

How to Prepare for the Holy Spirit's Next Move

At the height of the Jesus movement in 1972, tie-dyed hippies gathered in parks and stadiums to celebrate their newfound faith in Christ. But when these young converts went home to visit traditional churches, many were rejected because they had long hair and preferred to worship using drums and guitars instead of pianos and pipe organs.

Even though these kids were full of the Holy Spirit and excited about preaching the gospel in the streets, the church turned them away—because Christians weren't ready for something new.

God desires to bring a fresh wave of the Holy Spirit in every generation. The prophet Isaiah wrote: "Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert" (Is. 43:19). Even when we are in a spiritual drought, God promises to unleash a river of His presence and power.

I am convinced we are standing on the threshold of another wave of the Spirit. But we must face these questions: Are we ready? Will we be aware? Will we embrace the next outpouring of the Spirit when it comes, or will we stick our noses in the air like the traditional denominations of the 1970s did?

If you want to be ready for all that God has for you in this new season, take these steps:

- 1. Rekindle the Spirit's flame in your heart.** You will be ready for revival when revival stirs your own heart. You must be hungry for more of God. Ask the Lord to give you that hunger. Then begin to seek Him with passion. Set aside daily time to pray and read His Word. Ask Him to fill you afresh with the Holy Spirit.

2. Dismantle all dead religious tradition. Jesus warned the Pharisees that they would miss the day of His visitation because of their stale traditions. Many churches today are stuck in a time warp; they sing 1970s songs and enforce a 1950s dress code, so no one from 2015 feels comfortable visiting their church except the people who live in their religious bubble. You will never break out of tradition until you “sing a new song” (see Ps. 98:1; Is. 42:10) and welcome a fresh encounter with God.

3. Be willing to move geographically. The Bible says Naomi moved from Moab to Bethlehem when she heard God was visiting His people (see Ruth 1:6). If she had stayed where things were familiar and comfortable, Naomi would have missed God’s best for her and her family. Before the Lord pours out His fresh anointing, He gets His people in position. Make sure you are in the place where He wants you. He may be calling you to relocate to a new city or a new church to prepare you for revival.

4. Align yourself with the right people. Abram had to separate from his nephew Lot before he could inherit all of God’s blessings. Sometimes people can keep us from experiencing all that God has for us. If you are enmeshed in toxic relationships that hinder your spiritual growth, break free from their influence and find healthy mentors, friends and spiritual leaders who can encourage and equip you. Sometimes this might mean leaving an unhealthy church to find a healthy one.

5. Allow God to meddle with your sectarian pride. Christians tend to be cliquish. We find a church or denomination we are comfortable with, and then we tend to look down on all other groups as if they are inferior. We think we have the best worship style, the coolest pastors or the soundest doctrine. So if the Holy Spirit shows up at the church down the street, we are smug and suspicious—and quick to criticize what is actually God’s work. Don’t let pride cause you to oppose what

He's doing.

6. Be open to God's surprises. When the Azusa Street revival erupted in Los Angeles in 1906, everyone was shocked when the biblical gift of speaking in tongues was restored to the church. In the charismatic revival of the 1960s, no one expected to see Presbyterians, Catholics, Methodists, Baptists and Mennonites filled with the Holy Spirit—in the same meeting!

The Holy Spirit never violates Scripture, but He loves to open up rivers of anointing to do refreshing new things we have not seen in our generation. He wants an outbreak of miracles. He wants to break racial barriers. He wants to reach immigrants—even those who are illegal. He wants to heal those who struggle with embarrassing addictions, psychological problems and gender confusion. He wants the gifts of the Holy Spirit to break out in churches that have never seen His power. Let's expect the unexpected.

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Why 'War Room' Is a Must-See Movie

I'm not a big fan of Christian movies, mainly because low budgets often result in bad acting and cheesy scripts that make even the most gracious churchgoers cringe in embarrassment. But today Hollywood insiders are admitting that

the quality of Christian filmmaking is improving—and the newly released *War Room* is likely to take the genre to a new level.

Don't expect your typical nose-in-the-air film critics to give *War Room* good reviews. Its faith message is not subtle. People actually pray—out loud!—on screen, and the name of Jesus is mentioned numerous times. One of the main characters gets on his knees and asks God for forgiveness, while another walks out on her back porch and commands the devil to go to hell.

If all that religion isn't enough to drive the Hollywood elite crazy, the actors in this film talk with thick Southern accents. Even popular Bible teacher Beth Moore shows off her Texas drawl in a cameo role.

The reason for the Southern flair is that *War Room* was created by Alex and Stephen Kendrick, Baptist brothers from Georgia who gave us *Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof* and *Courageous*. Those films were panned by Hollywood, but their financial success made a few leaders in the movie business curious. They discovered that evangelical Christians have an appetite for wholesome entertainment that reinforces their beliefs. That's why *Fireproof* was the top-grossing independent film of 2008—and why *War Room* ended up with a stunning \$11.4 million last weekend when it opened in theaters.

I won't be surprised if *War Room* breaks all previous records for the Kendrick Brothers. They have outdone themselves with this one. You need to see it. In fact, you should take your friends and see it as a group.

The story revolves around a middle-class couple struggling in their marriage. Elizabeth Jordan (Priscilla Shirer) is a real-estate agent who is mad at her busy husband, Tony (T.C. Stallings), because he's stressed out and angry at her most of the time. When Elizabeth takes on the job of selling the house of an elderly woman named Miss Clara (Karen Abercrombie), she begins a remarkable spiritual journey that transforms her

family.

War Room gets its title from the small closet Miss Clara uses for prayer. She challenges Elizabeth to let go of her anger, submit fully to God and begin her own prayer life. "You are a warrior," she tells her young friend. Elizabeth reluctantly cleans out the walk-in closet in her bedroom and begins to fight for her marriage—at the same time that her husband is considering having an affair. By the end of the film, Miss Clara has not only mentored Elizabeth in prayer; she has also taught all of us why we need to go to war on our knees.

I don't know of any film that portrays the power of prayer like *War Room*. Abercrombie (who has appeared in numerous TV shows including *Alley McBeal* and *Judging Amy*) steals the show as Miss Clara, but Priscilla Shirer, who is the daughter of Dallas pastor Tony Evans, brings unexpected acting talent to the screen—especially in the scene when she decides she won't let the devil have her family or her marriage.

This movie is unabashedly Christian and might as well be rated P-I for politically incorrect. There is no profanity (Miss Clara does declare in one scene that the devil's butt has been kicked) and no sex—although a woman Tony meets at work invites him to her apartment. And the only violence occurs when a man wielding a knife confronts Elizabeth and Miss Clara. You guessed it—the old lady rebukes her attacker in the name of Jesus.

Miss Clara's bold approach to faith is what I liked most about *War Room*. This brave saint doesn't care what anybody thinks—she is going to pray whether you like it or not. She gets in Elizabeth's face and confronts her bad attitudes, and she gets in the devil's face and commands him to stop destroying Elizabeth's marriage. By the end of the film she's kneeling in her new prayer room in her son's house, praying up a storm for America.

This is exactly why director Alex Kendrick says he made *War Room*. He told *Entertainment Weekly*: “This movie calls people to make prayer a priority, and we believe that it’s something our culture and our nation really needs – to turn back to God and to seek him in prayer.”

War Room may do more than shatter box office records. It could actually inspire a fresh movement of prayer in our prayerless nation.

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Why Adultery Will Always Be a Foolish Choice

The infamous Ashley Madison website promotes its dating business by announcing: “Life is short. Have an affair.” Now, it looks like the company will have a short life as well. Ashley Madison will likely go out of business after anonymous hackers last month published the names of 37 million accounts on the site for extramarital affairs.

Ashley Madison caters to people who want to secretly cheat on their spouses. Clients pay a fee using their credit cards, set up discreet profiles and chat with potential hookups—all in a supposedly “secure” environment. A special guarantee promises users they can get their \$250 back if they don’t have an affair within three months. About 90-95 percent of the website’s users are male, and women are allowed to post their profiles for free.

So much for cyber security. You may have thought adultery would be easier in this era of Snapchat and password protection. Think again. Millions of people have literally been caught with their pants down in this latest scandal.

When the hackers released their information on the Internet last month, the news sent shockwaves across the world as users realized they'd been busted. The list of red-faced clients include employees at the White House and the U.S. congress, law enforcement and military officials, a Justice Department attorney and Christian activist and reality TV star Josh Duggar, who appeared in TLC's *19 Kids and Counting*.

Duggar has now resigned in disgrace from his job at the Family Research Council. After the Ashley Madison scandal broke, he released a statement on Aug. 20 admitting he had been unfaithful to his wife. Research into the hacker's information showed that Duggar, who is 27, paid \$986.76 for two Ashley Madison subscriptions. He listed himself on the site as "attached male seeking female."

I don't know anyone who paid money to Ashley Madison, but I do have friends who have experienced the pain and shame of an extramarital affair. Adultery has been happening since the book of Genesis, and it never ends well. Ever since the patriarch Judah was outed for his secret affair with Tamar, or when a prophet exposed David's affair with Bathsheba, men and women have tried unsuccessfully to hide their marital unfaithfulness.

If you have been involved in an extramarital affair, or you know someone who has, here are five painful but necessary steps you must take immediately:

1. Get brutally honest. You can hide your sin for a while, but if you don't confess it to God and your spouse, you will be miserable—and the guilt will only intensify. Numbers 32:23 says: "Be sure your sin will find you out." Come clean. Your

spouse's reaction may be one of anger, disgust or heart-crushing disappointment, but you can't heal your broken soul without a full confession.

2. Break off all ties to the past. Most affairs begin as emotional connections that later lead to sex. That's why it's not easy for some people to end affairs cold turkey. You must be ruthless in severing all communication with the other person. No calls, no letters, no texts, no involvement whatsoever. The adulterous man described in Proverbs 7 falls into sin because he naively wanders near the house of the adulteress. It says of his foolish error: "He does not know that it will cost him his life" (Prov. 7:23).

3. Rebuild your marriage. If your spouse is willing to forgive you and start over, you must work as hard on repairing your marriage as you would if you were rebuilding your house after an earthquake. You may come to the realization that your marriage was not built on a strong foundation to begin with. After going through a season of forgiveness and re-establishing trust, renew your marriage vows with a minister and supportive friends.

4. Recruit a support team. You can't rebuild your marriage alone. You will need a counselor, a loving pastor and Christian friends who are willing to speak the truth to you. Read good books on marriage, attend a marriage retreat and reach out for help. You may feel like hiding from others in shame, but you must resist the temptation to stay isolated.

5. Seek a personal revival. Ultimately, people wander from their spouses only after they have wandered from God. If your heart is aflame with the Holy Ghost, you will not let your eyes or your feet drift into sin. The only way you can truly repair your marriage is by surrendering your entire life to Jesus and asking Him to ignite your heart with love for Him. Begin having a daily quiet time with God, read His Word, pray with your spouse and invite him or her to join you on this

journey of spiritual revival.

J. Lee Grady is the former editor of *Charisma*. You can follow him on Twitter @leeegrady. He is the author of several books including *10 Lies Men Believe*. You can learn more about his ministry, *The Mordecai Project*, at themordecaiproject.org.

How 18 Years at Charisma Shaped My Life

When I joined the *Charisma* team in 1992, cell phones looked like bricks and the Internet didn't exist. No texting, no Google and no email. If I needed to research a topic for a story, I had to call a library on a landline phone, or—can you imagine?—actually go to the library and look up stuff.

The digital revolution hadn't started yet, so I was oblivious to what I was missing. All I knew was that I was happy to serve on the staff of the largest charismatic Christian magazine in the world. I stayed there for 18 years until I stepped into full-time ministry in 2010. Since *Charisma* is celebrating its 40th anniversary this month, I thought I would chime in with my own cherished memories.

1. Most spiritual moment. It's one thing for a smart-aleck journalist to report on a spiritual revival; it's another thing for that journalist to be spiritually wrecked by the experience. I went to Pensacola, Florida, in 1995 to write about the Brownsville Revival. I ended up on the floor of that church at least three times. I was overcome by the Holy Spirit's presence in those historic meetings, which were led by evangelist Steve Hill. (He became a friend until he died last year.) On that carpet inside Brownsville Assembly of God,

the Lord dealt with a deep cynicism I was holding in my heart. Something holy was imparted to me in those meetings that prepared me for ministry.

2. Favorite interview. In August 2000 I received an urgent call informing me that *Charisma* could have an interview with Texas governor George W. Bush. I flew to Austin, boarded Bush's campaign plane and flew to Maine. About mid-flight, I was invited to the front of the plane to interview our future president for 30 minutes. I wasn't nervous because Bush was his down-to-earth, folksy self—and our conversation about his faith made me feel I was with a brother in Christ. Before the interview ended I gave him a Scripture from Psalms and he wrote it down. I hope it gave him some comfort after the media and a majority of Americans turned against him years later.

3. Most sobering interview. When I traveled to North Carolina in 1996 to do a cover story on fallen TV evangelist Jim Bakker, I didn't go to rub his nose in the mess he'd made of his PTL empire. I could tell the guy was repentant the moment we met. He didn't sound like the cocky talk show host who bilked donors so he could buy gold-plated faucets for his mansion. The Jim Bakker I met was grieved over the mistakes he'd made. We ate dinner at his favorite low-priced Chinese restaurant next door to a K-mart. He told me sincerely: "I was wrong in so many ways, that it took five years of prison for God to deal with me."

4. Most meaningful part of my job: What blessed me the most about my 18 years at *Charisma* was the interaction I had with African-American, Hispanic and immigrant leaders in the body of Christ. In spite of the racism that still exists in our country, I learned that the Holy Spirit wants to build bridges, not walls, in the church. In 1994 I witnessed black and white Pentecostal leaders washing each other's feet in what came to be known as the Memphis Miracle. And during my subsequent years as editor I ate meals with black leaders, including G.E. Patterson, Charles Blake and C.D. Owens. They

shaped my spiritual DNA. Building interracial ministry is a core value for me today.

5. Most life-shaping experience. At *Charisma* I was exposed to powerful female preachers, including Fuchsia Picket, Alice Smith, E.C. Reems, June Evans, Barbara Amos, Beth Moore, Sharon Daugherty and Cindy Jacobs. Yet we often received angry letters from readers who objected to our articles about women in the pulpit. Those letters sent me on a journey to discover what God thinks about the spiritual callings of women—and the result was my first book, *10 Lies the Church Tells Women*. Today I have dedicated my life to helping release women into ministry.

6. Favorite article of my career. In 1997 I wrote an investigative feature about so-called Oneness Pentecostals—the people who insist on baptizing in Jesus’ name only. I wrote it partly out of fascination, but mostly because I had a genuine burden to see the Holy Spirit heal what has been a century-old rift in the church. The initial reaction to “The Other Pentecostals” was overwhelming—we received more letters about that article than any other during my tenure at the magazine. I still get comments about it 18 years later from ministers who say it affected them.

7. Most awkward interview. I will never forget sitting down on the Trinity Broadcasting Network set in California in 1998 to talk with Jan Crouch, wife of the late TBN founder Paul Crouch. There she was, with her trademark pink wig and false eyelashes, talking to me about how she was kicked out of Bible college in the 1950s because she didn’t obey all the rules of Pentecostal decorum. She called the professors who disciplined her “Sanhedrin”—and then reminded me that she didn’t like *Charisma* because we wrote about church scandals. She was as eccentric in real life as on camera, but I appreciated her honesty—especially when she told me: “God didn’t call Paul and I because we are good or because of our skills. He chose two of the most foolish, untalented people.”

8. All-time favorite issue. In 1998 I sent four reporters to the streets for a special evangelism issue. One interviewed hard-core bikers in Daytona Beach. One spent a few days on the streets with punk rockers in Chicago. Another spoke with gang-bangers in a risky neighborhood in Atlanta. And I went to San Francisco's Polk Street district to talk to men living in the city's gay underworld. I never felt more fulfilled when an issue of *Charisma* came off the press. We broke journalistic ground with that issue and called our readers to care about lost people instead of judging them.

9. Least favorite part of the job: No job is perfect, and what I hated most about being the editor of *Charisma* was dealing with some of our "problem" advertisements. Editors usually have a love/hate relationship with ads: We need the money ads generate, but some ads are just plain ugly, and others are embarrassing. I normally didn't see ads until the day before the magazine shipped out, and there was often a "miracle diet" ad promising a cure, or a conference guaranteeing personal prophecies, or a charlatan charging \$1,000 to be his spiritual son. I tried my best to screen those ads—and the current staff of *Charisma* continues to be watchful. Please forgive us if we let one slip though. This job is not easy.

10. Saddest part of the job: It felt wonderful to write articles about spiritual revivals and missionary breakthroughs, but there's an ugly side to being a Christian journalist. I had to write about the scandals. And there were plenty on my watch, starting with the sordid reports of sexual abuse at Earl Paulk's Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Atlanta in 1993. People often asked, "Why do you have to cover the scandals?" My response was always the same: We are providing accountability to a movement that has very few checks and balances. It isn't fun to write about respected Christian leaders who fall into sin, go to jail, extort money or start teaching heresy. But when I saw the failures I didn't become disillusioned. Through all the ups and downs of the

charismatic movement, through all the glorious victories and embarrassing scandals, I have learned that Jesus is faithful and that the Holy Spirit is still working in the church in spite of our weakness.

J. Lee Grady is the former editor of Charisma. You can follow him on Twitter @leegrady. His next book, Set My Heart on Fire, will be released next year by Charisma House. You can learn more about his ministry, The Mordecai Project, at themordecaiproject.org.

Memories of the Pentecostal Outpouring Bring Goosebumps

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When 88-year-old Elsie Mason was born, Teddy Roosevelt was president of the United States and the American West was still being tamed. Arizona and New Mexico weren't even states yet. The automobile assembly line had just been invented, but paved roads were still uncommon. Women wore floor-length skirts and couldn't vote. Only rich people had telephones.

The term "Pentecostal" was rarely used to describe any group of Christians. Although Holiness churches taught that believers should seek a spiritual experience they called "sanctification," it was a revival in Topeka, Kansas, in 1901, and the subsequent and more far-reaching Azusa Street Revival of 1906, that popularized the belief in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Azusa triggered a Pentecostal movement that today represents some 430 million people worldwide.

Mason, the widow of Charles H. Mason—founder of the Church of God in Christ—is one of several older Pentecostals who remember the early days of camp meetings, tent revivals and backwoods persecution. By talking with her, and with nine other elderly saints, *Charisma* has collected a treasure chest of oral history...

Pauline Parham, 86, grew up hearing about the Pentecostal outpouring that occurred in 1901. Her father-in-law, Charles Parham, led that revival, which proved to be a forerunner of the Azusa movement. She remembers that Parham rented a beautiful building in Topeka for \$40 a month to house his Bible school:

... Forty students lived there. They planned an all-night prayer meeting for New Year's Eve, and a woman named Agnes Ozman asked Dad Parham to lay hands on her and pray for her to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

He said he couldn't pray for her since he hadn't received it yet, but she said just do it anyway in the name of the Lord. She was actually the first one to receive the gift of tongues.

The meeting went for three days—day and night—and she could hardly speak English because the Lord gave her another language. The fame of this meeting went throughout the community, and many newspaper reporters came. When they interviewed Agnes Ozman, she responded in the Chinese tongue she had received. For three days she could only speak in Chinese.

Fred Griesinger, 95, was 5 years old when the Azusa revival erupted. He remembers the crude benches inside the barnlike Azusa Street building, and a horse-drawn ice cream wagon that was sometimes parked in front:

... I don't believe there was a membership there. The people came from every direction and were hardly identified with each other. When the service would start, it wouldn't take long

before the Holy Spirit would come down

People didn't even have lunch. They would go on through the noon hour and on into the afternoon. There was very little preaching. There was a lot of good singing and worship, and it was repetitious. They would sing, "The Comforter has come; the Comforter has come."

Stanley Horton, 80, was born 10 years after the Azusa revival. But both his parents attended the meetings at Azusa. His father, Harry Samuel Horton, told him much about the early days:

... When my father was 21, he and another young man decided to work their way across Canada and then down to California. He was actually running from God. Everywhere he went, revivals were going on, and his friend would want to go to them, but he refused.

The day before the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, he was walking in Golden Gate Park when an inner voice spoke to him saying, "Get out of this city!" It grew stronger and stronger. Finally he got his friend and took the ferry across the bay to Oakland.

The earthquake demolished the place where they had been staying. Undoubtedly they would have been killed if they had stayed there.

Shortly after that my father was walking by a Nazarene church in Oakland on a Wednesday night. He felt impelled to go in.

He kept crying out, "God, forgive me, a sinner," but he felt no response from the Lord until the pastor quoted the verse, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Then the burden rolled off, and my father walked out feeling as if he were walking on air.

A few days later he passed a street meeting in Oakland where

they were telling how the Holy Spirit had been poured out according to Acts 2:4 at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles.

*At age 12, **Fred Griesinger** was baptized in the Holy Spirit at a camp meeting in Los Angeles in 1913. His seven brothers and sisters lived in tents and dug their own well at the camp:*

... One evening they had a young people's tent meeting. I wandered into the meeting by myself. They were singing and praising the Lord and testifying. So I didn't see any reason why I shouldn't testify.

So I thanked the Lord that I was saved and said that I wanted to be filled with the Holy Spirit. At that moment I was taken out of this world—completely unconscious. I didn't know whether I was sitting down or standing or what. And when I came to I was speaking in tongues and my hands were up, and no one was paying attention to me.

No one ever laid hands on me. Nobody preached to me. I couldn't talk in English for hours.

Sarah Harrell, 93, was present at a meeting in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1914 when the Assemblies of God was formed. She remembers the camp meeting days:

... I was a very small girl when Pentecost came to our town in Arkansas. The preachers—Brother and Sister Shelton—came and rented a little storefront.

They lived in a houseboat on the Mississippi River. At that meeting, my grandmother was saved, my mother and stepfather were saved, and my aunt.

Two years later my mother and stepfather went into the ministry. We held lots of meetings in little towns. A lot of people were saved in the camp meetings. They had a tent for the meeting, a tent for the dining room, and they slept in

tents.

They didn't have cots. Farmers would bring in straw, and they'd put it on the ground, and we'd spread our quilts on that.

It was rough. We didn't have cars in those days; everybody rode the train.

*As a child, **Rolf McPherson**, now 83, traveled with his famous evangelist mother, Aimee Semple McPherson. She led crusades on the East Coast during the early years of this century before moving to California, where she founded the Foursquare denomination:*

... There were very few cars in those days. If you traveled in one you had to be careful that you didn't get stranded in the wilderness. So you often traveled in caravans. The roads were very difficult. I remember when we came to California we had to cross over the Rockies, and the roads were very narrow.

You could look right down the side for several thousand feet down. My grandmother was nervous, holding her breath the whole time and wondering if we'd make it. Sometimes you'd meet a car, and you had to back up to let the car go by.

***Elsie Mason**, 88, was married to Bishop C.H. Mason, founder of the Church of God in Christ. She remembers the particular struggles of black Pentecostals:*

... Negroes weren't allowed in the hotels in those days—only as employees. During our Holy Convocation in Memphis they would sleep in the different homes. Many would sleep all night in the church on benches.

All of the South was quite prejudiced, and there was always separate seating, even in churches. Negroes weren't to sit with the whites or the whites with the Negroes. Once, Bishop Mason had an incident when a white man embraced him in one of

his meetings in Nashville, Tennessee, and it caused quite a stir among the white people.

But the Lord always took care of Bishop Mason. He didn't shy away from other races. He always said, "All souls are God's."

Rolf McPherson *remembers that his mother preached in black churches at a time when interracial ministry was not accepted:*

... There were only a few thousand blacks in Los Angeles in the 1920s. But all of a sudden—about the time of the Depression—they began to come to Los Angeles and they had a tough time.

They came out here and tried to develop work and factories, but it was very difficult. They established communities where they had their churches.

Mother would often preach for them, or they would come to our church, Angelus Temple. It was always wide open, and many of them were our best friends.

When she was preaching in the South, she'd often preach to the white community, and then she would go across the tracks and set up the tent for the black people.

They were welcome in any of the meetings, but they couldn't always come across to the other community, so she would go and hold an extra week for them. She loved the black people. She would bring barrels of clothes and supplies for them.

Lelia Mason Byas, 77, *daughter of Bishop C.H. Mason, talked often with her father about the early days of the Church of God in Christ, when it was extremely difficult for black ministers to travel:*

... I often wondered why Bishop Mason was not mobbed or lynched during the days of strict segregation. I asked how he got his early ministry started, and he told me that when the Lord led him to go to a place, he would walk.

He didn't own a mule or a buggy or a horse or a wagon. He was a very poor man, so how he survived I just don't know.

Cities were far apart in those days, so I asked him how he found his way through the woods. He said he would follow the railroad track.

The track would always lead to a train station, and at the station there would always be a cotton gin and a grain mill. That's where he would meet black folks.

I asked him how he would find housing. He said he would go out and pray and minister to the people, and there would always be somebody kind enough to ask him to go home with them.

Rolf McPherson *recalls the excitement of an Aimee Semple McPherson crusade in the 1920s*

... Mother would preach continually, probably three times a day. That would go on for a month, and then we'd move to the next town.

All of Mother's meetings were full of enthusiastic people. They packed the place.

You didn't have public address systems in those days, so Mother had to be able to speak to several thousand people in a tent—which absorbs all of the sound. But somehow she managed to do it. Her throat was probably twice as large as the average person's.

They used to bring ambulances and stretchers, and they left empty. Often Mother would—right in the middle of her message—go down and pray for somebody on a stretcher. They would get up off the stretcher, and the stretcher would be carried off empty.

Carl O'Guin, 100, *got involved in the Assemblies of God when it was formed in 1914. He remembers how mainline Protestant ministers were swept into the Pentecostal movement after*

attending Aimee Semple McPherson's meetings:

... I came to pastor in Granite City, Illinois, in 1919. In 1921 we got Aimee Semple McPherson over in St. Louis at a big Masonic Temple. There was a Methodist pastor over there named Markley. He liked the meeting, and he was an emotional, shouting Methodist type.

Sister McPherson told him: "I just held a meeting in Washington, D.C., and there was a Methodist pastor named Charles Shreve who got the baptism in the Spirit. I would like you to get Dr. Shreve to come to your church and hold a revival."

Markley took her up on it. This Dr. Shreve was as bold as the dickens. He came right out there in that Methodist church, and he began to preach, "The glory, and the fire, and the power of the Holy Ghost is coming on the world," and people began to receive the Holy Ghost.

About 60 of them got the baptism before the bishop came and put them all out.

Rolf McPherson *recalls how Aimee Semple McPherson's ministry helped thousands of people during the Great Depression of the 1930s:*

... People were coming to California in great numbers and arriving here with absolutely nothing. Mother would see that they had all the help she could get.

The fire department and the police department brought people to the church's commissary. We had a group called The City Sisters who filled baskets all day for poor people. People stood in long lines to receive.

It was a difficult job to feed all the people that needed help. The children didn't have lunches to go to school with, and the people at Angelus Temple would prepare the lunches and

get milk for them so the children wouldn't go hungry. It was probably the only meal they had.

Daphne Brann, 105, got ministerial credentials with the Assemblies of God in 1917. She remembers how the Great Depression affected her church:

... When the Depression hit, we were in Mansfield, Ohio. We had a lot of farmers in our church, and they were always bringing us food. So we didn't feel the Depression like others did. Although I remember one week, after all the bills were paid, all we had to live on was the \$6 our son made selling papers in front of the bank on Main Street.

We would go out on a Saturday, and when we came home the big, round kitchen table would be loaded with food. Some of the farmers had cows, so they would bring milk, butter—everything.

On a Saturday night my husband used to have street meetings in the square in Mansfield before the service. People would go out and buy groceries and put them on the entranceway of the church for us. I loved the tomatoes and the corn.

Arthur Burt, 84, a British evangelist, met evangelist Smith Wigglesworth on several occasions. He remembers how the Pentecostal movement impacted England in the 1930s, confirming that “holy laughter” is nothing new:

... I had been expelled from the Protestant Truth Society because I had embraced the Pentecostal message and because I had spoken in tongues. In 1934 I landed at a convention in the Midlands.

I went into that meeting a puffed-up, arrogant young man. At that time, no meeting was a good meeting unless I was speaking in it. I came into the meeting, and a brother stood up and declared, “Quench not the Spirit.”

Down came the Holy Ghost in waves and waves. Everything

happened at once.

Some people were on the floor. Some had their hands up. Some were weeping. Some were shouting. Some were speaking in tongues. Some were laughing. Some were pushing handkerchiefs in their mouths to stop the noises they were making.

I stood up to minister, but God didn't seem to take any notice of me. I lifted my voice, but God lifted the crescendo in the meeting.

I lifted my voice higher, expecting all the noise to subside. But it didn't.

So here I was, a little peacock trying to compete with the mighty Spirit of God. A brother behind me pulled my jacket coattails, and he said: "Sit down. Don't you know the touch of the Spirit of God in a meeting?"

I was silenced as the people laughed in the Spirit while others wept. All kinds of emotions were rolling through like an incoming tide.

In many of those meetings people would laugh and laugh. Some people rolled off their seats and fell on the floor.

*Black communities in the United States were greatly impacted by Bishop C.H. Mason's Pentecostal crusades in the 1930s and 1940s, according to **Elsie Mason:***

... In Texas there were great crowds. He would leave the tent and go out in the open. Wherever he saw the crowds of people, he would go. There was hardly a village in Texas that hadn't heard of the Church of God in Christ.

Crutches were lined up against the walls because the people didn't need them any more. And people were raised from the dead.

In Memphis, a lady took sick during our convocation, and at

that time doctors weren't as prevalent as they are today, and there were hardly any hospitals for Negroes. So they sent for Bishop Mason, and he prayed until the Lord raised her.

Nora Bryant Jones, 99, lived in the backwoods of eastern Tennessee when the Azusa revival began. Her father, W.F. Bryant, founded the Church of God in Cleveland, Tennessee. She remembers how Pentecostals were persecuted in the early days:

... Some people used to pollute our springs with kerosene so we couldn't drink the water. One of my early jobs was to get water for the home, so I remember that very dearly.

Our house was shot at and pelted with rocks lots of times so that the windows were broken out. We children were not hurt by anybody, but my daddy was. I remember how the bad men tried to kill him many times.

One time he was shot with a shotgun. Sometimes Mom had to hide my daddy, and we children had to help. We hid him under quilts and sat on them so the men with guns couldn't find him.

Sometimes he would have to hide out in the barns or woods to keep from being killed. One time my mother was taking us children to a prayer meeting when a man with a gun stood in the creek we had to cross and he screamed at us to go back.

Sarah Harrell also remembers being frightened as a child because of persecution:

... People thought we were strange. They threw rocks at the preachers. One time a crowd of people threw eggs on our church. I was scared to death. I hung onto my mother. But I don't remember anybody throwing anything back.

Once, someone tried to burn **Arthur Burt's** church in Great Britain:

... We were called "the tongues people." Critics said of us: "They roll on the floor, they climb the walls, they're devil-

possessed." So, basically, to be identified with Pentecostals meant you were a leper.

During the visitation in the 1930s, our meetings would go on until 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning. This was every night. We met regardless of land mines and German bombers.

There was a woman who was married to an unsaved man. She went to the meetings and unwisely went home at about 2 o'clock in the morning.

That provoked her husband to anger. He couldn't believe that religious meetings would go on that late, so he accused her of carrying on a secret affair and locked her out of the house.

My wife and I offered her a room. From that time he spread the news that I had stolen his wife. Whenever I went out to the shops or in the village, people looked at me critically. It was just the price that you paid.

Then one night the door of the hall opened, and in he came, half drunk. He staggered down the aisle, and he cursed me.

He swore at me and pulled out a gun, and I just waited to be shot. He didn't shoot, but he went in the back of the room and set the place on fire.

*Radio was a major means of outreach for Aimee Semple McPherson, who was the first woman in the United States to obtain an FCC license to operate a station. **Rolf McPherson** recalls a remarkable conversion that occurred in the 1930s as a result of radio:*

... A woman named Mary Elizabeth ran a house of prostitution here in Los Angeles. She was into drugs, and they had put her in jail and said, "You might as well throw the key away; she'll never get out."

But she heard a radio broadcast in that jail, a sermon that Mother was preaching, and she begged those people: "Please

take me there. I know if I can get there, God will heal me.”

So they did. They put her in the police car, handcuffed, and at the front door they took the handcuffs off and let her run down the aisle. She knelt at Mother’s feet, and Mother prayed for her.

She was totally healed from the drugs. Her life was changed. She went back and closed the house of prostitution and made it a house for wayward girls and helped rescue them. It was a miracle.

10 Trends of the Coming Revival

Many Christians today have given up on America. They feed on a steady diet of doomsday books and negative headlines—both from *CNN* and *Fox News*—so it’s no wonder they’ve lost hope. As far as they are concerned, this country and the world can go to hell as long as the rapture happens soon.

I’m not buying this. Just because things are dark doesn’t mean God has turned His back on us. Spiritual trends may not be positive at the moment, but all it takes is one visitation from heaven to turn things around.

I believe we are about to witness another outpouring of God’s power in our generation.

During a recent retreat in the mountains of Tennessee, God spoke to me from Isaiah 35 about another wave of the Holy Spirit that is coming soon. He told me, from verse 6: “For in the wilderness waters shall break out and streams in the

desert.” Verse 7 goes on to say: “The scorched land shall become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water.”

Isaiah wrote those words at a time when Israel was in deep spiritual crisis. Prophets always see the light at the end of the tunnel. Anybody can look at negative trends and predict the worst, but God’s prophets look beyond the discouraging darkness to find His redemptive purpose.

I have never been more convinced that God is going to refresh us again with a sudden outpouring of His presence and power. What will it look like? Here are a few things we should expect:

1) The gospel will penetrate previously closed nations. Today the world cowers in fear because a small minority of barbaric ISIS terrorists are threatening to blow up airplanes and embassies as they slaughter people in Syria, Iraq, Libya and other nations. But what we don’t hear on network news is that the Holy Spirit is working in unprecedented ways to reach Muslims in the Middle East.

God has many surprises up His sleeve when it comes to reaching the Muslim world. He will do the same in other difficult world hot spots, including North Korea and Venezuela. The same God who toppled the walls of Jericho will tear down the walls of 21st-century dictatorship and spiritual oppression.

2) Asia will become the world’s largest hub of Christianity. Even based on current growth trends, China will be a Christian nation by 2035. It could happen even earlier if we see a more powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit there. Already the churches of China, Singapore, Indonesia, South Korea and the Philippines are emerging as a potent mission-sending force.

This will only continue—and at the same time nations like Japan that have been tough to crack will finally open fully to the gospel. This could exceed the spiritual impact of the evangelization of South Korea. When Japan embraces the gospel

on a large scale, expect an aggressive army of evangelists to emerge quickly.

3) Old-wineskin churches will fade off the scene. The bell has tolled for many of America's largest Protestant denominations—and they will die off over the next few decades because they abandoned the heart of the gospel. But this does not mean Christianity is fading in the United States. New church networks will replace those that compromised the message of Christ. While many traditional churches close, even more nontraditional churches will open.

4) Denominations will be completely reconfigured. Many leaders of evangelical and Pentecostal denominations will discard old, hierarchical structures and programs and open their movements to innovation. A great pruning will occur as methods are re-evaluated. The result will be a new focus on evangelism, discipleship and church planting.

5) A Christian youth revival will produce a new generation of leaders. American churches will become more intentional than ever on reaching children and teens—and vibrant expressions of Christianity will arise amid the spiritual darkness on college campuses. Expect to see many student-led evangelism movements, fueled by passionate worship and prayer.

6) Christian wealth will fuel a global movement of compassion and justice. In the past, many Christians who obtained wealth were content to spend it on themselves. A new movement of generosity will sweep through the church, and business owners and entrepreneurs will become channels of blessing to fund church planting and to confront global poverty, slavery, domestic violence and child neglect.

7) Women will emerge as leaders in the global church. From India to Nigeria to Ecuador, anointed women leaders will break the gender barrier in ministry. Many of them will bravely plant churches in places where women don't have rights; others

will champion the cause of the poor and marginalized. Churches will launch new efforts to train women to maximize their impact.

8) New Testament-style miracles will increase. The Pentecostal/charismatic stream of the church is growing faster than any other segment of Christianity, and trends show this continuing—especially in the developing world. Because more people believe in the miraculous power of God than ever before, we can expect Spirit-filled faith to result in supernatural demonstrations of healing, deliverance and other miracles.

9) Wars, plagues and global disasters will open opportunities for Christian outreach. Hollywood disaster films have filled us with fear about the end of the world. But if you look at history you see that God's truth marches on in spite of momentary doom and gloom. Jesus even told us that earthquakes, famines and "wars and rumors of wars" are just "merely the beginning of birth pangs" (Matt. 24:6, 8). Birth pangs are not bad! They herald the birth of something new!

It's possible that we may witness horrible global disasters in the next season of history—and because of technology we will all witness these disasters on high-definition screens. We may even witness the "Big One" in Southern California. But this does not mean we crawl in a hole and hide. The church must shine brighter than ever when gloom settles over our cities.

10) More people will be saved in the coming season of revival than in any previous time. During a recent prayer time the Lord took me to the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 20. In that passage, the owner of the vineyard sends workers into the fields in the morning, at midday, in the afternoon and "at the eleventh hour" (v. 6), which was 5 p.m. In the end, the owner paid the late-coming workers the same as he paid the first shift.

The Lord has been speaking to me that there is an 11th-hour miracle coming. We will see a greater spiritual harvest in the last days than in any other time in history. Jesus said Himself: "So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matt. 20:16).

This does not mean one generation is more valuable than another. But it does mean that before Jesus cracks open the sky to return for His bride, His glory will be revealed like never before to a generation that calls on His name.

Our cry in this season should not be, "Lord, get us out of here!" We cannot throw away the hope of a global spiritual awakening. We should cry out: "Come, Holy Spirit! Fill this early with Your glory!"

J. Lee Grady served as editor of Charisma from 1999 to 2010. He currently directs The Mordecai Project, a ministry focused on confronting gender-based violence in developing countries. He is the author of several books including The Holy Spirit Is Not for Sale and The Truth Sets Women Free.

Find out how God is using female missionaries to reach underprivileged and often abused women in Asia at gfa.charismamag.com.

10 Worst Mistakes Christians

Make While Dating

Singles make up a big percentage of any given church, and pastors spend a lot of time teaching about marriage and parenting. But how do you actually find the right person to marry?

You won't hear much teaching about dating in most churches. It's like we're afraid to touch the subject—so people just feel their way in the dark and figure out romance on their own.

Our awkwardness about this topic is one reason single Christians make so many relationship blunders—and why many marriages start out on the wrong foot. I asked some of my single friends and one of my daughters to help me compile this list of most common dating mistakes. Here are the Top 10:

1. Being desperate for a relationship. Some singles freak out when they hit age 25. They stop trusting God and begin a nail-biting search for a mate. My friend Nicole Doyley, author of *The Wait*, says she knows women who are so frantic about finding Prince Charming that they immediately fall for any guy who asks them out. "They should see the warning signs, but don't," Nicole says. "They start praying immediately if this is 'the one' and they quickly become blind to his faults."

2. Being too picky. On the flip side, some singles are waiting for the perfect human specimen to sweep them off their feet. Picky guys want a girl who could appear in the swimsuit edition of *Sports Illustrated*. Or, some Christian women expect to marry a spiritual giant who prays four hours a day. Be realistic. Whoever you date will have feet of clay and plenty of flaws to match your own.

3. Not developing healthy friendships with the opposite sex. Oftentimes too much pressure is placed on Christian singles to pair up, especially if they are attending a Bible college with

a reputation for being a wedding factory. And in that pressure cooker it's difficult for guys and girls to enjoy nonromantic friendships. Relax and make friends, and don't view every opposite-sex friend as a potential marriage partner.

4. Letting other people control your relationship. Church friends usually mean well, but some people don't know how to stay out of other people's business. They will engage in what I call "prophetic meddling" by dropping hints, manipulating you to go out with someone or pushing you to marry someone you don't even want to be with. And while the gift of prophecy is valuable, you should never let personal prophecies steer your decisions about marriage. Let God personally guide you in this very personal area of life.

5. Ignoring proper boundaries. Some Christian couples are extremely naïve about the power of a romantic bond. They don't realize that feelings can zoom from zero to 90 miles an hour in a few seconds, and that one kiss can lead to intercourse if you don't have your emergency brake on at all times. If you are in a dating relationship, you must know your boundaries, discuss them with your partner and commit to staying pure. Don't be stupid. Don't spiritualize your lust and suggest, "Let's go to your apartment and pray." Don't wait until clothes come off to determine what is out of bounds.

6. Missionary dating. Never start a romantic relationship with a guy or girl who is not a believer. Christians who do this usually justify it with the old "I know I can change him/her" line. But the opposite happens: The unbeliever changes you—after he or she has broken your heart, compromised your morals or damaged your faith.

7. Lack of healthy confidence. Some guys I know are stuck in a state of spiritual limbo when it comes to their dating life. They may admire a girl from afar, but they just can't muster up the nerve to break the ice and start a conversation. Proverbs 18:22 says, "He who *finds* a wife finds a good thing."

If you are going to find a wife, you don't just sit there until you are 40. Develop some healthy aggression. And while it is true that some women prefer to be pursued, remember that Ruth proposed to Boaz in the Old Testament story. Don't be so demure that your future husband can't even notice you.

8. Expecting the person you are dating to "fix" you. God wants singles to have undistracted devotion to Jesus (see 1 Cor. 7:35). Yet too often we look to other people to bring the inner fulfillment that only Christ gives. Many singles fall into the trap of finding a boyfriend or girlfriend to heal the wounds caused by childhood trauma, their parents' divorce or their dads' addictions. Seek healing from the Holy Spirit for those issues before you commit to a serious relationship.

9. Spiritual stalking. I've met guys in church who drive by girls' houses regularly, monitor their moves and troll their Facebook pages. That's creepy. If you have to sneak around like a private detective to get a date, you need a new strategy. If a woman tells you she is not interested in going out with you, honor her request and move on. Don't develop an unhealthy obsession. And never, never, never tell a girl: "God told me you will be my wife." That's manipulative and could fall under the category of sexual harassment.

10. Not discerning a spiritual predator. One single female friend of mine said she went out with a man who did a financial seminar at her church. Because the guy was invited to speak from a pulpit she assumed he was a man of character, but he tried to get her into bed with him on the first date. It became quickly obvious he was an imposter. Beware of wolves. You must walk in the Spirit if you want to protect your purity and save yourself for the right person.

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Why Abortion Is Not Women's Health Care

How much money can an abortion clinic make by selling fetal tissue to a medical research company? It all depends. If you don't use too much suction, and you can extract an "intact specimen" (that's a clinical term for a fetus that is not butchered beyond recognition), then you might get \$30 to \$100 each for a tiny liver, thymus or brain stem.

Oh, and those fees are just for "shipping costs."

These are just some of the grisly facts we learned during the past two weeks after conservative journalist David Daleiden posted a series of videos on YouTube alleging that Planned Parenthood is selling baby parts for profit. Planned Parenthood denies any wrongdoing while some Republicans in Congress have vowed to cut off federal funding from the organization.

These videos nauseated me when I realized how callous our nation has become about human life. I felt even sicker when President Obama made it clear he would stand behind Planned Parenthood—and veto any effort to defund it—because it provides "health care for women."

I have always felt it was insane to claim that abortion promotes "women's health" when the facts show the opposite. Abortion may be convenient for some women, and it has been legal in this country since 1973, but no health care provider can prove it is healthy to have an unborn child ripped or sucked out of a woman's uterus before it is viable. Here are three reasons you can never convince me otherwise:

1. Abortion harms women physically and emotionally. Various studies in recent years, including one by Britain's Royal College of Psychiatrists, show that women who have abortions become much more likely to develop cervical cancer, sterility, nervous disorders, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Another study revealed that women with a history of abortion face higher rates of anxiety (34 percent higher) and depression (37 percent higher), heavier alcohol use (110 percent higher) and marijuana use (230 percent higher). It has also been shown that women who abort are twice as likely to become heavy smokers.

2. Abortion is sexist. It has always amazed me that women have campaigned the loudest for abortion rights, yet the majority of abortionists are men who profit off of this horrific procedure. It is also a fact that many women, including many pregnant teenage girls, are forced by their fathers or sex partners to have unwanted abortions—resulting in increased trauma for the mothers. Why are feminists not outraged by this?

In India, many families abort female infants because they don't want girls. This is why there are skewed sex ratios—like 1,000 men for every 618 women—in India's Daman and Diu regions. Even though sex-selective abortions were banned several years ago in India, many female babies are aborted or abandoned at birth because of gender discrimination. Why is there not a feminist outcry about this injustice?

Mother Teresa, who ministered most of her life in India, understood the pain abortion causes women. She said: "Abortion kills twice. It kills the body of the baby and the conscience of the mother. Abortion is profoundly anti-women. Three quarters of its victims are women: Half the babies and all the mothers."

3. Abortion is racist. This is the ugly truth few of us are willing to face. African-Americans make up 12.6 percent of the U.S. population, but the Centers for Disease Control reports that black women accounted for 35.4 percent of all abortions in 2009. Of the 55.7 million abortions in the United States since 1973, about 17 million of aborted babies were black.

Abortion kills minority children at more than three times the rate of white children. Today, abortion is the leading cause of death for African-Americans, more than all other causes combined, including AIDS, violent crimes, accidents, cancer and heart disease.

So when people talk about Planned Parenthood promoting “health care for women,” I guess they only mean white women. Let’s not forget that Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger was an avowed proponent of eugenics—the elimination of “unfit” races. She worked tirelessly to keep minorities supplied with birth control (even though she herself believed abortion should be avoided.)

This might explain why 62 percent of Planned Parenthood clinics are located in areas with high black populations.

It baffles me that our first African-American president would be OK with this, and that a mostly white male Congress would talk about “women’s health” when our nation is guilty of government-funded genocide.

J. Lee Grady is the former editor of Charisma. You can follow him on Twitter @leegrady. He is the author of *10 Lies Men Believe* and other books. You can learn more about his ministry, *The Mordecai Project*, at themordecaiproject.org.

Three Relationships Every Christian Needs

When Jesus began His ministry, He did not rent a coliseum for an evangelistic campaign, start a mailing list, or put billboards all over Jerusalem announcing His healing ministry. No, the first thing He did was assemble a group of close followers.

He called them His friends.

Mark 3:14 says Jesus appointed the Twelve “so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach.” Notice that His relationship with them was not just about the work of ministry. He was not just calling followers to perform a task. He was not a foreman employing hired hands. He wanted their fellowship first—and then he would let them preach out of what they learned from Him.

Jesus is all about relationships. And He specifically told His disciples that He didn’t want this relationship to be performance based. He said: “No longer do I call you slaves ... but I have called you friends, for all things I have heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15).

In many parts of the church we’ve forgotten about the essential need for fellowship and tried to build the church without it. We developed a sterile church model that is event-driven and celebrity-focused rather than genuinely relational.

We build theater-style buildings where crowds listen to one guy talk. The crowds are quickly whisked out of the sanctuary to make room for the next group. Many of these people never process with anyone else what they learned, never join a small group and never receive any form of one-on-one discipleship.

Because we lack relationships today, we have tried to fill the

void with technology. We think if we can create a wow factor with cool video clips, 3-D sermons and edgy worship bands, the crowds will scream for more. I don't think so. Trendy can quickly become shallow.

I've had enough of this sterile religion. I've learned that ministry is not about getting big crowds, filling seats, tabulating response cards or eliciting raucous applause. It's not about running on the church-growth treadmill. Religion that focuses on externals cannot produce life. If our faith does not flow out of relationship with God, and result in deep relationships with others, then it is a poor imitation of New Testament Christianity.

Do you need to go deeper in your relationships? I tell Christians all over the world that they need three kinds of relationships in their lives, apart from family relationships:

1. "Pauls" are spiritual fathers and mothers you trust. All of us need older, wiser Christians who can guide us, pray for us and offer counsel. My mentors have encouraged me when I wanted to quit, and propelled me forward when I lost sight of God's promises. In the journey of faith, you do not have to feel your way in the dark. God gave Ruth a Naomi, Joshua a Moses and Esther a Mordecai. You can ask the Lord for a mentor to help guide and coach you.

2. "Barnabases" are spiritual peers who are close, bosom friends. They know everything about you, yet they love you anyway. They are also willing to correct you, bluntly if necessary! They provide accountability in areas of personal temptation. They offer a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on. And they will stay up all night praying for you when you face a crisis.

Everybody should know the benefit of Proverbs 18:24: "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." But you cannot find faithful friends without seeking to be one first. Don't

wait for your Barnabas to come to you—go and find him.

3. “Timothys” are the younger Christians you are helping to grow. Jesus never told us to assemble crowds, but He did command us to make disciples. Relational discipleship takes a lot of time and energy, but investing your life in others is one of the most fulfilling experiences in life. Once you have poured your life into another brother or sister and watched them mature in Christ, you will never settle for superficial religion again.

Like Paul, we must go out and find our Timothys. We must invest in them personally. It’s not about preaching to them; they want a relationship with us that is genuine. They want spiritual moms and dads who are approachable, accepting, affirming and empowering. If we don’t mentor them now, there won’t be anyone running alongside us when it’s time to pass our baton.

The Christian life is a vibrant, love relationship with God—but it doesn’t end there. I pray you will open your heart and invest in the people around you.

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3 Things Miley Cyrus Just Doesn’t Get

Pop star Miley Cyrus is all about shock value. She gyrates on stage in a nude bikini. She sticks her tongue out with bad-

girl attitude in glitzy photo shoots. She peppers every interview with at least a dozen F-bombs. She's the queen of sassy. She's rude, crude and angry at the world—and many people follow her stage antics, if not out of appreciation then out of sheer curiosity.

The former Disney-clean singer, who is now 22, has completely shed her innocent *Hannah Montana* image. Today Cyrus has evolved into a one-woman media circus. She's part vaudeville clown, part porn star and part angry poet—and she has millions of young followers who can't wait to see her latest wardrobe malfunctions or read her unprintable comments.

But this girl is just getting started. The attention-loving performer (and daughter of country singer Billy Ray Cyrus) has now become a social justice crusader. Her cause? She's speaking out on behalf of transgender teens who feel misunderstood.

Last month Cyrus launched her Happy Hippie Foundation, an effort to showcase transgender youth and their struggle for acceptance. Since she has 23 million followers on Instagram, she posted artsy photos of 11 transgender people. The subjects included a 19-year-old film student who has transitioned from female to male; a blond woman who used to be a guy; and a 24-year-old who identifies as neither male nor female. (He/she prefers to be called "queer, bi-racial and agender.")

Why does Cyrus care so much for this issue? She says she's tired of gender labels. She thinks if you were born a boy but feel like you're a girl, then you should be free to embrace your new identity. "People try to make everyone something," Cyrus says. "You can just be whatever you want to be."

To underscore her point, Cyrus has told reporters in the past few weeks that she has had sexual relationships with both men and women—and that she might have a husband or a wife in the near future. She also says she felt androgynous long before

she ever heard the hip new term “gender fluid”—which describes someone who doesn’t identify fully with being male or female.

“I didn’t want to be a boy,” she told *Out* magazine. “I kind of wanted to be nothing. I don’t relate to what people would say defines a girl or a boy, and I think that’s what I had to understand: Being a girl isn’t what I hate, it’s the box that I get put into.”

I can’t compete with Miley’s huge following on social media, and my opinion will never be as popular as hers. But I wish more people would think before they drink her Kool-Aid. There are three basic truths Miley Cyrus just doesn’t get:

1. Gender is fixed. For thousands of years people have been fairly content to function as male and female. We didn’t need categories for “bigender,” “pangender” or “genderqueer”—three of the 56 new gender categories you can now choose on Facebook. Look at nature and you can see that all living species are male and female. It is insane—and really, really bad science—to pretend that human beings are exempt from this rule.

2. You can’t just “be anybody you want.” I appreciate Miley Cyrus’ ambition to help confused teens find acceptance. But she’s not helping anybody by telling them they can change their gender just by having surgery, hormone injections or wardrobe changes. A male who has a sex change is still a male inside. And to tell a teenager that he or she should get a sex change operation should be considered child abuse.

Back in June we all learned that a white woman in Washington, Rachel Dolezal, pretended for at least 10 years to be black. When she was questioned about her fraud, she said she “identified as black.” She was laughed off the public stage because everyone knows you cannot “decide” to change your race. So why are we applauding people who “decide” to change gender? And why, why, why would we encourage immature teens to

do this?

3. Ultimately, gender is God's idea. Sorry to get religious about it, but the argument finally comes down to fundamental ideas from the Bible. God created the world, and when He made people He created gender. "So God created man in His own image ... male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). He didn't create gender to put us in a box of limitation; on the contrary, we will never know true freedom if we don't embrace the identity He gave us.

Miley Cyrus wants to help people with gender confusion, but she's actually confusing them even more with her latest campaign. It's time we tuned her voice out of this discussion.

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