

# Are You a Biblical Christian or a Cultural Christian?

*Editor's note: The book, The Man in the Mirror, is easily the most exponentially impactful resource Man in the Mirror Ministries has ever produced. And one of the concepts we've received the most favorable feedback about is the distinction between a cultural Christian and a biblical Christian. The following is an article on the subject adapted from the Revised and Updated 25th Anniversary Edition of The Man in the Mirror: Solving the 24 Problems Men Face.*

Contrary to the opinions of some, Christianity is still flourishing in our society. There are more Christians today in America than ever before, both as a percentage and in total numbers. Roughly one in three Americans indicates they have asked Jesus to forgive their sins and grant them the gift of eternal life.

But here is the obvious question: *If religion is such a big part of our lives, why isn't it making more of an impact on our society?* The sad reality is that claims of religious commitment run high, but impact is at an all-time low.

And here's the problem: Although Christianity is flourishing, many of us who are Christians have gotten caught up in this increasingly bankrupt culture. We have adopted many of the values of the world around us. Maybe it's the new sexual ethics of cohabitation or pornography, rampant greed and materialism, or winking at the needs of the poor.

Galatians 5:9 explains why adopting these values is a problem: "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." So when we try to have the best of both worlds, we exchange the truth of God for a lie and the glory of God for idols, we do what seems right in our own eyes, we get engrossed in the

secular world, and we worship created things instead of the Creator.

The result? *Cultural Christianity*. Cultural Christianity means pursuing the God we want instead of the God who is. It is the tendency to be shallow in our understanding of God, wanting Him to be more of a gentle grandfather type who spoils us and lets us have our own way. It is sensing a need for God, but on our own terms. It is wanting the God we have underlined in our Bibles without wanting the rest of Him too. It is God relative instead of God absolute.

What has been the result of this adaptive, cultural religion?

## **Two Kinds of Christians**

The ease with which people now associate themselves with religion has produced two kinds of Christians: *biblical Christians* and *cultural Christians*.

Jesus was the first to clarify the different types of people who would or would not associate with Him. The parable of the sower reveals four groups of hearers of the Word of God.

### ***Group 1: The Non-Christian***

“Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12).

Christ makes clear the point that not everyone who hears about salvation will believe.

### **Group 2: The Cultural Christian, Type “C”**

“Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away” (Luke 8:13).

Type “C” stands for *counterfeit faith*. Among us are some who

profess to be Christians, but in reality they are not Christians at all; they are cultural Christians—type “C.” They have a counterfeit faith—a faith that is not a genuine faith in Christ. Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

Without sounding a false alarm, but in love, I encourage every man who finds himself to be a cultural Christian to consider whether his faith is merely a defeated faith or a counterfeit faith. If counterfeit faith is the condition of your life, don’t be discouraged. God loves you with an everlasting love and wants to reconcile with you. In the next chapter we will look at how you can get on, or back on, the right track.

### ***Group 3: The Cultural Christian, Type “D”***

“The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature” (Luke 8:14).

Sadly, there is little marginal difference between the way many Christians spend their money and the way non-Christians spend theirs. For a group whose primary commission is to be salt and light to a broken, confused world, this example does little to present a viable alternative to empty lifestyles.

Type “D” stands for defeated faith. The type “D” cultural Christian lives in defeat. There is little, if any, marginal difference between his lifestyle and the lifestyle of the man who makes no claim to be in Christ. He has never understood, perhaps because he has never been told, the difference between what it means to be a cultural Christian versus a biblical Christian. This is the category I flirted with before God brought me to my senses.

### ***Group 4: The Biblical Christian***

“But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and

good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop" (Luke 8:15).

A biblical Christian is a man who trusts in Christ, and Christ alone, for his salvation. As a *result* of his saving faith he desires to be *obedient* to God's principles out of the overflow of a grateful heart (see Romans 1:5). Obedience doesn't save us; faith does. This explains why some men can be cultural Christians—they have a saving faith, but they have not obediently made Christ Lord over all their lives. They have not allowed the Holy Spirit to empower them.

What does it mean to be a cultural Christian today?

### **Lessons from Elementary School**

Do you remember your elementary school teacher demonstrating the principle of diffusion? She started with a clear glass of water. Then with an eyedropper she took some red food dye from a bottle and squeezed one drop into the glass. Within moments, the water was tainted with a pinkish hue as the dye permeated the water in the glass.

To be a cultural Christian in your parents' generation was to be like a clear glass of water with one drop of red dye. In other words, the secular culture was not that different from the Christian culture. That was before the days of Internet pornography, abortion on demand, explicit sex during prime-time TV, songs that degrade women, and a drug culture that's hard to avoid. So a man could be a cultural Christian and still be somewhat close to a Christian worldview and values.

To be a cultural Christian today is like having the whole bottle of red dye poured in the glass.

### **A Look in the Mirror**

The man in the mirror will never change until he is willing to see himself as he really is, and to commit to know God as He

really is. This objectivity anchors a man; it gives him the clarity of thought he needs to be a biblical Christian.

Is the man looking back at you in the mirror a cultural Christian or a biblical Christian?

**Patrick Morley** is the founder of *Man in the Mirror Ministries*. For the original article, visit [.](#)

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## Step It Up: 30-Minute Exercise Isn't Enough

The recommended 30 minutes of moderate exercise isn't enough to adequately reduce the risk of heart failure, according to a new study.

The findings, published in the journal *Circulation*, show people need to double or even quadruple that in order to reap the maximum health benefits.

Researchers examined 12 studies, which suggest people should engage in more vigorous exercise for longer periods of time to get the heart health they desire.

Scientists observed nearly 400,000 men and women for a period of 15 years. The researchers discovered that people who exercised only 30 minutes a day experienced "modest reductions" in heart failure risk. But the group that exercised twice or four times as much experienced "a substantial risk reduction."

It appears that the more they exercised, the greater their heart health. People who exercised an hour a day had a 20 percent risk reduction and the people who exercised two hours

a day experienced a 35 percent reduction.

Five million Americans currently suffer from heart failure, which is when the heart does not supply enough blood to the body.

Keep in mind, however, that any exercise is better than none at all. Increasing the duration and intensity of whatever you are doing will most likely improve your health.

Research shows that even just 10 or 15 minutes of cardiovascular exercise can be beneficial.

In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that one minute of intense, cardiovascular exercise is equal to two minutes of moderate exercise. Cardiovascular exercise is movement that causes you to breathe heavily.

*For the original article, visit .*

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## **Alternative Heart Treatment Moves Into the Mainstream**

Chelation therapy, an alternative technique long dismissed by conventional heart doctors, has taken a giant step toward becoming a first-line mainstream medical treatment, thanks to a boost from the National Institutes of Health.

The federal health agency's National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health has awarded \$800,000 to Mount Sinai Medical Center of Florida and the Duke Clinical Research Institute to begin a follow-up study of chelation that could lead to its use as a standard treatment for cardiovascular disease.

The funding, which will allow the research team to design a definitive study on chelation's benefits, follows a preliminary clinical trial that showed the technique provides a huge health boost to heart attack survivors that rivals the benefits of standard treatments.

That early study, published online in the *American Heart Journal*, found the combo treatment cut the death risk for some heart patients by half and is particularly beneficial to those with diabetes.

Lead researcher Gervasio Lamas, M.D., with the Columbia University Division of Cardiology at Mount Sinai, said the results came as a complete surprise to the researchers, who expected the study to prove chelation is a sham treatment.

Instead, the earlier findings were positive, said Dr. Lamas, who was once a skeptic chelation. If the latest follow-up study confirms the treatment's effectiveness, it could catapult the therapeutic approach into the mainstream, in treating cardiovascular disease—the nation's No. 1 killer.

"I think this a huge step forward," Dr. Lamas told *Newsmax Health*. "Where we were when we started this research ... we expected this would be a negative study that would be debunking chelation and this would prove it doesn't work.

"But in fact we didn't find that... It was a complete turnaround from what we expected."

Dr. Lamas' initial study—called the Trial to Assess Chelation Therapy (TACT)—involved 1,708 heart patients at 134 clinics in the U.S. and Canada, including such prestigious facilities as Johns Hopkins and the Mayo Clinic. All of the patients were heart attack survivors—50 and older, a third of them diabetics—who were taking heart medication.

The study participants were divided into four groups: The first received chelation injections (known as "infusions"),

plus high-dose oral multivitamins; the second was given chelation with a placebo (in place of vitamins); the third, placebo infusions (in place of chelation) with high-dose multivitamins; and the fourth were administered placebo infusions with oral placebo.

The researchers then tracked the participants for seven years to see which patients experienced a second heart attack, stroke, bypass surgery, other cardiovascular events or died. The results showed those who received chelation therapy with vitamin supplements had a 26 percent lower risk of heart complications, compared with those given placebos.

In diabetic patients, the combo therapy was associated with a 49 percent lower risk of heart complications. Chelation (with or without vitamins) was also found to cut the risk of death among diabetics by half over the course of the study.

“There is nothing like this for diabetes care,” Dr. Lamas said. “There just isn’t.”

In follow-up meetings with the FDA, Dr. Lamas presented his findings and pressed for a federal review of chelation therapy as an approved treatment for heart patients, alongside other conventional therapies such as the use of cholesterol-lowering statins, aspirin and other heart drugs.

Although chelation is an FDA-approved method for treating lead and toxic metal poisoning, it is not currently approved for other medical applications.

The therapy uses a synthetic amino acid (ethylene diamine tetraacetic acid), which binds to toxic metals and minerals in the bloodstream, allowing a patient to excrete them. Some experts believe heavy metal contamination causes or contributes to heart disease and that chelation rids the body of deposits that can lead to atherosclerosis, which causes coronary arteries to narrow, leading to heart attacks.

For the next leg of Dr. Lamas' research, he expects to enroll 1,200 patients in the U.S. and Canada who will be treated and tracked for five years.

Dr. Lamas says he hopes his continuing research will convince other cardiologists to embrace chelation.

"When you do research and you get the findings that you expect they are always less interesting than when you do research and you get findings you don't expect," Dr. Lamas said. "That's where you learn; that's where you have to be able to go to the next step, where you can really help patients."

*For the original article, visit .*

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## **3 More Sure Signs Witchcraft Is Attacking You**

Earlier this month, I went through a massive witchcraft attack. My mind was clouded. My eyes were burning. My body was worn out. People were attacking me with unfounded accusations. I had a low-grade headache that lasted for days.

I've literally written a book on witchcraft and I did everything I knew to do. In the end, all I could do was stand. I recently heard that the late prophet Bob Jones once said that weeping breaks witchcraft. That's something I intend to study, but one thing I know by experience is that the anointing breaks the yoke. The witchcraft finally broke at our miracle service at Awakening House of Prayer in Fort Lauderdale.

As I said in last week's column—"5 Clear Signs Witchcraft Is

Attacking You Right Now”—I believe witchcraft is one of the powers in the hierarchy of demons Paul listed in Ephesians 6:12. Just as the Holy Spirit is the power of God, witchcraft is a power of the enemy.

Witchcraft attacks often start with imaginations. Witchcraft plants seeds of deception through imaginations. These voices tell you things like “What’s the use?”, “Nothing will ever change,” “I can’t do anything right,” and “I don’t feel like going to church. I want to be alone.” With that said, here are three more signs you are under a witchcraft attack right now.

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**1. Angry and frustrated.** When witchcraft attacks, you may feel angry and frustrated. You feel like people and things are standing in your way. You may get mad at yourself, mad at the devil or even mad at God. You’re sick and tired of your circumstances, but what you don’t realize is that the enemy is magnifying your circumstances with distorted mirrors and smoke that clouds reality. When this happens, just keep acknowledging the Lord. He will make your paths straight (Prov. 3:6).

**2. Sickness, aches and pains.** I’ve told you before that when witchcraft attacks me, my eyes burn. Sometimes my chest gets tight and I get dizzy. One of my intercessors gets terrible back pain when witchcraft manifests in her life. Another of my friends sees old stroke symptoms return. Sickness is not from God. We have authority over it, but many times we like to grumble and complain and confess how bad off we are, which only strengthens the enemy’s grip on us. The devil brings what Jonah 2:8 calls “lying vanities” against you to make you think something is wrong so you’ll confess it out of your mouth and open the door for it to settle.

**3. Just plain worn out.** If you’ve slept eight hours, had a

tall cup of coffee and you still feel like you've been run over by a truck, witchcraft could be attacking you. This is one of the ways witchcraft comes after me. I've learned not to give in by laying down for a nap that turns into four or five hours of witchcraft-induced sleep. If you are eating well, sleeping well, exercising well and living well—and if you are generally healthy—you shouldn't feel like you're walking through quicksand. This could be a witchcraft attack.

## **8 Questions to Ask Yourself Right Now**

I am not one to beat the air (1 Cor. 9:26). I don't presume to know what spirit may be attacking me by comparing symptoms to a checklist. Articles like these are meant to prime the pump of information that could spark a revelation. Ultimately, we need Holy Spirit discernment to be absolutely sure we're waging warfare against the right demon. The last thing we want to do is provoke another spirit to join forces with the real culprit. We need to put the discernment back into spiritual warfare.

In my experience, though, there are some practical questions you can ask yourself to help you discern a witchcraft attack:

1. Are you on an emotional roller coaster, rushing from anger to sadness to confusion? You could be under a witchcraft attack.
2. Are you so overwhelmed with your circumstances that you just want to call in sick, stay in bed and feel sorry for yourself? You could be under a witchcraft attack.
3. Do you feel like nobody can possibly understand what you are going through and that nobody even cares anyway? You could be under a witchcraft attack.
4. Do you feel like everything you do is wrong, that nobody appreciates you anyway? You could be under a witchcraft attack.

5. Are you getting offended with people, are you touchy and fretting over what people are doing or saying? You could be under a witchcraft attack.

6. Are people rising up against you with false accusations and angry outbursts without any apparent justification? You could be under a witchcraft attack.

7. Are you reasoning out your life to the point of fear or confusion? You could be under a witchcraft attack.

Before I understood the power of witchcraft, I could answer yes to those questions when I was under attack. Witchcraft doesn't hit me that way anymore. In fact, I've learned to take authority over it, cast down imaginations, be slow to speak and maintain my joy despite the exhaustion, low-grade headaches and burning eyes.

When that doesn't work, I've learned that when I've done all I can do, to stand. I've learned to open my mouth and ask others to fight with me because one can put 1,000 to flight and two can put 10,000 to flight. And I've learned to get into the presence of God and pray in the Spirit. If we submit ourselves to God and resist witchcraft, it will eventually flee. Remember, when you've done all you can do, stand. Just keep standing.

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## **7 Ways to Develop a Prophetic Culture in Your Church**

A prophetic culture is an exciting and much needed element for a cutting-edge local church.

By “prophetic culture” I am referring to having a sense of anticipation among the attendees that God is going to manifest His presence and speak directly to His people, either through the preached Word of God or through the worship experience. There are several things needed to bring this kind of atmosphere into a local church.

The following are some of the ways to develop this culture:

**1. Minister to the Lord instead of entertaining men.** Often when I observe local-church worship services, it has more of a performance orientation than a worship orientation. When the focus is on performance, the goal is to entertain the attendees rather than minister to the Lord. Acts 13:1-2 teach us that the Antioch Church ministered to the Lord. This is much different than merely attempting to drum up enthusiasm and hype the people emotionally. A church that learns to minister to the Lord will also have regular seasons of God speaking corporately to their local church regarding their destiny and calling. This will release a powerful prophetic culture in the congregation!

**2. Have regular seasons of congregational fasting and prayer.** Our local church has had a weekly prayer meeting for over 30 years. It is often during these meetings that God has spoken to the leaders and myself about what He is saying and doing during that season of our church life. Furthermore, we have set aside three times per year when we consecrate days for corporate fasting and prayer. During these times people are empowered, lives are changed and the church experiences a time of cleansing and repentance.

A church that doesn't have regular, vibrant prayer is not allowing God to speak clearly and drill down deep to get at the root issues of sin and lethargy. Churches like this may have a great organizational flow and many good programs, but lives are not being transformed, and disciples are not being made. Like Samson of old, many churches like this would not

even know it if the Holy Spirit left them

**3. The elders should have a lifestyle of seeking God.** Leaders who do not live to seek God will not be able to lead the church into their prophetic destiny. Leadership not surrendered fully to living in the presence of God is left concocting mere strategies and programs that leave their congregation empty and powerless. Only leaders who seek God can usher in a prophetic culture.

**4. The worship team should have a lifestyle of seeking God.** Many musicians and singers I have met in the body of Christ have no personal prayer life. They are committed to the church only because it gives them a platform to express their skill. Only worship leaders and musicians that seek God as a team and in private can be sensitive enough to usher in a prophetic culture in their congregation.

**5. The gift of prophecy should function among the members.** The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 14:1 to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially to prophesy. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 instructs the church neither to quench the Spirit nor to despise prophesying. Prophecy is the greatest gift when it comes to edifying the church according to Paul the apostle. Prophecy can come forth through the anointed and authoritative preached Word, or it can be an anointed exhortation expressing the heart of God from any believer present in the congregation.

First Corinthians 14 gives rules for the use of this powerful gift so everything is done decently and in order, but in the name of biblical order many churches have shut down this gift totally! One of the greatest ways to create a prophetic culture in the church is to encourage use of this gift with biblical guidelines every time believers come together. (Whether in small groups or in during altar calls when people are being prayed for.)

In large congregational gatherings it is difficult for non-leaders to use this gift corporately, and when it is used to minister to another individual, there should always be a designated leader present to judge the word.

#### **6. The congregation should be equipped to commune with God.**

God has given the church many doors to enter into His manifest presence. Many believers understand just one kind of prayer (mostly intercession or petition prayer). The greatest way for the church to be equipped to commune with God is to observe how the leaders seek God during corporate prayer gatherings. This is because this kind of anointing is better caught than taught. Believers can learn from mature God seekers the various movements of how God draws us into His presence and orchestrates corporate seeking. However, for the prophetic culture to permeate the church there should also be congregational instruction.

Instruction should include topics such as; how to wait upon the Lord, the difference between worship and praise, meditation upon the word of God, intercession, supplication, spiritual warfare, and the prayer of faith. The more versed a church is regarding these various ways of interacting with the Father, the more the prophetic culture will permeate that church.

#### **7. The Word of the Lord should be preached every week.**

The lead pastor should be a voice for the Lord and not merely an echo of men. Too many pastors are too busy to seek God. The result is they often retrieve their sermons online or from commentaries. (These commentaries are good tools to inform a sermon but should not be mimicked in its entirety.) When a lead pastor is primarily a "God seeker," he will not only study and pray to prepare to preach, but will teach out of the overflow of their robust private devotional life. Perhaps nothing creates a prophetic culture in a local church more than when people know they are going to "hear what the Spirit is saying to their church" through the preached word every

Sunday.

May the Lord help every true church in the world develop a prophetic culture so that we can disciple the nations. After all, it is not by power or by might but by His Spirit says the Lord (Zech. 4:7). {eoa}

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## Why You Shouldn't Dismiss Flirtation as Harmless

Flirting games ring about as harmless in our minds as do reindeer games.

The modern definition of flirting is best found in the *Urban Dictionary* which reads, "A person who is innocently overly friendly, especially the type of friendliness that is interpreted as seduction." We encounter natural attractions for whatever reason all the time.

It's a complete mystery as to the why one person is attracted to another and the initial attraction is not something we can control. After that initial reaction, however, we certainly can control what happens next.

This is a difficult message to write because we do not need to

make mountains out of molehills. Yet, flirting is exactly where cheating begins, so it would be highly irresponsible of us as men not to take a strong look at it.

This is an era where apps like Tinder make “hooking up” way too easy, and 32 million married people were recently exposed by hackers as users of the married hookup site, Ashley Madison. That’s an enormous figure. All Pro Dad strives to strengthen families and marriages.

Flirting outside of your relationship is a slippery slope that will lead nowhere safe for the future of your family. Let’s take a look at the reasons, actions and ramifications of flirting.

### **Why Do Taken Men Flirt?**

The common justifications are to blame it all on your partner. “She doesn’t give me enough attention,” or “She isn’t affectionate enough for me.” Maybe she slacked off laughing at all the silly jokes over time.

But the real reason is ... the male ego is mighty and it wants to be fed. I testify to this humbly and honestly, that I have the capacity for an ego as large as the Great Lakes. I like it when the opposite sex shows me attention in *that* kind of way because it validates something deep inside my DNA.

As a young married man, a few times, this got me into situations that were hurtful to my equally young wife. As a maturing married man, it nailed me once again as sort of a last gasp: *Am I still desirable at this point or have I passed my prime?* Ego can get us into a hot mess in a hurry.

I’m a man of deep faith, and God directly intervened with me on this. It was impressed that I had been provided a tremendous gift in my wife and she would be all I ever need in all ways. It truly saved me from destruction.

## Where Are the Dangers?

This is now a digital world, and the ability to flirt has been infinitely expounded. There is something for every taste and if you go looking, you'll surely find. Even if you aren't looking, it may find you, especially on social media formats. Tread carefully. Social media is equally as powerful when designated for good, but we must remain diligent in creating boundaries to protect our families and marriages. If you have any doubt at all about what you're doing, get out.

## Ramifications and Solutions

The most serious ramification of habitual flirting is that your relationship deteriorates each time. The foundation gets cracked and falls to pieces. This is emotional betrayal, and few things are as damaging to our wives. Loyalty means everything to a woman. When they feel it slipping away, and they always do, they will withdraw emotionally from you as well. That's like introducing a deadly disease to the bloodstream of marriage.

The toughest, most rugged and manly thing we can do is simply pray and stop doing it. All of us, including our egos, are to be placed solely in her trust and care.

*For the original article, visit .*

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# Daniel Kolenda: The Call vs. the Commission

Allow me to become extremely practical, if I may. I once preached about answering the call with urgency, and afterward someone came up to me and said, "God called me to the mission

field, but you said I should obey now. Does this mean I should quit my job and move to another country right away?"

These particulars are where matters become very personal and highly customized. Ultimately, only you can know what God is saying to you, and only you will be accountable to God. But for most people, I think it's safe to say that when God calls you, He doesn't expect you to go to the airport immediately or sail with the next tide.

This may sound like a contradiction of what I have previously said, but if there is any confusion about this point, it is because of a failure to distinguish between the "call" and the "commission."

When Jesus called His disciples, He didn't call them to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers. He simply called them to follow Him. And as they followed Him, Jesus promised that He would make them into "fishers of men." Now the disciples left their nets immediately to follow Jesus, but they were not made into fishers of men immediately. There was a season of training between when Jesus called them to follow Him and when He commissioned them to preach the gospel.

Obedience to the call of God is about following Jesus. If you have heard the call of Jesus and you think you need to be on the next plane to the mission field, then you probably misunderstood what He said when He called you. He probably didn't say, "Go and do." He most likely said, "Come and follow." Don't worry about the commission. It will come as you follow Jesus. {eoa}

**Daniel Kolenda** *is a missionary evangelist who has led more than 10 million people to Christ face to face through massive, open-air evangelistic campaigns in some of the most dangerous, difficult and remote locations on earth. He is president and CEO of Christ for All Nations and hosts an internationally*

*syndicated television program.*

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# **Are You Willing to Die for Your Faith Like This Arab Believer?**

For far too long, we in the American church have taken our freedom to worship God for granted.

As believers, we can walk into a church and sing praises to Jesus without apprehension of verbal or physical confrontation. With few recent and rare exceptions, we can share our faith on the streets without fear of arrest or assault.

This type of mentality has made us complacent. And frankly, it has made us—the American church—soft and weak.

It makes me wonder how many so-called Christians in America are willing to die for their faith. If we were faced with a life-and-death situation, one where we were mandated to renounce our faith or be killed, how many of us would lay down our lives for the cause of Christ?

Daniel showed courage in doing so. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego willingly endured a fiery furnace.

And what about the college students in Oregon who didn't lie about their faith with a gun pointed at them?

Willingness to die for his faith has never been issue for my friend Steven Khoury. The son of an Arab Christian evangelist, Steven has dealt with intense persecution his entire

life—mostly from his own people—but his faith has never wavered.

As if growing up in the volatile and chaotic West Bank in Israel wasn't enough, Steven faced a double dose of oppression due to his faith in Christ as a Palestinian. His Arab brothers often assaulted his father's church with Molotov cocktails. They also assaulted him physically and labeled him as an infidel.

In the Arab world and according to the Quran, that means death.

"I'm stuck between two rocks and a hard place," says Steven, a pastor and co-founder of Holy Land Missions in Jerusalem. "I'm an Israeli and I'm a Palestinian. Some people say I'm doubly blessed; some people say I'm doubly cursed. Being an Arab and an Israeli, I'm sometimes looked at as a traitor by both sides.

"But I always ask people, 'If you don't find anything worth dying for, what's worth the living?' As a Christian, we are all called to live a life of sacrifice. We must pay a price. Part of carrying the honor of being a Christian is that it has to come with a price."

Believers in the Middle East incur the cost daily. ISIS has slaughtered many Christians in that area of the country. I have befriended pastors in India, Syria and Pakistan whose congregations are in constant danger of reprisal for their faith in Christ.

Yet, many in the American church go on about their business as if none of that matters. In a word, we are spoiled.

"American mentality is its own worst enemy," Steven says. "People around the world envy America as a whole for what you have. Since the majority of the world cannot possess what you have, the natural inclination for some nations is to destroy

you. You have what you have because this country is based on (a) biblical foundation.

“Since other countries reject the Bible, they cannot get to where America is today. Some in the Islamic faith are willing to lay down their lives, but it’s for all the wrong reasons. What would happen if all believers, especially the American church, did that for all the right reasons?”

Indeed. Jesus suffered and laid down His life for us. Can we not do this for Him?

And as I always say, “There is that.”

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## **How to Get a Non-Believing Spouse to Pray With You**

We sat outside in the plaza of a coffee shop. He looked worn out, tired, and frustrated.

He sighed out in anguish, “I’ve retained an attorney. I have no other choice. We’re just not getting along. She wants to live like she’s still single. I want to have a marriage and a peaceful home. She wants to party. I want a wife that will pray with me and believe God for a great life. She’s just not the person that I thought she was.”

Although I am not a marriage counselor and seldom take on the daunting task, I did offer my friend some advice. I suggested that he stop trying to fix her and make or mold her into a religious woman and begin to be the husband that he should be.

I explained that the word, husband, means ‘husbandry;’ it means to ‘cultivate.’ He needed to speak words as if they are

seeds planted within her for an expected harvest in return. Rather than focus on what she is not, pay attention to what attracted you to her in the first place. Show gratitude for her and treat her as a beautiful bride, rather than an unclean person who doesn't know God.

He left that day with a small glimmer of hope, called the attorney to put the divorce process on hold, and began to do what I suggested. Within a year, not only did they save their marriage, but also they were thriving with a new child, a peaceful and prosperous home. She began to attend church with him, and they began to pray together.

I later asked, "When was the breakthrough in your marriage?"

He said, "One day, she was facing a difficult situation at work. She was overwhelmed with stress from it. I gently took her hand and asked, 'Do you mind if I speak a blessing over your day at work?' Amazingly, she said, 'Please, I need it.' That was the beginning of it all."

**Here's how to get a non-believing spouse to pray with you:**

**1. Don't consider them unclean.** This is one of the most crucial mistakes that we make in relationships. This attitude reeks with judgmentalism. It repels our spouse as if our religion is a bad odor. The apostle Paul said, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband" (1 Cor. 7:14). Your example of faith will have a cleansing effect upon your unbelieving spouse.

Paul also said, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:25-26). In other words, speak kind and comforting words that build up, encourage, and strengthen your spouse. Don't speak negative words and expect positive results.

**2. Create and protect the atmosphere of your home.** Don't allow strife to enter in. Where there is strife, there is every evil work. Don't underestimate the destructive power of strife. It's obvious that music creates an atmosphere. Television can have a huge impact on the home. Nothing can set the tone of the home like your words.

**3. Attend a church that supports proper relationships,** a church that promotes the ideas of healthy marriages, one that provides safe and nurturing programs for children. Has the fruit of your pastor's teaching produced a healthy family in his home? Does the leadership in your church model a strong family life? If a leader cannot be faithful to his own marriage, what makes you think he will honor yours?

**4. Keep your relations confidential.** My friend confided in me regarding his marriage, but I quickly pointed the conversation to him and his issues, not hers. She was not there to be in the conversation so it would have been inappropriate to talk about her. Guys, no locker room talk. Don't talk about your sex life. Ladies, don't belittle or demean your husband to your girlfriends. Keep your marriage bed holy.

**5. Show gratitude for your spouse.** Your spouse connected with you, your dreams and your ambitions which are all part of the shared hope that you have together. Don't stop dreaming together.

**6. Speak kind and comforting words.** I saw this example in Scripture which overwhelmed me with the character of God. During a vision in the night, a prophet named Zechariah was involved in a dialog with angels and the LORD. When the angels reported what they had found on the earth, Zechariah says that the LORD turned and spoke, 'kind and comforting words to the angel.' This example shows how gracious the character of God is toward the angels. I often remember this example when it comes to my response to my wife. I often reflect on my conversations asking, "Did I treat her with the respect that

God treats his angels?"

**7. Continue to court one another.** A few years ago, I realized that I had slipped into the daily grind of life and stopped pursuing my wife. I changed that by asking her out on a date. I hired a babysitter. I made reservations at a restaurant and a hotel. We had a wonderful time. Interestingly, during that date our intimacy wasn't just physical, it became spiritual. I remember hearing a concern that she had for our family and responded later at the hotel, "Honey, I know that you're concerned about this, and I think that we should take some time to pray about it." We did.

I wasn't raised in a believing home. My experience has come from reading the Bible and attempting to make myself a better man, an example of faith for my family to follow. My faith is not expressed in a long list of do's and do not's, but in a deep and passionate desire to be the kind of man that inspires faith in others, especially to my wife.

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*For the original article, visit .*

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## **How to Shop for a Surgeon,**

# Online

If you need surgery, you first want the right surgeon. You also want convenience: a comprehensive service package, a clear price, and confidence that there won't be surprises.

Well, you can get all online. You can get it online because a growing number of American and foreign surgeons are coming together as Surgeo, a website that opens simple access to the surgeons that they would use if they needed surgery.

Here is how it works.

In surgery, quality comes from the surgeon. So the first thing these surgeons did was ask themselves a simple question: which surgeons deliver the kind of quality that would cause them to send their loved ones there? Surgeons have a real advantage in answering this question because they train together, cover each others' patients on weekends, and scrub together on cases.

Surgeons know surgeons better than anyone else. So under Surgeo, you get the benefit of their collective wisdom because they only bring in the surgeons they would personally use.

Convenience comes from administrative clarity and support. So the next thing these surgeons did was design flat-fee, transparently priced packages that include all the things they think you would need.

So for example, they packaged physical therapy in with knee replacement surgery, so you don't have to worry about that. Then they packaged in those pesky ancillary procedures. So if you need gastric sleeve surgery for weight loss and your surgeon finds you need a hernia fixed, it's included: with no extra bill to worry about.

They also built in things you never find, such as simple

healthcare financing. When did you last hear of that? So if you need a knee replacement and money is tight, Surgeo can help you arrange better terms through a loan. And in some cases, such as robotic prostatectomy for prostate cancer, they even wrap in complications protection, to give you peace of mind.

Healthcare delivery is going through monumental reforms. The government and other third parties are ever complicating what once was a pretty simple physician-patient relationship. This has made it hard to find good surgeons, get clear prices, and simply access good care.

Surgeo is the reverse. Surgeo is a surgeon-driven effort to once again simplify access to quality care and revive what has always been the purpose of healthcare: to help you get well.

If you need surgery, you need a qualified surgeon and you need convenience. Surgeo helps you find them.

*For the original article, please visit .*