

Christianity Today

AUGUST 2010

Why Women Want Moore

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BIBLE SMUGGLING ETHICS 46
SUFFERING: THE NEW NORMAL 30

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Your Eyes on God's World

God's world is a big place, and at *Christianity Today*, we have committed to doing everything we can to give you a front-row seat on what God is doing around the globe.

In April, for example, Deann Alford reported on risky ministry among rural Colombia's narco-terrorists. In June, news editor Jeremy Weber wrote about how Buenos Aires churches are conducting an unprecedented experiment in church unity. And last month, Cassandra Soars introduced readers to a Canadian economist in Mozambique who uses trade to help the poor.

We live in a time when American pastors are taking cues from clergy in Rwanda, Ukraine, and South Korea. Because Christ-followers need to connect with fellow believers worldwide, we are constantly expanding our global vision and yours.

Can we continue to increase this unique international coverage? Like many of you, we at CT have felt the pinch of recent economic uncertainties, and travel to unfamiliar cultures takes much more of our writers' time and emotional energy.

Fortunately, we've had some help. Several organizations help us with costs, access, and in-country travel. As I write, online editor Sarah Pulliam Bailey is debriefing after a lightning-quick sponsored trip to Haiti.

Such assistance encourages us as we plan future reports of gospel growth in the uttermost parts. That is why I want to encourage you as a CT "fellow traveler" to prayerfully consider what you can do to invest in this expanding work.

You can make your tax-deductible contribution—of any amount—by check or online. Make checks payable to *Christianity Today*, and put "CT Global Excellence Fund" on the memo portion, or visit ChristianityToday.com/donate.

David Neff, Editor in Chief

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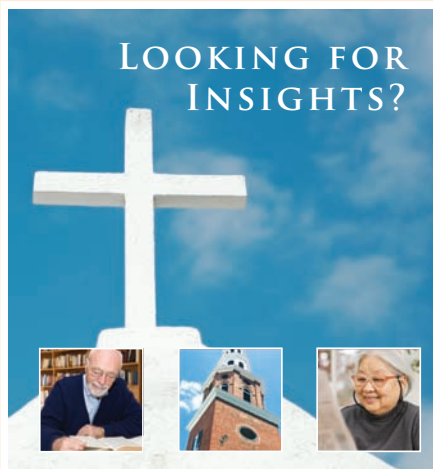
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Tears of a Journalist

Beth Moore can reach all kinds of people. Even me.

I WAS INTERVIEWING BETH MOORE some years ago when she told me a story about her teenage daughter. I don't recall the specifics of the story as much as the intensity of the storyteller.

By this point in the interview, Moore knew I had teenage children, and I'm pretty sure she told the story because she knew I would identify with it. It was a story with some emotional punch, and as she was telling it, it occurred to me that she was trying to hook me, trying to get me to feel the story's pathos. As I felt myself getting hooked, knowing what she was doing, I tightened my jaw and worked to retain my journalistic composure.

When she finished the story, I was blinking away tears, which I professionally assured her were due to allergies.

So when people tell me that Beth Moore is an effective communicator, I do not doubt it. And she is, to all sorts of people.

About that time, I discovered two sets of women who were attending Beth Moore Bible studies, watching her lecture on video while they explored Scripture together. One group was represented by an African American woman on welfare who attended such a study at a local Baptist church. Another was a group of northern Episcopalians from a wealthy Chicago suburb who could not quite fathom Moore's big hair, yet every week watched her videos with a Bible in one hand and a glass of Merlot in the other.

It was at that point that I knew we had to do a profile of Moore. That was a few years ago. We assigned the story to one writer, then another, but for different reasons, the story was never completed. Finally, our inimitable online editor, Sarah Pulliam Bailey, managed to pull it off. See "Why Women Want Moore" (page 20) to read the whole story.

Next Month: We look at a new subculture in the American church (hipster Christianity), libertarian hero Ayn Rand's continuing bad influence on Christian economics, and the results of a *Your Church* survey on sex offenders in the church.

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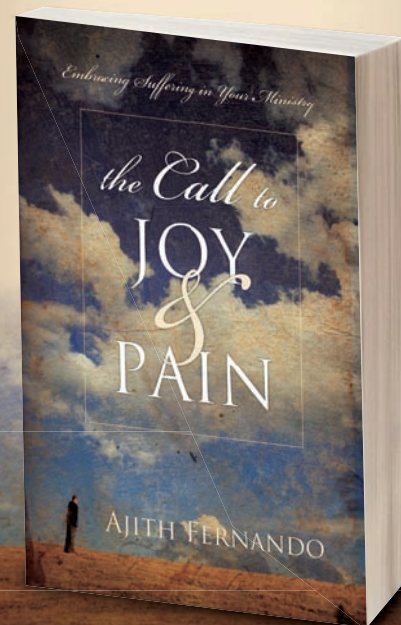
Embracing Suffering

IN YOUR MINISTRY

Joy and pain are both aspects of the call of God for the Christian. The Bible even presents pain as a trigger for joy. *The Call to Joy and Pain* explores how this is so, showing the connection between rejoicing and suffering, how suffering draws us nearer to God, and how suffering makes us more effective in service. Ministerial veteran Ajith Fernando opens readers' eyes to a truth they may already suspect: we in the West have much to learn about suffering.

AJITH FERNANDO

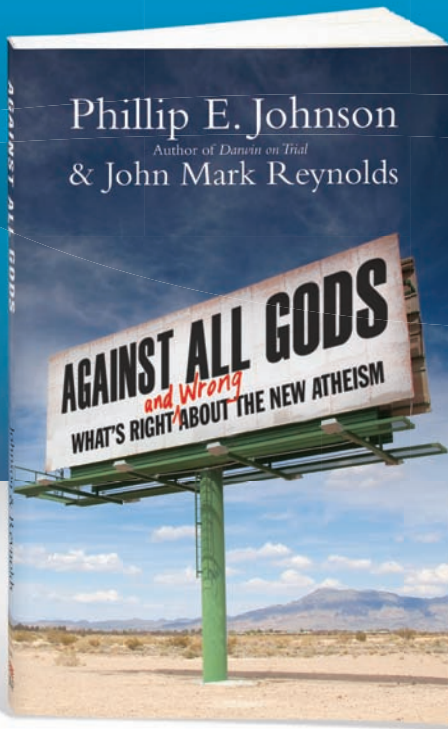
has been national director of Youth for Christ in war-torn Sri Lanka since 1976. He is the author of eleven books published in thirteen languages, including *The Call to Joy and Pain* and *Jesus Driven Ministry*.



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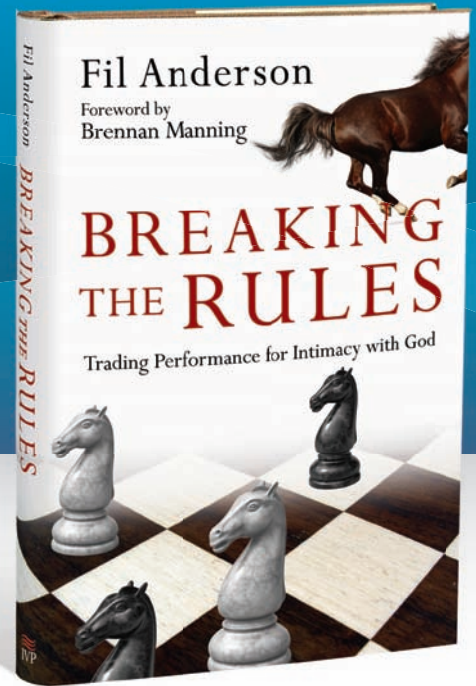
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AGAINST ALL GODS

In this appreciative critique of the New Atheists, Phillip E. Johnson and John Mark Reynolds evaluate the strength of the arguments for atheism and naturalism.

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Fil Anderson

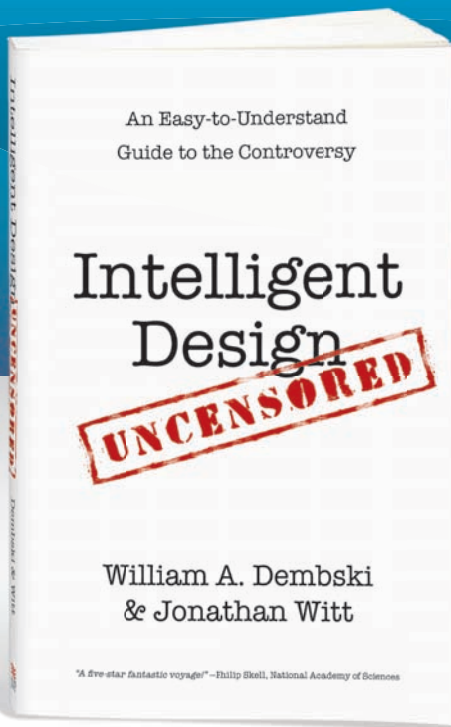
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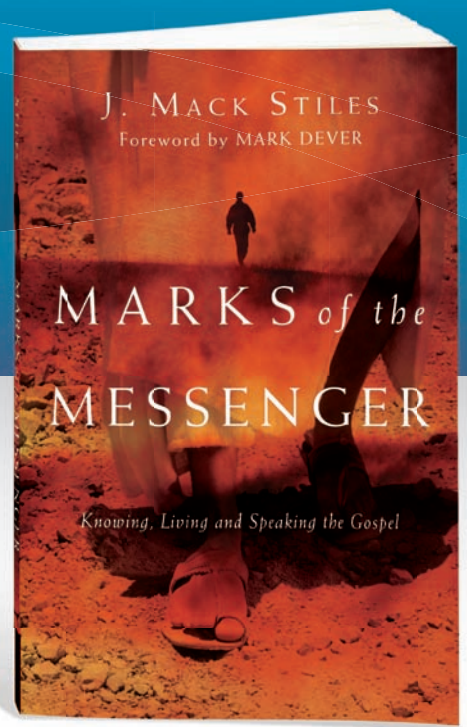
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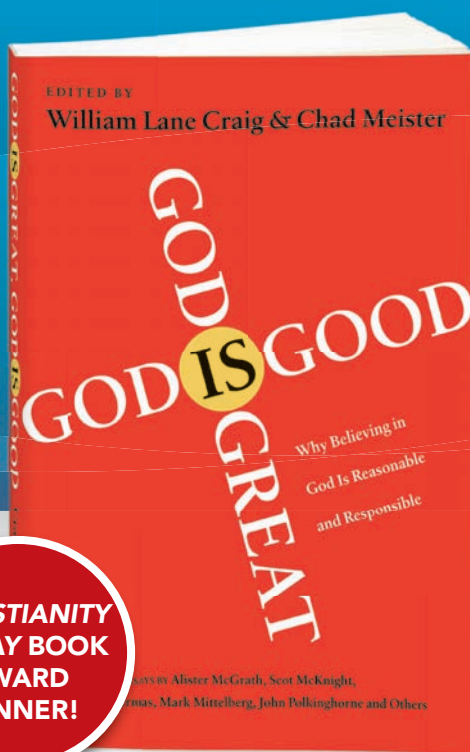
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BREAKING THE RULES

Fil Anderson tells how he lost himself under the demands of "getting right with God." He invites us to quit trusting in our ability to live for God, and trust Him instead.



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GOD IS GREAT, GOD IS GOOD

Editors William Lane Craig and Chad Meister bring together the most astute theological and philosophical minds of the day to respond to the New Atheists' case against belief in God.

**Contributors include
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McGrath, Gary Habermas
and others.**

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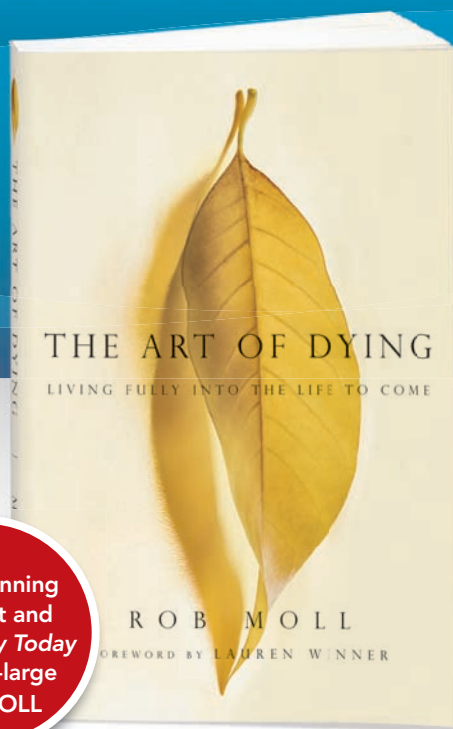
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MARKS OF THE MESSENGER

International evangelist Mack Stiles shows us how to know, live and speak a gospel message that is bigger than the messenger.



**By
award-winning
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editor-at-large
ROB MOLL**

THE ART OF DYING

Rob Moll revives the centuries-old Christian practice of dying well. An award-winning journalist and *Christianity Today* editor-at-large, Moll here draws from in-person reporting and interviews with hospice workers, bioethicists, family members and spiritual caregivers.

978-0-8308-3736-6, \$16.00

Q. Who has been winning souls and planting churches in Russia and the former USSR since Communism collapsed?

A. Native missionary evangelists like Slavik Radchuk have won millions to Christ and planted thousands of new churches in Ukraine, Russia and other former Soviet states.



Q. Who provides financial support for native missionary evangelists in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet empire?

A. Since 1991 Christian Aid has expended millions of dollars to support Slavik Radchuk and other native missionaries who conduct huge evangelistic campaigns and reach millions through radio and TV broadcasts in the Russian language which is understood in 15 countries of the former USSR.

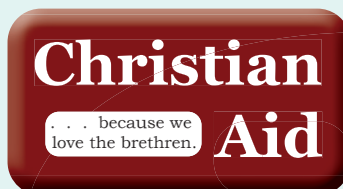
Q. How is Christian Aid financed?

A. Christian Aid is supported entirely by freewill gifts and offerings from Bible-believing, missionary-minded Christians, churches and organizations.

Q. Are other indigenous missions in need of financial help for their missionaries?

A. Christian Aid is in communication with more than 4000 indigenous missions, some based in almost every unevangelized country on earth. They have over 200,000 missionaries in need of support. All Christians who believe in Christ's "Great Commission" are invited to join hands with Christian Aid in finding help for thousands of native missionaries who are now out on the fields of the world with no promise of regular financial support.

For more than 50 years Christian Aid Mission has been sending financial help to indigenous evangelistic ministries based in unevangelized countries. Currently more than 700 such ministries are being assisted in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. They deploy more than 75,000 native missionaries which are spreading the gospel of Christ among unreached people within more than 3000 different tribes and nations.



When you contact Christian Aid, ask for a free copy of Dr. Bob Finley's book, **THE FUTURE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.**

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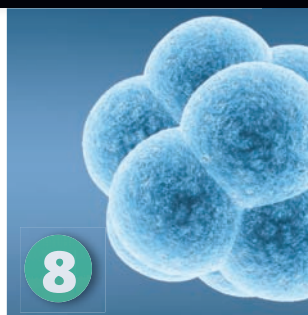
BRIEFING

REPORTING & DISPATCHES
FROM THE CHURCH
WORLDWIDE

SPOTLIGHT: The Future(s) of Missions

➡ In 1810, English missionary William Carey proposed a World Missionary Conference. In 1910, his dream was realized in Edinburgh, at one of the most influential Christian gatherings in history (Mark Noll's *Turning Points* includes it as one of 12 "decisive moments" for the church). Devoted to "the evangelization of the world in this generation," Edinburgh 1910 marked the culmination of a century of missionary passion, drew attention to Christians outside Europe and North America, and gave birth to the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches. This year, four world missionary conferences are celebrating the Edinburgh meeting's centennial, but with distinctly different views of its legacy and future.

	TOKYO MAY 11–14	EDINBURGH JUNE 2–5	CAPE TOWN OCTOBER 16–25	BOSTON NOVEMBER 4–7
ATTENDANCE	968 leaders of parachurch missions organizations.	300 , mostly clergy. 1,000 attended the closing ceremony.	4,500 evangelical leaders of various stripes. Invitation criteria attempted to ensure that no nationality, ethnicity, age, occupation, or denomination dominates. 10% had to be under 30 (60% under 50), 35% female, 10% not in full-time ministry, and 65% from the majority world.	TBD The only conference of the four with open registration (the others had carefully screened invitation lists), Boston's academic focus and light publicity means that only seminary students and professors invested in missions studies are likely to attend the Boston Theological Institute's event.
HERO	Ralph Winter (1924–2009), the missiologist who focused evangelicals' attention on "unreached peoples."	1910 organizer John Mott and V. S. Azariah (1874–1945), the Indian bishop whose 1910 plea, "Give us friends," became a cry for indigenous churches.	John Stott, drafting committee chairman for the 1974 Lausanne Covenant, which emphasized the role of social justice in evangelism.	Brian Stanley, director of the Centre for the Study of World Christianity and author of a landmark history of the 1910 conference.
THE FUTURE OF MISSIONS IS:	Completing the task of evangelizing and discipling every people group.	"Deconstructing boundaries" in the church: ecclesiological, political, economic, and so on.	Mobilizing Christians for "global solutions" to HIV/AIDS, poverty, Islam, and other global issues.	A fascinating subject that deserves much study.
SAMPLE TEXT	"God has entrusted this generation with more opportunities and resources to complete the task [of making disciples] than any previous one." (From "Making Disciples of Every People in Our Generation")	"Disturbed by the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world, we are called to repentance, to critical reflection on systems of power, and to accountable use of power structures." (From "Common Call")	"A concerted and well-reasoned response to . . . global issues and opportunities has been difficult because the church, and evangelicalism in particular, is highly fragmented." (From "Why Cape Town 2010?")	"Apart from intra-Christian and inter-religious critiques of mission, the rise of secular postmodernity challenges the very relevance of Christianity and therefore her impulse to reach out." (From "Call for Papers")
NOTABLE MOMENT	As the conference ended, Tokyo pastor Reiji Oyama apologized "to countries that Japan invaded and bombed and killed" and to Israel (for Christian anti-Semitism). Global Christian Network head Liz Adleta asked for forgiveness for America's use of nuclear weapons against Japan. More apologies followed.	Days before the conference, Daryl Balia was forced to resign as international director and barred from attending. He had publicly accused other organizers of racism and bullying, and admitted, "They asked me to sound out a homophobic bishop from Uganda to be a keynote speaker, but I never contacted him."	While the conference will stream live online, the Lausanne movement is emphasizing simulcasts at 400 sites in 60 countries. Similarly, it is hosting run-up conversation meetings (in the U.S., these are called "12 Cities: 12 Conversations"). CT's own Global Conversation series is part of a similar effort.	Promotional materials highlight the introduction of the <i>Atlas of Global Christianity</i> (though the volume has been publicly available since October 2009). Meanwhile, conference speakers include Brian McLaren and Ruth Padilla DeBorst (who was on Edinburgh's executive committee and is a keynote speaker at Cape Town).



GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Liberty cuts Caner as seminary dean

Liberty University chose not to renew Ergun Caner's contract as seminary dean after a trustee investigation found Caner made "self-contradictory" statements about "dates, names, and places of residence" in his testimony during public speeches. However, trustees found no evidence to question Caner's conversion from Islam; he will thus continue as a seminary faculty member. Christian and Muslim bloggers have accused Caner of falsifying his biography in order to inflate his credibility as an expert on Islam following September 11.

the ordination breaks guidelines aimed at calming tensions in the worldwide church. Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori defended the ordination, expressing concern over Canterbury's "colonial attitudes."

4 Court rules on Christian marriages

EGYPT The High Administrative Court ruled in May that divorced Coptic Christians must be allowed to remarry, a move Coptic Pope Shenouda III opposed as "against the Gospels." The court, in quashing Shenouda's appeal of a 2008 ruling, said family formation trumps religious rights. After Shenouda angrily refused to follow the order, Egypt's Minister of Justice announced in June that a new law would be drafted to govern non-Muslim marriages. Previously, all married non-Muslims were bound by Muslim law unless both spouses were members of the same religion; for instance, a Catholic married to a Coptic Christian would have been bound by Muslim law.

2 Pastor charged in drug lord's surrender

JAMAICA Police charged a prominent evangelical pastor for his role in the surrender of a Jamaican drug lord wanted by the U.S. Some saw Fellowship Tabernacle's Al Miller as a hero whose intervention ended a month-long street battle that claimed 70 lives in the capital of Kingston. But police said Miller's transporting cocaine broker Christopher "Dudus" Coke to the U.S. embassy was "harbouring a fugitive and perverting the course of justice."

3 Episcopalians given reduced role

ENGLAND The leader of the Anglican Communion has asked the Episcopal Church (TEC) to take a lesser role in church leadership after the denomination ordained a lesbian assistant bishop in Los Angeles. Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams wants TEC to withdraw from ecumenical dialogue and rescind its voting rights on an Anglican doctrinal committee, saying

5 Aid groups suspended for 'proselytizing'

AFGHANISTAN The Afghan government has suspended in-country operations of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and Church World Service (CWS), claiming the two Christian aid groups have been proselytizing. The groups are not known for evangelism; CWS is affiliated with the National Council of Churches, and NCA is part of Norway's state church. The suspension came after Noorin TV showed photos allegedly of Westerners baptizing Afghans. Noorin mentioned NCA and CWS in the same broadcast but had no evidence

6 Christian radio journalists detained

MADAGASCAR A Christian radio station stopped broadcasting after eight of its journalists and technicians were detained for threatening state security during a failed mutiny in May. The eight work for capital station Fahazavana, owned by the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar, a Reformed Protestant denomination and the country's second-largest church. The journalists are accused of broadcasting false information and inciting unrest; supporters say the government, which came to power in a March 2009 coup, is trying to limit religious freedom.

7 Publisher Thomas Nelson bought up

New York-based private investment firm Kohlberg & Co. has purchased a majority ownership in Thomas Nelson, the Nashville-based publisher of authors such as Max Lucado and John Eldredge. Thomas Nelson, the largest Christian publisher in the U.S., said the move eliminates much of its long-term debt, acquired when previous majority owner InterMedia Partners purchased the company in 2006.

8 Court: Pre-embryos are not human

SOUTH KOREA South Korea's Constitutional Court has ruled that "pre-embryos"—fertilized eggs within the first 14 days of development—are not human. Such embryos may be destroyed or used for medical research with the donors' consent. The ruling came during a lawsuit filed by a Korean couple that had one embryo implanted and the remaining two used for research. The parents later





compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

“Sharing the gospel of salvation through Christ alone is not an exercise in the selling of a product in a competitive marketplace of religions or philosophies, it is proclamation.”

Sharing the Gospel of Salvation, a new report from the Church of England.

Church Times

“For years I have hoped that my quadriplegia might encourage people struggling with cancer . . . now I have a chance to truly empathize and journey alongside, affirming that God’s grace is always sufficient for whatever the disease or disability.”

Joni Eareckson Tada, on being diagnosed with breast cancer.

JoniandFriends.org

“[It’s] a little bit of a bummer that could scare people away from the DVD. But in general, what Dove is doing is great for families.”

Jim Britts, youth pastor at New Song Community Church in Oceanside, California, and writer-producer of the film *To Save a Life*, on the Dove Foundation’s new label to warn of sex, violence, and drugs in Christian films.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

“Under the prevailing situation . . . there remains only the issue of what harsher punishment will be meted out to him.”

Korean Central News Agency, North Korea’s official outlet, threatening to further harm U.S. Christian activist Aijalon Mahli Gomes because of America’s “hostile approach” over the country’s sinking of a South Korean ship. Gomes, who entered North Korea in January, has already been sentenced to eight years of hard labor.

Associated Press

changed their minds and filed a lawsuit to give the unborn embryos the “fundamental right to life.” The embryos were listed as plaintiffs in the case.

9 Dark days for the Painter of Light

June was a bad month for Thomas Kinkadee, the popular Christian artist and self-described “Painter of Light.” Known for his paintings of idyllic cottages and outdoor scenes, Kinkadee was arrested for drunk driving days after one of his companies filed for bankruptcy. The filing came the day after Pacific Metro, Kinkadee’s production arm, was due to pay \$1 million to former gallery owners; the company also owes \$3 million to another creditor.

10 Divorced clergy approved as bishops

ENGLAND The Church of England can now appoint divorced clergy as bishops, the church’s House of Bishops decided. Previously, anyone who had been divorced or was married to a divorcee was barred from the bishopric. Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams supported the change, but those opposed say the shift softens biblical standards. Some argued the move is more serious and harmful than appointing homosexual bishops.

11 Church: Russians need more children

RUSSIA The Russian Orthodox Church is asking for tougher rules to reduce the nation’s high number of abortions. Russia was the first country in the world to legalize abortion in 1920; Stalin outlawed it from 1936 to 1954. The country’s health ministry registered 1.2 million abortions and 1.7 million births in 2009, and the United Nations predicts that by 2050, the country’s population will have dropped by one-fifth. The church suggested partnering

with “right-wing Christian Protestant” politicians in Western countries.

12 School board appeals church graduation ruling

A Connecticut school board appealed a federal district court ruling that Enfield Public Schools could not hold graduation ceremonies in a nearby megachurch. ACLU lawyers support the ruling that using a church for graduation endorses religion; community members dislike having to travel to each school for a ceremony. Of note: Activism by the Family Institute of Connecticut for the use of the megachurch was deemed a factor in making the graduation unavoidably an endorsement of religion.

13 Challenge to clergy tax break lives on

A California court case that challenges housing tax breaks for clergy may continue, a federal district judge ruled, to the surprise of many church-state observers. The case—filed by the Freedom From Religion Foundation, which won in court earlier this year against government recognition of the National Day of Prayer—argues that the current law, which exempts the value of clergy housing from clergy income tax (though not from self-employment tax), unfairly benefits religious employees.

14 Churches must replace wireless microphones

The Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) changes to the radio spectrum left churches around the country scrambling to replace wireless microphone equipment by a June deadline. The 700 MHz band, used by about 25 percent of wireless mics, has been re-designated as the FCC creates space for digital television broadcasts and mobile phones. Some churches say replacing their equipment has cost tens of thousands of dollars. After June 12, violators faced fines of more than \$100,000.

GO FIGURE Spirituality

9 Minutes

Time the average American spends per day in religious and spiritual activities (including those who spend no time at all).



97.2 Minutes

Average time spent per day among Americans who spend any time at all. (Only 9% did so on a given day.)



Bureau of Labor Statistics



Saints Go Marching: São Paulo's 2-million-strong March for Jesus displays the strength of Brazilian evangelicals, yet is dogged by controversy surrounding its founder, neo-Pentecostal pastor Estevam Hernandes.

PENTECOSTALS BRAZIL

Jesus March

São Paulo parade highlights more than the gospel. By Carlos Fernandes in Rio de Janeiro

Clutching pictures of sick relatives, Vera Lucia Oliveira was seeking a miracle—not inside her neo-Pentecostal church, but in the heart of Brazil's largest city.

Oliveira and some two million others took to the São Paulo streets June 3 for the latest March for Jesus, first organized 18 years ago by neo-Pentecostal megachurch Renascer ("Reborn in Christ") and declared a national holiday this year.

Renascer pastor Estevam Hernandes proudly showed off a soccer jersey autographed by star player Kaká, a church elder. "One of the goals of the march is the unity of Christ's church," said Hernandes. "Here are churches of all denominations."

However, the march's strong identification with Hernandes and its emphasis on power pushed away many Christians as well.

"I disagree with the theology behind the March for Jesus, which is one of spiritual warfare and

prosperity," said Augustus Nicodemus Lopes, chancellor of Mackenzie Presbyterian University in São Paulo. "The March for Jesus is [deemed] a prophetic act . . . a kind of territorial claim that allegedly destroys fortresses erected by the Enemy in areas where the march happens."

Lopes said it is a "monumental theological misconception" to believe that the march celebrates or promotes church unity. "If evangelicals want to impact our country," he said, "they should do so through lives that exhibit sanctity and ministries that do not cause scandals."

Some observers say the March for Jesus is markedly different in São Paulo than it is in the other 150 nations that take part. "In Brazil, the march has an owner," said Bishop Robinson Cavalcanti of the Anglican Diocese of Recife. "The march has turned into the brand name for a patented pseudo-Pentecostalism. It is a distortion that occurs nowhere else in the world."

São Paulo's March for Jesus has amassed great national visibility, rivaling the city's 3.5-million-strong gay pride parade—one of the world's largest—held only days later. However, the march has not been as successful outside São Paulo. Rio de Janeiro, for example, has a higher percentage of believers than São Paulo, but lack of coordination among a revolving door of organizers has resulted in gatherings of fewer than 10,000 people.

This year's São Paulo march successfully displayed the strength of Brazilian evangelicals, who now make up 18 percent of the population, but was also dogged by controversy. Renascer is under investigation for tax evasion and misuse of donations. Hernandes and wife Sonia were convicted of entering the United States in 2007 without declaring \$50,000 to customs authorities. A year later, the roof of the church's headquarters collapsed, leaving 9 dead and more than 100 wounded. Accused of negligence, Renascer still faces considerable civil and criminal actions.

Pastor Wellington Oliveira, national president of Youth With a Mission, which helped launch the first March for Jesus, held in the UK in 1987, agreed that today's march has a different tone. "At first we were very involved. Today, each local missionary base decides how it will participate," he said. "We must take care of politicization. The march exalts the name of Jesus, so it is important to be attentive to the contexts in which it is performed." +

GO FIGURE

Giving

0.7%
Drop in religious giving in U.S., to \$100.95 billion.

3.9%
Drop in total giving in U.S. (including companies, foundations, and bequests), to \$303.75 billion.

6.2%
Increase in U.S. giving to international aid in 2009, to \$8.89 billion.

Giving USA Foundation

MISSIONS

Urban Urgency

Missionaries follow migration to city centers.

By Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra

International missions is shifting focus to urban centers, following migration patterns that in 2008 indicated that more than half the world's population lives in cities.

Fewer than 30 percent of the world's 2.5 billion people in 1950 lived in cities. By 2050, almost 70 percent of the world's estimated 10 billion people will do so, according to the United Nations.

"As the escalation of global urbanization has taken place, so has the urbanization of mission work," said Doug McConnell, dean of the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary. Both local and full-time missionaries from the West are moving urban, he said.

"The world is connected, and what breaks my heart is that we are doing 21st-century missions with an 18th-century mindset and methodology," said Bob Roberts, pastor of Northwood Church in Keller, Texas, and an advocate for "glocal" ministry. "The heart of the spread of the gospel has always been in cities... since the days of Jerusalem and Antioch and Rome and then London. It has not changed, regardless of where the agencies have focused. Cities are central."

Fuller has seen so much interest in urban ministry that it recently combined two smaller programs on the topic into one larger one and expanded it, said McConnell.

The International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention is also concentrating more on cities, engaging 30 new urban centers in 2008 (up from 7 in 2007), including 27 cities with populations over 1 million.

"We've had an international global research team working to see where people are, so the fact that this has happened has not caught us by surprise," said IMB spokesperson Wendy Norvelle.

Scott A. Bessenecker, associate director of missions for InterVarsity, said there is "definitely an uptick" of interest in urban missions among young generations of missionaries. In recent years, more than 100 students have worked in urban slums via InterVarsity's Global Urban Trek program; about one-third commit to

serving for two years.

New Tribes Mission agrees that the urban migration trend is "very much a reality," but believes it has increased, not diminished, the need for their work with unreached people groups, said Larry Goring, international coordinator for field ministries. "The transition to the acquired language and culture is often a very bumpy road for [tribal] people groups," he said. "[This is] probably a time the church needs to give special attention to them."

Most missionaries are still feeling their way. It's been decades since the Church of the Nazarene specifically targeted cities, according to general secretary David Wilson. And while the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is receiving more requests for mission workers in urban areas, the numbers aren't tracked, said Stephen Nelson, director for global service.

These denominations are not alone. In fact, most mission workers haven't aimed at cities, McConnell said. "It's a logical extension of what's going on anyway."

Mission leaders are still working out effective city strategies. As they do, they need to remember to reach out holistically to people, McConnell said. "The challenges accompanying this are the same patterns of holism and seeing the church as a critical presence in the community. That has to continue."

SOCIAL JUSTICE KYRGYZSTAN

Harvest on Hold

Uzbek Christians weather ethnic violence. By William Yoder in Moscow

Ethnic unrest in southern Kyrgyzstan has undercut hopes for an evangelism boom under the Central Asian nation's interim government.

In June hundreds were killed and 100,000 minority Uzbeks

were displaced in Osh, the nation's second-largest city, during what appeared to be an organized wave of violence. The interim government, in place since the April 7 overthrow of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, blamed pro-Bakiyev Kyrgyz forces for the unrest. On June 27, voters overwhelmingly approved a new constitution creating Central Asia's first parliamentary democracy.

Vasily Kuzin, a charismatic pastor in the capital of Bishkek, attributed the havoc to unresolved ethnic conflicts from the 1990s. "One can always expect a conflict to express itself outwardly when there is no forgiveness," he said. "When there is no forgiveness, the fires of conflict are always burning."

Statistics on Kyrgyz Protestant Christianity are difficult to obtain, partly for reasons of security. The Osh region reportedly has three Baptist congregations and about 300 charismatic believers. Twenty percent of the country's population is Russian Orthodox.

Ethnic tensions have been common since the 1920s, when Soviet mapmakers carved up Osh's fertile Fergana Valley into the republics of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan without considering where ethnic populations lived. A Baptist leader in Osh forecasts that it will only be a matter of time until the "last pitiful remnant" of Russian Christians leave. Yet today, 20 percent of the country's 3,000 remaining Baptists (down from 13,000 in 1987) are Kyrgyz.

Speaking in Moscow soon after Bakiyev was removed from power, Genrikh Foth, president of Kyrgyzstan's Baptist Union, predicted that 2010 will be a year of harvest for evangelical churches. Despite draconian 2009 legislation to stop the conversion of Muslims, government authorities have been too occupied with civil unrest to concern themselves with small, struggling Protestant communities.

[continued on 16]

PASSAGES



Elected Bryant Wright
As president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Wright is pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Marietta, Georgia.



Died Dana Key
Half of legendary Christian rock duo DeGarmo & Key, of a ruptured blood clot on June 6 in Tennessee. He was 56.



Appointed Tom Lin
As director of the Urbana Student Missions Conference. Lin, currently an InterVarsity regional director, starts in February 2011.

Briefing [from 15]

"Following the unrest, we went into the hospitals, supplied the injured with food packages, and testified to hospital staff," said Foth. "We are even more active in evangelism than previously. . . . It will be a good year."

The unrest in Osh ensures that authorities will remain preoccupied for some time—but the price is indeed bitter. ➤

International reporting in *Christianity Today* is supported by a grant from John Stott Ministries.

CHURCH-STATE

Testing RLUIPA 2000 property/prisoners law takes shape. By Sarah Pulliam Bailey

Two recent court cases are testing the strength of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). Passed by Congress in 2000, the law has become a major force for churches in disputes with local officials over zoning, though for prisoners the benefits have been less clear.

"RLUIPA has made a big difference

for religious institutions; they have had a lot of victories over the years," said Charles Haynes, senior scholar at the First Amendment Center.

"Prisoners may have a stronger case for their free-exercise claims than most of us do because of RLUIPA. It doesn't mean prisoners are winning them all, but it has really changed the landscape for them."

Under RLUIPA, the government must avoid setting up measures that restrict religious institutions, or show that measures serve a compelling government interest. Consequently, a Colorado county recently lost its appeal in a zoning disagreement with its largest church.

In 2006, Boulder County denied Rocky Mountain Christian Church's request to double its campus to about 240,000 square feet. In May, the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals said the county's regulations did not meet RLUIPA standards, and told it to approve the permit and pay the church \$1.34 million in legal costs.

"RLUIPA has been around for a while, but it is now starting to flesh out," said Dan Dalton, chairman of the American Bar Association's Religious Land Use section. "This case sets a guideline, something other communities can use to measure

DISCUSSION STARTER Politics

The General Synod of Australia's Anglican Church wants citizens to have fewer children, recommending that the government cut childbirth incentives to new parents and instead offer incentives for parents to have fewer children. The country is on track for overpopulation, the church warned, which could break the eighth commandment by stealing resources from future generations.

limitations."

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case on whether prisoners can sue a state or state official under RLUIPA for damages when their religious rights are violated. It will be the second time the Court considers the prisoner section of the law. (In 2005, it unanimously upheld it as constitutional.)

RLUIPA could be sapped of its strength if the Court rules that prisoners cannot sue for damages and that states can invoke sovereign immunity, the National Association of Evangelicals warned in an amicus brief.

"If damages are not available to religious institutions in land-use cases under RLUIPA, cities and counties may easily manipulate the legal system to financially eliminate religious institutions from the city or county limits," wrote Kelly Shackelford, president of Liberty Institute.

Pat Nolan, vice president of Prison Fellowship, said that while he cannot point to growth in prisoners' religious devotion since RLUIPA, the law gives ministries greater access to evangelism and discipleship. "It gives us a seat at the table to discuss ways to meet the legitimate security concerns without interfering with religious practices." ➤

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Do Christians have a special responsibility to have children?

YES

"There is a scriptural mandate for it. In fact, I would say this: The only instance in which Christians should not seek the gift of children would be in extraordinary ministry circumstances where perhaps having children would be ill advised or dangerous."

DANIEL AKIN,
president, Southeastern
Baptist Theological
Seminary

"Children are a blessing from the Lord, and we should be promoting a culture of life in our nation. There are a lot of decisions to be made within individual families that churches have to look at individually, but it's certainly pretty clear in the Bible—celebrate life."

AARON MERCER,
project director, National
Association of Evangelicals
Generation Forum

"God calls us to be fruitful and multiply; the more important question is, as parents, especially disciples of Christ called to care and tend his garden, do we raise our children to be good stewards of the earth, to use the resources that God gave us wisely?"

MITCH HESCOX,
president and CEO,
Evangelical Environmental
Network

"If there's something important going on in fertility now, it's the fact that European nations are far below replacement fertility. I don't know whether Christians have a duty to be fertile, but I certainly do not see that they have a Christian duty to not have children."

RODNEY STARK,
professor of social sciences,
Baylor University

"Not every individual has the responsibility to reproduce, because God hasn't given every individual the capacity to reproduce, or the desire. We can express fruitfulness through responsibility, care, and stewardship for all of creation, which includes biological children."

JENELL WILLIAMS PARIS,
professor of anthropology,
Messiah College

"We tend to think Christians need to have children to bring more Christians into the world. But it may not be the best way to love our neighbor. Population and resource issues may mean the best way to love all children will be to limit our family size."

**LISA GRAHAM
MCMINN**,
professor of sociology,
George Fox University

NO

Hostile Climate: Christian Legal Society alleges that Hastings College of the Law discriminates against faith-based groups on campus.



HIGHER EDUCATION

'All Comers' Only

Supreme Court says Christian Legal Society chapter must allow leaders who disagree with its statement of faith. By Ted Olsen and Trevor Persaud

In a 5–4 decision on the last day of its term this year, the Supreme Court said that a California law school can require a Christian group to open its leadership positions to all students, including those who disagree with the group's statement of faith.

The majority opinion, issued by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, said that Hastings College of the Law's "all comers" policy, which required all registered groups to open all positions to all students, "is a reasonable, viewpoint-neutral condition on access to the student-organization forum." The Christian Legal Society (CLS)

chapter at the University of California school, Ginsburg wrote, "seeks not parity with other organizations, but a preferential exemption from Hastings' policy."

"Hastings, caught in the crossfire between a group's desire to exclude and students' demand for equal access, may reasonably draw a line in the sand permitting all organizations to express what they wish but no group to discriminate in membership."

However, Ginsburg gave some hope to CLS, which had argued that Hastings officials had selectively enforced its all comers policy, allowing organizations like the Latino group La Raza, but not CLS, to restrict their membership. Noting that lower courts had not addressed the accusation of selective enforcement (and that the Supreme Court "is not the proper forum to air the issue in the first instance"), Ginsburg said the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals could consider the argument.

CLS attorney Michael W. McConnell, a prominent constitutional law attorney and director of the Stanford Constitutional Law Center, said the organization will press the point at the Ninth Circuit. "We believe we will ultimately prevail in this case," he said. "The record will show that Hastings Law School applied its policy in a discriminatory way. . . . The Supreme Court did not rule that public universities can apply different rules to religious groups than they apply to political, cultural, or other student groups."

CLS may face an uphill battle against the Ninth Circuit; its March 2009 decision against the group was two sentences long.

But McConnell said CLS's argument is strengthened, ironically, by Justice Anthony Kennedy's concurring opinion. In it, Kennedy said that CLS would have a substantial case "if it were shown that the policy was either designed or used to infiltrate the group or challenge its leadership in order to stifle its views."

"In other words, if any hostile students actually take advantage of the policy," McConnell said, "it would become unconstitutional."

A UNIQUE POLICY?

In his dissent, Justice Samuel Alito castigated the majority opinion as political correctness run amok.

“The proudest boast of our free speech jurisprudence is that we protect the freedom to express ‘the thought that we hate,’” he wrote. “Today’s decision rests on a very different principle: no freedom for expression that offends prevailing standards of political correctness in our country’s institutions of higher learning. . . . Brushing aside inconvenient precedent, the Court arms public educational institutions with a handy weapon for suppressing the speech of unpopular groups—groups to which, as Hastings

association or organization and thereby have not only common reinforcement among themselves but also have a greater voice because they’re speaking as a united group.”

Timothy Belz, who wrote the friend of the court brief with Esbeck, agreed that few schools will follow Hastings’s lead. “Even Justice Ginsburg said that just because it was constitutional didn’t mean it was advisable,” he said. “A lot of universities are not going to find that this is an advisable policy, where you can force the

“The ruling today by the majority of the Supreme Court means that associational freedoms for all groups are diminished today. That includes groups that might celebrate the particular result here,” he said. “The First Amendment is of less value to all of us.”

Religious ministries far beyond those that meet at public colleges and universities watched the case closely. World Vision U.S., for example, had argued in a friend of the court brief that a ruling against CLS could dramatically change the debate over



‘I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that today’s decision is a serious setback for freedom of expression in this country.’ ~ Justice Samuel Alito

candidly puts it, these institutions ‘do not wish to . . . lend their name[s].’ . . . I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that today’s decision is a serious setback for freedom of expression in this country.”

But Kim Colby, senior counsel at the CLS Center for Law and Religious Freedom, said in a written statement that the ruling will have little immediate impact on other CLS chapters or other Christian groups at public schools.

“We are not aware of any other public university that has the exact same policy as Hastings,” Colby said.

And it’s unlikely that many state colleges and universities will adopt such an all comers policy in the future, said Carl Esbeck, a constitutional law professor at the University of Missouri who filed a friend of the court brief in the case for the National Association of Evangelicals, Evangelicals for Social Action, and leaders of the Evangelical Theological Society.

“It’s unlikely, because an all comers policy by and large defeats the purpose for which state universities allow student organizations to be created and recognized by the educational institution,” he told *Christianity Today*: “namely, that like-minded people can band together in an

Young Democrats to elect a Republican, or a lesbian group to elect a straight male as [its] president. It’s a silly rule.”

CLS and its defenders say the all comers rule lets students organize to take over the leadership of groups they don’t like. That has already happened at Central Michigan University and elsewhere, said David French, senior counsel at the Alliance Defense Fund and director of its Center for Academic Freedom. It’s a strong possibility at any school with a policy like Hastings’s, he said in a blog post.

“By emphasizing the value of dissent within groups, the Court ignores the fundamental reality of an all comers policy: Distinct student organizations exist at the whim of the majority,” French wrote. “If ‘all comers’ can join, then the majority can override the speech of any student group. Thus, the true marketplace of ideas exists by the permission (or, more likely, apathy) of the majority. The potential for minority or disfavored groups at schools with an all comers policy to self-censor to avoid controversy—and potential hostile takeovers—is high.”

But even if Hastings remains the only institution with such a policy, the Court decision is a blow, Esbeck said.

hiring at faith-based institutions. “How this court characterizes the religious associational policies and rights of religious organizations . . . will likely establish the framework for future deliberations within all branches of government on questions of religious hiring,” the group said.

But World Vision said the Court decision, “while disappointing, does not represent an erosion of authority regarding religious hiring rights,” because the ruling focused on the case’s higher education context.

“For the setting of a public university, the Court ruled that the government’s interest in promoting access to campus activities by all students outweighed the right of a religious student group to express its religious beliefs through its selection of leaders,” the organization’s press release said. “As a result, this decision does not have any direct impact on the rights of private, faith-based organizations to hire people of the same religion or to receive federal funds to deliver their social services.”

‘A CONFIDENT PLURALISM’

Nevertheless, the majority opinion and concurring opinions from Justices Kennedy and John Paul Stevens often used

harsh language to criticize the statement of faith and sexual morality standards that CLS requires its members to abide by—and such statements of faith and conduct in general. That language is already having implications for other cases unrelated to higher education.

Ginsburg suggested she thought the CLS statement was very exclusive when she wrote, “The First Amendment shields CLS against state prohibition of the organization’s expressive activity, however exclusionary that activity may be. But CLS enjoys no constitutional right to state subvention of its selectivity.”

Kennedy was less obscure. “The era of loyalty oaths is behind us,” he wrote in his concurring opinion. “A school quite properly may conclude that allowing an oath or belief-affirming requirement, or an outside conduct requirement, could be divisive for student relations and inconsistent with the basic concept that a view’s validity should be tested through free and open discussion. The school’s policy therefore represents a permissible effort to preserve the value of its forum.”

The harshest criticism came from Stevens, who compared CLS’s requirements—which include a bar against “unrepentant homosexual conduct”—with groups that “may exclude or mistreat Jews, blacks, and women—or those who do not share their contempt for Jews, blacks, and women. A free society must tolerate such groups. It need not subsidize them, give them its official imprimatur, or grant them equal access to law school facilities.”

But CLS’s rules “are not manifestations of ‘contempt,’” Alito responded in his dissent. “Nor do they thwart the objectives that Hastings endorses. Our country as a whole, no less than the Hastings College of [the] Law, values tolerance, cooperation, learning, and the amicable resolution of conflicts. But we seek to achieve those goals through a confident pluralism that conduces to civil peace and advances democratic consensus building, not by abridging First Amendment rights.”

NO MORE ‘LOVE THE SINNER’?

The day after the Supreme Court’s decision, lawyers for opponents of California’s Proposition 8, which bars same-sex

marriage in the state, filed a letter with the judge considering whether that law is constitutional.

The majority opinion in the CLS case, Theodore Boutsos noted, rejected a distinction between homosexual behavior and homosexual identity.

“CLS contends that it does not exclude individuals because of sexual orientation, but rather on the basis of a conjunction of conduct and the belief that the conduct is not wrong,” Ginsburg wrote. “Our decisions have declined to distinguish between status and conduct in this context.”

That note potentially changes the rules in a host of cases in which Christian groups opposed to homosexual behavior have claimed they do not discriminate against “sexual orientation” in proscribing sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman. The groups say that barring gay sex is not a ban on those who have homosexual attractions.

Making those distinctions “would impose a daunting labor” on those policing nondiscrimination policies, Ginsburg

‘The era of loyalty oaths is behind us.’

~ Justice Anthony Kennedy, on faith statements

wrote. “If a hypothetical Male-Superiority Club barred a female student from running for its presidency, for example, how could the law school tell whether the group rejected her bid because of her sex or because, by seeking to lead the club, she manifested a lack of belief in its fundamental philosophy?”

However, the Court rejected an opportunity that would have more dramatically strengthened efforts to bar limits on homosexual sex. At issue is the complicated fight over what Hastings College of the Law’s policies really are. CLS said the group was initially denied recognition in 2004 not because of the school’s all comers policy, but because of a more specific written

policy barring all activities that “discriminate unlawfully on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, disability, age, sex, or sexual orientation.” The policy’s sexual orientation clause, Alito and the other dissenters said, would constitute unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination against religious groups.

Stevens, meanwhile, offered a concurring opinion defending as constitutional both the all comers policy and the nondiscrimination policy, which he said “does not regulate expression or belief at all.” But none of the justices who signed on to the majority opinion were willing to join him in that view, and the decision was one of Stevens’s last before retiring from the Court that day.

Hastings’s CLS chapter says it has been unable to meet on campus as an unofficial group despite the promises of the law school, and that “nonrecognition has nearly destroyed” it. But if it were to decide to re-affiliate as a registered student organization, it would face still more rules—this time perhaps more in its favor.



As the case headed to the Supreme Court, Hastings officials announced a third policy (though they say it was active all along): While groups must allow all comers as members and leaders, it can also enforce rules unrelated to “status or beliefs” such as attendance, dues, or even “academic and writing competitions.”

“Could CLS base membership on a competitive test of religious orthodoxy?” CLS’s attorneys asked rhetorically in a brief before oral arguments. Perhaps not. But a Bible quiz might be allowed. ➤

Ted Olsen is CT’s managing editor of news and online journalism. **Trevor Persaud** is CT’s editorial resident.



Why Women Want Moore

Homespun, savvy, and with a relentless focus on Jesus, **Beth Moore** has become the most popular Bible teacher in America.
By Sarah Pulliam Bailey

AS BETH MOORE WALKS onto the convention center stage, the crowd erupts into screams and cheers. Several snap pictures with their cameras and cell phones. It's the largest crowd the Springfield, Illinois, venue has hosted, topping Elton John's appearance over a decade ago. More than 8,000 women, from teenagers to senior citizens, have traveled from 30 states and shelled out \$60 each to watch Moore open her Bible live and in person.

"Anybody just need a fresh dose of Jesus?" Moore yells. The crowd roars back.

Over 658,000 women have attended Moore's Living Proof Live conferences, and millions more have read her books. Her most recent, *So Long, Insecurity: You've Been a Bad Friend to Us*, reached the number two slot on *The New York Times* advice bestseller list shortly after its February release. Meanwhile, women in churches of all denominational stripes are discussing Scripture together using video clips of Moore's teaching as study guides.

Her stories about her big hair and self-tanner keep her audience in stitches—and also reveal her unmistakable rootedness in Southern Baptist culture. But her call to study the Bible seriously, as well as dramatic stories from her own life—sexual abuse as a child, a recent hysterectomy, giving her adopted son back to his birth mother—have earned Moore a following well beyond both Baptist and Southern communities.

"Baptists tend to be in silos and tend not to overlap with other denominations, but Moore is able to cross over to different pockets of evangelicalism," says Michael Lindsay, a sociologist at Rice University in Houston. "She has a tremendous appeal in that she has this homespun sensibility, yet there's a polished, savvy teaching style."

RICH KALONICK



AT HOME IN HOUSTON

In recent years, Moore has spoken not just on the Bible but also on psychological issues like addiction and depression. At her ministry's headquarters in the wooded suburbs of Houston, Moore explains why her latest campaign focuses on insecurity in Christian women.

"I'm telling you, it is the number one issue I see in us right now," she says, her large eyes locked on mine. "My very addictive personality and all sorts of strongholds are a thing of the past for me. Yet at the root of every single one of those issues was insecurity, something I had battled since childhood."

***'I have to have a daily, vibrant relationship with Jesus in order to survive that process toward healing.'* ~ Beth Moore**

Amazon.com, the *Times* bestseller list, and others put many of her books in the self-help category, but Moore, 53, says she's just trying to reflect the Bible's attention to the whole human self, psychological issues and all.

"We keep compartmentalizing when the whole spirit, soul, and body belong to the Lord," she says with her hand on her Bible. "He is the soul-ologist."

For example, Moore says, her own insecurity largely stemmed from the sexual abuse she experienced as a child.

"Any time something huge like that has happened to you, there really is not a lot of gray for people like us," Moore says. "I have to have a daily, vibrant relationship with Jesus in order to survive that process toward healing."

The abuse, which Moore references regularly in her work, came from outside the immediate family, but Moore is as deliberately nebulous about describing it in interviews as she is in books and videos.

"I have found, especially in the area of sexual abuse, details do not really bless and edify. I try as hard as I know how to keep my reader relating on a broad level so I don't lead her someplace where she thinks that's the only thing that could cause insecurity," Moore tells *Christianity Today*. "I also owe my family some safety and my extended family some safety, so I am careful to stay

vague." (Her office has said that the family did not turn the offender over to police.)

Her efforts to relate on a broad level have worked dramatically, says Mary McCormack, who has led several Beth Moore Bible studies as the women's ministry director at Westerly Road Church in Princeton, New Jersey.

"She's authentic and unpretentious, and women sense that right away. She doesn't talk down or act as if she has things all together," McCormack says. "She is very up-front with her past abuse, and many women feel uniquely understood by her and are drawn to how God healed her."

CLOSELY GUARDED

When I arrived at Moore's ministry headquarters, I was ushered into a conference room

filled with donuts and candles. Pillows were scattered on the ground, and a tissue box and Tootsie Rolls sat on top of a small refrigerator in the corner in the room where Moore led some of her focus groups for *So Long, Insecurity*.

It was not easy to get there. Just as Moore's stories are at once personal and private, Moore in person is intensely friendly—and closely protected by assistants who allow very few media interviews. After several interview requests from CT, her assistants allocated one hour to discuss her latest book and ask a few questions about her personal life. Each question had to be submitted and approved beforehand, I was told, or Moore would not do the interview. Follow-up interview requests were declined. I was permitted to see the ground level of her ministry, where workers package and ship study materials. But Moore's third-floor office, where she writes in the company of her dog, was off limits.

Living Proof Ministries is relatively small compared with the ministries of women of similar notoriety. Its total revenue in 2008, \$3.8 million, is dwarfed by Joyce Meyer Ministries' (\$112 million) and Kay Arthur's Precept Ministries' (\$12.9 million) in the same year. (Meyer's ministry says its top priorities are evangelism and social outreach; Arthur's ministry mainly supplies resources for women to study the Bible inductively on their own; Moore's ministry is grounded in her unique gift of teaching.) Living Proof employs only 16 people, including Moore's two daughters and son-in-law.

"I think she does a really good job of sharing but not sharing too much," Amanda Jones, 30, says of her mother. "There have been a few times where we thought, *Oh we shared a little*



Teaching with Passion: Moore's animated delivery comes through loud and clear at a recent Passion Conference.

too much there, so we're going to try to reel it back in." Jones's own posts on the Living Proof blog, which sometimes include pictures of her two children, are vetted by ministry staff.

Her mother's openness about her struggles—and those of her family—is what makes her appealing to so many women, Jones says. And such references—like Moore discussing in 2001's *Feathers from My Nest* her daughter Melissa's eating disorder—are not causes for concern, says Jones. "I don't ever sit there and shake and feel afraid that she's going to share something crazy about our family that I don't want anyone to know," she says. "I feel comfortable with her judgment on what to share and what to keep private."

Moore describes herself as "fiercely and unapologetically private" about the topic of adopting a son for seven years and then returning him to his birth mother. Other than sharing his name (Michael), she offers few details in her talks, books, and interviews, other than to say that the boy had developed "alarming behaviors" and that his birth mother had "resurfaced, strongly desiring to reclaim her son" (*Things Pondered*). "I find myself wanting to say to my reader, who has become like a friend through the years, 'May I share this without being expected to share much more?'" she wrote in *Feathers from My Nest*. She called the experience "complicated," but says she references the story in her public ministry because other women may have had similar experiences that left them brokenhearted.

"It was an immensely painful time in my life, but if on the other side of it, God's Word and his Spirit equip me to be able to turn around and minister to a woman, then it's of value," Moore tells CT. "We all deal with feelings of failure. It ranks right up there."

In short, for Moore privacy is as important to authenticity as honesty is. Being the same person onstage and at home means acknowledging the existence and general shape of her struggles—but she works to leave her fans at the door of her home. It's one of the key lessons she practices with husband Keith Moore, who recently retired from the home-service business he owned with his father.

"Authenticity is really, really high on Keith's list, and he has a very low tolerance for bull," she says. "I could not stomach the thought of going out there and serving fake and not having the reality and the authenticity of a real life at home."

Keith, whom Moore married in 1978 after they graduated from Texas State University–San Marcos, does not usually travel with Moore on speaking engagements. But she insists on maintaining a regular schedule, traveling every other Friday night and coming home the next night.

"We walk the dogs together and eat out together all the time and lie on the floor with pillows and watch TV," Moore says. "My man demanded attention and he got it, and my man demanded a normal home life and he got it."

Several people who have worked closely with Moore say she remains the same person she is onstage, whether on the road or at First Baptist of Houston, where she leads a

Tuesday night Bible study.

"The intensity does settle, but she's that same full-of-life person all the time," says Travis Cottrell, who leads the music at Living Proof conferences. "She walks through heartache and sickness, and she is completely vulnerable and transparent."

THINKING PINK

Warming up the crowd in Springfield, Moore walks through the audience, picking up a little boy, who gives her a frightened look. "He has never seen a nose this big," she says in a thick Texas accent, drawing laughter.

Before she begins, she addresses the few men in the crowd. A Southern Baptist, Moore emphasizes that her ministry is intended for women.

"The gentlemen who had such courage to come into this place tonight, into this estrogen fest if you will ever find one in your entire life: we are so blessed to have you," Moore says. "I do not desire to have any kind of authority over you."

She spends the first 15 minutes setting the stage for her Bible study, giving anecdotes from her childhood. She was born on an Army base in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and raised in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, where her father managed the local movie theater. She tells the crowd about her love for movies, how she has seen *Remember the Titans* at least 40 times.

Getting serious, she transitions into her Bible lesson on John the Baptist, asking the women to turn in their Bibles with her as she flips through the pages with her French-tipped fingernails.

Most of the women keep their pens in

hand to take notes on the pink conference pamphlets, an example of how Moore's ministry expressly targets women. She tells the audience about how she has prayed for a "loved one" to recover from alcoholism.

"God manipulates things that are going on in my life so I will share them with you, because he knows there will be a corporate gathering of people who need to hear the same thing," Moore says. "I beg you in Jesus' name, if you have prayed and you have prayed earnestly, do not give up."

A PATH TOWARD MINISTRY

"I didn't have a fireworks moment for my salvation," Moore tells *CT*. "I had a falling in love with Jesus in Sunday school when I was a very young child." But she did have an altar call moment. In high school, Moore had planned to become a lawyer, but one summer while leading a group of sixth-grade girls at camp, she received what she considers a call from God. "I had no words, nothing but a sense," she says. "God took a very troubled young woman and made sure that she understood."

She walked down the aisle of her church, committing herself to ministry.

"I'm not a big mystical person. The reason I don't share this very often is because callings come in all sorts of ways," Moore tells *CT*. "All of us are called, and I don't want people to think it's supposed to feel like that."

In 1982, she joined First Baptist and began teaching aerobics classes at the church. She also attended a local Bible class led by businessman Buddy Walters, and began to research the Bible to find her own insights. The Bible study she launched in First Baptist's chapel eventually moved to the 4,000-seat sanctuary, where some 2,000 attended weekly. In 1994, a friend wrote a check to "Living Proof Ministries." Moore took it to the bank and began running the nonprofit. Soon thereafter, she became the cornerstone author for the Southern Baptist Convention's LifeWay Christian Resources.

"Beth runs on a lot of adrenaline—she would probably say she runs on Starbucks. She's wound up tight, all to the glory of God," says James Robison, who hosts Moore on his *Life Today* broadcast every Wednesday. "There's no end to how far she can take her teaching."

VIDEO VENUES

If you search "Beth Moore" in Google News, you are less likely to find interviews and profiles

than dozens of listings for Bible studies at local churches. Over the years, Moore has developed various video curricula, such as ones on her most popular study, *Breaking Free* and the Book of Daniel. The kits, which include DVDs and a leader's guide, run at around \$200.

The women at Valley Baptist Church met for eight weeks earlier in 2010 in the church's sanctuary in Appleton, Wisconsin, armed with cups of coffee, leather-bound Bibles, and their marked-up studies on the Book of Esther. In the study, Moore refers to verses from the Bible and asks questions about her readers' personal lives.

"What differences has Jesus made in your life that are outward signs of your new identity as a member of the royal priesthood?" the leader, Jan Fiedler, asks the 15 women gathered, reading through the study questions.

"During our four miscarriages, we had a peace about it," Karridi Kelly says, holding a baby on her shoulder. "The Lord takes things that are bad and uses them for good."

An hour-long video of Moore follows the discussion, and the women laugh and murmur as Moore talks about cooking dinner, sewing a button, and coloring her own hair.

Of course, not every woman connects with Moore. Many find it difficult to get used to Moore's Southern personality or find her feminine approach off-putting.

"I haven't read anything I thought was heretical, but I've steered away from her studies more because of my personality," says Michelle Novenson, who recently participated in the *Stepping Up* Bible study at Westerly Road Church. "She weaves away from the text a little too much for me, and she's a little too 'just for women.'"

But in Alabama, it's difficult to avoid Moore, says Leslie Wiggins, who has completed eight of Moore's Bible studies, read thirteen of her books, and reviewed several of them for *Discerning Reader*, a Reformed website. Wiggins worries that women whose main engagement with Scripture is through

'God manipulates things in my life because he knows there will be a corporate gathering of people who need to hear the same thing.'

~ Beth Moore

Moore's Bible studies will give the same weight to her teachings as to the Bible itself.

"She has written in a couple of her books that God himself fed her the words as she wrote them, as though they were direct messages from him—though she will qualify that by saying that she didn't hear an audible voice," Wiggins says. "She can take one word from any verse, share something neat she discovered in a study of that word, and then make the verse say anything she wants it to say."

Nevertheless, Wiggins has some praise for Moore. "[She can] drive at women's hearts and hurts, their deepest desires for worth, love, and significance," says Wiggins, who believes Moore is increasingly becoming a role model. "She is definitely a trendsetter when it comes to the hairstyles and fashion choices of Christian women."



DAVID MOLNAR

THE EXHORTER

Moore's popularity seems to have few denominational limits, with Bible studies and consumers across the theological spectrum. Reactions, however, are mixed.

"Her enthusiasm is infectious," says Thea Leunk, who led the women at the church she pastors, Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, through Moore's *Living Beyond Yourself*, a study based on the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians.

Leunk says that Moore "does a very good job of making the Bible practical and bringing it to an every day, 'you can do this.' That's the hook that she provides to get people to study the Bible."

But Bible study is more than application, says Leunk, who found the fill-in-the-blank workbook simplistic. Moore occasionally

cites a theologian or a Greek lexical aid, but "you're not being a serious student of how it fits in the Galatian church or why Paul was writing the letter," Leunk says. Still, she acknowledges, Moore's approach is not unusual among popular Bible teachers.

"A lot of people are looking for a Bible study where they can say, 'I learned something about myself, I learned how to deal with my mother-in-law,'" Leunk says. "There's definitely this pop-psychology aspect to what she does that's found in evangelical Christianity."

Such criticism misunderstands the movement and Moore, says Joe Stowell, the former president of Moody Bible Institute and now the president of Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids. He believes Moore's approach is not mere trendy psychology.

"Whatever she says about insecurity or depression or self-pity all has biblical basis," Stowell says. "She meets me at the point of my struggle. She leads me to Scripture and to Christ. There's a very special balance that God has given her."

In the evangelical spectrum, Stowell says, if Billy Graham functions as an evangelist, Rick Warren as a pastor, and John Piper as a teacher, then Moore serves as an exhorter.

"An exhorter is calling you enthusiastically to grow with Jesus," he says. "If you look at the life of Jesus, he calmed the seas before he taught his disciples about faith. He healed the lame, and then he taught them about the power of God." 

Sarah Pulliam Bailey is online editor for *Christianity Today*.



Biblicism, Mysticism, and Moore: Beth Moore's teachings are rooted in Scripture, though she's primarily self-taught.

First Came the Bible

Four themes that characterize Beth Moore's teaching. By Halee Gray Scott

I WASN'T FAR ALONG in my Christian journey when I first came across the works of Beth Moore. When I completed a Beth Moore Bible study at age 21, I was no more than two months into my new faith, a former atheist with a long history of living however I pleased. Moore's study had me searching the Scriptures at least five times a week. Her enthusiasm for God's Word convinced me that the seemingly stiff, impenetrable book had legs—that its insights could actually make a difference in my everyday life.

In 1984, Moore began teaching an aerobics and Bible study class for women. Aerobics was eventually dropped, and women began asking her for homework "like all the other classes have." In response to their request, Moore wrote what would later become her first published Bible study, *A Woman's Heart, God's Dwelling Place*, which focuses on the construction of the Old Testament tabernacle.

Since then, Moore has become a prolific writer, composing more than 20 best-selling books and Bible studies ranging from profiles of heroic biblical figures to topical studies such as *Breaking Free*, *Believing God*, *Living Beyond Yourself*, and *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things*. In addition to her Bible studies, Moore has written poetry and about

topics such as motherhood, insecurity, how to pray God's Word, and finding freedom from oppressive situations.

Four fundamental themes are threaded throughout Moore's various writing genres: biblicism, spiritual warfare, mysticism, and, more recently, popular psychology.

BIBLICISM

Moore is truly a Bible teacher. Her teaching is rooted in her strong affinity for Scripture. She does not show much interest in theology or tradition, distrusting the way the academy has, at times, handled the Bible. "Godless philosophies have not been my temptation," Moore comments. "In my life experience, the most dangerously influential opinions have been those held by intellectuals and scholars who profess Christianity but deny the veracity and present power of Scripture." Although Moore believes that seminaries are necessary despite the "stunning arrogance" and "theological snobbery" that reside in them, she argues, "Psalm 131 reminds us that [the Scriptures] are not primarily for seminaries, dissertations, and theological treatments. They are primarily for everyday living on the third rock from the sun."

Moore is primarily self-taught. She uses commentaries and concordances when writing her studies, but she relies primarily on her own intuition when interpreting and applying Scripture. In *Believing God*, she writes, "In

my personal research, I get a little worried when I can't get Scripture to teach Scripture. If I can find no other scriptural back-up, I tend to think I am better off accepting by faith what I cannot explain by reason and leaving it to God. I do not pretend to understand everything in the Bible, but many precepts are affirmed often enough to warrant deep roots in our belief systems."

Moore's strict adherence to biblicism echoes the question Tertullian posed two centuries after the birth of Christ: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What communion is there between the academy and the church?" Because of this, Moore is not able to draw, as much as she might, on the solid biblical and theological scholarship that emanates from trustworthy seminaries and universities, teaching that actually guards us against heresy and reminds us of the hard lessons of history. Then again, in a culture of disbelief, in a time when many seminaries and universities are indeed questioning the authority, infallibility, and inspiration of the Bible, Moore's passionate defense of God's Word is surely compelling.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The publication of *Breaking Free* marked a critical change in the direction of Moore's teaching. In it she turned from teaching traditional Bible study classes to teaching believers how to find release from any bondage or "captivity that hinders the abundant and effective Spirit-filled life God planned for him or her." While she continues to write topical studies and profiles of biblical figures, generational strongholds and bondage are prominent themes in her work, particularly in *Breaking Free*, *Praying God's Word*, and *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things*.

Moore tends to portray humans as victims of sin either through generational strongholds, bondage from past sins, or increasing oppression by Satanic influences. Her primary claim in *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things* is that demonic assault on Christians has reached "a whole 'new' level" because we are in the last days and "must prepare ourselves to deal with the assault that is here and the one that is coming." According to Moore, "ignorance, spiritual passion that exceeds spiritual knowledge, a lack of discernment, and a lack of self-discernment" all lead Christians to sin

or to seasons of Satanic oppression.

Moore's strong emphasis on spiritual warfare sometimes threatens to eclipse the fullness of human fallenness: we are indeed victims trapped in sin, but we are also responsible for our moral choices. Still, plenty in her writings highlights the importance of confession of sin, and Scripture makes clear that spiritual warfare is a danger for Christians. And, as the popularity of Moore's teaching suggests, it is still something Christians wrestle with.

MYSTICISM

In contrast with Moore's biblicism is her mysticism. By this I don't mean medieval mysticism or new age mysticism, but that which is more broadly understood as faith that includes direct encounters with God. Often, in her teaching and writings, Moore claims that God directly communicates with her, such as when she says in the *Believing God*

that a lack of such experiences means something is wrong. And, as with many Bible teachers, it is often hard to discern if something is direct communication from God or simply Moore's thoughts on the matter. But no doubt Moore has a rich and personal relationship with God, and such comments do have a way of modeling what is in fact available to all of us in Christ.

POPULAR PSYCHOLOGY

A more recent turn in Moore's writing is toward popular psychology, particularly in *Get Out of That Pit* and *So Long, Insecurity*. Moore's works have always been therapeutic in that she demonstrates a consistent concern for freedom and healing in her own life and the lives of her readers. But in these recent books, Moore focuses more on popular psychology and personal experience than on the Scriptures.

Writers, teachers, and leaders share an understanding that we write, teach, and lead from who we are, so Moore's trend toward popular psychology is understandable given her own story.

video, "And this came as a direct revelation of the Spirit, because this would never have come to me. I know God spoke this over me as he began turning through a concordance in my mind and I started thinking about one Scripture after another." In almost every book or Bible study, Moore relates experiences of direct revelation from God or conversations with God.

Moore has been criticized for her involvement in a video titled *Be Still*, which describes the importance of contemplative prayer in the believer's life. According to the teachers in the video, contemplative prayer is slowing down and silencing yourself in the midst of a busy and noisy culture to not only talk to God but listen to him as well. Critics argue that contemplative prayer is rooted in Eastern mysticism and thus not a practice that Christians should engage in. This criticism is part of a larger debate about the nature and necessity of spiritual formation in light of Scripture's sufficiency for knowing and understanding God.

Naturally, repeated references to direct access to God can backfire. Readers may believe that direct revelation is normative,

Although Moore claims *Get Out of That Pit* is a biblical analysis of the ways people get into "pits" and the ways they can get out, the book is primarily grounded in human experience, though reinforced with an initial word study and peppered with proof-texts.

"Often times," writes Moore, "the precepts I feel the most urgency to teach are those lessons I learned the hard way." *Insecurity* has always been a looming issue throughout her life. In *So Long, Insecurity*, Moore claims that she completed "research" for the book, but the book is mainly composed of her own insights and anecdotes from friends and those who write to her on her blog. The first half of the book is devoted to seven factors that contribute to the insecurity of "the whole mess of us born with a pair of X chromosomes," while the remainder of the book is devoted to finding security in God. To be fair, this book includes a lot of wisdom, but it is long on anecdotes and short on theology and biblical analysis.

Writers, teachers, and leaders share an understanding that we write, teach, and lead from who we are. In this way, Moore's trend

toward popular psychology is understandable given her own story. Throughout her works, Moore is transparent about several traumatic experiences early in her life. She also affirms that she has found a great deal of freedom and healing. So it's not surprising that these experiences shape Moore's approach to the Scriptures and spiritual life in general, and may explain Moore's move toward psychological themes.

LEADER IN BIBLICAL LITERACY

One hopes that Moore's foray into psychology is just that, a foray. Many professed biblical teachers rely more on popular psychology than on sound biblical analysis, but few can mine the riches of Scripture and apply them to everyday life with the giftedness that Moore has demonstrated over the past 26 years.

Early in her career, Moore said she believed her calling was to enhance the church's biblical literacy, specifically "guiding believers to live and to love God's Word." For many years, Moore remained focused and committed to that calling, and she led a well-ordered, disciplined life in order to do so.

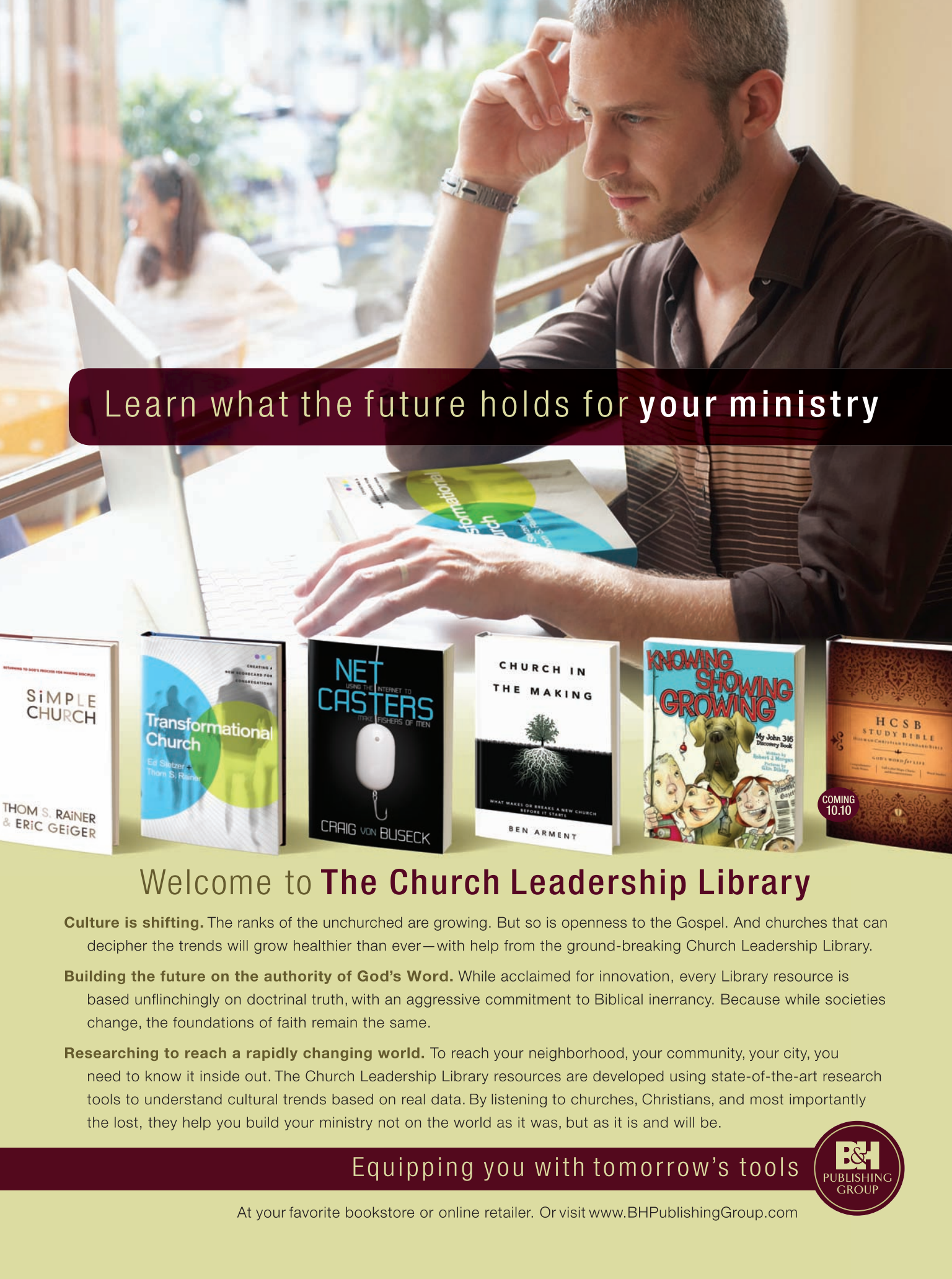
Moore has not only provided a level of biblical literacy for women in a time and place when it is scarce. She also continues to urge women to dig deeply into their Bibles every day, as she did for me as a young believer. She urges women to do their own research, and she has provided opportunities for women to fellowship with one another as they grow in God's Word.

Moore displays a humble heart. She is willing and eager to learn and admit where she errs. She avoids the prosperity gospel and, unlike many popular teachers, is honest about the presence of suffering in the Christian life.

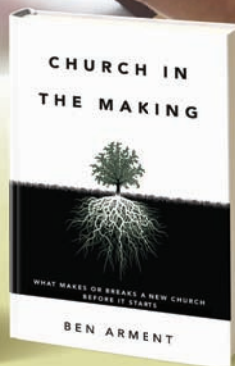
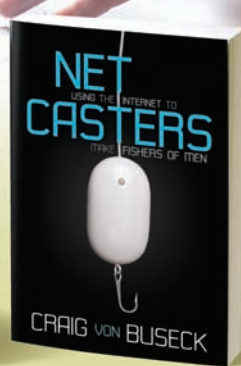
We would do well in our churches to follow her lead, to allow and give women more opportunities to find their callings as teachers of God's Word, and, as Moore writes, to "persist in them." 

Halee Gray Scott is a writer and a faculty member at Wesley Seminary and A. W. Tozer Theological Seminary. She is a Ph.D. candidate at Talbot School of Theology, where her research interests include leadership development and spiritual formation.

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for "What Beth Moore Can Teach Us about Bible Study," a Bible study based on this article.



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To Serve Is to Suffer

If the apostle Paul knew fatigue, anger,
and anxiety in his ministry, what makes
us think we can avoid them in ours?

By Ajith Fernando

North American Christians have paid special attention to the suffering of Christians in the Global South ever since 1996, when a coalition of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish activists began raising awareness about the persecution of Christians outside the West. When Christians, especially in the West, have shown concern for the persecution of majority-world believers, they have often approached it through the lens of human rights. In this installment of the Global Conversation, Sri Lankan pastor and evangelist Ajith Fernando helps us focus on suffering as an essential part of Christian discipleship, but especially for those called to be church leaders.

I WRITE THIS shortly after returning from a week of teaching pastors in the deep south of Sri Lanka. These pastors' experience shows that when people pioneer in unreached areas, they usually wait 10 to 15 years before seeing significant fruit and reduced hostility. In the early years, they are assaulted and accused falsely; stones are thrown onto their roofs; their children are given a hard time in school; and they see few genuine conversions. Many pioneers give up after a few years. But those who persevere bear much eternal fruit. I am humbled and ashamed of the way I complain about problems that are minute compared to theirs.

When I return from ministry in the West, my feelings are very different. I have been able to "use my gifts" and spend most of my time doing things I like. But when I resume being a leader in Sri Lanka's less-efficient culture, frustration hits me. The transition from being a speaker in the West to being a leader in Sri Lanka is difficult. As a leader, I am the bond-servant (*doulos*) of the people I lead (2 Cor. 4:5). This means that my schedule is shaped more by their needs than by mine.

Vocational fulfillment in the kingdom of God has a distinct character, different from vocational fulfillment in society. Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34, ESV, used throughout). If we are doing God's will, we are happy and fulfilled. But for Jesus, and

Illustration by Michael Mullan

for us, doing God's will includes the Cross. The Cross must be an essential element in our definition of vocational fulfillment.

Young Christian workers who come back to Sri Lanka after studying in the West struggle with this. They are highly qualified, but our poor nation cannot afford to give them the recognition they think their qualifications deserve. They cannot use their gifts to the fullest because we cannot afford pure specialists. They struggle with frustration. Some end up leaving the country after a few years. Some start their own organizations so as to fulfill their "vision." Others become consultants, giving expert training and advice in their specialized field. Others pay the price of identifying with our people and ultimately have a deep impact on the nation.

I try to tell these students that their frustration could be the means to developing penetrating insight. I explain that people like John Calvin and Martin Luther had a dizzying variety of responsibilities, so that they could only use their gifts in the fog of fatigue. Yet the fruits of their labor as leaders and writers still bless the church.

FRUSTRATION AND FULFILLMENT

Paul's theology emphasized the need to endure frustration patiently as we live in a fallen world awaiting the redemption of creation. Paul said that we groan because of this frustration (Rom. 8:18–27). I believe we fail to include this frustration in our understanding of vocational fulfillment. A church that has a wrong understanding of fulfillment for its workers will certainly become sick. This may be one reason why the church contains so much shallowness. We have measured success by the standards of the world and fail to challenge the world with the radically different biblical way to fulfillment.

The contemporary emphasis on efficiency and measurable results makes frustration even harder to endure. In the past four centuries, industrial and technological development in the West made efficiency and productivity top values. With rapid economic development, things once considered luxuries became not only necessities but also rights in the

The Cross must be an essential element in our definition of vocational fulfillment.

minds even of Christians. In this environment, the Christian idea of commitment has taken a battering.

We call our churches and Christian organizations "families," but families are very inefficient organizations. In a healthy family, everything stops when a member has big needs. We are often not willing to extend this commitment to Christian body life.

COMMITMENT AND COMMUNITY

The biblical model of community life is Jesus' command to love one another as he loved us—that is, for members to die for other members (John 15:12–13). The model of Christian leadership is that of the Good Shepherd dying for his sheep, not abandoning them when the situation gets dangerous (John 10:11–15). When God calls us to serve him, he calls us to come and die for the people we serve. We don't discard people when they have problems and cannot do their job properly. We serve them and help them come out of their problems. We don't tell people

to find another place of service when they rebel against us. We labor with them until we either come to agreement or agree to disagree.

When people leave a church because they do not fit the program, it communicates a deadly message: that our commitment is to the work and not to the person, that our unity is primarily in the work and not in Christ and the gospel. The sad result is that Christians do not have the security of a community that will stay by them no matter what happens. They become shallow individuals, never having true fellowship and moving from group to group. Churches committed to programs can grow numerically, but they don't nurture biblical Christians who understand the implications of belonging to the body of Christ.

Sticking with people is frustrating. Taking hours to listen to an angry or hurt person seems inefficient. Why should we waste time on that when professionals could do it? So people have counselors to do what friends should be doing.

Ideally, counselors help diagnose and treat difficult cases, and friends give the time that



is needed to bring healing through acceptance, comfort, and friendship. Hurt people usually hurt those who try to help them. Hurt and angry people to whom we are committed will hurt us too. Others they hurt could get angry with us because we are committed to them. But we endure the pain because Christ called us to die for our friends.

Several people have sympathized with me, saying it must be hard and frustrating to serve in a country wracked by war and hostile to evangelism. Indeed, we have suffered. A few months ago, one of our staff workers was brutally assaulted and killed. But I think the biggest pain I have experienced is the pain I have received from Youth for Christ, the organization for which I have worked for 34 years. I can also say that next to Jesus and my family, Youth for Christ has been the greatest source of joy in my life. Whether you live in the East or the West, you will suffer pain if you are committed to people. This is suffering that can be avoided. We can avoid pain by stopping the relationship or moving on to something more “fulfilling.” But what do we lose?

Some years ago I was preparing a message on commitment while traveling in the West. Within the space of a few days, three people told me how they or someone close to them had left a group or a person because of problems. One had left an unhappy marriage; another, a church; another, an organization. Each person described his leaving as a merciful release from suffering. But I could not help asking myself whether, in each of these cases, the Christian thing to do would have been to stay and suffer.

DRIVENNESS OR SERVANTHOOD?

I have a large group of people to whom I write asking for prayer when I have a need. Sometimes my need is overcoming tiredness. When I write about this, many write back saying they are praying that God would strengthen me and guide me in my scheduling. However, there are differences in the way friends from the East and some from the West respond. I get the strong feeling that many in the West think struggling with tiredness from overwork is evidence of disobedience to God. My contention is that it is wrong if one gets sick from overwork through drivenness and insecurity. But we may have to endure tiredness when we, like Paul, are servants of people.

The New Testament is clear that those who work for Christ will suffer because of their work. Tiredness, stress, and strain may be the cross God calls us to. Paul often spoke about the physical hardships his ministry brought him, including emotional strain (Gal. 4:19; 2 Cor. 11:28), anger

(2 Cor. 11:29), sleepless nights and hunger (2 Cor. 6:5), affliction and perplexity (2 Cor. 4:8), and toiling—working to the point of weariness (Col. 1:29). In statements radically countercultural in today’s “body conscious” society, he said, “Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16); and, “For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you” (2 Cor. 4:11–12). I fear that many Christians approach these texts only with an academic interest, not seriously asking

how the verses should apply in their lives.

The West, having struggled with the tyrannical rule of time, has a lot to teach the East about the need for rest. The East has something to teach the West about embracing physical problems that come from commitment to people. If you think it is wrong to suffer physically because of ministry,

then you suffer more from the problem than those who believe that suffering is an inevitable step on the path to fruitfulness and fulfillment. Since the Cross is a basic aspect of discipleship, the church must train Christian leaders to expect pain and hardship. When this perspective enters our minds, pain will not touch our joy and contentment in Christ. In 18 different New Testament passages, suffering and joy appear together. In fact, suffering is often the cause for joy (Rom. 5:3–5; Col. 1:24; James 1:2–3).

THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL

In a world where physical health, appearance, and convenience have gained almost idolatrous prominence, God may be calling Christians to demonstrate the glory of the gospel by being joyful and content while enduring pain and hardship. People who are unfulfilled after pursuing things that do not satisfy may be astonished to see Christians who are joyful and content after depriving themselves for the gospel. This may be a new way to demonstrate the glory of the gospel to this hedonistic culture.

I have a great fear for the church. The West is fast becoming an unreached region. The Bible and history show that suffering is an essential ingredient in reaching unreached people. Will the loss of a theology of suffering lead the Western church to become ineffective in evangelism? The church in the East is growing, and because of that God’s servants are suffering. Significant funding and education come to the East from the West. With funding and education comes influence. Could Westerners influence Eastern Christians to abandon the Cross by communicating that they must be doing something wrong if they suffer in this way? Christians in both the East and the West need to have a firm theology of suffering if they are to be healthy and bear fruit. ☩

Ajith Fernando has been national director of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka since 1976. With his wife, Nelun, he also serves in a church in Colombo consisting mainly of poor, urban first-generation Christians. He is the author of *The Call to Joy and Pain* (Crossway).

People who are unfulfilled after pursuing things that do not satisfy may be astonished to see Christians who are joyful after depriving themselves for the sake of the gospel.

Key Christian leaders respond to this article at ChristianityToday.com/go/conversation. Post your own comments to become part of the Global Conversation about important issues related to world evangelization in preparation for the Lausanne Movement’s Cape Town 2010 conference.

The

Sociologist

Author Robert Wuthnow stockpiled water and medicine when the swine flu threatened. The medicine came in handy. The water's still there.

Duct Tape Solution

Robert Wuthnow explains how Americans typically respond to fear.

Interview by David Neff

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM says that fear paralyzes people. And activists who preach about perils accuse Americans of being in denial. “Denial is not a river in Egypt,” declared then-Senator Al Gore in his book *Earth in the Balance*, reviving a familiar line

from Mark Twain. In a recent interview, Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow told *Christianity Today* that accusations of denial are mainly “rhetorical devices” designed to “get attention and mobilize people.”

Wuthnow’s new book, *Be Very Afraid* (Oxford University Press, 2010), examines “the cultural response to terror, pandemics, environmental devastation, nuclear annihilation, and other threats.” He surveys the history of American responses to crises beginning with the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. He concludes that Americans tend not to freeze in the face of threat, but get busy and buy duct tape.

Is your book’s title ironic?

Yes. As most everybody knows, it’s from the 1986 movie *The Fly*—“Be afraid. Be very afraid.” We have reason to fear some terrible catastrophes that might hit us, but fear has often been misunderstood and overplayed in the popular media. We don’t usually just recoil from danger. We buck up, take courage, and try to face it.

Does being afraid help society face crises?

It does. To be blasé about everything isn’t appropriate. We’re learning from neuroscience that fear does not just prompt us into fight-or-flight syndrome but also into an engaged problem-solving mode. That can be quite useful.

Even accusations of denial can make us start thinking about our moral responsibilities: Am I sitting back and not being a good citizen? Am I not protecting my family?

In the book, you say that people think the normal response to fear is to freeze up, but in American society we actually do the opposite: we get busy.

In our society, we have a roll-up-your-sleeves-and-

get-busy attitude. Much of the time, we don’t know quite what to do and we waste effort, but we do take a problem-solving approach, whether that means doing something on a small scale to protect our family or following what scientists and government officials tell us we ought to do as a society.

Back in the fifties, children learned the duck-and-cover routine in case of nuclear attack. Today people replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescents to help the environment. Are these individual actions usually on target?

A lot of the time, what we do really is helpful. But since risk is hard to calculate, we usually err, doing either too much or not enough.

For example, with the recent swine flu scare, my extended family was picking up a lot of information from the Internet and e-mails. Those sources said the new flu could really be terrible. Millions of people could die. You have to do something. So my wife and I bought Tamiflu and stockpiled extra water and food.

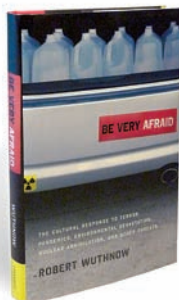
The extra water and food are still sitting there, despite the scary scenario that said there would be nobody well enough to run grocery stores.

On the other hand, when two of my grown children got swine flu, we used the Tamiflu, and it helped. So some of what you do is good preparation; some is useless.

How much has America’s “Protestant ethic” given us an ethos of preparation? Do some other societies fail to prepare the way we do because their cultures are fatalistic?

I saw a bumper sticker recently that said *Jesus Is Coming: Look Busy*. That sums up who we are as Americans. Our broadly Christian ethos has encouraged moral responsibility both on the part of the individual and of the government. It has encouraged a collective sense of responsibility. While we are still plenty selfish, we tend to ask if a policy is going to be good for our country or even good for humanity.

We also tend to use reason. This is where Max Weber [in *The Protestant Ethic and the*



Spirit of Capitalism] was on target. We take a practical approach to issues. That's one reason we trust science as much as we do. And in comparison with some societies—especially those with a strong sense of evil spirits that need to be counteracted by ritual—we are more skeptical toward what we call superstition.

That also gets at a theological point. Looking at titles at the Library of Congress, within the past 25 years there have been over a thousand books with *Armageddon* or *apocalypse* in the title. So we could ask whether Americans by and large think about really scary potential catastrophes in terms of statements from the biblical apocalypse. Frankly, no. If you ask the right poll questions you might get 25 percent of the people saying they think the end of the world is coming soon. But in the meantime, they're going about their day-to-day business.

After 9/11 many Americans began to treat Islam itself, not just terrorists, as a major threat. How does our society's post-9/11 response to Islam compare to historic reactions to "foreign" religions?

The way in which it is similar is the theological concern, such as concerns Protestants had about Catholics trying to take over and not understanding the Bible the way Protestants do. Some of what you hear Christians saying about Muslims is similar to that. But as religious leaders talk and write more about the Abrahamic faiths, that is broadening the tent in the same way previous discussions between Protestants and Catholics and between Christians and Jews worked it out. But I think we're in for a long, difficult period of figuring out our relationship both as a nation and as Christians with Islam.

Does the Internet—and particularly social media—simply hand a megaphone to extremists, or is society actually becoming more fearful?

Well, the Internet does help to hand the megaphone to folk in odd ways. Somebody writes something outrageous on a blog, and the other side of the political spectrum talks about it on a television program, and so it gets amplified.

But the Internet also makes it a lot easier to organize people. If you live in New Jersey and you don't know anybody else in your

town who feels the way you do, but you're upset and you feel you ought to go to Trenton and carry a banner in front of the state capitol, the Internet and social media make it pretty easy to find another hundred people in the state willing to get together and do that.

We get angry when government agencies like the CIA or the Food and Drug Administration miss a threat. To a lot of people it symbolizes the failure of big government. But doesn't it require fairly high-level authority to track and manage these threats?

We're learning from neuroscience that fear does not just prompt us into fight-or-flight syndrome but also into an engaged problem-solving mode.

Big government is a whipping post for a lot of the frustration that taxpayers feel when government seems to be getting bigger and not accomplishing as much.

But let's say you're running a church committee of three people. It's fairly easy to coordinate those three. If you have 30 people, it's a lot harder. And if you have 300 people, it gets even harder.

I grew up where there were maybe 50 people per square mile. You could get by with fairly limited government. I now live where there are 23 times as many people per square mile. It's just a lot more complicated. It's not surprising that a society with 300 million people has huge government overhead. Whether it's dealing with threats or with a lot of day-to-day business, it's a lot more complicated than the society of 75 million people we had a hundred years ago.

Churches are mediating institutions very close to the grassroots. Do they have a special calling to help people respond to a crisis?

They do, depending on the nature of the crisis. For instance, in terms of making sure that people have access to swine flu vaccines, in some communities the church may be one of the few available public buildings where that can happen. Or maybe they have an outreach program in a lower income community or among the elderly, or they have a van that can pick people up.

The other way that churches play a very positive role is through the discussions they have. They can talk about the nature of a

perceived threat and emergency preparedness. Increasingly we've seen churches talk about climate change, bringing in a speaker or a film and saying, "Let's talk about it." As a grassroots organization, the church has a positive role to play.

You write that the costs of crises fall disproportionately on the poor, as happened after Hurricane Katrina, for example, and the recent earthquake in Haiti. What is the role of churches in helping the poor in their communities meet crises?

One role churches have played is to bring justice language into the picture. It may be one thing to look out, as many middle-class people would, and say, "None of this affects me very much." Or if it's a health crisis, "I can find a doctor." But justice thinking focuses on, let's say, the fact that some people live in a Love Canal-type community or downstream from a copper mine and are suffering from health problems. They probably don't have the means to go up against a huge company with a lawsuit or even to go to Washington and make their claims known. That's where churches interested in promoting social justice really can play a role.

What is the role and responsibility of media to shape people's perception of threats, whether that's Islam, HIV/AIDS, or nuclear weapons?

I'll give you some encouraging news from a survey I did several years ago. We've looked at those data to see which Christians really care in an altruistic way about what's going on in other parts of the world, and which ones hold altruistic social policies. Whether they read religious periodicals is definitely a really important factor. Religious periodicals make a difference. *Christianity Today* and others are able to be out there quickly with information that is helpful to those who are facing something as sudden and unexpected as, say, 9/11.

For journalists, it's not like, "Oh, who do we talk to now?" They've been doing this for a while; they know who to talk to. That's helpful because there is so much nonsense out there, especially because of the blogosphere. The really valuable thing about respected religious journalism is you can usually trust it. ☪

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Saved by an Atheist

I BECAME A CHRISTIAN again during my last year of college. After years of wrestling with God and doubting his existence, I had an intense, spiritual epiphany that seemed to change my life instantly. The following day, though it sounds hokey to say so, the grass looked greener, the sky bluer. Ordering coffee that day from a complete stranger, I nearly burst into tears. *This is another child of God!* I thought to myself. *What a shame I'm handing her cash instead of praising God with her.*

That moment was unlike any I've ever since experienced. Suddenly, and without words, I knew that God had said to me, *I AM*. Nothing more, just *I AM*. With those words, God told me that he cared enough about me to reveal just this little bit about himself. *I AM*. It answered none of my questions and gave no explanation for God's five-year absence in my life. But those words were enough. I could say with Peter, "You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

There were a number of people through whom God worked before that revelation. Yet the biggest influence on my spiritual journey was the novels and philosophy of Albert Camus, a French existentialist of the 1940s and '50s—and an atheist. C. S. Lewis warned, "A young man who wishes to remain a sound atheist cannot be too careful of his reading." Camus should have been safe territory for me, but as I like to say now, I was saved by an atheist.

ATHEIST MORALITY

"If there were no God, there would be no atheists," said G. K. Chesterton. My own period of doubt came not because the idea of God or miracles seemed wrong, but because God himself wronged me. That's how I saw it, at least. Though atheists may argue that the existence of a supreme being is impossible, their arguments often reveal a belief that God just doesn't behave as they think he should. In a debate, Christopher Hitchens complained about war and killing in the Old Testament. He said he wrote his book *God Is Not Great* in response to the murders in Muslim countries that followed the publishing of cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. None of these are arguments against God's existence, but rather arguments against how God and especially his followers act.

That is why traditional atheism is a highly moral philosophy, and one worthy of respect, even while we strongly disagree with it. In his book *The Twilight of Atheism*, Alister McGrath describes the atheism that emerged during the Enlightenment as "one of the greatest achievements of the human intellect, capable of capturing the imagination of generations." Lewis shared the same respect for this godless tradition. Introducing one of his tutors, Kirkpatrick, in

Surprised by Joy, Lewis calls him an atheist, but hastens to qualify the description: "He was a 'Rationalist' of the old, high and dry nineteenth-century type. For Atheism has come down in the world since those days." In his science fiction novel *That Hideous Strength*, Lewis developed a character based on Kirkpatrick and included him among a small group working to save the world from evil. Maybe Lewis simply harbored fondness for his teacher, but I suspect he saw some spiritual hope in the old man's atheism.

Such hope is not misplaced. Timothy Larsen, professor of history at Wheaton College and author of *Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England*, says he has come to see doubt as a



LISA ANDERSON

Christians gave Albert Camus
good reasons not to believe.
He gave me a reason to
return to faith.

By Rob Moll



way in which we take our faith seriously: “If you haven’t doubted, you haven’t re-owned your faith.” Many Victorian atheists, Larsen discovered, converted back to Christianity. “Some actually are really trying to answer questions. That’s why they sound so angry,” he says. “They’re in a struggle for their own soul.”

Though Camus, who died 50 years ago this year, wasn’t the “high and dry nineteenth-century type” of atheist, nor did he return to Christianity, I’ve maintained a similar fondness toward him. He saw the world coldly, not as he wished it to be, but as he found it. He was brutally honest, yet hopeful. He was moral, in the sense that he believed in right and wrong and worked for what was right. His

disbelief remained an obstacle in his search for meaning, but Camus continued to look for reasons to hope, to find meaning in life.

The world, as Camus found it, is absurd. Humans yearn for meaning, yet life offers none. God is absent. But Camus argued against the nihilism of his fellow Europeans who found life meaningless and therefore flocked to totalitarian, fascist, or communist philosophies. “I don’t know whether this world has a meaning that transcends it,” Camus wrote in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, his argument against suicide. “But I know that I do not know that meaning.” Rather than take a leap of faith, Camus sought to “know whether I can live with what I know and with that alone.”

He illustrated his philosophy of creating meaning in the face of meaninglessness in the novel *The Plague*. When the city of Oran is struck by disease, officials quarantine the city. The main character, the physician Rieux, chooses to stay, throwing himself into caring for the sick. This is how one creates meaning amid the meaninglessness of the sudden outbreak of plague. And life is no different, Camus believed. We are to work against wrongs and injustice, with humility, trying to aid others in small ways.

It is no lofty idealism. Rieux describes how he first came to his philosophy in his campaign against the death penalty. In order to outlaw capital punishment, he realized, his party was on occasion forced to murder. Shocked by an execution, Rieux rejects his activism. He realized that “I, anyhow, had had plague through all those long years in which, paradoxically enough, I’d believed... I was fighting it.” Not only that: “I have realized that we all have plague.”

It was this scene that struck me most forcefully. Camus was right, I knew, and I, too, had plague. I was sick and in need of a Physician. Camus’ willingness to accept the truth that human beings are fallen allowed me to do the same. Camus held a mirror to my face—in a way that no pastor, preacher, or professor had—and I knew I needed salvation.

A CREATURE OF CHRISTIANITY

Certainly not all atheists lead readers to such Christian conclusions. And just as certainly, not every atheist writer deals as honestly with himself and with God as Camus. But, at their best, atheists show Christians how our teaching or our practice is failing our society.

In *The Plague*, Camus describes Father Paneloux, a priest who has no real answer to suffering but nevertheless thunders that the plague is God’s judgment on a wicked city. The epidemic is the fault of the people, he says, and it will remain until they repent. But Camus presents the death of a child as a counterargument: a good God would not punish an innocent child with such suffering.

The church’s inability to answer the problem of suffering is still atheists’ most common complaint against God, and it teaches us how we may be setting people up for spiritual disappointment and failure. Maybe the modern church puts too much emphasis on better living through God. Or perhaps we don’t adequately explain that God suffers with us and redeems our suffering without eliminating it. Whatever the cause, atheism remains an attractive worldview for those who have witnessed suffering or been in pain and can’t reconcile the idea of a good and powerful God with the reality of life on earth.

Another flaw of the faith revealed by atheists, especially the New Atheists, is the frequency with which Christianity or any religion

appears oppressive. It was no coincidence that the New Atheism exploded during the second half of the Bush administration, when Christians were widely perceived (correctly or not) to be using their political power to influence public policy. When some Christian leaders were found to be violating their professed beliefs, whether in sexual behavior or other ethical lapses, it cast all attempts to bring Christian moral arguments into the political process as hypocritical manipulations for power.

“The attractiveness of atheism is directly dependent upon the corruption of Christian institutions,” says McGrath. “History strongly suggests that those who are attracted to atheism are first repelled by theism.”

Atheism is a creature of Christianity. My turn away from God came at a time when I had questions about my faith. My pastors and youth group leaders, rather than hearing out my questions, prescribed more intense devotions, more fervent prayers, and further exclamations of biblical truth. My friends who wandered from the faith faced similar prescriptions. Our questions were heard first and foremost as a desire to flout the rules and to sin without compunction. In truth, there was no real correlation between those who lost their faith and those who flouted the rules of their Christian

high school and college, though our behavior was often described as the evidence of our lack of faith (while the infractions of our more faithful colleagues were seen as mere lapses of good judgment).

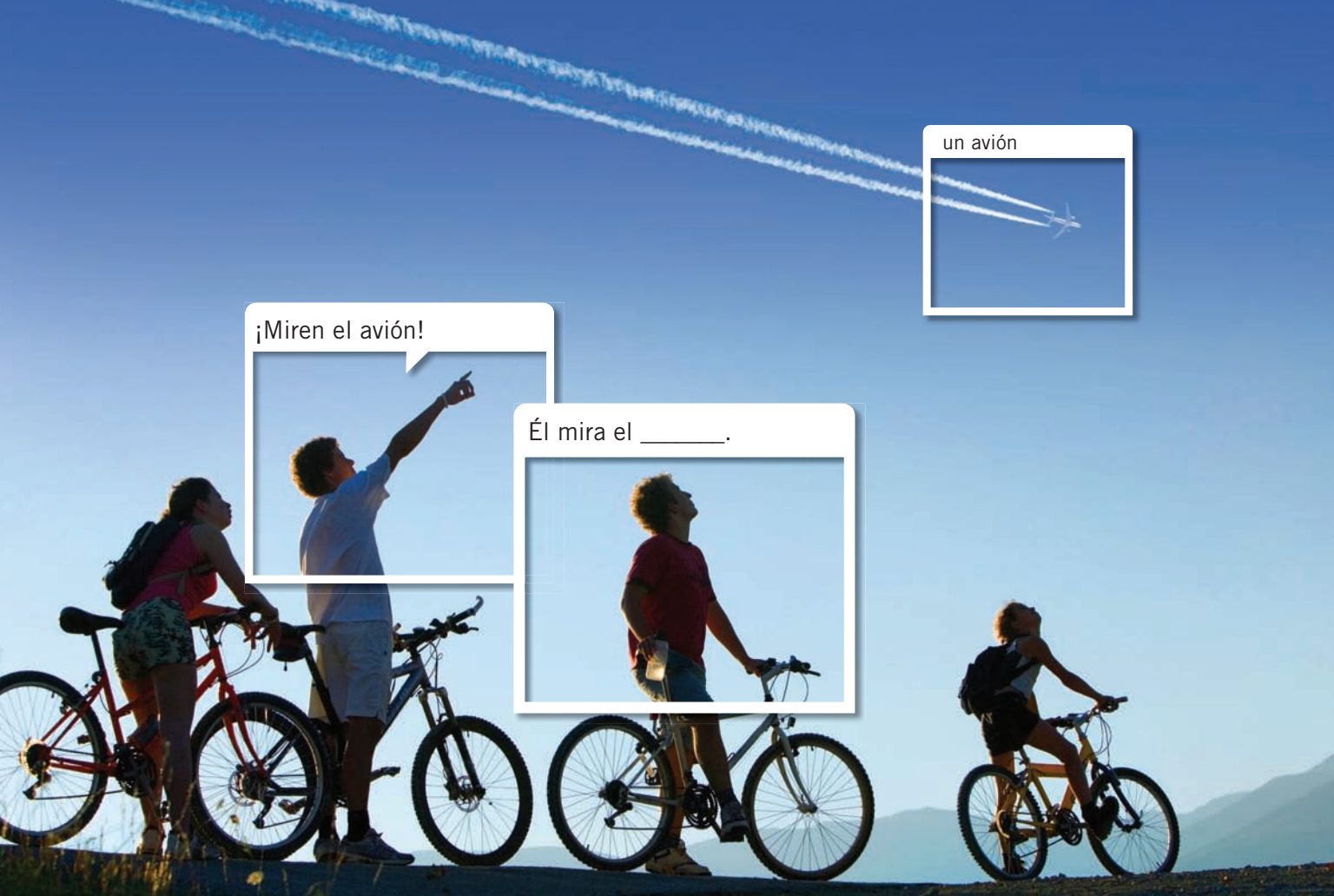
Most of my wandering friends, like me, seem to have returned to Christ. But I’ve found that a surprising number who had fully accepted the faith have now left it. Each tended to have had some experience in which Christian leaders acted as hypocritical, power hungry, judgmental, or arrogant elites. For some, the church’s inability to shepherd during a painful period led directly to rejecting God. “If God isn’t there when I need him,” they say, “I don’t need him.”

Atheists may have an arsenal of arguments against God or religion. But at heart, rejection of God seems not to be a purely logical choice against the possibility or desirability of God. Rather, it is often a rejection of God’s people. Atheism’s recent popularity should serve as a warning to us. Apologetics conferences and passionate rebuttals may have their place. Certainly we should be ready with reasons for our faith. But before we begin dueling on blogs and arming ourselves with television talking points, let’s learn to see atheists not as deniers of God, but as wrestlers with him. And let’s remember that their deepest arguments against belief are the people they’re arguing with.



Rob Moll is a CT editor at large and author of *The Art of Dying*.





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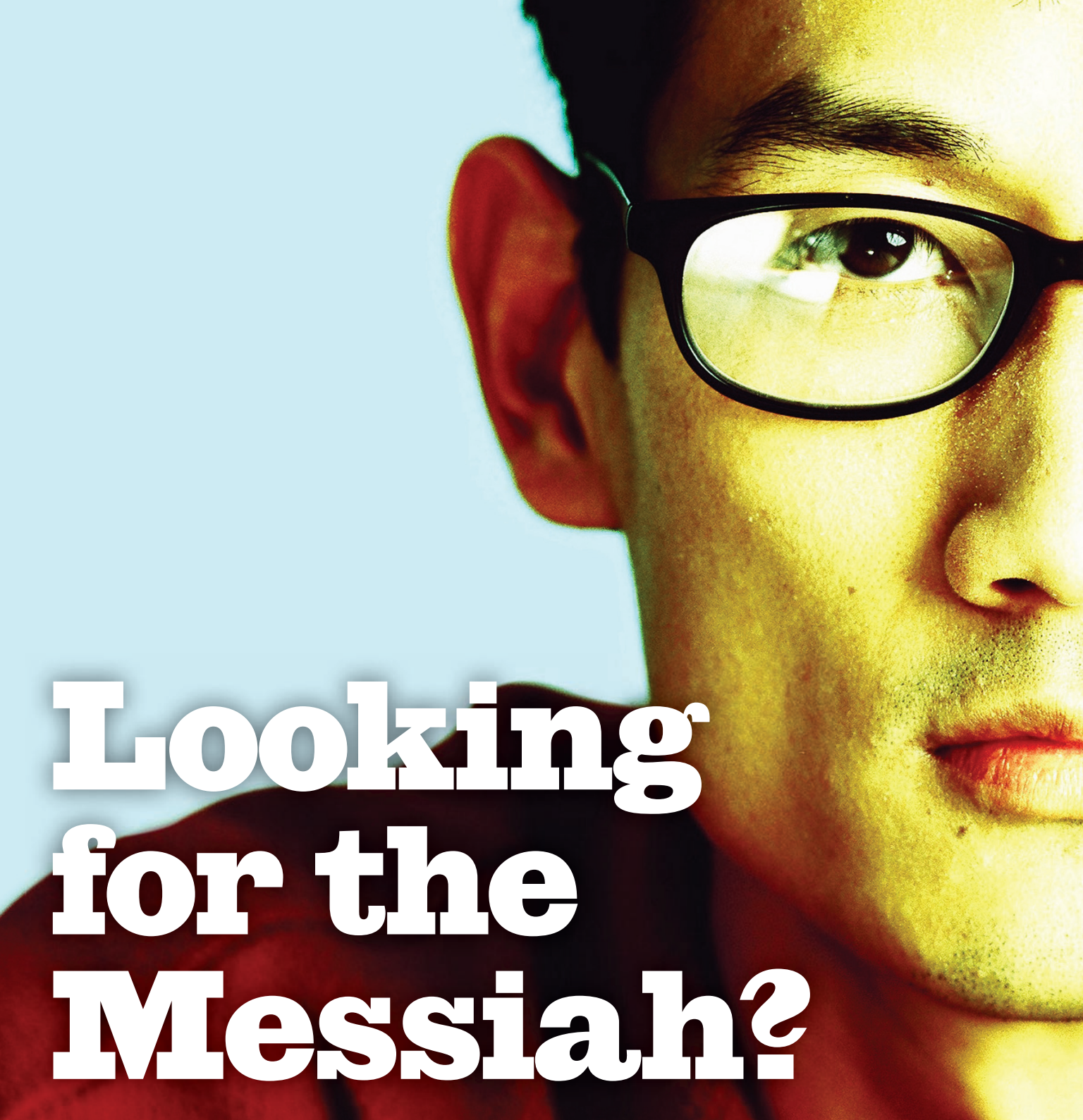
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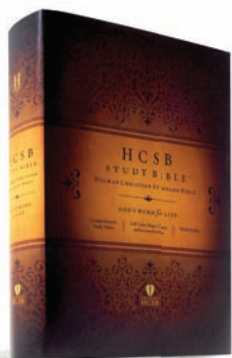
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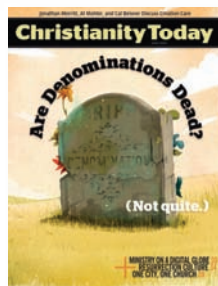
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VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH



If denominations' challenges move the church away from outreach and ministry, God's people will invariably look for other outlets to join Jesus' mission.

Bruce Becker
E-mail

What Denoms Can Do

Thanks for Ed Stetzer's recent essay on denominations' continued value ["Life in Those Old Bones," June]. I agree with him that doing missionary work outside a denomination is difficult; I've lost individual support, gone into debt, and at times worked while on furlough in the States. But had I gone through a denomination, I likely would not have been sent out at age 19, and wouldn't have been free to serve where God led.

Although denominational missionaries have retirement plans, savings, and insurance, many are deeply frustrated by the centralized control of how and where they serve. In my experience, the denominational missionaries accomplish much less than the "I hope I have enough money this month" nondenoms.

JAKE KNOTTS
Chernigov, Ukraine

I appreciated Stetzer's take on "proto-denominations." The rise of these missional networks indicates that God's people still want to work together for the kingdom's sake. If denominations' current challenges move the church away from outreach and ministry, God's people will invariably look for other outlets to

join Jesus' mission. My question is, will the proto-denominations eventually replace existing denominations and in essence become the new ones? And, will this be a good thing?

BRUCE BECKER
E-mail

It's a false dichotomy to suggest one is either in a denomination and thus cooperative or is nondenominational and thus uncooperative. Totally independent churches can cooperate as much as they want, and many do in missions. We can have missional cooperation without denominational control.

More important, as a Christian it is incumbent upon me to work and pray for the answer to Jesus' prayer for church unity (John 17). Can we ever argue against that?

SCOTT PIXLER
Pastor, First Christian Church
Phoenix, Arizona

Waltke's Witness

I was disappointed to read in "Adamant on Adam" [Briefing, June] that Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) president Michael Milton accepted my resignation because of my "mainline evolutionary"

views and "uncharitable and surely regrettable characterizations" of those who disagree with me.

As for my views on evolution, I am incompetent to endorse evolution. My point is that the scientific consensus endorses it, and, like B. B. Warfield, as an exegete and biblical theologian I see no need to interpret natural selection for the origin of species within an atheist worldview. Natural selection can be accepted within a framework of trusting Scripture as inerrant as to its source and infallible as to its authority for faith and practice; the Bible does not prescribe how God created the cosmos.

As for Milton's second reason, in an open letter to RTS, I apologized for unwittingly marginalizing in my impromptu, unvetted video other attempts to harmonize science with the Bible. In spite of these misunderstandings, President Milton remains my dear and trusted brother in Christ.

BRUCE K. WALTKE
Professor of Old Testament,
Knox Theological Seminary
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

It's sad to see believers resort to humiliation techniques because they disagree with RTS. In response to Waltke's statements on evolution, the seminary is seemingly trying to be consistent with the faith it professes. In this ever-compromising world, its leaders ought to

TOP 3 What got the most comments in June's CT

35%
Adamant on Adam
Charles Honey

30%
**The Village Green:
Creation Care**
Jonathan Merritt,
Al Mohler,
and Cal Beisner

9%
**Life in Those
Old Bones**
Ed Stetzer

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?
CT'S EDITORS WOULD LOVE TO HEAR THEM.

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be highly commended for this—even by Christians who disagree with the school over how old the earth is.

JASON PALERMO
Little Rock, Arkansas

Evangelicalism has featured too many dualisms. Science versus the Bible is one of them. President Milton said, “We begin and end with revelation at RTS,” but so do Waltke and many other conservative evangelicals who see some version of theistic evolution as the best way to connect our current understandings of Scripture and science. Driving a wedge here only replants the obscurantist flag—the same one the church planted centuries ago over heliocentrism—in a different knowledge Zip Code.

DAVID A. FRASER
Gladwyne, Pennsylvania

God Is Not ‘Scarce’

In June’s Village Green, Cal Beisner seems to dissuade Christians from creation care by imposing the scarcity principle. Creation care is simply not every person’s gift, Beisner says, so each one should do only what he or she has the time and resources to do.

Does God call some to follow only the first commandment and others only the third? Or some believers to do justly,

others to love mercy, and a few gifted ones to walk humbly? The God of the Bible doesn’t operate out of scarcity. Instead, he comes in the fullness of time and fills us to overflowing. Creation care is not just for those gifted with leisure time and spare resources. It’s for all Christians desiring to serve the Creator.

RYAN JUSKUS
Wheaton, Illinois

Faith-Based Firing?

Regarding CT’s recent report on religious hiring [“Faith-Based Fracas,” June], religious and nonreligious people are equal in the eyes of the law. When government gives funding to an organization, it’s reasonable to require the organization to demonstrate the same sense of equality. World Vision gets federal grants funded by all citizens’ taxes—not just Christians’—to administer social services. If everyone’s money is supporting an organization, then everyone should be able to benefit from it and be employed by it.

In a country that prides itself on equal opportunities and separation of church and state, the government simply cannot fund an organization that can fire people for not being Christian enough.

ROY SPECKHARDT
Executive Director, American Humanist Association, Washington, D.C.

compiled by Laura Leonard

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.

ONLINE POLL

TO JOIN OR NOT TO JOIN
Are you part of a denomination?

35%

Yes, I prefer to go to a church that falls under a denomination.

42%

Yes, but the denomination isn’t as important to me as other aspects of my church.

13%

No, our church happens to be nondenominational.

9%

No, I prefer to go to a nondenominational church.

1%

I don’t know if our church falls under a denomination.

Total Votes: 1,066

“Unlike many thinkers who refuse to take atheism to its logical conclusions, Peter Singer shows consistency in his work—which drives him to such radical, wrong conclusions. We should pray for him but also be grateful that he’s willing to be honest.”

Andy Williams, on bioethicist Singer’s controversial question, “Why don’t we make ourselves the last generation on earth?”

Theology in the News: “Peter Singer’s Swan Song,” by Collin Hansen

“Wetlands, oceans, and the natural resources in them are gifts from God to be treated with reverence. Our hearts grieve when we see that humanity has clearly abused his gifts.”

Tracy L., on the Gulf Coast oil spill.

Speaking Out: “The Cry of the Oil-Soaked Pelican,” by Katelyn Beaty

“If most people in this country consider it a joke, then it hasn’t really served its purpose. Why rebuild?”

Basil, on the “Touchdown Jesus” statue in Monroe, Ohio, that burned down after being hit by lightning in June.

Liveblog: “Famous Jesus Statue Struck by Lightning,” by Trevor Persaud

“Lady Gaga glamorizes many incorrect ideas, but parents should engage older children in discussions of the ideas rather than relying on prohibition.”

Andrew, on how parents should talk about controversial pop culture phenomena with children.

Women’s Blog: “Ooh La La over Lady Gaga,” by Jennifer C. Grant



Martha, I found the perfect card for Lazarus!!

Let the Sea Resound

We can no longer act like creation care is a secondary issue.

THE QUESTION is no longer, “Do you believe in global warming?” but, “What do you believe about the Gulf oil spill?” The BP spill has brought creation care closer to home. Whether global warming is a dire threat or not, human-made or not, we are all now more aware of our relationship to other parts of God’s creation.

It goes without saying that one of our main callings is to care for the Earth. The Bible uses a variety of phrases to talk about this, such as “to work and keep” the garden (Gen. 2:15, *ESV*), to “have dominion” over all the animals (Gen. 1:28, *ESV*), and to “rule over” “the works of [God’s] hands” (Ps. 8:6, *NIV*). Though some secular critics argue that the language of dominion and rule has led to exploitation, anyone familiar with the biblical context knows these words are about stewardship: We have authority, all right, but it is the authority given to a caretaker to manage things on behalf of another.

The main thing we are to manage is creation’s ability to glorify the Creator. The Bible is replete with the idea that all creation—everything from rocks and trees to badgers and eagles—is to witness to divine grace: “Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the Lord . . .” (Ps. 96:11–13a, *NIV*).

The Westminster Shorter Catechism put it well when, answering the question, “What is the chief end of man?” it stated, “To glorify God and enjoy him forever.” We might add, in light of the biblical calling to steward the Earth, “and to ensure that all of creation glorifies God as well.”

The problem with the Gulf oil spill is not just that human lives were lost and that the

Gulf economy is destroyed and that pelicans and turtles and other animal populations will be wiped out. All of that is bad enough. But worse is this: A sea hemorrhaging black oil now suffocates life instead of nurturing it. The sea does not resound with the glory of God but instead has become a sign of human hubris and greed.

To destroy the environment is not only an economic problem—it is also a theological

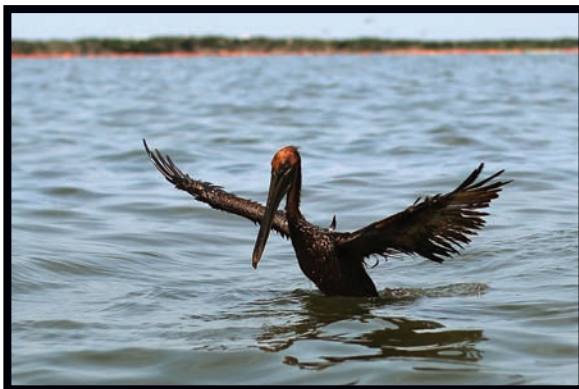
problem. Christians have maintained an uneasy ecological conscience. I include myself in this indictment.” His essay was one signal to David Gibson of *Politics Daily* that evangelicals are “seeing the disaster as a moral challenge” and “repenting of their previous positions.” A recent resolution of the Southern Baptist Convention condemning those responsible for the oil spill only reinforced his point.

We all recognize the incongruity when churches speak of redemption in Christ and yet their members do not attempt to live out that redemption, however partial, in this life. The same applies to our creation mandate. As Moore put it, “Will people believe us when we speak about the One who brings life and that abundantly, when they see that we don’t care about that which kills and destroys?”

Churches can no longer be indifferent to those matters that signal—to our members and to the world we

long to reach for Christ—whether or not the Earth can resound to God’s glory. At a very practical level, it means not just preaching and teaching but also being faithful in small things: taking concern for how efficiently we heat and cool our buildings, encouraging recycling at church gatherings, starting a community garden, and doing a hundred other things that signal our commitment to living in a way that exemplifies God’s intentions for his Earth.

The ground has shifted. The church—created to glorify God—can no longer pretend that creation care is an issue just for “sea huggers.” We are the sea huggers. We must change our talk to embrace creation care, and eagerly walk that talk. ✚



problem. More specifically, it sabotages worship, the chief end of man and of creation.

There seems to be little doubt that the Gulf oil spill is the United States’ environmental 9/11. The news coverage has been relentless for months, and according to a recent Pew survey, the public thinks the coverage is just fine. A recent Gallup Poll determined that Americans have shifted from a “somewhat pro-energy stance to an even stronger pro-environment stance.”

Christians are very much in step with this shift in popular opinion. Southern Baptist theologian Russell Moore, in an eloquent lament about how the spill would devastate his beloved hometown of Biloxi, acknowledged that “for too long, we evangelical

The church—created to glorify God—can no longer pretend that creation care is an issue just for ‘sea huggers.’

*God's Word for
Each Person—
Worldwide*

Should Christians continue to smuggle Bibles into China?

IT'S STILL NECESSARY

Todd Nettleton is director of media development for the Voice of the Martyrs USA, a ministry to persecuted Christians.

Several years ago, my wife and I delivered a small suitcase of Bibles into the hands of a Chinese house-church pastor. When he opened the suitcase and saw the treasure inside, his face displayed the same look I'd seen on the faces of my young sons on Christmas morning, when they realized "Santa" had left a basketball hoop in our driveway: sheer, unfettered joy.

I think of that pastor whenever I hear that the Chinese church has enough Bibles and doesn't need more than those printed legally in China. I wonder about those who argue against getting God's Word into the hands of as many people as possible by every means available.

One important fact to remember about Bibles and China is that China is still a restricted nation. The Communist government seeks to control Christian activities, including Bible distribution. Yes, China has changed and is changing. But don't let pictures of American preachers or presidents in large, ornate churches fool you into thinking that all of China's Christians are free. They are not.

As you read this, Christian bookstore owner Shi Weihai is serving out a three-year sentence at the Qinghe Detention Center of the Haidian Sub-Bureau in Beijing. His "crime": printing and distributing Bibles without the government's permission.

Another important fact to remember is the sheer size of the Chinese church. In a closed-door discussion in 2008, one Chinese government official estimated China's Christian population at 120 million.

China's government-approved Bible printer, Amity Printing

Company, boasts of printing "close to 56 million Bibles" since its first print in 1987. But in light of the growth of China's church, that means that in 23 years Amity still hasn't printed enough Bibles for half of China's Christians to have one. Its website says it exports Bibles to "more than 60 countries," and shows pictures of Bibles in English, Spanish, and Braille. So how many of those 56 million Bibles are in Chinese and still located in China?

China is a huge country with a huge population, and huge differences abound in how religion is "managed" in various parts of the country. While Bibles can usually be found in provincial capitals and large cities, they are much more difficult to find in rural areas. Among China's five approved religions, Christianity is the only one whose sacred text the government does not allow all public bookstores to sell. Also, Bibles printed legally do not contain commentaries, footnotes, or other study tools that help unlock the meaning of the text; these tools are, however, included in most Bibles delivered secretly in China.

I am thankful for every Bible legally printed and distributed in China. I hope someday the government will allow enough Bible printing to meet the needs of the growing Chinese church. But until that day, it is vital for Christ-followers around the world to help meet our Chinese brothers' and sisters' need for God's Word.

Even if it's one suitcase at a time.

SMUGGLING IS OUTDATED

Jonathan Brooks is president of the Voice of China and Asia Missionary Society (VOCA), which has served in Asia since 1909.

To answer the question about smuggling Bibles into China, it's helpful to better understand how Bibles printed within China are distributed. The city of Nanjing is home to Amity Printing, the world's largest Bible-printing facility and the only legal Bible printer in China. Its mission is to print Bibles for distribution inside China. Amity also exports Bibles in many languages throughout the world.

Because Bibles printed inside China do not have an ISBN number, they cannot be sold in Chinese bookstores. The only place one may legally purchase a Bible is in a registered Chinese church.

Working with these guidelines, Amity has developed 70 main distribution points that are located in China's largest population centers. From there, Bibles are funneled out to 55,000 registered churches for sale to the general public.





These are the choicest of Bibles among believers, because they bear an imprint stating they have been legally printed inside China. To own a Bible printed outside China can draw suspicion about one's outside and perhaps unauthorized contacts. We at voca do not smuggle Bibles into China and do not encourage others to do so. There are positive and extremely effective alternatives to smuggling that are rarely used due to outdated thinking.

Because of historical differences, which have included persecution, many underground believers in China will have nothing to do with the registered church. To be seen entering a registered church would be to betray the trust of one's closest Christian friends. In urban areas, however, this wall of division is slowly crumbling. Many believers enjoy the traditional Sunday worship of the registered church and the intimate cell-group atmosphere of the underground church during the week.

In the past, purchasing a Bible required showing an identity card. I have been told this is no longer necessary. But such a belief dies slowly, especially among the large numbers of urban believers who bear identity cards that show they have illegally migrated to larger cities, typically for work.

Leaders of the Chinese Christian Councils in many provinces recognize that even with Amity's thousands of distribution points, distribution of Bibles to China's rural communities is very limited. They also understand that for the millions of Chinese who make \$125 or less a year, purchasing a Bible may mean spending over 3 percent of one's annual income. Since China's greatest church growth is among the rural poor, arrangements have been made for free distribution of Bibles to poor people with the use of funds from overseas donors.

Chinese officials are working to ensure that Bibles are supplied to all Chinese Christians who want them. The best thing we can do is partner with their work and help to increase legal distribution avenues, rather than harming Chinese Christians by smuggling in telltale Bibles that could bring their owners unwanted attention.

THE MORE, THE BETTER

Gary Russell is international director for China Harvest, which ministers to needy individuals inside China.

The best way to illustrate the need for Bibles in China today is to share the testimony of a longtime friend, Brother "Han."

Born a peasant, Han came to Christ while in university. While planting churches in urban centers, he found the number of available basic Bibles growing. Getting enough Bibles was not the problem. That need, he concluded, was being met on a nationwide basis.

Soon, Han was asked to help develop a major Chinese study Bible

for pastors, and he worked to help pastors use it in every imaginable church setting. Many of those churches—especially rural ones—began asking him for regular Bibles to distribute. He was shocked to learn that they had only very limited access to officially sanctioned Bibles. Han found himself confronted by hundreds of thousands of Bible requests. The number of requests he receives is still growing.

Different areas in China have widely different circumstances and must be approached using different practices. But nationwide, there are just not enough Bibles to go around. Paul Hattaway, founder and director of Asia Harvest, recently compiled a county-by-county report of the number of Christians in China from 2,000 published sources, and arrived at a total of more than 102 million. Taking the loftiest estimate of Bibles supplied from all sources and comparing it with reasonable but conservative estimates of the number of Christians in China, one is left with a deficit in the tens of millions.

Whether working primarily in registered or unregistered churches, we should agree on some common realities.

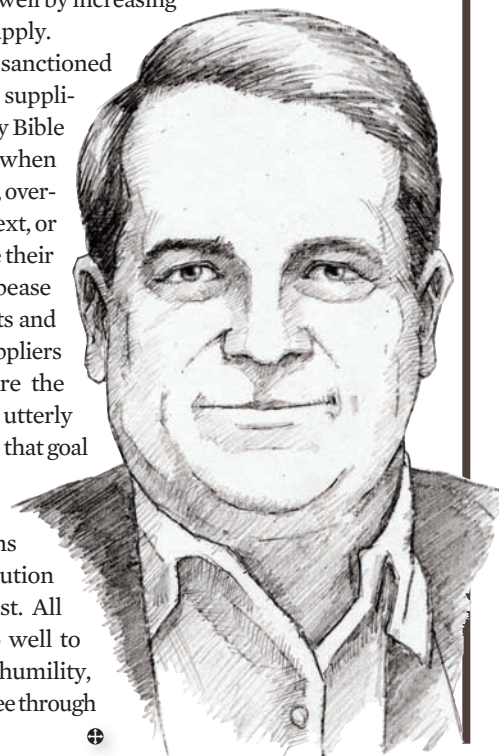
Every Chinese person deserves access to God's Word, and hundreds of millions do not have it now; the need has increased in the past 30 years.

Amity Press Bibles are legal, authentic, and available in many areas, and have made a substantial contribution to the need. But the Amity route is limited in quantity, variety, and distribution. Editions for children and pastors have barely been addressed. And millions of Chinese still have no regular access to a Bible.

Given these realities, covertly supplying Bibles to China is not only legitimate—it is a necessary element of obedience to Christ. While civil authorities are to be honored and respected, their authority is delegated by and limited under God. Restrictions against evangelizing and providing Scripture are not legitimate, and those who love God and China serve well by increasing the country's Bible supply.

But government-sanctioned and clandestine Bible suppliers contradict the very Bible they are distributing when they attack each other, oversimplify China's context, or otherwise undermine their unity in Christ to appease their own constituents and stakeholders. Both suppliers are appropriate, share the same goal, and are utterly insufficient to achieve that goal working alone.

Supplying Bibles to China by any means is a great contribution to the cause of Christ. All concerned would do well to exhibit Christlike humility, recognizing that we "see through a glass darkly."





Relationship That Leads to Life

Why God's law is good news.



MY HUSBAND AND I are trying to get our kids to consistently do their chores. We've tried threats and rewards but worry that our extrinsic motivators are holding our kids back from learning to obey simply because it's the right thing to do. "Gee," we long to hear them say, "my folks love me and know what's best for me, so I better pick up that broom and chip in."

Our struggle with our kids got us thinking about God's struggle with us. Surely he wants us to do the right things for the right reasons. As his people, do we behave "Christianly" because of extrinsic or intrinsic factors? As his church, what are our ideas about moral development?

I once spoke at a family camp of believers and nonbelievers who had been meeting for years. One morning, a seminary graduate shared his story with the group. David had weathered a crisis of faith when his father—a sternly religious man and prominent church leader—had been exposed in chronic sexual sin. David said that healing had come slowly and that, looking back, he realized the Christianity of his upbringing had overemphasized "morality" in place of "relationship."

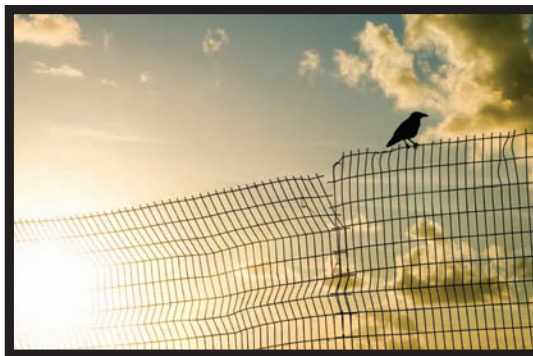
It sounded to me like David's dad might have benefited from a little *more* emphasis on morality. And I worried that David's take was not what the group needed to hear; two affairs had fractured their community in recent years. To me, it seemed they were suffering from too much relationship and too little morality.

I remember my reaction now with chagrin. I've since seen individuals and church communities with a robust focus on morality fall countless times. I get David's point: An emphasis on holy living without a genuine, life-changing relationship with a holy God can lead to rigid legalism on the one hand or secret sin on the other—and often it leads to both.

I also know Christians who emphasize relationship—and God's un-earnable, inexhaustible love—yet who have catastrophic moral falls. Such failings do not disqualify us for God's forgiveness, but they often have shattering consequences.

So what works? When it comes to shaping character and behavior, is it better to focus on God's law or his grace?

Psalm 119 is a love song to God's law, which seems odd. My friend Steve Bell says he never understood such passion for a moral code until he thought about children playing



near the edge of a cliff. Without a fence, the children are always in danger, never able to relax. But if a barrier is installed, they can play freely and without fear. God's law *is* God's grace. It's a safety fence that brings incredible freedom.

Of course, it's only a matter of time until a kid starts to wonder what's on the other side of the fence. If she doesn't know or trust the fence builder, she might suspect that the barrier is holding her back from bigger fun. So she hops the fence, a lemming for false liberty. Humanity has an extensive track record on this front.

Fortunately, there's more to the story. God's law is not only a safety fence; it's also

a mirror that shows us we can't live up to his standards without his help. Jesus comes not to abolish the law but to finally fulfill it. Yet many of us keep hopping the fence. Why? Partly because we still don't really know and trust the fence builder.

God doesn't expect morality in the absence of relationship. The first line of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20) is not, "You shall have no other gods before me," but, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." God defines the relationship first, then describes a life lived in its context.

Psychologists warn that extrinsic motivators for morality erode intrinsic ones. When our preachers thunder warnings about living right to avoid God's wrath or earn his favor, we run the risk of drowning out that still, small voice that beckons us to live out the holiness given us solely by our Father's grace.

Conversely, when the message is that our behavior doesn't matter, that God's grace is unmerited and therefore morality is not a major issue, we seem not to know our Father at all.

In the end, it isn't morality *versus* relationship. It's morality *because* of relationship. "Grow up," Jesus says in his most famous sermon. "You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you" (Matt. 5:48, The Message).

If we know our Father loves us, and we love him, we'll trust whatever he asks of us. We won't need the threats and rewards that can skew real faith toward pharisaism. We'll just pick up our brooms and chip in. ✚

When it comes to shaping character and behavior, is it better to focus on God's law or his grace?



The Lost Art of Commitment

Why we're afraid of it, and why we shouldn't be.

CERTAIN CHARACTERISTICS are so inherent to Christianity that to neglect them is to become a walking oxymoron. A Christian without commitment is such an oxymoron. That's why I was so disturbed when a friend shared a statement from presidential candidates at a Christian college. When asked, "What has changed the most in the past 20 years with young people who are entering college?" all the candidates said that young adults today are far less willing to commit to anything.

Whether we are talking about career, marriage, or faith, studies back up their observation. In 2008, more than half of people ages 20 to 24 had been with their current employer for less than a year. Although the recession has dampened this somewhat, young adults are still floundering when it comes to embracing a calling. Marriage, especially, has suffered; according to U.S. Census data, young adults are marrying later than ever. A 2006 PBS documentary, *Generation Next*, gave some insight into why: desire for adventure, career advancement, and prolonged adolescence. Lack of commitment is also hitting religion—hard. Studies suggest that the iPod generation is choosing which aspects of the faith to adopt to create their own unique spiritual playlists.

Among today's young adults, the unwillingness to commit is alarming, clearly one result of the philosophies of the 1960s and '70s coming to full flower. In 1979, sociologist Robert Bellah conducted extensive interviews to understand what "habits of the heart" defined average Americans. Many had no sense of community or social obligation. They saw the world as a fragmented place of choice and freedom that yielded little meaning or comfort. They even seemed to have lost the language to express commitment to anything besides themselves. Bellah called this "ontological individualism," the belief that the individual is the only source of

meaning. Bellah saw how this attitude would, in time, unravel the church and larger society. Since then, we've seen an almost uninterrupted march toward self-focus, affecting all of our institutions but especially crippling work, marriage, and family.

The basic building blocks of society simply erode without commitment. Any sensible society must address this problem by educating people that commitment is the very essence of human relationships.

At the least, we need to teach this in our churches. How can you begin as a Christian without death to self and total commitment to Jesus Christ?

But beyond the ramifications for society as a whole, beyond even the obvious necessity of Christian commitment, when we refuse to commit, we miss out on one of the great joys of life. When we obsess over ourselves, we lose the meaning of life, which is to know and serve God and love and serve our neighbors.

This was made clear when 33 research scientists investigated the relationship between human development and community in a 2003 report, *Hardwired to Connect*. Their research revealed that we are biologically primed to find meaning through relationships.

After nearly eight decades of living, I can vouch for this. My single greatest joy is giving myself to others and seeing them grow in return. You cannot discover that without

commitment. I first learned it by watching my parents care for my dying grandparents in our home. This is a custom long forgotten today, when such care is subcontracted out. I later saw it in the Marine Corps. You cannot go into combat, commanding 45 men, as I was trained to do, if you aren't committed to one another. You are going to die if the man next to you does not cover your back.

That's a point driven home in the excel-

lent 2010 book *Joker One*, by Donovan Campbell. It should be required reading for every Christian, because the kind of commitment you see in the platoon—Campbell calls it love for one another—is what needs to be happening in churches. Finally, I see it at this point in my life, when my greatest reward is seeing ex-convicts restored and people I've taught begin to

understand the faith in its fullness.

By abandoning commitment, our narcissistic culture has lost the one thing it desperately seeks: happiness. Without commitment, our individual lives will be barren and sterile. Without commitment, our lives will lack meaning and purpose. After all, if nothing is worth dying for (the anthem of the '60s anti-war protesters), then nothing is worth living for. But with commitment comes the flourishing of society—of calling, of marriage, of the church—and of our hearts. It's the paradox Jesus so often shared when he bid us to come and die that we might truly live.



By abandoning commitment, our narcissistic culture has lost the one thing it seeks: happiness. Without commitment, our lives will be barren and sterile.



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A Curious Saint

A new biography helps us sense what life was like for the 'pretty weird' and highly influential Julian of Norwich. By Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove

Not long ago, I was talking with a friend about why we teach the Christian classics. "It's like getting to sit down with our grandparents in the faith," I said. "When we're young, we think we're too busy to listen to Granny. But when she dies, we wish we'd taken the time to learn from her wisdom." My friend agreed. "But you do have to admit," she said, "a lot of what the saints wrote is pretty weird."

In *Julian of Norwich: A Contemplative Biography* (Paraclete Press) ★★★★★, Amy Frykholm doesn't ignore the tension between the saint we love and the odd character who worries us. Indeed, she makes this the entry point into her project. We are eager for affirmation,

delighted by the all-embracing love of this medieval saint's most famous line, quoted in T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." But when we actually sit down to read Julian, she can seem pretty weird.

Consider this statement of her desires in A.D. 1373: "I wanted to have every kind of pain, bodily and spiritual, which I should have if I died, every fear and temptation from devils, and every other kind of pain except the departure of the spirit." Reading a line like this, I can't help think that if Julian were a member of my church, I would encourage her

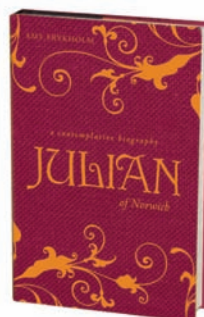
to see a counselor.

"For contemporary readers," Frykholm notes, "Julian's declaration that at a young age she 'desired a bodily sickness' coupled with her depictions of Christ bleeding on the cross are off-putting and impenetrable." Why does this woman whose counsel sounds gentle and wise seem so obsessed with suffering? Yet this is the same woman whose expansive vision of God's mercy we find so appealing.

My guess is that Frykholm does not flee from the apparent contradictions of Julian's faith because she has faced these tensions herself. A daughter of the church, Frykholm had her doubts about the assumptions of the evangelical world of her childhood. But Frykholm is not one to cut and run. For her, doubt seems always to seek understanding. (As a graduate student in literature, this disaffected evangelical wrote her dissertation on the *Left Behind* novels.) Here is an author willing to contemplate the messiness between what we say about God and what we do and say in real life. The result in *Julian of Norwich* is a sympathetic and realistic portrayal of a saint who, as it turns out, is both holy (that is, set apart) and as complicated as you and me.

Maybe the most imposing challenge for any biographer of Julian is that we know next to nothing about her actual life. The historical record is not merely thin; it's practically nonexistent. We have a few bequests in her honor on record at St. Julian's parish and a single account of a contemporary receiving counsel from the aged anchoress (a type of

hermit devoted to contemplative prayer and living in a cell attached to a church). But other than that, all we have is the text Julian wrote—*Revelations*, as it is most often rendered. Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has said that Julian's short book "may well be the most important work of Christian reflection in the English language." That its author was



practically overlooked by the record keepers of her day tells us something about both their assumptions and her determination.

Given the absence of hard facts, the temptation in telling Julian's story could be to chronicle her message rather than her life. But Frykholm seems to intuit that this would be a betrayal of who Julian was. Frykholm opts, instead, to imagine Julian's life through eleven "windows"—events we know of either because Julian mentions them in her text or because they happened during the time she lived in Norwich, England. Through these windows, Frykholm helps us see the church that Julian would have known, smell the stench of the streets she walked, and feel the loss from a plague that killed most of Norwich in A.D. 1349. Her "contemplative biography" is thus more imaginative non-fiction than year-by-year chronicle. Better said, it reads with the energy of a novel and the insight of a spiritual classic.

As to the power of Frykholm's words, I need only quote a representative passage:

Picture Julian. She sits at a plain oak table in front of an upright writing

Julian understands God's love not because she retreated from the world and focused on spiritual things, but because 'she chose Jesus over the bliss of heaven.'

desk with parchment attached to it by iron clips. She has brewed ink from crushed oak galls and rainwater, aged with an iron nail. The dark and murky liquid waits in a horn fitted to the desk. . . . She breathes deeply, checks the steadiness of her hand, focuses her mind just as she does for hours of prayer, and begins. This writing, too, is prayer.

Did it really happen just so? We cannot know, but we can be grateful to Frykholm for taking us there. Imagining the life behind Julian's classic text, we are given a space to join Julian at prayer.

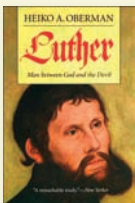
Which leads me to the key insight of this biography, the pearl of great price that makes

it worth even more than the gorgeous piece of literature it is. By entering imaginatively into the life that Julian lived in a place and time much different from our own, Frykholm shows us something about ourselves: namely, that our calculated distance from suffering in the modern world has something to do with our lack of understanding when it comes to the love of God. In short, Julian's compassion grows out of her passion—a suffering both in and of the church, but a suffering that nevertheless reveals the love at the heart of the church. Julian gets God's love not because she retreated from the world and focused on spiritual things, but because "she chose Jesus over the bliss of heaven."

Contemplating a crucifix that began to

MY TOP 5 BIOGRAPHIES OF THEOLOGIAN

By Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School



LUTHER

Man between God and the Devil

HEIKO A. OBERMAN (YALE)

A master historian, Oberman places Luther in the context of late medieval culture and presents him not as the forerunner of modernity but as a prophetic figure who saw his life's work as a harbinger of the last days. This is a book I enjoy reading and rereading.



AUGUSTINE THE THEOLOGIAN

EUGENE TESELLE (WIPF & STOCK)

A good primer for every theological student, this book should be read alongside Peter Brown's *Augustine of Hippo*, the definitive biography of the most prolific and consequential theologian of the early church. TeSelle traces with clarity the development of Augustine's mind through the major controversies and themes of his work.



KARL BARTH

His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts

EBERHARD BUSCH (WIPF & STOCK)

Drawing on Barth's letters and memoranda as well as his published writings, Busch tells the story of a person who lived through the great turning points of the 20th century and whose work as seen in *Church Dogmatics* demands attention from every serious student of theology.



SPURGEON

Prince of Preachers

LEWIS A. DRUMMOND (KREGEL)

We still await a definitive biography of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Baptist preacher and self-taught theologian, but Drummond's lengthy study is the best to date. He presents Spurgeon as a latter-day disciple of another Baptist saint, John Bunyan, and shows how his pastoral work encompassed "an all-round ministry."



SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The "Dumb Ox"

G. K. CHESTERTON (SHEED & WARD)

There are longer and better biographies of the *doctor angelicus*, but this is my favorite. Chesterton is at his brilliant best in writing this vivid portrait of the great Dominican saint, whose work continues to edify evangelicals as well as Catholics despite his student reputation as a dull, "dumb ox."

drip blood onto what she thought would be her deathbed, Julian saw and later wrote about a vision of God that was revolutionary to the church authorities of her day—indeed, to many church leaders in our own time. Frykholm imagines Julian as an obedient and pious member of the medieval church, not eager to rock the boat. (Subversive theology in 14th-century England didn't get a woman a book contract; it was more likely to get her killed. Even still, *Revelations* is believed to be the first English-language book written by a woman.) Moved by the all-encompassing love of the Christ she saw, Julian asked about the hell and purgatory she had heard about from her priest. Christ showed her nothing. But this did not make her a universalist. It scared her to death.

The resolution Julian came to might help anyone who has struggled to reconcile their own experience of God with what seems to be the logical conclusions of doctrine. The teachings of the church were like a ceilinged room, Julian concluded, while her vision of God was—like God—as broad and vast as the sky. She could no more leave the church than a person can live without a home, exposed to the elements. But her visions—her knowledge of the sky, so to speak—could help her better understand life inside the church. The wide-open air left room for mystery even while the church offered her a home.

Because Julian stayed and did not flee, we know her as a saint and not a heretic. I can hardly think of a better saint for the church in a time when so many outside the faith admire Julian's compassion but cannot reconcile it with the seemingly exclusive claims of Christianity. Here is someone who professed holy obedience to a mystery she could not understand, all the while wrestling with her own doubts, questioning Jesus, and lending an ear to friends who did not understand. For this she sacrificed everything, going into her anchorite's cell, never to return. Dying into the church, she rises to speak a word of hope in our own time: "Dear brother and sister who doubt: there is room in God's home for you." ✚

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (*JonathanWilsonHartgrove.com*) is the author most recently of *The Wisdom of Stability: Rooting Faith in a Mobile Culture* (Paraclete).

A Grace-filled Engagement

The main problem with most marriages, says Paul Tripp, is lack of submission—to God. By Lynn Roush

Twelve years ago, my husband and I dutifully pursued premarital counseling, which meant having dinner with a well-meaning professor and his wife. They walked us through their marriage's highlights and lowlights, covering faithfulness, forgiveness, and the roles of husband and wife. But what I remember most about the talk was thinking my fiancé and I already had figured marriage out. We were seminary students who loved God and communicated well. These qualities, along with our mutual love, surely meant we could avoid the sinkholes that doomed other relationships.

We are, by God's grace, still happily married, but I am often confronted with the extent of our foolishness in those early days. Like every married couple, we have faced unfulfilled expectations, disappointments, and unmet needs. At minimum, we could have better anticipated these with Paul Tripp's *What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage* (Crossway) ★★★★★.

Tripp adeptly burrows beneath discussions of gender roles, communication mishaps, and felt needs—the driving forces of most Christian marriage manuals—to get at the root of all marital problems: who or what we worship. This is the first Christian marriage book I've read that does not use the words *submission* or *headship*. Nor does it refer to the most classic passage on marriage, Ephesians 5. Tripp is not rejecting these biblical constructs, but he is asking us to consider a more fundamental question that shapes not just our marriages but our entire lives: Whose kingdom?

"We are kingdom-oriented people," the Reformed author writes. "We always live in the service of one of two kingdoms... When we live for the kingdom of self, our decisions, thoughts, plans, actions, and words are directed by personal desire, [and] we seek to surround ourselves with people

who will serve our kingdom purposes."

A marriage of two people serving their own kingdoms will eventually end in bloody battle. But when both people submit to God's kingdom, where Christ reigns and where joy and life are found, marriage becomes an "opportunity to exit the small space of the kingdom of self and to begin to enjoy the beauty and benefits of the kingdom of God." Relational change comes only when our worship is properly aligned with the God who pursues our hearts.

How does a couple repair a marriage damaged by warring kingdoms? The rest of Tripp's book offers ways couples can develop a culture of ongoing reconciliation based on six biblically based commitments, including, "We will give ourselves to a regular lifestyle of confession and forgiveness," and "we will deal with our differences with appreciation and grace." The most challenging truth Tripp presents is that our greatest marital problem is ourselves. We will always rise to our own defense and be tempted to blame others while believing the best about ourselves. Not surprisingly, God uses marriage to reveal the sin of self-righteousness. A marriage can be transformed when just one person sees this sin and humbly confesses ways they have damaged the relationship.

What Did You Expect? is fundamentally about the transforming power of grace, offered to anyone who has reached the end of themselves. It offers hope to readers whose marriage is bitter or little more than silent cohabitation.

Most couples did not expect marriage to be so hard, but God's sovereign plan includes such difficulties for the purpose of aligning our hearts to his big-sky kingdom—and rescuing us from our own. ✚

Lynn Roush is a counselor (MA, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) at The Crossing, an Evangelical Presbyterian church in Columbia, Missouri.



BITS & PIECES

Excerpts from recent books.

MERE CHURCHIANITY

Finding Your Way Back to Jesus-Shaped Spirituality

MICHAEL SPENCER (WATERBROOK, 240 PAGES)

Martin Luther let me know that I was not qualified to receive the victorious-Christian-life merit badge. He also let me know that I wasn't a very good Christian.

The gospel that put an end to the proud monk Martin Luther and produced a Christian created one of the few mystical experiences of my life. That gospel laid itself out in my mind and heart in a way I'd never seen it or heard it before.

For the first time, the truth that Jesus is the one Mediator between God and human beings knocked me to the floor and suspended me over the truth that God had done all things necessary for my salvation. I could stop looking for the secret key, and I could ditch the quest to demonstrate that I was a Christian hero. I was humbled as I looked at a universe of grace that filled my empty soul with the love of God in Jesus.

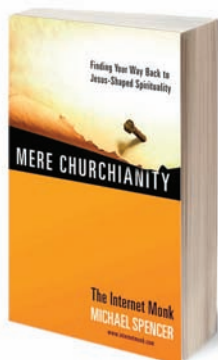
He did it all. He traversed the separation. He brought together the irreconcilable. He had paid the debt and become the necessary sacrifice. He had loved me to the uttermost. He had given all this to me as a gift. I had nothing to offer, nothing to contribute, nothing to do but simply stop ignoring his gift and receive it. I was a drowning man whose rescue depended on stopping all efforts to swim and trusting Someone who was not going to make me a better swimmer, but who would drown in my place.

This experience did more than give me a racing heartbeat. It demolished the idea that I could be anything other than what I was: a broken, sinful, wounded, failing, hurting human being. To try to become something else was an affront to God's love for me. To try to make myself presentable or acceptable made me less capable of receiving the simple gift of Jesus' mediation on my behalf.

Jesus was not clearing the road so I could ride victoriously through life. He was becoming the road that would carry me through all the garbage, falls, failures, and disasters that were the inevitable results of my existence. In trying to make myself loveable,

I had been distancing myself from true love. In pretending to be a leading candidate for the religious life, I was abandoning the life of grace. In seeking to be a good Christian, I was deserting the truth that there is no gospel for "good" Christians, because the Lamb of God was nailed to an altar for those who are not good, and who are no good at pretending to be good.

Excerpted from *Mere Churchianity* by Michael Spencer. Copyright © 2010 by Michael Spencer. Excerpted by permission of WaterBrook Press, a division of Random House, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.



WILSON'S BOOKMARKS

From the editor of Books & Culture.



THE NATURAL DESIRE TO SEE GOD ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS AND HIS INTERPRETERS

LAWRENCE FEINGOLD (SAPIENTIA PRESS)



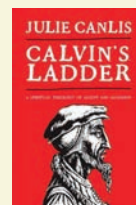
What we tend to think of as distinctively Protestant concerns regularly show up in other streams of the faith. Matters such as total depravity and prevenient grace are central to this patient expo-

sition, which will reward every minute of your attention. If I add that the cover of the book—framing a detail from a sculpture of a woman—is among the most enticing I have seen this year, you may wonder why you should care. To understand its relevance to the book's argument, you'll have to read the note on the copyright page identifying the sculpture and the brief bio of the author on the back cover.

CALVIN'S LADDER

A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension

JULIE CANLIS (EERDMANS)

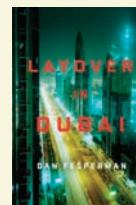


This superb book by Julie Canlis, perfect for reading alongside Lawrence Feingold, is about union with Christ—"participating in Christ." Here the resonance is especially strong with the Eastern Orthodox doc-

trine of theosis, often construed by Western Christians as blurring the absolute distinction between God and humanity. And at the center of the argument is Calvin's high understanding of the Eucharist, which a visiting theologian from Mars could hardly be expected to infer from contemporary practice among Calvin's heirs.

LAYOVER IN DUBAI

DAN FESPERMAN (KNOPF)



If you enjoy stories of the *North by Northwest* variety—ordinary guy gets caught up in murderous intrigue—you'll relish Dan Fesperman's expert handling of the conventions. His latest thriller is one of his best,

and it offers (apart from the twists and turns of the plot) several slices of life in the strange world of Dubai. Finally, like many novels with a Mideast angle these days, it offers hope for the future in the character of a resolutely independent young woman: a bit too familiar by now, perhaps, though the sentiment is nice.

The World's Prayer Guide

Operation World's latest edition spotlights a shifting global church. Interview by Stan Guthrie



Operation World might just be one of the most popular and influential evangelical books you've never read. Since 1974, the daily, country-by-country prayer guide has sold 2.5 million copies in six editions, including about 400,000 for the 2001 (most recent) edition. Canadian Jason Mandryk, a missionary researcher with Worldwide Evangelization for Christ International, has taken the reins as author of the newest edition, which will be published next month.

Christianity Today editor at large Stan Guthrie spoke with Mandryk about shaping the edition in the wake of numerous changes in the political, economic, and religious spheres in a post-9/11 world.

What are the most significant changes to *Operation World* since the last edition?

The global church has extended itself into new areas, even while it faces a growing crisis of confidence in the Western world. Since the invasion of Iraq, the Middle East has seen an acceleration of the exodus of traditionally Christian peoples on a scale that dwarfs the praiseworthy increase in believers from a Muslim background.

How has the book changed to reflect a post-9/11 world?

9/11 profoundly affected issues of security in missionary work and the interface of politics and religion in many countries. What has gone into the book reflects this; we have struggled to discover the entire ministry that goes on in many of these places, and have needed to be much more circumspect in how we report it. But in the unevangelized world, 9/11 was a non-event, or at least far down on the list of pressing issues that shape the nature and dynamics of Christian ministry.

Why has the book been so influential?

The emergence of *Operation World* as a resource was synchronous with the birth of an awareness in the West and the global church of the sheer diversity of Christianity, and the great challenge of the unevangelized world. There was a dearth of information to assist in prayer.

Operation World was born out of the need to provide information to Christians in Africa for weeks of prayer organized by the Dorothea Mission, a South African multicultural group in the 1940s that majored in evangelism. The churches desired to pray for other countries, but

because of their geographical isolation, the sanctions against southern Rhodesia and South Africa, and the lack of communications technology, they knew very little about the rest of the world or how to pray for it. It wasn't necessarily born out of a missionary dynamic; it was born out of a prayer dynamic.

It's interesting that a primarily informational book is also inspirational.

I visited a Ukraine ministry that worked with abandoned and orphaned street kids, particularly substance abusers and solvent sniffers. A North American man close to my own age was obviously having a great impact in a number of lives. I began to question myself, thinking, *All I've done in my ministry is sit in a comfortable office, crunch numbers, and write from my desk about what's going on in the rest of the world.* I met this fellow at a Christian meeting the following day, and I discovered that he became involved in ministry because he had read the 1993 *Operation World*.

We've heard for a while that the balance of the global missionary force has been tipping

to Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

We can definitively say the balance has tipped. We've encountered a radical unfolding of awareness of situations from the non-Western world, in both the size of the church and the size of the church-planting force.

How is the West doing in sending missionaries?

It's kind of in a holding pattern. The Western church is undergoing a shift, partly because people are aware that the majority world is sending so many missionaries. Now there's a temptation to exempt ourselves. I think the commands of Scripture are very clear and haven't changed. There are still many countries where there is no possibility for the gospel to be communicated from within the country. In some cases, someone still has to come from outside.

There's plenty of information about other nations and religions, particularly online.

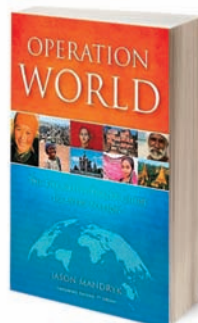
Why is *Operation World* still needed?

In addition to being a highly collaborative, consultative resource, it's written from a thoroughly evangelical and missional perspective. Of course, you can log on to Encyclopedia Britannica and find out what percentage of Kenya's imports come from Japan. But the essence and dynamic of *Operation World* are found in the prayer points.

Is passion to pray for the world increasing, decreasing, or staying about the same?

On a global level, it is definitely increasing. You can see that in trends and movements beyond *Operation World*, such as the Global Day of Prayer. But once you begin to see the number of prayer movements that have emerged in the past five to ten years, you're staggered to see how God is awakening his people to pray for their nations and the world.

Passionate prayer is such a natural expression, for example, within the African Christian context. In many parts of Africa, they don't turn to their material wealth, their national security, or the excellent infrastructure of their church networks. Often their first instinct is to turn to prayer. And I've been amazed by the sustained nature of their prayer.



The Weapon Satan Can't Stand

Furious Love highlights spiritual warfare around the globe. By Katelyn Beaty

Describing an event that exposed the reality of good and evil, G.K. Chesterton wrote, “I did not know whether it was hell or the furious love of God.” Like its source, the documentary **Furious Love** (Wanderlust Productions, now on DVD) ★★★★★ spotlights pockets of the globe where evil reigns and believers fight back in Christ’s name. Filmmaker Darren Wilson believes most Western Christians are unaware or dismissive of spiritual warfare as a daily reality, though they assent to it as a concept. As J. P. Moreland notes in the film, “We [Western Christians] tend to believe God heals only through medicine, that spirits are multiple personality disorders . . . [Non-Westerners] have a more biblical worldview when they come to Christ because they already know there’s a supernatural world.” On that note, *Furious* urges the Western church to turn from doctrinal quibbles and follow the lead of their majority-world spiritual siblings.

With a \$300,000 budget and sizable crew, Wilson journeys to Orissa, where India’s Christian minority has long endured attacks by Hindu nationalists, yet is learning the glory of suffering for Christ—and of forgiving persecutors. In Surabaya, Indonesia, the young pastor of a 30,000-member megachurch tells the story of confronting a witch doctor who claims he will resurrect himself—and who later becomes a Christian. In Thailand, a missionary couple helps women shackled in Bangkok’s vast sex trade find dignity in Christ and dignifying employment. “The powers of darkness rage blatantly here. I call it the Disneyland for the spirit world,” says one of the Bangkok missionaries. “But because of that, the love of Christ rages even more.”

Furious is more ambitious and better produced than Wilson’s first film, 2008’s *Finger of God*, but at times lacks focus. One sequence moves from ministers talking about prostitution in Amsterdam to a first-hand

account of Congo’s civil war to a New Age festival in Southern California. Each vignette is compelling, but strung together they have a whirlwind effect. And by focusing on such shocking stories in exotic locales, *Furious* all but ignores the subtler battles that might be occurring under our Western noses. For many, choosing to adopt or to stay married for life might be the most radical Christian deed. Including a few less dramatic (but no less powerful) examples like this might have provided a fuller, truly global portrait of God’s kingdom.

But if viewers can follow Wilson’s meandering narrative, they will likely leave deeply moved. “There is one weapon the Devil cannot stand: simple, pure love,” says one missionary in the film. By adding it to all the other weapons available in Christ (Eph. 6), our brothers and sisters are quietly triumphing. I hope to join them. ☩

Katelyn Beaty is a CT associate editor.

MY TOP 5 MOVIES IN THE HEAT OF SUMMER

By Mark Moring, CT senior associate editor and pop culture editor



JAWS

1975 | RATED PG

DIRECTED BY STEVEN SPIELBERG

As a teen, I spent many hot days on the beach; after *Jaws*, we were all scared to go back in the water. Spielberg’s first blockbuster captures not only summer’s heat but also the white-hot terror of what lurks beneath the surface—and reminds us that some fears are worth heeding.



IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT

1967 | NOT RATED

DIRECTED BY NORMAN JEWISON

Winning five Oscars, this aptly titled film drips not only with the sweat of a Southern summer, but also with racism, rednecks, and raw tension—and exposes the prejudicial potential that lurks within us all. A brilliant sociological study and murder mystery.



REAR WINDOW

1954 | RATED PG

DIRECTED BY ALFRED HITCHCOCK

It’s a sultry 94 degrees as this tense, macabre mystery opens. One resident—confined to a wheelchair with a broken leg—sweats it out as he watches his neighbors, particularly one very suspicious man. Hitchcock offers keen insights into our tendencies toward voyeurism and hasty conclusions.



TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

1962 | NOT RATED

DIRECTED BY ROBERT MULLIGAN

White lawyer defends wrongly accused black man in the Deep South; even “church folk” are ready to see a good lynching. But Atticus Finch—and truth and justice—ultimately triumph with his closing argument: “In the name of God, do your duty.”



12 ANGRY MEN

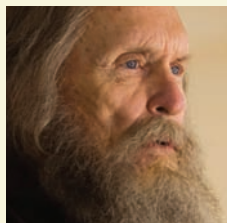
1957 | NOT RATED

DIRECTED BY SIDNEY LUMET

Shot almost entirely in one room in the oppressive oven of a New York summer, one can almost feel the stifling claustrophobia as 12 jury members debate the fate of a teen boy. It provides sizzling dialogue, superb camera work, and incisive insights into the value of human life.

TWO MINUTES WITH...

Robert Duvall



In his new film, *Get Low*, Oscar winner Robert Duvall plays Felix Bush, an eccentric recluse living in the Tennessee hills—while all the townsfolk tell wild (and mostly untrue) stories about

him. Bush decides to hold a living funeral so he can hear what the people are *really* saying about him. Duvall, 79, talked to *CT*'s Mark Moring about the film, his friendship with the late Horton Foote, and 1997's *The Apostle*.

How would you describe *Get Low*?

It's kind of a Southern folk tale, a fictionalized based-on-fact story of a man who had set up and gone to his own funeral. There's a lot of humanity in the story.

What do you think people will say at your funeral someday?

I don't know. I hope I left behind a legacy that people will enjoy.

I hear the script reminded you of the great scriptwriter Horton Foote.

Yes. I did several of his films—*Tender Mercies*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and others. I wish he could've seen *Get Low*. If I had done only Horton's films and those of Francis Ford Coppola (*The Godfather*, *The Godfather II*, *Apocalypse Now*), I would have had a wonderful career.

You often play flawed, broken men. Why?

They make good drama. If people don't have conflicts and faults, there is no drama.

Are you attracted to stories that depict spiritual things?

I don't go looking for something with a "message," so to speak. If it's there, it's there. When I did *The Apostle*, that was a personal kind of thing.

Some people thought *The Apostle* mocked Pentecostal preachers.

Let me straighten these people out. My guy [Euliss "Sonny" Dewey, the title character] killed a guy out of anger, right? But he wasn't half as bad as King David in the Psalms, who sent a man off to be killed so he could be with his wife. Billy Graham liked the movie, and many preachers did. If Hollywood had done this, they would have mocked [Pentecostals]. But I didn't.



Counting Blessings

Andrew Peterson's simple folk tales of everyday life.

By Josh Hurst

For a split second, at the beginning of his new album, *Counting Stars* (Centricity) ★★★★★, Andrew Peterson *almost* sounds like a bit of a narcissist. "Could it be that the many roads you took to get here / Were just for me to tell this story, and you to hear this song?" he wonders aloud. Actually, the song is the epitome of humility: Peterson doesn't fancy himself a pop star but an instrument of grace, a mouthpiece of something true.

On *Counting Stars*, Peterson is just a humble folk singer, his music tasteful, elegant, and never flashy. His songs are simple observational tales from life, drawing on spiritual metaphors that teach basic Christian truths without ever seeming didactic. This is folk music for the coffee-shop set: stories and songs so quiet, they demand that you sit and actively *listen*.

Peterson is a soft-spoken singer and gentle acoustic guitar strummer; he's also a writer who takes seriously the adage to write about what you know. As such, his songs are explicitly autobiographical. But *Counting Stars* isn't marked by navel-gazing

self-reckoning, like so much confessional folk music; it's characterized more than anything by a spirit of contentment. Peterson sings about his two greatest callings—his marriage and his music—from the perspective of one who has been deeply blessed, whose amazement at God's endless grace is renewed daily. "Dancing in the Minefields" is a standout, a chronicle of Peterson's marriage to wife Jamie that views the institution as an adventure fraught with peril but rich in joy.

Marriage may be like "sailing in the storm," but the singer finds peace in the faithfulness of the Almighty, and in the daily lessons in self-denial that a healthy marriage affords.

In the songs about touring and playing, Peterson acknowledges that sometimes his only reward is encouraging others with the light of Christ—but what more could he ask for? He may never be a big star, but he doesn't seem to mind; on *Counting Stars*, he's counting his blessings à la Abraham. And he's inviting us to do the same. ✦

Josh Hurst, a music and film critic, blogs at TheHurstReview.wordpress.com.



QUICK TAKES

More media of note.

BOOKS

► THE STRATEGICALLY SMALL CHURCH

Intimate, Nimble, Authentic, Effective

BRANDON J. O'BRIEN (BETHANY HOUSE)

★★★★★ Brandon O'Brien thinks the small church's biggest disadvantage is an underlying inferiority complex driven largely by megachurch ministry's definition of success. Seeking to renew the imagination of small-church pastors, O'Brien points to the small church's unique gifts for carrying out God's mission: simplicity, authenticity, participation, and a family-like environment. This book is helpful for small-church pastors looking to develop small-church strengths, and for big-church leaders who seek to emulate small-church gifts.

► THE PASSIONATE INTELLECT

Christian Faith and the Discipleship of the Mind

ALISTER MCGRATH (INTERVARSITY)

★★★★★ This book comprises lectures about developing the Christian mind as integral to

living out the faith. At times McGrath writes autobiographically, recording his journey from bewilderment at human evil and suffering to his eventual embrace of Luther's "theology of the cross." In the latter half, he responds to the New Atheism, putting on display the type of intellectual engagement he encouraged in the first half. Some may think him overly gracious to Darwin, but even so, McGrath's attempt to show that science is not necessarily a foe to faith is admirable. —Books reviewed by Trevin Wax

MUSIC

THE ARROWS

► MAKE BELIEVE

(TYDEE)

★★★★★ This full-length debut from a female duo from Durban, South Africa, lives up to its own description: "an atmosphere of thumpingly evangelical euphoria." Inventive both lyrically and melodically, the Arrows bring a Christian worldview to the entire project with a sound all their own—prog rock meets electronica meets disco, with a bit of jazz thrown in. Drummer Christie Desfontaine keeps the beat while Pamela De Menezes' versatile voice

mesmerizes; she also writes the songs and plays piano, organ, and synthesizers. One of the top surprises of 2010. —Mark Moring

ON TV

► 12TH AND DELAWARE

HBO DOCUMENTARIES | AUGUST 2

★★★★★ This documentary's title refers to an intersection in Fort Pierce, Florida, that's home to an abortion clinic and a pro-life pregnancy center on opposite sides of the street. The makers of *Jesus Camp* have crafted a documentary that is not so much pro-choice as it is anti-pro-life. Abortion providers are portrayed as fierce protectors of civil rights working under the shadow of violence and threats of murder, while protesters are just trying to bully prospective patients into doing what they think is right. It is a window into how many pro-choice people view those in the pro-life movement. —Kenneth R. Morefield

ON DVD

► WHAT'S IN THE BIBLE?

(TYNDALE HOUSE)

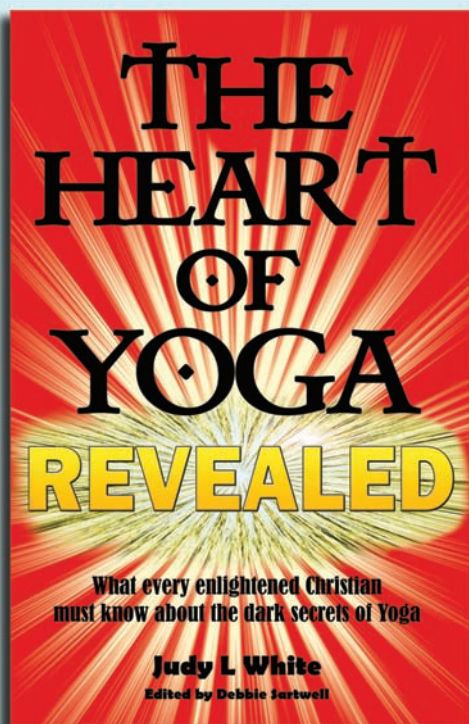
★★★★★ This new DVD series from VeggieTales creator Phil Vischer takes kids seriously. Its wacky characters and silly songs aim not only to entertain but also to improve biblical literacy by showing how the Bible's stories fit together to form one big story that affects our lives. The DVDs, which will eventually make a 13-disc set surveying the entire Bible, tackle big themes (sin, redemption, salvation) and big questions (canonization, creation theory, reliability) that will get both kids and parents thinking more seriously about God's Word and its impact on their lives. —Laura Leonard

CHONDA PIERCE

► DID I SAY THAT OUT LOUD?

(PROVIDENT)

★★★★★ Chonda Pierce has mined the foibles of Southern evangelicalism to great comedic effect, yielding three platinum and six gold DVDs. Here, she includes bemused observations from a recent stay in LA, and the results are mixed—broad swipes at environmentalists and covert references to homosexuality feel more cranky than funny. Pierce is at her best when she pokes fun at her own tribe, discussing mid-life beauty secrets and church politics. Filmed before a hometown crowd obviously familiar with Pierce's story, some of the material may feel too inside for new fans, but longtime followers should find plenty to enjoy. —Carolyn Arends



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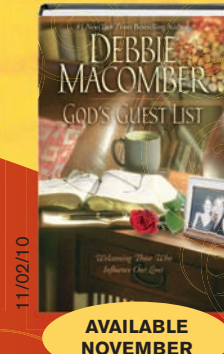
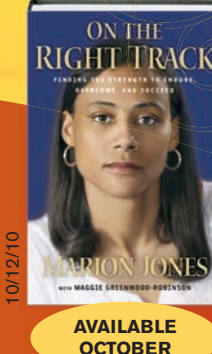
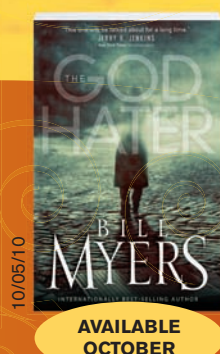
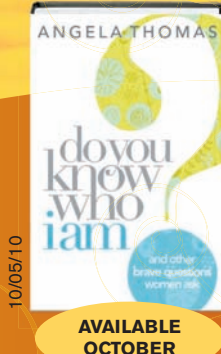
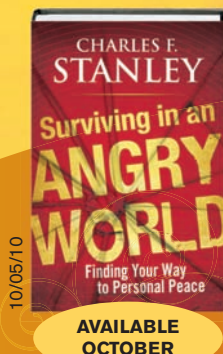
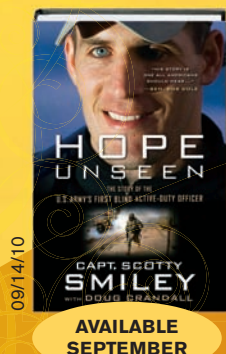
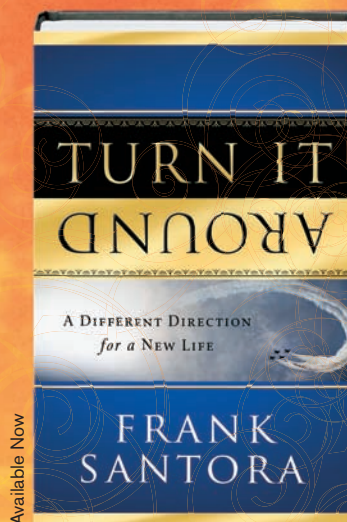
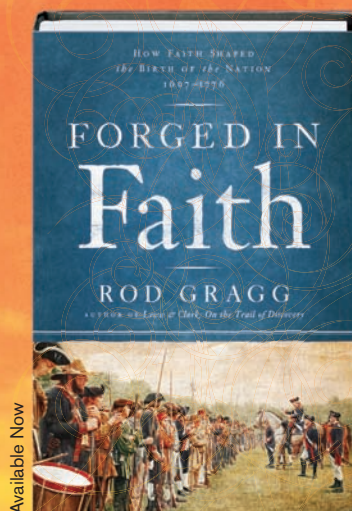
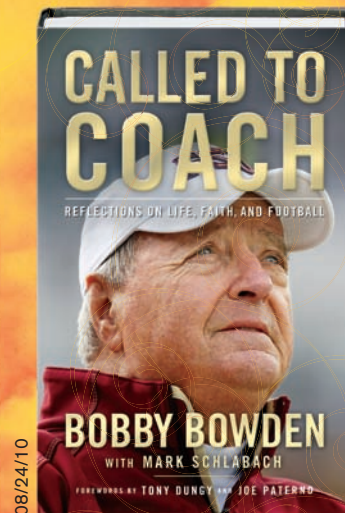
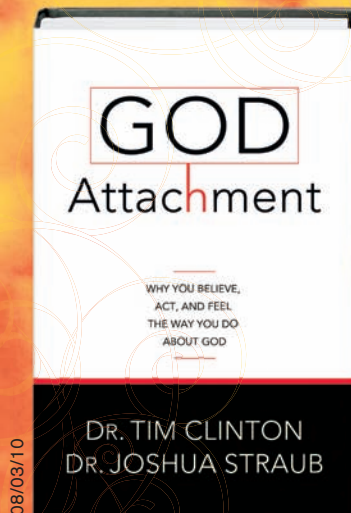
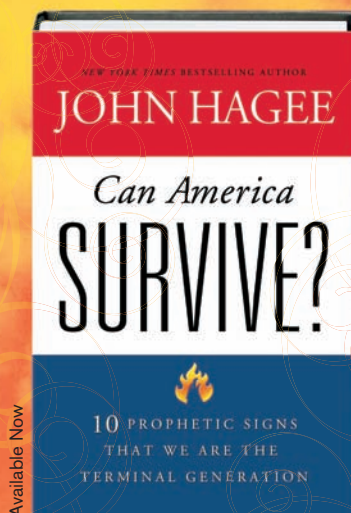
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[Employment Opportunities]

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A Jazz-Shaped Faith

Robert Gelinas, the Jazz Theologian, marches to the beat of a smooth drummer.

If you are studying systematic theology and have to work your way through Greek and Hebrew flash cards, you might think a nice quiet library would be the right spot. Not for Robert Gelinas. While working on a degree in biblical studies, he headed to a local jazz venue that stayed open late and offered bottomless cups of coffee. He would talk to the musicians about Jesus, and they would school him in the ways of jazz. “It was there,” says Gelinas, “that I realized that jazz is more than music and, when understood, can be applied to prayer, Bible study, and the way we do church.”

Today Gelinas is lead pastor of Colorado Community Church’s Aurora campus, where he also founded Project 1.27, an adoption ministry that encourages the adoption of every child in the state’s foster care system. (Gelinas and his wife, Barbara, have six kids—one biological and five adopted, including two from Ethiopia.) But these days Gelinas may be best known as the Jazz Theologian. He has a website by that name, a book titled *Finding the Groove: Composing a Jazz-Shaped Faith* (Zondervan), and another coming in 2011, *Strange Fruit: Responding to the Blue Note of the Cross* (Zondervan). ➦

➦ **Age** 40

➦ **Hometown** Denver

➦ **Church** Colorado Community Church

➦ **Family** Barbara (wife); six kids ages 5–12 (Selah, Kia, Gabriel, James, Mihret, Temesgen)

➦ **Reading now** *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, by Michelle Alexander

➦ **On your iPod** Nicholas Payton, *Into the Blue*; Regina Carter, *Paganini: After a Dream*; Terence Blanchard, *Choices*

➦ **Favorite website** UrbanFaith.com

➦ **Favorite recent film** *The Book of Eli*

question & answer

Who are your favorite jazz musicians?

I enjoy Miles, Coltrane, Charles Mingus, and Dexter Gordon from back in the day. Today I like Kirk Whalum, Roy Hargrove, and Marcus Miller. But my favorite jazz artist is the great American novelist Ralph Ellison, who demonstrated that jazz is more than music with his classic novel, *Invisible Man*. He showed that if we understand the basics of jazz, we can see it expressed in a variety of ways.

What’s “jazz theology”?

Jazz theology is what happens when we express the basic elements of jazz in our relationship with God—syncopation, improvisation, and call and response. These allow us to find our own voice within Scripture; experience life in concert with other practicing Christians; truly have time as servant leaders instead of time having us; and sing the blues so as not to waste any pain.

What do you mean by “sing the blues so as not to waste any pain”?

To sing the blues is to embrace the cross of Christ and the cross he calls us to bear. In the process we realize that Jesus not only redeems us *from* our sin and sadness, he also actually *redeems* our sin and sadness.

What does jazz-shaped faith look like in your life?

It helps me as a servant leader. A jazz drummer sitting behind the band has the worst seat to see from but the best to listen from. From that vantage point he is able to speed time up and slow time down depending on what others are doing. As a pastor this reminds me that one of the best things I can do is listen to what others are expressing about what God is doing in their lives, so I can serve them as Christ would.

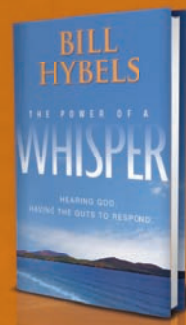
More: JazzTheologian.com, Project127.com, ColoradoCommunity.org

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to speak to a woman in a stadium of 40,000.

to warn the girl speeding through a hairpin curve.

God speaks. To countless people in countless ways, God speaks—not in a shout, but in a whisper. In *The Power of a Whisper*, pastor and bestselling author Bill Hybels recounts how powerful those whispers from God can be, and how they saved him “from a life of sure boredom and self-destruction.” Using true stories from people from all walks of life, Hybels inspires us to listen—and challenges us to respond—to God’s whispers.



You can download the first chapter of *The Power of a Whisper*, and read actual whispers that men and women have shared, at **TheWhisperWall.com/CT-offer**

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