



Empowering People to Change the World

The WholeHARD45 Challenge

Steve Holt

Prayer for Britt Hancock in Nicaragua

Since 2013, Mountain Gateway, founded by Britt and Audrey Hancock, has been preaching the Gospel in Nicaragua. In 2023, God opened the door for Mountain Gateway to hold eight mass evangelistic gospel campaigns throughout the country and almost one million people attended. Hundreds of thousands responded to the call to meet Jesus.

In December 2023, there was a drastic change when the Nicaraguan government arrested eleven of their national pastors and announced charges against Britt, his son Jacob, and his daughter-in-law Cassandra. When the pastors were arrested, Mountain Gateway's registration was cancelled in the country, all Mountain Gateway assets in Nicaragua were seized, and their Nicaraguan legal counsel was imprisoned—this is the same persecution so many other Christian organizations have faced in Nicaragua since 2018. Religious persecution is just as alive today as it was when Paul and Silas were in a prison cell. As the Body of Christ, we must stand together when we are under persecution.

Eleven U.S. Congress persons from the House and Senate drafted a resolution to present to the floor of the House to condemn Nicaragua for Religious Persecution and Human Rights Violations. The U.S. State Department is active and engaged to pressure Daniel Ortega, the President to release all prisoners.

Prayer Points:

- For the righteousness and justice of the Lord to prevail.
- For the pastors and their families to have peace from the Holy Spirit.
- Ask the Lord to release the pastors.
- For the work in Nicaragua to continue to advance even in the face of persecution – that the believers in Nicaragua would be filled with boldness to continue to proclaim the Good News.
- For the Lord to soften the hearts of those in leadership and that HIS will would be done.
- For Marsella, one of the wives of those arrested with him, to be reunited with her babies.

The WholeHARD45 Challenge

Introduction:

- People are fearful. And social media and 24-hour news aren't making things better. From pharmaceutical ads to quick fix infomercials, the media traffics in fear. It sells and we're buying.
- The rapid increase in depression is at an all-time high. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has found that over twenty-one million Americans struggle with some form of depression, with youth between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five years old being the most frequent victims.
- People of all ages are suffering from panic, agoraphobia, and social and separation anxiety disorders. The mental health and counseling systems are overloaded.
- Suicide in all age groups has exponentially increased over the past few years. *Time Magazine* records that suicide is the highest it's been since World War II.

While the culture is pressing in on us externally, our increasingly unstable emotions are weakening us internally. So, where do we turn? Where can we find solutions to our panic and anxiety? Can we find a source of strength and courage?

The famed German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe said:

“Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.” (German Poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)

- Jesus understands our dilemma and our tendency to worry and fret. Knowing this, He provided the most astute solution ever given.
- We worry, fret, and get *boxed in* to a life of fears, frustrations, and depressions because we haven't made the *main thing OUR first thing*.

Jesus Gives Us the Prescription for Breaking the Power of Fear, Worry, and Anxiety

Turn to Matthew 6:25-33

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

- In the valley of a worry-filled life, Jesus instructs us: quit worrying, take your mind off all your problems and start seeking Me and My Kingdom.
- Quit looking around you—quit comparing, quit chasing success, quit dwelling on your failures, and *start looking up*.
- Make the *main thing*, *YOUR first thing*. Seek *first* the Kingdom of God!

“Seeking first the Kingdom of God...is the most profound and noble statement ever made to man.” Canadian Psychologist and NY Times bestselling author, Jordan Peterson

Jesus, understanding the human condition of fear, worry, and anxiety, is challenging us to seek the highest good, the most noble cause of the universe--the Kingdom of God.

But how do we replace worry, anxiety, and frustration with a new mindset?

Our theme for The Road in 2024 is “Bring it On.”

We are emphasizing a spiritual mentality of welcoming problems, difficulties, and challenges by developing:

- New habits of Mental Toughness,
- Spiritual Power,
- Relational Connection, and
- Physical Stamina.

My hope and prayer is that you will build brick by brick a new you through building new habit patterns. I believe if you:

Build a New Way of Thinking, you will Build New Habits. New Habits Build New Character. If you Build a New Character, you will Build a New Destiny.

- Your spirit, mind and body are interconnected. The Great Physician of the universe, Jesus Christ, gave us the prescription for healthy living. He said that everything can be summed up in one statement.
- If you want to be fully engaged in loving God and people, Jesus gave us the greatest and most healthy command ever given to humankind. Jesus was asked, **“What is the greatest commandment?”** and He answered with *the most* important formula for success ever given:

The Definition for Seeking the Kingdom of God:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This *is* the first commandment. And the second, like *it*, *is* this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31).

- Jesus is saying to us that the Greatest Commandment to the *greatest focus* is to love God with ALL of our *heart*—our spirit, our emotions, our mind, and our physical strength!
- The Great Physician, Dr. Jesus is sharing with us just what true health is.
- I’ve developed a 45-day challenge to guide those who want to take the plunge, in how to build ourselves up spiritually, mentally, relationally, and physically.

WholeHARD45 will Challenge You in Four Ways:

1. WholeHARD45 incorporates all the key points of Jesus’s Greatest Command for healthy living.

- Jesus is saying that everything in life that will make you effective, joyful, and fulfilled is loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

2. WholeHARD45 is also about Loving Others.

- There is a part in the strategy for showing love to others.

3. **WholeHARD45 requires for you to have a Bloodstained Ally with you.**

- **WholeHARD45** requires you have a bloodstained ally with whom you can share your journey. This is someone you trust, who loves you, who is committed to your success. They will help hold you accountable and better yet, if they can, join you in **WholeHARD45**.

4. **WholeHARD45 is about Building New Habits.**

- I am calling it **WholeHARD45** because the next 45 days will be hard. It's always hard to build new habits. It's always hard to go to the higher ground of healthy living.
- Experts say it takes at least 21-30 days to develop a new habit. I've chosen 45 days in order to double the likelihood of these new habits becoming engrained into your life. **WholeHARD 45** could change your life.
- This is not for everyone to be able to do, but I wanted to introduce it to the whole church because I have no idea who might pick up the challenge.
- Like the bricks required to build a house, you are building brick by brick, a new you, a new temple spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically.

Your Destiny will be Defined by your Focus. Learn a New Focus Create a New Destiny!

- You fulfill your destiny through the things you focus on most intently. So, put your focus only on things that are beautiful, marvellous, just, and joyful.
- Keep moving forward and don't let failures, shame, and disappointments get in the way of your dreams. Don't quit. You have what it takes. Trust in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Ten Daily Challenges of WholeHARD45:

1. PB&J Thirty Minutes.

- Your thoughts are the architects of your destiny. So, read the Bible, pray, and journal. I would encourage you to use Jay Inman's PB&J book (journal). You can order it on Amazon.
- Start with prayer. Then read your Bible. Finish with writing in your journal.

- Read three chapters in the Old Testament and three chapters in the New Testament each day.
- Start in Genesis (first book of the Old Testament) and Matthew (first book of the New Testament).

2. Exercise or Walk for Thirty Minutes.

- Exercise. Get back in shape! And not just for the physical benefits, but countless scientific studies prove the most important way to oxygenate your brain and stave off mental decline is working out.
- The study of neuroplasticity has shown that even as we age, we can continue to increase our IQ through a daily work out.
- Just thirty minutes each day could change your entire outlook on life. Find a routine you can maintain. A little done consistently is better than a lot done sporadically.
- Walk. If you can do your walk outside, this would be best.
- Eighty-eight percent of Americans are Vitamin D deficient. Vitamin D is the *sunshine vitamin*.
- By getting outside in the sun each day for thirty minutes with no sunscreen or sunglasses, one can build up and maintain the daily need for the *happiness vitamin*.
- In addition, clinical studies have shown that walking just might be the most important way to lose weight and strengthen one's core.

3. A Random Act of Kindness.

- Start helping others each day. Helping others builds your love quotient.
- Look for opportunities to help or encourage someone in need. People in need are all around us. You can text an encouraging word. You can call someone who's lonely. You can take time to help someone with a task.

4. No Alcohol.

- I'm not against drinking alcohol per se, but alcohol can be addictive for many of us. Millions of people each year become addicted to alcohol, and it ruins their life. Don't drink. You will feel better in the long run if you replace alcohol with healthier eating and drinking habits.
- Try drinking more water.

5. No Junk Food.

- We are the unhealthiest most obese nation in the world.
- The huge amounts of sugar, fat, and GMOs in our fast food, junk food, and processed food is killing us.
- No eating fast food or junk food. None.
- Replace all those quicky stops at fast food places with God-Made-Food.
- God-Made-Food is natural grown, no pesticide sprayed, organic food. Only eat out at restaurants that serve healthy food. Learn to make good meals at your home.
- Sorry folks, Chick-fil-A is fast food!

6. Read Three Pages of a Non-Fiction Book.

- Leaders are readers. If you're not a reader of good literature, I hope you will be after these forty-five days.
- Read books you are motivated to read. If you enjoy history, read history. If you enjoy learning about great men and women, read biographies.
- If you want to improve your health in a particular area, seek the best books in those categories. If you want to improve your leadership, read leadership books.

7. Watch an EmpowerU Episode.

- EmpowerU is designed to do just what it says: empower you! One of the great lessons of life is keeping the edge of learning.
- It's up to you to keep empowering yourself. Go to **empoweru.live** and subscribe; it's free. We now have one hundred episodes.

- Each episode of each category is only fifteen minutes long. The Foundations series is the best for getting started.

8. Pray Out Loud with your Spouse.

- If you're married take time to pray with your spouse. The statistics are astounding. Couples who daily read the Bible and pray together have less than 1 in 1,018 chances of divorce.
- This just may be the number one way to divorce proof your marriage! I know it's scary to pray together out loud. But just start doing it and watch what God will do.

9. Communicate with your Bloodstained Ally.

- If you don't have a bloodstained ally, get one. If you have one, ask if they will hold you accountable to each daily challenge.
- The requirement is that you text, email, or call your bloodstained ally each day and let them know of your progress or struggles. Even better, do **WholeHARD45** together with your BSA.

10. Sexual Purity. No Porn.

- If you are involved in sexual activity that's not within the biblical boundaries of a marriage relationship, stop that.
- Stop looking at porn. It's killing your spirit, your relationships, and especially your marriage.
- The dopamine dump you get from fixating on sexual images is destroying your brain (and your life). The good news is that research proves one can re-dig the ditches of one's frontal cortex through rerouting our need for dopamine with healthier habits. The other nine habits can reform your brain if you will learn to completely fast from porn.

WholeHARD45 Daily Routine Check List is found in the booklet in the lobby. It's \$5 and if you want to join us for the challenge, pick one up and start it when you are ready.

Let me close with 1 Thessalonians 5:23

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

- “Sanctify” means *set apart*.
- I’m challenging you this morning to be set apart to build a new you, a new destiny through training yourself mentally, physically, relationally, and spiritually.
- Your WHOLE spirit, soul, and body.
- WholeHARD45!