

The Place Every Man Needs

Recently I took a backpacking trip through the Big Frog Wilderness in Tennessee with my good friend, Brian. In all designated wilderness areas, there are no trail blazes (easy to get lost), no bridges across streams (learn to ford them or turn around), and remote enough so that there are no crowds to preserve the silence (count on being alone out there).

All of this adds up to some challenges and concerns. I certainly felt some anxiety packing up the night before. Was I up to the challenge? But what happened out there vaporized my anxiety.

On that first night, I felt an unexpected joy in my tent. I sensed God's quiet presence as I read the Scriptures and prayed, finally being lulled to sleep by the babbling water from a nearby stream.

A Place for Meeting God

On the second day, we ascended Big Frog Mountain. On the way up, the vegetation and landscape slowly changed, as we came across bear scat and one, lone young man. But, despite the increasing roar of the wind, there seemed to be a deepening quiet as we approached the summit—no birds, no animals, no humans.

Pitching our tents at the top, Brian realized he was getting sick with a cold, so I volunteered to find the water. I had read of a small rocked-in basin that held some seepage down another path. But as I walked, I couldn't find any sign of it. Anxiety began to trickle through me: What if I couldn't find it? How would we survive up here without water? How far would I have to walk to find help? Those thoughts whirled through my head as I suddenly ran up on the spring. There it was—with plenty of water.

Walking back to the campsite, I experienced a powerful breakthrough. The wilderness areas have mysteriously attracted me for years, almost as if they were calling out to me. But, I never understood why. All of a sudden, I understood. It is God who has been calling out to me. He desires me to come there and meet with Him. There He will teach, encourage, and protect me, exactly what I had felt in the tent that first night. I don't ever have to be anxious out here again, even with all of the challenges and unknowns.

A Place for Every Man

I am not unique in having a place like this. Each man needs a special place to enjoy God's presence and feel enjoyed by Him. I have a friend who senses that when he fishes, another as he goes duck hunting, and still another when he swims laps in the pool. For other men it may be a walk in the park or playing the guitar or simply being quiet on the back porch.

Each of us has a unique architecture to our hearts that comes alive in that special place. Here God loves to meet with us personally, for He wants us to feel His joy. These experiences ground us in the love of His Son, so that we become rooted and established in His love (Eph. 3:17-18). Here we thrive and come alive as men, becoming filled with all of His fullness (Eph. 3:19) instead of the empty abyss our hearts have known. This is the deepest source of our manhood, one to which we must return repeatedly.

There is the place every man needs. What is that special place for you? Are you going there? And if you have no special place, are you seeking one? This idea is no luxury, but a necessity. It is here that we can be rejuvenated by the sound of His voice and the aroma of His love—with sounds and aromas that will linger long after we return to engage in our daily battles.

When I got back home from Big Frog, I found myself planning

the next trip to the wilderness. It's my special place.

What's yours?

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For the original article, visit .

Obamacare Pitfall: Doctors and Patients Watch the Clock

Now that the Affordable Care Act is weighing down the caseloads of already too-busy doctors with new patients, both doctors and patients are keeping an eye on the clock.

Patients spend most of their time waiting, and experience very little actual face-time with the doctor, whereas doctors tend to rush from patient to patient.

Harvard Medical School calculated how many minutes patients spent seeking medical care. A typical visit consumes 121 minutes of the patient's time and \$43 in lost wages. Patients are said to spend 1.1 billion hours per year obtaining care.

On the other hand, according to Statista, three-quarters of primary care physicians spend between nine and 20 minutes with each patient—a reported five percent spend less than nine

minutes with their patients.

Dallas primary care physician Anthony Lyssy said doctors and patients deserve better.

“I can’t do anything effective in eight minutes except throw a prescription at you and tell you to come back and see me in two weeks if it doesn’t work,” he said.

Dr. Lyssy chose to work for Diamond Physicians, a concierge practice. His patients pay a monthly or annual out-of-pocket fee instead of using health insurance.

His practice, like most concierge practices, has a much smaller case load than insurance-based practices, which means patients get more attention from the doctors.

“I meet with my clients for about an hour every time they come in,” he said. “Even if they’re coming in for something acute—a sinus infection, an ear infection—I take that time to talk about wellness, nutrition, fitness, overall elevation of health.”

Lyssy said the average caseload for insurance-based primary care physicians is 3,000 patients, whereas concierge practices average about 500.

For the original article, visit .

What Is the ‘Normal’ Amount of Sex for Married Couples?

A while back, I was having dinner with a group of friends. Most were married, but there were a handful of

singles. Somehow the discussion turned to the frequency of married sex.

The conversation was driven by the singles—ones that longed to eventually be married—who were curious. How many times a week? How many times a month? They had heard of married couples not having sex and couldn't imagine it. In fact, they couldn't imagine anything less than once a day.

Every married person laughed. The questions continued. I knew what they were after. Since each married person at the table had a strong marriage, they felt like we were a good measurement for what was "normal" and perhaps "healthy."

As we all looked at one another wondering who was going to answer them, I realized we were thinking the same thing. There was hesitancy to reveal for fear that maybe other couples have sex more and are happier.

Maybe our sex life is a problem, and we should be having it more frequently. It certainly isn't as frequent as it used to be. Maybe that means our marriage is headed in a bad direction.

Finally, I decided to say what I thought was true for most marriages or, at least, what was true of ours. I was a little surprised (and relieved) at how quickly the other married people agreed with me. I think most married couples struggle with this issue. So let's ask the questions "Do we have less sex than other married couples?" and "When does it become a problem?"

Is There a Normal Amount?

No. It depends on each individual couple. There may be an average amount, but no "normal." I have seen surveys suggesting an average frequency of sex for married couples to be around a couple of times a month (once every 7-10 days). That doesn't mean that this is a number to aspire to or judge

your marriage upon. What is normal and overwhelming are marriages with at least one partner who doesn't think they are doing it enough.

The key to a healthy sexual marriage is finding a frequency that works for both of you. [Tweet This] It takes a sacrificial love for one another. Investment grows desire. One partner with a low sex drive may need to initiate, even when they don't feel like it. Interestingly, having sex regularly raises the level of testosterone which increases desire.

It's like exercising. The more it's done, the higher the desire becomes to do it. On the other hand, the other partner may need to sacrifice their expectations and sexual needs. There has to be a meeting somewhere in the middle. All of this comes down to communication and to understanding. Talk and listen to one another. Seek to know each other, serve each other and love before being loved.

When Does It Become a Problem?

The problem occurs when couples resent one another and look out for themselves, rather than sacrificing. When a couple has sex once in a several month time frame, it may indicate problems below the surface. The same surveys indicated that couples having more sex were more fulfilled in their marriages; however, it is difficult to determine what leads to what.

Does having more sex alone lead to greater marriage fulfillment or is it vice versa? It's actually probably both working together. The couple willing to put the other first and invest in one another's needs before their own, physically and emotionally, will have a deeper level of satisfaction in their relationship.

Sound Off: What challenges have you faced in this area?

Huddle up with your wife and ask, "What was the most romantic

night we've ever spent together?"

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A Prophetic Showdown Is Surely Coming, and It's Coming Soon

"Prophets are a strange breed of men. They are God's emergency men for crisis hours. And the price of being a prophet is that a man has to live alone. All God's great men have been very, very lonely men."

When I read words like this from Leonard Ravenhill, I'm challenged. When I look at the state of prophetic ministry today, I'm grieved.

Ravenhill was known for his no-comprising, hard-hitting, sin-blasting messages. He carried the spirit of a prophet. He carried a spirit like John the Baptist that laid the ax to the root—but he didn't do it with a critical, condemning heart. He did it with pure and undefiled love forged in the fire of God.

"The great need in America tonight, I'm convinced of this—as good as Bible schools are with their assembly lines and producing their preachers—the greatest need in America tonight is prophets," Ravenhill once said. "Ah, the prophets were men who walked with God, they felt like God, they saw like God, they wept like God, they yearned like God. They had no satisfaction in seeing the beauty of the temple,

the ritual, the formality.”

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John the Baptist came doing no great miracles. As Ravenhill put it, he didn't raise a dead man—he raised a dead nation. He lead the nation into the First Great Awakening—the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a forerunner, preparing the way of the Lord. And they chopped his head off.

“Oh, I like to think of John Baptist standing there—no sponsors, nobody to agree or disagree with him,” Ravenhill said. “He stood there and they came to see this strange man anointed by the Holy Ghost. We have blinded our eyes to the truth and we have put our fingers in our ears to the voice of God.”

“And the judgments are going to fall if we don't get revival, and maybe if it's not an alternative of Christ or chaos but Christ and chaos, not revival or revolution but revival and revolution; not revival without concentration camps; maybe the only place we'll get it is in concentration camps. Oh brother, we are heading for trouble, I'll tell you. Ah, the prophets were men who walked with God, they felt like God, they saw like God, they wept like God, they yearned like God.”

I know there are prophets like the ones Ravenhill described in this video. I know there are thousands of prophets in the nation and around the world who have not bowed a knee to Baal. I know there are thousands who are not eating at Jezebel's table; thousands who are not selling personal prophecy on monthly installment plans; thousands who are nameless and faceless, with no public platform but a private prayer closet where God reveals to them His secrets. And they pray; they stand in the gap; they get in the watchtowers; they make up the hedge; they release intercession that touches heaven.

For all the haughty, arrogant, prideful prophets who believe

they are called to rebuke major movements in the body of Christ, there are many, many more who are weeping over the state of the nation. For all the doom-and-gloom prophets who release curses and leave no room for God's mercy, there are countless forerunners of awakening who are pointing to the next great move of God that will see a massive harvest come in.

For all the false prophets speaking smooth sayings for money, there are more who refuse to compromise the Word of God for ungodly gain. For all the Jezebel prophets leading the church into false doctrines, there are many more who are calling the church to repent in humility.

Lord, let the true prophets arise and glorify Your name, declare Your plans and urge the church to be salt and light in a lost and dying world! {eoa}

Are You Married to Your Best Friend?

The dream for many people is to marry their best friend. That's the fairy-tale marriage, one that brings together best friends in holy matrimony.

The old adage is to be friends first before becoming lovers and that successful marriages are built on friendship.

You may have heard people talk how they married their best friend, or you may even give that advice. Well, I didn't marry my best friend, and I'd like to argue that very few people do. When my wife and I were married, we were friends but not best

friends. In fact, we were probably better friends before our relationship got serious. The dynamic changed some, but I'm happy to say eventually our friendship was restored. Here are three ways marrying your best friend can become your reality.

Realize your relationship and your love grows over time. My wife and I had the pleasure and privilege of interviewing Mark and Susan (Merrill) for our "7 Rings of Marriage" web show. Mark said something simple yet profound during our chat. He said, "Love grows over time," meaning your relationship and the way you interact with your spouse today will differ than the way you interact and love your spouse five or 10 years from now. Through time, you'll experience many changes to your relationship. However, just like a plant that is watered and nurtured grows, your love for one another will also grow.

Be the friend you want your wife to be. When we teach our kids how to meet new people and develop friendships, we tell them to be friendly. If you are friendly, you will attract other people who are friendly as well. The same principle applies to our marriages. More often than not, what you give in marriage is what you will receive in return.

If we want to be married to our best friend, we need to be the friend we want our wives to be. If we want our wives to listen to us, then we should listen to them. If we want our wives to put our needs first, then we should put their needs first. The list goes on and on. Having a great friendship in marriage starts with us first being the friend we want in our wives.

Focus on intimacy. Most couples really don't know each other all that much when they first get married. I've heard it put this way: When you are dating, you are not dating each other; you are dating each other's representative. Our "representatives" portray us in our best light—showing our good qualities, looks and character traits.

Our representatives work the few hours we spend together. Then in marriage, we spend all day and every night together—when our “representatives” are not on duty. Finally, the representatives are no longer needed. That’s when all our glory is revealed. We share intimate things we’ve never shared with anyone else.

The more intimate moments we share, moments and things we don’t share with anyone else, the better we know one another. Then our friendship is tested and we have the opportunity to really know and love one another.

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

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

Spirituality: 1 of 9 Keys to ‘Radical Remission’ Cancer Cases

Every year, a small number of terminal cancer patients experience what doctors call “spontaneous remission”—recovery without a clear medical explanation. Few research studies have examined the phenomenon, which remains a mystery to conventional doctors.

But a new book by Kelly Turner, a Harvard-educated cancer researcher, reveals nine common factors in such remarkable cases—including faith, dietary changes and certain alternative-medicine practices. The book—*Radical Remission: 9*

Key Factors That Can Make a Real Difference—has just been issued in paperback.

“For every one case that’s published in medical journals, a hundred more go unpublished,” notes Turner, who spent a decade interviewing more than 100 cancer patients in 10 countries who’ve experienced such recoveries. She also analyzed 1,000 other similar cases to identify commonalities in against-all-odds survivors.

Her research identified nine top factors that were common among those who have experienced radical cancer remissions.

“I found over 75 different things that they were doing to try to get well,” she tells *Newsmax Health*. “Not everyone did all 75, but almost everyone that I’ve studied did nine of these things.”

According to Turner’s findings, the following factors were common to all of the “radical remission” cases she examined:

Taking Control

The most dramatic case Turner discovered was a Japanese kidney cancer patient who underwent unsuccessful surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. But once he started taking control of his health—drinking filtered water, eating healthy food and watching the sunrise every day—he went into remission. “He did all the nine factors in my research and, 25 years later and counting, he is completely cancer-free and has grandchildren,” she says.

Spiritual Connections

The practice of some form of spirituality—praying, meditating or interacting with the natural world—has measurable impacts on the immune system, Turner found. “What helps them survive, according to the people I studied, is not what they believe but how they practice their spirituality,” she explains.

Changing Your Diet

Nearly all of the long-term survivors Turner interviewed had taken aggressive steps to boost the nutritional value of their diets—boosting their consumption of fruits, vegetables, organic foods, filtered water and limiting foods such as meat, wheat, sweets and soda. She calls this factor “the big one” among the patients she studied.

Herbs and Supplements.

Most survivors used three types of herbs and supplements—those that aid digestion and increase the body’s absorption of nutrients, help detoxify the body of bacteria and viruses and boost the immune system. These include probiotics, prebiotics, digestive enzymes, detoxifying herbs (such as goldenseal, wormwood, dandelion root, milk thistle, licorice root, and walnut hull), anti-bacterials (oil of oregano, garlic), aloe vera, turmeric, and vitamins C, B12, and D.

Social Support

Many studies have linked close connections with family and friends to cancer survival—something Turner’s research confirmed. “Scientifically we know that that’s actually possible, because when you feel loved, oxytocin is released in huge amounts from the master glands of your brain and that increases (the immune system’s) natural killer cells and white blood cells,” she explains.

Trusting Intuition

Learning to trust your gut instincts was also a key factor Dr. Turner observed in the patients she studied. “They used their intuition to help make decisions,” she says. “And intuition is interesting because it actually can sense danger and paths to safety, long before the front of your brain—which is the thinking part of your brain—even knows what’s going on.”

Accentuating the Positive, Eliminating the Negative and Focusing on Reasons for Living

Three other characteristics of long-term survivors were inter-related: embracing positive emotions, letting go of negative ones and developing stronger reasons for living. Turner found the patients she studied made time every day to do these things, just as they made time to eat, sleep and exercise.

“Research has shown that having a fighting spirit and fighting against your cancer actually doesn’t lengthen survival time. And that’s exactly what I found among my radical remission survivors, as well,” Turner says.

“Many of them weren’t fighting their cancer; many of them were just simply focused on enjoying life for as long as they had it. And so again that’s moving them out of fear, and out of sort of this fight-or-flight mode and into the rest-and-repair mode, where you’re enjoying life, you’re relaxing, you’re taking happiness when you can get it. And that is actually better for your immune system than being in a fight with something.”

For the original article, visit .

5 Ways to Confront Spiritual Dehydration

Spiritual dehydration can creep into our lives in many ways, but learning to combat this infection can be the difference between a healthy soul and a broken one.

1. Do away with comparison. Don’t compare your inch to someone

else's mile. Everyone is on their own spiritual journey, and the reality is that none of us are going to be on the exact same page or chapter. We're all going through different things, experiencing God in different ways and trying to wrestle through different questions.

Do away with comparison, as it will do nothing but get you down and make you feel inferior compared to the accomplishments of others. Comparison is a game you will never win at.

It's not fair to compare your own life with that of someone else. All of us were uniquely made for a different purpose and to experience different things. I'll be honest in admitting that I constantly find myself comparing the accomplishments of others to my own. It's not healthy, nor does it help my current spiritual journey either. Human nature yearns for the approval of others, and much of that is found within the weaving of comparison. We compare in hopes of being better, in turn making us feel better about ourselves.

Regardless of which side we're on, comparison is never healthy nor does it help progress our spiritual well-being. Do away with comparison.

2. Stop trying to do things on your own. Spiritual dehydration can take root in our lives in many different ways, but one of the most common is when we try to do this whole God-thing on our own. You know, as if we've got it all under control. The beauty of God is that not only is He a spiritual companion, but He is the creator of companionship itself. Humble yourself completely, drop the facade of perfection and allow God to intervene in every facet of your life. Doing so will completely revolutionize your heart, soul and spiritual awareness.

When we give God the room He deserves, our souls will be refreshed and our hearts will flow with His presence. We were

created for the partnership of God. We were created to do life hand-in-hand with the one who created us in His image.

3. Don't allow a routine to become mundane. There is nothing wrong with having a routine. In fact, I'd encourage you to make prayer, reading your Bible and experiencing times of worship something you do habitually. What you don't want to do is allow these things to become a mundane routine, something you do just for the sake of doing. Prayer must be done with intention, studying your Bible must be done with tenacity, and worship must be done with passion.

When a routine becomes stale and mediocre, it's time to do away with it and recalibrate your direction. Routines are great because they form habits. You just need to make sure those habits don't become dry and without purpose.

4. Make prayer a priority, not a last resort. Prayer is spiritual dehydration's biggest enemy. When we truly discover the importance of prayer, we will see that it not only replenishes the soul, but it keeps us in tune with the current condition of our heart and mind. Prayer is common among those who are hurting and in quarrelsome situations, but one must not allow prayer to become nothing more than a last resort. Pray first.

Make prayer a priority, a part of your life and something that is interwoven into the inner-being of your character. You, my friend, are destined to be a prayer warrior. Combat spiritual dehydration with the awe-inspiring communication God has so graciously given us through the art of prayer. Share your feelings, your burdens and pains. Share your frustrations, your joy and your discontent. Share until you cannot share anymore.

5. Equip yourself with spiritual mentors. It's always a good idea to have people in your life to whom you've given permission to keep you accountable, call you out when you do

something idiotic and keep you on track with your spiritual journey. Whether it be in person, over the phone or even Skype, give permission to men and women who are wiser than you to speak life into you.

Humble yourself, learn from their direction and allow your heart to be guided by those God has put before you. Your spiritual welfare depends on constant evaluation and refining.

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

What a Really Stupid Thing to Say

Raising our daughter, Rachel, has presented many challenges for my wife, Patty, and me. She seems as if she has always been the quintessential “strong-willed child,” a phrase Dr. James Dobson coined in his book of the same name.

Rachel became a teenager in March, and it seems as if the challenges have intensified. I realize I’m probably not telling many of you anything you haven’t heard or experienced before. Indeed, raising a daughter can be tough.

If there is one thing I told myself when I became a parent, it’s that I wouldn’t do or say the things my father did as I grew up. “Lazy” and “irresponsible” were only two of the labels with which my dad saddled me.

Determined not to let history repeat itself, I would always consider Psalm 127:3, which says, “Look, children are a gift of the Lord.” If you knew what Patty and I went through simply

to have Rachel, you would understand that attitude.

Parents, let me let you in on a little hint: Words can hurt. Forget “sticks and stones.” Whether you want to believe it or not, your words can have a lasting effect.

My dad has since gotten saved, and we have mended our relationship, but it took a lot of years to do so. I pray that I have not inflicted that much damage on Rachel, especially some words that have venomously spewed from my mouth recently in anger.

Yesterday morning, I carelessly let it slip that “if you don’t show us that you care for us, you make it easy for us not to care.”

Wrong. Wrong. Wrong. What a horrible thing to say to your child—absolutely horrible.

And that’s after recently reading this insightful blog by Dr. Michelle Watson titled, “25 Things NOT to Say to Your Daughter, Ever.” I really let my emotions get the best of me, and I am deeply ashamed of that. No matter what she’s done, Rachel doesn’t deserve that.

I quickly texted her and asked her to forgive me, and I quickly asked the Lord to forgive me. I rebuked my words and prayed that they would quickly leave her heart. I ask for your prayers for that as well.

I realize that her obstinacy can be typical teenage behavior, and I realize that we’re not the only parents that have to deal with this. It is extremely frustrating nonetheless, especially for a type-A personality like me. To be totally transparent, I’m praying for God to shake me into better behavior.

I cannot claim to know what a young girl endures as a teen. I cannot fathom the wide range of emotions Rachel is

experiencing right now. It's difficult enough to grow up in this cold, dark and ungodly society with all the pressures kids must face.

It's comforting to know that I have a prayer shield at work for my family and me. If you are going through a similar situation with your children, know that you are not alone. We at Charisma Media will pray with you and for your children.

Please share your heart and let us know how we can pray for you. While you may not see immediate results, rest assured that God hears you and that He will mend those relationships.

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

Note: Thankfully I can report that my wife, Rachel and I sat down and had a great conversation last night. I know that I can't make up for what I said, but I pray that those words are loosed from her heart and that we can move forward. Next time I'm tempted, I pray that the Holy Spirit stops me from saying something that "stupid."

Daniel Kolenda: The Witchcraft of Rebellion

After I finished preaching recently, two young men approached. They said the Lord had called them to be evangelists, and they asked if I had any advice for them. I said, "Yes, I can give you my advice in one word: *obey!*"

I think this is perhaps the single greatest word of advice anyone could have for discovering and remaining in God's will. Unfortunately it is also one of the areas of greatest

difficulty for so many of God's people. We are like sheep—prone to wander and amazingly stupid. We are like donkeys—stubborn and willful. We are like peacocks—proud and vain. We are quick to analyze and rationalize but slow to obey. We are masters of procrastination and experts at justification. Making excuses comes naturally to us, but simple obedience seems so difficult.

“Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?” (Deut. 10:12–13, MEV).

Notice that God's commands are not given to make us miserable; they are for our own good. This might sound like a cliché, but please do not dismiss it and simply go on to the next paragraph. Stop to consider this thought for a moment. God is all knowing and all wise. He knows the future. He knows the past. He can see what is ahead in your life and in the lives of everyone around you. He knows what is going to happen in the economy, in politics, and on the world stage. When He speaks, He is giving you insider information for your advantage, and your obedience is the most profitable thing you could do for yourself.

I could point to many examples in my own life of times when God spoke to me about something, but because obeying required some level of personal sacrifice, I struggled and wrestled in my own heart and mind, sometimes for far too long. In the end I discovered that His instructions were meant to save me mountains of heartache, pain, and expense. If we could only learn to obey, we would be fulfilled, happy, and blessed in every way.

John H. Sammis' famous hymn says it well:

Trust and obey,
for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
but to trust and obey.

Consider Israel's first king, Saul, who always thought his idea was better than God's command. Each act of rebellion led him deeper into trouble and farther from God's will. It was to Saul that Samuel said, "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Obedience is better than sacrifice, a listening ear than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king" (1 Sam. 15:22–23, MEV).

Just as rebellion blocks God's blessings, so obedience releases them. Consider the widow of Zarephath, who experienced an extraordinary miracle of provision. A terrible famine was ravaging the land. God spoke to Elijah in 1 Kings 17:9 and said, "Arise, get thee to Zarephath ... behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

Notice that God did not send Elijah to a woman living in a mansion with huge storehouses of grain from which she could provide for the prophet. Instead, the Lord sent him to a poor widow who didn't have enough food to provide for her own family.

I emphasize this because God could have sent Elijah to anyone. For that matter He could have continued to send ravens to feed him.

The point is that Elijah didn't really need this woman's food. God didn't send Elijah to the woman so that He could provide for Elijah. God sent Elijah to the widow so He could provide for the widow. Why would the Lord command a poor widow to make such a costly sacrifice? It must have seemed cruel and

senseless. But it was for her own good! Her obedience unlocked a fountain of provision that she could never have anticipated. "The barrel of meal did not run out, nor did the jar of oil empty, according to the word of the Lord, which He spoke by Elijah." (1 Kings 17:16, NAS).

Note: This study was taken from Chapter 15 of Daniel Kolenda's book, Live Before You Die. {eoa}

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Our Talents Do Not Belong to Us

In Matthew 25 Jesus told a parable about a man who went on a journey to a faraway land. Before he left, he entrusted three servants with various "talents," or money. Rather than letting his money sit in a vault, the master decided to divide it among three servants so they could invest it and his fortune could increase while he was away.

To the first servant the master gave five talents, to the second servant he gave two talents, and to the third servant he gave one talent.

The first two servants invested their money wisely, and it doubled in value. The third servant was concerned about the possibility of losing his talent, so he buried it in the

ground. When the master returned, it was a time of reckoning. With the first two servants, the master was very pleased, but with the third servant who buried the one talent, the master was very angry. The master called him a wicked and lazy servant. He repossessed the one talent the servant had been given and had him cast out into the darkness, "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:30, MEV).

I want you to notice the reason this servant gave for burying his talent. The servant said, "So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground" (Matt. 25:25, NIV). He buried his talent in the ground because of fear.

Fear causes many people to bury their talents in the ground. I'm not talking about the ground in your backyard. Genesis 2:7 says, God formed man from the dust of the ground—we are the ground! People bury their talents within themselves because of fear—fear of failure, fear of being mocked, fear of hard work, fear of the unknown, spirits of fear, and fear of man, just to name a few.

I think one of the most tragic places you could ever visit is a cemetery, not because of the people who are buried there but because of what is buried within the people who are buried there: books and songs that were never written, sermons that were never preached, forgiveness that was never granted, inventions that were never developed—so much potential that was never realized. So much has been buried and lost for all eternity because someone was afraid of being hurt, afraid of criticism, afraid of rejection, afraid of financial difficulty or physical danger.

Evangelist Leonard Ravenhill said author and preacher A. W. Tozer once told him, "I'm not too worried about the judgment on my Christian life. It's the things I could have done but didn't do that worry me." My friends, one day we are all going to stand before the Master and give an account of what He has

entrusted to us. Oh, that we would fear that day above all and be willing to risk everything so on that day we would not be ashamed.

Notice that the servant was cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Scholars disagree about whether or not this verse is referring to hell, but one thing is certain (and I think it is the main point), it is talking about deep regret, sorrow, and remorse over something that has been lost forever and can never be undone.

Many people talk about the emotions they will feel when they arrive in heaven. There are popular songs about how we will dance and be overwhelmed with joy. But many will experience a very different emotion when they arrive in heaven—regret. In that moment all of their earthly fears will seem so impotent and distant, a hazy memory, like a dream that you can't quite remember. But the impact of those fears will be felt for eternity. It will be too late to go back and do what should have been done, and wave after wave of regret will wash over many people.

No wonder Revelation 21:4 says Jesus will have to wipe the tears from their eyes. {eoa}

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