

Robert Morris: The Truth About the Holy Spirit

The truth about the baptism in the Holy Spirit that most believers don't know.

Many people think Jesus' final words of instruction to His disciples are found in the final two verses of the book of Matthew, when He said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).

However, these words were not the last Jesus spoke to His disciples. His final word of instruction to His followers was not "go." It was "wait."

We find this command recorded in the final chapter of Luke and again in Acts 1: "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to *wait for the Promise* of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but *you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit* not many days from now'" (Acts 1:4-5, emphasis added).

Jesus' final instruction was to wait. Wait for what? The promise. What promise? The baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told His disciples to "wait" before they "go" change the world. He knew if they went without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, nothing would happen. He was telling them, "Don't try to do anything I've instructed and called you to do until you've received this additional baptism. You'll only be striving in your own natural ability, and nothing of lasting spiritual value will be accomplished. Wait! Wait for what I promised you—a Helper."

If you've been born again, the Holy Spirit baptized you into

Jesus at the moment you were saved. But let me ask you: Have you asked Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit? If not, in whose power are you attempting to live the Christian life?

The Three Baptisms

Many Christians are unfamiliar with the baptism in the Holy Spirit. In fact, most believers only know about water baptism. We can easily deal with this baptism because the Bible depicts it clearly—take John the Baptist’s activity in the Jordan River, for example. If you attend a church that practices water baptism, you see it with your own eyes all the time.

Still, the Bible mentions two baptisms you can’t see with your physical eyes; you can only see the after-effects of them in a person’s life. Let’s explore all three to understand the differences.

1. Baptism of the Holy Spirit. You probably already know about this baptism, but you might know it by a different name: salvation. First Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free.

Who is doing the baptizing in this verse? The Holy Spirit. When you and I experienced salvation, we were both baptized into the same body—the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the agent who did the baptizing. This is the baptism *of* the Holy Spirit, but it’s not the baptism *in* the Holy Spirit.

2. Water baptism. If we are obedient to the commands of Scripture, we choose to experience a second baptism, this one in water. This type of baptism is what Jesus had in mind when He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). This baptism symbolizes our new life in Christ.

3. Baptism in the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 3:11, John the

Baptist refers to Jesus, saying, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

John's statement here is one of just a handful of statements or accounts present in all four Gospels—you can find the other three versions of this verse in Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16 and John 1:33. You'll also find accounts of the death and resurrection of Jesus in all four Gospels, as these events are obviously central to the gospel story and explain vital truths believers need to understand. I believe it's significant that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is in all four as well.

Scripture clearly shows us Jesus is the one who performs this baptism, immersing us in the Holy Spirit. Yet because this baptism has been harmfully misrepresented, countless Christians avoid it. How could Jesus baptizing us in the Holy Spirit possibly be a bad thing, though—especially when it's so plainly present in the Bible?

Peter's Pentecost Sermon

This promise of the baptism in the Holy Spirit came powerfully to the disciples in Acts 2. Peter delivers a sermon immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In response to Peter's preaching, a number of his Jewish listeners fall under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:37 tells us, "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'"

"What shall we do?" That's a pretty broad question. How does Peter respond?

"Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are

afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call'" (vv. 38-39).

Notice that in the active verbs in these verses, Peter outlines three baptisms. He says:

1. *Repent*. This is the vital primary step in the baptism of salvation.
2. *Be baptized*. Peter urges his listeners to follow Jesus' example by submitting themselves to water baptism.
3. *Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. This is the third baptism. As Peter indicates here, the Holy Spirit will not force Himself upon anyone. He must be "received."

From here on out, the third baptism continually follows the first two as an essential, critical part of the Christian life.

Great Joy in Samaria

For example, in Acts 8 we find the evangelist Philip preaching and teaching in Samaria. After a revival breaks out, many people are healed, delivered from demonic oppression and saved. Then, verse 12 tells us, "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized."

Two of the three baptisms are found in this verse. "They believed" means the people received the baptism of salvation. Then they were baptized in water—that's two. What about the third baptism—immersion in the Holy Spirit? Let's keep reading:

"Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (vv. 14-16).

Notice what this passage *doesn't* say. It doesn't tell us that when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John, who gave these new believers the right hand of Christian fellowship because they had everything they needed.

In the early years of my Christian walk, this is precisely what I was taught. I was told that once I was saved and water-baptized, I had everything I needed to live the Christian life.

Of course now I know that without receiving the Holy Spirit, I was living a powerless and defeated life of minimal effectiveness in God's kingdom.

Peter and John didn't dare do that kind of disservice to the new believers of Samaria. They were happy these folks had received the first two baptisms. But the first thing the disciples asked was whether or not the new believers had received the third one.

When the answer came back no, the apostles immediately addressed the situation: "They laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (v. 17).

Only then were these new Christians fully equipped to be all God called them to be.

I've heard people argue that the baptism in the Holy Spirit only occurred on the day of Pentecost, yet these events in Samaria occurred months or even years after those of Acts 2—and this isn't the last time we see people experiencing three baptisms in the Scriptures, either.

The Pattern Continues in Ephesus

Many years after the Pentecost outpouring, we hear about the apostle Paul's ministry in Ephesus, recorded in Acts 19: "And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having

passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some *disciples* he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you *believed*?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit'" (vv. 1-2, emphasis added).

Interestingly, the people Paul encountered were "disciples" who already "believed," meaning they were followers of Jesus Christ. Now notice Paul's question: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Paul doesn't seem to have any doubt in his mind that someone can come to saving faith in Jesus Christ yet not receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Paul knows that a person can be baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ (salvation) yet not be baptized by Jesus into the Holy Spirit.

By the way, I love the response of the believers: "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." Maybe these people went to the same church I attended as a boy! Someone told them enough about Jesus so they could be saved, but they hadn't even heard of the Holy Spirit.

Paul found this so puzzling that he decided to check and make sure these people were actually saved: "And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?'" (v. 3).

When they said, "Into John's baptism," Paul explained what they were missing: "Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after Him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied" (vv. 4-6).

Notice what happens when the Ephesian believers receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit: they spoke with tongues and prophesied. We see this pattern again and again throughout the

book of Acts.

Three Witnesses in Heaven and on Earth

Now let's look at 1 John 5:7: "There are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." Of course, "the Word" is a reference to Jesus. But do you believe what this verse says—that the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit "are one"? In other words, do you believe in the Trinity? I suspect you do.

This verse says that these three all "bear witness in heaven." Of course, we aren't in heaven right now. We're on earth. So who or what is bearing witness here on earth?

The next verse tells us: "And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one" (v. 8).

Here we have the three baptisms in reverse order! The three "witnesses" on earth are the Holy Spirit baptism, water baptism and salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Each one of these baptisms represents a distinct work of grace God wants to do in our hearts and lives. Salvation is a miraculous work of grace upon the heart. Water baptism is a work of grace in and upon the heart of man. And a believer's baptism in the Holy Spirit releases within us the supernatural empowerment to do all that God calls us to do.

As we've seen, Jesus commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the promised Holy Spirit came. Why? Because in Jesus' own words, they would be clothed in heavenly power (Luke 24:49), receive empowerment to be witnesses for Him all over the world (Acts 1:8) and do even greater things than He had done (John 14:12).

Let me condense and summarize these three "witnesses" in a personal way. When I was saved, I became a new person. When I

was baptized in water, the old person was cut off. And when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit, I received the power to walk in the new. That third baptism makes a huge difference! For years, I tried to live in victory, power and purity. However, I experienced little but failure and frustration. After I received that third baptism, everything changed. The wonderful intimacy with the Holy Spirit that I began to enjoy became so precious to me that I would shrink back at the thought of doing anything that would grieve Him. Because God's Word was now alive to me in new ways, I suddenly found Scriptures coming to mind at critical times of need or temptation. That sense of anointing I had frequently experienced in the pulpit quickly came to be a part of my daily life—at the grocery store, on the golf course and, most important, inside the walls of my home.

What About You?

I want you to ask yourself an important question: "Have I experienced only two baptisms?"

Have you ever experienced an immersion in the Holy Spirit that brought supernatural power and help into your life? Jesus wants to baptize you with power from on high. Why in the world would anyone say "Thanks, but no thanks" to that?

Many Christians are living lives of defeat, frustration and failure, as I did before I opened my heart and mind to this third baptism. I've tried living without the Holy Spirit's power, but I wouldn't go back to that way of living for all the money in the world. It's too wonderful to have God the Holy Spirit as a best friend.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). That's the biblical truth that can transform your life. Will you pray and receive the Holy Spirit today?

Robert Morris is founding senior pastor of Gateway Church, a multi-campus, evangelistic, Spirit-empowered church in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. He is featured on the weekly television program The Blessed Life, broadcast to approximately 90 million homes in the United States and more than 200 countries around the world. He is the best-selling author of 11 books including The Blessed Life, From Dream to Destiny and The God I Never Knew. Robert and his wife, Debbie, have been married 32 years and are blessed with one daughter, two sons and three grandchildren. You can follow Robert on Twitter @PsRobertMorris.

Watch as Robert Morris goes into detail about the truths of the Holy Spirit that some Christians don't know at

Discovering You're Old

You know, now that I'm past that half-century mark in age, I wake up in the morning, look in the mirror and realize that the new me is now the old me.

Sigh.

I guess this thought crystallized last Saturday when I arrived at my first senior tennis match of the season. Yes, senior.

Senior.

In tennis terms, that means 55-and-counting. But the two gals my partner and I were playing against sure didn't look like seniors. They looked like hard-bodied, uber-energetic 30-year-

olds who had forgotten their moisturizers that morning. I mean, really, until you got up close enough to see a few crows' feet and forehead creases, you'd never know these trim, pony-tailed, cellulite-free gals were past the potty-training years.

I had to fight the temptation to demand they cough up their driver's licenses.

Without meaning to, I became acutely aware of the gray sprigs sproinging wildly from beneath my terry-cloth headband and the ample thigh skin that kept jiggling long after I stopped running.

Hey—why can't women shed old, loose skin like snakes do? Every spring, we could simply scrape that saggy, baggy, crinkly wrapper encasing our youthful insides off on a sharp rock. We could start over fresh, with unmarred, supple, beautiful new skin, soft as a baby's bottom.

Reminds me of the day last April when I walked out my back door to empty a trash can and encountered a perfectly intact 4-foot snakeskin caught in the vines atop our wooden fence. It was the perfect shape and markings of our serpent friend, Servius (Spouse and I named the pleasant reptilian fellow who likes to drape himself along the top of the fence). Only Servius wasn't in there. He was about 3 yards further down the fence, basking in the sunshine. He looked so happy and carefree—as happy and carefree as snakes can look—to be rid of that itchy, peeling, confining shell that probably felt like a too-tight sausage casing.

He appeared so jubilant, I thought he might burst into song at any moment: "I feel pretty, oh, so pretty ... "

How utterly wonderful for him, I thought. He gets a chance to start all over. To discard any flaws, pimples, age spots or imperfections that might have marred him in reptile world and enjoy a do-over. Better luck next time. A full-body makeover.

But alas, for some reason, Papa God didn't think this system would bode well for us humans. Pity.

So instead, I'll have to figure out ways to encase the jiggling thigh-u-lite in spandex, squeege out the facial wrinkles with alligator clips behind the ears, grow bangs over the forehead furrows and invest in vats of moisturizer.

And be grateful that the new old me is still here to distress over it.

Debora M. Coty is the author of 10 books and is a newspaper columnist, orthopedic occupational therapist and tennis addict. Follow Debora on Twitter @deboracoty.

Where's God in My Battle?

I am convinced that everyone, at some point on the journey between here and **eternity**, will face a Really Big Battle. Most of us can easily reach into our memory bank and remember the moment the **battle** lines were drawn.

My friend Vickie can still hear the loud ring of the first shot while she was in the hospital delivery room and the doctor whisked her baby off to intensive care before she could even get a good look. Hours later, she would learn that they were facing the **giant** of Down syndrome.

Jill recalls the moment like it was yesterday. A note from the city on the door of their 20-year-old family business informed them that, because of a legal technicality, the building no longer belonged to them. When the dust settled, her family was left without a business, a home or nearly all of the material

security they had once known.

Debbie suspected a battle was looming because her husband kept going to the doctor but wouldn't tell her why. The shot rang out on the day she happened to be driving a few cars behind him and watched in horror as his van began to swerve in and out of his lane. When he finally pulled over, she ran to his side and found that he was having a seizure. She would later learn it was the result of cancer that had metastasized to his brain.

Do you remember a day when you heard a shot ring out and you realized you were in a **battle** for your joy, your marriage, your finances, your health ... your future? Maybe you are engaged in something fairly fierce right this minute and are looking for hope that you will breathe again, laugh again, trust God again. Perhaps you are wondering why you are still standing. Or maybe you are on the other side of your battle, but it cost you nearly everything, and you're trying valiantly to believe that **God** is for you and with you, even though you feel quite desperately alone. I understand, friend. Oh, how I do.

My **Goliath** is an insidious motor-neuron disease and all the emotional, physical and financial implications that go along with it, but so many different battles rage around us every day. I've also been studying the battle stories in the Bible, looking for principles that can help me in this fight. Nearly all the heroes of our faith were tested, trained and made stronger through their time on the fighting fields. These glorious, victorious examples from the past and the present are teaching me that war is hell, but God is good. And He who is the great Giver of every good gift creates some of the most brilliant and beautiful things in the darkest, most daunting seasons. He does. I promise.

If our roles were reversed and you were telling me your story,

I know that together we could find something beautiful that you have already gathered in the course of your fight. I'm also willing to bet that with a few intentional but relatively simple adjustments, you could find yourself with more treasure than your arms could hold or your heart contain, not in spite of your battle, but *because* of it.

But finding that treasure is a trick sometimes. It can be difficult because so often we invest so much energy in surviving a battle that there's little left for discovering what wonderful things might have happened inside of us in the process.

Let's look for treasure. Let's sift through the soil of the battleground to discover the gold that glistens beneath the surface. Once we know it's there, the next step is to face our fight with faith and ask, *How do I win this thing?*

Now, for our purposes, "winning" doesn't necessarily mean that God has worked everything out as we had hoped (though it sometimes happens that way). It means that God has worked everything *together* to make us stronger, better and more beautiful.

Do you have faith to believe that you could walk off this battlefield more alive and free and ready to face your future than you have ever been before? Please, believe it. It's possible, friend.

I don't know exactly what you're facing today, but I want you to know that I am praying for you. That life will spring forth, His voice will ring in your ears and you will know for certain that the Captain and Commander is bringing life from ashes, order from chaos, strength from pain.

I am praying for you. That the tears you cry as you walk this road will bring healing as they flow and will usher in hope for a new and lovely season where laughter is not a rare guest, but a welcomed friend. I am praying for you. And I want

you to know it.

Let's find some beauty, shall we?

*An excerpt from Beautiful Battlefields by **Bo Stern** ©NavPress, used with permission. For more about Beautiful Battlefields and Bo Stern, visit [here](#), or connect with her on Facebook ([link](#)) and Twitter (@bostern).*

How to Bounce Back After a Huge Mistake

When I go to the grocery store and there's one of those signs on the end of the conveyor belt that says "Checker in Training," I always go to that lane.

Because I worked at a grocery store during my summers when I was in college, and I remember what it was like to be the one learning. I remember trying to memorize the number code for every fruit, learning what to do with food stamps and coupons, and mastering the art of packing a grocery sack so that the bread and eggs are placed gently on top and not on the bottom.

With learning comes mistake after mistake, but nobody cares, because they know you're working hard to figure it out and improve your skill.

So I'll be going down to the t-shirt store and having this decal ironed onto every shirt I own: "Woman in training."

It makes me laugh out loud this morning, to realize that I'm practicing on EVERYBODY. When I got married I knew nothing,

and 22 years later, I might be getting the hang of being a wife. Then somebody rolled up two swaddled babies and handed them to me, and I can promise you I knew nothing about what to do with them.

I put my faith in Christ knowing about one-trillionth of what that meant. I blog every day, but you do realize I'm new at this? A year and a half into writing, and I still feel like a novice. And God has gifted me with friends, but I find myself practicing on them—knowing I need to love them, but I feel all thumbs at times.

All thumbs.

Doesn't that describe how we feel during a good chunk of our day?

That's why Paul says, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Eph. 4:2, NIV).

Be patient, he says. We're all trying to get the hang of this.

You know, when they take the sign away that says, "Checker in Training," then all of a sudden everyone expects the checker to have their act together. This makes sense in a grocery store but doesn't make sense in real life.

Wives and moms and daughters and employees and Christ followers and home managers need years—maybe a lifetime—to get into the swing of things. The sign shouldn't come down.

So cut yourself some slack—you're learning.

I see your sign. I'll choose to come to your lane, because I understand if you make mistakes.

Christy Fitzwater is a blogger, pastor's wife and mom of two teenagers. She resides in Montana. Visit for more information

about her ministry.

When You Don't Think You're Good Enough for a God-Given Opportunity

Women want to be liked. To that end we may use modesty and self-depreciation as a communication bridge – a connection. Women also tend to overestimate the credentials and experience of others while discounting their own.

I watched this scenario play out with one of my dearest friends. She is dynamic and beautiful, hardworking and extremely talented. For more than 20 years she has run a successful day care, assisted her husband in ministry, and is a freelance writer for a popular parenting magazine. Recently an opportunity was presented to her. Her response is a prime example of how women underestimate themselves and overestimate others.

My friend was asked to consider consulting for a large organization because of the creative, intuitive way she works with her children and teachers. While she does not have a formal degree in this field, she has an amazing God-born talent, countless certifications and licenses, and decades of successful experience. As she investigated the opportunity, she began to question her qualifications.

“I don't have the formal training for this. The people in this company have incredible résumés.” I gently—oK, maybe not so gently—reminded her that her own résumé was nothing short of incredible.

My dear friend did what many of us do. We super-size the value of others, but when it comes to our own value, we think in terms of the kid's meal!

We have all been turned off by people who are walking, talking, look-at-me billboards. The noise of it does not compel—it repels.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is complete obscurity—a lack of clarity, distinctness, and definition. Perhaps the answer is found somewhere in the middle—a gentle balance of humility and confidence, understanding when and how to communicate a sincere, authentic message that allows us to walk into the opportunities God has for us.

Here are some better ways to appropriately talk about your successes when you are offered a God-opportunity:

1. Instead of talking about what you did, talk about the difference it made.
2. Instead of talking about what you can't do, talk about what you can do and what you are learning to do.
3. Talk about your goals and how you will measure your success.
4. If you are working for an organization, debrief results with your boss candidly and without apology. Listen to the difference between these two approaches: "I think the project went all right. There were some rough spots, but we made it through." Compare that report with this one: "We met our objectives, and we learned a great deal. I am most proud of the way we..."
5. Quantify your results whenever you can. Instead of saying, "I think we will save a lot of money," say, "I estimate a savings of more than \$10,000." This would come in handy with your spouse too, when its time for that new couch.

6. When you fall short of your goals, ask a friend or colleague for feedback, and talk about what you have learned from the experience and how you will apply those insights in the future.

7. Talk about your weaknesses differently. Instead of saying, “I need to be more analytical,” say, “I want to strengthen my analytical skills. What projects or assignments would help me do that?”

8. Even your challenges are opportunities to demonstrate creativity and problem-solving skills.

When you aren't getting the results you need, couple the issues with recommendations and solutions. False humility only strengthens the negative internal dialogue you may be working to overcome.

When you are able to speak truthfully and humbly about your gifts, talents, and accomplishments, you begin to reinforce your God-given destiny and purpose. Your positive thoughts about yourself and the positive way you present yourself to others will begin to invite those next-level opportunities.

*Adapted from A Softer Strength (CharismaHouse) by **Dondi Scumaci**. Dondi is an international speaker, author and expert in leadership development, communication, talent management and mentoring.*

Revealing Jesus

Darlene Zschech
(Integrity Media)

Like a familiar friend, the voice of Darlene Zschech lends itself to a live worship project.

A pioneer of the modern worship movement through her years with Hillsong Church in Sydney, Australia, Zschech continues to raise the bar with *Revealing Jesus*. Produced by four-time Grammy-winner Israel Houghton, the album, recorded last September at Church of the Highlands in Birmingham, Ala., includes Michael W. Smith and Kari Jobe as co-writers and performers.

Revealing Jesus features a variety of tempos and styles to engage listeners, including explosive anthems such as “Best for Me” and “All That We Are,” and more intimate ballads such as “Magnificent” and “Your Presence Is Heaven.”

“In Jesus’ Name” is among the project’s highlights, spotlighting the freedom and healing of Christ through a chorus that proclaims, “I will live, I will not die,” and which confronts sickness and cancer while declaring “the finished work of Christ in this place.” “Victor’s Crown,” a resurrection-centered praise track, builds into a triumphant chorus, much like “Worthy Is the Lamb.” Kari Jobe guests on the soft-rock ballad “Yours Forever.”

The release also includes a reworking of the hymn “My Jesus I Love Thee” and “Your Name/Cry of the Broken,” which blends the familiar praise song into a new refrain.

Zschech, with Houghton’s direction, has crafted one of the finest live worship projects in recent memory, which serves as a bridge for those raised on early Hillsong music who want to sing a new song. A companion book and DVD release simultaneously.

How God Set Me Free From Painkiller Addiction

On a sunny day in 2008 I woke up with my first migraine headache—and I had it (in one form or another) every day for the next 1,000 days. Three years of acute pain, medical tests and medications. Three years of panic, fear and tears. Worst of all, my three-year battle with migraines brought me face-to-face with narcotic painkiller addiction.

Apparently I'm not alone: Current statistics report that an estimated 50 million Americans suffer from some form of chronic pain. Between 2004 and 2009 prescriptions for opioid pain relievers went from about 45 million to approximately 180 million, more than a fourfold increase.

That's a whole lot of folks in pain and taking painkillers. Let me share with you a bit about my story and how God brought healing and redemption to me.

There's an adage about addiction, which says, "One is too many, and a thousand is neverenough." That phrase perfectly describes what it's like to be dependent on painkillers.

During my battle with migraines and painkiller addiction I found myself between a rock and a hard place: I desired to stop taking the narcotics, but I was in massive amounts of pain.

Let's be honest here and admit there's a "payoff" for taking a pain pill—a euphoric high, which is the reason why narcotics are so addictive. Long-term narcotic use is like a runaway train: Once it has gained speed, it becomes difficult to stop.

I prayed about my Vicodin use constantly. Each night as I crawled into bed I would begin a long discourse with God. *O Lord, I'm so sorry. Forgive me. Help me!* One night as I was

beginning my “pain med conversation” with God, I clearly heard the Holy Spirit say, *Can we talk about anything else tonight?* That gave me a much-needed laugh!

It was in the midst of this ludicrous pain-med cycle that God spoke clearly and distinctly, *Stop taking the Vicodin completely.* He confirmed His word through my pastor and leadership team at my church. They had been aware of my migraine illness, as well as my pain medication use.

I came across this quote by Rick Joyner shortly before I began my journey to go pain-med free: “Until we make the decision that we will not go back, regardless of how painful it gets, we will not go forward with the force of faith that it will take to fulfill our destiny.”

I taped that quote on my refrigerator and read it about 100 times a day. I also held tightly to this Scripture found in Jonah 2:8, “Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs” (NIV).

I hated the thought of “forfeiting” the very grace I needed to fight addiction and receive physical healing from God. I was ready to lay my idol down, once and for all.

Armed with God’s clear directive, the support of my family and closest friends—and that anointed quote—I went off all pain meds cold turkey. (I don’t necessarily recommend the “cold turkey” method. If you are dealing with prescription painkiller addiction seek your doctor’s advice).

During those first few days and weeks I battled extreme migraine pain, fear, insomnia and anxiety. I was shaky, nauseous, achy and sicker than a dog. I endured each day the best I could, and I clung to God. I knew this was His direction for my life, so I obeyed. I provided the “willingness” and the Holy Spirit provided the supernatural strength.

It's hard to explain, but while on one hand it was agony to resist the temptation to medicate myself with narcotic painkillers, on the other hand I was able to somehow endure, resist and conquer because of the courage and grace God supplied me. It was difficult—but not impossible.

During this time the Lord spoke 1 John 3:21-22 to me: "Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him."

This Scripture provided a breakthrough for me! The key was, "if our hearts do not condemn us." It had been impossible for me to stand in faith for my healing because my heart condemned me over my Vicodin abuse. I had lost my "confidence before God." Once I began to walk in the revealed will of God for my life, my confidence returned and I waited in a holy expectation for my healing.

Although my healing was not instant, it did come. Over the course of months I recovered from my illness! In my case, I believe my healing was dependent upon my obedience—but not because God was "holding out on me" Goodness no! God doesn't heal us because we are good. He heals us because *He* is good. And yet, I had a block to that healing flow because of my dependency on my precious painkillers—instead of on God's promise of healing.

Once I no longer had the option of taking matters into my own hands and euphorically medicating myself, I became wide open to the supernatural power of God. And He came! He came and healed me, and He'll do the same for you!

✘ *This article has been adapted by permission from A Season of Breakthrough: Four Strategies to Living a Life of Sustained Freedom by Paula Friedrichsen, author and speaker, .*

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 03/04/2013

This week thank God for the amazing grace He gives when you face what appears to be an impossible struggle. Thank Him for giving you courage, strength and endurance to face and defeat any obstacle, addiction, illness or lack in Jesus Name. Ask Him to continue to fill you with His Holy Spirit and produce the fruit of self-control while helping you recall appropriate scriptures to use in any battle you face. Continue to pray for revival in our churches and nation, for more workers to reap the harvest of souls, and for the peace of Jerusalem. Gal. 5:1, 22, 23; John 8:36

Epic Series Sets New Standard

Using new technologies, *The Bible* stands apart from previous Scripture-based portrayals in production quantity *and* quality

You know the word *epic* has been watered down and overused when it enters the vernacular of the average elementary school student. But *The Bible* might be the TV event to reclaim that word's original meaning: "extending beyond the usual or ordinary, especially in size or scope."

Starting on March 3, the History Channel will air the series two hours at a time over five weeks that fittingly culminate on Easter Sunday (March 31). As far as quantity is concerned, there has never been a lengthier project on this subject matter to hit the airwaves. *Moses the Lawgiver* had a running time of 360 minutes over six episodes in 1974. *Jesus of Nazareth*, which aired on NBC in 1977, was also 360 minutes long.

The only series to match Mark Burnett and Roma Downey's production might be the TNT *Bible Collection* that featured a dozen 180-minute films, including dramatic portrayals of

Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon and Paul. But that series aired over a four-year stretch in the '90s and barely touched the New Testament.

The Bible is divided into roughly two parts—the first half covering the Old Testament (Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses and David) and the second half covering the New Testament (the life of Christ, Acts and Revelation).

But it's more than quantity that sets *The Bible* apart from other biblically themed television specials. With access to the latest computer-generated imagery technology and a Hollywood-level budget (the amount of which has not yet been disclosed), Burnett and Downey have applied a level of production quality lacking in previous attempts.

"The production is absolutely captivating," evangelist Luis Palau says. "This will easily do for the History Channel what *Roots* did for ABC in 1977."

Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Orange County, Calif., is another influential church leader enthusiastically endorsing the broadcast—and seeing its breadth through a historical lens. "I've probably seen most, if not all, of the films about the Bible produced in the past 50 years," Warren says. "This one stands alone, in a class by itself, as the best I've ever seen. This series draws you into the story from the start. This is living history at its best."

'The Bible' Producers Reveal

Childhood Experiences That Shaped Their View

How the journey of bringing *The Bible* to TV left an imprint of faith on those behind the camera

For Mark Burnett and Roma Downey, the three years spent producing *The Bible* miniseries for the History Channel have been a long time coming. Both can point to individual childhood experiences that laid the foundation for the 10-hour event.

“I recall, as a little girl in Ireland, we had a big, beautiful, leather-bound Bible that had a place of honor on a special table in our good room,” Downey says. “We would gather around, and my father would read Scripture to us. I was also raised through Catholic school. So there were always Bible stories. That was my entire childhood.”

Burnett, on the other hand, was raised in a Scottish family but grew up in London, where it was common for the Bible to be taught in public schools from kindergarten through high school. For many years, Burnett viewed the Bible as a strict rulebook and believed that “something really bad could happen” should he ever deviate from it.

“But as I’ve grown older, and especially through this project, I’ve seen love in it,” he says. “It *is* a serious rulebook, but there’s a different way to look at it. The rules are rules of love. I feel like I’ve understood—that I’ve grown to understand that over time—and this project especially has made me know that.”

The three-year production process has likewise impacted Downey, who hopes viewers will be touched by the visual retelling of the Bible’s most iconic narratives.

“When you learn the Bible as a child, you see it through child’s eyes,” she says. “There’s something about revisiting many of these stories as an adult and recognizing the frailty and humanness of the characters that we filmed.

“This is everyone’s story. And to get to work on this project of a lifetime with the love of my life, Mark, has just been absolutely the most joyful experience ever.”

The Bible Made for TV?

It’s been called the television event of 2013. Yet behind the scenes of *The Bible*, a 10-hour History Channel series produced by reality TV king Mark Burnett and his wife, *Touched by an Angel* star Roma Downey, the Holy Spirit was already at work, proving that God’s Word will not return void.

The scene is set.

It’s the end of a beautiful day in Jerusalem, and Jesus and His disciples have set up camp just outside town. As the sun sets, a mysterious figure makes his way into their midst. The man’s name is Nicodemus, and his presence causes a stir. He is a member of the Jewish ruling council, a group of religious leaders that has grown contentious in its relationship with Jesus and His growing mass of followers.

But Nicodemus comes in peace.

Jesus gently leads the man away from the group, and the two engage in one of the most powerful conversations found in the Gospels.

“Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher who has come from God,” Nicodemus tells Jesus. “For no one could perform the signs You

are doing if God were not with him.”

Jesus replies, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

“How can someone be born when they are old?” a confused Nicodemus asks. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

Jesus explains that Nicodemus must be “born in the Spirit” and then uses another analogy to illustrate this divine truth. “The wind blows wherever it pleases,” Jesus says.

At the very moment Jesus speaks the word “wind,” a gust of air blows through the village. It sways the tree branches side to side and gently tousles the Savior’s hair.

After a brief pause, as if to allow Nicodemus to take in this moment, Jesus continues His thought. “You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

Supernatural FX

It’s impossible to know exactly what happened when that scene unfolded some 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem. The passage found in the third chapter of John isn’t nearly as descriptive in its account. So when Mark Burnett and his wife, Roma Downey, producers of the forthcoming History Channel miniseries *The Bible*, worked with directors and set designers to create a dramatic retelling of the story, they had a measure of creative license available to them.

For instance, that scene, along with most of the project, was shot in Morocco rather than the Holy Land, and many special effects were used to create some of the more challenging visual moments in the biblical narrative, such as the unfolding of Creation, the parting of the Red Sea and the Day of Pentecost.

But on this particular day, when filming the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, there were no plans for such filmmaking magic. It was just an average day on the set. In fact, it had been still all day. There were no hints of movement within the atmosphere.

And then, just as actor Diogo Morgado spoke that word “wind” from the script, a palpable change filled the air.

“In that moment, God said, ‘Here I am,’” Downey recounts. “The wind blew all through the village. And the actors, Diogo and Simon Kunz, had the presence of mind to stay in the moment. They didn’t cut. They didn’t break the scene. They just held the moment. It was extraordinary. And all of us who were watching, we could feel the hair stand up on our arms. It was clear that something supernatural and wonderful had just arrived and shown up.”

Mark Burnett has experienced countless surreal moments as the creator and executive producer of iconic shows such as *Survivor*, *Celebrity Apprentice* and *The Voice*. Nothing, however, could prepare him for that encounter with the Holy Spirit that day.

“The entire crew got chills,” Burnett says. “There was no way that the wind doesn’t blow without the Holy Spirit, especially on the word ‘wind.’ When he said the word ‘wind,’ it just blew. It was like, ‘Whoa!’”

Finding Jesus

When *The Bible* debuted on March 3, it will mark the culmination of more than three years of development and production. And throughout the process of filming this five-part, 10-hour miniseries, God made His presence known.

According to Downey, one of the most powerful instances took place away from the cameras.

“Clearly, we had to cast the role of Jesus. He was the most important cast member. He’s our leading man. We had a few actors lined up that we thought would be possibilities, but we truthfully didn’t have the one actor that we thought would just provide all of the characteristics that we were looking for. We wanted a strong actor but one who could also give us qualities of humility—someone who could be the lion and the lamb.”

Downey, famous for her starring role in the television series *Touched by an Angel*, started praying and put out requests for church groups and other believers she knew to do the same.

Back in Morocco, a production team was scouting locations when one of the crew members heard about the search for an actor to play Jesus. He remembered an actor who had been in Morocco recently for a different role, whom he thought might be suitable. So he employed some crafty investigative work to uncover the actor’s identity and turned up Morgado, a Portuguese actor with mostly European film credits to his name.

After viewing Morgado’s demo tape, Burnett and Downey requested a meeting. Though they loved what they saw on the demo reel, they knew they couldn’t cast the most important role in the series without meeting the actor in person. After some initial confusion on each party’s location, which led Downey and Burnett to believe they’d missed their opportunity, they learned Morgado was in Los Angeles. They scheduled an appointment at their home.

“We heard the garden gate open, and Mark and I looked out at the pathway, and walking toward us was Diogo Morgado,” Downey remembers. “I turned to my husband and said, ‘There he is.’ And it was him. And he was wonderful.”

Downey describes Morgado’s performance as “extraordinary” and feels he was “perfect in this role.” Others agree, including

Christian businessman and filmmaker Mart Green.

“Jim Caviezel did an incredible job showing us the last hours of Jesus’ life in *The Passion*,” Green says. “But in *The Bible* series, we get a more complete look at the characteristics of Christ. I believe that this portrayal of Jesus is the one that the church will envision for the next 20 years.”

For Downey, it was Morgado’s ability to capture Jesus’ strength and sensitivity that told her he was the one for the job. Even more importantly, it was his uncommon humility.

“He’s a very good-looking actor, but he doesn’t have any of that narcissism that usually comes with actors who know they’re very handsome,” she says. “He has a natural kindness and compassion and sensitivity, and yet he’s strong and he’s well built. He has all of the qualities that we hoped he would have and then some. I felt the hand of the divine in helping us find him.”

Burnett recalls another instance of the miraculous during the filming process.

“After we shot the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist,” he shares, “somehow a piece of Jesus’ costume got lost in this massive lake. It’s really critical because you’re shooting for five months—you’ve got to keep control of everything you’ve got. Things are very irreplaceable. A couple of days later, a local found that piece of costume and brought it all the way back to us. He had found it miles downstream. How would anyone even know it was ours? We thought we were never going to see that part of the costume again—ever—and it came back.”

Burnett says he is convinced it was the Holy Spirit acting in all of these instances and still others left untold. He felt it within his spirit, and the physical occurrences that happened almost daily left no doubt God’s hand was on the project.

“But it’s not surprising when you think about it,” Burnett adds. “What were we doing 24 hours a day with hundreds of people? We were working on the Word of God. And we had hundreds of more people praying every day.”

The Big Picture

With production wrapped, the prayer efforts have shifted to the ultimate, twofold purpose behind the miniseries: make a statement to Hollywood and reach the most people possible with the gospel message.

With that first goal in mind, Burnett, who knows a few things about generating massive television audiences, sees a huge opportunity for the Christian community to send a powerful statement by supporting this mass media endeavor.

“What really matters is that the most number of people watch on March 3 and stay with it every week,” he explains. “What that does is send a massive message to people who are involved in all forms of media. We want them to say, ‘Whoa! This is a tight community. It’s a big community. And they really care about this story!’”

To rally the proverbial troops, Burnett and Downey organized multiple events that gave influential Christian leaders a chance to preview clips from the series. Joel Osteen, senior pastor at Lakewood Church in Houston, spent time on the set and “witnessed firsthand the genius of Mark Burnett and Roma Downey” and “the deep and abiding passion they possess for God’s Word.”

Bishop T.D. Jakes describes *The Bible* as being “unlike any other film or miniseries” he has ever encountered and says it “draws us to the divine Author.”

It’s that last statement that excites Burnett and Downey. The couple hopes the series leads non-believers into a first-time relationship with God and brings back to God those who have

become disenfranchised with the church.

“I talk to Mart Green a lot about why Jesus told stories,” Burnett says. “Mart told me that he feels like that’s what I was supposed to do—tell stories—and allow the churches to untie the knots.”

“It’s the most exciting part of this film,” Downey adds. “I believe that the faithful will find the show. We also want to have people who were churched but have fallen away to return through this show. But I’m most excited about the possibility that this series can go out into the corners of the world and speak to people who we’ll never know their name, and their lives will be impacted and their hearts opened and their lives changed for eternity.”

Burnett and Downey are also intrigued to discover how their non-Christian friends will respond. That diverse group includes Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs and atheists, among others.

“Within our circle, we have a lot of respect for each other despite our differing opinions of religion, politics and social issues,” Burnett says. “But we live in a creative world, and our job was to make the most compelling and visual storytelling of the Bible. That’s how our community in Hollywood and our close friends will judge the project and connect to the stories. That was our job. I feel like we’ve done that.”

Despite Burnett and Downey’s individual and collective name recognition, they unequivocally agree that *The Bible* miniseries is the most important project to which they will ever be attached.

“It’s way bigger than us,” Downey says. “We were just the people used to do it. We stepped up. We answered the call. We did it. We brought our talents and our strengths. We combined our love and our energy together, and we put together a great

team of people, and then we had faith in the project. The Bible is a living book. We've been able to breathe fresh visual life into it and bring that to this generation."

Chad Bonham *is a journalist, author and broadcast producer who has worked in mass media for more than 20 years. He served as the contributing editor for New Man magazine for three years and recently released the book Life in the Fairway.*

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE: Watch a moving preview of *The Bible* miniseries at