

Why Some Believers Can Be a Bad Influence on Your Health Behaviors

Our health-related behaviors can easily become influenced by the ways of the world—the ways of the unbeliever. We can also be influenced in a negative way by other Christians.

Social norms and the practices of those around us can be so influential that our ways and habits can end up being indistinguishable from those who are not followers of Jesus. But, as Christians, we are called to be holy—set apart from the unbeliever—in all our ways.

“Because it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” (1 Pet. 1:16, MEV).

This applies to what we eat and how we care for—or don’t care for—our bodies, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the living God.

I confess that this applies to my life too.

Let’s look at two Scriptures in particular:

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion has light with darkness? What agreement has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he who believes with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will live in them and walk in them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore, ‘Come out from among them and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord

Almighty'” (2 Cor. 6:14-18, MEV).

“Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1, MEV).

To be separate from the world and its practices does not apply only to blatant sinful behaviors such as those that Paul speaks of: “adultery, sexual immorality, impurity, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, rage, selfishness, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, carousing, and the like.” (Gal. 5:19-21). This ought to extend to how we spend our money, how we use our time *and how we attend to our health.*

We are each called to “work out” our own salvation (Phil. 2:12). Part of “working out” our salvation is to become more and more set apart from the ways of the world. As we are aware that what we are doing is sinful, then we are instructed in God’s Word to purify ourselves of this type of behavior.

“What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own? You were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

So, in light of the verse above and Romans 12:1, here are a few key questions we each ought to ask ourselves: Is habitually eating food and drinking beverages that are not good for our bodies a sin? Is being slothful, being inactive, a sin? Is eating more calories than we expend in physical activity—and putting on a lot of excess weight—a sin? Is repeatedly engaging in any unhealthy behavior a sin?

Sit with that for a second. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to respond to these questions.

If these unhealthy behaviors are sinful, why do we continue in

our sin?

Have you been, like I have, so influenced by the attitudes and lifestyles of others—even *by those in the body of Christ, the church*—that it's affected your attitude concerning these behaviors? It's an easy thing to do. It's easy to become complacent. I think the church at large has become complacent with this issue. The term "sloppy grace" could apply here.

Another motivator to caring for our bodies in ways that are different than the unbelievers is that it's a good witness. Others will see in us behaviors that are different. Those who know that we are Christians may connect the dots between our behavior and our faith.

Those who may not know about our faith may ask why we have the lifestyle habits that we have, and we can explain our motivation for caring for our bodies.

This post is not meant to be a scolding, it's meant to be a reminder and an encouragement. And I need the reminder as much as many of you might need it.

"Iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend" (Prov. 27:17, MEV).

So, fellow Christ follower, I encourage you to be connected with at least one other person who is like-minded about this issue so that he/she may encourage you and hold you accountable, and so that he/she challenges you to grow and be more and more transformed into the likeness of Christ, including in your health-related behavior.

And you don't have to do this in your own self-effort. The Holy Spirit within you will help you do this! He is faithful.

"But we all, seeing the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18, MEV).

{eoa}

Dale Fletcher, executive director of Faith and Health Connection Ministry, is a speaker and wellness coach who lives in Fort Mill, South Carolina. He conducts workshops and retreats on the link between the Christian faith and health. Connect with Dale at [and](#) on Facebook.

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New Christian Film Leaves Pro-Choice Audience in Awe

With little to no filmmaking experience, the last thing Stuart Migdon wanted to do was make a movie about the controversial subject of abortion. It’s not the “feel-good” flick many people want to see on a Friday or Saturday night.

Yet Migdon and his partners knew they wanted to do something to impact American culture for Jesus. They tossed around a few other ideas and prayed diligently for direction. Ultimately, they all hearkened back to the same revelation: the abortion issue must not be dismissed.

But Migdon and his partners also realized that a film about abortion had to be made with the utmost vigilance to prevent even more division between the already volatile relationship of the pro-life and pro-choice camps. They knew the task ahead of them would be gargantuan, but critical.

Five years later—through much discouragement, consternation and some doubt—the film *Voiceless* emerged. The movie opens in

select theaters on October 7 and, from all preliminary indications, it is making the desired impact on those who have previewed it.

“When we decided we were going to do this movie, we knew that it would be uncomfortable for us,” said Migdon, the film’s executive producer. “We knew it was a huge risk for us, but God opened all the doors for us to do it.

“We wanted to make a movie that would motivate Christians to engage in the culture against the sin of abortion. Many Christians, instead of being salt and light, meld themselves into the culture in which they live. They don’t engage the culture; they let the culture engage them. And that’s a big problem, especially with this issue.”

National Right to Life estimates that, since the Supreme Court’s decision of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, more than 58 million unborn children were aborted through 2015. estimates that more than 794,000 babies have been aborted in 2016.

A Gallup poll revealed that 52 percent of women having an abortion identified themselves as a Christian. In 2015, Lifeway Research found that number to be closer to 70 percent.

“Most churches will simply avoid this subject matter,” said Migdon, a Christian author and ministry leader who is the founder of Jesus Take the Wheel Ministries. “In fact, Student for Life of America did a survey and found about 94 percent of evangelical churches don’t have a pro-life ministry, and members of those churches are not hearing anything about abortion from the pulpit.

“The advantage we had in making this movie is that very statistic. Evangelicals, for the most part, are pro-life. We’re hoping that our film will help kick-start this ministry in every church across the nation.”

Surprising Reception

Pro-Choice

A recent screening at the Philadelphia Independent Film Festival produced what Migdon says were surprising reactions, considering many of those in attendance were “very liberal, artsy people.”

“My partner and I were very nervous about the screening. But when the movie was over, they gave us a standing ovation,” Migdon said. “We were told that people were very impressed by the way we didn’t vilify the pro-choice movement, the fact that it doesn’t pit pro-choice vs. pro-life. Many pro-choice people have said they don’t agree with us, but that it’s an inspiring movie. And, many pro-life people say they are now motivated to do something about it.”

The Movie

Voiceless centers around Jesse Dean, a recently discharged soldier who came from a rough upbringing. Upon marrying, his wife brought him to faith in Christ and the Holy Spirit took firm hold of him. He and his wife moved to Philadelphia to take a job as an outreach leader at an older church with a declining membership. Little did he know the church stood directly across the street from an abortion clinic.

Determined to make a difference, Dean, played by Rusty Joiner (*Last Ounce of Courage*; *CSI Miami*), begins to engage with the abortion clinic, but receives resistance from his church, the community and even his wife. He’s forced to make the difficult choice of backing off or putting everything in his life on the line.

The film encourages people to stand up for what they know is

right—particularly as it pertains to taking God’s truths into society—and to address social issues. It addresses the spirit of retreat as it pertains to engaging the culture of apathy that has developed within the church.

“When it comes to the issue of life, silence is not an option,” said Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, President of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. “We are called to be a voice for the voiceless, from the womb to the tomb, elevating and respecting the Imago Dei inside every human being. *Voiceless* shares a prophetic message from a time such as this.”

In 2015, the Northeast Film Festival (a secular film festival), rewarded Migdon and his partners with the award for the best feature. The movie garnered several other awards, including best director (Pat Necerato), best actor (Joiner), best supporting actress (Victoria Gates), best screenplay and audience choice.

The message and the quality of the movie awed Lloyd Pulley, senior pastor of Calvary Chapel Old Bridge Church in New Jersey. Pulley says Calvary Chapel Old Bridge has about 20 members active with its pro-life ministry.

“I was speechless at *Voiceless*,” Pulley said. “I’ve seen a lot of Christian movies that are very raw, but this one rings true. It’s very real. Pastors don’t want to get into a political thing, so they stay away from the abortion issue. But it’s not just a side issue. What are we doing if we’re not involved in people’s lives, the young girls who are making these decisions.

“I saw myself in that pastor in the movie. I stepped away from the pro-life movement for a while myself because of the baggage that was involved with it. I soon realized that was a mistake. To me, this is an issue that’s affected the conscience of a nation. Abortion brings initial relief, but

then gives way to years of psychological pain, shame and regret. We as the church have a tremendous opportunity to help the men and women involved in this, and to help a generation not to go down that road. If we don't, it's going to continue to be a problem of cataclysmic proportions."

Pulley says his church's pro-life ministry has encouraged many women to deal openly with their past and the abortions they had been hiding. That includes his wife, who, after many years, told others what she had done.

"When she confessed that to loving people, I saw a change in her countenance," Pulley said. "It was like a huge burden had been lifted off of her. It's like Joseph, who God used to rescue his brothers. After hiding a dirty little secret for 20 years, they openly acknowledged it, and they became leaders of the nation.

"Our nation will be under judgment for the blood that has been spilled. But this could be an opportunity for a huge turn of repentance. The church needs to wake up and see what it can do. If it does, you can be sure God will move."

Personal Connection

Migdon himself can relate to the message of the movie. At 18, his girlfriend became pregnant, and many of his friends and members of his family openly encouraged them to seek an abortion.

It was never an option for him or his girlfriend.

"Even though I had no idea of how we were going to make it, I never thought about an abortion," Migdon said. "We didn't hesitate—we got married. We were poor, and I was determined to finish school. I came from a Jewish family and didn't even become a believer until years later, but God knew what he was doing. He convicted both of us. We struggled for a while but

pressed on. God is so good.”

Migdon hopes his story, and the message of *Voiceless*, will sear the conscience of the nation.

“I want people to see this movie and get inspired to stand up and do something against the sin of abortion,” Migdon said. “We want every church in America to start a pro-life ministry. We’ve aligned ourselves with several large pro-life ministries to assist in this effort. Our motivation is to motivate Christians to see that they can make a difference. It takes only one person to get uncomfortable and engage in the culture. God takes care of the rest.”

Shawn A. Akers is the online managing editor at *Charisma Media*.

A Spiritual Warfare Prayer to Encourage Intercessors

A while back, my husband Mike had a challenging week. He and several other members of the intercessory prayer team at our church were under spiritual attacks, especially with physical ailments.

But Mike is a prayer warrior, so when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord within Mike raises up a standard against him!

If you are facing a spiritual attack, then prayer is your first line of defense against it.

Mike wrote this prayer for spiritual warfare to encourage his fellow intercessors. Mike’s story and prayer follows:

Praise be to God with grace and blessing to each and every one of you. A few of you are aware that “no-good lying wonder” attacked my body again—in my knee this time.

Suddenly, this past Monday afternoon my left knee swelled up with pain that was almost unbearable. This was the first time I had experienced such an ordeal. I had to use some crutches to get around my house.

But thanks be to God for your prayers because recently I felt a small pop in my knee and the pain with the swelling started to subside. I was able to put pressure/weight on the knee with minimal discomfort. By the time Kim arrived home from church, I was, in my opinion, 89 percent healed. I am now 100 percent completely healed.

I am fully aware why the enemy is attacking me this way and that. I am also aware that he attacks you.

Our enemy may be shrewd with his attacks, but he is very stupid because he picked on the “right” man and the “right” group of people who will come against him and his kingdom with everything within us. With that being said:

Heavenly Father and in the name of Jesus, we honor and praise You today for being with us in all and everything. It is our delight to honor and serve You in any capacity we can. We are truly honored that You read and hear our prayers, and we know that You answer each and every one of them, and for that we thank You.

We come to You today on behalf of all the intercessors and are asking You to equip us for the fight that lies ahead of us in the spiritual, which may be manifested in the physical against Your archenemy.

We know You have seen the multiple attacks that he has and is imposing on Your people. However, nothing he does will stop any of us from pressing on and through to the very end of this

assignment.

Our first offensive attack today against this demon is in the form of this digital prayer since the morning is still fairly new and the words in this prayer will be anointed words that will set the tone for my fellow warriors so that they will be on guard throughout this day and every day.

I pray that each one will immediately release any bondage or stressful situation they may be going through. I pray that they stay and remain focused as they face situations today, whether it be in the workplace, at home or in the public sector.

I pray that You heal their bodies immediately Father (right now in the name of Jesus) so that the enemy knows he "ain't stopping nuttin'" and so that Your intercessors can focus on the matters that will disrupt his kingdom.

Father, You know what Your intercessors are going through. May You touch and anoint each one today as confirmation that You have heard their prayer and are working accordingly on their behalf today!

For those who are concerned about their children, who have to face the problems presented to them in the public schools, send Your peace to the student(s) and to the parents, for You are our Jehovah Nissi.

For those who have been attacked in their body with afflictions, diseases and ailments, send healing unto them, for You are our Jehovah Rapha.

For those who are overwhelmed with the lack of financial stability, send them the knowledge and wisdom to be able to manage their finances then follow that up with an immediate supply of money to help them overcome their current situation, as You are our Jehovah Jireh.

Speaking of the money, Father, I pray that You take the money from the dope dealers, destructive rappers, crooked politicians and any other unsavory character, group of people or organization and give it to Your people so that we can put it to good and godly use. Why should our enemy have such tools at his disposal to use against Your people?

We know You are in control and even now working on all of our behalf, and for that we thank You.

There is so much more I want to pray unto You, Father which I shall do indeed. In the meantime, this digital prayer is dedicated to my fellow intercessors. {eoa}

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.

This Simple Biblical Principle Can Help You Master Your Health Goals

I read a great story from author Laurie Beth Jones that applies to walking by faith. A grandmother gave her two grandchildren pumpkins to carve. She set out a few knives for the task.

The older grandson got access to all of the knives and he carved a fancy pumpkin, even putting feet on it.

In contrast, the younger granddaughter was given access to only one knife. The girl wasn't happy about it.

She protested, "But Grandma, I don't want to carve a pumpkin that doesn't go anywhere. I want my pumpkin to have feet!"

Have you added feet to your faith?

2 Corinthians 5:7 reads that as disciples of Christ, we walk by faith and not by sight.

To me, that means that even though you may not see results yet with your natural eyes, you see them with your spiritual eyes and keep walking toward it until you reach your destination!

Your feet were made for walking ... even running!

When I wanted to reach my ideal weight, I dreamed of running the Peachtree Road Race, a 10K race in Atlanta. It was on my Bucket List—you know, the list of things you want to do before you die.

When I was 240 pounds, I felt that my dream was impossible. After all, I could barely walk to the mailbox!

But I thought, "Hey, I've got to start somewhere!"

So I created a path to walk for myself. At the time, I was living in an apartment complex and the mailboxes were a couple of blocks away.

Before, I used to drive up to the mailbox after getting home from work, pick up the mail and then drive on to my apartment.

One day, I decided to drive past the mailboxes. I drove to the apartment building and parked. Then I walked back to the mailboxes, picked up the mail and walked back.

Boy, was I huffing and puffing! My leg muscles felt like they were filled with concrete.

But I'll never forget that feeling of accomplishment!

I had started walking toward my dream of better health.

I decided then that I wasn't going to wait until I reached my ideal weight to enjoy my life. I was going to enjoy the process all the way down.

Why should I put my life on hold? Tomorrow wasn't promised to me.

So I kept on walking to the mailbox until that became easy.

Then I started walking to the entrance to the apartment complex until that became easy.

Next, I walked down the street until that became easy.

Eventually, my walks became runs.

I entered the Peachtree Road Race. The first year, I half-walked, half-ran. The next year, I entered again.

That time, I ran the entire 6.2 miles. And I have the photo to prove it!

What is your dream?

Let's say your dream is to run a marathon. Would you go out tomorrow and try to run all 26 miles when you haven't even walked around the block yet? Of course not!

Yet, many people refuse to even start with the block.

To them, they'd rather let year after year pass sitting on the couch, dreaming about the marathon they'll run. Someday.

Somehow, conquering the block seems insignificant.

But I say, get out there and conquer that block. Or the mailbox. Whatever the challenge is right in front of you. A quote by the late President Theodore Roosevelt applies here:

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

Are you maximizing the resources God has given you?

If not, then it's time to get going. Take a positive step in the right direction today.

"...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10) {eoa}

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Why the Judas Paradigm Is Alive and Well in America

He had a kind boss, but for some inexplicable reason, that wasn't enough.

He had seen amazing things at the hands of his master, and thousands of people were touched by his goodness. Yet, as in many cases, the saying was definitely true: "No good deed goes unpunished." And when betrayal comes with a price tag ...

Well, where do we sign up?

He waited for the opportune time to spring his trap—a time when all was quiet, the adoring crowds were gone, and he was relatively alone, except for maybe a few of his closest friends. His accusers were seconds away in hiding, just waiting for a sign.

A kiss. Yes! Such a sign of affection would be unmistakable

for the wolves hiding in the shadows.

By now, if you know anything about the life of Jesus, you have probably figured out that I am talking about His betrayal at the hands of Judas Iscariot. With his singular act of betrayal, Judas entered the ranks of the most despised individuals in Biblical history, joining names like Cain, Goliath, Jezebel, Absalom, and others. Yet his betrayal of the Son of God moved him straight to the head of the class. Judas had betrayed God for 30 pieces of silver, and although remorse soon set in, and he tried to undo the damage he had done, some things cannot be undone.

In a matter of days, Jesus was tried, convicted, killed and resurrected from the grave.

Judas, on the other hand ...

(For the whole story, read Matthew 26–27:9.)

So how does one go from a position of favor to embracing a curse? How does one go from a place of honor to dying by suicide, and being buried in an unmarked grave? While I'm sure the other eleven disciples were somewhat surprised by Judas's betrayal, none of this caught Jesus by surprise. After all, this historic betrayal had been foretold hundreds of years before:

"Yes, my own close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. 41:9).

And was again alluded to in Zechariah:

"Then I said to them, 'If this is good in your eyes, then give my wages to me, but if not, then keep it.' They weighed my wages at thirty pieces of silver. Then the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter, the splendid price by which I was valued by them.' So I took the thirty silver pieces and threw them to the house of the Lord to the potter" (Zech. 11:12-13).

What drove Judas to betray the Creator of the universe to a self-serving and self-righteous bunch? What path did Judas take that led him to the hanging tree? What are the symptoms of the *Judas Paradigm*?

- **Judas had no faith.** In John 6, Jesus puts before His disciples some pretty tough language about what it takes to follow Him. He recognized that there were many of His disciples who did not really believe, and their desertion bore out this fact (v. 64-66). In the face of unpopular and controversial teaching, they bailed out. Even when given the choice to leave, and hearing Peter declare, *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and come to know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (v. 68-69), Judas still masqueraded as a follower, and gave the illusion of devotion and trust.
- **Judas had no respect for the sacred.** When Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with a costly perfume (John 12), Judas objected. *"Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"* (v. 5). The next verse reveals that Judas had no care or concern for the poor, but that he was a thief, and as the one tasked with the care of the money box, he regularly stole from the money that was given to Jesus and His disciples for their needs and the care of the poor.
- **Judas had no loyalty to the truth.** Because of the deceit of his heart, Judas was ripe to be used by the devil. John 13 bears out the fact that the rest of the disciples were clueless to his deceit (v. 28-29). In verse 2, we learn that the devil had *"put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot"* to betray Jesus. At that point, he was considering his betrayal. But when *consideration* turned to *commitment*, Satan entered into him (v. 27). At that point, he was totally under the control of the demonic. In spite of the fact that Jesus had, in an act of abject humility, just washed Judas's

feet (as well as the other disciples), Judas maintained his destructive path that ultimately took him to the grave.

In our world today, we are seeing the *Judas Paradigm* alive and at work in our homes, our churches and our government.

As statistics bear out, we are seeing a decline in the organized church in America today. Children are abandoning the faith of their parents for convenience, comfort and a feel-good gospel that requires no sacrifice, no commitment and no tough choices. The goal is relevance and inclusion, at the expense of truth and holiness. We have so blurred the lines between the sacred and the secular that the message of the blood of Jesus has been lost in pop-psychology and moral relativism. We have forgotten the words of Jesus that fly in the face of this 21st century mindset:

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." (Matt. 16:24).

When we lose our faith, it's open season on what is sacred. We are seeing that at work in America today. Our founding documents (the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution*) were written by men of faith that held the teachings of the Bible as guiding principles in their authorship of these documents. You cannot disregard one without catastrophic results to the others.

When we removed the Bible from a place of prominence and respect in our society, it was only a matter of time before our nation's founding documents followed suit. The assault on our freedoms that we are seeing now, with utter disregard for the Constitution, is unprecedented. With the fate of the Supreme Court in the balance, America stands on the edge of a precipice. This year's election will determine whether we move away from the edge, or plunge headlong into an abyss of

lawlessness and godlessness.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish: but happy is he who keeps the teaching" (Prov. 29:18).

It's easy to be loyal when people agree with you. But when society stands in opposition to the Word of God, we are forced to make a choice; we are forced to choose between the acceptance of the world or the approval of God. But make no mistake about it—if we choose the acceptance of the world, it puts us at odds with a Holy God. James 4:4 is pretty clear on the subject:

"You adulterers and adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Yet we are seeing an astounding number of "Christian" churches and pastors who are ignoring this dire warning, and condoning what God condemns. We are seeing politicians who—because of personalities—have abandoned their principles, promising to support a candidate who represents everything that is wrong with our political system, and who promises to continue us down a path of secularism, hedonism and liberalism.

The *Judas Paradigm* (spirit) allows loyalty to the truth to take a back seat to our own comfort, feelings and agenda. If we don't like criticism, we cower to conformity. If we don't like the messenger, we reject the message. If the road gets tough, we retire to the median and resign ourselves to being another casualty to a society bent on running over the righteous and off the cliff.

"For the eyes of the Lord move about on all the earth, to strengthen the heart that is completely toward Him" (2 Chron. 16:9a).

God is still looking.

He is looking for those who have faith, however small.

He is looking for those who recognize and respect the sacred.

He is looking for people of honor, who are loyal to Him.

He is looking for those who will stand when the crowd sits, be loud when the crowd is silent, and be faithful when the crowd is faithless.

He is looking for those who will gaze defiantly into the face of the *Judas Paradigm*, and refuse the 30 pieces of silver.

He is looking for *you!* {eo}

*In 1979, **Ron Phillips** was called as pastor of Central Baptist Church located in the Chattanooga, Tennessee area, where he serves today. Under his ministry, this Southern Baptist church has experienced the birth and growth of many ministries, and completed several building projects, but more importantly, the church has exploded into new realms of renewal and spiritual awakening. Today, the church has evolved into Abba's House, a place where all are welcomed by the Father's embrace.*

For the original article, visit .

A ‘Dynamite’ Scripture for When You Feel Defeated

If you ever feel defeated, I recommend that you memorize the following Scripture. If you feel stuck, this Scripture can also help you get unstuck.

I call it a “dynamite” Scripture because if you believe,

meditate and act upon it, it blows feelings of defeat right up.

What is this Scripture?

It is Isaiah 41:10, one of my favorites:

“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, yes, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (MEV).

When you feel defeated, you may think you are all alone.

You may think that nobody understands what you are going through.

It can be seductive to nurture self-pitying, defeated thoughts. I’ve been there. In a weird way, it can feel good to feel bad!

If you’ve thought this way for a long time, this thinking pattern can be comforting, like slipping under an old blanket.

It becomes your way of hiding out when the world becomes too much to deal with.

But even though the feelings are real, the thoughts behind them are deceptive.

When I found myself in this pit, I realized that I was entertaining a “familiar spirit”—one that meant me no good. A familiar spirit finds rest when your emotions are in torment.

When your emotions are in torment is when you are in the most danger to practice destructive habits, like emotional or binge eating.

However, one of the reasons God gives us His word is so we can recognize His truth from the lying thoughts the enemy puts into our minds—and walk according to the truth.

This article covers three thoughts to meditate upon so you can use Isaiah 41:10 to blow up the spirit of defeat.

Let's break down Isaiah 41:10:

“Do not fear, for I am with you ...”

God tells us that the basis for which you can have courage is to recognize that He is with you. Whatever your feelings say, the truth remains: God never leaves you nor forsakes you. It is always your choice whether to believe God's Word or your feelings if they contradict one another.

“... do not be dismayed, for I am your God”

Dismayed means that you are discouraged and have given up hope. However, the key to counteracting that feeling is to remember the God that you serve. You serve the God who:

- Parted the Red Sea
- Brought new life to barren wombs
- Helped His people defeat countless enemies
- Restored sight to blinded eyes
- Made the lame walk
- Raised people from the dead

Is anything too hard for the Lord? No!

The same God promises to:

- Strengthen you
- Help you
- Uphold you with His righteous right hand

No higher reassurance exists than that! If you are feeling overwhelmed, take a moment to write down the answer to this question:

What small thing could I do right now to move forward with the Lord on my side?

Taking even just a small action in faith rather than allowing defeat to paralyze you will do wonders for your energy and outlook.

It may take time to learn new ways of thinking and acting. But if you are consistent with meditation and practice, you will develop a thankful heart as 2 Corinthians 2:14 becomes your reality:

“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.”

By the way, that is why one of the resources given in the Take Back Your Temple program is the eBook, *Prayers and Promises to Take Back Your Temple*.

In the eBook, I give specific prayers and promises of encouragement and as a rock on which to stand. These are very helpful, especially if you feel anxious or ever feel like giving up in your weight loss plan.

You learn how to renew your mind to God's Word every day so that you will develop faith that cannot be shaken as His Word takes root in you.

The Bible says that the renewing of your mind transforms you (Rom. 12:2).

So resolve today to be diligent in renewing your mind to God's word and putting it into practice.

In the day of trial, you will be able to stand firm with supernatural confidence that will astonish you! {eoa}

Kimberly Taylor 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 .

10 Ways You Can Help Your Kids Overcome Peer Pressure

Author Quentin Crisp said, “The young always have the same problem—how to rebel and conform at the same time. They have now solved this by defying their parents and copying one another.”

How true.

As a parent, your biggest enemy by far is negative peer pressure. Notice the word “negative.”

There is such a thing as positive peer pressure—when good friends talk your child out of doing something stupid. But, negative peer pressure can destroy everything you’ve worked so hard for. Teach your kids the 10 ways to stand up to peer pressure:

1. Eyes like a hawk. Constantly observe the habits and behavior of your child. Know him better than he knows himself. Abrupt changes in dress or attitude could signal trouble. Pay attention if he starts dressing differently. Possibly he will use more disrespectful language or a negative attitude. Newly formed friendships can be at the root of the change. Children, of course, go through phases. No need to overreact at every turn. However, always have hawk-like eyes and be on top of trouble the minute it shows up.

2. Meet the crew. Your daughter’s friends are important to her. So they should be important to you as well. That means taking a vested interest. Make her friends feel welcome in your home. Talk to them when possible. Feeding them is a good way to make that happen. Everybody talks when meals or snacks

are served. Offer to drive them where they want to go. The car is another good place to start conversations. The more they talk, the more you learn.

3. Meet the parents. Following that same theory, make an effort to know the parents of your child's friends as well. Throw a backyard party. Invite all the children and parents as well. Do they share your same values, beliefs, and convictions? Establish an open communication. If problems arise, you will then feel more comfortable bringing it up.

4. Sleepovers. All kids enjoy sleepovers. Generally, they have a whole lot of fun. Awesome. What else is going on? If your daughter is sleeping over at her bff's house, how much do you really know? Are they watching movies you would not approve of? Talking about things that are new and beyond her young ears? Before allowing a sleepover, make sure you know the child and her parents. Peer pressure thrives in this environment.

5. Be the parent. You are not his friend. You are his parent. There is a major difference. When parents strive to be their child's friend they give up their authority and influence. Of course, you want a fun and loving relationship. As long as it does not impede on your ability to have the final say. Many great parents have heard the words "I hate you" as the child storms up the staircase. It's hurtful and hard to take. However, the reply is always, "You will thank me later."

6. Family virtues. "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything." Your family should have a set of standards that all are expected to live up to. Choose 5-10 virtues that you consider vital. Instruct your children in them and be sure to lead by example. Make it a matter of family pride. "It doesn't matter how the family down the street does it, this is how we do it."

7. Opportunities to teach. Our world today provides more than

enough chances to point out good and bad behavior. We have televisions, high speed internet, and mobile phones. We are never without instant access to any type of news, sports or entertainment. That is a whole lot of influence on everyone in the family. If you are watching a show with your son that portrays a desirable quality, point it out. If you are listening to a song with your daughter that has lyrics glorifying loose behavior, point it out. Counteract the bad influence with discussion and other options.

8. The big picture. People have a tendency to believe their own behavior does not affect others. We feel small in a giant world. Completely untrue. Try teaching your children to see the bigger picture. Pose questions to them such as, "What if everyone shoplifted like your classmate Dave?" "What if everybody cheated on their tests?" "How would these things affect society?" Give your kids the ability to understand how they affect the world and not just themselves. It builds wisdom and strong character.

9. Concern for others. Children certainly can be and will be cruel. Teach empathy to your child; a concern for the feelings and well-being of others. A child who has these qualities is much less likely to follow the pack at any cost. They will understand the damage being done and stand against it. Society needs leaders who bring out the good in others and stand for justice. This starts by teaching empathy.

10. Unique purpose. Most children who fall victim to destructive peer pressure have lower self-esteem. It's normal to feel lost as a teenager. A group that shows acceptance and understanding is attractive. Gangs recruit young souls based solely on this knowledge. Do not let this be your child. We are all created with a unique purpose. Every single person has much to offer this world. Help your child know how much they are loved and their true identity. A child with self-confidence and moral strength is difficult to corrupt when guided with love and care. {eoa}

For the original article, visit .

Prophetic Word: The Angels God Has Sent to Fulfill Your Prophecy

The word of the Lord came to me saying that the body of Christ is coming into their divine season of prophetic fulfillment. The Lord likened this next season as a time of an open door, open window, gate and open portal where prophetic prayers and intercession has ascended to Him. God has heard your petition!

The Lord showed me that there was war going on in the heavenlies. Your breakthrough of miracles, blessings, favor, answered prayers, restoration, healing and salvation for loved ones is breaking through suddenly.

Many of you have been pressing in, soaking in His presence and petitioning the King and Judge to release a favorable outcome and judgment. The Lord says that your personal prophecies and prayers has met much resistance, but He has sent His word through angelic reinforcement to confirm your release.

He has sent His warring angels to help bring your prophecy and prayer requests to pass. The Lord reminded me of Daniel—when he prayed, the Lord answered Him. God spoke to me that your answers are coming like express, certified, hand-delivered mail.

“Then he said to me, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. For from the first day that you set your heart to understand this and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I

have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me for twenty-one days. So Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia” (Dan. 10:12-13).

God wants me to encourage you that your breakthrough is imminent. The warfare was not in vain! God has dispatched His angels to carry out His prophetic promises in your life. The Lord said that your prayers seem to hit a brass heaven, but He is opening the heavens on your behalf while sending the host of heaven to cause you to walk in your prophetic destiny. Angels are summoned by the voice of the prophetic decrees and words over your life. God has employed your angels the first day you prayed!

“The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all. Bless the Lord, you His angels, who are mighty, and do His commands, and obey the voice of His word. Bless the Lord, all you His hosts; you servants who do His pleasure” (Ps. 103:19-21).

We must understand one of the assignments of angels is that they carry out God’s Word. Their primary role is to respond to the voice of the Lord. True prophetic words that are released from the mouth of God and His prophets will summons angelic assistance to bring God’s promises, will and directives to pass. Angels serve the eternal purposes of God. They bring in provision for the vision of God in your life that is to align to His will and word over you.

God is dispatching His angels to deliver you from the grip of the enemy that is keeping you from walking in your destiny!

“ The very night when Herod would have brought him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains. And the guards before the door were securing the prison. And suddenly an angel of the Lord approached him, and a light shone in the prison. He struck Peter on the side and woke him

up, saying, 'Rise up, quickly.' And the chains fell off his hands" (Acts 12:5-7).

Angels will be used of God strategically in this hour like never before to bring divine breakthroughs in the life of the believer. As the prophets prophesy the word of God, we will see prophetic breakthroughs. As we war over our personal prophecies, we will see angels coming to the rescue to deliver and fight for you to receive the promises of the Father.

"This command I commit to you, my son Timothy, according to the prophecies that were previously given to you, that by them you might fight a good fight" (1 Tim. 1:18). {eo}

Dr. Hakeem Collins is a new prophetic and governmental minister with a unique anointing in the prophetic, healings and the supernatural. He is a sought-after conference speaker, produces a weekly radio program called "The VOICE," and author of *Heaven Declares*. He is CEO of Champions International based in Wilmington, Delaware, where he resides. Visit: .

Your First Step to a Healthy Body, Mind and Spirit

"May the very God of peace sanctify you completely. And I pray to God that your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23, MEV).

You may be familiar with this verse. To many, it implies that we are a living spirit, we have a soul and we live in a body—three parts that make up our whole being. I happen to agree with this view of how God designed us for spirit, mind

and body health.

In this verse, Paul encourages us to attend to all three aspects of who we are. And so we try to do this the best we can, but often in our own strength. And many of us fail miserably. But the next verse holds the key to being successful at attending to our spirit, mind, body health.

“Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24, MEV).

This verse is there to remind you that God will do this for you. His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, living in and through you is who will see to it that you live a lifestyle that promotes good health in spirit, soul and body.

What’s required from you is to have faith that He will—faith as small as a mustard seed (Luke 17:6). You see, it’s not the magnitude of your faith that’s most important. It’s not so much having a strong and unshakable faith as it is in *having faith and trust in a loving, grace-giving, powerful God* that is the key. As you have this perspective, this mindset, this attitude, and you place your dependence on God’s Spirit as He lives through you, He will enable you to live a healthy lifestyle.

And a healthy lifestyle will promote a healthy spirit, soul and body.

You see, when Jesus lived on this Earth, as the son of man, He was not only God, but also a man. As a man, His all-powerful and loving Father lived in and through Him. This is how Jesus was empowered to perform miracles and to love others with deep compassion (John 17:21). He kept close to His Father, which enabled Him to live as He did.

That’s just what God desires you to do. And if you do this, in faith, you can rest in the confidence that the Holy Spirit will enable you to care for your spirit, soul and body.

God is faithful, and He will do it!

Dale Fletcher, executive director of Faith and Health Connection Ministry, is a speaker and wellness coach who lives in Fort Mill, South Carolina. He conducts workshops and retreats on the link between the Christian faith and health. Connect with Dale at [and](#) on Facebook.

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

If You Expect to Lead, You Must Embrace These Disciplines

One of the most important aspects of leadership in the body of Christ lies in the vital responsibility of team training. If a leader does not impart expectations, culture and attitude to the team he or she is leading and depending upon, it is a distinct possibility that the team will crumble at its very core.

I recently trained my team of incredible, world-changing women for the upcoming year of Bible Study that touches literally hundreds of women in my region of the country. It is absolutely necessary that the 50 women in leadership be exemplary role models of the ministry I lead. I am not developing slaves, but I am developing daughters who will live richly and strongly in spite of storms, disappointments and challenges.

To these women in servant-leadership, I gave a presentation on “5 Expectations of Leadership.” Perhaps you would like to

consider these principles for your organization or ministry as well.

1. Joy – Don't leave home without joy! Someone who is called to service in the kingdom of God should never allow the frustrations of the marketplace, marriage, parenting, finances or the election to rob them of this grand commodity known as joy. The women in my organization are the most joyful women on the face of the planet. I don't ask the women under my leadership to be someone they are not or to come in a masquerade. I simply ask them to exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit known and identified as "joy." I encourage them to be the women that Jesus made them to be – and He made them to be women of joy!

2. Be an Encourager – *"But encourage one another day after day after day while it is still called 'Today' ... "* (Heb. 3:13, NASB).

Today is a good day to encourage every person you meet! It is the very reason why you are still alive! The reason that you are sucking in oxygen another day is so that you can be an encouragement to the world around you. The primary reason your heart is still beating is so you can encourage the discouraged. Encouragement can actually change the course of another person's day, week or life.

3. Faithfulness – I ask all of my servant-leaders to be faithful in their attendance and in their commitment.

Come when you have a headache. You might be healed!

Come when you have too much to do. You need Jesus more than anything!

Come when your finances are tight and give a dollar. You might receive a breakthrough!

Come when you are discouraged and depressed because joy and

encouragement are found in His presence and with His people.

" ... all His work is done in faithfulness" (Ps. 33:4, NASB).

As leaders, it is important to work like the Lord works and all of His work springs out of His faithful and dependable character.

As believers, we love it when the Lord is faithful to His Word and to His promises. I believe that our faithful Father loves it when we, His children, are faithful to our word and to our commitments.

4. Personal Disciplines – In my quest to build women who will not wilt under criticism but will have enough strength in their personal deposit to share with others, I encourage them to stay disciplined in their personal lives.

The personal disciplines that I encourage and even expect are:

- Read the Word of God daily.
- Keep a prayer journal.
- Spend time in worship every day.
- Be a tither and a giver.
- Fast a couple of times a year.

The reason that I expect these personal disciplines to be a vibrant part of the lives of the women who are leaders is because I want them to live abundantly. I want them to flourish when other women wilt.

5. Positive Words – As leaders, we will be involved in all types of conversations and in many arenas of influence. Our words are perhaps the most important and visible way we lead, and as such, our words must perpetually reflect faith, encouragement and a positive outlook on life. There is no room for negativity or for unnecessary criticism in the life of a leader. {eoa}

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 .