

The Highest Honor to Which a Man Can Aspire

Not long after Jim and his wife moved to Orlando, his new neighbor invited him to attend The Man in the Mirror weekly men's Bible Study. For six months Jim never said a word—not one peep.

He later reminisced, "If my table leader had asked me to talk, I would've been out of there in a flash and never come back. Somehow he knew not to push me."

One day his table leader asked, "Who would like to close us in prayer today?"

Jim spoke up, "I don't have much experience, but I'd like to give it a try."

For decades, Jim has closed himself off to other people. He had been hurt so badly by his own mother and father that he said, "I had no friends. I was afraid that if I cared about someone they would just end up hurting me. So I walled myself in."

As Jim prayed, God took hold of his heart and began to change him. A couple of weeks later he asked, "Is there anything I can do to help around here?"

I said, "Well, I need someone to go around to the table leaders about five minutes before 8:00 a.m. and give them the "cut" sign so they can start wrapping it up."

"I can do that," he said.

A few weeks later Jim asked, "Is there anything else I can do?"

I said, "Well, the man who has been bringing the orange juice

can't do that anymore. Would you like to pick up the orange juice?"

"I can do that," he said.

Jim continued to ask for more assignments, and he was faithful with every one of them. After about a year I said, "Why don't you become the Bible study administrator? I'll be in charge of teaching, and you can be in charge of everything else." He liked that idea, and held that position for 17 years.

We decided to train our men how to share their personal faith stories and also how to lead a person to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Jim ate it up. He aced the worksheet that showed him how to explain what his life was like before Jesus, how he came to put his faith in Jesus, and what his life has been like since. He learned how to read Campus Crusade's Four Spiritual Laws pamphlet to someone, and how to lead them in a sinner's prayer.

Jim had no idea that God would soon call upon him to put his new skills to use.

A few months later, Jim received a call that his estranged son was in the hospital and about to die from AIDS. He and his wife caught the next plane to Cincinnati.

When they arrived on the hospice ward of the hospital, they were shocked to see the gaunt, fragile silhouette of their prodigal son hooked up to a menacing array of IVs and medical devices. They regained their composure, and God then emboldened Jim to tell his son, "Tim, I love you very much." But Tim wasn't interested—he would have none of it.

Every morning for the next two weeks, Jim and his wife came to Tim's room. Every day, the first thing Jim did was to tell his son how much he loved him. They prayed for him, but he didn't participate. They told Tim how sorry they were and longed for

reconciliation. After many days of resistance, the wall of hostility began to crumble. Finally, Tim confessed to his mother, "Mom, I'm so sorry. I never gave Dad a chance."

After 10 days, the doctors told Jim and his wife the end was near. They, in turn, told their son he was about to die. Jim said, "Tim, God loves you and wants to forgive your sins and bring you to live with Him in heaven. If you ask Him to forgive your sins and ask Jesus to be your Savior, you can be with God when you die. Would you like to do that?" After some discussion, Tim asked God to forgive his sins and give him eternal life. That was on a Friday. He passed away on Sunday. Tim crucified his sins on Friday, and three days later, he was raised from the dead.

Jim said later, "Leading my son to Jesus is the greatest thing I've ever done. I shudder to think of what might have happened if I hadn't moved to Orlando, gotten into a Bible study and learned how to share my faith. When I look back, it's so clear that God had a plan, even though it felt pretty random at the time. Discipleship has changed my life. Praise God."

Being a disciple of Jesus is the highest honor to which a man can aspire. When Jesus called Peter, James, John and the others, He called them to become, what? Disciples. When Jesus left earth, the marching orders He left behind are to do, what? "Go and make disciples ... " (Matt. 28:19).

The word "disciple" comes from the Greek word *mathetes*, which means "pupil" or "learner." When used in conjunction with Jesus, it came to mean "an adherent to the person and teachings of Jesus." A disciple is called to live "in" Christ, equipped to live "like" Christ, and sent to live "for" Christ. Discipleship includes both the moment of salvation and the lifelong process of sanctification.

Everything we know about becoming a disciple, we know from the Bible. Jesus said, "Whoever comes to Me and hears My words and

does them, I will show whom he is like" (Luke 6:47). Disciples are born again. They have faith in Jesus. They lead lives of continual humility and repentance. They love the God who first loved them. They love one another. They become humble servants who put others first. They become holy, obedient vessels.

They make a full, total, complete surrender of all their dreams and ambitions to the lordship of Christ. With their whole heart, they commit to follow Jesus wherever, whenever, whatever. Disciples take hold of their new creation natures. They submissively allow the Holy Spirit to transform them into a certain kind of man in character and conduct. Their lives commend their message. They lead powerful lives transformed by Jesus.

We all admire the hero who makes the headlines for a single act of great courage. But let's also give a nod to the millions of men who, like Jim, are courageously living out God's plan each and every day in the details of their lives. {eoa}

Note: The preceding is an excerpt from Chapter 3 of Patrick Morley's book, The Fellowship of God's Big Holy Audacious Goal. The deeply felt need addressed in Chapter 3 is, "To believe that my life has a purpose—that my life is not random." {eoa}

After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, **Dr. Patrick Morley** founded *Man in the Mirror*, a non-profit organization to help men find meaning and purpose in life. Dr. Morley is the bestselling author of *The Man in the Mirror*, *No Man Left Behind*, *Dad in the Mirror*, and *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines*.

For the original article, visit .

How Your Faith Can Help Lower Your Bad Cholesterol Level

An article in the Health Section of the *Wall Street Journal* titled “Stress Raises Cholesterol More Than You Think” is very informative. I’ve long understood this and have tried to educate others on this topic so that they might be able to better control their high cholesterol levels.

As the physicians in the article mention, if you have high cholesterol levels, it may not be your diet or lack of physical activity that is the culprit to your high cholesterol—it may likely be the unmanaged chronic stress in your life.

Here’s a link to a different website—How Does Stress Contribute to Cholesterol—that offers a handful of medical explanations on how stress impacts the body and contributes to high cholesterol levels. And this quote that follows is taken from that site:

“Stress will increase your cortisol levels. (Cortisol is a hormone produced by your adrenal glands when you are stressed.) Under stress, cortisol delivers glucose to the body to help the fight-or-flight mechanism function properly. If cortisol is consistently doing this, blood-sugar levels remain constantly high, which can lead to not only hypo/hyperglycemia and diabetes but also elevated cholesterol levels.”—Inna Topiler, MS, CNS

Yes, a nutritionally sound eating plan and regular physical activity are important aspects of a lifestyle that is conducive to manage stress and cholesterol levels. But the practice of biblical principles, spiritual exercises, found in

Scripture—God’s guidelines for living—are also hugely important.

Prayer, meditating on Scripture, attending church and being in community with other believers can be effective ways to cope with the stressors of life that you might be experiencing.

Dr. Harold Koenig, in his research on the link between spirituality and health, writes the following: “There is rapidly growing evidence that stress and negative emotions (depression, anxiety) have (1) adverse effects on physiological systems vital for maintenance of physical health and healing, (2) increase susceptibility to or worse outcomes from a wide range of physical illnesses, and (3) may shorten the lifespan prematurely. Social support, in turn, has long been known to protect against disease and increase longevity.

“By reducing stress and negative emotions, increasing social support and positively affecting health behaviors, R/S (Religious/Spirituality) involvement should have a favorable impact on a host of physical diseases and the response of those diseases to treatment.”

If you’re struggling to manage your cholesterol levels by diet and exercise alone, and that’s not working, consider reflecting on your recent stress levels. And address this important aspect of cholesterol management.

And look into the Bible to find relevant “spirit exercises” that might also help!

“But refuse profane and foolish myths. Instead, exercise in the ways of godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable in all things, holding promise for the present life and also for the life to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance” (1 Tim. 4:7-9, MEV). {eoa}

Dale Fletcher is a speaker and wellness coach who lives in

Charlotte, North Carolina. He writes and conducts workshops on the link between the Christian faith and health. Connect with Dale at .

For the original article, visit .

What God Says It Takes for You to Be Happy

Are you a happy person? Do you have pleasure, enjoyment or contentment with your life today?

If you'd like to increase your happiness, this devotion explores eight Bible verses about what God says it takes for a person to be happy. I recommend using them as a checklist. Meditate on each one and ensure that you are practicing the principles.

Since you only go around in this life once, then why not do what you can to make it a good one? Notice that none of these principles are dependent upon your outward circumstances, but on your inward decision of the heart daily.

The eight happy Bible verses are below:

1. Proverbs 3:13 – “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gets understanding.” According to Proverbs 9:10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” I define the fear of the Lord as honoring, reverencing and respecting the Lord enough to first pay attention to what He has to say and then to do what He says.

Imagine you have authority over someone. If that person

disobeyed your instructions constantly, would you say that person honored and respected you?

In the Lord's case, His desire is to work all things together for your good. If you really believe God's intentions toward you are good, then why deprive yourself of that good? Obedience is good, even if that obedience may feel uncomfortable to your flesh in the short-term.

The other specification for happiness is knowledge of the Holy One. As you walk with God in your daily life, your relationship with Him deepens. You grow in knowledge of His character, not just His acts. Growing in the knowledge of God is the essence of eternal life that Jesus died to give us.

It always amazes me that the same God who created the earth, the moon, stars and mountains wants me and you to know Him personally.

2. Deuteronomy 33:29 – “Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help, who is the sword of your majesty! Your enemies will cringe before you, and you will tread upon their high places.”

You become happier when you meditate upon your identity in God through Jesus Christ. You have been saved from the wages of sin, which is death. You are no longer a slave to sin.

Sin does not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under God's grace (see Rom. 6:14). God's grace gives you power to overcome. Hallelujah! Once you believe you have all power over the enemy through Jesus according to God's Word, then you have power to tear down any “high places” in your life.

In the Bible, the high places were those places used to worship idols. Today, I think of the “high places” as mental strongholds comprised of any thoughts you have failed to take captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. I also think of high

places as anything in your life that you put before God.

Even something good, like food, can become a high place if you find yourself running to it for safety and comfort rather than running to God.

It is hard to be happy when you feel out of control in any area. But the good news is through the Holy Spirit, you have the fruit of self-control. But like any muscle, you need to exercise self-control to make it stronger. You can't just wish for it; you need to work for it. Your recipe for ultimate success is to start with something small and then build upon that.

3. Psalm 146:5 – “Blessed is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.” The God of Jacob is a God of blessing. Genesis 32:22-32 records the story of how Jacob wrestled with God and said, “I will not let You go, unless You bless me” (Gen. 32:26c). Today, we don't have to wrestle a blessing out of God. God's blessings are bundled in His Word, in His promises.

You are happier when you acknowledge God as the source of your blessing and your help. So you seek God first through effective prayer whenever you experience fear and distress in your life. And you have strong confidence that He will respond to your faith.

4. Proverbs 3:18 – “She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy is everyone who retains her.” The “she” this scripture is talking about is wisdom. Are you sensing a theme here? Scripture says wisdom is a tree of life. I find it ironic that the enemy told Eve in the Garden of Eden that eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would make her wise. But the truth was, she already had the source of wisdom available to her—God.

All Eve had to do was ask Him and He would have given it to her, for James 1:5 promises: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let

him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and without criticism, and it will be given to him.”

In the natural, wisdom is the ability to select between two or more choices and then take the best course of action. You don't consider just what you think is good now; you are able to consider the future at the moment of decision.

If you are making unwise choices in any area of your life and you know that, then you cannot be happy. Ask God for wisdom through prayer and He will teach you wisdom.

5. Proverbs 14:21 – “He who despises his neighbor sins; But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.” God commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves. In addition, 1 John 4:20 challenges us with a critical question: “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar. For whoever does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”

So again, if you have hate in your heart towards anyone, you are disqualified from being a happy person.

This Scripture says you can be happier through having mercy on the poor. If you see a person in need and have the resources to help that person, through prayer and/or supplying their material needs, your care and generosity to them can increase your own happiness.

6. Proverbs 16:20 – “He who handles a matter wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he.” Because the Lord magnifies His word above His name (Ps. 138:2), I believe the highest respect you can give the Lord is to honor and obey His word. Jesus Himself is the Living Word, so you honor Jesus when you abide with Him through hearing and doing the Word.

That is why it is critical that you take time each day to study God's Word, meditate upon it and do it until it becomes

part of you. You are called to renew your inward man day by day (see 2 Cor. 4:16), and you only do that by renewing your mind through God's Word.

God's intent for His people is that we bring glory to Him through reflecting His character to others. It is a high calling indeed. Deuteronomy 4:6 says this about God's Word: "Therefore, keep and do *them* [His commandments], for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations which shall hear all these statutes, and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

Evidence of trusting in the Lord is obeying the Lord. As Pastor Charles Stanley says, "Obey God, and leave all the consequences to Him."

7. Proverbs 28:14 – "Happy is the man who is always fears, but he who hardens his heart will fall into mischief." Reverence is a sense of deep respect for the Lord. It is recognizing with humility that you serve One who is greater than yourself. In old movies when a person entered the presence of the king, they would bow before Him and address Him as "Your Grace."

I love how someone once defined humility: "Humility is bowing low enough to allow the Lord to work on you." Specifically, the area God wants to work on is your heart. Scripture says that every issue we have originates in the heart.

Most people don't want that. They want God to fix their outward circumstances and get them out of pain, while leaving their hearts untouched. Why? Because sometimes God's heart surgery can hurt.

But that is the very thing you need if you want God to heal your life. Sometimes you can resist doing the thing that you need to do the most.

If you harden your heart to God's Word and refuse to receive from Him, your destiny is calamity, not happiness.

8. Proverbs 29:18 – “Where there is no revelation, the people perish; but happy is he who keeps the teaching.” With revelation comes illumination. You need God’s viewpoint on situations because without it, you are left to your own understanding. Your own understanding will most often lead you to acting without any self-control, just doing what feels good to you at the moment regardless of future consequences.

So it is wise to ask God for revelation if you lack restraint in any area.

Finally, Scripture says you are happy when you keep the law. Jesus fulfilled every requirement under the old covenant. But Romans 13:10 tells us what we do to keep the law in the new covenant: “Love works no evil to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

You are happier when you love people. Again, we are called to love our neighbor as ourselves. So you can only love your neighbor to the degree that you love yourself. And you can only love yourself when you can receive God’s love for you and believe the truth of your identity in Him.

In summary, you can see the pattern for God’s way to happiness. Again, none of these are dependent upon your outward circumstances, but on your inward decision of the heart daily:

Gain wisdom and understanding, which is found in honoring, reverencing and respecting God; Find your identity in God and trust in Him as your source; tear down high places in your life; exercise natural wisdom and self-control; love your neighbor as yourself and show mercy to others; heed and obey God’s Word.

Attend to these principles each day consistently and greater happiness will be yours. {eoa}

*Once 240 pounds and a size 22, **Kimberly Taylor** can testify of*

God's healing power to end binge eating. She is an author and the creator of the Christian weight-loss website . Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.

For the original article, visit .

What You Can Do to Help Mend Your Daughter's Broken Heart

Recently, my eldest daughter had her heart broken. My phone rang on an ordinary afternoon and there she was, sobbing. "We broke up."

At the time, she was 350 miles away from me at college. This was her first real love, and it had come to an end. It caught me off-guard because they had just been together at home. What do I say?

There are many scenarios that can break a daughter's heart. These include friends fighting or friendships ending, not being selected for something they are passionate about and tragedy they aren't capable of processing like an adult. Dads must be ready for these difficult moments.

We have to offer substance and purposeful comfort. What does that look like? Here are four things I did to help my daughter get over her broken heart:

1. Let her vent. She needs to get out her emotions. That means you saying very little. Although it's painful to hear her cry, let her do so and tell her story. It's important later on to get the whole story, but for now, let them vent.

2. Reinforce your loyalty. You (Dad) will always be the man

she compares others against. She must know, without doubt, that we are the rock that never moves. You are 100 percent on her side no matter what. This is very important to all people, but especially females. In whatever way you express yourself best, reinforce your loyalty to her.

3. Share her pain. If her heart is hurting, yours should be, too. A woman needs compassion and empathy long before she needs a lecture or fixing. When my daughter is in pain the first thing I make sure she understands is that she is not alone in it. I'm going to experience it with her.

4. Help her see the whole picture. After the first three steps have settled down, now you can do what comes naturally. Help her learn from it. But don't lecture or scold. Just help her unfold the entire picture and where things went wrong. Help her see the mistakes she might have made or warning signs. This will be extremely valuable down the road. {eoa}

For the original article, visit .

When You're Not Convinced God Has Your Back

Waiting on God to move in your life sometimes pushes—and perhaps shoves—your faith to the breaking point. The wait can prove excruciating.

But God, in His infinite wisdom, always finds a not-so-subtle way to remind us.

He is still in control—that “I’ve got this.”

My wife, Patty, lost her job just over four months ago. Our

dwindling financial reserves have begun to pressure our family. Patty has had several interviews—including second and third interviews—but nothing solid has emerged.

Unemployment is no stranger to our household, but God has always come through. For some reason, however, this particular valley has been a bit tougher to navigate.

I found myself feeling more than a bit discouraged on a recent Sunday before church. Little did I know what God had planned.

When the service began, I felt empty and ungrateful. But then our worship pastor, Puchi Colon, began playing and singing a song called “Greater Things,” written by Nick Angelakos & John Dreher. The first stanza stirred my spirit immediately:

“Renew, restore, revive your church and make us whole.
/Ignite, transform, take us to the place we’ve never seen before.”

(OK, Lord, you have my attention.)

The song continued:

You’ve done the impossible/We’ve seen our mountains move before./Your Word is unstoppable, with expectation we declare!/Though mountains stand before us,/Though weapons formed against us,/We’re standing on Your promise, We’re believing You, Lord, for greater things!

We know that You are willing./We’ve seen that You are able./Oh God, release Your favor/We’re believing You, Lord, for greater things!”

When the song finished, the Lord spoke to my heart: “That was for you, Shawn. Any questions?”

Habakkuk 3:19 says, “The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and He will make me walk on my high

places.”

On that beautiful Sunday morning, I learned to yield my financial concerns to the Lord.

When traveling through a valley, it can be difficult to live confidently in Him. But as I stand on the promises in God’s Word, I know greater things are around the corner, as is for His favor for my family. My faith may have wobbled, but my God did not. {eoa}

Relationship-Changing Attitudes Happen When Husbands Do This

When it comes to navigating that “ocean of emotion” in marriage, I [Robert] still have not become a certified “master diver”—not by a long shot. In fact, I still find my sinful default mode drives me back again and again to putting my own interests before Pam’s and other people. Overcoming this tendency is a daily struggle, but I see that “enemy” more clearly now for who he is.

One of the best strategies for learning to listen well in our marriage has come from Dr. John Gottman. He refers to the practice as “attunement.” The process is not rocket science, but its impact is powerful. Just as it takes a few regular adjustments to tune in your favorite radio station while on a car ride, listening well involves more than just not talking. The type of listening a wife really needs from her husband

requires a focusing or tuning of self.

“He doesn’t listen to me.” That is not only one of the most common complaints Pam has had over the years in our marriage, but also one that we hear often about from other couples.

I [Pamela] have found that for most women, meaningful conversation is so important that they not only know how to converse with other people, they have the capacity to carry on mental conversations in their minds even when they are alone. There is a great need for conversational engagements that are authentic and meaningful.

This important practice is confirmed by research. Dr. John Gottman, a marriage specialist, further describes the process in *The Man’s Guide to Women*:

When men “attune’ to their women, there is less fighting, more frequent (and better) sex, and both men and women no longer feel so alone. It is also the skill that leads to genuine emotional connection, which in turn leads to trust, which in turn leads to trust, which in turns leads to you giving women the number one thing they need and want. In other words, this is a big deal. ... In essence, “attunement” is learning how to hear and not react, but rather to understand, empathize and supportively respond. It comes when you choose instead of challenging a woman’s feelings as “not based on a fact,” to instead recognize that in a real sense for her the feeling is a “fact.”

Attunement requires some focus and attention. No, it doesn’t mean she is always right, but it does mean that you make a decision that living in right relationship with each other is more important than dueling over who is right. Your goal is oneness. Attuning is a skill and requires practice. However, the more you practice it, the better you become. The key is to keep practicing, starting today. Here are the steps to follow Gottman’s strategy:

A-TT-U-N-E – Listening with Your Third Ear

(A) Attend to the needs of your wife. When you provide focused attention to your wife, it also feels like affection. Remember, to her attention *is* affection.

(TT) Turn Toward your wife. Women desire face-to-face interactions. Men, on the other hand, tend to focus more on side-by-side relationships, such as playing golf or going fishing together with a friend. The result of such cultural grooming is that most men do not have a close male friend. Men struggle to break beyond having mere acquaintances, beyond only competing as buddies on a battlefield or golf course.

In her book, *The Friendships of Women*, Dee Brestin sizes up the situation quite well:

Studies indicate that men, like boys, do things together—Rotary, softball, hunting—but they do not often relate to each other as confidants. Men tend to be side by side, engrossed in an activity, whereas women will be face-to-face. Men may confuse quantity of time spent in the company of other men with intimacy. ... Most men not only find it difficult to make themselves vulnerable to each other, but they are often uncomfortable being together unless their attention can be centered on activity.

I [Robert] will never forget the scene. It was the last week of the school year, and Pam and I were visiting a Christian elementary school we were considering for our children. As we took a walking tour with the principal through each class, she warned us things might be a bit off-routine and relaxed.

When we arrived at the third-grade class, we noticed that the desks were arranged a bit unusually. The teacher explained, "Please excuse us." I told the kids that they could set up their desks any way they desired and this is the way they chose."

Scanning the arrangement, a light bulb went off over both my wife's head and mine. Interestingly enough, the desks were distinctly separated into two groups—boys and girls. No surprise, right? Well, what was most interesting was that all the guys had lined their desks up, you guessed it, side by side, one right alongside another. And the girls? Face-to-face and two by two. Pam, who had just begun reading Brestin's book, picked up on it right away. Even these third-graders exhibited the different manner in which males and females forge friendships—side by side and face-to-face, respectively.

So husband, listening the way your wife needs you to listen is going to be something different than just another few minutes of golf. She needs you to turn toward her physically and emotionally.

(U) Understand: It is important to ask questions about how or what she is feeling. Remember, as the Prayer of St. Francis, to seek to “understand,” not just be “understood.” That will require some time and consideration of not only what she thinks, but thinking more about how she must feel. This kind of attention is almost irresistible to her. While you may think of it merely as extra effort or work to listen so hard, she feels it as love, true love.

(N) Nondefensively listen. Remember to respond, don't react, to what you hear. Even if she is upset, hear her clearly and hear her through. Listen and respond. If her words tap a frustration or negative emotion in you, don't let it co-opt your equilibrium. Breathe and calm yourself down if you feel the urge to react or overreact to what you hear.

(E) Empathize. When you listen long enough that what you hear from your wife goes beyond a simple auditory processing and turns into an emotional understanding, then your third ear is fully engaged. That's what she is looking for from you and sometimes desperately needs. You become the person who will listen to hear as will no one else, her friend and her spouse

in those moments becomes her soul mate.

Gottman says, “Neurologists have found that the emotional part of the brain calms down as soon as it feels connected to another person and not alone.” Remember, the most important thing in these moments is not who is right or who is wrong, but more so about the two of you being in oneness as a couple.

A-TT-U-N-E is such a great tool that we recommend memorizing it and using it often. Tuning in to each other’s concerns and needs is when marriage is more than just a certificate or agreement; it is a practice and a lifestyle. It is one of the ways “these two shall become one.” {eoa}

Robert and Pamela Crosby are the co-founders of *Teaming Life* (), investing their lives in men and women who desire to live as *Teaming Couples*, *Teaming Families* and equipping leaders to build strong *Teams in the Church and Marketplace*. Robert’s works include *The Teaming Church: Ministry in the Age of Collaboration* and *The One Jesus Loves*. Together they have written, *The Will of a Man and the Way of a Woman*, recently released.

How You Can Achieve Faster Fitness Results

I don’t know anyone who, when attempting to lose weight and get healthy, doesn’t want to get results as fast as possible. While I can’t promise that you will lose 30 pounds in 30 days, I can say that if you use the following three quick tips, you can get faster and more lasting results.

However, keep the following principle in mind as you practice

each tip: You will only get out what you are willing to put in. This is a biblical principle: “Be not deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that will he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

So to reap excellent health, you must sow the habits that lead to the harvest.

Without further delay, here are the tips:

1. Create unstoppable motivation. Go deeper than the shallow reasons for wanting to shed pounds. Looking good or fitting into a certain size is an OK goal, but that is not enough to keep you going when you want to quit. God did not put you here just for your own pleasure—He created you to make a difference. Consider the many ways getting fit will positively impact your life and the lives of others:

- It will give you energy to fulfill your God-given purpose
- It will empower you to be a better spouse, parent, employee or business owner
- It will enable you to be a positive role model and perhaps influence others to take care of themselves
- It will strengthen you mentally and emotionally so you can handle life’s challenges well
- It will give you the discipline you need to reach your goals in all areas of your life

Right now, think beyond yourself and come up with reasons as to why getting healthy yourself is a great gift for your friends, family and others within your circle of influence.

2. Eat a high-protein breakfast. A study from Purdue University found that eating a breakfast of lean, high-protein foods such as eggs and Canadian bacon led to study participants having a greater sense of fullness and boosted their mood throughout the entire day. These same results were not found if the added protein was at lunch or dinner. The

great thing is that this one small change may lead to better self-control in your daily food intake overall.

Other high-protein foods to consider adding to your breakfast include low-fat yogurt (make sure it has less than 10 grams of sugar per serving), turkey bacon, a protein fruit smoothie, a protein breakfast bar (again less than 10 grams of sugar and at least 5 grams of fiber), low-fat cheese and low-fat milk or unsweetened almond or soy milk. I do recommend organic dairy products if you consume them to avoid the added hormones and antibiotics found in regular dairy products.

And a quick note ... if you are skipping breakfast, that is the worst thing you can do concerning weight loss. When you skip meals, your body thinks you are starving and holds on to fat for dear life. The one thing that all weight-loss success stories have in common (besides exercising regularly) is eating breakfast. So join them by doing the same.

3. Make at least one of your exercise sessions 1 hour each week. A study at the University of Victoria in British Columbia found that people who exercised for 60 minutes burned almost 5 times as many calories in the hours after the workout versus those who did only 30 minutes. Can you believe it? Double the time, but 5 times the results. Going longer forces your body to raid your fat stores to come up with the calories needed for repairing muscles and other recovery tasks.

But if you are not exercising at all and are in poor shape, do not start with one hour as your goal. Start with 10 minutes and then add five minutes each week so you ease yourself into handling the longer workout.

And please, if you are going to put in the extra time to exercise, commit to embracing the effort. Why make it any harder than it has to be by complaining about it and dreading it? Instead, smile and act as if you have already achieved the healthy results you want. I guarantee with that attitude

shift, you will be enjoying the results in reality sooner than you think.

So put these tips to the test this week to jump-start your weight loss. And if you are seeking even more ways to get the best results, check out the Take Back Your Temple program as well. {eoa}

*Once 240 pounds and a size 22, **Kimberly Taylor** can testify of God's healing power to end binge eating. She is an author and the creator of the Christian weight-loss website . Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.*

For the original article, visit .

Prophetic Word: Expect Great Shakings and Breakthrough in 2017

For Part I of this prophetic word, [click here](#).

The greatest harvest of souls the earth has known is upon us. Hundreds of thousands will be saved. The Middle East will experience a revival and this will extend into the evangelization of both the Arab and the non-Arabic-speaking Muslims. Look to Egypt to be a leader in this revival and awakening.

The glory of God is going to be poured out across the United States, and these areas were specifically given as revival centers:

Los Angeles, California; Silicon Valley, Redding, California;

Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; Phoenix, Arizona; a new spring coming out of Colorado Springs, Colorado; Oklahoma; Austin, Texas; Kansas City, Missouri; Madison, Wisconsin; Indianapolis, Indiana; Nashville, Tennessee; Orlando, Florida; Fort Mills, South Carolina; Virginia; Annapolis, Maryland; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; New York City; Boston, Massachusetts; as well as other cities and regions.

The inner cities of America and the areas in which Satan has built his greatest strongholds will begin to rebuild, and the revivals in such cities as Detroit and Chicago will astound the news! God says, "I will not forget the inner cities!"

This harvest time will result in the salvation of high-profile leaders both in the media, government, and education spheres of society. They will be vocal and unashamed. Their bold presence on social media will cause a huge stir in the news services. God is going to shake pop culture! He is going to use it for His glory.

Look to the reserves and reservations and tribal lands of the nations of the earth. The indigenous peoples of the earth are about to be touched by God's power. Where they were oppressed through colonization, they are going to experience great healing and receive the power and grace to forgive the terrible atrocities committed against them. As a result, they will be used to touch many nations with the truth of God's saving power.

The historic wells of revival are going to flow again as bold evangelism takes place on the streets and on the campuses of schools where progressivism and Marxism have taken root. **Latin America** will be a leader in this move of God.

A New Renaissance

New songs and new sounds will flow from emerging worship leaders. The Tabernacle of David will see the release of many, many new psalmists who will sing the song of the nations. A

new, even more passionate generation of abandoned worshipers is emerging.

Songs will be written that influence not only the church but also society at large. These songs will disciple nations in the way that the Beatles and the Summer of Love released a “free love sexual revolution” in a negative way as well as rebellion and sin. We will be singing the sounds of awakening in society. The bells of true liberty will ring in song once again.

Andrew Fletcher, a politician from Scotland, said, “Let me sing the songs of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws.” In other words, the power of the voice singing creates movements for societal change.

Power worshipers will arise as a new generation moves into cities and regions and breaks open the heavens in a massive way. Through praise and worship, they will “pierce the darkness” created by principalities and powers over regions. These worshipers will become “sent ones” who will go into unreached parts of cities and nations to prepare the way for the evangelists who will come after them.

This worship movement will see an even greater rebuilding of the tabernacle of David, with many more 24/7 Houses of Prayer being established. They will have an understanding of the connection that God has given between the Church and Israel, and many will call this new move a “Davidic Messianic” movement of believers.

A Movement of Reformers

2017 is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Many, many people will talk about the need for societal reformation and desire to be reformers. Young people will band together to form movements that display a passion to go into each area of their culture and see reformation.

This will set the stage for the greatest outpouring of the Spirit and awakening the world has even known. Nations that were never impacted by the reformation will begin to experience one now. This will happen in all the continents. "Africa, Africa, Africa, you are moving into your greatest hour," says the Lord.

Germany and France will be deeply impacted by this move of God. The Calvins and the Luthers are arising. Books will be written and the history of past moves of God will be studied. It will also go into the Catholic churches, the Coptics from Egypt, the Orthodox churches in Russian and Eastern Asia. It will affect both the Eastern and Western Orthodox churches. While many of the older leaders in these denominations and church movements will rejoice, some will rise up and persecute this new movement of God.

Social media will be the Gutenberg press in this reformation. The news will be amazed as very liberal owners of social media begin to announce that they are now believers. This will impact the Silicon Valley community in California in a big way. The Holy Spirit is calling for massive intercession for influencers in these sectors of society.

The youth who have seemingly crashed in the past season into being part of the "hard left" with liberal, humanistic agendas will suffer great disillusionment. But if the church will reach out to them in this time of lost dreams, they will be saved and become part of the most powerful move of evangelism and discipling that their nations have ever known.

The Effects of the United States' Election

Several of our prophets received words that Donald Trump would become the next president and will become a 21st-century Cyrus. He is called to break the mold of political correctness. We received the word that if we pray for him, he will heal, rather than divide, the nation.

Intercession must be made, or this will not happen in the way God intends. Racial division must be healed and the people of all ethnicities must come together as part of this John 17 movement. This cannot be a “whites only” movement, but the church must work to fight for unity and be a massive voice against racism that still exists in the nation.

There will be many civil rights reformers who will not embrace this need of healing of the nation. We received a serious admonition that the church must pray to see the nation healed or the breaches will only grow.

Native Americans will be part of this civil reformation and antiquated laws, and even the Bureau of Indian Affairs will be reformed.

There is coming such scientific proof concerning the science of the pre-born child that this will result in reformations in the medical field’s stance and thinking as a whole. The pre-born child will be declared a human being. Some that have held this stance all along will break their silence and become strong advocates for the pre-born.

We prophesied a conservative revolt, and now we prophesy a “social media revolt” in which many use this form of communication, and it will result in the crippling networks and newspapers that persecute the truth of God. God is about to arise in a way to release the anointing of truth. There are media revolutionaries who will change the way everything is being done concerning communications. This will result in financial shakings will cause long-standing news media to begin to lose millions of dollars, even causing some to go under. This will be a shock to many who relied upon them to be their voice.

As a backlash against this conservative social media revolt, the liberal press will even accuse God’s people of lying, giving the biblical analogy of the sons of Belial who lied in

court to get Naboth's vineyard. However, accusations of the liberal press will not prevail. Intercession must be done for the church to be protected.

Corruption will be exposed in the media as well, and the disillusionment will deepen in people in general with traditional media sources. Out of this season, new, anointed news anchors will come to the forefront who will be unashamedly Believers and they will experience great favor.

Washington, D.C., will be "ground zero" for the exposure of corruption. Some who are exposed will shock the nation as God continues to move to cleanse both political parties. Corrupt judges will also be exposed in the circuit courts. We were told to use Ezekiel 22 as a model to decree against corruption.

The whistle blowers will come out in droves. Aides and interns will speak and tell what they have both seen and heard.

Collusion between the Federal Drug Administration and the pharmaceutical companies will be exposed in surprising ways.

The lobbyists are going to be removed from their places of influence in a significant way, and the influence of corporate giants over Congress will also be reformed.

Term limits will be put in place for Congress in the future. Reformation is coming to every aspect of society.

Major trade deals are going to be rewritten, and old enemies will become trading partners. God is aligning the nations for His purposes. The global elite will find that they are not able to move freely as they did on the international scene. Corruption and collusion will be exposed and many will be shocked.

A new season of mercy has been given, even though for some it does not appear to be so at this moment of time. God wants to

reboot the nation and get it back on track.

The Lord wants to release both protection for the nation as well as wisdom for compassionate immigration reform while dealing with the criminal influence. This needs serious prayer. The body of Christ is forerunning racial reconciliation, and this will display a unity and synergy that the world is looking for.

A call for continued concerted prayer to continue to bring both peace, protection and stability to the nation went out. God wants to give a path to establish what could be called "thrones of glory" all the way through the year 2020. If the intercessors continue to pray for 2020 vision, God will release His glory on a scale none of us can imagine.

The Economy

The U.S. will be the safe refuge for investment around the globe. Family economies will be blessed if they seek the Lord on how to get out of debt and save so they can invest in new financial opportunities that will arise.

Significant investments in new innovations and inventions; some even given through dreams, will be released. The Midwest and what has been known as the rust belt of the United States will begin to blossom. New investments in inner cities will open up as they are set free from historic violence and drug abuse.

The churches of the nation will begin to rise up and systematically work to eliminate poverty. This will impact the inner cities greatly as they will be considered both a mission field and a treasure field. The people of the inner cities are treasures to God.

Economic Shakings Are Coming to Europe

Italy, Spain, and Portugal will be tested: God's people will

be taken care of in the midst of the crisis. Alignments with Israel are critical in this season.

North America and Alaska: The wealth of North America will be unlocked and resources will be opened. There will be a new gas pipeline in Alaska. It will be in the news as “hidden riches” of gold and rare minerals are found.

The U.S. Military–Terrorism and ISIS: There will be a rebuilding of the United States’ military. Religious freedom will be restored, and the chaplains will once again be able to freely preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit pointed out the necessity of this happening in order to see God’s favor poured out on the military.

Reformers are going to be put in place in the military. The power of God is going to visit entire military bases around the world.

New strategies to defeat ISIS will be given by new leadership put in place and fear will fall upon those who are “rogue” terrorists. The mainstream media and social media voices who are favorable to allowing refugees with terrorists backgrounds are going to suffer major blows.

Those nations who are promoting and hiding terrorists will be ostracized both politically and economically. Rogue nations such as North Korea are going to be put in check.

New Alliances Between Nations

There will be a tightened alliance between the U.S. and the UK. Trade agreements will be made between these two nations that will shift the balance of trade.

God is dealing internally with the Parliament of the UK and strong voices will arise to speak out for alliances with Israel. Brexit and Amerix! The exiting from one wineskin to another. (Note: This by no means that God is not moving within

the people of the EU.)

United Nations

The extreme political and social agenda behind the U.N. is going to become apparent to people of many nations. Righteous nations will stand up to their plans for social engineering through International Planned Parenthood and eugenics. Reformers will arise from the midst with godly philosophies who will be strong voices for a realignment away from this perverted agenda to one that gives compassion aid without "strings" attached to unrighteous organizations. Ambassadors who are evangelists will rise up, unashamed of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Funding will be withheld as righteous nations in the U.N. demand they stop supporting radicalized social agendas that promote homosexuality as a life-style and the abortion of babies.

Israel

Signs and wonders will break out in many places. Nazareth and Haifa will see the power of God in great demonstration. The Russian Jews are going to experience a harvest of souls in a large way and become powerful evangelists to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

The nations who align against Israel will find themselves becoming more economically challenged in the coming days. Nations will withdraw their funding from the U.N. initiatives and countries that persecute Israel.

Israel will become a flash point among the nations. There is a confusion of the nations that will take place and an accelerated polarization of light and darkness.

This will start a process where the Temple Mount will once again be brought up as a central issue among the nations.

More shakings will take place in the nation but God will release a youth movement between the Jews and Arabs that will become voices of unity in the land.

Brazil

More corruption will be exposed and the shake-up of the government will continue all the way from the national to the local levels. There will be new government leaders run for office from the church, and whereas they were not successful in the past, some will see a breakthrough when they run again.

Iran

There is a growing underground movement that is strong although not yet seen. There will be much trouble brewing from Iran in this season; however, God wants to encourage the church that He is hearing their prayers and has a plan to liberate His people from radical ideologies.

France

Revival fires are burning. The move of God has started and will not be quenched. It is time for the prayers of the generations must be answered. The John 17 movement from France will affect the other nations in Europe.

The prophets are going to rise up from France and speak very accurately.

Asia

Vietnam is preparing to be the "Star of Asia" as far as the numbers of people being saved. This will even have a great impact on the Communist government. Hanoi will become a beacon of light to the nations.

China

There will be some continued shakings. However, look to Inner

Mongolia for the greatest moves of God yet.

Australia

Australia is a reformer nation and will produce great shifts as well as some clashes on a governmental level. However, the Daniels and Josephs are arising in this land.

Egypt and the Middle East

There is a massive awakening coming to the Egypt as well as the whole Middle East. It is the time for Isaiah 19 to be fulfilled. Reformers will arise in these nations as well. The blood of the martyrs is crying out from the ground where ISIS has beheaded so many believers in Jesus Christ. Their sacrifice is going to result in many Sauls who have become radicalized becoming Pauls.

We see in part and know in part. We are to test all things and hold fast to that which is good. Some words have immediate fulfillment and impact. Other words have conditions that must be met in order for them to be fulfilled. But this is a year of the breakthrough. This is a historical time when another Great Reformation shall take place! {eoa}

***Cindy Jacobs** is an author, speaker, and teacher with a heart for discipling nations in the areas of prayer and prophetic gifts. She and Mike—her husband of 41 years—co-founded Generals International in 1985. She is a respected prophet who travels the world, ministering not only to crowds of people but to heads of nations. Her first calling is and always will be prophetic intercession. She travels each year, and she has spoken on nearly every inhabited continent to tens of thousands.*

For the original article, visit .

{eoa}

5 Essential Levels of Communication for Your Marriage

Almost every time my wife and I speak at a marriage retreat, I share a story from early on in our marriage where we had a drawn-out communication failure. The result of the failure ended in a blow-up in which I left our home and wasn't sure when I'd come back.

We couldn't communicate, I couldn't take it, so I couldn't stay there. Fortunately, we had some close friends who intervened by coming to our apartment, waiting for me to return home and committing to not leaving until we were able to begin some healthy communication and start the process of working through it together.

I learned about the five levels of communication and discovered where we were getting stuck. The goal for your communication should be to get as deep as you can. This will lead to a stronger connection and intimacy. Here are the five levels of communication:

5. Common conversation. This is the lowest level. You don't really share anything at this level. These are conversations you'd have with anybody, even strangers. Things like "How are you?" "The weather is great today." There is no depth at this level, but it has a place.

4. Nightly news. You share what you know about something—your day, what happened with the kids, etc. Your conversation is similar to the nightly news, primarily reporting the facts. Your conversation has gone just beyond common, which gives you

things to talk about, but you can't stay here. An example is sharing how your workday went, how the kids did, what's for dinner or what somebody shared on Facebook. This is where my wife and I spent a lot of our time in communication. We'd go beyond common communication, but not by much.

3. Cautious disclosure. You cautiously share your opinions, your ideas and your judgments. You reveal some but not all of you. As you share, you carefully watch your spouse, and if you sense any bit of question or rejection, you abandon the conversation and close up eliminating your chance to get below the surface. You may bring up the fact that you'd like to spend more time golfing or fishing with the fellas, or you want to spend the next holiday with your family, or how the big vacation you've discussed may not be the best thing right now. This is where we got stuck and just couldn't seem to get past it. We weren't willing to risk anything due to past repercussions, or we just wanted to stay in our comfort zones.

2. High-risk/High-reward talks. Now you've done it. Feelings can be hurt when you expose yourselves to this depth. But you must do this. If not, your marriage won't grow. This is where you share things about yourself, your spouse, your marriage or your life that your wife may not agree with or that may lead to hurt. This could range from wanting to discipline your kids in a different way to how the lack of a budget for your money is leading the family into a financial hole.

1. Truth-in-love talks. This is where you are completely open and honest with your wife—total transparency. Sharing the real you. It means truthfully sharing your heart—your doubts, your fears, your insecurities, your struggles. It means lovingly sharing your feelings about your wife: your frustrations, concerns and hurts. You are now able to share anything and everything with your wife. If she's developed some unhealthy habits, you are able to honestly share those with her without condemnation. If you are concerned with the way your work or your marriage is going, you can talk to her about it. You

trust and she trusts that you have each other's best interests at heart and you're committed to talking through anything that comes up.

To get to level 1, you must develop deep trust, commitment and friendship. Each depth of communication enables you to do so. The first question to ask: At what level are you communicating now?

With each conversation, be attentive to your level of communication. Then consciously go a level deeper. Much like lifting weights, you start with lightweights, then you increase, and eventually you've built the strength to lift heavy weights or, in this case, have Level One communication in your marriage. {eoa}

Jackie Bledsoe is an author, blogger and speaker, but first and foremost a husband and father of three who helps men better lead and love the ones who matter most. For the original article, visit [.](#)

Why Spiritual Foundation Issues Can Affect Your Physical Health

Recently, our pastor preached an impactful message that relates to so much of what we are doing with Take Back Your Temple.

The message was based upon Psalm 11:3: "If the foundations are broken, what can the righteous do?"

Below are my notes from his message. I hope it makes you think

about the state of your own spiritual foundation:

- A foundation is the load-bearing part of the building. If the foundation is unstable, cracks will develop in the building.
- A foundation is below the ground and is not seen. Most cracks in homes come from foundation issues; in other words, a problem with something you can't see is causing a problem with something you CAN see.
- A foundation must be deeper and stronger than the building itself.
- How long a foundation lasts depends on the quality of the rock in which it is anchored.

Most people are only interested in filling in cracks and painting over them. They are only concerned with looking good, not in developing goodness in their lives. That was the Pharisees' problem in the Bible.

However, this creates a bigger problem. If the foundation issue is never addressed, the cracks will come back.

If the foundational problems are severe enough, they will eventually cause a collapse. Here you see a great picture of a house with an unstable foundation.

I believe this picture illustrates the core problem with the diet industry: it is about crack filling, not addressing the foundational issues that cause the problem in the first place. That is why so many people lose and regain weight.

This is the reason the first two steps of the Take Back Your Temple program address the foundation of your life. We focus on these before we even start talking about eating and exercise.

From my own weight-loss journey, I've learned that it does little good to address eating and exercise if life issues have you collapsing under their weight and turning to addictions to

cope.

Here are signs that you have spiritual foundation problems in your life:

1. A negative/nasty attitude
2. Lack of commitment
3. Operating in fear
4. Getting jealous or envious of others' successes; unable to celebrate with them
5. Becoming offended easily
6. Practicing addictions or out-of-control spending habits (example: have 100 pairs of shoes but don't have \$50 in the bank)
7. Can't get along with other people; always in conflict with someone

Let this year be the year each of us builds a stronger foundation. It's not "sexy" or exciting, but it will enable you to remain standing in times of shaking.

1 Peter 2:6 says, "For also it is contained in the Scripture, 'Look! I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes in Him shall never be put to shame.'"

A cornerstone is "an important feature on which a particular thing depends or is based."

My prayer is that each of us makes Jesus our chief cornerstone and fellowship with Him daily. We learn His word and practice it, praise to receive strength and allow His Holy Spirit to guide us.

Since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, does He not have the right to determine what happens in them?

Following the Lord's way is the only way to ensure our foundations remain secure.

Be blessed in health, healing, and wholeness. {eoa}

*Once 240 pounds and a size 22, **Kimberly Taylor** can testify of God's healing power to end binge eating. She is an author and the creator of the Christian weight-loss website . Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.*

For the original article, visit .