

Hillsong's 'Alive' Hits #1 on Billboard Charts for Third Week

Six months ago the world had never heard of *Young & Free*, yet Hillsong Church's new **worship** sound is now on top of the world, with their first single 'Alive' hitting No. 1 on Billboard's Hot AC for the third week running.

While Hillsong's music is played and sung in churches globally, the new youth sound of *Young & Free* was a bold new direction, and a dramatic shift from what people knew and loved.

Between 'Alive' and 'Back To Life', *Young & Free* has been at the top of TRAA/TCM chart in Australia for 18 weeks, and the Billboard Hot AC success of "Alive" has confirmed the album's global status.

"Our first album is a message and a movement. Our songs are the expression of our love for Jesus Christ straight out of the heart of our Youth Ministry here at **Hillsong Church**," says youth pastor Laura Toggs.

However, she said they were genuinely humbled by the success and grateful to everyone who has supported the new team.

"We really wanted to make sure that we captured the sound of our current youth generation," Toggs says. "The best part about this, is that these songs seem to have transcended age, culture, language and even denominational boundaries.

"Our feedback about 'Alive' is that it enables people to celebrate life and freedom that can only be found through faith in Jesus Christ."

You're Wrong, Mr. Obama, the IRS Is Corrupt

In the aftermath of an IRS targeting scandal that may have influenced the 2012 election, in the midst of criminal and congressional investigations while civil litigation is pending in federal court, before a single deposition is taken and while the IRS clings to tens of thousands of documents, the president of the United States has spoken. His meaning is clear.

Move along—nothing to see here.

In his Super Bowl Sunday interview with Bill O'Reilly, President Obama declared that the IRS scandal was the product of "boneheaded decisions" and that there was "not even a smidgen of corruption."

I suppose that's just another way of saying "phony scandal."

While the easy and immediate response is to ask the president whether senior IRS officials typically assert their Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination when there's not even a "smidgen of corruption," his statement actually has deeper problems.

First, it is not remotely appropriate for a sitting president to make such a declaration in the midst of an ongoing criminal investigation.

Given that the FBI hasn't even interviewed the victims of IRS targeting, it's safe to say the president hasn't seen all the evidence.

How can we trust the results of an investigation when Barbara

Bosserman, one of the lead attorneys, is not only a large donor to Obama's campaigns, but the president himself has publicly issued to that attorney his opinion about the outcome?

Next, he ignores the context. The IRS scandal was orchestrated not by young, inexperienced government employees but by attorneys with decades of experience in the IRS and in the federal government. They *knew* that singling out applicants for additional scrutiny merely because of their presumed politics violates the Constitution.

Viewpoint neutrality is a basic legal requirement for federal bureaucrats, one they're made aware of from day one of federal employment.

In other words, singling out conservatives wasn't an accident or mistake; it was an intentional act by lawyers who knew it was wrong.

Third, he downplays the extent of the wrongdoing. In addition to the initial targeting scandal, we know the IRS leaked confidential information to friendly leftist media outlets.

We know the IRS has engaged in targeted audits of the administration's political enemies.

Oh, and we know that the targeting continues to this day—in spite of media coverage, multiple investigations and multiple lawsuits.

At the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), of the 41 groups in 22 states that we represent in our federal lawsuit, 13 organizations still have not received tax exemptions despite waiting for years.

Finally, President Obama ignores the IRS' own lies. When the IRS made its public apology, it told a series of lies to the American public.

It lied when it said the problem was localized in Cincinnati. In reality, it involved IRS offices from coast to coast, with most action coming from IRS headquarters in Washington.

It lied when it said the problem was the fault of low-level employees. In fact, documents show the early and continued involvement of senior IRS officials.

It also lied when it said the misconduct had stopped. As stated before, the IRS continues to deny recognition to conservative groups, and now the IRS is compounding its wrongdoing by proposing new regulations that would unconstitutionally limit political speech.

These lies by themselves are strong evidence of corruption.

In reality, the question is not whether the IRS was corrupt. It was and is. The question is, how corrupt? How far up the chain of command does the corruption extend?

The intentional misuse of government office to deprive Americans of their constitutional rights and thereby sway the outcome of public debates is the very essence of corruption in a constitutional republic. Drafting the government bureaucracy into partisan politics is more than a "boneheaded mistake"; it's a threat to the integrity of our democracy.

Fortunately, we don't have to rely on the president to take action against the IRS.

Congress is intensifying its investigation of this targeting scheme. I will testify before a House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Thursday at a hearing entitled "The IRS Targeting Investigation: What Is the Administration Doing?"

At the ACLJ, our lawsuit—brought against key IRS officials—is still pending, and we are undeterred by political posturing.

In the heart of Bill O'Reilly's "No Spin Zone," the president tried to spin. But he can't escape the truth, and soon enough,

his administration won't be able to escape accountability.

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Justin Bieber Seeks Spiritual Cleansing, Baptism in New York

Justin Bieber, who has found himself in legal troubles multiple times in the last few weeks, sought spiritual help Saturday night.

According to the *New York Post's* Page Six, the pop star was on the hunt for a private pool in Manhattan so he could get baptized with Hillsong NYC. Bieber was reportedly in New York Saturday for *Maxim* magazine's Super Bowl party.

"Justin and his team spent time on Saturday searching for a place with a pool where they could conduct a baptism for him, a cleansing ritual, with the Hillsong Church. But they couldn't find a place in time," a source told Page Six.

Another source said, "Justin is serious about his Christian faith, and after recent events, he needed to take a pause."

The megachurch's pastor, Carl Lentz, is a friend of Bieber, to whom Bieber tweeted, "Amazing sermon at church this morning. Love you man. I broke down today," after attending a service in September.

The 19-year-old entertainer was arrested Jan. 23 in Miami

Beach on charges of driving under the influence, resisting arrest and driving with an expired license. He could face six months in jail if convicted.

The Canadian was also charged last week with assaulting a limousine driver in Toronto in December. An assault conviction in Canada carries a maximum sentence of five years.

How Anxiety Hits You

Character-building is tough.

I watched my son trudge to the van after last-minute complaints about feeling sick. Upon further interrogation questioning, he confessed, "School is too long." And the sore tummy became more than the stomach flu.

Mommy's diagnosis: anxiety.

Which I totally understand. But at that moment, I had to make a quick decision, and my decision was that my sweet 5-year-old had to go to school, armed with a plastic bag in case he threw up on the trip.

While I watched my son make his sad march to the van, I remembered the feeling of dread when I used to go to work early in the morning and wouldn't get home until my kids were tucked into bed. How I felt when I was living to survive instead of living my dream.

Do you feel this way?

Do you ever have a pit in your stomach when you have to get up in the morning? Do you feel like you have to just survive the next day? Week? Year? Do you wish you could just graduate high

school, then graduate college so life could begin? Do you wish you could stop working at your menial job so you could pursue your passions?

When anxiety hits, take a deep breath, say a prayer, and keep moving forward.

Sometimes we have seasons of our life where we have to suck it up and go to class. Go to work. Get a job. Go to school. Even if it's really long. And God is waiting with open arms when we succeed in overcoming our anxiousness.

Letting my son stay home this morning would have taught him how to take the easy way out. That an upset tummy means mommy lets him relax in bed with books and Legos. That he doesn't have to suck it up when his little world gets to be a little much for him.

And while I watched my little boy walk to his daddy, who was waiting at the van, I knew that this was a lesson we needed to teach him. One he needed to learn so that he'll be able to keep going when he wants to stop.

It didn't keep me from sobbing to my husband, Justin, on the phone after he dropped off the kids. Overanalyzing my decision led to wild thoughts of my son feeling like I let him down. But I know that if he gets sick at school, we can go pick him up. And just how God opens His arms to hold us when we can't quite make it, I'm ready to cuddle my little boy and tuck him into bed.

However, if my instincts are right about his anxious tummy, he will be the better for sticking it out during a long school day. And I'll be waiting for him when he gets home with open arms.

*Five months after winning the Florida Christian Writers Conference 2012 Writer of the Year award, **Bethany Jett** signed contracts with the MacGregor Literary Agency and Regal*

Publishing. Her debut book, The Cinderella Rule, hit bookstores in April 2013.

How to Get Unstuck in Your Fitness

Do you ever feel stuck in a rut with no way out? Do you ever find yourself wishing that your day-to-day life could be different? I know what it's like to be stuck, and I have good news for you: Your present does not have to be your future!

Over the next three months, I will share with you how to get unstuck and move beyond mediocrity in the area of fitness—to be perfectly clear, fitness includes both food and exercise. This month I will focus on our need to surrender our body to God.

Your body was made by God and for God. In fact, your body is not for the gratification of yourself. The apostle Paul has some strong words for us in Phillipians 3:19: “Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.”

God spoke to me through this Scripture and made me understand that my belly had become my god. I was eating for myself, not for God. This is idolatry. And I came to a verse that I knew very, very well that really spoke to my heart in a new and fresh way, and it was 1 Corinthians 10:31, where the Bible says, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

You see, if you're going to get unstuck, you need to know where you're headed, and where you need to go is not to a

pill, not to a powder, not to a potion. That is not your solution. The first thing we have to do, which is the most important thing we have to do, is to surrender our bodies to God. This is where it starts.

I came to a point where I realized I had to glorify God with my body. It was no longer about gratifying myself; it was about glorifying God. In Philippians 1:20, Paul said that his goal, which I soon made my goal, was to magnify Christ in his body. Whether it was by life or by death, I was going to magnify Christ in my body. You see, the Bible specifically spoke to my heart and said, "You know what? You've got to start eating, you've got to start drinking, and you've got to start exercising to the glory of God."

I had to come to the point where I found out that I had a spoon problem. You see, I had a total, absolute addiction to a huge, huge bowl of ice cream every single night before I went to bed—not most nights, but every night, and this was an addiction. I started this addiction as a child, and I continued it as an adult, and I came to the point where I could not honestly say that I was glorifying God with what I was eating. What I had to do was to surrender my spoon to God. I had to say, "God, I'm going to give you my ice cream spoon."

I also had a fork problem. I liked a lot of food. If a cheeseburger is good, why not eat three of them? It's good! So why not just eat three and, "Hey, you need some fries to go with that?" Later on I'd have that big bowl of ice cream. I didn't have to put down a cigarette. I didn't have to put down a bottle of liquor. I didn't have to put down a porn magazine. I had to put down my fork. I'd say, "God, I need to glorify You with what I eat. I need to glorify You with what I drink. I need to honor You with my body because it's not about me." It's not about a bod for Steve; it's about having a bod for God.

Do you know what? If we just stopped right here at

surrendering our body to God, we wouldn't need anything else. Are you willing to surrender your body to God? This is where getting unstuck in your fitness starts.

I recently received an inspiring email from one of our Losing to Live participants, John Frankenburg. Read what he has to say about having a Bod4God:

"Pastor Steve, I wanted to update you on my progress since beginning my B4G journey last April.

"I have been faithful in keeping with my new lifestyle living. I explain to healthcare providers, my family and friends ... I have embarked on a lifestyle change and eating 'biblically'!

"For the good news: My diabetes has almost disappeared. Deleted. One medication of three, and about to decrease or eliminate my meds altogether! My cholesterol is perfect now. H1C test fell from 8.4 in March 2013 to 5.7 in Dec 2013.

"Also weight has decreased from 256.6 to 204.4.

"All the above while selling a home, moving and helping my best friend through kidney transplant surgery. Being a blessing to him and his wife!

"I owe this lasting change in lifestyle to B4G and Biblical living.

"My only regret is not starting this journey sooner in my 67 years! Your encouragement and ministry has been an awesome blessing to me."

Bod4God is about creating your own healthy lifestyle plan. The litmus test of a fitness plan, a healthy lifestyle plan, has got to be: Will I do this the rest of my life? And if the answer is no, then you need to start working on a lifestyle plan that will work for you, and it's got to be your own. It's got to be something that God has led you to do, and it's got to be something that you will gladly do the rest of your life.

In the next article, we will focus on exercise and excuses in Part 2 of “Getting Unstuck in Your Fitness.” Meanwhile, if you have questions or would like more information, please contact me at sreynolds@ or 703-568-7484.

No Apologies: Dave Is Dead

Apologetics. What an intimidating word that is. Every time I hear it, I think of an apology for a total screw-up. Something like, “I’m sorry for forgetting our anniversary, honey.” And within the context of being a Christian, it would sound like, “I’m sorry for believing in something that you don’t.”

Webster’s Dictionary defines *apologetics* as “reasoned arguments or writings in justification of something, typically a theory or religious doctrine.” In other words, it’s the fine art of defending what we believe in, using facts and, in our case, the inerrant Word of God to prove His existence.

And the audience is typically someone who either wants to disprove that Jesus exists or someone who has a completely different belief system than we do. In the vast landscape of apologetics, we are to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pet. 3:15).

That’s where I get in over my head—a lot! First, I have absolutely no theological background whatsoever. Man, my kids can even sing the 66 books of the Bible in order, and I can barely remember if Hebrews is in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Color me handicapped when it comes to doing battle for the Lord, at least academically.

Second, I have a past life. Let’s call him “Dave.” Dave’s life

was filled with a lot of alcohol, drug-induced stupors, broken relationships and a cynical anger that could rob anyone's joy in mere seconds. The people who knew Dave likely recall a hard-partying man with a brutally sarcastic edge and no love for anyone or anything.

Incessantly negative, always brash and just plain rude, Dave was awful. There are literally hundreds of people who only knew him, not the new creation known as "David," who came into being on a fateful day after Dave lost absolutely everything that mattered and everything that didn't. Crushed and hopeless, David was birthed from the pain of loss and crisis.

Thanks to the inception of social media, I have been given the opportunity to reconnect with people from high school and beyond who have some not-so-fond memories of me. While I have been cruising along with life for the past 25 years, so have they. And their last impression of Dave has often been the lasting impression. Enter David, a Jesus freak with the same brash approach, which is now classified as a "bold" approach, to spreading the Good News.

Have you ever noticed when you profess Christ to people that the barrage of question is almost insane? Immediately, old friends look to you to justify why you believe in God, as if seminary is a prerequisite. And I often find myself thrust into the very apologetics that I know nothing about. In no particular order, here are some of the questions that I have fielded:

- There are millions of animals on the earth. How did Noah's ark hold them all, since it was so small?
- How come there are no historical records, other than the Bible, of the exodus from Egypt?
- How did Jesus pray to Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane?
- You say the Bible is from God, but man wrote it, so it has to be flawed. Why do you believe it's all true?

- A talking donkey? Really?

If you have people who remember the old you, they are often going to square off with you about the overall construction and validity of Scripture. And if you are like me, you don't have a clue about 98 percent of it.

Not to sound like an irreverent moron, but at the end of the day, I don't really care how many animals fit into the ark. And as a human, wrapping my arms around the Trinity would be mental suicide, since His ways are so much higher than mine (Is. 55:8-9). All that I know is David is kind, compassionate, loving and full of hope. I live for God, not for me, and I know that I will someday be with Him in heaven for eternity.

So when I get cornered about how I know that Jesus exists, my default answer is always the same and taken straight from the mouth of a blind man who met Him face to face:

"Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see" (John 9:25).

Thank God that Dave is dead. No apology needed.

David Dusek is founder and director of *Rough Cut Men Ministries* and author of *Rough Cut Men: A Man's Battle Guide to Building Real Relationships With Each Other and With Jesus*. *Rough Cut Men* has been presented to NASCAR teams, at West Point and the U.S. Naval Academy, at military bases around the world and at hundreds of churches and men's conferences of every denomination. To find out more about the *Rough Cut Men* or to book David for an upcoming men's event, please check out .

Why Some Women Keep Living With Abusive Men

In the nation of Colombia, where I ministered last month, a woman is killed by her husband or partner every four days. The problem is so serious that sociologists have coined a new term for it: *femicidio*, or femicide.

I've often quoted the statistics about domestic violence, but when I was in the Colombian city of Barranquilla, I saw the scars up close. The emotional pain I encountered while praying with and counseling women there was excruciating. Some were gang raped as teenagers. Others were sexually molested by relatives. Many had been slapped, punched, choked, kicked or attacked with knives or iron rods by husbands or boyfriends.

Celia (not her real name) had the saddest story. She gave her life to Christ a few years ago, but she maintained an on-again, off-again relationship with a boyfriend whom she admitted was abusive. He screamed at her constantly, he pushed her to the floor on one occasion, and he often told her she was inferior to his other girlfriends.

Yet Celia couldn't stand it when he stopped calling her. She wanted his attention, even when he called her names and bragged about his sexual conquests with other women.

Why do some women actually want to stay in relationship with men who act like total jerks? It's a complicated problem, but we can't use that as an excuse to ignore it. The Christian community must learn to confront domestic abuse if we ever hope to heal the women who suffer from it. In my experience, I've found five main reasons why abuse is tolerated:

- 1. Women feel compelled to keep their abuse a secret.** Any form of abuse produces shame. The victim is made to feel she is the guilty one, so she feels compelled to keep quiet about it. In

many cultures, relatives enforce this secrecy by insisting that what goes on inside the home stays inside the home. Often a mother will tell her daughter that exposing her husband's abuse will discredit the family. So a woman is expected to be the scapegoat, bearing the shame for her uncle's sexual advances or her husband's beatings.

2. Their fathers abused their mothers. One woman I met in Colombia told me she has always ended up with abusive men in her life, ever since her boss raped her in his office when she was in her early 20s. In counseling we discovered that her father constantly abused her mother physically and verbally—and that her mother stayed in the marriage even though she was miserable. Today, the mother's agony has been passed down to the next generation. The mother sent a signal to her daughter that women should simply roll over and take abuse.

3. They have lost their self-esteem. Women who are addicted to abusive men don't become this way overnight. It can start with a lack of affection and affirmation at home. But usually a traumatic experience such as a rape, childhood sex abuse or even a serious bullying incident can trigger the downward spiral. Abuse victims start believing they are worthless—and that they deserve to be mistreated. When this lie has fully metastasized, an abused woman will feel attracted to men who reinforce this sense of worthlessness.

4. They are financially dependent on their husbands. In the United States, women can call the police and secure protection from an abuser (although the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence says only 25 percent of victims in the U.S. report the crime). But in developing countries, reporting the abuse is rarely an option. In Peru, police have been known to rape women who report abuse! No wonder many women feel helpless. They have no legal way out of this nightmare—and if they leave the marriage, they have no money. So most women live with their bruises and suffer in silence.

5. They received flawed counsel from pastors. I've met many Christian women who felt trapped in horribly abusive marriages. In some cases, their husbands were HIV positive (because of affairs) and yet they demanded sex. In other cases, the men were hitting their wives, emotionally battering them or even threatening to kill them. Yet when the women sought help from the church, they were told to submit and endure. Often the line goes like this: "If you will be more submissive, your husband will change."

That is the worst advice any counselor could tell a woman whose self-esteem has already been torn to shreds. She already questions whether God loves her—and now a pastor suggests that God wants her to be abused. This type of "pastoral care" is actually a form of spiritual abuse!

Often pastors tell women to "be quiet and take it" because they don't want to encourage divorce. Pastors will use Malachi 2:16—"God hates divorce"—and yet ignore the rest of the passage, which says, "And him who covers his garment with wrong" (NASB). Many scholars say this passage should be translated, "And him who covers his wife with violence."

Yes, God hates divorce—because He created the family. But He also hates it when women are abused. If we want His heart, we must defend women from abuse and devise compassionate strategies to protect and heal them.

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When Corrupt Talk Comes Out of Your Mouth

It is impossible for me to begin 2014 without giving you a tool for making your year terrific. This is my motto for the year ... again! And I hope it becomes yours also. I did not search my archives before writing, but I am sure that I have written on this before.

“Let no **corrupting talk (unwholesome words)** come out of your mouth ...” You probably can finish the verse. It is found in the book of Ephesians 4:29. It is worth it to read the rest of the verse also.

This is a subtraction and addition equation. What is Paul teaching us about how we communicate with others? Let me put it in first person. Paul is telling me that I must be intentional to remove from my method of communication all words and phrases, sentences and paragraphs that reduce the quantitative value of another person. Whether they are present or not present. This is a discipline that I must take responsibility for.

It is impossible to live in the **power of love** and **speak words** that cause others to feel that something has been taken from them—confidence, motivation, trust. When we speak to others or about others in an unbecoming way, we remove the presence of grace from our attitudes. Without grace in relationships, we become a judge. This elevates our own self-opinion and prevents others from living up to our expectations. Wow! This is a trap. All traps isolate. The result of this kind of living will cause me to isolate myself and believe it is OK.

Subtract. It all starts with Subtraction. Subtract **words** that hurt others. Remove them from your vocabulary. If you try to add edifying words on top of hurtful words, it is like trying

to purify polluted water by adding pure water. It doesn't work. However, if you remove all pollution from the water and the vessel, then add pure water, the water remains pure. This is the principle that Paul is teaching.

Add. When you remove **hurtful words** that are not helpful to others, your **communication** slate becomes clean. Try this for a few weeks. Then begin adding uplifting words—words that enlarge confidence and build self-esteem. **Words** that are filled with favor that they may not yet deserve—that's what grace is.

This is an equation to release the Holy Spirit in our lives. He will not be grieved (withdrawn) by my unbecoming behavior.

Yes, this is step number one to living your life in love. There is no greater way to live. After all, that's what Christ is all about.

Now that I choose to be intentional with my words, my slip-ups are far and few between. I hope yours will be too. Have a love-filled year as you build up others, making life easier for them.

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth, but such as is good for building up as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:29-32).

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Facebook Takes Place of Bible in Most Americans' Lives

What can you say about a nation that reads **Facebook** more than the **Bible**?

Facebook, which celebrated its 10th birthday on Tuesday, reports 757 million daily active users. About 19 percent of them are in the United States and Canada, which translates to about 143 million people logging on to read **Facebook** posts each and every day.

According to a 2006 CBS News poll, 15 percent of U.S. adults read the **Bible** (or some other religious text) every day. The Associated Press did some quick calculations to determine that these numbers mean about 40 million people in the U.S. and Canada read the **Bible** every day. And that was eight years ago. It's more likely that the number of Bible-readers has declined rather than increased, given the downward spiral of our nation.

Now, I'm by no means anti-**Facebook**. I've got about 100,000 people on my Facebook page, and I use the medium as a tool to minister to the masses. So do many other ministries. **Joyce Meyer** has nearly 5 million Facebook followers, and Jesus Daily has a whopping 25 million! Clearly, God is using Facebook.

For all the wonderful ministry happening on **Facebook**, though—including teaching videos and apps—it is no substitute for reading the Bible. After all, Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Somehow, even if **Facebook** were a part of mainstream Galilean culture, I don't think Jesus would give up fellowship with the Father to check Facebook. It's

become a near addiction for some people.

But let me go back to my original question: What can you say about a nation that reads **Facebook** more than the **Bible**? We've got our priorities out of line. Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). But how many seek first the kingdom of **Facebook** on their smartphone each morning rather than seeking God? Selah.

Here's my point: **Facebook** can be a wonderful ministry tool, but for most people in America it's merely a distraction. (I can't tell you how many Christians send me multiple invitations to play Candy Crush or other time-stealing games, for example.) Of course, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg is not to blame. If it wasn't social media, people would find—and have historically found—something else to entertain them, whether it's television, movies, radio or a seeker-friendly church that tickles their ears with feel-good messages that don't produce change.

The bottom line: America needs to turn back to the God of the Bible, not the god of social media. The **Facebook** statistics, and the AP's spin on them, is just more proof positive that America is rapidly moving in the wrong direction. We need to put God and His Word back in the center of our lives, even if that means missing out on the encouragement that ministries are offering on the platform. So, yes, let's use **Facebook** as an evangelism tool. By all means. Let's use social media to network with those of like-minded faith and equip believers for the work of the ministry. But let's not allow it to become a substitute for personal fellowship with God and His Word. Amen?

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her on Twitter.

3 Serious Questions for the Undereater

After recently writing about overeating and the sin of gluttony, I thought it appropriate to also address its opposite yet equally dishonoring and destructive counterpart: undereating. This topic is particularly close to my heart because it is one that I have struggled with since my teen years.

A few moments of channel-surfing will remind you of just how image-driven our society has become. Hollywood's leading ladies and larger-than-life runway models flaunt flawless faces and svelte physiques. TV stars and pop singers flash dazzling smiles and perfect hair. Interspersed between the movies and shows are commercials touting diet products and weight-loss programs guaranteed to give you the body you've always wanted.

It's almost as if this subliminal message is being transmitted through the airwaves: You can have success, stardom, beauty and bliss. But first, you have to buy this product to get the toned legs of your favorite actress or the chiseled abs of your favorite singer!

"Physical perfection equals happiness."

That equation is the lie I began believing at age 17. It's one that many people, mostly women, buy into with their money, their time, their habits and sometimes, tragically, their very lives. For the sake of space, I won't go into details about my

eating disorder in this book. If you'd like to learn more, please visit my blog, .

If you struggle with undereating, here are three questions to help restore a healthy perspective and free you from the chains of obsession. Answer them honestly, respond to them positively and promptly, and wait for God's Word and the Holy Spirit to replace all carnal, harmful thoughts with eternal, life-giving truths.

1. Am I serving God or self with this decision? By believing that we can feel prettier, find success, meet the right mate or manage our emotions by depriving ourselves of the nutrients we need to survive and thrive, we choose to worship our own bodies. Our temple of the Holy Spirit becomes an idol of self as obsessive thoughts focused on calorie control, rigorous exercise, what the scale says and what others think build a barrier between body and spirit. Eventually, we become slaves to this idol; we worship it not because we love and adore it but because it controls us. It has become our master.

In Matthew 6:24, Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters. Either we are serving God through how we nourish our bodies or we're serving ourselves. Either we are loving our body because we view it as a member of Christ's body or we're hating it because we see it as a dispensable sacrifice to the idol of self.

The next time you want to skip a meal or severely cut calories, ask yourself who or what it is your decision is serving. There is no in between.

2. What are the consequences if I continue eating this way?

Consider the following facts about undereating:

- It can lead to depression because our moods are affected by how and what we eat. Many of the nutrients in food affect the emotional centers of our brain, and reducing our intake of these nutrients has an adverse effect on

the way we think and feel. Undereaters generally feel depressed and tend to become easily irritated or enraged.

- The effects of malnutrition on the brain also often lead to impaired concentration, a decreased sexual appetite, frequent panic attacks and irrational thinking.
- As for physical effects, undereating can weaken the heart, which can lead to an irregular heartbeat. Digestion often slows, causing misleading feelings of fullness and bloat. Skin takes on a yellowish tint, fingernails become brittle, and hair thins or begins to fall out. Osteopenia, the precursor to osteoporosis, becomes more likely because the body isn't receiving the vitamins and minerals necessary for strong bones.

If you sense, or someone else notices, that you're eating very little, seemingly preoccupied by food or just a little crankier than usual, reflect on the list above, then remind yourself that you're a precious, beloved temple of the Holy Spirit, and then ask the Lord to guide you toward healthier decisions.

3. Have you been in God's Word? Don't let pop culture tell you what's attractive or desirable. Let God's Word tell you. If you've starved yourself of the Bible's soul-reviving nourishment, it's time to dive into the psalms and remind yourself that you are "fearfully and wonderfully made." It's time to jump over to Ephesians and see that you've been created for "good things" which Jesus "planned for us long ago."

When you shift your focus from self to Savior, you will see just how beautiful, valuable and beloved you are as a member of the body of Christ. When you pour out your frustrations and feelings of inferiority before the Lord, He will fill you to the brim with warm assurance of your acceptance, worth and victory through Him!

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37, NASB).

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