

# American Doctor Shot Dead in Pakistan in Suspected Sectarian Attack

An American volunteer cardiologist was shot dead in Pakistan on Monday, a member of his minority Ahmadi community said, in the latest attack on a group that says it is Muslim but whose religion is rejected by the state.

Mehdi Ali Qamar had taken his wife, young son and a cousin to a graveyard in Punjab province at dawn to pray when he was shot, said Salim ud Din, a spokesman for the Ahmadi community.

“He came here just one or two days ago to work at our heart hospital, to serve humanity and for his country,” Din said. “Two persons came on motorbikes. They shot 11 bullets in him.”

Qamar was born in Pakistan but moved abroad in 1996. He had returned to do voluntary work at a state-of-the-art heart hospital built by the Ahmadi community in the eastern town of Rabwah.

Qamar, 50, moved to Columbus, Ohio, in the United States, where he founded an Ahmadi center and raised funds for medical charities in Pakistan, Din said.

He is survived by a wife and three young sons, Din said.

The U.S. embassy said it was providing consular assistance but declined to give further details.

“We express our deepest condolences to his family and friends,” the embassy spokeswoman said.

The Ahmadis believe there was a Prophet after Mohammed. Pakistani law says they are not Muslims, although Ahmadis insist that they are.

Ahmadis have often been jailed or lynched for blasphemy for things such as offering Islamic prayers or reading the Quran.

Qamar's killing follows the fatal shooting of a 61-year-old Ahmadi man last week. A teenage gunman killed Khalil Ahmad in police custody after the grandfather was arrested on blasphemy charges for objecting to stickers denouncing his religion.

Blasphemy carries the death penalty in Pakistan and cases against both religious minorities and Muslims are rising.

Some mullahs promise that killing Ahmadis earns a place in heaven and give out leaflets listing their home addresses. Few attacks are ever solved, even when the victims can identify their attackers.

Seven Ahmadis were killed and 16 survived attempted assassinations last year, according to an annual report produced by the Ahmadi community in Pakistan.

Others were driven from their homes or had businesses seized.

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*Writing by Katharine Houreld; Additional reporting by Mubasher Bukhari; Editing by Nick Macfie and Alison Williams*

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**Will Ex-Defense Secretary  
Push for Gay Boy Scout**

# Leaders?

Former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said Friday he would not press during his term as **Boy Scouts of America** president for an end to the group's ban on gay adult leaders for fear of causing permanent damage to the century-old organization.

Gates, who helped end the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that barred gays from serving openly in the U.S. military while he was defense secretary, said he strongly supported the Boy Scouts vote last year to lift its ban on gay youth members.

He also said he personally supported going further, but would oppose efforts to reopen the issue in his two years as president. His selection had fueled speculation that Gates would seek to end the ban on gay adult scout leaders.

"Given the strong feelings—the passion—involved on both sides of this matter, I believe strongly that to reopen the membership issue or try to take last year's decision to the next step would irreparably fracture and perhaps even provoke a formal, permanent split in this movement," Gates said in the text of a speech to the annual meeting in Nashville, Tennessee.

Gates, a former CIA director, was defense secretary when the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy was repealed in 2010.

"This is where we are at as a movement" Gates said in an interview. "Unlike the Pentagon or the CIA, I can't just give an order and everyone salutes and does what I say."

Gates, who took over as president this week, said he wants the **Boy Scouts** to focus on recruiting and fundraising at a local level. The Boy Scouts have acknowledged membership declines, but have about 2.6 million youth members and 1 million adult

leaders.

The vote last May to allow openly gay scouts starting on Jan. 1 drew criticism from conservatives who opposed the change and from **gay rights** groups who said it did not go far enough.

Some parents pulled their boys from the Boy Scouts after the vote and a group of conservatives formed a break-away start-up, Trail Life USA, which condemns sexual activity outside marriage between a man and woman as “sinful before God.”

Some major sponsors have pulled funding from the scouts to protest policies seen as discriminatory, including Lockheed Martin Corp and Intel Corp.

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*Reporting by Marice Richter in Dallas; Editing by David Bailey, Kim Coghill and Ron Popeski*

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## **Darlene Zschech Ends Chemo, Thanks Prayer Warriors, and Worshipers**

Nearly five months ago, former Hillsong Church worship pastor Darlene Zschech announced that she had breast cancer and would undergo chemotherapy. Now the popular singer and songwriter is thanking prayer warriors for their efforts during the battle.

Zschech announced she has officially finished her last round of chemo and says *hallelujah* is the best word to describe how

she feels about it. The battle isn't over. She starts radiation this coming week—and that will last six weeks.

“I shall be glowing from the inside out,” she quips. “And then that's it. Never again.”

Zschech again thanks her fans for continued prayers.

“On the days where I have felt I cannot do it anymore, I literally have felt the strength of people praying for me,” she wrote on her blog. “The power of the Holy Spirit to comfort and strengthen has been beyond what I have ever experienced before. Again, I am so thankful for every one of you.”

Zschech says she's had a lot of time to think—and think deeply. During this time, she says, she's reflected and prayed on many things.

“I cry easily, not necessarily sad tears, but tears all the same,” she says. “Even when I'm laughing I end up crying. I think the tears have taken the place of words for the time being. This too shall pass. One day the words to define this season will come. And I pray they bring hope to all who hear.”

“Even though I unashamedly begged for God to heal me before treatment,” she says, “He said to me that as I walked through He would never leave me.

“This is the truth for all of us today, no matter what you may be facing, even if God feels far away, our loving Father will never leave us or forsake us. I take great pleasure in knowing this beyond a shadow of a doubt. He is with me. He is with you.”

Zschech says she's excited about leading worship Sunday at church—the first time since the journey started.

“Even if its [sic] a bit rough and ready, leading people to the courts of our God is my greatest honor. I simply cannot

wait!” she says. “His presence truly is heaven. We will pray on Sunday night for all those needing healing, and for all of you who’ve asked us to pray for loved ones. Yes we shall. Healing, in Jesus name.”

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## **Abortions Rising: Detroit ‘Like a Third World Country’**

Around one-third of all pregnancies ends in abortion in Detroit, according to *The Detroit News*.

The city’s abortion rate has been steadily climbing, hitting 31 percent in 2012, the paper reports.

“We’re seeing a picture that looks more like some third-world country than someplace in the United States,” Susan Schooley, chairwoman of the Department of Family Medicine at a leading Detroit hospital, said.

A *Detroit News* study called the city, “the most dangerous city in America to be a child.”

Public health officials are blaming rising poverty and limited access to affordable contraception.

Meanwhile, in Louisiana, Gov. Bobby Jindal is expected to sign a bill into law this week that would force at least three of the state’s five abortion clinics to close.

The state legislature passed the Unsafe Abortion Protection Act, approved by the House May 21 in an 88-5 vote. The bill requires doctors at clinics that perform abortions to have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of the clinic.

Democrat Katrina Jackson, who sponsored the measure, said doctors doing abortions need to be held to the same standard as any other doctor performing a surgery.

“It ensures that physicians that do abortions in Louisiana do so in a safe manner,” she said.

Similar bills have already closed clinics in Texas and Mississippi. In the Lone Star State, admitting privileges law have shut down one-third of all abortion clinics. In Mississippi, just one remains open.

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## Living on the Right Side of 'However'

I am discovering the power of one little word. It's a conjunction, and if, like me, you were raised on a steady diet of *Schoolhouse Rock*, you will now have that song stuck in your head indefinitely. Sorry about that. But you'll also remember that a conjunction is the little word that connects two phrases or thoughts and makes them one.

*However* is a unique word, in that it usually joins two opposing ideas. When we see *however* in a sentence—and certainly when I see it in my life—it signals a change or a turn. Is the change good or bad? I think that depends on which side of the conjunction we choose to set up camp.

It may seem odd, but so much of my peace, joy and sanity in life right now hinges on how I view the *howevers* I face. Last week's vacation is a great example.

Consider this sentence: *We were able to get away to our*

*favorite spot on the Oregon coast; however, the wheelchair van broke down on the way home.*

True story. Accurate sentence. But what actually happened is that it broke down just two miles out of town so we could go back easily. My brother-in-law was able to come with a trailer and pick it up. We had enough room in our other vehicles to get everyone home that day. The delay enabled us to spend a sweet afternoon with my sister, Lila, which also enabled Steve to rest before tackling the rest of the trip home. The *however* wasn't a good one, and I'm not pretending I'm glad for a car repair, but many good things found their way into the equation, and all of us felt it. We felt grace on that whole *however* situation.

So, the sentence is better written (and better lived): *Our wheelchair van broke down on the way back from vacation; however, all the details worked out, and we made it home just fine.*

Here are others:

*Our family had to deal with the reality of Steve's condition while we were away; however, we made the most beautiful memories, and we all became stronger and grew closer through it.*

*It is very difficult navigating a wheelchair on a sandy beach; however, it was the most we've laughed in a long, long time.*

For so many years, I lived on the wrong side of the *however* word. I squashed every happy with a sad. Eventually, that evolved into including even the possibility of sad: *My schedule is good today; however, something will probably go wrong at work.* This constant slant toward the negative produces anxiety, frustration and, if left unchecked, bitterness. So much changed for me when I began to let Jesus steer me toward a new perspective.

This may sound like a fancy way of saying “Look on the bright side,” but it’s bigger than that. Though both sides of each situation are true, one side is the *stronger* truth because it’s redemptive truth.

*My flesh and my heart may fail; however, God is the strength of my life and my portion forever.*

*They took Him down and buried Him in a tomb; however, God raised Jesus from the dead.*

Do you see how redemption follows and swallows the despair in those sentences? Both sides are true, but they are not equal truth because—and this is the kicker—the despair is temporary and the rescue is permanent. Isn’t that the coolest thing? It is. Because sometimes in the darkest nights of life, finding the upside can feel like looking for the *Mona Lisa* at a garage sale. But when we can’t see a single speck of redemption, salvation enables us to push our vision out beyond the horizon of our timeline and peer into the promises of a world with no *however*s.

*My husband has ALS; however, his life is hidden with Christ, who stole death’s sting, bought Steve’s freedom and dries every tear.*

That’s the right side of *however* for me. I’m trying to learn to live there.

**Bo Stern** is a blogger and author of *Beautiful Battliefields* (NavPress). She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband’s terminal illness, a battle they are still fighting with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends, and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Oregon.

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# The Weapon in Your Mouth

Several years ago I was in attendance at a church when a lady began dancing and spinning around wildly during the praise and worship time. I'm not opposed to this kind of expression, but people don't usually start waking up until the second or third song, and this worship service was just getting started!

This lady also was in the choir, and I had always been taught that the choir has to keep it together and not become a distraction. This lady's behavior was definitely distracting! I thought, If I were the music director of this church, I would not let her do that. She should go find a private place to worship because this is neither the time nor the place to act like that!

I kept recalling the Scripture that says, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40, NKJV). She certainly was not in order.

But as I stood there judging her, the pastor's wife leaned over to me and said: "Do you see that lady up there dancing? Two days ago she lost her baby during childbirth, and here she is giving God praise. She is such an inspiration to our church."

The conviction I felt was enough to shake me back to reality. Suddenly I realized that I had been so focused on this woman's responses that I didn't see what was happening in the atmosphere.

This woman was overcoming the deepest possible grief. She had lost her baby, and as she danced, she kept the enemy away from her mind. Her praise brought relief from her pain.

That was significant enough. But something more was happening that day. When I looked around the room, I saw others were weeping and finding freedom from their burdens too.

Emotions are a natural part of life, but negative emotions, if left unchecked, can establish a stronghold and leave the door open to the enemy. The Bible says that the enemy has come to steal, kill and destroy. And he wants to steal your joy.

There have been moments in my life when I have had to fight sadness or depression. But Jesus said, "I have come to give you life and life more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Abundant life is full of joy, but this joy must be activated in us. What are the secrets for activating joy? How do you get it and keep it?

### **Give God Praise**

Psalm 149:6 says, "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand."

Joy is a force activated by faith—faith that is expressed, first of all, through praise. Most of the time we wait until we become glad before we give God the praise He deserves. But the psalmist wrote, "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24). He made his decision to give God praise because he understood that in order to be glad he had to rejoice.

Likewise, you are not going to have joy until you begin to praise God. Joy and gladness are activated through praise!

Although both joy and happiness are vital to a fulfilling life, they are not the same. Happiness is based on circumstances; but joy is activated by faith.

So often the little issues in life can add up and rob you of joy. It may not happen over night, but it will happen gradually if you meditate on negative thoughts. Feeling

unsatisfied with where you are in life or comparing yourself to others will cause you to lose joy.

The enemy is subtle, patient and willing to wait for us to fall into the trap he has set for us. He knows that if he paints the picture bleak enough and gets you to start talking about how bad it is, you'll soon be convinced that your situation is impossible.

Psalm 8:2 declares, "Out of the mouths of babes and unweaned infants You have established strength because of Your foes, that You might silence the enemy and the avenger" (AMP).

Another translation says, "Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you; toddlers shout the songs that drown out enemy talk, and silence atheist babble" (MSG). When the enemy tries to depress you with negative thoughts, instead of agreeing with him, drown him out with praise.

### **Find Someone to Bless**

The enemy will try to convince you that nobody understands what you are going through and that nobody cares about you. Remember, the devil is a liar! You may be the answer to someone's prayer. Sow seeds of compassion and love in the lives of others and watch them come back to you. When you begin thinking about someone else instead of focusing on your own problems, you will feel strength flooding your spirit because joy is being activated in you.

Galatians 6:9 says, "Let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint" (AMP). Verse 10 says, "So then, as occasion and opportunity open up to us, let us do good [morally] to all people [not only being useful or profitable to them, but also doing what is for their spiritual good and advantage]. Be mindful to be a blessing, especially to those

of the household of faith.”

There was a time when I was feeling discontented and had fallen into the trap of comparing myself with other people. I began to feel pitiful about the things I couldn't change, and I didn't realize the enemy was trying to steal my joy.

Around this time I was asked to contact a young girl and encourage her. She had been raped by her father repeatedly, and was hated by her mother for having him arrested and put in prison. The abuse this young girl had suffered led her to become promiscuous, and she had formed a habit of cutting herself.

None of the little frustrations in my life could ever compare to the tragedy this girl faced, and when I heard her story, immediately I felt convicted. I called her and left a message on her answering machine.

I told her that God loved her and had a plan for her life. I shared with her that she was special to Him, and that He had sent people to take care of her and get her the help she needed. When she called me back, she was so amazed that I had taken the time to help her. What she didn't know was how much helping her was really helping me at the same time.

As I began to exhort her, the Holy Spirit took over and ministered things to her that were beyond my own wisdom. God used me to speak things into her life that I didn't know in the natural.

By the time I hung up the phone, my joy was back! All my issues seemed insignificant, and I felt empowered.

I realized that if my circumstances had changed I would have been happy, but reaching out to someone else activated a deeper joy that blessed her and strengthened me. Happiness will benefit you, but the force of joy will transform not only you, but also everyone with whom it comes into contact.

Your joy will quickly return when you start speaking words of blessing and encouragement to others. There is something powerful in what you say.

## **Speak Faith**

Start confessing what God says about you and speak those things that are not as though they were (Rom. 4:17). Don't allow sickness and disease or anything else to touch your body and rob you of joy.

Second Corinthians 5:7 says, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (NKJV). Faith activates joy. Faith stirs up joy. When you are down and you make a decision to speak faith over your situation, joy shows up.

My husband, who has always been in good health, starting having trouble with pain in his abdomen. When his doctors couldn't find anything wrong, he started to worry. The pain, although slight, lasted for weeks and began to alter his moods.

I can be a very stubborn person sometimes, and although that's not always good for a happy marriage, it serves me well when it comes to believing God. When my son suffered a seizure on the first day of our recent promotional tour, I beat the devil back with everything in me. I beat him down so bad he's still limping! My son has not had any more seizures to this day and will not have another one. I can be very determined in my faith, so when I saw my husband succumbing to sickness, I got very mad. Very mad!

One day, when Danny wasn't feeling well, I said to him, "You know, Babe, maybe what you have is the beginning stages of an ulcer. That's not so bad. Maybe you should ask the doctor about that possibility?"

I realized his faith was lacking when he responded, "I hope not because ulcers can be terminal!" With this remark my "kill

all things fear" button was pushed and my "where is your faith?" tirade began.

"Terminal, how can you say that? How could you even let that word come out of your mouth? We are people of faith and power, and we have authority over sickness and disease," I preached. "You've got to start operating in faith that God is able to heal you.

"Don't allow fear of what it might be a stronghold in your mind. You have the authority to resist this attack on your body."

Standing on my "my faith is better than your faith" pedestal, I told him: "You better get some faith, Mister, or the devil won't be the only thing you should be afraid of!"

I felt so full of power and authority, as I shouted to my husband. I walked into another room and began to think, I can't believe his lack of revelation. I don't think he'll ever change. When is he ever going to have the faith that I have? "Never," I said to myself.

Suddenly, Danny, standing in the doorway, interrupted my thoughts. "Uh, honey," he said. "You are right; you are completely right. Thank you for reminding me that God is in control. I will put my faith into action and I will be careful what I let come out of my mouth."

The next day my mouth was still agape when my husband told me that he'd gone out and bought a book titled *30 Days to Taming Your Tongue* (Deborah Smith Pegues, Harvest House). Here I was, proudly displaying my faith for healing, when all the while, I was seriously lacking faith in God's ability to change my husband. Sometimes we can have strong faith in one area and weak faith in others, especially when it comes to our relationships. Some days we may wake up feeling great, and joy is automatic. Other days we may struggle and wonder where our

joy has gone.

It hasn't gone anywhere. Joy is always available. It's in you, just waiting to be stirred up.

What are you waiting for? Don't waste any more time being gloomy. Activate the force that is waiting on you to set you free from depression, heaviness and worry. Activate the force of joy!

Read a companion devotional.

**Martha Munizzi** *is an award-winning singer-songwriter.*

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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!

*Dr. James W. Goll is the president of Encounters Network, director of Prayer Storm, and coordinates Encounters Alliance, a coalition of leaders. He is director of God Encounters Training, an e-school of the heart, and is a member of the Harvest International Ministries apostolic team. He has shared Jesus in more than 50 nations worldwide, teaching and imparting the power of intercession, prophetic ministry, and life in the Spirit. James is the prolific author of numerous books and has also produced multiple study guides and hundreds of audio and video messages. James was married to Michal Ann for 32 years before her graduation to Heaven in the fall of 2008. James has four adult children who all love Jesus, and continues to make his home in Franklin, Tennessee.*

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## Uncover the Story Today

In Sarah Collins's mind, only one thing stands in the way of her success ... an unborn baby.

Sarah is about to receive a promotion that will give her everything she's ever wanted: a huge pay increase, a new car, a fabulous apartment, and first-class travel.

But then she discovers she's pregnant. And while she thinks she loves her boyfriend, Matt, she isn't sure he's mature enough to be a responsible father. And the job she's pursuing is open only because the previous employee is out on maternity leave. Sarah would never be able to handle the travel as a single mom.

Torn between advice from her coworkers, the insistence of her mother and sister that she keep the baby, her insecurity about her relationship with Matt, and the void where her father should be, Sarah has no idea how to make this decision.

A Christmas card from a mysterious old woman is the catalyst for three visions of her future—and just may be the miracle she needs. But can she trust the visions? Are they the yearnings of a conflicted heart? Or are they true visions from the God she thought had turned His back on her?

For every woman who has made painful decisions, Sarah's Choice offers comfort, wisdom and hope.

Purchase *Sarah's Choice*

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**'Health and Wealth' or Signs and Wonders? Discover the Difference and Unleash God's**

# Supernatural Power in Your Life

This article covers one of the most vital, misunderstood and controversial topics of debate in modern Christianity—the supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit. I pray that the following words cause you to rethink the evaluations people have made concerning the charismatic expression of the faith, writing off an entire move of the Holy Spirit due to the grievous error and, yes, downright heresy of a few.

Yes, there is a major difference between those who ascribe to a shallow “health and wealth” ideology (not even worthy of being called a theology or gospel) and those who hunger for a resurgence of authentic, supernatural, New Testament Christianity in a day of gimmicks and self-help sermons.

My heart burns to see all believers encounter a glorious Person—Jesus Christ. The supernatural is not about mankind simply using God to get what we want out of Him. Rather, it is about God’s character being revealed to the world, the supremacy of Jesus being displayed and the livingness of the Holy Spirit being made known to a people (and a church) who are often convinced that God is detached and disinterested. Such could not be further from the truth!

## **Knowing This Difference Will Transform the Way You Live**

The following article gives you a clear idea of why it is absolutely vital for all Christians to know the **one fundamental difference** between those who embrace a “health and wealth” ideology and those who legitimately want to see God move with New Testament signs, wonders and miracles once again. Merging the two perspectives is costly because it buys right into the lie that all charismatic Christianity is created equal. Not so. Discernment is not writing off an

entire movement due to imbalance; it is learning to separate the authentic from the counterfeit.

I do not believe this is a trivial matter. In fact, how we respond to the topic at hand will dictate what we expect from our Christian lives. Our concept of who the Holy Spirit is and what He does actually defines what dimension of power we actually walk in. I dare say, it is not up to God. There is no outpouring left to release out of heaven. The Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost. If you are born again, congratulations—God Almighty lives inside of you! There is no upgraded Holy Spirit. I believe in fresh fillings and fresh touches (Acts 4:31, Eph. 5:18); I do not believe in asking for a new Pentecostal outpouring. We don't need God to send a new Pentecost down from heaven; instead, we need to begin living like the first one we received is a precious inheritance, sufficient for the task at hand. Stewardship is the key issue here. Unfortunately, we will neglect certain aspects of stewarding the Holy Spirit's presence and power when we believe they are heretical, fanatic and self-consumed. This is not the Holy Spirit!

If we continue to demonize all forms of supernatural activity, lumping it together as "health and wealth" or "name it, claim it" me-centric heresy, we will never place an appropriate biblical demand on the faith that has been miraculously entrusted to us by God Himself (Eph. 2:8-9). If our vision of the supernatural is tainted by the gross misrepresentations we see from certain TV preachers, we will probably ignore anything to do with the power of the Holy Spirit.

On the flip side, if we sit down and become honest—with ourselves, with the biblical text—and accurately observe these two contrasting groups in modern Christianity, we will reap a powerful reward. What is this reward? Depending on how you respond to the challenge, it is highly likely that you will bring your Christian expression into agreement with every miraculous possibility that Scripture has made available to

you. You will launch out on the greatest quest of any believer—the quest for more of God.

Remember, the Holy Spirit is living within you. You are not getting more of God out of heaven; you are experiencing more of the One who has made your body His dwelling place on earth. If Scripture says the Holy Spirit's supernatural power is legal for us to experience, steward and release, I want us to press in for everything that is available.

### **Open Your Mind—But Don't Throw Out Your Brain**

I just ask you for one thing: an open mind. I am a student of theology, currently pursuing my Master of Divinity degree. When I say "open mind," I am not inviting you to toss thinking out the door to embrace some flighty experiential faith. I do ask that you open your mind to the facts as they are presented clearly and contextually in Scripture. I encourage you to temporarily press "pause" on some of the prejudices you may have embraced from a denomination, church, Christian TV or theological viewpoint before you continue reading. Above all, I humbly ask that you invite the Holy Spirit to come and reveal Jesus in all of this. At the end of the day, He is what this is all about.

There is a vast chasm separating those who pervert Bible principles to simply enhance their quality of life on earth and those who desire to see Jesus' prayer fulfilled—"on earth as it is in heaven"—through the release of signs, wonders and miracles as the gospel is proclaimed (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

So, what is the one key difference between the two camps? Simple. You will know the genuine based on how they **respond to Jesus**.

### **Camp 1: The Health-and-Wealth Brigade**

Where do we begin?

**1. “Sow your seed” me-ology.** “Just sow your \$1,000 seed *right now*—come on, that’s right! Run right on up here to the altar and write that check! There is a strong anointing flowing here for \$1,000 donations!” This is tame language compared to some of the gimmicks being used to manipulate people into giving money to a church or ministry. Talk about the exact opposite of the apostle Paul’s perspective on giving! He wrote, “Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind and purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or sorrowfully or under compulsion” (2 Cor. 9:7, AMP). Compulsion and manipulation are not godly.

I am sure you may have run into some of these shenanigans while channel surfing at night. Boom! You hit a Christian TV channel where they are hosting a giving telethon or pledge drive. I do not believe fundraising is wrong or sinful, but I am strongly opposed to people using the Holy Spirit, God, Jesus or promises of blessing and anointing to hype people up to make financial contributions—often well beyond their means to give. This is not Christianity. This is the Steve Martin huckster evangelist of the film *Leap of Faith* being personified.

**2. Vending machine Christianity.** The “health and wealth” teachings emphasize acquiring more stuff, tithing to increase personal financial wealth, and walking in physical health while ignoring what they consider to be more elementary subjects, such as intimacy with God, sin, repentance, taking up your cross and giving all for the cause of Christ. God becomes a cosmic vending machine, and the Bible is handled like a divine blueprint for pressing the right buttons in order for heaven to deliver on mankind’s demands.

This perspective sells books, sells out conferences and peddles teaching series all while grossly misrepresenting the gospel of Jesus Christ. Are these people heretics? Some, maybe. Many do boast orthodox statements of faith and preach an accurate salvation message.

This is not my effort to engage some type of witch-hunt, calling out who is going to heaven and who is hell-bound. Rather, this is all about helping you experience clarity on the difference between two contrasting perspectives.

**3. Extreme, imbalanced and dangerous.** When it comes to extremism in the area of “health and wealth,” I have seen and experienced a lot (although I am sure some of you have seen and personally experienced worse than I have). This camp promises much but delivers little. Confess it and possess it. Name it and claim it. Blab it and grab it; doubt it and live without it. If you are not part of the “confession clique,” you are basically a less-than, immature Christian who needs special enlightening. Oh, how backward this line of thinking truly is!

I ask you, please do not equate this imbalanced camp with those who are pursuing the authentic, Jesus-exalting move of the Holy Spirit. Even though the “health and wealth” group might mention the Holy Spirit, the supernatural, signs and wonders, or miraculous power, this does not confirm that they are legitimate representatives of Jesus. Remember the sobering words of our Messiah: “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you’” (Matt. 7:22-23, NIV).

### **Recognize the Counterfeit**

Be warned: This perspective is out there—and often in a grossly public spotlight. But also be encouraged: This fringe movement does not accurately represent the thrust of true supernatural Christianity that is making significant headway throughout the nations. For too long, we have approached counterfeits the wrong way. Counterfeits are evidence of the genuine artifact. The devil is incapable of creating anything new; all he can do is malign and pervert what is true, pure,

holy and God-originated. It is actually irresponsible for the body of Christ to respond to counterfeits by throwing out all forms of the truth.

There is nothing representative of Holy Spirit in extreme “health and wealth” ideology. I am not saying that all Word of Faith churches, teaching or preachers are bad; they are not. Also, I am not offering some blanket statement, saying that in order to be spiritual, we need to be poor and sick or healthy and wealthy. I do not believe this either. Financial prosperity, in and of itself, is not wrong. Physical health is not wrong; healing is actually an extension of the kingdom of God. These things become dangerous pursuits when they become the driving force of an entire movement.

At the end of the day, you will know a leader, church, book, teaching or televangelist is off when the road they present does not lead to Jesus Christ receiving all the glory. Jesus is not a side issue. His glorious name is not some secret code that we insert at the end of our prayers to ensure that we “signed off right.” He is the Lord of all. He is the Son of the living God. He is the worthy Lamb slain for the sins of the world.

## **Camp 2: Signs and Wonders That Point to Jesus**

Consider the approach of pastor John Piper, who famously denounces the prosperity gospel, but also hungers for a resurgence of authentic New Testament signs and wonders in the church today.

In his sermon “Are Signs and Wonders For Today?” Piper states, “We ought to be open to the real possibility that this too might be a unique moment in history, and in this moment it may well be God’s purpose to pour out His Spirit in unprecedented revival—revival of love to Christ and zeal for worship and compassion for lost people and a missionary thrust with signs and wonders.”

I specifically reference Piper because of my great respect for his integrity, consistent humility, spiritual hunger and unceasing devotion to the sacredness of Scripture. While he makes his disdain for the “health and wealth” perspective abundantly clear, he is likewise a proponent of the Holy Spirit’s authentic supernatural activity in the modern church. This perspective is possible! Not only is this possible, but Scripture paints a clear picture of a faith community where signs, wonders and miracles are normative elements of the Christian experience (Acts 5:12; 9:34-35, 40, 42).

Sadly, the world is often denied a church that hosts God’s presence and releases His power because of incorrect information circulating throughout the Christian community. Many have bought into the lie that you cannot walk in supernatural power and maintain your integrity. Their response to the “health and wealth” perversion is strong: “The last thing I want to do in life or ministry is be like *that* guy!” Fair enough. However, that guy or that lady who appears to be perverting the gospel for personal gain is not an accurate representative of the true supernatural New Testament community.

I could list leader after leader whom I have not only heard from the pulpit but have known behind the scenes and am absolutely convinced that they are examples of the real deal. They are not perfect, nor do they claim to be. However, they exhibit the one characteristic that definitively separates the “health and wealth” crew from those longing to walk in authentic signs and wonders: They are hungry to experience and glorify *Jesus*.

### **What Is Jesus’ Rightful Place?**

Health and wealth ends with man, but signs and wonders end with Jesus Christ. He receives the glory. He is where the signs are pointing. He is the One whose miracles stir us to awe. It is true foolishness for any of us to worship a sign.

Such a response is downright contrary to the fundamental purpose of a sign. Signs point to something beyond them.

Think about it. Could you imagine what would happen if people all gathered around an exit sign, stared at it, but never actually followed where the sign was leading them? That area would become severely congested by a people pileup. However, the incorrect response from the people's end is not the sign's fault. The sign functions according to design; it is man who chooses whether or not he is going to respond to it appropriately.

Such was the case when Israel was miraculously delivered out of Egypt. Their eyes witnessed a consistent flow of signs and wonders, but Scripture makes it clear that, in the end, the people did not properly respond to what their eyes beheld (Ps. 78:11, 42; 106:7). They kept on complaining. There was a disconnect, and ultimately the testimony of God's mighty acts did not pass on to future generations as it should have (Judg. 2:10-15).

Likewise, this was the case when Jesus walked the earth. There were many who responded to Him because of the miraculous signs He performed, but others' hearts hardened even more. Just because people respond correctly or incorrectly to signs and wonders does not negate their purpose and value.

The basis for our faith is never signs, wonders and supernatural phenomena—it is always the Person and truth of Jesus Christ. Yes, the Bible validates the reality and availability of miracles. No question that Jesus invites all of us into a lifestyle of faith where such supernatural demonstrations should be normative, not unusual or uncommon. Nevertheless, when we start celebrating the signs for the sake of the signs instead of being rightly awestruck by the glorious One whom every authentic sign and wonder points to, we are heading into dangerous territory. Jesus is eternally the cornerstone of our faith, our theology and our experience.

Any person or any experience that does not lead me toward the truth of Jesus Christ should be avoided like the spiritual plague.

### **It Is Legal for You to Desire and Cry Out for Miracles!**

In Acts 4, the early church actually prays for God to stretch out His hand and perform signs and wonders. Read their bold prayer:

“Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus” (Acts 4:29-30, NKJV).

I would be more apt to accept the whole “It’s not biblical to pray for signs, wonders and miracles” idea if the Holy Spirit responded to this prayer with a rebuke; He did not. On the contrary, we see that “when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (v. 31).

I feel like the building shaking was God’s amen to the disciples’ prayer. I am confident that almighty God is able and willing to move through His people in great power—greater than we have seen or experienced. However, He is looking for a people that He can trust with the miraculous. While this mandate does not demand absolute perfection, it does require a lifestyle of integrity and relentless commitment to make Jesus Christ front and center. The disciples were not about putting on a “miracle show” for the sake of spectacle; they were driven to see signs and wonders done through the name of Jesus. Jesus was their pursuit and delight. May the same be said of us and our generation.

As mentioned earlier, what separates the “signs and wonders” camp from the “health and wealth” proponents is simply what

they do with Jesus. “Health and wealth” ends with man; “signs and wonders” end with Jesus.

### **Are You Ready to Reconsider Normal?**

Scripture constantly summons us to live a supernatural life. The statements made by Jesus and, later, the apostle Paul are nothing short of stunning. When responded to correctly, these ancient words call us into lives of ever-increasing hunger to experience every miraculous inheritance we have received in the Holy Spirit.

Feast on these two final truths. I know they are familiar passages, especially to those in the charismatic movement. But truly consider their radical implications. Meditate on what they are summoning you into:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12).

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11).

In John 14:12, Jesus describes what normal Christianity looks like, and then, in Romans 8:11, Paul explains how you can experience it. Let’s not allow the “health and wealth” abuses to distract us from pursuing the life of greater works. This is what we have been authorized and empowered to walk in through the power of the Holy Spirit, all for the glory of the name of Jesus.

For more information about how to experience and activate the authentic power of God in your life, you can check out my new eBook, *Breakthrough Healing*.

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## **6 Things a Supernatural Lifestyle Doesn't Do**

Nothing silences a skeptic quicker than a bona fide miracle from God. I've known former atheists who became Christians by seeing God's supernatural power show up among everyday people. I'm not talking about minor "miracles" like finding a \$20 bill on the street, but instead limbs growing out, eyesight being restored, tumors disappearing and lame people walking. Like Thomas upon seeing a resurrected Christ's hands, these kinds of healings can cause even the most ardent doubter to confess Jesus as Lord (see John 20:28).

Likewise, countless Muslims around the world today are becoming believers after meeting Jesus in a dream, being healed by Him (without anyone praying or laying hands on them) or having other supernatural encounters with the Lord. It's exciting to see Joel 2:28-29 coming to pass in our day! And if you've read *Charisma* before, you've undoubtedly seen reports of how the Holy Spirit continues to move supernaturally, drawing people to Jesus with signs, wonders and miracles.

But the supernatural also attracts extremists. Not just those

radical for Christ (something we should all want to be), but also those who jump from conference to conference seeking their next spiritual high from an angelic encounter, prophetic word or dream interpretation. If you've been to a healing conference, you know that when there's an atmosphere that invites the Holy Spirit to move freely, you draw those with a penchant for spiritual extremes (and immaturity).

That's fine. After all, Jesus handpicked a zealot to be among His 12 disciples, and I'm sure He attracted a fair share of weirdos wherever He went. The problem wasn't and isn't those people, whom we should love as Jesus did; it's the belief they often hold that supernatural encounters are the end-all experiences. And sadly, this viewpoint still runs rampant within Spirit-filled churches and charismatic conferences as we elevate supernatural experiences over everything else.

Don't get me wrong: God calls each of us to a supernatural lifestyle. He desires for us to live out Jesus' promise that we would do even "greater works" than what He did (John 14:12). But so that we remain focused on Jesus and don't veer into unbiblical mysticism in our desire to see the Holy Spirit move through us, let's remember what walking in the supernatural *doesn't* do.

**1) It doesn't supersede intimacy with Jesus.** When it comes to living supernaturally, it's tempting to divorce the miraculous works of God with a relationship with Him. Yet Jesus' miracles were always a greater invitation for others to know Him. It's one thing to see the hand of God at work; it's another to, like Paul, consider everything—including signs, wonders and miracles—"a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:8, NIV).

**2) It doesn't replace the presence of God.** God's manifest presence ushers in the miraculous. Too often we think it's the reverse and end up chasing the gold dust or gold tooth fillings more than we care about actually being in the

presence of a holy God.

**3) It doesn't elevate us in God's sight.** The Holy Spirit doesn't use us to do the miraculous because we've done something special, carry a weighty title or have a super-spiritual lineage. He moves through us because of His own nature. Don't let spiritual pride disqualify you from walking humbly before God as a broken yet redeemed vessel He can use for *His* glory.

**4) It doesn't trump love.** Paul makes it clear that we can speak in tongues, be prophetically gifted, carry supernatural insight and have miraculous faith; but if we don't have love, it's for naught (see 1 Cor. 13:1-3).

**5) It doesn't signify true discipleship.** Just because you walk in the miraculous doesn't mean you're a true follower of Jesus. In fact, Christ disowned those who would claim to know Him by the demons cast out and wonders done in His name (Matt. 7:22). And in Matthew 24:24, He warned of "false messiahs and false prophets" who would deceive with "great signs and wonders."

**6) It doesn't excuse us from the Great Commission.** Why have the "power evangelism" messages from leaders such as Oral Roberts, T.L. Osborne and John Wimber resonated with so many? Maybe it's because they kept Jesus' last command at the forefront of their ministries. Rather than letting hype surrounding supernatural healings lead the way, they kept evangelizing and discipling the nations as the centerpiece.

As believers, we each have the gift of the Holy Spirit available to us. To avoid derailing our opportunity to walk with Him in a supernatural relationship, let's understand what this lifestyle does and doesn't entail.

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