

Exercise, Diet May Keep Sleep Apnea From Worsening

Losing weight through exercise and healthier eating may have long-term benefits for people with mild sleep apnea, a new study suggests.

Researchers found obese study participants who went through a one-year lifestyle intervention were about half as likely to see their sleep apnea progress to more severe disease, compared to those who received little extra help.

People who have sleep apnea stop breathing for short spurts when their airway collapses or gets blocked while they're asleep. The condition is most common among heavy, middle-aged adults and in its advanced form has been tied to a range of cardiovascular problems.

"It usually takes at least a few years to progress from mild disease to the more severe disease, and mostly it's due to weight gain," said Dr. Henri Tuomilehto, who led the new study at the Oivauni Sleep Clinic in Kuopio, Finland.

"With these results, we can say that if we change our lifestyle ... we really can stop the progression of sleep apnea," he told Reuters Health. But, "Nobody has really paid any attention to preventing the progression."

Tuomilehto and his colleagues randomly assigned 81 obese adults with mild sleep apnea to a one-year intervention, which started with a very low-calorie meal plan and included diet and exercise counseling, or to a comparison group that received only a few general diet and physical activity information sessions.

That study initially showed health benefits tied to the intervention, Tuomilehto said. But whether the effects would

persist after the program had ended was unclear.

For the new analysis, the researchers followed up with 57 of the initial 81 participants, four years after the experiment was completed.

They found people in the exercise and diet group had generally succeeded in keeping some weight off. Those participants were 12 pounds lighter than they had been five years earlier, on average, and people in the comparison group were about one pound heavier.

Six participants in the intervention group had seen their mild sleep apnea progress to moderate disease, and none had developed severe disease. On the other hand, 12 members of the comparison group had moderate sleep apnea at their follow-up and two had severe sleep apnea, the study team wrote in JAMA Internal Medicine.

“If you’ve lost some weight, four years later, even if you’ve regained some, there’s still some significant benefit in terms of your apnea,” said Gary Foster, head of the Center for Obesity Research and Education at the Temple University School of Medicine in Philadelphia.

Foster, who did not work on the new study, said that finding is consistent with his own research in a larger group of patients with both sleep apnea and diabetes.

“Obesity is the single most potent modifiable risk factor for obstructive sleep apnea,” he told Reuters Health.

“We should really think about weight reduction as a treatment for sleep apnea,” Tuomilehto agreed.

According to the American College of Physicians, 4 to 9 percent of middle-aged men and 2 to 4 percent of middle-aged women have sleep apnea—but the majority of cases are not diagnosed.

Continuous positive airway pressure, or CPAP—which helps keep the airways open at night—allows people to sleep better, but hasn't been shown to prevent cardiovascular problems tied to sleep apnea, Tuomilehto said. So weight loss is important even among people who are receiving standard treatment.

“Once you get some symptoms – even not that dramatic symptoms – then you should take the symptoms seriously because in the early phases of the disease, if you change your lifestyle habits, you can cure the disease and prevent the progression of the disease,” he said.

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God Bombards His Change Agents With Character Tests

Are you called to be one of God's change agents? If so, get ready for His preparation.

God releases and entrusts to you in direct proportion to the character you allow Him to develop in you. God develops character through a series of tests designed to develop humility and trust. That is what God did with Joseph and many other of His change agents.

Sometimes when I tell people that God tests us, they take issue with me. “Aw, surely you don't mean that. God doesn't test people,” they reply. I give them Deuteronomy 8:2, quoted at the end of this article, along with many others. *God does not test us to find out what we will do; He tests us to let us know what we will do.*

God's testing is one way we get to see how faithless or unloving or uncommitted we are to Him or another person. We get to see how we respond to those who treat us badly. We get to see if we are going to pout like little children or embrace the experience as one who needs to grow up.

David knew God tests His people: "I know also, my God, that You test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness" (1 Chron. 29:17). David didn't pass several tests. He flunked the test with Bathsheba—his child died and then there was a lifelong, generational bout with sexual lust and sexual problems in his family. He flunked the test on numbering the troops—70,000 people lost their lives because he did that.

David was one of the few leaders in the Bible whose sins did not disqualify him from achieving his ultimate purpose. This was due to his repentant heart and his extravagant love of God that came from his heart.

Joseph also had some tests. He was tested to see if he would retaliate against his brothers for betraying him and throwing him into a pit. He forgave them. He was tested sexually when Potiphar's wife decided she had to have him. He fled but still got prison time for being righteous. He passed that one.

Joseph was also tested with an extended time of isolation in prison to see if he would persevere and experience God's presence in his circumstance. He passed that one too. He was a model prisoner. The Scriptures say, "And God was with Joseph" (Gen 39:23)—he was in prison when that was said. Finally, Joseph was tested to see if he would be a good steward with the position, power and influence God gave him. He passed with flying colors.

Testing is designed to prepare us for greater things. "For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net; You laid an oppressive burden upon our loins. You made men ride over our heads; We

went through fire and through water, yet You brought us out into a place of abundance” (Ps. 66:10-12).

God brings tests into our lives to develop character and to prepare us for greater use in the kingdom. There is no other way to find out how we will do without real-world experiences to test our mettle. David understood this when he said, “Blessed be the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle” (Ps. 144:1). There’s no place like the battlefield to find out how we are going to do in battle.

James tells us that testing is designed to develop patience and perseverance that matures our faith: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing ... Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:2-4, 12). Like Joseph, God takes His servants through seasons of testing, designed to mature us by developing perseverance for greater assignments.

Crisis and pain leads to greater commitment, obedience and intimacy.

One of my favorite movies is *Braveheart*. It is the story of William Wallace, a change agent for Scotland, and his rebellion against the wicked king of England that led to the ultimate emancipation of Scotland from England.

In order to defeat the English, Wallace appealed to Robert the Bruce, the king of Scotland, to mobilize the Scottish lords. During the battle of Falkirk, Wallace was attacked in an open field by a knight with covered armor, so he could not identify his opponent. Wallace knocked the man off his horse and ran to see who had attacked him—it was Robert the Bruce.

The scene of Wallace's shock and utter feelings of betrayal was captured like no other scene I have seen in a movie. You literally felt Wallace's heart break into two pieces as he discovered the very man who had committed to help him emancipate Scotland had reversed sides. Later, Bruce had a change of heart and was credited for Scotland's ultimate freedom after Wallace was captured and tortured.

Emotional pain can be the most excruciating emotion to overcome. It can devastate you like nothing else. Divorce, loss of a child in an accident or illness, death of a spouse, abandonment by a wife or loved one—these experiences test our faith in God and in human beings.

I have had more than my share of very close relationships that ended in betrayal. Many of them reconciled, but some did not until years later. Those were difficult times. There were times I literally felt my heart was bleeding from the inside out. David must have been feeling this when he wrote this psalm: "For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him. But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng" (Ps. 55:12-14).

There is something about emotional pain that drives us deep into the arms of our heavenly Father like nothing else. Emotional pain is designed to take us deeper into the soil of God. It is designed to help us identify with the cross. Ultimately, it should motivate us to greater levels of intimacy and obedience.

Psalm 119:67 says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word." Hebrews 5:8 describes the pain our Savior endured that was designed to create greater obedience in His life: "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

Maybe you find yourself in this place as God prepares you to be a change agent. All of God's change agents will experience betrayal at some point in their journey. God wants you to know we must follow the example of His Son, who washed the feet of Judas. Oh, how difficult this test is to pass!

We don't want to forgive those who hurt us deeply. But Jesus said that if we don't forgive others, He doesn't forgive us—not a very good option if we choose to hold onto the pain or the right to revenge or simply withhold forgiveness.

Pride keeps us from extending forgiveness to others. We want justice. Self-righteousness says, "I cannot forgive. What he or she did is unforgivable." We want someone to pay for our pain.

A sinless person would be justified in withholding forgiveness, but the one person who ever qualified for that distinction chose to forgive you and me for our sins. Jesus chose to tear up the "You hurt me deeply—you deserve to pay" ticket. So must we.

You hold yourself and others in a prison if you do not forgive. Unforgiveness has even been proven to cause physical illness. Humility allows us to let go. Pride keeps us holding on to offenses. Psalm 25:9 says "The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way." God wants to teach us His way.

Moses was the most humble man on the face of the earth. He had his share of betrayals by those he led and those within his family. But he had a mission from God and knew he had to get past those things to accomplish his mission. So must we.

A Peculiar People

The greater the influence and spiritual insight, the greater the vulnerability we have to pride or a fall as apostle Paul was exposed to great revelation from God. It would have been easy for him to fall into pride and arrogance because of the

exposure to the inner sanctums of revelation he had from God. This is why God allowed a thorn in the flesh to buffet Paul. It was designed to keep him humble.

A Place of Weakness

God calls His change agents to operate from a place of weakness, not strength. It often appears on the surface that these change agents are operating from a place of great strength. However, many struggle to balance the influence and role they have with being a steward of their influence with faith and humility.

Paul had great influence, but he also operated from a place of physical weakness. He was not a great speaker or impressive in stature. God told him it would be His grace alone that would allow Paul to do what he was called to do: “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor. 12:9-10)

If you are a change agent in the making, expect God to take you through a season of character refinement designed to develop humility and trust.

“And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not” (Deut. 8:2).

Os Hillman is president of Marketplace Leaders and author of *Change Agent* and *TGIF Today God Is First*, a free devotional.

Living for Yeshua Negates Living With Terror

Watching the news this week has been more upsetting than usual. First there was Boston, and then Texas. So many people killed and maimed. It has been heart-breaking.

We here in Israel had another terror attack of our own—two rockets were fired at our southern resort community of Eilat on Wednesday. Thankfully, no one was *physically* harmed.

But that's the thing about terror—even when you don't suffer physical harm, there's always the psychological.

I wanted to write this week about just that—the psychological terror. The people of Israel know it well. As do Christians in Nigeria and Christians in Egypt (and across the Middle East, for that matter). And now, sadly, the people of the U.S. are learning it again. It's that feeling that anything catastrophic can happen at any time, in any place.

You could be watching a marathon. You could simply be at work. You could be at church, on a bus, in a café, at school or in your own home. You can be anywhere, and you live in terror just thinking and worrying about it all the time.

Or, at least that's what the terrorists want you to do.

They want us to be constantly afraid. They want us to be prisoners in our own homes—or in our minds.

But what we've had to learn here in Israel is to not let that happen. We've had to learn how to carry on with life, even in the midst of terror.

It's not easy, and it's not a perfect science. New Yorkers learned that after 9/11, and now Bostonians will have to learn the same.

Each person finds his or her own way of coping. For me, it's my faith in Yeshua.

To be honest, I don't know how anyone without faith in God deals with this issue.

Last November, during "Operation Pillar of Defense," as Hamas was firing rockets nonstop at Israel, I learned this lesson firsthand. I knew the siren could go off at any moment and I'd have to go running to a bomb shelter. I thought about it constantly. It impacted every decision I made every day. I had to plot my daily activities in terms of their proximity to the nearest place to hide.

And when there was no place to hide, like when I knew I had to take a shower or get on a bus, that's when I needed God the most.

What else is there? You have to be prepared to die. You have to accept the fact that the missile might hit you.

And without God, I just don't know how I would have gotten through that. He was and is my only hope. If not for my promised salvation in Yeshua and my promise of a life with Him after this life on earth, I would have curled up in a corner and lost all courage to leave my home.

With God, we don't have to live in fear. With God, we have a reason to get out of bed in the morning and the strength and courage to do so. With God, we have a real understanding of good and evil. With God, we know that even if this life comes to a horrific end, a better one is yet to come. With God, we have faith that He is in control and will sort this whole mess out in the end.

Without God, we have none of that.

I wish I could give my friends in Boston a handy 10-step plan to going on with life after a terror attack. But all I have for you is Yeshua. He is my hope, and I pray you'd make Him yours as well.

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Chaim Goldberg is the director of media for Maoz Israel and writes a weekly column for Charisma's Standing With Israel website.

Why Is Your Health Their Business?

Let me start out by saying, *"I love capitalism!"*

Our system of capitalism affords freedom, opportunity and the power of choice for everyone—the entrepreneur, as well as the consumer. It's a system that encourages competition, and competition brings about better products at better prices. But, as with most things, there are pros and cons to capitalism, and this is especially true when it comes to our health.

Over and over again, when I am presenting to groups on the topic of health, and I bring up the role of big business, I witness a jaw-dropping, eye-opening response—especially with respect to preventable disease. Jesus said, *"Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves"* (Matthew 10:16).

In other words, Christians are to be shrewd. And unless we're shrewd, we are not likely to realize the dramatic influence the business world has on our personal health and wellbeing.

Consider this:

1. **Big business** spends billions of dollars on marketing and advertising to persuade us to consume foods and beverages that increase the risk for obesity, hypertension, diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease.
2. **Big business** governs food availability to the extent that certain neighborhoods are categorized as "food deserts" where residents have limited access to fresh, wholesome foods and "grocery" shopping is done at places like gasoline stations and convenience stores.
3. **Big business** creates cigarette advertisements that appeals to teens, and posts billboards for alcohol in places of hopelessness—neighborhoods that are destitute and poverty stricken.
4. **Big business** develops advertisements especially appealing to kids for foods that are high in sugar, sodium, saturated fat and calories.
5. **Big business** oversees the research, development and marketing of prescription medications that cost a fortune, but are necessary to treat the diseases which are the inevitable result of numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Did I say *I love capitalism*? Indeed I do!

And I'm not being sarcastic because, as I said, capitalism is a great system. But in all things and in every place (including the marketplace) Christians are called to be a "peculiar people" (1 Peter 2:9).

So we are to be governed by biblical virtues such as discipline and moderation. Paul said "we should live soberly" (Titus 2:12) which doesn't just refer to drunkenness, but to a

life that is not defined by self-indulgence. We are blessed with the fruit of the Spirit of self-control, and have access to Godly wisdom and discernment through prayer.

So, with all this POWER at our disposal, we are equipped to take full responsibility for our lifestyles for the sake of our health.

Big business has every right to advertise and market products, but we have the right to make decisions that are beneficial and not detrimental. So the answer to the question, “Why is *your* health *their* business?” is this: It’s only if you allow it to be! As Christians, we are equipped to mind our *own* business, and make the choice for better health!

For the original article, visit .

Are You Keeping Secrets That Damage Your Sex Life?

The theme of 1 Thessalonians 4 is living to please God. Let me raise the value of what I am about to read. This is God’s word for you. What you do with it is up to you. My job is to share it and let His Spirit bring application to you.

This is what God says: “As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus” (vv. 1-2, NIV).

I want to stop there and have you say something with me. Say

“In the Lord Jesus.” This message is for people who are in the Lord Jesus. If you are in the Lord Jesus, then it is under this authority that Paul says, “For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.” *Of the Lord Jesus for those in the Lord Jesus*—that’s important. My authority isn’t good enough, but the authority of Jesus in your life really matters.

Paul goes on, “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified”—that word means “set apart”—“that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body”—mentally and physically; your brain is a part of your body—“in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before” (vv. 3-6).

There are consequences: “Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit” (v. 8).

Isn’t that wonderful—that God, because He loves you and He is love, gives us instruction in this area of sexuality? For those in the Lord Jesus, His authority drives our motivation and what He doesn’t want, because He wants you set apart because you are His son. He wants you *not* to defraud other people or take advantage of them, to manipulate them and use them. He wants you to know that He has the capacity to hear you and discern what it is to be a healthy, sexual man, through His Holy Spirit.

How cool is that?

That we have a GPS, sexually, from God that shows us what He thinks in this area—“This is how I would like to align you sexually, single man, married man, older man. I want you to get My mind, and I’m going to give you some help.” Oh, and by

the way, Paul doesn't talk about it here, but then we have the body of Christ to help us too.

In the previous articles in this series, I've teed up this topic and let you know my own story. I wanted you to feel a little normal. I hope a lot of you feel a little normal, hearing my story. I wanted to show you what's going on in culture and what's really happening, and then give you some starter thoughts about God and sex.

They are:

1. God is not against sex. He's against misusing it.
2. God knows where your sexual life really exists. I wanted to show you that God wants your sexual life to please Him. For me, that's what I want you to hear. For me, that's a green light. I'm supposed to express myself sexually.

I have a question for you. Try not to make it too personal, but where does your life produce satisfaction or the greatest struggle? It's a really simple question—it's kind of surface, but we will get deeper later.

Let's wrap up this sex series—body, mind and spirit. You have a sex life. I don't care what you think about the topic. You have one because God made you and designed you to have one. If you are a man, you have the part—remember the word *zachar* in the Old Testament? It means “the protruding one, the piercer.”

Every day we encounter our sexuality—physically, emotionally or spiritually. What I want to do in wrapping up this series is to demystify it and make it who we are because God says it's such an integral part of our lives, and it makes no sense to keep secrets.

Let me tell you about your secrets, especially about your secret sexual stuff. Your secrets reveal the exact kind of person that you don't want to be. I'm going to say that one

more time. The secret things that you can't talk about reveal the exact type of person you don't want to be.

If you have sexual issues you are conflicted about and you don't want to talk about, it's an indicator you don't want to be that person—that's why you don't want to talk about it. You don't want to present yourself out here when in reality you are over there. You don't want to be that guy.

The power of the secret is destroying men in this area of sexuality. I was just like that myself. I've shared it with you. In my story, it wasn't until I started talking about it and discovered other guys who knew God, loved God and wanted to please God with their life that I began to experience freedom and victory and great sex in marriage.

That's the goal. You have a sex life. If you are not having one physically, that doesn't mean that you are not having one cognitively or emotionally, especially you older guys, and I want you to finish strong.

Single guys, there is an epidemic of unhealthy sexuality out there, especially for you young guys, beginning in junior high and high school. Let me tell you something. If you are undisciplined before marriage, the little gold ring around your finger doesn't make you disciplined after marriage.

You are laying the quicksand for the future destruction of your marriage.

Single men, married men, generationally older guys, dads, husbands—can I just say so much is at stake in this area of your life? For you, your spouse, your friends, your sons, your daughters, your peers. Sex is God's design—His gift. He wants us all to understand it, to enjoy it, to embrace it under His design.

I want to close with this thought from the book of Colossians 1, which reveals my heart for you on this subject:

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of His will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious mind so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light” (vv. 9-12).

Colossians 1:13-14 reads, “For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, forgiveness of sins.”

That perfectly expresses my desire for you in this. I pray that you will be enlightened so that you can produce fruit in your life—a picture of productivity, fruitfulness, joy, satisfaction and fulfillment.

Sex is not about release. Sex is about fulfillment and purpose. When a man gets that, and when he realizes that in the Lord Jesus there is so much more for him in this area—personally, relationally and spiritually—then he begins to redeem the distorted view of sex out in culture and begins to experience the intended view and experience of sex in our real life.

That is what this series is all about. It’s about sexual redemption. There is a lot of sexual brokenness out there, in you, in your marriages, in your kids and all that, but God’s man is called to redeem these things in Jesus’ name.

That’s where I want to close in prayer.

Father, this area is so important. It doesn’t matter whether we are an older brother, a single brother, a married brother.

We are all brothers and men, the ones that protrude and pierce, and, God, you made us that way for a reason. It's a gift, and yet we are chased down and hunted with distorted views of sex and sexuality and sexual expression. The Dark One wants us to misunderstand sex because he knows if we misunderstand it, we will misuse it, and if we misuse it, we will destroy, and if we destroy, we will create death for ourselves, for our spouses and for our kids.

We are going to put a stake in the ground today and say no to destruction and say yes to You.

Some of you right now have shame and regret in your life. You have a secret, but not one from God. God knows and sees that secret, whether it's disinterest in your marriage, a lack of intimacy there, an emotional division. Some of you single guys are surfing material on the web. You would never talk about that, because that's not the guy you would want to be. Some of you are struggling and reconnecting with the wrong women and the issue of your faith. Some of you are my older brothers, and your mental life is in the gutter and you need to come out of there to be God's man.

Wherever you are, I'm happy to say that Jesus is here and He wants to redeem whatever part of your life that is sexually broken. He wants you to know that you are a loved son. He wants to heal you if you want to receive His Son for the very first time, or the Holy Spirit for healing to those of you who are in the faith right now.

Why don't you do that? Say, "Jesus I want to receive You, and I want to receive Your healing in my life sexually. Lord, I want Your will. I want Your gift. I want to please You. Come into my life. Fill me with Your Spirit. Show me Your Word. Give me other men to come alongside me. Help me to follow You in this area of my life, in a way that loves you back. In Jesus' name we pray."

And all God's men said, Amen!

Part I Part II Part III

Editor's Note: This is the fourth in a four-part series Every Man Ministries is calling "The Sex Series," where God's men receive the best from God's gift of sexual intimacy. Sex is physical, mental and spiritual, and God wants us to use this gift in the way He intended it to be enjoyed. This series will help you understand sex through the lens of Scripture. It will teach you to understand what God expects from His sons when it comes to sex and sexual intimacy.

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.](#)

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Don't Allow Sugar Substitute to Intoxicate You

I recently mentioned a few posts back that during my eating disorder, blood tests revealed elevated liver enzymes indicative of chemical toxins in my body; hence the reason for my constant headaches, dizziness, and, ahem, *digestion issues*.

But where were the toxins coming from? I never drank alcohol,

didn't overdo it on the herbal supplements, nor was I taking any pain medication.

My dad, a physician, was suspicious of one substance to which I was practically addicted: *Splenda*. Oh, Splenda, what a whimsical name with such fanciful, carefree commercials to match. Too bad that beneath your sweet façade of figure friendliness lies pure poison!

Since Splenda arrived in America in 1999, countless products have used it in their diet varieties: Diet Coke, Propel Fitness Water, Yoplait Light yogurt, to name a scant few. In fact, it would probably take less time to tell you what diet and "light" foods Splenda is *not* in.

Part of Splenda's hyped up appeal is that it's basically natural. I mean it comes from sugar, right? Please allow me to tell you just how far Splenda is from being a magical calorie-free version of sugar.

Splenda is a chlorocarbon, which is simply a fancy name for chlorinated sugar. To chlorinate sugar, you have to chemically alter the structure of the sugar molecule by substituting three chlorine atoms for three hydroxyl groups in the overall sucrose (sugar) molecule. Chlorine, as it turns out, is quite an excitable element. It's used as a biocide in bleach, insecticide, disinfectants; even WWI poison gas!

Chlorocarbons are neither nutritionally nor metabolically compatible in our bodies. Because we're not made to excrete the poison, the body shunts it into our *livers* (ding ding ding!), which is our detoxification organ. There, the chlorocarbons damage and destroy the liver's metabolic cells. Not so sweet anymore, huh?

Five years ago, I was blissfully on board the Splenda bandwagon. At any given time, I probably had enough toxins attacking my liver to wipe out an ant colony or remove a mustard stain. I used it on my oatmeal, cereal, my coffee,

tea, and of course, I bought the Splenda products –yogurt, water, energy bars, protein powder, you name it!

Part II of the sugar saga to come! Stay fit, stay faithful.

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

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

Don't Shut Yourself Out of Servitude

So many men long to serve God, but they feel that their inadequacies, shortcomings and/or the issues they struggle with will keep them from being used by God. However, these men need to realize that God can use anyone who will open themselves up to be used by Him. Recently, I saw some excellent examples to prove this point.

I have been taking a class that studies the history and founding of the Assemblies of God through Berean School of the Bible. The class takes a historical look at how the denomination was started and its core beliefs.

As I was reading the stories of the men and women God used to start and grow the Assemblies of God, I was struck by the humanness of these people and how God used them despite their shortcomings and backgrounds.

For instance, Charles Parham was one of the first people to recognize speaking in tongues as a sign of the baptism in the

Holy Spirit. This became one of the founding doctrines of the Assemblies of God.

God used Parham, despite the fact that Parham struggled greatly with prejudice against African-Americans. God used Parham to advance His work while trying to work on Parham's prejudice. Parham's life proves that God can use any man to accomplish His work if the man is willing to acknowledge his shortcomings and allow God to change Him.

The history of the Assemblies of God is full of many different types of people who were used by God for His purpose. Anna B. Lock was a drug addict and an alcoholic by the age of 14. She became a believer and follower of God, and God set her free from her addictions.

Lock became a great evangelist who preached to alcoholics and addicts on Chicago's Skid Row. She went to them on their territory and helped them break free of their addictions as they found salvation in Jesus.

Another is example is Edith Mae Pennington. Although she had been voted "Most Beautiful Girl in the U.S." and was a Hollywood actress, she found no fulfillment in this life.

Pennington began reading her Bible, got saved and became a great evangelist. It cost her everything she had: her fame, her fortune, even her marriage, but she gave it all up for God and He was able to use her mightily. She became a mighty evangelist and one of the first female pastors in the Assemblies of God.

God also used "average Joes" who allowed Him to use them to reach many for Him. For instance, Markus Grable was a janitor at Gospel Publishing House (GPH). He noticed the many letters GPH received were questions about Sunday school, so he took it upon himself to answer them.

Eventually, Grable was asked to lead and develop the Sunday

school promotion department at GPH. This janitor was used mightily by God through the Sunday school programs of the Assemblies of God. Every Sunday morning, churches across the world still benefit from the willingness of Mr. Grable to step up and help out in an area that was lacking.

The early founders of the Assemblies of God didn't always rely on the set church environment to reach the lost. They used any and all means possible, whether it was missions, revival meetings or home churches. Some even started churches in saloons to reach the lost.

These men and women were just like us, ordinary people with problems and issues who served an extraordinary God. They allowed God to use them whenever and wherever He chose. If God could use them, He can certainly use you!

All God requires of us is to humbly seek to do His will, to be obedient to His call and to live a holy life before Him. When He points out a sin or issue in our lives, we must work to overcome it and completely remove it.

We cannot allow our ideas or our feelings of inadequacies to stop us from serving or obeying God. Who knows? Fifty or 60 years from now, maybe someone will be taking a class and will read about how God used an ordinary guy like *you* for His kingdom. With God, all things are possible, and He can use anyone with a willing and obedient heart.

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

God's Grace Provides Endurance to Run Life's Marathons

Had anyone told me six months ago that I would be a half-marathon runner, I'd have said, "You must have me mistaken with someone else."

I'm a writer who, prior to this, enjoyed a sedentary lifestyle. I was never athletic as a kid. I never ran more than two miles in my life. But it happened. After roughly 10 weeks of training, many mornings getting up before dawn, and a few well-earned scars, I ran 13.1 miles. I pushed. I sweat. I burned. I finished strong, and I'm pretty sure I'll never be the same.

I never before understood why people ran, but now I know. Running, or really anything that pushes you physically, can teach you so much about yourself and even more about God.

Let me take you back weeks before my race. I was crying to a friend, lamenting areas in my life where I didn't see God working. I felt like my prayers were dissipating into a void. I know you've been there, because everybody has. It's frustrating and heartbreaking.

After my race, I revisited that night in my mind. It almost felt as though God and I were both saying, "Move!" At the same time that I was begging Him to do something, He was asking me to do the same. Sometimes, God requires you to make the first move. He wants you to develop some discipline and put in the legwork.

I would never have been in this race if I hadn't signed up. I certainly wouldn't have finished if I hadn't trained and ran all those miles and dreadful hill sprints. And lastly, none of

this was even possible if I hadn't said "yes" when a friend asked me to run with her. In a nutshell, I had to go first in order for God move.

Sometimes the first step is just being willing. I think about Isaiah. When God asks, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" Isaiah steps up and says, "Here I am. Send me" (Isaiah 6:9). That is a perfect example. After that, God had something to work with, and now Isaiah is considered one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament.

Now, God makes something out of nothing all the time. Yes, He could just wave His hand and change a situation with little to no effort on our parts. However, I'd venture to say that most of the dreams in your heart are not things that will develop overnight. They will take preparation. They will require some, if not, a lot of, hard work on your part. Don't be afraid of pain. Sometimes, it's here to help.

Like I said, I learned a lot from my half marathon. I discovered what God could do by pushing the limits of what I could do. I learned that there's no such thing as, "I have nothing left," because there's always something left ... and God will use it to get you to where He wants you to go.

I also learned that nobody gets anywhere by themselves. Much of this is thanks to one friend who said, "You should come run with us." That turned into encouraging me to run regularly, which quickly led to training for a race. Running with a group made the time fly by. It was a shining example of how we all need each other.

So what's next? I, who once thought channel surfing counted as exercise, am looking forward to my first full marathon. That's 26.2 miles. Just goes to show, you never can tell how a story turns out.

I want to add one last thing. When I told people I was training for a half marathon, I can't tell you how many times

their first response was, "Good for you. I could never do that."

Don't limit yourself by what you think you can or cannot do. We serve a "God of Wonders" who created you to be full of surprises. If you're willing to set your mind on success, put in the hard work and believe God when He promises you strength for today, there really is nothing you can't do.

Jennifer E. Jones is contributing writer. For the original article, visit .

Terror Cell Charged With Planning to Abduct Israelis

Indictments were filed on Wednesday against members of a recently apprehended terror cell, residents of east Jerusalem, who allegedly conspired to kidnap and murder an Israeli in order to steal his weapon.

The Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) and the Jerusalem police arrested the cell in March. According to the Shin Bet, during one of their outings, three cell members had picked up a Jewish hitchhiker, but upon learning that he was not carrying a weapon, decided to let him go. The Shin Bet says that the cell had also planned to carry out a terrorist attack at Temple Mount, including firing weapons at Israeli security personnel stationed there.

The indictment, filed with the Jerusalem District Court, charges the cell members with a host of crimes, including conspiring to commit a kidnapping, conspiring to commit murder, conspiring to assist an enemy in wartime, assisting an

enemy during wartime, contact with an enemy agent, carrying illegal weapons, attempted purchase of illegal weapons, attempted robbery, attempted murder, illegal military training and obstruction of justice.

According to the Shin Bet, the leader of the cell, Nur Hamdan, 25, confessed that he had planned to carry out an attack on Temple Mount "to protect Al-Aqsa mosque." He reportedly said that he had been inspired by YouTube videos detailing terror attacks in Jerusalem, especially the 2008 attack at Mercaz Harav yeshiva (in which eight students were killed).

Hamdan allegedly approached Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade in Gaza and in Nablus seeking assistance in preparing a shooting attack against Israeli targets on Temple Mount. He eventually recruited four friends from east Jerusalem to assist in the attack, the Shin Bet said.

The members of the cell allegedly trained several times near Kalandiya in northern Jerusalem, and even planned to travel to Nablus to meet with a Tanzim activist and ask him for weapons and money. In addition, the cell had allegedly planned to steal weapons from Israeli police officers, and had even built several makeshift pipe bombs for that end.

The weapons already in the cell's possession were discovered at the east Jerusalem home of additional suspect Firas Djani. The police discovered two handguns, ammunition and a pipe bomb.

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

Movie Addresses Internal Pain for Fathers

Cory Brand is a Major League Baseball All-Star. But off the field, he's haunted by memories of his past, and his life is spinning out of control.

After a DUI and team suspension, Brand's agent sends him back to his hometown to rebuild his reputation—and volunteers him to coach a youth baseball team. At the same time, Brand enters a recovery program that has a strong faith emphasis.

Brand is the main character in the new movie *Home Run*, which opens Friday.

Not many men have the skills and opportunities to play professional baseball, but other challenges in Brand's life are common to millions of dads. He's facing the reality of his own selfishness while seeing a need to become a grown-up, responsible man and father. And one major obstacle is his painful childhood and the wounds of his relationship with his dad, who is deceased.

In a scene where Brand has just learned that he didn't make the All-Star team, he's confronted with some of the deeper issues related to his "hurt inside."

Have you made peace with your father's influence in your life? Do you have the nagging feeling that what you do is never quite good enough because of how your father treated you? Do you carry a hurt inside that your father is partially responsible for creating? This reality is played out powerfully in the movie.

If your dad was a negative influence in your life, that can be a huge hurdle to your becoming a great father for your own children. This is such a common and daunting challenge for men

that the theme of reconciling your past runs through much of our work with fathers.

In *Forming a Lifelong Bond: For Dads of Infants*, which was recently updated and made available as an eBook, Ken Canfield includes a chapter about this challenge. It's so foundational that every man coming into the role of fatherhood would do well to work through these issues.

As Ken writes: "Some men carry years of anger around with them. It just sits there, waiting for the right time—or, more accurately, the wrong time—to erupt and splatter everyone around them. The other men live in confusion: a paralysis of the soul. A man in this confusion lives his life without confidence, refusing to trust anyone, emotionally shut down. He has the attitude: don't talk; don't feel; don't trust. His kids can't get in, and he can't or doesn't want to come out."

As dads, we need to realize that our ability to be good fathers is directly related to our relationship with our own dads. As dads, we have an inheritance. It is what we got from our own fathers, and it's what we'll give to our children unless we choose to do differently.

Here are three suggested guidelines.

1. Recognize your father's influence. Identify his impact on you, and get as specific as you can. Inventory his influence in specific areas. How did he show affection, carry out discipline, handle communication, teach values, etc.?

2. Resolve the relationship. There needs to be an event in the relationship that acts as the signpost for a new direction—whether it's a face-to-face discussion, a session with a third party or a visit to his gravesite (as Brand experiences in the movie). This is a time to talk about the relationship and any unresolved feelings, confess your own shortcomings and possibly extend forgiveness.

3. Relate to your father in new ways. You now move on and seek to honor his role in your life—and that might not be easy; he may not cooperate. Still, you are doing everything you can as his son, and that allows you to move on in a positive way and be the father your children need.

I encourage you to get the eBook and read more on each of these steps.

Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Ask your child's mother or a sibling for feedback on ways you are like your father and ways you're not like him.
- Learn about your father *as a son*. What kind of fathering inheritance did he receive from *his* father, and how did shape the kind of father he was for you?
- Write a letter to your dad—even if you don't plan on sending it—where you describe his influence on you and what you appreciate about him.
- Tell your children something positive you learned from your father.

Have you been through a reconciliation with your dad? How did it look? What did you learn that has made you a better father? Join the discussion by leaving a message either below or on 's Facebook page.

Carey Casey *is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization dedicated to changing the culture of fathering in America by enlisting 6.5 million fathers to make the Championship Fathering Commitment. NCF believes every child needs a dad they can count on, and it uses its resources to inspire and equip men to be the involved fathers, grandfathers and father-figures their children need. Subscribe to Casey's weekly email tip by clicking here: I want tips on how to be a great dad who loves, coaches, mentors and inspires my children.*