

Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

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Poor—But
Do We?

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Victories

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HOMELESS
+
HUNGRY

We Pray for a New Generation of WOMEN PREACHERS



Our movement began with powerful women in ministry. We need more of them today.



BY DOUG
BEACHAM

DOUG BEACHAM is the presiding bishop of the IPHC. He has served in various roles in the church including Georgia Conference Superintendent, executive director of Church Education Ministries, and executive director of World Missions Ministries. You can follow Bishop Beacham on [Facebook](#) or Twitter [@DougBeacham](#).

The first woman preacher I remember was Sister Katie Campbell. Almost yearly she would come to my father's church in South Norfolk, Virginia, to hold revivals. She came so often that she became "Aunt Katie" to me.

In those days, evangelists usually stayed in the homes of host pastors. Sister Katie was known for her encouraging ministry with people, preaching the Word and singing. As a young boy I remember her because she paid attention to me.

Into my teenage years I would receive a birthday card from her with a stick of chewing gum taped to the inside. Little did I know I would have the privilege of being mentored as a pastor by her son, Rev. Carl L. Campbell!

At the 6th IPHC Global Assembly held in late February in Santiago, Chile, I heard Pastor Joanne Wong from the Wing Kwong IPHC in Hong Kong preach on the IPHC as "A Place of Hope." To my knowledge, she was the first IPHC woman to preach in the pulpit of the Jotabeche Church, the Evangelical Cathedral of Chile.

In her message from Titus 2:11-14, she spoke of "The Coaching of Saying 'No,'" and "The Coaching of Saying 'Yes.'" Her message was well prepared, exegetically sound and powerfully delivered. Dr. Wong's presence and message to the global IPHC family was a visible reminder of our gratitude that the Holy Spirit continues to be poured out on us through His daughters and maidservants (see Joel 2:28, 2; Acts 2:17, 18).

I've stood on the sacred grounds of Happy Valley cemetery in Hong Kong, where the hills have numerous tombstones marking "A Pentecostal

Missionary” who came after 1906 to live and die among the Chinese. One of those was the grave marker of IPHC missionary Anna M. Deane, who died August 12, 1918.

Deane’s younger niece, Anna Deane Cole, had served with her in Hong Kong for seven years. They are part of the IPHC’s first fruits of many women who have obeyed the Lord and served as ministers in China, Africa, India, Latin America and Europe.

Today, through The Awakening, many young IPHC women are responding to the missionary call and faithfully serving Jesus. The good news is that they are coming from different countries, different languages and cultures, and all are committed to be a Place of Hope and a People of Promise. IPHC minister Lee Grady is also a strong global advocate for women through his ministry, The Mordecai Project.

In the United States, it is a joy to discover large numbers of women who are pastoring IPHC congregations. Some are co-pastoring with their husbands. Many more are either single or have the support of their husbands as they serve as senior pastors. From what I have gathered, the largest block of women pastors is probably in the Appalachian Conference.

I’m grateful for the support and opportunities these women receive from their leadership. I am also very thankful for the godly women pastors who served growing and effective churches when I was superintendent in Georgia.

Today the Holy Spirit is raising up a new generation of

younger women who are faithfully preparing themselves for ministry in our churches. Some, like Karen Lucas in North Carolina, are in seminary and serving in a local congregation. Others, like Samantha McCutcheon in South Carolina, are serving as evangelists who inspire people of all ages.

In my closing message at the 6th Global Assembly in Chile, I mentioned what I believe to be five of the key things we must do over the next 14 years as we prepare for Arise 2033, the 2000th commemoration of the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The first three are most relevant to this article.

First, we must pray the Lord of the harvest for the largest wave of

Christian workers, missionaries, pastors, evangelists, teachers and apostles that we have ever seen. I truly believe that in this dark world the Holy Spirit is working in undetected ways preparing a great host of laborers for this harvest.

Secondly, for the next 14 years every pastor, evangelist, teacher and denominational executive must preach on the call to serve and extend the invitation to new leaders.

Third, we must equip and release those God is calling for their maximum impact as they obey the Holy Spirit.

While none of us can call someone into the ministry (that is solely the work of the Holy Spirit), we nonetheless can talk about that call, extend the call, walk with

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Encourage

A place of hope. A people of promise.

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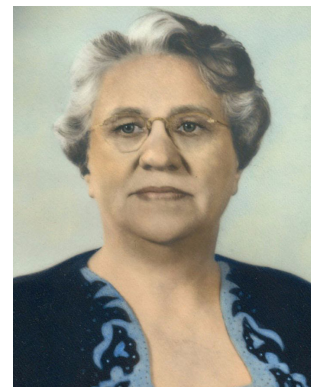
those who are discerning God’s call and mentor those who are responding. We need all those the Lord will send into His harvest fields.

Women are a vital part of extending and responding to this call. Over the next 14 years and around the globe, our prayer is that thousands of women in the IPHC will arise to the call of Jesus and enter the various fields of service where He leads.

We as a movement welcome them to serve among us. We celebrate their spiritual gifts and value their contribution as we fulfill the Great

Commission.

Let us pray that the women will arise! ☐



Evangelist Katie Campbell was an IPHC pioneer.

God Sees the Poor— **BUT DO WE?**



As we develop a theology of justice, we must understand who it is we are called to help.



BY ADRIAN
HINKLE, PH.D.

DR. ADRIAN HINKLE serves as the academic dean for the School of Professional and Graduate Studies at Southwestern Christian University in Bethany, Oklahoma. She has been active in the IPHC since 1997, and her passion is biblical interpretation. She is the author of *Pedagogical Theory of the Hebrew Bible* (Wipf and Stock Publishers).

The prophets of the Old Testament saw the needs of people. Seeing the lack of instruction and desperate need of redemption from oppression, they became mouthpieces for the God who sees. An unfortunate condition of the poor and outcast is their invisibility. Author Christopher Wright says the poor are both invisible and inaudible—but not to the God of Israel.

Israel's ethical response to poverty is intimately connected with their religious worldview and assumptions to fundamental concerns. Their identity as God's chosen people indispensably shaped their response to challenges such as what is wrong with humanity and how it can be corrected.

God commanded Israel to offer provision for the poor. They were directed to not cast judgment (see Exodus 23:6), leave a remnant of harvest to feed them (Ex. 23:32), offer assistance (Deut. 15:7,11) and speak on their behalf (Prov. 31:8-9). Within the Hebrew Bible, there are multiple examples of Israel receiving the same instructions for both the poor and stranger in the land. (For instructions about immigrants, see Leviticus 19:10, 23:22, 25:35, Ezek. 22:29, and Zech. 7:10).

Israel was directed to remember their roots as the oppressed strangers in the land and to look after the poor, the afflicted, the fatherless, the widow and the stranger. Israel eventually was blessed and became the conduit for blessings to extend to other nations.

Though Israel was the covenant people selected by God to receive His blessing, they were not exempt from experiencing the same poverty and landlessness in which they were instructed to show generosity for. The land

played an integral role in Israel's understanding of its relationship with God. The occupation and blessings of land were conditional upon Israel's obedience to God.

This occupation of land, or lack thereof, was a direct symptom of the nation's moral slide. The most noteworthy period of this landlessness was the Babylonian captivity. It was in Babylon that Israel found itself dangerously exposed and vulnerable to losing their cultic traditions. It was in this immersion of Babylonian culture and religious miscellany that Israel found a way to preserve its own mythos and ethos.

This narrative became relevant to an exiled community that was poised to reenter the land, but was itself landless. Propelled by theological intentionality, the narratives and traditions of the Pentateuch took shape as ongoing relevant material to those of both Jewish and Christian faiths.

Israel had a monumental responsibility in its relationship and service to Yahweh. It was ambitiously charged with the assignment to be a holy nation. As a result, members of this formulating faith community took it upon themselves to identify with the law of their God. It became intrinsic to their identity as a nation.

As they possessed this knowledge, they prepared a means of instruction in which they could train each member of their nation. As they continued to produce children, they determined a means by which their children could be taught the laws of their God. Finally, if they are commanded to train the foreign nations surrounding them, then they had to formulate a means to do so.

The Old Testament provides incredible insight into Israel's means of teaching. Without fail, aural instruction was consistently combined with something visual—such as the twelve stones that were set up at the base of Mount Sinai as a monument.

As a result of their relationship with God, Israel adopted a means for teaching the generations to come as well as those who lived among them. The audience of the Mosaic Covenant was undeniably responsible for not only obeying the established laws, but was also held responsible for future generations and resident aliens who lived among them to know and obey these laws.

Thus, they had to be educated. Neglecting to do so would bring destructive consequences as demonstrated throughout the book of Judges. The blessing extended to Israel was also extended to the landless who lived among them. One of Israel's responses to the poor was to teach them about Yahweh so they could experience the blessing that comes from obedience to His law.

It is thus argued that one means of social justice is religious education. This principle of a lack of religious training and direct correlation of oppression and poverty is also recorded in Jeremiah and Malachi. As the imminent threat of attack looms over Judah, Yahweh addresses the nation through Jeremiah. They are rebuked and indicted that even the religious leaders

have failed to teach God's laws (see Jeremiah 2:8).

Malachi 2:7 records a warning to the priests to teach and preserve the knowledge of the acts of Yahweh. The prophets repeatedly reminded Israel that God hears the cries of the poor and the oppressed; He sees social injustice and holds them accountable.

As with Israel, the modern Church is also accountable for how we respond to the poor and oppressed. Addressing immediate physical needs is important. But if we stop there, we foolishly overlook our responsibility to teach. As we recite memorized scripture or give a short sermonette on God's love, we overlook one of the most powerful means of relating to one another.

It is the testimony of the people that compels the strangers in the land. It is the unimaginable testimony and powerful reflection of reminding people when you *saw* God move, *felt* His healing touch, and *experienced* His interaction that others become hungry to experience the same.

We must learn to see those who are invisible, the poor and the outcast. However, as I reflected deeply on identifying the poor in the land and attempting to define, "Who are they?" I realized my own flawed presupposition. The poor is not a *they*. It is *we*.

Israel is blessed with the purpose of being infused with the mission to bring the good news of God's redemption to those around them. They were the landless people unexpectedly called upon to bring about God's missional intent.

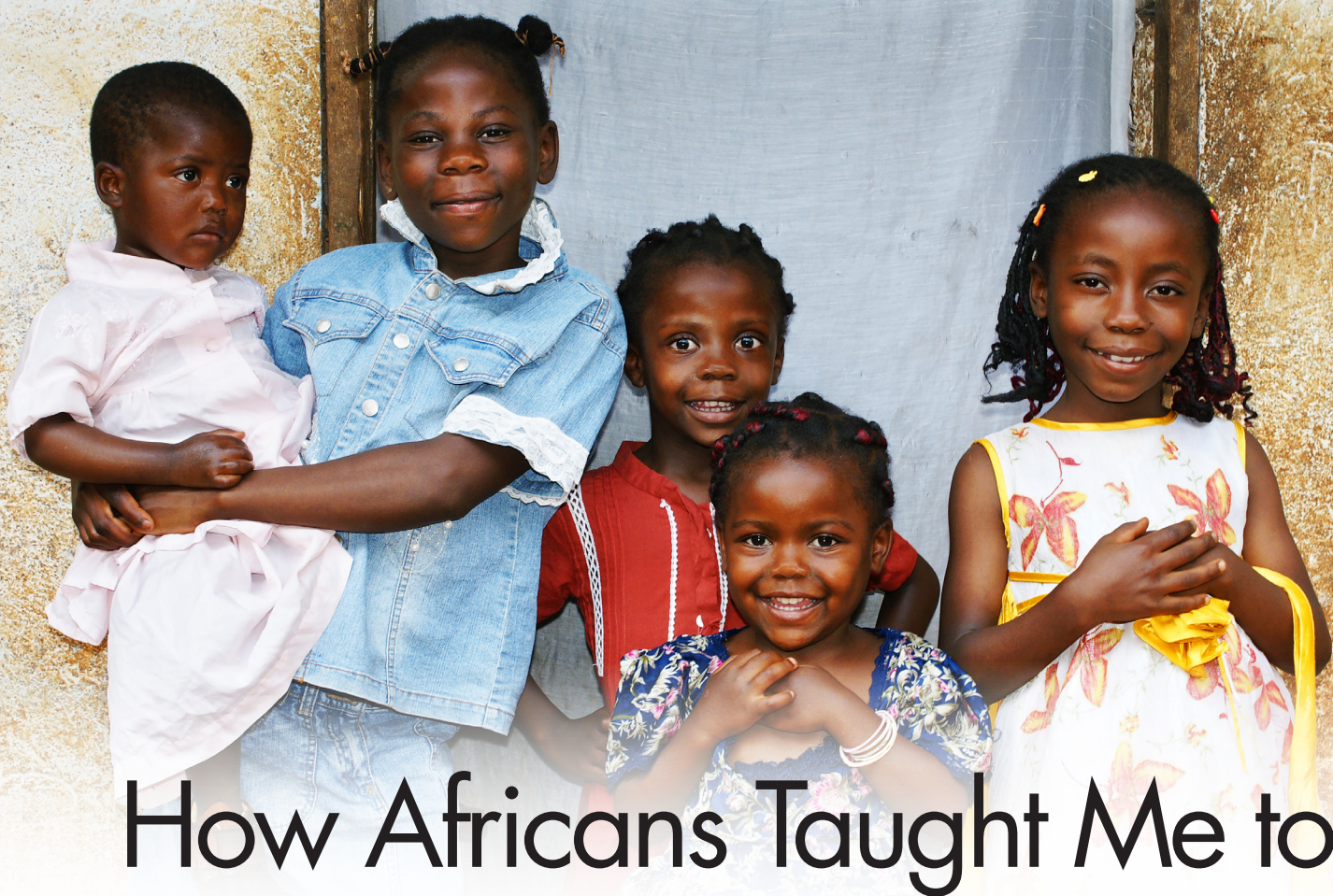
When I classify the poor as "them," I miss my place in God's redemption. I am the outcast; I am the cussing fisherman. I am the Samaritan and the Gentile. I am the untouchable leper. Yet, I am born again; I have been grafted in.

"The prophets repeatedly reminded Israel that God hears the cries of the poor and the oppressed; He sees social injustice and holds them accountable."

Today I am redeemed and forgiven. I have been made in the image of God. It is now my responsibility to carry this testimony. I am set free. I am healed.

When you see those who are in need, may you also remember your testimony. God interacts. Though he Himself is invisible, His interaction with humanity is not.

Just as the Israelites preserved symbols or memorials to maintain their memory of their testimony, it is our responsibility to remember God's acts of grace in our own lives and convey our testimony to those who are poor and oppressed. □



How Africans Taught Me to **BE THANKFUL**

I am so tired of all the whining.
We are spoiled and childish, and we need an attitude adjustment.



BY J. LEE
GRADY

J. LEE GRADY is an author, traveling minister and former editor of *Charisma* magazine. Author of several books including *10 Lies the Church Tells Women* and *Set My Heart on Fire*, Lee leads The Mordecai Project—a missionary organization that focuses on bringing the healing of Christ to women who are abused and marginalized. Lee has been ordained in the IPHC since 2000, and he and his wife, Deborah, live in LaGrange, Georgia. You can learn more about his ministry at leegrady.com.

I love Africa. I've made almost two dozen trips there, and I just returned from two weeks of ministry in Uganda. Many of my friends in that country would have loved to have flown home with me. Some joked about hiding in my suitcase.

They dream of obtaining a visa to visit the United States. To them, America is a land of limitless, air-conditioned opportunity.

Yet when I return from a foreign trip, I notice that many Americans don't appreciate how blessed we are. They gripe about their "First-World problems." They are clueless about how most people live in the real world. And sometimes they seem annoyed that immigrants want to enjoy the same blessings we have.

I am so tired of all the whining. We are spoiled and childish, and we need an attitude adjustment. That is really what thanksgiving is for—it bends our pride and corrects our self-centeredness. And we need to embrace the practice of gratefulness every day—not just once a year!

The Bible calls us to be grateful every day of our lives. I Thessalonians 5:18 says: "Be thankful in all circumstances." Psalm 95:2 says that thanksgiving prepares our hearts to approach God in true worship. It says: "Let us come before Him with thanksgiving."

Meanwhile, Psalm 50:14 says we must offer "a sacrifice of thanksgiving" when we come before God. That means the practice of gratitude is not always easy. It is a sacrifice because it forces us to crucify our flesh and our privileged attitudes!

How long has it been since you examined your heart for ungratefulness? I encourage you to think about your many blessings. Here are some of mine:

I AM THANKFUL FOR FOOD. One pastor I met in Uganda said when he was growing up in his small village, "Breakfast was a miracle, lunch was a sign and a wonder and dinner was a breakthrough." Many Africans don't know where their next meal will come from. Families struggle to scrape up enough money to feed their children some *ugali* (corn meal mush, popular in Kenya) or *matoke* (mashed green bananas, a staple in Uganda). Meat is an expensive delicacy.

I AM THANKFUL FOR MY HOUSE. During my recent trip I visited a pastor who lives in a two-room apartment in the Ugandan village of Migeera. The kitchen is on a stoop outside the front door. The bathroom is in a separate building and is shared by several families. Yet Ugandans from rural areas would consider this home extravagant compared to their one-room mud huts.

I AM THANKFUL FOR RUNNING WATER AND INDOOR TOILETS. I've had to take bucket baths with cold water on some of my Africa trips because water pressure is either low or water isn't available. On a recent trip to Malawi, in southern Africa, my hosts boiled water on their stove so I could have a warm bath. And many Africans use a spade to dig their own latrines; then they cover their waste with dirt. For some people, toilet paper is a luxury.

I AM THANKFUL FOR RELIABLE ELECTRICITY. I've been quick to complain when a storm knocks out the power in my home for a few hours. Yet many Ugandans are not connected to the power grid, and they burn wood for cooking. In Malawi, 80 percent of the population has no access to electricity. They use kerosene lanterns for light.

I AM THANKFUL FOR HEALTH CARE. Many Ugandans don't live past 60 because of disease and the hardships of life. I've met several people there who said their mothers died in childbirth. While we certainly need to reform our own health care system, we should be grateful that one of America's biggest challenges is caring for elderly people who would not have lived to be so old if they had lived in other countries.

I AM THANKFUL I CAN READ. In one of the churches I visited in Uganda, 60 percent of the members are illiterate. This is usually because their parents couldn't afford to pay their school fees. Many of the women I meet in rural villages in Uganda cannot read because their parents didn't think it was important for girls to go to school.

I AM THANKFUL FOR MY CAR. Only a minority of Ugandans own their own vehicles. Most people use public transportation—usually vans packed full of travelers, or motorcycle taxis called *boda bodas*. And many people walk or ride bicycles for miles in the hot sun to get anywhere. Accidents are common on the dangerous roads.

I AM THANKFUL FOR INEXPENSIVE FUEL. I complained when the cost of fuel jumped 50 cents a gallon after a recent hurricane closed refineries in the United States. Yet today, gas has leveled to \$2.28 per gallon in Georgia, where I live. In Uganda, the price is about \$4.50 a gallon, yet their wages are just a fraction of ours. That makes travel impossible for many people there. In fact, when I sponsor pastors' conferences in Africa I usually pay the transportation costs for rural pastors because they would never be able to come without some assistance.

I AM THANKFUL FOR GOOD ROADS. In the United States, we have the most advanced road system in the world, with multi-lane interstates, modern drainage systems and reliable bridges. When I was in Kenya last year, I drove on a major highway that was only partially paved and had potholes the size of whole cars. A 100-mile journey can take a whole day because of rough conditions.

I AM THANKFUL FOR OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. While I was in Uganda and Kenya in 2017, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe resigned after a majority of his people demanded his ouster. He had been in power since 1980. The president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, has been in power for 30

years—and most people know elections were not fair. Many other African countries suffer because the leaders they elected became tyrants who abused power and stashed billions of dollars of government funds in private accounts.

I listen to people gripe and complain about our president, claiming that his election was rigged. But in the United States, people have the freedom to level such charges on the national news—and they don't have to worry about being assassinated the next day.

Many Americans today are fuming, either because they didn't like what President Obama did for eight years or because they hate what President Trump is doing today. But the real blessing is that the United States places term limits on its leaders. We don't tolerate dictatorship. Our founders established a democratic system of law that is bigger than

"In the nation of Malawi, in southern Africa, 80 percent of the population has no access to electricity. They use kerosene lanterns for light."



one person.

Look around and count the blessings you've failed to notice. Before you complain about your poor Wi-Fi signal, your long commute to work, the annoying passenger on your flight, the quality of service at your favorite steak house or the poor cell phone service on your Caribbean cruise, think about how many people in the world would trade places with you. Be grateful. □



SIX WAYS You Can Reach People With Special Needs

You may not even realize that you are ignoring this segment of your community.



BY CHRIS
MAXWELL

CHRIS MAXWELL served as a lead pastor for 19 years and has worked as director of Spiritual Life at Emmanuel College for the last 12 years. He speaks around the world in churches, conventions and epilepsy events. An ordained IPHC minister, he has written nine books, including *Underwater*, his story about living with epilepsy, and his most recent book, *A Slow and Sudden God: 40 Years of Wonder*. You can learn more about Chris' story at chrismaxwell.me. This article was originally published for *Facts & Trends* magazine in February.

“Wow,” I said. My one-word-is-enough description was my response to what I noticed as I parked the car.

I stared at vehicles covering the parking lots, people of all ages and nationalities walking in the cool December air and children ice skating outside. We were there with the crowd to attend a Christmas presentation at a popular church.

As my family and I enjoyed hot chocolate and fake snow on our faces, the crowd from the previous service began exiting. Some friends walked in our direction. They told us how much we would love the experience they'd just had. My friend then looked at me said, “You have your sunglasses? You'll need them.”

I knew what he meant. He knows I'm part of a population often forgotten among the creative, artistic designers of today's church services and events.

The Christmas event was great. The church succeeded in helping many people in the community feel welcome and hear the gospel story.

But I left wondering: *Do today's congregations, which are so advanced in technology, know about the 1 in 26 people who will battle epilepsy at some time in their lives? Do they know about photosensitive epilepsy? If so, could they add a warning that some theaters and concerts include, notifying audiences of the potential of their lights triggering seizures?*



Blinded by the light: Is your church driving people away?

An article from *Psychology Today* suggests that fluorescent lights have the potential to cause health problems. They can “emit a ‘flicker,’” which can trigger migraines, tics or seizures in sensitive individuals.” *The Epilepsy Foundation* offers more information on photosensitive epilepsy. A few quick facts:

- “For about 3 percent of people with epilepsy, exposure to flashing lights at certain intensities or to certain visual patterns can trigger seizures; this condition is known as photosensitive epilepsy.”
- “The frequency or speed of flashing light that is most likely to cause seizures varies from person to person.”
- “Generally, flashing lights most likely to trigger seizures are between the frequency of 5 to 30 flashes per second. The likelihood of such conditions combining to trigger a seizure is small.”

Though those numbers seem small, I would love for church leaders to read comments in social media’s epilepsy groups. Common concerns are related to bright lights in police cars, emergency vehicles, auditoriums and, yes, in churches.

I counsel many people with epilepsy who are reluctant to attend church because they feel unloved and unwelcome. The seizure triggers and potential harm from the worship environment create an added barrier.

What if we made changes just to help them know we care? What if staff meetings included conversations about what to do if someone has a seizure?

What if we asked a deeper question like this: Why do we feel the need for these lights? If police officers can turn off their lights for a girl with epilepsy, what can churches do?

Tiffany Kairos, like me, lives with epilepsy. Cofounder with her husband, Chris, of The Epilepsy Network (TEN), Tiffany says flashing or flickering lights at a high intensity cause her to feel susceptible to having a seizure in a moment’s time.

“With fluorescent lighting (CFL bulbs/tubes) – which is becoming the standard lighting—this has caused problems for me where I go to churches,” Kairos says. “For extended periods of time, this lighting can cause me auras and even complex partial seizures. In our household we only use yellow lighting and when shopping, I wear sunglasses throughout the store.”

Psychologist Blake Rackley, Psy.D., admits the times and avenues for sharing the gospel have changed but wonders if we are hindering some people from hearing the gospel with our presentations.

“Our stages are full, our bands are

rocking and our services seem to fill with energy to engage the crowd,” Rackley says. “We are on our feet clapping and singing praises. With all our lights, sound, drama and enthusiasm of our risen Savior, we may miss conveying our message to those who suffer from autism, PTSD, TBIs and epilepsy.

“Think for a moment about the mission of your church to reach the lost. We may be unintentionally excluding those who need God’s healing the most. Our lights and sound, while attractive and sexy, are abrasive and many cannot tolerate them.”

Rackley offers these suggestions for churches seeking true care for those battling epilepsy or other brain disorders:

- Create a soundproof room where worship is on a screen.
- Have a break out area where a separate room is dedicated to work with simple instruments without all of the lights.
- Lose the mentality that there is an “atmosphere” of worship. Dim house lights, blaring stage lights, strobes and multiple colored lights do not bring people closer to God. They do not prepare someone’s heart; they set a mood.
- While this can be important to some, it is excluding others as they leave our places of worship because they feel trapped, confused, scared, and in pain. These people already feel alienated by the difficulties within their minds and physical bodies. They feel even more so when they can’t worship with others because of our presentation.
- Create an alternative service for those who have particular difficulties. (I know this is easier said than done, but we must become all things to all people.)
- Create services that are geared to those with autism or epilepsy so families of those can worship together without fear.
- Consult psychologists and counselors in your area about

“Do today’s congregations, which are so advanced in technology, know about the 1 in 26 people who will battle epilepsy at some time in their lives?”

ways they can help you create a better worship experience for those suffering from psychological or physiological difficulties. It may bridge a gap to those professionals who don’t know Jesus.

BE CAREFUL ABOUT YOUR “SHOW”

I enjoy saying, “Wow” during a worship experience. But I also want to say it when I see more practical assistance for people like me when entering auditoriums with our sunglasses, wheelchairs or medications.

Recently, a friend heard my story about living with epilepsy. I spoke about potential triggers, lights and stress, and about speaking to churches and businesses about becoming more sensitive to our needs. He said, “You’d definitely need sunglasses in our church.”

I am not anti-tech. And I’m not opposed to modern efforts for churches to connect with audiences. My wish is that such churches proclaiming to reach people would offer fitting environments for those of us who struggle with epilepsy or other health issues.

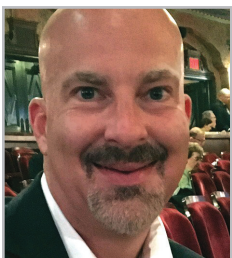
If such seeker-sensitive churches are determined to design receptive atmospheres, I hope they’ll think of those with epilepsy or other special needs rather than what can grab and keep people’s attention.

Yes, I loved the Christmas musical. The quality of sound and drama helped multitudes of people hear the gospel story. I’m glad I went. And I’m also glad a friend greeted me before I entered the auditorium and warned me about the lighting.

Please be sensitive. Reaching the special needs community is much more than providing handicapped access to your building. We have an incredible opportunity to reach the people in our communities who struggle with physical challenges. Before you stage a spectacular “show” on Sunday mornings, make sure the sound and the lights aren’t pushing certain people away from God. □

You Can Use Your **FAILURES** to Win **VICTORIES**

How you respond to God after a defeat is crucial. He can use even our defeats for His glory.



BY MATTHEW
FRETWELL

DR. MATTHEW FRETWELL serves as a revitalization pastor and director of discipleship for the IPHC's Redemption Ministries. He holds an M.A. in Theology, an M.Div. and a D.Min. in Great Commission Reproducible Disciple-Making from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Matt frequently writes about church leadership, planting, revitalization, health, and growth for *Church Planter* magazine, *Biblical Leadership* and *Church Central*. He is married and has three daughters.

Throughout God's story, there have been many biblical "heroes." The Bible is full of tales of men and women of seemingly great renown who displayed great courage and incredible resolve.

Men like David, a brave warrior, who led men to victory against insurmountable odds. Or men like Gideon, who overcame a powerful army with a battalion of only 300 men armed with torches. Or women like Jael, an apparently ordinary wife with remarkable fortitude and bravery. She craftily drove a tent peg through the head of Sisera, her sleeping enemy (see Judges 4:17-22).

Everyone loves these stories of courage. We especially love to hear about people who overcame adversity. These stories are like chicken soup for the soul. They inspire us to face our own battles and to trust God for a miraculous outcome.

When I reflect upon my own life, I know my story. I know that it's filled with defeats, trials and sometimes a few wins. I also know I'm not a hero. In fact, Jesus is the hero of my story. If I'm even more transparent, I will admit I've had way more failures in my life than victorious triumphs.

But I also know from experience that failing is not failure. When we learn from our failures and use them for success, those failures can become victories.

One of my recent devotional readings led me to the story of Joshua and the battle of Ai (see Josh. 7-8). Joshua spied out Ai and organized

a small battalion of 3,000 Israelites to go up to battle against them.

However, because of Israel's hidden sin and idolatry, they fled in defeat.

The people of Israel didn't see that coming! They had been cocky and self-reliant. Their sin was revealed, but then the people took action and repented. They refocused and centered their lives upon God. They learned an important lesson from their mistake.

When Israel was defeated, Joshua tore his clothes and fell on his face. He felt awful. He even worried that the defeat would make Israel look bad and that his enemies would mock God.

But God interrupted Joshua's pity party. The Lord said: "Rise up! (see Joshua 7:13). And then He revealed that the reason for their defeat was hidden sin that had to be confronted.

After that embarrassing defeat, the Lord exposed the sin. Then He encouraged Joshua: "Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land" (Joshua 8:1). This time, Joshua used defeat to bring victory.

I love the fact that God gave them a second chance to do it right. He did not just say, "Never mind. You blew it. You lost." He drew them close to Himself, like a coach draws his players into a huddle. And He gave them specific new instructions.

As in the previous battle when the Israelites fled, Joshua engaged the city of Ai. He used the same troops and the same battle plan (with some modifications), so the battle looked like it might end in defeat again. Joshua had the men flee—but only to draw the enemy out from the city and into the open. The new plan worked!

Again, the people of Ai thought that they were routing the Israelites, but as soon as they were outside of the city, Joshua had his men sneak in and burn it to the ground! A failure was turned around to a success.

The people of Ai didn't see that coming! Joshua had the enemy surrounded. He drew them out into the open; there was nothing hidden

and nowhere for the enemy to go.

There is one thing I have learned in life: When pride sets in, it blurs my vision. Whenever I'm facing defeat, I have to ask probing questions: Is there any hidden sin that I'm not seeing? Am I trying to do things in my power, or for my own glory? Am I trusting in God to be my "dreaded warrior"? How can I use this defeat for success? How can I honor and glorify God with my defeat? What have I learned?



"You may have experienced a failure recently in your ministry. You may feel like quitting. ... It is time to process and regroup."

You may have experienced a failure recently in your ministry. You may feel like quitting. You may think you aren't qualified to lead your church or to plant a new congregation.

It is time to process and regroup. I encourage you to ask yourself some tough questions.

- Are you following God's strategy, or just trusting your own instincts?
- Are you in close connection to the Holy Spirit?
- Are you listening to His still, small voice?
- Or are you just following your denominational playbook or the latest fad you learned from a church growth expert?

If you are failing, there is a lesson to be learned! God wants you to seek Him for His plan!

When I experience failure, I know I have to evaluate. I have to ask questions. Am I building my empire and not God's? Am I trying to achieve success so that people will notice my accomplishments? What are my heart motives?

Those are just some of the questions I think about whenever I experience a setback. Don't get depressed and give up. This is a learning opportunity! After a defeat I spend time with God to hear His instructions. I also ask Him to cleanse my heart, to search me and see if there is any wicked way within me.

When we confess our sins, our pride and our impure motives, our enemy will be forced into the open. Our adversary no longer has "ammunition" to use against us. To the enemy, on the outside, we may look the same, but internally we have been renewed through repentance, probing and reflection.

How you respond to God after a defeat is crucial. He can use even our defeats for His glory. As Joshua used defeat for victory, we too can use our failures as springboards to success. But the central focus must not be on us, but on the grace of God given through Jesus Christ. □

