

When So Many People Need Love

I was in a four-people-deep in line at the post office, which placed me next to greeting card racks on either side of me. My eyes went to the cards on the right, but after looking at a few, immediately I turned away. (Is there any greater sign of human depravity than in some greeting card lines these days?)

Averting my eyes to the left, the other card rack held beautiful cards, and I gave it a spin. Every card made me think of someone, and I wished I could load up a big handful, take them home and send meaningful notes to every person who was coming to my mind.

That brings me to the people in my life and how I feel like I'm failing most of them most of the time.

"You need to work on calling on all of your students," said my principal. This has been the same constructive criticism I've received in all of my reviews with him. But there are so many students, and it seems impossible to make sure 18 in a class are receiving my full attention—no one sliding by. It's hard. I vowed to keep trying to improve my skill, to get all of them to participate.

The classroom is a microcosm of my life. So many people with birthdays and sickness. Moms, aunts and in-laws. People who need an encouragement and the attention of a friend. Husband and kids. Students who are struggling. Neighbors whose names I can't seem to remember.

Always someone sliding by.

Jesus tells us the second great command of God:

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

Every day I fall short of loving all of my people well. This

makes me sad, and I come to the Lord today with His commandment in one hand and my inability to keep it in the other.

How, Lord? I ask. How can I love the way You want me to love?

He brings to mind John 3:16:

For God so loved the world ...

God is capable of loving the whole world—no sliders. He asks me to love my neighbor, but there are sure a lot of neighbors. My heart and hands feel too small for the job. I start to crumble with guilt, but then I think to myself, “No, God wants me to succeed here. He wants me to obey and to love blamelessly.”

Don't you think that second commandment is too big for us to keep on our own?

So I'm coming to the Lord needy today. I'm bringing Him this little heart of mine that needs to grow in love, and I'm asking Him to help me. And while I'm at it, I pray He'll help you love your people too.

When Your Pastor Can't Help You

I had this light-bulb moment the other day as I was thinking through the advice I give to hurting people who contact me. Actually, I was thinking through the advice I *don't* give. At least, not typically. I rarely say: *You should see a counselor*. And I rarely refer to it in my blog posts.

This is a pretty significant omission and the reason for it might surprise you. I am familiar, and have a lot of experience with, the school of Christian thought that says counseling is bad. All you need is Jesus and your B-I-B-L-E (you stand *alone* on that thing, for goodness' sake!) I am *not* of that school of thought; not by a long shot. The primary reason I rarely mention seeing a counselor is because I pretty much assume that someone going through deep levels of grief has already heard that advice. I take it for granted, I think, and that's dumb of me. The secondary reason I don't mention it, is because I don't want to offend an already-overwhelmed person by implying that they may need professional help—this is also dumb of me. On some level, we probably *all* need a little professional help. I know I do.

I started seeing a counselor just before my husband was diagnosed with ALS. Shelley helped me process my thoughts and deal with the overwhelming sorrow and anxiety in healthy ways. When I felt like I was drowning, she helped me learn to breathe underwater. I don't see her regularly now, but I do when I run into a roadblock in my thinking. That happened last week. I hit an issue I could not resolve on my own.

I was getting some conflicting advice from people who love me, and I knew it was time to bring in the big guns. I sat on her couch yesterday and spilled a million jumbled thoughts. She helped me pick them up, one by one, really look at them and decided which could stay and which should go. She helped me adjust my self-talk. And more than anything, she reassured me that—nine months in—I'm doing OK. I left her office feeling sort of wrung out and exhausted from the process, but I also felt ordered, clear and hopeful about the future. You know what I *didn't* feel? Ashamed. **I am not embarrassed that I can't figure everything out on my own.** In fact, I am proud of myself for being willing to ask for help when I need it and I think I've avoided a lot of time in emotional ditches because I know when to call the tow truck (that's a weird analogy, but I'm

sticking with it.)

As a pastor, people come to me for counseling often. They tell me their issues, and I listen and offer biblical perspective. But if the thing they are facing is not primarily spiritual, then I often refer them to a counselor.

I don't have the training to deal with emotional or mental crises, and I also don't have the time that is required to give it the attention it deserves. I'm very particular about *who* I refer them to because—just like dentists, doctors and hair stylists—there are those I would trust and those I would not. And just like those other professions, sometimes it takes a few tries to find the right one, but the search is worth it for those who are truly committed to building healthy, happy lives.

I don't know why it's taken so long to address this on my blog. Let's blame widow-brain, shall we? The conclusion of the matter is this: If you are in a season of deep heartache—for any reason—or if you just need help getting your thoughts to come together and work for you rather than against you, would you please consider making one appointment with someone who can help?

The days of the counseling stigma are over, or at least they sure should be, so go ahead and ask your friends for references. Try someone out. Give it a chance. It just might be the very thing that helps you escape (or avoid!) the ditch.

Bo Stern is a blogger and author of *Beautiful Battlegrounds*, *Ruthless: Knowing the God Who Fights For You* and *When Holidays Hurt*. She knows the most beautiful things can come out of the hardest times. Her Goliath came in the form of her husband's terminal illness, a battle they fought with the help of their four children, a veritable army of friends, and our extraordinary God. Bo is a teaching pastor at Westside Church in Bend, Oregon.

When Christians Tell You That You're Not Cool

I recently read a short article that my uncle shared on Facebook.

My uncle is really cool. He's a professional jazz singer and musician. He lived with us for a while when I was a little girl, and I remember how he'd take his guitar, open the Bible and start singing verses. He'd often write worship songs like that, songs I still sing today!

The article was written by another singer and musician that I listened to as a child, Scott Wesley Brown. His songs were on the radio, and somehow I always remembered him. Maybe it's because he seemed to have strong character, like a person who wouldn't compromise. Stable and strong.

In this article he wrote, he describes how he's not "cool," and maybe never really was. He was apart of the Christian music industry at a time when it was gaining a strong base, during the '80s. He always wanted to be one of the leading artists, but never really attained that, because he wasn't cool enough. In fact, one church told him that they wanted to invite him but he wasn't "hot" enough.

All those Christian music charts define how cool a singer is, and when you're not cool enough, then you're gone to make room for someone who is. Imagine what that does to you! Imagine how that impacts the way you see yourself, when all you want to do is earn a living from something you truly love and gives you satisfaction, but you realize you can't when someone whom you've neither seen nor met tells you, "I'm sorry, but you're not cool enough."

The question is: Does God call us to be cool? What is the standard for cool? How we will know when we've become a cool person?

But the better question is: What defines us? In what or whom is our identity?

Last week in the Good Morning Girls' study, we saw that Jesus had a lot to say about this, but His disciples didn't get it, because in chapter 10, we see that James and John sought to be more cool than the rest: "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory."

They thought that their position gave them identity. "If we can become Jesus' favorite disciples, then we've really arrived! And for all eternity!" But Jesus didn't play the game, "Which Disciple is the Best," because the kingdom of God isn't built on levels of importance.

Jesus tried to teach them a completely new worldview when He called the Pharisees, who were very religious and held strictly to the law, corrupt. In fact, in Mark 8:15, He said that they were no better than Herod! The Pharisees loved to show their dedication, and wanted people to hold them up as an example. But in the 8th chapter, Jesus said something very radical. He said that if you want to be His disciple, you must be ready to lay down your life, to deny yourself, to stop looking out for yourself.

In the end, Jesus Himself wasn't really an example of success. He was born in a cave, grew up in the ghetto and wasn't even very good looking. The Bible says that there was no reason to really look at Him. He wouldn't have been invited to some churches because He wasn't "hot" either. In the end, he was executed like a criminal.

How does Jesus define success? How does He define achievement? How does He define a cool person?

Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Perhaps we think that we could never live like that. Because what would people think of us? What would people think if we were a servant? Maybe they'd think we've failed.

But in this, Jesus was also saying, "Your worth and value are not defined by what you do, by your position, by your career, by your education, by your salary ... rather **Jesus Himself** defines your worth and identity!

He saved you.

He redeemed you.

You belong to Him.

And that is your entire worth. And that is your entire identity.

You can stop chasing success now. You can free yourself from the pressure to be the best. You can stop regretting that you never finished school.

Because your success does not define you.

You can stop grieving that your father rejected you. You can stop worrying that you're girlfriend will abandon you.

Because their acceptance of you is not your identity

You can stop running after things: a new car, a new home, new furniture, a new iPhone, new fashionable clothes.

Because your worth is not in things that are so short-lived

And when we finally, once and for all, understand this, then

we are free, we have succeeded. Then we have become cool!
{eoa}

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

The Signs of a True Prophet

Paul is again warning us in his letter to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:5-7 to protect us from the deception in these last days: “having a form of godliness, but denying its power. Turn away from such people. Those of this nature creep into houses and captivate silly women who are burdened with sins and led away with various desires, always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

We are not to be naïve, but wise. No matter how godly, how charismatic, how charming or how appealing the one with a message may seem, we are responsible to try the spirits and judge the message against the Word of God. We endanger ourselves when we run to others for direction and comfort instead of to God. The modern-day prophet is not meant to take the place of God.

True prophets bring clarity to the Word. They help shed

revelation knowledge on God's people. They do not mince words, but are very direct and to the point. They do not use flattery to gain favor.

The prophetic words they deliver are not their own, but God's. Their message complements the Word of God, but does not substitute the Word. They do not need to be coaxed from the receiver to see if what they are prophesying is the truth. They will bring transparency to the obscure.

The message they deliver from God will release freedom. They have a low tolerance level for blatant sin and a rebellious spirit. They are not going to ask you to compromise and do something ungodly. Understanding these characteristics should help to discern a true prophet from a false prophet.

False messages are not only delivered by false prophets and false teachers, but also by other means as well. Other delivery services are lying and deceptive spirits whispering to our minds and emotions. We are to judge these messages passing through our minds and working on our emotions.

We must learn to judge our own thoughts against the Word of God and do as Paul instructs us in 2 Corinthians 10:5: "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

Judging the message by the Word of God will protect our hearts from being deceived in these last days. It also will highlight the venomous snakes that are camouflaged in God's thicket.

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When God Brings Judgment

“For this cause everyone who is godly will pray to You in a time when You may be found” (Ps. 32:6).

The psalmist implies that there comes a time when God cannot be found. A time when God hides Himself. A time that I believe may have begun in America.

Our nation is in a mess. Why? Could it be because America is losing God's blessing? His favor. Could our sin be provoking His judgment? Judgment that is not necessarily in the form of a nuclear dirty bomb, or another ISIS attack, or an economic collapse. But a Romans 1 judgment as God backs out of our national life and turns us over to ourselves.

In the Old Testament, God moved in judgment on His own beloved nation of Judah. Interestingly, His judgment of Judah was a 22-year process. God moved slowly, giving plenty of opportunity for Judah to repent of her sin, turn to Him and, therefore, escape the judgment. But with all of God's warnings, Judah became even more defiant. More disobedient. More wicked. She insisted on her right to immorality and idolatry. In the end, God became her enemy. He sent in the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem, the temple and the people. Those who were not taken captive were slaughtered in the streets (2 Chr. 36:15-19)

God warns a nation that judgment is coming. He doesn't want any to perish. But if a nation does not heed His warnings, He unleashes His anger and there is nothing—no one—who can prevent it. If God would judge His own beloved nation of Judah, why would we think America could escape?

So ... *if* we are coming under the judgment of God—if He is

giving us over to ourselves, removing His blessing, protection, and favor—the solution will not be found in politics or the economy or the military or technology. The solution will be found on our knees as we humble ourselves, pray, seek God’s face, and repent of our sin. Then plead for Him to return to us as we return to Him.



Now is the time to get serious about repentance and prayer. As I addressed the crowd gathered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on May 9, I told them that when Ezra led a great revival in Judah, the people stood in the pouring rain for three days repenting of their sin (Ezra 10:9). I wonder ... had God made it hard on His people to test the seriousness of their repentance?

Those gathered before me on the Washington Mall were also standing in the pouring rain ... and snow ... with temperatures in the 20s. Was God also testing our seriousness to seek His face, to pray and to repent of our sin?

God promises: *“You shall seek Me and find Me, when you shall search for Me with all your heart”* (Jer. 29:13). There can be no casual, halfhearted turning to God—not if we want Him to return to us. God emphasizes this principle in Joel 2:12-14: *“Yet even now, declares the Lord, return to Me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning. Rend your heart, and not your garments. ... Who knows? He might turn aside and relent, and He might leave behind a blessing.”*

Some of the prayers and calls for repentance I have heard within the church or at prayer events seem to be a rending of garments. An outward show to impress. A going through the motions of repentance. But the pleading seems to be contrived and hollow instead of brokenhearted and contrite.

Only God knows those who are rending their hearts as they seek

Him. But I am led to ask truly serious am I about seeking God on behalf of our nation? When was the last time I fasted and wept and mourned and confessed the sin of our nation as though it were my own? I believe the future of America hangs on the answer to that question. {eoa}

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Why Christians Should Test Every Spirit

Yesterday, we read how John in 1 John 4:1-6 warns us of the spirit of Antichrist that we heard was coming in the form of false prophets. And that we are not to believe every spirit, but we are to test them to see if they are of God or not.

Then Paul warns us in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 about false prophets that transform themselves into prophets of Christ. We are not to be gullible, but be responsible and try the spirits.

Peter also warns us in 2 Peter 2:1-3 of false prophets and false teachers and their destructive heresies, and that many will follow after their destructive ways.

These false prophets and false teachers by the evil power of deception camouflage themselves to be like us. And their numbers are increasing in these last days.

The thought that there is deception in the camp of the Lord is discouraging. The fact that many will be led astray from the

faith is even more disheartening. But these warnings are not meant to detour us from walking in the supernatural; they are to help us not be foolhardy. They are to aid us in being wise and able to discern true gold from fool's gold and walking in the true power of the supernatural.

This is why we need to do as the Lord instructs us: "Try the spirits." Evaluate or judge them; put them on trial according to the Word of God. We are the judge; the message is the defendant. The Bible is our law book that we base our judgment upon, and we are to judge the message. There are only two choices: Either the message is true or the message is false. Does the message line up with the law book, the Bible? Or do we have to compromise the truth of the Bible in an area to approve the message?

A good judge is not swayed by emotions, but has studied the law books and with wisdom implements the law. To make good judgments, we need to know what the law books says. In order to have a fair trial, the truth needs to be revealed. In order for the truth to be revealed, the message needs to be examined according to the Word of God. We cannot rightly judge unless we have studied God's law, His Word. We are instructed in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." We are the ones who are to study the Word of God for ourselves; we are the ones who need to try the spirits; and we are the ones who are to judge the message according to the Word of God. Is the message true or false?

The evil one, Satan, and his demonic force are experts at being wicked. Through trial and error they have found our weakness and will appear as angels of light, false prophets and false teachers to cause us to fall into destruction. If they see we do not read and study the Bible on a consistent basis, they will bring false teachers and false prophets our way. Then before we know it, we could find ourselves in ruins because we believed a false prophet who declared the world was

going to end yesterday. We foolishly believed that he could predict the return of the Lord when Jesus Christ clearly states in Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." In our eagerness for the Lord's return, we willfully believed the charismatic personality and are now broke and bitter because we did not "try the spirits." We did not take the time to rightly evaluate, judge or put the message on trial to see if this message lined up with the written Word of God. {eoa}

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Why You Won't Lose Weight From Eating Less, Exercising

My heart is hurting today. It's not that anything out of the ordinary happened. It's not that anyone close to me passed away. It's that I have this great burden for those who are caught in the overwhelming stress of life that leads them down the path of continual weight gain. Everyone is looking for answers, but almost no one wants the real answer.

I got an email recently. Essentially it said, "I'm reading your book and I am confused. You say you've been on low-carb diets and gained the weight back again. Now you're on a low-carb diet and losing the weight and keeping it off. What changed?"

What Is the Problem?

In my response, I put on the coach's hat and said, "Obviously,

it's not about what we eat." Then I told her reread *Sweet Grace* and look for the hidden keys. "They are not so hidden."

We always go to what we eat as the cause of the angst we feel over our weight loss. Doctors will tell you what they always use to tell me, eat less and move more. Let me tell you, when I had over 250 pounds to lose, that sounded like Charlie Brown's teacher. Wah Wah Wah!

It is true on a very basic level, but it doesn't get at the core of why we eat. Without going to that deep place, we will always eat more than we should and continue to gain weight.

We Are Complex

Changing our mindsets is vital. However, in order to do that, we have to go to the root of why we eat when we are not physically hungry. It is head hunger, plain and simple. Part of it is physical if I eat foods which are addictive to me, but the reason I eat those foods is out of an emotional need.

We are very complex human beings. We know we need to change. We have good intentions and then something goes haywire when we try to implement it. There are many layers to this, but it starts with acknowledging we have a problem that goes deeper than sticking to an eating plan.

Stress from working long hours, stress from bills, stress from relationships, stress from not eating right, stress from not working out, stress from not being spiritual enough, stress from giving in to temptation, stress from not doing our daily devotions ... stress, stress, stress is a major culprit. We eat to stave off stress and then we get more stressed because it shows on the scale.

Live Freely and Lightly

Here's what God has to say about that. "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and

you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me, and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”¹

Wouldn't that be awesome to live freely and lightly? These verses tell us it is possible to stop the spinning for a minute and let God lead. I'm not saying to do forced Bible study, though studying the Bible is great.

Let God Minister to You

I'm saying to allow God to minister to you as only He can. Running to food when we are stressed does not hold a candle to running to the only One who can really comfort us, the precious Holy Spirit, the Comforter Himself.

When is the last time you took even five minutes to soak in His presence, focusing only on Him and asked Him, “Holy Spirit, what do you want me to know today? I invite You to lead me every step of the way today. I invite You fully into each moment. Speak to me.”

We do not have to worry. His yoke is “easy”² because we are joined in this battle with Him. We don't have to pull alone. He's pulling with us. As long as we are going His direction, “the yoke is easy to bear, and the burden is light.”²

I Am Weak

It's OK that I am weak. God delights in my weakness. Losing 260 pounds has been the easiest hard thing I've ever done because I surrendered my weakness to Him.

He says, “My grace is enough. It's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness.” His grace is all the power I need to take the next step out of overwhelming

difficulty and heaviness into living freely and lightly.

Are You Weak?

Are you weak today? That's awesome, because when you let Christ take over, the weaker you get, the stronger you become.⁴ Stop doing this in your own strength. Stop trying to bear your burdens alone. He's ready to shoulder them if you just take your hands off. {eoa}

¹ Matthew 11:28-30, MSG

² Matthew 11:28-20, NLT

³ 2 Cor. 12:9, MSG

⁴ 2 Cor. 12:10

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How Your Breath Releases God's Life

My three-ring notebook contained 14 songs, and I carried it with me last Friday and Saturday, to accompany vocalists for the high school district music festival.

Then at church on Saturday night, I had to laugh at myself. Fourteen times that weekend, I had heard adjudicators preach good breathing techniques to my students, so when we started singing praise songs, all I could think about was how to breathe while I sang.

1. Put your dominant foot slightly forward.
2. Roll your shoulders back until they fall relaxed, in line with your heels.
3. Hold your head tall.
4. Take a full breath in, using your large abdominal and back muscles, not your small, fragile throat muscles.
5. While you sing, control the release of air by using your abdominal muscles, as if breathing out through a coffee straw.

One of our praise songs talked about the breath of God, and I pictured the creation of Adam.

“Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7).

Breathing and life go together.

My husband is a licensed clinical professional counselor. Do you know what he does first thing when people (and not always just his wife) are anxious? He walks them through deep-breathing exercises.

What if God wants us to do with our spirits what he created our bodies to do?

As much as there is a physical art and discipline to breathing well for singing, there is a spiritual art and discipline to breathing well for living. Why do some followers of Christ have peace and joy and others don't? Breathing technique.

When I try to figure out a problem on my own or try to pull

myself up in a difficult situation by myself, I quickly experience anxiety and a great weariness, the way a novice vocalist starts sucking air before getting to the end of a phrase. But when I pray and put all my weight on God's truths, I can endure hard things better and longer, because I have filled myself with life-giving oxygen.

One of the vocal adjudicators (a gifted fellow teacher from my school) said that throat tension (TENSION!) is a symptom of not getting a sufficient fill of oxygen by using the abdominal and back muscles.

We all breathe, but not everyone breathes well.

Try watching this video of Andrea Bocelli and Heather Headley. When they hold the huge notes for an impossibly long time at the end, ask yourself how they are able to sing with such strength for so long. Their voices go to the rafters.

Then imagine your life, your "voice" going to the rafters, filled with the truths of God and able to produce and sustain something beautiful for the world to hear. This is what God made you to do, but you have to get a good breath first.

A Warning for the Last Days

John warns and instructs us in 1 John 4:1-6, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and

is already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world, and therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. We are of God, and whoever knows God listens to us. Whoever is not of God does not listen to us. This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

To protect ourselves in these last days we are to test the spirits. The enemy’s messengers will come especially to those whom they have witnessed do not judge what appears to them, for these people are easy prey for the enemy to devour.

We are not to be gullible, but responsible and try the spirits. Paul warns us in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, “For such are false apostles and deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.” He is warning us that there are false prophets and false teachers and that their numbers are increasing in these last days, but they will appear to us to be of Christ. So just because we see or hear something amazing, does not mean it is of God.

Peter also warns us in 2 Peter 2:1-3, “But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. And in their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their judgment, made long ago, does not linger, and their destruction does not slumber.”

As I meditate upon these warnings, I think of a time I was taking a nature walk and enjoying the beauty of the rain

forest. I bent down to pick up an old rusty bucket that was in the weeds. As I reached out to grab the bucket, I realized that I was right on top of a venomous snake in the grass. It held its head and upper body so still that it blended in perfectly with the tall surrounding grass. I didn't recognize it until I was very close to it and looked it in the eye. But as soon as it knew I had seen it, it dropped and slithered quickly away, deeper into the thicket of the woods.

Right after my encounter with this snake, our son, Joaquin, was down by the pond and he cried out, "Mom, there is a big snake!" The snake he saw was different from the one I just saw. Then later that morning our son, Andres, was walking down the path and he saw a snake, and it was a different species. Then the next day my husband, David, was working outside and he too came across a snake. We all came across snakes within a two-day span of time, each one a different species, but still they were snakes and we did not spot them until we were right on top of them.

Beware, for there are highly venomous spiritual snakes camouflaged within the body of Christ today. As we draw close to the end of this age, their numbers will increase and their poison will become deadlier than before.

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

Starting Your Revival

There's much talk for the need of revival throughout the world, in our nation and in the body of Christ. And this is certainly true, but I'm not sure if God's people understand

how to make this happen.

We can fill large auditoriums with God's people, have the most popular preachers and Christian singers, get people to sing and dance throughout the night and still not have revival. We can travel the world and revisit where amazing moves of the Holy Spirit took place and still not enter into true revival.

Why? Because revival is a matter of the individual's spiritual heart. It involves self-judgment and repentance. Spiritual revival resurrects the dead and gives oxygen so that the spirit can breathe again.

True revival is not staged, and it doesn't come cheap. It doesn't transfer from one person to another, you have to go after it for yourself.

You must look at yourself with your spiritual eyes wide open, and recognize your utter desperation for the Spirit of the Living God. Become the deer that David describes in Psalm 42 that is so thirsty it pants in desperation for the water. This is how we are to desire our Lord, Jesus Christ.

"As the deer pants after the water brooks, so my soul pants after You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When will I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they always say to me, 'Where is your God?'" (Ps. 42: 1-3).

If you are thirsty for God, I encourage you to fast 40 days, Daniel style. Not only will you cleanse your body by eating fruits and vegetables, but spiritually you will cleanse your spirit by the washing of His Word, and learn to enter into fellowship with Him, pray daily for the healing of our nation and break through to the realm of the miraculous for yourself and your loved ones.

Make sure to have on hand a supply of fruits and vegetables

you enjoy. You can juice these, make them into smoothies, or eat them whole, cooked or raw, organic or non-organic, however you prefer. Drink lots of water, caffeine-free tea and natural fruit juices. Make sure to eliminate added sugars, and do not use salt.

Have your Bible on hand, and a journal. A notebook is just fine for journaling.

What should you read? Let me recommend a chapter from Proverbs a day. If the date is the 6th of the month, then you read Proverbs 6. If it is the 18th of the month then you read Proverbs 18. And so on and so forth. I would also recommend you read through the book of Acts, one chapter a day, and when you finish with that, go to the book of Revelation. Make this time personal and examine your heart according to the Word of God that you read that day.

Journal what the Lord shows you during this time. And go back over your notes often.

Pray in the Spirit morning, noon and night. And write down your prayer requests in your journal. Make sure to include answered prayers in your journal as well.

If you will put your all into this time of prayer and fasting, you will enter into the place of true revival.

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