

8 Reasons Why Watching Porn Is Just Plain Stupid

I have prayed for countless men who admit they struggle with porn. After we prayed together they got a level of victory over the habit, but some came back to me asking for more practical steps to freedom—because porn is assaulting us from all sides today.

My response: You must be ruthless. Paul told the Corinthians: “I discipline my body and make it my slave” (1 Cor. 9:27, NASB). You must ask God for the power to control your urges, and run every time you feel tempted. You should also consider that it’s really dumb to look at porn, for the following reasons:

1. Porn is a huge waste of time. A 2008 study of graduate students found that 48 percent of young adult males look at porn weekly, and some view it daily. The statistics for women aren’t as high, but numbers are rising. The problem is that the more porn you look at, the more you need—and porn addicts spend hours (and sometimes lots of money) looking for bigger thrills. You’d be a lot healthier if you spent that time exercising, studying or hanging out with friends. Or praying!

2. Porn imbeds images in your memory. Philippians 4:8 says: “Whatever is pure ... dwell on these things.” A Christian who indulges in porn is filing thousands of unholy images in his or her brain. Those images will emerge during a conversation, during sleep or even during worship at church! Why would you want those movies showing in your brain every day?

3. Porn changes your view of sex and other people. Porn addicts begin to view people as body parts. And married men who are addicts often try to force their wives to engage in degrading acts they’ve seen in films or photos. I’ve counseled

guys who find it difficult to enjoy married sex because it's not as satisfying as the porn they consumed for years before marriage. Psychologists have proven that teenage boys who watch a lot of porn become much more sexually aggressive and assume girls want to be treated roughly.

4. Porn harms your sex life. Secular counselors have released countless studies proving that the human brain is "rewired" (in other words, damaged) by watching porn. The chemical dopamine is released when we feel sexual stimulation, but a porn addict needs higher and higher levels of this to be stimulated. He will search for more hard-core porn to satisfy the urge—and in some cases will experience erectile dysfunction because he can't satisfy the need for a thrill.

5. Porn grieves the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30 says: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (MEV). When you grieve someone he gets quiet. When a Christian makes sinful choices, the Lord does not condemn us but He will withdraw the sense of His presence so we become desperate for Him again. A mature Christian learns to avoid anything that offends the Holy Spirit.

6. Porn brings condemnation and shame. Many Christians go through life feeling spiritually defeated because guilt weighs them down. Romans 8:6 tells us: "For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace" (NASB). If you focus your attention on porn, you will live in a depressing spiritual rut. Get up, repent, receive forgiveness and learn to overcome your habit by trusting in His indwelling power. To find total healing you should admit your struggle to someone else (see James 5:16). Transparency brings freedom.

7. Porn is filthy. The Covenant Eyes ministry has reported that 66 percent of porn performers have herpes, and 7 percent have HIV. Porn is full of disease. It's gross. James 1:21 says: "So get rid of all the filth and evil in your lives"

(NLT). The Greek word for “filth” (*rhyparia*) can mean “obscenity” or “moral defilement.” The next time you are tempted to look at a porn site, imagine yourself standing in a latrine, up to your neck in human waste. Don’t soak your soul in filth!

8. Porn will pull you into worse sexual sin. Never downplay the power of temptation. You may think you can “manage” your sin, but the truth is that porn is a beast. It is stronger than you are. It is a cruel taskmaster that will take control and make you do things you regret. I have counseled men who admitted to me that porn was their first step toward adultery.

If you are struggling to stay free from porn, tape this article to your computer screen and read it before logging on. You may even want to write the words “DON’T BE STUPID” at the top of this list to remind you that purity is still important in this pornographic world. Get a grip. Use self-control. Don’t let porn destroy your life—or your relationship with God.

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Why the Pope Should Be Worried About Latin America

Pope Francis, leader of the world’s Roman Catholics, arrives today in Bolivia—the second country on his three-nation tour. He will meet with President Evo Morales, visit bishops and nuns, and wave at countless adoring fans on the streets of La

Paz. His visit will be upbeat, but this revered “pope of the poor” has a big concern: Millions of Latin Americans are leaving the Catholic Church to join Pentecostal groups.

Even though this popular pope is from Argentina and speaks Spanish, he is losing his grip on the region.

The Pew Research Center reported last year that 40 percent of the world’s Catholics—more than 425 million—live in Latin America. Yet nearly 1 in 5 Latin Americans now describe themselves as Protestants. The Catholic population of Brazil—the largest Catholic nation in the world—has slipped by more than 20 percent in the past 13 years, according to the *Washington Times*. Today, about 40 million Brazilians are evangelicals, and this number is expected to grow to 109 million by 2020.

Guatemala was 90 percent Catholic in the mid-1950s. Thanks to a Pentecostal revival that hit the country after the 1976 Guatemala City earthquake, and subsequent waves of church growth, 1 in 3 Guatemalans are now evangelical Christians. Similar growth is occurring in Mexico, Peru, Colombia and Paraguay, where Pope Francis will end his tour next week.

I have seen this Pentecostal revival up close during the past two weeks, when I ministered in Guayaquil, Ecuador and five cities in Bolivia. The statistics don’t lie. There is a spiritual hunger brewing in Latin America that outshines what I have seen anywhere on the planet.

In Ecuador I preached at Centro Cristiano de Guayaquil, an Assemblies of God congregation that has grown to 9,000 members in 30 years. It has been pastored all those years by an American couple, Jerry and Janice Smith, who built a 3,300-seat auditorium and a K-12 school that now has 4,600 students. The church ministers to more than 1,600 children every Sunday.

When I spoke at the Guayaquil church I witnessed a spiritual hunger that is rare in the United States. People jammed into

the sanctuary for an 8 a.m. service, and some returned for the 10 a.m. and noon service just because they wanted to hear more of God's Word. In each meeting people came to the altar to give their lives to Christ for the first time.

I arrived in Boliva on July 1 to work with Ekklesia Church, a movement that began in the early 1970s after a charismatic revival erupted in the capital city of La Paz. Today the church has planted congregations in dozens of cities all over the mountainous country. The pastor, Alberto Salcedo, and his wife, Silvia—who hosts the popular *Vaso Frágil* program on the Enlace Network—are training an army of Christians through cell groups, intense worship and leadership classes.

When I visited the Ekklesia church in the mining city of Potosí (which has an elevation of 13,420 feet), hundreds of people packed into a conference center near the center of town. More than 50 people came to the altar for salvation, including a man who had alcohol on his breath. When I prayed for him, he told me that it was the first time he had ever visited a church with his wife and young daughter. He prayed to receive Christ and said he wants to end his alcohol addiction.

I saw similar responses in meetings in other Bolivian cities such as Sucre, Cochabamba and Oruro. Many of the people who have joined these churches are former Catholics who now prefer a lively Pentecostal worship style and more contemporary sermons. They have traded rote tradition for relevant teaching on family, sexual purity and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostals in Latin America are also challenging long-held cultural traditions, including superstitious idolatry, witchcraft and male superiority. In a meeting I did in La Paz earlier this week, a man who has been regularly beating his wife came to the altar in tears to repent of his abuse.

Another thing I noticed on this trip was the striking number

of youth and young adults in the meetings. In Ecuador, more than 1,700 came for a Saturday night youth service, and some literally ran to the altar when I challenged them to go deeper with God. In Bolivia, teenagers often came to the front of the church during worship so they could dance freely—and many responded when I challenged them to pursue the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

These young Latin American believers represent a new generation that is passionate for God. They want so much more than tradition. If Pentecostal churches continue to grow at the pace we are seeing today, it's likely we will witness a total spiritual transformation of the region that Pope Francis calls home.

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6 Ways We Should Respond to the Gay Marriage Verdict

It's official. Thanks to the Supreme Court's ruling last week in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, gay marriage has been legalized in this country. Same-sex relationships are the new normal. The rainbow flag was unfurled on June 26, the White House was illuminated with rainbow colors, and our president tweeted "Love Wins" after the historic ruling.

The decision didn't shock me. Seventy percent of our country already had gay marriage laws on the books, so most of us saw this coming. I don't agree with the small percentage of our

population who pushed to win this right, but I have to support their right to make it. Yet at the same time I am horribly grieved that a lifestyle that is so contrary to Christian morality is being celebrated in a country that once honored Christian values.

Life will be different in America now—so we might as well prepare for the change. Just as *Roe v. Wade* redefined the way Christians approached the issue of abortion, this new Supreme Court ruling has changed the game. I recommend we take the high road. Here are six ways we should respond:

1. Recognize that we are a religious minority. Some American Christians think we have a right to control culture. That's not a biblical concept. Yes, we are supposed to shine the light of Christ's influence in a dark world by preaching the gospel and by demonstrating the compassion of Jesus. But we live in this world as "strangers and pilgrims" (1 Pet. 2:11). We are not a "moral majority." We are not welcome here.

Paul told Timothy: "The godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). I'm not afraid of persecution. If the United States government decides to throw me in jail because I believe the Bible, I will join a host of brave Christians who have suffered worse treatment—including today's martyrs in the Middle East. Let's stop whining when sinners don't behave like we want them to. Our job is not to control people but to extend God's mercy to them. Mature believers lay their lives down for sinners, just as Christ did.

2. Get busy evangelizing your community. Perhaps the Supreme Court's gay marriage ruling will wake us up to the fact that the United States is now the third largest mission field on earth. We are not a Christian country, so let's stop pretending we are. The fact that gay people can now legally marry is not going to change the Great Commission. Jesus said: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). The sad truth is that most American Christians weren't sharing their

faith when our laws were based on Christian morals. Will this new ruling motivate us to care about sinners?

3. Repent for hateful attitudes toward the gay community. As an evangelical Christian I believe the Bible is clear about sex: God created it as a gift to be expressed within the confines of marriage between a man and a woman. But that doesn't give me a right to bash gay people. The love of God draws people to repentance. In the past year I have heard a lot of hateful language aimed at homosexuals—including church leaders using words like “queer” to describe the gay community. Let's ask God to break our hearts so we can be free from bigotry and self-righteousness.

4. Keep teaching the truth about biblical morality. This is certainly not a time to back away from the Bible. We can't compromise. But while we uphold what the Scriptures say about homosexuality, let's be just as committed to preaching the truth about adultery, fornication and divorce. We are viewed as hypocrites by the world because we argue against gay marriage when we haven't shown them that our own heterosexual marriages work. We also must offer compassionate counseling to people who want to overcome homosexual feelings, just as we offer healing prayer to those who struggle with depression, gender confusion, addiction or the effects of abuse or abortion.

5. Defend our religious freedoms. The last time I checked, the United States was still listed as a democracy. But the church must work overtime to make sure our government doesn't force churches to perform same-sex marriages. Gay couples can find state officials or pro-gay clerics to perform their ceremonies, but the state has no business forcing a church to renounce its core teachings. If the government tries to control the content of Christian preaching to prevent what is deemed “hate speech,” there will be nothing left of our Bill of Rights.

6. Pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Today some doomsday Christians say they wish God would judge America like He did Sodom and Gomorrah. I prefer to take the strategy of Abraham, who prayed for Sodom because He understood the mercy of God—even though he lived before the New Covenant era. Today we live in the age of grace, and we should petition God for a global revival rather than asking Him to call down fire on people who offend us.

Pray for mercy. Pray for a fresh wave of evangelism. Pray that the Spirit's power will inundate our nation and unleash a third Great Awakening. That is our ultimate hope.

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Not All Southerners Fly the Confederate Flag

I am a son of the South. I was born in Louisiana, spent my childhood in Alabama and attended high school in the suburbs of Atlanta. I grew up eating grits, drinking sweet iced tea and attending big family reunions where the old people sat on wide porches and fanned themselves while the kids ran barefoot in the Georgia red clay.

I'm not apologizing for my upbringing, or for my Southern drawl. There are so many things I love about Southern culture: the warm hospitality, the fact that strangers say, "Hey!" to each other on the street, the way little kids politely say,

“Yes, Ma’am” and “No, Sir” to their elders, and of course the fried chicken, cornbread, biscuits, gravy, barbecue, slow-cooked collard greens and sweet potato pie—foods that were invented in the South and made famous at big church dinners.

But I want to make something clear to all my friends who might be tempted to stereotype: In all my years I never saw a Confederate flag in my house, never saw a Confederate decal on my dad’s car and never once heard anyone in my family defend slavery, segregation or racism. Even though I had a great-great-great-great grandfather who died in the Civil War—in the Battle of Kennesaw—no one in my family ever told me I should honor that legacy.

For me, the Confederate flag is an ugly reminder of the South’s biggest mistake. It is nothing to be proud of. The Confederate flag is something that should be put in a museum to warn us that people sometimes collectively practice injustice.

To a black person, the Confederate flag is a threat. It says: “We don’t want you here.” It has no business flying on any government property. And if you put it on your lawn or on the back of your truck, you are sending a message of hate.

I am sure the reason no one in my family flew a Confederate flag or defended a “Southern heritage” viewpoint was because we were Christians, and we knew that Christianity and racism are polar opposites. Some of my ancestors were Methodist preachers who advocated for the abolishment of slavery long before the Civil War.

I grew up knowing that it was a sin to say the N-word, and I never heard my parents say it, not even once. When schools were desegregated when I was a teenager, I made black friends, discovered black music and tried to learn every dance I saw on *Soul Train* on Saturday afternoons. I was never afraid of black culture; I embraced it.

And after I was filled with the Holy Spirit at age 18 (on Southern Baptist property, mind you), I began to visit black churches and discovered the richness of the black Pentecostal experience. Today I feel more at home in some black churches than I do in some white ones. Some of my closest friends are black (both Northerners and Southerners) and they helped me celebrate when my oldest daughter adopted a baby from Africa two years ago.

Today, my black grandson (who bears my name) lives in South Carolina—only a few hours from Charleston, where nine brave black Christians were shot and killed on June 17 while they were having a Bible study at Emanuel A.M.E. Church. The gunman, 21-year-old Dylann Roof, is a troubled white kid who apparently got his inspiration from white supremacist teachings.

Roof recently posted a photo of himself on his web site waving a Confederate flag—prompting protesters and South Carolina legislators to call for the removal of the flag from state capitol property. When I heard Gov. Nikki Haley call for the flag to come down this week, I joined a chorus of Southerners who said, in unison, “Why hasn’t it already been mothballed?”

Some people may protest, saying, “It’s only a flag,” or “It only represents our heritage.” I disagree. The Confederate flag is an idol. It represents the evil force of racial hatred that has torn this country apart for more than a century and is still wreaking havoc on our cities today. If this symbol has the power to inspire a young man to blow away nine people with a 45-caliber Glock handgun, it may inspire others to commit even worse acts of terror.

Take the flag down. Put it in a museum and remind everyone who sees it that the South lost the Civil War because God is on the side of those who fight for justice.

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7 Essential Qualities of Successful Dads

Last week I ministered to a group of young adults in a church in Singapore. From talking to some of them I knew that the stereotypical Asian father tends to be strict and demanding. Some Asian fathers, for example, have threatened to disown their kids if they didn't make straight A's in school or get high-paying jobs.

So of course when I taught on the heavenly Father's unconditional love, many of these young Singaporeans came to the altar to receive healing. They struggled to know God's love because their dads based their love on their children's performance.

This is actually not just an Asian problem. It is a global problem. Many fathers—even in the church—do not know how to successfully parent their kids. I am certainly not the best dad in the world, but I think my four grown daughters would agree that I belong in the “successful dad” category. In honor of Father's Day, we should look at seven qualities every dad needs:

1. A dad is present. Statistics show that 39 percent of students from grades 1 to 12 in the United States live without a father at home. This number has been climbing steadily for decades. Divorce and out-of-wedlock births have made fatherlessness normal. But it's not healthy. A good father

does not abandon his kids. He is physically present in the home and emotionally available to support and nurture his children. Psalm 46:1 says our heavenly Father is “a very present help in trouble.” If you want to model the love of God to your kids, be there for them. (And if your marriage ended in divorce and you share custody, make every effort to connect with your kids often.)

2. A dad is protective. A good dad draws clear boundaries. He teaches his kids that choices have consequences, and he warns his children about the dangers of sin. Successful dads teach their sons and daughters the rules of life from Scripture. Good dads say: “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Prov. 1:8). Successful fathers don’t let their kids run wild; they instill discipline, with appropriate punishment, to instill character. And good dads don’t shy away from talking to their kids about sex and the importance of purity.

3. A dad is affectionate. God created us with a need for affection. Scientists have proven that human beings cannot thrive without receiving several expressions of meaningful touch every day. Yet I cannot tell you how many people I have met around the world who tell me their fathers never hugged them or said, “I love you.” If you want healthy kids, hug them often. Bounce them on your knee when they are small and keep pouring on the affection when they are teens. Physical affection strengthens the bond between you and your kids and makes them feel secure and affirmed.

4. A dad is encouraging. Your words have the power to make or break your children. In the Bible we see that a father’s blessing has the power to propel a child into his or her destiny. Don’t withhold the blessing. Don’t remind your kids of their failures; don’t withhold your love when they don’t perform according to your expectations. A successful father knows how to see the best in his kids even when they disappoint him. Your words provide the fertilizer that will

cause your children to grow.

5. A dad is gentle. I have ministered to countless people over the years who struggle in life because their fathers were either physically or verbally abusive. Many Christian fathers discipline their kids in anger or lash out at them with threats and put-downs. Yet Colossians 3:21 tells us: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.” I like the way The Message version translates this verse: “Parents, don’t come down too hard on your children or you’ll crush their spirits.” Get a grip on your anger before it tears your family apart. Parents who rule their kids with an iron fist will not be able to maintain the bond with their kids once they become teens.

6. A dad is stable. Children who grow up in alcoholic homes develop an inability to trust. If your father was normal one day and then drunk or high on drugs the next day, it is hard to know who he is. This creates instability in a child. Your kids need a father who is steady and consistent. Don’t allow any form of addiction to control you. Instead, let your character be as solid as a rock. Let your kids draw security from your consistent behavior.

7. A dad is faithful to God. More than anything else, your kids need to know that you have a personal relationship with Jesus. They need to hear you pray. They need to see you worship—both at church and at home. They need to see you reading the Bible and living it out. And they need to hear you sharing your faith with others. No dad is perfect—and I am sure you are as aware of your fatherly failures as I am of mine. But if you seek to honor God in front of your kids, they will want to follow your example.

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Reclaiming the Lost Priority of Evangelism

You may have never heard of Scott Hinkle, but he is one of my heroes. He doesn't pastor a megachurch or host a daily TV program. He's not the most popular Christian conference speaker. He makes most churchgoers squirm in their seats because he's an evangelist, and he is not called to preach nice messages to the choir. He spends most of his time in the streets—and he challenges Christians to join him.

For decades while many charismatics and Pentecostals were selfishly chasing goose bumps, gold dust, angel feathers and overnight prosperity, Scott was a lonely voice in the wilderness calling the Spirit-filled community to embrace the responsibility of reaching lost people.

During four decades of the charismatic movement, through all the ups and downs and embarrassing scandals, Scott was winning sinners to Jesus. He was a heroin addict from New Jersey when he found Christ in 1970. He has never deviated from his calling as a soul-winner, even when many churches softened their approach and backed away from things like street preaching and aggressive personal evangelism.

Scott took a radical position: He believes the primary reason we are baptized in the Holy Spirit is not just to speak in tongues or to experience an emotional rush but to find the power to share Christ with others.

I first heard about Scott's ministry in the 1990s when he was taking teams of young people to New Orleans to share Jesus with crowds of partygoers during Mardi Gras. He still leads that bold outreach today. But fewer and fewer Christians seem

interested in invading the darkness. Evangelism has become an option, not a mandate, for many of us. Statistics show that most Christians have never led another person to Jesus, and only about 5 percent of believers regularly share their faith with others.

Scott Hinkle has decided to take a courageous step to change this. He believes the best way to reclaim evangelism in the United States is to train an army of young evangelists. Working in partnership with Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, one of the most respected charismatic ministry schools in the country, Scott will be launching a School of Evangelism later this year.

“At this critical hour,” Scott says, “God has opened an amazing door to help unleash a much-needed infusion of the gospel around the world through a new generation of students at CFNI.”

An anonymous donor recently gave \$200,000 so this program can begin in August at CFNI. Hinkle will be the lead instructor, and the courses during the first term will include Communication to the Unreached, the Local Church and Evangelism, Principles of Disciple-Making, Contemporary Urban Ministry and the Role of the Holy Spirit in Evangelism.

This new thrust at CFNI is an encouraging sign that God is on the move to spark revival in our nation—and I hope other Bible colleges and seminaries will quickly follow suit by inaugurating similar programs to train evangelists.

Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us that God gave the five-fold ministry of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher to the church so that we could fulfill our mission. Yet today, most professional ministry training focuses exclusively on pastoral and teaching duties—and we act as if evangelists are optional. Could this be one key reason why U.S. church growth is stagnant and most believers are passive about sharing their

faith?

We need anointed evangelists today more than ever. We need holy firebrands like Charles Finney, John Wesley, David Brainerd, T.L. Osborn, Catherine Booth, Bill Bright, Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke who will poke and prod the church to care about the lost. We need men and women who have peered over the abyss of hell and seen the millions of unconverted souls who are about to slip into eternity without God.

In the 1800s, British Pastor Charles Spurgeon called his converts to care about the lost. He said: "Oh, my brothers and sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies; and if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay, and not madly to destroy themselves. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for."

May God ignite that same aggressive concern for the lost in our hearts. Please pray for Christ for the Nations and Scott Hinkle as they launch this ambitious plan—and let's agree that God will use this and similar efforts to birth a new movement of evangelism in our nation.

If you are interested in enrolling in CFNI's School of Evangelism, you can find more information online at cfni.org or by calling 214-302-6438. You can learn more about Scott Hinkle Outreach ministries at scotthinkle.org.

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God Said: 'This Is Just a Taste of What Is Coming'

Last weekend, I led a men's discipleship retreat at a church in Augusta, Georgia. Of the 125 men who attended, there were African-Americans, Ukrainians, Hispanics, Indian-Americans, Brazilians and white guys—and more than a third of them were spiritually hungry teens or 20-somethings. (Those who say young people in the United States aren't interested in Christianity don't attend the same meetings I do.)

We had a special time together—worshiping Jesus, sharing meals, opening our hearts in small groups, listening to messages from both older and younger speakers (the youngest preacher was 25) and praying for racial healing in our nation. Over the course of three days, some guys were delivered from porn, others were reconciled with their dads and many decided to begin mentoring other guys in the faith.

But something happened on the last morning that I felt I needed to share with my *Charisma* family.

After the last message, I asked my Bolivian friend Ives Orozco to come to the stage with his father-in-law, Fernando Villalobos. I knew a bit of Fernando's testimony. He had been a part of the sweeping revival that occurred in Bolivia in the 1970s, and I wanted him to share a few stories from those days and then pray for us.

I was not prepared for what happened next.

Fernando is not a shouting preacher. He is very humble and soft-spoken, but when he took the microphone the atmosphere in the room shifted immediately. I felt the hairs stand up on the

back of my neck.

Fernando began to tell a story about how Julio Ruibal, the leader of the revival movement in Bolivia, had been baptized in the Holy Spirit while visiting California. When he returned to the city of La Paz, he led many students to Christ and was busy discipling them. One day, he asked a Christian woman to prepare a meal for 20 students—but when Julio arrived at her home he had 200 students with him!

When the woman worriedly complained that she didn't have enough food to serve the crowd, Julio told her that Jesus would provide. Then everyone watched as the meal was supernaturally multiplied. What Jesus did for a multitude 2,000 years ago was repeated in a modest home in South America.

"Jesus is here," Fernando said to us.

I have listened to countless miracle testimonies before. But when this broken man stood near the stage at Good News Church in Augusta, it was almost as if the same revival spirit that hit Bolivia more than 50 years ago entered the room.

Men spontaneously got up and walked or crawled to the front of the church. Some were kneeling, others were flat on their stomachs. I began to hear many of them sobbing. Within five minutes it became a chorus of wailing. It reminded me of some accounts I have read from the Great Awakening, when people were overcome by the presence and convicting power of the Holy Spirit.

Fernando did not ask for mood music, and he didn't manipulate the audience to get a response. He didn't tell anyone to cry. He simply reminded us that the same God who poured out the Holy Spirit on Bolivia in the early 1970s—resulting in hundreds of thousands of conversions over a four-month period—was with us now.

As I lay on the carpet in that church I thought of all the times I have prayed in the past year for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on my generation.

Then I felt the Lord speak to my heart: “This is just a taste of what is coming.”

That is all I needed to know to be convinced. A fresh wave of God’s power is headed toward the United States. The Lord has heard the cries of His people, and He is about to do again what He did in the early 1970s—only this time young people will be catapulted to the forefront of the movement, and it will not be divided by race.

I pray we all have our lamps full of oil so we can be ready for this visitation. Pray and expect the tangible presence of God to rock your world. We are on the verge of something big.

J. Lee Grady is the former editor of Charisma. You can follow him on Twitter at [leegrady](#). He is the author of *The Holy Spirit Is Not for Sale* and other books. You can learn more about his ministry, *The Mordecai Project*, at themordecaiproject.org.

Don't Quench the Spirit in the Next Move of God

Last weekend, my wife and I helped lead a retreat for ministers in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. I knew most of the couples who were joining us, but I was surprised to learn that one of the attendees was Sally Fesperman, a leader (with her late husband, Jay) during the early days of the charismatic renewal of the 1960s and 1970s.

Sally is 88, but she is as bright-eyed and energetic as any 20-something I know. She loves to talk about her relationship with Jesus, and she shared many stories about the early days of renewal when thousands of Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians were discovering the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Sally brought back so many memories of the mid-1970s, when I was filled with the Spirit as a teenager.

While in the mountains God spoke to me from Isaiah 35 about another wave of the Holy Spirit that is coming soon. He told me, from verse 6: "Waters will break forth in the wilderness." I have never been more convinced that God is going to refresh us again with a sudden outpouring of His presence and power. I was so excited about this promise that I asked Sally on Friday morning to pray over us, and to prophetically pass the torch of renewal to the younger generation.

I wept when Sally prayed over us because I am desperate to see revival. However, by Saturday I was sobered by the responsibility of receiving this torch of renewal. That's because I know that when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the American church more than 40 years ago, we mishandled this precious gift.

I believe God will visit us again soon, but we must prepare now to avoid the mistakes of the past. Here are five ways we mishandled the outpouring of the Spirit in the last season:

1. We exploited it. The first attempt at quenching the Spirit's power in the New Testament church was made by Ananias and Sapphira, who were full of greed (see Acts 5:1-11). The same thing happened to the charismatic movement in the 1980s, when prosperity preachers with dollar signs in their eyes showed up to merchandise the Spirit's anointing. Swaggering evangelists in white suits and Rolexes began pushing people to the floor and convincing crowds to dig into their wallets to give in "miracle" offerings. And so began the slow but steady sell-out. We didn't realize the greed was driving us farther

and farther from the Spirit's blessing.

2. We fabricated it. In the early days of renewal, charismatic leaders had a sense of holy awe when they prayed for people. They didn't want to do anything to grieve the Spirit. But somewhere along the way, some ministers realized they could fake the gifts of the Holy Spirit and still draw a crowd. Charlatans began hosting charismatic sideshows, complete with faked healings, spooky stage drama and mesmerizing manipulation. God's holy anointing was replaced by mood music and a quivering voice. Anybody with discernment could sense that the Spirit's sweet presence had exited the building.

3. We corrupted it. In the early charismatic days, I cut my spiritual teeth on meaty messages from firebrands such as Judson Cornwall, Leonard Ravenhill, Corrie Ten Boom, Keith Green, Derek Prince, Joy Dawson and Winkey Pratney. They preached regularly about the fear of God. Their messages demanded holiness. But if you fast-forward to today, you will find that much of the preaching in our movement has been reduced to drivel. It is sad that people can attend a "Spirit-filled" church today and never hear a sermon explaining that fornication is a sin. It is sadder that we have preachers in our pulpits who shamelessly flaunt sexual sin under the banner of a cheap grace message that will actually send people to hell.

4. We denominationalized it. When the Holy Spirit fell on certain groups in previous decades, their leaders assumed that the blessing of God was an indication that they were "special." Some denominations even taught that all other Christians would one day come under their group's banner—because they believed they had elite status. Sectarian pride might sound spiritual, but it is still pride. And don't ever think that nondenominational church networks are immune to this virus. There are trendy new groups today that claim to have a corner on truth. Their subtle message is, "We are better." Don't let this smug attitude quench the Holy Spirit.

5. We professionalized it. In the early days of charismatic renewal, there was a sense of childlike wonder as people discovered the power of the Spirit for the first time. The meetings were Christ-centered, the sermons were solidly biblical and the fellowship was deep. We could sing *They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love* because we felt a deep bond with each other in the Holy Spirit.

But it didn't take long to replace the genuine sense of New Testament *koinonia* with something colder and less inviting. We began emphasizing titles. We discovered slick marketing techniques. Churches and their budgets grew. Then a funny thing happened on the way to the megachurch: We lost our simplicity. We turned church into a business. We stopped being relational and we became professional.

I'm not against growth, megachurches or marketing. The Holy Spirit can produce and direct all those things! But if we sacrifice the freshness and warmth of relationships on the altar of professional Christianity, we may discover the Holy Spirit has withdrawn from our ministries.

May the Lord help us to cultivate an atmosphere that attracts His presence rather than repels Him. May we be ready to receive the baton as a younger generation embraces the promise of another move of God. Come, Holy Spirit!

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Pockets of true revival are breaking out across America. Want to know more about the next great move of God? [Click here](#) to see Jennifer LeClaire's new book, featuring Dutch Sheets, Reinhard Bonnke, Jonathan Cahn, Billy Graham and others.

6 Things That Block the Holy Spirit's Power

While I was preaching at a church in central California, a young man came to the altar to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. He was eager to go deeper spiritually. Someone prayed for him for a while, but nothing happened.

I walked over to the young man a few minutes later and told him I would pray for him some more after the meeting was dismissed. I've learned that sometimes there are blockages that can prevent people from receiving the fullness of the Spirit, so I always try to discern what must be moved out of the way.

In this guy's case, his heart was in a great deal of pain because his father had abandoned his family. He wanted God to baptize him with the Spirit, but the pain of rejection was like a gaping wound that needed urgent attention. As soon as I began to address this problem, he began sobbing in my arms.

After we prayed about his father issues, and he got the healing he needed, he quickly received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. A fresh joy filled his heart. And a new heavenly language began pouring out of his mouth. I encouraged him to pray in tongues for a while as he received the Spirit's anointing.

This next Sunday, May 24, is the official day of Pentecost—when Christians all over the world celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church. But Pentecost should also be a very personal experience for you. Have you, or someone you know, struggled to receive this supernatural infilling?

Here are some reasons why there might be a blockage:

1. Doubt or intellectual pride. In the 1960s a journalist named John Sherrill decided to write a book discrediting the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. But after he interviewed countless people about this experience, his doubts were shattered and he was baptized in the Holy Spirit himself. His book, *They Speak With Other Tongues*, became a Christian classic. Spiritual experiences cannot be figured out with the mind. To receive the Spirit's infilling you must let go of your intellectual arguments and display childlike faith (see Matt. 18:2-4).

2. Religious tradition. I knew an Episcopal priest who was filled with the Holy Spirit in the 1970s in New York City. He was excited about the new vitality he felt in his faith—and thrilled that his wife had experienced a physical healing. But when he shared his testimony with his bishop, he was told he was crazy! And the bishop referred him to a psychiatrist! Religious people who are locked into “the way we’ve always done it” find it hard to receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit. You must be willing to break free from tradition.

3. Fear of the supernatural. Some Christians grew up in denominations that taught against the infilling of the Holy Spirit. They were told that Pentecostals are all fanatics who go into trances, speak mindless gibberish and swing from chandeliers. Actually, the first disciples in the New Testament spoke in tongues and experienced miracles—yet their faith was not strange. It should be the norm! People who are afraid of God's supernatural power will struggle to receive it.

4. Unconfessed sin. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit can be “quenched” as well as “grieved” (1 Thess. 5:19; Eph. 4:30). Because He is so holy, our sinful habits and attitudes can cause Him to withdraw. This is why it's so important for us to walk in constant communion with God, and to be willing

to repent quickly when we know we have sinned. Some people “stuff” their secret sins in the closets of their hearts. If you want to be filled with the Spirit, you must be willing to open those closets and invite the light of God’s holiness into every dark corner of your life.

5. Emotional wounds. Like the young man I prayed for last weekend, some people are just too burdened with emotional baggage to be filled with the Spirit. Some have been abused, others weighted down by anxiety, others grieved or depressed. They need healing first. Like Lazarus on the day he was raised from the dead, they are bound by the grave clothes of the past, and they need to be unwrapped before they can experience God’s full anointing (see John 11:44). Healing is often needed before a person can receive the blessing of Holy Spirit baptism.

6. An unyielded spirit. You cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit if you are full of yourself. Some people are too willful. They have not surrendered their plans, finances, relationships or time to God. They have their lives planned out and they don’t want God interrupting their agendas. Yet God is looking to fill hearts that have been emptied and surrendered. Only the fully yielded can experience the fullness of His power.

If you have not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or if the flow of the Spirit has been blocked in your life, empty your heart today and prepare for your own personal Pentecost.
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Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, [CHARISMA PLUS](#).

You Can't Ignore the Miracle of Christianity in China

Last week I worshipped in Hong Kong with hundreds of believers at the Wing Kwong Church, a Pentecostal Holiness congregation that has grown from 28 members in 1978 to more than 13,000 today. The modern megachurch, which meets in a sleek six-story building completed in the year 2000, gives thousands of dollars every year to fund international missions work. Under the leadership of Pastor Donavan Ng, the church sent a missionary couple to Kenya in 2006 to reach Chinese immigrants who have moved to that African nation.

“God has entrusted to the Chinese church a special mandate for the 21st century,” declared James Hudson Taylor IV, a surprise guest in the Wing Kwong Church that evening. Taylor is the great-great-grandson of British missionary pioneer Hudson Taylor, who ventured to China in 1854 to evangelize the world's most populous nation.

When Hudson Taylor sailed to China, there were no Christians there—yet the China Inland Mission that he established won 18,000 converts to Jesus Christ during his lifetime and became one of the greatest success stories in modern missions. Today, Taylor's great-great-grandson has a front-row seat to witness the greatest miracle on planet earth.

Hudson Taylor's beloved China is becoming a Christian country.

Many Americans today seem discouraged by evidence of spiritual decline in the West. Now would be the best time for us to heed Jesus' words in John 4:35: “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.”

Our pessimism has blinded us to what is happening in the East.

Consider these facts about the Chinese church:

1. China will likely become the largest Christian nation in the world by the year 2030. Fenggang Yang, a professor of sociology at Purdue University, notes that in the year 2010 there were more than 58 million Protestants in China, and he believes that number will swell to around 160 million by 2025 based on current growth trends. (The United States had 159 million Protestants in 2010.) By 2030, Yang predicts, China's total Christian population, including Catholics, would exceed 247 million, placing it above Mexico, Brazil and the United States as the largest Christian population in the world.

2. More Christians attend church on Sundays in China today than in Europe. Some people attend government-sanctioned churches like the 5,000-member Liushi megachurch, located 200 miles south of Shanghai in Zhejiang province. This church was forced to close in the 1950s, but it reopened in 1978 and has grown ever since. Many other Chinese believers prefer to worship in more covert "house churches" so they can stay away from any government interference.

3. Spiritual hunger is exploding in China, even though the country is officially atheist. A recent study found that online searches for the words "Christian congregation" and "Jesus" are far more numerous than for "communist party." And as more people have moved from rural areas to big cities, large numbers of young professionals have turned to Christ. Missiologists say between 10,000 and 25,000 people convert to Christianity every day in China.

4. Persecution of Christians is still rampant in China, but it does not seem to be slowing church growth. A 2015 report by China Aid says leaders of the Chinese Communist Party remain worried about the popularity of Christianity, and this is the reason they have instigated recent crackdowns on churches and

arrested house church pastors. President Xi Jinping is considered the most authoritarian leader in China since Mao Zedong. Communist leaders have also been known to bankrupt churches in an effort to stop their work.

5. The growth of Chinese Christianity is linked to its economic growth. Economists announced that China overtook the United States as the world's largest economy in late 2014. China, with its population of 1.3 billion, now accounts for 16.5 percent of the global economy, compared with 16.3 percent for the U.S. A recent study by Qunyong Wang of Nankai University and Xinyu Lin of Renmin University of China discovered there was robust economic growth in areas of China where Christian congregations are growing.

Could it be that God will use the vast financial resources of China to pay for the next great thrust of world evangelism before Christ's return?

China's church is truly a marvel. The gospel seed that was planted by missionaries such as Hudson Taylor in the 1800s died in the ground after Mao Zedong unleashed his infamous Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. During that era, Mao tried to completely eliminate religion and foreign influence in China by forcing 10,000 missionaries to leave the country.

Mao also sent thousands of Christians to their deaths, but the blood of those martyrs has produced an unprecedented harvest today. No one on this planet will be able to ignore the full impact of China's miracle.

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