

Keeping Your Cool When Your Life Is a Frenzied Mess

My mouth is where I feel it first. Because my bite has changed with age, if I get stressed out, I start to clench my teeth and rub raw spots on my tongue and cheeks.

This serves as a low-fuel indicator light.

And I'm not like the guys, who live for the adventure of seeing how far they can drive on a low fuel light, without running out of gas. (Why do they think this is fun, and why didn't anybody warn me it was a thing when I got married?)

I don't like the idea of stranded.

So when I see the warning light of stress, I want to take care of it right now.

Gut reaction is to make the stress go away: "Could somebody please make it all go away?" "Please let it be summer so school is over." "Please send us a check for a million dollars." "Please erase everything on my calendar."

Or.

The stressors stay in place and my heart runs to the Lord at all hours of the day and night. He is my shelter.

Matt and I shook on a deal about a month ago. I told him he had to act cheerful about the snow until March 1, and I promised that come March 1, wouldn't complain about the increasing heat. On February 26, we had yet another blizzard that dropped a good six inches of fresh snow. So when Matt bowed his head over lunch, he thanked the Lord for the snow (seemed a little forced to me) and for our good shelter.

In Montana, we are people who know the value of a warm shelter

when the winds howl and the snow blows sideways from the north.

In my heart, this is what it means to go to the Lord with all the pressures in my life. I get behind his sturdy walls, and he gives me the necessary fuel to keep going—strength and help. But also his joy.

“But may all those who seek refuge in You rejoice; may they ever shout for joy, because You defend them; may those who love Your name be joyful in You” (Ps. 5:11).

We are loved.

We have help.

God cares.

This is a warm and protective relationship, and no stress can steal away the joy we siphon endlessly from the Lord.

If external stressors are pressing on you today, I pray you will internally go to the Lord for fuel to keep going. May you find in him a safety and depth of love and help that will cause you to relax your clenched jaw and tight shoulders.
{eoa}

Christy Fitzwater is an author and pastor's wife living in Kalispell, Montana. She is the author of *Blameless: Living A Life Free from Guilt And Shame* and *My Father's Hands: 52 Reasons to Trust God with Your Heart*. Find her devotional writing at .

A Single Woman's Secrets to Mind-Boggling Joy and Contentment

When I was a young adult, my brother and his wife called me into their bedroom during a family gathering. They had never done this before, so I knew something was up.

Both Dave and Debbie spoke, but my brother took the lead. They just wanted me to know that if I remained single, they would always be my family. They'd remember my birthday and invite me for all holidays. If I needed something, they'd do everything possible to help.

Until they loved me with these statements, I didn't know how badly I needed to hear them.

Our parents were still alive and in good health. I still had my old bedroom to stay in when visiting for holidays. But, Dave and Deb were correct—there would be a time when our parents wouldn't be alive.

Debbie and Dave opened their home to several single women who needed a place to stay for various reasons. Getting to know them and their concerns prompted their declaration to me. They came to appreciate the very real issue for many singles—where will I go when my parents die, and will anyone remember me on my birthday?

I'm grateful to God for how comfortable I am being single. I don't take it lightly. I know many single adults who would prefer to be married and some who are angry at God that they aren't. I've met parents whose greatest concern seems to be whether their children will get married. In those cases, I'm happy to model contentment and fulfillment as a single.

In addition to Dave and Deb's welcoming statement, what has contributed to my contentment?

- Jesus was single. If there was anything wrong with this choice, God's only Son would have been married. Jesus understands my temptations, fears, anxieties, confusion, lack of support, etc. If the single life was good enough for God's only child, it must be good enough for me.
- Marriage is not a cure for loneliness or any other thing. Jesus completes us (Col. 2:10) and people complement us. Expecting one person on Earth to do what Jesus came to do is dangerous and will lead to deep disappointments. Marriage is hard work, and I know it doesn't come with guarantees.
- I've cultivated a dynamic relationship with God and expect Him to meet my needs.
- I've become comfortable with who I am so I can be content alone. I accept what aren't my favorite qualities that can't be changed, and I work on the others. I humbly celebrate successes.
- I know the difference between being alone and being lonely and use the words carefully and accurately.
- I don't allow myself to isolate but spend time with friends. I have several activities I enjoy and things I do to relax.
- I've learned to ask for help because there are many things I can't do by myself and other things I don't know how to do. Asking doesn't make me weak.
- I enjoy the freedom I have to spend my money the way I want, eat what I want and where, decorate the way I want, make decisions in the way I think is best ...
- I pamper myself. I cook good food and sometimes buy myself flowers. I own beautiful china and many other nice things. (I tell young people not to get married for the party and the gifts! Buy what you want.)

Does anything in my list help you think through your situation

and contentment? Do you know singles you could share it with? Youth not dating who think they must?

There's one more thing that's significant to anyone's contentment and life satisfaction: Obedience.

Whether single or married, the bottom line is obedience. Singles may not be single forever, but the key is contentment and acceptance for what the Lord has for each of us at any given time in our lives. We must make the most of every opportunity. (Eph. 5:15-17)

If I don't believe my current situation is God's best for me, what makes me think I'll trust Him in my next phase? Living with a "grass is greener on the other side of the fence" thinking pattern dishonors God and isn't appealing to me at all. Is it to you? {eoa}

Dr. Kathy Koch *is the author of* Screens & Teens: Connecting with Our Kids in A Wireless World.

How Holy Spirit Can Help You Crucify Your Bad Attitude

Have the difficulties of life caused your attitude to sink? Have the painful circumstances you're facing caused your faith to sink?

Trust me friend, I get it, just as I explained in today's Proverbs 31 devotion called "Don't Let A Bad Attitude Rule Your Life." No matter how much we love Jesus or how much we try to walk in His peace, life can make it hard to stay positive. When circumstances are difficult, fears overwhelm,

hearts are broken or anger is simmering, our thoughts begin to sink, and over time, our attitudes sink too. Even worse is that eventually our faith might start sinking as well, and before we know it, we're not only feeling disconnected from God, but we've got a bad case of bad attitude and can't figure out how to break free from it.

Why do we do that? Why do we allow the hardships of life to weigh down our hearts and minds so much so that we get grumpy, sour, negative and sinking in our faith?

The reason why is simply that we're human. God gave us the free will to choose how we think, act and feel and sometimes we forget to intentionally think, act and feel in ways that are pleasing to Christ. As a result, negative thoughts and emotions can easily get the better of us if we're not actively controlling our own thoughts. We inadvertently let the enemy steal our peace. We let people destroy our hearts and tear down our self-esteem. We let life chisel away at our joy and chain us to an anchor of negativity that pulls us deeper into darkness.

But even though life is hard, our hearts and mind don't have to get hard with it. We have as much free will to choose to be positive and happy, as we do to choose to be negative and unhappy. In fact, it takes the same amount of effort to do both, so why not choose to think positive and not sink at all?

Proverbs 17:22 (MSG) says "A cheerful disposition is good for your health; gloom and doom leave you bone-tired." A cheerful disposition is a by-product of choosing to think positive, because as we think, so will we be. If we choose to think negative, we'll be bone-tired, and what happens when we're bone-tired? We sink.

You see, we sink because of how we think; but if we think positive, God helps us keep our heads, and our attitudes, above water.

With our free will, we can choose to be an optimistic thinker or we can choose to be a pessimist; we can let our attitudes change who we are, or we can choose to change them before that happens. We can let our thoughts control us and our emotions, or we can choose to control them instead. The choice is ours—and it's a life-changing choice.

Happiness depends on our mindset, not our circumstances, and even though attitude transformations don't happen overnight, they do happen. No matter what you're facing today, a total attitude, heart and mind transformation can happen for you too, if you want it bad enough to work for it and invite God to begin a transformation in you. {eoa}

Tracie Miles is a national speaker and author with the internationally known Proverbs 31 Ministries and has spent the last 12 years inspiring women to live intentionally for Christ. She is the author of two best-selling books, *Your Life Still Counts: How God Uses Your Past to Create a Beautiful Future* and *Stressed Less Living: Finding God's Peace in Your Chaotic World*. Her newest book is *Unsinkable Faith: God-Filled Strategies for Transforming the Way You Think, Feel and Live* (April 2017). She is a contributing author to the popular Zondervan NIV Women's Devotional Bible and the Proverbs 31 Encouragement for Today Daily Devotional Book, in addition to being a monthly contributing writer for the Proverbs 31 Ministries Encouragement for Today daily devotions, which reach nearly one million people per day around the world with encouragement from God's Word. Tracie also holds the role as COMPEL Manager at Proverbs 31, has 3 children and lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. You can connect with Tracie on her blog at [and](#) all social media outlets.

3 Strong Steps to Free Your Mind and Body From Witchcraft's Stranglehold

Whether it is called black magic or white magic, it is the same: witchcraft. Ad according to the Bible, it is a great sin against God. It is also the lesser of supernatural power, and God's Word is clear that what His followers have is far greater than those that practice witchcraft. If you are involved in witchcraft, there is hope for you to be free from this curse. I have concluded this article with 3 steps to being free.

The Word of God says witchcraft is sin.

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king" (1 Sam. 5:23).

The Bible shows us that this angers God.

"He even made his sons pass through the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom; and he had conjurers, and practitioners of divination and sorcery, and necromancers, and mediums. So he did a great amount of evil in the eyes of the Lord, so that God was provoked" (2 Chron. 33:6).

"Also he made his son pass through the fire, was conjuring and seeking omens, and dealt with mediums and soothsayers. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger" (2 Kin. 21:6).

If you seek mediums and wizards, you have no light within you. In other words, you are without God, spiritually dead.

"When they say to you, "Seek after the mediums and the

wizards, who whisper and mutter,” should not a people seek after their God? *Should they consult* the dead for the living? To the law and to the testimony; if they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Is. 8:19-20).

Those who practice these things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

“Now the works of the flesh are revealed, which are these: adultery, sexual immorality, impurity, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, rage, selfishness, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I previously warned you, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21).

“But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie” (Rev. 22:15).

The book of Revelation reveals to us the eternal destiny for those that practice these things:

“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, the sexually immoral, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars shall have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. This is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

Witchcraft is a weaker power compared to the power of God within His followers.

- “Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers/. Then the magicians of Egypt likewise performed with their secret arts. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods” (Ex. 7:11-12).
- “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to Aaron, “Stretch

out your rod, and strike the dust of the land, so that it may become gnats throughout all the land of Egypt.'" They did so, for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod and smote the dust of the earth, and it became gnats on man and on beast. All the dust of the land became gnats throughout all the land of Egypt. Then the magicians tried with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not, so there were gnats upon man and beast. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God' Nevertheless, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, just as the Lord had said" (Ex. 8:16-19).

- "Now a man named Simon was previously in the city practicing sorcery and astonishing the nation of Samaria, saying he was someone great, to whom they all listened, from the least to the greatest, saying, 'This man is the great power of God.' They listened to him, because for a long time he had astonished them by his sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Even Simon himself believed. And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip and was amazed as he watched the miracles and signs which were done" (Acts 8: 9-13).
- "On one occasion, as we went to the place of prayer, a servant girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, shouting, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.' She did this for many days. But becoming greatly troubled, Paul turned to the spirit and said, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out at that moment" (Acts 16: 16-18).
- "When they had gone through the whole island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a Jewish false prophet, whose name was Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul,

Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (which is his name by interpretation) opposed them, trying to divert the proconsul from the faith. Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, stared at him and said, 'You son of the devil, enemy of all righteousness, full of deceit and of all fraud, will you not cease perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now, look! The hand of the Lord is against you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.' Immediately mist and darkness fell on him, and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand" (Acts 13:6-11).

3 Steps to Be Free from Witchcraft:

1. You need to repent from the sin of witchcraft.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Father God, forgive me for participating in any and all forms of witchcraft. I renounce its hold upon me and my family. I am free from this sin and its consequences today. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

2. Then you need to rid your homes from items used to train or practice witchcraft.

"Many who practiced magic brought their books together and burned them before everyone. They calculated their value, which equaled fifty thousand drachmas" (Acts 19:19).

3. To keep yourself free from the satanic powers of witchcraft, you need to fill yourself with the Word of God.

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through dry places seeking rest, but finds none. Then it says, 'I will

return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings with itself seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it be also with this evil generation" (Matt. 12: 43-45).

If you will take these three steps and keep yourself filled with the Word of God, you will be free.

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the author of DARE to Believe, Greater Than Magic and The Healing Creed. Visit her at .

Spiritual Helps for When You Feel Totally Out of Control

Are you out of control? I'll admit, being in control or being the boss has always been something I highly valued. Being in charge and knowing what's going on seemed to be where I fit in the great scheme of things. I liked leading.

As a matter of fact, I liked it so much that I was always the one to make the decisions. I wanted to direct the outcomes to be what I wanted or at least what I felt were required.

Controller Mentality

Lately, though, being in control just takes too much energy. I'm not administering or managing. I'm simply trying to control the chaos and confusion.

In case you're wondering, that's not working.

As a child, I didn't like it when I saw adults in my life who seemed out of control. Even at a young age, I stepped in to be in control. At least then I'd know if supper got made or the clothes washed and dried.

Not knowing if it would get done would drive me more crazy than just doing it myself. These days, trying to do it all or make sure it all gets done is beyond exhausting and borders on a state of paralysis.

Giving God Control

Understanding this has been the best thing that has ever happened to me. I handed my need to control everything to God because I no longer had the capacity to do it. I didn't struggle with it. I just handed it to Him.

When He accepted my "gift," I didn't ask Him, "What do You give me in exchange?" I didn't want anything else to manage. Still, I was immediately engulfed in peace. What a welcome relief.

Then, insight and clarity began to flood me. God gave me a gift of leadership and administration, but He gave it to me to steward. That means I only have authority over the things He hands me.

This may not be a major revelation to you, but I am not God. However, as His daughter, I can lead you to Him if I am not trying to be Him.

Resting

Some gifts God gives us flow so naturally they begin to take over our lives and we become them. When that happens, they can overwhelm us to the point of exhaustion.

We need to rest, even from our gifts. God created the heavens, earth, plants, animals, mankind and everything we need to sustain life in a mere seven days (see Gen. 1:1). But notice,

on the seventh day, He rested (see Gen. 2:1). He laid His gifts aside and rested. Was He still Creator? Yes, but He didn't let His gifts overwhelm Him.

Here's a question I've been asking myself. If the God of the universe rested on the seventh day, why do I think I have to work nonstop?

Beyond Us

We need to guard our gifts in a sacred place in our hearts where God holds them until we need them. Then, He pulls them out and mixes them with a capacity so far beyond ourselves that we know we are no longer in control. God is.

"God wants to use you beyond your capacity, beyond your gifts, because then He gets the glory," Bill Johnson said.

These days I am seeking to be out of control so God can be in control. When that happens, I expect to see all of heaven break loose in my life. I will see miracles, acceleration of promises and supernatural favor in order for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (see Matt. 6:10).

All of this happens when we focus on what God wants instead of what we want. When we stop spinning in circles trying to control everything and everyone around us and just listen and follow our leader.

Good Health

We were not made to control everything. We were made to steward the things God has entrusted to us by following Him.

To do otherwise will ruin our health, but if we allow God to be in control of the outcomes in our lives, we will "glow with health" and "vibrate with life":

"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in

everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life!" (Prov. 3:5-8, MSG).

Are you ready to allow hand over to God everything you think you have to control? What are those things? Why do you continue to hang onto them when you know beyond a shadow of a doubt you can't control the outcome anyway? Are you ready to find time to rest in Him and allow Him to carry the load for you?

I've given up control, and I'm learning to rest in Him, but it's not a one-time event. I find I am daily having to give up control of some things again. God always patiently receives them back each time. Eventually, I decide it's a welcome relief and a sweet rest to have Him be in control of every single part of me. {eo}

Teresa Shields Parker is a wife, mother, business owner, life group leader, speaker and author of *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor* and *Sweet Grace Study Guide: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Overcome Sugar Addiction and Sweet Freedom*. Get a free chapter of her memoir on her blog at [Teresa Shields](http://TeresaShields.com) . Connect with her there or on her Facebook page or Twitter.

An End-Times Warning for

Every Believer

We should be alarmed at what we see taking place within the body of Christ these days. Such evil is infiltrating our fellowships. The congregants are so full of themselves and the world, and many pastors are so complacent that they walk around with spiritual blinders on, bending to every whim of society. These social whims are leading people to hell.

But we who refuse to bow to Satan and his evil are part of a mighty remnant surfacing for a short while to do the Lord's business and then meet Him in the air. Our time is so short on this earth. And there are so many people who need to hear the truth about our Messiah. And they not only need to hear but see us living out the kingdom now, with the authority of Christ, the power of the Spirit and the Word in action.

I remember sitting on a plane, and the young woman next to me started to pepper me with questions about my faith when she learned I was an author about faith for the miraculous and ministered around the world. She was full of anger towards followers of Jesus, because of the hypocrisy she saw, and decided to take it out upon me. It was fine, I knew this was a divine appointment of the Lord for this young lady.

As bitter as this young woman was, she burst into tears and said to me, "I have never met a Christian that walked in miracles before." She then changed her tone, and started to ask me questions about the Lord that she never understood, or was never taught before.

This encounter made an impact upon me. It makes me wonder what would happen if more Christians would take a stand for righteousness, and not give in to society's filth, live out the Word as if they actually believed, instead of being spiritual wimps.

I know the time is short, and the only way to protect

ourselves from falling for society's evil ways is to stay in the Word, keep our relationship with the Spirit fresh and alive, and put action behind our faith. And if we will do these things we will make an impact while on this earth.

The Spirit of God gave me this poem one night back in 2012 concerning the end times. I share it in the last chapter of *Greater Than Magic*, but it is just as powerful for today as well.

Stroll a supernatural stride

With the Holy Spirit as your guide

On His wings you will ride

Throughout the earth you will glide

If in His presence you will abide

He will forever be at your side

Because you are fixed on heaven's eyes

To Him your Savior you will arise

Now a warning to those as the end draws nigh

As light and darkness begin to collide

Evil spirits will run and hide

The gates of hell will open wide

And swallow those caught in its wicked lies

I pray you heed the voice of the One on high

Because the clock is ticking by

A way of escape Christ now provides

But only for those who will turn from

their self-righteous pride.

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the *Destiny Image* author of *DARE to Believe*, *Greater Than Magic* and *The Healing Creed*. Visit her at [.](#)

Guarding Your Holy Spirit-Given Joy From the Devil's Malicious Schemes

Keeping your joy and enjoying life is not always very easy.

Especially when we're surrounded by so much negativity. All you have to do is turn on the news, and you're bombarded with headlines about

- Corruption
- Natural disaster
- Violence
- Killings
- War

And if we are not careful to guard our hearts, we will find our joy slowly dissipate until our hearts are filled with the same negativity we have carelessly taken in.

I'll admit, the reaction to my recent article "Should a Christian Criticize the President" was quite negative on Facebook and other sites that featured it. It seems that Christians today are eager to feed on anger, negativity and drama.

In fact, there are those whose lives are so filled with drama,

that they will create drama where there is none.

But anger, negativity, and drama cannot coexist with joy.

If we wish to keep our joy, we make a decision to follow the proper steps that create an environment of joy in our lives that not only causes joy to remain in our hearts, but grow and influence those around us.

4 Ways to Keep Your Joy

1. Renew Your Mind

One of the greatest battlefields in every person is over the mind.

In fact, one of the most common strategies of the enemy is to infect your mind with negative, sinful and critical thoughts. Scripture recognizes this when it admonishes us to:

“And above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the evil one” (Eph. 6:16).

The first thought he shoots into our mind isn't sin, but if we fail to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,” that first thought turns into a second thought and we fall for Satan's strategy.

Renewing our minds puts a bolt on the door to this entry-gate through which the enemy seeks to come in and steal our joy.

You discipline your thoughts by countering every negative and sinful thought with Scripture. Biblical meditation is one of the best ways we renew our minds.

2. Control Your Tongue

If the enemy sees an open door to your mind, he will begin to take over your tongue.

We see this truth in Scripture when Jesus said, *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bears what is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bears what is evil. For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks”* (Luke 6:45).

Proverbs say that the power of life and death are in the tongue. This means our tongues have the power to speak life or death not only to those around us, but to our own hearts and spirits as well.

James says this:

“The tongue is a fire, a world of evil. The tongue is among the parts of the body, defiling the whole body, and setting the course of nature on fire, and it is set on fire by hell. ... But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:6, 8).

And just a cursory glance at the book of Proverbs reveals a lot more about the tongue and the damage it can do.

When we learn to control our tongue, we will begin to create an atmosphere in our heart for joy to grow and bear fruit.

And may I offer a bit of advice?

As we scroll through Facebook and see something we don't like or agree with, let's purpose in our hearts to move on. If we don't have something positive, encouraging or uplifting to say, let's just scroll on or walk away.

Don't feed the drama beast!

3. Submit Your Will

Not long ago I saw something in scripture that took my breath away. It was this: *“stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry”* (1 Sam. 15:23, emphasis added).

Stubbornness is often viewed as a positive character trait, and yet Scripture calls it iniquity (*in biblical terms, sin that is premeditated, ongoing, and increasing in nature*) and idolatry.

Stubbornness is refusal to submit our will to God and to the authorities whom He has placed over us.

I am deeply disturbed by the fact that recent generations have so forgotten the biblical principle of respect and honor for authority that today we are seeing a rebellious overthrow of authority on all levels

- Parental authority
- Police authority
- Church authority
- Governmental authority

And it all stems from this one area that will either cause joy to grow in our lives, or kill it: **our will**.

When we learn to submit our will to God and make His Word the final authority in our lives...

When we cease to rationalize why certain passages don't apply to today or what "God really meant when He said." But when we truly live like we believe that every Word of the Bible is God-breathed and meant to have the last word in every area of our lives, we will create an environment for joy to thrive in our lives!

4. Direct Your Emotions

I know, many people will tell you that you can't control what you feel.

You know what?

They're wrong. You *can* and you *must* learn to direct your emotions in healthy ways; because if you don't, they will

control you. And being controlled by our emotions is not only unhealthy; it is dangerous.

Our emotions are unstable, especially for women, because so often our emotions are influenced by our hormonal fluctuations. They are also influenced by our health or vitamin and mineral levels.

But when we follow the first three steps to maintaining joy, we find it almost natural to begin directing our emotions.

One of the phrases every Christian should eliminate from his vocabulary is "You made me feel [insert emotion]."

No one can make us feel anything. We choose to feel certain ways. Perhaps that person tempted you to allow your emotions to spin out of control, but it is your choice to allow them free reign or to bring them into submission.

Let us knock out this victimization mentality and choose today to stop blaming our lack of discipline on others, giving them the open door to steal our joy in this way!

But there is another extreme to this.

I have been in some Christian circles where emotions were almost viewed as evil. But God created our emotions. Even Jesus expressed emotion: sorrow, joy and even anger.

And we experience Him and life of the Holy Spirit in our lives through our emotions.

It is very dangerous for a believer to shut down all emotion, because among a host of other dangers, it shuts down the ability for the Holy Spirit to work and move in our lives. We cease to experience Him in the way we were meant to.

Directing our emotions is taking this gift God has given us and channeling it in a healthy direction so that the Holy Spirit can function in us and through us to influence those

around us for His glory!

If we want to keep our joy, and if we want it to grow in our hearts and spread to all those around us, we need to begin doing these four things today.

Lock the entryways that the enemy uses to steal our joy, and then begin creating an environment in which joy will grow and thrive in our lives! {eoa}

Rosilind Jukic, a Pacific Northwest native, is a missionary living in Croatia and married to her Bosnian hero. Together they live with their two active boys where she enjoys fruity candles, good coffee and a hot cup of herbal tea on a blustery fall evening. Her passion for writing led her to author her best-selling book *The Missional Handbook*. At *A Little R & R* she encourages women to find contentment in what God created them to be. You can also find her at *Missional Call* where she shares her passion for local and global missions. She can also be found at on a regular basis. You can follow her on Facebook, Pinterest and Google +.

Satan's Vicious Attack on Women in This Age

"Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give [her] will never thirst. Indeed, the water that I shall give [her] will become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life' (John 4:13-14).

Most American women are decent. Caring. Hardworking. In many ways, we are the backbone of our nation. I am quite certain we

are the backbone of the Christian church. Yet I'm alarmed. We are under attack. And we seem to be unaware of it.

Could it be that our careers, jobs, families, material possessions, education, technology, travel, entertainment and whatever else we could name, have kept us so busy that we are not paying attention? Could it be also that none of the things we're involved in have filled the emptiness inside? Are we getting entangled in more and more causes—political and social, local and national—because we are looking for ... what? For purpose? Meaning? Fulfillment? Satisfaction? Happiness? Whatever it is seems to be elusive, so we try harder. Yell louder. Demonstrate more.

The Bible warns that in the days before the return of Jesus Christ to Earth there will be a unique attack on women. We will be offered a false path that leads, not to genuine liberation, but to destruction (See 2 Tim. 3:1-9. Moses was the true liberator. When Jannes and Jambres opposed him, they were opposing true liberation.) Jesus repeatedly warned, "Watch out that no one deceives you." (Matt. 24:4).

The following article reveals some of the dangerous deception being perpetrated on women today, and it is deeply disturbing to me. I wonder if many of the women described, who are marching in the streets, are looking for an identity or a cause that's greater than themselves. They may be doing so because they want their lives to make a difference, which is an understandable desire.

But could it be they are not looking for something, but for someone? Someone who will love them, understand them, help them, guard and guide them. Someone who will replace their fears with peace, satisfy their hungry souls, fill their empty hearts and give their lives eternal significance. Could it be, like the Samaritan woman in John 4, they are looking for Jesus, yet don't know it? I wonder.

Just in case they are, I am committed to giving Jesus in any and every way that I can. Please pray for me. And join with me in just giving them Jesus.

But watch out! As for you and me, dear Christian sisters, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion has light with darkness? ... Therefore, ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you’” (2 Cor. 6:14, 17).

The enemy is trying to harness the pain, anger, emptiness and restlessness in the hearts of women in order to use it for his own evil purposes. Don’t be deceived! {eo}

Anne Graham Lotz, second child of Billy and Ruth Graham, is the founder of AnGeL Ministries and chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force. She has authored 15 books, including her latest, *The Daniel Prayer*.

God Is Calling Us to This Important Task in Our Year of Breakthrough

2017 has been declared as the Year of Breakthrough by at least three Christian prophets and probably more. Most people I know will say a hearty amen to the word breakthrough, but what does it really mean?

What are we asking when we ask God for a breakthrough?

Breakthrough Happens as We Are Going

It's interesting that breakthrough is a noun, not a verb. Most of us see the word as a verb. Breakthrough is an event that happens when we are doing something. It happens when we are active, not passive.

Online dictionaries define breakthrough in several ways: "a sudden, dramatic and important discovery or development"; "an instance of achieving success in a particular sphere or activity"; "a discovery or achievement that comes after a lot of hard work; a time when you begin to be successful at something."

Doesn't Happen in A Void

There is something very distinct about a breakthrough. It doesn't happen in a void. We have to be doing something first for a breakthrough to happen. We have to be working on something, and all of a sudden, a discovery or development occurs that makes all the difference. Notice, though it comes "after a lot of hard work."

Breakthrough is not where we are sitting around asking God to do something for us. It comes when we ask God how or if we should do something and then follow what He tells us.

David's Breakthrough

In 1 Chronicles, David and his army are up against the Philistines. He asks God, "If I go out and fight them will you give me the victory?"

"And the Lord replied, 'Yes, I will.'"

"So he attacked them at Baal-perazim and wiped them out. He exulted, "God has used me to sweep away my enemies like water bursting through a dam!" That is why the place has been known

as Baal-perazim ever since, meaning, 'The Place of Breaking Through'" (see 1 Chron. 14:10-11).

David didn't ask God to do the job for Him. He said plainly that He was but an instrument used for the breakthrough to happen. He had to believe that if God said He would give him the victory, then He would do it. However, David had to have the faith to engage in the battle.

How to Get a Breakthrough

This is where some of us fall short. We are prone to sit and complain that nothing is happening in our circumstances. We cry out to God that we need a breakthrough in our finances, in our health, in our jobs, in our relationships.

Jesus has already told us, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that the Father may give you whatever you ask Him in My name" (John 15:16).

So, if you ask for a breakthrough, why will the Father give it to you? So you can go and produce lasting fruit. Friends, we are the verb in breakthrough. God is the noun. We act on His behalf and at His direction. When we act according to what He tells us to do, He will make sure the event called breakthrough happens.

Sudden Breakthroughs

In this year, God is going to set up situations where as we are paying down our debts and spending less, eating right and moving more, being diligent to search for jobs and improve our skills, loving and forgiving each other each other all of a sudden breakthrough will come. We just have to be doing what He has already told us to do.

Our jobs are to walk out our journeys, to ask God if we should do this or that and then, when He tells us the direction, we

are to do it with faith and action. God will work supernaturally, but He needs dedicated natural vessels to use to work through.

Ask for Breakthrough

Don't just wait for breakthrough. Get to work. Do what you know to do, what God has shown you to do. Breakthrough will happen in the midst of what you are doing. Ask for it specifically. Then, watch for it! {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker is a wife, mother, business owner, life group leader, speaker and author of Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God's Favor and Sweet Grace Study Guide: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Overcome Sugar Addiction and Sweet Freedom. Get a free chapter of her memoir on her blog at [Teresa Shields](#) . Connect with her there or on her Facebook page or Twitter.

Why a Surprising Number of Christians Cling to This Destructive Addiction

Is anger eating you alive? I talk to many people who are angry. Most of the folks I deal with think they have found a good way to deal with their anger. They just eat it away. It really doesn't taste very good though.

I'm Angry Because

They are angry because something happened in their past. It made them angry, but as a child they couldn't do anything about it. It could have been being physically, sexually,

emotionally or verbally abused by an adult. Maybe it was a parent leaving, whether by death or divorce.

It might have been something seemingly less traumatic like being ridiculed by their peers. Maybe it was not getting their way at some point in time. Whatever it was, they couldn't process it as a child, and it has stayed stuck in them, driving them into an emotional angst.

It Hurts

As a child, they really couldn't do anything about the pain. It made them angry that it happened, but the pain was still there. Pain must have an outlet. If left unattended, pain grows and leaves open wounds that fester and ooze. Wounds open the door for finding a way to placate the pain.

This eventually morphs into a habit, which becomes an addiction. The evil one is the king of addiction. It's his favorite tool to lead us to an early grave or to ineffectiveness in the Kingdom of God.

Habits Become Addictions

What is addiction? The dictionary says it is the fact or condition of being dependent on a particular substance, thing or activity. It is a habit. When that habit becomes a problem, we call it an addiction.

Gaining up to a 430-pound weight was a problem for me. It was leading me right to an early grave. I finally realized I was a sugar addict when I asked my mentor, who had just told his story about laying down alcohol, if there was such a thing as sugar addiction. At that point, I hadn't even heard the term. These days it's all over the news.

He said, "You can be addicted to anything that controls you." I knew foods with high sugar and carbohydrate content controlled me because I couldn't say no to them.

Eating those foods had become a habit I felt I couldn't break. They were my go-to source to assuage any anger I felt. To me, anger was bad, ungodly and unrighteous. So any anger I felt, I stuffed with food.

When Anger Is Good

I had to understand that anger does have its place when being used to right a wrong. Jesus taught us that when he drove the money changers from the temple in John 2:14-17. They were taking advantage by overcharging for sacrifices. Those who traveled long distances couldn't bring their sacrifices with them, so they paid dearly for them when they got to Jerusalem.

Jesus saw the situation at the temple like a three-ring circus. He righted the wrong by publicly throwing the thieves out of the temple.

Many people have anger that could be characterized as righteous. No one should abuse a child. How do we deal with that, though, when we become adults? The person who abused us, ridiculed us or left us is likely gone. We can't bring them to justice.

Forgive

Jesus gave us a great tool to use to help with anger. It's called forgiveness. He first outlined how to use it in what we refer to is the Lord's prayer. "Forgive us our sins as we have forgiven those who sin against us." (Matt. 6:12, NLT). The Amplified Bible translates the last phrase as "letting go of both the wrong and the resentment."

To do that simply state out loud to God, "I choose to forgive (the person who wronged me) for (whatever they did). I separate the sin from the sinner and nail it to the cross where I leave it in Your hands, God. And on the day of judgment I will not hold that wrong against the person. I release it to You."

Releasing the wrong to Jesus allows you to finally release the anger against that person and begin to live your life. You may have to do this more than once. As a coach once told me, "Forgiveness is a process. You do it until it is done."

When I find the anger rising up again, I simply hand the wrong and the resentment to Jesus once again. Some resentments I've had to hand over and over again until I finally let go. It's worth the effort, though, to be free of that baggage. We weren't designed to carry that kind of weight.

Boundaries

If the person is still in your life, you will need to establish good boundaries. If they cross them, then righting that wrong means they cannot have access to you until they keep your boundaries.

Getting out of the addictive cycle is impossible if you do not keep those boundaries. God can change negative people into positive ones. However, be in tune with the Spirit of God if they cross the boundaries again. Calmly and firmly tell them again what you request. If they continue to cross the boundary you must disengage with them until they are willing to keep those boundaries. Make sure they are God-inspired boundaries before setting them.

Anger Fuels Habits

Anger fuels habits. Habits become addictions. Addictions, when allowed full reign, will eventually lead us to a death, whether it is physical, emotional or spiritual. Eating anger leads us nowhere but to an early grave.

God wants us to live. That's the real reason for forgiveness. The evil one's mission is to kill, steal and destroy your life. God wants you to enjoy life and have it in abundance, to the full until it overflows (see John 10:10).

Freely and Lightly

He wants you to live freely and lightly without the encumbrances of this world and all its cares and woes.

He says if you are tired, worn out, burned out to come to Him. “Get away with Me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (Matt. 11:28b-30 MSG).

We can’t do that when we are constantly eating anger. It just won’t feed us the way God can. {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker *is a wife, mother, business owner, life group leader, speaker and author of Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds and Stopped Trying to Earn God’s Favor and Sweet Grace Study Guide: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Overcome Sugar Addiction and Sweet Freedom. Get a free chapter of her memoir on her blog at [Teresa Shields](#) . Connect with her there or on her Facebook page or Twitter.*