

Will Bow-Hugging Become Trendy?

A leading pastor in the underground church in China recently hosted a conference in Israel. He brought with him more than 200 on-fire Chinese believers. What was unique about this conference was that they went out of their way to genuinely connect with the Israeli body of believers.

Often leaders, particularly well-known media ministers from the U.S., will bring large groups to Israel. They spend 10 days here and have no contact with Israeli believers. They see where Jesus *walked*, but fail to recognize His *fresh footprints*.

They might even hold a big meeting saying, "Here we are, ministering in Israel!" While it impacts their ratings, it has little to no effect on the country.

In fact, recently a famous minister invited Israelis to his event. They planned to translate into Russian, *but had no plans to translate into Hebrew*. How do you expect to touch Israelis if you won't even speak to them in their own language?

Get Out of the Bus

One of the Chinese pastors shared that in his first three trips to Israel, he had the same experience. He would land at the airport and get onto a tour bus. The bus would take him to the hotel and the sites. He would get out of the bus only to eat, see sites and sleep.

After his third visit, he met Asher Intrater and Ari Sorko-Ram, two veteran Messianic leaders in Israel. He asked Asher how the Chinese believers could bless Israeli believers. Asher said, "Get off your bus and visit us!"

It was a revelation for this pastor. Now when he brings believers from China, he connects not only with earth and stone, but with beating hearts—the body of Messiah in Israel.

The pastor who hosted this conference has not only given main sessions to Israeli leaders, but he turned to Ari to open the door for a good number of other leaders to share about their ministries for 20 minutes.

While I know many of these men and what they do, it was so amazing to see how excited the Chinese believers became as they heard each leader share. “This ministry has started a Messianic day school... this one started with a handful of people and is now 130 people ... an Arab pastor shared his burden for Yafo... one shared his burden for revival... “

I was given time one morning to share. I told them about the three-fold focus of Messiah’s Mandate.

- Our burden for young adults in Tel Aviv
- The Isaiah 2 Initiative—taking the Gospel from Israel to the nations
- The deep burden to share the Identity Theft message (how Jesus was robbed of His Jewishness) amongst the nations

The Pastor Who Ruined My Nap

What is crazy is that it had never even entered my mind that I would minister in China. Recently, however, I was sitting with Pastor John Koe in Singapore after the Sunday service. I was so tired and was looking forward to finishing lunch and heading to my hotel room to sleep. Pastor John told me, “I feel God is going to use you in Asia.” He began to share with me about the Chinese revival, as he was a missionary for many years to the underground church in mainland China.

Suddenly, I was awake. When I returned to my room I could not sleep. I could only think of 70,000,000 Chinese believers praying for Israel. He ruined my nap! I knew without a doubt that I would go to China and I felt impressed that the Chinese

church was a key to revival in Israel. I didn't realize that within 11 days, I would be sharing with 200 Chinese believers in Jerusalem!

I shared that with the group and they responded with joyful clapping. After speaking, Pastor Zheng (an alias) called all the Israeli pastors up to pray for China. The people prayed with intense passion.

I asked for a shofar and did what we have done in many places around the world. I told them that when I blow the shofar they should shout to the Lord, as in the days of Joshua. *I did and they did.* There was such a powerful presence of God there as they shouted and shouted and we prayed for revival.

Love Plus Theology

Many of the Chinese believers have a deep love for Israel, but no theological framework to put it in. Ari shared a powerful message, "To The Jew First," from Romans 1:16. The people responded by bow-hugging all the Jewish believers in attendance.

What is bow-hugging? They would come up to us in tears and then bow and hug us at the same time. It was incredibly humbling. They literally kissed our feet. In all my life, I have not met such humble believers.

Please agree in prayer with Israeli Messianic leaders for the right strategy to minister to the tens of millions of Chinese believers.

For the original article, visit MessiahsMandate.org.

Ron Cantor is the director of [Messiah's Mandate International](http://Messiah'sMandateInternational.org) 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.

What Could 50,000 Pastors Do?

The vast majority of men in America are in trouble. I would estimate that 90 percent of men today lead lukewarm, stagnant, often defeated lives—and they hate it. The collateral damage is staggering. This email from a friend about sums it up:

“My daughter stopped in on her daughter’s class today (my granddaughter). She saw the teacher sitting in silence with a stunned look on her face. The teacher explained that she asked the class to talk about what they wanted for Christmas.

“These 8-year-olds didn’t mention video games, dolls, toys, clothes or a trip to Disney World. Instead, their answers went like this: “I hope my parents don’t get a divorce.” “I want my daddy to come back home.” “I want to see my mommy smile. Maybe if daddy came back she would smile again.” “I want our family back together again.” “I want my parents to stop yelling at each other.”

“No wonder this teacher was stunned and perplexed. These were 8-year-old children in Queens, N.Y. They didn’t want gifts for themselves. They wanted a family with a mommy and daddy that love each other.”

As surprised as that teacher was, I know this comes as no surprise to you. America faces a host of problems, but none is more pervasive than the well-documented “men problem.” It is one of the most talked about, yet least acted upon problems of our time. You would think more would be happening by accident! There’s a lot of darkness surrounding this problem.

The Need

America desperately needs another “wholesale” spiritual revival and awakening—like the ones led by Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, or the Businessmen’s Revival triggered by Jeremiah Lanphier. Could that happen again? Obviously, only God can orchestrate an awakening. On the other hand, God rewards hard work and 2 Chronicles 7:14-style prayer. So what can we do?

A High Priority

There are about 500,000 pastors in America. Many of you have already made men’s discipleship a high priority. What if we could increase that number to 50,000 pastors? What if God touched 50,000 pastors with the passion to say, “Lord, give me my men or I die.” What might God do if just 10 percent of our pastors made men’s discipleship a high priority? Would a “tithe” of our pastors be enough? We believe 50,000 pastors would change the world.

In 10 years, I don’t want to look back and say, “I wish I would have done more,” or, “If only I had tried a little harder.” I know you feel the same way. Do you know of any other professionals who have the potential to help men become godly men, husbands and fathers? As far as I can tell, unless more pastors take up this cause—and soon—America will continue to see our moral and spiritual foundations crumble. We’ve talked about it long enough. The time for talking is over.

Here’s the vision...

First, we “tithe” the men of our nation to God. There are about 100,000,000 men in America. A tithe of our men would be 10,000,000 men. The goal is 10,000,000 men to lead powerful lives transformed by Christ by 2020. Lord, give us back our men!

Second, we “tithe” our problems to God. If 10 percent of the men in America are transformed, wouldn’t we expect to see a

corresponding change in culture? The goal between now and 2020 is to see a 10 percent reduction in divorces, unwed mothers, abortions, fatherless homes, high school dropouts, pornography use, sex sins, prison populations, domestic abuse, poverty, racism and so on—a 10 percent reduction wherever the sting of the lack of the gospel is felt.

Third, we “tithe” 50,000 pastors to intentionally disciple “all” their men to be godly men, husbands and fathers. Use the *No Man Left Behind* model and *The Journey to Biblical Manhood* to disciple all your men over time, right where they are, in ways that connect to their values. Churches using *No Man Left Behind* experience 48 percent growth in the number of men attending, and 84 percent growth in the number of men in discipleship in 2 1/2 years on average. We will teach you how. Email me at patrickmorley@maninthemirror.org. Explain your situation and I’ll have someone contact you—no charge, no pressure.

The Plan

When I was on the Board of Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru), I asked Bill Bright, “Why don’t we offer the Lay Institute for Evangelism anymore?” He said, “We don’t have a leader. Everything boils down to leadership.” Man in the Mirror is willing to provide organization and leadership to a pastor’s movement that reaches and discipless men, or we will support any other leaders God raises up.

Here are several steps you can take:

- Agree in prayer to “tithe” the men of America to God. Preach it.
- Agree in prayer to “tithe” our problems to God. Preach it.
- Ask God to raise up a “tithe” of 50,000 pastors unwilling to be satisfied with anything less than wholesale spiritual revival and awakening—starting with their men.

“If you do not long to see the conversion of your hearers ... you are not likely to see much success. ... But, let all who preach for Christ and men’s salvation be unsatisfied until they have the thing they preach for.” (Richard Baxter, 1656)

- Take immediate steps to intentionally disciple “all” the men in your church. We can show you how.
- Win your elders and/or deacons to the cause of men’s discipleship.
- Go public with your commitment to disciple men as a high priority.
- Send me an email declaring your commitment to patrickmorley@maninthemirror.org and we’ll figure out how to start a registry.
- Include a “men’s track” at every pastor’s conference.

We can do this. I do not think it’s histrionic or melodramatic to say that the future of our civilization is at stake—it’s already too late to say the future of “our way of life.” We cannot, we must not and—by God’s grace—we will not fail. Let’s put Dr. Phil out of business!

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

How to Intercede for Others

as If Your Life Depended on It

I heard what may be the best definition of prayer during a missions trip to Central America last year. Our entire time of ministry was spent in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. We linked up with a local Assemblies of God congregation, Iglesia Shalom, to be a funnel for the converts and people who would be reached.

Our first day of ministry involved our team being subdivided into smaller groups and going door-to-door with interpreters to invite people to the church, and hopefully have spiritual conversations that would lead to witnessing opportunities. Like many cities in that part of the world, poverty and pollution are abundant. Many of the neighborhoods are built right along the sides of mountains and hills. Homes are built more out of function than form, keeping out the elements and little else.

Going from house to house frequently involved descending steep and narrow concrete steps with no railing on either side. One false step and there was nothing separating you from falling 10-20 feet.

Our group was joined by the pastor's wife, Migala. She served as a wonderful icebreaker for us frightened Americans, who not only had to conquer our fear of instant evangelism, but also the obvious language barrier. Frequently she would engage in conversation with the residents, allow us to put in our two cents, then move on to the next home.

But when we came to the home of a troubled woman, our guide sensed the need to pursue further ministry. The woman's name was Delmi. She and Migala were having a spirited conversation on opposite sides of an iron fence that led to her patio. Every so often, Migala would tell us a summary of their

conversation so we could stay informed.

It seems that Delmi and her daughter, Suame, had been abandoned by their husband and father respectively. The pain of it was quite evident in Delmi's countenance. She wasn't about to trust anyone quickly; maybe not at all. As Migala tried taking the conversation to spiritual things, Delmi would have no part of it. She seemed closed off to anything involving God, no doubt blaming Him for her loss and pain.

After minutes of persuasion, Delmi opened up the gate and allowed our group to come into her living room. Migala continued in conversation, motioning to me frequently as she spoke in Spanish.

My best guess is that she was prepping me to take charge at some point, pointing out to this hurting woman that I was a pastor and could pray for her. Inside the windowless room was a picture of the Honduran National Soccer Team and various certificates that had been awarded to Suame at different points of her life.

With her young daughter pulled against her side, Delmi pondered whether to have these strangers from another part of the world pray for her. Eventually she relented. In order to cue me, Migala looked at me and said in broken English, "*Eh, her problem (pointing at Delmi) ees our problem (pointing at herself).*"

I think that's the best definition of prayer I've ever heard. I think that's what I need to remember the next time a friend calls in need of help, or I hear of someone who is dealing with a life-threatening condition.

How often do I just pray in rote, like a dispenser of religious clichés, with no passion or belief that God will do anything about it? But when we truly intercede (churchy word, but meaning "taking the cause of" or "being an advocate for"), I need to remember that their problem isn't something for my

to-do list. It's my problem too.

Lord, help me to put myself in their shoes, carry their spiritual bags for a few minutes, and get a full picture of the pain and trial they are enduring. Maybe that will change our hospital visits or make us think the next time we anoint someone with oil. Before we get into a rush to pray for the next person or move through our prayer list like a crop duster over a field, let's remember to make their problems our problems.

Matt Anderson serves as youth director for the Ohio District of the Assemblies of God.

For the original article, visit men.ag.org.

Muslim Imams Strongly Condemn Terrorism Against Jews

Some 16 Muslim clerics sought to lessen concerns that rampant anti-Semitism permeates the vast majority of European Muslim communities when they told President Shimon Peres on Sunday that they "strongly condemn" terrorism against Jews.

"We would like to calm the concerns of our brothers, the Jews," Imam Hassen Chalghoumi told Peres during an unusual meeting between the president and 16 Muslim imams in France. "We are not affiliated with terrorism against Jews, and we strongly condemn it."

The imams, heads of large mosques and leaders of immigrant Muslim communities from the African continent, voiced their firm opposition to acts of terrorism perpetrated against Jews

and Israelis.

“We believe in the sanctity of life,” Chalghoumi said. “Life is more important than the Vatican, Mecca or Jerusalem.”

Chalghoumi also sharply condemned the attack on a Jewish school in Toulouse a year ago in which Rabbi Yonatan Sandler, his two eldest children and the principal’s daughter were murdered. The imam further urged friendly cooperation between France’s Muslim community, and the country’s Jewish community—the largest Jewish community in Europe.

“We, the Jews, have been victims of discrimination, and that is why we aspire for a world where everyone is free of it,” Peres told the Muslim clerics. “We have a shared interest in resolving our disputes in peace rather than allowing terrorism [to] destroy any chance for peace. The Jews and Muslims share a father, our father Abraham.”

Addressing the issue of the stalled peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, Peres added that “when the new government is sworn in, an opportunity will arise to renew peace talks.”

“We evacuated the settlements in Gaza, but the Palestinians turned the territory into a terror base,” he added.

For the original article, visit IsraelHayom.com.

Good or Bad, Words Do Matter

How could I say it any better than the wise King Solomon in Proverbs 18:20-21:

“From the fruit of a man’s mouth his stomach is satisfied; he

is satisfied by the yield of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

The words we speak are oftentimes just as, if not more important than, our actions.

I've been thinking a lot about words this week.

Today, parts of the world are mourning the brutal dictator Hugo Chavez who died this week. In my opinion, Chavez was on the top five list of the worst humans on the planet. Not only did he violently repress any of his own Venezuelan people who dared to disagree with him, he was also a close ally of the vicious Iranian regime.

He even invited Hezbollah terrorists to literally set up camp in Venezuela, giving them a safe harbor in the western hemisphere, and setting the stage for what could have been the next "Cuban missile crisis."

Now, mercifully and pitifully, Chavez is dead. And what he leaves behind is a legacy of hate-filled words.

Chavez famously went to the United Nations in 2006, during a meeting of the General Assembly, and called then U.S. President George Bush "the devil" and said the podium-area "still smells of sulphur."

This comment made him a hero to many who hated Bush and his policies. But to me, as someone who actually studied diplomacy at the United Nations as a college student, this was an anathema to the very existence of the U.N.

What Chavez said during his multi-hour tirades on Venezuela television was his own business. But to go to the U.N., during a gathering of world leaders, seemingly under the guise of "peacemaking" and "bridge-building," and to refer to the leader of the host nation as "the devil" made me further

question why the U.N. even continues to exist.

Yes, words matter. Just ask the Venezuelan journalists who took on “El Comandante” and ended up being thrown into prison and brutally tortured.

But Chavez’s words aren’t the only ones ringing in my ears this week.

Take, for example, former basketball star Dennis Rodman (a childhood hero of mine, as a Detroit Pistons fan ... I once even dined with Rodman during a “fan luncheon”). Rodman was recently invited to North Korea, and upon returning, referred to dictator Kim Jong Un as “an awesome kid.”

It just so happens that “awesome kid” is the most violent repressor of Christians on the planet, sending them to work camps that rival Auschwitz. Just Thursday, North Korea vowed a preemptive nuclear strike on the United States. I hope Rodman has a bunker.

Yes, words matter.

Friday, America’s First Lady, Michelle Obama, will take part in a State Department event honoring “international women of courage.” One of those “courageous” women being honored is Samira Ibrahim. A quick glance at Ibrahim’s Twitter account, show just how courageous she is.

After five Israeli tourists and a Bulgarian bus driver were killed by terrorists, last year, Ibrahim tweeted: “an explosion on a bus carrying Israelis in Burgas airport in Bulgaria on the Black Sea. Today is a very sweet day with a lot of very sweet news.”

On the 2012 anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, as Egyptian rioters stormed the U.S. Embassy in Cairo, Ibrahim tweeted: “Today is the anniversary of 9/11. May every year come with America burning.”

And, Ibrahim even tweeted out the words of another prolific speaker, none other than Adolph Hitler himself. She shared his “courageous” quote: “I have discovered with the passage of days, that no act contrary to morality, no crime against society, takes place, except with the Jews having a hand in it.”

Let us pray that an outcry reaches the White House, before Mrs. Obama humiliates herself by honoring such a woman.

Yes words matter.

Words mattered as U.S. Senator Mark Kirk, a champion for Israel, returned to the world stage this week, after a long recovery from a debilitating stroke. He courageously told an audience at the annual AIPAC convention: “I have one message for the dictators in Iran ... I’m back!”

Speaking of AIPAC, while I don’t always agree with them politically, the words of U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and Democratic Senator Robert Menendez during the AIPAC conference were also very important. Both gave impassioned speeches in support of Israel and against Iran and the Palestinians.

Words mattered as the top U.S. commander in the Middle East, Marine General James N. Mattis, told Congress on Tuesday that the sanctions against Iran are not working. He said:

“Despite significant economic sanctions and increased diplomatic isolation within the global community, Iran continues to export instability and violence across the region and beyond.”

It mattered this week, when Israeli singer Rita Yahan-Farouz sang at a special United Nations concert. The Iranian-born Jew, who immigrated to Israel, sang an impassioned plea for improved relations between the people of her birth country and her adopted home.

And the words written by Muslim scholar Ed Husain matter. This week he wrote an op-ed in the *New York Times* calling for an end to “the Arab boycott of Israel.”

“The decades-long Arab boycott has failed miserably,” Husain writes, “How much longer will we punish Palestinians to create a free Palestine?”

It’s a powerful piece that should be read and shared by all.

Yes, King Solomon was right; *“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”*

Choose wisely, today, what your legacy will be.

Chaim Goldberg is the Director of Media for Maoz Israel Ministries and writes a weekly column for Charisma Media’s *Standing With Israel*.

Mediterranean Diet Rates Better Than Low-Fat Diet

The New England Journal Of Medicine just published a very reliable study that a diet high in fat, good fats, is better for your heart than a low-fat diet. The study looked at nearly 8,000 people for five years.

The people who followed the Mediterranean Diet had a whopping 30 percent fewer heart problems than the people who followed the low fat diet.

Many people are not at all surprised by these findings. The medical community is increasingly embracing the idea that heart disease is caused by inflammation, and that inflammation

is largely brought-on by eating too many carbohydrates, a hallmark of the low-fat diet. When Americans began embracing the low-fat diet 20 years ago, we started eating carbohydrates in the place of fats.

Low fat food manufacturers often make up for the lack of fat by increasing the amount of sugar in their products. And people, instead of eating fats, opted for low-fat food items like white bread, pasta, bagels, crackers, cereals, tortillas and so on, which all turn into sugar when you eat them. In fact, eating white, refined grains is, to your body, just like eating pure table sugar. All this causes inflammation, which leads to heart disease.

On the other hand, the Mediterranean Diet is rich in fats, but they are the good kind of fats. The bad fats are trans fats, also known as hydrogenated oils. The other kind of bad fats are Omega-6 fats. Those are vegetable oil, soybean oil, corn oil, safflower oil, grapeseed oil and the like.

The American diet is loaded with trans fats and Omega-6 fats because those two types of fats are in processed foods. But the Mediterranean Diet is very heavy in the wonderful, healthy Omega-3 fats. In fact, the cornerstone of the Mediterranean Diet is olive oil. Other good fats play a prominent role in the Mediterranean diet such as nuts, avacados and fish. The Mediterranean diet is rich with vegetables and salads.

The benefits of the Mediterranean Diet are not just observed in this most recent study. In fact, the people who live in Mediterranean countries are living proof that their diet is superior to most others. People in that region who follow that diet and who exercise and do not smoke have markedly lower cardiovascular disease than people in America.

Our country is the best in the world, to be sure, but our diet is arguable the worst! We could learn a thing or two from the Mediterraneans when it comes to eating. Topping the list:

eating olive oil every single day, and a lot of it, say, four tablespoons. One thing to keep in mind about olive oil is that you don't want to heat it. Heating it causes oxidation, which is bad for you.

An easy way to incorporate olive oil into your diet without heating it is to do what the Mediterraneans do, put it on a salad! Since bottled salad dressings usually contain harmful Omega-6 fats, whipping up your own olive oil dressing at home is clearly a much better choice.

Just whisk together 3 parts olive oil to 1 part vinegar and add salt and pepper. If you'd like, you can add other spices, like garlic or herbs, a dab of dijon mustard is good, too. Another way to incorporate olive oil into your daily life without heating it is to add it to roasted vegetables after they are finished cooking, or drizzles over fish after it has finished cooking.

So when it comes to heart health, and really overall health, stay away from carbohydrates like refined grains and sugar, which cause inflammation and opt for healthy fats like olive oil, nuts, fish and avocados instead.

For the original article, visit cbn.com.

Make Cultural Impact a Fruit, Not a Goal

There is an amazing spiritual principle we find in the Bible—transformed people transform people. Yes, when a heart is changed by an encounter with Jesus Christ, that life becomes a transformer of others.

But how did this happen in the Bible? It happened because of what Jesus did with almost every encounter with someone in the Scriptures—he solved a problem.

Influential Believer

If you read the Gospels about the encounters Jesus had with people, you will find that Jesus did something in almost every case. He solved a problem. When the Roman centurion met Jesus, he had a need for the healing of a family member.

What did Jesus do? He healed that family member when he saw the faith of the centurion soldier. When Peter had a need to pay his taxes, Jesus told him to go catch a fish to find the coin needed to pay his taxes (wish I could do that for April 15). When the disciples were not catching fish, Jesus told them to cast their net on the other side of the boat.

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, who was obviously not of the political party of the disciples, he told her things about her life that caused her to believe in him. The entire city came out to hear him as a result.

Culture does not care who solves their problem; they just want their problem solved. If you happen to be a Christian, then Christ is glorified in that problem-solving. And you gain influence in that life or that environment. If we are going to catch the world's attention, we must manifest God's presence in the area of our calling. We must move beyond words to tangible expressions of solving problems in the culture.

George Washington Carver

George Washington Carver grew up at the close of the Civil War in a one-room shanty on the homestead of Moses Carver—the man who owned his mother. The Ku Klux Klan had abducted him and his mother, selling her to new owners. He was later found and returned to his owner, but his mother was never seen again. Carver grew up at the height of racial discrimination, yet he overcame all these obstacles to become one of the most

influential men in the history of the United States.

Carver was a great example of someone who solved a problem that existed in his day. He told farmers that they needed to stop planting cotton because the land could no longer support the crop. He recommended that they plant peanuts and sweet potatoes instead of cotton, but this led to his greatest trial. The farmers lost even more money due to the lack of market for peanuts and sweet potatoes, and blamed Carver.

Carver cried out to the Lord, "Mr. Creator, why did you make the peanut?" Many years later, he shared that God led him back to his lab and worked with him to discover some 300 marketable products from the peanut and 100 for the sweet potato. These new products created a demand for peanuts and sweet potatoes, and they were major contributors to rejuvenating the Southern economy.

As he made new discoveries, he never became successful monetarily, but he overcame great rejection during his lifetime for being black. He was offered six-figure income opportunities from Henry Ford, and he became friends with presidents of his day, yet he knew what God had called him to do. His epitaph read:

"He could have added fortune to fame, but caring for neither, he found happiness and honor in being helpful to the world."

One time I was hosted by one of the top three news networks by an executive who was an Emmy Award-winning producer of the nightly news, and a committed Christian. As we walked through the studio of hundreds of people, this executive turned to me and said, "Oo, it saddens me to tell you that when my colleagues hear the word 'Christian,' they think 'right-wing political action group.' They do not see a people who love God or care about the problems in the culture. They just know what we don't believe in."

If we are going to have any chance of redeeming our culture,

or even having a voice in the culture, Christians must begin to solve problems in the culture without a motive to control the culture. Cultural impact is a fruit, not a goal.

Os Hillman is the author of the book Change Agent. His daily devotionals can be found at TodayGodIsFirst.com. 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.

God's Refining Fire Leads to Spiritual Purity

On the first Sunday in July 1995, something unthinkable happened in Israel. A raging fire consumed an estimated two million trees. Hand planted trees!

About 2,500 acres of land were left charred and barren. Several communities were evacuated while hundreds of firefighters bravely battled the flames in high summer temperatures, and planes and military helicopters sprayed chemicals from the air.

The ashes were landing on my balcony that day, though our home was at least 25 kilometers away from the forest. Roads into Jerusalem were closed and our speaker for that evening service at King of Kings Community Jerusalem was not able to arrive. We all prayed.

Only weeks earlier I had traveled past that forest, headed west in the afternoon, and marveled at the beauty of the trees through the sunlight. This was a heartbreaking day for a land that treasures its trees.

I now know that many of the pines that burned that day had been among the earliest planted. They had been fast to grow but had a short life span, and had probably lived it out by then.

Researchers are now saying that fires are not necessarily bad, but can be a natural part of a forest ecosystem. Parasites and pests die, piles of turpentine-producing needles and cones burn off, giving the soil a chance to regain its pH balance.

Today, 17 years later, the Jerusalem Forest is again beautiful. But now there are trees and plants that could not grow there before. This forest will be a stronger one, for it is planted in soil cleansed and renewed by the fire. Even the rainfall in the area has greatly increased over the years because of surrounding growth.

Have you been hit with a devastating tragedy? Does it seem like a loss that can never be redeemed? The story is not over when the ashes still smell and the soot is still flying through the air.

God's fire is painful but not cruel. Only for the rebellious does His fire consume and destroy, but if you are His, you will come through better, stronger and more luxuriant.

Some theologians deny that God would treat His own with fire. They insist that only those who rebel and reject God are subject to His fire.

Read [Zachariah 13:9](#). Here we see God refining His remnant people for His glory. Hear what He says! "They will call upon my name and I will answer them. I will say 'They are my people' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

I would prefer a baptism in fire from Yeshua now, than have to undergo a worse burning later. I pray for him to burn away the chaff and every harmful element from my heart; to bring me out of the fire with a tender and pure heart, ready for a new

season of growth and wholeness.

For the original article, visit kkcj.org.

Fathers, Monitor Your Teen and His Friends

In a significant study on adolescent development, researchers Schneider & Stevenson note that teenagers perceive their fathers more positively than what is commonly believed.

Though the father/child relationships went through periods of “some conflict and identity formation,” they were “not as turbulent as others have depicted.” For the most part, adolescents described their fathers as supportive, loving, and accepting of them.

Not surprisingly, an area of concern for the fathers was peer influence on their teens. The researchers discovered that students who have clear goals and ambitions for their future tend to have fathers who know their friends and have some influence regarding the friends with whom they associate.

Since friendships are so important to our teens, we fathers should consider how we can contribute to their wise choices in friends and appropriately monitor how their peer group influences them.

To Think About

Roger diligently monitored his son Ryan’s educational and sports achievements, but failed to stay connected with Ryan’s other activities. As a sophomore, Ryan became involved with a new group of friends, and though he continued to perform well

in school and sports, Roger began to sense that something wasn't right.

One night during Ryan's senior year, Roger overheard his son's friends making jokes about stealing cars. He had no idea it would soon become a reality. When Ryan was picked up for car theft, Roger was devastated. At 18, his son was charged with a felony, and the presiding judge had a history of going by the book.

At the hearing, Roger was surprised to see another peer group in attendance—his own. Several fathers came to silently support Roger, and have continued to do so throughout the process. It has made a significant difference for Roger.

During this time when our children's peers are a major concern, the positive influence of our own peers can be a major asset.

Action Points for Committed Fathers

- Play a memory game with your adolescent. See if you can name his three best friends in grade school and junior high. Then see if he can name three of your good friends.
- With a younger child, talk about how friends can be a benefit and what makes a good friend.
- Review with your wife the friends your child is choosing in school.
- Ask your children what new friends they have met since school began. Plan a time to host your child's friends soon and watch how they interact.

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 AllProDad.com, 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 AllProDad.com fathers can join the highly engaged All Pro Dad social media communities on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).

Despite Obesity Rise, U.S. Calories Trending Downward

U.S. adults have been eating steadily fewer calories for almost a decade, despite the continued increase in obesity rates, according to survey data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“It’s hard to reconcile what these data show, and what is happening with the prevalence of obesity,” co-author Dr. William Dietz, former CDC director of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity, told Reuters Health.

The results, published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, are based on the nine National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (NHANES) the CDC has conducted between 1971 and 2010. Several thousand adults aged 20 to 74 were randomly selected every two to four years and asked to recall what they ate over the previous 24 hours.

Dietz and a colleague analyzed trends since the 1970s and found that among adults, average daily energy intake rose by a total of 314 calories from 1971 to 2003, then fell by 74 calories between 2003 and 2010.

“Seventy-four calories is a lot, and as I said before, we would expect to see a measurable impact on obesity,” said Dietz.

Nevertheless, about 35 percent of U.S. adult women are obese, and that percentage has held steady since 1999, according to the CDC. For men, obesity has risen from 27 percent to 35 percent over the same time period.

Dietz said he would have expected obesity rates to have leveled-off for both sexes and to be decreasing at this point, if people are consuming fewer calories.

The CDC released similar results last month for children: boys have cut their calorie intake by 150, and girls by 80, since 1999. [Obesity rates](#) for boys continue to increase, however, while holding steady for girls.

Experts said it's possible more time is needed to see obesity rates respond to changes in calorie intake. It's also possible that Americans have changed their eating habits but are still not getting enough exercise to burn the calories they do consume. Or, the surveys may simply be wrong.

"If you cut back on calories by 100 calories, you'll plateau 10 pounds lower," but you'll only see about half of that progress over the first year, Dr. Claire Wang, who studies energy intake and expenditure at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health in New York, told Reuters Health.

There wouldn't be an immediate reduction in obesity at the population level, said Wang, who was not involved in the study.

She believes the change in calorie consumption could be due to more awareness of sugary drinks and added sugar, and that awareness campaigns such as efforts by the White House to promote healthier eating are working.

But by now, "People should be losing weight," Dietz said. The fact that they are not could be bad news, he said, because it could mean people are burning fewer calories with exercise,

and exercise plays an important role reducing the risk of many chronic diseases.

It's also possible that increased awareness of unhealthy foods has caused people to be embarrassed about eating junk foods or drinking sodas, so they may still be eating those foods but are less likely to admit it on a survey, Dietz added.

In general, data from surveys don't line up with actual calorie intakes when measured by a third party, according to nutritionist Marion Nestle of New York University.

The NHANES surveys indicate that men take in an average of 1500 calories per day, and women 1800, for example. When doctors or nutritionists measure calorie intakes, they find an average of 3,000 for men and 2,400 for women, according to Nestle.

While the estimates may not be exactly on point, surveys are the best available way to identify trends in the population, she said.

"NHANES is as good as we have on trend data," she said. "Taken at face value, they are somewhat good news."