

Christianity Today

NOVEMBER 2011

City Lights

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no longer just want
Portland fixed—they
want it to flourish.**

**Introducing CT's series
on cities.**



FALSE INTIMACY WITH GOD 34
SEXY ABSTINENCE 38
ARCHAEOLOGY'S REBEL 48



After completing an M.Div. at Gordon-Conwell, Sam Ferguson spent a year studying at the University of Cambridge and is now serving at the Falls Church in Virginia.

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Sam Ferguson, M.Div. '10

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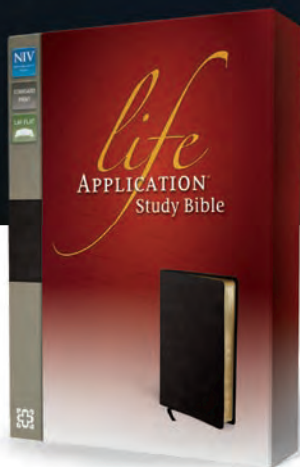
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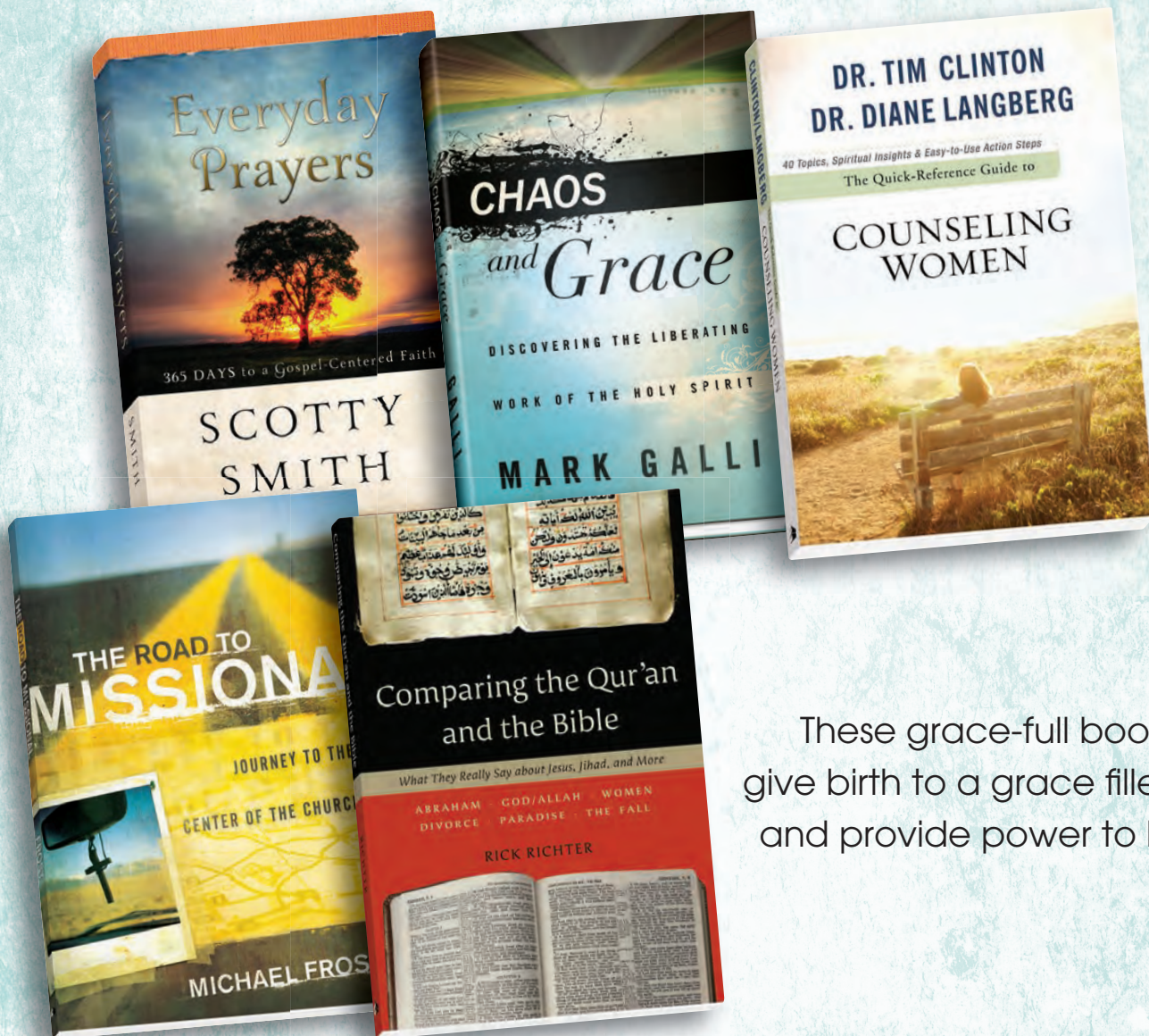
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You're Grounded

Location, Location, Location" reads the headline on our lead book review, page 67. The subject matter is a theology of place—the idea that only within a “matrix of particular loves and loyalties can we encounter and follow the risen Christ.” Without contemplating the details of whom we love and live next to, we cannot know how to love our neighbors as ourselves.

In this issue, we begin a series of reports on specific Christians who have examined the particular strengths and needs of the cities where they live and have shaped the form of their service to match. Be sure to check out Andy Crouch's “A New Kind of Urban Ministry” (page 22) and Katelyn Beaty's “Portland's Quiet Abolitionists” (page 26), as well as her brief profiles of other admirable activists (page 32).

These articles introduce a new *Christianity Today* project called *This Is Our City*. Nathan Clarke's video reporting and Christy Tennant's blogging join these articles online (ThisIsOurCity.org) to create a robust account of Christian love grounded in a spirituality of place.

This issue's lead book review articulated a theology of place without anyone having to travel anywhere. But to give that theology a solid form, writers, video teams, editors, and photographers all had to fly multiple times at costs well beyond our normal budget.

This Is Our City is a prime example of how we want to use donors' funds: not simply for ongoing operations (thanks to loyal subscribers and advertisers, we hope to continue our financial health), but to widen our horizons and deepen our coverage in crucial areas. Special thanks to the Henry Crofton Clarke Memorial Foundation for a generous gift to help us get started on *This Is Our City*.

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David Neff, Editor in Chief

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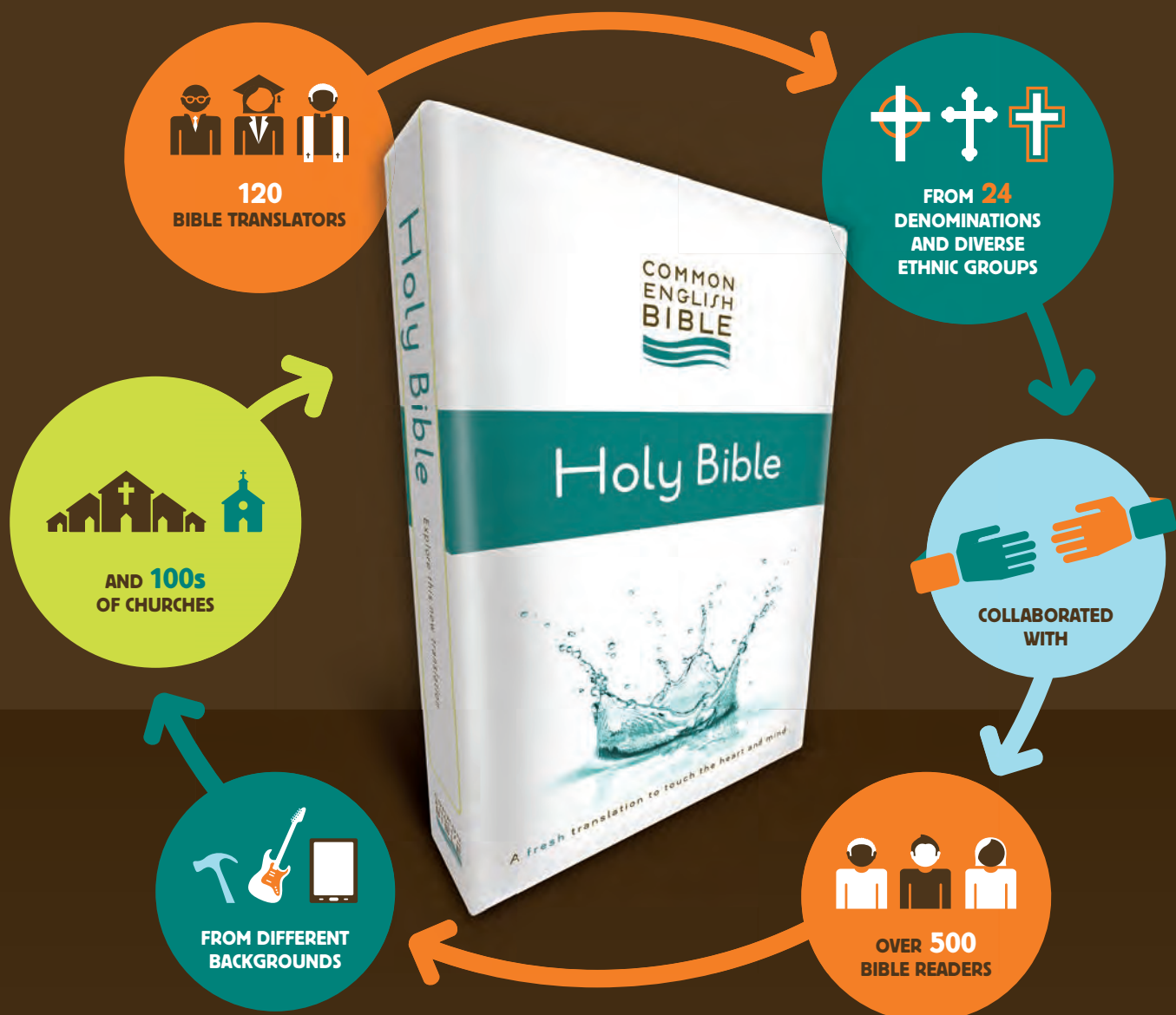
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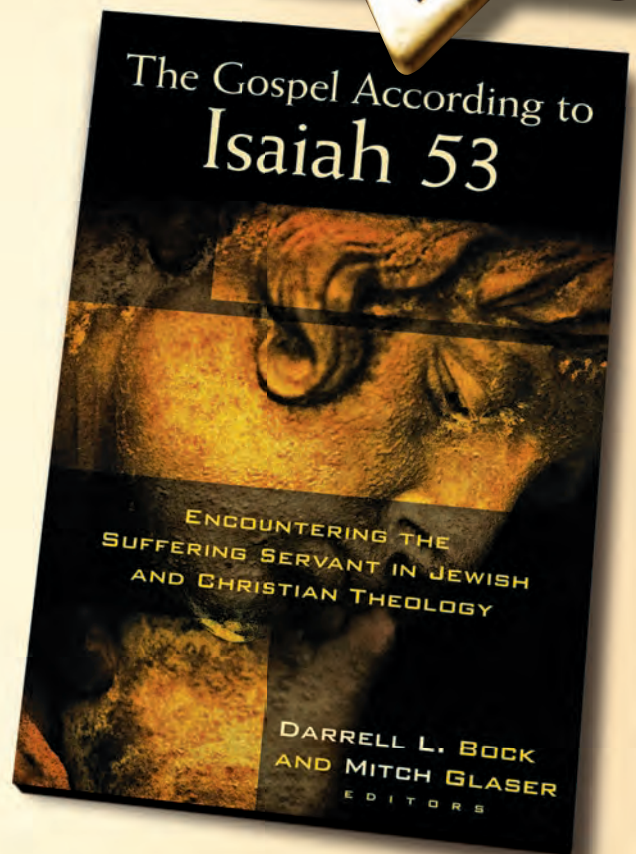


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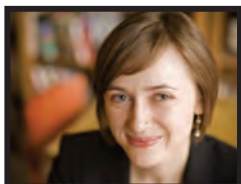
The woman behind the CT women's blog.

I was visiting with friends a couple months ago when the husband asked, "Who's in charge of Her.meneutics?" His wife chimed in: "It's great." The husband added, "We read it every day. Very thoughtful."

The husband's comment surprised me, because Her.meneutics is the *Christianity Today* blog for women, as the tagline reads (blog.christianitytoday.com/women). His comment was another sign that it is drawing more readers, female and male, every month, and one reason it's doing so is associate editor Katelyn Beaty.

The California-North Carolina-Virginia and finally Dayton, Ohio, native (the moves were driven by her father's service in the Marines) came to the magazine in August 2007 to become our copy editor. She was pretty much fresh out of Calvin College at the time. She says her first impression of the hallway was that it was "home to men who had strong opinions and liked to voice them frequently and loudly." Well, yes. But one reason we thought she'd fit well at CT is that she is more than capable of holding her own in such an opinionated setting.

Katelyn's natural editorial instincts prompted us to expand her horizons. The first was starting the women's blog, whose early names included Miss.iology and A Dame Good Blog. Katelyn finally came up with the current title, thank goodness. The blog is edited with help from online editor Sarah Pulliam Bailey, and is written by and for women, not as a platform for women's causes, as such, but whatever interests women—which includes a lot, of course, that interests



Katelyn Beaty

men. The blog now attracts about 3,000 unique pageviews daily and hosts 15 regular writers. Some of them are politically left-of-center, others are firmly conservative. While all the writers agree that women should take leadership in church and society, not all are committed to women's ordination. As Katelyn says, the blog "is distinctly evangelical—committed to scriptural

authority, personal and cultural regeneration, and actively engaged in the world." The blog's steady growth suggests that Katelyn is a dame good blog manager.

This year we added another item to Katelyn's portfolio: the This Is Our City project, debuting on page 22, for which she is the editorial director. This puts her peripatetic history to work as she travels with a team of people across the country, giving her "a front row seat to witness God's movement in American cities." She continues, "Sitting at a desk all day can numb editors to the fact that many news blips and articles originate with tangible and costly decisions to serve Christ."

Outside work, Katelyn plays piano at Taize services at her church (St. Barnabas Episcopal), serves on the church board, and occasionally teaches adult education. Add to that bird-watching and experiments in karaoke and cooking, and it's a wonder she has time to copy edit or write anything. We're glad she does.

Next month: Michael Horton discusses why we can really know what God is like, Tim Stafford interviews Craig Keener on miracles today, and Katelyn Beaty profiles the largest Vineyard church in the world (in Columbus, Ohio).

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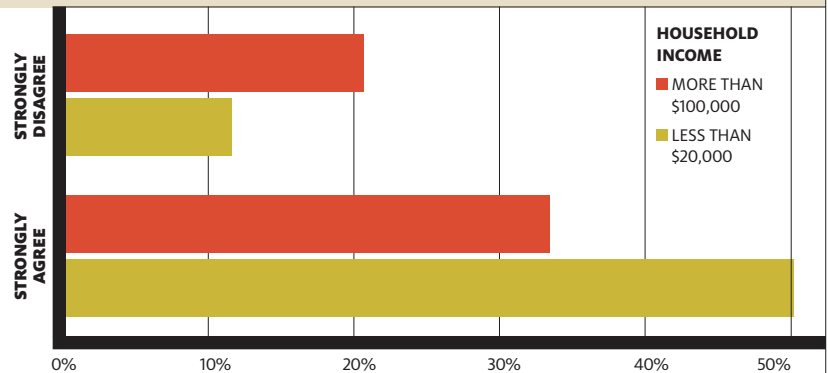
BRIEFING

REPORTING & DISPATCHES
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WORLDWIDE

SPOTLIGHT: Rich God, Poor God

➔ **IT IS HARD FOR A RICH MAN** to enter the kingdom of heaven," Jesus said. But is it rare for wealthy people to be religious? Recent studies have shown that conservative Protestants in America tend to be poorer (with a median net worth of \$26,200, half the national average) while regular church attenders tend to be wealthier. Now studies are examining religious attitudes and economic inequality. One Baylor University study found that belief in an engaged, personal God varies strongly by income: those who believe God has a plan for them are far more likely to believe that "anything is possible for those who work hard" and to oppose government programs that help the poor.

Participants who agreed with the statement, "I know God has a plan for me," by annual household income:



Researchers Respond

ON ECONOMIC RELIGION:

"For many Americans, the invisible hand of Adam Smith has become God's hand."

— Paul Froese, Baylor University

ON POLITICAL RHETORIC:

"Political candidates can promote economic conservatism and a lack of government regulation merely by referring to an engaged God. It works because many rank-and-file voters believe that a lack of government regulation and lower taxes are part of God's plan."

— Froese

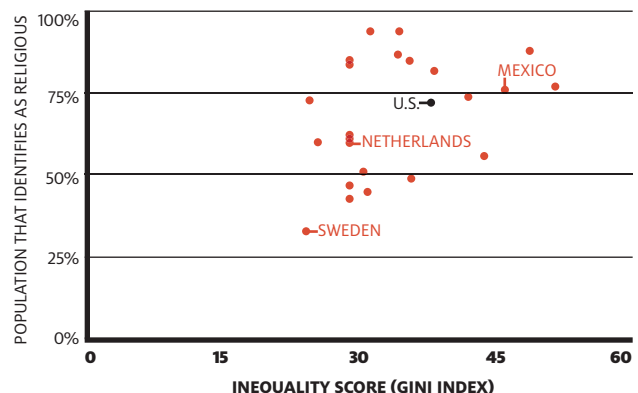
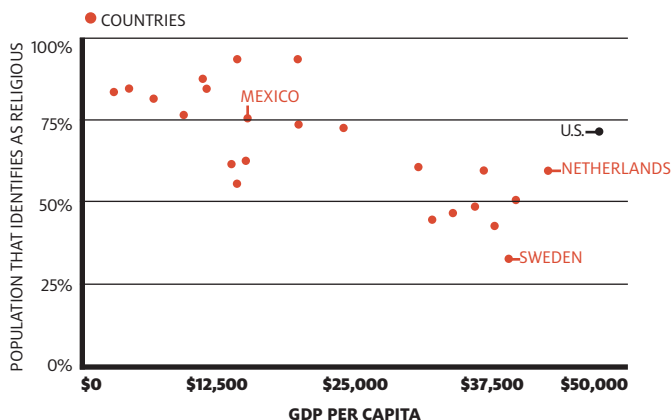
DO THE RICH USE RELIGION TO KEEP THE POOR DOWN?

"That's one interpretation. But religions that thrive in unequal societies are likely ones that appeal to the wealthy—more likely to seek out the rich young ruler, not the widow with only a few copper coins."

— Tobin Grant, Southern Illinois University

Is Economic Inequality Good for Religion?

Separate research, published in *Social Science Quarterly*, suggested that America is no religious outlier after all. While it's exceptional among developed nations, others don't have as wide a gap between rich and poor. Among nations with similar levels of inequality, such as Bulgaria or Cameroon, the United States is very average. Analyzing historical data, Southern Illinois University researchers argue that economic inequality leads to religiosity rather than the other way around.





2



8



10

GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Commission backs off defense of Christians

UNITED KINGDOM The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) announced this summer that British judges were failing to protect the freedoms of Christian employees. But it has pulled back from supporting current religious discrimination cases. The EHRC initially planned to argue on behalf of four Christians pressured to quit their jobs because of their beliefs or because they wore religious symbols on the job. They are appealing their cases to the European Court of Human Rights. The EHRC had said the court should adopt a principle of reasonable accommodation of religious beliefs, but later announced it would gather public input to determine what accommodations to recommend.

it added an activities center with a bookstore, café, fitness center, and gym in 2004. A property assessor in 2007 said the new areas operate like other businesses and could not be exempt from property taxes. Church leaders argue that the new facilities are for ministry. In 2009, a judge ruled that the gym should be taxed at 50 percent. The church's lawyer is arguing for complete exemption, saying the church's extensions should be treated like college bookstores and hospital gift shops, which do not pay property tax.

4 Churches compensated for seized properties

CZECH REPUBLIC After 20 years of negotiations, the Czech government agreed to return some Communist-seized property to churches, reimburse them for the rest, pay church upkeep fees for a time, and phase out state funding of clergy salaries. The state will give back 56 percent of seized property and reimburse churches \$3.49 billion over 30 years for the remainder. Eighty percent of funds and property will go to the Catholic Church; the rest will go to Protestant and Orthodox churches and Jewish synagogues.

2 Pro-life group scrutinized over deficit

A high-profile Catholic pro-life group is under scrutiny after an audit revealed a \$1.4 million deficit in last year's budget. Bishop Patrick Zurek of Amarillo, Texas, said he suspended director Frank Pavone over concerns about how Priests for Life was spending the \$10 million it received in donations in 2010. Pavone has appealed to the Vatican and is seeking a new diocese in which to base his activism. In spite of a decline in 2010 donations, the organization loaned \$879,000 to a related ministry, Gospel of Life Ministries, which recently had its tax-exempt status revoked by the IRS after failing to file tax forms for three years.

3 Church fights tax bill

A Nashville megachurch is fighting a \$425,000 property tax bill assessed after

5 Court: Church not liable for damages

Idlewild Baptist Church no longer has to pay \$4.75 million in damages to a man who claimed permanent injury resulting from a youth group's ski trip in 2003. Hillsborough County Circuit judge James Arnold vacated a prior decision against the 11,000-member Florida megachurch that awarded sizable damages to the man, and ordered a retrial because of jury conflict.

6 Christian minorities gain, lose representation

PAKISTAN For the first time, each of the Muslim nation's four provinces will get one senate seat for a religious minority. However, a concurrent government move hurts religious minorities: assassinated minister for minorities Shahbaz Bhatti's position was downgraded in rank and responsibilities. The All-Pakistani Christian League, a new Christian political party, formed in late July to mixed enthusiasm, as critics remembered previous failed attempts at forming a viable Christian party.

7 NYC, SF suspicious of pro-life advertising

San Francisco officials are proposing a bill to make it illegal for city crisis-pregnancy centers to advertise services falsely. And the city attorney asked local center First Resort to state clearly in its ads that the organization does not perform or refer abortion services. A federal judge recently barred a similar New York City ordinance, saying the ordinance was overly broad.

8 Court: City can't refuse church permit

City officials cannot impose zoning restrictions on religious organizations that do not apply to others, the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled. Centro Familiar Cristiano Buenas Nuevas had requested a permit to open a church in an old department store in downtown Yuma, Arizona. The city denied the request, saying it needed to revitalize the historic district for restaurants and other entertainments that would require liquor licenses. But state law forbids selling liquor in a 300-foot radius around a house of worship. The court stipulated that in such an entertainment area, city officials could overrule the liquor restriction.

GO FIGURE Politics

86%

Protestant pastors who say the government should not revoke a church's tax exemption if a pastor endorses political candidates.

84%

Protestant pastors who believe that pastors should not endorse political candidates.

LifeWay Research

compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

"It is challenging in many parts of the country to lead [new] churches to want to be part of a convention with such a regional name."

Bryant Wright, Southern Baptist Convention president, on forming a task force to consider changing the 116-year-old denomination's moniker.

Baptist Press

"God could have prevented that tsunami and the destruction, but he didn't. . . . And one of the background pieces of information is Japan is under control of the sun goddess."

C. Peter Wagner, on his argument that Japan's woes are the result of an emperor of Japan having sex with a sun goddess. Wagner's views have come under scrutiny because of his association with presidential candidate Rick Perry.

Fresh Air

"[To] include a woman candidate in the process . . . treating her as a top candidate even if she isn't actually one of the top candidates."

Jeff Langford, associate coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Missouri, explaining the group's offer to pay churches' interview, travel, and other expenses if they consider hiring a woman as senior pastor.

Associated Baptist Press

"They said they're going to cite us \$500 for every meeting. Okay, cite us."

Chuck Fromm, former president of Maranatha! Music and editor of *Worship Leader* magazine, on being fined by the City of San Juan Capistrano, California, for hosting Bible studies and other gatherings in his home without a permit.

Christianity Today Online



11

11 Debate over cash crops

ZIMBABWE Church leaders are debating the ethics of raising lucrative tobacco crops. One farmer tithed USD \$600,000 from his \$6 million crop, and national church leaders wondered aloud whether to accept the gift. Some denominations, such as the Seventh-day Adventists, do not allow members to raise tobacco; others are conflicted. The national director for evangelism of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, Josias Mudenda, said he would not encourage tobacco growing because of the health risks associated with smoking.

10 Postal service cutbacks may hurt nonprofits

The U.S. Postal Service could hike mailing costs for nonprofits if a proposed bill by Congressman Darrell Issa (R-CA) passes. The bill would help cut costs and restructure management. Over six years, it would reduce the 40 percent discount nonprofits currently receive to 10 percent. Many nonprofits use the discount to solicit donations through direct mail, which accounted for 78 percent of the \$300 billion donated in 2009.

11 Crosses annoy neighbors

SOUTH KOREA Some church neighbors complain that the light from tens of thousands of red neon crosses topping churches across the country is a nuisance, but the government's hands are tied. Church leaders say the crosses, which often stay lit until midnight, are a sign of Christian hope ("like a . . . lighthouse for passing ships in the dark," said one). Neighbors who live near such a cross say the glaring light makes it difficult to sleep. New legislation limits light pollution by mandating an 11 P.M. shutoff for outdoor lights, but the government excluded religious signs from regulation in 2008.

13

12 Ex-gang members seek permission to evangelize

Four alleged members of the Latin Kings in Elgin, Illinois, are asking to be removed from a lawsuit barring gang members from meeting in public. The four men say they are now Christians who have left the gang or were never members. They also want to talk with current Latin Kings about Christianity in order to lead them out of the gang. The Kane County state's attorney office filed suit against 81 alleged Latin Kings in September, attempting to weaken the group.

13 Chaplain suit gains numbers

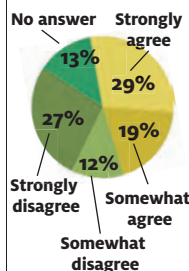
A 12-year-old court case alleging discrimination against 65 U.S. Navy chaplains may finally move forward, thanks to new statistics. It alleges that evangelical Navy chaplains are denied promotions because of their denomination. The statistics indicate that under the eight chiefs of chaplains from 1981 to 2001, 83 percent of candidates who shared the chief's denomination were promoted to commander, compared with only 73 percent of those from other denominations.

14 Church holes up for prayer vigil

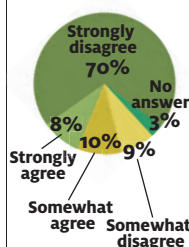
CUBA A pastor and 60 worshippers holed up in a church for more than three weeks in September, sparking nationwide concern that the group may be a doomsday cult. The church said it was on a spiritual retreat and would continue the prayer vigil to "liberate Cuba from sins" until God told them to stop. Medical officials checked the health of several minors and pregnant women in the church and reported that all were safe and healthy. But neighbors and family members remained nervous. National Assemblies of God leaders removed pastor Braulio Herrera last year, but he has refused to give up the church.

GO FIGURE Evolution

Self-identified evangelical pastors on whether the earth is 6,000 years old:



Self-identified evangelical pastors on whether God used evolution to create people:



LifeWay Research



THEOLOGY

A Grave Debate

Apologist's interpretation of Matthew 27 creates theological war of words. By Bobby Ross Jr.

A fiery debate has erupted over a leading Southern Baptist apologist's questioning of Matthew 27. The question: whether Matthew's reference to many saints rising from their graves after Jesus' resurrection might not be literal history.

The theological war of words, spurred by high-profile open letters and retorts on the Internet, has raised questions about the meaning of biblical inerrancy. It has also led to the departure of Michael Licona as apologetics coordinator for the North American Mission Board.

At issue is a passage of Licona's 700-page *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*, published in 2010 by InterVarsity Press.

"Based on my reading of the Greco-Roman, Jewish, and biblical literature, I proposed that the raised saints are best interpreted as Matthew's use of an apocalyptic symbol communicating that the Son of God had just died," said Licona, research

professor of New Testament at Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina.

In a series of open letters posted online, Norman Geisler, distinguished professor of apologetics at Veritas Evangelical Seminary in Murrieta, California, objected to Licona's characterizing the passage as a "strange little text." Geisler called for Licona to recant his interpretation, labeling it "unorthodox, non-evangelical, and a dangerous precedent for the rest of evangelicalism."

In a 2,800-word blog post, Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, praised Licona's book as "virtually unprecedented in terms of evangelical scholarship." Yet he devoted most of the post to criticizing Licona's "shocking and disastrous argument" concerning the bodily resurrection of the saints.

Licona replied to Geisler that additional research has led him to

A Symbolic Defeat: Southern Baptist apologist Michael Licona's recent book on Jesus' resurrection received rave reviews. But one passage sparked an inerrancy debate that cost him his job.

re-examine his position. "At present I am just as inclined to understand the narrative . . . as a report of a factual (i.e., literal) event as I am to view it as an apocalyptic symbol," Licona wrote.

In the wake of the controversy, a number of leading evangelical scholars came to Licona's defense—some publicly, others privately.

"I know a good number of evangelical seminary professors who have privately expressed support for Mike Licona but cannot do so publicly for fear of punitive measures," said Paul Copan, an apologist and president of the Evangelical Philosophical Society.

Craig Blomberg, a New Testament professor at Denver Seminary, complained of "the tragedy of 'witch hunts' of this nature." He accused Licona's critics of "going after fellow inerrantists with whom they disagree and making life miserable for them for a long time in ways that are unnecessary, inappropriate, and counterproductive to the important issues of the kingdom."

Bill Warren, director of the Center for New Testament Textual Studies at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, said Licona has earned more leeway than some in the evangelical academic community are affording him.

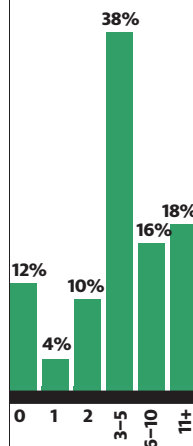
"What should be kept in mind," Warren said, "is that a person who has been well-received, written prolifically in multiple contexts, and taken firm stands in the apologetic arena in defense of orthodoxy surely should not be tossed aside based on his interpretation of one passage in a massive volume."

Daniel B. Wallace, New Testament professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, said he disagrees with Licona's interpretation but considers the issue hermeneutical, not a challenge to biblical inerrancy.

"If we view our own interpretation to be just as inerrant as the Scriptures," he said, "this could ironically elevate tradition and erode biblical authority."

GO FIGURE Ministry

Protestant pastors on how many close friends (not in their immediate family) they have within their church:



LifeWay Research

ARCHAEOLOGY TURKEY

Major Finds in Asia Minor

But excavations are running into roadblocks.
By Gordon Govier

A surge of archaeology projects in Turkey is uncovering more of the Christian legacy of Paul and other early evangelists. But archaeologists from the United States and other countries face growing barriers put up by Turkish authorities.

Turkish archaeologist Mehmet Ozhanli of Süleyman Demirel University recently reported the discovery of a fourth-century church in the ruins of Antioch of Pisidia. The city was the scene of a pivotal moment in the history of the early church. Here Paul chose to extend his missionary message of salvation to Gentiles, and also delivered his longest recorded sermon (Acts 13:16–41).

The ancient church, the fifth uncovered in the area, represents one of the first communities of Gentile Christians.

“That number of churches in one city is not unique,” said Regent University professor Mark Wilson, who runs the Asia Minor Research Center in Antalya. “Laodicea had as many, if not more.”

But Ozhanli’s find does represent a surge in biblical discoveries in Turkey; no surprise, given that two-thirds of the New Testament was written either in Turkey or to churches or people in Turkey, said Wilson. Italian archaeologist Francesco D’Andria has just reported the discovery of the tomb of Philip, one of the original 12 apostles, in Hierapolis in southwestern Turkey.

Wilson said that in 1990, the total number of excavations was 38. Last year more than 200 excavations took place, according to Turkish newspaper *Hurriyet*.

However, *Hurriyet* reports, the

Turkish Culture and Tourism Ministry has begun cancelling excavation permits for some foreign archaeologists and turning the permits over to Turkish archaeologists. Ministry head Ertuğrul Günay said many foreigners simply weren’t in the country enough. “If they don’t work on it, they should hand it over.”

“The government’s goal is to have universities in each of Turkey’s provinces, and an archaeology department in each of these universities,” said Wilson. This means the number of archaeologists is expanding rapidly. Foreign archaeologists now run less than 25 percent of Turkey’s 200 current digs.

American archaeologist Andy Bennett put together a team in 2008 to work with the Pamukkale University excavations at Laodicea. After a lengthy application process working with a consulting firm hired by the university, the team failed to get the final approval needed from Turkish authorities.

Colossae, where a first-century community of believers received one of Paul’s letters, is one of three biblical sites that remain unexcavated in Turkey. Alan Cadwallader of Australian Catholic University has his eyes on Colossae, but excavation approval from Turkish authorities has been slow in coming.

None of the estimated dozen ongoing American excavations in Turkey—including Aphrodisias, Gordion and Sardis—have been cancelled so far, said Timothy Harrison, a University of Toronto archaeologist who directs excavations at Tel Tayinat, which may be the Kalno mentioned in Isaiah 10:9.

Turkey’s increased attention to archaeology could reveal many new attractions that would bring increasing numbers of Christian pilgrims to the Muslim country. But red tape and the fact that archaeologists working in Turkey for many years are having their permits pulled is frustrating, said Wilson. “It’s a very disturbing trend.”



FINANCE

Easy Missionary Money

It’s easier to give, but worth less than ever.

By Ken Walker

Financial turmoil in global markets continues to play havoc with the value of the U.S. dollar, but technology continues to make the transfer of donor dollars to missionaries quicker and easier.

American missionary income in China has dropped 25 percent in recent years because of the dollar’s decline against the Chinese yuan, said a missionary leader who requested anonymity. “In 24 years of ministry, I have never seen things as tough as they are now.”

“It’s a complaint we hear almost every day,” says Bill Bray of Christian Aid Mission, which supports indigenous missionaries in 122 nations. “They need more money because of the exchange rate.”

Yet the continued global expansion of electronic banking means missionaries no longer have to wait for months while the check clears.

“When we served in Indonesia, we got paid once a quarter,” said Elmer Lorenz, chief operations officer for The Evangelical Alliance Mission, which supports more than 600 missionaries. “Getting our money was an arduous process. Today we pay everyone electronically.”

The United Methodist Church’s Global Ministries accelerated its electronic shift three years ago when it eliminated many regional financial positions. The Assemblies of God maintains a credit union that enables its missionaries to withdraw salary payments for less than the wire transfer fees at a commercial bank.

In addition, donors are more willing to make electronic payments. Orlando-based Pioneers, which supports nearly 1,000 missionaries,

[continued on 16]

PASSAGES



Died Robert P. Evans

Noted evangelist who founded Greater European Mission and co-founded Youth for Christ, on July 28 in Florida. He was 93.



Died
C. K. Barrett
Influential British commentator on the New Testament, on August 26. He was 94.



Retired
Jimmy Hester
Co-founder of the True Love Waits abstinence movement, from its publisher, LifeWay Christian Resources, on September 30.

Briefing [from 15]

today receives 45 percent of its donations electronically. Financial vice president Johnny Fowler has also seen a spike in giving by credit card, although he prefers electronic funds transfers because they are cheaper for Pioneers to process. "I've heard of people receiving \$100,000 gifts over the Internet by credit card," Fowler said. "It's amazing what people are comfortable with putting online." ☩

CHURCH LIFE

Trading Spaces

Suburban poor change the direction of ministry.

By Morgan Feddes

The longstanding pattern of suburban churches assisting inner-city ministries is starting to reverse.

"Historically, folks have driven into the inner city and done volunteer work, but now the poor are increasingly coming their direction," said Bob Lupton, president of Atlanta-based FCS Urban Ministries. "Suburban churches are looking to those with experience in urban ministry to help

them develop appropriate responses."

Gentrification is pushing more and more of America's poor from inner cities to the suburbs. Last year the number of poor in major-metro suburbs increased by 53 percent, but only by 23 percent in major-metro cities, according to the 2010 census. Suburbs now house one-third of the nation's poor.

"It's changing the landscape of those suburban communities," said Noel Castellanos, CEO of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA). "Their neighborhoods are now becoming impacted by poverty in a way that they never were before."

One challenge is suburbs often lack the social services that facilitate low-income life in cities, said Wayne Gordon, lead pastor of Lawn-dale Community Church, whose neighborhood was once ranked the nation's 15th poorest. "We've got mass transportation," he said. "[But] if you don't have a car and you live in Ford Heights [a poor suburb], you are really going to struggle."

Another challenge is not repeating the same mistakes urban ministries have learned to avoid. "Unfortunately, many suburban churches who become engaged with the needy are creating one-way charity programs

DISCUSSION STARTER Church Life

November 27 marks the first Sunday of Advent and the beginning of the Christian year. Liturgical seasons, especially Advent, are becoming more popular in some traditions that have historically neglected them.

that produce dependency," said Lupton. "Programs that experienced urban ministries have abandoned as more hurtful than helpful."

Increasingly, suburban ministries are joining city-focused organizations such as the CCDA for help. One example is Mosaic, a Chicago church network whose suburban DuPage County experienced a 149 percent increase in its poor population from 1990 to 2008.

One of Mosaic's biggest challenges is changing local church perceptions of poverty. Despite the influx of poor, the county is still one of Illinois's most affluent.

"No longer do you actually have to go into the city to do missions, or even overseas, but right here locally within your own backyard," said Jonathan Kindberg, Mosaic's network facilitator. "[Churches] still operate under the mindset that it's a wealthy area, and so there's not really much need to work with the poor because there aren't any poor."

"What we were doing in Lawn-dale 35 years ago, we need people to do today [in the suburbs]," said Gordon. "It's going to be even harder because you don't have some of the same systems in place that we have in a big city." ☩

UNDER DISCUSSION *Topics in the current debate.*

compiled by Ruth Moon

Do you follow the liturgical calendar? Why or why not?

YES

"It serves as a primer on how to cover all the bases in a year. I see it like your doctor saying, 'Here are the things you need to be healthy: eating, diet, exercise, and rest.' We need to have some structure through each part of the year."

STEVEN MERIWETHER
pastor, Immanuel Baptist Church

"It roots us in ancient Christian tradition while at the same time being relevant to the 21st century. Following the liturgical calendar connects us to the larger body of Christ and deepens our spiritual practices as we remember important aspects of the faith."

WINFIELD BEVINS
pastor, Church of the Outer Banks (Acts 29 Network)

"A church's program of preaching and teaching needs to have a 'prophetic' angle, with the leadership discerning which topics and sections of Scripture are most needed at particular times. Close observance of a liturgical pattern does not allow room for that."

TIM WARD
rector, Holy Trinity Hinckley (Church of England)

"Every Lord's Day we gather as a people to celebrate the work of our risen Lord. Because Jesus came in the flesh, died in our place, and rose from the grave, every Sunday is like Easter and Christmas. Every Sunday I hope the storyline of our service is the Good News of Jesus Christ."

TRAVIS CARDWELL
pastor, Baptist Church of the Redeemer

"I've been around the church a long time and never heard the word used. The liturgical calendar is not at the forefront of what we're trying to accomplish. I've never heard a person say anything negative about it; it's just not mentioned."

PAUL HELBIG
teaching pastor, Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church

"If I saw instruction in the New Testament that Christians should observe celebrations at certain times, or thought it reflected a pattern of the early Christians doing so, I would adopt it. The only calendrical pattern I see is the weekly celebration of the Lord's Day."

JIM HAMILTON
pastor, Kenwood Baptist Church

NO



Parent Power: Virginia Walden Ford takes the lead at a school choice rally in Washington, D.C., which has one of the highest school dropout rates in the nation.

POLITICS

The Year of School Choice

Forty-one states introduce or pass new programs. By Sheryl Blunt in Washington, D.C.

Since launching in 2004, Washington, D.C.'s voucher program has helped send over 3,200 disadvantaged D.C. students to private school. The idea is simple enough: Parents receive a sum of taxpayer money to use to send their children to a better school, public or private. But opposition centered on the use of federal funds for religious education crystallized in 2009, when opponents convinced lawmakers and the White House to cut funding.

Among those who responded were Virginia Walden Ford, the founder of D.C. Parents for School Choice, and Kevin Chavous,

a board member of the Black Alliance for Educational Options, a network of education activists. The groups ran ads, sponsored rallies, mobilized parents, and even staged a civil disobedience protest in front of the Department of Education building.

"Fighting for this under a president for whom most of our families voted has been really hard. They believed in him, and he didn't support the program," said Ford. "It was devastating." The battle in D.C. is a microcosm of one raging across the country.

SPECTACULAR GAINS

Ford said that school reform has always felt like a calling, thanks to her family's history.

Growing up in Little Rock, Arkansas, Ford's parents were prominent public school educators at the height of the civil rights movement. They attended White Memorial United Methodist Church, where Ford was president of the Methodist Youth Fellowship. The family's efforts to get Ford and other black children into desegregated public schools incited hate from the KKK, who threw rocks at the Fords' windows and planted a burning cross in their yard.

Her son's experience in public school has also fueled her fight. "Drug dealers were courting him," said Ford, until a neighbor offered to pay his tuition to any private school. They selected Archbishop

Carroll, a top Catholic high school in north-east D.C. "It was like a miracle," she said. "It saved his life. That's why I have to fight."

Ford has been a vocal champion of the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, the first federally funded school voucher program. It allows students to leave some of the nation's lowest-performing public schools and attend private schools using

Parental Choice Program, the nation's longest-running voucher program. The state established a similar program in the neighboring city of Racine.

Earlier this year, Indiana implemented a progressive education-reform plan that includes a voucher program that will allow more than 50 percent of low- and middle-income students to attend private or

'Public schools are packed with people who want to serve kids, but they're in an institutional context that doesn't empower that. I see school choice as the best thing that could happen to public schools.'

~ Greg Forster, the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice

federally funded tuition vouchers.

Ford's vision for school choice has gained traction across the country. According to the Heritage Foundation, 41 states, including the District of Columbia, have introduced or passed school-choice legislation in 2011. Eight states established new educational programs, while eleven others augmented or expanded existing programs.

Such reforms are largely due to Republican 2010 election gains. Governors and GOP-majority state legislatures have enacted education plans aimed at injecting greater choice, reform, and competition into public education.

New coalitions have broken down political boundaries and drawn activists to a common goal. "It's like nothing I've seen in my lifetime," said Clint Bolick, a lawyer with the Arizona-based Goldwater Institute and a defender of many high-profile school voucher programs. "You primarily have Republicans joining forces with low-income communities, faith-based communities, [and] a fair number of liberal activists including black mayors and legislators."

The result, Bolick said, has been "almost constant momentum over the past decade that culminated with spectacular gains this year."

This September, Wisconsin lifted restrictions on the number of students who can participate in Milwaukee's

religious schools. The state also has a new tax-deduction program for families who are already in private schools or are home-schooling, and has relaxed restrictions on charter schools.

Ohio dramatically expanded its Edchoice Scholarship Program, increased its cap and pool size of eligible students, and established a new program for special-needs students.

Georgia, Oklahoma, Iowa, and Florida are among the states that have new or enhanced tax-credit scholarship programs. In addition to its New Orleans-based school voucher program, Louisiana now offers greater state income-tax breaks for private school tuition. In North Carolina, parents of children with special needs can now claim a tax credit for private-school tuition expenses (up to \$6,000).

Arizona has the nation's first educational savings account program for special-needs children. The state deposits 90 percent of the per-pupil educational funding into a savings account that parents can use for a broad range of expenses. (The program is now being challenged in court.)

This spring, the U.S. Supreme Court tossed out a legal challenge to an Arizona program in which taxpayers gain tax credits for donations to local nonprofit scholarship funds. In 2009, the program provided an average of \$1,889 in private-school tuition scholarships to 27,500 students.

A CONTESTED STRUGGLE

These gains, often parent-led, have not gone unchallenged. In several states, teachers' unions and church-state watchdogs are contesting the programs.

The Indiana State Teachers Association has sued over the state's new voucher program, currently funding nearly 3,800 students. Students use vouchers worth up to \$7,930 to attend one of the 250 participating private schools, all but six of which are religious. The union has argued that the program violates the state's constitution and will siphon off funds from public schools.

In Florida, a teachers' union has challenged a Republican-led ballot proposal to repeal the state's Blaine Amendment, which bans the public funding of churches and religious organizations. The union says the effort is "a shady way of opening the door for school vouchers for all." Proponents counter by saying that lifting the ban would prevent religiously affiliated schools from being discriminated against.

In Colorado, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State and the American Civil Liberties Union successfully sought an injunction blocking Douglas County's new Choice Scholarship pilot voucher program. Some 14 of the 19 private schools approved to participate are religious.

Attorney Bolick is part of the legal team that successfully defended Cleveland's voucher program before the Supreme Court in a landmark 2002 case. He said that even in states with Blaine amendments, where vouchers have been struck down, school-choice supporters still have many options.

"We now have four arrows in our quiver: private-school vouchers, tax credits, education savings accounts, and charter schools," said Bolick.

The movement has grown among African American Democrats, many of whom believe school choice is the new civil rights struggle. "School choice has become a bipartisan principle," said Greg Forster, senior fellow at the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, based in Indianapolis.

The Black Ministers' Council of New Jersey, which represents more than 600

African American churches, is engaged in a drawn-out battle to pass a tax-credit scholarship program. Derrell Bradford, executive director of Better Education for New Jersey Kids, said there is “very visible outrage among black leadership, particularly clergy” over efforts within the Democratic Party to block educational choice.

In Florida, black churches and pastors are also actively backing school choice programs, while the John McKay Scholarship for Students with Disabilities Program provides private-school tuition vouchers to 20,000 students with special needs.

More than 34,000 low-income students benefit from the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, which gives tax credits to businesses that fund scholarships. Two-thirds of recipients are black or Hispanic. The program had received 33,000 new applications, and 9,000 students were on the waiting list.

“Through these two scholarships, it’s now possible for private schools in the low-income, African American, and Hispanic communities to become viable,” said

but positive stories.” At the voucher-backed private schools in Florida, “I have seen what I would call deliverance.”

CHOICE RESULTS DISPUTED

As with most public-policy issues, both sides in the school choice debate use research to bolster their case. Last March, the Friedman Foundation released a report summarizing ten empirical studies of school voucher programs. Nine found that vouchers “improve student outcomes” for all or some of the students. None reported a negative impact.

And last year, the Department of Education’s research institute found that participation in D.C.’s voucher program “raised a student’s probability of completing high school by 12 percentage points, from 70 percent to 82 percent, based on parent reports.”

Meanwhile, a report this summer from the pro-public education group Center on Education Policy found that long-term studies of publicly funded voucher programs have “generally found no clear

“The demand continues to grow,” said Witte. “Survey evidence in all of these cases, including Washington, D.C., shows satisfied parents, more satisfied than public school parents. So in those regards, there certainly is a positive aspect to it.”

REFORM AND TRANSFORM

Few school reformers seek to end public education altogether. Rather, many have committed to comprehensive change, including a role for school choice programs, in the short term at least.

Sajan George, founder of Matchbook Learning, has worked as a consultant for some of the nation’s largest school districts. “I’m not against vouchers,” said George, also an elder at Perimeter Church in Johns Creek, Georgia. “I am for anything that broadens the choices parents have for their children and breaks the monopoly of the local neighborhood poor-performing school.

“However, vouchers can never scale to meet the needs of all, most, or even a minor percentage of children. Eventually you run out of available seats at good private schools, and you’re back to trying to reform broken public schools.”

The Friedman Foundation’s Forster said, “School choice is the way to transform the incentives of the system so that public schools will have an institutional mission focused on serving parents and students.

“The public schools are packed with people who love kids and want to serve them, but they’re in an institutional context that doesn’t empower that. I see school choice as the best thing that could happen to public schools.”

Last April, Congress reauthorized the D.C. program for five more years, expanding it to impact more children. In June, voucher advocates celebrated the program’s renewal on Capitol Hill.

“This program opened doors for me,” said 19-year-old Ronald Holassie, a voucher recipient and Archbishop Carroll alum who attends a Florida university. Looking toward Ford, Holassie declared, “You have absolutely changed my life.”

Sheryl Blunt, a *Christianity Today* senior writer and 2009 Phillips Foundation fellow, is based in Washington, D.C.

‘We now have four arrows in our quiver: private-school vouchers, tax credits, education savings accounts, and charter schools.’

~ Clint Bolick, school-choice attorney

Doug Tuthill, a former teachers’ union president. He now heads Step Up for Students, the Tampa-based nonprofit that administers the tax credits. “We’ve seen an explosion of these schools that normally wouldn’t make it financially,” he said. “Increasingly, black churches and black community groups are able to create their own schools, and they’re sustainable.”

H. K. Matthews, a Florida pastor, is another champion of the state’s school choice programs. Former president of the Pensacola Council of Ministers, Matthews was jailed repeatedly in the 1960s for staging civil rights demonstrations. He said his desire is not to take monies away from public schools.

“We have to face reality,” said Matthews. “I’ve seen too many children who have come out of school choice and have nothing

advantage in academic achievement for students attending private schools with vouchers.”

Education historian Diane Ravitch has noted that “20 years after the initiation of vouchers in Milwaukee and a decade after the program’s expansion to include religious schools, there was no evidence of dramatic improvement for the neediest students or the public schools left behind.”

But others say such conclusions ignore important facts, such as voucher students’ increased graduation rates and high parental satisfaction. University of Wisconsin–Madison professor John Witte, an official evaluator of the Milwaukee voucher program, said that while there has not been “a great deal of difference in achievement based on test scores,” there are other positive outcomes.



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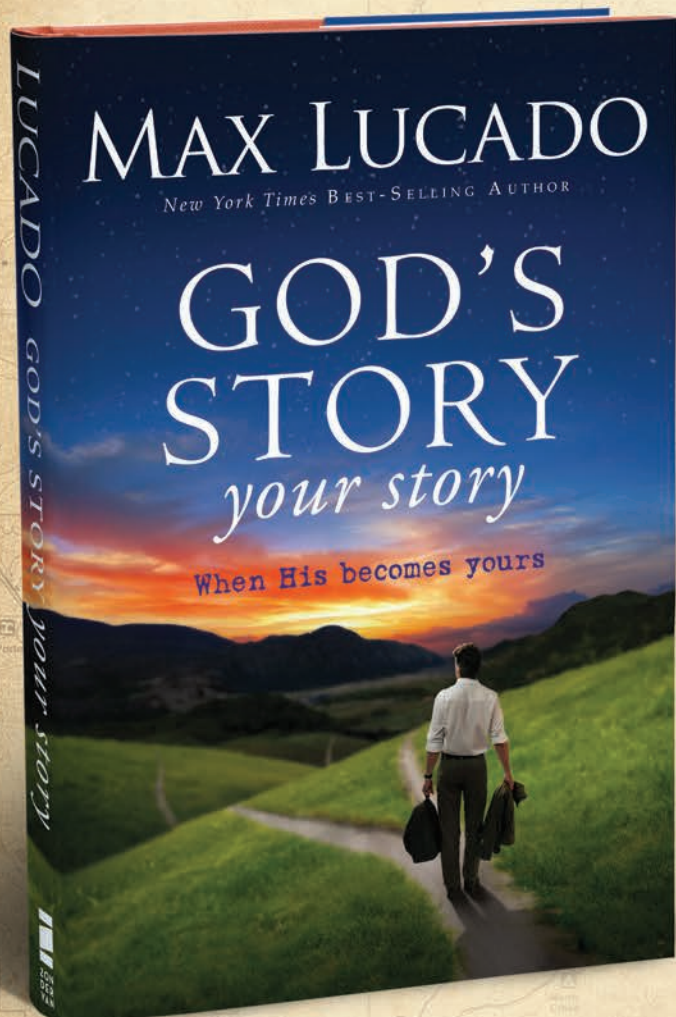
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A New Kind of Urban Ministry

Christians no longer want their communities fixed. They want them flourishing.

By Andy Crouch

I

IS, WITHOUT A DOUBT, the most surprising large-scale cultural shift in my lifetime.

Not that long ago, cities were places few people wanted to be. Across the northern United States, from Seattle to Pittsburgh, urban cores declined as industry and people decamped to sunnier climates. In the new South, the growth was in the greenfields of the suburbs, not the largely forgotten city centers. In the 1970s, you could drive down Atlanta's Peachtree Street and watch discarded newspapers float like tumbleweed past the storied Fox Theater.

Today those cities, and many more, are thriving in ways no one predicted a generation ago. Cities are the destination of choice for many young adults (at least, those who can find a job that will pay the outrageous rents that city-center landlords can demand) and the hub of revivals in food, architecture, and entrepreneurship.

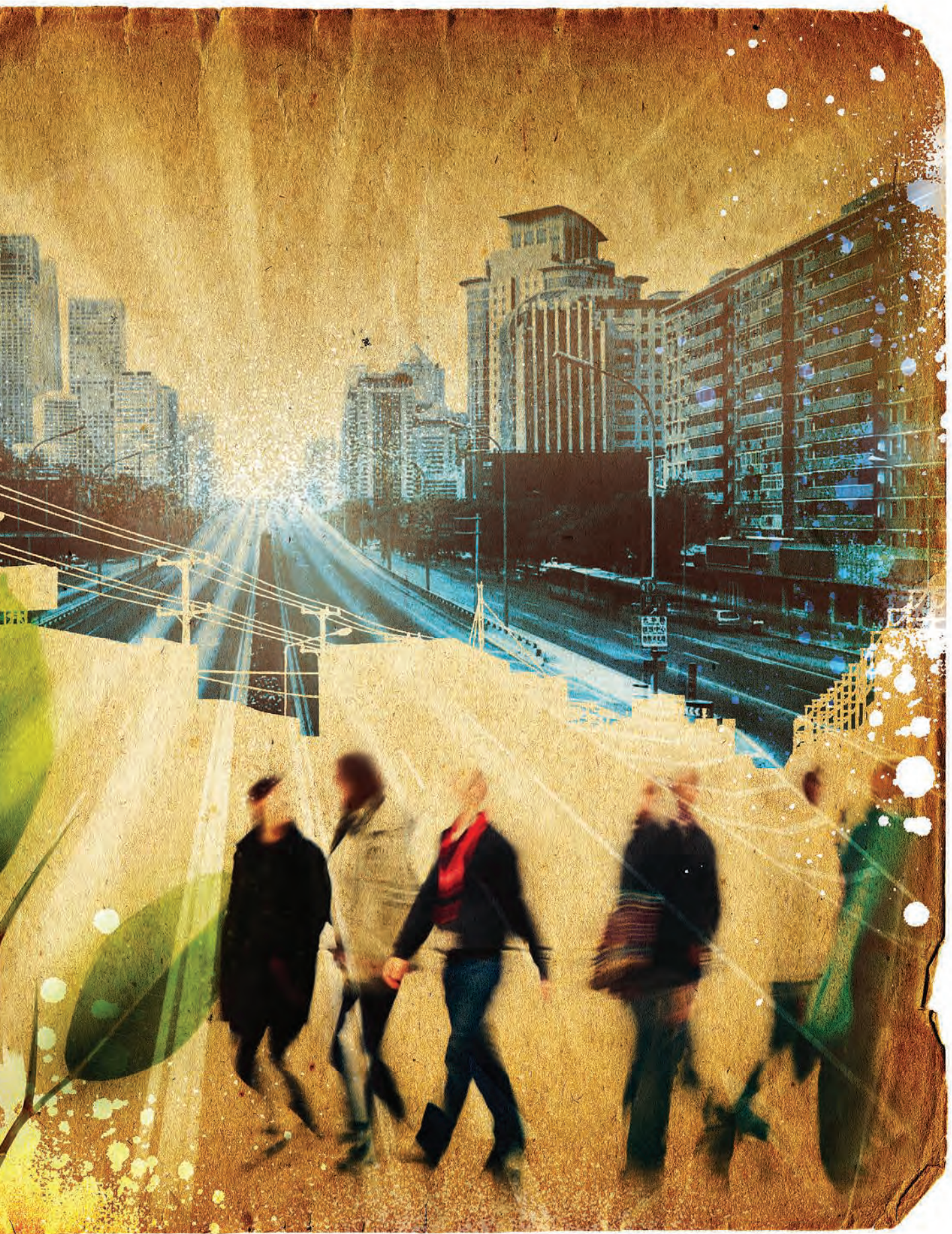
Indeed, many suburbs are now taking cues from the walkable, mixed-use economic and social fabric of cities woven before the automobile. As a teenager, I had to trek all the way from my quiet suburban town to Harvard Square to find a coffee shop. Now that experience is as ubiquitous as it is standardized. Most Americans still live in suburbs—true for all ethnic groups and most income groups too—but our markers of the good life are increasingly urban. This is just as well, because more and more of us live in places defined by the density and diversity that are the hallmark of a city.

Of course, there is a shadow side to these trends. First, not every city is thriving, and every American city still has dangerous and difficult sections. On the other hand, decline and danger are no longer hallmarks of cities—they have challenged countless suburbs and rural areas as well. Today the tumbleweed newspapers are more likely to blow past foreclosed homes in the Atlanta exurbs than the gleaming condos around the Fox Theater. Just as population and prosperity once associated with the suburbs have returned to the cities, so the challenges of the city have moved to the suburbs.

Second, thriving is in the eye of the beholder. When Jesus' disciples approached Jerusalem, one of them said to their teacher, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones!

DOUG FLEENER





What magnificent buildings!” (Mark 13:1). Jesus’ reply was searing: “Do you see all these great buildings? Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

Days earlier, at the sight of the Jerusalem skyline, Jesus had wept, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace!” (Luke 19:42). He understood that prosperity is different from peace—that rich and resonant Hebrew word *shalom* that is perhaps best translated “comprehensive flourishing.” And prosperity is very thin without posterity—a lasting legacy of flourishing. In an age where wealth can flow in and out of economies, and cities, with astonishing speed, our cities may be thriving only in the thinnest of senses.

But there is something profoundly right and hopeful about the rebirth of the American city. Cities, after all, concentrate more divine image-bearing per square inch than any other form of habitation. After the Fall, true, all image-bearing is accompanied by idol-making. But America’s renewed cities, and our culture’s renewed interest in what makes for thriving places, are an opportunity to recommit ourselves to the biblical mission that is meant to prepare us for the city whose builder and maker is God.

EXODUS, EXILE, AND EXPECTATION

The best news about Christians and the city? The church never left, even when the city was at its worst. Famously, in many struggling urban neighborhoods the only functioning institutions are churches and liquor stores. To be sure, a certain number of churches left with their members to the suburbs two generations ago, and no one seized the suburban opportunity more vigorously than evangelicals.

But most black churches stayed put in their old neighborhoods even when many of their members had left. International arrivals started their own churches in neighborhoods (and buildings) other Christians had vacated. A whole generation of community development-oriented pioneers, inspired by Dr. John Perkins, planted roots in the toughest urban locations through the darkest days of the 1980s and 1990s. In May 1992, I arrived at Penn Station in Manhattan on a Thursday afternoon just as (overwhelmingly white) commuters were fleeing based on unfounded rumors that the riots in the wake of the Rodney King beating verdict were coming to New York. I spent that weekend at prayer meetings in every borough, and at every one the churches were packed with lifelong New Yorkers and new arrivals. They were all there long before New York was so cool—committed to prayer, mission, and the flourishing of the city.

What gave Christians this kind of staying power? Some were sustained by the story of the *Exodus*, which has given strength to generations of Christians who find themselves under the thumb of one Pharaoh or another. The words of the Negro

spiritual, “Free at last!” ring true wherever people are tempted to despair over intractable social conditions.

More recently, though, many urban Christians have recognized that the model of Exodus, with its emphasis on escape, can sometimes justify disdain for the places and people we find ourselves among. Surely a move to the suburbs has seemed like liberation for many urbanites, but the Exodus paradigm is limited when it justifies washing our hands of responsibility for Egypt. There is another equally significant model in the pages of the Old Testament—the stories of *Exile*. While the exilic prophets never

gave up promising a return to the Promised Land, they also exhorted the exiles that exile was an opportunity for faithfulness and mission. Jeremiah’s injunction to seek the peace of the city where God had sent his people (Jer. 29) has become a touchstone for a generation of urban Christians.

The Old Testament models of Exodus and Exile are valuable in reminding us that “we have here no lasting city.” It is especially helpful to embrace the lessons of Exile, with its radical suggestion that even when God’s people sojourn among neighbors who want nothing to do with God, they should actively seek their neighbors’ flourishing.

Yet Exile takes us only so far as a model for Christian faithfulness today. There is one overwhelmingly obvious difference between the Hebrew exiles and Christ-followers in 21st-century cities: the Hebrew exiles were captives. Churches in every American city, on the other hand, are full of proud citizens and hardworking visitors, not captives. Most of us are not hap-

less exiles; we are purposeful arrivals.

In such a situation, the metaphor of Exile is quite misleading. Exiles have little responsibility for the powers that be. Even the Daniels and Esthers who rise to the heights of power are always marked as outsiders. But what if God’s people were *among* the insiders—as, in a liberal democracy, every citizen is to some extent? What if the God-fearer is not just deputy assistant to the mayor, but the mayor himself or the one to whom the mayor is legitimately accountable? At that point, the language of Exile starts to ring hollow.

Is there a biblical model, then, that describes better the situations of churches and Christians in cities today—that retains the valuable features of Exodus and Exile while accounting for our responsibility for our communities? Yes, and it is rooted in the 50 days that make us Christians—from Resurrection, through Ascension, to Pentecost. This story redefines our relationship not just to God but to our world. It is a story summed up in one word, *Expectation*, that keeps us rooted in and responsible for the flourishing of the world precisely because we have a hope outside of history in the usual sense.

Resurrection anchors this story. The exiles had Isaiah’s words



The best news about Christians and the city? The church never left, even when the city was at its worst.

of hope for future restoration. But in Jesus' resurrection, the restoration of all things has already begun—it is not just future, but here in its earliest stages. It is not only possible, but achieved. Resurrection empowers us to live infinitely more boldly than exiles who wait to see whether God will come through.

The Ascension is a crucial element of Expectation. That the risen Jesus no longer is confined to a single place or time means that he is Lord over every place and time. The fact that our humanity is represented in the very presence of God means that none of us has an excuse for taking our humanity lightly. But the fact that Jesus is absent, enthroned in heaven but not yet recognized as Lord of creation, calls for a profound dependence on God. "Is now the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus' disciples asked him before his resurrection. This is the hope of *Empire*, another possible biblical line of thought—the hope that the work of restoring the world will be finished straightaway, with people like us in control.

For whatever reason—and quite literally only God knows—that is not the way restoration is meant to happen. Rather than an imperial takeover, Jesus commissions his people for what has turned out to be a lengthy and thorough process of bearing witness to his lordship—but also one that has touched vastly more nations than one people group in Palestine. Jesus wants every place, not just Jerusalem, to be restored to flourishing, full of thriving bearers of God's image.

The Ascension, with its hope both fulfilled and delayed, calls us to a discipleship that our dreams of Empire would not. Indeed, it calls us to wait for a power beyond ourselves—the power that comes at Pentecost. Amid Pentecost, the far-flung first apostles find themselves witnessing, and suffering, in marketplaces and palaces, inside synagogues and outside temples—spread like leaven through all the institutions of the ancient world.

When we say "this is our city," then, we are staking a claim to a certain kind of Christian responsibility. Not the plundering flight of those in exodus, but a tenacious commitment to increasing the deepest well-being of the cultures we inhabit, as we testify to the one who secured that well-being with his own self-giving love. Not the dream of displacing one people with another, but the recognition that every nation is the object of God's saving purposes. Not the chastened diligence of exiles captive to an earthly power, but the eager investment of those sent to a place by the Spirit's power, graced with more resources than they deserve and a longer view of the world's story than anyone else could imagine.

FROM CHARITY TO COMPREHENSIVE FLOURISHING

This kind of vision will require new kinds of civic engagement. For generations Christians have been providing charity for those who suffer most from the idolatries and injustices that cities concentrate. The "rescue mission" model of Christian charity has restored dignity to countless people who otherwise

might have been lost or forgotten.

The community-development model, however, looked beyond individual cases of acute need to

ask what it would take to restore whole neighborhoods. In communities where this model has been pursued wholeheartedly, it has borne amazing fruit. At *Christianity Today*, we've had the privilege of covering this patient, courageous cultural transformation many times, and will continue to do so.

But precisely because the community-development movement has focused on neighborhoods that have lost access to the institutions that sustain comprehensive flourishing, it sometimes has left other parts of the city unaddressed. It is not just tough urban neighborhoods that need *shalom*. What would bring comprehensive flourishing to those who commute in and out of the city every day? What would bring it to neighborhoods where high housing prices create a monoculture of affluence? What would bring it to law firms, hospitals, and universities?

These, too, are part of the city, and to neglect Christian presence there to focus on the most obviously broken parts of society may mean missing the much greater vision of Expectation. As Katelyn Beaty reports in our feature on Portland (page 26), address-

ing a problem like commercial sexual exploitation requires not just charity and direct service, not just attention to a few blighted neighborhoods, but creative leadership throughout law, business, and education. It requires Christians to take up their calling as bearers of *shalom* in every neighborhood and every one of the city's structures.

All this prompts the multiyear project we are calling This Is Our City. We want to explore this new urban landscape, and the stories of Christians who are seeking comprehensive flourishing within it. The six cities we are profiling in print and online differ dramatically from one another in size, economic climate, and ethnic and racial composition, and in their history of Christian presence, leadership or abdication, at crucial moments. But they all have stories worth telling. Wherever we live, we can learn something from these cities about faithfulness to our own place.

We hope that as you read these articles, watch these films, and create your own responses—at ThisIsOurCity.org—you'll have in mind the seventh city covered by This Is Our City: your own. Jesus, who wept over Jerusalem, died for Jerusalem, rose from a tomb in Jerusalem, and ascended from a hill outside Jerusalem, now commissions us to live that same crucified-and-risen life in our neighborhoods, towns, and cities. For it is in these confusing and exhilarating places, where image-bearing and idol-making intermingle, that we can most wholeheartedly join the prayer of those first expectant followers: *Come, Lord Jesus.* ☩

Andy Crouch, a CT editor at large, is executive producer of the This Is Our City project and author of *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (InterVarsity).

For documentary videos, interviews, and photo essays about Christian renewal in U.S. cities, visit ThisIsOurCity.org.



Portland's Quiet Abolitionists

Leading the liberal city's efforts to halt child trafficking is a network of dedicated Christians. Just don't go advertising it.
By Katelyn Beaty

SHOSHON TAMA-SWEET has learned that for every coffee shop and independent bookstore in Portland, Oregon, there is a dimly lit backroom where children are sold for sex. "The Bedroom, Good Times, the Five Dollar Pub—that's a huge joint—and the high school's across the street," he says as we cruise 82nd Avenue, Portland's prostitution "track," on the eastside. "You've got the church on the corner, Rite-Aid Pharmacy, and JD's Bar and Grille, the pink-lettered strip club."

Like many Westerners, Tama-Sweet, 36, had long considered trafficking an overseas problem. When doing development work in the coastal town of Mombasa, Kenya, he'd see teenage girls standing on the docks, waiting for tourists. "I'd read about trafficking in places like Cambodia and India," says Tama-Sweet, the son of hippie atheists. "I really didn't imagine it was a problem here. It just doesn't fit the idea of what Portland is."

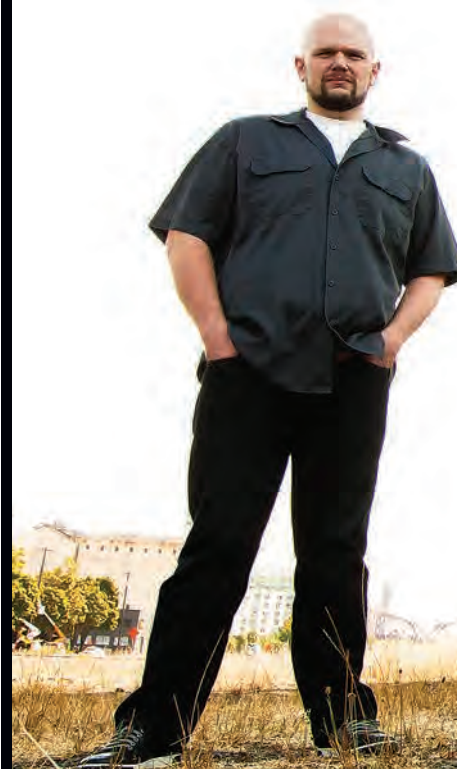
That idea—of green parks, copious bike lanes, and a bubbling arts scene—recently landed Portland the tagline, "Where young people go to retire." In 2005, Tama-Sweet and his now wife left the grimy City of Angels for the City of Roses. Stephanie had just completed a master's in intercultural studies at Biola. The couple had considered missionary work in the 10-40 Window, but Portland's "sense of optimism and opportunity" drew them, says Tama-Sweet. "It attracts a lot of young people who want to change the world."

His own optimism, however, faltered when the couple moved to Cully, a neighborhood south of the airport littered with strip clubs and porn shops.

"I would see prostitutes walk down my street Sunday morning when my wife and son and I were getting in the car to go to church," he says as we drive through Cully. He points to a "juice bar," a new establishment for an 18+ crowd who can't drink but can watch porn and nude dancing. "So if you're a high-school student, welcome to the Sugar Shack. They're open 24/7."

"When you have this evil—people who enslave another human being's body and turn it into something sexually exploited on a daily basis for financial gain—this is the antithesis of what God wants. This is the antithesis of a beloved community."

Yet it is precisely this community that Tama-Sweet—in a network of Christians



STUART MULLENBERG

On-the-Ground Witness: Pastor Ken Weigel, advocate Esther Nelson, Sergeant Mike Geiger, and legal activist Shoshon Tama-Sweet (l to r) are battling trafficking in the U.S. city with the most strip clubs per capita. 'This topic requires an amazing amount of collaboration,' says Nelson. 'I've never seen anything like it.'



living in one of the least-churched states—has loved enough to begin transforming. Under Tama-Sweet's leadership, the Oregon Center for Christian Voices (occv) has in four years become Oregon's flagship nonprofit for passing laws that make it harder to sexually exploit children. In the same four years, two Christians in Portland's leading assault advocacy group and police department have created a unique model for assisting underage victims. Their model earned their county a \$500,000 federal grant that created a special committee on CSEC ("commercial sexual exploitation of children"). Around the committee table are several committed Christians.

International Justice Mission (IJM) says these believers signal a trend among American Christians, who are wedding their longstanding emphasis on direct ministry to preventative efforts. In courtrooms, police stations, and the meager offices of tiny nonprofits, these Christians labor to end the vicious cycle of child trafficking before it starts.

LEGALIZED LICENTIOUSNESS

Portland's trafficking problem goes back, inadvertently, to Oregon's 1857 Constitution, which contains one of the most liberal free speech clauses in the country, says Mike Hogan, IJM's Pacific Northwest director of church mobilization. For decades, legislators have interpreted, "No law shall be passed restraining the free expression of opinion..." to block all attempts to regulate the adult entertainment industry. Free from zoning restrictions, strip clubs and other "creative expressions" are peppered throughout the city, often near schools and parks. Joslyn Baker, a CSEC specialist with Multnomah County, says 65 percent of all Portland schools are within a mile of a strip club.

"We've had trainers come and say, 'Show us your track. Show us where your sex industry is,'" says Baker, a Christian. "I say, 'I have to drive you around the whole town.' It's everywhere."

Baker says most Portlanders accepted the ubiquitous strip clubs as part of their premium on individual freedom—until February 2009,

when the FBI swept the Portland-Vancouver area and found seven underage girls, the most in any FBI raid at the time. With the ensuing national media coverage, Portlanders began realizing that their lucrative sex industry is the main "gateway" for pimping children.

"The strip clubs will deny it, but everybody I know who's a victim or survivor says that's where they started or interfaced," says Tama-Sweet. As we eat at a Popeye's Chicken

'We've had trainers come and say, "Show us your track. Show us where your sex industry is." I say, "I have to drive you around the whole town."'

~ Joslyn Baker,

Multnomah County CSEC specialist

at the intersection of 82nd Avenue and Fremont, he points across the street to Honey-suckle's Lingerie, which looks like a decrepit one-bedroom house with a fenced backyard. Tama-Sweet believes it's a trafficking point. He tells the story of a 13-year-old who was driven from Washington State across the Willamette River to Columbia Boulevard, near the I-5 Corridor, the West Coast "track" running from Vancouver to Tijuana. She was raped out of a van behind strip clubs during her middle school's lunch hour. Then, she was driven back to catch the bus home.

"In Oregon, it's illegal for an 18-year-old to serve a cup of coffee if she doesn't have a food handlers card," says Tama-Sweet. "Yet that girl can be hired as an 'independent contractor' and strip in a private room that's dead-bolted from the outside, at 3 A.M., with no oversight, no class, no license."

Such grave imbalances compelled occv four years ago (then led by Gordon-Conwell graduate Stephanie Ahn Mathis) to make trafficking its advocacy focus. occv's first victory came in 2009, when the legislature passed a Victims Confidentiality Bill, keeping victims out of Portland's public Internet database (and the hands of pimps). Then in 2010, it won permission to send orange stickers listing the National Human Trafficking

Hotline number to all 11,000 liquor-serving and -selling establishments in Oregon.

IJM, which began partnering with occv in 2009, says the six-year-old nonprofit has helped Portland's Christians do much more than send money to IJM. "Knowing the local legislation and being able to have events in Salem to get people to do something—they're a phenomenal partner," says Hogan.

Stacy Bellavia, 32, started volunteering with occv in 2009, when she returned from an IJM project in India. She testified in Salem, the state capital, on behalf of the hotline bill. "I've learned how much power constituents have. The fact that I can testify before a human services committee on behalf of a bill is wild. There's enough information for all Christians to speak passionately about it."

occv saw three more of its bills become law this summer. The first increases fines for purchasing sex from a minor from \$800 to \$10,000. The second outlaws the "age defense" in court ("But she said she was 18" is no longer a legitimate defense). And the third changes the very definition of prostitution. It used to be that "a 50-year-old man and a 16-year-old girl were technically guilty of the same crime," says Tama-Sweet. "We separated it out, allowing us to treat victims as victims and help shift the psychology around prostitution. This is not an egalitarian transaction 99.9 percent of the time."

ESCAPING THE 'EPICENTER'

For weeks, Sergeant Mike Geiger was peeved at Dan Rather. In a 2010 *Dan Rather Reports* series dubbed "Pornland," the seasoned anchor led cameramen along 82nd Avenue to expose the "seedier side" of the "model American city," labeling it "the epicenter of child prostitution." Other reporters, including Diane Sawyer (who called Portland "the national hub for child sex trafficking"), repeated the e-word.

"As you can imagine, that generated some attention," says Geiger, who says he spent weeks taking calls from shocked Portlanders. A wiry, straight-shooting police officer for 22 years, Geiger spends his days behind a



desk leading Portland's trafficking unit, one of the few of its kind in the U.S. The *Rather* series spotlighted his detective unit, which is currently working to find Portland's 150 known or suspected underage victims.

Geiger was frustrated that *Rather* overlooked his department's innovative response to victims. In early 2009, Geiger campaigned to move prostitution out of the bureau's drugs and vice unit into the sex crimes unit. So where buying a prostitute used to be a "vice"—and the john and prostitute were equally guilty under law—the shift turned soliciting sex from a minor into a major crime for a detective to investigate. And a simpler crime, since only the john was now pursued.

"Gone are the days when you view a child as complicit—'she engaged in consensual sexual conduct in exchange for a fee,'" Geiger says. "Our children are not complicit. It's not just a policy shift. It's a whole shift in thinking."

After a series of institutional changes, Geiger's detectives now work closely with the FBI to track down victims throughout Oregon and match them with advocates and shelters. In the past month, his team has identified four underage victims on BackPage.com, a Craigslist-type site that doesn't screen ads for illicit content, and rescued one 14-year-old the month this article went to press.

Tama-Sweet says the Portland Police Bureau is "way ahead of the national average" thanks to Geiger's leadership. "I view myself more as a father than a police officer," says Geiger, the father of three. "When we talk about these vulnerable people, my faith dictates that we protect and nurture them. Jesus' warning about the millstone highlights the inherent value of all children."

Esther Nelson, 29, is program manager of the human trafficking division at the Sexual

Assault Resource Center (SARC), Portland's most respected advocacy group. She says Portland has earned the "epicenter" label precisely because "our service provision has done a great job," which has "skyrocketed" the number of victims.

When she joined SARC in 2008, Nelson and Geiger created a victim-centered response



With bursting caseloads under the model, in 2010 Portland Police and SARC received a three-year federal grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. That \$500,000 created the CSEC Committee, where the FBI, district attorneys, child welfare, Nelson, Geiger, survivors—and, most



Street Activist: 'Our lives are so busy, we avoid these realities,' says Martin French, who convened the Exile Poster Project this spring. 'Art causes us to stop.'

model: Every child brought in off the streets receives (1) a detective to track down the pimp; (2) a child welfare specialist to find shelter; and (3) a SARC advocate who helps victims leave their abusers.

Having an advocate changes everything. "When we interviewed them as a *victim* of a crime, reframing their information as 'you're a survivor,' the outcomes were so different. The kids stopped cycling, and some of them got into shelters where they stayed put," says Nelson. (Due to the trauma bond pimps create, most victims return to abusers immediately.) "The kids had different directions put in place because they were afforded rights as victims."

recently, the church—work to ensure Portland never becomes an actual hub.

THE CITY WELCOMES THE CHURCH

For three years, Nelson kept her full-time job under wraps at Portland's best-known evangelical church. Meanwhile, Imago Dei Community, pastored by Rick McKinley, wanted to "fight trafficking" but didn't know how. Little did they know a direct link to a city-wide conversation was sitting in their pews.

"There were no places of engagement," says Ken Weigel, 31, Imago's pastor of ministry development. "We'd watch all these movies and host events . . . getting a few thousand people riled up for no purpose." Imago had run *Scarlet Cord*, a Friday night



dinner for prostitutes, since 2009. But like the dozen or so other direct-service ministries in Portland, it was disconnected from the CSEC Committee and social services.

Until the city needed the church. Last summer, Nelson asked Weigel to meet her at Three Friends Coffee House, around the corner from Imago. She needed counsel on how to better live her faith in a non-Christian workplace. As they talked, recalls Weigel, "I'm figuring out what she does, and I'm like, 'One of the leading people on this goes to my church. This is crazy.'"

Nelson invited Weigel to join the CSEC committee, making Imago the first church at the table. A surprising number of believers are on the committee, but Weigel has become the bridge linking city and church.

"I'm much more about us going in and blessing" what's already working, rather than building something new, says Weigel, who relocated SARC's trafficking unit to Imago this summer. "People of salt and light [should be] infiltrating every one of these institutions. We want to be part of the solution, as opposed to coming only if we are leading the discussion."

One solution came from Imago's sizable artist community. Martin French is an illustrator whose client list includes the Olympic Games, Nike, and *The New York Times*. He moved to Portland in 2005 to teach at the Pacific Northwest College of Art. Right away he plugged into Imago, because "engagement in the city is much of what I moved here for." After hearing McKinley preach through the Book of Matthew this January, French was struck by the theme of exile and landed on the Exile Poster Project concept.

"Portland is a poster-oriented town, a huge music scene," he says. "But I wanted to go deeper into what was going on in the city—a very non-Christian city—to create dialogue."

In talks with Weigel, French decided that the project's theme would be trafficking; victims are often exiles from their home countries and families. French invited professional artists, designers, and six of his students to contribute 20 unique pieces. The Exile Poster Project debuted this April in Imago's art gallery, located in the hip Pearl District. Now several are posted along 82nd Avenue and other troubled streets, and more went up in schools, City Hall, and the Capitol this fall.

One poster reads like a giant sticky note delivering a to-do list for Portland: "Be bike-friendly." "Make coffee roasting cool." "Open

a million food carts." "Stop having sex with the kids." Only the last item isn't crossed out.

"If that can elicit an emotional response," says French, "that can lead to that viral, person-to-person change that says, 'We'll do this fundraiser. We'll go and help this nonprofit.'"

"That's what's going to change Portland, because city government has been clear that their mechanisms [aren't] making much change. It's going to take individuals."

MORE THAN A BED

Anti-trafficking insiders hope that churches' engagement goes beyond mercy ministry. To varying degrees, Tama-Sweet, Nelson, Geiger, and Baker are wary of Christian ministries providing victim services, such as on-street rescue and psychological counsel. About a dozen such ministries operate in Portland.

Tama-Sweet says such ministry has its place but "has to be linked to structural changes. Direct service falls into a historical charity model that churches understand and do well. But it's just half the picture."

That's where Weigel comes in. After the poster project, Weigel says, the CSEC committee asked him to spearhead a new subcommittee on prevention. Besides rebranding the decidedly boring "CSEC Committee," Weigel is now creating prevention education for schools, churches, and businesses to use by early 2012. This August, he organized a breakfast where pastors of black, Hispanic, and white congregations could ask Senator Ron Wyden, a leader in anti-trafficking legislation, "What can we do to help?"

"With sex trafficking, unless you are a trained social worker, FBI agent, or DA, there's not much for you to do on the front line," says Weigel. "I'm creating places where people don't insist that they have to be on the front line, but still see they are helping."

Insiders are eager to see churches provide kids mentors and a sexual ethic that emphasizes their God-given dignity.

"The church is in the best position to take the lead on morality issues in a way that government can't," says Baker. "At the end of the day, we put the bad guy away and get [the girl] clothes and health treatment. But who loves her? Who tells her a story other than, 'The only thing you're good for is selling your body?'"

"When girls think they have no value to

where they are selling themselves, something has been missed along the way," says Geiger. "This is something the church can do."

Rep. Andy Olson (R-Albany) has worked with OCCV to try to amend Oregon's Constitution. A Christian, he calls trafficking a "family values issue." "When a 12- to 14-year-old runs away from home, and next thing you know she's on the train—you have to ask, why did she run away from home?"

Meanwhile, Bellavia has found ways to engage fellow Christians at Mosaic Church, located in the Hollywood District. Bellavia was appointed Mosaic's anti-trafficking organizer last year, and is putting her experience at OCCV and LJM to work. She and other members regularly visit a K-8 school and a high school in Cully, with hopes that role models will bolster students' sense of self-worth, thereby adding a layer of protection against pimps. She also leads training sessions at Mosaic on how to organize meetings with politicians, testify in Salem, write op-eds, and raise awareness through social media.

"It's not just about rescue, it's also about prevention," says Bellavia. "Sometimes that's hard because it's not exciting or notable. But you're having a long-term and probably more significant impact investing in a 9-year-old boy who doesn't have a good role model."

"If it's just about building a shelter, people think the only way to contribute is financially. I'm encouraging the faith community that they can

be involved, even though it doesn't look like it's directly involved."

"The church has something special: We have the Good News," says Tama-Sweet as we leave Popeye's so he can join his wife and 2-year-old at home. "We have a vision of the way the world is supposed to be. And it doesn't include the rape of children on our streets."

"When you realize that God loved every victim when they were born, that he's with them every day they're traumatized—it's incumbent on believers to protect them, to help them become whole, and to insist that, in our society, we are not going to tolerate the antithesis of God's beloved community." ☩

Go to MoreCT.com/Shoshon for a short documentary about OCCV's executive director.

Katelyn Beaty is associate editor at *Christianity Today* magazine and editorial director of the This Is Our City project. Additional reporting provided by CT video director **Nathan Clarke**.



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A City of Activists

Five Portlanders who unite work, service, and love for their community.

There's a running joke that every Portlander works as a barista in order to manage a nonprofit—one, inevitably, that will save the planet, end homelessness, or use art to subvert prejudice. Yet the joke rings true. Ben Sand, CEO of Portland Leadership Foundation, says Portland is one of the most "activist" U.S. cities, with the most nonprofits per capita among mid-sized cities. So currently, if you wanted to volunteer in Nashville, you'd have 548 positions to choose from; in Milwaukee, 585; in Tucson, 494. In Portland, you'd have over 3,900 (source: Idealist.org). "When [Portlanders] see a social need, they jump in and get busy," says religion reporter Tom Krattenmaker. This rings true for Portland's Christian community, the best-known example being Season of Service, some 27,000 volunteers gathered annually by the Luis Palau Association to beautify schools, run free medical clinics, and lead "the most successful, sustained volunteer effort in Portland's history," proclaimed Mayor Sam Adams this spring. Yet perhaps the city's evangelicals aren't mimicking their secular neighbors as much as they are being *evangelicals*: people who, like William Wilberforce, John Stott, and Oregon Governor Mark Hatfield before them, actively seek the flourishing of their societies and the persons therein. In other words, they demonstrate the "activism" that David Bebbington identified as core to the evangelical movement. Here are five Christians embodying that activism in creative ways. —Katelyn Beaty

THE MUSICIAN | Laura Streib



CHURCH Imago Dei Community

READING NOW Dr. Seuss to my 2-year-old daughter

FAVORITE PART OF PORTLAND The distinct neighborhoods

In 2007, Laura Streib was just another oboist facing the unlikelihood of finding a job that would exercise her love of music, teaching, and children. That year, Portland Public Schools slashed its arts and music fund-

ing following deep budget cuts. In response, Streib created Vibe of Portland, an after-school arts program for underserved kids. With a \$5,000 grant from Imago Dei Community, since 2008 Vibe has brought free painting and guitar lessons, a choir, a comic-book

illustration class—and real educational results—to Harrison Park School, where a majority of students are in a free or reduced lunch program. Says Kerry Rae Connolly, neighborhood coordinator at Harrison Park, "Students involved with [Vibe] often see greater gains in academic ability and social skills and have more stable school attendance. We could not meet the needs of these amazing kids without Vibe." Other Portlanders have taken notice: In 2010, Streib, 33, won the Skidmore Prize, given by the thoroughly secular *Willamette Week* to four nonprofit leaders each year. The \$4,000 that garnered, combined with yearly Imago grants and \$25,000 from the Pepsi Refresh Project, helped Vibe this year open a permanent art studio and start a scholarship for piano lessons.

Streib says her faith has "everything to do" with her work: "Our God delights in our creativity. Many kids might not discover who they were created to be because they didn't have an opportunity to explore those passions."

Go to MoreCT.com/Vibe for CT's documentary about Streib.

THE REPAIRMAN | C. J. Speelman

CHURCH Bread and Wine

READING NOW *Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life*, by Robert Lupton

FAVORITE PART OF PORTLAND The rich bicycling culture

Every week, underneath the oldest bridge in Portland, about 15 men meet to size up each other's bikes. In the U.S. city with the highest share of cycling commuters, the sight isn't surprising. What is notable is that all the men are homeless, and their gathering looks something like real community. "In Portland, the bicycle is our horse. We're here just helping cowboys get their horses," says C. J. Speelman, who started the nonprofit Wrench Raiders in 2010 to serve "our friends who live outside," many of whom rely on bikes to find work but lack access to maintenance.



Every Sunday, a fleet of volunteers sets up a mobile bike shop under Hawthorne Bridge, replete with repair stands and spare parts. Other free bike tune-ups exist around PDX, but Wrench Raiders is the only one that seeks to extend Christ's welcome. "Our objective is [making] the gospel real to our friends," says Speelman, 29, who has begun dispatching Cargo Tricycles carrying supplies to other strategic areas. "When we invite people who live inside to commune with people who live outside, we find a real equity in life experience, which leads to reconciliation."

Go to MoreCT.com/WrenchRaiders for CT's documentary about Speelman.

THE EDUCATOR | Andrea Cook

CHURCH Mt. Scott Church of God

READING NOW *The Invisible*, by Arloa Sutter

FAVORITE PART OF PORTLAND The unique shops and restaurants

For most of its 74-year history, Warner Pacific College sat behind 12-foot bushes, cut off from southeast Portland's people and needs. With flagging enrollment and institutional identity, in 2008 the Church of God-affiliated school selected Andrea Cook as president. Formerly vice president at George Fox University and Goshen College, Cook has helmed the school's return to being "in the city, for the city": lowering tuition rates by 23 percent, partnering with Act Six (a scholarship for emerging urban leaders), and sending students downtown to work directly with the homeless. Under Cook's presidency, enrollment has tripled to 1,675. Says Paul Corts, president of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, "As is often the case [with] a new president, Andrea has brought a lot of energy and fresh ideas to give a surge throughout the institution."

No longer jostling to join the ivory tower of academic elitism, Warner Pacific is set to become "the premiere urban liberal arts college for underrepresented students in Portland," says Anthony Jordan, president of Portland Leadership Foundation. Its newfound strength is its "urban pedagogy," says Cook, 56, who grew up in rural Oregon. "We're making the city a classroom. Students connect to God's justice when they are hearing, seeing, tasting, and feeling the city." Among its growing student body is Jaques Montgomery, an Act Six scholar pursuing a bachelor's in accounting. "A lot of people where I come from don't have a lot of responsibilities. I want to open job opportunities for inner-city kids and give them those responsibilities to help them succeed," he says. Oh yeah, and Cook made sure those bushes were cut down.



THE ANTI-TRAFFICKER | Tom Perez

CHURCH House of Providence

READING NOW *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe

FAVORITE PART OF PORTLAND The coffee, bikes, and beer

The City of Roses has a ghastly thorn: the sexual slavery of children. Two years ago, a talk by anti-trafficking group Shared Hope International inspired Tom Perez, a Portland-area resident for 20 years, to engage more men in the fight. With a \$20,000 grant from Imago Dei Community, this January Perez started EPIK ("Everyman Protecting Innocent Kids") to enlist

1,000 Portland men to "stand in the gap" between anti-trafficking organizations, mostly run by women, and the commercial sex industry, whose "products" are mostly consumed by men. Members commit to supporting local agencies with \$13 a month (13 being the average age of entry into prostitution) and speaking out on the link between the sex industry and trafficking. "Men have created this problem," says the former football player and pastor, 51. "Better men have to solve it."

EPIK aims to recruit 100,000 men nationally. "It's the largest missional grant we have ever funded, and people wanted to give more," says Ken Weigel, an Imago pastor. EPIK is part of the church's efforts to address the demand side of the trafficking equation. Imago has given EPIK an office in a key location and lent it its tax-exempt status. John Chapman, a police officer who helped arrest several johns in an FBI sting in 2009, joined EPIK's first team and is supporting local Christian shelter Door to Grace. "It's all about showing God's grace to these girls," says Chapman. "It's about making them whole again."



THE DESIGNER | Wilson Smith

CHURCH Southlake Foursquare Church

READING NOW *Frozen Music: A History of Portland Architecture*, by Gideon Bosker

FAVORITE PART OF PORTLAND The small downtown blocks

For 30 years, leading worship at Southlake Foursquare and other Portland churches was Wilson Smith's way of serving the Lord. Designing Nike footwear—including two Air Jordans and a special pair for Serena Williams—was a fulfilling but separate endeavor. Or so he thought. Then, in 2007, the architect by training and other believers, along with their employer Nike, got involved in a special service project: revamping the sports facilities of Roosevelt High School. The world's premiere athletic company, alongside other community partners, went on to rebuild the track, stadium,

field, grandstands, and locker rooms of one of Portland's poorest schools. "The kids really deserve the best. Not just the wealthy kids, but all the kids of Portland," says Smith.

Newly named a "creative catalyst" at Nike, Smith, 53, is now helping the company "just do it" in terms of philanthropic engagement: building sports facilities in developing countries, aiding recovery efforts in Haiti, and designing footwear specifically for Native American and aboriginal communities. Of course, Nike wants to make athletes out of as many people as possible. But Smith says his worship "has expanded beyond singing": "The number one mission is to actually do your work. [But] mission, ministry, and mentoring can happen in your job. The opportunities to serve the Lord are everywhere."



Disappointed *with* Intimacy

We set ourselves up for confusion about God if we forget that the best is yet to come. By John Koessler



MY FIRST MAJOR PURCHASE was a submarine. I saw it on the back of a cereal box that boasted of its prowess as a “real” diving submarine. Through the power of baking soda, this little vessel promised to make me master of the seas—or at least master of the bathtub. I had to have it, even though it cost me several weeks’ allowance. The day it came in the mail, I loaded the special compartment at the bottom of the sub with baking soda, and launched it.

The sub went straight to the bottom. It did not dive. It sank. Bubbles rose to the surface as the baking soda began to dissolve, and then suddenly it bobbed back up to the surface. After a while, it sank again. There was a kind of novelty in this, but overall it was less than I had hoped for. A wave of disappointment washed over me, and I realized that I had wasted my savings on a cheap plastic toy.

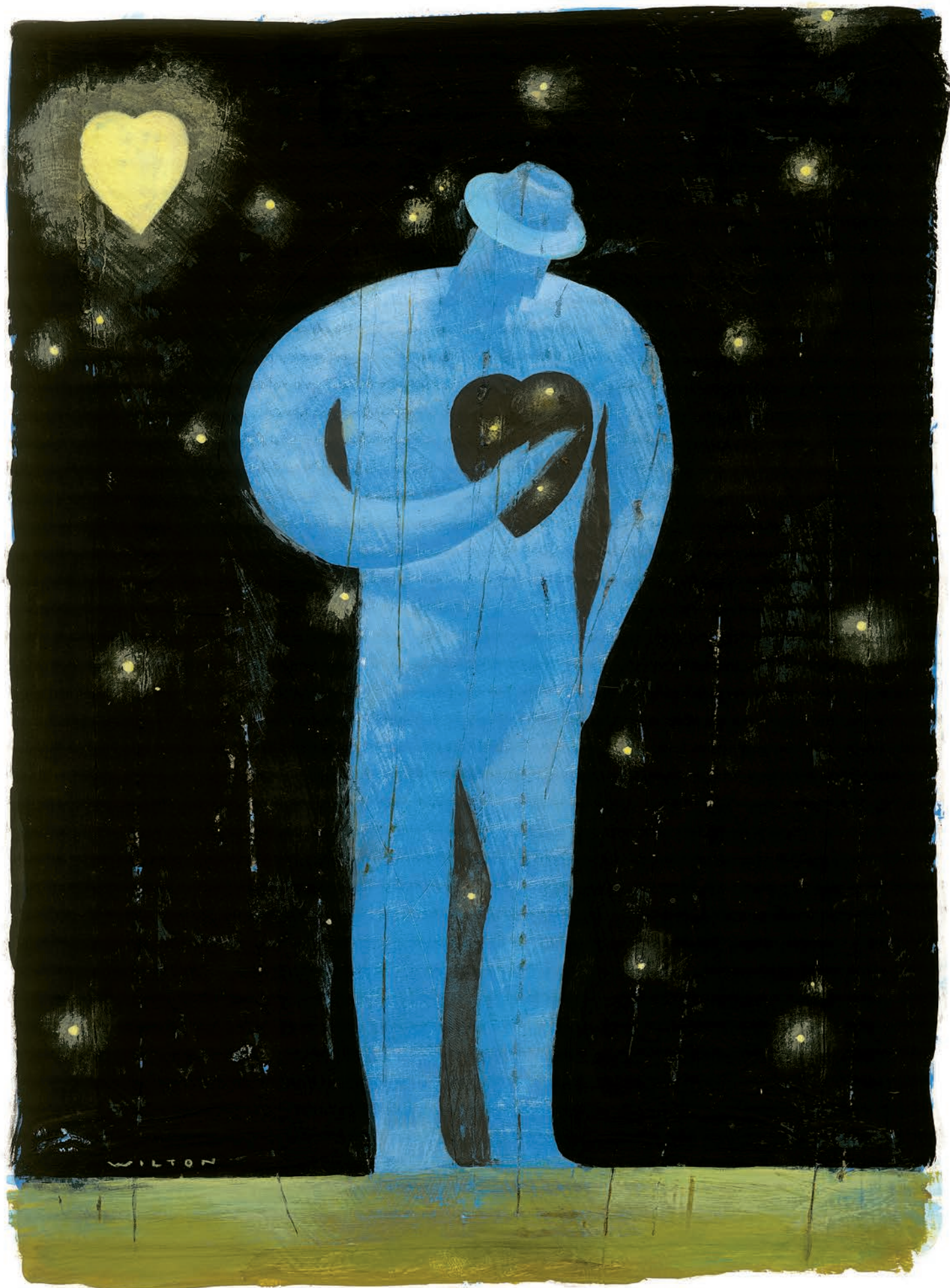
When I grew older, I put such childish concerns behind me. But disappointment would not be put off so easily. Instead, it insinuated

itself into the more complex toys of adulthood, like my vocation and my most cherished relationships. My work, even when it is ministry, often seems like toil. People I love do not always love me back. Sometimes I take others for granted or treat them unkindly. I set out to make something of myself and glorify God in the process. Yet after making every effort to “expect great things from God and attempt great things for God,” my accomplishments fail to follow the trajectory I expected.

UNREASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

I am disappointed but not surprised. We live in an age of unreasonable expectations. Ours is a world where promises are cheaply made and easily broken—where hyperbole is the *lingua franca*. Advertisers tell us that a different shampoo will make us more attractive to the opposite sex. Alcohol will lubricate our relationships. Purchasing the right car will be a gateway to adventure. These pitchmen promise us far more than enhanced lives. They are peddling ultimate fulfillment.

“The problem with advertising isn’t that it creates artificial longings and needs, but that it exploits our very real and human desires,” media critic Jean Kilbourne observes. “We are not stupid: We know that buying a certain brand of toilet tissue . . . won’t bring us one inch closer to that goal. But we are surrounded by advertising that yokes our needs with products and promises us that *things* will deliver what in fact they never can.” Kilbourne notes that ads also have a tendency to promote narcissism while portraying our lives as dull and ordinary. They trade on natural desires but in a way that heightens our dissatisfaction and creates unrealistic expectations.





We can blame Madison Avenue for raising false hopes, but we cannot escape bearing some of the responsibility. Advertising creates culture, but it also provides a mirror. Optimism has always been a feature of American thinking, sometimes to an unhealthy degree. Unrealistic expectations compel thousands of contestants who cannot sing to try out for *American Idol* every season and be genuinely surprised when they do not make the cut. Misguided enthusiasm has prompted a generation of well-meaning parents and teachers to tell children that they can accomplish anything as long as they believe in themselves.

The church is not immune from this way of thinking. American popular theology combines the innate optimism of humanism with the work ethic of Pelagianism, resulting in a toxic brew of narcissistic spirituality at once pragmatic and insipidly positive. This is Christianity without scars, and with all the sharp edges of our experience smoothed over. Nostalgia and a cheap sentimentalism replace Jonathan Edwards's religious affections, clouding over the hard facts of what it means to follow Jesus.

Such a view has little in common with the mindset of those who saw God's promises and welcomed them from a distance (Heb. 11:13). It depicts a world in which (to quote from the hymn "Trust and Obey") "not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies, but his smile quickly drives it away." There is no place on such a landscape for someone like Job, whose path has been blocked by God and whose experience is shrouded in darkness (Job 19:8). It has no vocabulary adequate to express Jeremiah's complaint that he has been deceived and brutalized by God's purpose (Jer. 20:7).

Brochures for Christian conferences claim that those who attend will "never be the same." Church signs boast of being the "friendliest" church in town. In other contexts, we would have no trouble recognizing such claims for what they are: the hyperbolic white noise of marketing. But when the church takes up these extravagant claims, they are invested with a false aura of divine authority.

This is especially true when the language of biblical promise is invoked to support such claims. In the Scriptures, Jesus makes bold claims about himself and his mission. But Jesus' claims, while extreme, are not extravagant. The church cheapens these promises when it resorts to clichés and the rhetoric of spiritual marketing to describe its experience and ministries.

'THE LANGUAGE OF UNSUSTAINABLE INTIMACY'

Not long ago, Michael, a former student of mine, complained about the way youth leaders commonly use what he called "the language of unsustainable intimacy" to describe our

relationship with Jesus Christ. "It's the sort of thing you hear when youth group leaders tell their students to 'date' Jesus," he explained. It is true that Christian mystics like Teresa of Avila have long used the language of intimacy to describe their experience of Christ. She spoke of Christ as both a friend and a lover. But Teresa also warned that one's experience with Christ includes desolation, pain, and suffering.

Likewise, the Bible uses analogs of intimacy to characterize the relationship we have with God. The relationship we have with Christ is compared to a bridegroom and bride, husband and wife, parent and child (Isa. 54:5; Rev. 21:2, 9, 17; Matt. 7:11). The trouble with the language of unsustainable intimacy is that it gives the false impression that intimacy with Christ comes through the same mechanisms which sustain ordinary relationships: presence, touch, and conversation.

Presence is indeed an element in our relationship with Christ. Jesus has promised to be with us until "the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). But this is a spiritual presence, mediated through the Holy Spirit. John could say that he had seen and touched Christ (1 John 1:1), but we cannot. Our peculiar blessing is enjoying intimate fellowship with one who is invisible to us (John 20:29). We are in a similar position when it comes to prayer. We enjoy a kind of conversation with Jesus through the exercise of prayer, but it often feels one-sided. He responds to our prayers but remains silent. What was said of the Jews with regard to the Father could be said of us with respect to Christ: "You have never heard his voice nor seen his form" (John 5:37).

FORGETTING GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE

When the church uses the language of unsustainable intimacy to describe our experience of Christ, it fails to do justice to divine transcendence. The Bible affirms that we were made in God's image (Gen. 1:26). But it also says that God is different from us (Num. 23:19; Isa. 55:8–9). "God is both further from us, and nearer to us, than any other being," observed C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain*. "He makes, we are made: He is original, we derivative. But at the same time, and for the same reason, the intimacy between God and even the meanest creature is closer than any that creatures can attain with one another."

Likewise, the Bible affirms that in the Incarnation, God the Son was "made like" us, "his brothers" (Heb. 2:17). He was tempted in all things just like we are (Heb. 4:15). This commonality guarantees that we can look to

Christ to find sympathy and help in the midst of temptation. However, the risen Christ is also transcendent. In his post-resurrection appearances, Jesus invited his disciples to "touch and see" that he was not a ghost (Luke 24:39; John 20:27). But it is equally clear from these appearances that the disciples' relationship to Jesus has radically changed. Mary is told not to cling to Jesus' physical form because he must ascend to the Father (John 20:17). The same John who speaks of seeing and touching Christ falls at Jesus' feet "as though

We live in an age of unreasonable expectations. Ours is a world where promises are cheaply made and easily broken—where hyperbole is the lingua franca.

dead” (Rev. 1:17). After the Resurrection, our relationship is with an ascended and glorified Christ. Jesus is still like us, but he is also unlike us. The day when we will be made like him is still to come (1 John 1:2).

The Bible does promise that we can have true intimacy with Christ. But this intimacy, which is mediated through the Holy Spirit, is unlike any other relationship with which we are familiar. It is one in which we are known more than we know (1 Cor. 13:12). The comfort we find in the conversation of prayer is the comfort of being heard more than of hearing (1 John 5:14–15). It is a relationship that is personal but reveals little about Jesus’ personality. It is also a relationship where our greatest intimacy will be experienced in the future rather than the present. For the present, we should not expect to find ultimate fulfillment in our experience of Christ. That is yet to come. We may even find on occasion that human relationships are more vivid and immediately satisfying. Perhaps this is implied in the earthly analogies the Bible uses when it speaks of our relationship to God. These concrete experiences “put a face” on our spiritual relationship and help us relate to the invisible God in a personal way.

WORSHIP AMID THE RUINS

Ultimately, the roots of our disappointment are much deeper than the language we use to frame our expectations. The seeds of disappointment are sown in the fabric of the world itself. To the ancients, the heavens looked like a model of symmetry, order, and proportion. However, this was merely an illusion created by distance. Closer inspection revealed a more terrifying reality. The heavens are full of dark matter as well as light. The earth is teeming with life, but the rest of the universe—at least the portion we have been able to see—is barren. There is order, as the stars move in their courses each night, and the cycles of seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night continue just as God promised (Gen. 8:22). But there is also chaos and destruction.

The collateral damage of sin cannot be avoided. The Bible teaches that the natural world, no less than the human soul, writhes in the throes of sin. Creation has been “subjected to futility” and “is in bondage to decay” (Rom. 8:20–21). The ground that once yielded its fruit willingly now does so only after struggle, and all who come after Adam have learned to eat the bread of sorrow like their first father. The full cup must be drunk, even to the dregs. To be sure, redemption is coming. The day draws near when the earth’s groaning will cease, and creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay. But that day is not today. Today we must live amid the wreckage of the Fall and build upon the ruins.

The other day, during my ride home from work, I saw a church sign that read “Greater Works Ministries.” I immediately recognized the allusion to Jesus’ promise in John 14:12:

The Bible does promise that we can have true intimacy with Christ. But this intimacy, which is mediated through the Holy Spirit, is unlike any other relationship with which we are familiar.

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” It was not the usage of this Scripture phrase that caught my attention so much as the poor condition of the church sign. The lettering was cracked and faded, like the worn building upon which it was emblazoned. *You would think a church that could do “greater works” could put up a better sign*, I mused.

But there is no real incongruity between the sign’s bold promise and the drab reality of its setting. If anything, the ostensible contradiction is a more accurate reflection of how most

people experience church life than the exaggerated rhetoric we so often employ. But what are we to make of the wreckage we see around us? Is it symptomatic of our crumbling façade, or proof that we are being rebuilt from the rubble? Perhaps it is both.

The construction of the spiritual life requires as much tearing down as there is building up. Although the demolition sometimes results from our own self-destructive behavior, it

can also result from God’s renovating work through the Holy Spirit. We “put off” in order to “put on” (Eph. 4:22, 25). Not everyone who builds the church does so carefully or with the best material (1 Cor. 3:11–13). But we can be sure that Christ will finish the work that he has begun, despite our worst efforts (and sometimes our best). He will build his church. The powers of hell will not overcome it (Matt. 16:18).

Near the end of the war with Germany, as allied bombs rained down on Stuttgart and the Nazi regime staggered toward defeat, Lutheran pastor and theologian Helmut Thielicke preached a remarkable series of sermons on the Lord’s Prayer. With the battered remnant of his congregation gathered for worship in the midst of their ruined building, Thielicke used Christ’s words to trace a stunning map of spiritual reality. He located their experience at the intersection of two lines of activity. “The first line is a descending one,” Thielicke preached, “and it indicates that mankind is constantly living farther and farther away from God.” The other line is the ascending line of Christ’s dominion over our lives, which goes on simultaneously with the other process. Employing Luther’s language of Christ’s presence in the sacraments, Thielicke declared: “In, with, and under the world’s anguish and distress, in, with, and under the hail of bombs and mass murders, God is building his kingdom.”

This is not hyperbole. It is not pastoral spin or church marketing. It is the language of spiritual reality. 

John Koessler, professor of pastoral studies at Moody Bible Institute, is the author of *Folly, Grace, and Power: The Mysterious Act of Preaching* (Zondervan).

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for “Our Disappointment with God,” a Bible study based on this article.

The Rhetoric of Chastity

Communications expert **Christine Gardner** reveals what makes abstinence campaigns work. Interview by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

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VANGELICAL abstinence campaigns have shifted their emphasis from “just say no” to sex before marriage to “just say yes”—within marriage, that is, says Christine Gardner. In *Making Chastity Sexy* (University of California Press), the Wheaton College communications professor examines the rhetoric of three evangelical abstinence organizations, comparing them with an abstinence campaign in sub-Saharan Africa,

where HIV/AIDS is a common threat. *Christianity Today* online editor Sarah Pulliam Bailey spoke with Gardner about the larger ideas communicated to young people in the campaign.

What did you find upon examining the language of the U.S. abstinence movement?

This is a study of rhetoric in the classical sense—the study of the art of persuasion, focusing on three very specific church-related evangelical campaigns. These groups are using a savvy rhetorical strategy: They are using sex to sell abstinence. They are using the very thing they are prohibiting to admonish young people to wait. They are saying, “If you are abstinent now, you will have amazing sex when you are married.” The argument then becomes a promise of marriage.

What are the limitations of this approach?

Such campaigns don’t address the challenges of singleness. Also,

what if you are gay? What if you do get married, but sex isn’t all it’s cracked up to be? There are many challenges with this kind of strategy, as savvy and persuasive as it is.

Evangelicals are quite good at interacting with secular culture. We have a long history of adapting secular forms for religious ends. The language of self-gratification in “sexy abstinence” is showing the ability of evangelicals to speak the language of the culture. But in doing so, are we actually transforming it?

You looked at how Africans view abstinence, saying they “saw their bodies as temples of the Lord and themselves as caretakers . . . a more deeply theological response.”

I assumed that HIV/AIDS would be the big motivator for [African] young people to commit to abstinence. It is big, but I found this other undercurrent that was deeply theological. A leader of one of the programs told me that yes, they do talk about AIDS as a motivator for young people to commit to abstinence, but they noted that “you can get malaria and die, too.” AIDS is not as much of a motivator as a Western researcher coming in would have assumed.

How do the American and African messages compare?

Americans have turned a prohibition into a more positive





admonition. In this case, pleasing God is an end in itself. Pleasing God will have tangible benefits. In Kenya and Rwanda, it was more of a combination: “Avoid death. Avoid HIV/AIDS, and do it out of fear of God, because he wants you to do this.”

Also, in the places I visited in Africa, the condom is viewed as a medical device, a tool for saving lives. It is not viewed as a tool for promiscuity, as evangelicals in this country largely view it. The same little piece of latex is described so radically differently by evangelicals in two different cultural contexts.

How does Western rhetoric translate to the African context?

It offers an understanding of self and empowers young people, especially women, to respect their bodies. This is, of course, fabulous and indeed, very biblical. But the language of individualism and self-gratification can seep in and pose a problem.

You say that U.S. evangelicals are strange bedfellows with

feminists when it comes to sexuality and reproduction.

The campaigns borrow an essentially feminist argument of “my body, myself” to encourage young people to take control of their bodies, to wait to have sex. In essence, evangelical campaigns say secular culture is telling young people that they have no choice but to have sex, that they are governed by their hormones. In contrast, evangelical campaigns tell young people, “You can control your body. You can choose to wait to have sex.”

How do these campaigns deal with those who are no longer virgins?

They talk about “second virginity” or “renewed virginity,” how a young person can make a decision from that day forward to remain abstinent until marriage. It’s a rhetorical construction of virginity, but it’s steeped in a theological understanding of God’s forgiveness. Some would criticize that as a form of cheap grace, that you can go out and have sex with your boyfriend

or girlfriend and then go to the abstinence event and renew your pledge. But the young people I talked to understand that there is no cheap grace. There is no get out of jail free card with these abstinence pledges. The young people who have broken their pledges carry heavy emotional burdens.

What are other ways the U.S. campaigns are successful?

Millions of young people have committed to abstinence since these campaigns began. Have some of the young people broken their pledges? Sure. But this isn't just a numbers game. These programs are successful because they are opening a space for the church to talk about sex. They are teaching both women and men a sense of respect for their physical bodies. We Christians are people of the Incarnation, and yet the physicality of the body scares us. These campaigns empower young people, especially women, to respect their bodies, to realize that they are worth waiting for.

What role do purity rings play in the campaigns?

The purity ring mimics the wedding ring, a physical manifestation of that pledge. One of the young people I interviewed talked about how if someone breaks his commitment, he is encouraged to flush the ring down the toilet in order to maintain the integrity of the symbolic

power of the ring. It's a pledge to God, it's a pledge to one's future spouse, but it's also a pledge to a community of other abstinent teens.

What did you learn about the "fairy-tale narrative"?

Some of the campaigns use fairy tales about passive princesses and valiant knights to communicate traditional gender roles. When I looked closer, I found an interesting subversion: The princess, even though she seems to be inactively waiting for her prince, is pictured as actively choosing to adopt princess-like behavior. The dragon that the knights are supposed to slay in order to rescue the princess is really the dragon of their own sexual desires. The campaigns may not be as conservative as they think they are: the young men are impotent, enslaved by their own desires, while the young women are powerfully choosing princess-like behaviors.

'I'm concerned that we may be raising a generation of abstinent teens but setting them up for divorce.'

~ Christine Gardner

What role does modest fashion play?

Modesty is not to be confused with meekness. The campaigns talk about modesty as a form of power. It is similar to the function of the *hijab*, or head covering, for Muslim women. The hijab forms a kind of community, a physical manifestation that joins women together. It also portrays women's power over men, because it suggests that if they were to reveal their bodies, men would be lusting after them.

There's room on campus for religious freedom...
...very little room.

Her application for a graduate nursing program included a requirement to participate in abortions.

See her story.
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So if they veil their bodies, they maintain and conserve that power.

What did you find missing from the campaigns?

The campaigns largely avoid talk of sexuality as sacrifice or suffering. But of course it's not sexy to talk about sacrifice and suffering to young people who are raised in a sexualized culture. On the other hand, perhaps this is where the evangelical church is selling out too fast. Language of sacrifice and suffering can be transformative to those who know that sex sells everything from cars to deodorant and, now, abstinence. It's a new kind of asceticism for the generation that has it all.

Instead of trying to master the idioms of the day, we could emphasize the difference the gospel message makes. The gospel is radical enough all on its own, even without the music of Usher or Beyoncé in the background. It's truly an alternative lifestyle. I think that too could be very persuasive among our media-savvy young people. That language of sacrifice and suffering for the purpose of worship to God, and understanding our sexuality as a gift of God, is key.

How might this self-fulfillment language potentially impact a future marriage?

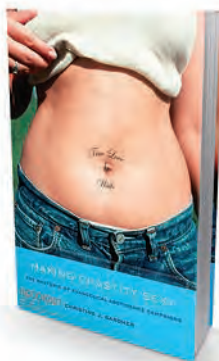
I'm concerned that we may be raising a generation of abstinent teens but setting them up for divorce. I don't

think that you need to promise fabulous sex in marriage to make marriage winsome. If we are focusing on great sex in marriage as a reward for abstinence now, then when those young people marry and the sex isn't great—then what? I'm afraid we are making marriage all about sex. So if it's not that, then what is marriage?

You suggest that abstinence is part of a larger endeavor.

By daily acting on that commitment, young people understand through their bodies what it means to become more like Christ. It's essentially a call to holiness that the Scriptures give us. It's just like practicing scales on a piano if you want to become a concert pianist. It's practicing abstinence that allows young people to inhabit their faith commitments in practical and tangible ways.

The largest study and the most quoted critique is that these kinds of pledges only delay sexual debut by about 18 months. I wonder if a more richly theological undergirding to some of the programs could help lengthen those commitments. When the going gets rough, and there is no marriage partner on the horizon, and the abstinence pledge starts to grow cold and stale, what is going to be there for them? I hope that it's something more than a funny skit, a dramatic rock song, or a winsome testimony from a cute guy. I hope there is something deeper from God's Word that's going to stay with them.



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[MISSIONS]

A Fresh Call for U.S. Missionaries

Americans should focus less on 'Western guilt' and more on sharing the gospel.



By Bishop Hwa Yung of Malaysia

Work to Do Still: After two great mission centuries, there are still 1.6 billion unevangelized people globally, according to the World Evangelization Research Center.

IDA SCUDDER was the granddaughter of the first medical missionary sent by the American church. John Scudder, her grandfather, went to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1819, and later to India, as a missionary doctor.

Ida was born in 1870 and, after finishing school in the United States, returned to India to be with her ailing mother. But Ida's mind was made up: She would never be a missionary. She planned to go to Wellesley College, then marry and settle down in the States.

One night, three men in succession knocked on the door of her parents' home in South India. Each came with this request: "My young wife is dying in childbirth. Can you please come and save her?"

To each, Ida gave the same reply: "I know nothing about doctoring. My father is the doctor. I'll be glad to go with him to see your wife."

All three men—a Brahmin, another high-caste Hindu, and a Muslim—gave the same reply: "In my religion, no man outside the family is allowed into the women's quarters."

Ida couldn't sleep that night. Morning brought news that all three women had died in the night. Ida was never the same again. She graduated from Cornell Medical School in the first class open to women. Returning to India, she started a clinic for women, then a nursing school, then, finally, a medical school. Today Christian Medical College in Vellore remains one of the finest medical schools in India, having produced thousands of nurses and doctors to minister to millions in South Asia.

Stories like this are repeated many times, demonstrating the wonderful work of God among the hundreds of thousands of missionaries sent from American shores over the past 200 years. Many missionaries are remembered with deep affection in the countries they served, for the way they sacrificially brought the gospel. They went as evangelists and pastors, teachers and professors, doctors and nurses, agriculturalists and engineers. Many died in strange lands but have not been forgotten by those whose lives were changed forever by the message of Christ. There is little doubt that in sheer numbers and overall impact, the American church was the dominant force in foreign missions in the 20th century.

Despite such a legacy, many today are questioning the place and vitality of the American missions enterprise.

For example, we hear the call in ecumenical

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Evangelicals have traditionally preached the gospel in terms of hope after death. But today, many are turning to Christ because of what salvation means in the here and now.

discussions for a moratorium on missions, first made in the late 1960s and '70s. It is built on the presupposition that Western missions is a form of imperialism and prevents indigenous churches from maturing. One African pastor, John Gatu, asserted that "the churches of the third world must be allowed to find their own identity, and the continuation of the present missionary movement is a hindrance to this selfhood of the church." Filipino bishop emeritus Emerito P. Nacpil argued that "the most missionary service a missionary under the present system can do today in Asia is to go home."

Although these views do not represent those of many Western churches or majority-world ones, they nevertheless reverberate in the background of many missions discussions today, especially in mainline Christian circles.

Concern about imperialism is grounded in part on what I call the "Western guilt complex." The mistakes—the Crusades, the European wars of religion, and colonial expansion, plus slavery and related issues—have created tremendous angst in the minds of many Americans. When the mistakes of Western missions are thrown into the mix, the guilt complex becomes a potent brew, contributing to the partial loss of nerve in Western missions.

Another factor is the gradual decline of American prestige worldwide since World War II. Wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, plus the gradual emergence of a multipolar world, have left Americans with increasing self-doubt. Even a book like Samuel P. Huntington's

brilliant *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* ends with the troubling question of whether the West, including America, is "capable of stopping and reversing the internal processes of decay."

Add to this militant secularism, internal weaknesses in the American church, the inability of missions agencies to find recruits, and the continuing decline in missions giving, and we have on our hands a demoralized missions community.

Despite all this, the American foreign missions force is still the largest in the world. In addition, the American church is the largest source of funding for missions. To take just one example: At the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in Cape Town last year, of the \$16–17 million raised, some 80 percent came from Americans.

I am concerned that the negative realities noted above are discouraging the American church in its missionary efforts. I want to challenge the American church to persist in its missionary efforts globally. Let me do so by noting a few countertrends and ideas.

GOSPEL HOPE NOW

Evangelicals have traditionally preached the gospel in terms of eternal salvation and hope after death. But today, many are turning to Christ because of what salvation also means in the here and now.

For example, believers in many nations look to Christianity as the foundation upon

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which to build their societies. This is particularly true among so-called cultural Christians in China, but they are not the only ones. As far back as the 1950s, Indian theologian M. M. Thomas, once chair of the World Council of Churches' Central Committee, asserted that the gospel is "the foundation of a true secular humanism" on which to build a better world.

When many intellectuals from newer nations look to the West, they most desire its prosperity and freedoms. They long for their countries to become modern democracies with advanced economies. They do not buy into the secularization theory that suggests that the unique, finely balanced combination of democracy, political stability with checks and balances in government, civil society, human rights undergirded by a strong and just legal system, and an advanced economy with minimal corruption will emerge willy-nilly with modernization. They have looked at the 20th-century experiment called Marxism, perhaps the most secular of ideologies, and found it utterly wanting for either the prosperity or the freedoms they seek.

These intellectuals have reached the same conclusions as those of the late American legal scholar Harold Berman and the sociologist Rodney Stark: The moral values, legal principles, and psychological basis of the best modern Western civilizations came from their Christian history. Thus, many, like Chinese cultural Christians, see the gospel alone as able to provide adequate moral foundations for rejuvenating their nations.

My point is perhaps best summarized in a 2008 article in *The Times* (UK) by Matthew Parris, a journalist and former British Conservative MP. He reflects on a visit to Malawi, where he grew up as a missionary kid. He confesses that the visit challenged his present ideological beliefs and "has embarrassed my growing belief that there is no God." He came to see Christianity as necessary to effect changes in the mindset and culture. He wrote:

Now a confirmed atheist, I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs, government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people's hearts. It

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brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good. . . . Those who want Africa to walk tall amid 21st-century global competition must not kid themselves that providing the material means or even the knowhow that accompanies what we call development will make the change. A whole belief system must first be supplanted. And I'm afraid it has to be supplanted by another. Removing Christian evangelism from the African equation may leave the continent at the mercy of a malign fusion of Nike, the witch doctor, the mobile phone, and the machete.

THE BENEFITS OF GUILT

In a well-known paper from 1987 (expanded into the book *Translating the Message*), Lamin Sanneh, a Muslim convert to Christianity, made a counterintuitive argument. Formerly at Harvard and now at Yale, Sanneh explored whether the history of Christian missions justifies the Western guilt complex. Did Western missionaries actually help destroy indigenous cultures? He examined the vast Bible translation enterprise and concluded that through the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages, Christian missions actually helped preserve cultures and languages.

As he put it, "Christian missions are better seen as a translation movement, with consequences for vernacular revitalization, religion change and social transformation, than as a vehicle for Western cultural domination." I don't know of any serious scholar refuting Sanneh's thesis. But the larger point can be found in the answer to this question: Where does this guilt complex come from, and to what does it point?

We've witnessed many conquests and imperial expansions throughout world history. Many of these were done in the name of religion. But I am not aware of a society that has self-critically developed a guilt complex as deep and extensive over past mistakes as today's West. One can easily name a number of non-Western societies and nations that have practiced territorial expansions and various oppressions in the name of religion or national interests. In which of these do we find serious wrestling with guilt? I am not saying those from other cultural and religious traditions aren't able to develop guilt complexes. I am saying that, outside Western culture shaped



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by a Christian history, I do not see evidence of such a complex on a similar scale.

The point is this: The very fact of Western guilt may be one of the supreme evidences for the enduring validity of the gospel in the post-Christian West. For it shows that the gospel has the power to shape the conscience of a culture, even when its propositional claims have been forgotten or largely rejected by that culture. Seemingly, despite being abandoned by many Westerners, the gospel continues to simmer in an unquenchable manner in a society that once acknowledged Christ.

In a globalized world, the days of parochial thinking and action in missions are over. The task is far too big for any one group to manage on its own.

What do we conclude from this? That yes, Western guilt should lead to repentance for presumptuous, insensitive, ethnocentric, and triumphalistic missions. The wrong conclusion, however, is to suggest that we must forgo Western missions because such missions have lost integrity. The very guilt that troubles the Western conscience over past failures points to the moral power and enduring validity of the gospel. Without this burden of guilt, which the Spirit imparts, this world would be far more cruel, heartless, unjust, and oppressive than it is. Only when our hearts and our cultures have responded to the call of Christ and experienced the work of the Spirit can such a conscience develop on the sort of scale that we find in the West. Thus, the Western guilt complex properly understood is also a profound call to humble confidence and boldness in mission.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

So, how might Americans respond to the call to missions? Allow me to suggest two steps.

First, the American church must recover a renewed confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul expressed his conviction clearly in Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes." Francis Schaeffer, commenting on this passage, said that "salvation has something to say not only to the individual man but also to the culture. ...

It is going to have the answers that men need ... because it is the power of God unto salvation in every single area; it has answers for both eternity and now."

Second, a renewed confidence must not lead Americans to forget past mistakes. As many have noted, when Americans go overseas, they need to go with a spirit of humility and servanthood. This means being willing to partner with believers from other cultures. Let me hasten to say that cultural imperialism is not solely an American disease, but can also be seen at times among other Western missionaries, Koreans, Nigerians, Singaporeans, and Chinese. But Americans who are rich in education and finances and many types of expertise need to be reminded of this as much as anyone.

In a globalized world, the days of parochial thinking and action in missions are over. The task is far too big for any one group to manage on its own. The way forward has to be one of genuine Christian partnership between Western and non-Western churches, and between the rich and the poor, whether materially or spiritually.

An example from the 2010 Lausanne Congress: Many of the people who worked behind the scenes to make the Congress a success came from the States. I have heard complaints about Western and American dominance in the program. Having worked as a member of the Congress Management Team for over four years, I do not find those complaints justifiable. There was a determined effort to make Lausanne a truly global movement and to embrace leadership from the majority world—in spite of the fact that the bulk of funding came from the U.S. I cannot say that this is the attitude of all American funders. But this is one highly significant example, among others, that has demonstrated a maturity in vision and partnership.

The key question is, how can the vast resources of Western Christianity on the one hand, and the vitality and dynamism of non-Western Christianity on the other, become a powerful synergistic whole for world evangelization? As we ponder the possibility that the 21st century may indeed be, in the words of Pope John Paul II, the "great century" for the advance of the gospel, this may well be the most important and urgent issue on the global missions agenda today. 

Hwa Yung is the bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia.

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Bible in One Hand,

Eilat Mazar is unafraid to claim archaeological finds of biblical proportions. *By Gordon Govier*

Spade in the Other

W

HEN THE RIBBON WAS CUT to dedicate Jerusalem's newest archaeological attraction last summer, Eilat Mazar stood among the dignitaries like a proud parent.

The 56-year-old Israeli archaeologist didn't just direct the final excavation

that prepared the Ophel City Wall site for visitors. She also linked the silent stones with one of the Bible's most eminent and holy kings: Solomon.

The Ophel lies just below the Temple Mount and above the City of David, the oldest area of Jerusalem. It is one of the most authentic locations for pilgrims to "walk where Jesus walked." Now it is possible to stand in the shadow of massive walls that date back to the First Temple.

"The Bible describes how King Solomon built the walls of Jerusalem in 1 Kings 3:1," Mazar told *Christianity Today*. "I'm suggesting that what we've revealed can be related quite safely to King Solomon."

Such a bold biblical connection from a modern Israeli archaeologist is rare. It provokes other archaeologists (except for evangelical ones), but it also exposes how the discipline has changed over the past several decades. Biblical archaeology has become a field of scientists who are self-conscious about the biblical pursuits that guided—and sometimes misguided—the discipline during earlier years.

APOLOGETIC ARCHAEOLOGISTS

Archaeologists of the early 20th century who linked their discoveries with biblical stories occasionally found that later evidence or more refined scrutiny called their judgments into question. Such premature connection is an indictment that has hung around the neck of biblical archaeology for so long that some archaeologists today are more apt to apologize for biblical connections than to trumpet them.

But not all. In the July/August 2011 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* (BAR), editor Hershel Shanks chided Israeli archaeologist Ronny Reich for asserting that hypothetical biblical connections should be saved until after the archaeological evidence has been properly sorted out. Shanks believes that Mazar, in her willingness to make the biblical hypothesis sooner rather than later, is not wrong. Speaking of another excavation that Mazar suggests is King David's palace, Shanks wrote that Mazar was simply following the scientific method: "Eilat had a hypothesis, and she wanted to test it by digging."

How many archaeologists today are willing to admit to testing a biblical hypothesis? In 1998, the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), the main professional organization for archaeologists working in the Middle East, changed the name of its magazine from *Biblical Archaeologist* to *Near Eastern Archaeology* in order to separate itself from that modus operandi. Mazar, on the other hand, seems more like her grandfather and the archaeologists of earlier generations.

Benjamin Mazar was one of Israel's most distinguished archaeologists. From 1953 to 1961, he also served as president of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Mazar learned her earliest lessons in archaeology from him long before she earned her Ph.D. from the Hebrew University, where she is now on staff at the Institute of Archaeology.

Benjamin Mazar directed excavation of the Ophel area for over a dozen years, beginning in 1968. His granddaughter was glad for



the chance to return to the area. "It's actually a dream come true," she said of the new archaeological park. "Now people can come and witness for themselves how impressive these fortifications are and why we're suggesting dating them to King Solomon."

A DISPUTED DISCOVERY

Mazar believes that the centerpiece of the discovery is the Water Gate gatehouse mentioned in Nehemiah 3:26–27.

Dutch-born archaeological architect Leen Ritmeyer begs to differ. He worked in the Ophel area with both Mazar and her grandfather in the 1970s and 1980s.

On his blog, Ritmeyer wrote that he suggested to Mazar 25 years ago that she excavate the area to see if it was a gate. But instead of excavating, he reports, she called a news conference and simply announced the discovery of the Water Gate.

"My suggestion that the building in question could have been a gateway was just a working proposal meant to give guidance as to where to dig and investigate. [It] was not ready for media consumption the next day," he told CT by e-mail.

Ritmeyer now believes the actual Water Gate was not at the Ophel but farther down the slope of the Kidron Valley. He believes what Mazar calls the Water Gate was only a

storage facility and water-distribution point.

Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* also noted objections from Israel Finkelstein, a professor at the Tel Aviv University Institute of Archaeology: "If indeed this is a fortification, the findings indicate it was built in a later stage of the kingdom—after Solomon's era."

Finkelstein is the chief proponent of the Low Chronology, which re-dates archaeological findings from the 10th century B.C. This method of dating minimizes the significance of David and Solomon, suggesting that they were minor chieftains rather than major rulers. The Low Chronology is based in part

a biblical archaeologist, as some of her colleagues might. She likes the terminology.

"Look, when I'm excavating Jerusalem, and when I'm excavating at the City of David, and when I'm excavating near the Kidron Valley and near the Gihon Spring and at the Ophel—these are all biblical terms," she said. "So it's not like I'm here because it's some anonymous place. This is Jerusalem, which we know best from the Bible."

Nor is Mazar self-conscious about declaring that she excavates with the Bible in one hand and a spade in the other—a description sometimes used to scornfully dismiss archaeologists

Mazar learned from her grandfather how to relate to the Bible: 'Pore over it again and again, for it contains within it descriptions of genuine historical reality.'

on the paucity of archaeological evidence for David and Solomon's rule in Jerusalem itself.

That's why the small fragment of writing that went on display in a museum at the west end of the Ophel—at the same time the Solomonic Wall was dedicated—may be a more important discovery still.

While carefully sifting the dirt dug out from around this section of the wall, Mazar's team discovered a 3/4-by-1-inch fragment of a clay tablet inscribed in Akkadian cuneiform script. The tablet was dated to the 14th century B.C.—the oldest writing ever found in Jerusalem. "It's very small, but it does tell much because it was written by a very highly skilled scribe," Mazar said.

The dating puts it in the period of the Amarna Letters, a cache of correspondence sent from vassal Canaanite kings to the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten. Six of the letters were from Abdi-Heba, the ruler of Jerusalem.

Little archaeological evidence of the Jerusalem of Abdi-Heba has been uncovered either. This has led Mazar and other defenders of David's and Solomon's significance to suggest there is much yet to discover about Jerusalem from archaeology. Pronouncements based on absence of evidence can change quickly with a new discovery. She notes that important areas of the City of David are still unexcavated.

THE FUTURE OF 'BIBLICAL' ARCHAEOLOGY

Mazar doesn't shy away from being called

of earlier years who were trained more in biblical studies than in archaeological technique.

"I don't believe these [modern] archaeologists who ignore the Bible," she said. "To ignore the written sources, especially the Bible—I don't believe any serious scholar anywhere would do this. It doesn't make any sense."

That Mazar is a serious scholar is without question. "She's a good archaeologist," said Lawrence Geraty, a former ASOR president. "She understands stratigraphy, she knows biblical history; I don't think she can be dismissed out of hand. Critics want to disparage her work because they have an agenda that doesn't allow the Bible to contain accurate history."

Ten years ago, archaeologist James Hoffmeier of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School convened a conference just outside Chicago, attended by a small invited group of evangelical and conservative Jewish scholars. "The Future of Biblical Archaeology" raised the question of whether biblical archaeology even had a future, as Finkelstein's theories gained credence and even more-minimalist views of the Bible's historicity gained a wider hearing.

In the intervening years, archaeologists working at sites such as Khirbet Qeiyafa and Khirbet en-Nahas have found new evidence for a centralized Judean monarchy during the time of David and Solomon. The pendulum is swinging away from the biblical minimalists.

At the same time, a better-trained generation of evangelical archaeologists is taking the field. "Many of us who are working in the field

are far more cognizant of our need to be scientific, to employ the latest methodologies, to have our work critically evaluated by our peers and not just by our friends,” said Hoffmeier.

Mazar was not at the August 2001 conference, but Hoffmeier thinks she would have been comfortable in a group that values the Bible for its historical information.

A HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

Mazar calls the Bible a historical document. But she also says that it needs to be tested and examined. While evangelicals can appreciate her vigorous defense of the Bible as an independent narrative in the field of biblical archaeology, she does not view it as holy writ.

“I’m not religious,” she said. “The only interest we share is interest in historical sources, either the Old Testament or the New Testament. Everything [in the Bible] is important to me in order to be examined or studied.”

She wrote in a 2006 *BAR* article, “One of the many things I learned from my grandfather was how to relate to the biblical text: Pore over it again and again, for it contains within it descriptions of genuine historical reality.”

The leading archaeologists of the early 20th century who worked with Mazar’s grandfather—such as William F. Albright, G. Ernest Wright, and Nelson Glueck—believed that the findings of archaeology supported and did not contradict the Bible. Evangelical archaeologists still hold to that.

“When I teach archaeology to my students, I will make that statement,” said Steven Ortiz, a professor of archaeology at Southwestern Baptist Seminary, co-director of excavations at Tel Gezer, and an attendee of Hoffmeier’s conference. “Archaeological finds help us interpret the Bible accurately.”

Hoffmeier agrees. “Some archaeological discoveries have challenged particular interpretations of the Bible,” he said. “One of the problems with the Wright and Albright school was that they had created an expectation of what archaeology could do in terms of discovering the Joshua conquest. They created an expectation that archaeology couldn’t deliver. And so people saw that failure as a failure of the Bible.”

“I would say that archaeology has not contraverted Scripture,” said Geraty. “But it has not always supported our previous interpretation and understanding of Scripture. So we’ve had to take another look to see how

we could help the two relate constructively to each other.”

Ortiz compares today’s biblical archaeology to *CSI*, the television show in which sophisticated techniques are used to gather clues that solve murders and other crimes. “We have enough circumstantial evidence to reconstruct historical events,” he said about today’s better-equipped excavators. Archaeologists of earlier years were after

the smoking gun, and sometimes came up disappointed.

MORE DISCOVERIES AHEAD

In 1997, *BAR* published an article by Mazar cataloging the clues that suggested the remains of the palace of King David could be found in the northern section of the City of David. This area, previously filled with orchards and off-limits to archaeologists, was now open for

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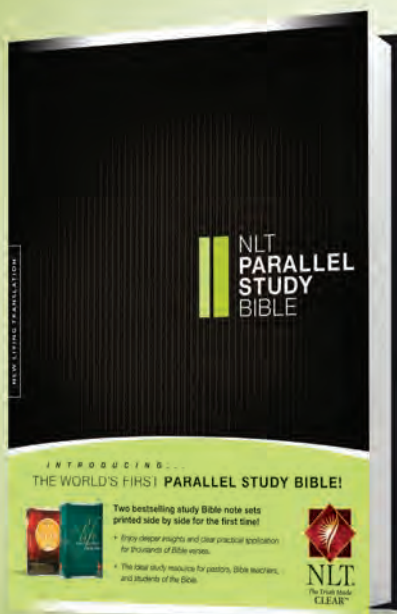
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excavation. “Who will heed the call to find King David’s palace?” she asked.

Mazar secured financing and began to dig in 2005. Soon the diggers uncovered the remains of what she called the Large-Stone Structure. The impressive size of the remains made it clear this was no ordinary building. Diagnostic pottery tests allowed for a 10th century B.C. date. Mazar announced that the most logical conclusion was that she

had found the remains of King David’s palace.

While a palace of King David and the gated walls of King Solomon are impressive, Mazar is clearly more impressed by the tiny discoveries that have come out of her excavations. The tablet fragment of Akkadian script is just one example.

One of her supervisors working inside the Large-Stone Structure spotted raised letters on a flattened ball of clay about the size of

a fingernail. Called a *bullā*, it was the seal impression from an important document. It read, “Belonging to Jehucal, son of Shelemiah, son of Shovi.”

Jehucal, the son of Shelemiah, is mentioned in Jeremiah 37:3 and 38:1 as one of the officials serving King Zedekiah. Describing how she deciphered the inscription, Mazar wrote, “I felt as though I had just resurrected someone straight out of the Bible.”

Three years later, as work continued outside of the structure, a *bullā* was unearthed with the name of one of Jehucal’s colleagues: Gedaliah, the son of Pashhur, also mentioned in Jeremiah 38:1.

“That is why archaeology is so fascinating,” said Mazar. “It’s written in the Bible, and then we find these seal impressions. It demonstrates that this biblical story is so accurate.”

The fact that Mazar works in the City of David, which is also part of the Arab village of Silwan, engenders additional criticism. The Elad Foundation, which is working to strengthen the Jewish connection to Jerusalem, has been reclaiming the land parcel by parcel from Arab occupants and provides funds for Mazar and other excavations.

Mazar defends the work being done, saying that the excavations are under the auspices of the Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University, using the best and most accurate archaeological practices and without a political agenda. She believes her archaeology speaks for itself.

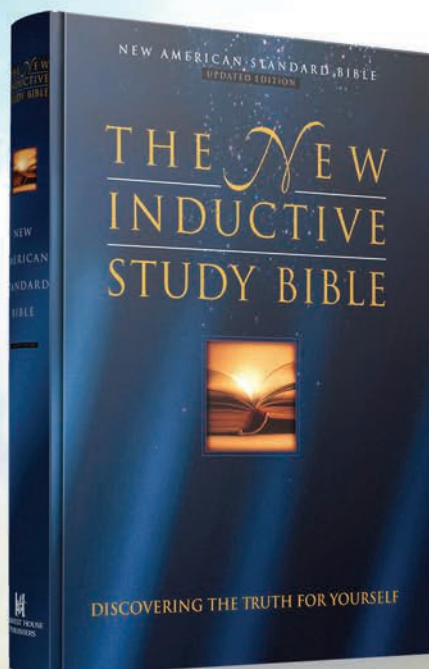
“When you go on a site, you use the best archaeological methods that you know of,” she said. “You put aside all theories and start working. Then the site itself—what’s revealed—comes up, whatever it is. Either it supports what you had in mind to find, or not.”

Mazar accepts the criticism as part of the territory that goes with excavating in Jerusalem. She appreciates the honor of working in one of the world’s most interesting historical cities. And she anticipates that digging further will add more to our understanding of the Bible and the biblical world.

“The Bible could have told us more about what David and Solomon did, because what we see now is so impressive,” she said. “I have a very strong feeling we are just at the beginning. There is much to be revealed in ancient Jerusalem.”

Gordon Govier is editor of *ARTIFAX* and produces *The Book and the Spade* radio program.

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Once we know who God is, we can grasp where he was on 9/11.

Paul O. Bischoff
Rockford, Illinois

Surveying the Cross

In his compelling article "The Gospel at Ground Zero" [September], Russell D. Moore's view of the Atonement bears an all-too-typical reduction of the Cross to its effects and benefits. As he says, "In the . . . Cross, God tell us he knows all our traumas, our insurgencies, our secrets—and that he has already executed them at Golgotha."

But Moore failed to subordinate the effects of the Cross to its ontological significance. It is not just my personal secrets that are murdered on the cross. God is murdered on that cross. A powerless, crucified God who has humbled himself is behind the apostle Paul's message of "Christ crucified." Once we know who God is, we can grasp where he was on 9/11.

As far as it went, Moore's article challenges the navel contemplation of revivalist-pietistic American evangelicalism. What he left out would have strengthened his argument and needed emphasis on the spiritual combating fire-fights located in "fighting the right war."

PAUL O. BISCHOFF
Rockford, Illinois

Remembering History

I was saddened by Will Willimon's response in "How I Have Changed Since 9/11" [September]. He doesn't understand the Cross at all if he thinks that is the worst day in history. All my life, it has been called Good Friday. This is the second best day in history.

Had Christ not been crucified, he could not have been gloriously resurrected. He died on that cross for our sin as was God's plan. I pray that no one blames all Muslims for 9/11, just as no one should blame the Jewish clergy for Christ's death.

PAULA KUHFUS
Radcliffe, Iowa

In "How I have Changed Since 9/11," Philip Yancey wrote, "Imposing democracy on Iraq and Afghanistan has come at a terrible cost to all parties, with no guarantee of long-term success." Anne Graham Lotz added to the anxiety of this present age by listing several recent catastrophes and "the inability to win the war in Afghanistan" as evidence that we are all doomed if we don't repent now.

I was a seminary student when 9/11 happened. This event inspired me to

become an Army chaplain, and I have not regretted this decision. When I was deployed to Afghanistan, I saw a lot of dedicated troops exhaust themselves to help this nation. These troops exemplified touching examples of faith in Christ.

Great things have been accomplished in Iraq and Afghanistan. We brought the war away from the cities and towns of our great nation, and we fought the terrorists in their own backyard, which made our country safer. The biggest benefit: There hasn't been an attack since then.

DENNIS STAHLNECKER
Newberg, Oregon

Praising the Ordinary

One might think it unlikely to use the image of an evangelical "superstar" to reflect the virtue of things plain and

ordinary. Yet Tim Stafford proves John Stott to be a worthy example of the oxymoron ["A Plain, Ordinary Christian," September]. It is always a blessing when gifted leaders maintain humility enough that they do not

distract from the True Source of power in ministry.

RON OGDEN
Winona Lake, Indiana

War of the Word

The editorial "Battle for the Bible Translation" [September] was *ct* at its

TOP 3 What got the most comments in September's *CT*

22%
**The Lasting
Effects of Your
School
Spotlight**

22%
**How I Have
Changed Since
9/11**
CT Forum

19%
**Battle for the
Bible Translation**
CT Editorial

READERS' PICK The most praised piece in September's *CT*



**'A Plain, Ordinary
Christian'**
Tim Stafford

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

CT'S EDITORS WOULD LOVE TO HEAR THEM.

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best: courageously putting forth sane, reasoned, biblical, and wise counsel on a debate in the church that has often fallen short on all four counts. Yes, let us defend the Bible, but also let's make sure it is the Bible and not some other agenda that we are defending.

MICHAEL G. MAUDLIN
Senior Vice President, HarperOne
New York, New York

I agree with your recent editorial on Bible translation. As a youth pastor, I teach from Today's New International Version (dynamic equivalence). Young people will wonder, "Why is the Bible speaking only to men?" if their Bibles use *men* and *brothers* where "all Christians" was intended.

As their biblical literacy grows, formal equivalence translations can only add to students' understanding, but solid dynamic equivalent translations like the 2011 NIV and the TNIV are an important part of their formative discipleship.

ANDREW I. SHEPARDSON
Highlands Ranch, Colorado

How to Obey

David Neff's helpful perspective on "Criminalizing Circumcision" [September] calls for clarification on one point.

Noting that Christians thought circumcision would "prevent unity among Jesus' followers," Neff describes Paul as "first out of the gate with his letter to the Galatians," specifically, "If you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you" (Gal. 5:2, ESV). But is Paul, the self-described Jew, really seeking to abolish a tenet of the Torah essential to Jewish identity?

The Jerusalem elders clear him of exactly this charge in Acts 21:24. The next verse in Galatians makes Paul's intention clear: "I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law." The only "man" in a position to accept circumcision is a Gentile; Jewish men were already circumcised at eight days old. Paul warns Gentiles away from ritual circumcision, but supports Jewish identity—with this biblical marker—for Jews who follow Jesus.

As Paul might put it himself: Are Jewish identity and faith in the Jewish Messiah incompatible? By no means!

RUSSELL RESNIK
Executive Director
Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations
Albuquerque, New Mexico



ONLINE POLL
PULPIT ENDORSEMENTS
Do you look to your pastor for advice on politics? (check all that apply)

3%
Yes, I look for guidance on political issues.

2%
Yes, I look for guidance for what kinds of candidates to support.

13%
Maybe; I look for broader principles related to politics.

82%
No, I don't look to my pastor specifically for political advice.

Total votes: 293

(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.

"Marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. What if Christ left us when we became sick and when we forget about him? This happens daily because of our sinful nature, but Jesus is gracious enough to see us through."

Didi, one of many to express disappointment in Pat Robertson's comments regarding Alzheimer's.

CT Liveblog: "Pat Robertson Says Divorce Okay if Spouse Has Alzheimer's," by Tobin Grant

"In societies where women in underwear are used to sell everything from toothpaste to tombstones, all of us are victims."

Steve Skeete, noting how ubiquitous sexualized images hurt men and women alike.

Her.meneutics, "MIA: Men Who Don't Use Pornography," by Amy Julia Becker

"Just because fathers are told to teach their children does not mean others can't help."

Kaye, on the importance of youth groups, especially with kids whose parents are not Christian. A new film claims youth groups harm families and go against Scripture.

CT Entertainment Blog: "Are Youth Groups Biblical?," by Todd Hertz

"There needs to be more unity within the church and less bickering about who gets the spotlight."

Carl, noting the absence of Christianity at 9/11 10th anniversary events. Many were upset that the Christian faith was underrepresented at national remembrances, or felt that certain denominations were snubbed.

CT Politics: "Evangelicals Left Off 9/11 Memorial Events," by Alicia Cohn



CUYLER BLACK / INHERITTHEMIRTH.COM

Fighting Famine Isn't Enough

Some 2,000 Somalis die of starvation daily. Drought isn't the reason.

Drought is an ecological disaster, born of little or no rain. Drought is weather-made. Famine is man-made. It's politically induced," said Brian Stiller, the new global ambassador for the World Evangelical Alliance, after his recent trip to Somalia.

Moved by the prospect that 750,000 Somalis may starve in coming months, Stiller and Aiah Foday-Khabenje, a Kenyan evangelical leader, flew to Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, to survey the situation.

Foreign Policy magazine recently ranked Somalia as the worst nation-state in the world. It cannot control its borders or feed its people, and has become a safe haven for pirates and terrorists. An October truck bomb killed 70 in Mogadishu. The Horn of Africa has never been as dysfunctional as it is now.

Describing Mogadishu, Stiller told *Christianity Today*, "It seemed like Berlin after the Second World War, just devastated, shot-down, broken-down, bombed-out. People scurry and scramble to scratch out an existence. You really feel like you are in a lawless land." A Somali warlord accompanied by five soldiers toting AK-47s befriended Stiller and Foday-Khabenje and escorted them throughout the city.

There is no question that Somalis, especially mothers and young children, are dying daily from starvation. On his tour, Stiller stopped by one tent in an overcrowded camp. A man had just delivered a rolled-up mat containing the corpse of a small child. "I looked outside the tent," said Stiller. "Here was a woman with her head on her knees, weeping. I thought, *This is normal*, until the man said, 'Sir, this is the third son she's lost this week.'"

Christians should not hesitate to feed the starving and care for the sick, homeless, and needy, no matter the cause of their suffering. After being chased out of Somalia in 2010, faith-based aid agencies have a critical role in border-area relief efforts. The Dadaab camp,

for instance, is home to 400,000 refugees in Kenya just across the Somali border. There is a shortfall of \$900 million in the estimated \$3 billion of total aid needed in Somalia and the region.

But famine cannot be defeated by food aid alone. Brought on by war and other complex underlying causes, famine calls for Christians to develop a comprehensive response. The tyranny of urgently needed, short-term famine relief should not lessen our commitment to a big-picture agenda.

Stiller said, "We aren't naïve when we look at Somalia. It's lawless, without fear." The leaders who hosted the two Christian men were puzzled about why they had come to Mogadishu. Stiller responded, "You matter to God."

Yet such a statement can sound like a spiritual platitude if it isn't backed by Christians committed to political reform and something much more basic: spiritual and moral renewal. "The worst places are often the places that God is there by his Spirit working, conspiring to do the will of the Father. I just love being part of his conspiracy," Stiller said.

That sounds like music to the ears of every mission-minded Christian. But many of Somalia's new leaders are Islamic fundamentalists. They have no love for the gospel or the West. Somalia's 10 million people do not have a visible church. Little or no religious freedom exists, and the new government has

no plan in place to provide it.

As Stiller and Foday-Khabenje cleared airport security in Mogadishu to return home, they saw a young Somali worker wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the words, "This is true: John 3:16." "Do you know what's on your T-shirt?" Stiller asked.

The man replied in clear English, "Yes, I do. It is true." Stiller met a number of Somalis

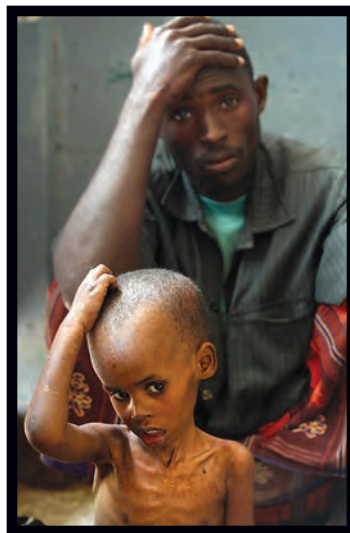
who had returned to their homeland to rebuild. Only a handful of the world's Somali Christians actually live in Somalia. These expat believers may provide a fresh foundation for Christian engagement in Somalia.

A biblical worldview can provide the framework for a new government that is accountable to the people, limited in its powers, and provides equal protection under the law. In post-conflict South Africa, Liberia, and

Rwanda, Christians influenced the process in a lasting and positive way. That can happen in Somalia too.

Shelter, medicine, drinking water, and 1,950 calories per day can arrest a famine, and make no mistake: there is a heart-breaking famine under way in Somalia. But the church's overall approach should treat the fever of famine while curing the underlying disease.

This is the kind of crisis that the church historically has turned into an opportunity to enact God's plan for all peoples and nations. ✚



The tyranny of urgently needed, short-term famine relief should not lessen our commitment to a big-picture agenda.

*Faith-based
Priorities*

What should be the defining issue of the 2012 presidential race?

WISDOM

Amy E. Black is associate professor of political science and chair of the department of politics and international relations at Wheaton College in Illinois.

Forecasting election outcomes is dangerous business, but I can make one prediction with reasonable certainty: Whomever we elect President next year will face significant challenges on at least one political issue that affects millions of lives and costs billions of government dollars, yet no one will debate it in the course of the presidential campaign.

In the buildup to the 2000 election, who could have predicted that the person elected President would face three coordinated terrorist attacks on our own soil and lead the nation into its longest war? As we prepared to vote in 2008, few expected that uprisings across North Africa and the Middle East would topple autocratic regimes and threaten several others.

As we evaluate the 2012 presidential candidates, we should think first and foremost about choosing the person we trust most to make wise decisions on whatever broad range of issues will come his or her way. We should choose the candidate who demonstrates the best judgment.

Every official campaign publication, every public speech by the candidate and his or her representatives, every utterance, however scripted or off-the-cuff, is significant. All of these communications explicitly or implicitly receive the candidate's approval and reveal aspects of his or her character. We expect rhetoric will be hard-hitting and tough, but we should also expect it to be accurate and fair. Those who are quick to distort and skirt the edge of the truth publicly are even less likely to make wise choices when no one appears to be looking.

It is always a great challenge to discern the difference between genuine expression and calculated pandering. One way that may help minimize distortions is to consider the totality of the evidence. Evaluate the campaign as a whole by asking questions such as: What are the central themes? What kind of tone does the campaign set? What messages are repeated consistently?

Words are easy to script, but actions are not. Look to the candidates' actions over many years and see what patterns emerge. Is the candidate loyal and a person who engenders loyalty in followers? Do you see someone willing to admit mistakes and learn from them? After leaving jobs or positions, does the candidate appear to have left people and places better able to thrive, or do you see evidence of destruction in his or her wake?

After considering all of the evidence, ask one final question: If your life or the lives of those you love most were in peril, whom would you instinctively trust to respond with wisdom and grace?

We entrust the President with thousands of decisions over the next four years that will affect our lives and those of hundreds of millions of others. A wide range of domestic and international issues will enter and exit the spotlight during the President's term. For a decision of this significance, wise judgment is the issue that matters most.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Chris Seiple is president of the Institute for Global Engagement and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Standard & Poor's July downgrade of America's credit rating stated the simple and stark truth: The emperor is naked and can't afford clothes. The fact that Republicans and Democrats reacted to the downgrade by pointing fingers at each other again, rather than taking responsibility, confirmed that this country's government has been unaccountable to its citizens, the world, and God.

The number one issue of the 2012 presidential election is accountability. Accountability begins with vision, certainty, and decisive consensus building. Vision requires an exceptional sense of who we are as a people and the role we play in the world. Americans are constitutionally called to critique and correct ourselves civilly through government. Vision also demands a strategy that prioritizes goals and resources.

Certainty does not validate dogmatic solutions. Certainty is a confident assurance based on facts. Decisive consensus building requires the ability to listen, to form a vision and strategy that will do the most good for the most people. Americans, markets, and countries worldwide



yearn for a humble and common vision of a governing system that is accountable.

The 2012 election will turn on the candidates' approach to some excruciatingly difficult decisions. Foremost, candidates should revisit the strategy, structure, and funding of our health and national security systems. "Reforming" organizational systems designed over 60 years ago for a completely different context will not guarantee future prosperity. Presidential candidates will need to boldly re-imagine the strategy, organizational structure, and budget for systems like health care and security.

Such vision and decisive consensus building should also suggest a way forward on permanent boundaries for congressional districts. The constant re-jiggering of boundaries for "safe" seats is the root of demonization politics. It encourages Americans to watch and read only those of the same opinion, even as Christians flirt with worshipping a God who always agrees with them.

For Christians who are Americans, it is useful to remember what the Bible teaches about accountability. Proverbs is clear: "Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you" (9:8, NKJV); for "he who regards a rebuke will be honored" (13:18) and will "get understanding" (15:32). Jesus taught his followers to "count the cost" (Luke 14:28), reminding them to always let their yes be yes, and their no, no (Matt. 5:37) while being "shrewd as snakes" and "innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16, NIV).

People of good will and theological conviction will come to different conclusions about the application of these principles. But it should also be clear to Christians that, as Americans, we too have been part of the problem. Indeed, if we seek to reform government without renewing our godly principles, we will surely fail.

Therefore, no matter our political conclusions, let us contribute them in a manner that testifies to God's glory and grace. There should be no other gods before him—simply because there is no one else to whom we can turn (John 6:68).

COMPREHENSIVENESS

Galen Carey is vice president of government relations for the National Association of Evangelicals.

Every election should be an act of worship for Christians. We should proclaim through our voting that Jesus is Lord. Those we elect are God's servants, accountable for their stewardship to the people and ultimately to God. Government is a gift from God for the common good, to uphold justice and righteousness.

A comprehensive perspective saves us from single-issue politics. We do our nation a disservice and sell our faith short when we narrow our focus to one or a few concerns. With such tunnel vision, we abandon the implications of Christianity for many important areas of public life. We risk conforming our views to a political party or movement's ideology rather than to a biblical vision.

The National Association of Evangelicals' publication "For the Health of the Nation" provides a good starting point for reviewing candidate and party platforms. It offers a biblical and theological grounding for evangelical civic engagement, and then outlines seven broad areas of concern: religious freedom, marriage and family, sanctity of life, poverty, human rights, peace, and creation care.

The President faces daunting challenges and responsibilities at home and abroad. In our volatile world, the President must be a peacemaker who will deploy all dimensions of American power responsibly, with an emphasis on diplomacy over force.

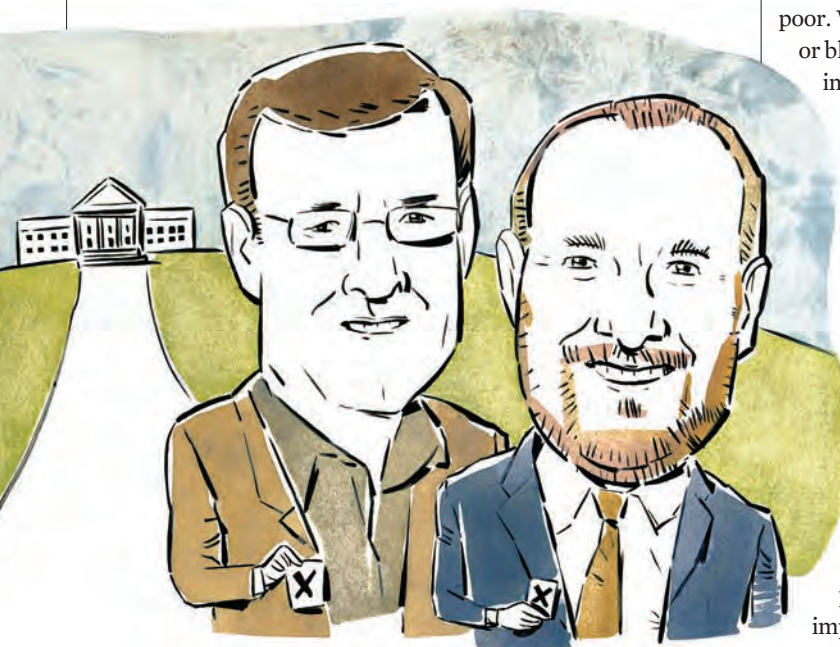
The American economy can no longer guarantee ever-expanding prosperity. For too long we have lived beyond our means. The Bible counsels contentment with what we have and generosity to those in need. While the process is messy, it is good that we are finally seriously discussing the national debt. In this era, leaders will be called to carefully allocate scarce resources. Experience has shown that spending cuts and revenue increases can both contribute to deficit reduction.

Biblical justice requires special attention to the needs of the poor. We should not balance our budgets on the backs of the poor or blame our problems on immigrants. Indeed, fixing our broken immigration system will contribute to greater prosperity for all.

Wisdom also suggests investing in future prosperity, even if that means deferring some current consumption. Our nation's moral foundations continue to erode as marriage and family are redefined, sex is debased, and life is unprotected. We need leaders who understand that marriage is more than a state-sanctioned sexual union of any two or more persons; it is fundamentally linked with the procreation, care, and nurture of children. We need leaders who understand that the well-being of mothers and their babies are intertwined, and that protecting the unborn is in everyone's interest.

Rhetoric should be evaluated against achievements. The issues are complex and interactive. Slogans often obscure more than clarify.

Let the debates begin! Let's do our homework and insist that the candidates do theirs. A thoughtful, intelligent campaign that addresses the full range of issues will itself be an important contribution to the health of the nation.





Intercultural Fiesta Fail

'We are all alike!' doesn't fly in a fly-infested hut in El Salvador.

The thinly thatched roof of the bamboo hut barely shades us from the tropical sun. The four women do not stop making tamales as my daughter introduces me to them. They smile shyly at me while tending the wood fire and tying the leaf-wrapped bundles with twine-like stems. The flies are thick. A baby sitting on the dirt floor surrounded by chickens cries. I try to look pleasant and non-judging.

"Will you come to the fiesta, then?" my daughter asks the mother and her grown daughters.

"Sí," they nod, glancing at me nervously.

The "intercultural fiesta" had been planned for months around my arrival in El Salvador, where my daughter is working in rural villages. The party was the perfect incentive for the women she works with—practicing songs and skits empowering them to resist domestic violence, an enormous problem in their country. I was part of the program. We would share our lives and learn from each other.

"They'll dress up as much as they can," my daughter tells me. So I dress down: a dress from Walmart, a plastic necklace, old vinyl sandals that stink when my feet sweat. I want to blend in, to be one of them, to not be what I really am: a rich American.

After a skit where my improvisation and faulty Spanish elicit a little too much laughter, we move on to a round of charades. The women act out their lives in the villages, and I do the same for my life in Alaska. For "work," they stand in a row and swing their arms gently back and forth. "Hoeing corn!" I shout out, while my daughter translates. They grin. For my turn, I mime standing in a skiff and pulling in a net heavy with fish. Because they have heard about this

already, they immediately guess "Fishing!" When I pantomime church, I bend my head to pray, I lift my hands to worship, and I enact Communion. They shout "prayer!" "Praising God!" "Communion!" with the excitement of recognition. Later, I teach them a hallelujah song.

My heart fills. Though we live 7,000 miles apart, we are women, we are mothers, we worship God—we share so much. I think of the apostle Paul's metaphor for the church,



that we are "many members, one body." I think of the mystery of the communion of the saints. I try to overlook the flies and the dirt to see these families as my neighbors. To love them.

But the we-are-all-alike glow doesn't last. Few of the women try to speak to me. The children are afraid of me. I am unable to eat the food served, because a previous meal has made me sick. They do not invite me to sit with them under the shade of the tarp. I ennoble them because of their brown skin and deep poverty. They ennoble me because

of my white skin and wealth. Despite their dressing up and my dressing down, we are clearly still "other" to one another, and nothing I do that day changes it.

Now, back home, I realize it is a travesty to try to erase what lies between us, which is not simply distance but skin color, language, education, worldview, lifestyle, life span, and myriad other real distinctions. Surely these matter.

The basis for loving our neighbors, and for unity in Christ, is not proximity, understanding, or commonality. We are one in Christ not because we are one and the same, but because Christ is the same. It is an impoverished theology that mistakes unity in Christ for sameness in Christ.

The perfection toward which we are heading, the extinction of our sin nature, will not blur us all into homogeneity. At Pentecost, a foretaste of heaven, the Holy Spirit did not repair the splintering of language begun at Babel, the miracle we would expect. Christ unified the multi-tongued hearers

not through the same language, but through the hearing of the same gospel.

No one at the fiesta that day would have mistaken me for anything but what I am. I'm relieved. Whatever borders I cross next—whether countries or church pews—I can give up the guilty fiction that I can *become* the other. I do know, however, that I can at least be *among* the other. There, among the women, I hope they marveled, as I did, that redemption is so wide it even includes a middle-aged *gringa* with bad Spanish and stinky feet.

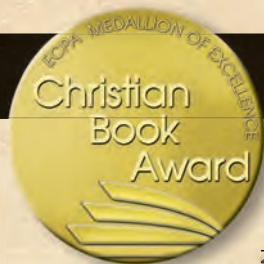
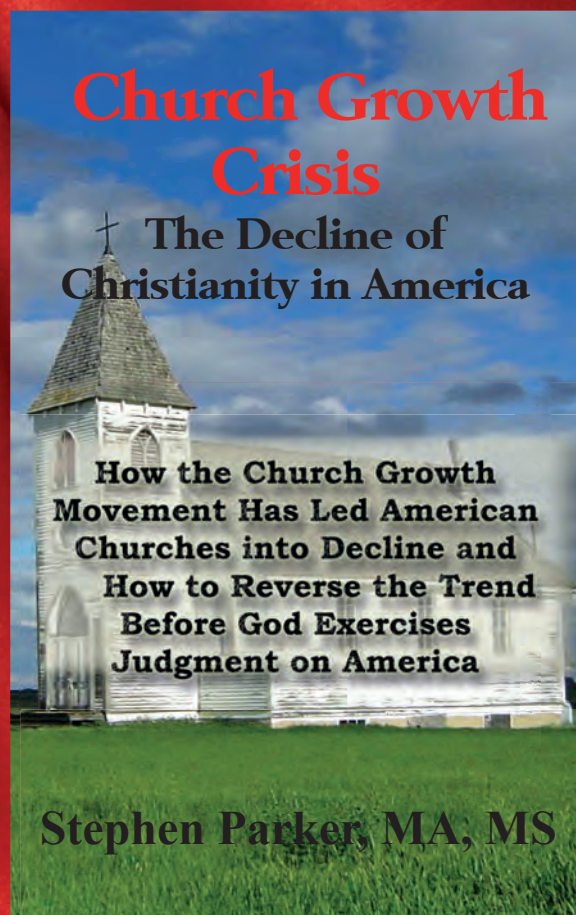
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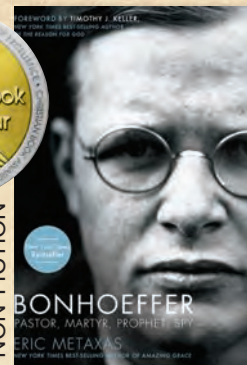
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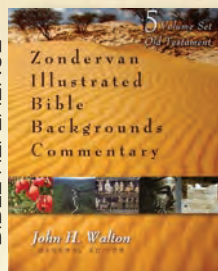
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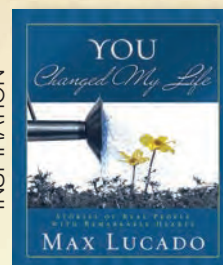
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A Big Family History

We're descended from Africans more than we realize.

Sometimes it is hard to remember just how I'm connected to some of my relatives. Beyond first cousins, it can be tricky to explain (or remember) what the relationship is. One of my cousins even calls himself my "imaginary cousin." (My father's parents fostered his mother. I don't know what that makes me to him. Yet we feel related.)

My father must have had a similar difficulty remembering family connections. After his death, I found a scroll (how positively biblical!) made of 10 sheets from a yellow legal pad. On the scroll, he diagrammed the descendants of my paternal great-grandmother's nine siblings. One of those nine had a daughter who married a prominent anti-alcohol crusader. He headed up the American Temperance Society and befriended Muslim leaders who appreciated Christians who didn't drink. I knew him as Uncle Billy, but I sure don't know how to label that relationship.

Like families, the church has a genealogy. And just as my family has regional concentrations in Illinois, Wisconsin, Arizona, and Pennsylvania, so the early church had regional concentrations in Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. Eventually, Jerusalem and Constantinople joined the list. Each center had a family history that helped the churches in their sphere know who they were and tell true believers from wayward ones.

Protestantism was, in part, an argument with Rome over the right version of the Western church's family history. The true heirs of the apostles who planted the church in Rome were those who treasured and taught true biblical faith, the Reformers taught, not necessarily those who occupied a place in a succession of officeholders.

This Western family dispute dominated, of course, because the other ancient centers of the Christian family fell to Muslim conquerors. Those other Christian communities no longer carried political clout in their

urban centers.

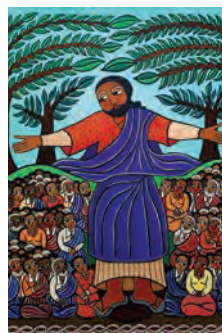
In recent decades, many Western Christians have rediscovered these communities and their family histories. This summer I read Thomas C. Oden's new book, *The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition*. Oden's tale centers on Alexandria, where the church produced both the early church's greatest defender of orthodoxy (Bishop Athanasius) and its most infamous heretic (Presbyter Arius).

Oden argues that we ought to take the Alexandrian church's tales of its own origins seriously, as seriously as I take my father's yellow scroll.

From various African sources, Oden reconstructs a church's memory of an African apostle, born in what is today Libya. Young John Mark's family migrated to Jerusalem, where he became one of Jesus' earliest followers and, significantly, the writer of the earliest Gospel. Mark's father was likely a cousin to Simon and Andrew, and their family home in Jerusalem became a focus of Christian activity. It was the place where the church prayed when Herod imprisoned Simon Peter. It was also likely the place where Jesus' core followers gathered to await Pentecost. John Mark became a key evangelist. His disappointing missions with Paul and Barnabas (another relative) are well known, but African Christians also remember his successful missions to his Libyan birthplace and then to Alexandria, the ancient seat of culture and learning in the region.

In 1 Peter, we find this verse: "She who is at Babylon . . . sends you greetings, and so

does Mark, my son" (ESV). Many interpreters treat *Babylon* as a code word for Rome. But Babylon was also a neighborhood in Alexandria, an urban enclave for expat Jews. That is where the African memory places Peter and Mark. The African church also remembers Mark's martyrdom, battered by being dragged through Alexandria's streets by horses.



Mark didn't die before he appointed successors in Libya and Egypt, just as Paul mentored leaders to follow him in places he evangelized. Mark's first convert, a shoemaker named Anianus, succeeded him. He heads the list of bishops, beginning in A.D. 68. In this era before New Testament

Scripture was canonized, knowing the spiritual "begats" of your fellowship of believers was important for validating your church's teaching. This genealogical approach to authority was never in tension with Scripture. As a matter of fact, the first authoritative list of our present New Testament books came from one of Mark's successors, Bishop Athanasius, in A.D. 367. The list originated in Alexandria, and was confirmed over the next 30 years by councils in Rome and Carthage. We have our New Testament because of the faithfulness of Mark's successors.

Engaging in dialogue with the ancient churches can remind us of those parts of our heritage—like the New Testament—that we may take for granted. And that can spur us on to be faithful in our own generation, that we might leave an inheritance to our family's next generation. ✚

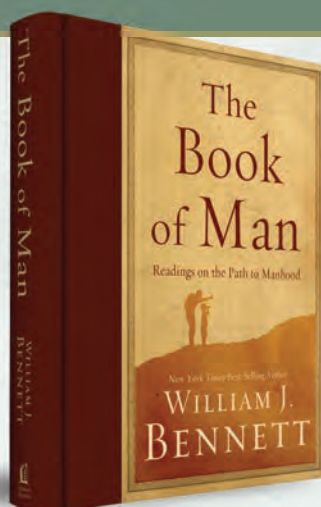
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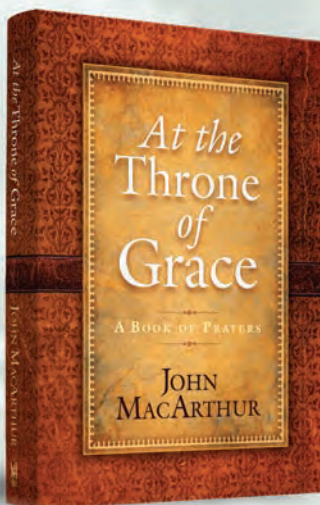
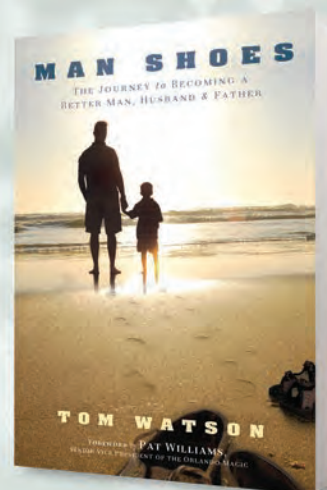


The Book of Man

New York Times best-selling author William J. Bennett uses profiles, stories, letters, poems, and myths to bring his subject to life, defining what a man should be, how he should live, and to what he should aspire in several key areas of life. A perfect Christmas gift for a father, son, or friend!

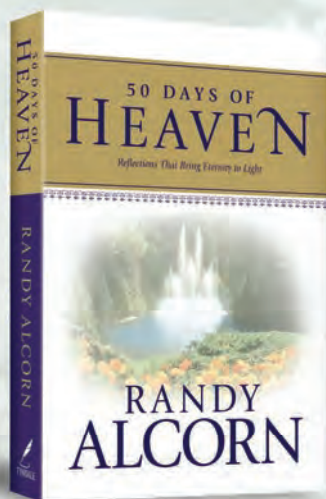
Man Shoes

All of us encounter challenges as we strive to live purposeful lives. *Man Shoes* is a powerful story of one man's journey through abuse, loss, restored hope, and deeper faith. This highly acclaimed little book is inspiring men and women throughout North America. A great Christmas gift they won't be able to put down! www.manshoes.net



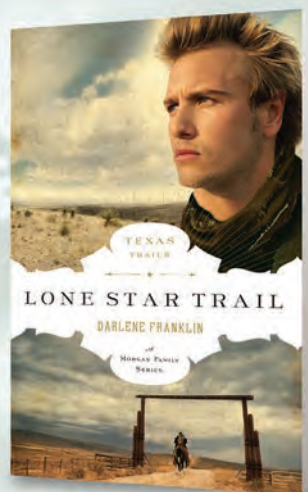
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From trusted Pastor John MacArthur comes a select collection of powerful Scripture readings and prayer offerings from a heart that is entrusted in God, proclaiming and obeying his Word, and calling others to do the same. This book will guide you in the most intimate way possible before God's throne of grace.



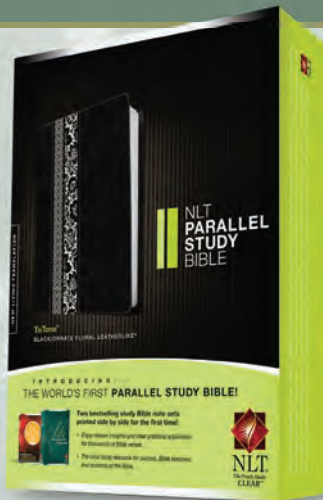
50 Days of Heaven

Based on the bestselling book *Heaven*, Randy Alcorn delivers the perfect gift in this devotional: *50 Days of Heaven*. This gift will be appreciated by those who want to know more about what the Bible says about heaven. This devotional will bring heaven to light one day at a time.



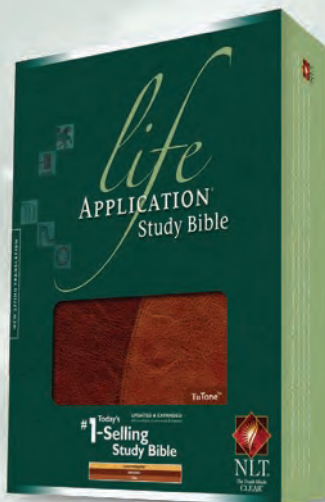
The Lone Star Trail

Jud Morgan's father died for Texas' freedom during the war for independence. German immigrant Wande Fleischer comes to this country to start a new life. As much as Jud dislikes the German invasion, he can't help admiring Wande. Can the rancher put aside his prejudice to forge a new future? TexasTrailsFiction.com



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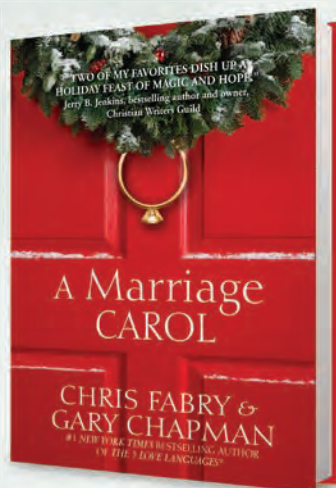
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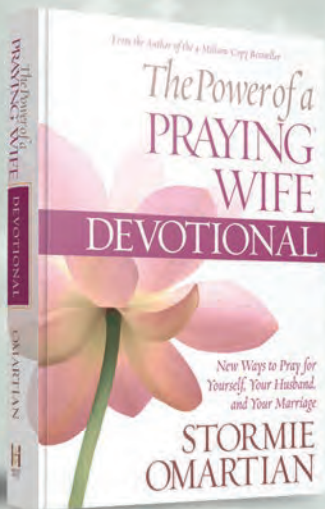
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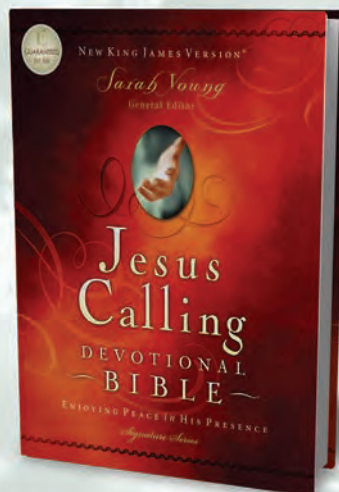


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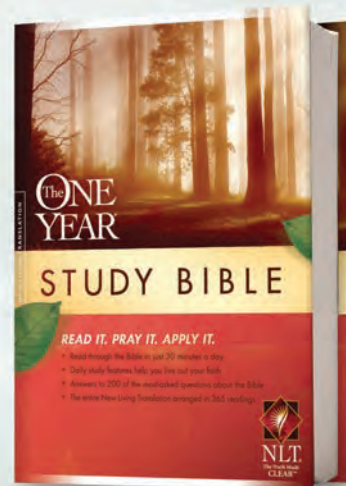
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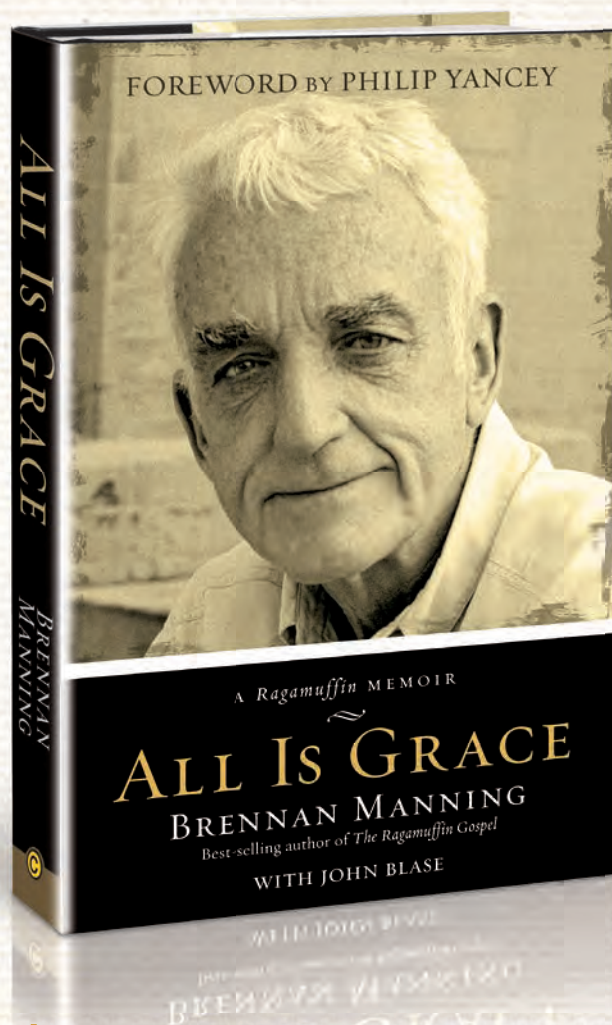


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Before he
was known as a
Ragamuffin...



Brennan Manning has gone by many names, but before the fame of his ragamuffin gospel, he was a son, brother, soldier, journalist, priest, husband, father, and friend. This is that part of the story, a necessary piece of the larger puzzle of grace. This book tells the story of a man whose name has not always been Brennan.



CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
MUSIC, AND
THE ARTS

Location, Location, Location

Particular places shape the biblical story, and each Christian life. By Jake Meador

Love in this world doesn't come out of thin air. It is not something thought up. Like ourselves, it grows out of the ground. It has a body and a place." So writes Wendell Berry in his breathtaking novel *Hannah Coulter*. If any four sentences can sum up the core thesis of Craig G. Bartholomew's **Where Mortals Dwell: A Christian View of Place for Today** (Baker Academic) ★★★★★, then surely it is these.

Bartholomew, a professor of philosophy, religion, and theology at Redeemer University College in Ontario, has written

what ought to become the introductory book for evangelicals interested in issues of place-making. While other evangelicals have written well on issues of land use and conservation—Lisa Graham McMinn and Megan Anna Neff's *Walking Gently on the Earth: Making Faithful Choices about Food, Energy, Shelter and More* (2010) comes to mind—Bartholomew's book engages more comprehensively with what the Bible has to say about place. For that reason alone, it is likely to appeal to a broad swath of readers, including

many evangelicals.

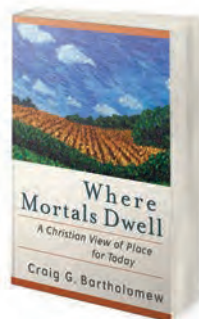
American Christians often struggle to understand the role of place in Scripture. Like much of Western philosophy generally, many recent forms of American evangelicalism marginalize or ignore the particular settings within which divine and human dramas unfold. We assume that place is trivial, merely incidental to the Bible's core message of salvation. And then, predictably enough, we read Scripture in such a way that our assumptions are confirmed. To such unwelcome habits, Bartholomew offers a bracing resistance.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF REDEMPTION

Bartholomew attempts to define *place* in the book's opening pages, but the concept tends to resist tidy definition. For most of us, the term conjures up highly evocative images, but we would struggle to give it a dictionary definition. Bartholomew offers a few principles to aid us: First, "[place] is a human concept," and "to be human is to be placed." Second, "place results from the dynamic interactions of humans and their particular location." Third, "although space and place are inseparable, place must be distinguished from space." These principles form the foundation of the book.

Bartholomew's opening chapters show the centrality of place in the Old Testament. When God speaks to Cain, he tells him that "the voice of your brother is crying out to me *from the ground*." The land itself tells of Abel's murder. God calls Abraham to a particular place, Canaan, and makes his pleasure

known to Israel through its eventual provision. And later, when God's judgment falls upon his wayward people, his punishment of choice is exile from the Promised Land. To contemporary Westerners who view particular places as incidental to their lives, the centrality of place in the Old



Testament can be quite jarring.

Yet it should not be surprising. From the very beginning, God's plan for creation was mediated through the particulars of a specific place and specific people. Genesis 1 speaks in grandiose, universal terms of God's plan for humanity to "fill the earth and subdue it" (1:28). It's a noble, epic calling, but to individual human beings, it can seem too large to be believed, much less realized. Until we continue reading. In Genesis 2, we find God focusing—focusing, not narrowing—the scope of that work. He does not give the creation mandate to Adam. Rather, to "the man of the ground" (*adama* means "ground" in Hebrew) he gives a very specific task: stay in the garden, work it, keep it. From the universal heights of the creation mandate, we immediately descend to the particular task of tending a garden and the failure of Adam and Eve to tend it well. This is the story of the Old Testament: emplacement in the garden, displacement on account of sin, and ever after, man's quest to be re-emplaced.

Turning to the New Testament, Bartholomew shows how the redemptive work of Jesus Christ fulfills this very quest. Just as the Cross does not replace the Old

To contemporary Westerners who view particular places as incidental to their lives, the centrality of place in the Old Testament can be quite jarring.

Testament sacrificial system, but embodies the perfect sacrifice that system foreshadowed, the New Covenant—open to all who confess Christ—does not erase dreams of a Promised Land, but announces the true kingdom those dreams were meant to envision. What the Cross is to the Mosaic sacrificial system, the New Jerusalem is to Eden and the Promised Land. God's new creation will be a restoration, not a negation, of the places we have known before.

Bartholomew illustrates this point by quoting N. T. Wright: "The point of the present kingdom is that it is the first-fruits of the future kingdom; and the future kingdom involves the abolition, not of space, time, or the cosmos itself, but rather of that which threatens space, time, and creation, namely, sin and death."

The Jesus who proclaimed this kingdom was not some abstract theologian-philosopher, bereft of earthly allegiances,

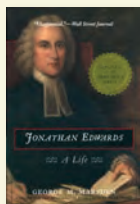
who swooped into the world to propagate an otherworldly message. Rather, as Bartholomew demonstrates, he was very much a first-century Jewish rabbi, and his mission brought the emphatically historical work of the Old Testament to its crescendo. If the New Testament isn't structured around the theme of place as explicitly as the Old, this is only because the New Jerusalem ideal was implicit within the worldview of Christ.

STARTING CONVERSATIONS

In the second part of *Where Mortals Dwell*, Bartholomew turns his attention to what other Western thinkers have said about place. Here, at some length, he contrasts the idea of "space"—a mere "position" or "point"—against the thicker tradition of place, in all its nitty-gritty particularity. Bartholomew traces a pattern of conflating "space" and "place" from its beginnings in medieval reflection through its

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON JONATHAN EDWARDS

By Gerald McDermott, co-author of *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford, 2011)



JONATHAN EDWARDS

A Life

GEORGE M. MARSDEN
(YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS)

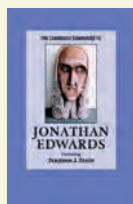
Far and away the best biography of America's premier theologian, Marsden's book is comprehensive, beautifully written, and deeply perceptive.



A JONATHAN EDWARDS READER

EDITED BY JOHN E. SMITH,
HARRY S. STOUT, AND
KENNETH P. MINKEMA
(YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS)

This compendium is the best place to start for those looking to read a representative sampling of Edwards's actual writings.



THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO JONATHAN EDWARDS

EDITED BY STEPHEN J. STEIN
(CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS)

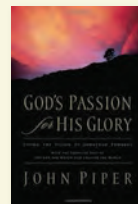
Leading Edwards scholars look at Edwards from various disciplinary perspectives, such as history, literature, religious studies, and philosophy.



THE PRINCETON COMPANION TO JONATHAN EDWARDS

EDITED BY SANG HYUN LEE
(PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS)

This volume focuses more on Edwards's theology. Featuring contributions from some of the most influential Edwards scholars, it's an excellent way to get up to speed on the past 50 years of research on Edwards's thought.



GOD'S PASSION FOR HIS GLORY

Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards

JOHN PIPER (CROSSWAY)

Piper's introduction is a passionate and accessible presentation of Edwards's significance, and the second half of the book is *The End for Which God Created the World*, which is Edwards's explanation for why a happy God created an erring world.

culmination in the thought of Isaac Newton. From Newton onward, Westerners have struggled to think philosophically about place, even growing averse to the concept. Bartholomew also explores how Christians have understood place, highlighting thinkers ranging from Irenaeus—whose theology was quite friendly to place, since he stood opposite the otherworldly Gnostics—to Karl Barth. Here he finds the Anglican and Dutch Reformed traditions especially instructive for evangelicals seeking help in developing a Christian view of place.

Finally, in part three, Bartholomew begins the difficult task of constructing a theology of place for today. His discussion touches upon themes of the home, the church, the garden, the city, the arts, and food production. The discussion runs the gamut from big-picture questions of city planning to more intimate matters, like how a front door helps or hinders a home's *homeyness*. Some readers may feel frustrated with this section, either because it is too short or perhaps too free in volunteering specific prescriptions. However, such criticisms miss the mark. Bartholomew isn't looking to create hard and fast rules for every conceivable situation. He seeks, instead, to provide some general principles that might inspire new conversations about creating and preserving those places that promote human flourishing.

Most importantly, *Where Mortals Dwell* forces evangelical readers to reevaluate their assumptions about the nature of life and Christian ministry. We tend to measure our lives by the yardstick of professional success, and evaluate our ministries according to their theological purity, numerical size, or accumulated wealth. Those aren't always bad standards of judgment, but any value system that excludes the role of place cannot help being badly inadequate. It is, after all, in particular places that we grow up, go to school, find jobs, marry, raise children, and enjoy friendships. If nothing else, Bartholomew reminds us of a truth we're inclined to forget: that only within this matrix of particular loves and loyalties can we encounter and follow the risen Christ. ☩

Jake Meador, a recent graduate of the University of Nebraska, blogs at Notes from a Small Place. His writing has appeared in *Books & Culture* and *Relevant*.

Wasted Charity

Why the 'compassion industry' is not helping the poor.

By Amy L. Sherman

Robert Lupton's new book is going to ruffle some feathers.

In **Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)** (HarperOne) ★★☆☆, the 40-year veteran urban minister "takes the gloves off" and argues that much of Americans' charitable giving "is either wasted or actually harms the people it is targeted to help."

The reason is that the "compassion industry" is "almost universally accepted as a virtuous and constructive enterprise," but its "outcomes are almost entirely unexamined." Years of charitable giving at home and abroad, Lupton contends, have made barely a dent in reducing poverty and often encourage dependency. *Toxic Charity* offers some statistics, but more stories, as evidence that both our philosophy and practice of charity are frequently misguided.

The news here is painful. Our self-centeredness contributes to the problem. We evaluate our giving, Lupton argues, "by the rewards we receive through service, rather than the benefits received by the served."

Short-term mission trips are a case in point. Such "junkets" involve expenditures of between \$2.5–5 billion annually, yet produce little lasting change, often displace local labor, and distract indigenous church leaders from more important work. We get more than we give when we go.

Meanwhile, our relief-oriented, commodity-based charity flourishes at home because even though its effects are irresponsible, it feels good to the givers. Lupton grieves that "our free food and clothing distribution encourages ever-growing handout lines, diminishing the dignity of the poor while increasing their dependency."

Lupton does offer some ideas for improvement. He proposes a new "Oath for Compassionate Service" for the charity industry to adopt, much as the medical community has adopted the Hippocratic Oath. Lupton's

Oath offers six key guidelines: (1) Never do for the poor what they can do for themselves; (2) Limit one-way giving to emergencies; (3) Empower the poor through employment, lending, and investing, using grants sparingly to reinforce achievements; (4) Subordinate self-interest to the needs of those being served; (5) Listen closely to those you seek to help; (6) Above all, do no harm.

The Oath embodies the philosophy of "asset-based community development" (ABCD). This is a glass-half-full strategy that focuses on a community's strengths more than its needs. It takes seriously the gifts and talents of the poor, and seeks to do ministry in the community *with* them rather than *for* them, thus protecting people's dignity.

For example, Lupton profiles a church that replaced its traditional food pantry with a food co-op. Local residents pay \$3 in co-op dues for \$30 worth of groceries, and *they* buy the food, box it, and distribute it. Another congregation turned its free clothing closet into a revenue-generating thrift store that teaches job skills. Still another transformed its soup kitchen into an entrepreneurial venture for female recipients who had a vision for starting a catering business.

Lupton's critique is largely on target, but he might have mentioned a few more positive trends—like the growth of social entrepreneurship and growing interest in reciprocal short-term mission projects.

Lupton says hard things that need to be said, and he's earned the right to say them. Believers would do well to receive his words with the mindset that "faithful are the wounds of a friend." If we accept

rather than resist his critique, the poor and non-poor will both be better off. ☩

Amy L. Sherman is a senior fellow at the Sagamore Institute for Policy Research and author of the forthcoming *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (IVP).



JESUS + NOTHING = EVERYTHING

TULLIAN TCHIVIDJIAN

(CROSSWAY, 224 PAGES)

In light of the gospel, let me especially demolish the myth that legalism is a blunder that's associated only with our initial salvation—with our positional justification in God's eyes. Most believers realize we could never earn such salvation; we've come to accept that no one can work his way into God's kingdom. . . .

But when it comes to our sanctification, suddenly we become legalists. In the matter of maturing in Christlikeness—and in continuing to please God and find favor with God and acceptance with God—we suppose it's all about what we have to accomplish ourselves and all the rules and standards and values we need to adhere to. We seem to inherently assume that our performance is what will finally determine whether our relationship with God is good or bad: so much good behavior from us generates so much affection from God, or so much bad behavior from us generates so much anger from God.

We get the Christian life all backwards. It subtly becomes all about us and what we do (which leads to slavery) instead of being all about Jesus and what he's done (which leads to freedom). We may not articulate all this theologically, but it sure comes out in the way we live.

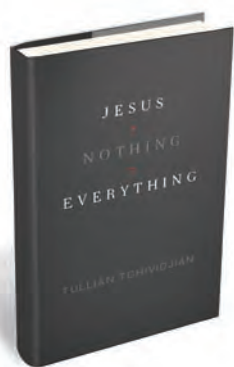
By their behavior, legalists essentially are saying this: "I live the Christian life by the rules—rules that I establish for myself as well as those I expect others to abide by." They develop specific requirements of behavior beyond what the Bible teaches, and they make observance of those requirements the means by which they judge the acceptability of others in the church.

We've all become pretty adept at establishing these rules and standards that we find personally achievable. Legalism therefore provides us with a way to avoid acknowledging our deficiencies and our inabilities. That's enough right there to make it attractive to us. But it's also appealing to us in how it puffs us up, giving us the illusion . . . that we can do it—we can generate our own meaning, our own purpose, our own security, and

all our other inmost needs. It's what Michael Horton pinpoints as "the default setting of the human heart: the religion of self-salvation."

It's all so attractive because it's *all about us*. Legalism feeds our natural pride. While abiding by our self-established standards and rules, we think pretty highly of ourselves. . . . And what's especially fine about being in charge of our situation (though we wouldn't admit it) is that it's a way to avoid Jesus.

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FAITH NO MORE

Why People Reject Religion

PHIL ZUCKERMAN (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)



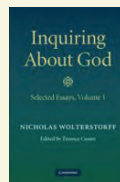
He's back! The fellow who told us how the Danes and their fellow Scandinavians are happy, healthy, and well-adjusted in their godlessness returns with an upbeat report on "the wind of secularity currently blowing across North

America." Conversations with American "apostates" reveal that, like their Nordic counterparts, they're an admirable bunch. One detail: "mine was a convenience sample and hence nonrandom. Thus, valid statistical generalizability to the wider population of American apostates is not possible." Oh.

INQUIRING ABOUT GOD

Selected Essays, Volume 1

NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF (CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS)



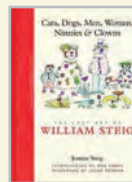
Some of these essays will appeal primarily to those who closely follow analytic philosophy of religion. Others have a much wider potential audience: the essays on "God everlasting," "Unqualified divine temporality," "Suffering

love," "Is God disturbed by what transpires in human affairs?," "The silence of the God who speaks," "Barth on evil," and "Tertullian's enduring question." Certainly these will engage Nicholas Wolterstorff's fellow philosophers, but they are also a great gift to the church.

CATS, DOGS, MEN, WOMEN, NINNIES & CLOWNS

The Lost Art of William Steig

JEANNE STEIG (HARRY N. ABRAMS)



Many are the hours that my wife, Wendy, and I have spent reading William Steig's books to our kids (or to each other); countless were the times we paused to savor one of his strange drawings in the latest

issue of *The New Yorker*. Steig's widow, Jeanne, has assembled this collection of roughly 400 previously unpublished drawings, with brief and affectionate reminiscences to accompany each section. Roz Chast provides the introduction, Jules Feiffer an afterword. A feast.

Liberty for the Captives

Rep. Frank Wolf pleads for a passionate American commitment to international religious freedom.

Interview by Susan Wunderink

Congressman Frank Wolf, a Virginia Republican, has been an outspoken advocate for international human rights for the past 30 years. In July, the House of Representatives passed his bill, co-sponsored by Rep. Anna Eshoo (D-CA), to appoint a special religious freedom envoy to the Middle East and Central Asia. In his new book, **Prisoner of Conscience: One Man's Crusade for Global Human and Religious Rights** (Zondervan), Wolf discusses human rights issues from the 1980s onward, and recounts his many visits to hotspots around the world. Wolf spoke with *CT* contributing editor Susan Wunderink about the role churches and the U.S. government can play in improving international human rights.

Why do you say, "America—and especially our churches—is failing the oppressed peoples of the world"?

I meet many people who are baffled and concerned that the West doesn't seem to be that interested in their plight. Three nuns from Iraq just came to my office. They said they feel abandoned. Half the Christian community in Iraq is now living in ghettos in Damascus, Lebanon, and Jordan.

I was in Egypt last month. The United States has given the Egyptian government over \$50 billion [since the late 1970s]. And yet the Coptic Christians have been persecuted during that time. If you're a Coptic Christian in Egypt, you can't get a government job, and you can't be in the military. They wonder why the church in the West hasn't spoken out.

The church in Sudan has suffered persecution. In southern Sudan, 2.1 million people have died—mainly Christians, but also

some Muslims and some animists. I had one woman tell me, "The West seems more interested in the whales than in us."

In China, you have roughly 30 Catholic bishops who have been arrested. You have hundreds of Protestant pastors and house church leaders being imprisoned and persecuted. And nobody in the West advocates for China's Uighur Muslim minority.

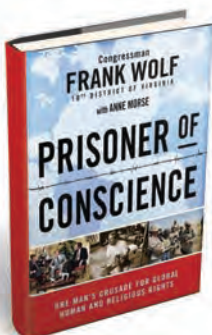
INTERVIEW

Should we be publicizing these issues and bringing them up with our legislators?

Not only should churches in the West be advocating and praying for persecuted believers, but everyone should be advocating for religious freedom. During the 1980s, when Secretary [of State George] Shultz would go to China, he would meet with the dissidents or with their families. The American embassy was an island of freedom. We don't see that same passion today, either within or outside the church.

Some argue that China, for instance, needed to prioritize economic rights—pulling people out of extreme poverty—before it could make progress on political rights, like assembly or free speech.

I would not agree with that. There have been economic gains in China, clearly. But people in the rural areas are living in tremendous poverty. So there has been some improvement, but in terms of human rights and religious freedom, things are actually worse in China over the past 10 to 15 years. Leaders of the house churches wonder why we are not advocating more for them.



How is the United States' influence different now than it

was during the cold war?

I think the United States has lost a lot of influence, because Western leaders have not advocated the way Jimmy Carter, Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, and Ronald Reagan once advocated for human rights.

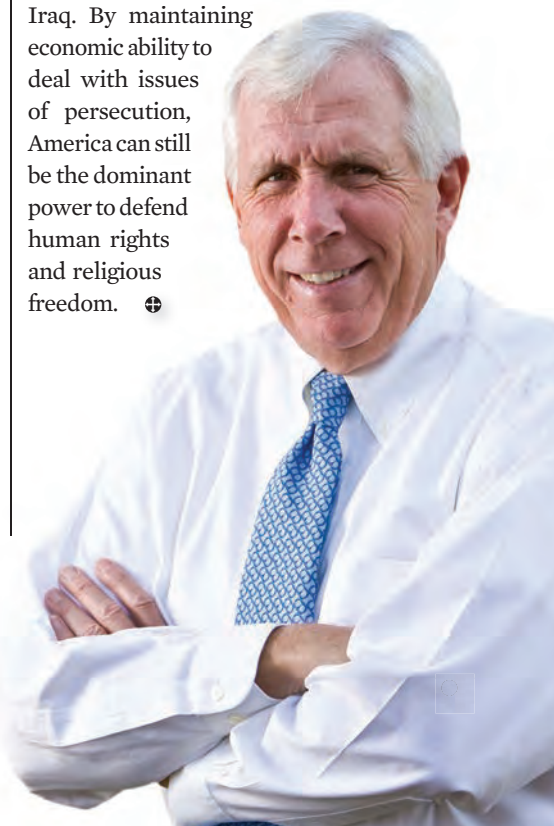
Reagan, in 1983 [at the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals], called the Soviet Union the "Evil Empire." I've been to a gulag camp where the prisoners learned about Reagan's statement.

Today, there is not the passion or the commitment on the part of elected officials or business leaders to speak out on behalf of the persecuted. I think America has lost much of its influence partially because our leaders aren't articulating human rights as a driving issue.

Your book also addresses reducing the U.S. debt and improving our country's economic competitiveness. How do those issues tie into human rights?

As America becomes weak, our largest creditor is China. Our second-largest creditor is Saudi Arabia, whose leaders fund the messages and institutions of radical Wahhabi Islam.

Our Declaration of Independence and Constitution should stand as a covenant not only between American citizens, but also between America and a Chinese dissident in Beijing, a Coptic Christian in the upper Nile, or a Chaldean who's being gunned down in Iraq. By maintaining economic ability to deal with issues of persecution, America can still be the dominant power to defend human rights and religious freedom. ✚



The Gospel According to Muppets

What Jim Henson, Kermit, and Miss Piggy got right. By David Zahl

The day before Thanksgiving, the wonderful legacy of Jim Henson returns to the big screen with **The Muppets** (Disney). Some of us find this exciting, while others will shrug with indifference, writing it off as the latest example of Hollywood's lazy shilling of nostalgia. Whatever your stance, there is a moral vision at the heart of the Muppets universe that Christians can affirm.

Creator Jim Henson was, by all accounts, a bit of a saint. Read any biography of the man, and you will walk away almost suspicious of his overwhelming decency and personal integration, his unfailing optimism and boundless energy. In fact, he and contemporary Fred Rogers compose "the unfallen duo" of American public television. Both saw their work as a spiritual vocation; Rogers was an ordained Presbyterian, while Henson grew up in Christian Science. Unlike Rogers, however, Henson reportedly distanced himself from his church as he grew older, downplaying sectarian concerns for the sake of reaching a wider audience with his message of hopes and dreams and rainbow connections. Vestiges of Mary Baker Eddy do surface occasionally, in the form of a can-do sunniness about the

human condition that would be a lot more cloying if it weren't dressed up in so much inspired silliness.

Silliness, in fact, is where Henson shone. It kept the feel-good-ism from ever succumbing to the piety of political correctness. Frank Oz, Henson's great collaborator/co-conspirator—literally the Bert to Henson's Ernie—once summed up their approach this way: "Whenever characters become self-important or sentimental in the Muppets, then there's always another character there to blow them up immediately." The Muppet characters were wonderfully and truthfully drawn. Their bickering, broken collective was united by a shared ridiculousness: Fozzie Bear was hopelessly insecure, Piggy an egomaniac, Kermit was long-suffering, the Great Gonzo a self-described "weirdo." In Muppet world, the weaknesses tell the stories, not the strengths, and those weaknesses are frequently a source of humor.

Yet Henson's was not an angry or nihilistic kind of absurdity; it was the sweet and,



dare I say, loving kind. A life-affirming poking of fun that puts people on equal footing, not expecting them to be anything other than flawed. You might even call it a gracious absurdism. His faith in humanity began from an acknowledgement of limitation, not an illusion about perfectibility. He knew that joy flowed from honesty rather than around it—sound

familiar? In a similar way, Christians, whose identity is found apart from our ever-changing and often hopeless abilities and attributes, are free to laugh at ourselves. This is part and parcel of Christian joy.

G. K. Chesterton once wrote, "It is the test of a good religion whether you can joke about it." If one can say with confidence that those on the extreme ends of the political and religious spectrum—left or right—are not known for their senses of humor, Henson surely must have been on to something. Where others found potential bitterness, he found the thread of human foibles; his lighthearted irreverence was as universal as the appeal of his characters.

Henson may have preached self-belief, but all his stories find people desperately in need of (and finding!) help from others. He may have believed in a "positive view of life," but his work reflects a larger truth. He understood that to truly reach another person, you must aim beyond the intellect, at the heart—at the unguarded, joyful corner of the soul known as the inner child, which, incidentally, is where Jesus was especially focused.

"The most sophisticated people I know—inside they're all children," Henson once said. "We never really lose a certain sense we had when we were kids."

He might as well have said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. ☩

David Zahl is editor in chief of the Mockingbird blog (mbird.com) and co-editor of *The Gospel According to Pixar*.

Inspiring Story, Clichéd Script

In 1971, Immaculata College was a tiny all-girls Catholic school in Pennsylvania struggling to keep its doors open for its 400 students. The school's administration saw collegiate athletics as little more than a way to manage female hormones, and when the campus gym burned down, no plans were made to replace it. Yet by the end of the 1971–72 season, the school's basketball team had won the nation's first AIAA championship (a precursor to the women's NCAA tournament), and Immaculata had become forever known as "the birthplace of women's college basketball."

The Mighty Macs (Ocean Avenue) ★★☆☆ tells the improbable and inspiring story of that historic Immaculata team, focusing on the efforts of Cathy Rush, the 22-year-old rookie coach whose charisma and strategy led it to victory. It's a fascinating tale, and the cast—including Carla Gugino as Rush and Ellen Burstyn as the college's beleaguered Mother Superior—is more than capable. But a clunky and clichéd-ridden script keeps it from being a slam dunk, when it might have been an underdog school sports classic in the mold of *Hoosiers* or *Remember the Titans*. (More: TheMightyMacs.com) —Carolyn Arends, *CT* columnist and film critic



TWO MINUTES WITH...

Bob Bennett



When it comes to Jesus music, singer-songwriter Bob Bennett was a bit late when he came on the scene in the late 1970s. But he kept it going with masterpieces like *Matters of the Heart*, named

1982's Album of the Year by *CCM Magazine*.

Though Bennett, now 56, sometimes wishes he had a chance to work with pioneers like Larry Norman and Keith Green, he has done the next-best thing: He made a record, *Jesus Music Again*, honoring their legacy and greatest songs. *CT*'s Mark Moring spoke with Bennett.

PAUL BENNETT

How did this album come about?

About four years ago, I was messing around on my guitar and started singing [Norman's] "U.F.O." for no apparent reason. I realized that no one has really gone back and treated this music like the folk music of the Jesus era. I thought it would be great to revive these songs.

It must have been hard to come up with just a dozen songs for this album.

We think our list is going to be as notable for what it lacks as for what we included. Everybody will say, "You should have done this." Our first criterion [for picking a song] was that we thought it was cool and that we could do a good job on it. If we can please ourselves, hopefully we'll please the people who are listening.

Did you know Larry Norman?

I only met him once and never got to spend time with him. The only one of that era that I've spent time with is Randy Stonehill. I've had a couple of incredible encounters with Barry McGuire, who's a hero to me, because he's 76 years old and still out there doing it. That's what I see for myself. As long as I'm not embarrassing myself and I'm healthy enough to play, there's no retirement.

Do you see your music as ministry?

My job is to communicate first. The ministry is always the outgrowth of what I do, not the main purpose. The ministry is on the right-hand side of the equal sign, and what I do with music is on the left side.



More Epiphanies

Sara Groves shines with new album. By Andy Whitman

The tiny epiphanies that Sara Groves uses as the building blocks for her songs have served her well for 10 years now. *Invisible Empires* (Fair Trade Services Records) ★★★★★, her 11th album, continues the tradition of closely observed moments set to memorable pop melodies.

Her previous project—*Fireflies and Songs*, *CT*'s 2009 album of the year—dialed back the pop hit-making approach in favor of stark, confessional songwriting and pensive, minimalist arrangements. It was Groves at her most vulnerable and introspective, and it showcased her undeniable talents as a songwriter. In contrast, producer Steve Hindalong (the Choir, Sixpence None the Richer) bathes the 11 lovely songs on *Invisible Empires* in strings and U2-like ethereal reverb and delay. The pop influences have returned in force.

But if the musical conception is more lushly orchestral, supremely melodic, and radio-ready, Groves's lyrical concerns remain finely focused and nuanced. "Eyes on the Prize" quotes the old civil rights spiritual of the same name, and serves as a touching reminder of the fearful price still paid by those who are enslaved by others. "Scientists in Japan" contemplates a world where

technological advances outstrip our ability to understand the impact of those advances on the human soul.

But these socially conscious songs are atypical. The majority of the songs showcase what Groves does best. She confesses her doubt, her weakness, and her propensity to lose sight of what is most important in the midst of the banality and frenetic pace of life. She then perfectly articulates the little epiphanies of truth that shake her from her lethargy and help her find her spiritual bearings—like on "Obsolete," on which she sings, "Are we walking through the streets / Of invisible empires?" Inspired by

Psalms 127, Groves says the song is a nod to the unseen spiritual realm, to things that are truly eternal.

Whether exploring the challenges and joys of marriage ("Miracle") or the conundrum of watching the wicked succeed while the righteous suffer ("Open My Hands"), Groves gives voice to both the struggle of living as a Christian and the unshakeable peace that comes from surrender and trust. These are the seemingly insignificant moments that comprise the warp and woof of a human life touched by the divine, and they are as real as yours and mine. ☩

Andy Whitman is a regular contributor to *Paste* magazine and *Image* journal.





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BOOKS

► GOSPEL WAKEFULNESS

JARED C. WILSON (CROSSWAY)

★★★★★ Jared C. Wilson makes the case that Christians need not only to believe the gospel, but to so delight in it that sin loses its attractiveness and Christ becomes all the more glorious. This book seeks to “awaken” our affections to the beauty of the gospel, so that we will be satisfied in Christ alone. Aside from some rhetoric that could imply a dichotomy between “gospel wakefulness” and political activism, Wilson’s work is substantive and inspiring. —Trevin Wax

► UNION WITH CHRIST

Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church

J. TODD BILLINGS (BAKER ACADEMIC)

★★★★★ Western Theological Seminary professor J. Todd Billings examines the doctrine of “union with Christ” in light of careful historical and exegetical reflection. Parting ways with recent Calvin scholars who seek to downplay the Reformer’s forensic (or legal) view of justification, Billings shows how the truth of a believer’s participation in Christ is grounded in Scripture and consistent with other Reformation insights. *Union with Christ* will start fresh conversations about this important New Testament doctrine. —Trevin Wax

► THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

God with Us

MATT WOODLEY (IVP)

★★★★★ The new law of Jesus, as outlined in the five great discourses of the first Gospel, is often said to be Matthew’s unique contribution: He shows Jesus as the new Moses, the new law-giver. Thankfully, Matt Woodley, a former pastor and now managing editor of *PreachingToday.com*, goes deeper. His theological and practical commentary shows a Jesus who is, more than anything, God with us. While calling for obedience, Jesus “never asks us to follow him with superheroic, overachieving, failure-free” obedience. Instead, the “poor in spirit” are the model disciples, and the weary and heavy laden are invited to come to Jesus. Woodley has done a masterful job of reminding us that this book is gospel—that is, good news. —Mark Galli

MUSIC

GLEN CAMPBELL

► GHOST ON THE CANVAS

(SURFDOG)

★★★★★ Glen Campbell’s self-described farewell album—he was recently diagnosed with Alzheimer’s—is both a heartfelt and frequently dramatic curtain call. While the songs are as maudlin and inwardly-focused as latter-day Johnny Cash projects, the arrangements are all swelling strings, dramatic guitar solos, and tinkling chimes. And there’s no denying the impact of his thanksgiving to the Almighty (“It’s Your Amazing Grace”). —Josh Hurst

SHAUN GROVES

► THIRD WORLD SYMPHONY

(INDEPENDENT)

★★★★★ Social justice troubadour Shaun Groves has invested recent years in the third world through a partnership with Compassion International. Tying his spiritual perspectives to his global experiences, Groves delivers poetically confrontational songs compelling listeners to act. Whether leveling the field on “No Better” (“We’ve all got hell to pay / And grace pays all we owe”) or channeling a prayer for just the basics on “Enough,” Groves is obviously passionate about Jesus’ challenge in Matthew 25. —Andrew Greer

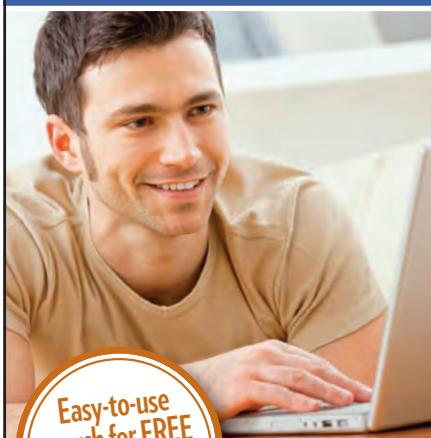
ON DVD

► THE TREE OF LIFE

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT | RATED PG-13 | OCTOBER 11

★★★★★ Terrence Malick’s latest is a magisterial symphony of sprawling scope and grand vision. Eschewing traditional cinematic narrative, *The Tree of Life* is bookended by *allegro* movements—sweeping montage visions of the universe coming into being and a grandiose finale evoking what could be interpreted as a Christian eschatological climax. In the middle is the *adagio* section—a slower-paced, intimate observation of one Texas family in the 1950s. Here, in one humble corner of a universe unimaginably large and complex, the true mystery of existence is manifest: A father, a mother, children, love, death, hate, forgiveness, reconciliation. The film shows that life is ultimately about tuning our ears to the divine symphony around us. —Brett McCracken

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Christian college faculty are God's hands and heart among the student body. [Page 76](#)

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Dedicated professors make an eternal difference . . . one student at a time. [Page 92](#)





More than Just A PROFESSOR

Christian college faculty are God's hands and heart among the student body.

Anyone who's familiar with the world of book publishing knows that in order for a book to be successful, several different elements must fall into place. This is especially the case if the author isn't a household name. First, the title must be engaging so it draws people in right from the start. Ditto for the cover art. Second, the subject of the book must "scratch where the market itches," as the saying goes. And third, the marketing plan must target the appropriate audience(s) and include carefully placed advertising.

However, if the content of a book is irrelevant or deficient, then little else will matter. The title, cover art, topic, and marketing plan may all be perfect—or at least as good as they can possibly be—but that will make little difference if the book's content misses the mark. Savvy marketing folks may help the book make a big splash in the marketplace initially,

but if the book's "sizzle" outweighs its substance, then potential buyers won't be fooled for very long. When a book isn't written well, readers aren't going to talk about it or recommend it to their friends. And soon, that book will be out of print.

Similarly, one could make a very strong case that faculty members are to the success of a Christian college or university what content is to the success of a book. That is to say that a particular school might have an ideal location with a spacious and beautiful campus, top-notch facilities, a substantial endowment, and a variety of highly regarded academic programs. Yet if the quality of the faculty is substandard, then virtually none of those attractive features will matter. In fact, if a Christian school is blessed with all or most of the above-mentioned positive traits, then most likely it's largely the result of having highly skilled, devoted, and caring

professors—a strong faculty.

"The faculty are the university in a very basic sense," says Hunter Baker, associate professor of political science and senior associate dean of arts and sciences at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. "Our strength as an institution and our ability to fulfill our mission depend on scholars teaching students and sharing their work with the world."

Says Gregg Chenoweth, vice president for academic affairs at Olivet Nazarene University (ONU) in Bourbonnais, Illinois, "At ONU, faculty are a yeast by which students rise to their God-given academic potential. As a Wesleyan institution, we also emphasize how faculty can embody the optimism of grace and act as participants with God in their redemption. Thus, faculty [serve as] God's hands, feet, mouth, and heart."

Carlos Campo, president of Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia,



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observes that “the etymological origin of the word *faculty* is tied to the words *ability* and *means*.” Says Campo, “In my mind, a strong faculty is the primary ‘means’ by which any educational institution fulfills its mission. This is especially true at an overtly Christian school like Regent University.”

Campo continues, “No education can be effective without some framework of common assumptions that structure and enliven the curriculum. It is our faculty who create and guide the curriculum to ensure that our students are grounded in a Christ-centered worldview and equipped with the excellence they need to be successful.”

According to Geneva College (Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania) provost Ken Carson, “The success of a college rises and falls on the strength of the faculty.” Carson adds, “At Geneva, our mission is to teach every subject through a biblical perspective, to integrate Christian theology and practice with every academic discipline. Faculty are responsible to

do this work. Just as important, faculty become mentors and advisers for students. Over and over again, Geneva alumni report how one faculty member or another has been influential in their faith development and their preparation for a career.”

Says Elizabeth Rudenga, provost at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois, “It is often said that faculty are the heart and soul of an institution, and this is an accurate statement for Trinity. Faculty members embody the mission. They not only teach, but also advise, mentor, meet with students, offer encouragement, conduct research, engage in scholarship, and serve the college in many ways.” Rudenga continues, “If a stranger asked for a description of Trinity, I would relate stories of faculty members and students: the teaching and learning, the relationships that are formed, and the scholarship that occurs.”

“Without talented and committed faculty, a college or university has no

means of providing a high-quality academic experience for its students,” says Mark L. Biermann, dean of natural and applied sciences at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana. Biermann observes that, in addition to teaching, faculty members “play key roles in community outreach, global initiatives, and institutional planning and oversight.” He adds, “Faculty members are playing an increasingly crucial role in recruiting and retaining students, and so the importance of quality faculty in the enrollment management process is difficult to overstate.” Biermann concludes, “In short, [every] aspect of the life of our university [is somehow] impacted by the faculty. Hence, the success of our school and its mission relies intensely on the quality and commitment of our faculty.”

Plenty to Choose From

Generally speaking, when it comes to hiring new faculty, Christian colleges and universities have numerous

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high-quality options to consider. Union's Baker observes that "there is substantial competition for virtually every position."

"In recent faculty searches, we have received anywhere from a couple dozen applications to well over 100," says Taylor University's Biermann. "A typical number might be in the range of 50 to 60."

Trinity Christian College's Rudenga notes that "the number of applicants depends on the discipline and desired expertise. For example, for an opening for nursing faculty, we received [fewer] than 10 applicants. However, we received more than 40 applications for an opening in the English department."

Says Geneva's Carson, "In some disciplines, such as engineering and business, it is difficult to find qualified faculty, and we may get only two or three applicants who possess the minimal educational and faith qualifications." He adds, "In other disciplines, we may get as many as ten or more applicants who

are legitimate candidates."

"In general," Rudenga observes, "we have seen an increase in the number of applicants in the past two or three years."

Criteria for Hiring New Faculty

Says Union's Baker, "We place a greater importance on hiring than on just about anything else we do. The overriding imperative is to recruit Christian professors with a natural interest in keeping their faith and their work in relationship to each other. We [believe] that being a Christian should have an effect on everything teachers do, including their scholarly and pedagogical efforts."

"At a minimum," says Geneva's Carson, "we look for two important attributes in every faculty candidate: disciplinary expertise and strong Christian faith. And then we look for persons who have the ability and motivation to explore and investigate the intersection of faith and learning in their field of

study." Carson continues, "Beyond that, we look for faculty who are comfortable with Geneva's Reformed theological commitments and who will be good colleagues."

Olivet Nazarene's Chenoweth states that faculty "need to demonstrate competence as scholars, not just as practitioners, and [they] must possess the capacity to nurture Christian faith in students, not merely profess faith themselves." He adds that this "requires a different kind of competence, a maturity in the faith."

"The most important attribute is that the person is a faithful Christian," says Union's Baker. "Without that, we can't go further. With that foundation in place, we are then interested in the qualifications of the person to teach in the discipline for which we are recruiting." These two attributes, Baker notes, are fairly basic. He adds, "It is the third level where people can really distinguish themselves. The third level is having

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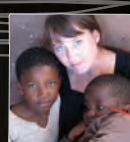
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a natural interest in bringing faith and learning together in an organic fashion.” Baker continues, “We aren’t looking for a stilted or awkward hybrid of Sunday school lesson and standard academic

that encourages and promotes learning and fosters advising and mentoring.”

“The overriding, single most important attribute for any faculty member at Regent,” says Campo, “is an unquench-

“Christian colleges and universities have come to a greater realization that they can’t afford to be indifferent about faith when hiring.”

teaching or writing. Rather, we are interested in professors who don’t see any artificiality in relating their faith and their work.”

Says Taylor’s Biermann, “The three most important attributes I look for in the hiring process are professional competence, mission fit, and collegiality (or institutional fit). Professional competence presumes appropriate preparation and prior experience. It is essential that faculty members be technically competent, strong classroom teachers, current in their fields, and active in scholarly pursuits.”

Biermann continues, “New faculty members need to be fully supportive of the mission of the university, and they must be willing and able to effectively implement that mission in their professional responsibilities.” He adds, “Our institution is mission-driven, and so faculty members need to ‘get it’ with regard to the mission in order to be effective in their roles as faculty members.”

Finally, says Biermann, “New faculty members need to demonstrate the ability to function effectively with their peers on campus. They must be able to interact in a collegial manner with other members of the faculty and with all members of the university community.”

In similar fashion, Trinity Christian College’s Rudenga cites three factors: mission fit, competence in the discipline, and passion or desire. She explains, “Faculty must [not only know] and support the school’s mission, [but also have] the ability to make it part of all they do. They must know their discipline and have the ability to communicate what they know. And they must have passion—the desire to be a part of our teaching and learning environment

able love for God and a desire to do his will above all else. If a faculty member has that quality, then he or she is driven to excellence, is an outstanding mentor and colleague, possesses a strong work ethic, and truly wants students to succeed.”

Campo continues, “Next, we try to hire the brightest people we can. Intelligence covers a ‘multitude of sins,’ as it were, and smart people generally increase academic rigor, raise the institution’s level of prestige, and challenge assumptions that can lead to academic atrophy.”

“The last quality,” says Campo, “would be a love for learning. Such love is infectious, and there is no greater gift for faculty to bestow to students. If faculty can spark this love in others, they create lifelong learners who perpetuate the wonderful cycle of learning for the next generation.”

Times Are A-Changin’?

By and large, what holds true for hiring Christian faculty today is pretty much the same as it was a couple of decades ago. However, there are some differences—albeit subtle ones. Says Union’s Baker, “Christian colleges and universities have come to a greater realization that they can’t afford to be indifferent about faith when hiring.” He continues, “I think the old idea was that you wouldn’t be able to find solid Christians to fill faculty positions, so [you should] just hire someone who is academically qualified and unlikely to cause trouble with regard to the Christian mission of the school. Just about everyone now realizes that hiring in that fashion is a recipe for secularization and for losing the distinctive mission of their

institutions.” Baker concludes, “And it has become clear that there *are* many excellent Christians ready to come and fill those positions.”

According to Trinity Christian College’s Rudenga, “mission fit is even more significant today than it was 15 or 20 years ago, though it’s not as obvious as it once appeared to be.” She explains, “Two decades ago there seemed to be more consistency among applicants. Most had received their undergraduate degree from one of about six colleges and were members in one of a few denominations.” She adds, “The greater variety seen now—which is both refreshing and enriching—highlights the importance of the search process.”

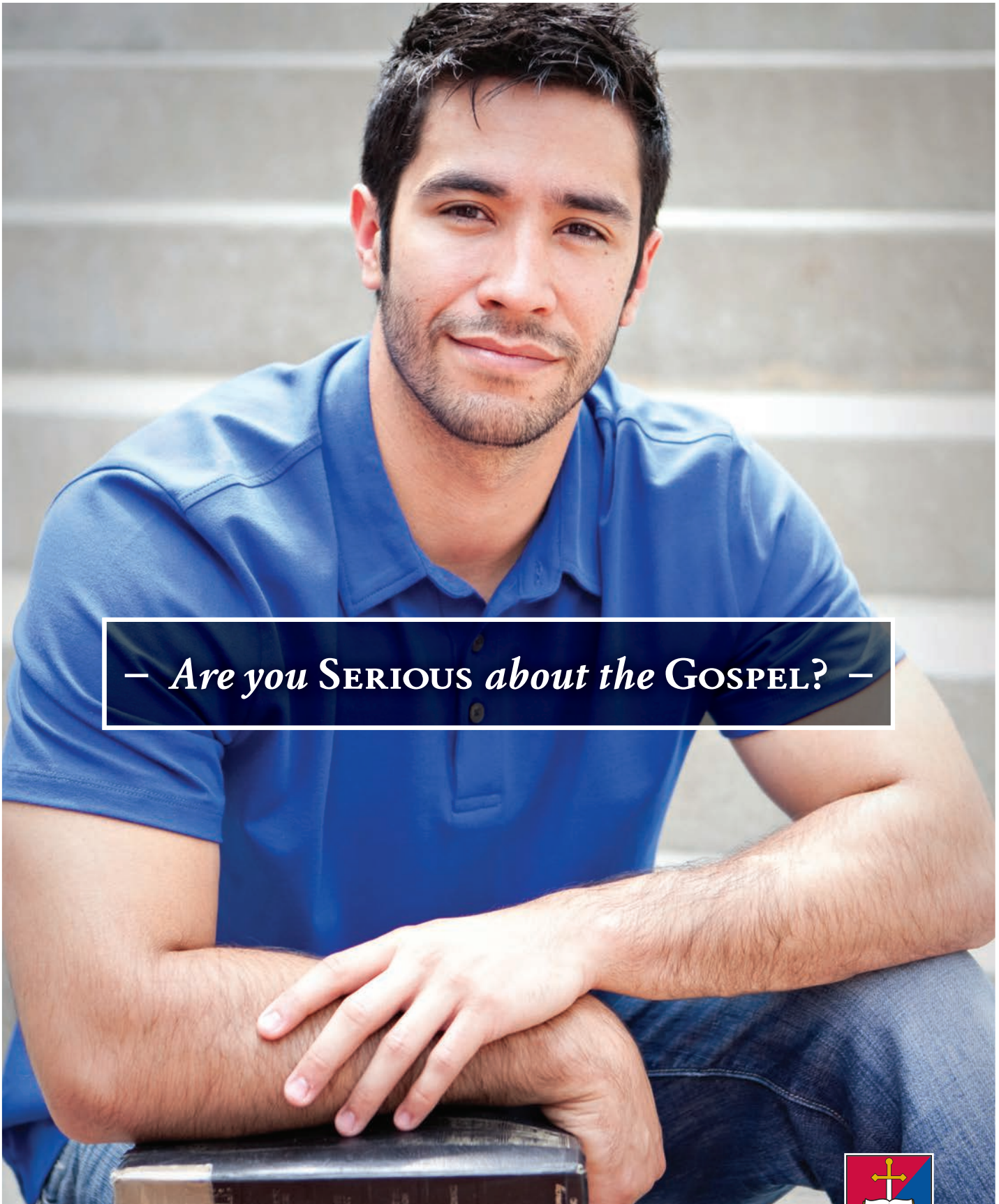
The High Priority of Mentoring

Among the qualities that distinguish Christian educational institutions from others is the high expectation that faculty members, in addition to being teachers, will serve as mentors. Says Regent’s Campo, “Mentoring is a key quality for faculty and an expectation for anyone we hire at Regent. All of us remember those who have deeply influenced our lives and—for most of us—a teacher or two is on the list.” Campo continues, “Our students often share how faculty pray for them and challenge them academically and spiritually. As Proverbs 4:23 says, ‘Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.’ Our faculty help students ‘watch over’ their hearts and guide them on their journey from life to life.”

Geneva’s Carson notes that mentoring extends beyond the classroom: “Many faculty have very significant and meaningful encounters with students in the local coffee shop, or by inviting students to their homes, or just having a conversation in a hallway.”

“In a private school setting, and especially at a Christian college, students should be able to expect that their professors will be available to them for mentoring,” says Union’s Baker. “We are interested in the spiritual development of the student, as well as in their intellectual development. Indeed, we see those things as complementary, so our general ethos is very much in favor

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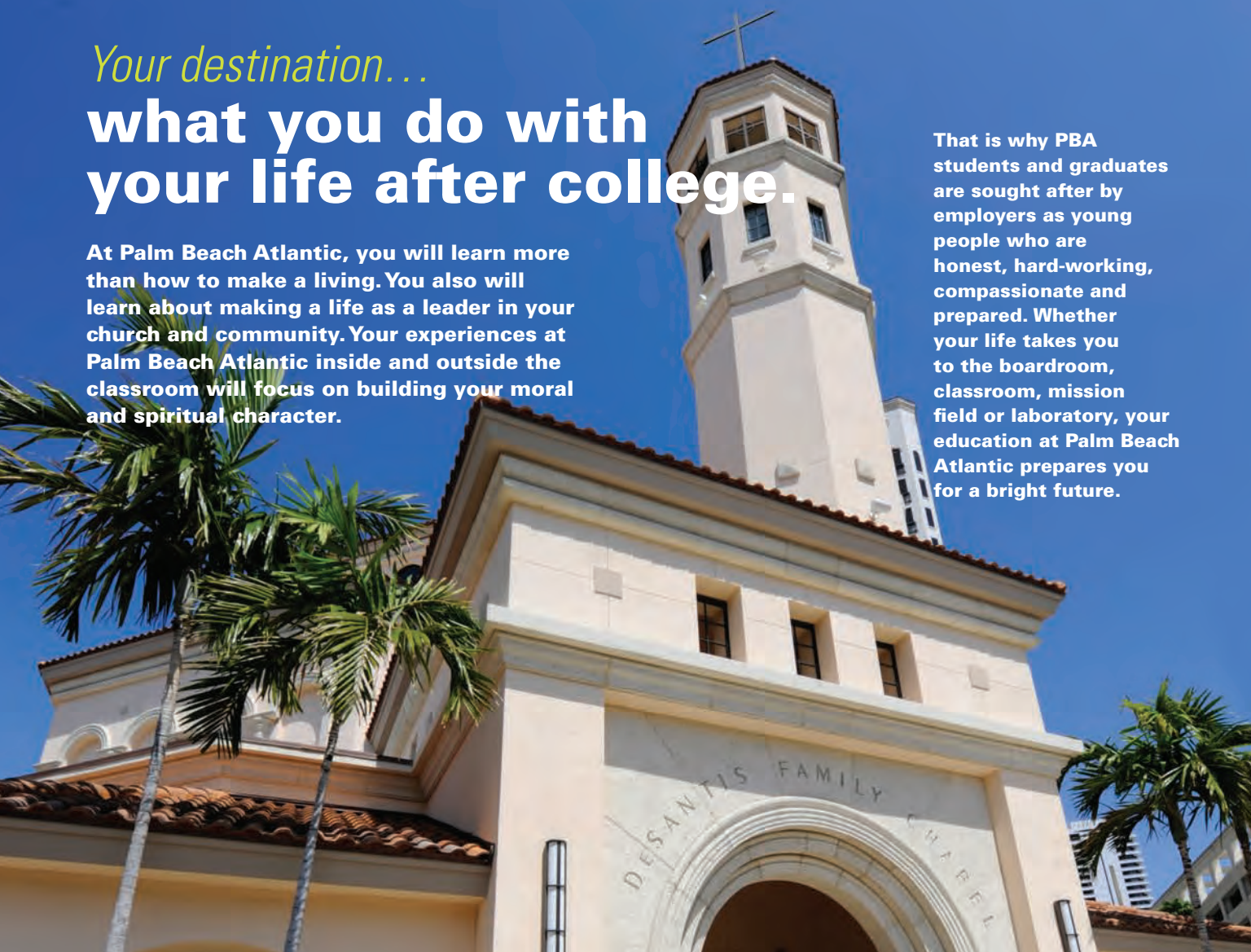
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of giving students personal attention and guidance.”

Chenoweth notes that Olivet Nazarene cultivates the value of mentoring through intensive, year-long new faculty orientations covering not just pedagogy, but also faith foundations. He adds that ONU highlights the priority of mentoring in a number of ways: “We have annual faith integration workshops for veteran faculty, require an annual agenda for professional growth in faith integration during annual performance reviews, conduct faith and mission training with graduate school adjuncts, supply faculty with devotional reference materials, and publically honor faculty for not only their scholarship or teaching, but also their spiritual mentoring.” Chenoweth notes that ONU even provides discount cards for meals with students.

As for mentoring at Taylor, Biermann notes that the importance of mentoring is cultivated in a number of

ways: “High-quality academic advising is greatly valued and is part of the tenure and promotion criteria for faculty members. Collaborative student-faculty research is also valued in the tenure and promotion process and is encouraged in a variety of formal and informal programs that support faculty. Also, our Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence provides periodic programming to support the development of faculty as mentors to students.”

Given that advising and mentoring students is “an integral aspect of a faculty position,” according to Trinity Christian College’s Rudenga, mentoring is part of the standard job description at the school. Says Rudenga, “We talk about it during the interview, and it is part of the new faculty formation program.”

She continues, “Even before students enter Trinity as freshmen or transfers, they have an opportunity to meet with professors, which exemplifies the importance of and type of

faculty-student relationship we hope to cultivate.” Rudenga notes that mentoring at the school is fostered through various means. For example, during the 2010–11 school year, Trinity hosted two faculty workshops on advising students. And before the start of the 2011–12 academic year, two faculty members hosted a workshop entitled “Student-Faculty Interactions: Finding and Developing Opportunities for Interactions with Students and Their Work.”

If indeed the faculty at Christian schools can be equated with the content of a best-selling book, then—given the diligence of the hiring process and the emphasis on student mentoring—it’s no wonder so many Christian colleges and universities are doing so well.

Freelance writer and editor Randall L. Frame also serves as Executive Director of Marketing and Communications at Palmer Seminary of Eastern University.



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Tara Munro '14, Discipleship Counseling
Served as a Resident Assistant and children's Sunday School teacher at a local church; played tennis, basketball, and a few intramural sports; and participated in the outdoor club ASCEND's camping trips and activities.

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Regent University

Professor James Duane, a graduate of Harvard Law School, joined Regent University School of Law in 1991. He teaches trial practice, evidence, advanced evidence, civil procedure, professional responsibility, and remedies.

"It is exciting to be a part of Regent Law School," Duane says, "where we enjoy the academic freedom to explore the radically alternative conception that certain self-evident moral rights and duties under the law have been endowed upon each of us by a Creator who has written them upon our hearts."

Professor Duane brings to his teaching the orientation of an engaged and skilled practitioner. He has a rich and varied background as a practicing

lawyer, and he continues to consult and participate in the practice of law. Benefitting greatly from Duane's fresh insights, his students have the privilege of learning from someone who not only

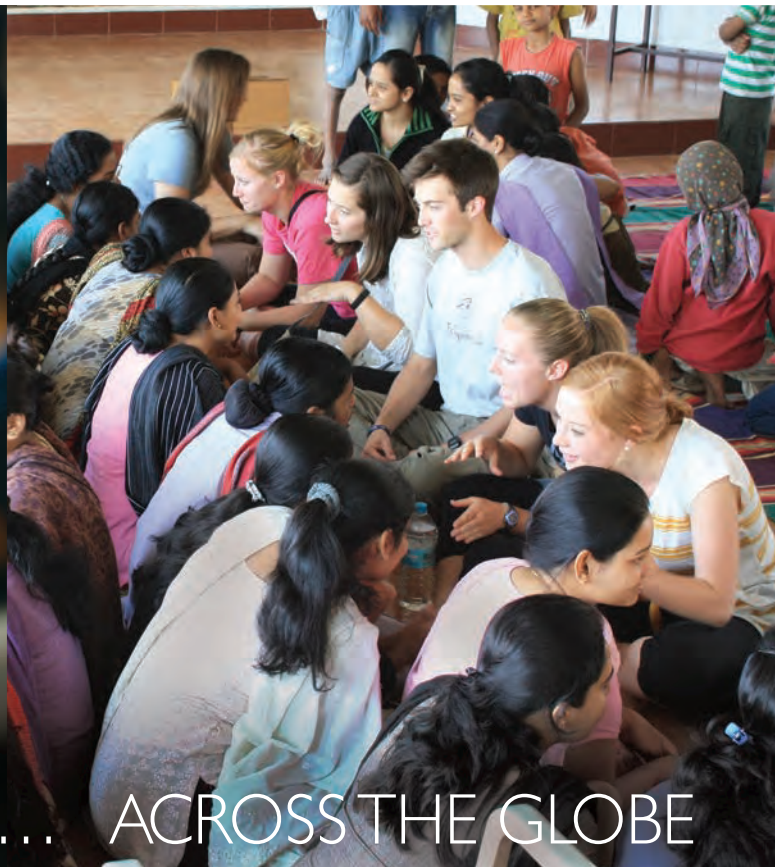


knows the law, but also serves as a change agent in making the law better.

Duane has a history of bringing attention to the laws' problem areas and seeing them fixed. His writing about Virginia's statute on marital privilege led the Virginia legislature to adopt a new version of the state law. And his ongoing engagement with the federal rules of procedure and evidence help mold and reshape the law in those areas as well. Plus, how many law professors will bring a guitar to class and lead

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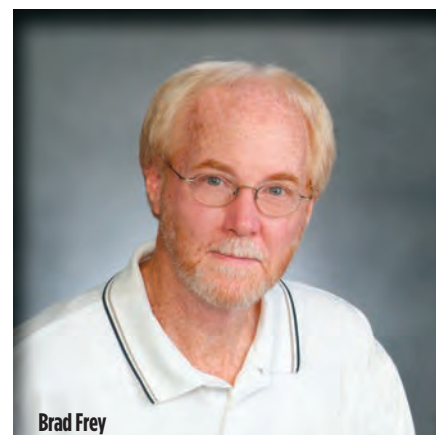
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worship songs at the start of the hour?

Duane's famous Fifth Amendment Lecture—more widely known as "Don't Talk to the Cops!"—was once recognized by Google as a top-ten most watched video (more than 1,546,759 viewings since it was posted in 2008). In that lecture, Duane gives viewers startling reasons for why they should always exercise their Fifth Amendment rights when being questioned by government officials.

Geneva College

Geneva College aims to develop students who critically engage culture and who have the desire and preparation to impact culture for Christ. Professor Brad Frey embodies this mission both in and out of the classroom. Chair of the department of history, political science and sociology, as well as a professor in



the master of higher education program, Frey prepares his students to thoughtfully live out the gospel in their daily lives.

Professor Frey has developed a criminal justice class that meets in the local prison. The class comprises equal numbers of inmates and Geneva students. Frey says, "This class has a huge impact on our students. They begin to see the inmates as human beings instead of just statistics." The class, Frey notes, can also serve as an educational springboard for the inmates.

Another way Frey encourages students to engage their community is through the Geneva College City House. This off-campus learning community, which Frey cofounded, gives students the opportunity to live in an intentional

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Author of *Engaging the Culture, Changing the World* (Intervarsity Press, 2011) and president of Seattle Pacific University



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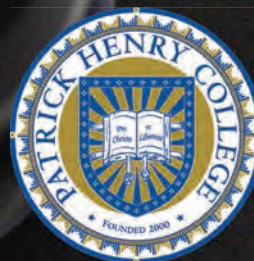
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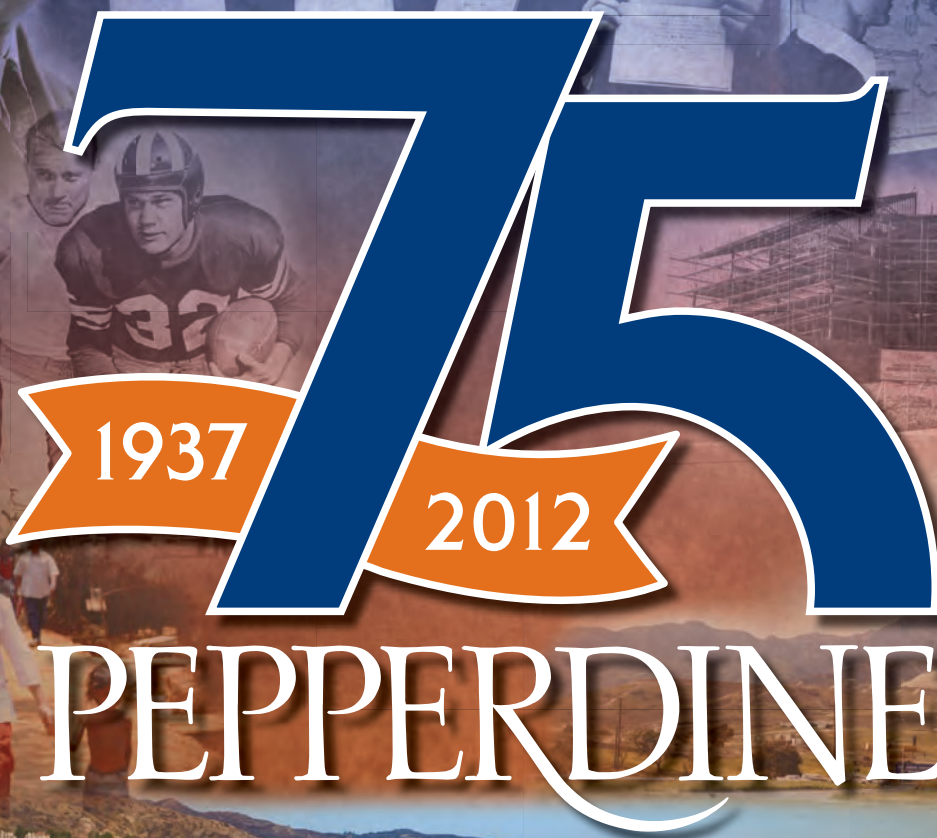


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community and learn what it means to be a good neighbor. Says Frey, “Students live in a mixed-race, mixed-income, and mixed-age neighborhood where they learn to be neighborly, as well as allow others to be good neighbors to them.” With Frey’s oversight, students live out their faith as they support, challenge, and encourage one another in Christ, while striving to be salt and light to a world in need.

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Trinity Christian College

Lynn Spellman White has served as chair of Trinity Christian College’s business department and professor of



Lynn Spellman White

accounting since 1989. Her goal is to help students realize that the numbers on financial statements have an impact on people’s lives. “Students must be able to not only generate financial reports, but also understand how to communicate the financial information in a way that is of service to society,” she says.

Spellman White integrates a Christian worldview into the accounting curriculum—and not just in the classroom. She’s traveled with students to Malawi, Africa, to lead financial literacy workshops for owners of small businesses, and she joined students at the 2010 Partners Worldwide International Business Conference entitled “Fighting Global Poverty Through Business.” Says Spellman White, “This experience allowed students to hear from international business people about how finance and marketing skills can be used to change the lives of people in other countries and to support kingdom-building work.”

Spellman White and other business faculty work closely with students. “Our faculty have an open-door policy,” she says. “Close communication helps our business students graduate within a four-year time frame.”

Taylor University

Though Stanley Burden officially retired

a year ago—receiving emeritus faculty status—he continues to teach on a part-time basis. Says Mark L. Biermann, dean of natural and applied sciences at Taylor, “Dr. Burden exemplifies what I seek in a faculty member and what our institution values. He is an outstanding colleague. He is humble, insightful, dedicated, and always willing to go the extra mile.”

One reason Burden continues to teach is to provide a younger faculty member more teaching load flexibility in order to establish and maintain an active research program. Says Biermann, “Dr. Burden cares deeply about his students, while holding them to clear expectations regarding academic rigor and quality of work. He is a talented and creative teacher who engages students and encourages them to learn. He understands how to advocate and to work for change and innovation that is consistent with furthering the mission of the institution.”

At Taylor, Burden has helped to build a strong student-faculty collaborative research program, something that has



Stanley Burden

become an institutional distinctive. Says Biermann, “Dr. Burden tirelessly advocated for a new facility for the sciences based on the institutional mission, and this new facility is now becoming a reality. He is a servant leader who models Jesus Christ both in his personal and his professional life.”

—RLF



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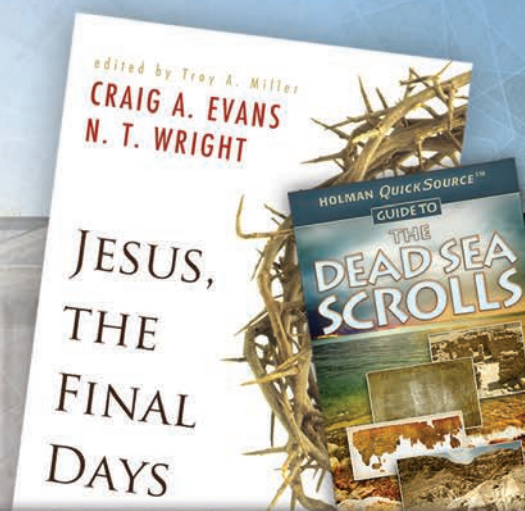
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Virtual Vitality

Bobby Gruenewald links technology and the church.



When Bobby Gruenewald first visited LifeChurch.tv—it's a real church whose name only *looks* like a website—in Edmond, Oklahoma, the most evolved technology he encountered was air conditioning. And even that was unreliable. Before the whirl of servers and megawatt projectors and Gruenewald's current staff title as “innovation leader,” the church met in a two-car garage and had dial-up Internet access. Even then, Gruenewald says, he had a passion for the gospel that remains decibels louder than any high-tech evangelism method employed by the church today.

A self-proclaimed “adrenaline junkie,” Gruenewald initially resisted the church's invitation to join its leadership team for fear of boredom. But after volunteering in technological and musical capacities at the church, he decided to sell two web start-ups from his entrepreneurial

days and in 2001 signed on to a role—which includes co-leading a congregation of nearly 30,000 at 14 U.S. campuses—that he says is far from boring.

Gruenewald, recently named one of the top 100 creative people in business by *Fast Company*, has led leading-edge ventures at LifeChurch.tv such as online church services and YouVersion, a free Bible app with over 30 million downloads. But the high-tech world is tangential, says Gruenewald. “Technology is not vital to the church, but an amazing tool for encouraging vitality.”

➤ Age 35

➤ **Hometown** Oklahoma City

➤ **Family** Melissa (wife); Audrey, 6, Robbie, 3, Emma, 5 months (children)

➤ **Favorite Bible verse** Galatians 2:20

➤ **Favorite book** *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940*, by Claude S. Fischer

➤ **Pet peeves** Anything that reduces speed

➤ **Hobbies** My kids; small home-improvement projects

➤ **Best meal you cook** Homemade ice cream

question & answer

What's an “innovation leader”?

It's a very eclectic role, really not that far off from being an entrepreneur. I'm constantly focused on coming up with new ways of building momentum and helping connect people within the church. On a strategic level, I evaluate the effectiveness of each idea, keep an eye on changes in the broader culture, and watch for where God is already innovating ahead of us.

What does technology contribute to church life?

We've seen a spike in population growth in the past century, and we've seen a boom in technologies that can connect us like never before. So we have this opportunity—in my mind, it's a responsibility—to connect with people we couldn't before and share the gospel. I also think the church has been vastly wasteful, and technology can help us be better stewards by allowing us to share materials and avoid duplicating resources.

Keeping up with changes in technology must be difficult.

It can be, but that's not our main concern. We're so focused on keeping up with changes in how the gospel is received and discussed, it's a lot easier to not get caught up in the glitz of what's next. On a personal level, I've made a point to do technology fasts, because we need to teach ourselves how to set boundaries.

Where does LifeChurch.tv go from here?

We rarely think more than a year or two into the future; usually we plan on a six-week to six-month timeframe. But if we push into the future, we'll see a global church that is more unified because of better communication technology, much more focused on a common understanding of who Jesus is and why he matters. Maybe this is ironic, but I also hope we'll see some of the ministries we've launched online—live prayer and side discussions during online sermons—get integrated into physical campuses.

More: LifeChurch.tv, YouVersion.com



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THANKSGIVING

is a Jewish holiday . . . sort of

The Jewish Feast of Tabernacles serves as the foundation of the American celebration of Thanksgiving.

Luis de Torres, a Jewish interpreter who accompanied Columbus in 1492, gave the holiday bird its name, *tukki*—the Hebrew word for “big bird.”

So, in a way, we can thank the Jews for Thanksgiving. But there are other reasons to be thankful for the Jewish people:

- Great biblical role models: Moses; Joshua; Deborah; Esther; Peter, Paul & Mary (you know which ones we mean), to name a few.
- A Jewish team of authors to give us His Holy Word.
- Jesus was born a Jew.

God told Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you . . .” (Genesis 12:3). And the greatest way to bless the Jewish people is to share the gospel with them.

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