

The Worst Four-Letter Word I Can Think Of

We all know curse words when we hear them. They don't leave much to the imagination.

I've heard them all—or at least I think I have. But to me, this four-letter word is far more detrimental to any Christ follower than any of those.

The word is “self.”

Some of you may be thinking that I've lost it. What harm can the word “self” do?

Plenty. And the Bible affirms that assertion. Galatians 6:8 says, “For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption ... ” (MEV).

Self-worship comes in many forms. Second Timothy 3:1-4 says, “Know this: In the last days, perilous times will come. Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, slanderers, unrestrained, fierce, despisers of those who are good, traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power ...” (MEV).

Does that sound familiar? Is that not the epitome of America right now?

Giving in to self can be as simple as watching college football all day on a Saturday. Or, eating the leftover Chinese from last night's dinner without thinking your daughter would have wanted it for lunch.

Ashamedly, I've been guilty of both, and don't think either

hasn't caused some hurt feelings within my family. It's nothing to take lightly, as the Holy Spirit constantly reminds me.

However, giving in to self can cause much more pain. Viewing pornography (which can lead to adultery), gluttony, anger and materialism (running up debt) are only a few things that can rip families apart all in the name of "it's all about me."

Is this something you struggle with? Never fear, there is a solution.

What does Jesus recommend?

"Then He said to them all, "If anyone will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23, MEV).

This is not a suggestion. Jesus demands daily self-denial from His disciples. He commands constant commitment from every one of His followers.

For every true disciple living in the shadow of the cross of Christ, your life will include times of hunger and thirst, temptation, times of being despised, rejected, misunderstood and mistreated. Isn't it wonderful to know you're in good company?

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

'Oskar Schindler List Moment'

Faces the Church

Global Strategic Alliance President Kevin Jessip says God has created a kairos moment for His children. But Jessip says the moment is right, and we must act quickly to help persecuted Christians worldwide.

With the martyrdom of nearly 165,000 Christians each year—that's one every three minutes—Jessip and the GSA are working diligently to engage the body of Christ as a voice for the persecuted church and to “restore America and the nations for the kingdom of God.”

“Our initiative is to wake up the Western world not only to the plight of the persecuted brothers and sisters around the globe but also to awaken the church,” Jessip said. “This is a God-given opportunity of favor being offered to mankind at this specific time. This is a time when the body of Christ needs to come together as one in unison under the leadership of Jesus Christ.

“John 17:23 says, “I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfect in unity, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me” (MEV). We can honor the appeal of the apostle Paul when he said, “Now may the God of perseverance and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5-6, MEV).”

According to the GSA, “more than 26 million cases of Christian martyrdom were recorded in the 20th century, more than in the previous 1,900 years combined.” The GSA says more than 240 million Christians (with 60 percent being children) in over 60 nations are living under the threat of persecution. More than 51 million have been displaced by persecution or conflict in their own countries.

The statistics are staggering, and the global emergence of terrorist groups like ISIS, Hezbollah and Hamas has done nothing but enhance those numbers. The recent nuclear arms deal with Iran has done nothing to curtail the fears of Christians in the Middle East nor Israelis concerning terrorism. In fact, the anticipated threat of terrorism has increased tremendously.

Despite the trepidations, Jessip says God is “on the move,” and “we are about to experience the greatest move of God this nation has ever seen.”

“The days ahead are the greatest days for the body of Christ. We need to be prepared for the days we’re walking into,” Jessip said. “First Corinthians 14:8 says, ‘If the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?’ That must be us. We need to understand these times and to seize the moment for Christ.”

The GSA is doing exactly that. It has uniquely positioned itself as a global voice for advancing Judeo-Christian values. GSA’s voice includes behind-the-scenes diplomacy with government leadership and collaboration with media on global issues.

The organization stands with Israel and is “helping to raise awareness of the critical intersection of Israel’s and America’s future and the importance of America’s stance against anti-Semitism and the delegitimization of Israel.

The GSA is working to provide safe havens for Christians throughout the Middle East. The group is supporting workers who are engaged with the displaced and marginalized—providing education, medical care, food, water, clothing, shelter and trauma care.

In a modern-day “Oskar Schindler list moment,” the GSA is fulfilling a call for a humanitarian effort of historical proportions.

Earlier this year, the GSA co-sponsored congressional legislation, H.R. 1568, the “Protecting Religious Minorities Persecuted by Isis Act of 2015.”

So what can individuals within the church do to help the GSA?

“Besides simply praying, which is crucial, we want the church to wake up and get involved,” Jessip said. “We are asking 1,000 churches to raise their hand and foster a family. They can go to our website, , to find out more. This is a time when the body of Christ must unite.”

5 Things to Do When Your Kid Isn't Making the Grade

When I entered my junior year of high school, I had a lot of optimism. Almost immediately, all of that was erased. I played soccer, which motivated me to succeed in other areas of my life.

During a game early in the season, I started to experience foot pain. As it turned out, I freakishly broke my foot straight across requiring two months in a cast and one month on crutches. Each day was physically taxing but more so emotionally. I lost my daily routine and motivation to achieve. I would even say I fell into a depression. My grades went down and I increasingly fell behind in my schoolwork.

My parents and teachers were concerned. There were a number of conversations with teachers in the hallway about my performance. All of this was intensified by the fact that junior year is such an important year for college admissions. I felt alone and desperate. I even cheated on an exam,

something I harshly judged others about before. Failure was in and all around me. It was like a deep hole and I was disappearing into it.

If you have a child who is failing, I know at least a little of how they feel. Are report card days filled with anxiety and arguing? Are you consistently concerned about the direction they are headed? Are you at the end of your rope? Here five things to do when your kid isn't making the grade.

1. Concentrate on the basics. Both success and failure are contagious. When you're in the failure pit, it feels as if getting out is insurmountable. It is easy to want to quit. Their confidence is most likely shot. It's their mindset that needs the most help. Remind them of past successes. When basketball teams are down by twenty points, good coaches will tell the team to cut the other team's lead down to ten points. That's how comebacks begin. Start by trying to create smaller and easier goals to achieve. Build small successes into momentum.

2. Research and analyze. Let your kids know that you are coming alongside them to help. Ask your son or daughter a lot of questions. They will probably resist because the last thing they want to talk about is their failing. Who does? But it is necessary in order to figure out the fullest picture possible. Talk to their teachers, guidance counselors, specialists, and research learning styles. You may even discover that they need to be tested for a certain learning disability.

3. Create a structured schedule. It can be overwhelming to know where to start, particularly for kids. A structure will give them much needed stability. It will help maximize their time and keep them consistently active toward accomplishing goals. Plan out study, homework, and break/free times. Tailor the schedule and activities to your discoveries in the research and analysis period.

4. Rewards and consequences. This can be done a number of ways. The easiest way to do it is to pay them bonuses similar to sales goals. The higher the grade, the higher the paycheck. You could also have them pay you when they get a low grade. Another way to do it is pay them for the faithfulness in their activity. There is a lot of debate about reward systems in education. It teaches our kids how the world works in terms of being paid for production while also motivating them. Opponents say that it kills creativity and a genuine love of learning. Perhaps they are correct; however, continuing to fail will not endear your kids to learning either. I would use it as a temporary way to get them moving in the right direction. Maybe just use it for the subjects they have a hard time with. Schedule activities that promote creativity so that is not missed.

5. Tutors and/or homeschooling. They may need some focused attention. If your lives allow it, you may consider homeschooling. You can start the day by doing subjects where they excel and experience the most enjoyment. You'll get an idea of their passions so you can teach to those interests and spark their love of learning. If that is not an option (or a desire), hire tutors. Every time I met with tutors, I did significantly better. You may have tried all of these things; but, for the sake of your child, don't give up. Go back to drawing board and keep trying new things. All of the investment will be worth it.

What other things can be done to help a child struggling in school?

BJ Foster is the content manager for All Pro Dad and a married father of two. For the original article, visit [.](#)

This Element in Foods Can Trigger Migraines

Nearly 28 million Americans suffer from migraines. Usually, a migraine involves intense, throbbing pain on one side of a person's head, but in as many as 40 percent of people who suffer migraines, the pain occurs on both sides of the person's head.

A migraine may be accompanied by nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to both sound and light. If a migraine is not treated, a person can suffer from symptoms for up to three days.

For individuals who suffer from headaches and migraines, it may be surprising to discover that some foods may be behind the onset of the painful experience. Some individuals may actually have a level of sensitivity to tyramine: An amino acid that originates from the breakdown of aging proteins from food.

The amino acid may increase blood pressure and, in turn, trigger a headache in tyramine-sensitive individuals. If you suspect you have a sensitivity to tyramine, you should begin tracking the foods you consume by keeping a detailed food diary.

Since tyramine originates with aged foods, if you find you are sensitive to the amino acid, you will want to avoid certain beverages and foods. Generally, the longer the food is aged, the greater the amount of tyramine one will find in the food or beverage.

Some **beers, red wine, soy sauce, sauerkraut** and **citrus fruits** may trigger a headache in tyramine-sensitive people. Additionally, foods like aged cheese and cured or smoked meats may be behind the onset of headaches. Tyramine content levels

in aged cheese will vary greatly and levels are dependent on the different processes, fermentation practices, aging and degradation of the cheese product.

Cheeses that typically contain high levels of tyramine include processed, Swiss, Parmesan, Muenster, Mozzarella, Gorgonzola, Feta, Stilton, Cheddar, Brie and Blue cheeses. Additional foods containing significant amounts of tyramine include nuts, canned soups, raisins, avocados, pickles, olives, onions, pinto beans, lima beans, garbanzo beans, broad beans and fava beans.

It is also important to note that tyramine-rich foods may interact with certain medications, particularly certain types of antidepressants called Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs). If you are taking such medications, you should discuss your dietary intake with your physician.

In addition to tyramine-rich foods, alcoholic beverages can trigger headaches as well. When the body metabolizes alcohol it creates impurities in the body. The impurities are byproducts that trigger headaches. The main culprits that serve as headache triggers are champagne, whiskey, beer and red wine.

Foods containing tyramine are only one source of foods responsible for triggering headaches. Some foods containing additives like nitrates can trigger headaches in certain people. The consumption of cold foods or even not eating enough food can lead to headaches.

Meanwhile, if you consume caffeine and you suddenly stop doing so, you will experience a headache from the caffeine withdrawal. By maintaining a diary, you can identify the foods triggering your headaches so you can avoid them and thwart the headaches entirely. You can also isolate a single food at a time to see if it is a headache trigger.

If it is, you can avoid it in the future, and if it is not,

you can keep it on your menu for acceptable food intake.

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

What Should We Expect During This Special Hebrew New Year?

We have now entered into the Hebrew New Year of 5776. The Ten Days of Awe is a time when many prophetic believers receive revelation for the new year. Below I highlight some of the things the Lord has been speaking to me—including the coming harvest, increased hunger for the Word, dreams fulfilled, and harvesters released. This also marks a new beginning for the ministry of Encounters Network! We believe that the Lord has amazing things in store for this year. We look forward to partnering with each of you to reach the nations of the earth through the power of the internet!

Significance of the Jewish New Year

This past Sunday at sundown marked the beginning of Rosh Hashana and we are now in the midst of the Ten Days of Awe. This leads up to the Day of Atonement, which this year is celebrated on the evening of September 22 through sunset on the 23rd. Happy New Year from myself and staff and team at Encounters Network.

Rosh Hashana, also known as Yom haDin (Day of Judgment), begins the “Ten Days of Awe” (Yomin Noraim), the “Ten Days of Turning or Repentance” or “the High Holy Days” which conclude with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. During this period, it is customary to greet one another with the phrase, “L’Shanah Tovah Tikateyvu” meaning “May you be inscribed in the Book of

Life.”

This holiday is both solemn and joyous since it is both the Day of Repentance and the Day of Judgment. It is celebrated for two days. On the first day, some Orthodox Jews practice a custom called “tashlich,” which involves going to a body of water and emptying one’s pockets or casting bread crumbs into the water. This is symbolic of Micah 7:19, *“And you will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”*

A family meal is celebrated which includes honey cake, wine, and apples dipped in honey to symbolize hope for a sweet and happy year. On the second night, a fruit not yet eaten that season is served. Challah bread, in a round loaf, symbolizing a crown, is another traditional food. It is both a time of seeking the Lord and feasting in His goodness.

In Jesus, we believe He is the promised Messiah; He has made atonement for our sins and He is the way to the Father for each of us. Every day is a new day in Christ. He is the “Bread of Heaven,” which has come down for us. Yet as New Covenant believers we honor the Hebrew calendar and we are invited to celebrate the Feasts of the Lord.

This Jewish New Year is particularly special because it is the Year of Jubilee. On the Jewish calendar, years are observed in seven-year cycles, with a sabbatical year on the seventh year. Then at the culmination of every seven cycles (a total of 49 years) comes the 50th year: the Year of Jubilee, when all agricultural work ceased, all land was returned to its original owner and all slaves were released into freedom! (See Leviticus 25:8-24.) God wants to unload His immeasurable blessings on you in this new year.

My Prophetic Insights for 5776

During the Ten Days of Awe, many prophetic believers receive revelatory dreams and visions from the Lord as they consecrate

themselves to seeking the face of God. For my own life, this has annually been a special time during which the Spirit of Revelation has seemed to be greater upon my life. So what should we expect in 5776 (at the Head of the New Year)? Here are some of the things that the Lord has been highlighting to me for this year:

An unusual movement of the Holy Spirit is beginning among nomads or the displaced people of the earth seeking refuge in the natural—but they will find it in the Lord Himself. Tens of thousands of Muslims will come to faith in Jesus as their one true God!

The Word of God will be “alive and active” and we will learn to meditate, speak and declare the Word of Life. There will be a revival of the Word of God.

A fresh wave of equipping the saints will crash in upon the shores of the church empowering believers to be “sent ones” into the fields of harvest.

A reset button will be pushed for many people’s lives, marriages, families, economics and a time of dreams being fulfilled. It’s time to dream again.

It’s a time of reaping the seed sown in previous seasons. God remembers your prayers, labors and tears and He will reward you.

(For more, please listen to my new audio message on Prophetic Perspective for Our Times and pass it on to others. I will be expanding on these themes in the next few months.)

New Beginnings with Encounters Network

The Lord has also been speaking many new things to our ministry of Encounters Network, with its various expressions of Prayer Storm, Compassion Acts and the God Encounters Training eSchool. We have many new things scheduled for

release in this New Year. The Holy Spirit is pushing our reset button and we are moving forward to reclaim old ground and take new ground in this new season.

- New Online Classes—including Releasing Spiritual Gifts Today, Hearing God's Voice Today and others.
- Live web streaming of Prayer Events like the Day to Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem, National Day of Prayer and others.
- Three conferences hosted by Encounters Network in Nashville, TN in 2016: Finding Hope on February 25-27; Women on the Frontlines on July 28-30 and the launching of Men on the Frontlines in the Fall of 2016.
- EN Ambassadors will launch in 2016 with chosen representatives in Prayer, the Prophetic and Personal Ministry who will spread out across North America and the nations.

A Ministry to the Nations—Online

Years ago when I was the pastor of a small congregation in Missouri, the Lord gave me a profound vision. I could see a man's hand with a globe rotating in it. A sort of ticker tape with words on it came before my sight, listing the names of nation after nation. **I could read the list of nations clearly as they rushed before my mind:** Guatemala, Haiti, Israel—on and on.

God told me that He would give to me the blessing of John Wesley—"that the world would be my parish." It has been so—as our EN Team has ministered in well over 50 nations of the earth thus far. But the now voice of the Holy Spirit is asking me with our EN team to reach out to the nations in fresh new ways.

We are to do this through our empowered EN Ambassadors and through our revised and updated online school and new web streaming service! We will fulfill our mandate by being a

Ministry to the Nations—Online!

Dr. James Goll is the founder of Encounters Network, Prayer Storm and helps carry on the work of Compassion Acts. For information on his online school visit: . James continues to live in Tennessee and is a joyful father and grandfather today.

For the original article, visit .

Benny Hinn Responds to Facebook Scandal

Healing evangelist Benny Hinn's Facebook page was hacked—and the intruders put all manner of filthy content on the news feed.

It was a trial, of sorts, for the ministry as it raced to remove the offensive material from the Christian-themed social media site. "I want to thank all my wonderful and dear partners! Thank you for your amazing support and prayers during the past 48 hours," Hinn wrote on the Facebook page. "We have been working very hard to restore it back into our hands. We now have control of it!"

Hinn assured his Facebook followers that his team is taking extra measures to make sure that never happens again, then shared how the ministry is moving on stronger than ever.

"Our precious Jesus will be glorified, no matter what happens throughout the world," Hinn wrote. "This is not my Facebook page, this is His Facebook page. It is His ministry. And we are here to serve you, encourage you daily, and minister to

you. Please help me get the word out quickly that our Facebook page is back in our hands and the devil's plans were defeated!"

5 Things You Need to Say and Pray Over Your Child Every Day

Let's face it, the culture we're living in is becoming increasingly more difficult for families of faith. As society becomes more and more secular, how do parents raise their children to not only survive, but to thrive in it?

Is it possible to empower our children to stand up and even stand out in their faith when there is hostility toward them? Yes, I believe that you can. To do so, they need to have what I call "faith to follow." Faith comes by hearing—simply meaning that when your children hear you speaking, even praying over them, they will be emboldened to follow the faith.

My friend, George Sawyer, was so passionate about children being empowered to thrive while living in a secular culture that he wrote a book entitled, **The Daniel Prayer for Parents**. George wrote the prayer based upon the young man, Daniel, who was living as a captive in another culture at the time. Daniel not only survived, but he thrived in Babylon.

1. I believe that my children are **healthy**. They flourish in their diet and physical ability. They are not harmed, assaulted, wounded, nor threatened by terror.

2. My child is quick to **understand**. They show an aptitude for learning. They comprehend and retain knowledge. They have discernment and wisdom to know the outcome of decisions.

3. I know that my children are **resolute**. They are not compromised by this culture but stand courageously in their convictions of faith. They are not influenced to change who they are, but they influence change in this world.

4. **Favor** opens doors and ushers my child into greatness. I believe that their teachers, leaders, coaches, and friends are favorably disposed toward them.

5. I also believe that there are **none equal** to my children. They are remarkable in their demeanor and disposition. They stand out in the crowd. They excel in their education and experience.

This prayer is based upon the attributes that were found in Daniel's life while he lived in Babylon. You may know that Daniel certainly faced challenges—slander, persecution for his faith, jealousy, false accusation, imprisonment, and condemned to death by being thrown into a den of lions. Yet his life is a testimony of how a young person can not only survive but thrive in a hostile culture.

As much as we would like to have our children live in a safe and perfect world that's simply not the case. Our children will face challenges. They may confront injustice and bigotry of all sorts. Their schools may be a hostile environment for their faith. However, I believe that we can be proactive and speak words of encouragement so that they can face life with courage and conviction.

For more information about the book that inspired this prayer, go to

Neil Kennedy *has passionately promoted God's Word for 25-plus years of ministry. He is known for practically applying*

biblical principles that elevate people to a new level of living. As a business, church, ministry and life consultant, Kennedy has helped others strategize the necessary steps to reach their full potential.

For the original article, visit .

Discipline vs. Obsession: All for the Glory of God

“Discipline” is defined as *“activity, exercise, or a regimen that develops or improves a skill; training.”*

Hard-working students who diligently study before exams and take assignments seriously are disciplined. As are Olympic athletes perfecting their sport, musicians honing their craft, moms and dads prioritizing their family’s spiritual growth and physical health, and hundreds of other people who pursue excellence in their given fields and callings.

Discipline, according to the Bible, isn’t always fun—“it’s painful”—but in the end, it always “produces a harvest of right living” (Heb. 12:11, NLT).

In my experience, obsession is discipline taken to a deadly extreme. It’s defined as, *“the domination of one’s thoughts or feelings by a persistent idea, image, desire, etc.”*

A disciplined student who gets hooked on caffeine pills so she can study longer each night could be called obsessed with good grades. (Jessie Spano, anyone? Google “Jessie Spano Caffeine Pills” if you’re not familiar with the notorious *Saved by the*

Bell episode. But I digress ...).

Olympians who push their limits, mentally and physically, while training eighteen hours a day could be described as obsessed with winning. Musicians who never give themselves a break from their instrument and place practice in front of people could be considered obsessed with fame. Parents who try to plug their children into every sport, club, and church activity could be obsessed with keeping up with the Joneses.

If you know my testimony, then you know that I have struggled—and at times, continue to struggle—with obsessive eating and workout habits. I was introduced to strength training when I was sixteen, and instantly fell in love with the *discipline* of showing up every day to the gym and pushing myself through every set and repetition. My trainer taught me all I know about nutrition, and I embraced the *discipline* of eating fresh fruit, veggies, and lean meat or fish at lunch instead of pizza and fish sticks like everyone else. A few years later, as many of you know, this newfound discipline became the victim of my broken heart ...

You see, after my first boyfriend, my first love, broke up with me, I grabbed hold of my healthy habits as if they were the only lifesaver within miles of my sea of sorrow (dramatic, yes, but that's what breakups are!). I counted on the weights, the treadmill, Spin classes, Pilates, and perfectly portioned meals to lift my spirits and grant me a sense of control over my topsy-turvy life. I didn't even notice the transformation that was taking place—discipline had become *obsession*.

For the sake of space and time (I know blog readers don't want to read posts as long as novel chapters!), I won't go into every facet of that initial battle. What I want to emphasize today is one of the most important lessons I learned during that time, a lesson the Holy Spirit mercifully reminds me of time and again. That lesson comes from 1 Corinthians 10:31, which says:

“Therefore, whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.” (MEV).

When we don't consciously study, practice, write, work, workout, etc. for the glory of God, then we naturally default and do all for the glory of *Self*. James, the brother of Jesus, wrote, “where jealousy and **selfish ambition** exist, there will be **disorder** and **every vile practice**” (James 3:16, ESV, emphasis mine). The adjective before “ambition” is important to notice, because like discipline, ambition in and of itself is a positive quality. It is when we allow the Self, our created body, to minimize the Creator and magnify our own God-given gifts that we follow the treacherous road to “disorder” and “every vile practice.”

I still struggle with my eating/workout disorder sometimes, especially when I'm feeling stressed, but I have learned to bring both my anxiety and the temptation to seize control before God in prayer.

I love this quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson: “You become what you think about all day long.” To me, it complements this line penned by King Solomon over 2,000 years before: “as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7, KJV).

I believe Scriptures emphasize cherishing God's Word (Psalm 119:11), thinking about Him (Isaiah 26:3), praying continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17), and fixing our thoughts on what is “true, and honorable, and right” (Philippians 4:8) because the Lord knows that in so doing, we will become more like His express image, that is, His Son Jesus.

Working out and countless other disciplines we pursue have “some value,” as Paul wrote to Timothy, but we must remember that “godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” (1 Timothy 4:8, NIV). No matter what you do today, ask the Lord to take the lead. Let Him inform your decisions, fill you with strength,

clear your mind of Self, rid your heart of envy, and show you how *everything* you do can be an act of worship, if you'll only surrender your burdens and agendas and trust Him to keep you in *perfect peace* (see Isaiah 26:3).

Stay fit, stay faithful.

Diana Anderson-Tyler is the author of *Creation House's Fit for Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness*, *Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness*, and her latest book, *Immeasurable: Diving into the Depths of God's Love*. Her popular website can be found at [and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925](#).

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

When Apostles and Prophets Use Prophetic Witchcraft Against You

As we enter into a political season in America—with candidates of many different ideologies contending (sometimes with nasty insults) to become the 45th president of the United States—it seems some in the body of Christ are tapping into the same spirit.

From coast to coast, I see Christian leaders spreading false rumors about the brethren, jockeying for prime position, prophesying witchcraft against people that anger them, and exalting their camp above another. These manifestations of rivalry among brothers and sisters grieve me—and I know they grieve the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, this is nothing new in

the religious world. Jesus and Paul dealt with it directly in their days—and they spoke into it with boldness and humility.

A spirit of rivalry manifests when people are competing with each other. Merriam-Webster defines “rival” as a person or thing that tries to defeat or be more successful than another; something or someone that is good or almost as good as another person or thing; one striving for competitive advantage.” Let me put this plainly: If we want revival, we need to get rid of the rival-mindset.

The Bible clearly speaks against rivalry. Paul told the church at Philippi, “Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. Let each of you look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4). You can’t tap into a spirit of rivalry and a spirit of humility at the same time. People who walk in a rivalry spirit are haughty, prideful and arrogant. They think more highly of themselves than they ought and don’t hesitate to tear you down to build themselves up.

Who Will Be the Greatest?

Jesus dealt with a spirit of rivalry among His disciples—more than once. Luke recorded a scene in which Jesus had just cast a devil out of a little boy. Jesus turned to His disciples and told them He was about to be betrayed into the hands of men. The disciples did not understand what He meant, and they were too scared to ask. But they weren’t too disturbed to start jockeying for position.

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“A dispute arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child and put him by Him, and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all

will be great'” (Luke 9:46-48).

Apparently, they didn't get it because Luke recorded a second, almost identical episode later in his Gospel. Jesus again talked about how He would be betrayed. At the very scene of the Last Supper, the disciples once again started arguing about who would be the greatest. That was an especially irreverent move given they were eating the Passover meal. Luke said there was a “rivalry” among them concerning which of them was to be counted the greatest.

Jesus to them: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But you are not so. Instead, let him who is greatest among you be as the younger, and he who rules as he who serves. For who is greater: he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? But I am among you as He who serves” (Luke 22:25-27).

Contending for Honor

That rivalry spirit contends for honor—and will manipulate to get its way. It seems every time Jesus announced He would be leaving the scene, the disciples got their mind off Him and on their own futures. Matthew recorded an especially selfish scene that took place right after Jesus announced He would be mocked and scourged and crucified. Read this from Matthew 20:20-25:

“Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons. And kneeling before Him, she asked for a certain thing. He said to her, ‘What do you want?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your kingdom.’

“But Jesus answered, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink from the cup that I am to drink, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ They said to Him, ‘We are able.’ He said to them, ‘You will indeed drink

from My cup and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. But to sit at My right hand and at My left is not Mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father.'

"When the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.'"

Behaving Like Worldly Men

Paul dealt with the same spirit with some of his disciples—or, should we say, the same flesh. The apostle rebuked some at the Corinthian church, grieved that he had to speak to them not as spiritual men but as worldly men—even babes in Christ.

"I have fed you with milk and not with solid food. For to this day you were not able to endure it. Nor are you able now, for you are still worldly. Since there is envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not worldly and behaving as mere men? For while one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not worldly?" (1 Cor. 3:2-4)

I've been talking about a rivalry spirit and sometimes I do believe it's a spirit. I certainly discern a spirit of jealousy and strife rising. But at the end of the day, the flesh that Paul pointed to is the ultimate culprit of rivalry—but no flesh shall glory in His presence, and if we want to see revival, we need to kill these tendencies toward rivalry in our carnal nature (see 1 Cor. 1:29). Of course, if you give yourself to your flesh, sinning against God, a spirit will eventually come to fortify your stance. God forbid!

When we talk about the works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5:19-21, we are quick to point to adultery, sexual immorality, impurity, lewdness, sorcery, heresies, murders, drunkenness, carousing and the like. But Paul also points out hatred, strife, jealousy, rage, selfishness and dissensions. Whether

you want to call it a rivalry spirit or a work of the flesh, this jealous ambition and backbiting in the body of Christ needs to stop. This prophetic witchcraft and self-exaltation needs to stop—now.

There's a lot of talk about judgment on America right now. Let me assure you, judgment starts in the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17). We need to repent and walk in love if we want to see another Great Awakening.

10 Ways to Romance Your Wife

After a long period of time, the passion in a marriage can begin to fade. Keep the flame alive with these 10 ways to romance your wife:

- 1. Learn her love language, and then use it every day.** Read *The 5 Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts* by Gary Chapman and figure out what you can do to become fluent in your wife's love language. Then use what you have learned every day.
- 2. Date your wife.** If you asked her out again today, would she still be excited to say yes? You must have been pretty good at this at one time or she wouldn't have married you! So why stop now? One date a month at a minimum. Use your imagination, get creative, and make it special.
- 3. Make her feel special (don't take the relationship for granted).** "She already knows she's important to me," is not a useful response. If you haven't done something to demonstrate how special she is in the past four hours, then you've already waited too long. This is not a high budget item; it's high consideration item. How about an *I love you* phone call, a

simple card slipped in her purse, a midweek lunch date, or flowers delivered to her office. Do you still open the car door? Serve her hot tea, wash her car, deliver an unexpected embrace, a foot rub, or candles with dinner? You get the idea.

4. Use some imagination. Plan events, dates, evenings at home, vacations—even stolen moments—with the kind of creative thinking that motivated you when you first asked her out. There's a psychological concept known as the "self-fulfilling prophecy." Simply put: Believe she's worth the trouble and she will be; stop trying hard and so will she; and bring some creative intention to your romance as if she still knocks your socks off—and she will.

5. Take care of yourself. Check the scales, think about how you dress around your wife, start some regular exercise, don't be a slob. When she sees you, does she take a second look—or does she look away? Does the way you present yourself tell your wife you want her to be attracted to you or do you take all that for granted?

6. Say *I love you* and say it often. The No. 1 misnomer believed by unromantic men is this: I shouldn't have to say it, she should know.

7. Be kind. Kindness could well be the "X Factor" in romance. Being kind is underplayed, undervalued, underrated, and certainly underutilized. Want romance? Be Mr. Kindness. Learn to make thoughtfulness and consideration your second nature. Nice guys really do finish first and she'll fall for you all over again.

8. Be a gentleman. Gentlemen are courteous, respectful, well-mannered, faithful, generous, modest, and charming. Stand up when she leaves the table, open the car door, walk on the street side of the walkway, help her on with her jacket, run to the car for her umbrella ... you get the picture.

9. Tell her she's beautiful. Women who hear their husband tell them they're beautiful become more beautiful. Men who tell their wives they're beautiful believe it with more conviction every time the words leave their lips. Love expressed = beauty; beauty = romance. It's win-win.

10. Spend uninterrupted time together. There are only 168 hours in each week—the number never varies. The amount of time we offer our relationships can appear like a vote as to how much we value the people we say we love. Romance like anything else worthwhile is worth the investment of time and attention.

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