

How Publishing Has Influenced the Charismatic Movement

Note: This Perspective column ran in the January 2015 issue of Charisma magazine.

A new year invites us to reflect on where we are and where we're going. I feel the invitation more strongly this year than most because 2015 marks *Charisma's* 40th anniversary. Much has happened since *Charisma* started in 1975. From humble beginnings, the magazine has done its best to chronicle the move of God in our generation.

Last August I wrote about the Assemblies of God centennial, which allowed me to share about our roots at Calvary Assembly of God as a "church magazine." As a 24-year-old newspaper journalist, I was on fire for God and wanting to serve Him the best I could with my journalistic skills. The burgeoning charismatic renewal had touched my life, and I could see it breathing new life into some of the waning Pentecostal denominations that were turning off my generation with legalism and a pining for the "good ol' days" of revival.

Now in our 40th year, I want to write a perspective on what has happened during these four decades. I am no longer a 24-year-old journalist, and *Charisma* is no longer a church magazine. My position has given me a front-row seat on the Spirit-filled church. So for 2015, I want to reflect as a 60-something on what I've seen thus far. My goal is not to draw attention to myself, but to humbly report what God is doing today in a way other media have not, dealing with the good and the not-so-good.

Charisma has continued the legacy of *Christian Life* magazine, which served a similar role in the 1950s and 1960s. Few are still alive who remember *Christian Life* in its heyday. But

before there was a *Christianity Today*, before there was a *CBN*, *Christian Life* reported on the post-World War II emergence of the evangelical movement. In fact, Robert Walker, the magazine's longtime editor, claims to have been the first to put a young evangelist named Billy Graham on the cover of a national magazine.

In the mid-1950s Walker, though from a denomination that looked down upon Pentecostals, received the baptism in the Holy Spirit after visiting the leaders of the Assemblies of God in Springfield, Missouri. He then wrote an article in *Christian Life* asking evangelicals if their disdain of the healing evangelists of the day meant they were missing all God had for them. This article was the first on what we later identified as the charismatic movement.

We think of this movement as beginning in 1960, when Father Dennis Bennett made his famous announcement about embracing the baptism in the Holy Spirit at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California. But the new move of the Spirit went back to the healing revival, the Latter Rain Movement of the late 1940s and the emergence of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship in the early 1950s.

When first identified by the press, it was called the Neo-Pentecostal movement, though the Roman Catholics must have chafed at the designation and later re-labeled it the "charismatic renewal."

While the Spirit was being poured out, our nation was going through tumultuous times. A young president had recently been assassinated, there was war in Vietnam, and a new generation of Baby Boomers were discovering free love and drugs.

Derek Prince, one of the early leaders in the charismatic movement, believed this was a pivotal time. He liked to equate moves of the Spirit with what was happening in Israel—1948 was marked by the War of Independence and the beginning of the

Latter Rain and the era of healing evangelists, while 1967 included the Six-Day War and the beginning of the charismatic renewal in the Roman Catholic Church.

During this time *Christian Life* reported on a few of these things. A young broadcaster named Pat Robertson was inviting people to give their testimonies on *The 700 Club*. Prince and a group later known as the Ft. Lauderdale Five began publishing *New Wine Magazine*, and in 1971, Dan Malachuk started *Logos Journal*, which focused on the Holy Spirit movement.

Into this setting Charisma was birthed in 1975. Next month we'll talk about the turbulent 1970s and the beginning of the culture wars. I hope you'll follow this series throughout the year as I give my perspective as a journalist who has spent his life observing and participating in one of history's greatest moves of God. Join me as we continue to ask the key question: What's next?

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Kenneth Copeland: 'They'll Never Be the Same'

Editorial note from Steve Strang: Kenneth Copeland's ministry began a few years before Charisma and by the time I wrote a cover story on his ministry in 1979 he was considered a successful up-and-coming ministry. His teaching on faith influenced me; I share that in the article.

In 1981, I was privileged to travel with him on his first international meeting to the Philippines. Although he received

a prophecy that 50,000 would be saved, a total of only 34,000 people attended the eight-night crusade. Writing that was difficult because I couldn't ignore the obvious discrepancy; but, I also had great respect for Copeland's ministry. It's interesting to reread the article below after all these years, considering how it was prophesied that Copeland would be changed through the Manila trip. I believe he was.

In spite of what some might think was a critical report, Copeland and I have remained friends through the years and my respect for him has grown as I've seen the stability of his ministry and its great impact on the body of Christ.

The article below originally appeared in the June 1981 issue of Charisma magazine. Begin reading here:

Kenneth Copeland wrote his supporters early this year that he was "expecting to win in excess of 50,000 people to Jesus" during his eight-day crusade in Manila in February.

It was to be the first major overseas crusade for Copeland's tremendously successful, though sometimes controversial, faith-teaching ministry.

In the past decade, Copeland has become one of America's foremost Bible teachers because of his special gift of helping people understand who they are in Christ, and how to exercise the faith God has given them as believers.

Each year, tens of thousands attend his twice-monthly Victory Crusades in major cities across America. The faithful pour millions of dollars into his ministry, supporting his daily 15-minute radio program, his weekly hour-long television program, buying his books, records and tapes by the thousands and reading his monthly publication, *The Believers' Voice of Victory*.

Copeland teaches that Christ redeemed man from the curse of the law which means, among other things, that all believers

can live in divine health and can enjoy prosperity.

Copeland believes what he teaches. He is vigorous and looks younger than his 43 years. And he enjoys a comfortable lifestyle which includes flying to his meetings in America in his private jet (which is more economical and saves more time, he points out, than flying his large crusade team on commercial airlines).

But critics call his teachings "Cadillac prosperity." It's something that will work only in America because it is a prosperous nation. But what about the rest of the world? It won't work in third-world nations, they say.

I was invited to cover the eight-day crusade in Manila as a journalist. Copeland's staff members were excited about the meetings scheduled for the imposing Araneta Coliseum, site of Muhammad Ali's 1975 "Thrilla in Manila" boxing match, as well as one of the places where Pope John Paul II would celebrate mass during his historic visit to the Philippines only a few days after Copeland's visit.

They told me Copeland's meetings would be the greatest meetings ever in the Orient, the beginning of the greatest revival in the Philippines. So I went, my curiosity aroused, hoping for a good story.

I had written once about Copeland in Charisma (June, 1979). I have read his books, listened to his tapes and been influenced by his ministry. I wondered how he would be received in a non-American environment.

What I saw was an interesting blending—and clashing—of two cultures. But I saw that the Word of God works in Manila as well as Miami, as well in Luzon as in Los Angeles.

Copeland's ministry (after a slow start) was well received by the Filipinos who eagerly grasped—some for the first time—the faith message that they have authority as believers.

Many testified they'd never be the same. Copeland's message gave them something to hold on to after he left. In faith, I am sure, the Philippine Islands will never be the same because of the seeds of faith that were planted.

While the Filipinos changed and grew because of the faith message, I watched—close-up—a change in Copeland and his ministry team. They were deeply moved by what they experienced in Manila. And as Copeland's director of publications George Pearsons told me, Copeland's ministry will never be the same either.

Interestingly, this is what Oral Roberts prophesied several months before the Manila crusade. He was at a Kenneth Hagin camp meeting in Tulsa where Copeland had been ministering on "change."

Roberts then rose and prophesied over Copeland: "The word 'change' that you used tonight over and over 'you're going to be changed. You're going to be changed. You won't be the same,' you were speaking to yourself."

"You didn't choose to go to Manila," Roberts continued. "Forces came together and called you. The Spirit called you through these people and you said, 'Me, go to Manila?' Yes. The Spirit is speaking to you but we must envelope you with the very anointing and power of God or you won't come back. Something is going to happen over there. I'm burning up with it"

Then Roberts asked Kenneth Hagin and T. L. Osborne to pray over Copeland, which they did, finally sensing a "breaking" of the thing Roberts said he felt in his spirit needed to be broken.

Copeland responded, "I commit, in the name of Jesus, that I will not withdraw from any man, beast, nor devil. And I re-declare we will win a minimum of 50,000 souls to Jesus in eight days. The nation of Manila (*sic*) will come to the Lord

and be broken to its knees in repentance”

Copeland had been feeling the Lord wanted him to minister overseas, but he didn't know how. He sought out Lester Sumrall of South Bend, Indiana, who has had great success overseas as well as in America. Copeland and his wife, Gloria, went to South Bend and after ministering in Sumrall's church asked to be anointed for overseas ministry.

Sumrall anointed him, then prophesied over him. Copeland meanwhile went down “under the power.”

A few months later when Sumrall was in Manila, he rented the Araneta Coliseum and arranged for the Copeland meetings to be sponsored by Bethel Temple, a great church in downtown Manila. Bethel Temple founded by Sumrall back in the early 1950s, is pastored now by Lester's nephew David Sumrall. Later, Lester Sumrall organized a tour of 225 Christians—including me—who accompanied Copeland to the meetings.

Meanwhile, Copeland raised \$140,000 from his USA supporters and got his thousands of people to promise to pray for the meetings. In a letter to his donors Copeland repeated the prophecy he made at the camp meeting that the eight-day crusade would result in more than 50,000 people finding Christ.

He sent Associate Billy Rash to Manila two months ahead of time. Rash sent back reports of a woman who had been blind for years receiving her sight in a meeting they held in Manila. He told Copeland to expect even greater things.

By the afternoon before the crusade began, Copeland told me his faith was even stronger. There would be 50,000 saved not in eight days, but in the first two nights alone.

The Copelands went to Manila a day early, because their friend Dr. James E. Johnny Johnson, former Under-Secretary of the Navy in the Nixon administration, had arranged an audience

with Ferdinand Marcos, president of the Philippines (Johnson had been stationed at one time at Subic Bay outside Manila, and was personal friends with President Marcos).

They talked with Marcos for 45 minutes about various things—especially the new Reagan administration which had been in office just a few days. Then Johnson asked the President if Copeland could pray for him.

Copeland told President Marcos, “I believe the greatest thing we can do for you is to pray that God will sustain you in your high office and enable you to administer it as God’s gift.”

Interestingly, Copeland didn’t share in the meetings about his visit with Marcos. It was too personal, Copeland said.

The 225 English-speaking people on the tour paid \$1,500 each to be a part of the crusade. The group did some sightseeing, stopping overnight in Tokyo on the way over, and in Honolulu on the way back. But mainly they came to Manila to help Copeland minister.

Most of the people were Americans. The rest were from Canada, New Zealand, Scotland and Australia.

Many in the group were ministers and wives, who took opportunities to preach in various parts of the Philippines. Others went into the slums of Manila to hand out thousands of small fliers in English by Kenneth Copeland on topics like “Prayer That Brings Results.”

One group of ministers—Ed Dufresne, Happy Caldwell, Wylie Tomlinson, Sam Carr, Jerry Wright, Bill Grein and Jerry Curtis—went to various parts of Manila including a place called Tondo, translated meaning “where the garbage is laid.”

The tour members who visited the poverty-stricken areas or who ministered to the Filipinos said they were deeply moved by the experience. Many said they’d never be the same. Most said they

wanted to come back.

But others on the tour spent their days shopping, taking bus tours to points of interest in Manila or attending two daily teaching sessions at Manila Bethel Temple held in conjunction with the Copeland Victory Crusade. Gloria Copeland taught each morning on healing; Lester Sumrall taught each afternoon on faith.

When asked to hand out tracts or minister in Manila's slums, some in the tour group declined, saying they preferred to get "the teachings," an attitude that irritated the ones who had been touched by the need for ministry in Manila.

Every morning at breakfast, I'd pick up the latest stories about what the tour members were doing. My favorite was from an attractive middle-aged American lady who spent several days sunning at a Filipino resort for the very rich several hours north of Manila on the China Sea. She had some connections with the family of the first president of the Philippines. This family was her host at the resort.

She met there a handsome young descendent of the former president, whom she felt should be a future president of the Philippines. She asked if she could anoint him with oil. She told me later she felt like Samuel sent by God to anoint Saul for kingship.

Copeland asked to meet with the tour group in the Manila Hilton where we stayed the afternoon before the meetings began.

"We didn't put together this tour for sightseeing," Copeland told them. "This is a team to witness and pray and to bring the power of God to bear on what will come about." Then, he and Gloria, along with Lester Sumrall, laid hands on each of us to impart—as Copeland put it—"the same anointing to heal the sick and perform miracles that he had." As he touched us, several people went down "under the power."

Then, Sumrall interpreted a message in tongues: "These meetings are of Me, saith the Lord. I will bless them. You shall bless the Filipino people and cause faith to raise up."

A woman from Jacksonville, Florida, stood and said, "We love you Kenneth and Gloria. We're standing with you; you won't be ashamed of us. We believe we're standing on the brink of destiny."

A few hours later, some may have wondered if she was right.

The 225 tour members were ushered that evening to the front center section of the mammoth 370,000 square-foot coliseum designed to seat 24,000. Many had expected the place to be packed. After all, more than 400,000 leaflets had been distributed. There had been announcements on Manila television stations.

And, a large ad that morning in the leading Manila newspaper advertised the meetings with a headline that read: "Jesus is Lord of the Philippines. Kenneth Copeland Victory Crusade. Feb. 1-8, 7:00 p.m. Araneta Coliseum, Quezon City, Philippines. Preaching. Music. Miracles. The public is invited. All seats free"

But the place wasn't full that night. There were only 4,183 by actual count at the gates by the coliseum superintendent.

Copeland told me later he was stunned at the poor turnout.

After all, previous meetings had drawn tens of thousands dating back to the early 1950s. For example, in 1955, Oral Roberts held meetings in which 40,000 people reportedly attended every night for six weeks. Local radio stations carried daily reports and then President Magsaysay reportedly told Roberts the only answer for the Philippines was Christ.

Three years earlier, in 1952, Lester Sumrall had held his first great meeting in Rizal Stadium sponsored by Youth for

Christ. Hundreds were saved that year.

Out of these huge meetings many Full Gospel churches like Sumrall's Bethel Temple were started.

Later, men like Rex Humbard, Ernest Angsley and Jimmy Swaggart drew tens of thousands when they went to Manila. Ironically Swaggart supporters were handing out fliers promoting Swaggart meetings to be held six weeks later as people left Copeland's services.

But Copeland's initial service was anything but a success. The arena was 84 percent empty. His prophecy of seeing 50,000 won to Christ in two days was obviously wrong. What now?

If Copeland was disappointed, it didn't show. He sang several upbeat songs with his band backing him up, and told the Filipinos the meetings were "a love gift from your brothers and sisters in the United States" (which brought applause).

He thanked the Filipino people for "releasing your faith, along with the body of Christ in the United States concerning the release of the hostages" in Iran, only two weeks before.

Then he prayed for the nation and government of the Philippines, interceding for President Marcos, his wife and high government officials. Copeland preached that night a powerful message on "Jesus the Jubilee," from Luke 4.

"Jesus was telling the sick people they did not have to be sick any longer. He was telling the blind they did not have to be blind anymore," Copeland said. "To the brokenhearted He was saying, 'You don't have to be brokenhearted.' To the captives He was saying, 'I've come to set you free.' The Jubilee has come and His name is *Jesus!*"

After preaching for 45 minutes, Copeland seemed unsure how to end the service. Seriously ill people already had been brought to the front of the coliseum to be prayed for.

Then, like Kathryn Kuhlman used to do at her miracle services, Copeland began calling out illnesses and healings: A ruptured right eardrum is healed; a bad throat is better; someone's back is healed; lungs are being healed. So are nerves.

Copeland asked those who had been healed to come forward.

No one responded.

Copeland then asked the people to begin praising God.

He finally asked the tour members to spread out in the crowd and pray for people.

The tour members were eager. They spread among the Filipinos and began praying in groups of two or three. A few began casting out demons and shouting at illnesses.

One 6-foot, 200-pound American preacher pounded with one hand on the back of a 5-foot Filipino man, while waving the other hand wildly over his head.

Minutes passed as these mini-healing services took place throughout the coliseum. Copeland seemed awkward. Finally, he said "no one get nervous. We're just going to follow God."

Just then, someone rolled an emaciated-looking 30-year-old Filipino man to the edge of the platform. Copeland leaned over the edge of the platform, laid his hand on the head of the man and shouted, "In Jesus' name, *be healed!*"

The man slowly pushed himself to the edge of the high-back wooden wheelchair, braced himself with both arms and laboriously raised himself. He took four or five halting steps forward and caught himself on the edge of the platform.

The crowd went wild. People began praising the Lord, yelling and clapping.

But it was obvious the man was experiencing excruciating pain.

Before the man collapsed, Copeland rebuked pain, and let him return to his wheelchair.

When Copeland asked Gloria and Sumrall to form three healing lines in front of the platform it looked as if half the crowd came forward for healing.

After everyone was prayed for, Copeland led those who wanted to be saved in a sinner's prayer, prayed for marriages to be restored, and prayed for the unemployed to find jobs. Everyone applauded. (Unemployment is a problem in the Philippines where the average daily wage is the equivalent to \$4 a day.)

Then, to the strains of "How Great Thou Art," the meeting abruptly ended. Copeland hurried to a waiting car.

Meanwhile, I had worked my way through the crowd to the man in the wheelchair. His name was Romeo R. Pakingan and he had been operated on three times for malignant tumors. He told me through an interpreter the doctors hadn't given him long to live, but he believed he had been healed.

Later in the week I saw him in the meetings again still in his wheelchair. There was no obvious indication of healing.

I had watched the faces of the people as Copeland prayed for Mr. Pakingan, extending their hands toward him to show their faith. They strained to join their faith with Copeland's, wanting so much to see a miracle happen, wanting so much to see the man be healed.

If the people were disappointed, they weren't half as much as Copeland.

Copeland told me en route back to America that he was discouraged after that first meeting. He had been advised by many not to offend cultural sensitivities and felt he could not be himself.

He said his ministry differs from other American evangelists

who rented the Araneta. Yet a platform, complete with center ramp, had been built so the miracle cases could be paraded before the admiring crowd as some evangelists like to do.

That isn't his style. So Copeland sequestered himself in his hotel room and sought God on what to do. The next night the long ramp was gone.

"I really admire him for sticking with it after such a dismal start," said David Sumrall, pastor of Bethel Temple who drove Copeland back to the hotel after that first service.

"He didn't say anything negative about how he felt," Sumrall said. "But I saw his face. I could see how low he was. A lesser man would have given up and gone home right then. He saw he had to change. He did the things he felt he had to do. It took a big man to do that."

If there weren't enough problems already, David Sumrall began getting negative comments about the tour members' behavior in the meeting. Apparently they were not sensitive to the Filipino culture.

Some Filipinos resented that the foreigners were ushered to positions of honor front and center in the coliseum, while the Filipinos had to sit in the grandstands behind them. Others said the tour members were too rough when they prayed for people the night before. A few had pushed over the smaller Filipinos in their zeal to lay hands on them or to see them "go down under the power."

David Sumrall asked to talk to the tour members the next day. "These are a gentle people who love to love and love to be loved," he said. "Speak gently to them and with the love of God. Reach out. People respond to love. It is still the same in any language. Just smiling under the anointing will cause burdens to break. Mingle with the people. Get in the middle of them."

His talk seemed to work. The tour members quit sitting together. They became more aware they were guests in another country. They developed a rapport with the Filipinos. By the final night, hundreds of Filipinos crowded the bus stop outside the coliseum to wave goodbye to their new friends as they were taken back to the hotel.

Filipinos are generally pro-American. President Marcos is one of the United States' greatest allies in the Orient.

They wear American-style casual clothes. They listen to American music and watch American television reruns. When I was there, the big rage was disco dancing—something John Travolta made popular over here a few years ago.

English is a major second language taught to all Filipino students in secondary school. Almost all commerce, and all street signs or products in stores are in English.

However, this proud nation has nine major languages and 90 dialects although the government is trying to make Tagalog the national language. The sensitive evangelist understands and does not try to force American culture, customs or language on the people.

But Copeland's meetings were held entirely in English, except for songs he sang in Tagalog. I couldn't understand why the meetings were not translated—especially when Lester Sumrall told me this was the first evangelistic crusade conducted in Manila without an interpreter. Maybe it was because each meeting was televised for possible rebroadcast in the United States.

Even though most of the people who came to the meetings could understand English, Sumrall told me at least 10 percent of the people could understand nothing that was said. Another large percentage couldn't speak English well enough to understand much of what was said.

When I tried to interview Filipinos, I had difficulty communicating unless I was with an interpreter who spoke Tagalog.

(Interestingly, en route back to the United States, Copeland told me of an unconfirmed report he received from Billy Rash, his associate. Rash said a woman told him that her elderly mother who spoke no English understood none of the service until Copeland began to preach, then she understood everything perfectly. "That's just like the Day of Pentecost," Copeland said.

Copeland told me that story sitting in Narita Airport outside Tokyo waiting for a connecting flight. Dressed casually in white slacks and a blue knit shirt, Copeland admitted he felt weary after the eight-day crusade-like air let out of a balloon.

Seated in a Japan Airlines waiting area, Copeland and Gloria shared their feelings about the crusade.

"I found out I had to believe God for things I didn't know I'd have to believe God for," Copeland said, lightly tapping the plastic arm of his chair for emphasis.

"I had to just lock myself up in prayer and find out what God wanted me to do. And, I had to fight discouragement over the size of the crowds. But then I saw that God was bringing together a nucleus of 2,000 or so who were there every night. I saw that they were taking the Word and that it will last, and that they will take it all over the islands.

"Finally, I got with the program and flowed with what the Spirit of God was doing," Copeland said.

The breakthrough Copeland was referring to seemed to come the night he sang, "He Is Lord," in Tagalog. Then, another night he sang in English "God Bless the Philippines" (to the tune of "God Bless America," with a few word changes). Simple

gestures, both of them. But they had the same emotional impact that John Kennedy's did when he stood at the wall separating East and West Germany and said "Eich Bin Ein Berliner" (I am a Berliner) in the early 1960s.

Copeland was saying, in essence, "I am a Filipino."

As the days passed Copeland discovered that in spite of language barriers and cultural barriers he could minister the Word as much as he does in the United States.

"We thought it would be different than ministering at home," he said. "But the Lord had us do here what we do at home, and that is just teach the Word. It was exciting to see the way the people received it."

Copeland told me he thought the most important thing he did in the Philippines was to plant an "indestructible seed."

"The people were ready for the Word," he said. "We gave them a heavier Word than I expected. I believe it was the seed to a great revival in the Philippines that will eventually break out like it did in Indonesia a few years ago."

Copeland seemed to understand that something else had happened.

"The testimonies of the people were so wonderful," he said. "Almost everyone referred to something they'd been taught."

Copeland was referring to Saturday night when Gloria stood in front of the platform and interviewed people who said they were healed. It was an exciting time. The people were eager to hear of miracles. They cheered and praised God for each person, even for the ones whose healing was not made clear, but who seemed to only want to express their devotion to the Lord.

When the testimonies began, I paid particularly close attention. I'd been watching for the miracles that all of us

wanted to see. I had interviewed people on stretchers; people with seriously impaired vision; people in wheelchairs. From what the people told me, no "miracles" had taken place (although many said they were somewhat improved, or that they believed in faith they were healed.)

As a Christian I believe healings must be accepted by faith. But as a journalist, I wanted healings I could document for this report.

Of the 25 people whom Gloria interviewed that night, three Americans said they had been healed of head colds or pressure in the head. Another American was healed of an inflamed knee. And three people—two Filipinos and one American— were healed, they said, of emotional or nervous disorders.

There were several testimonies of healings of the eyes. One 89-year-old blind woman testified in Tagalog how she could see light for the first time in years. The crowd applauded time after time, although we foreigners didn't know what she said until it was translated into English. It made us know what it felt like to not understand the language being spoken.

Another testimony was from a young Filipino girl whom I had interviewed two nights before, after she enthusiastically claimed a miracle healing for congenital cataracts when Copeland touched her in the healing line. She told Gloria how much improved her vision was.

Three others said they broke or lost their glasses after claiming healing for nearsightedness or astigmatism. None said specifically they were healed, but each said they had no headaches, and they implied their eyes were healed.

Some of the healing testimonies were more specific—like the lady with only one kidney who had no kidney pain for the first time in years. Or the man who said he was healed of heart disease and ulcers.

Several people said Copeland had given a word of knowledge that they would be healed. One lady said she was healed of arthritis, and swung her arm over her head to prove it. Another was partially paralyzed when Copeland called out her healing. She said she stood to claim that healing.

As the people recited accounts of their healings I noticed comments about how the Lord had given them *faith* to claim their healings.

One lady said that the Lord “taught me healing comes from the moment you believe.”

But a young Filipino man who worked for the telephone company may have summed it up best: “I’ve been serving the Lord many years, but this is the only time I’ve really learned to have faith and to use it to reverse the power of Satan.”

Later in Narita Airport, Gloria said those testimonies were the most important. “We feel like if we go into a place and leave the Word of God, then the people can stand on the Word themselves after we’re gone.”

One other thing seemed to emerge from the meeting. The times in which the Spirit of God moved in the strongest way was when the people ministered to each other.

Several times Copeland had the people lay hands on the person next to them and pray for salvation, healing or victory over the devil. Once he had the entire crowd pray four times for each of the people in front, in back and on each side of them.

Copeland and Gloria were both impressed with the openness of the Filipinos and how uninhibited they were in worship. Part of this is the influence, Copeland believes, of the Roman Catholic church (80 percent of all Filipinos are Catholic).

“The Catholic background is excellent,” Copeland said. “They are taught to expect miracles and they are very obedient. If

you show them something out of the Bible, they don't question it; they move on it. That gives the Spirit of God all kinds of lateral ways to move."

Copeland referred to the strong Catholic influence in Manila on Thursday night when he spontaneously prayed for God to bless the upcoming visit of Pope John Paul II about which all of Manila was talking.

His prayer was a beautiful intercession for the Lord to move through John Paul II—whom Copeland called a "man of God."

Why had he prayed for the Pope, I asked Copeland at Narita Airport.

"Obviously because God wants the Pope prayed for," Copeland answered. "There's so much criticism of the Pope. I wanted to show that you won't get anywhere criticizing. Besides, the Lord was teaching those people that they had the authority and had a right to pray for the Pope and that they were not subordinate to him.

"Many consider themselves so far inferior to the Pope or even a priest that they would never consider praying for him. It's almost as if they were to pray for God. I wanted them to see that their prayers for the Pope had meaning."

Then Gloria added, "Many of the people told us that now that they see who they are in Christ, they'll never be the same."

"That's just what Oral Roberts prophesied," Kenneth Copeland said.

It would be easy to end the article here. I have reported what happened, and I've left it up to the reader to draw his own conclusions.

But there is more that needs to be written. Therefore, here is my evaluation of what happened in Manila:

First, I believe Kenneth Copeland is a man of God. I believe he is doing what he believes God wants him to do. I respect that.

I also believe that despite the tremendous success of his ministry that God is forcing him to change.

Thus, the Manila meeting may have indeed been a watershed—not only for the Filipinos as was prophesied, (for they have been bombarded across the years by many American evangelists), but for Kenneth Copeland and his team.

Copeland prophesied there would be 50,000 souls saved during the campaign (later revising that to 50,000 the first two nights). But the coliseum superintendent told me the total count for the combined meetings was only 34,453.

Copeland explained after the trip that his “faith is still out for those people.” He believes that the 50,000 have been or will be saved when you combine the ministry that went on among the various groups involved—the tour members, the members of Bethel Temple, the teams that went into various parts of Manila witnessing and passing out tracts.

I can accept that because I understand operating in faith.

Yet that is not what was said ahead of time. It’s easy to come back and say that seeds were planted. But they said they were going to reap the harvest—not plant seeds.

Because I believe Kenneth Copeland is a man of deep integrity, I know he will not try to alter facts to fit his theology. Instead, I believe what Oral Roberts prophesied will come to pass—Copeland will change.

I believe the Manila experience will deepen him, will give him new and greater insight into God’s purpose for the universe.

I do not believe he will do as so many others have done—bend or discount the truth so he will come out smelling good. I

believe the truth will do to him what it does eventually, to all men of God—make him free.

Those are my conclusions from Manila. Time will prove, as it does with all prophecy, whether I am right or not.

In the meantime, keep your eye on Kenneth Copeland. God's not finished with him yet.

6 Things to Do When You Are Lonely in Marriage

As humans, we are not meant to be isolated. We all crave deep and lasting connections with other people.

But we know it's possible to feel alone in the middle of a crowd, and it's possible to sleep in the same bed with someone for years and still feel lonely. Many of us never expect to be lonely in marriage, hoping that our spouse will be the lifelong companion who saves us from loneliness. Over time, however, couples can gradually disconnect from one another and find themselves feeling isolated and withdrawn.

Loneliness is not just about physical proximity, it's also about emotional connection. FamilyLife's Dr. Dennis Rainey and his wife, Barbara, explain, "You may have sex, but you don't have love. You may talk, but you don't communicate. You live together, but you don't share life."

If you're feeling lonely in your marriage, here are some ways to reconnect with your spouse:

1. Make the first move. Feelings of loneliness are seldom felt by only one person in a relationship. If you're feeling

isolated, chances are your spouse is too. Take the first step to reconnecting with them, even if it's just a small gesture. Open up to them about how you feel and give them an opportunity to do the same. Healing cannot begin if you hide or mask your pain.

2. Forgive past hurts. Especially if you have been feeling alone for a long time, hurts have likely been building up in your marriage. Nothing breeds loneliness more than unforgiven hurt and conflict. If you have been wronged, make the decision to forgive your spouse. And if you have wounded them, seek their forgiveness immediately.

3. Spend time together. This seems like a no-brainer, but sometimes couples get so busy or caught up in their individual lives that they neglect to simply spend time together. The less time a couple spends together, the more likely they are to feel distant from each other. This can be resolved by deliberately scheduling date nights in, date nights out, TV-free nights and occasional weekend getaways—just for the two of you.

4. Make your time count. The quantity of time together is important, but so is the quality of that time. Couples have to be intentional about their time together to create a marital connection. When you and your spouse are talking, put down your cell phone, set aside distractions, and focus on each other. Find ways to bond over shared experiences: taking a walk, cooking dinner, going to a concert or sporting event, or playing a board game or cards together. Encourage and compliment your spouse. Make your moments together count.

5. Prioritize physical closeness. This is not just referring to sexual intimacy, though that is certainly an important part of marital closeness, but also to the little things that may have fallen by the wayside like holding hands or snuggling on the couch. The key to resurrecting physical touch is to start small. Sit close to each other, give neck massages and pull

out a surprise kiss. Getting closer physically will naturally lead to feeling closer emotionally.

6. Don't be afraid to ask for help. While the idea of seeking outside input on your marriage can be intimidating to many people, nearly every couple can benefit from marriage counseling. Getting an outside perspective can be extremely helpful to you and your spouse. Read my post to help determine if you should get counseling, and find tips to make sure you find the best counselor for you.

You may feel lonely in your marriage, but you are not alone in the struggle for marital intimacy. We have all experienced loneliness in our lives, but you don't have to feel it in your marriage.

Have you ever felt lonely in your marriage? How have you responded to these feelings, and what have you done to reconnect with your spouse? Please share your story below.

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit [.](#)

Marilyn Hickey: Angels Shut Lions' Mouths

Angels are sent to believers to take care of the lions in their lives.

The devil pretends he is a lion. He has a big mouth and he walks around roaring and looking for meaty Christians to devour (1 Pet. 5:8-9). But angels know how to shut lions' mouths.

The Old Testament prophet Daniel discovered an angel's power over lions in a dramatic way one day.

Daniel was not a young man when he encountered lions. He was probably more than 80 years of age, however, he had learned to handle lions long before he had his personal encounter with them.

In James 4:7 we are told to resist a lion (Satan) by standing in faith. Daniel had learned how to pray God's Word. From the first day of his captivity he purposed in his heart to stand uncompromisingly on God's Word. We never find him praying problems; only promises and thereby only receiving provisions. He had learned how to resist a lion. He stood fast in the Word; however, his praying didn't keep him out of the lions' den. His praying put him in the lions' den.

Daniel had a very important position in the Persian empire. He was one of three presidents who were second only to the king. He had power, wealth and favor. The Bible says he was promoted because he had an excellent spirit. This aroused envy in the other rulers and they looked for ways to destroy Daniel.

They found Daniel to be faithful with no evil in him, but they did discover one "glaring error" in him. He prayed too much. He had a disciplined time for prayer three times a day. Being more than 80 didn't keep him from bowing his knees. It was no secret because he opened his window and prayed toward Jerusalem three times a day.

David, who also fought lions, prayed three times a day (Ps. 55:17).

The presidents devised a plan they felt would please the king and remove Daniel from power. They came to Darius to persuade him to pass a decree that no prayer should be made to anyone but the king for 30 days.

The decree appealed to the king, for it made him a deity. And

once a decree was passed, it could not be revoked, even by the king himself.

Daniel did not have to get ready to face the lions, he stayed ready. His prayer life is shown throughout the book.

He prayed privately in Daniel 6:10: "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house. And his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled on his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously."

He prayed earnestly in Daniel 9:3: "I set my face toward the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes."

He prayed desperately in Daniel 10:2-3: "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no tasty food, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all until three whole weeks were fulfilled."

He prayed powerfully in Daniel 10:12: "Then he said to me, 'Do not be afraid, Daniel. For from the first day that you set your heart to understand this and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come because of your words'"

When the king was brought the news concerning Daniel's prayer life, he saw the neatly planned trap and became disgusted with himself. The king spent the night worrying while Daniel was in the lion's den. Daniel did not. He was prepared.

Early the next morning, the king called to Daniel and to his surprise and joy the strong voice of Daniel answered: "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths." Daniel hadn't been scratched in his ordeal with the lions.

Darius was so impressed he published a decree proclaiming the greatness of Daniel's God. He declared:

1. God is living.
2. His kingdom is eternal.
3. His dominion is unto the end.
4. He delivers and rescues.
5. He works signs and wonders.
6. He sent an angel and delivered Daniel from the lions' den.

The story opened telling of Daniel's prosperity and closed with Daniel's prosperity. What made him prosper? Very simply, it was faith. Faith in God's Word. Angels move to our aid when we move in God's Word.

You may have an overnight stay in a lions' den sometime. Let me give you some advice on how to cope with lions.

1. Read your Bible before you arrive in the lions' den.
2. Have a disciplined prayer time before lions are sniffing at your clothes.
3. Give God the glory for your angelic deliverance.
4. Pray for those watching you in the lions' den.
5. Keep an excellent spirit.
6. Know the Bible will work for you.
7. Decide you are a success.
8. Look to God.
9. Keep your focus on the Word in a crisis..

Daniel didn't try to get the king to help him; he appealed to the King of kings. It is the King of kings who dispatches angels to your rescue.

Because of his faith, Daniel receives an honorable mention in Hebrews 11:33, "who through faith subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions." Daniel means "God is my judge." Put your trust in a righteous God who is Judge of all and He will send His angel to stop the mouth of lions.

One cold, snowy night several winters ago I also had an

experience with that old pretender lion the devil and my angel.

I fixed dinner for my family and looked forward to a relaxing evening at home alone with only our black toy poodle, Beethoven. My husband and son had left to take an oil painting lesson and my daughter had gone to her piano lesson. It was so rare to have such a night at home alone, I thought I would savor every moment of it. I had been wanting to try a new cake recipe and what better time could I have?

I took the newspaper clipping out of my recipe file and began to get out all the ingredients. Running up the stairs to our bedroom to find an apron, I heard the ring of the bedroom phone interrupting the warm silence I had been enjoying. Hastily I picked up the phone wondering who would be calling on my solitary night which I had so relished. Answering questions in rapid-fire yeses and noes, I waited impatiently for the opportunity to say good-bye.

After 10 or 15 minutes, I hung up and hurriedly walked down the steps to continue my cake baking: While I had been talking on the phone I had kicked off my shoes and I remembered that as I walked down the steps in my stocking feet. But, impatient to get at my cake baking, I decided to leave my shoes in the bedroom.

As I walked into the kitchen, a cold wind hit my feet and the reason became obvious when I saw our back door wide open. My first thought was "which one of my children has left the door open?" and yet I knew in my heart that no one in our family would have left the door open on such a cold; wintry night.

Before I could react, Beethoven went over to our black, wrought iron fence which separates our family room from our kitchen.

The family room was dark but our little poodle was aware of more darkness than merely the absence of light. He let out a

low, throaty growl. Every little black curly hair on his body seemed to be standing at attention. He was alert and ready to jump through the wrought iron railing.

There was no question in his mind that there was an intruder someplace in the darkness of that room. By now, there was no question in my mind either that there was an uninvited guest and perhaps a dangerous one. I didn't know whether I should scream, run out the back door, or go into that dark family room and chase out the intruder.

As these thoughts raced through my mind, it was as though someone took my arm and guided me to close and lock the back door. A calmness which is really beyond description filled my spirit, my mind and even my body. Every movement I made seemed effortless, as though it had already been planned, and I was simply walking in steps placed before me.

I picked up our tiny poodle and walked out the front door. When my stockinged feet touched the cold concrete of our front porch, I suddenly wished that I had gone back up those stairs and put on my shoes. I walked rapidly down the front steps and then ran across the lawn to our neighbor's house to the west of us.

As I stood shivering on their front porch, waiting for them to answer the door bell, I probed in my mind trying to imagine who the frightening, mysterious intruder might be. I could feel the warmth of Beethoven's furry body in my arms and it seemed the only spot of warmth on the whole body. Even my mind seemed to be cold.

At last, my neighbor came to the door. He looked at me as though I had lost my mind—no shoes, no coat and holding a dog. Before he could open his mouth, I opened mine. The words flew out of my mouth, "There's someone in my house, hiding. They came in the back door. Would you please come over to my house with me?"

I waited with my feet almost numb with cold as he grabbed a jacket and a flashlight. The two of us cut across his lawn. I noticed the moon and for a second it seemed like a normal cold Colorado night. Because of the moon light, we could easily see the figure that erupted out of my front door, running in long strides and jumping into a car parked not too far from the front of our house.

Though I could tell the figure was tall, maybe 5'10" or 5'11", I was not sure it was a male. Much of the movement was like a woman. I felt a sickening feeling in my stomach as I realized that I could easily identify my unwelcome intruder.

She was a large woman with many mental problems our church pastor had counseled. We had all seen some extremely hostile reactions. Three of us had encouraged her to go to a Christian counseling service but she had refused. She had also refused psychiatric help.

Why had she waited until my family was gone? Why had she hidden in some dark corner of our family room? What did she want? What were her intentions?

I cannot give you secure answers to these questions, but I do know this: My guardian angel was very busy that night. I believe he took my arm and guided me and calmed me in those first moments of panic. My guardian angel is my friend.

When my husband came home with my daughter and son, they walked in the front door to the delicious aroma of freshly baked pound cake. My husband said, "Why is every light in the house on?" My neighbor had insisted on going through every room and closet in the house and turning on all the lights. He had also insisted we call the police but I didn't tell my husband until after cake and coffee.

It was then I could honestly say that I believed the rescue squad of heaven, God's angels, had come to my aid. "The angel of the Lord camps around those who fear Him, and delivers

them” (Ps. 34:7)

Jesus Wasn't Liked by Some, but He Was Likeable

My post last week, “Are You a Likeable Christian,” received a pretty decent response and sparked some strong debate. To refresh your memory, I wrote to extol the virtues of my friend Justin Lathrop’s new book, *The Likeable Christian*.

While some people agreed with my assessment of the subject, I’m afraid many misunderstood the point. Please allow me to elaborate.

One reader posted on Facebook, “When you preach the truth you will not be liked ... when called, you are not here for a popularity contest. It is written you will be hated for my name sake. Those drawn to you are done so by the will of God. Truly loving others is a willingness to endure for His names sake and preaching in places where you will not be liked ... but are needed. Are we to seek approval from people?”

The reader quoted Galatians 1:10, which says, “For am I now seeking the approval of men or of God? Or am I trying to please men? For if I were still trying to please men, I would not be the servant of Christ.”

The Scripture is 100 percent correct. No, we should not seek the approval of men, and we should not seek to be liked. Jesus did not seek anyone’s approval, and he was not liked by everyone. He was even hated by some. Anyone who reads the Bible knows that.

Another reader posted on our message board, “‘Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man” (□□Luke□ □6:22), and, ‘If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first’ □□(John□ □15:18,□ □NIV). Neither of these would impress me that Christ was likeable.”

Jesus Christ wasn’t likeable? I’m pretty sure that wasn’t the case.

The point that many are missing is that there is a huge difference between being “likeable” and being “liked.” Jesus didn’t care about being liked, but He did care about being “likeable.” That is the trait that we should all aspire to.

Jesus wasn’t liked by some; and why was that? It was because of the hardness of those people’s hearts, not His. The Pharisees’ hearts were not focused on the good of the people. Their hearts were focused on themselves and how the public perceived them.

That resulted in their hatred of Jesus. But that doesn’t mean Jesus wasn’t likeable. If we are likeable, then people are more apt to be drawn to us and will listen to what we have to say. There are those who will not like what we have to say, and therefore will not like us. We shouldn’t care about that. We need to keep preaching the gospel as instructed and portray Christlike character, which is that of a “likeable”—and loving—person.

The simple message: Be a Christ follower who is pleasant to be around. Smile. Laugh. Don’t repel people with self-righteous venom. Be compassionate. Give of yourself—including your time and your finances.

And even if your points are factual and valid, don’t try to be right all of the time. It’s annoying. Believe me—I’ve been there.

Some people may not like what I write, but that's OK with me. I believe my words are said with a loving heart and I am doing what the Lord wants me to do. Jesus' rebukes were said in love and some hated Him. If that's the case with me, I'm in good company.

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

Shawn A. Akers is the online managing editor at Charisma Media. He is a published poet and published a story about Dale Earnhardt in NASCAR Chicken Soup For the Soul. You can read his blog here.

How Can We Know That We Are Saved?

While in Ontario, Canada, Sue and I passed two Jehovah's Witness women standing on a busy street corner with racks of books and pamphlets they were giving to those passing by. As we passed, I felt a compassionate drawing toward them and so retraced my steps and politely opened a conversation with them.

I began by asking them how, according to their church, a person can know they are saved and will go to heaven. The one who was obviously the leader answered that we cannot know if we are saved until we die. She then quoted the words of Jesus, "He who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

I responded with the question, "Does that mean that at the end of our life if our good works outweigh our bad works, we will be OK?" She replied, "Yes." I then asked, "So what was the need for Jesus to come and die for our sins?" They did not

have an answer.

The conversation then turned to who Jesus is when they mentioned the name "Jehovah." I asked, "Do you believe Jesus is Jehovah?" She answered with an emphatic "No!" (Jehovah Witnesses believe Jesus is Michael the Archangel). I then asked, "Why then did Jesus receive worship from people?"

I went on to say, "In the Old Testament only God is to be worshipped and it would be blasphemous for anyone, even an angel, to receive worship, but Jesus allowed people to worship Him." I then quoted John 8:58, where Jesus identified Himself with God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush and identified Himself as *I Am*. I pointed out that Jesus said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was I Am," and that the Jews then attempted to stone Him for blasphemy.

At this point the leader politely brought the conversation to a close. I exhorted them to "follow Jesus" and went on my way with a sense of knowing I had obeyed the Lord and borne witness to His name.

Since then, I have thought on their human-centered concept of salvation that if our good works outweigh our bad works, we will be OK. The Bible, however, is very clear that we have already been weighed in God's balance and found wanting. What God said to of the Babylonian King Belshazzar is true of the entire human race, *You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.*

The human race in general, and every individual in particular, has been weighed in God's balance and found wanting. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," Paul said in Romans. 3:23. "All we like sheep have gone astray," the prophet Isaiah said, "We have turned, every one, to his own way" (Is. 53:6).

The whole world stands guilty before a righteous and holy God. God would have been righteous and just to have sent every one

of us to hell. Not a single angel would have protested. John makes this point when he said that the one who does not believe in Christ is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

This sense of guilt before God is innate in human beings. This is why humans are incurably religious. Everywhere you go, people are religious and are seeking to assuage that innate sense of guilt with a religion of works or by hiding within a group, like these two with whom I conversed.

God, however, does not offer "group" salvation. Every individual, whether a pope or a pauper, must deal personally with God. All are alike in His sight. He is not impressed with human pomp and circumstance. The ground is level at the cross.

In 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul said, "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

The good news is that we can have assurance of our salvation, not based on what we have done, but based on what He has done. We do not have to wait until the end of our life to know if we are saved. Here are five ways to be sure:

1. We realize that we have already been weighed in heaven's balances and found wanting. Know that you already stand naked, guilty and condemned before a righteous and holy God.

2. Flee to Christ. Put your faith completely in Him. Do not try to hide in a group or church. Lay hold of Christ by faith and take Him as your personal Savior and Deliverer.

3. As you put your trust completely in Him there will come an assurance in your heart. The old time Methodists called it the "inner witness," based on Paul's words in Romans 8:16, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

4. Walk in faith every day. Your life will not be perfect, but it will be different. Keep your eyes on Jesus. Trust Him every day for His strength and power to be a living witness to others of His mercy and grace as He promised in Acts 1:8.

5. As you walk with Him in faith each day, that inner sense of assurance will grow until you will know that you know that you are saved as much as you know your own identity. You will have no doubt that if you died today you would immediately go to be with Him.

Dr. Eddie Hyatt is an author, revivalist and Bible teacher. His latest book, The Faith & Vision of Benjamin Franklin, is available from Amazon. You can read about his vision for America and another Great Awakening by visiting his website at .

For the original article, [click here](#).

For the Sake of Your Kids, Stop These Embarrassing Facebook Posts

One of my favorite movies is *Uncle Buck* starring John Candy. When the parents in the movie have to go out of town suddenly, they call on Uncle Buck to watch their three kids.

One of those kids is an angry and rebellious teenager. When he drops her off at school right in front of a crowd, his car smokes and then lets off an explosive backfire. When the smoke clears, it reveals the teenager hiding in embarrassment. All of this brings enjoyment to Uncle Buck.

After that, she threatens to not be there when he comes to pick her up when school ends. To this, he replies, "Stand me up today and tomorrow I'll bring you to school in my robe and pajamas and walk you to your first class."

Adults, particularly parents, have been embarrassing teenage kids for ages. I am thankful every day that I grew in an era before the Internet. It has given parents an easier opportunity to mortify their kids.

There is no bigger medium for parents to do this than Facebook. After talking with teenagers, there are certain things they really wish their parents would stop doing. Don't shoot the messenger. I too had to evaluate my own Facebook behavior. These are your kids talking.

So for the sake of your kids, stop these embarrassing Facebook posts:

1. Checking in. If this was ever cool at all, it sure isn't anymore. There are a few people who need to know our exact location. The rest of the world doesn't.

2. Share this is you believe ... It's one thing to share something, but another to pressure others to do the same. Telling people to share if they agree with some generic or cheesy saying is nothing more than an annoying chain letter.

3. Throwback Thursday. Doing TBT every once in a while is fine, but every week is too much. Also, make TBT about you, not your kids. The last thing they need is a picture of them in diapers on the Internet for all of their peers to ridicule.

4. Liking your own comment, post or status. We know you like it or you wouldn't have said it, posted it or shared it. It comes across like you are trying to impress people or are needy for support and affirmation. You wouldn't applaud yourself after giving a speech; let others applaud you. Better yet, make your statement and let people respond as they may

without looking to accumulate likes. Sometimes true genius is not appreciated until later.

5. Incorrect shorthand usage. If you use shorthand, make sure you know what you are communicating. Too many bad things have been communicated by parents who thought LOL meant *Lots of Love*, among others. Personally, my advice would be to write in complete sentences and use correct spelling. Their generation is losing the ability to do that well. I think we should model it to them any chance we get.

6. Sharing quiz results. Everyone loves quizzes to see what *Star Wars* character they'd be, etc. Keep the results to yourself though. Most of the world doesn't need to know that you're most like Han Solo.

7. Bad selfies. Posting a selfie that is out of focus or at a weird angle says, "I'm trying to do what the kids are doing, but I'm not good at it." Either do it right or don't do it at all.

8. Overposting and oversharing. This is the problem of too many posts and sharing overly personal information. Limiting the frequency of your posts normally helps with the second thing. Personally, I try to limit myself to one a day at most and I'm told that even that might be too much.

9. Overbearing political views. Political convictions are good. However, you are divisive when your political posts consistently demonize opposing parties and viewpoints. You represent the entire family when you post something. People can have emotional responses, not just towards you but also your children (for right or wrong).

10. Instagram. They would rather you not be here at all. They see this as their thing. You already took over Facebook and they don't want to move again. It's good to be there so you know what they are doing, but save your posts for Facebook.

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

7 Love Actions to Show Your Spouse

Romantic movies often trick us into thinking that grand gestures equal big love. They tell us we need to write a message in the clouds or paint words on a billboard or shout it from the top of a mountain.

However, I'd suggest that many small acts of love add up to a lot more than one big gesture. It's the little things, day in and day out, that show your unwavering love and commitment.

So, I'd like to share with you seven love actions to show your spouse:

1. Write a note. Surprise your spouse with a long love letter and put it on their pillow one morning. Or leave sticky notes with short words of encouragement on the bathroom mirror or the kitchen table. To help get you started, here are some things you can write: "10 More Things Husbands Want to Hear From Their Wives" and "10 More Things Wives Want to Hear From Their Husbands."

2. Bring flowers. Bringing a bouquet of flowers to your spouse is a great way to show you were thinking of her. Set the flowers in a vase of water on the counter or by the door. This way, they will be there all week long, and every time she passes them, she'll be reminded of your love.

3. Make the bed. Mornings are constantly a rush to get out the

door. But I promise you, the 60 seconds it takes to make the bed is always worth it. When my wife, Susan, comes in at night from a long, hard day to find the bed made, she smiles knowing I made the effort to make her happy in this small way.

4. Cook dinner. There's nothing like good smells from good food cooking in the kitchen when we get home. So take over one night and make a meal for the whole family. Love your spouse well by trying a new recipe or just sticking with one of her favorites.

5. Plan a creative date. Get creative by planning a simple date that fits your lifestyle. Go for a picnic in the back yard, go to a pizza diner down the street, go for a walk, watch the stars come out at the park or go out for morning coffee. Whatever you do, be intentional in making your spouse feel special on the date.

6. Hold hands. After being married a few years, it's easy to forget the simple things in your relationship. Holding hands is one of those things. When you're out to dinner, driving in the car together or just sitting on the couch at home, grab your spouse's hand.

7. Call and text. Even if daily schedules have you and your spouse in different places, don't go all day without communicating. Give them a call during your lunch break just to see how they're doing and to tell them you love them. A quick call or text will reassure them that they are important to you and on your mind.

What are some other love actions you take to love your spouse?

Mark Merrill *is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit .*

This Little Known Connection Could Be Deadly for Your Heart

People don't usually think of the heart and the liver as being closely connected, but what happens to your liver absolutely impacts the health of your heart.

The liver is your body's largest internal organ, and it is vitally important for processing nutrients and also removing toxins from the food we digest. If it's not working properly, toxins can build up and cause damage.

One of the chief causes of poor liver function is fatty liver disease, a condition that causes the liver to swell with fat.

Because the liver naturally contains some stores of fat, a certain amount of fat content is expected. But if that fat accounts for more than 10 percent of the organ's total weight, it is considered fatty liver disease.

Fatty liver disease comes in two types: alcoholic fatty liver disease and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. Alcoholic fatty liver disease happens in people who abuse alcohol—a risk that we have known about for a long time.

But the type of fatty liver disease that is becoming epidemic in the United States is called nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, or NAFLD.

I often write about the dangers of abdominal fat and how having too much fat around your belly creates inflammation, which helps to kick off the process of atherosclerosis

(hardening of the arteries) and leads to heart disease.

The same thing happens when your liver is too fatty. Whether that inflammation comes from a fatty liver or fat in your belly, the result is the same. Your risk of heart disease goes up.

In April, a long-term study found that NAFLD was a strong independent risk factor for the early development of coronary artery disease, even in the absence of other traditional, recognizable risk factors such as smoking, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol and triglycerides.

In addition to heart disease, NAFLD also leads to diabetes. In fact, studies show that about 70 percent of people with diabetes also have fatty liver disease.

Although there are drugs in the pipeline, there is currently no medication to combat nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. However, you can actually manage the condition—and even reverse it—in the same way you do heart disease.

Lose Weight. A 2009 study of 50 patients found that those who lost 5 percent of their weight improved their blood glucose levels and reduced the fat in their livers. Those who lost 9 percent of their body weight actually began to see liver damage reverse.

Eat Better. Whether you're losing weight or not, it's important to improve your diet. Replace processed and fried foods with whole foods such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and fish or meat that is not fried. Some studies show that the Mediterranean diet, with its reliance on fruits, vegetables, whole grains and olive oil may also protect the liver.

You should also eliminate refined sugars from your diet.

Exercise. In 2011, a study of obese people with nonalcoholic

fatty liver disease found that walking one hour a day on a treadmill for seven consecutive days jump-started metabolism and helped reduce inflammatory damage.

Chauncey W. Crandall, M.D., ., *chief of the cardiac transplant program at the world-renowned Palm Beach Cardiovascular Clinic in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, practices interventional, vascular and transplant cardiology. Dr. Crandall received his postgraduate training at Yale University School of Medicine, where he also completed three years of research in the cardiovascular surgery division. Known as the “Christian physician,” Dr. Crandall has been heralded for his values and message of hope to all his heart patients.*

For the original article, visit .

5 Health-Changing Reasons to Focus on the Positive

You'd have to be living under a rock not to notice how the world seems to be spinning out of control politically, economically, spiritually and even meteorologically.

From escalating acts of terrorism around the world to unprecedented weather patterns above it, students of Scripture are watching as Jesus' prophetic words unfold into reality:

“For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines, epidemics, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. “Then they will hand you over to be persecuted and will kill you.

And you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake"
(Matt. 24:7-9, MEV).

In a previous article, I wrote about five ways in which fear damages our health. For example, fear can weaken your heart and your immune system, as well as lead to depression. Focusing on the chaos swirling around us and fretting about the future can easily breed health-threatening fear.

We quickly become blinded to the astounding work of the Holy Spirit, deaf to His call for us to join Him in the harvest, and insensitive to the impact He is having on the hearts of millions. The bad news makes the Good News seem distant and detached from the crises we face today.

As I was reading in Proverbs this week, I sensed God speaking to me regarding my own fixation on the ever-sensationalized news and disheartening current events that compose a vast amount of the media I see each day. Chapter 15, verse 30 reads:

"The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and a good report makes the bones healthy" (Prov. 15:30, MEV).

If good news equates to good health, then to what does bad news equate? I know that for me personally, it equates to fear, which as I mentioned earlier, can wreak havoc on our bodies.

Before I write any further, I want to clarify that just as I don't believe it's necessary or even correct to ban my clients from ever eating cupcakes or cheeseburgers, I similarly am not suggesting that we swear off tuning into the nightly news or averting our gaze from heart-rending headlines. (Being informed enables us to pray more specifically, which is one reason we shouldn't bury our heads in the sand.) I simply wish to point out what God's Word has to say about thinking on the positive, or in Paul's terms, on what is "pure" and "lovely" and "of good report."

In these last days, we must not let the enemy pollute our minds and stifle our spirits by stealing our joy. There is much to look forward to and much beauty and goodness to share and experience as we endure until Christ's Kingdom comes.

Here are a few reasons why we should make a concerted effort to focus on the positive, not just for the sake of our emotional health, but our physical health as well:

1. Improves longevity. In a study of nearly 1,500 people with an increased risk of early-onset coronary artery disease, those who reported being cheerful and relaxed had a one-third reduction in coronary events like a heart attack. Those with the highest risk of coronary events enjoyed an even greater risk reduction of nearly 50 percent. This was true even when other heart disease risk factors, such as smoking, age and diabetes, were taken into account.

2. Improves cell immune function. Clicking away from the talking heads to a few laughing ones will do more than make you chuckle—it will make you healthier! Humor improves immune cell function, helps you ward off illness, decreases your chances of cancer, and also increases your chance of living after heart disease hits. There is power in a good “LOL!” Of course, it's best to ward off heart disease before it occurs by eating healthy, managing your stress, and exercising regularly.

3. Reduces frequency of colds and the flu. Psychology Professor Sheldon Cohen, of Carnegie Mellon University, found that optimistic people are less likely to get more mundane, day-to-day illnesses (like a cold), and even when they do they are less likely to report symptoms. Essentially, “happy” emotions like optimism and self-esteem send signals from the brain to your body's organs, strengthening immunity.

4. Boosts motivation. When you look for the silver lining behind every cloud and choose to remind yourself of the Good

News' power of the ubiquitous bad, you will naturally feel more motivated to form healthy habits that will enable you to lead a fulfilled life, such as eating nutritious foods, exercising daily, reading and listening to enriching material, spending quality time with loved ones, and lending a helping hand to total strangers.

On a biological level, being active in particular causes your body to release endorphins, which are chemicals that make you feel good—no major athletic ability needed. Endorphins even have the capacity to relieve depression and anxiety. And, when working out makes you happy, you're going to continue to do it, creating a healthy cycle of happiness as you honor the body God's given you.

5. Decreases stress. Did you know that the simple act of smiling has been shown to decrease stress levels? A smile sends a message to your brain that you're happy, which then signals it to pump out feel-good endorphins. When this happens, your breathing and heart rate slows, thereby helping you de-stress. And as an added bonus, smiling is contagious! Studies show that something as simple as seeing a friend smile can activate the muscles in your face to make that same expression, without you even being aware that you are doing it. (Sounds like the yawning phenomenon, doesn't it?)

This week, I challenge you to look on the bright side, to seek out the goodness in the world around you. Take breaks throughout your day to think of and thank God for your blessings, no matter how small they may seem to you.

Smile at a co-worker or a salesclerk who seems to be feeling blue. Read a blog that makes you laugh, or shamelessly watch a funny cat video on YouTube. Go to the park and throw the Frisbee around with your kids. See a Pixar movie with your spouse. Anything that will make you smile will make your soul shine as well.

“A merry heart does good like a medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (Prov. 17:22, MEV).

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