

8 Reasons Many Churches Are Still Living in the 1980s

Nine out of ten churches in America are either declining, or they are growing so slowly they are not keeping up with the growth rate of the community in which they are located.

It's a long sentence. Read it again carefully. Soak it in. Across America 90 percent of the churches are losing ground in their respective communities. Most of them are declining. Many of them will close.

As I have worked with thousands of churches over the past three decades, I have noticed something fascinating, yet disturbing, about many of these churches. They are still acting like it's the 1980s. The world has passed them by. They are deemed irrelevant by members of their communities. They are frozen in a time warp.

Why has this tragedy fallen on so many churches? Though I don't want to oversimplify the issue, I see at least eight reasons for this crisis:

1. They are trying to shelter themselves from culture. In the 1980s, congregations were typically part of the mainstream culture. They were accepted in most places, and embraced in some. That is not the culture of today. Many church members use their churches as a getaway from the realities they don't want to face.

2. Programs were easy answers. The vast majority of churches in the 1980s were program-driven. If there was a perceived need, they would order a resource that best solved that need. Many churches today still think they can get quick fixes from programs.

3. Churches largely catered to the needs of church members in

the 1980s. We thus created a culture of membership that is me-driven. Many church members do not want to make the sacrifices necessary to reach our communities and culture today. They are demanding their own needs and preferences to be the priority of their churches.

4. Change was more incremental. If your church is stuck in the 1980s, it does not have to worry about the rapid pace of change today. Members can pretend like their church does not need to change despite the massive upheavals of change in the world.

5. Church growth was easier. In the 1980s, a number of people would visit our churches without much effort on the members' part. One church member told me recently, "If lost people want to come to our church, they know where we are." Sigh.

6. Denominations provided solutions. Not all churches in the 1980s belonged to a denomination, but many did. And many members expected the denominational organizations to guide them and resource them. Denominations work best today in partnership with churches, but too many church members want to return to the paradigm of the 1980s.

7. Others did evangelism for the members in the 1980s. Evangelism was the responsibility of the pastor or the denomination or a few people in a program. Church members paid others to do the work they were supposed to do. Some church members today are more concerned about their worship style preference than lost people who need to hear the gospel.

9. Some churches would rather die than to get out of the comfort of their 1980s paradigm. I feel certain they will do just that.

What do you think of these issues of time-warp churches? Let me hear from you.

Thom. S. Rainer *is the president of Lifeway Christian*

Resources. For the original article, visit .

Strength Team Founder Mike Hagen Dies at 56

Mike Hagen, president and founder of the Strength Team, passed away Sunday night from a stroke following surgery, reported. He was 56.

A former member of the Seattle Seahawks in the NFL, Hagen formed the Strength Team, a group of professional athletes who are ministers with the specific gifting of evangelism. According to its website, the Strength Team “exists to serve the local church through evangelism and presents Christ with passion and clarity, pointing all to follow Jesus Christ through repentance.”

The Strength travels to churches and schools, performing feats of strength while sharing the uncompromised message of Jesus.

Hagen’s friend Bobby Hebert, also a former professional football player and now a radio show host in New Orleans, said Hagen had been on life support prior to his passing.

“I was truly blessed to have this man in my life,” Hebert said in a Facebook post. “We met in 1983, when we were both young dads and trying to make it on a USFL team. Mike touched everyone whom he met. His kindness and loyalty and his faith in God was something we should all aspire to.

“The Strength Team is a unique and effective way of reaching the next generation. They have former professional athletes who demonstrate feats of strength, with powerful life lessons

and faith in God.”

Hagen once appeared on the cover of *Charisma* magazine with John Jacobs and the Power Team.

Study: Early Detection Keys Breast Cancer Survival

Even with recent strides in breast cancer treatment, a woman’s chances of surviving the disease still partly depend on early detection, a new study says.

The study of nearly 174,000 Dutch breast cancer patients found that survival rates improved between 1999 and 2012—and that included women with more advanced cancer.

Still, women’s survival odds were best when their tumors were caught early, the researchers reported in the Oct. 6 issue of the medical journal *BMJ*.

“The general prospects for a woman diagnosed with breast cancer in the Western world are very good,” said lead researcher Dr. Madeleine Tilanus-Linthorst, of Erasmus University Medical Center in the Netherlands.

Her team found that among women diagnosed with breast cancer between 2006 and 2012, the five-year survival rate was 88 percent. That compared with 83 percent among women diagnosed with the cancer between 1999 and 2005, the study said.

The brighter outlook extended to women with more advanced cancer. Among those with larger tumors—more than 2 inches across—the research revealed that the five-year survival rate rose from 63 percent to 73 percent.

However, the smaller a woman's tumor at diagnosis, the better the outlook. Of women diagnosed in more recent years, nearly all survived at least five years if their tumor was caught when it was less than three-quarters of an inch across, the study found.

In fact, their five-year survival rates were comparable to those of an average woman their age who'd never been diagnosed with breast cancer, the study showed.

"Catching the cancer early is still highly important," Tilanus-Linthorst said.

Of the women diagnosed between 2006 and 2012, she noted, 65 percent had their tumors caught when they were still less than three-quarters of inch in size.

Dr. Harold Burstein cowrote an editorial published with the study. "The cancers caught these days are smaller and better-behaved when you look at them under a microscope," said Burstein, an oncologist at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

"And this study shows that even with the treatment advances of recent years, tumor size still matters," he said.

That might sound unsurprising, Burstein noted. But the substantial improvements in breast cancer treatment in the past decade or so have raised the question: Is early detection as important as it used to be?

Those treatment advances include "targeted" drugs such as Herceptin that zero in on specific abnormal proteins found in certain breast tumors; wider use of hormonal therapies that lower the risk of a breast cancer recurrence; and better chemotherapy regimens, according to the study.

In this study, women diagnosed with breast cancer in more recent years were more likely to receive those treatments.

They were also more likely to receive “breast conserving” surgery—where only the tumor and some surrounding tissue are removed—and less likely to undergo a mastectomy, the study found.

Even with those therapy changes, though, tumor size at diagnosis remained a key factor in a woman’s outlook, the researchers said.

And that, Burstein said, underscores the value of mammography screening.

The study did not actually look at the effects of breast cancer screening, Burstein pointed out. “But,” he said, “I think this indirectly supports mammography screening.”

That’s important, he said, because the benefits of mammography screening have been debated in recent years, especially when it comes to women younger than 50.

In the United States, mammography guidelines vary. The American Cancer Society and some other groups suggest yearly mammograms starting at age 40.

However, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) suggests that women begin screening at age 50, and continue every two years. Women in their 40s are advised to weigh the pros and cons of screening.

The “cons” include false-positive mammography results that lead to invasive testing—as well as unnecessary treatment of tiny tumors that would never progress to threaten a woman’s life, according to the USPSTF.

The “pros,” Burstein noted, include catching and treating tiny tumors that would have threatened a woman’s life. {eoa}

10 Ways to Make Your Wife Feel Beautiful

The National Eating Disorder Association found that 80 percent of women are unhappy with their weight. Pop culture is a big factor in that.

Seventy-five percent of women portrayed in sitcoms are officially underweight. The average American woman is 5'4" and weighs 140 lbs. The average model is 5'11" and weighs 117 lbs.

Our culture's definition of a beautiful body is getting more and more unrealistic. This twisting is causing many women, perhaps your wife, to feel unattractive.

As a loving husband, you have to counteract our culture. If you implement the following 10 things, your wife will tell you, "You make me feel beautiful."

1. Straight up tell her. Tell her often and in different ways. Don't wait until she needs it. Let her know when she isn't expecting it.

2. Make sure she catches you looking-at her. Perception is built on small details. A glance, a word, a raised eyebrow, a smile.

3. Never view pornography or "girlie" magazines—the message will be clear. A husband more interested in other women devastates his wife's self-esteem.

4. Never compare her negatively to other women. If you really believe your wife needs to look better, tell her she's beautiful now. If you want her to lose weight like her sister or get toned like your neighbor, the last thing you should do

is point that out.

5. Place her picture prominently on your desk and carry it in your wallet. Introduce her to your friends as, “My awesome, beautiful wife.” In other words, develop and support a culture of positive regard.

6. Shower her with gifts and tokens of love at unexpected moments. Communicate how valuable she is. Nothing does the job like unconditional, generous, spontaneous love.

7. Compliment her in front of your children. Make sure your kids know how special and lovely their mother is. They will repackage those sentiments. The truth will leak out and do its work.

8. Purchase intimate apparel, have it gift wrapped and leave the package for her with a love note. Need we say more? I don't think so.

9. Be deliberate about romance. Be the guy who worked so hard to win your wife's affection before you were married. Be courteous, sophisticated, funny and romantic. Whoever that guy was, bring him back.

10. Treat your own physique with respect. Let your wife see how you respect your body and your health. Self-respect is a value that replicates within the family. “My wife deserves the best that I can be.”

For the original article, visit .

5 Things You Didn't Know About Brown Fat

Each individual carries white fat cells as well as brown fat cells on the body. White fat stores calories, while brown fat creates a source to burn energy as well as produce heat for the body. The brown fat cells are packed with mitochondria, which is more beneficial for the individual.

For many years, researchers believed brown fat only existed in babies. Through evidence revealed in scientific studies, researchers have found adults can also carry brown fat stores, usually in smaller amounts. Further documentation also reveals that individuals with lower indexes for body mass hold more brown fats, giving clues to a positive metabolic relationship.

With obesity continuing to rise at alarming rates, researchers are seeking to find ways brown adipose can be used to help heavier individuals to lower their body weight. Here are five interesting facts everyone should know about this healthy type of fat:

1. Individuals who spend time in the colder temperatures activate brown fat stores. Interestingly, people who spend more time in cooler temperatures help activate the brown fat stores they hold. Even better news is the possibility to increase the amount of brown fat within the body.

According to research by NIH (National Institute of Health), the stores of brown fat help to regulate the temperature of the body in a healthy manner. Other researchers abroad have noted brown fat is helpful to babies since they cannot “shiver” to keep the body warm. Therefore, this type of “fat stores” helps keep the blood warm in a natural and healthy way.

2. Brown adipose tissue is found in unreliable locations.

Typically, this healthy fat source is found on the back of the neck as well as near the back of the shoulders. The challenge for scientists comes in that not everyone has the same amount of storage and the location can be unreliable.

One group of researchers from National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) found a number of younger men in good health who held brown fat stores in the chest region as well as along the spinal column. In other individuals, stores were also found within the abdominal region, which provides an interesting view of the tissue being located in various places.

3. Everyone has some amount of brown fat within the body.

Researchers agree strongly everyone has “stores” of this healthy fat within the body (to some degree). The question arises as to how much the body has and how to increase the growth of this healthy fat store within each individual. More healthy fat stores will bring more health benefits overall.

4. Brown fat tissue is difficult to find and the cost is expensive.

Scientists have realized that brown tissue is difficult to locate within the body, and this slows the process of further research. Brown fat cells are often intermingled with white fat cells within the body. Cypress, a researcher from NIDDK, notes that cat scans (CT) along with PET scans must be used to visualize the most active brown cells. The challenges to this method include costs involved as well as the need to use an injected medium of radioactive material.

5. Brown fats may be activated by taking a special pill in the future.

Research studies conducted by Cypress provides evidence mirabegron can stimulate brown adipose activity. While a number of patients were being treated with a specific drug for their overactive bladders, researchers found a boost in the activity of these healthy fats. This discovery brings newfound evidence to the forefront.

Further benefits in using a drug to enhance brown tissue activity will bring more benefits to many individuals in the future. Those who are obese will have the option to lose more weight through increased activity of healthy fats.

Patients with fatty liver diseases (seen in one-fourth of the U.S. population) may also benefit from the increase in brown fat tissues.{eoa}

Don Colbert, M.D. has been board-certified in Family Practice for over 25 years and practices Anti-Aging and Integrative medicine. He is a New York Times best-selling author of books such as The Bible Cure Series, What Would Jesus Eat, Deadly Emotions, What You Don't Know May Be Killing You, and many more with over 10 million books sold. He is the Medical Director of the Divine Health Wellness Center in Orlando, Florida, where he has treated over 50,000 patients.

For the original article, visit .

5 Clear Signs Witchcraft Is Attacking You Right Now

“Welcome to witchcraft season. This is the time of year when people start attacking and accusing you for no reason, rebelling against authority, and otherwise walking in the flesh. Take authority over it in the name of Jesus. Don't bow to the intimidation and manipulation. And by all means, don't tap into it! I'll be writing more about this next week.”

I offered that simple exhortation on my Facebook page. Of course, I was flooded with responses from the saints—some of whom were battling witchcraft in that moment and some of whom

had never heard of spiritual witchcraft. 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.

Webster's Dictionary defines witchcraft as an irresistible influence or fascination—and the Bible warns us not to be bewitched: "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified" (Gal. 3:1).

Obviously, there is a spiritual force that the Bible is warning us about. It causes us to take leave of our senses. Witchcraft releases strong confusion against our minds so that Jesus is not the clear focus of our lives. Once that happens, we are more vulnerable to the vain imaginations the enemy whispers to our souls. We have a responsibility to know about this spiritual wickedness and guard ourselves against it. With that said, here are eight signs you are under a witchcraft attack right now.

1. Confusion: Witchcraft makes you question yourself, question your friends, question your leaders—question God. When witchcraft attacks, it's difficult to make sound decisions, you may forget your keys, forget important appointments, or even forget what the Word says. When strong confusion hits your mind, you can be sure it's not coming from God. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33).

2. Trouble paying attention: When witchcraft attacks, it can feel like your mind is scrambled like an egg. You have trouble staying focused on the tasks at hand. Your mind wanders to and fro. You just can't keep a train of thought or pay attention to what you are hearing or reading. It can be difficult to hear from God and discern the devil. We must walk in 1 Peter 5:8: "Be sober and watchful, because your adversary the devil walks around as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

3. Wanting to hide in your cave: I like my cave. I like being alone with God, but when I feel tempted to hide in my cave rather than face the world—when I feel like David when he said, “Oh, that I had wings like a dove! For then I would fly away and be at rest” (Ps. 55:6)—I know I’m under attack. When Jezebel sent a messenger of fear with a word curse threatening Elijah’s life, he ran scared and left his servant behind, sat in a cave and wished he was dead. That’s a witchcraft attack.

4. Forgetting who you really are: You are a child of the King. You are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Greater is He who is in you than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). You are blessed coming in and blessed going out. Everything you put your hand to prospers. That’s your legal position. But when witchcraft attacks, you feel like a worthless worm. You forget who you are in Christ, have little to no interest in the Word, church, praise, worship or the like. You may feel guilt, condemnation or self-pity.

5. Discouraged, depressed and ready to quit: We all get discouraged from time to time, but when witchcraft attacks, you may just want to throw in the towel; send your resignation letter to God; quit, give up, cozy up in bed and pull the covers over your head. The devil comes to wear you out (Dan. 7:25), yet the Bible commands us not to grow weary in well-doing and promises we’ll reap a harvest if we don’t give up (Gal. 6:9). There’s the tension, but let’s be clear. The devil is trying to steal your harvest. Don’t let him.

A final word: As I said in my Facebook post, this is the time of year when people start attacking and accusing you for no reason, rebelling against authority and otherwise walking in the flesh. We all need to be careful about tapping into spiritual witchcraft and releasing word curses against others and ourselves.

In part two of this article, I’ll share three more signs that you may be under a witchcraft attack and give you a list of

specific scenarios that will open your eyes to the attack. For sake of space, if you want to learn how to battling witchcraft attacks against your mind and body, read my article “Overcoming Witchcraft Attacks Against Your Mind and Body” and check out my book *Satan’s Deadly Trio: Defeating the Deceptions of Jezebel, Religion and Witchcraft*. {eoa}

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.

Are These 7 Everyday Habits Aging You Faster?

Everyday habits may be aging you, says Dr. Erika Schwartz, chief medical officer at the Age Management Institute in New York City. “Many times, we do things every day—or don’t do—often without even thinking, that can make us look older,” she tells *Newsmax Health*.

If you indulge in any of the following six habits, you are causing your skin to wrinkle prematurely:

1. Crash dieting. Crash dieting can cause wrinkles and sagging skin, because as you age, skin has less elasticity and can’t adjust to rapid weight loss. If you need to lose weight, aim for losing no more than one or two pounds a week. And some doctors advise seniors not to be concerned if they gain a pound or two—as long as they’re not overweight—because an extra pound here and there can fill in wrinkles and help you look younger.

2. Multitasking. Multitasking creates stress, and stress releases free radicals that are responsible for aging. A 2012 study in the journal *PLoS ONE* found that just one week of work stress can harm DNA by shortening telomeres, the caps at the ends of DNA strands that protect chromosomes. Shortened telomeres are linked to heart disease, cancer, Type 2 diabetes and other diseases of aging. Stress can also make you more likely to indulge in other behaviors that add years to your face, including grabbing unhealthy snacks.

3. Keeping your home too warm in winter. It's tempting to ramp up the heat indoors when it's cold outside, but high temperatures lower humidity. The drying effects can parch your skin, causing wrinkles to be more prominent, and can make you itchy and cause your skin to flake. Use a humidifier to counteract dry air. Keeping rooms a bit cool can also help convert fat-storing white cells to fat-burning beige fat cells.

4. Munching candy bars. "Your sweet tooth may be adding years to your face," says Dr. Schwartz. Sugar in the bloodstream forms damaging molecules called advanced glycation end products (AGEs). The more sugar you eat, the more AGEs form and harm the protein fibers that keep your skin firm and elastic. Once damaged, your skin begins to wrinkle and sag, says Dr. Schwartz.

5. Not sleeping enough. "Sleep is crucial," says Dr. Schwartz. "If you don't sleep seven to eight hours a night, you don't give your body time to renew itself, manufacture hormones and keep you from aging. People who sleep are always the ones who look younger than their chronological age." Try to get 7 to 8 hours a night.

6. Not washing your face every day. If you don't, you're making yourself look older, says Dr. Schwartz. "Wash with an organic cleanser and scrub makeup off your face." Although moisturizers hydrate skin and help make wrinkles less

noticeable, never moisturize on top of a dirty face. “If you do, you’ll clog your pores and wind up with pimples and other skin problems that can make you look older.”

7. Smoking. You should already know this, but in addition to shortening your life, smoking can age your skin prematurely, and the more you smoke, the more wrinkling you’re likely to have. It’s not only your face, says the Mayo Clinic. Smoking, which narrows blood vessels and impedes blood flow to the skin, also increases wrinkling on other parts of your body, including your inner arms.

For the original article, visit .

Thank God He Loves Me When I’m Unlovable

I will be the first to admit—and my wife and children will reluctantly back me up on this—that I am unlovable at times.

Anyone that has ever spent significant time around me during my nearly 50 years realizes that I have a temper. It’s a character trait I do not embrace.

Drivers on the road irritate me constantly. The injustices of this world—especially when it pertains to the godless acts of our government officials such as our “esteemed president”)—aggravate me. The cold, callous attitudes of not only the unsaved but of some in the church when it comes to societal issues makes my flesh want to tear into those people. My “righteous” anger leads me to believe those people are simply unlovable.

But doesn't that type of attitude reflect the character of a callow Christian, someone who hasn't experienced Christ's love and grace to a great degree? Doesn't that make me just as unlovable as those I accuse? I understand I am human and that humans get angry, but most times, it doesn't lead to Christlike behavior.

As a Christ follower, however, there are two things I know. The first is that if you are a child of God and have repented of such anger, God has afforded you grace and you are forgiven. "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in mercy" (Ps. 103:8).

No matter what you do (outside of the unpardonable sin of blaspheming the Holy Ghost), Scripture says His love is unconditional. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Not that you may take that as a license to wallow in your sin, but you know you are forgiven if you sin and repent.

The second is that you are a work in progress. In my case, the Holy Spirit convicts me daily of my un-Christlike attitudes and behavior. As Paul said in Philippians 1:6, "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."

In his book, *Lord, Teach Me How to Love* (which I am re-reading), Creflo Dollar writes, "No matter how you treat Him, His love remains the same. That's how He wants us to be." Isn't that the way we should be?

I mess up every hour of every day, and I am well aware of it. I'm about as unlovable as they come sometimes. I pray daily that God's love is continually nascent in my heart so that I can show others the love and grace God has shown me.

Won't you make this a daily prayer of yours? Won't you pray with me that God will make you lovable to the world and not only to Him?

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

How Do You Know If a Message Is Prophetic?

My father's family helped to start the first Pentecostal church in Western New York.

My family attended the local Methodist church every Sunday morning when I was growing up. My mom played the organ and my dad taught the adult Sunday school class. Church life was in our blood and in our very DNA.

When I was 7, my father decided that he wanted his family to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in the church setting. So, although we continued to attend the Methodist church every Sunday morning and serve there, we also began to attend Sunday evening services at the Assembly of God church in a neighboring community.

Instead of staying at home and watching *Lassie* or *The Wonderful World of Walt Disney* on Sunday evenings, we went to a church where the power of the Holy Spirit was moving and alive.

We drove to this Pentecostal house of God through blizzards and through thunderstorms. Weather didn't keep us home ... weariness didn't keep us home ... homework didn't keep us home ... and holidays didn't keep us home.

We went to church! It was who we were and what we did with our lives. There was no whining involved ... no questions asked ... no excuses given.

The Sunday night service began at 7 p.m. with a lively song service, but that was only the beginning! The evening wasn't complete without vibrant testimonies, a Bible-based sermon, and then it was time for the gifts of the Holy Spirit to move. I remember that most Sunday nights, we lingered at the altar until 10:30 or later. God was there ... He was real ... He spoke even to children!

I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit when I was 8 at that precious Pentecostal altar.

No matter how late we arrived home from Sunday night service, all three Burton children went to school on time on Monday mornings. The call to honor God with our lives went beyond the altar and into the everyday.

When it was time for college, God made it abundantly clear that I was to attend Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma. ORU was a place where the Holy Spirit was recognized as a vital and life-giving force.

ORU was a place of worship, of prayer, of hearing God's voice and of dynamic and Spirit-led challenge! And I was there!

I met the man of my dreams at ORU, and we have served the Lord in charismatic churches across the country for 38 incredible years! What a rich honor to be chosen to love the people of God who are simply hungry and thirsty for more of Jesus.

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that has impacted my life greatly not only as a child, but also as a college student and throughout my adult life has been the gift of prophecy.

Have you ever received a prophetic word that just seemed crazy to you? Has anyone ever prophesied gloom, doom and sin over your life?

Have you ever cringed at the proclamation of a self-described prophet and wondered where God was in all of the charismania?

I have. I have wondered, and I have shaken my head in disbelief, and I have asked God to protect unsuspecting victims from the verbal abuse of an overly eager and zealous prophet or prophetess.

I believe in the gift of the prophetic. I believe that God is still speaking today and that one of the ways in which He speaks is by giving words of knowledge and wisdom to men and women who have been called and anointed for such a ministry.

I have often received such words that have resonated in my spirit with fervor and a heartfelt agreement that the God of creation was speaking to me! Imagine that!

However, I have also heard hollow words of condemnation and misplaced authority that a man or woman of God has no business speaking!

So what do we do? Where do we go from here? If we are to be the people of God in this generation who believe in the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit, how do we exercise such gifts in a healthy and godly manner?

I believe that we approach this in the identical manner as we approach anything else that requires God's heart and God's oversight. We must go to the Word of God for instruction and boundaries.

"But he who prophesies speaks to men for their edification and exhortation and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3).

Edification. Exhortation. Consolation.

Those three words determine the boundaries of the prophetic.

Edification. Exhortation. Consolation.

If a word edifies the listener to whom you are speaking ... give it!

If a word exhorts or brings refreshment to the listener ... give it!

If a word consoles or calms the listener ... give it!

Otherwise ... don't give it!

As I minister to women all across America through the written and spoken word, this is how I view the gift of the prophetic in my ministry:

I go mining for gold in the heart of God concerning a person or a situation and then I place that valuable and beautiful gem found in the heart of God into the life of the listener.

The New Testament prophet was given the extraordinary role of edifying people, exhorting people and consoling people! What an honor! {eoa}

Carol McLeod is an author and popular speaker at women's conferences and retreats, where she teaches the Word of God with great joy and enthusiasm. Carol encourages and empowers women with passionate and practical, biblical messages mixed with her own special brand of hope and humor. She has written five books: *No More Ordinary, Holy Estrogen!*, *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart and Defiant Joy!* Her most recent book, *Refined: Finding Joy in the Midst of the Fire*, was released on Aug. 1. Her teaching DVD *The Rooms of a Woman's Heart* won the Telly Award, a prestigious industry award for excellence in religious programming.

How to Teach Your Son to

Become a Godly Man

When I was in my mid-30s, I had a life-changing epiphany. I worked on the road a lot as a financial adviser, but on this day I was in the office on my computer.

When my boss walked in, I buried my face into the computer screen as she spoke with others. I was filled with anxiety and hoped I would go unnoticed. I realized at that moment, that was how I normally responded to my bosses. Then a question reverberated in my brain, *Why are you hiding?* I wanted to find out why I was afraid of the authority figures in my life.

Ultimately, I came to the conclusion that I didn't feel like an adult. Physically, I was in my 30s, but internally, I felt like I was twelve and I was afraid they would find out. That fear kept me from being comfortable with my true self. Instead, I would try to play the part I thought they wanted in order to mask what was going on inside. I would always be in awe of those I felt like had the keys to a kingdom of which I didn't have access.

Sons need their dad to show them how to be a man. My dad was amazing in so many ways. He taught me a lot. I loved him, he loved me, and I wouldn't have wanted anyone else as a father. There were many reasons I felt the way I did that had nothing to do with him. However, somewhere along the way, there were things that were missed in bringing me into manhood. As I have studied what I was missing, I have narrowed down the following things in teaching a son how to become a man.

1. Identity. Unfortunately, the world communicates to our kids that they need to be a certain type or way to be "successful" or perhaps even "acceptable." When they believe it, they conform and/or perform for approval. In other words, they hide their true self. If they have been rejected by an authority or

their peers, they will bury it even more. Our boys need a strong understanding of who they are as individuals. Until our sons are able to authentically be themselves, they will remain in perpetual childhood. Bringing a boy into manhood involves nurturing his real self to the surface. A man is not made; he emerges. We draw him out with unconditional love, listening, encouragement, and gentle coaching.

2. Belonging. Although being independent is often lifted up as a virtue, we were never meant to live that way. We were meant to be connected to one another through love and belonging. It is a major factor in our maturation process. Our sons need to know they are worthy of belonging otherwise they will never feel good enough. They will always feel as though all others are a step ahead. It will inhibit their ability to be vulnerable which leads to stunted emotional growth. A father is one of the most powerful factors in a son feeling worthy. Our boys need our presence and approval. Merely spending attentive time with him verifies his dignity. Affirm his value so that he knows it is not based on his accomplishments, but on who he is.

3. Voice. In Walt Whitman's poem "O Me! O Life!" is the line, "That the powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse." Our sons are made with gifts and talents. They have wisdom gained through their own experience; a story to tell. They have powerful things to offer the world. A child shrinks into his parent's arms (or computer screen), but a man stands up and contributes his verse. Help him find his gifting by encouraging him to try new things. Give him room to toil and let him know it's OK to fail. Give him space to find his voice. Don't sculpt it for him or be quick to shoot it down. Affirm it instead.

4. Ceremony. I believe this is something our culture has lost when it comes to bringing boys into manhood. There are still cultures that do it, but they are declining. Have a ceremony that communicates he has gone from a boy to a man. We have

weddings and graduations. This is equally important. Here is an example of a blessing ceremony. {eoa}

B.J. Foster *is the content manager for All Pro Dad and a married father of two. For the original article, visit .*