

# When We Use the Word of God to Hurt People

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb. 4:12, NIV).

Our God has entrusted us with a great treasure –the living sword–“the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph. 6:17, NLT). This is a powerful weapon that should be wielded in a manner that brings honor to our King.

Unfortunately, too often this weapon is mishandled. Many have used the Word to serve themselves rather than advance God’s kingdom, turning the Word of God into a legalistic document that regulates behavior and wounds the soul. The law executed without the heart of His Spirit brings death.

“For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6, NIV).

Beloved, we must use wisdom when wielding the sword of God’s Word. Wisdom empowers the sons and daughters of God to properly use the sword of God’s Word. How do we receive this wisdom? All we have to do is ask.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you” (James 1:5).

God wants to give us wisdom so that we can partner with Him to establish His plan and purpose on the earth.

Where there is oppression and fear, we can overcome by the power of the sword, bringing forth life and justice for those who are oppressed. Carrying out His decree of everlasting

love, we can restore that which has been lost. We have the great privilege of bringing honor to the King by the way we administer His Word!

How have you been wielding the sword of God's Word? Are you using divine wisdom to advance His kingdom? We can call upon His name for the strength and wisdom it takes to honor His name with the sword of the Word. Pray:

*Heavenly Father, I come to you in the name of Jesus, thanking You for both the honor and privilege of wielding Your sword. I want to bring Your favor to every life I touch. I want to release the splendor of heaven here on earth. Now raise and empower me to wield the sword of Your Word with wisdom, bringing forth life and justice, in Jesus' name, amen.*

*Adapted from Fight Like a Girl (Faith Words, 2006) by Lisa Bevere.*

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## **Most Modern King James Translation in 30 Years Coming to Market**

Charisma House hosted the official launch of the Modern English Version (MEV) Bible translation into the trade market in a highly anticipated one-day event at Charisma Media in Lake Mary, Florida, on Friday.

The MEV is the most modern translation produced in the King James tradition in 30 years. This word-for-word translation maintains the beauty of the past yet provides fresh clarity for a new generation of Bible readers. The MEV also accurately

communicates God's Word anew as it capitalizes references to God, maintaining reverence of the Scripture.

"As a team, we have worked enthusiastically to present the MEV Bible translation to the trade market via this event," says Tessie DeVore, executive vice president of Charisma House. "To Bible readers who value biblical truth, the MEV literally translates God's Word in a way that preserves the message but remains readable for today's world. Because of this, we anticipate that the MEV will have broad ecumenical and consumer acceptance."

Christian retailers from all over the country traveled to Charisma Media's corporate office to hear experts, scholars and translators, such as N. Blake Hearson, Ph.D., and Rudolph D. Gonzalez, Ph.D.

The day's events included video presentations, sales and marketing discussions, and background information on the product development of the Bible lineup.

Projected products were also unveiled, such as the *MEV Thinline Reference Bible*, the *KJV/MEV Parallel Bible* and the *SpiritLed Woman Bible*. Guests came away with knowledge of the MEV translation's origins, how Charisma House became its conduit to the world, and projections for the future of Bibles in the trade.

"I am excited and humbled by what took place in the life of Charisma House this week," says Jason McMullen, publishing director of the MEV. "We were privileged to gather with retailers and brothers and sisters from around the country to think about and collaborate for the dissemination of the MEV, the holy Word of God."

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# People Are Not Born Gay, Affirms Royal College of Psychiatrists

A statement by the Royal College of Psychiatrists that people are not born gay has been welcomed as “a major admission” by a Christian charity that helps men and women change unwanted same-sex feelings.

Core Issues Trust (CIT), which is campaigning against a ban on therapy being offered to people who want to move away from a homosexual lifestyle, says the latest statement by the Royal College admits what it previously denied.

“They now say that the causes of homosexuality are a combination of ‘biological and postnatal environment factors.’ So, if a child does not encounter such postnatal life experiences, he or she will grow up heterosexual,” says the director of CIT, Mike Davidson.

Davidson says he is incredulous that despite its admission that being gay is not fixed at birth, the college continues to support the ban on change therapy.

“The Royal College has also modified its view on whether sexual orientation can change, saying, ‘It is not the case that sexual orientation is immutable or might not vary to some extent in a person’s life,’” he says. “So how can that be consistent with a ban on people voluntarily seeking professional counseling to change unwanted same-sex feelings?”

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# **WATCH: 'The Voice Kids' Stunning 'Hallelujah' Performance**

Three young contestants on Germany's *The Voice Kids* recently delivered a stunning performance of Leonard Cohen's classic "Hallelujah."

Patrizia, Simon and Helen—ages 12, 12 and 11, respectively—wowed judges and the audience with their emotional rendition of the popular 1984 song last month, and the YouTube video has gone viral with more than 1.2 million views.

Watch the video below.

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# **America's Greatest Moral Crisis Is the Lack of God Consciousness**

Several years ago my good friend and frequent debating partner, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, challenged me to debate the question, "Is Homosexuality America's Great Moral Crisis?" My answer was that homosexual activism is certainly a matter of great concern, but our country's greatest moral crisis is the lack of consciousness of God.

What has happened to the fear of the Lord? What has become of holy reverence? Where is the recognition that one day, all of

us will give account to the Judge of the whole earth?

Almost 25 years ago, in my book *How Saved Are We?* I wrote a chapter entitled “Whatever Happened to the Fear of God?” Looking back today, almost a quarter-century later, the question is all the more urgent.

Twenty-five years ago, I wrote:

“America is ripe for judgment! Our selfish deeds have come up before the throne of God—and we have been found sadly lacking. Our sinful lives have been weighed in the balance—and we have come up pitifully short. Our preachers haven’t clearly warned us, and our teachers haven’t told us the whole truth. *Judgment is already in our land.*”

“Isaiah warned Jerusalem many years ago: ‘The Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you on that day to weep and wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! “Let us eat and drink,” you say, “for tomorrow we die!”’ (Isa. 22:12-13)

“Today we sing a new tune: ‘Let us eat and drink and be glad. America shall not die!’ Little do we realize that the land of the free and the home of the brave is perishing before our eyes.

“We are filled with an unreal optimism, not knowing that deterioration is already rampant in our culture. We sit smug and secure, proud and protected—but the divine axe has already been laid at the root of our society. We are too busy having fun and pursuing our dreams to even realize that America is falling apart.”

Friends, if this was true back in 1990, how much more true is it today?

In *How Saved Are We?* I asked this simple question: “Then why

aren't we busy repenting? Why are we hardly interceding for our land? Why are we so nonchalant and numb?"

The answer was also simple: *"It is because we too have lost the fear of God.* Judgment has become an almost meaningless word. We have forgotten the Law of the Lord. But His holy standards have not changed."

To be clear, I did not mean then and I do not mean now that as followers of Jesus, we are under the Law of Moses. What I did mean then and what I do mean now is that there are things God hated 3,000 years ago that He still hates today, and the nation that practices those things will come under His judgment.

And it is God's Law that often teaches us what God hates and what God loves.

For example, we see from the Law, reinforced throughout the entire Bible, that morality and honor are sacred before God, and the severe penalties prescribed by the Torah were given so that "all Israel will hear of it and be afraid" (Deut. 21:21, NIV).

The problem today, as I explained in 1990, is that "the exact opposite has occurred (we don't need to start stoning adulterers again—but we've gone to the other extreme). We have not purged the evil from our midst! Blatant sinners go unpunished, high-handed criminals walk away free, and it is often the guilty who are protected by law. That's why America has not 'heard' and is not 'afraid.' That's why so many among us do such evil things again and again.

"Some judges have persecuted parents for home schooling their children while preventing other parents from knowing that their own daughters are having abortions. In fact, those who protest abortion are jeered; those who practice abortion are cheered. Perversity has gripped our land! 'Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and

light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter' (Isa. 5:20). Woe to the nation whose courts commit crimes! Recently a two-time murderer was released on *two dollars* bail—only to kill again!”

Sadly, “From our earliest days we are taught that sin is OK and that wrongdoing is only relative. We do what is right in our own eyes. Even our churches wince at the thought of discipline. We preach a great grandfather God. He is kindly and smiling and warm. He never gets indignant or angry. In His eyes we can do no wrong. He is blind to our sin and our guilt.”

And may I remind you that all this was written long before the rise of the modern hyper-grace message? Today it is even harder to proclaim these truths, given the compromised spirit of the age.

Please allow me, then, to share a few more quotes from *How Saved Are We?* with the hope that these words will stir your heart afresh.

I personally believe that God is going to shake our nation and that a great awakening could be at hand. I also believe divine judgment is already in our midst as we reap the fruit of our sinful choices. So listen and read and pray and weep and seek His face.

It is not too late for God to move in our land. Yet it is anything but a time for complacency. As I wrote in 1990:

“Here is a frightful thought. *Every sin that is not under the blood must be punished.* Every transgression must be judged. God has a record of every abortion, every rape, every theft, every murder, every lie, every injustice, every blasphemy, every adulterous affair, every homosexual union, every pornographic act, every satanic ritual, every godless sermon — every single sin that has ever been committed in our country. He remembers all the cries of the helpless little children who

have been abused, of the terrified wives who have been beaten, of the destitute poor who have been forgotten. Think of how much divine wrath has accumulated for our land! *The containers of judgment are brimming.*

“Our ‘anything-goes’ gospel has put us to sleep. We have been sadly deceived! But ‘God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows [this holds true for a nation as well]. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit will reap eternal life’ (Gal. 6:7-8). We have sowed to please our sinful nature. We are beginning to reap destruction. The Day of accounting is here!

“‘Do not pollute the land where you are. *Bloodshed pollutes the land*, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it. *Do not defile the land* where you live and where I dwell, for I the Lord dwell among the Israelites [does His Spirit dwell among us today?]' (Num. 35:33-34). But with garbage cans overflowing with the torn-up bodies of aborted babies and our city streets stained with the blood of the slain our very future hangs precariously in the balance.

*“Let us tremble with fear for our land.* The kindness of God has been spurned.

“So much light has been given to us. How much obedience will be required of us? So much knowledge has been imparted to us. How much responsibility lies at our feet?

“May God awaken us, may God bring back an awareness of His holiness and His justice, and may the name of Jesus be exalted again in our midst.

“It is not too late for mercy, but we would do well to pray the prayer of Habakkuk who cried out to the Lord, ‘in wrath, remember mercy’ (Hab 3:2).”

Have mercy on our nation, Father, and restore to us the reverential awe of the Lord.

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## **Pope Seeks Unity but Spars With Israel Prime Minister Over Jesus' Native Language**

Pope Francis and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu traded words on Monday over the language spoken by Jesus two millennia ago.

"Jesus was here, in this land. He spoke Hebrew," Netanyahu told Francis, at a public meeting in Jerusalem in which the Israeli leader cited a strong connection between Judaism and Christianity.

"Aramaic," the pope interjected.

"He spoke Aramaic, but he knew Hebrew," Netanyahu shot back.

Like many things in the Middle East, where the pope is on the last leg of a three-day visit, modern-day discourse about Jesus is complicated and often political. [ID:nL6N00C0X6]

A Jew, Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the Roman-ruled region

of Judea, now the Israeli-occupied West Bank. He grew up in Nazareth and ministered in Galilee, both in northern Israel, and died in Jerusalem, a city revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims, and to which Israelis and Palestinians lay claim.

Palestinians sometimes describe Jesus as a Palestinian. Israelis object to that.

Israeli linguistics professor Ghil'ad Zuckermann told Reuters that both Netanyahu, son of a distinguished Jewish historian, and the pope, the spiritual leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, had a point.

"Jesus was a native Aramaic speaker," he said about the largely defunct Semitic language closely related to Hebrew."

But he would have also known Hebrew because there were extant religious writings in Hebrew."

Zuckermann said that during Jesus' time, Hebrew was spoken by the lower classes—"the kind of people he ministered to."

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*Writing by Jeffrey Heller; Additional reporting by Dan Williams; Editing by Louise Ireland*

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## **Would Your Child Say You Are a Good Parent?**

Most engaged parents want to know that they have a good relationship with their son or daughter. But sometimes it's

tough to tell just how solid that relationship really is.

You might think things are going great, but your child might think otherwise. Or your child might feel like things are fine but you feel like you've fallen short as a mom or dad.

Well, the best way to evaluate your relationship with your child isn't to take an exam or ask someone else. The best way is to ask your child.

So, here are 20 questions to ask your child to help evaluate where your relationship needs improvement and where it's thriving. You don't have to formally ask them all these questions in one sitting. You can just casually ask as many as you'd like when the timing is right.

1. How do you know I love you?
2. Would you say I'm a bad, OK or good listener when you talk to me?
3. Do I make your mom/dad happy or sad? Do we fight too much?
4. What are some areas where I can improve as your mom/dad?
5. How often do we spend time together? Do you wish we spent more time together?
6. Would you say I'm better at giving compliments or at criticizing?
7. Am I fair when I discipline you?
8. How often do I hug you? Do I hug you enough?
9. On a scale of 1-10, do I do a good job getting to know your friends?
10. Do you trust me in everything?
11. Have I broken any promises to you? If so, which ones?
12. Do I treat you and your brothers/sisters equally?
13. What's the most fun thing we've ever done together?
14. What is one thing you wish I would stop doing?
15. What is one thing you would like me to keep doing?
16. What things would you like to learn from me that I have not taught you?

17. If you could change our relationship in any way, how would you?
18. How have I helped you over the last couple of months? How can I help you more?
19. What do you want most from me?
20. What do you wish I would say more often?

If you have more than one child, I encourage you to pull each of them aside separately and ask them this series of questions. For more ways to communicate with your child, check out “The Best Conversation Starters for Teenagers.”

What are some other questions you plan to ask your child to evaluate how your relationship is doing? Leave a comment below.

*Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit .*

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## **President Obama, We Still Want to Know if You Are Really a Christian**

President Lincoln believed the Civil War was God’s judgment on the United States of America. In calling for a National Day of Prayer and Fasting in 1863, he said, “Nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and divine chastisements,” as he called Americans to turn back to God.

After the war ended, leaders inaugurated a Memorial Day event. The threefold purpose was to honor the deceased servicemen, reflect on their sacrifice and look forward to rebirth as a

nation.

Abraham Lincoln expressed his genuine conversion after he himself pondered the carnage and realized the tremendous toll Americans experienced because of our nation's sins.

On the observance of this Memorial Day, which we celebrated yesterday and which traditionally marks the start of our summer season, I'd like to humbly ask a question of our president as we see his woeful leadership contributing to this nation's decline. May President Obama's hero speak to him from the grave to repent and begin exercising the courageous Christian leadership America needs before it's too late.

President Obama, on this Memorial Day 2014, you and your fellow Americans paused to reflect on those who paid the ultimate price for the USA. Would you allow me to share with you that I and scores of others have serious doubts about your conversion and the authenticity of your **Christianity**?

I say up front that while I'm in disagreement with many of your policies and beliefs, I do love you and pray for you every single day. I affirm your God-given leadership gifting and your exemplary role as a husband and a father to your two lovely daughters. Yet I must be honest with you: I'm not sure you're really a **Christian**.

Will you allow me to present my reasons and, if you're not, to challenge you to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ at a time when America desperately needs your moral leadership? After political leader William Wilberforce was genuinely converted, he became the leader in the abolition of the slave trade in England that reverberated later to America. He brought about a righteous transformation, but it was accomplished after a true **born-again** experience that catapulted him to victory because of the blessing of God on his life.

Mr. President, as multitudes observe you, you seem to be under

a heavy burden and striving to make things happen through the power of your own will, through clever obfuscation and through manipulation of the masses. The promises you made to the American people regarding keeping our health plans, keeping our doctors, saving us money and insuring more than 30 million people with free medical care without adding "one dime to the federal deficit" appear to be lies and deception to informed and perceptive Americans. The same goes for your statements on Benghazi and the VA plus the IRS scandals.

You told us this would be the most transparent administration ever. Is it? You assured us you would restore civility to political discourse. You talked of economic growth and recovery and stimulus packages that have delivered a paltry return on all our tax money. Something is terribly wrong, and as president, you must be held accountable.

One senior commentator stated, "Obama has told more whoppers than Burger King has sold!" Maybe this produces a laugh, but the tragedy is watching your credibility disintegrate daily while watching you squirm uncomfortably behind your podium. The majority don't see you as trustworthy anymore, and this is a terrible reflection on your so-called **Christian** testimony.

But then again, maybe the label has been applied prematurely and God is using these events to bring you providentially to a place of desperation. Could the God who created you and gifted you in such incredible ways be orchestrating things to bring you to a newfound relationship with Himself?

A changed life is at the core of a genuine conversion experience. This is what separates the authentic from the counterfeit when so many Americans—some polls say 80 percent—profess to be Christian, yet something seems terribly amiss as we survey our society today. And with all due respect, that's where I and countless others find ourselves sincerely questioning your stated spiritual identity of "I'm a **Christian.**"

Are you?

You say what scores of people mistakenly or ignorantly embrace: "I believe that there are many paths to the same place, and that is a belief that there is a higher power, a belief that we are connected as a people. We are all children of God."

Being incorrect on this fundamental of the faith is but one of many areas that cause many to sincerely question your understanding of the true nature of Christianity as well as the legitimacy of your conversion. And if you hold that we all are God's children, why won't you defend the least of these and most vulnerable—the unborn? Your 100-percent NARAL **pro-abortion** rating, your endorsement of taxpayer dollars for Plan B contraception, your support of partial-birth abortion, your opposition to the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act and your speech to Planned Parenthood that ended with "God bless you!" leave us dumbfounded.

Lest you and others stiffen at this point and say, "Hold it! Religion is personal. That's disrespectful. Doesn't the Bible state, 'Judge not'?" let's be clear here on what Jesus actually said. He stated, "Judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24) while cautioning us to avoid anything hypocritical, mean-spirited or unredemptive.

When it comes to leaders, righteous judgment is not an elective but a directive so we'll know their character and the values that shape their positions on critical issues affecting our lives. Also, we must examine their fruit (what they're producing), which takes time, something I and millions have afforded you. To simply give you a pass here because of the historic nature of your election or because of your race is idolatry and must be categorically rejected once and for all. America is imploding rapidly, and we cannot afford to remain ignorant or complacent or to retreat at this watershed moment.

**Jesus Christ** stated, "Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matt. 7:17). While I want to honor you in your position as our commander in chief, I respectfully submit that we are seeing lots of "bad fruit" coming from a tree most likely in need of real redemption. The Good News of the gospel begins with this recognition!

Here's the Deal: Mr. President, examining your beliefs, policies, social leanings and character lead us to this reasonable conclusion. Much of them are inconsistent with living out the biblical worldview that is to characterize an authentic, obedient Christian. It also encourages other high-profile Catholic Christians like Kathleen Sebelius, Nancy Pelosi and Caroline Kennedy to continue in their wayward paths.

We all know you went to a Catholic school in a Muslim country. I, too, had 12 years of parochial school upbringing but wasn't truly born again until the age of 20.

Later, after an admitted lifestyle of drug usage and fornication (cohabitation), you straightened out somewhat in Chicago and joined Trinity United Church of Christ, pastored by Jeremiah Wright. You spent 20 years there but later disassociated yourself as public scrutiny of the reverend and his teachings became uncomfortable for you. As I proceed, know that I definitely cut you some slack here because this represents your formative years in the Christian faith. We know that the content of a church's message determines the authenticity of its converts.

My question to you is this: Have you ever received correct instruction in the Christian faith?

It's probably uncomfortable to hear this forthright and honest inquiry into your spiritual life, but we all need people in our lives who will tell us not what we want to hear but what we need to hear. You are surrounded by many who receive their

direction from you and desire to please you (and keep their jobs!). Yet what is at stake is your eternal destiny.

**Franklin Graham** was asked not long ago about your faith. He's an honest man who pulls no punches. "I don't know if he's a Christian," he said.

On the other hand, your former religious adviser Joshua Dubois wrote a book, *The President's Devotional*. He testified to your faith in glowing terms: "The president is a committed Christian. ... He practices his faith, spending time in the Oval Office with pastors praying for him. ... He went up the side of a mountain to visit **Billy Graham**. ... He has a yearly prayer call with pastors on his birthday. ... He really lives it out. ... I'd rather have a leader who lives a sermon than preaches one!"

Mr. President, these are all commendable activities, but most of us know atheists, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus and humanitarians who also are good husbands and fathers, who pray with others, who do good deeds and visit the sick. What really matters is this: Are they—and are you—born again?

Jesus told a learned, very religious man, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see [or enter] the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). How's that for straight talk?

Charles Colson, White House special counsel and "hatchet man" for President Nixon, was radically transformed when he repented and yielded his life to Jesus Christ. He penned a bestseller entitled *Born Again* to share his journey. May I suggest it for your next reading?

Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). The key here is not merely a declaration but a demonstration—obedience to God's Son and His words as revealed in sacred Scripture.

Years ago, at Moody Church in your hometown of Chicago, a famous pastor spoke with an elderly man who confessed to the pastor his uncertainty about his conversion experience. He told the pastor how he longed for some definite witness that he could not mistake.

“Suppose,” said the pastor, “that you had a vision of an angel who told you your sins were forgiven and you were genuinely converted. Would that be enough to rest on?”

“Yes,” the man replied. “I think it would. An angel would be great!”

The pastor continued, “Suppose on your deathbed Satan came and said, ‘I was that angel, transformed to deceive you.’ What would you say then?”

The gentleman was speechless.

The pastor smiled and put his arm around the shoulder of the older gentleman and said the following: “God has given us something much more trustworthy and authoritative than the voice of an angel. Consider an angel supposedly launched the Mormon faith and Islam! God has given us His Son and His authoritative Word.”

That is enough to rest on—if we will humble ourselves and follow in obedience.

### **The 7 Biblical Marks of an Authentic Christian**

Mr. President, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ are clear on what it really means to be His disciple, a **Christian**. There is scarcely any room for misunderstanding if we will accept what He says at face value. Here are the terms as communicated by the Savior Himself:

1. A supreme love for Jesus Christ (Luke 14:26)
2. A denial of self (Matt. 16:24)
3. A deliberate choosing of the cross (Matt. 16:24)

4. A life spent following Christ (Matt. 16:24)
5. A fervent love for all who belong to Christ (John 13:35)
6. And unswerving continuance in His Word (John 8:31)
7. A forsaking of all to follow Him (Luke 14:33)

I must alert you, as Jesus did those to whom He preached, that it is wise to first "count the cost." There are many positions you hold that are totally incompatible with biblical teaching, no matter how many liberal Bible scholars have told you otherwise. These positions will have to change if you follow Jesus and obey His Word.

For instance, you've said:

- "Jesus is a historical figure for me, and He's also a bridge between God and man ... and He's also a wonderful teacher." Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man.
- "I believe there are many paths to the same place, and that is a belief that there is a higher power." There is salvation in no one else except through Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son.
- "I'm a big believer in tolerance. I'm a progressive Christian." While we should respect everyone's beliefs, we can't respect everyone's conduct.
- "I find it hard to believe that my God would consign four-fifths of the world to hell." The path to salvation is open to all, but it is narrow, excluding all who reject God's free gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ.
- "Parts of the Bible may be modified to accommodate modern life." Extreme caution is needed here, as we have a mandate to "rightly divide the Word of truth."
- "What I believe in is that if I live my life as well as I can, I will be rewarded. I don't presume to have knowledge of what happens after I die." Salvation comes as a result not of good deeds we do but totally as a gift of God received by faith and with a certainty of heaven upon one's death.
- "Those opposed to abortion cannot simply invoke God's

will—they have to explain why abortion violates some principle that is accessible to people of all faiths.” At conception, a separate human being is created in God’s image and deserves full protection and care until the child is born.

- Regarding homosexuality and gay marriage, “I am not willing to accept a reading of the Bible that consists of an obscure line from Romans to be more defining of Christianity than the Sermon on the Mount.” Throughout the entire Bible, the practice of homosexuality is declared as sinful and contradicting of God’s design for human relationships, marriage and family.

Thank you for listening, Mr. President! If what I have communicated resonates with you, I’d suggest you give a call to the Rev. Billy Graham, who in his twilight years continues to herald “There is hope for America!” Talk with him. Listen. Let him pray with you, as he has other presidents for decades. What a phenomenal gift it would be to this man who has spent his lifetime introducing people to an authentic relationship with God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Respectfully, I am

Larry Tomczak

**Larry Tomczak** is a best-selling author and cultural commentator with over 40 years of trusted ministry experience. His passion is to bring perspective, analysis and insight from a biblical worldview. He loves people and loves awakening them to today’s cultural realities and the responses needed for the bride of Christ—His church—to become influential in all spheres of life once again.

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# With Hell Arriving in Syria, Christians Urge Pope Francis to Help

Syrian Christians who fled a village near the border with Turkey after it was captured by Islamist rebels say they refuse to leave the country and urged Pope Francis to pray for them and help them return home.

In March, rebels including fighters from the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front captured the majority-Armenian village of Kasab in the coastal province of Latakia, a stronghold of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Thousands of people fled to the city of Latakia and accused hardline Sunni fighters of targeting Christians and desecrating holy sites. Rebels denied the accusations.

Christians interviewed by Reuters said they hoped Pope Francis, who visited Bethlehem on Sunday, the traditional birthplace of Jesus, would pray for peace in Syria.

“The pope’s visit is a holy one, we wish for him to work for peace and pray for peace in Syria,” Father Miron Owadesyan said.

The Argentinean pope made an urgent appeal for an end to Syria’s war on Saturday at the start of his first trip to the Holy Land as pontiff.

In the first days of the attack on Kasab, more than 1,500 people sought refuge in the Armenian Greek Orthodox church of the Virgin Mary in Latakia city 30 miles away.

Most of them have since moved and now only about 100 people are living in the 1,200-year-old-church, mainly surviving on donations and support from the government.

Narik Louisian, a priest from Kasab, said he hoped the Pope would use his influence to help Christians in the Middle East who have felt threatened by violence and political turmoil.

“(It is) our right as Christians to live in the East, the East is our land too,” he said. “We are an inseparable part of the Holy Land.”

Tamar Minoknian, a 40-year-old housewife, said she wanted Pope Francis to help Syria’s displaced Christians return to their villages. “We want him to help us return to our houses. We do not want aid, we just want to go back to our homes.”

Latakia and neighboring Tartous provinces together form the Mediterranean heartland of the Alawite faith—the Shi’ite-derived sect of which Assad is a member.

Many Alawites have remained loyal to the government throughout the three-year-old conflict which has killed at least 160,000 people.

Syria’s Christian community, about 10 percent of the population, is wary of the rising power of Islamist groups within the rebel movement, and only a small percentage of Christians have taken up arms.

“I cannot live outside Syria, we were born here and we will die here,” Nerneen Boinashikian, in her fifties, told Reuters while she was preparing lunch. “All that we want is to return to our homes. Enough destruction.”

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*Writing by Mariam Karouny, editing by Alister Doyle*

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# Top 4 Summer Foods for Weight Loss

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!

**Diana Anderson-Tyler** is the author of *Creation House's Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness* and her latest book, *Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness*. Her popular website can be found at [www.dianataylor.com](#), and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925. Diana can be reached on Twitter.

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