

The Word 'Church' Creates Misunderstanding

Did you know that the King James Version was *not* the first English translation of the Bible, but the Tyndale Bible was in 1526? What is interesting is that Tyndale never translated the Greek word *ecclesia* as *church*, but *congregation* (congregacion).

He does use the word 'church' twice, but only in reference to pagan temples (see Acts 14:13, 19:37). *Ecclesia* is not used in either of these verses. So, according to Tyndale, a congregation was people who are holy and churches were buildings for religious purposes, including pagan temples.

Churches Are Buildings

The Greek word for church is *kyriakos* and does not appear in the New Testament. It dates back to the third century—meaning it did not exist when the New Testament was written. It comes from the Greek word (meaning “belonging to the Lord”). Sometime in the 300s, people began to refer to buildings where believers met as *kyriakos* or churches (About the time that the anti-Semitic Roman Emperor Constantine began building structures for Christians). And then, the body of believers themselves started to be called “the church.”

Of course, in common vernacular, most of the world associates churches with buildings.

The fact that church (*kyriakos*) does not appear in the New Testament must be the reason Tyndale refused to use it. However, when King James authorized a new translation (in 1611), one of the rules was that the *ecclesia* would not be translated congregation, but church. Why—maybe because they wanted to be consistent with common practice, or maybe it was more sinister—was congregation too Jewish? Let's remember they

also translated Yeshua's brother Jacob as James. Then again, Tyndale also translated Jacob as James.

Ecclesia (the word that is translated 'church' in your Bible) is not a religious word. In Acts 19, it refers to a town council. In verses 32, 39 and 41 the KJV correctly translates the word as assembly, referring to the meeting of the council. However, the more than 100 other times that *ecclesia* appears in the New Testament, translators simply changed the word to *kyriakos* or church. In the same way that believers were part of The Way.

'Way,' though a general word, becomes a specific word—a proper noun. *Ecclesia* simply means “those called to a regular gathering.” For years, believers have said it means “called-out ones”—as in, called out from the world. While I like that, in truth, it means called out to gather for any purpose, as in Acts 19.

Is it possible that the New Testament seeks to elevate the meaning of *ecclesia*, adding a spiritual definition? Sure, in the same way a house can be white without being *the* White House, but still, the word 'church' is nowhere in the texts.

Kehila—Community

The Hebrew word used for *ecclesia* in my Hebrew New Testament is *kehila*, or community/congregation. This, in my opinion, is a much better word, because the community is *people* no matter where they meet. The New Testament congregation is a spiritual house made of people, as Simon Peter says, “*you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house*” (1 Pet. 2:5). In addition, as pointed out by one of my readers, the Old Testament book that we call Ecclesiastes (from *ecclesia*) in Hebrew is Kohelet. Kohelet comes from the word *kehila* or *kahal* (gathering; audience).

Community is also a more Jewish-friendly term. Most Jewish people would not step foot in a church, but they might come to

your community or gathering (especially if the meeting is in a non-religious building, like a home).

I am not maintaining that there was a conspiracy (although, there may have been), but rather that because *ecclesia* was not a religious word and the new word 'church' did have a religious connotation, it became the dominant word. However, I think that the word *ecclesia* (assembly) is a perfect word because at the end of the day, the body of believers is a living community of people, not a building, and that is the word in the New Testament, not church.

Is This a Big Deal?

As long as we know to whom we are referring—the people of God—then maybe not. But the confusion that remains today over whether church is a *building* or a *group of people* stems from the fact *kyriakos* are buildings, not gatherings, while the *ecclesia* are people.

In addition, because the construction of historic church buildings (that the New Testament never encourages us to build) are so closely connected with Christian animosity towards Jews, the less charged word—community, may be preferable.

You tell me. Do you think it is a big deal? Use the comments area below to share your answer.

Editor's note: William Tyndale died for his faith, as he was executed in 1536, while the KJV had the backing of King James ... who do you think was more trustworthy?

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). Ron 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 on April 16.

Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

Do You Hear God in Your Workplace?

God is raising up a new breed of man and woman in the workplace today. We have largely been a people who have operated at a “principle-based level” in regard to our relationship with God.

Our culture has been such a formula-based society that it has penetrated the church with this philosophy. In the workplace movement this is especially true. We often hear of programs like, 10 Steps to Better Church Growth or 5 Ways to Become a Better Leader, etc. that are designed to give us a formula for walking with God or succeeding in our jobs. Don't get me wrong; there is a place for these programs. However, I believe God is calling forth a new kind of workplace believer who is operating at a higher level.

Knowing His Presence

Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt when they did not have water. They began to complain to Moses. Moses cried out to God for help. God told Moses to speak to the rock and water would come from it. In the past, God told him to strike the rock. This was a new paradigm for Moses to “speak” instead of “strike” the rock. Moses disobeyed the Lord but was still able to bring forth water from the rock. *“Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink” (Num 20:7-8).*

Today, we have many believers who refuse to operate at the “listening and obeying” level with God. They would rather use their skill and power only to accomplish their call. This will not produce spiritual fruit for the Kingdom. Rather, it will only produce “Ishmaels,” which is attempting to accomplish something for God in our own strength, the one thing Jesus never did.

Moses recognized he could not effectively lead his people out of Egypt unless he had more than his skill and ability. He had to have God’s presence go with him. The LORD replied, *“My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”*

Then Moses said to him, *“If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”* (Ex 33:14-16).

It is not enough to have God’s Word in our heart. We must have His presence in our lives too. We do not have a relationship with His Word; we have a relationship with Jesus and His Holy Spirit. Some parts of the Body of Christ act as though the Trinity is Father, Son and Holy Scriptures versus the Holy Spirit. Only when this relationship is two-way with the Holy Spirit do we see the power of God reflected through us.

Recently I was visiting a major ministry to discuss co-hosting a major workplace conference. The morning after the meeting I was awakened at 5AM and was led to Exodus 33:15. The Lord was showing me that the conference theme needed to focus on bringing His presence into the workplace.

A few months later I was picking up a friend from the airport in preparation for another workplace conference. My friend begins to tell me this: “The Lord spoke to me on the plane and asked me ‘What will be the way workplace Christians will overcome the shaking that is coming? He asked this several

times of me and then said to me,' "It is only through having his presence that they can overcome the shaking." He then told me to tell Os this immediately upon getting off the plane.'"

My friend told me this when he got off the plane. Before he told me the answer I said, "It is only through His presence—Exodus 33:15." The Lord had been speaking to both of us on this important new paradigm God is speaking to the workplace believer today.

Why Don't We Hear?

Many of us have been taught that we cannot hear the voice of the Lord in our lives. In the first centuries after Christ the Greeks became Christians. However, their focus on knowledge-based systems and oratory skills began to move us away from our early Hebraic roots. You see, Greeks learned wisdom through reason and analysis; Hebrews learned wisdom through obedience. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10).*

Paul addressed this growing trend in the following passage: *"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Corinthians 2:4).* The more we move towards knowledge and intellect, the less we see the power of God manifested in our daily experience.

The Bible is full of Hebraic experiences with God. When God gave Joshua a strategy for defeating Jericho it confronted the logical basis for winning a battle. Imagine telling your generals that the strategy to capture Jericho is to walk around the city seven times and blow a trumpet. Imagine putting all the pros and cons of this option down on a piece of paper and deciding what to do based upon the pros and cons of these options. God confronts our knowledge to test our obedience.

We need to realize that we are a product of a Greek system that encourages us to operate on a reason and analysis basis without the power of God mixed in with our God-given reasoning abilities.

Speak to the Books

A few years ago, my TGIF devotionals were published as a book. Our agreement with the publisher called for us to purchase 1,000 copies of the book. At that time we had few distribution capabilities. We would only get one or two orders of books a day for small quantities from our website. After several months we had many boxes of books sitting in our basement. I was burdened about this. I felt God said I was to do something unusual. I was led to go down and lay hands on my books and pray and to leave the basement." So, I went downstairs and began to pray based upon Mark 11:23 that said, "Speak to the mountain."

"Have faith in God," Jesus answered. "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins" (Mark 11:22-25).

Then, I began to pray: "Lord, these books do us no good here. In the name of Jesus we command these books to leave this office, in Jesus' name!" That afternoon I received a phone call from a workplace ministry in Dallas. They ordered 300 books from us, the largest order we had ever had.

"He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice" (Jn 10:2,3).

"He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do

not hear is that you do not belong to God”(John 8:46-47).

Five Points

I love to tell the story of my friend Emeka Nwankpa from Nigeria. I asked him to speak at a leader’s meeting one time on the idea that prayer changes things in the physical realm. He is a lawyer from Nigeria and had to argue a case before his supreme court. He had five points he had to argue. He prepared for months for this case. On the day of court he met with his wife and junior chamber members of his team.

During his prayer time the Spirit of God spoke to Emeka and said, “Do not argue point 1-4, only argue point 5.”

Now, if I am about to argue such a case before our supreme court, you better believe I want to know the difference between God’s Spirit speaking and another voice speaking. Emeka stood before the judge and said, “Your Lordship, I wish to change my motion and only wish to argue point five in the case.” “Are you sure you want to do that counselor?” said the judge. “Yes, your lordship,” said Emeka. He proceeds to argue point five and sat down.

The opposing attorney stood up and for 12 minutes could not seem to get his words out. He mumbled, then said a few other things that seemed irrelevant and then told the judge, “Your lordship, it is unfortunate my learned friend did not present points 1-4 in this case. I wish to yield the case.”

You see, he had prepared for 1-4 and not for point 5. My friend Emeka won the case by listening to the Spirit of God.

God will speak in the daily grind of our workplace callings if we allow Him to. Invite the Holy Spirit into your work life and listen to what He might say.

... those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Rom 8:15).

Os Hillman is author of Change Agent and TGIF Today God Is First devotional.

Are You Prepared for Persecution?

This week was a monumental one in Israel for the body of believers in Yeshua. It could easily go into the book of Acts alongside the story of the angel of the Lord opening up the prison doors to free the apostles.

Only this time, the angel of the Lord was *closing* the prison door, for life, on a man who tried to kill God's modern-day apostles.

The man who has come to be known as the "Jewish Terrorist," Jack Teitel, was sentenced to 80 years in prison for multiple murders and bombings. One of those bombings was at the home of a Messianic Jewish family. Teitel targeted the Ortiz family because they lead a Messianic congregation and are very active in evangelism to both Jews and Arabs.

I have personally been with David Ortiz on some of his radical missions for the Lord. I've gone with him to the border of the West Bank, as he waited for a Palestinian Christian pastor, to appear out of the woods. David was bringing him some supplies, mostly clothing for his congregation.

The pastor appeared, gratefully took the supplies, then disappeared into the woods again. It was a clandestine mission, for sure. David told me, later, that pastor is sick with cancer and is persecuted heavily by the ruling Palestinian Authority.

I also remember a couple of years ago when Maoz Publishing printed 50,000 copies of the book, *Betrayed* by Stan Telchin, in Hebrew. The short book, about a Jewish man who came to faith in Yeshua, is an excellent resource to give out to seeking Israelis. Maoz sent notices to every congregation in Israel, that they could come and take as many copies of the book as they wanted, to give away for free.

In the end, only two congregational leaders showed up that day. Howard Bass from a congregation in Beersheva and David Ortiz.

Not surprisingly both Howard and David have suffered violent persecution for their boldness of faith.

It's Only Just Begun

So while we did experience a victory this week, the battle is far from over. Jack Teitel won't be able to hurt Messianic Jews anymore, but he was hardly alone in his violent ideology.

Teitel admitted to the court that he used to attend meetings with the group Yad L'Achim. He also admitted to volunteering for the group. While Yad L'Achim denies telling Teitel to carry out violent acts, there has been no indication they disagreed with anything he did.

Yad L'Achim proudly boasts of their work to stop any activity by Messianic Jews, anywhere in Israel. That could mean many things: Bringing a crowd to storm a congregation on a Shabbat morning or following a group on an outreach and grabbing their materials and tearing them up; throwing stones at people trying to share the Gospel; infiltrating the government's department of Interior and interfering with believers who want to immigrate to Israel; hanging up posters with believers' names, photos and addresses all over Israel; and on and on and on ...

And worst of all, did you know that Yad L'Achim is a registered nonprofit organization in America, that people like

Jack Teitel can make tax-deductible donations to support Yad L'Achim? All with the blessing of the American government!

Where are the believers in America to rise up and call their Congressman to demand this stop immediately? Where is the outrage? Is the church in America asleep?

Responding in Love

Perhaps even more heartening than the sentencing that came this week for Teitel from an Israeli court, was the response of the Ortiz family afterwards. As they gave interviews on Israeli television and to Israeli newspapers, they spoke of their forgiveness towards Teitel and were unapologetic for their faith in Yeshua.

They have been through a fire like most of us will never know in our lives. God chose to use their family in an extraordinary way to glorify Himself.

They have endured five years of hell—hospitals and courtrooms and violence and ostracism. Yet they have responded with only love and faith.

Would you do the same? Are you ready to be hated for your faith in Yeshua?

Will you rejoice like the apostles if you are beaten and imprisoned?

Have you truly counted the cost for what your faith could mean to your life one day? If not, you should.

“And the high priest asked them, saying, ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!’ But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’” (Acts 5:28-29)

Chaim Goldberg is the director of media for Maoz Israel and

writes a weekly column for Charisma's Standing With Israel website.

Raw Fruit May Not Be Linked to Lower Blood Pressure

People who eat more raw fruits or drink juice do not necessarily have lower blood pressure, according to a new study that goes against previous evidence.

Larger, more rigorous studies have found that eating more fruits and vegetables does lower blood pressure over time, but the specific role of fruit remained unknown, lead author Dr. Linda Oude-Griep told Reuters Health in an email.

Based on the new results, it is unclear if eating more fruit will influence blood pressure, said Oude-Griep, of the Imperial College London School of Public Health.

Oude-Griep and her coauthors analyzed data from a study of 4,680 middle-aged men and women randomly selected from Japan, China, U.S. and U.K.

Participants recalled what they had eaten the previous day two days in a row, having blood pressure measurements taken as well, then repeated the process three weeks later. Their blood pressures averaged at or just below 120/80, the safe cutoff point according to the Centers for Disease Control, but people with higher measurements were included.

The researchers calculated each person's fruit and fruit juice consumption as grams per 1000 calories of food eaten.

People in the U.S. ate the least raw fruit, averaging 52

grams, equivalent to half an apple, per 1000 calories, compared to 68 grams in China, the country with highest consumption. Fruit juice was not commonly consumed in the Asian countries; in the U.S., the average was 46 grams, or less than a cup.

For the group as a whole, there was no association between fruit and blood pressure. When the researchers considered Japan and China alone, blood pressure actually increased with more fruit, but the change was almost imperceptible.

But the study was small and only looked at one group of people at one point in time, so the results have limitations and the door is open for more research, Oude-Griep said.

“The main limitation of this study is that dietary intake was assessed on only a single day, and that is not a good representation of a person’s usual diet,” Dr. Walter Willett told Reuters Health by email.

Previous studies which found a decrease in blood pressure followed individual eating patterns over longer periods of time and were probably more reliable, said Willett, chair of the nutrition department at Harvard School of Public Health in Boston.

Other differences may have also played a role. In the new study, high fruit consumers were more often women, older, more educated, less likely to smoke or drink alcohol, and tended to have healthier diets overall. People who ate more fruit got more vitamin C, fiber, potassium and magnesium, according to the study.

Fruit juices contain lots of rapidly absorbed sugars that might offset some of the benefits of fruit itself, Willett said.

“My main concern is that this article should not dissuade people from eating fruit, which has increasingly been found to

be part of a healthy diet (along with vegetables),” said Dr. Martha Grogan, a cardiologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

Most doctors don’t expect eating more fruit to lower blood pressure by itself, but achieving a healthy weight does lower blood pressure, and eating more fruit and vegetables is a part of that process, Grogan told Reuters Health by email.

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Keep the Door Open for Your Teen

“Dad, aren’t you going to open the door?”

One morning not long ago, I heard that from my fifteen-year-old son, Chance.

We have several routines we go through every morning before he leaves for school. One is sitting together for a few minutes to read some wisdom and maybe talk for a minute. We’ve been doing that probably seven or eight years.

But lately there’s another routine that’s been taking place not long after that, and it’s really no big deal ... or so I thought.

So that morning, we finished reading and then Chance left the room to do whatever else he does to get ready. After a few minutes, I heard him say from the front of the house, “Dad...?”

“Yeah?”

“Are you going to open the door?”

I said, “What’re you talking about?”

And he said again, “Aren’t you going to open the front door?”

I was thinking, You’re almost 16; you’re as tall as I am now. I’m pretty sure you can open your own door!

I’d forgotten about the other part of our morning routine. He leaves pretty early, so I usually turn the light on there by the front door, open it, kiss his forehead, give him a hug, and say something like, “Hey, you’re a winner. And you have a great life and great responsibility ahead of you.” Some word of encouragement that’s on my heart that day.

I guess I flash back to my days playing football, and imagine giving him a positive word before he runs out the tunnel and on the field before a big game. In many ways, we do send our children out to battle every day.

Anyway, he reminded me about that, and it struck me as a sign that he places some value on it. *He wanted his dad to open the door!*

He didn’t *need* me to. He could have turned on the light; thank God, the electric bill was paid. And as I said, he could have opened the door ... but he wanted *me* to. For my son, there’s something significant about his dad opening the door and sending him out into the world.

Maybe it’s a sign that he still needs me and wants me to be part of his life—even as he gets older and more independent. For me, it affirmed my role as a dad.

And often with teenagers we have to grasp for any kind of affirmation we can get. Teens might not say “I love you” or “Thank you” as often. But sometimes they do say, “Hey, Dad,

can you help me check the oil in my car?" Or, "Hey, Dad, can you take me to practice?" "Dad, will you open the door for me?"

Maybe they just want some help, but sometimes I believe they also want our presence. They want to be reassured that we're still watching out for them and taking care of them.

Adolescence is often a confusing time for teens *and for their fathers*. Sometimes it seems they don't want to be seen with you or have anything to do with you.

And many times it would be easy to just give up. But don't do it. Right now your teenager needs your love and acceptance—maybe more than ever before. And believe me, you might need a few good times to think back on as you navigate the ups and downs that often come during the teen years.

Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Find or come up with an encouraging saying or quote or Scripture verse to leave your child with as he or she walks out the door to school each day.
- Want to be closer with your teenager? Flexibility might be a huge factor. You may have to participate in some odd-seeming activities—and maybe at odd hours—to be part of his or her world.
- Really try to *relax* and bring *humor* to the daily interactions and challenges of having a teenager. It will make a difference!
- Also really try to notice and point out the positives in your teen. He/she really needs your validation and encouragement.
- Take the courageous, loving step of apologizing to your child. "Katie, I know I've been busy in my own world recently, and I'm sorry." "Brandon, I know I've been under a lot of stress from work, and I've been short with you. It's the wrong approach. Will you forgive me?"

We want to hear from has helped you connect with your teenager? Please join the discussion below or on our Father's Facebook page.

5 Ways to Have Fun at Home

As parents, we are required to wear a lot of different hats. We are providers, protectors, teachers, and advisors. In addition, we are also entertainment directors.

The family that plays together stays together? That might not be a guarantee, but it sure goes a long way towards helping the cause. Now more than ever, families are distracted away from each other in countless ways. We can counter that by planning activities that bring the whole family together in a fun way.

All it takes is some creativity and a little bit of effort, and, before you know it, your family will be sharing laughs and bonding closer to each other. Consider ideas that best suit the tastes of your own family, but here are a few gems to help you get started.

The House Olympics

If you are a family that loves to compete, this is the idea for you. The "sock slide" is a personal favorite. Find a slippery surface and compete for distance and style. Mom is the judge. Mom is usually the most fair. The Nerf basketball long distance shot is also fantastic. Another great event is the relay race around the house. Let your mind go and have a blast.

The Family Garage Dance

String a few lights, perhaps throw up a disco ball, play some terribly cheesy music, and have a dance party right at home. Even if you don't like to dance, which some of us don't at all, it is just your family. It is very good to let loose around your children sometimes. This is especially true with teenagers. Psychologically speaking, it releases a lot of built-up tension.

The Indoor Camping Adventure

Almost all children love to go camping. What is more fun, and snake free, than camping inside your own home? Make it as authentic as you can by turning off the breakers and bringing out the battery-powered lanterns. Set the tent up in the living room. No television allowed, no cell phones except to take some pictures, and if you have a fireplace you can roast marshmallows. A free family activity and you even save money on the electric bill.

The Cooking Contest

Dad can't cook? Your cooking partner is a toddler? Too bad; it is the family cooking contest so you better figure out something. Divide up into teams or compete individually. Have each come up with one signature dish of any kind to be submitted for judging by mom or an outside source. The winner gets a gift card or dinner out at their choice of restaurant. Not many things bring as much joy as food.

The Great Movie Marathon

For those that prefer something a little less active, this is an excellent choice. Do it right, however, by having lots of popcorn and candy at the ready. Choose a theme the whole family will enjoy based on ages and your own particular tastes. It requires at least three movies to be considered a marathon, so settle in for the long haul. Extra benefits would be blowing up air mattresses and breaking out the blankets and pillows. Pajamas are required attire at your theatre. It is

almost certain your wife will love you for this idea.

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

Athletes Know No Age Boundaries

Turn on ESPN2 when the CrossFit Games are airing or simply Google "CrossFit" and you'll no doubt be blown away by the fit physiques of those who could very well pass as Greek deities—or at least demi-gods à la Achilles—in a different time and place.

However, in *this* time and place of 21st-century America, those mere mortals populating motivational fitness posters and entertaining awestruck spectators with their Herculean feats of strength do share at least one thing in common with the ancient Greeks' pantheon of gods: they're in the minority.

The majority of us don't train with dreams of qualifying for the Olympics or CrossFit Games motivating our every rep. We don't strive to be the strongest or the fastest. We *do* strive to be healthy for tomorrow, to become stronger than we were yesterday and, simply put, to feel good today.

If you turn off ESPN and visit a real-life CrossFit box, you will immediately find that there are more people there who resemble Average Joes than Avengers. Sure you've got your former collegiate football and soccer players like my friends Jackson and Li, doing overhead squats and double-unders with ease, but you've also got men and women who graduated college decades ago—athletes in their own right—working out alongside them.

The Baby Boomer generation comprises the true heroes (of the non-mythic sort!) of CrossFit, in my opinion. When they could provide myriad excuses for throwing in the proverbial towel and taking a load off in favor of sedentary pastimes and ho-hum hobbies, they keep working hard and sweating often for great health.

Recently on my Blog Talk Radio program I interviewed one of the oldest athletes (yes, athlete) I coach at CrossFit 925. Merrily is fifty years old and will tell you she feels like she's in her 30s again, and that she's fitter than she's ever been.

When she started CrossFit eleven months ago in my garage, she couldn't do a single sit-up by herself. When she tried performing a 45-pound deadlift (while I wasn't watching!), she had to sit out the remainder of the workout and schedule a chiropractor appointment for a strained back muscle. When I announced that part of the workout called for a few 200-meter runs, she began to bawl. (Okay, I made that part up. But she *really* didn't like running!)

Fast forward to today and Merrily is one of the strongest women in the gym. She can do sit-ups 'til the cows come home ... holding a fourteen-pound medicine ball, I might add. She presses 110 pounds overhead with ease. She deadlifts 250 pounds, and her back feels peachy afterward. And believe it or not, on the days she can't make it to CrossFit, she emails me her "Map My Run" results which show she's running nearly two

miles at a time in less than a half-hour.

Yes, Merrily is like Wonder Woman to me. At 50, she is pushing herself daily to be the fittest version of herself, and not so she can flaunt a two-piece bathing suit, but so she can live fully and serve others with her gifts and talents every day of her life with confidence, strength, energy, and vitality. She is living proof that it is never too late to discover one's inner athlete.

"He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!" (Psalm 103:5, NLT)

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](#).

Concert to Honor The Holy Land

Carnegie Hall has been host to many special events and some of the biggest acts in the entertainment business. The nation of Israel will take center stage at the world-famous venue Thursday night during "Honoring Israel at Carnegie Hall," hosted by renowned pianist Dino Kartsonakis and his wife, Cheryl.

Other performers will include: Grammy and Dove Award-winning Christian artists Sandi Patty and Larnelle Harris, the

Philadelphia Boys Choir, Denver and the Mile High Orchestra, operatic tenor Daniel Rodriguez and the Christian Cultural Center Chorale.

The Kartsonakis' have made it a priority in their lives and the influence of their careers to work toward peace for Israel.

"Anti-Semitism is on the rise, and Israel is now surrounded by nations committed to her destruction," Dino Kartsonakis said in a news release. "My friends, it is vital that we stand together.

"This is a very special moment as this amazing group of people comes together to honor Israel. In this hour of our history, it is essential that we [are] united around our shared values."

Robert Stearns, founder of Eagles' Wings and a leader in Jewish-Christian relations, said the evening will be an historic one.

"The evening of music and celebration in the historic Carnegie Hall is a statement of support, friendship and commitment," Stearns said. "We hope to make it clear that our bond with Israel is stronger than ever."

Proceeds from the event will go to feed hungry Jews, Arabs and Druze in Israel through the humanitarian nonprofit organization, Hope for Zion.

Harris has made four trips to Israel, which inspired his hymn, "I Walked Today Where Jesus Walked."

"That song always brings me to tears. I remember being in the Garden of Gethsemane on one visit to the Holy Land and being struck by the fact that I was standing in one of the last areas that Jesus stood before He was taken to be crucified," Harris told .

Justice Prevails in Trial of Terrorism Attack on Jewish Family

A little more than five years ago, a young Israeli boy opened what looked like a holiday package left on his doorstep. The package was a bomb. It was one in a series of attacks targeting the family of Ami Ortiz and others.

On Tuesday, an Israeli court brought the case to closure by sentencing American-born Jack Teitel, who perpetrated that attack and several others.

An amazing part of the story deals with the forgiving spirit shown by Ami Ortiz, his parents and siblings.

Jack Teitel walked into the Jerusalem courtroom unrepentant Tuesday, saying he had no regrets.

The judge responded with two life sentences for two murder cases and an additional 30 years for other crimes, including the attempted murder of the Ortiz family.

“We hope that this heavy punishment will deter any others who might think of doing any kind of terror activities or participate in such,” said Jerusalem District Attorney Sagi Ofire.

Teitel’s reign of terror included killing two Arabs and planting a bomb at the home of Messianic pastors David and Leah Ortiz.

The explosion nearly killed then 15-year-old Ami. Miraculously, he survived.

At one point, Teitel claimed he did God's will, but during sentencing the judge said his "holy" work had become dust under his feet, and his actions contradicted the values of the Jewish state.

Part of his mission included eradicating Jews who believe Jesus is the Jewish Messiah – from Israel. Ironically, his actions spread the news of Messianic Jews throughout the country.

"The Lord has, in His mercy, chosen us to suffer for His name sake that His name should be lifted up because that's the only thing we take with us, only Jesus," his father told CBN News.

His mother, Leah, says God told her from the outset to pray for the man who almost killed her son.

"He really dealt with me from the very beginning concerning that and He gave me His love for Jack Teitel," she said. "I didn't even know who Jack Teitel was, but He gave me the love of God and told me to pray for the person who did this and pray for his salvation and that's what I did."

"Have you and David, Ami and the rest of the family forgiven him," CBN News asked her.

"All of us, from the very beginning," she responded without hesitation. "Otherwise, we would have been prisoners along with him. We would have been destroyed. We wouldn't have been able to receive any kind of healing in our lives whatsoever and so we did. We all forgave him."

The family's lawyer, Yossi Greiber, called them "an amazing family."

"For me, I consider them as heroes," Greiber said. "To deal with [at] the same time as the medical situation and with a son who almost died in the explosion...on the other hand [to] deal with the psychological situation with the family—all the

house was destroyed by the explosives—and the legal issues, and they dealt with that with a good sensitivity,” he said. “They are an amazing family.”

Yet the Ortiz family credits the prayers of believers from around the world for carrying them through this horrendous time.

“It was their prayers that were able to lift us up and keep us afloat,” Ortiz said. “Without the prayers, we wouldn’t be able to do it.”

His mother says she came to know God more closely than ever.

“I have never known the Lord as Emanuel [God with us] as I have through this situation,” she said. “He has stayed so close to us. We have experienced the Body of Christ around the world that is unbelievable, how everyone pulled together.”

David and Leah Ortiz were relieved at the verdict, grateful Teitel cannot harm other families and hope one day to visit him in jail to share God’s love.

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

Aliyah Marks ‘Homecoming’ for American

Many people ask how I came to the decision to make aliyah to Israel. For me, it wasn’t so much a question of *if* I wanted to move, but rather, *when*.

More importantly, it was the incredible connection to Israel that my family always encouraged throughout my life.

I grew up in a modern Orthodox house, behind a white picket fence, just outside of Boston. I went to Jewish day school, synagogue, and was part of many Jewish youth groups, but the central theme to my childhood was Zionism. Any time someone moved to Israel, or joined the army, my parents had cause for celebration, always telling me and my sister how jealous they were and how much they wish they could "return home."

My parents used to take my sister and me on trips to Israel, showing us apartments they had rented, kibbutzim on which they had volunteered, and introducing us to old friends. While we did the "touristy" visits as well, they were never from the perspective of the tourist. Rather, we traveled on the public buses, stayed overnight with friends, and entered and exited the country on our Israeli passports.

As we got older, it wasn't enough for us to just come to visit. We had to do something constructive for the country while we were here.

My sister and I volunteered on kibbutzim, on army bases and in schools, all the while improving our Hebrew every day, having just jumped into a world where there was no English. We learned to get ourselves around the country, always asking for directions and discovering new bus lines. Getting us to this comfort level was something our parents aimed for.

They sent us alone for months at a time, with a list of numbers we could call if we needed help—and that was it. Why? That's what they did.

My mother, Anne, came to Israel in 1974 at the age of 17. She spent summers, semesters, years in Israel before she made aliyah, living here for seven years after. My father made aliyah three weeks after graduating university, having been only once. Their volunteering on kibbutzim and service in the army formed their connection and strengthened their love for this country that was their home away from home.

Although I had come with my parents, I didn't fall in love with Israel until I spent a summer here by myself. I started my trip with a whirlwind experience on Birthright, and then extended my stay to live in an absorption center in Jerusalem and to volunteer in a kindergarten. After that, I spent a week sleeping on a friend's couch in Tel Aviv, meeting new people and spending hours on the beach.

Then, I followed in my parents' footsteps.

I returned to my mother's adopted family on their kibbutz—a family that is still my closest family in Israel—and volunteered for three weeks cooking in the kitchen, making cheeses and packaging milk bags for the kibbutz store.

I remember vividly having a major breakdown a week or so before my flight. I didn't want to leave Israel. I was happy. I had found my home—a home I had been searching for my whole life. I was at the kibbutz and had just finished a day's work when I ran out searching for my adopted grandmother, someone I knew I could cry to, someone who would understand.

Instead, I found my adopted grandfather who works at the kibbutz store and I unloaded all my feelings in three minutes of tears. He had been through the same thing with my mother several times, and knew to take me home. There, he and his wife sat me down and calmed my nerves.

I made a plan to email my parents and tell them I wasn't coming back to the States and that they shouldn't come to the airport to pick me up. In response to these emails, neither of my parents was shocked, nor did they tell me to come back and to first finish college.

They said ok.

They understood my feelings. They told me to take my time figuring myself out. They asked me to think about making a plan for the future.

In the end, I got on the plane. I cried the whole 13-hour flight. But I went back to the States. The next semester at school was one of my worst. I cried most of the time, received bad grades, and by halfway through, I had not gotten Israel out of my head.

So I decided to go back.

By then it was too late to apply for a semester abroad, but not too late to take a semester off. Once I had done my research, found a program and convinced my parents that it was a good idea to drop out of school, I was on my way.

The program I had found gave me all the freedom I wanted. It placed me in an Ulpan class to further my Hebrew speaking, gave me internship experience working with special needs children, and set me up with a job working as a waitress at the Hilton Hotel. Other than that, I was living in a Tel Aviv apartment with five other girls and having an incredible time.

At the end of those six months I was determined to finish school within the next year so I could come back as soon as possible. Because of this motivation, I completed a year and a half's worth of classes in only 12 months.

While it was a very stressful year in America, I jumped into it with the idea that it would be my last.

Three weeks after my graduation, I was on a plane back home, to Israel. Since then, every single day has been an adventure. While not all of it has been easy or fun, I know more and more that I made the right decision.

Even though I know that making aliyah was the right choice for me, I understand those for whom it is not the right decision. Not everyone can, or for that matter wants to, pick their lives up and move across the world. It seems as though this decision is what unfortunately divides people today.

Maybe this has been a result of the lack of options on how to develop a connection to Israel if you don't have parents like mine. How lucky that today there is Israel Forever, an organization that helps people connect to Israel without lifting a finger.

And, just maybe, by sharing my whole story with you, it will encourage others to appreciate the little steps that help us each ignite that spark of Israel love, *Ahavat Yisrael*, we sometimes take for granted.

For the original article, visit .