

Man in the Mirror Sets 2013 Agenda

After FUEL, our annual meeting, we are so encouraged about the vision and mission God has given us to disciple men through the churches of America. And you are important to the mission. So here are a few updates.

First, I'm so pleased to announce that our Board of Directors has elected David Delk, our president, to become the Co-Chief Executive Officer with me. I remain Chairman of the Board. David's steady and professional leadership has meant that our staff, churches and other ministries can trust what we tell them. And trust is, after all, the true currency of getting things done. His promotion is well deserved. Congratulations, David!

Another notable milestone is the soft launch of "The Journey to Biblical Manhood"—a comprehensive, but flexible process for a church to disciple all its men over time. We provide the hospital, but the patients always belong to the church. And the church is always in control of the treatment. Learn more at [.org](#).

Now, here's an update on the mission.

As you well know, the "men problem" has become a crisis that is virtually out of control. The devil has plundered our men. The collateral damage among families is staggering. Men under 40 are especially vulnerable to an alien worldview that is gutting the institutions of marriage and family. Our government agencies, social sector organizations and businesses are overrun trying to cope with the downstream damage of an increasingly fatherless, angry and dysfunctional generation.

Here's what needs to be said: Anything less than a plan to

disciple every willing man in every willing church is a moral failure of historic proportion.

But, unfortunately, we also have a “church problem.” The mission of the church, of course, is to make disciples. We love the church. Our only mission is to help churches disciple men. But the vast majority of churches have no comprehensive strategy nor enough leaders to disciple their men. As a result, they have not been able to cope with the changing climate among men. Yet these same churches know that there can be no meaningful solution to the problems our world faces unless men are equipped to be godly men, husbands, fathers and citizens. But isn't it be reasonable to ask why God would give a church more men if they haven't been able to disciple the ones they already have?

How can we fix these two problems? We know what needs to be done and we have a plan. Churches that use our “No Man Left Behind” model reported a 48 percent increase in men's attendance in, on average, 2 1/2 years; and an 84 percent increase in men's discipleship in that same period. When these results passed statistical analysis, we realized God had given us a trust to steward. We knew we had a duty to proliferate this model to as many churches as wanted it.

To spread this training on how to disciple men, we started an initiative 18 months ago to hire 330 Area Directors (ADs)—one for every 1,000 churches. Of course, we did not know if the idea would work—only that it was needed. I am happy to report that we have enough data after appointing 52 ADs to conclude the idea is working. While we have not reached critical mass, all the numbers make sense after 18 months.

Based on actual results, we have projections that show we will have 330 ADs by 2020 with more than 1,000,000 new men disciplined, and a structure in place to disciple an additional 500,000 new men per year beginning in 2021. It is exciting to see the kingdom potential.

Our vision is “for every church to disciple every man.” Over the last 25 years, Man in the Mirror has helped churches impact more than 12,000,000 men with 20 staff operating out of a nondescript strip shopping center in Casselberry, Fla. We can readily see how this plan to mobilize 330 ADs should eclipse those results.

We believe that if God gives us success, this initiative to disciple men would reverse the moral and spiritual erosion of our men and their families for the next generation.

Recently I’ve been teaching our staff and new ADs about what it means that we are a servant ministry. For a servant, the question isn’t “What do I want?” It’s “What does the Master need?” This initiative is something we believe the Master has called us to sacrifice our lives to achieve.

Our priorities for 2013 include:

- Increasing the number of AD applications.
- Training and equipping ADs to succeed.
- A second round of financing. The first round of financing in the amount of \$1,750,000 got us off the ground. Now we need a second round of \$3,000,000 to cover 2013, 2014 and 2015, after which the AD initiative generates positive cash flow. That means *we’ll help churches disciple 1,000,000 men between now and 2020 for less than \$5 per man of donor money coming to headquarters.* We think this is smart money.
- Website upgrades that will make the site more complete and easier to use.
- New database system—our current system is over a decade old.

We want to stand with you in any way we can as you disciple men. We really are in this together.

Obama: 'Peace Must Come to the Holy Land'

U.S. President Barack Obama touched down in Israel at midday on Wednesday in a visit that U.S. officials said was aimed at improving relations with the Israeli public. Upon landing and after stepping out of his plane, Obama's first words to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres were, "It's a lovely day. Great to see you, great to be here ... It's good to get away from Congress."

Peres welcomed the president with the words, "We face the same dangers, we share the same hopes."

As Obama was guided down a receiving line of Israeli politicians, religious leaders and other notables, he lingered when he met Yesh Atid Chairman Yair Lapid, head of Israel's second-largest party, and gave him a hearty handshake. The two had an animated exchange. On Lapid's new political career, Obama said, "My wife always says, 'Be careful what you wish for.'"

Netanyahu, Obama and Peres each delivered a short speech at the airport. "Thank you for standing by Israel at this time of historic change in the Mideast," the prime minister told Obama.

Netanyahu called the visit a "historic moment": "I come here today with a simple message. Thank you," he said. "Baruch haba leyisrael—welcome to Israel. The people of Israel are honored to have you visit."

Netanyahu said he hoped that Obama would "get to see a different side of this tiny land."

"I look forward to working with you over the next four years," Netanyahu, whose relationship with Obama has often been testy, said.

"Thank you for standing by Israel at this time of historic change in the Middle East," Netanyahu said. "Thank you for unequivocally affirming Israel's sovereign right to defend itself by itself against any threat."

In what many observers describe as a reversal of his Cairo speech four years ago—in which he said that Israel was born from the Holocaust—on the tarmac of Ben-Gurion International Airport, Obama emphasized the historic link of the Jewish people to the Holy Land. Obama stressed the "rebirth" of Israel as the historic Jewish homeland.

He opened his speech with the word "Shalom," earning a round of applause, and then said in Hebrew, "Tov lihiyot shuv ba'aretz" ("It's good to be in Israel again"). This is Obama's third visit, but his first as president.

"We stand together because peace must come to the Holy Land," he said.

"I know that in stepping foot on this land, I walk with you on the historic homeland of the Jewish people. More than 3,000 years ago, the Jewish people lived here, tended the land here, prayed to God here. And after centuries of exile and persecution, unparalleled in the history of man, the founding of the Jewish state of Israel, was a rebirth, a redemption, unlike any in history. Today, the sons of Abraham and the daughters of Sarah are fulfilling the dream of the ages: to be masters of their own fate in their own sovereign state. Just as we have for these past 65 years, the United States is proud to stand with you as your strongest ally and your greatest friend," Obama said.

The U.S. "stands with Israel because it is in our fundamental security interest ... That's why the United States was the very

first nation" to recognize Israel 65 years ago.

Economy and Trade Minister Naftali Bennett said Obama's speech was "important because it recognizes the deep historical connection between the people of Israel and the land of Israel."

Obama moved on to visit the Iron Dome anti-missile battery that had been set up at the airport.

"Where do you want to start?" Obama asked IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz.

"Follow the red line," said Gantz, to which Obama joked, "Bibi is always talking about red lines." Obama was referring to Netanyahu's position against the Iranian nuclear drive, and the disagreement with Obama over when a military strike against Iran would become necessary.

"You've done a great job," the president told officers near the missile system. Iron Dome, funded in part by the U.S. budget, intercepted 84 percent of missiles fired at Israel during last November's eight-day conflict with Hamas.

Obama did not come alone. His delegation includes 600 people, who are staying at Jerusalem's King David Hotel. The visit is being secured by 15,000 police officers.

Obama administration officials on Tuesday said that Obama's visit is intended to improve his stature among the Israeli public, in addition to improving relations with Netanyahu.

This is "a very important trip for the president. It's his first trip to Israel since becoming president and the first foreign trip of his second term in office," said Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes.

"We felt like this was an important opportunity for the president to go to the region," Rhodes said.

“There will be a broad agenda for our governments to address while the president is in Israel, including our efforts to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, the ongoing situation in Syria, the developments in the wider region that pose both opportunities and security challenges, and efforts to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace among the agenda.

“We thought it was very important for him to speak directly to Israelis.”

Sources within the White House emphasized that Obama would try to relay the message that the U.S. is 100 percent committed to Israel’s security. On Tuesday, White House spokesman Jay Carney said that the decision not to speak at the Knesset was not an omission. Rather, the president’s “message will be heard by Israelis who are both members of the Knesset and who are not.”

Obama’s speech on Thursday to students at the International Convention Center in Jerusalem was meant to relate that message.

Carney said that the president would also meet with Israeli leaders and senior members of the government.

Obama was expected to meet with Netanyahu on Wednesday and hold a work meeting with him focusing on Iran, the civil war in Syria and the deadlocked negotiations with the Palestinians. Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon and Secretary of State John Kerry were also scheduled to take part in the meeting. Kerry arrived in Israel Tuesday night.

Before the meeting, Netanyahu was expected to present the president with a gift: a gold-plated nanochip engraved with the declarations of independence of Israel and the United States. During the day, the U.S. president was also a guest of Israel’s president in a festive ceremony featuring Israel’s children.

On Wednesday night, Obama is scheduled to have dinner with Netanyahu and his wife, Sara. Chef Shalom Kadosh has prepared a menu that includes Jerusalem artichoke ravioli, beef filet and a selection of spring vegetables. On Thursday evening, Obama is scheduled to dine in the President's Residence and be presented with a presidential decoration for his unique contribution to Israel's security.

In an interview with CNN on Tuesday, Peres was asked about Netanyahu and Obama's relationship. He replied that the two leaders understood that even if they hailed from different philosophies, they were working toward the same goal.

"When it comes to the goal, there are no differences," he said.

Obama was also scheduled to meet Labor Chairwoman Shelly Yachimovich, even though she has not yet officially assumed the position of opposition leader. Peres is also scheduled to attend the meeting. Throughout the course of Obama's visit, many roads will be closed to traffic, particularly in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Police opened an information hotline for the public.

Dad, Would You Rather Have Joy or Cash?

I know nearly all dads, me included, are challenged by the daily struggle between work and family as they compete for our time, attention and energy. Maybe the better question is, "Is your life reflecting your priorities?"

I like how this was addressed a few years back by Jonathan

Clements in the *Wall Street Journal*, where he looked at some studies related to the question, “Can money buy happiness?”

To sum up the findings, money does make a difference in a sense of happiness for people who have a very low income. But for people who do have enough to meet their families’ needs, wealthy people did not report being any happier than people who earn an average living.

In addition, people with higher incomes were more likely to be anxious or angry, and they tend to spend more time working, commuting and engaging in other activities they consider to be “obligatory”—all of which are associated with lower levels of happiness.

Clements interviewed several experts on the whole work-family challenge. He summarized their insights into four action points—and I’ve added some thoughts more specifically for dads. These are worth considering:

1. Keep your commute short. Commuting reduces your time at home—not to mention that driving in traffic can be a big source of stress. Taking a job closer to home or moving closer to your job might make sense for you.

2. Choose time over money. As you grow older, you realize *time* really is the most precious resource. Cutting back on work time, even if you’re earning less money, allows you to spend time with your family and do other things you enjoy. And eventually you’ll realize that your relationships are what matter most—not all these material things or making money, which is what we often spend our time on.

3. Be sensible with leisure time. Whether you cut back on work time or not, be a good manager of the time you have left in your week. Trade solo, passive activities for more active things you can do with your family members or friends. Your opportunities to spend time with your kids are disappearing faster than you realize, so *make the most of them*.

4. Spend your money wisely. Material things wear out and/or their excitement quickly fades. A better investment might be activities and trips with loved ones, because they are more likely to create cherished memories and provide more lasting satisfaction.

You can read Mr. Clements' entire article [here](#).

Dads, true joy comes from loving, connected relationships, and the sooner we realize it—and act on it—the better. We must not strive to succeed at everything else in life at the expense of our family members.

So, would you rather have joy or cash? Answer the question with your actions—today and every day. Enjoy your kids. They're among God's greatest gifts.

More Action Points for Dads on the Journey

- Is your child facing a specific challenge or approaching a special opportunity? What adjustments can you make in your work schedule to be there more to support him or her?
- Make sure there are some times every week when you silence your phone, put away the laptop, turn off the TV, and simply focus on your child.
- Talk with your wife, or someone else who knows you well, and ask: "How can I show my children that I'm committed to them?" (Then ask your kids, if you're brave.)
- Make a commitment to be there with your child at a key point during the day—dinnertime, bedtime, breakfast, or maybe reading together.
- Look at your goals for the next ten years. Are there things you can sacrifice or put on hold for the sake of your family?

What adjustments have you made to make sure your family is getting your best time and energy? Please join the discussion by leaving a message below.

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 that every child needs a dad they can count on, and uses its resources to inspire and equip men to be the involved fathers, grandfathers and father figures their children need. Subscribe to his weekly email tip by clicking here: [I want tips on how to be a great dad who loves, coaches, mentors and inspires my children.](#)

Click here for the original article at [.](#)

5 Reasons Why Hard Work Trumps Divorce

We all get tired. Tired *from* work, tired *from* being a dad, tired *from* being a husband, tired *from* trying to make everything balance.

Then sometimes, less often, we get tired *of* work, tired *of* parenting, and tired *of* marriage. We feel overwhelmed, backed against the wall, despondent. We want a break from conflict and we want life to be easy again (as if it ever was...).

Sometimes we want out, and sometimes we have specific reasons that have broken our hearts and our trust. That's when getting a divorce can look like the answer to all the tiredness and pain and misunderstanding and aggravation.

But here's the thing. Life is hard sometimes. Parenting is hard sometimes. Marriage is hard sometimes, too. But, and this is true pretty much every time the question comes up, working

hard at marriage is way better than divorce.*

It might be hard to believe, especially when you find yourself in a tough place, but it's true. Here are 5 reasons working hard at marriage is better than divorce:

1. "Easy" was never part of the agreement. All marriage vows assume difficulty, sickness, tough times, financial hardship, and times of challenge. So where's the glory in giving up just because the infatuation is gone and you both grew into cynical versions of the couple who fell in love all those years ago? Working hard is better than divorce because working hard is what you promised to do when you took those vows before God, your family, your friends, your community...and your future children.

2. Your kids need your very best. You're a dad. Don't compromise on giving your kids the best shot possible at a happy home with parents who refuse to give up when the going gets tough. If there's anything left in your reserves, any effort you can muster, any cost you can bear, any positive change you can make in your approach, do it as a husband and as a father.

3. Everything in life improves when we work at it. Most problems turn into opportunities for growth when we work hard at solutions. Trying on new relational skills typically leads to being grateful for the bump in the road that forced the issue in the first place.

4. Hard work that brings results is always satisfying. Guys like projects. We're problem-solvers and we like to see the result of our labors. Identifying where we need to change and grow, and then doing something about it, is deeply satisfying.

5. Even costly counseling is cheaper than divorce. Still resistant to getting help? Don't want to cough up money for counseling? Try doing the math. Divorce is a financial burden that makes six-months of therapy look like a huge

bargain. Make marriage your number one investment in time and money and reap the rewards—spiritually, socially, and financially.

**Of course there are legitimate reasons a marriage ends (i.e. serial adultery, abandonment, etc.). But, the vast majority of people do not get divorced for these reasons.*

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

Worship Customs Skew God's Priorities

Religion teaches us many ways to worship ... just about all of them are very scripted. In modern Judaism, we have the Siddur to tell us exactly what to do and when to do it. "On Friday add this prayer ..."

In many churches, people light candles in order to obtain some favor. Some religions tell you to visit places like Mecca or Vatican City or even the Western Wall to be close to God.

But the truth is, God is not in Mecca, or the Vatican or even at the Western Wall. As a Jew, I love to visit the Western Wall, but not because I think that the presence of God is

stronger there than in other places. I go because it is a part of my history and my people.

The Bible says that the presence of God is no longer in buildings: "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands..." (Acts 7:48). So where is He?

We are the temple of the living God. As God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor. 6:16).

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?" (1 Cor. 3:16, NIV)

God is in us, not at some "holy site." Where we are, the presence of God is!

Some religions focus on people. Just as Catholics will kiss the ring of the pope (not very sanitary) in order to get a blessing, religious Jews will visit certain rabbis—even dead ones—to receive spiritual power. In fact, each January about 100,000 Jews will visit the gravesite of the famous Moroccan Rabbi Baba Sali in hopes of receiving a blessing. Sadly, dead men can't lay hands on you and impart spiritual life.

Others will put a picture of him on their wall as an act of worship. Again—it won't help. In fact, seeking spiritual power from visiting graves and praying to dead people is witchcraft. It is the opposite of the picture of worship that we see in the Bible.

How Can We Worship?

The Bible tells us how to worship and it has nothing to do with traditions or customs or dead people! Immediately following the Shema, the greatest creed in Judaism, we find another famous passage that we call "The V'ahavta":

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your

soul and with all your strength.” (Deut. 6:5, NIV)

This is how we express love to God—with all of our heart, devotion, strength, loyalty, passion and soul. We express our love to God as if we know him. If you wanted something from me, you would not ask my picture, light a candle or visit my birthplace, or God-forbid, my grave—you would simply ask me. We talk to God as if he is our friend, as well as King.

NFL vs. Worship

I have been to three NFL games in my life and I have no desire to go to another. I love football, but I prefer TV. The atmosphere at a professional football game borders on worship and lunacy. Thousands dress up, paint themselves and scream to the heavens for their team. And the funny thing is, we think nothing of it. In fact, we often respect their devotion.

However, the minute someone expresses similar zeal in worshiping the living God, we are tempted to judge them as proud, weird or extreme. When Oprah gave away cars to her entire audience in 2004, these women went crazy, screaming and crying. For what, a \$20,000 car?

Okay ... I get that ... I would be pretty excited too to receive a free car, but you have received something far more valuable than a new car. Your name has been written in heaven. If getting a free car evokes such a response, how much more should the people of God respond to the fact that we will never die! Our names are written in heaven! We will be with Him forever!!!

Note: This is the first of a four-part series. In Part 2, Ron will take a look at the best Old Testament example of New Testament worship—King David.

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 16th. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

Can You Claim Daniel Status in Today's Culture?

The History Channel is featuring a new multi-part series entitled, *The Bible*. It is a selection of Bible stories dramatized from Genesis through the death of Jesus.

Sunday night, I watched Part 3 of the series. It featured the story of Daniel and his three friends—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They did a great job portraying what might have happened.

The first scene shows the burning of Jerusalem by the wicked king, Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel and his three friends were taken captive, along with the entire nation, to Babylon to be ruled by Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel's reputation preceded him and he was made an advisor to Nebuchadnezzar. He and his friends are described in the second chapter as doing their work ten times better than anyone else. However, his stock went way up after the king required a dream be told to him by the magicians and advisors, lest all the advisors die. Talk about an unreasonable boss! Daniel approached the king and said God would tell him his dream and the interpretation. That is pretty gutsy!

Daniel went to his friends and explained the situation. They went to God in prayer and God gave Daniel the dream *and* the

interpretation. Just like the Red Sea parting, Daniel is placed into an impossible situation, humanly speaking. But, God gave a supernatural solution.

The result: Daniel and his friends and the non-believers were spared. They were given raises and more responsibility. And the God of Abraham was protected in the land.

Later Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship the golden idol Nebuchadnezzar set up. They were thrown into the fiery pit. However, instead of burning, God protected them and showed up in the midst of the fire. Their chains were removed and they walked out untarnished. Again, God's name is honored and they are elevated.

Later, Daniel serves in the administration of the King of Persia and there is a political smear campaign against Daniel by one of the king's men. They passed a law that no one could pray for thirty days. Daniel refused and was caught praying. He was thrown into the lion's den but God closed the lion's mouths.

The King had a change of heart because of a dream he had but got to the dungeon after Daniel had been tossed in. He was there to see Daniel walk out. Again, God's name is protected and he is honored and his accuser is thrown to the lions, except this time they are very hungry!

The moral of these amazing stories is that great stories come from great obedience to God and great faith and courage. You never have stories told about anyone who played it safe or did not step into an impossible situation. What is God calling you to step into that requires courage and faith? What problem are you called to solve?

Os Hillman is the author of the book *Change Agent*. His daily devotionals can be found at [. TGIF Devotional](#) is a daily email devotional written by Hillman designed to encourage and inspire you to bring the presence of God into your work life.

Palestinians Deface Obama Poster with Swastikas

Palestinian demonstrations against U.S. President Barack Obama's upcoming regional visit intensified on Monday, with activists in Bethlehem spray painting swastikas over a poster emblazoned with a blue and white portrait of Obama.

Hundreds of demonstrators gathered in Bethlehem to stage a protest against the U.S. president, who will visit the city later this week. According to protesters, Obama is persona non grata in Palestinian territories because of his "bias in favor of Israel." The Palestinians have long felt aggrieved by the U.S., accusing it of favoring Israel over the Palestinians.

Palestinians in Bethlehem tore down a banner of the U.S. president, hurled shoes at it and spray painted it with swastikas. Footage of the incident showed a taxi driving over the banner before it was set on fire.

The banner with Obama's picture is among many hung by activists, seeking to raise the American president's awareness of the lack of 3G frequencies in the West Bank. Israeli authorities control cellular networks there and they have not granted Palestinian telecommunication companies 3G.

Obama is scheduled to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on Thursday and travel to Bethlehem on Friday.

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

Review: 'Home Run' Takes Faith to the Big Screen

Don't let the title fool you. *Home Run* is not simply a baseball movie.

Though the film does center on the life of a professional baseball player and includes multiple baseball scenes throughout, this movie is ultimately about one man's battle against an alcohol addiction and the haunting memories of his childhood. Most of all, it is a story of the redemption and healing that can only come from salvation through Jesus Christ.

Cory Brand is a talented player at the top of his game. But he has little regard for anyone but himself, and that self-absorption leads to a lengthy suspension from the game. This turn of fortune returns him to his roots in Oklahoma, where he coaches a Little League baseball team in place of his brother, who was injured in an accident Cory caused, and is court-ordered to a 12-step recovery program. He finds no solace, as he has to face his past and regain his former success.

Perhaps the most attractive quality of *Home Run* is its realism. There is no quick-fix for Cory's alcoholism, and he can't overcome it by sheer willpower. He isn't able to repair the broken relationships in his life by his own efforts, either.

Scott Elrod's portrayal of Cory Brand is solid. The emotion and volatility Elrod brings to his character are genuine and undeniable.

The movie, produced by Impact Productions of Tulsa, Okla., is

made in the genre of the Kendrick Brothers' films *Fireproof* and *Courageous*. It brings real-life situations with faith-based answers to the big screen. Christians and non-Christians, baseball fans and non-baseball fans—all should go see *Home Run*.

Israel's Enemies Suffer God's Judgment

On a quiet Shabbat evening in Israel, Feb. 15, an asteroid came closer to colliding with the earth than any asteroid before in recent history. The impact would have been catastrophic.

However, earlier that day, a meteor exploded into a blinding fireball above Russia, with the force of 20 atomic bombs, striking fear into the hearts of residents convinced the world was ending. The size of the meteor was about the size of a city bus and traveled at 33,000 miles per hour, what is called hypersonic speed. The results were a shockwave that injured at least 1,200 people and shattered millions of meters of glass in the wintry cold city of Chelyabinsk.

"There was panic. People had no idea what was happening," one of the city residents said. Scientists said the flash of light was brighter than the sun. In the days following, more than 23,000 volunteers and workers would be helping to clean up the aftermath.

Luke 21:25-27 says, "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea, and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of

those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then, they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

Shortly after these words, which remind us of what happened in the Ural Mountains of Russia, we read in verses 29-31, “Then He (Jesus) spoke to them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near.’”

This becomes significant for us as we read through prophecy and take notice of current events in Israel. It has always been considered biblically a type of the fig tree being restored.

Not only did a miracle of history take place when Israel became a born-again, restored nation on May 14, 1948, but during the month of April 2013, in the Jewish calendar, Israel will celebrate it’s 65th birthday in modern history. To many in Europe and the world, this was an accident of history that some regret, especially the Islamic nations. But with God, there was no accident but only divine intention to restore the Jewish people from the four corners of the earth and the nations.

That’s why it is not only the fig tree budding (which is Israel), but the nations have been budding and putting forth their leaves as well. Verse 36 tells us, “Watch therefore, and pray always ...”

As we see the developments surrounding the Middle Eastern nations, the terror groups and peoples that have sworn themselves to Israel’s destruction, we cannot help but notice these very same nations and peoples coming under the hand of God’s judgments. In Joel 3:2, the Lord announces that He will enter into judgment “on account of My people, My heritage Israel.”

Nations that are seeking to divide up the land of Israel will

they themselves become divided. The cover title of the late February/early March issue of *The Economist* magazine, reads, "SYRIA—The death of a country."

Since my last article, the estimates of Syrians killed in the two-year civil war are now thought to be 90,000 and counting, with more dead bodies all the time. There are now more than 1,000,000 Syrian refugees. The developments are going from bad to worse as Syrian rebel terrorists are threatening Israel's Golan Heights and the northern border of Israel.

As the meteor took everyone by surprise, there is no telling when a war will break out between the Syrian side of the border and Israel itself. The very people of Syria, under Assad, and even more so under the rebels are vowing Israel's destruction and the taking back of the Golan Heights. But yet, doesn't anyone see that today Syria is being divided and is suffering in a civil war of destruction?

Look at Egypt, as they have suffered recently from crops destroyed by invading locusts, and every week riots are taking place in the streets of Cairo and elsewhere.

Thousands have been arrested, placed in prison and tortured, and Islamic jihadism increases its grip upon the press, the Christian community and anyone who would dare oppose Morsi, the new Egyptian president. In Pakistan, hundreds of Christian homes were burned in the city of Lahore. Hundreds were made homeless, and violence is growing across the Middle Eastern Christian communities from Pakistan to Afghanistan, to Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Mali, Sudan and Somalia.

And where are the evangelical churches across Europe? Where are the Christians when their brothers and sisters are suffering for their faith or identity as traditional Christians?

But, when it comes to Israel, even the Christian churches are ready to condemn our nation—where Christianity is more safely

expressed than anywhere else in the Middle East, and possibly Europe as well. Christians in Europe have been exposed to replacement theology and anti-Semitism, and therefore must purge themselves of this sin if they are to become united in call and purpose. Otherwise, the contagion and curse for despising Israel and the Jews will come on Europe.

Let Go of Sin and Run to Freedom

In today's society, it is easy for men to be held captive by something in their lives: anger, pornography, etc. Deep inside, these men love God and want to serve Him, yet these sins and oppressions keep them held captive to sin, making them feel helpless and hopeless to change.

However, no man needs to stay trapped in a sin. Every man can break free and be used mightily by God. The man from Gadarenes is a perfect example.

The Bible doesn't tell us this man's name, but his story is a powerful one. The first time we read of him, we find him in the cemetery. I am sure your mind immediately thinks he must be mourning the loss of a loved one. Actually, he wasn't visiting the cemetery. He lived there. He was controlled by demonic influences.

The demons caused this man to go crazy. When they came on him, he would lose control. The townspeople banned him from the town and made him live in the cemetery. They went as far as to chain him up in the cemetery, but the demonic influence was so great he would break the chains and go free, wandering through the cemetery naked, cutting and mutilating his body. How sad

to see the hold the enemy had on this man's life. No one could help him, but Jesus.

One day, Jesus and His disciples came ashore near the cemetery where the man lived. The demons that controlled him freaked out when they saw Jesus coming. They caused the man to run up to Jesus and start worshipping Him. Immediately, Jesus commanded them to leave. So, the demons started begging Jesus not to torture them. The demons knew their rule of tyranny was over and they could no longer control the man. They begged Jesus to send them somewhere, anywhere, but to the pit of Hell.

Jesus spoke directly to the demon in the man and asked his name. The demon replied that his name was Legion, for they were many. They begged Jesus to send them into a herd of pigs grazing nearby instead of to an eternity in the pit of Hell. Jesus agreed. They left the man, entered the pigs, and caused the pigs to run off a cliff into the sea!

The man was instantly set free! He put clothes on and was able to think and talk clearly. He wanted to go with Jesus and follow Him. However, Jesus didn't take the man along with Him. Instead, He told him to go back home to his family and friends and tell them how God had been merciful to him and set him free. I love how this scripture passage ends in Mark 5 ...

"However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, 'Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.' And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled" (NKJV).

Not only was this man set free, God was also able to take him and use him to preach the gospel to other people! God used him despite his past. If God could use this man, He can definitely use you!

You may be thinking, "I may have my issues, but I am not demon

possessed. I am a responsible adult who has full control of myself. I just struggle with certain areas.” My reply is this: if you struggle with certain areas, then you don’t have full control of yourself. If you have sins or issues that you just can’t seem to conquer, it is likely that you have given ground to demonic oppression in your life. A stronghold of evil has developed, and you are unable to break free on your own. However, there can be freedom.

I encourage you to pray about the area you struggle with in your life. Ask God to set you free from any demonic influences your sin has allowed to enter your life. I strongly suggest going through a deliverance session with a trained spiritual warfare counselor.

E-mail me at jamie@notyourdadministries if you do not know of one. There is freedom and victory for all God’s children, and a renewed life of loving and serving God. All it requires is admitting you have a need and want to be set free. I encourage you to make that decision today.

Jamie Holden is the facilitator of and teacher at Harrisburg First Assembly of God Berean Study Center in Harrisburg, Pa. He is the leader of Jamie J. Holden Ministries.

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