

How This Prayer of Miracle Faith Saved a Boy's Life

The prayer of faith saves a boy's life, but before you read this wonderful testimony that just took place, let's talk about faith and the prayer of faith.

What is faith and the prayer of faith? First we have the matter of faith. What is it? Certainly it's not feelings. According to Hebrews 11:1 (NKJV), "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is a supernatural foundation, it literally upholds you. Its strength depends upon your relationship and communication with Elohim, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, James refers to something called the prayer of faith in his writings. We would think that whenever we pray, we use faith, but apparently, this is not always the case. Much of what is said during prayer is not faith at all. Let's face it, there is a lot of whining, complaining and blaming going on during prayer.

And how many times have you heard it said in prayer, "If it be Your will..." There is no faith activated in a prayer like this. This statement shows that the heart is not settled upon God's will in the matter. It reveals insecurity and a lack of trust in the God who truly cares for your needs.

This is especially true when it comes to prayer for healing. If we do not know the will of God to heal, we cannot pray with faith and believe that God hears us and responds to us according to our words full of faith.

On Sept. 19, 2019, at 10:58 p.m., I received an urgent prayer request for a young boy who was in a serious accident at the point of death.

Mrs. Becky,

My co-worker called to inform me that her son was riding his bicycle when a car accidentally hit him. Her son had surgery on his brain and leg. She shared with me that the doctors told her that his blood level is too low, and he does not think he will make it. Can you stand in agreement for Dion? I believe God will heal this precious child in the name of Jesus.

Thank you always,

Paulette

My response to Paulette's prayer request, Sept. 19, 2019 at 11:04 p.m.:

In the name of Jesus, I renounce this spirit of premature death over this child. I command it to leave him. I release the Spirit of life to flow in and throughout his entire being. I speak to his brain, heart, lungs, kidneys and all other organs to be recreated. I command you to not shut down, but to come back to life in Jesus' mighty name, I say live in the name of Jesus. Holy Spirit, hover over this little one in Jesus' name, amen and amen.

Call his mom and read this aloud to her in Jesus' name, amen.

On Sept. 22, 2019 at 12:02 a.m., Paulette responded with a wonderful praise report:

Mrs. Becky,

Glory be to God! After following instructions and saying the prayer out loud that you sent, a miracle from God happened. Dion's mom said the doctors completed the CT scan and ran tests and could not find where the bleeding was coming from in her child's head. The doctors told her that her son was

supposed to be dead because the fracture that was connected to the skull, and a vessel was bleeding. The doctors told her to call her family and get her son's affairs in order.

But while her son was in ICU, and right after saying the prayer you sent out loud over him, she said the four doctors who were examining her son told her that her son will recover. And all of sudden, they were able to reach a vessel that was far back in his skull and impossible to reach, but now they were able to reach it and stop the bleeding.

He is out of critical condition, and the doctors expect to move him out of ICU soon. He is eating and talking too. The doctors are still in shock.

Dion's mom said, "God is amazing!"

And I praise God, our healer! God bless you, Mrs. Becky.

The prayer of faith is such a powerful gift given to all of us who will actively believe and receive all the goodness God has for us. Will you activate the prayer of faith today? {eoa}

Check out Power to Heal, Charisma's new e-book, available at [this link](#) for the low price of \$.99.

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the author of DARE to Believe, Greater Than Magic and The Healing Creed. Visit her at .

This article originally appeared at. Its teaching comes from The Prophetic and Healing Power of Your Words, Chapter 8, "Prayer Strategies" on page 149.

3 Steps to a More Authentic Relationship With God

Bible study can be encouraging—until we begin to put the people of the Bible on a pedestal.

It's so easy to think of them as almost mythical individuals. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Peter, Paul—we read their accounts and imagine them to be larger than life. We even excuse their foibles, frailties and outright sins because, well, they're biblical *heroes* of the faith!

But doing this creates a problem. The problem is that we begin to believe the lie that the transformative power of God isn't for real people like us with real problems and real sin. After all, the people of the Bible didn't live lives that included the kind of things we deal with today ... or did they?

Then we get to the book of Psalms. In the psalms, we read authors who bare their hearts and tell it like it is. They get real.

Here are just a few examples:

Ever feel as if God doesn't care about your troubled circumstances? So did David in Psalm 10:1 "Why do You stand far off, O Lord? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?"

But David did not remain stuck there. He refocused on God's character in verses 16-18: "The Lord is King forever and ever; the nations perished from His land. The desire of the humble You have heard, O Lord; You make their heart attentive; You bend Your ear to judge the orphan and the oppressed; man on earth no longer trembles."

We see a similar response in Psalm 13. David began with verses 1-2: "How long, O Lord? Will You forget me for good? How long

will you hide Your face from me? How long will I harbor cares in my soul and sorrow in my heart by day? How long will my enemy loom over me? How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?"

Then he concluded in verses 5-6 (NIV): "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me."

Ever feel envious of the wicked and wonder why they prosper while you're trying to do what's right? So did Asaph in Psalm 73:3-5: "I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills."

But just like David, Asaph changed his perspective by the end of the Psalm in verse 28 (MEV): "But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have taken my refuge in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works."

Perhaps you've been falsely accused. David understood that, too, as he wrote in Psalm 109:1-2 (NIV): "My God, whom I praise, do not remain silent, for people who are wicked and deceitful have opened their mouths against me; they have spoken against me with lying tongues."

And once again, he concluded with a different perspective in verses 30-31: "With my mouth I will greatly extol the Lord; in the great throng of worshipers I will praise him. For he stands at the right hand of the needy, to save their lives from those who would condemn them."

David and Asaph did not allow their circumstances to define God. Yet they were authentic and transparent about their struggles. And from reading passages such as these, I've learned three things to help me as a follower of Christ in my

relationship with God

–**Problem:** I can be real about my problems in talking with God and with others. Being a Christian doesn't mean we slap a plastic smile on our face and pretend life is wonderful while we're crying on the inside. Being authentic means facing reality, whether it's pleasant or not.

–**Pour out your heart to God:** God can handle whatever I need to tell Him. He is omniscient—He knows everything. Which means He already knows what I'm thinking, so nothing I say to Him will be a surprise.

–**Perspective:** It's okay to tell God how we feel. Even Jesus did it in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from Me" (Luke 22:42, MEV). But like David and Asaph, He also refocused on who God is—in this case, His sovereignty—when He finished the sentence by saying, "Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

I can be real about my circumstances and my discouragement, but I can't stay stuck there. As a child of God, in Christ, and with the indwelling Holy Spirit, I need to look up. To consider the character of God. To rest in the truth of His attributes. And to trust that He is always at work for my good and for His glory.

Those people in the Bible? Yes, they were real people with real problems. Let's learn from them and model the same authenticity. For as we read what they wrote, we hear echoes of the cry of our own heart.

And when we get real with God and others, a watching world will see His power lived out in real people. {eoa}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 "Chicken Soup for the Soul"

books. She also authored Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at .

This article originally appeared at .

5 Spirit-Filled Ways to Push Past Obscurity and Make Your Greatest Impact

In your wildest dreams, what mark do you hope to leave in the world?

What do you want people to say about your life, your business?
How do you want to be remembered?

Go ahead. Scribble it, say it, type it out.

Now, ask yourself this question: Why shouldn't you be this person right now? If you are floundering in life and fading in obscurity, it's time to upgrade your plan.

It's not too late to recalibrate!

5 Ways to Push Past Obscurity and Make Your Greatest Impact

Give yourself the freedom to dream big. This is not the time for small thinking but to be brutally honest about the deposit of greatness God has entrusted to you and the call to live out your best impact.

When you recalibrate your life to go over the top, get ready for some pretty exciting things to happen, but also prepare yourself to meet real resistance and learn to overcome.

So without further ado, here are my five ways you can

recalibrate your thinking and upgrade your life plan for your greatest impact:

1. Write the vision. Lean in as God refreshes your thinking and map out a simple plan to live and work into bringing your best impact in the spheres of influence where God has placed you.

2. When you process your vision and the obstacles, avoid rehearsing the problem. Identify it and immediately get ready to access divine counsel in prayer. As a spiritual professional, a praying man or woman on assignment in your field of expertise, remember you have a direct line to the counsel of the Holy Spirit. To keep the line open, confess your sin and take Communion.

Live and work in a way that doesn't grieve the Holy Spirit but honors the one within you.

3. Forgive those who have hurt you. Work through the pain and move to a higher place with the capacity to dedicate your full bandwidth, mentally and emotionally, to become the one you are called to be. There's only one with your DNA, your fingerprint, and others will suffer if you don't show up to bring your unique mark and impact.

4. Try a pilot. Making your new plan can seem daunting at first. Look for baby steps that will move you in the right direction as you make changes in small bites.

Baby steps count!

You don't have to have the whole plan in place to make small improvements. You'll be surprised how small steps add up and fuel your progress in accomplishing your best impact.

5. God is searching for people who will acknowledge His leadership. These are those who have ears to hear and implement heavenly plans according to His leadership to

transform lives, companies, cities and nations one life at a time.

You are awesome, and I can't wait to hear about your vision! One of the things I'm best at is helping people just like you clarify your dreams, create your path, overcome obstacles and succeed with IMPACT. I host an annual gathering in Kansas City, Missouri, and it's coming up. You can bring a friend, a team or just get away solo to work on your plans and dreams in a safe and inspirational setting.

Click this [IMPACT 19](#) link and register now!

Find more encouraging tips, listen to this week's podcast!

Linda Fields, MBA, is an American educator, marketplace ministry leader, entrepreneur, author and keynote speaker teaching a unique approach to personal leadership and professional success. She is an ordained Evangelical Christian minister and host of "The Linda Fields Show" on the Charisma Podcast network. Find her at .

How a Python Spirit Tried to Dismantle This Woman's Ministry Trip

When we end up in the emergency room, most of us look for medical solutions. But when Jennifer Eivaz suffered respiratory problems that sent her there and home for bed rest right before a major ministry trip, she made an immediate connection.

“I made some assumption that it was, first of all, spiritual warfare,” she says on the “Take 10 With Jenn” podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network. As she researched Australia, one of her planned destinations, some disturbing information came to light: An aboriginal deity was likely at work.

“It was known as the wāgyl. It’s a snake-like creature, I would liken it to a python spirit. And it was in their tradition responsible for the creation and protection of waterways and land forms around present-day Perth, and southwest of Western Australia.

The aboriginal tribes, Eivaz discovered, “were later appointed as the guardian of the land by this wāgyl this snake-like, python-like creature, and certain tribal elders were visited by this dreamtime being. ... although this could seem somewhat mythological, elements of the wāgyl are often represented in Perth architecture and its design structures.

“I learned in my experience that things we dismiss as myths are actually spiritual strongholds in the land that need our intercession. ... Think of how a python behaves in the natural, and you’ll understand how it manifests in people, even those who believe in Jesus but are unaware. ... I’ve done a lot of deliverance work with it as a result of what I learned on this trip. Many people with chronic breathing issues, they’re not dealing with a physical issue as much as they are dealing with a spiritual issue.”

Learn about the territorial demon in Scripture that this spirit resembles and how you can learn to deal with a python spirit in this podcast. {eoa}

Click here to receive your own copy of The Spiritual Warfare Strategy Guide for just \$.99.

How This Woman Discovered the 'Diet' Mentality Was a Road to Insanity

This time it was real. This time it was a deep, gut-wrenching decision. I surrendered sugar to God. I knew my life was never going to be the same again.

Longing for Change

In the past, I'd get to a place where I wanted to lose weight and I'd look for a diet that could get the weight off fast so I could eat what I wanted again. This time, I was looking for a way to get sugar out of my system for good.

I knew it had a hold over me. I knew I had willfully chosen to eat things with high sugar and high carbohydrate content. I knew that just telling myself to stay away from it would only make me want it all the more.

I heard of a mother who was a drug addict. Both times when she got pregnant, she would stop doing drugs for nine months so her child would be born healthy. Then she would reward herself for delivering a healthy baby by starting to use again.

Diets and Willpower

I was the same way with diets. I would muster up the willpower to resist sugar for a short time. Nine months was about the time frame where I could lose 100 pounds by not eating sugar and staying away from starchy foods.

Once I got to my goal weight, I would reward myself with a big treat, and that was it. I was off to gaining weight again.

I wanted to break this cycle. I wanted to change, but I knew I needed God to help me. I needed to trust Him with my food issues. Learning to do that was the challenge.

I began attending a new harmful life patterns group that my mentor, Russ, was starting. We began by discussing the first three of the Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 Steps. I had no idea if those were God-inspired or not, but God spoke strongly to me through them.

Accepting My Problem

To begin with, I admitted I was powerless over sugar and that my life had become unmanageable. I was shocked by how closely my issue was aligned with that of an alcoholic.

If I walked into someone's house and there was a plate of warm cookies right from the oven, my mouth would be salivating. I would immediately be craving those cookies! If the hostess didn't offer them to me, I might rudely ask for one first.

To realize that a plate of cookies could wreck any resolve I made was hard to admit. Just sitting there in our meeting thinking about those cookies made me want to go home and bake. There was no holdback with this statement.

I readily admitted I was powerless over sugar and foods with high carbohydrate content. Admitting or accepting that I have a problem was my first step. I had never done this before. I had not seen my issue as something I could not control, but one look at me at 430 pounds and that was apparent to anyone else.

I Turned My Will and Life Over to God

Step 2 was much harder. I had to skip it and come back later so I went on to step 3 This was something I had already done in part. I made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God, as I understand Him.

I had surrendered sugar to God. It was a real, deep and honest expression of my desire. I knew I couldn't walk it out on my own. The important part of this step that I felt God was dealing with me about was turning my will totally over to Him.

I'm stubborn. My mother used to tell me I'd argue with a fencepost if it would talk back. Actually, it probably didn't need to talk back. I'd still argue. I was an oldest child who had a lot of responsibilities at home, and I was the boss. There were times my stubbornness was necessary, but at times, it felt overwhelming.

Finally, I saw how I needed to lay that part of my life down. I needed to allow God to be my boss. It was a great relief when I finally did this. It felt like a huge load was lifted off my shoulders. God is in charge of me now! It felt so good.

I Am Insane

God still wouldn't let me get away with not facing step 2. The reason this step was so difficult for me was that it required me to admit I was insane.

My mother had manic depression when I was growing up. She was in and out of mental hospitals. Although we never spoke of her as insane, it was the unspoken word that hung in the air. I never wanted to be insane.

Step 2 says I came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. So that means I am admitting I am insane. Over the process of several weeks, God gently revealed to me that what I had been doing was crazy.

Restoration to Sanity

Willfully allowing myself to get to 430 pounds, willfully having surgery to take care of the problem, then willfully negating that surgery was insane. Every time I went on a diet, lost weight and gained it back again plus more was insane!

“Dear Jesus, I need help to restore myself to anywhere near sanity. Have I ever even been there before? I need You to help me understand how to live in any state that is near sane. I need directions to sanity restoration.”

Once I prayed that God began to reveal to me how the diet mentality had been my road to insanity. It promised a short-term fix for a long-term problem. It presupposed that if one minute I'm eating all the sugar and high carbohydrates I want that in the very next moment I can stop all of that and begin to eat a greatly restricted menu.

This never did fix my issue with food. I felt I had failed with every single diet I'd ever been on because I gained the weight back again plus more. Diets were actually causing me to gain rather than lose. Now that's insane!

Stop-Start

I needed to allow God to bring sanity into my life by helping me focus on good habits I wanted to start. When I asked my mentor how I could do this he had a ready answer.

“Diets tell us things like, ‘Don't eat sugar,’ Russ explained. “All our brain hears is ‘sugar, sugar, sugar.’ We can abstain for a while, but eventually we go back to it because our focus is on sugar.”

What he suggested was to focus instead on a good habit I wanted to start. Then, put firm boundaries around the bad habit I wanted to stop. I named this new tool stop-start. I stop a bad habit, and I start a good one in its place.

“Don't try to stop sugar all at once,” he suggested. “Stop one aspect first. One that you know you can do. Start something that you have been wanting to do because you know it's good for you. Make it a SMART goal: very specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely.”

My heartfelt desire was to say I'm stopping all sugar, but I knew if I did that, I would have the same results I always had. I'd eventually go back to it. So I chose to stop my trigger food, which was candy. It was a SMART goal because I knew exactly what it was.

I began to see that a stop without a start was just another diet. The start was the thing I had to focus on. So the start I chose was to exercise in the water three times a week for 30 minutes. It was also a SMART goal.

Easiest Hard Thing I've Done

This, along other tools he taught, began to help me completely change my lifestyle and eventually lose over 250 pounds.

I learned that it's not as simple as just going on a diet. It's a lot more difficult, but it is the easiest hard thing I've ever done. That only happened when I finally admitted to God that I needed His help.

"For when I am weak in human strength, then I am strong, truly able, truly powerful, truly drawing from God's strength" (2 Cor. 12:10b, AMP).

God radically changed me when I simply began listening to Him and, along with a group of peers, began following the guidance of a mentor who knew how to lead me out of my addictive lifestyle. {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of five books and two study guides, including her latest, *Sweet Journey to Transformation: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Live Healthy*, and her No. 1 best-seller, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds*. She is also a blogger, spiritual weight loss coach (check out her coaching group, *Overcomers Academy*) and speaker at .

This article originally appeared at .

For stories of supernatural healing, check out *Power to Heal*, available for just \$.99 at [this link](#).

The Miracle That Brought This Woman's Dead Heart Back to Life

Jennifer Eivaz had just finished leading a prayer conference and felt satisfied with the outcome. But God had more work to do—in her own heart.

“In the middle of the night, the Holy Spirit appeared in my room, just a tremendous glory, a tremendous power,” Eivaz says on the “Take 10 With Jenn” supernatural podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network. “And He picked me up out of the bed ... and He brought me, in the most tender way, He brought me to His chest in a brief but life-changing holy embrace. Upon contact, I felt something from Him drop into my heart.”

The “heart” she refers to, explains Eivaz, is not the muscle that pumps blood through our bodies. “I’m referring to the spiritual part of us where our emotions and our desires dwell, something the Bible mentions almost 300 times,” she says, adding, “My heart was miraculously resuscitated by that encounter.”

A heart doesn’t need to be resuscitated unless it has stopped or died. So the Lord revealed to Eivaz that “large parts of my heart had died. ... because of grief and sorrow and betrayal and

pain and loss and so many other things. ... I had killed off my own heart from today's pain, and I didn't have feeling anymore, I didn't have care anymore in those dead places."

Check out *Charisma* magazine's new e-book, *The Spiritual Warfare Strategy Guide*, available at a discounted price of just \$.99 at this link.

To learn more about God's miraculous healing and the prayers God gave Eivaz to present her own and others' hearts to the Lord, listen to the podcast!

Chip Gaines Sets the Record Straight on Baby No. 6

Christian home improvement stars Chip and Joanna Gaines are known for their family values and love for their five children. Recently, Chip teased that another child isn't out of the question.

"There's a running joke with the people that run in our circles where anytime things are going well between Joanna and me, at the end of that statement, I'll sarcastically say—used to be sarcastically—'No. 5, No. 5,'" Chip said.

Chip and Joanna welcomed their fifth child, Crew, in July 2018.

Chip continued, "Well, now we've got five children. So now, sarcastically, I would say, 'No. 6, No. 6,' when things were going well."

While announcing their new network on *The Tonight Show With Jimmy Fallon*, the pair joked that when they stopped filming *Fixer Upper*, they got pregnant.

Read the rest of this article at Movieguide®. Find out what God's doing in Hollywood!

How Prophecy Into Her Own Life Gave This Woman the Strength to Lose 250 Pounds

The heart-pounding strains of the *2001 Space Odyssey* theme stuck me as I walked through the doors of the Freedom Seminar. I am sure I looked as frightened as I felt.

My friends Nancy and Judy, who had paid my way, along with friends of my fellow trainees, were cheering us on as we entered the room. Then the doors closed and there we were: 24 strangers together with those who would guide us for eight days.

It was February of 1994. I weighed 430 pounds. Life was never going to be the same again.

How Committed Are You?

During the opening session, Russ, whom I knew as my adult Sunday school teacher now turned trainer, stood in the middle of the circle where we were seated. Without moving, he made eye contact with each of us.

Then, he said, "We are all here for a reason. We are all on a journey. We want something for our lives that will bring us greater freedom. Our journey will take commitment to this process.

"Right now, I want you to think about this question. How committed are you to this process with, 0 being 'no commitment' and 10 being 'Wow, I'm all in, 100% committed'?"

Immediately, I felt like I was a two. I was there to write a story for the regional Christian newspaper I edited and published. I was there in observation mode. I wasn't there to be a part of any process. Sure, I needed to lose weight, but I didn't expect this seminar to help me do that.

I would stay for the duration because my friends paid the fee, but I was definitely not there for any participatory aspects. Then he said, "So let's do some sharing. Stand and tell us where you are and why."

I stared at the floor. Then to my surprise, people started getting up and talking. The first ones who stood were the go-getter types. They were all passion and excitement. They were all-in, but they had valid reasons as to why they wanted the process to work.

What Keeps You There?

Then one brave woman stood and said she was a two because she was skeptical that anything would help her. Finally, someone like me, I thought. I greatly identified with her.

Russ asked her, "What are the barriers that keep you at a two?" I don't remember what she said, but I remember what I was thinking. "I don't want to have to stand up in front of all these people and say my biggest problem is what they already know just by looking at me. My weight is the barrier that has me stuck."

Then he asked, "What would it take to move you to a five?" My unspoken answer was that it would take me understanding what was driving me to eat. Then, I realized that if I felt anything could actually help me figure that out, it would move me to a 10. The answer couldn't be that I was just born to be fat.

How Is This A Reflection of Your Life?

When I came back to myself, Russ was asking another question. "How is this exercise a reflection of how you do your life? And what would it be like if you always did your life at a level two commitment? What would it be like if you could do your life at a level 10?"

He had my wheels turning. I knew if I stayed at two, I'd be stuck for life. If by some chance I could begin to live my life at a 10, I could do anything with God's help. I knew God wanted me to live at that 100% commitment level. I also knew that I was holding back being all in because of the foods I loved to eat.

That day, I began to dream of what it would mean if I were all-in, living life at that 100% level and not settling even for 99%. Observation mode went out the window, and I decided I was all-in for the process.

The entire eight-day seminar was a spiritual, God-directed journey just for me. I sensed throughout the entire time that God was directing my every step and my every thought. I felt His presence more strongly there than in any church service I had ever been in.

What Kind of Person Can Have What I Want?

Towards the end of the seminar, we spent some intense time in small groups working to discover what we wanted to be our true identities. It began with me asking myself the question, "What do I really want?"

After a lot of drilling down to get to what that really was, I said, "I want to write books."

Pat, the trainer working with me, asked, "What kind of person can have what you want?"

That took more time and more back and forth with questions from Pat and my group until I got down to the real answer. It stemmed from something Russ had said during the seminar. He had defined "holy" as "whole and healthy."

God Words

Then in a flash, God dropped words into my mouth. I said, "It would take a whole, healthy, happy person to write the kind of books I want to write."

I didn't think about it. I just said it. After I said the words, I saw their truth. No one can be an author unless they are whole emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. They need to be healthy in all those areas in order to have the clarity, stamina and energy they need to stay with the process of writing a full-length book.

They also need to be happy. The process of writing needs to bring them joy. They need to be happy within themselves.

During the seminar, I had gotten a glimpse of the areas in which I was sadly lacking. I wasn't whole emotionally. I had a lot of issues I needed to deal with. I had faulty mindsets. I had spiritual disconnects. I wasn't even sure I trusted God.

I knew before I came that I wasn't healthy. Weighing 430 pounds did not a healthy woman make. My weight was not just affecting my health, it was affecting every part of me.

I wasn't happy. I should have been. I had a wonderful husband, great children and loved what I did. Yet I knew personal happiness was missing.

Self-Prophecy

The next step was a huge one. In order to have what I wanted, I had to prophesy into my life. I had to declare to the group who I was. The trainer called it making a contract with yourself, but it just felt as though I were lying.

How was I going to do this? Remembering I was 100% committed to the process, though, I took a deep breath, gathered all 430 plus pounds of me and said, "Hi, I'm Teresa. I'm a whole, healthy, happy woman of God."

I can still hear the applause. It was one of the best days of my life.

Life-Guiding Statement

That statement has guided me every day since then. At every Freedom Seminar reunion, we would introduce ourselves with our "I am" statements. Though it took me many more years before I fully stepped into that self-prophecy, God used that statement to guide my life.

I remember the first time I went to a Freedom gathering after I had lost 250 pounds. Embracing the fact that I had fully stepped into my self-prophecy made tears come to my eyes.

God knew my future back then. He pulled back the curtain of my life and inserted His words into my mouth. They were words that said what my destiny would become.

As the seminar came to end, 24 strangers, who'd become more than friends, gathered in a circle with their arms around each other's shoulders and sang a final meaningful song together.

I sensed God crying tears of joy with all of us. I know every single piece of my Freedom Seminar experience was God speaking into my being, breathing His life into me, guiding me on my path.

Thank You, Jesus, that today, I am a whole, healthy, happy woman of God. {eoa}

Teresa Shields Parker is the author of five books and two study guides, including her latest, *Sweet Journey to Transformation: Practical Steps to Lose Weight and Live Healthy*, and her No. 1 best-seller, *Sweet Grace: How I Lost 250 Pounds*. She is also a blogger, spiritual weight loss coach (check out her coaching group, *Overcomers Academy*) and speaker at .

This article originally appeared at .

Understanding This Biblical Pattern Can Predict (and Prevent) Adultery

What if we could predict an extramarital affair before it took place?

Research shows us there is a way to do just that, says Dr. Barbara Lowe, psychologist and host of “Dr. Barbara’s Whole Life Podcast” on the Charisma Podcast Network. “There is a specific cascade into betrayal ... we can predict the pattern of betrayal just looking at people’s behaviors before they have an affair.”

But that’s not the most amazing part, Lowe says. “We are going to see the Word of God actually shows the same pattern as far as how we turn away from the Lord and the promises of God, and

that what we turn toward is not God.”

Popular language in speaking of marriage today, even in Christian circles, focuses on meeting needs. “We have hungry hearts; we have needs and desires in our hearts,” Lowe says. But the way we get those met can either be right or wrong.”

And betrayal hurts so many lives, Lowe says. “Maybe your parents split up over an affair; maybe your spouse has had an affair; maybe you’re tempted to have an affair; or maybe you’re feeling very distant from the Lord.”

Listen to the podcast as Lowe examines the cascade to betrayal land from both a natural and a spiritual lens. {eoa}

3 Critical Choices You Must Make When You Know You’ve Heard From God

I’m a person of strong opinions. It’s a rare occasion when I don’t have an opinion on a subject.

Lately, though, I’ve been wondering about the art of disagreement. Without meaning to, I’ve come up against passions that run high and emotions that run deep. The subjects cover everything from the national debt to exercise preferences to application of Scripture. While I understand the strong feelings—I have them myself—I don’t understand the hostility that targets and denigrates anyone who believes differently.

A Few Examples

Several years ago, I wrote a blog post describing my observations about yoga. Do I have strong feelings about it? Yes, I do. However, what surprised me were the comments that went far beyond thoughtful agreement or disagreement (which I welcome). Many comments attacked those in the opposite “camp.” I found it necessary to delete some because of their uncontrolled vitriol. By the way, the hostility came from both sides—Christian and non.

On another note, friends, acquaintances and strangers have been posting scathing denunciations of Republicans or Democrats, depending on which side of the aisle they identify with. Hyperbole abounds in an effort to portray the opposing party as unintelligent, elitist or communist. And those are some of the more civil terms!

Finally, I had a conversation with a young lady who disagreed with something I taught from Scripture. The position I hold is one supported by many well-respected Christian denominations. The position she holds is held by many well-respected Christian denominations. Unfortunately, rather than agree to disagree, she gave vent to vehement indignation at what she pronounced to be “false teaching” simply because she did not have the same view. I should add this was not a matter of interpretation, but simply a matter of application.

These three experiences cause me to wonder: *Have we lost the ability to disagree without attacking those who hold an opposing view?* These days, disagreements quickly deteriorate into *ad hominem* arguments, where the person is targeted instead of the position they hold.

Convictions and Preferences

I am *not* saying we should compromise our convictions. But perhaps the issue is that we don't understand the difference between a *conviction* and a *preference*. A conviction, according

to *Webster's Illustrated Contemporary Dictionary*, is "a fixed belief." A preference is "the choice of one thing or person over another." A conviction is something we would die for. A preference is not. A conviction is something we would stake our reputation on. A preference is not.

Before we engage with others on everything from politics to shampoo brands, perhaps we should spend some time—and prayer—determining our convictions and our preferences ... and deciding which is which. And most importantly, listening to what the Holy Spirit has to say to us about both.

Then we have a series of choices to make.

We need to choose our **motive**. When we respond to those who disagree with us, are we doing so out of anger, self-righteousness or love for others caught in error?

We also need to choose our **venues**. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven" (Eccl. 3:1). A social media venue such as Facebook is not the place for Christians to unleash a torrent of negative comments about nonbelievers, and then expect to be a witness to our unbelieving friends! Come to think of it, Christians shouldn't be doing that *anywhere*.

Finally, we need to choose our **words**. Some words are more emotionally charged than others, igniting fires and leaving charred remains in their path. Certainly not what we want to do if our goal is to persuade others to our views.

The art of disagreement does not require compromising our convictions. It does not even entail parking our preferences. It *does* involve respecting those who disagree with us. Who knows? Someday, they may even be won over to our way of thinking—or we may be won over to theirs!

Your turn:

How might distinguishing between preferences and convictions

help you better handle disagreements? {eoa}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 "Chicken Soup for the Soul" books. She also authored Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at .

This article originally appeared at .