

Americans: Israel the MVP of the Middle East

At a time when the White House is pressuring Israel to make dramatic concessions, the Jewish state is enjoying an all-time popularity high among Americans, and therefore among their elected officials in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate.

According to a Feb. 18 Gallup poll, Israel is the most valuable player in the Middle East—72 percent have a “very/mostly favorable” view of it—leading all other Middle East countries by a wide margin: Egypt (45 percent), Saudi Arabia (35 percent), etc.

Israel’s popularity is at its highest since 1991, when Gallup first polled Americans on foreign countries, compared to 2009 (63 percent), 2010 (67 percent), 2011 (68 percent), 2012 (71 percent) and 2013 (66 percent).

Israel is more popular than most Western democracies, while the Palestinian Authority is ranked among the least favorable (19 percent favorability), along with North Korea (11 percent), Iran (12 percent), Syria (13 percent) and Iraq (16 percent). Thus, when U.S. President Barack Obama delivered the 2014 State of the Union address, he was greeted with indifference when he stated, “American diplomacy [aims] to achieve dignity and an independent state for Palestinians.”

However, the president triggered resounding applause when he continued, “And lasting peace and security for the state of Israel—a Jewish state that has known that America will always be at their side.”

The Gallup findings reveal that the more experienced and mature Americans are, the higher Israel’s favorability: 81 percent among those 55 or older (who tend to be more

knowledgeable about international relations, in general, and Israel in particular), 72 percent among those in the 35-54 age group, and 64 percent among those between the ages of 18 and 34.

The Gallup data highlights the fact that Americans in general, rather than U.S. Jewry, are the main source of intense identification with the Jewish state. That is also the case on Capitol Hill, where the key initiatives have been conceived and led by Christian legislators (most notably, the late Sen. Daniel Inouye).

In fact, the vast majority of Americans have embraced the idea of a Jewish state since the 17th-century pilgrims—long before the integration of the Jewish community into American society, and many years before the founding of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

Such determination was underlined by an October 2013 Pew Research Center poll: 55 percent of America's Christians (and 82 percent of evangelicals)—compared with 47 percent of American Jews—asserted that Israel was given to the Jewish people by God. An April 2010 Quinnipiac Institute poll documented an overwhelming majority of Americans (66 percent against 19 percent) urging Obama to be more supportive of Israel.

While Obama suffers from erosion of support by an increasing number of legislators from his own party—as has been the case with all second-term presidents—while his approval rating drops to 40 percent according to a Gallup poll on Feb. 16, and while polarization among constituents and legislators has been dramatically intensified, the record support of the Jewish state has been one of the few bipartisan consensus issues in America.

The support of Israel has been enhanced by the anti-U.S. Arab tsunami from the Persian Gulf to northwest Africa, the rising

threat of Islamic terrorism—which has penetrated the U.S. mainland through hundreds of sleeper cells—and the rapidly expanding and mutually beneficial cooperation between the U.S. and Israel, commercially and militarily.

Moreover, support for Israel has been bolstered despite the tension between the White House and Jerusalem, due to the fact that most Americans do not consider the Jewish state a classic foreign policy issue. Americans have always considered the Jewish state an integral part of the American story, morally, culturally and politically.

The Feb. 18 Gallup poll reflects the vitality and potency of the covenant, which has withstood wars, crises and pressure, constituting a robust tailwind behind the surge of the Jewish state from a remnant of the Holocaust to the prime ally of the U.S.

For the original article, visit .

How Don Came to Watch Another Man Love His Wife and Raise His Children

Mary divorced Don because he was unfaithful, but she had never been unpleasant about it. If anything, she killed him with kindness, which only made him feel even more rotten.

Don was not a scoundrel. He didn't set out to fail. He didn't wake up one day and think, "Well, I wonder what I can do to ruin my life today." Rather, his fall followed on the heels of thousands of small, daily choices he made in his private

thoughts over several years.

It all started the day after he and Mary moved into their first home, when he fixed the blinds just right so he could watch the woman next door sunning in her backyard. What began as a single act of curiosity snowballed into a regular habit of lust.

He was also a little too huggy-kissy around the office, where he led in sales year after year. Don was no Brad Pitt, but he could tell women found him attractive. This flattered his ego, especially since girls had not noticed him at all in high school. He tended to let his eyes fix a moment too long on his female associates. Often Don found himself engaging in sexual fantasies as he would creep along the freeway toward home after work.

Evelyn was an ambitious young woman also in the sales department. She was bright, a quick learner and already earning more commissions than most of the men in the office. By her ambition she was eager to learn from Don, and by her upbringing she was lonely for love. She had not been hugged enough by her daddy.

There was a natural sexual attraction between Don and Evelyn. But for Don, this was no more than most men felt toward a physically sensuous woman, which Evelyn certainly was—she had “the look.” Neither of them ever overtly acted on the physical attraction by flirting, but the chemistry was there.

One of the company’s biggest customers was interested in getting a quote for a privately labeled product. If the numbers worked, it could be one of the biggest sales in the history of their company. Four top salespeople were assigned to work out the details, including Evelyn and Don. About two weeks into the project, it became clear that the four of them needed to travel to the customer’s home office to work out kinks in the pricing.

After checking in at their hotel, two of them wanted to hit the downtown entertainment district that night, but Don and Evelyn both declined. They waved goodbye as their associates' cab pulled away from the curb.

As they walked inside, Don's senses were alert. There was a sense of danger in the air, and he welcomed it. He said, "I'm going to get something to eat. Would you like to join me?"

Evelyn simply nodded as her eyes fell to the carpet, and they walked to the dining room. The *maitre d'* seated them in a booth near the back of the restaurant. Don had already made his first mistake but not his biggest mistake. His biggest mistake was mixing wine with dinner. But his real mistake had been made thousands of choices earlier.

The wine lowered both of their inhibitions, which led to exploratory questions. The questions became more and more provocative. Each successive answer signaled interest in going further. By the time Don signed the check, he had pulled the noose tight around his own neck. They walked to the elevator, went up to her room, and Don became an adulterer.

Don woke up the next morning laden with guilt, remorse and shame. The balance of the business trip was extremely awkward. He resolved in his mind that it was a one-time tryst and that he was going to change a number of his ways. Unfortunately, that thought came several years too late. Don was addicted, and he couldn't walk away from his lusty habits.

Evelyn, his correspondent, was equally flustered by the affair, but she was single. She was also highly attracted to Don, and that fed his ego. Less than two weeks later, Don found himself at Evelyn's apartment during lunch. For the next three months, that became their regular rendezvous two or three times a week.

Meanwhile, Mary had been frustrated several times because she had been unable to reach Don during lunch, which he usually

ate at his desk. He explained by lying to her that he had started taking key customers to lunch from time to time. Meanwhile, it didn't take long for Evelyn's and Don's co-workers to add things up. Several of the women in the office felt scandalized. Don naively didn't think anyone had noticed.

One day Mary called and reached Susan, one of the scandalized women. She asked, "Is my husband there?" Susan, who could be vicious as a cornered cat, shot back in a villain's voice, "No, and you may want look into it a little further."

Mary sat with the phone hanging limp in her hand until the phone company's you-didn't-hang-it-up-right ringer brought her back to earth. The next day Mary—she couldn't help herself—followed Don's car from the office at lunch. When she saw him go into an apartment, she didn't want to see any more. She sped away, sobbing hysterically.

As soon as she arrived home, Mary called her mother and spent 10 emotional minutes telling her what she had just seen. "Mom, I'm just so scared. I don't know what to do."

"Honey, I am so, so sorry," her mother began, then followed with 20 questions. After talking out every possible explanation and course of action, they agreed that Mary would tell Don that very evening exactly what had happened step by step, starting with Susan's offhand phone remark.

After the children were in bed, Mary asked Don into the den and shut the door. She began trembling, and tears streamed along the creases of her face. Don knew he had been caught before Mary said a word. The guilt had been eating away at him. He started crying too. He made it easy for her by asking, "How did you find out?" For the next two hours they covered every angle. Don, a former altar boy, was defrocked. He confessed how it all got started and the hundreds of little sins that led up to the big one.

Mary heard more than she thought she could bear. That night

she set her course, and she never wavered from it once. She was a woman of faith—strong faith—but she would not be married to an unfaithful husband.

The divorce took six months. The awful pain didn't begin to recede for two years. Then she met Sid. Sid was a lot like Don. After all, she had never found anything wrong with Don's personality, just his character. At the end of 12 months of dinners and picnics with Mary's three children, they both started thinking, "This might work."

Four years after Don took Evelyn to be his unlawful mistress, Sid took Mary to be his lawful wife.

It took another year or so to work out the details of shared parenting. Eventually, the children each had two toothbrushes, two beds—two of everything. The children spent every other weekend with Don, and he could attend all their contests and concerts, which he faithfully did.

One Saturday morning, he arrived a few minutes early to pick up the kids for the weekend. Don's children—ages 14, 12 and 9—were sitting at the breakfast table when he knocked on the kitchen door.

Mary and new-husband Sid were scurrying around the kitchen, fetching more milk and cooking scrambled eggs. Mary went to the door, swung it open, smiled a genuinely friendly smile, and invited Don to come in for a cup of coffee while the kids finished breakfast.

Don came in and, feeling quite awkward—this was their first time all together in the same room—sat down at one end of the kitchen table. The kids were at the other end of the table, with a couple of empty chairs between him and them. The kids didn't greet him right away because they were arguing about who should get the last piece of toast. He felt like he wasn't really even there—like he was a ghost, and he felt like a giant horrible, smelly toad.

Mary intervened and calmed the toast storm. Sid said, "Thanks, honey," gave her a soft kiss on the cheek, then served the kids their eggs and asked if they wanted more milk. Sid tousled Tommy's hair, and Tommy smiled that toothy grin that always melted Don. But today he was flashing it at Sid. Don was melting anyway, but for a different reason.

Then Sid turned to get the milk bottle and brushed his arm across Mary's back and gave her a love pat. He poured the milk into Anna's glass, and she said, "Thank you." Sid said, "You're welcome, sweetie." Sid turned toward Don and exhorted the children, "OK, now, kids, your dad's here. Aren't you going to say hello?"

I cannot believe this is happening to me, Don thought as he turned numb. Here is another man doing what I am supposed to do. Here is another man calling my wife "honey," kissing her face, cooking for my children, tousling my son's hair, touching my wife's body, calling my daughter "sweetie," and my children can't seem to get enough of him. Meanwhile, it's like they didn't even see me come in. There must be some mistake!

There had been a mistake, but it was too late to do anything about it now. Don was going to watch another man love his wife and raise his children.

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Dealing With Dirt and Hurt: When to Call in the Cavalry

Tough times happen. This world isn't a cozy comforter. It's more of a wet blanket that wants to wrap around you when you feel lost, defeated, rejected and discouraged.

The world provides liquid spirits, drugs, fantasy women and images to soothe, but these only drag us down a path of destruction.

The Bible warns us in John 16:33, "In this world you will have trouble" (NIV). So it should be no surprise when we feel like we've been sucker-punched in the gut with problems. Unfortunately, we are all damaged goods, bringing past dirt and hurt to our lives and relationships, which can snowball in our minds and make matters worse.

How do we deal with the dirt and hurt?

Life offers a series of challenging events, like experiencing betrayal by a loved one, losing a job, financial woes or the death of a close friend or family member. These are the obvious ones we need to be prepared for, but what about the daily issues we struggle with?

- Anger outbursts
- Emotional avalanches
- Relationship confusion
- Communication gaffes
- Frustrating situations
- Compulsive behaviors
- Intense mental anguish

The first step is to have a relationship with Jesus. Knowing and following Him will be the foundation for dealing with dirt and hurt. Then add a supportive group of men you can talk

with. Lean on God with honest prayer because He listens and loves you more than we can imagine.

There are times and situations in relationships when you need to call in the cavalry, raise the white flag, give in and ask for professional help. Counseling or therapy should be the norm, not rare. We all have baggage that can impact our decisions, emotions and behaviors. A good licensed counselor is like a good mechanic who pops open the hood to your life and does some rewiring.

Unfortunately, men self-protect. We don't want our problems aired out in front of others. We strive to protect our public image, but our image lies about what's really going on deeper down. Our pride and fear result in pretending there's nothing wrong. Too often, guys view getting counseling as a weakness, instead of being courageous.

Stop being resourceful and trying to apply a MacGyver fix. There's no duct tape for your character. The longer you stay with the self-protecting image, the less real help you'll get while your character defects get worse.

The humble choice to accelerate your growth is to forget about your image and get counseling from a professional who doesn't care about your image.

When should you get professional help? Here is the spectrum I use to guide men:

- **Scrape:** If you have an emotional flesh wound, start by searching our site for teaching and then apply what you learn.
- **Cut:** If you have a deeper issue, perhaps a recurring problem or habit, then use our site for guidance, but you may need to turn to other men who can listen and carry the burden with you.
- **Deep Cut:** This is a lingering problem, perhaps a fracture in the relationship and you're not sure it's

repairable. When you have a deep cut, you would go to the emergency room, right? The same goes with a deep cut in your social, emotional and spiritual health. Time to get help immediately.

- **Big Bleeder:** This is serious trauma with lives on the line. Perhaps it's marital trouble, dealing with divorce or dangerous behaviors that are risking your livelihood. There's no time to waste. Find therapy fast.

There's a great example of this in the story about Naaman in 2 Kings 5. Naaman was at the apex of his career. He was a highly regarded commander and valiant soldier, and he had money. But he also had to hide his spots from leprosy. So he did what any rich commander would do: He ordered healing immediately and paid generously for it.

Elisha told him what to do. But Naaman's pride didn't want healing by washing in the dirty Jordan River seven times. Naaman's servants slapped him with the humbling obvious, telling Naaman if he wanted to be healed, he would have to obey. Eventually Naaman did as he was told and received healing.

Here's what we learn from Naaman to deal with the dirt and hurt:

1. Ask for help.
2. Expose your hurt.
3. Put your pride on the shelf. Healing requires humility and faith (1 Pet. 5:6).
4. Be open to, and seek, the truth.
5. Do the work. Knowledge demands action; otherwise it's just like an unopened book sitting in your library.

The secret to change is doing something you don't want to do in order to get the result you need.

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 .

Hollywood: 2014 is the 'Year of the Bible'

In a throwback to the golden age of cinema, Hollywood has declared 2014 the "Year of the Bible." From Ridley Scott's *Exodus*, starring Christian Bale as Moses, to Russell Crowe playing Noah, Hollywood is gambling on new innovations in technology and star power to revisit some of the most popular stories ever told.

"It's definitely a throwback to the 1950s and early '60s," Dr. Stephen J. Whitfield, an American studies professor at Brandeis University, told .

Starting with *The Robe* in 1953 and Charlton Heston's 1956 Passover-related epic *The Ten Commandments*, then continuing with Heston's other biblically themed films—1959's *Ben-Hur* and 1965's *The Greatest Story Ever Told*—the post-war era was packed with movies that appealed to the conservatism of the era.

"One of the reasons biblical epics were [so] popular in the 1950s and 1960s was because of the general atmosphere of piety of the era," Whitfield says.

Advances in technology also played a role, according to Whitfield.

“The second reason [for the popularity for bible-related films] was television, which was in black and white for most of this era,” he says. “What movies could do is provide rich living color on a very big screen.”

But in an age of increasing secularism, will the latest biblical epics be able to capture the attention of a new generation of Americans?

One of the first biblically inspired films on the docket for 2014, scheduled for February release, is *Son of God*, by British-American producer Mark Burnett and his wife, Roma Downey. The devout Christian couple made headlines last year for their acclaimed History Channel miniseries *The Bible*, which drew polarized reactions over its literal interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. Produced by 20th Century Fox, *Son of God* seeks to trace the life of Jesus of Nazareth while also telling the story with “the scope and scale of an action epic,” according to the film’s trailer.

Coming on the heels of this story about Jesus will be the March release of Jewish-American director Darren Aronofsky’s *Noah*, starring Russell Crowe as the biblical patriarch who saved mankind from the Great Flood. Joining Crowe are other Hollywood stars Jennifer Connelly, playing Noah’s wife Naameh; Emma Watson of *Harry Potter* fame, playing Noah’s adopted daughter Ila; and Sir Anthony Hopkins playing Methuselah, Noah’s grandfather.

Aronofsky has garnered criticism over his movie’s environmental slant and other creative licenses.

“Noah is a very short section of the Bible with a lot of gaps, so we definitely had to take some creative expression in it,” the film’s producer, Scott Franklin, told *Entertainment Weekly*. “But I think we stayed very true to the story and

didn't really deviate from the Bible, despite the six-armed angels."

With a massive \$130 million budget, *Noah* will feature all the usual Hollywood computer-generated special effects and action scenes that moviegoers have become accustomed to over the past few decades.

"Hollywood's return to biblical stories can also be explained by the huge advances in computer-generated graphics, similar to the role color played in the 1950s," Whitfield told .

"These massive special effects have already been demonstrated in revisiting science-fiction and comic book stories," he says. "Now they can put this into recreating the ancient world."

Another highly anticipated 2014 biblical epic is famed director Ridley Scott's *Exodus*, starring Christian Bale as Moses and *Breaking Bad* star Aaron Paul as his lieutenant, Joshua, which won't hit theaters until December. There have been few details leaked about the direction Scott will take movie.

Whitfield says that by focusing on major figures in the Bible and using Hollywood megastars, Hollywood is not gambling too much on these films, despite the many changes in America today.

"By producing movies focusing on major figures like Jesus, Noah or Moses, these are individuals that even the most ill-educated know of, compared to most other historical figures," he told .

Whitfield adds that the movies, by using biblical stories that take place in the Middle East, are also able to feature diverse casts and weave modern political themes into the stories.

“Because it is set in the Middle East, you can also have a multiracial and multiethnic cast that appeals to Hollywood’s values,” he says.

Also slated for release in late 2014 is *Mary, Mother of Christ*. The film, which bills itself as the “true prequel of [Mel Gibson’s] *The Passion of the Christ*,” stars 16-year-old Israeli actress Odeya Rush as Mary, Ben Kingsley as King Herod, and recently deceased Peter O’Toole as Simeon, a prophet from the Gospel of Luke.

The trend of biblical epics on the big screen is likely to continue for several more years. A number of other biblical movies are also under consideration, including Will Smith directing a movie on Cain and his fratricide victim, Abel, and a film starring Brad Pitt as Pontius Pilate, the villainous Roman governor of Judea who sentenced Jesus to a painful death.

“Despite increasing secularism today, the Bible is still a very strong part of American culture,” Whitfield says. “There is more of a chance [for biblically inspired films] with recognition and widespread appeal, than [there is for] another movie about an American president or any other historical figures.”

For the original article, visit .

Fitness Program: What’s Right for You?

Designing a fitness program begins by knowing why you’re working out. Are you wanting to lose weight, add shape and

tone, better your health or train for competition?

It seems like most people like to exercise because they want to look better, feel better and sleep better. Either way, taking care of your temple is a good thing. Some people are better at taking care of their spiritual muscles than their physical muscles or vice-versa. In either case, here are a few things you need to think about when designing your workout routine:

- How much aerobic cardiovascular training do you need?
- How much anaerobic strength training?
- How long should your training sessions be?
- Can your body handle the additional physical stress?
- Does your current health condition affect your training?

When it comes to getting fit and healthy, the name of the game is to train and diet smarter—not harder or longer.

1. Exercise can be a double-edged sword. It can be both stress-reducing and stress-producing. The more intense your workout, the more stressful it is on your body and the more cortisol and adrenaline you produce. Hitting a heavy bag or a going for a hard run may help you get rid of some anxious energy, but that intense workout will elevate your stress hormones. Can your adrenal glands handle that? Or are they already in a state of exhaustion due to all the stress in your life?

2. Exercise is a type of physical stress. Casual walking is exercise, but it's not that stressful. Weight training, burst training or aerobic training done incorrectly (the most common mistake) is stress-producing. Are you exercising and physically taxing a body that is already exhausted?

3. Exercise is when you tear down the muscles. It's called the catabolic or breakdown phase. Only about 15-20 percent of your results will come from the workout. About 70-80 percent of your results will come from diet and rest. This is termed the

anabolic growth phase. Don't overemphasize the workout and undercut the need for a good diet and additional rest and sleep.

4. The quicker you lower your stress hormones after a workout, the quicker the anabolic growth phase begins. Don't assume your stress hormones automatically drop back to normal after your workout. If you're hustling to the shower, wolfing down a shake or meal, or speeding out the door in a constant hurry, I can almost guarantee you that your stress hormones are staying elevated—in which case you are slowing down the start of the rebuild growth phase.

5. The more intense the workout, the more testosterone (TT) and growth hormones (GH) you produce. These hormones help you burn fat, lose weight and keep you feeling young. This is, again, why you want to do some type of strength training or burst training: It allows you to kick up those two important hormones. Strength training doesn't have to be long—it just needs to be intense! If you don't stress the muscle, it has no reason to change. Short, intense workouts are all you may need.

FYI: When your adrenal glands are depleted and fatigued, they are not going to produce as much TT and GH. This is why it's a good idea to measure your cortisol levels, especially if you've hit a plateau and are dealing with prolonged stress.

6. More exercise, more stress = more rest. Sleep and exercise are the two best ways to pump up your testosterone and growth hormones. So you have to give your body a chance to rebuild itself. Are you giving yourself additional rest to offset the additional physical demands on your body? If not, you will deplete and exhaust your adrenal glands. You want to feel tired and healthier after a good workout, not exhausted and frazzled, which happens to so many people whose adrenals are exhausted and overworked.

7. Aerobic deficiency and anaerobic excess is a common mistake. Performing your aerobic workout at too high an intensity level for your current level of condition turns aerobic conditioning into an anaerobic activity. This is another stress on the body. Only well-trained marathoners and tri athletes can train at 80-85 percent of the maximum heart rate and still burn fat. If that's not you, you should be training at 65-75 percent of your max heart rate. Otherwise you will be burning mostly carbs and lean muscle instead of stored body fats.

These are only a few of the things you need to consider. We haven't even discussed all the variables that come into play with regards to your health symptoms, because that will also determine how long or how intense you should workout. If you've been training and have hit that plateau and aren't feeling good after a workout, you need to think: Could your adrenal glands be exhausted?

There are so many variables to be reviewed in order to design an individualized health and fitness program. So buying a good pair of tennis shoes, joining a gym and taking a class is all great, but if you're not getting the results you expect, it would be smart to review all the variables that go into designing a health and fitness program.

Dr. Len Lopez is a nutrition and fitness expert and creator of the Work Horse Fitness Trainer. His background in natural medicine and strength training gives him that special insight to help those who are struggling to bring both health and fitness together. You can learn more or get a second opinion at .

For the original article, visit .

Are You Overdoing It on Special Occasions?

Why do special occasions seem to provide people, even Christians, with a supposed license to sin? We see it in movies, popularizing wedding “hangovers” and among “bridesmaids” and “wedding singers.” Or closer to home, the uncle who drinks too much at family gatherings.

It feels like holidays, when boiled down to reality, become nothing more than occasions to indulge for so many.

I’m not a prude, and I realize Jesus turned water into wine for wedding guests. But I don’t think He was condoning overdoing it as a form of celebration. Think about it with me. Here is a quick list of occasions that our culture has glamorized with not-so-special behaviors, giving us a mysterious hall pass from morality:

- Big-game beer fests and tailgating
- Bachelor and bachelorette parties featuring strip joints, excessive drinking and, in some cases, prostitution
- Valentine’s Day, which virtually promotes sexual activity before marriage
- St. Patrick’s Day, a saint’s celebration turned into a reason to drink too much Irish whiskey, green beer and other green libations
- Thanksgiving gluttony
- Cinco de Mayo fiestas with tequila
- Fourth of July, celebrating freedom with the freedom to party hearty
- Graduations and promotion celebrations—moving up and letting your hair down
- Halloween hijinx, giving people an excuse to eat too much candy and act out of character by pretending to be

- one, from sexy costumes to evil icons
- Birthdays parties designed to forget your age
 - Reunions that bring back the “good ol’ days”
 - Celebrating big-game wins and accomplishments with the attitude that you work hard, play hard
 - Spring and summer breaks that become breaks from morality

Have another one to add? Please use the comment section below.

We often justify these occasions by giving ourselves an extra measure of grace, which can turn into overindulgence, gluttony and debauchery.

The Bible clearly calls out these behaviors. God wants us to have a sound, sober mind to help protect us from the enemy, as written in 1 Peter 5:8. Our bodies are considered temples of God according to 1 Corinthians 6:19, and we should offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, according to Romans 12:1.

God wants us to celebrate and enjoy the blessings He’s giving us, but in a way that honors Him and each other with self-control. Remember, all good things come from God—good food, good wine, good friends, good progress, good character.

When you go into these celebrations, don’t leave Jesus behind. Go into special occasions as a lighthouse, being a properly calibrated ambassador among people who do not share your faith.

10 Ways to Make Special Occasions Special

1. Reminisce past experiences (Phil. 4:8).
2. Make the meal the hero. Savor the flavors and experience of a unique restaurant.
3. Take in the ambience and the moment of a unique venue.

4. Enjoy live music and dance joyfully.
5. Capture the moments with photography.
6. Catch up with people, finding out what's really going on in their lives.
7. Recognize people for their efforts in fun ways and with unique awards. Propose a toast with the purpose of giving a blessing instead of a healthy pour.
8. Participate in respectful roasting with humor served up in grace and love. Use storytelling to recap significant moments.
9. Think of what you can give or bring, rather than what you can get out of the occasion.
10. Celebrate with a new tradition. Think of activities that get the guys (or gals) moving, such as hiking, ski trips, pick-up basketball games or beach bonfires.

5 Practical Tips for a Sober Celebration

- 1. BYOB.** Bring your own beverage (alcohol-free) or healthy dishes.
- 2. Don't arrive in a state of HALT.** Recognize your vulnerability when you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired.
- 3. Flee temptation, and that may mean skipping the event.** But you can substitute the event by organizing your own with a healthy crowd and healthy environment that allows for a less hazy and more memorable experience.
- 4. Think about how you want to feel the next day.** Would your behavior make you or Jesus proud? Would it be what you want to be doing if He returned unannounced?
- 5. Ask God to show you how to have fun.** We're used to allowing the world to tell us how to have fun. But what if we asked Him? He created laughter, and He told us he would give us

abundant life, so why not ask Him?

Remember, God is not a killjoy, and following Him is not a drag. Sometimes we need to say no to say yes. Perhaps the hardest times to follow Him are during the celebrations of life when the world is saying, "Treat yourself; have more." But remember Jesus said in John 6:35, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (NIV).

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.

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Are You Giving In to Satan's Mind Games?

What a week ... business problems, church problems, people problems. It seems all of a sudden that nothing but problems are in my life.

A few months ago, I felt as if our business was unstoppable—boy, was I wrong. Business has slowed almost to a stop. I do see light at the end of the tunnel; I just hope it's not a train.

The strains of church have taken hold as well. With the economy, the world problems and individual struggles, people

are starting to become depressed and despairing—through which comes with lots of counsel.

With all of this going on, it has taken my focus off of God and placed it on me. That's not a good place to be. I don't know about you, but when I do that, depression and desperation kick in. This seems to be where the whole world is right now.

We are all so focused on ourselves that we have forgotten others are suffering as well. We are focused on the physical instead of the spiritual. This is where Satan wants us, because now he's in control. Taking our focus off of God and focusing on ourselves gives Satan the opportunity to play games with our minds—thus the depression and desperation.

So yesterday, as I am wallowing in my own pity, a ministry opportunity came about and I was able to help someone who was in need. This person was in desperate need of some help, counsel and prayer. I was able to help, and for a moment all my depression and despair went away. It was a wonderful feeling.

Imagine if just for a moment we took all our self-centered focus and placed it on those around us. How awesome would it be? Imagine how little depression and desperation there would be in the world.

Now imagine if we stayed in the Word every day, we applied it to our lives, and we stayed focused on the others around us. That's a world I want to live in. We would be rid of depression and desperation once and for all. But any time we take our focus off of God, sooner or later the double-Ds will kick in.

So try this with me. Let's all stay in the Word, keep our focus on God and others, and then see how you and I feel. Let me know the success you have.

I would bet it's a better place than being depressed and

despairing. I saw a glimpse of that yesterday in Psalm 32:7:

“You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance” (NASB).

God bless, and share your faith.

Jody Burkeen is founder of Man Up God's Way Ministries, birthed out of his desire to help change the way Christian men “do” Christianity.

Vast Study Casts Doubt on Value of Mammograms

The value of yearly mammograms is under fire once again, with a long-running Canadian study contending that annual screening in women aged 40 to 59 does not lower breast cancer death rates.

For 25 years, the researchers followed nearly 90,000 women who were randomly assigned either to get screening mammograms or not.

“Mammography detected many more invasive breast cancers,” said lead researcher Dr. Cornelia Baines, professor emeriti at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health. “Survival time was longer in women getting mammography.”

“[However], the number of deaths from breast cancer was the same in both groups at 25 years,” she said.

“It is increasingly being recognized that there are significant harms from screening, and that screening can do much less now than 40 years ago because of improved therapy,”

Baines added. "Twenty-two percent of the mammography group with screen-detected invasive breast cancer were over-diagnosed and unnecessarily inflicted with therapy."

Over-diagnosis is defined as the detection of harmless cancers that will not cause symptoms or problems during a patient's lifetime.

The study, which began in 1980 in 15 screening centers in six Canadian provinces, was published Feb. 11 in the online edition of the journal *BMJ*.

Women in the mammography group had a total of five mammograms—one a year for five years. Those aged 40 to 49 in the mammography group and all women aged 50 to 59 in both groups also had an annual physical exam. Women aged 40 to 49 in the no-mammography group had a single physical exam followed by typical care.

During the next 25 years, 3,250 women who got screening mammographies were diagnosed with breast cancer, compared with 3,133 in the no-mammography group, according to the study. While 500 women in the mammography group died during the follow up, 505 in the no-mammography group did.

In 2009, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force updated its recommendations on screening mammograms, suggesting them for women aged 50 to 74 every two years. Among women aged 40 to 49, the task force recommended only a discussion with a woman's doctor on the pros and cons of screening.

But other organizations, including the American Cancer Society, continue to recommend annual screening mammograms for women beginning at age 40.

The American College of Radiology, which also supports annual screening mammograms for women aged 40 and older, reacted strongly to the Canadian findings. In a statement issued Feb. 11, the college called the report "an incredibly misleading

analysis based on the deeply flawed and widely discredited Canadian National Breast Screening Study.”

Among those flaws, according to the college: the quality of mammograms done in the study was poor and the skills of the imaging technologists were not adequate.

The new report isn't a surprise, said Dr. Carol Lee, chairwoman of the college's breast imaging communications committee. “When it was first reported 20 years ago, it didn't show a benefit,” she said.

The findings are at odds with many other reports that show a benefit for routine screening, Lee added.

“Screening mammography has been shown over and over again to decrease mortality from breast cancer,” she said.

Lee said she is “concerned [the new study] is going to discourage women from having mammograms.”

In an editorial accompanying the study, experts from the University of Oslo, the Harvard School of Public Health and other institutions agreed with the Canadian researchers that the rationale for screening needs to be reassessed by policy makers.

Baines said her research points to the value of offering screening mammograms only to those at higher risk of breast cancer.

“In time, the hope is to offer screening to a subset of the population [that has] been identified, probably by genetic markers, to be very likely to benefit from screening,” she said.

For the original article, visit .

Why the Hypocrisy of the Obama Administration?

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has made international waves by releasing dozens of dangerous prisoners in an effort to garner favor with the Taliban. According to Fox's Leland Vittert, these are men who "have the blood of U.S. servicemen on their hands."

General Jack Keane, a Fox News contributor and all-around tough guy, made the argument that this makes as much sense as releasing Nazis after World War II as a gesture of peace to the Germans. On the contrary, many of the captured Nazis were hung.

The U.S. had requested that these terrorists stay behind bars. No one was to be released without the approval of U.S. forces. However, Karzai, possibly realizing that with U.S. troops on the way out, he will be left with the Taliban, one of the most vicious, ruthless organizations on earth, is seeking to make friends in low places.

What's the Problem?

What I don't understand is why the U.S. is so upset. Isn't this right in line with U.S. policy regarding terrorists in Israel? John Kerry should be backing Karzai—not criticizing him!

Since August, Secretary Kerry has pressured Israel to release 104 Palestinian prisoners, nearly all with blood on their hands, in exchange for ... well, zilch. Releasing these killers was called a "confidence-building measure." (You have to wonder: Who is getting confident through such idiotic

policies? Not Israel.) Just as Palestinians welcomed home their terrorist sons, the Taliban is also laughing as their fighters come home—just in time for the spring battles.

This is called reaping what you sow. The United States has been more than willing to put Israel's soldiers, not to mention innocent women and children, in a precarious position but cries foul when Karzai does the same thing to U.S. troops.

Technically, they are right to be mad. It is suicidal to release these Taliban fighters. They will no doubt return to the battlefield. Not only will U.S. soldiers be at risk, but also Afghani women and children.

But how can President Obama and John Kerry think that Palestinian terrorists whom they pressured Israel to release will not return to fight another day—or be used as inspiration to young would-be terrorists? You can't have your cake and eat it too!

Hopefully Israel will grow a backbone and stop kowtowing to Kerry's threats. Last week in Germany he seemed to almost threaten Israel, saying that if we missed this opportunity for peace—the "Kerry" opportunity—we would be even more isolated than we presently are and that we should expect more boycotts and divestments. Thanks for encouraging the enemy!

The problem is that he makes no declarations like that to the Palestinians, who have been offered a state by Israel on three different occasions—and said no each time.

Sadly, it may only be when an American soldier is killed by one of Karzai's released prisoners that the Obama administration sees the lunacy of its policy towards Israel. But from what I have seen over the past five years, even that most likely won't change its hypocrisy.

Note: For those who don't know me, I am an Israeli American, and I equally hold in high esteem the soldiers of both of my

homelands.

Ron Cantor is the director of Messiah's Mandate International in Israel, a Messianic ministry dedicated to taking the message of Jesus from Israel to the ends of the 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, *Identity Theft*, was released April 16. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

Dump Sugar, Eat Fat and Cure Diabetes?

More than 26 million Americans suffer from diabetes. That's 10 times the number from just 50 years ago.

But even with diets filled with sugar and soaring obesity rates, there is hope. Some people are reversing their Type II diabetes, getting off their medications, and feeling great.

This report focuses on Type II diabetes, which represents 90 to 95 percent of all diabetes cases.

Like millions of Americans, Janet Huffstetler felt diabetes was ruining her life. Then she changed her diet.

"I will tell you I have never felt so good," she said. "I think having my body free of sugar and carbs and processed chemicals has made such a difference in how I approach everything. I am just an entirely different person."

It's a far cry from the fear she felt eight years ago when doctors first diagnosed her with diabetes. She had seen what

the disease did to her uncle.

“He ended up on full dialysis and blind,” she recalled. “He also had coronary bypass surgery. They had started talking about amputation, but he died.”

Diabetes is when you have too much sugar in your bloodstream. The standard treatment is largely medication.

More Meds, More Problems

Huffstetler’s first doctor put her on medication that led to weight gain and depression.

“[It] kind of made me feel sluggish, it made me dizzy, it made me lethargic,” she recalled. “It was very hard to get motivated to do anything I should have been doing, more exercise and everything.”

Daily life became a series of finger sticks, constantly monitoring her blood sugar levels.

“I was doing it four times a day, and they would tell you ‘You have to do it on this side, so you can do it on that side the next time.’ And your fingers became very sore,” she said. “And I work at a computer and it’s not fun.”

Believing there had to be a better way, she changed doctors.

“I came home and Googled and Dr. Westman’s name kept coming up. And I was fortunate enough to get in to see him within a month, which, I must have called and gotten an immediate cancellation,” she said.

Diet-Only Approach

That appointment sent her to the nationally recognized Duke Lifestyle Medicine Clinic led by Dr. Eric Westman. He helped reverse Huffstetler’s diabetes through his diet-only approach.

“Diabetes and obesity is complicated,” Westman explained.

“There are lots of factors that are involved, but most experts agree that it’s the foods and the beverages that people eat that are the major cause for diabetes and obesity in the U.S., and so that should be the major focus of treatment.”

Instead of treating the sugar in his patients’ blood with medicine, Westman instructs them to eliminate their sugar intake.

Westman said he gets diabetes patients who are unhappy with the treatment they’ve received thus far.

“I took someone off 180 units of insulin for their diabetes in two days. And this is not unusual,” he told CBN News. “This individual was on diabetes medicine, injectable insulin, for 10 years. And just by changing the foods that person no longer needs insulin in two days.”

“And that’s because the insulin was treating the sugar in the foods that the person was eating,” he continued. “In that case the individual was drinking two liters of sugar-sweetened beverage every day and taking insulin to treat the sugar-sweetened beverage.

“Now this could be sweet tea in the South, orange juice in the North, any beverage that has sugar in it, this was raising the blood sugar,” Westman explained.

“And the doctor, the clinical doctors, put him on insulin without addressing the food component, the cause from the foods,” he said. “I instructed him to take away all the sugars, the starches in the foods and in the drinks. He never needed insulin again. It’s pretty amazing.”

Westman said his program is tremendously successful for the patients who do it.

A Success Story

Susan Hollowell did it and went from spending \$400 a month on

diabetes drugs down to zero.

“I was insulin-dependent, five injections a day,” she recalled. “The third day of my diet my blood sugar dropped to 150 and I asked Dr. Westman, ‘What should I do about my insulin?’ I didn’t want to go over. And he said, ‘Get off of it.’”

Three months later she was 20 pounds lighter and had more energy than before.

“I wasn’t involved in any clubs or organizations, didn’t want to go to church very often, and now that’s not the case,” she said.

Managing Sugar Withdrawals

Westman admitted it’s not easy for some people to give up sugar.

“There’s a feed-forward, a drive that comes from eating sugar, that eating sugar makes you want to eat more sugar,” he explained.

So his patients use artificial sweeteners to manage their withdrawal symptoms. Huffstetler remembers how she did it.

“When I first started, the little individual sugar-free Jello things, I would come and put whip cream on it; it would take care of the sweet,” Huffstetler recalled.

“Now I was so amazed with this program,” she said. “After a while you don’t crave those things any more. You don’t want it. When I have family dinners I have to really work on thinking about dessert for Thanksgiving or whatever because my mind just doesn’t go there anymore.”

In addition to sugar, Westman’s diabetes diet also limits starches, like bread, pasta, and rice, because they also raise your blood sugar.

Butter and Oil, It's All Good!

Surprisingly, the diet allows patients to eat fats: the unsaturated kind like olive oil and avocados, and saturated fat like coconut oil and butter.

Although this diet might sound revolutionary, it's actually a throwback. If you notice, old medical textbooks dating back to the years before insulin was discovered, advised physicians to put their diabetic patients on a low carbohydrate, high fat diet."

Westman tells his patients not to worry about eating saturated fat because he says the latest science reveals it does not cause heart disease.

"So now we're in a phase of education, trying to get the word out about the cholesterol in the blood and the arteries and all that, do not get adversely affected by a high fat diet," he said.

So to avoid diabetes, or reverse it, put the brakes on sugar and starch. It's not always easy but well worth the effort.

For the original article, visit .