

# When Boxing Champion Manny Pacquiao Saw Angels and Heard God's Voice

He grew up poor in the Philippines and went to work at an early age to support his mother after his parents separated. At 14 he began to fight, rising through the ranks to win 10 world titles. But the current WBO welterweight champion's bold profession of faith in Jesus Christ is what sets him apart.

"God has a purpose," he told Fox News. "He brought me back into His kingdom to use me to glorify His name, to let people know there is (a) God who can raise the people from nothing to something."

Surprisingly, he and noted quarterback Tim Tebow grew up in the same town on the island of Mindanao, in the southern Philippines.

Dec 8, 2012; Las Vegas, Nevada; "Manny and Juan Manuel Marquez box during their welterweight bout at the MGM Grand Garden Arena." Credit: Joe Camporeale—*USA TODAY Sports*

Raised Roman Catholic, Manny strayed from the church as he rose to fame in his boxing career. "I went to church on Sunday, but from Monday through Saturday I was in the bar drinking," he told *CBN*. "I was gambling. Careless words came out of my mouth. I committed adultery. I didn't care."

But one day he read a letter that gripped his heart. "I received a letter from my mother saying my sister stopped going to school because I stopped sending them the money. I cried, blaming myself for spending all the money on alcohol."

That same night in 2011, not long after his third fight with Juan Manuel Marquez, God visited Manny in a powerful dream. "I

heard the voice of God in my dream. His voice was 10 times louder than thunder. He said to me, "My child, my child, why have you gone astray?" he recounted to *CBN*.

In the dream, which unfolded in a beautiful forest amid flowers, he also saw two angels, according to an interview with *The Blaze*. "When I heard the voice of God I felt like I died. ... I was in the middle of the forest and I was kneeling and praying with my face on the ground and then I saw a light, a very white light and I heard the voice."

He said the angels had "white, long, big wings" and said that God revealed to him "about the end of time."

"I felt I was melting when I heard the voice of God. It was the turning point in my life. God spoke to me and he told me what He wanted me to do and I had to follow (Him)."

For a while, Manny tried to ignore the dream. But one day he felt compelled to pick up the Bible and begin reading it for himself. "I forgot about that dream, but when I started reading the Bible, the first verse I read said that God talked to a man through dreams. I realized, wow, my dream was real," he told *CBN*.

As a result of the power of God's Word, the working of the Holy Spirit in his heart and the compelling dream, Manny surrendered his life to Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

"I'm happy because I found the right way, salvation, born again," he told *The Blaze*. "We are required to be born again, all of us. Christ said unless we are born again we cannot enter the kingdom of God. So it's very important to me. Jesus Christ said: 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' There is no other way. The only way is through Jesus."

"When you accept Jesus Christ into your heart as your Lord and Savior, you have eternal life."

Many changes unfolded in his life as he began to follow Jesus, according to Manny's trainer, Freddie Roach. "Manny has made a lot of changes in his life. He's more disciplined in his life. He sold his nightclub. He doesn't drink anymore. He doesn't chase girls anymore. Him and his wife are getting along a lot better now, him and his family. He's become a much better person," Roach told the *Wall Street Journal*.

The most important thing to Manny has become his faith in Jesus. "When you have Jesus in your life, when you have God in your life, the things in this world are not important to your heart. What is important is God in your heart."

Manny stays in God's Word with daily Bible study. "Keep this book of the law always on your lips. Meditate on it and be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and satisfied," he told *CBN*. "When you keep the words of God in your mouth and your lips and your heart and your mind you will be guided by the Holy Spirit.'

Manny won a seat in the House of Representatives a few years ago, representing the province of Sarangani. He was re-elected in 2013 to the 16th Congress of the Philippines. Some believe he may be a candidate for president of the Philippines one day.

"The Lord has blessed me [with] everything I have ... [my] political career and serving the Lord and being a boxer—and I believe God has a purpose," he told *The Blaze*. "It is (beyond) my expectation and imagination. I think it's time to proclaim His name, not mine."

"This is my life's work: to spread the Word."

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# LGBT Activists Say 'Love Is Love' but Struggle to Define Marriage, Especially When It Comes to Polygamy

Hundreds of LGBT activists gathered in front of the Supreme Court on Tuesday to rally for same-sex marriage.

On April 28, the Supreme Court began hearing oral arguments in the watershed *Obergefell v. Hodges* case to determine whether states can be forced to license same-sex marriages or to recognize same-sex marriages licensed out of state.

At the rally, gay rights activists argued that same-sex couples across the U.S. should be able to legally marry because "love is love" and knows no bounds, but their answers varied when it came down to offering marriage a new definition, especially when asked to consider the practice of polygamy.

Some demonstrators defined marriage as a covenant and/or legal agreement between strictly *two* people who love each other:

*"Clearly, covenant love is between one person and one person," one activist said.*

"Traditional marriage is two people who love each other," said another. "We're not talking about anything else."

Others argued that the definition of marriage is far more subjective than that offered by their peers, leaving open the door of possibility to polygamists who seek to legally marry in the future.

"My basic golden rule is, are you harming yourself or others?"

a demonstrator said.

*“If we can come to a determination ... that [polygamists are] not harming themselves or others, then I am for any law of any stripe.”*

“I definitely agree in equality for all,” stated another, “and I definitely don’t think it’s OK to discriminate against polygamists.”

The Supreme Court will continue hearing oral arguments for the same-sex marriage case this week. Whether the Court will hand down a definitive decision in the near future remains to be seen.

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## **If You’ve Messed Up Real Bad, Read This**

Matt found a new show for us to watch on Netflix called *Food Network Star*, and don’t you think he is the most chivalrous husband, to go searching for a program he knew his wife would like?

In this show, cooks compete against each other, to see who will be the next Food Network star. (Are you glad I helped you with that?)

Contestants have to be good cooks, of course, but they also have to be good in front of people. In every episode, they have to make food and then present it in front of the judges, a judging audience, and a camera. What I’ve found intriguing is that, as they do their spot, we see insertions of their own commentary about how they thought they were doing while they

were presenting.

So we see the cook say something to the camera, then we see the judges cringe because it was poorly said, then we see the audience make weird faces because it was poorly said, then we hear the contestant react about the poor job he did.

*It was like someone removed me and replaced me with an idiot,* one contestant said.

Oh my word. That is my life. It's like I have 90 seconds with people and then I go home and insert commentary about how that 90 seconds went.

Like last night at church I was talking to someone about someone else (danger!danger!danger!), and I related what I thought was a humorous story. Then I turned around and found out there were about eight people listening to what I was saying.

Hello, audience.

Then comes the judging. **Always the judging.** Me saying to the camera how foolish I was for telling a story about someone else to begin with, let alone to do it in front of a whole bunch of people, even if I didn't intend to. The Holy Spirit shaking his head in agreement.

Here let me quote Paul:

*What a wretched man I am! (Romans 7:24 NIV)*

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And just like those contestants, I found myself with beads of sweat and pinched lips and wringing hands.

Because elimination, right?

People who do well stay. People who blow it pack up their

knife sets and go home. Only the most eloquent and most skilled will come back next week.

But Paul goes on to say:

*Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God –through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 7:24-25 NIV)*

**Thanks be to God –there is no elimination. We mess up? We confess. We are forgiven.**

We come back next week and try again.

But more than that, Jesus transforms us. We get better in those 90-second spots with people that happen all day long. A little forward progress every time, until that one day when we will celebrate not messing up at all. That's the promise Jesus makes to us.

*Now that was better*, Matt and I said when Nikki Dinki presented her shrimp pasta. (You know I had to stop and say her name out loud.) We could see her improvement from the previous weeks.

By the grace of God, we are safe, and we will improve.

**Christy Fitzwater** *is the author of A Study of Psalm 25: Seven Actions to Take When Life Gets Hard. She is a blogger, pastor's wife and mom of two teenagers and resides in Montana. Visit for more information about her ministry.*

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**Palestinians                      Are                      Being**

# Massacred, but Not by Israelis

During the war against Hamas last summer, the world condemned Israel for defending herself against 3,500 Hamas rockets. Left wing actors were brokenhearted over Israel's supposed "savagery" (But silent over Hamas' targeting civilians).

Who can forget Penelope Cruz and Javier Bardem signing a letter condemning Israel for a supposed "genocide."

"In the horror happening right now in Gaza there is no place for distance or neutrality ... It's hard to understand and impossible to justify. And it's disgraceful that Western countries are permitting such *genocide*."

In truth Hamas had created a series of tunnels and were planning a mass murder of Israelis in the nearby area. The Israeli Defense Forces prevented that only because Hamas got impatient and started a war.

## **Palestinians Are Being Murdered, However**

Here is what is amazing. Palestinians *are* experiencing a real genocide and *no one cares*. Have you even heard one peep from Hollywood or MSNBC about Yarmouk?

Yarmouk Palestinian Refugee camp is under siege by Assad and under attack by ISIS. It has shrunk from 160,000 Palestinians to 18,000 in three years. Tens of thousands fled, thousands have been murdered, and many have died of starvation. Many of the remaining Palestinians are being prevented from leaving Yarmouk by ISIS, who instead is forcing them to be human shields ... sound familiar?

Yarmouk has been described as an open-air prison.

Claiming that rebels were using Yarmouk, Assad's forces laid

siege to Yarmouk, leaving the residents without food, water and medical supplies.

### **Where Is the Outrage?**

Israel tries to stop Hamas from sending rockets against her, and the world is livid. Arabs kill Palestinians in cold blood and hardly a peep. In fact, you would think that President Abbas of the Palestinian Authority would be alerting the world to this injustice—after all, these are the very same Palestinians whom he wants to return to Israel. These are his people!

One of the primary sticking points in preventing a peace deal with Israel is Israel's refusal to allow those Arabs who fled Israel in 1948 to return. (They fled in hopes that we would be destroyed. The Arabs who stayed are Israeli citizens.)

The silence is deafening!

- Where are the college campus demonstrations for the Palestinian Massacre in Yarmouk?
- Where is the media outrage over tens of thousands of deaths and refugees?
- Where are the Boycott, Divestment, Sanction groups?
- Where are the Palestinian leaders?

The fact is, they only really care about Palestinian deaths if it comes from Israel's self-defense. The deliberate murdering of Palestinians by ISIS or Syria doesn't seem to prick their consciences. How many of them even know Yarmouk exists?

### **Arabs Lives Matter?**

What is being taught here is that Arab lives matter, unless other Arabs want to kill them—then they don't. The U.N. and even the U.S. are fine with Arabs murdering Palestinian women and children, but God-forbid, a Palestinian stubs his toe in Gaza. That will release the indignation of the U.N. Human

Rights Council.

The hypocrisy was on full display during the war last summer in Gaza. There is ample proof that Hamas used churches, mosques and rooftops of residential buildings to launch attacks. They encouraged and coerced Gazans to gather on rooftops and balconies, often on buildings where known terrorists live, to keep Israel from bombing them.

Hamas murdered 20 Palestinian war activists in cold blood and just as many supposed collaborators, often chopping their heads off and then dragging them around the city tied to motorcycles. An effective tool for instilling fear.

But no one cares about these poor people. Not unless you can blame Israel. Then, and only then, is it news.

Thousands of Palestinians have died in a real genocide in Yarmouk—but the world only cares about Arab deaths if they can somehow blame Israel. In fact, *Arabs* only care about Arab deaths if it can be a tool against Israel. They will even sacrifice their women and children in exchange for propaganda against Israel.

The genocide in Yarmouk makes Israel's self-defense campaign in Gaza look like a picnic, but no one cares. Be honest, before this article had you even heard about Yarmouk?

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

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

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# Bruce Jenner, the Bible and the Transgender Debate

Olympic track and field star Bruce Jenner was named Male Athlete of the Year in 1976, and soon he appeared on the front of the Wheaties cereal box. He was the poster boy for American masculinity. The 6-foot-2-inch-tall decathlon champion was even considered for the title role in the 1978 *Superman* movie because of his muscles and agility.

But last week Jenner dropped the proverbial bomb when he admitted to a huge TV audience that he is on a transgender journey. In his April 24 interview with ABC's Diane Sawyer, he said he had experimented with cross-dressing as a child—and later when he was married to his three wives. Sometimes referring to himself as “he,” and sometimes “her,” the 65-year-old Jenner says he now realizes he has “the soul of a female.”

“My brain is much more female than it is male,” Jenner said. “It’s hard for people to understand that, but that’s what my soul is.”

Tabloid publications have been speculating about Jenner’s struggle for years, since he began starring in the reality show *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*. Although Jenner says he still has “all the male parts,” he wears his long hair in a ponytail, he’s had breast implants and other plastic surgery, he sports a French manicure and he’s undergoing hormone injections.

The public reaction to Jenner’s announcement was largely supportive—especially from American celebrities. Oprah Winfrey tweeted: “All of us deserve to be loved for who we are.” Talk

show host Ellen DeGeneres said Jenner's public admission was "saving lives and opening minds tonight." Pop singer Lady Gaga simply tweeted: "Bravery."

Then, just hours after the ABC interview aired, an Australian radio station started the #PaintYourNailsForBruce hashtag—urging both men and women to get colorful manicures to show their support for Jenner. The message was clear: Don't judge Bruce Jenner. Accept his choices. Be tolerant.

I would never bash Jenner or any other person who wrestles with their gender identity. Every human being deserves love and respect, and Christians—of all people—should be ready to offer support for anybody who struggles with emotional problems. But because I am a Christian, I can't just accept someone's behavior if it is destructive or unhealthy for them. To affirm a person's wrong choices just to make them feel accepted is *not* love.

If a person with gender confusion came to me for help, I would have to point out these important truths:

**1. Gender is part of God's sacred creation.** Gender is God's idea. Genesis 1:27 says: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." My gender is part of my created identity; it is God's plan for my life. It is not fluid or changeable. It is fixed. Just as a dog cannot be changed into a cat or a fish into a bird, a man cannot be changed into a woman, or vice versa, because gender is a fundamental aspect of creation.

**2. Satan is the cause of gender confusion.** Because of the entrance of sin into the world, human beings struggle with all kinds of mental, emotional, physical and sexual brokenness. The world is full of abuse, violence, fear, ignorance, sickness, poverty and addiction—and all of this is fueled by the devil, whom Jesus called "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). Sin began when the devil went to Eve and

questioned God's truth (see Gen. 3:1). Satan even questioned Jesus' identity as God's Son (Matt. 4:1-11).

As long as we are under the influence of sin, our minds are "darkened" (Eph. 4:18). Paul went so far as to say that the devil "has blinded the minds of the unbelieving" (2 Cor. 4:4). A person who is apart from Christ can be tormented by all kinds of evil, degrading thoughts. The devil does this because he hates people—because we are made in God's image.

**3. Sex change surgery does not fix a person's gender confusion.** Author Walt Heyer had a sex change operation in the 1980s and lived as a woman for eight years, but he later realized that he had made a mistake. He now has a website, , where he writes: "Eventually, I gathered the courage to admit that the surgery had fixed nothing—it only masked and exacerbated deeper psychological problems." Heyer points out that studies performed on 500 transsexuals proved that surgeries and hormone therapy did not cure these people of their confusion.

**4. Christ offers healing from gender confusion.** When the apostle Paul went to the Greek city of Corinth he preached to people from all kinds of sinful backgrounds, and many of them embraced faith in Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Paul mentions fornicators (unmarried people having sex with each other), adulterers, idolaters, homosexuals and "effeminate" men—that is, men who dressed as women to engage in prostitution. Yet Paul says these people were set free from these sinful lifestyles after they believed in Christ.

Paul did not promote tolerance or acceptance of gender confusion; instead he offered the hope of healing. Isn't that a better expression of love? While today's culture pretends to care about people like Bruce Jenner by putting a sympathetic Band-Aid on this problem, Jesus can go to the root and totally heal it.

*J. Lee Grady is the former editor of Charisma. You can follow him on Twitter at leegrady. He is the author of 10 Lies Men Believe and other books. You can learn more about his ministry, The Mordecai Project, at*

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## **A New Beginning For The One New Man**

October 28, 2014 was no ordinary day for the Kingdom of God. It was upon this day in Nazareth in Israel that both Jewish and Gentile leadership in the church gathered to sign an historic document; one that is greatly needed in the body of Messiah/Christ. It is a document of vital importance to the family of God, which strategy will be noted in the days ahead.

This commemorative signing went by relatively unnoticed, however it's affects will be felt and experienced by many in the church who during these days are turning their hearts and spirits back towards Israel. It is a direction that must take place before the Lord can return for His bride to introduce the healing necessary so both Jewish and Gentile believers can move into their end time roles to glorify God; to help to awaken Israel spiritually to be grafted back into the vine and family of God (-27).

Some documents, when signed by people, churches, governments and nations, can have immediate and noticeable affects, while others go relatively unnoticed and yet still can have a profound effect. That will be the case with this reconnecting document, which is pictured below.



This document does not mark the beginning or the commencement of this spiritual reconnecting work in His Church, because it has already begun. But rather it acknowledges the seed that the Father has already planted that must grow now in healing and reconnection throughout the family of God between Jew and non-Jew in His Church, so that God's purposes and plans maybe achieved and carried out during these days.

For numerous reasons, this spiritual reconnection has not YET been fully recognized in the Church, which Grant Berry expounds upon in his book, *The Ezekiel Generation*. However, at this point in time as we come into the fullness of the mystery between Israel and the Church it is both vital and strategic in God's end time plan, so that Yeshua/Jesus can return to establish His throne upon the earth.

### **What Is the Reconnection?**

The reconnection focuses on a realignment in the family of God between Jew and Gentile in the church, helping both sides find healing and reconciliation for end time purposes. For Gentile believers to be reconnected to their Jewish roots through Messiah/Christ and His covenants, and for Jewish believers to fully embrace their Christian family. Not to go back to anything old, but rather to reconnect the family spiritually between Jew and Gentile as brethren in the unity of the one new man; fully blessing each others roles with one faith, One Father, One Son and One Spirit, in accordance to Yeshua's prayer of John 17.

To realign Israel and the church (acting as its Commonwealth) in preparations for the Lord's return; and to assist in Israel's spiritual awakening through intercession and personal witness in order that they maybe spiritually awakened and grafted back into their own vine, in which the rest of the church is already functioning and operating through Messiah/Christ, to fully awaken the bride that the family of God would be complete for His return.

Is this not the mystery that the apostle Paul spoke to the church about in Romans chapter 11, that as we come into the time of the fullness of the Gentiles, so it says that all Israel will be saved? However, a good number of us in the church have difficulty with the restoration of Israel, because the Jews are not yet awakened and yet they are back in the land. But does it not say in Scripture, in the Torah (5 books of Moses) and the Prophets (Ezekiel & Jeremiah) that after their dispersion He will bring them back, AND THEN HE will take away their sins? And did Yeshua/Jesus not tell us that the first would be last, and the last would be first. In other words, that Israel would come in at the end. All of which is now coming into fulfillment, as God's covenants and promises to restore Israel are coming to pass (see Ezekiel 36: 22-28). For if this is the way and plan that our most precious Father in heaven has decided to restore the earth, shouldn't we be giving His plan our full support?

During these days we MUST come to understand that His bride is not complete without Israel's spiritual awakening and the great role we have to play out in His church in order for this to take place. On top of which is the greatest ever redemptive power waiting to be poured out upon the Nations (see Romans 11:12,15), as we begin to realign the family of God into the fullness of the Gentiles and Israel's spiritual awakening and to understand its significance. In the greater picture, the Gentile church is not complete without Israel's spiritual awakening, and Israel is not complete without the church and the Commonwealth of believers. We must be reconnected spiritually and be able to co-exist as a family. This unity known as the one new man is the very heart of God and requires our full attention and dedication at this time.

### **How Do You See the One New Man?**

As a result, there are numerous challenges ahead of us in this regard. Not only is the church at-large greatly divided on the Israel issue with many still holding to replacement theology,

but even among those of us who are loving Israel and fully supporting them as they are, we still have differing views in how we see and perceive the one new man. Depending on your position in the family, either as a Jewish or Gentile believer, we have a tendency to view this relationship and our theology much through our own lenses. Rather than from our Father's perspective, and adjustments and changes are definitely needed on both sides in order for us to find His heart and unity in this very special relationship.

I view these perspectives like a musical pendulum, with both Jewish and Gentile believers at each end and on varying degrees on each side, and the Father's Heart at its center to which we must hopefully all find during these days.

As a result, I am beginning a new focus in my articles for Reconnecting Ministries to address these differences called, *"What Is The One New Man?"* This focus will shed more light on this most crucial issue and our differing viewpoints from all sides of the family and lay them at the feet of the church in love and patience for consideration and contemplation. The purpose of which, is to bring greater understanding, more tolerance, and the healing necessary for this spiritual reconnection to take place along with any adjustments that need to be made to help motivate the church into its great end time role to help bring spiritual awakening to Israel and usher in the Lord's return.

This is truly a very exciting time for the church and what an honor to be apart of it, to potentially witness Israel's spiritual restoration and the Lord's return to the earth. Please look out for these future articles and feel free to let us know your views about the one new man by emailing us at *grant@*

For a copy of the signed *Reconnecting Commission Document*, please visit and click on the image of the document on bottom right of the home page.

To view the video of this event in Nazareth, please [click here](#).

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## **When You Can't Trust Anyone Around You**

I'm a trusting person. I don't throw discernment out the window when I encounter new people, but neither do I enter into new relationships with suspicion.

Essentially, I choose to believe the best; to take people at their word; and to give people the benefit of the doubt. To put it another way, I trust people until they give me a reason not to.

Most of the time, this mindset lays a foundation for strong, trusting relationships. Sometimes, though, you get blind-sided by someone you thought you could trust. Still, I would rather operate with an open, discerning heart than a closed, suspicious soul. I believe this is God's will for our lives.

### **When You Can't Trust Anyone Around You**

All that said, there are times when it becomes painfully apparent that you can't trust anyone around you—or at least you've discovered you can't trust most of the people around you and you're entirely unsure about the rest.

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What do you do when it seems like everything you say can and will be used against you for their own advancement? How do you respond when people you've stood by, opened doors for and

displayed loyalty to betray your trust and stab you in the back in the name of having your back?

If you are still reading this article, clearly you can relate. You've been stunned by the revelation that you can't trust the people around you. You've been deeply disappointed by people you thought were standing with you. What to do?

### **Why People Betray You**

I have found myself in this sort of perilous situation more than once. Sometimes it's because people's motives were never right to begin with and I didn't pick up on it because I chose to believe the best.

Other times it was because people change. People may start off with the best intentions toward you until the enemy finds something in them—whether it's personal ambition, fear of loss or a demonic accusation against your character—and pulls their strings like a puppet master.

Still other times, they think they can't trust you and decide to get you before you can get them. I've said this in the past, but it bears repeating: People outside your inner circle persecute and malign you—but they can't really betray you because betrayal implies trust. That brings me back to my original question: What do you do when you can't trust anyone around you?

And again, what do you do when it seems like everything you say can and will be used against you for their own advancement? How do you respond when people you've stood by, opened doors for and displayed loyalty to betray your trust and stab you in the back in the name of having your back?

### **Waking Out Psalm 37**

If you've been betrayed, you have to forgive. But if you are just discerning that you can't trust in the people around you,

you have to lean in to Psalm 37. Sometimes you need to emotionally detach, walk in love and embrace Psalm 37 at a new level. The Holy Spirit told me once, "Trust in the Lord and do good." Listen in to some of the rest of this psalm and let it encourage your heart:

"Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be jealous of those who do injustice. For they will quickly wither like the grass, and fade like the green herbs. Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land, and practice faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

"Commit your way to the Lord; trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of those who prosper in their way, because of those who make wicked schemes.

"Let go of anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret—it surely leads to evil deeds. For evildoers will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the earth" (Ps. 37:1-9).

I don't know about you, but that changes everything for me. God is our vindicator. We can't always trust people, but we can certainly always trust Him.

**Jennifer LeClaire** is senior editor of Charisma. She is also director of Awakening House of Prayer in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and author of several books, including *The Next Great Move of God: An Appeal to Heaven for Spiritual Awakening*; *Mornings With the Holy Spirit*, *Listening Daily to the Still*, *Small Voice of God*; *The Making of a Prophet* and *Satan's Deadly Trio: Defeating the Deceptions of Jezebel, Religion and Witchcraft*. You can visit her website [here](#). You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.

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# 3 Holy Spirit-Inspired Ways We Can Stand Up for the Persecuted Church Right Now

My heart has been heavy these past few days. When I heard the news and saw the images of the 30 Christian Ethiopians who were executed at the hands of ISIS I wept. I know I am not alone in my grief.

If you're like me, you feel powerless in the face of such atrocity. I wonder what, if anything, can be done. I have spent the past few days praying and seeking the face of the Lord about that very thing.

This latest act by ISIS certainly has me conflicted. Shock, anger, fear, horror and grief are the exact emotions they hoped to provoke with this brutal act. In many ways they got exactly what they wanted. They wanted us to feel this way—and we do. At the same time, how can we not express such emotion when we see our Christian brothers and sisters so callously slain?

Friends, there is a Christian holocaust taking place at this very moment. Hundreds of thousands of Christians are facing a modern-day genocide. Our generation must not repeat the mistakes of the past by turning a blind eye to the suffering of so many.

We must take a hard look at the realities of the evil we face and act accordingly. So far ISIS has been underestimated. Trust me on this, our failure to recognize their evil has extreme consequence.

ISIS is not the “JV squad.” They’ve proven such by conquering large portions of Syria and Iraq. Their network is rapidly expanding throughout the world. Some reports even have an ISIS camp right off our southern border in Mexico. It’s very likely they have cells inside the U.S. already.

The latest video from ISIS makes two things very clear. First, they want a war. Peace and prosperity is not their aim—they want prophetic fulfillment. They believe they are called by Allah to avenge the blood of Muslims who died at the hands of “Christian crusaders” and establish a united Arab state.

ISIS’ videos are created to provoke us. They know exactly what they are doing. Their propaganda isn’t created by a bunch of amateurs. They put a tremendous amount of thought and planning into their message. They are making that message clear: “Come fight us.”

They know we will be disgusted by their brutality. They hope we will demand vengeance. For ISIS, war is inevitable. Such ideology cannot be negotiated with nor contained. It can only be destroyed. ISIS is leaving no other choice.

ISIS has declared their war on Christianity. You will not hear this reported in the mainstream media, but the latest video by ISIS is entitled “Until There Came to Them Clear Evidence.” This strange title is actually a reference from the Quran, which states:

“Those who disbelieve from among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) and Al-Mushrikun (believers in the Trinity), were not going to leave [their disbelief] until there came to them clear evidence” (verse 98:6).

According to the Quran, Jews and Christians are the “worst of creatures” whom deserve the “fire of Hell.”

Christians are vile to ISIS because we believe God has a Son. They see this as blasphemy towards Allah—one that must be

purged from the world. In the video ISIS offers Christians three choices: Convert to Islam; submit to the Islamic State; or lose your head.

ISIS purposely recorded this portion of their video in English and directed the message to “the nation of the cross.” They state this is a battle between “faith and blasphemy; truth and falsehood. Until there is no more polytheism (belief in the trinity).”

Our government is reluctant to call this what it is. ISIS is not just political extremism; they see it as a war between Islam and Christianity. The beheading of our Ethiopian brothers is a warning to Christians in the Middle East and the West: “Oppose us, you’ll suffer the same fate.”

Today they spill Christian blood in desert sands of the Middle East. Soon they may do it in our city streets. They hope doing so will provoke us to war just as the attacks on 911 did before. They are not running from it. They want it. They are convinced their coming victory over the “Nation of the Cross” is the “clear evidence” that will convince Jews and Christians to convert to Islam.

So what must we do?

First, we must stand with the persecuted!

The most vital thing we can and must do is to pray for our Christian brothers and sisters who are literally giving their lives for the sake of Christ. Have you prayed for the persecuted believers in the Middle East and around the world today? How about in this past week? Don’t look the other way, and don’t discount your prayers. I encourage you tonight as your family gathers for a meal stop and pray for the persecuted.

It was the prayers of the believers that opened the prison doors for Peter when he faced execution (Acts 12:16). The

answer to their prayers came so suddenly and supernaturally that the interceding disciples didn't even believe Peter was standing at their door! They didn't realize the power of their own prayers. I dare say neither do we.

Another way we can stand with the believers is to lift up our voice. We live in a world where a video filmed by ISIS can travel around the world and strike outrage in the West. The Internet works both ways. A post or video made by you can travel back to the Middle East and bring encouragement to a people who wonder if anyone even notices their plight.

Your voice also raises awareness. Our nation will remain indifferent as long as we remain silent. God gave us a voice to encourage and edify one another. May we strengthen each other here and abroad.

Second, we must radically live our lives for Christ.

I reached out to a friend of ours who works intelligence in the Middle East. He shared that as ISIS continues its reign of terror and defends itself as pure Islam, many Muslims are being forced to question their faith. They are saying, "If this is Islam, then I want nothing to do with it."

There is an opening for a great harvest in the Middle East. Scripture tells us that had the enemies of Christ known the outcome of their actions, they would never have crucified our Savior. Likewise, ISIS doesn't realize pushing people from Christ is actually opening the door for millions to find Christ.

ISIS has exposed to the world what true Islam looks like. Let us expose to the world what true Christianity looks like. We must fully embody the faith, hope and love that Christ calls us to. This lost and dying world needs us to embrace a radical faith.

Radical Christianity is very different from radical Islam.

They rely in the power of force; we rely on the power of prayer. They speak a message of hate; we speak a message of love. They offer death; we offer life. We honor the lives of those who gave their life for Christ by living our lives for Christ. Pray for a great end-time harvest amongst the muslims of the Middle East!

Last we must support the underground church in the Middle East.

Churches in the Middle East are in distress. They need our prayers and they need our financial support. These communities of believers are working hard every day to strengthen and encourage one another and make a difference in hostile environments that are unfathomable to most of us.

Every church in the U.S. should seek out churches in the Middle East, especially in the most dangerous African and Arab nations, that they can support with their missions giving. If your network of churches doesn't have any contacts in the region, contact me and I'll put you in touch with several.

Honestly, each of these action steps will not mean much if just a few of believers act upon them. However, if we all collectively will embrace them, the impact will be felt.

Recently I walked through the Holocaust museum in Israel. I've been to several of these memorials around the world. Each one is built with the same purpose in mind. To remind us of the past mistakes and warn us not to repeat them in the future.

At every monument and memorial I've found this statement by Edmund Burke engraved or expressed in some way.

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Are we not good men and women? If so then we cannot sit back and do nothing. The times we live in are calling upon us. We

must do something!

**Daniel K. Norris** is an evangelist who worked alongside Steve Hill bringing the message of revival and repentance to the nations. Together, they co-hosted a broadcast called "From the Frontlines." Norris also hosts the Collision Youth Conference that is broadcast all over the world. He can be contacted at .

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## **The Reconciled Church: 7 Bridges to Peace**

Until criminal justice reform is introduced in America, situations like those in Ferguson, Missouri; Staten Island, New York; North Charleston, South Carolina; and now Baltimore, Maryland, will continue to arise and severely dampen if not destroy the racial unification efforts of the church and society, prominent voices at The Reconciled Church Summit said Wednesday in Orlando, Florida.

And it is the church—God's people—as the numerous speakers agreed, that must spearhead the movement and lead the way in racial reconciliation societal reform and changes in the current criminal justice system.

Given the recent deaths of African-Americans like Michael Brown in Ferguson, Eric Garner in Staten Island and Freddie Gray in Baltimore, the atmosphere has reached a critical, if not potential powder keg stage in America.

"I compare it to a plane that is about ready to go down in flames," said Bishop T.D. Jakes, senior pastor of The Potter's House in Dallas, Texas and one of the founding members of The Reconciled Church. "If we don't pull up now, and fast, we're

going to crash and burn.”

Violent protests in Ferguson and most recently in Baltimore have become symbolic of the racial divide in America and clear, unabashed examples of the need for criminal justice reform.

It is only through a unified church and adherence to Jesus' prayer in John 17, TRC co-founder James Robison said, that will heal the racial divide in this country and prompt justice system officials to bring about much-needed change in the way they handle certain volatile situations.

“The question of the hour is whether the church will meet Jesus' prayer to the Father,” said Robison, an evangelist and teacher and founder of Life Outreach International. “Father God is looking at us, his family, right now. He's saying, 'look at my kids.' He wants to see a family that loves its father so much that they will love each other.

“The greatest source of influence over this nation should be the church, not some political party. We've tried to make another pharaoh our source. We've been kept in bondage by a system we have erroneously put our trust in. We need to get an answer to Jesus' prayer, and immediately.”

In praying for future believers, Jesus relayed this in John 17:20-23, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one; I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have Sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

Given the ongoing state of obvious racial mistrust in America, the unification of the church—a must to help bring about

criminal justice reform—certainly won't be easy, TRC co-founder Bishop Harry Jackson said. But Jackson says unification has to be about more than simple change.

“Lasting change requires transformation,” Jackson said. “It’s not just about ‘getting along,’ it’s about getting it right. Only great diversity, in unison, can bring America to its better self.”

And to bring about that society-changing transformation, The Reconciled Church is imploring local churches to employ its “Seven Bridges to Peace” initiatives immediately.

TRC’s Seven Bridges to Peace are, as described on :

**1. Prayer and reconciliation events:** Prayer will be perpetually offered to God requesting wisdom and divine aid for the multi-generational fulfillment of the Great Commandment (John 17:1-26; love and unity) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 18-20). We will have periodic gatherings of Christian interdenominational and multi-ethnic believers to lift up specific prayer points. This will be accompanied by periodic voluntary engagement in transparent, honest, frank, civil and Godly dialogue; the implementation of plans of action to confront, overcome and resolve destructive views, values, convictions, preferences and practices (like racism, sexism, age-ism, etc.) that divide the Lord’s church, misrepresent Jesus Christ, defame God’s creation and hinder the fulfillment of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

**2. Education reform:** Increase access to early educational programs prior to kindergarten for children. Churches can play a major role in offering academic and character building enrichment programs to students in middle and high school. Focus will be on developing core skills in language, reading, and mathematics as well college preparedness.

**3. Civic engagement:** The meetings would emphasize and educate

on the following elements: Christian Citizenship Training Best practices for dealing with citizen and law enforcement rights and issues that threaten to denigrate, deteriorate, debilitate or devastate the highest quality of life for urban residents.

**4. Community outreach and service:** Compassionate Outreaches with Christian faith-based interdenominational and multi-ethnic Christian based social services . These are strategic efforts to serve the under-resourced, poverty stricken residents living in economically devastated and financially depressed zones of our urban community. In Greater St. Louis and other parts of the urban world; models include counsel and representation for legal issues, financial assistance, housing education, healthcare programs, employment training, etc.

**5. Marriage and family:** Programs and services that will help to introduce, rebuild, restore and/or enhance the divine sanctity of life, the discovery of personal and relational identity, purpose and destiny. Navigation into the discovery and the fulfillment of these through seminars, personal and group counseling, youth athletic programs, pro-life services and biblical marriage and family training and development. Mentoring and fatherhood initiatives will be a key component of family development.

**6. Criminal justice reform:** Minority engagement with the criminal justice system is at the core of our current tensions. We need strategic involvement with the criminal justice system. This would include training for prison and jail evangelism workers, and regional partnerships for prison aftercare and job creation.

**7. Economic development:** In addition to personal financial training, credit repair, and benevolence; many other dimensions of economic equipping can be launched from churches. Investment training, schools of business, and specific entrepreneurial training plans can be developed. There are several different models from St. Louis and beyond

that will help position the church to encourage “ethical capitalism.”

But can the church actually affect economic development and criminal justice? Undoubtedly, Jackson says.

“As it models unity—as God’s people address the racial divide in our own house—yes, new things can happen,” Jackson said. “For one, we all see more clearly that we have not just a race problem, but a class problem, a poverty problem. The TRC becomes a clearinghouse of ideas and power through unity. Church, government, business ... together we stand—together we revitalize education, economic development and justice—or divided we fall.”

**Shawn A. Akers** is the online managing editor for *Charisma Media*.

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## **Facing Financial Ruin, Christian Florist Fights Back Against Radicals**

Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys have filed an appeal with a Washington court on behalf of florist Barronelle Stutzman. A state judge had earlier ruled against Barronelle for acting according to her Christian faith. ADF is standing with Barronelle and defending her free of charge. Barronelle herself has said it best—“It’s me today... It’s you tomorrow.” With the recent increase in attacks on religious freedom, the days to take religious freedom for granted are gone.

The Washington State Attorney General’s office and the

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have targeted Barronelle, who is a florist, with a pair of lawsuits. They are both suing her professionally and personally and could take everything she owns—her business, her home and her personal savings.

Because she would not violate her conscience and Christian faith, Barronelle declined to create custom floral arrangements and provide wedding support for a longtime client's same-sex wedding.

She's not the only one. In just the past few years:

- Julea Ward, a graduate student at Eastern Michigan University, was expelled from the counseling program because her Christian religious beliefs prevented her from affirming same-sex relationships.
- Five pastors in Houston, Texas, had their sermons and personal communications with church members subpoenaed because they dared to speak out against a city ordinance that forced businesses to allow men and women into each others' public restrooms and created serious privacy concerns.
- Atlanta Fire Chief Kelvin Cochran was fired for his religious beliefs, despite a stellar professional career that included being appointed by President Obama to serve as the U.S. Fire Administrator for the U.S. Fire Administration.
- Memories Pizza in Indiana faced an onslaught of threats after simply telling a reporter they could not cater a same-sex wedding because of their religious beliefs.

We are living in a time when those who stand for Christian values—and especially God's plan for marriage—should not be surprised when they are targeted for their faith. If a Christian grandmother can be targeted for living out her faith, then it could happen to any of us.