

11 Characteristics That Will Destroy the Marital Intimacy You Crave

The following are 11 specific characteristics of intimacy anorexia. As you read through this, if you are the anorexic, try to keep your heart and mind open. If you're not sure if one applies to you, ask your spouse. He or she would most likely be able to give you a clear picture from their perspective.

Busy

The first characteristic of an intimacy anorexic is *being so busy you have little time for the spouse*. Let's start with inside the house. An intimacy anorexic keeps so busy that they have little time for their spouse. This may include: doing homework together with a child (without the spouse), playing with the children and excluding the spouse or working on solo projects around the house.

Technology is a dream come true for many intimacy anorexics, since it can feel as if they are actually doing something or relating to the images on some type of screen. The computer, and especially the internet, is the greatest avoidant strategy of our day.

Some intimacy anorexics have busy avoidant strategies outside of the home to actively withhold intimacy from their spouse. These activities can be positive and easily justified by the intimacy anorexic. The person who volunteers to avoid intimacy has a cause they are helping and can justify their absences. The religious person is saving the world, but intentionally withholding from their spouse.

Blame

Blame, as an anorexic characteristic, is almost universal. Blame comes to life *when an issue or problem comes up in the marriage and the anorexic blames or puts responsibility on the spouse for the issue, instead of acknowledging their contribution to the problem or issue.* As you understand anorexia better and how an intimacy anorexic wants to be in the “good box” all the time, you will see that it makes being flawed (irresponsible, thoughtless, careless, bad and so on) unacceptable to discuss (if you are the anorexic). Blaming is almost reflexive for many anorexics.

Withholding Love

The anorexic often has a difficult time perceiving the intangible nature of withholding love. To withhold love is *to not give love to your spouse the way you know how to, or how they have asked to be loved.* Each one of us wants to be loved, and yet we all experience being loved in many different ways. Spouses may want emotional sharing, long walks, a thoughtful note or gift that says, “I was thinking of you.” Some just want help around the house or with the children. Each spouse needs to be shown love, and the anorexic already knows how the spouse wants to be loved.

If you go back to dating, what meant a lot to him or her? If your life was dependent on your answer, could you say how your spouse feels your love the most? If you’re the intimacy anorexic, and you agree now that you know how your spouse receives love, then why are they doing without it? If you don’t have a clear rational reason, without blaming, let me suggest that you are actively, intentionally, withholding love from your spouse.

Withholding Praise

The withholding of praise is also a significantly recurring behavior for intimacy anorexics. To withhold praise is *to not share with your spouse about their positive qualities as a*

person and their positive impact on your life. Let's go back to "if your life depended on it...". If you had to write 10 things that are amazing and positive about your spouse or how he or she is impacting your life in a positive way, my bet is, again, you could make a list, and pretty quickly. Think about the last week or month, and how frequently you intentionally praised your spouse. How often are you praising your spouse in front of his or her family, your friends or even the children?

Withholding Sex

By far, of all the behaviors that are characteristics of intimacy anorexia, withholding of sex is probably the easiest to measure, and at the very least, most obvious. *Withholding sex from your spouse is avoiding having sex, sabotaging sexual encounters or not connecting emotionally during sex.* You can tell whether you are the spouse or the anorexic by observing the last time you had sex.

Withholding Spiritually

The characteristic of withholding spiritually is also only noticed by the spouse. Withholding spiritually is *withholding spiritual connectedness from your spouse.* This means regardless of faith practices or lack thereof, there is no real spiritual connecting behavior with the spouse. The anorexic might be religious to the hilt, but lacks spiritual authenticity in the presence of their spouse.

I've heard countless excuses, especially from the religious (regardless of faith) anorexic. *I do this just by myself. It's not my personality. My spouse is too spiritual (or not spiritual enough) so I don't connect with him or her spiritually.* Regardless of the rationalization, there is an absence of spiritual connecting between the intimacy anorexic and their spouse.

Feelings

This characteristic can be described as *being unwilling or unable to share feelings with their spouse*. Having difficulty sharing feelings is a universal characteristic of the intimacy anorexic. The sharing of feelings is an act of authenticity that can be scary, difficult or both for the intimacy anorexic. Their unwillingness or inability to share feelings can be intentional, so as to not give you love the way they know you like it. There is a time when it could legitimately be a skill deficit; in that case, when he or she does the Feelings Exercise with you, you will both experience real effort and connecting.

Criticism

Having ongoing or ungrounded criticism that leads to distance in the marriage is the seventh characteristic of intimacy anorexia. This can be the low-grade put-downs toward the spouse, noticing what they do wrong or just regularly pointing out their bad ideas.

The ungrounded criticism has little to do with reality. That strategy may be to push the spouse away or throw them off the trail of something; either way, it is intentionally creating distance.

Criticism in this category does not need to be spoken. Many spouses have told me that their husband or wife doesn't actually speak their criticism, but they can feel it constantly.

Anger or Silence

My experience with intimacy anorexics is that not all use silence or anger as a characteristic of their intimacy anorexia. However, those who use anger or silence as a characteristic use it with a vengeance. This intimacy anorexia characteristic can be described as *any use of anger or silence to push away, punish or control the spouse*.

If the intimacy anorexic uses anger or silence as a tool in their anorexia, you can expect it often. If the intimacy anorexic chooses to pursue recovery, this behavior will need consequences and boundaries to conquer. This characteristic is best explained by real-life examples such as those listed below from intimacy anorexics and their spouses.

Money

The characteristic of *controlling or shaming the spouse about money issues* is probably the least common among intimacy anorexics. Those who employ it use it with an iron fist. Most of the anorexics who control or shame with money do so by keeping the spouse ignorant of the finances, giving their spouse an allowance, making the spouse ask for money or not allowing the spouse to have a credit card or checkbook.

There is another side of controlling through money as well. I call it controlling through abundance. This spouse, male or female, has substantial money, but controls with it. Their attitude is, "I buy you everything, so don't complain about a lack of intimacy, love or sex." This type of controlling by money isn't as obvious as those who control by not giving.

Roommate

The characteristic I have seen in a vast majority of intimacy anorexics' marriage relationships can be summed up with the keyword "roommate." *The spouse of the anorexic feels like, or has started feeling like, a roommate.* I have heard this same comment so many times from spouses that I often add it to the end of my assessment of clients for anorexia.

If you have five or more "yes" responses to these characteristics, I would encourage you to read the book, *Intimacy Anorexia: Healing the Hidden Addiction in Your Marriage*. Be encouraged, there is always hope for change to those who are willing and able to apply the effort to change.

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Anne Graham Lotz: Through My Cancer, God Is Giving Me a Message for Israel

*“The word of the Lord came to me again: ‘What do you see?’”
(Jer. 1:13).*

I’m sitting here in a snowstorm two weeks before Christmas, in between back-to-back chemo treatments, wondering ... what do I “see”?

At 70 years of age, why did I come down with cancer? My cancer is potentially fatal. It struck swiftly and unexpectedly. It required immediate, prompt, drastic surgery and follow-up treatments that include chemotherapy and radiation. Through our prayers and God’s answers, I believe I will be victorious over it. But the word of the Lord has come to me, “Anne, what do you see?”

As I have contemplated the answer in light of my present circumstances, I have wondered ... Could it be there is more to my cancer at the age of 70 than just a random coincidence?

In the Bible, God often had His spokespersons live out the

message He gave them ... *before* they delivered the message to the people. For example:

–Hosea was instructed to marry a woman who then became unfaithful to him as he lived out in a very personal way the broken heart of God over unfaithful Israel (Hos. 1:11-14).

–Jeremiah was told to purchase a linen belt, wear it, bury it, then dig it up when it was ruined and useless to live out a demonstration that God had bound Jerusalem to Himself, but she would not listen to Him, so He would ruin her and render her useless (Jer. 13:1-11).

–Isaiah lived out his own vision of the Lord, high and seated on the throne (Isa. 6:1) before he revealed that God’s people would also see the Lord. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light has shined” (Isa. 9:2). “For unto us a child is born ... And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6).

For years, I have believed that my life was entwined with the nation of Israel. I was born one week to the day after her rebirth. We are both 70 years old. Could it be that God has given me a message for her that I am living out in my own experience? This is what I seem to see.

In Israel’s 70th year:

–Just as my cancer is a potentially fatal disease, is Israel also in danger of being attacked in a potentially fatal way?

–Just as my cancer struck suddenly and unexpectedly through no fault of my own, will Israel also be struck by her enemies suddenly and unexpectedly through no fault of her own?

–Just as I have not been immediately and quickly delivered from cancer, will Israel also not be quickly delivered from her enemies as she was in the 1967 war?

–Just as I am having to fight the cancer with chemotherapy cell by cell, will Israel also have to fight her enemies region by region, village by village, street by street, house by house?

–Just as I have had to turn to God to be my defender, refuge and strength throughout this cancer journey, is it time also for Israel to turn to the God of her fathers, to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? The God of Moses and Joshua and David? Now, before it's too late.

The warning I feel deep within is that Israel is in danger of a surprise attack in this, her 70th year. This is the message God has placed on my heart for her:

*Yet even now, declares the Lord, return to Me with all your heart,
and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning. Rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and He relents from punishing. Who knows? He might turn aside and relent, and He might leave behind a blessing (Joel 2:12-14a).*

And this is the message God has placed on my heart for you and me, for God's people. It's time, once again, to: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: 'May they prosper who love you! Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!'" (Ps. 122:6-7).

It's time to pray for Jerusalem and for the whole house of Israel. If you agree, please join me in prayer:

Our Father in heaven. God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ. You are the eternal I AM. The one who is age to age the same. There is no shadow of turning with You. You are fully present in every generation—past, present and future. You are the Almighty. Your power has not been deleted or depleted over the millennia of human history.

We know that You so loved the world that You gave us heaven's treasure when You sent Your only Son to die, so that anyone and everyone who places their faith in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. Yet we also know that Your great heart of love still longs to pour out Your blessing on the city and the people that You have uniquely chosen as Your own: Jerusalem. The house of Israel. The Jews.

Your people and the city that bears Your name are surrounded by a vast multitude of hostile, evil men seeking to kill and destroy. Men who behead those who refuse to embrace their evil dogma, who bury alive those who refuse to submit to their will, who crucify those who are identified with Your Son. And now these demonic forces are on the verge of being equipped with nuclear weapons and with WMDs. They are tunneling under Israel's borders, funneling in their weapons and terrorists, ready to rise up and slaughter the innocent. Your people are subjected to the continuing barrage of enemy missiles and fiery parachutes that destroy farms and families, communities and children, while shattering peace and serenity.

One ceasefire after another promises peace, but when Israel's land is divided and surrendered for peace, when people cry out for peace, peace—there is no peace. Are You not the God who rules over all the nations? Power and might are in Your hand, and no one can withstand You. You are the defender of the weak. You are our refuge and strength. An ever-present help in times of trouble (Ps. 46:1).

Hear us, great Jehovah God. We are compelled to pray for Your people because they are facing their enemies without the

strength, wisdom, peace, comfort, security and hope that You reserve for those who are indwelt by Your Spirit through faith in Your Son, Jesus. They have no deep, blessed assurance that their sins are forgiven, that eternal life is theirs and that a heavenly home is waiting to welcome them. We are compelled to pray because:

–You have promised that You will give Your people a new heart and put a new spirit within them; that You will remove their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh (Ezek. 11:19).

–You have promised that in the very last days, You will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication (Zech. 12:10-12).

–You have promised that You will open the eyes of the spiritually blind, and they would look on You, the One they have pierced (Acts 26:18, Zech. 12:10).

–You have promised that all of Israel, tribe by tribe, clan by clan, family by family, will mourn for their sin of rebellion and rejection of their Messiah (Zech. 12:11-14).

–You have promised that on that day of national mourning and repentance, all of Israel will be saved. That the deliverer will come from Zion; that You will turn godlessness away from Jacob (Rom. 11:26-27).

–You have promised that You will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and You will cleanse them (Hos. 14:4).

–You have promised that they will be Your people, and You will be their God (Ezek. 37:23).

–You have promised that You will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them (Ezek. 37:26).

–You have promised that one day, and we believe soon, You will set aside 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel who have been redeemed and on whose foreheads You write Your name, to

be proclaimers of the gospel to the whole world (Rev. 7:1-4, 14:1-5).

–You have promised that You will go out and fight against the nations that come against Your people, that You will set Your feet on the Mount of Olives once again, that You will be King over the whole earth (Zech. 14:3-4, 9).

O Abba Father! We do not ask for what we want or what we hope. We are asking You to do what You have said! You are a great covenant-keeping God. You do not mock Your children. You keep Your word. So, be a wall of fire around Jerusalem. Cause Your power and glory in her midst to return her to You with all her heart. For the glory of Your great name, the Prince of Peace, Yeshua the Messiah, Amen. {eoa}

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How You Can Use Your Words of Faith to Bless Others This Christmas

Since our words are filled with power, I believe they are a gift we can bless others with every day, especially during this Christmas season. Why not start your morning with the following confession of faith to Jesus before rising out of bed, “This is the day that the Lord has made, and I will

rejoice and be glad in it" (see Ps. 118:24).

If you see that your spouse is struggling to get out of bed due to physical pain or illness, use the power of your words and bless them with the prayer of faith, "In Jesus' name, I renounce this pain and sickness, and I release the healing power of Holy Spirit to flow in and throughout your entire being; be healed in His mighty name, amen."

When you walk into the kitchen and find that your teenagers are arguing with one another or your teen is speaking rudely with you, instead of joining in the fight and making matters worse, use the power of your words wisely and break the power of rebellion with a kind and sincere word. For example, "Kids, I know you are at odds with one another, but we are family. Let's sit down and calmly talk the situation out." Or if their words are blatant rebellion against you, start saying the words they really desire to hear from you, "I know we don't agree, but I want you to know I love you." If they respond back with stinging words such as, "I hate you!" hold your tongue and say, "I know, but I love you." And keep on daily with words of love, concern and understanding; eventually, you will break that spirit of rebellion.

Whatever the source of confusion, declare words of faith according to God's promises, and eventually the power of your words will win. The Bible is very clear concerning the power of our words; here are three verses to take to heart. "the merciful man does good to his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own body" (Prov. 11:17). Proverbs 15: 1 counsels us, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." And Proverbs 15:4 says that "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it crushes the spirit."

When out in public, start the habit of greeting people again with a warm "Hello" and a smile on your face. Many people live in such an environment of contention that your kind words, as simple as they may be, will be what God uses to bless people

with and start to soften their hard hearts. Remember, you don't always know how someone else has hurt this person with their evil use of words. Maybe their spouse insults them on a consistent basis, or their kids are sassing off to them, or their boss just yelled at them for making a mistake, or their coworkers are so dysfunctional that all they hear are derogatory comments all day.

My challenge to all of us this Christmas is to gift people with the blessing of our words. It's not as difficult as we may think, and words really do create or destroy people. Let's use them this season to glorify God and bless His people.

Are You Expecting God to Do the Unexpected?

Christmas has always been my favorite season. After all, what's not to like? But this Christmas season is a bit different, as my celebration is muted because of the loss of someone precious to me.

What about you? It may be difficult for you, or someone you love, to celebrate this year. Burdens of loss, financial pressures, health complications or depression can build an impenetrable wall, brick by brick, separating you from the joy of the season. And yet, when you least expect it, God has a way of showing up.

He did it for me last week.

Someone I didn't know well took me aside at a holiday gathering. She shared how she had suffered from depression most of her life. When she attended my husband's memorial

service this summer, she heard the story of his battle with depression. She also learned how God had healed him—not of his cancer, but of the depression he struggled with for decades.

My pastor closed the memorial service by doing something unexpected. He sensed the Holy Spirit prompting him to pray for the healing of those there who might be suffering from depression.

In her words, “Who goes to a memorial service to be healed of depression?”

Indeed. Who does?

But that day, God showed up unexpectedly. And four months later, she took me aside to share how she had not experienced a day of depression since the memorial service.

Two thousand years ago, God also showed up unexpectedly, this time in the life of a teenage girl. He showed up with news delivered by an angel—news that turned her life upside down, and then turned the world upside down. Or maybe a better description would be right side up! Still, the religious leaders of His day failed to see Him because they were convinced God would reveal Himself in a different way. They refused to consider the possibility that God might be moving in another direction.

God is still showing up unexpectedly. But if we’re laser-focused on what we’ve decided He should do, we’ll miss the work *He* wants to do in and through us.

Like my husband, you might be praying for healing in one area, only to learn God is at work in another area of your life.

Trust your heavenly Father to wrap you in His grace and surround you with His peace. Then trust Him to work sovereignly to fulfill His perfect purposes. You just might find He will give you what you need, when you need it.

Unexpectedly. {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 .

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How to Find God-Ordained Prosperity in Every Area of Your Life

It’s almost Christmas, and we are living the American dream—family, home in the suburbs, two cars and all the Christmas gifts we can buy. It requires money and lots of it. Secretly, we all hope when the Bible tells us we will prosper and be in good health as our soul prospers (3 John 2), it means we are going to be rich and maybe this year we can buy that really special gift for the one we love.

America is already one of the wealthiest nations, but are we really prosperous?

What Is Prosperity?

What is prosperity? Does it just mean financial success and wealth? What does it mean for my soul to prosper? I know God says He has plans for my good and not my disaster (see Jer. 29:11, NLT) and I want to have faith to believe that is true, but does it include everything, even money?

If it does, am I ready for it? Are you?

The standard dictionary definition of prosperity would lead me to believe prosperity only means being successful financially. In the Hebrew and Greek, though, “prosperous” means to have success in all areas of life. In the Aramaic, it means “to advance.”

To be successful in God’s kingdom, I must be perpetually advancing in every way, not just collecting a lot of money and sitting on it or squandering it. Money can be used for worthy purposes, but only if I have the rest of my life in order first. Otherwise, it will mean sure disaster.

Prosperous Soul

To be prosperous, I must advance in every area—physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. If the soul part of me, the part that is the essence of who I am, is continuing to advance along with my spirit, I will advance in other areas, namely, a healthy body.

Healthy in mind means having a healthy thought life. Healthy emotionally means not allowing emotions to control me but understanding their purposes. Healthy in will means to have my primary goal in mind and always assert my will to be in line with what God shows me is my ultimate goal.

The way things are supposed to work is my thoughts control my emotions, which then control my behaviors. Many times, especially when I was battling sugar addiction and my weight was climbing skyward, I found my emotions dictated my thoughts, which then resulted in my behaviors acting totally contrary to my primary desire to be healthy.

“When I want to do good, I don’t; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway” (Rom. 7:19, TLB). Even when I understood this, it was hard to bring my emotions in line. When I was able to somewhat control my emotions, then my

thoughts would run helter-skelter and throw me off course once again.

Keys to Prosperity

During this conundrum, I learned several key things.

1. I don't have to follow every suggestion my thoughts throw at me.
2. My emotions have deep roots in my past, which I can with God's help understand how to manage.
3. I need to guide my will by keeping what I really want to happen at the forefront of my brain.

When I understand these things, my mind, will and emotions will continue to come into line with what God wants for me. I won't stay stuck in the muck and mire of my past. Through forgiveness of various past scenarios and hurts, I can move forward to the well-being, success and destiny God has planned for me.

Kingdom Success

Another big key, though, is understanding how God measures success. To Him success is when I totally surrender to Him and deny myself (Luke 9:23), which means to focus on Him and not on my fleshly wants and desires.

The following defines true kingdom success: "Blessed [morally courageous and spiritually alive with life-joy in God's goodness] are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil things against you because of your association with Me. Be glad and exceedingly joyful, for your reward in heaven is great [absolutely inexhaustible]; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5:11-12, AMP).

The only way I advance in the kingdom is through total submission to what God wants for me trusting Him for the

ultimate success. If that is finances, then I need to learn how to submit totally to Him and advance in every other area so that I will be able to correctly handle such an assignment.

Spirit Health

My spirit's health is directly related to how much I allow the Holy Spirit to do His deep work within me. If I am listening to Him, if I am following Him intently, every area of my life will exude His prosperity.

"God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, His Spirit deeply and gently within us" (Eph. 3:20-21, MSG).

My success in His kingdom is totally related to how well I do only the things He has planned in advance for me to do. Those might be as simple as hanging clothes out on the line, home-schooling my kids or being involved in their education in some way, cooking a healthy dinner for my family, really taking time to love and appreciate my husband, teaching children's church for 3-year-olds or taking time to encourage a friend.

These can be some of the good works He has called me to do. When I do even what seem like the simplest of things, I am His masterpiece, His handiwork, His work of art, His poetry, His workmanship (see Eph. 2:10).

Nothing would provide true prosperity for me more than that.

Are you willing to ask God for prosperity? What would that look like for you? {eoa}

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Your Isa. 7:14 Reason to Wait With Holy Hope

What is the longest you've waited for something you wanted? In this age of instant gratification, "wait" is a four-letter word in more ways than one.

The oven takes too long, so we microwave our food ... then stand in front of the microwave, counting off the seconds because even that takes too long!

Dial-up internet service wasn't fast enough, so we converted to DSL, only to replace DSL with high-speed internet.

Remember the days when we waited to see the photographs we took? We developed the film and printed pictures from the negatives. Polaroid film provided photos within minutes, but even that took too long. Now we can see our digital photos instantly.

Since we work hard at not having to wait for anything, it can be difficult for us to understand how long ancient Israel waited for her Messiah. The original prophecy for His coming can be traced all the way back to Genesis 3:15 in the Garden of Eden. But the prophet Isaiah spoke of Him by name: "Emmanuel."

'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name

Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14).

The ancient Latin hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” translated by John Mason Neale, has its roots in Isaiah’s prophecy. “Emmanuel” is God with us. Today, Christians understand the historical reality of Jesus’ coming and experience the presence of His Holy Spirit.

But 700 years before the first coming of Jesus Christ, Isaiah spoke an amazing prophecy of the one who would be born of a virgin—God incarnate. Beginning with this prophecy, the hymn writer included other names and characteristics of Emmanuel. He was the Son of God. The Dayspring who brings light. Wisdom personified. The “desire of nations” who would someday bring peace.

The saddest part about this is not that Israel waited 700 years for Isaiah’s prophecy to be fulfilled. No, the saddest part is that when Jesus came, the religious leaders failed to recognize Him as the one for whom they had been waiting.

Have you been waiting for peace and wisdom and light in your own life? Don’t be like the religious leaders of Jesus’ day. Recognize the source of all these things is Jesus Christ, and Him alone.

Enjoy the planning, preparations and anticipation while you wait for Christmas to arrive. But as you check off the days, recognize that you no longer have to wait for the answer to your deepest needs. “Emmanuel” has already come. {eo}

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 .

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Avoid This Popular but Demonic New-Age Practice

Is it OK for Christians to sage their homes? No, it's not OK. Let's find out why.

First of all, what is "saging" or "smudging"? And where does it originate from? Burning sage is a ritualistic practice originally used by Native American shamans to spiritually cleanse the atmosphere of an area, such as a home or a person from evil spirits, negative energy or to release healing.

What is a shaman? A quick search on Google defines a shaman as "a person regarded as having access to, and influence in, the world of good and evil spirits, especially among some peoples of northern Asia and North America. Typically such people enter a trance state during a ritual and practice divination and healing." Other names for a shaman would be medicine man or woman, sorcerer or witch doctor.

This practice of saging a house is common among followers of New Age and shamanistic beliefs, and sadly, is becoming increasingly popular in Christian homes. Why would this practice go against Christian beliefs? Because the center of Christianity is Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, our Savior, our Deliverer, our Healer. Acts 4:12 tells us, "There is no salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Whom should we trust to save us from evil?

"My soul waits in silence on God alone; from Him comes my salvation" (Ps. 62:1).

Acts 4:12 has this to say concerning Jesus as our Savior, "There is no salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

"But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one" (2 Thess. 3:3).

"The Lord shall protect you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul" (Ps. 121:7).

What does the Bible have to say about those who practice witchcraft?

Revelation 18:23 says concerning the practice of witchcraft, "The light of a lamp shall shine in you no more, and the voice of bridegroom and of bride shall be heard in you no more. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery" (Rev. 18:23).

What does Revelation 21:8 have to say about this? "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, the sexually immoral, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars shall have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. This is the second death."

Galatians 5:19-21, "Now the works of the flesh are revealed, which are these: adultery, sexual immorality, impurity, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, rage, selfishness, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I previously warned you, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Let's take a moment to pray a simple but heartfelt prayer of repentance from this evil practice in the name of Jesus.

Father God,

Forgive us for not understanding that burning sage to protect us and cleanse us from evil spirits is a sin. And that such

sinful practices testify that we do not believe in the power of the redemptive blood of Jesus to deliver and protect us from evil. Jesus forgive us for not valuing Your blood. Cleanse us and our homes from any and all lingering spiritual effects of this demonic activity. From this moment forward, we renounce the ties to this occult practice. Help us, Holy Spirit, in these last days to use godly wisdom found in Your Word for us this day.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. {eoa}

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the author of DARE to Believe, Greater Than Magic, The Healing Creed and her new book, The Prophetic and Healing Power of Your Words. Visit her at [. You are welcome to click and have a free preview of Chapter 1, or you can click to purchase your copy now.](#)

This article originally appeared at [.](#)

Prophecy: 'The Hour of My Coming Is at Hand'

The Spirit of the Lord would say to you in this hour:

Wake up. It's not time to sleep or to slumber, for the greatest hour of power is upon you.

Light is crashing into darkness, and the light will not blend with this darkness but will cause a great separation.

You are either for Me or you are against Me, and the motives of your heart will be clear for all to see.

If you love the ways of this world, the love of My Father is not in you.

You make your decision this day about whom you will follow.

My sheep hear My voice, and the voice of another they will not follow.

No longer will I allow you to hide behind titles and positions; your sins will find you out.

Now is the time to get down on your knees and repent of the darkness you have been harboring within your heart.

Those who repent of their sins are forgiven and set free from them, and those who do not are bound to the chains of their chosen sins.

I am not taking you out of this world, but calling you to let your light so shine within it that they may see your good works and glorify My Father in heaven.

I have been sending you My prophets, and yet many of you refuse to head the message upon their tongue.

The time is ever so short, and I need my people to prepare for My great coming.

Prepare your hearts for all that is about to take place. Do not allow even a bit of leaven to remain. Release yourself from the sin of unbelief.

I am coming for My bride who is without spot or wrinkle.

Get rid of the leprous spots of sin by the power of My blood and iron out all the wrinkles of the old man and his ways.

Be ready in season and out of season to share with others your reason to believe.

Be prepared to demonstrate with the power of Holy Spirit My

love for them with signs and wonders that truly make a difference in their lives.

I tell you that all lives matter, young and old and in between, and the color of skin does not matter, for I have created all equally with the same power—My love.

What counts is what's on the inside. Do you love Me? And if you do, you will feed my sheep and tend to my lambs.

I say to you, "Love Me with all your heart, soul, and might, and fight the good fight of faith, remain faithful to the very end. And those who will remain faithful to Me to the very end will hear, "Well done, though good and faithful servant." And to hear the sound of these words will make all things worth it in the very end.

The end of this earth is near, and it is nearer than you think. The hour is upon you.

You will witness great darkness, and this darkness will quickly overtake the earth. But be not dismayed, for even in the midst of great filth, rebellion and grave sin the light within you will shine even brighter.

Snuff out your light they will try, and they will if you let them. But for those of you who will take a stand for Me, I will uphold with My righteous right hand. And if I am for you, who can stand up against you? You need to ask yourself, "Am I willing to take this stand?" And if so, "How do I strengthen myself now for what is at hand?"

Prepare yourselves in My Word: read it, study it, speak it and live it. And be ready to share it with your life to all those around you. Take time now and hide away with Me in the presence of My Father. Learn to sit still and listen for that still small, voice of the Spirit. And be very aware of a very powerful spirit of deception that has risen from the depths of hell against you. This spirit of deception will come to you as

an angel of light. It will be beautiful to behold, and for the unsuspecting, it will snuff your light for me out, and you will walk hand-in-hand with it, but know that you have been foretold of its assignment against you: to steal, to kill and to destroy you. And for the undiscerning, its attack will be subtle and seemingly harmless, and for those not in right standing with Me, their light will be snuffed out.

You are not a lone ranger in this battle, but you are part of a body—My body, and even though you may be part of a remnant, together, you are stronger than ever. It will appear that you are outnumbered, but open up your spiritual eyes in this hour and know that there is a heavenly host around about you, and I am making intercession on your behalf. The heavenly host obey My command as you release the protection of My righteous right hand with your prayers of faith.

Oh, eye has not seen, and ear has not heard all of what is about to take place. For soon, and very soon, you are about to gaze upon My face. The completion of your spiritual race is about to take place. I say to you, pick up your pace, for soon you will be dressed with a fine white lace, and you will leave this earth without a trace of the wickedness of this place.

For those who have made the right choice, it's time to lift up your voice and rejoice.

For My coming is at hand, just as it was planned. And for those of you who will take a stand, and your station you faithfully man, you will not be like sinking sand, but I will pluck you from the enemy's hand, and around My throne you shall surely stand. Again I say, "Be ready, for My coming is at hand." {eoa}

Becky Dvorak is a prophetic healing evangelist and the author of DARE to Believe, Greater Than Magic, The Healing Creed and her new book, The Prophetic and Healing Power of Your Words. Visit her at [. You are welcome to click and have a free](#)

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Are You Crazy or Just Crazy-Busy?

“I will strengthen you, I will help you” (Isa. 41:10).

Hey, did you hear about 27-year-old Amber Miller, who, in her 38th week of pregnancy, completed the Chicago Marathon, then checked into a hospital to plunk out a healthy baby girl?

Now that’s what I call a mom on the fly!

Well, you and I might not officially run marathons, but we both know our feet fly at a marathoner’s pace most days. So many things we *must* do, a few things we *want* to do and countless things we *should* do.

You know, *should* is a dangerous word. It’s a stress-filled, pressure-packed slave driver. It ruthlessly inflates the bulk of a mother’s to-do list, often crowding out healthy sanity-essentials with guilt-induced clutter.

“I *should* go to that parents’ meeting; in a weak moment, I said I’d be treasurer.”

“My mother thinks I *should* cook a big dinner every night like she did.”

“I really *should* make time to bake a pie for my new neighbor.”

“Shouldn’t I crochet cute beanies for my kids like Perfect Patti does?”

"I *should* clean my house so the kids won't write notes in the dust."

Our *shoulds* may be fueled by self-comparisons with friends and neighbors, subtle cultural messages, high expectations imposed on us by church, civic, or family members or maybe even unrealistic regulations we've self-inflicted to become a perfect mother ... as if that fairy-tale creature really exists.

But as every woman striving to squeeze into last year's skinny jeans knows, more isn't always better; sometimes it's simply overwhelming. You know, we can be "whelmed" without being overwhelmed. "Whelmed" is livable; "overwhelmed" is strangling. We just have to recognize that we truly do have the power to choose which *shoulds* are potential *coulds* ... and then unapologetically embrace the woman our choices make us.

Only then can we clear the choking clutter and take a deep, cleansing, reinvigorating breath. *Whew*. The pressure is now manageable.

Once when I was playing baseball with my preschool grandbuddy, Blaine, his mama started filming. Suddenly I couldn't pitch the ball straight for love nor money. "Whoa! The pressure's on!" I acknowledged, throwing the ball everywhere but over the plate.

Blaine, wise beyond his 5 years, calmly laid down his bat, reached for an imaginary faucet valve, turned it, and said, "Okay, Mimi. Now the pressure's off. Play ball!"

Yep, sometimes we need to take the initiative to turn off the pressure valve and just play ball. Here are a few tried-and-true suggestions to stymie the flow:

-Be stress-smart. When you're slammed into a stress mess, sit yourself down and have a calming cup of your fave hot beverage and a snack (*not* baby carrots—something satisfying but not too fattening so you don't add calorie remorse to your stress baggage). Close your eyes. Tune in to Papa God's loving

presence. His heartbeat. His peace. Slap guilt to the curb when the tyranny of the urgent attacks; *you* are important. Everything else can wait a few minutes. I promise you the world will not end while you regroup. Unless the kids start a fire in your panty drawer.

-Move to the front. Promote yourself off the back burner. Don't argue, girl, just do it. You may sacrificially place yourself there routinely, but your Creator doesn't. You're a front-burner person to Him. He wants you to enjoy this marvelous gift of life He's given you, not sludge through it. So it's time to add a little fun to your day. Write yourself into your schedule for an hour of something you enjoy a minimum of three days a week—walk in the sunshine, bike a woody trail, sing, boogie, dig in your garden until you find Papa God there, get your nails done—whatever tingles your toes. Put that beautiful smile back on your face. And speaking of pots on burners. . .

-Avoid B00P—Boiling Oatmeal Overflow Phenomenon. B00P is one of my Coty Near-Facts of Science (theories not yet proven by actual scientific studies but nonetheless known by women to be true). You see, I postulate that women are like pots of oatmeal; at the beginning of the day we simmer—little manageable bubbles of stress rise to the surface and harmlessly pop. But as the day progresses, the heat escalates and the oatmeal boils higher and wilder and meaner until it overflows and spoils everything around with a nasty, ugly, sticky mess. The key to avoiding B00P is to know when to remove the pot from the heat.

-Be a dipstick. The Lord puts only enough fuel in your daily tank for you to arrive safely at the destination He's routed out for you. All the detours you add will either run you out of gas or land you in a ditch. Check your tank, review your destination, and then engage in the Three Ps: Prioritize, Plan and Pace yourself. {eoa}

Debora M. Coty is an inspirational speaker and author of the popular book series, *Too Blessed to be Stressed*. Her passion is sharing a blend of biblical truth gift-wrapped in humor, encouragement, and unconventional wisdom with women of all ages. She believes that the stresses of life become manageable when we truly understand God's blessings. She currently lives, loves and laughs in central Florida with her husband, Chuck. They have two grown children and four grandchildren. Readers can connect with Debora via her website, [www.deboracoty.com](#), or on Facebook (AuthorDeboraCoty), Twitter (DeboraCoty) and Instagram (DeboraCoty).

This article is excerpted from Debora's most recent book, Too Blessed to Be Stressed for Moms (Shiloh Run Press, 2018).

WATCH: Lisa Bevere Says God Wants Us to Prophecy With Our Lives

"We are in a time period that is perilous and a time period that is wonderful," Lisa Bevere says. Watch as she explains what she means by "prophesying with your life" as described in the second chapter of Joel.