

Stay Calm and Don't Bite My Head Off

Is it just me, or does it seem like people today are way too angry? There have been three highly publicized incidents of road rage in our nation in the past seven days, including one on a New Orleans street that killed former NFL player Will Smith. Last week in Houston, two women began pulling each other's hair and punching each other in the parking lot of the Houston Zoo. They were fighting over a parking space.

And then there's the embarrassing video, now going viral, of a woman screaming at an American Airlines ticket agent on March 24 because her flight to Florida from New York was delayed. She felt she had the right to verbally assault the airline employee because she had been waiting a year to take her children on a Disney cruise.

I don't know what triggered this sudden volcanic eruption of national anger. Is it too much coffee? Are people not getting enough sleep? Is it social media, which now allows otherwise rational people to mount their virtual soapboxes and launch hateful tirades against the outrage-of-the-day on Facebook: Obamacare, illegal immigrants, racism in Hollywood, Hillary Clinton's emails, Donald Trump's tweets or Kim Kardashian's latest inappropriate Instagram post?

We may not have all the information about the topic we are angry about. But we are upset! We have an opinion! We will stomp our feet and drop F-bombs to make our points! WE WILL USE ALL CAPS AND MANY EXCLAMATION MARKS!!!

This tendency toward exclamatory outrage certainly characterizes the 2016 presidential election. We are so polarized now—Red v. Blue, Fox v. CNN, Trump v. Cruz, Hillary v. Bernie—that close relatives and good friends have stopped

speaking to each other. Verbal barbs, laced with profanity, are flying everywhere. Everybody is mad. We are at war, and it is anything but civil.

What grieves me most about this barrage of anger is that Christians are fueling it along with everyone else. In the name of “righteous anger” we lob our verbal grenades—not only at the evils of the world but also at each other when someone disagrees with us.

I want to simply remind my brothers and sisters of three biblical guidelines that are very relevant during this season of frayed nerves:

1. Think before you speak, and consider saying nothing at all.

The apostle James said it best: “But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger” (James 1:19). My Southern relatives often say of an argument that does not affect them: “I don’t have a dog in this fight.” You don’t have to jump into every debate. Oftentimes, the wisest man is the one who says nothing. Throwing in your “two cents” can sometimes cause a raging fire to spread. Just be quiet and let the fire go out.

2. Promote peace, not arguments. We are called to be “ambassadors” for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). But the best ambassadors are those with tact. They don’t go around stirring up emotions, flaring their nostrils and rattling swords. Skilled ambassadors use wisdom to promote goodwill. This doesn’t mean they don’t confront wrong or bring correction, but their words are “seasoned with grace” (Col. 4:6). The apostle Paul told the earliest Christians: “So then pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another” (Rom. 14:19). Don’t let the devil use you to tear people down.

3. Frame your words with kindness. It is currently hip to be hot-headed, and this is true among both Democrats and

Republicans. But the last time I checked, Fox News was not commissioned by God to provide the standard for Christian behavior. Your favorite political pundit may be cheered for his verbal jabs and snappy comebacks, but that does not give you the right to be abrasive with people who disagree with your views. The fruit of the Spirit includes love, peace, kindness and gentleness (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Bible doesn't have good things to say about angry people. Proverbs 29:22 says: "An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression." Proverbs 22:24 warns that we should not be friends with hot-tempered people, while Proverbs 14:16 states bluntly that "hot-headed" people are actually fools. Meanwhile the book of James, which has been called the "Proverbs of the New Testament," declares: "For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."

Anger is in style today, and our culture may get so angry that the fury boils over in the streets. But those who follow Christ shouldn't be taking our cues from this outraged world. A soft answer turns away wrath. Let God filter your words before you say them. Let's respond in the Holy Spirit rather than react in the flesh.{eoa}

How Cyber-Porn Is Seducing a Generation

Last week, a guy named "Jake" asked me to pray for him after I taught at a ministry school in a northeastern state. He is only 22—and he wants to serve Jesus with all his heart. But he struggles daily because he has experienced a level of sexual bondage that was probably not even possible a few decades ago.

I got really upset as I listened to Jake's story. It clearly shows how the devil is using pornography to systematically enslave today's younger generation.

Jake was abandoned at age 2 by his 16-year-old father. His teenage mother tried her best to raise him alone, but she couldn't provide the kind of protection or guidance that he needed. He was introduced to porn at age 13, and a friend taught him how to bypass the Internet filters at his middle school so he could watch hard-core porn there. Before long, he discovered gay porn and began watching it daily.

When Jake was still underage, he met a guy on Jack'd, a gay dating app. He gave the man his address and he showed up at his house—and the two had unprotected sex. Jake eventually had sex with 11 or 12 guys through other dating apps like BoyAhoy, GuySpy and Grindr. He never used condoms because he secretly wanted to catch a venereal disease.

"I wanted to die," Jake told me. "I felt like I would never be free from same-sex attraction and I didn't want to spend the rest of my life miserable like that."

Eventually Jake progressed into the realm of cybersex. He learned that he could perform sex acts on camera for people who watched—and he made \$1,000 in extra cash that way every three months. He used Instagram, SnapChat, Skype and other social media to advertise for sex or to connect with prospective partners.

Thankfully, God's mercy intervened. Jake ended up in Pennsylvania, where he met some Spirit-filled Christians. He gave his heart to Jesus and quickly enrolled in a Christian discipleship program. His desires didn't go away overnight, but he began a journey toward healing that continues today.

"Since I gave my life to Jesus, I feel less and less satisfied doing these kinds of things," he says. "The more people tell me how much I am worth to God, the more I have become aware of

how degrading these things are.”

You might think Jake’s story is extreme. But I have found that more and more young people today are being pulled into unimaginable depths of immoral behavior because they got hooked on porn, either gay or straight. Once porn becomes an addiction, it can lead to cybersex sites, voyeurism and endless hookups with strangers.

What can people like Jake do if they find themselves struggling with lust and perversion even after giving their hearts to Christ? I will share here what I told Jake last week:

1. You must sever all ties with the past. People who get involved in cybersex typically store dozens if not hundreds of phone numbers and social media connections with past sex partners. You cannot maintain those relationships. Block every number and delete every app. Don’t allow even one person to stay connected. Paul wrote: “Flee immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18) and “Flee from youthful lusts” (2 Tim. 2:22). Run as fast as you can from the temptations that enslaved you in the past.

2. Get ruthless with your sin. Jesus said: “If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell” (Mark 9:47). This means we must take radical steps to stop ungodly habits. You can’t take a half-hearted approach. Throw your phone away if you have to. Starve your lusts. If you try to “manage” or “tame” a sexual addiction it will eat you alive. You must kill it.

3. Ask for help and stay accountable. No one is strong enough to defeat a sexual addiction alone. You must seek help from mature Christians. Confess your sins fully—don’t hide any aspect of your problem—and then ask for healing prayer. Find a Christian counselor or join a ministry such as Celebrate Recovery that offers support groups for addicts. Allow others

who have had similar struggles to encourage you in your journey to healing.

4. Fill your time with healthy activities. Porn addicts waste hours every day looking at websites, chatting with potential hookups and engaging in online sex. The bondage that develops is as strong as a cocaine habit. Most people who have a porn habit cannot handle being alone—they will automatically sense a craving for sexual images if they have time on their hands.

If this is your problem, you must revamp your schedule and eliminate down time. Spend time with friends, play sports, exercise, work hard, attend church activities and get plenty of sleep. Don't give yourself the option of wasting another minute of your life on a porn site.

5. Seek supernatural deliverance. Ultimately, you must cry out to God for freedom from your bondage. You must fight for your freedom. It's important to read the Bible and pray on your own, but that is not enough. Find a healthy church that believes in the power of the Holy Spirit and seek out prayer support. If the church offers altar ministry after a service, share your struggle and let people pray for you. You will need prayer often. Keep receiving prayer until your habit is completely broken.

Ultimately our freedom comes from the Savior. Look to Him to break every chain. Revelation 1:5 says Jesus "loves us and released us from our sins by His blood." When you believe in His amazing grace, the iron chains of your addiction will melt and you will find the power to resist temptation. {eoa}

5 Ways to Pray for the Muslim World

After I heard the news that Islamic terrorists had killed more than 72 people in a public park in Lahore, Pakistan, last Sunday, I called my friend "Faisal" (not his real name) to grieve with him. Faisal is a Pakistani Christian who has lived in the United States for several years. He has friends who live near the Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park, a normally cheerful place where an unidentified killer detonated a bomb with the specific goal of slaughtering Christians during the Easter holiday.

The March 27 attack was the work of Jamaat-e-Ahrar, a splinter group of the Pakistani Taliban. Some of the people killed were buying tickets to fair rides or playing with their children.

"Everybody is in shock. A woman lost both of her daughters," said Faisal, who has a wife and a daughter of his own. "I was crying while I was watching the news footage. It is so sad."

The attack did not grab as much media attention as the March 22 Brussels airport bombing, which has claimed 35 lives so far. The death toll continues to rise in the Pakistan massacre because more than 340 people were wounded, many severely. After the Sunday blast, the park was soaked in blood and strewn with body parts and shreds of clothing.

Many of the victims were Christians who had come to the park after church services to enjoy the holiday. Survivors are now planning funerals for their relatives. The attack came just days after Pakistan's National Assembly recognized Easter and two Hindu festivals as public holidays.

Apparently Muslim extremists don't want religious freedom for anyone but Muslims.

After I comforted Faisal, who has family near the bombing site, we prayed together for Pakistan. I prayed in English but I asked Faisal to pray in his native Pakistani language, Urdu. I love to hear people pray to Jesus Christ in the same language used by Taliban militants.

How can we pray in the aftermath of such a horrific tragedy? Here are five ways I am praying for the Muslim world these days:

1. Pray that cowardly acts of violence will backfire. The history of the church is written in the blood of its martyrs. But whenever Christians have been killed for their faith, their blood becomes a seed for the advancement of the gospel.

Many nominal or liberal Muslims are deeply troubled by the actions of Islamic militants who belong to groups like ISIS or the Taliban. In Pakistan, my friend Faisal says liberal Muslims are distancing themselves from extremists, and they are condemning these acts of terror. "They are even donating blood to help the Christians. They are embarrassed and they are getting tired of Islam," he says. Pray that millions of Muslims will see the brutality operating in these terrorists groups. Pray that they will reject Islamic jihad and the doctrines behind it.

2. Pray that Muslim governments will pursue justice. In a televised message last Sunday, Pakistan's prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, condemned the Taliban massacre and pledged to fight terrorism in Pakistan "until it is rooted out from our society." But the United States and other Western governments must continue to pressure Muslim nations to oppose extremist groups. Pray that God will plant Christians in strategic positions in these governments so they can work to protect believers from the inside.

3. Pray that terrorist groups will be exposed and stopped. We tend to be fearful of militant groups like ISIS because their

tactics are so cruel and intimidating. (An ISIS faction in Yemen allegedly planned to crucify Catholic priest Thomas Uzhunnalil on Good Friday, but some reports say he is still alive.) But if we could see this situation through God's eyes, we would realize that these terrorist factions are fighting a losing battle. They are the ones who are afraid. Soon they will be defeated.

Psalm 37:35-36 says: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a luxuriant tree. Yet he passed away, and he was not; I sought him, but he could not be found." Pray that God will dry up their funds, confuse their communication, create disloyalty in their ranks and lay a trap for them.

4. Pray for a continued release of miracles in Islamic nations. Reports out of Iran, Pakistan and other Muslim nations indicate that God is displaying His power like never before in this dark region. Muslims are coming to Jesus secretly, often because they have dreams about the Son of God. Muslim women are attending underground meetings and hiding Bibles under their black burkas. "Many Muslims are coming to Jesus secretly in Pakistan," says my friend Faisal. "I have seen many Muslims come to Christ because they saw miracles or because He answered their prayers."

5. Pray that Christians will not be intimidated by persecution. It isn't easy for my friend Faisal to live in the United States while his family struggles in Pakistan. Two days before Easter, some Muslim thugs broke into his family's home—one hour from Lahore—and stole furniture after demanding that they stop spreading the gospel. Those who follow Christ in Muslim countries suffer job discrimination, social harassment and a lack of government protection. Pray that Christians in these countries will be empowered with supernatural boldness to defend their faith—even in the face of terror. {eoa}

The Crucifixion of Jesus Was R-Rated

The Christian faith is built on the undeniable, unshakeable truth that Jesus was raised from the dead. It is also founded on the historical fact that the Savior suffered unimaginable pain when Roman soldiers nailed Him to a cross.

I hope you will ponder that pain as you celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ this weekend.

When the movie *The Passion of the Christ* was released 12 years ago, Hollywood insiders mocked it because it offered a realistic—and extremely bloody—depiction of Jesus' torture and death. Regardless of what you think of controversial director Mel Gibson, he did a masterful job of capturing the brutality of a first-century Roman execution.

I know some Christians who objected to the R-rated violence of Gibson's movie, as if what happened to Jesus should be reduced to the sanitized charm of a Renaissance-era painting. But the truth is that what Jesus suffered on Good Friday was R-rated. It was spattered with blood and horrifying to watch.

Nobody performed an autopsy on Jesus' mangled body after He was taken down from the cross. But doctors who have studied the Bible's description of His death say the pain would have been beyond excruciating. In fact, the word *excruciating* means "out of the cross." Jesus literally defined the worst pain anyone could feel.

His suffering began in Gethsemane, when God laid the sins of the world on His beloved Son. Hebrews 5:7 says Jesus offered up prayers "with loud crying and tears" during this moment of

anguish. Luke's Gospel says the agony was so strong that Jesus' sweat "became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). The intense stress caused what physicians call *hematidrosis*, a condition in which blood seeps out of sweat glands.

After His arrest, Jesus was flogged so mercilessly that his skin was stripped off His back, exposing muscle and bone. The soldiers who tortured Jesus would have used a weapon called a flagellum—a whip that had several leather strands with lead balls or shards of bone attached to the ends.

The cuts inflicted by this whip could actually rip open the flesh and expose internal organs. Jesus would have lost a significant amount of blood after His scourging—and this would explain why He did not have the strength to carry His cross all the way to Calvary.

Matthew 27:28-29 says the Roman soldiers stripped Jesus naked and then twisted together a handmade crown made of thorns to mock His kingship. Bible scholars believe these thorns were extremely long and hard. When the thorns pierced the top and side of His head, Jesus would have most likely experienced what doctors call "trigeminal neuralgia"—piercing pain all over the head and face.

After this merciless abuse, Jesus was covered with a red robe and led to Golgotha. There, Roman soldiers drove seven-inch metal spikes into his wrists (most likely hitting the median nerve, causing more blinding pain) and then they rammed another spike into his feet.

At that point, doctors say, Jesus would have suffered dislocation of His shoulders, cramps and spasms, dehydration from severe blood loss, fluid in His lungs and eventual lung collapse and heart failure.

Yet Jesus refused to drink wine mixed with gall, a pain-killing solution offered to Him by his executioners (Matt.

27:34). He chose to endure the full impact of the pain.

He felt that pain for us.

Some victims of Roman crucifixion took as long as nine days to die, but Jesus' death came in a matter of hours—probably because He had been flogged so cruelly before He was nailed to the rough wood. Victims of crucifixion typically developed serious dehydration because of a lack of blood and oxygen.

As Jesus took His last breath, He said: "It is finished." He was actually quoting the last verse of Psalm 22, a psalm He recited throughout His torture. It is one of the most graphic prophecies about Christ's suffering in the Old Testament—and Jesus knew it was about Him.

Jesus willingly poured out His blood on that cruel cross. It was an ugly, revolting, disgusting scene. We don't have to downplay the violence or muffle the gut-wrenching cries. The Bible does not soften the impact or censor the cruelty of Jesus's suffering. Isaiah 53:6 says: "But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

God laid the sins of the world on Jesus, and then He sacrificed Him as the one and only Lamb of God. Isaiah 53 goes on to say: "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities." He took all that pain to fully pay the price so that we could be forgiven.

This Easter, please don't settle for a G-rated, greeting-card version of the cross. Consider the depths of the agony Jesus experienced when He died for you. He took the pain we deserved.

The President of the United States Shouldn't Be Sexist

I have voted for a Republican candidate for president in every election since the Jimmy Carter/Gerald Ford contest in 1976. I vote Republican because I have conservative moral values, pro-business economic views and a serious concern about protecting religious freedom. You are free to disagree with me; since I'm a Christian, I will still love you even if you vote for a Democrat.

But like so many other evangelical Republicans, I am scratching my head over the popularity of Donald Trump. I understand that voters are angry; they feel that establishment politicians from both parties are playing games and not moving the country forward. But why, why, why would we elect a man to occupy the White House who not only makes racist comments about foreigners but who insults women on a regular basis?

I've heard some crazy reasons Christians have given for why I should vote for Trump. Some say he's a "Cyrus" (like the benevolent Persian king who allowed Jewish captives to go back to Israel); some believe we just need an inexperienced outsider who will dismantle Washington with a wrecking ball. And others have blindly jumped on the Trump bandwagon because they think the belligerent billionaire is the only man who can beat Hillary Clinton in November.

I'll stick my neck out and make a prediction: If Trump is the GOP nominee, he will lose to Clinton and it will be made clear—once again—that Christians in this country can't unite behind a candidate.

There is one deeply personal reason I can't vote for Trump. I am the father of four daughters—and I cannot support a candidate who is so blatantly rude and crude toward women. His

record of sexism is sickening.

Last August during the first GOP debate, Megyn Kelly of *Fox News* bravely challenged Trump about his sexist language. She asked: "You've called women you don't like fat pigs, dogs, slob and disgusting animals. Does that sound to you like the temperament of a man we should elect as president?"

Rather than apologizing for his remarks, or at least pledging to be more civil, Trump made a joke about Rosie O'Donnell and later blasted Kelly with his infamous remarks about "blood coming out of her wherever." Later he refused to participate in a Republican debate because Kelly was a moderator.

Megyn Kelly asked the right question: Is this the kind of behavior we want in the man who represents the United States to the world? Do we want a president who will make embarrassing comments about a female government leader's appearance ... or her menstrual cycle?

This week an anti-Trump organization called Our Principles PAC released a television ad highlighting the most audacious quotes Trump has made over the years about women.

The PAC is not pro-Clinton. It is led by Katie Packer, a former campaign manager for Mitt Romney. Her goal is to sway Republican voters toward other GOP candidates like Ted Cruz or John Kasich. (You can watch it [here](#)).

Here are a few of the most embarrassing quotes being highlighted in the ad:

- Trump once told radio commentator Howard Stern: "I like kids. I mean I won't do anything to take care of them. I'll provide the funds, and she'll take care of the kids."
- Trump told *The New York Times Magazine* in 1992: "Women, you have to treat 'em like (expletive)."
- Speaking about Carly Fiorina, the only woman who ran on

the GOP ticket in the 2016 campaign, Trump said: “Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president?”

- In an earlier comment about media personality Rosie O’Donnell, Trump said: “If I were running *The View*, I’d fire Rosie O’Donnell. I mean, I’d look at her right in that fat, ugly face of hers; I’d say ‘Rosie, you’re fired.’”
- On one occasion, when a woman lawyer asked to be excused from a courtroom to pump breast milk for her baby, Trump scolded her and said: “You’re disgusting.”
- Trump has also made it clear that he judges a woman by her breast size. He said: “A person who is very flat-chested is very hard to be a 10.”
- Some of his comments about his tastes in women have been downright perverted. He said of his daughter: “I’ve said if Ivanka weren’t my daughter, perhaps I’d be dating her.”
- And Trump also stated that he views women as objects to be owned. He said: “I think the only difference between me and the other candidates is that I’m more honest and my women are more beautiful”—said the man who has been married three times, twice to Slavic models.

It is bizarre that Spirit-filled Christians can listen to these quotes and heartily cheer for a man who claims he will “Make America Great Again.” You can’t make America great with bigotry, bullying and bad character. Both men and women who want a better future for our kids should reject Trump’s reality-show values and find a candidate that Christians can respect. {eoa}

Mexican Evangelist Says God Can Heal the Lesbian Soul

Isabél Contreras was the most unlikely person on earth to become a traveling preacher.

Raised in a Catholic family in southern Mexico, she became an atheist at 14, explored satanism during high school and began living la vida loca—the crazy life—when she became an amateur volleyball player. She drank heavily, embraced a lesbian lifestyle and even sold her body as a same-sex prostitute during the three years she lived in Mexico City.

But all that changed when she found Jesus at age 21. No one had to tell her to stop having sex with women. “Immediately the Holy Spirit told me this was wrong,” Isabél says.

After her conversion she invited 25 of her athlete friends to a dinner and announced that she was a Christian. “You are welcome to join me,” she said, after inviting them to her charismatic church. “Otherwise you can pretend you never knew me. The old Isabél is dead.”

Her lesbian friends weren’t happy with the drastic change. They even hired a girl to try to seduce her, but Isabél didn’t fall for the scheme. “I knew I would never go back into that life,” she says. “I knew my decision to follow Jesus was all or nothing.”

And thus began an unusual journey for a woman who has become a respected minister in a male-dominated country marked by its machismo. Now 54, Isabél has planted two churches. From her base in La Paz, in the Baja peninsula, she has preached in every state in Mexico and in five other nations.

At the ReeNueva women’s conference held in the city of Querétaro last week, her passionate preaching had women

cheering—and laughing at her frequent jokes. “Christ is in you!” she shouted. “God put you where you are so you can give people the anointing; Satan and his demons are afraid of that!”

Being a minister is not easy for Isabél, even though she has traveled for 20 years as a prophet and Bible teacher. When she visits a new city she often learns that she’s the first woman ever to preach there. Some male pastors have angrily confronted her, telling her that God doesn’t anoint women to share the gospel. She usually reminds them of the biblical story of Balaam.

“If a donkey can speak for God, so can I,” she says.

Isabél has become popular, especially among women, because she doesn’t even try to fit into the Latino cultural mold. She is not a fashionista, for sure. She doesn’t wear high heels or fancy dresses. When she stands at a pulpit she typically wears functional work pants, a sweater and a simple key necklace. Her hair isn’t styled. And she jokes about her weight—and then reminds people that she recently lost 116 pounds.

“I know what some of you ladies are thinking when you see me,” she told the crowd in Querétaro. “You think I look like a dyke. That’s OK. I don’t care what people think about me. I am going to keep looking at Jesus until I look just like Him.”

But it is Isabél’s plain appearance and brutal honesty that win her audience. They love that she doesn’t have a model’s looks. They feel accepted by her, not threatened. So they listen carefully to her testimony and her prophetic teaching.

“God has told me that I’m a sign,” she says. “The way I look, the way I am, allows people to feel comfortable with me and they receive what God is saying.”

Isabél believes her homosexual struggle began at age 11 when an older girl molested her in a dark closet. But she also

believes some women turn to lesbianism because they have been raped or abused by men—and therefore they view sex with men as painful or traumatic. This problem is especially serious in Mexico, where domestic abuse has become an epidemic and the rate of femicide is one of the world’s highest.

While Isabél views homosexuality as sin, she has only compassion for people who struggle with same-sex attraction because it is often rooted in abuse. She has counseled countless people who found healing after prayer.

Some church leaders in Mexico believe God is using Isabél in a unique way, not only to offer healing to people who struggle with their sexual identity but also to the entire body of Christ.

“Isabel is breaking paradigms,” says Claudia Cupido, co-pastor of Unidad Cristiana, a charismatic megachurch in Querétaro. “It is not often you find the combination of prophetic and teaching ministry that she offers. Now that she speaks freely about her past, she will neutralize the battle that many girls and women are facing.” {eoa}

12 Trail-Blazing Christian Women You Should Celebrate

March is Women’s History Month, so for the next few weeks we will be hearing a lot about women inventors, humanitarians, entertainers and entrepreneurs who are changing today’s world. We will probably also hear a lot about Hillary Clinton and her chances of shattering the glass ceiling in American politics—but I’m not convinced that all the great women heroes of the past would be cheering for her political views.

When I think about the empowered women of my generation I'm reminded that they stand on the shoulders of brave women pioneers who didn't have today's advantages. We should especially be grateful for the Christian women who defied religious and cultural traditions—and sometimes paid with their lives—to free African slaves, protect children from abuse, denounce injustice, preach the gospel in foreign nations, heal the sick and win women the right to vote.

This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but here are 12 women I'm celebrating this month:

1. Mary Magdalene – She was the pioneer of pioneers and the forerunner of all forerunners. As a passionate follower of Jesus, and the first person—male or female—to be commissioned to preach the gospel, she proved to a male-dominated, first century-world that God can and does use women to do His work.

2. Jarena Lee (1783-1855) – Authorized to preach in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, she traveled hundreds of miles on foot to share the gospel. When people questioned a woman's right to preach, she told them: "If the man may preach, because the Savior died for him, why not the woman, seeing he died for her also?" She was the first black woman in the United States to publish an autobiography.

3. Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) – Born a slave in New York—and later sold to a second owner for \$100—she eventually became an abolitionist. In her most famous speech, "Ain't I a Woman?" delivered in Ohio in 1851, she demanded equal rights for both women and blacks. She became a Methodist in 1843 and felt God calling her to ministry. "The Spirit calls me, and I must go," she wrote. During one speech in Boston she admitted that she once hated white people, but that after she met Jesus she was filled with love for everyone.

4. Phoebe Palmer (1807-1874) – A Methodist revivalist, Palmer and her husband, Walter, helped fuel the holiness movement in

the mid-1880s, which led to the Pentecostal revival. Although she and Walter were well-known preachers, she was the more popular speaker at a time when women preachers were an oddity. In one of her books, *The Promise of the Father*, she called for the acceptance of women in ministry. In 1850 she also founded a mission for alcoholics in a New York City slum.

5. Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) – Even though she was blind from birth, this “queen of gospel song writers” composed more than 8,000 hymns. Raised as a Baptist, her most famous songs include “Blessed Assurance,” “Rescue the Perishing” and “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior.” She always prayed that her hymns would bring people to Christ, and she believed her songs were divinely inspired. Some theologians criticized her for “feminizing” church music.

6. Catherine Booth (1829-1890) – At a time when people threw eggs at women for speaking in public, this brave firebrand preached on the streets of London and ignited a gospel revival movement to help the poor. Not only did she establish the Salvation Army with her husband, William, she also carved out a path for women ministers by writing *Female Ministry: Women’s Right to Preach* in 1859 and by mentoring hundreds of “Hallelujah Lassies,” women who served as evangelists in the Salvationist movement.

7. Mary Slessor (1848-1915) – This short, red-headed girl from Scotland was inspired by a Presbyterian pastor to go to the mission field at a time when women were discouraged from such work. She ended up in a dangerous region of Calabar (modern Nigeria), and she established a mission station among tribal people by traveling to them in a canoe. Her work laid the foundations for the widespread growth of Christianity in Nigeria today. With her characteristic spunk, she opposed African traditions and successfully stopped the ritualistic killing of twins in Calabar.

8. Amy Carmichael (1867-1951) – This brave Irish Presbyterian

sailed to India and founded the Dohnavur Mission—which pulled hundreds, if not thousands, of children out of ritual prostitution. Known to the children as “Amma,” which means “Mother,” she dressed as an Indian and even dyed her skin with coffee to fit into the local culture. When a British woman asked Carmichael what missionary life was like, she simply wrote: “Missionary life is simply a chance to die.”

9. Ida Robinson (1891-1946) – She was an early Pentecostal pioneer ordained in the United Holy Church of America and appointed to pastor a small church in Philadelphia in 1919. A few years later she felt God gave her an assignment to “loose the women” so more females could be ordained in ministry. Thus she founded the Mount Sinai Holy Church of America, which became a network of 84 churches by the time of her death in Florida.

10. Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944) – Born in Canada, she preached the gospel to her dolls as a child. But after she began preaching throughout the United States in the 1920s and 1930s—often under a large tent—she was more popular than evangelist Billy Sunday. People loved “Sister Aimee” because she used drama and theatrics to make the Bible come alive. When she built her church, Angelus Temple, in Los Angeles in 1923, people came from all over the nation to hear her—including Hollywood stars. She eventually founded the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, which today has more than 8 million members worldwide.

11. Corrie ten Boom (1892-1983) – The daughter of a Dutch clockmaker, she led a rather boring life until Nazi forces invaded Holland. At that point, Corrie and her Christian family began hiding Jews in their home to protect them from German death camps. But their work was exposed, and she was sent to Ravensbruck, a women’s labor camp in Germany. Her horrific experiences there prepared her for a worldwide ministry that took her to 60 countries. She preached about forgiveness and Christ’s love well into her 80s.

12. Gladys Aylward (1902-1970) – This simple British woman wanted to go to China as a missionary, but she was told that women could only serve as teachers or nurses—and she was neither. So without official backing she used her life savings to buy a one-way ticket to Shanxi Province. Once she got to China, she became an official “foot inspector,” helping Chinese officials enforce a new law against the cruel “foot-binding” of Chinese girls. This led to her work among orphans. Her brave attempt to protect children from the Japanese invasion of China was memorialized in the 1958 film *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*—a film that Aylward hated because it glamorized her very simple life.

It was Catherine Booth who said: “If we are to better the future we must disturb the present.” We need more women today who will disturb the status quo. I pray that this year’s celebration of Women’s History Month will inspire a new generation of women to rise up with holy courage. {eoa}

8 Qualities We Need in Our Next President

The 2016 U.S. presidential contest has become an endless TV soap opera: It’s part drama and part comedy, with surprising plot twists and a cast of colorful characters that includes a former president’s wife accused of lying, an eccentric tycoon who spends millions of dollars of his own money on his campaign, two conservatives of Hispanic origin who fight daily with the tycoon (and sometimes with each other), an African-American neurosurgeon, and a socialist senator with a New England accent who sounds like a nerdy university professor.

Only in America can you get this much entertainment during one election. But in November the political theater will end and voters will elect the next commander in chief—hopefully without triggering recounts. And hopefully we will choose a leader who has the qualities needed to guide this nation wisely for the next four years.

What are those qualities? I have never been of the opinion that the president of the United States should be the “pastor” of the country. But I do look for character in presidents because I think leaders should have moral values. Call me old-fashioned, but I still believe the best leadership qualifications are found in the Bible—and I prefer leaders who actually exhibit those qualities.

When the apostle Paul outlined the necessary qualifications for a bishop in the church, he was specific. The character qualities listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-6 could help us decide who is the best candidate to move into the White House. According to this passage, a qualified leader is:

1. Blameless. The Greek word is *anepilēptos* and it means “above reproach.” The modern-day term would be “squeaky clean.” Good leaders exhibit a consistently moral lifestyle. They don’t have skeletons in their closets. They tell the truth, admit their mistakes, refrain from bribery, pay their bills and obey the law.

2. Responsible. Paul told Timothy: “If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:5). Shouldn’t the same question be asked of a president? The way a leader manages his family is not an irrelevant issue. How is his or her marriage? Some Hollywood entertainers might change spouses like outfits, but government leaders should be held to a higher standard.

3. Temperate. The Greek word for this quality, *nēphalios*, means “sober.” The Message Bible translates it as “cool and

collected.” A leader should control his temper instead of flying off the handle. And wouldn’t it be a good idea for the leader of the free world to use restraint, dignity and tact when addressing other world leaders—instead of flippantly offending them?

4. Prudent. This word means “self-controlled,” and like temperance, it involves curbing one’s desires and impulses. We don’t need a president who is addicted to alcohol or drugs, who can’t restrain his sexual urges, or who is so prideful he can never forgive an enemy. A leader who can’t control his private life will eventually spin out of control on the public stage.

5. Respectable. The Greek word *kosmios* means “modest or of good behavior.” In modern terms, a president should be a gentleman—or, in the case of a woman leader, a lady. Good leaders recognize they have been entrusted with a public charge. They earn respect by doing what’s right.

6. Gentle. We all want a bold, decisive leader who will make hard choices and be willing to confront evil. But the best leaders also know how to temper their strength. They don’t throw their weight around, bully people or use inflammatory language to pick fights. Paul told Timothy that a good leader is not “a striker” (1 Tim. 3:3, KJV)—which means he is not a contentious, quarrelsome person.

7. Hospitable. The Greek word for this quality is *philoxenos*, which literally means “love of strangers.” In Paul’s day, good leaders showed compassion to all people, including those from other racial or ethnic backgrounds. A president who represents a nation as diverse as the United States cannot afford to be racist or bigoted. With the grace of an ambassador, he must promote harmony, not divisiveness.

8. Not greedy. The Greek word *aphilargyros* means “not covetous.” All the candidates running in the 2016 campaign are

wealthy, but are there any candidates who have not been so spoiled by wealth that they can still empathize with regular Americans? Considering the fact that 45 million Americans live below the poverty level today, we need a leader who actually cares about helping the poor get jobs and opportunity.

Do your own evaluation. How do the current candidates—Carson, Clinton, Cruz, Kasich, Rubio, Sanders and Trump—measure up when it comes to the character test? If you are a Christian, character should matter when you go to the polls. Don't vote for a candidate just because you like his or her sound bites, blistering attack ads or over-the-top promises.

Vote for character. That's what America needs.{eoa}

In Uganda, Anglicans Are Casting Out Demons

Last Friday in the dusty town of Kabwohe, Uganda, more than 5,000 people crammed into an enclosed field to worship Jesus. They stayed from 7 p.m. until 6:30 a.m. for an all-night celebration that included dancing, singing, shouting, speaking in tongues and an altar call that resulted in dozens of conversions. A few times during the evening, someone was set free from demons.

You might expect this in Africa, where Pentecostal churches have been growing for decades. But this event, which happens in Kabwohe once a month, is sponsored by All Saints Anglican Church. Right after a demonized woman was carried away from the rickety wooden stage, Rev. Gordon Karuhanga led the congregation in the Apostles' Creed. Then he and other robed clergy served Communion.

It took more than an hour to serve the bread and grape juice to the crowd.

This is the new face of revival in Uganda, where hundreds of traditional Anglican churches have been set on fire by the Holy Spirit. All Saints Church in Kabwohe had shrunk to a handful of people a few years ago. But today the 400-seat building cannot contain the throngs of worshippers who show up for Sunday or mid-week services. When I spoke there last Saturday morning, many people sat in plastic chairs outside the building and watched through the windows because the church was packed.

Rev. Karuhanga is no traditional Anglican. He was persecuted by his bishop when he began teaching about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He sees people delivered from demons regularly, sometimes right in the middle of a church service. His parishioners are now learning how to set local families free from the witchcraft that has been so prevalent in Uganda.

“There are many invisible forces that are in constant attack against God’s people,” says Karuhanga, who has focused his efforts on getting people delivered from *amahembe*, a form of sorcery promoted by local witchdoctors. People who are oppressed by these spirits often begin twitching, flailing their arms and falling on the floor in fits when they hear the gospel for the first time at All Saints Church.

“To counteract the power of demons, many Anglican churches have become open to praying for deliverance,” says Rev. Medad Birungi, an Anglican evangelist who established the interdenominational World Shine Ministries in 2005 in Uganda’s capital, Kampala.

While he, too, has been persecuted by traditional bishops, Birungi sees a growing openness to charismatic renewal throughout the Anglican churches of Uganda. Today, 12 of the 38 Anglican bishops in his country are open to charismatic

renewal. A similar openness is developing among Ugandan Baptists and Presbyterians.

“We are raising up a whole new crop of young Anglican leaders here,” Birungi told me. “Within 20 years they will replace the liberal bishops. These new leaders speak in tongues and embrace all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the next 20 years, we will experience a whole new wave of revival here.”

This explosive spiritual movement is not limited to Uganda. Similar waves of renewal are impacting Nigeria, Tanzania, Rwanda, Botswana, Kenya and other African nations. In some large prayer gatherings sponsored by the African House of Prayer, Christians have asked God to break witchcraft covenants that were made by government leaders.

With the Holy Spirit’s help, Africa is slowly renouncing its historic ties to sorcery, corruption and genocide.

This surge of conservative, Spirit-filled Christianity in Africa has been on a collision course with its liberal counterpart in the West. Uganda’s Anglicans are baffled by the 2003 decision by the Episcopal Church in the United States to accept gay marriage, and they have asked the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, to kick the Episcopalians out of the worldwide Anglican communion because of the heresy.

At a meeting last month in England, Anglican leaders voted to put the Episcopal Church on probation for three years as they try to resolve the conflict. They rebuked the Americans for a “fundamental departure from the faith and teaching” of the church, and they strongly reaffirmed that biblical marriage is between one man and one woman.

At All Saints Church in Kabwohe, Rev. Karuhanga says he will never compromise biblical teaching on sexuality, and he says he has prayed for people who struggled with same-sex feelings. Those people found grace to live in sexual purity. And while he stands firm on his convictions, he offers compassion rather

than judgment.

“The church must be rooted in the Word of God,” Karuhanga says. “I see the Episcopalians in America as people who need to be helped. We need to teach them.”

Now that many dying liberal churches in the United States have lost the fire of the Spirit, it appears that African Christians are picking up the torch and carrying it for a new generation.

When a Smile Is Supernatural

The first thing I noticed about my Ugandan friend Nelson Barigye was his smile. When Nelson greets you, it's as if he switches on a 60-watt light bulb. His smile is so bright that during a visit to England a few years ago, a woman told him: “You smile like God.”

But when I learned more about his difficult situation, I wondered if I could smile at all if I were in his shoes. Why is this guy so happy?

At age 40, Nelson and his wife, Grace, have five sons—ages 15, 13, 11, 8 and 6—and all seven of them live in a tiny, two-bedroom apartment in the city of Masindi, three hours from Uganda's capital. The five boys sleep in one room. Their bathroom is shared with three other families who have seven other children.

The kitchen is outside. Grace uses a *sigiri*, a charcoal stove, to cook meals. The apartment costs 100,000 Ugandan shillings a month—\$30 U.S.—but Nelson struggles to pay the rent because he also must pay school fees of \$130 per term.

Nelson and his family live on a basic diet. Breakfast consists of sliced plantains, chapati (Indian-style flatbread) and tea. ("The boys get milk maybe twice a week," he says.) Lunch is usually *matooke*—mashed plantains—and *offals*, which are boiled cow intestines.

Dinner may include sweet potatoes and beans, but Nelson has to be careful what he eats because of a recent flare-up of ulcers that sent him to the doctor. He had to pay \$30 U.S. for treatment—the equivalent of a month's rent.

To complicate matters, Nelson's youngest son, Godwill, has a disability and couldn't walk until recently.

For a long time Nelson's family didn't have their own means of transportation, except for his used motorcycle. But last year his pastor, Robert Kaahwa, allowed him to purchase his 1991 Toyota Sprinter at a greatly reduced price. Nelson's bright smile lit up again when he told me how proud he was of that vehicle.

He smiled again while sharing that he and his wife are thinking about adopting a daughter because there are so many abandoned babies in Uganda.

I couldn't help but marvel at this guy's joy. I tried to imagine sharing a toilet and bath with 18 people every day. I thought about how uncomfortable I'd be in that hot apartment with a tin roof and no electric fan. I wondered if I could stand to eat *offals*.

"My hope is in my God," Nelson told me when I asked for the secret of his smile. "Jesus is my Lord whether I am hungry or not. I am a living example that there is hope in God and His generosity. No one can add anything to their life by worrying, so I have learned to trust in God."

Nelson grew up in a home with nine children. His grandfather was a witch doctor, and his father was a nominal Anglican who

beat his wife and children mercilessly. But his dad stopped beating his mother after a dramatic conversion.

“My father believed he should dominate everyone, especially women,” Nelson explained. “But after he got saved he changed dramatically.”

Nelson found Christ at age 23. And that’s when he also found his trademark smile. Jesus flooded his soul with miraculous joy.

Today Nelson spends most of his time working for C3 Church, a growing Pentecostal congregation in Masindi. He plays the keyboard during worship, leads the praise team, disciples young people and serves Pastor Kaahwa. In return he gets a small stipend—all the church can afford since the majority of members don’t have steady jobs.

Like many Ugandan churches, only fifteen percent of the congregation has salaries. At C3 Church, which has 800 members, the weekly collection is only \$20. Or \$30 on a good Sunday.

During the offering time at church, some people who don’t have money give other things—such as fruits from their gardens or bags of cassava flour. “Once someone gave a chicken, all tied up,” says Nelson. “They just laid it on the altar.”

These offerings of food sometimes end up on Nelson’s family table, and he is grateful for the provision.

Nelson’s joy in the face of unimaginable lack totally rocked my world, especially after considering that I pay more for a dinner with my wife at an American restaurant than Nelson spends on meals for his family in a month.

I asked Pastor Kaahwa how he explains Nelson’s joy. “People in my church know that having the Lord is the most important thing in life,” he said. “There are a few people in Masindi

who have money yet they are not happy. When they find the Lord, immediately the joy of the Lord becomes evident.”

If you have the joy of the Lord, I hope you realize how priceless it is. And I hope you can let your joy shine as brightly as my Ugandan brother, Nelson—who smiles in the face of poverty and rejoices instead of complaining. {eoa}