

This May Be Why Your Teen Shuts You Out

Many years ago, I met weekly with a group of teenage guys. We would meet for breakfast to talk about life, struggles, faith and relationships.

When a couple of the guys in the group got into a fistfight playing basketball, I gathered everyone to discuss it. My goal was to get all our issues on the table so that type of thing never happened again. It was a long and difficult meeting. I handed out some regrettable and harsh reprimands.

However, I thought we left in a good place, but would eventually learn otherwise. The next time I saw them was at a game. When I said, "Hello," they just kept on walking past me. Many attempts to initiate were met with silence. I was being shut out.

Being shut out by a teenager is a painful experience. Are you getting one-word answers and blank stares when you attempt conversation? Is your teenager giving you the cold shoulder? Do you want to know why? Here are five reasons you are being shut out by your teenager:

1. They are feeling pressured. Teenagers today are under more stress than we ever experienced. The expectations placed on them to perform are through the roof. Teens are weighed down by never-ending sports schedules, nightly three-hour homework and studying obligations, forced advanced placement classes, performing arts, community service hours, and holding down part-time jobs. Add to that the social pressures and the awkward changes of adolescence. Teenagers are getting pressure from every area of their life. It's a lonely feeling. If they see you as another pressure point rather than an ally, they'll shut their door and seek refuge.

Advice: Show them empathy regarding the pressure they are under. Do your best to understand it. If they are failing in school, use phrases such as "How can I help you?" or "What can we do about this?" so they know you are there for support. Reduce the amount of activities. They won't want to, so you may have to give them activity choices to cut and set boundaries for their own welfare.

2. They feel misunderstood. They have been marginalized. Everyone tells them what to do while giving them little respect. A consistent complaint I heard from teenagers while in their world was that adults didn't listen to them. They felt like no one understood them or took the time to get to know them. Many times, adults assume they understand teenagers because they were once one. It's a poor and dangerous assumption. Not only is each person unique, but the world has changed.

Advice: Assume you know nothing. Gain as much intel as you can. Ask a lot of questions and resist the temptation of telling them what to do. Talk to their friends if they are over. If they start giving you cold one-word answers, back off. They probably feel interrogated. It just means you have to take it slower.

3. They are tired of being micromanaged. As adults, we feel like we are just trying to save them from all of our mistakes. So when they do something wrong, we are quick to correct. They see it as constant criticism and feel suffocated. This is exacerbated by the fact that they are already naturally looking to separate from their parents. Sometimes it makes them feel like they can never do anything right in your eyes.

Advice: Let them make some mistakes without criticizing. Give them room to breathe. For every criticism, give them several things about them that make you proud.

4. They feel as though you haven't followed through. It is a

huge letdown when promises are made and not kept. When it becomes a pattern, you become untrustworthy and undependable. It hurts and they put up walls to protect themselves from the constant letdown.

Advice: Apologize for past letdowns. Moving forward, keep your promises. Always follow through. Win them back one kept promise at a time.

5. They feel like you cause instability. The teenage years bring so many changes it is unsettling. The range of changes covers a broad spectrum from the body to feelings and friendships. It's a time of great feelings of instability—internally and externally. If their home is a place of heaviness and stress, they will desire to be somewhere else. This is not meant to be an indictment; it's just the unfortunate reality. The things that cause instability at home would be marital difficulty, substance abuse, anger issues and physical or emotional abuse.

Advice: Do your best to make the home a stable place. Most of these issues can be avoided. If there is abuse, seek professional help. Marital difficulty can be hard to avoid. Seek counseling to help navigate the waters.

Have you ever been shut out by your teen? What are you doing to remedy the situation?

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3 Reasons Why Men of God Aren't Influenced by Politicians

Our culture is inundated with prospective people to follow. Open up your smart phone and click on any social media app and millions of people are competing for your attention.

Twitter is full of people trying to stay relevant enough to be retweeted, and followed by hundreds and thousands. Instagram has millions of pictures crying out for your heart, Facebook had hundreds of posts in my News Feed this morning with people arguing about whether we should or should not vote for this candidate or another (#nevertrump #crookedHillary #lyinTed #feelthebern).

It's very easy to get caught up in the spin of it all (Lord knows I have!) and chase attention from people we will never know personally and give attention to people we will never know personally. I'm not anti-politics, but I refuse to *follow* any candidate and here's why.

1. Men of God don't emulate personality traits of politicians that are displeasing to God. When I use the word follow, I'm not using a Twitter or a Facebook or an Instagram moniker, but I'm literally talking about placing yourself subconsciously and consciously under the influence of someone else. If he doesn't like this, I don't like this. If he's proposing to do it this way, I'm backing him tooth and nail because he has my vote!

Grown men are getting into fistfights at political rallies and grown people are name-calling and losing friends over political affiliation, even within the same party. I'm not discussing our right to vote for who we think will do the best job for America in the coming years—I'm sure going to cast my

vote—but just because I’m voting for someone doesn’t mean I line up morally or ethically with all they say or do.

I have the ability, and so do you, to cast a vote for someone without acting like them. It’s unfortunate, however, that recent elections have required Christians to vote the lesser of two evils or sit out the election and be responsible for doing nothing.

2. Men of God know their kids watch them closely and will emulate them. Politics is a dirty business and a flesh-driven game. As men of God and dutiful Americans, it is our responsibility to teach our kids how to navigate the political process while still holding to our morals and ethics. My oldest daughter voted for the first time in the last presidential election and my middle child voted for the first time in this primary.

I’ve had to lead by example and show a love for our democratic process while maintaining a separation from the political fray. This is a difficult balancing act. Allowing our relationship with God to trump our political affiliation (see what I did there) will always help us adjust our behavior when needed.

3. Men of God know they are called to follow Jesus. Jesus said, “Follow Me”, and I followed. About eight years ago, I was a mess, my marriage was a mess and my kids were collateral damage. I ostracized myself from friends and family because of my passionate political beliefs. I chased things of this world and I had an opinion about everything. I was forced to one day make the decision whether to crash and burn, or choose Jesus. I chose Jesus.

In choosing Jesus, I lost my vehement views about politics and I lost my six-figure-salary career. I lost some material things, but I gained so much more! I gained grace, love, forgiveness, my marriage back, my kids’ respect, a career

serving God and a new perspective on life and this culture.

The apostle Paul wrote my life verse in 1 Corinthians 11:1: "Follow me, as I follow Christ." This verse changed my world. I don't need to follow a politician or trust in a politician. I need to follow and trust in Jesus, and I can't do both. Now, I'll follow who God puts in my life, as long as I know they follow Jesus. Pastors, mentors, fathers, spiritual fathers—if they don't follow Christ, I will not follow them. I'll love them, I'll pray for them, I may even vote for them, but I won't act like them.

Let me leave you with something God placed in my spirit eight years ago.

"If I offend someone with my politics, I'll never have the opportunity to tell them about my Jesus."

Which is more important? {eoa}

is a website written by men for men. The goal of the site is to build more mature men spiritually. For the original article, visit .

4 Foolproof Ways to Master This Deadly Stronghold

In the comments on my blog, I've read that some of you are struggling with anger issues. I feel led to write about biblical solutions for that.

Anger occurs when you feel your rights have been violated, your expectations have not been met, or you are outraged about an injustice that involves others.

Even God the Father and Jesus expressed anger.

However, many women don't feel comfortable dealing with that emotion. Instead, they keep their mouths closed while seething inside. But keeping anger inside is like a pot on the stove set to boil. Just like that pot will eventually boil over, so does the woman.

And too often, it's the people closest to them who get burned!

While anger itself is not a sin, there are godly and ungodly ways to deal with it. In this article, I'll cover some principles of Christian anger management. First, let's look at what Jesus says about anger:

"You have heard that it was said by the ancients, 'You shall not murder,' and 'Whoever murders shall be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, '*Raca*,' shall be in danger of the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go on your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:21-24).

Jesus tells us that before anger is expressed outwardly, it starts in that person's heart inwardly. As I read this passage, I saw something I had never seen before.

When you add a 'd' in front of the word 'anger', what do you get? Danger! Jesus used the word "danger" three times in His description of the consequences of anger.

He even prioritized pursuing peace with others above bringing a sacrifice to God! Mark 11:25 makes it even clearer:

"And when you stand praying, forgive if you have anything

against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven may also forgive you your sins.”

With this background, let’s look at the story of brothers Cain and Abel, the first instance of a person’s anger in the Bible (Gen. 4:3-8). In this case, lack of anger management had deadly consequences:

“In the course of time Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. Abel also brought the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had respect for Abel and for his offering, but for Cain and for his offering, He did not have respect. And Cain was very angry and his countenance fell.

“The Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted? But if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. It desires to dominate you, but you must rule over it.’

“Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.”

From Jesus’ words, we know that anger begins in the heart. So the murder of Abel was conceived in Cain’s heart.

Here are the facts:

1. Cain brought an offering to the Lord.
2. Abel brought an offering to the Lord.
3. God respected Abel and his offering.
4. God did not respect Cain and his offering.
5. Cain became angry.
6. The Lord asked Cain why he was angry, then gave him instructions as to how he could gain the Lord’s respect.

7. Cain talked with Abel. Time passed, and Cain killed Abel.

Cain was angry at God. Did his anger have a cause? No, it did not. So when you are angry, you should always ask yourself, "Why am I angry?" to determine if you have a legitimate cause for it.

Many of our negative emotions are birthed in lying thoughts. Cain apparently felt that God had wronged him because He did not respect him and his offering. But the Lord's question, "Why are you angry," tells us that there was no cause for Cain's anger.

The Lord told Cain that if he did well, he would have been accepted. Cain did not respond to God's instruction. That tells me that Cain had a prideful heart and was not teachable. It appears he was not bringing an offering to the Lord out of love; rather it seems he was just going through the motions, perhaps because of his parent's expectations or he was just doing it because Abel did.

If Cain had been humble and was concerned with pleasing God, he would have asked Him: "Lord, what do you mean 'if I do well'? What am I doing wrong? How can I do better?"

I believe that if Cain had a sincere heart to please God, then God would have answered these questions.

Instead, God told Cain that sin was crouching at the door. Sounds like danger to me! However, the Lord also said that Cain should rule over it. Rule means "to take authority." The Lord would not have told Cain to do something that Cain did not have the ability to do.

This is an important principle. We have the power to take authority over anger. Too often, we let anger get out of control because it feels good to our flesh to do so. But as Christians, that is no longer an option because we are submitted to Jesus' lordship.

Our heart should always be set on peace—peace with God, peace with ourselves and peace with our fellow man, as we are in position to make it.

In Cain's case, he did not rule over sin in his heart—the desire to murder. Because he could not take his anger out on God, he took it out on Abel. Abel did nothing wrong.

Cain expressed his anger outwardly, and danger was the result. He ended up a marked man, separated from God and receiving judgment.

Cain is an example of how not to manage anger. Let's look at advice from Psalm 4:4 (NKJV) for advice on how to manage anger:

"Tremble *in awe*, and do not sin. Commune with your own heart on your bed, and be still. Selah."

Here are some points to keep in mind:

1. Be angry ... It is OK to feel the emotion of anger; however, always assess it to discover if there is a cause. If you are angry and can't identify a reason for it, consider it an attack from the enemy. Submit your feelings to God in prayer or even write Him a letter about it. Ask God to open up your spiritual eyes so that you can see the truth of what is happening. Believe that you have God's peace within and pursue that peace rather than indulging your flesh through unwarranted anger.

2. ... and do not sin. If your anger has a cause, then ask yourself, "How have my expectations not been met?" or "How do I feel my rights have been violated?" If the anger comes from unmet expectations, were your expectations reasonable? Did this person have the ability, knowledge and will to meet your expectations?

Sometimes you have expectations, but the other person has no

idea that you have them. You were expecting them to read your mind! Make sure the other person is at least aware of your expectations. Otherwise, it is not fair for you to expect something of them that you never bothered to tell them about.

If they lack knowledge about how to meet your expectations, could you supply the knowledge to assist them? If they lack the will, then you have a decision to make. Depending on the relationship, you may decide to limit your association with them or lower your expectations.

Were your rights violated? If you are in a place to do so, be assertive with the other person and state the facts about what happened and then set boundaries regarding the expected behavior.

Once again, your goal is to make peace so that a spirit of offense will not take hold. You don't want to act in a way that will be a stumbling block to someone else coming to the Lord.

Finally, if you are angry about an injustice that doesn't involve you directly, then pray for the situation, for God's justice to manifest. Ask the Lord if there is anything you can do personally about the situation and for Him to give you the courage and resources to take action.

3. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah. Make it a regular practice to take your thoughts captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ. That way, when situations happen that can spark your anger, it will be second nature to shift your thinking to those things that are acceptable to the Lord according to Philippians 4:8:

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."

Take moments in your day to just “be still and know that He is God.” If you are always running around and don’t stop to catch your breath, then life’s pressures can make you short-tempered and more prone to use anger as a release valve.

4. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord. You are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21).

Even though it is tempting to let your flesh have its way, act in accordance with your true identity and put your flesh on the altar:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2).

Trust that if justice must be meted out, God will vindicate you:

“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19).

The way to give place to wrath is to bring it under the Lord’s authority in prayer. Let Him give you wisdom as to how to deal with your anger in a way that pleases Him.

Only then can you experience His peace, which surpasses all understanding. His peace will guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus. {eo}

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For the original article, visit .

Evangelism or Discipleship: Which Is More Important?

For generations, Christians have pitted sharing the gospel against making disciples. So which is it?

Just as we don't argue which side of a coin is more valuable, so it is absurd to argue about the relative importance of evangelism versus discipleship. The Great Commission has been understood only when both are fully embraced. This is the example Jesus clearly laid out, and He calls us to extend His ministry.

He preached to the unsaved: "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, '*Repent*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matt. 4:17, emphasis added); and, "For the Son of Man has come *to seek and to save* that which was lost" (Luke 19:10, emphasis added).

And He developed believers: "*Follow me*, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19, emphasis added); and, "Everyone, who is *trained*, will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40, emphasis added).

Jesus both evangelized and made disciples. That is enough to settle any debate and get on with the work. But we must also get to the root of the debate and change the wrong thinking that caused it.

Let's look beneath the surface of Jesus' ministry. We have seen that for Jesus, evangelism and discipleship were two

sides of the same coin, but this leads us to an important question: What was Jesus' "coin"?

It was God's kingdom. Every stream of Jesus' ministry flowed from one inner spring: God's invading dominion. The gospel Jesus preached to the lost was the "gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). The followers He trained were disciples of the kingdom (Matt. 13:52).

Jesus' whole vision was to establish and advance God's kingdom in people's lives. "Your kingdom come ... on earth as it is in heaven," He prayed (Matt. 6:10).

Wherever God rules, there is salvation and increasing peace (Is. 9:7). God's kingdom is not merely a ticket to heaven. *It is the expansion of divine life.*

It begins as a tiny seed but grows into a huge tree (Matt. 13:31-32). After it initially delivers a person from sin, it gradually permeates him with the character of its king.

That kingdom was Jesus' whole mission! Thus, for the lost, God's kingdom meant evangelism; for followers, it was discipleship; for the sick, healing; for the demonized, deliverance; and for the dead, resurrection. Jesus' ministry was the full expression of God's kingdom.

So we must replace our narrow ministry visions with Jesus' vision! Evangelism and discipleship are two sides of same coin: God's kingdom.

It is this "lost coin" for which we must light a lamp, sweep our house and search until we find it again (Luke 15:8-9). Let's end the debate by doing exactly what Jesus taught us: seek *first* God's kingdom. {eoa}

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How the Holy Spirit Can Keep You From Sinning When You Get Angry

When we attended the 10-year anniversary celebration of Mercy Multiplied in the St. Louis, Missouri area, one of the young ladies who graduated from the program shared an eye-opening testimony.

She said that her father committed suicide when she was a teenager and the pain of that situation led her to start drinking and taking drugs. When she realized her life was falling apart, she went to Mercy Multiplied for help.

The thing that really struck me was when she shared that as she went through the program, she came to realize that her problem started at the time her father committed suicide because it made her angry that he took his life and left their family. She couldn't get well and overcome her addiction to drugs and alcohol until she got over being angry with him.

Many times we have issues in our lives because we're angry about something but we don't know it. I believe that for many people, the root of their problem is due to the fact that they are angry at God because their lives haven't turned out right, or they are angry with someone who has hurt them. They may even be angry at themselves for some reason.

The word "anger" is one letter away from "danger." Benjamin Franklin is quoted as saying, "Whatever is begun in anger ends in shame," and "Anger is never without a reason, but it seldom has a good one."¹ It's so important for us to be aware of any

anger issues we have because they can become dangerous and create damage in our lives.

Our Anger Epidemic

We live in an angry society, and we see the effects of it in problems like road rage, which has surged over the last few years. I recently researched statistics on anger and discovered that an estimated 1 out of 5 Americans has an anger management problem.²

According to an article I read in *Newsweek*, people are coming out in droves asking for help with anger management. Enrollment in anger management classes is booming and the demand for counselors is at an all-time high.

The Holy Spirit is the ultimate anger management Counselor! Jesus says in John 14:26 (AMP), “But the Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name ... He will teach you all things.” We can be confident that when we go to God, He will give us the help we need to face the truth about ourselves and overcome our problems.

What Anger Looks Like

Dallas Willard, who was a professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California for 47 years and a best-selling Christian author, defines anger as “a feeling that seizes us in our body and immediately impels us toward interfering with, and possibly even harming, those who have thwarted our will and interfered with our life.”³ He also says, “Anger will evoke anger on the other side.”⁴ In other words, one person’s anger feeds another person’s anger.

We all get opportunities to be angry. You may not be the kind of person who gets road rage, but you may still get angry over what the Bible calls “trifling (ill-informed, unedifying,

stupid) controversies over ignorant questionings” that “foster strife and breed quarrels” (2 Tim. 2:23 AMPC).

I wasted so many years of my life being angry about things that didn't really matter and trying to control people I was never going to be able to control. The truth is, there is nothing better than peace! And God's peace in our souls equals power in our lives.

If you want more power and energy in your life, you can't be angry all the time.

Find Freedom From Anger

In order to be free from anything, we have to face truth and take responsibility for our behavior. Blaming other people or circumstances and making excuses never changes anything.

John 8:31-32 teaches us that if we abide in Christ, continually obeying His teachings, we will know the truth and the truth will set us free! I want to encourage you to go to God first when you are angry. Tell Him honestly how you feel and make a determined decision to forgive. There is no sense wasting your life being angry about something that happened years ago—or even something that happened earlier today.

Take a few moments and pray something like this: “I need Your help, Lord, to deal with my anger. I thank You that because of Your love, grace, mercy and the power of the Holy Spirit in my life, I don't have to act on those foolish feelings that can cause problems in my life and hurt me and others.” Spend time quietly waiting on God with an open heart to hear what He has to say to you. Study what His Word says about anger and being angry. And trust Him to make some positive, healthy changes that will bring more of His peace and power into your life.

1. , accessed June 29, 2016.

2. , accessed June 30, 2016.

3. , accessed June 30, 2016.

4. accessed June 29, 2016. {eoa}

Fighting a Gut-Wrenching Battle That Ends in Beautiful Defeat

When I read the story of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-36), I feel like taking my shoes off. I am standing on holy ground.

Here we see Jesus beginning to feel the weight of His impending crucifixion as it bears down on Him. The terrible physical suffering lay ahead, but that did not hold the most dread for Him; it was separation from His Father.

By bearing our sin, He would be cut off from the One in whom He had lived His whole life. Jesus went to pray in that garden to find comfort from His Father, but instead found the bowels of hell opening up.

In that anguished moment, He cried out, *“Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will”* (Mark 14:36). The cup refers to God’s judgment, a metaphor used by the prophets to speak of drinking the cup of His wrath as a cup of wine.

Jesus knew that His Father’s will was to go to the cross, and He was determined to surrender to it, yet even in that agonizing surrender, He addressed God as Abba, the Aramaic term for Daddy. There is no record of any Jewish prayer at that time ever using this term, one that implies such intimacy

and love. It would have been considered disrespectful to address God this way. Yet for Jesus, it was the way He felt about His Father.

He learned in the garden to surrender to His Father's will because He had already surrendered to His Father's love.

How does this connect to our own stories as men? We are all enslaved to our wills, determined to find the life we long for in our own way. Yet in doing so, we all repeat the fall of Adam and Eve.

They were seduced into thinking that God was holding out the best and giving them the leftovers. The doubt the serpent put into their minds still reverberates in ours: *Is God really good? He's really holding out on you. If you want anything good out of life, you will have to go out and get it for yourself. God can't be trusted.*

And so begins the attempt to be gods of our lives. So also begins the tragedy of our lives. We make a mess of everything. But the call of the gospel is a call to surrender back to that will, to the Father whose love is utterly delightful. What does that surrender look like?

First, we learn to surrender our wills each and every day. When we do, we begin to discover the terrible lie of the enemy. God is not holding out on us. His will is not something that will make us miserable. He is the Father who longs to give good gifts lavishly to His sons. Paul describes that will as "good, acceptable, and perfect" (Rom. 12:2). We find that what He desires for us is what we have deeply longed for anyway.

But the harder surrender is still to come—surprisingly, it is the surrender to His love. In all of our lives, there are shameful places we don't want others to see and patterns of sin that seem impervious to change. It is in these very places that God wants to meet us, not with plans for improvement but

with His very love. Yet He must often sneak up on us when our defenses are down.

Just such a moment happened over Christmas vacation as I was reading a book that contained written prayers based on various personality types. One of the prayers I turned to felt like someone had read my journal and knew of my deepest struggles. At one point, it mentioned the sadness of feeling love toward others much more when they are *not* present than when they are—something that has troubled me for years but has resisted all attempts to change.

In that moment, I felt utterly exposed before God and yet paradoxically loved by Him as well. There was no call to be better, just a call to receive the love of a Father for a son unable to heal himself. The tears surged forth, not over my lack of love but over the torrent of love I felt from Him. In that moment I was able to surrender to that love.

For all of us, surrendering to the Father's will and then to His love will be at times a terrible battle, but in the end it can be a beautiful defeat.

This is how we enter the story He wants to tell with our lives.

I wouldn't have it any other way. {eo}

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For the original article, visit .

The Surprisingly Simple Way to Deepen Your Intimacy With the Holy Spirit

Have you ever wondered what Scripture means when it says in 2 Corinthians 13:14 (MEV), “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all?”

Have you ever asked what “communion of the Holy Spirit” means and what that may look like?

In order to understand what communion with the Holy Spirit is, this let’s look at the Koine Greek. This is the original language of the New Testament. Looking at the Bible verse above, the word for ‘communion’ in the Greek is *koinonia*, which means, “participation, communion, fellowship.”

Contextually, this is a reference to the Corinthian church having fellowship with the Spirit of God as a faith community. However, in order to know Him in community, one must also have communion with Him personally.

Before beginning communion with the Spirit, here are three scriptural principles you should know:

1. The Holy Spirit convicts us before we even know Jesus. John 16:8 says, “When He comes, He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.” Thus, before we even know Him, He convicts us, revealing what we are doing wrong, or speaking to our conscience. This is the work He does, one small step at a time, communicating with us and wanting us to know Jesus. So, before we believe, He is present, and we may

not see it at the time, but He is communicating, wanting us to be born again.

A friend of mine from the Marine Corps shared with me how his wife was going to church and said he needed to go. He wasn't listening and would refuse to go with her, wanting nothing to do with God since his combat service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But one day in June 2014 while he was mowing his lawn, deep inside of his heart, the Holy Spirit spoke to Him, convicting Him. He immediately knew he had to go to church, so he stopped mowing the lawn, obeying the conviction of the Spirit, and responded to the gospel message that day at church, beginning a life of fellowship with Him.

2. The Holy Spirit lives in us once we give our lives to Jesus. Ephesians 1:13 says, "In Him you also, after hearing the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and after believing in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." The moment we responded to the gospel message and accepted Jesus as Lord, we received the precious Holy Spirit. There is no greater gift given to us by God than salvation. When we hear the word of truth and commit to Jesus, it is incredible that His wonderful Spirit seals us.

During the time the apostle Paul wrote Ephesians 1:13, the Roman leaders used their signet rings to seal parchments, scrolls and letters. This was their sign on the order or directives they issued, and officially sealed the documents, showing the origin and ownership of the documents. Once we come to Christ, He places His seal on us, revealing that we belong to Him.

3. The Holy Spirit teaches us and draws us to Jesus. John 14:26 said, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you." These were the words of Jesus to His disciples, yet the principle applies to each one

of us who are His followers today. As the Spirit of Truth, He reveals the truth of Scripture and leads us to the truth of Jesus.

It is always encouraging when we are reading the Bible, whether it is through daily devotional plans or reading through a book, and verses seem to jump off the page to us, applying to something we may be going through, giving us peace and revelation, and making us worship Him more.

How You Can Commune With Him

Set aside time to be alone with Him, bringing your Bible and a journal. Communion and fellowship with Him begins with conversation, so if you have never done this before, simply introduce yourself to Him. Fellowship begins with an introduction that leads to wonderful conversation with Him.

Know that He lives in you. Ask Him questions, writing them down as you go or before you begin the conversation. Ask the Holy Spirit to talk to you, asking Him what He wants to teach you. Expect Him to answer and to share Scriptures with you. Listen to His whispers and write them down as well as the Bible passages that come to mind as you continue the conversation with Him. Your life will be enriched the more you do this.

He enjoys these times with you, and through them you will feel your heart swell with affection for Jesus as you draw closer to Him. As you commune with the Spirit, watch how He takes the conversation and puts it toward Jesus. I think He delights in this and is pleased to convict you, live in you and teach you about Him.

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recently co-authored a book called Veronica's Hero you can find on Amazon [here](#). It describes how God worked in a young woman who received news that her husband paid the ultimate sacrifice for his country.

Simply Looking Can Lead You Into Dangerous Situations

Don't tell me you haven't looked. You know what I'm talking about—women wearing skin-tight yoga pants. It's even big news.

Clothing maker Lululemon Athletica lost millions of dollars from investors a couple of years back when reports came out that they had to recall their yoga pants for being too sheer. Imagine being in the store and seeing a woman having to prove the knit is too thin! Apparently the company fixed the sheer problem, but leads me to think there's more to this story than meets the eye.

Many times, temptation starts with the eyes, and where you look. In James 1:14-16, God reveals how sin starts with a look, and ends with destruction. "But each man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then, when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin; and when sin is finished, it brings forth death."

An example of this is Potiphar's wife. In the story about Joseph in Genesis 39:7, she cast her eyes upon Joseph. Every day, her longing gaze at the handsome Joseph fueled her lustful desires, until one day she forced herself on Joseph, pulling him to bed. Fortunately, Joseph fled and avoided sin.

But the moral of the story is: Don't be a lookie-lulu or else

you will find yourself compromising yourself, your beliefs and your marriage.

And, there are consequences. God spoke through Jeremiah, "They were as fed horses in the morning; everyone neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish for these things? says the Lord" (Jer. 5:8-9).

Your gaze is important business to God. God's man needs to fight for focus on Jesus and His plan for your life, not the yoga pants in front of you in line at the store.

The apostle Paul explained it this way in Philippians 3:14: "I press toward the goal (focus) to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus".

In other words, focus on what matters. Focus on Christ. If your gaze is pure, your mind remains pure. And you will be rewarded. Jesus said in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Here's the bottom line: If you're a lookie-lulu, then you've already committed adultery in your heart. In Matthew 5:28, Jesus says, "But I say to you that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart."

It's interesting that Jesus made these comments after addressing anger and disconnection in relationships in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5). Jesus then addresses obsessive desire in men. Makes sense that they come in this order.

Anger and contempt in relationships, or contemptible attitudes inside of the heart in any relationship, creates disconnection and unmet needs that inevitably draws people into the realm of fantasy.

It's better to skip the fantasy and focus on the prize awaiting you.

If you, or a friend, is struggling with being a lookie-lulu, or sex or porn addiction, find godly men to hang out with, and stop looking at the yoga pants. There is a better way. God's way.

Additional resources for men regarding sex and porn addiction are available [HERE](#).

Kenny Luck is the president and founder of Every Man Ministries. As the former men's pastor at Saddleback Church in California and current leadership pastor at Crossline Community Church, Kenny has found the proven way to improve men's ministries around the world. *Sleeping Giant* is this blueprint, and gives men the tools they need to lead and understand their own men's ministry. Watch Kenny's teachings at .

Shed Extra Pounds With These Strategic Verses

I spoke last week at the wonderful Community Bible Church here in San Antonio on the subject of honoring God with our bodies. One concept I emphasized is that the living and active Word of God was given to live and act in *all* areas of our lives, from our marriages and money to our holiness and health.

We can attend church every week, volunteer our time to serving the sick and needy, never utter a curse word or gossip about a single soul, but if we neglect to take care of our bodies, our temples of the Holy Spirit, we are not living the Christian life the Lord intends for us.

Romans 12:1 says, "I urge you therefore, brothers, by the

mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship." Notice that the Holy Spirit, speaking through the apostle Paul, tells us to give not just our spirits, not only our souls, but our *bodies* to God.

First Corinthians 10:31 underscores this command with another like it: "Therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God."

We see that God is indeed interested in how we treat our bodies. Keeping them strong through regular workouts (which wasn't as much of an issue 2,000 years ago like it is today) and maintaining a healthy diet (there were fewer dietary pitfalls around the Mediterranean, and elsewhere around the globe, before GMOs and processed foods came along) are habits that please and glorify our Creator. When we choose laziness and excuses over discipline and obedience, we not only set ourselves up for obesity and an increased risk of various diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension, but we move toward a Christian walk devoid of the strength, confidence, energy and longevity that God wants for us.

I know that working out is the last thing we want to think about some days. With myriad responsibilities at work, stress-inducing assignments at school and an exhausting schedule with kids and countless other activities and chores, the word "exercise" can be tiring just to say. But we all know that exercise, despite the negative emotions we may ascribe to it, actually increases our energy levels, boosts our moods, clears our heads, reduces stress and gives us the strength, immunity and flexibility necessary for life's everyday tasks.

So, how do we find the motivation to work out on the days we feel like forgoing the gym (or track, or trail, or studio), kicking up our feet and eating a box of Cheez-Its for dinner? I have found that the best source is the Holy Bible. In it, we are reminded that life isn't about appearances or pleasing

others, and that indolence and idleness are vices to be purged as we become sanctified, day by day. The Word exhorts us to do all things as unto the Lord, and to be hardworking and diligent laborers in His kingdom.

Here are 10 verses that I believe will encourage and motivate you to get your workout in, especially on days when the couch is calling your name like a Siren's song:

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

2. *"I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13).*

3. *"So, therefore, I run, not with uncertainty. So I fight, not as one who beats the air. But I bring and keep my body under subjection, lest when preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:26-27).*

4. *"Therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).*

5. *"What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).*

6. *"But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint" (Is. 40:31).*

7. *"She clothes herself with strength, and strengthens her arms" (Prov. 31:17).*

8. *"Now no discipline seems to be joyful at the time, but grievous. Yet afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness in those who have been trained by it. Therefore*

lift up your tired hands, and strengthen your weak knees” (Heb. 12:11-12).

9. “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

10. “No temptation has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, and He will not permit you to be tempted above what you can endure, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). {eo}

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

10 out of 10 People Have Struggled With Fear—Here’s How to Overcome It

Fear has a way of keeping us stuck in a life of mediocrity. We were never intended to live a life of mediocrity.

Got Dreams?

Have you ever wanted to start a business, write a book, plant a church, travel the world or even start a non-profit? We all

have dreams and desires, but the sad reality is that very few of us will actually grab the bull by the horns and go for it.

For some reason we allow fear to get in the way of us embracing a life of extraordinary meaning. We allow fear to control the way we live our daily lives. We allow fear to set the tone for the story we are currently writing for ourselves.

Maybe it's the fear of failure, the opinions of others or even the fear of yourself. Regardless of where your fear comes from, its goal is to keep you from being brave and successfully accomplishing the goals you have set before you.

Fear Is A Liar!

When I was 6 years old I was afraid of ghosts; at 16 I was afraid of not fitting in; and at almost 30, I'm afraid of failing as a husband and father. Fear is a liar, and we must realize this truth if we ever want to come into our true potential.

If you want to accomplish great things, you must stop listening to the lies that you're not good enough, strong enough or smart enough. You can do anything you put your mind to.

"Regardless of what you want to do or who you are, fear will always see you as wholly unqualified for anything you ever dream or attempt." – **Jon Acuff**

No matter what your goals are, don't let fear get in the way of your God-given destiny. Your fear doesn't define who you are, but how you respond to it does. Choose to be brave. {eoal}

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