

Christianity Today

MARCH 2012

How to Save the Christian College



RIISING COSTS IN A FAILING ECONOMY. THE BROWNING
OF CAMPUSES CATERING TO A WHITE ELITE. **THE PRESSURE**
TO SECULARIZE. MANY FORCES ARE SHAKING
THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS HIGHER EDUCATION.

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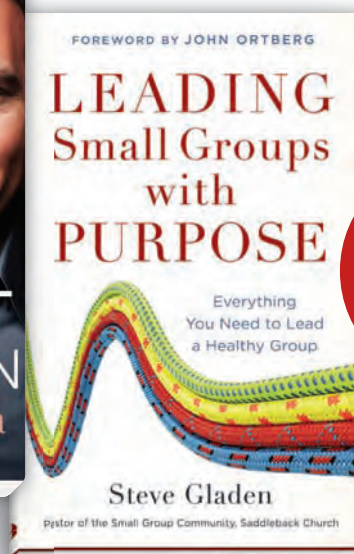
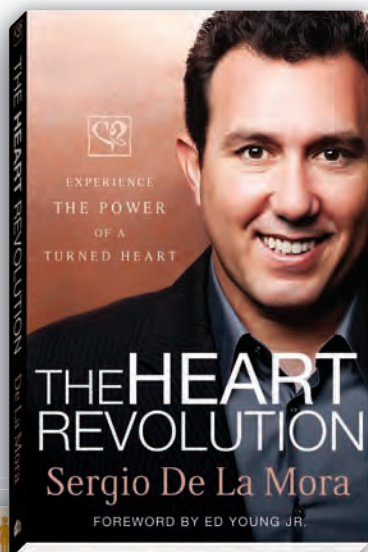
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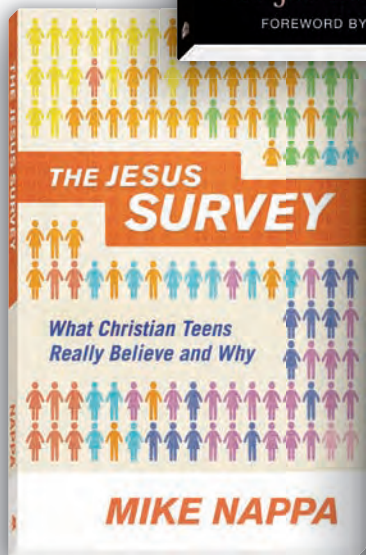


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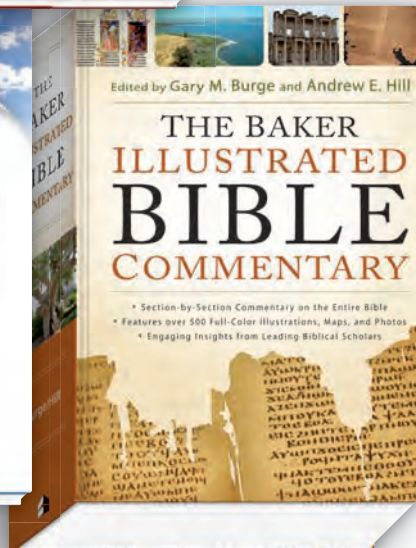
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Keep the Conversation Going

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

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

Global conversation continues at *Christianity Today*. For this issue, Alanna Foxwell-Barajas traveled to Japan to listen to the Christian minority talk about the opportunities for service and witness they have had since last year's earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown. Although the church is tiny, its commitment to neighbor love and its built-in social capital give it enormous leverage. Japanese leaders' words of hope are inspiring. "We lost many visible things," Pastor Akio Sato told CT, "but we rediscovered the invisible power of Christ." Be sure to listen to him and other Japanese leaders in the report beginning on page 15.

In our next issue, we engage with a voice from Nigeria, where interreligious violence is tearing the fabric of society. We first connected with Sunday Agang of the Evangelical Church of West Africa Seminary in Jos through our John Stott Ministries network. Professor Agang has studied the way post-colonial elites manipulate the violence for their own benefit, and he proposes a uniquely Christian way forward.

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

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David Neff, Editor in Chief

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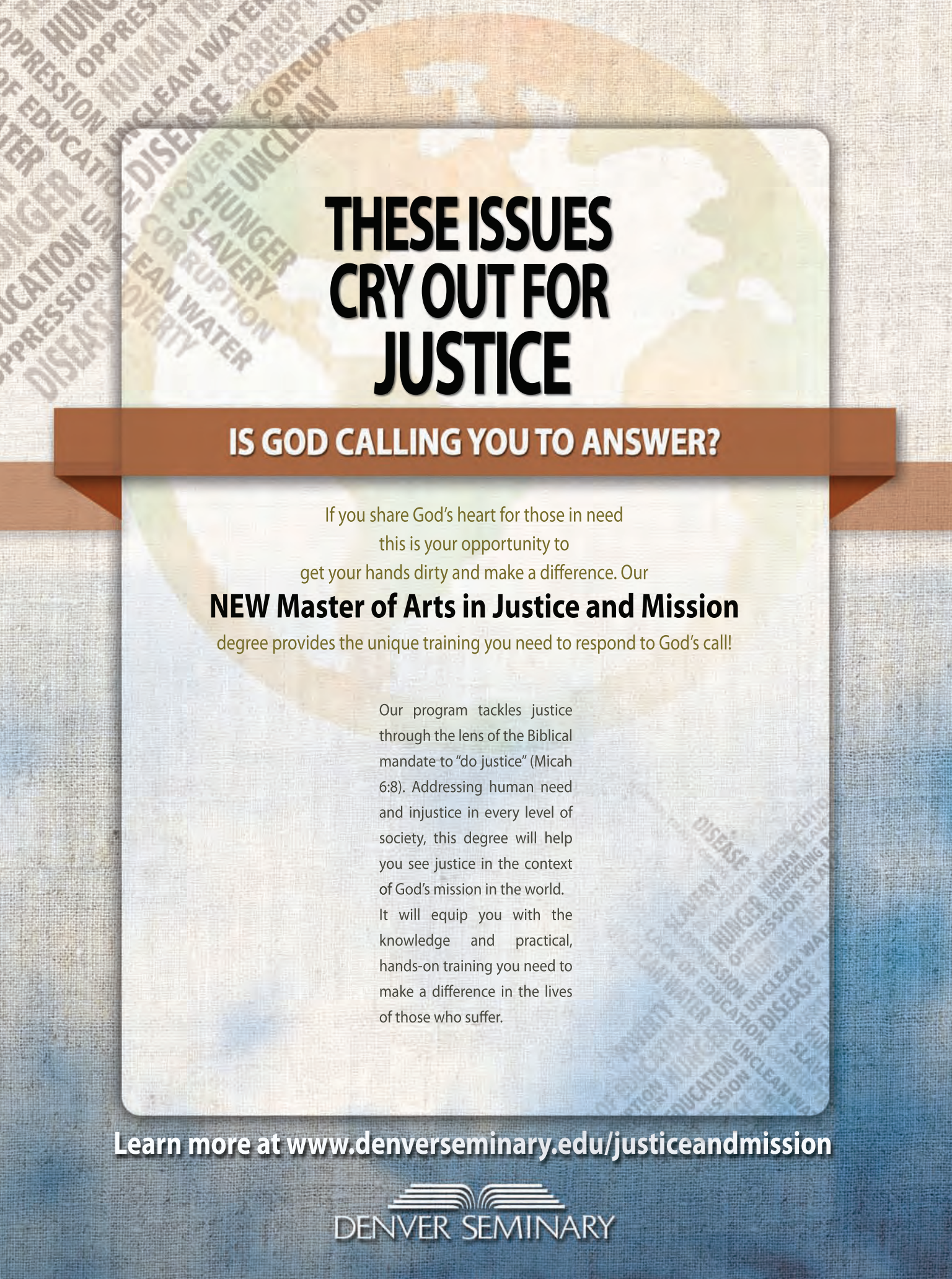
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Learning from Babushkas

Some things can't be taught in a classroom.



On Sunday, July 25, 1976, I was 5,016 miles from home and felt free as a bird even though I was in Moscow, then capital of the Evil Empire—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. After a budget breakfast at our campground outside the city, my fellow Americans and I decided to go to church. This was not risk-free. By the 1970s, the Soviets had terrorized millions of Christians and murdered priests and leaders by the thousands.

When we arrived at Moscow's Central Baptist Church, the pastor welcomed us warmly and, more importantly, dislodged about 25 worshipers so we could sit in the balcony. The service was traditionally Protestant, but the setting was extraordinary. Babushkas, Russian grandmothers with colorful headscarves, made up the entire congregation. The church was full beyond capacity, and every few minutes worshipers would yield seats to those standing. This was an unforgettably rich moment because nearly all of the Americans in attendance (including me) were undergraduates at a Christian college. For most of us, it was our first exposure to non-Western, global Christianity. What I learned that day has lasted me a lifetime.

The trip was possible because in 1958, a history professor at Gordon College near Boston had a vision that international education for undergraduates could be done in the field and on a budget. This program, now in its 54th year, is one of many jewels in the crown of Christian higher education.

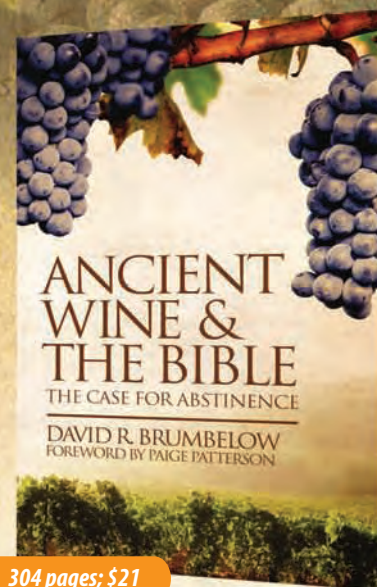
Today, Christian colleges and universities have rarely been stronger or healthier. But the daunting challenges facing all of higher education—rising costs, distance learning, a changing workforce—pose just as grave a threat to the traditional Christian college as to any other college or university.

In this month's cover article ("The Missing Factor in Higher Education," page 18), Perry L. Glanzer, associate professor of education at Baylor University, exposes how the modern research university has abandoned any pretense to make its students wiser or instill character in them.

Further, Glanzer cites research showing that evangelical colleges and universities that affirm wisdom as a goal of education are fulfilling the promise of a college education better than their secular counterparts.

Beyond mastery of an academic subject, living with integrity is the higher goal. In 1976, what I learned from Baptist babushkas about Christian community in a hostile climate could never have happened in a classroom. My professor knew some things could not be taught, only witnessed. That made all the difference to me.

Next month: Amy Julia Becker reports on Christians in Richmond, Virginia, investing in their public schools, Elissa Cooper profiles a youth gospel choir from Norway, and Sunday Agang reveals the roots of religious violence in Nigeria. ➤



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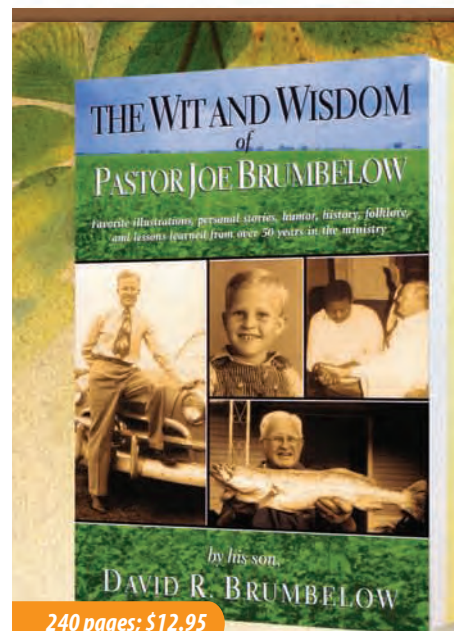
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—Dr. R. L. Sumner, Biblical Evangelist



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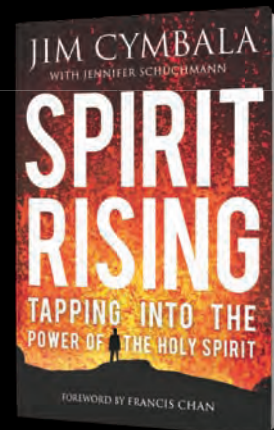
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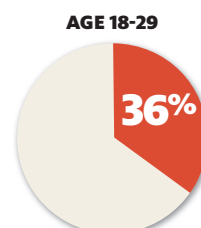
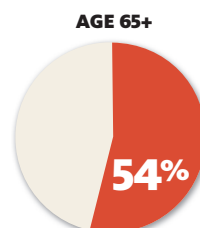
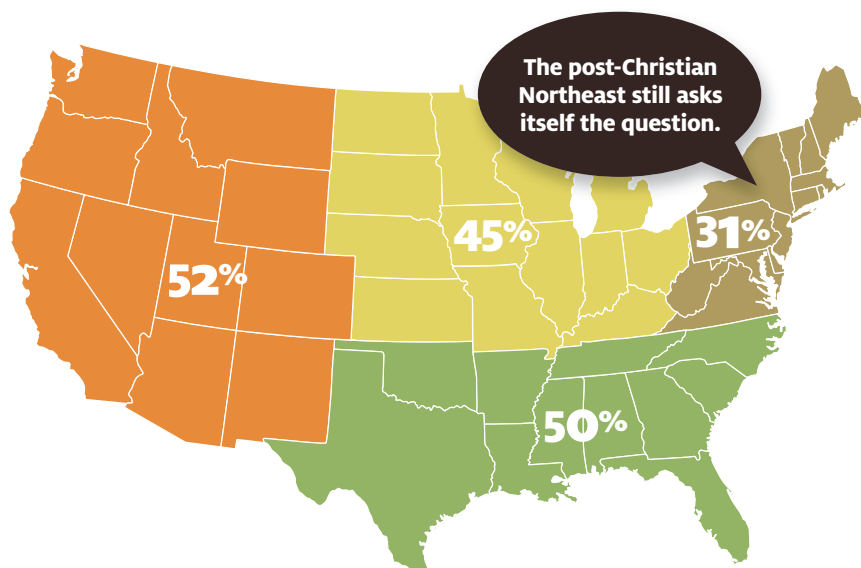
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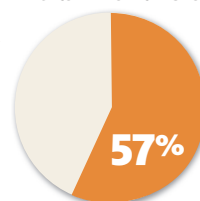
SPOTLIGHT: The Question That Died

➔ **“If you were to die tonight, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?”** No other question has been so identified with American evangelism and the evangelical movement. Billy Graham used it regularly in his crusades and books, and it was the backbone of training for D. James Kennedy’s Evangelism Explosion. But a new survey from LifeWay Research suggests that it’s not a question many people are asking themselves. About 11 percent of Americans say they wonder about it once a year or so; similar percentages said the question occurs monthly or weekly. But about half (46%) said they never wonder about it at all.

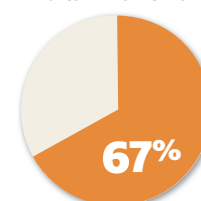
Percent of Americans who never wonder, “If I were to die today, do I know for sure that I would go to heaven?”



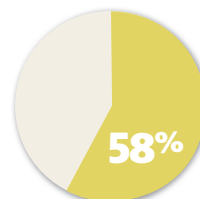
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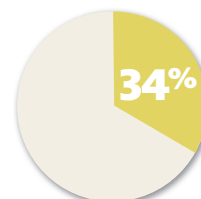
AMERICANS WHO NEVER ATTEND WORSHIP SERVICES



PROTESTANTS WHO IDENTIFY AS BORN-AGAIN OR EVANGELICAL

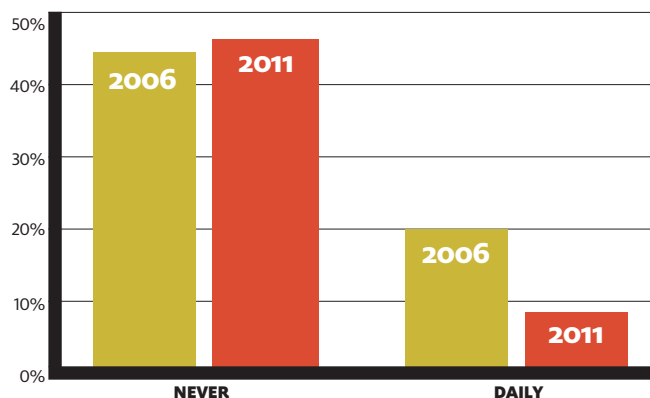


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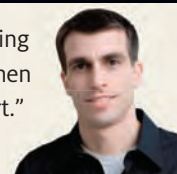
Asked and Answered?

People who never ask aren't shifting as fast as those who ask daily.



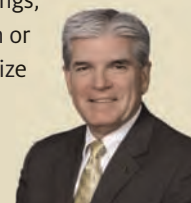
“Starting faith-sharing conversations by assuming people are wondering about spiritual things when they are not could be the wrong place to start.”

— Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research



“People are open to talking about eternal things, whether they’ve thought about this question or not. It tends to be people who don’t evangelize who imagine people aren’t open.”

— Ken Silva, vice president for North America, Evangelism Explosion





**Evangelical
Covenant
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OF PRESBYTERIANS



GLEANNINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Presbyterians form new denomination

Conservative Presbyterians launched a new denomination in January, though most don't plan to leave their current one. In response to the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s decision to ordain noncelibate gays and lesbians, dissenting congregations can exclusively join the new Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO), but they can also affiliate with it while remaining in the PC(USA). A poll of the 2,100 representatives from 900 congregations who attended the ECO's founding conference in Florida indicated most churches would not leave the PC(USA). But the New Wineskins Association of Churches, which broke from the PC(USA) in 2007, said it would "conclude its ministry" and merge with the ECO.

2 Contraception fight no longer just for Catholics

Evangelicals joined Roman Catholics in challenging a government mandate that employers' insurance plans cover contraceptives and some abortifacients. In December, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities sent a letter to the White House, voicing concerns that none of its members would "fall within the regulation's extremely anemic religious exemption." A group of high-profile evangelical leaders also sent a letter written "in solidarity, but separately" from Catholics to protest the requirement. Additionally, Colorado Christian University filed a federal lawsuit against the mandate. In January, the Obama administration granted a one-year delay for religious employers to comply with the mandate, but did not broaden its religious exemption.

3 Court: Ultrasound before abortions

A pro-life law now has another lease on life. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a Texas law requiring abortion providers to perform an ultrasound, have the patient listen to the fetal heartbeat, and give a detailed description of the fetus. Under the law, a woman cannot decline hearing the description except in cases of rape, incest, or fetal abnormality. The January ruling by a three-judge panel overturned a lower court decision that said the law was unconstitutional because it forced doctors to be the "mouthpiece" of the state's ideological agenda. Proponents argue the law ensures women are fully informed before deciding to abort. The Center for Reproductive Rights said it would appeal for a rehearing by the entire Fifth Circuit.

4 Christianity becomes a foreign religion

SUDAN Sudanese Christians face more government pressure than ever following last year's secession by South Sudan. In January, the Ministry of Guidance and Religious Endowments sent a letter warning it would arrest church leaders for engaging in evangelistic activities or failing to register their contact information. Within weeks, police arrested and beat a Khartoum evangelist, apparently for using his church as his home. Another church leader was arrested when he complained that authorities seized his church's property and gave it to a Muslim businessman. Religious leaders within Sudan have said Christianity is now culturally and officially considered a foreign religion in the north.



5 Judge: Is Lord's Prayer really Christian?

A Delaware county council has a novel defense for why it recites the Lord's Prayer before meetings: The prayer is generic because Jesus was a Jew. The district judge overseeing the lawsuit against Sussex County questioned whether the prayer was specifically Christian because it makes "no reference to Jesus or Allah."

Additionally, in January the United States Supreme Court refused to consider two other cases involving public prayer. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals had ruled that a North Carolina county commission's prayer policy is neutral on its face but unconstitutional in practice, as the majority of prayers referenced Jesus and no non-Christians offered any. And the Third Circuit had ruled that a Delaware school board's opening prayers were unconstitutional because students were often present, making the meetings analogous to public graduation ceremonies. The Supreme Court's denial means the current decisions stand.

GO FIGURE Church Life

272
Messianic congregations in the United States, not counting small house-church fellowships.

150
Messianic congregations in 2003.

ChristianSourceLists.com

6 Communist party keeps religion ban

CHINA Religion is more popular than ever in China. But the Chinese Communist Party refuses to budge when it comes to party members.

Zhu Weiqun, executive vice director of the United Front Work Department, said that allowing members to participate in religious services would divide party members. Chinese president Hu Jintao has stated that the country must take action to prevent westernization and that Christianity is "the essence of Western culture." Party members must be atheists, but a 2006 report indicated at least a third of the 60 million members believed in some form of "religious superstition." Researchers peg China's Christian population today at between 60 million and 115 million and growing.





compiled by Ted Olsen

QUOTATION MARKS

“Planned Parenthood . . . perpetrated what was nothing short of a shakedown.”

Karen Handel, a senior VP at Susan G. Komen for the Cure, after Komen ended its grants to the organization, then reinstated them amid outrage. Handel resigned.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

“When someone voluntarily chooses to enter a profession, he or she must comply with its rules and ethical requirements.”

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, rejecting Jennifer Keeton's effort to reverse her expulsion from Augusta State University's counseling program. The school said her stated desire to change homosexual clients' behavior conflicts with the American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics.

“[Clemency] is rooted in the Christian idea of giving second chances. I'm not saying I'll be perfect, that no one who received it will ever do anything wrong.”

Haley Barbour, former governor of Mississippi, on criticism of the 215 pardons he granted shortly before leaving office.

“I have a hand in both worlds. I love praise and worship music, and I love heavy metal.”

David Ellefson, founding bass player for Megadeth and music minister at a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod church in Arizona.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

“It's the right thing to do in order to respect the diverse religious beliefs [of] customers.”

Bill Ayer and Brad Tilden, Alaska Airlines' CEO and president, on the company's decision to remove prayer cards from its meals.

Alaska Airlines

6

7 Breakaway Anglicans lose their churches

A Virginia county judge has reversed his decision on who wins an Anglican spat over historic churches. Randy Belows, who has ordered seven congregations that broke away from the Episcopal Church in 2006 to give their historic properties to the Diocese of Virginia, had originally ruled in favor of the congregations back in 2008. However, the Virginia Supreme Court reversed that decision in 2010 and ordered a new trial, stating the state's Division Statute did not apply to the case because the congregations' new home, the Convocation of Anglicans in North America, is not a branch of the Episcopal Church. Among the affected churches are Truro Church and The Falls Church, both of which trace their roots back to the colonial era and claim George Washington as a past vestry member.

8 Province will split costs with religious schools

CANADA Saskatchewan will extend its funding of public education to independent schools, including religious schools, as long as schools meet certain guidelines. The plan will grant 50 percent of the average cost-per-student to such schools, provided they use certified teachers and the provincial curriculum. Schools that qualify include an Islamic school, a Jesuit middle school, and a Seventh-day Adventist school. The plan resembles those in Alberta and British Columbia but contrasts sharply with Ontario's.

9 Religious colleges no longer 'hands-off'

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board can regulate and investigate secular matters at religiously affiliated colleges, the state's attorney general ruled in January. The decision clarified

7

a potential conflict between a 2010 U.S. Department of Education rule and a 2007 Texas Supreme Court ruling that mandated a “hands-off approach” to religious institutions. The federal rule requires states to establish procedures to review and act on complaints at schools, including ones with religious ties.

10 Public worship may no longer need permission

MEXICO The Mexican government may soon loosen its religious freedom laws. The nation's Chamber of Deputies has approved a constitutional amendment that would allow religious worship in public without needing prior government permission. The Senate and at least 16 of Mexico's 31 state legislatures also must approve the amendment for it to become law. Some officials worry the amendment could give religious organizations access to public radio and television programs or entrance into the public education system. Supporters say the amendment would allow Mexico's constitution to abide more closely with international treaties it has signed. Members of both the governing National Action Party and the opposition Institutional Revolutionary Party support the amendment.

11 Facebook told to remove antireligious posts

INDIA A New Delhi court ordered 21 social-networking sites—including Google, Facebook, and YouTube—to remove antireligious or anti-social content that promotes hatred or communal disharmony. Representatives for Google and Facebook protested the order, saying it isn't possible for the sites to control the content posted by users. Though less than a tenth of India's population has Internet access, it is still the world's third-largest Internet market.

GO FIGURE Bible

68%

Americans who can identify that the 3 in John 3:16 refers to the third chapter of John.

103,923

Wikipedia searches for John 3:16 the day after Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow threw for 316 yards in a playoff game.

18,327

Wikipedia searches for John 3:16 the day after Focus on the Family aired a John 3:16-focused ad during the next Broncos game.

David Kinnaman, Barna Research



OUTREACH

City Shuts Down Church Club

Gang outreach slammed as dangerous business.

By Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra

A Christmas Eve shootout prompted a government crackdown and eviction of a Chattanooga, Tennessee, church and its controversial gang-outreach program.

Residents have criticized Club Fathom, run by Mosaic Arts Venue pastor Tim Reid, for hosting secular concerts for teens that have turned rowdy. Police have responded to at least 19 assault calls there since 2006.

City officials asked for an injunction to close down the club and the church after a Christmas Eve event attended by about 400 people ended in a gunfight that wounded 9.

A judge granted a 15-day restraining order, allowing only church services and Bible studies and capping occupancy at 100. Soon thereafter, Mosaic's landlord evicted the church.

"Under the current mayor's

administration and court rulings telling us how we are to conduct our worship services and what types of people we can or cannot allow—it makes it impossible to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ to love and accept all," Reid posted on Mosaic's Facebook page.

But Mayor Ron Littlefield calls Mosaic a "business masquerading as a church."

Tennessee's religious freedom laws require that the government show a compelling interest before interfering in a church's dealings, said Thomas Berg, a church-state expert at St. Thomas School of Law in Minnesota.

"Physical violence, rape, and other criminal acts are the kind of thing that, under any theory of religious freedom, the city has the authority to punish," he said. If such acts happen often enough, a city can



Outreach
Outside the Box: Tim Reid's church/night-club outreach to gang members exceeded what city officials considered proper church activity—and what other gang ministries consider wise.

rely on the doctrine of "general nuisance," which is what happened in the Mosaic case, he said.

Security is imperative in outreach to gangs, said Boston pastor Eugene Rivers. "If one is going to host quasi-secular events and entertainment, and be in the inner-city community, you've got to secure your space in the most literal sense," he said. "If you cannot guarantee the safety and security of people who participate in your program, you shouldn't do it."

Mosaic has the right goal, said Rivers, but finding effective strategies is difficult.

"The [church's] current wine-skins and paradigms are inadequate for meeting the needs of 20- to 40-year-old males in the inner city," he said. "I suspect [Reid] is in a period of trial and error where he's experimenting with ways to reach out to the lost."

Anyone experimenting with new models is going to make mistakes, but tactics cannot compromise integrity, he said.

Sonny Arguinizoni Jr., senior pastor of Victory Outreach in Chino, California, agrees. Gang ministries walk a fine line between being accommodating and being prophetic.

"We're not just duplicating what's already out there in the world," he said. "Jesus didn't have to become a prostitute to reach a prostitute, or a drug addict to reach a drug addict. We don't want to make it so worldly that there is no difference between the light and darkness."

How you present the gospel is important, said Arguinizoni. "You can't make the gospel look gray or shady when Jesus says, 'You have to leave this and follow me.'"

Reid did not respond to requests for an interview. Mosaic pastor Chris Edwards told the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, "We would do anything to be relevant with the culture; the lost are that important to us. We believe God can use anything." ✦

GO FIGURE

Spirituality

66%

Churchgoing
Americans who say they have "felt a real and personal connection with God" there.

44%

Weekly churchgoers
who say they feel that connection weekly.

18%

Weekly churchgoers
who say they feel that connection monthly.

Barna Research

MINISTRY

TMI in VBS?

Persecution is focus of new kids' curriculum.

By Rob Moll

A child in North Korea explains to her teacher that she did well on a test "by God's grace." Later, she arrives home to find her parents have disappeared.

Such stories in a new Vacation Bible School curriculum from persecution ministry Voice of the Martyrs have some children's spirituality experts questioning whether it encourages children's faith or burdens them with inappropriate information.

Launched last year, the ministry's Kids of Courage curriculum "came about as a result of churches' desire and [our] desire to tell the story of persecuted Christians in an age-appropriate way," said media director Todd Nettleton.

Church for the Harvest in Alexandria, two hours northwest of Minneapolis, used the curriculum last summer. Children's director Katy Kiger is a former missionary to South Africa and liked that Kids of Courage includes stories from China, Egypt, India, Nigeria, and North Korea.

For example, stories from Nigeria talk about Muslims converting to Christianity as well as terrorists attacking churches.

Many of the children in Kiger's program attend public schools where they face a milder form of antagonism. Still, she said, "It was awesome to hear how kids talk about their own struggles."

"The kids here need to know what is up in the world today," said Jalil Dawood, pastor of the Arab Church of Dallas, whose members and their families have faced death and severe persecution in their home countries. His church hasn't used the program, but Dawood says it is important for American children to

learn about the challenges of being a Christian in other parts of the world.

It is important for children to confront difficult or challenging topics, says Scottie May, professor of Christian spirituality at Wheaton College and co-author of *Listening to Children on the Spiritual Journey*. However, she said, "I have concerns about materials that might introduce pain, torture, and death to a young child without a context for them."

Ginny Olson, director of youth ministry for the Covenant Church's Northwest Conference, agrees. She said, "There is no way a teacher can be attuned to the differing levels of sensitivity of a group of children. Little kids need to experience scary stories in the presence of a parent who can protect them."

Still, telling stories of God's presence with his people who suffer on his behalf has a long history. "Jewish children heard the stories of Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," said Holly Allen, professor of Christian ministries at John Brown University and author of *Nurturing Children's Spirituality*. Stories of suffering in the mission field have been told to children in recent centuries.

"Six- or seven-year-olds can hear and process these stories," Allen said. "We have misrepresented God's work in the world when we avoid telling stories where God does not save. The deeper, more foundational truth must be told: God will not abandon us, even in our death."

GIVING

Foundations Surge

Wealthy Christians favor new tool for family funds.

By Chris Norton

Donations to large evangelical foundations increased dramatically in 2010 and were poised for growth in 2011, as

wealthy Christians shift away from traditional family foundations. The trend means more grants will be available to fuel ministry at small nonprofits that have struggled to sustain themselves via traditional donations.

The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) reported that giving to its member foundations surged 68.8 percent in 2010, compared to 6.8 percent growth for its high-revenue members overall.

President Dan Busby said the growth is largely due to the rise of donor-advised funds, which provide a tax-efficient and cheaper alternative to setting up a private foundation. In such arrangements, donors transfer management of their assets to a public foundation while retaining an advisory role over how the money is donated.

Such funds are popular outside the Christian ministry world as well. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* reported that giving to donor-advised funds rose sharply in 2010, including Schwab Charitable (92 percent) and Fidelity Charitable Gift (38 percent). Donations to the Philanthropy 400 charities more broadly rose 3.5 percent in 2010.

"Donor-advised funds have had really strong years," said Busby. "They simplify the process of transitioning large gifts to charity."

Rusty Leonard, founder of Stewardship Partners, agrees that the relatively recent availability of such funds, first approved by the Internal Revenue Service in 2006, is also a factor in the record-setting surge.

"People are realizing these are a tool that we didn't have a decade ago, and are moving forward with large gifts they may have been holding on to for years," he said. "Often it's baby boomers who have collected stocks, bonds, and property and are getting ready to donate them at retirement."

The National Christian Foundation (NCF), an ECFA member, saw

[continued on 14]

PASSAGES



Died

Michael O'Rear
President and CEO of Global Mapping International and Lausanne Movement technology advisor, on January 14 in Colorado Springs after a heart attack. He was 57.



Died

B. Sam Hart
Pastor and founder of the Grand Old Gospel Fellowship (now GOGF Ministries), on January 19 in Pennsylvania. He was 80.



Resigned James MacDonald

Founding member of the Gospel Coalition, from its council on January 24. Other council members had asked the pastor of suburban Chicago's Harvest Bible Chapel not to include T. D. Jakes in his Elephant Room conference.

Briefing [from 13]

a 61 percent increase in donations during 2010, jumping 15 places to become America's 19th largest charity, according to the *Chronicle*. NCF grants reached the \$3 billion mark over the last decade, 12 times the \$250 million in grants it distributed during its first 20 years of operation.

David Wills, president of the NCF, said the growth is partly driven by moderate recovery in the financial markets and partly by fears that capital-gains taxes may be reinstated on such funds. But the economic climate is only part of the picture, he said.

"It's a groundswell of engaged giving," said Wills. "People are sharing stories of their giving journeys—something that before was almost a private matter—and mobilizing peers to give and create communities of generous believers."

"It's a paradigm shift. For many, it's the first time the spiritual gift of giving is being seen as going beyond the offering plate," he said. "People used to think that giving meant selling property for cash so it could be used by the church or a charity. But now they're seeing that they can give property without selling it first, and actually give more that way [by

avoiding taxes]."

Since the U.S. recession first took hold in 2008, large foundations administering donor-advised funds have posted annual gains in donations, while smaller charities have faced sharp declines. But Leonard said this trend may not be as one-sided as it appears.

"We'll likely see, as these large foundations grant money they've received over the past few years, that a lot of it ends up back at smaller foundations and public charities," he said.

Wills said that in 2011, his foundation distributed \$500 million through 7,200 grants to 12,000 organizations, almost all of which were small or church-based charities.

"We don't sit on donations for very long," he said. "There is nearly a complete turnover of funds at the NCF every two years."

And not all small charities are facing shrinking donations. While drug rehabilitation and prison ministry saw decreases, ECFA noted significant increases in giving to child sponsorship (up 24.3 percent), orphan care (up 20.5 percent), and adoption (up 14.7 percent) in 2010. Busby believes the changes are due to the varying levels of promotion

DISCUSSION STARTER Pro-life

The Evangelical Environmental Network recently spent \$150,000 on TV and radio ads and billboards promoting new U.S. Environmental Protection Agency mercury pollution regulations as a pro-life issue because of mercury's effect on neonatal health.

such causes received among churches and nonprofits.

Giving to specific causes usually parallels awareness, he said. "If you look at the ministries, conferences, and conventions centered on adoption [today], they're drawing in huge crowds and rallying [evangelicals] around change in that one area."

As to the sustainability of increases in donor-advised giving, Leonard said that remains to be seen.

"After baby boomers transition to old age and leave the workplace, there will inevitably be less money going through the foundation pipeline, but their wealth will be passed on in various ways," he said. "They will pass it on to the younger generation, which historically has given less but is likely to give more as time passes and their income increases."

Wills believes giving to donor-advised funds will remain strong despite economic woes.

"While giving is pretty standard among the younger generation, they are more spiritually engaged than ever," he said. "This is a generation of people that, once they begin to accumulate wealth, in 10 years will be giving significantly and will want to be highly connected with where and how they are giving."

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Is mercury pollution's effect on newborns a pro-life issue?

YES

"When it affects one in six children, reduces IQs, and increases heart disease, it's a pro-life issue. Being pro-life means protecting life at every stage. We have to be consistent in our theology. Jesus calls us to care for the unborn. Abortion is critical; so is this."

MITCH HESCOX
president, Evangelical Environmental Network

"The sanctity of human life is at issue in many areas. Some people make abortion the overriding issue. We need biblical balance. If being concerned about all the things God cares about 'waters down' a pro-life stand, that's God's fault and God's problem."

RON SIDER
president, Evangelicals for Social Action

"Being pro-life means more than just opposition to killing the unborn. It also means opposition to euthanasia and assisted suicide, support for the handicapped, and affirmation of the elderly and infirm. And yes, it may also mean protecting babies from hazards."

DENNIS SULLIVAN
director, Cedarville University Center for Bioethics

"Being consistently pro-life requires more than opposition to abortion. However, politicians who favor abortion-on-demand cannot claim the pro-life mantle regardless of how many other pro-life policies they support."

GALEN CAREY,
vice president,
National Association of Evangelicals

"The 'life' in 'pro-life' denotes not quality of life but life itself in historical usage. Mercury emissions do not kill. Calling this a 'pro-life' issue obscures the term's meaning, though pro-life people will want to reduce risks without increasing other risks more."

E. CALVIN BEISNER,
spokesman, Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation

"Once you start to expand the term 'pro-life' very far beyond abortion and euthanasia, it dilutes the issue beyond the point of real meaning. Using the label 'pro-life' on other political issues comes across as a way to potentially divide and diffuse pro-life votes."

MARK TOOLEY,
president, The Institute for Religion and Democracy



Frozen in Time: Pastor Hiroshi Minegishi and his wife hold the clock from their church, which was destroyed in the 2011 quake. The quake killed over 800 people in Kesennuma.

MISSIONS

Second Chances in Japan

One year after disaster, sacrificial giving gains churches new credibility.

By Alanna Foxwell-Barajas in northeast Japan

For two days last spring, Hiroshi Minegishi lived inside his car in a parking lot, surrounded by mountains of debris from the historic March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

On the third day, he climbed across rooftops and crushed cars, arriving at the spot where his small church once stood. It took him a long time to find pieces of tile and tin that resembled the place where he ministered as a pastor for so many years. For a moment, Pastor Minegishi stopped his efforts and prayed, “God, somehow be glorified in the midst of this horror.”

At the time of the quake, Minegishi

was about 200 yards from the coastline in the northeast fishing town of Kesennuma. As he fled to higher ground after hearing tsunami-warning sirens, he received a chilling text message from his daughter miles away in Tokyo: “Escape. Escape. Escape.”

“I decided then that all I really have—or ever had—was the love of Christ,” Minegishi said, “so I need to let him rule.”

In the year since the largest quake in Japan’s recorded history, Christians have witnessed more than the walls of buildings come down. During *Christianity Today*’s recent travels through the quake zone, pastors and other Christian leaders

said that the cultural and spiritual barriers that have for generations divided Christians from each other and from greater Japanese society have weakened in the aftermath.

“We’ve been called to remember in these months that the church really is the body of Christ,” said Joseph Handley, president of Asian Access, an interdenominational evangelical organization that works throughout Asia to develop Christian leaders.

“It doesn’t matter if it is a traditional-looking building, Samaritan’s Purse aid workers circling up in their tents, or a businessman rebuilding homes and

Starting from Scratch: Pastor Nagai (center) visits the quake zone in Shichigahama. Nationwide, 125,000 buildings were destroyed or damaged.



community centers in a fishing village. All of it is part of the true presence of the invisible church, bringing the kingdom of God to bear for the good of Japan.”

Japan has a longstanding reputation as a “missionary’s graveyard,” Handley told CT. Christian workers from overseas have seen few results, becoming discouraged and returning home. “For the few who stay, ministry is truly a lifetime commitment with slow, small triumphs building on friendships established over generations.”

NEW MOMENT ARRIVES

During interviews, Japanese pastors said that the end of World War II was the last time there was such an open window for Christian outreach in a nation largely composed of Shinto and Buddhist believers.

Right after the war, in late 1945, Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur urged visiting American clergy to send 1,000 missionaries to Japan. He said it was “necessary to replace the old Japanese religion with Christianity.” Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders affirmed the call and mobilized hundreds of American missionaries.

But Doug Birdsall, the Lausanne Movement’s executive chair who served as a missionary in Japan for 19 years, told CT that the American missions response did

not achieve the expected result of seeding Japan with churches that would grow in number and influence. Birdsall said, “A historic opportunity was lost.” Christians in Japan have never composed more than 2 percent of the population.

When the earthquake and tsunami hit on March 11, they struck a nation already suffering economically and culturally. “The economy has been struggling for more than a decade, suicide rates have skyrocketed, and there’s a disintegration of family structure with growing divorce rates and numbers of latchkey kids,” Handley said.

In the aftermath, Japanese church leaders soon realized a second chance had arrived. They now could respond to the physical needs of their neighbors at the grassroots and reintroduce them to Christ. “This time there [is] an outpouring of love, prayer, and support,” Birdsall said. “The church has been praying for decades for a time of major breakthrough for the gospel. There is no country in the world where the church has sown the gospel so generously, yet reaped so sparingly.”

After the quake and ensuing tsunami and nuclear power plant failure, Japan’s government became unusually receptive to overseas aid, including aid from Christian agencies involved in relief work, such as Samaritan’s Purse, Food for the Hungry, and national groups such as CRASH Japan.

“We are in a new era now,” said Handley. “This is clearly Japan’s hour for Christ.”

Shortly before the March quake, pastor Shuzou Suzuki returned from Bible school to his neighborhood of Watanoha, Ishinomaki, a major port city of 164,000 where more than 3,000 died. He was unsure of his mission.

Soon after, Suzuki began a partnership with the Housing Reform Project, associated with Samaritan’s Purse. He has been mucking out houses and counseling grieving families, and recently planted a church and ministry center in the newly restored neighborhood blocks that the aid work-

ers have rebuilt.

The Watanoha Christ Church and Disaster Relief Center has regular Sunday worship services with people from the community. Local residents are curious to learn more about the volunteers’ Christian faith and hopeful attitude. Watanoha Christ Church also hosts women’s coffee hours, Bible studies, and youth groups, and stores relief supplies.

“Nothing can compare to the joy that comes from knowing the love of Jesus Christ,” Suzuki said enthusiastically. “I’ve been praying for a place like this—where we can meet to worship, pray, study the Bible. Through the prayers of the church, I hope that people will turn to Jesus in these confusing times.”

CARING RECONNECTION

Prior to the earthquake, there was little connection between the typical Japanese church and the community at large. Pastors were exemplary shepherds of their small congregations, devoting their lives to fellowship and discipleship. But their social engagement was minimal, and the community remained suspicious or largely unaware of the church’s purpose or role.

The tsunami changed that. Due to their grassroots networks, churches became some of the first distribution centers. They took in evacuees, stored supplies, served meals. “Churches were the shred of hope

that people clung to when they had nothing else,” Handley said.

“As these centers became centers for hope, the walls started melting away. People started saying, ‘Wow, these people are real. They aren’t some strange cult or taken over by some foreign religion. They are really our people and they care about us.’

“There was a sense of camaraderie developing between the church and the community as they started to band together for the good of the whole—augmented, of course, by tons of aid pouring in.”

Nobuyoshi Nagai, a northeast pastor, told CT that church leaders in the hard-hit Tohoku region believe they must act quickly and address the urgent needs of their congregations and communities at the same time. He said, “For just a short time, there is some vulnerability. We have a window of about two years. The needs are overwhelming.”

In Ohira, Pastor Nagai’s church became a nucleus for volunteers and supplies for Ishinomaki and Kesennuma. “We didn’t

people know where to come for help.”

In a country whose Christian population has plateaued for generations at about 1 percent, the Tohoku region was among the least churchified in the country. “We haven’t been planting here. We haven’t focused here,” Nagai said. “There are so many towns without any churches at all.”

Now Nagai said there is a plan to plant 100 new churches out of the small existing network over the next five to ten years. “The global church community has never prayed so intently for this area, but there is so much work to be done. I ask them to maximize prayer,” Nagai said.

UNEXPECTED CONVERSATIONS

Improvements in the public’s perception of local Japanese churches have motivated more church leaders to work across denominational lines. But the lethal devastation due to the Fukushima nuclear plant failure has forced entire communities, including congregations, to relocate.

Pastor Akira Sato led the members of

to Fukushima, just outside the nuclear evacuation zone, to start a new church and apartment complex for the elderly.

“We need to return to offer hope and encouragement to the church members who stayed in Fukushima outside the evacuation zone,” Sato said. “Being scattered makes all of us feel the isolation even more strongly.”

Admitting to discouragement, deep pain, even hopelessness at times, Pastor Sato said, “We will not be beaten by this disaster. We will live to see Fukushima become famous not for this nuclear accident, but as a symbol of hope.”

“A building with a cross on top is one way of doing church,” Handley said. “But [church] can happen in a community center, a gym floor, or the newly framed structure for a small business being rebuilt.

“Believers working together in any spectrum of church life doesn’t require the presence of a building. And for the first time on a large scale in Japan, we’re seeing people from different backgrounds and denominations put aside their differences.”

Asian Access is trying out new ways of investing in ministry areas that it might never have imagined as the domain of churches.

Members are supporting several small business projects, such as a home for the elderly that will be built next door to Pastor Sato’s new church in Fukushima. “And yet, these projects are done with the idea that they will become ‘invisible churches,’” Handley said.

“We’ll place disciples there who will be a part of the process of recreating business enterprises where they were decimated, serving the pressing needs of the community with a discipleship mindset.”

“I thought my church died that day, but it did not,” Sato told CT. “We lost four chapels and multiple organizations, but the church remains. We don’t need to worry because the church is our home. We lost many visible things, but we rediscovered the invisible power of Christ.”

Alanna Foxwell-Barajas is a freelance writer in Atlanta. Additional reporting provided by Takeshi Takezawa and Jordan Foxwell.

‘There is no country in the world where the church has sown the gospel so generously, yet reaped so sparingly.’ ~ Doug Birdsall, Lausanne Movement

really know if we could handle what seemed to be required of us,” he said. “But we also knew we had to do all that we could do.”

Over the first few months following the tsunami, more than a thousand people stayed with Nagai while his small congregation, Gospel Town, worked to keep people fed and cared for up and down the coast.

The church became an information clearinghouse for many tiny coastal communities that the government had been unable to reach with aid. Some of these connections led to unprecedented opportunities—beginning a junior-high Bible study and gospel choir, or growing a college sports and worship program in Sendai to mobilize young Christians for service.

“We won’t see a drastic change,” Nagai added, “but in this slow, gradual change,

four churches in Fukushima prefecture—all of them within five miles of the nuclear power plant crippled by the tsunami. While the churches were relatively unaffected by the earthquake and tsunami, they are in untouchable land—a ghost town. It is illegal for Sato, his family, and his congregation to return to their homes, perhaps forever.

“Our church has never stopped worshipping together, though,” said Sato. While the town broke apart, scattering to shelters and relatives’ homes elsewhere, the members of Fukushima First Bible Baptist Church began their exodus together. Eventually, a Christian camp in the mountains near Tokyo offered to shelter the entire church community as long-term evacuees.

Plans are in place to commemorate the anniversary of the disaster by moving back



The Missing Factor in Higher Education

How Christian universities are unique, and how they can stay that way. By Perry L. Glanzer

Illustrations by Keith Negley

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HE HISTORY OF AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION might have changed radically if Harvard College had pulled off an incredible feat when looking for its first president. The college's Puritan founders offered the position to the most innovative Christian educator of the time, the amazing Czech John Amos Comenius. He never came.

Comenius's fame derived from his theological and practical advances. He set forth the theological proposal that all people, including women and the poor, should be educated, because all are made in God's image. He created educational techniques that appealed to all the senses—for example, his Latin grammar text *Orbis Pictus* was the very first illustrated book in print history.

When it came to the purpose of higher education, however, Comenius shunned innovation. His illustrated book hints at what he saw as a primary aim of education. An invitation at the beginning bids the reader, "Come, Boy, learn to be wise." He later described the university as "a permanent assembly of wise men" and "a factory for wisdom." Comenius represented the expectation, now nearly 400 years old, that universities should help students cultivate expertise in the conduct of a good life—a quality the Book of James identifies as the mark of wisdom (3:13).

Today, however, the idea that professors should dispense moral wisdom is passé. Contemporary universities consider themselves sources of technical expertise for professional practices. If their professors dispense advice beyond their discipline, it usually concerns matters of public policy or political life.

Consequently, professors operate with a narrow conception of their vocation. As one professor admitted, "There are many of my colleagues who would say, 'Look, we are at a university, and what I do is math; what I do is history. Moving into [moral or spiritual development] is not my competence.'" I have found not one secular college mission statement that claims to provide students with wisdom.

What caused this shift away from wisdom? And are Christian colleges and universities any different from their secular counterparts?

INCREASING SECULARIZATION

Many historians lay blame for the abandonment of the pursuit of wisdom on the development of the research university in 19th-century Germany. Faculty who taught and trained at these universities grew more concerned with producing knowledge and passing it along than with forming the whole student. As one historian has described it, the student became “a mind to be loaded with facts like a tank car with oil.”

Research professors also began to change their view of knowledge. Knowledge simply became technical expertise in one’s discipline. A recent book by Yale professor Anthony Kronman, *Education’s End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (2008), contends that this approach marginalized broad topics related to life as a whole, as subjects beyond one’s narrow field of expertise began to seem like unprofessional distractions.

But these factors do not fully explain the change. Early research universities still thought they should form students morally. In 1876, Daniel Coit Gilman, the founding president of America’s first research university, Johns Hopkins, claimed that “everyone agreed” that the job of the university and its faculty was “to develop character—to make men.” The university “misses its aim,” he continued, “if it produce[s] learned pedants, or simple artisans, or cunning sophists, or pretentious practitioners.”

What eventually changed the priorities of many universities pertained more to their constituency. Prior to the Civil War, church-affiliated colleges educated 90 percent of undergraduates in America. Later, with the help of the Morrill Act in 1862, the state increasingly dominated the creation of colleges and universities, resulting in increased secularization. A century later, more American students would attend secular state colleges than private colleges. Today, public universities educate over 73 percent of American undergraduates.

This shift transformed higher education in two fundamental ways. First, state legislators expected these universities to produce technical experts and civil servants, not liberally educated, wise humans. It comes as no surprise, then, that a recent study reported that 62 percent of students *never* had professors encourage discussions of life’s meaning and purpose.

Second, state-funded institutions do not have the freedom to form the whole person. Unconstrained by religious mission statements and denominational ties, they may enjoy a certain kind of academic freedom. But government oversight and Establishment Clause strictures preclude more vigorous forms of moral and spiritual instruction. Thus, public universities aim simply to form professionals, citizens, and broadly defined leaders, to whom they provide generally defined capacities such as critical thinking.

As a result, secular universities have transformed into “multiversities”—institutions with no unifying core of knowledge

or identity that can provide students moral wisdom for life. Without agreement on life’s purposes, any rationale for character development disappears. In an article about Princeton University, *New York Times* columnist David Brooks found the university does not “go to great lengths to build character”; as one university administrator claimed, “We’ve taken the decision that these are adults and this is not our job. . . . There’s a pretty self-conscious attempt not to instill character.”

THE CHRISTIAN DIFFERENCE

When it comes to the moral dimension of education, are Christian colleges and universities different? Actually, they are. Evangelical college and university mission statements are filled with language about moral goals and ideals. Sometimes they even mention wisdom. For instance, Indiana’s Huntington University seeks to “educate students broadly for a life of moral and spiritual integrity, personal and social responsibility, and a continued quest for wisdom.”

But does it matter in practice? Research shows that Christian,

particularly evangelical, institutions demonstrate a marked moral difference in five areas: (1) faculty attitudes; (2) Bible, theology, and ethics in the curriculum; (3) measured or reported impact

on character or moral attitudes; (4) students’ moral reasoning; and (5) alumni views about moral education.

While less than half of the faculty at public universities think it very important or essential for higher education to help students develop moral character, one study found that close to 75 percent of faculty at Catholic and Protestant institutions affirm this view. Whereas every evangelical college requires classes in the Bible, theology, or ethics, most secular universities do not require even an ethics course.

In addition, studies have noted the uniqueness of particularly evangelical schools. One analysis of moral development at private liberal-arts colleges and public research universities showed that the institutions with the most distinctive impact on character were colleges associated with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. More recently, Donna Freitas, in the book *Sex and the Soul*, found that evangelical institutions created a moral culture that helped counter the destructive “hook-up” culture prevalent on most other college campuses.

With regard to alumni perceptions, a survey by the higher-education consulting firm Hardwick-Day discovered that 65 percent of alumni from church-related institutions claimed “their experience often included integration of values and ethics in classroom discussions.” By contrast, only 24 percent of alumni from the top 50 public schools indicated that they experienced such discussions. In addition, 36 percent of alumni from church-related colleges said “their college experience helped them develop moral principles,” while only 7 percent of alumni from the top 50 public schools claimed this outcome.

If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, then it

Professors can remind Christian students that their vocation entails not merely studying and acquiring knowledge but also loving God.

should be no surprise that conversations about wisdom and character have diminished at secular universities while remaining robust at Christian universities.

CULTIVATING WISDOM

In light of this research, Christian colleges and universities can celebrate their distinctive moral contributions. But they must also ask how they can continue to avoid the flight from

how universities might flee these temptations.

First, Christian higher education must always recognize that wisdom, like salvation, comes from the triune God as a gift of grace. Scripture reveals that wisdom is especially nurtured through worship and prayer (Proverbs; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:2–3; James 1:5). In other words, the best route to discovering God's wisdom is through particular Christian practices and virtues.

While the church has a primary responsibility for shepherding its charges along these lines, universities do play a unique role. Historically speaking, they have served as “the mind of the church”—the place where Christians, as image bearers of God, have searched out God's truth in every area of knowledge and practice, and transmitted wisdom gathered from God's created order. When speaking to the world about how to construct a good family life, the university is better equipped than the church to engage in discovering and disseminating empirical realities, such as studies on the long-term effects of divorce and fatherlessness upon children.

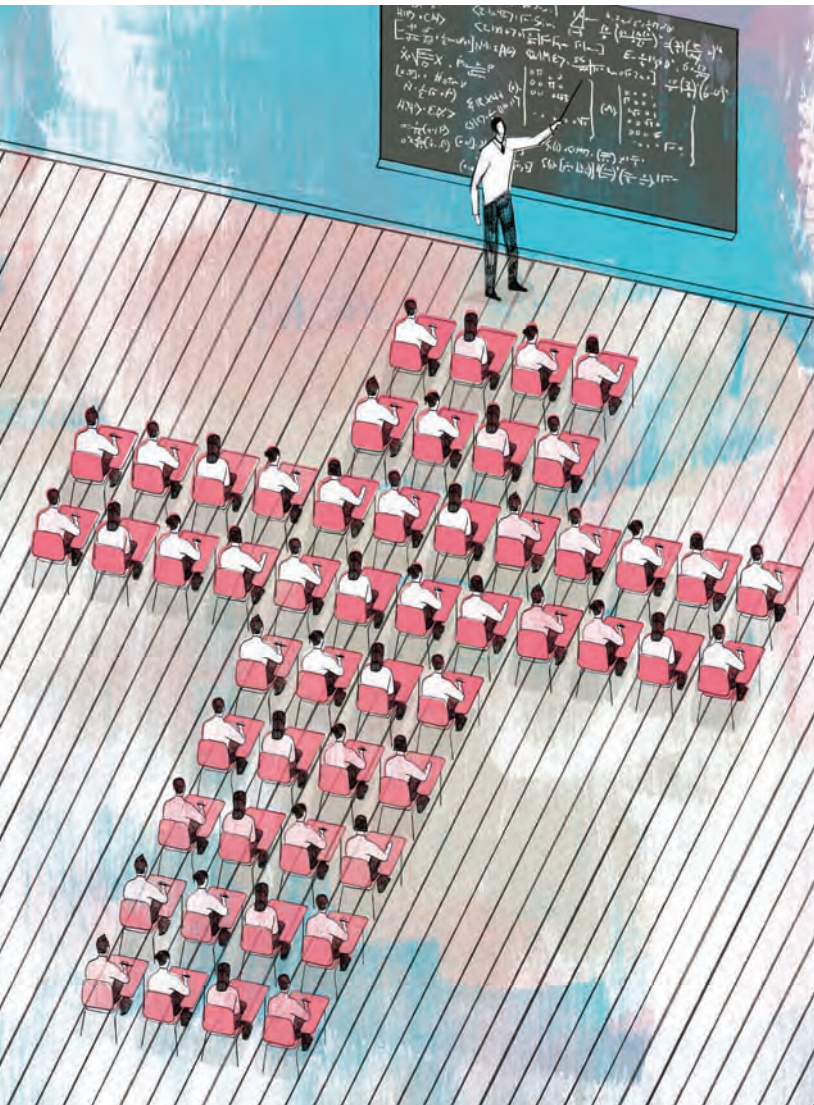
A number of Christian scholars have pointed out how Christian educational communities can cultivate the intellectual virtues needed for these tasks. Douglas Sloan, formerly with Columbia University, has suggested that wonder and reverence “become primary cognitive organs without which nothing of genuine newness can be known.” Valparaiso Provost Mark Schwehn notes how the virtues of humility, faith, self-sacrifice, and charity are essential for the communal quest for knowledge and truth. “The wisdom of loving God for God's sake,” observes Cambridge divinity professor David Ford, provides “a Christian rationale to inspire and champion the love of truth and knowledge for their own sake—this being perhaps the goal of universities that is most under threat in the 21st century.”

Second, university faculty can mentor students and help them understand what loving God looks like when engaged in a particular discipline. For example, Christian historians should be able to provide young historians

wisdom to expertise taken by secular universities. The temptations are many: Financial and peer pressure to attract a greater variety of students, particularly through barebones online degree programs, entice Christian universities to abandon their theological and moral distinctives or to gear curricula toward building professional qualifications. The desire to bolster one's academic standing may lead administrators and faculty to downplay an institution's Christian identity when hiring. And the personal failures and struggles of faculty members may discourage them from moving beyond narrow forms of professional training. I'll offer four suggestions for

with wisdom about how to research, interact with sources, empathetically interpret opposing views, and truly love their subject. They can remind Christian students that their vocation entails not merely studying and acquiring professional abilities, but also the virtues and practices necessary for loving God and gaining knowledge of God's creation.

There is danger, however, in concentrating only on cultivating virtues for work-related vocations in a way that mimics secular universities. Most people lack the skills and wisdom for success in areas of life outside of work. David Brooks recently asked people over age 70 to send him essays in which they



evaluate their own lives. "Most people," he found, "give themselves higher grades for their professional lives than for their private lives. Almost everybody is satisfied with the contributions they made at work. . . . At home, many give themselves mediocre grades."

In contrast, consider Habib Malik's testimony about his father, Charles Malik, a Lebanese philosopher and diplomat who helped draft the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "People ask me, what was it like growing up the son of a great man? My answer is, it was great! But only so because Charles Malik never let greatness detract from fatherhood." We should, as Malik does, redefine greatness, making sure Christian higher education considers all our roles and identities.

This fact points to the third unique task Christian professors and student life professionals should accomplish: introducing students to complex theological, ethical, and academic discussions about what it means to

be fully human. With great sophistication, Christian professors should reflect on and communicate what it means to be good in such non-work vocations as being a friend, neighbor, citizen, son or daughter, future spouse and parent, or being a steward of creation, culture, and money. In reality,

Students want to acquire wisdom relevant to life. They long for Christian institutions as a whole to witness to Christ in every dimension.

evangelicals are not the leading scholars in areas such as marriage, friendship, and fatherhood. While we may be known for political and cultural advocacy in these fields, we are much weaker when it comes to using academic disciplines to strengthen the work of the church.

Of course, we cannot expect professors and staff to cultivate this deep academic engagement without also promoting excellence in all areas of life. In other words, if we

think of life as a track event, as the apostle Paul does, the university should educate students not merely for one event (one's work vocation) but for multiple events (the good life as a whole). I recently asked the father of the National Junior Decathlon champion how his son trained. He said they sought coaches to teach the unique skills associated with each event, since a decathlete must excel in multiple areas. Christian higher education, I suggest, should be similarly formative.

To this end, Christian universities must hire faculty and staff who demonstrate not only expertise and the willingness to sign a confessional statement, but also the thinking, heart, virtues, and practices related to a well-lived Christian life, and the willingness to commend these things to others. Perhaps even more demanding, the Christian university will need to demonstrate God's grace and forgiveness when an individual or the whole academic community falls short of this ideal. Historically speaking, many of them have chosen instead to ignore

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this difficult challenge and focus on hiring primarily for academic expertise.

LIVES OF INTEGRITY

Finally, professors should articulate what it means to place Christ and their Christian identity first in life. Students, who are learning to prioritize and combine their own multiple identities and loyalties, surely profit from such wise counsel. Professors can constantly remind students that they are more than students. Their grades do not constitute their worth and identity. They are first and foremost persons made in the image of God and redeemed by Christ.

Yet students need more than occasional admonitions. To approach this subject in a more complex fashion, professors could actually end their classes with a lecture about how their subject fits into their lives and how they put their lives together. I find the questions that most intrigue students are about how I'm making decisions in the other areas of my life: How do I balance being a professor with being a husband, father, citizen, and church member? How do I school my children in

light of my education? How do I integrate not only faith and learning, but also faith and learning with living? Students are interested in acquiring wisdom relevant to life. They long for the institution as a whole to witness to Christ in every dimension.

Of course, professors are not necessarily wise people. They've been socialized to be experts, not sources of wisdom. I hope professors are wise enough to require students to read biographies of how people in their field and Christian saints in general have seen their lives redeemed under the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, I find that books relating issues about someone's life journey, like Augustine's *Confessions*, continuously fascinate my students. As Richard Foster writes,

In every age, great Christian saints have cultivated their life with God using the writings of Scripture, the theological reflections of others, the capacities of human reason, the cultural resources of the day and the spiritual disciplines. Through their

reflections, the great saints witness to the work of the Holy Spirit and, when we study them, guide our spiritual life as well.

Thus, since professors will always be deficient in this area when compared to great sources of wisdom, they should point students to other mentors. They must continue, as Hebrews 11 reminds us, to help students contemplate the wisdom offered from the whole Christian tradition.

If Christian universities hope to remain more than training grounds for narrow forms of competence, they must avoid the secular temptation to be satisfied with providing disciplinary expertise in a field of study. They must continue the grand quest to offer the world wisdom about what God's story of creation and redemption entails for the good life and a good world. ✚

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Wheaton College President Philip Ryken

[HIGHER EDUCATION]

Sailing into the Storm

College presidents **Philip Ryken** and **D. Michael Lindsay** discuss the challenges in Christian higher education today.

Interview by Timothy C. Morgan

TRADITIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION is passing through troubled waters. Overall, college costs continue to rise. Though more financial aid is available, more students than ever are seeking aid. And the interest rate on subsidized college loans will increase unless Congress acts by July. Less expensive, web-based instruction poses stiff competition to the classic four-year residential model. Many schools are ill-prepared for the so-called “browning of America,” in which Hispanic and Asian student populations continue to outpace the Anglo population’s much slower growth.

Evangelical colleges face additional challenges for their staunch commitment to biblical teaching on human sexuality, human origins, and the authority of Scripture. *Christianity Today* invited two new college presidents, Philip Ryken (Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, 2010) and D. Michael Lindsay (Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, 2011) to discuss these and other issues. *CT*’s deputy managing editor Timothy C. Morgan recently interviewed them together on Wheaton’s campus.

There is much doom and gloom about the future of higher education. Some argue it’s simply too expensive. Others argue that Christian higher education can’t compete with its secular counterparts. How do you respond?

Lindsay: I find it astonishing that people are questioning the value of Christian higher education. If I have to put my finger on the defining difference between



what we offer and what our peers at [secular] institutions offer, there is something about the level of commitment that emerges from shared faith between faculty and staff and students. It's qualitatively different.

Ryken: A lot of the learning takes place beyond the curriculum. What excites me is the opportunity for young men and women to be on an entire campus full of peers who are very interested in growing intellectually, are serious about their Christian discipleship, and are deeply desirous of strong community relationships. It's a transformational experience that you may or may not get at other kinds of colleges.

Imagine a scenario with me: A student's parent says, "I'm sending my child to your college to stay out of trouble, find a spouse, graduate, get a great job somewhere, settle down, and start a family." Isn't that the American dream?

Lindsay: Those are important components of a whole life, surely. If that's all you're looking for in a college experience, then I don't think it's worth the investment. What we want is to enliven the minds of young people who have a chance to change the world. I did research on senior leaders. Over half of them had a liberal arts degree. Over half the leaders I interviewed cited the vital importance of a mentor during college.

Ryken: Our parents' deepest desire is for their sons and daughters to become the men and women God is calling them to become. If you look at what enables young people to sustain a consistent faith in Christ into adulthood, two of the factors are living in a like-minded community that really encourages them to follow this Savior, and having mentors who show them how to live the kind of life they're called to live.

Should the main goal of Christian higher education be spiritual formation or academic achievement?

Ryken: I don't want to dichotomize those. At Wheaton, we're trying to produce whole and effective Christians. What we mean by "whole" is not somebody who hasn't experienced brokenness and doesn't sense a need for God's grace, but whole in the sense of a complete person.

Lindsay: I didn't separate it out when I was teaching at Rice. I saw the moral formation of my students as fundamental to what I was trying to do in the academic classroom. The benefit [in a Christian college] is that you have institutional support to be able to do it. That's why students at Christian colleges and universities are more loyal to their alma mater. They've been more deeply shaped than those at secular schools.

Is a Christian college for everyone?

Ryken: No, if you look in the Scriptures, you see some notable leaders of the people of God who had part of their formative experiences in very secular environments. Yet it would be my view that probably every Christian



Gordon College President D. Michael Lindsay

high-school student who's thinking about going to college ought to be seriously considering a Christian college or university.

Lindsay: I can't imagine making an informed college choice if I'm a committed Christian without at least seriously considering the quality of what we have in Christian institutions of higher learning. Realize that the majority of what happens on college campuses today is so bad, at least in terms of student life, you can't print it in *Christianity Today*. The work hard, play hard mindset in American higher education has had corrosive effects on students.

In the early 1990s, Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* challenged traditional paradigms. Is there still a scandal?

Ryken: That book actually presents a double scandal. The part that people mainly remember is that there isn't much of an evangelical mind. But the other scandal is the scandal that Christ himself causes in society when he is exalted and lifted up. I hope that scandal is still with us. In terms of the academic quality of our institutions, we can



still aspire to grow. An issue for us is wrestling with the temptation to pursue the approval of secular guilds in academia—the temptation to pursue that success in ways that maybe won’t be conducive to Christian discipleship.

Lindsay: I talked with Noll while I was writing my book. He said that if he were to write that book today, it would be more irenic, more hopeful. There’s a new horizon. Churches today talk about engaging the culture. There is no institution that does that more faithfully or more successfully than Christian colleges. It’s what we do day in and day out. We can actually serve an important function in the church—showing how Christ relates to culture. Christian colleges are at the tip of the spear.

What do you see as the most significant theological issue that you, as president, are facing at the moment?

Ryken: You could go down the list in Wheaton College’s Statement of Faith and say, “There are challenges in all of these areas.” Three of the biggest challenges that I perceive are:

- Human sexuality and a Christian understanding of marriage and sexual behavior.
- Human origins as it relates particularly to the historicity of Adam and Eve, but more generally questions related to Christianity and evolution, creation and evolution.
- Not losing our zeal for evangelism, particularly for proclaiming the gospel in words as well as witnessing to the gospel in deeds.

Lindsay: The theological issue that we’re grappling with is cultural

pluralism—what’s the appropriate response for us as a Christian community to those outside the Christian community. We’re going to have more pressure to accommodate on some issues and uphold positions in others. There’s not clear agreement within our own community on how to best do that.

There’s always been a desire on behalf of some for institutional leaders to draw the borders and defend the borders. Do you feel that pressure?

Lindsay: I don’t feel the need to police the boundaries. I do feel pressure for us to articulate our distinctives in a way that is compelling yet winsome. The things that most people associate with Christian higher education is what we are known to be against, not what we are for. Having an identity based upon negation as opposed to affirmation is something that I want to change. Both Wheaton and Gordon care about the arts. That represents an area where we can be affirming.

Ryken: We strengthen the center of our evangelical commitment more by what we are for than simply by what we are against. I do feel more definitional pressure, and that may be the role that Wheaton has had in the evangelical community. Most of my time is spent not policing boundaries but articulating vision and strengthening convictions. Evangelical Christianity is not so much a bounded set as an overlapping set or a shared set.

Do you as presidents believe that helping to establish Christian unity is part of your calling?

Lindsay: Sometimes the Christian community is the worst about working together. Nothing has the ability to draw a movement together like a common enemy. Some of the cultural challenges that Christian institutions are going to face are going to demand that we work together. Outside challenges have a tremendous way of unifying the community.

Ryken: This is a question people had for me coming to Wheaton because my Reformed and Presbyterian convictions are well known. I was living those out in a confessional context as a pastor of a local church. But I was also raised on the campus of Wheaton College. I celebrate the evangelical diversity we have on this campus. Wheaton self-identifies as an evangelical Protestant institution. We’re not trying to be the entire body of Christ, but we come out of this evangelical Protestant tradition that has roots in the Reformation. Within that context, the connections that we have with Roman Catholics are significant. We have common cause in those issues that affect even our ability to function as Christian institutions. On a campus like Wheaton, we read Catholic authors in the same way we would want to read evangelical authors—sympathetically but also critically, testing things according to Scripture.

‘The college presidency is perhaps the prototype for the way leadership gets exercised in our society today.’

~ D. Michael Lindsay



‘We strengthen the center of our evangelical commitment more by what we are for than simply by what we are against.’

~ Philip Ryken



There is new dialogue between Mormons and evangelicals and between Muslims and evangelicals. Is your institution joining in or opting out?

Lindsay: We have to be in conversation with people who don't agree with us. There is no other way for us to be part of the wider intellectual milieu. What we hope to do is help our students embody the ideal of how John describes Jesus as being full of both grace and truth. John was a careful enough writer that I think the order of those words matters. People came to know the grace of Jesus before they necessarily knew the full truth. The temptation, however, is for that conversation to begin to modify your identity.

Ryken: There's a certain kind of conversation that is really about covering up important distinctions in order to make a connection. But there's another kind of conversation that I think really respects people more. That is to say, "Here are the things where I think we disagree, and here's why this is important to me. Now, what do you think?" People really desire conversation where you're honest about differences.

Is there too much distance between the Christian college and the local church?

Lindsay: There's more distance than I like. I want us to be working on a shared commitment to being a leavening influence on our society, and working to develop fully committed Christ-followers.

Ryken: To me, it's just obvious that Christian colleges and universities have a very significant role to play for the future of Christianity in America. We really need to make that case persuasively so that people understand. If I could borrow one of Michael's phrases, "convening power," we have found that Wheaton College probably has more convening power for local church leaders than any single congregation or denomination. There's a real hunger for evangelical leaders to be together, but not always a context in which they can.

Is your school doing enough to address the needs of Asian and Hispanic Christians?

Lindsay: We're not doing enough. The browning of America is going to be significantly felt in American evangelicalism because both of those populations are more religiously committed than their white counterparts. We've created campuses that are more open and more welcoming of students of underrepresented groups than we ever have in the history of Christian higher education. But you have to be very intentional.

Ryken: I agree. Wheaton College would be an interesting

example. When I look at it half-full, I compare barely a handful of students of color on campus when I was here in the mid-1980s, to nearly 400 students of color on campus now. That's required a lot of intentionality. We've done better with our student body and our staff than we have with our faculty. We want to have relationships that live out what it means to work, play, worship, and study together with a full expression of what it means to belong to the kingdom of God.

Notions of leadership have changed over the years. How do you talk about leadership?

Lindsay: The college presidency is perhaps the prototype for the way leadership gets exercised in our society today. The notion that somebody can issue a directive that everyone follows, if that ever was true, is certainly not true today. It is especially not true on college campuses. Persuasion is the coin of the realm in leadership. This is the ability to persuade other folks to catch a vision that you articulate and to mobilize energy and resources behind that. The college presidency has to do that day in and day out.

Ryken: The president is the living embodiment of the ideals of the institution. When I came to Wheaton, the first thing the letter of covenant with the college from the board of trustees says is: "We have not provided you with a job description because we believe that you already understand what the job entails." I laughed out loud when I saw that. Who has any idea of what the job entails? You have to get in and figure out how to do it.

For me, the paradigm for spiritual leadership is the three-fold office of Christ, which has a priestly dimension of prayer and of living with the people carrying their burdens. It has a prophetic dimension of not just speaking to the future (although that's part of it), but also discerning the present moment and speaking God's truth into that moment. It has a kingly dimension because there's an appropriate exercise of authority. The leadership calling is multidimensional. It, in some way, is patterned after the life of Christ and his leadership. ✚

Timothy C. Morgan is CT's deputy managing editor. He is an alumnus of Gordon College and is the coordinator for the new Journalism Certificate program at Wheaton College.

Little Colleges

ASK ANY HIGH-SCHOOL SENIOR if colleges are competing for his or her attention, and the answer is simple enough: “Check out my mailbox.” Flashy fliers and brilliant brochures—some even come with fancy DVD “tour guides”—arrive almost daily, essentially screaming, “Pick me! Pick me!”

Christian institutions are in on the act, with their own flurry of clever slogans, beautiful pictures, and dazzling graphics. These days, just as important as marketing and defining a niche, schools need to respond to the many challenges that face Christian higher education—such as affordability, elitism, and cultural and missional relevance. Here are five schools that address those challenges in unique ways.

Alaska Christian College

Rae Fancher had been raped and abused as a young girl, so when she first came to Alaska Christian College (ACC) as a freshman, her needs were far more than academic. “There were times I couldn’t even be in the same room with a man,” she recalled. “I’d start shaking and crying.”

Suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, Fancher found hope at the school’s counseling center, ultimately “working through that,” as she put it, and later defying all odds by making it through boot camp at the U.S. Naval Academy. Today, she is a commissioned United States Naval officer—the first Alaska Native female to hold the position—stationed in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Fancher’s story is not unusual. ACC president Keith Hamilton says about half of its male students and roughly 90 percent of its female students have been sexually abused in the past. For many Alaska Native youth, the future, like the long winter nights that surround them, is dark. Only about 67 percent of them complete high school, and of those who enroll in college, only 12 percent survive their first semester.

ACC, located in Soldotna, Alaska, is changing that—one life at a time.

Founded in 2000 by the Evangelical Covenant Church of Alaska, ACC provides its primarily Alaskan student body something they weren’t getting elsewhere: biblically based studies, Christian discipleship, and the skills for further education in a Western culture. ACC offers two-year programs in biblical and ministry studies, but also focuses on helping students heal spiritually and emotionally.

Nearly all of the school’s 45 students come from rural villages where test scores are 40 percent lower than the national average, so developmental courses are part of the curriculum. Many ACC students



Hope and Healing: Alaska Christian is reaching students who don't fit the normal college profile.

have difficulty with written and verbal communication.

“In the village, you’ll hear a mix of different languages: two different native dialects, English and Pidgin English,” said Hamilton. “These students are living between Western culture and a subsistence rural culture. We offer a transitional opportunity to their next step in higher education.”

Just as important as educating the mind is transforming the heart. ACC’s New Hope Counseling Center offers free counseling to all students; 80 percent take advantage of the service.

Hamilton said the biggest hurdle for students is “the baggage they carry from their past.” According to the American Psychological Association, American Indians and Alaska Natives experience far greater psychological distress than the general population, putting them at greater risk for some mental disorders. Alcoholism and sexual abuse have historically been cyclical, generational problems. Among those ages 12 and older, Alaska has the highest percentage of illegal drug use in the United States (13.5 percent).

Among young people, Alaska’s suicide rate is three times the national average, according to a University of Alaska–Anchorage study. In some villages, the suicide rate among teens and young adults soars to seven times the national average.

“So when you have a student who can’t get to class in the morning, are they lazy or depressed?” said Hamilton. “Maybe he just found out about a suicide in his village, or a fatal accident, or a family member affected by substance or sexual abuse. The counseling center hits that head on to get students to a place of healing or accepting what’s happening in life and moving on.”

Many students also struggle with cultural identity, said Curtis

BILL HEATH

That Could

How five small Christian schools are adapting to the new environment.

By Jocelyn Green

Ivanoff, field director for the Evangelical Covenant Church of Alaska. “At ACC, they grow in their understanding that their identity is ultimately in Christ,” he said. “That sense of self helps them in whatever they decide to do. Our hope is that eventually many will return to their home villages equipped to be agents of hope in the name of Christ.” Many alumni are doing just that—teaching in villages, nursing, doing ministry, or working in a trade.

ACC’s annual tuition (\$14,000) is lower than most private institutions, and scholarships are available. About 65 percent of funds come from individual and church donations.

College of the Ozarks (MO)

At College of the Ozarks in Point Lookout, Missouri, students don’t take out loans. They punch a clock.

Students work 15 hours a week plus two 40-hour workweeks until they graduate debt-free. The 80-plus campus jobs range from working at the college’s four-star hotel and restaurant, to milking cows at the campus dairy, to operating a beef and hog farm, to baking fruitcakes for the school’s gift shop.

“The price of higher education is just outrageous,” said Elizabeth Hughes, director of public relations. “If you don’t have a way to pay for a college education, you leave burdened with debt. So parents and young people are looking for ways to meet that cost.”

The King’s College (NY)

At the King’s College, those not interested in changing the world and culture need not apply.

Uniquely situated in Manhattan’s Empire State Building, King’s is in the business of training world leaders. In addition to a typical major program, every student must take 60 credit hours of rigorous politics, philosophy, and economics courses, each taught from a Christian worldview. Most Christian liberal arts schools require between nine and sixteen hours in such courses for general education requirements.

The requirement at King’s gives “all of our students a common grounding in the great

ideas that built the culture in which they work,” said writing instructor Alissa Wilkinson. “They share an excitement about learning, a desire to pursue the truth and someday make a difference in their part of the world.”

Moody Aviation (WA)

The need for missionary pilots is just as great today as when Jim Elliot and his team brought the gospel to the jungles of Ecuador more than 50 years ago. With five-year programs in both flight and maintenance, Moody Aviation in Spokane, Washington, is dedicated to meeting that demand.

Sixty-five percent of the instructional staff are on loan from various mission agencies. They’ve all “been there, done that, and are passing on to the next generation both the heart and the skill set to continue in mission aviation,” said Cecil Bedford, director of the program.

To date, Moody has trained almost half of the missionary aviators that are now overseas.

Shepherds College (WI)

Shepherds College in Union Grove, Wisconsin, is the country’s leading Christian post-secondary educational program for students with intellectual disabilities.

Students study biblical studies and culinary arts or horticulture, as well as life skills such as communications, personal finance, transportation, and more—all while being mentored on recognizing God’s plan for their lives.

Faculty prepare students for “appropriate independence,” including “the truth that each of us has been created on purpose and for a purpose,” said Tracy Terrill, director of the college. “We desire that each student determine and then pursue God’s plan for his or her life and ultimately share God’s love through community involvement and service to others.”

Jocelyn Green is an award-winning freelance writer and author living in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Visit her at JocelynGreen.com.



College of the Ozarks



The King's College



Moody Aviation



Shepherds College

COURTESY OF COLLEGE OF THE OZARKS

COURTESY OF THE KING'S COLLEGE

COURTESY OF MOODY AVIATION

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By His Birth We Are Healed

Our redemption, it turns out,
began long before Calvary.

By Oliver D. Crisp

THE CENTRAL CHARACTER of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Little Mermaid* dreams of giving up her life in the sea to find love on dry land. The agony she undergoes exchanging her tail for a fully human form is poignant.

It makes one wonder what it would be like to become another sort of thing, something we've desperately wanted to become.

Even before the Fall, human beings longed for dramatic change. In Genesis we see that Eve longed to be like God, to share in his very wisdom and goodness (Gen. 3:5-6). That longing was not the problem, since we see that in Christ, we are destined to "participate in the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). Rather, the problem was that Eve grasped at God's wisdom and goodness instead of waiting and trusting God to fulfill her God-given longing. After the Fall, that longing is now utterly frustrated in human beings. This is one gracious reason God has given us the moral law—to show (a) that it truly is our destiny to live godly lives as outlined in the law, and (b) that it is now impossible to live in accordance with God's law without divine grace.

Thus we find ourselves in a desperate situation. We long to know and experience truth, beauty, and love in perfect fulfillment—the very wisdom and goodness of God. This yearning is what drives human beings relentlessly to create, to write, to

ponder, and to love. But history and our everyday experience show we fall so far short of this goal as to lead us to despair; we are, as Paul put it, in a "wretched" situation, destined to live and die in futility (Rom. 7:24).

In the midst of our desperate situation, the gospel announces some startling news: In Christ, God has done that which is necessary for us to be changed, to enjoy the life we were created to enjoy, to participate in his being, to know and experience divine wisdom, beauty, and love—the very things we have longed for all along.

Future articles in this series will examine how one can personally participate in this dramatic transformation. Here I want to examine one crucial event that makes this dramatic transformation possible: the Incarnation.

Many assume that the Crucifixion and Resurrection make our transformation in Christ possible. And of course, there is a great deal of truth in this assumption. But we often think of the Incarnation as the warm-up to the real drama: Jesus needed to become human so he could die for us. What many Christians have forgotten is that our redemption *began* with the Incarnation.

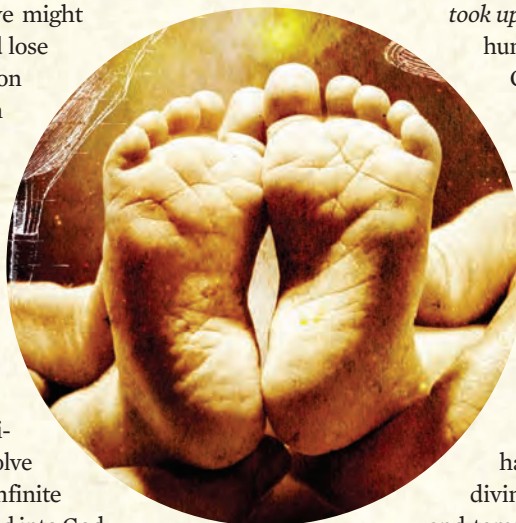
In the Incarnation, God the Son stoops down to gather up our humanity, becoming one of us so that he may reconcile us to God. He takes up our humanity in addition to his divinity—he unites what makes us human to what makes him divine. As the church father Athanasius puts it in

We often think of the Incarnation as the warm-up to the real drama: Jesus needed to become human so he could die for us. What many Christians have forgotten is that our redemption began with the Incarnation.

the first chapter of *The Incarnation of the Word of God*, “He has not assumed a body as proper to his own nature, far from it, for as the Word he is without body.” Rather, “He has been manifested in a human body for this reason only, out of the love and goodness of his Father, for the salvation of us men.” Then he makes the startling claim that God the Son assumed humanity so that we might become divine. Not that we should lose our individual identity in total fusion with the Godhead, but that we can be united with God through Christ.

Similar thoughts are found in evangelical theology. In his *Dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World*, Jonathan Edwards, the great Puritan pastor-theologian, argues that God’s desire in salvation is to bring us into increasingly intimate communion with himself. Our glorified life in the world to come will involve drawing ever closer to God in an infinite embrace, yet without being absorbed into God like a drop of water in the ocean. We are to be united with God without being “goddied with God,” as Edwards puts it.

So how is it that the Incarnation, and not just the Crucifixion and Resurrection, makes this unity possible?



THE IMAGE OF GOD

Today, many are asking what makes human beings different. What sets us apart from other creatures? There are many answers to that question. Theological leaders through the centuries have labored long and hard to comprehend human uniqueness. Many of them have focused upon the biblical idea found in Genesis 1:26–27 that we are made in the image of God. According to Scripture, no other creature possesses this divine image. But interestingly, Paul tells us that Christ is himself the image of the invisible God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15), while the author of Hebrews says Jesus is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being” (Heb. 1:3). He has been made temporarily “lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:9) in order to be crowned with glory and honor on account of his suffering for our salvation.

Much ink has been spilled in trying to understand what bearing the image of God entails. But rather than attempting to isolate some quality that only humans possess, we should begin, like the New Testament, with Christ. For if Christ is the image of the invisible God, then he sheds light on what it means for humans to carry the divine image. This is hardly a new insight. In *Against Heresies*, Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons

observed that when “the Word of God became flesh . . . he both showed forth the image [of God] truly, since he became himself what was his image; and he re-established the similitude after a sure manner, by assimilating man to the invisible Father through means of the visible Word.”

In other words, in becoming human, God the Son *took up our humanity into God*. By becoming human, Christ bridged the divide between God and man, doing so from God’s side, by God’s initiative—the exact opposite of Eve’s, and our, natural grasping inclination. Christ’s *participation in our humanity*, then, enables us to participate in his divinity, through being united to God in Christ.

This is what it means, then, to be made in the divine image—to participate in the life of Jesus Christ, who is both fully human and fully divine. In becoming human, God has taken up our humanity into his own divine life. He has endured the hardships and temptations of earthly life not merely to provide us a moral example, but also to begin renewing and sanctifying our humanity. His Incarnation actually repairs the defaced image of God that results from our sin. As Irenaeus suggests, God remakes us in his image.

CHRIST’S VICARIOUS HUMANITY

In this way of thinking, the Incarnation itself is also a vicarious work. Evangelical theology already imagines the Crucifixion in this way: As Christ’s work on our behalf, performed by a representative standing in our place to take upon himself the penal consequences of our sin. But now we see that God the Son also acts on our behalf *in the very act of taking upon himself human flesh*. His work does not come in two parts, becoming human and living a perfect life, and then dying on our behalf. No, his work is one whole. He acts on our behalf and in our stead from the Incarnation onwards—in his birth, life, death, and resurrection.

This is sometimes referred to as Christ’s “vicarious humanity,” and is often associated with Scottish theologians like John McLeod Campbell in the 19th century and Thomas and James Torrance in the 20th. But as has already been indicated, this doctrine can be found much earlier in the life of the church, especially in the writings of the Fathers.

With the concept of Christ’s vicarious humanity comes a related notion: The characteristics of human life become the property of God the Son, while the characteristics of his divine life become the property of his human nature. In other words,

God the Son acquires the qualities of a human being in addition to his divine qualities. He is no longer just a divine person. Now he is a divine person with a human nature. His divinity and humanity are not fused together in some mixture of divine and human characteristics, like many heroes of myth and legend. Rather, his two natures are held together in this one complex person.

An admittedly crude illustration comes from cooking. When we add yeast to dough, the yeast and the dough interact and enable the dough to rise. In one sense, the yeast has become doughy, and the dough has become yeasty—they have taken on the properties of one another.

Of course, the illustration is limited. One difference is this: the dough and yeast get lost in one another, so that one soon forgets the parts and only thinks of something new called “bread.” But Christ’s human attributes—born in Bethlehem to Mary, raised in first-century Jewish culture in the Middle East—do not compromise his divine nature. Nor does he become something new or different in taking on human flesh. His divinity and his humanity remain intact, yet united in one person. So when he walks and talks and preaches and heals the sick, he is acting as a divine-human being, the God-man.

Theologians like John Calvin describe a *wonderful exchange* between the qualities of the two natures of Christ—one that jeopardizes the integrity of neither. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin puts it like this:

This is the wonderful exchange which, out of his measureless benevolence, he has made with us; that, becoming Son of Man with us, he has made us sons of God with him; that, by his descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us; that, by taking on our mortality, he has conferred his immortality upon us; that, accepting our weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; that, receiving our poverty upon himself, he has transferred his wealth to us; that, taking the weight of our iniquity upon himself (which oppressed us), he has clothed us with his righteousness. (*Institutes*, 4.17.2)

Several centuries after Calvin, Edwards

termed these apparent paradoxes the “admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies.” In a sermon titled “The Excellency of Christ,” Edwards argues that there is nothing intellectually untoward about ascribing a multitude of differing attributes to Christ. In reality, says Edwards, any misapprehension we might have comes not from any actual incongruities within Christ’s nature,

but from the inherent limitations of human understanding.

But if Edwards is correct to see in Christ an “admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies,” a difficult question arises: Does this mean that his humanity adds to, or improves upon, this package of divine excellence? Does the Incarnation, beyond bringing about our participation in the life of God, add something

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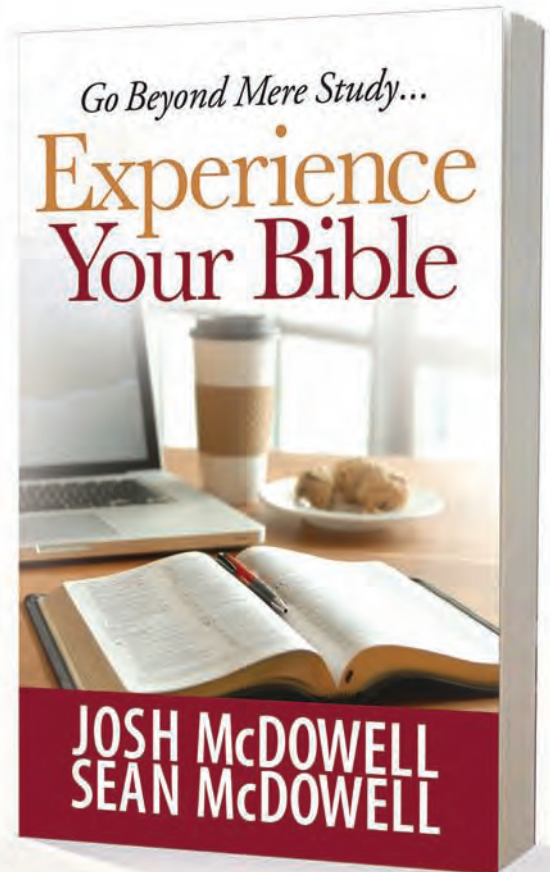
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In becoming human, God has taken up our humanity into his own divine life. He has endured the hardships and temptations of earthly life not merely to provide us a moral example, but also to begin renewing and sanctifying our humanity.

to God's life as well? Does this "yeast" finally find fulfilment in the dough of humanity?

The answer is that it does not, for the simple reason that God is already perfect.

One cannot add to perfection. The "addition" of a human nature to the person of Christ does not mean the Son becomes more perfect still. Rather, it is the means by which God

makes himself visible to us and shows forth his divine image. So although the Incarnation does not add to God's perfection, it does give us, his creatures, an additional reason to love and delight in him.

Still, Edwards understood that true knowledge of God must go beyond merely looking at God. It must involve acquaintance *with* God. It is no good thinking we know God from studying books or thinking about him. We might put it like this: Without encountering the admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies laid bare in Christ, fallen humans cannot know and enjoy communion with God any more than someone can know what honey is like by understanding its chemistry but not tasting it.

A LIFE-CHANGING DOCTRINE

In this light, we see that the Incarnation is not a mere prerequisite to the Crucifixion and Resurrection. It is part and parcel of the way in which God has chosen to redeem his people.

By God participating in our humanity, we are now, by faith, enabled to participate in his divinity. We can, after all, enjoy the wisdom and goodness and love of God. This is not something we can gain by grasping for it, as did Eve, but something God has graciously done for us. At the same time, the Incarnation helps us literally see what God is like, and gives us a model to imitate as we "work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling," for God has taken on human nature truly "to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Phil. 2:12–13).

It is difficult, then, to see the doctrine of the Incarnation as anything other than life-affirming and life-changing. To know that God has made us in the image of Christ, and entered into our lives so that we may enter into his, is to know that we are set apart from other creatures to love, enjoy, and serve him forever. 

Oliver D. Crisp is professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary and the author of several books on the Incarnation.

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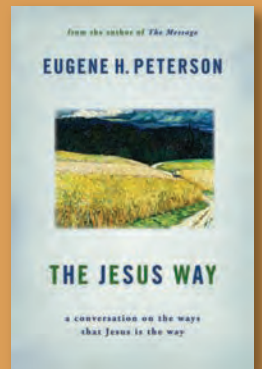
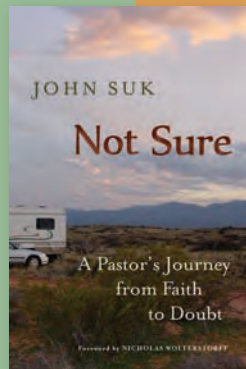
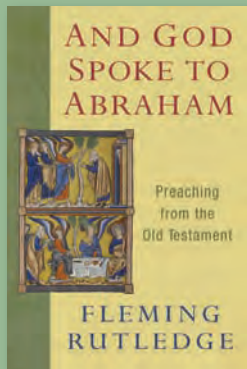
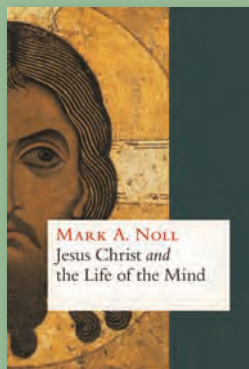
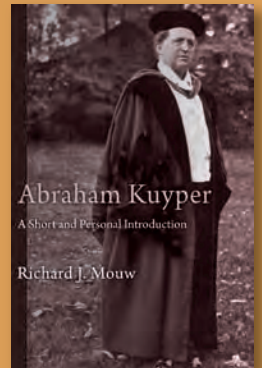
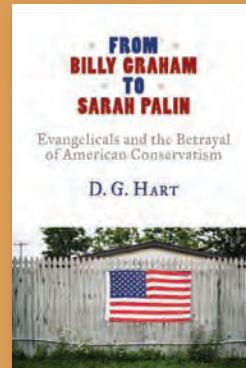
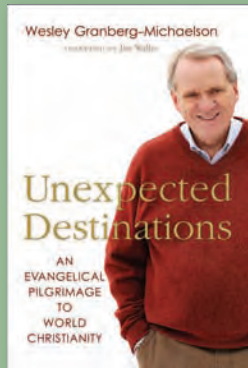
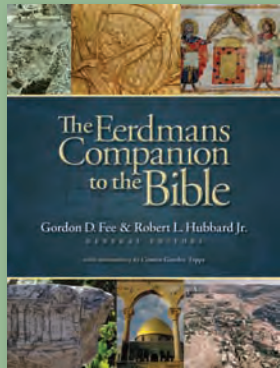
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WHEN MOST OF US think of Lent, we immediately think about giving something up—sugar, tv, radio, you name it. Although this season is marked by abstinence, it also can be the busiest time in the church calendar. In many traditions, Lent is packed with special services and religious practices to help us focus on the life of Christ—more prayer, more devotional reading, more church services. But for what purpose?

One obvious answer: These activities help deepen our devotion to Jesus Christ. But if we're honest, we also do these things in part because we believe that they contribute to our sanctification. After all, in order to become more like Christ, you have to imitate him, right?

Amid all the devotion, however, the last thing we think of adding to our Lenten disciplines is observing the Sabbath. This is surprising, since the Bible seems to teach that rest may be the most significant and transformative activity of all.

AN 'ABOVE ALL' COMMAND

It is difficult, and ironic, to imagine rest as the most transformative element in the Christian life. For evangelicals especially, transformation

Resting in

The
forgotten
spiritual
discipline.

By Kevin
Emmert



and sanctification are closely linked to activity. We appropriately begin with the idea that our works do not merit justification (being declared righteous by God). We can do nothing to earn our salvation. But most of us imagine we must play an active role in our sanctification, the ongoing process of becoming more like Christ. Sanctification, we assume, involves work and effort on our part.

This is good news to evangelical ears. We like activities. We conduct Bible studies, participate in small groups, and attend prayer meetings. We engage in worship services and outreach. We like inspirational books that teach us how to become better Christians. We have a sense of duty that compels us to evangelize and demonstrate Christ's love to those around us. Indeed, these activities are good and find their foundation in biblical teachings.

And this is precisely why we find it so difficult to imagine *rest* as the most transformative feature of the Christian life. We love those verses that emphasize disciplined activity. Yet most of us probably have never even considered that the Sabbath may be the most important "discipline." Consider this:

the Work of God

And the Lord said to Moses, "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.'" (Ex. 31:12–13, *ESV* used throughout)

We may debate how the Sabbath should be observed, but we all recognize the value of taking a day of rest. However, this passage suggests features of the Sabbath we typically overlook.

For example, this passage says that the Sabbath is an "above all" command. It is as if God said, "This is the most important one!" A careful look at the context in the Book of Exodus reinforces the point.

In chapters 25 through 30, Moses received many instructions regulating Israel's worship: how to build the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, and other tabernacle furnishings; how to celebrate festivals; the duties of priests; and so forth. However, the last command Moses received from God (in chapter 31) concerned the Sabbath.

Chapter 32 then describes the incident with the golden calf; after severely chastising the people of Israel, Moses went back up Mount Sinai, where he interceded for the people and received more instructions from God. When Moses asked for God's mercy, God answered, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (33:14).

When Moses came down from the mountain a second time, he gathered the Israelites and told them everything he had received from God, *starting with* the Sabbath command (35:1–3). So the Sabbath command functions as a set of bookends: It was not only the last command that Moses received from God the first time around, it was also the first one Moses revealed to the people on the second pass. It seems that rest was intended to lie at the heart of Israel's religious observances—an "above all" commandment.

LIVING IN JUSTIFICATION

Why is the Sabbath so important? After all, it's a command to do nothing; it requires no activity or effort. And that may be precisely the point.

This "above all" command encourages us to trust in God in a way that no other activity can. So much more could be accomplished by adding another day of labor, but the Sabbath requires us to trust that God will provide for all our needs and that he will continue to manage the world without our help. The Sabbath is a practical reminder that we are completely dependent on God.

But there is also this: "That you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you." Here rest is closely connected to sanctification. We instinctively believe our efforts and activities effectively promote personal and spiritual growth—that God is the primary agent in justification and that the individual is the primary agent in sanctification. We may need to think again.

John Calvin said that the Holy Spirit was given to us for our transformation, and that "we are purged by [God's] sanctification." Calvin here expresses what Christians from many theological traditions affirm,

that God is the primary agent in sanctification, and that the Spirit alone enables Christians to live a holy life. Though Christians perform many activities to overcome sinful habits and become more like Christ, it is

the Spirit, Calvin said, who "dispenses a power whereby they may gain the upper hand and become victors in the struggle."

Similarly, pastor Tim Keller said in one interview that though sanctification requires enormous effort, it is not "works based" but rather comes by continuously "reorienting ourselves to our justification." Keller teaches that sanctification is living in accordance with our justification, which is a free gift. Therefore, even in sanctification we acknowledge that God is the primary agent, and that our works contribute nothing on their own. So in both sanctification and justification, Christians are declared righteous and are continually being made righteous solely by the free grace of God. Though we are called to be active, the "activity" seems mostly to mean the call to rest, to trust, to freely receive sanctification from God.

The Sabbath, therefore, helps us realize we completely depend on God for *all* our needs—physical, emotional, and spiritual.

So, can we just sit back and passively wait for some mystical experience to transform us? As Paul would say, "By no means!" God is not dependent on our doings, but like many aspects of life, he has gladly chosen to use us and our activities to transform us. Thus, the story of Israel remains significant today. Although Israel was instructed to obey God's commands in order to "be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:45), at the end of the week the only thing they had to do was relax; in the midst of their religious busyness, they were called to simply remember that God alone sanctified them. As Paul put it, "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Cor. 3:7). Only God brings about our transformation. That is something we can count on, and rest in. ✚

Kevin Emmert is editorial coordinator with *Preaching Today*.

Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for "Resting in the Work of God," a Bible study based on this article.

A NEW SEMINARY ANATOMY

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The exploration of Christlike ways to engage issues and candidates and the compelling call for both critical thinking and civility are most necessary and welcome.

Nathaniel Rhoads
Winnemucca, Nevada

Civility Calls

Just a word of praise for "The Cure for Election Madness" [January]. What a wonderful way to begin the year! I cannot imagine a more timely or relevant topic heading into this election year in our tumultuous and divisive American political climate. Amy Black's analysis of the current political scene's poisonous and polarizing discourse, exploration of constructive and Christlike ways to engage issues and candidates, and compelling call for both critical thinking and civility are most necessary and welcome. This is the best CT article I have read since becoming a subscriber.

NATHANIEL RHOADS
Winnemucca, Nevada

Kudos to Amy E. Black for her insightful and challenging cover story. God calls Christians to stand up for our convictions that are rooted in his truths. But he also calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves. Those are not mutually exclusive exhortations.

Every human deserves dignity and respect; that's a point we as a pro-life community have made for decades. Unfortunately, we haven't always lived it out in our interactions with those who

disagree with us. All of us—liberal or conservative—are more than the sum of our positions on policy issues. Let's look for points of mutual civility where they might be found, even if all we can do is say, "We're both created in God's image. That means we deserve each other's respect." We may not change each other's minds, but we don't have to call each other names. We can never become so consumed with winning a political battle that we lose sight of basic virtues like the Golden Rule. God expects—he demands—more than that.

JIM DALY
President, Focus on the Family
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Provoking Words

Since the release of *Love Wins*, CT has suggested that Rob Bell advocates universalism, such as in the January issue, where the No. 1 news story of 2011 states, "Rob Bell tries to legitimize universalism." In *Love Wins*, Bell deals with universalism in three ways: apparently in favor of it, unclear on his position, and against it.

I believe the favorable and ambiguous statements regarding universalism in *Love Wins* are provocative statements

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

23%

**The Cure for
Election Madness**
Amy Black

17%

**Thou Shalt Not
Abuse**
CT Editorial

10%

**The Village Green:
Sports & Violence**
Joe Carter,
Ted Kluck,
and Matt Morin

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



**One Leap after
Another**
Mark Moring

designed to make us think. However, in balance it is clear that Bell advocates universal responsibility for our choices, not universalism.

KEN TUNSTALL
Barrie, Ontario, Canada

EDITOR'S RESPONSE:

When we say that Rob Bell tries to "legitimize," we mean he specifically argues in his book that universalism is a legitimate theological option for Christians, that it should not be dismissed out of hand. We did not say that he teaches it, or believes it, or is trying to get others to believe it.

Lost and Found

"Blessed Are the Jobless" [January] really nailed it. As a recently employed former jobseeker myself, I know from experience that jobseekers yearn for caring,

community-based job clubs in order to tackle the many issues associated with joblessness. In addition, networking with the employed is a very important activity.

DAVID REED
Aurora, Illinois

Give and Take

I enjoyed the article "Discipling the Dragon" [January], and am excited about what God is doing in China. However, I am concerned about the apparent one-way discipleship the

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

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article suggests. The faith of China's Christians was formed in the crucible of persecution. I am sure God has taught some lessons to our Chinese sisters and brothers about what it means to follow Jesus. Have any of them written books about the sacrifice required in following Jesus, and have they been translated into English? Perhaps *Christianity Today* could print an article about what we can learn from them.

CINDI KIRBY
Plano, Texas

Hands-On Parenting

We cannot find a solution to the spanking debate by merely resolving not to use violence ["Thou Shalt Not Abuse," January].

It is a disservice to parents to imply that sweet reason and gentleness will always be enough (possibly supplemented by the occasional smack carefully delivered without anger). As the mother of four grown children, I can testify we all find ourselves using our bigger, stronger bodies to force our screaming, thrashing children to do something, whether it's manhandling them into the car seat, shoving medicine down their throats, or just holding them down in the time-out chair.

To pretend that this is not "violence" is not helpful. Instead we must humbly and prayerfully realize that parenting is a

place where we are the strong in charge of the weak, and remember that strength only compels bodies and not souls. Abuse happens when we forget that respect, obedience, and love are choices of the heart beyond anyone's compulsion.

GLORIA WALL
Mountain View, California

Tapping Out

Have we so lost touch with the life Jesus lived and taught that the spectacle of cage fighting could seriously be considered an "open question" among Christians [The Village Green, January]?

Matt Morin rightly calls cage fighting and the culture surrounding it a "form of pornography," human degradation that cannot be consistent with creation or new creation in God's image. From the exaltation of ego to disrespect for the body—and really the person—of a combatant, and the voyeurism Morin describes, there is no resemblance between the phenomenon of cage fighting and a life lived in Christ and motivated by the Holy Spirit.

Christians have to do better than represent their Lord as approving this and other manifestations of a culture of death. If we can't, we're no better than the bloodthirsty mobs that thronged the amphitheaters of ancient Rome.

D. GREGORY VAN DUSSEN
Batavia, New York



FAITH MATTERS
How much does a candidate's religious faith matter in your voting decision?

17%
It's the most important factor.

32%
It's an important factor, but not the most important one.

28%
It's one of many factors.

16%
Other factors are more important.

5%
It depends on the religion.

2%
It depends on the candidate.

Total votes: 291

(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.

"I don't think there's anything sinful about it. But it's certainly not what I desire."

Anonymous, on how physical intimacy with a spouse is more pleasurable and emotionally satisfying than masturbation.

Her.meneutics: "Getting to the Root of Female Masturbation," by Marlena Graves

"We face many problems and challenges as a nation, but putting a right-wing nut in the White House will make things a lot worse. And that's something this country can't afford."

Willie, debating the merits of the Republican presidential candidates following the Iowa caucus.

CT Politics Blog: "Bachmann Retreats as Majority of Evangelicals Pick Santorum in Iowa," by Tobin Grant

"I am constantly amazed at how much the porn industry has invaded the church."

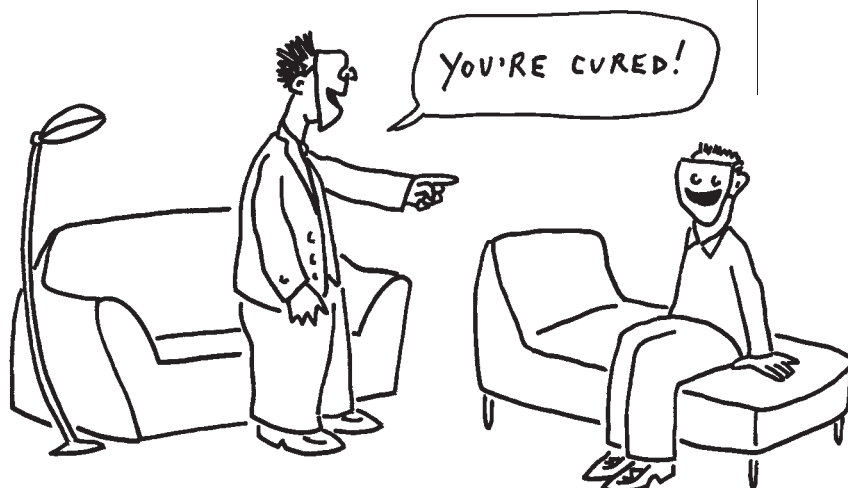
Carol A., responding to the DVD release of the documentary *Out of the Darkness*, which features testimonies and ministries devoted to those struggling with pornography.

CT Entertainment Blog: "Overcoming the Porn Problem," by Mark Moring

"We ask God to strengthen believers like you who are striving to remain as living stones there. May God's protection and peace shield you all in the coming year."

Ken, joining others in prayer for Christians in the Arab world amid changes from last year's political events and current struggles to stabilize.

CT Liveblog: "Jesus, Christmas, and the Arab Spring," by Botrus Mansour



MUELLER

Religious Freedom Reality Check

High-court ruling reveals deep commitment to our 'first freedom.'

Few subjects prompt louder cries of anguish than suppressed religious liberty. Many Christians worry that precious freedoms are "under assault." Talk about a "war on religion" trips off the tongues of many activists.

We are right to be concerned, because religious freedom is vital and necessary for the health of society. This is why the 2009 Manhattan Declaration considers it a core concern, and why key Catholic and evangelical leaders now work together to protect it. The question is: Are we on the verge of secular totalitarianism, as some activists seem to suggest?

Christian concerns about a suffocating secularism go back decades. Yet activists who sound the alarms today fear more than the loss of a religious perspective in public life. Religious identity itself is at stake, and along with it, freedom of conscience.

Colleges and universities pressure campus fellowships to admit leaders hostile to Christian moral teaching. Governments that partner with Christian groups are now severing ties because faith groups refuse to place needy children with homosexual couples. Hospitals seek to strip medical workers' conscience protections; they strong-arm nurses into assisting with abortions. Bureaucrats bully religious employers into bankrolling health plans that include contraceptives or the morning-after pill.

Attempts to constrict religious liberty are indeed terrifyingly real; hence we understand the rhetoric of grave threats and imminent dangers. But in the midst of all this, a blessedly reassuring Supreme Court decision has arrived. We hope it will rouse the doomsday prophets from their fatalistic crouch.

In mid-January, the court issued the *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School v. EEOC* ruling. The case pitted a Missouri-Synod Lutheran school in suburban Detroit against a disgruntled former

teacher. After battling back from narcolepsy, Cheryl Perich requested her job back. School officials doubted Perich's fitness to teach. So they found a replacement and asked her to resign. Then, Perich threatened to file an employment discrimination lawsuit. But school officials fired her, because she transgressed a denominational rule to resolve disputes internally.

The court unanimously sided with the church and school. Religious institutions must retain the right to decide, in Chief Justice John Roberts's felicitous phrasing, who will "personify" their beliefs. The opinion affirmed a "ministerial exception" to workplace-discrimination law. It grounded this exception in both the no-establishment and free-exercise clauses of the First Amendment. Perich taught secular subjects, but she also gave doctrinal and moral instruction. She did so as a commissioned Lutheran minister. Allowing her suit to proceed would empower the courts to second-guess the school's assessment of her ministerial competence.

"The interest of society in the enforcement of employment discrimination statutes is undoubtedly important," Roberts concluded. "But so too is the interest of religious groups in choosing who will preach their beliefs, teach their faith, and carry out their mission."

We wholeheartedly endorse the Supreme Court's opinion. Government micromanagement of faith-based hiring and firing undercuts free-exercise rights intolerably. But many people don't see things this way. They sympathize with Perich. They abhor the

church's exemption from rules that protect workers from prejudice. Our culture instinctively recoils at the notion of discrimination.

Against such headwinds, the Supreme Court has recognized—again, *unanimously*—a "special solicitude to the rights of religious organizations" under the First Amendment. This is remarkable, and we should not underestimate its value. Perich's predicament tugs

at our heartstrings. The church's prerogative to fire her makes us queasy. Religion's cultured despisers find the whole spectacle obnoxious. And yet, the highest court in the land affirms a basic right of religious groups for self-determination.

The guarantee of religious liberty affirms the dignity and equality of human beings in their pursuit of truth. Erode America's "first freedom,"

and you erode the basis for the freedoms of speech, press, and association that this quest requires. (More on this in a future issue of *Christianity Today*.)

In the meantime, we ask this: Has alarmism blinded us to this country's extraordinary achievements in protecting religious liberty? Measured against despotism in the past and in other societies today, religious Americans remain enviably free to act on their beliefs. The fact that the Supreme Court willingly vindicated an unpopular form of religious autonomy suggests that the First Amendment's safeguards are as sturdy as ever.

Our call for perspective is not a call for complacency. Serious battles loom on the horizon. But, in the meantime, let *Hosanna-Tabor* talk you off the ledge—if not out of the fight. ✚



Has alarmism blinded us to this country's extraordinary achievements in protecting religious liberty?

Entertainment
Ethics

Are secular television shows with moral messages good for Christian children?

THEY'RE NEUTRAL

Carla Barnhill is former editor of *Christian Parenting Today* and author of *The Myth of the Perfect Mother* (Baker, 2004).

Before I rail about morality on television, let me be completely clear: I love television, always have, always will. But when I watch most television shows with my mommy goggles on, well, it's quite a horrific view.

I am an easygoing parent, but media is the one place I tend to skew toward the restrictive end of the permissiveness spectrum. There's something about a visual image that sticks with us in a more lasting way than a conversation or even words on a page. You can't un-see something, so my husband and I tend to be very protective about what our kids watch.

But here's where I tend to differ from many Christian parents I know: I'm not protective because I fear the moral damage television might do to my children. I'm protective because I want my children to stay children and not have to watch people being killed or hurt or harassed. I don't want them to see how awful people can be to each other—not yet. I'm protecting their outlook on humanity.

For us, the deal breakers are things like violence and sexual overtones. I have put the kibosh on *Glee* unless my teenager watches it with me so we can talk through the more suggestive storylines. But *Wizards of Waverly Place*? *Dinosaur Train*? The kids love them, they're sweet, and someone always learns a good life lesson—and that's enough for me. I'm not all that concerned about my kids finding an overtly Christian worldview on a TV show.

I find that so many evangelical parents tend to treat things like TV—and music and the Internet—as though the people creating material for those media somehow owe it to Christians to produce morally sound content.

They don't. They are businesses trying to make money. Now, many have become savvy enough to know that they make more money when they make both kids and parents happy, so many of them are trying to offer a product that entertains and teaches some moral value, like friendship, respect, and self-esteem.

But parents are naïve to expect their children's television viewing to be good for anything except entertainment. That's what television is for, nothing more, nothing less.

It's my job as a parent to develop my child's moral center. Television is not my parenting partner. I firmly believe that if I do my job

well, then no TV show can strip away the core of who my children are and who they will become. But when a show—whether it's from Disney or VeggieTales—gives my kids a good laugh or a glimpse of how to build healthy friendships or a taste of what life is like in other families, then that's just gravy.

THEY'RE DAMAGING

Phil Vischer is the creator of VeggieTales, the voice of Bob the Tomato, and producer of the *What's in the Bible?* video series.

Over the last 30 years, children's television has gotten a tremendous amount of attention. What are the programs teaching? Nonviolence? Gender and race sensitivity? Great strides have been made since the days most kids' shows were either afterthoughts, or worse, half-hour commercials underwritten by toy manufacturers.

Today, most new kids' shows are created with advice from Ivy League educators and consultants. Every episode of key shows like *Sesame Street*, *Blue's Clues*, and *Dora the Explorer* is tested with kids to ensure they meet educational objectives.

But for all the educational strides being made and all the pro-social "vitamins" cleverly inserted into our kids' media diets, there is one ingredient sorely missing. There is no God on *Sesame Street*. No clue will ever point Blue toward his Creator. No matter how far Dora explores, she will never bump into the divine. The world of children's media, to put it bluntly, is as atheistic as a Richard Dawkins book club. And that missing ingredient will cripple our children if we let it.

Admittedly, this is nothing new. Howdy Doody never bowed his head in prayer. Captain Kangaroo looked heavenward only to



escape his daily deluge of ping-pong balls. Even Mr. Rogers, an ordained minister, kept God out of the conversation once the cameras began rolling. And look at us! We turned out fine, even without God in our TV shows. So what's the problem?

The problem is we didn't grow up with nearly as much media as our kids face today. As a preschooler in the late 1960s, I had a choice of no more than three or four kids' shows each day. My only splurge was Saturday morning, when I could dig into a bowlful of sugared cereal and three solid hours of Hollywood's finest. I quickly went back to the real world of school, church, and my own backyard after those brief television forays. God was everywhere. Kids' TV was a blip in the formation of my view of the world.

By contrast, according to a recent Princeton University/Brookings Institution study, the average 11-year-old in America today consumes eight hours of electronic media per day. That's eight hours of viewing the world through some sort of screen. Fifty-six hours each week. And the world they view is as empty of the divine as it has ever been. There are 350,000 churches in America, but not one is on the Disney Channel or Nickelodeon. No one prays or turns to God. Characters help each other and care for the environment, the poor, and the needy, but never from a religious motive or as a response to God. That much godless media exposure is downright harmful for our kids, as it teaches them to be comfortably familiar with a world where there is no God.

In most American homes, television has become a live-in nanny—a nanny who shows our kids a world that simply has no need for God.

The questions worth asking are: Which world do our kids believe is real? The one they hear about for an hour Sunday morning, or the one that captures their hearts eight hours every day?



THEY CAN BE POSITIVE

Vincent Bacote is director of the Center for Applied Christian Ethics and associate professor of theology at Wheaton College.

Secular shows with moral messages can be good for children. This is an opportunity for growth in discernment as well as appreciation for positive contributions to the culture from those outside of Christian circles.

In my favorite childhood shows, some programs always had a message at the end, while some were exercises in comedy or adventure created with a premium on entertainment value. Like many people, I had a special fondness for *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* and looked forward to it every day.

In the midst of the various characters and stories I encountered, I was not only experiencing excellent programming but also learning an array of lessons in how to become a good person. Did I know this at the time? Not really, and perhaps this is where there can be some trepidation about the "influence" wielded by the media.

As a parent myself, I think this trepidation is a reminder of the opportunity at hand when children view television shows, films, and other video presentations.

I see two important aspects of this opportunity: First, there is the opportunity to develop an eye for excellence in non-Christian sources. The doctrine of common grace teaches us that positive things can emerge from God's creation, and this includes great storytelling, acting, and beauty. We should teach our children to give God glory for all of the ways his creation gives praise, even if unintended.

Second, this is a tremendous opportunity to develop our children's moral discernment, especially as they live in a world where there is a constant stream of media, often with conflicting messages about what is (for example) good, true, loving, and just. It is important that Christian parents help their children learn about the Bible (as Deuteronomy 6:6–9 commands). It is also important to help children identify moral lessons that resonate with God's truth, even if there is nothing explicitly Christian in the show they are watching.

In every era of history there has been some kind of moral crisis (even in the most "civilized" places). Much has been written about the unique dangers of our time because of the proliferation of media.

We can do more than sound the alarm. Helping children develop the ability to identify positive moral messages and interact with morally ambiguous ones will serve them well as they grow into adulthood. Children's shows are not worldview-neutral. Those programs may become a helpful resource when they help children learn about virtues such as compassion, patience, and justice. While not every show need be an exercise in moral formation, it is a positive contribution to culture when even secular shows reveal moral truth to children.

We need Christians to do their part to produce excellent programming that educates our children, but I happily affirm the intersection between creativity and moral formation from other Zip Codes in God's creation.



Starving for Jesus

If we have such an extravagant Savior, why are our Communion meals so paltry?

As I enter the sanctuary, I see the cloth-draped table near the podium. Communion Sunday! My heart lifts—and sinks. What will they serve? If they pass little cubes of bread, I resolve to take three or four. This time I am determined to be nourished.

The problem could be me. Maybe I simply lack imagination. In the churches where mini-saltines are served, my clumsy fingers struggle to find and keep purchase of a single morsel. As I crush it in a single chew while the pastor reads, “This is my body, broken for you,” I cannot help wondering if Christ has broken a fingernail on my behalf. At the common cup where I take a single anxious swallow, or in the jigger of juice I down in two gulps, I strain to see the blood that flowed from his face and side, the blood that covers the flood of my sins. I know this should be enough, because I deserve none of it—not a fingernail of bread, not a tongue-tip of the blood that Christ spent for me! But the body talks; its messages are real, and I cannot help listening: We have overspiritualized the Lord’s Supper. We’ve turned an actual meal into a pantomime of a meal, and the church is hungry because of it.

I have some guesses as to how this has happened. Forgive the familiarity of this critique, but we’re still trying so hard to be spiritual. The Book of Hebrews tells us that earthly things shadow and symbolize the more real yet invisible heavenly things. If Christ’s presence is made real through the elements, then a sliver, a swallow is surely enough! And if the ceremony is mostly memorial, a remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice, then tidbits and jiggers suffice!

But we cannot escape another truth: On the night he was betrayed, Christ offered a very real meal. Throughout the Scriptures, the apprehension of spiritual realities behind earthly symbols plunges us *into* physicality rather than removing us from it. John the Baptist sunk penitents into a cold and

decidedly wet river. On his eighth day of life, Jesus was marked with a symbol of the covenant—his body cut with a honed knife.

Nor did Christ overspiritualize the meaning of being a disciple. He flaunted, even hyperbolized the physicality of that meal and what was required: “[U]nless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53).

It is past time to reclaim the “supper” that Christ instituted and to give the body—our



own bodies and Christ’s body, which our gathered bodies enact—its full due.

I am not asking for an examination of our theology. In truth, I think much of the Communion practices of the evangelical church have less to do with theology and more to do with the behavior of a single congregation, those unruly, factious Corinthians who gathered for the feast but ate and drank with no regard for others. Some left hungry while others left stuffed and drunk, blind to the body of Christ in their food.

We’ve taken care of all that—in spades. Our services are precisely orchestrated. Servers march with military precision. We

no longer recline at tables; we stand in line or sit upright in pews. We do not choose our serving; portion control assures we’re all served the same. We chew and quaff in exact synchronicity. The Scriptures are scrupulously read as we partake. No one is overeating. No one is getting drunk. Check. Check. Check.

And we’ve managed to go one further: even in the largest congregations, we can get everyone out the door on time for their real meal after the pretend meal. This is my final complaint. In our avoidance of the sins Paul warns against, we are committing another: the crime of efficiency. We’re so busy, and our services so short, there’s no time for a sit-down dinner or anything like it.

But I can think of no busier night than those two particular nights: Passover, when the Hebrews were readying for their journey from bondage to freedom. Who had time to cook and eat dinner? But God required a meal, however hastily it was eaten. Jesus had betrayal and death before him, and all of history to overturn on his night. Who had time or appetite for a meal? But the events of those nights were too important not to eat and remember.

I hunger, spirit and body, for the day when our Communion tables are freed from regimentation and parsimony, images of a cautious, lugubrious, measurable redemption so unlike the real table God has set before us. Let us find ways to extend the table to a fuller meal, if not every Communion service, then once a month or quarterly. It is now, in this world, when we are parched and starved, that the church needs the meal most. Let’s eat the feast already given. ✚

We have overspiritualized the Lord’s Supper. We’ve turned an actual meal into a pantomime of a meal, and the church is hungry because of it.



Kingmakers and Powerbrokers

Why the January conclave of evangelical leaders was dangerous.

T

he 150 evangelical leaders who met behind closed doors on January 14 to anoint a Republican candidate for President were wise not to have invited me.

I believe that Christians have an urgent duty to engage the social, economic, and moral threats to a healthy society. That requires a wide variety of political action. However, one thing it doesn't call for is playing kingmaker and powerbroker.

By conspiring to throw their weight behind a single evangelical-friendly candidate, they fed the widespread perception that evangelicalism's main identifying feature is right-wing political activism focused on abortion and homosexuality. In truth, it is hard to imagine the Religious Left in 2008 doing something similar: holding a conclave to decide whether they would throw their collective weight behind either Hillary Rodham Clinton or Barack Obama, unwilling to leave the Democratic primary results to the voters.

I am jealous for the reputation of evangelical Christians. And so are a host of other Christian thought leaders. In 2008, Presbyterian pastor (and Christianity Today International board chair) John Huffman gathered a broad-based group to affirm and lend support to a defining document entitled "An Evangelical Manifesto" (you can Google that). The broad coalition included key seminary presidents, leaders of Hispanic evangelicalism, tall-steeple pastors, and leaders of key parachurch ministries. There were even denominational leaders: the national commander of the Salvation Army was among the first to sign up after the charter signatories.

The manifesto explained that evangelicalism is defined by its beliefs, its piety, its compassion, and its mission activity. The manifesto was largely positive, but when its message finally turned negative, it strongly repudiated attempts to politicize the faith, either from the Right or from the Left.

In a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, Wheaton

College literature professor Alan Jacobs suggested what the manifesto writers should have put up front (full disclosure: I was one of the document's editors). He said what some of us thought without being bold enough to blurt it out: "We're fed up with being the Republicans' lapdogs, but don't think we're joining the Democratic kennel."

When evangelicals are confined to a partisan kennel, it is easy to think we are exercising real power. In fact we are, to use the old Soviet phrase, serving as "useful idiots." *Christianity Today* founder Billy Graham discovered this had happened to him. Out of an abundance of enthusiasm and good will, he tried to aid Richard Nixon in his campaign. Later, when Watergate transcripts revealed the true Nixon, Graham realized he had been used.

We are tempted to think we can be kingmakers and powerbrokers, that we can deliver or withhold the support of a voting bloc. But if there is any lesson in the story of this year's primary elections, it is this: Evangelicals have not voted as a bloc and many are not following their leaders. (Ironically, in December several news pieces described the lack of consensus on a candidate among Iowa evangelicals—and then referred to them as a voting "bloc." How could they be a bloc if they couldn't agree which they hated more: Mitt Romney's Mormonism or Newt Gingrich's infidelities?)

Rather than trying to demonstrate power through the promise or threat of votes, evangelicals should use influence. Influence is a matter of education and persuasion—informing and convincing constituents and lawmakers alike. In the past four decades, the number

of evangelical advocacy groups operating in Washington, D.C., has grown thirteenfold, from three to thirty-nine. These groups focus on a variety of issues, both domestic and international: human rights, global poverty, religious freedom, bioethics, family life, and immigration, among them. They advocate for legislation that will address these problems, but because they need everyone's support, they have learned to work both sides of the aisle.

We should also exercise influence by focusing our talent on the institutions of influence—the universities, think tanks, and media outlets where elites shape culture. James Davison Hunter advocated this approach in his book *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. But he didn't advocate it as a strategy for cultural change so much as an exercise in serving the common good.

In 2010, Hunter told *Christianity Today*, "Whenever Christian churches and organizations partake in the will to power, they partake in the very thing they decry in society."

This is the kind of boomerang effect that happened when the Puritans took advantage of the power vacuum created in 1649 when King Charles I was decapitated for treason. The Puritans accomplished much good in society, especially in the mediating institutions of church and family. Yet, some of their leaders succumbed to the will to power, and ultimately lost the popular support necessary to govern.

Unfortunately, the word *Puritan* garnered the same connotations that are adhering to *evangelical* today. Both groups were betrayed by good intentions and the seduction of power.



Christian leaders who exercise the will to power partake of the same thing they decry in society.



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CT REVIEW

BOOKS, MOVIES,
MUSIC, AND
THE ARTS

Necessary Evil

Could God have created a world without suffering?

By Douglas Groothuis

We all suffer, and we often wonder why we suffer. We yearn to find meaning in—or despite—the evils that assail us. Everyone does this, whether they believe in one God, no god, many gods, or claim ignorance on the matter. Christians are compelled to give a meaningful and rational explanation for God, good, and evil (1 Pet. 3:15). Those enlisted in this noble cause include intellectual giants such as Augustine, Aquinas, Pascal, Jonathan Edwards, C. S. Lewis, and Alvin Plantinga. Now Dinesh D'Souza bids to join their august ranks—and even to outshine them.

D'Souza, president of the King's College in New York City, made his name as a

conservative public policy analyst. In recent years, however, he has also written books on Christian apologetics and has debated well-known atheists such as Christopher Hitchens and Peter Singer. His latest offering is ***Godforsaken: Bad Things Happen. Is there a God who cares? Yes. Here's proof*** (Tyndale)

★★★★. In it, D'Souza tackles the perennially vexing problem of evil.

From Epicurus to David Hume to Hitchens, unbelievers have denied that one can rationally believe in a God who is both all-good and all-powerful, given the amount and variety of evil in

the world. If God were good, he would *want* to eliminate evil; if he were all-powerful, he *could* eliminate evil. Yet evil exists. Therefore, the atheist concludes that the God of traditional theism does not exist. The burden of the Christian apologist is to reconcile the fact of evil with the reality of God, without committing intellectual suicide.

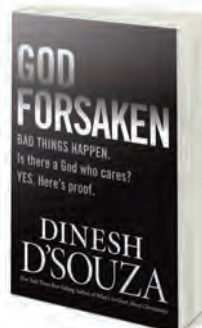
Tackling this topic is a tall order for a short book written by a non-philosopher. I respect much of D'Souza's political analysis. However, concerning apologetics—despite his native intelligence, clear writing, and wealth of footnoted sources—D'Souza is too often out of his depth. This is particularly evident in this ambitious, but ultimately disappointing, work. To make matters worse, D'Souza claims to offer a new solution to this ancient problem—one that incorporates discoveries from contemporary science and avoids the errors of traditional approaches. Few professional philosophers or theologians hazard this kind of claim, and for good reason.

BALANCED ON A RAZOR'S EDGE

Since the problem of evil is both a cerebral puzzle and a visceral wound in the soul, the author wisely begins by emphasizing both aspects. D'Souza draws the reader into the problem through several stories from his own childhood in India and through other gut-wrenching examples. He clearly explains the unbeliever's charge against God, citing the pertinent sources, from ancient to modern. Some of D'Souza's best work is in the fourth chapter, where he exposes the vacuity of atheistic approaches to understanding the

meaning of evil. D'Souza summarizes and criticizes the traditional responses to the problem. He then claims to offer an answer superior to that of his intellectual forebears.

In the process, D'Souza undermines his case by caricaturing some of the positions he finds inadequate, particularly the Augustinian doctrine of evil as the absence of good



(rather than an entity unto itself). Augustine did not argue that evil doesn't exist (contra D'Souza), but that it has no roots in the nature of existence—unlike the good, which is grounded in the character of God and in God's original creation. The Augustinian view, which has been defended by, among others, Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, is far more richly nuanced and philosophically supportable than D'Souza's account would suggest.

The same holds true for his account of the German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz's view that God's creation is "the best of all possible worlds." Ironically, D'Souza seems unwittingly to emulate Leibniz's approach. Both claim that God can only actualize states of affairs that are logically coherent given the results God desires on the basis of his character. Thus, some imaginable worlds are not, in fact, really possible. However, God will bring about the best world that he can *possibly* produce, however painful that world must be.

Here is where things get messy. D'Souza correctly claims that modern physics has recently discovered a finely tuned universe

A theodicy needs to offer compelling reasons, not merely possible options, for why God acts as he does in a world contaminated by evils.

that reveals a Designer. The various laws, constants, and proportions that govern the world are balanced on a razor's edge to make human life possible. D'Souza, though, states that it *had* to be that way. If God were going to create a world of free beings, he had to situate them in a world governed by regular and predictable laws. But the byproduct of creating this world is a set of physical conditions that produce suffering through disease, earthquakes, and other ills. Even God's apparent absence from human experience (the supposed "hiddenness of God") is *necessary* given the constraints God faced in creating the world of his choice.

Yet none of this is genuinely new, despite D'Souza's claim otherwise. He is simply updating the older natural law argument used by Lewis (in *The Problem of Pain*) and

others. A world of natural regularities will produce both good and evil; it is inescapable. The same fire that warms the body will burn the flesh. Original to D'Souza is the addition of scientific research confirming a fine-tuned universe, but this only elaborates on the previous strategy.

Moreover, D'Souza fails to make a crucial distinction in his overall argument. He says he is offering a "theodicy," a way to justify God's ways to man. However, several times he asserts that his proposed solutions to the problem of evil need only be *possibly* true, not even probable or likely true. Here he fails to make a key philosophical distinction (originated by Plantinga and now canonized in the philosophical literature on this topic) between a *defense* and a *theodicy*.

The former merely attempts to show that

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON ARCHAEOLOGY

By Craig A. Evans, author of *Jesus and His World: The Archaeological Evidence* (Westminster John Knox)



LOST TREASURES OF THE BIBLE

Understanding the Bible through Archaeological Artifacts in World Museums

CLYDE E. FANT & MITCHELL G. REDDISH (EERDMANS)

In 400 pages, the authors assemble more than 100 archaeological objects in some 25 museums, roughly in chronological order, with photographs, descriptions, and concise explanations as to how these items relate to the Bible. Fant and Reddish also include a number of important ancient books.



ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE LAND OF THE BIBLE

Volumes I and II

AMIHAI MAZAR & EPHRAIM STERN (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS)

Volume I, written by the late Mazar, covers the period from 10,000 B.C. to 586 B.C., the year the Babylonians captured Jerusalem and destroyed the temple of Solomon. Volume II, by Stern, covers the period 732–332 B.C. As good as these books are, they will have to be updated thanks to some major excavations and digs in Jerusalem and elsewhere.



THE HARPER-COLLINS VISUAL GUIDE TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

What Archaeology Reveals about the First Christians
JONATHAN L. REED (HARPERONE)

Reed provides readers with a great introduction and overview of the key finds relating to early Christianity. The book offers many beautiful photographs, maps, and artistic renderings of what life was like.



JESUS AND ARCHAEOLOGY

JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH, EDITOR (EERDMANS)

Charlesworth, a professor at Princeton Seminary, convened a scholarly conference in Israel in 2000, which resulted in this book's publication. The 31 contributions by leading archaeologists, historians, and biblical scholars show how archaeology and historical research have shed important light on the world of Jesus and his first followers.



THE FINAL DAYS OF JESUS

The Archaeological Evidence

SHIMON GIBSON (HARPERONE)

A Jewish archaeologist provides readers with a lay-friendly assessment of the archaeological evidence that especially pertains to Jesus' fateful visit to Jerusalem. Readers will appreciate Gibson's expertise and balanced judgment.

the existence of evil and the existence of God are not *logically incompatible*. A theodicy, on the other hand, is a constructive explanation of how and why God uses or allows evil in the world. Therefore, a theodicy needs to offer compelling *reasons*, not merely *possible options*, for why God acts as he does in a world contaminated by evils. This distinction is lost on D'Souza, to the detriment of his argument.

CONFUSING CREATION AND FALL

One also wonders how the author distinguishes Creation, Fall, and Redemption. Given his embrace of Darwinian macroevolution, he denies a literal, space-time fall of our first parents, while trying to retain some sense of human rebellion against God as having systemically deleterious effects on creation. However, he also claims that God's creation of a physically fine-tuned world mandates many ills that would plague us even without a fall from grace (such as earthquakes). There seems to be a conflation or confusion of Creation and Fall.

Especially troubling are D'Souza's many statements that embodied human existence demands certain defects leading to suffering, because God could not have created otherwise. Yet he also affirms a blessed and embodied afterlife in which these features will be absent (see Revelation 21–22).

D'Souza cannot have it both ways. If fine-tuning and embodiment necessitate suffering, they would do so in any set of physical conditions, including the final state of the redeemed. But that would not be a paradise without curse and without tears, but rather a continuation of the kinds of suffering we now experience. Perhaps D'Souza hints at a way to resolve this apparent inconsistency, but I could not unearth it.

While D'Souza capably navigates some of the territory of the problem of evil, he lacks the philosophical acumen needed to present a fully compelling case. Nevertheless, the reader will benefit from a wide-ranging and stimulating discussion of one of Christianity's thorniest problems. ✚

Douglas Groothuis is the author of *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Faith* (IVP Academic) and professor of philosophy at Denver Seminary.

Pillars of Hospitality

How to strengthen communities that welcome strangers. By Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove

Toledo, Ohio, is a small city with big-city problems. But cheap housing makes it a perfect place for creative types. One aspiring collective—about a dozen proverbial “starving artists”—recently rehabbed an old house that now hosts a once-a-week meal to which anyone is welcome. About 300 homeless folks, fellow artists, and college students show up.

“They’re all seekers,” explained a young man involved in this outreach. “Most of them say they’re looking for community.”

In a culture where so many people feel alienated from family and clan, a place of genuine welcome is attractive. And though the starving artists of Toledo may not realize it, hospitality is a thoroughly Christian practice. Christine D. Pohl, associate provost and professor of Christian social ethics at Asbury Theological Seminary, has reflected deeply on what it means to welcome the stranger not simply as “client” or “guest,” but as Christ.

While researching her classic *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, Pohl noted a recurring lament from experienced workers: Practicing long-term hospitality requires the infrastructure of community, but sustaining community is hard—much harder than merely opening it up to strangers. **Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us** (Eerdmans) ★★★★★ is Pohl’s attempt to resolve this dilemma.

Why do communities come unglued? Paradoxically, Pohl argues, the very fragmentation of contemporary life that makes us crave community also makes most of us poor candidates for committed membership. “Despite the fact that many of us claim to be dissatisfied with individualism,” she writes, “we cherish our capacity to make individual choices and to seek opportunities for personal growth.” It might be exciting to visit the Toledo artists’ collective and meet 300 fellow seekers. But

if everyone remains a “seeker” on their own terms, there won’t be food on the table—for a community around it—for very long.

How, then, can we truly belong to one another amid the trials of community? Pohl recommends four practices that provide the basic structures of life together: *hospitality*, which Pohl places at “the heart of the Christian life,” along with *gratitude*, *promise-keeping*, and *truth-telling*—three legs of a stool on which hospitality can stand.

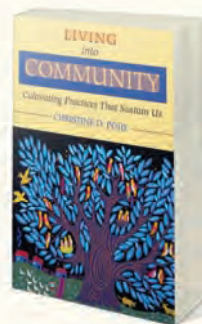
For each practice, Pohl reflects on its importance and identifies factors that strengthen or weaken its realization. Take promise-keeping. “Promises,” Pohl writes, “provide the internal framework for every relationship and every community—they function like the hidden supports in a well-built house.” For Christians, the making and keeping of promises is rooted in our relationship with a covenant-making God. But promises are complicated. They make claims about an unknowable future, when we’d prefer to “keep our options open.” They assume our best intentions, when we are often given to self-deception.

All four practices, Pohl stresses, are tightly interwoven. The pillars of hospitality stand or fall together. Again, consider promise-keeping: Can the pledge of shared life survive a breakdown in gratitude for the gift of shared life? Can it survive a failure of truth-telling when sinful passions arise?

While painfully honest about the challenges of contemporary culture, Pohl exudes confidence in God’s grace to knit us together despite ourselves. Ideal communities don’t exist. But Pohl reminds us that practices of

“truth and hospitality” are “at the heart of our grateful response to the one who ‘became flesh and lived among us . . . full of grace and truth.’” ✚

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



YOUR CHURCH IS TOO SAFE

Why Following Christ Turns the World Upside-Down

MARK BUCHANAN

(ZONDERVAN, 240 PAGES)

Historian Daniel Boorstin documents a momentous shift that occurred in North America in the nineteenth century: we stopped calling people who went on trips travelers and started calling them tourists.

Traveler literally means “one who travails.” He labors, suffers, endures. A traveler—a travailer—gets impregnated with a new and strange reality, grows huge and awkward trying to carry it, and finally, in agony, births something new and beautiful. To get there, he immerses himself in a culture, learns the language and customs, lives with the locals, imitates the dress, eats what’s set before him. He takes risks, some enormous, and makes sacrifices, some extravagant. He has tight scrapes and narrow escapes. He is gone a long time. If ever he returns, he returns forever altered. . . .

A tourist, not so. *Tourist* means, literally, “one who goes in circles.” He’s just taking an exotic detour home. He’s only passing through, sampling wares, acquiring souvenirs. He tastes more than eats what’s put before him. He retreats each night to what’s safe and familiar. He picks up a word here, a phrase there, but the language, and the world it’s embedded in, remains opaque and cryptic, and vaguely menacing. He spectates and consumes. He returns to where he’s come from with an album of photos, a few mementos, a cheap hat. He’s happy to be back. He declares there’s no place like home.

We’ve made a similar shift in the church. At some point we stopped calling Christians disciples and started calling them believers. A disciple is one who follows and imitates Jesus. She loses her life in order to find it. She steepes in the language and culture of Christ until his Word and his world reshape hers, redefine her, change inside out how she sees and thinks and dreams and, finally, lives. . . .

A believer, not so. She holds certain beliefs, but how deep down these go depends on the weather or her mood. She can get defensive, sometimes bristlingly so, about her beliefs, but in her honest moments she wonders why they’ve made such scant difference. . . .

You can’t be a disciple without being a believer. But—here’s the rub—you can be a believer and not a disciple. You can say all the right things, think all the right things, believe all the right things, do all the right things, and still not follow and imitate Jesus.

The kingdom of God is made up of travailleurs, but our churches are largely populated with tourists. The kingdom is full of disciples, but our churches are filled with believers.

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THE DREAM OF A BROKEN FIELD

DIANE GLANCY (UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA PRESS)



Fragmented, discontinuous, yet all of a piece, this “personal history” traces a Christian journey in a broken world. Diane Glancy is known as a Native American writer, and she is unapologetically that. But the particularities of her story are not posted like “No Trespassing” signs. “Lord, when I pass from the earth,” Glancy writes, “may I be in a car on a road such as this,” driving between “the harvested fields of Iowa” as if in “suspension above time.”

NOTHING MORE HAPPENS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Haiku Dangers

GARY HOTHAM (PECAN GROVE PRESS)



You can read this book by opening to any page. You can also read it as a sequence of glimpses, perceptions, episodes of awareness, asking implicitly for you to make connections between them, from the first haiku all the way to the last, from “Dew hanging on the fence— / paint chips off / the danger sign” to “sitting out / the night air cooler— / nothing more happens in the 20th century.” In between, after painful illness, a mother’s funeral: “we slide her casket out— / the small loose stones / under our feet.” And “the rattle / of left-over pills— / we empty her room.” Gary Hotham pays attention, and we’re the richer for it.

THE FEAR INDEX

ROBERT HARRIS (KNOPF)



From the author of *The Ghost* (filmed as *The Ghost Writer*), this superb thriller gets you in its grip on the first page and doesn’t let go. Robert Harris keeps you thinking—about financial markets and artificial intelligence and the changing nature of work, about evolution and the intricate interconnectedness of 21st-century life—long after you’ve closed the book. An admonitory tale that manages to be blackly funny as well, *The Fear Index* is also eminently filmable. Here’s guessing we won’t have to wait long.

Family as Calling

How Martin Luther's doctrine of vocation can mold marriage, parenting, and childhood.

Interview by Caryn Rivadeneira

For Gene Edward Veith Jr., provost and professor of literature at Patrick Henry College, Martin Luther's doctrine of vocation undergirds a truly Christian theology of the family. Vocation, as he describes it, is "the way God works *through* human beings." In his latest book, **Family Vocation: God's Calling in Marriage, Parenting, and Childhood** (Crossway), Veith looks to Luther's ideals of loving and serving our neighbor, and to his view of the family as a "holy order" unto itself. Coauthored with daughter Mary J. Moerbe, a deaconess in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the book applies Luther's understanding to the various family vocations (marriage, parenthood, and childhood) and the "offices" within those vocations (husband, wife, father, mother, and child). Author and Hermeneutics blog contributor Caryn Rivadeneira spoke with father and daughter about Luther's vision of family life.

Did writing this book together help you learn anything about your own family?

Veith: As I look back, I can see how God has been working through our family; how he brought Mary into her callings as wife and mother and everything else she does. Of course, that's the part of vocation that is often forgotten: that God works through our vocations. God is present and active, and he works through fallen, weak, mistake-prone human beings to accomplish his purposes. It's illuminating to see how even ordinary family life is really God's working through us.

In terms of everyday life within the individual family offices, is there freedom to re-interpret or step outside of one's roles?

Veith: We do say that there are roles within family. There is authority in family. But at the same time, Christian books tend to reduce things to, "Who has to obey whom?" It reduces roles to power relations, whereas the Scriptures and the doctrine of vocation teach that the purpose of every vocation is to love and serve your neighbor.

When we forget the mystery of how God works in vocation—that it's about loving and serving—we end up with a legalistic set of rules. That's what happens when the gospel is drained out of our view of vocation.

Moerbe: There's also a tendency to oversimplify our understanding of vocation by *prioritizing* vocations. Yes, motherhood is great, and frankly, motherhood takes so much time that it's often difficult to be active in a lot of other vocations. However, when I think about God being the source of vocations, he is Father, he is Son, and he is King. Do we say that God the Father is more important than God the King? No, he relates to us in different ways.

Veith: These differences make each vocation personal and unique. No two people have the same callings because no two people have the same neighbors, the same gifts, or the same tasks and opportunities.

You suggest that the proper and unique work of marriage is sexual intercourse. Can you explain?

Veith: Every vocation has its

unique work, its defining work. Sex inside of marriage is sex according to God's design, and thus sex becomes a good work within marriage.

Many of us are Victorian and prudish. It's very uncomfortable to write about sex, but it's so important. What the Bible says about sex inside of marriage is quite remarkable. It says we're one flesh. There's a mutuality: The husband doesn't have control over his own body, but his wife does. And the wife doesn't have control over her own body, but her husband does. Just the fact that the wife has control over the husband's body was very radical in the ancient world. There is mutuality.

Indeed, the Bible says that sex is what *creates* marriage. The reason you're not supposed to have sex with someone you're not married to is because you're not *called* to. You don't have an authorization—it's not part of your vocation—to have sex with someone you're not married to, so it's sinful.

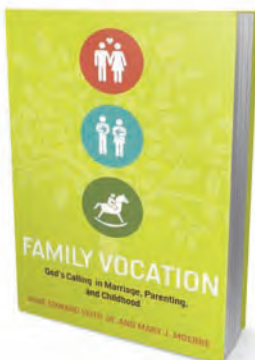
Authors Mary Moerbe and Gene Edward Veith



Moerbe: Sex also reminds us that marriage is a vocation unlike other vocations. In marriage, you serve *one* neighbor. In parenthood, you might have more than one kid. If you work outside the home, there will be plenty of customers and plenty of co-workers. But marriage is unique in that it is one-on-one.

What do readers need to grasp about how the doctrine of vocation applies to family?

Moerbe: The message is simple: Love and serve your neighbor. Love and serve your family, not because of who is in your family, but because *God* is in your family. Christ is hidden behind our neighbors, and Christ is present with us in our neighbors.



Desperate Christian Housewives

New primetime soap targets gossip in the church. By Mark Moring



When ABC announced a new show called *Good Christian Bitches*—based on the popular Kim Gatlin book of the same name—some faith-based groups complained about the title. ABC proceeded as planned, albeit with a concession: They changed the title to *Good Christian Belles* and later to *GCB*, but with no explanation of what the letters stand for.

No matter. What matters is whether the show (Sundays, 10/9c, premiering March 4) is true to the spirit of Gatlin's book, which shines the spotlight on the ugly practice of gossip among believers—in her case, a circle of wealthy Southern Baptist housewives in a Dallas suburb. Gatlin has said that her novel, based on her experiences, doesn't mock God but rather "those of us who love God and don't always make the best choices to honor him." It isn't well written, but it boldly calls attention to one of the church's "lesser" sins, albeit a persistent and prevalent one.

If the pilot episode of *GCB* ★★★★★ is any indication, it not only highlights the problem, but underscores it with audacity.

The story is told from the perspective of Amanda Vaughn (Leslie Bibb), a Dallas native who was the ultimate mean girl in high school.



Kristin Chenoweth as Carlene Cockburn

But she'd spent most of her adult life in California raising a family—until her philandering husband is killed in a car wreck in the pilot's opening scene. Amanda and her teenage kids, Laura and Will, move back to Dallas, where her wealthy mother welcomes her daughter home with open arms. As Amanda pulls into the driveway, former schoolmate Carlene Cockburn (Kristin Chenoweth) glares through a pair of binoculars from across the street. She picks up the phone, calls a friend, and smirks, "Well, well, well, Amanda Vaughn's back in town." The voice at the other end of the line says, "And she's single, too!"

And just like that, the gossip machine is

already overheating. Several more women—all ridiculously wealthy suburbanites—join the fray, but Carlene eventually ends it with self-righteous smarm: "Ladies, it is not appropriate to speak of such things on the phone." Pause. "I'll see you in church." It's clear where this conversation will resume.

Chenoweth, a Christian who has starred on TV (*The West Wing*) and Broadway (*Wicked*), steals the show as the ultimate, well, you know what

that *B* stands for. With her brazen hypocrisy, Carlene—a faithful churchgoer who cites Scripture and has "HOLY ONE" on her license plate, but is also the biggest gossip of them all—personifies *GCB*'s premise. She's always jumping to conclusions, assuming the worst in people—and is the first to spread it around. But on Sunday mornings, she's singing hymns in the choir and praying aloud before the congregation. Even then, she finds a way to slander her neighbor. But haven't we all, in the name of "prayer requests"?

The hour-long show has something of a *Desperate Housewives*-for-Christians vibe. It's both a soap and a comedy—often laugh-out-loud funny, sometimes cringe-inducingly raunchy. There's plenty of emphasis on the *B* in the title, but it's not completely devoid of *G* or even *C*. One woman who initially joined the attack on Amanda begins to soften, hinting at some transformation. And Amanda, more concerned about character than appearance, shows great love for her family and (mostly) exercises patience with her peers. She thanks God for a "second chance" and his "blessing of forgiveness."

Viewers can decide for themselves if they think these women are "good" or "Christian," though the b-word certainly applies to many. But it would behoove all of us to at least ask ourselves, "Do I ever do that? Am I guilty of gossip?" May we, as well as these fictional characters, ever gravitate more toward the *G* and the *C*, and away from the *B*. ➦

Mark Moring is CT's senior associate editor.

Out of the Darkness of Porn

When Sean Finnegan decided to make a documentary on the problem of porn, he didn't want mere facts and figures interwoven with expert sound bites. The best way to tell this story was to, well, tell a story—and for *Out of the Darkness* (Anteroom Pictures) ★★★★★, now on DVD, he found a powerful one in former porn actress Shelley Lubben, who now runs a ministry helping others escape the sex industry and find hope and healing in Christ.

The film focuses on four subjects: Lubben; recovered sex addict Mark Houck; family therapist Richard Fitzgibbons; and sexual revolution historian Judith Reisman. All are more than mere talking heads; they all have stories about how porn and attitudes about sex have affected their lives. But Lubben's is the most riveting: Neglected by her parents and sexually molested at 9 years old, she sought love in all the wrong places—namely prostitution and porn. When a man fell for her, and not merely her body, she eventually escaped what she calls a "cult" and found true love, in marriage and in faith. While made from a Christian perspective, the film is not preachy, but lets the stories speak for themselves. (More: AnteroomPictures.com)

—Mark Moring, CT senior associate editor



TWO MINUTES WITH...

Julie Lee



Few indie artists are truly financially independent. Julie Lee, a talented singer-songwriter and visual artist (she makes collages from

"found objects"), supplements her income by babysitting, often for the children of musicians. Many offered to play with Lee if needed, and "after a few years of babysitting," she jokes, "I had quite a list of potential band members." Several appear on her new album, the aptly titled *Julie Lee @ the Baby-Daddies*. CT's Mark Moring spoke with Lee.

How would you describe the album?

A collection of stories told in a variety of southern musical landscapes, illustrated by some of the top musicians and vocalists in Nashville. It's a patchwork quilt of bluegrass, old-time, country, swing, blues, and gospel.

What's the difference between creating music and visual art?

The tools and the medium may be different, but the mental process is the same. When I write a song, there is a visual image in my head, and when I create a piece of art, a song often drives it to completion.

You started with the ccm industry, but have since gone the indie route. Why?

I just saw "industry" for what it is: It's a business. It can be confusing, and "the machine" can eat you up and spit you out; I saw it happen to some of my closest friends. I was being led in a different creative direction—drawn to bluegrass and Americana because of the storytelling and the fact that the gospel is a part of that story, constantly weaving in and out.

Alison Krauss has recorded your songs.

Who would be your ultimate cover?

I just want to keep growing as a writer and if something resonates with someone else at that level, well then, wonderful. I just want to keep following the Spirit. [Pause] Okay, well maybe Dolly Parton singing "He's My Man." That would be ridiculous!



Folkie Finds Love

Rosie Thomas beams with it on her new album.

By Kristin Garrett



After a four-year record-making hiatus, folk singer Rosie Thomas returns to the studio with her effortless, laid-back melodies—and with plenty of creative fodder for these 10 new songs. **With Love** (Sing-A-Long Records) ★★★★★ follows a bittersweet two years in which Thomas wrestled with an anxiety-producing thyroid disorder and was married. She says she "woke up one morning, and the sun shined in the window, and... the world felt like it was back on my side again."

Here, she brings more unflinching honesty than ever and a versatility that proves this delicate vocalist can belt it out when warranted.

Lovely acoustic piano and guitar lines remain Thomas's go-to sound, but on *With Love*, she also experiments with richer, more soulful sounds on tracks like "Two Worlds Collide" and "Back to Being Friends." A more diverse repertoire gives her the opportunity to showcase her improvisational skills and a stronger side to her tender vocals. Rarely does one hear an artist perform quite so effortlessly; Thomas seems to live comfortably within her songs. Friends Dave Bazan (Pedro the Lion) and Sam Beam (Iron & Wine) contribute their

production and vocal talents, again showcasing the power of collaboration seen on Thomas's 2006 album, *These Friends of Mine*.

Like folk friend (and sometime collaborator) Sufjan Stevens, Thomas's Christian beliefs are organic to her songwriting. Throughout these musings on romantic, friendly, and familial love, its source is clear. As Thomas considers the mysteries of love, she seems content despite frustration at its comings and goings. Even while bemoaning the loneliness of waiting "your whole life for someone to finally take

a chance on you," she acknowledges, "If it's all about timing, then I'm right where I should be." The album explores pure love through heartbreaks and missteps ("Two Worlds Collide"), through meaningful friendships ("2 Birds"), and

through beauty and wonder ("Really Long Year"). *With Love* is a journey for the listener and a celebration for Thomas, who has learned that while sometimes it feels that love exists inside a tricky concoction of risk and trust, its purest and most perfect form still lives in a place devoid of fear.

Kristin Garrett is a CT music critic and works in development at Virginia Opera.



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NICHOLAS HOLTAM (NATIONAL GALLERY COMPANY)

★★★★★ Some Protestants, obtuse to the ramifications of the incarnate God, have inherited a hostility or indifference toward aesthetics under the assumption that God never leaves his heavenly altitude to contact terra firma. But even Calvin, the alleged iconoclast, argued that God manifests himself in "living icons" throughout the history of Israel and the church. Nicholas Holtam, as vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and parish priest of the National Gallery, celebrates this indissoluble marriage of Word and Image in a beautiful volume of commentary on his favorite paintings. Combining the acts of hearing and seeing, the book induces a worshipful stillness. —Christopher Benson

► HOW TO READ THE BIBLE THROUGH THE JESUS LENS

A Guide to Christ-Focused Reading of Scripture

MICHAEL WILLIAMS (ZONDERVAN)

★★★★★ Do daily devotionals leave you craving greater theological depth? Do study Bibles leave you feeling overwhelmed? Poised nicely between these genres is Michael Williams's *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*. In brief chapters, Williams identifies the major theme of each book of the Bible, shows how it witnesses to Christ's redemptive work, and draws out a lesson for contemporary readers. —Matt Reynolds

► CREED

Connect to the Basic Essentials of Historic Christian Faith

WINFIELD BEVINS (NAV PRESS)

★★★★★ Winfield Bevins, a pastor on North Carolina's Outer Banks, eschews novelty in this compact discipleship manual, relying instead on three cornerstones of the Christian faith: the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. Both newcomers to Christianity and mature believers will profit from these imperishably relevant teachings on basic doctrine, spiritual formation, and ethical living. —Matt Reynolds

MUSIC

ANDREW GREER

► ANGEL BAND: THE HYMN SESSIONS

(MA'M RECORDINGS)

★★★★★

When not writing music reviews for CT, Andrew Greer is a Nashville singer-songwriter, and on this sophomore album he surrounds himself with a gaggle of talented musicians (McCrary Sisters, Sandra McCracken, Ron Block, Cindy Morgan, Sonya Isaacs) to flesh out 11 hymns and an original. Greer has an unusual and versatile vibrato, pushing at times into jazzy territory, and other times evoking southern gospel. *Angel Band* skips across genres, from the down-home bluegrass of "Unclouded Day" to the orchestral "I Am Thine." Though the arrangements don't perfectly fit every tune, the stylistic diversity is welcome and nicely showcases Greer's voice. —Joel Oliphint

DON BYRON'S NEW GOSPEL QUINTET

► LOVE, PEACE, AND SOUL

(SAVOY JAZZ)

★★★★★

Don Byron is a reed man and a bit of a jazz chameleon, his albums typically offering thematic tributes to the music he loves—standards, funk, even klezmer. He says gospel is the music that moves him most deeply, and one listen to this album confirms it. Byron's New Gospel Quintet, including soulful singer D. K. Dyson, has fervor and conviction to spare as they give spirited readings of Thomas A. Dorsey and Sister Rosetta Tharpe classics. They stretch out into pure, spontaneous jazz, but never lose sight of the material's gospel foundations. —Josh Hurst

LYLE LOVETT

► RELEASE ME

(CURB/LOST HIGHWAY)

★★★★★

Lyle Lovett's superb songwriting and signature Texas roots anchor a collection that veers from gospel-rock-blues scorches to bluegrass, country, and delicate acoustic ballads—and two oddly interspersed Christmas songs. Shakespeare would be proud of the devastatingly tragic "Dress of Laces," and "Understand You" plays as a patient, life-worn love song. Spirit and flesh stand in opposing corners—the gospel song "Isn't That So" co-mingled with "Girl with the Holiday Smile," which celebrates a liaison with a prostitute. It all wraps up with "Keep Us Steadfast," a sparsely beautiful hymn from the pen of Martin Luther. —Jeremy V. Jones

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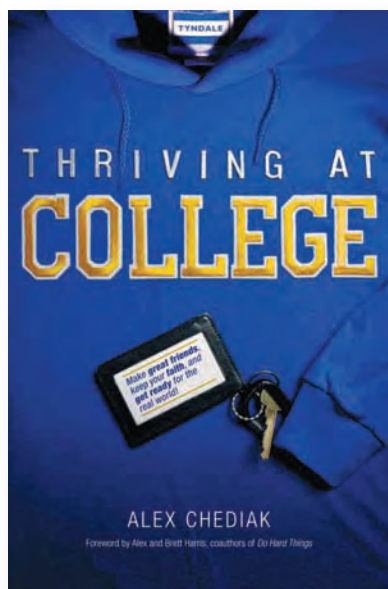
Alex Chediak is an author, speaker, and associate professor of engineering and physics at California Baptist University, and he's been involved in campus ministries and student mentoring for many years. His 2011 Christian Booksellers Association Best Seller, *Thriving at College*, explores the ten most common mistakes college students make and how to avoid them in order to successfully transition from high school to college.

In this article Chediak speaks to the parents of college-bound teens and examines practical ways they can prepare their children to have a rewarding and productive college experience. Going beyond the typical advice on financial aid and college visits, he instead focuses on what parents can do to aid their child's character development, the discovery of their passions, and the recognition of their talents to help identify potential majors and career paths.

College: A Launching Pad into Adulthood

While seven out of ten high school graduates enter college, about 30 percent will never make it to their sophomore year, and about 50 percent won't

have graduated even six years later. Meanwhile the average student who does make it to graduation will have racked up \$23,000 in debt. Today the cost of a college education is increasing two to three times faster than the overall rate of inflation.



Besides being expensive, college is also time-consuming and life altering. Particularly for students who move away from home, college is the season of life in which they launch into adulthood—for better or for worse. How

they establish relationships, manage their time, spend money, and pursue coursework (or not) will depend largely upon their worldview and character.

Their perspective on the purpose of college is also a factor. Is college just a recreational interlude between childhood and adult life, a time to maximize enjoyment and delay responsibility? Or is it a season of academic preparation and personal growth to propel a lifetime of effective service to God and neighbor—a launching pad to responsible Christian adulthood?

To be prepared for college, a student needs to fully and accurately understand what college is and what it's not. For starters, college is not an expensive four-year personal discovery vacation funded by Mom, Dad, and student loans. It is a temporary season of academic and professional training—a time to prepare for a life of useful service in a profession which either requires or benefits from college-level training.

Full-time students should also be prepared to approach college as a full-time job. The general rule is two hours of out-of-class work for every hour spent in class, which means the typical course load of 16 to 17 semester units becomes a 50-hour-per-week

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commitment. College-bound students need to be both motivated and disciplined in order to maintain this level of commitment. Unlike when they were in high school, nobody will check up on them to see if they're working or even attending their classes.

Character Development: Drive and Discipline

College admissions counselors will tell you that no amount of intelligence can make up for a lack of ambition or discipline. Schools have been known to sometimes reject applicants with high test scores who don't also have good grades. If a prospective student has a super-charged brain but very little success to show for it, this raises a red flag. There's much more to succeeding in college than just being smart.

So what are the character traits that predict success, and how can parents help cultivate these traits during their child's pre-college years? Drive,

ambition, determination, and grit, if properly applied, can marvelously fuel the kind of personal discipline required for success in college. It's that fire in the belly to do something big, to be a part of something great. Christians are called to be "zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14, NKJV), and high school students should be no exception (1 Tim. 4:12).

Parents can nurture drive and discipline in their children by teaching the value of diligence, hard work, and faithfulness. Help teens use their time well—to make the most of opportunities and to gracefully say no to some things so they can say yes to the best things. Don't do their homework for them. Give them enough freedom to fail every now and again—it will teach them the law of cause and effect like nothing else can.

The ability to delay gratification is another necessary fundamental, and it can be developed through activities in

which students are already participating, such as school, sports, theater, or music. Parents can help kids set goals, limit the amount of time spent on Internet entertainment to ensure higher productivity, and use social media wisely and with discernment. It's important for teens to learn that recreation should empower us for our God-appointed work, not distract us from it. This is especially true as they gain greater access to social opportunities, and these will increase dramatically during college with little to no external restrictions.

The pre-college years are also a great time for teens to learn to finish what they start. Sure, there's a place for brainstorming and idea generation, but once we lay our hand to the plow, we generally shouldn't look back. Faithfulness in the little things opens doors and prepares us for future challenges. The Proverbs speak regularly of discipline and of the consequences of being

continued on page 62

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undisciplined (e.g., Prov. 10:26; 20:4; 24:30–34). It's easy to get distracted when something more interesting comes along, but those who succeed in college—and in life—know that faithfulness involves finishing one thing well before going on to something else.

Lastly, parents can help teens cultivate a sense of responsibility for their lives, combined with the confidence that personal change and growth are possible. There will always be obstacles that are beyond our control, but having a victim mentality is deadly—it saps our potential to be strengthened by adversity. Equally crippling is blame-shifting: protecting our pride by holding other people or circumstances responsible for our shortcomings. When kids make mistakes (on a test, in a basketball game, and so on), they must learn not to point the finger elsewhere (“the test was unfair”; “the other players distracted me”).

There are two dangers that parents can teach teens to avoid: (1) Failure to recognize and own the mistake; and (2) Going too far and concluding, “I messed up; I always will mess up.” The first error denies responsibility and thereby makes improvement unnecessary: “Why do I need to make adjustments if what happened wasn't my fault?” The second renders improvement impossible. We all fall short on occasion, so learning to own the problem and having the courage to get back up are essential.

Exploring Academic Interests and Developing Passions

Parents can maximize college preparation by identifying and cultivating academic inclinations during the pre-college years. What activities has your teen pursued without being prompted? If the answer is endless video games or movies, brainstorming can help provide a direction. Ask, “If the salary were irrelevant, what would your ideal job look like?” Would they work outside? With their hands? At a computer? With books, people, machines, or equations? In a classroom, library, theater, or laboratory?

You can also light ambition's fire

by introducing them to the needs of the world and the many ways to serve God. Are there social problems that grab their attention, such as human trafficking, extreme poverty, or crisis pregnancies? Cultivating a concern for larger global issues will expand their horizons beyond the myopia of the typical high school social scene. They might even discover connections

scientist, and so forth. This will help them see that God can be glorified in a myriad of professions, while also motivating a kind of holy emulation. Point them to contemporary role models in your church as well. They're not too young to volunteer or shadow someone at work.

Each young person has a unique God-given set of gifts, and with diligent

IS COLLEGE A GIVEN?

Today there's a prevailing societal assumption that children will immediately go on to college from high school. But what if Amanda would rather become a beautician than a businesswoman? What if Mike would flourish far more as a pilot than as a doctor or a lawyer? What if Emma has shown little academic interest up to this point and isn't sure about committing the time and money to four or five more years of school?

We need to be careful that our children don't pursue college simply to please us or because “it's what everyone does.” College is a step they might take into the adult world. So it's important that they actually want to attend college, that their desire to go is based on accurate expectations, and that going to college is the best way to achieve the knowledge and training needed for their future goals.

By working with their teen to objectively and realistically examine the best fit for the teenager's talents and interests, parents can help their child determine the next step—whether it's a traditional four-year college, trade school, junior college, or some other path.

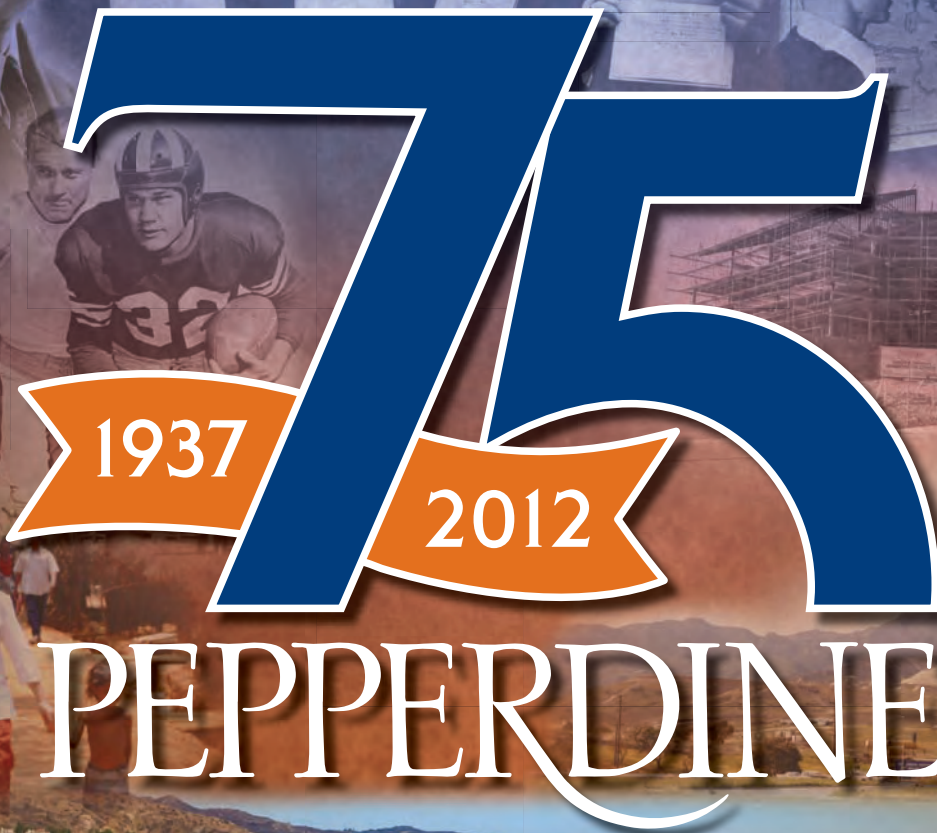
between their professional interests and real-world needs.

As teens express their interests—in writing, math, science, music—parents can look for opportunities to help them flourish in a particular area. Maybe it's a writing contest, the math team, a robotics club, an orchestra, or a school play. If possible, expose them to historical examples, particularly of Christians, who've excelled in these fields—Madeleine L'Engle the fiction author, William Wilberforce the politician and activist, Michael Faraday the

effort, he or she has the capacity to increase these abilities. Mere aspiration—like faith without works—is dead. Desire and ambition must be paired with persistent application in order to accomplish anything. Bill Gates put in thousands of hours programming computers before he even graduated from high school. Mozart practiced the keyboard relentlessly even as a child, composing scores of musical pieces in his teen years. Our kids, too, must consistently apply themselves—in the paths of their

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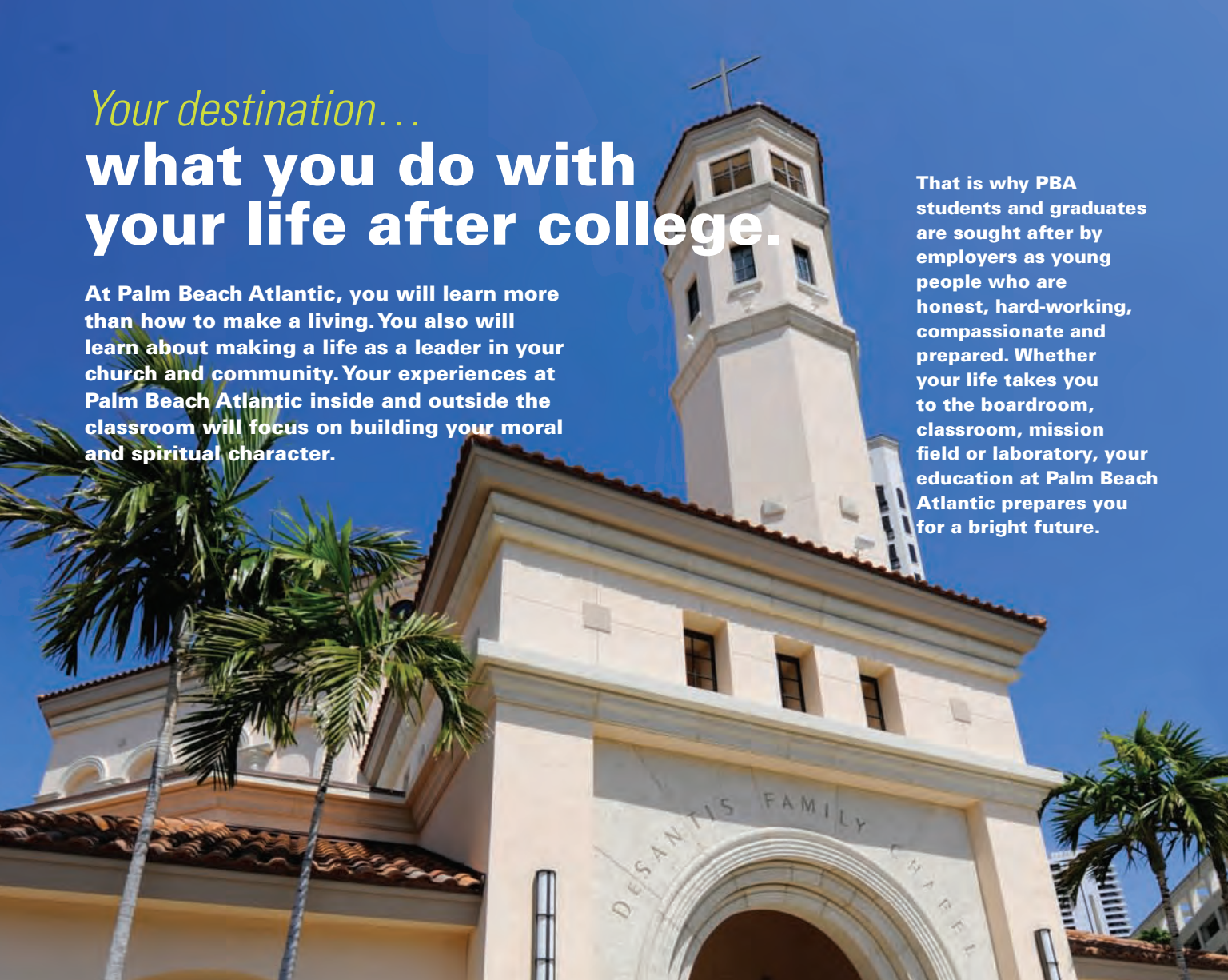
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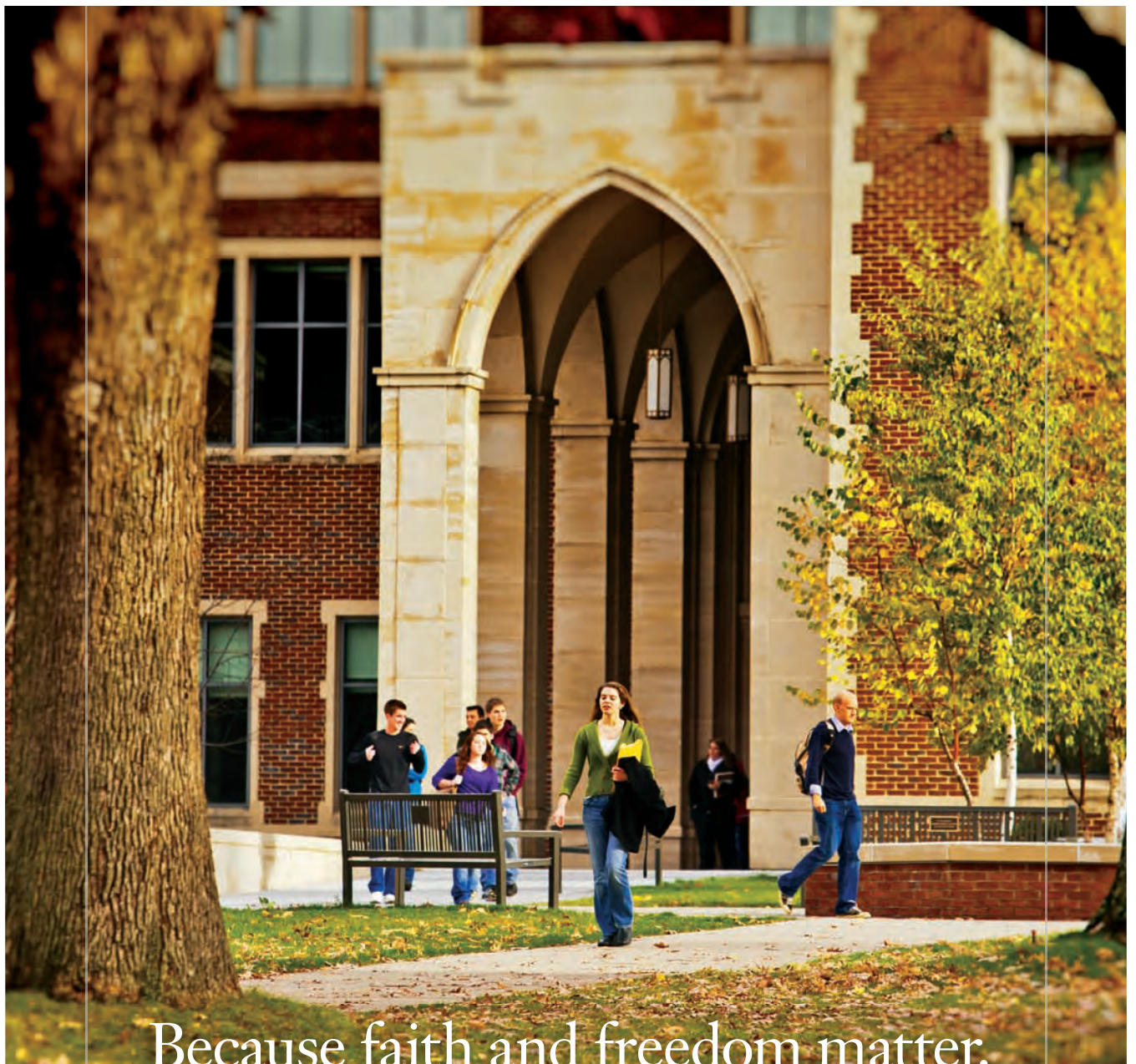
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Discovery of Talents

As your teen explores his interests, be on the lookout for objective markers of talent. In what academic subjects or extracurricular activities has he done particularly well? Do teachers, relatives, or friends ever say, “I could really see your son doing X”? If so, ask them why. Then share that feedback with your teen and see how he responds.

to aim for the moon, parents must help them be realistic about their current level of ability. Imagine that your daughter really wants to sing in the school’s concert choir, but she can’t carry a tune. Instead of confronting the choir director after a failed audition or spending a ton of money on private voice lessons, talk with her about the pleasure of singing in the shower.

One vital note about helping your teen discover his talent: While it’s important to assist your child in find-

know their weaknesses, pursue excellence, and come in with at least some academic ability and interest do just fine in college. Yet problems arise when one or more of these traits are missing.

While pre-college preparation is crucial, even if you’re a bit late to the game, the good news is that it’s never too late to start. I’ve had the joy of seeing a student worker I once fired graduate four years later with tremendous competence and character. I’ve seen students change majors and take off like a rocket because they finally found their niche. I’ve even seen goof-off freshmen become mature, responsible seniors.

As parents, what can we do to help prepare our children to succeed in college?

1. Love them enough to set high expectations and give them a vision of Christian excellence: Living fruitfully for God’s glory in the strength that he supplies (1 Pet. 4:11), and in a manner consistent with our gift set. Keep in mind that they’ll live up—or down—to our expectations.

2. Find that delicate balance between protecting them from major harm, yet allowing them to stumble so they can learn from their mistakes and misjudgments.

3. Encourage them regularly but also help them accurately recognize their weaknesses.

4. Live what we preach: Pursue Christian responsibility and excellence in our own lives, apologize when we fall short, and be transparent and authentic with them.

God has great plans for our children. May their journey be a blessing to us all.



Dr. Alex Chediak (www.alexchediak.com) is the author of *Thriving at College: Make Great Friends, Keep Your Faith, and Get Ready for the Real World!* (Tyndale House, 2011) and an associate

professor at California Baptist University in Riverside, CA.

“A common misperception is that high performance follows high self-esteem. In reality, high performance follows high expectations.”

It’s important for parents to help their child balance the subjective experience of a particular activity (the teen’s enjoyment of it, her desire to do more of it, and so on) with the objective feedback of others, but particularly that of a teacher, coach, choir director, and so forth—the person whose expertise merits serious consideration. I’ve met students who’ve taken calculus and physics three times each before concluding that engineering wasn’t for them. A better initial evaluation of talent and ability would have made this realization apparent much sooner.

Today’s parents must also contend with the consequences of the “high self-esteem culture,” in which teens may have a tendency to feel too special and lose sight of the proper objective basis for justified self-confidence—actual accomplishment. A common misperception is that high performance follows high self-esteem. In reality, high performance follows high expectations. The 2006 Brown Center Report on American Education reported that 39 percent of American eighth graders were confident of their math skills compared to only 6 percent of their Korean counterparts. But guess which group vastly outperformed the other?

So while teens should be encouraged

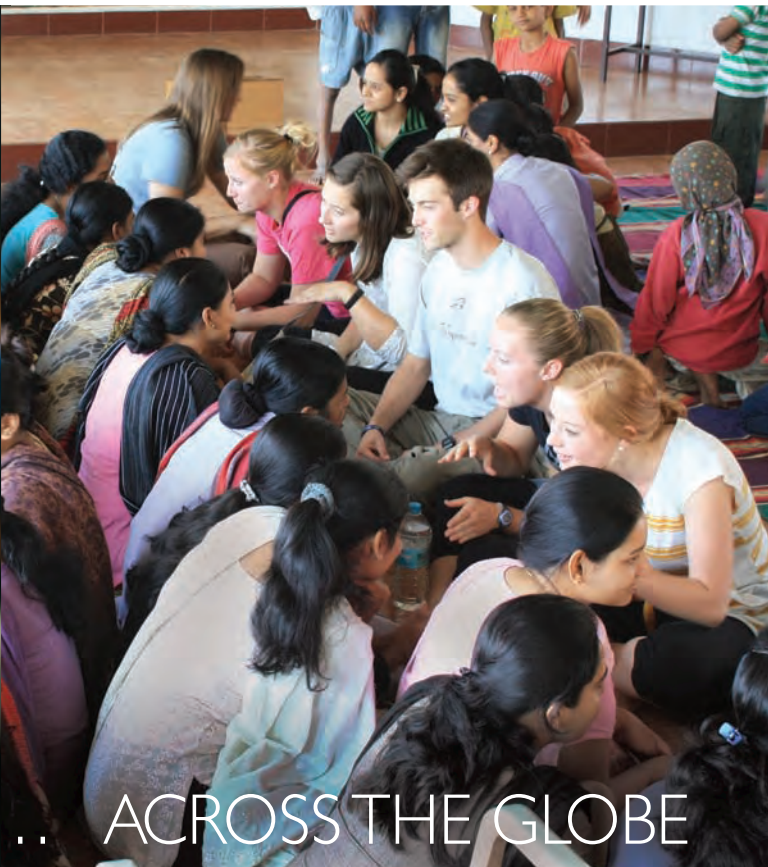
ing that intersection between passion and ability, desire and giftedness, it can also be risky to give a verdict on someone’s potential when he’s only 16 or 17 years old. And if he isn’t exhibiting success in something he’s passionate about, could other factors be involved—such as a lack of discipline or maturity, an uninspiring teacher, biting off more than he can chew in a semester, or a relational difficulty? These problems can be addressed and corrected. So while we should avoid rushing to conclusions, we ought to be realistic and recognize that current success is often an excellent predictor of future success.

Conclusions

Many parents fear their child’s college transition. They wonder, Will my daughter make it? It’s totally understandable—the dangers are real and multifaceted. Teens will be tested spiritually, morally, academically, financially, and relationally. The good news is God faithfully sustains his children—he longs for our holiness and progress more than we do. Thriving at college IS possible.

What I’ve seen during my seven years of working with college students is that those with godly character who embrace responsibility, take initiative,

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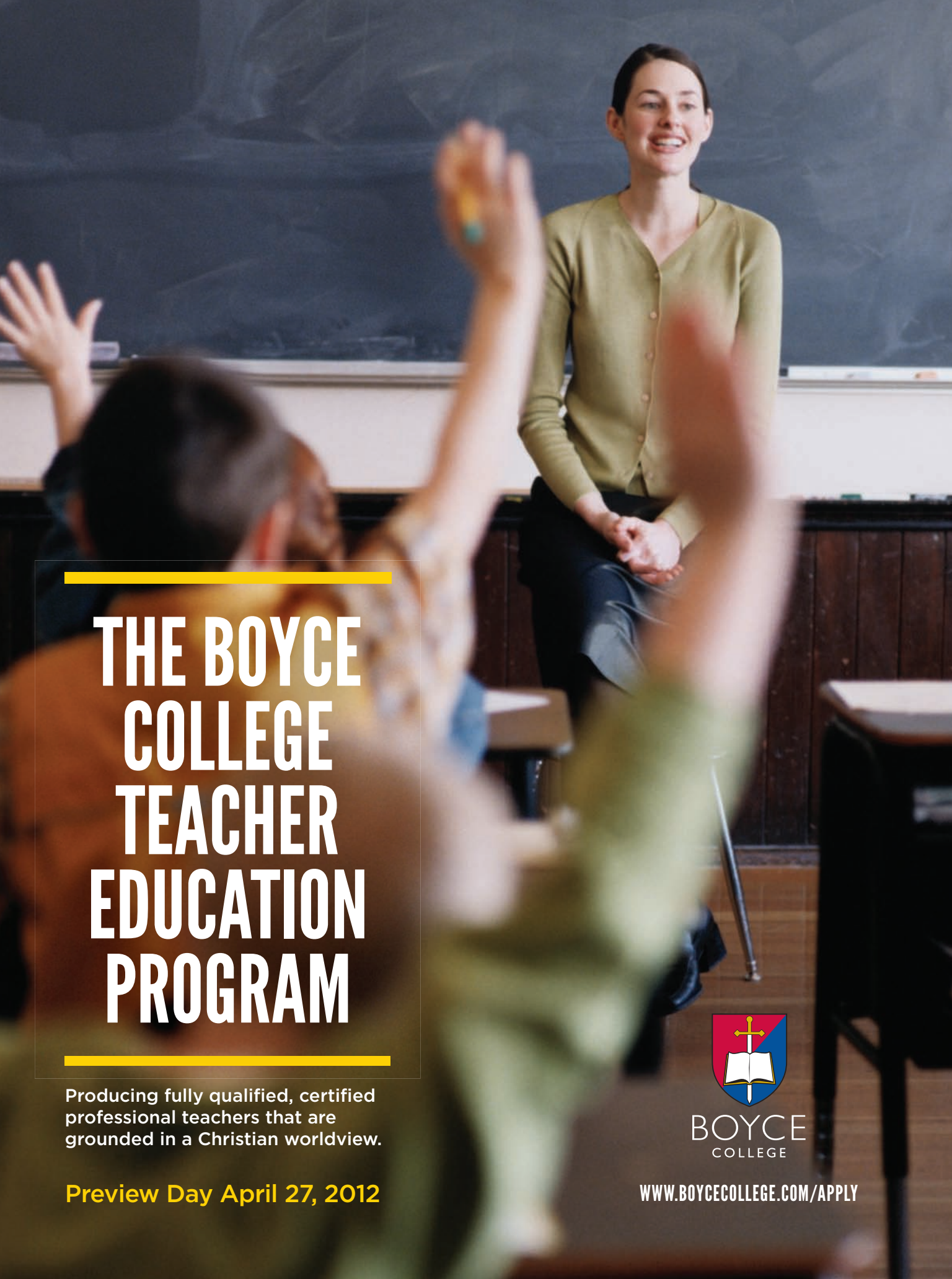
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OUR STORY

How one couple prepared three sons for life after high school.

Ken and Stacey live in Northern California. They've been married for 22 years. Ken is a tax accountant, and Stacey is a homeschooling mother of three boys. Two of their sons are now in college (Michael and Andrew), and a third (Brandon) is a junior in high school.

Did you assume your kids would go to college?

Starting their freshman year of high school, we had them spend five minutes of their daily quiet times in silence. Especially during their junior and senior years, we encouraged them to listen for God to give direction regarding their future. We prayed with each of them explicitly in this area.

If they were unsure of their direction, then going to a four-year school wouldn't be an option for them. Alternatives could be joining the military, going on an extended mission trip, or going to junior college (perhaps while working a part-time job). But honestly, our first choice was a college degree—preferably in a field with promising employment opportunities.

How did you talk to your sons about what to expect at college?

We told them their faith would be challenged—even at a Christian college—and we encouraged them to be a light wherever they ended up (Matt. 5:14–16). From their earliest days, we taught them “Wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it, and right is right even if no one is doing it.” We warned them they'd have to be disciplined, manage their time well, and be self-motivated because nobody would be looking over their shoulder.

How did your sons display ambition in high school?

We encouraged them to have a well-rounded life in high school—to include service to God and others, as well as personal development, in the midst of their academic work. We wanted the Lord to be the top priority in their lives. We trained them enthusiastically in “life skills”—finances, home maintenance, tithing, and being lifelong learners. We trusted that God would open the doors for them in college and beyond.

We had them each take an SAT prep course. We gave them career tests to discover their aptitude for various disciplines. There are a few engineers in our family, and math was always easy for Michael. So after we arranged several job-shadowing experiences for him, as a high school senior he narrowed down his chosen field to engineering. During his first year at college, he narrowed it further to electrical engineering. Now a junior in college, he recently enjoyed a six-month internship in his field.

Andrew is more introverted and likes a quieter environment that allows him to work individually. After long talks with his dad about accounting, he chose to follow in his father's footsteps. He's been enjoying his first semester at college.

How did you seek to shape their character?

We tried to motivate them with Scripture so they'd see that our requirements made sense and were rooted in God's will to bless them. We didn't want them to do things just because we said so.

The boys attended youth group in junior high and high school, and Ken was one of their leaders. We also required them to serve in a ministry. Each of our sons has worked with younger children, visited Alzheimer's patients, built homes in Mexico, and served as a counselor at summer camp. These

opportunities stretched their faith and allowed them to be a blessing to others.

We've been intentional about training our boys and giving them opportunities to rely on God in a personal way. It is our prayer that when the world comes at them with all its temptations and ugliness, they will know the righteous path because they've not only seen it before, but they've been living it.

As they grew up, how did you seek to cultivate diligence and time-management skills?

God speaks in his Word of doing all things in a good and orderly way. Stacey used a variety of checklists to keep the boys on task. A morning-routine checklist tracked what needed to be accomplished before the day's academic activities commenced. And the home-school day had its own checklist. The boys had to keep their own calendars in high school. No more solely relying on Mom to know where they had to be at a certain time! These tools were used to instill responsibility, self-reliance, and independence.

During the school week, no video games were allowed unless they'd earned a “good job” coupon worth 20 minutes of video game time. Stacey would give these to the boys when warranted, and then they could play video games during the week—after the school day was done and their homework was complete. Normally, video games were permitted only during the weekend (which began Friday afternoon at 3:30 p.m. and ended Sunday evening at 5:30 p.m.).

And as they departed for college?

We gave them some general tips, such as:

- Get up every day at a reasonable hour—even if you don't have a class—and redeem the time.

continued on page 74



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continued from page 71

- Don't wait until after dinner to begin doing your homework.
- Use small blocks of time during the day and go to the library to peck away at your homework.
- Strive for excellence in all that you do. Your work represents who you are and can be a witness for Christ.
- Don't sit around wondering why you're not getting better grades, not doing well on the team, or not getting a particular job. In most instances, good things happen to those who work hard, are prepared, and are ready for opportunities whenever they arise.

Self-confidence and humility are sometimes viewed as competing character qualities. Do you agree that both are important?

We tried to create a balance in our boys' understanding between who they are in Jesus—which instills confidence—and

who they are as sinners interacting with the Omnipotent God Almighty—which keeps them humble. From a young age, we impressed upon them the need to not let the actions of others determine their responses. Kids can be cruel, and we asked our boys to have compassion for those who may hurl insults and unkind words at them (or even use physical violence). We stressed their accountability to God for all of their actions.

Along with humility, we tried to teach them contentment and the importance of gratitude to God for all he gives us. We have a blessed life. We live humbly, but our wealth is immense when compared to many in the world. This is probably the area we feel least "successful" in. It seems our boys sometimes take material blessings for granted. So we pray and constantly examine what we can do differently as parents, even when they're no longer under our roof. —AC

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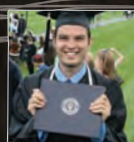
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He Does Know Beans

Michael Patton teaches theology over a cup of joe.

Michael Patton was just four years old when he first tried to teach theology—while playing on a swing set with a childhood chum. Patton asked the boy if he loved Jesus; the boy said no. When Patton replied, “Then you’re going to hell,” the boy quickly changed his mind and declared that yes, he *did* love Jesus after all.

Today, Patton’s evangelistic methods are a bit more seasoned and savvy. As founder and president of Credo House Ministries, he has ample opportunity to reach both saints and seekers, primarily through that ubiquitous marketplace of ideas: the local coffeehouse. But not just any java joint. Patton has established what he hopes will be the first of many “theological coffee shops,” beginning with the Credo House in Edmond, Oklahoma. The store, built in 2009, seats up to 55 customers and serves up plenty of good coffee, books, teaching,

seminars, and lively discussion—much of it led by Patton and executive director Tim Kimberley. (Both have master’s degrees in theology from Dallas Seminary.)

Patton calls Credo House a “belief-strengthening events hub” in which clients—ranging from college students to pastors to pros—will find “the walls dripping with theological meaning.” He says it is a place “where people can learn, fellowship, study, and just hang out under the banner of truth and grace in Christ.”

- **Age** 39
- **Hometown** Edmond, Oklahoma
- **Family** Kristie (wife); Katelynn, 13, Kylee, 11, Will, 7, Zach, 4 (children)
- **Church** Faith Bible Church
- **Reading now** *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*, by Michael R. Licona
- **On Your iPod** The Fray, U2, Matt Moberg
- **Favorite Bible verse** Galatians 2:20
- **Your hero** Chuck Swindoll
- **Hobbies** Playing poker

question & answer

What’s the idea behind Credo House?

We didn’t want to have to ask people to come to a church to have theological discussions; we wanted a more neutral environment, and coffee makes a good bridge for that. We didn’t want it to be overtly Christian where you’re going to run off the postmoderns and those who hate clichéd Christianity. We wanted a historical element, to put the words on the walls in Latin, theological words so people have to ask what they mean. *Credo ut intelligam*: “I believe in order to understand.” We want a place where people want to ask questions and dig a little deeper.

You’re reaching believers and seekers?

Yes. We’re an intellectual hub from an insider’s perspective, but we also want to show the viability of Christianity to others. We’re trying to reach a postmodern, skeptical, disenchanted, suspicious generation—and those people are both inside and outside the church. Everything we do at Credo House, we want to be irenic. That’s the big word we use around here, even when discussions turn into arguments. Be irenic. Be peaceful.

Give an example of a recent encounter.

A group of Mormons came in and started asking questions. The conversation turned to the Bible—the history of the Bible and the manuscripts behind it. They had no idea about all of that, and they were just blown away learning it. These are the types of conversations we love to have.

None of it would mean a hill of beans if your coffee was crummy.

Exactly. We want to compete with the best coffeehouses in town. But when we first started, I didn’t know much about it. I bought an \$800 latte machine, and I thought it was great. But when we hired Tim, he said we needed an \$8,000 latte machine, a \$1,000 grinder, and all this. I had a lot to learn.

More: CredoHouse.org



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