

How Christian Parents Produce Backslidden Children: Part 2

This is part 2 in a two-part series. You can read Part 1 [here](#).

As a pastor for over 30 years, I am amazed that such a small percentage of the children of Christian parents actually serve the Lord when they reach their teenage years and beyond, including the children of Christian leaders. Since nurturing covenantal children is the primary method God uses to establish His dominion on the earth as it is in heaven, there aren't many subjects more important than the one I am addressing in this article.

In this article, I correlate Christian parental behavior with likely outcomes related to the faith of their children. That is to say, each of us could read this article and most likely tell if our children will serve the Lord with all their hearts in the future, or be lukewarm or unbelieving when they get older. The following are my observations on why many children of Christian parents do not serve the Lord when they are older.

Many Christian parents have a superficial understanding of God and their faith

Many parents only have a very superficial belief system; some don't even know the very basics of the faith! Because of this, they cannot possibly pass down the faith to their children with any substance. Thus, their children will also have a very superficial faith at best. Most likely they will have a trajectory of having no faith and not attending church when they are older.

Every parent doesn't have to be a theologian, but every parent should be grounded in the first principles of the faith and

pass them on to their children.

Many children rarely see their parents seeking God earnestly and consistently

Our faith is more caught than taught. Thus, children learn much by observing their parents diligently seeking God in their private lives. This shows children that their parents have a substantive relationship with God, even when other people are not looking at them. Children who do not see their parents consistently and earnestly seeking God are on a trajectory of having a casual acquaintance relationship with God, instead of a friendship.

Many parents depend too much on their church's **Sunday school or youth group to mature their children in the faith**

I have had to correct many parents who think it is the job of the local church to disciple and train their children in the Lord. The truth is, the church only has their children for several hours per week at best. Parents have their children for at least 50 hours per week. Truly, the primary responsibility of training children in the way of the Lord rests with parents, not the church (Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Children not trained at home by their parents will possibly find themselves on a trajectory toward nominal Christianity without any personal spiritual discipline to seek God.

Many Christian parents consistently miss church for any and all reasons

As a pastor, I marvel that so many parents regularly miss church services because of family events, sporting events, because they are tired or a little sick, or because they want to stay home to relax or shop. Truly, when parents live like this, they shouldn't be shocked when their children grow up to be lukewarm Christians who don't take the things of God seriously! If these same parents treated their business or

place of employment the same way they treat church, they would have gone bankrupt or gotten fired years ago! These children are on a trajectory of making God only a part of their lives instead of Jesus being their lives!

Many Christian parents don't spend quality time with their children

Many leaders are guilty of sacrificing their children on the altar of ministry or work-related ambition. What does it profit us if we gain the whole world and lose our children? Children of these parents are on a trajectory of having low self-esteem and insecurities because they feel they are not important enough for their parents to take time out for them.

Many Christian parents jump from church to church

I am not saying that you can't ever feel led to leave a local church, but some people I know are hopping from one church to another every year or two. Children of these parents are on a trajectory of not being personally stable in their faith, being individualistic in relating to God, not being able to commit to any community of faith, nor trusting spiritual authority in their lives.

Many Christian parents constantly nag their children

I have learned that it is not wise to preach at your children. As they get older it is also important that we do not nag them constantly about doing what is right. At a certain point we need to believe God that He will get a hold of their hearts and convert them.

Instead of nagging our children we need to spend that same amount of time or more in prayer and fasting in faith for their souls. Children of nagging parents are on a trajectory of tuning out their parents and all adults when they get to be teenagers, which will result in rebellion against authority and foolish behavior.

Many Christian parents are too legalistic or religious with their children

A parental approach that is very strict, religious and legalistic may be just as harmful as parental lukewarmness in the home towards Christ. When parents try to force their children to believe in Christ by making them live by strict, oppressive rules without any emotional connection, spiritual connection or fun, they will nurture resentful children who will run from God as soon as they are old enough.

Children of legalistic religious parents are on a trajectory of falling into gross excess in regards to sinful pleasure as a reaction against the oppressiveness of rigid legalistic religion. Children of legalistic Pentecostal homes rarely serve God when they get older and often stop going to church in their older teenage years.

In summary, these are just some of my observations which seem to ensure the backslidden or lukewarm condition of a child raised in a Christian home. However, there are always exceptions to these observations. Some children can go on to fulfill their purpose in Christ with passion in spite of the hindrances of their parents.

Also, as parents we can do everything correctly and not violate any of the above points, and yet still find our children struggling in their faith. This article is not meant to bring condemnation to parents, but to awaken us to our responsibilities as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the nurturing of our children. Ultimately, if our children don't meet God for themselves they will not seek Him, even if we follow the best practices as parents.

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Many Christian parents often do not emotionally connect with their children.

I learned through having five children that it is not enough to read the Bible and pray with my children. I need to have fun with them, learn their particular love languages (read Gary Smalley's book *The Five Love Languages of Children*), and try to reach their hearts and establish deep relationships with them while they are young. I learned this the hard way because I didn't really emotionally connect with one of my children the way I should have when they were young (we are close now). This resulted in a great struggle of faith in

spite of all the Bible teaching and prayer we shared together. Children without an emotional connection to their parents can have a trajectory of unhealthy soul ties with ungodly people who will pull them away from the Lord.

Many Christian parents don't intentionally pray with their families as a habit in their households.

As I have surveyed Christian families, even the families of some leaders, I have found it a rare thing when the altar of the Lord has been established in a house with regular, consistent prayer. Often when there is prayer it is perfunctory and superficial, or only one of the parents prays while the other doesn't actively engage (thus showing their children that prayer really isn't important). Children of these parents will be on the trajectory of a nominal Christian who doesn't know how to seek God or walk in the presence of God.

Many Christian parents don't have an intentional approach to biblically catechize their children.

Most parents are clueless when it comes to training their children in the Word of God. I tell parents that one easy thing to do is teach from the book of Proverbs on a regular basis. Proverbs is the primary instructional book parents can use to train their children to live wise lives in the fear of the Lord.

Unfortunately, many independent evangelical churches have jettisoned everything about the historical denominations, even good things like the concept of catechisms. We can take a catechism (for example, the Heidelberg Catechism) and revise it to fit our doctrinal perspective so we can use it to give our children a great overall understanding of the major doctrines of Scripture.

I believe all churches should institute some form of catechism training for their children. One church I know uses it when

their children are very young, resulting in them not having Sunday school classes that separate the children from the parents; the children are so well-versed in Scripture they can understand the adult preaching as well as their parents!

Children of parents who don't train them in the faith will be children without a biblical worldview. This will leave them vulnerable on a trajectory toward a kind of syncretism with false religious views based on spirituality and not on Christ as the truth in all of life.

Many parents allow their children to miss church on Sundays so they can participate in team sports.

Somehow in this nation, there is an unwritten law that teaches, "Honor the sabbath day except if your child is involved in sports"! Parents who allow their children to consistently miss Sunday services because of sports programs are on a trajectory to nurture backslidden children who are being taught that sports and hobbies are more important in life than worshipping God! Mark 4:19 says the desire for other things will come in and choke the Word of God.

Many parents would rather stay home if their spouses are working or unable to attend **Sunday services.**

There are some parents who will not attend church on Sundays if their spouses are not attending church, because it is too much of a hassle to get the children ready to attend church on their own! Parents who do this are putting their children on a trajectory of serving God only when it is convenient, which would classify them as lukewarm Christians, something Jesus said He would vomit out of His mouth (Rev. 3:14-16)!

Many Christian parents live a compromised life at home.

Many parents regularly watch ungodly television shows, listen to ungodly secular music, tell racist or dirty jokes and use foul language in front of their children in the confines of

their homes. Then they go to church and act spiritual on Sundays. This duplicitous behavior will place their children on a trajectory of either hypocrisy or disdain for God, the church and Christianity!

Many Christian parents don't properly supervise their children.

Many parents allow their young children to have televisions in their rooms, computers, smartphones and even go out on dates when they are young teenagers! Consequently, these parents have no clue as to what their children are viewing or whom they are connecting with in person or on social networking websites. Unsupervised children are being indoctrinated by the world 60-80 hours per week; this is something an hour per week in church cannot compete against! It is possible for these children to be on a trajectory with no focus or with addictive/compulsive behaviors from too much texting, social networking, video games or even pornography.

Many Christian parents talk bad about their churches or church leadership in front of their children at home.

Many parents are in the habit of badmouthing their pastors or churches, or speaking critically about other Christians. This puts a critical spirit in their children, which eventuates in their children thinking that church is for hypocrites! These children are on a trajectory toward being critical of everything regarding church, which will result in them staying far away from corporate worship participation.

Many fathers show more enthusiasm for sports than for seeking God

I know of many fathers who will scream and shout during a football game but will have a lethargic attitude when it comes to prayer, attending church and serving God. I even know of one pastor who would cut his services short during football

season so he could go home and watch football on Sunday afternoons! Jesus told us that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Thus, when parents show they are more fascinated about something than they are about God, or value something more than God, their children are on a trajectory of thinking that God is unworthy of their passion, time or attention!

The Nation-Shaking Prophetic Download I Got at Azusa Now

The winds blew and the rains fell on TheCall Azusa Now, but that didn't stop tens of thousands of people from weathering the storms at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, the same venue where Billy Graham preached the gospel to over 134,000 in 1963.

If anything, the adversity intensified the determination of the masses to cry out to God in what became for 15 hours an outdoor house of prayer in the heart of California.

“William Seymour, the catalyst of that great revival, prophesied in 1913 that in roughly 100 years another revival far eclipsing Azusa would come,” says Lou Engle, founder of TheCall. “The fulfillment of Seymour’s word is overdue ... or right on schedule. Let us therefore “pray for the rain in the time of the latter rain.” Who knows? Maybe like those who were baptized in the Spirit in the original Acts 2 upper room, we will say, “This is that which was spoken by William Seymour the prophet!”

Of course, Seymour wasn't there and Graham wasn't there, but Christ for All Nations' Daniel Kolenda preached the gospel

and, instead of George Beverly Shay, a new breed of worshippers—including Bethel Live, Eddie James and Roy Fields—lifted up praises to Jesus. Although the final count isn't in and the stadium wasn't full because of the miracle rain that drenched a city in drought, some say there were between 60,000 and 75,000 people at this historic event that aligned with the 110th anniversary of the Azusa Street outpouring.

Cindy Jacobs, co-founder of Generals International, released a prophecy that caused a roar from the stadium stands: "This is that which the prophets foretold. I'm getting ready to open up the greatest generation of young evangelists the world has ever known."

Dutch Sheets, the founder of the Appeal to Heaven Movement, took the stage to tell the world—multiplied thousands were watching the live stream on GodTV—that God is not done with America. He told the story of how God revealed a new strategy for prayer that is sweeping the nation. "Today's 15-hour gathering to worship and pray was epic. Lot of great moments from Asuza Now gathering in Los Angeles."

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Indeed, social media were ablaze with the #azusanow hashtag as praying believers found inspiration in gathering together to literally act out 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Sean Fuecht, founder of the 24/7 Burn movement, insists "history cannot ignore this sound."

"The course of my life was changed at 16 while lying face down, weeping in the grace on the Mall in D.C. during the first Call gathering. I've joined with many others in this dramatic storyline ever since," he says. "A movement was born in my heart that day. I believe the same happened for countless thousands ... on the 110-year anniversary of Azusa.

Let it begin.”

Jeff Jansen, founder of Global Fire Ministries, says he believes Azusa Now was one of the most significant events of the past few decades.

“As we were driving on Interstate 5 to the Azusa Now event on April 9, I saw a large, gold angel standing over LA,” Jansen says. “The Lord said, ‘Just as the 1849 gold rush drew people to California ... So 4/9 2016 will mark a new gold rush of divine proportion that will once again draw the nations into revival.’”

Joshua Mills, a recording artist, author and revivalist, says he witnessed the ignition of a worldwide move of God. “I saw healing miracles happening and lives being changed by simply the hand of God resting on entire groups of people,” Mills says. “I believe Azusa Now was the beginning, and now it will continue to unfold for those who were touched by that moment of glory.”

So where do we go from here? I’m declaring right now that awakening is here, and it’s coming. Azusa Now wasn’t the only prayer event on April 9. United Cry gathered 30,000 pastors in Washington, D.C. There was an Azusa event in Houston and thousands of people watching, praying and agreeing in churches, prayer rooms and homes across America. Reset America will gather tens of thousands on the Mall in D.C. to cry out to God again.

I believe April 9 was a day of demarcation in America. It was a show of desperation and unity in the church. Prophetically, it was a shot heard around the world. Will we immediately see the impact of this historic, or as many are calling it, “epic” event? Probably not, but something shifted in the spirit in the City of Angels on Saturday. If you could pull back the curtain on the realm of the spirit, I believe you would have seen an intensified war in the heavens—and we’re winning that

war.

On April 21, 2007, the Lord woke me up at midnight, and I sensed Him offering this prophetic word:

There is a great awakening coming to this nation. For I have heard your cries, and I long to heal your land. I am a covenant God, and I will not forget the covenant I made with your Founding Forefathers. Yes, there will be a shaking, but the foundations will not crack, and they will not crumble. Only those things which can be shaken will be shaken that the sin in the land may be laid bare.

Repentance. I require repentance from My people who have through the generations allowed the enemy to take ground in this nation. I require repentance for the abortions and for the prayerlessness. I require repentance for the apathy and for the idolatry. You shall have no other gods before me. I am indeed the God of America.

Yes, there is a great awakening coming to this nation. I am the Author of it and I will bring it to pass. Just turn from your wicked ways and humble yourselves. Stand in the gap and make up the hedge. I am the Lord and I am a Warrior. I will not leave or forsake this country. I will fight through you and with you to regain what has been lost.

Be encouraged now, because as you go forth boldly with My Word and My Spirit, there will be the sound of truth and it will prevail in the land. Speak boldly and clearly and watch as the mighty men arise to take their positions on the wall and in the churches and in the marketplaces. For I am raising up deliverers and reformers in this generation who will not shrink back at the challenge that is coming in the days ahead.

Yes, it will grow darker before My light shines brightly from this nation again. But the light has not been extinguished and will not be extinguished. The time to rise up is now. I am

calling you to war. I am calling you to repentance. I am calling you to My side. I am the captain of the hosts. I am calling you to victory. I am calling you to destiny. Will you answer?

On April 9, I believe we answered. And I believe we are standing at the door of transforming revival in America.

10 Signs You Are a Secular Believer

As a full-time church minister since 1981, I have had the task of observing the lives of thousands of believers. Consequently, I have come to the conclusion that there are believers in the church who say they are Christians, while, at the same time, espousing value systems that are secular. However, these secular believers are slightly different from what we may identify as a “carnal Christian,” whose ways have to do with the overt sins of the flesh and emotions (read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Of these two types, the secular believer, as with “secular Christianity” (which, by the way, is contradictory and, therefore, a misnomer) is more subtle because they are sugar-coated with spirituality and outward peace but have foundations of secular values.

The following are 10 signs you are a secular believer:

1. You make major decisions without first determining God’s will.

Many believers are functional atheists because they make major decisions, such as marriage, moving to another region, changing jobs, or changing churches, without hearing from God,

getting input from spiritual leadership or searching the Scriptures.

2. You care more about what others think than what God thinks about you.

In this “selfie” secular age, appearance, status, and popularity with friends are sometimes pursued more than understanding the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). When we care more about what people think of us than respecting the ways of God, then we are secular.

3. You are led by money not by the Holy Spirit.

Whenever you prioritize money over God’s will, you are secular. This is why so many so-called believers work so many hours; then they rarely have time to participate in a faith community. Jesus said that if we “seek first His Kingdom, then all the other things we seek will be given to us” (Matt. 6:33).

4. You attend church services primarily to socialize.

Secular believers’ primary motivation to attend church services is to meet their friends, while biblical Christ followers’ primary motivation is to meet God in the context of communing with the saints and hearing what the Spirit is saying to the church.

5. You mimic the values of popular culture.

Secular believers espouse the world’s values when it comes to dating, pre-marital sex, dress, popular music, language, etc. This reminds me of the old adage: “If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it’s a duck!” If you internally celebrate the value systems of the world, then you are worldly-minded (secular), not spiritually-minded.

6. God is a mere part of your life.

True Christ followers do not make God a mere part of their lives. Christ is their life! (Col. 3:1-4).

7. You don't have a lifestyle of seeking God.

Secular believers may say a quick prayer here and there, usually to bless their secular lifestyle, but they do not consistently seek God's face in prayer or pour over the Scriptures.

8. Your life does not impact others for the gospel.

Secular believers do not have a burden to win others to Christ. Many have never even won one person for God in the past five to ten years! The reason is because they are so subsumed with this world they do not have a sense of eternity. Sadly, many times unsaved family members, friends, and co-workers are not able to notice the difference between a believer and an unbeliever.

9. You are not making disciples.

There are many people in the body of Christ today who have been saved for many years and have not invested their lives in making even one disciple. If you are not presently mentoring and helping somebody mature in Christ, then you are willfully disobeying the Great Commission Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:19). Just because you have a title of pastor or elder does not mean you are a disciple maker.

10. You do not practice biblical financial stewardship.

It is sad that many in the body of Christ do not believe that their money belongs to God. How do I know? It is because they only tithe and give offerings when it is convenient. They live as if they are the ones in charge of their lives, money and wealth. Even those who tithe should understand that God claims ownership of one hundred percent of their money, not just the ten percent. When you spend your money as if it were your own,

then you are not practicing biblical stewardship. You are acting like a secular believer and not like a true Christian.

Are You a Kingdom Prophet or a Church Prophet?

We in the charismatic expression of the body of Christ have had much teaching on prophetic ministry since the 1980s, including some good teaching that brought clarity and balance but also some other teachings that may have been extreme.

All in all, when examining Scripture I find one area of lack regarding prophetic emphasis has been the narrow focus of prophetic ministry to only the realm of the church. There has been some powerful prophetic ministry via preaching, exhortation and sharing what people have heard from God's heart, either for individuals and/or for the nation. But most of it has only been heard by other church people and it rarely, if ever, goes outside the four walls of a church building or church-related functions.

This was not how the prophets of the Old Testament and, to a certain extent, the New Testament functioned. If the Old Testament is to serve as our primary model for how prophets are to influence culture, then it is clear from just a cursory examination of Scripture that prophets didn't just prophesy in the temple or a synagogue. They had political and cultural access to the most powerful people in their nation. Thus, when they prophesied it had immediate impact, unlike the prophecies given today that are only voiced on Christian media outlets or in church services. The prophetic words of Old Testament prophets had the potential to reach the primary decision

makers of nations.

As mentioned in a previous article of mine, Moses was already a prince in Egypt before he was called to confront Egypt and deliver the people of God out of slavery (Ex. 2-3); Daniel was serving as a top political adviser to the King of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) and later as a prime minister in Persia, which positioned him to speak truth to power and transform the Babylonian and Persian nations (Dan. 1-6); Nehemiah was the cup bearer of the King of Persia which enabled him to receive the favor necessary to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 1-2); Samuel, first in the line of great Jewish prophets, also served as the political judge of the nation (1 Sam. 3-10); David his protégé may have been a great prophet/psalmist but he also became Israel's greatest king (1 Sam. 16-2 Sam. 3); finally, all the great prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, Ahijah, Amos and so on) didn't just prophesy to small crowds of people in the temple or synagogue, but had access to political and cultural elites, even to the highest political office of the land.

For example, Elijah not only prophesied to a poor widow (1 Kin. 17:10-16), but also to King Ahab (1 Kin. 17:1, 18-19). He also anointed a person to serve as king in a foreign nation like Aram (1 Kin. 19:15). Elisha, the spiritual son of Elijah, not only ministered to the kings of Israel and Judah (e.g. Jehoram and Jehoshaphat in 2 Kings 3:6-27), but he also ministered to the military captain of Syria, Israel's enemy (2 Kin. 5:1-14), gave prophetic military advice to the king of Israel (2 Kin. 6:8-23) and also ministered to the kings of Gentile nations such as Ben-Hadad (2 Kin. 8:7-10). Political kings even referred to Elisha as "father" and to themselves as his "sons" (2 Kin. 6:21 and 2 Kin. 8:9)!

Thus the prophets of Israel were primarily called to speak the word of the Lord to cultural elites who were in a position to guide the nation. This is where I see the prophetic going next: outside the four walls of the church. We have made a

slight improvement in this area with a greater understanding of “prophetic evangelism,” in which we go up to strangers and share with them things from the heart of God that only God knows about them, resulting in many people coming to Christ. (I have seen and experienced a lot of this through the years.) Then there have been some instances when prophetic leaders have ministered to high-level political leaders and a president, but that has been the exception, not the general rule, in regards to what is expected of prophetic leaders in the church.

I have personally stepped into this realm with high-level political leaders in New York City, which has included giving the word of the Lord to a community leader (whom I barely knew) that they were supposed to run for a particular powerful office. They cried and said they were just thinking about whether they should do it and didn't mention it to anyone else. This person ran and won the election! Also, on several occasions, I have warned top political leaders and predicted judgment or the demotion of some, which has already happened in at least one instance.

In regards to the church, we are now coming to a place where the church's understanding of being the salt and light of the world is going to impact all of our planning for ministry and vocation, in which all the realms of society will be our parish instead of just church-related services. Not shifting the prophetic and mission focus of the church to the public realms of society would continue to perpetuate a dualism in which the church builds mega-subcultures that neither embrace surrounding communities nor engage secular society. This results in Christians prophesying and having conversations with themselves! I am not saying that we don't need church prophets or that church prophets are bad. It is just that we are not expanding our thinking enough on the incredible calling of prophets to include an important aspect of the prophetic call to culture. Prophets were essential and

arguably the primary people God used to transform culture. I believe it is still the model God wants to use to influence nations.

The following are some of the salient contrasts between the new emerging kingdom prophets and church prophets.

- Kingdom prophets speak the heart of God for all of life; church prophets speak regarding only church life.
- Kingdom prophets mentor kings and princes of the earth; church prophets mentor other church prophets, intercessors and leaders.
- Kingdom prophets influence those who can shift culture; church prophets influence those who can shift church services.
- Kingdom prophets have a call to influence whole communities; church prophets prophesy to church movements and individuals.
- Kingdom prophets speak the language of secular culture; church prophets speak the language of religion.
- Kingdom prophets often have favor in governmental palaces; church prophets have favor in pastors' personal offices.
- Kingdom prophets prophesy about current events; church prophets prophesy about church related issues and events.
- Kingdom prophets influence the climate of a community or city; church prophets influence the atmosphere of a church service and congregation.
- Kingdom prophets feel comfortable befriending marketplace leaders; church prophets focus on befriending committed church attendees.
- Kingdom prophets father political and economic kings; church prophets father potential leaders in church life.
- Kingdom prophets train cultural leaders; church prophets

train church leaders.

- Kingdom prophets can serve as elders in a city; church prophets can serve as elders in a local congregation.
- Kingdom prophets are gifted with all the learning and knowledge of contemporary culture; church prophets are gifted with all the learning of church dogma and doctrine.
- Kingdom prophets are respected and are visible in mainstream media outlets; church prophets are famous only in Christian media outlets.

In conclusion, all of Scripture including the Old Testament is given to us as a model on how we ought to live out our faith (1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4). We also see glimpses of this in the life of John the Baptist who prophesied against both the religious and political leaders of his day, and Jesus who ministered to both King Herod and Pontius Pilate. Paul the apostle also testified to the secular kings of his day (Acts 24-26), and history tells us he also appeared before the Roman Caesar giving a defense of the gospel.

I believe the next 20 years will see the fullness of this cultural prophetic call as the church continues to grapple with and grow in the area of cultural engagement. I also see an incredible move of God in the area of prophetic and apostolic leaders discipling and speaking the word of the Lord over leaders of developing countries in Africa, Latin America and even Asia.

Let's believe God for the church to nurture leaders who will not only be respected and quoted in Christian magazines but also publish editorials in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and other major global news outlets.

Pastor Drops Gay Bombshell in Middle of Sunday Sermon

“At last I am choosing to serve in that role with full authenticity and as my genuine self—as a woman who loves and shares my life with another woman.”

Those were the words of Cynthia Meyer, a pastor at Edgerton United Methodist Church, who decided to make her first sermon of 2016 a coming out party. Meyer, 53, has been an ordained UM pastor for 25 years.

“My decision to speak out and do that through a sermon for my congregation came long before the ‘It’s Time’ campaign,” Meyer told United Methodist News Service. “I’d say it’s been a calling on my heart for quite some time.”

Reconciling Ministries Network, a group working for full participation of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in the life of the UM church, launched the “It’s Time” campaign in December. The campaign kicked off by partnering with documentary filmmakers who produced *An Act of Love*, the story of Frank Schaefer. Schaefer was defrocked in 2013 for officiating his son’s same-sex wedding and later reinstated.

“I’m a woman of God sharing my life with another Jesus-following woman. We, like you, are made in God’s image. *Jesus Loves Me, This I Know*. I’m lifting my voice. It’s time for the UMC to illumine its brighter heritage and its claim: “*Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors*.” Make it true! It’s well past time,” she wrote in a blog post on the Reconciling Ministries Network site.

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“Some who have been biding our time now proclaim our truth,” she continued. “We’re done being victims of an unfaithful system. Now we’re activists for the redemption of the UMC, for the love of all God’s beloved children, for the love of God. It’s my time now. Forty years I prepared, pondered, prayed and wandered.”

Meyer could be banned from the congregation, but she has decided to risk her credentials and her career to, as she puts it, “keep faith with the church by challenging it to keep faith with the gospel.” She says she’s offering herself for this cause and God is well-pleased. She says it’s time for gospel followers to stride forth from desert gloom to promised land, to reclaim full, equal regard in church and in ministry.

Since 1972, the UMC’s Book of Discipline has declared that practicing homosexuality is not compatible with Christian teaching. Coming out as gay like Meyer did or officiating a same-sex wedding like Schaefer did typically leads to a church trial and defrocking. This rising “It’s Time” movement in the UMC is working to overthrow the denomination’s history and change the church’s stance on homosexuality at the May convention in Portland later this year.

But conservative Methodists aren’t bowing. In an open letter, they wrote: “We simply cannot abandon the Bible’s teachings on the practice of homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Your proposal would put us, who believe that same-sex relations are sinful, in the position of having to deny our consciences. This new policy is simply asking us to do something we cannot do.”

Saints, we’re seeing 1 Timothy 4:1 playing out right before our very eyes. It’s called the Great Apostasy and it’s well underway. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote:

“Now the Spirit clearly says that in the last times some will depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.”

Back in 2012, I wrote an article titled “Is the Great Falling Away Already Underway?” In it, I explained that some have indeed departed from the faith because they have engaged with deceiving spirits and embraced doctrines of demons. We’ve witnessed more than one man of God with a major ministry platform bow a knee to doctrines such as universalism, deceiving and being deceived with this deadly heresy. Despite many in the church lifting their voice against heretical teachings, these deceived ministers hold fast to their demonic doctrine.

What I said back then bears repeating: Before each of the last Great Awakenings, people of God thought it was hopeless—and they didn’t see the half of what we’re seeing. But I am convinced God wants to turn this around—and I am convinced God can turn this around. Nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). A Great Awakening is our only hope for this nation. Will you join me in praying for another Great Awakening?

You Won’t Believe What McDonald’s Plans to Add to Their Menus

A much healthier McDonald’s restaurant could be coming to a neighborhood near you. The fast-food chain is testing a new concept that includes hip, fresh menu items, like quinoa, asparagus and couscous.

It's called "McDonald's Next." The first concept restaurant opened in Hong Kong, where folks have been loving the traditional McDonald's restaurants for the last 40 years.

However, the new McDonald's Next is barely recognizable as a McDonald's, except for the iconic golden arches outside. The interior is swanky and sleek. Mood lighting and wooden décor are just a few of the upgrades. There's even table service at night.

There's no word yet on why the company chose Hong Kong to launch McDonald's Next or when one might be coming stateside.

Customers will still have the option of ordering from the standard menu, including the Big Mac and the unmistakable McDonald's french fries.

However, the expanded menu includes a build-your-own salad bar and the "Create Your Taste" touchscreen menu that allows patrons to customize their order.

McDonald's is apparently jumping on the health-conscious bandwagon after experiencing lagging sales and fewer customers. Some of the McDonald's restaurants in the United States are already showcasing the CYT options, even boasting kale on the menu.

Yes, kale.

McDonald's also announced they'll stop using chicken and milk from animals treated with hormones.

As you might expect, these upgrades likely mean raising the famously low prices. Chief Executive Officer Steve Easterbrook, who took the job last year, is no-doubt banking on customers' willingness to pay more for higher quality food.

A Nielsen Global Health and Wellness survey conducted last year revealed most people who planned to lose weight said they'd focus on healthier foods to achieve their goal.

6 Times When You Will Face Temptations and Tests

I have been a committed Christ follower since 1978 and I have experienced many tests, trials and temptations.

The following are the seasons of six primary tests and temptations I have observed in my own Christian walk:

1. Tests come before a great assignment.

I found that right before God wants to do something great, either in an event or in my life and ministry, there was an extraordinary amount of resistance against me.

In the beginning of my Christian journey, this was at times confusing, but as I matured, I realized that if I did not get resistance from the enemy, then that was a sign that I was probably missing God. Hence, when there is great spiritual warfare, I have confidence that God is ready to do something big. This gives me the endurance and patience I need to continue on in spite of the intense difficulty I am experiencing.

2. Tests come right after a completed assignment.

Through the years, I also discovered that Satan attacks right after great achievements and victories because he is desperately attempting one last time to prevent our forward motion. Often after experiencing a major victory, we are not on guard and are vulnerable to attacks from the enemy.

This is similar to what happened after Elijah the prophet reached his peak in ministry after he called down fire from heaven and proved to the nation of Israel that Jehovah was the

true God over Baal (1 Kin. 18).

Immediately afterward, the wicked Queen Jezebel threatened his life, he got discouraged, wanted to end his life and ran into the wilderness (1 Kin. 19). Also, we read in the Gospels that after Jesus had a great glimpse of the glory of His Father on the Mount of Transfiguration, immediately after, demonic oppression manifested so strongly that even His disciples could not deal with it or cast it out (Matt. 17:1-20).

I learned the hard way that after every breakthrough or victory I experience, I have to be on high alert so I am not blindsided by an attack.

3. Tests come in between a prophetic word and its fulfillment.

Some of the greatest tests I experience happen while waiting for a prophetic word to be fulfilled. Often, the timing of a prophetic sense or word is not accurately discerned and people think a word will be fulfilled soon after they receive it. Sometimes I have had to wait years before words spoken to my heart by God were ever fulfilled. Some words spoken decades ago have still not come to pass. This is a great test of faith. Abraham experienced a similar test when God told him he would have a son, and he had to wait several decades before Isaac was born (Gen. 12-21).

Not only that, but after Isaac was born, God tested Abraham's obedience by telling him to sacrifice his son on the altar (Gen. 22). In light of this, after we receive a word from the Lord, we need to ponder it in our hearts like Mary did after the word about the birth of her son (Luke 2:19). We have to discern both the timing and interpretation of it and rest in the Lord until it comes to pass. We need to continue in well doing and not faint because in due season we will reap if we do not give up (Gal. 6:9). This is perhaps the hardest of all the tests in this article.

4. Temptation comes when you are at your weakest point.

In studying the Gospels, we learn that the devil came to tempt Jesus after He fasted 40 days and was hungry (Luke 4). After Jesus resisted all the temptations successfully, the devil left Him until a more opportune time came (Luke 4:13). I have learned that the devil doesn't have mercy upon believers when they are weak, tired, discouraged, angry, bitter, offended, sick or burned out. Rather, that's when he assaults them the most. Never think that the devil feels sorry for you or will have mercy on you when you are struggling. This is why we have to have covenant relationships with mature Christians who will come around you when you are weak and help pray you through in your weakest moments.

Along these lines, I also learned never to make major decisions or communicate sensitive information to others when I am weary, tired, discouraged or angry since I am not in a good position emotionally to discern the will of God.

5. Temptation comes when you are bored.

Second Samuel 11 illustrates how King David fell into adultery and murder when he was idle and stayed home instead of going to battle like the other kings did. Often, because people do not have a strong sense of purpose and or get bored, they get involved in adulterous relationships because they yearn for excitement and stimulation. I have found that the only thing that saves me during the mundane times is my deep intimacy with the Lord. As long as my primary motivation for living comes from seeking and knowing God (and not from ministry), then when I experience mundane times, I can use the extra time I have to seek and study the ways of God (which further prepares me for the next big thing I will face when my schedule becomes hectic again).

6. Temptation comes when you lose your primary focus.

Along with the last point, temptation comes when you allow distractions to keep you away from the main things you are

called to focus on in life.

Besides our walk with the Lord and our commitment to family and church, we all have a primary assignment we should focus on. One of the greatest temptations I have faced in life is not necessarily sinful temptations, but many good opportunities that can wear me out and keep me from maximizing my time and focus on my primary assignments. The enemy of God's best is often disguised in the form of good opportunities. We have to continually focus so we can keep the main thing the priority in our lives.

Finally, I thank God that He always provides a way of escape from temptations (1 Cor. 10:13) and is always with me during my fiery trials and tests (Is. 43:2-3).

Anne Graham Lotz Gives Prophetic Warning About 2016

As I look ahead into 2016, I believe our national and global situation will get worse. A good friend has focused my attention on Isaiah 60:1-2 as a word from the Lord for the New Year: "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For the darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord shall rise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you."

I can feel the encroaching darkness of evil that is like a heavy moral and spiritual fog. It's permeating our nation at every level. At the very same time that our nation is enveloped in thick darkness, God commands us to arise, let our Light shine, and the distinctive glory of our Lord will be obvious to all.

These conflicting thoughts of thick darkness and light, of encroaching evil and glory, were on my mind during these days before Christmas. I have been meditating on 2 Chronicles 20 in which Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was warned that a vast army was coming against him. As I put myself in his place, I asked myself, what do we do when we are warned of the enemy's advance? The answer was given in the next verse: *"Then Jehoshaphat was fearful and set himself to seek the Lord, and he called for a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah was assembled to seek the Lord; even from all the cities of Judah, they came to obtain aid from the Lord"* (2 Chr. 20:3-4). Jehoshaphat led God's people in a prayer that was a desperate heart's cry for help.

I have been repeatedly warned in my spirit that the enemy is advancing. It's something that *I know*. And I feel compelled, like Jehoshaphat, to lead God's people also in a desperate prayer for help before we plunge past the point of no return into the abyss of God's judgment.

The glory is that God answered Jehoshaphat's prayer by reassuring him, *"Do not fear, nor be dismayed because of this great army, for the battle is not yours, but God's. ...It will not be necessary for you to fight in this conflict. Take your positions, stand, and observe the deliverance of the Lord for you, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be filled with terror. ... (T)he Lord will be with you"* (2 Chr. 20:15, 17).

What is the position we are to take up? I believe it's a position on our knees as we humble ourselves, seek God's face, repent of our sin and intercede for our nation. Then, having done all, we stand firm in our faith that God has heard and will answer our prayer.

7 Effective Ways to Reach Muslims

In light of the horrendous terrorist attacks perpetuated by radical Islamic groups like ISIS, I see this as a great opportunity to reach Muslims who have been disaffected by their fellow Muslims and are experiencing intense backlash. This may now be the greatest evangelical opportunity in a thousand years to reach Muslims for Jesus.

The following are seven effective ways to reach Muslims:

1. Share with them how they can know the presence and love of God. Muslims have no sense of the nearness of God. For Muslims, Allah is transcendent—high and separate from creation—but not immanent, or near, to creation or humanity.
2. Share the love of God and assurance of salvation. Their faith in Allah is often fatalistic, as they say that only martyrs know for sure they will go to heaven. Thus, they have no real sense of God's love or assurance of salvation.
3. Share with them that we don't believe in three gods but one God. Share how the Triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a mystery that no one this side of heaven can figure out. Share with them that we do not have a polytheistic faith.
4. Share with them that we, too, are against idolatry. We do not worship statues or icons of saints or Jesus.
5. Share with them how there is a true church made up of those who believe the Scriptures and a false liberal church that denies the Bible and its moral teachings.
6. Befriend a Muslim family or co-worker and enter into friendly dialogue. Now, with all the anti-Islamic banter because of terrorist attacks, the horrendous actions of ISIS,

many Muslims are ashamed, which gives Christians the greatest opportunity to demonstrate love and friendship toward Muslims.

7. Most importantly, share your testimony of how Christ's death, burial and resurrection became real to you when Jesus Himself came in your life, gave you His Spirit, took away your sins and guilt, and has given you a new life that is effective, both in this life and in the eternity to come. Tell them how you are now ready to meet God as your judge, not based on your own merits and your own righteousness but on the merits and righteousness of Christ alone.