

Encourage

Inspiration for IPHC Leaders

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We Must Boldly Cry for JUSTICE



We must be willing to swim against the cultural current to be a witness for God's truth.



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](#).

Throughout 2019 the IPHC has focused on the biblical issue of justice. In 2020 we will place our focus on our seventh core value: “We Prayerfully Value Generosity.” There is a correlation between justice, and all our other core values, with the spirit and actions of generosity. Our core values are interconnected.

As we close this focus on justice for 2019, there are three observations I want to emphasize. While some of this relates directly to the United States, the principles apply to the IPHC globally. The justice theme this year has focused on listening to the “voices” of those who suffer injustice. The most important voice is God’s voice calling us to live righteously in our sin-scarred world.

First, over the past few years in my interactions with African-American Christians from across the theological spectrum, I have discovered how difficult it is for me as a white American Christian to comprehend the ongoing impact of slavery, legal segregation (Jim Crow laws), and the latent racism that impacts our society.

I learned that the color of your skin determined “the talk” that parents have with their children. As a white parent, “the talk” is about sexual morality (the “birds and the bees”). For African-American parents, “the talk” is about how to respond when you are stopped by the police. Both are issues of life and death, but one is perceived as more about death.

We all should make a trip to Montgomery, Alabama, to visit the numerous Civil Rights museums [there](#). The National Memorial for Peace and Justice features several hundred large columns representing the counties and states where more than 4,000 African-Americans were lynched from the 1880s to the 1940s. The names of the victims are etched on these stone columns. That history remains real in the consciousness of many Americans.

God is calling the body of Christ to bear witness to reconciliation, healing, and unity in our time. I’m grateful that many IPHC congregations I visit have people worshipping together whose skin colors are different.

May we leave church and go out and eat together in public! May we invite each other to visit in our homes! May we serve together in our communities! May we take time to sit and listen to our stories, better understanding our cultural differences and our togetherness in the kingdom of God!

Second, I am grateful the IPHC has taken a clear stand for life, especially the life of the unborn. I invite you to join me and thousands of others in Washington, D.C., on Friday, January 24, 2020, for the [March for Life](#).

I am also grateful that the IPHC is providing opportunities for women who face difficult circumstances. One such outreach is the Royal Home in Falcon, North Carolina. There are local congregations partnering with local pro-life ministries that provide hope for women and their unborn children.

Multiplied millions of children have been aborted in the United States since the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973. We are nearly fifty years since this national policy, funded with tax dollars, became the law of the land. Today our nation is without millions of people who would be contributing to our economy, education, culture, and, yes, our religious life.

I encourage the IPHC family to be engaged in the civic discourse of this issue. Respectfully write your state and national legislators.

Support pro-life facilities and events in your area. And show Christ's loving mercy to people facing the difficult circumstances surrounding unplanned pregnancies.

Third, religious liberty is a growing concern globally. In India, IPHC ministers have been martyred

for their faith. Christians along the tenth parallel from Africa to Asia face life-threatening conditions and are often treated as second-class citizens. We must remember that our voice for religious liberty includes speaking up for non-Christian religions.

As Jesus taught us, let us "do unto others as we would have them do unto us" (Luke 6:31). In the Western world, religious liberty issues are in conflict with the dominant societal views on human sexuality and identity.

The dividing line in the western cultural experience is human sexuality, specifically the cluster of issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender. The tolerance of the spirit of the age is moving towards intolerance towards any different expression or even thought.

Today, the debate over these issues is in the courts, in the marketplace, in public opinion, in education, and in churches. Sadly, sexual lifestyles that are contrary to the teachings of the Bible are advocated by the United States government around the world. Recently a presidential candidate of a major U.S. political party publicly advocated restrictions (i.e., punishment) against religious institutions that refuse to bow to these new definitions of "rights" and "human dignity."

This is not only an issue for evangelical Christians. It has profound implications

for Roman Catholics, Orthodox churches, and even mosques.

In this matter I want you to join me in prayer and reflection in two areas. First, we need to pray for the political parties in the United States. We must be willing to wisely and respectfully communicate



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A place of hope. A people of promise.

November/December 2019 | Vol. 6 No. 10

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Encourage is published monthly except in July and December by the International Pentecostal Holiness Church, P.O. Box 12609, Oklahoma City, OK 73157. Digital subscriptions are available free of charge by subscribing at iphc.org/connect. Images courtesy of adobestock.com unless otherwise noted.

with city, state, and national leaders our convictions and our concerns over religious liberty issues globally and locally.

Second, as IPHC leaders and members we should not be naïve about the negative atmosphere in the culture towards churches and institutions that believe marriage is between one man and one woman, and that God created people male and female.

Just ask Chick-Fil-A, an NFL player, or an evangelical parachurch group at a state university how vicious the attacks are if you refuse to accept the redefinitions demanded by our society. In some political, business, and educational spheres, IPHC members need to be prepared to be falsely labeled as homophobic, intolerant, and hateful.

But we are not those things. We are salt and light in the world, and we live by God's truth, God's mercy, and God's love for our lost and broken world. Let us be wise. Let us be righteous. And let us not be afraid. □



Please Stop Ignoring the **FORGOTTEN PEOPLE**

To fight injustice, we must show Christ's compassion to those who have been marginalized.



BY GARY
BURD

GARY BURD became a minister at the age of 16. He and his wife, Carolyn, served Christian Heritage Church in Amarillo, Texas, in various capacities including senior pastor for 41 years. Gary also served as superintendent of the Great Plains Conference from 1994 to 2014. Gary and Carolyn have logged approximately 700,000 miles on their motorcycles since they began riding for the Lord in 1999. Their outreaches have touched the homeless, veterans, Jews, Native Americans, and other bikers. Gary now leads Mission: M25, a ministry of the IPHC that reaches “the overlooked and the ignored” who are described in Matthew 25.

The apostle Paul said our spiritual struggle is invisible. “We wrestle not with flesh and blood,” we are told in Ephesians 6:12. Today many Christians have made this struggle very self-centered. We “fight” to stay pure, we “meditate on the Word” to remain clean, and we “study” to grow in grace. Yet all this ends up being selfish.

In today's narcissistic society, we have unintentionally made the Lord's commands about us rather than about Him. We have forgotten the broken people He called us to serve. Our “warfare” is about taking the gospel to others!

Justice is a prevailing character trait of our creator God, yet it is so overlooked by the church world in which we live. James speaks of the injustice of honoring the wealthy; Corinthians speaks of honoring the lesser members of the body of Christ. Jesus was born in a manger so He could identify with those who do not have a religious or wealthy heritage—yet we overlook that fact today.

Justice is one of the key elements to becoming a king. Proverbs 31:8-9 says, “Speak up for the people who have no voice, for the rights of all the down-and-outers. Speak out for justice! Stand up for the poor and destitute” (The Message). This is a text written from a godly woman to her son taking the role of kingship.

Psalms 72:4 says: “Please stand up for the poor, help the children of the needy, come down hard on the cruel tyrants” (The Message). Here, again, is a continued appeal to be a good king.

One of the Jewish rabbis stated it this way: “The role of a king is to protect the weak and poor from the strong and rich.” It is natural for a person of power, influence, and wealth to overlook and ignore Matthew 25, where Jesus spoke clearly of the cost of mistreating the poor.

When I read the Bible, I see clearly that a lack of justice affects our worship (Isaiah 1:13-17) and it also affects our prayer and fasting (Isaiah 58:2-7). Justice is not something we can ignore!

Mission: M25, which was officially organized in 2004, began to bring justice to the overlooked and ignored in 1990 when I was pastoring Christian Heritage Church in Amarillo, Texas. In an attempt to “level the playing field,” it was determined that every child—even the poorest—would come to our Christian camp free of charge and that everyone would be treated the same.

I was not prepared for the massive amount of resistance this triggered. Many church members were accustomed to the special privileges given to members over the “street kids.” But we chose to show compassion to the poor, and we have done this now for 30 years. Our camps continue to grow around the world.

Below you can see a “pipe hawk,” which is a peace pipe on one side and a tomahawk on the other. I think God is much like this Native American implement. He is a peace-loving God. He desires to sit around the fire and commune with us. Yet there is a side of God that brings death.



Kindness and justice: This Native American pipe hawk reveals two aspects of God’s nature.

Our Lord stated in Matthew 10:34, “I did not come to bring peace but a sword” (NKJV). God is our Mighty Warrior. He is not just involved in internal battles of personal sanctification and holiness, which are vitally important. He is on a mission of freedom. He stands for those who cannot speak up for themselves.

In his book, *Live Dead Joy*, Dick Brogdon states that we damage the character of God by trying to reconcile His mercy and His wrath. We as humans are unequipped to explain the two extreme sides of God; therefore, we will do ourselves and our followers well if we simply celebrate the two opposites.

Consider the pipe hawk as a visual of the church. We are good at presenting the peaceful, loving side of God to our world. But that is only one side of His character!

Through Mission: M25, we aim to preach peace. We use Colossians 4:6 as a guide, which says: “Be gracious in your speech. The goal is to bring out the best in others in a conversation, not put them down, not cut them out.” We show Christ’s love to all.

But we also know that we must fight the injustice that is in our society. Sometimes this requires confrontation. There is a violent side of the pipe hawk.

We fight the injustice of our society through Jesus’ of command of “Go ye therefore.” We endeavor to engage the world through personal service and sacrifice. As one Mission: M25 pastor stated, “We leave the sterile office and get our hands dirty in the ‘mess’ of the broken world.” It is our heart not to “wait until they come” but go to the cemetery of demonic possession and find the people who live in chains.

Mission:M25 continues to fight for and speak up for the unborn, Native Americans, veterans (who were met with silence when they came home from Vietnam), Jewish people, the homeless, those who currently live in prison, inmates who have been released from prison, and those caught in the bondage of addiction.

We attempt to do this by what I call “violent love”—which is defined as risky, costly, and sacrificially serving people. You can see our list of efforts at www.missionm25.org, or you can connect with us on [Facebook](#) for more information.

“May we fulfill Christ’s commission by showing ‘violent love’ to those all around us who have fallen in the cracks of society.”

David, the shepherd boy, shouted to Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:45: “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” When injustice takes place, we must see it as an insult. It is a defaming of the name of the God of the armies, not the army itself. We must confront it.

Secondly, we minister to people from a heart of compassion. Our guiding light is Matthew 14:14: “And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.”

Jesus said this right after His cousin, John the Baptist, was beheaded. Jesus’ grief did not stop Him from showing compassion to the multitude. We must see broken people as the Creator’s sheep who have gone astray.

To “heal the sick,” according to Strong’s Concordance, means “to serve the weak.” May our fear of the Lord drive us to obedience. May we fulfill Christ’s commission by showing “violent love” to those all around us who have fallen in the cracks of society. May the church today recapture our lost credibility by shining the light of Jesus’ love through acts of kindness and justice. □



When the **REFUGEES** Come, Be Ready With Open Arms

Seventy million people today looking for a home because they've been displaced by wars or disasters. Some of them live near you.



BY MEGAN ALBA

MÉGAN ALBA is a writer and communications professional. She believes everyone has a story worth sharing, and she works with marketing firms and small businesses as a copywriter and story crafter. Mégan is a 5th generation member of the IPHC. She lives in the Dallas-Forth Worth area with her husband, Angel, and their two sons.

Jean Pierre Gatera stood in front of a group of Rwandese soldiers, awaiting execution. The soldiers had mistaken him for a rebel and were holding him until nightfall. "I prayed, telling God, 'If you exist, if you help me from here, I will serve you,'" the pastor recalls. "And because He is just, He rescued me."

Gatera's life reads like a modern-day account of Joseph. He was born as a Burundian refugee and grew up in Rwanda. In 1994, Rwandan civil war broke out and his family fled the violence and genocide. Jean Pierre, who was away at school, was left with no way to contact his family. He had no home, no possessions, and no documentation.

He walked hundreds of miles, searching refugee camps for his family, and seeking asylum for himself. He ultimately made his way to Kakuma Refugee Camp, located on the border between Kenya and South Sudan.

For the first three years he tried unsuccessfully to gain refugee status so he could receive provisions from the United Nations.

"I was not recognized as a refugee simply because the leaders did not believe I was Burundian," he recalls. "Every Saturday for three years, I'd go to a local mountain and pray for God to intervene in my situation."

In time, God did miraculously intervene. A house fire led the police to inquire why he had no documentation. When they learned he'd spent three years being shuffled around the system, he was sent to Nairobi, Kenya, where he interviewed, received proper documentation and provisions, and gained refugee status.

During the three years Gatera was awaiting documentation, he gained something much more valuable – a spiritual calling.

Members under Rev. Tito, an IPHC minister living in the camp, took Gatera in and provided food and shelter. He began attending church services and revivals; at one meeting, a visiting pastor shared a personal story of persecution. Gatera walked down the aisle that night and accepted Jesus Christ. From that day on, he carried out the promise he'd made when God delivered him from execution years earlier.

Salvation shifted Gatera's perspective. He realized being a refugee did not mean he was resigned to a life of poverty and hopelessness. "God put me onto the world stage, because that is where I belong," he says. He completed his education at a camp school, then attended Kakuma Interdenominational School of Mission and was ordained as an IPHC minister.

Gatera began to accompany his pastor to leadership meetings and ministerial gatherings in the camp. It didn't take long for other camp ministers to recognize his gifting as a leader. The man who came to Kakuma without education or documentation became chairman of the United Refugee Churches. Pastor Gatera spent 14 years overseeing dozens of churches in a camp housing more than 185,000 refugees.

Gatera's life and work within Kakuma have given him a unique perspective. Where others see a hopeless humanitarian crisis, he sees an opportunity for global ministry and latter day evangelism.

"We are 70 million people on the move," he says. "There is a need for a shift. That is a key issue to understand in terms of evangelism and missions. If those people can be reached, the world can know Jesus."

While refugees may spend decades in a camp, as Gatera did, the goal is to move to a permanent residence. Some remain in the country where they initially gain refugee status; some go back to their home countries when peace has resumed; and others are placed in new countries around the globe as part of resettlement programs.

Gatera believes if refugees can be trained as ministers while they wait for placement, the church will be more successful in global missions and church planting. He envisions a day when the IPHC has a department dedicated to working with and training refugees.

"If refugees are trained effectively, they can go into countries and start churches and serve in ministry," he says. "If there is an effective mechanism, the IPHC can partner ministers with needs, and the church can expand in a tremendous way."

For almost 20 years, Pastor Gatera built a life in the Kakuma Refugee Camp. He married, started a family, led

ministries, and trained leaders. Yet he was still a man without a home. In 2016, after 14 years of praying and patiently applying for relocation, Gatera and his family were invited to relocate to the United States.

Today, he still ministers to refugees, although his work looks different than it did in the camp. "I believe that what I passed through is the outlet for me to help other refugees. I can help them pass through the same situation," he says. Gatera works as a janitor; he uses the rest of his time to mentor other refugees settling into life in the United States. He helps them navigate paperwork, connects them to services, and ensures they acclimate to a new culture and social structure.

Gatera also sees his experience as an opportunity to educate others. "I can help other people to understand the refugee situation," he says. He believes the American church should be more intentional in reaching out to refugees. And he believes media reports often lead to fear and misconceptions that drive a wedge between churches and refugees.

Many refugees, Gatera says, have an education, leadership experience, and insight that can be assets in ministry. But it can be hard to find a church that welcomes or wants to partner with them.

In his own community, misunderstandings and church regulations about baptisms and credentials led refugees to start their own church service rather than integrate with established

congregations. Gatera hopes that by sharing his story, he can help to overcome these misinterpretations and build a bridge between churches and refugees.

From preaching and training in the African desert to waxing floors in Minneapolis in the winter, Gatera sees God's hand on his life. He is committed to living out his calling wherever God places him.

When asked if he would change anything about his past, he says: "There is no way you can change your story. You can only learn to make things better. There are two options: to learn from your experiences, and to help teach others." □



FIVE WAYS YOU CAN HELP REFUGEES

Giving money to refugees isn't always the best approach. Here are five ways U.S. churches can help refugees within their own communities.

REACH OUT. Many refugees who arrive in the United States have no driver's license and no transportation. They may spend weeks alone in their apartments simply because they have no way to get out. Churches can help by reaching out to refugees in their homes.

ESTABLISH A CLEAR PATH TO MINISTRY. Some refugees are mature Christians seeking an outlet for ministry, but they are often deterred when American churches ask for a new profession of faith or require them to go through extensive ministry training before serving. Establish new policies in your church to move spiritually mature refugees into ministry opportunities.

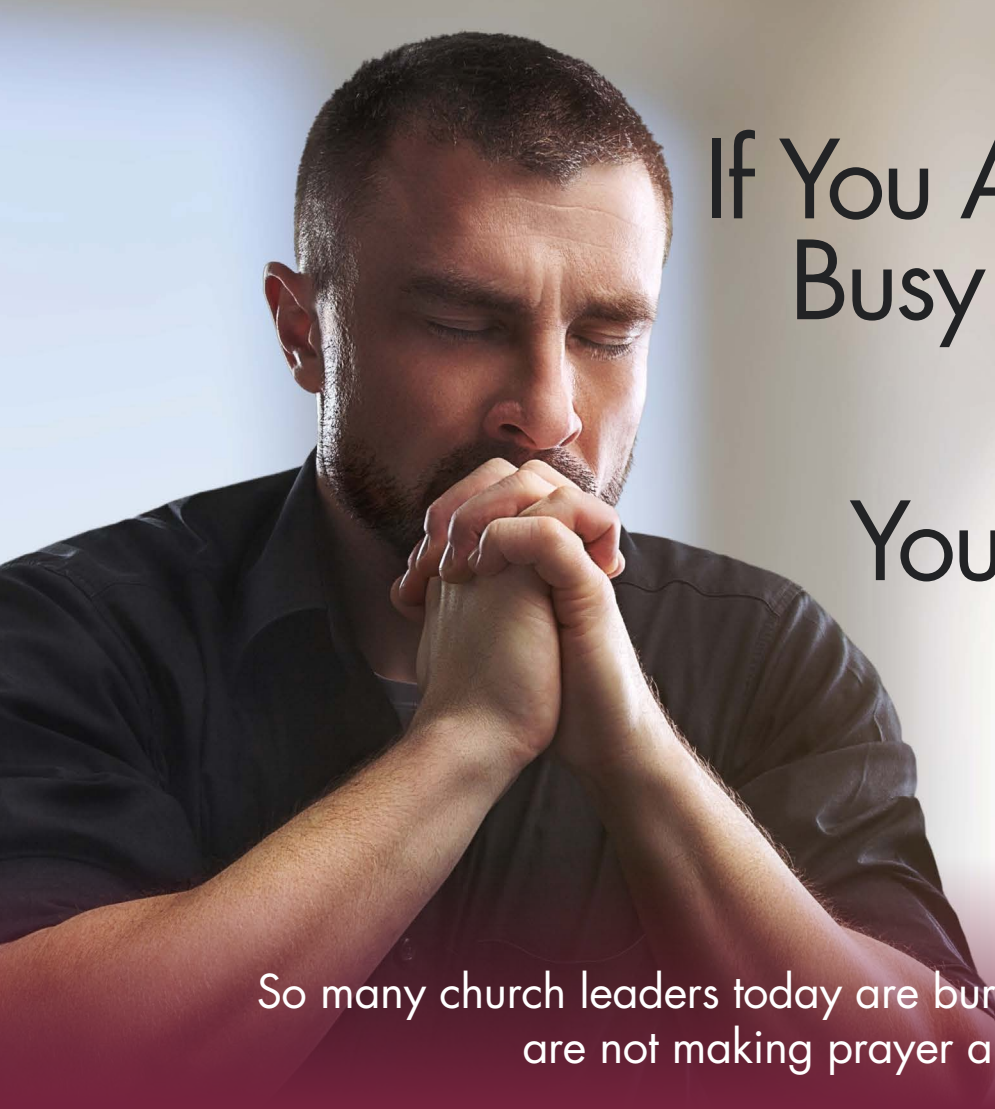
OFFER ASSISTANCE, NOT MONEY. Many refugees receive three months of financial assistance when they enter the United States. Most have some form of income, but they need help in other ways: transportation, English classes, help with homework or paperwork, or even driving lessons.

GIVE YOUR TIME. Our individualistic American approach to life can be shocking and lonely to refugees who came here from a collective culture. One of the best ways to help is to take refugees out to social engagements, such as meals, movies, and community events.

ASK, DON'T ASSUME. Refugees don't always need money or clothes. The best way to identify a refugee's greatest need is to ask. This can also open the door for spiritual conversations that help churches identify whether a refugee is an unbeliever, a Christian needing discipleship, or a mature believer seeking new ministry opportunities. The key is to be willing to open your heart and church to refugees.

"If refugees are trained effectively, they can go into countries and start churches and serve in ministry."

— Pastor Jean Pierre Gatera



If You Are Too Busy to *Pray,* You are Too Busy

So many church leaders today are burning out because they are not making prayer a priority.



BY LYDIA FIGUEROA

Originally from Caguas, Puerto Rico, **LYDIA FIGUEROA** is an ordained IPHC minister who pastors Abiding In Him Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina. She also serves as Director of the North Carolina World Intercession Network (WIN). Lydia has her doctorate in theology, is certified as a Lifeforming Growth Coach, and serves as a chaplain, as well as a trainer, in the Church Planting Essentials Training Track, DCPI. She and her husband, Miguel, have three children, six grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.

Do you remember the first time you decided to pray in order to give your life to Jesus Christ?

Wow! That first conversation with God completely gave you access to Him, and it transformed your entire life!

I know for me it was a mind-blowing revelation when I understood that Christianity is all about a relationship. It is all about fellowship with God! And I was astounded when I realized that the God of the universe wanted to spend time with me. I was chosen! Jesus even said it in John 15:16: “I have chosen you.”

But I have noticed that many Christians—including many church leaders—can get so busy with the work of ministry that we forget our priority. We were called first to a relationship, not to a task. We were called to fellowship with Jesus, not to perform. We were called to rest and enjoy being in a close connection with Him.

Jesus told His first followers in John 15:4: “Abide in me, and I in you.” Yet many of us have forgotten how to abide. We are busy doing God’s work, but often we are doing it in our own strength. We are disconnected from the source of our power. And that is why so many ministers are weary and burned-out.

In these turbulent times, prayer has been placed in the backseat in many of our churches and meetings. It seems that relationship and fellowship with God is no longer our primary pursuit. We’ve exchanged times of prayer for drama and choir practice, setting up carnivals and cafés, and building family life centers and so many other things.

I am not saying those things are wrong. But when prayer rooms are scarce, and prayer meetings are poorly attended, we know our priorities are out of order.

How can something so holy and so necessary as prayer be treated so haphazardly? How can something that began in such an awesome way be so forgotten or mismanaged? How can the church today think that we can bring

about a great move of the Holy Spirit without the power that only comes from heaven?

Jesus reminded His disciples many times to “listen up.” He constantly reminded them to pray. He repeatedly pointed them back to the source.

In Luke 18:1, Jesus shared a parable about our need to “pray at all times and to not lose heart.” After describing the unrighteous judge who granted the petition of the persistent widow, Jesus said in verse 7: “... will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will he delay long over them?”

As I look around at how busy church leaders are today, I am drawn to these words of the Savior, who calls us back to the place of rest and abiding:

- “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5);
- “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.” (John 15:9);
- “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18);
- “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).

"I believe the church is blocking the presence and move of God with its human logic and plans. ... Prayerlessness is not an option!"

In many instances, I believe the church is blocking the presence and move of God with its human logic and plans. We cannot get to God's secret will if we ignore His revealed will, which we obtain through a life of prayer and the Word. Prayerlessness is not an option!

In order to impact this turbulent, fallen world, today's church must have the active life of Christ moving in and through it. That word “life” in the Greek is “zeo.” A zeo life is one that is deeply committed to communion with God and the oneness in Christ that births an accompanying desire to fervently seek Him.

As we close 2019 and begin a new year, please reset your priorities and make time for fresh communion with Jesus. Make these goals as you begin 2020:

1. TO HAVE INTIMACY AND RELATIONSHIP.

Fervent prayer, coupled with the study of God's word, maintains our relationship with God. This is the access that fans and moves the Holy Spirit, who is the source of our power. Oswald Chambers said: “Get a place for prayer where no one imagines that that is what you are doing, shut the door and talk to God in secret.” As a leader, set the example and become committed to spiritual devotion.

2. TO FULFILL HIS WILL AND PLANS.

Isaiah reminds us that our carnal minds are not in sync with God's heavenly perspective. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord” (Isa. 55:8). Don't just rely on your good ideas! When we spend time in prayer, we are able to comprehend God's plan. Your church will never become what God desires if you are not abiding in Christ and drawing your power daily from Him.

3. TO TAKE DOMINION AND AUTHORITY BY PROCLAIMING AND DECREERING HIS WORD.

When we pray, we are lifted into heavenly places with Christ, and we begin to walk in His divine authority. You cannot do this on your own! Learn to live in the throne room of heaven!

4. TO BE THE SALT AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

It is only after we have prayed that the power comes to make a difference in this world. It was only after prayer that the early church felt the earthquake of God's presence (see Acts 4:34).

5. TO MAKE YOUR CHURCH A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS.

As the church finds her way back to the closet of prayer, once again being the house of prayer, she will then begin to experience relationship, fellowship, guidance, healing, deliverance, and the revelation of His plans to bring in the harvest.

Many churches today want to grow, but we depend on human gimmicks and church-growth books to achieve that goal when God is calling us to seek Him for His strategies. Stop limiting Him with your ability and step into God's ability!

The Great Shepherd is inclining His ear to hear your voice in times of prayer. Engage Him. You are chosen. □



Don't Put the Holy Spirit's GIFTS in a BOX!

Here are seven practical things you can do to encourage the freedom of the Holy Spirit in your church.



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.

Back in September I traveled to Perth, Australia, which is the “ends of the earth” for me, since I live in Georgia. I went there mainly to speak at the IPHC’s annual Australian conference, where national director Chris Friend and his wife, Natalie, have pioneered an incredible network of churches.

There are two things I love about Chris Friend. One, his heart is open to all cultures—so the IPHC’s work in Australia is not just about white Aussies. The conference included people from Congo, Birundi, Zambia, Iran, the Philippines, and darker-skinned, indigenous Australians.

Secondly, Chris is very open to the Holy Spirit’s gifts. In fact, he encouraged me to prophesy over people in their ordination service, where almost a dozen new people were launched into ministry.

While I was in Perth I also preached at a church that meets in a big lecture hall on a university campus. Most of the congregation at Zion Praise Harvest Church consists of students from Singapore, China, and Malaysia. Some of them met Jesus for the first time while in college.

The whole experience at Zion was refreshing for me, mainly because most of the people in the service were young enough to be my children. But I was also blessed because the pastors, Patrick and Joyce Chen, wanted the Holy Spirit to move in the service.

In fact, Patrick told me I was welcome to take a longer time to invite people to the front of the auditorium for prayer after my sermon. He was not in a hurry to finish the service, nor was he embarrassed that I might speak in tongues or prophesy.

And that is exactly what happened. Dozens of young people came to the stage, asking to be filled with the Holy Spirit. God showed up and touched them all in a deep way. One young man buried his head in my chest and sobbed because God was healing his emotional hurts. Another young girl came to me after the service and shared that God had delivered her from deep shame.

If your church allows this kind of freedom for ministry, you are blessed—because many pastors today are afraid to allow the Holy Spirit to move. We’ve put the Spirit

in a box. We have a long list of seeker-friendly rules these days, telling us that: 1) American churchgoers only want a 60-minute church experience; 2) the only “cool” way to do church is to offer three songs, a short TED Talk, and video announcements on a big screen and; 3) altar calls or extended prayer times will scare people away.

People need the reality of God’s power. My prayer lately has been that we will stop being so worried about how the Holy Spirit will show up or show off. We should stop being so afraid of people’s reactions. Here are seven practical things we can do to encourage the freedom of the Spirit in our churches:

“Multiple services are fine, but we are crowding the Spirit out of the church if we don’t schedule time for people to respond to the message.”

Teach about the Holy Spirit often.

The Holy Spirit was rarely mentioned in the church I grew up in, so we never expected Him to do anything. Yet He is described in the second verse of the Bible as “moving” upon the surface of the newly created world (Gen. 1:2), and He has one of the last messages in the Bible (see Rev. 22:17). He moves and He speaks throughout the Scriptures! But we must invite the Spirit to move and speak in our churches by giving Him the place He deserves.

Leave room for altar ministry.

A church without altar ministry is like a hospital without a maternity ward. New life often begins at the altar—whether it is salvation, healing, prophetic ministry, or the impartation of a fresh anointing. Today many churches that offer multiple services often skimp on ministry time because they are focused on herding the 10 a.m. group out of the sanctuary to get ready for the 11:30 a.m. crowd. Multiple services are fine, but we are crowding the Spirit out of the church if we don’t schedule time for people to respond to the message.

Have small groups where people can use the Holy Spirit’s gifts.

It’s not practical for everyone to prophesy or exercise other spiritual gifts in a large congregation. But if people are plugged into small

groups, there will be opportunities for believers to encourage one another in supernatural ways. And people are more comfortable stepping out in faith in front of 10 people than they are in front of 3,000.

Train people in prophecy, healing, and Spirit-led ministry.

Many pastors clamp down on spiritual gifts because a few fanatics with inflated egos like to pull the church into weirdness.

But in our effort to protect the sheep from “charismania,” let’s not pull the pendulum to the other extreme by forbidding the gifts of the Spirit. The genuine power of God will flow if we teach people the difference between authentic anointing and strange fire.

Offer “teaching moments” to explain the gifts of the Spirit.

I’ve been in churches where Brother Herschel or Sister Agnes prophesied in such a harsh, condemning tone that everyone in the church let out a collective groan. Their “words from God” had the same effect on the congregation as fingernails on a chalkboard. We cannot ignore these moments and move on. When the Corinthians mishandled speaking in tongues and prophecy in the first

century, the apostle Paul used their mistakes as an opportunity to teach about how to use gifts properly. We should do the same.

Expose your church to healthy ministries that flow in the anointing.

God not only gave the church pastors—He also gave evangelists, teachers, prophets, and apostles (see Eph. 4:11). Yet many churches today know only pastors. We need life-giving traveling ministries because God sends them to win new converts, heal the sick, unleash prophetic power, train leaders, and impart new vision in congregations. We should not be afraid to open our pulpits to the ministry gifts God has raised up to bless the church.

Give time for testimonies of God’s supernatural power.

Nothing raises the faith level of a congregation like someone’s raw experience with God. If a man was healed this week in your church, let him shout it from the housetops. If an infertile couple got pregnant, let them tell about the goodness of God. Stories of supernatural intervention trigger a holy expectation in everyone—and God gets the glory for His miracles.

We should be willing to pray, “Holy Spirit, come.” Let’s fling open the doors and allow the Spirit to have His way. Instead of being afraid of what He might disrupt or whom He might offend, let’s rather fear what our churches would be like without Him. □



Down Under: Chris Friend (far right) with newly-ordained leaders of IPHC Australia.