

# Are You a Cultural Christian or a Biblical Christian?

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

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

Here's the problem: Although Christianity is flourishing, many of us who are Christians have gotten caught up in this increasingly bankrupt culture. We have adopted many of the values of the world around us. Maybe it's the new sexual ethics of cohabitation or pornography, rampant greed and materialism, or winking at the needs of the poor. Gal. 5:9 explains why adopting these values is a problem: "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."

So when we try to have the best of both worlds, we exchange the truth of God for a lie and the glory of God for idols, we do what seems right in our own eyes, we get engrossed in the secular world, and we worship created things instead of the Creator.

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

instead of God absolute.

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

## **Two Kinds of Christians**

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

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

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

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

### **Group 2: The Cultural Christian: Type ‘C’**

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

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

Without sounding a false alarm, but in love, I encourage every man who finds himself to be a cultural Christian to consider whether his faith is merely a defeated faith or a counterfeit faith. If counterfeit faith is the condition of your life,

don't be discouraged. God loves you with an everlasting love and wants to reconcile with you.

### **Group 3: The Cultural Christian: Type 'D'**

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

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

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

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

"But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop" (Luke 8:15).

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

What does it mean to be a cultural Christian today?

## **Lessons from Elementary School**

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

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

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

## **A Look in the Mirror**

The man in the mirror will never change until he is willing to see himself as he really is, and to commit to know God as He really is. This objectivity anchors a man; it gives him the clarity of thought he needs to be a biblical Christian.

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

**Patrick Morley** is the chairman and co-CEO of *Man in the Mirror Ministries*. For the original article, visit [.](#)

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# How to Make 2 Favorite Fall Treats Healthier

Fall is absolutely my favorite season. What's not to love about crisp colorful leaves, cozy sweaters, excessively furry boots, and friendly orange pumpkins ready to be custom-carved to be as cute or creepy as you wish?

And when it comes to the seasonal foods, what's not to love about cinnamon spice and everything else that's nice, like hot chocolate and apple pie? Put quite simply: Fall, ironically enough, *lifts* our spirits!

There's a popular meme featuring *The Lord of the Rings* character Boromir that reads, "Brace yourselves. Pumpkin-flavored everything is coming." This is wise counsel, because as you may have noticed, much of the pumpkin- and cinnamon-flavored food and drinks we enjoy this time of year can become menacing, Orc-like enemies of our waistlines if we're not careful.

In this article, I'm going to highlight one beloved fall beverage and one dessert, each of which possess a high "Orc Potential," if you will; I'll discuss how we can make them friendlier and more peace-loving. More like Hobbits, in other words. (Just watch out for those second breakfast helpings!)

## Hot Chocolate

First up on our soon-to-be upgraded autumn menu is the poster child for cold-weather beverages. Hot chocolate is to brisk afternoons what ice cream is to sweltering ones; it's delicious, invigorating, comforting, and for us older folks, it can be downright sentimental. But hot chocolate, like its refreshing summertime counterpart, is full of not-so-appealing ingredients, such as loads of sugar and hydrogenated oils.

Just a 16-ounce serving at Starbucks contains 370 calories, 43 grams of sugar, and 16 grams of fat! And many fat-free, low-calorie, “diet-friendly” varieties sold in coffee shops and grocery stores are far from healthy due to artificial sweeteners and thickeners like the carcinogen carrageenan.

**To healthify your hot chocolate:** Try making your own at home using organic milk or a carrageenan and artificial sweetener-free nut milk. Use unsweetened cacao powder instead of store-bought packets.

Naturally sweeten your hot chocolate using minimally processed natural cane sugar or another sweetener such as stevia, honey, agave nectar, or maple sugar. Top off your marvelous mug with cinnamon or another spice of your choice, such as cardamom—an energy booster—or ginger, which is great for digestion.

**Fit Fact:** *According to a study conducted at Cornell University, the antioxidant concentration in hot cocoa is almost twice as strong as red wine. Cocoa’s concentration was two to three times stronger than that of green tea and four to five times stronger than that of black tea.*

Here’s a wonderful recipe I found for organic hot chocolate that uses whole and coconut milk, dark chocolate, and vanilla extract. Oh, and there’s a recipe for optional whipped cream as well!

## **Apple Pie**

Apple pie is arguably the ultimate comfort food. Its tantalizing aroma alone can turn a heated family feud into a tranquil Thanksgiving meal worthy of a Norman Rockwell painting. But apple pie can also be an ugly, brutish Orc ...

Starting from its outside in, an apple pie’s crust is often butter-laden or full of shortening. The traditional all-purpose flour used is heavily refined and thus nutritionally void. Then, aside from the antioxidant-rich apples and spices,

the filling is comprised of more flour and butter and heaps of sugar. According to , a single serving contains 411 calories, 19 grams of fat and 58 grams of carbohydrates.

As promised by Uglúk the Orc, apple pie can be a part of a fit fall menu with these easy tweaks:

Use a combination of whole wheat and all-purpose flour. Or, for a gluten-free version, try a chia and almond flour blend instead.

Use a one-to-one ratio of coconut oil instead of butter.

Use raw honey or stevia in the filling instead of sugar.

**Fit Fact:** *Coconut oil does not have a coconut flavor and can be substituted for butter, vegetable shortening, or any solid fat without dramatically changing the flavor of the recipe. Coconut oil offers a host of benefits, including lowering cholesterol, restoring normal thyroid function, aiding in weight loss, keeping weight balanced, boosting the immune system, and improving the texture of skin and hair.*

Here's a Paleo apple pie recipe that is totally grain-free!

For a healthified recipe that includes flour and features stevia as its sweetener of choice, check out this one from the Sugar-Free Mom:

**Fit Fact:** *Apple pie is not American at 's English! Before the Revolutionary War, apple pies were made with unsweetened apples and surrounded by an inedible pie crust or shell. Its first mention in literature appeared in the year 1589 in "Menaphon" by dramatist Robert Greene: "Thy breath is like the steam of apple pies."*

I hope these tips will come in handy for you this season! Here's to a healthy, happy fall, y'all!

Stay fit, stay faithful!

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

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## **John Hagee: 'If You're Not for Israel, You're Biblically Ignorant or Not Christian'**

One picture captured my heart this past Sunday. The sight of Pastor John Hagee, the leader of tens of millions of evangelicals in the United States and around the world, and Rabbi Aryeh Scheinberg, a great scholar and veteran rabbi of the Orthodox community in San Antonio, embracing during a joint prayer at the Western Wall.

This picture joins the mounting evidence of a theological earthquake occurring in parts of the Christian world pertaining to relations with the Jewish people and the state of Israel. While some of us have difficulty opening up to these changes, considering the bloody historic record of the Jewish people with the church, it is important to know of this revolution and the righteous among the nations who come to our assistance.

In 2006, Hagee established Christians United for Israel (CUFI), a growing organization that currently numbers 1.8 million members. The group's activists regularly approach

their representatives in the U.S. government in Washington on behalf of Israel. The organization has branches on many college campuses in the fight for the hearts of the next generation and starting this year will launch a program bringing Christian student missions to Israel to become directly acquainted with it.

CUFI convenes a huge annual conference in Washington and throughout the year holds dinners honoring Israel in every major city. Hagee emphasizes that they condition admission to the organization and its meetings with the stipulation that “they are not to be conversionary in any way, but are to communicate to our Jewish brothers and sisters our love for them and our desire to help them in any way that we can.”

**IH: What brings you to Israel at this time?**

Hagee: “We have arrived in Israel with a delegation of more than 500 people because we consider Israel’s struggle also our struggle. We believe Israel has the right to exist, and the right to secure borders. It has the right to defend itself against its enemies, and its friends need to stand up and speak up for it at a time of adversity. Many people have canceled their trips to Israel due to the situation. In contrast, we chose this time to come because we want the people of Israel know that we are more than talk. We are action.”

**IH: Israel has to deal with pro-Palestinian propaganda and lies. How do you see this?**

H: “Well, I can say that Israel is winning the media war in the United States hands down. Our organization (CUFI) put full-page ads in 14 of the top-circulation newspapers in the United States. These stated that Israel’s fight is our fight. We pointed out what Hamas was trying to accomplish. We demonstrated the fact that Hamas terrorists were aiming for casualties among their own civilians to win the media war by

presenting Israel in a negative light. The American people were flooded with the truth, and we were glad to be a part of this effort.”

**IH: Let's talk about religion and faith. The average Israeli is not familiar with the differences between the Christian denominations. Tell us about the American evangelicals.**

H: “There are about 60 million evangelicals in America. The thing that separates the evangelicals from other belief systems in the United States is that we believe in the Bible. It is the moral compass for the soul. The Bible does not offer God's recommendations; these are God's laws and we keep them, beginning with ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth’ (Gen. 1:1). King David said: ‘The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof’ (Ps. 24:1).

“If God owns the earth, and made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give their descendants the right to the land of Israel—then Israel is not an ‘occupier’ as implied by the liberal media in the United States, but the owner of the land by covenant. And the covenant still stands.

“Israel must never be separated from its biblical roots. When King David says, ‘Speak and pray for the peace of Jerusalem’ (Ps. 122:6)—we speak and pray for the peace of Jerusalem. When the Prophet Isaiah (62:1) says, ‘For Zion's sake I will not keep silent’—we do not keep silent.

“Our organization has 1.8 million members, making us the largest pro-Israel organization in the world. When we send out an ‘action alert,’ our members promptly send out tens of thousands of emails in support and defense of Israel. We do this due to the biblical commandment. We believe that not to speak is to speak; seeing evil and not resisting it is evil. Therefore when we see evil—and anti-Semitism is evil, a sin that damns the soul—we react.

“In the teachings of Paul in the book of Romans (15:27), which

state that the Christians should recognize that they have a debt of gratitude to the Jewish people for their contribution to Christianity, Christians should know that without the Jewish contribution there would be no Christianity.

“Judaism does not need Christianity to explain its existence, while Christianity cannot explain its existence without Judaism. So what did the Jewish people give to Christianity? The Bible, the Torah, which is the most priceless treasure we have. They have given us the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They have given unto us the knowledge that ‘the Lord is our God; the Lord is one,’ (Deut. 6:4) invalidating pantheism and all polytheistic religions.

“Judaism has given Christianity the first family of Christianity: Mary, Joseph and Jesus, as well as the 12 Disciples. Jesus says in the book of John (4:22): ‘Salvation is of the Jews.’ Meaning that if you take away the Jewish contribution to Christianity, Christianity would not exist.

“Now, people who believe the Bible believe in this too, and therefore their support for Israel is not a political issue, but rather a matter of obedience to the Word of God.”

**IH: So how come the majority of the Christian world does not support us?**

H: “If you really want to read a masterful exposition on the subject, read the book by Father Flannery, ‘The Anguish of the Jews.’ He goes into the historic essence of the evolution of the Roman Catholic Church in becoming anti-Semitic.

“For 800 years, the church had an anti-Semitic message that produced the Crusades, and brought to the murder of thousands of Jews for refusing to convert to Catholicism, as well as those killed by the Spanish Inquisition.

“And then Adolf Hitler, who attended a Roman Catholic church and listened to the teachings of John Chrysostom (bishop of

Antioch from the end of the 4th century), 'the Golden Mouth,' who said: God hates the Jews and I hate the Jews and I want to kill them because of Christ. ['For killing God there is no expiation possible, no indulgence or pardon. ...

When animals are unfit for work, they are marked for slaughter, and this is the very thing which the Jews have experienced. By making themselves unfit for work, they have become ready for slaughter.' (D.E.)]

"When such a message enters the brain of the child who later became the monster who led the Third Reich which systematically murdered 6 million Jews—this is what I call 'the harvest of hatred' of 1,800 years of a theological concept according to which God had no use for the Jews. Yet, I acknowledge that there have been, in the past and present, Catholics who have been very good friends of Israel, like Pope John Paul II."

**IH: What response did you get from Christians of other denominations about your vision and religious viewpoint?**

H: "You have to go back to basics, with the fact that in Genesis (chapter 1), God created the world and made a very solemn promise (brought in Gen. 12:3), 'I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you.' From that moment on, every nation that ever blessed Israel has been blessed by God. And every nation that has ever persecuted the Jewish people, God crushed. And so He will continue.

"So take that principle and apply it to the people who call themselves Christians. There are Christians who claim to be anti-Semitic. That is an oxymoron. Christianity is driven by a love. Anti-Semitism is driven by hate. You cannot be a Christian anti-Semite; You are either a Christian or an anti-Semite. Bottom line, if you are not for Israel and the Jewish people, you either are biblically ignorant or you're not a Christian."

**IH: Part of the Christian world reads the word 'Israel' in the Old Testament as referring to the church.**

H: "I know, but saying it doesn't make it true. You are talking about replacement theology [which maintains that God abandoned the Jews and replaced them with the church following their rejection of Jesus. Since, the Jews have only been 'Israel according to the flesh,' namely, the biological descendants of the biblical people of Israel, while the church is 'Israel according to the spirit,' the heir of all the prophetic promises given to the people of Israel in the Bible (D.E.)] This is a false doctrine!"

**IH: Was it not also Paul's view?**

"Absolutely not. In Romans (chapter 11), Paul opens by saying: Has God cast away his people?—speaking about the Jewish people. And he responds: God forbid! And then he used the logic—'I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin; God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.'

"Therefore, Paul concludes, if God is using him then he is still using the Jewish people and they were not cast off. He repeats this idea further down in this chapter, just for those who have a hard time getting it the first time round.

"And then you learn the concept that anything that is replaced in the Bible never reappears, Sodom and Gomorrah, for instance. The people of Israel, in contrast, were dispersed from their land in the year 70 A.D. But they were reborn and the State of Israel was re-established in 1948. Why would they be reborn if God wanted to replace them? Furthermore, not only were they reborn, but they flourished. This nation has one of the most prosperous countries on the face of this Earth. It is militarily strong. It has transformed the desert into a blossoming place. This is a testimonial to the fact that God is with Israel. Therefore replacement theology is a false

doctrine. It is religious anti-Semitism, and can only be believed by people who do not read the entirety of the biblical texts concerning Israel.”

**IH: We are now facing a revival of ancient Islam that is sweeping major parts of the Middle East. How do you respond to this?**

H: “I think it was Edmond Burke who said, ‘The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.’ I think America has backed down from its role as a global leader. We have a weak national leadership, and on account of that weakness, the tyrants of the world are marshalling all the people; the radicals are bent on realizing their evil intent, and evil is prospering. This is the heyday for evil.

“ISIS [Islamic State], which was dismissed by our president as the ‘Lakers Junior Varsity,’ now has, according to our latest Intelligence, over 31,000 soldiers, fully equipped and ready for action. In less than 10 months they went from nothing to a major military force. And why? Because those who should represent truth and light are backing down, and evil is having a field day. I see no difference in principle between ISIS, Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran, apart from the degree of violence they resort to. They all want the Jews dead.”

**IH: We know that the people who are suffering directly from ISIS are Shi’ites and Christians. Christians have become the Jews of the days of old.**

H: “Yes, ISIS is a very radical form of Islam that kills anybody that doesn’t share its beliefs, whether Christian, Jewish or anything but what they are. Yet, any faith that has as its fundamental reason for existence the killing of innocent children solely for not sharing their belief certainly cannot be following the God of heaven.”

**IH: Some say that the evangelical support for Israel is to**

**hasten the prophetic scenario of the End of Days; that your support is not for good reasons but stems from the desire to have Israel engaged in a new world war that will hasten the Second Coming of Jesus.**

H: "The answer to that is that it is absolutely impossible for any human being or group of people to do anything to change the mind of God about the things He is going to do in the future.

"The Bible is very clear on this that from the foundation of the world, God has established what He is going to do and when. I will be judged by how I am going to obey the Bible to help the Jewish people.

"If some people are too biblically illiterate to understand this, it is not my problem. If some are too prejudiced to accept it—so be it. My response is to do what I know: to help Israel and the Jewish people. This will not change one thing God Almighty is going to do, not now, not ever."

**IH: Finally, on the eve of the Jewish New Year, what would you like to wish the people of Israel?**

H: "Our prayer and our blessing for the state of Israel is that they have a lasting peace, when they can enjoy the fruit and benefits of living in this democratic country; and that their children and their children's children will no longer be under constant threat of war from radical groups, but will prosper and be blessed."

*For the original article, visit .*

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# Like an Automobile, Manhood Requires an Occasional Tune-Up

Time passes. Circumstances change. People come and people go. Life gets busy. Life gets boring. Relationships go bad. Relationships go good.

Maintenance is necessary to make sure that throughout all of these circumstances, you maintain your mature manhood and faith in Jesus. Do you perform it as often as you need?

Maintenance requires maturity. Maintenance requires a man to think beyond himself and think about the people around him.

Maintenance requires a man to think beyond today and plan for his future. Maintenance requires a man to hold to his wedding vows exactly as he speaks them. Maintenance requires a husband to take responsibility for his soon-to-be children.

Maintenance requires a father to do his duties of raising his children according to the standard of God. Maintenance requires a man to review his relationship and faith in Christ daily.

Are you performing the necessary maintenance in your life or circumstances?

Whether you care to admit it or not, all aspects of your regular life require maintenance. Your car must be maintained in order to run properly. Your house needs to be cleaned inside and out often to maintain order. Your work requires you to maintain consistency in showing up on time and getting your work done in a timely manner. You know these things and, at this point, you almost do them without any thought of the maintenance you are performing.

Your spiritual walk demands a level of maintenance. It's why God has led me to lead the charge with . It is why I wrote a 30-day challenge specifically on the topic of maintenance. It's why I continue to write articles about maintaining your faith daily and weekly. Your spiritual walk is about your relationship and faith in Christ. It is the most importance type of maintenance you will ever perform in your life.

When was the last time you considered the maintenance needed in your regular life?

More importantly, when was the last time you considered the maintenance needed in your spiritual life?

Man up this week, and review all areas of your life, like the ones mentioned in the above sentences.

Pray for strength. Pray for guidance. We'll be praying for you as well.

What are some areas in your own life that need maintenance, and are you ready to perform it?

**Manturity** is a blog built on establishing spiritual maturity in today's man. The goal is to assist men in building better marriages and help them grow in maturity and explore different aspects of manhood. features new weekly blog posts, daily social-media updates and a powerful resources page. Stay up to date with the Manturity blog communities on Facebook and Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

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# How Meditation Becomes Your Key to Success

Being bound by demonic strongholds and oppressive spirits has a way of keeping you in a place of lack and failure. You may have a few high points here and there, but there is no lasting victory and success.

When you are delivered by way of God's grace and mercy, you will find breakthrough from the cycles that keep you from lasting success and victory. When you are delivered and set free, you may even find that you will see success in many other areas that on the surface seem to be unrelated to what you were delivered from. Success, victory and breakthrough become a way of life when you see true deliverance and learn to maintain that deliverance.

This is the covenant of God with you—that you will have the full measure of salvation so that you can walk free, have victory, take over the land that God swore to your fathers, and have good success in this life and the life to come. You cannot have good success when you are bound. By way of covenant you can be set free and walk in an abundance of prosperity and success.

Prosperity is not just about riches and fame. Prosperity covers everything that concerns you. When you are prosperous, you will not lack in health, relationships, supernatural power to serve and help others, wisdom, insight, knowledge, all the fruit of the Spirit, creativity, strategy for everyday life, as well as all of your needs being met. Do not get caught up into thinking that prosperity means that you will be a famous celebrity megachurch pastor or TV evangelist. Prosperity means that you will not lack *any* good thing the Lord has designed for you.

Joshua 1:8 gives insight on how we can make our way prosperous and have good success—which is essentially how to maintain our freedom and deliverance. The verse says that we must meditate in the Word *day and night*. This takes discipline, but it will pay off greatly if done consistently. Prosperity is the key benefit to being in covenant with God.

Muttering and meditating upon the Word of God, until it becomes alive in our spirits, is the key to actualizing the promises of God. Muttering (Hebrew *hagah*, “mutter”) upon the Word of God day and night is likened to a tree planted by the rivers of water absorbing and drawing water into its system through its roots (Ps. 1:3).

Meditation is the process of chewing on the Word. We take a Scripture, speak it, think on it, and then we do it again. This is the biblical way to get the Word into your system and to receive revelation and understanding. *To meditate* means “to ponder, regurgitate, think aloud, consider continuously and utter something over and over again.” This is exactly what we need to do with the Word of God.

“Meditate” or “muse”—Hebrew word *siyach*—means to put forth, meditate, muse, commune, speak, complain, ponder, sing, study and talk. Your meditation is also what you are speaking, muttering, singing, complaining about, or pondering (see Ps. 5:1).

- My meditation is connected to the words of my mouth (Ps. 19:14; Ps. 49:3).
- My meditation should cause *gladness* (Ps. 104:34, emphasis added).
- My meditation is on what I love (Ps. 119:97).
- My meditation gives understanding (Ps. 119:99).
- My meditation brings success (Josh. 1:8).
- My meditation is what I delight in (Ps. 1:2).
- My meditation is at night (Ps. 63:6)

Josh. 1:8 is the only place the word “success” is found in the King James translation. Success is the Hebrew word *sakal*, meaning to be prudent, be circumspect, to act wisely, to understand, to prosper, to give attention to, consider, ponder, to have insight, have comprehension, to act circumspectly, act prudently.

Meditation is connected to wisdom. Meditation will help you access the wisdom of God, and the key to success is wisdom.

✘ *Adapted from God’s Covenant with You for Deliverance & Freedom by **John Eckhardt**, copyright 2014, published by Charisma House. Covenant is the foundation of all of God’s interactions with us. In fact, success for every part of your life depends on how you respond to God’s promises and divine plans for you. Learn how to overcome personal struggles and end cycle of failure and bondage with this book. To order your copy [click here](#).*

### **Prayer Power for the Week of 9/22/2014**

This week include times of meditation as part of your prayer time. Ask the Lord to direct you in those times and to lead you to the Scriptures you need to ponder. Include Him as you ingest the Word of God and expect Him to give you life-changing revelation and wisdom for success in everything you do. Continue to pray for God’s kingdom to spread at home and abroad. Expect and thank Him for revival in our churches, communities, nation and the world. Remember Israel when you pray for God’s purpose to be fulfilled in the earth. Lift up those suffering for the cause of Christ, and ask God to show you tangible ways to be a blessing and carry His presence (Ps. 1:3; Josh. 1:8).

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# 'Breaking Good' Beats 'Breaking Bad' Any Day

Driven by love for his family and faced with seemingly insurmountable financial burdens, the lead character and mild-mannered father, Walt, in the Emmy Award-winning television show *Breaking Bad*, decides to use his chemistry knowledge to make "fat stacks" of quick cash by "cooking" meth—an addictive, destructive and dangerous street drug.

Walt breaks bad, and despite attempts to keep his new business under wraps, the inevitable lies, deception and lawlessness catch up with him, ironically damaging the one thing he valued the most—his family relationships. The show's popularity has captured tons of viewers, both Christians and non-Christians alike, helping make "binge watching" a new term for watching several episodes at a time.

At Every Man Ministries, we've caught the show's bug too, and we think there's more to learn from it than just how to get caught up in the drug trade.

Here's the key point: God's in the "breaking bad" business.

But God's goal is for us to see how breaking good beats breaking bad. He'd rather set us free from sin, pushing liberty instead of peddling sin—especially when the stakes are high.

We men are a lot like Walt. Walt's *motives* were good. But his *means* were bad. We want to provide and protect our family and loved ones. Often it takes a traumatic event to accelerate achieving the means to an end. So we may turn to cheating, backstabbing a competitor, swindling a deal, or telling little "white" lies to get ahead fast.

It took a wake-up call diagnosis of cancer for Walt to

eventually break bad. His pride prevented him from receiving financial help from his family and business colleagues. So he broke bad thinking it was for the good.

We all have the same decision, and hopefully it doesn't take a traumatic event to choose between engaging in sin or a relationship with Jesus.

Contrary to what you may think, breaking good is not a milquetoast proposition. Jesus is all about risk and reward.

**He wants us to bet it all on him.**

- *“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:35).*

**He wants us to trust him in troubling times.**

- *“Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done” (Phil. 4:6).*

Here are the differences between breaking bad and breaking good that can share the same motive:

### **Breaking Good**

Choose God

Trust God

Follow Jesus

Tell the truth

Live transparently

### **Breaking Bad**

Choose sin

Trust yourself

Follow others

Lie to get ahead

Hide a secret life

Use talents wisely

Use talents foolishly

Be accountable

Avoid accountability

Give

Steal

Serve

Take

Go to church

Go to the bar

Judas Iscariot broke bad. Even though he tasted what it was like to walk with Jesus, when the chips were down, he chose greed instead of Jesus. Judas left a part of himself open to sin, and like a dormant virus on your hard drive, the enemy exploited it when he was vulnerable.

Don't be like Judas. Be like Jesus and break good. It's better in the short—and long—run and much more fulfilling.

- *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here” (2 Cor. 5:17).*
- *“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).*

**Kenny Luck**, founder of Every Man Ministries, men's pastor at Saddleback Church, and ChristianMingle advisory board member, provides biblically oriented teaching and leadership for men and pastors seeking relevant, timely material that battle cultural, worldly concepts threatening men and God's men. Follow Kenny and Every Man Ministries now on Facebook, Twitter (@everyMM) and YouTube.

For the original article, visit .

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# The Most Important Stress Relief Technique You'll Ever Learn

If you often deal with stress, anxiety or any tension-related emotion, this may be one of the most important stress-relief techniques you'll ever learn for now to deal with it.

Not only that, but I'll show you how this technique can even help you deal with procrastination or binge eating.

I only discovered this technique a couple of days ago myself. I was rubbing my forehead up and down with my fingertips and was disturbed to feel how sore the muscle beneath was. Then I rubbed beneath my collarbone and my upper chest. The muscles were sore there too.

What could be going on?

If you are feeling anxious or stressed, where do you tend to hold it in your body? Do you feel it in your forehead or temples, in your throat, in your upper chest?

Whenever you feel tense, it usually shows up physically in the "tension triangle." Imagine drawing a triangle with your forehead as the top/tip of the triangle and a line from each shoulder as the bottom/base.

If you spend a lot of the day in the tension triangle, it could be having a disastrous effect on your health. Many people practice addictive behaviors simply because they've learned that they relieve tension in the short term—even if they are destructive in the long run.

All they care about at that moment is getting out of pain.

But the techniques I'm going to teach you will show you how to

get out of that triangle in a healthy way:

**The stress-relief technique.** Pay attention to your body right now. Are your shoulders raised up or tilted forward? This stressful posture is comparable to a cat that arches her back up when she feels threatened. So pull your shoulders back and down right now. This simple act alone makes it more difficult to stay tense.

Are your legs or arms crossed? Uncross them if they are.

Are you breathing deep—from your belly?

Take a moment and breathe in through your nose, allowing your lungs to fill with air, counting from one to 10 mentally. Then breathe out through your mouth, deflating your abdomen, counting down from 10 to one mentally.

As you breathe, meditate on the following Scripture:

- The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life (Job 33:4).

When I think about the breath of God flowing through my lungs, it makes me feel calm and centered. It also helps me to become present-minded. Most of the mental pain/stress people experience comes from either fear of the future or rejection/regrets from the past.

But controlling your breath and meditating on God's Word help prevent that self-defeating tendency to "time travel."

- "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (Phil. 3:13).
- "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matt. 6:34).

With these practices, you stay present and engaged in your life right now. You have confidence that God is with you, and His grace is sufficient to help you deal with any challenge life throws at you.

**How to stop procrastination with stress relief.** This technique also can help if you procrastinate a lot. Have you ever noticed that the things you procrastinate on usually are things that are most good for you to do in the long run?

When you procrastinate, ask yourself the following two questions:

- What pain am I imagining that I'll experience if I take action?
- Could I breathe through that?

Question No. 1 is based the time-travel tendency—you likely are imagining future pain. When I procrastinate, my pain usually comes from imagining the future tension I'd feel from the tension triangle!

However, now I think of this mental resistance as like birthing pains. Typically, the thing you are procrastinating on is about giving birth to something new; it could be a healthier you physically, more financial responsibility, a cleaner house, or a more organized office.

Whatever it is, there is going to be tension between the way things are now versus the way you want them to be.

I've learned that I can short-circuit that "birthing pain" through the simple techniques of exiting the tension triangle. I do the task I've been putting off, but I use the stress-relief technique to release muscle tension.

If my shoulders try to raise themselves up or tilt forward in tension, I lower them and pull them back.

I keep my breath even and use the '1 to 10, 10 to 1' breathing

pattern throughout the activity. I meditate on my Scripture, imagining God's breath in me, empowering me to do what needs to be done.

Before I know it, I am finished! If you do this right, not only will you experience the satisfaction of a completed job, but you will benefit your body too.

**How to stop binge eating with stress relief.** If you find yourself eating a lot when you are not physically hungry, check your body to see if you are tense:

- Where is your shoulder position?
- Where is your breathing?

Here is a little-known fact: Opening your mouth and/or chewing is actually a tension-relieving activity! So eating is likely your unconscious attempt to get yourself out of the tension triangle.

In fact, open your mouth right now and let your jaw go slack. Lower your eyebrows. You'll look like you are screaming or yawning. Sometimes, I'll even stick my tongue out. It makes it more fun!

After a few seconds of this, you will feel tension draining away from your face and jaw—all without eating anything.

In addition, bring your shoulders back and down. Do the '1 to 10, 10 to 1' breathing pattern while meditating on Job 33:4:

- The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Here are some other Scriptures I've meditated on as well:

- Psalm 150:6: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!"
- Isaiah 42:5: "Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the

earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it.”

After you release the physical tension, then shift your attention to another activity, preferably one that you’ve been putting off. Breathe through it as you do it.

I challenge you to pay attention to your body today. Make it a game. Can you catch yourself in the tension triangle? Share your experience in the comments.

Make a conscious effort to get out of the tension triangle throughout the day, every day. Your body will thank you for it!

*Once 240 pounds and a size 22, Kimberly Taylor can testify of God’s healing power to end binge eating. She is an author and the creator of the Christian weight-loss website . Visit today for inspirational health and weight-loss tips.*

*For the original article, visit .*

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## **Dad, What Is a Good Way to Connect With Your Daughter?**

How do you connect with your daughter?

Earlier this year, some research came out of Baylor University with some powerful insights for fathers. The researchers found that the best bonding times for dads and daughters—and what often become positive turning points in those relationships—are *shared activities*.

Take note, dad. When asked about moments when they really felt

connected to their dads, daughters commonly mentioned the time when they began to play a sport. Their dads quickly jumped in and became the primary practice partner. And it's natural for dads to stay involved to help their daughters develop skills and learn lessons about competition, taking risks, and standing up for themselves.

Most of all, when dads made the effort to help coach or work on the skill with them, it made the daughters feel important—*the center of their dad's attention*.

To be clear, this isn't all about sports. Other shared activities daughters mentioned include working on a project and taking a trip together. Those experiences helped them feel connected to their dads. And often, spending that time together led to great conversations about all kinds of subjects.

Now, here's what I believe is even more interesting about this. The professor at Baylor noted that these shared activities tap into the *masculine* style of building closeness. Guys often relate more easily while *doing* things together (side-by-side), where the feminine approach is more about connecting by *talking*, (face-to-face).

Allow me to challenge you here, dad. The fact that your daughter is probably willing to do activities and sports and work on projects with you is a good thing. Maybe without knowing it, she's accommodating your male communication style.

But let's not look at this study, say, "That's cool," and quickly move on with life as we know it. It's pretty clear that daughters enjoy those activities with their dads because *they get more access to him, and the activities lead to more open communication*.

So, if *they* are willing to come over into our world a little bit, shouldn't we be eager to do the same? Those one-on-one, face-to-face conversations our daughters thrive on might not

be easy for many of us, but aren't our girls worth the effort?

So look for more opportunities to do things with your daughter. If she isn't into sports, maybe join a club or take a class. Start a hobby together. The study mentioned one dad who took singing lessons so he could be in a school talent show with his daughter. I'm sure she was glowing when they performed.

And for those of you who don't have a daughter, keep using that side-by-side approach with your sons also. It's when you're doing things together that the real bonding occurs.

*So, dads of daughters, what has worked for you? What special activities do you share with your daughter? Please leave a comment below.*

### **Action Points for Dads on the Journey**

- Ask your child what sport or other activity he or she would like to do together—or learn together. Then make plans to do it, even if it requires you to stretch and learn something new.
- Put a regular one-on-one outing on your calendar with each of your children. You'll be surprised how much they open up when it's just the two of you.
- What project can you take on with your child? Try to find one that interests her, and then tackle it together.
- Plan a trip with your child to do something fun—whether it's for a few nights or just for an afternoon. Or make arrangements to take him or her with you on a business trip.
- Are face-to-face conversations with your child difficult for you? Don't hesitate to get help from conversation-starter decks (like this one or this one) or something like The Communication Game for Dads and Daughters.

**Carey Casey** is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a

*nonprofit organization seeking to improve the lives of children and establish a positive fathering and family legacy that will impact future generations by inspiring and equipping fathers and father figures to be actively engaged in the life of every child.*

*For the original article, visit .*

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## **Expanding Waistlines: Belly Fat Becoming Huge Problem**

America's waistlines have been expanding rapidly in the last decade, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Fifty-four percent of U.S. adults have abdominal obesity, which is a waistline of 35 inches or more.

Researchers found that from 1999 to 2012 the average American male waistline grew by an inch to 40 inches. The average waist size for women grew two inches to 38 inches.

People whose fat has settled mostly around their waistline instead of other places run a higher risk of heart disease, diabetes, and other issues related to obesity.

"The increase is a concern. There's no question about that," said Dr. William Dietz, an obesity expert formerly with the CDC who was not involved in the study.

"What it suggests is that even though the obesity rate may be stable, fat distribution may be changing, which would mean that we shouldn't be complacent about the plateau," Dietz added.

For the original article, visit .

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# Parenting: A Beautiful Mess

We all want to be great parents. As a parent of five grown children, I can tell you it takes hard work. And, it's sometimes messy. Parenting is a beautiful mess!

The new movie, *Moms' Night Out*, captures this idea perfectly. I've seen it several times and can tell you the message it delivers isn't just for moms, it's for dads too. It shows us what it means to get rid of all the expectations and pressures of parenting, and, instead, learn the basics of parenting and how to love your kids well.

So, as you learn more about this beautiful mess we call parenting, here are five questions you should ask yourself:

**1. When was the last time your nails were painted by your daughter?** One way to know you're parenting well at a basic level is if you immerse yourself in their world. The best way to connect with your kids is to spend time doing what they like to do. So, I encourage you to create a world out of Legos, climb up into the treehouse with them, and let your daughter paint your nails (even you, Dad!). For more ways to spend time with your kids, check out [How to Spend More One-on-One Time with Your Children](#).

**2. When was the last time you taught your son about being a gentleman?** Being a role model is such an important foundation to lay in your relationship with your kids. As I mentioned in [8 Things Every Father Must Teach His Son](#), one of the best things you can do is teach your son how to be a gentleman. This basic concept is something that all parents

should work to instill in their sons.

**3. When was the last time you were in a different room than your phone?** Are you constantly checking texts, emails, Twitter or Facebook? If so, choose to leave your phone behind sometimes and fully focus on your kids—without distractions. You can parent well by being there for your kids, physically and mentally.

**4. When was the last time you were affectionate with your spouse in front of the kids?** Your kids desire to see a loving relationship between their parents. They crave that stability and security. This is why making your marriage a priority is part of the basics of parenting.

**5. When was the last time you told your kids you love them?** Ultimately, your job as a parent comes down to one thing: loving your kids well. Sometimes we assume our kids understand our love for them because of the way we provide a home, food and so many other things for them. But it's still very important to *tell* your kids you love them. Say "I love you," and say it often.

I hope you'll see *Moms' Night Out* and enjoy the beautiful mess of parenting.

Have you found parenting to be a bit messy? Is it still beautiful to you? Please share your comments below.

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