

Lord, Have Mercy on Miley Cyrus and Hollywood

Miley Cyrus has gone from Disney Channel kid favorite to raunch queen performing simulated sex with a foam finger wearing a flesh colored costume while **Robin Thicke** repeatedly sang "Lord have mercy." Her behavior was an in-your-face rejection of decency.

As offensive as the stage act was, the greater offense is the message it sends to youth. This former Disney child actress is remaking herself into a pied piper of immorality. Every gesture was as if to say, "I've sold my soul to the devil, and you Bible-believing types can just go to. . ." The "Lord have mercy" lyrics accompanying her behavior were a tweak at God.

Why does this happen?

It happens when there's a disconnect between the image someone has been presenting and reality. Julie Andrews played one of the most beloved roles ever filmed in *The Sound of Music*. Julie Andrews was no Maria. She was actually concerned about the movie being too goody-two-shoes sweet. She later starred in movies that were more reflective of her less noble beliefs. They bombed.

Do not expect **Miley Cyrus'** star to rise with this new revelation of character. There are audiences that revel in rebellion against God and will appreciate her. There are much larger audiences that will elect to avoid her future work like the plague if it reflects the same attitude.

The truth is God does desire mercy on Miley Cyrus and for any who share her anger and resentment. God sent his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, to make possible forgiveness and rebirth. The Apostle Paul rejoiced at the killing of Christians, but God transformed him into his spokesman to the Gentiles. God

can transform Miley Cyrus. God can transform Hollywood.

Imagine a day when Hollywood is making movies like *The Sound of Music* with stars and crew whose heart's desire is to honor God and minister to the lost. It may be that Hollywood becomes the Detroit of movie making. God could use other locations and distributors to produce the entertainment America wants.

Far more Americans want programs like *The Bible* that aired on television earlier this year, than will ever want to see **Miley Cyrus** repeat her recent presentation.

David Outten is the production editor for *Movieguide*. This article originally appeared on .

Is Religious Liberty the Price of U.S. Citizenship?

Anyone who still doubts that the normalization of homosexuality and the legalization of **same-sex marriage** will represent a seismic shift in the culture at large needs only look to New Mexico to see that nothing less than religious liberty is now under threat—and in a big way.

Jonathan and Elaine Huguenin are the owners of Elane Photography, a firm that operates as a commercial photographic studio. Elaine Huguenin is the lead photographer, and the Huguenins together run the business.

In 2006, the couple refused to photograph a same-sex couple's commitment ceremony and were sued. Last week, the New Mexico Supreme Court ruled that the Huguenins had violated the human rights of the same-sex couple and that the First Amendment

does not allow Elane Photography to refuse to photograph same-sex unions.

The court's decision was unanimous, upholding a 2012 decision by an appeals court. The court's decision declared that the Huguenins had acted unlawfully in refusing to photograph the same-sex commitment, even when Elaine Huguenin had argued that to force her to photograph the celebration of a **same-sex ceremony** was to force her to function as a celebrant and thereby to violate her own conscience. That last part of the Huguenin's argument has to do with the fact that photography is "expressive" as an art form. There is no way that photographing a same-sex ceremony would not require the professional photographer to arrange and construct photographs in order to artistically celebrate the same-sex union.

The court concluded, "When Elane Photography refused to photograph a same-sex commitment ceremony, it violated the NMHRA [New Mexico Human Rights Act] in the same way as if it had refused to photograph a wedding between people of different races."

The court then further concluded, "Even if the services it offers are creative or expressive, Elane Photography must offer its services to customers without regard for the customers' race, sex, sexual orientation, or other protected classification."

Jonathan and Elaine Huguenin are Christians who believe that marriage is exclusively the union of a man and a woman. They further believe they are responsible and faithful only if they avoid any explicit or implied endorsement of same-sex marriage. They insist they do not discriminate on the basis of the sexual orientation of the potential client, but only on the basis of the ceremony they are asked to photograph.

The New Mexico Supreme Court dismissed all of the arguments presented on behalf of the Huguenins—arguments that have a

very clear precedent in decisions by other courts, including the Supreme Court of the United States. The decision in this case by this court is both stark and strident, rejecting the reality that its holding forces a wedding photographer to make an artistic statement against a religious sentiment by supporting certain celebrations the photographer in fact does not support.

The court's ruling sets a very dangerous precedent, saying, "If a commercial photography business believes that the [New Mexico Human Rights Act] stifles its creativity, it can remain in business, but it can cease to offer its services to the public at large. Elane Photography's choice to offer its services to the public is a business decision, not a decision about its freedom of speech."

A business decision, but not a decision about freedom of speech?

The New Mexico Supreme Court's ruling points to the comprehensive scope of the moral and legal realignment likely required by same-sex marriage—and eagerly demanded by its proponents. The addition of sexual orientation as a denominator of a protected class was sufficient to drag the Huguenins before a court in a state that itself does not legally recognize same-sex marriage.

The most amazing language found in the decision of the New Mexico court is not in the main opinion but in the "specially concurring" opinion of Justice Richard C. Bosson.

Although Justice Bosson concurred with the decision made against the Huguenins, he seemed to understand their plight:

"As devout, practicing Christians, they believe, as a matter of faith, that certain commands of the Bible are not left open to secular interpretation; they are meant to be obeyed. Among these commands, according to the Huguenins, is an injunction against same-sex marriage. On the record before us, no one has

questioned the Huguenin's [sic] devoutness or their sincerity; their religious convictions deserve our respect. In the words of their legal counsel, the Huguenins 'believed that creating photographs telling the story of that event [a same-sex wedding] would express a message contrary to their sincerely held beliefs, and that doing so would disobey God.' If honoring same-sex marriage would so conflict with their fundamental religious tenets ... how then, they ask, can the State of New Mexico compel them to 'disobey God' in this case? How indeed?"

After asking exactly the right question, Justice Bosson then proceeded to give exactly the wrong answer—and to give it in a way that is both elegiac in tone and tragic in result. Since Elane Photography is a business offering services to the public, it cannot operate on the basis of the Huguenins' sincerely held Christian principles. According to Bosson, the New Mexico Human Rights Act trumps religious liberty rights when the two come into collision.

Justice Bosson then acknowledged that his reasoning "is little comfort to the Huguenins, who are now compelled by law to compromise the very religious beliefs that inspire their lives. Though the rule of law requires it, the result is sobering. It will no doubt leave a tangible mark on the Huguenins and others of similar views."

That language is breathtaking. Justice Bosson acknowledges this decision will compel the Huguenins "to compromise the very religious beliefs that inspire their lives." But he insists the state of New Mexico will compel them to do just that.

Then comes even more shocking language. Justice Bosson asserts, "At its heart, this case teaches that at some point in our lives all of us must compromise, if only a little, to accommodate the contrasting values of others."

So this is a matter of the justices balancing “contrasting values”?

Compromise, Justice Bosson argues, “is part of the glue that holds us together as a nation, the tolerance that lubricates the moving parts of us as a people.”

That compromise, Justice Bosson wrote, is just a fact of American life: “In short, I would say to the Huguenins, with the utmost respect: it is the price of citizenship.”

So the price of citizenship is the denial of **religious liberty** when the Christian convictions of this couple run into a head-on collision with the “contrasting values” of others. This is a “compromise” that requires the Huguenins give up their convictions or go out of business. What does the “compromise” require of those who push for the normalization of same-sex relationships and the legalization of same-sex marriage? Nothing.

Some compromise.

The same-sex couple in this case did not contest the fact that there were many other professional photographers available to them. Indeed, they hired another photographer after Elane Photography declined. But they still pressed for the force of law to require all commercial photographers to provide services for same-sex ceremonies. And they got what they demanded.

That is the true nature of the “compromise” that Justice Bosson argues is “the price of citizenship.” His language about the Huguenins and their plight is moving and respectful—almost an elegy. But the decision itself is a denial of religious liberty and the constitutional guarantees of religious expression and free speech.

Justice Bosson asserts that “there is a price, one that we all have to pay somewhere in our civic life.” The New Mexico

Supreme Court has now made clear that the price to be paid by many is the forfeiture of their religious liberty.

R. Albert Mohler Jr. is the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Should American Church Beware Fate of Evangelicals in Iran?

In Ward 350 of Iran's notorious Evin Prison, American pastor Saeed Abedini is incarcerated with 30-40 other prisoners, twice the legal limit for this section of the prison.

The authorities arrested Saeed while he was working in Iran, with permission from the government, to help build an orphanage for children. According to the Iranian state, his crime is endangering national security—really just trumped-up charges. What was the real danger? The fact that he is an **evangelical Christian** and that is a threat to Islam.

Sept. 26, just a few weeks from now, will mark Saeed's one-year anniversary in Evin Prison. In conditions unimaginable for most of us, he has been relentlessly interrogated, psychologically harassed and physically beaten—even resulting in internal bleeding and injuries. Twice he has faced solitary confinement.

Saeed is Iranian-born but an American citizen. He, his wife, Naghmeh, and their two children live here in the United States. Thanks to Naghmeh's relentless efforts—and the **prayers** of a number of believers—Saeed's plight is gaining the attention of the world. His internal injuries have finally been treated, but the outcome for him is still uncertain.

I don't know if believers in our own country will ever experience this degree of **persecution**, but I do know that our **religious freedoms** are being seriously eroded. The Bible tells us that Christians should expect persecution by the world: "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be **persecuted**" (2 Tim. 3:12, ESV).

Our children can't **pray** aloud in public schools. Students who speak openly about Jesus Christ at public assemblies have their microphones shut off. Our military is hostile to soldiers who share and practice their faith, and even atheists now aim to become "chaplains" in America's armed forces.

In a nation that was founded by believers seeking the freedom to practice their religion, Christians are now routinely targeted by our courts and government for reasons related to their faith in Jesus Christ. Rarely is a Christian portrayed in a positive light by the media.

All of this has resulted in a nation that is quickly hurtling toward a moral Armageddon. **Homosexual activists** and **abortionists** have their so-called rights protected and upheld, while Christians are becoming the victims of our country's growing intolerance and misguided zeal for pluralism. The name of Jesus Christ—which Christians love—is increasingly hated by our culture.

This is why I am so excited about the opportunity all of us have this fall to join with my father in a nationwide evangelistic effort, My Hope America With Billy Graham. This is something everyone can be a part of. It will be the largest evangelistic outreach of his lifetime. I encourage you to get involved now and make sure your church is involved. It starts with prayer. Individuals and churches sincerely and urgently praying—for the lost around you, for our nation, for Pastor Saeed and for other persecuted Christians around the world—will make a difference.

We're not at this stage yet, but we must realize that our nation is not as far as we may think from some of what is happening in Iran today. The Scriptures say, however, that "if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face ... then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:14). Revival begins in the heart of God's people, confessing their own sins and seeking the Lord.

That happened on a number of occasions in the Old Testament, when a spiritually decadent Israel repented of their sins and once again sought God's favor and blessing. God was gracious to heal and forgive, and I do believe He can do the same for this country now.

Christians who live boldly for Christ, even in the face of opposition, are a strong witness to a morally bankrupt society. The My Hope America With Billy Graham outreach is one opportunity not only to take a stand, but to take action.

So remember to **pray** for Pastor Saeed and his family and for thousands of others who are also persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. And take steps today to join with us in this great evangelistic outreach to our own nation that will reach its high point in November.

More than 18,000 churches across America are already taking part, along with tens of thousands of individual Christians like you, and more are added every day. It's a huge task requiring enormous resources—we need your prayers and gifts, and especially your personal participation.

Click here to read the original story at .

Why I'm Praying God-Mockers Start Praying in Tongues

I'll admit it. The first time I saw people **praying in tongues**, it completely freaked me out. It actually scared me!

It was 1993. I was interning at a Christian television station. Before going live on the air, the producers, cameramen, on-air talent and others stood in a circle holding hands—and **praying in tongues** just as fast and hard as they could. I looked on with confusion for a few minutes; then I left and never came back. I went home and told everyone, "Those people were crazy."

I mocked this **supernatural** experience.

Fast forward 20 years, and now I **pray in tongues** for extended periods every day. I believe **praying in tongues** builds me up (1 Cor. 14:4, 18) as I speak directly to God (1 Cor. 14:2, 14). I believe praying in tongues stirs my faith (Jude 20). I believe praying in tongues assures I'm praying God's perfect will (Rom. 8:26-27). I believe there are many benefits to praying in tongues. That's why I do it as much as I can, and I encourage other believers to do the same.

So when I came upon an article in the *New York Times* titled "Why We Talk in Tongues," I was intrigued. T.M. Luhrmann, a professor of anthropology at Stanford and author of *When God Talks Back*, dived into the controversial topic in an op-ed column that drove plenty of mockers, even among those in the Christian faith.

Luhrmann starts her column discussing a recent trip to Accra, Ghana. She traveled there to learn more about charismatic Christian church growth in the region. What struck her was how much people **spoke in tongues**. She went to services that lasted three hours and reports people prayed in tongues most of the

time.

“People I interviewed spoke about praying by themselves in tongues for similar stretches of time,” Luhrmann writes. “They said they did so because it was the one language the devil could not understand, but what I found so striking was how happy it seemed to make them.”

Luhrmann goes on to write about how some of the early Christians **spoke in tongues** and how the practice, for the most part, died out until Pentecostalism emerged around the turn of the 20th century at **Azusa Street**. She also points to studies from the Pew Research Center revealing 18 percent of Americans speak in tongues at least several times a year.

“What dawned on me in Accra is that speaking in tongues might actually be a more effective way to pray than speaking in ordinary language—if by prayer one means the mental technique of detaching from the everyday world, and from everyday thought, to experience God,” she writes.

Lurhmann’s column opened the floodgates for mockers of many stripes.

Some commenters accused **tongue-talkers** of seeking to elevate their status. Others claimed tongue-talking stopped after **Pentecost**. The list of objections and mocking continued, with people claiming that praying in the Spirit is for “weak-minded believers” and insisting it is “delusional, self-induced, hallucinational gibberish,” “mass hyperactivity and imitation” and “controlled hysteria.” Others were convinced “cunning charlatans” talk us into talking in tongues for their own personal gain.

The list of mocking accusations go on and on, but I found one comment particularly interesting. A commenter named Jaja wrote, “I think that if Professor Luhrmann looked closely she would find that whiskey does the same thing ... if taken in sufficient quantities.”

Hmm. Isn't that what they said on the day of **Pentecost**?

When divided tongues, as of fire, fell upon the born-again believers in the upper room and they were all filled with the **Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:3-4), everyone was amazed and perplexed, wondering what it meant.

"Others mocking said, 'They are full of new wine'" (v. 13).

That's when Peter stood up and set the record straight, preaching from Joel 2: "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18).

Peter went on to preach the gospel, and 3,000 people got saved. But that didn't put an end to the mocking. Of course, we've seen this mocking spirit come against the things of God throughout the Bible. Some youths mocked Elisha (2 Kings 2:23). Messengers of God have been mocked (2 Chron. 36:16). Sanballat mocked Nehemiah's work to rebuild the wall (Neh. 4:1). Job's friends mocked him during his trial (Job 12:4). Jeremiah was mocked (Jer. 20:7). Jesus was mocked (Matt. 27:28-29).

With all this in mind, it's no shock that **speaking in tongues** is going to bring modern-day mockers. We shouldn't be surprised. Jude, the man the **Holy Spirit** inspired to write, "Building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20), also warned us there would be mockers in the last days (v. 16).

So why do people mock **praying in tongues**?

Ultimately, because they don't understand it. It does look pretty wild when you don't know what's going on—and can look

pretty intense even when you do know what's going on. As a young woman working at a Christian television station, witnessing tongue-talkers frightened me so much that I abandoned an internship I vied hard to win. So I get it. I understand why people, especially unbelievers, think praying in the Spirit is strange.

Nevertheless, I'm praying for the **Holy Spirit** to encounter all those who don't believe in Christ—or who don't believe tongues is for today—in a mighty way so that, like me, a once-mocker can become a tongue-talker that enjoys all the benefits of a heavenly prayer language.

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High-Wire Faith

High-wire artist Nik Wallenda walked across the Grand Canyon this summer with 13 million viewers tuned in live to see him defy gravity for 23 minutes.

Stop Dwelling in the

Wilderness

Just as I brought My children of Israel out of the barren wilderness where they wandered for forty years, so I will not cause you to dwell in a spiritual wilderness any longer. Because you have listened to My words and have honored Me with your life, I will not forsake you in the wilderness, but I will lead you on the road and show you light to bring you out into the land I have promised to you. I will sustain you as you leave the wilderness, and you will have lack of nothing. I will turn your wilderness into a pool of living water and cause My watersprings to rise up out of your dry land. I will establish My dwelling place with you and will bless you, give you a fruitful harvest, and cause you to multiply greatly.

Nehemiah 9:19–21; Psalm 107:35–38

Prayer Declaration

Lord, release Your living water in my dry places and create streams in the desert of my heart. Let Your rivers flow into my desert places. I will not dwell in the wilderness but will be led by You into a fruitful land. My desert shall blossom as a rose and bring forth abundant fruit.

All of these are from *Daily Declarations for Spiritual Warfare* by John Eckhardt.

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You Will Walk in My Spirit of Excellence

You will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but I will be to you an everlasting light and your glory. Though you may be hard-pressed on every side, you will not be crushed. When you are perplexed, I will not forsake you. If you are struck down, you will not be destroyed. By faith you will know that just as I raised up My Son, Jesus, I will also raise you up with Jesus and will bring you before My throne in heaven. Therefore, do not lose heart. For your light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for you a far more eternal victory. Do not look on the things that you see, but look at those things that are not seen.

Isaiah 60:1, 15–16; 2 Corinthians 4:7–18

Prayer Declaration

Because the Spirit of God is at work within me, I am empowered to walk in the excellence of God. When troubling and perplexing circumstances come into my life, I will not lose heart. I will not look at things as they are seen, but I will look at the unseen power of God. I will place my eyes on my Father's throne in heaven, and as I walk in His excellence, His Spirit will enable me to radiate His glory.

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Was Money at the Root of Sam Hinn's Rapid-Fire Restoration?

Editor's note: Prophetic author Jennifer LeClaire sounds the alarm on key issues impacting the church and society through her bold writing. Sign up today to stay informed and join her as a "watchman on the wall" interceding for these times. Click here here to sign up for the newsletter.

After a four-year affair and an eight-month restoration process, **Sam Hinn**, the brother of evangelist **Benny Hinn**, was re-ordained into the ministry on Sunday night at Bishop Mark Chironna's Church on the Living Edge.

Although there have been other controversial restorations in the past—Jimmy Swaggart, Paul Cain and Todd Bentley are a few that come to mind—Hinn's re-ordination is causing many in the

body of Christ to take a closer look at what's going on behind the scenes.

- Why the rush back to ministry after a four-year affair?
- Is this a symptom of the hypergrace movement?
- Did money have something to do with it?

“I have to confess that when I heard about the plans to re-ordain Sam, I was upset. I told one of my ministry colleagues, ‘This is a joke and makes a mockery out of everything I hold dear and have spent my life proclaiming and upholding,’” wrote Pastor Ron Johnson, who was charged with overseeing Hinn’s **restoration** process.

“I outlined a two-year plan of **restoration** and walked through the initial stages with him. But after three months, Sam wanted to renegotiate the terms. When I wouldn’t agree to that, he withdrew from my covering and has since found a group of men willing to endorse his leadership in a more expeditious manner.”

So what’s going on here?

Clearly, there’s a strong disagreement among well-known leaders in the body of Christ over whether this man should have been released back into public ministry so quickly. In an age of the **hypergrace movement**—which is full of dangerous errors, such as denying the need for true repentance—re-ordaining a man who admitted to a four-year affair after less than a year smacks of grace wrongly applied. Grace (and **forgiveness**) is one thing. Restoring trust is another.

Noteworthy is the dichotomy of responses to Hinn’s restoration among lay believers and clergy alike. Some believe it was too soon. Others pull the legalistic card on anyone who suggests it was too soon. Still others point to money motivations. Let’s look at some of the Facebook responses to Johnson’s article:

“Look how the ‘Christian population’ treated Jimmy Swaggart, Jim Bakker. Yes, they did sin. Do you see them on TBN? Daystar? You will see Sam Hinn. It is disgusting. This is the reason so many good and decent Christians have stopped going to church,” Verla Toney wrote.

“Where in the Bible is this 2 year to restore thing? That’s an AG thing. Six weeks after Peter had a moral failure, he was having the first gospel crusade in history,” commented Peter A Vandever.

Beth Rank said, “Sam has shown by his actions that he is still in rebellion and not ready for ministry. I think the author has rightly discerned the situation and has done all that he could to help Sam. The men who have re-ordained Sam have done him a great disservice and will have to answer to a holy God because of it. These things are very, very serious ... see 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-11.”

“Who are we to judge? Leave that to God. He that is without sin cast the first stone? God is merciful,” noted Janis J Shepherd Harewood.

“When a minister has broken trust like this, it takes a lot of time to rebuild trust ... even in his own family and marriage. It seems like when they want to rush back into ministry, they are caring more about how this has affected them instead of the impact it has had on those closest to him and the body of Christ. Ministry isn’t about the minister. It is about serving God’s people. Ministers who have failed should not be rushed back into the limelight!!!” Annette Houtz Compton wrote.

“How soon should a pastor be restored after falling into sin? How long does it take God to forgive one who repents of his sin?” commented Bishop Rodney Sanders.

“Narcissism at its finest these days. Holiness has been put on the shelf & out comes hyper grace. We need to get back to the fear of God (& this incident scares the mud out of me) instead

of the fear & worship of man,” Bonnie Curry Stempel noted.

“Does God expect 2 years of groveling at the AofG? Or can God bring fruits of repentance in one single ALTER CALL OF POWER? From how I read this article he refused 2 years of his life being under the scrutiny of how bad he has been. God restores and give grace and mercy. Seems like he refused the AofG recommended penance of walking on his knees at their temple,” said Kris Koskella.

“He can’t wait to be restored. After all, there’s money to be made ... is how tons of ppl are gonna read this,” speculated Laura Vernon Bull.

The divided responses show a divided body of Christ—and it also shows that there needs to be more discussion around **how to restore a fallen leader**. Sam Hinn wasn’t the first leader to fall, and he won’t be the last. I am grateful for Ron Johnson’s boldness to come out with a part of the story we would otherwise never have known—and in doing so starting a much-needed dialogue.

Personally, I believe a four-year affair requires more than an eight-month restoration process. And if Johnson, who has known Hinn for 30 years and has been involved in successfully **restoring fallen ministers** in the past, prayerfully laid out a two-year plan, then I believe it was necessary. As Johnson noted in his article, restoration is not only about forgiveness; it’s also about trust.

So what’s going on here? I don’t think this is a hypergrace error, but neither do I wonder why so many folks think money ultimately drove Hinn back into ministry just a few months after admitting to long-term sexual immorality. Hinn needs money to live. Whatever motivated Chironna and Archbishop Lonnie Langston to re-ordain him so quickly, we can only pray that he doesn’t fall again and hurt more people in the rush back to ministry.

Jennifer LeClaire is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *The Spiritual Warrior's Guide to Defeating Jezebel*. You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.

How to Divorce-Proof Your Marriage

Linda S. Mintle, a licensed Christian therapist, offers helpful advice for safeguarding your relationship from a breakup.

When church or ministry leaders call it quits on their marriages, the outcome “culturally sanctions” divorce and “cheapens grace,” says marriage therapist and author Linda S. Mintle, Ph.D. *Writing in Divorce-Proofing Your Marriage* (Charisma House), Mintle says Christian couples often split over fixable problems while viewing their marriage as a contract instead of a covenant, or “unbreakable promise.”

“What have we done with the transforming power of God?” asks Mintle, who’s also a licensed clinical social worker. “We have it for healings and finances but not for marriage? God’s power can change difficult situations.”

Mintle offers the following advice as a way for Christian leaders to safeguard their marriages and ministries:

Be wise counselors. Clergy need to implement ministry boundaries. Men, in particular, need to be careful “when females, who are vulnerable, are coming in to speak with them,” she says. “Be careful not to do counseling when you’re

not trained to, and make sure that your door is open or that another person is present. Avoid even the appearance of evil.”

Resist the power trap. Ministers are not immune to the lure of power that comes with the limelight of ministry. “Everything in the Bible is about humbling yourself and not exalting yourself over God,” Mintle says. “But people are seduced by power, control and sexuality—all of which can lead to marriage problems. It’s wise to have people around who won’t make you vulnerable to these things.”

Break down the barriers. The road to divorce begins with emotional distance and leads to roadblocks of discord that get deeper and wider. “A lot of people tend to get critical of their partner and start thinking they can find a better mate. They become defensive and begin to harbor negative feelings.” At those times, instead of focusing on what that other person isn’t doing, call out to God.

Humbly seek help. When you’re the shoulder others cry on, it’s hard to look for one of your own. “You have to humble yourself,” Mintle says. “People are broken, and it shouldn’t matter who you are. There are lots of organizations that offer help.” Among them is the American Association of Christian Counselors ([aacc.org](#)), which provides resources on family and marital stress.

Rest to restore. Some leaders mistakenly believe they have special divine privileges. “It’s as if they say, ‘I can get a divorce, and come back with a new platform,’” she says. “They don’t think that [the divorce] should have any ramifications on their ministries.”

Ministers who divorce need a mandatory restoration period of at least two years “to figure out what made [the marriage] go south and then to get some help,” Mintle says. Afterward, if they return to ministry, she says, it must be decided whether they should be “at the same level of leadership.”

Linda Mintle is a national expert on the psychology of food, weight and body image and relationships.