

Village People Frontman Victor Willis Dies at 74: The Surprising Church Roots Behind His Iconic Voice

Victor Willis, the founding lead singer of the disco group Village People, whose unmistakable vocals helped define an era of popular music, has died. He was 74.

Willis died on June 30 after what his family described as a “short but aggressive illness,” according to statements shared by his wife, Karen Huff-Willis, and the band. His death came one day before his 75th birthday.

“We are profoundly sad to announce the death of Victor Willis, lead singer of Village People,” the group wrote in a statement. “Privacy is requested.” Karen Huff-Willis echoed that request in a separate message to supporters.

Although generations of fans knew Willis as the voice behind enduring hits including “.,” “Macho Man,” “In the Navy” and “Go West,” his musical journey began far from the disco stage.

According to JubileeCast, Willis was born to a Baptist preacher and first discovered his love for music while singing in church. Those early experiences helped shape the powerful voice that would later propel him to international fame.



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Before joining Village People, Willis pursued acting and musical theater, eventually appearing in Broadway productions, including The Wiz. His career took a dramatic turn when French

producer Jacques Morali recruited him to help launch Village People, a group that would become one of the defining acts of the disco era. As the band's lead vocalist and a co-writer of many of its biggest songs, Willis helped create music that has endured for nearly five decades.

Willis left the group during the height of its popularity but returned years later after successfully regaining rights to many of the songs he helped write. He resumed touring with Village People in 2017 and remained the only original member actively performing with the band in recent years.

His passing comes after a late-career resurgence that introduced Village People's music to a new generation. "." once again became a fixture at public events, sporting venues and political rallies, bringing renewed attention to one of the most recognizable songs in American music.

During this time, lift up those closest to Willis in prayer as they grieve.

Prepared by Charisma Media Staff.

Historic Convent Near St. Patrick's Tomb Destroyed in Deliberate Fire

A historic former Catholic convent near the traditional burial place of Saint Patrick was destroyed in a suspected arson fire Sunday evening, marking the loss of one of Northern Ireland's longstanding Christian landmarks.

The Gateway Pundit, citing local reporting, said the fire

broke out at the former Convent of Mercy in Downpatrick, County Down, around 7 p.m. on June 28. The Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service said the cause is “believed to have been deliberate.” No injuries were reported.

Former convent in Downpatrick deliberately burned down on Sunday.

Downpatrick is literally where St Patrick is buried.

These are not coincidences.

– Tommy Robinson  (@TRobinsonNewEra) June 30, 2026

More than 70 firefighters battled the blaze overnight, working to keep the flames from spreading to neighboring St. Patrick’s Church. The former convent, built in the 19th century, was destroyed, but the church was spared.

The Downpatrick Family of Parishes praised emergency crews, saying the fire had been prevented from reaching St. Patrick’s Church through the “heroism and skill” of the Fire Service.

“Fire fighters worked through the night to protect St Patrick’s and to them we owe an enormous debt of gratitude,” the parish said.

The timing added to the community’s grief. Earlier that day, the parish had celebrated the ordination of Fr. Thomas Hampton inside St. Patrick’s Church.

“Coming at the end of a wonderful day in the life of the parish family – the Ordination to the Priesthood of Fr Thomas Hampton—when the parish came together in a tremendous act of hospitality and welcome, it is particularly sad that so beautiful a building has been destroyed,” the parish said.



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The parish also reflected on the legacy of the Mercy Sisters, saying they left an "indelible influence for good" after more than 150 years of ministry in Downpatrick.

Authorities have not announced a suspect or identified a motive in the suspected arson investigation.

As attacks against Christian sites continue to make headlines across Europe, let us pray for God's protection over churches and our brothers and sisters in Christ who faithfully serve Him. May the Lord strengthen His people, preserve Europe's Christian heritage and draw many hearts to Jesus Christ.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a journalism background from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and at the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary* and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@.

Breaking: Major Red Heifer Update Sends Shockwaves Through Temple Preparations

A newly born red heifer in northern Israel has been disqualified from use in the biblical purification ceremony outlined in Numbers 19, but Jewish leaders involved in preparations for a future Temple say the birth still marks progress in their ongoing breeding program.

According to a report published by The Times of Israel, the calf, named Tamima, was born last month in the Galilee after a breeding program using semen imported from the United States. Although the calf was born completely red, experts removed her ear tags shortly after birth.

Rabbi Azariah Ariel, one of Israel's foremost Temple scholars and leader of the Temple Institute's Red Heifer Project, determined that the calf cannot be used for the purification rite because of the resulting blemish.

"She is disqualified for the current rite due to the ear tag blemish."

The report noted that while Tamima cannot provide the ashes required for the purification ceremony, she could still play a role in future breeding efforts if she remains free of additional blemishes.

The announcement comes as Temple preparation efforts continue to expand in Israel. Organizers say government-backed educational initiatives have trained approximately 150,000 Israelis toward a goal of 200,000 participants, with particular emphasis on preparing kohanim (priests) and Leviim (Levites) for future Temple service.

Temple leaders also outlined a broader six-part strategy that includes breeding a qualified red heifer, preparing ritually qualified priests, identifying a suitable location for the purification ceremony east of Jerusalem, resolving remaining questions of Jewish law, expanding public education and securing long-term funding for Temple-related projects.



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Why the Red Heifer Matters

For us as Christians, the significance of the red heifer extends far beyond the birth of a single calf. Scripture teaches that the ashes of a qualified red heifer are necessary for the purification rites described in Numbers 19. Those rites are foundational to restoring the full sacrificial system prescribed under the Mosaic Law.

Temple leaders believe a qualified red heifer is one of the final requirements for restoring ritual purity for the priesthood. That purification would allow preparations for renewed Temple services to move forward, making the search for a qualified red heifer one of the most closely watched developments surrounding plans for a future Temple in Jerusalem.

The rebuilding of the Temple carries global prophetic significance because Scripture teaches that the Antichrist will one day enter the Temple, exalt himself above every object of worship and proclaim himself to be God.

The apostle Paul wrote that the “man of lawlessness” will take “his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thess. 2:3-4). Jesus likewise warned of the coming “abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (Matt. 24:15), pointing to a future event connected to the Temple in Jerusalem. Daniel also foretold that a coming world ruler would bring Temple sacrifices to an end midway through a seven-year covenant (Dan. 9:27).

For these reasons, Christians around the world continue watching developments surrounding the red heifer, the Temple Mount and preparations for renewed Temple worship. These events do not determine the timing of Christ’s return, but they demonstrate how the prophetic framework described in Scripture continues to come into sharper focus.

While this latest red heifer has been disqualified, our mission remains unchanged. Jesus commanded us to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). As we fulfill the Great Commission, we are also called to remain spiritually alert and to discern the signs of the times through the lens of God’s Word.

We do not watch these developments out of fear or speculation, but with confidence in the promises of Scripture, ensuring our hearts are prepared for the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a journalism background from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and at the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man’s Commentary and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@.

Israeli Officials: Hezbollah Has Fired More Than 7,000 Rockets at Israel While Operating From Christian Villages in Lebanon

Israeli officials say Hezbollah has launched more than 7,000 rockets, missiles and drones into Israel since early March while embedding military infrastructure inside civilian areas and Christian villages in southern Lebanon.

The claims were made by Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar during MUNI EXPO in Tel Aviv as Israel, Lebanon and the United States continue negotiations aimed at securing Hezbollah's disarmament and a lasting peace agreement.

"Since March alone, Hezbollah has launched more than 7,000 rockets, missiles and drones from Lebanese territory into Israel," Sa'ar said. "What country can accept this and not act to restore security to its citizens?"

Sa'ar said Hezbollah launched the current conflict under Iranian direction and argued that both Israel and Lebanon share the same enemy.

"We and Lebanon have a common enemy," he said. "This is the enemy of Lebanon's future, sovereignty, and independence, and it is also the enemy of Israel's security. That enemy is Hezbollah."



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According to the Israel Defense Forces, Hezbollah has used Christian villages, including Qawzah, to launch rockets and anti-tank missiles while operating from civilian infrastructure in violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701. The IDF also said it released drone footage in March showing Hezbollah fighters entering a building in a Christian village before it was struck.

Lebanese Christian MP Ghassan Hasbani also criticized Hezbollah's actions.

"Hezbollah decided single-handedly to reenter the war triggered by the events in Iran," Hasbani said. "This is a suicide action by Hezbollah, taking the whole country, the whole of Lebanon, into a regional conflict, into the unknown."

Sa'ar has urged the United Nations to designate Hezbollah as a

terrorist organization, press Lebanon to disarm the group and recognize Iran as a threat to international peace.

Israeli officials say Hezbollah still possesses thousands of rockets despite months of fighting, and Defense Minister Israel Katz said military operations will continue until northern Israeli communities can safely return home.

As this conflict continues, we are reminded to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6), for the protection of innocent civilians, and for our Christian brothers and sisters in Lebanon who remain caught in the middle of the fighting.

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Outspoken Christian Kelsey Grammer Considering a Run for Political Office

Does the political realm constitute the best venue in which to serve God? Many prominent Christians must face that question.

For instance, in an interview published on Wednesday, legendary actor and unapologetic Christian Kelsey Grammer told Us Weekly that he has thought about running for political office, albeit for reasons that, in true Christian fashion,

have nothing to do with self-promotion.

"I would consider it. It would possibly tick that box for me, in terms of the service I feel I should have given to my fellow man – to my fellow countrymen – that I missed in the military," the 71-year-old Grammer said. "Maybe that would be the way to do it. I have wrestled with it."

In his show business career, Grammer emerged as a beloved television figure while playing Dr. Frasier Crane on the long-running NBC sitcom "Cheers" (1984-1993). After "Cheers," the even longer-running spinoff sitcom "Frasier," starring Grammer as the character he made famous on "Cheers," catapulted him to stardom (1993-2004).

Nowadays, however, the actor dwells on service, particularly his lost opportunity to serve in the Vietnam War. Grammer registered for the draft, *Us Weekly* reported, but he was never called to the service.

"There were people – my peers, young people my age – who went and died there," he recalled. "I always thought there was a kind of sense of personal deficit in my own life, in my life story, that I didn't serve in the military because my father had, my grandfather had, but in the circumstances of Vietnam and my generation, it was less attractive in some ways. I breathed a sigh of relief, and I didn't go, and now I have a sense of regret that I should have served in some way anyway."

Perhaps his work as host of "The Patriot War" – a documentary series about the American Revolution – has him thinking even more about military service. That series is currently streaming on Fox Nation. *Us Weekly* reports that it gives prominent space to Washington's religious faith.

Grammer also has a role in "Young Washington," a new movie from Christian-centric Angel Studios that focuses on the life of the first president decades before his turn as commander of the Continental Army.

"I am very, very proud to be connected in a deep way to the selfless and courageous acts of the people who founded this country, and I look on it as an obligation to continue what is a love letter in a lot of ways, but a deep gratitude for the opportunity they gave me," Grammer said of America's Revolutionary Era heroes. "I mean, if they hadn't been here, who knows?"

In other words, should Grammer run for office, the Christian virtues of service and sacrifice would direct his steps.



To order Travis Johnson's book, [Un]Embarrassed of Jesus, visit .

Moreover, like many Christians, Grammer has not had a smooth journey to faith.

According to Fox News, in a February appearance on the "Arroyo Grande" podcast with host Raymond Arroyo, Grammer revealed that at times in his life he thought he was done with God, "but He wasn't done with me."

In 1975, Grammer's 18-year-old younger sister Karen was raped and murdered. That horrific crime left the future acting star angry, bellicose, and distant from God.

In 2025, Grammer published "Karen: A Brother Remembers," a memoir about his sister. According to Catholic Vote, the actor wrote about not only Karen's murder but also two other tragedies.

In 1974, Grammer's pregnant girlfriend aborted their child.

"Though I have supported it in the past, the abortion of my son eats away at my soul," Grammer wrote.

"I supported the idea that a woman has the right to do what she wants with her own body. I still do," he wrote. "But it's

hard for me. Still is.”

Then, years later, doctors convinced Grammer and his current wife, Kayte, to abort their twin boy, whose amniotic sac had ruptured at 13 weeks, in order to save their twin girl, a daughter they named Faith.

“We killed our son so Faith might live. We wept as we watched his heart stop,” the actor recalled in the memoir. “It is the greatest pain I have ever known. Kayte’s scream was enough to make a man mourn a lifetime.”

Enough to make a man mourn a lifetime. Could even the most ardent pro-life activists could find a better phrase for the horror they seek to eradicate?

In any event, Grammer summarized his faith journey in a 2023 interview with USA Today. while promoting the movie “Jesus Revolution.”

“I’ve had hiccups,” he recalled. “I’ve had some tragic times. I have wrestled with those and worked my way through them: Sometimes rejecting faith, sometimes rejecting God even, in a period of being pretty angry about it, like, ‘Where were you?’ That kind of thing. But I have come to terms with it and have found great peace in my faith and in Jesus. It’s not cavalier – Jesus made a difference in my life. That’s not anything I’ll apologize for.”

As Grammer told Arroyo, his anguish led to a spiritual encounter with Jesus.

“Don’t you think it’s time for you to give it up?” the actor said he heard Jesus say of the pain Grammer still felt over his sister’s murder.

“I said, ‘No, it’s OK, I’ve carried it this long, I can still handle it. It’s mine.’ And He said, ‘No, it’s mine. That’s why I came,’” Grammer recalled.

In short, Grammer values service and sacrifice. And he has seen his Christian faith forged in the crucible of tragedy. He also has a personal relationship with Jesus.

Americans could use someone like that in public office.

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The End: British Monarchy Is Dead as Charles Bows the Knee to Islam With Sickening Change to His Own Title

We are one step closer to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland becoming the Islamic Republic of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

King Charles III has a new description in his role as monarch to that end.

In an annual review published for 2025-2026 reported by the U.K.'s Telegraph on Friday, the king was previously the "Head of Nation" and "Head of the Church of England and Defender of the Faith."

This year the language has changed, reading, "His Majesty is Supreme Governor of the Church of England and protects the space for Faith within the multi-faith nation."

His mother, Queen Elizabeth II, had a much less ambiguous title: "Supreme Governor of the Church of England."

What is the king trying to say with this shift? That the United Kingdom is not Christian, and that her monarch represents a non-Christian people – Muslims.

The Muslim Council of Great Britain noted in a March 2025 report that 4 million Muslims reside in the nation.

It's sad and demoralizing, but not surprising.



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There's already a two-tier police and justice system in place for Britain. Law enforcement and public officials have consistently ignored the problem of migrant abuses, trafficking, and rape gangs.

The Restore Britain Party's Rape Gang Inquiry Report exposed a serious multi-level failure over decades to bring criminals to justice, but we shouldn't expect mass deportations any time soon.

The mayor of London is Muslim.

There are Muslim members of Parliament.

The Religion Media Centre notes 1,884 mosques in the United Kingdom.

These people aren't going anywhere. They are conquering the land without firing a shot.

If the monarchy is just going to be a mouthpiece for a leftist globalist agenda, why bother having it? When Islam is a majority, Muslims will establish a caliphate to replace it anyway.

Between Charles's affair with Queen Camilla while still married to Princess Diana, and his climate activism which Smiley Movement notes dates back to when he was 21, what is

redeemable about the king?

European officials consistently fail to consider Islam for its true intentions. They judge it through the lens of Western spirituality, believing it to be exclusively a faith whose adherents desire harmony with others.

Islam's prophet Muhammad's life proves otherwise. He conquered the Quraysh clans, taking Mecca by 630. He articulated a faith that was political. Infidels – non-Muslims – had the choice to convert, fight, or live as second-class citizens under subsequent empires by caliphs emulating his life and teachings.

While in a minority, Muslims advocate for peace and tolerance. This is also to emulate Muhammad, as his earlier years in Mecca saw him outnumbered and weak among the Quraysh. He was only able to strike back after going to Medina and gathering armies for his cause.

Muslims in the United Kingdom are currently in Mecca. What do you think will happen when they reach Medina?

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White House Religious Liberty Commission Doubles Down on Americans' Freedom

White House Religious Liberty Commission released its final draft report to President Trump, detailing the ongoing fight to protect religious freedom in the nation.

"The Members of this Commission are united in the conviction that religious liberty remains one of the greatest sources of American strength. It protects believers and nonbelievers alike. It strengthens communities, enriches civic life, and lifts up individuals from every background, color, and creed," the report says. "Preserving it will require vigilance, education, and renewed commitment from institutions and citizens alike."

"Among our conclusions, we believe that safeguarding religious liberty requires more than defending legal rights after they have been violated," it adds. "It requires cultivating a culture that understands why those rights exist in the first place. It requires correcting misconceptions about the Constitution, strengthening conscience protections, ensuring equal treatment under the law, and fostering renewed appreciation for the manifestly positive role of religion in building up the infinite richness of American life."



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The report drew upon testimonies given during the Commission's hearings.

"Although their circumstances differed, their stories shared a common theme," the report said of its more than 100 witnesses. "Far too often in our national life, religion is treated not as a protected and valued contribution to public life, but as a problem or annoyance to be managed, restricted, or sidelined."

Addressing various venues for religious freedom, the Commission recommended that faith-based institutions be ensured equal opportunities; educational institutions train teachers and administrators on students' constitutional rights; that parental rights be defended; Department of War leaders undergo religious liberty training; protect the

religious rights of healthcare workers; track anti-semitic incidents; and direct the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to create “Know Your Rights” resources for the private sector.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order creating the Religious Liberty Commission last year.

The Commission will be tasked with “producing a comprehensive report on the foundations of religious liberty in America, strategies to increase awareness of and celebrate America’s peaceful religious pluralism, current threats to religious liberty, and strategies to preserve and enhance protections for future generations,” a fact sheet on the matter read, noting that the group will focus on parental rights, freedom of conscience, school choice, attacks on churches, free speech, and other areas.

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Spiritual Breakthrough Begins With Prayer

Jesus Christ alone is Lord and Savior. He is our Healer, Restorer, Forgiver, Redeemer and Provider. Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, and whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. His Word is living, inspired, and eternal—a light that never grows dim and truth that never fails.

For 3.4 decades, I have prayed and fasted for the salvation of my family. Yet they all remain unsaved. With a heart that is utterly desperate for their salvation and water baptism, I

humbly ask fellow believers and intercessors to join me in prayer and fasting on their behalf.

We stand on the promise of 2 Corinthians 6:2 (NIV):

For He says, 'In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.' I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

Prayer for Salvation

Please pray for:

Nargis, Mehru, Sam, Nergish, Nazneen, Frazer, Kayomerz, Rayomand, Goshpi, Darius, Sunita, Yvonne, Cyra, Zinaida, Jasmine, Bryce, Rayshad, Adil, and Aran.

Prayer Focus

Please pray:

- That those named above would come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and receive water baptism.
- For longer life, health and wholeness, as God granted to King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20; Isaiah 38).
- For healing in body, soul and spirit through the power of the Holy Spirit and the renewing of their minds.
- For their adoption into the family of God and citizenship in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.
- For Kingdom transformation in every area of their lives.
- That they would seek the Bible, study it daily, and live according to its truth.
- For financial provision and breakthrough, trusting Christ as Provider (Luke 6:38; Malachi 3:10–11; Psalm 37:25).
- For hearts filled with worship, psalms, hymns and spiritual songs unto Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:19).
- For strong and unwavering faith in Jesus Christ.

- For the restoration of honor, credibility and testimony.
- For the Holy Spirit to draw each person into the saving knowledge of Christ.
- That they would experience the love, grace, and kindness of Jesus Christ in a personal way.

Lord, Send Laborers

I believe only Jesus Christ can reach the hearts of my loved ones.

Please pray that God will raise up Spirit-led believers to share the gospel with them, teach them the Scriptures and disciple them in the ways of Christ.

May the message of the gospel reach them with power, clarity and love.

A Call to the Body of Christ

We ask believers everywhere to join us in fasting and prayer—in private devotions, home groups and church prayer meetings—for the individuals named above, as well as for your own family members and friends.

Revival often begins one soul at a time, touching families, homes and entire communities.

Specific Prayer Requests

For Mehru

Pray for the restoration of her eyesight and healing from macular degeneration. May God's light fill her vision and bring complete healing.

For Nargis

Pray for divine health and protection from disease, injury, and danger, including cancer, pulmonary illness, neurological

disease, heart attack, stroke, blood disorders, blood clots, immobility, falls, broken bones, blindness, deafness and kidnapping.

We ask for longer life (beyond 110 years, as promised in Isaiah 38:4–6), strength, salvation, immunity, wisdom, peace, joy, faithful Christian prayer partners, provision and continual renewal according to God's promises.

For Nargis, Kayomerz, and Our Family

Pray for deliverance from deception and spiritual hindrance. May the Lord rescue them from the domain of darkness and transfer them into the Kingdom of His beloved Son (Colossians 1:13–14).

May they be wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16).

Please pray that they would be delivered from attraction, desire, temptation, admiration, allegiance, peer pressure and fear related to all gods and religions apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray also for God's protection over them, especially from kidnapping.

For Rayomand

Pray for healing, immunity, strength, and restoration of his heart, blood, blood pressure, eyes, lungs, skin and knee.

He currently struggles with blood clots, fluctuating blood pressure, and the effects of triple bypass surgery. Due to advanced glaucoma, he is unable to read the Bible. Please pray for healing and restoration.

A Prayer of Gratitude

We thank God for the miracles He has already accomplished,

especially Nargis' healing from cancer.

We are grateful for the grace of Jesus Christ and for the medical care that contributed to her recovery.

Thank You, Lord, for Your faithfulness and mercy.

Believing God for Miracles

We believe the Lord hears the prayers of His people.

May His Kingdom come and His power be revealed in our homes, families and communities.

In the mighty name of Jesus Christ, amen.

A Prayer of Blessing

Lord Jesus Christ, we ask Your blessing upon:

- President Donald Trump, his family and the current U.S. administration
- The Charisma Media family
- Every family, church and believer who joins in this prayer
- Israel and the Jewish people
- The United States of America

May Your grace, wisdom, power, strength, favor and protection rest upon them.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Prepared by Charisma Media Staff.

The Power and Presence of Sin

Sin is not merely a deed. It is a darkness of the soul. It is a lawlessness that found refuge in the human heart. It is the venom of the Serpent flowing through humanity, pulsating rebellion against God and all that He is. No one escaped this venom. From the first child of Adam who murdered his own brother, to the most "innocent" of persons in our day, "all have sinned," Jesus Christ being the only exception to that absolute truth.

Jesus described sin as the slave master that causes people to commit the acts of sin. This evil presence is what defiles a person before God. Carnal religion seeks to control and restrain it. Jesus Christ takes it away!

What gives sin such power? It is the seed of rebellion that Adam and Eve received into their heart from the Serpent. It is as a single cell of cancer that never stops spreading. There is no cure until the whole is taken away. The power of sin is in its presence. Only where sin has no presence does it have no power.

Consider these two examples: One man has wrestled with lust for years. He has prayed, fasted, and taken every step possible to keep it subdued. So far, this man has kept himself from fulfilling the unclean desires that are within. He has never committed an act of adultery or fornication and does not partake of pornography. This man has power over the unclean lusts that are within him, but it is a constant battle that never ceases. In the best of times, the uncleanness seems to be dormant, but it is always ready to revive and roar.

Another man does not struggle with such things. He faces the same tests of living in this world with all the opportunities for sinful acts that are common to men. He also does not commit adultery, fornication or partake of pornography. In

fact, he never even contemplates such things. It is just not in his heart to desire or to do anything of that nature.

I cannot help but have respect for the first man. He lives every day in a battle with lusts, but keeps himself from fulfilling the act of the sinful thing. His determination and fortitude are to be admired. Yet with all the power he exercises over the sin, he is not free from it. If at any time he lets down his guard, he will fall into its darkness and shame.

You cannot rightfully claim that the second man has power over unclean lusts. In fact, no one knows what course he would take if these things were actually in his heart. Would he be weak? Or would he be strong? He might fail on the first encounter. But this second man does not need strength to overcome sin because it not in his heart. The truth is that no one needs power over sin if it has no dwelling place in their heart.

Many teachers offer you wisdom they say will give you power over sin. That is not God's promise to you. Jesus Christ came to take your sin away. His blood was shed to wash it from your heart; to wash it from your nature. Do not scoff at the mention of truly being free. This is what Jesus promised to do when he said, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed!

As long as you believe that you must always be a sinner and sin must always remain in you, both will be true for you. But if you will believe the word of God, you can, and will, be free.

Simply Christ Gospel Insight is shared weekly by **Pastor Keith Surface** with believers in over 150 nations. For more information about this ministry or to subscribe free, visit

Virtual Kidnapping: A Real Scam Targeting Mission Travelers

Mission trips are built on community support in the form of prayer, giving and updates that help people back home feel connected. Photos, short videos and quick posts can encourage supporters and remind families why the trip matters.

But the same posts that build connection can also create unwanted exposure. In recent years, ministries have been paying closer attention to a scam that targets families back home, not the team overseas. It often starts with an urgent call claiming a traveler has been kidnapped, arrested or hospitalized, backed by just enough personal detail to sound believable. The goal? Use pressure tactics to force a loved one into sending money before they can confirm what's true.

"Most teams prepare for what could happen during the trip. What often gets overlooked is how something like this can impact families at home in a matter of minutes," said Brad James, Brotherhood Works. One of his responsibilities is working through the risks with groups and individuals preparing for mission trips and helping them make sure they have the right mission travel coverages.

Panic Powered by Partial Information

Virtual kidnapping relies on a predictable human response: when someone you love might be in danger, you want to act immediately. Scammers take advantage of that moment, especially when the loved one is traveling and harder to reach due to time zones, full schedules and limited connectivity.

“Criminals don’t need much to sound credible,” said James. “Public social posts can reveal names, relationships, church connections and travel details. Even small bits of information can be pieced together into a story that feels real in the moment.”

A Scenario Worth Discussing

To help churches prepare, it can be useful to talk through how a call like this might unfold.

“Let’s say a mom receives a call from an unfamiliar number that looks international,” said James. “The caller claims her son has been kidnapped and pressures the mom to act immediately.”

James explains that the caller may include specific details such as names, location references or mentions of the mission trip. All to make the situation feel legitimate. There may be shouting or distressing noise in the background. The mom is told to stay on the line and send money right away.

In reality, the traveler hasn’t been taken at all. The son may be in a team meeting, doing outreach, on a bus or away from his phone, completely unaware that panic is unfolding at home.

According to the FBI, schemes like this are designed to keep victims engaged so they don’t verify what’s happening. Perpetrators often work to keep the conversation going and prevent contact with the supposed victim.

If you ever get a call like this, the most important step is also the hardest: slow the situation down.

“Scammers rely on urgency,” said James. “If they can keep you reacting instead of thinking, they have a much better chance of getting you to comply.”

The FBI advises focusing on staying calm, buying time, and verifying the situation before acting. Recommended steps

include:

- **Try to reach the traveler another way.** Call or text them from another device while staying on the line.
- **Ask to speak directly with your loved one.** Request proof they are okay.
- **Use a family codeword.** Ask a question only your family member would know.
- **Keep your voice low and steady.** Don't argue or escalate the situation.
- **Repeat the caller's instructions to buy time.** Let them know you're writing things down.
- **Avoid sharing additional information.** Don't give details the caller can use to strengthen the story.
- **Be cautious about payment demands.** Scammers typically insist on immediate digital payment because it is fast and difficult to reverse.

"If something feels off, take that seriously," said James. "Verification should always come before action." If you cannot confirm your loved one's safety or believe there could be a real threat, contact local law enforcement right away.

Consider covering these safety tips with your team and their families early in the trip planning process:

- **Set expectations for online updates.** Ask them to avoid posting real-time locations, schedules or lodging details.
- **Make social media settings private.** Keep personal information and contact details from being publicly visible in posts or on a feed.
- **Have a communication plan.** Identify who families should contact first if they receive a concerning call, email or message.
- **Use a prearranged codeword.** A simple phrase can help

confirm a mission travelers identity quickly.

- **Encourage delayed or limited public posting.** Sharing highlights after the trip reduces real-time exposure.

You Can't Always Trust What You Hear

While these scams have existed for years, they are becoming more sophisticated. Generative AI tools now make it easier to create highly convincing fake content, including voice cloning for proof of life. The FBI warns that scammers can use deepfakes and synthetic media to carry out imposter scams, extortion, and financial fraud.

“That doesn't mean every scam call involves AI. But it does mean ministries and families should be prepared for a moment when something sounds real, even if it isn't,” said James.

For more guidance on mission travel planning and mission-related risk management resources, visit

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