

Father-Daughter Bond: Better Than a Commercial

I always planned to be the first guy to ask my daughter out on a date. I wanted to show her how it's supposed to be done. You know, set the bar really high to eliminate some of the losers in her future!

That was the plan. I just didn't know that day would come so soon. You have all these principles, promises and plans in place but you have to stay flexible, adaptable. That's because parenting is a moving target and teaching opportunities pop up when you least expect them.

Our daughter, only three at the time, stood on her tiptoes peeking at a collection of wedding pictures hanging above the chest by our bed. Her eyes grew wide when she recognized her mommy in a wedding dress and her daddy in a tux.

"Mommy, what are *those* pictures?"

My wife could have simply answered "those are our wedding pictures" and left it at that. After all, our daughter was only three. But, she paused for a moment and responded with what I thought was a perfect one-sentence answer.

"That's the day Daddy gave me a ring and promised to love me always."

Our daughter replied, "Oh ... " and was off to the next thing on her agenda. Several days later, there she stood again gazing curiously at our wedding photos.

Same question: "Mommy, what are *those* pictures?"

Same answer: "That's the day Daddy gave me a ring and promised to love me always."

There were a few more exchanges just like that until one day something unexpected happened. She asked the same question but this time my wife responded with a different answer, actually a question to see if she remembered.

“Mommy, what are *those* pictures?”

“What did I tell you they were?”

“That’s the day Daddy gave you a ring and promised to love you always.”

That was a pretty incredible moment. We hit the target! We succeeded in teaching her the real value behind the pictures. They weren’t just images documenting a wedding event. They were reminders of the day *her Daddy* made a promise to *her Mommy*, a promise to love her always. That should be enough, right? But, remember, parenting is a moving target. You’ve got to be ready to adjust your aim because it can shift at any moment. And so it did ...

“Mommy, do you think Daddy will give *me* a ring one day?”

It was probably a good thing I wasn’t there when it happened or I would have broken down and cried like a baby. You see, I’ve been wrapped around *her* little finger ever since the day she wrapped her tiny hand around *my* little finger. I had to get that girl a ring! But, I wanted it to be more than just a ring because she not only wanted a ring; she wanted a promise, a promise that I would love her always.

So I made trip to James Avery.

I found the perfect little silver ring with a tiny heart on it. Then I asked her out on a date to Johnny Rockets, just the two of us. She gave me a BIG smile and a BIG yes! Her eyes lit up when I told her that she would need to pick out a special dress for the occasion. It was hamburgers, fries and shakes but this was special, our first father-daughter date.

Our waitress pulled out all the stops with balloons, pictures, special attention and special milkshakes. She said it reminded her of some of the dates she experienced with her dad growing up.

After dinner we walked over to the plaza area of Market Street and found a spot next to one of the water fountains. As soon as I revealed the tiny gift bag she knew immediately what it contained. It was a priceless moment. Better than a MasterCard commercial.

As I placed the ring on her finger I explained that this ring means three things ...

“I promise to love you always, no matter what. I promise to always love your Mommy, no matter what. And, God will always love you, no matter what.”

I designed a card with photos from that first date and those three promises, plus a few extra thoughts that she will understand later. She has one displayed in her room and I have one in my office. Does that seem like a lot for a three-year-old to process? Well, every time that ring has been on her finger and people ask about it, she tells them exactly what it means ...

“This means that my Daddy will always love me, *and* he will always love my Mommy, *and* God will always love me, no matter what!”

At this writing, our daughter is eight and in second grade. She’s really growing up way too fast. Not too long ago she lost her ring when she took it off to wash her hands at a restaurant. We retraced our steps later with no luck.

Well, you know what I did. I made another trip to James Avery. It was really another teaching moment. You see, the ring is just a symbol. She may lose this ring, too. She will definitely outgrow it. But, she will never lose or outgrow

those three promises.

Tierce and Dana Green were married in 1987 and have one daughter. He is the Executive Pastor of Small Groups at Woodlands Church in The Woodlands, Tex., where he speaks to over a thousand men each year in a seasonal gathering called The Quest. He is also a teaching pastor in the bullpen for his Senior Pastor Kerry Shook.

Click here for the original article at .

Freed by the Holy Spirit

“George Barna has stated that half of the men sitting in the pew on Sunday morning have a major problem with pornography.”—Patrick Morley, in a presentation of the National Coalition of Men’s Ministry Leadership Conference

Roy Comstock of Men in Ministry surveyed more than 1,000 men of different denominations during the past several years. He reported that 46 percent had willfully viewed explicit material within 30 days of answering the survey. Ninety-one percent of the men attended church at least once a week. On average each man had known the Lord 21 years.

(Are these) statistics true of men in Alliance churches? Yes. The following are three examples of men who have overcome their addictions to pornography.

Testimony 1: From the Cell to Christ

I was sexually molested when I was 15 years old. The molestation left me feeling like I had done something bad. I could not understand why people I trusted—a doctor, a lawyer and a minister—would do anything like that. I figured people

in authority had the right to do what they did.

It took me a long time to trust men, and I thought that entering the military would ease the pain of the molestation. But it was not meant to be. I was introduced to pornographic material in the military. It had a definite impact on my way of thinking.

I was stationed near Washington, D.C., where I visited adult bookstores, saw pornographic movies and watched strippers. Although I was a Christian, I was drawn deeper and deeper into pornography.

I felt that it was wrong to view pornographic images, but thinking about the men who molested me made it seem normal. I began the slow path to sexual addiction.

Because I was molested by older men, my sexual addiction was focused on girls and younger women. I watched x-rated movies and read erotic books, which fed my sexual desires. I knew God would have to stop what I was doing and that my actions were not pleasing to Him.

I was so attracted to pornography that my thoughts revolved around the young girls I met at work. I eventually took a job working for a school system, which increased my appetite for pornography.

God spoke to me in many ways. Once He stopped me from boarding a plane that crashed on takeoff, killing all on board. But at the time, I didn't believe that God actually saved my life.

I continued my sexual fantasies long after I was married, until God finally put a stop to what I was doing. In August 1998, I was arrested for talking to a young girl. Even though I didn't do anything to her, the fact I made a sexual remark brought in the law.

My arrest was the best thing that ever happened to me. I spent

92 days in jail. God provided an opening and I was put into the Life Learning cellblock with nine other Christian men.

After my arrest, I stayed away from pornography. I knew people were watching me. I was afraid of what would happen if they caught me.

When I was in the Life Learning block, many people visited who—at one time or another—were involved in some sort of sexual addiction. Their testimonies made me realize that only God could break my bondage.

A minister came into our cellblock every Monday and taught us from Romans. That convinced me that what I was doing was wrong.

On my release I began working with a Christian counselor. One day after leaving his office I said, “Lord, I can’t go on like this.” I asked the Lord to reconcile me to Him. God took the load of sexual addiction and pornography off my shoulders. That was the day I knew I was free.

Today, I look for opportunities to share my testimony. I want other men to know what can happen, and that God can break the grip of sexual addiction.—*Anonymous*

Top Ten Principles for Sexual Purity

We live in a sex-crazed culture where sexual temptation is every man’s battle! Men, how can you learn to say “no” to sexual temptation? How can you gain and maintain sexual purity? How can you teach sexual purity to your children?

The following principles go beyond describing what not to do by detailing what you can do positively. I periodically return to these principles and renew my resolutions. Here is a challenge for you to make the following resolutions to maintain sexual purity:

1. Maintain sexual purity through the power of Jesus Christ

- (Eph. 5:3; Rom. 7:24–25). Exercise self-restraint by bringing my body, mind, will and emotions under complete control through Christ (Gal. 5:16).
2. Never look lustfully at a woman, entertain lustful thoughts or commit adultery (Job 31:1; Matt. 5:28; Ex. 20:14, 17; Rev. 2:22).
 3. Never make sexual or seductive advances toward another woman (Prov. 6:27–29) and resist any sexual advances from another woman (Prov. 2:16; 6:24–26).
 4. Never allow my mind to pursue stimulation through sensual advertising, obscene or perverse material, nudity, indecent television programs, computer images, the Internet, movies or visit a place of sexual promiscuity (Ps. 101:3; Rom. 12:2).
 5. Hate evil and put to death earthly desires at work in me for sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil passions and greed. Run from sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18; Ps. 97:10; Col. 3:5; 2 Tim. 2:22).
 6. Fill my mind with things that are pure (Phil. 4:8).
 7. Use my body to serve the Lord and keep my body clean and pure as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:13, 19–20). Obey the desires and commands of God in all that I do (1 Pet. 1:14–16).
 8. Always treat my wife with godliness and humility, honor and respect, dignity and purity (Eph. 5:25–28) and always have my needs for sexual intimacy met by her alone (Gen. 2:24; Prov. 5:18–19; Song 1:2; 1 Cor. 7:3–5).
 9. Live as a Spirit-filled Christian in expressing value and worth to all people (John 3:16; Rom. 13:9, 15:7).

Quickly and fully repent of any moral failure and trust the Lord for full deliverance (1 John 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:10).

Click [here](#) for the article at . The article was reprinted with permission from an article posted July 7, 2006, on the @Life website. Part II of this series is scheduled for Monday, Feb.

'All Israel Shall Be Saved'

The Messianic body in Israel believes with a united heart that **"All Israel will be saved"** (see Rom. 11:26). The idea that one nation, Israel, is promised a predestined, national revival is a radical concept. It is too radical to be based on one verse, even coming from Paul (Saul) the apostle. It must be a principle developed throughout the Scriptures.

The prophets of ancient Israel began to have revelation of Israel's salvation. It is from their prophecies that Paul received the biblically based authority to make such a bold statement in Romans 11:26.

"Israel is saved in YHVH (Yaweh; the Lord), an eternal salvation" (Is. 45:17).

"In YHVH all the seed of Israel will be righteous and praise" (Is. 45:25).

"I will give salvation to Israel, My glory" (Is. 46:13).

"Your people will all be righteous; will inherit the earth forever" (Is. 60:21).

This last verse became the basis for the rabbinic teaching that all religious Jews have eternal salvation. All Israel has a part in the world to come, as it is said, "And your people will all be righteous"—Masekhet Avot 1:1. The interpretation of Isaiah's prophecies as referring to eternal, national salvation is parallel in the New Covenant and in the Talmud/Mishnah—with obviously quite differing applications.

The other prophets, particularly Jeremiah, continued in Isaiah's viewpoint, which in turn paved the way for Paul's revelation in Romans.

"In His days, Judah will be saved" (Jer. 23:6).

"Time of great tribulation for Jacob and he will be saved out of it" (Jer. 30:7).

"YHVH, save your people, the remnant of Israel" (Jer. 31:7).

"In those days, Judah will be saved" (Jer. 33:16).

The contexts of these passages are prophecies describing the Messianic king, the restoration of Israel and the New Covenant. The early chapters of Jeremiah focus on God's judgment for Israel, the latter chapters on God's judgment for the nations. Right in the middle is a poetic, prophetic section, concerning the restoration of Israel. Jeremiah 30-33 is parallel to Romans 9-11, which was Paul's thesis on the restoration of Israel as well.

Jeremiah 31:7 reveals that the time of Israel's national revival is during the great tribulation. Israel's revival and end-time tribulation are concurrent. Other prophets continued in the same insight; also describing Israel's revival in the context of end-time tribulation:

"...time of tribulation such as never was ... and at that time your people shall be delivered" (Dan. 12:1).

"The sun turned into darkness, moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of YHVH ... whoever calls on the name of the YHVH will be saved, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance" (Joel 2:31-32).

"YHVH will save the tents of Judah first..." (Zech. 12:7).

The vision for national revival in Israel in the end times is established by the full range of Israel's latter prophets. The

root of biblical authority for this idea goes all the way back to the prophecies of Moses in the Torah.

“Blessed are you, Israel, a people saved by YHVH...”
(Deuteronomy 33:29).

We would not emphasize the salvation of Israel were it just an isolated verse in Romans. However, Israel’s restoration, remnant, and revival during end-times tribulation are major themes of Scriptures, from the Torah to the New Covenant.

All quotes from the Scriptures were translated from the original Hebrew by the author.

Click here for the original article at .

Kick Up Your Heels With Natural Solutions for Arthritis

“Be not wise in your own eyes; reverently fear and worship the Lord and turn (entirely) away from evil. It shall be health to your nerves and sinews, and marrow and moistening to your bones.” (Proverbs 3:7-8, AMP)

Hurting every day is no way to live. In these days of modern technology, advanced medical techniques and improved hygiene, we are living much longer than we did just a hundred years ago. Unfortunately, many elderly people experience so much pain every day in their bodies that they wish they could just go on to heaven. Although the major killers are still heart disease, cancer and strokes, the number one cause of disabilities is arthritis. Between rheumatoid arthritis,

osteoarthritis, joint inflammation and a very painful form of arthritis called gout, it seems that we barely have a chance to avoid it as we age. What is the point of living 80 or 90 years on the earth if the last several decades are filled with debilitating joint pain.

God has provided a plant and animal kingdom full of natural remedies of which we are just becoming aware. After we become Christians, we have a renewed spirit man, but we still have to live our lives on earth in physical bodies. And those physical bodies need to be "renewed" just as our spirits and minds need to be renewed.

Arthritis Not Only Affecting the Elderly

Most of us associate the degeneration of arthritis with something our grandparents had; the idea that younger people could develop arthritis may seem a bit far-fetched. In my experience, an astonishing 90 percent of all 40-year-olds have the beginning stages of cartilage degeneration. This does not mean that they are necessarily in pain or are facing disability at that point, but it does mean that without certain changes in their diet and lifestyle, there is a good chance that full-blown arthritis will develop—and not just later in life. Nearly three out of five people with arthritis are under the age of 65!

What could be the cause of such a trend? First of all, the poor diet that most Americans consume does not contain the nutrition needed to foster healthy cartilage replacement in the joints. Not only that, but the typical diet promotes obesity in our society. And if a person is 20 pounds overweight, this weight-bearing problem is almost certainly causing arthritic changes in their joints, especially the knees and the hips.

Another reason for the growing prominence of arthritis in the younger generation is the increasing number of athletic

injuries that occur. If a person has suffered a football injury, a hockey injury, a skating injury and so on, the risk of arthritis increases threefold due to the damage sustained to the cartilage in the joints.

With such alarming risks and such pain and debilitation at stake, thank God that he has made it possible to prevent and even correct the joint pain and worn-out cartilage that causes arthritis. In these days, it is becoming increasingly important to take advantage of the preventive measures that God has put in place for us. While Satan would love to keep so many of God's people bound up with the excruciating pain and joint stiffness that arthritis causes, God offers you a better plan.

Below are questions designed to determine if you are exhibiting the signs of arthritis.

1. During the past 12 months, have you have pain, aching, stiffness or swelling in or around a joint?
2. In a typical month, were these symptoms present daily for at least half of the days in the month?
3. Do you have pain in your knee or hip when climbing stairs or walking two or three blocks (1/4 mile) on flat ground?
4. Do you have daily pain or stiffness in your hand joints?
5. Are you now limited in any way in any activities because of joint symptoms (pain, aching, stiffness or loss of motion)?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are exhibiting symptoms that may be arthritis or another condition that needs to be diagnosed. You should confirm this diagnosis with your healthcare provider.

Nutritional Answers for Arthritis and Joint Problems

The wonderful news is that God has provided elements in nature to help correct these painful arthritic conditions. Some of

these nutritional answers provide more than just relief from the symptoms of arthritis; they can actually reverse cartilage damage, restoring health to damaged cartilage caused by the disease—the aspect that traditional medicine has not even addressed.

So what should you do to cope with arthritis if you are suffering from its pain and debilitation? First of all, you should begin to seek God for His pathway to healing for you. Consider that your pathway could include the nutrients that God has placed in the plant and animal kingdoms, which have been there since the beginning of time. I encourage you to become acquainted with the following natural resources God has provided that have proven helpful in the treatment of this painful disease.

Curcuma

Curcuma is a substance that comes from turmeric, a plant root commonly found in curry powder. Curcuma does not create the same kidney problems that Celebrex or Vioxx do, and I recommend 100 milligrams of Curcuma daily.

Tart Cherries

The kind of cherries that create benefits for the joints and cartilage are not Bing cherries or the cherries you would find on the top of an ice cream sundae. You would find these beneficial cherries in a cherry pie. It is in the beneficial chemical in them that causes the undesired tartness. Just as the case was with curcuma, tart cherries have been used for centuries to alleviate arthritic pain and joint swelling.

Holy Basil

Holy basil is another ingredient that contains much the same properties as curcuma and tart cherries; again, it has been used for hundreds of years to bring relief to painful, swollen joints. One hundred fifty milligrams a day is sufficient to

help relieve pain and reduce inflammation.

Sea Cucumber

A sea cucumber is not a member of the plant kingdom, but a marine animal, an underwater creature that feeds on plankton in every sea on earth. As the sea cucumbers, also known as bechedemer, strain the plankton, they collect certain compounds from these tiny marine organisms that have amazing anti-inflammatory properties.

Editor's Note: The preceding is an excerpt from Reginald Cherry's book, Bible Health Secrets.

Reginald Cherry, M.D., has practiced diagnostic and preventive medicine/alternative medicine in his clinic for more than 27 years. Frustrated with the limited number of people he could help, he was led to expand his outreach through ministry with weekly television, a monthly newsletter, books and other materials. The television program, *The Doctor and the Word*, now reaches millions of homes each week, and the medical newsletter, *Pathway to Healing*, goes to thousands of partners. He is the author of *The Bible Cure* and *The Doctor and the Word*.

Some Things You Simply Can't Leave Behind

There are things in life that you can't leave behind. You can't travel overseas without a passport.

There are good reasons for this. A passport says that you are recognized and approved by your government to travel overseas.

It states your name, sex, date of birth and birthplace.

Sometimes getting a passport happens quickly. Other times, you have to wait for processing that may take longer than normal. You have to work within the system.

Just like you have to work within the system on earth, you have to work within God's system to get to heaven. Traveling to heaven also requires a passport. If you skip the first step, you will not complete the journey.

This step is salvation. Adam and Eve placed their desires above God's and choose to do what He told them not to. It's been all downhill since then. Every one of us has sinned.

But from the beginning, God has had a plan. He made a way to cover the sins we commit. The mess we made required God's help to overcome. So, He sent His Son to take our sins off of us and place them on Himself. He died as a sacrifice to cover what we could not. God wants you to accept salvation and join Him in heaven.

You have to work within God's rules, but He has already done the hard work. God's rules are that He calls you to salvation and you accept the sacrifice He made for you. This rule also involves repentance. That is, you turn away from an ungodly lifestyle, and live according to God's plan.

On the one hand, this is completely free. You owe God no money for what He has done. On the other hand, it costs you everything. When you follow God's plan, you give up your own hopes and desires. There will be things you used to do that you can no longer do.

That will vary by person, but God may tell you to no longer date the woman you are dating. You may have to give up some of your money. Some habits will have to go.

The choices may be hard, but you have to weigh this in the

long run. What you are giving up doesn't compare to what you are gaining. You gain eternity at the cost of a few temporary activities.

You decide to accept the sacrifice. You respond to God's call. Now, you have a passport from God for eternity. No one can steal it from you. You can't accidentally lose it or misplace it. But you could choose to give it up.

You can choose to lay down the passport and go back to your old ways. But if you give up your salvation, you will not experience heaven.

Some people say that you have to do other things after salvation to get into heaven. They say you have to be baptized, attend church and tithe. This is not the case.

All of those things are good and will allow you to grow in your new life, but not one is required for heaven. The only one required is salvation. Just like you can't get on a plane to Scotland without a passport, you can't get to heaven without being saved.

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

Pastors Make Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

In recent weeks, more than 50 pastors associated with traditionally African-American denominations traveled with Christians United for Israel (CUFI) to the Holy Land. The two trips were part of a series during the winter of 2012-2013 in which CUFI is taking more than 180 Christian clergy from a

variety of denominations to Israel.

“There is no feeling or experience quite like visiting Israel. Here you walk where Jesus walked, you meet the people who have made the desert bloom, and you leave with an even greater understanding of why we must stand with the State of Israel,” said Pastor Michael Stevens, CUFI’s African American outreach coordinator.

Trip participants visited holy sites, met with leading Middle East experts, and saw firsthand what daily life is like surrounded by extremism and unrest.

Stops on the trip included the Sea of Galilee, Golgotha, the Western Wall, Yad Vashem, a visit with Israeli soldiers serving along the Jewish state’s border with Lebanon, and a briefing by Khaled Abu Toameh, the Palestinian Affairs correspondent for *The Jerusalem Post*.

“I stood with Israel for many reasons before, but after visiting and personally interacting with the people of that great nation, I have a newfound love and affinity for Israel and its people. I stand with Israel like never before,” Detroit-based Pastor Marlin Reid said upon his return.

“I will never forget what I saw, felt and learned during this trip to Israel. I believe it is imperative that, as Christians, we stand with the Jewish people and the Jewish state in their struggle for peace and security,” said Iman Edwards, Elder Pastor at the Emmanuel Church of God in Christ in Katy, Tex.

In an effort to further foster interreligious dialogue, participants also visited Rabbi Shlomo Riskin’s Center for Jewish-Christian Understanding and Cooperation (CJCUC), which helped underwrite the trip.

“We are honored to host pastors traveling to Israel with CUFI. Such trips foster the Jewish-Christian dialogue and equip

these leaders with the tools and knowledge to engage their communities in support of Israel,” Riskin said. “CJCUC is absolutely committed to advancing the dialogue between our two faith communities and continuing to build a relationship founded on mutual trust and respect.”

Christians United for Israel is the largest pro-Israel organization in the United States and one of the leading Christian grassroots movements in the world. CUFI spans all fifty states and reaches millions with its message. Each year CUFI holds hundreds of pro-Israel events in cities around the country. And each July, thousands of pro-Israel Christians gather in Washington, D.C. to participate in the CUFI Washington Summit and make their voices heard in support of Israel and the Jewish people.

CUFI’s mission is to provide a national association through which every pro-Israel church, parachurch organization, ministry or individual in America can speak and act with one voice in support of Israel.

Since Life is So Futile, Should I Believe God Cares?

It is best to call things plainly as they are. Many of the basic claims of Christianity are not only the most difficult to explain, but also the most embarrassing.

A Christian writer, however, has the duty to explain Christianity, not explain it away.

There is one claim in particular that many Christians find terribly embarrassing: Christianity makes the remarkable claim

to not only solve the problem of futility, but also to cause it.

Christianity teaches that the whole world has been subjected to futility (synonyms: frustration, vanity, and meaninglessness) by God. He has done this with the hope of liberating us from our bondage to decay, and bringing us into the fold of God's children.

It is the Christian view that if man could find even a trace of meaning in any earthly pursuit apart from God, he would take it. We saw in an earlier chapter how Solomon pursued every possible earthly avenue to find meaning and happiness independent of God, and came up empty.

Christianity teaches that God causes every system that seeks meaning and happiness apart from him to end in futility, while at the same time teaching this futility is considered a "grace" or kindness from God. In other words, failing was for Solomon's benefit.

Christianity teaches that God makes us feel the weight of futility in every worldly pursuit—getting the big promotion, making the big bucks, living in the big house or getting none of those things. He makes us so miserable through futility that we choose him of our own free will. He sovereignly removes any possibility of meaning except in him. We might put it this way: Futility is the chief tool by which a good God sovereignly draws us to himself of our own free will.

The Christian system teaches that God will not force a man to revere him, but he will make it impossible for a man to be happy unless he does. Solomon said it this way: "I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him." (Eccl. 3:14)

Even if we get exactly what we want, we will still not be happy apart from God. Apart from God, life has no meaning.

That's the deal. I am just reporting, don't shoot me.

Futility is Protection

Christianity goes one step further and states that if you had gotten what you wanted you would have destroyed yourself, and your failure to get it is God's grace and kindness. Personally, I spent my twenties and thirties working and praying to achieve a type of success that I now realize would have destroyed me, and then was disappointed when I was spared.

Ken worked for a Fortune 100 company for eleven years. A star, he wanted the brass ring, and he put in the 70 hours a week required to get it. He was also a deacon in his church. Ken met once a week with a man in an accountability group. In his hunger for worldly success, Ken became so busy that his accountability partner was driving Ken's son to Little League games. One day he told Ken, "You need to do something about your life. Your son is starting to be closer to me than to you." It woke him up.

Men are interested in goal success; God is interested in soul success. Would we really want to get what we want if we knew it would be our undoing? Of course not. An all-knowing, all-wise, all-good God actually protects us from disasters we would bring on ourselves.

The Bible contains passages that further explain why bad may not be so bad after all.

"But by means of their suffering, he rescues those who suffer. For he gets their attention through adversity. ... Be on guard! Turn back from evil, for it was to prevent you from getting into a life of evil that God sent this suffering" (Job 36:15, 21, NLT)

"For the creation was subjected to frustration (*futility, vanity, meaninglessness*), not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation

itself will be liberated from bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20-21, NIV, *emphasis added*).

God is love. Christianity explains that while we work and pray for things that would destroy us, a loving God—like a loving parent—graciously slows us down. We may wish he would just leave us alone, but as C. S. Lewis noted, that would not be asking for more love, but less.

We Are Easily Deceived

We are made in such a way that we want to lead a comfortable, happy, meaningful life. We also are made in such a way that we think we know the best way to pull that off. Sin deceives us, and we leave God out of our systems.

To change, you have to become uncomfortable with something. Christianity states that God loves us so much that he will never let us become comfortable in the world. He does this by removing the possibility of finding any meaning apart from him.

So what’s the bottom line? If God did not introduce futility into our lives and make us uncomfortable, nothing would ever change. Christianity never claims futility is good, but that God uses it for good. Futility sets in when your system fails. It leads you to despair. Despair leads you to the leap. Futility is the grace of God that allows us to be disturbed out of complacency and error.

The Grace of an Untamable God

By this point you may be thinking, “This is a brutal system to get men to become Christians. It is, in one sense. It is brutal for a surgeon to amputate a gangrenous leg, but he does so to save the rest of the body. In the same way, Christianity is a gracious system designed to save us from ourselves.

When I was a teenager, I tried to tame my parents. I couldn’t. Then I tried to tame my brothers, and failed. Next, I tried to

tame my teachers. No dice. I quit high school. My dad escorted me down to the Army enlistment office. I couldn't tame my dad.

Then I married and tried to tame my wife. I couldn't tame my wife, either. Next, we had children and I tried to tame them too, but I couldn't. Then I became a Christian and, following the pattern, I tried to tame God.

And God is an untamable God. He just will not allow Himself to be tamed. If we didn't try to tame God, he wouldn't have to tame us.

Is there any doubt that men think they can tame God? Is there any doubt that they will fail?

We are being sought by an untamable God. He is the immovable rock dropped in your path. He loves you so much that he will brutalize you, if he must, so that you will choose him of your own free will. That's why the worldly, moral and religious systems don't work. Life becomes futile when we try to tame God.

Abundance, Not Comfort

In the Christian system, God desires men to lead an abundant life. Men often mistake abundant for comfortable.

Someone has told the story about a farmer and his son clearing a field together over a couple of weeks. They placed the brush in a pile, and after a few days birds came and started to build nests. When the farmer chased the birds away, his son thought he was extremely cruel.

At the end of two weeks the field was cleared, and the farmer set the pile of brush to flames. Only then did his son see that what he had at first thought was an act of cruelty was actually an act of kindness. This world is not our home. Someday the world will come to an end. God doesn't want us to get too comfortable here.

Everyone experiences futility. But remember that futility is the love of God that restrains a man from ruining his life of his own free will.

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*.

Editor's Note: This article is adapted from chapter nine of Patrick Morley's 2001 book, *Coming Back to God*. The book is a helpful evangelistic tool for prodigals, cultural Christians, and men who have become jaded about Christianity, but would perhaps respond if someone would take their honest doubts and questions seriously. *Coming Back to* was written for men who have given the best years of their lives to a "system" that has failed them.

Click here for the original article at .

Check Out These Vision-Friendly Veggies

You've probably heard that carrots are good for your eyes. But they're not the only sight-saving vegetable around town. Look no further than your local traffic light to see the best colors for eye health. Research shows that eating certain *red*, *yellow* and *green* veggies may decrease the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration, leading causes of vision loss.

A cataract is a clouding of the lens of the eye due to damaged proteins in the lens. It usually develops gradually over a number of years. More than half of Americans over age 80 are affected, with more than two million cataract extraction surgeries performed each year. Exposure to radiation from the sun over time contributes to cataracts.

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is loss of central vision you need to see people's faces or words in a book. The macula is the center part of the retina that is responsible for focusing on fine details. In AMD, the macula deteriorates and leads to a central blind spot.

Traffic Light Colors Might Help

Red, yellow and green vegetables may protect eye health because of their powerful antioxidants that help remove disease-causing free radicals from the body, including the eyes. Studies show that vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin may protect against vision loss from cataracts and/or AMD. It turns out that many veggies in traffic light colors are rich in some or all of these nutrients, making them super foods for your eyes.

Look at Vitamins C and E

All three of these nutrients are antioxidants, which means they fight oxidative stress put on our cells by free radicals. Results of studies involving these nutrients and eye protection have been perplexing. Some studies show that eating foods high in vitamin C, vitamin E and beta-carotene helps decrease the chance of vision loss or slow its progression. But research using vitamin pills has been perplexing, showing that taking vitamin C or E supplements helps some people but in others might even increase the risk. Bottom line for eye health? Getting your nutrients from whole foods is probably best.

Zinc and Omega-3 Fats

The mineral zinc is important for eye health. Zinc is found in

meat, poultry, dairy, nuts and seeds. Omega-3 fats found in fish oil may also protect against AMD.

Lutein and Zeaxanthin

Lutein and zeaxanthin are naturally-occurring pigments in plants that protect the eyes like a sunscreen shields the skin. Remember the center of the retina called the macula? These two pigments accumulate in the tissues of the macula where they filter out blue light, which is harmful to the eyes. Scientists think this sunscreen effect may play a role in preventing AMD. The theory is that the more lutein and zeaxanthin you get from your diet, the more protective pigment in your macula.

Several large studies showed that people who ate lots of lutein-rich foods had lower risk of getting cataracts than people who ate hardly any lutein. Interestingly, lutein and zeaxanthin are almost always found together in foods and a surprising source is egg yolks. Although the amount in eggs is small, research suggests these nutrients are absorbed better from eggs than from richer plant sources.

Best Vegetable in sight

Of all the traffic light veggies, broccoli and broccoli sprouts might be the best choice in sight. They have an extra antioxidant called sulforaphane which protects eyes from the sun's damaging ultraviolet rays. In one lab study, the more sulforaphane human retinal cells received, the more protected they were from oxidative damage that can lead to vision loss.

Your eyesight is priceless. To improve the chances of reading, driving and seeing the faces of your loved ones for many years to come, try these **sight-saving tips**:

- Wear sunglasses that block 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays. Since sunlight comes in from all angles, a wide-brimmed hat is helpful, too.
- See your eye doctor for checkups on a regular basis.

- Don't smoke. Smoking contributes to both cataracts and AMD.
- Eat a variety of traffic-light-colored fruits and vegetables each day.

Bright reds: tomato, red bell pepper

Golden yellows: corn, sweet potato, carrots, squash, pumpkin, cantaloupe, peaches, papaya, mango

Dark greens: broccoli, broccoli sprouts, spinach, peas, green bell peppers, all kinds of greens such as collard and turnip, avocado

Beth Bence Reinke is a registered dietitian who writes about food, nutrition, and health topics. She is a mom of two sons and the author of numerous magazine articles for adults and children. Beth and her husband have been CBN partners since 1998. Visit her at .

Swimming in the Deep End Takes Courage

From the mid-1930s to the late 1940s, C.S. Lewis met with a group of literary friends every Tuesday and Thursday in an Oxford pub to enjoy good beer and good conversation. They discussed literature, writing, and life.

Their pub, the Eagle and Child, is still there. It was in this environment, within this circle of friends, that heavyweight works like Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, and Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* were forged.

C.S. Lewis and his friends made a habit of swimming in the

deep. You can feel the depth of their encounters in his description of their friendship:

“In a perfect friendship, this appreciative love is, I think, often so great and so firmly based that each member of the circle feels, in his secret heart, humbled before all the rest. Sometimes he wonders what he is doing there among his betters. He is lucky beyond desert to be in such company. Especially when the whole group is together, each bringing out all that is best, wisest or funniest in all the others. Those are the golden sessions; when four or five of us after a hard day’s walking have come to our inn; when our slippers are on, our feet spread toward the blaze and our drinks are at our elbows; when the whole world, and something beyond the world, opens itself to our minds as we talk; and no one has any claim on or any responsibility for another, but all are freemen and equals as if we had first met an hour ago, while at the same time an affection mellowed by the years enfolds us. Life—natural life—has no better gift to give. Who could have deserved it?”

One Man Sharpens Another

You can almost hear the crackling of the fire; you can feel the warmth of that room and taste the depth of their friendship. They made each other better when they were together. That’s what the wisdom of the Scriptures says. Proverbs 27:17 says, *“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another”* (NIV).

True brotherhood. Face-to-face and man-to-man. Iron on iron. But, how do you know if you are swimming in the deep end of authentic manhood and true brotherhood or just splashing around in the kiddie pool? Here are two indicators to identify where you are now and two requirements to get to where you need to be:

True brotherhood sharpens you. In other words, your

friendships are making you a better man, like iron sharpening iron. Men need other men to challenge them and bring out the best in them. Men need environments that are safe, where permission is given and understood—a circle of trust where advice and accountability are welcome. As men, we still need to choose our friends wisely. Proverbs 13:20 says, *“He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm” (NIV).*

It goes without saying that there are significant differences in male relationships and female relationships. Sociologists have observed that, for the most part, men’s friendships revolve around activities while women’s revolve around sharing. I don’t need a sociologist to tell me that. Guys are action figures! We get stuff done! We don’t need to “share.” The less “sharing” we do, the better, right? But, that’s not true. Men were created for deep relationships with other men.

We cannot be the men we are designed to be if we are disconnected from other men. Left to ourselves, we start writing our own rules. Left alone, we can talk ourselves into anything. Proverbs 14:12 says, *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (NIV).* Isolated from other men, we won’t know what hit us.

True brotherhood connects on a soul level. Jonathan and David had that kind of connection. Both of them were warriors. Both of them stepped up at critical times when the Israelites were bullied and intimidated by the Philistines.

The Israelites needed something to ignite their courage, so Jonathan and his armor bearer walked right into the enemy’s garrison and killed about twenty men in hand-to-hand combat. Later, David would stand up against Goliath and then become one of Israel’s greatest warriors. Jonathan and David had a connection so strong and deep that 1 Samuel 18:1 describes it like this: *“ ... the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself” (NASB).* Do you have

a healthy God-designed connection with another man like that?

True brotherhood requires honesty and trust. And, honesty and trust requires vulnerability. Most men settle for having a golfing buddy or a fishing buddy. They don't feel the need to be vulnerable. Guys can talk about cars, football, real estate and business and never connect on a soul level. Some guys think they have to conjure up some practical reason for picking up the phone and calling another man. That's part of the myth that says, "I don't have any emotional needs that I can't handle by myself."

Author David Smith writes: "The message is clear. The independent man doesn't feel he needs the company of other men. Therefore, men must manufacture non-emotional reasons for being together. A business deal must be discussed or a game must be played. Rarely do men plan a meeting together simply because they have a need to enjoy each other's company. Even when men are frequently together, their social interaction begins and remains at a superficial level. The same male employees can have lunch together for years and still limit their conversations to sports, politics, dirty jokes and comments about the sexual attractiveness of selected female workers in their office or plant."

True brotherhood requires time and practice—lots of practice! There is no such thing as microwave manhood. You can't just flip a switch or push a button. No one will just hand you the time. Stop waiting for your church to find you friends like ! Accept responsibility! Make it a priority. Carve out the time and practice, practice, practice.

If you're married, practice sharing your emotions with your wife first. It will make your marriage better and prime the pump for soul connections with other men. Learn from others who already do it well. Read the Psalms of David and see how honest and vulnerable he was in the way he worshiped God.

Take off your floaties and leave the shallows. Discover true brotherhood in the deep end of authentic manhood. You can't man up without it.

Adapted from *Fight Club – Some Things Are Worth Fighting For* | Round 8: *Brotherhood*, Created and Presented by Tierce Green.

Tierce Green is the Executive Pastor of Small Groups at Woodlands Church in The Woodlands, Tex., where he speaks to over a thousand men each year in a seasonal gathering called *The Quest*. He is also a teaching pastor in the bullpen for Senior Pastor Kerry Shook. Tierce was a popular speaker and consultant for the 26 years previous, and wrote curriculum for organizations including LifeWay and Student Life.

Finding the Right Nutritional Supplements

What constitutes a good multivitamin? The answer is the same things that make living food healthy. Most multivitamins are made of synthetic ingredients and toxic fillers. They may have all the vitamins you need, but the vitamins are typically in suboptimal amounts and in a cheap form made of mineral salts, which are poorly absorbed. People who take these pills usually don't get the nutrition they need.

These chemical-based supplements also lack that vital combination of nutrients that characterizes living foods. Nature never produces nutrients in isolation. Oranges, for example, contain much more than vitamin C.

Carrots contain much more than beta-carotene. When you eat them, you get a myriad of vitamins, phytonutrients, flavonoids

and more that interact in ways that are not fully understood, but that we recognize to be healthy.

When you isolate one of these nutrients and take it in high doses, especially in synthetic form, your body may treat it like a foreign substance. When only synthetic vitamins are consumed, there is generally no synergy or balance. It's similar to taking a drug or medication. It ignores the complexity of nutrition.

Pharmaceutical companies are now jumping onto the phytonutrients bandwagon, realizing that these have a certain appeal to consumers. The problem is that phytonutrients were almost certainly not meant to be consumed one at a time.

The healthiest supplements combine the enzymes, coenzymes, trace elements, antioxidants, activators, phytonutrients, vitamins and minerals, and many other elements, which all work together synergistically. These supplements are called whole-food supplements and are generally what I recommend.

Whole-food supplements combine portions of the plants we know are healthy and those portions we have not yet discovered to be healthy. I believe it's wise to do this because medical knowledge is expanding so quickly that it gets outdated practically every few years. A nutrient we hadn't heard of a year ago can suddenly be discovered to protect against certain kinds of cancer or disease. You need a comprehensive multivitamin, made from living ingredients and combined with living nutrition.

Basics for Everyone

The reason we have so many vitamin and mineral deficiencies is because most Americans have embraced fast foods and processed foods, rarely consuming adequate amounts of whole grains, fresh fruits, vegetables and nuts and seeds, which are excellent sources of these nutrients. So we do need supplements, preferably whole-food supplements.

When choosing a supplement, you should look for a multivitamin that contains all 13 vitamins and 17 to 22 minerals with 100 percent of daily values. Also, you need omega-3 fats and a phytonutrient powder. That's it!

Realize if you consume a healthy diet, you will probably get at least 50 percent of the daily values of vitamins and minerals. If you are over 50 years of age, you will probably need extra antioxidants, extra calcium and vitamin D, sublingual B-12, and maybe digestive enzymes. If you already have a disease or simply want more protection, start taking extra antioxidants after the age of 40.

When choosing a supplement here is what I recommend for everyone, regardless of age:

- Choose a comprehensive multivitamin that has at least 100 percent of the daily value (DV) or reference daily intake (RDI). Start slowly because they may upset your stomach. Start with half the recommended amount and space them out during the day after meals. You may increase the amount as tolerated, but do not take more than 100 percent of the daily value.
- Choose a high-quality omega-3 fat to take daily. Start slowly with one a day and increase as tolerated.
- Choose a phytonutrient powder. This powder should contain a combination of colorful organic fruits and vegetables such as red, yellow, green, orange and purple. Start slowly with just a teaspoon a day, and increase the amount as tolerated.

Living foods may cause gas and bloating as your body adjusts to them.

Don Colbert, M.D., is board-certified in family practice and in anti-aging medicine. He also has received extensive training in nutritional and preventive medicine, and he has helped millions of people discover the joy of living in divine

health.