

Enduring Gut-Wrenching Pain to Find Your New Beginning

“Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Is. 43:19).

That *rhema* word from Scripture nearly four years ago kicked off a season of change in my life that hasn’t quit. I’m convinced that I’ve seen more changes in my life over the past few years than many people see in two decades. I’m talking major life changes. Some of those changes produced immediate joy. Others produced prolonged pain before producing joy.

I’ve noticed a cycle, if you can call it that, where one change comes at the heels of another and then another—finally followed by the avalanche. Some of the changes are welcomed while others are gut-wrenching, even when you know it’s God’s will. I still don’t like change, but I’ve learned to embrace it because I’ve seen the fruit of faithfully following God through life’s transitions—and that fruit is good!

Facing Sweeping Changes

Maybe you are seeing sweeping changes in your life even now. Whether they are welcome changes, like getting married and having a baby, or unwelcome changes, like getting divorced and losing a loved one to death, change can cause confusion, stress, delight, anticipation, fear, joy—a whole range of fickle emotions that ebb and flow with what seems like the powerful rush of a rolling tide.

Before we go any further, understand this: The only thing that doesn’t change is God. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). Everything else—I said *everything else*—is subject to change. I won’t recite all the words of Solomon here, but suffice it to say that “to

everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (Eccl. 3:1).

So if you are going through a season of change—especially gut-wrenching changes—how do you position yourself to walk worthy of your calling? How do you yield to God's will while resisting the enemy? How do you embrace the change that will produce more of the character of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit in your life—and perhaps in the lives of others involved?

Learning to Let Go

Keeping your eyes on God, who doesn't change, is the critical first step (Heb. 12:2). The Lord really is your rock, your fortress and your deliverer (Ps. 18:2). His hope is the anchor of your soul (Heb. 6:19). When you keep your mind on Him, you'll remain in perfect peace even amid the most stormy changes (Is. 26:3). When you keep your eyes on Him, you'll find that road in the wilderness and the rivers in the desert that Isaiah prophesied (Is. 43:19).

Next, you've got to be willing to let go of what the Holy Spirit is showing you to let go of. If you want that new beginning—if you want that new thing God has in store for you—then you must let go even if it feels like it's going to kill you; even if you have to do it through tears; even if other people don't agree with you; even if you can't see where to go next. When you let go, He'll show you what to do next, just like he showed Abram what to do when he left everything behind to follow God (Gen. 12:1-3).

The letting go part is probably the hardest part of the change process. I've written several articles—including "How to Forget Those Things Which Are Behind," "Burning the Bridges to Your Past," and "Are You Willing to Leave Your Baggage Behind?"—on this topic because it's a real pain point for people. I had to learn that lesson and learn it well, and you

should too.

Sometimes there are soul ties with people, churches or even things that you need to break. The pull you feel to keep going back to the same people and things God has told you to leave behind is often a soul tie. A soul tie is a deep emotional bond. When David met King Saul's son Jonathan, there was an immediate bond between them. The Bible says, "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1). That's intense. When you move on, sometimes you have to break soul ties, in the name of Jesus, before you can move forward full speed.

Pursuing the New Vision

Once you've let go of the people, places and things holding you back, ask God for a new vision. What does God have next for you? I assure you, He has a new thing in mind. God may even resurrect an old dream you thought was dead. You won't see this spiritual vision come to pass overnight—there is a time of transition between the old and the new—but with clarity, you'll have the discipline you need to keep pressing forward (Prov. 29:18).

During this transition time, pursue any emotional healing you need. We all suffer wounds from the words and actions of others, from the work of the enemy, from our own sinful mistakes, from disappointing life events and even from doing the work of the ministry. Sometimes we have to suffer for Christ (Phil. 1:29). It's easy enough to get resentful, bitter and unforgiving. But walking toward your new beginning means letting go of these things also. Be assured that God is using it all for good (Rom. 8:28).

Many men in the Bible suffered great losses on their way to greatness. Just look at Job, Joseph and David. But all of these men endured the enemy's best shot and took back what he stole—and then some. Each of them had a new beginning that

brought glory to God. They persevered, kept their eyes on God and waited on His deliverance. So while you are enduring gut-wrenching pain, take comfort in God's Word: "Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert" (Is. 43:19). Amen.

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Hypergrace Movement Leaves Follower Questioning God's Existence

"Have I crossed the unforgiveable line? Is there still hope for me?" A man named Roy recently asked me those questions in a private message via my Facebook page.

I get hundreds of messages every week from people looking for **prophetic words**, wise counsel or just a little encouragement as they walk by faith one day at a time. Unfortunately, there aren't enough hours in the day for me to respond to everyone, but this struggling soul's message so struck my heart that I immediately sought the Lord for help to answer Roy's absolute anguish. Here's the body of his entire message to me:

"I'm in desperate need of advice. I recently disassociated with the **hypergrace** movement and it has left me in a spiritual struggle, from anxiety and depression to straight up confusion

and other mental symptoms. Unbelief has eroded me pretty well. I have questioned my salvation and even God's existence and I can barely even read the Word without being critical and doubtful. Have I crossed the unforgivable line? Is there still hope for me? This has been going on about 4 months. I feel as if my heart has hardened. I really want my sincerity for God and spiritual things to return! Thanks for any help."

What a heartbreaking testimony! You can hear the desperation. You can see the struggle. I understand all too well how disassociating with a movement the **Holy Spirit** shows you is riddled with errors and extremes can cause a faith crisis. I've been there with the extreme **apostolic** movement that values building one's own personal kingdom before family—and ultimately even God. For a deeper discussion of what the hypergrace movement is, [click here](#).

Breaking Away From Deception

When I broke away from that movement, I struggled with confusion over whether or not I made the right choice—even though a cloud of seasoned ministers showed me Scripture that clearly exposed the extreme errors. It took me more than a year to shake that dust off my feet, and it was, indeed, a spiritual struggle. I know others who escaped that same extreme apostolic movement who wound up depressed and with other mental symptoms like the ones Roy described. That's because the enemy is angry that you've stopped buying into his **deception**, and he wants to torment you (John 10:10).

When you turn your back on **deception**, you often turn your back on friends who are flowing in that same deception—or, I should rightly say, they often turn their back on you. It can be a painful process to remove the tentacles of error from your soul, especially if you've believed the error for a long while. We tend to read the Bible through the lens of the camp we call home, whether that's apostolic, **prophetic**, **spiritual warfare**, word of faith or some other doctrine. Roy was reading

the Word with a **hypergrace** filter, and once he saw the error, it caused a crisis of faith in the Word.

Once error is exposed, it can be difficult to believe anything you read because you lose confidence in your ability to rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). After all, you were deceived once, right? That's the way I thought, and I thank God that I had mature saints around me to help me wade through that recovery stage quickly. Others I know are still struggling with the aftermath of believing lies. Like Roy said, he can "barely even read the Word without being critical and doubtful."

The Rotten Fruit of Hypergrace

How can a movement based on grace leave one in such a spiritual struggle, from anxiety and depression to straight-up confusion and other mental symptoms? How can it drive unbelief into your soul? How can it cause you to question your salvation and even God's existence? How can it lead you to question if you've crossed the unforgivable line or if there's still hope for you? Again, it's the enemy tormenting you because you discovered the truth. The **Holy Spirit** doesn't talk to you in those terms (John 14:26). If you were in error for leaving a movement, the Holy Spirit wouldn't reveal it by flooding you with condemnation, confusion, unbelief and the like. Here's some of what I told Roy:

"Rest assured that you have not crossed any line or committed any unpardonable sin by disassociating with the **hypergrace** movement. I believe the issue is that you have seen the light of truth and the enemy is tormenting you because you have broken free from the **deception** you were under. He wants to steal, kill and destroy your faith and paralyze you. ... You need to shore up your foundations in the faith. You are very brave and you do have faith; evidenced by your willingness to follow the Holy Spirit out of deception. You can get your footing back. Surround yourself with books, and solid

teaching. Get back to basics and you'll walk completely free of this torment. I am **praying** for you."

Maybe you can relate to Roy's struggle—or maybe you can't. I hope you can't. But if you can, I **pray** that you'll take the advice I offered him for yourself. And if you are currently part of the **hypergrace** movement, extreme apostolic movement or some other movement on the fringes of Christianity that clouds Scripture with personal experiences and full-blown error, I pray that the **Holy Spirit** will open the eyes of your heart, break in with light and set you free. In fact, I encourage you to **pray** for God to break any **deception** off your mind even if you think you've got it all right. None of us have it all right, and little errors can lead to big deceptions—and even **heresy**. Amen.

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A Message to Heresy Hunters Seeking Strange Fire Where There Is None

Since I was first born again, God has allowed me to witness **spirits of error** and full-blown **deception** over and over. And He's called me to confront it more times than not. I've wept over souls falling headlong into pits of deception and been persecuted for walking away from ministries where **strong delusions** were leading people away from Jesus.

But make no mistake, there's a huge difference between discerning a **spirit of error** that keeps people from a full understanding of Jesus and accusing people of full-blown **heresy** that keeps people from receiving salvation. Even though deception is running rampant in the body of Christ, I shun the work of **heresy hunters** who have made it their mission to discredit anyone and everyone with whose theology they share a point of contention.

I get emails from **heresy hunters** every day suggesting I expose some ministry or another (and sometimes calling me foul names for hitting "delete"). Most of the Christian personalities these **heresy hunters** are working to expose aren't heretics at all, though most fall in a measure of error because none of us have it all right all the time. Some are clearly deceived, but they still don't qualify as heretics. I also get emails from **heresy hunters** who sometimes disagree with what I write. But an email last week from a woman named Yvonne took the heresy hunting to a hellish level.

A Heresy Hunter Baited Me

"As I read the seven signs of a cult as outlined by Mike Bickel (sic), I must say my extensive experience with IHOP members, an IHOP church and the written and recorded claims of IHOP founder Mike Bickel (sic), IHOP fits all seven signs of a cult!," she argued. "You should read this online piece from the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry."

The **Holy Spirit** prompted me to take the time to click the link and read the material. It was utter nonsense. Noteworthy is the fact that the author of the piece quoted extensively from Pastor John MacArthur's work to discredit the **International House of Prayer** (IHOP) in Kansas City, a 24/7 **prayer** and **worship** movement led by Mike Bickle. Also noteworthy is the fact that MacArthur is organizing a "strange fire" conference in October, claiming that the **charismatic movement** "offers to God unacceptable worship, distorted worship. It blasphemes the

Holy Spirit. It attributes to the Holy Spirit even the work of Satan.”

Dr. Michael Brown has been pleading with Pastor MacArthur’s ministry to sit down and discuss his inflammatory claims about the **charismatic movement**. Brown has appealed to him to embrace God’s true fire. Brown noted how Pastor MacArthur’s scathing indictment names “fine godly leaders like Mike Bickle and Lou Engle, claiming that they are guilty of blaspheming the Spirit.”

Condemning Me to Hell

Yvonne seems to be coming from the same spirit. Again, after I reviewed the material she sent I told her it was nonsense. Her response to me: “Depart from me I never knew you, is what you will hear when you stand before Him, for promoting and profiting from a heretical cult. I should have realized you were part of it.”

How sad for the likes of Pastor MacArthur and Yvonne, both of whom I am convinced love God and His Word, to harass and **persecute** their brothers and sisters in Christ in this manner. Of course, Yvonne was quoting from the passage from the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus told many who will say to Him, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matt. 7:22-24)

Yvonne’s indictment doesn’t bother me a bit. I just look back to the introduction of the Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5: 11-12).

As much as I respect those who are faithful witnesses to the

truth—and as much as I acknowledge there is **strange fire** in the **charismatic movement** and deception (and even heresy) in some camps in the body of Christ, we have to be extremely cautious in flippantly condemning someone to hell because they don't agree with us.

When it comes to **heresy** we expose it and refuse to fellowship with those propagating it, but even then we don't chase them down and persecute them. We pray that God will break in with light and expose the darkness that has clouded their minds. To take any other approach is simply a wrong spirit that could ultimately lead you into a deeper deception than the one you believe they are exposing. Amen.

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When the Prophetic Word Brings Spiritual Warfare

When I was young in the Lord, I always hoped the pastor would have a prophetic word for me in the prayer line or that the visiting prophet would call me out of the congregation and **prophecy** over me. Now, I'm not so eager for that next prophetic word.

As I matured and learned how to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit for myself, I realized I didn't need a prophet to tell me—and announce to the principalities and powers—what the Lord's next step was for my life. And as I matured, I also

noticed a pattern: Prophetic words bring **spiritual warfare**.

Think about it for a minute. A **prophetic word** is God announcing His specific will for you. The words of edification, exhortation or comfort don't tend to stir up many devils, but directional prophecies or revelatory words about assignments, callings or destinies, in my experience, give the enemy a new agenda.

In other words, once the enemy has prophetic intelligence on where God wants to take you he'll be sure to set up snares along your path to getting there—whether that's a Judas to betray you, a sickness to slow you down, financial distress to freak you out, relationship woes, or just plain stressful situations that cause you to forget all about the prophecy and put out your personal fires.

Facing Your Goliath

This is scriptural. Two examples that come to mind are David and Joseph. David was the prophesied king, anointed by Samuel in the midst of his brothers (see 1 Sam. 16:13). But David went through hell and back before the prophetic act became a reality. In fact, he was almost immediately taken from his home and assigned to become the then-King Saul's armor-bearer. In the next breath, he was facing the battle of all battles with the giant Goliath.

You know the story. When David defeated Goliath against all natural odds, Saul became jealous and tried to kill him. David ended up fleeing into the wilderness and ran into all sorts of dangers along the way as Saul's army pursued him. His wives were captured. His men turned against him. David's psalms reveal the emotions of a man facing warfare to see his prophetic destiny become a reality.

Then there's Joseph. He had two prophetic dreams as a teenager. Both dreams essentially indicated that he would rule over his older brothers. When they found out, the warfare

began. Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery. He was falsely accused of trying to trying to rape Potiphar's wife. And he was thrown into prison.

Prepare for War

Yes, when you receive a true **prophetic word** from God it brings spiritual warfare. You probably won't be chased through the wilderness by a jealous king, but you may be chased out of your church by a jealous pastor. You may not be sold into slavery, but you may be betrayed by those closest to you. You may not be falsely accused of rape, but you may be falsely accused of something. You may not be thrown into prison, but you may be thrown out of your comfort zone.

Spiritual warfare comes in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes it's disobedient children who get into trouble because they lost their way. Nothing hurts worse than seeing a child go astray. Sometimes it's the sickness of financial pressures I mentioned before. Sometimes it's a raging battle in your mind that causes you to bite down on the enemy's bait, whether that's burnout, depression, confusion or something else.

Some years ago I received a prophetic word from Dino Kartsonakis, the late Kathryn Kuhlman's piano player. I have long been an admirer of Kuhlman's ministry so this was really cool. Kartsonakis' word wasn't ultra specific, but it was nonetheless a prophetic announcement. Some weeks later, I was on the phone with Doug Stringer, who released a **prophetic prayer** over me along the same lines.

That's always exciting, but it brought tremendous warfare. I spent the next 18 months battling a nasty controlling religious spirit that targeted my life and ministry for destruction. Through other circumstances, my daughter also fell into life-and-death danger as the enemy worked in her midst. One of my best friends was almost killed in a head-on collision with a drunk driver. And the list goes on and on. The warfare was intense, but now I am beginning to see the

first fruits of those two prophecies delivered years ago.

Enduring the Spiritual Battle

How did I get through it? God's grace, of course, but I also took Paul the apostle's advice to Timothy: I waged war with the prophetic words. Paul said, "This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18). The New Living Translation puts it this way: "Timothy, my son, here are my instructions for you, based on the prophetic words spoken about you earlier. May they help you fight well in the Lord's battles."

What does that practically mean? It means I continued to declare the prophetic word over my life. Although a prophetic word is not on par with Scripture, a **prophecy** that's been judged true can be used as a sword in the **spiritual realm** to do battle against the enemy's assignment. After all, the enemy doesn't really care about you. He hates you, yes, but ultimately he just doesn't want the prophetic word to come to pass because when it does God's will comes to the earth.

If you are in a season of waiting and warring, hold on. Remember, it was at least 15 years between David's prophetic anointing and David's kingship. And it was about 13 years in between Joseph's dream and his promotion to Egypt's prime minister. Chances are, it won't take that long for you to see the first fruits of those powerful prophetic words spoken over your life. But even if it does, don't give in to the enemy's strategies. Remember that this is the Lord's battle. Declare the prophetic word over your life and keep fighting the good fight of faith. Amen.

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What to Do When You Feel Like Giving Up

*Open your ears, God, to my **prayer**; don't pretend you don't hear me knocking. Come close and whisper your answer. I really need you. I shudder at the mean voice, quail before the evil eye, as they pile on the guilt, stockpile angry slander.*

My insides are turned inside out; specters of death have me down. I shake with fear, I shudder from head to foot. "Who will give me wings," I ask—"wings like a dove?" Get me out of here on dove wings. I want some peace and quiet. I want a walk in the country. I want a cabin in the woods. I'm desperate for a change from rage and stormy weather.

Those aren't my words. They are the words of King David in Psalm 55:1-8 (MSG). But I can certainly relate to those words, and you probably can too.

If you're like me (and David), there are times when you feel like God just isn't listening. Mean voices are rising with guilt and condemnation or angry slander. You feel like you've prayed your guts out. You're battling fear. You just want to fly away, to escape the trial. You want to run off to a cabin in the woods. You need a break from the stormy weather—and you need it now. You've tried everything and nothing changes.

You are on the verge of giving up.

Flesh Wars Against Spirit

So, what do you do when you feel like giving up? Do you go on a sleep marathon, hoping to escape the harsh reality? Do you veg out in front of the television with a bag of potato chips

and a pint of ice cream (and put on a few pounds), watching anything that will keep your mind off the pain? Do you call your friends to rehearse and rehash the drama, hoping they will have a **prophetic word**? Do you wallow in self-pity? Do you drown your pillow with tears (Ps. 6:6)? I've done all those things, but none of it helps.

So, what *should* you do when you feel like giving up? You do what David did a few verses later in the same psalm:

"I call to God; God will help me. At dusk, dawn, and noon I sigh deep sighs—he hears, he rescues. My life is well and whole, secure in the middle of danger even while thousands are lined up against me. God hears it all, and from his judge's bench puts them in their place. But, set in their ways, they won't change; they pay him no mind. ... Pile your troubles on God's shoulders—he'll carry your load, he'll help you out. He'll never let good people topple into ruin. ... And I trust in you" (Ps. 55:16-19, 22-23).

Quitting Is Not an Option

I know all too well what it feels like to want to give up. I know all too well the temptations to revert to the world's comfort in the midst of a trial. I know all too well the emotions that come with a raging storm against your family. But quitting is simply not an option. If we lay our weapons down, the devil won't just forfeit his position and pursue someone else. If we lay our weapons down, we just become an easier target for the enemy. The devil will keep attacking until he's robbed us of our faith to believe in the goodness of God.

When we feel like giving up, we can take our complaints to God. He can certainly handle it. Like David, we can take our deep sighs to God dusk, dawn and noon. But ultimately, we have to come to the conclusion that God does hear us (Ps. 116:1), that He is working on the situation (Rom. 8:28) and that His

grace is sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12:9). Ultimately, we have to conclude God is trustworthy (Ps. 9:10). Ultimately, we have to keep on our whole armor of God so we are able to withstand the attacks of the enemy against our mind and, having done all, stand (Eph. 6:13).

Pile your troubles on God's shoulders. If He carried David's load and helped David out—and He did—then He won't fail you. As trite as it sounds, set your heart to trust in God, and you will not be disappointed (Rom. 10:11). Don't give up.

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God's Prophet Jailed for Refusing to Compromise Prophetic Word

What's your **prophetic** reputation? Are you known as the **prophet** who refuses to water down—or, worse, manufacture—a **prophetic word** to tickle the ears of those listening, or will you speak the **prophecy** boldly despite the persecution it may bring you?

Would you be willing to go to jail to maintain the purity of your prophetic ministry? Or would you instead go along with the hundreds of other prophets who give way to spirits of divination, Jezebel spirits, witchcraft or lying spirits in order to make hearers happy (and keep the offerings pouring in)?

Put another way, will you be like Ahab's prophets or like Micaiah?

Pontificating False Prophets

Here's the scene. There was no war between Aram and Israel for three years when Judah's King Jehoshaphat made a visit to Ahab's palace. The kings discussed going to war against Ramoth Gilead, but Jehoshaphat had enough wisdom to seek the counsel of the Lord before hitting the battlefield (1 Kings 22:1-6).

Ahab summoned about 400 **prophets** to ask, "Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?" Unanimously, they told him to go and that he would succeed in overtaking the land.

Jehoshaphat wasn't so quick to put his faith in the false prophets. He asked Ahab if there was a prophet of the Lord available to weigh in.

"The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, 'There is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah'" (v. 8, NIV). Despite expecting bad news, Ahab called for Micaiah even as the **false prophets** continued their prophetic pontificating about his sure success in battle.

Don't Let Ahab's Messengers Intimidate You

Before Micaiah appeared before the two kings, the messenger who fetched him gave him a warning: "Look, the other **prophets** without exception are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably" (v. 13). But Micaiah stood his ground and told the messenger he would only speak what the Lord told him.

Imagine the **prophetic** pressure that was on Micaiah! He knew what Ahab wanted to hear—and he knew the 400 **false prophets**

had pumped Ahab up with expectation to take new land for his kingdom. Would Micaiah tell Ahab what he wanted to hear or truly stand on God's truth?

When Ahab asked Micaiah if he should go to war or not, the **prophet** first told him what he wanted to hear—not out of compromise but because, much like Balaam, the wicked king was determined to go to war no matter what the Lord's will was. It didn't really matter what Micaiah said. But Ahab picked up on Micaiah's clear undertones and insisted the **prophet** tell him the truth in the name of the Lord (vv. 15-16).

That's when Micaiah let it loose: "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the Lord said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'

"Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the Lord said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?'

"One suggested this, and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the Lord and said, 'I will entice him.'
...

"'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. ...

"So now the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The Lord has decreed disaster for you" (vv. 17, 19-21, 22, 23).

True Prophets Face Persecution

And that's when the persecution began. Ahab completely disregarded the true **prophetic word**, even though the Lord was gracious enough to reveal what was going on behind the scenes.

Zedekiah, son of Kenaanah, slapped Micaiah in the face. Ahab

ordered Micaiah put in prison with nothing but bread and water until his safe return. For Micaiah's part, he didn't back down from his God-breathed **prophecy**, boldly telling Ahab that if he ever returns safely, the Lord had not spoken through him (vv. 24-28).

Of course, Micaiah was right. Ahab was killed in battle. We don't know if the **prophet** ever got out of prison or not. But Micaiah was a good and faithful witness for the Lord. Even if his earthly fate was to die in prison for his **prophetic** purity, he gains in eternity.

Unfortunately, too many in today's **prophetic** ministry have a temporal view rather than an eternal view of their calling. Many would rather hang out in Ahab's house than in caves or prisons eating bread and water.

But, modern-day **prophets**, I urge you to remember Micaiah. He set the example for us. Micaiah was familiar with Ahab's displeasure in the wake of true **prophetic words**. Ahab's own confession was that Micaiah never had anything good to tell him. It's possible that Micaiah had faced persecution at Ahab or Jezebel's hand—or at the hands of the party-line prophets—throughout his ministry. But he stood strong. He spoke what he heard the Lord saying—nothing more and nothing less. Let the Micaiahs arise in this prophetic generation and be faithful witnesses to the truth! Amen.

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Rebuking Demons and the Danger of Playing Holy Ghost

When Paul and Silas were on the mission field, a slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination started following the team, declaring, “These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17).

The Bible says the girl did this for many days before Paul finally cast the devil out of her. For years, I was taught that Paul waited “many days” (v. 18) because he was trying to discern the spirit that was operating so he could cast it out. I believe that teaching is in error—and the truth holds a key lesson for us all.

It’s clear that Paul already knew the spirit the servant girl was flowing in. Scripture reveals, “Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling” (v. 16).

Hindering God’s Work

Essentially, she was the town witch—and everybody knew it. Indeed, it didn’t take any discernment to understand what spirit she was tapping into. This servant girl was widely known in the city as one who had demons that could tell fortunes.

The *Matthew Henry Commentary* says, “She was actuated by an evil spirit, that dictated ambiguous answers to those who consulted her, which served to gratify their vain desire of knowing things to come, but often deceived them. ... Many came to consult this witch for the discovery of robberies, the finding of things lost, and especially to be told their fortune, and none came but with the rewards of divination in their hands, according to the quality of the person and the

importance of the case.”

By following the apostles and proclaiming to the city who they were, this servant girl was actually hindering God’s work—even though what she was saying was absolutely true. Of course, it didn’t take Paul “many days” to figure out she was a distraction. They could not make a move without being noticed because she announced their coming. Doubtless, this caused some—especially those who stood against spirits of divination—to put their guards up against the gospel message that could bring salvation to their households.

I believe Paul discerned quickly—not after many days—that a spirit of divination possessed the servant girl. Why, then, did Paul wait many days to cast it out? Clearly, the girl was in error. Clearly, she was deceived and deceiving others in the city with her fortune-telling. Clearly, she was merchandising people for the sake of sordid gain. Clearly, she was in bondage to this demon and also to her human oppressors who profited off her false prophecies. It seems he would be doing everyone a favor by rebuking this devil straight away.

So why did Paul wait many days to rebuke the spirit? I believe the apostle was waiting on God’s timing. In other words, Paul knew what spirit he was dealing with but he was seeking understanding from the Holy Spirit about how to handle it. The Bible says Paul was “greatly annoyed” (v. 18). I’m sure it didn’t take “many days” for this servant girl to annoy him. But he waited on the Lord’s timing to take action.

Don’t Get in the Holy Spirit’s Way

Here’s the lesson, especially for prophetic types who tend to see the error everywhere: Just because we see error, deception or even heresy doesn’t give us a license to rush in with guns blazing and fire bullets of rebukes. Just because someone is hindering God’s plan doesn’t mean it’s our job to set them straight. Just because the Word of God speaks against a

certain sin, for example, that doesn't give us the right to play Holy Ghost in the person's life.

Am I saying that we tolerate sin? Am I saying that we ignore devils? Am I saying that we tolerate Jezebel? God forbid! But there's balance in all things. When we discern an enemy working in someone's life, the first response should be prayer. When we are faithful to pray for a person or situation, it helps us keep a right spirit. Lord knows, it's easy enough to become like the sons of thunder and want to call down fire from heaven. But remember, Jesus rebuked John and James for being so quick to rebuke.

We need to pray, and when the Holy Spirit—who is far more patient than we are—leads us to speak to the person, then and only then should we speak. We only know in part—and we don't know if the Holy Spirit is on the verge of a breakthrough with the one in error. We don't know if that person is on the edge of repentance. And we don't know if our correction will push them further away from the God who is actively wooing them. Again, we can't play Holy Ghost. That job belongs to One and only One.

As we keep praying, if the Holy Spirit wants to use someone as an instrument of correction, you are first in line to serve God's purposes because you kept a right spirit. So, again, don't be so fast to issue a harsh rebuke to a brother or sister. Don't get in the Holy Spirit's way. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14).

Jennifer LeClaire is news editor at Charisma. She is also the author of several books, including *The Spiritual Warrior's Guide to Defeating Jezebel*. You can email Jennifer at @ or visit her website here. You can also join Jennifer on Facebook or follow her on Twitter.

5 More Rude Things People Do in Church

J. Lee Grady last week compiled a list of the “Top 10 Rudest Things People Do in Church.” He mentioned talking during a service, texting or surfing the web, sleeping, clipping fingernails during church (I’ve actually seen this one and it grossed me out!) and six other pet peeves you probably agree with.

His list got me thinking—and asking others—about rude behavior in church. I asked some of my Facebook friends to chime in on some of the rudest things they’ve witnessed during Sunday morning worship services. The responses were troubling and indicate a sign of the times we live in, where, in many cases, the Word of God being preached is no longer revered.

Here are some of the most interesting responses:

1. Eating Pop-Tarts (or other food) during service. I understand that some people have blood-sugar issues or other problems, but I am hard-pressed to believe that most of the people noshing on breakfast foods during morning worship are prediabetic. In our rushed society, many may not get up early enough to eat breakfast before church. Some are bringing food from the church cafe into the sanctuary. Nibbling on a cracker is one thing. Having your morning meal is quite another. This is inappropriate. We should be focused on eating a spiritual meal or else step outside to snack if we can’t make it through the service. With regard to people eating the Lord’s supper (communion), Paul wrote: “Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?” (1 Cor. 11:22).

2. Eyeballing the opposite sex with lustful eyes. Many people

meet and fall in love in church. That's awesome! But the church is not a meat market. People should be able to go to church without being gawked at with lustful eyes. Based on some of the comments I saw on Facebook, apparently the sanctuary isn't always a safe place for women pursuing God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. Of course, with some of the outfits women wear to church these days, it's hard to put all the blame on the guys. The Lord says, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

3. Heckling the pastor. If you are in a church that deals with recovering alcoholics and homeless people, you are bound to have at least one guy who heckles the pastor—or at least hollers out with inappropriate answers to rhetorical questions from time to time. They don't know better, but ushers need to be properly trained on how to deal with this and other disruptions so that the word of God can go forth unhindered.

4. Tapping you on the shoulder when you are deep in worship to scoot by you and find a seat. How annoying! You are crying out to God over a deep issue in your life and on the verge of a breakthrough when Johnny Come Lately barges in, bumping into you as he tries to find a seat next to his buddy (who's eating his breakfast on the third row).

5. Coming up behind you and laying hands on you suddenly. I'm all for the laying on of hands, but having a stranger who just clipped his fingernails—or who just heckled the pastor, or who disrupted you during deep worship—deciding to lay hands on you without permission is beyond rude. It can be sort of creepy. Even if they weren't eating Pop-Tarts or engaging in any of the other rude behaviors mentioned, it's still creepy for someone you don't know to pounce on you and begin praying in some strange tongue.

Here are a few other pet peeves folks mentioned about rude behavior they see in church:

- Not showing up at all because you find out the senior pastor isn't preaching
- Clipping coupons
- Treating those less fortunate like they don't belong there
- Being unfriendly
- Digging up their nose (yuck!)
- Constantly looking at their watch
- Mocking the way someone worships
- Making fun of people singing on the platform
- Passing notes back and forth
- Conversations across pews
- Clapping and shouting so loud during prophetic words that you can't hear what's being said
- Talking about how someone's weave looks

The list goes on and on. Yet some of my Facebook connections were upset that I asked the question. One commenter said it was judgmental. Another said it wasn't edifying. Still another said the person sleeping in church could be having a prophetic dream. I think they are missing the point. Church is not a place to clip your toenails—or your coupons. Church is not a place to lust after the opposite sex. Church is not a place to catch up on your meal planning.

God is gracious and merciful, much more than we are about distractions. But here's the bottom line: When the Word of God is being preached, respect should be offered as if Jesus was standing there Himself. It's not about the messenger or what he is wearing or what his hair looks like. It's about the message. We should pay attention to the Word of truth, especially in this hour when deception is rising, instead of texting our friends, passing notes, whispering about what we're going to do when the pastor finally finishes preaching, or talking about somebody's hairstyle.

Lost souls who don't know better, well, they don't know better. But church members who come in every week need to be

gently corrected. After all, Jesus warned us to be careful how we listen: “Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him” (Luke 8:18). When we’re in church, we need to remember why we’re there. We need to cut out all the distractions and focus on the Lord—and we need to be respectful of the people around us whose lives may depend on the Word being preached. Amen.

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Satan’s End-Time Strategy to Outlaw Traditional Marriage in Full Swing

Despite our fervent prayers, the **gay agenda** has won a victory in the rapidly degenerating land of the free, as the U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday struck down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).

DOMA is a 1996 law blocking federal recognition of **gay marriage**. With that ruling, and because the high court decided not to give its opinion on a challenge to a ban on gay marriage in California known as Proposition 8, the road is paved for same-sex marriage in the Golden State. And that may open the floodgates.

Clearly, our nation is seeing Romans 1 play out before its

very eyes because although we know God, we have chosen not to glorify Him (Rom. 1:21).

Exchanging the Truth for a Lie

Our Supreme Court has “exchanged the truth of God for the lie” (v. 25). A growing number of our citizens are fine and dandy with the fact that women exchange “the natural use for what is against nature,” and more are accepting of the fact that men have left “the natural use of the woman” and have “burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful” (vv. 26-27).

Many of our nation’s leaders have given in to a “debased mind” (v. 28). Our nation is marked by “all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness” (v. 29). Many of our citizens are “full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful” (vv. 29-31).

Our Supreme Court just opened the door to more of the same. Could it be possible that one day marriage as an institution could be outlawed altogether? I believe that is part of Satan’s end-time strategy.

Recognizing the Signs of the Times

Paul hints at this in a **prophetic** letter to his spiritual son, Timothy, more than 2,000 years ago. Paul wrote, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry” (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

We are in the latter times. We are in the end times even now. And many are indeed departing from the faith. Less than 1

percent of 18- to 23-year-olds have a biblical worldview, according to a recent Barna Group survey. Seven in 10 Protestants ages 18 to 30 who went to church regularly in high school said they quit attending by age 23, LifeWay Research reveals. And the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life reports that half of former Protestants who left the church said they turned away from their childhood faith because they stopped believing in its teachings—and about 40 percent said they did so because they do not believe in God.

We are in the latter times. We are in the end times even now. And some are indeed giving heed to **deceiving spirits** and **doctrines of demons**. Look at the likes of Rob Bell, with his “no hell” theology; John Crowder, with his distorted hypergrace messages; and Carlton Pearson, with his universalistic “gospel of inclusion.” Then there's the false justice movement that talks about Jesus while holding Bible studies, worship meetings and performing good works—but it's a different Jesus at the center. These are just a few of the doctrines of demons circulating through the church today that are leading us toward the end-time harlot church.

Forbidding to Marry?

We are in the latter times. We are in the end times even now. And some are indeed speaking lies in hypocrisy. Some are indeed living with a seared conscience. So the question is, Will 1 Timothy 4:3 be the next part of this **prophetic** Scripture to come to pass? Will we see governments forbidding marriage? I believe it's inevitable as we get closer to the Second Coming of Christ. I believe the institution of traditional marriage will come under attack in parts of the earth as the deceptive gay marriage agenda continues to gain momentum.

Today's rulings from the U.S. Supreme Court are about more than allowing gays to tap into federal benefits that, until now, were reserved for couples in traditional marriages.

Today's rulings set into motion a dynamic that could mainstream gay marriage in this nation sooner than later—and forward the satanic agenda to eventually end a godly institution that's almost as old as the world itself.

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Roy Harthern Passes Away, Leaves Strong Legacy

International Bible teacher Dr. Roy Harthern has gone home to be with the Lord.

In December 2001, Harthern had terminal cancer and total kidney failure. According to his biography, doctors gave him 12 hours to live. But he said the Lord visited him in the hospital room every night and promised him, among many other promises, that He would heal him.

On the 50th day, Harthern's biography explains, the doctor said, "I don't know what to say. You have two brand new kidneys and I know you have not had a transplant. Also, there is no trace of cancer anywhere in your body."

Harthern was born and educated in England. At a very early age, he learned to play the piano and the accordion. As a musician, he traveled with his father, who had an apostolic

ministry in the United Kingdom and in America. He also played the piano for Smith Wigglesworth in a crusade in his hometown.

Harthern started his ministry in 1945 with the Assemblies of God (AG) in Great Britain, but from 1946 to 1949, he had to interrupt his ministry when he was enlisted and served as an officer in the British Army. After leaving the army, he traveled with the AG Home Missions team, and in October 1949 he sailed to the United States of America, where he continued his ministry.

Harthern married Pauline in January 1951. They began their ministry as evangelists in America and Europe. Harthern served as youth president in the Peninsular Florida district of the AG, which included over 200 churches. He also served on the national youth committee for the denomination. The Hartherns pastored churches in Jacksonville and West Palm Beach in Florida and in Beaumont, Texas.

During Harthern's ministry in Florida, he served on the Presbytery Board (ordination committee and board of directors) in the Florida district of the AG for 18 years. In 1970, he pastored Calvary Assembly in Orlando. In 10 years, the church grew from 260 to over 7,000. For several years, *Christian Life* magazine acclaimed Calvary Assembly as the fastest-growing church of all denominations and the largest AG church in America. The church had five services every Sunday, with two additional buildings for overflow attendance to accommodate the crowds. Before the Hartherns left the church in 1981, they raised over \$5 million in cash to build a new 5,000-seat auditorium.

During their pastorate at Calvary Assembly, *Charisma* magazine was launched. The magazine is now the largest Pentecostal-Charismatic periodical in the world. The burden for the magazine was given to Steve Strang, who was a reporter for the *Orlando Sentinel* newspaper and a member of the church. The Hartherns also started Christian TV – Channel 52 in

Central Florida and built Calvary Towers, a high-rise for the elderly. Calvary Assembly pioneered the Jesus Festivals, an annual event near Disney World that attracted up to 30,000 people.

During the Harthern's pastorate at Calvary Assembly, Roy Harthern served on the board of Church Growth International. He traveled with Dr. Yongi Cho, who pastors the largest church in the world in Seoul, Korea. With Cho, Harthern taught the principles of church growth to pastors and church leaders in several countries of the world.

Since 1981, the Hartherns had been involved in a worldwide Bible teaching ministry. They are the parents of three daughters: Suzanne and Leanne (twins) and Elizabeth. Suzanne is married to Benny Hinn, the healing evangelist. Earlier this week, Hinn asked for urgent prayers for his father-in-law.

Services will be held at Calvary Assembly in Winter Park, Fla.

Viewing is July 12 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Service is July 13 at 10 a.m.