

Will North Carolina Bow to Hypocritical Anti-Religious Freedom Bullies?

PayPal, the website known for processing online payments, believes grown men have a constitutional right to use the same bathrooms as little girls.

So when North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory signed a bill that banned people from using bathrooms not assigned to their birth sex, PayPal became enraged and retaliated.

They canceled plans to open a new operations center in Charlotte—a facility that would've employed more than 400 workers.

“The new law perpetuates discrimination and it violates the values and principles that are at the core of PayPal’s mission and culture,” CEO Dan Schulman wrote in a memorandum on the company’s website.

READ: Franklin Graham Has Some Choice Words for ‘Hypocrite’ Company

That’s what a corporate bully looks like, folks. Conform to the demands of radical cultural militants or pay the price.

“It is corporate blackmail,” Lt. Gov. Dan Forest told me.

But PayPal is not just a big business bully—they are also hypocrites.

“PayPal does business in 25 countries where homosexual behavior is illegal, including five where the penalty is death,” NC Rep. Robert Pittenger wrote on Facebook. “Yet, they object to the North Carolina legislature overturning a misguided ordinance about letting men into the women’s

bathroom?”

Yes, they do, congressman.

“Perhaps PayPal would like to try and clarify this seemingly very hypocritical position,” he suggested.

READ: PayPal Scorns Conservative Americans While Embracing Cuban Communists

I asked PayPal to explain why they were doing business in countries that slaughter gay people—but they did not return my calls or emails.

“This bill was purely to protect women and children in the bathroom from people who are really bad actors,” Forest told me. “This had nothing to do with the transgender movement. Nobody has ever said that it’s the transgender community that’s going to be causing those problems. Other bad actors will.”

In Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas and Indiana—religious liberty bills have come under attack from a number of Fortune 500 companies—from Coca-Cola and Delta Airlines to UPS and Marriott Hotels.

But the American Family Association says what’s shocking is that all of those companies opposing religious liberty in the name of LGBT rights are operating in countries where gays are facing fines and imprisonment.

“The hypocrisy of the major corporations that threatened a boycott in Georgia or other states in response to Religious Freedom Restoration Acts is astounding,” AFA President Tim Wildmon said. “Many of these same corporations are doing business in Saudi Arabia—a country in which homosexuals are fined, jailed or killed for their lifestyle. Yet where is the action there?”

The sad truth is that many Fortune 500 companies have turned a

blind eye to the horrors inflicted on the LGBT community in Middle Eastern countries.

Hollywood's hypocrisy is just as bad.

Celebrity websites are filled with stories about stars of stage and screen vacationing in exotic locales like the United Arab Emirates—where being gay can be a death sentence.

Talk show host Ellen DeGeneres recently rebuked Mississippi for protecting the rights of religious people.

“This is not politics, this is human rights,” she told her television audience.

Last year, Miss DeGeneres partied the night away at the Shangri-La Hotel in Dubai—a city where gays can be thrown in jail for simply sharing a public kiss.

If Miss DeGeneres is so concerned about human rights, why would she spend her money in a nation that would commit such atrocities?

Even family-friendly Disney is guilty of hypocrisy on the LGBT issue.

READ: [Disney Threatened to Boycott Georgia Over This](#)

Georgia lawmakers recently passed a bill that would protect pastors from performing same-sex weddings.

Disney threatened to boycott the state and take their business elsewhere.

Gov. Nathan Deal gave in to the bullies and vetoed the legislation.

Disney was willing to boycott Georgia for protecting Christian pastors—and yet just a few months ago they staged a performance of “Beauty & the Beast” in Dubai.

I asked Disney to explain why they would do business in a country that imprisons gay people—but so far they have not returned my phone calls or emails.

There's only one way to stand up to corporate bullies—with your pocketbook.

I'm not the kind of person to tell you what to do with your hard-earned money. But as of today, I will no longer drink Coca-Cola products, nor will I mail packages through UPS.

And I'm proud to tell you that PayPal is no longer a pal of mine.

Historic Gathering Unites Thousands for Revival in America

An unprecedented event will bring together an estimated 30,000 pastors and religious leaders from across the nation, all uniting in prayer.

The United Cry will take place on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Saturday, April 9.

Leaders will pray for an array of topics, including pastors in unity, bridging racial divide and bringing revival to America.

READ: Will God Hear This Interdenominational Cry and Send Revival?

The diverse group of leaders includes Anne Graham Lotz, Rev. Sammy Rodriguez, Bishop Harry Jackson, Alveda King and dozens

more.

The families of both Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and author Alex Haley will also be on hand for the event.

Ted Cruz Connects With New York Jews

Despite getting an assortment of “Bronx cheers” during his visit to New York City this week, presidential candidate U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) has received the occasional warm reception, as well.

One of his brightest moments in the Big Apple was during an event with supporters at the Brighton Beach Jewish Center in Brooklyn. The center includes a preschool and a model matzo bakery where children learn how to make the traditional unleavened flatbread that is an integral part of the Passover celebration.

Cruz visited both the preschool, talking with the children about Passover, and the bakery, where he learned how to make matzo himself. They also sang, breaking into an impromptu rendition of “Dayenu,” a traditional Passover song about being grateful to God for all of the gifts he gave the Jewish people that roughly translates to “It would have been enough for us.”

He also took questions from the supporters, and introduced them to Nick Muzin. The Canadian-born Orthodox Jew serves as the senator’s senior adviser and deputy chief of staff for campaign strategy.

During the visit, supporters wearing red yarmulkes adorned

with “Cruz 2016” in both English and Hebrew chanted, “Ted, Ted, Ted!” and “Jews for Cruz!” And, best of all, “New York values” wasn’t even mentioned once.

Jewish voters, particularly conservative and Orthodox voters, are essential to Cruz’ effort to prevent Republican front-runner Donald Trump from winning all 95 delegates in his home state. Currently, the Queens native is polling slightly above 50 percent in New York.

When It Comes to Prayer, We Must Minister to God First

Ministry to God must come before ministry to people. First Peter says that “you are a chosen race, *a royal priesthood*, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may declare the goodness of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (2:9, italics added).

The role of the priest is to minister first to God; then to the people. The way that we minister to God is by praising, worshipping and communing with Him in prayer and meditation. The way that we minister to the people is by allowing the overflow of what we have received in our time alone with Him to pour out into the lives of others (Prov. 15:8; 1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 1:4,5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:16).

The Relationship of Prayer

My husband, Floyd, and I have been married for 43 years. We love each other, and because we do, it is not a chore to be together—it is an awesome privilege. We want to share and know the most intimate details of each other’s lives. Although I am

often the one who is out front in our ministry, Floyd is the strength behind the scenes, working to make sure that what I do when I am publicly ministering runs smoothly and effectively. This happens as we spend time communicating about our heartfelt and physical needs. We have the same goals, the same purpose and a mutual love and respect for each other.

Similarly, the Bible says that you are Christ's bride (John 3:29). Your marital relationship with Him will deepen as you spend time alone with Him, sharing heart to heart. Prayer is that unique channel of dialogue between you and the Lord. Intimacy is cultivated as you invest time in your relationship with Him. The result will be knowing His will and making His will known to the people. Moses is a perfect illustration of this.

There is probably no one man in the Bible who is more fully respected among the Jewish people than Moses. Why? Moses knew God; therefore, God made His ways known to Moses and His acts to the children of Israel. We read in Exodus 33:11 that "the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend." The Lord longs to speak to you today through the Holy Spirit, just as He spoke with Moses (Ex. 33:11-23). And not only does God want to speak to you, but He also wants to show you a dimension of life that is invisible to the natural eye.

The Bible says, "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). Therefore, to know and understand the things of God, your spiritual eyes need to be opened. Keeness in the Spirit realm comes as you discipline yourself in prayer, praise, fasting and renewing your mind through God's Word. Ask the Lord to reveal spiritual reality to you just as Elisha did when he asked God to open his servant's eyes, allowing him to see the chariots of protection:

So he answered, "'Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than with them.'" Then Elisha prayed, 'Lord, open his eyes and

let him see.' So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha" (2 Kings 6:16-17).

The more our spiritual eyes are opened, the more understanding we will have about our physical circumstances. Jesus was so spiritually attuned that He said: "Who is the one who touched Me?" And while they were all denying it, Peter said, "Master, the multitudes are crowding and pressing upon You." But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me" (Luke 8:45-46).

Peter was looking at the natural touch; Jesus was aware that something was happening in the spiritual realm. Prayer ignites our natural senses so the light of His Spirit is able to shine in on the motives of the power and principalities at work around us.

The Sacrifice of Prayer

The Scripture tells us that Jesus went to the cross for the joy set before Him. How can this be? How could the Cross possibly have brought Him joy? Because when Jesus was on earth, He was limited by time and distance. Through His death and Resurrection, however, He was able to send the Comforter so all believers could have ongoing, immediate access to the Father via the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:34 says that "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

As we follow Christ's example, we too must freely give ourselves to prayer. Prayer is an unselfish work that is often unseen and unappreciated by others; they only experience the results. When we pray, we are not seeking to be seen by men, but rather to stand in the presence and pleasure of the Lord (Matt. 6:5; Heb. 7:25). Our times with God the Father bring us into oneness of heart with Him. We are then able to experience His heartache over the lost, His compassion for the hurting

and His love for others—even our enemies.

Prayer is a love response to the burdens of others. The apostle Paul set forth a model for unselfish prayer in Philippians 2:3-4:

“Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

The apostle said he did not cease giving thanks for others while making mention of them in his prayers (Eph. 1:15,16; Phil. 1:3-4, 7). Paul, like Jesus, believed God. As a result, prison gates were opened, souls were saved, the afflicted were healed and lives were transformed. Prayer is powerful, especially when it is based upon God’s Word.

*The preceding is an excerpt from **Elizabeth Alves’** Becoming a Prayer Warrior from Chosen Books, a division of the Baker Publishing Group, © 1998. Used with permission.*

Will You Help Fulfill This 110-Year-Old Prophecy?

This Saturday, April 9, a historic gathering will take place in Los Angeles, CA. It’s expected that tens of thousands of believers will cry out for an increased and widespread outpouring of the Holy Spirit (with the vision being for over 100,000). Azusa Now, being pioneered by Lou Engle (author of *The Jesus Fast* and founder of the Call), represents a catalytic moment that has the potential to shape history for years to come.

While it's obvious that the powers of darkness are advancing more and more upon the Earth, Scripture points to a simultaneous glory that would arise upon the people of God and draw in the nations of the Earth (see Isaiah 60:1-3). It's time for us to press in and walk in this glory!

Azusa Now commemorates 110 years since the historic outpouring of the Spirit on Azusa Street (in 1906), which became the birthplace for modern Pentecostalism. Perhaps more significantly, the Azusa Street revival unveiled a key shift that took place in the heavenly realm. More and more people were experiencing the fullness of the Holy Spirit because they observed that experience as available. Salvation through Christ is the glorious entryway into a lifestyle in the kingdom of God. While salvation is an unparalleled gift, too many Christians "make it in," but never learn how to live as kingdom citizens through the Spirit's power.

For many centuries, only select individuals here and there would taste of the "power of the age to come" (see Heb. 6:5) Miracles. Healings. Signs and wonders. Gifts of the Spirit. These are evident throughout history, for sure, but not as normatively until the time following 1906's Azusa Outpouring. Why?

This was not because God was holding Holy Spirit hostage, sovereignly waiting for a certain "dispensation" of time. Far from it. The Spirit had been made available on the day of Pentecost. And yet, for one to experience the fullness of the Spirit's power, one needs to follow the biblical model. Even though He has been made available, we are still instructed to ask for Him (see Luke 11:13). The same is true for salvation. Yes, the cross made salvation available, but to receive it and experience it, we must ask for it. It may sound overly simple, but it's true—history is shaped by men and women, on Earth, who make their "ask" clearly known in heaven.

It's time for you to ask for the outpouring of the Spirit like

never before!

On the Brink of a Historic Crossroads ...

We don't need another conference or church service; we need a great awakening. I have every reason to believe that Azusa Now represents a key shift in the heavenlies that will position the church to step into the next season—fulfilling prophetic words spoken by William Seymour and Maria Woodworth-Etter about a “greater outpouring” yet to come. We're living in the “yet to come.”

I attended the Call Nashville back on July 7, 2007. What did we see as fruit following that catalytic event?

In 2008, we witnessed the Lakeland Revival. Yes, it ended poorly. No, it was not stewarded well. I have strong opinions about this. At the same time, I do believe there was a genuine and authentic hunger for revival during this season.

In 2009, International House of Prayer in Kansas City began to experience an unusual season of awakening and visitation that broke out during their ministry school classes. Many were healed, delivered and set free during these powerful services.

In 2010, the Bay of the Holy Spirit revival broke out in Daphne, AL at John Kilpatrick's Church of His Presence. During these services, singer and minister, Delia Knox, was healed of paralysis and legitimately got out of her wheelchair. Many notable physical healings took place during this season.

Since then, we've only seen increase of the Spirit's movement. The revival cry back in the 1990's was “More, Lord!” We've seen it fulfilled. We've seen the increased influence of the Holy Spirit through churches like Bethel church, ministries like Catch the Fire Toronto, and revival movements like An Appeal to Heaven led by apostolic leader, Dutch Sheets.

If we witnessed this measure of spiritual awakening and increased visitation of God following the Call, Nashville back in 2007, what's ahead?

Truly, we're standing on the brink of something the eyes of men have yet to behold.

It's Time for Us to Tarry Again...

What were some of Jesus' final instructions before His departure?

"And look, I am sending the promise of My Father upon you. But wait in the city of Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49, MEV).

The King James Version uses the phrase tarry in the city. I am not sure how many disciples "dropped out" of the number between the resurrection and Pentecost, thus, prematurely ending their season of waiting and tarrying. All I know is that there were at least 500 witnesses to the resurrected Christ, and there were 120 gathered in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost (1 Cor. 15:6, Acts 1:15).

I don't hear many people use the language of "tarrying" today. Maybe it sounds too "works" oriented? Tarrying is not going through spiritual gymnastics trying to convince God to do something that He is hesitant to do.

God is not hesitant to send revival.

God is a good Father; He has not wrapped a clenched fist around revival, outpouring and awakening.

Tarrying is the process through which we partner with God, lay hold of His promises, and remain in agreement with Him until what's an invisible promise becomes a visible fulfillment.

How Do We Partner with God to Fulfill These Prophetic Words?

God is not releasing prophetic words and announcing promises that He does not intend to fulfill. He's willing to move. He's just looking for a people on Earth who are willing to make room for His movement in their lives.

The church is at a prophetic crossroads. In many ways, it's extremely positive and encouraging. I am seeing more people, denominations, and churches open to Spirit's movement than ever before. What I've read about the Charismatic movement of the 1960s is, I believe, going to be eclipsed in the days ahead. However, we must be careful to cooperate with what God is doing, rather than trying to make it comply with what we think it should look like.

Here are some strategies to accommodating what God is doing in this unique moment in history:

1. Be hungrier than your history. Don't let your past theological education distract you from pressing in for everything God has made available in the Holy Spirit. This is not a call for the people of God to leave their brains at the door and get all crazy. Far from it. It's a summons to open the Word with a new level of honesty, and say, "Holy Spirit, show me everything you have made available to me. I'm desperate to walk in Your fullness—whatever it looks like. I want You, Holy Spirit. Not on my terms, but on Your terms."
2. Be willing to get uncomfortable and stop restraining the Holy Spirit's movement. We're at a crossroads where many "charismatic/Pentecostal" churches are distancing themselves from their roots due to the "lack of respectability" that the Spirit's movement carries. There's a price to pay for revival. Always has been. If we want God to dwell in the midst of us, then we need to be OK with and actually celebrate His effect in people: falling on the ground, laying prostrate on the ground, shaking, trembling, laughing, weeping, etc. It's messy.

Perhaps our expectation is too clean and sanitized, hence why we are not actually experiencing the fullness of what's available.

3. Build cultures that accommodate the Holy Spirit. At the day's end, we need to be Spirit-sensitive, not seeker-sensitive. We offer people nothing—especially those who don't know Jesus—when we try to control the Holy Spirit. He is the Evangelist. He is the Healer. He is the Deliverer. He is the “finger of God” who brings freedom and liberation from bondage. At the day's end, let's have a plan. God's not asking us to throw caution to the wind; He's asking us to hold up our “plan” before Him and say, “Holy Spirit, I'm committed to excellence ... but above all, I'm committed to You. Give me eyes to see how You are moving and ears to hear what You are saying so I can partner with your movement.” We're are the best servants to people when we become the best servants to the Spirit.
4. Stop assuming that delay means denial—keep asking, praying, knocking and believing. Too many Christians take “no” for an answer when, in fact, it was never God's answer. We assume that the lack of immediate breakthrough means denial. Not at all. Read the history books chronicling landscape-shifting revival. History-makers always persevered for the promise of outpouring. Some for months, some for years. Evan Roberts persevered for Wales to be transformed. William Seymour tarried to receive the baptism of the Spirit in his life. Frank Bartleman interceded for the fire of God that was falling in Wales to also fall in America. Two sickly 80 year-old women cried out for God to transform the Hebrides Islands.

Many are crying out for the Spirit to move in a landscape-shifting way. Let's partner with God and during this historic

Azsua Now event, ask the Spirit: Holy Spirit, show me areas in my life (my church) where I need to make more room for You to move freely and without restraint?

At Pentecost, God gave us His best—the Holy Spirit. We're not asking for more to come down; we're desiring more of Him to come out. To be demonstrated. Manifested. Revealed. Unveiled. To see these 110-year old prophecies fulfilled, it's time for us to pray, seek the face of God, and ask the Spirit to show each one of us how to accommodate His movement in our lives in a greater measure!

Larry Sparks is compiler of the brand new book, Ask for the Rain and co-author of the book The Fire That Never Sleeps with Dr. Michael Brown and John Kilpatrick. Larry's mission is to help teach all believers how to experience and sustain personal revival—enjoying a deep relationship with God through encountering the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. To this end, he maintains a blog through Charisma magazine, is a published author, teaches revival seminars, and is the co-founder of Renewing South Florida, an organization committed to uniting the local church for regional outpouring. Larry holds a Master of Divinity from Regent University and presently serves as publisher for Destiny Image publishing house.

8 Healthy Food Tips The Cretans Knew First

The diet world is a very crowded place, and advice is constantly changing. But, very slowly, we're coming to realize what the physicians of Greek antiquity well understood – that

“food” is far more than something we put in our mouths and swallow. In fact, the ancient diet of the Cretans is once again gaining favor.

What is the Cretan diet?

A eureka moment early in our own society’s attempts to understand the relationship between food and health took place 70 years ago. In wealthy America, heart disease was on the rise. A U.S. researcher, Ancel Keys, discovered that in war-torn Europe, especially in poverty-stricken Crete, heart disease was relatively rare. He concluded that it was because of the Cretans’ diet and way of life. The timing of his study has since been criticized (the Orthodox Church observes many fasts and, in the 1940s, these were strictly adhered to), but the general good health of the people was there for all to see.

I first visited Crete just 20 years after Keys. I was there as a student volunteer on an archaeological dig. It took me more than a day to reach the dig (there was, then, less than 40 miles of tarmac road on the entire island). It was a two-hour walk to the nearest village, and this Crete wasn’t much different from the island Keys experienced. In the weeks I spent there, I felt much healthier than I had at home in London. I knew that the reason for this was the food, and the sharing of our tables with friends and strangers. In short, it was because of the Cretan diet.

Sorting fact from fiction isn’t easy

In the intervening years, a great deal has been written about the benefits and dishes of various diets, especially the Mediterranean diet. The subject of food attracts huge research grants and promotional fees from commercial companies. Unsurprisingly, the core finding in that original research on Crete – the link between local foods, food production, enjoyment of food and good health – has disappeared under a

pile of lab-inspired markers and recipes.

Today, some of us can buy Cretan olive oils and cheeses in our stores. These give us the good flavors of the island and the advantage of being able to consume cheeses made with milk from animals that have roamed free over herb-covered hills, but it isn't the whole story. We can follow the Cretan diet (from the Greek, *diaita*, meaning "way of life") to our advantage wherever we are by enjoying a large diversity of foods that are grown or gathered locally, that are at the peak of their seasonal (nutritional) best and that excite us with their different flavors and textures. This holds true for fish and meat, too. They both have seasons, based on the breeding habits of the animals and fish, and their ability to feed well.

Thus, what are now the two most serious Orthodox fasts – Lent (March, lamb-breeding season) and August (when it's hot and the land is parched) – have their roots in a way of life that was followed long before Christianity. This attitude to true sustainability (which ensures future life) exists on Crete even when food is plentiful, and some of the most appreciated island foods are what we generally consider to be "lesser" fish and meats – octopus and other seafood, tiny fish, snails, offal and small game.

What the Cretan diet can do for you

But we're not Cretans, so why should we want to follow their diet? There's one particular reason why I like to: It means I can rely on my own judgment as to whether something is "good for me," as I can always check the 4,000 years of food wisdom that has passed down from those smart, early inhabitants of Crete, the Minoans. Following a few simple tenets, and stocking your pantry with some quality ingredients, you, too, can create for yourself the Cretan diet.

Use olive oil like a Cretan

Until a generation ago, Cretans consumed around five times more olive oil than other Greeks, and Greeks consumed per capita the most olive oil in the world. To an islander, all olive oil is extra virgin, and only consumed in the year of its production. There's plenty of evidence now that olive oil (extra virgin and fresh) is a "super food," so much of the Cretans' good health can be traced to its copious use in island kitchens. For those of us without an olive tree, it's not quite so simple. Extra virgin olive oil is not only expensive, it's rare for the current season's product to reach our stores. So we lose out on what is its greatest value for us. One solution is to build a relationship with a producer and buy direct.

Love those green leaves, the wilder the better

A neighbor of mine on Crete was able to identify more than 60 wild greens and herbs. She knew exactly where and when to find certain species, and how they were best served. She was well known locally for her remarkable skill, but every Cretan cook could – and many still can – identify a dozen or so wild greens. Wild greens contain more, and a greater variety of, nutrients than garden- or commercially grown greens. Many of the best garden greens, as far as nutrients and flavor, end up on the compost heap – beet, turnip and radish greens. Farmers markets are now a good source of these greens and others, and many of us enjoy foraging in the countryside, wherever we are. Turned into salads or side dishes, Cretan-style, with plenty of olive oil, they make very good eating.

Look for sheep-milk and goat-milk cheeses

Not only do Cretans have an admirable capacity for consuming olive oil, they are also among the world's largest consumers of cheese. But their cheeses are different from many available in our stores. Made with milk (mostly sheep, some goat) from animals that eat a melange of wild herbs and greens, and graze outside year-round, they possess nutrients that are missing

from cheeses made with highly processed factory-farmed milk. If you can't buy Cretan cheeses, seek out cheeses made with milk from pasture-raised cows or goats.

Measure herbs with your hand, not with a spoon

Measuring spoons are unknown in traditional Cretan kitchens. Your hand is the perfect measure for herbs and spices. You see what you are adding to a dish and, with dried herbs and spices, the heat of your palm releases their wonderful aromas, in the process delighting you, the cook.

Sweeten the natural way

Honey is another "super food" that Crete has in abundance. With only a few days a year without sunshine and much pesticide-free land, bees have a good life on the island. Honey is more than sugar-sweetener – it has nutritional and medicinal qualities, too. But only when the bees have a healthy environment. A good substitute is local honey from bees that have enjoyed pesticide-free pollen.

Give your gut a helping hand

Yogurt made from the milk of animals that have grazed on herbs or grass and the necessary "friendly bacteria" is a very different food from the commercial yogurts that have a shelf life of weeks. Its bacteria are alive and ready to do their good work, keeping your gut in good order. These bacteria are even more valuable to us now, with so much of our foods being highly processed.

Cretan yogurt, made from sheep/goat milk, is thick, creamy and utterly delicious but, at the moment, travels only as far as Athens. It's easy to make your own at home; for the best results, use full-fat organic milk. Other ways, Cretan-style, to keep your gut healthy is to include naturally fermented (wine) vinegar, pickles, fish and cured olives in your culinary repertoire.

Drink like a Cretan, too

Existing right at the heart of the ancient “wine world,” it’s no wonder wine is as much part of a Cretan’s diet as olive oil. Like olive oil, wine to a Cretan is a drink made that year from grapes nearby (village wine) and consumed with gusto. Appreciated as it is, village wine takes getting used to, so it’s good news that, today, some of the island’s wineries are winning medals on the world stage. Well-made, modern Cretan wines are particularly interesting when made with the island’s unique, and sometimes ancient, grape varieties. On Cretan tables, wine and food are inseparable. Wine is a digestif, and a way of welcoming all to the table – there’s always plenty of it on Cretan tables.

Staples for the ‘Cretan shelf’ of your pantry

Olive oil: extra virgin

Olives: brine-cured, young and green, salt-cured, plump and fleshy, sweet and tiny

Capers and caper leaves, salt-packed

Red wine vinegar

Sea salt, fine and coarse

Spices: allspice, ground; cinnamon, sticks and ground; coriander seeds, whole and ground; cumin, whole and ground; black peppercorns; sumac, ground; nutmeg; cloves; vanilla

Dried herbs: rigani (Greek oregano), marjoram, rosemary, thyme, sage, bay leaves

Dried fruit: currants, small dark raisins, large plump sultanas, figs, prunes

Honey: Cretan mountain sage, orange blossom, Hymettus

Nuts: whole unblanched almonds, walnuts in the shell, pine

nuts, unsalted pistachio nuts, hazelnuts (filberts)

Seeds: melon, pumpkin, sesame

Dried pulses: garbanzo beans (chickpeas), white beans (great northern, cannellini), green lentils, brown lentils, yellow split peas, butter (large lima) beans, black-eyed peas

Preserved lemons

Preserved fish: salted anchovies, sardines packed in olive oil or brine, tuna packed in olive oil, oil-cured bonito (lakertha), sun-dried or smoked mackerel or octopus, smoked eel

Preserved grape leaves

From your refrigerator or freezer

Cheeses: graviera, aged kephalotyri, manouri, myzithra, brine-stored feta

Yogurt: sheep milk, good-quality cow's milk

Fresh or frozen filo sheets: you can store fresh filo for up to 2 days, frozen filo for up to 4 weeks

In your herb garden

Flat-leaf parsley, cilantro (fresh coriander), thyme, rosemary, bay laurel, marjoram

Fennel, dill, mint (many varieties, including "garden," small-leaf), small-leaf basil, sage, lovage, savory, chives

Rose- and lemon-scented geranium leaves

Beet Greens With Latholemono

Beet greens are only one of a huge variety of wild or garden greens Cretans bring to the table. You can substitute turnip greens, radish tops, amaranth greens, water spinach, ruby

chard or mustard greens (charlock) for the beet greens, and use a sauce of olive oil and red wine vinegar in place of the lemon juice.

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cooking time: 2 to 5 minutes, depending on the green

Total time: 7 to 10 minutes

Yield: 6 for a meze serving, 4 as a side dish

Ingredients

1 1/4 pounds beet greens

For serving

5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, or to taste

Coarse-grain sea salt and cracked black pepper to taste

Lemon wedges

Directions

1. Rinse the greens in several changes of cold water. Remove any tough stalks from the greens and tear the leaves into bite-size pieces.

2. Steam the greens. Or place them in a non-reactive saucepan, add 4 tablespoons boiling water, and cook, stirring once or twice with a fork, for 1 to 2 minutes. Take care not to overcook. Drain well in a colander, pressing the greens against the sides with a wooden spoon.

3. To serve, transfer the greens to a platter and lightly fork them to lift and separate the leaves. Add the olive oil and sprinkle with a generous amount of salt and pepper. Serve warm or at room temperature, with lemon wedges.

Note: Prepare turnip greens and radish tops the same way as

beet greens and cook 3 to 4 minutes. Break off the tender sprigs of leaves from water spinach and mustard greens and cook 4 to 5 minutes. Amaranth greens and young ruby chard take only 1 to 2 minutes to cook. Take care not to overcook.

Bernie Sanders Is in Hot Water With the ADL

After suggesting the 2014 Gaza War resulted in the deaths of “over 10,000 civilians,” presidential candidate U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-Vt.) is in hot water with the Anti-Defamation League.

During an interview with the editorial board of the *New York Daily News*, Sanders was asked about the fighting in 2014 and what Israel could have done differently to reduce casualties. Although he said he was reluctant to answer, he gave a lengthy response:

“I think it is fair to say that the level of attacks against civilian areas ... and I do know that the Palestinians, some of them, were using civilian areas to launch missiles. Makes it very difficult. But I think most international observers would say that the attacks against Gaza were indiscriminate and that a lot of innocent people were killed who should not have been killed. Look, we are living, for better or worse, in a world of high technology, whether it’s drones out there that could, you know, take your nose off, and Israel has that technology. And I think there is a general belief that, with that technology, they could have been more discriminate in terms of taking out weapons that were threatening them.”

The *Daily News* editorial board then asked if he supported the

Palestinian Authority's attempts to use the International Criminal Court to prosecute Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for war crimes. Sanders said he didn't, but pressed on the issue further, he made the following comments:

"I don't remember the figures, but my recollection is over 10,000 innocent people were killed in Gaza ... I think it's over 10,000. My understanding is that a whole lot of apartment houses were leveled. Hospitals, I think, were bombed. So yeah, I do believe and I don't think I'm alone in believing that Israel's force was more indiscriminate than it should have been."

That raised the ire of ADL CEO Jonathan A. Greenblatt, who said even the highest number of casualties claimed by Palestinian sources was "five times less" than the number Sanders cited. He said those Palestinian numbers included " Hamas members engaged in attacking Israel."

"As Mr. Sanders publicly discusses his approach to key U.S. foreign policy priorities, including Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, accuracy and accountability are essential for the voting public, but also for U.S. credibility in the international community," he said. "We urge Sen. Sanders to correct his misstatements."

Israel's former ambassador to the U.S from 2009 to 2013, Michael Oren, wasn't as kind in his response to Sanders' comments. Now a member of Israel's legislative body, The Knesset, he told *The Times of Israel* newspaper the senator owes Israel an apology.

"First of all, he should get his facts right. Secondly, he owes Israel an apology," he said. "He accused us of a blood libel. He accused us of bombing hospitals. He accused us of killing 10,000 Palestinian civilians. Don't you think that merits an apology?"

Sanders has since corrected his statement—after a phone

conversation with Greenblatt—saying his “recollection was incorrect,” and that it had been corrected during the course of the interview with the *Daily News* editorial board. Greenblatt said the senator assured him that he did not mean for his remarks to be a “definitive statement” and that he would make every effort to set the record straight.

The ADL has been keen to protect Israel’s reputation, particularly against pro-Palestinian reports, which it calls “false and incendiary,” that blame the Jewish state for applying disproportionate force in defending itself.

When a Movie Becomes a Movement

Harold Cronk never expected *God’s Not Dead* would grow beyond a simple independent film into a full-fledged movement. The director of one of the most successful faith-based films of all time says he gets emails and calls from people testifying the film changed their lives. The movie has provoked people to renew their faith and to become passionate about sharing it—so passionate, in fact, that Cronk says he may need to get a new phone number.

In the original movie’s climax, hundreds pull out their phones to text friends about their faith. On one phone, one of the cell numbers still visible belonged to Cronk—who had been texting an actor earlier that day. Cronk says he’s received a flood of calls and texts from eager fans who punched the number into their phones, unaware that the film’s director was on the other end.

Cronk doesn’t really mind, though. That vigor—that desire to

share the message of Jesus, no matter who is on the other end of the phone—is exactly the response Cronk hoped this film would inspire. The first film, which told the story of a college student defending his Christian faith in an atheist classroom, resonated with many Christians and sent shockwaves through Hollywood. In 2014, *God's Not Dead* became the little independent film that could, surpassing every outsider expectation by making over \$60 million at the box office during its five-month theatrical run. Now, with all eyes on the highly anticipated sequel, *God's Not Dead 2* will prove whether the first film was a flash in the pan—or the opening battle cry of a larger movement.

Launching the Film

Before the movement, before the movie, *God's Not Dead* began as a book by evangelist Rice Broocks. As co-founder of the Every Nation family of churches and senior minister of Bethel World Outreach Church in Nashville, Tennessee, Broocks worked with college students on a regular basis. He grew concerned about a worrisome trend among students.

“You hear these alarming statistics,” Broocks says. “Some people say as much as 80 percent of young people are leaving the faith when they leave high school and get to college. Now that’s totally not true. ... No one quite knows how many it is, but it’s an alarming figure. I think it would be conservative to say at least 50 percent that leave high school, when they get to college, will either lose or abandon their faith, and many times it’s because they don’t have clear enough understanding. They get presented with evidence or arguments they can’t answer, and they just shelve their faith like an out-of-date cellphone. So I started writing this book to lay out the evidence for God.”

Broocks was telling a friend, businessman Troy Duhon, about the book he was writing—*God's Not Dead: Evidence for God in an Age of Uncertainty*—when Duhon stopped him in his tracks. “That

needs to be a movie,” Duhon said. He ended up connecting Broocks with Pure Flix Entertainment.

Michael Scott, founding partner of Pure Flix and co-producer of *God’s Not Dead*, says the Pure Flix team met with Broocks shortly thereafter: “We talked about the ideas of taking the Newsboys song ‘God’s Not Dead’ and the apologetics book and turning them into a movie, and the process started. Within a year and a half after the process started, we came out with *God’s Not Dead*.”

Broocks began sitting down with the screenwriters and explained to them the tensions on college campuses. He says he even helped write the apologetics-heavy classroom scenes in the movie.

At the same time, Cronk was brought on board as director for the project. “Pure Flix had actually produced a couple of smaller films at my studio, 10 West Studios, in Michigan,” Cronk says. “We just developed a relationship. When the script came up for *God’s Not Dead*, Michael Scott called me and asked if I wanted to direct it, and I came on board.”

Even as production commenced, the team never suspected *God’s Not Dead* would become a breakout hit. But as early cuts of the film’s scenes came into the editing room, Cronk says he had some inkling.

“I don’t think anyone expected the massive support the picture got,” Cronk says. “I did talk to the producers about two-thirds of the way through production after watching through some dailies and seeing some of the performances. I said, ‘I think we have something special here.’”

Impacting the Lost

Indeed, *God’s Not Dead* was a special achievement in Christian film—a message-based film that achieved mainstream success. The film made over \$9 million in its opening weekend alone,

becoming at one time the fourth-biggest film in the U.S.

Phil Cooke, a Hollywood producer and industry veteran, says the film succeeded by striking a chord with everyday believers. "The original *God's Not Dead* was a rare phenomenon that really tapped into the dismissive attitude Christians have been experiencing a long time in today's culture," Cooke says.

But though *God's Not Dead* primarily resonated with believers, many unchurched individuals became curious after the film began to succeed at the box office.

"That's a common question: Are you preaching to the choir or impacting others?" Scott asks. "We don't always have the marketing budget to spend \$20-30 million on commercials everywhere (like other movies do), so we primarily focus on activating the church. It's like this: You drop a pebble in the lake, and it makes an initial splash, but then it begins to ripple out. We activate the core Christian audience, and then they bring in their circle of friends until finally, as the movie creates momentum, you reach into a crowd that may never attend church. But they have to come because they've heard of it and there's a fear of missing out. Based on initial surveys, we think 25 percent of the audience was unchurched or not Christians at *God's Not Dead*. So I think, yes, these films strengthen core Christian beliefs and strengthen them to understand beliefs, but they're also an evangelistic effort to reach the lost as well."

That tension, between addressing the desires of the faithful and meeting the needs of the seekers, weighs heavily on Cronk as he prepares to release the film's sequel to an eager audience. He says finding that balance is a constant discussion for him and his team.

"We can't just preach to the choir," Cronk says. "Obviously we make films for an audience, but the content needs to be

something that reaches beyond the faithful, because we are called to bring others. It's tricky. We feel that these films—if nothing else—are making people who are not of the faith at least ask the question. I absolutely believe that the films are reaching beyond just the Christian audience. It might not be having an effect on a lot of people, but on the agnostics, on the people who are on the fence, it's at least planting the seed in them."

God's Not Dead isn't the only example of this. Movieguide founder Dr. Ted Baehr says studies show Christian films go far beyond simply preaching to the choir: "We know that 40 percent of audiences who wouldn't go to church have gone to a Christian film in the past year or two. How many of that 40 percent are unchurched Christians? I don't know. Possibly a significant portion. I think there are a few others who have no defined faith who end up watching these movies and are evangelized, and I hope there are more than we imagine."

Raising the Cinematic Bar

The ripple effect has become a metaphor for *God's Not Dead* as a whole. If the movie was the initial splash, then the broader movement gaining steam is the ripples spreading outward. The team at Pure Flix is aware that they have a fledgling movement on their hands, and the success of the sequel could determine the survival of the movement.

"I do believe *God's Not Dead* is a movement," Scott says. "I think we saw that from the first film. The movie goes to levels deep enough in faith-based circles that it's a movement. It's a cry: #GodsNotDead. People are using that term out there, and it's really started a movement. I think that will continue with *God's Not Dead 2*."

With the sequel, Pure Flix has attempted to raise the bar, both in terms of story ambition and technical achievement. *God's Not Dead 2* raises the stakes from a university classroom

to a courtroom. Based on several real-life court cases, the movie tells the story of Grace Wesley (Melissa Joan Hart), a high school teacher who is sued for quoting Jesus in the classroom. She and her defense attorney (Jesse Metcalfe) decide that the best way to prove her innocence is to prove Jesus was a real person, rendering her quotation no different than quoting Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr.

Cooke believes this movie could be a useful tool for evangelism with nonbelievers: "This would be the moment for believers to take a nonbelieving friend who's sitting on the fence or thinking about these issues. After the movie, take them out for coffee and have a discussion about it. If the Christian audience looked at films like this as an opportunity for sharing their faith, the result could be remarkable. After all, how easy is it to invite a friend to see a movie?"

Baehr says the film's financial success will be difficult to predict, given that *God's Not Dead 2* will have significantly more competition than the first film—*Risen*, *The Young Messiah* and *Miracles from Heaven* will be simultaneously competing for attention at the box office. But he says it's possible for all of the films to be successful—and send an even bigger message to Hollywood about the future of faith-based films—if Christians support them en masse.

"My fanboy statement is that we want these films to succeed," Dr. Baehr says. "If they're good films, you need them to do really well. Everyone needs to go out to the theater the first weekend and support their local Christian film."

Scott and Cronk echo Baehr's exhortation to believers, and both point out that increased box-office revenue means that the next films will have larger budgets—which can raise the quality and increase the potential audience size. They've seen that effect already with *God's Not Dead 2*. Cronk says the success of the first film has allowed the team to create an even better film this time around.

“Many of your readers may have noticed that the first film was lacking in some cinematic areas,” Cronk says. “A lot of that was the result of a very, very limited budget and a very compressed timeline. Our production schedule for the first film was 18 days total. So in talking with the producers, we decided we are called to try and create excellence as Christians, and we owe it to our audience to try and raise the bar, not just in message but also in cinematic quality of the picture. Thanks to the success of the first film, we had access to more resources, which gave us the tools to take the next step in trying to create not only a film with a strong message for our audience but also a film that is a beautiful, well-told story.”

Joining the Movement

At the initial meeting with Pure Flix’s owners in 2011, Broocks laid out his vision for the *God’s Not Dead* movement: “We need a million young people in this country alone who can defend their faith. This is what it’s going to take.”

That vision was carried by former Pure Flix CEO Russell Wolfe until his unfortunate death from ALS last May. Broocks says Wolfe’s dying wish was, “Please let this become a movement.”

Already his wish is being fulfilled. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Broocks’ book has been translated into many different languages, and the first film has been seen worldwide by 25 million people—and that’s by Broocks’ own conservative estimates. Broocks is releasing a new book, *Man Myth Messiah: Answering History’s Greatest Question*, which ties in with the film’s sequel. And the *God’s Not Dead* Facebook page alone has over 8 million likes.

“This isn’t just a movie or a concert,” Broocks asserts. “We’re trying to create a movement, and the movement is a cross-denominational apologetics and evangelism movement that equips people of all ages to defend their faith.”

Early screenings of the sequel have been highly positive, suggesting the movement could grow even larger when *God's Not Dead 2* opens April 1. Whether the second film surpasses the original's success or sputters short, Cronk gives the glory to God and gives thanks to his audience. The director says he's been overwhelmingly blessed by the positive response of Christians who have supported his work—although he doubts he'll include his phone number in the closing credits this time around.

"Many people are calling it a movement," Cronk says. "I think it's amazing that the stories are reaching the audience and giving them confidence to stand up for their beliefs, to not be afraid of saying 'Jesus is my Lord and Savior.' I think it's helping people to be more confident in their faith. It's crazy the way that God is using the picture. We never could have fathomed what He'd be doing with it."

The film is officially out of Pure Flix's hands and in the hands of God—and moviegoing Christians. The only question remaining is how many more believers will join the movement.

Taylor Berglund is the assistant online editor at *Charisma Media* and the co-host of the podcasts "*Charisma News*" and "*C-POP*."

Listen to how *God's Not Dead 2* actors think the film will impact culture's view of Christianity at .

Ted Cruz's Father Making Inroads With New Yorkers

It's no secret Ted Cruz dug himself a hole with New Yorkers after his attacks on Donald Trump's "New York Values" in January. But his father, Pastor Rafael Cruz, has been working hard to open some doors for his campaign.

Earlier this week, the pro-Israel group Proclaiming Justice to the Nations released a video of a speech the elder Cruz made in February at a gala in Tennessee during which he said, "Foundation of America and the American Constitution was the Torah." See the video below.

In the speech, Pastor Cruz told the pro-Israel audience his son is the "strongest supporter of Israel on Capitol Hill," and promised that he "will continue to support Israel unconditionally." He added his son "will not fund the United Nations, until they stop supporting BDS and anti-Semitism."

"Israel is the only country in the world with a title deed from the Almighty!" he added.

Pastor Cruz also confronted replacement theology, by which some Christians believe they are the new Jews and that God has abandoned the Jewish people. He declared that theological view "heresy."

Jewish voters, as well as Hispanic voters can be key swing votes in the Empire State, which will hold its winner-take-all primary on April 19. Currently, Sen. Cruz is polling in third place there, but within the margin of error with second-place Ohio Gov. John Kasich.

Both are polling more than 30 points behind Donald Trump, who is a native of Queens, and has lived in New York his entire life.

The 5 Masks of Pride

Have you ever asked the Holy Spirit to teach you something and then quickly realized you asked for more than you bargained for?

That's what happened to me a couple years ago when I asked for a revelation on what pride is and asked the Lord to convict me in areas where I was missing it. It all started because one day I was minding my own business reading a book on my Kindle, and I heard in my spirit that I had an issue with pride.

I was confused. *"Pride? How, Lord?"*

At that time, I had always looked at pride as the excessive glorification of one's self—an arrogance of sorts. If someone asked me if I was dealing with pride based on this definition, I would say no. However, what the Lord revealed to me is that I was worrying about what others would think and allowing a concern over perception to take precedence over seeking Him for His will in a specific situation I was faced with in my business, and that was a form of pride.

I didn't recognize this as pride because it was not one of the more obvious forms of pride. It was in disguise. Honestly, it didn't feel good to have that revealed, but I was grateful that God loved me too much to allow it to be a barrier for me. It was at that moment that I repented (changed my mind and turned away from it), made the right decision to handle the situation His way and also asked the Holy Spirit to reveal the various subtleties of pride whenever they reared their ugly head.

He truly delivered. Over the next few weeks, the Holy Spirit would either point out a situation where I was being prideful

or would reveal to me when someone else I was observing or interacting with was displaying pride. There are so many layers, and they all come down to being self-centered and self-focused rather than Christ-centered and Christ-focused.

Here are some of the other examples of pride in disguise:

Timidity

Have you ever decided not to speak up about something that you felt led to speak up about? I've been there. Most likely, it was due to fear, but the reason for the fear is often concern over how you will be perceived by others when you speak up. The Scriptures encourage us to be strong and courageous, and with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we should be bold as lions.

Procrastination

A surprising form of pride is procrastination. When we are putting things off, it's often due to feelings surrounding the task at hand, and we're allowing those feelings to govern our motivation to take action even when things are urgent. We have to check our hearts for the reasons why we're procrastinating, and if it's not Christ-focused, we have to renew our minds in that situation and take the appropriate next action.

Faking It

Oftentimes we'll put on a good face for everyone even when we're a mess on the inside. Some argue that this is standing in faith or "faking it until you make it." While there's no reason to reveal the specifics of our struggles with everyone, there are people in our lives that we can and should be real with.

Independence

Independence can lead to refusing to ask for help and doing everything yourself. This one is a tough one for so many, and I've been guilty of this myself on numerous occasions. The truth is that it is actually a blessing for others to bless you, just as you consider it a blessing to bless others. When you need help, get help and don't be shy about it! If you've been burned before, that comes with the territory. Don't allow a bad experience to create a spirit of independence that says, "I don't need help from anyone" or "I can do this myself," even when help is needed—both in personal and professional life.

Preoccupation

To be transparent, this is one that the Lord is still working with me on. Oftentimes we are so busy or preoccupied with things going on in our own lives, or preoccupied by the distractions provided through social media and technology. During those times, it's easy to miss what the Lord desires to show you or miss opportunities to have an impact in the lives of others, not just those you are close to, but even complete strangers. By being less busy and distracted, we can remain more Christ-focused and aware of what He's doing.

This is something we should all want to get a handle on, because the Word of God tells us that He despises pride! Here's just a little of what the Bible has to say on the matter:

"Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not be unpunished" (Prov. 16:5).

"Then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery" (Deut. 8:14).

“Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honor is humility” (Prov. 18:12).

I’m sure there are other subtleties of pride that I didn’t cover and likely some that have yet to be revealed to me in my own walk. However, I urge you to be proactive and not wait for the Lord to interrupt you while you’re reading a book like I did. Ask God to show you the areas where you’re displaying pride so that you can repent and move forward knowing confidently that the enemy can no longer use that against you to delay you from your next level. {eoa}

*Reprinted from . **Shae Bynes** is a passionate storyteller, best-selling author, and engaging teacher whose life was completely changed by encountering God. She enjoys the response she receives when she tells people that she is a Firestarter, igniting fires in the marketplace and in the bedrooms around the world. Shae has authored several books on the topics of God-centered and Spirit-led business and marriage and is the Host of The Kingdom Driven Entrepreneur Podcast. Visit to learn more.*