

Christian Shares How God Sustained Him Through 19 Months in Chinese Prison

Kevin Garratt is a Canadian Christian who spent 19 months in a Chinese prison on charges of spying and espionage. Garratt explains how his faith in God got him through the persecution and the surprising ways he was able to minister to his fellow inmates. Listen to his story and pray for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in China.

Sadie Robertson Weighs In on 'Touchy Subject' of Modesty

Sadie Robertson says she doesn't want to weigh in on the modesty debate—but she will. In a new vlog, the Duck Dynasty star explains her feelings on the modesty debate the best way she knows how. What do you think? Give us your take on the hot modesty debate in the comments.

Prophetic Vision: 'Many Have

Waited Faithfully for Years, but Now I Will Open the Right Doors for Them'

I recently had a vision where I was walking down a long hallway. I had a great expectancy as I kept walking down this hallway. I noticed that there were doors all along its sides, some to the right and some to the left. Again, as I kept walking, I felt an excitement, and joy begin to build. I kept walking straight ahead and came to a door directly in front of me. I felt the Lord say, "This is your door."

So I opened the door, and as I walked through it, I came upon another door. I opened it and walked through the next door and another door opened to me. This happened many times. I keep opening door after door, one right after another. Then I heard the Lord say, "There are so many people who have been patient in the process, walking with Me for years, and they have been waiting on the right time and the right door to be opened for them. They've prayed about the doors they have come across and have been faithful to stay out of the wrong doors and opportunities. But now I am leading many into the right place, at the right time, and the right doors are opening for them."

God was showing to me in this vision that this is not just a season for one door to be opened for people. Instead this is a season of multiplied doors. God is sending open doors to you, one right after another after another. Not just one door, but multiple doors. Many people are waiting for God to just open one door. God doesn't just want to open up one door for you, He wants to open up multiple doors for you in this season. You don't have to look for doors of opportunity; open doors will find you. You don't have to ask for favor; the favor of God will find you.

If you are faithful to stay in the secret place of fasting, prayer and seeking the Lord God will open doors for you. You won't have to go looking or knocking on doors. As you stay humble and walk in humility, God will open up doors for you that you can't even imagine. When you walk through each door, you will have the insight to be able to manage and steward what is on the other side of each one.

The Lord spoke to me and said, "Everything from your past, every pain, trouble, blessing, hard season, great season, all of your education and training will make sense and help you as you walk through the doors." I saw this like a funnel which starts out with a wide opening and becomes narrow at the bottom. I saw this season like a funnel of everything in the past coming together and leading up to this moment for many people.

As you enter into this incredible season of multiple doors, never forget it was the Lord who opened the doors for you and gave you the strength to walk through the doors. God is pouring out divine insight and wisdom to those that will walk through these multiple doors. Get ready, my friends. Your long walk through the hallway of closed doors is about to end. Door after door after door is going to be opened for the people of God in this season. Your season of multiplication, acceleration and your season of numerous doors being opened for you is here, and it's coming! {eoa}

Joe Joe Dawson is the founder and apostle of ROAR Apostolic Network and ROAR Church Texarkana. Joe Joe is married to the love of his life, Autumn Dawson, and they have three children, Malachi, Judah and Ezra. The Dawsons live and teach a lifestyle of revival and awakening. Their desire is to see every believer fulfill their God-given destiny and live life to the fullest in God. Joe Joe is also the author of *Living Your God-Sized Dream and Recipe for Revival*. To connect with Joe Joe or for more information, visit .

This article originally appeared at .

Think Twice Before Rebuking Someone

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44, NIV).

Sometimes love means letting things go. Love “covers a multitude of sins,” as 1 Peter 4:8 (MEV) says.

Other times love requires us to confront. If someone is doing something that will be their undoing and destruction, the most loving thing in the world is to confront them. But it is doing so with hope for the person being confronted, without bitterness, in an effort to not defeat them but to bring them to repentance. The issue is never our victory as much as God’s glory.

This takes wisdom and discernment. Since our own hearts are so prone to pride and anger, we must be sure that our desire to rebuke is truly a prompting of the Holy Spirit and therefore an act of love, and not one of vengeance that would be better left in the Lord’s hands. So we are not called, as John Calvin writes, to imitate God’s judgment upon sin, because that belongs to him alone. Rather, we are called to “imitate his fatherly goodness and liberality.” Love is our response to injustice; it’s not vengeance. Believers are marked by a life of love and are known as Christ’s disciples by their love (John 13:35).

The point of Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:44 is to challenge

conventional wisdom, “to live on a level above that of ordinary decent people,” and to take our cues not from the culture but from our Father in heaven. This does not mean we ignore injustice and avoid confrontation. But it might mean that, in some situations, we keep our mouths shut and leave things in the Lord’s hands. Other times, it doesn’t mean this. But no matter what, the heart that is led by the Holy Spirit is led not by hatred, but by love, which bears all things, believes all things and hopes all things.

Lastly, this allows us in the end leave people in the hands of God. There is a day when we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for our life. Loving someone today does not negate or diminish the reality of that tomorrow. It gives them an opportunity to know him today so that change can come before it’s too late on Judgment Day.

Whom do you need to forgive so you can move on with your life and allow them to do the same?

Mark Driscoll *is a Jesus-following, mission-leading, church-serving, people-loving, Bible-preaching pastor and the author of many books, including Spirit-Filled Jesus, which you can preorder here. He currently pastors The Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his family. For all of pastor Mark Driscoll’s Bible teaching, please visit or download the app.*

Click here to get a free devotional e-book from Pastor Mark Driscoll.

7 Signs You Have an Unhealthy

Soul Tie

Sex is a tridimensional experience: spirit, soul and body. Anytime you have sex with a person, you bond with them. Dr. Daniel Amen writes in his book, *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*:

Whenever a person is sexually involved with another person, neurochemical changes occur in both their brains that encourage limbic, emotional bonding. Limbic bonding is the reason casual sex doesn't really work for most people on a whole mind and body level. Two people may decide to have sex "just for the fun of it," yet something is occurring on another level that they might not have decided on at all: Sex is enhancing an emotional bond between them whether they want it or not. One person, often the woman, is bound to form an attachment and will be hurt when a casual affair ends. One reason it is usually the woman who is hurt most is that the female limbic system is larger than the male's.

This phenomenon is what we call "soul ties." Sex is like gluing two pieces of wood together and the next day, ripping them apart. Of course, wood from the opposite board remains on each board. A piece of your sex partner (the good, bad and ugly) stays with you (and vice versa) for the rest of your life. You can only imagine what it looks like when you bond with multiple partners.

Unhealthy soul ties are often the ramifications of having partners with whom you create a lifelong bond through a sexual encounter(s), but with whom you only have a short-term relationship. The bond (soul tie) remains long after the relationship is over, leaving both sexual partners longing for wholeness.

3 Reasons Unhealthy Soul Ties Take Place

1. People are misinformed and therefore convinced that sex is strictly a single-dimensional, physical act with no emotional or spiritual connections. Yet after sex, they find themselves mysteriously longing for the person they may not even like.

2. A person (usually the woman) gives him or herself sexually to someone, expecting that the intensely intimate act of intercourse would create a bond that would lead to deeper levels of commitment in their relationship. But soon she discovers that her sexual partner was taking advantage of her need for intimacy and used her vulnerability merely to have sex. Of course, this leads to a person being emotionally and spiritually bonded to somebody they deeply resent.

3. Two people commit to marriage and therefore surmise that the covenant vows are only a formality. So they live together and enjoy a sexual relationship outside of a life-long commitment. But later they decide (for whatever reason) that they don't want to live in a covenant relationship and eventually break up. They usually don't realize how deeply they have wounded each other, as their souls are ripped apart, tearing the very fabric of their beings in the separation.

I understand there are hundreds of other reasons why unhealthy soul ties take place, but I am simply trying to give you a few examples.

7 Signs You Have an Unhealthy Soul Tie

1. You are in a physically, emotionally or spiritually abusive relationship, but you "feel" so attached to the other person that you refuse to cut off the connection and set boundaries with them.

2. You have left a relationship (maybe long ago), but you think about the other person obsessively (you can't get them out of your mind).

3. Whenever you do anything—make a decision, have a conversation with someone and so on—you “feel” like this person is with you or watching you.

4. When you have sex with someone else (hopefully your husband or wife), you can hardly keep yourself from visualizing the person with whom you have a soul tie.

5. You take on the negative traits of the person your soul is tied to and carry their offenses, whether or not you actually agree with them.

6. You defend your right to stay in a relationship with the person to whom your soul is tied, even though it is negatively affecting or even destroying the important relationships in your life (husband, wife, kids, leaders and so on).

7. You have simultaneous experiences or “moods” as the person to whom your soul is tied. This can even include sickness, accidents, addictions and so forth.

“Do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh” (1 Cor. 6:16).

There Is Hope

There is hope if you find yourself in an unhealthy soul tie. You can never fall so far that you can't be restored. New life is available to you by simply repenting and asking Jesus to forgive you. Forgiveness restores the standard in our lives, and you can live in freedom and hope again.

For more on this subject, check out my book, *Moral Revolution*.

Have you been freed from an unhealthy soul tie? Tell me about it in the comments below. {eoa}

Kris Vallotton is the senior associate leader of Bethel Church in Redding, California, and cofounder of Bethel School of

Supernatural Ministry (BSSM). Kris travels internationally, training and equipping people to successfully fulfill their divine purpose. He's a best-selling author, having written more than a dozen books and training manuals to help prepare believers for life in the kingdom. He has a diverse background in business, counseling, consulting, pastoring and teaching, which gives him unique leadership insights and perspectives. Kris has a passion to use his experience and his prophetic gift to assist world leaders in achieving their goals and accomplishing their mission.

This article originally appeared at .

The Church Can't Afford to Ignore This Destructive Sin Any Longer

One of the most ignored or tolerated sins of the church is the sin of schism: The formal separation of a church into two churches, caused by differences in opinion or belief. I have been a part of splits and, let me tell you, they are messy. No, messy is too nice a word. They are downright destructive—demonic. And, sadly, both sides usually are convinced they are on God's side.

Too often a disgruntled assistant pastor or lay leader feels he can do a better job than the pastor. He promotes his cause through gossip. Once his movement has enough steam he leads a coup against the senior pastor or starts a new congregation. Paul calls this "building on another man's foundation" (Rom. 15:20). It is also called rebellion, divisiveness, self-promotion, pride, gossip and more.

The fruit of schism is broken relationships. I have seen families split into two over congregational divides. I have seen lifelong friendships come to a halt. That is the demonic part. A spirit of division disguises itself as righteousness or godly boldness. It feels right. You're taking a stand. But rarely does the fruit of the split justify the pain it causes.

Yes, there are times to take a stand against a pastor or leader of a congregation. Sometimes, you might even need to warn people to leave:

1. Sexual immortality or other chronic sins (theft, habitual dishonesty).
2. False doctrine (to be clear, that means it goes against what mainstream evangelicalism considers broad orthodoxy, not just against your opinion).
3. Cult-like tendencies of control over the lives of the members.
4. Gross ineffectiveness—and, in this case, I would expect that you would have a group of elders who had already appealed to the ineffective senior leader.

Jesus Loves Unity

God puts a high price on unity. It was the thing that Yeshua asked the Father to establish in the body in John 17: "Holy Father, through Your name keep those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are one" (John 17:11b).

Paul rebukes the Corinthians for establishing cliques, and equates division to destroying the temple of God! And then, he warns them about what God does to the person who destroys His temple (i.e. causes division):

Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy. And you are His temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

What if two leaders simply can't work together? It happens, as we will see with two of our heroes. Sometimes, it is even God's way of moving someone out in a new direction. The question is: do you have the humility and love for the body to do it in a way that causes the least damage to the congregation. If you are the junior in the relationship, then it is incumbent upon you to walk away. When we seek to take others with us, it is often because we don't trust God to lead us in a new direction. We take people with us, so we can still have a congregation. We can easily disguise it, even to ourselves, as taking a stand.

Even Paul Was Part of a Split

Leaders are, by nature, a little strong-willed (read: hardheaded). We tend to think we are right. Even Paul and Barnabas had sharp disputes that put an end to their ministry relationship.

After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us return and visit our brothers in every city where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas determined to take with them John, who was called Mark. But Paul thought it was not good to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. Then there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brothers to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches (Acts 15:36-41).

The issue was simple. John Mark left the team in the middle of their mission. Barnabas, who is more of a pastor in his gifting, has mercy on Mark and wants him to join them. Paul, who seems more prophetic in his calling, takes a hard line. *If he abandoned us once, how do we know that he will not abandon us again?*

This is such a big deal that they go their separate ways. It does seem that Paul and Mark worked out their differences, as Paul refers to him later in life. Through this example, though, we can learn from Paul and Barnabas how to disagree and, even separate, in a godly way. They did not let their split affect the churches they had planted or the people in them.

Who Has the Spiritual Authority?

When they first started out, Barnabas was the lead apostle. But, very shortly thereafter, Paul became the primary leader. When they separate, Barnabas goes to Cyprus with Mark to minister to the believers there. Cyprus recognized Barnabas as their spiritual father, as it was one of the first places they visited. Paul takes Silas and visits the churches they had planted after Paul was the lead apostle.

They respected each other's apostolic fathership. You'll notice, there is no book of Cyprus from Paul. He had no authority to write it, as Barnabas was the father. Paul only wrote to churches he planted (except for Romans, and there was a reason). Whenever you find yourself in a situation where you have to break with another leader, the easiest way to know who needs to walk, is to ask, 'Who has the authority here?'

I Almost Caused a Split

I almost made this mistake after I first moved to Israel. I had a disagreement with my pastor, and there did not appear to be a solution. I wanted to start another congregation. Of course, if I did it in the same city, people from my former congregation might be tempted to follow. Some had already expressed interest. I felt completely justified (we always do), even though it went against everything I had learned and had taught. But I was deceived. I was completely unjustified. So, we had a disagreement. It didn't come anywhere close to the four reasons I stated above. In the end, thanks to godly counsel, we shut down our little group. A few years later, I

reconciled with the pastor and, today, we have a great working ministry relationship.

And what is interesting is that by humbling myself—not what I wanted to do—God opened an amazing door in another city with far more influence than I had before. But it didn't happen until I committed to not start a competing ministry.

But, sadly, all over the world, splits are winked at when, in fact, the historic church looked at the sin of schism as a serious violation. We would do well to take it more seriously as well. {eoa}

Ron Cantor is an Israeli evangelist. He blogs at , and you can get his book, *The Coming End-Time Awakening* free at . Ron is on the leadership team of Tiferet Yeshua Congregation in Tel Aviv and is also the director of communications for Tikkun Global. He is the author of several books, including *Identity Theft: How Jesus was Robbed of His Jewishness*.

This article originally appeared at .

Are You Refusing to Obey Matthew 5:44?

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44, NIV).

As a new Christian, I must confess that I struggled with these words of Jesus. My concern was if we just loved everyone and prayed for everyone, the bad guys would just keep hurting people.

Perhaps you too wonder, *Is Jesus denying the idea of justice*

here? Are we just supposed to love everybody no matter what they do to us or to others? Is the popular but false picture true that the God of the Old Testament was a God of strict justice and wrath, and Jesus is the opposite, overlooking all that and loving everybody?

Not exactly.

First, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is not prescribing how the world should live together in peace and harmony. It describes life in the kingdom of heaven that has broken into the world as we know it, directly challenging the “normal” human way of living. Part of its purpose is to stir up and challenge a world where hatred is often the norm. So, that must be remembered.

Also, Jesus doesn't give us isolated teachings to do with them whatever we want. As with any text, this one must be viewed in light of the entirety of Scripture. We have to take all of what Jesus said together. For example, in Matthew 23, Jesus rips into the scribes and Pharisees, calling them “children of hell,” and in Revelation 19, Jesus comes riding on a white horse to slay his enemies. Passages like these show that there was more to Jesus than “Let's all just love everybody.”

The call to love is also not a general call to weakness or passivity. Justice is real, and justice will be done. Love does not mean ignoring evil and pretending it doesn't exist. We need to be stirred by injustice. But what true love does is recognize that vengeance is the Lord's (Rom. 12:19).

This does not mean we sit back and wait for some ethereal form of justice from God. He can and does use humans and institutions to bring justice in this world and this life. We can be thankful for God-ordained means of justice in the world such as governments, courts, police forces and the military (Rom. 13:4, for example). Sometimes, we as individual believers will make use of these, as Paul does in Acts

22:25–29, and other times we may be mistreated for the very reason that we are serving God. Nonetheless, Jesus' strong words should cause us to check our own life, heart and motives to see if we are seeing the love of God that flows to us also flow through us to others.

Is there anyone in your life who has hurt or angered you for whom you have not been praying? Will you pray for them now?

Mark Driscoll is a Jesus-following, mission-leading, church-serving, people-loving, Bible-preaching pastor and the author of many books, including Spirit-Filled Jesus, which you can preorder here. He currently pastors The Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his family. For all of pastor Mark Driscoll's Bible teaching, please visit or download the app.

Click here to get a free devotional e-book from Pastor Mark Driscoll.

'If I Had Learned This 20 Years Ago, My Life Would Be Changed Right Now'

Too many men and women graduate from seminary, get hired as pastors and mere months later, feel completely overwhelmed. Why? Because although they received a thorough theological education at seminary, no one prepared them for the practical leadership challenges of pastoring a church.

LifeWay Research found in 2016 that 25 percent of U.S. pastors who leave the pastorate do so due to conflict in the church and another 19 percent due to burnout. And that's not all—12

percent leave because of financial problems and yet another 12 percent of pastoral departures are the result of family issues.

But it's not just pastors who deal with these problems. It's worship leaders, board members, elders, church planters and Christian business leaders. Perhaps you've even wrestled with some of these same issues yourself. After all, each of us is a leader in some way or another.

That's why Dr. Mark Rutland, a man I greatly respect for his wisdom and leadership expertise, founded the National Institute of Christian Leadership (NICL). Dr. Rutland's heart for the NICL is to take 50 years of bumps, bruises and life lessons and pour them into today's leaders—right now.

Dr. Rutland touches on a variety of leadership challenges, including management vs. leadership, strategic growth, selecting the right staff, maintaining healthy board relations, effective interviewing, the 10 stages of disloyalty, debt management and more.

He developed this course a number of years ago and taught it as part of a master's program at Southeastern University. Later on, he left that position, but because he had seen such success with the course, he felt he needed to continue teaching it. That's when Charisma Media partnered with Dr. Rutland. As a result, we've seen nearly 1,000 people go through the course and report what a blessing it has been to them.

David Manning, director of leadership development at Charisma Media, attests to how satisfied people are after experiencing the NICL.

"When people come out of his class, they look me in the eye, and they tell me, 'If I had learned this 20 years ago, how my life would be changed right now,'" Manning says.

I had the opportunity to witness Dr. Rutland's leadership skills when he was president of Southeastern University and, later on, of Oral Roberts University. Both schools were in desperate need of a turnaround—and I was impressed to see Dr. Rutland provide exactly that.

I actually went through his leadership training and, even though I've been in leadership for decades, Dr. Rutland not only reminded me of important principles but also helped me see leadership in a fresh way. Eight years ago, I also had several of my employees go through the NICL. As a result, we changed several things in our company and saw tremendous success.

Now, for the first time, Dr. Rutland's 60-hour course is available online at [www.nicll.com](#). When you enroll, you have complete, 365-day access. The neat thing about the online course is that when you sign up, your spouse also receives free access so you both can use the training at your own pace. And if you enroll by Sept. 30, you will get three bonus months free. (Manning tells me that's worth more than \$600!)

Listen to my podcast interview with Manning below to learn more about the benefits the NICL offers you.

I highly encourage you to sign up for the NICL's online course. The NICL helped me and my leadership team achieve a higher level of success. I know this course is life-changing and will infuse new energy into your ministry, your team and even your home.

Should Christians Protest Nike?

How should Christians approach civil unrest?

From Nike to Trump—does the Bible have answers? Yes it does.

Facing Breast Cancer Surgery, Anne Graham Lotz Finds ‘A Vibrant Calm in the Storm’

Editor’s Note: Ms. Lotz’s surgery is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 18. Please join us in lifting her before the Lord before and after this procedure.

“He is the Lord; let him do what is good in his eyes” (1 Sam. 3:18b).

Hurricane Florence is still making her presence known. My cell phone alarm is continually giving me alerts that the storm is swirling all around, spinning off thunderstorms and tornadoes as well as flash floods. And this is the day, exactly one month following my diagnosis of breast cancer, when I go in for preoperative procedures before my surgery in the morning.

What I want to convey to so many of you who are praying is that the storms may be swirling *around* me, but they are *not* swirling *within* me. I have total peace. Joy. Expectancy. Trust. I know I am in God’s hands. I know also the reason for what I can only describe as a vibrant calm is that I am not only being carried by our heavenly Father, I am being carried

by your prayers. So before I know the outcome of the surgery, I want to praise the Lord for His great faithfulness, and also to say a heartfelt “thank you” ... *to you!* Please continue to pray!

Here is a link to a song that I listened to this morning as I stretched and worked out. I pray it will bless you as it has me. My eyes are fixed on Jesus. Therefore, all is well. {eoa}

Anne Graham Lotz, *second child of Billy and Ruth Graham, is the founder of AnGeL Ministries and former chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force. She has authored 15 books, including her latest, The Daniel Prayer.*

This article originally appeared at .