

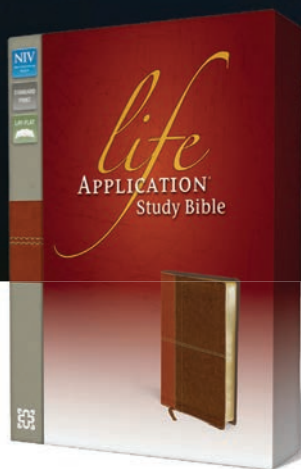
Christianity Today

OCTOBER 2011

How to Read the Bible

Why leading evangelical scholars are arguing for a new way to interpret Scripture.

SAVING CHINA'S DAUGHTERS 34
+ THE TRUTH ABOUT WELLS 44
WHAT IS 'CHRISTIAN POLITICS'? 65

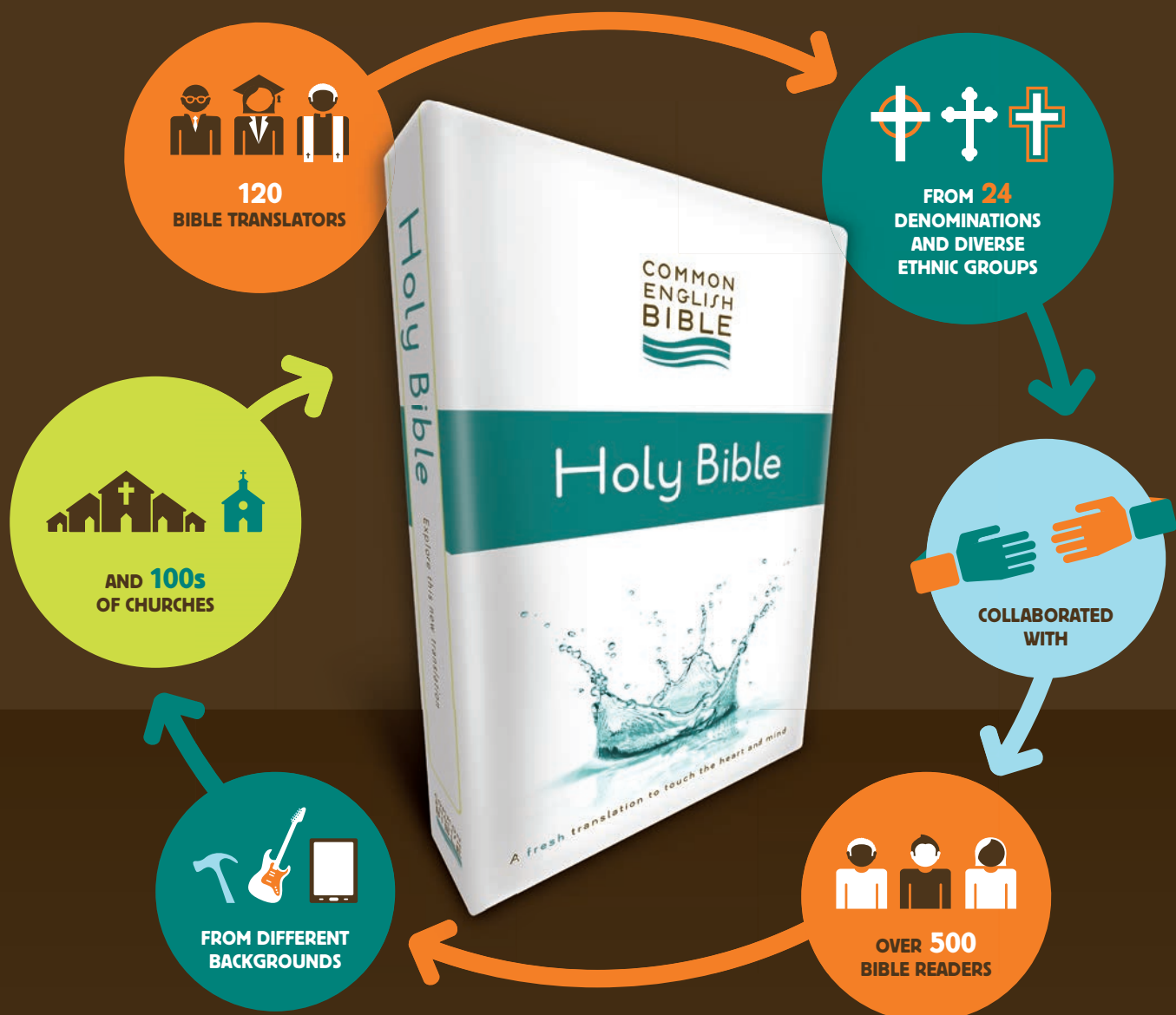


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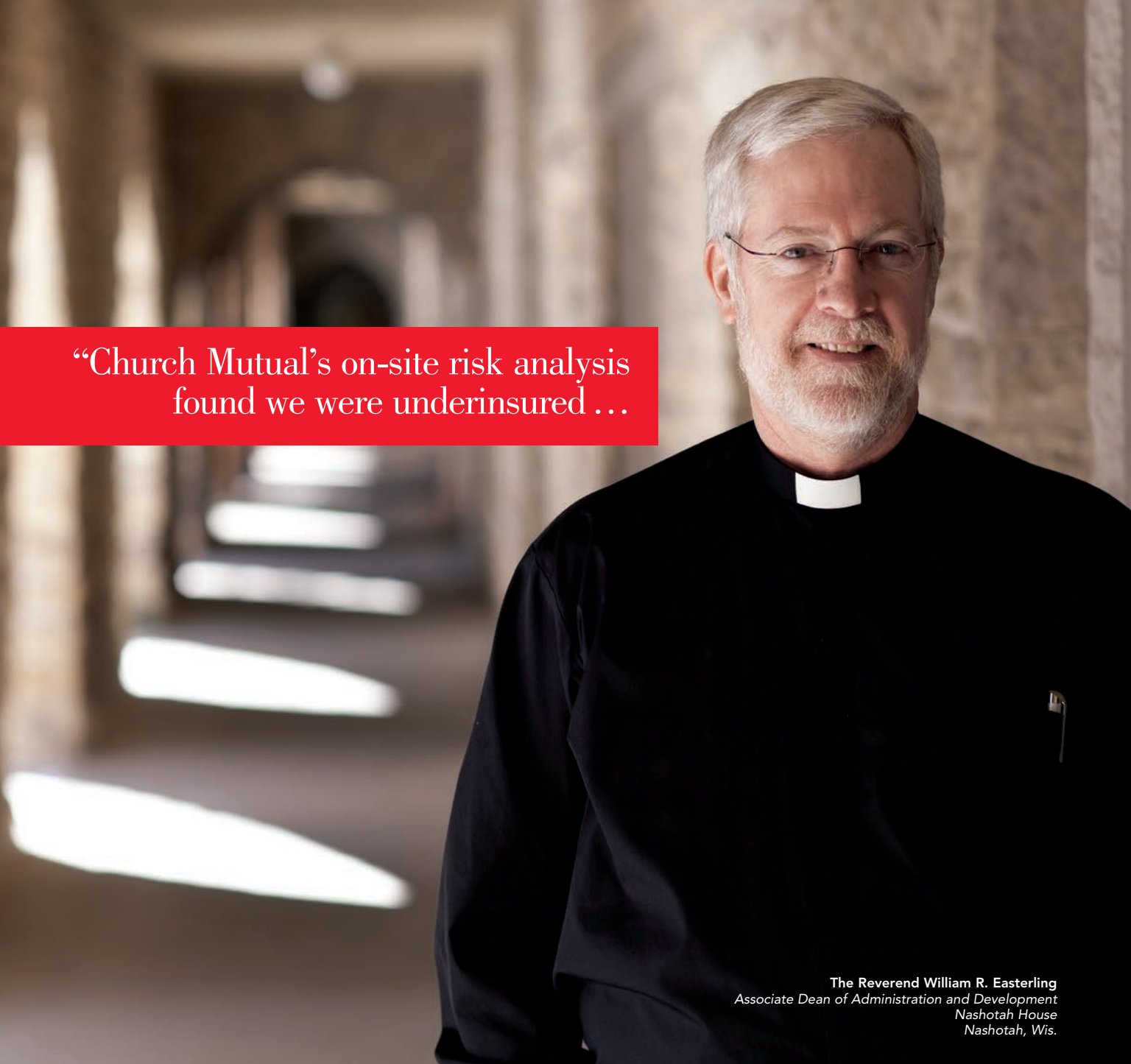
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BRIEFING

- 13 Spotlight** Steve Green's Bible Manuscripts
- 14 Gleanings** Prison Fellowship de-funds reentry programs, Hungary withdraws benefits from hundreds of churches, and Peru and Croatia compete for world's tallest Jesus statue.
- 16 Headlines** **CHURCH LIFE** Tanzanians debate the healing power of pastor's 'miracle cure.'
FINANCE Las Vegas church drops mortgage payments for expansion plans. **17**
BUSINESS Online boycotts separate corporations from Christian groups. **17**
◀ { In Depth } MISSIONS A leading missions agency transforms itself following persecution. **19**



FEATURES

- 24 How to Read the Bible** **J. TODD BILLINGS**
 New strategies for interpreting Scripture turn out to be not so new.
- 32 A Left-Leaning Text** **AARON B. FRANZEN**
 Survey surprise: Frequent Bible reading can turn you liberal (in some ways).
- 34 Saving China's Daughters** **INTERVIEW BY TIMOTHY C. MORGAN**
 Each day in China, 35,000 baby girls are aborted and 500 women commit suicide. Freedom fighter Chai Ling won't take it any longer.
- 38 Salt and Light** **JOHN R. W. STOTT**
 Four ways Christians can influence the world.
- 44 Drilling for Truth** **JEREMY WEBER**
 The messy business of clean water.
- ◀ 50 Free at First** **MARK GALLI**
 Why we need a fully biblical liberation theology.
- 54 A Black and White Production** **MARK MORING**
 Sherwood Baptist, the church behind *Facing the Giants* and *Fireproof*, partners with an African American congregation to bring racial healing to a Georgia town.
- 60 Undoing the Damage** **MARK MORING**
 If the famine in the Horn of Africa is manmade, human intervention can end the crisis.

VIEWPOINTS

- 63 Letters** Readers respond to the August issue of CT.
- 65 Where We Stand** Unexpected Political Hero
- 66 The Village Green** Jenell Williams Paris, Leslie Ludy, and Dennis Franck consider Christian dating websites.
- 68 Wrestling with Angels** Carolyn Arends hopes for a blast of holy water.
- ◀ 70 Contra Mundum** Chuck Colson and Timothy George introduce the polygamists next door.



CT REVIEW

- 73 Books**
- ◀ Marcia Pally's *America's New Evangelicals*
 - Sara Zarr: My Top 5 for young adults
 - Liao Yiwu's *God Is Red*
 - Excerpt: *Simply Jesus* by N. T. Wright
 - Wilson's Bookmarks
 - Interview: Douglas Groothuis on good apologetics
- 78 Movies**
- *The Way*
 - *The Presence*
- 79 Music**
- Two minutes with Nichole Nordeman
 - Switchfoot's *Vice Verses*
- 80 Quick Takes** More media of note



COVER LETTERING BY
AMANDA DUFFY



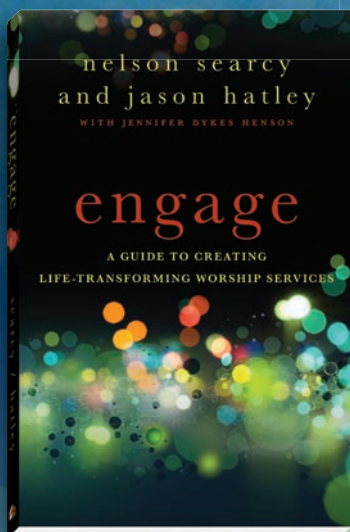
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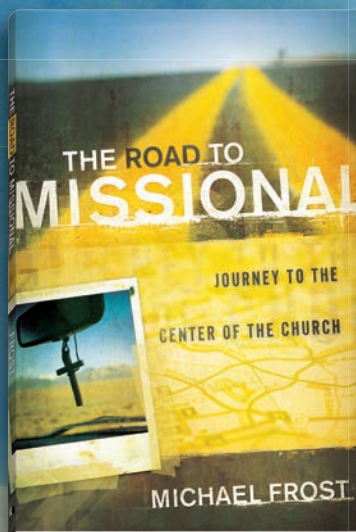
- 11 Inside CT** Mark Galli introduces the next 'Battle for the Bible.'
- 112 Who's Next** Julie Bell trains church leaders' minds Christ-ward.

RELEVANCE

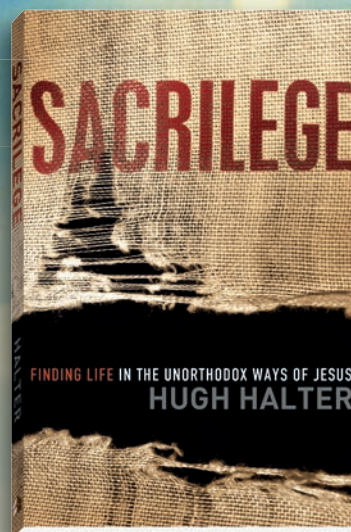
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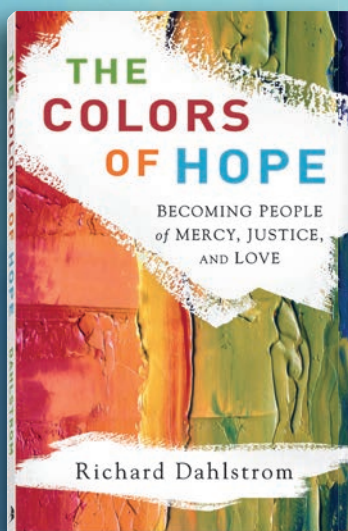
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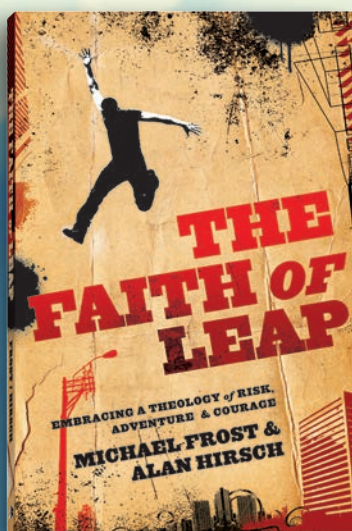
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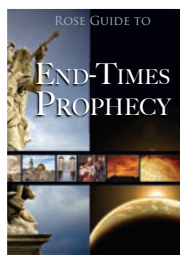
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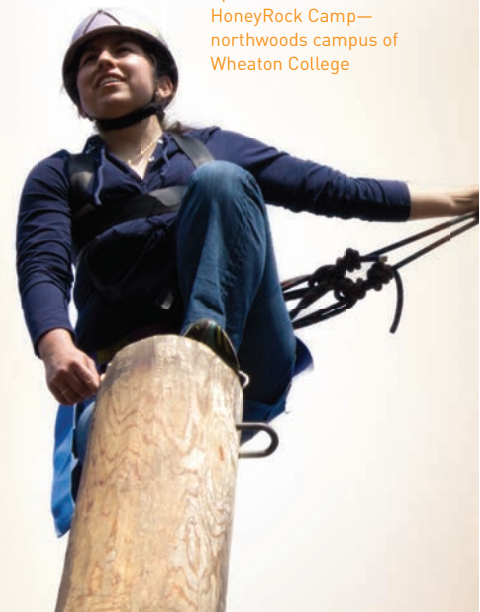
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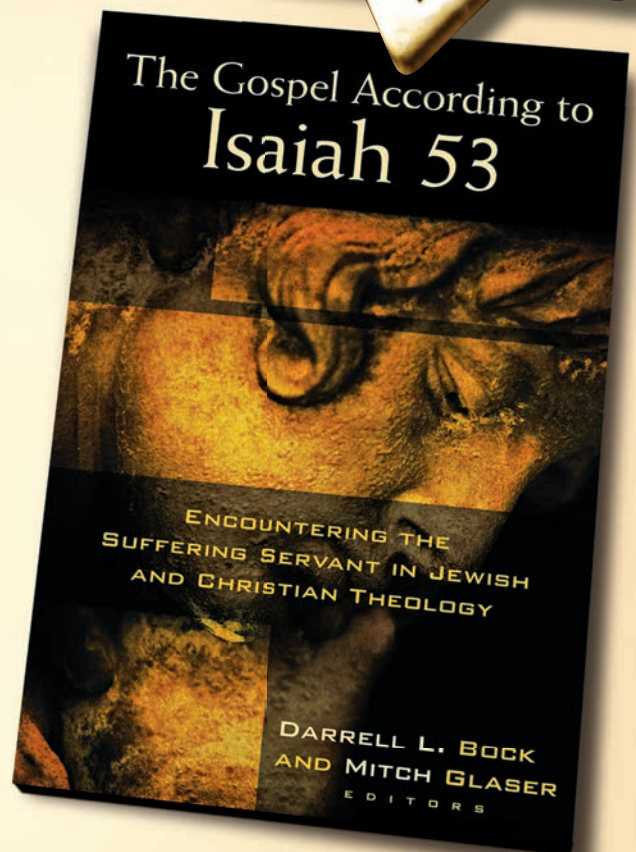


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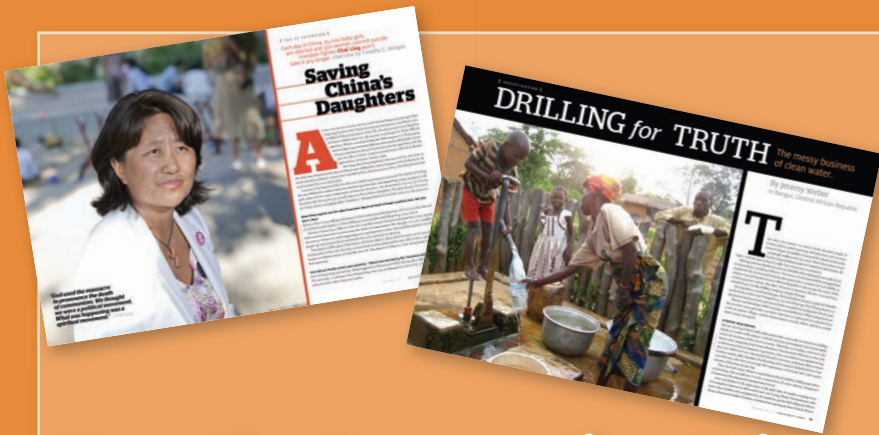


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Christianity Today is eager to spark conversation between our readers and believers outside North America. Billy Graham, CT's founder, convened key events that brought people together from around the world. He initiated large international gatherings focused on evangelism in Berlin, Lausanne, and Amsterdam.

In 2009 and 2010, CT partnered with the Lausanne Movement to focus an interactive discussion on the issues that shape our witness today.

Global conversation continues at *Christianity Today*. In this issue, we talk with Chai Ling, a veteran of the bloody Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Chai became a Christian in 2009. Then in 2010, she founded the nonprofit All Girls Allowed (AGA), which campaigns against the forced abortions that have followed in the wake of China's 32-year-old one-child policy. That policy has also led to sex-selective abortion, disproportionately discarding girl babies. AGA fights for the right of all girls to live. Read Chai's story on page 34.

Also in this issue, we listen in on a transatlantic dispute over a Christian well-drilling operation in the Central African Republic. Having clean, potable water can radically improve the health and economic well being of people living in primitive circumstances. Perhaps because Jesus said a cup of cold water could have eternal significance, evangelicals have eagerly supported ministries that provide these wells. The claims and counterclaims reported on page 44 will help you understand the cross-cultural difficulties and potential mistakes and missteps inherent in such enterprises.

All this requires funding. To do more means drawing on resources outside our normal revenue streams. That's where you come in.

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David Neff, Editor in Chief

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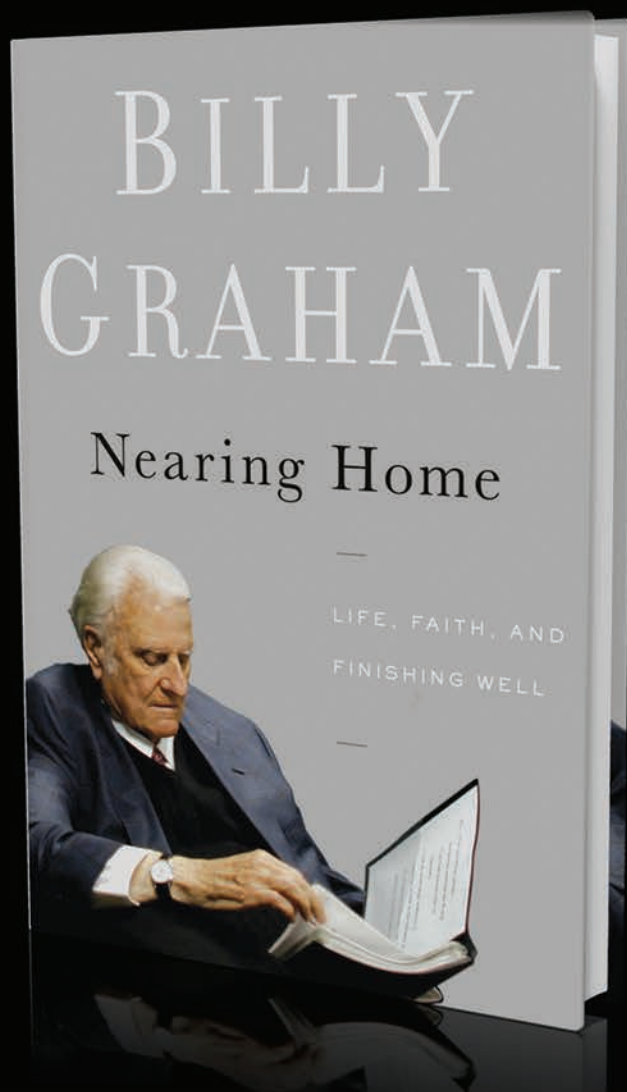
—BILLY GRAHAM

“I would have never guessed what God had in store for me, and I know that as I am nearing home, He will not forsake me the last mile of the way.”

In *Nearing Home* this man of faith—now in his nineties—explores the challenges of aging while gleaning foundational truths from Scripture. Billy Graham invites us to journey with him as he considers the golden years while anticipating the hope of being reunited with his wife, Ruth, in his heavenly home that eclipses this world.

“When granted many years of life, growing old in age is natural, but growing old with grace is a choice,” says the author. “Growing older with grace is possible for all who will set their hearts and minds on the Giver of grace, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Join Billy Graham as he shares the challenges of fading strength but still standing strong in his commitment to finishing life well.





A New Bible Battle

It's not about doctrine but our use of Scripture.

T

his magazine is indirectly famous for one of its editors—Harold Lindsell—starting a short-lived but notorious “Battle for the Bible” when the editor penned a book with that title in 1976.

At the time, I was a student at Fuller Theological Seminary, one key institution criticized by Lindsell (where he taught briefly) because it didn't hold to inerrancy. I still recall the momentous convocation in which our president, David Hubbard, defended the school's position: that the Bible is “the only infallible rule of faith and practice.” Hubbard questioned Lindsell's “unbiblical” understanding of inerrancy, disputed his take on the contemporary theological scene, and vowed that Fuller would “sail into the winds of controversy” confident of the “seaworthiness of our ship and the correctness of our course.” It was heady stuff.

At the time, Donald Dayton, a professor at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in suburban Chicago, reviewed the book and the broader controversy for *The Christian Century*. Toward the end of the review, he noted,

The crunch will most likely be felt at *Christianity Today*. Does the editor's book inevitably pull the magazine into his corner and make of it a party journal no longer representative of the whole? Or will the magazine find a way to bridge the ever-broadening evangelical world and by implication repudiate Lindsell's position—which depends at its very heart on its exclusiveness?

That question was answered in short order after Kenneth Kantzer became CT's editor in 1978. One of his first acts was to write a letter to Hubbard—which Hubbard posted outside his office door—extending an olive branch.

Though one editor's book suggested otherwise, as a magazine, we have always been committed to the word *inerrant* to describe the Bible's trustworthiness, and to fellowshiping with those who describe the Bible's authority using other language. The magazine as such never engaged in that battle for the Bible.

We are now interested in another battle, one that's not about the Bible's authority but rather its use. Evangelicals are tempted—even when we have the highest view of Scripture—to read it in sub-biblical ways. The sacred text is often used as a self-help manual, or for erecting a doctrinal fence, or for justifying our latest missional venture.

Instead, argues J. Todd Billings, associate professor of Reformed theology at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, recent evangelical scholarship concludes that the Bible is not primarily about us or doctrine or even mission (see “How to Read the Bible,” page 24). It's about that yet so much more: the means by which we come to know God as revealed in Christ, and are transformed into his image.

So, in this new “battle,” I'd like to see us (charitably!) wrestle over what that looks like as we preach and teach the Word of God in our churches.

Next month: Andy Crouch and Katelyn Beaty debut our This Is Our City project, and Sarah Pulliam Bailey interviews Christine Gardner on the abstinence movement.

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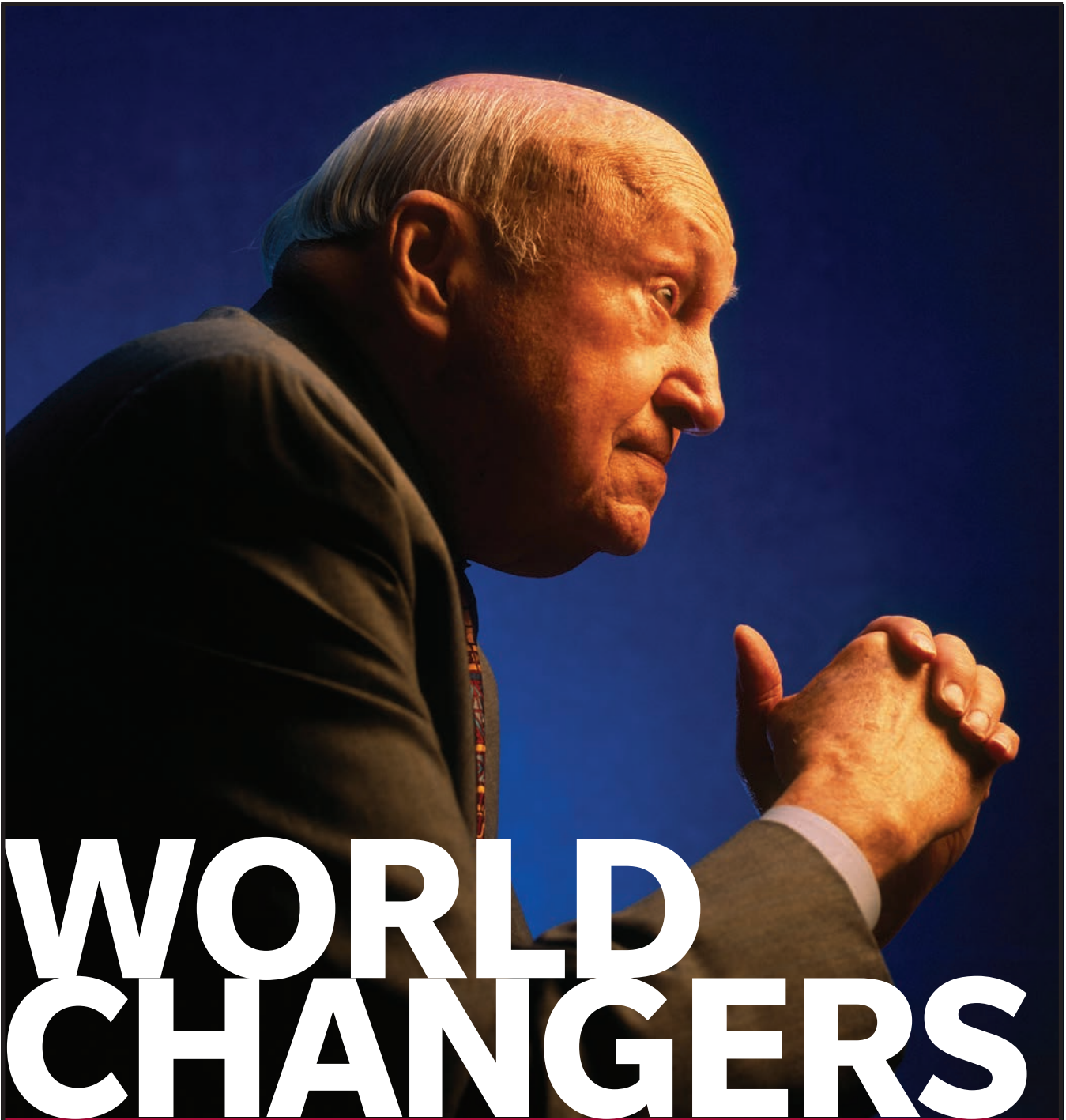
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FROM THE CHURCH
WORLDWIDE

SPOTLIGHT: The Green Collection

➔ **HOBBY LOBBY PRESIDENT** Steve Green bought his first biblical manuscripts at auction in November 2009. By the time the Green Collection debuted in March, he had, conservatively, more than 30,000 more biblical manuscripts and artifacts. While 300 or so of its most notable items have been on display at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, the collection has grown by another 10,000 items. After the Oklahoma "Passages" exhibition closes October 16, it will travel to Atlanta, the Vatican, New York, and other cities. Meanwhile, Green (who now spends about half his time on the collection) is scouting locations for a permanent museum.



26,800

People who have visited the Passages exhibit in Oklahoma so far.

\$2.6 billion

Net worth of Green family patriarch David, founder of Hobby Lobby, according to *Forbes*. It places him among the country's wealthiest 150 people.

\$20 million to \$40 million

Worth of the Green Collection items, according to unnamed specialists cited by *The New York Times*.

Collector and curator:

Green (left) works closely with Scott Carroll, who previously served as founder and director of Robert Van Kampen's Scriptorium (formerly the largest private collection of biblical manuscripts and artifacts). Here they hold a 13th-century, richly illustrated copy of the Ethiopic Gospels.



Jewel: The collection's capstone is the Codex Climaci Rescriptus, one of the oldest near-complete Bibles in the world, in Greek and Christian Palestinian Aramaic.



Important pieces: This Genesis fragment is part of the second-largest private collection of the Dead Sea Scrolls. All of Green's fragments are yet unpublished.



Luther letters: The Passages exhibition has many Reformation items, including Martin Luther's Bibles, tracts, and letters. It also highlights Catholic and Jewish contributions to the King James Bible.



Personal favorite: Green is particularly fond of his 1782 Aitken Bible, which the U.S. Congress endorsed; it became the first English Bible printed in North America.



Saved scrolls:

Green also owns the world's largest private collection of Jewish scrolls, including ones that survived the Spanish Inquisition, Nazi concentration camps, and China's Cultural Revolution.

seventh day, wherefore the LORD blessed both day, and hallowed it.
* Deut. 5: 12 * Honour thy father and thy mother: thy days may be long upon the land: LORD thy God: which is the first commandment.
* Eph. 6: 2 * Honour thy father and thy mother: which is the first commandment.
* Matt. 23: 2 * Thou shalt not kill.
* Rom. 13: 9 * Thou shalt not commit adultery.
* Rom. 13: 10 * Thou shalt not bear false witness.
* Rom. 13: 11 * Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house.

1

Erroneous missing word—*not*—in the rare 1631 "Wicked Bible."



3



4



6

GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 School can force Christian groups open

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled that San Diego State University can refuse to recognize student religious groups that limit membership to fellow believers. However, the court said the school may have unfairly singled out a Christian fraternity and sorority while allowing other groups to use race or religion as membership criteria. The policy is more common than a broader one at Hastings School of Law, where the Christian Legal Society (CLS) lost a high-profile Supreme Court appeal last year. In a related case, the CLS dropped a lawsuit against the University of Montana School of Law after reaching a settlement that sets neutral criteria for funding groups.

in health-care plans for employees. The bill requires full coverage of women's contraception, including Plan B and ella (both opposed by pro-life groups); the exemption applies to nonprofit religious employers that exist to instill religious values and employ and serve people of the same religion. Catholic hospitals are nonprofit but meet none of the other requirements.

4 UN clamps down on blasphemy laws

The United Nations Human Rights Committee updated its freedom of expression definitions for the first time in nearly three decades. Comment No. 34 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights says that member countries cannot legislate speech in favor of or against specific religious groups (as do blasphemy laws). Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also called for UN member states to implement a spring Human Rights Council decision emphasizing freedom of religion over religious defamation laws.

5 Future of Catholic foster care uncertain

The State of Illinois can decline to renew foster-care contracts with Catholic Charities, a Sangamon County circuit court ruled. The future of Catholic foster-care services was under review after Illinois legalized civil unions in June. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services refused to renew funding contracts with Catholic dioceses for the 2012 fiscal year because they will not place children with gay couples. Catholic Charities currently refers such couples to other organizations. More than 2,000 Illinois foster children will be transferred out of Catholic Charities' care.

2 Hundreds of churches lose approval

HUNGARY A law that takes effect January 1 recognizes 14 faith groups and requires almost 350 others to re-register for state approval in order to receive tax breaks and to use the title "church." The Church of God, Methodists, Pentecostals, and Seventh-Day Adventists are among the excluded. In order to re-register, faith groups must prove they have 1,000 followers and have existed for more than 20 years; then parliament must approve them by a two-thirds majority. The dominant Hungarian Reformed Church welcomed the restrictions on new groups.

3 Conscience clause omits Catholic hospitals

A proposed conscience exemption to federal health-care rules may require Catholic hospitals to include contraception

6 Religion law clamps down on freedom

ARMENIA Proposed revisions to religious laws would prohibit preaching to children under the age of 14 and would ban "soul-hunting," defined as "improper proselytism." Pastors and democracy advocates in Armenia criticized the new draft as repressive. Meanwhile, churches in Armenia and neighboring Georgia are debating which country owns churches and monasteries near the border.

7 Court: Discrimination suit can continue

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) cannot claim a ministerial exception to deflect a lawsuit, a North Carolina federal court ruled. Kimberly McCallum was formerly the only African American in the BGEA executive office. She sued the BGEA, claiming she was the only employee laid off in a downsizing shortly after she complained that black congregations were not asked to participate in a summer program. The court ruled McCallum's job description was administrative, not ministerial, so the BGEA cannot claim a ministerial exception to discriminate in hiring people who perform religious functions.

8 Church construction bill raises concerns

EGYPT A proposed law is designed to simplify the building process for churches and mosques. But both Coptic and Muslim leaders say its restrictions are impractical. The law would allow only one worship building per square kilometer, but Muslim leaders say many villages need more than that. Catholic leaders said a requirement that buildings be at least 1,000 square meters is similarly impractical. The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies asked the cabinet to withdraw the bill because it covers only government-recognized religious

GO FIGURE Identity

49%

Muslims in the U.S. who say they think of themselves first as Muslims rather than as Americans.

70%

Evangelicals in the U.S. who say they think of themselves first as Christians rather than as Americans.

Pew Research Center



compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

“The times when a citizen of ours would be oppressed due to his religion, ethnic origin, or different way of life are over.”

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, prime minister of Turkey, announcing the return of hundreds of properties seized from Christians and other minorities since 1936. The European Union has made the returns a requirement for Turkey's membership.

Anatolian News Agency

“Christians cannot continue to be at the receiving end. Enough is enough.”

Owen Nwokolo, an Anglican bishop in southern Nigeria, warning that Christians might retaliate for recent deadly attacks on churches and clergy. The deaths were blamed on the Islamist Boko Haram sect.

Punch

“Fast from each and every kind of secular information: TV, Internet, newspapers, magazines, radios . . . from everything that is not godly.”

Edir Macedo, head of Brazil's popular prosperity-gospel sect, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, and owner of many of the country's religious media. He announced the fast as Brazilian media aired exposés of the church.

The Guardian

“The less educated are dropping out of the American religious sector [like] they have dropped out of the American labor market.”

W. Bradford Wilcox, sociologist at the University of Virginia, on finding that church attendance among white Americans without college degrees is dropping twice as quickly as among those with college degrees. Only 37 percent with only high school diplomas attend church at least monthly.

American Sociological Association

11

9 Restructuring and layoffs at Prison Fellowship

Prison Fellowship laid off 72 employees, named new top leadership, and cut funding to a partner program in three states. The inmate ministry named Michigan pastor Jim Liske CEO and former Atlanta pastor Garland Hunt president. Prison Fellowship also announced it would close the InnerChange Freedom Initiative, a partner program that trains inmates for reentry, in Missouri, Kansas, and Arkansas; the program will continue in Texas and Minnesota. Staff in Missouri and Arkansas hope to establish InnerChange as an independent nonprofit rather than shutting down.

10 California regulates abortion speech

In a pro-life victory, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals declared unconstitutional California rules that allow abortion-clinic employees to escort clients inside but prevent pro-life protesters from approaching. Policies that set an eight-foot bubble of space around women entering clinics must be enforced without regard to the message being presented, judges ruled.

11 First Christian elected to parliament

TURKEY Citizens have elected the first Syriac Christian ever to serve in the Turkish parliament. Less than 1 percent of Turkish citizens are Christians. Erol Dora is an independent backed by the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party. Dora promised he would become the voice of the Syriac community. Only a few Christians have served in Turkey's other legislative seats over the past century.

12 Americans expelled for proselytizing

UZBEKISTAN The government expelled eight U.S. nationals for allegedly attempting to convert locals to Christianity. The Americans were in the Central Asian nation as English-language teachers and “carried out unlawful missionary activity to attract Uzbek students,” according to a report from a state government website. The 90-percent Muslim country bans missionary work and has deported eight other people this year on missionary charges.

13 Islamic banking system draws controversy

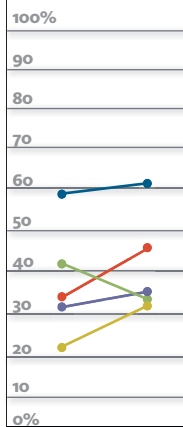
NIGERIA A law legalizing an interest-free Shari'ah banking system has roiled the religiously divided nation. Christian groups have vehemently opposed the law as promoting Islam over other religions. The Central Bank of Nigeria denied the charge, claiming that any group or individual may apply for a license to practice non-interest banking. Media reports indicate a Christian group plans to test the law by creating its own banking system and submitting it to the central bank for approval.

14 Jesus statues create uproar

CROATIA, PERU Planned statues of Jesus are creating controversy in Europe and South America. In heavily Catholic Croatia, Split mayor Zeljko Kerum announced plans to erect a 129-foot-tall, privately funded statue that would be the tallest Christ sculpture in the world. Critics said the statue was a popularity ploy to gain votes. Meanwhile, departing Peruvian president Alan García ordered the construction of a 120-foot-tall Jesus statue in Lima. Critics said the money should have gone toward social needs.

GO FIGURE Spirituality

Faith in New York City since 9/11



● religious faith is very important in my life
● attended church last week
● unchurched
● read from the Bible outside of church
● born again

Barna Group



CHURCH LIFE TANZANIA

Drink This Herbal Cup

Churches debate healing power of pastor's 'miracle cure.' By Tom Osanjo in Nairobi, Kenya

In April, 43-year-old Jackson Mwasapila of northern Tanzania died from what doctors suspected to be malaria. While malaria is one of the leading killers in Africa, Jackson was no ordinary patient.

He was the son of Ambilikile Mwasapila, a 76-year-old retired Lutheran pastor who has made global headlines for dispensing an herbal "miracle cure" he claims can heal any ailment: cancer, HIV/AIDS, and other terminal diseases. Mwasapila has drawn hundreds of thousands in a culture where superstition remains widespread and the health system is dilapidated. Of every 1,000 children, 118 die before the age of 5.

Traffic jams stretching miles from Mwasapila's previously unknown village of Samunge, near Serengeti National Park, have become the norm. It's particularly remarkable considering that the

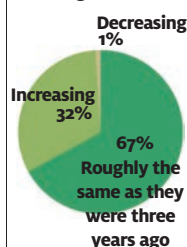
nearest major city, Arusha, is 250 miles away. Officials report significant increases in tourism revenues as wealthy patrons charter helicopters from Nairobi in neighboring Kenya and hundreds continue to pour in by foot and car. Local media report that more than 80 people have died waiting in line. All for a small cup of an herbal cure offered at the wallet-friendly price of 50 Tanzanian shillings (3 cents).

The Tanzanian government reported in May that the concoction, which Mwasapila claims God revealed to him and is derived from mugariga tree bark, is "not toxic and safe for use." But Alloys Orago, director of the National AIDS Control Council in Kenya, maintained that "the effectiveness and safety of the herb has not been ascertained." He joined with the U.S. embassy in Dar Es Salaam and the Tanzanian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

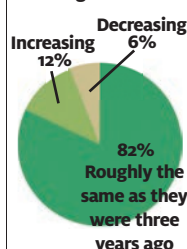
Here's to Your Health: Huge crowds have traveled to a small Serengeti village to drink a retired Lutheran pastor's cheap but potent 'miracle cure.'

GO FIGURE Religious Freedom

Countries where government restrictions or social hostilities against religion are:



Global population living where government restrictions or social hostilities against religion are:



Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life

to discourage AIDS patients from abandoning antiretroviral treatment given at hospitals in pursuit of herbal remedies. Those who do risk drug immunity and sometimes death.

The remedy has similarly divided the Tanzanian public. Mid-summer Synovate polls show that 59 percent approved of Mwasapila's methods while 29 percent disapproved; another 11 percent were unsure.

Some, such as Jennifer, a 41-year-old Kenyan mother of two who took a 15-hour van ride to drink the cure, swear by their own lives that the drug works. She now says she is HIV-negative after living with the disease for a decade. Thomas Laizer, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania's Northern and Central Diocese, has announced plans for a large "herbal hospital" where the sick could receive Mwasapila's cure under more comfortable and sanitary conditions.

Others remain skeptical, arguing that the death of Mwasapila's son proves the pastor is nothing but a quack.

Leaders of the Evangelical Assemblies of God in Tanzania, the Dar Es Salaam-based Full Gospel Bible Fellowship, and Seventh-Day Adventists warned members not to travel to Mwasapila's clinic, maintaining that God's healing powers did not require such a journey.

Oliver Kisaka, deputy secretary general of the National Council of Churches of Kenya, said that while Mwasapila's claims of divine inspiration leave little room for debate, "Generally, we would want to ask our people to walk in faith and not in superstitions, because as Christians we are called to walk by faith."

But pastor Andrew Mollel of Arusha's Philadelphia Church refuted warnings that the healings would lead people astray and corrupt their faith. "Pastor Mwasapila is providing a cure; he is not preaching a new faith or introducing another religion," he told the *Arusha Times*. "If the medicine works, then by all means people should go and take it."

FINANCE

Forgive Us Our Debts

Church drops mortgage payments for expansion plans. By Ken Walker

Facing a dramatic decline in its property values, The Church at South Las Vegas stopped paying its mortgage in May and filed for Chapter 11 protection in July after its lender filed suit. The church owes approximately \$7.6 million on property now worth only \$2.4 million.

Pastor Benny Perez told media that the default was a strategic move in order to preserve member donations—totaling almost \$650,000 according to court filings—given to expand church facilities. The church has the money to make its monthly payments (it has about \$1 million in reserve funds) but believes it is bad stewardship to have tithes keep going into a “black hole.”

“People give to vision,” Perez told CBS 8 News. “They don’t give to debt.”

But others doubt the wisdom of a church taking such action.

Although bankruptcy can be a tool to more effectively allocate resources, the president of the Association of Christian Economists thinks churches need to remember the way their actions affect others.

“It does strike me that there is a witness in a church doing everything it can to meet its obligations,” said John Lunn, an economics professor at Hope College. “That doesn’t mean you can never file bankruptcy. But as Christians, we have an obligation to behave better than the law.”

Indications are that many have fallen short. Pointing to 200 church foreclosures over the past three years—compared to virtually none from 1996 to 2006—Maryland-based business consultant Mike Metzger said too many Christians talk in religious clichés instead of facing reality.

“A lot of faith communities are like homes,” said Metzger. “They have balloon payments, and when due they either beg, pass the plate, lay off staff, or file bankruptcy.”

Experts disagree over the extent of future financial difficulties.

“My guess is we’re headed for a double-dip recession and we will see more,” said Gary Moore, founder of the Financial Seminary. “There are too many [church buildings] in America. We have an ‘edifice’ complex.”

However, Evangelical Christian Credit Union president Mark Holbrook thinks the bankruptcy trend is ebbing. The delinquency rate in the group’s \$3 billion portfolio has dropped from 7.4 percent one year ago to 5.5 percent today.

“We’ve had the first foreclosures in our history,” he said of the past three years. “Some churches blow away—attendance and giving drops off. We will still see some lingering effects . . . but it will only be a few.”

America’s Christian Credit Union has also seen a slight decline this year in delinquencies in its \$390 million church loan portfolio.

“It gives us a little bit of hope that the economy is starting to stabilize and churches have made necessary cuts and are able to stabilize too,” said president Mendell Thompson.

Many current problems have roots in the prosperity of the late 1990s, which touched off an \$80 million boom in church building. The most notable victim of overreaching: the Crystal Cathedral, which filed for Chapter 11 last year under the weight of \$48 million in debts.

“It wasn’t the bad times that got us; it was the good,” said Moore, a Crystal Cathedral board member during that era. “We over-built.”

Despite the downturn that has led churches to take a step once unheard of, Dan Busby, president of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, calls Crystal Cathedral one of the “outliers” that

don’t represent most churches.

“The good news is that most churches and parachurch organizations have thoughtfully adjusted their budgets and made tough decisions,” he said. “We’re not through this yet, though. Leaders have to step up with imagination and creativity to address these situations.”

PASSAGES



Died
David Barrett
Noted missions researcher and founding editor of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, on August 4 in Virginia. He was 83.



Named
Jackie Patillo
As executive director of the Gospel Music Association. Patillo most recently served as vice president of artist development at Sony’s Verity Music.



Died
Eugene Nida
Creator of the “dynamic equivalence” approach to Bible translation, which made the Bible accessible in hundreds of languages, on August 25 in Brussels. He was 96.
More:
ChristianityToday.com/go/Nida

BUSINESS

The New Boycotts

Online petitions effective, but not by numbers. By Bobby Ross Jr.

In August, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz withdrew from a speaking engagement at the Willow Creek Association’s Global Leadership Summit. The reason: An online petition had called the Illinois megachurch anti-gay and threatened a boycott of the coffee giant.

The petition had only 717 signatures. Senior pastor Bill Hybels said the church is “not anti-anybody” but believes the Bible reserves sexual expression for marriage between one man and one woman.

Around the same time, Apple removed iTunes from the Charity Give Back Group (CGBG), formerly known as the Christian Values Network. The action came after activists collected more than 20,000 signatures complaining that the online hub allows customers to support “anti-gay hate groups” such as the Family Research Council.

CGBG’s CEO, Jed Prosper, blamed the “hate group” claim on a “bullying campaign fueled by false information.”

Earlier, TOMS Shoes distanced itself from Focus on the Family after 500 people signed an online petition on Change.org about the company’s relationship with an “anti-gay, anti-choice group.”

The backlash came from a brief

[continued on 18]

Briefing [from 17]

mention of TOMS' budding relationship with Focus in a *Christianity Today* cover story on Focus's shift away from politics back toward an emphasis on the family.

At least two major factors appear to be at play as some Christian organizations find it difficult to partner with businesses: stereotypes and public opinion.

"Some evangelical groups [may] feel unfairly stereotyped," said John Green, an expert on religion and politics at the University of Akron. "Whatever their views on gay rights, a pressure campaign could paint all evangelicals . . . the same."

The Internet has increased the speed at which such stereotyping travels as well as how quickly corporations react—or overreact.

"Many companies worry about having negative publicity on the Internet because it can travel very widely before [they] have a chance to respond or react," Green said.

At the same time, public opinion on gay rights has shifted, making corporations less willing to risk "guilt by association" with a position—traditional biblical sexual ethics—that may clash with the emerging societal

norm, experts said.

That shift has been most pronounced among younger Americans, "and typically, large corporations give more attention to younger consumers than older ones," said Andrew McFarland, a University of Illinois at Chicago political scientist and author of *Boycotts and Dixie Chicks*.

Michael Smith, a communications professor at Campbell University, complains that "using online petitions to make policy is as weak a business plan as counting the horns in a 'honk if you love brand X' campaign. It's a lot of noise, little hard data."

But if the tactic works, what's to stop an activist from employing it?

"Typically, the consequence for the user is small," Smith said of online petitions, "but the political message can be enormous."

In recent times, gay-rights activists seem to have scored more victories than their opponents—540,000 people have signed a petition committing to a boycott of Home Depot because of its gay-friendly policies, with no response from the company.

"The success of these campaigns has to do [with] whether they feel the [activists] can generate negative publicity among potential customers," Green said. "The number of

DISCUSSION STARTER Marriage

A recent poll conducted by LifeWay Research found that 58 percent of Protestant pastors would perform marriage ceremonies for cohabitating couples; 31 percent would not, and 10 percent were not sure.

signatures is not the issue."

But he cautions against viewing recent developments as a trend, noting that, in politics and public opinion, the prevailing winds can change directions in a hurry. "We may be in a moment in which the gay-rights advocates have a bit of an advantage," he said. "It could be that a few years from now they won't because circumstances will change."

Willow Creek somewhat disarmed the "culture war" clash by responding graciously. Hybels let Schultz out of his speaking contract without penalty, and instructed the 165,000 summit participants to "show some Christian goodwill" by buying Starbucks coffee and Schultz's new book on leadership. Hybels also offered to meet with the creators of the petition in order to explain Willow's beliefs.

The challenge for Christian organizations, said Stephen M. Rapiere, a marketing expert at Pepperdine University, is to remain true to their core beliefs without regard to outside pressure. "This resoluteness," he said, "will signal our genuine beliefs, strengthening the bond with our followers and seeding the field of authenticity for those who hope to harvest a partnership with us." ☪

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Should pastors perform marriages for cohabitating couples?

YES

NO

"If I believed them to be in sin, why wouldn't I help get them out? I think it's overly scrupulous—overly pietistic—to refuse to perform a ceremony that gets someone from a morally questionable situation into an honorable estate."

DOUGLAS WILSON
minister, Christ Church,
Moscow, Idaho

"I will most likely officiate at a wedding for a couple who has been living together. The arms of the church need to be open, giving them opportunity to know the grace of Christ and hopefully become part of the congregation."

KURT FREDRICKSON
associate dean, Fuller
Theological Seminary

"The legal benefits of doing things in the proper order cannot be underestimated and ought to be explained. When couples understand the implications of their actions, they can make better decisions. Pastors can come alongside and bring wisdom and counsel to the decision."

LYNNE MARIE KOHM
professor, Regent University School of Law

"I ask cohabitating couples who attend our church, 'Do you want to start this marriage off right?' If we get to the point of marrying cohabitating couples without asking them to separate or practice abstinence before marriage, we're moving away from being a church . . . and becoming a justice of the peace."

TED CUNNINGHAM
author, *Young and in Love*

"We need to do everything we can to help couples build relationships that are likely to endure. If pastors don't encourage couples to move apart and prepare for marriage, they're not acting responsibly. They're being neither biblical nor practical in helping that couple."

MIKE MCMAUS
president, *Marriage Savers*

"Pastors are stewards of a biblical understanding of sexuality. Marrying cohabiters miscommunicates the teaching function of marriage. I would only marry Christian couples that were repentant, had forsaken the sin of cohabiting, and sought the remedy of marriage."

R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.
president, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary



Chance of a Lifetime: India has the largest illiterate population of any nation. Uddamarry school can take only 30 percent of applicants.

MISSIONS INDIA

A Local Witness

A leading missions agency transforms itself in the wake of persecution.

By Tim Stafford in Secunderabad, India

Not far from the city of Secunderabad, in a boulder-strewn landscape, the Uddamarry Good Shepherd School models the new approach of Operation Mobilization India (OMI). A simple cement structure, Uddamarry educates several hundred bright-eyed children from 14 villages. Most students at Uddamarry are Dalits—members of the “untouchable” caste that composes the lowest rung on Indian society’s ladder. They long for education.

In this rural setting, where Christianity has never gained a foothold, children are learning Bible verses—and so are their families. Almost three times as many students have applied for admission as the

school can accommodate.

OMI teachers live in the surrounding villages, one married couple per three villages. OMI teachers are viewed with great respect. When they start church fellowships in their homes, they do not encounter the same level of resistance as do traditional missionaries.

Churches are opened as the school gains credibility. Then comes a variety of development schemes. In Uddamarry, OMI has started a tailoring school where workers stitch the students’ blue uniforms.

There is also a small health clinic, a microenterprise office, and a self-help center. All projects work in concert, demonstrating a holistic gospel in a place where the name of Jesus is scarcely known. OMI offers Christmas programs,

Awana children’s clubs, vacation Bible school, and other programs. They invite local officials to these events. The gospel gradually becomes less foreign, hostility fades, and interest in Christ grows.

Ragland Rameshwarren, who oversees OMI’s community development projects in Uddamarry, says, “In the old days, there was no place for me. You had to become a pastor or an evangelist. But now we are so happy. I am giving back what was given to me. We are bringing the gospel to people’s doorsteps.”

BANNING WESTERNERS HELPED

OMI did not start out this way. “When I first went to India in 1964,” says Operation Mobilization (OM) founder George Verwer, “I knew right away this was my nation of



Focus on the Church: After street evangelists suffered harassment, they started planting small churches in local areas, causing rapid growth. India is estimated to have 165,000 congregations.

destiny. I immediately moved my whole family there and made it a priority.”

Historically a hot-gospel, street-preaching, tract-distributing ministry, OM is one of the world’s largest mission organizations, working in 115 countries through 6,000 staff members.

In the early years, leaders convened annually in Belgium and then dispersed teams around the globe. Some headed overland for India in donated vans and trucks. They spent the year living in those vehicles, crisscrossing the subcontinent and telling anybody who would stand still about Jesus. They sold tracts and Bible portions to support themselves.

Those gospel pilgrims were inclusive, evangelistic, and itinerant. OM attracted countercultural young people who were open to adventure. Many of the first missionaries to India had studied at Oxford and Cambridge. As Verwer notes, “Indians admired university students,” and the fact that the elite students had adopted a simple life of discipleship “got gossiped [about] across the country.”

Peter Dance remembers his first trip to India in 1972, driving a truck that had been

reconditioned in England. “It was cold and wet and scary. We went across the Austrian border, and I had the feeling of, *there is no one there to help me anymore except Jesus*.

“Before I crossed that border, I had everything I needed; even my mother was there if I needed her. I went to India many times, and through breakdowns and difficulties, the Lord always came through.”

As young Indians came to Christ, they joined OM’s evangelistic teams. Indians and Westerners lived together on equal terms, experiencing exhilarating freedom while witnessing to their faith. “India in 1972 was very Western-led,” Dance says. “Those leaders felt strongly that if the movement was going to continue, it needed to bring in and train national leaders. The ethos was discipleship.” That discipleship happened as they witnessed, lived, and traveled together.

Verwer saw a bigger picture. He urged South India Christians to go north—where few Christians lived—and to train local northerners for leadership. “Verwer trusted us, believed in us,” says Alfie Franks, now bishop of the 3,000 Good Shepherd churches that make up OM’s core structure.

But in 1968, the government barred Verwer. Forty years passed before he could re-enter the country. In his sudden absence, Indian staff had to rise to a new level of leadership. In the 1980s, greater

stress came with restrictions on visas for missionaries. India’s Christian organizations had to look to local resources.

In retrospect, it was a blessed necessity, leading OM to become a truly national organization. In the vast subcontinent, with its hundreds of languages and caste differences, people tend to stay most loyal to their own group.

“We were a pan-Indian, pan-caste movement,” says OM leader Joseph D’souza. “That can be very painful. We have had our own divisions and fights, but out of them we created our own special ethos.”

Indian leaders recognized something that Western OM leaders might never have seen: that study and training were crucial for new believers. Many had no biblical background, nor did they grasp Christian ideas of God, sin, and forgiveness. OM began to invest in formal education, developing training institutions.

OM has trained 25,000 leaders since 1964. On its sprawling campus near Secunderabad, the organization prepares both pastors and schoolteachers. The International College of Cultural Studies offers two bachelor’s and four master’s degrees. OM went from distributing tracts to developing the largest Christian publishing house in India.

Dasan Jeyaraj is an appropriate choice to head the International College of OM. He grew up one of eight children in a Dalit family. When Jeyaraj was 10, his mother could not repay a significant debt and sent Jeyaraj to work for a high-caste Christian family in Chennai, 425 miles away. “I cried. I thought my life had ended. Once, I ran away, but they caught me and sent me back,” he says.

As a 10-year-old, he did all the household work: grinding spices, mopping floors, washing clothes, shopping, helping cook, and taking children to school. The family allowed him to go to Sunday school and church. They thought they were doing him a favor by providing three meals a day. His

wages—10 cents a day—went to pay off his mother's debt. Only after his mother died and he entered a Dutch Christian orphanage was Jeyaraj able to go back to school, eventually earning his Ph.D. in the Netherlands.

"There are hundreds, thousands, millions like me who had to work, who couldn't go to school," he says.

A CHURCH-LED MOVEMENT

Even after investing in education, OMI was barely prepared for the dramatic changes that came to India in the 1990s. Economic controls were lifted, inaugurating fast economic growth and rapid social change. Per-capita income doubled, from US\$1,380 in 1990 to US\$2,420 in 2000.

'I am giving back what was given to me. We are bringing the gospel to people's doorsteps.'

~ Ragland Rameshwarren, OMI

Indians began discussing caste-based prejudice widely. The Hindu nationalist BJP party, which supported anti-conversion laws aimed at restraining Christian outreach and evangelism, won national elections.

It soon became impossible for OMI teams to witness. They were likely to be arrested or beat up. Moses John, a church planter, says, "Times changed, and we ha[d] to find new ways to communicate the gospel."

For the first time, OMI teams had to stay in one place and witness locally, depending on community goodwill. Observing the needs of the community, some staff started schools. Others reached out to the extremely poor and began advocating for human rights for the Dalits and other oppressed minorities.

"We got involved, starting schools and becoming part of the social struggle of this nation," says D'souza. "Our credibility went up, and our churches started erupting [with growth]. It caught us by surprise."

At a higher organizational level, OMI joined with Catholics and other Protestants in the All India Christian Council, which tracks persecution and defends minority rights. D'souza became international president of the Dalit Freedom Network, a

human rights advocacy organization.

Once renowned for its roaming teams, OMI now settles down to make a lasting difference at the local level. Once decidedly "parachurch," OMI now calls itself a church-led movement. Churches even have bishops, a development that was difficult for some OMI staff outside India to swallow. (India's legal structure recognizes the nomenclature of bishops, so OMI adopted it for their Good Shepherd churches.) Through this holistic missions model, the entire OMI organization is also being reshaped. OMI comprises nearly half the total staff of OMI worldwide.

According to Verwer, other OMI countries have made significant ministry gains after following OMI's path into holistic ministry. Peter Maiden, OMI's international coordinator, says that "OMI has been in the vanguard of our missional understanding in the past 20 years. Its integrative approach to mission has hugely impacted the way OMI thinks about mission."

With a church-led structure, OMI is riding growth such as it has never seen. D'souza says he worked like a dog for 15 years in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, a highly traditional state in north India. "If I saw a half-dozen new believers, thank you Jesus!" In the past ten years, through a more holistic ministry, OMI has started 45 churches in Lucknow alone. Nationally, it has grown from 300 churches to over 3,000.

While many educated Indians see caste withering away in a globalizing India, D'souza believes it remains a battleground where the church must engage. "Globalization has empowered the upper caste even more. Why, 20 years in, is not one telecom owned by a Dalit or an OBC [another poor tribal group]? Why does no media organization have a Dalit editor?"

Not that OMI's ministry is for Dalits only.

"In urban congregations that are bilingual, the upper caste happily comes in. The first responders are often upper-caste women, because they are asking the same questions that Dalits ask. A Brahmin woman is a slave to her husband," says D'souza.

LEADERSHIP THAT SERVES

Perhaps the best way to grasp the new Operation Mobilization is to follow one of its pastors making his rounds.

Raised by his nominally Christian grandparents, Bangarraju committed his life to Christ during college and subsequently felt God's calling to ministry with OMI. Now he walks through a small cluster of homes built on abandoned land on the site of a deserted quarry.

He began to pastor the quarry villagers in 1997. The most obvious change, he says, is that most people have replaced makeshift huts with simple brick houses. Less obviously, thanks to Bangarraju their children go to the local Good Shepherd school. They remain very poor, but their trajectory is upward. With Bangarraju's regular visits a house church began to meet; now they have built a small neat structure, about 18x12 feet, decorated with Scripture and colorful banners. During the week, black treadle sewing machines occupy most of the small room. Three times a week, an OMI teacher comes to teach tailoring, providing potential careers to village women.

As he strolls through the village, Bangarraju is greeted respectfully by women cooking over open fires and by girls decorating the ground with brightly colored powders for an upcoming Hindu festival. At one home, a loud fight breaks out—a drunken man lifts a rock and threatens violence, then tries to tear apart the hut where his mother lives. Bangarraju helps restrain him; he explains to his guests that the man's wife has left him and his mother has refused to keep feeding him.

Another family stops him to talk. It is impossible to miss their respect and appreciation. "They believe that Jesus is one of the gods," says Bangarraju. "I'm not criticizing them when I say that. They open their home for our Tuesday meetings. I believe one day God will speak to them."

"The people here respect me. They say so much change has come since I arrived. They say I brought education to their children. I say, 'No. Give glory to God.'"

Tim Stafford is a senior writer for *Christianity Today*.

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How to Read the Bible

New strategies for interpreting Scripture turn out to be not so new—and deepen our life in Christ.



By J. Todd Billings

Illustrations by Amanda Duffy



WIDE RANGE OF VOICES claims that a crisis of biblical interpretation is taking place. But contrary to many pundits, the crisis does not simply involve a decline in the Bible's authority. Even when the Bible is turned to as *the* authority, it's not necessarily interpreted *Christianly*.

Consider, for example, a recent Christian bestseller that offers a "Bible diet." The book claims to enable better concentration, improve appearance, increase energy, and reverse the process of "accelerated aging." To want to improve your appearance and energy level, do you have to be interested in knowing God or Jesus? Of course not. There is nothing intrinsically Christian about the advice.

Similar trends appear in Christian books that promise biblical solutions for success in finances, relationships, and family. These books can help Christians see implications of their faith for various aspects of life, but they often communicate that the Bible is the authoritative answer book to felt needs and problems. This message centers on the individual and his or her preferences, and does not interpret the Bible in a way that calls felt needs into question or looks beyond them.

It's not just well-meaning writers but also many biblical scholars who fail to approach the Bible as Christian Scripture. Some approach it only as ancient history, using it as a piece of evidence in answering archeological or sociological questions about the ancient world. Other scholars try to reconstruct the thought of a book or author. A scholar can write an in-depth essay about Paul's theology without ever considering that God could be addressing the scholar's own time through Paul's ancient texts.

Even those who try to connect the historical-critical context of a passage to today's world can inadvertently suggest that most of the world's Christians cannot truly understand God's Word because they are not scholars. After returning from a semester of teaching church leaders in Ethiopia, I heard a well-known biblical scholar argue that "historical reconstruction" behind and within the biblical text is the central way to avoid idolatrous and unfaithful biblical interpretation. I left the lecture wondering: Where does that leave Ethiopia, a country with millions of Christians and a growing church, yet with very few who could historically reconstruct the Bible?

Partly due to the inadequacies of popular and scholarly readings of the Bible, an increasing number of scholars have

been advocating a "theological interpretation of Scripture." They encourage us to read the Bible as God's instrument of self-revelation and saving fellowship. This school of interpretation includes a wide range of practices, but all of them move us toward knowing the triune God and being formed as Christ's disciples through Scripture.

THE SPACIOUS RULE OF FAITH

When examining how we interpret Scripture, we should pay attention to our functional theology of Scripture: how our use of Scripture reflects particular beliefs about what the Bible is. There are two common approaches to using Scripture today.

Some readers start with a detailed blueprint of what the Bible says, then read individual passages of Scripture as if they were the concrete building blocks to fit into the blueprint. They translate each passage into a set of propositions or principles that fit the established details of the blueprint. This approach assumes that we already know the larger meaning of Scripture; our system of theology gives us the meaning. Thus, the task of interpreting Scripture becomes a matter of discovering where in our theological system a particular passage fits.

Others prefer a smorgasbord approach. Imagine a huge cafeteria loaded with food of many kinds for many tastes; you are at the cafeteria with the members of a small-group Bible study. Can you imagine what some of the other members of the group would choose to eat? I suspect that there might even be patterns based on age, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, but each person chooses which foods to feast on based on his or her appetite. In the smorgasbord approach to Scripture, the Bible becomes the answer book for our felt needs and personal perspectives.

With both the blueprint and smorgasbord approaches, we end up using Scripture for our own purposes. We are in control. The Bible may be viewed as authoritative, but it provides either confirmation of our preconceived ideas or divine advice for felt needs.

Blueprint readers rightly sense that one cannot read the Bible without bringing some understanding to the table; we each come with some theological assumptions about the Bible when we open its pages. Smorgasbord readers rightly believe that the Bible is a book through which God addresses us; it's not just a book of ancient history or doctrine or worldview. A theological reading of Scripture makes use of both of these assumptions, yet in a deeper and fuller way.

Instead of providing a detailed blueprint, a theological reading brings a map for a journey. Our map does not give all the answers about a particular text. Instead, our reading sends us on a journey in which God in Scripture encounters us again



Our reading sends us on a journey in which God in Scripture encounters us again and again, both with comforting signs of his presence and surprises that confound us.

AMANDA DUFFY

and again, both with comforting signs of his presence and surprises that confound us, yet may open new vistas. Reading Scripture is not about solving puzzles but discerning a mystery. Through Scripture, we encounter no less than the mysterious triune God himself.

Early Christians also taught that Christians should—indeed, must—approach Scripture with a basic theological map in hand. By the second century, Irenaeus spoke of the “rule of faith” as a way to understand the basic Christian story with which orthodox Christians (versus Gnostics) should approach the Bible. This “rule of faith” was not the creation of detached scholars, but an account of the gospel and Christian identity rooted in baptism: one reads Scripture as a follower of Jesus, baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thus, early baptismal creeds—statements of faith—had a Trinitarian character (e.g., the Apostles’ Creed) that provided the basic content of the “rule of faith.”

Why is this necessary? The Bible is a large book, and even careful readers can interpret it in a variety of ways. But not all of these ways are *Christian* ways of reading Scripture. For example, one can read the Bible in a way that sees the God of Israel as a judging God, as the antithesis of the God of Jesus, who is supposedly only a gracious (not judging) God. But this is not a Christian reading of the Old or New Testaments. In the early centuries of Christianity, the rule of faith helped make sure that Christians held together the Old Testament with the New—that the God of creation and covenant is also the God revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

The Trinitarian rule of faith has been a critical element of Bible reading from the early church through the Middle Ages and the Protestant Reformation. The Reformers emphasized that Scripture (not church tradition) was the only final “rule of faith.” Yet Luther, Calvin, and others made it clear that they heartily affirmed a basic, Trinitarian theological approach to Scripture. In interpreting the Old Testament as well as the New, Reformers sought to read Scripture in light of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God’s promises in creation

and covenant, applying it to the church as disciples of Christ.

Many contemporary scholars have sought to revive the Trinitarian rule of faith. For example, as R. R. Reno says in the preface to the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, the multivolume series “advances upon the assumption that the Nicene [Trinitarian] tradition, in all its diversity and controversy, provides the proper basis for the interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture.”

The term *rule* in “rule of faith” is best thought of in terms of “measure.” The rule gives a sense of the center as well as the periphery in biblical interpretation. It does not decide the meaning of specific Scripture passages in advance. Instead, it gives a sense of scope in the journey of reading Scripture, forging a path to deeper fellowship with the triune God.

Some describe this journey as “drama.” In the words of Kevin Vanhoozer, a theologian at Wheaton College Graduate School:

The Father is the playwright and producer of the action; the Son is the climax and summation of the action. The Spirit, as the one who unites us to Christ, is the dresser who clothes us with Christ’s righteousness, the prompter who helps us remember our biblical lines, and the prop master who gives gifts (accessories) to each church member, equipping us to play our parts.

The new world into which God brings us via Scripture is wide and spacious, but it also has a specified character. It is a journey on the path of Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit in anticipation of the final, culminating communion with the triune God.

THE BIBLE IS FOR DISCIPLES

Does the theological interpretation of Scripture require specialized training? While the movement’s adherents (Vanhoozer, Joel Green, Stephen Fowl) encourage us to engage pre-modern commentators

and modern biblical criticism, they have great confidence in the ability of ordinary congregations to approach the Bible as God's Word.

Two dynamics are often overlooked in contemporary biblical interpretations, especially those grounded in historical-critical assumptions. The first is the work of the Spirit in illuminating Scripture, and the second is interpreting the Scripture "in Christ." Congregations around the world cultivate a sense of these two realities as they pray for the Spirit's illumination, worship the triune God, and apply Scripture to their community of discipleship and witness. Of course, these practices don't guarantee faithful biblical interpretation, but they are indispensable dynamics for interpreting the Bible *as Scripture*. The indwelling of the Spirit in the Christian community, as one located "in Christ," uniquely equips the Christian community to interpret the Bible as God's Word.

Approaching the Bible with such theological assumptions is anathema to many biblical scholars today. Theological convictions, many assume, are an adversary rather than a potential ally of faithful biblical interpretation. There is a genuine concern behind this objection: Aren't we supposed to get our theology from the Bible rather than impose it on the Bible? Those who object in this way usually grant that we cannot be unbiased in our interpretation, but add that we should "bracket" our theological presuppositions as we approach the Bible.

While it is right to seek our theology from the Bible, others note that theological convictions and practices like worship make Bible reading more fruitful and faithful rather than less. As Reno claims in the preface to the Brazos series, theological doctrine "is a crucial aspect of the divine pedagogy, a clarifying agent for our minds fogged by self-deceptions . . ."

Consider the following scenario: As a congregation gathers, they give thanks for the love and majesty of God the Father, worship Jesus Christ as their saving Lord, and confess the communal working of the Holy Spirit. These are basic features of healthy Christian worship. Worship both expresses and shapes the loves and theological

convictions of the worshipers. Now, after the opening of worship, we hear a text from the Gospel of Luke—containing a narrative and the words of this same Jesus.

Do we really want to ask the congregation to "bracket" their love and conviction that Jesus is Lord at that moment? The congregation is approaching Luke's text with a certain bias, a disposition. But that disposition can actually make the hearing of Luke's text *more* fruitful rather than less for the sake of Christian discipleship—particularly if it displays an openness to hear through the text from Jesus Christ as Lord of the church.

Of course, a theological reading of Scripture can have pitfalls as well. But the solution is not to surrender the Bible to scholarly experts. Rather, it is to regain a sense of the place of Scripture in God's drama of redemption, and to enter into the task of reading Scripture with openness to being reformed and reshaped by God on our path of dying to the old self and living into our identity in Christ.

THE PLACE OF COMMENTARIES

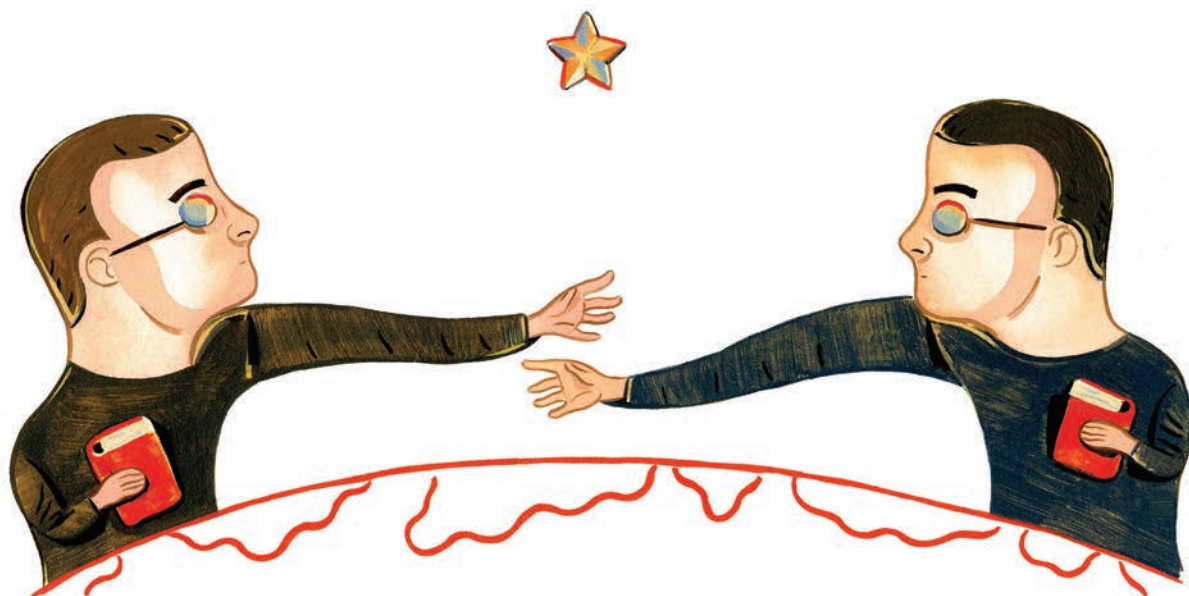
Still, we should avoid another extreme: interpreting the Bible alone, without others. In our day, some assume that the individual is an omniscient biblical interpreter. No need for commentators, no need for a community of faith. Just me, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit.

While sometimes the slogan "sola scriptura" is used to justify such an approach, it is a serious distortion of that Protestant principle. The key Reformation exegetes consulted exegetes through the ages, as well as refined their knowledge of biblical languages and other critical skills of biblical interpretation.

The theological interpretation of Scripture movement has sought to reunite what modernity has divided: discipleship and critical study of the Bible. For example, in *On Christian Teaching*, Augustine said that Jesus Christ, as the incarnate God-human, is the "road" to our heavenly homeland. Thus, all Scripture is interpreted in light of Jesus Christ. All scriptural interpretation must lead to our growth in love of God and neighbor.

Instead of providing a detailed blueprint, a theological reading of Scripture brings a map for a journey.





We should avoid interpreting the Bible alone. While sometimes the slogan 'sola scriptura' is used to justify doing so, it is a serious distortion of that Protestant principle.

Along with this, however, Augustine claimed that knowing Greek and Hebrew is very valuable for interpreting Scripture. He said that reading Scripture engages the disciplines of history, rhetoric, logic,

and what we would call cultural anthropology. Like Augustine, the theological interpretation movement has generally sought to bring together discipleship with the academic study of Scripture. On one

Theological Interpretation in Action

Consider the well-known story in 1 Samuel 17 in which David faces and defeats Goliath. Let me give two possible approaches to preaching or teaching this text. Neither sees it as simply an account of a border skirmish in ancient history. Both approaches understand the Bible as authoritative.

In the first approach, the character of Goliath becomes a metaphor for the challenges faced in daily life. Hearers are encouraged to identify the “Goliaths” in their own life—low self-esteem, financial challenges, or a family problem. David becomes a model of the underdog who dares to step up to his own inner “giants” and “challenges.” The Bible is the answer book, showing us the way to face challenges in our personal life: visualize a positive outcome like David (17:36), act with confidence in the face of a challenge (17:37), and take risks (17:48–9). In this way, the Bible helps us solve our problems. Who is the hero of this rendering of the story? David—more specifically, his courageous human will. David’s faith in God may be noted, but it is David’s faith that is highlighted. The living God is not a major character in this reading of the text.

In contrast, a theological interpretation of Scripture tries to understand the text as part of a God-centered drama. In this approach, God’s saving action is at the center of the narrative. While the mighty Goliath can taunt the people of Israel, David confesses, “The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will

save me from the hand of this Philistine” (17:37). Rather than seeing David as the self-actualized hero, the emphasis here is on the saving action of the almighty God, whom David actively trusts. For as the text repeatedly notes, it was not a “sword” of David that brings deliverance from the Philistines, for “the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s and he will give you into our hand” (17:47; cf.

17:37; 17:50). Although David appears to be ill-prepared to encounter Goliath, David acts with covenantal trust in God that “The Lord . . . will save me from the hand of this Philistine” (17:37).

Thus, we are invited to actively trust in this same God—the God of Israel who finally reveals the nature of his victory over his enemies in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Indeed,

the 1 Samuel narrative shows how God’s surprising way of working contrasts with worldly appearances of power. Paul reflects on this mystery as it culminates in Christ crucified: “God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God” (1 Cor. 1:27b–30). As disciples of Jesus, we are called through the David and Goliath narrative to renew our trust in God’s deliverance, acting in confidence as we love God and neighbor and witness to God’s power in Christ crucified. Our confidence is in the Lord (not our faith or our commitment), for it is the Lord who uses even those who appear weak and lowly to accomplish his purposes.

A theological interpretation of Scripture tries to understand the text as part of a God-centered drama.

hand, the reader need not have scholarly competencies (such as the ability to read Hebrew or perform textual criticism) in order to interpret Scripture. On the other hand, all readers are deeply enriched when some in the community study the Bible at this level. Consider the passages in the Gospels that refer to the Pharisees. If we don't think of ourselves as Judaizing legalists, we think we are off the hook when Jesus rebukes the legalistic Pharisees. But historical study has shown that the Pharisees were not just stereotypical legalists; they also sought a renewal of obedience to covenant law from within the framework of God's promises to Israel. They certainly differed from Jesus and from the early Christians, but there was common ground as well. Just when we thought we were safe from the implications of Jesus' words for the Pharisees, this historical insight can help make our lives vulnerable once again to receive the piercing, healing Word of God. In more general terms, critical study can help readers of Scripture avoid common dead ends that block a fruitful reading: a misunderstood biblical genre or a misconstrued linguistic or cultural issue.

Regarding methods of reading the Bible, Fuller Seminary New Testament scholar Joel Green reminds us that "any and all methods must be tamed in relation to the theological aims of Scripture and the ecclesial context within which the Bible is read as Scripture." As Augustine suggested, a wide variety of interpretive methods can be used, but they are used in order to read Scripture as God's powerful word to the church, a community of disciples growing in the image of Christ.

CHRIST IN FOCUS

A key feature of much work in theological interpretation has been the revival of some form of "spiritual" interpretation, such that the Old Testament has not only a historical sense but also a spiritual sense—in the form of allegory or typology—that extends to Christ

and his church.

But doesn't such reading violate a historical reading of the text itself?

It depends on what one means by "historical." For the majority of Christian history, the historical or literal sense of the Old Testament did not mean that exegetes tried to "unthink" Jesus when they read the Old Testament. Rather, it generally referred to the narrative flow of the Old Testament itself. Thus, in its best instances, the Old Testament's narrative continued to have integrity even as "spiritual" senses referring to Christ were layered on top of it. The Reformers rightly protested aberrant forms of allegory that lost sight of the historical sense, but they continued to give spiritual readings of the Old Testament in various forms.

This approach to the Old Testament is rooted in the New Testament itself, which gives us good examples of this approach. For New Testament writers, it is not just the occasional messianic psalm or prophecy that applies to Christ. They read all of Israel's Scriptures in light of Christ. For example, Hebrews begins with seven citations of Old Testament texts from diverse contexts and genres (the Psalms, Deuteronomy, and 2 Samuel), yet all of them are applied to Christ. How could this be? It is not because of quirky hermeneutics but because of who Jesus Christ is in God's economy of salvation: "Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being" (1:1–2, NRSV). The Son fulfilled such divergent Old Testament passages, because even though "our ancestors" did not recognize it in their day, the Son is the Creator who is also the "heir of all things" and has been made known in history in Jesus Christ.

This means that spiritual readings of the Old Testament should

The 'rule of faith' is an account of Christian identity rooted in baptism: one reads Scripture as a follower of Jesus, baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.



not annihilate the Old Testament narrative. When the risen Jesus opened the minds of his companions on the Emmaus road “to understand the Scriptures,” he did not suggest that the “law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms” had been displaced; rather, they had been “fulfilled” in himself (Luke 24:44–45). In the words of Wheaton College theologian Daniel Treier, reading Scripture in a “Christ-centered” way “makes possible spiritual participation in the realities of which Scripture speaks.”

READING WITH CONFIDENCE AND HUMILITY

As John Webster, theologian at the University of Aberdeen and a key advocate of theological interpretation, notes, “reading Scripture is an episode in the history of sin and its overcoming; and overcoming sin is the sole work of Christ and the Spirit.” Thus, “reading Scripture is inescapably bound to regeneration.” As such, we read Scripture expecting to receive a divine word—one of comfort but also of confrontation. God’s Word renews us as it confronts our cultural and personal idols,

provides light for our paths, and equips us to serve the world.

Thus, to read the Bible as Scripture involves delighting in, memorizing, and dwelling on it. When tempted by Satan, Jesus responds with Scripture he has memorized (Matt. 4:1–11). Colossians admonishes believers to “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” The Gospel of John shows a Trinitarian dynamic of dwelling in Christ’s word, for the Spirit sent to believers will “glorify” Christ, and “will take what is mine and declare it to you” (16:14). Delighting and dwelling in God’s Word is supremely practical, relating to our finances, family, and bodies. However, we should not enter into it for worldly “success,” but rather as part of our dying to the old self and participating in the Spirit’s new creation in Christ.

In this way, we can read the Bible confidently, knowing that God acts powerfully through Scripture—in corporate worship, through prayer and memorization, through teaching and witness. We do not have to master Scripture and then make it relevant to our lives; through Scripture, God opens up

a new place for us to dwell, a place of fellowship with Christ on a path leading to love of God and neighbor.

We never finish the journey of sanctification in this life. Likewise, we never finish our journey of meditating on Scripture, experiencing it anew in word and sacrament. We wrestle with it even as it sometimes tells us what we don’t want to hear, as well as confirming and building up our new identity in Christ. In all of this, Scripture’s value to us is inexhaustible, because the Spirit uses Scripture to testify to Christ, the Word of the Father.

In reading the Bible as Scripture, we are not the masters. We are being mastered and enlivened by the triune God. ☩

J. Todd Billings is associate professor of Reformed theology at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. He is the author of *The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Eerdmans, 2010).

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for “How to Read the Bible,” a Bible study based on this article.

FURTHER RESOURCES ON THE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

INTRODUCTORY WORKS

J. Todd Billings, **The Word of God for the People of God: An Entryway to the Theological Interpretation of Scripture** (Eerdmans, 2010)

I offer a constructive theological hermeneutic rooted in a historic vision of the practice of scriptural interpretation, which provides an entryway to the field.

Joel B. Green, **Seized by Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture** (Abingdon, 2007)

This is an accessible account of the aims and scope of reading the Bible as Scripture, describing how critical methods of biblical studies can be incorporated into a theological hermeneutic of Scripture.

Daniel J. Treier, **Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice** (Baker Academic, 2008)

Treier introduces the key issues and scholars in the contemporary theological interpretation of Scripture discussion.

RECENT PROPOSALS

A. K. M. Adam, Stephen E. Fowl, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Francis Watson, eds., **Reading Scripture with the Church: Toward a**

Hermeneutic for Theological

Interpretation (Baker Academic, 2006)

This book provides essays and responses from four of the leading advocates of the theological interpretation of Scripture.

Kevin Vanhoozer, **The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology** (Westminster John Knox, 2005)

Vanhoozer’s work draws on speech-act theory and the metaphors of theater and drama to give a robust vision for revitalizing theology and biblical interpretation in the church.

John Webster, **Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch** (Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Webster makes the case that a Trinitarian theology of salvation should be central in a Christian reading of Scripture, showing how this theological approach can help one avoid misconstruals of the doctrines of inspiration and canon.

KEY SERIES

The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Eerdmans)

Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible (Westminster John Knox)

Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Brazos)

These commentary series seek to bridge the gap between theology and biblical studies, giving a book-by-book theological interpretation of Scripture. The Brazos series explicitly draws on a Nicene Trinitarianism as a basic theological hermeneutic.

The Church’s Bible Commentary Series (Eerdmans)

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (InterVarsity)

Reformation Commentary on Scripture (InterVarsity)

Each of these is a multivolume series with rich selections from pre-modern exegetes in English translation.

REFERENCE WORK

Kevin Vanhoozer, general ed., **Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible** (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005)

This work contains numerous helpful articles on the theological interpretation of Scripture from biblical scholars and theologians.

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RECENT POLL from LifeWay Research found that 89 percent of American households still own a Bible, with the average home having 4.1 Bibles. But owning a Bible is different from reading it—and pollsters might be surprised by what happens when many Americans do.

Most polls, surveys, and studies that have examined the Bible's influence have looked at views of its inspiration and methods of interpretation. Gallup, for example, has for four decades asked Americans how literally the Bible should be taken. Comparatively very little research has looked into what happens when one actually reads the Bible, especially when one reads it independently outside the church.

Perhaps we've assumed that such questions would be redundant, merely one more measure of religiosity, along with how often one attends church, how literally one views the Bible, and how much one prays. When researchers look at these indicators, they usually find a correlation with both political and moral conservatism. It's not always the case, but it is a trend. Reading the Bible on one's own makes a difference, too. The interesting part, however, is the unexpected difference it makes.

Frequent Bible reading has some predictable effects on the reader. It increases opposition to abortion as well as homosexual marriage and unions. It boosts a belief that science helps reveal God's glory. It diminishes hopes that science will eventually solve humanity's problems. But unlike some other religious practices, reading the Bible more often has some liberalizing effects—or at least makes the reader more prone to agree with liberals on certain issues. This is true even when accounting for factors such as political beliefs, education level, income level, gender, race, and religious measures (like which religious tradition one affiliates with, and one's views of biblical literalism).

TERRORISM, JUSTICE, AND SCIENCE

In 2007, the Baylor Religion Survey asked Americans how often they read the Bible on their own. (It was a five-point scale in this study, ranging from “never” to “several times a week.”) It also asked whether the federal government should expand its authority to fight terrorism—a reference to the Patriot Act. For each increased level of Bible-reading frequency, support for the Patriot Act decreased by about 13 percent.

Frequent Bible reading also influences views on criminal justice. As might be expected, respondents who were more politically liberal were prone to disagree with the statement, “The government should punish criminals more harshly.” Unexpectedly (at least given the conservative stereotype), the more frequently people read the Bible, the more they too are prone to disagree with the statement. This is not an anomalous finding: Support for abolishing the death penalty increased by about 45 percent for each increase on the five-point scale measuring Bible-reading frequency.

Reading the Bible affects attitudes toward science as well. If you just ask people about biblical literalism, you don't find statistically

significant differences in views of whether science and religion are compatible. But the more someone reads the Bible, the more likely he or she is to believe science and religion are compatible. (For each increase on the five-point scale, the odds that they see religion and science as incompatible decrease by 22 percent.)

JUSTICE AND CONSUMPTION

Some of the most interesting findings relate to moral attitudes. “How important is it,” the survey asked, “to actively seek social and economic justice in order to be a good person?” Again, as would be expected, those with more liberal political leanings were more likely to say it's very or somewhat important. And those who read the Bible more often were more likely to agree. Indeed, they were almost 35 percent more likely to agree at each point on Baylor's five-point scale. That may be bad news for Glenn Beck, who last year told believers to leave their churches if they hear “social justice” language being used. Likewise, contrary to liberal media stereotypes, those who are most engaged in their faith (by directly and frequently reading its source material) are those who are most supportive of social and economic justice. A reading, politically conservative literalist is only slightly less supportive than a non-reading, politically liberal non-literalist.

Likewise, the survey asked whether one must consume or use fewer goods in order to be a good person. Political liberals and frequent Bible readers are more likely to say yes. A conservative Bible reader might not be as prone to say yes as a liberal non-reader, but think of it this way: Ask an evangelical who is politically conservative, has some college education, has an average level of income, is a biblical literalist, and does not read the Bible, and you'll have only a 22 percent chance he or she will say reducing consumption is part of ethical living. Ask the same person, only now they read the Bible, and you'll have a 44 percent chance they'll say so. It's still not a majority, but the swing is dramatic.

WHY THE BIBLE PUSHES YOU LEFTWARD

The discussion becomes even more interesting when we consider who is most likely to read the Bible frequently. It's evangelicals and biblical literalists, those who tend to be more conservative on these topics. In other words, those who read the Bible most often are more conservative, but the more they read the Bible, the more likely it is that their views will change, at least on these topics.

Why does this happen? One possible explanation is that readers tend to have expectations of a text prior to reading it. Given the Bible's prominence in our society, it's little wonder that many people think they know what's in it before they open it up. But once they start reading it on their own, they are bound to be surprised by something, and this surprising new content is then integrated and grafted on to the familiar. Beliefs do change with the addition of new information.

But it doesn't have to be unfamiliar content to surprise the reader. It just has to be personally relevant. Frequent Bible readers may have different views of biblical authority, but they tend to read it devotionally, looking for ways in which Scripture is speaking directly to them. They will read until struck by something that sticks

ISTOCK

A Left-Leaning Text

Survey surprise:
Frequent Bible
reading can turn
you liberal
(in some ways).

By Aaron B.
Franzen

out in the text. Even if the reader thinks the Bible has some error or needs a lot of interpretation, this thunderbolt moment can take on tremendous personal significance.

But frequent Bible readers don't just see the Bible as personal. They also see it as authoritative, written by an author who had a specific context and intent, and they want to conform to its message. After all, why read the Bible with no desire to embrace what it teaches?

In short, sometimes reading the Bible can change views and attitudes because readers are surprised by what's in it. Other times, it's just a matter of discipleship. 

Aaron B. Franzen is a graduate student in the sociology department at Baylor University. This research is undergoing peer review.



'God used the massacre to pronounce the death of communism. We thought we were a political movement. What was happening was a spiritual movement.' ~ Chai Ling

Each day in China, 35,000 baby girls are aborted and 500 women commit suicide. Freedom fighter **Chai Ling** won't take it any longer. Interview by Timothy C. Morgan

Saving China's Daughters



AFTER ESCAPING FROM CHINA to the United States 22 years ago, Chai Ling, a top leader in the Tiananmen Square democracy movement, reassembled all the puzzle pieces of her life. She discovered something that had been hidden from her, the answer to perhaps her most difficult question: Where was God during the 1989 massacre at Tiananmen, where China's government killed an estimated 2,600 people (something it continues to deny)? Chai lived with this question until she gave her life to Christ. A pastor at Park Street Church in Boston baptized her on Easter Sunday 2010.

Not long after being baptized, Chai turned her attention to the daily loss of innocent life due to China's one-child policy and subsequent forced abortions. By some estimates, Chinese women have had 400 million abortions since 1979, when the government implemented the one-child policy.

Last year, Chai launched All Girls Allowed, a faith-based organization with the mission of ending the one-child policy and sex-selective abortion (gendercide), and supporting women pregnant with girls. Chai tells her story in her book, *A Heart for Freedom: The Remarkable Journey of a Young Dissident, Her Daring Escape, and Her Quest to Free China's Daughters* (Tyndale House). *Christianity Today* deputy managing editor Timothy C. Morgan interviewed Chai twice over the past year.

Most China experts see the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests through a political lens. But you don't. Why?

Before, when I was walking in darkness, I didn't understand the meaning. All I saw was the triumph of evil forces and injustice—China killing so many people and still getting away with it.

But now I'm seeing a different side of it. I see the country being transformed into a new nation. God used the massacre to pronounce the death of communism. We thought we were a political movement. What was really happening was a spiritual movement. God used the massacre to wake people up and prepare hearts and minds for a new spiritual awakening.

Tiananmen will be a part of the history of China's church. Many church leaders say it was a major turning point in how the churches evolved from rural to urban and became able to have a profound impact on China's society. It feels like Acts 29. The church in China is a very strong body of Christ that's growing.

How did you finally answer your question, "Where was God during the Tiananmen killing?"

Once I was praying and asking, "What happened in Tiananmen? Why did you allow this to happen?" The next day, a colleague from Hong Kong who was at Tiananmen sent me by e-mail a journal entry she had written ten years earlier.

JESSICA SCRANTON

She was a Christian at Tiananmen. She watched the brutal killings take place. She held in her arms a boy who was dying. She came out traumatized, and she was angry with God. Every year she asked God, "Where were you? Why didn't you save the people there?"

Until the tenth anniversary. Then she had to give a testimony for her church. She said she quieted herself and asked gently, "God, where were you?" She went back to the image of the boy dying in her arms. Immediately there was another figure walking toward her from far away. That figure walked with such peace and dignity—she instantly recognized him. He merged into the dying boy. This dying boy was saying, "Persevere until the very end. My blood comes from this place." That figure was Jesus. The Holy Spirit overpowered her. She just cried and cried. Jesus was there.

[When I read the journal entry] I cried for three hours too. My question was answered.

What do you think Tiananmen ultimately means?

At Tiananmen in 1989 when I was speaking, there was a bigger power speaking through me. It was so close, that force. We went there with hope that we could reform communism. But God allowed Pharaoh's heart to be hardened to show the true face of communism. That idol has been smashed.

Pastor Tim Keller told me that he went to see the pastors in China. They said a third of the Tiananmen generation [had turned] to Jesus, a third had gone into business, and the other third is still searching. God is using the Tiananmen massacre to bring salvation to China. God has his timetable. He will bring China to Jesus.



'We will see God parting the Red Sea in our time, by ending gendercide and China's one-child policy.'

~ Chai Ling

God is going to raise up people who will start fearing him, not the government. We don't really know when the final showdown will be. But it's going to be beautiful. We will see God parting the Red Sea in our time, by ending gendercide and China's one-child policy.

Why should fighting China's one-child policy and forced abortions be a high priority for the church?

It's urgent when every single day there are 35,000 lives lost. That's what gets me up and running every day. No second should be wasted. Five hundred Chinese women commit suicide every day. Women are so traumatized. Only God can heal these people. It's very hard for humans to try to heal them. This one issue

influences every single Chinese family—it's one way the Chinese government controls people's fundamental freedoms.

What is the mission of All Girls Allowed?

We want to save lives right now. Our first mission is to rescue born and unborn girls. Second, to support abandoned girls. Third, to reunite trafficked children with their families. In one city, Putian, among three million residents, there may be 100,000 to 600,000 trafficked child brides. Fourth, to pray for the enforcers of the one-child policy.

We hope this is going to be supported by churches from this country and inside China. We want to work with grassroots organizations. The overall goal is saving lives physically and spiritually through transformation. Welcoming girls persuades the Chinese family to respect the rights of both women and men. Give a mother a garment of praise rather than a spear of despair when she gives birth to a baby girl. I share from Scripture that it is a right family

Half the Sky Is Falling

Unnatural Selection traces the world's missing girls back to powerful Western institutions. By Marian V. Liautaud

If, as the Chinese proverb says, women hold up half the sky, then brace yourself—the sky is falling.

In *Unnatural Selection: Choosing Boys Over Girls and the Consequences of a World Full of Men* (Public Affairs), journalist Mara Hvistendahl sounds the Henny Penny alarm: Population control methods used for decades in China, India, South Korea, and other countries have skewed sex ratios to biologically impossible levels. She first noticed the problem while visiting a Chinese kindergarten class in 2000: "In the sea of tiny smiles that greeted us, boys outnumbered girls." Her teacher explained the disparity was the result of women getting prenatal scans and aborting female

fetuses. This compelled Hvistendahl to investigate the societal implications of a world with tens of millions more men than women.

Most cultures have tended to favor boys over girls. Boys carry the family name, cost less to marry off, and have better access to education than girls. It's no surprise then that when South Korea and China launched population control efforts in the 1960s, many couples aborted or abandoned their girls. Ultrasounds and abortion have claimed over 160 million unborn girls in Asia alone—the equivalent of the entire current U.S. female population being wiped out.

Yet cultural preferences and China's one-child policy don't explain why girls have also gone missing from Albania and Azerbaijan, and why sex ratio imbalance is now appearing in Europe. The global problem demanded a global theory, and Hvistendahl's is this: Sex selection has arisen out of a drive to control population size, using technology (primarily ultrasound) and abortion as handmaids. And Hvistendahl charges that it's powerful Western institutions—think General Electric, Rockefeller, the Ford Foundation—that are largely responsible for the world's gender crisis, for providing the necessary technology.

relationship when the man grows up to leave the parents and be with the woman, versus the current Chinese way: The girl is married off to the man's household. We will make them realize they should keep a baby girl, and there will be a promise for them in their old age: They will be taken care of. People should accept the promise and, hopefully, come to Christ.

We are in a spiritual battle. We are not trying to overthrow the government or change the law. Of course, we would love to see the law change. But the real important part is to save lives—physical lives and also souls.

Has it been difficult to go public with the fact that you had four abortions as a young adult?

Last year, we were doing 40 days of prayer for All Girls Allowed and for all the women and mothers in China. I was going through the process of confession and remembrance. I said, "Well, God, my story, my life is yours. It is not mine. Do whatever you want to accomplish your will." I started by walking in faith to confront my own abortion experience. I had to make peace with God.

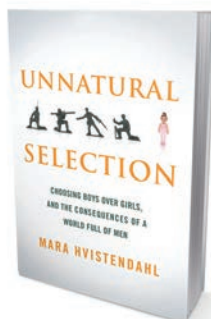
Early in my life, I was searching for him. He could have saved me back in China when I was looking for him, even riding a bicycle to find him. But he didn't. He allowed the abortions to take place. I was feeling horrible about that. I didn't believe it was his will to allow that to happen. I felt like I was Saul in the secret place. I prayed, "God, why do you want me to be so broken? How can I go and do your work anymore?" Basically, God said to me, "Look, nobody in my Bible was complete. They sinned, except my Son." And as with Paul, my eyes opened up.

I have mixed emotions about my own abortions, because I don't want to say that all these I need to repent of. Repentance about the blindness, not knowing the baby actually was alive, yes. But the woman is also the victim. I had not even realized I was also a victim of a forced abortion. It's the system herding helpless lambs into their slaughter machine—the mother and the baby. It's the slaughter machine that we need to go fight and break up.

Hvistendahl also reports that Western groups have funded population control, a fact kept under wraps until Planned Parenthood and the Rockefeller Foundation recently opened their early files. They reveal billions of U.S. dollars sent to India for food loans and public health projects conditioned on population control. The West held its debtor nations hostage, relying on reproductive extortion, which included sterilization campaigns in India, South Korea, and China, and forced abortions and exorbitant fines for more than one child.

THE ONE SOLUTION

To Hvistendahl, sex selection is an issue of women's rights; that is, abortion is bad if it involves a motive to select the sex of a child, but good if it involves a woman's right to choose. For example, Hvistendahl expresses outrage that Chinese women underwent 67 million abortions from 1981 to 1986, because they were pressured to select for sex. One page later, she notes how "refreshing" it was to count five flyers on a Chinese outhouse



How can American Christians influence U.S.-China relations?

The Christian community in this country needs to understand that God is delivering China as we speak. Many Chinese do not have a strong faith, like when I was walking in darkness and thought that power was success. Encourage leaders of this country to stand firm on the values we adhere to so dearly. Support the faith movement in China. End forced abortion. Expose the cruelty of this practice and tell China firmly that it is not acceptable. There is no justification for this kind of massive murder.

I want to be the first one to say I am guilty of ignorance. But now that we have heard the story, we have no right to remain silent and do nothing about it.

[China's Communist Party] created a whole nation that does not cherish life. The nation becomes more powerful economically and politically every single day. It is not a good picture for world peace, except that Christianity is growing equally strong, if not more so.

Can you change the belief that men matter more than women?

For the longest time, I had resentment toward the Bible. Somebody had told me that women are worth less even in the Bible, because Eve was made out of the rib of man, and man was made with whole mud.

When I finally read the Bible myself, I couldn't believe it. The whole intent of God is for man and woman to become one flesh—to be united. It wasn't that the woman was worth less than the man.

This is so different from Chinese culture. The traditional culture is that women never get a chance to be themselves. They first have to obey the father, then obey the husband, and obey the son if the husband dies. So to lift woman up, make her equal with man, and have a true relationship and respect—that is a really important message and part of this battle.

Do you see yourself returning to China?

Not now. I can't go back to China, but God can send angels to China to work. I think someday God will send me back to China. I've never been this optimistic in my life ever. ✚

wall that advertised where to get an abortion.

Sorry, Hvistendahl, this is where you lose me. How can a problem in China and India pose such a grave threat to the world, yet we continue to abort 3,700 babies every day in the United States? Hvistendahl is unwilling to declare when life begins, yet it apparently begins early enough in China and India to be gravely concerned. In North America, we can feel grave concern only for the women who are forced to have abortions. Never mind that along with the 160 million missing girls in Asia are millions more boys and girls in America that have gone missing since *Roe v. Wade*.

Unnatural Selection is a comprehensive, insightful look at our world's extreme sex ratio imbalance. I just wish Hvistendahl had offered the one solution that would solve the world's gender imbalance: stop killing fetuses altogether, and let nature's 105:100 sex ratio find its balance. In other words, let men and women hold up the whole sky—together. ✚

Marian V. Liautaud is an editor for Christianity Today International's church management resources and *GiftedforLeadership.com*.

[DISCIPLESHIP]

Salt & Light

Four ways

Christians
can influence
the world.

By John R. W. Stott

CHRISTOPHER HEITZMANNSEDER / FLICKR / GETTY



A

ALIENATION was originally a Marxist word, and Karl Marx meant by it the alienation of the worker from the product of his labors. When what he produces is sold by the factory owner, he is alienated from the fruits of his work.

But nowadays the word *alienation* has a much broader meaning of powerlessness. Whenever you feel politically or economically powerless, you are feeling alienated.

Jimmy Reid, the well-known Marxist counselor in Glasgow and leader of the Clydeside Ship Workers, when he was rector of Glasgow University, said, "Alienation is the cry of men who feel themselves to be the victims of blind economic forces beyond their control. Alienation is the frustration of ordinary people who are excluded from the processes of decision-making." Have we any influence? Have we any power? That's the question.

The word *influence* can sometimes be used for a self-centered thirst for power, like in Dale Carnegie's famous book *How to Make Friends and Influence People*. But it can also be used in an unselfish way of the desire of Christians who

refuse to acquiesce to the status quo, who are determined to see things changed in society and long to have some influence for Jesus Christ. Are we powerless? Is the quest for social change hopeless before we begin? Or can Christians exert some influence for Jesus Christ?

There is a great deal of pessimism around today that grips and even paralyzes people. They wring their hands in a holy kind of dismay. Society is rotten to the core, they say. Everything is hopeless;

extremely unbalanced, if not actually heretical and harmful. It's ludicrous to say Christians can have no influence in society. It's biblically and historically mistaken. Christianity has had an enormous influence on society down through its long and checkered history. Look at this conclusion of Kenneth Latourette in his seven-volume work on the history of the expansion of Christianity:

No life ever lived on this planet has been so influential in the affairs of men like the life of Jesus Christ. From that brief life and its apparent frustration has flowed a more powerful force for the triumphant waging of man's long battle than any other ever known by the human race. By it millions have been lifted from illiteracy and ignorance and have been placed upon the road of growing intellectual freedom and control over the physical environment. It has done more to allay the physical ills of disease and famine than any other impulse known to man. It's emancipated millions from chattel slavery and millions of others from addiction to vice. It has protected tens of millions in exploitation by their fellows. It's been the most fruitful source of movement to lessen the horrors of war and to put the relations of men and nations on the basis of justice and of peace.

ISTOCK

People are not rubbish. People are made in the image of God. Indeed they are fallen, but the image of God has not been destroyed. Are they capable of doing no good?

there is no hope but the return of Jesus Christ. As Edward Norman, dean of Peterhouse in Cambridge, once said in a radio interview, "People are rubbish."

But people are not rubbish. People are men and women made in the image of God. Indeed they are fallen, but the image of God has not been destroyed. Are they capable of doing no good? The doctrine of total depravity, which means that every part of our human being has been tainted by the Fall, does not mean that we're incapable of doing any good. Jesus himself said that although you are evil, you are able to do good things and give good gifts to your children. Now, of course we believe in the Fall. We believe that when Christ comes again he is going to put things right. If you develop a Christian mind, you don't concentrate exclusively on the fall of man and the return of Christ. You also think about the creation and about the redemption through Jesus Christ. And we have to allow the creation to be, as it were, qualified by the Fall, and the Fall by the Redemption, and the Redemption by the Consummation. And the Christian mind thinks in terms of this total purpose of God, which includes the Creation, the Fall, the Redemption, and the Consummation.

If we are pessimists and think we are capable of doing nothing in human society today, I venture to say that we are theologically

Christ and his church have had an enormous influence. And if only we were out and out for Jesus Christ in the fullness of our commitment, then we would have far more influence than we do.

So, away with pessimism, and away also with blind optimism, as if we thought utopia was around the corner. No, Christians are sober-minded, biblical

realists, who have a balanced doctrine of creation for redemption and consummation. We are not powerless. I'm afraid what we are, rather, is often lazy and shortsighted and unbelieving and disobedient to the commission of Jesus.

BEYOND MERE SURVIVAL

To many of us, the verses of Matthew 5 are becoming increasingly familiar. We see their great importance today, and we begin to look at them again. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaims, in verse 13: "You are the salt of the earth." Verse 14: "You are the light of the world." Verse 16: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven" (ERV).

In both these metaphors of the salt and the light, Jesus teaches about the responsibility of Christians in a non-Christian, or sub-Christian, or post-Christian society. He emphasizes the difference between Christians and non-Christians, between the church and the world, and he emphasizes the influences Christians ought to have on the non-Christian environment. The distinction between the two is clear. The world, he says, is like rotting meat. But you are to be the world's salt. The world is like a dark night, but you are to be the world's light. This is the fundamental difference between the

Christian and the non-Christian, the church and the world.

Then he goes on from the distinction to the influence. Like salt in putrefying meat, Christians are to hinder social decay. Like light in the prevailing darkness, Christians are to illumine society and show it a better way. It's very important to grasp these two stages in the teaching of Jesus. Most Christians accept that there is a distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian, between the church and the world. God's new society, the church, is as different from the old society as salt from rotting meat and as light from darkness.

But there are too many people who stop there; too many people whose whole preoccupation is with survival—that is, maintaining the distinction. The salt must retain its saltiness, they say. It must not become contaminated. The light must retain its brightness. It must not be smothered by the darkness. That is true. But that is merely survival. Salt and light are not just a bit different from their environment. They are to have a powerful influence on their environment. The salt is to be rubbed into the meat in order to stop the rot. The light is to shine into the darkness. It is to be set upon a lamp stand, and it is to give light to the environment. That is an influence on the environment quite different from mere survival.

FOUR POWERS

What is the nature of this influence? Let me suggest to you a few ways in which we Christians have power.

First, there is power in prayer. I beg you not to dismiss this as a pious platitude. It isn't. There are some Christians who are such social activists that they never stop to pray. They are wrong, are they not? Prayer is an indispensable part of the Christian's life and of the church's life. And the church's first duty toward society and its leaders is to pray for them. "I urge, then, first of all," writes Paul in his first letter to Timothy, "that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

If there is more violence in the community than peace, more indecency than modesty, more oppression than justice, more secularism than godliness, is the reason that the church is not praying as it should? I believe that in our normal services, we should take with increasing seriousness the five or ten minutes of intercession in which, as a congregation, we bow down before God and bring to him the world and its leaders, and cry to him to intervene. And the same is true in our prayer gatherings, in our fellowship groups, and in our private prayers. I think most of us, myself included, are more parochial than global in our prayers. But are we not global Christians? Do we not share the global concerns of our global God? We should express these concerns in our prayers.

Second, there is the power of truth. All of us believe in the power of the truth of the gospel. We love to say, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16). We are convinced of the power of the gospel in evangelism—that it brings salvation and redemption to those who respond and believe in Jesus. But it isn't only the gospel that is powerful. All God's truth is powerful. God's truth of whatever kind is much more powerful than the Devil's lies. Do you believe that, or are you a pessimist? Do you think the Devil is stronger than God? Do you think lies are stronger than the truth? The Christian

believes that truth is stronger than lies, and God is stronger than the Devil. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 13:8, "For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth." As John said in his prologue to the fourth gospel, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Of course it cannot; that light is the truth of God.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the legendary Soviet dissident, believed in the power of truth over lies. Upon receiving the Nobel Prize in literature, he gave a speech called "One Word of Truth." Writers, he says, "haven't got any rockets to blast off. We . . . don't even trundle the most insignificant auxiliary vehicle. We haven't got any military might. So what can literature do in the face of the merciless onslaught of open violence?" Solzhenitsyn doesn't say we haven't got any power. He says, "One word of truth outweighs the whole world." If anybody should believe that, it's Christians. It's true. Truth is much more powerful than bombs and tanks and weapons.

How are we going to see the power of truth at work? Persuasion by argument. Just as we need doctrinal apologists in evangelism to argue the truth of the gospel, so we need ethical apologists in social action to argue the truth and the goodness of the moral law of God. We need more Christian thinkers who will use their minds for Jesus Christ, who will speak and write and broadcast and televise in order to influence public opinion.

I'll give you one quick example. You cannot force people to go to church by legislation. You can't force them to rest on Sundays. Nor can we simply quote from the Bible as if that settles the matter. But we can put forward our best arguments. We can argue that, psychologically and physically, human beings need one day's rest in seven, and that socially it's good for families who are separated during the week to have a day together on Sunday. We can argue for legislation that protects workers from being compelled to work and encourages family life. In this example, we're neither imposing our Christian views, nor leaving non-Christians alone in their own views, nor quoting the Bible dogmatically. We are simply using every argument—physical, psychological, sociological—in order to commend the wisdom and truth of biblical teaching. Why? Because we believe in the power of truth.

If you doubt the power of secular forms of argument to illuminate biblical truth, then consider an article appearing in the American magazine *Seventeen* in 1977 called "The Case against Living Together." It's an interview with Nancy Moore Clatworthy, a sociologist at The Ohio State University. For ten years, Clatworthy had been studying the phenomenon of unmarried couples living together. When she began, she was predisposed towards the custom. "Young people," she said, "have told us it was quite wonderful." And she said she believed them. It seemed to her to be a sensible arrangement, a useful step in courtship in which couples get to know one another. But her research, involving the testing of hundreds of couples, married and unmarried, led her to change her mind. And she concluded that living together was not doing the things the couples expected it to do, especially with girls. She found them uptight, fearful, looking past the rhetoric to the possible pain and agony.

Clatworthy makes two points: In the areas of happiness, respect, and adjustment, "Couples who live together before they're married have more problems than couples who marry first." In every area, the couples who lived together before marriage disagreed more often

than the couples who hadn't. Living together, she concludes, doesn't solve your problems.

Her second point was about commitment, the expectation a person has about the outcome of a relationship. Commitment is what makes marriage and living together work. But here's the problem: "Knowing that something is temporary, like living together unmarried, affects the degree of commitment to it. So unmarried couples are less than wholehearted in working to sustain and protect their relationship.

community can see the husband and wife loving and honoring one another, devoted and faithful to one another, and finding fulfillment in one another. They see the children growing up in the security of a loving and disciplined home. They see a family not turned in on itself, but turned outward—entertaining strangers, welcoming, keeping an open home, seeking to get involved in the concerns of the community. One Christian nurse in a hospital; one Christian teacher in a school; one Christian in a shop, in a factory, or in an office—we will all make a difference, for good or for ill.

Christians are marked people. The world is watching. And God's major way of changing the old society is to implant within it his new society, with its different values, different standards, different joys, and different goals. Our hope is that the watching world will see these differences, and find them attractive, that they "may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Fourth, Christians have the power of group solidarity—the power of a dedicated minority. According to the American sociologist Robert Bellah, at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University, "We should not underestimate the significance of the small group of people who have a vision of a just and gentle world. The quality of a whole culture may be changed when two percent of its people have a new vision."

That was the way of Jesus. He began with a small group of only 12 dedicated people. Within a few years, Roman officials complained they were turning the world upside down. There is a great need for dedicated Christian groups committed to one another, committed to a vision of justice, committed to Christ; groups that will pray together, think together, formulate policies together, and get to work together in the community.

Do you want to see your national life made more pleasing to God? Do you have a vision of a new godliness, a new justice, a new freedom, a new righteousness, a new compassion? Do you wish to repent of sub-Christian pessimism? Will you reaffirm your confidence in the power of God, in the power of prayer, of truth, of example, of group commitment—and of the gospel? Let's offer ourselves to God, as instruments in his hands—as salt and light in the community. The church could have an enormous influence for good, in every nation on earth, if it would commit itself totally to Christ. Let's give ourselves to him, who gave himself for us.

John R. W. Stott (1921–2011) was rector of All Souls Church in London, founder of Langham Partnership International, and the author of many books. This article is adapted from a sermon published on *Christianity Today's* sister website *PreachingToday.com*.



If we are pessimists and think we are capable of doing nothing in society today, I venture to say that we are theologically extremely unbalanced, if not heretical and harmful. It's ludicrous to say Christians can have no influence in society.

And, consequently, 75 percent of them break up. And especially the girls are badly hurt." She concludes, "Statistically you are much better off marrying than living together, because for people who are in love, anything less than a full commitment is a cop-out."

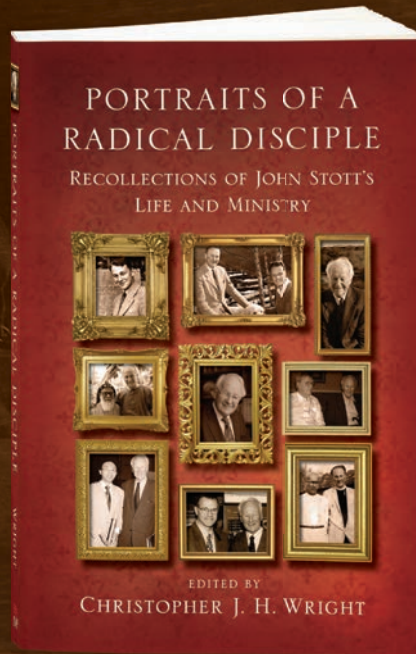
Now, I don't think that Clatworthy is a Christian. Her appeal is not to the authority of Scripture but to the findings of sociology. And yet her sociological research vindicates the wisdom of Christian ethics as it applies to the institution of marriage. It reminds us that God's truth has power, in both its biblical and non-biblical guises.

Our third power as Christians is the power of example. Truth is powerful when it's argued. It's more powerful when it's exhibited. People need not only to understand the argument. They need to see the benefits of the argument with their own eyes. It's hard to exaggerate the power for good that a thoroughly Christian family can exert, for instance, in a public housing development. The whole

Remembering "UNCLE JOHN"

"TO THOSE WHO KNOW AND MEET [JOHN STOTT], respect and affection go hand in hand. . . . He thinks of himself, as all Christians should but few of us achieve, as simply a beloved child of a heavenly Father; an unworthy servant of his friend and master, Jesus Christ."

TIMOTHY DUDLEY-SMITH

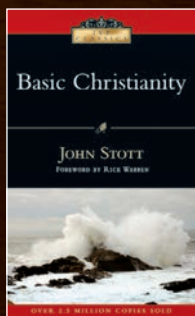


PORTRAITS OF A RADICAL DISCIPLE

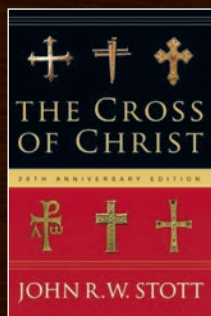
With nearly three dozen human-scale portraits, this book is a capsule of memories, both public and private, of evangelical statesman John R. W. Stott.

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM Michael Green, Keith and Gladys Hunt, Samuel Escobar, René Padilla, Ajith Fernando, Peter Kuzmic, Mark Labberton and many other friends, fellow students and worldwide partners in the gospel.

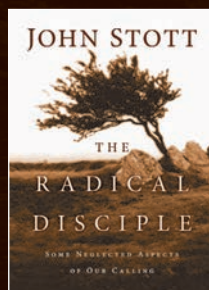
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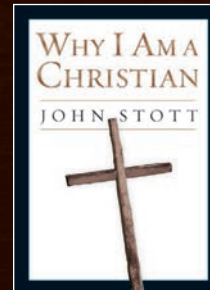
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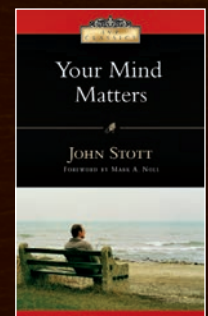
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[INVESTIGATION]

DRILLING *for*



TRUTH

The messy business of clean water.

By Jeremy Weber
in Bangui, Central African Republic

T

HE MEN PLANNED TO MEET in the desolate rainforest of Central Africa, amid towering 150-foot trees and swarms of small butterflies clustered like shark teeth on the seemingly endless red clay road. Their discussion would lead to clean drinking water for hundreds of destitute villages—and the fracturing of a tight-knit missionary community.

Driving east from Berberati, a town of 80,000 where diamonds can be found in nearby streambeds, was Roland Mararv. The former Iron Curtain Bible smuggler had traded the life of a Swedish Baptist missionary for that of a commercial well-driller—a better way, he believed, to help the Central African Republic (CAR) escape the ranks of the world's 10 poorest nations. After 20 years in business, Mararv was seeking a suitable buyer for his drilling company, Sangha Forage.

Having traveled originally west from Bangui, the landlocked nation's capital of 700,000 along the wide Ubangi River, was Jim Hocking. The longtime Grace Brethren missionary had been raised in the CAR and was looking for his next step.

Their 2003 meeting was a fateful one. What transpired over the next few years provides a window into how complicated it is to build clean wells in remote villages and let donors know exactly where and how wisely their money was spent.

STRONG BEGINNING

Mararv had drilled 1,400 wells nationwide and was ready to retire from drilling thanks to a 600-well contract with the German government and a fortunately timed devaluation of the local currency. Hocking was chafing at a mission desk job in the States while his wife recovered from a traumatic experience. (Their family was robbed at gunpoint before the CAR's 2003 civil war, the nation's fourth in 10 years, making it Africa's most lawless country after Somalia.) Yet Hocking still wanted to help his fellow Central Africans, who face an average life expectancy of 50 years and, for most, income of less than \$1 per day.

They devised a plan: Mararv would donate his \$2 million drilling operation to Hocking, who would use it as the cornerstone of a new charity, Integrated Community Development International (ICDI).

ICDI was birthed at the right place at the right time. It caught a surging wave of evangelical interest in Africa and water aid. Living Water International, with more than 10,000 wells completed in 26 countries, got the ball rolling in 1990 in Kenya. Dozens of smaller Christian ministries have sprung up since. Charity:Water, launched in 2006 by former New York City nightclub promoter Scott Harrison, has arguably taken water aid to a new level of prominence, raising more than \$40 million for 4,300 projects in 19 countries.



Water Works: The remote Central African village of Karaza enjoys clean water thanks to an ICDI well. But hundreds of other wells still need repair.

JEREMY WEBER

The pitch was compelling: Bring clean drinking water to the African nation once deemed “the world’s most silent crisis” by the United Nations. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that water-related illnesses kill more African children under age 5 than HIV/AIDS, malaria, and measles combined. Access to clean water reduces water-related deaths by 21 percent, and the hours previously spent either ill or fetching water can now be used by women for economic endeavors and by children for schooling.

Within a few years, ICDI—which had expanded into orphan care, radio, AIDS education, and agriculture—was pulling in more than \$2 million in donations from NGOs, churches, and individuals.

In September 2010, Charity:Water chose ICDI as the recipient of its high-profile anniversary campaign. It raised more than \$2 million in four months to help provide wells to the Bayaka, an indigenous tribe known as pygmies (adults are less than 5 feet tall). A special edition of ABC News’ 20/20 this past December highlighted ICDI as one of six groups improving global health.

Stateside, things were rosy for ICDI. It reported to donors that over 200 new wells had been drilled and another 800-plus maintained. It planned a \$4.2 million budget for 2011.

But back in the CAR, a March 2010 lawsuit by ICDI’s African representative, a former education minister and governor, was the latest evidence of relational bridges ICDI burned during its rapid growth.

The three missionary couples who first helped Hocking operate ICDI had all left on bad terms. Their missions also severed ties with the organization whose founding purpose was to serve as “an adjunct to existing mission programs” (since changed to “empower Central Africans”).

Mararv and his wife, Gunnel, codified concerns in a 100-page report. They alleged that ICDI had engaged in double billings and had lied about well rehabilitations to the tune of more than \$1 million.

“I have no theory as to where all the money has gone,” said Mararv to *Christianity Today* after traversing the nation examining ICDI’s work. “All I know is that you don’t see it here.”

Mararv became concerned about his donation after he noticed that wells for Gem Diamond, an international diamond mining company, appeared on a June 2008 donor update as paid for by Living Water. Subsequent research led to questions that, frustrated by ICDI’s responses, prompted Mararv to complete his report and send it to the ICDI board, major donors, and, eventually, CT.

CHARGES DENIED

ICDI, which had yet to complete a certified external audit, denied the charges. It countered with a 33-page board report, which led all of its major donors to affirm their support of Hocking. ICDI claims that Mararv not only drew false conclusions based on a “colossal



Well Traveled: Former missionary Roland Mararv (above) knows wells. He’s drilled 1,400 across CAR. Wells help schoolchildren (right) improve their health.

misunderstanding” of incomplete information, but also was retaliating for no longer being allowed to import hunting supplies (for his son’s safari business) undeclared on ICDI shipping containers.

CT examined the reports, and drove 600 miles through some of the world’s poorest villages, to understand what happened.

The core charges Mararv leveled at ICDI were claiming project totals that surpassed capabilities or records, as well as double billing: the same wells and rehabs would appear in donor reports for multiple NGOs. ICDI and Living Water say project totals do not match due to different reporting methods, cost-sharing, and typos—thus the mismatches don’t represent actual missing dollars exchanged.

Regarding cost-sharing, some groups like Living Water donate less than the full cost of a given well so that recipients have incentive to develop other funding sources. Other times ICDI distributes costs to allow smaller donors to be involved, or to give donors better publicity via higher well counts. Over half of the wells in a 100-well project for the International Partnership for Human Development (IPHD) and a 36-well project for Mercy Corps in 2008 also appear in the donor reports of Charity:Water, Living Water, and Blood:Water Mission. A number of wells commissioned by Catholic missions appear on American NGO donor lists as well.

Mararv contests whether those wells needed to be cost-shared, given that he did the same work for roughly the same price, which included 25 percent markup for business taxes and 25 percent for profit margin—markups that a nonprofit wouldn’t have. Jonathan Wiles of Living Water explains that ICDI projects may cost twice as much as Sangha Forage projects did because nonprofits have many other expenses, such as long-term training on sanitation and HIV/AIDS.

Regarding Gem Diamond, the company paid ICDI to drill two wells on its gated Likaya compound in southwestern CAR and another well for a neighboring village. But ICDI says the 2007 wells were twice as deep as normal, approximately 150 meters, and that two attempts resulted in dry holes. So it asked Living Water to cover the extra costs.



Quoted well prices are based on an average depth of 60 meters. So, with ICDI claiming a 65-meter average for 2007, Mararv says that it shouldn't have needed to bring in Living Water. Hocking counters that his reserves were so low that he couldn't wait out the year to see if he later recouped the costs.

POOR COMMUNICATION

Cost-sharing makes sense in principle, but implementation can be tricky. The ICDI board report claims that cost-sharing was built into NGO contracts. But Mercy Corps and Catholic mission leaders expressed surprise that their wells were also claimed by American NGOs.

This, in turn, leads to other confusions. For example, IPHD's 2008 funds were enough to rehab 40 to 50 wells but were spread across a 100-well rehab project in northern Ouham. Other donors, including Living Water and Charity:Water, made up the remainder. None of the donor reports share credit.

"I can't control what they tell their donors," said Hocking. "Nobody technically gets 100 percent credit."

Failing to share credit is "unforgivable but very common," said Chris McGahey, a 28-year water management expert now with Tetra Tech ARD. "Too many organizations are bad record keepers. Love 'em to death, but by far their priority is to put the thing in the ground."

Other charges from Mararv include the following:

- **Premature rehabbing:** The Vergnet and India foot-operated pumps prevalent in the CAR are designed for rigorous use. But Hocking says even a regularly maintained pump can break within 6 to 12 months from overuse by villages swollen with refugees. However, ICDI has imposed a two-year limit on rehabs and, in the wake of Mararv's report, said it has identified 10 wells rehabbed before the previous one-year limit and has made them right with donors.

ICDI was birthed at the right place at the right time. It caught a surging wave of evangelical interest in Africa and water aid.

to 2008. He left ICDI in April 2008 and submitted a report alleging that ICDI had sent the same receipts to both the foundation and the embassy. He also alleged that ICDI had inflated the costs incurred and diverted materials intended for the project to its radio station in Boali.

The embassy declined comment. The foundation's Silvia Vienne remains unsatisfied with ICDI's documentation of her donations. Hocking says of the early years, "I robbed Peter to pay Paul many times, and then [always] paid Peter back later."

OVERSELLING

The most puzzling practice involves ICDI's maintenance program, an expansion of a system Mararv devised to keep pumps working longer. Villages paid a small monthly fee (\$8) and received regular maintenance visits, which reduced or even eliminated the need for major repairs.

Hocking has grown the program to 900 villages, up from 350 when Mararv handed it over, but only half of those villages pay regularly (Mararv had the same results). But the villages' payment histories show that many of the rehabs in ICDI's early years were of villages making steady payments, with donors paying \$1,000 to \$1,500 to cover the cost. This suggests to Mararv that either regular maintenance visits had not been made as promised (leading to deteriorating wells), or that maintenance visits were being "charged" to donors at rehab rates.

Along these lines, former staff have accused ICDI of using such donations to subsidize other ministries that were harder to raise funds for. "Why is well drilling being treated like a cash cow . . . ?" wrote Berberati garage chief Ron Ziegelbaur in a grievance e-mail before he was dismissed in January 2007. Hocking says Ziegelbaur was an "incredible mechanic" but was dismissed for not keeping up with assigned tasks.

- **False reporting:** Mararv says that ICDI reported that wells tested clean when they never were tested. Nearly all of ICDI's rehab reports state that no disinfection was needed, claiming that samples taken to a government laboratory tested clean. But lab records exist for only half of the 2005 and 2008 wells, and not at all for 2006 and 2007. In addition, the government tests mainly for aesthetics (odor and hardness), not potability—that is, for fecal coliform, arsenic, fluoride, and nitrates—as recommended by the WHO. Hocking says the lab never reported that any ICDI wells needed treatment. Living Water says it strongly encouraged ICDI to chlorinate every well but doesn't have a formal policy requiring it. Today ICDI tests every well in-house.

- **Other double charging:** Mararv alleges that ICDI charged both the U.S. embassy and an Italian foundation, Un Raggio Di Luce, for the construction of a fence and roof. Josh Danforth was the missionary running ICDI's orphan and agriculture programs from 2006

Hocking explains the payment pattern: “[Villages] are selected based on what they’re putting into it. Some people that need [a rehab] may not get it because they want it handed to them. ... [Others] get a rehab because they’re investing in [their well], and we think it will last a long time.”

Mararv says that participating villages never needed \$1,000 rehabs from Sangha Forage. Plus, his rehabs included a *soufflage*, or flushing out, for which ICDI charges \$5,000 separately.

Hocking says ICDI operates under different definitions from Sangha Forage, and that wells qualified for rehabs if they weren’t pumping water when the maintenance team arrived, regardless of the cost of the repair. Yet Living Water, in a heated reprimand to Hocking in October 2007, wrote, “We do not expect routine maintenance for the cost of a rehab.” When such expectations began is unclear, as neither group clearly distinguished the difference between maintenance and rehabs in the early years of the partnership.

Hocking disputes Mararv’s claims of the preventative nature of maintenance, saying that even paying villages can lose a functioning pump within 6 to 12 months due to overuse.

All that being said, the claim of ICDI—that it provides 450,000 Africans in 900 villages with a “constant supply” of clean water—seems oversold.

“Could you couch it as fraud? Maybe, but it’s a stretch,” says McGahey. “More like goodhearted people who are not thinking it through.”

Hocking has “no doubts” that his Central African field staff “pulled the wool over my eyes” at times, but defends the program. “It is nearly impossible to really verify what happened here,” he says.

Living Water says the program successfully instills ownership. “In other countries, locals say, ‘Here are the *mzungu* [foreigners] to look at their well,’” said president Mike Mantel. “In CAR they say, ‘What are you doing visiting our well? You have to ask before using it.’”

METHODS ENDORSED

ICDI acknowledges that it made mistakes as it grew, and has sought to correct them while professionalizing its staff and reporting. Living Water says it chose to extend grace as it invested in ICDI’s potential.

“Understand that in a new startup, you have a lot of issues to address all at one time,” said Bruce Whitmire, the then-Living Water vice president overseeing ICDI. “I am a lot easier on a guy getting started than on a guy who’s been doing it for a while, because there’s a learning curve.”

Mararv acknowledged in his report that his claims were based on incomplete information and that he was seeking answers. Still, Mararv wants a confession and apology: “I feel betrayed by a person I thought was a saint and a good friend.”



Ad Hoc: Former missionary Jim Hocking learned on the fly to quickly grow ICDI into a multimillion-dollar NGO.

Hocking acknowledges that ICDI has made mistakes. Most of those mistakes came from working quickly and learning while we worked. However, we have always tried to make our errors right.

cannot apologize for things he never did.

Bangui tabloids have made much of the dispute between ICDI and Zokoe. “I think it is very bad for us as Christians in this country because people are looking to us as a model,” says Nupanga Weanzana. He is president and dean of Bangui Evangelical School of Theology, located by a massive new stadium along an oddly broad road that

used to be the runway of the Bangui airport. “We are 50 years past the time when we needed a man from the West to control everything. That is the big problem with ICDI: leadership.”

Hocking acknowledges that ICDI has made mistakes. “Most of those mistakes came from working quickly and learning while we worked,” he says. “However, we have always tried to make our errors right when they are presented to us.”

Regarding disaffected former employees, Hocking says, “Yes, a lot of [former staff] felt like I moved too fast and grew too fast. ... They had a different idea, and that idea clashed with my vision, and at that point we had to separate ways. And that’s—you know, that’s missions. That’s business. That’s life. ... Why would I slow down and quit helping people when God continues to bless and give me the opportunity to help more people?”

The Mararv report has spurred ICDI to make changes. ICDI had already started professionalizing its staff, beginning with a full-time CFO in 2007. Record-keeping is now improved, contracts and costs are clearer, and ICDI will soon complete its first external audit.

“The birth pains that ICDI has been blessed with—now we are a better organization because of it,” says board chairman Doug Brennan. “This trial even helped us find some errors. ... There will be errors until we go to heaven. If we find an error, we correct it.”

“I wish NGOs could be self-critical enough to learn something from a business model,” says McGahey. “Doing good and running a good financial operation are not mutually exclusive.”

The Zokoe lawsuit is ongoing. The friendships between Hocking and his fellow CAR missionaries are still strained. Both sides say they want reconciliation. But that may prove harder than providing the poorest villages in the world with a cup of clean water. ☩

Jeremy Weber is Christianity Today’s news editor.

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Free at First

Why we need a fully biblical liberation theology. By Mark Galli

LIBERATION THEOLOGY began as a movement within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s, but soon found quarter in some sectors of Protestantism. It is a political theology that interprets the teachings of Jesus Christ in terms of liberation from unjust economic, political, and social conditions. Proponents say it is the way to view Christian faith through the eyes of the poor; opponents say it is nothing but baptized Marxism.

I tend to side with the detractors, and yet the liberation theologians—people like Gustavo Gutiérrez of Peru, Leonardo Boff of Brazil, and Jon Sobrino of Spain—had one thing right: the church's call to make the cause of the poor its own cause. That often entails challenging unjust regimes that grind the face of the poor ever deeper into misery. Certainly one finds biblical justification for seeking political liberation—for one, in the Exodus story, a great inspiration to blacks caught in the clutches of American racism.

That being said, liberation theology as it usually comes to us seems more indebted to Marx than to Moses. Yet the main problem is not that liberation theology went too far but rather that it did not go far enough. When the Bible—in particular, Jesus—speaks of liberation, there is much more at stake than politics. And it is for this reason, among others, that I think evangelicals should adhere to a liberation theology of our own. And we should frame that theology not with politics but with religion, morality, and spirituality—the three greatest oppressors humanity has ever known.

RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION

To be sure, you can't have a Christian life without religion. The Bible recognizes that life in God has no meaning if it is not embedded in

religious activity such as Scripture study, worship, and ritual. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus assumed that the devout life includes prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (Matt. 6). The Bible shows that Jesus was a man of prayer (Mark 1:35) and a regular church attender: "And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day . . ." notes Luke early in Jesus' ministry (4:16, *ESV*, used throughout).

At the same time, the Bible can talk about religion as if it were a curse. We're not just talking about false religion or idol worship, against which prophets like Isaiah waxed eloquent and sarcastic (Isa. 44:9–17). The Prophets could also indict perfectly acceptable religious practices. Take for example Isaiah's classic charge, where he quotes God as saying:

When you come to appear before me,
who has required of you
this trampling of my courts?

Bring no more vain offerings;
incense is an abomination to me.

New moon and Sabbath and the calling of
convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and
solemn assembly.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my
soul hates; they have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them. (1:12–14)

This must have been shocking rhetoric in Isaiah's day, because offerings and feasts and religious gatherings are what books like Leviticus are all about. The Israelites were doing in spades the exact thing they were

commanded to do.

Religion as such is not the problem, of course, only religion that becomes an excuse for or means of social and economic oppression. God despises religion when people use it to avoid some rather elementary matters of justice. Take this passage from the prophet Micah:

Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob
and rulers of the house of Israel,
who detest justice
and make crooked all that is straight,
who build Zion with blood
and Jerusalem with iniquity.

Its heads give judgment for a bribe;
its priests teach for a price;
its prophets practice divination for money . . . (3:9–11)

This type of oppression goes hand in hand with political oppression, but in this case, religion does not question but supports the oppressive order.

People look to religious leaders to bring order and peace to their spiritual lives. And they are willing to pay good money to know what God thinks of this and that. It starts out justly enough; the laborer is indeed worthy of his hire even if the laborer is working in the fields of the Lord. But it doesn't take long before the money is the main thing and religion is a means to an end. Pretty soon pastors are opening up wedding chapels (a brisk little business) and going on speaking tours (a lucrative big business), teaching for a price, and offering spiritual counsel for money. And people are so desperate for moral and spiritual order, they will pay the extortionist fees.

The solution to such religion is not to abandon it but to fulfill it—that is, to use religion to inspire not works of mammon but mercy:

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke? (Isa. 58:6)

In short, God's mission when it comes to religious oppression is the same as his mission when it comes to political oppression: liberation.

MORAL OPPRESSION

In the biblical story, we see that religion gets twisted by people in other ways, for instance into moral oppression. This is a recurring theme in Jesus' conflict with religious leaders of his day. One classic encounter happens when the Pharisees, defenders of the moral order, criticize Jesus and his disciples for plucking grain on the Sabbath, a technical violation of Sabbath rules. Jesus will have none of it. He



is not one to bend the knee to moral law just because it is moral or law. That's to enslave oneself to the letter and to refuse to live by the Spirit.

Jesus' pithy response gets at the heart of the matter: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The point of this religious law, as with all religious law, is not found in itself. No, the law is designed to bring freedom and life.

There is no more succinct expression of Jesus' exasperation with moral oppression than his famous sermon against the Pharisees, which begins,

The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so practice and observe whatever they tell you—but not what they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. (Matt. 23:2–4)

The apostle Paul is one with his master on this. His letter to the church in Galatia is very much in the spirit of Jesus' sermon against the Pharisees.

In this case, it is new Christians, not Pharisees, who make the law an end in itself, who use it to burden instead of free people. In this case, some Christians were arguing that accepting circumcision was part and parcel of being a Christian. They assumed that since God's covenant with Abraham included circumcision, God's covenant in Christ would require the same.

Paul responds with a decided "No!" In so many words he argues that what had once been a sign of God's gracious relationship with his people had become a mere external ritual. Instead of it being a free act of gratitude for God's goodness, it had become a religious yardstick for measuring one's righteousness. This is not freedom but moral oppression. Paul puts it this way:

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. . . . For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. (Gal. 5:1, 6)

With the coming of Jesus Christ, every law and commandment is turned on its head. They are not ends in themselves but means to an end: a life of freedom and love.

SPIRITUAL OPPRESSION

There is one more form of oppression that is of particular concern to Jesus. We see this in the many stories in which Jesus delivers people from sickness and the demonic. Time and again, people who are "oppressed by demons" come to him to be freed from illness, which Jesus understood as a type of spiritual oppression. Thus when

Jesus commissions his disciples to share in his work, he sums up that work in this way: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons” (Matt. 10:8).

Spiritual oppression takes another, more debilitating form. Jesus frames his ministry in this light in the middle of the Gospel of John:

If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:31–32, 34–36)

Paul put it this way in his letter to the Romans:

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. (6:6–8)

The sin that Jesus and Paul refer to in these passages took its first form in the eating of the forbidden fruit, followed by the murder of a brother. Then we see it manifested in Abraham’s initial refusal to trust in God’s promise and provision, and in Moses’ impatience to get on with his call. It is impatience about living from God’s daily provision of manna, and building altars to golden calves when God does not speak quickly enough. Sin takes the divine commandment and turns it into an iron rule rather than a living word, something we control rather than something that controls us. Sin is the yearning to live safe, controlled, predictable lives instead of lives born in and driven by the wild and unpredictable Spirit of God. Sin is fundamentally a desire for order where God does not want order, and to control that which God does not want us to control.

Not surprisingly, what comes of this panting after order and control is that our lives are ordered and controlled by that which cannot give life—thus, spiritual oppression. Sin enslaves the person who participates in it. It’s spiritual heroin. It is something we partake in because we think it will increase our options, but it soon narrows them to the point of death. The tragedy is that when we realize the trajectory our sin has put us on and try to break from its grip, we find that its grip becomes stronger than ever. We are powerless over our addiction to it, an addiction from which only death itself could set us free.

Dealing with this oppression—the oppression in which all oppression finds its root—was the mission of God in Jesus Christ. Liberation from the oppression of sin required a death, but in a gift as mysterious as it is wonderful, it was the death of Jesus that has made the difference.

Gift is the key word here, according to Paul in Romans:

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned . . . But the *free gift* is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the

free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. . . . For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the *free gift* of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. (5:12, 15–17)

For what Christ has done is not obligation. It is not duty. It is not a quid pro quo, something for something. It is gift, and as gift it is an offering made in freedom. Only a free gift can bring true freedom.

To signal that he was free to give this gift of his life, and free from the curse of Adam (“for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”) that has oppressed humankind, Christ overcame death and rose from the grave. “For as by a man came death,” writes Paul, “by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:21–22).

It is no wonder that, in trying to sum up all of who Christ is and all that he has done for us, Paul’s words cascade over one another: “For freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1).

It is not just Paul who sums up Jesus’ work in this way. At the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus went to the synagogue to explain the work he was about to embark on. He quoted a passage from the prophet Isaiah, and in doing so pointed to himself:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed . . . (Luke 4:18)

Jesus announced that overcoming oppression in whatever form it comes—political, religious, moral, or spiritual—is the object of his life. He is the liberating Son of a liberating Father, who then sent a liberating Spirit to complete the work.

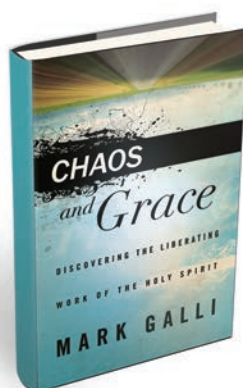
FREEDOM AT THE CORE

There are many wonderful ways to talk about the wonderful work of God. Certainly the ideas surrounding the word *salvation* will always be central, as will *grace*, *forgiveness*, *justification*, *eternal life*, *the kingdom of God*—and more. Each is necessary to fill out all that God has done for us in Christ.

I am not suggesting that *liberation* should replace any of these ideas. But for the past few decades, evangelicals have been reluctant to talk about God’s gracious work in terms of liberation, fearing,

I think, being associated with Marxist ideology—or maybe just fearing a loss of the religious, moral, and spiritual control we like to exercise in our institutions.

But no matter how the word has been misused or why exactly it has been ignored, we are wise to recall that at the heart of the Good News is a very simple affirmation: For freedom Christ has set us free. ✚



Mark Galli is senior managing editor of *Christianity Today* and author of *Chaos and Grace: Discovering the Liberating Work of the Holy Spirit* (Baker), from which this article is adapted.



Sherwood Baptist, the church
behind *Facing the Giants* and *Fireproof*,
partners with an African American congregation
to bring racial healing to a Georgia town.

By Mark Moring

A Black & White Production

WHEN MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. led a civil rights march into Albany, Georgia, in December 1961, racial tensions were boiling. Jim Crow laws were still in effect, the Ku Klux Klan was a threat, and most whites were serious about keeping blacks in their place.

As one of the original Freedom Singers, Rutha Harris marched alongside King, singing songs like “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around,” while whites lined the streets, harassing the passing activists. “Those songs gave us hope,” says Harris, 70, who still lives in Albany. “They filled the voids that segregation brought into our lives.”

Segregation remains on the tip of the tongue for many residents of Albany, where old attitudes persist—sometimes openly and certainly behind closed doors. Blacks and whites attend the same schools, visit the same movie theaters, and drink from the same fountains, but prejudices are palpable.

“There are a lot of tensions around here that just won’t die,” says a member of the local news media who asked to remain anonymous. “There’s a black-white divide, a lot of good-old-boy cronyism. The whites won’t let it go, but the blacks won’t either.”

One local pastor who has lived in several southern cities—including Montgomery, Alabama, where Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man—says Albany is “easily the most racially divided city I’ve ever been in.” In 2010 alone, charges of racism dogged the selection process for a school-board superintendent, Albany’s human resources director resigned after accusing her boss of racist comments, and a local firefighter sued the city and its fire chief, alleging racial discrimination after being passed over for a promotion. As the year ended, conflict erupted after a black man killed a white cop in the wake of an armed robbery.

2011 hasn’t been much better. When Albany’s African American city manager resigned in March to take another job, two whites and one black emerged as replacement candidates. When Mayor Willie Adams, an African American, hired the black applicant, some locals played the race card. “Imagine that,” one reader commented in the *Albany Herald*. “The only black finalist is the recipient of the top city guvment job.” “Bad just got worse,” wrote another.

When the *Herald* ran an evenhanded report about the community’s history of segregation and civil rights, readers let loose with comments like these:

- “The black community needs to get over being black and move forward. . . . I see more black people trying to get something for nothing. I see more white people working and paying for black people who do nothing but commit crime and sit around.”
- “All black people are racists and have proven they can’t be trusted.”
- “If you really want to help race relations in Albany, just fire all the Albany officials and start over. Talk about a racist bunch. And excuse me, but 90 percent are black. And being in

Get On the Bus:
Sherwood Baptist
pastor Michael
Catt and Mt. Zion
Baptist pastor
Daniel Simmons
are taking a stand
in a city where
one resident
misses the days
when ‘we could
still buy blacks.’

office gives them power they do not need.”

• “If hate could fuel an engine, Albany would power the world!”

Lee Formwalt, executive director of the Albany Civil Rights Institute, told *Christianity Today* about an older white doctor who welcomed a new physician, also white, to town a few years ago. While riding down one street, they saw a black boy with an older man. The old doctor chuckled, “Kind of makes you wish we could still buy ‘em.”

All this in a town whose motto is “The Good Life City.”

Into this uneasy quagmire have stepped two local Baptist churches—one mostly white, one mostly black—and their pastors, working together to heal divisions.

MARCHING TO ZION . . . AND SHERWOOD

Founded in 1865, Mt. Zion Baptist Church made national news when King marched through town and spoke to its packed congregation before being arrested. Mt. Zion has relocated twice since, moving in 2010 to a



Healing the Poor: Nedra Fortson, director of the Good Samaritan Clinic, says all their patients are uninsured or underinsured and have income under the federal poverty guideline.

new \$13 million facility with ample room for its 3,000-plus members.

Five miles away, the mostly white, 3,000-member Sherwood Baptist Church, founded in 1956, is well known for its full-length feature movies. *Facing the Giants* (2006)

and *Fireproof* (2008) were major hits with Christian audiences. Sherwood's latest, *Courageous*, released September 30 and will also likely be a faith-based favorite. It focuses on five men wrestling with faith and fatherhood, with a subtext of racial unity; the main characters include three whites, a black, and a Latino (see our review below).

Several people from Mt. Zion were

GARY CHAPMAN

Calling for Heroic Commitment

The makers of *Fireproof* are improving their craft with *Courageous*, their new film about fatherhood. By Steven D. Greydanus

Children raised without involved fathers are far more likely than children with fathers to live below the poverty line, suffer illness, commit crime, go to jail, do drugs, perform poorly in school, and become absent fathers themselves. Many sociological factors contribute to the fatherhood decline, but the makers of *Courageous* ★★☆☆, which opened September 30, aren't interested in placing blame. Instead, they are calling men to buck the trend and make a heroic commitment.

Courageous, the fourth film from Sherwood Pictures (*Facing the Giants*, *Fireproof*, *Flywheel*), is a step forward for the church-based company. With each outing—and bigger budgets and better production values—they become more adept at artfully exploring characters, relationships, and the theme underlying all their films: conversion. While Sherwood's tendency toward didactic storytelling persists, *Courageous* is its most ambitious and watchable film to date.

From the start, it's evident how far the film company has and hasn't come. *Courageous* opens with a grabber that establishes a main character as a competent hero, touching on themes of fatherhood and self-sacrifice

by showing rather than telling. But as two characters drive away, they muse moralistically about whether they could have matched the heroic paternal devotion they just witnessed. A lighter touch would have felt more like a movie and less like a sermon illustration.

Perhaps that's not entirely fair. Sherwood is, after all, a church-based ministry as well as an indie film company. Perhaps a certain “*Davey and Goliath* for grownups” vibe is simply part of their milieu, and even what their audiences want and expect.

Courageous is a loose-knit ensemble piece about five men—four police officers (three Anglo, one African American) and a Latino construction worker—and their domestic and professional lives. Not all the men are married nor live with the mothers of their children, but the challenges of fatherhood touch every character in one way or another. Most of them are also believers—Baptist-style Protestants, to be specific. (A hint of Catholicism or Pentecostalism in the Latino household might have contributed a bit of realistic diversity.)

At the center of the story is Adam Mitchell (writer-director Alex Kendrick), an experienced police officer, respectable family man, and a

COURTESY OF SHERWOOD PICTURES

involved in the production, including senior pastor Daniel Simmons, who plays a pastor in the film. It's fitting that *Courageous* would involve both churches working together. It's something they've been doing for a while, always with an eye toward unity and reconciliation.

For Albany's 75,000 residents (about 69 percent black, 28 percent white), Mt. Zion's civil rights history and Sherwood's movie-making hold little relevance. The locals know them rather as congregations that serve their community, often together. "It would be sad if the only thing we were known for is making movies," says Sherwood senior pastor Michael Catt. "That doesn't matter to the people of Albany. We have people across the street struggling to make the rent. We don't want to save the world but lose Jerusalem."

Sherwood and Mt. Zion consider themselves sister churches—Catt and Simmons call each other co-pastors—on a mission to transform their city. They do so in a variety of ways, and many of their programs bring blacks and whites together, still a rare sight in Albany.

It was even rarer in 1995, when local churches planned an integrated citywide evangelistic crusade. The integration didn't happen. Catt, Sherwood's pastor since 1989,

says the event was planned by white pastors who didn't consult local black clergy. Catt says Sherwood opted out of the event "because of the way the African American churches were being treated. I felt like I was back in the '50s."

Sherwood received hate mail over its decision not to participate.

"One white pastor asked me, 'How do we straighten this out?'" recalls Catt. "I said, 'You need to talk to [Simmons], you need to eat crow, and you need to ask for forgiveness.'"

Simmons, at Mt. Zion since 1991, says the incident cemented his then-budding friendship with Catt. "When our relationship first started," says Simmons, "I was not convinced it was real, and my people were suspicious, saying, 'They've got an agenda. They want to steal your members. They're just using you.' But when Michael and Sherwood took that public stance, that was the defining moment. I realized I had to deal with my own personal issues when it came to race relations—and they were real."

A JOINT EFFORT

Mt. Zion and Sherwood each has dozens of ministries geared toward community outreach, but members from both congregations

volunteer in each other's ministries, many of which serve the poor.

In 2009, *Forbes* listed Albany as the fourth poorest metro area in the nation. Twenty-seven percent of the city's residents live below the poverty line, including 35 percent of all blacks; 22 percent have a household income of less than \$15,000; 24 percent of Albany's families receive food stamps. Racism clearly isn't Albany's only problem. Poverty and homelessness are rampant. That's where Sherwood and Mt. Zion step in.

For years, Margaret Fillmore, homeless and uninsured, could not afford treatment for a tumor growing inside her stomach. She was finally referred to the Samaritan Clinic, founded by Mt. Zion in 2008. Her tumor had grown to 25 pounds. Samaritan staff connected her with surgeon and Sherwood member Troy Kimsey, who removed the tumor at no cost. "I don't know what would have happened without Samaritan Clinic," Fillmore said at the time. "If not for them, I would not have had the surgery I needed."

"We help people who don't have anywhere else to go," says clinic director Nedra Fortson, a Mt. Zion member, registered nurse, and one of the clinic's two paid staff. The other medical personnel—including

Christian. He seems to have it all together, but complacency keeps him from being entirely there for his family. When a domestic crisis erupts inside his own home, Adam reevaluates his priorities, his faith, and his role as a father. The filmmakers do their best to give the crisis its full weight, but their reach exceeds their grasp, and exposition takes the place of storytelling and character development.

And . . . Action!
Mt. Zion pastor Simmons gets ready to shoot a scene for *Courageous*.

("My emotions are all over the place," Mitchell's wife explains at one point.)

Mitchell decides to formalize his commitment with a pledge or resolution, which ends up as the film's equivalent of *Fireproof's* *The Love Dare*: a concrete way that viewers can participate in the movie's program. The resolution becomes a formal, religiously tinged ceremony in which the fathers solemnly commit themselves to God, honor, and family. After that, some of the fathers are tested, with mixed results.

A major weakness of *Facing the Giants* was that once the struggling protagonist recommitted his life to God, everything went his way. The same spirit shows up in *Courageous*: While Mitchell's son Dylan rebuffs his dad's attempts to reach out after the family crisis, there's little doubt that Mitchell can turn their relationship around any time he wants. Parents of alienated teenagers find it can be difficult to make amends, and issues have lingering half-lives if they fade at all. But not in a Sherwood Pictures film.

Still, the filmmakers aspire for Hollywood quality, and while they aren't there yet, they are certainly moving in the right direction. ➤

Steven D. Greydanus is a film critic for *Christianity Today* and the *National Catholic Register*.



'People used to say that racial reconciliation won't happen in Albany. But they don't say that anymore. Now you hear, "It can work, because Mt. Zion and Sherwood are doing it."'

~ Daniel Simmons, Mt. Zion pastor

Mt. Zion and Sherwood members—are all volunteers. The clinic, a one-story brick building in which many rooms do double duty, operates on an annual budget of about \$100,000, about half of which is paid by Mt. Zion. (The rest comes through grants and private donations.)

Three miles down the road on Slater King Drive—named for a civil rights activist and real-estate broker who helped local African Americans grow financially—the Mt. Zion Garden Apartments, a low-income housing complex, welcome hundreds of residents who might otherwise be homeless or live in substandard housing.

It's mostly subsidized by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, but part of its budget also comes from Mt. Zion.

Residents have found a "sense of stability, a sense of place for their families," says manager Ramona Nealy.

'MADE ME A BETTER PERSON'

At Mt. Zion's old campus—fittingly located on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive—the Youth Academy, a summer program for boys ages 9 to 16, addresses academic, social, and spiritual needs. Albert Simmons, one of its leaders, says many of the boys might have otherwise ended up in gangs. He says only one of hundreds of graduates has ended up in jail, and that young man has since straightened out his life.

Another recent grad, Khalil Winchester, 16, comes from a single-parent home. With his dad out of the picture for years, Khalil

wanted a father figure. He doesn't think he'd have joined a gang, but he might have remained aimless if his grandmother hadn't signed him up for the academy at age 9.

Khalil says his teachers served as male role models for him, and that the program "made me a better person and taught me a lot about leadership." Khalil returned to the academy this summer as a volunteer leader.

A few miles to the south, surrounded by old pecan groves and tree-lined streets, is Sherwood's Legacy Park, an 82-acre sports complex funded mostly by profits from *Facing the Giants* and *Fireproof*. The park—shimmering with rich green grass on a hot summer day—includes a small football stadium, two baseball fields, two softball fields, ten soccer fields, eight tennis courts, an 18-hole disc golf course, two volleyball courts, two horse arenas, a fishing pond, and a 110-foot-tall cross in the middle of it all.

The park is used by Sherwood Christian Academy's sports teams for home games (a stirring scene from *Facing the Giants* was filmed at the football field), but it's also used by the wider community for youth and adult

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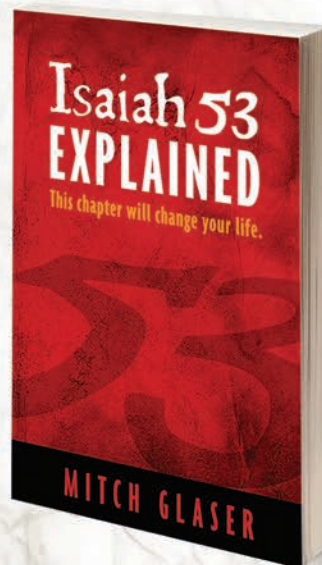
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sports leagues.

"We're trying to get people from all walks of life at the sports park," says Jay Flynt, Sherwood's minister of sports and recreation, who oversees the park. "Our leagues look a whole lot like Albany now, with a mix of blacks and whites." Scholarships are offered to low-income children.

Third graders Gavin, white, and Jalen, black, are from different sides of town; their lives might have never intersected if it weren't for baseball. At Legacy Park, they've played together for three years, starting in T-ball, and are now "fast friends," says Flynt. "When new teams are formed every year, they ask to be put on the same team. The first few days of practice, the black kids and white kids tend to hang out separately, but Gavin and Jalen set an example for others by hanging out together. The other kids quickly get it and follow suit."

Sherwood also serves the community with a ministry to homeless men; a crisis pregnancy center; a food-and-clothing pantry for the poor; and a financial assistance program. Coca-Cola recently donated its 60,000-square-foot

bottling plant to Sherwood to be used for serving the community.

'A BEACON OF LIGHT'

Mayor Willie Adams appreciates the efforts of Sherwood and Mt. Zion. "They've been working together for a number of years now, and they serve as a beacon of light to the rest of the community," he says.

Catherine Glover, president of the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce, says the two churches are "setting an example by the sharing of their resources, talents, and assets. They are putting race aside and truly focusing on the reason we are all on this earth—to serve mankind, any race, any denomination, any belief system."

Catt, Sherwood's pastor, sees improvements, partly the result of his relationship with Mt. Zion's Simmons. "There used to be too many lines drawn in the sand and not enough people talking," he says. "But Daniel and I said, 'Let's do this because we're brothers in Christ who have two significant churches in this community.' What we do will impact what other churches do and how they think.

If Sherwood's healthy and Mt. Zion's healthy, the community will be healthier."

Simmons agrees. "Race relations *are* getting better," he says. "People used to say, 'It won't happen in Albany!' But they don't say that anymore. Now you hear, 'It can work, because Mt. Zion and Sherwood are doing it.'"

As Catt and Simmons talked, Freedom Singer Rutha Harris sat nearby, nodding in agreement. Later that day, her famous voice could be heard in the distance, carrying one of the old standards:

*Ain't gonna let nobody
Turn me 'round,
Turn me 'round,
Turn me 'round.*

*Ain't gonna let nobody
Turn me 'round,
Keep on a walkin',
Keep on a talkin',
Marchin' up to Freedom Land.*



Mark Moring is senior associate editor for *Christianity Today*.

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[JUSTICE]

Undoing *the* Damage

If the famine in the Horn of Africa is manmade, human intervention can end the crisis. By Mark Moring

YOU CAN BLAME DROUGHTS on God, but famines are manmade. This shouldn't be happening."

So said humanitarian rock star Bono in a recent interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper on the current crisis in the Horn of Africa. More than 30,000 children under age 5 have died in the famine in the past four months, and another 12 million people are at risk of starvation. The number of dead was expected to increase significantly as this edition of *Christianity Today* went to press.

As Bono and other activists have pointed out, solutions are possible. "Since famine is manmade, it can be undone by human activity and human intervention," said former senator William Frist, who recently visited the area as part of a U.S. delegation. Scientists, politicians, and aid organizations knew up to 18 months ago that the drought—Africa's worst in 60 years—was coming, but lacked the resources and access to avert the famine that would almost certainly

accompany it. Preemptive aid, including food, water, medical supplies, and agricultural assistance, prepared millions of Kenyans and Ethiopians to survive. But millions more in war-torn Somalia never received such help, and many are still unreachable due to fighting and factions, particularly where the Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab is active. As a result, hundreds of thousands have poured out of the country into refugee camps in neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia.

The U.S. federal government has sent more than \$580 million, but with a debt crisis and a Congress looking to cut spending, it is calling on the private sector, particularly the faith-based community, to step up. (By comparison, the government sent about \$1 billion to the Horn of Africa during a 2008 drought that was significantly less severe than this one. It sent \$908 million in aid after the 2004 tsunami in East Asia, and \$2.9 billion after the 2010 Haiti earthquake. The United Nations estimates that another \$1.4 billion is needed for emergency care in Africa right now.)

Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Biden, recently visited refugee camps in Dadaab, Kenya, calling the famine "a moral crisis and

Help Is on the Way: A woman in northern Kenya near the Somali border awaits aid as a Samaritan's Purse truck delivers life-sustaining water to several area communities.

humanitarian crisis of the first order.” She met one Somali mother of two young children who “had to make the wrenching choice” to leave one child behind to die on the road when she could no longer carry both.

‘WE CAN DO SOMETHING’

“The good news is we can do something,” Biden said. “We saw firsthand the difference that aid is making.”

Many faith-based NGOs are freely doing their work in Kenya and Ethiopia, but most of Somalia presents a security risk—especially in south-central regions where Al-Shabaab is most active. In a recent 58-page report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said the militant group “has violated international humanitarian law by prohibiting food aid to many areas under its control. It has banned about 20 humanitarian organizations, whom it accuses of pursuing religious or ideological motives.” The UN World Food Programme also reported that food is often stolen, then sold at markets near the starving people it was intended for.

Christian aid organizations, which Al-Shabaab calls “infidels,” are particularly at risk, according to HRW. Al-Shabaab spokesman Ali Mohamud Rage recently told *Al Jazeera* that it

will continue to ban most foreign aid, and went so far as to deny any problem. Rage said there is merely a “shortage of rain” and that “the declaration of famine is political and is a lie with hidden agendas.”

World Vision has teams in Kenya, Ethiopia, and regions of Somalia where it has “earned the trust of the communities” through years of working there, said Nathaniel Hurd, policy adviser for conflicts and disasters. “Because we’re impartial and independent and make it clear that we’re there to serve, we are often able to work in places where there is conflict.”

Raj Shah, the administrator of USAID, said the government relies on faith-based organizations in the area to help them get aid to those who need it most. “They’ve always been the first responders and the type of institutions that build the deep, longstanding, trust-based commitments with communities at risk.”

Food for the Hungry, working in drought-affected communities in Ethiopia, is providing food packages for 91,810 individuals with the help of USAID and Canadian Food Grains Bank, but said it needs an additional \$122,000 to sustain the program through the end of 2011.

Ato Abuta, 35, one of the recipients of the food, told the nonprofit, “My little children cry out at night because they go hungry to bed. I am only able to feed them by borrowing money from neighbors to purchase food. I will have to pay them back 10 percent interest after my harvest.” But with the drought, there may be no harvest.

Samaritan’s Purse has a team in Garissa, Kenya, near the Somali border, where volunteers are distributing maize, beans, corn-soy blend, cooking oil, and other necessities. One staff member reports dead animals all along the road, a sign of loss of livestock, which is devastating for villages. A Christian Aid worker met a man who had 3,000 cattle before the drought began; he now has 30, and most are too weak to walk.

SOMALI AMERICANS HELP OUT

Shah said U.S. officials have been “active” in Minnesota (home to 60,000 Somali refugees) and other Somali communities in the United States, “seeking relationships and access and ideas.” “We have found these to be incredibly valuable relationships in helping things to get done,” added Assistant Secretary of State Eric Schwartz.

One of those engagements has resulted in a pledge of at least 5 million meals from Feed My Starving Children (FMSC), a Christian

The loss of livestock is devastating for villages. A Christian Aid worker met a man who had 3,000 cattle before the drought began; he now has 30, and most are too weak to walk.

hunger relief charity that distributes nutritionally complete meals in almost 70 countries. A Somali leader in Minneapolis approached the nonprofit about packing meals for relatives who operate 15 feeding centers in southern Somalia and were running out of resources. Sultan Warsame Aliyoow, the local leader, is asking area Somalis to donate and pack meals at the FMSC center in Minneapolis. The first shipment of 272,000 meals arrived in Hargeisa, Somalia, in late July, and another 1.4 million were shipped by the end of August, en route to the goal of 5 million.

“We feel a particular connection to this crisis because our Twin Cities headquarters are located near the largest Somali community outside of Somalia itself,” said Mark Crea, executive director of FMSC.

Tony Hall, executive director of the Alliance to End Hunger and former U.S. ambassador to the World Food Programme, told CT that he’s encouraged by efforts by the Christian community but that more needs to be done.

“There are a lot of [Christian] organizations there and they’re really helping these people,” said Hall, who visited Kenyan refugee camps in mid-August. “They’re feeding them. Kids are being treated. People are getting clean water. There’s hope on the ground. But it’s hard to keep up. More than 1,500 people a day are fleeing Somalia, so the need keeps growing. But once they reach the refugee camps, they are getting help.”

Mark Moring is senior associate editor for *Christianity Today*. To find out how to help, go to ChristianityToday.com/go/HornofAfrica.

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Rows upon rows of discarded cement pipes — intended to channel human waste — are used as homes for a community of desperate Dalit families, who are considered by many to be . . . scavengers . . . untouchables . . . slumdogs.

And while India's Hindu caste system has been officially outlawed, the living conditions for the 250 million Dalits remain much like they have for hundreds of years: virtual slavery. In fact, half of the world's slaves are from among the Dalit people. But God's Word is blazing through Dalit communities, drawing tens of thousands to Him!

Birthered by Operation Mobilization (OM) in India, The Good Shepherd Community Church movement is now planting 15 new churches a month among the Dalit people, in communities as oppressive as Pipe Village — providing opportunities for discipleship, training, education, health-care and economic development.

What is so urgently needed now are partners, like you, who will help provide the financial support for national pastors to go and proclaim the Good News.

Incredibly, for just one dollar a day, you can help meet the very modest financial needs of these national pastors who wish to follow God's call — preaching, teaching and providing the hope that can only come from God's Word to those who need it the most.

Your gift of \$30 today will help support a pastor for 1 month. Your generous gift of \$60 will support him for 2 months. Even better, your \$90 gift will enable a pastor to minister for 3 months!

We must respond in Jesus' name — the Dalit people need to hear of God's unconditional love and acceptance for the first time ever!

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You can provide financial support for national pastors — enabling them to preach, teach and provide the hope that can only come from God's Word to those who need it the most.

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- ☐ \$_____ to help as much as possible

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CTI1011

VIEWPOINTS

OPINIONS AND
PERSPECTIVES ON
ISSUES FACING
THE CHURCH



We can stick our heads in the sand and ignore the truth, or we can strive to love our neighbors as ourselves and hope that if enough Christians actually do this, then perhaps the tide will change.

Michael Gogis
Chicago, Illinois

Yes, No, Maybe So

While I share Bradley Wright's desire to rid American evangelicals of their persecution complex ["They Like You," August], I am baffled that he, an academic in a public university, failed to acknowledge one segment of American society where evangelicals are *not* liked: academia. At least three studies over the past 15 years have validated this fact, which certainly explains why the graduate students in his Bible study are not as deluded by evangelical low self-esteem as he suggests.

What is troubling is that this attitude seeps into hiring decisions in academia, thus perpetuating the longstanding and tragic gulf between the church and secular academia.

ROBERT OSBURN

Executive Director, Wilberforce Academy
St. Paul, Minnesota

I want to believe Wright's article. Yet I don't based on my own data. If he can find more than 1 in 10 of my neighbors who don't think poorly of Christians and who aren't intellectually hostile toward them, maybe I'll change my mind. Our neighbors still can't reconcile that my wife and I are Christians—they tell us

that we're too "normal and nice."

We can stick our heads in the sand and ignore the truth, or we can strive to love our neighbors as ourselves and hope that if enough Christians actually do this, then perhaps the tide will change.

MICHAEL GOGIS

Elder, Park Community Church
CFO, Willow Creek Association
Chicago, Illinois

Soon after reading Wright's article, I came across Nicholas Kristof's *New York Times* column "Evangelicals Without Blowhards." Kristof commended evangelicals and conservative Catholics for their courageous work on issues of global poverty and justice, despite the negative publicity of televangelists and the misguided efforts of certain political activists.

Kristof has long been an admirer of believers who put their faith into action, and has encouraged similar regard among his readers. His column confirmed Wright's thesis and was a good reminder that others are watching us and often like what they see. Though it's always valuable to pause for reflection, we can stop the navel-gazing and self-loathing and get on with the important work of the

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

17%

They Like You
Bradley R. E. Wright

17%

**The Village Green:
Just War
vs. Technology**
Paul Zahl, Daniel
Bell, and Brian
Stiltner

11%

**A New Kind
of Pentecostal**
Robert C. Crosby

READERS' PICK The most praised piece in August's CT



A New Kind of Pentecostal

**A New Kind of
Pentecostal**
Robert C. Crosby

kingdom.

MATT KOSCHMANN

Professor, University of Colorado
Boulder, Colorado

Body Wars

I find a paragraph in Matthew Lee Anderson's "God Has a Wonderful Plan for Your Body" [August] quite disturbing. Anderson states, "Further poisoning our culture's lust for pleasure is a frightfully egoistic mentality: Nothing, we say, should deter us from sexual fulfillment besides absence of consent and avoidance of bodily harm (and sometimes not even the latter). Unfortunately, many evangelicals have adopted . . . just such self-centered attitudes. Most prominently, Douglas Rosenau, author of the best-selling book *A Celebration of Sex*, endorses a 'healthy sexual selfishness.'"

In the section of the book he quotes, I am developing a theme, especially for wives, reaching out beyond self (unselfishness). God often puts two seemingly opposing principles (law and grace, self and unself) together to develop a greater whole. Selfishness and unselfishness are both critical in developing intimate relationships within the biblical concept of "loving your wife as your own body."

I realized I was redefining "selfish" but wanted to catch the reader's attention. I therefore start off clearly with, "Christians

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?
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need to be able to practice both submission and a righteous selfishness. Sometimes I call it 'selfness' because selfish appears to be in direct conflict with the traditional Christian teaching of putting others first." I state, "Orgasms are an excellent example of healthy sexual selfishness. . . . You selfishly enjoy your orgasm but unselfishly allow your mate to observe how much pleasure your mate brings to you." I am in no way espousing an egoistic, individualistic ethic but a greater understanding of intimate lovemaking with two distinct but equally important elements involved.

DOUGLAS ROSENAU
Cofounder, *Sexual Wholeness Inc.*
Atlanta, Georgia

I appreciate Rosenau's defense of his work and want to underscore most of all that I had no intention of impugning his character or work for the kingdom. Such praise doubtlessly sounds hollow now, but his book was one my wife and I turned to when we were married and have profited immensely from it.

What's more, I do wish I had taken more care in stating Rosenau's position and accentuating where we agree. The practice of charitably presenting other authors' works is one I strive for and at which I clearly failed. Whatever

disagreements we might have on matters of substance and presentation—and I suspect such disagreements remain—had I to do it over, I would have not referenced his book at the end of a paragraph describing the problematic views of sex in the world, and offered my reading with more nuance. I gave the wrong impression regarding his work, and take full responsibility for the error and apologize for it.

MATTHEW LEE ANDERSON
Lead Writer, *MereOrthodoxy.com*
St. Louis, Missouri

Defining Just War

There are no easy answers here ["The Village Green: Just War vs. Technology," August]. Devout Christians have disagreed on whether there really is such a thing as "just war." Throughout church history, we have exemplary disciples, even martyrs, who have been soldiers, and others who have been pacifists. There may be sociological, cultural, economic, and political reasons for a nation to pursue particular strategies in war, and all will certainly have ramifications beyond their immediate purpose that may or may not be quite predictable or desirable. War, after all, is hell.

JOHN WEBER
E-mail



Pagans protest the commercialization of Halloween.

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.

"Some of you sound like you are buying a car. Friendship is not utilitarian—it is caring, love, help, fun, and hope for life."

Susan, responding to readers' stories of the difficulties in cultivating meaningful friendships.

Her.meneutics: "The Female Friendship Crisis," by Karen Swallow Prior

"We should not be a distraction in God's house; but I'd rather see the hooker shoes than an empty pew."

Nicole Hayes, discussing how one's appearance, be it frumpy, dressy, or scanty, does not reflect one's spirituality, and how it can be dangerous to fall in that mindset.

Her.meneutics: "Modesty: Still Missing from the Church," by Natasha Robinson

"It is all about who makes the most noise and yields the heaviest hand."

Thomas E. Jones, regarding an online petition that called for Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz to not speak at Willow Creek's Leadership Summit, claiming the church was "anti-gay." Starbucks did not say whether or not the petition was a deciding factor in canceling Schultz's speech.

CT Liveblog: "Starbucks CEO Withdraws from Willow Creek Leadership Summit," by Ted Olsen

"Using any Scripture as a catchphrase is a poor practice. It treats Scripture as if it were an owner's manual to be memorized to 'do Christianity' correctly."

Robert Velez, opining on the problems of Michele Bachmann's using Ephesians to explain her stance on submissiveness in a 2006 interview.

CT Politics: "Bachmann Asked if She Would be 'Submissive to her Husband,'" Tobin Grant

KEVIN FRANK

Unexpected Political Hero

Even evangelicals who disagreed with Mark Hatfield admired his passionate faith.

I don't like 'Christian politics,'" the late Mark Hatfield said in 1996, a few months before ending his 30-year career in the U.S. Senate.

"I don't want to assume that somehow I have the right to take a very sacred word, the word *Christian*, and have that applied to a specific set of political issues."

It was a refrain Hatfield had uttered throughout his political career. Decades before the rise of the Religious Right, even before Jimmy Carter, the Oregon Republican was the most prominent evangelical in national politics—and his most constant target of criticism was civil religion.

"There is a theological 'silent majority' in our land," he lamented in 1971, "who wrap their Bibles in the American flag; who believe that conservative politics is the necessary by-product of orthodox Christianity; who equate patriotism with the belief in national self-righteousness; and who regard political dissent as a mark of infidelity to the faith."

At the same time, Hatfield just as strongly decried evangelical withdrawal from politics and never shied from making his faith known. As governor of Oregon, he became known for pulling his car to the side of the road and kneeling in prayer. Hatfield spoke publicly not just about God, but also about the saving work of Jesus Christ. At the 1964 Republican National Convention, he famously called John Birch Society members (many of whom were delegates) bigots, then declared the Republican Party "the party of faith—a faith that believes in the basic eternal moral values of the Judeo-Christian faith."

It's not that Hatfield was a contrarian gadfly eager to be unpredictable. When he talked about getting angry letters addressed to "Dear former brother in Christ," he did so with pain, not pride. He honestly anguished over whether it would be better to leave office than to be a divisive figure in the evangelical movement. He had a pro-life ethic that put him on the forefront of debates on abortion,

medicine, poverty, capital punishment, and, most notably, military spending. He never voted for a military authorization bill. He co-sponsored the 1970 Hatfield-McGovern Amendment, which would have ended the Vietnam War, and was one of only two Republican senators who opposed the first Gulf War.

In fact, just days after Nixon had negotiated a ceasefire in Vietnam, Hatfield gave one of his most famous speeches. With Nixon and Billy Graham sitting next to him, he called for public prayers of "repentance from that sin that has scarred our national soul." It was a theme he would return to as the Watergate scandal erupted.

"It is more comfortable to believe in the spiritual symbols of righteousness than to acknowledge the reality and presence of evil, in ourselves and in our corporate life," he said. "We would rather believe that we merit God's blessing than admit that we stand under his judgment, and in need of his forgiveness."

Hatfield died Sunday, August 7, the same day media outlets expressed shock at the giant prayer rally at Reliant Stadium convened by Texas governor Rick Perry. No doubt Hatfield would have been dismayed (or furious) at many aspects of the event: the hawkish references to the military, and the fact that the event served as an unofficial kickoff to Perry's presidential campaign.

At the same time, the day served as a marker of how broadly Hatfield's message

has won the day in evangelical political engagement. Evangelicals no longer wonder if it's unchristian to enter office. And while there's intense debate on policy, evangelicals agree that the main social problem is sin. Notably, the dominant theme on Perry's website was not celebration or blessing, but rather repentance. The call to prayer was about "asking God's forgiveness" because "we

are a nation that has not honored God in our successes or humbly called on him in our struggles."

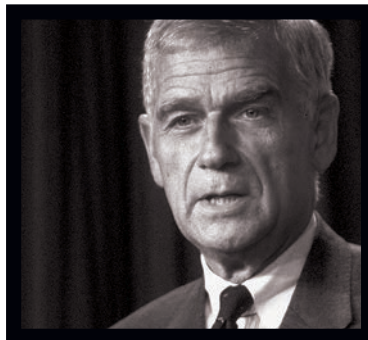
Still, Hatfield repeatedly noted that our repentance and our declaring Jesus as Lord needed to go much deeper. As he said at that 1973 Presidential Prayer Breakfast: "Events such as this . . .

contain the real danger of misplaced allegiance, if not outright idolatry, to the extent that they fail to distinguish between the god of an American civil religion and the God who reveals himself in the Holy Scriptures and in Jesus Christ. . . . The god of civil religion . . . [is] a small and exclusive deity, a loyal spiritual adviser to power and prestige.

"But if we pray to the biblical God of justice and righteousness, we fall under God's judgment for calling upon his name but failing to obey his commands. . . . We must be continually transformed by Jesus Christ and take his commands seriously."

Mark Hatfield may not have liked "Christian politics," but he certainly stood as a model of Christian politics. ✚

Go to ChristianityToday.com/go/Hatfield for more on the Oregon senator.



Hatfield spoke publicly not just about God, but also about the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Cyberspace
Romance

Should Christian singles be encouraged to use online dating services?

WITH GUSTO!

Jenell Williams Paris is a professor of anthropology at Messiah College and author of *The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex Is Too Important to Define Who We Are* (IVP).

Should Christians use online dating services? Yes, and with gusto! Online dating doesn't correct the well-documented imbalance of devout Christian women (abundant supply) to like-hearted men (a paucity), but it at least widens the net for Christians seeking partners.

It also reduces the need to choose between meaningful service in a region where pickings are slim, and work that may be further from one's calling in a more populated area.

Along with these benefits, online dating does raise new dangers: a creep—a violent one, even—may be lurking behind the next click; the process over-represents certain features of a person (facial appearance, for starters); and it requires an investment of funds that perhaps could be better spent elsewhere.

It would be foolish, however, to preserve the dating practices of an earlier era, even as an attempt to avoid these dangers. For instance, I'd never recommend that a modern woman do as I did. In the mid-1990s, when I was seeing the man who became my husband, we talked on landline phones late at night (when rates dropped from 25 cents per minute to 10 cents), sent just a handful of e-mails (seemed impersonal), and never texted (weren't pagers mostly just for drug dealers back then?). We wrote letters, too. By hand! And sent them via postal mail! These archaic behaviors suited the olden days, but some of them seemed novel even to the generation before mine. Like work, house construction, and child-rearing, dating is a cultural practice that humans reinvent and adapt to different circumstances. Refusing to adapt to massive cultural shifts such as technological innovation may work for a short time, or for separatist Christian communities, but for Christians living in mainstream society, discerning engagement is generally better than wholesale rejection.

Viewed with my anthropologist's eye, online dating and conventional dating look like near equivalents anyway; both are mate selection strategies favored by individualistic societies that believe marriage partners should know each other ahead of time and freely choose one another. They seem even more similar in contrast to societies that rely on arranged marriages, cousin marriages, or bride service, where the prospective groom works for future in-laws before marriage.

In another sense, however, online dating offers an improvement over conventional dating, which is rapidly devolving from courtship

(increasing closeness over time with the eventual prospect of marriage) to hook-ups (sexual intimacy early, even before an exclusive relationship is formed). Online dating requires consideration of a prospective mate before physical contact occurs, and usually progresses from "just looking" to e-mail exchanges, texts, and cell phone calls, and then a face-to-face meeting. Electronic exchanges carry their own etiquette, so a person's character and charm (or lack thereof) are displayed early on. Christians can use online dating in ways that express discernment, modesty, and self-control, not only in sexual boundaries, but also in the very process of getting to know another person gradually.

Christians use the Internet for building all kinds of human relationships: evangelism, discipleship, friendship, family, and workplace. In today's society, the only thing odder than searching for a soul mate online may be not doing so.

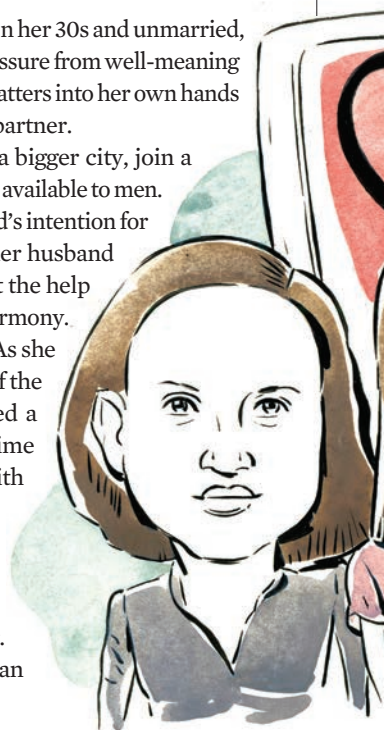
NO; TRUST GOD

Leslie Ludy is the author of *Sacred Singleness: The Set-Apart Girl's Guide to Purpose and Fulfillment* (Harvest House) and coauthor of *When God Writes Your Love Story: The Ultimate Guide to Guy-Girl Relationships* (Multnomah).

When my sister-in-law Kristina was in her 30s and unmarried, she received an endless amount of pressure from well-meaning friends and family members to take matters into her own hands when it came to finding a marriage partner.

They counseled her to move to a bigger city, join a singles' group, and make herself more available to men. But Kristina believed that if it was God's intention for her to marry, he was able to bring her husband into her life out of nowhere, without the help of singles' groups, blind dates, or eHarmony. And that is exactly what happened. As she built her life around Christ instead of the pursuit of marriage, he orchestrated a beautiful love story in his perfect time and way as she simply trusted him with all her heart.

If you are single, God has a much higher calling upon your life than spending all your time and energy trying to snag a marriage partner. As Paul wrote, being unmarried is an



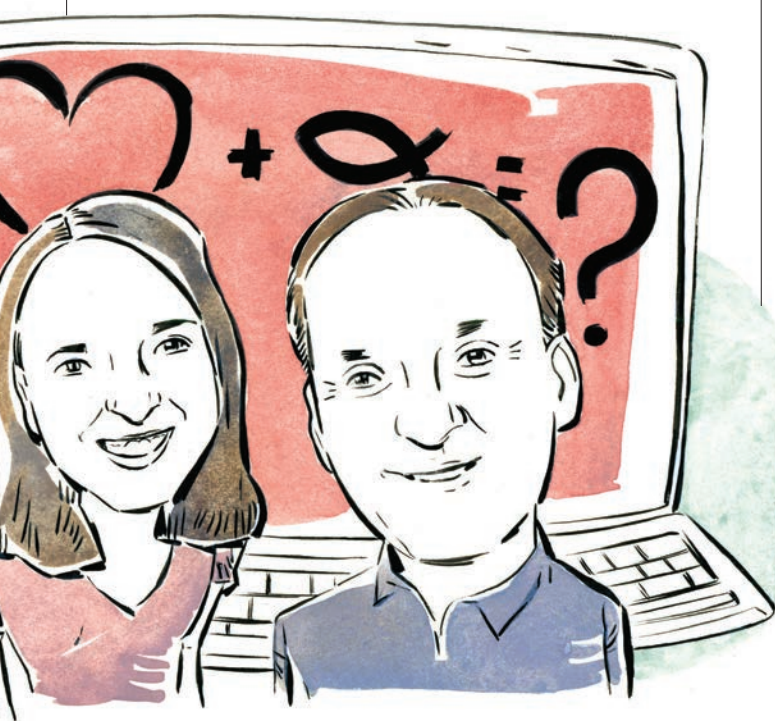
amazing opportunity to serve the Lord without distraction (1 Cor. 7:34). It's true that you might find a decent partner by reading books on how to get noticed or by joining an Internet dating service. But what amazing heaven-scripted beauty we forgo when we try to write the story ourselves. God is in the business of writing incredible love stories. The problem is that most of us aren't willing to leave the pen in his hands.

After God promised a son to Sarai and Abram in their old age, Abram, at the urging of Sarai, tried to rush God's plan by taking matters into his own hands and sleeping with his wife's maidservant, leading to the birth of Ishmael. What a messy situation this turned out to be. It was a self-manufactured, subpar solution of something for which God had a far better plan (Issac).

In the same way, when we rush ahead of God in search of a love story, we end up with less than God's very best. The most God-honoring way to find a godly spouse is to stop hunting for one, and instead focus your entire life around Jesus Christ and his priorities. If he wants you to be married, he is more than capable of writing your love story in the most unlikely way, in the most unlikely place—without the help of blind dates, singles' groups, and online dating services. God can bring your spouse to you in the remotest village in Africa, or in the most hidden slum of Haiti.

Throughout my past 16 years of ministry, I've encountered many godly men and women who didn't put life on hold until they met their spouse. Instead, they poured themselves into building the kingdom of God—even though it meant being less available to the opposite sex. Amazingly, it was in a place of seeming obscurity that God wrote their love stories.

Remember that God cares more about this area of your life than even you do. He wants the pen of your life, not to make you miserable, but to bless you beyond all you could ask or think. Those who put their hope in him will not be disappointed.



WITH CAUTION

Dennis Franck is the national director of single adult/young adult ministries for the Assemblies of God USA.

One might think that with 97 million single adults in the U.S. age 18 and older (according to the 2010 Census), it would be easy to find Mister or Miss Right. Not so, say many single and single-again adults of all ages.

Enter online dating, society's answer to this dilemma. Match, eHarmony, AdamMeetEve, Christian Soulmates, and a thousand other online dating services, Christian and secular, offer themselves as a possible, sometimes seemingly sure way to find a perfect relationship or soul mate. In my experience with single adults, at least half of them have tried online dating.

What should a single adult think about these services? Especially a Christian single adult who desires to marry, but discovers only 20 percent of churches offer a group where single adults of similar ages can create and develop friendships with the opposite sex?

As a former pastor to single adults for 21 years, and now director of Assemblies of God Single Adult Ministries, I'm not against online dating services. I have seen a few of these relationships form and mature into healthy marriages. I do have many concerns, though.

Online dating services are tools to bring about a contact. They're not much different from a person meeting someone in the grocery store, except the person may live 2,000 miles away. Because of this, rather than condemn online relationships, I urge extreme caution and offer tools for navigating the world of online relationships.

Here are some dos and don'ts:

Do realize that people can and do misrepresent themselves and exaggerate their personal qualities. People tend to reveal too much too soon online, making it easy to build false intimacy. Depth of character cannot be known online or even on the phone. Because of this, it is a good idea to meet in person early in the relationship.

Online stalkers do exist, so protect your identity. Use caution and maintain a healthy level of skepticism. Don't use your real name as a screen name, and don't assume someone is a Christian because he or she says so. It is a good idea to meet in a public place and not travel alone to a strange place to meet an online connection in person—and let someone know where you're going.

Online dating can work, but realize that most Internet matches do not lead to long-term relationships, and that online dating can take a lot of time.

God knows your desire for a relationship with the opposite sex. He's a good matchmaker: he paired Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and many other model biblical couples. The promise in Philippians 4:19 that God will supply all your needs doesn't refer only to food, shelter, and clothing. Trust him to provide in his timing. Until and after he does provide, deepen your relationship through prayer and study of his Word. Live an obedient life in your attitudes, desires, priorities, motives, and commitments.

It's more important to become the right person for marriage than to find the right person for marriage. Would you marry someone like you?



Power Washed by God

The blessings—and danger—of divine proximity.

Last summer, we hired a man with a power washer to clean our deck. As he blasted the dirt that had defied our feeble garden hose, I found myself wishing all the muck in my life could be dealt with so efficiently. Sticky kitchen floor? Messy relationships? Unleash the water pressure!

But not so fast. Two weeks earlier, a neighbor's teenager, Matt, was cleaning the driveway with a rented power washer when he felt an ant crawling on his calf. Instinctively, he turned the nozzle toward his leg, obliterating the insect—and, unfortunately, some layers of muscle and tissue. Matt's injury is not uncommon; an online search produces innumerable accounts of gruesome wounds and even fatalities related to the use of pressure washers.

So I decided to give my handyman and his potentially flesh-stripping machine a wide berth. I had to do some reading for a biblical studies course, so I sat by my kitchen window and kept one eye on my yard and the other on the Pentateuch.

I was making my way through Exodus, feeling a little jealous of my spiritual ancestors. It seemed they never had to wonder if God was there. They had only to follow pillars of cloud and fire, gathering up the manna served fresh daily from God's kitchen. At Sinai, Yahweh made his presence even harder to miss, clearing his throat with thunder, lightning, trumpet blasts, trembling mountains, and billowing smoke.

I wondered why the present-day actions of the immutable God sometimes seem so muted in contrast to the God of Moses. I wouldn't mind a pillar of cloud or fire when I need direction, or some manna on my front lawn when I pray for provision.

But 10 chapters into Leviticus, I sobered up to the dangerous side of God's proximity to the Israelites. They had just set up the tabernacle, and two of Moses' nephews had been recruited for the priesthood. When

they failed to follow protocol and offered "unauthorized fire" at the altar, "fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1–2).

This seems a little harsh. Two guys make one mistake their first day on the job, and they get "fired." But other similar incidents had the same tragic result: Achan's stashed plunder (Josh. 7), Uzzah's casualness with the ark (2 Sam. 6), Ananias and Sapphira lying about their offering (Acts 5). In each case, God was inaugurating a new era in salvation history, and in each case, his holiness was underestimated with dreadful consequences.

These episodes remind me of a strategy employed by one of my schoolteacher friends. On day one, he sends the first unruly student into the hallway, knowing that an early show of authority makes the rest of the year go smoothly. It is tempting to think of the disturbing accounts of God's judgment as cases of extreme classroom management.

But as I struggle to reconcile Yahweh's apparent "zero tolerance" policy in these stories with the inexhaustible mercy we see in Jesus, I wonder if both the wonderful and awful aspects of God's power experienced at close range aren't more like the blasts of a pressure washer than the techniques of an irate teacher. God's holiness is the very thing we need to get wholly clean. But,

unmitigated, it's too much for us. We can't survive it.

Maybe Yahweh's holiness (and its sometimes fiery consequences) became more visible at turning points in salvation history less because God wanted to set a stern example, and more because at those moments he'd drawn particularly near to his people in all his power. As envious as I might be of God's visibility to the Israelites, they clearly sensed the danger inherent in his proximity. In Exodus, they ask Moses to speak to God on their behalf, so they can stay at a safe distance.

When I grasp that God's holiness is necessary for my cleansing but is also, by its nature, a vaporizing force, two things come into clearer focus.

First, I begin to perceive God's judgment as no more malevolent than the blast of water from a pressure washer. It is simply God's holiness doing what God's holiness does. Second, this reality points to one reason we need a mediator. Jesus is the only human who could vicariously absorb (and ultimately survive) the cleansing we so desperately need. Because of him, we are washed not by a force so intense it annihilates us, but rather by the blood of the Lamb.

Just like I wish I could turn the power washer on all the messes of my life (without the resulting carnage), I still find myself longing for more visible manifestations of God's nearness and power. But in the final analysis, I am grateful that the God who once resided in a cloud on the mountain now lives in us, baptizing us not with an obliterating flood, but with his Spirit.

God's holiness is the very thing we need to get wholly clean. But, unmitigated, it's too much for us. We can't survive it.



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The Big Love Strategy

What are Americans learning from pop culture portrayals of polygamy?

Big Love, HBO's series about the "polygamists next door" in Sandy, Utah, ended its five-year run last March, but polygamy is still going strong on American television. TLC's reality series *Sister Wives*, which features a real-life polygamist family named the Browns, has just been renewed for a third season.

TLC used to be called "The Learning Channel," which prompts the question: What are Americans learning from sympathetic portrayals of polygamy in popular culture?

When *Will & Grace* debuted in 1998, few could have imagined that scarcely a decade later, same-sex marriage would be regarded by many Americans as a constitutional right. Catholic Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York was no alarmist when he worried aloud that the next step in the marriage debate would be another redefinition to allow polygamy and infidelity. How did we get to this point?

It began with making what was once marginalized and tolerated seem normal and mainstream by calling into question the very idea of norms. Pop culture excels at perpetuating this kind of relativism: gay characters were depicted as interchangeable with, if not superior to, their heterosexual counterparts. The message was clear: Only a bigot would make a fuss over homosexual behavior.

This approach, while effective, was too slow for some activists. That led to the second part of the "how": the legal strategy. This strategy built on the foundation laid by abortion-rights advocates, especially *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which defined liberty as "the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."

This notion of liberty as self-definition led to *Lawrence v. Texas*, which not only overturned Texas's anti-sodomy law, but also put the validity of all morals legislation

into doubt. As U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia wrote in his blistering dissent, the majority opinion would preclude all further morals legislation, opening the door to bigamy, same-sex marriage, and even adult incest and prostitution. He was right, of course. When a federal judge overturned California's Proposition 8 last year, he cited *Lawrence*. Now the aforementioned Browns have filed suit against Utah, seeking



The cast of *Sister Wives*

to have its law against polygamy invalidated. Their attorney, Jonathan Turley, argues what gay-rights advocates vehemently deny: "Homosexuals and polygamists do have a common interest: the right to be left alone as consenting adults." Following *Lawrence*'s logic to exactly where Scalia said it would lead, he adds, "There is no spectrum of private consensual relations—there is just a right of privacy that protects all people so long as they do not harm others."

What then about evidence that polygamy is bad for women? What about studies linking polygamy to higher rates of domestic violence, an increased chance of dying in childbirth, and abuses such as daughter-swapping? What about intentionally depriving children of the singular devotion of a loving father and mother? Doesn't that constitute "harm"? It is ironic that feminist writers (and even a professor at that bastion of feminism, Brown University) are sounding the alarm

about the dangers of polygamy. After all, feminists have always bristled at the idea of government "legislating morality" regarding any kind of "consensual relationship." But now they are ready for government to step in and legislate in the case of "consensual relationships" that harm them.

Shoe, meet other foot.

But, in fact, polygamy violates the equality and personal dignity of men and women. It contradicts the uniqueness and exclusivity of the marital bond. This is why the Christian church has always regarded it as a violation of God's moral law.

The Mormon Church renounced polygamy in 1890, and the estimated 50,000 Mormon polygamists are violating not only civil law but also the teaching of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. True, polygamy was also practiced by some in the Old Testament, but it invariably led to disaster among the people of Israel. God's original marriage plan set forth in Genesis involved an intimate partnership of life and love between one man and one woman.

The Judeo-Christian tradition, as interpreted by Jesus (Matt. 19:3–9; Mark 10:1–12; Luke 16:18), defines marriage as the joining of one man and one woman in a lifelong covenantal union that is open to children, the mutual care of husband and wife, and the flourishing of the human community. Christians today are called to model this ideal of marriage in our own families and to reach out in love and forgiveness, as Jesus did, to those within and outside the Christian community who fall short of it. We are also called to renew the marriage culture by opposing practices that undermine and destroy it.

Today, unimaginable though it is, that includes polygamy. ☩

Scalia was right: The majority opinion in *Lawrence* opened the door to bigamy, same-sex marriage, and even adult incest.

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I HEAR CRIES OF ANGUISH & FALLING BODIES"

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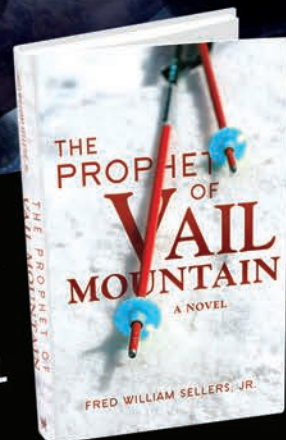
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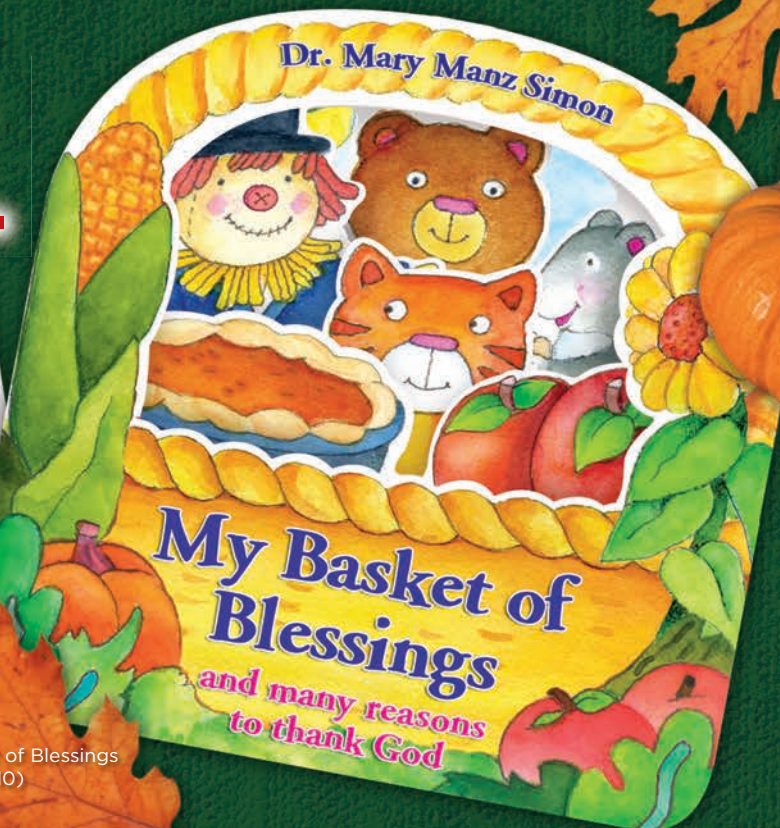
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CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
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THE ARTS

What's New Is Old

Today's politically liberal evangelicals may not be as different as some imagine. By Matthew Lee Anderson

The 2008 election of Barack Obama reinvigorated an ongoing discussion within evangelicalism about the nature of its relationship to the political order. It is a discussion that will almost certainly receive a new infusion of energy during the 2012 election cycle. But analyses of evangelical captivity to politics and purported generational shifts in ideology have come close to reaching a saturation point, bringing evangelical introspection to the edge of exhaustion. Of the writing about evangelicals and politics, there is apparently no end.

Marcia Pally's ***America's New Evangelicals: Expanding the Vision of the Common***

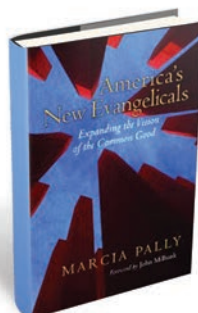
Good (Eerdmans) ★★★★★ is one of the latest attempts to understand the direction of evangelicalism's political priorities. For Pally, the emergence of the "new evangelicals"—figures like Tony Campolo, Shane Claiborne, and David Gushee—reveals important shifts, in both substantive beliefs and habits of engagement. She sees this movement as "new" because its members embrace "beliefs and practices that have advanced religion, liberal democracy, and just economic distribution." She contrasts the new with the "old evangelicals" (though Pally does not call them that), whose political engagement she believes has

been sullied by allegedly "prototheocratic yearnings" and an attachment to free-market capitalism. The new evangelicals, she argues, allow religious convictions to shape their political vision, but nevertheless "support pluralism, economic justice, and liberal democratic government." Whether the new evangelicals are championing ideals wholly different from their forebears, or simply imbuing them with different meanings, is not always clear. Pally's presumption, for instance, that "economic justice" is antithetical to free-market economics is astonishing, given the enormous debate over the question.

While Pally presents the "new evangelicals" as an antidote to perceived evangelical vices, her narrative is occasionally given to overstatement. Take, for instance, those supposedly "prototheocratic yearnings." True, Pally's stance later softens into suggesting that evangelicals have "at times" attempted to "use the state to impose religious views on the nation." But even this skirts the boundaries of hyperbole. Unless Pally thinks that evangelical opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage are exclusively theological in nature—a highly debatable contention—she is left only with school prayer as an example of such attempts. Evangelical activism may have sectarian underpinnings, but evangelicals have shown a remarkable willingness to abide by the rules of liberal democracy in working—through legislatures, courts, and grassroots initiatives—to "impose" their views.

NOT SO NEW

Pally makes no attempt at any statistical survey, instead approaching her subject through blogs, newsletters, sermons, and other expressions of the "new evangelicalism." Transcripts of interviews with prominent figures like Richard Cizik and Joel Hunter punctuate her commentary, lending the reader a firsthand familiarity



that is both interesting and illuminating.

Yet whether the new evangelicals are really *new* depends upon our understanding of what came before them. And unfortunately, Pally's understanding makes it difficult to discern what's actually new about the movement. For instance, she argues that the new evangelicals practice a "third way" of political engagement, avoiding the twin traps of theocratic ambition and privatized piety. They do this through "voluntarist associations" that "advocate for their positions through public education, lobbying, coalition building, and negotiation."

This "civil society activism" is a commendable approach, but couldn't Pally apply the same description to the Religious Right? Historically, this movement was propelled by a cluster of voluntary parachurch organizations—many of them avowedly non-sectarian in their approach—that worked to influence society by means of lobbying and public persuasion. Moreover, and somewhat ironically, traditional approaches to limited government have often been justified precisely because they leave room for the mediating institutions of civil society, rather than relying upon the coercive powers of the state. Because Pally conflates conservatism with what amounts to

Evangelical activism may have sectarian underpinnings, but evangelicals have shown a remarkable willingness to abide by the rules of liberal democracy.

libertarian economics, she overlooks the possibility of a mutually reinforcing relationship between "civil society activism" and limited government principles.

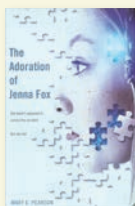
What's more, Pally passes over any discussion of "compassionate conservatism," the more activist school of thought espoused by George W. Bush and cheered on by many fellow evangelicals. (Conservative commentator Fred Barnes famously re-labeled it "big government conservatism.") The advent of compassionate conservatism suggests that evangelicals, in their association with the Republican Party, have not, for good or ill, hewed inflexibly to a libertarian orthodoxy. Widespread evangelical support for the 2008 campaign of Mike Huckabee, who was (perhaps unfairly) spurned by mainstream Republicans for being too comfortable with government involvement, confirms this point.

Closer to the heart of the book, though, is

Pally's suggestion that the new evangelicals are distinguished by their endorsement of "church-state separation and constitutionally based law." Here again Pally's lack of substantive argument about the "old evangelicals" makes it hard to discern where the differences actually lie. With respect to "church-state separation," Jon A. Shields demonstrates in *The Democratic Virtues of the Christian Right* (2009) the great pains to which evangelicals have gone to present their views on abortion in non-sectarian terms. And as for endorsing the principle of "constitutionally based law," this does not preclude working, through constitutionally legitimate channels, to reform or undo laws deemed unjust. In this regard, evangelicals' abortion and same-sex marriage, both in the courtroom and at the ballot box, seem to exemplify the highest respect for constitutionally based law.

MY TOP 5 BOOKS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

By Sara Zarr, author of *How to Save a Life* (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2011)



THE ADORATION OF JENNA FOX

MARY E. PEARSON (SQUARE FISH)

Set in a world like our own in the not-far-off future, this book asks compelling questions: What makes a person a person? How far should we go to preserve a beloved life? I love Pearson's spare and poetic voice.



AMERICAN BORN CHINESE

GENE LUEN YANG (SQUARE FISH)

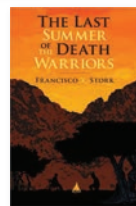
This award-winning work turned me on to graphic novels. The three interwoven stories about race and identity are engaging and often funny, and Yang speaks deeply to a fundamental human dignity through his words and art.



SORTA LIKE A ROCK STAR

MATTHEW QUICK
(LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY)

To be honest, I resisted the voice of the relentlessly hopeful Amber Appleton at first. But Quick won me over with this story, which is full of hope and despair, beauty and ugliness, all inextricably intertwined—and perhaps interdependent.



THE LAST SUMMER OF THE DEATH WARRIORS

FRANCISCO X. STORK
(ARTHUR A. LEVINE BOOKS)

Between this and his *Marcelo in the Real World* (2009), Stork is becoming one of my favorite writers.

Here, complex and conflicted (and funny) teen boys deal with faith, doubt, anger, and friendship in the cultural and physical landscape of New Mexico.



A WRINKLE IN TIME

MADELEINE L'ENGLE
(FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX)

I grew up with L'Engle's characters, came of age with them, and wrestled with identity alongside them. Most important to me as a young reader, these books (unlike my peers) made me feel like being smart was not only okay but also desirable.

KEEPING VIGILANT

Pally's chapter on the new evangelicals' underlying beliefs departs noticeably from her generally dispassionate, scholarly approach. She quotes virtually no new evangelical activists or theologians, and instead develops Anabaptist theologian John Howard Yoder's concept of "revolutionary subordination," analyzing how Scripture understands Jesus as a political actor. It is an odd moment of normative political theology in the middle of a book that presents itself as examining the beliefs of others.

Strangeness aside, the chapter is excellent and very well balanced. Pally suggests that Christian political engagement should obey "positive law in all but extreme circumstances, defend its country under the extreme condition of invasion, and [spend] most of its time serving those within the church, the stranger, and the enemy." This is wise counsel, so far as it goes, but ought we simply to infer that new evangelicals would endorse Pally's principles?

The answer isn't clear. On the one hand, in presenting their underlying beliefs, Pally comes close to describing a consistent, unified framework out of which policy decisions might be made. But in presenting this belief system in her own voice, she leaves it unclear whether the new evangelicals understand and abide by their own framework. After all, Pally repeatedly underscores the issue-by-issue approach that often characterizes young evangelical politics. It can be difficult to discern whether new evangelical activism arises from a unified moral philosophy, or whether its piecemeal approach reflects a more pragmatic spirit.

Pally makes clear, though, why evangelicals will and must continue reflecting on their relationship with state authority. In a liberal society, marked by a crowded and contentious public square, an impulse toward introspection helps preserve a proper ordering of religious faith and political power. The new evangelicals certainly understand that such vigilance is a price worth paying for liberty. But so too, I suspect, do their counterparts of "old." ☛

Matthew Lee Anderson is the author of *Earthen Vessels: Why Our Bodies Matter to Our Faith* (Bethany House). He blogs at *MereOrthodoxy.com*.

Martyrs of the Middle Kingdom

A non-Christian reporter profiles Christians who have suffered under Chinese Communism. By David Aikman

Every so often, you come across a narrative of courage under suffering that is so well reported, so restrained and sensitive in its intelligence, that you are momentarily altered by the experience. Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* had that effect upon millions, both Russians and foreigners, in 1962. The publication of Solzhenitsyn's novels—like *Cancer Ward* and *The First Circle*, for which the Russian writer was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature—even contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

It is far too early to guess whether Liao Yiwu's latest book, **God Is Red: The Secret Story of How Christianity Survived and Flourished in Communist China** (HarperOne) ★★★★★, will have any long-term impact on the author's homeland. But readers will surely come away inspired by the landmark account of Chinese Christians living under the vicious political campaigns of the Mao era. (No stranger himself to political persecution, Liao was imprisoned during the government's post-Tiananmen Square crackdown. He described his prison experience in *Testimonials*, an expanded version of which has just been published in German.)

Two ingredients, in particular, make *God Is Red* such a powerful account of Chinese Christians' perseverance. First, Liao acknowledges that he is not himself a Christian, so he cannot be accused of trying to persuade anyone of anything religious. And second, the quality of his reporting is simply excellent.

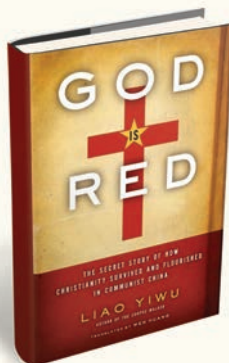
The drama of the reporting derives from the fact that much of it takes place in remote areas of the Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. The characters Liao focuses on are men and women of extraordinary saintliness: the indefatigably beneficent Dr.

Sun, for example, a man who turned down prosperous positions in China's cities because he wanted to help the poor and outcast in China's remote rural areas; the elderly nun persistently appealing for the Communists to return confiscated church property.

Some of the narratives are historically fascinating. There is the story of the martyrdom of Wang Zhisheng, an ethnic Miao executed by the Communists in 1973 and commemorated today by a statue in London's Westminster Abbey. Almost as fascinating is the detailed story of the suffering of Yuan Xiangchen (Allen Yuan). A patriarch of China's house churches, Yuan spent two decades in labor camps (as did his friend, the legendary Chinese evangelist Wang Mingdao) for refusing to join the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the state-controlled church. Yuan died in 2005, but I can still remember visiting his house, which served as a house church, in the center of Beijing in the 1990s.

Like all good reporters, Liao lets his characters speak for themselves, without adding superfluous commentary. From hip-hop youngsters in Chengdu to seasoned old saints in Yunnan come varied stories of how each one became a Christian. From the same people come powerful recollections of the pitiless and evil tyranny of Communism as it struggled to dominate all of life in China. If you want to read one book that sums up the glory of the Christian witness under persecution and the tragic 20th-century story of China's Christians, read *God Is Red*. Brilliant and immensely moving, it will, if anything can, inject new backbone into your own Christian life. ☛

David Aikman is a former *Time* magazine bureau chief in Beijing and the author of *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Regnery).





SIMPLY JESUS

Who He Was, What He Did, Why It Matters

N. T. WRIGHT

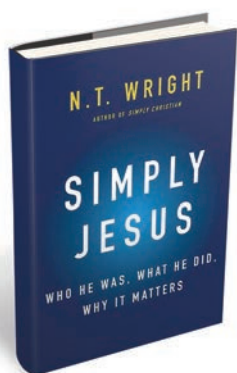
(HARPERONE, 208 PAGES)

Christian worship declares that *Jesus* is Lord and that therefore, by strong implication, nobody else is. What's more, it doesn't just declare it as something to be believed, like the fact that the sun is hot or the sea wet. It commits the worshipper to allegiance, to following this Jesus, to being shaped and directed by him. Worshipping the God we see in Jesus orients our whole being, our imagination, our will, our hopes, and our fears away from the world where Mars, Mammon, and Aphrodite (violence, money, and sex) make absolute demands and punish anyone who resists. It orients us instead to a world in which love is stronger than death, the poor are promised the kingdom, and chastity (whether married or single) reflects the holiness and faithfulness of God himself. Acclaiming Jesus as Lord plants a flag that supercedes the flags of the nations, however so "free" or "democratic" they may be. It challenges *both* the tyrants who think they are, in effect, divine *and* the "secular democracies" that have effectively become, if not divine, at least ecclesial: that is, communities that are trying to do and be what the church was supposed to do and be, but without recourse to the one who sustains the church's life. Worship creates—or should create, if it is allowed to be truly itself—a community that marches to a different beat, that keeps in step with a different Lord.

Ideally, then . . . the church, the community that hails Jesus as Lord and king, and feasts at his table celebrating his victorious death and resurrection, is constituted as "the body of the Messiah." This famous Pauline image is not a random "illustration." It expresses Paul's conviction that *this is the way in which Jesus now exercises his rule in the world—through the church, which is his Body*. Paul, rooted as he was in the ancient Scriptures, knew well that the Creator's plan was to look after his creation through obedient humankind. For Paul, Jesus himself is the Obedient Man who is now therefore in charge of the world; and the church is "his body, the fullness of

the one who fills all in all" (Eph. 1:23). It is this vocation that gives the church courage to stand up in the face of the bullying self-appointed masters of the world, to resist them when they are forcing their communities to go in the wrong way, while at the same time demonstrating, in its own life, that there is a different way of being human, a way pioneered and now made possible by Jesus himself.

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THE PIETIST IMPULSE IN CHRISTIANITY

EDITED BY CHRISTIAN T. COLLINS WINN, CHRISTOPHER GEHRZ, G. WILLIAM CARLSON, AND ERIC HOLST (PICKWICK)



"Pietist," "pietistic": when we encounter these terms at all, they typically come dripping with condescension and scorn. This collection serves as a corrective. In addition to a cluster of pieces on "Continental German Pietism"

(rightly the longest of the book's eight parts), there's a section on "Wesley the Pietist." And I was particularly glad, as a longtime member of the Evangelical Covenant Church, to see the essays on "Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Trans-Atlantic Scandinavian Pietism." The volume concludes with a lovely bit of Catholic bridge-building by Emilie Griffin.

JOHN IN THE COMPANY OF POETS

The Gospel in Literary Imagination

THOMAS GARDNER (BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS)



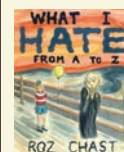
The conception of Thomas Gardner's book is brilliant. He works his way attentively through the Gospel of John, with recourse to poems that engage directly with John's text or with its salient themes. Gardner's company of

poets includes canonical figures and contemporaries as well. The result is a reading of John that will draw you "deeper and deeper into the claim that Jesus is life itself—that through his death his Father offers life to the world."

WHAT I HATE

From A to Z

ROZ CHAST (BLOOMSBURY USA)



The title of Roz Chast's new book of cartoons may be slightly misleading. She gives us a list of "concerns," things that make her anxious. ("I am an anxious person," she tells us, from "a long

line of anxious people.") So what we have here is a delightful miscellany of "phobias, fears, loathings." Some are expected (Elevators, Heights, Quicksand); others will perhaps come as a surprise (Balloons, Jell-O-1-2-3, Spontaneous Human Combustion). In all cases, A to Z, anxiety is transmuted into absurdity. No prescription required.

Taking It to the Streets

Douglas Groothuis wants all Christians to go out and defend the faith in love. Interview by Stan Guthrie

Douglas Groothuis calls his new apologetics volume, which weighs in at well over 700 pages, “as close to a magnum opus as I will ever have.” Groothuis, professor of philosophy at Denver Seminary, has written a number of books about worldview, apologetics, and the gospel, including *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (IVP) and *The Soul in Cyberspace* (Wipf and Stock). His latest offering is **Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith** (IVP Academic). Stan Guthrie, a CT editor at large and coauthor of *The Sacrament of Evangelism*, spoke with Groothuis about his apologetics approach.

What distinguishes this book from other apologetics books?

While there are many good apologetics books out there, it seemed that they were all missing *something*. For example, a book might be extremely good but not deal sufficiently with the problem of evil, or with Darwinism and intelligent design. And in general, a lot of apologetics books fail to sufficiently address other religions, particularly Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, whose beliefs pose very significant challenges to Christianity today. So I’m not claiming that I necessarily do a better job than some of the great apologists out there, such as J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig. But I tried to put everything germane to the apologetics agenda in one book.

How do you approach apologetics in the current culture?

I think our culture is very pluralistic in a lot of ways. Different pockets of the culture have different perspectives on truth, knowledge, worldviews, and so on. The savvy apologist needs to understand the basic worldviews and epistemologies, and then get a good read

on the approaches taken by individual people. You can only do good apologetics when you have some understanding of the perspective of the person or the group you are addressing. Many people have worldviews that are internally inconsistent. They may have a certain amount of folk Christianity or some Hinduism, so the apologist has to sort things out and expose the inconsistencies. We need a kind of existential engagement with people, whereby we genuinely and humbly interact with them—not dump the truth on them or view apologetics as some kind of philosophical game. It is too serious to be anything like that.

INTERVIEW

Have developments in cyberspace surprised you or confirmed what you addressed in the past?

Some of the basic concerns I had about cyberspace in the mid to late ’90s are still there: the lack of personal interaction, the temptation to be absorbed into diversion, and so on.

It’s difficult to make a sustained, persuasive argument in some electronic media because of the space limitations, but also because the Internet is not really the best means of communicating about the deepest things in life. It’s much better to have face-to-face conversations, or to speak to a group and have a question-and-answer time. In terms of sharing apologetic arguments, there’s a lot of activity online, and much of it is truthful and worthwhile as long as it doesn’t eclipse other forms of taking it to the streets.

Are you still concerned that these media will take away our capacity to reason and converse in significant ways?

Yes, absolutely. Nicholas Carr’s book *The Shallows* argues that life on the screen doesn’t tend to

develop intellectual depth. We tend to skim and scan and surf as opposed to deeply enter into the argument of a text. It’s possible to cheapen apologetics on the Internet if you are not a well-rooted, intellectually grounded person. At the same time, the Internet allows interaction with a tremendous scope.

A big part of apologetics is not simply the arguments for Christianity and against non-Christian worldviews. It’s wisdom. That is, what are the best venues for engaging people apologetically? How do we communicate this life-changing, ultimately significant truth to people such that they will truly listen and engage? In many cases, the Internet is not the best way.

How is this book different from what you might have written 10 or 20 years ago?

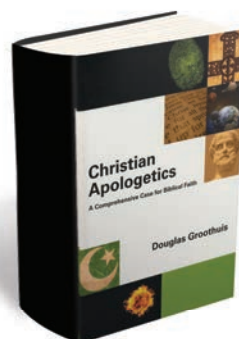
One aspect that the years have added is a deeper sensitivity to people’s suffering and the necessity of prayer for all of the Christian life, including apologetics. You need good arguments, but it’s a matter of engaging people, listening to their heart’s cry, being filled with the Spirit, and responding in a Christlike way. I hope that I bring a little more wisdom, a little more maturity, and a bit more awareness of the sufferings and struggles of the world.

What is our greatest challenge today in Christian apologetics?

The greatest challenge is just doing it. Often, for various reasons, apologetics doesn’t get into the pulpit. Part of it is fideism, the idea that faith requires no evidence. In fact, some people even pit faith against reason. That’s simply bad theology, and bad anthropology.

Many Christian colleges do not require apologetics courses. Many seminaries do not require their divinity students to study apologetics. I think that’s deeply wrong. But it is not merely for the professors, the philosophers, and the writers. We are called

to love God with all our hearts, souls, strength, and minds; to love our neighbors as ourselves, have a reason for the hope within us, and contend earnestly for the faith. Apologetics is not a peripheral discipline for Christian eggheads. It’s right at the center of the kingdom of God. ✚



The Father Becomes the Son

Martin Sheen explores transcendence in the making of *The Way*. By Mark Moring

When Charlie Sheen had his drugs-and-alcohol-fueled meltdown earlier this year, his father could relate. Martin Sheen had battled his own demons as a younger man, as booze and anger issues nearly cost him his family—and his life. In 1977, at just 36 years old, he had a heart attack while filming *Apocalypse Now*; a priest began delivering last rites before Sheen unexpectedly recovered.

The elder Sheen eventually overcame his alcoholism (he still attends AA meetings) and returned to his Catholic roots. Sheen, who celebrates his 50th anniversary with wife Janet this year, tells *Christianity Today* that his faith enables him to extend grace and patience to his struggling son.

“People who are addicted to drugs or alcohol are generally seeking a transcendent experience,” he says. “But you have to surrender to a higher power—I happen to believe that’s God—and ask for help, and then begin the reconstruction work on yourself. And that’s a deeply spiritual work.”

Martin Sheen, 71, and his eldest son, Emilio Estevez, 49, were involved in a deeply spiritual work of their own recently, making a movie about El Camino de Santiago—the Way



of Saint James, a 500-mile trail in northern Spain that serves as a spiritual pilgrimage for thousands of hikers annually. Tradition has it that the remains of the apostle James are buried in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, at the end of the trail.

The Way (Relativity Media) ★★★★★, which opens in limited release on October 7, was originally Sheen’s idea, but Estevez ended up writing the script and directing the movie. Sheen plays protagonist Tom, an aging doctor trying to find his “way” after learning that his estranged son Daniel (played in flashbacks by Estevez) has died in a storm while walking El Camino. Tom flies to Spain, recovers Daniel’s ashes, and spontaneously decides to walk

the trail himself—carrying those ashes while wearing Daniel’s hiking shoes and backpack. He meets other characters on the road, and it turns out to be a healing pilgrimage. (Our full review will post online on Oct. 7.)

“I love the Camino,” says Sheen, who walked parts of the path during a brief visit in 2003. “People take the pilgrimage for many reasons, and each comes to grips with the inner journey, which is really a yearning

for transcendence.”

Estevez, who calls himself “secular,” is less likely to talk in spiritual terms. “I just wanted to make an honest film,” he says. “If you’re a person of faith, you’ll find something in this movie that speaks to you. If you’re not, you’ll find something of interest too. But what I love about the Camino is that the road is a metaphor for our lives: *Are we walking in truth? Are we walking with integrity?* That’s what speaks the loudest to me in this film.”

Faith elements are clear throughout the film—prayer, conversations, several poignant moments in churches—but Estevez says his dad wanted it to be even more of a spiritual quest. “If he’d had his way, his character would have stopped at every church along the Camino and prayed and cried,” Estevez says. “I said, ‘Pop, I think that would be overly sentimental. The church will be represented, but this movie is more about finding and creating community.’”

“I wanted more of a *Wizard of Oz* analogy in that Tom meets these characters along the way—three younger people with whom he forms bonds and through whom he ultimately reconnects with his son. He’s able to be a father to these strangers in a way that he was never able to be a father to Daniel.”

In the end, says Sheen, “It’s a father-son story about loss and recovery. Father-son movies are generally about sons who become their fathers, but this one is the reverse. The father becomes the son, by taking this journey that his son wasn’t able to take.”

Mark Moring is senior associate editor at *Christianity Today*.

A Psycho-Spiritual Thriller

The **Presence** (Lionsgate) ★★★★★, releasing to DVD on October 4, is part thriller, part romance, and part ghost story with some supernatural elements. It offers the suspense of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rebecca*, the paranormal mystery of M. Night Shyamalan’s *The Sixth Sense*, the foreboding of Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining*, and a story that falls somewhere between C. S. Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters* and a Frank Peretti novel.

Writer-director Tom Provost, a Christian, creates an air of mystery and tension—and the less you know going in, the better. Academy Award winner Mira Sorvino plays a writer who is staying in a remote cabin in the woods, seeking solitude and creative inspiration. A boyfriend unexpectedly shows up, but only after a mysterious character makes his “presence” known much sooner. How these beings—human or otherwise—interact is part of the ride. Is it a psychological nail-biter, or a supernatural thriller? Or both?

It’s certainly *not* a horror film, but there’s plenty of nerve-wracking suspense. Much is left for interpretation, but Provost infuses his story with the themes of temptation and redemption. And the film’s tagline is perfect: “Don’t believe everything you hear.” (More: ThePresenceMovie.com) —Russ Breimeier, CT film critic



TWO MINUTES WITH...

Nichole Nordeman



Singer-songwriter Nichole Nordeman has always enjoyed the Bible's heroes, but never fully appreciated them until she stepped into their shoes and literally gave them songs to

sing. That was her task in penning the lyrics for *(Music Inspired by) The Story*, a new album chronicling Scripture's best-loved characters. The 18-song album, featuring some of CCM's top stars, is part of an ambitious project based on *The Story Bible* from Zondervan, *The Heart of the Story: God's Masterful Design to Restore His People*, by Randy Frazee, and *God's Story, Your Story: When His Becomes Yours*, by Max Lucado. *CT*'s Mark Moring spoke with Nordeman.

Why did you write from a first-person perspective?

We are quick to label these characters the "heroes" of our faith—and they certainly are—but in writing these songs, I was more drawn to their fragile and frail parts: the doubt, the fear, the second-guessing, but also the trusting, the surrender, the bravery, the second chances. At the risk of casting them in too common a light, I wanted to relate to them somehow.

What song came most easily to you?

"Broken Praise," the song of Job. I have not walked anything that resembles a "Job path," and felt like such a fraud trying to speak in his tortured voice. I set the song aside for a while, and then a friend sent me Mary Beth Chapman's book, *Choosing to SEE: A Journey of Struggle and Hope*. I read of the Chapman family's struggle to move and breathe through life after losing their beautiful daughter. After I finished the book, I lit a candle and prayed for their precious family, and the song poured out of me in a matter of minutes.

Which song was the most difficult?

"Alive," about Mary Magdalene finding the empty tomb. It was the last song we wrote, and we were tired. The Resurrection is so central to our faith story, and I was panicked that creative exhaustion had crept in. I wrote six entire lyrics, none of which were right. But [co-writer Bernie Herms] helped unclutter the song by pointing me to the simple and breathless moment where Mary first encountered her risen Lord.



Good Verses, No Vices

Another triumph from **Switchfoot**. By Jeremy Jones

There are rare bands that re-create their sound with every album, and there are those that don't fix what isn't broke. Switchfoot isn't fixing with **Vice Verses** (Credential) ★★★★★, but that doesn't mean the multiplatinum arena rockers aren't willing to tinker with the signature sound they have successfully forged over the past 15 years.

With the band reclaiming more creative control in its own studio, 2009's *Hello Hurricane* pushed into edgier, more muscular territory without abandoning the band's swelling sound. *Vice Verses* plays like *Hurricane*'s sequel with a few stylistic additions. Songs such as "The Original" and "Dark Horses" push the harder edge, and "Afterlife" ratchets up a notch with hints of Linkin Park. Overall the guitars are big, sometimes snarling, occasionally laying down the funk à la Red Hot Chili Peppers ("Rise Above It"). And the swirl of towering percussion and electrobuzz behind the six-strings is broader than ever. But the sparse, acoustic title track and the nostalgic ballad "Souvenirs" bring balance.

Frontman Jon Foreman says the album is about "tension and release, an attempt to describe the polarity of the human

experience." The title track captures that most poignantly when it laments, "Every blessing comes with a set of curses," questions, "Where is God in the earthquake? Where is God in the genocide?" and prayerfully pleads, "Tell me that you're there."

Most of the material is stock-in-trade for Switchfoot: yearning, struggling, broken humanity blended with the miracle of love. Some similarities to previous albums run the risk of repetition, and there's room for wider experimentation. But smart and honest

songwriting keeps things fresh. Foreman's metaphors keep fueling epic anthems that don't flinch from pain and doubt but won't let go of hope either—even if only by a fingerhold.

Vice Verses pounds out Switchfoot's evolving soundtrack for a messy yet grand spiritual journey. It's what they do with subtlety and universal appeal better than most. If "Where I Belong" is an indicator, they won't let up anytime soon: "Until I die I'll sing these songs... Still looking for a home / In a world where I belong."

Jeremy Jones is a freelance writer and music critic for *Christianity Today*.



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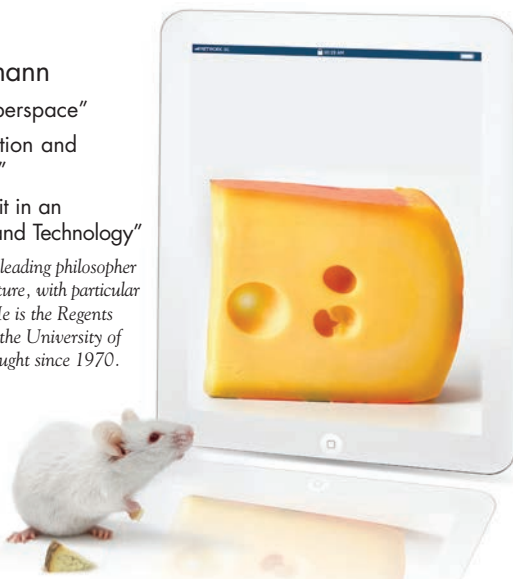
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★★★★★ The newest book from John Eldredge seeks to surprise readers with the powerful personality of Jesus. Eldredge is at his best when describing the awe-inspiring nature of Christ's incarnation and humility. Unfortunately, he tends to pit Christ's immanence against God's transcendence, as well as Jesus against the church. The end result is largely a "me and Jesus" Christianity. —Trevin Wax

► THE ACCIDENTAL REVOLUTIONARY

George Whitefield and the Creation of America

JEROME DEAN MAHAFFEY (BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS)

★★★★★ Jerome Dean Mahaffey's new biography is about a major Founding Father whose first name was George. No, not the man from the Mount Vernon, the one whose visage adorns the dollar bill, but George Whitefield, the British itinerant whose preaching propelled the First Great Awakening. Whitefield did not aim to rock the boat politically. Throughout his life, he pledged loyalty to the crown and the Church of England. But Mahaffey shows how Whitefield's bold challenge to settled religious doctrines and hierarchies helped coax the colonies in the direction of independence. —Matt Reynolds

MUSIC

KEROSENE HALO

► KEROSENE HALO

(LO-FIDELITY)

★★★★★ Mike Roe of the 77s and Derri Daugherty of the Choir join to form Kerosene Halo, trading harmonies and gentle acoustic strumming as though they were playing in your living room. Nine covers of the likes of Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen, Richard Thompson, and others are squarely in the realm of the sometimes-country strains of the duo's "other band," the Lost Dogs. Poetic takes on Christian faith color most of the selections, with Larry Norman's classic "The Outlaw" (about Christ's earthly ministry) carrying the most biblical weight. Soothing and evocative stuff. —*Dave Urbanski*

MAT KEARNEY

► YOUNG LOVE

(UNIVERSAL REPUBLIC)

★★★★★ Mat Kearney found a quick start in Christian hip-hop, but in recent years has made an effortless leap into secular acoustic/pop-rock.

Here, the singer-songwriter attains his highest production values yet, and his music has never sounded as crisp and catchy. Kearney's faith isn't as straightforwardly presented on this album. But on "Down," he tells a story of fallen individuals, and in the chorus reminds listeners that "we all need forgiveness." —*Ron Augustine*

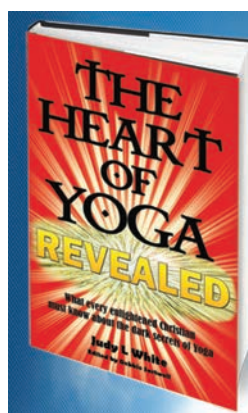
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(INDEPENDENT)

★★★★★ What began as a group of five

friends in a 2008 living room jam session has morphed into a full-time recording and touring band. The Tennessee troupe turns in 13 earthy tunes on this vertically focused album, blending folk, bluegrass, and Americana with rock and pop elements. The mix of harmonies is sublime, shifting from joyful to pensive to praise-filled, fitting just as comfortably on country radio one minute as on more straight-up ccm the next. One highlight is "Japheth Song," where they croon, "With Adam's blood in us, we all look the same." —*Andy Argyrakis*



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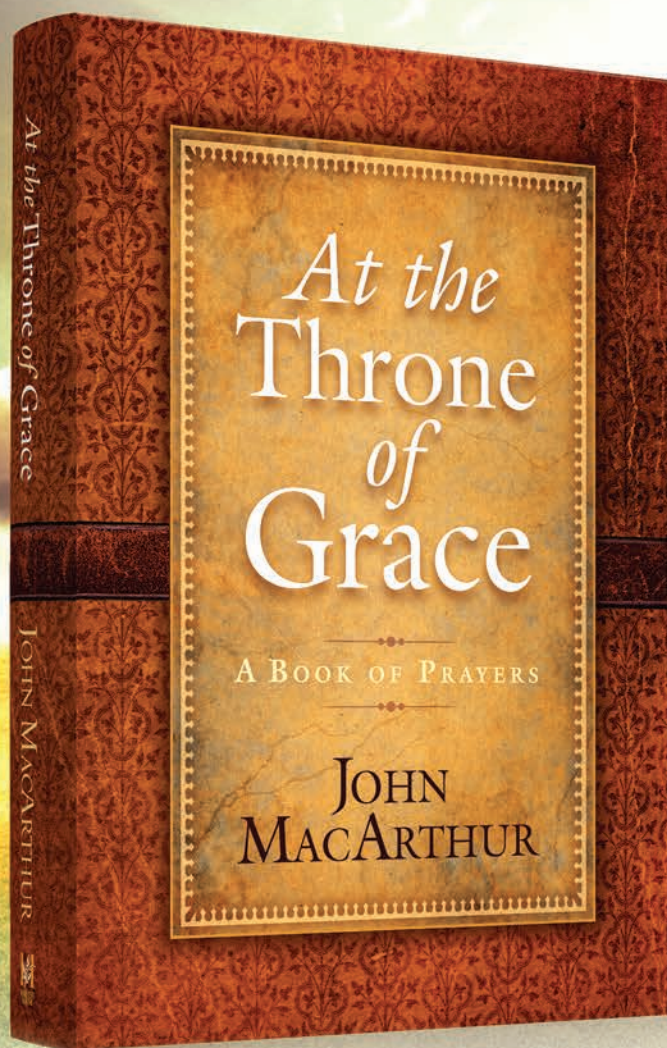
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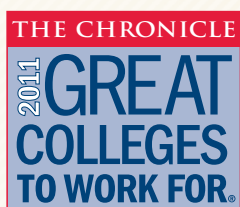
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men·tor [men-tawr, -ter] noun

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2. an influential senior sponsor or supporter.

verb v. men-tored, men-tor-ing

3. to act as a mentor: To serve as a trusted counselor or teacher, especially in occupational settings.

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL **EFFECT OF MENTORING**

Mentoring relationships impact the mentor, the mentee, and those they serve.

How mentored ministry programs give seminary students the **necessary skills**. p. 86

Everyone from **professionals to professors can benefit** from a mentor relationship. p.102

Mentoring can lead to **lifelong friendships**. p. 104



It Really Does Take a Village

How mentored ministry programs give seminary students the necessary skills.

It takes a village, as the saying goes, to raise a Christian leader.

In terms of preparation, close partnerships between seminaries, churches, and other ministries are instrumental in ensuring that graduates not only exhibit competence in diverse and complex skill areas, but also possess the spiritual maturity, good habits, and personal resources that their vocations demand.

“Engagement with and in the church helps students develop ministry skills that cannot be learned elsewhere, while providing immediate integration of classroom work,” says Carol Kaminski, associate professor of Old Testament and dean of faculty at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. (Gordon-Conwell also has branch campuses in Boston, Charlotte, and Jacksonville.) “There is no substitute for personal experience, and there is no better way to gain it and grow than by being able to work alongside and be supported by a conscientious and caring mentor and/or church.”

Seminaries have long depended on theological field education to give students valuable hands-on experience. Many schools now refer to these programs as “Mentored Ministry,” a name change that acknowledges the significant role of relationships in the student’s personal and professional development.

“The seminary curriculum has formational ends,” says Matthew Floding, dean of students and director of formation for ministry at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. Identifying an appropriate

placement is generally the first step of a mentored ministry experience, with the supervising pastor or leader serving as the student’s mentor. Most seminaries require at least one placement to be with a local congregation; other options include clinical settings, parachurch ministries, and social service agencies, depending on the student’s interests and sense of vocation. The practice of ministry in all of these contexts is supported by learning covenants that define professional and personal development goals, frequent meetings with mentors/supervisors, and regular participation in on-campus peer formation or reflection groups.

At Western, master of divinity (M.Div.) students complete 800 hours of ministry experience—half of that in a full-time setting—utilizing what Floding describes as “action-reflection” learning. “That is, one grows more competent in ministry, as well as [more] self-aware, by lots of practice and reflection on that practice with supervisor-mentors, peers in reflection groups, and seminary faculty,” he says.

“If the student does not have opportunities to reflect on the ministry with a mentor, peers, and faculty, the experience will lack meaning and soon be forgotten,” says Ellen Marmon, associate professor of Christian discipleship and co-director of mentored ministry at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. Students bring case studies from the field to their groups for analysis from biblical, theological, and experiential perspectives under the guidance of a faculty facilitator. She explains, “Pairing the practical ministry with critical reflection allows students to

address the ‘why?’ of ministry. Without intentional and communal reflection, students get swallowed up in the ‘what and how?’”

As students engage in ministry, reflection also stimulates personal growth. “Mentors, other students, and faculty [members] create safe places where each student can honestly evaluate his or her [own] prejudices, fears, strengths, and joys,” Marmon says.

At Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, M.Div. students complete two full years in the practice of ministry, and one year with a congregation. “The field education supervisor is a vital resource for students,” says Dianne Reistroffer, director of field education and Methodist studies, and professor of ministry. “In weekly supervising conferences with these practicing professionals, the student reflects upon concrete segments of his or her work and engages in planning for future learning.” Concurrent with their congregational placements, students and supervisors also participate together in a yearlong course called Practical Theology in Congregations. “This integration of academic and experiential learning has been well received by both students and supervisors,” Reistroffer says.

The value of extensive, effective mentoring is widely recognized. Students who enroll in the Master of Arts in Christian Formation and Ministry at Wheaton College Graduate School, in Wheaton, Illinois, join a mentoring group specific to one of five concentrations: Church and Parachurch Ministries; Student Development; Ministry to Children and Families;

Bible, Theology, and Ministry; and Outdoor Adventure Leadership. Led by "experienced professionals in the field of the concentration," students participate in these mentoring groups for the duration of the program, says David Setran, graduate program coordinator for the Christian Formation and Ministry Department.

In addition to sharing the wisdom gained from many years in the field, "these groups provide helpful ways for students to develop close networks of like-minded students and potentially lasting relationships with leaders in their field of study," he says. "They also provide another avenue for spiritual mentoring, as each of the leaders also meets individually with students to discuss personal issues."

Denver Seminary in Littleton, Colorado, pioneered a major shift in emphasis back in 1998 when it replaced its supervised ministry requirement with a comprehensive mentoring program "embedded in the core curriculum of every degree," says Don Payne, associate dean and assistant professor of theology

and ministry. All students are required to complete at least three consecutive semesters of mentoring. M.Div. students must complete five.

"During each semester of mentoring, students are required to develop and implement a personalized learning contract in an area of character growth and in a ministry skill domain," Payne says. "The mentoring relationships provide support, interaction, and accountability for the learning contract process, but also tend to touch on a wide array of topics that are important for the student's personal and ministry formation."

Students identify and recruit their own mentors, which Payne says many students find to be stressful. However, he argues that the seminary "upholds the strategic value of students owning the relationships and developing the skills of identifying and inviting mentors into their lives for lifelong learning." In addition to regular interaction with mentors and formation groups, each student participates in periodic mentor team meetings with his or her external

continued on page 90



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mentors, formation group mentor, and a seminary mentoring director. These meetings, Payne says, integrate “the student’s broader experiences in seminary, life, and ministry”, and include “encouragement and celebration of growth, suggestions for maximizing the mentoring relationship, and discussion of possible next steps with learning contracts.”

Thirteen years into the program,

Payne says the seminary has now had several thousand individuals serve as mentors. “Our mentoring program is taken seriously at every level of our school [and] has bred a culture of mentoring at Denver Seminary in numerous areas of our institutional life.” He adds, “Informal mentoring goes on here in ways that never would have happened without the modeling and impetus of the curricular

mentoring requirement.”

At Lincoln Christian University in Lincoln, Illinois, M.Div. students are required to engage in formal mentoring/supervised ministry through three semesters of Mentored Ministry Experience (MME), says Don Green, director and professor of leadership and director of mentored ministry. Beyond MME, Green also credits the extensive informal mentoring that Lincoln’s faculty members undertake as having significant formational impact on their students. “Relationships with faculty as mentors are more organic than programmed,” he says, and ultimately transcend academic concerns: “While academic direction is the primary goal, advisors are also viewed as spiritual mentors.”

“The whole of what we do is mentoring,” agrees Rob Gallagher, associate professor of intercultural studies at Wheaton College Graduate School. A missiologist, Gallagher has found that “the majority of our students have had significant cross-cultural experience.” Consequently, he says students aren’t simply on the receiving end of mentoring relationships; they also mentor and encourage one another, and they teach their professors a thing or two as well.

One aspect of faculty mentoring that Gallagher takes very seriously is that of exposing his students to “the full-blown missiological academic discipline” by encouraging, coaching, and sometimes working collegially with students to prepare papers for publication and present research at academic conferences. With encouragement, some have also pursued doctoral studies in missiology, the next generation of missions faculty. Citing the example of two students—one from Ethiopia and one from Taiwan—who are writing articles that explore their cultural perspectives on leadership for submission to an academic journal, Gallagher points out that “the students in these programs have unique voices and experiences, and [they] are good researchers and writers in areas where not much has been published.” Mentoring students in these academic processes “is important and fun for all of us. It’s hard work, but it’s very rewarding.”

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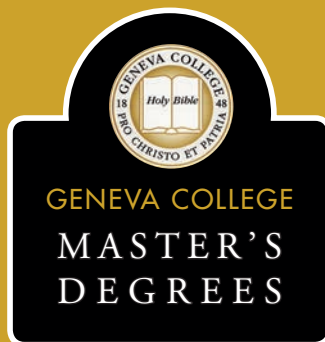


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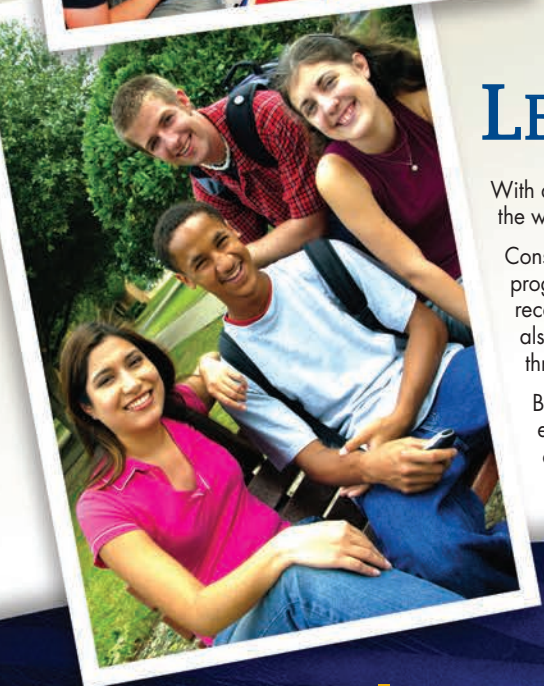


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formation groups, and evaluation provide critical structures and support, successful mentoring ultimately rests on individual mentors and students.

"Mentors who make a positive impact are those who personally invest in their mentees, giving them the freedom to be creative and innovative while also providing wisdom and guidance—they help students remember that what they are doing is not training for ministry, but actually *is* ministry," observes Gordon-Conwell's Kaminski. "They help students remain biblically grounded while ministering to people, especially in life's most troubling and trying situations, and they help students reflect pastorally and theologically on their decisions."

More than dispensing advice, says Asbury's Marmon, "The two most important gifts a mentor can offer a student are generous amounts of time to listen and [asking] insightful questions. Mentoring is not a 'sage on the stage' experience. Rather, it is a dynamic relationship supported by mutual respect,

challenge, and encouragement."

Tom Schwanda, associate professor of Christian formation and ministry at Wheaton—where he teaches graduate-level courses on mentoring and discipleship—agrees. Jesus himself, he says, offers the consummate model of attentive listening and penetrating questions. "One of the benefits of a mentoring program is that it teaches people how to listen," he explains. "Most [inexperienced mentors] quickly discover that they listen long enough to form an answer, but not long enough to really hear the specific need." Rather than dispensing advice or trying to solve other people's problems, Schwanda says good mentors "learn how to help them solve the problem by taking responsibility, following the example of Jesus. They also learn the importance of developing greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, who is always the primary mentor."

The disposition of the student is equally important. "Students who derive the most benefit exhibit a teachable

spirit; a strong work ethic; positive habits of communication and self-awareness; a willingness to take risks, to receive constructive criticism and other forms of feedback on their ministry, and [to] engage in theological and critical reflection on the practice of ministry," says Louisville's Reistroffer.

When meaningfully engaged, mentoring relationships have enormous and obvious benefits for students: refining their skills, encouraging self-discipline, shaping their vision, and pointing the way to lifelong learning. "Seminarians tend to come from a wide range of age groups, life experiences, and ministry backgrounds. We consider it vital that a significant portion of a student's education takes those variables into account," Denver's Payne says. "The mentoring process provides a curricular vehicle by which students can chart a path of personal and ministry development that fits their sense of calling, their known gifts, their previous experiences, and their fears or stretch

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points so as to define meaningful next steps of growth."

Mentoring programs yield many other benefits as well. For seminaries, partnerships with local churches and ministries are crucial: practicing ministry under the guidance of engaged mentors teaches on a level that cannot be achieved in a classroom. "One of the most foundational building blocks [of successful mentoring] is a strong relationship between the seminary and the local churches in our area," says Kaminski of Gordon-Conwell. Strong seminary-church relationships also provide essential windows onto the realities of ministry and the needs of church leaders. "The work of one is always done with the other in mind," she says.

When churches take students under their wing, they discover that mentoring is itself a rewarding ministry. "The hospitality of the congregation or ministry site cannot be overstated," Western's Floding says. "The congregation that expects their student to preach occasionally, to teach classes to different age levels, and to make hospital calls is owning their part of the larger mentoring experience."

"Mentoring allows the church to fulfill its calling: building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:1-16) and investing in faithful people who will invest in others (2 Tim. 2:2)," agrees Asbury's Marmon. Mentoring also mobilizes people for ministry in ways they may not have anticipated, Payne observes. "In our experience, some of the most effective mentors are not high profile and don't think they have much to offer. Yet they are incredible listeners with immense wisdom. Mentoring provides an arena for ministry that often doesn't exist in a widespread or systematic way in churches. It mobilizes and energizes people in an unusual manner."

Indeed, many schools report that their mentors regularly testify to the energizing effects of these relationships on their own ministries and spiritual growth. "Feedback from mentors usually involves an affirmation of mutual learning and appreciation for the opportunity to invest in equipping the next generation of kingdom leaders," Lincoln's Green says.

continued on page 100

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Reistroffer, at Louisville Seminary, concurs: "Many of our teaching parishes take great pride in preparing pastors in training, and [they] follow their students beyond graduation and throughout their careers. [And] supervisors talk about what they have learned from seminary students, including the latest scholarship, new approaches to worship and discipleship, creativity, and reimagining of ministry in their settings. [They] also share their own narratives of renewal and spiritual growth from their work and relationships with students."

In fact, these relationships are so influential that many students, in due time, become mentors themselves, often for the same schools from which they graduated. In mentoring relationships, Asbury's Marmon observes, "when both parties show up ready to learn and contribute, the experience can be transformative."

Kathy Furlong is a freelance writer living in Philadelphia, PA.

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Mentoring—It's Not Just for Seminarians Anymore

Everyone from professionals to professors can benefit from a mentor relationship.

When the student is ready, the teacher will appear,” says Kara Lee Mantinaos, quoting an old proverb. “I knew the Lord brought me to this place, at this time, to prepare me for what he’s called me to do.”

“This place” is the Master of Arts in Higher Education Program at Geneva College (in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania), which prepares men and women for college campus vocations.

As a graduate assistant overseeing Geneva’s undergraduate honors program, Mantinaos’s responsibilities include developing significant relationships with the students, coordinating special events, informal advising, and serving as a teaching assistant. She says she has benefitted immensely from the mentoring relationship that has developed—“quite organically”—with her supervisor, David Guthrie. And she credits his “generosity of spirit” with fostering collaboration beyond that of employer/employee. Guthrie is dean of the faculty and professor of higher education at the college.

“Our first interactions were very positive. We have similar temperaments, so establishing our communication pattern was a more natural process than in previous mentoring situations I’d experienced,” she says. “However, I believe that serendipity is possible because we both come humbly to the table and are willing to be taught by each other. . . . He is gracious to acknowledge my prior experience and accomplishments, and [he] has always treated me with dignity and absolutely zero pretense. So mutual respect and trust were quickly established.”

As a mentor, Guthrie says he invests in his students with the hope that they

will “passionately embrace a vision for, [an] understanding of, and [the] skills to undertake a vitally important effort—in our case, higher education—for a purpose that transcends the mentor or the mentee.” Taking the long view, he adds that “the anticipated outcome of the process is that the current and eventual contributions of the one mentored [will] extend far beyond the contributions previously made by the mentor.”

Working with Mantinaos on behalf of the honors program, Guthrie says, requires consideration of myriad issues, including the undergraduates’ motivations, engagement and learning styles, academic performance, [and] “faith-shaped learning,” as well as program management and evaluation. In doing this work together, he says he benefits “from an opportunity to look closely at the theory and practice of all of these issues, and more, in league with a very eager and extremely able colleague. It’s an exhilarating professional experience and one in which the lines between mentor and mentee are blurred, if not largely nonexistent.”

Personally, Guthrie says the work has been humbling. “Together, we realize the complexities involved with leading effective honors programs, as well as supporting, challenging, and loving the college students who populate the programs.”

Mantinaos is grateful for the significant personal and professional dividends she has gained from being mentored. “Dave’s broad perspective and experience are helping me to understand and navigate the lay of the land in our field, which is helping me discern where I want to go with the knowledge I’m gaining in the program. At times, he has impelled me to venture

into unfamiliar waters, which has prompted growth and discovery of gifts I wouldn’t otherwise have encountered,” she says.

Currently, Mantinaos is in a process of discernment and is preparing to apply to either a Ph.D. or Ed.D. program. Her interests are many. (“My ever-lengthening list of possible capstone projects is a running joke,” she says.) Yet she’s seriously thinking about pursuing curriculum planning. “Dave has often recommended that I plan to become an academic dean or possibly a provost someday, which would combine my strategic planning background with my love of higher education and curriculum and assessment,” she says. “It’s that kind of bird’s-eye perspective that Dave offers that is so valuable.” Not to minimize his accomplishments in research and in the classroom, she says, but “if he had only ever been in the classroom, his suggestions would have been mere guesses and not the valuable perspicacious insights they are.”

On a personal level, Mantinaos says she has appreciated Guthrie’s encouragement to persevere through inevitably difficult “stretching” experiences. “He is truly a Titus 2 encourager and sets a benchmark example in all areas of the field of higher education: extremely high standards of scholarship, common sense and deep wisdom in administration, and outrageously generous ministry to the people in his path.”

She adds, “Perhaps I am most grateful for his commitment to work as an expression of worship. It has reframed how I view the professional life and the field, which keeps me encouraged that I am indeed doing the work of the Lord.”

—KF

A man with short brown hair and black-rimmed glasses stands on a city street. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and has a black backpack strap over his right shoulder. The background is a blurred city street with a large 'STAGE' sign hanging from a building and other pedestrians in the distance.

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When Brooks Buckwalter enrolled in the M.Div. program for chaplaincy at Denver Seminary, she asked God to lead her to the right mentors, sensing that “this process was going to be a very important part of my seminary and vocational journey.”

Because she intends to seek ordination, Buckwalter asked Mike, one of the pastors at her Evangelical Presbyterian church, to serve as her denominational mentor. But she also needed to find someone in her specialization. So with guidance from

faculty and her fellow students, her search led her to Shirley Lindsay, a chaplain with extensive mentoring experience who is not only a graduate of Denver Seminary, but also a veteran of the student side of Denver's mentoring program.

About their initial meeting, Buckwalter says, “I was a bit skittish,



not knowing her at all, but that reticence quickly dissipated as I saw her heart and felt the warmth that she so naturally exudes in conversation. What I didn't know . . . is that she takes mentoring very seriously and isn't willing to mentor someone who just sees it as another hoop to jump through.”

“Some type of ongoing mentoring is invaluable for all mentees throughout their careers,” Lindsay says. “I personally continue to have mentors and find it imperative that



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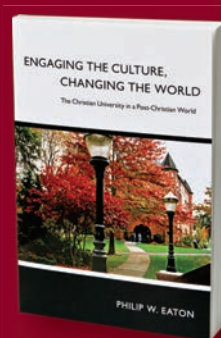
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mentees establish lifelong partnering to keep them spiritually focused.” As a mentor, she says, “I provide guidance to help [mentees] develop a better understanding of who they are as people and who they are in their relationship with the Lord Jesus.” She also guides her mentees through vocational discernment, both in ministry and in secular employment.

For Buckwalter, the discernment process involved confirmation—seconded by her denominational mentor (Mike)—of God’s call to become a pastor. “I have been sluggish in taking on this mantle,” she admits, “but God has been consistently confirming that this is indeed what he is calling me to do. Mike and Shirley have continually affirmed that what I am seeing—and what they see—points to a specific calling from God on my life. . . . They serve as my ‘checks and balances’ in accurately discerning my calling from God.”

Buckwalter recalls how she committed one of her learning contracts to addressing a fear of preaching. “Mike and Shirley not only gave me practical help, such as reading through my sermon notes and giving good feedback, but also walked with me through my fears, helped me process them, prayed for me, listened, and then they both showed up to cheer me on the day I preached,” she says. “I don’t think I can express in words what that meant to me to have them there.”

As Buckwalter reflects on her mentoring experiences at Denver Seminary and looks ahead to graduation in 2012, she says, “I didn’t expect . . . the three of us [to] bond so strongly. . . . We have truly become great friends and a society of mutual encouragement and love. I believe they will always be close friends of mine, and I will continue . . . to reach out to them as I venture out into ministry and continue my life.”

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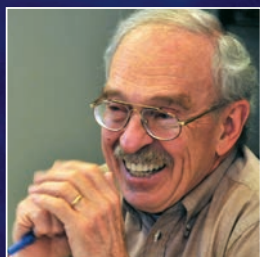
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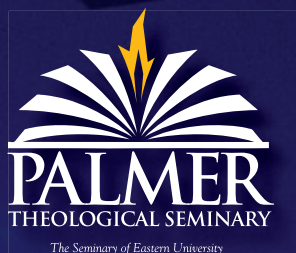
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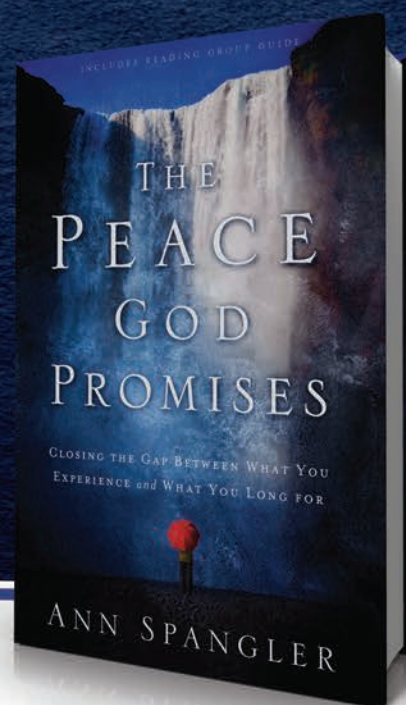
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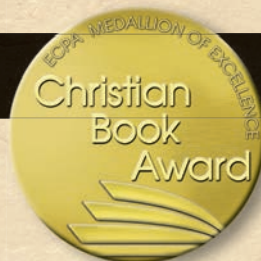
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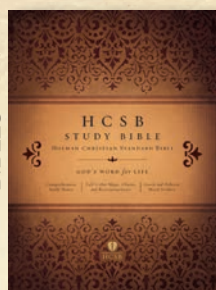


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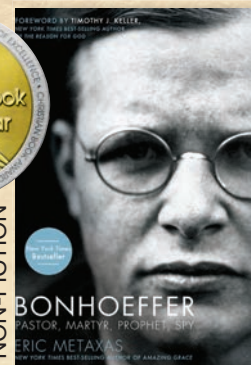
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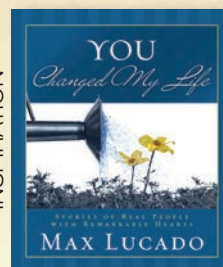


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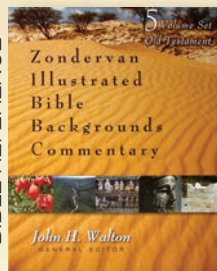
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The Coach in Your Head

Sports psychologist **Julie Bell** can help you hear it.

As a psychology major at Oklahoma State University, Julie Bell was fascinated by the complexities of the human brain, but not by the prospect of listening to people's problems. When she discovered the field of sports psychology, she'd found her niche and went on to earn a master's and then a Ph.D. in the subject at the University of Virginia. Today, she helps not just athletes but also business professionals and church leaders.

"That coaching voice in your head sets you up to do your best, and other times it will undermine you and burn you out," says Bell, founder of the Mind of a Champion, a coaching firm based in Dallas. "Some people have a strong coaching voice that sets them up well. Others need help."

Bell, who spoke at the 2010 National Association of Church Business Administration conference, says church leaders often struggle with their coaching voices, but that her firm's Performance Intelligence teaching can help. Bell's clients include church teams, pro fisherman Dion Hibdon, State Farm, and the vice presidents of several Fortune 500 companies.

➤ **Hometown** Muskogee, Oklahoma

➤ **Age** 44

➤ **Family** L. Nelson Bell II (husband); Mary McCue, 8, Myers Anne, 7, L. Nelson III, 6 (children)

➤ **Church** Highland Park Presbyterian Church, Dallas

➤ **Reading now** *Grace-Based Parenting: The Bible in 90 Days*

➤ **On your iPod** Mormon Tabernacle Choir; Hootie and the Blowfish; Josh Groban

➤ **Your hero** Ruth Bell Graham

➤ **Favorite movie** *Chariots of Fire*

question & answer

A "coaching voice"? Sounds like pop psychology.

It's based in Scripture. You have to be intentional with your thinking. Paul talks about taking every thought captive to Christ. If we let our minds wander to whatever we want, we are in the world and suffering the consequences of sin.

What's Performance Intelligence?

It's your ability to perform your best when it matters most. A lot of people can do their best when the circumstances are right. How do you use the talents and resources that God has given you to do your best, regardless of the circumstances?

How would this benefit a church worker?

A lot of great programs come in to maximize your skills, such as a communications workshop or conflict resolution or time management. Mind management is our greatest inefficiency. My list of things to do doesn't wear me out—my *thinking* about my list of things to do wears me out.

You talk about "maximizing" and "doing your best" with our talents, while Scripture says to be "steadfast" and "faithful" in all things. What's the difference?

All of our life is an act of worship, and in all areas we can glorify God. Colossians 3:23 tells us whatever we do, work at it heartily for the Lord, not for men. That verse makes me want to be intentional in my life, whether I am making a presentation, teaching my kids to ride a bike, or having dinner with my husband. In order to put my best out there, I have to make my thoughts obedient to Christ, to "maximize" every occasion for Christ.

What's next for you?

I'm working on a new book that will take the basic concept of *Performance Intelligence at Work: The 5 Essentials to Achieving the Mind of a Champion* (McGraw-Hill, 2009), but will use more biblical examples and references.

More: TheMindofaChampion.com

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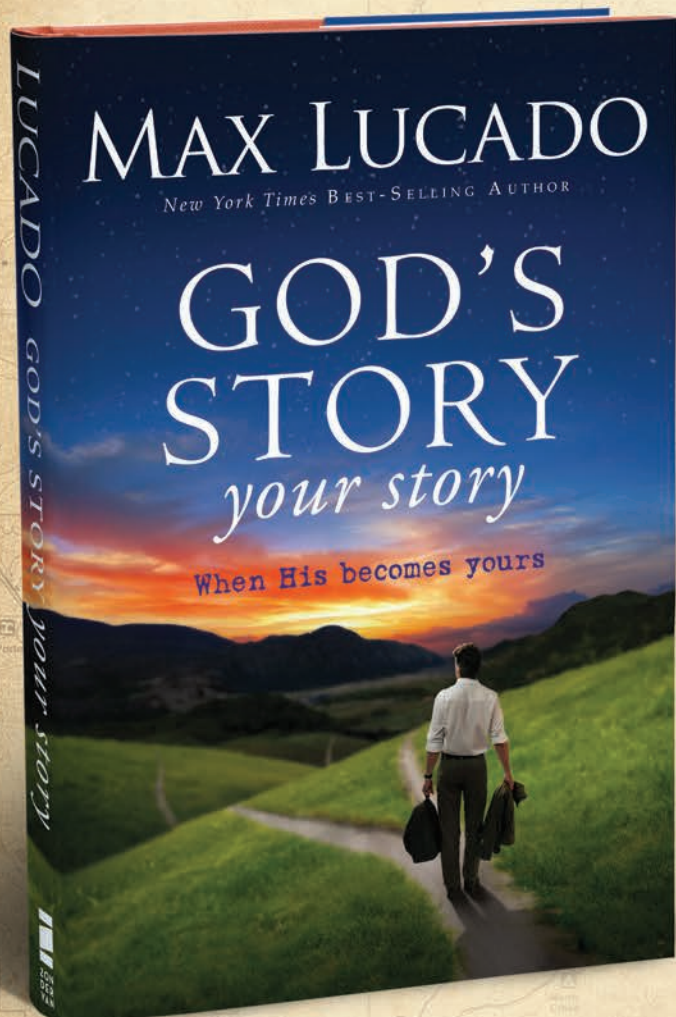
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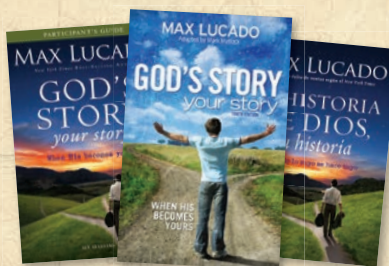
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