

# 5 Telltale Traits of an Immature Christian

The first epistle of Peter (written somewhere around the year A.D. 63-64) is addressed to those who have been scattered throughout the greater Asia area. The letter is addressed to the aliens scattered, but the theme of this amazing book is the true grace of God. For the next few moments, let's consider some of the implications of grace in our lives. That grace, or unmerited favor of God, has been deposited into us because of our personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Grace means that we are secure because of who Jesus is and, since we've entered that relationship with Him, the text tells us that we have "an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that does not fade away (1 Pet. 1:4a). We are secure in Christ and as a result of that security, we are called into holiness and are challenged to live a holy life that reflects the character of Jesus because "you shall be holy for I am holy (Lev. 11:45c). Holiness leads us into fear of a holy God. This fear is not the same as that which goes bump in the night; rather, this fear is a wholesome dread of displeasing Him. The continuing result of this grace is that we are to grow. That's where we pick up the text in 1 Peter 2:1-10. I encourage you to grab your copy of the Scriptures and read those verses.

First, we see a prerequisite to growth. The apostle Peter tells us to "put aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and slander of every kind" (1 Pet. 2:1, NIV). We are to put away malice, that is a vicious disposition, that spirit of doing harm, always thinking the worst of other people. Even as a child of God, malice, or distrust of people, so easily creeps back into our lives and we can come to that place where we are the ones who truly have a vicious disposition.

Peter not only says "malice" but he talks about "deceit,"

which means to mislead. It really comes from a fishing term, to bait the hook. If you're an avid fisherman, you know that baiting the hook is a way to try to deceive the fish into believing it's going to get something good to eat, but when it bites into that food and grabs hold of that hook, it is now caught. Deceit is intentionally misleading. As a child of God, it should not be part of our lives. And yet, church leaders sometimes find themselves misleading their people, not telling them all of the truth. Or sometimes, as a child of God, we mislead the church leadership into thinking that we are far more holy or spiritual than we really are. Sometimes it's in our work environment where we shade the truth just a little bit so that we look better than we actually are. Sometimes we try to make someone look worse than they really are! So, Peter says you need to put away malice, that vicious disposition, deceit, to intentionally mislead. Then he goes on to talk about hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy is an outward show, masquerading as something you are not. Now, let's be completely honest with one another! There have been times when we all have been the hypocrite, saying one thing and doing another; condemning an action and then finding ourselves doing the exact same thing. Peter tells us to stop doing this.

The next prerequisite for growth on the list is envy. Envy is coveting, or wanting what others have, resenting their prosperity. Instead, we are to rejoice with them that they have been blessed with such great possessions, wealth, or position! It can be a challenge for us to learn to be grateful to the Lord for what others have, and to be incredibly grateful to the Lord for what we have.

The next part of the list is slander, which means to defame or give an evil report. These are negative things that Peter speaks about that need to be removed from our lives if, as the children of God, we are going to grow in this amazing grace.

In verse 2, Peter gives us a positive point when he says, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2, MEV). Just as a newborn infant longs for his mother's pure milk, so we, as newborn children of Jesus, need to long for God's Word, because that is how we grow. Acts 6:4 tells us that "we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." Coupled with the ministry of prayer is the ministry of the word, feeding on the Scriptures. If we only do this on Sundays at church and then not again until the next Sunday, it's like eating at a buffet for Sunday lunch and then not eating again until the following Sunday. As children of God, we need to be in His Word to learn from Him, seek His face and rejoice in who He is. So Peter tells us to grow! Grow up, putting aside these evil things and longing for the pure milk of the word.

As a result of this, as we see in verse 5, we are living stones, and we who believe in Jesus will never be disappointed. In verse 6, we see Jesus as the cornerstone who was rejected, the stumbling stone. But, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. You see, we must grow so that we can fulfill the mission that Christ has given to us as a chosen people, God's own possession, a group who have the privilege of proclaiming the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness.

The task of reaching a lost generation, a lost world, is at stake. If we are going to see our nations reached for Jesus, then we, the church, must be renewed by seeking His face; by longing for the pure milk of the Word; and by growing into a deep, mature faith which will not tolerate things like malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander. Let's grow together for the sake of the gospel.

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*Taylor is president of Strategic Renewal Canada. This sister ministry launched just a year ago and is seeking to be used of the Lord to ignite the heart of the local church to seek the face of God in Canada, a nation in great need of spiritual renewal. If you are reading this article and you are in a Canadian church, we want to encourage you to contact Strategic Renewal Canada. You can do that through their website, which is simply [www.strategicrenewal.ca](http://www.strategicrenewal.ca), or you can call Lindsay directly at 519-993-1597. He will be glad to assist you and your ministry.*

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## **A Letter From Britain on the Fourth of July**

Dear America,

On the 241st anniversary of independence, we wish all our American cousins a blessed and enjoyable day. While we still miss you sadly, we know that while apart from us, you have matured and prospered into the strongest nation on earth.

We have seen great cities emerge and watched with great awe your rockets reach other planets as you explored the universe. Yes, we also witnessed very many sad occasions when your men and women fell in battle helping us and when you were attacked by others with great loss. We saw you reinvent yourself many times and marveled at your speedy recoveries. Great men have led your nation and your fiscal brains have navigated the ever-frequent economic storms.

Your climate and terrain offer your 322-million population the

splendid spectrum of life's offering without needing to exit your borders. We have seen your Stars and Stripes grace your land, and we watch with envy your patriotism under that star-spangled banner. Embracing many creeds, colors and religions, you have managed to steer your ships with the gusts of the Founding Fathers, and from the indigenous Indians to the multi-layered cake that's America, we are proud to be your cousins.

We of the Old World have been known to lament your New World, but we too are no strangers to independence. Earlier this year, we cut our lines and in March 2017 set sail, adrift from Europe, as we broke away to the land of Brexit. In case we drift completely into uncharted waters, we ask you to remember us and to watch over your Mayflower cousins.

Our language is shared, and our beliefs from freedom in democracy are common denominators. We are very aware that Mr. Churchill's mother came from America and Mr. Trump's mother from Scotland. Let our seed be your sentiment and our prayers match your hopes. May you prosper in every way.

We are acutely aware that and reminded in writing to you that independence is a fine thing, yet in dependence on each other, we find the love and friendships that enrich our lives and remind us all that we are stronger together in peace. Through loving our neighbor, we establish community and great nations.

So we bid you our best, with a tear in our eye, as we come to remember the Fourth of July. Here's a poem I wrote which I hope makes you smile with gratitude:

Sticks and stones will break my bones but the pain does come from sticks

That brutal year when you rid of us that terrible 1776

The Boston Tea Party was a terrible brew dipped in very cold water

We should never have sought to tax the tea, it was that which led to slaughter.

But forgiven us you have on many a Fourth of July  
You came back often to help us, on that we could rely  
As you became stronger we watched from afar  
Your buildings were taller, everything on large scale  
Cadillacs and Limos great trains on the rail

Then rockets to launch moon and Mars  
Someone called Musk with his electric cars  
Companies Amazon and Apple great fruit from the tree  
Wall Street expanding, millions of buyers, homes for the  
brave, land of the free

Your movies and theatre great arts to behold  
We gave you Chaplin and Taylor as we sold all our gold  
Fort Knox became fuller as James Bond appeared  
Hollywood blossomed as Hitchcock neared those terrible birds  
suddenly reared.

Great Leaders and Presidents though no female to see  
Our example was Thatcher, though Hilary not to be  
Instead you chose the card called Trump, up your sleeve was  
the ace  
To make America great again at such a lightning pace.

Surely a very Independent man surrounded by his faithful clan  
For don't forget he's a Scot at heart, tartan and tough,  
formidable man.

Oh yes I know there's some German in his bones  
Just like our Royal Family when you left us alone, By George!

God Bless America.

Yours ever,

Great Britain

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**Martin Clarke** *is a charismatic Christian and London*

*businessman. He often provides Charisma with an international perspective.*

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## **Could Ancient Writings Have Pinpointed 9/11?**

Nearly 16 years ago, the nation was shocked by a terrorist attack in New York City that will forever be etched in history as “9/11.”

Now, New York Times bestselling author Jonathan Cahn poses a powerful question in his upcoming book out on Sept. 19. In his explosive new work, *The Paradigm: The Ancient Blueprint That Holds the Mystery of Our Times*, Cahn asks: Could the ancient paradigm have pinpointed the exact date of 9/11 before anyone had any idea? Could it have determined the exact years of Bill Clinton? Barack Obama? Hillary Clinton? Osama Bin Laden? Donald Trump? And more?

The Paradigm is an exciting follow-up to Cahn’s other best-sellers, *The Harbinger*, *The Mystery of the Shemitah* and *The Book of Mysteries*, which all took the world by storm.

Cahn’s publisher, Frontline, an imprint of Charisma House, is talking about “The Paradigm: The Ancient Blueprint That Holds the Mystery of Our Times” on social media at **#ThePARADIGMIsCOMING**, and recently released a [new promotional video](#) for *The Paradigm*, as well as the cover (view and download here) and the new website at [www.TheParadigmMystery.com](http://www.TheParadigmMystery.com).

*The Paradigm* also explores:

- Is it possible that a blueprint from ancient times holds the secret of our times?
- Could events that transpired almost 3,000 years ago be determining the news of modern times, and with it, the issues of our lives?
- Is it possible that this mystery lies behind current events, the rise and fall of leaders, governments and global happenings?

Long before his previous best-selling books, Cahn was known for opening the deep mysteries of Scripture and for teachings of prophetic import. He leads Hope of the World and the Jerusalem Center/Beth Israel, just outside New York City in Wayne, New Jersey. He is also a much sought-after speaker, having addressed the United Nations on Capitol Hill and millions of people around the world. Cahn has also been called the prophetic voice of our generation. {eoa}

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## What Constitutes Moral Decline?

Most Americans surveyed in a recent [LifeWay Research](#) study agree that America is in a moral decline. But that's where the agreements end.

The recent survey of 1,000 Americans found 81 percent are "concerned about declining moral behavior in our nation." How they view right and wrong and where their moral influences come from, however, run the gamut.

For example, 60 percent of Americans older than 45 say right and wrong never change. Of those 35 and younger, just 40 percent feel the same way, which demonstrates a significant

generation gap in how Americans view morality, LifeWay says. Another third (32 percent) of all surveyed say whether or not someone gets hurt plays a role in determining if something is right or wrong.

Author, religion and culture expert and national radio host Dr. Alex McFarland ([www.AlexMcFarland.com](http://www.AlexMcFarland.com)) says the survey is a telling reminder that a person's beliefs, and sometimes upbringing, dictate how they view society.

"Morality and right and wrong were once very black and white," McFarland said. "But as the culture becomes more complicated, and as views on morality—Christians' views as well—evolve, issues of right and wrong and even sin aren't as clear-cut. But the truth is that the Bible has not changed, and never will. Even though society may tell us that something is right and acceptable and 'tolerable,' God's Word is forever. And because of these shifting views on right and wrong, there has never been a more important time for Christians of all ages to become grounded in the Bible and know how God defines these matters, rather than how man defines them."

McFarland was also recently interviewed by [The Christian Post](#) on the changing views of same-sex marriage by evangelical Christians. The article cited a new study from the Pew Research Center that found that support among evangelicals for gay marriage has more than doubled, from 14 percent to 35 percent, over the past 10 years, and about half—47 percent—of young white evangelicals support gay marriage.

"Several things are coalescing in our culture," McFarland told The Christian Post. "We've got a public school system and a public university system that for decades now, 50 years at least, has been trending away from belief in morality and belief in God."

Other findings from the LifeWay survey include:

- 63 percent say "implementing laws to encourage people to

act morally is not effective.”

- 44 percent say: “The fewer laws regulating moral standards, the better.”
- Those surveyed also listed influences on their views on morality, which included parents, religious beliefs, personal feelings, friends, teachers and media such as books, movies and music.
- The greatest influences are parents (39 percent), religious beliefs (26 percent) and feelings (18 percent). Friends (4 percent), teachers (2 percent) and media (3 percent) were less influential. {eoa}

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# Travel Ban Renews Biblical and Constitutional Conversations About Immigration

After a back-and-forth battle that went all the way to the Supreme Court, President Donald Trump’s temporary travel ban went into effect Thursday evening.

The executive order requires that those traveling from six foreign countries—Libya, Syria, Iran, Somalia, Yemen and Sudan—must have a credible claim of a “bona fide relationship” with either an entity, such as a school or workplace, or a person who is living in the U.S., CNN reported.

The American Pastors Network (APN, [www.americanpastorsnetwork.net](http://www.americanpastorsnetwork.net)) frequently discusses immigration issues, as well as news of the day from a biblical and constitutional perspective, on its daily, popular “Stand

in the Gap Today” radio program. APN President Sam Rohrer has also written and spoken extensively on this topic and says that many Christians are torn between keeping the country safe and being “Good Samaritans” who welcome others.

“One question that every American must ask is if our country’s current immigration policies are in agreement with or in opposition to the historical ideology set in motion by our Founding Fathers,” Rohrer said. “While the founders did set about to fashion ideals that would be freeing to many people groups from various backgrounds and faiths, they also strived to keep the nation safe from those who were not in line with those ideals. The truth is that many ideologies today are in direct opposition to all that America stands for, and such ideologies are one of the greatest threats to our freedom. Taking a step back, pushing pause and properly vetting those who wish to come into the United States is wise and in line with protecting the nation and all who live here.”

Rohrer added that many, including some Christians, are in denial that Islam, for example, is a threat to the U.S. Earlier this year, Rohrer spoke to [The Christian Post](#) about the belief by some that Islam is not a violent religion.

“The view for a long time has been that jihadists, wherever they are, are not at all reflective of Islam, and these are only a small number who don’t speak for Islam,” Rohrer told The Christian Post. “The unfortunate thing about that is that those involved in jihad are the only ones who are really practicing what the Quran says. It’s violent all the way around, the total opposite of Christianity, the opposite of what the Bible speaks about. Yet, because there are many who either don’t want to know or don’t do their own homework, (they come to believe that) ‘everybody is equal,’ when the reality is these various systems of belief are totally different.”

CNN also reported that those who can’t establish the “bona

fide relationship” in the U.S., and live in one of the six listed countries, will be banned from traveling to the U.S. for 90 days. Refugees from any country will be banned for 120 days, according to the reinstated travel ban. {eo}

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## **Pediatrician: Transgender Agenda Has Led to Widespread Child Abuse**

Transgender politics has taken Americans by surprise and caught some lawmakers off guard.

Just a few short years ago, not many could have imagined a high-profile showdown over transgender men and women’s access to single-sex bathrooms in North Carolina.

But transgender ideology is not just infecting our laws. It is intruding into the lives of the most innocent among us—children—and with the apparent growing support of the professional medical community.

As explained in my 2016 peer reviewed article, “[Gender Dysphoria in Children and Suppression of Debate](#),” professionals who dare to question the unscientific party line of supporting gender transition therapy will find themselves maligned and out of a job.

I speak as someone intimately familiar with the pediatric and behavioral health communities and their practices. I am a mother of four who served 17 years as a board-certified general pediatrician with a focus in child behavioral health prior to leaving clinical practice in 2012.

For the last 12 years, I have been a board member and researcher for the American College of Pediatricians, and for the last three years, I have served as its president.

I also sat on the board of directors for the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity from 2010 to 2015. This organization of physicians and mental health professionals defends the right of patients to receive psychotherapy for sexual identity conflicts that is in line with their deeply held values based upon science and medical ethics.

I have witnessed an upending of the medical consensus on the nature of gender identity. What doctors once treated as a mental illness, the medical community now largely affirms and even promotes as normal.

Here's a look at some of the changes.

### **The New Normal**

Pediatric gender clinics are considered elite centers for affirming children who are distressed by their biological sex. This distressful condition, once dubbed gender identity disorder, was renamed gender dysphoria in 2013.

In 2014, there were [24 of these gender clinics](#), clustered chiefly along the east coast and in California. One year later, there were 40 across the nation.

With [215 pediatric residency programs](#) now training future pediatricians in a transition-affirming protocol and treating gender-dysphoric children accordingly, gender clinics are bound to proliferate further.

Last summer, the federal government stated that it would not require Medicare and Medicaid to cover transition-affirming procedures for children or adults because medical experts at the Department of Health and Human Services found the risks

were often too high and the benefits too unclear.

Undeterred by these findings, the World Professional Association for Transgender Health has pressed ahead, claiming—without any evidence—that these procedures are safe.

Two leading pediatric associations—the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Pediatric Endocrine Society—have followed in lockstep, endorsing the transition affirmation approach even as the latter organization concedes within its own guidelines that the transition-affirming protocol is based on low evidence.

They even admit that the only strong evidence regarding this approach is its potential health risks to children.

The transition-affirming view holds that children who “consistently and persistently insist” that they are not the gender associated with their biological sex are innately transgender.

The fact that in normal life and in psychiatry, anyone who “consistently and persistently insists” on anything else contrary to physical reality is considered either confused or delusional, is conveniently ignored.

The transition-affirming protocol tells parents to treat their children as the gender they desire and to place them on puberty blockers around age 11 or 12 if they are gender dysphoric.

If, by age 16, the children still insist that they are trapped in the wrong body, they are placed on cross-sex hormones, and biological girls may obtain a double mastectomy.

So-called “bottom surgeries,” or genital reassignment surgeries, are not recommended before age 18, though some surgeons have recently argued against this restriction.

The transition-affirming approach has been embraced by public

institutions in media, education and our legal system and is now recommended by most national medical organizations.

There are exceptions to this movement, however, in addition to the American College of Pediatricians and the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice. These include the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, the Christian Medical & Dental Associations, the Catholic Medical Association and the LGBT affirming [Youth Gender Professionals](#).

The transgender movement has gained legs in the medical community and in our culture by offering a deeply flawed narrative. The scientific research and facts tell a different story.

Here are some of those basic facts.

### **1. Twin studies prove no one is born trapped in the body of the wrong sex.**

Some brain studies have suggested that some are born with a transgendered brain. But these studies are [seriously flawed](#) and prove no such thing.

Virtually everything about human beings is influenced by our DNA, but very few traits are hardwired from birth. All human behavior is a composite of varying degrees for nature and nurture.

Researchers routinely conduct twin studies to discern which factors, biological or non-biological, contribute more to the expression of a particular trait. The best designed twin studies are those with the greatest number of subjects.

Identical twins contain 100 percent of the same DNA from conception and are exposed to the same prenatal hormones. So if genes and/or prenatal hormones contributed significantly to transgenderism, we should expect both twins to identify as transgender close to 100 percent of the time.

Skin color, for example, is determined by genes alone. Therefore, identical twins have the same skin color 100 percent of the time.

But in the [largest study of twin transgender adults](#), published by Dr. Milton Diamond in 2013, only 28 percent of the twins both identified as transgender. Seventy-two percent of the time, they differed. Diamond's study reported 20 percent identifying as transgender, but his actual data demonstrates a 28 percent figure, [as I note here](#) in footnote 19.

That 28 percent of identical twins both identified as transgender suggests a minimal biological predisposition, which means transgenderism will not manifest itself without outside non-biological factors also impacting the individual during his lifetime.

The fact that the identical twins differed 72 percent of the time is highly significant because it means that at least 72 percent of what contributes to transgenderism in one twin consists of non-shared experiences after birth—that is, factors not rooted in biology.

Studies like this one prove that the belief in innate gender identity—the idea that feminized or masculinized brains can be trapped in the wrong body from before birth—is a myth that has no basis in science.

## **2. Gender identity is malleable, especially in young children.**

Even the American Psychological Association's Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology admits that, prior to the widespread promotion of transition affirmation, 75 to 95 percent of pre-pubertal children who were distressed by their biological sex eventually outgrew that distress. The vast majority came to accept their biological sex by late adolescence after passing naturally through puberty.

But with transition affirmation now increasing in Western

society, the number of children claiming distress over their gender—and their persistence over time—has dramatically increased. For example, the Gender Identity Development Service in the United Kingdom alone has seen a [2,000- percent increase in referrals since 2009](#).

### **3. Puberty blockers for gender dysphoria have not been proven safe.**

Puberty blockers have been studied and found safe for the treatment of a medical disorder in children called precocious puberty caused by the abnormal and unhealthy early secretion of a child's pubertal hormones.

However, as a [groundbreaking paper in The New Atlantis](#) points out, we cannot infer from these studies whether or not these blockers are safe in physiologically normal children with gender dysphoria.

The authors note that there is some evidence for decreased bone mineralization, meaning an increased risk of bone fractures as young adults, potential increased risk of obesity and testicular cancer in boys and an unknown impact upon psychological and cognitive development.

With regard to the latter, while we currently don't have any extensive, long-term studies of children placed on blockers for gender dysphoria, studies conducted on adults from the past decade give cause for concern.

For example, in [2006](#) and [2007](#), the journal *Psychoneuroendocrinology* reported brain abnormalities in the area of memory and executive functioning among adult women who received blockers for gynecologic reasons. Similarly, many studies of men treated for prostate cancer with blockers also suggest the possibility of significant cognitive decline.

### **4. There are no cases in the scientific literature of gender-dysphoric children discontinuing blockers.**

Most, if not all children on puberty blockers go on to take cross-sex hormones, estrogen for biological boys and testosterone for biological girls. The only study to date to have followed pre-pubertal children who were socially affirmed and placed on blockers at a young age found that 100 percent of them claimed a transgender identity and chose cross-sex hormones.

This suggests that the medical protocol itself may itself lead children to identify as transgender.

There is an obvious self-fulfilling effect in helping children impersonate the opposite sex both biologically and socially. This is far from benign, since taking puberty blockers at age 12 or younger, followed by cross-sex hormones, sterilizes a child.

## **5. Cross-sex hormones are associated with dangerous health risks.**

From [studies of adults](#), we know that the risks of cross-sex hormones include, but are not limited to, cardiac disease, high blood pressure, blood clots, strokes, diabetes and cancers.

## **6. Neuroscience shows that adolescents lack the adult capacity needed for risk assessment.**

Scientific data show that people under the age of 21 have less capacity to assess risks. There is a serious ethical problem in allowing irreversible, life-changing procedures to be performed on minors who are too young themselves to give valid consent.

## **7. There is no proof that affirmation prevents suicide in children.**

Advocates of the transition-affirming protocol allege that suicide is the direct and inevitable consequence of

withholding social affirmation and biological alterations from a gender-dysphoric child. In other words, those who do not endorse the transition-affirming protocol are essentially condemning gender-dysphoric children to suicide.

Yet as noted earlier, prior to the widespread promotion of transition affirmation, 75 to 95 percent of gender-dysphoric youth ended up happy with their biological sex after simply passing through puberty.

In addition, contrary to the claim of activists, there is no evidence that harassment and discrimination, let alone lack of affirmation, are the primary cause of suicide among any minority group. In fact, at least [one study from 2008](#) found perceived discrimination by LGBT-identified individuals not to be causative.

[Over 90 percent](#) of people who commit suicide have a diagnosed mental disorder, and there is no evidence that gender-dysphoric children who commit suicide are any different. Many gender dysphoric children simply need therapy to get to the root of their depression, which very well may be the same problem triggering the gender dysphoria.

## **8. Transition-affirming protocol has not solved the problem of transgender suicide.**

Adults who undergo sex reassignment—even in Sweden, which is among the most LGBT-affirming countries—have a suicide rate [nearly 20 times greater](#) than that of the general population. Clearly, sex reassignment is not the solution to gender dysphoria.

## **Bottom Line: Transition-Affirming Protocol Is Child Abuse**

The crux of the matter is that while the transition-affirming movement purports to help children, it is inflicting a grave injustice on them and their non-dysphoric peers.

These professionals are using the myth that people are born transgender to justify engaging in massive, uncontrolled and un-consented experimentation on children who have a psychological condition that would otherwise resolve after puberty in the vast majority of cases.

Today's institutions that promote transition affirmation are pushing children to impersonate the opposite sex, sending many of them down the path of puberty blockers, sterilization, the removal of healthy body parts and untold psychological damage.

These harms constitute nothing less than institutionalized child abuse. Sound ethics demand an immediate end to the use of pubertal suppression, cross-sex hormones and sex reassignment surgeries in children and adolescents, as well as an end to promoting gender ideology via school curricula and legislative policies.

It is time for our nation's leaders and the silent majority of health professionals to learn exactly what is happening to our children and unite to take action. {eoa}

*Dr. Michelle Cretella is president of the American College of Pediatricians.*

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# **President Trump: 'We Don't Want to See God Pushed Out of**

# the Public Square'

President Donald Trump was the keynote speaker Saturday at the first-ever Celebrate Freedom Rally hosted by First Baptist Dallas pastor Rev. Robert Jeffress in Washington, D.C.

The event celebrated not only the nation's independence, but the hard-fought religious liberty victories that have piled up under the new president. The president acknowledged the role evangelical Christians played in his electoral victory and reiterated his promise to stand up for their religious liberty.

"We don't want to see God forced out of the public square, driven out of our schools or pushed out of our civic life," he said. "We want to see prayers before football games, if they want to give prayers. We want all children to have the opportunity to know the blessings of God.

"We will not allow the government to censor sermons, to restrict the free speech of our pastors and our preachers and the people that we most respect. Like Robert. That is why, just as I promised Pastor Jeffress and other faith leaders, I signed an executive order following—and this is something that makes me very happy and very proud—following through on my campaign pledge to stop the Johnson Amendment from interfering with your First Amendment rights.

"As long as I am president, no one is going to stop you from practicing your faith or from preaching what is in your heart. We want to hear him."

The White House released video of the president's speech Sunday, which you can see in the clip above. {eoa}

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# This Is Why You Can't Find Your Passion for Prayer

I admire people who are passionate. When you and I are passionate about something, we give it our all. We're enthusiastic, bold and persuasive.

However, one area we don't often associate with passion is prayer. Seminars or books on the principles of prayer may fail to help because the topic doesn't awaken our excitement. After years of struggling with "saying my prayers" while longing to be passionate about it, I finally began identifying the enemies of passionate prayer in my life.

## Look at Me

Prayer is often described as talking with God. However, it can be difficult to become passionate about conversing with someone we cannot see. Communication experts confirm our need to sense we're being listened to when we speak. Moms tell children, "Look at me when I'm talking to you." Wives appeal to husbands to put down the newspaper, television remote or smartphone when having a conversation.

My own prayer life suffered because I wondered if God really listened. Did I believe Him when He said, "The LORD hears when I call to him" (Ps. 4:3b). Belief and trust are rooted in relationship. God has shown Himself faithful and trustworthy throughout my relationship with Him. I had no reason not to believe Him, yet the times of waiting for answers to prayer took their toll.

And those who never established a personal relationship with Jesus Christ will find it almost impossible to be passionate about talking with Him. There's a huge difference between knowing *about* God and knowing Him personally through His Son. Attending church every week helps us know about God but does

not guarantee we will be in a relationship with Him.

Even those who do have a personal relationship with the Lord may feel discouraged in prayer because they're not as close to Him as they would like to be. When I first came to know the Lord, I was told prayer would help me develop a closer relationship with Him. But I struggled in my prayer life because I didn't feel close to Him. How could I get close to God if I didn't pray? How could I pray if I didn't feel close to God?

### **Do I Have To?**

For some Christians, prayer has been about the "have-to." Good Christians have to pray. God expects us to pray, other Christians expect it, and we expect it.

One of the quickest ways to kill my passion for something is to tell me I have to do it. Prayer became a chore and a transaction: If I wanted God to answer my requests, He required me to spend time with Him.

This led to another passion-killer in my prayer life—a focus on getting things from God. I spent my time and energy on what God could do for me—not just answers to requests for health, wealth and happiness, but even requests for my own spiritual growth. I wanted to be more holy, to develop the character traits of "love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23). I wanted to be a good wife, a good witness, a good teacher, a good writer.

Although these requests sound spiritual, they were all about *me*. Of course, God wants me to be a good wife or a good teacher, filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit as I serve Him. But first, He wants me to just *be* . . . to be in His presence, to worship Him for who He is and to seek His heart before I seek His hand.

### **Eggshells or Enthusiasm?**

When we're passionate about something, it shows. Ever listen to sports fans at a football game? Their passion is rarely expressed in constrained whispers.

Yet for years I entered the throne room of God as if I were walking on eggshells. I convinced myself it was a sign of respect. Of course, our heavenly Father is worthy of reverence and awe as we approach Him. Yet few parents want their children to tiptoe around them for fear of what they might say or do. We want our children and grandchildren to respect us, yes, but also to love us unreservedly. We want them to know our love for them goes far beyond anything they could ever ask or imagine.

Approaching God timidly might seem like a good thing, but His Word tells us otherwise. "Let us then come with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16), and "we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10:19).

Knowing Jesus is interceding for us ([Heb. 7:25](#)) gives us confidence to approach our heavenly Father. If we enter the presence of God based on our relationship with Jesus Christ, then to come with anything less than confident boldness is to not take God at His Word.

### **Whittling Away at Passion**

Other things can also quench our passion for prayer—including emotions such as:

#### **Discouragement**

When God doesn't answer my prayers the way I want, I can become discouraged. But discouragement in prayer is another way of saying that I don't believe God really knows best. Looking back, however, I've lost count of the number of times I've asked God for things I'm now grateful He's answered with

a resounding “no.”

The more I read God’s Word and grow in intimacy with Him, the more I’ve come to trust His sovereign will. The accompanying assurance that my heavenly Father does, indeed, know best, is a strong antidote for discouragement.

## **Guilt**

Guilt has also been a passion-killer in my prayer life. Guilt over failing to spend enough time with the Lord. Guilt over failing to spend consistent time with Him. And guilt over breaking my promises to do better.

So I stopped making elaborate promises to double and triple my quiet time. Instead of attempting radical overnight increases in my daily quiet time (and failing), I lengthened my quiet time in five-minute increments over a period of several weeks. Instead of trying to wake up two hours earlier the next morning, I set my alarm clock for 15 minutes earlier, increasing it by an additional 15 minutes each week until my quiet time developed into a protected time with my heavenly Father. Slow and steady changes resulted in successes that renewed my passion for the time I spend with the Lord.

## **Pride**

Pride is yet another passion-killer for me. For years, I avoided praying in public, not wanting to do it until I could do it “right.” Pride squelched my passion for prayer because I was concerned about how others perceived the way I prayed.

God reminded me prayer is directed to an audience of One. The only person I’m speaking to is Him. But even with the Lord as my only listener, I still tried to pray as I had heard others pray. Consumed with getting it right, I wondered if I was using the proper words. Were they in the right order? Was my tone religious enough? I had a mental image of God looking down from heaven shaking His head in disappointment, ready to

criticize me for not sounding holy enough.

But God doesn't listen to our prayers with an evaluation checklist. He isn't armed with a rolled-up newspaper, ready to rap us on the nose if our prayers don't sound religious enough. God is looking at our hearts' passion as we speak to Him.

Passionate prayer is a vital component of our relationship with the one, true, living God. Evangelist and teacher Oswald Chambers once described prayer as "getting into perfect communion with God." Now that's something we can all get passionate about!

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## **Will Martial Law in America Pave the Way for the Antichrist?**

Already we are seeing an unprecedented wave of lawlessness in Europe, America and around the world. The scope and complexity of terror networks will soon make it impossible for local law

officials to monitor and quell the rising tide. The provision for martial law, which suspends individual rights, is stated in the U.S. Constitution, article 1, section 9: "The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion, the public Safety may require it."

Martial law would suspend the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the government and install the highest-ranking military officer as governor. That position, appointed by the president of the United States, is the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff.

One possible scenario for the unchallenged rise of the Antichrist would be for the president to declare martial law and install a military governor to address the problem of civil unrest and terror. Other countries experiencing the same kind of unrest would follow suit and install military governors.

The need for coordinated worldwide effort could give rise to a central command center led by one person, similar to the position that General Dwight D. Eisenhower held during World War II as the supreme Allied commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force. From this central command center, a multinational, multidisciplinary force would be directed to ensure that the world was safe and resilient against terrorism. The role of the leader could expand as countries face currency manipulation, border-control threats and cyberattacks. If the person in this position were indeed the Antichrist, he would wield such far-reaching power that he could access financial data, disrupt essential services and alter or steal classified information.

In addition to the removal of Christian influence in the world leading to an unfettered spread of lawlessness, there is another reason people might put their unbridled faith in the Antichrist, even after his promise of peace is quickly

replaced by violence on a worldwide scale. Some economists believe that there is a connection between war and a good economy.

An article in the *Business Insider* a few years ago took a satirical look at the effect World War II had on the American economy. The author made a tongue-in-cheek suggestion that the best way to grow the economy was to start another world war. Although he was not serious about this suggestion, he argued that global war had unexpected positive results that today's more contained conflicts fail to achieve:

*Most economists believe that massive federal government spending on tanks, uniforms, bullets, and battleships ... finally put to an end the paralyzing "deflationary trap" that had existed since the crash of 1929 ... The numbers were indeed staggering. From 1940 to 1944, federal spending shot up more than six times from just \$9.5 billion to \$72 billion. This increase led to a corresponding \$75 billion expansion of US nominal GDP ... In other words, the war effort caused U.S. GDP to increase close to 75 percent in just four years! The War also wiped out the country's chronic unemployment problems ... [and] drew women into the workforce in unprecedented numbers, thereby greatly expanding economic output, according to Peter Schiff, in Business Insider's "Let's Start a Third World War to Save the Global Economy."*

It is easy to see how effortlessly and quickly a person could rise to worldwide power with promises of peace and security against the global threat of terror coupled with economic prosperity. Our world seems ripe for the coming of the man of lawlessness.

The apostle Paul warned his Thessalonian readers to expect a "falling away" from the faith (2 Thess. 2:3). The Greek word for "falling away" is *apostasía*, from which we derive our

English word "apostasy." Paul's message to Timothy was similar: "In the last times some will depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1).

This increasing apostasy will culminate in the rise of a powerful figure who will we can identify as the Antichrist. Once the foundation of lawlessness is laid and apostasy reaches a climax, this figure will appear not as an evil, despotic ruler but a winsome, world-class leader who promises peace.

These will be difficult days on the face of the earth as the "mystery of lawlessness" (2 Thess. 2:7) that began ages ago is now coming to pass. What started with the fall of Lucifer will have intensified and reached a new level:

*Even him, whose coming is in accordance with the working of Satan with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all deception of unrighteousness among those who perish, because they did not receive the love for the truth that they might be saved. Therefore God will send them a strong delusion, that they should believe the lie: that they all might be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:9–12).*

It may surprise you that it is God who sends the "strong delusion" on the inhabitants of the earth. This is in response to their denial of the truth and rejection of Christ. In place of the truth (John 14:6), they will now believe the lie (2 Thess. 2:11). We see a similar action on the part of God in the book of Isaiah: "I also will choose their punishments and will bring their fears on them, because when I called, no one answered; when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did evil before My eyes and chose that in which I did not delight" (Is. 66:4).

People in the last days will be looking for a savior of the

world and, having rejected Jesus, will gladly welcome the Antichrist and yield to his authority. They are deceived by identity theft at the highest level. All too soon will the world discover that its newly chosen leader, who promised peace and prosperity, is actually a pawn of Satan, who quickly reverts to his true nature of evil and violence—at a level the world has never before seen.

The influx and acceptance of the demonic into our culture will pave the way for the entrance of this individual so sinister that he will make all the despotic rulers of the past look like amateurs.

Satan and his demonic forces are moving to install their man for the hour. For generations Satan has been waiting to empower someone as a puppet whom he can control to rule over the world.

These are days that demand that we know the time, awake from our sleep and realize that darkness is advancing. People who lack the ability to understand the times are easily shaken by the turn of world events. They question God and worry about the rise of evil in our day. Those who filled and anointed by the Spirit will host the presence of God and bring heaven to earth. God wants us to be secure in our faith and able to move in the spirit realm with power and confidence.

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**Phil Hotsenpiller** is a pastor and expert in the field of end-time prophecy. His new book, [One Nation without Law](#), is now available nationwide.

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# Scriptures to Combat the Master of Confusion in Your Life

Confusion is one of the enemy's best tactics. He pulls it out at his whim to send us off on wild-goose chases in the midst of our intentional focus to get integral projects done and especially to discern what door to knock on, open and then walk through.

## Master of Confusion

Back in the 1980s, I did a Bible study on prayer. I can't remember the name of it, but one concept has remained with me. When God is about to do something amazing in our lives, we will be offered a tremendous substitute.

This is where the evil one, the master of confusion, really gets me every time. He is so good at giving me the tremendous substitute that I seem to go for it every time. Is it God or Memorex? Is it God's choice or a really, really great copy?

The confusion comes in at the point of stepping out in faith. I know that God wants me to follow Him: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). But what if there is no voice, just a wide open door? What if the door really appears to lead exactly to what I have been praying about but may be designed by the former angel of light to appear that way?

## What Is Confusion?

The dictionary definition of confusion is a "lack of understanding; uncertainty; a situation of panic; a breakdown of order; a disorderly jumble; the state of being bewildered or unclear in one's mind about something; bewilderment,

perplexity, puzzlement.”

What is bewilderment? Oh, that definition is easy. The dictionary says it is to be confused. Circular thinking is so perplexing we have no idea what anything is any more. We just go 'round and 'round in the possibilities.

We weigh options to the point that no option seems to work. We've been praying. Then out of the blue, a door opens, and we just know that has to be God showing us the way. We walk through the door expecting the answer we've been praying for, and instead, another door slams in our face.

My first thought screams, “Beware: tremendous substitute!” It could be, but is it? Is it the evil one luring us into a trap, or is it God positioning us for a breakthrough?

### **Getting From Here to There**

Whenever I walk through an open door in faith and something happens, I can't beat myself up for making what I perceive is a wrong decision. I must have confidence in my Father God that He can get me there from here. As a very human individual, I evaluate everything through my five senses.

God, though, calls me to a deeper sense of knowing. This spiritual sense is a mystery we can never explain. He wants us to walk by faith, not by what we can see. Faith is not something we can evaluate by our five senses, our emotions or our intellect. Faith “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

Suppose there are two doors available to me. Is one right and the other wrong? Or maybe both are right? Maybe both will lead me to God's plan. Maybe there is no wrong way when I am walking in faith that God will lead me where I cannot see (2 Cor. 5:7).

### **What Is God's Plan**

Romans tells us “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

The master of confusion’s plan is that we not take any door open to us and that we never step out in faith, that we always stay in fear and circular thinking. His desire is that we stay stuck in the turmoil of having to make a decision.

Never acting, always staying mired in indecision, is not God’s plan. We have to be moving to be directed. “Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand and when you turn to the left” (Is. 30:21).

What if I make life-changing choices based on an open door, and the door seems to slam shut in my face? Then with all my heart, I truly know God will open a window. I also know I don’t see like God sees.

That open door may have just been what I needed to make that life-changing choice He’s been trying to get me to make forever. I just needed a more earthly encouragement to take that leap of faith. Once I jumped, the door seemed to shut because I no longer needed that incentive.

### **God Has a Purpose**

Now where I am I? I’m right where God wants me to be—100 percent dependent on Him. I’m walking by my spiritual insight called faith, not by my physical sight. I’m walking in a manner consistent with my confident belief that God will never let me down (2 Cor. 5:7).

One thing I know about God, He has plans for my me, “plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

Peace is just the opposite of confusion. We have an enemy who

knows this well. He will keep us in discord and total confusion until the open doors close.

God keeps calling us to the open door while we try to evaluate it by our earthly wisdom. God's opens doors can never be evaluated by our head. They must be evaluated by our heart. Are we willing to trust God or not?

Whatever door is open, pray and then muster up the courage to walk through, holding tight to Jesus' hands. In His hands is where we must leave the outcome of our faith walk. Then without waiting, we must walk through the next open door.

### **God's Will**

It's not always a straight shot to God's will. Sometimes He needs to take us through the fire so we can be purified before we step into the destiny assignment He has waiting there.

When we are desiring above all else to follow God's will, we can't go wrong. When we step out in faith, we will always fall right into the arms of grace, whether it looks like it or not.

Despite what we feel or think, we must always keep going. We must always walk right out of confusion and into His peace. No matter what, all things will work together. That's His promise to us. {eoa}

**Teresa Shields Parker** is a wife, mother, Christian weight loss coach, speaker and author of [Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor](#), [Sweet Freedom: Losing Weight and Keeping It Off with God's Help](#) and [Sweet Change: True Stories of Transformation](#). Get a free chapter of all her books, plus many other free resources, on her blog at [TeresaShieldsParker.com](http://TeresaShieldsParker.com). Connect with her there or on her Facebook page, [Twitter](#), [Pinterest](#) or [Instagram](#).

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