

Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

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SHINING THE LIGHT of JESUS in a Dark Season

When Satan opposes the church, we
must rise up in faith and pray fervently.



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](#).

God has called the church to be salt and light in a dark world. He wants the gospel to advance in every nation. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 says: “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and for all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (NKJV).

As a global movement, IPHC members live under a wide range of governments and religious policies. Many countries have official governmental departments of religious affairs. Other countries, like the United States, do not have such a department, and I pray that we never do! Consider this about many of our members in the IPHC:

- They faithfully serve Christ in nations where there is little to no public support for Christianity.
- They live along the 10th parallel, the navigational line from North Africa across Asia that often marks the divide between Islamic controlled areas and non-Islamic areas.
- They serve Christ in “underground,” or unregistered, house churches.
- They serve Christ in secularist western European nations.
- They bring gospel hope to eastern European nations still spiritually recovering from the 20th century scourge of atheistic communism.
- They feel the effects of recent Russian efforts to restrict evangelism.
- Cuban Christians often have a government official sitting in a worship service to monitor their activities.
- In Canada and the United States of America public opinion, legislation, and courts are actively curbing individual religious freedoms.

- The California legislature is about to pass Senate Bill 1146 that will interfere with the religious liberties of religious colleges and universities under the guise of protecting gay rights. You can read more at <http://www.opposesb1146.com>.

As I reflect on these matters, I am encouraged by the witness of IPHC members and leaders in Eastern Europe. Here are a few examples.

First, I vividly remember the joy and love on the face of Lazlo, a Hungarian man in his fifties. I was in his home with Rhonda Pruitt, an IPHC missionary, in the spring of 1990. It was about 1 a.m., and Lazlo and his daughter had waited up for us and served us Hungarian goulash.

As we ate, I asked Lazlo about his life. He told me that he was unemployed, having been fired by the communist-run factory. I asked why. He told me that on his break he would read his Bible. But his employers told him that if he continued to read his Bible on the break, he would lose his job.

With humble joy, he told me that he told them that he would not deny himself taking in God's Word and they would have to fire him. They did. Instead of bitterness and anger, Lazlo revealed to me the heart of a servant of Christ faithfully trusting Jesus in the midst of an ungodly system.

"Many members of IPHC churches faithfully serve Christ in nations where there is little to no public support for Christianity."

Second, on the same trip, I was with IPHC missionary Don Gentilini in Oradea, Romania. We attended church services and visited in one of those nondescript, architecturally boring highrise apartment buildings that characterizes so much of state planning.

Yet the Christians who gathered in that tiny apartment were so joyful. They were happy in Christ, and also happy that just before Christmas 1989, the oppressive ruler Nicolae Ceausescu was overthrown and executed.

They had the front page of the local paper on the wall dated Christmas Day, 1989. The headline read: "The Anti-Christ is Dead, Christ is Born." For the first time in decades, Christmas and its real meaning were celebrated in the press!

Third, in the Ukraine, Bishop Valery Reshetynskyi leads Christian Hope Church IPHC, a model of how people survive the darkness of the various manifestations of the anti-Christ spirit. Though a Christian since childhood, Reshetynskyi was protected by the Holy Spirit as he served in the Soviet controlled academic and military world.

When the Soviet Empire collapsed, he was positioned to take a small group of believers in Kiev and lead them to a movement that has expanded across Ukraine and other parts of the world. They prove that even in the darkest of times, either under Nazi terrorism in the 1940s or Communist oppression following World War II, God will preserve a remnant for the future. This thriving church is having an impact on the educational and social needs of Ukraine.

The apostle Paul wrote his disciple Timothy about how one serves Christ in a world that is in conflict with the kingdom of God. First, wherever we are and whatever the nature of our civic government, we pray.

We need to remember that when Paul wrote this letter, Nero was the Emperor of Rome. The empire had its own religious cults, and followers of Jesus were already being viewed as "atheist," or "without god," since they did not recognize the official gods of Rome.

Encourage

A place of hope. A people of promise.

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Even Christian terminology about Jesus became a threat to the Empire. Who is Lord? Jesus or Caesar? Who is the Almighty One? Jesus or the Emperor? Who had the Good News? Rome or Christians?

I hope you will carefully read 1 Timothy 2:1 and notice that Paul used three different words for prayer: "supplications," "prayers" and "intercessions." His instructions to Timothy were not a casual call to prayer. Rather, the emphasis on different kinds of prayer reflected Paul's recognition that the body of Christ is in serious conflict with the principalities and powers of this age.

Second, we pray with fervor, wisdom and in the Spirit, asking that the Holy Spirit will restrain Satan's efforts to silence and destroy the influence of Christ's body in the world.

In recent months efforts have been made to "shame" those who call for prayer when there have been local and national disasters and tragedies. May we not be "ashamed" to heed the advice of the apostle Paul and enter into serious seasons of prayer, especially in these dark and confusing days. □



Church Growth Always Requires **PAINFUL CHANGE**

To shift my church into the future, I had to make these six very difficult decisions.



BY ROBBIE
JONES

ROBBIE JONES is the lead pastor of Parkway Christian Center, a multi-ethnic congregation in Chesapeake, Virginia. He is a graduate of Emmanuel College and Southwestern Christian University, and has previously served the IPHC as a member of the General Board of Administration, evangelism director of Redemption Ministries, and three pastorates in the South Carolina Conference. His church will soon be opening a campus in nearby Portsmouth, Virginia. Robbie and his wife of 37 years, Lynn Driggers Jones, have two married daughters and two granddaughters. You can follow him on Twitter [@robbiejonesPCC](#) and on [Facebook](#).

Thirteen years ago I became the lead pastor of Parkway Christian Center. Since then, I've been on a challenging and sometimes bumpy but rewarding journey that dramatically transformed the church and required me to make some very difficult decisions.

I knew the history and culture of my new church well because I grew up in it. I left the area in 1977 for Emmanuel College, then pursued ministry opportunities in the South Carolina Conference and a 10-year stint as the head baseball coach at Emmanuel. But, I always stayed connected to my home church.

In 1989, the congregation moved from an aging urban neighborhood to the Greenbrier section of Chesapeake, Virginia. They built a beautiful 600-seat auditorium, classroom facilities and a family life center. The church grew along with the rapidly expanding community that surrounded it. Everything was in place for Parkway to be one of the fastest growing churches in the region and the IPHC.

By the time I assumed leadership in July 2003, our community was changing. Hundreds of condos, townhomes and apartments were being rapidly developed alongside the older upper middle class neighborhoods. Suddenly, Greenbrier had everything from million-dollar golf course homes to \$800-a-month apartments. Today, it's one of the most economically and racially diverse areas in the country.

But the Parkway church was not diverse. It did not resemble its new surroundings. God was calling me to lead a reformation in the church like it had never seen.

"I knew I had to make some critical decisions that would be unpopular. And I knew I would have to live with the consequences."

Leading change takes resilience. Especially when the people you're leading are family, longtime friends and godly people who poured themselves into your life. I knew for Parkway to reach our community I had to make some critical decisions that would be unpopular. And I knew I would have to live with the consequences. Reflecting on our journey, I believe there were six decisions that positioned Parkway for the future.

1. OUR CHURCH WOULD BE VISION-DRIVEN.

I resolved that our vision would always supersede our opinions. Let's face it: We all have opinions on everything from food to music, and our ideas about how to "do church" can be very entrenched. But our vision constantly led us to try new things to discover how to reach new people. I was determined never to let people's opinions derail God's purpose for Parkway.

2. OUR CHURCH WOULD BE COMMUNITY-FOCUSED.

I will never forget the day I decided to give Parkway to our community. One of our seasoned leaders was filling in for me while I was out of town and he shared a story about a homeschooling association that approached the church for several years, wanting to use our gym for basketball practices. They were denied for three straight years.

The story shook me to my core. I was grieved, angry and motivated to act. I immediately drove to the group's office and announced myself

as Parkway's pastor. I was met with bitterness and resentment. Before I left, tears of joy flowed and Parkway had a new partner.

That arrangement unleashed a fresh attitude about our facilities, even as it made some people unhappy. It signaled that Parkway would open our doors to a community we needed to engage. We began to reject a "members-only" mindset that said, "this is *our* church."

3. OUR CHURCH WOULD BE INTENTIONALLY DIVERSE.

I remember walking around our local Wal-Mart thinking, "This community does not look like my church." The congregation was older than the community in general. It was also 99 percent white and built around several extended families. To connect with our changing community, we had to become intentional about diversity.

I made strategic decisions about who was on stage, the type of music we sang, lighting and the people we recruited for the greeting ministry. The changes helped us to more closely resemble the people living within a five-mile radius of the church.

4. OUR CHURCH WOULD BE WILLING TO LET GOOD PEOPLE WALK AWAY.

No leader enjoys watching people leave his church, especially those who have been around a long time. It tests the limits of your leadership. I am convinced this is why many pastors choose to settle and keep things peaceful instead of taking risks to reach those who are far from God. I am not that kind of leader.

People finding Jesus as Savior is too important. But letting people walk away has consequences. I have taken criticism and lost personal relationships and finances. Attendance and giving can be inconsistent when you change like this.

Some people ask, "Is it worth it?" I can honestly say there has never been a time when God did not provide new people with amazing gifts and financial resources to ensure the purpose of

our church is fulfilled. Their stories of salvation, transformation and growth confirm for me that it is worth it!

5. OUR CHURCH WOULD BE PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC.

I celebrate all the movements of God that happen in non-charismatic churches. But, as the saying goes, "A seed produces after its own kind." I am a pentecostal/charismatic leader at heart, and I decided from the very beginning that we would embrace and promote our pentecostal identity.

1 Corinthians 14:22 says speaking in tongues is a sign to the unbeliever. Our mission statement unapologetically proclaims that Parkway is a Spirit-filled church. Today we are seeing unchurched people, including more millennials, come to us hungry for a supernatural encounter with God. I've learned that they are not ashamed or afraid of manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

6. OUR CHURCH WOULD CHANGE ITS STRUCTURE.

Recently a good friend said to me, "The changes you've made are incredible, but you have one last hurdle to overcome. Your current structure will never take you to where you want to go." Many of us who grew up in small or medium-sized churches have a hard time conceiving a structure that allows for growth beyond a membership of 500.

Two of the most difficult and yet productive decisions I made were to appoint a chief financial officer and create a board of directors that includes business-minded people who are familiar with multi-million dollar budgets. Parkway now has a structure that makes us more accountable and willing to invest in people, vision and partnerships.

Every situation is different, and there is no template that works for everyone. The best advice I give on leading change: Don't do it like me. But, I promise that whatever path you take, you will have to make painful decisions to succeed. □



You Must Reach Generation Z Before It's **TOO LATE**



BY **BRAD
DAVIS**

BRAD DAVIS is a husband and father of five children. He was the pastor at the West Columbia Pentecostal Holiness Church from 2004-2013. Today he is vice president of Student Life at Southwestern Christian University, pastor of Northwest Christian Center, candidate for a Doctorate of Education at Oral Roberts University. In his spare time, he sleeps.

They are among us. The next generation of young men and women has arrived and are walking into middle schools, high schools, colleges and the job market. Born between 1995 and 2005, these young people are the offspring of the Millennials, one of the most studied groups in history.

The labels range from the “touch generation” to the more recognizable, Generation Z. No, they are not zombies. They could be the most influential group in history if their foundation is corrected.

One of the fascinating things about studying generations is to realize the unique effect each generation has had on the next. When Baby Boomers (born 1945-1964) were parents, they experienced American prosperity. Both mom and dad had careers, cars (plural!), a house and increased opportunities; however, the family unit struggled and divorce became common.

Their children were Generation X, born 1961-1981. Because mom and dad were busy chasing the American dream (or chasing another person), many children were left at home. Parents did not have time to allow their children to be involved in extra curricular activities at school or in town.

This generation was labeled “latch-key kids” because they let themselves in when they got home from school and did not see their parents until late in the evening. What did Generation X do? They played video games, watched MTV and entertained themselves.

A few years later, Generation X became the parents of the Millennials, born 1975-1995. Gen X parenting was the opposite of Baby Boomer parenting. Their babies were not going to miss out like they did. Gen X parents take

their children to ballet, gymnastics, T-ball, wrestling or anything that their child wanted to do.

Now Millennials are parents of this up and coming generation. Millennials, as parents, are tracking on the same line as their parents did and they are trying to provide all the experiences and technology that they can afford for their children.

Millennials and Generation Z are similar in many aspects; however, Generation Z has been given technology since birth. This generation is smart, techy and driven; however, the most alarming statement about Generation Z was made in a recent New York Times article in which Hannah Payne, an 18-year-old U.C.L.A. student, said Generation Z “takes in information instantaneously and loses interest just as fast.”

This generation can take information in and lose it just as quickly. Their attention span is short. This should be a concern to the church. Are we doing enough to get the information in so that it can stick?

Just like each generation of parenting affected the next, so does each spiritual generation of the church affect the next. Many of the same trends that we saw when different generations became parents are also seen when different generations became the leaders of the church.

One trend that will continue to affect the church is Christian education. Generation Z and the next generation to follow could be the first generation of students that has either a very shallow foundation in biblical instruction or no foundation at all.

Noah Webster said this about education: “To give children a good education in manners, arts and science, is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable; and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties.”

Years ago it was not uncommon for a family to attend Sunday school even if they did not attend the worship service. Sunday school attendance was the focus of many families. Children were encouraged to memorize scripture and develop a foundation of biblical truths.

The trend shifted and the worship experience became more important. Once Sunday morning worship attendance numbers became the barometer of church growth/health, many churches began to shift away from the traditional Sunday school and began to focus on the quality of the Sunday worship and preaching.

At that time, churches focused on having a separate children’s church. Instead of a classroom setting, the children were placed in a large group, depending on the church size; the group could have as many as 20 to 100 students.

Recently, the trend has shifted to cell groups or home groups. Adults meet in homes, and many times the children are placed in a playroom while the older people engage in discipleship. The church was able to capture

“If we are going to reach Generation Z, we are going to have to teach Generation Z.”

many new and unchurched adults, but the children were not getting the same level of foundational teaching as their counterparts did in the 70s or 80s.

Why is this so important for Generation Z? Simple: If we are going to reach Generation Z, we are going to have to teach Generation Z. Christian education is not indispensable.

If you think traditional Sunday school is outdated for today’s culture, then consider another way to educate children. I’m not advocating Sunday school only, but I’m challenging churches and pastors to consider the Christian education of the children that God has brought to your ministry and church.

All church leaders should consider the following:

1. Pray about foundational Christian education for the children of your church.
2. Preach about the importance of Christian education – if the adults get it, the kids will come.
3. Children are smarter than you think and can handle deeper subjects and truths from the Bible. (If most students are taking classes in math and science in our humanistic public schools, they can handle and need the depth of biblical theology.)
4. Run a pilot program with a group of students. Test their Bible knowledge before and then put together a class for them to take for 8 weeks then see if they have progressed).

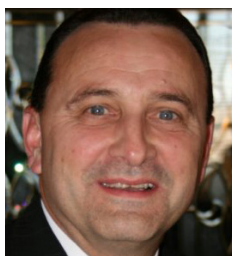
The future of this generation and the next is in the hands of its leaders. We can continue to march down this hill or we stop, about face, and push back against the tide of Christian illiteracy. We can make a difference in the lives of children. Generation Z needs parents, preachers and leaders to fix the foundation, improve the foundation, and lay the foundation on which they can build their lives. ☐



It's Time to 'GO RETRO'— and Reclaim Pentecost



Acts 2 is not just an account of our past. It is the template for the future of the church.



BY GARRY
BRYANT

GARRY BRYANT is a native Virginian and the son of a Pentecostal Holiness minister. He was licensed at age 17 and has been in ministry for over 30 years. He has served as a senior pastor, as conference Christian Education director, and as bishop of Redemption Ministries. He achieved a Th.B. from Advantage College and a Master of Ministry from Southwestern College of Christian Ministries. Garry serves as the national field director for ACTS2DAY Ministries and as assistant director for Evangelism USA. He lives in Oklahoma City with his wife, LaDawn, and their two children.

The term “retro” is popular today. We love to reach back into a previous time and reclaim it for ourselves. This trend has impacted fashion, furniture, building design, music and much more. So let’s “go retro” by revisiting the second chapter of Acts. Let’s ask how the past should be impacting our present and determining our future.

We must recognize that this biblical account of the early church is more than just validation for Pentecostalism and vindication for our doctrinal positions. I am confident there is much more revelation to be discovered and present day truth to be applied.

There are several questions to be considered when we look at Acts 2:

- Is the DNA of the church found in these passages in the Bible?
- Can we discover the design and architecture of the church that Jesus promised He would build?
- Are there clear patterns that can serve as an original deserving ongoing duplication?
- Does the Book of Acts provide us a template or gauge that can be used to evaluate and determine true kingdom ministry?

To help examine these questions let’s look at the four distinct but inseparable sections of this chapter. Let’s investigate these veins of revelation and insight from this antiquated text for our present and future application.

1. IMPARTATION (ACTS 2:1-13).

Here we receive the detailed description of the giving and receiving of the Holy Spirit and the fulfillment of Acts 1:8: “You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you.”

We find a strong similarity between this occasion and Christ’s introduction into public ministry as described in John 1:32-34. “Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a biblical pattern for preparation and productivity in ministry. Through the impartation of the Holy Spirit we receive power and anointing for ministry fruitfulness and effectiveness.

The prophet Zechariah tells us that what we are to do and accomplish is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God. We are instructed in Scripture to be filled with the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, and to stay in step with the Spirit. That means the church must not neglect, ignore or marginalize the prominence and purpose of the Holy Spirit. We need His power to witness, His gifts to serve, His anointing to impact and His fruit to engage.

The past, present and future work of the church is hinged on our cooperation, participation and partnership with the Holy Spirit. In giving attention to Christ's commands to the disciples and to what we call the Great Commission, it is easy to recognize that obedience to these orders and the impartation of the Holy Spirit are inseparable.

2. DECLARATION (ACTS 2:14-41).

In this passage we are presented with one of the most powerful sermons ever delivered. We receive the declaration of truth as Peter proclaims a message for the ages. It has been defined as the first full gospel preaching.

The content of Peter's preaching was in obedience to Christ's exhortation found in Luke 24:47-48, "And repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

In this message, Peter declared Jesus, he preached the cross, he communicated the gospel. His audience went from asking "what does this mean" in verse 12 to "what shall we do" in verse 37. What a powerful transition in the heart of the listeners as they heard this declaration of truth!

Peter's altar call was simple and productive; it is the invitation to everyone to be a part of the kingdom of God. Acts 2:38 says, "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one

"Acts 2 is not just about a moment in history; it is a model for us to follow today."

of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

We know the dramatic results: About 3,000 were saved. Without question, we recognize that this is the same pattern that Jesus followed, being filled with the Holy Spirit he went about preaching the message of the kingdom. Matthew 4:17,23 tells us: "From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people."

We must follow this example. We must preach the Word and we must declare the truth. The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation. In a world of deception, idolatry, false teaching and an increasing famine of truth, remaining faithful to God's Holy Word is an absolute.

3. DEMONSTRATION (ACTS 2:42-46).

In this section of the scriptural template, we see the demonstration of the church and the lifestyle of the early believers. Discovering how they engaged their world and practiced their faith is so insightful and revelatory. Early church life was characterized in these ways:

- They were consistent in their commitment to the truth
- They were consistent in fellowship and relationship
- They were consistent in their prayer life
- They were consistent in their generosity and care for one another
- They were consistent in coming together in worship, in both large and small gatherings
- They were consistent in demonstrating their faith both privately and publicly

- They were consistent in their love for God.

What a tremendous display of what we know as Christianity. It is simply the continuation of the lifestyle of Jesus. They were duplicating His way of living, loving and serving. This is a pattern worth reproducing that is validated throughout all of the New Testament. Loving God supremely and loving others, as we love ourselves, are the greatest commands.

4. DIVINE PARTICIPATION (ACTS 2:47).

Acts Chapter 2 concludes with the words of verse 47, "... And the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved." Wow! This is our prayer and our desire. So be it Lord!

Let's recognize that to have the reality of verse 47 we must have heaven's impartation, gospel declaration and faith-filled demonstration. It's time to "go retro" and follow the Acts 2 model.

- May we all receive the impartation of the Holy Spirit
- May we all boldly declare the truth of the gospel
- May we all consistently demonstrate our faith
- May we all experience divine participation

Let's consider the following exercise. Lay the pattern of Acts 2 over your present ministry, methods and operations. How closely does your present ministry resemble the template of the early church? Determine what needs to be removed or included. What changes and adjustments should be made? Then put your conclusions into action.

Acts 2 is not just about a moment in history; it is a model for us to follow today. Let's reclaim the past and make it our own. □





How to Guard Your Heart from BITTERNESS

The Holy Spirit—your Sanctifier—is serious about uprooting toxic attitudes in your life. Surrender to His work!



BY J. LEE GRADY

J. LEE GRADY is an ordained IPHC minister who serves as contributing editor of *Charisma* magazine and editor of *Encourage*. He also directs The Mordecai Project, an international missions organization based in Florida. He is a member of the IPHC's Sonshine Conference. You can follow him on Twitter at [@leegrady](https://twitter.com/leegrady) or visit his ministry website at themordecaiproject.org.

When we invite Jesus into our hearts, He moves in—and He does not timidly co-exist with our sin. He is a ruthless warrior, and He goes on a loving rampage until every area of our rebellious hearts has been conquered. He slays our pride, kills our greed and shows no mercy to any sinful behavior that has controlled us.

This grueling process is what the Bible calls “sanctification”—a big, theological word that simply means God is serious about burning the junk out of my heart so I can reflect His divine nature. He doesn’t mind putting me through the fire because He knows the happy outcome. Sanctification can be painful, but the result is, according to the author of Hebrews, the “peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11).

Bitterness is one of the Holy Spirit’s targets. I know this because the Sanctifier has dealt with me about it.

Recently a friend of mine hurt me deeply. I felt betrayed and disrespected. I tried to pretend the insult was no big deal, but inside I was seething. I can always tell when resentment has invaded my life because I start obsessing about the pain. When I went to bed that evening, I literally felt sore. All I could think about was retaliation.

But just before falling asleep I mouthed a prayer. I meant what I said, even though my feelings begged me to retract the words. I prayed: “Lord, help me to forgive ____.” Then, during the night I dreamed that I was enjoying a friendly conversation with this person. When I woke up, it felt as if we had really been talking!

It was a miracle. I realized the dream was God’s way of softening my heart and taking out the offense. The Lord gave me the grace to forgive.

Perhaps you’ve been insulted, overlooked, stabbed in the back or mistreated—and now bitterness is poisoning your soul. Don’t let it spread any further. You can nip your offense in the bud by following these guidelines:

1. DON'T NURSE YOUR GRUDGE.

It feels good to our flesh when we replay an offense in our minds and then fantasize about hurting the other person. But if you star in and direct this dramatic movie in your head, you are going to be making sequels for months and years until bitterness makes you sick. Pull the plug on the whole production now.

2. LET GO OF ALL REVENGE.

C.S. Lewis said: "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." No matter how a person offends you, be humble enough to recognize that you've probably done the same thing to someone else before. Quit sharpening your knives. You will be tempted to think about hurting the person, but remember that those knives are hurting you worse than anyone else.

3. DON'T SPREAD YOUR BITTERNESS.

Sometimes you may need to vent to a close friend about what happened, but this isn't so you can ruin the reputation of the person who hurt you. If you share your pain with someone because you need advice, don't seek sympathy or go to those who have animosity toward the person who hurt you. That's like mixing toxic chemicals!

Instead, go to mentors or friends who are mature enough to tell you the truth. You may feel mistreated, but the speck in your brother's eye may actually be a log in yours. A true friend will tell you that you are overreacting or being unreasonable.

4. PRAY FOR GOOD THINGS TO HAPPEN TO THE PERSON WHO HURT YOU.

Jesus urged His disciples to love and pray for their persecutors (Matt. 5:44). That's a foreign concept in this age

when we unfriend people on Facebook just because they forgot to invite us to a party. Calm down, let go of your petty outrage and ask God to bless the person who offended you. Forgiving prayer will feel like a warm salve applied to your wound.

"True forgiveness is not burying a hatchet while we still hate a person inwardly; forgiveness requires us to surrender the hatchet to Jesus."

5. REACH OUT AND EXPECT TO REPAIR THE RELATIONSHIP.

Jesus places a high priority on reconciliation. He wants us to get along. If you are praying and you remember that someone has something against you, remember what Jesus said: "First be reconciled to your brother" (Matt. 5:24). On the flip side, Jesus said if someone has

sinned against you, "go and reprove him" (Matt. 18:15).

In both cases Jesus commanded us to confront. And confrontation is never easy. We'd rather just avoid each other. We'd rather "bury our hatchets," pretending that our nasty attitude is gone just because it's hidden under our Sunday morning smiles. But true forgiveness is not burying a hatchet while we still hate a person inwardly; forgiveness requires us to surrender the hatchet to Jesus.

6. ASK FOR GOD'S FORGIVING LOVE TO FILL YOUR HEART.

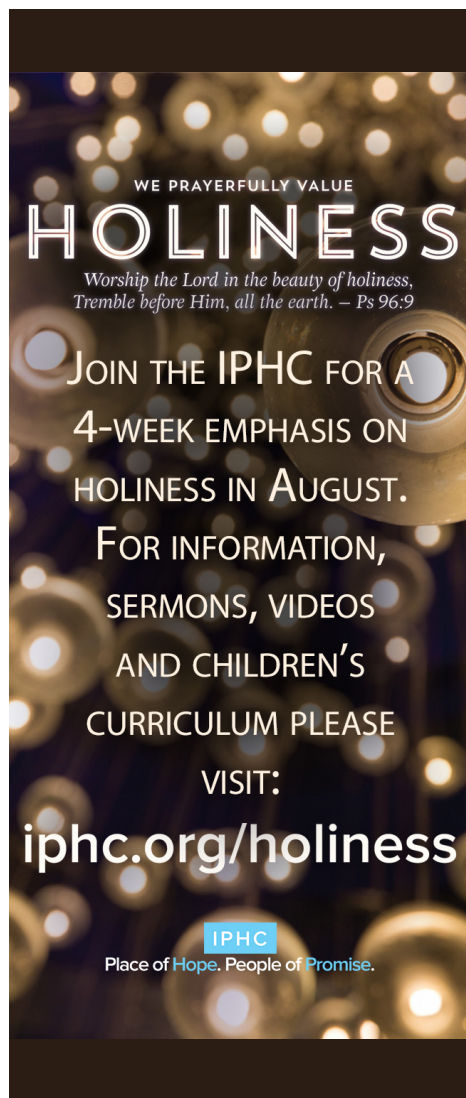
One of my favorite preachers, Corrie ten Boom, struggled to forgive the Nazis who beat her in the Ravensbrück prison camp. After the Germans surrendered, she met a former Nazi guard in the street, and he told her he had become a Christian. He reached out his hand and asked her for forgiveness. She couldn't look at him.

But then Corrie remembered Romans 5:5, which says, "The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit." She realized that when we don't have the

capacity to forgive, God gives us the love. Jesus changed Corrie's heart.

Corrie added: "God's love is stronger than my hatred and unforgiveness. That same moment I was free. I could say, 'Brother, give me your hand,' and I shook hands with him, and it was as if I could feel God's love streaming through my arms."

Jesus didn't promise a life without offenses. Hurt happens. But He provided the way to keep resentment from ruining our lives. You must make a conscious decision that you will embrace a life of miraculous forgiveness. □



WE PRAYERFULLY VALUE
HOLINESS
*Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
Tremble before Him, all the earth. — Ps 96:9*

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