

What Is a Black Hole?

How do you detect something out in space that's invisible? Well, you observe how the objects near it behave. This gives you clues about the nature of the invisible body. And that's exactly how scientists have discovered and described black holes.

Black holes are not visible through standard technology or telescopes, even though they've been discovered throughout our own galaxy and our universe. They have an extremely high density, which means there's a lot of mass in a small area called a "singularity." Black holes have such a strong gravitational attraction that nothing—not even light—can escape. However, we can see the effect these giant objects produce on nearby matter and stars. Now, it's a common misconception that light gets "sucked" into a black hole. But a black hole is nothing like a vacuum, so it doesn't "suck."

Learn more by watching this video.

Black holes, and the beautiful, bright stars that orbit it, were all created by God on the fourth day of creation when God made the stars. Black holes should encourage us to glorify God for all the amazing physics He's put in place.

*The Creator left a pattern of His fingerprints across each corner of the universe, a pattern that **David Rives** has devoted his life to researching, revealing and sharing, while declaring the glory of God. The president of David Rives Ministries, his weekly TV show Creation with David Rives airs to millions globally on TBN. Author of 21 Verses Backed By Science, his work has been featured on the History Channel, DirecTV, NRB, TBN, CBN, METV, and heard daily on Christian radio. Having gained millions of views on social platforms, his Facebook, TikTok and YouTube pages continue to grow, as Rives captures the attention of Christians and skeptics of all*

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Rebuke the Enemy

In general, most deliverance ministry and spiritual warfare prayers fall short of what we need to bind, restrict, clean up and clear up the spiritual atmosphere. People stay in bondage because we don't go deep enough and far enough in using our authority and casting out demons. We get bored and stagnant in our prayer time and don't partner with the Holy Spirit to listen to what He says needs to be prayed out. I remember a mother who kept trying to take charge of her child's health by praying in her mind, "I rebuke you, Satan." I told her she must speak out and decree into the situation, but she persisted that rebuking the devil in her mind was enough.

There are two issues with her way of thinking:

1. The first is that the devil cannot hear what we think or pray to God silently. Therefore, the demon attacking the child was neither hearing nor heeding the mother's authority.

2. The second is a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word "rebuke." "Rebuke" means to take authority over something. When we rebuke something, we need to take authority over it

and then give it a follow-up command.

In the Scriptures, when Jesus rebuked, He gave a follow-up command. A good example is when He was in the middle of a storm and He rebuked the wind and then spoke to the sea. The Bible says, "He rose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still!' Then the wind ceased and there was a great calm" (Mark 4:39).

Jesus rebuked the wind, which was disrupting the sea. After He rebuked the wind and took authority over it, He spoke to the sea with a follow-up command to be still. Notice that the wind ceased first, as He began with a rebuke, the starting point of authority. The wind and the sea—both things He took authority over—had to react for the stillness to come forth. It was twofold: rebuking and speaking a follow-up command.

Another example is when Jesus delivered a man who was deaf and dumb from a demon. "When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying to it, 'You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and enter him no more'" (Mark 9:25).

Jesus took authority over the foul spirit, addressing it by name and commanding it to depart and not reenter. He rebuked and then followed up by commanding it to leave and enter no more. He was taking care of the immediate situation and preventing future movement.

When searching through the Scriptures for spiritual warfare techniques, we must pay attention to words such as "saying," "said," and "call." We must look for action words in the Scripture. Look again at what Jesus said in Mark 9:25: "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and enter him no more." Jesus not only cast out the demon but also took authority, told it to depart and then sealed the person's deliverance by commanding the demon to enter him no more. He rebuked and took complete authority over every part of the

demonic stronghold.

We must follow Jesus' example. Direct the demonic realm through commanding. Decree and take authority to demolish attacks. I recommend that you use a variety of words in prayer. This practice can help you avoid praying ineffective and legalistic prayers. When you pray out loud, the enemy can hear your prayers, and he can tell when you are being legalistic and praying routinely instead of being inspired by the Holy Spirit and releasing your authority.

Allow the Spirit to Lead

Jesus was not traditional or legalistic. He did not repeatedly minister the same way. The Spirit of God led Him. It is essential to be led by the Holy Spirit in warfare, releasing prayer and receiving discernment. I like to say, "Deliverance is not a cookie-cutter ministry. It is not one-size-fits-all." What works for one person doesn't necessarily fit for another.

Jesus delivered in different ways. He conducted warfare through His own prayers, not through another person's prayers. It seems that in the body of Christ we want others to fight our battles more than we want to fight them ourselves. We need to learn to pray as Jesus did. Spiritual warfare, being prophetic and releasing the ministry of deliverance are the most unusual and unique ministries. We can't expect to follow a pattern or formula. We must allow our spirit man to be Spirit-led and instruct us how to release the ministry for each particular situation we encounter.

In addition to following the Spirit's leading, we must follow Jesus' example in Scripture. When Jesus dealt with demons, He told them to be quiet (Mark 1:25) and forbade them to speak (Mark 1:34). He did not need to consult with a demon to evict it. Rebuke is taking authority over a demon, not bargaining, arguing or consulting with it. Your words are prophetically assigned to hit a target. Demons must bow to the name of Jesus

and the authority you exude.

This has been excerpted from Chapter 11 of Prophetic Spiritual Warfare (Charisma House) by Kathy DeGraw.{eoa}

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Every Teenager Figuring Out Faith Asks These 3 Questions

“I’ve been slowly reflecting more on what it means to be a Christian, and I feel like I still don’t know where exactly I fit into everything. I feel like I’m still trying to figure out my faith.”

When a teenager in your life is struggling to figure out their

faith, it can be scary. For them ... and for us. Whether you're a parent, mentor or leader, young people's questions can raise all kinds of anxiety.

The good news is that young people want to know how God is relevant to them. The bad news is that for many teenagers, their answer is "not much."

For over 15 years, we have been trying to answer questions about young people's faith through our research at the Fuller Youth Institute. Multiple studies indicate that about half of young people who have been involved in a church or youth ministry will drift from God and the church after high school. None of us want to imagine the teenagers we care about most leaving their faith behind in adulthood—but for far too many, it's far too real.

Our latest quest to understand young people's faith included surveys and focus groups with over 2,200 teenagers as well as in-depth multi-session interviews with 27 diverse youth group high school students nationwide. In one of these interviews, our interviewer asked a Midwestern high schooler, "How would you say your faith has shaped your sense of identity?"

There was a long pause before the student answered, "Not like a huge amount, but my faith like shapes part of who I am, I guess ... It's a big part of my life, but it's not my whole life, I guess."

Today's teenagers can access almost any information. They can instantaneously receive scores of possible answers to just about anything. But they're also growing up in families and churches who shy away from some of their deepest questions about faith and meaning.

One of the reasons young people are drifting from faith is that we aren't focused on the questions they care about most. Instead, we're pitching answers to questions that aren't anywhere near their strike zone.

Too often we're stuck in questions that reflect what happened in the past, or missing what's unfolding in the present, or afraid of what's to come in the future.

As one high school student yearned to his leader, "I wish the church would stop giving me answers to questions I'm not asking."

The specific questions that he and other teenagers most value might be unique to our time, but questions aren't new to God. In the Gospels, Jesus was asked nearly 200 questions. That's remarkable, but what's even more remarkable is that Jesus Himself asked over 300.

The question isn't whether faith is big enough to hold young people's questions. We know it is. The question is whether we will take the time to hear and honor them—and walk with them toward finding better answers.

What's more toxic than tough questions?

One of our most counterintuitive findings over the years has been the role of doubt in teenagers' spiritual formation. In our research for *Sticky Faith*, 70% of former youth group students admitted to having significant questions about faith in high school.

But those teenagers with doubts who felt the freedom and had the opportunity to express their questions actually showed greater faith maturity.

Put more simply, it's not doubt that is toxic to faith—it's silence. Tough questions are most likely to sabotage faith when adults stifle them.

The 3 Big Questions That Drive the Rest

While many questions are on the minds of today's teenagers, we've unearthed the three primary questions undergirding all the rest. These queries may not live right on the surface, but

when we dig deep enough, we can trace their longings at the roots.

Almost every question young people ask ultimately finds its genesis in these three big questions:

Who am I? The question of identity.

Where do I fit? The question of belonging.

What difference can I make? The question of purpose.

Of course, these aren't just young people questions; they are people questions. They aren't relevant only to adolescents; they are relevant to all of us. But for young people, the three big questions of identity, belonging and purpose are at a constant, rolling boil.

We wrote *3 Big Questions That Change Every Teenager* to help you and any adult who cares about young people walk with them while they're trying to "figure out" life and faith. Keeping identity, belonging and purpose at the forefront of your mind can help you have better connections and conversations with teenagers and point them toward faithful answers.

The journey starts with deciding we won't be afraid of the questions anymore.

Adapted with permission from Kara Powell and Brad M. Griffin, 3 Big Questions That Change Every Teenager: Making the Most of Your Conversations and Connections (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021). {eoa}

Messianic Rabbi: If Only We All Spoke the Same Language

There has never been a time when humans could communicate faster than the time in which we live. When I was a young man, if I wanted to communicate with someone far away, there were only three valid options: a telephone (which meant either calling from home, office or a pay phone), sending a letter (which could take weeks, or even months, to arrive), or sending a telegram (which would be delivered quickly, but at a much higher cost than a stamp).

Today, we can make a call on a cell phone, send an instant message, write an email or even video conference instantly around the world. Yet with all of the advancement in communication technology, we have never been able to say more in less time while understanding less of what has been said. The thought that today we say more while understanding less of what is said caused me to think about another time when communication became an issue. In Genesis 11 (TLV), we find the story of the Tower of Babel, which begins with these words:

“Now the entire earth had the same language with the same vocabulary. When they traveled eastward, they found a valley-plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. They said to one another, ‘Come! Let’s make bricks and bake them until they’re hard.’ So they used bricks for stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, “Come! Let’s build ourselves a city, with a tower whose top reaches into heaven. So let’s make a name for ourselves, or else we will be scattered over the face of the whole land.”

While this story is well known to almost every believer, most of what we know about the Tower of Babel was taught to us from children's Bibles, storybooks or coloring books. So let's take a look at what the Bible actually says in context. First, take a look at the first verse where it reads in English, "the entire earth had the same language." The word translated earth in this text is ארץ *eretz*, which can mean earth, land, territory or country. Most Bibles translate this word earth; however, if we only read down to verse 4, we will see why that translation doesn't make sense. The fear was that if they didn't make a name for themselves, they would be scattered over the face of the whole land. If the entire earth was one people with one language, why would they fear being scattered over the face of the whole land? By the way, the word translated "land" at the end of the fourth verse is the same word that was translated "earth" in the first.

You may be saying, "What difference does this make?" Well, it makes a big difference if you want to understand the Bible and what it says or doesn't say. If you have your Bible open while reading this, which I hope you always do, please turn back one chapter. In Genesis 10:5, we read: "From these the coastlands of the nations spread out in their lands, each one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations."

In Genesis 10:20, we read: "These are Ham's sons according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, in their nations."

And in Genesis 10:31, we read: "These are Shem's sons, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations."

So according to the Bible, the nations and their languages were established after the flood and before the Tower of Babel took place.

Genesis 10:32 records, "These are the families of the sons of Noah according to their genealogies in their nations, and from these the nations were dispersed on the earth after the flood."

Some would say that the event of the Tower of Babel in chapter 11 takes place before the narrative of the genealogies in chapter 10. However, if we read chapter 10, we see that the establishment of nations and languages didn't happen all at once, as we see in Genesis 10:18: "the Arvadite, the Zemarite and the Hamathite—and afterwards, the Canaanite families were scattered."

But the confounding of languages takes place at one time:

Genesis 11:7 records, "'Come! Let Us go down and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand each other's language.' So Adonai scattered them from there over the face of the entire land, and they stopped building the city. This is why it is named Babel, because Adonai confused the languages of the entire world there, and from there Adonai scattered them over the face of the entire world."

Notice that the Bible doesn't say G-D changed their language; it says G-D confused their language. G-D didn't divide people by languages at the Tower of Babel. Nations had different languages in chapter 10. G-D simply made it so that the people speaking to each other didn't understand what the other was saying.

Just as we find today, people are speaking to each other more and faster than ever before. Yet our language has been confused. We use the same words but hear different things. We can talk instantly across the world and, because of our technology, we are no longer scattered over the whole face of the land. Yet with all of our talking, texting, messaging and video conferencing, because our language has been confused, we understand less of what we are saying than ever before.

If only we would take the time to speak and listen to each other once again, we could all speak the same language. {eoa}

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When I Woke Up Prophesying

I had fallen asleep. I was attending my very first seminar on how to hear God's voice, and I had fallen asleep during the class. If I had been aware, I probably would have been embarrassed.

That week at work carried a heavy schedule, and every night I would attend the seminar. I was truly exhausted, yet I wanted to be trained.

The instructor was calling on each student to respond to the activation, and when he got to me, I was sleeping.

Then something amazing happened. He called my name, and I woke up prophesying (see Acts 2:17).

It was such a heart-lifting grace that set me free. God's grace had empowered my weakness. It showed me that faith was the key.

All I needed to do was believe God would use me and speak through me. I could start where I was and move forward.

God had mercy on my weakness and bypassed my limitations, letting me know that it was not by might but by His Spirit.

There's a point of starting. No matter what your next endeavor with God is, there's a place where faith and agreement connect. Start there. Let your next step be the step in the direction of being used.

That one activation experience set me free to know that in the midst of worship, I could trust that God would show me what He wanted me to sing or release.

Start where you are. That's the simple yet powerful next step. Willingness paves the way for usefulness.

When I recently interviewed apostles Tom and Jane Hamon, that was the takeaway: to start where you are. You can hear more on this episode of *The Prophetic Worship Leader* on Charisma Podcast Network. {eoa}

Dean Mitchum is the founder of Movement Writers School of Worship and the host of The Prophetic Worship Leader Podcast. Dean and Lisa Mitchum serve as the directors of Worship Ministries for Bishop Bill Hamon of Christian International and as the worship pastors for apostles Tom and Jane Hamon of Vision Church at Christian International. Dean is the author of *Apostolic Kingdom Praise* and *The Tabernacle of God*. Dean

and Lisa have written more than 100 worship songs and produced 17 worship albums. Dean is a powerful prophetic psalmist and apostolic teacher. Together they specialize in writing for the current moves of God, playing prophetically and leading worship that changes the atmosphere. They have been married 39 years and have five children and six grandchildren. They make their home near the beautiful emerald coast on the Florida panhandle.

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Moving From Songwriter to Movement Writer

If you've been struggling with songwriting, it may be time to shift from songwriter to movement writer.

Psalm 45:1 (NKJV) says, "My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer."

Maybe you need a new position to write from. Maybe you need a new perspective to write from. Maybe God is calling you out like a star because your flame needs a new source with a new kind of fuel: the fuel of a movement writer.

2 Samuel 23:2 says, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue."

Movement writers' songs move the church forward. They quicken the spirit within the believers, causing new life and new breath, awakening the church to its new direction.

Movement writers hear the conflict between what is and what is to be. They are prophetic and write toward the future.

Characteristics of a Movement Writer

1. They are awakened by new revelation. When prophets and apostles preach new messages of revelation, something awakens within the songwriter, and they put that message to music.

2. They carry the spirit of the revelation, not just write it. As movement writers, they don't just put that message to music; it is something that they have revelation of and the authentic authority rings true in the sound of the song.

3. They write for more revelation. There's something incredible that happens when they write. It seems to release more revelation (Ps. 49:4).

4. They write toward the future, generations ahead. King David demonstrated new covenant worship for future generations. This is why Acts 15:16 declared God was restoring the tabernacle of David.

5. They burn with a musical fire to prophesy. They prophesy through songwriting. The very words of their songs bring life through the voice of the Lord (2 Chron. 25:1-3).

6. They are compelled to cause change. David wrote his way to a new day. In the darkness of a cave, hiding from Saul, he wrote a song of change and breakthrough (Ps. 57:8).

7. They understand the connection between sound and movement. Sound is movement, and movement causes sound.

The Sound of the Third Reformation

Within the third global apostolic reformation movement is a worship reformation movement. That worship reformation is transitioning us from the tabernacle of David to the tabernacle of God.

This is where the new perspective and positioning is found. The tabernacle of God from Rev. 21.3 is the seed for writing the next movement songs.

God is calling forth a new generation of songwriting movement writers. They are not content to write songs that only comfort; they are burning to write songs that awaken the worshippers and move the church forward.

This is your next awakening. This is your next reformation. This is your next movement. Join the movement; write the movement!

Listen to this episode of *The Prophetic Worship Leader* on Charisma Podcast Network now. {eoa}

Dean Mitchum is the founder of Movement Writers School of Worship and the host of The Prophetic Worship Leader Podcast. Dean and Lisa Mitchum serve as the directors of Worship Ministries for Bishop Bill Hamon of Christian International and as the worship pastors for apostles Tom and Jane Hamon of Vision Church at Christian International. Dean is the author of *Apostolic Kingdom Praise* and *The Tabernacle of God*. Dean and Lisa have written more than 100 worship songs and produced 17 worship albums. Dean is a powerful prophetic psalmist and apostolic teacher. Together they specialize in writing for the current moves of God, playing prophetically and leading worship that changes the atmosphere. They have been married 39 years and have five children and six grandchildren. They make their home near the beautiful emerald coast on the Florida panhandle.

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Holy Spirit: God's Presence on Earth

Once the month of August rolls around, many of our youth anticipate going back to school. Meeting a teacher, getting school supplies and looking forward to seeing friends are all a part of the normal routine of going back to school. Dear Christian friends, let's keep our students and their education process in prayer.

What I love about the Lord is that it isn't enough just to save us and destine us for a heavenly home. God loves us so much that even though we have earthly friends, God had the ultimate best friend in mind: the Holy Spirit. When we make Jesus the Lord of our life, the Holy Spirit comes to reside in us. What a huge blessing!

In my podcast sessions, we've been going through a step-by-step approach in growing with the Lord. The first step is always making Jesus our Lord and Savior. Our daily walk includes other steps, and one day we'll walk into heaven where we see Jesus face to face. Part of our Christian walk includes the fellowship we have with the Holy Spirit. We are going to dig into the Holy Spirit's roles starting in the second week of August.

It seems the Holy Spirit may be the most difficult part of God to understand or explain to others. God's Word makes it a little easier for our humble souls. In the *Heaven Bound* book, I included the roles the Holy Spirit fills and the Scriptures to support them. This will be what we study for the next few weeks. I wanted to give you a chance to get your copy for our study time. I would also like to encourage you to read Acts 1 and 2 before our study time.

Over the upcoming weeks, I would like to invite you to spend

some time with me in Bible Study. We will be diving into sharing Jesus with those around us, as well as growing with the Lord. We will be working from my two books, *Heaven Bound* and *Walking The Talk*. You can read along and listen to my recent episode of *Loved Always*. My website, , has links to purchase each book. Bring along your Bible as it is the foundation for any book I write to help believers. There are countless Scriptures in these books. We will only be able to touch the surface within this framework. I would like to make sure you have great resources that help you in your journey with the great God we love, serve and worship. {eoa}

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Converts: The Mysterious Triune Meaning of the Original Hebrew Word

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

“Zion shall be redeemed with justice and her converts with righteousness” (Isa. 1:2).

Though the word “converts” is used quite often in Christian theology and conversation, it is only found one time in the Word of God. The original Hebrew word is *shub* and it has a

mysterious triune meaning—to turn away from, to turn toward and to return. In many other places in the Old Testament, *shub* is actually translated “turn” and “return” such as the following passages:

First, it is used in the sense of “turning away” from evil:

“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why will you die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek. 33:11).

Second, it is used in the sense of turning toward God:

“All the ends of the world will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will worship before You” (Ps. 22:27).

Finally, it is used in the sense of “returning” to a relationship with Him that is right:

“Yet even now, declares the Lord, return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning” (Joel 2:12).

Moses is a prime example under the Old Covenant. When he was “converted” from his former life, he first “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter” (he turned away from sin); then, “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a time. He esteemed the reproach of Christ as greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he looked to the reward” (he turned toward God). Finally, he forsook Egypt” and “he kept the Passover” (he returned to a relationship with the God of Abraham and led the Israelites to do the same thing) (Heb. 11:24-28 excerpts).

Like many other biblical examples, this shows that conversion is not an act of God like salvation, regeneration,

justification, sanctification and redemption. Conversion is primarily an act of man, as is repentance and faith. We are required to do our part; then God is faithful to do His!

First, we turn away from sin with a spirit of repentance in our hearts; second, we turn toward God with a spirit of faith. Third, in doing so, we return to a right relationship with Him. Then He intervenes and graciously saves, regenerates, justifies, sanctifies and redeems.

Of course, it is also true that no person can truly repent, believe or be converted unless God grants him the grace to do so. Romans 2:4 reveals that the “goodness of God” leads us to repentance, and Ephesians 2:8 indicates that saving faith is “the gift of God ... so that no one should boast.” Therefore, in the end, all the glory and all the credit should return to the grace-giver and the gift-giver Himself.

This dependency on God is found in the writings of Jeremiah, who admitted that he (along with the Israelite nation) was like “an untrained calf,” but he pled with God, “turn me back and I will be turned, for you are the Lord my God” (Jer. 31:18). In other words, he was saying, “We can’t change, the way we need to change, without Your help, God.”

The Two Main Means of Conversion

God uses two main supernatural influences in assisting us to make this sacred transition in our lives, as indicated by the following verses:

– The Word. “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul” (Ps. 19:7).

– The Spirit. “Turn at My rebuke; surely I will pour My Spirit on you; I will make My words known to you” (Prov. 1:23).

By the Word and the Spirit, God turns our lives around and gets us moving the right direction.

Jesus verified the Holy Spirit's involvement in the following powerful passage:

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I am going to My Father, and you will see Me no more; and of judgment, because the ruler of this world stands condemned" (John 16:7-11).

In other words, by convicting us, the Holy Spirit helps us turn away from sin, then turn toward the Lord Jesus (taking Him as our example of how to live righteously). Then finally, He helps us return to God in the full assurance that the enemy of our souls has been judged and condemned, so we are free to become one with our heavenly Father once again. That's what conversion is all about. It will culminate in a grand conclusion, being converted from earthbound, carnal, cursed sons and daughters of Adam to eternal, resurrected, glorified sons and daughters of the Most High God. Praise God!

On *Discover Your Spiritual Identity* on Charisma Podcast Network, Mike Shreve goes even deeper into this powerful insight as he teaches on *God Calls His People Converts (Miraculous Metamorphosis)*. Next week, in part two of this subject, you will find out the mystery of the meaning of "Zion" and how true converts are called to be contagious. {eoa}

Mike Shreve has taught on the spiritual identity of believers for over 30 years. This powerful revelation is featured on his weekly podcast on and a weekly TV program on "It's Supernatural Network" (ISN)—both titled *Discover Your Spiritual Identity* (also posted weekly on YouTube here). It is also the theme of his Charisma House book titled *WHO AM I? Dynamic Declarations of Who You Are in Christ*. A product of

the Jesus movement era, Mike has traveled evangelistically in the United States and overseas since 1970 with an added emphasis on healing and the prophetic.

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Bound for Glory

As we're running this race called life, it's helpful to remember where we are headed. If we are in Christ and are running this race the way He wants us to, then we are bound for glory.

In the midst of our daily trials and tribulations, though, we quickly understand that our physical bodies have limitations, aches, pains, diseases and will eventually expire. I'm glad there is part of us that will live on forever. That is the real essence of us, our souls and spirits.

It's hard not to focus on the fact that suffering is part of living in our current bodies of flesh, but suffering for Christ is not losing. It is winning. Romans 8:18 (NLT) tell us that "what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory He will reveal to us later."

Honor God With Your Body

Even though our bodies have expiration dates, our spirits don't. They can be renewed daily and live eternally. However, we shouldn't ignore our bodies because they are extremely important gifts to us from God. We should treat them with care.

First Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body."

God wants us to take care of our bodies because they help us do the work He has for us here on earth. The work is the important thing, not how good our bodies look. I know most of us want to lose weight. We want to be more attractive. The only reason we should lose weight, though, is to honor God. That doesn't mean we need to all be a size 6. That means don't let your body control you.

I did that for way too long. My flesh was directing me down a path to early death, and I was along for what I thought was a "sweet" ride. I'm talking about the fact that I was addicted to sugar, and really, it is not a very sweet ride at all. Thank God that since 2013, I have been following what God wants me to do for my body's health.

Glory to Come

As Christians, we can look forward to the day when we will receive our heavenly bodies. Philippians 3:21 tells us that God "will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like His own, using the same power with which He will bring everything under His control."

I can't wait for the glory that we will one day experience. "For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever!" (2 Cor. 4:17).

There is really nothing on earth to compare this with. I've known some great moments—sweet, intimate moments with my husband, loving days with my children, beautiful experiences exploring God's creation, awesome times celebrating with

family and friends and fulfilling times doing what God has called me to do. Multiply those by 1,000, and it still doesn't come close to the glory that will be revealed to us one day.

A Sneak Peak

First Corinthians 2:9 says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him." That verse always sends shivers of anticipation down my spine.

It's as if God is pulling back the curtain just a little to give us a sneak peek or a taste of what is coming. The suffering, the disappointments, heartaches and pains we encounter today are not a big deal because we are in a race to the finish line. We are bound for glory.

In many cases, suffering, to us, means denying what our flesh wants. It concerns only the body, but what God has for us in His heavenly kingdom is way beyond anything we desire today. It's beyond the greatest food we've ever eaten, beyond all the money in the world, beyond even the greatest love of our lives. The glory God has for us is something He created especially for our souls and spirits. It is eternal, which means the end of it does not exist.

Letting Go to Be Led

I can remember as a child having a favorite stuffed animal, a monkey named Skippy. I didn't want to share him with my little brother, even though my parents were trying to drill into me why it was the right thing to do.

We are doing the same thing today. We have things we won't let go of and hand to God, even though we know it is what He wants us to do and is the right thing. In the great scheme of things, though, the things we grasp so tightly are of no consequence compared to what God has promised us if we allow His Spirit to lead us completely.

We will be amazed at the blessings He sends our way when we simply let go of what we are holding on to and willingly allow Him to lead us.

God Is For Us

God wants the best for each of us. Though suffering is not what He wishes for anyone, if we go through some devastating issues, He will use them in some greater ways in our lives. He never wastes a thing we go through.

A friend recently requested prayer because someone had died in a tragic way, leaving a family with small children. She asked the question, "Where is God in this?" I believe God is right in the middle of any suffering and pain, giving comfort to those who will allow Him to do so.

Our earthly bodies are dying daily, so our focus must be on growing our commitment to God and connecting with Him to carry out our missions while we are here on earth.

Well Done

I so want to hear Him say, "Well done my good and faithful servant."

I love the thought of the glory that is to come, but those words are what I long to hear. They are what I look forward to the most. I know you do, too.

Now Father God, Comfort us. Settle us. Lead us. In Jesus' name.

For more on this topic, check out this episode of Sweet Grace for Your Journey on Charisma Podcast Network, *Towards Glory*.

Don't miss my birthday special. Get 50% off the first month when you join Overcomers Academy by Aug. 19. It's my birthday, but you get the present. I'm also adding in a copy of my book *Sweet Journey to Transformation*.

This article first appeared on . {eoa}

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Burning in the Spirit

I submitted a theme in an English Composition class one day in which I described watching a house burn down. I received a Pavlovian reward in the form of an A, but a question my teacher posed disturbed me:

“Does a house burn up or burn down?”

That question burned me up for years. I certainly never wrote the phrase again until now. But the word-choice challenge did prepare me to consider other similar quandaries: write down or write up, beat up or beat down, tear up or tear down?

I recently finished reading Joseph Mattera's book *The Jesus Principles*. He wrote it to help readers unleash greatness in themselves, their homes and their circles of influence. The principles he shares are those Jesus used to unleash human potential.

The book grabbed my attention quickly with seven questions to help me consider whether I'm currently living a directed life or drifting aimlessly toward the latest shiny object.

One of those questions took me back to that high school English Composition class: "Are you suffering burnout?"

The Mayo Clinic describes burnout with a non-medical description: "Job burnout is a special type of work-related stress—a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity." The clinic offers the following list to consider:

Have you become cynical or critical at work?

Do you drag yourself to work and have trouble getting started?

Have you become irritable or impatient with co-workers, customers or clients?

Do you lack the energy to be consistently productive?

Do you find it hard to concentrate?

Do you lack satisfaction from your achievements?

Do you feel disillusioned about your job?

Whether we believe we're suffering from burnout or not, we all sometimes feel as though we are drifting through our work, our relationships and our spiritual walk. Some of us haven't recovered from the multiple impacts caused by COVID.

Things simply feel harder. Progress comes with more struggles, more effort and many more distractions. Some days, it just feels as though we are tied by a leash.

Another question Mattera asks cuts straight to the heart of a drifter: Are you experiencing continuous frustration?

If we aren't pursuing God's specific path for our life, it's likely that we experience many frustrations throughout the day. God lets us know when we are drifting. He sends us several wake-up calls.

When we lose our passion and purpose, it's a good sign that our boat is adrift. We may feel increased anxiety with every project we attempt and feel blocked by circumstances and feelings. We know the motions to go through and boxes to check. But motions and checkmarks don't satisfy the sense that God has more for us.

Frustration breeds more frustration. How can we influence others when we lack clarity of purpose?

Jesus accomplished more in his three short years of ministry than we can hope to accomplish in a lifetime. Yet we see no signs of frustration as the Savior walked through life. We see no signs of burnout, even when He spent hours ministering to large crowds.

Instead, Jesus offered a simple, wise solution: "'Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.' He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat" (Mark 6:31, NLT).

If you're feeling frustrated or burned out, check your rest meter. Find that quiet place with Him. Only He can transform a life of burnout to one burning with the Spirit of God.

Dr. Steve Greene is the publisher and executive vice president of the multimedia group at Charisma Media and executive producer of the Charisma Podcast Network. His Charisma House book, *Love Leads*, shows that without love, you cannot be an effective leader. Sign up for his free "5 Things I Learned Last Week" and "Greenelines" newsletters, and download his

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