

# What to Do When Hell Breaks Loose Against You

Have you ever felt like all hell was breaking loose against you? Maybe you are under **spiritual attack** even as you read these words. Well, I can relate. Last week it felt like all hell broke loose against me.

My mother underwent heart surgery only to find out that the doctors could not fix the problem. According to the surgeon, she could throw a blood clot and have a massive stroke at any time. That kind of news intends to breed fear in your heart.

My 15-year-old daughter was left stranded in an international airport after a missions group failed to arrive on time to pick her up. Again, the **spirit of fear** launched a fiery dart. That same group neglected to collect the proper travel documents to give her entry into the foreign country to which they were traveling.

The next day, a colleague I recommended for a preaching engagement failed to show up and attacked me when I suggested he needed to repent. I lost my rental car keys. I hit my head so hard I was too dizzy to drive. All the while I was living on virtually no sleep in a city 700 miles away from home, trying to seek God for the next chapter in my life.

## Hand-to-Hand Combat

I could go on and on about the opposition I faced ... but let's just say it felt like **hell** was breaking loose against me. I get it. Clearly, the enemy didn't want me to focus on consecrating myself during a time of **prayer and fasting** at the International House of Prayer in Atlanta.

Clearly, the enemy didn't like the **prophetic words** I received there that connected the dots to the next steps in my walk with God. Clearly, the enemy was working to rob the seed the

**Holy Spirit** had sown into my heart by stirring up a whirlwind of drama before, during and after I returned from Atlanta. It doesn't take a **prophet** to see all of this clearly. I was doing hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, fighting to receive and contain what the Lord was pouring into my spirit.

Maybe your story isn't so dramatic. Maybe your story is much worse. Or maybe you are in a season of rest. But you are likely to feel like hell is breaking loose against you at some point in your life. And some people seem to get a greater share of spiritual warfare than others.

So what do you do when you find yourself in the middle of hand-to-hand combat, when people you love are in danger even as others are stabbing you in the back? On a smaller scale, what do you do when you are just having a really bad day that you wish would end?

### **Hearing From God**

The flesh, and maybe even the soul, wants to overreact. When the doctors said my mother's surgery was not successful and outlined the risks, I had to remain calm for the rest of the family. When my daughter used a stranger's cellphone to call me from an international airport saying the missions group was nowhere to be found, I had to keep my cool so I didn't scare her.

When all hell breaks loose against you, the first challenge is to not overreact to what you are hearing in the natural. If you do, you'll hinder your ability to hear from God—and you need to **hear from God**. If you quiet your soul, you're more likely to receive the direction you need to respond rather than react. Once you believe you've heard from God, take whatever action you can take in the natural and believe God that your obedience will yield a harvest.

Remember this: The devil is ultimately after your peace and your joy. Why do you think the Bible instructs us to rejoice

in trials? James said to count it all joy when we encounter trials (James 1:2), and Peter told us not to think it's strange that a fiery trial has come our way—but to rejoice (1 Peter 4:12). So rejoice, and understand whom the enemy is. It's not flesh and blood—and it's not God.

God didn't cause my mother's heart problems. God didn't cause the missions group to put my daughter in danger. God didn't cause the preacher not to show up. But God permitted it. Likewise, God didn't cause your woes. But nonetheless you face trials and tribulations and God is watching to see how you'll respond. Will you keep our eyes on the Author and Finisher of your faith and remain in peace as a witness to the world or will you freak out and melt down?

### **Believe God**

Consider Paul the apostle. He was a prisoner on a ship to Rome that was caught in a great storm. He was hungry from fasting. Nevertheless, he remained an encouragement to those around him—even to his captors. Paul continued to stand on God's Word—"I believe God that it will be just as it was told me" (Acts 27:25). That is **spiritual maturity**.

When the ship wrecked, the soldiers planned to kill all the prisoners. Paul could have gotten in the flesh to defend himself. Instead, he continued to stand on God's Word. He kept believing God that it would be just as it was told him. And when a poisonous viper bit Paul, he didn't have a panic attack. Instead, he continued to stand on God's Word. He kept believing God that it would be just as it was told him.

That must be our response when it feels like all hell is breaking loose against us. We have to go back to the Word—even if we have to get a concordance and look for Scriptures that may relate to our specific trial—and find out what God has to say about the situation. Then we have to believe God that it will be just as it was told to us. And we need to seriously rejoice, because when all hell breaks loose against us we can

rest assured that all of heaven has our back. Only believe. Amen.

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## Who Cares What They Think, Anyway?

I used to have such thin skin you could see my heart through my chest, or at least on my sleeve. I've had to learn to toughen up over the years, especially in the face of a constant barrage of verbal attacks from **religious spirits** who sometimes don't like what I say because it hits a self-righteous nerve.

But it wasn't a ministry encounter that caused me to grab the revelation that I needed to stop worrying so much about what other people were going to think or say about me. No, it was a very personal issue indeed.

I was going through hell at the time, watching my then-best friend make what I thought was one of the worst mistakes of her life. This was happening during the same season that the Lord was calling me out of an abusive church system. The **spiritual warfare** was coming at me from all fronts.

I stayed at that church for at least six months longer than I should have—and suffered more **spiritual abuse** than I needed to endure—because I was concerned that people would think I was leaving because my friend was getting married. I didn't want

people to think I was walking away because I thought the marriage was a mistake or that I was upset by the sudden change.

The truth is, I was walking away because the church was unhealthy. I was agonizing over how it would look if I left before the wedding, and not just for myself—for her too. I didn't want to put a damper on the wedding, even if I had grave doubts that it was God's will. After all, I was in the wedding. How could I walk away then without causing a stir?

### **Holy Ghost Encounter**

Finally, the **Holy Spirit** broke in to my emotional turmoil. He said, "Stop worrying about what other people think." Sounds like a simple **revelation**, but it changed my life. No longer was this just some advice from a friend. The **Spirit of God** Himself was giving me a **prophetic instruction**: "Stop worrying about what other people think!"

See, when you worry about what other people think, you are giving them a measure of control over your life that belongs to the Holy Spirit. If you worry about what other people think, you are in danger of becoming a people-pleaser rather than a God-pleaser. If you worry about what other people think, you may even give away some of your God-given identity.

I'm not saying that we shouldn't be sensitive to what we say or how we behave. That's not my point at all. What I'm saying is that when you are confident that God has told you to do or say something, then stop worrying about what people are going to think. And after you do it, stop worrying about what they are thinking after the fact. Constantly worrying about what other people think or are going to think is crippling existence, really.

### **What Would Jesus Do?**

When Jesus healed the paralytic and forgave his sins, some of the scribes were sitting there and thinking, "Why does this

Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:5-9) Jesus knew what they were thinking, but that didn't stop Him from healing the next guy. What if Jesus had worried about how it would look to heal and forgive on the Sabbath and started picking and choosing when and whom and how He would heal based on the day of the week or how sinful the sinner was? I don't even want to imagine that.

Jesus had a habit of casting out devils. After He healed a demon-possessed, blind and mute man, the Pharisees said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons" (Matthew 12:22-24). The Bible says Jesus knew their thoughts. Did Jesus put a screeching halt to His **deliverance ministry** because the **religious spirits** accused him of casting out devils with the power of darkness? No, because He wasn't worried about what other people think.

Now, do you think Jesus was sitting up all night worrying about what people thought of His **Sermon on the Mount**? Hardly. Did everyone who heard it like it? Doubtful. There were probably religious spirits there who launched all manner of accusations against the Word of God made flesh. That didn't stop Jesus from speaking and doing the will of God. It's not going to stop me. And it shouldn't stop you, either.

### **Who Are 'They,' Anyway?**

So commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established (Proverbs 16:3). Listen, it doesn't matter what they think. It doesn't matter what they say. Even if you make a mistake and really blow it, it doesn't matter what they think. It doesn't matter what they say. It only matters what God thinks and says about you. If you make a mistake, repent. We know that the thoughts God thinks toward us are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give us a future and a hope (Jeremiah 29:11).

And, hey, more times than not people aren't really thinking and talking about you anyway. More times than not, it's just

the enemy inserting imaginations into your soul to breed [insecurity, rejection or fear](#). What does God think and say about that? Listen in to the apostle Paul's **Holy Spirit** wisdom:

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ ... Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's” (2 Corinthians 10:5;7 KJV). Amen.

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## Knowing When It's Time to Surrender the Vision

I surrender ... I found myself saying those words while talking with the Holy Spirit about my frustrations.

Whether you are in ministry, in the marketplace or tackling the all-important task of raising a family—or perhaps, like me, doing all three at the same time—you will no doubt come to a point in your walk with God that you feel like giving up. Paul wouldn't have admonished us not to grow weary in well doing if he hadn't witnessed people losing heart at times along the journey (Gal. 6:9).

But I'm here to tell you that the answer is not to quit and give up. The answer is to surrender. And there's a vast difference between the two. As much as I want to sometimes, I'll never admit defeat in the midst of doing something God has called me to do. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13). And, of course, we know that God always leads us in triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14). I could rattle off a few other Scriptures to drive home the point, but you get the idea.

No, as much as I want to quit sometimes, I'll never admit defeat in the midst of doing something God has called me to do. But I have learned that there is a time to surrender the vision. Miriam-Webster defines the word *surrender* as "to yield to the power, control or possession of another upon compulsion or demand," and "to give up completely or agree to forego especially in favor of another."

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## **Are You Willing to Leave Your Baggage Behind?**

**One key to walking in the Word is leaving your issues—and your fleshly tendencies—behind.**

When I got saved I became a hardcore student of the Word. But when stressful situations arose it seemed I couldn't remember the Scriptural principles until after I'd stumbled over my own flesh.

As a young Christian, it was frustrating to know the right thing to do and somehow miss the mark anyway. Maybe you can relate.

I held on to verses like 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord," and Philippians 1:6, which says, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."

One key to walking in the Word is leaving your baggage behind. Over the years, I've unpacked quite a few drawers of flesh and emptied a number of soulish closets, so to speak. But an incident last week reminded me of the power of the Word to transform our hearts.

Through a **prophetic lesson**, I learned this: I need to do more than leave my baggage behind. I need to be willing to let someone else throw it away if it means showing lost souls the love of Christ. So bear with me while I share the highlights of my prophetic lesson.

### **A Prophetic Annoyance?**

The maintenance crew at my condo removed all baggage from the baggage room and put it into a large storage room during a recent painting project. I went to claim my baggage—about \$500 worth—on several occasions. Each time, the maintenance men told me to come back another day. Instead of complaining or losing my cool, I exercised the fruit of patience.

Last week, as my daughter was preparing to go on a mission trip to Australia, I again tried to retrieve my baggage. The maintenance men, who knew full well that I had requested this baggage several times, had thrown it away. Five-hundred dollars worth of baggage!

What was worse, the condo manager had me running up and down 15 floors looking in baggage closets for my items, only to have me follow this vain chase with a walk through a musky storage garage on the same hunt. Of course, my baggage was

nowhere to be found. They threw it away.

All of this was annoying, but it got worse. The condo manager suggested that I was lying about owning baggage and trying to retrieve it. She insisted that I show her photographs of my baggage and produce receipts. This was despite the security guard testifying on my behalf that I requested the baggage several times.

### **The Devil's Provocation**

A blind man was listening to all of this unfold in the lobby. With each affront, he nudged me to raise my voice and fight. He suggested I was being too nice, too kind, too calm ... Playing the devil's advocate, this man continued to cajole me. He suggested I storm down to the manager's office and give her a piece of my mind.

I won't lie. My flesh was tempted. This wasn't the first time the staff has treated me poorly and cost me a lot of time and money in the process. Finally, when it became clear that the condo manager would do nothing but continue to insult my integrity, the blind man said, "You need to raise your voice and fight!"

"Sir, there was a time when I would have," I said. "There was a time when I probably would have gone down there, adrenaline flowing, and sputtered loudly in her face with all sorts of demands and threats. But I'm not that person anymore. I've changed."

The blind man felt sorry for me. But the security guard, a woman I had led to the Lord some months earlier, marveled. She saw a glimpse of Jesus in that situation. What's funny is that I didn't have to think about keeping my cool or even try. It was just my natural response to the situation. Or, I should say, it was the grace of God working through me. That's growth! Glory to God!

### **The Lord is Our Warrior**

Sure, I was frustrated, but by the grace of God I was salt and light rather than bitter and dark. By the grace of God, I went more than the second mile. I went around the mountain a few times. By the grace of God, I refused to retaliate against the maintenance men or the accusatory condo manager.

Wow, I've changed. How about you?

I didn't share this story with you to pat myself on the back. Believe me, I have other issues to conquer. I wasn't nearly as patient this week as I was last week. But the point is I see fruit. So I didn't share this to puff myself up. I shared it to encourage you because you can probably relate to the struggle.

No matter what traits you see in yourself that you don't like—no matter what the **Holy Ghost** is shining a light on during this season—don't beat yourself up about it. Just see it for what it is and decide in your heart to agree with God and yield to His Spirit. He's changing us all from glory to glory and He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Be willing to leave your baggage behind and God will do a mighty work in you. Amen.

P.S. Just hours before I published this article, I received a phone call from the board of directors at my condo. The security guard interceded on my behalf with the board and the association manager agreed to reimburse me for the loss of my luggage. See, I didn't need to fight. The Lord, My Warrior, fought the battle for me. And He'll fight for you to. Be led by His Spirit. Amen and amen.

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# How to Forget Those Things Which Are Behind

Forgetting those things which are behind so you can reach forward to those things which are ahead (Phil. 3:13) can bring gut-wrenching pain to your soul. I know that pain all too well as I have experienced it a number of times.

To describe the process as difficult would be an understatement.

Sometimes moving on feels like leaving a piece of yourself behind. Other times forgetting those things which are behind seems like an exercise in futility. Still other times reaching forward to those things which are ahead is, well, let's just say you may feel there is a tug of war in your soul threatening to tear you apart.

Again, I know that pain all too well as I have experienced it a number of times.

Forgetting those things which are behind is perhaps one of the greatest challenges we can face, especially when those "things" were a major part of our daily lives. I've had to "forget" a husband, more than one best friend, several ministries and more—and sometimes in the midst of great **persecution**.

But I'm here to tell you that we can forget those things which are behind. Or at least we can remember them without the gut-wrenching pain we felt while we were making the transition. And we can press on toward the goal with joy.

**Soulsh Realities**

It all starts in the mind. What we think about can live on as reality in our souls long after a painful event passes. I remember a difficult split with a friend who was emotionally unstable. This friend was dear to me on many levels, but not a week went by when she didn't have an emotional meltdown and attack me verbally for "not being a friend." It was a false accusation, and she knew it in her heart. But she wanted from me what only Jesus could give her.

The **Holy Spirit** told me at one point that if it happened again to walk away because it was abusive—and it was distracting me from God's will. And it wasn't helping her, either. But alas, soulish compassion can cloud spiritual discernment.

It did indeed happen again, but I didn't obey God and walk away. Instead, I tried for another year to counsel her through her emotional issues with absolutely no fruit. In fact, it only got worse. I had become an enabler, of sorts. Finally, it got so bad that I had to cut the relationship out of my life altogether. And it was a painful cut for both of us.

Guilt, sadness, **condemnation**—a flood of emotions came to plague me. That's when I had to make a decision about what I was going to think about. The Bible says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). The enemy wanted me to wallow in that guilt, sadness and condemnation until I ran back to my friend with repentance and continued a relationship God had told me to cut off a year earlier.

### **Resisting the Past**

I had to resist that temptation with everything in me at first. After all, everyone likes a familiar friend. And nobody likes to hurt a friend. I had to quickly grab hold of the reigns of my mind, stop replaying the scenes over and over again in my soul, and reach forward to those things which are ahead. The only way out is through, and it starts with a disciplined mind.

Maybe for you it's not a relationship, per se. Maybe you need to forget past hurts, past failures—or even past successes. The point is this: Dwelling on an unpleasant past, no matter how recent or far away that past is, can't lead to healing. Dwelling on an unpleasant past isn't the path to **forgiveness**. Dwelling on an unpleasant past can't send you to the next place God wants to take you. It just can't. Dwelling on an unpleasant past can only keep you tied to that past, which hinders you from moving forward in God.

Beloved, if you were led by the **Spirit of God** to end your relationship with a person or place or if the enemy caused you to experience great loss in your life through death, divorce or some other tragedy, God has something better for you. And if your past is one of shame, guilt and condemnation for sins you have committed, God is ready, willing and able to forgive you and cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

### **Trust for Restoration**

Beloved, trust God. He will restore anything the enemy stole from your life—and He may even restore relationships with people who walked away from you (or people He told you to walk away from). Our job is not to wonder what could have been or what will be. Our job is to obey God. Be assured, when we don't walk in obedience to the Word the challenge to forget those things which are behind becomes even greater. He gives grace to those who seek to obey.

God is a progressive God. He's always moving forward. By His grace—and with a will determined not to dwell on an unpleasant past—we can overcome the challenge of forgetting those things that are behind. I won't lie to you. It won't be easy. The past may even come back to “haunt” you sometimes. But the battle really is in the mind. The good news is, you have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16) and God has a good plan for you. Press forward to that goal. Leave the past behind. Amen.

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## The Making of a Prophetic Prima Donna

In my editorial role at *Charisma* magazine I come across all kinds. There are many among the nameless, faceless generation who walk in a level of humility and honor that I aspire to. Then there are apostolic abusers and prophetic prima donnas, divas and all-out “exalted prophetesses” who walk in pride and pretense and don’t seem to care who knows it.

A recent encounter with a **prophetic prima donna** got me thinking: How do Christians with international ministries, book deals and large staffs become such drama queens (and kings) who think more highly of themselves than they ought?

### The Wrong Ladder

Did they start their journey as part of the nameless, faceless generation only to fall victim to pride’s puffery? Or were they always secretly striving for the spotlight? Were they always willing to climb over (and even trample on) anyone and everyone to get to the top of the ministry ladder?

What causes some Christians to flat-out abuse the people around them once they “arrived” in a position of authority? What does the making of a prophetic prima donna look like? How does it happen? And how can we keep from falling into this trap as God promotes us to more visible roles in the kingdom or in society?

Yes, I have a lot of questions because I don't want to become an apostolic abuser who maligns the character of others to cover up their own shortcomings. I don't want to turn into a demanding prophetic prima donna who is too big for her own britches.

### **Hollywood Christianity Syndrome**

In fact, every time I run into one of these prophetic prima donnas I walk away with the fear of God in me because I know that anyone can be deceived by the pride of life. Especially when success keeps knocking louder and louder. Especially when no one is willing to hold you accountable for the pattern of pride that consistently manifests in your life.

It seems the Hollywood Christianity syndrome causes even the most discerning believers to turn a blind eye to the evidence of deep character flaws that could be a symptom of serious sin. If we can't rightly discern and lovingly deal with the visible pride of apostolic abusers and prophetic prima donnas, how will we avoid the even greater deceptions coming in the end-times?

After much prayer and reflection, I've come to this conclusion: There is not any one formula for the making of a prophetic prima donna. I think we can fall into pride any number of ways. After all, we'll have layers of pride to peel away so long as we live in these fleshly tents.

### **Honor Vs. Puffery**

Think about it for a minute. From the world's standards, these prophetic prima donnas have plenty of which to be proud. "Successful" ministers worked hard to get where they are. They sacrificed a lot. We should honor them in a godly way for laboring over the Word, in prayer and in service to the body.

But I believe the snare of the pride of life becomes a dangerous reality when people begin to idolize "successful" ministers as demigods who are above reproach. We've seen this

time and time again when congregants vehemently defend and refuse to believe even the most blatant and public sins of their pastors. But it's just as real in the local church with unapproachable pastors.

Too often, "successful" ministers are surrounded by "yes men" who are either too scared or too ambitious to tell the pastor his behavior is not Christ-like. Instead of speaking the truth in love, they pray in silence. But too often nothing changes because the deception is so great.

Let me be clear: I'm not giving anyone a license to rebuke your pastor or anyone else. I'm merely suggesting that perhaps some leaders wouldn't fall if those whom the Holy Spirit quickened to speak the truth in love obeyed His prompting.

### **Get Over Yourself**

With all that said, I'm quite sure we all need to get over ourselves. We can't sit idly by and point the finger at the apostolic abusers and prophetic prima donnas at the expense of peeling the onion of pride in our own lives. The truth is, we are probably all too proud to see just how much pride we really walk in and if we don't think we have pride in our souls then we are already deceived.

I've come to the conclusion that in order to avoid falling into the sins of the apostolic abusers and prophetic prima donnas—the ones who mistreat people and begin to think they deserve a measure of the glory for running the ministry the Lord assigned them—we need to frequently check our own hearts. And we need to be open to hear those who labor with us if they suggest we may have an "issue" to deal with.

We need to ask ourselves: How are we treating people? How do we think about people? Do we take God's glory? Walk in false humility? I think if we all focused on walking in humility and love, we'd be more ready to hear and obey the Holy Spirit to help others whose pride may be setting them up for a fall.

Amen.

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## Prophetically Discerning Your Times and Seasons

I had never stepped into a church like it before. The **worship** ushered in the presence of God in a way I had never experienced. And I knew I was home.

Within seconds, the **Holy Spirit** told me it was a “safe place for this season.” I rejoiced in knowing it was a safe place after following Him out of a spiritually abusive church. But my heart simultaneously sank when He said it was “for this season.” From the moment I walked in, I never wanted to leave that place.

See, to everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven (Ecc. 3:1). I had entered into a season of refreshing and restoration after escaping a congregation where control and manipulation held many in bondage. The **Holy Spirit** needed to heal me where pastors had [worked to shame me](#). And I needed rest for my weary soul that had been pushed to perform beyond the grace of God.

When the Holy Spirit’s work was done, though, that season was over and He sent me out to do a work for Him in a new vineyard. The Lord had to almost physically push me out of the door to get me to go when the season was over because I didn’t

want to leave! Let's just say I didn't transition gracefully. I resisted the next movement of God in my life. God had to make it so uncomfortable for me to stay that I had no choice but to leave.

### **Don't Fear Change**

That's often the case when we are transitioning into new seasons. And it makes the move a more trying, confusing experience than it needs to be. Typically, it's not rebellion that keeps us from transitioning to the new place God wants to take us. It's often just ignorance, immaturity or fear of change. But failing to move in God's timing can bring unwanted consequences, such as strained relationships, financial loss and stress. We need to **prophetically discern** the times and seasons we're in and move with the **Holy Spirit**.

In Ecclesiastes 3, the Preacher said there is a time to break down and a time to build up. Are you breaking down what God is trying to build in your life by refusing to let go of what lies behind and press on to what lies ahead? The Preacher said there is a time to gain and a time to lose. Are you trying to hold on to something God wants you to give up? Likewise, the Preacher said there is a time to keep and a time to throw away.

Do you see a running theme here? We can't hold on to something that God wants us to let go of and move into the next season of blessings He has ordained for us.

Sometimes letting go means willingly, at God's direction, giving up friends who have been negative influences in your life. I've had this happen more than a few times. The **Holy Spirit** led me to leave Florida and everyone I knew 11 years ago in order to flush all the poisonous relationships out of my life. I had a **supernatural boldness** to leave but once I got there, I didn't transition well.

### **Just Surrender**

You might call it my **wilderness experience**. I remember sitting on a curb in a tiny Alabama town three days after arriving and crying my eyes out because I didn't know a single soul. I was there for 13 months and I resisted the transition for 12 of those months.

It's no coincidence that the Lord sent me back to South Florida one month after I told Him, "I don't like it here, but if you want me to stay here the rest of my life I will." Once I surrendered, He knew I was ready to go back and fight the proverbial lions, tigers and bears in South Florida again. I was looking out my window to the Atlantic Ocean within weeks.

Sometimes letting go means giving up your rights and allowing God to be your vindicator. God has vindicated me time and time again when I refused to retaliate against my (Christian) enemies.

I've endured emotional terrorism at the hands of church leaders who said they loved me. I refused to return evil for evil, and God promoted me. I've been robbed by Christian contractors more than once and had opportunities to prosecute but, led by the Holy Spirit, I refused to defend myself. God returned everything I lost and more. I could go on and on about the vindication of God in my life. But I had to learn to surrender, and sometimes it was a struggle.

### **Discerning Times and Seasons**

It isn't always easy to transition from one season to another even in the best of circumstances. Even great blessings can bring difficult transitions. The key to transitioning well is to first **discern the change in season**.

When you notice things beginning to rumble in your life, ask the **Holy Spirit** what is going on. Think back to the prayers you've released in recent weeks, months and years. Dig out **prophetic words** that have been spoken over your life. And stay prayerful. This will help you distinguish between the work of

the enemy and the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, which isn't always obvious—especially in the face of loss.

Once you've discerned that the Lord is ushering you into a new season, quickly get into agreement with Him. The Bible says, "(How) can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Surrender your will to the Lord's will and be sensitive to the leading of the **Holy Spirit**. When you do, you'll find peace and joy even in the midst of the most difficult transitions. When we resist the will of the Lord we find ourselves without the grace we need to rise to the occasion He is calling us to. He gives grace to the humble and He gives us the grace to be humble.

So no matter what season you are in now—and no matter what season the Lord has for you next—be encouraged. The Lord would say to you, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you ... thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). Seasons may change. Winds may blow. But God is the God of all seasons. Amen.

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## **A Prophetic Showdown Is Coming**

Just like Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal, the time is coming when God's New Testament mouthpieces will confront modern-day merchandisers. The true will defy the false. The holy will challenge the unholy. Until that day, **spirits of**

**divination**, with a little help from the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, are working overtime to woo God's true prophets to the side of error.

Some **merchandising prophets**, with their miracle water, prophetic soap and prosperity oil, are catching naive Christians hook, line and sinker. Other gospel gainsayers are profiting with urgent announcements that God will heal the first five people who run up to the altar with \$100 bill in hand.

But perhaps the most dangerous merchandisers are those who use their gift to tap into divination. These **prophets** announce what the believer wants to hear in order to sow a false seed of faith in his heart and reap an improper financial reward, inappropriately earned position or wrongly received recognition. No matter the merchandiser's brand of deceit, it is a practice that stinks in the nostrils of God.

"Then the Lord said, 'These prophets are telling lies in my name. I did not send them or tell them to speak. I did not give them any messages. They prophesy of visions and revelations they have never seen or heard. They speak foolishness made up in their own lying hearts. Therefore, says the Lord, I will punish these lying prophets, for they have spoken in my name even though I never sent them. They say that no war or famine will come, but they themselves will die by war and famine!'" (Jer. 14:14-15)

Of course, most false prophets don't start their ministries as **false prophets**, rather they are tempted and enticed by the idolatry in their hearts. Avoiding Satan's snare begins with the fear of the Lord and the promised wisdom that follows. After all, the merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies and all the things that you can desire are not to be compared to her (Prov. 3:14-15).

The wisdom in God's Word plainly illustrates that with every temptation there is also a way of escape. By comparing the responses of Balaam with Daniel and of Jezebel's diviners with Elijah, we get a clear view of the trap, the way of escape—and the ultimate fate of merchandising prophets.

Balaam is best remembered for his talking donkey. He was a true prophet of God who went the way of divination for the promise of financial gain when King Balak offered him rewards to curse Israel. But Balaam did not fall into sin upon the first temptation. In fact, he refused the king's initial offer. His royal majesty then upped the ante, promising the prophet promotion, honor and power if he would curse the Israelites. Balaam once again refused, saying "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more" (Num. 22:18).

Despite his bold confession to obey the Lord's will, Balaam secretly desired to attain the rewards pledged by the king. And so the testing begins. Balaam would follow his rebellious heart 320 miles on a donkey's back to curse Israel and claim his coveted merchandise. But to his surprise, the Lord would not allow him to pronounce the curse when he arrived in Moab. Disappointed and still hoping to collect the king's bribe, Balaam shared a strategy to trip up the Israelites through sexual sin that led to the downfall of his brethren.

Balaam had a clear way of escape: Telling the king's messengers upon their first visit that the Lord forbade him to curse Israel. That would have closed the door to future offers and put an end to the temptation that would lead to his destruction. The end of Balaam came by the command of Moses at the sword of his own people—the Israelites he tried to curse through divination.

Daniel, on the other hand, refused to give in to the temptation presented in King Belshazzar's dilemma. Belshazzar and his guests were drinking from gold and silver cups that

his father had stolen from God's temple and giving praises to idols when the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the palace wall. Belshazzar was frightened and summoned enchanters, fortunetellers and diviners to come, promising riches and power to anyone who could interpret it. When none could, the king called Daniel and made him the same offer (Daniel 5).

Daniel was faced with at least three choices at this critical turning point in his ministry. He could accept the king's offer to interpret the message, thereby merchandising his gifting. He could exercise the gift he had freely received from Jehovah to freely interpret the message, all the while knowing that such a harsh word from the Lord could land him in the lion's den. Or he could stand on his credible reputation as God's prophet to falsely interpret the warning message as a blessing message and in all likelihood collect the loot anyway.

Unlike Balaam, Daniel unlocked the hard truth in the writing on the wall. He told the king that his days were numbered and that his kingdom would be divided up and handed over to the enemies. Daniel refused to compromise, no matter the consequences, and God used the king to promote him. As one of his last acts as king, Belshazzar robed him in purple, draped a great gold chain around his neck and positioned him as third-in-charge of the entire kingdom.

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So while Jezebel's prophets had full bellies in a time of

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While Jezebel's prophets looked well-fed and God's true prophets looked like sheep being led to the slaughter, the story changes in a hurry when Elijah confronts the 850 merchandisers at Mount Carmel in what goes down in Biblical history as the ultimate showdown between the true and the false. Elijah threw down the prophetic gauntlet and challenged the false camp to bring fire down from heaven by calling upon their God. The merchandising diviners cried to Baal from dawn to dusk with no answer.

When the false camp had finally exhausted itself, Elijah built an altar holding a sacrifice to Jehovah, drenched it with four barrels of water, said a simple prayer, and watched as the **fire of God** fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust and even the water in the trench. Then Elijah slew his false counterparts one by one. So the ultimate fate of the false prophets came at the hand of the true prophet, who was later taken to heaven in a chariot of fire.

Like Old Testament prophets, **modern day prophets** are also being tempted to merchandise the anointing for fame, fortune or friends in high places. Being plugged into a strong local church is a safety net because apostles boldly confront false moves of the Spirit and give merchandisers a way of escape by leading them into deep repentance.

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The decision to go the way of Baal and or to go the way of Elijah lies in the prophet's heart. If pride, self-will, anger, or lust occupies the place where obedience, love and truth should live, then the merchandising prophet may succeed in reaping worldly rewards for a season but the retirement fund built on ill-gotten gains leads only to death (Romans 6:23). While there is certainly abundant grace for the true prophet who misses it, the Book of Revelation makes it clear that the false prophets (those who purposely set out to lie and deceive God's people) will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone and be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

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# Rejecting the Spirit of Rejection

Rejection used to have a tight reign on my soul—and I didn't even know it. All I knew was that I always felt like there was something wrong with me. I often felt like nobody really cared. And I sometimes felt like people were talking about me behind my back.

Rejection works subtly to destroy your self-esteem and your purpose. Rejection causes you to feel sorry for yourself. Rejection spurs you to reject other people before they have an opportunity to reject you. Rejection wants you to base your worth on what you do instead of who you are in Christ.

There is true rejection, but there is also imagined rejection. Indeed, rejection often works through imaginations. The **spirit of rejection** can twist your perception of circumstances so it looks and feels like you are being rejected even when you aren't. In the natural, it's called a misunderstanding. But if you don't cast down the imaginations that ride on the back of misunderstandings, the spirit of rejection will work to form a stronghold in your mind that controls your thought patterns and makes it easy for this demon to hold you in bondage.

Whether you are in full-blown bondage to rejection or just have an occasional battle with this spirit, the remedy is the same: Reject rejection and accept your God-given identity.

## **Praying or Condemning?**

I remember a time when I was really beating myself up over something. I was down on my knees virtually whipping myself with self-condemning pseudo prayers. I was just crying out to God over and over about the same weakness, asking Him to

forgive me and wondering what was wrong with me. There was nothing really wrong with me. I was just growing in character. But rejection was doing a number on me. And it didn't help that I had spiritual leaders who used shame as a tool to control the congregation.

Suddenly, in the midst of my self-rejection, I heard a still, small voice that said, "Would you just stop it?!"

That startled me. After all, I was on my knees praying out of my heart to the Father. Why would He want me to stop?

When I stopped, the Holy Spirit said, "How would you like to watch your daughter sit there and beat herself up every morning?"

See, I wasn't praying. Not really. I wasn't approaching the throne of grace boldly to receive mercy and find grace in a time of need (Heb. 4:16). Not really. I was merely repeating to God the words rejection had recited to me as if it was gospel truth. I was condemning myself for an innocent matter of immaturity.

As I sat there silently, tears still rolling down my cheeks, the **Holy Spirit** said, "Go read Ephesians 1:6."

I have to admit, I didn't even know what that Scripture said. Not exactly. I knew generally speaking that it had something to do with our redemption in Christ. I got off my sore knees and opened up my Bible. Wouldn't you know it? Ephesians 1:6 says, "He made us accepted in the Beloved."

Wow! That changed my whole perspective. God Himself interrupted my self-condemning prayer to let me know that He accepts me with all my faults and all my immaturities. From that point on, I made it my mission to reject rejection and accept my God-given identity.

## **The Voice of Rejection**

When I hear rejection begin to whisper that no one cares—and the spirit of rejection will often take the opportunity to say things like that when you are walking through a fiery trial—I tell that devil something like, “I cast all my cares upon the Lord, for He cares for me” (1 Peter 5:7). And my punch line is always, “I am accepted in the Beloved.”

Chances are, you’ll have to reject rejection more than once, either on the home front, in the workplace, or among friends. Whether real or perceived, rejection doesn’t just give up. If it can’t turn you into a self-pity-toting performer, rejection will puff you up with pride to compensate for your insecurities or lead you to fabricate a protective personality to guard yourself from more rejection. The key to **victory over rejection** is to reject rejection in whatever form it takes and accept you God-given identity.

When rejection comes whispering to your soul, telling you that something is wrong with you—you aren’t “this” enough, “that” enough or “something else” enough—reject that thought in the name of Jesus. The truth is, you are fearfully and wonderfully made. You are complete in Him Who is the head of all principality and power (Col. 2:10). You are God’s workmanship, **created in Christ** unto good works (Eph. 2:10). So reject rejection and accept your God-given identity.

Be conscious of your thoughts. Any thought with even the slightest hint of rejection should be immediately cast down and replaced with the truth. The truth is God loves you (Romans 1:7). The truth is you were delivered from the power of darkness and translated into God’s kingdom (Col. 1:13). The truth is you are forgiven of all your sins and washed in the blood (Eph. 1:7). The truth is you are the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). The truth is you are submitted to God and rejection has to flee from you when you resist it (James 4:7).

I could go on and on and on. If you want to keep it really

simple, do what I do. When rejection comes whispering, I tell that devil: "I am accepted in the Beloved." And nothing else matters. Not really. So reject rejection and accept you God-given identity in the name of Jesus! Amen.

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