

Shattering Strongholds With Sweet Breakthroughs

Overcomers Christian Weight Loss Academy is the fruit of Teresa Shields Parker's passion. A pair of key revelations drives this ministry, built out of her weight loss season from 2004-2013. The academy's existence serves as practical proof of Parker's hunger to use the power of the Holy Spirit—and of her personal story—to set captives free from strongholds.

Parker understands what it means to feel trapped. She spent most of her adult life battling weight challenges and at one point weighed more than 400 pounds. She wrestled with the anguish of overdue breakthrough, but God allowed her to travel a difficult path. Her challenging journey over many painful moments gave her eyes to see the sadness in others.

Parker began to pray about her weight in 1977 after she first crossed the 200-pound threshold. In the weight loss community, that represents a dreaded mark. She began the weight loss frustration cycle. She would lose weight only to put it back on again at least six times over the following few decades.

Through those years she felt what her academy members feel today: Why doesn't breakthrough come? Will it ever come? She longed for the freedom some realized but which, for her, remained out of reach. God finally led her to breakthrough in 2009.

Breakthrough Moment

Parker, a journalist by trade, accepted Christ at the age of 7 and has been a writer most of her life. As a child, she knew she had a calling on her life to write books about people who did special things with God's help. She also loved and devoured biographies. Beginning in 1989, she published *The Good News Journal*, a free weekly Christian newspaper,

distributing it in the region around her Columbia, Missouri, home for 13 years. She also published Family Magazine, a Christian parenting magazine, for six years after that.

As the internet matured, it devoured many small publications. Advertising revenue kept small publications alive, but the internet's prevalence caused budgets to dry up. Retail advertising now became possible at lower cost on the internet, forcing many small publications to struggle and close. What's next? Parker wondered.

"I pretty much felt like I had hit rock bottom," Parker says. "I thought, I don't have a purpose; I don't know what I'm doing. Is this the end of my usefulness?"

But Parker seized the opportunity to break the back of her weight issues once and for all. Her breakthrough began when she realized her addiction to sugar.

"It was my come-to-Jesus moment," she says, noting that the revelation shattered the stronghold that held her prisoner for so many years. And it came when her counselor and colleague showed her the truth: "Alcohol is one molecule away from sugar; alcohol is liquid sugar."

"I allowed sugar to control me—that's what happens with any addiction, thinking it helps us at the beginning," Parker says. "So, with sugar, most people eat it because it comforts them, helps them forget about their emotions, helps them chill out for a while, anesthetizes their pain—it's not that you need sugar, it's that you need to figure out how to deal with your emotions.

"We think that the stronghold is the addiction, but that's not it. The stronghold is the lies inside the mental mindset that we believe and leads to the addiction," she says. "This is what 2 Corinthians 10:3–5 says, with pretensions and arguments set up against the knowledge of God, thinking we know better than God and setting ourselves up as if we know best ... That

leads to the addictive behaviors.

“My life flashed before me, all the way back to when God first told me to stop eating sugar,” Parker says. Through all the cycles of losing weight but putting it back on again, she says, “I hadn’t heard about sugar addiction, but it clicked with me that it was exactly what I was. I had always thought, Other people can eat sugar, so why can’t I?”

“You can be addicted to whatever controls you,” her counselor later told her—which, Parker says, is the definition of a stronghold.

Turning Point

God had already told her to stop eating sugar. But He didn’t mean taper off, He meant stop.

At last, Parker had reached her turning point. It was time to repent of sugar, to turn from it and leave it behind. Her food plan going forward would feature less bread, desserts, sodas and the rest of the carbohydrates that sneak sugar into otherwise good food habits.

During this same period, the puzzle pieces finally began to align in regard to an incident when she was sexually molested at age 11. It also showed her how that moment affected her weight for years afterward. Though she did not suffer physical harm, the episode left lasting emotional challenges.

She kept the secret locked in the same shackles that held her prisoner in the weight she did not want. Through adolescence, college and into her adult years, she self-protected by allowing her weight to slide upward. She drifted into a mindset that told her it was OK to put on a few extra pounds if it neutralized the risk of any sexual molestation ever happening again.

Then came the turning point: a testimony Parker heard Joyce

Meyer give at a conference. Hearing how Meyer prayed a prayer of forgiveness about her father, who had assaulted her during childhood, energized Parker and motivated her to attack her secret and break free.

Meyer invited all attendees who wanted to pray a similar forgiveness prayer to stand. As soon as she did, Parker says, "I saw him [her attacker] in my mind as this little wimpy guy, smaller than I am, and I thought, I've been afraid of this all my life?"

That prayer removed the crippling fear she had carried since age 11—but it did not block the mindset that she needed protection from men like him. Completing her inner healing required a new level of trust in God.

Secure in the belief that God watches over her and would protect her, Parker found herself set for next-level breakthrough. The Lord would soon free her from comforting herself through the sugar addiction her counselor had helped her recognize. Meyers' testimony also helped her understand what other women have gone through. It gave her deeper insight into how fear paralyzes and prevents victims from escaping to freedom.

Freedom Threshold

On Jan. 1, 2013, Parker prayed her customary prayer at the beginning of a new year, seeking God for His plans for the days ahead. She had lost more than 250 pounds since her 2009 breakthrough. She had no specific target weight. The Holy Spirit had shattered her chains and set her free from addictive habits and the long-term fear resulting from the attack she had suffered in childhood.

"I asked God, 'What am I supposed to do?'" Parker says.

"You're going to write a book," God said. "About yourself."

Parker remembered her childhood calling to write biographies of people who did great things with God's help. Over the years, she had a handful of false starts. During her newspaper writing days, she began a few manuscripts about God's work in the lives of people with unique accomplishments.

During that New Year's Day prayer, "God told me, 'Now is the time to put you in the game,'" Parker recalls with a laugh. "And I thought, What game?"

God was showing her that it was time to write "the book," Parker says. But not once had it ever crossed her mind to write a book about herself. She considered herself a failure, recalling the closing of her weekly newspaper. And even after losing so much weight, she still felt she had failed by ever gaining the weight in the first place.

Parker had one more freedom threshold to cross. God was building within her Holy Spirit passion to bless others with the blessings she had received.

The moment God told Parker to write the book, she set to work composing the text. But God gave her a word a few months into plowing through the first draft, the strongest one He had ever given her.

"What if I planned a writer's retreat 10 minutes from your house just for you—and you wouldn't go because of pride?" God asked her.

"And I thought, Well, I guess I'm going then," she recalls.

With no expectations at all, she attended the conference, expecting little but obeying God. Within the first hour, He gave her a revelation download, showing her the exact order and outline as well the specifics of the book's content—what to put in and what to leave out.

The conference built within Parker the courage to believe, and

she now expected to accomplish the task. It also equipped her with sound practices such as writing without stopping. She understood the value of setting goals for completing manuscripts and finished books. Soon, she would apply what she'd learned.

Then the conference leader delivered another key piece of understanding. Parker moved forward by applying the vision of her target audience: those who would read her new book. But the passionate drive that rose above everything else—setting free prisoners of strongholds—could not find fulfillment if her demand for personal perfection still controlled her. Perfection would abort God's lovely plan. Perfection could block His blessings to captives yearning for breakthrough.

Parker got the message. God expanded her heart for His project and the people who would read it. If this book helps one person, it will be worth it, Parker recalls thinking.

She published her first book, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor*, in October 2013. Within 90 days, she recouped all of her costs and realized a modest profit.

Early in the book's life cycle, Parker was able to deliver an excerpt to a contact at , after which she began contributing articles over the following years. When Charisma published the excerpt, "The Snake in the Bedroom," it contained a link to the book's Amazon page, which increased its sales velocity in the initial weeks.

In the following months, the first book led to a second, and today, Parker has published six books and two study guides under her Sweet series brand. She first completed a study guide as a free download with a link in the back of her book. Prompted by questions from Facebook followers, later she published the guide as a separate product.

Soon she learned groups were gathering in churches to study

her book, so she led one at her church. A prophetic word from a friend gave her a vision for delivering coaching sessions, which she offered in both one-on-one and group settings. From there, the Overcomers Christian Weight Loss Academy was born.

But the pandemic of 2020 threatened Parker's growing ministry. How would academy participants attend coaching sessions when the whole country remained under state-led lockdowns and social distancing measures? How could she appear at speaking engagements to keep bringing her message to those trapped in addiction and longing to break free?

In God's perfect timing, just ahead of the pandemic year, He led Parker to the ministry of podcasting.

"In 2019—God always tells me these crazy things, like out of the blue—He says, 'I want you to start a podcast,' and I said, 'I don't know how to do a podcast ... I'm game, but I'm not technical. I don't know how to do it, but I'll do it if You show me how,'" Parker says.

Soon, she connected with a fellow member of a business group who helped her understand more about podcasting. By early November 2019, within a few weeks of God's word to her, she recorded and posted her first podcast. Now a member of the Charisma Podcast Network family, she presents vibrant and practical, Spirit-driven wisdom in her Sweet Grace for Your Journey podcast.

As the pandemic rises and falls, "By having a podcast, I'm still out there, sharing my story, and that's been a real blessing," Parker says. "Of course, once you do a podcast, you get invited to other podcasts, and that's how this developed—we don't know our destiny until we surrender to God."

Parker has a purpose—God-given and hard-earned. Having empowered her for the hard work of getting beyond herself and coming up higher, the Holy Spirit now compels her to lead

people through and out of strongholds.

“It’s the kind of work I love doing,” she says. “Strongholds restrict and affect our connection to our Father God.” Her ministry offers a path forward to freedom for anyone willing to commit. “God showed me it’s ‘no investment, no commitment,’ and I have learned, ‘the greater the investment, the greater the commitment.’”

The Message translation of John 8:32b transformed Parker’s thoughts on the essence of freedom and best captures her faith and ministry: “Then you will experience for yourselves the truth, and the truth will free you.”

As she moves forward in faith, Parker will continue connecting those who suffer from food issues with the transforming grace of God’s truth and the freeing power of the Holy Spirit, tearing down strongholds and helping them move into abundant life.

Visit Teresa at [www.treeparker.com](#), and instagram, pinterest and twitter at @treeparker.

Robert Caggiano is a content development editor for Charisma Media.

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Why Michelle McClain-Walters Is Calling Women to a New Kind of Greatness

We often hear the term “legend” applied to sports figures, movie stars or others the world considers memorable. But Apostle Michelle McClain-Walters says God is redefining what it means to be legendary—and she is joining Him by calling others to the greatness He has placed within them.

“We really believe greatness is all about being on the television, being first, when Jesus says, ‘The greatest of you is the servant,’ McClain-Walters tells Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of *Greenelines* on the Charisma Podcast Network. Her new book, *Legendary Woman: Partnering With God to Become the Heroine of Your Own Story* (Charisma House, 2021), offers women that new and more biblical paradigm.

“What I do in *Legendary Woman*, I begin to show women that with their love, their compassion, the faith that they have, they can leave a legend of compassion for other women to follow. So I take a look at the characteristics of God, the small things that we do that no one sees on a platform, but it could be legendary in the lives of someone who’s the beneficiary of your actions.

“What I try to do in this book is redefine what greatness is,” she says. “I take it back to looking at what Jesus said, how Jesus told us, you know, ‘There’s no greater love than this, that we lay down our lives for a friend.’ ... In the book of Acts, the Scripture says about David that ‘he served his generation by the will of God.’ So I just believe serving our generation can lead to being legendary.”

McClain-Walters says in her training with Apostle John Eckhardt, she was the only woman on most of the apostolic

teams. “You need to raise up women like you,” the men told her, but she didn’t understand what they meant.

“So they began to give me definition about being a woman of courage, understanding my word and the authority to preach. And they said, ‘You need to reproduce yourself.’

McClain-Walters says she’s long known that the kingdom advances through reproduction. “One generation is supposed to teach the next generation,” she says. “So that started my passion to see other women like myself, to see them raised up in their destiny to understand they they’re powerful, but they can be feminine. ... I found that the best blueprint for that was given in the Bible.

✘ For much more from McClain-Walters on legendary women and how God is raising them up to make an eternal difference, listen to the entire episode of *Greenelines* at this link, and subscribe to *Greenelines* on your favorite podcast platform for more inspiring stories like this one. Find *Legendary Woman* wherever fine books are sold. {eoa}

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**ICEJ Invites Christians to
Celebrate Feast of
Tabernacles Alongside Israel**

in Global Online Event

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem serves a unique purpose in the body of Christ, a purpose rooted in an equally unique calling: to minister Christian love and support to the Jewish people. Founded in 1980, the ICEJ carries out that calling in a variety of ways, including the annual global celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, scheduled this year for Sept. 20-27. Receive more information and register at this [link](#).

The celebration of the Feast, which now includes a large online component, played a significant role in the ministry's founding, says ICEJ USA Director Dr. Susan Michael.

"In the late '70s, there was a group of Christian leaders living in Jerusalem for different reasons," she recalls. "There were academics, there were journalists, there were people involved in local churches and others just called to be there in the city and to pray." Some of those leaders included Merv and Merla Watson, gifted worship leaders from Canada who helped drive the vision forward.

As the Watsons and others prayed, God gave them two burdens, Michael says. "The first one was that they needed to begin celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles and bringing an awareness to the global church of what the Feast of Tabernacles is all about."

Most Christian churches know about Passover because of its Christian fulfillment in the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Michael says. And most believers also know about Pentecost, when God brought tongues of fire down from heaven as He sent forth His Holy Spirit. But typically, they're not at all familiar with Israel's third great feast, the Feast of Tabernacles.

The group of assembled Christians wanted to change that,

Michael says. "They wanted to bring the understanding of this prophetic feast to the churches, and that's why they organized a Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles there in Jerusalem."

Standing With Israel

At that first celebration, more than 1,000 Christians from 15 countries gathered, Michael says. But the Feast wasn't the only purpose God placed on the leaders' hearts. "At the same time, these Christian leaders were also talking about the need to start a Christian organization that would work in support of Israel—because in the '70s, there were none."

God moved in history in a supernatural way while the team was planning and preparing the Feast, Michael says. "The Israeli government passed what's called the Jerusalem Bill. And that's when they legally declared what was already de facto, but they put it into law: that all of Jerusalem was the eternal and undivided capital of the state of Israel."

That summer, all the national embassies located in Jerusalem packed up and moved out in protest. But the Christians still came there to celebrate the Feast.

"And while they were there, the organizers announced, 'We do not support what our governments have just done, and we are starting an International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem that represents the millions of Bible-believing Christians around the world who understand the significance of Jerusalem to the Jewish people and stand with Israel at this moment,'" Michael explains.

With founders Johann Luckhoff of South Africa, executive director, and Rev. Jan Willem van der Hoeven, spokesperson, the ICEJ opened on Sept. 30, 1980, as the only embassy in Jerusalem for the next 38 years. Right away, the ICEJ played a representative role for Christians around the world to the Israeli government and people, Michael says. "Immediately, we began opening branches ... and today, we have representatives

and branch offices in over 90 countries around the world.”

ICEJ represents a global constituency and, because of its international breadth, remains the largest pro-Israel Christian organization in the world, Michael says. The organization is now in its third generation of leadership. Johann Luckhoff was followed by Rev. Malcolm Hedding as Executive Director, and now Dr. Jürgen Bühler is leading as President.

ICEJ USA is integral to the global organization’s work, Michael says. “As a branch of the Jerusalem network, our first priority is to bring awareness to the Christian community about our ministry there in Israel and to raise support for it, but secondly, it is to educate the Christian community in our nation.”

As a part of that, the U.S. branch started an educational website, , which educates visitors on Israel, Christian Zionism and antisemitism. Michael herself conducts numerous teaching and training seminars along with hosting Out of Zion, her popular podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network.

ICEJ USA has also started the powerful American Christian Leaders for Israel, , which brings together evangelical leaders, helping them unite their voices in collaborative initiatives and events in support of Israel.

Preparing the Way

The ICEJ’s unique calling lends itself to a unique role that is “wrapped up in the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles,” Michael says. “We really have a prophetic end-time calling that’s unique because of the uniqueness of this Feast of Tabernacles celebration in Jerusalem and what the Scriptures have to say about it.”

In explaining the meaning of this Feast, Michael points to a particular prophecy: “Then it will be that all the nations who

have come against Jerusalem and survived will go up each year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zech. 14:16).

Michael says this passage describes “a future day that I believe we even now are preparing for. The ICEJ is working in almost every nation on earth now. And one day, we will say, ‘We have a representative from every nation on earth celebrating the feast this year.’”

That international representation does not signify a fulfillment of the Zechariah prophecy, however, but a preparation for it, Michael says. Just as ICEJ grew out of the Feast of Tabernacles, “part of our mandate is to bring an awareness of the Feast to the nations and bring them up to Jerusalem now, which is only a preparing of the way for that future time when the Lord returns and stands on the Mount of Olives, which is also in Zechariah” (Zech. 14:4).

Michael sees yet another prophetic tie to the Feast in the book of Revelation, where John describes the new heaven and new earth. “And I heard a loud voice from heaven, saying, ‘Look! The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them. They shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God’” (Rev. 14:3).

“That’s a wonderful future event that we look forward to,” Michael says. “And I just believe that we are in some small way preparing the way for that.”

Celebrating the Feast

Through the years, the ICEJ has brought “at least 150,000 Christians up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast,” Michael says. “And that’s a very conservative number.” For 2020 and 2021, the celebration has gone online, with more than 7,000 paid registrants last year along with watch parties in churches, making an accurate participation count difficult to obtain. Key Israeli leaders have appeared on the stage for the

Feasts through the years, including every mayor of Jerusalem and every prime minister of Israel except one.

“We now have the potential online to have 150,000 people celebrating at one time, and our goal is just to keep growing this,” Michael says. “With technology, it’s just going to be phenomenally easy to reach every nation on earth and have them celebrating with us, whether virtually or in person in Jerusalem.”

But why does the ICEJ continue to focus on this unique celebration? Beyond the prophecies concerning it, Scripture sets forth the Feast of Tabernacles as one of the three great feasts of the Lord. “The men of Israel were required to go up to Jerusalem and appear before the Lord and celebrate this,” Michael says. “The Feast of Tabernacles was given to the Israelites by God. Those who celebrate this feast are celebrating God’s provision and covering of them during the wilderness wanderings.

“But God also tabernacled with His people during the wilderness wanderings,” she adds. “His presence was there in the tabernacle in the desert, and He was with them. And so He tells them to do this every year, to remember that experience.”

As a part of the tabernacle celebration, God told the people to rejoice before Him for seven days, she explains, noting one aspect that aligns with the chaos our world faces today. “God understood no matter how difficult life is, no matter what problems you may be going through, He set aside seven days and said, ‘Rejoice and celebrate before Me.’

“We need this just like we need a Shabbat every week to rest,” she says. “We need a week every year where we just forget our problems, rejoice and celebrate over His provision for us.”

The significance of the Feast doesn’t stop there, however. Once the nation of Israel entered the promised land, the Feast

also included a celebration of the harvest as part of God's provision, Michael says.

Over the years, the Jews added what they called a Water Libation Ceremony to the Feast of Tabernacles, "where they would go down to the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem and bring fresh, living water up to the temple and pour it out over the altar," she says. "And they knew that it not only signified rain—and they would pray for rain for the next year's crops—but they also knew it signified the Holy Spirit, the living waters of the Lord."

A key verse in John 7 reveals this truth, Michael says: "And it was on that day of the Feast, that Jesus stood in the temple and said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38).

"These are the different elements that we're celebrating; there's such rich meaning in the Feast of Tabernacles, and we as Christians can also celebrate those meanings," she says. "And we see it as celebrating, in a way, the taste of the kingdom of God that we have in our lives by the Holy Spirit. We're celebrating a reality of what God's doing today while we look forward to a prophetic fulfillment on a global scale."

Blessing Abraham's People

Through the years, ICEJ's driving motivation remains rooted in Scripture and realized in practicality.

"One of the motivating factors in the ministry of the ICEJ is our belief that the return of the Jewish people to their homeland is not an accident of history or a coincidence; it is an act of God, fulfilling His promises to Abraham that this is their land, and His promises to the Israelites and confirmed through the prophets that they would return to their land, never to be uprooted again," Michael says.

“Because we see the hand of God in this, and the fulfillment of so many prophecies as a part of it, we want to be involved, and we want to bless what God is blessing, and we want to support it,” she adds. “And then we understand the spiritual significance of this return to the land for the world. And we understand because of that, the spiritual warfare, the evil hatred of it, and we see the responsibility of standing against that.”

To that end, ICEJ has long given active support to Jews participating in aliyah, the Hebrew word for “ascent,” a term for immigrating to Israel. The ICEJ just celebrated 30 years of assisting Jews—more than 160,000 of them—in making aliyah, or “coming home to Israel.” This can mean anything from helping future immigrants attend seminars to prepare for moving to Israel to assisting with paperwork to helping them get to the airport and even to funding their flight.

Christians often sum up their support of Israel via what has become a go-to Scripture, Michael says. “I will bless them who bless you and curse him who curses you, and in you all families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:3).

While not denying the importance of this truth, she takes it deeper. “It’s like a law of spiritual blessing God put in place, because as we are blessing the Jewish people, we’re standing on God’s side of this equation. And we’re blessings His plan, His choice of that people and His plan to use them to reach the world with redemption. We’re blessing that plan of redemption, and that’s why it is so key that we do bless Israel.”

This blessing carries special significance when we look at over 1,500 years of Christian antisemitism, Michael explains. ICEJ’s mission statement itself comes from Isaiah 40:1: “Comfort, O comfort, My people, says your God.”

“And so our mission as a Christian organization is to speak

words of love and support, which were a comfort to the Jewish people," she says. From its founding forward, ICEJ has sought to voice and demonstrate Christian love and support in practical ways, including various humanitarian aid projects.

"We have an Israel in Crisis fund whereby we have placed almost 150 bomb shelters in the south of Israel in vulnerable communities," Michael says. "We bought firefighting equipment for all the south of Israel because of the terrorist arson fires that were being started."

All these are tangible signs to the Jewish people that Christians are not only praying for them but giving financially and doing everything they can to help them, she says. But the ICEJ initiatives don't stop there.

"Back about 13 years ago, we were approached by Yad Vashem, which is the Holocaust Memorial and Remembrance Center in Jerusalem," Michael says. The center wanted to engage the Christian world and sought ICEJ's help in achieving such a partnership.

That partnership, Christian Friends of Yad Vashem, helps bring Christians to the memorial center while also bringing Holocaust awareness to churches around the world. ICEJ also sponsors and supports the Haifa Home for Holocaust Survivors, and during the pandemic, received government passes to deliver food to Holocaust survivors out in the communities who couldn't get out to buy groceries.

Believers who feel led to stand with ICEJ in showing strong support for Israel won't want to miss this year's Feast of the Tabernacles, which Michael says is "the largest solidarity event with Israel," in person or online.

"We often are a part of the Jerusalem March, where we march through Jerusalem with banners of support from the nations, and the people of Israel love it," she says. "We invite everyone to sign up and be a part of this event and help us

make it a huge show of support for Israel.”

Michael invites Americans in particular to register for the historic celebration, saying ICEJ hopes the U.S. will have the most representatives at the feast of any nation outside Israel. “We really encourage people to sign up, and their participation will bring back blessing on our country and on them as they go before the Lord during this Feast.”

Marti Pieper is a freelance writer and editor.

The Pillar and Foundation of The Truth: Standing Strong in a World Full of Deception

Discover Your Spiritual Identity! The Revelation of the Names and Titles God Has Given His People

“But if I am delayed, you might know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15).

An expertly fashioned pillar represents qualities like uprightness, authority, strength, stability, dominion, greatness, excellence and permanence. Towering, ornately designed columns often symbolize that which is exalted, admirable, praiseworthy, awe-inspiring and superior.

These words describe the kind of believers that are especially needed now, during a time when our culture is increasingly

being dominated by selfishness, immorality, violence, greed, dishonesty and blasphemy. Sacred things are lightly esteemed, even scorned and profaned in this era – including the sacredness of life itself. In such “perilous times,” heaven ordains choice men and women to courageously lay the foundation of truth once again and rear up a pillar-like standard to turn back the hearts of the wayward (2 Tim. 3:1).

It was such a time of crisis when God called Jeremiah. Though he insisted his youthfulness disqualified him, the Lord countered:

“For you shall go everywhere that I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak . . . Do not be dismayed at their faces . . . For indeed, I have made you this day a fortified city and an iron pillar . . . They will fight against you, but they will not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you” (Jer. 1:7-8, 17-19).

God made His earthly representative an “iron pillar” – a strong, unbending, unchanging voice of truth – and his testimony made an impact that has endured to this day. In this hour, when proponents of communism, socialism, pluralism, humanism and transgenderism are doing all they can to discredit, dishonor and disregard the truth, it is imperative that a new generation of prophets and prophetesses arise – not to tickle the ears of self-absorbed Christians, but to disarm the forces that would like to subject the entire human race to a dark and godless agenda. Children of God, we can push back, and we must!

Pillars of the Earth

Hannah, the mother of Samuel, revealed this calling on all of God’s people in a powerful, heartwarming way – declaring that God:

“Raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the oppressed from the dunghill to make them sit with princes and inherit a

throne of glory. For the pillars of the earth belong to the Lord, and He has set the world upon them" (1 Sam. 2:8).

First, this speaks of the transformation that comes to those who covenant with God:

– "He raises the poor from the dust" (elevating those who are "poor in spirit" from the "dust" of mortality – the bondage of a mere, temporal existence, Matt. 5:3).

– He "lifts the beggar from the dunghill" (delivering those who plead for mercy from the "dunghill" of carnality – the bondage of a sensual, base, egocentric lifestyle).

Once they are loosened, God positions the repentant "among princes" – adopting them into a royal lineage. They become sons and daughters of the King of kings, destined to reign with Him forever. Those chosen for such a destiny become "pillars of the earth," not only in the future kingdom of God, but right here, right now. The world rests upon them – for they often become key players, major influencers, in shaping society. They are God's catalysts for change, His means of introducing kingdom values in a world quite opposed to them.

Explore this wonderful subject more deeply by listening to a former episode of Mike Shreve's weekly podcast called "Discover Your Spiritual Identity" or the TV program posted on our YouTube channel that brings forth this same revelation. A suggested book about becoming a pillar of truth in this generation is *GOD and Cancel Culture: Standing Strong Before It's Too Late* by Charisma founder Steve Strang.{eoa}

Mike Shreve is a product of the Jesus Movement era and has traveled evangelistically in the United States and overseas since 1970, with an emphasis on healing and the prophetic. His primary biblical teaching for over 30 years has been the spiritual identity of believers. This powerful insight is featured on his weekly podcast on and on his TV program – both titled "Discover Your Spiritual Identity." It is also the

theme of his Charisma House book titled WHO AM I? Dynamic Declarations of Who You Are in Christ. The first three categories on his YouTube website expand on this amazing revelation:

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Last Troops Exit Afghanistan, Ending Longest US War, Which Claimed 2,400 American Lives

The United States completed its withdrawal from Afghanistan late Monday, ending America's longest war and closing a chapter in military history likely to be remembered for colossal failures, unfulfilled promises and a frantic final exit that cost the lives of more than 180 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members, some barely older than the war.

Hours ahead of President Joe Biden's Tuesday deadline for shutting down a final airlift, and thus ending the U.S. war, Air Force transport planes carried a remaining contingent of troops from Kabul airport. Thousands of troops had spent a harrowing two weeks protecting a hurried and risky airlift of tens of thousands of Afghans, Americans and others seeking to escape a country once again ruled by Taliban militants.

In announcing the completion of the evacuation and war effort.

Gen. Frank McKenzie, head of U.S. Central Command, said the last planes took off from Kabul airport at 3:29 p.m. Washington time, or one minute before midnight in Kabul.

The airport had become a island, a last stand in a 20-year war that claimed more than 2,400 American lives.

The closing hours of the evacuation were marked by extraordinary drama. American troops faced the daunting task of getting final evacuees onto planes while also getting themselves and some of their equipment out, even as they monitored repeated threats—and at least two actual attacks by the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate. A suicide bombing on Aug. 26 killed 13 American service members and some 169 Afghans.

The final pullout fulfilled Biden's pledge to end what he called a "forever war" that began in response to the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York, Washington and rural Pennsylvania. His decision, announced in April, reflected a national weariness of the Afghanistan conflict. Now he faces condemnation at home and abroad, not so much for ending the war as for his handling of a final evacuation that unfolded in chaos and raised doubts about U.S. credibility.

The U.S. war effort at times seemed to grind on with no endgame in mind, little hope for victory and minimal care by Congress for the way tens of billions of dollars were spent for two decades. The human cost piled up—tens of thousands of Americans injured in addition to the dead, and untold numbers suffering psychological wounds they live with or have not yet recognized they will live with.

More than 1,100 troops from coalition countries and more than 100,000 Afghan forces and civilians died, according to Brown University's Costs of War project.

In Biden's view the war could have ended 10 years ago with the

U.S. killing of Osama bin Laden, whose al-Qaida extremist network planned and executed the 9/11 plot from an Afghanistan sanctuary. Al-Qaida has been vastly diminished, preventing it thus far from again attacking the United States.

Congressional committees, whose interest in the war waned over the years, are expected to hold public hearings on what went wrong in the final months of the U.S. withdrawal. Why, for example, did the administration not begin earlier the evacuation of American citizens as well as Afghans who had helped the U.S. war effort and felt vulnerable to retribution by the Taliban? It wasn't clear whether any American citizens who wanted to get out were left behind, but untold thousands of at-risk Afghans were.

It was not supposed to end this way. The administration's plan, after declaring its intention to withdraw all combat troops, was to keep the U.S. Embassy in Kabul open, protected by a force of about 650 U.S. troops, including a contingent that would secure the airport along with partner countries. Washington planned to give the now-defunct Afghan government billions more to prop up its army.

Biden now faces doubts about his plan to prevent al-Qaida from regenerating in Afghanistan and of suppressing threats posed by other extremist groups such as the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate. The Taliban are enemies of the Islamic State group but retain links to a diminished al-Qaida.

The final U.S. exit included the withdrawal of its diplomats, although the State Department has left open the possibility of resuming some level of diplomacy with the Taliban depending on how they conduct themselves in establishing a government and adhering to international pleas for the protection of human rights.

The speed with which the Taliban captured Kabul on Aug. 15 caught the Biden administration by surprise. It forced the

U.S. to empty its embassy and frantically accelerate an evacuation effort that featured an extraordinary airlift executed mainly by the U.S. Air Force, with American ground forces protecting the airfield. The airlift began in such chaos that a number of Afghans died on the airfield, including at least one who attempted to cling to the airframe of a C-17 transport plane as it sped down the runway.

By the evacuation's conclusion, well over 100,000 people, mostly Afghans, had been flown to safety. The dangers of carrying out such a mission while surrounded by the newly victorious Taliban and faced with attacks by the Islamic State came into tragic focus on Aug. 26 when an IS suicide bomber detonated himself at an airport gate, killing at least 169 Afghans and 13 Americans.

Speaking shortly after that attack, Biden stuck to his view that ending the war was the right move. He said it was past time for the United States to focus on threats emanating from elsewhere in the world.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "It was time to end a 20-year war."

The war's start was an echo of a promise President George W. Bush made while standing atop of the rubble in New York City three days after hijacked airliners slammed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center.

"The people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon!" he declared through a bullhorn.

Less than a month later, on Oct. 7, Bush launched the war. The Taliban's forces were overwhelmed and Kabul fell in a matter of weeks. A government led by Hamid Karzai took over and bin Laden and his al-Qaida cohort escaped across the border into Pakistan. The stage was set for an ultimately futile U.S. effort to build a stable Afghanistan that could partner with the United States to prevent another 9/11.

The initial plan was to extinguish bin Laden's al-Qaida, which had used Afghanistan as a staging base for its attack on the United States. The grander ambition was to fight a "Global War on Terrorism" based on the belief that military force could somehow defeat Islamic extremism. Afghanistan was but the first round of that fight. Bush chose to make Iraq the next, invading in 2003 and getting mired in an even deadlier conflict that made Afghanistan a secondary priority until Barack Obama assumed the White House in 2009 and later that year decided to escalate in Afghanistan.

Obama pushed U.S. troop levels to 100,000, but the war dragged on while the Taliban used Pakistan as a sanctuary.

When Donald Trump entered the White House in 2017 he wanted to withdraw from Afghanistan but was persuaded not only to stay but to add several thousand U.S. troops and escalate attacks on the Taliban. Two years later his administration was looking for a deal with the Taliban, and in February 2020 the two sides signed an agreement that called for a complete U.S. withdrawal by May 2021. In exchange, the Taliban made a number of promises including a pledge not to attack U.S. troops.

Biden weighed advice from members of his national security team who argued for retaining the 2,500 troops who were in Afghanistan by the time he took office in January. But in mid-April he announced his decision to fully withdraw and initially set September as a deadline for getting out.

The Taliban then pushed an offensive that by early August toppled key cities, including provincial capitals. The Afghan army largely collapsed, sometimes surrendering rather than taking a final stand, and shortly after President Ashraf Ghani fled the capital, the Taliban rolled into Kabul and assumed control on Aug. 15.

Some parts of their country modernized during the U.S. war years, but Afghanistan remains a tragedy, poor, unstable and

with many of its people fearing a return to the brutality the country—especially women and girls—endured when the Taliban ruled from 1996 to 2001. {eoa}

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CN Morning Rundown: Beloved Nashville Pastor, Daughter Killed in Car Accident

Here's a quick summary of the top stories on :

Beloved Nashville Pastor, Daughter Killed in Car Accident

The Rev. Thomas McKenzie, the rector of a prominent Anglican congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, and his eldest child, Charlie, were killed in a car crash Monday (Aug. 23).

Rev. McKenzie was 50. Charlie McKenzie, who had recently changed her legal name, was 22.

The two were headed to Texas, the first stop on a trip to New Mexico, when their car collided with a tractor-trailer about 9:50 a.m., according to a local news report.

Rockets Fired at Kabul Airport Amid US Withdrawal Hit Homes

Rocket fire apparently targeting Kabul's international airport

struck a nearby neighborhood on Monday, the eve of the deadline for American troops to withdraw from the country's longest war after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. It wasn't immediately clear if anyone was hurt.

The rockets did not halt the steady stream of U.S. military C-17 cargo jets taking off and landing at Hamid Karzai International Airport in the Afghan capital. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Last week, the Islamic State group launched a devastating suicide bombing at one of the airport gates that killed at least 169 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members.

The airport has been a scene of chaos in the two weeks since the Taliban blitz across Afghanistan took control of the country, nearly 20 years after the initial U.S. invasion that followed the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. But since the suicide bombing, the Taliban have tightened their security cordon around the airfield, with their fighters seen just up to the last fencing separating them from the runway.

The Powerful Biblical Reason This Expert Says Jesus' Return Is Imminent

Modern-day Christians, like the rest of the world, have experienced division in many areas. But throughout the ages, the church has united in its belief in the Second Coming of Jesus and His rule and reign over eternity.

That day, entrepreneur and author Douglas Cobb says, may come sooner than we think, based on the near-completion of Jesus' Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). Cobb's book, *And Then the End Will Come*, details his research into the Second Coming and why he believes it is imminent.

"The title is derived from Matthew 24:14, a verse that links the return of Jesus to the completion of the Great Commission," Cobb tells Dr. Steve Greene on a recent episode of *Greenelines* on the Charisma Podcast Network. "Early in that

chapter, Matthew 24, the disciples asked Jesus, 'When are you coming back?' That's my paraphrase, but that's what they asked. {eoa}

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Hope for Those Left Behind in the Aftermath of Suicide

If you are in crisis, please call 1-800-273-8255 or visit . You are not alone.

Recently, I did a podcast on a very, very difficult subject to talk about, and that is suicide.

Sadly, we hear about suicide every day, or we read about it in the newspaper or on social media. It seems to be especially rampant right now – Hollywood actors are committing suicide, business people, wealthy people, hurting teens and veterans living on the streets – and it hits home.

Most people know someone who has taken his or her own life, or maybe they've even had a close relationship with someone who has committed suicide. Maybe it's even been a member of your own family. The spirit of suicide has brought devastation to so many. It's touched so many lives, in so many homes and the aftermath—the family that's left behind—is so distraught. They are hurting and they're looking for answers to their questions.

I've been wanting to talk about suicide because so many people are hurting due to what they've been through. You may not be

aware, but back in the early 1980s, my only brother, Ronnie, committed suicide. At the time, it was announced all over America. It was in all the newspapers, on the TV news: "Oral Roberts' son commits suicide."

I was the one who found my brother, and one of the hardest things I've ever had to do in my life was to tell my dad and my mother. His death affected our entire family, not to mention Ronnie's precious children.

Through the letters, phone calls and emails I receive through my ministry, I get questions regarding suicide quite often. And because I've had personal experience with this subject, I feel qualified to offer some insight on how to hang on to God and get through such a terrible and heartbreaking time. I share how my family found hope after devastating loss and address some of these questions in my podcast episode.

- Can a person who committed suicide go to heaven?
- God's mercy and forgiveness.
- Letting hope in Christ and His resurrection be our anchor.
- How to recognize that thoughts of suicide are from the devil and how to overcome them.

Also, if you know someone who you think has been entertaining thoughts of suicide—or if you, yourself, are struggling with depression to the point of thinking about a way to end it all—please listen to this podcast.

God cares about you; you do have value and importance; and your life does matter. The Bible says God knew you even before you were born, when you were in your mother's womb, and He loves you. He *love you*. just as you are. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, if you'll let Him, He will bring you through.

The Bible says in Jeremiah 29:11 that God has a great plan for your life, and it's a good plan. Hold on to the lifeline of

God and His Word and don't let go.

If you are in crisis, help is available 24/7 by calling or texting 1-800-273-8255. You can also visit .

For more Spirit-filled content like this, subscribe to *Expect a Miracle* with Richard Roberts on the Charisma Podcast Network.

Richard Roberts, D. Min., is chief executive officer of Oral Roberts Ministries and co-hosts with his wife, Lindsay, a daily inspirational TV program, The Place for Miracles. Dr. Roberts is also the founder of the Richard Roberts School of Miracles, hosting thousands of online students from more than 140 countries. Richard conducts healing meetings throughout America, as well as ministers to and teaches pastors in underdeveloped countries the fundamental principles of healing, seed-faith and the Holy Spirit, so they may do the greater works of Jesus in their regions of the world.

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How to Speak In Tongues

It is the will of God for every believer to speak in tongues. First Corinthians 14:2-4 shows us one of the tongues that is your prayer language. For those who say, "This doesn't belong to me," then my question would be, "Does edification belong to you as a Christian?" Of course.

So how can you receive this gift of speaking in tongues?

1. You must receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. The Bible says, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said,

out of his heart will flow rivers of living waters” (John 7:38). It doesn’t say these rivers will flow out of the throne of God. Instead, you have this well, “a river of living waters,” that wants to be released through your mouth.

2. Relax. In Acts 2:2, it shows us the disciples were not striving, or kneeling and praying—they were sitting. Sitting is a relaxed position. Speaking in tongues is the Holy Spirit being released through you. It’s about surrendering. Rest in His love for you.

3. Your choice is involved. The Scripture says, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to speak” (Acts 2:4). It does not say the Spirit spoke—they spoke in tongues. The Lord will not override your free will.

4. Your faith is needed. Some people believe something just comes over you and you begin to speak in tongues. That’s not the case; it takes faith to trust that God will add meaning to the sounds you release.

5. You must remove every fear that the tongues spoken are not from God. Luke 11:13 shows your heavenly Father is not going to give you a stone. He won’t fill you with a demonic entity when you ask Him to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Trust in God and in His Scripture.

Listen to my full podcast episode on the Charisma Podcast Network. {eoa}

Vladimir Savchuk is the lead pastor of Hungry Generation Church and author of *Break Free, Single, Ready to Mingle and Fight Back*. He is also a founder of a virtual online school. To download free e-books, sermon series and small group study guides, go to .

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How to Know Your Calling

There is a general will of God for every Christian. This involves following Jesus, forsaking sin and fishing for souls. You'll notice that as you get involved in the general will of God, God's specific will for your life begins to become clearer.

God will not reveal your specific calling if you're not interested in doing His revealed purpose first.

With that said, here are five cues to help reveal your specific calling.

1. Revelation: God can reveal this through a dream, a prophecy or an inner whisper. In the Bible, some were called through an angel, through a burning bush or a prophet.

2. Advice: Many times our community of faith can discern God's calling on our lives better than we can. It's important to pay attention to their suggestions as to where we fit best in the big picture of God's redemptive plan for humanity.

3. Passion: Your passion could oftentimes be an indicator. If you're passionate about preaching, missions, songwriting, signs and wonders or even media – all of that could be indicators.

4. Talents/gifts: Talents come at birth; gifts come at salvation. God graced you with natural abilities and spiritual gifts with the purpose of fulfilling your calling.

5. Experience: The things we go through, they are not just for ourselves; they are for our ministries. God not only rescued us from our pasts; He will recycle them to enhance His purpose

on the earth.

I want to remind you—get busy doing the revealed will of God and He will make His specific will more clear for you. Look for an opportunity to serve. Remember that God is not as interested in helping you reach your calling as He is interested in changing you in the process.

If you liked this message, listen to the full podcast episode on my *Raised to Deliver* podcast. {eoa}

Vladimir Savchuk is the lead pastor of Hungry Generation Church and author of Break Free, Single, Ready to Mingle and Fight Back. He is also a founder of a virtual online school. To download free e-books, sermon series and small group study guides, go to .

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President Biden Is Clearly Telling Us He is Not in Charge

The nation watched in horror over this last week as the abrupt and hectic pullout from Afghanistan resulted in 13 United States service members being killed, as well as dozens of Afghan nationals.

Currently, there are hundreds of Americans who didn't "make the plane" and will be stranded (at least for the time being) inside of the Taliban-controlled nation.

This all looks very bad for President Joe Biden and one would think that Biden himself would see this as a colossal failure. One would think that of course, unless Biden doesn't believe he is in charge.

The truth is, if we take him at his word, he's not.

On August 29th, Biden gave an address at FEMA headquarters regarding Hurricane Ida. At the end of his address, he told everyone, "I'm not supposed to take any questions, but go ahead."

"I'm not supposed to"? Mr. President, what exactly do you mean by, "I'm not supposed to"? You are the President of the United States. If you don't want to take a question, you simply say, "No questions." But don't stand in front of reporters as the leader of the free world and tell us that someone else told you what you were "supposed to" do.

Unfortunately, this is not an isolated event.

On August 26th, the president addressed the nation in light of the soldiers who lost their lives protecting the Kabul airport in Afghanistan. After finishing his speech, he told the room and the nation, "Ladies and gentlemen, they gave me a list here. The first person I was instructed to call on was Kelly O'Donnell of NBC."

The pain goes on.

On June 16th, President Biden was making a speech from Geneva, Switzerland and concluded by saying, "I'll take your questions and as usual, folks, they gave me a list of the people I'm going to call on."

As usual?

"They" gave me a list?

Biden is making it very clear: He's not running the show.

The question that remains unanswered is this: Who is?

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