

5 Ways Porn Slowly Damages Your Connection With Your Children

When the only thing they hear from adults about sex is that it is bad and you shouldn't do it, they know they aren't hearing the full story. When parents fail to give the full picture of sex kids will go looking for answers somewhere else.

The "somewhere else" is porn.

I was recently speaking to a father who caught his 12-year-old daughter watching porn. He remarked, "I've seen plenty of porn during my life, but the stuff she was watching was disturbing." His experience is the new normal. The average age a child encounters porn for the first time is between the ages of 9 and 11, and mainstream porn continues to get more extreme, violent and degrading.

The internet and smartphones have opened the door to an invading army of porn into the minds and hearts of our kids. The consequences are devastating.

Here are five ways porn hurts our sons and daughters:

1. Sexualizing our kids. The term "teen" has been in the top three highest-searched words on porn sites for the past three years. One year, 2014, it was No. 1. That should make us all sick. We are talking about kids. This means a majority of people looking at porn on the internet want to watch kids. When porn site visits outnumber Amazon, Netflix and Twitter combined, think about how many people are looking to watch kids having sex. Think about how many child predators are being fueled and emboldened. What is all of this communicating to our sons and daughters?

2. Losing innocence. The culture surrounding porn is reinforcing the idea that kids can be sex objects. This was evident in 2010, when 8-year-old girls danced, while wearing lingerie, in a competition to the song "Single Ladies," with highly sexualized moves. The crowd on hand, which included the girls' parents, wasn't horrified. Instead, they hooted, hollered and cheered. We are teaching our sons and daughters at a young age that if they want to be noticed, they need to be sexy. It all starts with our pornified culture. And kids have gotten the message loud and clear.

3. Feelings of shame, guilt and depression. What happens next is tweens and teens play at being sexy. They quickly believe the lie that the best place to learn how to be sexual is through internet porn, which is easily accessible and affordable in large quantities. The images of mainstream pornography they encounter within one minute of searching are violent and graphic. The images are burned into their brains forever. The pornographers are telling them this is the sexual experience. Deep down, they know they have seen something they shouldn't have seen, but their brains can't make sense of it. They are excited and embarrassed, but they don't know why. They feel ashamed and guilty, but too scared to talk to anyone for fear of being in trouble.

4. Addiction. Little do they know what their developing brains have been doing while viewing porn. The brain releases large amounts of dopamine, which gives the feeling of pleasure in its rewards center. This gives them the urge to come back again and forms a connection with the image (a connection meant for a person). This causes an addiction, which is more powerfully ingrained the younger their ages when they're introduced. Since the feeling of euphoria helps them forget about their problems momentarily, porn becomes an unhealthy coping mechanism to distract them from the feelings of shame, guilt and stress. Unfortunately, it only leaves them feeling emptier, so they watch more, and the cycle continues.

5. It fuels disconnection and disrespect. Ultimately, porn leads to relational disconnection and degradation. They draw expectations of what sex will be like. Rather than sex being about connecting intimately with someone in the safety of commitment, it becomes a selfish pursuit of achieving sexual climax. Sex gets cheapened to a physical act, and people are reduced to objects of fantasy. A good and rich life is found in relationships. Sadly, this porn culture is leading our sons and daughters far from them.

The best thing you can do is educate your kids about the lies and the dangers of pornography. Start early rather than later. At some point, they are going to encounter it and will need you to help them make sense of it. Keep the line of communication open and engage them in conversation so they don't go it alone. {eoa}

BJ Foster is the Director of Content Creation for All Pro Dad and a married father of two. For the original article, visit [BJ Foster](#).

The Best Prayer Partner You Could Ever Have

Do you have regular conversations with the wonderful Holy Spirit? Did you know that when you dialogue with Him, He is dialoguing with Christ?

So, when you talk to Him, He is talking to King Jesus, and the words He tells you are fresh words from heaven. John 16:13 says, "But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own authority. But He will speak whatever He hears, and He will tell you things that are to come."

When you have Jesus in your life, you can hear from God and receive fresh words from heaven. God loves you, and He wants to talk to you. He spoke to Moses as a friend, according to Exodus 33:11, under the old covenant, when the presence and anointing of the Spirit were limited to a select few. But you and I are living under the new covenant, where the Spirit is given without measure (John 3:34).

Your access to hear from God is unlimited because of what Jesus accomplished at the cross. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then come with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

There are times in our lives when we feel tired or exhausted and don't know what to pray. But, even in these times, we can hear from Him. If you are in a time of need, running on empty spiritually, and you are unable to see the long-term fruit of your work, prayers and ministry, I want to encourage you to know that your prayer partner, the Holy Spirit, prays for you.

Romans 8:26-27 says, "The Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." This is exciting. The Spirit prays God's will for you.

The New Testament was written in koine Greek, and when Romans 8:26a says, "The Spirit helps us in our weaknesses," one of the words is συναντιλαμβάνομαι ("sunantilambanomai"). It means, "to take hold of with someone, to support, to help, aid," (William D. Mounce's *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, page 433).

The precious Holy Spirit comes to your aid, and He takes hold of you, pulling you up out of the discouragement, out of the despair or depression, and intercedes for you. And then He

will give you words straight from heaven, strengthening you as He leads you further into His truth in Scripture. You cannot fail when you rely on the best prayer partner in the universe. He is interceding for you, and all you need to do is talk to Him.

Here are three steps for you to receive the Spirit's help and hear fresh words from heaven:

1. Surrender to the Spirit of God. When we surrender to the Spirit, we are walking in the Spirit as Gal. 5:16 says, "I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Tell Him you yield and surrender to Him and His guidance according to the Scripture and will obey what He says. Be excited as you approach Him.

2. Seek Him by asking Him questions and write down the words He speaks. Be like the prophets and authors of Scripture who, according to 1 Peter 1:10b-11, "inquired and searched diligently, seeking the events and time the Spirit of Christ, who was within them, signified when He foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow."

3. Search out what He says. Ask for Scripture references, and when He whispers them to you, look them up in your Bible. Proverbs 25:2 says, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the honor of kings is to search out a matter."

If you follow these three steps, you will have great conversations with Him. And as you talk to Him, write these things down and make quick reference of them. When you look back on your journals, you can revisit these amazing times in His presence and be encouraged by your fresh words from heaven. {eoa}

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When Your Heart Is Broken, Cling to This

When I first came to Charisma Media in 2012, I wrote an article titled "Leave It All at God's Feet." The story shared my wife's and my personal struggles with infertility. I invited those faced with the same issue to write me and share their story so we could pray for them and try to help them.

More than four years later, I continue to receive emails from readers. One I received this week from a woman in Norway touched me. She and her husband have suffered through seven years of infertility.

"I am desperate and somewhat depressed. Barrenness is like a filter over your whole being ... My thoughts are that God might have a plan, higher and better than I could ever think of myself. ... I would like to spend my life destroying barrenness because it kills your spirit, and God is about life, Hallelujah! I am greatly touched by your email."

I answer each email. My wife, Patty, and I listen to God's guidance to discern opportunities to minister to hurting couples.

Infertility is only one form of heartache that brings

challenges to believers. My friend and *Charisma* columnist, Carol McLeod, recently wrote a heartfelt article titled “How Does a Believer Deal With a Broken Heart?” in which she quotes Psalm 147:3, “He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.” Carol reiterates that God knows of your pain, has heard your cries of desperation and wants to respond.

“If you have a broken heart, you can count on His presence and His closeness to bind up your wounds and to begin the healing process,” she says. “Do not push Him away at these moments of brokenness, but welcome Him gladly and receive the comfort that He has for you. So many Christians squeeze God out of their lives at the very time they need Him most desperately and when He has promised to stay close.”

God’s promise to stay close to you is only one of more than 7,000 He makes to His children in the Bible: “He will not fail you nor forsake you. Do not fear, nor be dismayed” (Deuteronomy 31:8b).

Cling to that, and you will never be alone. {eoa}

5 Keys to Hurdle Your Greatest Challenges as a Parent

Jake was a good kid from a wonderful family. He had two parents who loved him, supported him and spent time with him.

They raised him with morals and consideration for others. Jake was smart, popular, good-looking, a star athlete and wealthy. That’s why it was so shocking when police cars showed up one

day to arrest him for setting fire to several public buildings. His parents were blindsided, destroyed and confused.

Sometimes life hits hard, especially when you're a parent. Have you ever had really tough parenting challenges that have led to major family issues—the type of challenges you really didn't know if you could handle or bounce back from?

Sometimes it may be you who made the bad choice and now your family is paying for it.

We are all human and always one bad decision away from turmoil. How do you overcome these challenges? How can you and your family bounce back?

Here are 5 ways to overcome your greatest parenting challenges to help you bounce back:

1. Give it to God in prayer. There are some things we can't understand. We can search for the lesson, ask questions and even ask someone else. Turning to God in prayer will give us peace about it and free us from the burden of fixing something bigger than ourselves.

2. Don't beat yourself up. "Where did I go wrong?" "How could have I have let this happen?" "I am such a failure!" Stop right there. What's done is done and mentally beating yourself up will not change what happened.

3. Focus on something good. What good can result? What can you do with what you have right this moment? Turn your energy toward something you control that will have a positive result.

4. Use it to get better. There is opportunity to get better in all situations. Sometimes it is hard to see, but make every effort to learn and grow from the good and bad experiences you have in parenting.

5. Look for the lesson and pass it on. I have learned that

when I look at something with the intent of teaching it to someone else, I learn more. Search for the teachable moments so that as you learn, you can teach your kids.

What has been your biggest parenting challenge? {eo}

For the original article, visit .

Simplifying the Message of the Connection Between Faith and Health

I've been reflecting on how I might simplify the message I've been writing and speaking about. My thought has been that the more concisely I can articulate this message, the easier it will be to explain to others and for them to understand.

With that in mind, I thought I'd share this condensed version with you:

An Inspiring Day

As I've pulled this together, all my senses have been engaged. I've been sipping on a few cups of great-tasting coffee, listening to the trickling of the water in our small fountain, hearing the birds chirp, listening to a playlist of soft, instrumental Christian music on iTunes, feeling the warm spring air as it wafts through an open window and seeing the bright sun shine on the trees and flowers in the back yard. It's been quite an inspiring morning and early afternoon.

Understanding the Faith and Health Connection

This, I believe, is the essence of the faith and health connection:

God designed us in a marvelous way. Our nervous, endocrine and immune systems are interconnected such that our beliefs, emotions and thinking patterns have a direct impact on our physical health.

Our emotions and thoughts related to life events and our relationships will be either health-enhancing or disease-enhancing.

We all inherited a sinful nature at birth. Apart from God, it's our natural tendency to be selfish and rebellious. How we choose to react to life events and how we live in relationship with God, ourselves and others will have a significant effect on our health.

When we try to cope with the stressors of life and to meet our deepest needs apart from God and by our own resources, it's often in ways that are sinful and unhealthy. These self-sufficient and rebellious attitudes, thinking patterns and behaviors often become habits that have a negative impact on our emotional, spiritual and physical health.

Bitterness, resentment, anger, guilt, shame, insecurity, jealousy, low self-worth, fear, worry and anxiety have to do with our relationship with God, others and ourselves. These beliefs and emotions along with their associated spirit-mind-body interactions can have a negative impact on our health.

The repression of strong negative emotions as well as thinking about the respective painful memories can also have harmful effects on our physical health.

The addictive behaviors and personal habits many of us have in an effort to escape from or cope with these uncomfortable relationship-related issues can also be harmful to our emotional and physical health.

God inspired the writers of the Bible to share His truths with us. By reading the Bible, we can learn about God and how much He loves us. The principles found in the Bible tell us how to have the full life He desires for us. Choosing to believe these principles and live by them can create an environment favorable to good health.

Because God loves us, Jesus died for our sins so we might have a full and eternal life. He came to free us from the self-sufficient and sinful nature that keeps us from experiencing flourishing relationships and a full life.

God's greatest commandment is to love God and to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31).

God has given us free will. We can choose whether or not to receive His love and fully live out His greatest commandment and apply the life-giving principles found in the Bible.

As we incorporate the truths of the Bible into our life, live in relationship with Jesus and are dependent on God's Holy Spirit, we can experience love, joy, peace, forgiveness and hope. Love and forgiveness can also be more easily and more fully extended to others and to ourselves. This will promote inner healing, which favors health, wholeness and a full and abundant life.

God also enables us, with the power of His Holy Spirit, to live according to His principles and to make healthy lifestyle-related choices.

Improved health, in general, will better enable us to use the talents and gifts God has given us to serve others and to live out our life purpose.

As we acknowledge the role that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit have played in our lives and enabled us to be healthy, God receives glory.

Questions to Reflect On:

- Are there any relationships in your life that require healing? This includes your relationship with yourself and God as well as with other people.
- Are there principles of the Christian faith that you've neglected and, if practiced, would lead to a more abundant life?
- Have you experienced God's love and forgiveness by accepting Jesus in your heart?

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For the original article, visit .

The Lord Says, 'I Will Have the Last Word in the Media'

As I was praying about what to share at POTUS Shield, the convocation for a group of prophetic leaders working to seek the Lord and prepare for transforming revival in our nation Frank Amedia formed, Holy Spirit started talking to me about the media.

There are many voices and none without signification, but I want My voice to be the loudest one people hear in the media. I want My voice echoed with clarity so it will ripple through the lies of the prince of the power of the air. I want My truth to be established in every sphere of society. As the righteous ones rise up in the media world, the people who

listen and read what is being proclaimed will begin to discern fact from fiction, truth from lies. They will begin to understand My perspective on the matters at hand, and it will resonate in the hearts of many who are sick and tired and overwhelmed with the hopelessness and despair on the airwaves and in print. Many are looking for an alternative. Many are seeking truth. Pray that the blinders would be removed. Pray that hearts would be softened. Pray that boldness would arise even among those non-believers who have a heart for the truth. Pray and keep on praying, because I intend to have My way in the media. The wicked one has infiltrated the airwaves, but I will have the last word.

I sense angels are being dispatched to interrupt the prince of the power of the air's perversion in the media. News media will begin to have encounters with angels and with Jesus that shake them into belief. The media will begin to report on what God is doing in the earth because miracles, signs and wonders that manifest will be undeniable.

The shift that's going to happen in the media as we pray and take Spirit-led action is already underway. Sexual harassment was exposed at Fox News. Fake news—which is like a false prophetic voice—has been exposed. The secular media put coverage of revival in West Virginia on its front page. Mainstream media will quote Christian media with greater frequency. We stand on the precipice of a shift that will at first be subtle but will gain momentum.

Christian media need to stand together, united for the common cause of truth rather than operating in a spirit of competition for readers. God is going to clean up some of the so-called Christian media that is nothing more than a gossip rag by replacing leadership or bringing conviction on leadership. Christian sites that continue to give voice to atheists and liberal agendas will diminish and make way for the uncompromising Christian media to rise higher and carry

more influence.

The Lord has released the angels of abundant harvest. If you are at all interested in learning more about this, visit [. {eo}](#)

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5 Things You Should Bring to Your Home as a Husband and a Father

We often hear of the repercussions of a home without a husband and father—the statistics can be daunting, and the collateral damage is immeasurable.

As the prophet Malachi warns us, the absence of a father brings with it a decree of utter destruction. The facts are indisputable: When a husband leaves the home, the family suffers.

Jesus said, "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25)

I have lived a very dramatic contrast. I was raised in a house of division, but when I became an adult, my wife, Kay, and I built a home of peace. Our three children are now all married and building their own homes. We have the privilege of seeing each of them navigate the challenges life brings with the faith and perseverance required to secure their homes.

Recently, a friend asked, "Neil, what are the keys you and Kay implemented in building your home?"

Here are five things a husband and father brings into the home:

1. Security. "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then, he will plunder his house" (Mark 3:27)

Jesus teaches that the thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy (see John 10:10). Your nemesis hates your home. He knows before he can take your possessions, he must first tie you up. He considers you a strong man. You're the protector of the home. You bring to your home a security—a spiritual authority to protect your turf.

If Satan can get you bound or remove you from being the gate of authority to your home, he has full access to ransack your home.

When I was a teenager, our home was robbed. Someone broke into the garage and stole all kinds of equipment, tools and motorcycles. I had two bikes that I raced. They were both taken. If you've ever been robbed, you know the feeling that comes with it—a vulnerability and insecurity that makes you feel violated.

A vital attribute of being a husband is to bring security to

the home.

2. Stability. “Everyone who hears these sayings of Mine and acts on them will be likened to a foolish man who built his house on the sand” (Matt. 7:26).

The husband brings foundational words, words you can build your life upon. Often times our children will roll their eyes, and our wives may give us a humored grin at our mantras, maxims and adages—but with repetition, these foundational principles help stabilize them.

However, let me encourage you to speak clearly and with conviction. If any of your words matter, all your words matter.

When Zechariah was receiving disturbing messages upon speaking with an angel, the Lord turned to the angel and spoke “good and comforting words” (Zech. 1:13b). It is very revealing to see the character of God in his reassurance of the angel who was speaking with the prophet. Rather than speaking down to or dismissive of the angel, God speaks gentle, reassuring words to him.

In the same way, as husbands and fathers, our words should be kind and comforting, bringing stability to our family’s confidence.

3. Culture. The atmosphere you allow in your home becomes the culture of your children.

Kay and I were very careful to maintain a home of peace. We would not allow strife into our home. The Bible says that where there is strife there is every form of evil. I truly believe that strife manifests the presence of evil.

It has become increasingly difficult to monitor the voices allowed to speak into our homes—the internet, smartphones and television have invited influences that are not always in

agreement with our belief systems. I'm sure internet filters and monitoring controls for these devices are helpful, but if we do not protect the atmosphere of our homes, we will not see it become a culture for our children.

We don't hear much about culture in the home, but it's very important. Conversation, books, politeness and manners may sound like archaic ideals, but in reality, these can and should become the attributes of our homes.

If you teach your children how to conduct themselves at home, they will have no problem behaving in public.

4. Laughter. My wife purchased decorative letters at Hobby Lobby and hung them in our breakfast room. The huge letters spell out L-A-U-G-H. It was a constant reminder that we should enjoy our home.

With all of the challenges we face as families, this makes a good reminder that laughter is good medicine (Prov. 17:22).

I realize you may be facing some real issues and stresses, but it may really help if you can lighten up a little, especially around your wife and kids.

5. Strength. "Be strong, and show yourself to be a man!" (1 Kings 2:2). Do not attempt to draw your strength from your wife and kids. Don't whine and mumble about the burdens you're carrying. Don't complain every time your children need clothes or something from school.

Go to God and draw your strength from Him, then turn and strengthen your family.

Don't be weak and whiny. Don't put the burden on them. They're children.

"Likewise, you husbands, live considerately with your wives, giving honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they too are also heirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will

not be hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7).

Wow! Did you see that? The manner in which you treat your wife can close up the heavens for your prayers.

My wife and I have enjoyed a tremendous relationship. However, early in our marriage, I was upset about something that was happening (I can't remember why). I'm ashamed to say I attempted to get my way by sulking and pouting for a few days. After my morning prayer time, I walked into the kitchen, and Kay looked at me and said, "You're wasting your time praying while you're treating me like this. God isn't going to side with you on this matter."

She was right.

I immediately asked her to forgive me and told her I would not continue to sulk to get my way. I realized my pouting was a childish and weak way to deal with my disappointments. From that day forward, I learned to get my strength from God and strengthen my family from my prayer time.

Action Steps:

1. Is your home secure? Do you have a security system? Do you need one? Are you conditioned to protect your home? Are you situationally aware to protect your family? Look for ways to add security to your home without developing a bunker mentality.

2. Do your words strengthen and encourage your family? Are your words flippant and demeaning? Monitor your words for a day and count how many times you speak down to a family member.

3. What kind of television programs are entertaining you? Are you intrigued by murder mysteries? Are you entertained by inappropriate adult relationships? Are you watching too much television?

4. When is that last time you belly-laughed with your family?

5. Strengthen yourself with prayer. {eoa}

*FivestarMan was founded in 2008 by **Neil Kennedy**. Kennedy has passionately promoted God's Word for 25-plus years of ministry. He is known for practically applying biblical principles that elevate people to a new level of living. As a business, church, ministry and life consultant, Kennedy has helped others strategize the necessary steps to reach their full potential.*

For the original article, visit .

7 Ways You Might Drive Your Wife Crazy—and How You Can Avoid Them

In my first year of marriage, I turned on the TV and started to watch a marathon of a show my wife didn't like. After three episodes, I turned to say something to her and noticed for the first time that she was no longer in the room.

I went to our bedroom where I found her fuming. Apparently, four different times she tried to say something to me but could not get my attention. I was too engrossed in the show to even realize she was in the room let alone hear her say something. This incident happened several times that first year, and it drove her crazy. She felt like the show was more important than she was.

After several arguments, I realized I needed to make a change. Now if I am watching a show, my ears are heightened to her

voice and just to be safe, I look over at her occasionally. It's made all the difference.

As I talk to couples, I hear a list of common things husbands do that drive their wives crazy. Many of these can be avoided by small pieces of intentional action.

1. Inability to multitask. Marriage author Mark Gungor talks humorously about the difference between men's and women's brains. He says women's brains are like a big ball of wires, while men's brains are like a collection of boxes. Inside each of those boxes is a subject and only one box can be dealt with at a time. Women have the ability to think of everything at the same time. They see every subject as interconnected. The amount of details running around their brains is overwhelming. The trouble I run into is when my wife is trying to transfer some of those details to me. If you give me more than one detail in one sitting we're in trouble.

2. Zone out. Gungor goes on to say that men have a box in our brains with nothing in it. He says the Nothing Box is our favorite box. We have the ability to actually think about nothing, while women's brains never stop. We love to sit and not have to think. This drives women crazy because they can't fathom it. In fact, they kind of envy it. However, it becomes a problem when we zone out or our minds wander when our wives are talking or needing us to engage. I've had too many experiences like this clip from *Lego Movie* where I've had to ask my wife to tell me things multiple times.

3. Don't respond. The easiest response for us when our wives have a problem is to jump into action and try to fix it. However, they have told us over and over they don't want us to do that. We are told they want us to just listen. When they are finished pouring out their problems and emotions, we sometimes sit there not knowing how to respond. They are looking for us to say something, but we know we're not supposed to say something that attempts to fix it. So we say

nothing because we haven't done the next point.

4. Don't connect emotionally. I believe, more than anything, our wives are looking to connect with their husbands. However, that's certainly not the easiest task for us. Watching a group of women empathize over one another is fascinating. They all gather around the hurting person in tears and console her. When our wives talk about their struggles and joys they want us to tap into our own similar experience and connect our emotions with theirs. When it doesn't happen, they feel frustrated and alone.

5. Expect sex without trying to connect. When we go to bed, we hope to have sex to connect with our wives, but she needs to emotionally connect first, and if that didn't start earlier in the night it's not going to happen. Wives need a warm up and when we haven't reached out to them until bedtime, their first thought is, "Now you want me? Where were you earlier when I wanted to talk?" If sex with your wife is going to be a possibility, you need to start making your move the moment the kids go to bed.

6. Show no initiative. After a long day, it's easy to come home and disengage. This is especially true when our wives are running crazy with details. It's tempting to think, *She's got it*. They want us to enter into all of their chaos, help them think ahead and move.

7. Don't plan. When my wife takes the kids to the park, she plans for everything. She thinks through inviting friends, the weather, extra clothes, snacks, drinks, toys and sporting equipment, and how long we are going to be there. I think through whether they are dressed and have shoes on, and we're on our way. Imagine what vacations are like. Our wives are constantly planning to meet the needs of our kids and want our help, whether it is our natural tendency or not. {eoa}

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and a married father of two. For the original article, visit .

5 Radical but Effective Depression Cures

I read a disturbing statistic in *U.S. News and World Report* the other day: Anti-depressant drugs are the most widely prescribed class of drugs in the U.S. now, with prescription rates almost doubling between 1996 and 2005.

It is sad that so many people suffer from depression when the source of healing is readily available. I was once one of the people in this category.

Depression robs you of hope. It comes from constant meditation on what you've lost or what you lack, real or perceived. It can be from your past, present or imagining what might happen in the future. But if you are in Christ, you have the very source of wholeness and the reason for hope. He is able to heal the loss, make you whole and restore your hope. But for this to occur, you must fellowship with him daily; it can't be a "Sunday-only, sometime-y" thing.

In my prayer time, God revealed to me radical steps to take that combat mild depression. If you are struggling with this issue, please take them to heart. Practice these steps every day. Your depression will lift, and joy will fill you with strength, helping you face each day's challenges with grace.

1. Radical prayer. If you don't have a regular prayer life, then make that a priority. And if you don't a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, then learn how you can here.

For those who do have that relationship, set a regular time to communicate with God first thing in the morning. Arrange your bedtime and morning routine so you can have this time. This is critical, because depression saps your energy and distorts your thinking. You must replace your weakness with God's strength to be effective in combating its assault.

In your prayer time every morning, start by sitting in quietness. Breathe deeply; don't launch into telling God about your problems just yet. Instead purpose in your heart to focus on praise and worship so that you can enter into His presence with thanksgiving. As you wait in quietness for God's strength to fill you, meditate on His goodness and what He has done for you. Meditate on His character. Recall stories from the Bible in which people faced seemingly impossible situations and God came through for them (My favorite is Moses and the Red Sea Crossing—Exodus Chapter 14).

The more you relax, breathe and focus on God's strength and power, the more your spirit will quicken and leap. Your faith will stir, and you will feel strong in spirit. Keep waiting and meditating until this happens. It is from this position of humility and God-supplied strength and power that you make your requests known to God. His peace will fill you, and you will be confident that He will perfect that which concerns you. End your prayer time with praise and thanksgiving, just as you started. Be consistent with this practice and watch radical changes occur in how you face the day.

2. Radical focus. Guarding that which you see, hear and speak is critical. If you are regularly watching the news but not spending any time with God, you will naturally be more depressed. In Philippians 4:8 we are reminded: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

Since news reports are usually not good reports, change your routine so you fill your mind with good news. Read the book of Psalms for comfort and the book of John to learn more about the good news of the Gospel.

If you are concerned about missing the weather and the traffic report, you can get the weather report on or watch only the traffic report (most news programs have a regular time in which they air the traffic report).

Finally, be sure the words you speak to yourself are of good report. Speak of those things you are hoping for and not what you fear or lack.

3. Radical praise. I read an interesting viewpoint from a psychiatrist about neurotic disorders. He said every patient with such a disorder nearly always had a habit of fault-finding. No matter what was good in their lives, they always focused on what was wrong and what was lacking.

The antidote for that habit is to become a person of praise. For the next 30 days, consciously think of seven things every day that you want to praise God for. It could be as simple as having breath in your lungs or getting a green light if you are late for an appointment. To make this even more powerful, write down your seven praiseworthy things in a small notebook. I guarantee your entire perspective will change after consistent 30-day practice.

4. Radical pursuit. Resolve to put God first and make study of his Word a regular practice. Pursue righteousness, peace and joy. Remember, if you are in Christ, you are given free access to God and can come boldly to his throne of grace. What an awesome privilege! He sees you clothed in Christ's righteousness. If you have areas of disobedience in your life, confess them in your prayer time. Willfully doing what you know is contrary to God's Word can also be a contributor to depression. Ask for forgiveness and turn away from your error

immediately. God is ready, willing and able to restore you to fellowship.

Humbly ask God if there is sin in your life, to cleanse you from it and to give you the strength to do what is right. Ask him to fill the space left behind with more of Him. Be willing to ask as many times as you need to until your breakthrough comes, confident that God will answer your prayer.

5. Radical action. Finally, if you are depressed about a situation from the past, you will need to ask God to fix it, because you cannot change the past. He can help you forgive any hurts you need to forgive. If you need healing, He can do that too.

If you are depressed about your present and future, ask yourself: Is there something that I can do about this situation right now? Write down any actions you can take to change your situation for the better or at least glorify God in your attitude towards it.

Then, take immediate action on one of the items on your list. Action will give you power and energy. Keep acting on the things that you can change.

Regarding the parts of your situation you can't change, go back to the radical prayer step: Start in quietness, focusing on thanksgiving and praise to God. Wait on Him to fill you with strength. Once you feel your spirit built up, tell him your concerns in confidence. End with prayer and thanksgiving.

I do pray that you take these steps to combat depression. And even if you aren't depressed, these radical steps will still bring radical joy and peace into your life. {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 .

The Pathway Past Adversity: Surviving Your Wilderness

“If you’re going through hell, keep going!” So said Winston Churchill during one of the worst crises in world history.

And these words of wisdom still apply to anyone passing through a trial today. Adversity does not have to become our destination. It can be a pathway to something greater.

Maybe you are passing through a difficult season in your life. Perhaps you feel spiritually dry and alone. You might feel as though your prayers are not being heard, and you wonder if God even knows where you are. You are not alone. Millions of believers have passed through these troubled waters and experienced the same emotions. King David sang about the “valley of the shadow of death” (Ps. 23:4). John of the Cross wrote of the “dark night of the soul.” Even Jesus went through times of suffering when He had to offer “prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death” (Heb. 5:7b). People often refer to such seasons as “the wilderness.”

But first things first. If you have not been born again into the family of God, then the wisdom that follows cannot apply to you. Before a person receives the mercy of God through faith in Jesus Christ, they are lost in a perpetual wilderness that stretches beyond this world and into the next. And there’s no way out—except one: Repent and believe the gospel. Entering God’s kingdom by making Jesus your Lord and Savior makes you a child of the most loving, powerful and wonderful

Father. He knows how to guide and take care of you as you traverse life's journey, even when it leads you into a wilderness. His wisdom for the wilderness is what I want to explore in this timely email study.

To do that, I will adapt six tips survival experts give for those stranded in the wilderness. As you will see, the secrets for surviving a physical wilderness bear striking parallels to those for surviving a spiritual one:

Survival Tip No. 1 – Don't Panic

Survival Tip No. 2 – Assess Your Situation

Survival Tip No. 3 – Find Shelter

Survival Tip No. 4 – Build a Fire

Survival Tip No. 5 – Drink Water

Survival Tip No. 6 – Find Nourishment

Stay tuned to in the coming weeks for articles on each of the survival tips. {eo}

This Bible study has been taken from the introduction of Daniel Kolendas's new booklet, Surviving Your Wilderness, and is for those who want to discover God's way for conquering their wilderness times.

Daniel Kolenda is an evangelist and the president and CEO of Christ for all Nations (CfaN), the worldwide ministry of evangelist Reinhard Bonnke.