

Why Busyness is Not a Badge of Honor

"I'm so slammed at the office this week. I'm going to be working late every night to get things done!"

"This is a crazy month for me and the kids. Between basketball playoffs, piano recitals, and soccer tournaments, I might as well start a taxi service."

"Wow, my schedule has had me traveling all over the place lately. I haven't had one minute to even stop and catch my breath."

Sound familiar? Not many days go by without someone I know saying how busy they are. Often they say these things with a hint of pride, as if being busy is something they are proud of. They wear their busyness as a badge of honor.

And I'm no exception. There have been many busy seasons in my life when I've been quick to tell people all about how I'm running from one thing to the next and being pulled in so many directions. But over time, I've come to learn that busyness is not something to be proud of.

Somehow, we've equated busyness with value. We've equated busyness with importance. We've equated busyness with honor. And yet, being busy can be harmful in so many ways. Here are 3 reasons why busyness is not a badge of honor:

1. It harms our kids. We want our kids to experience good things. So, when we view busyness as a good thing, of course we want to share it with them. We sign up our kids for three or four organized sports teams, make them learn every instrument imaginable, do arts, dance ... the list goes on. But being involved in so many things keeps kids from being kids. When they don't get done with practice until 8pm each night,

they don't have time to run around the yard or catch lizards.

Another way our kids are harmed is through the pressure that comes with a busy schedule. They will begin to feel anxious and overwhelmed by their activities until they are unable to enjoy them anymore.

Busyness is a bandit that steals precious time together with our kids. It steals one-on-one time where we can teach them important life lessons, hug them, and share how much we love them.

In our family, we found that setting up boundaries was the best way to protect our time and avoid busyness. For example, we only allowed our kids to do one organized sport at a time.

2. It harms our marriage. When spouses find themselves on different schedules, they often become like two rudderless ships passing in the night ... and day. One is getting home from work while the other is taking their daughter to soccer practice. One is sleeping in after a long night of work while the other is up early and out the door to get things done.

Whatever the situation may be, a disconnection arises in marriage when you've given the best of your time and energy somewhere else and only have your leftovers for your spouse.

To help reconnect with your spouse, one of the 6 Ways Your Marriage Can Thrive in a Busy Season is to set up certain nights or afternoons that belong just to the two of you. Plan your dates before you plan out the rest of your month. Make sure your schedule is set around your family time and your family time isn't set around your schedule.

3. It harms our lives. Ultimately, being busy keeps you from focusing on the important things in life—your faith, your family, and your friends. So be sure that instead of pouring all your time into activities, you're spending time investing in your relationships.

If you struggle with busyness, perhaps my post, *Why Solitude and Silence Are So Important*, will help.

Are you experiencing busyness in your life? What are you doing about it? I'd like to hear your thoughts. Leave a comment.

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

2 Big Excuses That Could be Keeping You Fat

All of us know that being in good physical shape is important for a number of reasons that could easily compose an entire article. A few primary reasons health and fitness professionals encourage patients and clients to exercise regularly is because doing so reduces the risk of injury in daily activities, prevents certain cancers, reduces the risk of heart disease, promotes better sleep, reduces anxiety and depression, strengthens the bones and immune system, helps with weight loss and weight control, increases energy levels, and improves confidence.

And yet, while the benefits of working out are vast and indisputable, many Americans still maintain sedentary lifestyles, inconsistent exercise routines, and frankly, apathetic attitudes and an unwillingness to change. As Christians, this is purely unacceptable as **the Bible clearly commands us to honor our bodies as dwelling places of the Holy Spirit.**

First Corinthians 10:31 says:

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (NIV)

My aim over the next few weeks is to highlight some of the excuses I hear most often from people whose workout routines are infrequent, ineffective, or even nonexistent. (I’ll save the excuses people give for eating poorly for another series!)

In this article, I will be focusing on two excuses that I am classifying under the umbrella term, **“Personality Blame.”** Personality Blame encompasses those excuses that are derived from an individual’s perceived inherent and unchangeable aversion to exercise. It simply isn’t in their nature to work out, and they see no reason to challenge the status quo.

While a predisposition to workout avoidance may certainly be legitimate, **it definitely isn’t an obstacle too tough to conquer.**

Without further ado, here are the top two Personality Blame excuses I hear along with what I hope will be helpful suggestions for how you can overcome them ... *for good:*

1. “I’ve tried it. I always quit working out after a few sessions.” This excuse comes mostly from people who have tried every form of exercise under the sun but haven’t been consistent with anything. After committing to an activity only to give up on it time and again, people often begin to associate the word “exercise” with “failure.” And **nobody wants to feel like a failure.**

If you can identify with this excuse, it’s time to start thinking more optimistically! You may feel like you’ve tried and hated every type of workout, but either you are mistaken and need to give another class/gym/sport a shot, or you didn’t stick to your previous routine long enough to reap results and begin to enjoy it. (Sometimes it takes time to learn to love exercise!)

Don't be so hard on yourself by saying "I'm a quitter." You just need to be a little more patient and devote some time to evaluating what it is you truly desire out of your workout, be it strength training-centered program, a dance or agility-based format, a team/community atmosphere, etc.

Write down one activity or routine you'd like to try, then commit to doing it for one month. Next, enlist your significant other, best friend, or someone else close to you to hold you accountable to your commitment. Ask them to send you a text or email everyday asking you if you've worked out yet.

Be sure you stick to your original activity. Give yourself time to get used to the environment, the movements, and the people. Give the program you're engaged in a chance to work for you, not only physically, but mentally and emotionally as well. You may be surprised one day to realize that attending your training session has become the highlight of your day!

2. "I'm just not that motivated." I love the quote from Zig Ziglar that says, "People often say that motivation doesn't last. Well, neither does bathing, that's why we recommend it daily."

Many people wait until they have a wedding to slim down for, a beach trip to shape up for, or a ski trip to get fit for before they commit to a regular exercise schedule. But after the special occasion or vacation has passed, they revert back to their former workout-less ways.

We need to motivate ourselves daily, not occasionally.

In the opening paragraph of this article, I mentioned myriad physical reasons why we should exercise, reasons that will enhance, strengthen, and lengthen our lives if take them to heart. This list can indeed be a source of motivation, especially the older we get, but I don't believe it is the most effective source. As followers of Christ, I believe we

are to look to the Word of God, the Bible, as our ultimate source of workout motivation.

Second Timothy 3:16 says:

“Every Scripture passage is inspired by God. All of them are useful for teaching, pointing out errors, correcting people, and training them for a life that has God’s approval.” (GOD’S WORD® Translation)

You may not need to lose weight. You may not want to build muscle or work on your cardiorespiratory fitness. You may feel peachy and see no pressing reason to start getting into better shape. But the fact is, to quote Paul to the Corinthians, you are not your own.

As a child of God, you belong to Him, and as His child, you’ve been given the duty to represent Him, honor Him, and glorify Him through the way you treat and respect your body.

When we choose to neglect exercise, we choose to disobey the call to keep our bodies, our temples, tidy and strong. By forgoing exercise, we set ourselves up for a future of poor health and ultimately, a shorter life devoid of the strength, energy, focus, and confidence that work to advance God’s kingdom.

If finding the motivation to work out is something you struggle with, I would urge you to dive into your Bible and extract key verses that will inspire you to put exercise high on your priority list each day. Here are a few of my favorites:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.” (NIV)

3 John 1:2: “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good

health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.” (NIV)

Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things because Christ gives me the strength.” (New Life Version)

Romans 12:1: “Christian brothers, I ask you from my heart to give your bodies to God because of His loving-kindness to us. Let your bodies be a living and holy gift given to God. He is pleased with this kind of gift. This is the true worship that you should give Him.” (New Life Version)

Proverbs 31:17: “She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms.” (NKJV)

Proverbs 24:5: “A wise man is strong. A man of much learning adds to his strength.” (New Life Version)

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

How to Avoid a Family Cold War

On Saturday, October 27, 1962 the United States and Soviet Union were on the brink of nuclear war. The Cuban Missile Crisis was in its terrorizing 14th day. Communication between

President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev had been reduced to a naval game of cat and mouse.

On this particular day, the U.S. Navy repeatedly attempted to surface a Soviet submarine with depth charges. They were unaware that the sub was armed with nuclear warheads. The Soviet sub-captain, furious and unable to communicate with Moscow, ordered the nuclear torpedoes battle ready. Fortunately, he was calmed down by his second captain and a catastrophe was avoided. After the crisis ended, a "Hot Line" was established to ensure quick and direct communication between the heads of state.

Communication breakdowns in the family can cause significant relational barriers. Good communication is essential for maintaining healthy relationships, nurturing our children into adulthood, and avoiding unnecessary conflict. Avoid the Cold War by following these 10 Communication Tips.

1. Breaking Bread. Life for the American family is fast-paced. Hours that used to be spent at the dinner table talking have been replaced by running to activities. Valuable hours of molding and shaping our kids have been taken away. Protect family meal times. Make a point of eating together at least two or three times per week. No TV or phones.

2. On the Move. Don't waste the time your family has in the car running around town. Rather than reverting to music, video games, or the DVD player ... start asking questions. Get them talking. Use open-ended questions.

3. Listen. Developing our children effectively requires getting to the heart. "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." Pay close attention to their words, body language, and tone. Use every sense to go below the surface and connect with their cries of the heart.

4. One-on-One. Spend one-on-one time with each child. When you do, the dynamic changes dramatically. Getting them out of the

group environment with focused attention will open them up. Your quiet, less dominant child, in particular probably has a lot to say when given the chance.

5. Walk in Their Shoes. Educate yourself on the issues they face. Peer pressure, drugs, alcohol, dating, school, etc. Ever-evolving issues face your child every day. Know them and stay current. Remember that life is much different now than it was even ten years ago.

6. Texting. This is how a majority of kids communicate with each other. You need to be here. BUT do not be annoying. Keep it short and light. No nagging or lectures allowed. Coordinate pick up times or send them little words of encouragement.

7. The Right Approach. How we guide and discipline our children makes all the difference. Personalities and needs are different. Some need a firm hand, while others need a gentle touch. Measure your approach based on how your child reacts.

8. Get off Their Back. Are your conversations dominated by constant correcting? This can cause a child to lose self-confidence and shut you out. Balance your conversations intently. Choose the right moments to speak into their lives. Give them room to make mistakes and fail. Even ask them if they'd like your opinion.

9. Open Your Book. Share your experiences, both good and bad, with your child. It makes you real and relatable. Sharing builds trust, exactly what you are trying to earn.

10. An Open Door. Be yourself. If you are relaxed and open, your child will respond back with the same. They should know that "your door is always open" to discuss life's issues. If love and trust exist in your home, communication will flow smoothly.

For the original article, visit .

Opinion: Netanyahu Shouldn't Believe U.S. Diplomacy

Last week, the Obama administration announced it would support the new unity government forged between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. The only thing surprising about America's reversal of its original commitment not to recognize or provide financial aid to such a government was that anybody was surprised by it, least of all Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

If there is one thing the Israeli leader should have learned by now is not to take Secretary of State John Kerry at his word, particularly when it involves Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

This is not because Kerry cares about Abbas specifically. No, it is likely that Kerry has as little patience for the PA president as he does for Netanyahu. But the world's top diplomat, whose dreams of a Nobel Peace Prize keep being mugged by reality, has no desire to live out his term with egg on his face.

If Netanyahu was under any illusions to the contrary, he was engaged in some serious wishful thinking—the very kind that causes the world to believe every promise made by Abbas, no matter how often or egregiously he breaks each one.

The European Union and other countries satisfied with the merger of what Economy and Trade Minister Naftali Bennett called “terrorists in suits” are a different story where Netanyahu is concerned, though Canada's ambiguity must have come as somewhat of a shock. While the Harper government said that it would only back a Palestinian unity government that

“renounces terrorism and recognizes Israel’s right to exist,” any entity that includes Hamas cannot meet such requirements. (Nor has the PA, when ruled solely by Abbas’ Fatah party, ever actually done so, which is why unity with Hamas was possible in the first place. Indeed, the enmity between the two stems from a struggle over power, money and strategy, not ideology.)

What Netanyahu had not anticipated, however, was that the PA was going to come up with the perfect rhetorical ploy as a defense against Western concerns about legitimizing Hamas: that new unity government is “technocratic” in nature. In spite of how meaningless this assertion is, it has been lapped up eagerly by those at which it was aimed.

The EU, taking its cue from Washington, was thrilled to be able to continue criticizing Israel and funding Palestinian corruption and terrorism, without acknowledging that this is what they are doing. Though the U.S. paid lip service to the need for “monitoring” the unity government, the EU welcomed the process of “Palestinian national consensus,” going so far as to state that it “creates new opportunities for the peace process, for democratic renewal and for the Palestinian people in both Gaza and the West Bank.”

Netanyahu’s reaction, other than expressing his “disappointment” at being lied to by Kerry, was to announce the approval of plans for the construction of 1,800 housing units in existing neighborhoods in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria (the West Bank).

Naturally, it was this, not Hamas, which elicited outrage from all corners of the globe.

Abbas immediately warned of “an unprecedented [Palestinian] response.”

On Thursday, the 47th anniversary of the outbreak of the Six-Day War, the U.S. and the EU called on Israel to reverse its decision on settlement activity, as did U.N. Secretary General

Ban Ki-moon.

In Israel, members of Netanyahu's coalition, such as Justice Minister and peace negotiator Tzipi Livni and Finance Minister Yair Lapid, are blaming Netanyahu for arousing the ire of the international community. And Opposition Leader and Labor Party head Isaac Herzog is even faulting him for Abbas' truce with Hamas. The twisted logic of this position is that, due to Netanyahu's "failure" to establish a Palestinian state, Abbas directed his aspirations for peace at Gaza.

Livni, in particular, ought to bow her head in shame. On Monday, as Rami Hamdallah was being sworn in as prime minister of the new Palestinian government, Mrs. Peace Process was presiding over a gay wedding. "I have come here on the authority of my moral position, and to say that the time has come that the state accept any couple who has chosen to tie their fate together as a couple," she told the two grooms and their guests.

One wonders how she can criticize her own government's lack of social and political progress, yet consider a bunch of Islamist homophobes as partners for peace.

Everyone else would do well to take note of the fact that on Tuesday, as the "international community" was welcoming the Fatah-Hamas union, outgoing Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniyeh's mother-in-law was being ushered into the Augusta Victoria hospital in Israel for cancer treatments. (Last November, his granddaughter—who subsequently died—was treated in Israel for a digestive tract infection.)

Haniyeh's term in office was marked by hundreds of missiles fired into Israel, in keeping with his organization's goal to annihilate "Zionists and Jews." Christians, too, have been are targets of his jihadist ideology. This did not prevent him from rushing his family to a church-run hospital in the Jewish state for medical care. More significantly, it did not cause

the Israeli authorities to deny him such a privilege.

It is this that should astound the U.S., the EU and the U.N. about Israel. Alas, a few apartment buildings worry them more than terrorists backed by Iran.

Netanyahu should stop relying on assurances from iffy allies and stick to his guns, literally. It is weapons, not two-faced friends, which Israel is going to need now more than ever.

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For the original article, visit .

Treasure Every Moment With Your Earthly Father

Over thirty-three years ago, my paternal grandfather passed away. We called him Paw Paw and my dad loved him very much.

Paw Paw loved to listen to his "45" of Tennessee Ernie Ford on his console record player and walked through the house singing at the top of his lungs. He had a lava lamp on top of the TV and an old fashioned cuckoo clock on the wall. Even with thick coke-bottle glasses he still had to use a magnifying glass to read his Bible, which he did the first thing every morning and the last thing every night. He loved Jesus with all of his heart. In church he would "amen" after almost every sentence.

Paw Paw died suddenly from a massive heart attack while at work. He was 80 years old. I remember my dad hugging me and saying, "I hope I can make it without him. I talked to him so

often. I already miss him ...”

My grandmother, Dad’s mom, was 10 years younger than my grandfather and we called her Gran Gran. They got married when she was 16 and were married for 54 years. Gran Gran was so special. She was a hairdresser (we called them “beauticians” back then), and always smelled like the solution she used when she gave permanents. Every night she would rub lotion on her hands, and it was a treat for each grandchild to sit next to her and let her rub the extra (by design I think) on our hands. We argued to see who would sit next to her at church, because she always held the hand of the child sitting next to her.

One time, when I was very young, I got in trouble while my family was visiting her home. I ran into the kitchen where she was cooking, and hid behind her skirt. She turned and looked at my dad and said firmly, “Ramon Eldon, you are not going to spank this boy in my house!” Right then I thought that it might be a very good thing if we moved in with her *permanently*.

Although he traveled all over the world, Dad never missed a day calling her, and when she died at 96 my dad was holding her soft sweet hand. For many weeks after she went to heaven, Dad caught himself picking up the phone to call her. He loved her deeply.

May of 2010, shortly before Father’s Day, Dad stepped onto the shores of heaven. Many sermons have been preached, and many songs sung about a saint who has gone home wanting to see *Jesus* first. You know, I believe our Savior is so gracious that He looked at my dad and said, “Go hug your mom and dad. Visit with them. Catch up. You and I have eternity together.” And Dad would do just that. He would hug the two people he had loved more than words could say.

While he was here I talked to him every day. In the last four

years of his life he spent many days sitting on his recliner praying for me. Every time I talked to him he finished our conversation by saying, "I love you Leonard ... with all of my heart!"

Someone said that my dad lost his battle with cancer, but Dad lost no battle. My dad loved Jesus deeply. Fervently. Passionately.

Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15:54 that "when this mortal is clothed with immortality ... *death has been swallowed up in victory*" (HCSB, emphasis added). Jesus said in John 11:25-26 that He is the resurrection and the life. If we believe in Him we will *never die*. Today, Dad would declare that, "*to be alive was Christ ... but to die is so much better.*"

A man who is one of my dearest friends and mentors has expressed often that we should give honor to whom honor is due. So, *please understand* when I would say, "*Dad, this devotion was written to honor you. Well done, brave Warrior. You finished strong. You were my best friend. I miss you more than words could express. You finished well. I love you ... with all of my heart!*"

This Father's Day, treasure the time you have with your earthly father. Embrace the wonderful memories and discard any negative ones and the emotions attached to them. Let the God of all comfort remind you of His great love and if your father is now in His presence, know that you will be reunited and spend eternity enjoying both.

Prayer Power for the Week of 6/9/2014

As we approach Father's Day this week, take time to thank God that He is eternally our Heavenly Father and will never leave

or forsake us. Thank Him that He's promised to be a father to the fatherless, and the One who takes us in even if our natural fathers and mothers forsake us. Pray for those who have lost their dads through death, divorce or abandonment, and take time to honor yours if he is still available, and his memory, if he's not. Pray for our military and their families, especially those dads currently away from home. Continue to pray that believers would work and pray together for revival in our nation and the expanding of God's kingdom. Remember Israel and pray that our leaders would have wisdom in dealing with the issues affecting the nation and the world. Psalm 27:10; Psalm 68:5; Heb 13:5b; John 11:25

Holy Shift: Do You Need to Make One?

Don't worry about the headline. There's an "F" after the "SHI" and before the "T" and yes, there's a purpose to that. I am exchanging the secular phrase for a sacred principle, the silly for the serious, and if I pressed your buttons then *mission accomplished*.

What remains are the two words every believer must consider if they claim to be a follower of Jesus—*holy* and *shift*.

"If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have gone; *everything* is made new!" (2 Cor. 5:17, NCV)

That's some major *shift* going down. Oops, did it again. What's the key word here? *Everything*. God says he wants all of you versus parts of you. Get that. Life with God requires change in God if the relationship is working the way he designed.

God himself is telling me in strong, simple terms that when he is at the center of my life I don't get to pick and choose my changes of life and lifestyle. It's positional.

"Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?"
(Luke 6:46 NIV)

By contrast, if we do call him "Lord, Lord" we will be moving, exchanging, changing or adjusting our ways for God's ways on a regular basis. Why? Because when you are connected to Christ, shift happens (of the holy sort).

The red letters of Jesus in your Bible clearly state one unequivocal fact: *change is ground zero of the spiritual life*. We dispute this reality of spiritual life internally because personal change is often emotionally uncomfortable for us and requires new character we don't presently have. Or we flat out disagree with God because we don't want to give up that attitude or behavior.

The result is self-styled Christianity, patterned around our comforts, where we live out of spiritual and non-spiritual boxes as the context suits us. Both approaches fall short and neither passes muster with God.

"I beg you to offer your lives as a living sacrifice to him. Your offering must be only for God and pleasing to him, which is the spiritual way for you to worship. Do not be shaped by this world; instead be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you will be able to decide what God wants for you; you will know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect" (Romans 12:1-2 NCV).

Beg? Apparently the Bible assigns an urgency to change. Or, staying with our theme, *the shifts need to be hitting the fan* starting with your inner life progressively making its way to your outward expression.

A Load of Shift

The moment we decide to commit energy for the purpose of changing or exchanging our ways for God's ways we are making a HOLY SHIFT. While life in God demands change in God, the consequence of making these shifts in being, believing or behaving have a massive payoff—God's blessing.

If you are ready to make a major advance, stop a major problem, go to a new level or experience success in your life with God and people, then buckle up! What are the most critical areas of transformation God desires?

Making A Spiritual Shift

Outward change doesn't last unless inner change is driving it. That's why the first HOLY SHIFT every person needs to make is in their relationship to God. Specifically, that means we seek to refresh our vision of God to go to our next destination in God. Seeing God clearly for who he really is redefines who we are, how we feel about ourselves and the way we should think and live.

There's life and then there's living an eternal life starting right now. That's the life you were made for—life with God now and forever. Every living person is created by God, for relationship with God and is purposed to go back to God. That process starts with a "yes" to relationship initially and ongoing where we recognize God, respond to God's love in Christ, receive his presence into your life and release yourself to his purposes *daily*. Say "yes" right now.

Making a Mental Shift

Letting go of the old to win the new always begins with a thought. New behaviors in any area of our lives always reflect new beliefs about those areas. We exchange the stale and stagnant perspectives that leave us the same for newer ones that get us better results.

In the battle for change, your mind is going to make the

difference and God wants to make sure you win the war between the ears. You can have the “mind of Christ” if you have the Word of Christ (the Bible) as the main ingredient of your mental recipe for living.

Making An Emotional Shift

Let's face it: *We are not good at facing or expressing our feelings.* Both men and women hide and mask anger, internalize pressure, deny being hurt, and withdraw in the face of hard truths about themselves. These inabilities at the emotional level create problems and distance in the relationships we treasure most.

As fathers, husbands, moms, wives, friends and believers, our relationships call for and require emotional health. And when we are emotionally healthy, the people connected to us suffer less and develop better. Knowing God involves untangling emotions and growing toward newer, more productive ways of dealing with feelings.

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 .

Why Can't the Arab World Accept One Small Jewish State?

"We will return to the sea of Jaffa, to the sands of Haifa, to the Palm trees of Beit She'an, and to the hills of Lod [near Israel's Ben Gurion International airport] and Ramle. We in the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque await the legions of the conquerors. We await the armies from Tunisia, from Jordan, from Egypt, from Iraq, from the Maghreb (Northwest Africa), and from the Hejaz (Western Saudi Arabia)." (Al Jazeera TV, April 27, 2014).

These impassioned words were broadcast by Imam Raed Al-Daana at an Italian conference in April. Daana is the Imam from the al-Aqsa Mosque, third most holy place for Muslims and where Yeshua the Messiah once taught and healed in the Jewish Temple.

Daana promises there are "great and proud men [in Gaza] who have realized the darkness and [when] the Jewish state will vanish ... that morning, the sun will rise on Palestine."

Daana is not from Hamas. He is a religious Islamic cleric in Jerusalem under the Fatah-ruling Palestinian Authority. He lives to see an Islamic Arab state replace Israel. It is this common aspiration that unites all factions of Palestinians with the exception of a few evangelical Arab believers.

The only difference between the Fatah and Hamas parties is that Fatah strategizes to dissolve Israel through the United Nations, through diplomatic demonization, isolation, sanctions and world opinion, whereas Hamas is dedicated to out-and-out attacks on Jewish civilians, kidnappings and other acts of terrorism against Israel.

In 2006. Palestinians living in Gaza chose a Hamas government over the Fatah party in “democratic elections.” Soon afterwards, Hamas overthrew the entire Gazan governmental infrastructure and kicked out all Fatah civil servants in bloody street battles, leaving the Palestinian Authority only with the West Bank.

The End of the Peace Process

However, for his own reasons, at the end of April 2014, PA head Mahmoud Abbas decided it was time to reunite the Palestinian people by reconciling Fatah with Hamas. The main hitch, however, is that the PA was supposedly conducting peace talks with Israel, and now was suddenly merging with Hamas, a recognized terrorist organization.

Israel’s response has been what you would expect: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately ended the already disintegrating peace negotiations with the PA, exclaiming, “How can the Palestinians say they want peace if they forge an alliance with these killers? We don’t negotiate with Hamas as long as they seek our destruction.”

Hamas Dreams of Destruction

Indeed, what would keep Hamas from winning the next Palestinian election, and taking over the entire West Bank? Hamas’ dream would be to attack Israel, not just from Gaza, but also from Judea and Samaria.

This would mean Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and the whole center of Israel would be fair game for renewed terrorism. This would mean that planes landing at Ben Gurion International airport would be a couple of miles away from terrorist rockets and missiles.

In case anyone missed their intentions, Hamas’ leader Khaled Mashaal announced, “Our path is resistance and the rifle, and our choice is jihad,” confirming to the world that Hamas is

most definitely still committed to holy war against Israel.

Mashaal said now that the two parties of the Palestinians have signed a reconciliation pact, they must produce a joint strategy that will lead to the "liberation of our lands and holy sites and the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes."

He declared boldly that until Israel is destroyed and replaced with an Islamic state, "There is no past or future without jihad and resistance. Jihad is our path."

Indeed, it is very important to Hamas leaders that the world understands its goal and its purpose for existence.

European Union Pleased With Reunification

In response to the new reunion, the ever-present EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton finds herself quite pleased with the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. True, she did politely explain to Hamas that they "must uphold the principle of non-violence, remain committed to a two-state solution and accept Israel's legitimate right to exist."

May I politely ask Ms. Ashton, "Who is the party that is to remain committed?" What planet is she living on?

Netanyahu replied that Hamas' participation in "peace" talks is a non-starter for Israel. Abbas then claimed that Hamas wouldn't really have any say in executing policy in the West Bank no matter who won the elections. Really? Is Abbas living in a fantasy land or is "truth" simply not a part of his DNA?

There is, of course, a good chance that nothing will come of the Fatah-Hamas reunification as the power struggles between the two factions will surely continue. Both parties' immediate goal is to determine who will control the monthly financial largess pouring into the West Bank in the form of multiplied millions of dollars from the U.S. and Europe. It is well known

for anyone who wants to know that this money lines the pockets of those in power and their cronies and workers, and funds families of prisoners in Israeli jails convicted of murder and terrorism. (The more Israelis a convict murdered, the greater the sum to the families.)

Israelis Dream of Peace

As for Israel, I don't know if it is really possible to articulate the profound, aching desire Israelis have for peace. We ask ourselves:

"Why are we a persecuted people—always persecuted, hounded and despised by the world?

Why can't we have peace with the Palestinians who are a brand new community that came into existence only since the Jewish people began returning to their ancient homeland a little over a century ago?

Why can't we make peace with a group of people who have never ruled over an inch of the Holy Land, who have never before had Jerusalem, or for that matter, any city as their capital?

Why can't the Arab world accept one small state as a state for the Jewish people?

But Israelis know that if the Islamic Arab states refuse to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, it is because they don't accept Jews living in the Middle East. And so that is Israel's primary demand: Recognize us as a Jewish state!

But the Arabs claim that a Jewish state would be an apartheid state! The difference between these two peoples, of course, is that persecution of religious minorities in the Jewish state is minimal, really, infinitesimal, compared to persecution in any Islamic state. But the Fatah party tells Israel, "No" to a Jewish state! Hamas says, "Never!"

How Many Islamic States are There?

Well, there's the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Then there's the Islamic State of Saudi Arabia, of Oman, Mauritania, etc. Libya has made its official religion Islam, as has Malaysia...

In fact in every Arab state—and non-Arab state—where the population is overwhelmingly Islamic, every other religion suffers serious persecution. Ask any Christian (privately) if he is a second-class citizen in his Muslim country, and he will almost certainly tell you he is.

Come to think of it, I don't believe I have ever heard any diplomat, journalist or head of state talk about Islamic apartheid. And Islamic apartheid is like no other apartheid that exists in this 21st century.

But diplomats like Secretary of State John Kerry recently warned that if Israel doesn't make peace with the Palestinian Islamic country, Israel, the only democratic state in the Middle East, could well become an apartheid state! He was quickly parroted by Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat who agreed wholeheartedly.

What a scam! Why didn't Kerry mention the fact that because of the apartheid situation under the Palestinian Authority, the traditional Christian community is disappearing! Leaving the country! And traditional Christians are not out evangelizing like the Evangelical Christians are. The latter of course receive even greater persecution in the Palestinian communities, and in every single Islamic-dominated country. Who doesn't know that under Sharia law, if a Muslim converts to Christianity, he receives a death sentence?

Israel's Dreams vs. Reality

To negotiate a peace treaty with the Palestinians, Israelis

know we must have some way of insuring that terrorists cannot plan attacks from Judea and Samaria.

And no matter how much pressure is put on Israel, the Jewish people will not give up the Western Wall and control of the Old City to a Muslim authority. Jerusalem will be Israel's capital.

Israel agrees that Palestinian "refugees" including children, grandchildren and great grandchildren could live in a Palestinian state, but not in Israel.

Here is my bottom line: It's not going to happen. There's not going to be a peace treaty. When there is a new president of the U.S., he or she will surely send over more diplomats who will try to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They, too, will fail.

The god of this world will continue to hammer and batter Israel. But there is a growing army of Messianic Jews and Bible-believing Christians who are interceding for the physical and spiritual deliverance of the Jewish people of Israel!

These prayers will be answered by the Mighty God of Israel who will send His own army of angels to bring His ancient, beloved people back safely to Him.

Shira Sorko-Ram, along with her husband, Ari, is a co-founder of Maoz Israel Ministries. The couple has pioneered several Messianic Jewish congregations in the Tel Aviv area and sponsored national conferences for the Israeli believers.

For the original article, visit .

The Power of 'I Love You' From Dad

Here at the National Center for Fathering, when speaking to groups of men we'll often conduct some informal research about affirmation and love from fathers. Typically we'll ask, "Please raise your hand if your father told you that he loved you on a consistent basis."

The results are predictable, as are the jaws that drop in amazement. Usually only 3-4 percent of the dads will raise their hands! And I'm sure the majority of those men are still waiting to hear their dad say, "I love you" for the first time.

For me, it's another picture representing the culture of fatherlessness that we're living in, because even when dads are present in their kids' lives, too often they aren't connecting with them in a meaningful, affirming way.

Like father, like son ... dads who didn't hear "I love you" growing up often don't feel natural saying it to their children.

Now, some people may say it's no big deal. A lot of people who didn't have that benefit still grow up and do fine. But our research and experience at the National Center tells us that those three words, spoken with sincerity and backed up by behavior, can demonstrate support, encouragement, tenderness and caring as much as anything else we do as fathers.

I believe it is a big deal.

Our words—or sometimes our lack of words—can either bless or discourage our children for their entire lives. And we've heard all the excuses: "They know how much I love them." "I don't want my son to get a big head." "It just isn't what we

do in our family.” But those are just excuses. If we know how much it benefits our children, there’s really no reason we shouldn’t say it.

If, for some reason, telling your child “I love you” is too difficult for you, here are some ideas you might try as you work up to it.

- Go into your child’s room at night, when he’s sleeping, and “practice” saying it to him. Keep doing this every chance you get, and before long it will feel natural enough that you can say it when he is awake. It may even slip out before you realize it.
- Try writing, “I love you” on a card or in a letter or short note. (Just make sure you don’t stop there. Work up to where you can say it to him.)

Sure, it may be awkward or even difficult at first, but it’s worth it.

Eventually, you can come right out and say: “I just want you to know that I love you and accept you totally, just as you are. I love you whether you succeed or fail. I love you because you’re _____ [insert your child’s name].”

Your children gain great confidence and security from knowing you place high value on them. Use words to build them up at every opportunity. Give them plenty of “I love yous” and other positive phrases that will echo in their minds for a long, long time.

Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Get a small voice recorder that’s attached to a photo frame (or that can be attached) and record a short message of love that your child can play over and over. (Great for young kids, or as a Father’s Day gift from a child to a dad.) Here’s an example.
- Honor your child by throwing a “just because” party—one

which says, “I love you” for no particular reason—just because.

- Find ways to reinforce your “I love you” message through actions, like a big hug at bedtime or any time, following through on promises, doing small favors, etc.
- Use the milestone events that happen this time of year—graduations, performances, sports events, etc.—to communicate to your child, verbally and in writing, “I love you just as you are, and I’m proud to be your dad.”
- Ask your child to autograph his or her picture, then display it in your office like you might display something from a celebrity or sports star.

Do you have unique ways to demonstrate love to your kids? Please help other dads by commenting either below.

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 [.](#)

Study: Diabetic Drug Slows Aging

The world’s most widely used anti-diabetic drug, metformin, has been shown to slow aging and increase lifespan.

In a new study reported in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Belgian researchers determined the drug

boosts oxygen levels in cells, which in turn increases their vitality and longevity.

The findings, by Belgian doctoral researcher Wouter De Haes, are based on laboratory studies involving roundworms, but investigators believe the mechanisms may be the same for human cells.

“As they age, the worms get smaller, wrinkle up, and become less mobile. But worms treated with metformin show very limited size loss and no wrinkling. They not only age slower, but they also stay healthier longer,” said De Haes. “While we should be careful not to over-extrapolate our findings to humans, the study is promising as a foundation for future research.”

Other studies involving human patients have shown that metformin suppresses some cancers and heart disease.

De Haes explained that mitochondria—the tiny energy factories in cells—provide the body’s cells with energy. Highly reactive oxygen molecules are produced as a byproduct of this process. While high levels of these molecules can damage proteins and DNA, a small dose can actually do the cell good, the new study shows.

“As long as the amount of harmful oxygen molecules released in the cell remains small, it has a positive long-term effect on the cell. Cells use the reactive oxygen particles to their advantage before they can do any damage,” said De Haes.

“We found that this makes cells stronger and extends their healthy lifespan.”

For the original article, visit .

68 Words That Can Change Your Marriage

When an athlete trains, he pours himself into repetitive practice—the baseball player with hours of batting practice, the runner with lap after lap, the golfer with his swing. Repetition brings transformation. The same can be said for transforming our marriages.

Challenge yourself to pray “The Marriage Prayer” daily—68 words that capture the essence of what the Bible says about marriage. I know men who already pray this prayer daily that are seeing a surprising change in themselves. Here it is:

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

You can get a free copy of The Marriage Prayer (men’s and women’s versions both available) at [.](#)

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