

Totally Forgiving God

Overcoming hurts through total forgiveness is one of the most difficult things in the world to do. It is arguably the most major challenge one can accept in this life. I therefore put the following suggestions not as easy steps but rather as things for you to consider as a way forward in setting God free (if you have not done so).

1. Be totally honest with God and tell Him your complaint. David said, "I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble" (Ps. 142:2). This means to tell God but not the world. Perhaps you have heard of the old spiritual that came out of the Deep South in the nineteenth century. It came out of the cotton fields from black slaves who were so rudely and wickedly treated: "Nobody knows the troubles I've seen; nobody knows but Jesus."

The truth is, God likes it when He is the only one who knows! We all need someone to share our griefs with—thank God for friends. But when the Lord alone knows what you have been through—and no one else—you are letting Him in your feelings and not others. When a friend confides in you and you know you are the only one who knows what he or she has been through, you are affirmed in a significant way. God wants to have that place in your life—when He is the only one you tell. It has given me great consolation over the years when I was tempted to tell this person or that one what I have been through to hear the Lord saying, "RT, I know what is going on; will I do?" It connects to that question Jesus asked the Pharisees, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:44, KJV). If indeed you choose to seek only the honor of God, why not let Him be the only one you tell your grievances to?

When you talk to God, be vulnerable, transparent, and totally honest with Him. Take the mask off. He sees right through you

anyway! Don't pretend; don't try to impress Him. Tell Him your anger, your hurts, and your feeling of bewilderment. The more honest you are, the more intimate will be your relationship with Him.

After all, why do you think He let you go through that trial in the first place? It was partly to get your attention. He likes your company. He wants a close relationship with you. The bottom line: it is all because He loves you so much.

2. Make a list of things you are truly thankful for. When you have been dealt a most severe blow, it is easy to forget the good things you have in life. With effort you can think of some things. The list will grow as you think harder.

I will never forget when I was first convicted over my own ingratitude. It came right in the middle of a sermon—when I was preaching on Philippians 4:6: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (emphasis added). The words with thanksgiving—which I had read a thousand times before, but that day it was like the first time—made me see how I had taken God for granted, and the many, many things He had done for me. I resolved then and there to be a thankful person from that day on. When I recounted how many things God had done for me but which I never specifically said thank you for, I felt so ashamed. God loves it when we are thankful.

So I strongly recommend you take time to reflect. Go back over your life. Write down every single thing you are happy about. Did you ever think to say thank you to the Lord? When you do this earnestly and thoughtfully, you will be amazed—and perhaps embarrassed as I was—how long the list becomes.

We had a Sunday prayer meeting every week at Westminster Chapel an hour before the evening service started. We began taking the first fifteen minutes of that prayer

meeting to do nothing but thank the Lord for things. I said to them, "No requests. Don't ask Him for anything for fifteen minutes.

Just thank Him for things." The first night I put this to the people there was total silence—at first. People didn't know how to begin. So I spoke up: "Thank Him for Jesus. Thank Him for salvation. Thank Him for the Holy Spirit." Those fifteen minutes seemed like an eternity at first. But months later they were that fastest fifteen minutes of that prayer meeting! When you make an effort to recall things you are sincerely thankful for, you will be amazed how much there is!

As the old hymn put it: Count your blessings, name them one by one; Count your blessings, see what God hath done! Count your blessings, name them one by one; And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done. —Johnson Oatman, Jr. (1897)

3. Fight self-pity and a feeling of entitlement with all your heart.

We come from our mother's womb with a feeling the God owes us something. It is symptomatic of the sin we inherited from the Fall of our first parents in the Garden of Eden that we feel like this. We come into the world not only speaking lies, as we saw, but also feeling that God owes us certain things.

In this book I have had something to say about self-pity and how it is counterproductive in our lives. Closely akin to self-pity is a feeling of entitlement. Modern society has become like this, that the world owes us a living. We likewise transfer this entitlement to God—that He owes us explanations, income, comfort, and, most of all, heaven when we die. The idea that it is of God's mercy that we are not consumed

(Lam. 3:22) is alien to us—but is the biblical way of thinking. When Jonathan Edwards preached his sermon from Deuteronomy 32:35, "Their foot shall slide in due time"

(kjb), his hearers were shocked but also smitten. Strong men were seen holding on to tree trunks after the service to keep from sliding into hell. For Edwards had said that it was by the mere mercy of God we did not wake up in hell this very day.³ This kind of thinking is the polar opposite to the way modern man and the contemporary church have been led to believe.

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How to Forgive God—Totally

If we will just pause . . . and think . . . we will be amazed how much we have to be thankful for. My word to you: tell Him you are thankful. He notices it when we don't thank Him. When Jesus healed ten lepers, only one came back to say thank you. Jesus's response was: "Weren't all ten healed; where are the nine?" God notices it when we are thankful; He notices it when we aren't. (See Luke 17:17.) Make it a habit to tell God of the things you are thankful for. Name them one by one.

4. Choose to believe that God has a purpose in what He has permitted—and thank Him for it.

You may not be convinced yet that He has a purpose in what He has allowed. Don't worry. Joseph could not have known that God had a purpose in his brothers being jealous of him and was behind their decision to sell him to the Ishmaelites.

So with all of us. The worst suffering is the hardest to understand at first. The most natural reaction in the world is to panic and complain. But one day we will see that God was up to something that was very wonderful. As I said earlier, the worst trial of my life was accompanied with the greatest disillusionment and bleakest outlook you can imagine. I can now tell you with total honesty that it was the best thing that ever happened to us. In fact, I would hate to contemplate where we would be today without that trial.

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The God of the Bible is a God of purpose. He does nothing accidentally, and all accidents are under His allseeing eye. The reason that all things work together for good to them that love God is because of God's purpose (Rom. 8:28). His plan. His intent. Joseph said to his brothers, even though they meant to harm him, God meant it for good (Gen. 50:20). God does everything He does according to His sovereign plan; He works everything according to the purpose of His will (Eph. 1:11). If you don't have a robust view of the sovereignty of God, I predict that you will come to this eventually; the sooner, the better. It is the best way to live, namely, knowing that God has a plan for your life. What He said to others centuries ago He says now to you: "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jer. 29:11).

5. Be patient and willing to wait for things to become clear to you.

Perhaps one of the hardest things of all for us to do is, simply, to wait. "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord" (Ps. 27:14).

What exactly are you to be waiting for? First, for the dust to settle and for things to become clearer to you. This may take time. It could take a long time. Joseph waited twentytwo years for his dream to be fulfilled. David waited for

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twenty years before he was made king. During those years he had the anointing but not the crown. Do not be intimidated or envious of those who appear to wear a crown—they are happy and prosperous and perhaps arrogant; it is far better to have the anointing without the crown than the crown without the anointing. As it happens, I waited for twenty-two years before I heard my own dad affirm me. I told him in 1956 I would have an international ministry,

thinking it would come any day. But in 1978 as the train was pulling into London's King's Cross station, I actually heard my dad say to me: "Son, you were right and I was wrong; God has indeed been with you, and I am proud of you."

But what if the dust doesn't settle for you and things don't become clear in the present life? This could be the case. I can only say that, if it is, the glory to come is worth waiting

for. Jesus endured the cross "for the joy set before him" (Heb.

12:2). It did not come in the days of His life here below. It came later when He was welcomed home to the right hand of God by His Father.

There are some things I don't really expect to be cleared up for me in this life. I gave up a long time ago thinking I would understand this vision, that dream, or the promise I took to be from God. Vindication does not always take place on this earth. We all have to wait for some things to be clear in heaven. Vindication for some will take place in heaven.

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Think of the judges that have been bribed, the elections that were rigged, the lies that were believed, and the murders and crimes that were unsolved. Think of the murders that were committed but the innocent person was executed for. Do you think those things were unseen by God? God loves justice. And He will love to vindicate you. Sometimes He does it in the present life; sometimes He waits. But I make you a promise: the longer He waits, the sweeter the vindication will be. I guarantee it. "Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

That, dear reader, is worth waiting for.

How Do We Respond to a Violent Culture?

The tragedy of Newtown, Conn., the Colorado theater massacre and other egregious violations of our communal serenity demonstrate that in the 21st century, the spirit of Herod still lives. In the New Testament, the biblical narratives include the presence of three different Herods. The first Herod persecuted Jesus as a baby, the second Herod prosecuted John the Baptist and the third Herod executed disciples. Each embodied an unbridled commitment to mindless violence.

To that extent, the spirit of Herod still lives.

Nevertheless, it's important to understand that in the midst of so much violence today, there exists a prophetic supposition of hope. In other words, there exists today a Spirit more powerful than the spirit of Herod.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we must declare that the most powerful Spirit alive today is not the one that persecutes, prosecutes or executes. The most powerful Spirit is the one that redeems, restores and resurrects. In spite of the media-exacerbated reality of a culture saturated in violence, the most powerful Spirit alive today is none other than the Holy Spirit of Almighty God.

Yet as Christians, we cannot negate that a culture of violence permeates all aspects of our society today. Therefore, as Christ followers, we must answer the following queries: *What is an appropriate and biblical response to violence in today's culture and society? What place, if any, should "righteous indignation" have for Christians? What about Jesus becoming angry and cleansing the temple on two different occasions?*

What does God have to say about working with, ministering to and forgiving those who have committed acts of violence?

Re-Embrace the Prophetic

Let's begin with the biblical response to violence in today's culture and society. In order for the church to respond, we must embrace the biblical impetus and moral imperative to speak into culture. We must capture once again our prophetic mantle.

There's a fine line between the prophetic and the pathetic. The prophetic, which is defined as truth-telling, requires the church to recognize that the most important problem in America is not moral relativism, cultural decadence or spiritual apathy. The number-one problem in America stems from the unfortunate posture of a lukewarm church.

The church, once the most catalytic and influential institution in community, stands guilty of sacrificing biblical truth on the altar of political expediency. To a great degree, we stand guilty of abandoning our prophetic, truth-telling mantle and our ontologically derived purpose.

Saints, silence is not option when in 2013 America, men abandon their roles as fathers, children are slaughtered, pornography marries technology, God is mocked, pushers are more admired than preachers, school grounds look like battlegrounds, and our neighbors sit paralyzed by the gate called Beautiful, begging for change. Silence is not option when violence not only captivates our actions but also our thoughts and language.

Hence, the first step in offering a counter-narrative to the endless cycle of violence that saturates society is the awakening of the only institution guaranteed never to be silenced by violence: the church.

Reclaim the Image of God

The church's response must include the reintroduction of an

idea that revolutionized the Roman Empire—and the world, for that matter. Early Christendom built the initial firewall against unbridled violence in society when it proposed the concept of the *imago Dei*, the image of God. We carry a responsibility to assist those who suffer from spiritual and cultural myopia with the corrective lens of seeing God's image in every human being.

For the image of God lives in all human beings: black and white, rich and poor, straight and gay, conservative and liberal, citizen and undocumented. Our challenge is to see the image of God in every human being, including those we disagree with. Our challenge is to see the image of God even in those who persecute and slander us. Our challenge is to see the image of God in those who oppose us. Our challenge is to see the image of God in the suffering, the marginalized, the oppressed and the hurting. Our challenge is to see the image of God in friend and foe, acquaintance and stranger, strong and weak, oppressor and liberator.

Recognizing the image of God in those around us serves as a significant deterrent to acts of violence. In practically every post-violent episode, the perpetrator has alluded to a lack of humanity seen in those upon whom they brought their actions. In other words, the violent offender objectifies their victim in a matter that extrapolates any notion of humanity, significance or spiritual value in them. Diluting the image of God in a person enables the culprit to engage in acts of aggression with minimal conviction of something done wrong.

Recognizing the image of God in every human being must result in engaging with the *habitus Christus*, or the habits of Christ, toward our fellow man. Such actions reconcile sanctification with service, conviction with compassion, and holiness with humility. Violent acts stand limited in a culture that champions life and recognizes the image of God in each and every being.

Reconsider the Power of Words

We've all heard this saying since we were school kids, knocking around in the playground: "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me." The intent behind this saying is a good one, to be sure. We say it to steel young minds and hearts against the inevitable bruises of childhood and adolescence. Even the coolest kids get called names. The vulnerable, the uncool among them, suffer incalculable verbal abuse.

As hard as we might try, did any of us ever believe name-calling didn't hurt? Even today—now that we are older and hopefully wiser, having experienced the heartaches of everyday life more fully than we may have as kids—is "words will never hurt me" a maxim we can stand behind? The Lamb's agenda says no. Words *do* hurt, and we should not be the ones inflicting pain.

Today, given the electro-charged public square in which we speak, our words can cause enormous damage to any number of people within seconds of them leaving our mouths. Once gone, there is no pulling them back. There's no erasing them. Those words may live in the cybersphere forever.

As Christians, we should not add useless wind to this electronic maelstrom. Instead, we must lead by example. We should measure our language, especially when assessing our critics. Derogatory terms for other human beings, regardless of how widely those person's views differ from ours—or, more importantly, from the truths of Scripture—should not pass through our lips.

"For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of," Jesus said in Matthew 12:34. What Jesus meant was that it is far more than a failure of tone when we marginalize or malign those with whom we disagree. The solution is not just "nicer" words but a transformed perspective, a more acute vision, one that sees all human beings, including opponents, through the eyes

of our *proponent*, Jesus.

Accordingly, we must repudiate all vestiges of articulated terror. Let a generation arise that will dare to speak to both the heathen and the Pharisees. Let a generation arise committed to turning the tables of the money-changers in the temple and to writing on the ground while saying, "He who is without sin, throw the first stone."

Righteous indignation compels us to marry truth with love and conviction with compassion. It enables us to redeem the narrative of prophetic Christianity by establishing a firewall against the spirit of violence—a spirit that can be quenched when we speak with civility and reach out with charity.

Rethink the Proper Response

But wasn't Jesus turning the tables a violent act or, in the best case scenario, a demonstration of anger? Jesus, without a doubt, exhibited righteous indignation when he revealed the religious hypocrisy and apathy captured in the actions of the money-changers and dove-sellers.

Yet the revolutionary and catalytic message of "turning the other cheek" best frames the loving and graceful metric of authentic Christ-following. For example, when Christ rebuked Peter for engaging his sword and cutting off the ear of a participant attempting to arrest Jesus, our Lord exhibited a heart for a nonviolent, righteous, civil posture poised to transform the world.

Consequently, the church's role includes reforming the culture and equipping Christ-followers to minister healing to the victim while simultaneously providing deliverance to the perpetrator. The born-again church must empower Christians with the knowledge that the violence in our communities stems from a spiritual deficiency and not just a sociocultural breach. In addition, we cannot negate the reality of mental illness that serves as the facilitative womb for so many

violent acts.

Therefore, when politicians attempt to provide political solutions to a problem with a clear spiritual dimension, let us not hold our silence. Understandably, building a firewall against Herod stems not from the agenda of the donkey or the elephant but from the agenda of the Lamb.

At the end of day, the church's role in addressing the spiral of violence requires spiritual fortitude, prophetic courage, a biblical impetus and an anointing to reiterate the words of a young shepherd boy as he confronted a giant threatening him with violent acts: "You come against me with a sword, a spear and a javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord God Almighty!"

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Alveda King Reflects on Death of MLK 40 Years Later

Forty-five years ago today, my Uncle M.L., the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., was murdered by an assassin's bullet. Sometimes I wonder what life would be like if that shot had never been fired—what our nation would be like if that bullet had missed. Many are the times I wish he were here.

But though Uncle M.L. is no longer with us on earth, his voice

lives on in the words he used to change our nation in the cause of justice.

We are a more just society today because of Martin Luther King Jr. Not because he brought new ideas into the public consciousness but because he reminded us of fundamental, eternal truths—truths that needed to be restated and lived out. He once asked and answered this question: “How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust?” He went on to explain:

“A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: ‘An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law.’”

These timeless truths must be restated again today.

Remember the Rev. Martin Luther King. Let us not forget he was an ordained Baptist minister and preacher of the Word of God. He taught that we are to respect the law. But he also taught that there is a law higher than man’s. There are no commands more deserving of obedience than God’s.

Those commands caused Uncle M.L. to look beyond city ordinances, state statutes or even federal law for guidance. He believed that those ordinances, statutes and laws were to be respected but that they were to be weighed against God’s law or what some would term natural law to determine if they were just.

The same is true today. But some still look to themselves to determine right and wrong.

We are told by the Obama administration that it is “unjust” that women should have to buy their own birth control pills, so everyone else must reach into their pockets to pay for them.

We are told by abortion advocates that it is “unjust” that some women cannot afford to abort their babies, so tax dollars must be used to finance the killing of those children.

We are told by same-sex “marriage” advocates that it is “unjust” that men cannot marry other men and women cannot marry other women, so 2,000 years of wisdom must be abandoned.

And yet the Bible tells us that human life is sacred. We are thereby to choose life over abortion. The Bible teaches us that natural marriage between one man and one woman is part of the procreative process. We are thereby compelled to choose holy and procreative matrimony.

In forgetting our heritage, in distancing ourselves from God’s moral rules, we are doing Uncle M.L. a disservice, and we are in danger of coming face-to-face with disaster. So, in remembering Uncle M.L. today, I urge America and the world to remember that he was a servant of God who, though imperfect, tried to point people to the truth.

Alveda C. King is the daughter of the late slain civil rights activist the Rev. A.D. King and niece of Martin Luther King Jr. She is also a civil rights and pro-life activist, as well as director of African-American outreach for Priests for Life. [Click here](#) to visit her blog.

John Eckhardt: How to Confront the Enemy’s Tactics

We are not to be ignorant of the devil’s tactics. We can overcome all his schemes. The devil is a schemer. A scheme is a plan, design, or program of action.

The Bible talks about the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). A wile is a trick or a trap. A trap is a snare. Warfare involves tactics and strategies. The greatest generals are great tacticians and strategists. You cannot win without a strategy. Don't allow the enemy to strategize against you.

Overcome and destroy his strategies through prayer. Traps and snares are hidden. People fall into traps unknowingly. We are delivered from the snare of the fowler. A fowler is a hunter. Satan is the hunter of souls. We can release ourselves and others through prayer.

The main tactic of the enemy is deception. He is a liar and the father of lies. The Word of God exposes the tactics of the enemy. God is light, and His Word is light. The light exposes the enemy and tears away the darkness.

Multitudes of people are deceived by the enemy. There are hosts of lying and deceiving spirits that work under the authority of Satan. These spirits include delusion, deception, lying, seducing, blinding, error and guile. Our prayers can strip the power of these deceiving spirits and cause the eyes of people to be opened.

David prayed against the enemy conspiracies of the wicked. The psalms are filled with references to the plans of David's enemies to overthrow him. His prayers were the key in destroying these plans and bringing him deliverance. David prayed for his enemies to be scattered, confused, exposed and destroyed.

David's struggles were with natural enemies. But behind these natural enemies were spiritual ones that were opposed to the Davidic kingdom. Jesus was to come from this line and sit upon this throne. David was fighting something beyond the natural. Through the Holy Spirit, he was contending with the powers of darkness that were set against the arrival of the kingdom of God.

These powers were also manifested through Herod, who attempted to kill the coming Messiah. Herod was driven by spirits of fear and murder. He was used by Satan to attempt to abort the coming kingdom. However, the Holy Spirit had already been loosed through the prayers of David, and David's throne was secure.

Many of these warfare prayers are taken from the psalms of David. Jesus is the Son of David. He sits on the throne of David. David's prophetic prayers were weapons against the enemy's attempt to stop the promised seed. David's victories in prayer opened the way for his throne to continue. The throne of wickedness was unable to overcome the throne of righteousness.

God taught David. He became the warrior king. His victories caused his kingdom to be established. His victory over the house of Saul came after a long war (2 Sam. 3:1).

Don't become discouraged in prayer. Continue to pray. You will become stronger, and the enemy will become weaker.

David consumed his enemies (Ps. 18:37-40). He did not turn until they were destroyed. We must see our spiritual enemies completely destroyed. We must pursue the enemy. To "pursue" means to follow in order to overtake or capture. It means to chase with hostile intent. We cannot be passive when it comes to warfare.

David's victories prepared the way for Solomon. Solomon enjoyed peace and prosperity. Solomon's name means "peace."

Peace is the Hebrew word *shalom*. *Shalom* means "peace, prosperity, favor, health and well-being." Your victories over the enemy will release *shalom*. You will experience greater levels of peace and prosperity.

John Eckhardt is overseer of Crusaders Ministries in Chicago.

Gifted with a strong apostolic call, he has ministered across the U.S. and in more than 80 other countries. He produces a weekly TV program, *Perfecting the Saints*, and is the author of more than 20 books, including *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power* and the popular *Prayers That ...* series (*Prayers That Rout Demons, Prayers That Break Curses, Prayers That Bring Healing, Prayers That Release Heaven*). For more, visit his ministry at www.impactnetwork.net. This article was excerpted from his book *Prayers That Rout Demons*.

Nick Vujicic: Running the Race With No Legs

In a video from *60 Minutes Australia*, Nick Vujicic jumps backwards off the diving board and splashes into a pool. He resurfaces, yelling, "I can't feel my legs!"

Why are people laughing in the background? Because Nick has no legs. Or arms.

Nick Vujicic (pronounced Voo-yi-chich) is no stranger to the spotlight. He has appeared on *CBS Sunday Morning, Inside Edition* and *The 700 Club*. He's a *New York Times* best-selling author, radio host and motivational speaker. His life has inspired millions of people around the world.

"Inspired" might even be an understatement. Based on comments from his website and Facebook page, he has transformed the way some people think about life—and God.

"I have no arms and no legs, yet I am complete and lacking nothing," Nick said. "I'm not jealous of anyone having arms or legs because I've got something much more, which is faith in

Jesus Christ ... He will carry me when I cannot walk.”

At 30 years old, Nick has traveled to more than 44 countries and has seen many people embrace new life in Christ. He calls Billy Graham his “evangelistic role model.” (Read more about meeting Mr. Graham below.)

Everywhere he goes, Nick connects with people. People are drawn to him despite age, culture or status.

“They know how it feels to feel alone and feel like there’s no hope,” he said. Above all, he added, they want purpose, and Nick’s story is full of it.

Nick was born in Melbourne, Australia, to Serbian parents. Although he was the firstborn in his family, no one sent his mom flowers as congratulations after Nick was born without arms or legs. As a young child, he was depressed about his seemingly dark and lonely future. At age 10, he attempted to drown himself in the bathtub but couldn’t because he cared too much for his parents.

Then at 15, Nick read John 9 in the Bible where the disciples see a man blind since birth and ask why that happened. Jesus said, “This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:3).

As a child, Nick thought he would be happy if he had arms and legs. But that verse from John resonated with him, and instead, he found that happiness comes from doing what God created him to do: inspiring others and telling them that despite their circumstances, God can use them.

“[Theologian] William Barclay ... said the greatest two days in anyone’s life [are] the day you were born and the day you knew why,” Nick once said. On his website, he writes, “If God can use a man without arms and legs to be His hands and feet, then He will certainly use any willing heart!”

Nick now lives in California with his bride of one year, Kanae, and their new son, Kiyoshi. Being a father “is a joy and love that you’ve never known,” he said, but there was a time when he thought it would never happen. How would he find a wife who loved him without limbs?

In his book, *Unstoppable*, Nick comments on faith in action. People might say they have faith, he says, but do their actions show it?

“Stop putting limits on God,” he said. “Whatever the fears are, God is bigger.” It’s God, he said, who gives people the power to overcome.

In an interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network, Nick talked about questioning God:

“The question was, ‘Why? Why did you make me this way?’ And the answer was, ‘Do you trust me?’ ... When you say ‘yes’ to that question, nothing else matters ... There is no point in being complete on the outside when you’re broken on the inside. And I found out that God can heal you without changing the circumstance.”

Nick holds two bachelor’s degrees—one in accounting, and one in financial planning. He and Kanae married in February 2012 and welcomed their son in February 2013. While Nick has no limbs, he has two toes on his left foot that assist him in certain activities: He can get a glass of water, comb his hair, type, hit a golf ball and shave.

“But that’s all boring compared to skydiving, scuba diving, horse riding, swimming [and] surfing,” he said. Yes, he’s done all that.

“I can be angry with what I don’t have or thankful for what I do have,” Nick said.

And as he tells people around the world, he has a lot to be

thankful for.

Nick on Meeting Billy Graham

Nick has met millions of people, but one person he was anxious to meet was Billy Graham. A couple of years ago, he and his then-fiancée, Kanae, met Mr. Graham at his home in Montreat, N.C. Nick calls it “a monumental day” and wrote about it in his book, *Unstoppable*. Their conversation led Nick to make changes in his ministry.

“He’s helped me to make sure that my priorities are right,” Nick said, and that faith and family come first. Hearing about Mr. Graham’s career “caused me to step back and think about what I want to look back on when I reach a similar place in my life.”

Mr. Graham said he regrets not spending more time in prayer or memorizing more Scripture, Nick said, and “when the Rev. Billy Graham says that, it really humbles you.”

Nick on Love

Although Nick had loving parents, his childhood was, at times, rough. He was bullied in school and since then, has met others overlooked or mistreated by society.

Yet the Jesus Nick believes in never overlooked people, he said. Jesus reached out to the lowest of the low and called His followers to love everyone.

On a recent tour of eastern Europe, Nick visited a school in Croatia. Noticing three boys who subtly teased him during his talk, he invited them onstage for a hug. He told them he loved them. The first boy broke down in tears.

When faced with opposition or mockery, Nick said, Christians’ response should always be “to love.”

Nick on Faith in Action

Putting that faith and love into action, though, can be

difficult, Nick said.

“We must talk about the love of Jesus, but we must above all show the love of Jesus,” he said. For churches, that means making people feel welcome and tending to their needs, particularly for families who have children with special needs. It also means working together with other churches to effectively reach the community.

Nick’s nonprofit, Life Without Limbs, occasionally partners with local churches to organize citywide outreach. Volunteers might feed the homeless, landscape or paint fire hydrants to illustrate their love for the city.

Nick on Future Plans

Nick’s book, *Limitless: Devotions for a Ridiculously Good Life*, will be released April 2. It’s a series of short life stories that draws its title not from Nick’s seemingly endless abilities, but from “God’s limitless love and power.”

Also this month, Nick begins a 26-country outreach to mobilize churches and tell people about the kind of fulfillment and purpose found only in Christ. That’s the same goal that BGEA’s My Hope America has as Christians nationwide share their faith in 2013.

“It’s not about numbers, but at the same time, we want the world to know that Jesus lives,” Nick said. My Hope America “is really pushing the body of Christ into being evangelistic, not just as a church but as a family.”

Final Thoughts: Nick on Having Arms and Legs

In heaven, Nick said, God promises perfect bodies. So what’s the first thing he would do with limbs?

“Hug Jesus and then hug my wife, family and friends, and hug everyone who was encouraged through the ministry,” he said. “So lots of hugging, and then I’d run.”

[Click here](#) to read the original article on *BillyGraham.org*.

We Will All Appear Before the Supreme Court

Last week, all eyes were upon the U.S. Supreme Court because of the potential overturning of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and Proposition 8, which would help redefine marriage as we know it today.

The Supreme Court is made up of nine unelected justices who are appointed by the president of the United States and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Once confirmed, they serve for life. These justices have been making so many landmark decisions the past several decades that many are saying our nation is no longer a republican democracy, but rather an oligarchy (a nation run by a team or committee of people).

Although those who serve on the Supreme Court swear an oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States, it seems many of them make decisions based on where the political/sociological winds are blowing instead of basing decisions on the original intent of the writers of the Constitution.

This issue of **same-sex marriage** has divided Americans almost in half, with many confessing Christians even advocating for same-sex marriage because they believe it is an issue of equality and/or because they want to receive cultural affirmation.

No matter what your position on this or any other matter, including your religious affiliation, one thing is for certain: One day we will all stand before the true Supreme

Court of the universe! This court will be convened by a person not appointed by man but ordained by God to judge the world in righteousness.

Acts 17:30-31 says, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead" (ESV).

This Supreme Judge will not be swayed by human opinion, affirmation or flattery. He needs not our affirmation because He has already been given a name above every other name (see Phil. 2:9). What is highly esteemed by men is an abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15).

Not only that, His court will sit in judgment of every human and every nation that ever existed, based on the heavenly books that accurately record every thought, word and activity in history.

Regarding Jesus as judge of the nations convening His court, we read in Daniel 7:9-10: "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came out from before Him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened."

Jesus, our final Supreme Judge, has already told us by what standard we will be judged: Ultimately every life will be judged based on the standard of His law. Matthew 5:18-20 says: "For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of

these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus also tells us in Matthew 12:36-37, “I tell you, on the Day of Judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

The apostle Paul took Judgment Day so seriously that he lived his life based on its court proceedings. 2 Corinthians 5:9-11 says, “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others.”

On that day, it won't matter how much money, fame or man-centered accolades we received; only the Lord will be glorified and only those whose names are written in the Book of Life will enter His heavenly kingdom!

Revelation 20:11-15 is perhaps the most ominous section in all of Scripture that describes the final Judgment Day: “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it. From His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the

second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

While the whole world is presently watching the U.S. Supreme Court for direction regarding to the future of marriage, we must realize that God is also watching and judging our words, motives and actions based on His law, His Word. It is our responsibility to uphold biblical standards in our spheres of influence. Of course, all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and none will enter His kingdom apart from faith in the precious blood of Jesus Christ who died for our sins and rose from the dead as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He alone is worthy to be our Judge!

Those who are wise in this world will serve and obey Him and put Him above their ethnicity, nationality, color, economic status and political affiliation.

In conclusion, we need to pray for our leaders, including the Supreme Court of the United States. These justices are about to make perhaps the biggest decision of their lives, a decision that will impact the lives of millions of Americans for generations to come! As they make this decision, I pray they realize that one day, they will have to give an account to God for this and every other decision they make. In spite of their great position of influence in the world, on Judgment Day they will face a greater Judge who will not be appeased by anything man can offer Him; on that Day, no lawyer, judge or legal process will be able to save those who stand before Him. The only thing that will appease Him will be the righteousness He freely bestows on all who trust in His precious blood!

Joseph Mattera *has been in full-time ministry since 1980 and is currently the presiding bishop of Christ Covenant Coalition and Overseeing Bishop of Resurrection in New York, a multiethnic congregation of 40 nationalities that has*

successfully developed numerous leaders and holistic ministry in the New York region and beyond. [Click here](#) to visit his website.

How to Have a Prophetic Lifestyle

Under the old covenant, the Spirit of the Lord would come upon certain individuals and they would speak by inspiration. Sometimes we use the word oracle in connection with them. Today, every believer partakes of the Holy Spirit under the new covenant. We all have the Spirit within us, and we can enjoy the Spirit upon us because God has fulfilled His promise to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh.

Therefore, we can speak as the oracles of God: If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. –1 Peter 4:11

Oracle is the Greek word *logion*, which means a brief utterance of God. God wants you to be His oracle. This is challenging to many believers who do not feel qualified to speak on behalf of God, but if you are one of them, you need to know that God has qualified you by giving you His Spirit. This is the blessing of the new covenant, and it is part of your inheritance as a believer.

I am attempting to simplify prophecy. There are different levels of the prophetic gift and lifestyle, but the most basic definition is speaking by the inspiration or influence of the Holy Spirit.

We should not make prophecy more difficult than it is. Any

believer can speak by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, including you. As you walk into your full inheritance in the Spirit, you can do your part to build a prophetic culture in the body of Christ. It is a culture in which inspired utterances—in all their many manifestations— both bubble up and drop like rain wherever you may go.

John Eckhardt is overseer of Crusaders Ministries in Chicago. Gifted with a strong apostolic call, he has ministered across the U.S. and in more than 80 other countries. He produces a weekly TV program, *Perfecting the Saints*, and is the author of more than 20 books, including *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Power* and the popular *Prayers That ...* series (*Prayers That Rout Demons, Prayers That Break Curses, Prayers That Bring Healing, Prayers That Release Heaven*) and . For more, visit his ministry at www.impactnetwork.net. This article was excerpted from his book *God Still Speaks*.

Nothing But the Blood Can Redeem Us

The Petersen House in Washington D.C. is the house across the street from Ford's Theatre, where a mortally wounded Abraham Lincoln was taken after being shot by John Wilkes Booth. A few hours later, Lincoln succumbed to his wounds and, as then Secretary of War Edwin Stanton observed, passed into the ages.

For years, his blood-stained pillow remained on display—a testimony to the horrific events of April 14, 1865, and the violent death of one of our greatest presidents.

A while back, some friends of mine visited the Petersen House

only to discover that the pillow had been removed, and placed into storage. The only item that contained the blood of the “Great Emancipator” had been taken out of public sight and put into a place where it could, potentially, be forgotten.

As Christians, we must never let it be forgotten that it is only by the blood—the blood of Jesus—that we have been forgiven. We must never forget the price that was paid when Jesus spilled His blood, and willingly gave up His life out of love for us.

In this time of history revisionism and self-obsession, as well as being an appropriate reminder during this Holy Week, may this story remind us all that we must never lose sight of the ONLY thing that can save us ... the blood of Jesus.

*For more than thirty years, **Ron Phillips** has been the pastor of Abba’s House (formerly Central Baptist Church) in Hixson, TN. A lifelong Southern Baptist, a dramatic encounter with the Holy Spirit in 1989 changed his life and ministry to one that grasps who we really are in Christ, and the gifts and fullness that are available to us through a Spirit-filled life. His television program, Ron Phillips from Abba’s House, blends solid biblical exposition with a simplicity anyone can understand. In addition, for 14 years, he hosted the daily 15-minute radio program, CenterPoint, across the nation via radio, and throughout the world via the Internet. He has now authored more than 20 books, including Awakened By The Spirit, Our Invisible Allies, Everyone’s Guide to Demons & Spiritual Warfare, The Foundations on the Holy Spirit Series, and his latest release from Charisma House, A God-Sized Future.*

For the original article, visit the heartofabba.com.

Is the NRA the Best Advocate for Black Family Safety?

Last year, the horrific shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. put the issue of gun control back at the forefront of public debate in America. Predictably, most celebrities voiced their support of stricter gun control laws as a response to the tragedy. Samuel L. Jackson surprised many when he articulated a different opinion:

“I don’t think it’s about more gun control. I grew up in the South with guns everywhere and we never shot anyone. This [shooting] is about people who aren’t taught the value of life,” the actor told the *Los Angeles Times*. Jackson’s comments recall a time when blacks could not count on the police to show up to protect their lives and property. The right to bear arms was not an issue of hunting or hobby; it was a matter of survival.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice echoed similar sentiments in 2005 when she explained her strong support of the Second Amendment to Larry King. “The way I come out of my own personal experience, in which in Birmingham, Ala., my father and his friends defended our community in 1962 and 1963 against White Knight Riders by going to the head of the community, the head of the cul-de-sac, and sitting there, armed. And so I’m very concerned about any abridgement of the Second Amendment.”

The history of gun control in the United States is steeped in racism. Unsurprisingly, state laws in the antebellum South prohibited slaves from owning or carrying weapons. But some states forbade free blacks from owning firearms as well; Tennessee actually amended their state constitution to clarify that “the free white men of this State have a right to keep and to bear arms for their common defense.”

After the Civil War, many southern states went to extensive measures to try to prevent or restrict black gun ownership. Since they could no longer abridge the Second Amendment rights based on race, as with voting, they sought to institute fees and a permit system that would deny blacks the ability to carry a firearm for all practical purposes. In fact, as late as 1941, a justice in the Florida State Supreme Court noted the history of such a gun control law:

“The original Act of 1893 was passed when there was a great influx of Negro laborers in this State drawn here for the purpose of working in turpentine and lumber camps. The same condition existed when the Act was amended in 1901 and the Act was passed for the purpose of disarming the Negro laborers...The statute was never intended to be applied to the white population and in practice has never been so applied.” (Watson v. Stone)

So for most of the nation’s history, abridging the Second Amendment was understood to encroach on the rights of blacks in particular to defend themselves and their property when they could not count on the police to do so. But today, many of the traditional spokesmen for civil rights have sided with those who want to disarm law-abiding blacks. Former congressman and NAACP president Kweisi Mfume recently defended stricter gun laws, saying, “Easily available handguns are being used to turn many of our communities into war zones. The fact that the illegal trafficking of firearms disproportionately affects minority communities in this country is indisputable. Urban communities have sadly become so accustomed to the prevalence of firearms in their neighborhoods that they are no longer shocked at the sound of gunfire.”

Unfortunately, stricter gun laws by definition will not affect the “illegal trafficking of firearms.” Right now, there are between 250 and 300 million privately owned guns in the United States. There is no credible plan to locate and collect these

weapons. (Countries like Japan, with very low rates of gun violence, also have very few firearms within their national borders.) So any further restrictions will only keep guns out of the hands of law-abiding citizens.

Last Sunday, the *Washington Post* had a cover story stating that a huge number of African-Americans have been murdered by other peoples' guns versus a lower, but significant number of whites who took their own lives with guns they owned themselves. It is obvious that America has lost its emotional and spiritual equilibrium with the appropriate use of violence and guns. It is also obvious that if any group needed to consider arming themselves, it would African-Americans because of the disproportionate number of murders in their community. Ironically, many of our clergy are recommending that guns be turned in instead of increased policing or increased mental health evaluations of homeless folk and unstable veterans in our community.

It seems to me that the "emperor" has fooled around and taken off his clothes again and nobody but his children are pointing out that fact. I am anxious to see whether the NRA will come up with recommendations that will help curb the violence that exists in schools within our urban communities. Their proposal is due soon. The question is: will their proposal advocate for black family safety?

Harry R. Jackson Jr. is senior pastor of 3,000-member Hope Christian Church in the nation's capital. Jackson, who earned an MBA from Harvard, is a best-selling author and popular conference speaker. He leads the [High-Impact Leadership Coalition](#).

Why Gay NFL Players Should Stay in the Closet

When I was a kid, watching football on Sunday afternoons was a family tradition for many people in my neighborhood. Now, the **gay agenda** is finding its way into family life—from marriage (and divorce) to adoption—and may soon enough seep into Sunday afternoon football.

“In a country with openly gay politicians, entertainers and even soldiers, professional sports has become a final frontier,” Reuters reports. “Questions are now being asked why sports, which helped play a key role in changing public opinion on racial discrimination, is out of step with the rest of American society. Nowhere has the issue become hotter than in the National Football League (NFL), the most macho of America’s pro sports.”

Professional sports *should* stay out of step. If it’s not supposed to matter whether or not an NFL player is gay, then why do we need to know about his sexual orientation? The **gay agenda** wants us to know because it wants to shape and mold the minds of the next generation. It’s much the same as the [gay superhero drama](#). Shining a positive spotlight on gay role models in any industry serves to validate homosexuality, which is clearly a sin.

There may not be any openly gay quarterbacks, linebackers, tackles, centers or kickers in the NFL, but that doesn’t mean professional sports is immune to the gay agenda’s schemes. We’ve already seen the first inroads. As Dr. Michael Brown pointed out in a [column last month](#), talk leading up to the Super Bowl may have led some conservatives to question whether it should be called the “Gay Equity Bowl” instead.

According to Fox News, “Hours after [Brendon] Ayanbadejo’s

team beat the New England Patriots on Sunday, paving their way to football's biggest game, the three-time Pro Bowl special teams player wrote an email to gay marriage proponents asking how he could use his time in the limelight [to] support the cause."

In his email he asked, "Is there anything I can do for marriage equality or anti-bullying over the next couple of weeks to harness this Super Bowl media?"

Ayanbadejo's email stirred headlines, but not as many as San Francisco 49ers cornerback Chris Culliver expressing his views on gay players in the NFL during a one-minute, recorded interview with comedian Artie Lange. Culliver said, "I don't do the gay guys, man. I don't do that. Ain't got no gay people on the team. They gotta get up outta here if they do. Can't be with that sweet stuff."

Culliver later backpedaled, but that's not where it ends. Now, CBS is reporting that a gay NFL player may soon come out of the closet, which would stir up post-season drama in more ways than one.

"Based on interviews over the past several weeks with current and former players, I'm told that a current gay NFL player is strongly considering coming out publicly within the next few months," CBS reported. CBS said the footballer's identity was not known and he is more concerned about response from football fans than his teammates.

When I was a kid, watching football on Sunday afternoons was a family tradition for many on my block. But as the **gay agenda** makes its public relations push from all sides, expect to see more gay professional athletes coming out of the closet in 2013, especially if the U.S. Supreme Court validates **gay marriage** at a federal level before football season begins.

In an age of openly gay clergy preaching the gospel, it wouldn't be nearly as shocking to see a muscle-bound NFL pro

doing a wacky dance after scoring a touchdown. But you can bet whoever comes out first will be the poster child for the radical gay agenda's campaigns as they seek to make all things LGBT mainstream in a nation under God that's divided on gay marriage.

Where will the gay agenda go next to recruit kids who are confused about their sexual identity? How should the church respond to youth who need to know who they are in Christ so they can avoid the eternal consequences of homosexual sin?

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