

10 Ways Communication Can Break Down in Your Marriage

I write and speak about marriage for a living. It's my job and it's my ministry.

So what I'm about to say is hard, but I'm hoping it helps somebody. A few months ago, my wife and I were having a really tough time in our marriage. I'm talking tough to the point where we were questioning some of the things we teach, the things I've written about and the things we speak about. We just couldn't come to a resolve.

So we called for help. We called on a husband and wife who are our marriage mentors and occasional crisis marriage counselors. After several text messages and a couple phone calls, the husband shared his thoughts about the problems we'd been having: communication.

We were terrible at communicating. And if we didn't change it our marriage was going to continue to struggle. The same goes for your marriage. As your communication goes, so goes your marriage.

Here are 10 common communication breakdowns in marriage:

1. Not really listening. The biggest problem to communication is just not listening. Many of our communication problems would go away if we just intently listened to one another.

2. Speaking before thinking. Guilty! I'm guilty! So many times I say things as a reaction, and those times it usually doesn't go well. Take your time and think before speaking and responding to your wife.

3. Only talking about what you want to talk about. I call this throwing up on her. Sometimes I just overload her with things

I'm dealing with, not caring to hear what she's dealing with. Too many of those conversations and you might be calling your marriage mentors for help as well.

4. Raising your voice. You can help yourself in this area when you think before speaking as mentioned above. You may need to take a breather to gather yourself, but raising your voice doesn't serve you or your wife well.

5. Negative non-verbal communication. Your non-verbal communication—facial expressions and gestures—will impact your conversations as well. Maybe you didn't say anything wrong, but you sure did say something wrong with your negative body language, which can be received as worse.

6. Speaking in superlatives. "You always." "You never." "Every single time." Have you ever uttered those words? There are few things, if any, that your wife always does, never does or does every single time. Using these words can be harmful to your marriage.

7. Degrading your spouse. This should go without saying, but I'll say it anyway. Never ever degrade your spouse. You should look to build her up, to encourage her, to love her as you love yourself. Degrading her has no place in your marriage.

8. Playing the blame game. If a miscommunication or a mistake is made, don't let your first instinct be blaming your wife (even if it is her fault.) The blame game or pointing fingers doesn't work. You are one. That means you both have a joint responsibility in whatever happened. Talk through it together, find the learning opportunity for her and for you.

9. Seeking to be understood first rather than to understand. Strive to know what she is thinking, what she is feeling, what she is dealing with. Before you try to get her to understand you, first understand her and her point of view. It just may change your point of view before you even share it.

10. Bringing up the past. Do not keep score and do not bring up your past victories or your wives past losses (mistakes). There is no positive purpose in that. It is a losing strategy when it comes to communication in marriage. {eoa}

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For the original article, visit .

Scripture Says Pain, Health and Sin Share This Unexpected Connection

Sin, pain and health. There is often a connection. The Bible makes this truth very clear.

Please understand, I'm not saying that health issues are *always* the result of sin. But unconfessed sin can sometimes directly lead to health issues—mental and physical.

This past week, I delivered a workshop for Faith Community Nurses in Georgia. My topic was “Complementary, Alternative and Integrative Medicine. What’s the Christ Follower to Do?”

During my research, I learned that, according to the National Institute of Health (NIH) the No. 1 reason why people turn to alternative modalities and therapies, rather than traditional medicine, is because they are in physical pain. They are seeking relief from chronic pain—back pain, neck pain and joint pain.

More than half of American adults (125 million) had a musculoskeletal pain disorder in 2012.

Sometimes the pain is rooted in a skeletal or biological issue or imbalance. Often this comes about as a result of an accident or injury.

But sometimes the pain can be caused because people are in internal conflict with God or with themselves because they have sinned or are living in intentional sin. This internal conflict can cause tension in the muscles and other body tissues. Soft-tissue tension can sometimes compress the tissue or bone against nearby nerves and result in pain. Sometimes the pain becomes chronic.

Sure, a massage or an acupuncture treatment, an anti-inflammatory pill or physical therapy can provide short-term relief. But if the pain is rooted in the inner conflict or guilt that stems from sin, the treatment or pill may very well not cure the pain.

What the Bible Says About Pain, Health and Sin

The Bible addresses pain health and sin head on. Let's look at a few key verses in Psalm 38:

"O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure. For Your arrows pierce me, and Your hand presses down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation, nor is there health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have passed over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness. I am bent, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am numb and completely crushed; I have roared because of the groaning of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before You, and my sighing is not hidden from You. My heart throbs, my strength fails me; as for the light of my eyes, it also is

gone from me. My friends and my companions stand back because of my affliction, and those close to me stand at a distance. ... For I am ready to stumble, and my pain is continually before me" (vv. 1-11, 17).

Clearly David felt guilty from his sin. He was in mental anguish. He likely could have experienced arrhythmia in his heart. He experienced searing pain. In the New International Version, verse 7 reads, *"My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body."*

Do you see the connection between his sin and the pain and poor health that David experienced?

Let's look at another Scripture where in Psalm 32, beginning with verse 1, David writes the following:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord does not count iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy on me; my strength was changed into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not conceal. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin" (vv. 1-5).

Internally, David felt guilty because he knew that he had committed sin. This internal conflict—his guilt and negative emotions—undoubtedly caused harmful chemicals and hormones to be released within his body, resulting in inflammation, sickness and pain. God permitted this. God designed us in such a way that our sinful behaviors (our will/choice to engage in sin) and our mind, emotions and body are all intricately connected. Nothing happens in isolation!

For more insight into biblical principles and examples related to sin and health read the following verses:

- Psalm 106
- Psalm 107:17-20
- 1 Corinthians 11:30

Sin, Pain and Health—The Prescription

The spiritual prescription or solution to pain and health conditions that are rooted in sin is confession to God and turning from the sin. The healing occurs through God's forgiveness and in recognizing His forgiveness. Remember what David wrote in Psalm 32:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord does not count iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. ... I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not conceal. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:1-2, 5).

As we receive God's forgiveness from sin, we can release our guilt feelings. The tension can then fall away. The body stops releasing harmful substances. It returns to balance. We can again experience God's peace. This all promotes good health and a lack of physical pain.

So you see, there is a connection between sin, pain and health.

If you've been experiencing chronic pain or a health condition that your health care provider has not been able to cure, I encourage you to prayerfully ask God to help you examine your heart and your behaviors (Ps. 139:23-24). Ask Him if you are holding on to any resentment toward someone. Ask Him to show you if there is any recurring or unconfessed sin in your life. If He shows you anything, be obedient to confess and follow through with what He shows you to do.

Be encouraged! God loves you so much that He sometimes brings

physical pain or sickness into your life so that you'll turn from sin and grow closer to Himself! {eoa}

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For the original article, visit [.](#)

Emotional Healing: Applying a Warrior Discipline to Basic Spiritual Habits

On July 6, 2009, my platoon was conducting mobile operations soon after Operation Khanjari began. We were escorting our battalion commander and other officers to Echo Company's area of operations, which was a highly volatile and violent environment.

Our battalion participated in the largest helicopter assault since Vietnam, where NATO ISAF forces were being inserted behind enemy lines in order to conduct operations to dismantle Taliban networks and prepare the populace in Helmand Province for the upcoming elections.

As we were driving south we passed the last Marine outpost and would be on our own for a while, crossing what was the patrol base line, the imaginary line between NATO forces and the Taliban. The route was said to have been cleared days previously of IEDs.

However, after passing the outpost, everything became too quiet for me. I looked at my platoon sergeant and said, "I don't like this." Then he looked at me and I remember him saying, "What?" Then we both looked forward, and in a moment the lead vehicle exploded in front of us, the sound of the explosion forever etching itself in my memory.

In that moment we had to rely on our training with so many unanswered questions. The MRAP ahead of me was made for this terrain and to withstand explosions, but my friends were in that truck. We called up to our higher command, securing the area in order to get answers about the unknown in the next five minutes. After calling the base on the radio with the Nine Line and situation report, I prayed in the Spirit with my machine gunner encouraging me to do so as he was raised in a Spirit-filled church.

I became numb as the days passed, doing my job to the best of my ability, sometimes going for days without sleep or rest to make sure we had communications everywhere we went. My truck was a mobile command operation center being my responsibility, as I was the driver and radio operator for our battalion commander.

My platoon was made up of 24 Marines and one sailor, who was our medical corpsman. We escorted dignitaries such as Senator John Kerry, General Petraeus and other high-level personnel who came to our area of operation for a quick visit, and we did infantry patrols and raced through the desert dodging IEDs, completing over 100 missions.

At a certain point on deployment I no longer cared what happened to me; my job was for my friends, so I considered myself dead in order to ensure others survived. More than half of my platoon would be hit by IEDs through the course of our deployment. Each of us made it home, but were never the same.

The day before the Thanksgiving holiday we returned home and I

was embraced by my wife, my firstborn son and my twins, who were born 13 days into my deployment. I was ecstatic and elated, loving every moment. I never felt better. But a few months later, I took a turn for the worse and entered a dark and despairing season. The combat thrill was gone and so were my friends as our platoon was dissolved after serving its purpose.

My emotions were like a roller coaster ride and I was on a self-destructive road. I felt alone and abandoned, no longer part of a bigger cause. I tried to push the war aside but it would come back in full force with a vengeance. Working through the scenarios, the things we saw and did while over there and feeling like we gave our best but were never recognized for it by our commander were all things I had to sort through. Insomnia, depression and adrenal fatigue were all symptoms of deep issues from the war.

After multiple therapy sessions and a number of medications many of us referred to as the “combat cocktail,” I realized I had to go back to the basics of my faith. I knew that no matter what man had to offer, I needed God more. In order to not lose my mind and my family in the process, I decided to rely on the Spirit of God and the basic spiritual habits in order to heal. I had to be proactive taking charge of my mind, will and emotions, taking every thought captive and making them obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

I applied a warrior discipline to the basic spiritual habits in order to heal, which were:

Memorization: Taking Romans 12:2 to heart, it says, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” I applied Colossians 3:2-3 to my life daily, setting my affections on heavenly things, hiding in the presence of God. The best model of inner healing was applying Scripture.

Meditation: I immersed myself in the Bible, meditating on it daily, reading and studying it. Throughout the course of the day I had to be intentional to focus my energies on Scripture and meditate no matter how I felt. Philippians 4:8 became a daily reality. It says, "Finally, brothers, 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." I could not allow the depression and negative thinking to consume me, so I engaged often with Scripture, especially focusing on Jesus reigning on His throne.

Prayer: The secret place of prayer was where I had to discipline my mind again, focusing on Jesus and laying everything at His feet. Every scene, every memory, trauma and fracture of my being had to be handed to Him. I sought His face, needing His presence. It was here that I was restored, returning to my first love and He taught me how to laugh again and love life and be positive, affirming and encouraging. I learned that in His presence comes transformation.

Many veterans are looking for a place to belong again. Many are alone waging battle in their minds against the war they were in. Now, more than ever before, the church should reach out to them with open arms, embracing them with love and teaching them how to apply the basics of the faith and spiritual habits in order to heal because only in Jesus is abundant life (John 10:10). {eoa}

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The Healthiest Thing You Can Do Every Day

Years ago, I used to suffer from depression. In the midst of it, the Lord challenged me with Psalm 119:164:

“Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments.”

He impressed upon me to get a pretty journal and write down seven things that happened that day for which I was thankful.

He further challenged me to do it each day for 30 days.

I did it. And by the end of that 30 days, I was happier and more peaceful than I had ever been! That depression lifted. If it ever tries to come back, I now know how to resist it.

Science is just catching up with God’s word. A psychologist once studied people who suffered from depression and other neurotic disorders. He discovered they all had one thing in common.

Can you guess what it was?

They were all fault finders.

They focused on the worst within themselves, in other people or in their life situations.

However, praise and thankfulness is God’s will for His people (1 Thess. 5:18). I believe that many of us who suffer from emotional eating have that depressive “spirit of heaviness” on us.

But Isaiah 61:3 says that God gives us “the garment of praise

for the spirit of heaviness.”

Think about it: You have to choose to put on clothes every day, don't you? They don't just magically appear on your body!

So each day, set your heart on praise and thanksgiving. Try it every day for 30 days and see if it doesn't help you on your health journey!

I am sure that you will agree it is the healthiest thing you can do every day.

Please comment if you decide to accept this 30-day challenge.

When you complete it, please come back and testify in the comments about how it has changed your outlook on life. {eo}

*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 .

These 2 Powerful Attitudes Make a Winning Combination

I had an extraordinary date this summer with a young man by the name of “Boyce” who is only 3 1/2 years old! He is my grandson who lives thousands of miles away from me. I only get to see him a couple of times a year, and I treasure every single minute in his lively, gregarious and cheerful presence!

We had spent our special time together eating gluten-free

pizza at the pizza shop and gluten-free cupcakes at the cupcake store. Then, we stopped in the village toy and candy shop so that he could choose a prize that would be suitable for his adventurous and active little body.

As we got into the car and as I strapped him into his car seat, he said to me, "Thank you, Marmee! This is the best day I could have ever imagined!"

My heart melted at his words of gratitude and sweet little boy love. I looked into his sparkling blue eyes and responded, "Boyce, it is the best day I could have ever imagined as well!"

As we were driving home, we stopped at an overly long red light. I heard his little voice chanting in the back seat, "Come on green! Come on green! Come on green!"

I looked at his face in the rear view mirror and questioned with a smile, "What's that about, Boyce?"

Just then, the light turned green and we started to go. He pumped in his fist in the air and said, "It works every time, Marmee! It works every time!"

Oh! For the faith of a little child! Boyce believed with his entire being that it was the power of his words that caused that stubborn red light to turn miraculously to vibrant green.

Perhaps that is what the Lord wants all of us to believe as well! Maybe it is when our hearts are filled with gratitude and our words are filled with faith that we are able to embrace, with childlike wonder, the possibilities and the joys that lie before us.

Maybe it is time for you and me to look into the eyes of the Father and just say, "Thank You, Father! This is the best life that I could have imagined!"

Perhaps when we are impatient with waiting and undone by

disappointment, we should begin to speak words of faith. It is indeed a more powerful choice to speak words that are laced with possibility than words that are birthed in whining and discouragement. Maybe, just maybe, we should humbly learn the lesson that I learned from a 3-year-old bundle of perpetual energy this summer: The words I choose to speak at the crossroads of life are of unmatched importance. When I choose to declare words of expectation and hope, I usher in heaven's intervention into my ordinary life.

When I determine that the words that I allow to come out of my mouth will be words that partner with God and with His Word, I become the vessel for His power to change unchangeable situations!

I dare you to speak words of childlike faith over your life today! I challenge you to partner with God in declaring a blessing and a miracle over the mundane in your circumstances. And who knows? Perhaps like Boyce, and like me, you will then be able to confidently conclude, "It works every time, God! It works every time!" {eo2}

Carol McLeod is an author and popular speaker at women's conferences and retreats, where she teaches the Word of God with great joy and enthusiasm. Carol encourages and empowers women with passionate and practical biblical messages mixed with her own special brand of hope and humor. She has written five books, including *No More Ordinary*, *Holy Estrogen!*, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart* and *Defiant Joy!* Her most recent book, *Refined: Finding Joy in the Midst of the Fire*, was released last August. Her teaching DVD, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart*, won the Telly Award, a prestigious industry award for excellence in religious programming. You can also listen to Carol's "A Jolt of Joy" program daily on the Charisma Podcast Network. Connect with Carol or inquire about her speaking to your group at .

What to Do if You're Experiencing a Spiritual Recession

John was highly leveraged when the stock market crashed. By Friday morning of Wall Street's worst week, John's equity was paper thin.

He said, "If the market goes down another 100 points today, they will call my margin account and I'll lose everything. On Monday morning, I'll have to start over."

As we talked on, John explained, "You know. I think I needed this. I'm only in my early 40s, but I've made so much money that I stopped working about a year ago.

"Basically, I've been sitting around on the couch watching movies and getting fat. My life was headed nowhere. God has my undivided attention."

The most difficult lessons to learn are often the ones we already know.

Living by Your Own Ideas

Like John, during good times a lot of people get lax about doing life God's way. In fact, a lot of people have never really been trained to understand God's way.

I see this every Friday morning at The Man in the Mirror Men's Bible Study that I teach here in Orlando. Every week we have four to eight visitors. They sit at a "first timers" table with me.

Invariably, many of them have professed faith in Christ. But they want the best of both worlds. They want the benefits of Christ, but they also want to taste the good things the world has to offer. They want to have their cake and eat it too.

They read the Bible for comfort, but their *Forbes* for direction. They have been shaped more by the herds of commerce than the footsteps of Christ.

As a result, they have spent the last five, 10, 15 or more years living by their own ideas. Their lives have not turned out the way they planned. And now they are miserable.

Biblically, these men have let the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of money choke the Word and make it unfruitful (Matt. 13:22); they've let the yeast of culture work through the whole batch of dough (Gal. 5:9); they've done that which is permissible but not beneficial (1 Cor. 6:12); and they're high-risk for a great crash because they built on sand and not the rock (Matt. 7:24-27).

It's not as though these men want to struggle or fail. But their *capabilities* are not equal to their *intentions*. As Denzel Washington, playing a recovering alcoholic ex-military bodyguard in a Latin American country, said in *Man on Fire*, "You're either trained or you're not trained." Spiritually, most men are not trained. As a result, they end up Christian in spirit, but secular in practice.

So what are the root problems? There are two: *idols* and *lies*.

Idols

An idol is anything of which we say, "I *must* have this to be happy."

Every morning, you go into a world that all day long tempts you to exchange the glory of God for an idol (Rom. 1:23).

I race a vintage Porsche and have used racing as a platform to

build relationships with men and share my faith. One day a man who never misses a chance to race asked me quite seriously, "When does my passion for racing become an idol?" Good question.

All idolatry is rooted in *unbelief*. This unbelief can take many forms, but at its root is the powerful lie, "Jesus Christ alone is not enough to make me happy. I need something else."

An idol is something we worship. The issue is looking to anything except Jesus Christ for identity, meaning and ultimate purpose. An idol is anything that becomes the object of inordinate affection—anything that competes with our full surrender to Christ.

John Calvin said that men are "idol factories." Perhaps nothing interferes with our faith more than the root problem of making idols—it's the "next step" after believing a lie (see next section).

We can make idols of almost anything, but common examples today include:

Money

- Titles and positions (especially if the job doesn't generate a large income)
- Homes (i.e., attaching personal worth and identity to a dwelling)
- Country club memberships (i.e., being part of the "right" crowd)
- Ministry titles (e.g., elder, deacon)
- Relationships (e.g., idolizing a wife)
- Affiliations with important people
- Cars, boats, planes, motorcycles
- Our bodies (i.e., physical appearance)
- Superior intelligence
- The praise of men (what C.S. Lewis called "to win worship" in *The Weight of Glory*)

- Even our own righteousness!

Idols make promises they cannot keep, which is why a man can be on a winning streak and still feel empty.

Lies

All of us either live by the truth or a *good* lie.

Every morning, you go into a world where all day long you are tempted to exchange “the truth of God for a lie” (Rom. 1:25).

There are two languages in the world: *truth* and *lies*.

The first language—the native tongue—of every person is the language of lies. When we receive Christ we become *bilingual*. We learn a second language—the language of truth. But what happens when we don’t regularly practice speaking a second language? We revert to our native tongue.

How do we fall back into our native language? No one, Christian or otherwise, will choose to live by an obvious lie. Which counterfeit dollar bill is most likely to make it into circulation? It’s the one that looks like the real thing.

In the same way, the only lies that make it into circulation are ones that appear to be true. A good lie is probably only one or two degrees off course. Otherwise it would be rejected.

The problem with a good lie is that it will work—for 10, 20, even 30 years. But ultimately it will fail you, and often at the worst possible moment—like now, during an economic meltdown.

Solving the Right Problem

What is the fundamental problem you should be trying to solve? If you don’t get this right, you risk prolonging your pain.

Our nation is facing a problem of biblical proportion. As a nation, we have been living beyond our means. We have too much

national debt. Many of us have too much personal debt.

As a result, most observers would say we have a financial problem. And we do.

But this “presenting” problem is really the symptom of a deeper problem.

Fundamentally, we have a spiritual problem. It is a problem of the human heart. We have disobeyed God. Moses started talking about this about 1,400 B.C. He said,

“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today, and the curse, if you will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn from the way which I am commanding you today, to go after other gods which you have not known” (Deut. 11:26-28).

We see this same sentiment throughout Scripture—Old Testament and New Testament.

We are told not to follow the practices of the world, adopt worldly customs, intermingle with the world, make treaties, imitate detestable ways, covet gold and silver, become engrossed with the things of this world, love money, love the world or anything in the world, or worship other gods (Lev. 18:3, 20:22; Exo. 34:12,16; Deut, 7:2-4, 7:25, 8:19, 18:9; Josh. 23:12-13; 1 Cor. 7:31; 1 Tim. 6:9; 1 John 2:15-16).

And what happens if we do? We become ensnared, we turn back, we do what seems right in our own eyes, we form worldly alliances that become a temptation and a trap, our hearts become stubborn, we cling to deceit, we exchange the truth of God for a lie, and we end up worshipping other gods.

Intermingling With the Culture

There are a lot of Scriptures that explain how people get caught up in the world. Psalm 106:35-36 puts it this way: “But

they mixed among the nations and learned their deeds; they served their idols, which were a snare to them.”

You already know that you can’t serve both God and money, right? But that doesn’t stop us from trying, does it?

The apostle Paul put it this way: “You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (Gal. 5:7).

Two verses later, he answered his own question. The problem is, “A little yeast leavens the whole batch” (Gal. 5:9).

And that leaves us where we are today. None of us planned to be in a prolonged recession. But here we are.

One of the essential questions you need to answer is, if applicable: “Do you understand how you got off track?”

Is the problem that you have lived by your own ideas? Did you make an idol? Did you believe a lie? Did you adopt worldly customs and get snared? Understanding the problem you need to solve is crucial.

If you are trying to solve the wrong problem, then you can only succeed by accident. {eo}

The preceding article is adapted from Pat Morley’s book, How to Survive the Economic Meltdown.

*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 best-selling 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 .

7 Reasons People Leave Their Church During Crisis Times

The church has often been taught about the times of refreshing that come during seasons of revival. The first such time recorded was the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when 3,000 were saved. In Acts 4 and 5, God continued to add to the church daily while there was unity and purpose of heart, which released great signs and wonders that confirmed the resurrection of Christ. Also, in Acts 9 after Saul was converted, the church enjoyed a season of blessing, growth and renewal.

There were also great revivals in Old Testament times during the reigns of Kings David and Solomon, and then repentance and revival during the reigns of Kings Hezekiah, Josiah and others (2 Sam.; 1 Kings; 2 Kings).

But what many people don't realize is that there are also seasons when God purges His church (John 15:4-7) by allowing us to go through severe times of testing—like Israel did in the wilderness—during which the true motives of God's people are revealed. Hebrews 3 and 4 relate how God was angry with the Jews who hardened their hearts with their incessant complaining and unbelief during times of testing.

This resulted in God's favor being lifted from a whole generation of those who subsequently died in the desert and never saw the promised land. First Corinthians 10:1-14 teaches that this failure of the Jews during this time of testing is also relevant for today and serves as a warning to the contemporary church.

Thus, there are seasons of revival for growth and seasons of

testing for purging that God allows so that, ultimately, His church will be pure and fulfill its destiny in the kingdom of God.

Although it seems we are presently in a global time of testing for both the world and church, there are also seasons of testing and purging for individual believers and specific congregations that are unique to each. During these seasons of testing, the number of people attending congregations may diminish, or there may be just a general malaise and lack of commitment in regards to financial giving and volunteerism among the fence-sitters. This will result in God's people being purified so we will have true disciples and not just "mere Christians."

The world, especially the United States and Europe, is in a severe time of testing. We can also include Latin America, the Caribbean, Japan and other regions. This global season of testing, precipitated by the global economic meltdown, has resulted in people losing their jobs or working two to three jobs as well as overall increases in stress levels, which have dramatically impacted key relationships and whole families, and the commitment people have to their churches. Consequently, this has unleashed a fear greater than the actual challenges and has revealed the hearts of those who said they had great faith and were supposedly faithful during the times of plenty before 2007.

The result in the faith community has been alarming:

- With the exception of a few, most churches have seen their tithes and offerings drop almost 40 percent, with even many church leaders withholding their tithes from their local churches.
- Church attendance is down because folks under stress are taking their Sundays off for themselves, or they are working on Sundays in a feeble attempt to pay their bills while disobeying the Lord in their giving,

violating Malachi 3:8-14.

- Many people in the body of Christ are discouraged because they are succumbing to the overall negative global climate instead of fighting the good fight of faith. God has allowed this test to reveal to them the true condition of their false selves.

Why God Allows Seasons of Falling Away

Ezekiel 3:20 teaches us that God allows stumbling blocks in the way of the righteous to see if they will pick them up and be ensnared by them.

We all have buttons that can be pushed by the enemy. If we refuse to deal with them, then at a certain point God will allow the devil to test us in these areas that eventuate in our falling away from the purposes of God in our lives!

John 3:16 teaches us that if we believe in Him, we will not perish. "Perish" comes from a Greek word that has to do with us living in a ruined state, eventually resulting in eternal judgment. When we fall away from God's purposes for us in His kingdom, we may be deceived into thinking we are still OK with God because in our hearts we still pray and say we love Him. You may recall that Samson didn't even know when the Holy Spirit left him (Judg. 16:20).

But Jesus makes it clear in John 14:15, 23-24 that the ones who truly love Him are the ones who obey His commandments and keep His Word. Thus, the purpose and ministry God has for us is inextricably connected with our love for God. Jesus reiterated this to Peter in John 21:15-17 when He equated loving God with feeding His sheep.

Paul the apostle predicted in the first century there would be a great falling away from the faith sometime in his generation (1 Tim. 4:1-3), which was fulfilled during the judgment of Israel in A.D. 70. During this time of great tribulation, Jesus said that as the impending judgment was coming upon the

nation of Israel, men's hearts would faint with fear. He warned them in Luke 21:34, "Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts become burdened by excessiveness and drunkenness and anxieties of life, and that Day comes on you unexpectedly."

Paul the apostle tells us about seasons like this in Ephesians 6:10-13, when he says to put on the whole armor of God and to take our stand in the "day of evil"—seasons of satanic deception and testing.

Paul also says that in the time of testing, God will send to those who refused to repent "a strong delusion, so that they should believe the lie" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

Hence, God even allows supernatural confirmations to confirm and establish the self-deception in the hearts of those predisposed to disobey God and fall away from Him.

Furthermore, Deuteronomy 13:1-4 teaches that God allows false prophecies to actually come to pass because He is testing the people to see if they will really fear Him and serve Him no matter what! Galatians 1:6-9 states that Paul taught the church in Galatia that God may even allow an angel to appear to get them off track but that is still no excuse! He told them: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel."

Sometimes satanic deception is so great that whole churches experience this falling away. The books of Galatians and Hebrews were apostolic attempts to plead with and impart truth to these churches because all of them were falling away from the grace of Christ into another gospel, which was a mixture of Christianity and Judaism.

Syncretism is when we have a mixture of Christianity or truth with another religion or system of faith that conforms to the flesh and waters down our commitment to Christ as Lord. Hence, we may even have some churches that are so compromised in their preaching that they are really preaching another gospel.

An example is the liberal mainline Protestant denominations that preach a mixture of Christianity, humanism and deism.

In Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus warns five of the seven churches to repent or He would judge them. Those five churches disappeared from the scene.

What Are We to Do?

Leaders: Those who are leaders and workers in the church are admonished by God to care for the flock of God during seasons of testing and distress. Those leaders who are self-centered during these times and neglect the flock to take care of themselves are warned in Zechariah 10:3, "My anger burns against the shepherds, and I will visit judgment on the male goats. For the Lord of Hosts will visit His flock, the house of Judah, and will make them like His majestic horse in battle."

Also in Ezekiel 34:2-6, 10: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourself with the wool; you kill those who are fed without feeding the flock. The diseased you have not strengthened, nor have you healed that which was sick, nor have you bound up that which was broken, nor have you brought back that which was driven away, nor have you sought that which was lost. But with force and with cruelty you have subjugated them. They were scattered because there was no shepherd. And they became meat to all the beasts of the field and were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill. Indeed, My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and no one searched or sought after them. ... Thus says the Lord God: I am against the shepherds. And I will require My flock from their hand and cause them to cease from feeding the flock. Nor shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore, for I will deliver My flock

from their mouth so that they may not be meat for them.”

Like Nehemiah, leaders are admonished to stay on the wall and not stop building the local church out of fear or waste their time answering the taunts of those lying and gossiping spirits who would like nothing better than for the work of the ministry to cease.

For those under spiritual leadership: There is a warning not to strike the shepherds during these times of testing or the sheep will be scattered (Zech. 13:8). Thus, when we criticize or gossip against our shepherds, we are self-serving and responsible for causing the sheep to be scattered. Let God deal the shepherds as He said He will do in Ezekiel 34.

7 Reasons Why Sheep Are Leaving Local Churches During This Season of Testing

1. Because of work-related and family stress, they are spending their weekends on their own pleasures and doing their own things instead of honoring the Lord's Day (Is. 58:13).

2. People have given in to a spirit of discouragement and falling away, instead of obeying what Jesus and Paul said by watching, praying and putting on the whole armor of God during these times. There is nothing better than corporate church prayer meetings during these times of testing because the prayers and faith of others can lift us up when we are down in the dumps. Hebrews 5:7 and Luke 22:44 teaches us that when Jesus was in agony, He prayed even more earnestly! James 5:13 also admonishes us to pray when we are suffering.

3. Many believers are working on Sundays to make ends meet. This shows their commitment to God is less than the orthodox Jews who don't even have Jesus in their hearts and yet refuse to dishonor God by violating their Sabbath.

4. Many believers are listening to and spreading negative talk about their churches and leaders. Proverbs 6:19 teaches us

that God hates divisive talk in the family of God. Ephesians 4:29 instructs us not to allow any negative or unwholesome talk to come out of our mouths but only those things that are good for edifying one another.

Slander and negative talk often results in people leaving their local churches and disrespecting their spiritual oversight. If you feel your spiritual leader has offended you or is doing something wrong, don't just listen to slander or entertain negative thoughts. Make an appointment with them and hear their side of the story and allow for healing and reconciliation. This is the protocol laid out for believers in Matthew 18:15-18.

5. Financial pressures are causing an overall stress in relationships, which also includes negative feelings toward spiritual leaders and their churches, especially when someone has to be corrected or held accountable for their ministry-related performance or because of personal issues. It seems the overall margin for friction in relationships has been greatly reduced because of the saturation level people experience from work and economic-related stress.

6. People are running from the pain of their stress and medicating themselves by engaging in illicit sexual relationships, substance abuse or excessive entertainment. Hence, they feel guilty and choose to run from God and church instead of repenting and dealing with their pain through spiritual counsel.

7. Fear or paranoia spreads when one person leaves a church. Then their circle of friends wants to leave. Next, it starts a movement or exodus from a church because sheep are generally not discerning and impulsively follow other sheep they are connected to. When they see one or two sheep running away, they also run away even without knowing fully why they are afraid or running! They say to themselves, "something must be wrong with this church because my friends are leaving."

Consequently, only those who have enough integrity to speak honestly with their leaders, receive their counsel and are praying for discernment and interpreting their experience in light of the Scriptures—instead of being led astray by false movements or led by fear or rebellion—will be safe and secure during this time.

We should know that most—if not all—churches globally and Christians individually are presently going through an intense time of testing, just like the world is. This is because God is judging every aspect of His created order. Church attendance and giving is generally down everywhere I look, with few exceptions.

There are some larger churches that are growing from transfer growth. But this not true growth and will not last long because these new attendees will soon discover that the grass is not always greener on the other side—especially when they don't deal with their own unbelief and rebellion that had a hand in them running from their church in the first place.

In conclusion, falling away from God and His purposes is nothing to sneeze at. Hebrews 6:1-9 teaches that it is possible for people to ultimately fall away from Christ after receiving all the fruits of salvation, power of the Holy Spirit and the good Word of God. Second Peter 2:20-22 teaches that it is actually better not to have ever known the way of righteousness than to experience Christ and turn from Him.

Let us remember one of the closing words of the author of Hebrews 10:35-39:

“Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which will be greatly rewarded. For you need patience, so that after you have done the will of God, you will receive the promise. For, ‘In yet a little while, He who is to come will come, and will not wait. Now the just shall live by faith, but if anyone draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.’ But we are

not of those who draw back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the saving of the soul.” {eo}

Joseph Mattera is an internationally known author, futurist, interpreter of culture and activist/theologian whose mission is to influence leaders who influence nations. He leads several organizations, including The United States Coalition of Apostolic Leaders (). He also has a blog on Charisma magazine called “The Pulse.” To order one of his books or to subscribe to his weekly newsletter, go to .

For the original article, visit .

Debunking Common Misconceptions About Fallen Angels

Many believers hold the belief that fallen angels are demonic beings. It is a belief that holds no biblical providence, evangelist and healing minister David Diga Hernandez says.

“Nowhere in the Bible does it say that the angels who rebelled with Satan became demons upon the earth,” Hernandez says. “This is an assumption we make because there are missing links in the Scriptures. People will make the leap from the angels falling and rebelling with Satan all the way to ‘now they are therefore’ minions that are doing his bidding on the earth. Check out Revelation chapter 12 to discover the truth.”

Watch the video for the rest of this powerful teaching from Hernandez. {eo}

David Diga Hernandez is author of 25 Truths about Demons and

Spiritual Warfare (Charisma House, 2016), an evangelist, healing minister and host of Encounter TV. His evangelistic healing ministry is marked by a distinct presence of the Holy Spirit. A rising voice of healing, Hernandez is a unique and emerging spiritual leader, called to take God's saving and healing power to this generation.

5 Common 'Heat of the Moment' Mistakes Husbands Can Avoid

In the heat of the moment we often don't think clearly and react poorly. My worst marital offense of this occurred many years ago.

My wife and I had been out with friends and started arguing in the car on the way home. It spilled over into the house as I continued to lose control of my anger. My wife is difficult to rile but I kept on until I got her there. She eventually informed me that I would be sleeping away from home that night.

On my way out the door to sleep in our van, I noticed my oldest daughter had been on the couch the entire time witnessing everything. My heart sank. I was mortified, and nothing can take back that moment. I never made that mistake again.

What are some of the most common mistakes husbands make in the heat of the moment? Here's a list of typical mistakes and how we can correct them:

- 1. Saying hurtful things** – You're angry and you want to

inflict damage. You know where the weak spots are. Your good conscience is telling you not to say it because it's fighting dirty and you don't really mean it. But you say it anyway. Huge mistake. What was once just an argument that would blow over has now become something deeper that will stay with her, possibly forever. Listen to your conscience. Think about what you say.

2. Emphasis on winning – We are competitive. We like to win even when it's not to our benefit to do so. Getting our way at all costs should never be a primary goal. The goal is what is best for our family and a good marriage. Swallowing pride is not an easy thing, but pride goes before the fall, and placing an emphasis on winning rather than the relationship will bring a fall every time.

3. Being too sensitive – I'm a sensitive guy. Wish I wasn't, but I surely am. My feelings can get hurt and I'll make dumb decisions because of it. Develop ways to cope with bruised or hurt feelings in a healthy and productive way. Take a time out, assume best intentions and try to see things objectively rather than personally. Sometimes it's as simple as going out to the garage and pounding it out on a project or two and you'll feel better.

4. Choosing what feels good over what's right –You've promised her you will take care of a list of projects on Saturday morning. On Friday, your buddies have a last minute opening as a 4th to play golf at the same time. What does a husband do here? You love golf. You don't love cleaning out nasty gutters. Easy choice right? Wrong. Family first. Wife first. Promises are to be kept. Besides, if your buddies really wanted you to begin with, it would already be on your schedule. Never sell out your wife.

5. Giving into temptations – Each day temptations are going to present themselves. Those glancing looks, special smiles, private messages. Danger, danger, danger. Train yourself to

always see the big picture when dealing with seemingly small temptations. Those small things often lead to large disasters. When your mind and heart begin to want, cut it off early. The big picture is your family and the life you're building.

For the original article, visit .

The Limitless Benefits of Combining Spiritual and Physical Exercise

Spiritual exercise might be defined as any intentional behavior that helps one become more like God, draw closer to Him, know Him better or that follows the principles or commandments of God.

In most translations of the Bible, the word "godliness" is used in 1 Timothy 4:8 instead of spiritual exercise. The more we become like God, the more spiritually fit we will be and the more we will experience a full life. That's what God wants for each of us, to live a life full of joy, peace, kindness and love.

This is what Jesus had in mind when He told us in John 10:10 that He came to give us a full and abundant life. In addition to an eternal life, which we can have if we believe in Jesus, we can have a truly wonderful life on Earth before we die, if we live according to the principles God lays out for us in the Bible. Part of having a full life is being physically healthy.

When we enjoy good physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health we are better able to do the type of things that we

want to do and enjoy doing. We are better able to use the gifts and talents that God has given us. Our life is more meaningful.

Much has been written over the years about spiritual exercises. Saint Ignatius of Loyola, who lived in the 15th century, wrote an influential book titled *Spiritual Exercises*, in which he wrote about his struggles to grow closer to God and of the benefit of certain behaviors. When practiced, these activities helped him grow in his faith. Scientific research shows that, when people practice certain spiritual behaviors that are associated with their faith, their health is positively impacted.

Many of the behaviors that have been identified in this research can be considered spiritual exercise. Activities like praying, believing in God, attending church, socializing or having fellowship with others of a like faith, and serving others in need have all been shown to have a positive impact on health.

The medical community recognizes the significance of the faith-and-health connection. According to a poll of doctors by the American Academy of Family Physicians, 99 percent of physicians say that religious beliefs can make a positive contribution to the healing process. This is, perhaps, the tip of the iceberg.

God inspired the writers of the Bible to write about His principles. God loves us, and His principles are intended for our good. They are intended as a guide to help us make decisions and to know His will for our life. Read a contemporary version of Psalms 119 and you'll understand the benefits of following the guidelines set out for us by God. The writer says in verse 93 that his joy and health was restored because he followed God's principles. Verse two tells us that when we obey his principles we are happy!

Throughout the Bible, God reveals His principles, which are forms of spiritual exercises. When we incorporate well-defined principles of physical fitness into our exercise routines, we become more physically fit and healthier. A regular exercise program that includes cardiovascular activity, resistance training and flexibility exercises will help us to be more fit. When we eat a variety of foods in moderation and accompany that with physical activity, we are better able to control our weight.

When we incorporate God's principles into our life, we can become more spiritually healthy, and this improved spiritual health can impact on our physical and emotional health. There are numerous spiritual exercises that, if practiced, will improve one's spiritual health.

Perhaps the best way to understand what exercises are best for you would be to get to know God better by reading and studying His operation manual for your life—the Bible. That is a form of spiritual exercise. Just as it is important to eat foods that provide physical nourishment, it is important to nourish yourself spiritually.

As you read the Bible, you will get to know God better. You will understand how He wants you to live so that you can have the terrific life He intends for you to have. As you combine this with praying, another form of spiritual exercise, you will begin to draw even closer to God. Spending quiet time alone with God will also help you grow in your faith. Some would call this exercise solitude.

As you get to know God better, you have the opportunity to love Him more deeply. When your love grows, you'll want to yield to God more frequently. This yielding, or surrendering, will draw you even closer to Him. This is what happens in your relationships that are important to you. You begin to make sacrifices for the other person, out of your caring for them.

As you love God more and more, you'll want to be less selfish. You'll also begin to realize and believe that submitting to His principles is in your best interest. Serving others is another form of spiritual exercise. Study after study has shown that when we volunteer and give our time to others, it has a positive impact on our health. The secret to living a full life is to have a life of love, gentleness, kindness, peace, joy, helping others and other "fruits" ... including good health. The more we remain close to God, and live out of His power and direction, the more fruit we will bear.

The secret to staying connected to God is to follow His principles, to obey Him. The more we love God, the more we will desire to obey Him. And the secret to loving God is to know Him better.

The disciplines and behaviors mentioned in the Bible that help us to be more God-like are forms of spiritual exercises. Practicing these spiritual exercises can help us move along this process and enable us to enjoy a fuller life. When we incorporate these types of exercises into our spiritual fitness program, we are more likely to experience better emotional and physical health.

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For the original article, visit [faithandhealthconnection.org](#).