

# Your Spirit-Filled Strategy for Ultimate Victory

Proverbs 21:31b, TPT, makes it clear: "...ultimate victory comes from the Lord God."

We alone cannot discover it, accomplish it or sustain it, because ultimate victory is not only a win against overwhelming opposition, it's also a divine gift.

## **Defined and Delineated**

The gracious gift of ultimate victory Jesus offers to us is the complete establishment of mastery over darkness by love. It includes the foundational elements of deliverance and salvation.

Ultimate victory was accomplished once and for all time by Jesus' finished work of redemption at the cross for our sins and His resurrected life in heaven, on earth and in the believer's spirit.

Ultimate victory is never subject to change (James 1:17).

## **We Need Him**

We receive the gift of ultimate victory by our Savior's triumphant grace and faith.

Whether we believers reign truly victorious in life on earth is based on God's power of grace and our humble obedience to live out the Lord's finished work, even though we go to heaven afterwards.

2 Peter 1:2-4 reminds us:

*May grace and perfect peace cascade over you as you live in the rich knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Everything*

*we could ever need for life and godliness has already been deposited in us by his divine power. For all this was lavished upon us through the rich experience of knowing him who has called us by name and invited us to come to him through a glorious manifestation of his goodness. As a result of this, he has given you magnificent promises that are beyond all price, so that through the power of these tremendous promises you can experience partnership with the divine nature, by which you have escaped the corrupt desires that are of the world.*

### **To Sustain Ultimate Victory**

Hebrews 10:36 forewarns us, "You need the strength of endurance to reveal the poetry of God's will and then you receive the promise in full."

We need His resurrected life in us. Since there is life in His Word and in the blood of the Lamb, we need both His truth of Word and Spirit (see Rev. 12:11).

This means hindrances in the heart have to go to grow (3 John 1:2).

This means yieldingness must rise: We must surrender to His will and His ways to produce the greatest yield of fruit of The Spirit in and through us.

Mercy and unending love toward others form the highest rung on the ladder of fruitfulness (foreshadowed by the spies' pole of fruit from their promised land in Num. 13:23, 26-27; Gal. 5:22-23). Truly extending authentic mercy and unending love is our final step of obedience before we see the resurrection life of God's manifest promises (foreshadowed by Jesus' declaration on the cross in Luke 23:34).

*So devote yourselves to lavishly supplementing your faith with goodness, and to goodness add understanding, and to*

*understanding add the strength of self-control, and to self-control add patient endurance, and to patient endurance add godliness, and to godliness add mercy toward your brothers and sisters, and to mercy toward others add unending love. Since these virtues are already planted deep within, and you possess them in abundant supply, they will keep you from being inactive or fruitless in your pursuit of knowing Jesus Christ more intimately. But if anyone lacks these things, he is blind, constantly closing his eyes to the mysteries of our faith, and forgetting his innocence—for his past sins have been washed away. For this reason, beloved ones, be eager to confirm and validate that God has invited you to salvation and claimed you as his own. If you do these things, you will never stumble. As a result, the kingdom's gates will open wide to you as God choreographs your triumphant entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Messiah (2 Pet. 1:5-11).*

## **Jonah's Story**

In studying the topic of victory during the month of April, the Lord highlighted the story of the prophet Jonah to me.

We know Jonah spent three days in a fish's belly because he ran from God's assignment to deliver a warning of repentance to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria (modern-day northern Iraq). We know Jonah finally delivered God's message and that the people of Nineveh took God's Word to heart, believing Him and repenting for their sins.

This resulted in a revival of over 120,000 people.

God proved faithful even when Jonah did not.

These pagans and longstanding enemies of the Israelites were *destined for victory*, regardless of Jonah's ungodly attitude and behavior.

Psalm 98:2, NLT, assures us, "The LORD has announced his victory and has revealed his righteousness to every nation!"

The Ninevites humbled themselves unto God and extended overcoming faith to believe Him for their victory of salvation, even though Jonah did not value them.

Since one of the elements of faith is value, this reveals that Jonah lacked faith, hence his depression. He had trouble believing God would rescue Israel's abusive enemies. God's strategy was to send one of His covenant people (Jonah) to do a work of outreach and, in the process, convict him of his own limitation to lead him through his own deliverance into greater maturity.

But Jonah got stuck in his lack of faith, the victorious power that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4).

Jonah was commanded to go where he didn't want to go to, in part, to confront his own attitude of prideful self-justification for the purpose of breaking through to love on a higher level of true justice: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34b, MEV).

Is this not our daily commandment and standard?

To love our enemies beyond ourselves (Matt. 5:44, Luke 6:27).

Grudge-holding is a sin that hinders blessing.

God calls us higher.

How can we prevail or ascend by superior power (to be victorious) above petty grudges if we are not synced with God's ways of faith and grace?

As submitted followers of Christ, who are we to pick who we minister to? After all, Jesus died for us while we were still sinners (Rom. 5:6, 8).

“Is it right for you to be angry?” God asked Jonah twice (Jonah 4:4b, 9a).

This rhetorical question reveals that we are not entitled to self-justify our ways. If we desire to see maximum fruit in our lives, we must maximize our yield to God to see God’s maximum yield through us.

### **Mercy Over Judgment Is Critical**

“Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13b).

Both Jonah and the Ninevites were desperate for God’s mercy.

God desired to give all of them life over death.

Victory to not be overthrown by evil came to Nineveh through God’s prevailing mercy and grace. But there was no victory coming or going in Jonah’s prideful self-justification.

Jonah stumbled to go the distance as he ran a false race away from God before he reluctantly showed up to finish the task he was sent to do (Jonah 1:3, 10; 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Ps. 119:32), all because he did not believe the Assyrians deserved mercy and love since they had been abusive to Israel—God’s covenant people.

By the end of Jonah’s story, he still hadn’t come around in his heart.

Everyone was faithful, except Jonah.

What would you do if you were in Jonah’s position?

Would you decide to value what God values? Even your enemies? Would you humble yourself and ask God to help you receive a new perspective through His eyes of mercy? Would you ask our Lord to fill your heart with His love for them?

Would you decide to break through prideful self-justification? Or would you make it all about you, your pain and your

opinions, ending up depressed with your false pride exalted, like Jonah?

Do you desire to live a powerful life?

Submission to God is our greatest position of power.

We all know it's easy to devalue our enemies. But also, know this: God's will is to use them to provoke us to come up higher. We may be the only one praying righteously for them. God will bring reformation to them, often after we have done our part. He will use all of it to build His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven (1 Chron. 29:11, Matt. 6:10).

Everyone will be better off.

Our greatest victories await on the other side of our obedience to receive and pour out His resurrection life.

### **God's Strategy for Ascension**

"You see, every child of God overcomes the world, for our faith is the victorious power that triumphs over the world" (1 John 5:4, TPT).

"But we thank God for giving us the victory as conquerors through our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One" (1 Cor. 15:57).

"And God has made all things new, and reconciled us to himself, and given us the ministry of reconciling others to God. In other words, it was through the Anointed One that God was shepherding the world, not even keeping records of their transgressions, and he has entrusted to us the ministry of opening the door of reconciliation to God" (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

"However, I say to you, love your enemy, bless the one who curses you, do something wonderful for the one who hates you, and respond to the very ones who persecute you by praying for them" (Matt. 5:44).

“You love him passionately although you did not see him, but through believing in him you are saturated with an ecstatic joy, indescribably sublime and immersed in glory. For you are reaping the harvest of your faith—the full salvation promised you—your souls’ victory!” (1 Pet. 1:8-9). {eoa|

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*This article originally appeared at [.](#)*

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## **Pastor Deeply Traumatized After Brutal Maoist Attack**

An increase in persecution of Christians in Nepal began after a new criminal code was passed in October 2017, which took effect in August 2018.

Nepal was ranked 32nd on Christian support organization Open Doors’ 2019 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

Now, more than a month after men claiming to be Maoists in Nepal assaulted Dhurba Kumar Pariyar, the 40-year-old pastor is still physically and mentally traumatized, according to Morning Star News.

“I still have headache and chest pain, though I am under strong medication,” Pastor Pariyar told Morning Star News. He later quoted Matthew 5:10, Christ saying those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake are blessed.

“I find courage in reading of the persecution that my fellow Christians are undergoing,” he said. “My suffering is little in comparison.”

One of the leaders at Devotees Nepali Assembly in the Nepali capital of Kathmandu, the pastor was riding a motorcycle on his way back from distributing free toys and stationary to Dalit children on March 24 in Sarlahi District when two motorcyclists with riders on extra seats stopped him 36 miles from Mahottari at about 7 p.m., he said.

Accompanying Pastor Pariyar on another motorcycle was the chief guest of a program organized by a Non-Governmental Organization for poor Dalits in Ramgopalpur, Mahottari District.

One of the riders asked Pastor Pariyar his name, and as soon as he confirmed his identity, the rider hit his motorcycle with a thick wooden stick while the other pulled him off, he said.

“One of them caught hold of me from my chest and pulled me down from my motorbike and dragged me towards the jungle,” Pastor Pariyar told Morning Star News.

While two men dragged him away, two others caught hold of the program guest, who is not a Christian, and aimed a knife at him, threatening to kill him if he interfered. They forced him to switch off his mobile phone, Pastor Pariyar said.

Twice Pastor Pariyar tried to escape, but each time they kicked him to the ground, he said.

“They said I am preaching foreign religion, converting people and ‘feeding’ on dollars in return,” Pastor Pariyar said. “They asked me to hand over all the [supposed, U.S.] dollars I am carrying to them, and they will spare my life. I asked them who were they to question my work and demand money from me, to which they said they were ‘underground Maoists.’”

While they were kicking him and beating him with wooden sticks and their fists and threatening to kill him if he did not hand over U.S. dollars to them, he said, a bright light from a passing vehicle fell on them, and they fled.

“They fled while warning me, ‘If you continue to preach the Jesus religion, we will not spare you—we will come and kill you, wherever you may go,’” he told Morning Star News.

The pastor, who is also president of BG Hands Ministries in Kathmandu, sustained injuries on his face, arms, elbows, knees and ankles, he said.

Pastor Pariyar and his guest immediately went to the area police station to report the attack, and then to Gadhimai Hospital, Lalbandi in Sarlahi District for treatment. The next morning, the pastor registered a First Information Report in the Kesharganj Police Station after submitting a written complaint.

The Nepal Christian Society also reported the attack to the National Human Rights Commission, according to the Religious Liberty Forum Nepal (RLFN).

Police are investigating but have yet to find the assailants, Pastor Pariyar said.

“When I walk on the road or ride my motorbike, I am suddenly shaken with fear when a motorbike overtakes me,” he said, adding that twice he had previously received threats. “I am still in trauma from the incident. There is no outcome of the FIR that I registered.”

With his wife and 5-year-old son, he has served as a pastor of Devotees Nepali Assembly since 2011.

Pastor Sagar Baizu, senior pastor and mentor of Pastor Pariyar, told Morning Star News he was shocked by a recent increase in the number of anti-Christian attacks in Nepal.

“The manner in which he was stopped in the jungle area and assaulted is astonishing,” Pastor Baizu said.

He said it is evident that pastors and other Christian workers are being identified and targeted.

“This incident along with other recent instances of increased targeting of Christian leaders reveals that Christians in Nepal are being spotted from among the general masses, watched regularly, their activities tracked, and then they are assaulted and extorted for money,” Pastor Baizu said.

He said he was further shocked that there is no security from the government and from political parties for Christians who are helping the poor and the needy.

“They are doing no harm to the society at large in any way yet are assaulted, harassed and put in jail,” Pastor Baizu said. “It is high time that the government should realize and step-up to provide security to the church and the Christian community. It is a matter of great concern that religious terrorism is increasing rapidly in Nepal. The way Hindu radicals are carrying out hate campaigns against the Christian community is a matter of great concern.”

Pastor Baizu, who was also attacked last year and has since received several phone threats, said Christians are deprived of basic human rights in Nepal, including the right to burial spaces.

“There is not even a burial ground for the Christians who die in Nepal,” he added.

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# 'We're in the End Times': Why Satan Worship Is on the Rise in Pop Culture

Netflix's new season of *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* just came out, and kids are raving over it. But Tina Griffin—also known as the “Counter Culture Mom”—says this new, live-action show takes witchcraft to a whole new level.

“We're not talking about a one- or two-minute scene in a short program,” she says. “The entire theme of the program is about seances, black cats, magic, Wicca. We've got Sabrina's Sweet 16 party with the devil, Satan, showing up at her birthday party.”

But it's not just *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* that's glorifying witchcraft and glamorizing the devil. Griffin says Satan worship has infiltrated pop culture through music and social media too.

She shares example after example of top celebrities who adhere to Satanism, wear occult clothing or brand themselves with Satanic symbols. But why are we seeing this sudden spike in Satan worship?

“It's because Satan has little time left,” she says. “I honestly believe we are living in the end times. ... We really, strongly feel Christ is around the corner.”

Listen to the interview to hear Griffin expose how pop culture glorifies witchcraft.

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# Ambassador Uses Bible to Prove Jewish Claim to Israel

Israel's U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon used the Bible to defend the Jewish people's claim to the land of Israel during a special session at the United Nations Security Council on Monday.

Danon was tasked with the job of proving the case for Jews' connection to the Holy Land during the session. He outlined four reasons, "the Bible, history, international law and the pursuit of international peace and security."

In a dramatic moment, Danon opened the Bible and read aloud God's covenant with Abraham from Genesis 17: "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout the generations for an everlasting covenant. And I will give to you and your descendants after you all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession and I will be their God."

Danon then raised up the Bible, turned to attendees and said, "This is the deed to our land."

"From the book of Genesis to the Jews' exodus, from Egypt to receiving the Torah on Mt. Sinai, and to the realization of God's covenant in the Holy Land of Israel, the Bible paints a consistent picture. The entire history of our people and our connection to Eretz Israel begins right here," he continued while lifting up the Bible once again.

Danon argued that all of the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam – affirm the Jewish people's connection to Israel.

"The Qur'an itself accepts the divine deed of the Jewish people to the land of Israel," he said.

Click [here](#) to read the rest of this story from our content partners at CBN News.

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# Did President Trump Make False Claims About Infanticide?

As expected, pundits on the left are in an uproar at the president's claims that a doctor conspires with parents as to whether to execute their newborn baby. In Trump's words (spoken at a recent rally in Green Bay), "The baby is born, the mother meets with the doctor, they take care of the baby, they wrap the baby beautifully. Then the doctor and mother determine whether or not they will execute the baby."

In response, *Rolling Stone* senior writer Jamil Smith tweeted, "President Trump keeps telling the same lie about abortion doctors murdering healthy fetuses after delivery. This doesn't happen. Yet he said it again last night. This is precisely the kind of hysteria that inspires people who murder doctors and patients."

Julia Pulver, a former neonatal nurse, said this: "When a baby dies in the hospital, it is a very sad thing but it is not something that is ever chosen. It is a horrible situation thrust upon parents who want their baby, who have prepared for the baby, who have framed sonograms sitting on their desks."

According to Ilyse Hogue, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, "What Trump asserted, for the second time, is false, illegal and simply not happening—nor would it happen." She claimed that, "The president "not only straight-up lied but

also vilified women, families and doctors facing situations every single one of us prays we never encounter.”

And Huffington Post adds this: “The recent focus on the alleged horrors of late-term abortions is especially fact-free. Only 1.3 percent of abortions take place after 21 weeks, and experts say these involve pregnancies that endanger the mother (and by extension the baby) or severe fetal anomalies that are incompatible with life.”

Let’s address these claims one at a time.

First, President Trump said nothing about the baby being healthy (contra the tweet of Smith). Instead, he spoke about the very real situation in which a baby survives an abortion (or, presumably, is born with a life-threatening defect) and is allowed to die. That’s why Congress keeps trying to pass the Born Alive Protection Act.

In its current form, the bill reads, “To amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion.”

This is a real bill designed to address real, life-and-death situations.

Not only so, but it was Virginia governor Ralph Northam who provided Trump with his main talking points about infanticide.

As Northam infamously said during a radio interview, “If a mother is in labor, I can tell you exactly what would happen. The infant would be delivered. The infant would be kept comfortable. The infant would be resuscitated if that’s what the mother and the family desired. And then a discussion would ensue between the physicians and the mother. So I think this was really blown out of proportion.”

Yet the left rails on Trump for calling this out rather than

on Northam for saying it.

To repeat: These things are really happening.

An official government document dated Sept. 23, 2016, notes that, "In 2002, Congress responded by passing the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, which was signed by President George W. Bush and is current federal law. This law recognized a child who is born alive after a failed abortion attempt as a legal person under the laws of the United States. The legal definition of live birth includes any sign of life, such as breath, heartbeat, pulsation of the umbilical cord or definite movement of voluntary muscles.

"Unfortunately, incidents involving born-alive children being killed after an attempted abortion have continued after this law was passed. Infanticide is unacceptable in a civilized society, regardless of what one may think about abortion itself. It should be uncontroversial for the federal government to supplement current law with enforcement protections for born-alive children after attempted abortions. That is why Congress must pass the proposed legislation known as the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act (H.R. 3504/S. 2066)."

Trump is not lying. These things are happening. They may happen just as he described (with the baby being wrapped in a blanket) or they may not (perhaps the baby is left naked and crying on a table). But they are happening, nonetheless.

Yet, to repeat, there's no outcry from the left about these horrors. The outcry is about the president drawing attention to the horrors.

As noted by Tony Perkins, "Liberals certainly thought infanticide was real enough in 2002, when protecting infants was so uncontroversial that it passed without a single Democratic opponent. Since then, the CDC's data only confirms these atrocities— as do mountains of eyewitness testimony,

grand jury reports, survivors' own stories and admissions by doctors like Northam himself!"

Second, what point is made by saying, "Only 1.3 percent of abortions take place after 21 weeks"? What if the sentence read, "Only 1.3 percent of abortions take place after birth"? Would that lessen the severity of the crime? We only kill a tiny percentage of babies once they're born!

Let's also put this in real-life numbers.

According to a just-released CDC report, in New York City in 2015, "the number of abortions at or after 21 weeks was 1,485 while the number of homicide victims was 352."

Shall we celebrate the fact that this (allegedly) represents "only" 1.3 percent of abortions?

These, in short, are the facts: States like New York have passed laws allowing for abortions right up to the time of delivery. Infanticide is taking place. And in countries like the Netherlands, "650 babies a year [are] euthanized so that their parents don't have to witness them struggle with disability or disease."

In light of all this, I'm glad that President Trump continues to speak up. He is addressing something terribly evil, and it behooves every person of conscience to stand with him in standing for the rights of "the least of these."

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## **Never Build a Ministry on One**

# Man's Swag

John the Baptist said he was not worthy to untie Jesus' lowly sandals. But in today's hyper-cool, megachurch culture, a preacher's footwear has become very pricey.

So pricey, in fact, that a new Instagram account called preachersnsneakers went viral last month and now has 154,000 followers. The social media account does nothing except offer photos of famous preachers' expensive and colorful footwear—including a pair of red Air Yeezy 2s worn by South Carolina pastor John Gray. His shoes retail for \$5,611.

Some people have complained about the Instagram site, claiming that its founder, an anonymous guy named "Tyler," is hurting the church. But he says he's simply holding up a mirror and asking Christians if our leaders should be known for their lavish tastes in clothes.

There's really nothing new about this. In the 1980s, televangelists were criticized for their three-piece suits and pricey Italian leather dress shoes—yet we know their followers gave them enough money to buy them private jets. Today, the suits and leather shoes are out of date, but the price tag on the designer sneakers is the same.

In today's vocabulary, it's called swag. It basically means stylish confidence, and it comes from the word "swagger."

Like the televangelist of the old days, the celebrity preacher of today may still be on television—or he may have his own YouTube channel. But his look has been totally updated. His hairstyle is hip, he has a few days' stubble on his face and his ministry has an app for your smartphone.

And apparently his on-stage wardrobe must now include a pair of \$1,000 Air Jordans.

I'm not against hair gel, stubble or the latest designer athletic shoes. I enjoy some of these preachers' podcasts. And, in their defense, some of these men received their fancy footwear as gifts from wealthy donors.

But I am concerned about the swag factor. Technology and youthful trendiness can breed pride if we're not careful. And pride is still pride, whether it is clothed in yesterday's neon polyester or today's jeans.

As ministry platforms grow larger, the potential for bigger egos grows more dangerous. Let's all take the humility test. We need less swag and more brokenness in the pulpit. Let's remember these basic biblical principles as we choose who to follow:

1. Christians should never worship preachers. Paul rebuked the people of Lystra when they called him and his companion Barnabas gods. Paul told the people: "We are also men of the same nature as you" (Acts 14:15b, NASB). True ministers of God will not allow their followers to place them on pedestals. Paul knew his proper role was to take the lowest seat, as a bondservant of Christ Jesus (see Phil. 1:1). He also knew that ministers must never allow flattery or adoration to inflate their egos.
2. Preachers must know who they are and who they aren't. When people spread a rumor that John the Baptist was the Messiah, he corrected them and said: "I am not the Christ. ... He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:28, 30, MEV). Even some of the most gifted Christian communicators can be seduced by the power of technology—and by the roar of a crowd—so that they actually believe they are in an elite category. No! We are nothing and He is everything. We must get out of the way so people can see Jesus!

Leaders who have not crucified the lust for self-promotion can

become infatuated with the big and the sensational. They can build big churches with bigger projection screens, yet their character cannot sustain the pressure of spiritual warfare that inevitably comes. An out-of-control ego becomes a monster.

Author Henry Blackaby said it this way: "Nothing is more pathetic than having a small character in a big assignment. Many of us don't want to give attention to our character; we just want the big assignment from God."

3. Ministry is best accomplished with a team, not a celebrity. Paul laid the foundations of the church in the Gentile world, but he always shared the spotlight with Timothy, Silas, Barnabas, Titus, Phoebe, Priscilla and other co-workers—who suffered in prison with him and faithfully preached alongside him. He didn't try to be five places at once; he trained people to take his place. And nobody on the team had swag!

It is becoming popular for large churches to open satellite campuses that offer video sermons from the same preacher. If this strategy is effectively reaching more converts, that's great. If preachers can do that and stay humble, keep it up. But let's be careful that we are not building ministry on one man's charisma.

Our ultimate goal should be for a whole new generation of people to be trained and empowered to serve, not for one man to build a show around his gift. And certainly not around his expensive Air Jordans.

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# How God Used a 'Failure' to Build One of the Largest AG Megachurches

Pastor John Lindell leads James River Church, a megachurch based in Springfield, Missouri, which is one of the largest Assemblies of God churches in the country. But before Lindell came to James River, he pioneered a church in the Kansas City area that couldn't grow. He said he felt like a failure when it came to believing and trusting in God.

Lindell says, "Really, I'd lost sense of my calling, honestly, and it felt like such a failure."

Yet God still had a plan for Lindell—and breathed on James River Church. Watch his interview on *The Jim Bakker Show* to find out what happened next.

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## Bethel Senior Pastor: Why Charismatics Shouldn't Feel Superior to Other Denominations

Eric Johnson, senior pastor at Bethel Redding, cautioned his charismatic community against feeling superior to other streams or denominations in a recent sermon. Instead, he urged them to learn from one another and cooperate in unity.

Johnson said, "Every stream thinks they're a river. So it's

important that we're actually learning from our brothers and sisters in other streams. Why? Because they're carrying something that we do not have. They saw an aspect of God that we do not have. ... It's funny how critical we are of other streams when it doesn't look like your stream. Do you understand? It's a different stream. That's the whole point."

Johnson said that Jesus embodied all aspects of five-fold ministry, but later "split up the fivefold so not one person can have all five." He did that to force believers to work alongside others and cooperate with the different streams. When believers refuse to do that, Johnson said, it demonstrates arrogance.

"'Well, they don't worship long enough' or 'They don't teach about signs and wonders and miracles'—when you have that attitude approach, it's very arrogant," Johnson said. "It's very superior. I wish they would talk about signs and wonders. But I'm not going to let that bother me. Why? Because they've got a message on evangelism that we need, or they've got an insight on communion that we need to have."

Watch the video to hear Johnson's full remarks.

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## **Heidi Baker's Ministry Shares Dramatic Footage of the Devastation Left by Historic Cyclone**

Only one month after Cyclone Idai killed over 1,000 people, a second storm—even stronger than the last—rocked Mozambique

this week. Over the last week, intense Tropical Cyclone Kenneth made landfall in Mozambique, becoming the strongest tropical cyclone to do so in recorded history. As a result, houses collapsed, roads were cut off, people became trapped by flash-floods and ultimately more than 40 people were killed. This devastation comes barely a month after Tropical Cyclone Idai—the third-deadliest cyclone in history—devastated Mozambique and neighboring countries in March.

Heidi Baker's ministry, Iris Global, released a video Tuesday showing footage of the destruction and devastation left by Cyclone Kenneth. The ministry also explained how they are helping on the ground and what believers abroad can be praying for. To learn more or help, visit .

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## **The Marriage SCENE You Must Move Beyond**

Today's Western culture is often less than helpful or friendly to long-term Christian marriage. Few believers would dispute that, and you would probably agree that marriage is more like a marathon than a sprint. Yet so many marriages dissolve into misery, or even end. Understanding the SCENE in your marriage provides some fascinating perspective.

This idea comes from Dr Tim Elmore, president and founder of Growing Leaders and world-renowned expert on Gen Y and Gen Z. He describes the 21st-century reality young people are facing using the word SCENE as an acrostic:

- S – speed
- C – convenient
- E – entertainment

- N – nurture
- E – entitlement

Those same ideas apply strongly to marriage, and that's what I want to explore today.

What's the SCENE in your marriage?

## **S – Speed**

Whether spoken or unspoken, the unconscious expectation many people have is that saying "I do" will make a marriage. Add a little prayer to the wedding day and perhaps the honeymoon, and voila, you have a marriage!

That expectation is understandable in a culture of speed. After all, we have fast food, high-speed internet and any information available at the push of a button. Instant gratification is expected.

And the corollary belief is that *if speed is good, slow is bad*.

But marriage doesn't work that way. While a wedding happens in a day, a marriage grows over a lifetime. It's truly impossible for communication, understanding, trust, and intimacy to happen in a moment.

A wedding is like an acorn. A marriage is more like an oak tree—stronger, more beautiful and more useful as the decades progress.

## **C – Convenient**

Today's world is ever more convenient; banking, shopping, eating, online church services and a whole lot more. "There's an app for that." Of course some of these conveniences come with side effects. But the expectation and experience in our world is for ever more convenience.

And the corollary is that *if convenient is good, hard is bad*.

Ask anyone who has been married more than a few weeks (or perhaps a few hours!) and they will tell you that marriage is hard. Ask a senior citizen who has had a long and healthy marriage if it was easy. Not!

A wedding might be like seeing a mountain peak from an airplane window. But a healthy marriage is more like climbing that mountain with your own legs and standing on the summit. Nothing quite compares with the exhilaration of actually doing it.

## **E – Entertainment**

Our culture is saturated with entertainment. If you have a TV, a computer screen or a smartphone, you can find any variety of entertainment you wish 24/7. And if you don't like what's on one screen, you probably have a couple other screens you can switch to.

And the corollary is that *if entertainment is good, boring is bad.*

Entertainment is a great killer of creativity. Good research shows that boredom is the fertile soil of innovation. One must be intentional to approach boredom that way. Especially in marriage expecting the fluff of always feeling stimulated sabotages the security of commitment.

A wedding is rather like sitting in the audience for a movie, perhaps a very good movie. A healthy marriage is more like the satisfaction and soul-filling nourishment of a weekend at the beach doing nothing but being together. "Boring" is often where relationship grows deepest.

## **N – Nurture**

It's normal today to expect protection from everything. Vehicle airbags, insurance for everything imaginable, multi-page legal protection documents for anything as "simple" as a cellphone-while exploitation is wrong, such an environment

gives people no understanding that life itself is not guaranteed.

And the corollary is that *if nurture is good, risk is bad.*

Anything worth anything comes with risks. Trying to avoid risk at all costs is futile. When it comes to marriage, you will marry a sinner. (There are no other humans available!) Choosing a spouse thoughtfully and prayerfully is wise, but something as valuable as marriage comes with no guarantees.

A wedding might be like getting a very nice bonus as an employee. A marriage is more like striking out as an entrepreneur; you know it will require everything in you to make it, but the potential rewards are more than worth it.

## **E – Entitlement**

All the above factors foster a sense of entitlement. Everybody owes me: my parents, my school, the government, my doctor, my church, even God owes me something. And if something in my life isn't going well, it's somebody else's fault. Who can I blame?

How sad!

The corollary is that *if entitlement is good, labor is bad.*

A good marriage doesn't just happen. The universe doesn't owe you happiness, or ease or that all your needs will be met. Your spouse doesn't owe you a good life. Any reasonably healthy marriage only develops because both partners worry more about their spouse's needs than their own. They each give 100% without keeping score.

A wedding could be likened to a cubic zirconia—shiny and bright while new. A healthy marriage is more like a diamond, developed over time and under pressure.

May you move beyond the 21st-century SCENE in your marriage to

a relationship that is truly priceless. {eoa}

**Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley** is both a board-certified OB-GYN physician and an ordained doctor of ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the **Fully Alive** kind of life Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .

*This article originally appeared at .*

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