

How You Can Activate Heaven With Your Voice

In our age, building a platform seems to be on every person's mind. Getting on Facebook Live and preaching, singing and training whoever may stop scrolling and listen is what so many are doing to reach as many people as possible. They desire to get their message out to as many as they can. Often this can be a point of competition: Who has the most followers? Who has the most viewers? Who is drawing the most attention and getting other opportunities to speak, preach, teach or share their skills and expertise?

Now, I'm not saying any of this is wrong, but I want you to know that God knows how to get your voice out. God knows how to release your voice. He knows where your word needs to go.

As He purifies and matures your voice, He will bring promotion and set you before great men and women. He may give you a prophetic word for somebody. He may cause you to have a dream, like the apostle Paul did, of somebody saying, "Come over to our church, come over to our company, come over to our nation and help us. We need to hear your voice."

In Acts 16, Paul had a dream of a man pleading with him to come to Macedonia and help them. Paul had never been to Macedonia, but the man had asked him to come and help them. So Paul went to Macedonia, preached the Word of God, and revival broke out. His voice needed to be heard in Macedonia.

There may be places you've never been, but God can come to you in a dream and tell you where to go. He can show you people in your dream whom He wants you to contact to give them a word.

The apostle Peter provides another example of God speaking in a dream about where someone should go to deliver His word. In Acts 10:9-23, Peter had a vision of a sheet coming down from

heaven, of unclean animals that represented unclean nations—Gentiles.

Immediately following the vision, God sent a messenger from the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius to Peter. The messenger asked Peter to go with him to Cornelius' house. Arriving there, Peter preached, and the Spirit of God fell on all who were in the house (Acts 10:44). They began to speak in tongues, and all of a sudden, the floodgates were open. As a result of their conversion, more Gentiles began to come into the church along with the Jewish believers.

As we've seen from Paul's and Peter's examples, your voice can go places you've never been. God can do it through dreams. God can do it through visions. God can speak to you. He can even have somebody call you.

I got a call once. It wasn't on my phone; it was through Facebook Messenger. I wasn't used to receiving calls that way, but I answered.

"Hello? Who is this?" I asked.

A guy with an accent answered and said, "Praise the Lord! Apostle Eckhardt, I am calling from Moldova."

Moldova? Moldova is in Eastern Europe, near Russia.

He said, "Praise the Lord! I got your book. I've been reading your book. I'm an evangelist in Moldova. I want you to pray for me."

I said, "OK."

I've never been to Moldova. I don't know anybody there. But somehow my book was there.

The man then said, "I'm a Russian evangelist. I speak English. When I preach in Russian, we go on the streets. I've been reading your books on the apostolic. Would you bless me?"

I said, "Well, if you had the nerve to call me from Moldova on Facebook, I'm going to pray for you."

I began to pray for him, and I prophesied over him on the phone through Facebook Messenger. He received the prophetic word, and my voice was going into Moldova—from the South Side of Chicago to Moldova.

Have you ever been to Moldova? Not many people have. I learned it is near Transylvania. I was in Hungary once, and my hosts pointed in a direction and said, "There's Transylvania."

I said, "Transylvania? Isn't that where Dracula is from?"

They said, "Yes. There are many witches there."

I said, "Well, God bless Transylvania. I am not going up there, dealing with Herman and Eddie Munster and Dracula. No, thank you. I am OK. I've dealt with witchcraft, but I don't want to deal with Transylvanian witchcraft."

The point here is that you can end up in strange places—places you've never been—as God begins to send you to people who need what you have.

Rise, Shine and Come Forth

Some time ago I was leading a congregation through a series of prophetic activations. We were doing one activation where we encourage people to hear the sound of the Lord. When you are tuned in to the Spirit in this way, sometimes the Lord gives you sounds. You may hear wind blowing, rain falling or birds singing. You may hear trains. This time, I heard the sound of an army marching. In the Spirit, I heard its boots marching. Then the Lord gave me a verse in Psalm 68, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it" (v. 11, KJV).

The Hebrew word translated "company" means "army." It is also translated as an army of women in some Bible versions. Somehow

the King James Version left that out. Some people don't think women can preach or prophesy, but every married man knows women preach.

So as I was leading this activation, I began to see how America needs revival and breakthrough. There is so much going on in our country—perversion, rebellion, witchcraft, violence, hatred and injustice. But I believe that when it's the darkest, that's when prophetic people rise.

Elijah was the prophet when Jezebel was ruling the nation. Two of the most wicked people who have ever ascended to the throne, Ahab and Jezebel, were the ones controlling the nations, but God raised up Elijah. God has a way of raising up strong anointings when the world seems dark, when it looks like the devil is taking over and witchcraft is prevailing. The strongest anointings are raised up when things are bad. Strong people are raised up who know how to pray and fast, preach and teach—people who know how to rebuke, take authority and prophesy.

I believe no matter how dark it looks, the Bible says, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isa. 60:1-2).

When darkness tries to cover the land, that is when it is time for you to shine, rise and come forth. God is raising up a new breed of believers who will prophesy, pray, preach, teach, bind and loose. He is raising up a company of people who know that no weapon formed against us shall prosper. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will raise a standard against him (Isa. 59:19).

No matter how bad it looks, one word can turn a situation around. All it takes is one word from God to change a whole

situation. So this concept of being a voice, being the heavens or having a voice that activates heaven is not just people saying, "Thus saith the Lord." It's about an army of believers God is raising up, an army into whose mouths God will put His word so that when they release it, something will shake and change.

Things are changing politically. There is a lot of division, particularly in America. Everybody hates everybody, it seems. We have problems with people in the military, with the police department, with authority, with racism, with prejudice, with Democrats versus Republicans and with drugs.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, so many things have come undone and need to be set back in order. But I believe God is going to send those with His words—with solutions, skill, wisdom and insight—and we will see that the best is yet to come.

How You 'Speak' Is Unique

Some of us are more evangelistic—we feel a sense of urgency to use our voices, gifts and talents to introduce people to the gospel of Jesus. Some of us are more apostolic—we feel motivated to use our voices, gifts and talents to help establish systems and programs that secure the church or other organization they've been put in place to serve. Some of us use our voices, gifts and talents to teach, coach, mentor or train. Others of us use our voices, gifts and talents to serve, administrate, give or pastor.

Each of us "speaks" with our different gifts and graces. We're not the same. Even two apostles can be different. Even two prophets can be different. Don't try to be like someone else. Be who God has called you to be. Go where He sends you. Don't be a copycat. Don't be a clone. It's OK to receive an impartation from someone, but God has created you to be different and unique. Don't be born an original and die a copy. We have too many copies out here.

As God prepares you to go to your Macedonia, know that you may seem different than what people expect, or the place He's called you to go may be different from where some people think you ought to go. Expect to be misunderstood.

Special Assignments, Callings and Mandates

When you walk in a special grace, special anointing, special ability or special talent, it opens you up to the realm of what I call special miracles. There is a class of miracles called special miracles. You can find evidence of this in Acts 19:11, which says, "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." This is telling us that there is the miracle realm, and then there is the special miracle realm. The word "special" simply means something unusual, something better or something on a higher level. In the New King James Version, the same verse says, "Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul."

As you walk in this new heavenly identity, you need to understand how important it is that the Lord performs special miracles for you and through you. This is how you demonstrate the things that are in heaven that can be loosed in others' lives. This is also how God will bless you so that by your words and actions—your hands—the special miracles of heaven will be released into the lives of those God sends you to.

For you and through you, God wants to do something different, something unusual. He wants to perform some unusual miracles. He wants to open some unusual doors. He wants to bring unusual breakthroughs. He wants to raise you to unusual levels. He wants to cause you to make unusual connections. He wants to do something very unusual for you and through you.

In studying the word "special," you will find that it is not a word frequently used in the King James Version. It is more often used in other translations such as the Amplified Bible, The Voice, the Passion Translation and The Living Bible. Then

if you follow how the word is used, you will see it show up as “special messenger”—the apostles were called special messengers. You will see references to “special favor,” which was given to Esther. But when we see “special endowments,” the word is being used to describe an unusual impartation of the gifts of the Spirit.

The apostle Peter talks about this: “As each of you has received a gift (a particular spiritual talent, a gracious divine endowment), employ it for one another as [befits] good trustees of God’s many-sided grace [faithful stewards of the extremely diverse powers and gifts granted to Christians by unmerited favor]” (1 Pet. 4:10, AMPC).

Paul told Timothy to stir up the gift, or the special endowment, that was given to him by prophecy with the laying on of hands of the presbytery. “Do not neglect the gift which is in you, [that special inward endowment] which was directly imparted to you [by the Holy Spirit] by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon you [at your ordination]” (1 Tim. 4:14).

Spirit-filled ministry, especially prophecy and the laying on of hands, is a vehicle through which gifts or special endowments are released. Then in 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul told Timothy again to neglect not the gift God had given through the laying on of his hands.

Special endowments come directly from God through the vehicle of laying on of hands in prophecy. These are unique gifts: prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, faith, gifts of healing, the working of miracles, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, discerning of spirits, mercy, giving, exhortation, prophecy, serving and so on. (See Rom. 12.) All of these special endowments are connected to the miraculous—when you move in words of knowledge, words of wisdom and discerning of spirits and when you prophesy, speak in tongues or interpret tongues. Moving in these gifts releases miracles, as they are

imparted as special abilities to individuals with special assignments, commissions or mandates.

You're reading this because God has given you a special assignment—a place where your voice will have great impact.

God has given you a unique way to speak and preach heaven. He has given you special vision and a special gift. This thing that God has placed within you is unique and different, and it separates you from others.

Remain Humble

My calling out your uniqueness is not an attempt to feed your pride or a statement that you are better than anyone else. The truth is, the more special you and the things God does in your life are, the more humility you must have.

God gave Paul a special mandate to preach to the Gentiles but then gave him a thorn in the flesh, because the abundance of revelations given to him could have caused him to be puffed up (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Paul received special revelation from heaven. He understood the mysteries of God more than all the other apostles. There was special grace given to him, but there was also a thorn in his flesh to keep him in a place of humility.

God does give special gifts, special talents and special anointings—and we need them if we want to bring heaven into the lives of so many who are living in a kind of hell on earth—but these endowments are never given to make us think we are better than someone else. What we can recognize is that God does give people special assignments, special callings and special mandates—special things to do on behalf of the kingdom—and they may be different, unusual and not standard. Often when God gives us those kinds of mandates, we tend to pull back because we've never seen anything quite like it before.

John the Baptist was a special messenger raised up by God (John 1:5-15). After he was born, people wanted to name him after his father, Zacharias, but God said, "His name is John."

Zacharias may have thought, "But there's no one in my family named John."

Zacharias and those around him didn't understand that God wanted the child to be named John because he was special. He was different. He was unique. He had a special calling. He carried the spirit of Elijah. He was in the wilderness eating locusts and wild honey. He had a special garment of goats' hair. God was raising up a special kind of ministry to be the forerunner of Christ.

Samson was different. He was special. When Samson was a child, God said, "Don't cut his hair. He's going to be a Nazirite. He can't drink any wine, because he's special" (Judg. 13:5,7). God gave him special strength to use to bring deliverance to Israel.

Then there was Joseph. His father made him a special coat of many colors because he was different from his brothers (Gen. 37:3). He had a special assignment to go into Egypt before them and bring deliverance to his family. He had a special endowment—the ability to interpret dreams. It was something very unusual; no matter how difficult the dream was, he had a special endowment to interpret it.

Then God gave Solomon a special endowment of wisdom. Solomon received a special ability to walk in wisdom more than any other person of his day, and really, anyone in history. No one could come close to matching the endowment God gave to Solomon.

And there was the special endowments God gave Bezalel: the special skill and wisdom to construct the articles of the tabernacle and to design the garments of the priests and the tabernacle (Ex. 31:1-6).

John the Baptist was different. Samson was different. Joseph was different. Solomon and Bezalel were different, and so are you.

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**Against Overwhelming Odds: My
Pillow Founder Reveals
Miraculous Life**

Transformation Story

If you watch TV at all, you've seen Mike Lindell. He's the bold, boisterous, broad-mustached CEO of infomercial fame who invented MyPillow because he couldn't get a good night's sleep. Almost overnight he went from life as a functional crack, alcohol and gambling addict who made his living running honkytonks and counting cards in casinos to leading a multimillion-dollar business. Yet he only turned his life over to Christ in 2017.

Lindell has now emerged as a friend of President Donald Trump and a high-profile Christian leader who has helped underwrite events such as "The Return" and fund major motion pictures, including the pro-life project *Unplanned*.

He has also sold 43 million MyPillows and expanded to mattress pads and toppers, sheets, towels, even bedding for dogs and Mike Lindell bobblehead toys. (I bought one.) He employs 1,500 in his home state of Minnesota (and another 1,500 around the country). He's well on his way to hit a billion dollars in annual sales in 2021, especially with the addition of , an online store launching in January that he believes will help entrepreneurs sell their products. But while these facts make up a significant part of his story, they're not the entire story. Not by a long shot—as Lindell himself might say in his broad Minnesota accent.

Lindell believes God has given him a "platform" to bring people to Jesus, and he's started a faith-based recovery network that is growing almost as fast as MyPillow. In fact, he seems to have had a unique connection with God long before he knew Him. He received prophetic words about his platform long before he got off crack, gave up gambling or even received Christ. He wore a cross necklace over a bright blue shirt on his commercials long before he became a Christian. He also told others they should accept Jesus and get off drugs

long before he attended a retreat called Operation Restored Warrior in 2017 and was confronted with his own need to finally surrender his life to Christ.

His story of believing God for creative ideas and having the Lord come through at the last minute again and again—even saving him from death—is the theme of his memoir, *What Are the Odds?* The book recounts lows and highs in his life more outlandish than those you'd expect to find in an action-packed adventure movie. In fact, he hopes to make the book into a movie by spring 2022.

One of Lindell's greatest creative ideas, the one for MyPillow itself, came in a 2004 dream in which God gave him both the name and the concept for making his product unique. This launched his platform, despite the fact that he almost went bankrupt, lost his marriage, had employees try to steal his company and faced multiple lawsuits. His book, which God told him he would write years before he could share it, includes one miracle story after another.

As a Christian journalist for more than four decades, I've interviewed hundreds of people who have extraordinary stories of changed lives or developed major platforms to spread the gospel. But never have I had an interview more fascinating than the one I had with Lindell when I flew to the Twin Cities and spent close to five hours hearing his stories and touring two gargantuan facilities. We discussed how, long before he recognized it, God was working in his life, what He has done in the intervening time and the divine destiny he now sees unfolding—which I hope inspires you to experience the same.

Full disclosure: I love MyPillow. And so does my brother-in-law Jim Ferrell, who told me he bought at least 30 pillows trying to find a good one until he discovered Lindell's invention. I took an easier route. I saw the commercials, bought a MyPillow and loved it.

I'd seen Lindell wear his famous cross on TV and heard he might be a Christian. So I wasn't surprised to see him at the National Religious Broadcasters convention in 2019 where someone introduced us. "You're the man who improved my sleep," I told him. Without missing a beat, he responded in a sing-song voice I recognized from his infomercials: "I knew it would."

As a businessman and entrepreneur myself, I admire the way Lindell has navigated the many obstacles he has faced and led his company into exponential growth. But this CEO has one consistent message: All this is only a platform for pointing people to Jesus.

"The platform that has now manifested is a platform for a great revival," he told me. "Whether that includes me going into politics, just to evangelize, whether it doesn't include that ... it's all the same. All the roads lead to Jesus."

I grew up in a Christian home, so for me, Lindell's story of alcohol, drug and gambling addiction offers a fascinating look into a world I don't know. And to see the hand of God giving him prophetic words even when he was running taverns and gambling or taking drugs seemed almost unbelievable. According to accepted theology in charismatic circles, the miracles come after your life is surrendered to Jesus and you're pursuing godliness—not when you're totally immersed in an ungodly lifestyle.

For *What Are the Odds?*, which he self-published, Lindell did something no cost-conscious publisher would do: He chose an expensive cover that included two holograms. The front is a professional shot of him today, flipping to one taken by his drug dealer after Lindell had been awake for 14 days straight on a crack-cocaine high. The back, a cute picture of Lindell as a 7-year-old, morphs into one of him speaking at Liberty University. That boyhood photo has significance, he told me. He was just 7 when his mother left his father and moved into a

mobile home with her three children. That's when the wounds developed that, he later learned, drove his addictions and inappropriate behaviors. Until that point, he seems to have had a stable upbringing—fishing and hunting trips, playing with neighborhood kids, living on a lake with both parents.

'Everybody's Looking for Hope'

Those deep childhood wounds never healed until he encountered two significant programs that helped him gain true freedom: Operation Restored Warrior and Living Free. Both helped him face and gain healing from the wounds he says he has in common with every other addict. His own freedom has now birthed a major focus in his life—the recovery network he believes will help heal millions.

“The Lindell Recovery Network is my calling to use in a big way,” he says. “Because that's what's going to bring the biggest revival. ... This platform gets it done, because everybody's affected by addiction, and everybody's looking for hope.”

As difficult as life became after his parents split, his mom took the kids to an Assemblies of God church and Sunday school. There, he learned a few things about the Bible, especially about the end times, which became a personal fascination after the church showed a movie on the topic.

“It just resonated with me,” he says. “I never forgot that.”

Lindell shares how when he tended bar he would tell his intoxicated customers that “the computer is the beast” and scanners were part of the plan to take away the use of cash. Somehow many customers and other friends would be scared straight and walk away from their addictions, even as Lindell continued his own.

“You've got to think how powerful it is when I'd be doing lines of cocaine with them, and drinking, and I'm sitting

there telling how bad it is," he explains. "Now you'd say, 'Well, that's a hypocrite,' right? They would say, 'You know what? You're doing it. What do you mean? If you're so good, why don't you quit?'"

But Lindell adds, "They would believe me, 100%. I would even tell the dealers that someday I'm going to quit and have this platform, and it's going to change the world. I would start prophetically seeing that a long time ago. My friends were walking down the street, and I said, 'I'm part of the great revival in the Bible—in the end times,' I said. 'I'm a leader of that.'

"I could tell you the names of those who quit forever overnight," Lindell says. "Now whether they found the Lord or not, that part I didn't know, but they definitely quit their [addiction]."

Even as a child Lindell showed a willingness to risk it all, like the time he bet his friends he could jump out of the window of a moving school bus. Thankfully he landed on soft snow. He also displayed an early entrepreneurial flair by hosting carnivals at the trailer park where he lived. "I felt if I could deliver amazement, the kids would like me," he writes. "In the little playground at the center of the trailer court, I would put on carnivals complete with games (penny pitch, softball throw) and magic shows." He even bet neighbor kids a quarter that he could escape if they buried him up to his neck in sand. (He lost the bet, and the trailer-court manager saved his life.)

But he also began to try more dangerous means of coping. He wanted to entertain but was painfully shy. In high school, he discovered what he calls a "secret weapon" to help deal with his shyness: alcohol, starting with peppermint schnapps and then sloe gin.

Almost at the same time, Lindell began his gambling habit in

earnest, fueled by his constant desire for the “high” he got when he won at the last possible moment. In his younger years, he bet on a simple card game he played with his parents and even on the marathon rounds of Monopoly he shared with friends.

“I always found it more interesting when there was some kind of wager, even if it was just five bucks,” he writes. “This is how I put down gambling roots early on.” But by his sophomore year of high school, he says, “I bet on anything I could.”

What Lindell didn’t realize at the time was that these habits were activating the chemical reward system in his brain. “For me, sports betting—and later, playing craps and especially sitting at a blackjack table—was like an IV drip of pure satisfaction,” he writes. “In fact, that dopamine drip is a real thing, and so powerful that people will literally destroy their lives to get it.”

And Lindell continued on a path to destruction. After high school, his gambling addiction only increased, bringing him to desperation after losing \$25,000 in one long weekend of NFL betting. In an effort to escape his Mafia-style creditors, who threatened his family, he broke into a gas station, hoping to land in the relative safety of jail. After leading police on a high-speed chase, he did end up in jail and at the mercy of the southern Minnesota gossip chain. While serving in work-release, he earned as a result of that escapade, a friend introduced him to what Lindell says became his “new best friend”: cocaine. That began an addiction, which later morphed to a nearly 20-year crack habit only ended by God’s miraculous intervention.

Lindell describes himself as a “functional addict,” but his addictions kept hurting his family and business, as addictions always do.

In 1985, he fell in love with Karen, mother of his children,

who joined him in his crack addiction and put up with his wayward ways for 20 years before she left him for another man. During this time, Lindell coached Little League and, on the surface, looked like a good parent, even though his various addictions drained the family financially.

At one point, he decided to take his family on a long vacation, flying into Las Vegas, where he planned to “gamble a little” and then drive on to Southern California, where the Lindells would visit the typical tourist sites such as Disneyland, Knott’s Berry Farm and Sea World. He spent the first night at the craps table in the casino across from their motel and lost every bit of the \$4,000 he and Karen had brought along for their vacation. In typical fashion, he manipulated a pit boss into giving the family a huge suite for the night, then headed for California as planned.

“For the rest of our vacation, we scraped by on the proceeds from four ATM cards, heading to the machines at 12:01 a.m., pulling out our daily limit to get through until midnight the next day,” he writes. “The night before we were to head home, we rolled into a little Best Western. The six of us had one room with one bed and no money.”

‘You Will Be Provided a Platform’

Time and again, a “miracle” would happen like one that took place when Lindell, then only 20 years old, already owed a bookie \$12,000. He walked into a bank and, instead of spinning a story, decided to be totally honest with the loan officer. “Mark, I’ve lost money to some bad guys with some betting, and I need cash right away,” he said. “I’ve gotta have \$12,000. You can give it to me as a mortgage on my trailer.” Most people would have been turned down flat. But Lindell had his cash within 15 minutes and paid off his debt in full.

Another time, when Lindell was on his way home from a failed gambling binge in Kansas City, Missouri, he accidentally drove

into a rough area of town, hitting a pothole that caused the camper shell to fly off his truck bed and land in the street. Just then, two men approached, one of them holding a gun.

Instead of fear, all Lindell felt was a crack-induced rage. He says he yelled at the men to put the gun away, adding, "I've got all of six bucks on me, and you can each have three! But first you're gonna help me put this camper shell back on my truck!" The two men walked over to where Lindell was attempting to drag the camper shell by himself and helped him lift it onto the truck bed. Then they silently disappeared.

God kept showing up in his life long before Lindell recognized Him. He woke up one morning with words swirling around his mind, so he grabbed a notebook and wrote them down. "It wasn't like I was writing," he says in his book. "It was more like I was taking dictation. My hand moved the pen, and words appeared on the page. It struck me that these were words I didn't even use."

Lindell ended up with six pages of handwritten notes that included a step-by-step plan for getting off crack. The notes also included these mysterious words: "You will know when the time is right, and you will be provided a platform."

He writes, "Were these thoughts from somewhere—or Someone—else? I didn't know."

A major influence was his sister Cindy Carlson, who was what we'd call an "on-fire Christian." His book explains how he couldn't understand why she and her husband, Bryan, drove more than an hour across town to attend Living Word church, pastored by Mac Hammond.

The same day Lindell received the divinely dictated plan to get off crack, his sister called him. Hammond had brought her up in front of the congregation that morning and asked if she had an older brother named Mike. God had given the pastor a prophetic word for Lindell, and his sister shared it.

“Whatever happened to your brother, it’s important. He has to follow through on it, and you need to tell him.”

Lindell knew exactly what this meant. Shaken, he grabbed the notebook containing the plan and stuffed it behind a framed album cover hung on the wall. Four years would pass before he saw those pages again.

As if this weren’t enough, right after a girlfriend left him and he came out of a stress-induced walking coma, in one 24-hour period, four people gave him nearly identical messages. A local TV station kept replaying what he considers one of the worst interviews of his life. One night a woman called his business cellphone to ask if he was the one whose interview she’d watched. “I don’t want to buy a pillow,” she told him. “But I was praying, and God let me know that what you’re doing is so important. You can’t give up.” Then she prayed for him and MyPillow for 30 minutes while he listened and did lines of cocaine.

Ninety minutes later a local boutique owner called and said she also saw him on TV. “God’s called me to pray for you. What you’re doing is very important, and you can’t give up,” she told him. “Although I didn’t know what the future held or why, I was encouraged that the woman said this company was important to God,” Lindell writes.

Hours later his phone rang at 3 a.m., and a male voice barked, “Well, let me tell you something, pal, I don’t believe in God, but I keep having this dream that I’m supposed to call you and tell you what you are doing is important to God.”

Finally, the next morning a woman called. She didn’t want to buy a pillow either, but she did want to pray for him. “You have a ‘platform,’” she said tentatively, echoing Hammond’s 2003 prophetic word. “But I don’t know what that means.”

The story that fascinated me most was how he instantly got off crack. I’d read his 325-page book, so I was aware of the

stranglehold his addictions had on his life. Yet in a 24-hour period, he dropped the crack habit. He said Jesus took away his desire for drugs on Jan. 16, 2009, and it's never come back. And this took place long before he surrendered his life to Christ and five years before he was delivered of gambling. He broke that addiction in 2014 after he heard an audible message from God while driving down the highway toward a casino.

Growing up in Christian circles I've seen many seemingly strong believers who continue to struggle with addiction or other problems despite going through deliverance or fasting and praying to be free. I've heard a few testimonies from people who say Jesus delivered them instantly, but those are exceptions, not the rule. Yet even for believers who may struggle with relapses of drinking, pornography or other addictions, Lindell's story offers true inspiration.

In his book, he recounts how he picked Thursday, Jan. 15, 2009, as his final day of bondage. That night as he slept on a friend's sofa, he prayed what he says may have been his first genuine prayer. "God, when I wake up, I don't ever want to have the desire for drugs or alcohol again." He remembers when he woke up, he was lying in bed like someone who has had a bad fall and staying there a minute to determine if they've broken anything.

"Yes, I was all in one piece," he writes. "And I could feel, without question, that my desire for drugs and alcohol was gone. ... But the greater miracle was how I felt inside. I felt calm and refreshed and peaceful. It was a new kind of peace I had never experienced. I also felt an urgent sense of calling."

His calling, of course, was to use his business platform and notoriety to bring people to Jesus. When I told one of my businessman friends about my interview, he said Lindell's story lets him know God can use businessmen, not just

ministers, to impact the world.

Even for people who never gamble or abuse drugs, seemingly everyone can relate to some sort of deep pain like Mike Lindell experienced. And every believer in Jesus can pray they will experience miracles over the problems in life or receive creative ideas that turn into business or ministry successes. And who wouldn't like a huge testimony such as going from life as a cocaine and crack addict to become an inventor and CEO of an outrageously successful business?

Mike Lindell seems the least likely person to become a famous Christian leader. His spiritual journey is unlike any I've ever heard, which is one reason I wanted to interview him myself. I hoped I could learn more from his unconventional life and be inspired by how he uses the huge platform God has given him. I also hoped that by telling his story, I could inspire *Charisma* readers how they too can learn from his testimony.

There's so much more to the Mike Lindell story, such as the supernatural connection he made with Rabbi Jonathan Cahn that led to his sponsoring *The Return*, and the unbelievable series of miracles that allowed him to become a confidant of President Donald Trump. As I wrap up this article, I remember the concluding words of the book of John: "There are also many other things which Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that not even the world itself could contain the books that could be written" (John 21:25).

One of the biggest parts of his story is the miracle that started his Lindell Recovery Network, which space does not allow me to cover. So watch for a second article about Mike Lindell in the next issue of *Charisma*, about his addiction recovery network, including how you can get involved.

For me, reading Lindell's book (which I recommend you also read) and spending several hours with him were enormously

inspiring. In my years of covering the charismatic world, I've heard numerous testimonies, and in my walk with God, I've had a few miracles of my own, but nothing like Lindell's. His story motivates me—as I hope it motivates you—to believe God for great things that will lead people to Jesus and spark the great revival Lindell says God has shown him lies ahead.

Stephen Strang is founding editor of Charisma. Learn about the books he's written at .

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Joyce Meyer: Discover the Key to a Truly Fulfilled Life

Matthew 6:33 (NIV) says, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as

well.” The key to living the abundant life God has for us is learning to make Him our first priority. Yet many people seek the “things” first, things like jobs, houses, cars or other material things.

To seek means “to crave, pursue, to make sacrifices to get, to go after with all of your strength and all of your heart.” It’s a mistake to crave and pursue possessions, believing they will give us the lasting peace, joy and contentment that only come from God’s presence in our lives.

Take a moment and ask yourself, “What am I seeking? What do I spend most of my time thinking or talking about? How do I invest the majority of my energy?” These are important questions you need to answer from your heart.

I remember years ago when I had lots of material things, but I still wasn’t very happy. Have you ever been there? Maybe you’ve wondered what’s wrong with me? as I did. Well, when I asked God that question, His answer was, “Joyce, you’re shallow. It’s time to step out into the deep.”

That was a wake-up call. I was a shallow Christian. I wanted the “fruit” of God’s Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience—operating in my life, but I wasn’t seeking that, so my “roots” weren’t very deep at all. I had it backward, as many of us do at times. We want the money, the house, the platform or whatever our “thing” is. So we pursue that rather than the true treasure of God’s presence.

Just as a tree needs roots to go down deep and spread wide in the soil for it to grow strong, healthy branches that can withstand the elements, Christians need to develop deep spiritual roots in Christ. Our lives need to be deeply rooted and grounded in the Word of God and in His love—not our “stuff”; otherwise, we soon find out when the storms of life come, our “things” don’t make us so happy anymore. That’s because those things can’t give us what we truly need. And it

doesn't matter how much stuff you have if you're miserable.

Now, I'm not saying it's bad to want nice things or to desire a good life. But we need to examine our priorities when it comes to those things. We need to learn to seek God's face and not His hand. If we will seek His face, His hand will always be open to us, providing what is best for us.

If you're wondering how to seek God's face, it simply means you take time to cultivate a relationship with God, to get to know Him and trust what His Word says about who you are in Christ. And with prayer, Bible study and time, you will.

We are to pursue God in prayer, crave time in His Word and go after a relationship with Him with all of our heart and strength—even if it means sacrificing some of our desires. The Bible never tells us to seek things, but to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33).

It seems that many times, we get it the other way around, going after possessions as if we'll never have what we want if we don't. But I encourage you to think about what it will be like at the end of your life. I know that's not a pleasant thought, but do you really think you'll be concerned about your stuff? Or do you think you'll want family near?

If we are to be truly happy—with or without all the stuff—we must establish our lives in Christ and learn to trust God to fulfill our heart's desires. As we pursue His kingdom and His righteousness, we will see what it means to be content in life. As the apostle Paul said, “I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content” (Phil. 4:11, NKJV).

The key is to pursue God. Seek His face and go after a relationship with Him above and beyond everything else! You will find that if you seek His face, His hand will always be open to you. So, learn to be content in your relationship with God—He knows exactly what you need.

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times' bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including Battlefield of the Mind and her newest devotional, Quiet Times With God (FaithWords). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit .

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What the First Christmas Can Tell Us About the End of Days

Has the thought ever crossed your mind that the end of this year might be our last Christmas on earth? The precise day and hour of Christ's return remain unknown except to the Father (Matt. 24:36). For the unbeliever, it will happen unexpectedly, when people are doing what they normally do—working in the field, grinding at the mill—just as the

people were doing when the flood overtook the world in Noah's day. When they least expect it, the Son of Man will come (Matt. 24:44).

For true believers, signs and prophecies already are recorded in the Scripture (Matt. 16:2-3) and will become clearer as their fulfillment draws closer. Even the Old Testament prophets who predicted the first coming of Israel's Messiah did not fully understand the meaning of their own words (1 Pet. 1:10-11). Only after the events arrived did all the pieces fully come together.

God told Daniel to "shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end" (Dan. 12:4a). Its prophecies will make increasing sense to us when world events parallel the predictions found in His Word.

Interestingly, John the Revelator was told, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand" (Rev. 22:10). This may explain the blessing that was pronounced at the beginning of the book on those who read or even hear the words of the prophecy (Rev. 1:3).

The Divine Display

The word "advent" means "coming" or "visit." Modern liturgy identifies the four Sundays before Christmas as the Advent season. Each Sunday of this season can become a teachable moment for believers to review the history and meaning of Christ's first coming and give renewed understanding to the promises and hope of God's divine display in Christ's Second Coming.

The first coming displayed God in human form. The incarnation demonstrated God's love. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

He came as our Redeemer. "For the Son of Man has come to seek

and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). In a future day, He has promised to restore or make "all things new," including "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1-5).

His first coming had been prophesied for millennia, yet the timing was unknown, the characters in that drama of the ages were unlikely, and many prophecies about His coming were still unfulfilled. His Second Coming will be similar, except all the prophecies of the ages will be fulfilled.

The Divine Delay

The first coming of God's "anointed one," the Christ, was as a child in a stable. However, the Second Coming of this Anointed One will be as King of kings and Lord of lords with power and great glory. His second Advent will be to judge sinners and reward the saints.

Unbelievers often scoff at the seeming delay before the prophesied "Second Coming" due to its unknown duration. But the apostle Peter reminds us that a day or a thousand years is like tomorrow to the Lord (2 Pet. 3:8). He is waiting, Peter says, because He does not want any to perish and is giving more time for sinners to repent (v. 9).

His Second Coming is certain, however, and will be dramatic. Great tribulation and persecution will come in those days, preceding the unprecedented signs or signals in the sky, as the whole world watches Him arrive "with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:27-30).

Ultimately, He is returning to judge the living and the dead according to their works, to rule as King of kings and Lord of lords and to establish a new heaven and a new earth!

In His incarnational visit, the Son of God came as a baby, grew in wisdom and stature, and taught with authority, like a prophet. He willingly gave up His life to redeem us from our sins and deliver us from the kingdom of darkness.

He is coming again to establish His everlasting kingdom of light over all the earth. As children of light (Eph. 5:8), we must eagerly look forward to this promised second visit! That Advent is sooner now than when we first believed (Rom. 13:11).

This future kingdom's power and authority can be tasted and tested now. It is a parallel reality that is transitioning from a spiritual truth to a physical force and ruling authority.

In this transitional reality, the past is completed. The present is secure in faith, and the future promises eternal rewards. The apostle Paul taught Timothy that a "crown of righteousness" is prepared for "all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8b).

Paul used the Greek word *epiphania*, which means "a bright manifestation." He used it several times to instruct Timothy and Titus about believers' rewards and reviews. In Titus 2:13-14, he linked "the blessed hope" to the "appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all lawlessness and purify for Himself a special people, zealous of good works."

We all must learn to long for His appearing at His soon return. This is not to just escape the trials and testings of these last days, but we long for His soon appearance because we truly love Him and want to see Him face to face.

Rightly discerned and practiced celebrations at Christmastime can display His glory. They also can help us and our families develop a passion for His return.

The Divine Disruption

Jesus said in Matthew 24 that His second Advent will be a divine disruption. Paul explained in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 that it will come after the restrained "man of sin is

revealed.” This “son of destruction” will commit the abominable acts of which Daniel, Jesus and Paul spoke.

This “prince who shall come” will stand in the holy place and demand to be worshipped “as God” in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Dan. 7:25, 9:26-27, 12:11). This will be followed by three-and-a-half years (Dan. 7:25, 9:27) of “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21, 29), which God will shorten “for the sake of the elect” (Matt. 24:22).

In that future context, a rapid sequence of cosmic disturbances will take place. “The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken” (Matt. 24:29), just as Joel prophesied (Joel 2:10b).

Finally, the Son of Man will appear in the clouds of heaven “with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:30). With the sound of a trumpet, His angels will be dispatched and will “gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt. 24:31 and possibly Rev. 14:14-16). This “twinkling of an eye” transformation (1 Cor. 15:51-58) is our victorious hope.

The ‘Blessed Hope’

As we faithfully “endure to the end” (Matt. 24:13, Mark 13:13) and eagerly await His glorious appearing (see 1 Tim. 6:14), Jesus calls us to be watchful, ready and holy. We must look for His return. “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord will come” (Matt. 24:42). And, again in Matthew 25:13, “Watch therefore for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”

The watchful servant keeps active about the Master’s business, living in the happy expectation of His physical return. In this mission, we are accountable and will be rewarded accordingly!

Running parallel with this end-time call to watchfulness is a strong warning to avoid being deceived. Jesus said plainly, "Beware lest you be deceived" (Luke 21:8a). The word "deceive" is used many times in the New Testament about ourselves, false prophets, false christs and especially Satan. (If you want to be amazed, do an online word search on "deceive.")

Paul was deeply concerned that the Thessalonians had been deceived into thinking the persecution and tribulation they were facing meant that the "day of Christ is already here" (2 Thess. 2:1-5). Although he may have only been in Thessalonica three Sabbaths (Acts 17:2) to found the congregation, he had faithfully taught details about end-times events and wrote even more in his first epistle to them. He wanted them to be alert, watchful and not deceived by others.

Let us learn to discern the truth about the end times and avoid giving place to doctrinal deceivers, textual speculators and emotional manipulators, who will abound. We must be careful not to believe everything we see or hear in these last days. Ask God, by the Holy Spirit, to reveal the truth to you and expose all errors.

Be ready, using unexpected time and resources wisely and faithfully, not like the "evil servant" in Matthew 24:48-51. As our Lord delays His return even more, the opportunities to use our gifts and abilities also increase. We must be ready to faithfully and wisely discharge our duties, as we are given modern tools and greater time to use them.

Likewise, in the Parable of the 10 Virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, the wise ones prepared emergency supplies of oil and the means to trim the wicks in their lamps. When the bridegroom came, they were ready and went with him to the wedding banquet.

One indication you're ready for the return of Christ is that you truly want Him to return. The sooner, the better! Jesus doesn't want to return to a church who isn't ready for Him or

really doesn't want Him to return—at least not yet. He wants to come for a church who loves Him and longs for His return.

Like a child waiting for Christmas, the church should be eagerly waiting for the soon return of Christ (Heb. 9:28). This “blessed hope” (Titus 2:11-14) should again be a frequent and major theme of pastoral teachings and congregational singing. Why did we cease talking and singing about it?

Be holy, for our Lord is coming to “present to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27b). Paul admonished Timothy to remain unblemished and blameless “until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:14b).

Our Lord's coming is described in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 in terms of the Greek word *parousia*, which stresses His physical presence. In view of the Lord's delay (Matt. 24:48; 25:5), we must be prepared and watch in committed readiness and spiritual refinement. The “wise” virgins “trimmed their lamps” (Matt. 25:7) as they waited for the arrival and continuing presence of the bridegroom.

The Greek word for “trimmed” is *kosmeo* and relates to our word “cosmetics.” It means to beautify, arrange, decorate, furnish, embellish, adorn or put in order. If we would be “holy and without blemish” for our coming bridegroom, we need to beautify our lives and set them in order by worshipping “the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 29:2).

Some see this delay in our Lord's return as providing for a revival of holiness before the Second Coming, even if concurrent with intensified evil in our world. Let us “trim our lamps” and be ready for the bridegroom, Jesus Christ our Lord!

The Witness of Christmas

Comparing the end times and Christmas may be an unconventional consideration, but the cultural celebration of this season provides unique occasions for gospel testimony and witness.

The Good News of Jesus Christ has always been connected to the end times. Jesus said, "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). The kingdom message has always been about the grace for forgiveness and the power for deliverance.

Communicating the gospel at the end of this age to all ethnicities and people groups—before "the end" comes—is still our mission (Matt. 28:18-20, Acts 1:6-8). And seeing the full release of the power gifts of the Holy Spirit ("signs and wonders") in this increasingly pagan society will provide a confirming word with accompanying signs (Mark 16:15-20).

Instead of a commercialized Christmas in our heads, let us determine to make this season Spirit-filled in our hearts. Let us remember that "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no change or shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

Connecting the "Good News" with the "kingdom," which often precedes the healing of sickness and disease in the Scriptures (Matt. 9:35), is powerful. You see, the kingdom of God exists everywhere the King is. For now, Christ's kingdom is "not of this world" (John 18:35-38). However, the Gospels reveal the good news that His authority and reign will eventually rule over every evil thing, including "every sickness and every disease" (Matt. 9:5-8,35).

God invites us to accept the gift of His Son's redemptive work on the cross and to partner with Him (Luke 19:13) in eternal kingdom business—"doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38)—until He returns to establish His physical rule on the earth.

The Peace of Christmas

Finally, in this special season, we are reminded that King Jesus is called "Immanuel" (Isa 7:14, Matt. 1:23), meaning "God with us." Let's allow every beautifully trimmed tree and every delightful carol to be grace-filled reminders that our King Jesus is with us.

He is in our midst and able to bring justice where injustice may now exist and to right every wrong. He can heal our bodies, restore relationships and mend broken hearts. He can forgive the past, strengthen our present and open up the future.

That is the "Good News of the kingdom," which Jesus taught and which we proclaim this Christmas. He is our only hope and resource for meeting every need.

Country music singer-songwriter John Rich debuted a new song, "Earth to God," during Franklin Graham's Washington, D.C., Prayer March 2020. This moving musical plea to God was featured several times during the livestreaming event.

Near the end, Rich was interviewed about the song's background. He said that during the COVID-19 lockdown, he had come to realize that "the entire world was in the same bad situation, all at the same time. I've always believed that 'man cannot fix man's problems' but God can! The thought of our planet sending an SOS to God came to my mind, and the song was born."

Rich said he doesn't really feel that he even wrote the song since it came together in about half an hour. He believes the song was a gift from God, calling forth the message of the kingdom: "We need your light, we need your love/to heal the world you made/And save us now in our darkest hour/with your amazing grace/... Earth to God (Come in, God)."

"I recorded it to hopefully bring peace, hope and unity to

every human being who hears it,” Rich said, adding an “Amen.”

That contemporary hope for peace and unity was the recurring dream and prayer at the time of Christ’s first Advent. It will be the same—but different—at His second Advent. Jesus said He alone can give us peace that is totally unlike anything the world can give (John 14:27). His peace is permanent and powerful, unlike any human peace treaty or meditative musing.

I invite you to join me in this end-times Christmas season in renewing our commitment to a Matthew 6:33 life, to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” so that “all these things shall be given to you.”

READ MORE: For further insights into the blessed hope of Christ’s Second Coming, visit

Gary Curtis served on the pastoral staff of The Church on the Way, the Foursquare church in Van Nuys, California, for 27 years. He directed Pastor Jack Hayford’s radio and television outreach and, later, the church’s not-for-profit media outreach. Now retired, he writes a weekly blog () and articles for digital and print platforms.

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How to Expand the Reach of the Gospel During COVID-19

Although public health authorities have asked Americans to help “flatten the curve” of the COVID-19 spread, Christians have the opportunity to help others “flatten the fear,” says Dr. Mark Virkler, who founded and directs Communion with God Ministries along with his wife, Patti.

With their hopes pinned on a future COVID vaccine, many people who have been isolated for months and unsure about the future are on edge. A spirit of fear has seemingly shrouded communities across the country, increasing anxiety, frustration and disconnection from others. They have become timid about reaching out to others.

People are struggling with what to believe, who to trust and what—or who—will deliver them from COVID and the fear of contracting the disease. Distrust seeks to destroy bonds between people, whether with a “neighbor” down the street, a person down the aisle in a grocery store or a friend or family member on the other end of a text or video call.

The truth about COVID and other politicized matters seems fluid or elusive in this environment.

“So-called ‘facts’ are hard to come by, as so many have a political agenda,” Virkler says.

Tension reveals the lack of peace many people feel. News channels regularly cover stories of people getting punched or berated in stores for not wearing a mask or maintaining six feet of social distance from other shoppers.

As controversial as mask-wearing has become in the U.S. during this election season, Virkler encourages Christians to be sensitive to others who may feel differently on whether a mask is effective in preventing the spread of COVID, especially when outdoors.

“Wearing a mask is a way of helping others cope with their fear,” Virkler says, reflecting on how believers’ respectful actions show that they recognize people are hurting during this difficult time.

Believers aiming to show the love of Christ have the opportunity to reach out to their neighbors. Answering the important question “Who is my neighbor?” during the COVID-19 crisis means considering how your neighbor feels in this uncertain time.

Doug Addison, founder and president of InLight Connection in Santa Maria, California, believes it’s important to take a considerate rather than a contrary approach to the volatile issue of social distancing.

“One of the things Jesus said to do is to practice hospitality, and this means to be considerate of one another,” Addison says. “The pandemic has put us all in a strategic place to be the light in darkness. People are struggling with fear and hopelessness. We can reassure them that God has not forgotten them, and this tragic time will pass. I encourage people to be safe and stay in faith by going into public and practicing social distancing.”

Reg Morais, an Australia-based pastor who leads Living Faith Community and who has a prophetic umbrella covering hundreds of thousands of people, concurs with Addison.

“Pray for one another and encourage one another,” Morais says. “Don’t become an island. Be sure to connect with one another, whether it is on the phone, text messaging, emails, Zoom calls or whatever it is. We need to be solution-oriented and help

one another wherever we can.”

Speaking Life to Others

Amid these challenges, Christians are seeking and finding ways to follow Jesus’ command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (see Mark 12:30-31). Sandra Giet, lead pastor of Mid-City Vineyard Church in Los Angeles and the first solo female lead pastor in the U.S. to plant a church as part of the Association of Related Churches network, feels strongly about being both practical and prayerful at this time.

“We encourage our church members weekly to be praying for their neighbors and to look for practical, tangible ways to reach out and bless and support their neighbors,” Giet says. “This is actually an amazing time in history. We have so much to offer in the hope and peace of Christ and our own love to those who are anxious and afraid.

“Words have power—even creative and mindset-changing power, available and transformative through the power of the Holy Spirit,” Giet says. “Speaking words of wisdom bring life to one’s neighbor.”

Morais, who is also an author of multiple books about the nature and work of the Holy Spirit, speaks to the immediate need for compassion care.

“During this season, it is important to only share words of healing and words of comfort,” Morais says. “Words of healing and comfort for your neighbor will bring encouragement and remove the fear.”

Russ Walden, founder and prophetic leader of Father’s Heart Ministry in Branson, Missouri, also speaks to the value of an encouraging word.

“The key to dealing with fear and the pandemic’s uncertainties is to move in the opposite spirit,” Walden says. “How do we do

that? When someone greets you or inquires about your well-being, speak encouragement and something uplifting.

“Taking this approach is not mere positive thinking but to move in the opposite spirit. Remember, you can’t solve the problem on the level of the problem. You can’t combat fear without raising the dialogue and your conduct into a higher perspective.”

Walden pointed to 1 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) as relevant for such a time as this: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

“When you encounter fear, respond in love,” Walden advises. “Stay attuned to others’ feelings and responses.”

He urges Christians to respond to fearful people with godly humility. Many feel a sense of helplessness and an inability to control their environment, which show through fear, anger and resentment.

“As believers, we may not have direct control over things, but we serve the one who is in charge,” Walden says.

Balancing the spiritual and the physical has become more delicate in the post-COVID age of social distancing. Before venturing out to minister to others with care and empathy, some ministry leaders advise taking steps to strengthen yourself in the Holy Spirit as well as in the physical body.

“Love, joy and peace are fruits of the Spirit, and they all help build a strong immune system, as does speaking in tongues,” Virkler says. “We know a strong immune system fights off disease, so do everything you know to do to strengthen your immune system, including plenty of sunshine, exercise, vegetables, vitamin C and vitamin D.”

Taking precautions to protect oneself and one’s neighbor from COVID-19 is a responsible act of compassion and love. But the

good news is we do not have to be stuck in fear. Christians are being led by the Holy Spirit to reach out to their neighbors in new and fitting ways.

For example, members of Mid-City Vineyard Church in Los Angeles have offered to do grocery shopping for people who are most at risk of catching COVID-19. One person was helping a neighbor who had cancer, and when she died, he adopted her dog and gave him a home. A family noticed the overgrown yard of an older widow in their neighborhood and chose to serve her by cleaning her yard.

“Several people in Mid-City Vineyard Church have shared how they have met neighbors during the pandemic who they have never met before,” Giet says.

Feeding Neighbors in Need

God has used Natalie Flores, a member of Giet’s church, to start a food outreach that drew national attention from The New York Times. In the second month of the pandemic, Flores, an urban farmer and educator, sought guidance from the Holy Spirit on what to do to reach out to her neighbors.

“I felt like I was unable to do anything, like I wasn’t exuding light,” Flores says. “I felt powerless. I remember sitting back and just talking to God and saying, ‘God, please use all of my potential. Use my gifts. Help me do what I do best out in the world.’ Even though we weren’t supposed to be out, I knew there was a way to still serve. I just didn’t know what it was yet.”

She continued to seek the Lord about how to do considerate, helpful outreach and shine the light of Christ during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“At the garden where I was working at the time, my co-worker ran into a woman dropping off her compost,” Flores explains. “We had a compost hub site there. She noticed how much food

she was bringing by and asked her about it. She told me about it when she got back to the garden. Immediately, it was like 'Ding.' I knew that I needed to talk to this woman and find out where she is getting all this food, which I could funnel through my network of people. And that's exactly what I did."

She believes God dropped this idea into her mind to redistribute the food that was being thrown away from restaurants and grocery stores. She started a "hub site," similar to a food bank, in her neighborhood for people in need.

"The following week I was able to get a van load of good, healthy produce and bring it to the garage," Flores says. "My neighbors helped me package it all up. We made a flyer and let all my neighbors know to save their paper bags. In an hour and a half, we were able to distribute about 60 bags of food to people in need."

Flores responded to the need of her neighbors, trusting the Holy Spirit to help her make it happen.

"The need is so great," she says. "I could not just sit back and watch my neighbors go hungry when I know I am capable of doing something. This is where God told me to go. He said, 'Feed your neighbors.'"

The ability to feed an increasing number of people over time has been nothing short of miraculous in her eyes. God has shown up in ways that point back to New Testament times when Jesus multiplied the boy's loaves and fishes to feed a crowd.

"Every week we've seen multiplying the loaves of bread, multiplying the food amount," Flores says. "I eventually looked at my neighbors and said, 'I think we will need a large hub site. We will need refrigeration. A lot of what we're getting is perishable. It needs to go to families in need.' That's when I put a call out to my network and friends and family and said, 'Hey, who has a restaurant? Who has

refrigeration? Who can help us and support us to do this hub site?'"

Her former boss stepped up to help. He had just laid off 65 employees due to the economic impact of the COVID pandemic. The first hub site event Flores did was just for his employees. Her food distribution events have accelerated regularly since April.

"I was appalled by how many people were in need," she says. "People were telling us their stories, 'I just got laid off. I have no idea how I am going to feed my family. I am on my last \$100.' To me, that is a surreal feeling when you see people in your community say, 'I need help. I need food. I can't feed my family.'"

Not only did Flores lean on her neighbors to get the word out and help feed other neighbors, but she also leaned on God and learned an important lesson.

"It just goes to show that when God is telling you to do something, you really don't hesitate," she says. "You just go and do it.

"In some ways, I didn't know what I was doing. I had never made a flyer [to promote the food hub site]. But I have always worked with food, so it made perfect sense that God was using me in this way."

Flores considers food to be a "great bridge" to bring people together and shine the light of Christ. During a time of shutdowns and stay-at-home orders creating a sudden sense of isolation and disconnectedness, she was willing to listen to God and obey His direction.

Flores also believes God has been testing her to take steps to put her faith in action in her community. She says she has grown spiritually through the experience and has seen God's faithfulness at every turn. She is quick to give God credit

and to tell her neighbors that the Lord is the driver of the food outreach.

“It goes to show that there is a lot of important work that needs to be done, and it doesn’t have to be so big and so huge,” Flores says. “It’s actually right at our fingertips if we are willing to be humble, do the work, let God work through us, let God work through our networks, work through our gifts and just be of service. Let God be the light and the love. Let that be the outpouring of the goodness that needs to be brought onto this earth, especially right now.”

This food distribution operation, now called “Nourish LA,” started in her garage with Flores and friends packing bags with groceries that would have rotted in the trash every day from every restaurant and every major grocery store. This supply now feeds more than 1,000 people every time it’s distributed.

Even though in-person church services have been stopped or restricted for months during the pandemic, the Good News of God’s sacrificial love, relentless caring and faithfulness through His children has still been reaching people in need.

To read more about compassionate efforts of various kinds, go to [. {eoa}](#)

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RT Kendall: The Double Whammy America Faces

On May 25, 2020, an event took place that may very well live in infamy, like the bombing of Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941—the evil murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A new crisis emerged overnight, promising possibly to create greater fear and concern than that caused by COVID-19. People across the country protested the killing of a Black man by a white police officer.

People blamed the police. Thousands all over America were now damaging stores, even ruining many small businesses. Some people demanded abolishing the police altogether, while others called for defunding the police in all cities. A few days after the funeral of George Floyd, another white police officer shot and killed a Black man, Rayshard Brooks, in Atlanta. Violence broke out all over again. The chief of police of Atlanta resigned. Renewed calls for the abolishment of police came.

I never dreamed I would see the day that in America there would be vast numbers of people fulfilling Isaiah's warning: people calling evil good and good evil. That is what has been happening before our eyes. The breath of Satan is being felt in nearly every state. There are people in the streets protesting with the threat of violence erupting at any moment. None of us has seen anything like this. It is almost as though we had forgotten about COVID-19, although threats of its second wave are now being voiced. The threat of the coronavirus still looms large.

Is God judging America? Is the double whammy best explained as

the judgment of God upon us? Yes.

Why would God bother to judge America? Is it because America has a special relationship with Him? Are we like Israel—under a divine covenant?

One thing is certain: As a nation, our forefathers chose to bring God into our government. We did not have to call ourselves a nation “under God.” We chose to. Consequently, God has honored us. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Ps. 33:12). “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34).

The difference between God’s covenant with Israel and America’s relationship with God is simply put: God initiated His covenant with Israel. America chose to be called a nation under God. What is more, without question, God has honored America.

What has worried me most as I have written this book is that many well-meaning white Christians will hastily dismiss any need to sympathize with Black people.

Ask this question: How do you suppose Jesus would feel? If He could have compassion on a multitude “because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36b, NIV), how much more would He understand how people feel when they are quickly dismissed because of their skin color or because they have not had the education, the care, the love and acceptance most white people have utterly taken for granted?

“Every person is worth understanding,” said Clyde Narramore (1916-2015). I am pretty sure we would lower our voices and climb down from our lofty pedestals of comfort and pointing the finger if we knew all that was knowable about people we hastily dismiss. The question is: Do we want to know more about them?

This modern example applies to the subject of chastening, or disciplining, following the pattern of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews. As soon as he urges us to focus on “looking into Jesus,” who is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, he asks a question: “Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (Heb. 12:5-6, ESV).

Going back to the Old Testament verse that inspired this book’s title, Joshua was preparing people to come into their inheritance. They had never been that way before. But first they would need to learn to expect what preceded coming into their inheritance. Similarly, the writer of Hebrews was helping his readers understand what they were going through—as part of their preparation. Strange as it may seem, they were undergoing chastening.

Could this be the explanation for what you are going through now?

It is so easy to forget this. The doctrine of chastening is often neglected when it comes to Christian teaching. And yet it is so comforting when we realize that God’s disciplining us is the explanation of what could be going on in our lives.

I will never forget how I discovered the doctrine of chastening. It was on an August afternoon in 1956. My father virtually rejected me over my new theological understanding. My grandmother had given me a new 1955 Chevrolet when I began pastoring a church in Palmer, Tennessee, but took it back when she could see I would not remain in my old denomination. I was distraught—not so much from handing back the car as from the sense of God deserting me. I honestly thought my dad and grandmother would be thrilled with my new teaching. In prayer that day I cried out to God, “Why?” when unexpectedly “Hebrews 12:6” entered my mind. I had no idea what that verse was. So I

turned to it in my little King James New Testament. It read: "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

This was a new concept for me, but instantly I could see that what was going on in my life was God at work in a different kind of way. I was immediately able to see that it was a vital part of my preparation for the future. I could not think of anything I had done that was sinful. Yet I knew God was allowing my family—and many friends—to reject me as part of His preparation for me. It opened up a new world of thought. I went on to explore this teaching in ever-increasing measure. It became integral to my theological understanding generally and the premise interwoven throughout many of the books I have written, beginning with my first book, *Jonah*.

Has it crossed your mind that God might be chastening you? Could it be that God is trying to get your attention? You may say, "God already has my attention." But is it possible that He wants more from you than you have presumed?

I have personally thought a thousand times that God truly has my attention—only to discover by His grace that He did not have my attention, as I had thought. It is like being asleep; you don't know you were asleep until you wake up!

God's chastening is essentially preparation. It is not God getting even with us; He got even at the cross. The blood of Jesus satisfied the justice and wrath of God. This is why David could say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12, ESV). The word *paideuei* in Hebrews 12—chastens, disciplines—means enforced learning. It is when God teaches us a lesson. He can be very strict like a relentless schoolteacher who does what it takes to secure the needed change in us. But God carries this out entirely because He loves us. Indeed, He chastens only those He loves. If we were not disciplined, it would show we are "illegitimate children and not sons" (Heb. 12:8b). We

should therefore rejoice when we are chastened; it is a sign we are truly saved.

3 Kinds of Chastening

There are three kinds of chastening: internal, external and terminal.

Internal Chastening

This is God's plan A. It's when God speaks to our hearts through His Word. This can be painful. It operates on us. Sometimes God does not use an anesthetic. It cuts. It hurts. After all, the Word of God is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

As painful as it might be, God dealing with us through His Word is the best way to have our problems solved. If God speaks to you through His Word—even though you see its demands could cost you a lot, take it! Take it with both hands. It will save you incalculable regret down the road.

So when God speaks to you through His Word, my advice to you is to say, "Yes, Lord"—then and there.

External Chastening

This is plan B. God turns to this when plan A does not achieve the change in us that He wanted. God spoke His word to Jonah (plan A): "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it" (Jon. 1:2). God said, "Go," and Jonah said, "No."

If only Jonah had listened to God's Word—the call that went right to his heart. But he did not heed the Word. And God turned to plan B. Because "Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish" (Jon. 1:3) and boarded a ship going there, "the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea" (Jon. 1:4). Plan B began to work when Jonah was in the

belly of a fish: "Then Jonah prayed" (Jon. 2:1).

More often than not, God uses plan B to get our attention because we have not sufficiently prayed. What will it take for you to pray? God wants your time. He loves your company. Will it take being swallowed up by the equivalent of a big fish to get you to pray? What we know is it worked with Jonah: "Then Jonah prayed." Not only that; God secured the response in Jonah He was after. Enforced learning worked.

After the fish ejected Jonah and God repeated His original order to go to Nineveh, "Jonah arose and went to Nineveh"(Jon. 3:3a). Plan B worked.

Terminal Chastening

What if plan B had failed? Answer: Plan C—terminal chastening—would be put into effect. Pray that God does not resort to this in your case. Terminal chastening means death. It is the "sin that leads to death" (1 John 5:16).

Christians in Corinth had abused the Lord's Supper. Paul answered a question they must have asked: Why are people in our church ill, weak, sickly and some have died? Having pointed out how they had abused the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-29), he then answers, "This is why many of you are weak and ill [plan B], and some have died [plan C]" (v. 30).

The generation of Israel that did not make it to the promised land were those with whom God was not pleased (1 Cor. 10:5). God swore in His wrath that they would not enter His rest (Heb. 3:11). They died in the wilderness, being an example of terminal chastening.

This also goes to show that God expects us to ask why when extraordinarily bad things happen—such as the coronavirus and the violence we have been seeing in America.

So is our double whammy God's judgment on the United States of

America? Yes.

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How You Can Stand in the Gap Against Racism

The year 2020 is one most of us could not have envisioned, nor would we have wanted to do so. Before #georgefloyd, #breonnataylor and #ahmaudarbery, I started 2020 addressing racist verbal and physical attacks against Asians and anti-Semitic attacks against Jews. 70% of attacks against Asians have come from African Americans. Anti-Semitic attacks happened when the Hebrew Israelites, an African American religious cult, killed a Jewish rabbi in New York City.

Members of the same cult also killed four people in a Jewish kosher deli in New Jersey.

While most of the nation has been focusing on Black, white and blue (police) divisions, the enemy of our souls has been working on driving a wedge between us all. In the midst of combatting the coronavirus, could it be that social distancing has revealed the social distance in our hearts? Many are looking for rays of hope, asking, "How do we heal the divide?"

Much has already been said about the current climate of our nation's racial crisis. Once protests turned into riots, looting, cities on fire and nine police officers being killed during the summer, much of the sentiment and emotional leverage from #georgefloyd were close to being depleted from many Christian leaders.

Since then, everything has been questioned, from systemic racism yesterday to whether or not it exists today. Closer examination has revealed social engineering by left-wing billionaires funding rioters, the Marxist origins of Black Lives Matter (BLM) founders and ancestral worship. This was revealed in the viral video of Abraham Hamilton III on his show, *The Hamilton Corner*. Also hotly debated are how intersectionality and the shortcomings of critical race theory are informing much of the secular assessment on where we are as a culture.

As a result, many are searching for the nearest exit off the road of racial reconciliation. While we definitely need discernment, we don't need avoidance. Neither do we need more pundits who polarize, or false prophets who anesthetize by pretending nothing is wrong. We need Spirit-filled, intelligent believers at the table to work on healing the divides in our country. We must be emotionally and spiritually intelligent, knowing our battle isn't against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers influencing the situation.

Christians have written many great articles with advice on practical conversation, listening and so forth. Although these are necessary, in this article, I want to focus on how Jesus addressed racism and the reality of the spiritual battle. God is calling the church to stand in the gap and connect to His narrative for releasing healing in our nation. First, I want to share the hope I have because of the miracle of reconciliation in my own life.

Racism in the Civil War

I have hope for healing the racial divide because of a unique story involving my dear friend, Matt Lockett, whom I first met on Jan. 17, 2005. We both had dreams that led us to meet on MLK Day in a prayer meeting at the Lincoln Memorial. Matt and I have now been friends for 16 years but realized we have family heirlooms and artifacts connected to slavery and the Civil War. In my family, we have a 200-year-old kettle pot passed down for generations because slaves used it to muffle their prayers for freedom. Matt discovered six years ago that General Lee's last battle of the Civil War was fought at a house owned by his forefathers. Essentially the Civil War ended in his family's front yard. I thought, *What a coincidence: I have a kettle pot that slaves prayed underneath for freedom, and your family's front yard became the answer to their prayers.*

In our research, we then stumbled onto an even more significant discovery: Matt's family owned my family during slavery! We were amazed when we realized we met at the Lincoln Memorial, both led by dreams to the place where Dr. King declared, "I have a dream, that one day ... the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." This is just the tip of the iceberg of our story, and we tell more about it in a book we wrote together, *The Dream King: How the Dream of Martin Luther King Jr. Is Being Fulfilled to Heal Racism in America.*

While this amazing story gives me hope to continue to pray for spiritual awakening and healing the racial divide, it's also helped me understand there is more going on behind the scenes, both good and bad, trying to influence the direction of our nation. During these times of coronavirus and quarantines, social distancing has revealed the social distance in our hearts. The enemy wants to exploit it, but God wants to heal it.

Racism in Jesus' Day

In Luke 9 and 10, we see Jesus' approach to addressing racism when He personally encounters it in a Samaritan village in Luke 9:51. Jews and Samaritans had 800 years of religious and racial hostility toward each other. Jews normally avoided going through the Samaritan territory for fear of spiritual defilement. When Jesus sought to go through a Samaritan village or neighborhood, it was similar to an African American choosing to go through a white neighborhood in the Deep South in the '50s and '60s.

The racism Jesus experienced from the Samaritans angered the disciples, which is why they reacted: "Do you want us to call down fire from heaven and destroy this village?" They basically wanted to send a Molotov cocktail from heaven and burn down the neighborhood. However, Jesus responded, "The Son of Man didn't come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." But, before He said that, He said this: "You don't know what kind of spirit you are of" (Luke 9:54-56). In other words, "You don't want justice, you don't know what spirit you're speaking from. You really want revenge." He revealed they wanted to do more harm than good.

As we've seen from the rioting, looting and killing, many today don't know what spirit is operating through them. The devil is taking advantage and pimping the pain of wounded people to further exacerbate our division with violence. James says, "The anger of man never achieves the righteousness of

God" (see Jam. 4:18). However, if you continue to read the next two chapters of Luke's Gospel with this event in mind, you realize that Jesus does confront the racism in Samaria.

In Luke 10, He releases 72 to preach the gospel, and many return and report that "even the demons are subject to us through Your name." Jesus replies, "I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:17-18). I believe Jesus is referring to spiritual breakthrough over the region. While the 72 were taking a towel to the earth with the cleansing power of the gospel, a sword of intercession was delivering a breakthrough in the heavens.

Then, in the midst of that open heaven, a Jewish lawyer, who despised the Samaritans so much that he refused to say their name because he didn't want to defile himself, asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29b). Jesus replies, "Oh, let me tell the story about a racist Samaritan." We all know that's not what Jesus said, but He could have. He had just experienced racism from the Samaritans. Jesus didn't ignore what happened to Him, but knowing He was in a spiritual battle, He chose to change the narrative. Amid the open heaven, after taking a towel to the earth and releasing a sword to the heavens, Jesus basically tells a biased person the story of a good police officer, or a good Black man, or a good white man, or a good Asian man, or a good Jewish man. In other words, while the heavens are open, Jesus tells the story of a good Samaritan to destigmatize the very people the Jews hated.

As the Lord departed, He made sure in His commands to preach the gospel that the disciples went to Samaria before going to the uttermost parts of the earth. I believe God is releasing similar strategies to change the narrative and destinies of people and regions. It's time for the church to change the narrative and destigmatize people considered irredeemable by the "cancel culture."

Racism in the Community

One blueprint God has given me for engagement on this issue is 2 Timothy 2:24-26, which says, "The servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but must be gentle toward all people, able to teach, patient, in gentleness instructing those in opposition. Perhaps God will grant them repentance to know the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will."

The application of this Scripture came alive years ago when I had a run-in with racism from a family in my neighborhood. After a healthy confrontation and resolution with most of the family members, one of them continued to ignore us and drove or walked by me as if she couldn't see me. Eventually, I stopped going out of my way to say hello and became just as chilly and hard-hearted as she was. One day, her toddler children were playing with my toddler children. As I walked onto the playground, the oldest toddler shouted, "I'm ready to leave right now!" Her grandfather replied, "But we just arrived; let's stay a while longer." To which the little girl screamed while staring at me, "I want to leave right now!" Angry, with clenched fists, she ran to her grandfather and then turned around to face me. Suddenly, her eyes rolled into the back of her head. She slumped to the ground and began sliding on the playground like a snake.

Being analytical, my second thought was, "I wonder if she is dehydrated or having an epileptic fit?" However, my first thought was right. I heard the Holy Spirit say, "That's the demon of racism and division in this family, and it's affecting the next generation. Use the authority I've given you."

I wanted to say to her grandfather, "Has this ever happened before?" but the first thing out of my mouth was, "In the name of Jesus, stop it and come out." Immediately the girl sighed, stopped writhing and fell unconscious. Her grandfather

couldn't lift her, so I picked her up and carried her home. When I knocked on the door, her mother, who had previously ignored me, asked, "What happened? Is she all right?" and I said, "Just let me lay her down." She became conscious once I laid her down, and I walked out. The family later told me they took her to the doctor and found nothing medically wrong with her.

Later that night, I was in tears, but I wasn't sure why. My spirit was grieved, and I prayed for answers. I was prompted to read 2 Timothy 2:24-26. Then I heard this rebuke from the Lord, "William, every time you played by the devil's rules and chose to not overcome evil with good by just saying hi to that mother, you were empowering the racist spirits that are destroying that family and affecting the next generation. You're not the Republicans' bondservant or the Democrats' bondservant. You're My bondservant, and you don't have the option to respond the way the world does to this issue if you want to use My power and represent My kingdom."

Beloved, our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against demonic powers and principalities in the unseen realm. Our job, according to 2 Timothy 2:24-26, is to be kind to all, bear fruit, speak the truth and not be quarrelsome in person or on social media. We also have to be "able to teach," meaning we need to study and be well-versed, instructing others without being condescending. As believers, we can empower or disempower demonic forces influencing many people through our forgiveness, repentance and conduct. Our goal is not to win arguments but hearts. We must shift the narrative by standing in the gap.

Racism Subject to Christ

A spiritual father of mine recently said this to me: "Today, if you want to draw a crowd, all you have to do is draw a line." In our polarizing times, this is the fastest way to surround yourself with those who consider themselves radical

right or radical left.

While both of those groups would consider themselves “radical,” the truly radical place in our nation is the radical gap. It is not a place of compromise or double-mindedness, but a conviction that believes righteousness and justice are still the foundation of God’s throne. Those in the radical gap are firmly planted on a Venn diagram of right and left ideals, values and truths that align with God’s kingdom and are rooted and grounded in love. Those in the radical gap are reaching out for healing to both extremes while God hangs on to them. While the right and left hurl attacks at each other, those in the radical gap take shots from both sides. Perhaps this is why God is looking not for those who will stand to either side, but for those who will “stand in the gap” (Ezek. 22:30b). Many will visit there, but few are willing to stand there and stay.

Those who intercede from this place of prayer and action don’t stand alone, and God is using them to keep our nation from tearing apart at the seams. It takes courage, tenderness and strength to handle the tension and vulnerability in the gap. God will use those who know how to steward the tension and vulnerability to save this nation.

I mentioned earlier how the last battle of the Civil War happened in the front yard of a house owned by the family that once owned my ancestors in slavery, and how I became friends with one of the descendants, Matt Lockett. In our book, *The Dream King*, we write how in God’s irony, Lockett’s farmhouse, the house that unites Matt and me, is the same house that stood between a divided nation. History records that the Confederate Army was in front of the Locketts’ farmhouse, and the Union Army was in the back. The house stood between these armies, and though riddled with bullets, it is still standing today. Historians say that after the Southern army surrendered, the Lockett house was set up the next day as a hospital for both Confederate and Union soldiers. Its

floorboards were stained with the mingled blood of both sides, as former Black slaves worked with white nurses to heal the wounds of brothers who had been fighting against each other.

It is a picture of intercession, a house of prayer, standing in the gap for the nation in the middle of conflicts where brothers are still divided along class, ideological, political and racial lines. Once again, God is raising up a house that stands between the living and the dead, to use our intercession to stop the plagues of culture (see Num. 16:46-48).

Matt and I believe it's no mistake that we met first in a prayer meeting on MLK Day at the Lincoln Memorial and have been sitting at the table of brotherhood ever since. Today, he and I endeavor to stand united in the house of prayer, to heal a divided nation once again. Now God is using us to call believers of all races to join in prayer and intercession, because only a united church can heal a divided nation.

What's also interesting is that Matt later learned that one of his ancestors was a revivalist and an abolitionist who fought against slavery. Matt realized he had generational blessings of freedom and generational curses of bondage, all in the same family. It's not only true in his family, but yours too, and in our nation. We have good or bad generational storylines or narratives we can perpetuate. God is asking America, "What storyline do you want to be a part of? The healing or the hurt? The blessing or the curse?" Together, let's connect to God's narrative to heal our land.

Read more about racism at [. {eoa}](#)

Will Ford is the co-author with **Matt Lockett** of *The Dream King: How the Dream of Martin Luther King Jr. Is Being Fulfilled to Heal Racism in America. Based in Dallas, Ford is founder of Will Ford Ministries and Dream Stream Co.*

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Joyce Meyer Says Live With Prudence to Fulfill Your Purpose

We all have the same amount of time—24 hours a day, seven days a week. The longer I live, the more I discover that time is too valuable to waste, and we need to live on purpose, for a purpose.

The truth is if you make wise decisions now, you will have a better future. But if you waste your time now, you will have regrets, and regrets are terrible because you can't go back and do anything about them.

That's why we need to do the right thing when we have the opportunity to do it instead of blaming our circumstances or how we were raised or how the world is for the way we live. We can learn how to cooperate with God and make changes that will make something good happen in our lives.

Ephesians 3:20b (NIV) is an exciting verse people like because it says God “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.” But if we stop there, we don’t fully see what this Scripture is saying. It goes on to say, “according to his power that is at work within us.”

God is able to do great things as His power works in us and through us. So it’s not just about God doing things for you—He wants to do things through you. We are meant to be partners with God, participating in His plans, not merely spectators.

Instead of wishing life would change, we can start taking action. We can pray, study God’s Word, and as He speaks to our hearts, we can step out in faith.

I want to encourage you not to let fear keep you from moving forward. If you are afraid of making the wrong choice, then make a determined decision to take a step of faith and trust God to show you if you’re going in the wrong direction. Because sometimes we can’t find out what the right direction is until we step out and find out.

In Proverbs 1:1-5, we learn some of the ways we hear God’s voice as we seek Him. Verse 4a says He gives “prudence to those who are simple.”

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines prudence as “the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason; shrewdness in the management of affairs; skill and good judgment in the use of resources.” A prudent person is disciplined and a good manager. He won’t waste his money, time, energy, talents or words. We see this in the following Scriptures:

Proverbs 10:19b (AMP) says the prudent person “controls his lips and keeps thoughtful silence.”

Proverbs 12:16 (NIV) teaches that “fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult.”

And Proverbs 31:16 describes the prudent woman as one who carefully considers new opportunities before making a decision and uses her time in ways that benefit her.

I want to encourage you to study these verses and look up others that will help you get more revelation about prudence.

God created you to live on purpose, for a purpose! His plan is for you to bear good fruit, and He's given you free will so you can make good choices in every area of your life.

It's easy to get caught up in the busyness of everyday life in the world we live in today. We all need to take time on a regular basis to think about how we're spending our time so we can evaluate whether we're being fruitful and making progress in the things we should be doing.

I like to do this before I go to bed at night. I think through the things I did that day to see what I accomplished. Doing this helps me discover anything that caused me to waste time and lose my focus on the things I needed to do.

Honestly examine the way you're spending your time. Pray and ask God to reveal things that need to change, ways you can make better choices that line up with His wisdom and then lean on Him for the strength to make changes. You'll find that as you make choices guided by the Spirit of God, you won't end up with regrets—you'll be fulfilled, peaceful and excited about how He is working in your life! {eoa}

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and her newest devotional, *Quiet Times With God (FaithWords)*. She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit .

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A Great Revival Is Coming to America

The “Washington for Jesus” event in 1980 became a turning point for a nation reeling from the Vietnam War, Watergate, Roe v. Wade and the feckless presidency of Jimmy Carter. A 20-year-old Jonathan Cahn was there and deeply moved. Forty years later Cahn, now a bestselling author and Messianic rabbi, had a vision to call America to return to God during an even darker period—once again on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

I believe “The Return” on Sept. 26 marked a similar turning point. I was there for the entire event from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and I was deeply moved—much more so than I have been at several other large gatherings I’ve attended. This event had a prophetic edge. In the era of COVID-19, crowd estimates were huge at more than 100,000, but millions more watched in simulcasts or online.

Yet the purpose of The Return wasn’t to garner media attention

or emphasize the huge voting bloc Christians represent in the upcoming election. Instead it was to get the attention of God, who promised, “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 heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14).

Only time will tell what shifted in the heavenlies that day in Washington. But I believe it was significant. America (indeed the world) seems on a century-long rush toward godlessness, now manifested in culture and government. True revival will take more than one solemn assembly and a few thousand Christians crying out to God.

But The Return was more than that. It was something God ordained.

Toward the end of the event, Pastor Kent Christmas of Nashville, Tennessee,

prophesied a great harvest of souls in 2021, following this tumultuous year of pandemic, racial division and violence. Many saw the prophecy live and many more on YouTube. We reported on it on . I want to share a few high points from the prophecy because I believe it’s a true word from the Lord.

“Hear God today,” Christmas said. “This is not about color. This is not about culture. This is about the church, and God said, ‘The church is My body. So today I release healing into you. I release a spirit of boldness on you. The Spirit says rise up,’ saith the Lord. ‘Whatever you bind, I’ll bind. Whatever you loose, I’ll loose.

“‘And the church is going to begin to fill up, and the glitter of sin that has drawn the sinner to the world is now going to be tarnished, and I’m going to cause the church,’ saith the Lord, ‘to rise to her feet,’” Christmas decreed.

“‘By the end of this year,’ says God, ‘the greatest outpouring

that you've ever seen is going to hit the United States of America, starting in January.'

"Thus saith God, 'I'm coming after the strongholds that have ruled over this nation for decades, and I am pulling them down by the power of the Spirit of God.' For the violence that you see in the land, the roaring that you hear over our nation, is demon spirits that are crying out because the angels of the Lord have come to silence them for this hour.

"'I am also coming after a generation of young people that have never been in church, that have never known God. I'm going to invade the homosexual community, and I'm going to set them free by the power of the Holy Ghost.

"'There is anointing,' saith the Lord, 'that I am releasing over this nation. Just as the laws have come out of this city in the natural,' saith God, 'There is now a law being released out of heaven that says my church will not be silent.

"'For the spirit of Jezebel has ruled over this nation for a century. But I have raised up an Elijah anointing,' saith God, 'that's going to break the spirit of Jezebel, and there's going to be peace in the land.

"'There is a liberty,' saith the Lord, 'that I am releasing over this land. And it is a harvest of souls. Your churches are going to fill up. Your children are going to praise the Lord. Your bodies are going to be healed because I declare it,' saith God, 'and it shall be done,' saith God."

We as a body of Christ must now judge this word as to whether it's from God. I hope and pray it is.

Stephen Strang is founder of Charisma. He believes God, Trump and the 2020 Election (Charisma House), available wherever Christian books are sold, is his most important book. Listen

to his new podcast by the same name on the Charisma Podcast Network.

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Joyce Meyer: Discover How to Pass Your Tests in Life

“Why, God, why?” It’s a common question, and one we often ask in the midst of hard times when we feel we’ve been forsaken. But the truth is God is always with us, and He never leaves us or forsakes us (Heb. 13:5).

I’ve learned through my own trials and painful experiences that no matter what I’m going through, God is with me through it all, and He will redeem it. He’ll make something beautiful out of it. This is true for every single person who puts their trust in God.

Proverbs 3:5-8 (NIV) says to “trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.”

Notice that verse 7 says, “Do not be wise in your own eyes.”

In other words, don't ever think you're smart enough to solve your own problems or figure everything out on your own. And verse 8 shows us that if we'll trust in God and follow His ways, it will bring health to our bodies and nourishment to our bones.

When I look back and think about what I was like before I really got serious about growing up spiritually, I can honestly say I am a much different person today. Back then, I believed in Jesus and loved Him as much as I knew how to love Him, but I had every kind of character problem you could possibly have. I was not a nice person, even though I went to church every week and was on the evangelism team. The problem was I was religious but not Christlike. But thankfully, this daily journey with God that I've been taking for more than 42 years now has brought radical transformation to my life in so many ways.

See, it's the challenges we face that God uses to reveal the things in us that need to change, because we can't deal with our weaknesses if we don't know what they are. Then He works through them to transform us into the character of Christ little by little, one day at a time (see 2 Cor. 3:18).

These situations are tests that God uses to help us become everything He has created us to be. Now, I'm not talking about major disasters or crises like sickness, the loss of a loved one or some other kind of evil trauma. The tests God gives show us ways we need to grow spiritually and prepare us to move forward in His plan for our lives.

For example, I used to be very impatient. I still get impatient sometimes, but I have grown a lot in this area. I would get so frustrated with people who were slow or situations that created inconveniences for me. After all, I had important things to do and was always in a hurry!

God used clerks in stores to help me see my bad attitude and

work patience into my soul. I remember when it seemed that whenever I went to the grocery store, I'd get in the slowest line. The person in front of me would have items with no prices on them, so we'd have to wait for someone to look them up, or the person checking out wouldn't have enough money to cover their total bill and have to decide what to send back.

And I finally knew for sure that God had my number when I went to a department store one day and tried to buy something, but I couldn't find a clerk to take my money. I went from slow clerks to no clerks!

I realized in these situations that the best thing I could do was decide to have a good attitude and enjoy waiting. Because in God's school of life, we don't really fail; we just get to keep taking the same test over and over until we pass it.

The good news is when we pass our tests, there's a promotion coming! We're changing and being prepared to do bigger and better things for Christ, and we'll have much more peace and joy in everyday life.

So, what bugs you? What grates on your nerves and causes you to get frustrated, stealing your peace and joy? I want to encourage you to remember Proverbs 3:5-8 and use it as a practical guide in these situations. Let the tests you take make you better—more like Christ—and keep moving forward in every good plan God has for your life! {eoa}

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