

Warning: You Might Suffer From One of These 6 Serious Addictions

Addictions can involve both substances (alcohol, drugs, sugar, carbohydrates, caffeine and others) and processes (gambling, relationships, love, work, sex and more). In these short descriptions, I will not be able to fully detail your particular addiction. That's one of the limitations of writing a general addiction article. If you find the biological aspects of addiction interesting, there are many books that focus on specific addictions that you may find helpful.

1. Biological Addict

The condition of the body is a key factor in one becoming addicted to a substance or process. The first kind of addict starts life chemically or hormonally challenged, which causes discomfort, imbalance or depression. This person will definitely look for a biological solution for his or her nagging problem. The first time this person ingests alcohol or drugs, they engage in a process that causes the chemicals to rise that they need to compensate for the deficit in their bodies, and they feel whole or great. They repeat ingesting the substance or engaging in the process to continue getting that elated feeling. That is, until they become addicted. In this case, the "medicine" (addiction) for the body's imbalance becomes the problem.

The second kind of addict from a biological aspect has a relatively healthy body, but through repetition creates a dependence on a substance or process to feel a certain way. In some cases, like sex and substances, the neuropathic highways of the brain can be hijacked. When this happens, one's body becomes the enemy, demanding the candy (addiction) that you

have been reinforcing to feel the mood state it creates, whether a substance or process.

The body part of “spirit, soul and body” has been largely overlooked in Christian recovery models. Christians like to just focus on only the spiritual. However, Paul encourages us to look at the whole person. This approach to healing and obtaining recovery makes more sense to me than focusing on only one dimension of our three-dimensional being.

You need only see someone go through withdrawal, whether from drugs, alcohol, sex, relationships or work, to realize that the body aspect is real. Addicts have withdrawals that are partially physical, such as convulsions, sweats and shakes. This is important to understand, particularly if physical aspects are part of your addiction process. Also, if you are a person who grew up in a healthy family with no trauma or abuse, it is important to know you might have become addicted purely due to biological reinforcement.

2. Psychological Addict

Research related to addiction has found that generally, a larger population of addicts has suffered some form of abuse or neglect. These people find the combination of messages in the fantasy world and the chemical cocktail to the brain to be a salve unto their hurting souls. Simply put, they medicate the past or the pain in their souls by acting out, which is their form of medicine.

In my clinical experience, 80 percent of addicts (or more) have abandonment, abuse or neglect issues of some type in their past. These painful events will ultimately need to be addressed for the addict to fully heal. Some of these issues are addressed in the *Recovery for Everyone Workbook*.

3. The Spiritual-Based Addict

This addict is looking for a spiritual connection in all the

wrong places. In recovery, we talk about our spiritual hole. Such addicts put their addiction (whether chemical or process) in a hole but find it doesn't scratch the itch over time. Should they have a spiritual awakening of some type, their addictive behaviors cease because they have filled their spiritual hole. They then pursue life in a healthy manner.

These are the people who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and their addictions stop instantly. This is what happened to me and my addictions to alcohol and drugs. My addictions left when I became a Christian, though my sex addiction stayed, and I needed to heal from that.

I tell my Christian clients, "If He didn't deliver you, He wants to heal you through the recovery process. Either way is a miracle!"

4. The Trauma-Based Addict

The trauma-based addict has experienced sexual trauma as a child or adolescent. This trauma becomes the major pain they are medicating. For some addicts, this is their biggest secret. They suppress the pain. However, this pain must be addressed and healed.

If you have suffered the trauma of sexual abuse or rape, you absolutely must tell someone so you can begin to heal. This secret lodged in your spirit, soul and body needs to be exposed to be healed. I was abused in my early years. It wasn't my fault. Victims of sexual abuse often take false responsibility for the abuse, and this must be worked through. If you were abused or raped, it was not your fault: You were not responsible for it.

The trauma-based addict has to address the abuse they suffered to stop the acting out, be it substance or process addiction behaviors. Find a pastor, recovery person or counselor of the same gender with whom you can be honest.

This category of trauma includes those who have experienced abortions. Women especially suppress this trauma, so their secret can be the core of the pain they are medicating. When men who willingly participated in an abortion hold onto their secret, it often becomes a big factor in their addiction behaviors. If this is your trauma, again, speak to someone of the same gender and start to expose your secret.

For the trauma-based addict, the trauma determines the flavor of the addiction. This trauma must be addressed for the addict to heal.

5. The Intimacy Anorexic Addict

Intimacy anorexia is an addiction process all by itself. However, from my experience working with addicts of various kinds, this addiction cannot only coexist with, but exacerbate a chemical or process addiction in one's life.

Look at the list of intimacy anorexia characteristics below. Which of these would your spouse or partner say apply to you? If you believe five or more of these apply to you, you are probably an intimacy anorexic.

1. Withhold love from your spouse.
2. Withhold praise or appreciation from your spouse.
3. Control your spouse by way of silence/anger.
4. Criticize your spouse without grounds, regularly.
5. Withhold sex.
6. Blame spouse for everything.
7. Stay very busy to avoid your spouse.
8. Control/shame with money issues.
9. Are unable to share feelings with your spouse.
10. Withhold spiritual connection from your spouse.

Many addicts who try to get sober but keep having what I call "flat tire" recovery (relapse regularly) meet the criteria for intimacy anorexia. If you have been sober from addictive acting-out behaviors for a year, but your spouse wants to

leave you because “nothing’s changed,” you too might be an intimacy anorexic.

6. The Addict With Mood Disorders

Some adolescent or young adult addicts have chemical imbalances. These young people find the addictive chemical or process offers them a way to medicate or alter their chemical imbalance. They use this medicating response quite regularly, and over time, create an addiction. In a journal article I wrote called, “The Prevalence of Depression in Male Sex Addicts Residing in the United States,” I discovered that 28 percent of male sex addicts suffered from depression.

A second common chemical imbalance I see in my practice with addicts is cyclothymic disorder. This is a slight up-and-down fluctuation in mood addicts usually experience on roughly a weekly basis (a funky day). This type of addict will need to do all the recovery work discussed here and in the exercise workbook. In addition, he or she should see a psychiatrist for medication for the mood disorder. {eoa}

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Choose This Spirit-Anointed

Resolution This Year

Research done at the University of Scranton suggests that just 8 percent of people achieve their New Year's goals. I choose to do something much more effective than a New Year's resolution.

For many years, on Jan. 1, my practice has been to simply journal and ask the Lord what He wants me to focus on and master over the coming year. He tells me, and I focus on it, letting His Spirit guide and empower me as I master the area in the following months. Since I am a teacher with a passion to pass on to others practical steps to achieve spiritual realities, a how-to book will usually be the result of the year's growth.

4 Keys to Making New Year's Resolutions Successful

1. **It is the Lord who gives the topic to explore** for the year, not myself. He says, "My *rhemas* are spirit and life; the flesh accomplishes nothing" (John 6:63). This helps us understand why a New Year's resolution made in the flesh will fail.
2. **I stay tuned to the flow of the Holy Spirit** as I pursue mastery in the area (John 5:30; 7:37-39). This allows me to receive words of wisdom and words of knowledge which focus my activities.
3. **I have challenges, not problems.** I refuse problems, which are effort coupled with negative thinking which says, "This problem blocks me so I cannot succeed." Instead I have challenges that have only one possible result: They are overcome. In Christ, this battle is already won (1 Cor. 15:57). This victory is assured!
4. **I speak life over myself.** God's *rhema* is spoken as my present tense, current reality (Mark 11:22-24). I am not trying to become something. By His stripes I am healed (Isa. 53:5). God has given me the power to create wealth

(Deut. 8:18).

Some Examples of Covenant Promises Being Realized

God's covenant blessings touch every area of our lives (Deut. 28:1-14). Here is a listing of 12 divine exchanges Jesus provided for all of us. Review the list and see if He gives you a focus of one of these 12 for the next year. Tune to flow and journal out what He is speaking to you.

Health: I just finished two years of focus on maximizing my health, and once again I am experiencing wonderfully improved health.

Finances: During the last two months, God has led my son and me to a couple of conferences which have re-awakened in us the dream He gave us over 30 years ago to achieve personal financial abundance through two different activities.

Sticking with it: We stay with a challenge until mastery is achieved. Normally it is 12 months. We stay with it until we are living the reality. A truth is mine when I am walking in it. That is when I know the truth. If it takes two years, that is fine. No need to rush. Head knowledge is not knowing truth. *Knowing truth* is a transformed life that is manifesting His Kingdom promises.

Edison did 6000 experiments with the light bulb before perfecting it. He won! I choose to also win. I am not going to try three things, and say, "It doesn't work for me." I am pressing in until I have the victory.

I will seek out counsel from proven trainers who are living in victory in the area I am pursuing. They must be living models of the lifestyle and able to teach the necessary steps to achieving that lifestyle. If they are not living it, they cannot teach me how to live it.

I also invest in the best tools available to speed me along

the way. I am willing to spend money for both great coaches and great tools. It is an investment into the victory that lies before me.

I live daily tuned to flow, honoring the counsel and guidance of God through my nightly dreams and my daily journaling. I know that whatever I go to sleep meditating on, my heart will work on all night, providing wise solutions through my dreams and my journaling the following morning when I awaken. So I purpose to fill my mind at the close of the day with ideas and questions concerning the issue I am seeking wisdom and mastery on. I often will awaken in the middle of the night with revelation. I get up and record it on my computer so I can explore it later in greater depth. Nighttime dreams and morning journaling are wonderful times of revelation helping me master an area God has placed before me. This makes my morning devotional exciting, life-giving, constantly changing encounters with the Lord. Journaling about health or finances is as spiritual as journaling through a book of the Bible.

One of the ways Edison tapped into the creativity of his heart was to hold marbles in his hand as he rested and meditated. As he drifted off into a nap, the marbles would fall from his hands, and he would awaken with new insights which he would try out.

I love tapping into God's creative flow from my heart. Through it, I access words of knowledge and words of wisdom which spur me on to success. You can do this, too. Keep it easy. Put a smile on your face so you don't start grunting and disrupting His creative flow within you.

Let the church be the most creative entity in the world, as we release the creativity of God which solves mankind's problems and serves them effectively. {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .

‘Trump Aftershock’ Author Stephen E. Strang: Strong Judiciary Wins Must Continue in 2019

Conservatives may have experienced a loss in 2018 House midterm races, but victory is a significant and powerful reality when it comes to the nation’s courts.

Because Republicans increased control of the Senate, appointments of conservative jurists will continue in 2019, says Stephen E. Strang, a best-selling author who released his newest book, *Trump Aftershock*, on Election Day.

Strang says the country’s judiciary is of utmost importance to evangelical voters, and the knowledge and assurance that President Donald Trump is succeeding in this realm—and can continue to do so—is crucial.

“This was one of the promises evangelicals were counting on President Trump to keep—and he has,” Strang said. “Smart

Christian voters knew that how Trump worked the judicial system during his time in office would have implications for generations to come. Evangelicals have watched without recourse as their customs and religious beliefs have come under assault by the education establishment, the media and, most damaging, the federal courts. Supreme Court rulings in the 1960s stripped prayer and Bible reading from the public schools. There were no riots, no marches. Instead, believers stood by in silence, fearing there was nothing they could do. But that was only the beginning.

“Today Christian bakers, florists and wedding planners, along with restaurant, hotel and resort owners, are under the constant threat of losing their livelihood, their homes and their freedom for simply abiding by the time-honored principles of their faith,” Strang added. “Evangelicals want to make sure these things never happen again, at least while they can do something about it. And this is a major reason why many evangelicals continue to support President Trump. The midterm election may have been a loss in some respects, but it was a huge win for America’s court system in the minds of the faithful.”

Trump Aftershock explores the “president’s seismic impact on culture and faith in America” and uncovers unreported facts while objectively helping readers understand what the nation’s most unlikely and unconventional president has accomplished.

Is This Fast-Growing Church Trend Completely Unbiblical?

My wife recently attended a memorial service for a longtime

friend, who was in her 90s and had been known and loved by our mutual families for many decades.

The officiating pastor dressed as he normally does for public worship services, in casual pants and an untucked shirt.

I'm not his judge (1 Cor. 4:5), but I do continue to question what has become of a common sense of decorum and discerning appropriate dress for public worship or solemn gatherings.

Paul calls us to show "honor to whom honor" is due (Rom. 13:7). There are occasions where our own casual convenience or cultural preferences should not be the focus but, rather, a holy obligation to show respect and honor for the occasion, for other worshippers, or—most importantly—what is pleasing to the Holy One of heaven.

The great "love chapter" (1 Cor. 13:4-6) teaches that love "is kind ... [and] does not behave itself improperly, seeks not its own." Often, it seems we have forgotten that we come together not for our own purposes or pleasure but to worship God and to edify, encourage or comfort each other.

I would be the first to admit that this specific topic is not a moral issue, where God has already ruled on its acceptability (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Paul said that, as a believer, "all things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable" (v. 12, NASB)." That could also be expressed as "not all things are helpful" (MEV), or maybe, as may relate to appropriate dress, "not all things are appropriate, respectful or positive."

Rather, how to dress appropriately for certain settings or circumstances (like a memorial service for a member of the family of God) might be considered as an ethical issue, where we have to discern biblical principles and examples to apply in pleasing the Lord.

I have written elsewhere about Jesus' example in dressing for

the first Communion service. (He dressed “up” and not “down.” See John 19:23-24). How should we dress for this holy observance?

Also, you and I can consider these practical categories and ethical questions for contemporary Christian living:

1. Profit (1 Cor. 6:12): Is it good for me? Will it add a plus quality to my life?
2. Control (1 Cor. 6:12): Will it get control of me, or will it lessen Christ’s control of me?
3. Ownership (1 Cor. 6:19-20): As God’s property, can I justify this activity?
4. Influence (1 Cor. 8:9, 12-13): Could this action negatively influence any of my believing friends?
5. Testimony (Col. 4:5): How will my testimony be affected if I participate in this activity?
6. Thanksgiving (1 Thess. 5:18): When I come home from this activity, can I thank God for it with a clear conscience?

Based on your prayerful consideration of these practical categories and ethical questions, you can develop personal convictions for a discerning lifestyle that will be pleasing to God. {eoa}

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20 Things Your Wife Hates to Hear You Say

My friend and his new wife had just finished their first dinner in their new home. She spent a good amount of time preparing the meal so it was perfect. After dinner he went and sat in front of the TV. Then he said it: "My mom would have had everything cleaned up by now."

As you can imagine, he immediately had an angry wife. The vase just barely missed his head, shattering on the wall behind him. I asked him if the vase was a warning shot or if she actually meant to hit him. "Oh, she definitely meant to hit me," he said. Over 20 years later, they are more than happily married. One of the reasons for their happy marriage is he stopped saying things like that.

There are things a husband says that lead straight to an angry wife. While some depend on the context, others just need to leave our vocabulary altogether. Whether you have a happy marriage will depend on how you communicate. It's not always about saying the right things; sometimes it's about not saying the wrong things. Here are 20 things wives hate hearing their husbands say.

Disconnected

Each of these communicates that we are disconnecting from them or leaving them to fend for themselves when it comes to

meeting the needs and responsibilities of the kids.

“I’m going out. I need some *me* time.” There’s nothing wrong with the occasional *me* time, but it does cost her. Make sure she is okay before you go, and that you are also doing the same for her.

“Huh?” You’re disengaged from or, at least, not tuning into her.

“I’ll do it later.” What she hears, whether you mean it or not, is she’s not important to you.

“Nothing” or (nothing). She wants to know what you are thinking and feeling. Nothing communicates nothing.

“I’m working late again tonight.” Again, there’s nothing wrong with occasionally working late, but when it becomes frequent, she will assume you are choosing work over your family.

Condescending

Our wives are our partners, and these comments make them feel at best, unappreciated, and at worst that we think they are inferior.

“Let me explain this to you in a way you can understand.” or **“It’s easy ...”** In other words, you are saying she is not as smart as you.

“You spent how much?” Fiscal responsibility is important, and couples need to come to agreements, but this belittles her ability to make a decision.

“You’ve got it easy.” Essentially, you are belittling her struggles. It may look easy or easier, but until you’ve walked in her shoes, you can’t know.

“Well, then why don’t you (proposed solution to her problem)?” Most of the time she wants your empathy, not your solutions.

Assume she is smart enough to figure it out.

“I’m paying for it.” Your money is her money too, no matter whose name is on the paycheck. A statement like this makes her feel like you are exerting power over her.

Invalidating

These statements communicate to her that what she is saying and feeling doesn’t have any merit. More than anything, wives want to be known, understood and empathized with. These statements are dismissive.

“Relax!” She may be overreacting, but at least some of her feelings are valid, and a reprimand rather than an ear is the last thing she needs.

“Is it your time of the month?” You might as well tell her she is crazy and laugh at her.

“How many times do we have to talk about this?” As many times as it takes until it is resolved. Otherwise, you are communicating that your pride is more important than she is.

“I can’t do anything right.” If she’s overly critical, this is not the way to communicate it. All she is going to hear is that you can’t take responsibility, suggestions or critique.

“And here it comes ...” If she is saying something over and over again, it’s more important to get to the root of it rather than dismissing her point of view as a broken record. Deal with it, and maybe it won’t come up again.

Devaluing

One of the most important things we can do as a husband is to make our wives feel valuable. These comments achieve the opposite.

“What’s for dinner?” Don’t assume dinner is automatically hers to make; otherwise, she will feel taken for granted and

possibly subservient.

“Wow. The house is a mess.” This is a passive-aggressive statement that casts blame and judgment.

“She’s hot.” You are telling your wife she isn’t pretty enough and that you wished she looked like that girl.

“You know I love you. I don’t need to say it.” Yes, you do, and she’s not being needy by wanting you to say it.

“Leave me alone. You’re always nagging.” You are telling her that if anything is bothering her, she should keep it to herself. {eoa}

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This article originally appeared at .

Beloved 53-Year-Old Pastor Dies Suddenly on Ski Trip

A Northern California church was shocked to learn Sunday that its pastor had suddenly died during a skiing trip just a few days earlier.

Craig Jutila, 53, of Venture Christian Church in Los Gatos, California, suffered a major heart attack while taking his family skiing in Lake Tahoe on Dec. 26.

“We are grieving the loss of our family ministry pastor,

teaching pastor, Craig Jutila,” Tim Lundy, senior pastor at the church, told the congregation Sunday morning. The announcement was live-streamed on Facebook.

“We found out that Craig passed away from a heart attack on the slopes,” Lundy said.

A press release from the ski resort, Sierra-at-Tahoe, said he Jutila was found unconscious and paramedics tried to resuscitate him but he was later pronounced dead by the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office.

“This sudden and terrible news has stunned us all, and we are grieving with Craig’s family. Please keep his wife, Mary, as well as their kids, Alec, Cameron, and Karimy in your prayers. Their loss is immeasurable and we want to surround them with love and prayer,” Lundy wrote in a statement on Facebook.

“Craig’s leadership as pastor of Family Ministries has made such a difference in our church. His writing and speaking ministry to families has helped countless homes and lives around the world. He will be missed as a pastor, leader, and teacher, but most of all, as our friend. This news is so hard to believe, as just a couple of days ago he was hosting all our Christmas services. Now he is gone,” Lundy added.

{eoa}

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

The Protestant Case for

Honoring the Virgin Mary

And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well advanced in years."... Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (Luke 1:18, 34).

In considering the life of Mary, history, theologians, traditions and agendas quickly set in. Some make far too much of Mary, and some make far too little of her.

Mary was not sinless (Luke 2:22). She did not remain a virgin forever (Matt. 1:24–25; 12:46). She is not a co-mediator or co-redeemer alongside Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). We're to pray to our Creator and not to anyone he has created.

Just because some Christian traditions have elevated Mary to an unhealthy state, however, does not mean we cannot honor her. Mary should not be our object of faith, but she should be an example of faith Martin Luther rightly said. Every man and woman should aspire to have faith like Mary's. By the grace of God, we should aspire to love God, trust God and serve Jesus as she did. We should long to have the same kind of heartfelt devotion and affection for Jesus she did. Furthermore, she is an amazing example for everyone, especially young and single women, for what godly devotion looks like.

Small-town religious gossip can be brutal. Joseph married a single mom and adopted her son. Joseph had to deal with the fact that his boy was called illegitimate, his wife was called unfaithful, and he was called a fool for the rest of his life. He didn't have to accept this fate. Joseph would have been well within his rights to abandon Mary—technically, he could have even sought to have her stoned to death for adultery. But God told Joseph to love Mary and raise the child, and that's exactly what Joseph did.

Thanks to Joseph's humble obedience, Jesus had a dad. And Matthew 1-2 provides more details about him. For you single men reading this, do not overlook the single mothers God places in front of you as a possible wife for your consideration. It is almost certain that when Joseph sat in his youth group with his friends and compiled a list of qualities he was looking for in a wife, the virgin Joseph did not include "pregnant" on his ideal list. Yet, there is no more godly and glorious woman, wife and mother the world has ever known than Mary.

The elderly priest Zechariah met Gabriel with a question: "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well advanced in years" (Luke 1:18b). The angel responded by silencing the old man for nine months. Mary met Gabriel with a question: "How will this be, since I am a virgin" (Luke 1:34) and receive no such rebuke.

What's the difference? Mary's question is about understanding, not unbelief. Mary doesn't argue. She doesn't disagree. She doesn't try to explain to Gabriel where babies come from. She basically says, "I believe that can happen, how's it going to work?" That's a fair, honest question.

You can believe in Jesus—that he is God, that he died for your sins, that he rose for your salvation—and still have questions. Christianity is certainly big enough, and God is certainly mysterious enough, for questions. Anselm, an ancient theologian, spoke of faith seeking understanding. We believe, and we are trying to understand.

That's the life of faith.

God can take an elderly woman like Elizabeth and open her womb. God can take a virgin like Mary and give her a son. "For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37). Do you believe that? Do you believe it is not only true for Elizabeth, but also others, including you?

God can create everything out of nothing. God can take on human flesh and enter into human history as the man Jesus Christ. God can atone for the sin of the world on a chunk of wood. God can rise from death. God can raise us from death. God can hear and answer prayer. God can take enemies and make them friends.

Nothing is impossible with God. That's why Christians can be joyful and hopeful even amidst horror. That's why we sing and pray. Our God is a God of the impossible.

Has God given you a script for your life that is different than the one you had in mind? How have you responded? How do you need to align yourself with his will for your life? {eoa}

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Once Again, 'The New York Times' Misunderstands and Mocks Evangelical Christians

In a year-end op-ed piece for *The New York Times*, Katherine Stewart alleges that, "The Christian nationalist movement today is authoritarian, paranoid and patriarchal at its core. They aren't fighting a culture war. They're making a direct

attack on democracy itself.” Such claims are as ludicrous as they are misleading.

According to Stewart, when evangelicals like Lance Wallnau compare Trump to King Cyrus in the Bible, they are actually wanting Trump to be a king. Indeed, she claims that, “in Mr. Trump, they have found a man who does not merely serve their cause, but also satisfies their craving for a certain kind of political leadership.”

Evangelicals, whom she slyly characterizes as “Christian nationalists,” want a king, not a president. They want someone to impose their views on the nation. They are theocratic, not democratic. That’s why Trump is their man.

She writes, “I have attended dozens of Christian nationalist conferences and events over the past two years. And while I have heard plenty of comments casting doubt on the more questionable aspects of Mr. Trump’s character, the gist of the proceedings almost always comes down to the belief that he is a miracle sent straight from heaven to bring the nation back to the Lord. I have also learned that resistance to Mr. Trump is tantamount to resistance to God.”

Let’s analyze these claims one at a time, as factually and as dispassionately as possible.

First, with regard to the Cyrus comparison, I can say without equivocation that those using the analogy did not use it with reference to Trump ruling over the nation like a king. As evangelical Americans, we trace our roots back to those who overthrew British rule. We reject a king over America just as much as we reject attempting to set up a theocracy where religious leaders rule the land by fiat and force.

The Cyrus analogy had to do with the unlikelihood of someone like Trump being president, just as it was unlikely that God would use someone like Cyrus (an idol-worshiping, non-Israelite), to restore the Jewish exiles from Babylon.

Wallnau even read Isaiah 45 to Trump at a gathering of evangelicals during the primaries, including these words: "For the sake of My servant Jacob, Israel My chosen one, I call you by name, I hail you by title, though you have not known Me" (see Isa. 45:4).

In other words, God was raising up Donald Trump, a non-evangelical, non-Christian, to help America and, in particular, to help evangelicals. It had nothing to do with him reigning as a king.

Second, these evangelicals are not paranoid. We are fighting a very real battle for our liberties. We are standing up for the rights of our children. Even *Time* magazine published an article on June 29, 2016 titled, "Regular Christians Are No Longer Welcome in American Culture." And already in 2003, David Limbaugh could write the book, *Persecution: How Liberals Are Waging War Against Christians*.

There's a reason I have urged fellow evangelicals to rise up and speak up in 2019. (For a fair, academic evaluation, see George Yancey and David A. Williamson, *So Many Christians, So Few Lions: Is There Christianophobia in the United States?*)

Third, we evangelicals are fighting a culture war. We are not fighting "democracy itself." To the contrary, we believe the democratic principles of our country are being undermined by radical ideologues who have a very different vision for America.

We see a rise in mobocracy, not democracy. We see a push towards socialism, which will destroy the democracy. We see an anti-Constitutional, even anti-American vision from the radical left that is destructive, and we see Trump opposing that.

For good reason, Tom Gilson has started the new year writing about, "Leftist Totalitarianism: Your 'Freedom of Conscience' Under State Control." For good reason, Dennis Prager has

warned about where the left wants to bring us in 2019.

It is the radical left that is attacking Democracy. Evangelicals are trying to protect it.

Fourth, it is downright disingenuous to speak of American evangelicals as “Christian nationalists,” with all the ugly connotations such a term stirs up.

I don't know a single evangelical leader who would use such a term, nor do I know any who would prefer being labeled as such. (I can only speak of those I know.)

The truth be told, Stewart could just as well label liberal and “progressive” Christians as “Christian nationalists,” since they too speak about what is right for America, they too believe that their candidates would do the best job for America, and they too claim to be following the principles of Jesus.

Fifth, these evangelical leaders are not standing up for patriarchy. They are resisting radical feminism, which ultimately hurts women more than anyone. They are pushing back against the “Shout Your Abortion” movement, against the war on the unborn. They are pro-woman and pro-family.

Sixth, virtually all evangelical leaders I know wish that Trump would not call people dogs, that he would not be so nasty and demeaning in his tweets.

They like the fact that he fights back. They like the fact that he takes on the media. But they often groan over the way he does it, and I can say with confidence that quite a few evangelical leaders have urged him to reconsider some of his methodology, even if their words fall on deaf ears.

But, as one black evangelical said during the primaries (this was quoted to me by a colleague), “I'm not voting for his morality or his spirituality. I'm voting for his

constitutionality.”

Seventh, Stewart forgets that most of us voted for Trump because we were voting against Hillary. He was not the first choice for most of us. And yes, given the circumstances, we do believe he was elected with God’s help.

But since he has been elected, the Hillary-type forces (by which I mean the liberal media, the Democratic Party and the leftist agenda) have only become more extreme. More anti-Christian. More anti-democracy. More anti-freedom.

Should we now hope that Trump is removed so that these forces come to power? And would the resistance to Mike Pence be any less intense?

In reality, Stewart has things upside down, since it is really the radical left that wants to take over the nation and rob us of our liberties. And evangelicals see Trump, with all his massive flaws and blemishes, fighting against this hostile takeover. And for that we are glad.

What’s so un-Christian about that?

Pastor Thrown Behind Bars: ‘I Must Denounce This Wickedness Openly’

A Chinese pastor and his wife who were arrested alongside 100 church members and detained in southwest China recently are accused of subverting state power, which can carry a prison sentence of up to five years.

Pastor Wang Yi and his wife, Jiang Rong, and other members of their 'underground' Protestant Early Rain Covenant Church in the metropolis of Chengdu, Sichuan province, were picked up from the church, their homes or the streets by police during a raid last month.

While Wang has been criminally detained, his wife has been placed under "residential surveillance at a designated location", which, sources say, is a form of secret detention, the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) reported Dec. 13.

A lawyer who declined to be named told the newspaper she could be held for up to six months and that "the absurdity of this situation [the detention of the pastor's wife ... and] the handling of the case shows how furious the top party leadership is about the church".

The couple's 11-year-old son, meanwhile, is staying with Wang's mother, Chen Yaxue, 73, and both been placed under 24-hour police surveillance.

"They follow us wherever we go ... The surveillance is taking a huge toll on my grandson—he's in shock after [his parents were taken away]. He hasn't slept for two nights," Wang's mother told SCMP.

'Unlawful Action'

On Tuesday, Dec. 12, police also arrested Wang's assistant, Li Yingqiang, for "picking a quarrel and inciting trouble," according to church members.

Li had hidden himself in the first raid and then posted updates on social media, according to AsiaNews, which quoted Li, before he was arrested, as saying: "Even if we are down to our last five, worship and gatherings will still go on because our faith is real ... Persecution is a price worth paying for the Lord. We would rather live through it than to hide our faith, and we hope more Chinese churches will speak up and

stand with us.”

Li's wife, Zhang Xinyue, told SCMP the church would continue to meet: “We will not forsake assemblies. I was frightened at first when it happened but have soon overcome the feeling as we are prepared [for persecution].”

Two days after Wang's arrest, church members published a letter the pastor had written in September and instructed them to publish if he went missing for more than 48 hours.

In it he wrote that he respected “the authorities God had established in China” and that his aim was not to change institutions. However, he called the government's persecution of the church “greatly wicked” and an “unlawful action”.

“As a pastor of a Christian church, I must denounce this wickedness openly and severely. The calling that I have received requires me to use non-violent methods to disobey those human laws that disobey the Bible and God,” he wrote.

Human Rights Watch has called on the Chinese government to “immediate release” the pastor and the members of his church who are still being detained.

“The shutdown of a Protestant church in Chengdu epitomizes the Xi Jinping government's relentless assault on religious freedom in China. It makes a mockery of the government's claim that it respects religious beliefs,” said China researcher Yaqiu Wang Dec. 13.

Although an ‘underground’ church, Early Rain is known for operating openly, including publishing sermons and online studies, and engaging in street evangelism. It also has training facilities for pastors and a primary school which educates 40 children. Its weekly gatherings in different locations in Chengdu are attended by approximately 800 churchgoers.

In September, authorities notified the church that it was violating the government's religious policies as it was not officially registered, according to *The New York Times*.

The church had been raided by police in May, as it prepared to commemorate the 10th anniversary of an earthquake. Wang was arrested alongside 200 church members after the authorities warned him that he did not have the permit necessary to hold such an event.

Wang, a former lawyer and human rights activist, has also been vocal in his criticism of the new religious regulations introduced on Feb. 1, saying they were a violation of religious freedom and that Christians in China should resist them.

As World Watch Monitor has reported, Christians and the church are an enigma to the Chinese government. "The CCP believes the church is a de-stabilizing force, but not because it is bad; in fact, local communities and authorities tend to believe Christians are good people," Aaron Ma, an Asia-based researcher for the Christian advocacy charity Open Doors International, said in June.

"Some suggest that because Christians' allegiance is first and foremost to God and not the Communist Party, there is a conflict of interests that the party believes can potentially hinder the process of unification. Others are more concerned by what they perceive as potential 'chaos' arising from the huge number of Christians."

China also features on the U.S. State Department's latest list of Countries of Particular Concern (CPCs) for religious-freedom violations, and U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback, called the situation in the East Asian country "one of the really worst human rights situations in the world", referring to the incarceration of hundreds of thousands of Muslim Uyghurs in

Xinjiang province but also to the arrests of members of the Early Rain Covenant Church. {eoa}

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This Is One of the Worst Kinds of Spiritual Slavery

Prosperity without freedom is the worst kind of slavery.

The Bible is a book filled with blessings, teachings, words of encouragement and warnings. Many times, a single verse can carry within it each of these categories and more. One example of such a verse is Exodus 1:7 (TLV):

“Yet Bnei-Yisrael were fruitful, increased abundantly, multiplied and grew extremely numerous—so the land was filled with them.”

At first glance, the words of this passage can be viewed as a blessing. We read these words and see that over their years in Egypt; G-D has allowed the children of Israel to become prosperous in every way. We can also see within the text an expression of encouragement as we clearly see that the children of Israel had seen an abundant increase both financially and numerically.

Yet many people reading these words do not look beyond the outward so that they can see that these words were provided to us for teaching and as a warning. Remember what 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us:

“All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for

reproof, for restoration, and for training in righteousness, so that the person belonging to God may be capable, fully equipped for every good deed.”

To put this verse into context, the children of Israel moved to Egypt to survive a famine that lasted seven years. Yet by the time we read about them in Exodus, they had continued living in Egypt for over 200 years. In Egypt, they had grown from 70 people to millions of people. They had gone from starving in a famine to becoming wealthy. Yet in all their outward prosperity, they were living outside the promised land and outside the covenant promises of G-D. When viewed in context, Exodus 1:7 reads a lot like Revelation 3:17:

“For you say, ‘I am rich, I have made myself wealthy, and I need nothing.’ But you do not know that you are miserable and pitiable and poor and blind and naked.”

Or even:

“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26).

You see the children of Israel had over the years exchanged their faith in G-D and His blessings for faith in Egypt and the riches they had acquired there. They had become so assimilated into Egyptian life that they forgot that their covenant blessings and promises were connected to the land of Canaan (Israel). Life in Egypt had become comfortable; they had become a large people within the boundaries of Egypt. They had become prosperous in earthly goods. Yet somehow they failed to see that even though by worldly metrics they were blessed, they were not free. It wasn't until the Egyptians reminded them who they were by physically enslaving them that it became clear. They didn't realize they had voluntarily placed themselves in bondage.

This lesson is vital especially for those of us who live in

the United States and much of the Western world. The body of believers has for many years grown and prospered in the metrics the world uses to denote prosperity. However, we must be careful that we don't trade our freedom in G-D for the riches of the world. We cannot allow ourselves to forget who we truly are and what real prosperity is.

In John 8:31-40, Yeshua (Jesus) is having a conversation with some Judeans:

Then Yeshua said to the Judeans who had trusted Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free!"

They answered Him, "We are Abraham's children and have never been slaves to anyone! How can you say, 'You will become free'?"

Yeshua answered them, "Amen, amen I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now the slave does not remain in the household forever; the son abides forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed! I know you are Abraham's children; yet you are trying to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I tell of what I have seen with the Father; so also you do what you heard from the Father."

"Abraham is our father," they replied to Him.

Yeshua said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But now you are seeking to kill Me—a Man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God. This Abraham did not do!"

Notice the context of this conversation deals with two things: first, freedom and second, the covenant G-D made with Israel through Abraham. Yeshua tells them they need the truth to set them free. But because of their blindness, they could not even admit that Israel had been slaves in Egypt or that at that

moment they were servants of Rome. Yeshua reminds them that slavery is first spiritual and then it becomes physical. He also lets them know that just as the children of Israel had been blind breaking the covenant G-D made with Abraham (by remaining outside the promised land) they had become blind to their being outside of the covenant with Abraham by not accepting the freedom He was offering to them. As we read Genesis 22:18, Yeshua is the seed of Abraham spoken of in this verse: "In your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed—because you obeyed My voice."

While we may not be under Roman authority today or living in the slavery of Egypt these words still speak to us today. We cannot ever allow the successes of the world to become more important than the covenant freedom provided through the covenant G-D made with Abraham. Prosperity without freedom is the worst kind of slavery. {eoa}

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