

The Left's Hatred of Mike Pence Undermines Its Hatred of Donald Trump

We know why President Trump is so hated. We've heard it time and again. The man is out of control. He's a threat to national security. He has damaged our international standing. He's unstable. He's volatile. He's in totally over his head. No one can work for him.

Just read the latest books about Trump. Listen to his former employees. Look at his tweets. Donald Trump must go!

In the words of Rep. Maxine Waters, "I say 'impeachment, impeachment, impeachment, impeachment, impeachment, impeachment, impeachment.'"

Is there any validity to the charges against Trump? Is there any truth to these concerns?

Perhaps there is some truth to some of them. Perhaps he has been autocratic. Perhaps he has created a White House environment that can be chaotic. He has certainly spoken out of turn at times and given his opponents plenty of fuel for their fire.

But I don't believe for a minute that these are the real reasons the left wants to get rid of President Trump.

I say that because many on the left fear Vice President Pence even more, pledging to get rid of him once they get rid of Trump.

Yet Mike Pence is an experienced politician, having served in the House of Representatives from 2001-2013 and as governor of Indiana from 2013-2017.

And Mike Pence is not unstable or volatile, nor does he have a history of alienating those who work for him, nor has he been accused of being an autocratic narcissist.

He is clearly in control of his words and actions, he has not insulted or maligned his opponents, and he has done nothing to disgrace the office of the vice president. Yet he too must go. He too is a threat. He too must be removed.

To quote Maxine Waters once again: After getting rid of Trump, "You knock one down, and then we'll be ready for Pence. We'll get him, too."

Yes, Mike Pence must also go. Away with this man too!

Waters' words drew a sharp rebuke from Trump supporter Philip Schuyler, who tweeted, "When Maxine Waters says, 'We'll impeach Trump,' she's fantasizing, since he didn't do anything wrong. But when she says re Pence, 'We'll get him too,' isn't she admitting that her party is closer to a vengeful mob than to a lawful org?"

But it's not just Maxine Waters saying this. The anti-Pence rhetoric has been building for months. Most recently, it was Omarosa Manigault Newman who echoed these sentiments.

As reported on Yahoo News, "Ms. Manigault Newman, who is busy promoting her book, *Unhinged: An Insider's Account of the Trump White House*, was asked by TMZ which of the top White House executives was worse—the president or the vice president? 'Pence,' she shouted, before being driven away in a black SUV."

Yes, Pence is worse than Trump.

Back in July, *New York Times* op-ed writer Frank Bruni penned a piece titled, "Mike Pence, Holy Terror. Are you sure you want to get rid of Donald Trump?"

His article opens with these chilling words: "There are

problems with impeaching Donald Trump. A big one is the holy terror waiting in the wings.

“That would be Mike Pence, who mirrors the boss more than you realize. He’s also self-infatuated. Also a bigot. Also a liar. Also cruel.”

Mike Pence is a monster! The man would bring a reign of terror!

But there’s something even worse, and it lies at the heart of Bruni’s concerns: Pence “adds two ingredients that Trump doesn’t genuinely possess: the conviction that he’s on a mission from God and a determination to mold the entire nation in the shape of his own faith, a regressive, repressive version of Christianity. Trade Trump for Pence and you go from kleptocracy to theocracy.”

Yes, Mike Pence wants to turn America into a Christian theocracy, with himself the earthly tyrant ruling in God’s stead. Oh, the horror!

The Tylt website conducted a poll (apparently late in 2017), asking the question: “Who should liberals fear more: President Trump or a potential President Pence?”

By a vote of 51.9 to 48.1 percent, the answer was that a Pence presidency would be more dangerous.

In support of this claim, Tylt cited a *New Yorker* article by Jane Mayer dated Oct. 23, 2017. According to Mayer, “Pence has the political experience, the connections, the discipline and the ideological mooring that Trump lacks. He also has a close relationship with the conservative billionaire donors who have captured the Republican Party’s agenda in recent years.”

But that is not the worrying part. Rather, “Even as [Governor] Pence argued for less government interference in business, he pushed for policies that intruded on people’s private lives.

In the early nineties, he joined the board of the Indiana Family Institute, a far-right group that supported the criminalization of abortion and campaigned against equal rights for homosexuals....”

In short, Pence is an evangelical Christian, a biblically-based conservative. As such, he could be a worse threat to the left than Donald Trump. (Really now, if the left could make President George Bush into a religious fanatic who allegedly waged war based on Bible prophecies, what will it do to Mike Pence?)

So, to repeat, I do believe there is some validity to some of the charges raised against President Trump. And at times, he is own worst enemy, spreading disunity and dissent rather than rallying the nation around his very real successes.

But, the truth be told, the vast majority of concerns raised by the left are merely a convenient ruse for the real issue, which is this: They hate the fact that their radical agenda is being thwarted. They despise the fact that some of their strongholds are being demolished. And they will do anything in their power to remove anyone who dares to get in their way, be it Donald Trump or Mike Pence.

The more conservative, the worse. The more Christian, much, much worse.

Let’s not take our eyes off the real stakes involved.

Bethel Worship Star Joins

Forces With IHOP for National Event

Bethel pastor and worship leader Jeremy Riddle has joined with the International House of Prayer for an upcoming conference. Riddle will be a guest worship leader at this year's Onething 2018 conference. Find out more by watching the video or visiting the website.

4 Principles for Receiving Immediate Answers to Your Prayer

If God always hears and answers our prayers, why have certain prayers not yet been answered? The Bible teaches that, in heaven, there are “golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints [believers]” (Rev. 5:8). These bowls have not yet been poured out on the earth in a visible or tangible manifestation of the answers. The bowls contain the prayers of the apostles, prophets and pastors, along with the prayers of multitudes of believers over the centuries—including you.

In these end times, there will be an acceleration in spiritual matters, so that all prayers will be answered, because God doesn't leave any prayers unanswered. To become aligned with God's purposes and receive immediate and accelerated answers to prayer, we need to know—and act on—the revelation contained in the following four principles of God's will.

1. Know the Will of God

The more precise we are with our prayers, the quicker the answers will come. That precision will always depend on our knowledge of the will of God. If God hears everything we ask “according to His will” (1 John 5:14), then the key to making a precise prayer and obtaining an immediate answer is to know His will. Faith is “now,” but whoever doesn’t know the will of God will usually position their faith in the future and not in the present, with the result that the answers to their prayers will be delayed.

To know God’s will, we must walk with Him daily, dedicating time for intimacy with Him through prayer, as well as for reading and studying His Word. We must also renew our mind (see Rom. 12:1–2.) The knowledge of His will progresses in the same measure that the renewing of our mind advances.

2. Be in—and Remain in—the Will of God

Knowing the will of God is one thing, but remaining firm in it is another. Jesus said, “If you remain in Me, and My words remain in you, you will ask whatever you desire, and it shall be done for you” (John 15:7). To remain in the Lord is to walk in His will. To do this, it is necessary to abandon ourselves completely to Him, allowing Him to work in all His fullness.

Do you know the will of God for your personal life? Your ministry? Your career? Do you know who you are in God, and what you should do on His behalf? There is power in communion and relationship with the God of heaven, because it is in that fellowship that He shares His image and glory with us. There, we can see His face and see ourselves in Him, as in a mirror. There, we come to know Him and understand His eternal will.

3. Do the Will of God

It is not enough to know the will of God; it is necessary to do it. If we don’t act on it, we will become merely

“religious” and our faith will fade, no matter how much knowledge we have. When we do His will, we are synchronized with the rhythm of faith. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17)—but we see the manifestation of our faith by acting on what we have heard from God. When someone doesn’t act according to the spiritual knowledge they have received or learned, the devil comes and makes them doubt, and the rhythm of faith is lost. Jesus persevered in doing the will of the Father; in fact, the Father’s will was His daily food, as He Himself said (see John 4:34).

4. Speak According to the Will of God

Speaking the will of God refers to declaring and decreeing His will, which is the same as giving spiritual commands. If we know God, His will has been revealed to us, and if we remain in His will and act on it, then when we speak, His answer will be immediate.

When Jesus performed miracles, He didn’t pray and ask God to heal the sick; instead, He declared, “Be healed!” or “Rise up and walk!” When we are living in unity with God’s will and we declare something, it is as if God Himself is speaking, because we decree on His behalf, with His authority and from His identity.

If your life is aligned with these four principles of God’s will, you are synchronized with the supernatural and you have access to the power and authority of God. You now have the same power that Jesus had when He was on earth, in order to act in His name. There won’t be any obstacles to receiving answers to your prayers. There will be a complete flow of the supernatural that will bring the fulfillment of the Father’s will in each situation.

Today is the day that your prayer life goes to another dimension; it accelerates and moves “from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:17) and from answer to answer. {eoa}

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*Active in ministry for over 20 years, **apostle Guillermo Maldonado** is the founder of King Jesus International Ministry—one of the fastest-growing multicultural churches in the United States—which has been recognized for its visible manifestations of God’s supernatural power. He is a spiritual father to more than 330 churches in 50 countries, which form the Network of the Supernatural Movement (formerly called the New Wine Apostolic Network). He is also the founder of the University of the Supernatural Ministry (USM). Apostle Maldonado has a doctorate in Christian counseling and a master’s degree in practical theology. He resides in Miami, Florida, with his wife and partner in ministry, Ana, and their two sons, Bryan and Ronald. Visit .*

What To Do When Your Pastor’s Sin Comes Out

When Sarah Joy Hays learned in the summer of 2016 that her pastor in Baton Rouge, La., had been having an affair with another woman in their church – a woman who had been her spiritual mentor for many years – she was angry and confused.

“I got pregnant out of wedlock, and she was one of the first people I told,” Hays recalled. “She kind of pastored and mentored me through it.

“To find out she was actively involved in this affair throughout that – that’s where I had the hardest time, figuring out how to react to that. I was going through something that was very obvious, an ‘external sin.’ And she

was in the same situation, essentially, but nobody knew.”

Both the pastor and the woman with whom he had an affair were disciplined by their denomination, and he was removed from the pastorate, Hays said.

Two years later, the small congregation has a new pastor, many members have taken advantage of periodic one-on-one and group counseling provided by their denomination, and some measure of healing has been achieved.

But Hays said she is still guarded spiritually. “It causes you to question any amount of wisdom and discernment from then on,” Hays said. “It helps determine trust and how you give away trust.”

Bill Hybels. Theodore McCarrick. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Tariq Ramadan. Andy Savage. Paul Pressler. Retired Mormon missions president Joseph L. Bishop. Creation Festival founder Harry Thomas. Rabbi Haskel Lookstein. Stanley Rosenfeld.

The shameful roster of spiritual leaders who have been accused of committing acts of sexual misconduct and abuse, or enabling others to commit such acts, or both has left many souls who looked to them for instruction, discernment and direction to sift through the wreckage wrought by their malfeasance.

What do we do when we learn that the person we trusted as an intermediary for God, or to teach us about all things eternal, is actually a predator? What if the faith leader we’ve admired all our lives turns out to be more a scoundrel than saint?

“Part of what happens to us, on a much deeper level than the initial shock, disbelief, disappointment or outrage, is that our sense of ourselves is affected negatively,” said Lallene Rector, president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Illinois, where she has been an associate professor of psychology of religion and pastoral psychotherapy since 1986.

“To the extent that we have felt enhanced in our own self-esteem by our affiliation with these leaders, part of what we may experience (often unawares) is a deflation of our own self-worth,” said Rector.

“The failure of these idealized figures can strike at the very heart of our own longing for a kind of perfection,” left over from our disappointments in our parents and other adults in childhood, said Rector. “Add God to that mix – the clergy as a role representative of God – and it’s psychologically intoxicating.”

The Bible can be instructive to some believers when it comes to spiritual leaders falling from grace – but perhaps not in the way some people might think it is.

Take King David, for instance – at best a morally complicated man who was nevertheless, Scripture says, “the apple of God’s eye.” It’s a paradox often invoked to defend faith (and other) leaders who behave badly.

“David is like these pastors in that he is lionized for the things that he did, like expanding boundaries and whatnot, and a tradition of overlooking” the bad things he did, said the Rev. Wil Gafney, associate professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas.

But Gafney said the biblical king’s story is not meant to be a prescription for how anyone should behave. “Just because God did something wonderful with (David) doesn’t mean we should do all the things he did.”

From her reading of the biblical account, Gafney believes David raped Bathsheba. “The text says he sent men to get her. That evaporates consent,” Gafney said.

“I think we need to be able to not hang a thing around someone’s neck forever,” Gafney said, “but be honest and not sweep it under the rug. That means allowing brokenness to be

broken.”

Because David’s story is about “how we deal with a beloved leader,” Gafney said, “some have chosen to say, ‘Well, it was all worth it.’ Some have said, ‘Let’s leave his bygones in the past.’ But others choose to say, ‘Let’s be real about this person and this is part of that legacy that doesn’t go away.’ And it doesn’t go away, because when we don’t hold him accountable for it in our telling, we then give other people permission.

“Christians have evolved into this understanding of repentance that is not biblical – that it’s about saying, ‘I’m sorry,’ and hopefully not doing the thing again.”

But that’s only the first layer of repentance, said Gafney. “From the Hebrew Bible forward, reparation is at the heart of repentance. ... Yes, your profound sorrow, your turning your life around – that’s part of it – but you’ve still never made it right,” she said.

If the ramifications of one person’s failure can seem endless, the failure of an institution means restitution on another scale. A moral catastrophe like the systemic cover-up by bishops and other Catholic leaders cataloged in the landmark, 1,300-page Pennsylvania grand jury report released in August “demands public and sincere lamentation from every segment of the Body of Christ,” said Richard Rohr, the Franciscan priest and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, N.M., in a recent statement. “Only then can deep healing begin.”

But Rohr points out that the Catholic Church has more than just sinful behavior to account for. “It also demands public ownership, repentance, and reform of our very immature teaching in regard to sexuality in general, male power issues in particular, and our ‘enforced’ understanding of celibacy, which will predictably produce this kind of result.

“This shadowy material will keep emerging unless we own it and hold it fully accountable,” he said.

And while leaders do their work, we have our own to do. “In the meantime,” he wrote, “let’s all pray and try to live more authentic sexual and spiritual lives ourselves.” {eoa}

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Greg Laurie: This Is Why We Don't See Revival

Almost 50 years ago, a great spiritual awakening known as the Jesus Movement swept across America. *Time* magazine called it the “Jesus Revolution”, which is interesting, considering it was during the time of a sexual revolution as well. Moral standards were replaced with “free love,” and sexual promiscuity was wildly rampant. And let’s not forget about the drug revolution that took over the country as well.

The Beatles led the charge on this, starting with their early hit “I Want to Hold Your Hand” and then on to “I’d Love to Turn You On.” Things got even darker in America, especially in 1968. Civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in April, and just two months later, presidential hopeful Robert F. Kennedy was shot and killed. He was the brother of President John Kennedy, who was shot and killed in Dallas in 1963.

The country was reeling.

God decided to send a Jesus revolution, and let me tell you—it changed America dramatically, and in many ways, it saved an

entire generation. It seems to me it's time for another spiritual revival. As believers, we want God to heal our land and change our nation for the better, but as we look at the problems in our country, it's sometimes easier to just point at someone else. We say the problems in our country are because of the White House or Hollywood, but God says the source of the problems is actually His house, the church.

God lays out His prescription in 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Notice God says, "If My people who are called by My name ..."

He doesn't say a thing about secular culture. He talks to His own people—that's you and me. We don't have time to point fingers when we're picking up our crosses and following after Him.

There's no doubt that America needs another spiritual awakening, but the church needs a revival just as much. We often use the words "revival" and "awakening" interchangeably, but there is a distinction. An awakening is when a nation comes alive spiritually—when it sees its need for God and turns to Him. A revival is when God's people come back to life again. Revival simply means "to restore." It's time for the church to wake up and shine its light into a dark world.

"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (Eph. 5:14b, NIV).

As C. S. Lewis once pointed out, "A moderately bad man knows he is not very good: a thoroughly bad man thinks he is all right. You understand sleep when you are awake, not while you are sleeping." In other words, if you think you're a great person with no problems, you are knocked out asleep and don't even realize it.

Revival is a choice to wake up, it's an intentional decision to get back to the Christian life as it was meant to be lived. Revival is being in the bloom of first love for a lifetime, walking closely with the Lord. You can't always have those initial emotions you had as a new believer any more than you can have the same butterflies in your stomach you had when you first met your husband- or wife-to-be. That is unrealistic, but here's the thing: Your love can grow deeper, stronger and bolder, it just takes intentionality.

That is how we ought to be as followers of Jesus. We need the faith of the Christians of the first century who turned the world upside down. Revival is nothing more or less than a new obedience to God. Or as it has been described, "a long obedience in the same direction."

Only God can send an awakening to America, but I believe whole-heartedly that revival can happen right here, right now. May it start with you and me.

Back in the days of the Jesus Movement, we used to do mass baptisms at Pirate's Cove beach in Southern California.

Thousands showed up, and hundreds would be baptized.

Major news outlets showed up and did feature stories on this phenomenon.

We just held a baptism in September of this year, and we baptized over 550 people. It seems to me, if we want to see revival again, we should do "revival-like" things. {eoa}

Greg Laurie is the pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Southern California and is also the evangelist for the Harvest Crusades. Over 500,000 people have made professions of faith at these large-scale evangelistic events. Laurie is also the author of the newly released book, *Jesus Revolution* that he wrote with New York Times best-selling author Ellen Vaughn.

Massive Christian Music Fest Undergoing Big Changes

Rock the Universe, one of the country's most popular Christian music festivals, is about to get even cooler. After parking on the second week of September since 1998, the Universal Studios Florida event will move from the summer to the coldest month of the year, February. The new dates will be Feb. 1 and 2. The change was announced this past weekend.

"Universal Orlando Resort has new dates for Rock the Universe 2019," a park spokesperson said. "The event will take place on Feb. 1 and Feb. 2 at Universal Studios Florida. Guests will enjoy a faith-filled weekend of live music, worship and theme park thrills."

Rock the Universe 2019, which will now be held just a few months after the 2018 event, will feature Lecrae, Matthew West, Colton, Skillet, Bethel Music and Crowder.

Although Universal did not disclose attendance figures for this year's event, some concerts and Fan Zone autograph sessions reached their capacity. Thousands of students and youth group leaders and chaperones made their way around the parks for the weekend event, which included two days of concerts and a Sunday worship service. Two youth leader lounges offered seats, networking opportunities, and snacks and beverages.

Recently, Casting Crowns singer Mark Hall, who led a crowd of thousands in a candlelight service to mark the end of this year's event, spoke about its significance. As a youth pastor, Hall brought his own students to the event.

“I would (tell my students), ‘You ride all the rides you want, but at nighttime, we’re all going to be right in front of the stage’,” he explained. “They were exposed to different styles of Christian music. They usually all went home liking a new band that you knew was going to be saying something positive, and they all heard the gospel. You always knew that was gonna’ happen. It wasn’t just going to be music, the gospel’s also going to be shared.”

Casting Crowns was one of many featured bands and artists, also including TobyMac, Trip Lee, Jesus Culture, Lauren Daigle, Zach Williams, Brandon Heath and Andy Mineo.

The park’s Halloween Horror Nights weekends have also grown in popularity. This year, additional dates were added. The new dates for Rock the Universe will distance the two crowds and place the music festival right before the park’s Mardi Gras festival. {eoa}

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Historic Revivalist Claudio Freidzon: Massive Revival Will Come When We Do This

Dr. Claudio Freidzon sees revival springing up all over the world as he travels and preaches—but he’s believing for

something even bigger. You may know Claudio as one of the main spiritual leaders God raised up during Argentina's massive revival in the 1980s and 1990s. He now pastors a powerful church in Buenos Aires called Iglesia Rey de Reyes (King of Kings Church).

But Claudio's legacy goes beyond Argentina's revival. Many may not realize that Claudio actually played a significant role in the Toronto Blessing. In November 1993, John and Carol Arnott heard about the Argentinian revival and flew down to receive an impartation. They visited services of several revivalists, including Hector Gimenez, Carlos Annacondia and Claudio Freidzon.

The way John tells the story, Carol was so overcome with the Spirit, she couldn't walk. And in one of the services, Claudio singled John out and said, "Do you want the anointing?" When John replied yes, Claudio said, "Then take it!" and slapped John's outstretched hands.

After that powerful encounter, John and Carol went back to their church in Toronto and saw a revival bigger than they could've imagined.

I had the opportunity to interview Claudio recently at Heidi Baker's Live to Love conference in Orlando, Florida. He told me he sees revival blazing in hungry continents like South America and Africa. And although he doesn't see the same level of hunger in North America, he is praying, believing and challenging American believers to make this generation the one that sees a massive move of God.

"Every time I come here in North America, I have that kind of challenge and expectation to see in this generation the great move of God—with people coming to churches with a new hunger to listen to the Word of God," he says.

But Claudio says that all hinges on one goal: Seek and save the one.

“The people have to pray that in their families and every neighborhood and every house of their neighborhood, one house and one family will receive Jesus as Savior and be born again,” Claudio says. “That’s the prayer. And if we have in each house of the neighborhood people who are totally changed by the Holy Spirit and are born again, something will happen in the country.”

The United States has certainly seen pockets of revival lately. Just look at Greenville, Tennessee; Cane Ridge in Bourbon County, Kentucky; Corpus Christi, Texas; and Dawsonville, Georgia. But Claudio is right—it’s not enough. We need more of the Spirit in this nation.

For that reason, I encourage you to listen to my entire interview with Claudio below. I believe his words will refresh and inspire you to receive more of the Holy Spirit and His power in your life. If you hunger for God to awaken this nation, share this article on your social media and inspire someone else toward revival.

Man Who Inherited David Wilkerson’s Church Mantle: Some Christians Live in Slumber, Defeat

Instead of living the abundant, fruitful life that Jesus promised, some Christians are living in a quagmire of slumber and defeat.

New York City pastor Carter Conlon says in his new book, *It's Time to Pray*, that never have believers had so many resources, tools and places to fellowship as they do in today's society, yet in the abundance of these things, Christians have never been more ineffective and lukewarm in their faith.

"We are rich and have need of nothing," Conlon says. "In many ways, Revelation Chapter 3 describes the church in America. 'I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.' There is an abundance of Bibles to choose from—different translations, different study notes and even designer covers. Some homes have multiple Bibles lying around—but how often are they opened? We can go online or to a bookstore and get all kinds of resources that help guide us in our daily walk. And yet, we are largely still living with one foot in the Spirit and one foot in the flesh. There are megachurches on almost every corner in our communities, but we are more disconnected from one another than we have ever been."

Conlon is the well-known senior pastor of Times Square Church in New York City, an interdenominational church with more than 10,000 people in attendance, representing more than 100 different nationalities. In his new book, *It's Time to Pray*, releasing Nov. 6 with Charisma House, Conlon will help readers understand how prayer is vital in their lives, their community and the world.

"The Holy Spirit is willing and able to direct us in the narrow way that leads to the more abundant life if in humble self-denial we submit to His unerring supervision," Conlon says.

Conlon joined the pastoral staff of Times Square Church in 1994 at the invitation of founding pastor David Wilkerson, who launched Teen Challenge and wrote the best-selling book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*. Conlon was appointed senior pastor

of Times Square Church in 2001.

It's Time to Pray challenges Americans to make prayer more than a moment and, instead, a lifestyle. Conlon explores many areas of prayer in 10 different chapters that focus on praying for salvation, life, strength, serving, the impossible, forgiveness, faith, peace, freedom and awakening.

With a foreword by national radio personality Eric Metaxas, *It's Time to Pray* also acknowledges that there are far too many Christians who are dejected, depressed, hopeless, powerless and struggling with sin. Yet this is not what the Christian life is or should be.

Conlon continues to be a voice for God far beyond the pulpit of Times Square Church by speaking at numerous conferences across the country and around the world. His weekly radio spots air on 1010 WINS, the nation's longest-running all-news station, and his one-minute devotional and 30-minute program, called "A Call to the Nation," are currently syndicated on over 350 Christian radio stations worldwide. He is the author of several books, including *The 180-Degree Christian*, *Fear Not* and *Unshakable*.

For more information on *It's Time to Pray*, visit .

It's Time to Pray is published by GPC Books, an imprint of Times Square Church's partnership with Charisma House. Charisma House has published books, including 14 best-sellers, that challenge, encourage, teach and equip Christians.

20 Signs of a Toxic Church Culture

The following 20 signs are based on my observations regarding organizational dysfunction associated with a toxic (poisonous) culture in any organization.

In this article, the word “culture” refers to the prevailing attitude, behavior, and unspoken feeling and or rules that motivate and determine how people respond, react and act in the context of their work.

The following toxic traits fit either a “for profit” or “nonprofit” organization (including nonprofits like a hospital, school or church).

1. The leader is a demanding micromanager.

When the leader of an organization is constantly hovering over staff and other team leaders—not only telling them what to do but exactly how to do it (although this is necessary temporarily when a new person is learning a new job until they prove their competency), it discourages the work environment because the leader’s leadership style demonstrates a lack of trust towards those under him or her.

2. The leader is emotionally abusive and demeaning.

A work environment is absolutely horrible when the boss is constantly putting the staff and other leaders down—never praising them and only speaking to them when he wants to correct them.

3. The leader doesn’t understand or desire to delegate tasks to others.

Often, micromanagers have a hard time delegating work to others because they have a “perfectionist” spirit and think

they are the only ones who can get a job done the correct way. Even when they delegate, they don't trust those they delegate to and are constantly on top of them, thus not giving them room to breathe or grow.

4. The leader and the governing board are always arguing.

I have spoken to numerous pastors or CEOs who say they dread board meetings because of philosophical differences. The result is, there is constant bickering and or resistance which then hurts the execution of the vision, which spills over to the rest of the organization—creating a toxic environment.

5. There is low morale among the staff, employees and participants.

When the staff and team leaders of an organization have low morale, it negatively affects the rest of the participants since it is like a virus that spreads to all.

6. The vision and mission are always changing based on the mood of the leader.

Any church or organization that has a new vision and mission every year has a confused leadership team. Since vision determines the organization's responsibility and mission determines its authority, when these two are constantly changing, nobody understands what is expected; thus, creating confusion, lack of trust towards the leader and resulting in a toxic culture.

7. A culture of rampant gossip is tolerated.

When an organization cannot keep confidentiality among the leaders and staff, and when backstabbing and gossip is tolerated, the organization is poisonous and unfit to work in until there is a drastic shift away from this behavior.

8. There is a lack of transparency regarding financial decisions.

When any organization—including a church—doesn't at least annually divulge financial expenditures, values and priorities, it shows a lack of accountability and possible mismanagement. When only the lead pastor and or CEO of an organization (not talking about a "for profit" mom and pop restaurant or small business) know the true financial state and or has access to the monies, it can be an ethical disaster waiting to happen. I've known of some cases where not even the trustees of the organization knew what was going on financially.

9. There is an ambiguous accountability structure.

When nobody on staff or in a ministry or job position understands who to report to, it creates a toxic, confusing environment without true accountability.

10. There is a lot of transition in the staff and middle management.

When a "season" of transition becomes years of staff transition, it becomes part of the culture and demonstrates some level of toxicity that chases people away from the work environment. People in healthy work environments usually enjoy going to work (unless they are lazy and unmotivated) and make a long-term commitment to serve.

11. There is no "buy in."

The key to the success of all organizations is when the staff and participants go from being "employees" to "proprietors;" hence, only when the key players in an organization take ownership and have the attitude of a shareholder does the organization gain momentum.

An organization populated only with mere "employees" is a toxic organization that marginalizes its ability to execute its vision and mission.

12. There is an entitlement mentality among the leaders and staff.

When the leadership and staff of an organization have a “what’s in it for me” mentality—the organization is in big trouble.

This entitlement mentality spreads, then instead of a culture of servant leadership you have a culture of obtaining a title in the organization primarily, so you can enjoy the fringe benefits.

13. There is much activity without measurable goals and profitability.

When an organization has much activity without measurable goals, then it’s difficult to define success and failure. In a church like this, nobody has to exercise their faith in God to accomplish their mission and assignment. Consequently, it is an organization that is on autopilot or like an aimless ship at sea in the night. This causes much frustration and lethargy among the staff, and eventually creates a toxic environment.

14. There is blame-shifting and a lack of taking responsibility.

In any organization that doesn’t have clear lines of communication, leadership structure and accountability, it is easy to have a culture of blame-shifting. Since blame-shifting generates animosity among the staff (and irresponsibility from the ones blaming others) you have a toxic culture that needs to be cleaned up systemically.

15. The participants do the minimum amount of work required.

I have observed in many organizations leaders and staff who just do the minimum work required to keep their position. They clock in and clock out and don’t care to do above and beyond the general job description. This generates a very bad

environment if it is not dealt with and results in resentment from other staff members carrying most of the weight.

16. There is a dearth of volunteers.

When it is hard for a nonprofit to garner volunteers, it may demonstrate that there is a disconnect with the vision, the morale is low or the people are not committed to the mission. This lack of motivation creates an apathy, that is toxic for the culture of the entity.

17. The boss regularly ignores the protocols.

Every efficient organization needs to have protocols in place related to communication, accountability, layers of leadership and responsibility so that participants know the when, where and who to report to. When the top leader continually violates these processes put in place he or she acts like they are above the law and become bad role models for other leaders who will also replicate their disregard for protocols and order.

18. The boss regularly bypasses the leadership structure set up.

When the top leader allows people to report directly to him or her—(thus bypassing the delegated leadership structure) it creates confusion, favoritism and disrespect towards those bypassed.

The result is resentment among those bypassed, a sense of entitlement and favoritism among those with direct access to the boss, resulting in a toxic environment that can only be fixed if the senior leader leads the way by ceasing to violate the hierarchical leadership structure.

19. Creativity and innovation are discouraged.

Healthy organizations encourage creative thinking, innovation, a certain level of risk-taking and cutting-edge methodologies to support and advance the mission.

When an organization is more concerned with protecting the status quo, the result is groupthink—a lack of creativity and a uniformity lacking a healthy dose of critical thinking, which eventually leads to the dulling and ineffectiveness of the organization.

20. There is no long-term planning.

The old popular adage “when you fail to plan, you plan to fail” is a proven truism. An organization constantly given to last-minute events (barring an unexpected crisis or emergency) or a lack of long-term planning (every organization should at least execute an annual planning meeting for future events directed towards advancing the assignment) is an organization without a spirit of excellence or proper focus.

The result will be many opportunities to maximize the gifts, talents and resources of the organization will be missed, which will frustrate many and hurt the morale of many.

Do You Believe This Candy-Coated Lie?

We were watching a competition show on TV last night, and one of the judges tried to encourage a young contestant by telling him, “Remember: You’re enough. You’ve always been enough.” And I lit up. I’m so mad right now just thinking about it that I can feel my pulse rate going up.

Do you realize there are a whole bunch of these little expressions that creep into our culture, and they’re like gross jelly beans? “Oh look, candy!” you say, until you pop it in your mouth and realize it’s actually barf flavor. Why do

they make those disgusting flavors? Why do people buy them and eat them?

“You’re enough” is a sweet-coated, candy-shaped expression that we hear all of the time, but let’s open the Word of God together and look at the truth about ourselves: “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

We’re not enough. We’ve never been enough.

I can feel this as school starts, and I know there are going to be times when my precious students say and do what is wrong. And I know from years of experience now that there will be times all throughout the year when I’m going to have to say to a student, “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that to you” or “I’m sorry, I should not have done that.”

We fall short. We’ve always fallen short.

Which is why we need Jesus in a desperate way, from the minute we wake up until the minute our heads hit the pillow. This is why we hear the blessed words of Psalm 23:1: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” My husband preached a good one last week and said that we’re *always* desperately needy, but Jesus is *always* the shepherd.

Jesus brings the “enough.”

C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, uses the word “relief.”

I wish I had got a bit further with humility myself: if I had, I could probably tell you more about the relief, the comfort, of taking the fancy-dress off—getting rid of the false self, with all its “Look at me” and “Aren’t I a good boy?” and all its posing and posturing. To get even near it, even for a moment, is like a drink of cold water to a man in a desert.

Let’s pick the candy-coated, barf-flavored expressions out of

our language and throw them in the trash. Feel the sweet relief of humility, as you say, "I am not enough and never will be, but thank God He sent Jesus to be all that I lack." We reach out needy hands and rejoice in having all we need in the Good Shepherd. {eoa}

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