

5 Common Pitfalls That Can Drain the Joy Out of Your Marriage

One of the biggest failures in my marriage was the season when Stephana and I didn't date as a married couple.

We understood the importance of dating, but our actions or lack thereof didn't show it. It was probably a two- or three-year span when we were lucky to have a few dates per year, and those were only for special occasions.

This almost devastated our marriage. Our marriage became like a roommate relationship. We were missing the connection that is developed when you consistently date, do new things together and have a quality conversation. Our conversation centered on schedules (ours and our daughter). Our conversation centered on bills and money. It became old and stale quickly. Marriage wasn't very fun. The effect of my failure to making dating a priority has made me vigilant in that area.

I've failed many times in my marriage. Fortunately, I've learned some great lessons as a result. Here are my top five failures as a husband:

1. I didn't make my wife a priority. As I mentioned, I messed up on [date nights](#) for a while, then after I got it right, I messed up again. Once we got the date night thing right, I had the bright idea of scheduling "daddy-kid days" on the same day as our date nights. So, I'd spend the afternoon hanging with my kids, then rushed home to make date night in time. My wife and our time together became second priority. She was pretty much getting my leftovers. I finally learned this and changed our daddy-kid days to a different day.

2. Neglecting the power of prayer in our marriage. Much like date nights, praying together is crucial to the well-being of our relationship. And much like date nights, I neglected to take action and make this the integral part it needed to be. Once I did, our marriage changed. Prayer enabled us to become more transparent; we openly shared before God and one another.

Praying together is such an intimate act, which spills over into other areas of your relationship. And we both gained a better understanding of one another, what we struggle with, and what we need most. I've learned to fight for our prayer time and make it very important.

3. Thinking premarital behavior wouldn't affect our marriage.

When Stephana and I were dating before getting married, I was unfaithful to her. I thought that once I committed to her in marriage, I would have a clean slate. I was wrong. The first few years of our marriage were marred by a lack of trust because of what I had done. She was still hurt. While I did change, my wife still had concerns when I wasn't with her. Over the years, I had to regain her trust. It was challenging, but she was eventually able to trust me again.

4. Not having a plan for our money. We've experienced major debt, major financial devastation, and even homelessness as a family (including our kids). All because of my failures in the area of our finances. While joblessness was the spark that started the fire, not having a plan and following a plan for our finances enabled that spark to grow into something we couldn't tame. I've learned a lot, and made some changes, but we're still climbing out of the financial holes that were dug. It's one of the biggest lessons I've learned from one of the biggest failures I've had as a husband.

5. Not communicating in my wife's love language. One of my wife's top love languages is receiving gifts. One of the things I'm the worst at is giving gifts and celebrating special occasions like birthdays and holidays. It took me

years before I even realized how important receiving gifts and making a big deal out of special occasions was to her. And even after I realized it, it was tough to break the habit of treating the occasions like just another day. This led to years of hurt, disappointment, and frustration for us. I'm still a work in progress, but doing better than I have in the past and now these special occasions are much better than they have been.

You are going to have some major failures as a husband. I'm sure you've already had some. Just be sure you learn and grow from them and eventually become a better husband. {eoa}

Jackie Bledsoe is an author, blogger, and speaker, but first and foremost a husband and father of three, who helps men better lead and love the ones who matter most.

For the original article, visit allprodad.com.

Why You Don't Want Satan to Leave You Alone Completely

"Being left alone by Satan is not evidence of being blessed."

The above is one of my favorite quotes from the devotional book, *Streams in the Desert*, which I highly recommend, by the way! I love it because it makes me thankful for adversity and trials when they come.

It reminds me that we are all engaged in a spiritual war and that the enemy has labeled me not as a harmless civilian, but as an armed and dangerous foe. It gives me joy as I remember the early church saints in the book of Acts who, after just

being beaten for their faith, rejoiced, *“that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name”* (Acts 5:41; MEV).

I am often guilty of complaining when life throws me a curveball. Instead of considering the spiritual culprit, I become harsh with myself and lament poor decisions, faulty thinking, unfortunate naiveté, incompetence, weakness—you name it.

Unlike some who seek to blame others for their woes, I tend to punish myself, which typically manifests in disordered eating and obsessive exercise. Satan uses my anxiety as a weapon to steal my joy and destroy my body, all in an effort to kill my effectiveness for Christ (John 10:10).

If there’s anything 13 years of weightlifting and five years of CrossFit have taught me, it’s that improving one’s fitness doesn’t come easy.

I think anyone who’s ever exercised before, even just once, can attest to the mental and physical challenge a workout presents, and the soreness that follows it. Granted, if one sticks with a consistent exercise schedule long enough, very often it becomes easier to motivate oneself through workouts, and even DOMS (delayed onset of muscle soreness) becomes less severe. However, relative ease during workouts and an absence of soreness could also indicate that your body has fully adapted to the work you’re putting it through and is therefore in need of a challenge! So ultimately, there’s really no getting around the tough stuff if your goal is to keep improving.

The same is true in life. Challenges, burdens, weariness and pain are precursors to growth and progress. While it’s true that we can bring pain upon ourselves and that others can inflict it upon us, the common source we tend to overlook is the old serpent, our adversary, Satan

First Peter 5:8 tells us to be “sober and watchful” because

“the devil walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Ephesians 6:12 says we “our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Jesus told His disciples in Luke 22:31 that Satan desired to sift them like wheat.

Clearly, we have a very real enemy whose sole mission is to discourage, deceive and ultimately destroy us. I believe one of the best things we can do when we feel ourselves being attacked is to, like the apostles in Acts, rejoice that we’ve been “counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.”

Many unbelievers, and people who merely profess to be Christians without living out their faith, are seemingly left alone by the enemy. This is no surprise—they aren’t a threat to his kingdom of darkness. However, fervent followers of Jesus—individuals who live every day on mission to serve and glorify Him—have giant targets on their backs.

We are Jesus’ hands and feet, His ambassadors until He returns again, and therefore are loathed and pursued by a prowling lion with an insatiable bloodlust. Hardships and struggles and all kinds of fiery darts from the enemy are evidence that we are up to something which Satan detests—and that’s a *good* thing. To be left alone by Satan is to be ineffective as a warrior for Christ.

Just like the burning in your lungs during a long uphill run.

Just like the ache in your legs after an hour of squats and deadlifts.

Just like the sting of sweat in your eyes during a kickboxing, spinning or CrossFit class.

Just like the conversation you have with yourself when that little voice whispers, “*You’ll never stick with it. Your*

efforts aren't worth it ... "

It's all making you the strongest version of yourself.

Whatever storm you're facing now—whether it's dominated by disappointment, anger, doubts or frustration—has been allowed in your life for a purpose by your heavenly Father. Thank Him for it. Ask Him to show you its culprit, be it carnal or spiritual. Trust Him to create with it something beautiful, to use it to make you wiser, kinder, more patient and compassionate.

As with your fitness endeavors, remember always that results do not materialize from comfort. Indeed, gemstones must be cut and polished to reveal their beauty, a metaphor that serves us well in every area of life.

Diana Anderson-Tyler is the author of Creation House's [Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness](#) and her latest book, [Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness](#). Her popular website can be found at dianafit.com, and she is the owner and a coach at [CrossFit 925](#). Diana can be reached on Twitter.

For the original article, visit dianadeadlifts.com.

It Is Time to Start Declaring What Heaven Is Decreeing

Four hundred years of silence separates the Old and the New Testaments, during which the Lord did not speak to His people. Can you imagine 400 years of silence from God?

This dispensation was "when heaven was silent."

The heavens were shut up!

But John the Baptist, a prophet, broke the silence and was used of God to break open unprecedented moves of God's Spirit. When heaven is silent, it becomes the time when God amplifies the voices He's raising up in obscurity.

Believers often struggle with hearing the voice of God and recognizing what His voice sounds like. They often question whether prophecy is for today. My response is that the voice of God is always relevant in every generation and that His voice is that of a loving Father.

The prophetic Spirit of God is coming upon all flesh in a new way and whole nations will prophesy what heaven is speaking. The Lord is opening up the heavens again and releasing a sound that His people will hear, speak, obey and respond to.

Prophetic Outpouring

"In the last days it shall be," says God, "that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams'" (Acts 2:17, MEV).

We are witnessing a resurgence of the prophetic spirit being released with greater measure of glory coupled with the supernatural. Heaven is speaking! Heaven is prophesying! The Lord is opening up the ear gates of His people to hear what the Spirit of the Lord is saying to the church (Rev. 3:22).

God loves to communicate and prophecy is one vehicle that will bring about sudden change. The prophetic is not man's idea, but God's idea. I believe that hearing the voice of the Father and speaking should be as easy as the breath we breathe.

The Power of Prophecy

In Ezekiel 37, Ezekiel saw the power of prophecy when he partnered with heaven's agenda by prophesying to a hopeless

situation, turning it around by the Word of the Lord, and delivering hope again to a nation. The power of prophecy has the potency to bring supernatural change. I believe that prophecy is the doorway to the supernatural.

The Power of Your Decrees

“You will also declare a matter, and it will be established unto you; and the light will shine upon your ways” (Job 22:28, MEV).

God has given His people kingly authority and legislative power through dominion. What you decree today is the reality you will live in tomorrow. Heaven only responds to God’s Word and will for our lives. When we speak His will for our lives then prophetic fulfillment is imminent. This is not “name it and claim it” teaching, but decreeing God’s will from heaven to Earth. The Bible says that *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov. 18:21, MEV).*

Prophecy Your Day

Are you ready to change your life by your decrees and what you prophesy over your life daily? Did you know that your tongue holds creative power? Your tongue is a key that can bind and loose things into your life each day. We have the power to permit or prohibit things from happening in our lives. One of the definitions of *decree* is an “order of decree by decision.” I often say that our destiny is determined by the decisions we make.

In other words, our decisions will determine our destinies. We have the power to prophesy our day. The outcome of our day is the result of our faith to align with heaven’s view, perspective and agenda, and speak it without fear or reservation. We command and change our day by prophesying God’s will each day for our lives.

We are seated in heavenly places right now with Christ (Eph.

2:6), and from that realm we can prophesy over our day. If the enemy tries to frustrate your day, just open your mouth and frustrate all of hell with the Word of God. I believe that every spirit-filled believer can prophesy by the Holy Spirit to frame their day and their world.

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: hakeemcollinsministries.com.

Trusting God When Life Doesn't Make Any Sense

Sometimes feeling OK is the best you've felt in a very long time. Your brokenness entraps you because of unchangeable moments that took place in your past.

You've yet to let go and find peace amidst the storm of remembrance. You're hurting. You're frustrated. You're in repetitious, unwavering pain. You ask yourself, "Does God even care?"

God does care. He feels our pain, yet sometimes the way He responds to us might not be exactly the way we anticipate. Over the course of my life, I'll be honest in saying I've found myself furious at God on multiple occasions. I've yelled at God, cursed at God and even threatened God for not providing what I felt was the best response for my current situation in life.

I'm sure He looked down at me, chuckled a bit and knew that I didn't really mean what I was saying. I was just upset, and God was patient enough to let me vent to Him. He allowed me to use Him as a scratching post. He could handle it. That's the beauty of God; He's big enough to handle anything I throw at Him, but wise enough to not give me everything I ask for.

When putting our lives in the hands of God, we must be ready to not understand everything God does, why He does it, and how long He will do it for. Some things only have one answer – to trust God even if it doesn't make sense. It may seem like a shallow and cliché response, but it's actually quite the opposite.

Trusting God among our brokenness is a beautifully painful but spiritually deepening experience. Every time we put our trust in God, another scoop of our fleshly dirt is removed from our spiritual sandbox.

Trust God among your brokenness, but realize it's OK to be mad at Him, frustrated and even downright confused. God doesn't expect us to understand everything He does, but He does expect us to trust Him among the process.

Don't be afraid to question what's happening. Don't be afraid to wave your fist a little.

God can handle it. Let it all out, and get honest with God about what you're really feeling. {eoa}

Jarrid Wilson is a husband, pastor and author relentlessly sharing the love of Jesus. For the original article, visit jarridwilson.com.

7 Notes That Will Bless Your Child's Heart

Detroit Lions head coach Jim Caldwell shared with me about how he wrote many letters to his daughter in college, but she never said anything to him about it when they spoke on the phone or when they saw each other. He wondered if she ever even read them.

One day when Jim was visiting her in her dorm room, he saw all of the letters he had written to her opened and proudly posted on her bulletin board!

Your children may not express their enthusiasm about your notes or even acknowledge getting them, but know that writing notes to them will impact their lives and always be remembered. Over the years, I've made it a practice to write notes to each of my children.

I'd like to share the kinds of notes I've written and then show you how you can write those notes to your children as well. If you don't feel like you're the writing type or don't know what to say, I'm going to try to give you some ideas and specific things you can say in your notes. Some of these notes you'll write one time; others will be notes you'll want to write on an ongoing basis when you can.

Here are the seven notes that will bless your child's heart:

1. Love note – This note expresses your unconditional love to your children for who they are and validates their wonderful gifts. You can read what I wrote to my children in my [How to Win Your Child's Heart](#) blog post.

2. Lunch box note – Another way to uplift our children is to slip them a note in their lunchbox. My wife, Susan, and I found that just simply letting them know we're thinking of

them will encourage them through the day. Not sure of what to write? How about, “I love you,” “I’m proud of you,” “Have a great day,” or “Hope your test goes well.” You can even surprise them with a “Let’s go for ice cream after school” note. I’ve got some free, downloadable [lunchbox notes for kids](#) and [teens](#) you can use to get started.

3. Post-It note – You can write little notes to your kids on yellow sticky notes and put them on their mirror, dresser, notebook or anywhere you want. Like lunchbox notes, these post-its are just quick words of encouragement to your kids. You might just say something like, “Way to go. An A in math! Awesome!” or “That was so nice that you encouraged your brother when he was down.” You can check out my [How to Love your Family with Sticky Notes](#) blog to see how we do it in our home.

4. Pillow talk note – As our children were growing up, Susan began to feel as if all communication with them was becoming instructional or disciplinary. So one time, she grabbed a spiral notebook, wrote a note to one of our daughters praising her for a nice thing she did for her sister and put it on her pillow. To my wife’s surprise, my daughter wrote back and placed the journal on her pillow. As a result, Susan developed the Pillow Talk journal so parents, like you, can write short notes of encouragement to their kids when they desire.

5. Forgiveness note – Every parent makes mistakes in child rearing. And every parent should ask their child to forgive them for those mistakes. Sometimes a verbal, “I was wrong, would you please forgive me?” is appropriate. Other times, a written letter to your child is the way to go. Here’s ideas on how to [write to right a wrong](#).

6. Blessing note – There is something inside every child that makes that child crave a good word from his or her parents. When we bless our child, we are placing our “seal of approval” upon them and giving them power to prosper in many areas of

life, including marriage, children, finances, health and career. In addition to writing a note of blessing, you can also have a [blessing ceremony](#).

7. College and career note – Another thing I've done for my children is to memorialize, in writing, the most important things I tried to instill in them as they were growing up. Three of our five children are now in college or working. Before they left our nest, there were four things that Susan and I taught them and always want them to remember. Here are the [four things](#) I penned to each of them. {eoa}

Mark Merrill *is the president of All Pro Dad and Family First , a national non-profit organization. He is also the voice of a daily radio program called "The Family Minute."*

For the original article, visit allprodad.com.

Classic or Clunker: A Peculiar Lesson About Your Eating Habits

Just the other day, Mike and I were on our way to the grocery store and saw a gorgeous classic car pass us on the road. We were marveling that it was still on the road when many of the other cars built that same year were in the junkyard or otherwise destroyed.

This morning, an image of that car popped into my head again and the words, "classic or clunker" whispered to me. The main difference in a classic car vs. clunker car is in the maintenance.

It's not in the washing, oil changes, tune-ups, tire rotations or other maintenance tasks the owner does once and then forgets about it. It's about the maintenance tasks the owner does repeatedly over time.

When I was in my early 20s, I learned a hard lesson about car maintenance. I knew my oil needed changing regularly, yet I kept putting off the task. I even bought the right oil once and put the bottle in my trunk.

However, I never poured the oil into the reservoir where it belonged.

The oil warning light came on in the car eventually, but I ignored that.

Well, one day driving on the Interstate, my car started making a loud knocking noise. The car shook and smoke started pouring out of the engine. I got the car over to the emergency lane and lifted the hood.

I suddenly remembered that I had oil in my trunk. I frantically got the oil and started pouring it into the reservoir, smoke billowing everywhere.

But it was too late. My engine was destroyed and its replacement cost over \$1,000.

You better believe I have **never** allowed that to happen again. I always make sure my oil is changed now.

Unfortunately, it took longer to make that connection when it came to my body.

Instead, through my 20s and most of my 30s, I expected my body to run well off of junk. I threw sweets, junk food and snack food into my body with abandon.

Eventually, my body started giving me warning signs that something wasn't right. It started storing excess fat. My skin

didn't look healthy and broke out. I had itchy patches on my arms and upper back. I got out of breath easily with any exertion. My blood pressure started going up.

I ignored these warning signals. Well, I'd make a halfhearted effort to change, but that never lasted long.

Then one day, I got a [warning that was hard to ignore](#). I had a chest pain that I thought was going to kill me at the age of 38.

I realized that I could not get a new heart as easily as I got a new car engine! Plus, I did not want to endure the pain of a failing heart.

Today, almost 13 years later, I am so glad I did not ignore that warning. I made a decision that [I wanted my latter end to be better than my beginning](#).

While aging is inevitable, [how we age is largely up to us](#). I'm challenging us to do what we can to age into classics, like a classic car.

Here are some examples of health maintenance tasks I do daily:

- Drinking a minimum of 8 cups of water or green tea per day
- Eating a minimum of 2.5 cups of green vegetables (usually it's 4 cups). My favorites are turnip greens, broccoli, spinach and cabbage.
- Eat minimal sweets and junk. This is the toughest one for me, but experience has taught me that the more I eat of sweets and junk, the more my tongue wants it. That is why I keep them out of the house.

Besides, the rest of my body tells me that this is "food" it doesn't want. After all, eating junk will make my body go "clunk"!

I use the lesson from the old movie *War Games* when it comes to

sweets and junk. In the movie, a teenager almost starts World War III through hacking into a government game called "Thermonuclear War."

But the computer eventually learns that nobody wins when you are dealing with nuclear weapons: "A strange game. The only winning move is not to play."

Here are some questions I have for you to turn things around:

What warning signals is your body giving you or has given you to alert you that you are headed for "body trouble"?

What maintenance tasks are part of your plan to age as a classic?

If you haven't established any tasks, then which one will you start with?

Aging well is [essential to your purpose](#) as well because you need energy and vitality to do the work the Lord has called you to do.

We admire classic cars because of their beauty and rarity. They have stood the test of time. I hope you determine that your body will stand the test of time and be there for you as long as you need it! {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 takebackyourtemple.com. Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.

For the original article, visit takebackyourtemple.com.

Where Is Holy Spirit When My Heart Shatters to Pieces?

Our day could be going well from the start. Our routine is set and we have a momentum and we feel accomplished. But then the unthinkable happens.

Whether it is a phone call, or an unexpected visit from the authorities, our world could feel like it has collapsed in an instant. Tragedy and loss has affected us and we didn't invite it. We didn't ask for it but our lives changed in an instant.

I had started a community outreach center in the summer and we knew we were on the brink of revival, but in late September 2000, after receiving the news that my brother had died, I found myself walking through a fog, with so many unanswered questions. I tried to make sure my responsibilities were taken care of, including a ministry I felt like I was neglecting, but I had to be with my family.

As our family made funeral arrangements, we remembered the good times, and every word for the eulogy had a deeper and more profound meaning. It had to convey the best about my brother, and even though it would be in the newspaper next to other eulogies, I understood that each one had a family and a story, and left people who loved them behind. Some passed due to old age, while others like my brother, were tragically taken at a young age.

Questions abounded about the details of his death, and some will continue to go unanswered. As a family, we went together to the place where he was found. What were we looking for? I don't really know, but we loved him and we wanted to say goodbye in one way or another. Everything we did had meaning, including the funeral that he would have wanted.

Friends and family sent their condolences, and I was grateful

for the food and coffee people brought. I had moments when all I wanted was to be alone and hide from the world, but there were other times when I needed to be around people. At times I could cry, but then other times I hated that I couldn't weep. I even tried to act strong in front of certain people, but then fell apart when I was near others.

Six months before he died, we went up to the cemetery above the small church we grew up in, where hours before he had rededicated his life to Christ and was water baptized. We walked those hills together and chased wild turkeys. But as I grieved after he passed, those hope-filled memories were hard to grasp hold of as so many questions and fears went through my mind. I would take long walks where I cried and grieved and yelled, and ran ... and hid. I would yell, "Where are you God? My family needs You!"

I even asked the question, "Where is God in my pain and grief? Where is the Holy Spirit?"

We may think that the wonderful Spirit is not present, that perhaps He left us. But He would reveal Himself briefly through the grace of friends or short encouraging words. We catch that moment and hold on as best as we can to a glimmer of hope, to a ray of sunshine into the darkness we are in. I couldn't sense the presence of God for days, even weeks. I knew He was present, but I was angry that I felt like He was gone. I was even ashamed to show how I felt, but I had great friends who listened to me and prayed with me even when I didn't want prayer.

We jumped into revival and every emotion I had I directed toward God. One night at a youth group meeting, the Spirit of God fell on me in my pain and mourning, and I yelled to God, crying out the name of Jesus, and four teenagers who were praying with us were baptized with the Spirit in that instant. Another time we shared what we were going through with a group of teenagers and we prayed for them, and a number were filled

with the Spirit. A few even had demonic entities reveal themselves, but in a few moments, the precious teenagers were freed.

We saw revival taking place, but I was still grieving. But I realized that it was part of my story. I decided that my pain and grief would be turned into helping others see that Jesus is always with them. Deuteronomy 31:8 (MEV) says, "The Lord, He goes before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you. Do not fear, nor be dismayed."

Psalms 139 (MEV) says, "Where shall I go from Your spirit, or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell at the end of the sea, even there Your hand shall guide me, and Your right hand shall take hold of me." This is something I had to keep reminding myself for a long time, that He is always with me, even if I didn't sense it. This brought me comfort as I mourned and I can tell others, "He is with you."

If you have walked through tragedy, or maybe you are in the midst of grieving and feel like God has left you, find a place to meet with God and write out your prayers and questions directly to God. Then, knowing the biblical truth that He will never leave you nor forsake you, close your eyes and ask Jesus to show you where He was during that time.

When you ask Him, know He will show you He was right there with you. Allow enough time to interact with Him and be completely honest with Him, and He will pour His love into your heart. {eoa}

Jared Laskey, is starting *Destiny Open Bible Church* in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and is a Master of Divinity student at Regent University. He lives to see Jesus awaken this generation to the power of His Holy Spirit. You can follow him on Twitter @jaredalaskey, or contact him through his website,

firebornministries.com. He also co-authored Veronica's Hero found on Amazon [here](#).

10 Valuable Steps to Godly Success—No Talent Required

Over the years, I've seen an antipodal effect to success, namely those with the most talent are often the most unsuccessful and those with the least talent become extremely successful. How is it possible those with the most potential are often sidelined or have marginal success?

I live with the conviction that every man has talent, a divine deposit, a skill set that may seem common to him yet would be exceptional for others. However, even if you have identified your unique talent, there are things you can do that will elevate you beyond what talent alone can do.

It comes down to character. Character trumps talent when it comes to success.

Here are 10 things you can do to succeed that require no talent:

1. Be on time. Time is a currency. It is equally dispersed to all of us to have 24 hours—1440 minutes—to steward each day. Being late for work or for a meeting is equivalent to theft. Those minutes can't be returned. They're gone forever.

Being timely communicates that you not only value the persons with whom you are working or meeting, but it also demonstrates your mastery over contrary conditions and interruptions. It shows that you have dominion over your circumstances.

Perhaps you've heard the old expression, "A dollar waitin' on a dime." It infers that the more important or valuable is waiting on the less important and less valuable.

A naive young man asked a very successful man if he could have some of the man's time to discuss the ideas and dreams that he had for his life. The very successful man generously agreed to do so. Amazingly, the young man showed up for the appointment 10 minutes late. Flippantly apologizing, the novice excused himself. The seasoned man said, "Young man, you've stolen my time. Therefore, I have none left to give to you. Goodbye."

Action Step: Calculate what your time is actually worth. Divide it down to the minute. This will give you a very clear picture of how much your time is worth and what you're spending it on.

2. Hustle. I learned very quickly in life that you can make up for a lack of skill simply by putting a lot of effort behind your work. Solomon said, "Using a dull ax requires great strength." (Eccl. 10:10 NLT) He furthers encourages us to "sharpen the blade." Until we can sharpen our skill set, we should use all of our strength to work hard.

When we put extra energy and effort behind what we do, we show a seriousness toward our work and once again honor the currency of time.

3. Effort. Complementary to working with hustle is to put effort to your work. Effort is applying hustle to your mental game. It is the ability to coordinate your mental faculties with your physical capabilities. It is a "practice makes perfect" mentality, not willing to settle for just getting by. Putting effort into your work shows you're engaged in what you're doing.

If effort is the key, *continual* effort provides the grooves and notches that make the key work. Most men fail in their efforts because they are not consistent in those efforts. Our

efforts must have a tenacity behind them if we're going to see the results we want.

4. Body language. It is said that 80 percent of our communication is understood through our body language. How we position ourselves, how we hold our arms or use our hands, the expressions of our face, raising eye-brows or frowning the forehead, all have a significance in what we're saying.

So much of our communication is body language that we have begun to use emojis in our electronic messages to make up for the lack of it.

I've noticed when I am on a business phone call that if I stand up during the call I project better with my words. I've also realized I prefer Facetime or Zoom meetings over voice only because I am able to connect with the conversation better with fewer distractions.

5. Energy. We've discussed hustle and effort, but there is a distinguishable difference between those and applying energy to our work. Using energy, we gain the momentum and inertia of our work to propel us. The synergy of effort and hustle creates the energy to get things done. At some point, it's as if the work is self-powered. Obviously, we believe in cause and effect, meaning that without hustling and divine effort, we would never gain the momentum.

The apostle Paul advised his protege, Timothy, to "fan into flame the gift of God" that was within him. A flame or fire is both literal and figurative when applied to energy. Paul was saying that you must increase your energy for the gift to reach its potential.

Are you gaining the momentum of your efforts? Are you turning up the heat?

6. Attitude. Your attitude is the emotion you display toward doing the work you are undertaking. People hear your words but

feel your attitude. Attitude is a huge player in your success.

If you're in sales and you don't believe in your product, you're not going to sell your product. People won't believe in your product because they don't believe you.

Albert Einstein said, "Weakness of attitude is a weakness of character." The genius equates a poor attitude with a character flaw.

I fired an employee 15 minutes before he was to go on stage because of his habitual poor attitude. He was arguably one of the most talented employees that I'd ever hired, yet he was also the most carnal-minded, meaning that he allowed his emotions to completely control his behaviors. I couldn't allow him to continue because his attitude was an emotional virus—infecting everyone.

7. Passion. Passion is more than attitude; it is enthusiasm for your purpose. Passion brings excitement to work. It elevates a man's labor into a vocation—what we call a "divine calling." We transform ourselves and our work environment when we bring passion into our work ethic.

When a player on the field brings passion to the game, he can literally be the game-changer. It's what separates champions from amateurs.

The question for us to consider is, "Are we bringing our best to our vocation?"

8. Learning. It is foolish to think that we can navigate life without the discipline of life-long learning. John Wooden said, "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts."

A recipe for ignorance is to be satisfied with your own opinions and content with your own knowledge.

At different men's events and conferences, I've had a few men come by my book table and while they thumb through one of my

books, they jokingly say, "I don't read." To be transparent, it is a pet-peeve of mine to hear men say something that demeans themselves.

Some men have accepted the lie that asserts that men don't read. I find that ridiculous.

Leaders are readers.

The average American begins one book a year and doesn't finish it. The average millionaire reads one non-fiction book a month.

9. 110 Percent–The Extra Mile Mentality. Most men want an excellent life with eighty-percent effort. That's just not going to happen. The extra mile mentality goes beyond being a finisher, it doubles the effort.

In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus teaches that two employees put the master's money to work and doubled his fortune. The boss not only acknowledged the men's accomplishments but invited them to share in his happiness and gave both of them a promotion in his company.

When we excel, we stamp whatever we touch with our DNA. Whatever we do, we should do with all of our strength.

As a FivestarMan, I don't want to represent mediocrity. I want the distinction of going the extra mile. I want to represent Christ in all that I do. Don't you?

10. Opportunity. When the army of Israel lined up on the field of contest against the Philistines, they saw a crisis. The undisputed champion fighter named Goliath would raise his booming voice to ridicule them and blaspheme God. The king's reward promised wealth, tax freedom and a royal lineage. Yet no one took the bait because no one had prepared themselves for such a challenge.

However, when David arrived he was prepared for the

opportunity. David saw the crisis as an opportunity in disguise. He had fought a lion and won. He had killed a bear. He considered the giant no greater a threat.

Success is often one step away from seizing an opportunity. However, you can't seize an opportunity if you're not prepared. That would be presumptuous. I've seen entrepreneurs jump into a crisis without preparing for it, only to fail miserably. The difference maker is being prepared for the opportunity when it comes.

Bonus: To be successful, you must have rest. God has an incredible work ethic. You may think that is stating the obvious, but I want to emphasize that His work ethic also came with rest—each evening and one day of the work week.

Motivated men are driven to succeed. Often one of the casualties of an insatiable drive to work is getting enough rest and recouping for the next week of work.

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

For the original article, visit fivestarman.com.

The Lies Satan Wants You to

Believe About Your Health

Lies and false beliefs can derail us from living an abundant life. These are part of the impact of original sin and a type of stress that messes up God's design for perfect wellness for each of us.

One thing we are called to do as followers of Christ is "strip off" anything that hinders us from running the race of life.

"Therefore, since we are encompassed with such a great cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" ([Heb. 12:1](#)).

And one aspect of this can be 'stripping off' the lies that Satan plants in our minds about ourselves ... and "putting on" the truth according to the Word of God.

Listed below are 10 lies we can be convinced by Satan and others to believe—false beliefs. After the lie is the truth about who we really are, in Christ.

Lies of Satan

1. I am not good enough. (*You are a royal daughter of the King, [1 Pet. 2:9.](#)*)
2. I might fail. (*God goes before you and doesn't want you to worry, [Deut. 3:18.](#)*)
3. I might not have enough money. (*God is Jehovah—that means provider. He will meet all of your needs for His glory, [Phil. 4:19.](#)*)
4. There seems to be no way. This is impossible. (*Jesus is the way, [John 14:6.](#)*)
5. How will I make it? Which way should I go? (*Pray to God, He*

will show you the right path. Seek His Word; it will light your way, [Ps. 119:105.](#))

6. I am not pretty enough or the right weight. (*God knit you in your mother's womb and you are fearfully and wonderfully made, Jeremiah 1, Psalm 139.*)

7. I might mess up my future. (*God knows His plans for you to prosper you, and not for evil or harm! Believe that! Trust in God, [Jer. 29:11](#)).*

8. I can sin and no one will know. (*God sees all things and knows all things, [Rom. 6:23](#); [Job 28:24](#).*)

9. There won't be a consequence for my sin. (*God is our Father and disciplines those He loves. When He corrects you, it is for you good, [Prov. 3:12](#).*)

10. I am a failure. God doesn't love me. (*God so loved you, He sent and gave His one and only Son, Jesus, to die for your sins on the cross. There is no condemnation in Christ. You are healed by the blood of Jesus on Calvary, [John 3:16](#).*)

Don't believe these lies. Make a choice to embrace the truths. One way to renounce these lies would be to write and/or say the Scriptures that are listed above as a personal affirmation.

Example: "For the Lord corrects those He loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom He delights." ([Prov. 3:12](#)). As an affirmation: God corrects me because He loves me, just as my earthly father corrected me because he delighted in me.

Remember, the lies Satan plants in your mind and heart are meant to derail you from being in an intimate relationship with God, a healthy relationship with yourself and in loving relationships with others. If you believe the lies Satan wants you to embrace, it will likely impact negatively on your view of yourself, perhaps your self-esteem or body image. The

distorted thinking that comes from the false beliefs might then influence when and what you eat to cope with the negative image you have of yourself. In turn, your health might be adversely impacted.

Don't believe the lies of Satan! Embrace God's truths!

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 FaithandHealthConnection.org and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/FaithandHealthConnection).

For the original article, visit faithandhealthconnection.org.

Do This When You Get Antsy Waiting on God

Imagine with me what it may have been like to grow up on an ancient Israeli farm. The long winter months have reduced the once plentiful pantries to empty shelves, and the family is now living on meager rations and dreaming about a loaf of bread fresh from the oven.

Suddenly the rain begins to pour, and the once-dusty fields are becoming rivers. The father says to his young son, "Come, it's time to sow." Together they walk out to the barn where the father climbs into the loft and pulls down huge bags of grain.

"Father!" the young boy exclaims, "now we can make bread!" The father replies, "No, my son. This grain is not for eating.

Come, I will show you what it is for.”

He fills a sack with grain, and they wade into the flooded fields. Then the father does the most absurd thing; he begins throwing the grain into the water! That night at the dinner table, the little boy eats his paltry portion and wonders why his father threw all that grain away.

Many weeks will go by before he understands, but one day the water will recede and the little boy will step outside and behold a miracle. The fields will be full of tiny sprouts, racing heavenward to produce a harvest of golden grain. It was this ancient farming technique that Solomon was referring to when he wrote, “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days” (Eccl. 11:1, MEV).

Throwing perfectly good grain into the water when you are hungry is a difficult thing to do, but what is more difficult is waiting *many days* for the harvest. This is why Paul encourages us by saying, “And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in *due season* we shall reap, if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:9, emphasis added).

It is amazing and sobering to think that we are all planting seeds all the time. Sowing and reaping are not confined to putting money in an offering plate. That cheeseburger you ate, that movie you watched, that comment you made, that time you spent with your family, that book you read—everything you do is a seed that will produce a harvest (good or bad) in the future. Be careful what you plant in this season because you will eat it in the next.

In the end our lives are a sum total of the decisions we have made—a harvest, if you will, of what we have sown. You can’t usually change today’s harvest by sowing good seeds today, but if you will determine to sow the right seeds day in and day out, in “due season” you will reap your harvest if you “faint not.”

If you have been waiting for a long time and still have not seen the fulfillment of God's promise for your life, keep sowing good seeds and beware of impatience. Allow God to do the work in your heart that He is trying to accomplish.

The children of Israel walked in circles in the wilderness decade after decade because they did not learn their lesson. Some people keep going in circles because they never learn what God is trying to teach them, and they never move to the next phase because they never pass the test. Stop squirming and wiggling and trying to get through with this as quickly as possible, but be faithful and patient. When you pass the test, He will lead you forward. {eoa}

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