

Here Are Some Natural Ways to Elevate Your Mood

Many health experts, as well as lay people, believe doctors over prescribe antidepressants. In just the last 20 years, the number of people taking antidepressants has exploded. One out of every 10 Americans takes one, and that number jumps to one out of every four middle-aged women.

Recently I interviewed Dr. Sara Gottfried, a California gynecologist and author of the fabulous *Hormone Reset Diet*. She told me she discovered her successful weight-loss program after a frustrating experience with her own doctor, who, when told she was moody, lacking energy and clearly overweight, prescribed an antidepressant.

Gottfried was skeptical that an antidepressant was the answer to her problem. She was right. She suspected it was hormonal in nature, and tested her hormones (something her general practitioner failed to do), which were wildly out of whack. After balancing her hormones, she lost the weight and regained her joy ... all without any pills.

One of my friends complained to her doctor about experiencing brain fog and lethargy. He prescribed an antidepressant. Like Dr. Gottfried, my friend was skeptical and felt an antidepressant was not the answer.

She was right. She got second and third opinions until one physician hit upon the correct diagnosis: Lyme Disease. She was treated with an antibiotic, not an antidepressant, and her symptoms dissipated.

A woman in my aerobics class mentioned she ditched her antidepressants when she started doing strenuous cardiovascular exercise combined with weight lifting. She said the doctor who prescribed her antidepressants never even told

her there was a natural alternative to the medication.

A brain researcher has written a fascinating book about other natural ways to mitigate feelings of depression. It's called *The Upward Spiral*, by Dr. Alex Korb.

Korb uses his knowledge of the way the brain works to teach people how to rewire their brain's circuitry, focusing on two primary areas: the prefrontal cortex, which is the thinking part, and the limbic system, the feeling part.

He bases his theories on scientific studies that have proven to increase happiness.

One of the most interesting tips in his book is when you are feeling depressed, ask yourself, "What am I grateful for?"

As it turns out, gratitude stimulates the production of dopamine. This is what the antidepressant Wellbutrin is said to do. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that deals with the brain's reward and pleasure centers and regulates emotions.

Additionally, gratitude boosts levels of serotonin, which is the claim of the popular antidepressant Prozac. Like dopamine, serotonin is a neurotransmitter that is considered a contributor to feelings of happiness. Gratitude is enormously valuable in boosting well-being.

If it seems difficult focusing on the things and people for which you are grateful, take heart. Dr. Korb says the more we practice gratitude, the easier it becomes, kind of like building a "gratitude muscle."

Nancy Lee DeMoss penned the highly successful *Choosing Gratitude*, which is a comprehensive tutorial about how to increase gratitude. I interviewed her last year for a piece that aired on *The 700 Club* on Thanksgiving. It changed my life. Gratitude not only improves our mood, but also our relationships and overall health.

Another tip Dr. Korb recommends to stymie the blues is to label negative feelings. The simple act of identifying the emotion you are feeling helps alleviate it. We need to recognize and name our feelings, not bury them. All you need to do is describe the emotion you are feeling in just one or two words.

Here's another great tip: touch. Human contact makes us happy. It can be something as slight as a handshake or a hug. If you don't have a lot of physical contact in your life, getting massages on a regular basis will do the trick.

Finally, we become happier when we make decisions. It gives us a feeling of completion, closure and accomplishment. Try not to fret about making the perfect decision, sometimes that's not realistic. Instead, try focusing on making a decision that's "good enough," and move on. {eoa}

For the original article, visit .

For This Time, God Has Called the Jonahs

Are you a prophet on the run? Are you running away from your assignment to speak the word of the Lord? Are you running from the presence of the Lord? Are you hiding? You can run, but you cannot hide from God.

The Lord is calling the Jonahs. You will not be the first and you will not be the last because there are Jonahs in every generation. There are prophets running from God today. Don't be a prophet on the run. You have been called to bless your generation. Don't run and hide from the call. Embrace it and

obey God today.

For those who don't want to speak for the Lord, I pray that His word in your heart will be like fire shut up in your bones (see Jer. 20:9)!

God told Jonah to arise and go to Nineveh. Jonah instead went the other way. Jonah ran from the presence of the Lord. There are many prophets who are like Jonah. I call them prophets on the run. They sense and know the call of God to be a prophet, but they say, "I cannot handle that calling."

If you are a prophet on the run, then you know you cannot hide from God. You cannot hide in the bottom of the ship as Jonah did. You cannot hide from the presence of the Lord.

In Psalm 139:8-9, 12 David wrote, "If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell at the end of the sea ... even the darkness is not dark to You, but the night shines as the day, for the darkness is like light to You." Even the darkness cannot hide from God, Jonah tried to hide, but God knew where he was. God knows where his Jonahs are. He knows where every prophet is.

Jonah did go to Nineveh. Jonah did speak the word of the Lord to that city. The results were astonishing. The whole city repented and was spared.

Jonah's assignment was to speak to a city. What is your assignment? How many lives hang in the balance as a result of your calling? How many people will be blessed when you obey God?

This is a call for the Jonahs to arise and go to Nineveh. Where is your Nineveh? Whom are you sent to? These are questions every prophet has to answer.

Your Jonah experience has prophetic significance. Even Jonah's

experience was prophetic. He was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights. This was a picture of Christ being in the heart of the earth three days and three nights (see Matt. 12:40).

When you are prophetic, even your experiences will be prophetic. Jonah was prophetic even when he was running away from the call. Prophet, you can't escape. You have been designed by God to be a prophet. You will see things even when you are running from the call (see John 1:11-12).

Jonah knew what was going on when the storm came. The men on the ship did not know, but Jonah knew. Prophets know when they are running. They know the trouble of running from the call. Jonah told the men to throw him overboard. Then a big fish swallowed him. Jonah cried out to God from the belly of the big fish. He promised God he would pay his vows.

Prophets, many of you have vowed to serve and obey the Lord, but you are running the other way. It is time to keep your vows, promises, dedications, and obligations.

Arise and obey, Jonah. Don't get yourself in trouble. Necessity is laid upon you. You have to obey God. You have to arise. Jonah prayed, and God brought him out of the fish's belly. God will bring you forth when you pray.

There are many ministers who have accepted the call to preach but are running from the prophetic calling. Maybe your group does not believe in prophets. Maybe you have seen people call themselves prophets who did not have good character. Maybe you have seen false prophets. These are reasons why some run from the call.

God is calling and transitioning many of His ministers. Many have been called to be prophets, but they are fearful. Don't be a Jonah. Don't run from the call. Embrace it. The prophet's ministry is designed to bring deliverance and salvation to many. Nineveh was spared and blessed because

Jonah was there.

*Adapted from Prophet Arise by **John Eckhardt**, copyright 2015, published by Charisma House. Has religion and tradition hindered you from rising up into your true calling? If so, this book is a must-have for you. It will help you understand your anointing, unique characteristics, call and purpose while providing healing and deliverance where needed. To order your copy [click here](#).*

Prayer Power for the Week of October 5, 2015

This week respond to God's calling, whatever it is, by surrendering to His will and agreeing to do, say and go wherever He leads. Continue to pray for revival to ignite in our churches and spread throughout the nation. Pray that our leaders would seek God and ask for His wisdom to govern righteously. Begin to pray now for the upcoming elections and ask the Lord for direction in how you should vote. Remember Israel and the persecuted church. Pray for opportunities to share Christ and His love everywhere you go (Jer. 20:9; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; 2 Chron. 7:14). {eoa}

5 More Ways to Really Love a Woman

On Thursday, I shared five of the most practical marriage ideas I've picked up over four decades of working with men. (These are straight out of my book *Man Alive*). Here are five more that are crucial for keeping your marriage alive and well:

1. Accept her unconditionally. Happy wives don't feel like

they have to perform to be loved. They don't feel like they will be rejected if they don't meet a set of standards. For Pete's sake, if your wife has fat ankles, don't say something stupid like, "Why don't you do ankle exercises?" Jesus accepts each of us "just as I am," as the old hymn says, and smart mates accept each other as is too. Intimacy means that I know who you are at the deepest level and I accept you.

2. Encourage her with words. Your mate has an emotional bank account into which you make deposits and from which you make withdrawals. If you're grumpy when you get home from work, you are making a withdrawal from her account. When you encourage your spouse when she feels down, you are making a deposit. (Make sure to keep track of the account balance!)

We all need to be lifted up when we feel blue, but the most successful couples go one step further—they create a positive environment. They verbally affirm each other at every opportunity. They try to catch each other doing things right. They pass along compliments others make about their mate. They never pass up an opportunity to express appreciation: "I love the way you fix your hair." "That was a great dinner." "I love having you for my wife." "Thank you for running such a smooth home."

Encouragement is the food of the heart, and every heart is a hungry heart.

3. Take care of her financially. Money problems create more stress on a marriage than any other outside threat. Here is the money issue in a nutshell: is it right to spend so much on a lifestyle today that your wife would be forced into panic mode if you were not around anymore? Successful couples have resolved to live within their means. They do not live so high today that they fail to provide for retirement and premature death.

4. Laugh with her. The antidote to boredom in marriage is

lively humor. If your partner says something even remotely funny, laugh! Keep track of what brings a smile to her face and what makes her laugh till her sides hurt. If neither one of you is funny, watch funny movies and make some funny friends.

5. After God but before all others, make your wife your top priority. Once I called three friends to pray for a difficult challenge I faced the next day. One week later I called each of them to let them know how it turned out. “Oh yeah,” every one of them said, “I’ve been meaning to call you.”

Sure.

Men, you and your wife are the only two people who are really in this thing together. Everyone else will phase in and out of your lives—even your children. One day soon the party will be over and all your golfing buddies will have moved to Florida to live in little condominium pods and drive around on streets made for golf carts.

And, there will be only two rocking chairs sitting side by side—one for you, and one for her.

Doesn’t it make sense to invest today in the person who will be sitting next to you then? Be your wife’s best friend.

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

Could These Vegetables Be

Inflaming Your Body?

Many people have heard of deadly nightshade, which is a poisonous plant, but there are a number of nightshade vegetables, both popular and not so common, that are safe for consumption. Edible species within the *Solanaceae* order include eggplant, bell peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, and paprika, as well as foods like pepino, tomatillo, and pimento.

Surprisingly, while the latter-mentioned foods are healthy food choices, there is growing evidence suggesting the alkaloids in nightshade vegetables may contribute to the onset and/or persistence of chronic pain and inflammation.

As part of the *Solanaceae* order, nightshades consist of more than 2,000 different botanical species, including perennial and annual plants, trees, and shrubs. The term *Solanaceae* originates from Latin and references the solanine alkaloid compound the nightshade plants produce. While not considered true nightshades, ashwagandha, goji berries, huckleberries, and blueberries also produce solanine. Solanine is a nerve poison within the plants, serving as a defense against plant-eating insects.

Solanine is just one of the steroid alkaloids and cholinesterase inhibiting glycoalkaloids in nightshade vegetables. Potatoes and eggplants contain solanine, peppers contain capsaicin, and tobacco contains nicotine. The glycoalkaloids in vegetables like potatoes have a negative impact on the permeability of the intestinal tract and contribute to Irritable Bowel Syndrome.

Dr. Norman F. Childers and Dr. M.S. Margoles write about the negative effects associated with the accumulation of glycoalkaloids in the body in an article appearing in *The Journal of Neurological and Orthopedic Medical Surgery*. According to Dr. Childers, the founder of the Arthritis

Nightshades Research Foundation, the accumulation of glycoalkaloids, whether alone or in conjunction with other cholinesterase inhibitors like pesticides and caffeine, can have negative effects on the body.

Some of the effects include the onset of inflammation, muscular tenderness, pain, spasms, aching, and stiffness. The latter symptoms may only last a few hours after nightshades consumption, but the negative effects can last up to 90 days if the individual consumes large amounts of edible nightshades.

The effects of edible nightshade consumption may contribute to or worsen arthritic conditions. Osteoarthritis is one of the leading disabilities in the United States. According for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of 2012 there were 52.5 million diagnosed cases of arthritis in the U.S. The number of those affected is predicted to increase dramatically within the next 15 years and predictions suggest that by 2030, some 67 million individuals will have diagnosed arthritis. Roughly two thirds of all sufferers are females. The most common type of arthritis is Osteoarthritis, followed by conditions like rheumatoid arthritis. Arthritic conditions affect men, women, and children; as such conditions know no boundaries related to gender, age, or race.

The medical costs of such conditions can prove staggering; in 2003, the medical costs associated with arthritis were around 128 billion each year. Since the mid-1990s, medical care and disability related costs related to arthritis and other rheumatic conditions have exceeded \$300 billion a year. Finally, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies released a report in 2011 suggesting that 116 million people live with chronic pain conditions, which in turn is resulting in more than \$635 billion in lost productivity and health care costs every year. Some experts assert that many arthritic conditions are misdiagnosed and may actually be caused from the consumption of edible nightshades instead.

90-Day Ban on Edible Nightshades

People suffering from musculoskeletal pain disorders, rheumatism, lupus, and alternative conditions related to arthritis often find that consuming edible nightshades has a negative impact on their health. To determine if nightshades are affecting an individual, it is recommended that the individual avoid all food sources falling under the definition of nightshades as well as those that have similar effects. The foods and products should be avoided for a period of 90 days.

Once the 90 days have passed, the individual can reintroduce one selection at a time back into the diet. The individual should take careful notes documenting how one feels after eating. If the individual notes any of the symptoms associated with nightshades consumption, then the food should be eliminated from one's diet.

List of Edible Nightshades

Aubergine

Bell pepper

Blueberries (contain inflammation inducing alkaloids)

Cayenne pepper

Chili pepper

Eggplant

Goji berries

Gooseberries

Green pepper

Ground cherries

Homeopathic Nightshade (Belladonna) treatments

Huckleberry (contain inflammation inducing alkaloids)

Okra

Paprika

Pepino melon

Potatoes

Red pepper

Sorrel

Soy Sauce (US made with genetically modified soybeans cut from Petunia (a nightshade plant)).

Tobacco

Tomarillos

Tomatillos

Tomatoes

Wax pepper

Additional Items to Eliminate

Baking powder made with potato starch.

Edible flowers like Devil's Trumpets, Angel, Day Jasmine, Chalice Vine, and Petunia.

Envelope seals: Refrain from licking them as some may contain potato starch.

Medications, either over-the-counter or prescribed, containing potato starch filler.

Sleeping pills containing scopolamine or atropine.

Topical pain treatments containing capsicum: It originates from cayenne pepper.

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For the original article, visit .

5 Ways to Really Love a Woman

Consider the multitude of problems men face—the problems *you* face. Now put the marriage problem in one stack, and all the “other” problems men face in a second stack.

The marriage problem *alone* is bigger than all the other problems men face *combined*.

Easily the biggest problem men face, as a group, is that their marriages are not working the way God designed.

Before we get practical, the reason practical often doesn't work is that men don't, in their heart of hearts, have the right “theology of marriage.” Or, knowing what's what, they either don't believe it, don't want to believe it, or did believe it but lost their faith because it's not going the way they wanted.

The correct theology of marriage is based on Ephesians 5:25. “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and

gave Himself for it.”

“As Christ loved the church” means that we are to love *our* brides “in the same way” or “equal to” the way Christ loved *His* bride.

What’s interesting is that it’s not the way “Jesus” loved. Rather, the reference is to His title as the Christ—the Messiah.

In theology there are three very well-known, classic offices held by Jesus in His capacity as the Christ: prophet, priest, and king.

So when the Bible tells us to love our brides “equal to” the way Christ loves His bride, that means we are to love our wives, and by extension our children (the fruit of our union), as prophet, priest, and king.

As the prophets of our wives (and children) we are responsible, like Christ, to bring the gospel and the Word of God to our families. Examples include “along the way” discipleship, having them in church, praying before meals, mentoring moments, and/or family devotions.

As the priests of our wives (and children) we are responsible, like Christ, to pray for (and with) our families and mediate with them to the Father.

As the kings of our wives (and children) we are responsible, like Christ, to provide for all of their temporal needs.

Of course much more could be said, but with this better understanding about “the theology of marriage,” let’s now turn it into something we can actually execute. How can we excel at loving our wives as her prophet, priest, and king—practically speaking?

Here are five of the most practical marriage ideas I’ve picked up over four decades of working with men. (These are straight

out of my book *Man Alive*).

1. Pray with your wife. Shaun from Bozeman, Montana, asked his men's group, "How many of you pray with your wives?" Only one of the eight men said that he did. They started holding each other accountable. Here's what Shaun said about it a year later:

The benefits when we are obedient in this area are amazing. Here are some comments from the men about what happens when they pray with their wives on a consistent basis:

"I feel a closeness to my wife that wasn't there before."

"Communication between us is better."

"The petty things are just not a big deal anymore."

And I'll tell you this, it's pretty hard to be upset with your wife or to be arguing and still come before God with a clean heart. It forces us to communicate and humble ourselves with each other before we do something as intimate as praying together. It just permeates through the rest of your family and day.

Ask your wife if you can take some time each day to pray together. Patsy and I always start the day with prayer for one to three minutes, and then we pray again when we're together for dinner.

2. Pray for your wife. Not long ago I wrote a book called *The Marriage Prayer* with David Delk. The book is titled after a very specific 68-word prayer that we believe captures the essence of what the Bible teaches on marriage.

One day, a few months after I had started praying the marriage prayer myself, I was settled into my favorite chair and deep into a book when I saw Patsy walking by with the trash. I literally leaped out of my chair and said, "Here, let me get that for you."

Immediately I stopped. *What just happened here?* I wondered, since I was pretty sure I had never done that before!

And then a phrase from the marriage prayer popped into my mind: "I want to hear her, cherish her, and serve her—so she would love You more and we can bring You glory."

This prayer has also been transforming for other men. One man said he started putting his empty Splenda packets in the trash instead of leaving them on the counter. You have to start somewhere.

Here's the whole marriage prayer:

*Father, I said, "Till death do us part"— I want to mean it.
Help me to love You more than her,
and her more than anyone or anything else.
Help me bring her into Your presence today.
Make us one, like You are three-in-one.
I want to hear her, cherish her, and serve her
So she would love You more and
we can bring You glory. Amen.*

Think about this: you are likely the only person in the whole world who will remember to regularly pray for your mate. Copy this prayer, pray it every day for your wife, and watch God work. Learn more about the Marriage Prayer—including a version for a wife to pray—at .

3. Spend time alone with her. How we spend our time reveals what is really important to us. Successful couples spend time together. They develop shared interests, such as bowling, reading, hiking, Bible studies, board games, or walking around the neighborhood. Patsy and I have always kept a weekly date night as a top priority.

Early in our marriage, I started hanging out at the table after dinner for about twenty minutes just to be with Patsy. We've done this for decades. A few years ago I also started

rubbing her feet with lotion as we talk. I can guarantee you who she'll say is her best friend!

4. Listen to her deeply without giving an overly quick reply. Communication invariably shows up as the number one problem in marriage surveys. And the greatest weakness in communication with our mates is the problem of giving an overly quick reply. We attach high value to our mates when we listen sincerely and patiently to each other. Listening deeply requires that we don't respond too quickly, don't criticize, and don't give advice unless the other person asks for it. (Everyone dreads being "fixed.") Listening lubricates marriage and cuts down on friction.

5. Touch her. Successful couples touch each other. They hug, squeeze, embrace, pat, hold hands, put their arms around each other, and sit close enough to touch when watching television. Nonsexual touching leads to genuine intimacy. Touching her is like recharging her battery.

Note: This is the first of a two-part series. Tune in Friday for part two. {eoa}

Patrick Morley is the founder of Man in the Mirror Ministries. For the original article, visit .

5 So-Called 'Healthy' Snacks That Aren't

Yogurt makers tout the immune system-boosting punch of probiotics. Protein bars are pitched as nutritious alternatives to candy bars. And granola, trail mix, and fruit smoothies have become synonymous with healthy snacking.

But are these so-called “healthy” snacks all they’re cracked up to be? The answer, health experts say, depends on many factors and varies product-to-product.

A new *Consumer Reports* analysis found, for instance, that while some protein snack bars are a good nutritional bet, others have as many calories as a Snickers bar. Greek yogurt is a protein-rich source of probiotics, but some fruit-on-the-bottom varieties contain more sugar than a cup of ice cream. And certain fruit smoothies and brands of granola and trail mix have the same nutritional profile as a can of soda or a couple of donuts.

The take-home message: Big differences in nutrition, calories, sugar, and fat make it essential for consumers to read labels of any snack foods or beverages they buy.

“Snack bars might seem like a healthy choice for those munchie moments, with images of wholesome berries and nuts on the wrapper and claims such as ‘superfoods in every bite,’” *Consumer Reports’* experts noted in the magazine’s recent analysis of protein bars. “But the truth is that not all bars are a healthy snack—some have about the same calories, fat, and sugar in every bite as a candy bar.”

Robert Newman, a certified nutritionist and wellness expert from East Northport, N.Y., notes that healthy snacks do exist in the form of packaged bars, servings, and drinks. But fresh fruit, nuts, Greek yogurt, and other whole, unprocessed foods are equally convenient, portable, and satisfying—and don’t contain “processed junk, usually too high in carbohydrates,” he tells *Newsmax Health*.

“The whole food approach is always the best approach,” he adds. “I prefer organic walnuts, almonds, cashews, and pumpkin seeds. To be decadent I add dark chocolate flakes or chips. A handful of the above will satisfy most appetites and provide healthy fats, carbohydrates and a small amount of protein.”

That said, if you do opt to choose snack foods, here are some ways to be sure you're getting the best nutritional bang for your buck.

1. Yogurt: Plain Greek-style yogurt is packed with more protein than traditional yogurt and lower in sugar and carbs than flavored varieties. But be aware that some fruit-on-the-bottom yogurts are surprisingly high in calories, carbs, and sugar. A typical six-ounce fruit-at-the-bottom yogurt serving can pack nearly 30 grams of carbs and nearly as many grams of sugar—the same amount in a candy bar.

Tip: Buy plain Greek yogurt, be sure to mix in the liquid that tends to float on top (that's beneficial whey) and add your own fresh fruit, berries, or raw nuts.

2. Protein bars: Despite what many believe, many snack bars are not much more nutritious than high-calorie candy bars. Many of the bars tested by *Consumer Reports* often contain soy protein or chicory root—less-than-wholesome ingredients—as protein sources. Calories in the bars tested ranged from 90 to 270 per serving; fat, from 2 to 9 grams; sugars, from 2 to 20 grams; fiber, from less than 1 gram to 9 grams.

Tip: Read the label of any bar you buy, to be sure you're not eating too much sugar. High-quality brands rated by *Consumer Reports* included: Kind Plus Cranberry Almond, Abound Pomegranate & Cranberry (CVS), Larabar Blueberry Muffin, Raw Revolution Cranberry Almond & Coconut, and Raw Revolution Cranberry Almond & Coconut. Also: don't buy into the idea that protein bars are healthy alternatives to whole foods like lean beef, eggs, poultry, fish, beans, beans, and legumes.

3. Trail mix, granola: Many varieties of trail mix and granola contain unsalted nuts, seeds, dried fruits, oats, and other whole foods that are good for you. But be aware that some enhance flavor by adding sweeteners and candy—packing calorie counts of 300 or more and up to 20 grams of sugar per serving.

Tip: Read labels closely for serving sizes, calorie counts, and sugar levels.

4. Smoothies: A cool smoothie may seem like the perfect way to end a workout and some varieties do contain healthy vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and natural juices from fruits and vegetables. But be aware that some smoothies—particularly those with added chocolate or sugar—are little more than milkshakes masquerading as healthy beverages.

Tip: Check the ingredients label and make sure it contains low calories, and no more than 12-15 grams of carbohydrates or sugar per serving to guarantee you're not killing the health benefits of that workout.

5. Prepackaged salads. Many fast-food joints have added prepared salads to their menus. But some of those ready-to-eat salads contain 1,000 calories or more—as much as a conventional fast-food meal.

Tip: Avoid salads loaded with cheese, croutons, high-calorie dressings, and meats. Instead, choose salads with healthy ingredients you can see through the package—mostly fresh vegetables and greens. And be aware: baked or deep-fried veggie or fruit chips are not healthy alternatives to fresh produce. In fact, many products are simply potato chips with some veggie powder sprinkled on top, and they are typically loaded with calories, fat, sodium, and carbs.

Daniel Kolenda: The Sedative

of Excuses

Jesus said, "Seek, and you will find" (Matt. 7:7, MEV), and this is especially true of excuses. If you are looking for an excuse, you can always find one.

Some people are too young. Some are too old. Some are not smart enough. Some are not experienced enough. Some are not privileged enough. Some don't have enough money. Some don't have the right abilities. For some it's not time yet; for others it's too late. Excuses are a penny a pound, plentiful and cheap—and God does not buy them!

We become extremely creative when we want to make an excuse. Our excuses can often sound very noble and even spiritual at times. We use excuses to fool others, but they are especially effective at helping us to fool ourselves. We use them as a sedative to soothe our conscience and to make us feel better about our own disobedience and laziness.

My friend, God has a wonderful plan for your life, and He invites you to partake of it, but excuses are a dangerous enemy that can keep you from possessing what God has for you. I have seen how excuses have kept so many wonderful people from realizing their God-given potential. This is a great tragedy because life is so short, and time wasted can never be recovered.

This book has been written to help you discover God's will for your life, but the discovery of God's will for your life is never going to be enough in and of itself. Knowing God's will and fulfilling it are two entirely different things! The reality is that many people already know what God has called them to do. Even if they don't realize it or won't admit it, God has already revealed His will to them in one way or another. But they never achieve all that God has given to them to accomplish. And they never enter into the fullness of the

blessings God has prepared for them because they comfort themselves in disobedience and laziness through excuses.

Although there are far too many excuses to mention, I would like to address a few in the upcoming studies that are especially common. As you read through the list of excuses, I would like to challenge you to allow this to be a sort of diagnostic test. Examine your own heart to see if you are allowing these excuses or others like them, to keep you from walking in the fullness of what God has for your life.

Note: This Bible study was taken from Chapter 14 of Daniel Kolenda's book, Live Before You Die.

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.

13 Reasons Christians Don't Walk in Miracles

Jesus assured us that signs would follow us if we believe. So why do so many believers come up short when they try to cast out devils? Why do they lay hands on the sick and the sick stay sick? Why do they long for miracle-working power but continue to struggle day in and day out with powerlessness?

It could be because they don't have the faith for it, but it could also be that they haven't paid the personal price to walk in God's power. Yes, we have authority over devils and

sickness. Yes, we carry the kingdom of God with us wherever we go. Yes, miracles, signs and wonders happen according to God's will—not our own.

But I submit to you that there could be many things standing between you and the manifestation of His miracle-working power. That was the case in Voice of Healing evangelist A.A. Allen's life. Before Allen's miracle ministry took off, he was struggling with these questions: "Lord, why can't I heal the sick? Why can't I work miracles in Your name? Why do the signs not follow my ministry as they did that of Peter, John and Paul?" Good questions. They are questions every Christian should be asking.

Doing Away With Besetting Sins

"I have found in my travels as an evangelist, as well as in experiences gained in pastorates, that most people have a pet sin (that) they have pampered and petted, and developed, for years. Paul terms it, 'The sin which doth so easily beset us.' (Heb. 12:1.) ... your "besetting sin." He also says it must be laid aside if we are to gain the prize at the end of the race: 'Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.'"

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Some of you may stop reading right here. It always gets quiet when I teach or preach about sin. But here's the thing: We like to look at someone else's sin and say that's the reason they don't get healed. Yet Jesus healed sinners over and over again. We need to be less focused on the sins of those who need a miracle and more focused on our own pet sins that prevent us from walking in God's power to set the captives free.

"He (needs to have) shown you what in your life needs

cleansing before you can experience the power of God. Your pet sin is the sin that you do not want the preacher to preach about," Allen says. "It is the sin for which you are always ready to make an excuse. It is the sin which, although you would not admit that it is sin, you prefer to do it when you think no one is going to find out.

"It is the sin which leads you captive most easily. It is the sin which you are always ready to defend. It is the sin which causes the clouds of doubt and remorse to cross your spiritual sky, whenever you really feel the need to contact God," Allen continued. "It is the sin (that) you are most unwilling to give up. It is the sin (that) you think is so small that God should scarcely be able to see it, yet so large that you are sure you could never live without it."

Practical Examples of Besetting Sins

Besetting sins sometimes look rather innocent. Some people like to say they are discerning, for example, but they are just critical. Some like to say they are gathering intercessors, but really they are just gossiping. Some like to say they have the gift of exhortation, but really they are flattering people with manipulation to get their way. Some like to say they exaggerate a bit, but really they are flat-out liars. The list goes on and on. Some pet sins are more serious than others, but they are all serious to God. And sometimes it's not sin; there's just no grace for you to do it.

Allen sounds like when he said, "Thousands of those who profess to be believers in the Lord Jesus Christ today would have more power in their lives if the time they spend in listening to the ball games and 'soap operas,' and 'perpetual emotion dramas' were spent listening to the voice of God, alone in the closet of prayer. These are some of the 'little foxes that spoil the vines,' destroying the tender grapes and robbing God's people of fruitfulness."

Here is the list that God gave Allen:

1. He must realize he couldn't do greater quality miracles than Jesus.
2. He could walk as Jesus walked.
3. He must be blameless like God Himself.
4. He must measure himself to Jesus alone.
5. He must deny his fleshly desires with fasting.
6. After self-denial, he must follow Jesus seven days a week.
7. Without God, he could do nothing.
8. He must do away with sin in his body.
9. He must not continue in shallow, pointless discussions.
10. He must give his body wholly to God forever.
11. He must believe all God's promises.

Numbers 12 and 13 were pet sins that he did not share with anyone, even his wife.

"Christ is sufficiently interested in pointing out the way, that if you desire to find the way of perfectness, He will place his finger on your pet sins, and show you what is keeping you from the goal," Allen says. "When you come inquiring how you can be perfect, He will not send you away without an answer."

The question is: Will you dare to ask? Are you willing to pay the price? Are you willing to deal with your pet sins? How bad do you want to see miracles?

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What If Jesus Had Become a Politician?

It's a good thing Jesus was above reproach. Otherwise, He could have been seen as simply another politician who fell for Satan's empty promises and what the world has to offer.

He is the perfect example for believers to follow when the seduction of sin taps us on the shoulder and the enticement of self-gratification presents itself.

In Matthew 4, we read the story of the Spirit leading Jesus into the wilderness. After Jesus fasted for 40 days, Satan came to tempt him not only with food but also with fame and power (which was not Satan's to give, by the way). At that moment, Jesus' temptation was to take the world as a political ruler and to shun His plan to save the world from sin. Satan's job was to try to distort Jesus' perspective by making Him focus on worldly power and not on God's plans.

Like many rulers and government heads who followed—including many in power today—Jesus could have thought only of Himself and what He could gain from the situation. Thank God for

Matthew 4:10 where Jesus said, “Get away from here, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.’”

Had Jesus given in and not lived out His purpose of the cross, our one-way ticket to the lake of fire would still be punched. No “get out of jail free card” here.

Daily, Satan fulfills one of his duties by attempting to entice us with materialism and power. He attempts to lure us away from the safety of God’s Word and entangle us in things in which we have no business being involved—desires for which we need to lie, steal and cheat to fulfill.

Remember the parable Jesus taught in Luke 8? Are you a “thorn patch” person who, after hearing the Word, goes out into the world and is choked with cares, riches and pleasures of life that bring no fruit to spiritual maturity? Or, are you a “good ground” person who will follow Jesus no matter what the cost?

If you find yourself in such a situation, ask yourself not what *would* Jesus do, but what *did* Jesus do. Away with you, Satan!

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

How Not to Cheat in a Relationship

When you Google “*cheating*,” you come up with a lot of websites that will help you do it. That tells a lot about our society.

On your wedding day, cheating is the farthest thing from your mind. You may even think: *We love each other. That will never*

happen to us. It's important to realize that none of us are above it.

When you don't take the measures to protect your marriage from cheating, you will find yourself even more vulnerable to temptation. How to not cheat in a relationship is to continually practice activities that keep you from it.

Here are 3 things my wife Lauren and I do:

1. Realize we are not above it. The minute you think it couldn't happen to you is when your guard goes down. That mentality will put you in a much weaker position and make you more susceptible to wander. It's important to be alert and focused on your commitment to your spouse.

2. Reading Scripture. God's word is instrumental in both Lauren's and my life. It keeps us focused on His ways rather than our own, which helps us hold to what is right both morally and in our relationship.

3. Talk and pray about it. Talking about it keeps us connected and on the same page. It ensures that nothing comes in between us. Similar to reading Scripture, praying about it focuses our minds and hearts on the right things. However, it also invites God's protection over our marriage and His daily renewal.

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