

Is This Dream From God?

Nearly 10 years ago, after having been saved and Spirit-filled for 14 years, I experienced a personal revival. Many truths in God's Word became revelation to me, and I learned to live more according to the Spirit than according to the flesh. During this season, I came to understand that God had created me for a unique destiny.

I was SO excited! For the first time in my life, I had purpose—a true sense of calling. As I continued to press into God, He began to speak to me through dreams, visions and prophetic words about the things He would have me do.

He even began to move me in the direction I would need to go to fulfill some of the words. Though they had nothing to do with ruling and reigning, I felt as Joseph must have after he had received supernatural input about his future.

What I didn't know was that, like Joseph, I too was headed for a pit. It was a figurative rather than a literal one—but it was nevertheless a place of betrayal and rejection that caused me much disillusionment and pain.

I couldn't make sense of my experience or find a resolution for it. Slowly but surely the dreams began to fade, and the desire I had to become all God wanted me to be fizzled out.

By His grace, I didn't completely give up at this point; I kept running to Him. And when I pressed in to study His Word, I saw something. I wasn't the only one who had experienced the death of a vision on the way to fulfillment! Many characters in the Bible went through a similar time in their journeys.

Moses was appointed by God to be a leader of His people—to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. He didn't ask for the job; in fact, he resisted it. But once God convinced him of his call, he took the necessary steps to begin walking in it.

What happened? Every time he appealed to Pharaoh to “let God’s people go,” Pharaoh said, “No.” It’s a little difficult to lead a group of people if you can’t get them moving in the right direction! Moses must have wondered whether he had really heard God about the appointment in the first place.

Joseph dreamed that he would rule over his own family; then he was sold by his brothers as a slave. In any society, a slave is a far cry from a ruler! And his chances of fulfilling his destiny got even slimmer when he was thrown in prison for something he didn’t do.

David was anointed as a young boy to be king over the Israelites, but he spent the next 15 years trying to stay alive long enough to make it to the throne. He probably thought Saul, the reigning king, would be the one to train him up and prepare him for the job; instead, Saul sought to kill him.

David must have felt the prophet Samuel had made a big mistake in pouring the anointing oil over his head. The way things were going, he was more likely to become mincemeat at the end of a sword than the next king!

Paul was called as an apostle to the Gentiles. He traveled all over Asia preaching the gospel—until he was apprehended and put in jail. Suddenly, his ministry travels came to a screeching halt. How was he supposed to reach the people God had sent him to?

Perhaps you are in the place today that these godly characters once were, trying to hang on by a thread to a promise or a vision or a prophetic word and wondering why the realization of it seems so impossible—or at least far away. Perhaps you are feeling, as I did, as if you can’t go on.

Don’t worry. You aren’t responsible for putting the wind back in your own sails. “For God is the One working in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). He is

responsible for taking you from the promise to the presentation of it. And He knows that the season in between—the time of preparation—is often difficult.

But He also knows what it will take for you to carry out the commission He has given you, and He wants to be certain you are prepared for the task. He uses the time of preparation to patiently and carefully equip you, going so far as to work all things together for your good so that His purposes ultimately will prevail (Rom. 8:28).

We don't know for certain all that God had to work into—or out of—the biblical characters I mentioned to make them ready for their destinies. But we do know the end results.

Moses led God's people out of Egypt and through the wilderness to the brink of the promised land. Joseph was named second in command to the highest ruler in the nation. David became king over all Israel—not just over one of the two kingdoms. Paul wrote letters while in jail, now called "epistles," that have "spoken" to Gentiles and believers alike for centuries as a part of the New Testament.

Did these men fulfill their destinies? You bet they did! And you will too. The Bible tells us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8), so you can rest assured that God will do for you what He did for them.

Don't let the season of preparation discourage you or dampen your faith. Don't let it obscure your vision. Hang on! If you have a promise, you'll see the presentation—just like all the saints who have gone before.

When Disappointment Is a Symptom

It was empty. I immediately asked, "Is today a holiday?" But no. We just didn't get any mail, so the box was a black hole of disappointment. "Not even a sales flier?"

Shoulder sag.

There it was again—the idolatry of heart that I had been learning about for a few years. I was starting to recognize the groping to find satisfaction in anything and everything except in the heart of God.

Prone to wander, Lord.

I feel it.

So says the old hymn.

So from the time it took me to turn away from the mailbox, walk across the street and get to my front door, I went to church in my heart.

Lord! I groaned. Lord, my soul needs You. I need so much more than mail to satisfy these deep, empty places in me.

My heart went to a verse I had just read, during my time with the Lord the morning before. I had planned to read further in the passage, but I came upon this phrase that tasted like the soft center of a Lindt milk chocolate truffle.

"The Father has life in himself" (John 5:26).

This is what I am always looking for, without even being aware of it much of the time. I want life—the abundant kind that Jesus talks about.

Timothy Keller says that idols always disappoint us, and I'm hypervigilant for this symptom now. Disappointment is a symptom. The feeling sends up a red flag that I was hoping to find satisfaction in the wrong place.

Empty mailbox. Empty. Empty. Empty.

But there is life in the Father—always full and never disappointing. Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays the life He delivers.

So let us turn away from meaningless, lifeless idols and seek satisfaction only in the Lord.

What the Gorilla's Death Teaches Us About Our Culture

As I scrolled through my Facebook feed Memorial Day morning, I saw this letter: "An open letter to the mom of the boy who fell in the gorilla enclosure."

Having not yet heard about the boy who managed to get in the gorilla enclosure at the zoo, I was naturally intrigued by this title.

The letter was kind and gracious, but the comments revealed a whole different side to the way our society thinks today.

Let me start out by saying this:

There are many people out there who, despite not having been present when this situation occurred, seem to have intimate knowledge about how well the mother was watching her child.

I find this puzzling, because those who actually *were* present when the boy got in the enclosure with the gorilla paint a whole different picture of this mother.

And I must insert myself here, being a mother of two boys, one of which is extremely active and at time precocious. It doesn't even take so much as a split second to take your eye off your child for him to get into something he shouldn't.

This could have happened to any parent, and it unfortunately happened to her. I can only imagine the amount of terror she must have felt until her child was rescued.

And lest she thought that knowing her child—although seriously injured—did not have life-threatening injuries could bring peace to her mommy-heart, little did she know that it was only the beginning of the story.

Moms are incredibly hard on themselves. We blame ourselves for every cold, every flu, and every injury. The accusations in our head tell us if we “had only done _____ (insert any number of helicopter-parenting skills here)” we could have somehow prevented whatever it was that assailed our child.

We are not God.

No amount of helicopter parenting can ever prevent bad things—even tragic things—from happening to our children.

And the most helicopter of parents will at some point sneeze or be distracted by a bird flying three inches above their heads or a voice that sounds familiar and take their eagle eye off their child ... only to discover that this is the exact amount of time it takes for a child to go from the safety of his mother's watchful eye into danger.

And beware that this ever happen to you because all of Hades will be brought down upon your head by the millions of people who have either never parented, and thus have no idea what it

means to care for another human life who ever lives to extricate himself from his parents' care, or who have chosen to raise their children on deserted islands where no danger ever exists anywhere, and thus have no idea what it means to raise children in the real world.

But there is an even more serious lesson to be learned from this tsunami of public shaming we've been subjected to on social media.

It actually goes back 150 years to the theory that man was not created, but rather evolved from apes.

By erasing the hand of God from existence of mankind, and the very important fact that mankind was created in the image of Almighty God, as opposed to all other life forms, the value of human life was demoted to that of every other living thing.

But God, throughout His Word, expresses that human life has greater value than animal life.

This is why, in Genesis, He gave mankind dominion over the animal kingdom. The value of human life is not equal to that of animal life, but greater.

But sadly, it doesn't stop here.

Forty years ago, we chose to diminish the value of human life even further when we began rationalizing away the immorality of taking human life.

- Abortion
- Euthanasia
- Doctor-assisted suicide

Ironically, many who support these issues when it comes to human life are radically against the same practices being done to animals.

And here we've come to a time when, for many, human life has lesser value than animal life.

The worst comment I read about this issue was on this Facebook thread:

"The silverback gorillas are an endangered species. 4 year old boys are not."

Jesus warned of this when He said: "Because iniquity will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12).

As we have legalized increasingly more methods of murder in our society, the love of many has grown cold. In the Greek "grown cold" literally means that rigor mortis has set in.

The honor and respect we would naturally and instinctively have for human life has quite literally died in many, and rigor mortis has set in, as they have elevated the value of animal life above human life, being willing to sacrifice an innocent child to save an endangered gorilla.

This is a clear and demonic distortion of God's order.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were commanded to sacrifice animals as a temporary way to cover their sin so that God could at least look upon fallen man, until Christ came and offered Himself as the final sacrifice.

Yes, God actually commanded the sacrifice of animals to save mankind from God's wrath.

And yet now the cry goes out by many that sacrificing this endangered gorilla to save the life of a 3-year-old boy was wrong and immoral.

The lesson we have learned from the death of this gorilla is that when we erase God from society, there is no end to how Satan distort the thinking of man.

We have been given over to such depravity that we have:

- Legalized mothers murdering their babies
- Refused to make illegal in all States the neglect of babies who survive abortion
- Legalized the murder of the elderly and terminally ill in some states

And now many even rationalize sacrificing the life of a preschooler to save the life of an animal.

If there ever was a time that the church needed to repent for having lost her salt and light, it is now!

“If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chr. 7:14). {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, Twitter, Pinterest and Google +.

Ladies, Is This the Truth That Really Sets You Free?

I'll begin with Beverly, and eventually you will see where I'm going with this. She is half Australian Shepherd, half Border Collie, and she just got her 12-week shots. My daughter has brought her new dog to stay with us for a week while her husband's away, so we are tag-teaming the puppy thing.

I heard you groan.

Because you know. Puppies are so cute, but they pee everywhere they shouldn't; nip at you with razor-sharp teeth, under the guise of playing; and they run fast in the other direction whenever you say, "Come."

We don't have a fence, so while my daughter has been at work I've decided Bev has got to be on a leash if I'm going to get her out. Bev does not like the leash. The first time I hooked it to her collar, she went boneless on me. Then she tried to chew on it.

"Now listen, Bev," I reasoned with her, "I know you don't like this, but the leash is your ticket to freedom. Freedom, I tell you!" So I've kept trying her on the leash for short bursts of time, and you know what? This last time she didn't fight it. As I got her out of her little kennel, I said, "Look, I brought Freedom with me, Bev." And *click*. This time we went far, and she sniffed new things she had never sniffed before. She ran places she had never run before. (I did too.) She even saw her first mushroom, and it was quite a discovery.

Over the last few days, while Bev has been taking a nap, sprawled out on her stuffed pig, I have been listening to a Timothy Keller sermon about freedom. He says freedom is not what you think. We're happiest when we're in a love relationship, and as soon as you fall in love with somebody,

the first thing you give up is your freedom—willingly. You start checking in with the guy before you make plans. You stop doing things that annoy him. You start thinking about what he wants to do before you indulge in what you want to do.

That brings me to the point I want to make today, which is a very special day in my life. Today is Matt and my 25th wedding anniversary! My dad would say, “Your Anna-very-sorry?” Funny, Dad.

We’re celebrating 25 years, and I want you to know that the best decision I ever made was to tie the knot.

“Ball-n-chain” I think the guys call it.

But from my experience? **Best constraint ever.** After 25 years, Matt and I are still swoony in love and flirtier than ever. I think we were supposed to be crushed by the empty nest thing, but—sorry kids—your dad and I are really happy with each other.

Do you know what our wedding rings said to us all those years ago? “You can call me Freedom.” While I do have to be thoughtful and bend toward that guy now, at the same time, I’ve run farther toward joy with him than I ever could have imagined. I’ve experienced the love of Christ through Matt’s care. He has encouraged me. He has been kind and protective. We’ve laughed together.

We’ve given up a lot of freedoms because we’re married, but because we’re married, we’re the most free we’ve ever been.

Now really this post isn’t about marriage, although someone reading this maybe needs to be encouraged to tie the knot—to take the risk of a lifetime of constraint. But you know the reason I write is so that you can know God. So if there’s someone out there who has been unwilling to settle down with God, to go all in, then I say to you that knowing God is the way to the freedom you want.

But listen, before you freak out and want to nip at my hands the way the pup did, listen to these words of Jesus:

“For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 16:25).

Imagine Jesus with a leash in his hands, asking you to give up your freedom so you can have more. It’s a demeaning thought at first, but what if it leads you to a wonderful adventure?

“Therefore if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Stop fighting Him, I beg you.

Hold still, at least long enough to consider where Jesus is offering to take you, an idea I stole from Timothy Keller.

Quit squirming away and say hello to Freedom.

One Major Roadblock to Divine Healing

In Luke 5:12-13, we read about a man who was not sure about healing. But he did something that many are not willing to do, he sought out the Healer.

It says, “And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ Immediately the leprosy left him.”

This man had a very contagious disease called, "Leprosy". Even his identity was wrapped around it, he was known by the others as a leper. Think about this, his name is not recorded in this story for us to remember him by, only the hopeless label, "Leper". And the public associated him with the characteristics of this dreadful disease. When they saw the leper, negative adjectives passed through their minds concerning him, such as, unclean, contagious, cursed, and deadly to be near.

Even the leper, himself, identifies with these painful labels. Back in these days, whenever someone would pass by, he had to pick up a rock and throw it at the person passing by and call out to the others about himself, "Unclean!" Imagine how hopeless he felt. The Bible clearly teaches us that, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." See Proverbs 23:7. It also tells us in Luke 6:45, "For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

This man could see his body being eaten away from leprosy, and he could smell the rotting of the flesh as well. He could feel the utter pain and sting constantly.

I also believe he heard amazing testimonies about people who were being healed by a healer named, "Jesus." But as long as he received his identity from the fearful reactions of others as they saw him, or from his five senses or human reasoning, he would forever remain a leper on this earth. Something radical would have to change for this man to be healed.

He obviously did not know how Jesus felt about all of this. But he did hear of these amazing miracles that were taking place, so when Jesus passed by he called out to Him, "Lord." To acknowledge Jesus as Lord shows that this man was humble and respectful towards Jesus. Then he asks Him what he has been wanting an answer for, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

He hears enough about Jesus that He knows that He is able to heal him, but when it comes to His willingness he was unsure. But he does the right thing and seeks out the Healer, and asks Him His will to heal. And because he seeks, he finds the answer, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him."

What are you waiting for? If you are unsure about healing, ask Him to reveal Himself as your healer. If you will do this, you will find Him and your healing. Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." And when you seek the Healer, you will find your healing too.

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the *Destiny Image* author of *DARE to Believe* and *Greater Than Magic*. Visit her at .

Prophetic Vision of Two Banquets Speaks Volumes

On a morning when I woke up I had a vision about banquets:

The Minus Banquet (-)

The first banquet I saw was not really the kind of banquet anyone would want or enjoy! I ran around preparing all the food to feed my guests and serving it out to a table mixed with some people I recognized and loved and other faces that were unrecognizable, but they looked really mean and scary!

The more food I put out the more they devoured, and the more food I seemed to prepare the more revolting it looked! My guests were filled with words that crushed me. The people I

knew and loved started to say things to the point that they became unrecognizable to me. The whole scene looked and felt like a nightmare! Then as I stood there and watched them, I felt exhausted, angry, broken and sad. I then saw a sign on the table with the minus (-) symbol on it.

The Plus Banquet (+)

Then before I knew it, there was a new table in front of me. At this second banquet, again I recognized some faces of people I knew and loved, and there were also unrecognizable faces, but they looked kind and lovely. I instantly felt better, so I started preparing food to feed my guests. This time my food actually looked good and I became filled with hope and faith that all would be OK.

Every time I came out with the food for my guests, they would be filled with words of encouragement and love, and each time my plates of food I was preparing just kept looking better and more delicious! After feeding my guests I felt a little tired but I was so happy. As I stood there watching them, I saw a sign on the table with the plus (+) symbol on it.

“People Have a Choice”

Then God spoke to me and said, “People have a choice. They can feed the negative or they can feed the positive.” In this vision He showed me the two tables side by side.

He then spoke to me again and said, “The more you feed the negative, the more the enemy feeds off of it. See the faces you don’t recognize, they are demonic spirits sent to feed off your negativity and to turn friends and loved ones against each other. The more you fed them negativity the more they devoured, the stronger they became, to the point even the people you knew and loved started to become unrecognizable to you.”

Then He said, “When you started feeding the positive, you not

only felt happy and filled with hope and faith, but what you served up kept improving. The faces you didn't recognize, they are of Me. For I come in all forms and surround you with all that you need. When I spoke words of love and encouragement, the more beautiful your banquet became. Those you recognized and loved, not only got to feast off all the positive from you, they got to watch you transform into someone filled with faith, hope, joy and love, till all that came from you tasted good."

He then asked me "Now, which table would you like to go and sit at?" There was NO way I was going back to the negative!

The Invitation

As I sat at the positive table enjoying the company and the food I had prepared earlier, a waiter came over and handed me an invitation and said, "Would you like to come with me?" I was a bit torn as I really wanted to just sit and enjoy the positive banquet. But I felt like it was in invitation I had to say yes to. All my guests were very excited for me as I stood up and went with the waiter.

The Multiply Banquet (x)

He led me to a new table and as I arrived there I saw a big table, filled with the most incredible banquet I had ever seen! It was heavenly! I was taken over to a man sitting at the head of the table. As I looked at Him I recognized Him immediately ... it was Jesus and He thanked me for accepting His invitation and asked me if I would join Him and be His guest at His banquet.

There was a spare seat right beside Him and I sat down. As I looked around I saw all the people who were at my positive table sitting there along with many others. A sign appeared over the table with the multiply symbol (x) on it. As I turned to ask Jesus about the symbol He said, "Because you accepted

My invitation, you get to sit and feast from My banquet where I multiply all that you need and do.”

All of a sudden the table multiplied to beyond what my eyes could see. A plate was placed in front of me with the words, “Taste and see that the Lord is good,” inscribed on it. Jesus then lent over and whispered into my ear, “Look what your positivity has invited you into. Now I will do exceedingly, abundantly above all you could ever ask or think.” He smiled and started to fill my plate with food.

Reprinted from The Elijah List. Helen Madeline Cobanov has a heart to ignite God’s children and awaken the dormant ones. Over the years, God has been filling Helen with prophetic words, songs and dreams, and speaking into her life, not only to love who He created her to be, Helen Madeline (meaning “Light Tower”), but to live by example, and show others what the Lord can do when you become a willing vessel for Him. Through her ministry, His Light Tower, God is using her to speak into the hearts and lives of others, and teaching them to stop putting limits on Him, and to fully embrace all He has for them. Helen is married to Daniel and they have two teenage sons, and live in Brisbane, Australia. Reach out to Helen by email at hislighttower@.

Who Knew a Woman in a Chewbacca Mask Could Touch the Hearts of Millions?

It’s one week until our 25th wedding anniversary, so you should know about a longstanding joke between Matt and me. I’ll make some insightful comment about a person, and Matt

will disagree. I'll argue with him, because I argue. The disagreement escalates, until finally I bark at him, "Honey, which one of us knows people?"

Then we laugh, and he has won, because he always wins.

Matt has a master's degree in psychology and is a licensed clinical professional counselor—that plus a few decades of counseling experience. He knows people.

So that brings me to the important event of last night, which was finally caving in and watching the viral Chewbacca Mask Lady video, which has had millions of hits. And we laughed just as hard as everybody else must have.

Then I thought like a blogger and wondered, *What was it in that video that touched people so much?*

Swing with me to one more place—my Spanish classroom. Let me introduce you to sixth period, which is full of generally reserved students who feel like they've been tipped back in a dentist's chair if I ask them to sing in class. Then there is seventh period, which is generally full of *not* reserved students. I've been teaching seventh period the same Spanish song that I've been teaching to my sixth period class, except seventh period belted it out with gusto yesterday, while dancing in their chairs. They begged me to play it again, and I wished I had taught them more music all year.

But who knew? Who knew that music would be the thing for that group? Who knew that a woman in a Chewbacca mask could touch the hearts of millions of people?

In John 2:25, we read this simple truth about Jesus:

He knew what was in a man.

Jesus knew people enough to know when to speak to them and when to be quiet, when to engage in conversation and when to slip away, when to trust and when to guard Himself. He knew

the responses that would shut up His adversaries. He knew the questions that would touch the greatest needs of broken souls.

Even Matt, a professional counselor and a great judge of people, does not know the inner man the way Jesus does. The human heart is hidden and complex, so it makes sense when we just don't get somebody.

This has to bring us to a great confession of dependency on Jesus in every relationship. He's the only one who really knows my students. He's the only one who fully understands my husband, my kids and my friends.

So I pray for us:

Lord, give us insight into our people. Help us see where they hurt and what they need. Give us a perspective that we cannot have on our own, and help us relate to our people in a meaningful way. In the name of Jesus, amen.

4 Ways to Recover From Satan's Attack

I had the oddest experience today that got me to thinking about how the enemy covets our blessings. I was shopping in the woman's department at a local store. I found the perfect skirt, blouse and blazer outfit needed for my next ministry trip to Tanzania.

- It was the right fabric for the hot and humid weather,
- It was a great color for me.
- It was very versatile.

- It was able to pack well.
- And it would wash and wear easily.
- It was one of a kind, and there was not another one like it on the racks.
- And the price was great.
- It's as if God fashioned the outfit for my needs and desires.

I placed the outfit in my cart, and continued shopping. But while I was browsing the racks, I noticed another woman nearby that was getting a little bit too close for comfort. I brushed it off, figuring she was real focused on her shopping and didn't realize how close she was to me.

I turned aside to check out a blouse, when all of a sudden this woman came up from behind me and pushed me into the clothing rack and stole the dress from my shopping cart and ran off!

In all honesty, I was taken off guard, flustered and couldn't get out of that store fast enough. Once back in the car with my kids and good friend who accompanied me, I started to detox my spirit and soul from the ugly greed of someone that would do such a thing.

But then I got to thinking about how our enemy, Satan, comes to steal, kill and destroy us (John 10:10). And my thoughts went deeper than just his thieving, murderous and destructive behavior against us, but to the real motives behind his wicked attacks against us.

Let's look back to the woman at the store today. She didn't try to steal my purse hanging over my shoulder, which possessed the provision, my money to purchase this outfit. She coveted the blessing in my basket, the outfit itself. And so

much so that she did not care how unbecomingly she behaved to get it. She pushed me aside and nabbed it from me.

This is exactly how the enemy behaves, and the true reason behind his behavior. He covets our spiritual attire, God's glory. He's jealous of what God has fashioned for us. He sees how God has uniquely designed our ministry attire, and he wants it. And he will stop at nothing to try and swipe it from us.

Christians often look at ministry attire as being a part of the fivefold ministry, but whether you realize it or not, all of God's people are called to the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). It might just be your blessing of healing that he wants to nab from your basket to try to prevent you from shining hope to the sick and hurting around you. Perhaps your healing already manifested, but he tries to steal your testimony by putting lying symptoms back on you. Maybe he tries to steal your witness by attacking your marriage.

What blessing is Satan trying to rob you of? And more importantly, what can you do about it? Plenty!

1. Repent of sin if you need to.
2. Pray in the perfect will of the Father as you pray in the Spirit.
3. Declare the power of the blood of Jesus Christ over you and your family.
4. Put your faith into action, and do what God is calling you to do.

Doing these four things alone will help you recover from the attack of the enemy, and cause your spiritual attire to shine for the advancement of the kingdom of God. {eoa}

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Is Having a Passion for Profit a Sin?

Passion is a popular word. A cursory Google search on 'passion' yields 633 million results in less than half a second. Coupling that search with the word 'profit' narrows the field to a paltry 93.6 million results. Each entry promises to inform and direct your gifts and passion in ways that will change your life forever and do so at a great profit.

So, what is the balance between passion and profit? How do these two things work together?

Like many, you may feel a tension in your heart between your passion and making a profit.

God has wired you with passions, whether to apply a certain skill in a unique way, or to conquer the world, or to climb Mount Everest. You may have a passion for something halfway around the world or on the block where you live. That is your mountain.

This thinking comes into play as the curriculum for **Moving Forward** events as we revamp and update our content. It is important to clarify what is your passion, unpack it, and understand what it has to do with God, the world and those around you. It is vital to carry your passionate, God-given desire or dream well and step into greater fulfillment each year of your life.

Many experience the urge to exalt passion above the higher good. There is a tendency to couch these passions in more acceptable terms of social justice causes. It is God who

gives you your passion but without the right perspective you can become absorbed in it and by it. If, in the pursuit of your passion, you become fixated on something less than the bigger picture, the shape your passion is taking is not from God.

So, which is it? Do you follow passion or remain firmly connected to doing good while your passion falls by the wayside? The pendulum swings first to one side and then the other. If you haven't come to grips with God's shape for your passion, your pursuit of is likely to end in burnout.

To help bring order to this process of reconciling the tension between passion and profit, let us consider together two Scriptures. First, consider Psalm 37:4-5:

"Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it."

It is God who reconciles the seeking of Him and work in your passion. Daniel 11:32-33, one of my favorite verses, says, "the people who know their God will do great exploits. Those who have understanding will give insight to the many."

Our American way emphasizes the exploits. But God wants you to know Him as you do the exploits of life and work. He wants you to engage Him with questions about your business: its needs and its processes.

My delightful experience with God came in the corporate world. In creating a corporate learning center that had huge financial success and impacted the professional track of 150,000 people, I learned and developed many principles to use as a guide in this type of process. These principles are summarized and are available to you in my book, ***Impact Your Sphere of Influence.***

Now, let's connect profit to the process. Work is valuable.

The skill set God has put in you has been put in you for the sake of profit. Consider the parable of the minas beginning in Luke 19:13-27.

This Scripture teaches us that whatever God has put into your hands (skills, talent, resources) to bring an advance to the kingdom, you will bring a return, not only in finances, but also in the impact on the lives around you.

Marketplace ministry is such an important topic these days. In fact Charisma Media's *Ministry Today* just published an article of mine this week called *The Greatest Work on Earth*. There I talk about men and women going to work every day with the light on in their hearts, knowing they are carrying the presence of God to impact their mountain, their sphere of influence. This is how God is going to change the world.

My invitation is that you evaluate this concept. As you see it aligning with what you have read here, embrace the concept that you have a passion, that it is totally unto God, that He invites you to walk it out, and that profit is the natural result. This profit is in finances, in the satisfaction you will gain by knowing you used your skills today, and that you were helpful to others.

Remember the man with one mina who did not know or respect his master well. Instead of using his talent he buried it and accused the master of being a harsh taskmaster. The master's response was that the servant was to work with what had been put in his hand until the time of his return.

This privilege you have to fine tune your passion, to develop a track record where you have applied your skill and created a profit is pretty exciting.

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The Sin That's Eating Christians Alive

He's crafty. He's wily. He's a wolf in sheep's clothing. Many of us stop him when he comes at us with something we recognize as wrong like being tempted to pilfer funds no one will ever know are gone, go to a movie with that man or woman from the office who acts so much more interested in us than our spouse, drink and drive and hang out with folks who do. We can easily (I hope) say, "No!"

He's far more clever than to tempt us with the obvious. He's got his hand in something far more deadly than any of the things we ordinarily think of as sin, and yet it is one of the seven deadly sins. I am talking about the thing I've never heard even one pastor preach about or even talk about—gluttony, the sin that's eating Christians alive.

What Is Gluttony?

Several times the Bible mentions those who are gluttons and advises people not to associate with someone who is a glutton. The Weymouth New Testament translates one of the "acts of the flesh" listed in Galatians 5:19-21 as "riotous feasting," while the Wycliffe Bible calls it "immeasurable eatings." Others translate it as "orgies, wild parties, revelries" (Galatians 5:19-21, Weymouth New Testament, Wycliffe Bible, NIV, NLT, NKJV). These are all words for gluttonous behaviors.

The definition of a glutton is “one given habitually to greedy and voracious eating” (*Webster’s Dictionary* online). Synonyms are overeater, hog and stuffer (*Webster’s Dictionary* online). I will admit, this was my rebellion of choice. I saw it as the “sanctified sin” because I had never heard a pastor say it was wrong to eat until you were stuffed.

As a matter of fact, most joked from the pulpit about the upcoming church carry-in supper as one where everyone would have to wear expandable clothes. As a sugar and comfort food addict and glutton, that just justified my chosen rebellion.

I Wore My Rebellion

At 430 pounds, I wore my rebellion where all could see it. There was no hiding my sin. It was always with me, but then no one dared mention it to me lest I point out their third piece of pie.

Yet, my sin, like many others God steers us away from, was killing me, eating me alive. I thank God for a rude cardiac surgeon who bluntly told me I’d be dead in five years if I didn’t lose at least 100 pounds and keep it off. That was a wake-up call. However, it took several more years and many more circumstances before I owned my addiction.

Acting Against My Addiction

As any addict knows, to recover I had to do a 180-degree turn-around. I had to give up those things I craved, the things that if I ate them, I couldn’t stop. I had to face my emotional demons and recognize how they impacted my relationship with God.

I changed physically. To date I’ve lost 265 pounds. I changed emotionally. I fully embrace my emotions and learn from them and how to handle them. I changed spiritually. I accept the glorious grace, strength, mercy and mystery of who God is and how He works in my life.

I stay away from foods with sugar and flour or that combination. This is true any place I am, even when others are eating other things. I stay true to my commitment because I have made an obedience commitment to my God to want Him more than the things I crave.

In addition, I am aware people are watching me to see if I stay true to the journey God to which has called me. It is even more motivation to be obedient.

Hell of Food Addiction

I pray for divine encounters with people who suffered like I did for years because I know they want a way out of the hell of food addiction. Satan has gripped them by the stomach and won't let go. The way out is not easy, but it is possible when we submit totally to Him and desire to be transformed, changed from the inside out (Romans 12:2).

I have immeasurable compassion for those who are where I was. It's why I write books. When I was super morbidly obese, I wouldn't ask for help, but I would read a book. I just couldn't find one written by someone who had been where I was and had overcome.

It's why I speak and do radio and TV interviews. God has given me a platform. I use every opportunity to make the church aware that they must wake up to Satan's tactics before it is too late.

It's also why I do weight loss coaching. Food addiction is a true addiction and it takes someone to walk beside you to come out of where you are.

You can come out of the addiction by clinging so tightly to Jesus there is no reason to want anything else. His presence becomes "food and drink in the best meal you've ever eaten" (Matthew 5:6, MSG). However on some level, we want the food instead of Him. The church must make it their mission to find

the “why” hidden in that statement.

Is Your God Your Stomach?

Paul told the church at Philippi, “Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:18-20, NIV).

Do you love Jesus? Do you love Him enough to break the stronghold certain foods have over your life? I’m telling you right now the serpent has many Christians by their stomachs. We’ve willingly allowed him to make our overeating, gluttonous ways a stronghold in our lives when the only stronghold should be occupied by God Himself.

I’m concerned about this sneaky deadly path he’s led us down. We must do everything we can to win this food fight. We must embrace total transformation with everything that is in us.

I’m not talking about a diet, here though. I’m talking about lifestyle change. Are you ready?

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*. Get a free chapter of her memoir on her blog at .