

Chapter One:

I don't want to be on the left side...

Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction”.

Fearing the Lord is not something we're into as humans and believers of the gospel, as a matter of fact many believers don't understand the fear of the Lord at all. On one hand many think the fear of the Lord is quivering every time we make a mistake. The reason why I decided to write a book on the subject is not that I understand the fear of the Lord to my full capability or even to yours but I believe as I am faithful to write the Holy Spirit will be faithful to teach. I have been a Christian for over twenty years and I have never heard anyone say these words, “I woke up today in great fear of the Lord.” We love to infatuate ourselves with His promises, His grace, and His mercy, but when it comes to fearing Him we quickly quote the 51 times the scriptures say, “Do not fear” and then ignore the 118 times the scriptures demand us to be in utter awe and fear of the Lord. We can't get out our Kindergarten box of crayons and color God in the image our mind can relate to nor can we adopt the God of our parents, or even who our church says God is. We need to pick up the Word and read it for ourselves to see who we believe God is. Who is God to you? Stop and think it about it for a moment.

We have become nothing more than people pleasers instead of God pleasers. We fear people more than God. Here are some interesting facts. The Sunday supplement magazine, USA Weekend, ran a cover story in its August 22-24, 1997 issue, entitled “Fear: What Americans Are Afraid of Today.” In a scientific poll, the magazine uncovered the things Americans fear most:

54% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of being in a car crash.
53% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of having cancer.
50% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of inadequate Social Security.
49% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of not having enough money for retirement.
36% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of food poisoning from meat.
35% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of getting Alzheimer's
34% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of pesticides on food.
33% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of being a victim of an individual violence.
32% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of being unable to pay current debts.
30% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of exposure to foreign viruses.
28% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of getting Aids.
25% are "afraid" or "very afraid" of natural disasters.

After I finished reading this I quickly realized it appeared Americans did not fear God at all. One of the largest fears in America is being in a car crash. I thought about finding out the statistics on all of the fears and see if it was even rational to be fearful of these things, but I decided that was not what this book is about. This book is about fearing God the creator of the Universe. It is not about if you should fear those other things, but rather why many of us don't feel it necessary to fear God. Isaiah 66:2 says, "But this is the one I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word". Let me ask you a question, do you tremble at God's Word?

How do you respond to Matthew 25:34-46, "Then the King will **say to those on his right side**, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you "gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Then the righteous will answer him, saying, "Lord when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?" And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." "Then he will **say to those on the left**, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked

and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me. Then they also will answer, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you? Then he will answer them, saying, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life".

Do you look at Matthew 25:34-46 as if these scriptures apply to everyone else? If you really trembled at his Word you could not look at these scriptures and ignore the value of them. You could no longer pass by a man hungry on the side of the road only to get yourself to the other side or flip the channel when hungry children from Africa come on because it's uncomfortable for you to watch.

After reading and teaching several Bible Studies on, "Remembering the Forgotten God," by Francis Chan, I was challenged to live even more accurate according to God's Word. I've just recently graduated from Biblical Life College and Seminary with my Associates Degree in Biblical Studies and I must say I spent the better part of four years really dissecting the Bible. Although there is nothing wrong with dissecting the Word. I am elated to find myself back to the basics, just reading the infallible Word of God.

Years before I heard of Francis Chan I had a heart for the needy in every aspect of the word. I was the lady who held up traffic to give someone a meal or if I saw someone on the side of the road in need of prayer. I would stop to pray. I have a tender heart for God's people and I hold myself accountable to His Word. As I taught his Bible study I grew deeper in the Lord right along with the ladies taking the class. I had made up my mind to quit playing church like it was an instrument I could pick up and put down at my leisure, and start being the church. Being an instrument that God could use. Have you ever bought a second hand piano, or a guitar? Usually when you buy an instrument second hand it will need some tuning. Well church how long will we sit up in the balcony applauding the orchestra, and being in

awe of the conductor? How long will we just sit in the repair shop, waiting for “church”, to be tuned, fixed, restored, pampered, and babied before we start living an accurate life according to God’s Word?

We are the church so if we are upset with how things are happening in the church we should be upset with ourselves. We have all allowed the mimicking, pretending, and the putting on heirs we not only allow it we are doing it as well. Believers, we are so far off from where the church originated from in the book of Acts. The churches today remind me of the type of house my family and I used to live in, in Texas. The houses were called “cookie cutter” homes. They only took about three months to build, but it took longer to go through the paperwork to buy the house than it did to build it. The reason they were called cookie cutter homes was the builder would offer several different floor plans to choose from but they were all made out of basically the same material, constructed by the same builder, painted by the same painters, bricked by the same brick layers. In other words the floor plans were a little different but the houses were more or less the same. This is what I think happened to the local body of Christ. We have made cookie cutter churches. We have used the architect and blueprints of the churches around us instead of the original architect of the book of Acts.

In Hebrews 11:10 the scripture says, “For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God”. Sure the churches look a little different on the inside, different music, different programs, different styles of preaching, but basically the same, nowhere do I find the church of today on the blueprint of Acts. We have strayed from the original plan of God’s church whose designers and builders are men and not God. I think many Pastors have made being a Pastor more of a job than a calling. Is the church accurately living Matthew 25:34-46?

Let’s reflect again on Matthew 25:40 which says, “And the King will answer them, Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.” Wow!!! You know this means good or bad. Every time we chose to ignore the hurting world around us, we have done this unto Him. Every

time we sit around getting fat and happy while investing our money for our future only, instead of investing in a life worth saving, we have done this unto Him. Every time we store our riches up on earth, while ignoring the kingdom of God we have done this unto Him. Every time we care more about things than people we have done this unto Him. I am telling you, I understand it like never before. Ever since I taught on “Remembering the Forgotten God”, by Francis Chan the flash light which I allowed the Holy spirit to lead me by has turned into a floodlight. I am in this thing with my eyes wide open and my ears fully awake.

According to the Message translation in the book of Revelation Jesus is talking to the seven churches and he says eight times, “Are your ears awake? Listen to the Wind Words, the Spirit Blowing through the churches.”ⁱ

Are we listening church, are we really listening? Do we have ears that are awake or are we slumbering on the Word of God? Romans 13:11-12 says, “Besides you know the time that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”

Let’s unpack the word of God and see what Jesus said to the seven churches and glean from the wisdom of the Word.

To the Church in Ephesus Jesus is saying in Revelation 2:3-6 says, “I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate”. Revelation 2:7 ESV says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

To the Church in Smyrna; Revelation 2:10b -11 says, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death. The church in Smyrna did not receive a rebuke from Jesus just encouragement.”

To the Church of Pergamum Revelation 2:14 says, “ But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.” The Pergamum church was compromising the Word of God. Revelation 2:17 says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.” Historically, a white stone was given to victors at games for entrance to banquets, (cf. the messianic banquet); such a stone was also used by jurors at trials to vote for acquittal. (ESV footnotes)ⁱⁱ

To the Church of Thyatira Revelation 2: 19-20 says, “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. But I have this against you that you tolerated that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.” Revelation 2:26-27 says, “The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.”

To the Church of Sardis Revelation 3:1-3 says, “I know your works. You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your

works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you." Revelation 3:5-6 says, "The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

To the Church of Philadelphia Revelation 3:8 says, "I know your works, Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. Revelation 3:12-13, says, "The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down from my god out of heaven, and my own new name. He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

To the Church of Laodicea Revelation 3:15-17 says, "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So that because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." Revelation 3:21-22 says, "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Let's take a few moments and really examine what Jesus is saying to the seven churches. To the first church Jesus addressed Ephesus, Jesus said you did well in patience and endurance, but I hold this one thing against you, you have abandoned your first love. Are you still in love with Jesus? Do you

remember when you first met Him? Do you remember how excited you were about Him? What has happened to your passion? When I first gave my life to the Lord I ran around everywhere telling anyone whose ears were awake about my Lord and Savior. My heart would start beating fast, my hands would sweat and I would absolutely feel like I was going to explode with excitement. Have we become complacent with our first love? I have been married for twenty four years and I know complacency can creep in on a marriage, where you just become silent partners. It takes a lot of work to keep the unexpected in your marriage, the astonishing factor happening, the love flourishing daily. Jesus said, "You did well in patience and endurance,"ⁱⁱⁱ but patience and endurance does not complete a relationship. I don't want my husband to just endure me; I want him to be crazy out of his mind in love with me. Are you still being astonished by Jesus? Does He still have the Wow factor in your life? What are you having an affair with? What is stealing your time away from your first love? I believe the first step to falling back in love with Jesus is remembering how you felt in the beginning. When we are crazy in love with Jesus we will be crazy in love with His people. "What you have done to the least of these you have done unto me."^{iv}

Many of us have developed a no tolerance policy. We see the hungry man standing on the side of the road and we turn our nose up as if to say as flipped as we can, "A man don't work a man don't eat." Who are you to judge who eats and who doesn't? Do you know the man or women standing on the side of the road? Do you know their situation? Do you know for a fact that they are just being lazy, that they had a job and just up and quit so they could come stand on a street corner and hold up a sign begging for food? My guess would be No, you don't. I would rather stand before my God and had fed the hungry than to stand before my God and say something stupid like, "Well I thought they needed to work to eat so I let them go hungry." I decided who ate and who didn't that was my job. 1 John 4:20-21 says, "For anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have

from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.” Your brother is considered to be the one you don’t know, maybe someone you have never even seen. “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”^v Have you become a liar? Do you say you love Jesus but ignore the hurting people who surround you every day? If Jesus came back today what would He find you doing?

To the church of Smyrna Jesus was sympathetic with this church, He encouraged them knowing they were being persecuted. Jesus said “be faithful unto death.”^{vi} What wise words for today as we are living among the dead. Jesus is saying be faithful to me until your death. Look how many started out in the Spirit but have ended up in the flesh, look how many were on fire for the Glory of the Lord but lost hope and committed adultery on their God. As I look around in the twenty first century I see so many faces without a cause, so many faces who wear their name proudly but deny His. I have noticed an increase of self motivation, self centered, self absorbed, and self improvement attitudes. It seems like we took God out of our self and replaced Him with more self. What happened to living for God, when did he become a choice rather than a life style? Oh, readers we read the words to the church of Smyrna and sigh a sigh of relief but what Jesus was encouraging them to do was to stay faithful unto death. Many of us cannot stay faithful until Monday after Sunday service. No, Jesus did not rebuke them but he did challenge their thought process the way they handle persecution. He challenged their natural instincts to deny the Spirit and pick up their flesh and run.

To the church of Pergamum –

“It was not a commercial city, but its hill formed a natural fortress. It was the seat of the worship of AEsculapius, the god of healing, who was symbolled as a serpent, and represented by a live serpent which was kept in his temple. There is a legend about this

god to the following effect: On one occasion, in the house of Glaucus, whom he was to cure, while he was standing absorbed in thought, a serpent entered, and twined round his staff. He killed it, and then another serpent came in, carrying in his mouth an herb with which it recalled to life the had been killed. AEsculapius henceforth used that herb, with healing effects, on man. But an elaborate system of magic grew up around this god, attended with deceptive practices. Pergamum became a focus of idolatrous worship, and could be described as the place “where Satan’s seat is.” Outward circumstances of *temptation*, rather than of *trouble*, are represented in the picture of this church. Under pressure of these temptations the church has partly yielded; but it does not seem to have recognized the seriousness and peril of this partial yielding; and therefore the Living Christ must come to it with the dividing and revealing two-edged sword.”^{vii}

The few things Jesus had against the Pergamum church was some of them were still holding onto the teachings of Balaam eating food sacrificed to idols, unrestrained feasting or self indulgence in food, and sexual immorality. Many of you reading this book have partly yielded to the word of God. You think it’s a tick for tack. I’ll do this and God will do that. You are divided between the world and the spiritual. In 1Kings 18:21 Elijah was speaking to the nation of Israel. He was tired of the partial yielding of God’s people. Elijah asked them, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions?” How long will we lean into self indulgence whether it is with food or sexual encounters? I think there is something defiantly wrong when being a virgin until marriage turns men away. Why do we believe if we are living with someone God is going to bless the relationship? Why do we pray silly prayers of protection when we insist on living our lives partial yielded to God? Many of you drink and drive and then ask God to protect you as if there are no consequences for your sin. Partial yielding to God is limping between two opinions. I do not want to limp on the word of God. I want to stand boldly and decisive on the word of God.

Now to the church of Thyatira although small it was singled out for this letter of rebuke. This is what Jesus held against the church of Thyatira they tolerated a woman who called herself a prophetess and is seducing the servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. Due to a lack of discernment many fell to her false teachings. I found it interesting that right in middle of their rebuke Jesus addressed the ones who didn't hold onto the teachings of Satan. Jesus said, "You did not learn what some call the deep things of Satan".^{viii} Jesus said, "I do not lay on you any other burden; only hold fast what you have until I come."^{ix} In other words; Bravo, for those who did not learn the deep secrets of Satan, but held fast to the Word of God. A church that stands still is actually moving backwards.

Pastor's who tolerate things in their church so they do not disturb their goals, dreams, or their plans are another way of standing still. We must not care about the numbers, the money, or who we may offend by teaching the unadulterated, uncompromised, unfiltered Word of God. Can I say I don't think we fear God anymore? We fear numbers, people, humiliation, and failure. When are we going to make a stand and quit accommodating ourselves and people first then God? When will we listen to the Holy Spirit and obey? If I took a poll and asked every Pastor in America how many times has he received a message to bring forth on Sunday morning from the Holy Spirit, and because he was afraid he did not preach what he heard or he watered it down so much it didn't resemble what he had previously received from the Holy Spirit. I wonder what the answer would be. Would it be more than 50%?

I think many times we are so focused on the growth of the church that we have dismissed the power of the Spirit. Any church can grow as long as they have some talented people, but what is the motive? Why do we want our churches to grow, so we can store more people in a building to say Amen, Hallelujah, and Praise be to God then sit down and do nothing? I would rather have a church of sixty who are on fire for the kingdom of God than a church of a thousand who are complacent, who are

satisfied with a menu to choose from instead of the endless buffet God has provided. Sitting is a verb, but the action behind it takes very little effort.

Now to the church of Sardis I know your works. "You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your work complete in the sight of my God." How many churches (I mean you and me, we make up the church) are appearing to be alive but we are really dead? Sure we walk into church on Sunday morning sporting our Sunday best, appearing to be set on fire for Jesus and His work, but the minute we leave the building and there are no more witnesses we strip off our costumes, put on our worldly clothes and become a dead man walking. Oh, yes my friend we have a reputation of being alive. We have prayers that are alive. We have all the right words in order and they appear to be alive. We have our bibles out and our next plan of action on the forefront of our thoughts. We know we will volunteer for the outreach program, and we will teach a class. But are we alive? Are we living a life worth repeating? Are we excited about being a born again, sold out, radical believer for God? Have we as a church been sleeping in the pews only to be awakened by our neighbor who says hallelujah to loud and preaches the Pastor's message right along with him. Are you annoyed by how alive the person is who insist on sitting by you? Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die.

Watch out, your sleep is about to lead you to death. Have you ever wondered what happened to the person who you saw every Sunday morning in flames for God? One day they were serving God with all their hearts and the next day they were no more? They fell asleep; it was like a gradual sleep similar to when I chose to read myself to sleep at night. I first get my book, then my glasses, a drink, prop my pillows up, and finally I climb into bed, open my book and begin to read. It is a process and it takes time. This is what happens to these people, it sneaks in gradually. They started out alive but they are on their way to their spiritual death. One of the dangers of falling asleep spiritually is we leave our watch post

unattended and the enemy can just come in and attack us before we even know what has happened. How many people have fallen asleep in our churches? If you are waiting for your Pastor to stir you up, shake you awake or throw ice water in your face, forget it. It is not part of their job. Paul told Timothy “stir up the gift in you.”^x In other words wake up the gift that is in you Timothy. Wake up from your slumber and quit spending all your effort and strength pretending to be alive when you’re really dying. Wake Up!!!

To the church of Philadelphia to all the other churches God said, “I know your works,”^{xi} but to the church of Philadelphia God also said, “I have placed before you a door that no one can shut.”^{xii} God knew their works so therefore He said, “I have placed an open door that no one can shut.” Wow! What an exciting time for the church of Philadelphia God has opened a door that nobody can shut. Many people are looking for an open door from God. I myself pray “Lord open the doors you want me to go through and shut the doors you don’t want me to go through.” Then we must wait for His time. Let’s not just skim by this promise God has set before the Philadelphian believers, let’s examine why God would open a door that no one could shut. First of all God said in Revelation 3:8 “I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.” God went on to say “I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, I will make them come and bow down before your feet and they will learn that I love you. Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.”

Keeping God’s word in the midst of the twenty first century is challenging to say the least. Not denying His name seems easy but many of us do it every day without knowing it. If I was a betting lady, I would bet most of us deny His name at least once a day without being aware of how you have denounced the

name of Jesus. Every time we pick up a bottle of aspirin for a headache without praying first we deny the power of His name. You might be thinking how can you say that? Well, every name must bow to the name of Jesus, even the headache must bow to Him. We are blood bought Christians who put more faith in a bottle of aspirin than we do on the Word of God. Have I done this myself? Yes, I have. My goal is faith first, but I too have failed and have denied his name and the power it carries. How else can we deny His name? What about denying His authority in our lives? Can we deny Christ by denying His right to direct our lives? Every time Jesus tells us something to do and we get this stirring in our Spirits and we choose not to obey, we deny Christ. The church at Philadelphia was commended on keeping God's word. Did you know there are approximately 800,000 words in the bible, all inspired by the Holy Spirit? This is no small feat that the church of Philadelphia had accomplished. And although it appears they had little power they were able to keep the Word of the Lord and not deny Christ.

Finally to the church of Laodicea I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. To be lukewarm is like to be a plate of potatoes neither hot nor cold it's just not appealing, it does not taste well. This is what Jesus is talking about when he said, "You make me want to throw up, I want to spit you out of my mouth."^{xiii} This church thinks they have it all, they say I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not even realizing how wretched they are. They are pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Lukewarm is a great description of 80% of the people in a 100% of the churches. They come in on Sunday morning not too hot for God, nor too cold. They do just enough to maintain their temperature.

It must take a lot of effort to remain lukewarm, a lot of work to not let something get to cold or too hot. Can you imagine living in a world where people were so in love with God's word that lukewarm was only used to describe a plate which has sat up at a restaurant's pickup station too long? Can you vision a church that lives and breathes the Word of God without letting compromise cool down the Word? I am not suggesting that everyone look, act, and talk alike. I am suggesting being on fire for God in whatever

way that looks like to you. No more lukewarm, no more settling on normal. What has happened to our radical side? Have we grown up so much that it has gotten in the way of radical? Funny what we consider as radical, was just church two thousand years ago. When did we decide to step out of the bible and into what everyone else calls normal? When did we let the world or even the church tame our passion for the Word of God?

Nothing happened in the bible in a lukewarm state. They were set ablaze with the power and conviction of the unadulterated Word of God. For Example - people were being raised from the dead, people were being healed from Leprosy, blind eyes were being open, lame people were healed, set free, as they abandoned their iniquities. Three thousand were added to the kingdom of God in the book of Acts.

Lukewarm people don't get involved with the people who are on fire, they are spectators not participants. As spectators they feel they have a right to stifle your heat, to throw water on your fire, and to tell you why it can't be done. They don't get involved; they try to get you uninvolved. Lukewarm people are fantastic dream smasher. They don't acknowledge the Holy Spirit nor do they live by His directing. If you think about it hot water added to cocoa mix makes hot cocoa which is a positive and when we add cold water to something, like fresh squeezed lemon you can make lemonade another positive, but what do you add lukewarm water to, to get a positive? Come on church let's look different from what the world looks like. It's sad when people cannot tell the difference between a believer and a non believer. It's really upsetting when your words need to go before your actions, in other words when you need to tell people you're a believer because they cannot witness it with your behavior. Within the first five minutes of meeting someone there should be a noticeable difference in the way they talk, act and represent Jesus.

Let me ask you a few questions –

1. If God was addressing the church today, the church being you and me, what do you think His warning to you would be? Resist going any farther until you have prayed about the church in you.
2. Describe your relationship with Jesus. Have you drawn Him on the size of paper your comfortable with? If you can contain God then you have made Him too small.
3. Have you abandoned your first love? Have you found yourself wearing a leg brace limping between two opinions? Maybe you are lacking in discernment and have fallen into false teaching.
4. Lastly, take a long hard look at yourself as I have done and examine your walk with your God. Have you become lukewarm common with your walk?
5. Are you on the Left side or the Right?

Choices are for the Living.

Challenge for the week: Buy the person behind you a coffee.

Chapter two

John 4:34 "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me to finish his work."

Is there a spiritual eating disorder in the body of Christ?

I write a weekly column for a local newspaper. Recently, I had written a series on the spiritual eating disorder in the body of Christ. I have become painfully aware of the lack of faith with action in the body of believers. I have seen complacency in the body of Christ. It's almost like some of us are living while only waiting to die. It's like we don't believe what we say we believe. Have we become desensitized to the Word of God. How can that be? How can we look at His Word and feel nothing? How can we get up in the morning, get ready for our day, eat breakfast, check our e-mails, blackberries, and face book, then kiss the family good-bye, but never even glance in God's direction or pick up the written Word. It's as if we have made God an option. The Lord gave me an amazing revelation the other day, He said, "Michele there is a "U" and an "I" in the word UNITY. If the "U" and "I" don't agree it's like two trying to walk together without agreeing to meet."^{xiv}

How can we walk together with God if we insist on limping between two opinions ours and His? God says it is better to serve than to be served but the absence of fearing the Lord is so prevalent in the body that we have somehow made this a suggestion rather than the Word of God. If we read the bible and its words are too difficult to digest than we re-write it in the mind of the listener. For example the Lord commanded us in John 15 to "love each other as I have loved you." Do we love each other the way God loves us? I think we would be hard pressed to say we like each other the way God loves us. Some of us have become masters of manipulation; we manipulate the word of God to fit our own beliefs instead of

changing our thoughts to match His. Another example of us re-writing the word of God is found in Matthew 6 the word clearly says *when* you give, *when* you pray and *when* you fast, but again we are tempted by the flesh of our own digestive system to assume God meant *if* we give, *if* we pray, and *if* we fast. If I am wrong about this ask yourself one question - when is the last time you gave to the needy, fast, or prayed? Have you made this an option or a general request from a God whom you do not fear? I found it interesting that over 693 million worth of self improvement books were sold last year^{xv}. Why do we insist on seeking what has never been lost? We read books and read books until we find someone who agrees with us.

John 4:34 "my food said Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work."

I believe there is a great threat to the twenty first century church. What is the threat? A spiritual eating disorder running rampant in the body of Christ which has left our churches filled with four types of believers, bulimia believer, anorexia believer, obese believer and the radical believer. First I would like to take a look at the Bulimic believer. A bulimia believer eats and eats the word of God until they disagree with the Word, or until the Word becomes uncomfortable, or cost the bulimic believer something they're not willing to give. Oh sure, the bulimic believer eats up 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." But the bulimic believer will purge out Mark 11:25, which says, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in Heaven may forgive you your sins." For the bulimic believer it's an all you can eat buffet when it comes to John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." Yes, we say praise be to God on that one, but we purge out the very words of Jesus in Matthew 22:37-39 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first

and greatest commandment. And the second commandment is like it; “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
Are you getting the point?

Bulimic believers sit in church week after week, month after month, year after year, and eat, and eat, and eat, but when it’s time to act on what they have eaten they purge the very word that was sent for their nourishment. For an example, in your physical body you need to eat certain things to give your body the proper amount of nutrition, to nourish and fuel your body so it can run at its optimal best. There are certain foods that I really don’t like but because I know my body needs them I eat those foods in spite of the fact that I have not acquired a taste for them. The same analogy can be applied to the spiritual body. You may not like every bite of what the Bible has to offer you, but because you know it’s good for your spiritual well being you partake just the same. In [Ezekiel 3:1-3](#) the word says, “And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it.” So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth”. In Ezekiel’s vision he ate the word of God and it tasted like honey. In the Ancient times books were usually scrolls and one page could be up to thirty feet long. Most of the time the writings were on just on one side but not in this case, in this case the writings were on both sides. The warning overflowed to show the measure of the judgment. We must eat both sides of the word of God not just the side buttered with what is easy to digest.

How many of you really “love your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with your entire mind” ^{xvi} enough to digest even what we would rather purge. I always thought this scripture said, “With all your might,” but no it says, “With your entire mind.” How can we love God with our entire mind? By choosing what we allow to occupy our thoughts, by making a conscience choice on what we are meditating on. What does your mind spend most of its time on? I know when I fell in love with my

husband I could not keep my mind off of him. I thought about him day and night. When you're in love you will do anything to be with that person, you will go out of your way just to spend a moment alone with them. When is the last time you went out of your way to spend time with your first love? When is the last time you woke up early just to sit quietly with your God? This is the first of the greatest command and the second love your neighbor as you do yourself? Oh, for the bulimic believer it says in Revelation 2:4 "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love." Remember the height which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. Believers if you will love your Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with your entire mind, loving your neighbor as yourself will follow. Don't go to church to take up a seat and to fill your stomach with only what is comfortable to swallow. Allow God to fill you with His spiritual food so you too can accomplish the will of God in your life.

Now let's look at the next eating disorder in the body of Christ, the anorexia believer.

James 1:23-25 "Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it, he will be blessed in what he does."

The anorexia believer goes to church every week, sitting in the same place, talking to the same people, and remaining in the same mind set they were in the week before, never really occupying the Word of God. Oh sure they say a couple of "Amen's", throw a few "Praise the Lord's" and for show why not a "Hallelujah" as well, but as they leave the building, get into their cars, put their bibles in the back seat, they remain untouched by the Word of God. An anorexia believer never really partakes in the actual eating of God's Word. They feed off the desires of their flesh. Oh, they will hardly miss a Sunday, their

attendance is almost perfect, but no one is ever changed by their presence. They remain the same, their world remains the same, and their existence is complacent. Will they go to heaven? I am sure they might, but will they take anyone with them? No, probably not.

How can we look in the mirror and forget what we look like? The same way we can listen to a message and remain the same. The anorexic believer is starving to death, because the world is feeding them a man made diet consumed with self. They have become cannibals in a sense, because we feed off each other instead of the word of God. Can I be as bold to say that maybe the anorexia believer has cared more about the appearance of being in the body Christ instead of a true authentic relationship with the body of Christ? Has church become nothing but a social event where you show off your latest dress or gather around the coffee pot and talk about who's going to win the next fantasy football league? Do you think just because you show up God is pleased? Even the devil shows up at church! Oh, maybe someone is taking attendance but I don't think it amounts for anything if you become just another check in a box.

The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3: 7-11 "but whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the death.

Paul was saying whatever I valued before fails in comparison to Christ. I consider it all rubbish, nothing but a pile of dog dung, chicken poop, a liter box filled with rubbish. I consider it all worthless waste, everything I have done, everything I have accomplished, any money I have earned, anything I have

bought, any education I have accumulated, I consider it all rubbish compared to my relationship with Christ. Can you say I find it all rubbish in comparison to my relationship with Christ? Can I? Whatever you do first thing in the morning holds the most value in your heart. Stop right here and ask yourself what do I really value? What do I spend my time doing? Does God own a place in your life in addition to Sunday mornings?

There are 168 hours in a week, who and what gets the other 166 hours left in the week when you're not at church? What have you replaced God with? Has it furthered eternal fulfillment to anyone else's life? If Jesus came back today would He be pleased with what you are accomplishing for His kingdom? Are you an anorexic believer? Matthew 13:44 says, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field." Wow! Did the word of God say in his joy he sold everything he had to purchase the field? Most of us are not willing to give up a date night to bless someone else, much less sell everything if God asked us to. The amazing thing is; He is worth it. Isaiah 6:1-4 says, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke."

Readers, is this the God you serve? Is this the God you see when your praying, believing, and bombarding heaven for your petitions of unanswered prayers? Have you made God less than what He is? "His robe filled the temple, the angels are in constant praise of His name, calling out to one another, holy, holy, holy, is His name as the temple shook and was filled with smoke."^{xvii} This is the God we serve, not some wimp who sits on a teeter-totter rocking back and forth complacent with our walk.

This God is the same God who speaks in Mark 10 who is confronting the rich man. In Mark 10:17-19 the rich man was asking Jesus what to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him you know the commandments: do not murder, do not commit adultery; do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, and honor your father and mother. Mark 10:20-22 says, "Teacher, he declared. "All these I have kept since I was a boy," Jesus looked at him and loved him, one more thing you lack, he said, "Go sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth."

I noticed several things; the first thing I noticed was Jesus looked at him and loved him. In other words Jesus was not suggesting he sell everything because he was trying to punish the rich man, No, he knew if the rich man's heart was not right his walk would not be right either. God cares more about our relationship with Him than our possessions. This is sad because I think most of us care more about our possessions than we do about God, Oh, we will say we don't but what do we spend most of our time doing? Where your money is there you will find your heart. What do you spend your money on?

The second thing I noticed was the rich man appeared to be awesome at keeping some of the commandments. Jesus only mentioned the last six but He left out the first four. I began to ponder on this fact; why? I believe He only mentioned the ones the rich man was keeping. Isn't this how we as modern day twenty first century Christian's think? As long as we are not stealing, murdering, committing adultery, not coveting, giving a false testimony, or dishonoring our parents we are pretty good Christian folk. What about not having any other gods before me, or do not make for yourself an idol, in addition to do not misuse the name of the Lord your God, and remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

I want to address the first commandment today. Do not have any other god's before. I believe the rich man's face fell because he had another god before the one true God. Money; a false sense of security. It broke his heart to think that all he had worked for, all his stored up treasures and all which defined him

Jesus wanted him to give away. Jesus wanted him to be sold out for the cause. Maybe Jesus wanted him to acknowledge the fact that money had taken him captive and held him prisoner with his own wealth, it had hand cuffed him to self indulgences while others starved to death. Maybe Jesus was saying to the young rich man - it doesn't matter if you gain the whole world if in the process you lose me it's all for not.

In Luke 16 Jesus tells of a story about another rich man and a beggar whose name was Lazarus who lay at the gate begging while covered in sores longing to eat the scrapes from the rich man's table. Finally the beggar died and the angels came and carried him away. The rich man died as well and was buried in hell where he was tormented he looked up and saw Abraham and said, "Have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip his finger in the water to cool my tongue." Abraham replied, "Son, remember in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony."^{xviii}

Wow! Readers, this is a serious consequent for ignoring the poor outside your gate. I can hear many of you thinking thank God I am not the rich man, but the truth is you are and so am I. Let me share something shocking with you. At least 80% of humanity lives on less than \$10.00 a day, and 48% live on \$3.14 a day 25% live on \$1.72 a day. ^{xix} Now the question is, what are we going to do about it? Who are the poor outside your gate? Do you just walk by with the attitude "that's not my problem"? Do you think to yourself I wish I could help but I'm having a hard enough time taking care of my own family? Or are you among those who are blinded by the darkness of self? If I give I might not have enough for my family, or what about my future; who is going to take care of me when I retire? Let me have the honor of answering that question, the same God who is supplying your needs. Now if you're not in the 25% of people making \$1.72 a day you are considered the rich man, I'm not sure about you, but you are

definitely rich. The anorexia can't eat the word of God because they are too busy eating off the desires of their flesh, nothing more than a cannibalism believer.

The first spiritual disorder we discussed was the bulimic believer, who only digests what they want to believe, only what they are comfortable consuming; only what can be explained and then ultimately they purge everything else out. Next, we discussed the anorexia believer; this kind of believer never really partakes in the actual eating of God's word they feed off the desires of their flesh, cannibalism if you will, which leads them to spiritual starvation. Now I would like to address the obese believer. The obese believer becomes stationary in their walk with Christ, they become idle.

2 Thessalonians 3:11 says, "we hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies." An obese believer is always eating but never exercising their authority in Christ. They are all consuming with the word, but are not doers of the word.

Ezekiel 33:30-32 says, "As for you, son of man, your countrymen are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of their houses, saying to each other, "Come and hear the message that has come from the Lord." My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouth they express devotions, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them to into practice."

An obese believer fills themselves with so many different things, their possessions, entertainment, jobs, social events, homes and cars. When the day has come to an end, the last light has been turned off they are snuggled down in their beds, and left feeling over-stuffed with the world. They are anxious, angry, and full of anxiety. An obese believer hears the word, thinks it has a beautiful sound, tells everyone about the great Word of God but never acts on what they hear.

I would like to share a very personal story. Last Tuesday night, I went to teach my class on the Holy Spirit, my ladies and I were lead to go to our local hospital to pray for those who had loved ones residing there. After we had finished praying I felt lead to buy some food for the needy. The ladies and I searched for someone who appeared to be homeless and hungry but by that time of night I guess they had already found refuge for the evening. I explained to the ladies that I had many homeless and hungry people out in the direction I lived and I would distribute the food on my way home. We said our good-byes and got into our vehicles to go our separate ways. As I was driving home I began praying and singing in the Spirit and then the words "lead me oh Lord, lead me to the needy" came to my mind. Directly after I prayed, I remembered a man passing me by on his motorcycle. I noticed his bandana flying off. I was going to stop and pick the bandana up for him if I saw him brake. I did not see him brake that night. Within a few minutes I was kneeling beside him praying for him as I laid my hand on his back calling on the name of my Jesus. I continue to stay with him and pray until the ambulance arrived, and then I was asked to step away. From a distance I continued to pray because in Matthew 25:35-46 Jesus said, "everything you have done unto them you have done unto me". I didn't know this man's name at the time and I didn't know if he was married or if he had children. I didn't know if his parents were still alive or if he had siblings, or grandchildren, but what I did know was, this man was God's son and I was not only compelled but driven to pray for God's son on that night. As I stood in the moment which seemed to engulf me, a nurse who had been there with me asked me if I would like her to go check on him? I said, "Yes, would you please?" She left for just a moment and then reported back that he had not made it. Oh, how my heart broke for the man on the motorcycle that belong to God. As I stood in silence while all the noise of uncertainty was developing around me all I could hear was the Spirit of God saying, "Michele sometimes I will lead you to the hungry and sometimes I will lead you to pray for strangers in a hospital, and sometimes Michele I will lead you to a man dying on the road." I knew from that point on my existence would never be the same. I wanted to be lead by the Spirit for

the rest of my life into eternity. The ladies and I have talked since this happened and we have come to the conclusion that every step we took that night led me to the man I now know as Robert. God cared so much about his son that He made sure Robert was not alone when he made the transition from this life to the next. Thank you for letting me share my one and only memory of the man on the motorcycle named Robert.

Can you ignore God's Word? Yes you can, but who will remain untouched because you did. If this doesn't make you want to listen and obey the Spirit of God who lives in you to direct and lead you into all truth, to be your comforter in your time of need, to give you wisdom, freedom, peace, understanding, boldness, rebirth, and a reborn cleansing, then you are left to your own demise.

As the night went on and I had finally made it home embodied in my thoughts I remembered the questions I had been asking on Tuesday nights. I would begin each class with three questions. The first question I asked the ladies, are they willing to be an answer to someone else's prayer? The second question I asked the ladies - are they willing to follow the Holy Spirit without knowing where He was leading? The third and last thing I would ask was not only a question but a challenge - to treat everyone they see like they were Jesus. Because "what you have done for the least of these you have done unto me"^{xx}. The obese believer hears the word thinks it has a beautiful sound tells everyone about the great word of God, but never acts on what he hears. He is a hoarder of the word. Stop right here and ask yourself this question, "Would you have stopped for the man on the motorcycle?" If you had to think about your answer or think of an excuse for your answer then maybe you are too stuffed with the food of this world to make a difference in the next. An obese believer who fills his self up with the cares and worries of this life will be too full to inhale all of what the Holy Spirit has in store for him. Our purpose is to live out loud on purpose for our Christ Jesus.

Many of you may be asking yourself which believer am I. I have asked myself the same question while writing the past several columns. Well, to be completely honest I have the potential to be any one of the three believers at any given time if I do not stay connected, plugged in, and fastened to the hip of the Holy Spirit. What believer are you? My goal is to be the radical believer, radically serving God in an untraditional way.

I want to discuss one more believer which is the radical believer. I thought about writing on the balanced believer. It matched, but only in words. I do not want to be a balanced believer I want to be an untraditional, sold out, radical, on fire, willing to be lead by the Holy Spirit even if I do not know where He is leading me kind of a believer. I want to strike a match in the heart of God's people wherever I go. I want to make a difference in a place where being the same has been accepted as "fitting in" but in reality if we were to examine the truth its only living with a compromise standard. I do not want to compromise the Word of God any longer. Ironically what I call a radical believer the book of Acts calls the church.

2Timothy 3:1-5 says, "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying the power."

The Apostle Paul was in prison in Rome awaiting his death when he wrote this letter to Timothy. He was not talking to unbelievers but believers. Paul was talking about the church. People will attend the church because they love themselves, instead of God. You might be thinking: that is a bold statement, but why do people love money? Because they love themselves. Why are people abusive? They love themselves, they want their way and if they don't get their way they become abusive. Why won't people

forgive others? Because it is about themselves not others. Listen, I know there is real relevant pain out in the world. I know people have been sexual, mental, verbally and physical abused so how could I say that it is selfish not to forgive? Because I myself have been sexually, mentally, verbally, and physically abused and until I released those people I always had my mind on myself. Some people say "I just cannot control myself." The only reason they cannot control themselves is because they want what they want no matter what it cost to get it. Every word the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 is about people being lovers of self, but the book of Acts is the exact opposite. How can we strike a match and light up a room if we are making it all about self? How can people see the Holy Spirit in you if it's all about self? How can we call ourselves followers if we will not follow? Let's step into the book of Acts for a moment and nail our tent pegs to the ground and see what the Lord shows us.

Acts 2: 42-47 say's, "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe (reverent fear) came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing their proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."

If we want our churches to grow we must be different, we must look different, we must act different, and we must walk, and speak different. You cannot change and remain the same. You cannot keep doing the same thing to get a different result. Most churches will un-doubtedly say they want the power of God in their churches but they are not willing to do what it takes to receive the power that the church of Acts had. What did you read when you read the account in the book of Acts? It seems to me they were in complete unity; no one was above and no one was beneath. It seemed to me they did not

put one person on a pedestal and another underneath the pedestal. They honored each other, they were not fighting about who was going to be in a spotlight but rather they put the spotlight on Jesus. They cared for the people more than they did themselves. It wasn't about who had what gift or the number of people who showed up; but rather about unity and the breaking of bread in the homes. I am not talking about communism; the people still had personal possessions and houses to live in, I'm talking about the desire to give to one another out of a place of love.

We were in the military for 25 years and we have had many opportunities to visit numerous churches; but one church has a place in the forefront of my thoughts. Not because of a person but because of a method. Here is the method they used : you, (the church goers) would go to church Sunday morning and then on Sunday evenings you would obtain the Pastors notes, then meet in different homes with a home group leader in that area to discuss the message that was brought fourth that morning. The objective was to talk about how you could use what you had learned on Sunday morning in the upcoming week which would preserve the people from becoming complacent with the Word of God.

If we are going to make a difference we must **be different**, we must walk by the Spirit. Last week my dad and aunt had called and asked if they could meet us for lunch at Longhorn Steakhouse we said, "Yes." As we were sitting talking to our waitress she mentioned that she had some unexpected car repairs. After we had placed our order and our waitress left, my aunt and I decided that we should take up an offering to help our waitress with her repairs. Why am I sharing this with you? I am sharing this because we must live by the written Word of God, we cannot ignore Matthew 25:35-46 any longer, "what you have done to one of the least of these you have done unto me". I want to live the Bible out-loud for Jesus. I want my life to be relevant. To only live and breathe is to die a slow death, but to save the dying while living makes every breath I breathe worth inhaling...

Let me ask you a few questions –

1. What kind of believer are you the bulimia, anorexia obese, or the radical?
2. What are you purging out in order to match your selfish desires?
3. When is the last time you gave to the needy, or when was the last time you fasted, or prayed?
4. If you missed several Sunday services in a row would anyone be affected by your absence?
5. Do you spend more time thinking about what you're going to wear, or what time the game starts on Sunday morning than you do about the people you have the potential to minister to?
6. If God told you to sell everything and move to Africa would you do it if you knew it was God?
7. What have you done for the poor outside your gate, not just the poor in the physical but the poor in the spiritual as well?
8. Are you willing to be an answer to someone else's prayer today?
9. Are you willing to follow the Holy Spirit without knowing where He is leading you?
10. Do you treat everyone you see as if they were Jesus?
11. Are you a selfish person; meaning do you think about yourself more than others?

Weekly Challenge: Fast for one day and seek God about how you can be an answer to someone else's prayer. For example maybe a neighbor is going out of town and you could offer to check their mail or mow their grass while their gone. Or maybe one of your friends have an Anniversary coming up you could offer to keep their kids overnight, or maybe a friend lost their job you could buy them a gift card at the grocery store, another idea would be make someone a homemade dinner who has been under the weather or working hard lately.

Choices are for the living... I dare you to be an answer to someone's prayer today. Choices are for the
Living... Chose to live a life worth repeating...
