

What's Holding You Back From God's Unthinkable Power?

I have experienced so many things in my life that I never would have thought possible or dared to dream. I was raised in a single-parent home on what some would consider the wrong side of town. Yet seemingly against all odds God blessed me to finish college with a degree in biology and chemistry, have a successful career in corporate and nonprofit sectors, marry a wonderful man, and raise children who make us both so proud. Today my husband and I lead a wonderful church, The Fountain of Praise in Houston, Texas, and I travel the world preaching and teaching God's Word.

At one time the life I now live would have been unimaginable to me. Unthinkable. Too unlikely for me to even desire. But God taught me that He is able to do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20, NKJV). God did the unthinkable in my life when I decided not to settle for life as I had known it. I wanted more out of life than I had seen growing up, and as I had placed my desire before God, He showed me how to break out of poverty and a self-limiting mind-set. He began to open my eyes to what He had in store for me, and His plans were beyond what I would have dreamed. I still cannot fathom all He wants for me, but I have learned to trust God with the things that seem impossible to me.

You see, when God began to show me His desires for my life, I began to study the godly examples of men and women in the Bible to discover my full potential in God. When I began to apply what I was learning, God began to do "exceedingly abundantly" above all I could ask or think. And I was empowered to be my best!

As I studied these individuals, I noticed that they often did

what others dared not do. They stepped out of their comfort zones and took bold steps of faith, at times defying convention and cultural norms, and their choices brought life-changing results. They did the unthinkable and experienced the impossible.

Many times we allow ourselves to live according to others' expectations of us. We let those around us or our circumstances define how far we can go or what we can accomplish. But it's time to rethink the boundaries you've set around your life. It's time to push the margins, press beyond the norm, and join hands with the One whose dreams for you are bigger than you think.

I want to challenge you to raise your level of expectation. My prayer is that this will compel you to take a close look at your life and ask yourself some tough questions: Have I limited myself because someone said I couldn't do something? Am I holding back because someone said I shouldn't try something new? Have I talked myself out of going somewhere I have never been? If you're like me and most of the women I know, your answer to at least one of these questions is a resounding yes. But that can change.

First, you must trust God. Believing God is the bedrock of experiencing the life God desires for you. Only through Him are all things possible. Then, have a desire to get closer to God and not seek personal aggrandizement. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide your actions, not your ambitions. Focus on seeking and pleasing God first, not your community or certain religious leaders.

If you are tired of being restricted, or if you have ever felt marginalized or been made to feel that your voice isn't powerful or important this word is for you. I want you to consider all the things you have desired to do but have been too afraid to try. Then ask the Holy Spirit to embolden you as He did the biblical figures we study.

God wants to do in our lives what He did in theirs. He wants to heal our wounds, transform our marriages, save our children, bring us out of desperate circumstances, deliver us from bondage, and make us vessels of honor. Our God has no limits, and He wants you to let Him do the unthinkable in and through you!

✘ *Adapted from Unthinkable by Mia K. Wright, copyright 2018, published by Charisma House. This book will help you not settle for the “status quo” in your life, but to trust God to help you accomplish so much more. The author uses the lives of 10 biblical personalities as examples to encourage you and show you how God did the unthinkable and obtained miraculous results through them. To order your copy, click on this link.*

Prayer Power for the Week of April 1, 2018

This week as we're reminded of the glorious resurrection of Christ, let's continue to focus on the victories ahead and thank God for the outpouring of His Spirit, the spread of revival fires, and His soon return. Pray for our nation and its leaders, the protection of our borders and allies, more laborers for the harvest fields and the next generation. 1 Thes. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:8

Why an Eternal Hell Is Justifiable

One question I receive quite often is, “Why does 70 or 80 years of sin in our lives deserve an eternity of torment in hell? That doesn't sound reasonable. The crime doesn't seem to fit the punishment.”

There are several reasons. First, the greater the one sinned against, the graver the sin. In other words, if I lie to you about my age, that would be wrong. But if I lie to the Supreme Court, it would be far worse because of their position. If I punch my brother in the stomach, that would be wrong. But if I punch my mother in the stomach, it would be far worse because of her position.

God is infinitely greater in position and in being. Now as far as being, if I step on a bug and kill it, it's not such a big deal even though it's life. But if I kill a dog or a cat, it would be far worse. And if I kill a human being, it would be much, much worse. God is infinitely greater in position and in being therefore, we are deserving of eternal punishment.

Some people think that time spent in hell should pay for their sin. Time is the wrong premise. Our time is not valuable enough to pay for sin. Only the shed blood of Jesus can do that. It took an eternal God to pay for our eternal sin. In addition, God sent the most precious thing He has, His Son. He was beaten and suffered a horrific death on the cross for our sins, yet many people reject what God values the most. They are in essence saying to God, "I do not value Your Son. He means nothing to me, so don't bother me with your views."

Hebrews 10:29 states: "How much more severe a punishment do you suppose he deserves, who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded the blood of the covenant that sanctified him to be a common thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" Romans 1:18 says that there is wrath coming on man for his sin but the good news is in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, it states, "Jesus ... delivered us from the wrath to come."

There is a court trial coming in heaven at judgment day. God tells us the outcome of the trial ahead of time so that we can prepare and avoid the sentence of death. We won't have to pay the penalty for our sins because Jesus paid it for us, but

only if we have trusted in what He did for us. Jesus said He is the only way of salvation (John 14:6). The wisest man that ever lived, besides Jesus, was King Solomon, and he said in Proverbs 27:12, "A prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished."

The question I have for you is, "Will you be the wise man who trusts in Jesus, or the simple one who rejects Him?"

Excerpt from Bill's books, What Happens When I Die? and 23 Questions About Hell.

The Hidden Science That Proves Jesus Definitely Died on the Cross

When atheists find evidence of Jesus' resurrection and become believers, you know there must be more than just faith that it happened. Two of the most famous former atheists came to a recent Truth for a New Generation conference outside this North Carolina city to talk about how they ended up strong defenders of the fact Christ really did rise from the dead.

As a successful cold case detective, J. Warner Wallace became so well known at solving decades-old murders, he ended up as the foremost expert on national TV true crime shows.

But as an atheist, he decided to turn his superior detective skills on disproving the resurrection of Jesus Christ... or even proving it if the evidence should somehow take him there.

He remembered telling himself, "I'm going to have to figure out how to evaluate that for its truthfulness given this skill

set that I had as a cold case detective.”

CBN News talked to him at this crowded conference where many hundreds gathered to hear Wallace and others tell their stories and learn how their faith in Christ rests on solid evidence.

Tackling Theories Against the Resurrection

For years some doubters clung to one theory that Jesus didn't actually die on the cross but was just nearly dead and revived later.

Wallace points out when you work with dead bodies all the time like he has and people in Christ's time did, you can definitely tell “dead” from “nearly dead.”

“As a homicide detective, I'm thinking ‘I've seen a lot of dead people, and I know what dead people look like,’” he said, and then talked about something called “the mortis triad.”

“That hot blood's going to stop circulating, you're going to cool down. That's called algor mortis,” he stated. “You'll be cool to the touch. And we can actually judge time of death based on how cool.”

Jesus Really Was Dead

This author of *Cold-Case Christianity* moved on, saying, “This is something I've seen my entire career: There's the thing called rigor mortis. It's the second of the mortis triad. And you'll see that kind of stiffness. You won't be as flexible as you would be if you were just unconscious.”

And Warner finds in the Gospel of John a key point of proof that Jesus wasn't faking it and that He really did die: a line about blood and water coming out of Jesus' body on the cross when a Roman soldier pierced him with a spear.

“Water will collect in your lungs,” he explained. “Now if that

happens, if you pierce that cavity, you will see a separation of blood and water.”

It struck Wallace powerfully that John wrote of this, saying, “He was either so clever that he included some little-known biological fact that nobody would discover for 1800 years or he just reported what he saw. And as a result we have a good piece of hidden science that confirms that Jesus actually died of cardiac arrest and was dead at the point of the body being taken off the cross.”

As a young atheist, Josh McDowell set off to write *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* to show the evidence about Christ, including His resurrection, was so weak, the verdict would be “Not True.”

“The resurrection was one of several things I knew I had to refute as a non-believer,” McDowell recalled.

How Could He Move? Or Roll Away the Stone?

But instead of refuting, he became so convinced it happened, he spends dozens of pages in *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* knocking down false theories, like the one suggesting Christ didn’t really die but woke up and escaped from the tomb.

“There were a hundred and some pounds of encasement of aromatic spices and gumming of cement consistency around His body, wrapped tightly in three separate linen cloths weighing about 117 pounds,” McDowell told CBN News.

He continued, “Christ was encased in that, and it becomes hardened. Second, how would He be able to move in such a state like that a one-and-a-half to two-ton stone away from the entrance?”

Did the Disciples Steal the Body?

As for the theory His disciples stole the body, the Jewish leaders opposed to Jesus were so worried about that exact

thing happening, they talked the Romans into putting a massive guard group—as many as 16 soldiers—outside the tomb.

McDowell scoffed, “The impossibility of that! That they could have climbed through there, tiptoed around all the guards and become invisible to the guards in front of the tomb, rolled a one-and-a-half to two-ton stone that in that day that they said 20 men couldn’t move it.”

Wallace can’t accept this was all just a conspiracy, because detectives know those often fall apart when there are too many conspirators and the people involved face real threats if they don’t recant.

He pointed out, “And we don’t have a single, ancient record of any of the disciples ever recanting, when that was often the goal of the people who were persecuting Christians.”

Wallace pointed out courts don’t expect the law to prove absolutely no possible doubt. Only no reasonable doubt.

“So is it possible that they conspired for 60 years, at 500 plus people, under immense pressure with not enough family relationships to hold it together?” Wallace asked. “Yeah, it’s possible. It’s just not reasonable.”

Jesus Appeared to All Sorts of People

Debunkers say Jesus in the biblical accounts only showed up to his closest followers, those most likely to lie about His resurrection. But McDowell said the opposite is true.

“He appeared to the Apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus, who was anything but a follower of Christ. He despised Christ as a false Messiah,” McDowell said.

He also pointed out Jesus appeared to James, saying, “You take James, His brother. James was not a follower of Jesus Christ. He was embarrassed by Christ, his brother, going out and doing these things and claiming these things. But James ended up

coming to Christ and became a leader of the Jerusalem church.”

No Two People—Much Less 500—Have the Same Hallucination

The Bible talks about Christ after His Resurrection showing up before 500 people. Some debunkers say that was likely just a mass hallucination. Neither Wallace or McDowell buy that.

McDowell interviewed five experts and learned, “No two people ever have the same hallucination because there’s no external reference to it. It’s all internal.”

Wallace added, “There’s just no history of kind of group hallucinations with the kind of detail that we see in the gospels. So I was never fond of that explanation.”

Worshipping Jesus

McDowell stated, “In my research to refute Christianity, I became convinced the Church would never have been founded without the resurrection. Everything that they did pointed back to that.”

One huge thing they did: break the Sabbath and worship Jesus as they did it. Remember: all the early believers were fervent Jews who had believed they faced dire danger if they broke the Sabbath.

Alex McFarland—who organized this Truth for a New Generation conference—points out how that changed right after Jesus’ resurrection.

“Pious Jews whose very relationship with God is contingent on keeping a Sabbath that they’ve observed for centuries, suddenly overnight begin to worship on Sunday. Why? Something must have happened. Well, Sunday was resurrection day.”

“Now you have to understand what it meant to the Jew if they ever broke the Sabbath,” McDowell explained. “It could mean death.”

The Resurrection Proves It All

But the resurrection on a Sunday had been the proof positive that Jesus was indeed the Risen Lord, worthy of worship on that day of the week.

“If Christ physically rose from the grave, then that proves His identity, message and credentials,” McFarland pointed out. “What was His identity? God Incarnate. What was His message? Salvation by faith in what He did on the cross. His credentials? Virgin born, sinless life, rose from the dead, i.e.: He is the Savior.”

McDowell told CBN News the meaning of it all is so powerful and overwhelming, it still touches him deeply more than half a century after he first came to believe Jesus was indeed the resurrected Son of God, able to conquer death.

“It gives me hope that as Christ was raised from the dead, I shall be, too. Because of that,” he stated.

McFarland added, “In the empty tomb, we have it all, ironclad, guaranteed. I tell people the tomb was left empty so that your life could be made full.” {eoa}

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**Believers Rejoice After
Government Reinstates Good**

Friday Holiday

Widespread protests have forced the government in Christian-majority Meghalaya State in northeast India to restore the Good Friday holiday.

The coalition government, to which the Hindu nationalist BJP is a partner, had declared in a circular that Good Friday would be a normal “working day,” but the move was withdrawn on Tuesday, March 27.

“We are happy that the government officials acted promptly and reversed the controversial order,” a senior Christian leader based in state capital, Shillong, told World Watch Monitor today.

. Basaiawmoit, a Presbyterian Church member and former vice-president of the National Council of Churches in India, said that he wrote a letter to key government officials as soon as he heard about the plan on Saturday, March 24.

The circular was issued by the BSNL, an Indian telecom corporation, and the Indian Council for Agricultural Research, but only in Meghalaya, where Christians account for 75 per cent of the state’s population of three million.

In his letter, Basaiawmoit said he had questioned why Christians were being denied the religious freedom guaranteed to them under the constitution, and asked whether the order was only “a fabricated one to create confusion and resentment.”

Meanwhile, the leaders of a political party called Khun Hynniewtrep National Awakening Movement (KHNAM) met Rajendra Kumar, BSNL general manager for Meghalaya, to seek “clarification” on the order.

“We object to any central government offices declaring Good

Friday as a working day," KHNAM's leaders said at a news conference on March 26. "This decision was against the sentiments of the Christians and against the provisions of the constitution."

Meghalaya state witnessed similar protests around Good Friday 2017 after the BJP-led federal government chose Good Friday to launch 'Digital India Day'. But following protests, three Christian-majority states in the northeast, including Meghalaya, were exempted from its observation.

Similarly, the BJP-led government in Gujarat in western India, the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was forced to retract its bid to make Good Friday a "working day" in 2016.

There was also a furor in 2015 when India's second-most populous state, Maharashtra, launched Good Governance Day and asked its employees to conduct training programmes on Christmas Day. Both Good Friday and Christmas Day are national holidays in India.

"This episode shows that the BJP will do anything wherever they are in power," Basaiawmoit said. "We have to be on the alert."

"I cannot understand why national organisations should issue orders to offend a community in a particular state," he added. "This cannot be seen in isolation from the BJP becoming a part of the ruling coalition after the February election."

The recent local elections in Meghalaya led to a hung Assembly, with the ruling Congress Party winning 21 out of 60 seats and the BJP's major partner, NPP, winning 19. With the support of splinter parties, the BJP eventually put together 34 seats and so formed a government.

Meanwhile, church leaders in nearby Nagaland State, where more than 90 percent of the population is Christian and where there is also a new BJP-led government, have rejected the new

government's proposal to sponsor free Holy Land pilgrimages for Christians, a promise the BJP had made ahead of elections.

Following up on its electoral promise, the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) government, of which the BJP is a major partner, announced the introduction of a new program called 'Holy Land tours and pilgrimages'.

However, Nagaland's churches in a joint press statement on March 24 said such promises were "not in sync with the secular ethos of the country". {eo}

This article originally appeared on World Watch Monitor.

Tribute to a Great Servant of the Lord

Cecil Wiggins was a great pastor and fervent proponent of the baptism of the Holy Spirit as well as one of the largest givers to missions in the Assemblies of God. He died quietly in his home last Saturday, as we reported here. He was 87.

Even though you may not have heard of him, he was well-known in Jacksonville, Florida, where he pastored Evangel Temple Assemblies of God for 45 years. In 2010, he turned the church over to his son and longtime associate, Garry Wiggins. It is the largest Assembly of God in that part of Florida, and he was widely known and respected all over the state.

I knew Brother Wiggins, as I called him, for 46 years. He was a good friend of my father-in-law, the late Rev. Harvey Ferrell, who pastored in Jacksonville when I met Brother Wiggins. I remember attending a Good Friday service with my

future father-in-law at Evangel Temple in 1972. That was almost exactly 46 years ago—before I married Joy. Over the years, I've become friends with his son, Garry, and attended church services at Evangel Temple many times. When I visited, Brother Wiggins would always say something to me about how he loved my father-in-law, who passed away 22 years ago.

Wednesday, I attended Wiggins' funeral in Jacksonville, and though I don't often write about funerals, his was one of the nicest I've ever attended. It gave me an opportunity to give tribute to his life and legacy. What impressed me most was what he wanted on his tombstone: "Servant of the Lord."

He was eulogized again and again by prominent ministers such as John Kilpatrick, Wayne Blackburn, Terry Raburn, Paul Zink and Jim Raley—all of whom discussed his spotless integrity and his deep prayer life. They talked about how he had built Evangel Temple from a fairly small church to the megachurch it is today. It seems to me Garry is cut out of the same cloth. Several of Brother Wiggins' grandchildren are on the staff or involved in the church, as are other family members.

His grandson, Pastor Jordan Wiggins, spoke about the last time he talked to his granddad—the day before he died—about having to preach a funeral for a 2-month-old baby. Brother Wiggins said he should preach about how King David grieved when his baby died and then got up and went on. Second Samuel 12:23 quotes David as saying: "But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Am I able to bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me." Now Jordan said he can't bring back his granddad, but later we can all go to him, implying heaven.

Missionary and evangelist David Grant shared how he recently talked to Brother Wiggins about missions, his passion.

Approximately 2,500 attended the service. It was respectful and dignified, but there was also rousing charismatic worship and some of Brother Wiggins' favorite songs, such as "I'd

Rather Have Jesus.”

Garry said it was his dad’s wish that he preach his funeral. He talked about what a good man his dad was, how fun-loving and family-oriented. Then he compared him to great Bible leaders and to Jesus Himself.

Finally, they played a video of the last time Brother Wiggins preached—March 7, two and a half weeks before he died. He looked vibrant, but the family said he was failing. He talked about casting out devils and speaking in new tongues. Then at the end, he gave an altar call and invited people to accept Jesus. What a fitting way to finish a wonderful service. If you want to watch the service, go to the church’s website. You can also contribute to the Cecil Wiggins Memorial Fund, as I am doing.

I can’t attend a wonderful funeral of a great man of God without wondering what my family and associates will say about me when I’ve finished my race. I hope I’m remembered as Cecil Wiggins was: a man of prayer, generous in missions and a servant of the Lord.

Who Separated Passover from Easter?

This year, as Christians celebrate Good Friday, Jews will be celebrating Passover. But most years, the two holidays are separated, sometimes by several weeks. How did we end up with two distinct holy seasons when, in the beginning, they were one?

It’s important to remember that, 2000 years ago, there were

not two different faiths, Judaism and Christianity. Instead, Jesus the Jewish Messiah came to His Jewish people with a message of salvation, and that message was then preached to the whole world.

In the beginning, it was an exclusively Jewish movement, and the first disciples were all Jews, with names like Yaakov (James) and Yehuda (Judas) and Yochanan (John). In fact, the Lord's name was Yeshua, not Jesus, and He was a rabbi, not a reverend. As for His mother, her name was Miriam, not Mary.

And when did Yeshua die for our sins? It was in conjunction with the Passover. And He rose from the dead on Firstfruits, which took place on the first day after the Passover Sabbath. (In other words, on that Sunday.) And when did He send the Holy Spirit? It was at Pentecost, the Jewish feast of Weeks (Shavuot).

So these momentous events—the Messiah's death and resurrection and sending the Spirit—all happened in conjunction with the Jewish biblical calendar. (See Leviticus 23; for more on the Jewish roots of the faith, see my book *The Real Kosher Jesus*.)

This was understood by many of the first Gentile converts, which is why Paul wrote this to the believers in Corinth: "Therefore purge out the old yeast, that you may be a new batch, since you are unleavened. For even Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old yeast, nor with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

Over time, the followers of Jesus began to mark the day of His death and the day of His resurrection, leading to what we know today as Good Friday and Resurrection (or Easter) Sunday. But at first, this was done during the Passover season. How, then, did it get separated, becoming a separate holiday called Easter?

Messianic Jewish scholar Mark Kinzer explains:

“The point of disagreement was this: should the Gentile *ekklesia* [congregation, church] commemorate the death and resurrection of Yeshua on the fourteenth of Nisan, when the Jews celebrate the Passover? Those who said yes were called the Quartodecimans (from the Latin word for “fourteenth”). Their practice likely derived from the early Jewish *ekklesia*. The small communities of Jewish Yeshua-believers in the second century almost certainly maintained this custom. ... The problem came from the fact that the Gentile *ekklesia* of the province of Asia (in Asia minor) was Quartodeciman and claimed that their practice was of apostolic origin.

“The Quartodeciman controversy observing was disturbing, since (if followed) it would obligate the entire *ekklesia* to order its liturgical calendar in accordance with the decisions of the Jewish community. In a matter of great practical import it expressed dependence upon and even solidarity with the wider Jewish world” (*Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism*, 199).

The problem, then, was simple: Following the Jewish calendar was too Jewish for the increasingly Gentile church! The idea of a Sunday celebration of the resurrection was not the real issue, since that could have been done, theoretically, in conjunction with Firstfruits. The issue was having a major Christian (which by then meant “non-Jewish”) holy day determined by the Jewish calendar. That was simply unacceptable, leading to the final decision at the Nicene Council in A.D. 325. As Kinzer notes, “Constantine’s language is almost embarrassingly direct.”

To quote the decision directly:

“It was declared to be particularly unworthy for this, the holiest of all festivals, to follow the custom [the calculation] of the Jews, who had soiled their hands with the most fearful of crimes, and whose minds were blinded. In

rejecting their custom, we may transmit to our descendants the legitimate mode of celebrating Easter, which we have observed from the time of the Saviour's Passion to the present day [according to the day of the week]. We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews, for the Saviour has shown us another way; our worship follows a more legitimate and more convenient course (the order of the days of the week); and consequently, in unanimously adopting this mode, we desire, dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews, for it is truly shameful for us to hear them boast that without their direction we could not keep the feast ... it would be still be your duty not to tarnish your soul by communications with such wicked people [the Jews]."

Yes, such language is "almost embarrassingly direct," not to mention shamefully unchristian. How painfully ironic that the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah had to be separated from anything Jewish! If ever there was a tragic severing of Jewish roots, this was it.

How, then, do we reconnect these severed roots? My proposal is radical, requiring a change of the most commonly-used Church calendar. But, to be candid, severing Easter from Passover was radical.

Here, then, is what I propose. Let the Church celebrate Easter in conjunction with Passover, coordinating its calendar with the biblical, Jewish calendar. And during the Passover week, commemorate Yeshua's death on Friday and His resurrection on Sunday. Can anyone give me a biblically-based reason not to?

Fasting Applies Extra Pressure to the Spiritual Realm

Have we forgotten the hidden secret of fasting? I believe that we have. Watch the Fasting Forum [here](#).

In Matthew 17:21, Jesus said that a certain evil spirit does not go out of a person except by prayer and fasting. Some manuscripts disagree on whether this verse should be there or not, but the principle is found throughout scripture: Fasting applies pressure to the spiritual realm. Arthur Wallace notes, "Often, pressure has to be maintained before there is a breakthrough in heavenly warfare." It appears that some demonic activity is not released until pressure is applied through prayer and fasting.

The weapons we use to fight Satan are not physical; they are spiritual. The weapons should match the warfare! Satan cannot be eliminated with an AR-15, but we can fast and pray. Those two high-caliber spiritual bullets do substantial damage. Open the Word of God, pray, meditate, and worship for the fatal blow: "'Not by might nor by power but by My spirit,' sayeth the Lord" (Zech. 4:6 KJV).

Two wills cannot successfully live in the same body—our self-will and God's will. We can't defeat what we feed. First John 2:16 (NIV) states, "For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world." Society says, "Be yourself! Embrace your longings! Feed your desires!" However, we know that gluttony and indulging the flesh never lead to spiritual victory, or any victory for that matter. Some strongholds hang on piece by piece. We must "resist the devil" and he will eventually flee (cf. James 4:7). Fasting

disciplines the body, prayer and worship binds the enemy, and the Word provides wisdom. Fasting ignites a hunger for God as well as direction.

Don't misunderstand, I'm not promoting a works-based religion; I'm demonstrating the importance of spiritual disciplines that produce godly fruit. What is dead in your life that you know God is wanting to resurrect? What dream, goal or godly ambition is waiting to be realized? Is there a stronghold that has been gripping your life? Do you desire a deeper walk with God and increased spiritual hunger? Do you need help in the area of self-discipline and temperance? Do you need a breakthrough, direction or peace? Is all hell breaking loose in your life? Are there great obstacles ahead? Then it's time to prepare for battle through prayer and fasting.

Ask God for direction and set a target date. Remove the hindrances within your home such as junk food and junk media—out of sight, out of mind. Fuel the completion of your fast by praying, reading, worshiping and listening to sermons on fasting. Have a prayer list available. It's a battle—a hunger strike against hell—it's challenging and difficult, but the pain of discipline far outweighs the pain of regret.

After my first seven-day water fast that I stumbled through, Fox News contacted me to fly to New York to debate a pastor with opposing views on morality. (It can be viewed here: [.](#)) While there, my wife and I also met two strong Christian men who I look up to, Jim Cymbala at the Brooklyn Tabernacle and Kirk Cameron at the Fox Studio, all in two days. Additionally, God grew the church, expanded our reach, and healed old wounds. A perfect fast didn't do this, but God, through His mercy, honored my feeble attempt, and He will do the same for you.

The vast majority of the heroes of the faith fasted, and it's still very common in many places. But in America, our fullness is our downfall. Leonard Ravenhill said, "When there's

something in the Bible that churches don't like [such as fasting], they call it legalism."

Whether it's on the radio, television, Internet or at church, we often hear that God has a wonderful plan for our life and that Christianity is easy and carefree. But as Ray Comfort notes, "The preacher promises a bed of roses for those who come to Christ, but those who are in Christ are evidently sitting on a painful bed of thorns." We have turned following Christ into an easy path rather than a narrow road. We've made Jesus a butler rather than a King. We want the cross light, the road easy, and the burdens lifted.

Spiritual disciplines are not intended to only break down strongholds, but to also build us back up. Don't misunderstand, God blesses His people. We should pray for, enjoy and encourage His blessings. But a wonderful, comfortable life is not always a blessing. As the Bible teaches, the presence and the power of God in our lives is always a blessing: "The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

Christians are called to be lean, fighting machines. I'm not talking about body weight, but spiritual weight—weight to pull down strongholds. Leonard Ravenhill said, "How can you pull down strongholds of Satan if you don't even have the strength to turn off your TV?" We could add, "How can we pull down strongholds of Satan if we don't even have the strength to say no to food?"

I'm not teaching perfectionism. No one has complete mastery over the flesh, but our goal should be victory rather than constant defeat. Deeply embedded addictions can be reversed by starving the flesh. We are not powerless. We give control to either the flesh or the Spirit. James 4:5 reminds us that our spirit has envious yearnings. Do we yield to these yearnings, or do we give in to the pull of the flesh? We will crave more of what we feed. Fasting silences the voice of the flesh.

We all fall short. The only difference between those who succeed and those who fail is that those who succeed get back up again. Fasting doesn't twist God's arm; it realigns our heart with His and gets us back on track; it gives us wisdom and discernment for crucial issues. Discernment is one of our greatest challenges today. I came across this news clip some time ago that illustrates my point:

A 17-year old Dutch girl who died on Monday during a bungee jump misheard instructions and jumped on the "no jump" instruction. One of the Spanish instructors on the bridge when the teenager plunged 40 meters to her death has told police the girl jumped before her harness was clipped on to the bungee cord. An instructor told Spanish television channel RTVE that she had said, "No jump. No jump," but that the girl may have misheard and thought she said, "Now jump."

So tragic. Too many today are listening to the wrong voice. Are you? The ultimate goal of sin is to destroy our testimony and our lives by following the wrong voice. Obviously, we are to spend time in God's Word seeking wisdom and discernment, but fasting aids the process. We don't want to go when God says, "No!"

**Martin Sheen Plays Oral
Roberts in Netflix's
Pentecostal Universalist**

Movie

Netflix's *Come Sunday* tells the story of Bishop Carlton Pearson, a popular Pentecostal pastor mentored by Oral Roberts who was deemed a heretic when he adopted Universalist theology. The movie stars Chiwetel Ejiofor as Pearson and Martin Sheen as Roberts. The official trailer is available [here](#), and the movie debuts April 13 on Netflix.

5 Signs of a Truly Spirit-Filled Church

Darren Rouanzoin, pastor of the Garden Church in Long Beach, California, says the Bible outlines five major characteristics of a Spirit-filled church. In this sermon, he uses a combination of metaphors and deep Bible teaching to show his church the power of walking in the Spirit.

God's Not Dead Star: 'Is the Church Relevant Today in Our Society?'

David A.R. White says he wants the *God's Not Dead* films to raise important questions that challenge people. White talks about the central questions of the series' third film, *God's*

Not Dead: A Light in the Darkness, in an interview with Movieguide. Don't miss it.