

'Clean': Kill the Seed of Lust Before It Grows

You and I need to aim our protective gear and weapons against the enemy's plan for our lives, so we don't one day become the perpetrator of this crime of lying, cheating and hurting those we love.

Before I go further, I want to discuss a principle from James 1:15. The translation will differ, but the principle is the same. The King James Bible states, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

The main thought here is the principle of the seed. Lust is a seed because it produces fruit. Seeds are the only things that can produce a fruit. Seeds can only produce the fruit of their DNA. For example, a tomato seed doesn't produce pumpkins; it can only produce tomatoes. The DNA of a seed is powerful and with proper nourishment will be unstoppable in becoming what it is determined it shall be.

Now let's go back to Adam's creation for a moment. From what was Adam created? That's right, dust or dirt. All of us menfolk are fancy dirt. Dirt is where seeds are planted. Lust is a seed; it's a seed with a known DNA and ultimately can create death in a man's life. The first stage of sin is lust, which can be described as those long looks, double-takes, rubbernecking, and over-evaluating when a woman is in your field of vision.

Women are three-dimensional creatures with spirits, souls and bodies, with relationships, responsibilities and dreams for their lives. When we lust, we remove all these other aspects of their beings and just look at their packaging, or their bodies. We objectify, or make them things, instead of souls or

people. In lust, we devalue the amazing soul that a woman is and make her into a lust hit-entertainment that we scan into our brains.

Lust is absolutely wrong. Who says so? God does. In Exodus 20:17, otherwise known as the Tenth Commandment, God clearly states, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

It's clear we are not to lust after our neighbors' wives. You might think, *Great! My five neighbors are not attractive to me, so no problem.* But when Jesus was asked who our neighbors are, He responded and made it pretty clear that everyone is our neighbor (Luke 10).

That means that we are not to lust after *any* woman on Planet Earth. Paul said to treat "older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (1 Tim. 5:2). Why sisters? Because that puts a relationship context around each person. Most of us would not lust after our own physical sister regardless of her level of attractiveness, because, of course, she is our sister. In the absence of the option to lust, we see her as a whole person with feelings, a history, relationships and value, not as an object.

Lust, if it is not destroyed at this level, can and will grow. And if it is watered repeatedly with more lust, fantasy and pornography, lust will continue to grow and become stronger. If you masturbate to lust-inducing pictures, it's like feeding super-fertilizer to the seed, or genetically engineering it. If you lust after the same person repeatedly, you are in real danger of creating a situation where you will be drawn toward her. You are reinforcing that situation with your lust, as Joe did with blond employees. Because he lusted after blond women when he masturbated, this specific targeting led Joe to be attracted to the blond employee who eventually sued him.

The second stage of the seed of lust is sin. The sin can start off small, like inappropriate humor, jokes, asking about a woman's marriage or telling her how bad your marriage is, a hug, a longer hug, private meetings and then kissing, sex and ongoing sex. Sin is the evidence that you have fertilized lust over time. Since sin is the next growth stage of lust, it doesn't just happen; there is always a process of nurturing the seed of lust.

You can repent of sin, be forgiven and once again grow spiritually, although there may be consequences of sin that continue for quite some time. If a man chooses not to repent, however, he is guaranteed only one future, and that is the fruit of lust and sin: death.

A man may lust for years, never thinking he will sin. I have heard hundreds of times from men, Christian men, who thought they would never cross the line. They didn't understand that feeding lust guarantees the seed will grow into its next stage. Whether a man is saved or not, that's the principle of the seed.

Sin can also be fertilized. By repeating the porn, masturbation, secret sexual chatting, texting or cheating, you fertilize lust and sin. This reinforcement promotes the growth of this sin in your life, making lust and sin stronger and stronger over the years or decades. Sin, like a plant that has sprung up from the ground, definitely grows in a particular season (Heb. 11:25). *Season* is an interesting term to use because it is a period of time with a beginning and an end. A man in the season of sin often believes he will never get caught; he thinks he is smarter than those other guys. This man is deceived, because there is absolutely no such thing as a secret; there is just a season of secrets. Countless men learn this the hard way. If a man doesn't humble himself before God and others during this season of sin, he will be faced with the seed of lust reaching its final fruit: death. This harvest season of death has its own distinct beginning.

It starts with the humiliation of getting exposed or caught.

As I began to describe earlier, I can't tell you the countless ways God has contrived his sons-in-law into getting caught. It's the guy who makes a phone call to a prostitute and somehow his wife is accidentally conferenced in on the call. It's the voicemail, text, or email that is found. It's the call from the husband of the other woman, who has repented in her season of sin. It's the accidental Facebook post that a friend or relative came across that shows you and the blond woman together. It's the wife showing up to surprise you at your hotel during a "business trip" and walking in on you unexpectedly. God is creative and specific when the season of death starts.

In the beginning of the season of death, a man can still repent. Sometimes there is restoration, and sometimes there is death. Death can have many faces, such as not seeing your grandchildren because your children don't want to be around you. Death can include not being able to walk your daughter down the aisle on her wedding day, no longer being called Dad, your calls not being returned, a photograph from your ex-wife's wedding to her new husband, the children calling her new husband Dad, the cost of a career or license, public humiliation in a newspaper or broadcast, living alone and going further into your sin or adding other addictions—even facing jail time for child porn on your computer. Death has many faces, but death hurts everyone you love. Those you love are forced to deal with you now being a perpetrator of pain instead of their protector.

*The preceding is an excerpt from **Dr. Doug Weiss'** book Clean, used with permission from Thomas Nelson Inc. A leading expert in sexual addiction recovery, Dr. Weiss is a nationally known author, speaker and licensed psychologist. He is the executive director of Heart-to-Heart Counseling Center in Colorado Springs, Colo., and the president of the American association for Sex Addiction Therapy (AASAT). He is the author of more*

than 20 books on marriage, men's issues, addiction recovery and self-help, including The Final Freedom; Sex, God and Men; Intimacy; and his latest, Clean: A Proven Plan For Men Committed To Sexual Integrity.

For more information, visit [or](#) .

Asher Intrater: In the End, Jews and Christians Will Unite

There are amazing parallels between gospel events and Jewish history. Yeshua was crucified on Passover and raised on the same morning that the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea (John 20:1; Ex. 14:27). The Holy Spirit was poured out on the feast of Shavuot. The gift-language of tongues was lost to the church for many centuries, during the same time that Hebrew was lost as a spoken tongue to the Jewish people; then, starting about 120 years ago, they were both restored.

Another significant parallel is that the ascension of Yeshua to heavenly Jerusalem and the Israeli recapture of Jerusalem in 1967 happened on the same day. Yeshua taught His disciples about the kingdom of God for approximately 40 days after being resurrected on the third day after Passover (Acts 1:3). The recapture of Jerusalem also occurred on day 43 of the counting of the Omer. This year, that date fell on May 8.

The word for ascension in Hebrew is *aliyah*, which is the same as the songs of *ascent* (Ps. 120-134), the *ascension* of Yeshua, *immigration* to Israel, and *going up* to Jerusalem (Is. 2:3). Yeshua rose into heavenly Jerusalem to acquire spiritual

authority for the church (Eph. 1:19-23; 2:6; 4:10).

He will return to earthly Jerusalem to restore governmental authority for Israel (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 2:6; Acts 1:11; Is. 2).

In the end, heavenly and earthly Jerusalem will be united, the church with Israel, and God's name and authority will be one (Zech. 14:9). That's why Yeshua's ascent to heaven and the recapture of Jerusalem are united on the same day.

Asher Intrater, along with his wife, Betty, is the director of Revive Israel Ministries, an apostolic ministry team dedicated to revival in Israel. The Intraters are committed to world evangelism, the power of the Holy Spirit, personal integrity, the lordship of Yeshua, the unity of the Church and the restoration of the nation of Israel.

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

10 Things Men Need to Say to Their Wives

As men, most of us are past masters when it comes to saying the wrong thing to our wives. We too easily say words that are cruel, hurtful and outright dumb at times. It's a fast track to marriage conflict.

Mostly we trip up because we're thoughtless, stressed, scared about something or simply in a bad mood. Regardless, the damage is done. It turns out the best solution to saying the wrong thing is to say the right thing more often.

Being a thoughtful guy isn't that difficult once we get the hang of it. Saying the right thing is mostly a matter of practice. It really doesn't help that we "didn't mean it." What *does* help is saying the right thing.

Marriage communication 101: We can retrain ourselves one positive affirmation at a time. Positive communication is crucial to a marriage that works.

A great place to start is this list of the 10 things you need to say to your wife:

1. I love you. Sure, this one's a no-brainer, but we have it on good authority that some guys routinely forget to use their brains when it comes to relationships!

2. You are beautiful! You are so smart! I'm so proud of you! If all you take from this list is a commitment to boost the incidence of positive affirmation in your home, then we're good to go.

3. I've been thinking about what you said, and I see that I was wrong. Your wife needs to know that you are flexible and that you respect her viewpoint.

4. Let's sit down over coffee sometime this week. We need to talk about how I can be a better dad and improve family relationships. Dialogue about family dynamics is gold! She needs to know that you are on board and in the conversation.

5. I know our lives are busy, but I want to spend more time together as a family. Training children works best when mom and dad are together. She needs to hear that you plan on being there. Simply being a family-together-pays huge dividends.

6. There are some changes brewing at work. I'd like to include you in the decision-making process. Many women feel closed out of their husbands' decisions. Don't be that guy.

7. I'm having trouble making our budget work. Would you help

me go over the details? Contrast that with, “You spend too much on your hair!” or “Hand over your credit cards.” Or even, “I’ve crunched the numbers, and I need you to cut back.”

8. Honey, don’t worry about a thing. I’ve got dinner covered every day this week. Or anything that helps to shift your speech patterns from “Here’s what I want” to “Here’s something I can give.” Be a servant leader in the home.

9. Call me at work anytime. Let your wife know you’re accessible, that she is your priority and that her presence is always welcome.

10. I’ve been going over our finances, and I’ve noticed you don’t spend enough on clothes. Tongue in cheek? Yes. But this is about culturing an environment of encouragement. Let her know you love what she looks like and that you enjoy her sense of style. Tell her you want to buy her an outfit. Go with her to her favorite shop. That’s right—you are the man!

All Pro Dad is Family First’s innovative and unique program for every father. Their aim is to interlock the hearts of the fathers with their children and, as a by-product, the hearts of the children with their dads. At , dads in any stage of fatherhood can find helpful resources to aid in their parenting. Resources include: daily emails, blogs, Top 10 Lists, articles, printable tools, videos and eBooks. From fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram.**

The Pitfalls of Eating From Boredom

Recently, I received an email from a lady who wrote me the following:

“How do I make God’s Word work for me in the area of food addiction when I have been back and forth so many times? My heart just always wants food, as I always feel so empty and bored, and I know natural food does not meet that inward need. I have had so much inner healing and spiritual deliverance, etc., over the years, but this food thing is something that I just do not seem to be able to get me to change. But I am willing to trust God’s Word. As you said, it is God’s food.”

Here was my response to her, and I hope it helps you today, primarily if you eat from emptiness and boredom:

“Isn’t it interesting that you said your *heart* wants the food? That solidifies the lesson God taught me years ago—food addiction and compulsive overeating are primarily about issues of the heart, not the body. Only God has the ability to change the human heart. A diet will never fix that.

“Regarding the food addiction, you have to remember that it is a habit that you have learned over years. You have thoughts and behaviors associated with that. The only way you are going to be able to change it is to start renewing your mind to thoughts and actions that line up with God’s Word. That takes time, but you are well able to do it with God’s help. ‘God’s Word is food’ should help you renew your mind.

“Continue to humble yourself (admitting that you can’t do it alone and need God’s help), pray, seek His face, and obey the Holy Spirit’s guidance that instructs you on what to do to turn from that destructive way and strengthens you to carry it out.

“Again, you are remaking habits that have been learned over years, so changing them will require patience, diligence and awareness. Your brain is probably prompting you to eat whenever you feel any discomfort. That may be dozens of times a day! So, like rewriting a computer program, it’s going to take time to learn new ways of thinking and acting.

“You say that you feel empty and bored. First of all, you might feel empty, but you aren’t empty as a believer in Jesus Christ: ‘The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you’ (John 14:17).

“One of the works of the Holy Spirit is to comfort you and help to fulfill God’s will in your life. He doesn’t shout at you—His voice is still and small. It’s that quiet voice that says ‘Do this,’ ‘Call her’ or ‘You know you shouldn’t do that.’ It’s like an internal GPS system that steers you toward God’s highest good for you.

“Whenever you disobey that voice, it causes delay. Or it can even land you in situations God never intended for you to be in.

“So it’s very important that you learn to recognize that voice and to obey its guidance. I’d recommend praying that God give your spiritual listening ears a tune-up. In addition, you need to study the Bible so that you can recognize the Holy Spirit’s voice from others. The voice will always line up with God’s Word. It will always lead you toward doing what is best in the long run, not necessarily what is easy in the short term.

“Unfortunately, what gets us into trouble is always going for what’s easy to do right now, instead of what is best for us now and in the future. Most people live their lives like that: ‘Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it’ (Matt. 7:13).

“As for boredom, I’d take a look at a couple of things in your

life. Is your life in order, or is it in chaos? Boredom sometimes occurs as a means to avoid dealing with the *big* issues in your life. The truth is, you may have things you need to handle (which would eliminate the boredom), but you don't want to.

“For example, is your house in order? Do you have clutter? Voila! If you focus on dealing with that, you won't have time to be bored. How about your financial life? Are your bills paid? Do you need to learn about how to manage money better? Yet another thing that can occupy your time. Check out this article for insight on getting your house in order.

“Finally, do you know what spiritual gifts God has given you to use to benefit the kingdom? That's a big issue because God created you for a purpose. You have at least one gift God has given you to benefit the body of Christ. Are you using it?

“If not, here is how you can discover it, and after you take the test, the website has a document with ideas on how you can use your gift.

“I hope this helps!”

***Kimberly Taylor** is the author of The Weight Loss Scriptures and many other books. Once 240 pounds and a size 22, she can testify to God's goodness and healing power. Visit and receive more free health and weight-loss tips.*

Opposing Groups Stage Battle

of Wills at Western Wall

Intra-religious tensions were at an all time high at the Western Wall plaza on Friday morning as thousands of haredim (ultra-Orthodox) faced off with a group of a few dozen women, seeking to conduct their monthly Rosh Chodesh (the beginning of a Jewish month) prayer at the holy site.

The Women of the Wall, who have been holding a monthly egalitarian prayer service at the Western Wall for 24 years, were joined by Meretz MKs Tamar Zandberg and Michal Rozin, and Likud MK Miri Regev. Many of the women wear prayer shawls and perform religious rituals typically reserved for men under Orthodox Judaism. Haredi leaders have accused the women of violating "local custom" at the holy site.

Thousands of haredi women and seminary girls, called to the site by Shas spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef and bused in by haredi organizers, also arrived and took up positions inside the women's section, ready to hold a mass prayer and eclipse the Women of the Wall's presence in the women's section. Thousands of young haredi men also accompanied the women to the Wall, ready to stage a demonstration.

Hundreds of police officers summoned to the scene tried to physically divide the Women of the Wall and the haredi worshippers, but to no avail. As soon as the prayer began, shortly before 7 a.m., some of the haredi worshippers began beating police officers, throwing garbage and plastic chairs at police and at the Women of the Wall, hurling cups of coffee and other objects and spraying them with water.

Three haredi men were arrested. The police said that they would examine photos of the incident and possibly make further arrests. Several haredi men called the police officers present "Nazis."

Two police officers sustained light injuries and were treated

on site.

Upon completing the service, the Women of the Wall were escorted by heavy security out of the compound. Their bus was pelted with stones, witnesses said. Jerusalem Police Commander Yossi Parienti said it was likely that more arrests would be made following police analysis of video from the violent protest. "It pains me to see the Western Wall become a battlefield," Parienti said.

"It's a historic moment," said Shira Pruce, a spokeswoman for Women of the Wall. "The police did an amazing job protecting women and allowing them to pray freely at the Western Wall. This is justice."

In the past, police have arrested members of the Women of the Wall several times on charges of violating a 2003 High Court ruling barring them from wearing prayer shawls and reading from the Torah at the Western Wall. Last month, however, the Jerusalem District Court ruled that the High Court decision did not render their actions illegal, and therefore they should be permitted to pray unimpeded.

As a one-time concession, the Women of the Wall complied with a request made by Economy and Trade Minister Naftali Bennett to "be considerate of the feelings of others at the Wall" and agreed to forgo reading from the Torah this Rosh Chodesh.

The Western Wall rabbi, Shmuel Rabinowitz, who has in the past called the women's group a "provocation," tried to ease tensions at the holy place. "No one in Israel wants a disagreement at the Western Wall," Rabinowitz told Army Radio.

Israeli officials and lawmakers have been attempting to find a compromise that will satisfy both the women's group and the ultra-Orthodox. They have proposed establishing a new section at the Western Wall where men and women can pray together. The proposal, if implemented, would be seen as a victory for the more liberal streams of Judaism, which have been battling to

be granted recognition in Israel.

The Women of the Wall, in contrast, insist on their right to pray as they want in the existing women's section.

It's part of a wider culture clash that has triggered a backlash against Israel's ultra-Orthodox community.

The ultra-Orthodox make up about 10 percent of Israel's eight million citizens. For most of the last three decades, they have served in coalition governments securing vast budgets for religious schools and exemptions from mandatory military service for tens of thousands of young men in full-time religious studies.

For the original article, visit .

How to Stay Joined at the Hip and Heart With Your Teen

I've learned a lot from my wife, Susan. One thing she's taught me is how to maintain a "heart relationship" with each of our children—a deep, enduring relationship that beats strong through the transitional teen years. Here are a few lessons I've learned.

1. Don't take it personally. "Why doesn't she want to hold my hand?" "Why would she rather go to the mall than go bike riding with me?" "Why would he rather stay home with friends than go on vacation with us?" Those are just a few of the questions that swirled in my mind and flowed through my wounded heart as we ushered in the teen years. So I searched for answers, and Susan gave me one. "Don't take it

personally,” she said to me. “And, don’t try to force anything. Give them some space. They’ll come around.”

I knew she was right, but I didn’t take her advice at first, which led to my kids telling Susan that I was “smothering” them, and that made them not want to hang out with me as much. So I backed off a bit. The result? I found that they wanted to do a bit more with me. These 5 reasons why your teen is rebelling may help you to better understand your teen as well.

2. Always speak the truth. No matter what, my children know that I will always speak the truth to them. If they ask me a question, they will get the truth. They can trust what I say because of my track record over time. Consistent truth-telling is key to staying connected relationally. As you speak the truth into your child’s life, it’s also important for you to know how to tackle tough topics with your teen.

3. Always do what’s in their best interest. On many occasions, I have sat down with my children and advised them on someone or something they should avoid—a bad relationship, a questionable movie, an inappropriate party or someone or something they should embrace—a new opportunity, a good event or a faithful friend. When I do so, I often preface my comments with something like, “You know that I am saying this because I have your best interests at heart. And I want you to help you avoid pain and prosper in life.”

4. Broaden the boundaries. Creating boundaries for your kids is essential. But rules and consequences for breaking those rules should change based on age, trust, maturity and responsibility. As our children demonstrate responsibility by staying within the boundaries consistently and as they grow in age and maturity and earn our trust, the rules and consequences should become fewer and our children should have more freedom to make decisions. In other words, the boundaries of their “playing court” will become larger and larger.

5. Find one thing. During those teen years, I've learned that finding that "one thing" is important—one big deal. It's that one thing they like to do and will do with you. For Megan, it's shopping. For Emily, it's soup and salad at a nearby restaurant and then an old movie together. For Marky, it's hunting. For Hannah, it's jogging. For Grant, it's camping.

6. Embrace technology. Just like many other things in life, technology can be an enemy or an ally. It can be used for good or evil. With five children ages 17-23, Susan and I have found that technology gives us some common ground for communicating. For example, we each send a good-night text to our girls who are in college or working almost every night. Often, it's simply a "'Night, love you soooo much." Susan and I will have Facetime with our girls away at school. All of us use Instagram, so sharing pictures is often a nice way to catch up as well.

7. Get out of town. Plan something periodically with your child that takes you both away from familiar distractions and allows you to be one on one. Your teen may very well resist, but try to make it so appealing they can't refuse. Make sure it's not just something *you'd* like to do, but rather something they'd want to do too. Whether it's a shopping trip, fishing trip or just a fun road trip, give your teen the opportunity to breathe a little easier when they're with you. That means, don't lecture during your time together; just listen and hopefully laugh.

8. Ask. Periodically ask your child questions such as, "How am I doing as a dad?" and "What can I do better as a father?" Ask your child's mother the same questions, then take note of their suggestions. If you don't like their answer, make sure you don't react in a negative way; just thank them for their candidness.

9. Don't give up. As a parent, you must walk with your child through the good times and the difficult times. Encourage them

in the right way every opportunity you get because, as I've shared before, there are 4 wrong ways parents encourage their kids. Never give up on your child, no matter what your child does or says. Let them know you love them no matter what and that your relationship is all-important. And remember: Being a parent is a lifetime commitment.

What are other things we can do to stay joined at the hip and heart with our teens? Please share your comments.

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

Why Jerusalem Must Remain United

Aside from the religious and historical reasons, there are many security-related reasons why Jerusalem should remain the undivided capital of the Jewish state.

From the United States to the European Union to the developing countries, political leaders are calling for the division of Jerusalem. Such proclamations disregard the deep historical Jewish attachment to the city and the fact that true freedom of worship for all three monotheistic religions has only occurred under Jewish rule.

People who make such claims ignore the fact that Jerusalem has had a Jewish majority, not an Arab one, for over 100 years and that even a majority of the city's Arab population prefers Israeli rule to the Palestinian Authority's dictatorship.

Strangely enough, however, many of these same political leaders are not inherently hostile toward Israel. Indeed, the very same people who often claim that they respect Israel's security needs and state that they support Israel's right to exist as Jewish state also proclaim that Israel needs to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders and the division of Jerusalem. Yet what many fail to grasp is that the division of Jerusalem is contrary to the security and sovereignty of the state of Israel.

Anyone who has any doubt what a future Palestinian state will look like need look no further than Gaza. When Israel controlled Gaza, the coastal strip was full of beautiful Jewish agricultural communities with lovely greenhouses full of beautiful plants. When Israel withdrew from Gaza, she left the greenhouses in place, thinking they would assist the local Palestinians economically. The first thing the Palestinians did upon the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza was destroy them and convert them into rocket-launching sites. As a result, all Israeli communities that live close to Gaza have been under a constant barrage of terror attacks ever since.

A Jewish withdrawal of half of Jerusalem would make the situation in Sderot look like paradise. For starters, the Jews would be cut off from the Kotel—the holiest shrine in Judaism, as well as the Old City's numerous historic synagogues, such as the Hurva and four Sephardic synagogues. Jews would also be cut off from the Mount of Olives cemetery, where Menechem Begin and many prominent Jewish thinkers are buried, as well as the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the French Hill neighborhood.

Additionally, this places the great archaeological finds of the City of David Archaeological Park into the hands of people who don't even respect the preservation of Islamic history, much less the history of others; Jews may be barred from being able to visit the grave of Shimon Ha-Tzadik or King David.

If this were not enough, the entire nation of Israel would be within the reach of Palestinian terror organizations. The hills of Judea and Samaria right outside Jerusalem would be utilized to launch rockets at Ben-Gurion International Airport, Tel Aviv, Herzliya, Netanya and even Haifa. Thus, almost all of Israel, and not just the southern part, might live under constant rocket fire.

No Israeli citizen would be out of the reach of the Palestinian terror organizations should Israel withdraw to the 1967 borders and re-divide Jerusalem. For these reasons, it is pivotal that Jerusalem remain the undivided capital of the Jewish people.

For the original article, visit .

Get the Skinny on the ‘Anti-Fat Pastor’

Steve Reynolds has served as senior pastor of Capital Baptist Church in Annandale, Va., since 1982. But, he admits he’s always had an eating problem, especially when it comes to ice cream.

A few years ago, God spoke directly to his heart—and to his high blood pressure and diabetes—and told him to practice what he preaches and lose weight. After losing more than 100 pounds, he launched a weight-loss campaign in his church and community. He’s written two books, and he recently sat down with Charisma Media to share his story.

C: Steve, talk about both of your books, *Bod 4 God* and *Get Off the Couch*. Losing weight obviously is a subject that’s very

near and dear to you.

SR: So far, I've lost about 123 pounds. I was about 340 pounds with high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes. I was digging my grave with a knife and a fork, and my favorite thing was ice cream.

Basically, I'm sitting here as a pastor, and I view myself as a temple trasher. I knew my body was the temple of God, but I wasn't honoring God in that way. The whole time I'm up there preaching to honor God with your body, and I've got gravy dripping down my chin. I was trashing the temple.

It took a long time, but God finally got hold of my heart, and I started thinking, "What do I need to do about this?" God started speaking to me and asked me, "What do you tell other people to do?" I tell other people to look in the Bible. He said, "Why don't you follow your own advice?"

I decided to look up the word *body* in the Bible and do a study on it. I figured there has to be something great in there about it, and the word is in there 179 times. That was the basis of my first book, *Bod 4 God*. The four keys I discovered in those passages, I started applying them and lost the weight. When I got to 70 pounds of weight loss, I actually lost all three diseases. I'm prescription-free. I surrendered my fork to God, and God healed my body.

C: How did it feel to be disease-free?

SR: I was taking eight pills a day for high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes. Thankfully, I won't have that any longer. If that happens again, it's not going to be because I'm 340 pounds.

C: Other than God putting a bug in your ear about it, what was it that set you on the healthy path?

SR: It was kind of a slow process. I had those diseases for

quite a few years. My new book, *Get Off the Couch*, opens up with a story I have with my wife. When I found out I had diabetes, she asked me if I was going to change and work on my habits. I'm ashamed to say this. I looked her in the eye and said, "Listen, they gave me pills and I'm going to take them. That's what I'm going to do, and we don't need to talk about this anymore." Unfortunately, she knew I meant it.

I was far from God—not just a little bit off, but hard-hearted.

Really, it was just a combination of getting older and wanting to live. I'm looking forward to heaven, but I just don't want to get there yet. Mainly, I want to be here for my family. Back in 2006, when I started this journey, I had my grandchildren on my mind. I wanted to know them and have a relationship with them. I wanted to be around. Recently, we just had our first grandchild, Olivia, and it was a blessing to hold her in my arms.

C: With your congregation, did you ever stop and think that, *If I'm not doing what I'm preaching, why should they do it?*

SR: I hate to cast blame, but I will cast blame. I put the problem of obesity in the church on the pastors, and a large percentage of us are overweight. Here we are, struggling, but nobody wants to talk about it. Nobody is saying, "Would you please preach on obesity?" It's like it will just go away.

There was one study I did just for me. When I finally got to the point where people were seeing that I was losing weight, they wanted to know how I was doing it. That's when I did the "Bod for God" sermon series. I thought people would be offended, but I found that's not true. It's a matter of humility, transparency, and it's in the Bible. It's in the Word of God.

We've initiated a whole wellness ministry called Losing to Live. So far, we've lost over eight tons, or 16,000 pounds, in

our church. Hundreds of churches are doing this program. Churches are known for sickness, people asking for prayer. That's fine, and we need to do that. But why can't we be known as a church of wellness? We have what I call the greatest health book in the world, and that's the Bible. Why don't we teach the Bible and have people get well? I have a passion for helping churches to do that.

C: So, everything starts with you, the pastor?

SR: Yes, it does. There is tremendous influence with the pulpit. I'll never forget something Dr. Don Colbert said to me. He said, "People don't listen to their doctors, but they will listen to their pastor. I'm praying that God will use you to turn the hearts of the pastors."

There are very few pastors that will address this or talk about it. I told pastors, "What you eat in private, you wear in public." It's a matter of being humble and transparent. I had to get up there and say I was the biggest hypocrite in the world for most of my adult life. I still need to lose weight. The point is to step up and teach the Word of God. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 says, "Teaching them to obey all things, teaching them to observe all things." The big thing we've left out is the teachings about the body related to health. Overeating and under-exercising are all part of honoring God with our bodies.

C: How much more weight would you like to lose?

SR: I would like to lose about 20 to 25 more pounds. What I'm doing is what I call my lifestyle program. I enjoy it. Wherever it settles, I'm OK with it. I want to keep those diseases as far away from me as I can.

C: What is the biggest change in your diet?

SR: The biggest addiction was that I had a big bowl of ice cream every night. When I say every night, I mean every night.

I couldn't even get to sleep without having it. Moving away from that and replacing it with a healthy yogurt or something similar is best. Try to find something of a similar texture to replace your addiction. A lot of times that will meet the need in your life.

For me, it was about volume. Most people are emotional eaters; I am not. I was just a pure glutton. It was all about volume. After doing this ministry for quite a few years, I've seen people eat to soothe themselves, to comfort themselves. It's their friend and companion. Three cheeseburgers taste better than one, you know? It's all about portion control. Some foods are bad, and some are good, but just cut back the portions.

C: What kind of feedback have you gotten from your books?

SR: It's been tremendous. It's a lifestyle process. Transformation takes time. The books are designed to where you can take 12 weeks to a better body. You read until the end of each chapter, and we have something called the Victory Guide. That's where you personalize and incorporate it into your life. When you use those techniques, it's very successful.

It's also been a great tool for evangelism. I found that people, if there's something that will work, they will come. It connects with the culture. People come to find out what to do about bread (what they eat), and they find the Bread of Life, which is Jesus.

Steve Reynolds, the "anti-fat pastor," has served as senior pastor of Capital Baptist Church in Annandale, Va., since 1982. He launched a weight-loss campaign in his church and community after he lost more than 100 pounds. His story has been featured in local, national and international media, including *Fox News*, *CNN*, the *Washington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

Click here for an excerpt from Steve's book Get Off the Couch.

A Man's Guide to Mother's Day

If you're like me, you've probably never done much advance planning for Mother's Day. Yet motherhood is one of the highest callings any woman can have. What an opportunity to change the world for Christ! In this article, I want to show you how to make this the best Mother's Day ever.

This year, why not do something for all the moms in your life? That might include your wife, mother, mother-in-law, married daughters, daughters-in-law, grandmothers and granddaughters.

Forethought: The Key Ingredient

In a moment, we'll talk about a lot of specific ideas. But first, there's one key ingredient that supersedes all others in making a big impression on Mother's Day: forethought. The big idea for Mother's Day is: *Anything counts if it's not last minute.*

For years, I was a last-minute guy. I'm one of those guys who would work the picked-over Hallmark card racks on Saturday night, after dark at the 24/7 drugstore. I'd be one of those guys standing in line at the grocery store florist department on Sunday morning to find the best of the "Is this all that's left?" corsages. I'd think, *Oh, that would be a good idea*, when I'd see the Mother's Day chocolates in the checkout line. (Boy, am I grateful for those impulse-purchase displays!)

So what's wrong with that? "Last minute" says "not that important." She will probably never say that—maybe never even think it exactly that way. But "last minute" says, "I didn't

care enough to give any forethought.”

On the other hand, when we think ahead, it shows up in the details. Forethought gives your imagination time to work. “Little things” are what make moms feel honored. They appreciate something planned in advance.

Now, some ideas ...

The Letter

Idea: Each year, write one of your moms a special letter. Start with your wife. Next year write to your own mom if she's living. A couple of weeks out, take a sheet of paper and write across the top, “Why I Love and Appreciate _____.” Let it incubate.

Every day or two, write down something you especially love or appreciate. Your goal will be to write a two-page letter one week before Mother's Day with specific stories that illustrate each quality you mention. For example, if you wrote, “I really appreciate your kindness,” you would also want to tell her why. Maybe you would write, “It touches my heart to see the way you treated those children with such tenderness when we visited the hospital the other day.”

The Dinner

Idea: Invite all family members to a special Mother's Day dinner or brunch. Let the restaurant cook! If that won't work, then you and the children cook. If you don't have a big family, consider getting other families involved. Consider a cookout with an afternoon of games.

The Purchases

You have several items you must buy and several more to consider. The must-buy items are a card and flowers or a corsage. Consider these items the minimums. If you are feeling financially expansive, go for a gift. Even a small gift like

chocolates can be a big hit. There are some other ideas below.

Set Up a Planning Calendar and Checklist

Don't just react to Mother's Day. Make it happen. Here's a schedule to use and adapt. Make it the foundation for your own Mother's Day traditions.

Two Weeks Out

- Start collecting thoughts for "The Letter." Prepare the invitation list (children, relatives, others) to invite to "The Dinner" that focuses on your wife first, then the other moms.
- Order any online or catalog gifts or gift certificates. Give a copy of this article to all the men in your church. If you are a pastor or worship leader, incorporate ideas from this article into your annual traditions.
- Invite guests to your Mother's Day dinner or brunch so they have plenty of time to mark their calendars—also shows forethought!
- Be sure to make progress on "The Letter."
- Other _____
- Other _____

One Week Out

- Sit down with your accumulated notes and write "The Letter."
- Purchase Mother's Day cards. Mail all out-of-town cards and "The Letter."
- Make a dinner or brunch reservation at her favorite place.
- Order flowers and corsages.
- Purchase chocolate, gifts or local gift certificates.
- Prepare homemade gift certificates (for chores, dinner out, girls' night out). Make a list of everyone to call or visit on Mother's Day.

- Other _____
- Other _____

The Day Before

- Have flowers delivered “The Day Before” to prove forethought!
- Other _____
- Other _____

The Big Day

- Start with a card to your wife (with a long, mushy note).
- Give “The Letter” to your wife. (Kind words in private.)
- Give her a corsage to wear to church, if applicable.
- Go to your Mother’s Day brunch or dinner. Present gifts or gift certificates (purchased or homemade). (Kind words in public.)
- Make phone calls to out-of-town moms.
- Visit local moms.

Immediate Family Situations

- ***We have no kids.*** Focus on your own mothers and grandmothers. Orchestrate “The Dinner.” Be servants.
- ***We are expecting.*** Dad-to-be, this is your big chance. You can start well by making a “Pre-Delivery Mom” card. In fact, make two if you don’t know the gender—one for a boy and one for a girl. Tell her to keep whichever one turns out to be right!
- ***We have young children.*** A woman’s self-esteem is usually at its lowest point when she has young children. It’s hard to stay pretty, keep a clean house and get everything done. Earn points by giving this mom homemade gift certificates, such as “Good for one deep house cleaning” or “Good for one night out while I baby-sit.” Have the kids draw Mother’s Day cards. Teach them to honor Mom each year on her special day. Assign your kids

to look on Google and print the history of Mother's Day. (America's first Mother's Day was May 10, 1908—a church service to honor the mother of Anna Jarvis of West Virginia, a spinster who really missed her deceased mom. In 1914, Congress passed a resolution, and President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed Mother's Day an official national holiday.)

- ***We have teenagers.*** I'll pray for you. Seriously, though, many teens worship their moms. Include them by letting each teen add to "The Letter." Show them the importance of building Mother's Day into their value system.
- ***We have college students.*** Surprise mom by flying the kids home. Or arrange to go there. Give students a heads-up one week out so they can get a card in the mail. Call the day before and remind them to give her a call.
- ***Our children are grown.*** Hopefully, by now they understand the significance of Mother's Day. Include them in "The Dinner." Encourage them to write their own "Letter." Give them a copy of this article.
- ***Our children have children.*** "The Dinner" is getting bigger! If you are in town, get together. If your grandchildren are out of town, Mother's Day brings great weather nearly everywhere. Pack your bags and go. Respect the traditions your children want to set up. This article may help them too. Remember: Anything counts if it's not last minute. Forethought is the key to showing that you really care. Last-minute loses.

Application

Why not share this article with the men in your church and agree to implement it together? Learn from one another and share ideas. After Mother's Day, get together and talk about how things turned out. End with a time of prayer for the mothers in your life, asking for God's blessing during the next year.

Note from Patrick Morley: *It's been a few years since we published this article. With Mother's Day just around the corner, I decided to give it a fresh look. May God richly bless all the mothers in your life!*

Patrick Morley is founder and CEO of Man in the Mirror. After building one of Florida's 100 largest privately held companies, in 1991, he founded Man in the Mirror, a non-profit organization to help men find meaning and purpose in life. Dr. Morley is the bestselling author of *The Man in the Mirror*, *No Man Left Behind*, *Dad in the Mirror*, and *A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines*.

Why You Shouldn't Forget Your Body Is a Temple

Years ago, a friend borrowed my small Ford Ranger pickup truck. When he brought it back, the bed was sagging.

"I went to a marble show at the convention center, and they gave me lots of free samples," he said. But the weight was too much for my pickup. It messed up the shocks and cost me some money to replace them.

Millions of people do to their bodies what my friend did to my truck. They load up their bodies with extra weight, more than their frames were designed to carry. Then they wonder why their knees and hips are wearing out and they're developing arthritis, ankle problems, heel spurs, lower back pain, bunions, degenerated disks and more. That's their body's way of saying, "Quit putting so much weight on me!"

Why can't Americans lose weight and keep it off? There are

some basic reasons.

Bad foods are a habit. Bad foods are convenient. Bad foods are a vicious cycle. Hormones make bad foods look good. Bad foods give comfort.

Starchy and sugary foods raise serotonin, one of the brain's feel-good chemicals. Chocolate raises dopamine levels, another feel-good chemical. Generally, when people are depressed, anxious or just low in serotonin or dopamine, they reach for a food that pumps up these feel-good chemicals.

Food Cravings

The main reason many Americans are obese is simply gluttony, and Christians are no exception. Christians often think that because they don't smoke, drink or party, they can eat all they want! Then they reap what they sow in obesity, heart disease, cancer, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, reflux disease, sleep apnea and loss of quality of life.

Webster's dictionary defines *gluttony* as "excess in eating and drinking." The Bible equates it with drunkenness: "Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags" (Prov. 23:20–21, NIV).

The word *glutton* in this passage is defined as "ravenous eater of meat." This describes a lot of men in particular. If you want to experience the harsh reality of some people's lack of restraint, simply go to a buffet and watch how they load up their plates. Many will eat as if they've never seen food before. Food is not at the root of the overeating issue; it actually goes much deeper than that.

The Mind-Body-Spirit Connection

Many times people who struggle with a weight problem

experience self-loathing, loneliness, low self-esteem, depression, guilt and shame—especially the latter two. I have treated numerous patients with weight problems, and almost always the root cause is emotional. The moment they mess up, they feel guilty and ashamed, and they feel like quitting. In my medical office, we treat the patient's body, mind (emotions) and spirit. We give them Scriptures to confess daily aloud and meditate upon so that they begin to change their mindset. The Word gives them hope.

I take them through forgiveness therapy, which enables them to forgive themselves and others. This breaks the vicious cycle of negative feelings and emotions. Then we address the physical by making lifestyle changes—eating living foods and exercising.

Our bodies are precious and were created as a dwelling place for their Creator. Start practicing temperance, moderation, portion control and self-restraint when it comes to food. Then, when you make positive changes to your diet, it will have a real and lasting effect on your health.

The preceding is an excerpt from The Seven Pillars of Health by Don Colbert, M.D. The book can be purchased at , or .