

# God Is Pruning Us in This Pandemic

Have you ever imagined the year 2020 was just a bad dream? I've had that fantasy many times since the coronavirus pandemic started six months ago. But I always wake up and realize this nightmare is real.

Life hasn't been easy. Some of us got infected with COVID-19, or we know people who were sick or even died. People with loved ones in nursing homes haven't been able to visit in months. Many of us lost jobs, or experienced a serious drop in income. Families have had to deal with closed schools and shuttered businesses. Meanwhile the U.S. economy shrank 32.9% in the second quarter of 2020—the sharpest economic contraction in modern American history.

The impact the pandemic has had on churches has been devastating. After weeks of virtual meetings, churches that now are meeting in person have learned that many of their members are too afraid to be around people or they've grown too accustomed to watching church in their pajamas at home. Church budgets have been slashed, staff positions have been eliminated, and pastors are wondering if having even 50% of their previous members is the new normal.

We've been challenged. We've been hit with overwhelming discouragement. We've been stretched to a breaking point.

Yet those of us who love Jesus know we can't despair. The pandemic didn't take Him by surprise. He not only has promised to be with us during our worst trials, but He promises to use this crisis for our good.

When my ministry travel schedule was canceled in mid-March, and I had no idea where I would get my income, the Lord took me to John 15 and underscored these words from verse 2: "Every

branch in Me that bears no fruit, He takes away. And every branch that bears fruit, He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”

Jesus was sharing an uncomfortable truth in this verse. If we want to grow spiritually, and if we want more spiritual fruit, we must submit to the Father’s plan, not ours. He has to cut things away so new growth will appear. He might even need to prune things we cling to. We can’t just skate along in comfort, always getting what we want. If we desire the fruit of a mature Christian life, we must welcome adversity.

British preacher Charles Spurgeon, when preaching about John 15, said: “All fruit-bearing saints must feel the knife.”

I don’t like the knife! Pruning is an ugly, painful and embarrassing experience. If you’ve ever seen a row of pruned trees, you know what I mean. Grapevines that have been pruned are cut back so drastically they look dead. Are you willing to live the pruned life?

**Pruning cuts off what is ineffective.** This pandemic has been painful, but when we look back in a year we’ll realize that God used it to eliminate things in our lives that weren’t working. Some churches, for example, are realizing they were pouring tons of financial resources into programs or buildings that had no spiritual impact. Pruning has revealed what is essential for us to make a powerful, book of Acts-style impact on our communities.

**Pruning brings new life and more fruit.** A tree that has never been pruned looks good. But unless the dead wood is cut away along with the showy leaves, we will never see new blooms. We need the knife. The church will not look the same in 2021. Right now we are an ugly sight, stripped of our big audiences, our celebrity preachers and our cool worship bands. We have been reduced to basics. But with the cutting comes something fresh and powerful, something that is so much better than

church as we knew it prior to the pandemic.

**Pruning draws us closer to Jesus.** More than anything, the knife brings us into a deeper connection with Jesus, the “true vine” (John 15:1). He promises that those who submit to His pruning process will abide closely with Him. Isn’t this what we want? We cannot abide in Him if a thousand other things are distracting us. Life prior to this pandemic was too busy and too cluttered. Jesus wants our focus to be on Him. The process of pruning cuts away everything else so we can love Him and trust Him fully.

If you are willing to embrace God’s knife of pruning, pray with me: “Lord, I choose to rejoice in the midst of this difficult season. I know You can cause all things to work together for my good. Forgive me for complaining. I welcome Your pruning process in my life. Cut away my unfruitful branches so I can bear much fruit for You. And purify Your church in 2020 so we can welcome a fresh movement of Your Holy Spirit in this new season.” {eoa}

**J. Lee Grady** was editor of *Charisma* for 11 years before he launched into full-time ministry in 2010. Today he directs The Mordecai Project, a Christian charitable organization that is taking the healing of Jesus to women and girls who suffer abuse and cultural oppression. Author of several books, including *10 Lies the Church Tells Women*, he has just released his newest book, *Set My Heart on Fire*, from *Charisma House*. You can follow him on Twitter at @LeeGrady or go to his website, .

---

# Why I'm Praying for Judgment on God's Enemies

I've never prayed that God would kill anybody. I know the Lord is compassionate, even toward His enemies. Second Peter 3:9 (NASB) says God is patient, "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."

But I also know the Bible gives us permission to get aggressive in prayer when we are under spiritual attack. When all hell breaks loose, God permits us to go on the defensive as well as the offensive. Jesus, for example, taught us to pray, "Deliver us from evil" (Matt. 6:13b)—a powerful prayer that invites the Lord to intervene and defend us.

The apostle Paul spoke often of aggressive "spiritual warfare" prayer. He wrote: "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses" (2 Cor. 10:4). Prayer can be a tool of blessing, but it can also become a weapon when we or God's kingdom come under assault by the invisible forces of hell and by the wicked human beings who are used like puppets by demonic powers.

There are times in history when we must take the gloves off and get ruthless in our spiritual resistance. We can't play nice when our nation is under attack. This week I'm spending three days fasting and praying for America—and I'm finding courage from the imprecatory prayers in the Psalms. These are specific prayers that ask for God's judgments on His enemies.

Psalm 60:11-12 is a great example of a judgment prayer. It says: "O give us help against the adversary, for deliverance by man is in vain. Through God we shall do valiantly, and it

is He who will tread down our adversaries.” When I ask God to “tread down our adversaries,” I’m not asking that He kill anyone, but I am asking that the enemies of righteousness—both people and demons—would be silenced and defeated.

Psalm 44:4-5 says: “You are my King, O God; command victories for Jacob. Through You we will push back our adversaries; through Your name we will trample down those who rise up against us.” This is a promise that when we trust in the Lord to fight our battles, He will visibly defeat our enemies.

I invite you to join me in praying for deliverance for the United States. There are four spheres of our nation that I am praying about during this tumultuous season:

1. **America’s universities and their professors.** It has become obvious that our university campuses have become the Petri dishes of evil in our culture. The cult of political correctness began on the campus, and now a whole generation is brainwashed. Now a movement toward socialism and Marxism thrives in places like Harvard, Berkeley—our major state universities. Even though most of these schools began with Christian foundations, today they have turned to the dark side of atheism and communism.
2. **The mainstream media and Hollywood’s elite.** There was a time when America was known for its free press and for a media that held our institutions accountable. Today, many of our best newspapers have been hijacked by leftists. Meanwhile our news and entertainment companies are pushing an immoral agenda down our throats as they shred what’s left of family values.
3. **Lawless anarchists.** I never expected in my lifetime to see angry militants marching through the streets of Portland, Seattle or Chicago setting fires, destroying businesses, and taking over federal courthouses and

whole city blocks. Some protesters say they are doing this for racial equality, but the truth is these outraged antifa activists don't care about justice. They are bent on destroying America as we know it. They want a country with no police, no laws and no private property.

4. **Politicians bent on destroying godly values.** What is most shocking is that the very people Americans elected to represent them in local, state and federal government are pushing an agenda of third-trimester abortions, anti-family policies, transgenderism, social engineering, open borders and lack of police protection. The rise of New York congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who was elected in 2018, has proven how easily it is for an ultra far-left candidate to win in today's divisive political climate. Ocasio-Cortez is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America.

We can't just sit back and sing another chorus of "Kumbaya" while the devil mounts the most aggressive assault on our nation in a generation. Don't be intimidated by the resistance. We have so many examples in the Bible of brave intercessors who watched God smash His enemies in response to one bold prayer. It's time to pray. Get ruthless in faith as you suit up for this spiritual battle. {eoa}

---

# Don't Let Your Love Grow Cold in These Hateful Times

The year 2020 will go down in history as the year of national outrage. While a virus is spreading across the United States, peaceful protests for racial justice morphed into vandalism, arson and anarchy. Angry marchers in Seattle took over several city blocks while protesters in Portland tried to burn down a federal courthouse. I've never known my country to be so hateful.

Anger has reached a boiling point. Passengers are being removed from planes because they started fistfights over leg room. Store customers are going ballistic because other customers aren't wearing masks. Entitled Americans, always ready to record a cellphone video, are ready to blow the whistle on each other.

We don't care how our words hurt people anymore. We have become a vicious culture. Jesus warned this would happen when He said that in the last days, "Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12, NASB).

We are naïve if we don't recognize this cold-hearted hatefulness affecting Christians. I've noticed that people today get offended more easily and are much quicker to storm out of a church when something goes wrong.

The world tells us that ending a relationship is as easy as hitting the unfriend button. But when I read the Bible, I don't see any room for outrage, resentment, intolerance or "unfriending." Jesus calls us to love—and He gives us the supernatural power to do it.

Have you considered ending a relationship recently because of politics? Did you already walk out of a church or break a

close friendship because of a disagreement? If so, examine your heart and ask these probing questions first:

1. **Am I giving up too soon?** The apostle Paul told the Ephesians they should “always demonstrate gentleness and generous love toward one another, especially toward those who try your patience” (Eph. 4:2b, TPT). Your love will never grow unless it is stretched—and the best way to stretch your love is to show kindness when you feel like slamming a door in a person’s face.

The truth is that we often give up on relationships because we just don’t want to exert the energy to improve them. Relationships require a lot of work. When you unfriend someone just because they hurt you, you are missing an opportunity to become more like Christ.

Show some patience. Choose to love even when you don’t get anything in return.

Ephesians 4:3 (NLT) says we must “make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.” The Greek word for “make every effort” means “to be diligent; to use speed; to be prompt or earnest; to labor.” That means you shouldn’t let wounds fester. Act quickly to repair the relationship before it gets worse!

2. **Would Jesus end this relationship?** When you end a friendship because of an offense, you are doing the exact opposite of what Jesus did for you. Ephesians 4:32 says “be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.” You will never understand God’s merciful love if you don’t show it to others.

Jesus doesn’t flippantly write people off. He loved us even when we were sinners, and He patiently drew us to Himself using “ropes of kindness and love” (Hos. 11:4b). Before you end a friendship, judge a pastor, storm out of a church or

give someone the cold shoulder, remember how aggressively Jesus pursued a relationship with you. Let His ropes of kindness pull you out of your bad attitude.

When Peter asked Jesus how many times we are required to forgive a person, Jesus answered “seventy times seven” (see Matt. 18:22b). Taken literally, that means 490 times—but Jesus wasn’t putting a limit on forgiveness. He was using the number seven to imply infinity. Stop counting how many times you have been offended and instead thank God for all the times He has overlooked your mistakes.

**3. Am I nursing a grudge?** Our divisive political climate encourages people to get up mad in the morning, fuel their anger with hot political rhetoric throughout the day and then go to bed after listening to more arguments on news broadcasts. We are literally poisoning ourselves.

Many Christians have allowed similar poison in their lives because of church drama. They are mad that a pastor slighted them. They are jealous of someone who took a position they wanted. They are angry because a Christian did something hypocritical.

Resentment is deadly. It actually makes people sick. It also makes us ugly and unpleasant. Unforgiveness puts a frown on your face, wrinkles around your eyes and a sour tone in your voice.

Don’t let today’s culture of outrage infect you. Go against the flow of toxic hate. Make a decision today to work harder at maintaining your relationships. Forgive those who hurt you so your love doesn’t grow cold. {eoa}

---

# 6 Ways to Identify the Antichrist Spirit

Back in the 1940s, people believed Adolf Hitler was the Antichrist because he murdered more than 6 million Jews. A couple of decades later, Americans spread the rumor that Communist leader Leonid Brezhnev was the true Antichrist.

Today the Antichrist mantle has been awarded to a wide range of politicians, entrepreneurs and celebrities, including Bill Gates, George Soros and even Dr. Anthony Fauci. And almost every American president since Franklin D. Roosevelt has been accused of being the devilish “beast” described in the book of Revelation.

The apostle John wrote: “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18, NASB). This verse indicates there is a spirit of antichrist that has been working in the world from the beginning, manifesting in various eras.

And throughout Revelation, we see that this Antichrist figure works in tandem with the devil and the false prophet to wage war on God and His people. The Antichrist is part of a demonic trinity—a counterfeit of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I’ve never been more aware of this spirit operating in our nation than I have today. The devil is working overtime because he’s furious that his days are numbered. He is mustering all his forces because he knows heaven is about to unleash a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

We shouldn’t focus our attention on the devil, but the Bible

says clearly that we should not be ignorant of his crafty schemes (see 2 Cor. 2:11). Here are six ways to identify the antichrist spirit:

The antichrist spirit hates God. The devil wants the attention that only God deserves. He hates all righteousness and goodness. He wants evil to triumph. This is why people who hate God celebrate sin. And this is why we see in our own educational system a systematic attempt to replace Christian values with atheism.

The antichrist spirit hates life. The devil doesn't have the power to create because he himself was created. Jesus called Satan a "thief," and He said his goal is "to steal, kill and destroy" (John 10:10b). No wonder the devil fuels racial hatred in people so they will kill others. And isn't it obvious that only Satan would convince people that killing an unborn child, even up until the moment of birth, is acceptable?

The antichrist spirit hates the family. Not long ago, secular psychologists would have all agreed that children thrive when they have a mother and a father. You can't suggest that these days without being scorned by social media censors. Our universities have become breeding grounds for hostility to anything traditional, including the simple scientific fact that there are only two genders.

The antichrist spirit hates authority. When you see hordes of people marching through our streets burning buildings and screaming curse words, you can be sure the antichrist spirit is near.

The antichrist spirit hates the Word of God. When Elijah called down fire from heaven, and God proved He was real to the whole nation of Israel, Jezebel got angry. She was hell-bent on killing the prophet before he could preach again (see 1 Kings 18-19). In this challenging hour, we need the courage

to speak, especially when God asks us to break the rules of political correctness.

The antichrist spirit hates the church. Americans have enjoyed more than two centuries of religious freedom. But I have friends overseas who live in fear, either because their own government is closing churches or terrorists are killing Christians. I pray we never see such violence in the United States, but the spirit that is slaughtering Christians in Africa is already lurking in our midst.

I'm not saying these things to scare anybody. Jesus will rule forever as King of all kings. But we have some praying and preaching to do now. We can't sit back and let the spirit of antichrist gain ground. Let's get serious about pushing back the darkness.

---

J. Lee Grady was editor of *Charisma* for 11 years and now serves as contributing editor. He directs The Mordecai Project (), an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest book is *Set My Heart on Fire* (Charisma House).

This article was excerpted from the August issue of *Charisma* magazine. If you don't subscribe to *Charisma*, [click here](#) to get every issue delivered to your mailbox. During this time of change, your subscription is a vote of confidence for the kind of Spirit-filled content we offer. In the same way you would support a ministry with a donation, subscribing is your way to support *Charisma*. Also, we encourage you to give gift subscriptions at , and share our articles on social media.

---

# How a Brave Black Woman Is Challenging Black Lives Matter

Bevelyn Beatty is the liberal media's worst nightmare. The 29-year-old activist, who says she gave her heart to Jesus in 2013, has been called a "Christian gangster." This month she was arrested after pouring cans of black paint on Black Lives Matter murals in the streets of New York. After her act of protest she preached to crowds and told them to stop supporting the Black Lives Matter movement.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we're in Brooklyn, and it ain't over," Beatty shouted after she defaced the murals in multiple locations, including Manhattan. "Jesus matters. We're taking our country back. And let me tell you something, the police need our help. ... Don't just sit by idly and watch your country go to the ground."

Beatty was quickly released from jail after she and her female friends were "treated like princesses" by New York Police Department officers. Don't expect this courageous young woman to go away after a few more arrests. With her signature "Jesus Matters" motto emblazoned on her T-shirt, she is on a crusade to awaken America.

Why would an African American woman be so defiantly against the Black Lives Matter movement, which is supposed to be about ending racial injustice? Beatty says the organization is actually a Trojan horse with an evil, anti-Christian agenda. She lists several reasons why Americans, and especially Black Americans, shouldn't buy into the rhetoric.

1. **Black Lives Matter is against the Black family.** "The biggest issue in the Black community today is fatherlessness," Beatty says. And yet Black Lives Matter

is “against the nuclear family,” and specifically against Black men, she adds. Beatty says that’s because of the three women who founded Black Lives Matter, two publicly identify as queer, and Black Lives Matter’s stated goals are to abolish the traditional understanding of family.

- 2. Black Lives Matter never talks about abortion.** Black Lives Matter protests focus on one thing—incidents of injustice in which a Black person is killed by a white police officer. But Beatty finds it ironic that while an estimated 13 black men were killed by white policemen in 2019, abortion has killed hundreds of thousands of African American babies.

A 2012 study by Protecting Black Lives found that 79% of Planned Parenthood’s surgical abortion facilities are located within walking distance of minority communities. Black women make up 14% of the childbearing population, yet 36% of all abortions were obtained by Black women, according to another report.

Beatty asks the obvious question: If Black lives matter, don’t unborn Black lives matter, too? “Abortion is the No. 1 killer of Black people. That’s 675,000 babies a year,” she says.

- 3. Black Lives Matter never talks about Black-on-Black crime.** Black Lives Matter’s focus has been on incidents in which a Black person is killed by a white cop, such as the George Floyd tragedy in Minnesota in May. But Beatty says if Black Lives Matter is really concerned about Black lives, the group should also talk about the fact that a large percentage of Black shooting victims are killed by other Blacks.

In Chicago, where 85 people were shot in one 24-hour period on May 31 of this year, 85 percent of murders over the past several years have been instances of Black-on-Black crime. Beatty says the last thing we need is to cut funds to the

police, “unless you want more Black people to die.”

Beatty is incensed that Black Lives Matter has called for the defunding of the police force. “Democrats see us as ignorant,” Beatty says. “This [anti-police] agenda is killing us. We are dropping like flies.”

“I’m not buying it,” Beatty says of the Black Lives Matter agenda. She warns that of the three co-founders of the Black Lives Matter organization, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, one has stated clearly that she is a Marxist.

Cullors said in a 2015 video that she was trained in Marxist-Leninist ideology by Eric Mann, founder of a domestic terrorist organization called the Weather Underground. That group, which was basically a white counterpart organization to the Black Panthers, listed as its main goal to destroy U.S. “imperialism” and to form a communist society.

Before you judge Bevelyn Beatty as some sort of traitor to her race or a sellout to Donald Trump, keep in mind that she grew up in the inner city, and she has relatives who have been shot in street violence. She’s not speaking from a position of privilege, and she didn’t embrace conservative values until after her conversion.

Her crusade flows out of love for her community and her obedience to God. And she is paying a price for that obedience.

“If you really want me to be honest,” she says on one of her many YouTube videos, “a lot of people are calling me a coon. A lot of people are saying I hate myself, or they say, ‘You must hate being Black,’ or ‘You are getting paid for what you do.’”

Her response is: “How can you support an organization that is basically setting you up to fail?”

You may not agree with her unorthodox tactics, but Bevelyn

Beatty's courage can't be ignored. I suspect we'll be hearing a lot more from this Spirit-filled justice warrior as America's culture war intensifies. {eoa}

---

## Stepping Into Ministry? Be Aware of the Risks

This week I did a video call with a gifted young man named Billy who serves on the staff of a growing church in South Africa. He has a big heart of compassion for people. He knows how to make disciples. And he's a great communicator. I told him I would love it if he were my pastor—even though he's only 32.

But as I encouraged him—and many young leaders like him—I'm aware that ministry is not an easy assignment. Like everything else in life, it's full of risks. And I want to make sure anyone out there who is praying about stepping into ministry knows what they will face.

When you answer God's call, you put your life on the line. Just ask the apostle Paul, who told the Galatians, "From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17). The Greek word for "marks" is *stigma*, and it refers to the marks that were burned into the flesh of a slave to show who owned him. Paul was saying, "I have the scars to prove I serve Jesus."

Ministry has a long list of occupational hazards, and I do an

injustice to any young leader today if I don't warn him or her of what might happen on the job. I'm not sharing this to scare anybody. But if the Occupational Safety and Health Administration can require businesses to display a poster to encourage workplace safety, we should at least read this list of ministerial hazards when leaders are ordained.

To all my young friends who are considering a ministry career, I offer these warnings:

1. **The devil will attack you and your loved ones.** I don't focus on the devil or his demons, but it is foolish to be ignorant of hell's schemes. Satan hates ministers. You are in a war, and your enemy plays dirty. You must learn to fight both defensively and offensively if you expect to win.
2. **Religious people will hate you.** Jesus and Paul both proved that persecution comes not just from worldly unbelievers but from self-righteous saints who think they are doing God a favor by discrediting you. Religious people hate change. Many pastors I know have been chewed up and spit out by mean-spirited people who love their sacred cows more than they love Jesus. God's leaders must have the guts to challenge lifeless, status quo tradition.
3. **You will face discouragement often.** Preaching is a unique effort that requires you to lean wholly on God for a word from heaven. No wonder it is emotionally draining! Charles Spurgeon told his students that he often got depressed after intense ministry.

He wrote, "How often, on Lord's-day evenings, do we feel as if life were completely washed out of us! After pouring out our souls over our congregations, we feel like empty earthen pitchers which a child might break." Don't be shocked when heavy feelings come.

4. **Your pride will be wounded.** You may think your sermon was awesome, but some people will yawn, some will sleep and others will remind you of the points you missed. Don't let the criticism make you bitter; allow it to nail your flesh to the cross so you can remember that ministry is not about you anyway.
5. **Your heart will be broken.** You may invest your time and energy into people who eventually walk away without even thanking you. Sometimes a close disciple may prove to be a Judas. Don't let disappointment cause you to close your heart to people. Keep on loving and giving, despite the heartache.
6. **Your knees will become calloused.** Any good leader knows that prayer is the fuel that keeps them going. As long as hands are raised to heaven and hearts are bowed low, heaven's oil will not run out. Never let the flame of prayer go out in your personal life.
7. **Your priorities will be turned upside down.** For me, God's call included traveling—which meant spending lots of time away from home. I would personally rather sleep in my own bed than in a strange bed in Nigeria or India, but when you pray, "Here I am, Lord, send me," you do not have the luxury of running your own schedule. Your life is not your own.
8. **Your dreams and ambitions will be misunderstood.** Joseph was thrown in a pit after he shared his dream. David's brothers questioned his motives when he came to the battle to challenge Goliath. Anyone who attempts great things for God will be maligned. If you are worried about your reputation, or you want everyone to say nice things about you, don't pursue a ministry career.
9. **Your faith will be stretched to the breaking point.** God gave Moses a stick and told him to split the Red Sea. He told Gideon to win a battle with 300 ill-equipped

soldiers. Leaders who are following the Spirit will be constantly challenged to look beyond natural circumstances and believe in God's supernatural ability. This is never comfortable. Jesus calls us out of the boat and onto the water. Get used to it.

10. **Your character will be tested in the heat of God's furnace.** The work of the refiner is never finished. You are engaged in a heavenly process, and you go from one level of glory to the next. The Spirit will regularly turn up the heat to test your motives, adjust your attitude and chisel your character until you look like Christ.

Don't run from the flames of testing, even when delays make it seem like you will be stuck in the furnace of preparation forever. The best leaders have learned to live in the fire so they can be examples to the flock. {eoa}

---

## **Saying These 6 Things Could Get You 'Canceled'**

We live in a free country where certain rights are guaranteed—freedom of religion, the right to assemble and freedom of speech, for example. But a storm is brewing today that threatens to blow away those rights. We are experiencing “cancel culture.”

In a cancel culture, you still have the right to say what you believe, but most people keep their mouths shut because an

intolerant mob will attack you if you say something its members disagree with. The mob determines the acceptable way to think about a certain topic. If you dare to have a different view, you are a fair target to be shamed, vilified, fired from your job or kicked off of social media platforms.

British author J.K. Rowling is the latest example of a “canceled” celebrity. Even though she’s considered leftist in her views, she recently dared to defy the official code of political correctness. She refused to agree with the statement “Trans women are women” because she feels men who undergo sex-change operations or take hormones don’t share the same life experiences of women who are born female and live as women. For this, the transgender community hurled every nasty word in the book at Rowling when they attacked her on Twitter.

This form of militant intolerance isn’t new. Remember King Nebuchadnezzar? He was the granddaddy of all thought control. He demanded that everyone in his kingdom bow to his golden idol. But Daniel’s three brave friends—Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego—refused to bow to the Babylon’s cancel culture. The king threw them in his overheated furnace, but the three Hebrew boys miraculously emerged from the fire without even the smell of smoke (see Daniel 3).

Today a growing group of university professors, liberal journalists, Hollywood elites, government leaders and tech CEOs have created a new idol, and they want us all to worship it. They hate Christianity because of its moral boundaries. They reject the idea of an all-powerful God, and they want to replace Him with the all-powerful state. They don’t want anyone speaking out of turn. You must agree with their narrative.

Cancel culture is intensifying today. The heat has been turned up in Nebuchadnezzar’s oven. You will be tempted to keep your mouth shut because the intolerant mob will attack you if you talk about your faith (which they consider “narrow-minded”) or

your moral values (which they say are “hateful”).

This shouldn't surprise us. Paul told Timothy: “Yes, and all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12, NASB). Whether we like it or not, persecution will become a reality for Christians living in a post-Christian era in America.

In recent years of writing this column I've noted that there are certain topics that always trigger the mob. If you say these six things on social media, in workplace conversations or even in a sermon, you may get verbally blasted, shamed, reported to the “thought police” or even fired.

1. **God created the world.** Nobody on an American university campus today is allowed to question the official doctrine of evolution. Scoffers will laugh at you and cancel you if you believe in the fairy tale of a wise Creator.
2. **Marriage was created for one man and one woman.** Ten years ago, a university in New England came close to canceling me as a speaker because I've defended traditional marriage in this column. If you don't believe God sanctions gay marriage, you will be labeled homophobic. Never mind if I love gay people as individuals. If I don't celebrate the gay lifestyle and promote it without question, I will be considered hateful.
3. **Sex is intended for marriage.** When I was a kid, most families on network TV shows had a mother, a father and children. But the culture manipulators changed all that—and HBO and other big media companies made gratuitous sex the norm for most of their characters. We went from *Father Knows Best* to *Californication* in 50 years. I'm considered a self-righteous prude because I don't push the free-sex agenda.

4. **Abortion is the killing of an unborn child.** The media is calling for racial justice, especially in relation to police reform. But “justice,” according to today’s groupthink, is selective. When African American, pro-life activist Alveda King reminds people that Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger promoted abortion and sterilization to reduce the black population, her comments are ignored. In today’s narrative, “Black lives matter” doesn’t apply to Black babies.
5. **There are only two genders.** Even though we are daily reminded to believe in science when it comes to the COVID-19 masks or global warming, science is thrown out the window when it comes to gender and biology. Today, we are expected to applaud when a person announces he is a she, or she is a he or when someone “feels” they have no gender at all. Never mind the DNA evidence.
6. **Jesus Christ is Lord.** This is the phrase that got many Christians killed in the first century. Nero couldn’t tolerate Christians because they wouldn’t bow down to him. Yet in the face of persecution and death, the early apostles cared more about obeying God than pleasing people. They said, “For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

Don’t bow to the idol. Ask God to give you a stronger spine so you can stand straight when cancel culture pressures you to conform. {eoa}

---

# All Black Opinions Matter, Too

I don't know anyone who disagrees with the statement, "Black lives matter." It has been a rallying cry in street protests and in the halls of Congress since the murder of George Floyd in May.

But if you listen to the mainstream media, you'll notice that a particular group of Black activists are being scolded for daring to spread their views. I'm talking about the growing number of African American conservatives whose opinions don't line up with the liberal narrative. These people are anti-abortion, pro-family, flag-waving patriots who defend cops, denounce socialism and refuse to view themselves as victims of systemic racism.

Apparently, in this politically correct world, not all Black opinions matter. They've been called Uncle Toms, traitors, puppets and much worse. They've even been told they aren't Black because of their opinions. But I want them to know that a white guy in Georgia is grateful for their courage. I've become a big fan.

One of the most vocal new Black conservative voices is Brandon Tatum, 33, a former police officer and social media commentator from Arizona who runs a successful apparel business. What's unusual about his company is that he makes "Make America Great Again" hats and clothing. His support of President Trump has raised eyebrows and earned him scorn—especially after he made a video called "How I Switched from Democrat to Republican" that went viral in February.

A born-again Christian who is especially concerned about the lack of fathers in Black homes, Tatum doesn't care whom he offends when he questions the politically correct narrative of

white privilege or when he defends police officers. He's painfully blunt, but you can also feel his Christian compassion. He has spoken on 26 university campuses and comes across as a combination of street preacher and motivational business coach.

Tatum blasts mainstream journalists for promoting the concept of white privilege. "Black people can succeed in this country," Tatum says. "At the end of the day, the color of your skin doesn't matter. The content of your character matters. How hard you're going to work, that's what matters. ... If you bust your tail in this country, you can be successful."

Tatum is part of a small army of Black conservatives who are upsetting the status quo by questioning the belief that all African Americans are Democrats. Some of these leaders, led by 30-year-old Candace Owens, are part of Blexit—a movement that is urging Blacks to reject the Democratic Party's platform.

The growing list of outspoken Black conservatives includes Kaaryn Walker, president of Black Conservatives for Truth; Tim Scott, a South Carolina senator, speaker Anthony Brian Logan, pro-family activist Jesse Lee Peterson and author Jason Riley.

Their opinions have cost them a lot. Any Black conservative knows that if they speak out for what they believe, they will be written off by today's "cancel culture" censors.

Alveda King, 69, the niece of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., has stood for the rights of the unborn since she became a born-again Christian in 1983. She was a Democrat when she served as a state representative for Georgia, but she later switched her party affiliation and founded a pro-life group called "Civil Rights for the Unborn". She calls abortion womb-lynching because Black women have the highest abortion rate in the United States.

"Abortion, like slavery, is a crime against humanity," King says. She also believes the diabolical goal of Planned

Parenthood is to murder as many Black babies as possible.

Lynette Hardaway and Rochelle Richardson, two sisters from North Carolina, make up the “Diamond and Silk” speaking team. Their *Chit Chat Live* internet show attracts viewers worldwide because they dare to turn over the tables of political correctness. They are spunky, and their folksy, jive talk about everything from coronavirus masks to gun rights got them kicked off of Fox News in April due to accusations of spreading misinformation about the virus. Yet they are releasing their first book, *Uprising*, next month.

“Defund the police?” Hardaway asked indignantly on a recent installment of her show. “Somebody tell me how is that going to help the law-abiding citizen? Who are we supposed to call—Black Lives Matter? ... Where is Black Lives Matter when those Black-on-Black crimes are going on?”

I want to thank these brave African American champions of truth for sticking their necks out for the United States. Instead of stirring up division and hate, they are talking about forgiveness. Instead of making Black people feel like victims, they are urging all people to work hard, invest in family, create businesses and transform communities.

There’s a growing number of Americans of all races who realize the mainstream media has used spin, manipulation and negativity to divide our country. Yes, we want racial justice. Yes, we want police reform. But we don’t want to burn down our cities to avenge the mistakes of the past, and we know socialism isn’t the answer.

You may not agree with the opinions of these Black leaders, but I hope you’ll defend their right to preach what they believe. Black people are not slaves to anybody, or to any political party.

If you don’t think they have the right to their own opinions, you may be the one who is racist.

You can watch Brandon Tatum here.

Watch an Alveda King interview here.

You can watch a recent Diamond and Silk broadcast here. {eoa}

---

## **Lee Grady: God Has Pushed a Great Big Reset Button**

Unless you've been hiding under a rock for three months, you know gasoline prices are at record lows. Some states are reporting prices below a dollar a gallon. There are two reasons for the price drop: Not as many people are buying gasoline because of the pandemic, and Russia and Saudi Arabia are engaged in a price war, causing the oil supply to swing up. Market analysts say they've never seen such a glut of oil. As I pondered this situation, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said: "Now is the time to fill up." I knew He wasn't talking about my car's gas tank.

Sometimes there are things in the natural world that send spiritual messages. I believe God is asking the church in this season of lockdown to fill our spiritual reserves.

Jesus talked about the importance of having enough oil. The five wise virgins in His parable in Matthew 25 made sure they had enough oil for their lamps, while the five foolish ones weren't prepared. They were locked out of the wedding feast because they didn't consider oil an essential commodity. Right

now, God has hit a “reset” button because He wants us to be ready for what’s coming.

We’ve been much like the foolish virgins. The oil of the Holy Spirit hasn’t been important to us. We can take it or leave it. We figured out a way to do church without God’s help. We even have books and church growth gurus to teach us how to manufacture a cool vibe, entertain people for 60 minutes and get them out quickly.

A.W. Tozer said it this way: “If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we do would go on, and no one would know the difference.” Many churches today are devoid of the Holy Spirit’s raw power. Conversions are rare. Baptismal tanks are dry. Altars are empty. Our processed version of Christianity doesn’t resemble the book of Acts.

This must change. What if God wants to send a global awakening of the Holy Spirit after this coronavirus pandemic? Do we have enough oil in our lamps to handle the next revival? Here are three things should do immediately to prepare your heart for what’s coming:

Pray for a spiritual reset. When the pandemic started in March, my schedule was canceled, and I realized how busy I’d become. As uncomfortable as it was to adjust my routine, I knew I needed the break—even if it meant less income. I asked the Lord to change my habits, purify my thoughts and attitudes, and give me more hunger for Him. I wanted personal revival.

I began soaking in God’s Word. The Lord told me to read the book of Acts every day in May leading up to the day of Pentecost, which was May 31. Reading about the early church stoked my hunger for God even more. I don’t want to settle for anything less than New Testament revival. The book of Acts is still God’s template for how He works, and we need to adjust our lives to it.

Let God refine and prune. Before Jesus came, John the Baptist had to prepare the way. That process requires repentance and a washing away of the old. Whenever God is about to do a new thing, He recalibrates us so we don't go back to our old ways. He can't put new wine in old wineskins. The way we did things in previous seasons won't work in this next move. Ask God to trim away the dead branches of stale religion.

Seek a refilling. Dependence on the Holy Spirit was the early church's secret. The Spirit anointed the first disciples to heal the sick, discern evil spirits and carry the gospel boldly to difficult places. How did we ever think we could do ministry without that power?

When Paul went to Ephesus, he met some men who believed in Jesus in an intellectual way, yet they had never been born again. In fact, they didn't know there was a Holy Spirit (see Acts. 19:1-7). This reminds me of many American churches. We go through the motions of church, but we are clueless about Pentecost.

Now is the time to ask the Holy Spirit to fill you. Don't wait until your regular routine resumes. The last thing we need is to go back to last year's "normal" setting. God has a new normal for us! What He has in store for us in 2020 is unprecedented. Only those with full tanks will be able to handle it.

---

J. Lee Grady was editor of *Charisma* for 11 years and now serves as contributing editor. He directs The Mordecai Project (), an international ministry that protects women and girls from gender-based violence. His latest book is *Set My Heart on Fire* (Charisma House).

This article was excerpted from the August issue of *Charisma* magazine. If you don't subscribe to *Charisma*, [click here](#) to get every issue delivered to your mailbox. During this time of

change, your subscription is a vote of confidence for the kind of Spirit-filled content we offer. In the same way you would support a ministry with a donation, subscribing is your way to support *Charisma*. Also, we encourage you to give gift subscriptions at , and share our articles on social media.

---

## How I Stir My Faith During Troubled Times

This has been the most spiritually intense season I've ever lived through. We've only reached the midpoint of this year, yet many of us are ready for 2020 to be over. First there was the coronavirus lockdown in March, then George Floyd was killed in Minnesota in May—and riots erupted amid peaceful protests. Now, medical experts say a second surge of the virus is heading our way, just in time for the presidential election.

Put on your seat belts, my friends. I don't expect the second half of this year to be any easier.

How do we navigate tough times? One thing that helps me is meditating on God's prophetic promises. When the skies grow dark, I remind myself of what God has said about the future. The apostle Paul told Timothy that the prophecies we have received can be like weapons, by which we "fight the good fight" (see 1 Tim. 1:18b, NASB). God's prophetic words pull us through bad times.

Watching the news depresses me. So I've been listening to special prophetic messages that were given to Christian leaders about a coming of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Over the past century, revivalists received powerful words

from God about what He will do in the last days. Here are five of them:

1. **William J. Seymour**, the humble leader of the 1906 Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles, shared a message in 1913 saying that God would send an outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would begin 100 years later. He said what happened during the Azusa days (which birthed the global Pentecostal movement) would be dwarfed by the coming outpouring. It's interesting that around 2013 Western believers began to hear about the most sweeping revival in the world today in Iran. (You can learn more about Seymour's prophecy [here](#)).
2. **Maria Woodworth Etter**, a powerful evangelist who died in 1924, led the famous Stone Church revival in Chicago in 1913. During those six months of mass conversions—which attracted people from all over the United States—Etter prophesied that something far bigger was coming. She declared: “We are not up to the fullness of the former rain, and when the latter rain comes it will far exceed anything we have ever seen.” (For more information, go to this video message from her great-great-grandson).
3. **Faith teacher Kenneth Hagin** shared a vision and prophecy in 1963 of a global outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In a video that is archived online, Hagin says he saw in the spirit a rise in communist ideology, even in the United States. But then he saw a “ball of fire” coming from heaven. “When it came to the earth, it divided into small sparks of fire, and I saw an army of men rising up,” Hagin said. “It seemed as though their hands were fire, and there sat upon their heads a tongue of fire—tongues of fire leaping. Before the worst shall come, in the day of darkness, there shall go those who shall carry the fullness of my truth and the fire, not only to the states of this nation but to many other places” ([watch full video here](#)).

4. **Lester Sumrall**, an American evangelist who died in 1996, spent some of his younger years with British revivalist Smith Wigglesworth. In a video message, Sumrall says Wigglesworth prayed for him in 1939 when Sumrall was 25. He said Wigglesworth described a vision of a global revival, saying: "I see revival coming to planet earth, maybe as never before. ... It will be untold numbers, an uncounted multitude. Nobody will be able to count those that will come to Jesus. ... The dead will be raised. The arthritic will be healed. Cancer will be healed. ... No disease would be able to stand before God's people. And that it would be a worldwide situation, not local, but it would be a worldwide thrust of God's power and thrust of God's anointing upon mankind."
5. **Pentecostal evangelist, Tommy Hicks**, was the leader of a revival that shook the nation of Argentina in 1954. In a meeting in Winnipeg, Canada, in 1961, Hicks shared a descriptive vision of a global revival. He said he saw a huge army of Christians who fanned out across the world. "As they marched forth," Hicks said, "tens of thousands, even millions seemed to come to the Lord Jesus Christ as these people stood forth and gave the message of the kingdom."

Hicks continued: "I saw these workers as they were going over the face of the earth. When one would stumble and fall, another would come and pick him up. There were no "big I" and "little you," seemed to have one thing in common—there was a divine love that seemed to flow forth from these people as they worked together. ... God said, 'I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh,'...And to every man and every woman that received this power, and the anointing of God, the miracles of God, there was no ending to it."

All of these words confirm the promise of a latter rain mentioned in Joel 2:23b, which says: "He showers down rains for you, the early rain and the latter rain, as before." The

Bible is clear that before Jesus returns there will be a final glorious ingathering, resulting in the greatest spiritual harvest in all of history.

The promise has been confirmed over and over. God will send a fresh outpouring of the Spirit. No wonder the devil has unleashed so much fierce opposition at this time. I know the warfare is intense, but please don't lose hope. Hold on tight to the promise. Our best days are yet to come. {eoa}