

Abbas ' Terrorist-Release Demand Raises Red Flag

Ma'an News Agency has reported that the Palestinians claim zero progress was made toward restarting peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority when Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas met U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in Turkey.

This is because the Istanbul meeting did not address the Palestinians' two main preconditions for restarting negotiations with Israel: halting construction of Jewish communities within Judea and Samaria and, even more disturbingly, the release of 4,500 Palestinian security prisoners held within Israeli jails.

According to an article on Israel's Homeland Security Home (IHSH), a website whose main focus is Israeli security, the Israeli Prison Service says that Abbas insists on the release of all Palestinian security prisoners, regardless of the fact that 50 percent of them have blood on their hands.

In fact, according to the IHSH, "Among the security prisoners one finds senior members of Palestinian terrorist organizations, terrorists who were on their way to a suicide mission and were apprehended by the defense forces; dispatchers; attack planners; those responsible for preparing the explosives, etc."

Nevertheless, Abbas has stated there will be no peace with Israel until these very terrorists are released. This demand in itself should be a red flag that Abbas is no true partner for peace.

Any careful examination of the biographies of various Palestinian terrorists serving time in Israeli prisons whom Abbas has personally praised should cause one to ponder

whether Abbas is any better than his Hamas adversaries. For example, one of the Palestinian prisoners Abbas has praised is Marwan Barghouti, who is serving five life sentences for orchestrating suicide bombings against innocent civilians.

Some of the terror attacks for which Barghouti was directly responsible were the murder of a Greek Orthodox monk en route to Ma'ale Adumim; the slaughter of six Israelis celebrating a bar mitzvah in Hadera; a shooting spree on Jaffa Street in Jerusalem that resulted in the murder of two Israelis; the killing of an Israeli in a coffee factory in Jerusalem; the suicide bombing perpetrated by Darine Abu Aisha at the Maccabim checkpoint; a shooting spree at a Tel Aviv seafood restaurant that led to three Israeli deaths; and more.

Another Palestinian prisoner whom Abbas has praised is Abbas Al-Sayyid, who is serving 35 life sentences plus 150 years for planning suicide bombings. According to the Investigative Project on Terrorism, Al-Sayyid is responsible for the Passover Massacre, "a 2002 bombing of Netanya's Park Hotel that killed more than 30, mostly elderly Israelis attending a Seder. Al-Sayed had planned the Park Hotel bombing down to the minutest details ... helping bomber Abdel-Basset Odeh check his explosives, write a will, and make his 'martyrdom' video." Al-Sayyid also planned another suicide bombing in 2001, which killed five and wounded 100 others.

These are merely two of the many examples of Palestinian terrorists who have been honored by Mahmoud Abbas, who routinely not only praises Palestinian terrorists sitting in Israeli prisons, but also deceased Palestinian terrorists, the families of suicide bombers and recently released Palestinian terrorists.

For example, Samer Issawi, a Palestinian hunger-striker who is going to be released, was imprisoned for violating the terms of his release as part of the Shalit prisoner swap deal. According to the Israeli Prison Service, Issawi was sentenced

to 26 years for attempted murder, belonging to a terrorist organization and possessing weapons illegally.

Yet despite all of these facts, Abbas called out to the international community to assist all of the Palestinian hunger-strikers, including Issawi, asserting that their hunger strikes were “an honorable example of our people’s struggle for freedom and independence.” One must ponder, is it possible to strike a peace deal with people who view terrorists in such a manner?

For the original article, visit .

Allow God to Close the Gaps in Your Life

All of us have those moments we wish we could relive or those seasons we wish we could redo.

Every man feels within himself a wish factor. We “wish” we would’ve learned the things we know now years ago when we “really” needed this wisdom. We “wish” we hadn’t made some of the mistakes we made in our past. We “wish” we could be doing “then” the things we’re finally getting around to “now.” There’s a wish factor in every man.

I don’t know a man who doesn’t feel, at least on a minor scale, a sense of a gap of time he wishes he could experience all over again.

Those gaps look different for all of us. Some of us missed out on jumping on a career opportunity or a career risk that, in hindsight, would’ve propelled us exactly where God was wanting

us to go.

Some of us made some huge mistakes, whether intentionally or lackadaisically, that now, with a few more years of maturation, we look back on and feel shame or sometimes even guilt, wishing we could get that back. Many men regret not listening to another wise person's advice when we had the choice, or we regret having followed an example that proved troublesome in our lives. Gaps are everywhere!

I recently met with one of the brothers I'm currently discipling. He's 28, and he's a great guy. I enjoyed being in a position to speak into the growth I've seen him experience in the past year, and I'm so proud of him.

Yet as a 28-year-old, he couldn't help but reflect on the fact that he had the chances to do at age 23 what he's just now getting around to. He didn't follow some of the wisdom he'd been given, and I just sensed a little remorse on his part.

So then I gave him my story.

I told him that seven years ago, at 28, I "ventured" into buying some property. I had lofty visions of owning a bunch of real estate, renting it out and building up a nest egg for the next generation. My aspirations were noble. I had a ton of money and nowhere to invest it ... at least so I thought.

With these properties, it wasn't about making a lot of money. But I figured it'd be something my family would have for years. Maybe it would even pay for my future children's education.

Problem is, I didn't do my research. I trusted people instead of reading through contracts. I assumed things would work out and had to suffer the consequences of those properties never turning an investment.

As my grandmother said during that season, "I guess you had to

buy your lesson." I told this young brother that the mistakes of having to start over as a man financially (I lost my shirt and maybe my shoes too), being technically "at risk" to provide for a family, and wrestling with the guilt of having made so colossal an error rode me to no end. There were some prayer sessions over this drenched in tears. Bad days.

This had been going on for years. Guilt. Shame. Regret. The gaps ... would I ever close them? I couldn't handle it anymore. So I met with a man who was discipling me—an older, wiser guy. And in tears, I shared with him my great shame. He gave me some advice I'd like to leave with you.

He said, "Ricky, it sounds like you need to forgive yourself. We all make mistakes. You made yours. Now move on from it." And then he said what I didn't think was possible. He looked at me and said, "This is fixable. It'll take time. But it's fixable."

He then began to tell me what all that looks like and simply licensed me to believe that my mistakes didn't signal the end of the world.

But then I came up with more excuses to feel miserable. I questioned how I was going to be able to provide well.

I mean, I technically can't buy a house for a while, even with a decent salary and savings, because of the mistakes of my past. And what was I, as a single man, going to be able to offer a God-fearing woman?

Then he looked at me and said, "Well, the woman who falls in love with you is not going fall in love with you for those reasons anyways. Plus, I wouldn't even share that with a woman unless you're pretty darn sure you're going to get on one knee."

What encouraging words. I barely believed him when he was saying them, yet I was hanging on to every word. Incidentally,

when I shared the same story with who was to be my future bride a year or so later, I can't tell you the serendipity I enjoyed when she looked at me after 30 minutes of me "dumping" on her and simply responded, "That's okay, babe." And that was the end of the conversation. Relief. But that's another story for another time.

Essentially, what that wise man said to me that day was, "God's bigger than your gap."

In a passage in the book of Joel, the prophet forecasts the Lord's coming and His restoration of His people. It's a scene full of evidence of God's gracious sovereignty, in that God acknowledges that it's us who's made the mistakes through our sin.

We caused it. We created the gaps. Yet He's graciously pursued us amidst our sin. And ultimately, as Joel 2:24-27 exclaims, it's God who'll eventually reconcile all things and all people to Himself.

The language here is picturesque. Israel sinned. Israel's sin caused consequences. People are hungry. Armies have destroyed them. Everything is decimated. But ultimately God will fix it. He'll come through. He'll restore and replenish. Translation: *He'll close the gaps.*

I love the last few words of the passage: "We'll never be put to shame again." Even though it's a shame we ourselves caused, God will take it away. That's called gracious sovereignty.

You who struggle with the remorse of the gaps you've caused in your life, listen. You may be 40, battling guilt that you could've been where you are now at 30. You may have a degree you're just now getting around to because you wasted your 20s.

You may be just now getting around to desiring the courtship of a godly woman instead of the knuckleheads you're used to. You may just now be thinking it's time to start leading your

wife and kids devotionally and consistently. You may just now be truly getting involved in your church or stretching yourself to make disciples. You may be just now starting to figure out who you are vocationally and what you're good at and want to do 40 hours every week.

Hear the words of Scripture: God will restore. He'll redeem the time you think you lost. He'll use all of the so-called "wasted time" and redeem it to His glory. But you have to step up and trust Him to do so.

For what it's worth, I just saw God do that in the heart of a 28-year-old.

Don't let the gaps slow you down. Don't let shame and remorse define you. You're a son of the great King. And He knows how to close the gaps. Trust Him to do just that in your life.

"The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you ... And my people shall never again be put to shame." (Joel 2:24-27, ESV)

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For the original article, visit .

How to Discern (and Deal With) a Fool in Your Midst

The Bible speaks of four different types of fools in the book of Proverbs, according to the Jewish sages. One of these fools is actually considered a positive term. Marvin Wilson, author of *Our Father Abraham*, has written incisively about the various meanings for the word *fool*:

“In Biblical wisdom literature, the pupils of the sages and mentors are the unwise, often termed ‘fools’ (Prov. 1:7) or ‘simple one’ (1:22). In wisdom literature, the different levels of fools—both young and old—are the raw material on which the sages had to work, and they represent the varying degrees of rawness. Perhaps as much as anything else, the term *fool* is descriptive of an attitude, bent of mind, or direction in life, which needs correcting. The various Hebrew words for *fool* occur more than a hundred times in the book of Proverbs.”

The reference to someone being a fool was not necessarily a negative term, in other words.

A **simple fool**, or *peti*, is a person who makes mistakes but quickly rights them and is restored to fellowship with God and with others. King David was a simple fool—one who made mistakes but kept a repentant heart toward God. This is why God did not turn away from him for his many sins.

The **hardened fool**, *kesil* and *ewil*, is someone who makes mistakes but never learns from them and will not listen to others. Such people can expect God’s reproof to continue and are said to “eat the fruit of their own way” (Prov. 1:31). The hardened fool “returns to his own vomit.” King Saul was a hardened fool, one who made mistakes and continued in them even after he realized he was wrong.

We're going to err in our ways. The question is, once we know we've made a mistake before God, do we make the necessary adjustments that will allow Him to intervene on our behalf? And will we avoid the same course of action in the future? God says that if we do, He will pour out His Spirit on us (see Prov. 1:23). He will make known His words to us.

The third level of fool mentioned in Proverbs is the **mocking fool**, or *letz*. The mocking fool mocks the things of God. This word means "scoffer" or "scorner." When you encounter cynical people who disregard the things of God, you know these people are mocking fools.

The fourth level of fool is the **God-denying fool**, or *nabal*. This term relates to the morally wicked person who ignores the disgrace he brings on his family and who despises holiness (see Prov. 17:21). This person says, "There is no God." By failing to acknowledge God for who He is, the *nabal* declares himself to be a God-denying fool.

I have found it helpful to try to understand if people are teachable. Are they simple fools—those who make mistakes but seek to learn from them? I can work with those people.

But if I sense I am working with a hardened fool, I know I should not spend much time on that person. Jesus did not spend much time trying to convince the rich young ruler. He presented truth and then let the young man make his decision. Some people must get broken before they can become simple fools. Sometimes it is simply better to let Satan chew on people until the ground is fertile enough to present truth to them.

Ask God to make you a simple fool who learns from your mistakes and gains wisdom as a result.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline" (Prov. 1:7).

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Does God Care About Your Weight?

“Does God really care about our weight?”

A young woman emailed me that question recently after reading about my Christian weight loss success story. I gave her the short answer, but it inspired me to look deeper at the subject.

In this article, I want to share my answer to that question, as well as some other controversial questions surrounding weight loss programs for Christians, and then my thoughts on the ideal Christian weight-loss program.

The questions I will answer include:

- Does God really care about our weight?
- Can I “shame and guilt” my way into changing?
- If I fall short in my weight loss plan, do I disappoint God?
- What is the best Christian weight loss approach?
- Can I eliminate the desire for quick fixes?

So let's get started with the questions.

1. Weight doesn't matter. No, God does not care what you weigh. The Bible says man looks on the outside but God looks on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7). God loves you just as much at a size 28 as at a size 8. Nothing you do can make Him love you more than He does now.

What *does* God care about? Our bodies are temples of the Holy

Spirit. We are called to glorify God in body and spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In John 15:8, Jesus tells us how we glorify God: "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

The fruit Jesus is talking about is the fruit of the Spirit. We are to bear *much* love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (see Gal. 5:22-23).

Any thoughts or behavior in your life that have become weeds hindering the fruit that you bear concern God. In my case, compulsive overeating was that behavior—one that I was using to hide myself from emotional pain. My excess weight was just an outward manifestation of what was going on in my heart.

So you see, the real issue is not about size but stewardship. God can teach you how to become a good steward of your body and remove the hindrances that keep you from bearing fruit. Humble yourself and pray the same prayer that King David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting."

Caring for your body requires wisdom and balance. Only with God's help can you gain both. As I learned to build my health through following godly wisdom in my eating behavior and through disciplining my body with regular exercise, my weight took care of itself.

I'll discuss this point more later in the article.

2. Can I "shame and guilt" myself into changing? I've read many articles about weight loss for Christians, and some seem to endorse the "shame your way to change" approach. But that approach does not work. Well, not for long!

Why? Because shame and guilt ignore the grace of God. Trying to use shame as a motivator ultimately leads to frustration, hopelessness, discouragement and depression.

But meditating on the grace of God, His goodness, and His love for you constantly leads to a renewed heart and inspires repentance (a change of heart and mind). You acknowledge that God personally formed every part of your body skillfully and wonderfully, and you want to honor Him by taking care of it.

A change in daily behavior is evidence of true repentance.

3. If I fall short in my weight loss plan, do I disappoint God? The other issue I've seen is Christians thinking they are disappointing God by falling short in their weight-loss plan. But this, too, is an error in thinking. Disappointment comes about when you expect something of a person and are surprised when they don't come through. But God already knows everything about you. He knows about your mistakes before you make them! So how can you ever disappoint Him? Not only that, but He already has a plan in place to help you recover!

Secondly, there is really no way that you can fall short if you use each mistake as a building block, not a stumbling block. What can you learn from the mistake that can propel you forward?

God is ever patient in teaching you the right way and leading you in the way you should go. Remember Philippians 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." With that in mind, resolve to never give up on yourself. Hold fast to your confidence.

4. What is the best Christian weight-loss approach? Scripture says the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. So any thoughts or behaviors that are contrary to God's word, that take away your joy and that disrupt your peace concern God. All of these hinder your ability to fulfill

the purpose for which God created you.

Remember how Jesus said that His food was to do the will of God? As His disciples, it is our mission as well.

Let me cover what should be different in how a Christian approaches weight loss. The differences arise from:

- Our identity
- Our reason
- Our methods

Our Identity

We are disciples of Jesus Christ, and our aim is to walk as He walked. In Revelation 1:5-6, we are told that Jesus, through His sacrifice, has made us kings and priests to God. In Romans 5:17, Scripture says we who have received the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through Jesus.

In contrast, I remember my past struggle with emotional eating issues. I felt out of control with certain foods, feeling they controlled me rather than me reigning over them! And I felt powerless to change the other habits that led to my weight gain.

It was only by assuming my true identity in Christ that I gained victory. When I had a severe chest pain at 240 pounds and God whispered to me, "It is not supposed to be this way," then I chose to believe Him. I had to open myself up to His leading in the way it was supposed to be.

In the process, I admitted my weakness; I asked God for help in prayer daily and walked out the guidance He gave me daily in rooting out the habits that were destroying my health.

I also learned to appreciate my body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. It was not an overnight change, but it certainly is a lasting one!

Our Reason

Jesus said in John 4:34, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work." As Christians, that is our mandate as well. However, when I was obese and really examined my thoughts, I was shocked to discover how much of them centered around food, not on doing my Father's will. My main source of joy was thinking about what I was going to eat and when.

But an effective Christian weight-loss program teaches us to restore a right relationship with food. God created food for us to enjoy, to give us energy and to provide the raw materials for our bodies to repair and rebuild themselves. But food was never meant to control our lives.

Hebrews 12:1 urges all of us, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

Our Methods

An ideal weight-loss program for Christians would use biblical principles to guide us into reaching our best weight.

When I created Take Back Your Temple, one of the guiding Scriptures was this one from Proverbs 23:1-3:

"When you sit down to eat with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; and put a knife to your throat, if you are a man given to appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food."

Two principles are given regarding eating: eating with wisdom and eating with self control.

Eating With Wisdom

You are the ruler in this case, since most of the time you are serving food to yourself. So the guidance is to consider your

food carefully—not be anxious over it, not worry over it, but do consider it.

One thing to consider first is what a privilege it is to have food to eat at all. As you know, many people in the world do not have food, so it's not a small thing that you have the ability to get food. That's something to be grateful for.

With being able to get food comes responsibility to ensure that the food you eat helps you and doesn't hurt you. Scripture says that some food is deceptive. Many modern processed foods (those found in a bag, box or can) impair your body's natural hunger/fullness signals, which can lead to out-of-control cravings and overeating. Remember the potato chip slogan, "Bet you can't eat just one"? It is true! That statement applies to many junk foods, and the manufacturers like it that way. The more you eat, the more money for them.

So make it your business to learn about the foods you tend to eat and the effect they have on your body. I advise you to pay at least as much attention to what you put into your body as what you put on it.

When you shift your focus from losing weight to building health, your body will naturally reach the weight that is best for you.

Eating With Self-Control

The bible puts it bluntly: "Put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite." One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is self-control. You already have it, but like any muscle, it must be exercised to grow stronger.

One aspect of self-control is to learn to eat when your body is hungry. If you have a weight problem, chances are you have disconnected from your body's natural hunger signals.

Proverbs 23:21 says, "For the drunkard and the glutton will

come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.” The implication here is that when you practice gluttony (overeating), you become drowsy, and when you are drowsy, your judgment is impaired.

To hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, your mind must be alert and sharp. But if you are going through life with brain fog (as I was when I overindulged regularly with food), then you are more likely to make decisions that you will regret later.

Discipline Your Body

I believe that increasing your physical strength enhances your mental and emotional strength. In 1 Corinthians 9:27, the apostle Paul says, “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

A regular exercise program shows you vividly that your body is your servant, not your master. Remember that as you go about the work God has called you to: Your spirit does not get tired, but your mind and body can.

So you want to do everything you can to improve your physical strength, endurance, and flexibility so that your physical condition can better respond to spiritual demands.

Eliminate Quick Fixes

I don’t believe it is possible to eliminate the *desire* for a quick fix. I think that is part of our sin/flesh nature. It’s like little children on a road trip to Disney World continually asking their parents, “Are we there yet?” When little children want something good, they don’t want to wait to get it. They want it now!

But as mature believers, we recognize the truth of the Scripture that says that we inherit God’s promises through faith and patience (Heb. 6:12). Patience is part of the fruit

of the spirit, and as I mentioned previously with self-control, it must be exercised to grow (Gal. 5:22).

With that being said, you'll never get to "Disney World" as long as you stay at home. You have to get on the right road to it. Then once you are on the road, you can enjoy the trip by reminding yourself that you will get there in time—encourage yourself continually. You can also amuse yourself by making your goal a game daily. For example, count how many healthy choices you make each day, and every day try to match or beat your previous score.

Finally, enjoy the scenery along the way. Notice yourself getting stronger, fitter, faster than you were before. Notice better muscle tone. Notice less shortness of breath. All of these will ensure you will not only enjoy your ideal size when you get it, but enjoy yourself all the way to it.

I hope this article clearly provides my stand on some controversial Christian weight loss questions. And if weight is an issue for you, ask God to show you wisdom in how to handle it.

I am not special—the victory He gave to me, He can give to you!

Kimberly Taylor *is a certified wellness coach and author of the ebook Take Back Your Temple.*

Despite Haters, Golf Champ Bubba Watson Continues

Tweeting About God

There's something different about Bubba Watson.

And he doesn't care if you know it.

The winner of the 2012 Masters golf championship realizes he's not like most famous athletes.

In fact, he welcomes it.

"People always ask 'Why is Bubba different?'" said Watson during a phone interview with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. "They're just trying to figure it out."

Watson's identity is not wrapped up in his freakishly long drives from his lanky 6-foot-3, 180-pound left-handed swing – he leads the Tour with a 315-yard average.

Rather, take one look at his Twitter profile and you may figure out what's different about Watson.

@bubbawatson: Christian. Husband. Daddy. Pro Golfer. Owner of General Lee 1.

And pay close attention to the order.

Watson is an outspoken Christian golfer and he uses his Twitter account—along with his platform as one of the PGA Tour's magnetic personalities—to share about his faith in Christ.

"For me, it's just showing the Light," the 34-year-old said. "There's people who want to put down Christians. I try to tell them Jesus loves you. It's just a way to be strong in my faith."

Twitter Outreach

Last April, just before teeing off on the final round of the

Masters, Watson took advantage of his social media platform to Tweet out two Bible verses on Sunday morning.

He followed that up talking about his faith, his relationship with God, Tweeting out more verses and the impact of Christian artists on his iPod.

Some started complaining about his 140-character witnessing tactics, but Watson's response was simple: Feel free to unfollow, but the talk about God wasn't going away.

Some 100 people quit following him and in true Bubba style, he reached out and wished them well with goodbye notes.

This past month more Christian haters have tried to derail Watson's testimony—or as he mildly puts it, "write bad stuff."

But Watson doesn't take offense, even when it's the sole intent.

When someone tells him "Your God Tweets are lame," Watson responds with, "I will pray for u and ur family."

Among the 42,000-plus messages he's sent into the Twittersphere, he's sure to spread the Gospel message: *God made everything & saved us from our sins & gives us hope and gives us eternal life! #Godisgood*

Sometimes he'll Tweet out some of his favorite verses: *"Hebrews 13:6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?"*

Or he'll use his PGA platform—like the day after taking the lead with a headline-grabbing 10-under-par 62 at last month's Cadillac Championship—to bring God into the mainstream conversation.

Watson's Tweet before his third round: *The most important thing in my life? Answer after I golf 18 holes with @JustinRose99. #Godisgood*

Later that day: *Most important things in my life- 1. God 2. Wife 3. Family 4. Helping others 5. Golf*

“Lecrae said it the best,” Watson said of the Christian rapper he listens to on his iPod. “He doesn’t want to be a celebrity. He doesn’t want to be a superstar. He just wants to be the middle man for you to see God through him.”

‘Bubba Golf’

As golf’s official major season bloomed this week, and Watson winning a major for the first time—only his fourth PGA Tour career victory—Watson seemed like a long shot. His best finish at Augusta National has been a tie for 20th in 2008.

But winning is no longer everything for Watson. There was a time in his life where drives slicing into the thick, 5-inch stuff or birdie putts rimming out would get the best of him and his blood pressure.

Watson will tell you, Angry Bubba was not a good look. Unbecoming, for sure.

“I was so wrapped up in ‘Why am I not winning?’” Watson said. “It created frustrations in my head and in my life.”

Things got so heated on the golf course, Ted Scott, his caddie since 2006, finally gave him an ultimatum.

“My caddie finally stepped up and said, ‘You’re going to have to change, or I’m going to quit,’” Watson said.

Watson’s temper-laced decorum was replaced with what some call “Bubba Golf,” which stresses golf mechanics less and puts a heavy focus on just playing golf and having fun on the course.

And it’s working.

Watson won the Travelers Championship in June of 2010, the Farmer’s Insurance Open in January of 2011 and the Zurich

Classic a few months later.

Last month, Watson led the Cadillac Championship after 54 holes before fading in the final round, missing a 9-foot putt by inches on the final hole that would have forced a playoff.

Old Bubba may have let that one fester for weeks. New Bubba brushed it off with a satisfied smile and slight head-tilt.

Watson credits three strong believers—Scott, along with his trainer Adam Fisher (“Fish”) and Watson’s wife Angie—as the difference in his attitude.

“I’ve really got a good team around me trying to help me succeed,” said Watson, who has long supported many charities, including the upcoming Bubba’s Bash and the infamous Golf Boys and Golf Boys YouTube projects. “Not just in golf, but off the golf course, to be a light for Jesus.”

PGA Bible Study

Perhaps the most powerful Christian impact Watson has experienced has been the PGA Tour’s weekly Bible study, held every Wednesday night during tournament weeks.

Rickie Fowler, Matt Kuchar, Zach Johnson, Jonathan Byrd and Webb Simpson, along with Watson, are some of the regulars, with attendance ranging from 16 to 50 on a given week.

“For me it’s a way to get back connected with the Bible and with God and Jesus,” Watson said. “Now you know other people you can talk to, ask questions to, tell them what you’re thinking, tell them what’s going on in your life.”

The one-hour study is something Watson looks forward to regularly: “Getting more in the Word and realizing that golf is just an avenue for Jesus to use me to reach as many people as I can.”

Newly-Adopted Son

Watson's journey to Christ isn't uncommon.

He grew up in Bagdad, Fla., as one of the good guys: "Didn't cuss, didn't cheat, didn't steal, didn't lie, didn't drink, didn't do drugs," he said. "I was doing the right things but I didn't know what that meant."

It wasn't until his senior year in high school when two twin neighbor girls, from the house directly behind his, invited Watson to their youth group. He went and found a place where he belonged.

"The girls asked me to go to church," he said. "And after a few times going I realized this is what I wanted to do. This is truth here. And I gave myself to the Lord."

But with all the pressures of college golf, especially on the weekends, it wasn't until 2004 that Watson became serious about his commitment to Christ at the University of Georgia. He began dating Angie Ball (former WNBA player) and the two began living for God as a couple.

"We wanted to be Christ followers," Watson said. "We wanted to do the right thing. We started turning to the Lord for our decisions."

The couple married in September 2004 and were both baptized later that year, the day after Christmas: "I would say 2004 was my true time of becoming a Christian," Watson said, "and shaping me into the man I am today."

And just this week, Bubba the Man has become Bubba the Father. The Watsons began another chapter of their life, adopting a 1-month-old boy (Caleb), a journey that began several years ago.

Fittingly, Watson broke the news on Twitter: *Everyone @angieb1433 & I are proud new parents of a 1 month old baby boy name Caleb. Been a parent for 2 days. #amazing*

Read the original article at .

Study: Steady Sugary Drink Consumption Significantly Raises Diabetes Risk

Drinking just one can of sugar-laced soda drink a day increases the risk of developing diabetes by more than a fifth, according to a large European study published on Wednesday.

Using data from 350,000 people in eight European countries, researchers found that every extra 12 fluid ounce (340 ml) serving of sugar-sweetened drink raises the risk of diabetes by 22 percent compared with drinking just one can a month or less.

“Given the increase in sweet beverage consumption in Europe, clear messages on the unhealthy effect of these drinks should be given to the population,” said Dora Romaguera, who led with study with a team at Imperial College London.

A 12-fluid-ounce serving is about equivalent to a normal-sized can of Coca-Cola, Pepsi or other soft drink.

The findings echo similar conclusions from research in the United States, where several studies have shown that intake of sugar-sweetened drinks is strongly linked with higher body weight and conditions like type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is a long-term condition characterized by insulin resistance that affects around 2.9 million people in Britain and, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 310 million people worldwide.

Romaguera's team wanted to establish whether a link between sugary drinks and diabetes risk also existed in Europe.

For their study, they used data from 350,000 people from Britain, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Sweden, France and the Netherlands who were questioned about their diet, including how many sugary and artificially sweetened soft drinks and juices they drank each day.

Writing in the journal *Diabetologia*, the researchers said their study "corroborates the association between increased incidence of Type-2 diabetes and high consumption of sugar-sweetened soft drinks in European adults".

Fruit juice consumption was not linked to diabetes incidence.

Patrick Wolfe, a statistics expert from University College London who was not involved in the research, said the message from its results was clear.

"The bottom line is that sugary soft drinks are not good for you – they have no nutritional value and there is evidence that drinking them every day can increase your relative risk for type 2 diabetes," he said in an emailed comment.

(Editing by Michael Roddy)

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5 Toxins of the Tongue That

Can Poison Your Marriage

Toxic words poison, and sometimes even kill, relationships. Words like “I hate you” or “I wish I never met you” can cause irreparable damage.

I confess there have been too many times when harsh, harmful words have come out of my mouth toward my wife, Susan, my kids and others. It grieves me. I’m continually working hard to choose my words wisely.

Here are five toxins of the tongue that we must work to avoid.

1. Sarcastic Words. Comments like “The lawn isn’t going to mow itself” or “Do I look like your maid?” seem like no big deal on the surface, right? But sarcastic words are sometimes just symptoms of an underlying unmet expectation that has frustrated a spouse for quite some time. They can be used as a cowardly way to “dig” at your husband and wife ... poisoning slowly.

2. Unsupportive Words. Every husband and wife wants to know that their spouse is in their corner, cheering them on. When a spouse says things like, “That’s a crazy idea,” or “Do you really think you can do that?” what they may really be saying is, “I don’t believe in you,” or “I’m not on your team.”

Now, that’s not to say you shouldn’t tell your spouse when you think they have a truly bad idea. But instead of saying, “That’s the worst idea ever,” you could say, “That’s a great idea, but I feel like you would be better at this ... ” Supporting one another’s aspirations is essential to a happy and productive marriage. We should be our spouse’s No. 1 fan, not their biggest critic.

3. Disrespectful Words. Respect is not something that has to be earned. It should be given unconditionally in marriage. Disrespectful comments like, “Can’t you find a real job?” “I

don't care what you say; I'm going to do it anyway" and "You've really been putting on weight" are insulting, offensive and can undermine a spouse's sense of worth.

4. Comparing words. When saying things like, "Jonathan would do that for his wife" or "Why can't you be more like Karen?" what you're really communicating is, "You don't make the grade; you're not good enough" as a husband or wife.

5. Selfish Words. "I don't care how you feel, just get it done." "I want that new dress." "I need someone who really meets my needs." Spouses who care more about themselves than their spouse often start their sentences with "I." It's all about their wants and their needs, rather than their mate's.

Have any, or many, of these toxins of the tongue been injected into your marriage? If so, here are several antidotes you can use to counteract their effects.

- Apologize to your spouse for all the poisonous things you've said to them over the years. Healing can only begin when toxins are removed. And in the case of verbal toxins, relationships begin to mend when couples ask for forgiveness from each other.
- Be slow to speak. There's an old adage that states, "You never regret what you never say." It's okay to be quiet, reserved and thoughtful about what comes out of your mouth—especially when you are upset.
- Make a personal vow that toxic words will no longer come out of your mouth. Putting a Post-it note by your bed or on your mirror can serve to remind you of your commitment. Give your spouse the freedom to inform you when toxicity starts to stream from your tongue.
- These "10 Things Husbands Want to Hear From Their Wives" and "10 Things Wives Want to Hear From Their Husbands" can give you some ideas on how you can breathe life-giving words into your spouse. You were created to build each other up, not tear each other down.

Which of these five toxins do you struggle with most? And how do you work to keep from speaking those words to your spouse? Please share your ideas.

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

Ya'alon Casts Doubt on Iranian Diplomatic Efforts

Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon cast doubt Wednesday on the current diplomatic efforts to get Iran to stop its nuclear program.

"The diplomatic channel is not bringing the Iranian nuclear program to a halt, and the economic sanctions have yet to stop the centrifuges. A viable military option is required, even if it is the last resort," Ya'alon said during a meeting with Canadian Chief of Defense Staff Gen. Thomas J. Lawson.

Israeli Ambassador to the U.N. Ron Prosor warned the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday of Iran's continued progress toward developing a nuclear program.

"The Iranian nuclear program continues to advance at the speed of an express train," Prosor said. "The international community's efforts to stop them are moving at the pace of the local train, pausing at every stop for some nations to get off and on."

Prosor called Iran's nuclear ambitions "the single greatest threat to the Middle East and the entire world."

The ambassador also said Iran's expressed concern over the

Arms Trade Treaty, which details the conventions of global trade in conventional weapons, was audacious. He said Iran is a prime supplier of weapons for terrorist groups in the Middle East, and he likened their complaint to “the Mafia complaining that the crime rate in New York is too high.”

For the original article, visit .

Where Are All the Godly Men in America?

Most pastors dream of having a strong and vibrant men’s community driving the mission and vision of their local churches. But this dream rarely becomes a reality because there is no compelling vision for men that’s articulated, visible and connected to a meaningful process in the church context.

The idea that a man should just show up and give his best energy and expression just because the church asks is presumptuous and deflating to a man. Without a clear vision that makes sense *to him*, we orphan our best potential leaders to the culture where there is a clear, albeit unhealthy, vision ready and waiting for him. Then we wonder why most of our best men choose to remain affiliated versus activated in the local church.

It is because we haven’t painted the target! No end game. No goals. No pathway. No larger meaning.

When the vision for men in the community and in the congregation is no larger than “This is good for you” or “You should do this,” without any personally transcendent or

transformational component driving interest or curiosity, why go?

Time is their most precious commodity. Team moms on their kids' sports teams along with numerous other causes are competing for it. No wonder the church is losing the battle.

The results of our existing church strategies for men are clear. Detailed, unresolved problems for churches have resulted in problems including:

- Male flight out of the church
- Male involvement beyond simple attendance
- Giving levels
- Church growth
- Staffing levels and associated costs
- Energy for initiatives
- Delivering justice to women and children
- Leadership needs

On the flip side, if there is a strong vision, a defined process that helps a man realize it and outcomes that make men stakeholders in the ongoing success of the church's mission—men long for that kind of significance!—they start showing up in big numbers.

Vision. Meaning. Clear process. Influence. Now we're talking!

The Sleeping Giant model contains those critical ingredients mentioned above, which are central to wide participation and success with men. Key word? *Simple*.

Men like simple. They also like strong, clear and intentional.

Gathering them together is the easy part. The question every man is asking himself once he gets to your gathering is this: "Now that you've got me, where are you taking me?" The consequences of that question going unanswered before he

leaves are lethal for your men's community and for the man.

Why? Inspiration without progression is stagnation.

A larger vision that resonates is required. To this end, the Sleeping Giant model and process answers this critical question and bridges men from inspiration firmly over to the progression of spiritual development by calling men in the congregation and in the community to:

- Get in
- Get healthy
- Get strong
- Get going

We call this the Sleeping Giant Spiritual Pathway. In the next article, I'll cover this pathway in more detail.

Note: This is the first in a three-part series called "Sleeping Giant" on the state of men in our culture and the spiritual pathway that changes everything—the man, his family, his church, his community and the world.

Kenny Luck is the founder of Every Man Ministries and the men's pastor at Saddleback Church. His 20th book, *Sleeping Giant: No Movement of God Without Men of God*, is the proven blueprint for men's ministries and was recently released through B&H Publishing. Watch and read more of Kenny's teaching at [. Follow Every Man Ministries now on Facebook, Twitter \(@everymm\) and YouTube.](#)

Sign up now to receive Every Man Ministries' free email newsletter.

8 Reasons Why Gentiles Should Care About the Jewish Roots of Their Faith

“Why are the Jewish roots of the faith important to us as Gentiles?” I was asked this question the other day during a radio interview.

After spending nearly a year writing a book about this subject and teaching on it for over a decade, I found myself at a loss for words!

The interviewer wasn't being antagonistic—he just assumed I had the answer. I winged it and quickly threw out something I thought sounded intelligent and compelling, but I can't remember for the life of me what I said. However, once it was over, I thought to myself: *Why is this important to non-Jewish believers? If someone is born again, what does it matter if they understand the Jewish roots of their faith?*

Four points quickly came to me, and four more later on.

1. When Gentiles forget to honor the Jewish roots of their faith, it isn't long before Jews start dying. The minute the church forgot her Jewishness, she began to charge Jews with *deicide*—the killing of God. Tens of thousands of Jews have been called “Christ-killer” just before being murdered by supposed Christians and even Nazis. Hitler laughed at the church and said, “I am just finishing what you started.” History is filled with stories of persecutions, expulsions, imprisonments, confiscations, rapes and mass murders of Jews at the hands of so-called Christians who lost their way. More than 30,000 Jewish converts were burned at the stake by the Catholic church from the years 1500 to 1800 for the sin of returning to Judaism!

Furthermore, as soon as church leaders forgot their Jewish roots, they started creating theologies that teach that the church has replaced Israel, God has rejected Israel (see Jer. 31:35ff) and even that God hates the Jews (see the teachings of John Chrysostom, who lived from 347-407).

2. Jesus comes back as the King of Israel. Yeshua is returning to Jerusalem (Zech. 14:3-4), not Rome, and when He does, the nations will be required to come to the Holy City every year and worship the Lord during the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16). A church unfamiliar with the Jewishness of the Messiah might be caught off guard to meet Jesus the Jew in the clouds. There has been so much anti-Semitism in the church for 2,000 years that it appears the church has often forgotten not only that Jesus Himself was a Jew, but that He will return as a Jew!

3. If you love someone, you should love what they love. If you love Yeshua, then you should know that He loves His natural brothers and longs to see them embrace Him. In tears, He told the orthodox Jews of Jerusalem, "You will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matt. 23:39).

In Hebrew, those words "Blessed is he who comes" are a greeting. It is how you greet someone who arrives in the country or simply comes to your home.

I arrived back in Israel this week after a ministry trip to the U.S. My dear friend and mentor Asher Intrater called me up, and his first words were: "*Baruch Haba* [Blessed is he who comes]." The words are written in Hebrew at our airport to welcome those arriving.

Yeshua was saying here, "I will not return until you welcome Me." Just as Joseph had the love of the nations, his joy was not complete until his brothers reconciled with him.

In addition, whenever a groom is invited to the altar in a

Jewish wedding, the cantor sings, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Yeshua is the bridegroom, and He will return when they call for Him.

Furthermore, in the most intense plea in Scripture, Paul reveals Yeshua's love for Israel and a desire for the Jews to be saved when he said *by the Holy Spirit* that he would be willing to go to hell if only his brothers, Israel, would be saved (Rom. 9:1-5). If you love Yeshua, then you must love who He loves, and He loves His brothers.

4. God's plan is to use the Gentiles to reach Israel. Romans 11:11 says that salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. God has put an anointing in Gentile believers to reach Jewish people. Even as Israel was called to be a light to the nations (Is. 42:6; 49:6), the nations are now called to reach Israel with the love of God. I was brought to faith by a non-Jew, and so were most of the Messianic Jews I know. God has given you an anointing to reach the Jewish people!

5. Escape judgment. Romans 11:17-23 says that if the Gentile church treats Israel poorly, it is also in danger of being cut off. I know this is difficult language, but these are not my words, but Paul's:

"Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches [Israel], he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness [toward Israel]. Otherwise, you also will be cut off." (Rom. 11:20-22)

May I encourage you to take a slow read of Romans 11 and let God speak to you? Start with verse 11, and go to the end of the chapter.

6. A debt of love. God brought forth Yeshua through Israel. *No Israel equals no salvation.* It was the prayers of people like

Simeon and Anna—both Jews—that brought forth the first coming of the Messiah, prophesied by the Jewish prophets. Without Israel, you have no Old Testament and even no New Testament (as the Old Testament prophesies the New [Jer. 31:31-33], and it was Jews who wrote the New Testament). Without Abraham, there would be no Messiah! Without David, no Son of David! Without Israel, the nations would still be sacrificing their children to false gods.

It was the Jews who said, “The Lord is One”—a revolutionary concept in the pagan world. It was Jewish apostles who spread the message of salvation to the nations. The apostle to the Gentiles was a Jewish rabbi (Rom. 11:13). The Gentile church owes a debt of love to the eldest brother amongst the nations, Israel, who brought forth salvation in Yeshua the Messiah.

7. A desire for revival. Romans 11:12-15 says clearly that if Israel, by failing (rejecting the gospel) brought revival to the nations, what will happen when Israel accepts the gospel? The answer: Greater riches and life from the dead! See Paul’s words here:

“But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring! For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”

If Israel, through her rejection of salvation, released revival on the nations, her acceptance will bring her back into right alignment with the plan of God, releasing worldwide revival—greater riches (v. 12) and life from the dead (v. 15). If the book of Acts represents *riches*, then greater riches means *greater than anything we have ever seen!*

8. Jews alienated from Yeshua. By cleansing the gospel of its Jewish roots, Jews are left to think this is a non-Jewish story—a story about people named Peter, Paul and Mary that

takes place in Rome amongst Gentiles, as opposed to a story about Simon, Shaul, Jacob (the actual name of James) and Miriam that takes place in Galilee and Jerusalem and focuses almost entirely on Jews until Acts 10.

Without the Jewish context (that Israel's Messiah comes), Jews are left to believe that Jesus and Judaism are exclusive. The Jewish world wrongly agrees with Justin Martyr, who said, "He who would be both Christian and Jew, can be neither Christian nor Jew." They mistakenly assume that the New Testament represents a new religion.

Can you think of any more reasons the Jewish roots of the faith are important to non-Jewish believers?

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). He 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, will be released April 16. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

For the original article, visit .