

Palestinian Textbooks Demonize Israel, Study Shows

A recent study of 150 new Palestinian Authority textbooks used by a U.N. educational body reveal widespread delegitimization of Israel and continued calls to use violence against Jews in Israel.

The survey was conducted by the Near East Policy Research Center and led by Dr. Arnon Gross, a professor in Islamic study and veteran Arab affairs correspondent for Israel Radio. Gross' survey translated 150 new Palestinian Authority textbooks. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which runs 250 schools in the Gaza Strip and 100 in Judea and Samaria, claims there is no incitement in the Palestinian Authority textbooks studied in its schools.

In the books, the center found widespread delegitimization and demonization of Israel and a call for violent struggle instead of peace. According to the textbooks, the Jews have no rights to Israel, including to Jewish holy sites, and are not considered legitimate residents of the country. The name *Israel* appears less than a handful of times on the maps and is usually replaced with Palestine, and areas inside pre-1967 Israel are described exclusively as Palestinian.

The center sent a letter to UNRWA, asking it to correct the deficiencies, including: correcting maps to show current borders and mark the land inside the pre-1967 borders as Israel; showing Jewish cities as well as Palestinian ones in maps; recognizing sites holy to Jews in discussions of holy sites; mentioning in demographic discussions the millions of Jews who live in Israel; removing sections that demonize Israel or Jews; and removing violent struggle as a solution.

Meanwhile, students at Sapir College in Sderot were up in arms

over recent remarks made by Tel Aviv University professor Yehuda Shinhav.

“I, as a Jew, oppose the idea of having a Jewish nation. It will be the Jewish apocalypse in the long run because we arrived here through violence,” Shinhav said during a recent conference at Sapir.

Matan Peleg, chairman of right-wing organization Im Tirtzu, called on Sapir “to do some soul-searching.” Sapir College released a statement saying that Shinhav does not represent the college’s views. Tel Aviv University had no comment.

For the original article, visit .

Beer, Bubbly and Libation Lies—But God Is Not a Buzzkill

Drinking is intertwined in our culture with almost every event in life, whether it’s a wedding or a funeral. But it’s hardly new.

The Bible records several stories and suggestions about alcohol. Heck, even Jesus turned water into wine, so surely there’s a place for alcohol in society, right? (I bet that tasted good.)

For many of us it’s a welcomed ritual with benefits. The soothing chill slips by your lips, rolling down into your stomach and releasing its relaxing presence. Drinking alcohol is pleasurable at the moment, lifting spirits and lowering defenses. Sipping champagne is synonymous with celebration,

while beer may be synonymous with sports, wine with romance, and vodka martinis—shaken, not stirred—synonymous with James Bond-like cool. It's part of our culture at most every level.

If we believe the advertisers, alcohol is all pleasure but no pain—a fun roller-coaster ride that provides thrills but never comes off the rails, right? Wrong. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates 88,000 deaths are attributed to excessive alcohol use each year, with 1.2 million emergency room and 2.7 million physician office visits.

The economic costs associated with overdrinking were estimated to be \$225.5 billion. Most men know of an alcoholic, were raised by an alcoholic or have been affected by alcohol. We may even be aware of the short- and long-term risks of drinking, like driving dangers, sexual behavior, violence, pregnancy problems, poisoning, neurological changes, psychiatric issues, liver disease and cancer, to name a few.

But you might be surprised that God is not a buzzkill. The Bible never says, “Thou shalt not drink.” But God is very concerned about your character, and drinking can be a way God tests it. So, the real question is: When is drinking OK? Here are a few guidelines:

1. Drinking is about context. The top two ways guys connect today is texting and get-togethers. Often men gather over a beer to talk. There's nothing inherently wrong with drinking beer, as long as it doesn't cause someone to question or doubt your authenticity of faith in Christ, and as long as it doesn't cause someone to stumble—literally and figuratively.

Drinking with a few friends isn't the problem, but getting drunk together is. Drinking with a buddy isn't the problem, but it is if he's a recovering alcoholic. Drinking with the boys isn't bad, but drinking and then getting behind the wheel is. Here's the key verse that sums up this point:

“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another.

Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister” (Rom. 14:13, NIV).

We have the power to self-limit and to allow someone else’s faith to blossom, grow or be strengthened. But the opposite is also true.

2. Drinking is about control. Men love to push the limit, getting as close to the cliff as possible. Unfortunately, alcohol can blur the lines, turning a black-and-white issue into hazy gray. It’s in those gray moments we can think things, say things and do things under the control of another “spirit.” The Bible clearly states to be “sober” minded and not to get drunk so that we never surrender our body, mind or soul to anything other than God. Most of us all have stories about waking up after we’ve surrendered control, and it’s not pretty. So we have to choose to stay away from the cliff, and be wise.

“Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise” (Prov. 20:1).

“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).

3. Drinking is about character. God’s men are in a continual character development program. Drinking orders up a character test to determine which spirit is shaping yours—God’s Holy Spirit or the world’s liquid spirits. God is more interested in your heart and motives than He is in drinking. If drinking becomes a way to escape problems or boost your courage or help with your honesty, then your faith in God is squeamish and your character is at risk.

But when you’re living God’s purpose, filled with the Holy Spirit, then alcohol isn’t required for a good time and your life will produce good fruit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

The truth is, alcohol produces synthetic pleasures, honesty and connection. The question is: Can you find joy, truth and integrity without it? Rather than pour out your problems to the next bartender, take a drink of God’s love and Spirit and see what happens. It’s better than a hangover, and it will quench your thirst forever.

Then get yourself around a community of others who share your faith and understanding of self-control and context. This will help you rise to the occasion and have safe connections and a forum to discuss real issues without shots.

Kenny Luck, founder of Every Man Ministries and the men’s pastor at Saddleback Church, 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 .

Risk Factors for Stroke and How to Prevent One

Your first line of defense in preventing a stroke is to know where you stand. So before we get into the actual warning signs of a stroke, let’s review some of the risk factors.

Controlling these risk factors is not a guarantee against a

stroke, of course, but it can lower the chances considerably. Statistics show that up to 50 percent of all strokes are preventable. Everyone has two kinds of risk factors: those they can change and those they cannot. Here's a rundown:

The Things You Can't Change

- **Age.** The risk of stroke increases with age. Two-thirds of strokes happen in people over the age of 65. The chance of having a stroke almost doubles for each decade of life after age 55.
- **Race.** Those with higher risk of stroke include African-Americans, Native Americans and Alaskan Natives. African-Americans have double the risk of a first ischemic stroke because they have a higher incidence of hypertension and diabetes.
- **Gender.** Stroke is about 25 percent more common in men than women until age 75. Overall, however, more women than men die of stroke. Birth-control pills and pregnancy pose particular risks for younger women. And because women live longer than men, they are more likely to have an increased death rate after age 75.
- **Family history.** Your risk is higher if a parent, grandparent or sibling has had a stroke. This includes the ministroke called a transient ischemic attack (TIA).
- **Personal history.** Anyone who has had a prior stroke, TIA or heart attack has a much higher risk of another stroke. A TIA is a very strong predictor of a stroke. Those who have had a TIA have about 10 times greater risk for a subsequent stroke—which is why TIAs are also called “warning strokes.”

The Things You Can Change

- **Hypertension.** High blood pressure is by far the most significant risk factor for stroke. Luckily, this biggest risk factor is one that you can control. It can be managed with lifestyle changes and medication.

- **High cholesterol.** High levels of bad (LDL) cholesterol can result in hardening of the arteries, which leads to plaque deposits on the walls of blood vessels.
- **Stress.** Studies show that people who experience high stress levels are more likely to develop hardened arteries than those who stay calm under pressure. The reason for this is that high stress causes the body to release more cortisol (the “fight or flight” hormone), which causes arteries to narrow.
- **Food and alcohol choices.** Diets high in saturated fats and trans fats raise cholesterol levels, while diets high in salt increase blood pressure. These two factors together can put a great deal of strain on blood vessels and the heart. A moderate amount of alcohol has a protective effect, but alcohol abuse increases risk of stroke.
- **Smoking.** The combination of nicotine and carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke (including secondhand smoke) is extremely damaging to the cardiovascular system. Over time, it causes a narrowing and weakening of the arteries called atherosclerosis. This results in a need for the heart to pump harder, leading to hypertension. Smoking combined with the use of oral contraceptives greatly increases the risk of stroke in women.
- **Sedentary lifestyle and obesity.** Being inactive increases your weight, which leads to an increase in blood pressure.
- **Diabetes.** With diabetes comes serious circulation problems that can double the risk of stroke. Also, many people with diabetes have other risk factors, such as being overweight and having high blood pressure and/or high cholesterol.
- **Heart disease.** The same problems that are associated with heart disease (narrowing of the arteries, plaque buildup, etc.) can lead to stroke. That’s why I call stroke a heart attack in the brain.

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For the original article, visit .

Nearly Martyred Pastor Umar Mulinde Says Farewell to Israel

On Dec. 24, 2011, two Islamic radicals threw buckets of skin-burning acid on Ugandan pastor Umar Mulinde. Through a series of miracles, he survived.

One of those miracles was that Sheba Hospital here in Israel offered to treat him free of charge—a gift worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Without this treatment, he would have surely died. However, getting here was nearly impossible, as there is no Israeli Embassy in Uganda and he was in very bad shape. Getting a visa took a few more minor miracles.

When I saw a note on Facebook just after he arrived, I called up the hospital. Sheba is only 20 minutes from my home, and I wanted to meet this heroic pastor.

I assumed he was alone here and would welcome friendship from

a believer. I quickly found him, and he invited me to come to the hospital, where he and his wife, Evelyn, shared with me his amazing story.

Working with Maoz Media, we documented that story in this video that has received more than 14,000 views.

Doctors have done an amazing job reconstructing his face, saving his ear and providing him with a prosthetic eye. He is ready to go back to Africa after more than two years of painful rehabilitation and to begin to preach the gospel once again.

This week, I had the honor of emceeding a farewell celebration. Several pastors and leaders from all over Israel who have grown to love Umar came to greet him and bless him upon his soon departure. He shared in detail how Israeli technology not only saved his life, but also sped up his recovery.

He plans to continue preaching the gospel in Africa and standing for Israel, as well as warning the West about the dangers of radical Islam. At a time when many evangelicals are turning against Israel, he is a pastor who nearly died for his support of Israel. One of the primary reasons he was targeted is because he led a campaign in Uganda to stop the Muslim community from enforcing Shariah law on its constituents. He presented a petition with tens of thousands of signatures to the Ugandan speaker of Parliament.

As a former Muslim, he warned them of the dangers of allowing this law to go through. It was defeated, and Umar Mulinde, the ex-Muslim preacher for Jesus, was attacked.

Let me encourage all of you to be in prayer for Umar as he returns to his wife and his children.

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earth (Acts 1:8). Cantor also travels internationally teaching on the Jewish roots of the New Testament. He serves on the pastoral team of Tiferet Yeshua, a Hebrew-speaking congregation in Tel Aviv. His newest book is Identity Theft. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

5 Keys to Training Your Son to Respect You, Himself and Others

Recently, a video went viral on social media that represented the statement “Be a man!” as a completely negative attribute. The argument is that when boys hear the masculine mantra, they adopt a mask and performance-based mentality. The video draws the conclusion that when we deny boys their emotions, insecurities and even femininity, the result will be crazy, aggressive and violent men.

The video asks, “As a society, how are we failing our boys?”

We’re failing our boys because we have allowed the original intent of authentic manhood to be redefined. We have made the masculine traits of men to be misrepresented so that the idea of manhood is a narcissistic, carnal-minded, violent, sex-crazed, beer-gutted and uneducated buffoon. To counteract this hypermasculine narrative, we’re told, we are to secure our boys into a more feminized and emotive version of manhood.

But rather than mold men into a softer, kinder and gentler form of metrosexuality, we should raise a boy into manhood who

understands the original intent of authentic manhood.

Here are five keys to train your son to respect you, himself and others:

1. Your son has an adventurous spirit. Within every boy is a spirit of adventure. There is something about the field that calls to a boy. It may be a football field, a baseball field, a soccer field and, yes, even a battlefield. It's on the field of contest where a boy relates to other boys. This may not sit well with a woman's personal sensitivities, but men relate to each other differently than women do.

Solomon said, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another" (Prov. 27:17, NIV). As a boy faces the challenge of competition, he becomes stronger, faster and smarter. The field of contest makes him better. This is something that you may struggle with, but I promise you, you must allow your son to get out on the field and get dirty. That's right. You must raise a dirty boy.

2. Your son has an entrepreneurial drive. The very first words God spoke over man were a blessing: "Be fruitful and increase" (Gen. 1:28). This theme of increase is echoed throughout the Scriptures. God not only blessed Adam, but He repeated the blessing upon Noah and his sons. Then thousands of years later, Jesus spoke it over His disciples.

Your son is created in the shadowed image of God (Gen. 1:27). I know this is a powerful statement, but it's true. Man is designed to recreate after his own kind—to increase. A woman's position as a mother is powerful in that she begins to lay the foundation for her son's understanding of increase. It is vitally important for a young man to comprehend that he is designed for increase. Increase is in his DNA; his genetic code dictates to every fiber of his being to increase. Make your son a money magnet—to finance his needs, fulfill his desires and finance his purpose.

3. Your son wants to be gallant in relationships. The themes of popular comics are pretty simple. The stories are very similar in rhythm: An enemy wants to destroy innocent lives, and the hero—with unusual or even supernatural abilities—fights against the odds to win the day and save the victim from impending disaster.

Every boy reading these stories sees himself as that conquering hero. But somewhere in the daily grind, the thrill of life is dulled by the routine. The glamorous expectations of saving the world from destruction are lost in a boring existence of home, school and work. Yet deep inside your son lies a courageous, chivalrous and gallant purpose.

Understanding this purpose will become a strong motivator in your son's management of relationships. He will learn to relate to women who are older as his own mother, those who are younger as his own daughter, and those who are his peers as his own sister. The only woman who will eventually receive the intimacy of his eyes and the passion of his loins is his wife.

4. Your son desires to be faithful. You want your son to live up to the original intent of manhood—ethical in business, principled in relationships and spiritual in his walk with God. Contrary to popular belief, men are overwhelmingly spiritual; however, men are not religious. Men are practical in their faith, not pious. Men want a real relationship with God, not to join a religious sect or organization.

Earlier than you may think, your son will begin a spiritual journey. It is in the heart of man to do so. This will happen through two primary ways: in the daily commute and in the spiritual encounter. The continual secularization of manhood is what leads to the destructive course we see modeled in society. Raise your son to strive for character more than talent.

5. Your son wants to live a legacy with a philanthropic cause.

Your son wants a cause worthy of a fight. He wants to make a difference in the world. We're seeing a generation of young people who really don't have anything to fight for. Confused by the empty rhetoric of false causes, they rally on Wall Street against an unknown identity—the top 1 percent. They have food, clothing, elite educations, all while holding their Starbucks cinnamon dolce lattes, but they're angry enough to sleep in the parks for their cause, no matter how silly and underserving of a cause it may be.

That is not the kind of cause you want to raise your son to fight for. It's not worthy of him. You should remember that you are preparing your son for his mission. You're not just raising an executive or an athlete or a professional salesman. You're raising a man on a mission. Your goal is not to simply raise a good boy into a good man. You are assigned the responsibility to raise a boy who has a deep reservoir of purpose within him. That purpose is a philanthropic cause.

Help your son gain understanding, and tap into these five keys, and he will understand what it means to "be a man."

***FivestarMan** was founded in 2008 by **Neil Kennedy**. Kennedy has passionately promoted God's Word for 25-plus years of ministry. He is known for practically applying biblical principles that elevate people to a new level of living. As a business, church, ministry and life consultant, Kennedy has helped others strategize the necessary steps to reach their full potential.*

For the original article, visit .

You've Offended Someone—Now What?

Let's face it: Most of us don't want to hear that we've done something wrong. We don't want to admit that we've hurt someone with our words or actions. But when we speak 16,000 or more words a day, we're bound to offend people more easily than we'd like to admit.

So, how do you react when you've offended someone? Here are some common reactions, as well as solutions, for handling this kind of conflict:

1. We become defensive. The easiest way to avoid having the blame put on us is to push that blame onto someone else. So when we've offended someone, our initial reaction is to become defensive and deflect that blame onto the very person we've offended. We say things like, "If you weren't so sensitive," or, "If you could've just understood me better."

Rather than defend yourself, it's often best to simply own up to the mistake. Moving forward sometimes requires letting go of your pride and apologizing in humility. If pride is a constant struggle for you, then you may also want to read through my blog post "Fight for Your Marriage, Not Your Pride."

2. We become frustrated. Oftentimes we offend people unintentionally. It can happen in a number of ways: by taking a joke too far, causing them to feel uncomfortable in a group setting, or even through a lack of action, such as forgetting their birthday or not offering to help set the table for dinner.

When the offense is unintentional, it's natural to become frustrated. We don't want to apologize for something we didn't mean to do. But calming down and saying we're sorry is often

the best way to right an unintentional wrong. If you find yourself offending others with your words, you may want to check out my blog post “5 Toxins of the Tongue That Can Poison Your Marriage.”

3. We ignore. When we offend people in ways we view as small, ignoring the incident seems like an easy way out. We convince ourselves that what we said or did couldn't have been *that* offensive, at least not enough to deserve an apology.

However, we must keep in mind that people are different from us and, therefore, get offended in different ways. Instead of ignoring the situation by pushing it under the rug, make an effort to talk through the conflict with the person you've offended. Not only will it heal your relationship now, but it will also give you insight to that person's personality and perhaps save you from offending them the same way in the future.

4. We complain to someone else. More often than not, we somehow find reason to talk to anyone other than the person we've offended. Rather than go to the source of the conflict, we all too quickly find ourselves complaining to our spouse or friend.

Unfortunately, this complaining usually consists of us justifying our own actions or putting down the person we've already offended. Until we face the conflict at its core by addressing the person we've hurt with our actions or words, the issue will remain unresolved. So be slow to gossip about the situation to others and quick to address the conflict with the one you've offended.

How do you react when you've offended someone? How can you respond differently in the future? I'd appreciate you leaving your thoughts and experiences in a comment below.

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

5 Reasons Your Marriage Needs Church

Congratulations, you're married. You will never need help from anything or anyone ever again.

That's dangerous thinking, but I'm inclined to believe a lot of newlyweds or a lot of couples in the early stages of marriage think that way. Why? Sometimes marriage can make people think that the amazing person they just married will be their answer to life's problems.

The reality? Without help, new marriages will suffer and suffer quickly! Problems will arise out of the smallest things, and tempers will get worse over time. Welcome to marriage.

Although my wife and I grew up in Christian homes, went to Christian schools and attended a home church, we had a terrible time going to church together after we got married. We had just moved to a new area and really didn't know anybody. We thought that we would be enough for each other to handle anything life could throw our way. We managed to meet a few local people and establish friendships, but we were still missing the solid foundation that only church could provide.

After living life according to our terms for the first few years and almost getting divorced a couple times, we thought it might be time to see what having a home church would be all about. We got online one day, found a really close church to our house and agreed to try it out. We liked it.

But even after a year or so, we were still not attending regularly. We were trying to give God about half of our

marriage, and we still struggled in multiple ways. You know, you become the couple that looks and acts like they have it together, but ultimately the relationship could fail at any moment.

We finally agreed to take a stand in our marriage and attend a church full-time. It honestly transformed our marriage, our individual lives and our relationships with Christ.

So now that we know, here is why you need to know. Here are five reasons your marriage needs church:

1. Great community. Isolation in early marriage is the wrong idea, but that is typically what happens. It might have even started happening when you were dating and started removing yourselves from other groups and friends so that you could be together more. Church is a great way of joining in with a community. In our experience, we have found most of the people to be very helpful and accepting. Most churches will have a visitor area where you can introduce yourself and your wife. This should be the time when you find out about the next step.

2. Join small groups. The church can provide a great way to meet new people of any age, but a small group or class will help you dial in with people your own age. I can't speak for every church, but our church will have a marriage group going on throughout the year. You might find some classes that are held at the church, like "Love and Respect" or "Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage." Or keep an eye out for groups that meet at their houses.

Our local group of young and marrieds will meet up to hang out together, pray together, play games together and just discuss whatever is on our minds. These groups will help you and your spouse realize that you are not alone in this crazy marriage dance and will offer great tools and resources for whatever problems you may be facing.

3. Relationship discipline. Wouldn't it be easier to wake up

Sunday morning and turn on the TV or just sleep in? Sure it would, and I think we can all agree on that. But this is your marriage, and if you want it to be as successful as possible, you are going to need to mature and get God involved. Don't wait to decide to go at the last second; let it be known the day before, and show some excitement. Don't just slap on an old pair of jeans, but rather put on some nice clothes. Schedule a small coffee date or something for after the services with your wife or with a few of your friends from small groups. Attending church weekly will birth maturity and discipline in your marriage, and it will make a positive impact in other areas or situations in your marriage.

4. Knowledge of God. Don't just go to church for the small groups or community, but make it a main goal to go for the lead sermon or message. Small groups are typically more about a theme, like marriage, faith, manhood or something like that. The main service is a place to learn more about the Bible and Christ. There may be a theme, but it will most likely be on a subject that you have never heard before.

Don't check out at this point; rather, grab a pen and take some notes. Take in what the pastor is preaching about, and find ways to apply it to your life, marriage, friendships or work. Write down a couple questions, and discuss the message topics with your wife afterward. She may have heard things you did not, and it will make for great conversation. The main sermon will offer you the diversity you need in your Christian walk.

5. Mentorship. While going through some issues in our marriage, my wife and I finally decided to seek help. The church we attend has a great marriage program where older married couples make themselves available to help out younger or struggling couples.

We were paired up with a great couple that would come over about once a month and just talk with us. After a while, we

started to become great friends and actually started taking small vacations with them, along with other friends from the church.

If we hadn't made ourselves open to doing this, we would have missed out on some great friends and some awesome opportunities. Take a bold step and find a marriage mentor.

What are some ways you have found church to be essential in your marriage?

***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 in 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 .

Don't Die Before Your Time

As we enter spring, the time of year when all of God's creation is bringing forth new life, I take pause and ponder: What if one of God's creations said, "No! I refuse to bring forth new life—I'd rather just die?" You might think that's just silly.

If a plant was perfectly capable of producing a branch and from that branch a bud and from that bud a flower and from the flower perhaps some fruit, why would it refuse?

Why, indeed?

Maybe, it's been a hard winter and the struggle to survive has just about nipped it in the bud—excuse the pun. There's another chance that a new flower has been planted next to it and the feeling of inferiority is overwhelming. Maybe it doesn't like the competition.

Could it be the thought of growing in the same garden again and again has become boring? Of course not. A plant will continue to grow and produce fruit as long as its lifeblood is maintained and it is provided with the proper nutrients to perpetuate life. It really doesn't have a choice.

Humans, on the other hand, are quite a different story.

Today's garden is full of God's children who refuse to live. That choice is what separates us from the other creatures on the planet. Adam and Eve's choice is why we till the ground or give birth to our children. Cain's choice is why we have a divided land. Throughout history, individual choice has stood out as a tool God uses to make a point, open an eye or touch a heart, and He still uses it today.

Do you realize it's a choice when you get up out of bed in the morning? When you walk to the mailbox and say hello to your neighbor, it's a choice. The same is true for those who back themselves into a corner, cutting the outside world off and refusing to be "tools of choice" for God. It's always a choice: "to be a tool or not to be a tool."

Have you thought of yourself as a tool before? As I pray, I ask God to make me into a usable vessel—a tool for His purpose. I don't place restrictive guidelines in my request. For example, I don't tell Him not to make me a broom because I hate cleaning. It's His will, His timing, but I have to make the choice to be available.

Too many believers today are choosing to die before their time. They don't see their usefulness and therefore sit around getting stagnant, waiting for the end to come and ease their

“suffering.” How sad! Hey, if you’re still here, you have work to do!

Imagine getting to a place in your life where you would feel blessed whether you lived or died. That is exactly where Paul was in Philippians 1:21-24. Up to this point in his life, he had faced imprisonment, beatings and false accusations, to name a few challenges. He was running for his life, yet he still maintained a willingness to continue on course sharing the Good News until God decided to remove him from his situation. Paul was the ever-sharp pruning shears; no matter the thickness of the branch or the thorns he had to go through, he remained steadfast, looking toward the goal.

Maybe that’s where we fail today—we have no goal! Maybe we are living day to day spiritually with no direction or “tool” recognition. If we don’t recognize our purpose, it’s hard to judge our effectiveness. Without guidelines or a measuring stick, we most often see failure. The suggestion of failure plants the seed of uselessness, and from uselessness comes—nothing. Therefore, our spirit gives in to the weak flesh and ceases to be a tool at all. We settle to just be—and we die before our time.

Here is some encouragement: Life does not need to be that way. If we choose to discover our purpose, God will surely open doors and windows of opportunity. Never allow age or physical condition to be a determining factor in your effectiveness. Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, effectiveness is in the heart of the believer. Choose to be a Paul; he never wore a watch but was always on time. He lived his entire ministry with a thorn in his side. He did not prepare his speeches but always said the right words.

My goodness, he didn’t even have someone telling him what to wear, yet he continued to impact lives in every level of society. He recognized his purpose, relied on the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and stayed on task until he was removed from

it, literally.

To answer the question “How do I recognize my purpose?” walk this way:

1. Write down things you enjoy doing. (Most people find their gifts are what they enjoy doing in the first place.)
2. Spend time daily in God’s Word. (Seek clarity of purpose and open windows of opportunity.)
3. Enlist the prayer of godly individuals who will hold you to task. (That’s accountability.)
4. Be ever diligent in looking for the open windows. (Don’t wait to be asked—step out and take action. If it’s where God wants you to be, He will affirm you through your spirit and through others.)

I believe if we take to heart this action and apply it to our lives, we too will live with the anticipation of Paul: “For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don’t know which is better” (Phil. 1:21-22, NLT).

Will you choose to “live” for Christ today? Choose to be a source of strength for others around you in the midst of your challenges. When you feel the weight of the world on your shoulders, maybe it’s because you are trying to carry the load alone. Reach out and share the load. As believers, we are all heading to the same destination.

And, most importantly, don’t give up on life because of your circumstances; excel in spite of them.

I would love to hear from you and the choices you made today. May God bless you greatly as you seek His guidance and open windows of opportunity.

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For the original article, visit .

Susan Michael: PCUSA Crosses a Line by Vilifying Israel

A disturbing study guide entitled "Zionism Unsettled" has been published by an arm of the Presbyterian Church (USA), or PCUSA. The publication is filled with distorted facts and a historical narrative so extreme that some Jewish groups are calling it "hate speech."

It vilifies Israel and Zionism while ignoring Palestinian terrorism, calls for the annihilation of the Jewish state, and absolves Arab leaders of their culpability in the plight of the Palestinian people. The study guide proves that the PCUSA has aligned itself with the most radical of positions by equating Zionism with racism, comparing it to centuries of Christian anti-Semitism and calling for a rethinking of the Holocaust to include the plight of the Palestinians.

The chapter on evangelicals and Christian Zionism skews the facts to portray Christians who support Israel as dangerous and a threat to Middle East peace. The chapter is taken largely from the writings of Dr. Gary Burge, an evangelical Presbyterian and professor of New Testament at Wheaton College, who admits to holding a form of replacement theology in spite of the fact that it was the root of centuries of

Christian anti-Semitism.

Replacement theology teaches that God abandoned the Jewish people, has broken His promises to them and has chosen a new people, the church. The danger with this theology is that it implies the Jewish people have been rejected and discarded due to their sin and failures. It is fertile ground for the proliferation of anti-Semitism and should be guarded against.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 11 that God is not finished with the Jewish people and that their calling is irrevocable. In Hebrews 6, the writer cites God's faithfulness to the Abrahamic covenant to encourage beleaguered Christians to keep their faith, knowing they serve a faithful God.

Nevertheless, Burge goes so far as to say that the New Testament teaching spiritualizes and universalizes the Old Testament land promises to the Jewish people by treating them as spiritual metaphor. While it is true that in Galatians 3:29, the apostle Paul said that Christians do enjoy the blessings of Abraham as spiritual heirs, he did not claim that they replaced the natural heirs nor were meant to inherit the land. This would require a rewriting of Scripture, since the land promised to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was "everlasting" and is confirmed 46 times throughout the books of the Old Testament.

Psalm 105 says that God does not break covenants or alter the word that has gone out of His mouth; therefore, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would receive the promises made to them. It is because of these Scriptures that the disciples asked Jesus if He was going to "restore the kingdom to Israel now" (Acts 1:6). He simply said the time was not for them to know, clearly indicating it would happen in God's timing.

In Luke 21, Jesus said that Jerusalem would once again be under Jewish sovereignty and put it in an eschatological

light. Burge attempts to diminish the reach of Christian Zionism by limiting it as dispensational and dual covenant in theology. While dispensationalism is theology favorable toward Israel, only one in every 10 Christians is a dispensationalist.

A much larger number of Christians, from a wide-variety of denominations and theological persuasions, have supported the restoration of the Jews to their homeland, including John and Charles Wesley, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, Bishop Ryle of Liverpool, Charles Spurgeon, the Puritans, professor Jacob Janeway of the Scottish National Church, Martin Luther King Jr. and many others.

Christian Zionism is also not "dual covenant." Mainstream Christian Zionists are found in all the historical and contemporary church movements, including the Presbyterian Church, and they most certainly believe that Jesus' finished work on the cross is their only grounds of salvation. While the basis for Christian Zionism is found in the Abrahamic covenant, in which God announced to Abraham His plan to create a people through whom He would carry out His plan to redeem the world, the Abrahamic covenant needed the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant and the New Covenant to bring about that great salvation.

Israel's role as the vehicle of God's redemptive plan does not make her better than any other people groups but rather more accountable to God. The Jewish people are chosen for the blessing of the nations, including the Palestinian people. However, this study by the PCUSA construes the chosenness of the Jewish people to be a form of racism that esteems them higher than other peoples and therefore not held to the same standard of accountability.

The PCUSA may wish that Christians that support Israel and the Jewish people be a fringe group, but the fact is that some 70 percent of Americans are favorable toward Israel. There are a

number of reasons why Americans support Israel: personal experience while touring Israel, admiration for Israeli technology and innovation or appreciation for the only democracy in the Middle East. Bible-believing Christians support Israel because of their reading of the Scriptures. In short, God has brought the Jewish people back to their homeland in fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, and millions of Christians want to bless and help them.

Conversely, the PCUSA has aligned itself with extreme and radical groups such as Sabeel.

Founded by Naim Ateek, Sabeel propagates Palestinian liberation theology that disregards any portion of Scripture that disagrees with Ateek's anti-Semitic views. Hence, right out of the Sabeel playbook, this study guide calls for churches to stop using hymns and liturgy that use the biblical terms *exodus*, *covenant*, *return*, *blossoming of the desert*, *Zion* and *Israel*.

It is time that the PCUSA wake up and realize that holding radical and anti-Semitic positions, such as those reflected in this study guide, will only guarantee its continued membership decline, because most Americans not only shun hate speech but admire and stand with the people of Israel.

Susan Michael is U.S. director of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem and the creator of .

Diana Anderson-Tyler: The Key

to an Abundant Life

This article picks up right where last week's left off: with the dumbfounded fishermen whose boats nearly sank beneath the weight of a fish-filled treasure trove. Simon rightly viewed the bursting nets as a supernatural act of God through this Messiah, or "Anointed One," Jesus of Nazareth. Immediately realizing he was in the presence of no ordinary man, Simon fell to his knees, exclaiming:

"Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8, NIV). Jesus calmed down this fiery, future follower and told him not to fear.

"From now on you will fish for **people**." (Luke 5:10, NIV (emphasis mine))

Moments before, these fishermen had been sitting on a sea of hopelessness. Then, one simple act of obedience sent them past their comfort zones and scrambling to hoist heavy nets into their boat. Seconds later, they found themselves face to face with a holiness they'd never known, accompanied by a conviction they'd never felt:

They were sinners unworthy of help from this Sinless One.

As I wrote last week, Simon, James, and John represent you and me and anyone who's sat listlessly in an empty boat, staring into unpromising stillness. They also represent anyone who's obeyed the Word of God, cast their nets into deeper waters even when the tide was against them, and reaped an unthinkably grand reward. But today we shift our focus from the heaven-sent answer for our emptiness to the Holy Spirit-sent follow-up question that only you and I can answer:

What happens next?

All of us have a choice when, like Simon Peter, we sense an

uncomfortable tug persisting within our souls. Granted, most of us probably won't experience an up-close encounter with Jesus this side of Heaven, but God will surely continue to gain our attention in ways only He can orchestrate and in ways only you can understand.

For Simon and his fishing partners, God chose to send His Son into their boat and make a miracle before their forlorn, fish-seeking eyes.

For Ruth, He gave her favor with the venerable Boaz, who himself was a picture of the coming Messiah.

For Job, the Lord allowed Satan to take his family, steal his wealth, and destroy his health so that his faith in God would be intensified by an unprecedented time of testing.

For the wise men from the east, God placed a star in the heavens that led them to the Christ-child before whom they fell down in worship.

For the leprous outcast in Luke 15, God provided immediate healing that saved and restored him to a normal life among his friends and family.

When the Holy Spirit tugged at their hearts, each of the people mentioned above made the decision to believe and trust the Lord with all their hearts. No matter what it cost them, they knew they would soon be gaining much, much more as children in God's everlasting kingdom.

The Galilean fishermen left everything and followed Christ. Have you done the same? Have you surrendered your self-made plans and your harmful habits, poured out your pride, shed your selfishness, and let go of your iron grip on a comfortable, risk-free, I-can-handle-this life?

The fishermen could have gone home that night and enjoyed a giant fish fry with their families while Jesus walked on to

the next seaside village. They could have led simple, happy lives along the lake they loved before dying peacefully in their sleeps at a ripe old age.

But they didn't.

Instead, they committed their lives to Christ, poured themselves out for the sake of the cross, and walked courageously to crosses of their own as martyrs and exiles.

We were never promised an easy life. We were promised an abundant one.

In John 10:10, Jesus says He came so we may have life more "abundantly." The Greek word for "abundantly" used here is *perissos*, which means "exceeding, going beyond, full of, abundant."

God wants to give us more adventure, more joy, more health and wellness, more satisfaction, more riches and reward than we could ever imagine. But before we can accept all the marvelous "mores" of His eternal abundance, we must be willing to live with less of what the world and self have to offer.

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