

Message to Terrorists: You're Not Winning

With the death toll at 129 and 352 others wounded, ISIS heads must be having a good laugh after the terrorist attacks in Paris this past weekend.

Undoubtedly, these people believe that they now have a special place in heaven after perpetrating such dastardly and evil acts in the name of Allah. They are rejoicing because they are creating an aura of fear worldwide.

But here's a little newsflash for you. You've already lost the battle. You just don't know it yet.

For those who have fully put their trust in Jesus Christ, the victory is ours. We already know the end result, and so does Satan. We win. Done. Over and out. See ya.

No doubt these radical Islamists take extreme pleasure in creating terror in hearts of those who will not submit to them and their deception. It may appear as though their efforts are prospering, but we should take to heart Luke 18:7, "And shall not God avenge His own elect and be patient with them, who cry day and night to Him? (MEV).

The enemy's plan is to disrupt everyday life for those who do not bow down to him, and fear certainly can do that. Just ask many in Israel, who now are looking over their shoulder during a simple trip to the grocery store in fear of being stabbed or shot.

No matter what the secular media says, don't delude yourself—it's that bad over there, my friend Jonathan Feldstein tells me.

The good news for us is the Word of God says we do not have to

be afraid. Certainly nobody wants to die, especially of a beheading or any other gruesome act at the hands of one the devil's armies (ISIS). For one, I have too much to live for and too much to do for the Lord to be cut down before my time.

But that's why we can rejoice in Psalm 37:1, which says, "Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be jealous of those who do injustice. For they will quickly wither like the grass and fade like the green herbs" (MEV).

Or how about Romans 8:31, which assures us, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" And then there is Psalm 138:7, which says, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will preserve me; You stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand saves me."

Do you get the unifying message of these Scriptures?

Another friend of mine whom I have gotten to know through the wonder of instant messaging, Qasim (an assumed name for his protection), pastors a small congregation in Pakistan. He and his flock are under constant persecution, but as he tells me, "God is our shield. All our hopes are on God. He will send an angel for us who will help us. One day we will all be free in heaven, but we must trust Him now for his divine protection. Our government is a partner of the Taliban, so that should tell you that worshiping Jesus is not smiled upon."

And then there's Shant in Syria, yet another pastor whom I've come to know through the Internet. He and his congregation are constantly harassed for their Christian beliefs. Yet, Qasim's and Shant's courage, and that of their congregations, never waver in the face of constant persecution.

By the way, Qasim and his people need Bibles in their native language of Urdu. Would you be willing to help? Please inquire in the comments section.

If Qasim, Shant and their people won't give into the fear

terrorism, how should we handle it? It's only a matter of time before ISIS and other terrorist groups turn their attention to America. Don't give them the upper hand by living in fear.

Won't you put your trust FULLY in the Lord and His promises, and fear Him instead of anything the world can throw at you?

And as I always like to say, "there is that." {eoa}

Why All Believers Should Avoid Comparison

One of the most difficult and consuming challenges of ministry is determining not to compare oneself with others who are kingdom workers for the cause of Christ.

"She sings better than I sing ... why didn't God give me a better voice?"

"His church is larger than my church ... what does he have that I don't have?"

"They have more young families in their church. Our church looks like a veritable graveyard of souls just waiting to be buried."

"Their kids program is phenomenal! Lights ... actors ... a full-blown worship team ... their budget must be enormous. I'd like to see what they could do with our measly budget. I can barely afford new crayons."

Comparison is a thief; did you know that?

Comparison robs today of its joy and productivity.

Comparison reaches its dirty little hands into vulnerable pockets and then removes that which is of enormous value. These valuable commodities were never intended to be owned by the pick-pocket known as "Mr. Comparison" but were always intended to be life-changing gifts given to a world in pain through your daily faithfulness.

When a person spends even one moment of life in comparing his or her significance with that of someone else, a rare and precious gift is lost.

Comparison eats away at one's self esteem like a wicked virus with no known cure.

So what is the antidote to that vicious varmint known as "Mr. Comparison" and his gang of hooligan cousins, "Rival," "Opposition" and "Scrutiny"?

The antidotes to unhealthy comparison have always been and will always continue to be "trust" and "contentment."

"But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6).

Now, don't misunderstand. It is indeed a healthy spiritual heart that desires a church or ministry that is dynamic and growing. It is a God-given impulse to focus on becoming a man or woman of great excellence as we minister to others.

What is surely disease-ridden is to embrace the false belief that God loves someone more than He loves you. What is absolutely rotten to the very core is to believe that if you owned someone else's gifts, or church, or leadership or budget, that you could do what they are doing.

What is wickedly contagious is to compare oneself with someone who is investing himself or herself in the kingdom of God and to envy them for their apparent success.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths” (Prov. 3:5-6).

At the end of your life, God will not hold you accountable for someone else’s ministry or church. He will only hold you accountable for how well you used what He gave to you for use in fulfilling the Great Commission.

And so, as men and women who have been called by the greater God to invest our lives in His unshakeable and eternal kingdom, let’s get to the task at hand and refuse to breathe in the germs of account-keeping.

I dare you to roll up your sleeves and keep your eyes on your own field! I challenge you to declare to God and to that rotten bully “Mr. Comparison” that you will serve God with every breath that you take regardless of budget, seeming success or of discouraging numbers.

“The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; do not forsake the works of Your hands” (Ps. 138:8). {eoa}

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Men, Here's What Your Pastor Would Love to Tell You, But Can't

The following letter first appeared as the Prologue to *Pastoring Men*. It was intended to show pastors that I understand what they're going through.

But it has occurred to me that, if you're a layman, you too would learn a lot from it about how your pastor thinks, his pressures, and his dreams.

Although it's fictitious, the letter is based on conversations with hundreds of pastors during the past 25 years. I believe it represents their desire—and yours—to help men become disciples, as well as the frustration in pursuing that goal:

Dear Laymen,

I would like to get some things off my chest. Since I could never say these things to my own men (and survive), I will say them to you. I offer these thoughts humbly.

Frankly, I get nervous when some of my men get all excited and start talking men's movement lingo like *father* wound, masculinity, etc.

What often happens is that the least respected men in the church—the ones who talk about Jesus all the time but struggle to keep a job—"take over" the men's ministry. No one would follow them on a bet—I know I wouldn't want to be in a small group they led.

So, honestly, it's just easier for me to let them do what they

want. I want to help them, but in my heart I don't really think they have what it takes, and they will eventually peter out and I'll be back to zero—or worse. Don't get me wrong. I love them. And I have faith that God has good plans for them. But, at least at this point, they need to be the ministerees, not the ministers.

What I can Get Behind

I'll tell you what I can get behind. I can get behind a disciple-making plan that men I respect are personally involved with.

Let me tell you a secret. If you really want to get me involved, here's what you would do. You would find between six and twelve of the most respected men in the church—normal guys. Invite them to a meeting to explore and pray about reaching more men for Christ. Give me a heads up *before* this exploratory meeting, so I'm not feeling blindsided. Don't try to take it too fast. Pray a lot. Don't be afraid to ask men for a big commitment.

Once you have some men willing to make a go of it, then come see me. Please. When you do come see me, don't act like you're the first ones who ever thought of reaching the men in our church. I've beaten my head against that wall for years trying to get men more involved.

How to Win Me Over

Give me space—and time—to process how it would work. Don't try to “close” me right away. Everyone thinks if they just lean on me hard enough, then their program can go. Show me some stats; build the case; why should I add to, change, or tweak my existing focus?

Ask me how ministry to men can help me. Find out what I think are the problems our men face as husbands, fathers, workers, churchmen, and men in general. I pick up quite a lot, you know, in the course of a day.

And come see me before you have the whole concept designed—I will need to make sure the plans mesh with our vision and other church ministries. Besides, I probably can make a unique contribution as the pastor.

We can meet and discuss why we need to reach men, how men in our church are doing, what kind of men we want to produce, what will constitute success for us, and how we will measure progress.

Make it easy for me to support a ministry to our men. Talk about getting men into small groups to study the Bible. Talk about helping men to understand the gospel. Talk about how we can build men up as godly men for the home, church, workplace, and community. Talk about integrating men into the existing ministries of the church. And not just some of our men, but all of them!

Don't talk about adding a bunch of new programming like retreats, seminars, etc. But, first things first. Let's see how you can help make the ministries we're already committed to work.

Just So You Know What I'm Up Against

Like you, I want to serve God and have a successful ministry. I got into this field because I sensed a calling from God to make a difference for the gospel of Jesus.

The other day someone asked, "Why don't you care about the men in our church?" Why would they think that? It hurts when people question my motives.

I work hard to be an effective leader. The demands are unbelievably diverse—and they excite me. I love the variety of public communication, private counseling, leading a staff, inspiring volunteers, administrating an organization, marriages, baptisms, funerals, committee meetings, and more.

Here's what I see happening when it comes to men's ministries:

A man brings me an idea, but often acts like I had nothing else to do but drop everything and embrace his idea ... an idea he did not do a very good job researching, explaining, or finding others to support. He has no plan. In fact, what he really wants is to dump the whole idea in my lap and be done with it. He thinks I'm the professional so it's my job. Are you surprised that a pastor would speak so bluntly? Don't be. We're human, too, and we all feel this way sometimes.

You have no idea how many people let me down. Hey, I'm not feeling sorry for myself, and I'm certainly not angry. Indeed, I thank God for those people who, when they tell me they will get something done, I can bank it. But often I have not found people to be very dependable. It's as though their word to the church is the first thing that gets cut. Even that wouldn't bother me so much if they would just tell me. As it is, most of the non-performers don't tell me until the day they were supposed to be finished.

I Want to Build a Growing Church

So please, keep me in your prayers. Think the best of my motives. Help me see that you are really serious about reaching our men. Show me that you don't merely want to start something, and then dump it in my lap.

And by the way, you will have more clout with me if I see that you have a track record of actually ministering to men yourself.

I'm excited about what we could do together that we could never do alone. I am eager to partner with you to grow Christ's church. When can we get together? {eoa}

Patrick Morley is chairman and CEO of Man in the Mirror. His book, *Man in the Mirror*, was selected as one of the 100 most influential Christian books of the 20th century. For the original article, visit .

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Is Your Sweet Tooth Raising Your Risk for Alzheimer's?

This week, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration proposed new dietary guidelines that, for the first time, recommend placing a cap on average Americans' consumption of added sugar.

The recommendations are part of new 2015 Dietary Guidelines, due to be finalized next month, and based on the latest research showing that sugar—not fat, long vilified as a dietary evil—is behind the nation's rising rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers.

But the official pronouncement from the FDA comes as no surprise to nutritional researchers like Dr. David Perlmutter. The board-certified neurologist and fellow of the American College of Nutrition has long argued that sweeteners in soft drinks and processed junk foods are not only fueling millions of Americans' physical ailments, but are also behind the nation's rising rates of Alzheimer's disease.

The good news, he tells Newsmax Health, is dietary changes may be an effective way to stave off the ravages of Alzheimer's, which now strikes more than 5 million Americans and is expected to afflict three times as many over the next 25 years. And certain kinds of fat in the diet may actually be beneficial for brain health, he notes.

"One of the key ways to help prevent this disease is through diet," says Dr. Perlmutter, author of the No. 1 *New York Times* best-seller, *Grain Brain*, and, most recently, the best-selling book *Brain Maker*.

Specifically, he recommends what he refers to as the "Anti-

Alzheimer's Trio" – grass-fed beef, avocados, and coconut oil. All three foods are high in brain-healthy fats that can help boost memory and cognitive function, and knock down inflammation tied to dementia.

"These items are all low in carbs and high in fat, helping to reduce some of that brain-bullying inflammation – the root cause of so many ailments," he explains.

Here's why Dr. Perlmutter argues these three superfoods are critical to maintaining healthy brain function, and staving off memory loss, as we age:

Grass-fed beef. Unlike conventionally raised livestock fed grains, cows fed grass produce meat that is much lower in inflammation-producing omega-6 fatty acids. Inflammation – from sugar, carbs, and certain types of meat common in the typical American diet – increase the risk for Alzheimer's, as well as heart disease, diabetes, and certain forms of cancer.

Going with grass-fed beef lowers your overall risk from inflammation-inducing compounds found in conventional meat, Dr. Perlmutter says.

"In addition, the corn and grain fed to cattle is overwhelmingly genetically modified, and this introduces worrisome proteins into non-grass fed meat," he says. "It may sometimes be a bit more expensive, but it's smarter to buy grass-fed when you can."

Coconut oil. This common oil is loaded with saturated fats, which actually raise HDL (the good) cholesterol and change the LDL cholesterol to a benign subtype. As a result, it can improve your cholesterol levels naturally, which lowers your risk for heart disease and Alzheimer's.

"Specifically, coconut oil is known as a rich source of beta-HBA and is one of our brain's 'superfuels,' " adds Dr. Perlmutter.

Avocados. A common Mexican food staple, avocados are naturally nutrient-dense and contain around 20 vitamins and minerals. While consuming fruits and vegetables of all kinds has long been associated with health benefits, many studies suggest avocados are particularly helpful in combatting obesity, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, vision loss, and dementia – in part because they have anti-inflammatory properties.

Avocados contain a natural plant sterol called beta-sitosterol that helps help maintain healthy cholesterol levels, lutein and zeaxanthin, – two phytochemicals that are essential to eye health – bone-strengthening vitamin K, and cancer-fighting folate, which also helps combat depression and other mental-health disorders.

In addition to these three foods, Dr. Perlmutter recommends a number of other foods containing ingredients that have been shown to prevent neurodegenerative disorders – including probiotics, prebiotics and fermented foods.

“Probiotics and prebiotics help maintain a healthy balance of bacteria in your gut – this is known as the human microbiome (HM),” he explains.

“Emerging studies indicate that the HM may contribute to the regulation of multiple neuro-chemical and neuro-metabolic pathways through a complex series of highly interactive and symbiotic host-microbiome signaling systems. These systems mechanistically interconnect the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, skin, liver, and other organs with the central nervous system (CNS).”

Dr. Perlmutter says conventional medical practitioners often underestimate the importance of diet in staving off Alzheimer’s.

“The first step to preventing [Alzheimer’s] is consuming the right foods, the second is knowledge,” he says.

Dr. Perlmutter's comments come as the FDA is proposing new guidelines that recommend Americans limit added sugar to no more than 10 percent of daily calories.

For someone older than 3, that means eating no more than 12.5 teaspoons, or 50 grams, of it a day.

That's about the same amount of sugar found in a can of soda, but for most Americans, simply giving up sugary soft drinks won't be enough to meet the recommendations.

Sugar, honey, and high-fructose corn syrup are found in sodas, cookies and candy – but are also in many low-fat foods, yogurt, granola and wholegrain breads, as well as in ketchup, pasta sauce, canned fruit and prepared soups, salad dressings, and marinades.

For decades, fat was the primary dietary evil health experts targeted, with many suggesting it was the primary cause of the nation's rising obesity levels. But the latest nutritional research shows sugar is a far greater enemy of public health, and that some fats are even good for you.

Dr. Perlmutter recommends taking steps to prevent or even reverse autoimmune responses and disorders, including Alzheimer's. Your physician can order blood tests, like those from Cyrex Laboratories, that can help your physician determine if you are having an autoimmune response to environmental triggers like food, chemicals, or other substances.

For the original article, visit .

Punching Holes in the Devil's Darkness

When the Scottish novelist Robert Louis Stevenson was a child, the story is told that one night his nanny came into his nursery to put him to bed. She found the little boy looking intently out of his bedroom window.

When she called to him, he continued staring into the darkness, so she went over to ask him what he found so interesting outside. As she peered over his shoulder, she saw the lamplighter walking down the street, lighting the street lamps. Little Robert responded, "Look, Nanny. I'm watching as that man puts holes in the darkness."

Sometimes I can become discouraged when I look out into the "darkness" brought on by the spiritual and moral decay of our great nation. But I'm reminded that while I may not be able to change the world, I can put a "hole in the darkness."

Daniel was a young man who lived during a time of great darkness in his nation of Judah. The Babylonians from the East swept through and destroyed everything in a series of ruthless campaigns. When the enemy king, Nebuchadnezzar, ordered the finest and the brightest Israelites to be taken captives to serve as slaves in his palace, Daniel was seized and marched 800 miles east, never to return. But rather than despair, Daniel put holes in the darkness.

Read Daniel 1

In Times of Change

Political Change

- Describe the political changes that took place in Judah where Daniel lived. See Daniel 1:1-2.

- How do you think these changes affected the average person? How did they affect Daniel?
- What political changes are taking place in our nation? How do they affect you? How do they affect the general public?

Religious Change

- How was the religion of the Babylonians different from that of the Jews? See Jeremiah 32:29, Isaiah 21:9; Daniel 3:12; Deuteronomy 5:2-5; Exodus 20:3-6; 2 Samuel 7:22.
- How do you think this difference affected Daniel's faith?
- Describe the religious changes in our nation over the past ten years.
- What impact do you think these changes have had on the church in general? How have they impacted your own faith?

Personal Change

- Read Daniel 1:3-7, and name four or more changes that took place in Daniel's personal life. Put each change into your own words.
- Which personal change in Daniel's life can you most identify with?
- When so many changes take place at the same time—in the world, in the nation, in your community, in your church and even in your own life—how does that impact you? How do you think they could have made Daniel feel?
- What encouragement for times of change do you find in Psalm 46? Give the phrases.

Be True to Your Convictions

Make the Choice

- How did Daniel handle the changes that swirled around

him? Give the words that describe the choice he made in Daniel 1:8.

- How did Daniel follow through on his choice?
- What impact did Daniel's example have on others? See Daniel 1:8-21.
- If Daniel had not been true to his convictions, do you think anyone back home would have known about it? What blessing would he have missed?
- How did Moses make a similar choice, and what were the results? See Hebrews 11:24-27. Who followed his example? See Exodus 12:37-38.
- How did Joshua challenge his people to make the same choice? Read Joshua 24:14-24. Give the verse and phrase that indicates Joshua set the example.
- How did Elijah challenge Israel to make the same choice? Describe the setting of his challenge in 1 Kings 18. Write out his challenge in verse 21 in your own words. What was the outcome? Read 18:38-39.
- What are your core convictions? When have you intentionally made the choice to live by them? How have you followed through? Who has followed your example?
- What analogy does Jesus use to describe these core convictions in Matthew 5:14-16? How does this analogy relate to Himself, and what does this mean to you? See John 9:5.

Keep the Commitment

- Read Daniel 1:1-15. What resistance did Daniel encounter, and what was the reason for it?
- Read 1 Kings 18:1-15. What resistance did Elijah face for the same reason as he sought to follow through on his choice to obey God?
- Who has resisted your choice for that same reason? Describe the circumstances.
- What were the risks Daniel took in order to overcome the resistance and keep his commitment?

- Give the phrase that reveals God was working invisibly on Daniel's behalf. Do you think Daniel kept his commitment because he knew God was at work, or did he keep his commitment because of the choice he had made?
- Read Exodus 12:36. What similar phrase describes God's activity on Moses' behalf?
- Relate God's activity on behalf of Daniel and Moses to Proverbs 21:1. How does this encourage you?

Experience the Consequences

- What were the consequences of Daniel's choice and commitment? See Daniel 1:15-20.
- How were his friends, the chief official and the king affected by what he did?
- In the end, was he better or worse off than if he had not stayed true to his convictions?
- How do you think Daniel's three friends were influenced by his example in Daniel 1? Describe the choice, the commitment and the consequences that they made several years later in Daniel 3:1-30.
- How are the choice, the commitment and the consequences confirmed in Psalm 1?

Don't be discouraged because of the turmoil and decay in our changing world. Make the choice to be true to your convictions, live out your commitment to the truth and experience the blessing of just putting a hole in the darkness!

For the original article, visit .

Do You Really Want Wisdom?

What do you do when you don't know what to do? Where do you go and whom do you ask?

It seems that we live in a world where everyone has an opinion about every thing, but there's only one opinion that matters more than any other and that's God's. He is the source of all wisdom.

So, if it is wisdom you want—and since God alone holds the key to this wisdom—you and I must go to Him on bended knee. This shows we have a proper fear of Him. The counsel of the Lord is with those who fear him (Ps. 25:14). You respect Him. You are in awe of Him. You therefore ask for mercy that you might find grace for wisdom in your time of need.

But, what about asking for wisdom in faith *without any doubting*? That is what James said. First, he said that if any of us lacks wisdom, we should simply ask God. I welcome that. James added that God gives this generously to all, “without criticism, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). I like that a lot too. So far, so good.

But James added something that gives me a sinking feeling. I almost wish he hadn't said it: “But let him ask in faith, without wavering. For he who wavers is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed with the wind. Let not that man think that he will receive anything from the Lord” (James 1:6-7).

This is not so easy to explain. First, I am not sure how many people pray without ever doubting. Surely only Jesus prayed without ever doubting. He alone had the Holy Spirit without any limit (John 3:34). What James puts before us is virtually the same thing Jesus puts before us.

He said, “For truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be thrown into the sea,’ and does

not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says" (Mark 11:23). True. But, apart from an allegorical interpretation of Mark 11:23, how many have literally prayed for a mountain to be removed and it disappeared before their very eyes? I haven't. But there is no doubt that if I truly prayed with that kind of faith such a mountain would disappear before my eyes.

James didn't say that a person who doubts won't have their prayers answered. He said the person who doubts should not expect to have their prayers answered; we may not have the expectancy. But God is greater than our expectancy! He may choose to answer our prayers because we *asked*—not because we prayed without doubting. Behind all our prayers with our limited faith is our great High Priest who intercedes for us at God's right hand with a perfect faith! That is why our prayers are answered. It is Jesus' faith that lies behind answered prayer.

The same is true when it comes to praying in the will of God. In order to be heard, we must pray in God's will. That is the way we are "heard." But if we *"know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have whatever we asked of Him"* (1 John 5:14-15).

We have two things here:

- Praying in the will of God
- Knowing you pray in His will

If the latter is the case with you, you are assured your prayer will be answered. But does it follow that if we *don't* know we have been heard that our prayer cannot be answered? No. The proof of this is the prayer of Zechariah who prayed for a son. But after a while he gave up praying for a son. Then one day the angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah.

"Your prayer has been heard" (Luke 1:13). Zechariah didn't believe it! But his prayer was nonetheless answered, and John

the Baptist was born! Zechariah's unbelief did not stop answered prayer. This is because any prayer prayed in the will of God—whether we consciously pray in His will or not—will be answered.

So, do not be overly concerned if you don't pray in perfect faith or know for sure that you prayed in God's will.

What do I do? I know that God holds the key. He knows the next step forward. The Holy Spirit *always* knows what to do next. I simply say, "Lord, I come to You to ask for mercy, that I might find wisdom in this hour—to know what to do now."

That's it. That is exactly how I pray. And although I cannot say God answers me as I wish every single time I pray, He does answer me at times! That's good enough for me.

One last thing. God delights in mercy. He loves to show mercy. He is a merciful God. He knows our frame, remembers that we are dust (Ps. 103:14).

Psalms 103:14 is possibly my favorite verse in all the psalms. It coheres with Hebrews 4:14, that our great High Priest is sympathetic with our weaknesses. So, when we pray we should remember to begin by asking for "mercy," as the writer says in Hebrews 4:16.

Go to your heavenly Father and ask. He has the key. He can unlock your mind, take the dimness from your eyes, increase your ability to hear, and give you wisdom that defies a natural explanation—in one second. Just ask.

✖ Adapted from *In Pursuit of His Wisdom* by **R. T. Kendall**, copyright 2015, published by Charisma House. In this book, the author shows you how to pursue the knowledge of God, which leads to true wisdom. You can take possession of this gift in order to know the next step forward, use the right timing and gain 20/20 foresight in decision making.

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Prayer Power for the Week of November 16, 2015

This week go to the Lord with a humble heart and in meekness. Thank Him for His mercy and grace in your life. Thank Him that Jesus is your High Priest and understands all that you are facing. When you ask for wisdom, thank Him for answering your prayer and giving you direction and the solutions you need. Continue to pray for worldwide revival and lift up our national, civic and spiritual leaders. Pray that Israel would fulfill the mandate God has for it in this hour and remember the persecuted church (Psalm 103:14; Heb. 4:14).

Have We Substituted Good for God?

Good and evil. We all know the difference, don't we? Aren't we born into this world with an inherent knowledge of what is right and wrong?

I've often heard people say human beings are inherently good. We hear someone say "he's a good man" or "she's a good woman," and we accept the evaluation at face value. The vulnerable let down their guard and embrace every statement or action from those proclaimed to be good.

But are these assessments always accurate? Could we ever fall into the delusional state of calling good evil or evil good? Surely not. The distinction is too obvious. Right?

Consider the following story. Many centuries ago, a wealthy young leader approached Jesus with a question: What must I do

to gain eternal life? This leader was an honest man and a model citizen. When he came to Jesus, he honored Him with the greeting "Good Teacher."

The man's question was one Jesus could certainly answer. However, before Jesus acknowledged his inquiry, He countered, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good, except God alone" (Mark 10:18).

Wait a minute. Why would Jesus correct a man who called Him good? He is good! I'd like to propose an answer to that question: Man's standard of good is different from God's.

Here's how Scripture puts it: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 14:12).

There is a way that seems right. It seems good, wise, beneficial and so forth. Yet the warning is clear: What seems good may actually be detrimental, harmful and nonproductive—the way of death.

Knowing Good from Evil

This is why Hebrews 5:14 says we need discernment to know the difference between good and evil. It's why King Solomon prayed, "Give Your servant therefore an understanding heart ... that I may discern between good and bad" (1 Kin. 3:9).

This isn't the way most of us naturally think, myself included. Years ago, I was puzzling over this issue when God said something that transformed my perspective. "Son, it wasn't the evil side of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that Eve was drawn to," He said. "It was the good side."

I opened my Bible to Genesis 3 to confirm what I'd heard. Sure enough, I read:

"When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasing to the eyes and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave to her

husband with her, and he ate" (Gen. 3:6).

I saw the words good, pleasant and desirable and my jaw dropped. I heard God say, "There is a 'good' that is not of Me. It is not submitted to Me."

God proceeded to show me how most "good" people, especially Christian people, are not drawn to blatantly evil behavior. Instead, they're drawn to things that seem good but are contrary to His wisdom. That's what happened to Eve.

This brings me to another nagging question, one I've wrestled with for years. Just how did the enemy get Eve to turn on God? It's important to ask this question, for Paul states, "But I fear that somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve through his trickery, so your minds might be led astray from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3).

Think about it. Eve lived in a perfect environment. She enjoyed total peace and abundant provision. Best of all, she lived in harmony with her Creator. So how did Satan do it?

You can find the full account of the story in Genesis 3:1-6. But let me give you two big takeaways. First, the enemy directed the woman's attention away from all the things God had given and got her focus on the one thing He had forbidden. Satan said to the woman, "Has God said, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?" (Gen. 3:1).

Thousands of known fruit trees exist in the world. My guess is that every one was represented in the garden. Eve could have eaten from any of the trees, but after Satan's question, she couldn't get her eyes off the only one that was forbidden.

It's no different today. God has freely given each of us so many gifts—every blessing heaven offers (Eph. 1:3). However, our enemy seeks to cover up God's generosity, so we only see what is "withheld." We forget that when God restrains us, it's because He knows what's best for us.

Satan's Strategy

That brings us to the second aspect of Satan's strategy. He called God's character into question. Then the serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-5).

Eve saw that the tree was good, pleasant and would make her wise. At Satan's words, her thoughts began to go down a new road. If this strategy was successful in a perfect environment, how much easier is the enemy's task today?

It's for this reason we're strongly warned by the apostle James: "Do not err, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no change or shadow of turning" (James 1:16-17).

Here's the gist of what he's saying—and don't take this next statement lightly. It doesn't matter how good something looks, how happy it makes you, how much fun it is, how rich and successful it will help you become, how deeply spiritual it appears, how sensible it seems or how popular or accepted it is.

If something is contrary to the will of God, it will ultimately bring sorrow to your life. Great news: God isn't trying to hide His best from us. He promises that those who seek will find. The key to discovering His perfect will is found in Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

We cannot discern what is truly good for our lives without first having our minds renewed. To walk in the fullness of God's good plan for us, we have to turn away from the wisdom of this world and let our minds be shaped by His Word.

If we live by what human reasoning calls good, we can easily be swayed from God's wisdom, confusing good and bad. But if we rely on God's inspired Word to set our standard, we will be unshakeable.

Whose standard of good guides your life: man's or God's? I encourage you to ground yourself in the perspective of heaven. Get in God's presence, study His Word and ask His Spirit to lead you along the way of life!

John Bevere and his wife, Lisa, are the founders of Messenger International. A minister and best-selling author, Bevere delivers messages of uncompromising truth with boldness and passion.

Discover more about John Bevere's new book, *Good or God: Your Internal GPS* at [.](#)

You Think Jesus Is Worried About Starbucks Coffee Cups?

Yes, this is another post about Starbucks and their decision to remove any mention of Christ or Christmas from their new holiday-themed coffee cups. There seems to be a lot of hype around these cups, their lack of Christ and the so-called "outrage" taking place among Christian circles.

I recently did a poll on Twitter to see how many people truly cared about these cups, and the results were as I expected. Not many people actually care ...

It would be silly for us to expect non-Christian companies to do Christlike things during holidays that celebrate Christ. So instead of worrying about whether or not a coffee company not run by Christians is going to put "Merry Christmas" on their cups, we should rather focus on loving our neighbors, extending grace and being tangible examples of what it means to follow Jesus. God isn't worried about red cups; He's worried about Christians reflecting an image of Christ all year long.

It would be unbiblical for someone to force another to follow Jesus, so why would it be OK to force a non-believing company to follow Him?

Starbucks may not be a Christian-founded company, but over the years they have graciously allowed me to host hundreds of Bible studies at numerous locations around the country. I've never once been asked to leave because I was a Christian or even looked at wrong because I had a Bible with me. Starbucks isn't out to get Christians, but for some reason people have crafted the lie that Christians are out to get Starbucks. It's just not true.

There are people all around the world who are being persecuted for their faith to the point of death, and I believe 100 percent of these people would laugh at the Americans' red cup riot against Starbucks. It's really not that big of a deal. We as Christians should be known more for what we are for than what we are against.

And if we really want something to rally about, how about we start with the fact that there is one death by suicide in the **U.S. every 13 minutes**, that over **400,000 children** are living in the foster care system in America and that **3.5 million people** experience homelessness each year.

There are a lot more important things that need our attention. Let's leave cups to Dixie.

Jarrid Wilson is a husband, pastor and author relentlessly sharing the love of Jesus. For the original article, visit [.](#)

Let's Take Off Our Shoes

Something remarkable happened to a man named Joshua outside a city called Jericho. What happened to him needs to happen to us.

He became the leader of the Israelites after Moses died. In Joshua 1:3, God promised Joshua that when he led the people across the Jordan River that He would give him every place he set his foot. Three days later, God dried up the Jordan for His people to cross over. All of the Amorite kings and Canaanite kings heard how God was leading His people, and they just folded. They didn't have the courage to face them. Everything was going great until they came to Jericho and literally hit a wall.

Jericho was strong and fortified with huge walls all around the city. Joshua had a promise from God that the land was theirs, but the people of Jericho were not going to just hand it over. They chose to stand their ground inside what they believed was an impenetrable fortress.

Here's what happened to Joshua that changed everything:

"Now when Joshua was by Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him. In His hand was His drawn sword. Joshua went to Him and said, 'Are You for us or for our enemies?'

"He said, 'Neither, for I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come.' Then Joshua fell with his face to

the ground and worshipped. Then he said, 'What does my Lord wish to say to His servant?'

"The commander of the army of the Lord said to Joshua, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' So Joshua did this" (Josh. 5:13-15).

It was right after this that God gave Joshua the plan to defeat Jericho. The people were to march around the city—one lap a day for six days. On the seventh day, they would march seven laps with the priests blowing on rams' horn trumpets. At the end of the seventh lap, they would blow a long blast on the trumpets, which would be everyone's cue to shout. Then the walls of Jericho would collapse.

That was some plan! It made no sense from a military perspective. But it was God's plan, and Joshua knew it.

Joshua literally removed his shoes that day. He was barefoot. This said volumes about his understanding not only of who God is but also of who God was to him. By removing his shoes, Joshua was saying, *"If this battle is going to be won, it will not be determined by our military equipment, as good as it may be. It will not be determined by our military strategy and expertise, as smart as we may be. If this battle is going to be won, it will not be determined by our strength, our endurance or our numbers. If this battle is going to be won, it will be won by God's power! His strength! His Spirit!"*

We need to take off our shoes. It's only then that we can see things from God's perspective and recognize His plans. It's about dying to yourself. It's about relinquishing control and accepting the fact that you are not God and you never will be. Taking off your shoes is about tuning in to God's voice. It's about humility and vulnerability before God and before others.

Sometimes all our successes can keep us from being really successful in things that matter the most. We can be too smart for our own good. When we hit a wall and the circumstances of

life get dark, instead of taking off our shoes, we lace them up even tighter and try to kick our way through it. But the walls are too thick and too tall. We end up experiencing and inflicting more pain. We need to take off our shoes.

When Joshua saw this man with a sword in his hands, his heart must have been beating out of his chest. He immediately asked him to identify himself: *"Are you for us or our enemies?"* Identify yourself! Whose side are you on?

The man replied, *"Neither, but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come."*

When Joshua heard that, he hit the deck. The Scripture says he fell down *"in reverence"* and immediately asked, *"What message does my Lord have for his servant?"*

There are several things about this event that indicate this man was not an angel. If he had been an angel, he would have told Joshua to get up and not to worship him because he was just an angel. Most Bible scholars believe this man was Jesus. The Bible teaches us that Jesus has always been. John 1:1-2 says, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."*

"The Word" is a name for Jesus. John 1:14 says that one day *"The Word became flesh ..."* That's the Jesus we know in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But Jesus has always been. I believe that Joshua got a sneak preview of Jesus.

The reason Jericho fell before Joshua is because Joshua fell before Jesus. It's really not important whether you believe that the man standing in front of Joshua that day was actually Jesus. Don't get distracted by that. The point is that Joshua's perspective of who God is and his understanding of God's authority is why he recognized that this moment required total surrender and submission to his Lord. He automatically said, *"What message does my Lord have for his servant?"* That's where we need to be and what we need to ask.

Take off your shoes and fall before Jesus. It will clarify God's purpose for your life and define who you are.

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For the original article, visit .

Breaking Jezebel's Eunuchs Free From Controlling Emotional Ties

I didn't know what I was walking into. There was a prophet-killing spirit on the loose that had successfully muted the voice of true prophets and turned others into spiritual eunuchs. When I made an altar call during one church service to set the eunuchs free, almost the entire congregation came up for prayer. I was shocked.

The word *eunuch* comes from the Hebrew word *caric*, which means "to castrate." Although Jesus made it clear that some eunuchs made a conscious decision to become eunuchs out of their own free will for the kingdom of God's sake (Matt. 19:12), Jezebel's modern-day spiritual eunuchs don't fall into this category. Jezebel is on a mission to spiritually castrate the saints—especially prophets—and keep them under its thumb.

But why does Jezebel need eunuchs? How do these eunuchs fit into Jezebel's wicked plot? What role, specifically, do eunuchs play in Jezebel's wicked puppet show? Jezebel uses eunuchs to do its bidding. For example, eunuchs in Queen Jezebel's royal bedchambers did not have the luxury of deciding what tasks they would or would not perform. The eunuchs were her servants and did her bidding without question, though probably begrudgingly at times. Eunuchs perform tasks that Jezebel does not want to do or cannot do itself.

Jezebel's Spiritual Slaves

Eunuchs are Jezebel's servants. It may have been a eunuch who delivered the fearful curse to Elijah that sent him running into the wilderness hoping to die after defeating the false prophets at Mount Carmel. Motivated by fear or a need for acceptance, Jezebel's spiritual eunuchs are at its beck and call. Eunuchs are essentially Jezebel's spiritual slaves.

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In the modern-day church, eunuchs aren't physically castrated. They are spiritually castrated. In other words, they may appear to have some spiritual authority in a church setting, but in reality they've been stripped of their spiritual strength to resist the wiles of Jezebelic personalities because they are deceived. I should mention that modern-day spiritual eunuchs don't always serve the leadership. Sometimes they are ruled over Jezebelic church members working to erect their own power structure within the church.

Whether they succumb to a religious mindset or the pursuit of the praise of man, eunuchs are powerless to rise up against Jezebel in their own strength. They are effectively in bondage to a strongman they didn't see binding them. Without any true power or authority of their own, eunuchs live vicariously

through Jezebel and draw their strength from the approval of Jezebel—or more specifically those flowing in a Jezebel spirit—rather than the approval of God. This is a dangerous position to take and is called out in Scripture.

Paul understood how vital it was to keep his heart in line with what God wanted rather than what man wanted. Paul made it known in no uncertain terms that he was seeking the approval of God and not man (Gal. 1:10), and the Bible is clear that the fear of man lays a snare, but that whoever trusts in the Lord is safe (Prov. 29:25). Ultimately, eunuchs “fear those who kill the body” but can’t kill the soul rather than fearing “Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). Spiritual eunuchs today do this because they are deceived.

How Jezebel Castrates You

In my book *The Heart of the Prophetic*, I outline several of Jezebel’s playgrounds, including insecurities, hidden fears and rejection. Think about it for a minute. Eunuchs in Bible days were largely rejected by mainstream society. They were essentially well-treated slaves in kings’ palaces, always seeing the best of everything but never experiencing any of it.

Suffice it to say that Jezebel will seek to control you by petting your insecurities and alleviating your hidden fears. What are you insecure about? What are you afraid of? Our confidence should be in Christ in us—and He hasn’t given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7). It may seem like a pedestrian Scripture, but if we really had a revelation of it then I believe the body of Christ would rise up and take dominion rather than lying down in timidity and watching sinners eat the good of the land. Prophets need to get this so they can herald it, but as long as prophets are bound up with rejection, Jezebel will get the best of them.

One of my prophetic mentors has said, “You can’t have a prophet full of rejection.” Why is that? Because it opens the door for Jezebel. Jezebel targets hurts and wounds and, unfortunately, many prophets—and many people in general—have a root of rejection. It may be that you were different, even from your childhood years. It may be that the local church doesn’t understand your gift and has rejected you along with God’s voice. Rejection comes through many channels, and it’s poison for the prophet because it opens the door to control, fear of man, fear of failure and a host of other ungodly emotions.

We must get free from rejection and the fear of man—continually examining our hearts for traces of this disease—so we don’t find ourselves eating at Jezebel’s dinner table with the company of false prophets or serving in Jezebel’s bedchambers. I go into greater detail about how eunuchs can break free from Jezebel’s controlling emotional ties in my new book, *Jezebel’s Puppets*. I’d encourage you to pick up a copy and learn about Jezebel and her puppets, which may be wreaking havoc on your life.