetic word, long ones or short

ones, in every vision, every dream, every inspired prayer, I want to be declaring the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 19:10). I want to be like John the Beloved, leaning my head on His chest and then telling others about Him.

Do you love Him? If you love Him, your heart will overflow with words about Him. In loving Him, none of us will be exactly like Anna, because the overflow will take different forms. The message of love will come in different wrappings, and it will be presented in different styles. Marketplace manners are a little different from prophetic conferences. Culture differs from place to place. But the simple truth is that all adventures in the prophetic realm must be rooted in the same soil: expressing the love of God.

### **How Much God Loves Somebody Else**

The prophetic gift helps us understand how much God loves us personally. But as the gift operates upon, in and through you, it becomes a demonstration of how much God loves someone else.

When you stir up the gift and release it, you are doing what the apostle Paul taught: "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Cor. 14:1). Prophecy, in its pure form, is supposed to be about loving people with Jesus' love. God has put into you a tiny measure of His massive heart of love, and His Spirit decides to open up a little spigot. Even a tiny measure of His love overwhelms us, whether it comes with signs and wonders or in the midst of a quiet, calm, little conversation.

For each of us, the various expressions of the prophetic gift differ, depending upon our personalities and what God has called us to. Each of us is a unique creature. God never uses a cookie cutter. The varieties of giftings and ministries that we read about in the New Testament become further varied as they are expressed through such a wide variety of individuals: "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There

are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all" (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

## **Relevant Shifts**

Besides the differences in personalities and in applications of the prophetic gifts, I am continually noticing additional diversity in the prophetic realm. Within the body of Christ, we are finding a wider ethnic diversity than ever before, and we are also hearing fresh voices. More new people are just over the horizon.

We are hearing new prophetic sounds, in terms of up-to-the-minute media presentations. Continuous change seems to be the new norm. New ways of thinking require flexibility and adjustment. From prophetic evangelism at New Age fairs to solemn assemblies of hungry, passionate young people, the name of Jesus is being proclaimed as never before.

Year after year, new models of kingdom life are developing. They include everything from megachurches to small house churches, from crowded stadiums to widely dispersed webcasts. Some flourish in places that have become centers of spiritual life, while others remain hidden from the public eye. Such a wide variety of new possibilities abound in this shifting prophetic landscape that I have tried to capture them in a memorable way. Here are my nine Ms:

**1. Mighty streams of prayer and praise.** This, combined with the worship movement, is maturing and bringing us into higher realms of glory.

**2. Miracle manifestations.** They are proliferating, not only in Third World countries, but also in the West.

**3. Marketplace ministry.** Though never heard of until recently, it is increasing. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Christians exercise their prophetic gifts in their places of secular

employment, bringing much-needed wisdom and prophetic intercession into new situations.

**4. The matrix of relationships.** The gifts do not thrive in isolation; they require a healthy, relational community of faith.

**5. Missions outreach.** In spite of world recession and the well-established indigenous church, both long-term and short-term missions continue to be launched, based in many countries, including new places.

**6. Middle East emphasis.** God is doing something in Israel and in the regions surrounding Israel as people bring the gospel of the kingdom to the Jew first and then to the Gentile (Rom. 1:16).

**7. Ministry training.** With the proliferation of ministry training centers and the organic spreading of the mentoring movement, established prophets, pastors and teachers are able to give away what they have earned and learned. People are realizing that the little bit they have may be someone else's magnificent meal.

**8. Mercy ministries.** My late wife, Michal Ann Goll, responded to a call for this one. She ministered in Mozambique, Thailand, Burma, among the First Nations and wherever else she was able to release the message that compassion acts.

**9. Media mania.** This is another way of saying that every new means of communication, public and private, is being used by people of the kingdom.

The Holy Spirit is helping the worldwide church to achieve a remarkable level of unity and energy in "doing the stuff." Whether we face more storms or times of fulfillment, it is time to seize the moment, listening to the Holy Spirit for direction. The body of Christ is accepting an incredible opportunity to shift and move into kingdom alignment.

## Getting It Together

I wish personal character could have been an outright gift of the Spirit like the gift of prophecy or the word of wisdom. Our character flaws contribute more to our ministry failures than any other factor. And yet bequeathing us such puny character represents a stroke of genius on the part of God, who wants us to rely on Him for everything.

Here He is, living inside each person who names Him as Lord, with a goal of transforming us into His image day by day. As we come into union with the Creator of the universe, who knows us better than we will ever know ourselves, we grow in our experience of new creation realities. Christ in us is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27).

The Spirit who dwells inside us is also the spirit of prophecy, and, as you will remember, the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 19:10). As the spirit of prophecy draws you continually to the Lord of love, you will know God better and better.

That is our cure for weak character—and our primary prophetic message. What an adventure this life with Him is turning out to be! Yes, there will be a generation that walks in the double: fullness of fruit (character) and fullness of power (gifts of the Holy Spirit). And when we add the spirit of wisdom to that—oh, what an adventure that will truly be!

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