

# 3 Treacherous Traits That Led to Balaam's Destruction

I've heard the faulty theology countless times and it disturbs me.

"If God didn't want me to have this, He would take away my desire for it."

Nowhere in the Word do we see our desire for something as an indicator of God's will. I suppose people arrive at this conclusion because of their own mistaken application of the verse, "Delight yourselves also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

We see the latter part of that verse and completely ignore the most important part, which is, "Delight yourselves also in the Lord".

We can only apply this verse to our lives when our desires are no longer based on our own worldly passions but on all that God has for us, so that His desires for us literally become our desires.

But what happens so often is that we become so consumed by our worldly passions, knowing full-well that they do not line up with God's will for our lives, that we find a way to manipulate God into giving us what we want anyway.

You may say, "But God wouldn't do that! He won't give me anything that's not in my best interest."

That is also untrue.

We have already seen how in Numbers 11 God gave the Israelites what they wanted, even though it wasn't His will or in their best interest. But they pushed God until He gave them what they wanted.

But we see again in Numbers 22-25 this same scenario repeated, but this time in a much more conniving and manipulative manner.

Balak, the king of Moab, saw how God was giving the Israelites favor over their enemies and was afraid that they would defeat him, too, so he went to a pagan prophet named Balaam to hire him to prophesy a curse on Israel.

I imagine Balaam must have had quite the reputation because Balak was prepared to pay a nice sum for this curse.

We see something very interesting in this story: Although Balaam was a pagan prophet, God still spoke to him. Throughout the story, we see that he uses sorcery to connect with God, and God actually speaks to him on a number of occasions, but what is most important is that the first very thing God says to Balaam is, ***“You shall not go with them ... ”***

This is where the story should end.

Balaam should have allowed that command to become his conviction. But instead he did what so many of us do.

**1. He was petulant.** *“So Balaam rose up in the morning and said to the princes of Balak, ‘Go to your land, for the LORD refuses to give me permission to go with you.’”*

Instead of making God’s command his conviction, he chose to whine about God’s refusal to let him go, saying, “God won’t let me go.”

Make no mistake about it, Balaam **wanted** to curse Israel because Israel would eventually defeat his people and he was greedy and wanted the money. But he had just enough of the fear of God in him to keep him from pronouncing a curse on a people whom God had blessed ... just not enough to keep him from manipulating God.

**2. He was persistent.** After the princes of Moab and

Midian, with whom Balak had formed an alliance, returned to Balak unsuccessful in their mission, Balak sent another delegation to Balaam. At first Balaam warns them that no amount of money will change *his* mind, but maybe it will change *God's* mind because he once again inquires of God *just in case God decides to let him go anyway.*

This is a typical adolescent trick.

Dad said no the first time, but maybe if I ask again I'll get a different answer.

And Balaam *did* get a different answer. But lest we think that God sometimes changes His mind, we need to take the whole story in context. This wasn't God changing His mind; this was God giving Balaam what he wanted ... at a price.

**3. He was conniving.** Balaam goes with the second delegation of princes and it's on that journey that we find the familiar story of his donkey actually speaking to him.

God sent an angel to prevent the journey He never wanted in the first place, because while Balaam had said with his mouth that he wouldn't curse Israel, he apparently hadn't ruled out that possibility in his heart, because that's exactly what he intended to do. That is, until his donkey refused to budge, an angel was revealed to him in the flesh and his donkey started talking like a human.

And just when you think that such an event would have struck a terrible fear of God in his heart, let's look further.

Balaam arrives at Balak's place and Balak takes him to a place where he can see Israel's camp from afar and asks him to curse Israel.

Now, God had already told him no twice. But apparently to Balaam *no* really only means *maybe*, because he has to check again to see if maybe God has changed His mind.

And this happens no less than three times, and all three times Balaam speaks God's words, and in the end actually prophesies Christ's birth.

And just in case you think that the story of Balaam ends with this amazing prophecy by a pagan prophet who uses sorcery to connect with God, and who repeated his failed attempts to get God's permission to curse Israel so he could get the money he wanted, you're wrong.

No, Balaam gets what he wants in the end.

In Numbers 25 we see that some of the men of Israel took Moabite wives—yes, *the same Moab of whom Balak is king and who wanted to curse Israel*—and began mingling the worship of Ba'al with the worship of God.

This angered God and he sent a plague that killed 24,000 people.

But when we turn over a few pages to Numbers 31, we see something very interesting.

Israel goes to war against Midian, with whom King Balak has an alliance, and conquers Midian, but they do not destroy all the women. The army comes back to camp and instead of cheering their victory, Moses demands, "Look, these *women* caused the children of Israel, ***through the counsel of Balaam***, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD."

In the end, Balaam got his money.

How?

He convinced the women of Moab to infiltrate the camp and do to Israel what he himself couldn't do.

His manipulation got him what he wanted.

But the wages of his sin was death: *“They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed—Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. **Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword.**”*

“Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” May our hearts delight in Him, and in nothing else: not money, not new cars, not new furniture, not a nice job, a nice house, a nice vacation ... not in anything other than Him.

Because what we delight in becomes our god.

And when our hearts are consumed with another god, when our passion for those things that God has not destined for us moves us to push God’s hand and manipulate Him until He gives us what we want, the end is always destruction!

**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, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

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**Unlock            Revelations            From**

# Heaven With This Underused Spiritual Gift

Out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water.

An abundance of power and grace shall flow from your mouth as you pray in the Spirit.

Mysteries will be revealed, revelation knowledge shall stream forth from your mouth as you surrender your tongue to My Spirit.

You have missed in many areas because you have failed to surrender your voice to My Spirit, but that can all change now.

Humble yourself before Me, bow your knee, and you will begin to see great and mighty wonders take place before you if you will pray in the Spirit.

Starting with the first syllable of the first word in the Spirit, My creative, explosive power is released into the atmosphere and change takes place.

The more you discipline yourself to pray in the Spirit, the more change you will begin to see.

Many of My people have resisted My Spirit in this area. And many have suffered needlessly because they would not align themselves with the power of the Spirit.

But a mighty rushing wind is starting to blow from the four corners of the Earth as My intercessors are calling forth a revival of true repentance.

A spiritual storm of immeasurable proportions gathers in strength; light and darkness clash, good and evil do not mix, but light always invades the darkness.

And darkness you will see, as many will flee from Me, and follow after the lusts of the flesh, and all forms of ungodliness.

But as My people, who are called by My name, humble themselves and pray, seek My face, repent of their wickedness, I hear from heaven, and I heal their land.

A new heaven and a new Earth is being called down, and here there is no darkness, no sorrow, no pain and no more tears. It is a land without fear, because the enemy is not allowed here.

Prepare yourselves in the Spirit, for My return is drawing ever so near.

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

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## **Free Your Mind From This Destructive Lie About 'God's Will'**

Acts of God, what are they? We are accustomed to hear the local newscaster declare a natural disaster as an act of God. But is it really? Is that an accurate forecast?

When society no longer believes that Satan exists or that hell is an actual place, then they blame the Creator for these destructive events. When they say that there are many roads that lead to salvation, then there is confusion about who God is. And therefore, humankind makes their own gods and anyone's description of the nature and character of their god is

confused and accepted as the one, true God.

And sad to say, there are many Christians who do not study the Bible for themselves and do not know who God is or what His acts really are. So they blame the tragedy in life as God's will and turn bitter toward Him.

Is God responsible for tragedies? His Word tells us in John 10:10, *"The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* The thief is Satan, and he comes to steal, to kill and to destroy us. He causes tragedies to destroy us and our loved ones. I use John 10:10 to judge any situation that is before me. If the circumstance brings any form of destruction, then I know Satan is responsible. This verse helps to keep life simple, and truth also sets us free (John 8:32).

Jesus warns us in John 16:33, *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* He is forewarning us that in this fallen world we will pass through difficulties, but to be of good cheer. He's not making light of the situation, but revealing to us the safe place, in Him we will have peace.

In Luke 5:12-16, we read about a man that was full of a plague called leprosy. This plague was deadly and incurable. And by the powers of faith, love and compassion, He cleansed the man and made Him whole again.

Today, there are many plagues in this World, especially as we are nearing closer to the return of Jesus. The enemy is fighting against humankind, lurking in every corner to bring destruction, but Jesus on the other hand, wills to make us whole by delivering us from plagues. Plagues are part of the curse, and Jesus delivered us from the effects of all forms of the curse, by transforming into the curse for us. Galatians

3:13 reads, *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us—as it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.”*

In Luke 8:43-48, we read about a woman who had a problem that no one knew how to cure. She was bleeding for 12 years and slowly dying. But with Him all things are possible, including cures for the human body when the medical field does not know what to do.

We discover why Jesus came to this Earth in 1 John 3:8, *“Whoever practices sin is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was revealed, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”* By His blood, Jesus dissolved the power of Satan and all of his evil ways over us.

Matthew 8:23-27 recalls the amazing testimony of how Jesus calmed the wind and the waves. And He wills to do the same for us and through us, whether the storms are spiritual, emotional or physical. He gives to us His authority over Satan and all his wicked works in Luke 10:19, which says, *“Look, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. And nothing shall by any means hurt you.”*

A few acts of God we can see in these verses are:

1. He is a life-giver and wills to give life to us in abundance.
2. He is a peace-giver even during difficult times.
3. He provides a safe place in Him during tribulations.
4. He wills to cleanse us from modern-day plagues.
5. He is able to cure the incurable.
6. He dissolves the power of Satan over us by the power of His blood.
7. He shares His authority with us over Satan and all of his wicked works.

Though the world and even some of God's people may falsely accuse God of being responsible for tragedies, sickness, disease, plagues and deadly weather, and call these tribulations "acts of God," we who choose to seek the truth of God's Word can see these accusations are false, and that in reality, He is the giver of life and gives life to us in abundance. {eoa}

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

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## **A Spirit-Led Life Is Marked by This Simple Question**

Picture a beautiful Sunday morning in Montana. I was in pajamas, steaming coffee in hand, sitting with knees tucked close to me on the front step.

Hear the birds. Smell the fresh air.

And I was praying long and slow. No hurry to do chores. Just enjoying the Lord and talking to him about random everything, because that's how a girl's brain works. (And can we just stop to appreciate that God can track with a woman's brain? I know. Incredible.)

Most on my mind was writing. Four years into my writing and with two books published this spring, I was taking time to think about my future writing life. Setting down my coffee, I opened up both of my hands in front of me.

"What next, Lord?" I asked.

It wasn't a desperate question. Hands open, I pictured myself as a servant.

"What would you like to do next with my writing?" I asked again. The Lord is kind and good, and **I began an open-hearted waiting for what He has next for me.**

Thinking back, I remembered the joy I had when I wrote Bible study guides that went with our sermon series at church. There hasn't been time to help with those in the last few years.

"Lord, I really miss writing those Bible studies," I told him. It was just a statement.

Finishing my prayer time and the dregs of my coffee, I stood up and stretched. My coffee cup went in the sink, and I clicked open my computer to check email for the day.

Can you believe that the first email I saw was from the man at church who is in charge of the Bible study guides that go with the sermons? "Looking for help on the study guide for the fall," said the email. I hadn't been able to help with these for so long, that I was surprised to even hear from him.

And would you believe that the study was going to be over the book of Mark, which I had just finished studying personally during the spring?

For the rest of the morning, I kept breaking out in a smile. God had heard my prayer and had given me my next writing assignment.

**So personal. God is so personal with us.**

Yesterday I put the finishing touches on the Bible study of Mark. Working on this has been the sweetest time. I found myself in tears at the table on multiple occasions, seeing even more deeply who Jesus is and how much He loves us.

Now I want you to think about what Jesus tells His disciples,

about a slave who comes in from working:

*Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? I think not. So you also, when you have done everything commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done our duty' (Luke 17:9-10, MEV).*

We are slaves in the best of kingdoms, and it can ease our anxiety and longings about the future, if we maintain a mindset of doing God's bidding instead of laboring frantically to achieve our own dreams and force our own futures.

**"What next, Lord?" can be the question that opens your life to the intimate plan God has for your coming days.** If you ask the question, He will answer.

And the answer will be good.

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## **War Against Your Sickness With This Daring Prayer Strategy**

Do we need to grovel on the floor before God when we have a need? Or should we be bold and confident in His willingness to meet our need?

Let me ask you some more questions. Do circumstances dictate our faith? Should we allow negative medical reports to judge God unfaithful to keep His promises? When we don't receive our healing instantly, do we waver in our beliefs? When we allow circumstances and negative reports to control us then we will not be bold, but full of doubt.

You may think to yourself, "Well that's easy for you to say because you don't walk in my shoes." And you are right to think that, I don't, but Jesus has. Hebrews 4:15 encourages us with these words, *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who was in every sense tempted like we are, yet without sin."*

Strong's definition of this word "infirmities" is from the Greek word, *asthénéia* from G772; feebleness (of mind or body); by implication, malady; morally, frailty:—disease, infirmity, sickness, weakness.

Jesus walked this earth for 33 years. He understands the frailty of the human body. He can sympathize with us, that's why verse 16 is so powerful for us when it says, *"Let us then come with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* He understands, and He calls us to come boldly, not timidly, not with fear, but with all boldness in His redemptive work to save us from the present situation. And with this bold faith we are to come before His throne of grace.

This word "grace" is the Greek word, *charis*, and it means favor. Take the time to ponder this, and the next time you have a need, come before His throne of favor with bold faith so that you can obtain His mercy. The Greek word for mercy here is *éleos*, G1656, and it means active compassion. I have taught you in the past that compassion means love in action. Bold faith activates Christ's love, and needs are met, and people are delivered and healed and receive eternal life. You can read throughout the Gospels and see for yourself how bold faith always activated this active compassion and people were healed in spirit, soul and physical body.

He does not want us groveling on the floor before Him with fear. That's not demonstrating bold faith, but doubt. He wills for us to come before Him with all confidence and believe that He loves and cares for us as well as desires and is able to

meet our needs. Amen! {eoa}

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## **This Dangerous Attitude Could Lead to Your Downfall**

A Christian reality TV star turned pro-family activist admits to adultery.

A prominent megachurch pastor is fired due to long-term self-exalting and manipulative behavior.

A middle school teacher is accused of molesting a child she is hired to protect.

The rest of us? We look on. We shake our heads in disgust, spit out our enraged social media rants. And whether out loud or in our hearts, we presume these three little words:

“I would never.”

And in that moment, we are sunk because we already have.

## **Like a Tower Built in a Pit**

Why? Why is it so easy for me to look out from the ivory tower of my (self-perceived) impeccable morality and see so clearly the gaping pits into which Activist A, Pastor B and Teacher C have stumbled? I am prone to say, “How could they be so careless, so stupid? Wasn’t it obvious that these decisions were wrong? How could they let themselves get here in the

first place?" I mean, is it really *that* hard?

My tower is pretty high. So high, in fact, that I'm oblivious to my immediate surroundings. My whitewashed fortress, this strong sense of righteousness that gets me through the day? **It's built in a pit of my own, and I'm completely blind to it.**

Scripture tells us that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). When I attempt to identify my own areas of vulnerability, my pits, I'm pretty shortsighted because I gravitate toward the areas in which I clearly **see** my weakness:

- I'm really impatient.
- I'm so detail-oriented, I fail to see the big picture.
- I can be ill-tempered and short with my family.

My weaknesses stink, and I recognize them, but rarely do I look to the area where, as a believer, I am most likely to stumble. I fail to see the pit of my strength.

## A Double Weakness

A few weeks ago, I heard a message that drove this idea home to me like never before. Perhaps you've heard this Chinese proverb the pastor quoted: "An unguarded strength is a double weakness." He then went on to present a lineup of biblical examples—*people whose perceived area of strength was exactly the area in which they fell*. Think about it! Here are some of the examples given:

- Abraham's great strength was **obedience**. Where did he fall? **Obedience** (Gen. 12:13, 16:2).
- Noah's great attribute was **discipline**. Where did he fall? **Discipline** (Gen. 9:21).
- Isaac's great asset was **truth-telling**. Where did he fall? **Truth-telling** (Gen. 26:7).
- Moses' great strength was **meekness**. Where did he fall?

**Meekness** (Num. 20:10-12).

- David's great character trait was **integrity**. Where did he fall? **Integrity** (2 Sam. 11:3-27).
- Elijah's great attribute was **faith**. Where did he fall? **Faith** (1 Kings 19:3-13).
- Uzziah's great strength was **adherence to God's Word**. Where did he fall? **Adherence to God's Word** (2 Chr. 26:16-21).
- Peter's great asset was **courage**. Where did he fall? Yup. **Courage** (Luke 22:34-62).

The case from Scripture is pretty clear. You can re-read the first paragraph of this post or cruise through your newsfeed for examples from modern culture. How about a historical example? What is the defining characteristic of the United States? Freedom. What do terrorist groups hate so much that they long to bring us to our knees? Freedom. Put it all together, and the old Chinese adage rings true: "An unguarded strength is a double weakness."

## Preparing for Pitfalls

If these things are true, then we have to ask—as women, as wives, as mothers, as teachers, as mentors—is it ever wise to say, "I would never ... "?

Chances are good that the majority of people in those early examples of falling to temptation would have put themselves in the "Never" category. Some actually did!

When I read my Bible, just one page before Peter's first, second and third denial of Christ, he's confidently proclaiming before Christ Himself, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death" (Luke 22:33).

And within a day, he's afraid to speak the name of Jesus before a little girl (v. 56)? If Peter, "the rock," is

vulnerable to falling on the sword of his strength, then guess what? I am too. And so are you.

So instead of looking for our weaknesses and then searching for the best self-help Christian book or blog post to overcome them, a different tactic might be needed in the battle against sin and self. For instance, as women, what are some of our more natural strengths?

- The propensity to be relational.
- The ability to multitask.
- The innate desire to nurture.
- Mama-bear love for our children.
- The desire to be attractive to our husbands or potential husbands.

Yet when perusing that list, it doesn't take long to see how any one of those strengths can become the pit of our destruction:

- When our ability to be "relational" invites intimacy where it doesn't belong.
- When we multitask ourselves out of giving undivided attention to our spouse or family members.
- When our desire to nurture becomes a people-pleasing monster.
- When Mama-bear raises sons who are incapable of taking care of themselves.
- When our desire to be outwardly attractive becomes a bondage to beauty in the form of obsession, eating disorders and discontent.

These are characteristics that are God-given and wonderful, but we are also playing with fire. As quickly as we become enveloped in its warmth, it can become all-consuming.

On an individual level, admittedly, it can be hard to pinpoint our own greatest asset, so I asked my husband the other night, "What do you see as my biggest area of strength?" After a long

pause (a little too long for my comfort, frankly!), he said, "Probably your ability to communicate or your desire to do what's right." Both good things, correct? But both are areas in which I need to exercise great caution.

I need to acknowledge that my words can slice and dice as aptly as they can build and encourage. I need to make sure that my desire to do what is "right" in my eyes is not done at the expense of my husband's leadership. These are tricky issues and fine lines, but ones which we cannot ignore.

## **Beware of the Undercurrent**

In *My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers summed it up this way:

*We are apt to say, "It is not at all likely that having been through the greatest crisis of my life I would now turn back to the things of the world." Do not try to predict where the temptation will come; it is the least likely thing that is the real danger. It is in the aftermath of a great spiritual event that the least likely things begin to have an effect. They may not be forceful and dominant, but they are there. And if you are not careful to be forewarned, they will trip you.*

*You have remained true to God under great and intense trials—now beware of the undercurrent. Do not be abnormally examining your inner self, looking forward with dread, but stay alert; keep your memory sharp before God. Unguarded strength is actually a double weakness, because that is where the least likely temptations will be effective in sapping strength. The Bible characters stumbled over their strong points, never their weak ones.*

*"Kept by the power of God"—that is the only safety (1 Pet. 1:5).*

Never say never, dear sister in Christ. Beware, but do not be afraid. Be guarded; stay alert.

How about you? What do you think is your greatest strength, and how might that be used to your detriment? What would others say about you? Ask someone today, and make it a matter of prayer going forward. {eoa}

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## **This Step of Obedience Can Unleash Heaven's Blessings on Your Life**

There is multiplied power available to us. It can release us from the heavy burdens we carry. It can unleash blessings from heaven our way. It can cause us to see the world from an entirely different perspective. That power is what happens when we know we are forgiven and therefore must forgive others.

There are many reasons Jesus talks so much about this power, but one of those is that it's entirely up to us to accept and

then appropriate to others. When we forgive others, Jesus forgives us.<sup>1</sup> It is really a simple concept, but it creates a landslide of blessings when we live our lives in a constant state of looking beyond another's fault to who they can become.

## **Jesus**

If there is anyone qualified to teach on forgiveness it's Jesus. His very life's purpose was to bring the power of forgiveness to rescue us. Every one of us has sinned and fallen short of God's ideal plan.<sup>2</sup> Without Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross and His resurrection, we would be bound for an eternity living separated from God.

Forget any preconceived idea of heaven being boring and hell being a party atmosphere. Any time we are without the influence of a merciful God, it will be hell, even if it is on Earth.

We come to God through Jesus. He is the way, the truth and the life.<sup>3</sup> None of us come to God without Jesus. We simply accept His sacrifice, paid with His own blood and suffering, for our imperfections. Then, as if magic, He forgives all our sins: past, present and future. His supreme love for us paid the price for our sins.

This is why He looks so closely at how we treat our fellow human beings.

## **How God Sees People**

There is no them and us. Jesus died for every person. So when we refuse to forgive someone, we are essentially saying we are better than them. Jesus doesn't see it that way. We are all in the same boat. We have all failed God in some way. The least failure is still a failure. There is no magnitude of wrong in God's eyes.

It's hard for us to understand because we are not God. He wants love to rule and reign in our lives. This cannot happen as long as we hold on to grudges or decide we will get our own revenge. Funny thing is, many times the way we decide to get that vengeance is to simply hold on to our anger. This opens the door to emotional and mental illnesses which can also cause any magnitude of diseases and sicknesses in us, not the other person.

## **Unforgiveness**

Harboring unforgiveness is truly "like drinking poison and thinking the other person will die."<sup>4</sup> Many times another person is unaware they have done anything to us. That person lives life unconcerned while we flounder in resentment, anger and bitterness. Even if another has knowingly said or done something to us, they can live unconcerned because in reality, that's probably the way they live life.

When we hold on to an issue, it is not harming the other person. It is only causing us harm. There is a deep, dark hole we fall into when we don't do anything with what has now become our issue. If you are like me, you may not get outwardly angry, scream and holler, or stomp your feet. Instead, you may just let that anger simmer, boil and fester to a stench that affects most everything. Many try to drink, eat, buy or sniff the situation away. This attitude, then, becomes the way they do life.

Depending on how deeply we perceive we have been hurt, we will allow feeling we have been wronged to completely take over and govern our lives.

## **Sin Is Not the Person**

The key to forgiveness is understanding sin is not the person. Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our sins and we have forgiven those who sin against us." We separate the thing that

person did or said to us from that person. Jesus died for our sins.<sup>5</sup> He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.<sup>6</sup>

As the soldiers who nailed Him to the cross gambled for His clothing, He did not condemn them. Instead, He cried out to His heavenly Father, "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing."<sup>7</sup>

Their sins, my sins, your sins were nailed to the cross. He died for our sins so that we can live forgiven when we accept His sacrifice. This is why we must forgive others who have harmed us. He forgave us.

"He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness. 'By His wounds you were healed.'"<sup>8</sup>

## **How to Forgive**

I can be redeemed. You can be redeemed. The person who wronged us can be redeemed. The wrong deeds cannot. Their wrongs, my wrongs, your wrongs must be nailed to the cross of Christ. As we hand them to Christ to do that, we release them from our lives. With the hurt, the anguish, the pain, the wrongs committed against us, which God calls sin, released into Jesus' care, we can then choose to forgive that person.

A simple prayer borrowed from my friend, Joan Hunter, tells us how to do this. "Father I choose to forgive (insert name). What they did to me is sin. Take this sin from them and put it on the cross. And on the day of judgment when I stand before Your Throne, I will hold no accusation against them. Father, I ask you to bless them, in Jesus name."<sup>9</sup>

Who do you have to forgive? Use Joan's simple prayer. I'd love to hear about how the power of forgiveness has changed your

life.

There is much more to forgiveness. In *Sweet Freedom: Losing Weight and Keeping It Off With God's Help* and *Sweet Freedom Study Guide*, Teresa talks about the power of forgiveness to get us through any overwhelming difficulty. She relates this to her weight loss journey, but as other reviewers have mentioned, *Sweet Freedom* is more than a book about weight loss. It's a book about allowing God to set you completely and wonderfully free utilizing the amazing tool of forgiveness. Get yours [HERE](#). Also check under the FREE tab on for two *Sweet Freedom* resources including an audio of one of the chapters and a FREE ebook entitled *Self-Sufficient*. It's the chapter she left out of *Sweet Freedom*.

<sup>1</sup>Matthew 6:14

<sup>2</sup>Romans 3:23

<sup>3</sup>John 14:6

<sup>4</sup>This quote or something similar has been attributed to both Joyce Meyer and Marianne Williamson as well as many others. Hard to know the exact origin. Still a great quote.

<sup>5</sup>1 John 2:2, 1 John 3:5

<sup>6</sup>Isaiah 53:5

<sup>7</sup>Luke 23:34

<sup>8</sup>1 Peter 2:24 NLT

<sup>9</sup> Hunter, Joan. *Healing the Whole Man Handbook: Effective Prayers for the Body, Soul, and Spirit*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2006. Print.

*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.*

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## **One Thing That Might Be Hindering Your Healing**

In a village called Sonjo in Tanzania, where we held a healing conference, there was a teenage girl who had been deaf since birth. As I laid hands on her for healing, everyone gathered around, including the girl's mother. This girl held her head down in shame and was uncooperative. I could literally sense unbelief around me. I ministered over her, but nothing happened, and I knew that it was the unbelief that surrounded her. I spoke with her mother and asked her to come to the meeting the next day. She agreed to come.

When it came time to lay hands on the sick, I came to this teenage girl again. I looked at my friends who were standing next to me, and told the one to keep the mother busy. I took the girl around the corner where no one was watching her. I quickly stuck my fingers in her ears and rebuked the deaf spirit to come out of her in Jesus' name. Immediately, for the first time in her life, this young girl who was full of shame, could hear! Her smile said it all.

When the mother came around the corner, I presented her

daughter to her. The mother stood there in complete amazement at what the Lord had done for her daughter. He not only delivered her from a spirit of deafness, but opened up her ears, and took away her shame.

This experience taught me that there are times when we need to minister to the person in private, without onlookers. We need to create an atmosphere that is full of faith for the person receiving the healing touch. Faith is very powerful, and so is doubt. Faith releases healing whereas doubt steals it. Even Jesus kicked out the gawkers and the unbelievers when He raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (Luke 8:40-56), and so do we.

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

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## **Discern If Your Dream Is From God With These 5 Strategies**

Do you have a dream?

Are you growing discouraged as year after year passes and it lays dormant and unaccomplished? Are you about to give up on it altogether?

In an earlier post *4 Thing You Need to Know About Dreams* I shared in a video about my dream of coming to Croatia.

But that isn't the only dream I've had. Oh, I've had many dreams.

There was one in particular that I never thought would come to

life, and yet it wasn't one I felt I must accomplish.

*There is a quote from Anne of Green Gables that I love:*

*"No wonder [Aunt Josephine] has so little imagination. That's one consolation about being poor—you have to dream all this up."*

Imagine how boring life would be if everything we ever dreamed of having or doing came true? What would be left to dream about?

In 2012, my husband and I went to look at a little yellow country house and a yard big enough for our kids to run around and play in.

I had always wanted such a house, although I never really believed it would be a possibility for me. But the moment I laid eyes on this house, I was in love. That was in June, by the end of September we put the key in the lock, opened the door and began moving our things in.

The process of birthing a dream can be both exhilarating and excruciating. But through it I learned a few things about dreams.

## **5 Things I've Learned About Dreams**

### **1. *When God gives a dream He will make it happen.***

I had no idea my little yellow country house was a dream from God's heart. I thought it was dreamed up by me. But every step of the way the doors have miraculously opened, as if on their own.

Every step of the way we were prepared for the whole thing to fall through. In fact, we thought the idea that we could be homeowners was just too good to be true.

But here we are in our own home, newly renovated, and even

more lovely than it was four years ago when I first laid eyes on it! And what more could we conclude other than God made this happen?

## 2. *Hold your dreams lightly.*

It is easy to clutch our dreams in a death grip, thinking that they are our and that it is up to us to make it happen. Doing this only causes deep dissatisfaction to grow in our hearts. We envision how fulfilled we will be if only our dream would come true, yet we fail to realize that fulfillment and satisfaction do not lie in our dreams, but in our decision to be content in every situation.

This is something I have made great effort to cultivate in my heart. I even blogged about it in a series called 5 Keys to Contentment. I haven't arrived yet, and I still fail in these areas, but I am finding that I am growing in contentment. When we first began inquiring about house—and all through this journey we've been on in buying it—I told my husband, “No matter what happens, I am content. I love living here in our apartment. I have friends here and everything is nearby.”

I held my dream lightly by focusing on the good things we have now. I had a long list of “pros” on both sides, which helped in case the house fell through. I knew I would still be happy. I would just keep on dreaming!

## 3. *You need to know when to fight for your dream and when to let go.*

One thing that stood out to us was that we didn't have to fight for the house. It has been the easiest and most painless process we've ever encountered! There are dreams that seemingly come true on their own. And yet there are those that require us to have courage and stamina in fighting to make them happen.

But we have to be discerning. Sometimes we fight to make dreams come true that were not meant to come true. Sometimes

the dreams we are fighting for are self-serving dreams that we think will elevate us, make us feel better about ourselves, promote us, and stroke our egos. Such dreams are never of God.

It takes great humility to recognize this and let those dreams go. But when we do, we will find great freedom because dreams like this will only hold hostage the ones that God has for us. Learn to fight for God's dreams, while letting go of our own selfish ones so we are free to accomplish the ones God has truly given!

#### 4. ***You may have to let your dream die so it can live***

Does that statement sound confusing to you? Like an oxymoron? It's not. Jesus described a seed that, when planted in the ground, dies so that it can live. Sometimes God plants a dream in our heart. We cultivate it, water it and even pray about it. And then we watch it die. This can be very disillusioning!

Do not lose heart or grow angry. Sometimes God lets a dream die, so that we cease being possessive of it. It's not ***our*** dream, after all. It's God's dream! It's His plan. Sometimes God will let it die so that we pry our fingers off of it and let it go. In doing so, we give God the freedom to let that dream live as it should live. Quite possibly the path we were taking to make that dream come true was a wrong path, or maybe it was wrong timing. Maybe we need to include others in that dream, or a different set of "others."

Has your dream from God died? Don't give up. Keep praying about it. In the meantime, let God help you make it *His* and not yours; and let Him renew that vision in your heart the way He created that dream to be.

#### 5. ***Never stop dreaming***

Never stop dreaming. Ever. Even those dreams that may seem silly and insignificant. Even the ridiculous ones you know will never come true. Dreams fuel passion and drive. Sometimes the ridiculous dreams are what give foundation to the "real"

ones down the road. Never stop dreaming. Never let your imagination die. Never starve creativity. Allow God to use it, hone it and cause it to grow.

**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, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

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## **An 8-Day Journey to Ignite God's Fire in Your Soul**

***For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God ... 2 Timothy 1:6***

Three days before our *God Speaking* initiative came to a close, I spoke with a family friend whose wife died a few weeks after my husband, Danny, moved to our Father's house. Our friend shared how difficult it was for him, after a hard day's work, to go home to an empty house. While I know ... I know ... that grief is a journey we all have to travel for ourselves, I also know that God promises to walk with us. So I told him about *God Speaking*, suggested that he start with Day One, then forwarded the link to his phone. Two days later he texted to say what a difference listening to God's Word had made in his

evenings and that he had shared *God Speaking* with his grown children so that they could all be “on the same page.”

The day before the conclusion of *God Speaking*, I visited a beloved friend who is suffering from a staph-infected hip replacement. She and her husband are facing multiple doctors' appointments and life-altering decisions. So I shared *God Speaking* with them. Although my friend never complains, I encouraged her that instead of just lying on a bed of pain, how much better it would be to lie there and listen to God speak! She and her husband both agreed and gave me their cell phone. I pulled up the website so that they could easily access it for themselves and start listening with Day One. They were eager to begin.

Many of you also have commented how blessed you were to know that you were part of a movement of tens of thousands of people all over the world who were listening each day to what God had to say. So putting your feedback together with my two experiences related above, God has seemed to whisper to my heart: What if you and I began looking for ways to fan the flame? To pass on *God Speaking* to others who may have missed it for one reason or another? Why couldn't we gather our own groups so that we can listen together with our family—immediate and extended, our Sunday school class, our Bible study, our leadership circle, our entire church, our board of deacons and elders, our ministry team, the missionaries our church supports, our office staff? The possibilities seem exciting and endless!

As the circles we gather get broader and more numerous, could it be that God's Word will take off in a fresh outpouring of God's Spirit? The August dates have been removed from the website, so it will simply be an 8-day journey of listening to God's Word. Who knows? Since it only takes a spark to get a fire going, maybe—just maybe—we will ignite the fire of revival. Let's find out. Join me in fanning the flame!

**Anne Graham Lotz**, founder of AnGeL ministries, has proclaimed God's Word worldwide for more than 30 years. Her newest book, *Wounded by God's People*, is available at