

Why Tired Dads Need Grace Too

It feels like it's been a long week already, and I'm tired. Work takes its toll, so does relating to my wife, much less the work of parenting.

I know. Love is a gift; so is being a parent. But they do take hard work, right?

Sometimes, even these good things can wear me out. So it's been a long week. A long month, maybe; and depending on how you look at it, a long few years. I'm tired. I get to the end of a day like this, and it can feel like my loftiest goal is quiet Netflix and my favorite beverage. Is anyone with me here?

This is for tired dads, from a tired dad. It's for guys who haven't got it all figured out yet, from a guy who often doesn't feel like he has a clue. It's for husbands trying hard to get it right, sometimes fighting to make their marriage a place of joy, sometimes feeling like throwing in the towel, and sometimes, truth be told, not really bringing their all.

This one is for the flawed guys, who bring a load of inadequacy to the table, more failings than they care to admit, less ability to control the things around them than they'd like. This is for the husbands and fathers who sometimes get scared. Me too. In fact, here's what I'd like to say: just because you find yourself writing articles for All Pro Dad, doesn't necessarily mean that you *are* All Pro. This is why.

Tired dads and flawed dads, semi-pro dads and all pro dads, D-league dads and "I don't even know what the rules are" dads: guess what? We're a mess. Each of us. We get impatient and irritable. There are limits to our energy, our resources, and our abilities. (That's Tony Dungy and Mark Merrill too. They'll tell you the same thing.) But we are called to be

dads, nonetheless. As a mess, married to a mess, parenting beautiful little messes. If you're not paying attention, this could be taken as discouraging.

It doesn't have to be. You need to know that it's OK to be tired, and it's OK to not have all the answers. It's OK to not be the toughest, the smartest, the best at handling money, a master at tackling tough conversations, or the world's number one lover.

I'm saying this even as I need the reminder myself. Sometimes, we each need validation that reminds us how draining life and responsibility can sometimes be. I've had really great dads come into my office and say something like, "I'm tired, man. I work. I go to my kid's practices. I try to spend time with my wife and show her I love her. I try to help out around the house. I'm working on being a good person and getting better, but I'm tired." And I'll look at that man and say, "Sounds like you've got good reason for it, there, my brother."

What about you, All Pro Dad? You need to hear this too: Good work. You're doing it. You're allowed to make mistakes. But keep going. (Isn't this what coaches and teammates do for each other? Celebrate, encourage, challenge and then go alongside?)

Being a dad is really hard work, not for the faint of heart. It takes courage, and sometimes double, when you're trying to make changes. But here you are. You're reading. You're looking for answers. You're growing. Now how about taking one more step today by participating in a bit of dialogue with other tired dads?

Have you got it in you? Comment on this article. Write a word of encouragement. You know how big a difference that can make. Or, share a small slice of your tired story. You remember how much it can help simply to know you're not the only one who feels the way you do.

Let's take a minute, dads and husbands, to cheer one another

on. And then, after that, go take a nap. You probably need it.
{eoa}

For the original article, visit .

What Is the Best Christian Weight Loss Approach?

“Does God really care about our weight?”

A young woman emailed me that question recently after reading about my Christian weight loss success story. I gave her the short answer, but it inspired me to look deeper at the subject.

In this article, I want to share my answer to that question, as well as some other controversial questions surrounding weight loss programs for Christians, and then my thoughts on the ideal Christian weight-loss program.

The questions I will answer include:

- Does God really care about our weight?
- Can I “shame and guilt” my way into changing?
- If I fall short in my weight loss plan, do I disappoint God?
- What is the best Christian weight loss approach?
- Can I eliminate the desire for quick fixes?

So let’s get started with the questions.

1. Weight doesn’t matter. No, God does not care what you weigh. The Bible says man looks on the outside but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). God loves you just as much at a

size 28 as at a size 8. Nothing you do can make Him love you more than He does now.

What *does* God care about? Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. We are called to glorify God in body and spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In John 15:8, Jesus tells us how we glorify God: “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

The fruit Jesus is talking about is the fruit of the Spirit. We are to bear *much* love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

Any thoughts or behavior in your life that have become weeds hindering the fruit that you bear concern God. In my case, compulsive overeating was that behavior—one that I was using to hide myself from emotional pain. My excess weight was just an outward manifestation of what was going on in my heart.

So you see, the real issue is not about size but stewardship. God can teach you how to become a good steward of your body and remove the hindrances that keep you from bearing fruit. Humble yourself and pray the same prayer that King David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my concerns, and see if there is any rebellious way in me, and lead me in the ancient way.”

Caring for your body requires wisdom and balance. Only with God’s help can you gain both. As I learned to build my health through following godly wisdom in my eating behavior and through disciplining my body with regular exercise, my weight took care of itself.

I’ll discuss this point more later in the article.

2. Can I “shame and guilt” myself into changing? I’ve read

many articles about weight loss for Christians, and some seem to endorse the “shame your way to change” approach. But that approach does not work. Well, not for long!

Why? Because shame and guilt ignore the grace of God. Trying to use shame as a motivator ultimately leads to frustration, hopelessness, discouragement and depression.

But meditating on the grace of God, His goodness, and His love for you constantly leads to a renewed heart and inspires repentance (a change of heart and mind). You acknowledge that God personally formed every part of your body skillfully and wonderfully, and you want to honor Him by taking care of it.

A change in daily behavior is evidence of true repentance.

3. If I fall short in my weight loss plan, do I disappoint God? The other issue I’ve seen is Christians thinking they are disappointing God by falling short in their weight-loss plan. But this, too, is an error in thinking. Disappointment comes about when you expect something of a person and are surprised when they don’t come through. But God already knows everything about you. He knows about your mistakes before you make them. So how can you ever disappoint Him? Not only that, but He already has a plan in place to help you recover!

Secondly, there is really no way that you can fall short if you use each mistake as a building block, not a stumbling block. What can you learn from the mistake that can propel you forward?

God is ever patient in teaching you the right way and leading you in the way you should go. Remember Philippians 1:6: “I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.” With that in mind, resolve to never give up on yourself. Hold fast to your confidence.

4. What is the best Christian weight-loss approach? Scripture

says the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. So any thoughts or behaviors that are contrary to God's Word, that take away your joy and that disrupt your peace concern God. All of these hinder your ability to fulfill the purpose for which God created you.

Remember how Jesus said that His food was to do the will of God? As His disciples, it is our mission as well.

When I created Take Back Your Temple, one of the guiding Scriptures was this one from Proverbs 23:1-3:

"When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before you; and put a knife to your throat, if you are a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his delicacies, for they are deceptive food."

Two principles are given regarding eating: eating with wisdom and eating with self-control.

Eating With Wisdom

You are the ruler in this case, since most of the time you are serving food to yourself. So the guidance is to consider your food carefully—not be anxious over it, not worry over it, but do consider it.

One thing to consider first is what a privilege it is to have food to eat at all. As you know, many people in the world do not have food, so it's not a small thing that you have the ability to get food. That's something to be grateful for.

With being able to get food comes responsibility to ensure that the food you eat helps you and doesn't hurt you. Scripture says that some food is deceptive. Many modern processed foods—those found in a bag, box or can—impair your body's natural hunger/fullness signals, which can lead to out-of-control cravings and overeating. Remember the potato chip slogan, "Bet you can't eat just one"? It is true! That

statement applies to many junk foods, and the manufacturers like it that way. The more you eat, the more money for them.

So make it your business to learn about the foods you tend to eat and the effect they have on your body. I advise you to pay at least as much attention to what you put into your body as what you put on it.

When you shift your focus from losing weight to building health, your body will naturally reach the weight that is best for you.

Eating With Self-Control

The Bible puts it bluntly: "Put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite." One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is self-control. You already have it, but like any muscle, it must be exercised to grow stronger.

One aspect of self-control is to learn to eat when your body is hungry. If you have a weight problem, chances are you have disconnected from your body's natural hunger signals.

Proverbs 23:21 says, "For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags." The implication here is that when you practice gluttony (overeating), you become drowsy, and when you are drowsy, your judgment is impaired.

To hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, your mind must be alert and sharp. But if you are going through life with brain fog (as I was when I overindulged regularly with food), then you are more likely to make decisions that you will regret later.

Discipline Your Body

I believe that increasing your physical strength enhances your mental and emotional strength. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, the apostle Paul says, "But I bring and keep my body under subjection, lest, when preaching to others I myself should be

disqualified.”

A regular exercise program shows you vividly that your body is your servant, not your master. Remember that as you go about the work God has called you to: Your spirit does not get tired, but your mind and body can.

So you want to do everything you can to improve your physical strength, endurance and flexibility so that your physical condition can better respond to spiritual demands.

Eliminate Quick Fixes

I don't believe it is possible to eliminate the *desire* for a quick fix. I think that is part of our sin/flesh nature. It's like little children on a road trip to Disney World continually asking their parents, "Are we there yet?" When little children want something good, they don't want to wait to get it. They want it now!

But as mature believers, we recognize the truth of the Scripture that says that we inherit God's promises through faith and patience (Heb. 6:12). Patience is part of the fruit of the Spirit, and as I mentioned previously with self-control, it must be exercised to grow (Gal. 5:22-23).

With that being said, you'll never get to "Disney World" as long as you stay at home. You have to get on the right road to it. Once you are on the road, you can enjoy the trip by reminding yourself that you will get there in time—encourage yourself continually. You can also amuse yourself by making your goal a game daily. For example, count how many healthy choices you make each day, and every day try to match or beat your previous score.

Finally, enjoy the scenery along the way. Notice yourself getting stronger, fitter, and faster than you were before. Notice better muscle tone. Notice less shortness of breath. All of these will ensure you will not only enjoy your ideal

size when you get it, but enjoy yourself all the way to it.

I hope this article clearly provides my stand on some controversial Christian weight loss questions. And if weight is an issue for you, ask God to show you wisdom in how to handle it.

I am not special—the victory He gave to me, He can give to you!

Kimberly Taylor *is a certified wellness coach and author of the ebook Take Back Your Temple.*

Avoid This to Protect Your God-Given Destiny

Every person on earth needs to know they matter ... that they mean something to someone and that they are valuable. The problem is when people don't get a good start in life, they often waste their lives searching for self-worth in all the wrong places.

In the world, people base their value and importance on what they do, how much education they have, who they know, what kind of clothes they wear, how they look, their job title and the list goes on. But when worldly standards determine your sense of self-worth, you'll always be striving to please people and it will derail you from your God-given destiny.

The only way to find true security and have a healthy self-esteem is by knowing and experiencing the love of God.

Popular With People or Peaceful With Yourself?

The apostle Paul talked about this in Galatians 1:10 when he said, "Am I trying to win the favor of men, or of God? Do I seek to please men? If I were still seeking popularity with men, I should not be a bond servant of Christ (the Messiah)" (AMPC). He's basically saying, "If I were trying to be popular with people, I wouldn't be serving God and know that He loves me."

I can tell you that if I was trying to be popular with people, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing today. When God spoke to my heart about His call on my life to teach the Word and I began to step out in that ministry, some of my friends and family told me I shouldn't be doing that. I was asked to leave the church we were attending at the time, and I ended up losing friendships that I thought were important to me.

It was a very difficult time, but I discovered through that experience that while it's not always easy to do what God calls us to do, obedience to Him is always worth it in the end. Doing things God's way is the only thing that works in the long run. There are people in your life—I'm talking about people other than your spouse and children—who may come and go over time, but God will always be with you because He loves you and He promises to never leave you nor forsake you (Heb. 13:5).

The Value of God's Love

The bottom line is you are valuable because God loves you and He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for you. Your worth is not based on how you look, who you know, your title at work or any of the other superficial things the world considers impressive.

After Paul met Christ and became a born-again believer, he came to realize that everything else was rubbish compared to the priceless privilege of knowing God. In Philippians 3:8 (AMP), he said, "I count everything as loss compared to the

priceless privilege and supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord [and of growing more deeply and thoroughly acquainted with Him—a joy unequaled]. For His sake I have lost everything, and I consider it all garbage, so that I may gain Christ.”

I’ll say it again: The truth that God loves you is what makes you valuable. He created you because He loves you and wants to have a personal relationship with you. He has wonderful plans and purposes for your life, and His love for you is unconditional—He loves you just as much on your worst day as He does on your best day.

No matter what your past is like, where you’re from, what you’ve done or where you are today, God is there for you and He loves you! He loves us all the same, and He wants to meet us right where we are to heal our wounded souls and bring us out of the messes we’re in—whether we’ve created them or they are the result of things others have done to us.

After the years of being abused by my dad and abandoned by my mother, who knew what he was doing but didn’t have the courage to stand up to him, I was so messed up! I felt worthless, guilty, damaged, used, condemned and terribly insecure. I tried to find my worth and value in many things, especially in work. And living this way just made me more miserable, angry and messed up.

It was so wonderful to discover that God loves me and to find the healing and restoration I desperately needed through my relationship with Him. The truth is God is so much more important to us than any person in the world could ever be!

I want to encourage you to spend time seeking God in prayer and to study what the Bible says about who He is and how He loves you. Meditate on scriptures like Ephesians 1:4-5, Romans 8, Psalm 27:10 and Isaiah 38:17. Ask God to help you learn to receive His love and find your true worth in Him. He chose you

on purpose, He wants you and He loves you. There's nothing more valuable than that! {eoa}

Can You Be Rejected by God?

When we teach that God accepts all people no matter what, we are not accurately reflecting His standards as they are set out in His Word. The Bible records many stories that reveal God's rejection of certain behaviors and lifestyles.

In Genesis 3 we see that Adam, the first man God created, was rejected by God for disobeying His command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam ate of the tree and was cast out of the Garden of Eden as a result.

Next up was Cain, who offered a sacrifice the Lord rejected. Instead of correcting his mistake, Cain became jealous of his brother Abel because God accepted Abel's sacrifice. Fully manifesting a spirit of rejection, Cain allowed anger and bitterness to drive him to kill Abel (Gen. 4:3–10).

Because Abraham and Sarah did not want to wait for God's promise to be fulfilled, they took matters into their own hands. Their actions led to a whole people group being rejected generation after generation.

Ishmael, conceived out of an unwillingness to wait on God, was also rejected by God (Gen. 21:8–21). Abraham and Sarah had tried to help God by using Sarah's maid, Hagar, as a surrogate. (See Genesis 16:1–4.) But this was not God's plan, and He did not need their help. Therefore, Ishmael was rejected as the promised son. Understand that it wasn't that God didn't love Ishmael, because He did, just as He loves us all. It was simply the fact that Ishmael was not the one God

promised to Abraham.

First Samuel 15:17 provides an example of another person who experienced divine rejection: “When you were little in your own sight, were you not made the head of the tribes of Israel?” In this verse the Prophet Samuel is reminding Saul of who he was before he became king of Israel. Coming from the tribe of Benjamin—the smallest of Israel’s tribes—Saul entered the scene predisposed to the spirits of self-rejection, inferiority, and insecurity. Initially God chose and anointed him to be the first king of Israel. But throughout Saul’s rule the spirit of rejection and other strongholds began to manifest more and more. He became rebellious and disobedient, choosing to seek his own way ahead of God’s. He refused to submit himself to the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit through the prophet Samuel. This arrogance and pride led him to be rejected by God as king of Israel.

“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. *Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king*” (1 Sam. 15:22–23, MEV, emphasis added).

Though divine rejection opened up Saul’s life to demons of paranoia, suspicion, murderous spirit, witchcraft and suicide, we must understand that it was Saul who first rejected God. Of course, God’s intention was not to get back at Saul, but there were certain commands and instructions through which God wanted to bless and prosper Saul and the people of Israel. Saul’s determination to go against what God directed him to do set him on a path of destruction. He forfeited the blessing, protection and victory over the enemy that obedience and submission to God bring. The story of Saul’s rejection demonstrates how demons of rejection can completely ruin a person’s whole life.

Rejecting the Knowledge of God Opens the Door to Destruction

Being rejected by God comes as a result of a person's refusal of the knowledge of God.

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject you from being My priest. And because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children" (Hosea 4:6).

This verse defines the curse of rejection, also known as the demon of rejection. This curse or demonic spirit is not just about being turned down or rejected by someone one day. The demon of rejection that enters as a result of refusing the knowledge of God is about your whole life being characterized by the manifestations of this demon, which we will explore in later chapters. Though all of us have been rejected in one way or another, there is a deeper infiltration of the spirit, curse or demon of rejection that destroys lives and causes one to reject God. But there is deliverance, and there is forgiveness.

God is always open to a person with a repentant and humble heart. If you come to Him in the midst of your mess and confess that you want to know His ways, that you want to walk in the knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of His Word, He will deliver you from the destruction of rejection.

However, God cannot accept you when you are living in deliberate opposition to His ways. He will reject you if you reject deliverance, His Word, and the leading of His Spirit. We are living in a time when hardly any of us can say we have not been introduced to the knowledge of God. There may be remote groups of people who have never known the God of the Bible, but most of us have, in one way or another, been presented with an opportunity to receive the truth of God, deliverance and healing. So if we choose to go another way and our minds are fixed on living out that choice, God says, "I will reject you."

Hosea 4:6 says it clearly: “Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you.” So it is not only about a lack of exposure to the knowledge of God; it is also about refusal to accept it. And through our rejection of this knowledge, we are destroyed. Now focus in on that word *destroyed* in this verse.

The spirit of destruction comes into our lives as a result of our rejection of God and then by His rejection of us. If we want to experience victory, blessing, and protection from God—and even acceptance, because we always have His love—it is important for us to repent and accept His truth. We need to be humbly open and submitted to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. {eoa}

Excerpted from John Eckhardt’s book, Destroying the Spirit of Rejection (Charisma House, 2016). To purchase the book, click [here](#).

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Exercising Your Faith for

Maximum Results in the Gym

I watched an interesting documentary a few weeks ago on a subject I cannot entirely recall. All I know for certain is that it was hosted by the illustrious Mr. Morgan Freeman and featured a fascinating study on self-control that involved scrambled sentences, a disgusting cocktail of orange juice and vinegar, and monetary rewards. (More on that in a bit.)

The findings of this experiment are truly remarkable. According to the 2012 paper published by the Queen's University researchers who conducted the study, religion replenishes self-control and increases our ability to endure discomfort, delay gratification, exert patience and refrain from responding impulsively.

As a CrossFit coach and personal trainer, I am well acquainted with myriad forms of "discomfort":

- Discomfort during 5K runs and rowing sprints that test the mind's willpower far more than the body's ability.
- Discomfort during heavy sets of back squats that pull us out of our comfort zone with every all-out rep.
- Discomfort during workout sessions in which your sole objective is to face an exercise foe—that is, a skill that needs improvement, such as overhead squats, double-unders, handstand push-ups or kipping pull-ups.
- Discomfort during deep stretches and intense foam-rolling sessions that, ironically, are encouraged because they in fact *soothe* tired muscles and *relieve* joint pain.

As both a committed CrossFitter and a follower of Christ, I was naturally intrigued by the notion that my faith could make me stronger both inside and outside of the gym, both in spiritual and physical endurance races.

In the experiment that I watched unfold in the aforementioned

documentary, the psychologists asked participants (college students) to complete a scrambled-sentence task in which they were to unscramble the sentence and remove the excess word. For those in the neutral priming group, the excessive word didn't bear any religious connotations. In the religious priming group, however, the excessive words did contain religious themes and undertones, like *divine* and *spirit*.

After this priming portion of the experiment, the participants were confronted with a task that presented a bit of gustatory discomfort. On a table were 20 one-ounce cups that held a repulsive mixture of orange juice and vinegar. The psychologists told the participants that they would receive a nickel for every cup they drank. The more stomach-turning concoction that was consumed, the greater the display of endurance fueled by self-control.

Those primed with religious concepts drank significantly more than those who'd formed value-neutral sentences.

I later learned that in a follow-up experiment, researchers told the same participants that they would receive monetary compensation for their earlier participation; they could go to the lab within the next week to pick up five dollars, but if they waited a week or later, they would instead receive an additional dollar. Sure enough, there was a statistically significant difference between the religiously primed group (who waited) and the neutral group (who did not wait).

This research, as I stated earlier, got me thinking about both some very practical real-world applications, from how we as faithful followers of Christ respond graciously to the bitter orange/vinegar cups we're handed to how we persevere through tough workouts and abstain from junk food (most of the time!) knowing that the gratification of having a healthier body is well worth waiting—and fighting—for.

I'm blessed to be able to train men and women who are also

spiritual brothers and sisters to me. Nearly every day, something they do or say while pushing their bodies through the “discomfort” of burpees, squats or box jumps points to their dependence on a greater source of strength than a pre-workout shake or shot of espresso.

For example, during one rowing workout (nearly three miles worth of intervals), one of our athletes scrawled Philippians 4:13 in yellow chalk on the floor beside her rower. Every athlete who came in that day to face this particularly daunting workout had the opportunity to be motivated by the words “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”

On another day, as we were working on double-unders (a jump rope movement in which the rope must pass under your feet twice with every jump), one woman looked down at the faint red lines the rope had left on her arms and began to cry. When I asked her what was wrong, she gave a shy, embarrassed smile and whispered, “I’m sorry. It’s just I see these superficial lash marks on my arms and think about Jesus! The sting that I feel when the rope hits me is nothing compared to what He endured for me.”

I started to tear up, too.

Two weeks ago, all it took was an upbeat Mandisa song to give my class a second wind halfway through a 30-minute conditioning workout. During a CrossFit competition last Friday, it was my friend’s reassuring words—“God is with you!”—that seemed to send a surge of energy up through my heels and into my back as I lifted that 185-pound barbell off the floor six more times.

I could go on and on, but I think I’ve made my point. There seems to be a direct correlation between faith and endurance of every sort. This is the kind of faith with which Moses, unafraid of Pharaoh’s wrath, “endured by looking to Him who is

invisible” (Heb. 11:27). This is the kind of faith with which the Israelites marched around Jericho for seven straight days before the walls started trembling (v. 30).

When we feel unprepared to face a day we know will be mentally taxing, emotionally draining and in every way uncomfortable, we know that praying and immersing ourselves in Scripture are two surefire ways to restore confidence to our souls and replenish peace in our minds. But what would happen if we applied these spiritual disciplines to our physical fitness?

What if, when trying to psyche up for a CrossFit workout, a cycling class, a personal training session, a half marathon or a full buffet, we prayed to God for strength, for a positive attitude, endurance and self-control, and equipped ourselves with invigorating verses to wield when our willpower begins to run low?

My unplanned personal experiences as well as research produced by academia’s stringent scientific method connect faith with fortitude, confidence with capacity, and belief with breakthroughs. I challenge you to see what can happen to your fitness, your perspective, and your strength inside and out when you carry faith into the gym with you.

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

These Latin American Pastors Have Paid the Price for Revival

What is the price of revival? What price did Martin Luther pay? What did William Seymour pay? What about Evan Roberts? What price did the Wesleys pay? What about George Whitfield, Charles Spurgeon, Billy Sunday? What price did the Voice of Healing evangelists pay? What about Kathryn Kuhlman?

We get a few glimpses into the prayer lives—and the intimacy with the Holy Spirit—of some so-called generals of the faith, but we'll never really know the cost until we set out to pay it in our own lives.

Pastors Ricardo and Patricia Rodríguez, who co-lead Central Mundial de Avivamiento in Bogotá, Colombia, have paid the price to see their warehouse megachurch move from visitation to a true habitation of the Lord that attracts 40,000 hungry believers on Sunday alone.

Ricardo will tell you that the Holy Spirit comes freely, but to maintain a dwelling place for God, you have to give Him the preeminence. That translates largely to time. John Wesley, a key figure in America's first Great Awakening, rose every morning at 4 a.m. to seek God for the first four hours of his day. He was known to spend as many as eight hours a day in prayer.

"Ricardo has paid a big price," Patricia told me. "He denies himself everything and gives first place to the Lord. He spends hours every day in the presence of God, praying, reading, singing, crying, jumping and joyful. As a matter of fact, if he doesn't have as much time to spend with the Lord as he would like, he becomes unhappy. There is such a tight relationship, a friendship with the Lord."

Everyone I speak to—from John and Carol Arnott, generals from the Toronto Blessing, to Dutch Sheets, the founder of the Appeal to Heaven movement, to Bill Johnson, senior pastor at Bethel Church in Redding, California—tells me pursuing personal revival is about pursuing a true friendship with God, so that His thoughts become your thoughts.

“Many people hang up pictures on the wall that say, ‘The Holy Spirit is my friend,’ but those are just words to them,” Patricia says. “For Ricardo, that friendship is a reality. Wherever the Lord takes him, we go together, and each place we go, you feel the atmosphere become warm before he steps on the platform. He never goes on the platform by himself. The Holy Spirit always goes with him.” And signs and wonders follow.

This friendship with God is available to “whosoever will.” But there is a price. Kuhlman once put it this way: “It cost everything. If you really want to know the price, if you really want to know the price, I’ll tell you. It’d cost you everything.” {eoa}

How Do You Want Your Kids to Remember You?

My father has always been a big part of my life. When I was a teenager he took a job as a teacher at a college around two hours away from our home in Jackson, Michigan.

Since we wanted to finish high school in Jackson, he sacrificed and lived away from us for a time. I didn’t realize how difficult that must have been until I experienced the same thing coaching the Colts while my family remained in Tampa.

However, even though he was living far from us he was still engaged in our lives and unified with my mom. He would always talk to us on the phone and spent many hours in the car driving to our events to remain connected. I always felt loved and that he was there for me.

Those are some of the things I think about when I remember my father. He was self-sacrificing and always present. When people ask me, "How do you want to be remembered as a father?"

I think it would come down to the following things:

1. Someone who was there for his kids. Just like my dad was there for me I want to be remembered as being there for my kids. I won't always be able to be physically present, but I want them to know that their dad is always available for them, particularly in their times of need.

2. Someone who cared for his kids. Fatherhood is a tough job because you have to put the needs of others before your own. Kids have a lot of needs. Growing up is a tough job and something that makes it a lot easier is a loving parent. I want my kids to know how much I loved them and care for them.

3. Someone who did everything to help them out. One of the most important ways a parent can help their kids is by preparing them for the future. I want to not only help them see how the decisions they make impact their future, but also have a vision for the type of person they want to be and what it will take to get there. Ultimately, I want to help my kids be the best they can be. {eoa}

Tony Dungy is a former Super Bowl-winning NFL head coach and a spokesperson for All Pro Dad. For the original article, visit

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'Secret Life of Pets' Fetches Laughs, Fun Story

Ever wonder what your pets do when you're not home?

Wonder no more because of *The Secret Life of Pets*, which cribs the concept by the classic *Toy Story*—the things toys do when you're not around.

The Secret Life of Pets is the fifth animated movie of the year to revolve around talking animals after *Kung Fu Panda 3*, *Zootopia*, *Angry Birds* and *Finding Dory*.

The film from the makers *Despicable Me* is cute and family friendly (for the most part), but it gives a bad bite for younger viewers with its unnecessary rude humor and talk of killing.

On the positive side, throughout the movie the theme and importance of friendship are emphasized, as well as the concept of accepting others just as they are.

This animal tale features spoiled Jack Russell terrier Max (voiced by Louis C. K.), who lives in a Manhattan apartment block populated by all kinds of seemingly perfect pets who lead outlandish secret lives while their owners are away.

Max adores his master, Katie (Ellie Kemper). But when she brings home a stray, mongrel dog, Duke (Eric Stonestreet), a fierce rivalry begins—much like the premise of *Toy Story*.

One day when Max and Duke, who are copycats of Woody and Buzz, are out for a walk, they come up against a gang of cats led by the vicious Ozone (Steve Coogan).

After being captured by animal control, the dogs are inadvertently rescued by not so cute, white, little, psychotic rabbit Snowball (Kevin Hart), who introduces them to the Flushed Pets, a group of forgotten animals who live in the sewer. The encounter sets off a series of farcical events in an effort to return Max and Duke home—triggering an unlikely friendship ala Woody and Buzz.

The animation is top notch and very finely detailed, as New York City looks incredible and even the sewers are colorful. The film opens with beautifully with Taylor Swift's "Welcome to New York," as the camera pans around the gorgeously animated New York City parks and landmarks.

Although the film is funny, the trailer seemed to showcase most of the jokes and gags seen in the movie—there are three scenes of the head-banging poodle.

Chris Renaud (*Despicable Me*, *Despicable Me 2*) directed the \$75 million film, which earned an A- CinemaScore. *The Secret Life of Pets* dominated this past weekend's box office, racking up a massive \$103.2 million and launching the first new franchise of the summer.

It's a bona fide hit, but with its substantial amount of potty humor, the film is not "pawsome" for little eyes and ears. {eoa}

Content Watch: Rated PG for action and some rude humor, *The Secret Life of Pets* doesn't feature curse words, but there are several times characters use insults such as stupid, idiot and dumb, as well as "holy schnitzel," "heck," "oh my gosh," "shut up" and "Ah, pellet!" There are a lot of scenes of mayhem and destruction of property along with quite a lot of physical violence—all played for laughs. One character also experiences a very violent death. Most concerning was seeing all the talk about death, killing murdering the "humans." Max and Duke say they saved their lives by "putting their owner in the

blender.” Also, there are dogs trapped in a van, sinking under water. There are some scenes that might be too scary and intense for little kids.

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Sustained Revival Ignites Holy Ghost Transformation in Latin America

It was as if I stepped into a river of Holy Ghost fire. The rain of the Spirit was falling and the wind of the Spirit was blowing. In one accord, over 25,000 people worshipped Jesus with all that was within them. Some lay prostrate on the ground while others stood with hands raised and tears streaming down their faces. I thought I heard angels singing.

I was caught up in the glory when Pastors Ricardo and Patricia Rodríguez, founders of Central Mundial de Avivamiento (translated World Headquarters of Revival) in Bogotá, Colombia, walked onto a colossal circular platform. Suddenly, the atmosphere shifted from adoration to anticipation.

Praise and worship continued thundering from skilled musicians praising Him on trumpets, violins and other instruments when Ricardo started doing publicly what he does many hours every day privately: crying out in surrender to a living God who saves, heals and delivers.

Moments later, Ricardo started calling out words of knowledge about various sicknesses and diseases—and people responded in droves. Demonized Christians were toted to the front for

deliverance. Doctors stood nearby to verify miraculous healings. Testimony after testimony glorified the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus was truly exalted.

Avivamiento is living up to its name. What I experienced in that Sunday service has been the norm for nearly 23 years every time the congregation meets. But it wasn't always that way.

When Ricardo and Patricia started the church 25 years ago, there were only a few members, and nobody came on time. They showed movies. Nobody came. They evangelized in the streets, and nobody came. They did everything they could think of to build the church God called them to plant—but all of their efforts fell to the ground.

After Ricardo confessed his frustration one night in prayer, he says God told him to stop worrying about numbers and start seeking His presence. Once he obeyed, that surrender revolutionized his life and his ministry.

“Twenty-two years ago, I started spending time with God from before the break of day until 1 in the afternoon,” Ricardo, who was once a nominal Catholic, told me. “I would sit all day long in His presence. It was not an experience. It was a relationship with God. And I won't stop. There is not a single day when we don't seek Him.”

Relationship Leads to Revival

That relationship birthed a spiritual awakening that's impacting the nations. Indeed, when I was there, the Holy Spirit told me, “Colombia is the drumbeat of Latin America.” Ultimately, that's not because of a husband-wife team who sold out to God 23 years ago—it's because the Holy Spirit has found churches in Colombia like Avivamiento that will let Him have His way.

“All this started when Ricardo sought the Lord in a passionate

way in his secret place and the Lord manifested Himself," Patricia told me. "We had a one-person revival. This made us feel the same hunger, and we caught that fire. The Lord told Ricardo to bring that fire to the 70 people in our church. The presence of God came, and the musicians were not able to keep worshipping. They fell on the ground and wept. When the Holy Spirit has first place in the church, you can feel revival."

And if you sustain that revival, you'll see transformation. Indeed, transformation is a key word at Avivamiento. Several members I spoke with shared testimonies of their entire families getting saved after they plugged in. Others report financial prosperity, and there are too many verified healings and miracles to list here.

Avivamiento has satellite campuses in Cali, Medellín and Olavarría in Colombia; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Corona, New York; and a Miami location that meets on the campus of Florida International University. Leaders from around the world come to the church to catch the spirit of revival and take it home.

Of course, Avivamiento is also impacting its own city. The ministry holds a New Year's Eve service in Colombia's largest park that sees over 1 million people gather to worship and adore Jesus. Major media outlets and people from other nations attend the prophetic event—and people are saved and healed just as they are in the church services. To accommodate constant growth, Avivamiento is building a new auditorium over its current facility that will expand seating to 40,000.

Sustained Revival Leads to Transformation

Revival for revival's sake feels good, but it doesn't really change the big picture. Revival must reach the top of society and trickle down to bring true transformation. And no single church can take credit for transforming revival. Avivamiento is one of many churches in the nation—and in Latin America—contending for a societal awakening. But it has

happened before, and it is happening again.

Two decades ago, Colombia was the scene of martyrdom. Julio Ruibal had moved to Cali, the drug capital of the world, with his wife, Ruth, to plant a church and mobilize congregations to oppose the cartels. The Ruibals held their first all-night prayer meeting in the civic auditorium in 1995. More than 25,000 intercessors cried out to God while others circled the city in mobile prayer caravans.

“They prayed against principalities and powers,” Ruth says. “They prayed for unity. They believed God to see Him move in the churches.” Ten days later, the first drug lord fell. Corruption was dramatically reduced.

The cocaine drug cartels were shattered—and the devil hit back. Notorious drug lords dispatched an assassin to slay the Bolivian preacher, known as “the apostle of the Andes,” on the streets of Cali that same year. But the fruit of this transforming revival is still visible. The year 2014 was Colombia’s most peaceful since 1984, according to Insight Crime.

Transformation doesn’t happen overnight, but it does happen. George Otis Jr., founder of The Sentinel Group, a community of researchers, filmmakers and ministers documenting and preparing communities for awakening, says the 1,000 communities in which he has documented transforming revival have passed through several stages. It starts with what he calls the “invitation stage.” This is when people humble themselves, fast and repent of sins.

“They recovenant with God,” Otis told me. “They form unity kernels, and they prevail in prayer. And with clean hearts and pure hands, they ask God to rend the heavens and come down—not first and foremost to repair the community, but because they cannot bear to live apart from His presence a moment longer.

“They are not summoning a handyman. They’re summoning a lover.

And when they do this, there is a certain moment in time where the presence of the Lord comes. God comes in response to that entreaty.”

The Awakening Has Begun

Habakkuk 2:14 reminds us, “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas.” God wants to bring transformation to all of Colombia, all of Latin America—and all of the world. It seems Latin America is among the ripest regions for transforming revival, with many believers there having recently tasted it and hungering for an even greater move of God.

Tens of millions of Latin Americans have left the Roman Catholic Church in recent decades to embrace Pentecostal Christianity, according to a Pew Research Study. By 2025, the number of Pentecostals and charismatics in Latin America is projected to surpass 202 million. That compares to just 10,000 in 1900, according to the *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Indeed, Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC), told me the majority of Christ followers around the world are now Latinos.

“Even here in America, the majority of Christ-followers will be of Latino descent by 2030,” Rodriguez told me. “This is our reformation. Seventy years ago, the majority of Latin Americans were Catholics.

“We haven’t had 500 years of Martin Luther’s theses on the door. This is not Wittenberg, so we’re giddy about Christianity. We’re like little kids super excited about not having to go to a priest and confess and take penance and do 10 Hail Marys. We can speak to Jesus directly, and He can fill us with His Spirit, and we have a prayer language. And there are signs and wonders and miracles.”

C. Peter Wagner, president of Global Harvest Ministries and a

former missionary to Bolivia, says this grass-roots movement started in the 1970s and picked up in the '80s. One of the major twists he has observed in recent times is the emergence of an overwhelming number of Pentecostal and charismatic ministries, which he attributes to a sovereign move of the Holy Spirit.

"Many were never trained in seminary; a lot come from the business world," Wagner says. "These people have multiplied megachurches in every metropolitan area. Many number in the tens of thousands; few are led by people who have gone to theological school."

In Brazil, apostle Rene Terra Nova has used the M12 cell-church model—a spinoff of the G12 movement founded by Bogotá's Cesar Castellanos—to develop his church of 100 to one that today numbers more than 70,000. And Ministerio Internacional de Restauración (International Restoration Ministry) is the base for a Pentecostal group of more than 1 million that is one of the world's fastest-growing church networks.

Peru is also seeing revival. Robert Barriger and his wife, Karyn, moved to Peru in 1983 and now pastor Camino de Vida, a church in Lima of over 10,000 with 12 services on three campuses on a typical weekend. Barriger says this revival is not like the miracle meetings in Argentina in the 1980s but more "a real healthy, church-growth revival."

"For the first time, the fastest-growing church in the world is Third World, especially Latin America and especially Peru," Barriger says. "God has arranged it to such a point that not one person can take credit for it, which is good. It's not based on a personality or a person, but it's God doing stuff, and it's happening everywhere, and it's happening across denominational lines."

Explosive Church-Planting Movement

According to Ricardo Luna, who once served as Peru's

ambassador to the U.S. and who works with Harvard University's Institute of Politics, in just four years, over 85,000 church leaders from 19 countries have participated in transformation summits, where they have been inspired by and adopted God's dream of transformation as their own. Transforming revival is the ultimate goal. But it starts with a visitation.

"There is a move of God sweeping so many parts of Latin America that nobody can claim they have a corner on that," says former *Charisma* Editor Lee Grady, an evangelist who frequently visits Latin America as part of his ministry, The Mordecai Project. "I have yet to go to any place in a major metropolitan area there where there's not an outpouring of the Holy Spirit."

He points to Uruguay as one example. The nation is opening up after past resistance because of atheist influences in the country. When Grady preached at a Foursquare church last March in Colombia, 1,000 people showed up at 6 a.m. for the first of four services that Sunday.

"In every service I preached in, at least a dozen people gave their hearts to the Lord, and that's typical," Grady says. "There's one movement in northeastern Peru where more than 100 churches have started in the past 30 years. There are churches in different cities, big and small, planted in places where there was nothing before."

Eloy Nolivos, a native of Ecuador who grew up in California and now serves as a professor of practical theology at Oral Roberts University, says church planting is a strategic key. The Church of God plans to establish several thousand Latin American churches over the next few years. And during a visit last year to Peru, an overseer with the Church of God of Prophecy told Nolivos, who specializes in the study of Latin American Pentecostalism, they had 500 church plants in progress. He says that would have been unheard of five or 10 years ago.

“They’re not just talking about Latin America, but everywhere they are—different continents where they have churches,” Nolivos says. “To me, that’s pretty amazing and evidence that something historic is happening with Pentecostals.”

Small wonder why Grady calls this “their season.”

“I don’t know if anyone knows why this is happening,” he says. “God’s favor and power are being manifested there. I think He’s honoring the labor of a lot of people who went and sowed the seed and prayed. There’s a sovereign openness to the gospel in Latin America that we can be grateful for.”

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Ken Walker and Richard Daigle contributed to this article.

Watch the Spirit of God move during worship at Centro Mundial de Avivamiento. Visit .

The Real Reason You Need to Forgive Hypocrites in the

Church

I remember growing up in church and always feeling a little intimidated when one of the pastors would walk by my family in the foyer or hallway.

There was this reverence and awe that came over me each and every time I saw one of them, and I believe it was because I truly did respect the calling that God had placed on each of their lives. But while my reverence for them was vast, my parents always took the time to remind me that they need Jesus just as much as the next person. They didn't say this with ill-intent, but instead to give me an honest look at the reality of the Christian life—that we're going to make mistakes, that we all are in need of Jesus.

I didn't think much of what my parents had told me over the years, and I remember continuing to put my pastors and leaders on a pedestal of perfection and righteousness. I did this on my own, and it's because something within my heart couldn't grasp the idea that pastors could be as sinful and messed up as any other person in the world. I couldn't have been more wrong.

I remember my parents sitting down with me one night expressing to me that they had something important they wanted to talk to me about. I remember being extremely confused and hoping to God they weren't about to tell me mom was pregnant again. All jokes aside, my father began sharing with me that my youth pastor at church was recently caught in an inappropriate relationship with one of the female students, and because of this was going to be fired from the church and arrested.

Wait ... what? You could have heard a pin drop in our living room. I was taken aback.

At first, I didn't really know what to think. I kind of

thought it was a joke, but then realized how twisted my parents would have to be in order to joke about something like that. Immediately I started thinking back to all the sermons this guy had preached on about purity and what it means to be a real Christian. My heart immediately felt betrayed, my skin became tough, and for the next ten years of my life, I took out my anger towards anyone and everyone who affiliated themselves with Christianity. I remember thinking to myself, "What a hypocrite."

The reality was, I was no better a Christian than he was. Jesus died for him just as much as He died for me. And we were both imperfect and in need of a perfect Savior.

I wrongly held my pastors and leaders to an unattainable standard and because of this found myself in a place of distaste and pain towards the church for a very long time. What this pastor did was terribly wrong and obviously deserved consequences, but so was the standard to which I was holding him. It wasn't fair for me to hold him to such a place of perfection. Why? Because as humans, we're all just one decision away from making a mistake or fueling our sinful nature.

Christians are still human.

It's been about eight years since God has brought me into my ministerial journey and the adventure itself has been incredible, to say the least. But although I am technically an ordained pastor in the beautiful state of Tennessee, a Christian author and a speaker, this doesn't mean that I am without flaw or failure. I mess up all the time. I say things I shouldn't say, respond in ways I shouldn't respond and pursue things I shouldn't pursue. Excuse me for being honest with you, but it's true. I'm human. My heart is filled with trash outside of Christ. This doesn't mean I'm a hypocrite. It means I'm in need of the cross of Christ.

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Whether you’re a pastor, an author, father, a mother, a janitor or a dentist, you’re still human, and you’re still going to make mistakes, even if you’re a Christian. The Christian life is full of imperfections. That’s why we needed a perfect Savior to die upon a splintered piece of wood on our behalf. We’re never going to be perfect, nor will we ever be able to obtain anything close to it.

Does this mean we give up and accept our sinful nature? No. We pursue righteousness, purity and the light of Christ, but we don’t beat ourselves up if we trip over the hurdles of our flesh sometimes. We seek forgiveness, accept grace, learn from our mistakes and push forward towards another day.

We have to realize that Christians aren’t hypocrites; we’re human. We aren’t going to reflect Jesus perfectly, nor are we going to live a life that is flawless and without mishaps.
{eoa}

Jarrid Wilson is a husband to Juli, dad to Finch, pastor, author, blogger, founder of Cause Roast. He’s helping people live a better story. For the original article, visit [.](#)