

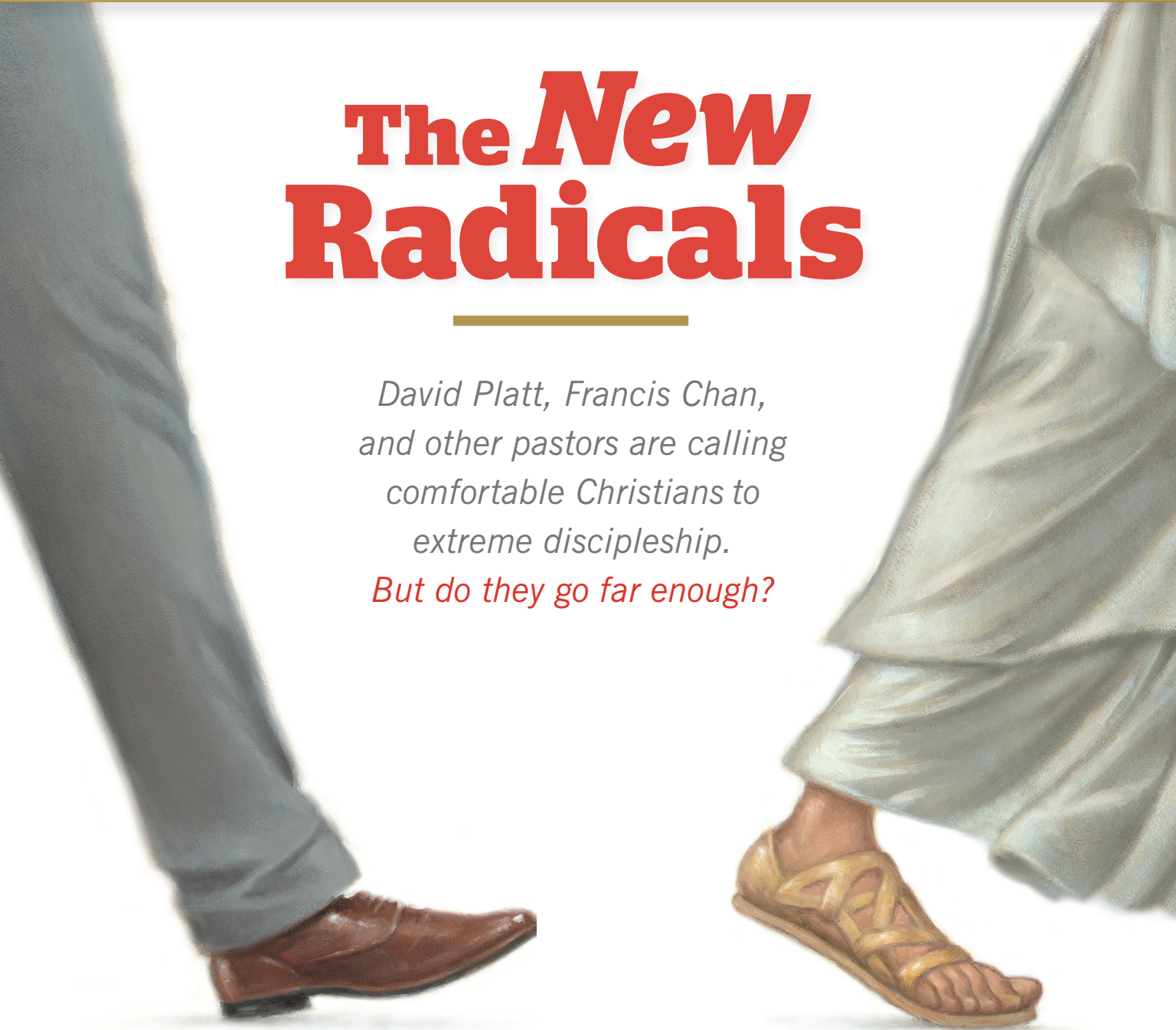
Christianity Today

MARCH 2013

The *New* Radicals

*David Platt, Francis Chan,
and other pastors are calling
comfortable Christians to
extreme discipleship.*

But do they go far enough?



GOD OF THE JOBLESS 36
RUSSIA'S ORPHAN CRISIS 38
MY HARVARD JESUS MOMENT 88

SWAMP WADER
TRUTH TELLER
CLIMATE CHANGER
CATALYST



THIS IS DOROTHY BOORSE. THIS IS GORDON COLLEGE.

Coauthor of the best-selling textbook *Environmental Science*, Dorothy connects ecology with global good. Her recent report for the National Association of Evangelicals tackles the changing environment's effect on poverty. But some of her most important work happens in the field, slogging through wetlands alongside students. This is Gordon: informed and involved, with faithful and courageous scholars inspiring students toward lifelong growth. Education is transformation. At Gordon, we take it personally.



YOU ARE CALLED TO **SERVE.**

BECOME EQUIPPED TO SERVE.

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Master of Divinity*
Master of Theological Studies*
Master of Arts
Master of Theology
Doctor of Philosophy
Diploma or Certificate

**Distance learning available*

*A community rooted in the Reformed tradition
and committed to Biblical, holistic formation.*



AWAKEN TO THE CALL

Pastor and author David Platt boldly challenged the church with his message in *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream*. David Platt's next major message is a wake-up call to the church, compelling us to examine the validity of our own personal faith. There's a cost to *truly* giving yourself to Christ's call: "Follow me." **Are you truly a follower of Christ?**



DAVID PLATT



FOLLOWMEBOOK.ORG



- Available in softcover, audio and large print
- Spanish edition book releases May 2013



Available through bookstores and online retailers.

TYNDALE and Tyndale's quill logo are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.



AUDIO & E-BOOK
AVAILABLE



LIFEWAY
CURRICULUM KIT
AVAILABLE



BRIEFING

9 Spotlight Why Conservative Christians Distrust Their Neighbors

10 Gleanings

12 Headlines

- Catholics withdraw from Nigeria's top Christian association.
- Why build a big box sanctuary when you can upcycle an old one?
- Can courts second-guess pastoral counsel of abuse victims?
- Kenya's Supreme Court mulls vetting pastors.
- **IN DEPTH** Churches and colleges reach out to Hispanic youth.

VIEWPOINTS

43 Readers Write

45 Where We Stand The Future of Today's Christianity

46 The Village Green Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Anne Graham Lotz, and Dallas Willard revive spiritual disciplines.

49 Her.meneutics Sharon Hodde Miller asks whether women—or anyone—have a 'right' to ordination.

51 Past Imperfect David Neff defines shifting doctrine.

CT REVIEW

53 Books

- J. D. Greear's *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart*
- Makoto Fujimura: My Top 5 on creativity
- Gilbert Meilaender's *Should We Live Forever?*
- Interview: Rachel Marie Stone learns to *Eat with Joy*

58 Movies

- *Django Unchained* and our thirst for revenge

IN EVERY ISSUE

88 Testimony

How the Truth found a Harvard atheist.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY ROB DAY



FEATURES

20 Here Come the Radicals!

MATTHEW LEE ANDERSON David Platt, Francis Chan, Shane Claiborne, and now Kyle Idleman are dominating the Christian best-seller lists by attacking our comfortable Christianity. But is 'radical' faith enough?

Global Gospel Project

26 Bigger Than We Think

DAVID WILKINSON The doctrine of Creation goes deeper than just explaining how the world began.



30 A Holy Tension

MEGAN HILL Why God's design for marital romance is hotter than all the Fifty Shades in the world.

32 The Love Shack

INTERVIEW BY MARK GALLI William Paul Young explains the theology behind his best-selling novels—and why he's no longer at war with himself.

36 The Sabbath Swimming Lesson

SUSAN WUNDERINK When unemployment threatens to sink us, God keeps our heads above water.

38 Orphans in Limbo

KEN WALKER Russia's recent adoption announcements leave American parents confused—and 700,000 Russian children waiting.



NOW AVAILABLE

Downloadable Bible studies based on selected articles: ChristianBibleStudies.com

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Dale Hanson Bourke sheds light on the places, terms, history and current issues shaping the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. With an even-handed presentation of the most controversial issues, she provides a framework for American Christians who wish to understand why the conflict began, why it continues and what remains to be done.

978-0-8308-3763-2, \$13.00



"By clearly and simply laying out the history and the facts of the conflict, Dale Hanson Bourke has done much to further the cause of peace."

—Rich Stearns, president of World Vision US and author of *The Hole in Our Gospel*

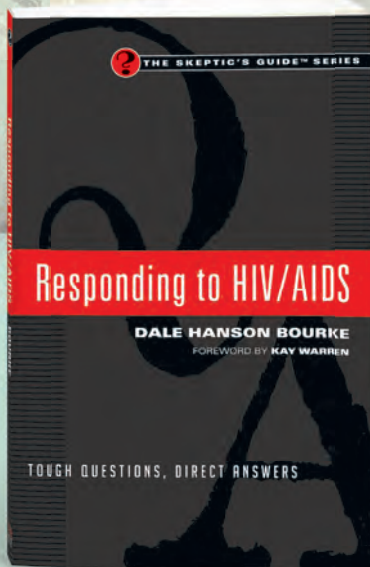
TOUGH QUESTIONS, STRAIGHT ANSWERS

THE SKEPTIC'S GUIDE™ SERIES

RESPONDING TO HIV/AIDS

In this easy-to-understand, full-color guide, Dale Hanson Bourke provides a straightforward tool for Christians who want the latest information on the growing AIDS pandemic. Jargon-free and propaganda-free, Bourke's descriptions of the medical and political issues make it a great resource for personal information and group study.

978-0-8308-3761-8, \$15.00



Useful for group conversations and group mobilization.

IVP Books
Church. Culture. Mission.

IVPRESS.COM
1.800.843.9487

Founder Billy Graham

Editor in Chief Harold B. Smith **Publisher** Terumi Echols

Editorial Vice President of CT Initiative Development

David Neff

Christianity Today
Founded 1956

Editor Mark Galli

Executive Editor Andy Crouch

Managing Editor Katelyn Beaty

Managing Editor, News & Online Journalism Ted Olsen

Deputy Managing Editor Timothy C. Morgan

Design Director Gary Gnidovic

Associate Editor, News Jeremy Weber

Associate Editor, Books Matt Reynolds

Associate Editor, Hermeneutics Kate Shellnutt

Designer Alecia Sharp

Assistant Editors Elissa Cooper • Kevin Emmert

Video Director Nathan Clarke

Editorial Resident Melissa Steffan

Senior Writers Tony Carnes • Tim Stafford

Editorial Administrator Rebecca Custer

Editorial Council Timothy F. George • Christopher A. Hall
Scot McKnight • Thomas C. Oden • James I. Packer
Sarah Sumner

Editors at Large Darrell L. Bock • Edward Gilbreath
Stan Guthrie • Collin Hansen • Rob Moll • Mark Moring
Madison Trammel • John Wilson • Philip Yancey

Contributing Editors Miriam Adeney • James A. Beverley
Sheryl Henderon Blunt • Mark Buchanan • Michael Cromartie
James R. Edwards • Ajith Fernando • Leslie Leyland Fields
David Gushee • John W. Kennedy • Douglas LeBlanc
Frederica Mathewes-Green • Michael G. Maudlin • Richard Mouw
Mark A. Noll • Roger E. Olson • Ben Patterson • Ronald J. Sider
Bob Smietana • Howard Snyder • Ed Stetzer • Walter Wangerin
Lauren F. Winner • Ben Witherington • Susan Wunderink

Advisory Editors Deann Alford • Leith Anderson
Myron S. Augsburger • Jim Ball • Randall Balmer
Edith Blumhofer • Colin Brown • George Brushaber
Robert E. Cooley • Calvin DeWitt • Edward G. Dobson
David S. Dockery • William A. Dyrness • James Engel
Samuel Escobar • C. Stephen Evans • Richard Foster
John R. Franke • Christopher D. Hancock
Alan F. Harre • Nathan Hatch • Roberta Hestenes
R. Kent Hughes • Todd M. Johnson • Robert K. Johnston
Walter C. Kaiser Jr. • David Livingstone • Paul L. Maier
Grant McClung • Steven T. McFarland • Alister E. McGrath
David L. McKenna • James Meeks • Dean Merrill
Stephen V. Monsma • Terry C. Muck • Kenneth A. Myers
Bradley Nassif • Armand M. Nicholi Jr. • Will Norton Jr.
Michael Novak • Virginia Stem Owens • Earl F. Palmer
William Pannell • Eugene Peterson • Richard Pierard
James W. Reapsome • Robert C. Roberts • Haddon W. Robinson
John Rodgers • Vinay Samuel • David P. Scaer
Stephen A. Seamands • Christine A. Scheller • Uwe Siemon-Netto
Russell P. Spittler • John Stackhouse Jr. • Joseph M. Stowell
Marianne Meyer Thompson • Donald Thorsen • Elmer L. Towns
Grant Wacker • John D. Woodbridge • Edwin M. Yamauchi

Carl F. H. Henry, Editor 1956–68

L. Nelson Bell, Executive Editor 1956–73

Harold Lindsell, Editor 1968–78

Kenneth S. Kantzer, Editor 1978–82

V. Gilbert Beers, Editor 1982–85

George K. Brushaber, Executive Editor 1985–91

Terry C. Muck, Executive Editor 1985–90

Christianity Today (ISSN 0009-5753) is published monthly (bi-monthly January/February and July/August), by Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188. Periodicals postage paid at Carol Stream, IL, and at additional mailing offices. ©2013 Christianity Today

Postmaster: Send address changes to Christianity Today, P.O. Box 37060, Boone, IA 50037-0060; 1.800.999.1704. Canada Publication Mail Agreement #: 040029733. Registration #: 126028836RTO001. Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to: WWM Inc., 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, Ontario N8T 3B7. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription Rates: Regular subscription price: one year \$29.95. Outside U.S. add \$13.00 postage prepaid U.S. currency. \$4.95 per copy.



Your Eyes On God's World

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

All eyes are on Egypt these days, as the Morsi government provokes protests and lethal violence. Christians in Egypt have it hard, so it is easy to believe reports that a mother and her seven children were sentenced to 15 years for becoming Christians. But despite Egypt's repressive atmosphere, those reports were not completely accurate. In our next issue, Cairo-based Jayson Casper will unsnarl for you this tangled tale of fraud, family fortune, and social pressure.

In this issue, Nairobi, Kenya, correspondent Tom Osanjo reports on plans by Kenya's chief justice to weed out venal and greedy pastors. Is this a serious threat to religious liberty? Some church leaders embrace it while others think it a very dangerous idea (page 14).

And from Lagos, Nigeria, Sunday Oguntola tells of a new obstacle faced by Christians who want to present a united front to encroaching Islam. Catholic bishops who helped to found the Christian Association of Nigeria now want out (page 12).

In-country observers like these share stories that help you understand the dynamics of their volatile societies. They help you sort sensational reports from reality. And ultimately, they help you know how best to support fellow Christians living under extreme pressure.

We'd like to support even more reporters like Jayson, Tom, and Sunday, but staying in touch through in-country writers is more expensive than just monitoring news reports stateside. So while we're very grateful for your subscription dollars, we'd like to ask you to go beyond that and directly support this global reporting.

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

David Neff, Editorial Vice President
of CT Initiative Development

Send checks (U.S. dollars only) to:
Christianity Today
Attn: Donor Relations Box CT0313
465 Gundersen Drive
Carol Stream, IL 60188

Christianity Today International
is a 501(c)(3) organization.





C·S· LEWIS INSTITUTE

invites you to tour

C.S. LEWIS'S OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

JULY 6-14, 2013



Travel to Oxford and Cambridge to celebrate the life and legacy of Christian apologist, disciple, and writer C.S. Lewis during the 50th anniversary celebration of his passing.

TALKS BY WORLD-RENOWNED

C.S. LEWIS EXPERTS:

Walter Hooper, Dr. Alistair McGrath, Dr. John Lennox, Dr. Michael Ward, and C.S. Lewis Institute Staff



For tour information please visit: www.cslewisinstitute.org



**CHRISTIANITY
TODAY**

a global media ministry

President and CEO Harold B. Smith

COO Kent Jensen

Executive Administrator Paulette DePaul

Executive Vice Presidents Keith Stonehocker

Carol Thompson

Senior Vice Presidents Terumi Echols • Vicki Howard

Vice Presidents David Neff • Marshall Shelley

Special Assistant to the President and CEO

Skye Jethani

Advertising Phil Bandy • Michael Chuchvara •

Kathy DePue • Terumi Echols • Judy Gill • Peggy Gomez

Walter Hegel • Wes Jakacki • Julie Kaminski • Toks Olawoye

Luke Schoenrock • Stacy Smith • Sandra Sundin

Jacob Walsh • Josh Wood • Hazel Ziebell

Brand Support Services Adrian Carrion • Diane Kielma

Sherry Kyle • Kathryn McQuaid • Nancy Nance

Tim Platek • Todd Watermann

Financial Operations Jim Fuoss • Gary Johnson

Sandra Johnson • Phillip MacDonald • George Sifnotis

Human Resources Jaime Patrick • Paul Ross

Richard Shields

Production Cynthia Cronk

Customer Support Pamela Ferrill

Technology Clayton Anderson • Valerie Broucek

David Dougherty • Theresa Hoffner • Julia King

Kent Oxley • Stephen Swithers • Matt Wistrand

Board of Directors

FOUNDER, HONORARY CHAIRMAN Billy Graham

CHAIR John A. Huffman Jr.

PRESIDENT AND CEO Harold B. Smith

Miriam Akeny • John N. Akers • Claude Alexander

Sandra C. Gray • Eugene B. Habecker • Alec Hill

Darryl L. King • Charles H. Kwon • Michael Lindsay

Samuel Rodriguez • John M. Sommerville

Editorial/Advertising Offices

Editorial: cteditor@christianitytoday.com

Advertising: ctiad@christianitytoday.com

Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL

60188-2415 • 630.260.6200 • Fax: 630.260.8428. Advertising

in *Christianity Today* does not imply editorial endorsement.

Manuscript Policy

Unsolicited manuscripts and poetry are not accepted. A query

letter must be sent first, describing a proposed manuscript.

Any unsolicited manuscript will not be returned.

Permissions

Christianity Today grants permission for any original article

(not a reprint) to be photocopied for use in a local church or

classroom, provided no more than 1,000 copies are made, are

distributed free, and indicate *Christianity Today* as the source.

Australian Agent

MediaCom, 14 Eton Road, Keswick 5061, South Australia

Indexes

Christianity Today is indexed in Readers' Guide to Periodical

Literature; Christian Periodical Index; Religion Index One;

Periodicals, Religious and Theological Abstracts; Book Review

Index; and Academic Abstracts and Magazine Article Summaries.

Occasionally we share subscriber information with select

organizations. If you wish to remove your name from direct

mail, e-mail, or telephone lists, call 1.800.999.1704 or send

e-mail to ctcustserv@christianitytoday.com. Please specify

the types of promotions you do not wish to receive.

Subscription Rates? Gift Subscriptions? Address Changes?

ctfulfill@christianitytoday.com • 1.800.999.1704 or write

Christianity Today, P.O. Box 37060, Boone, IA 50037-0060

Find every issue of *Christianity Today*

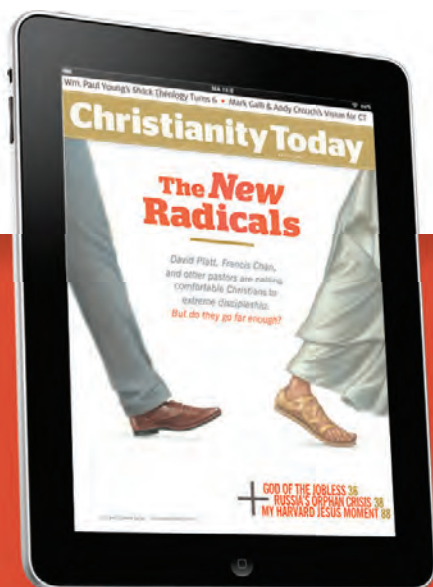
back to 1996:

Use code 0095753 at:

CTLibrary.com/offer/CTsubscriber

to get a special discount.

Read CT. Anywhere you go.



**Get it now
for your iPad.**

Free to Subscribers.



Available on the

App Store



Giving It Everything

What we like about the new radicals. Really.

I expected to see a burly man with blazing eyes barreling toward me down the hotel hallway. Instead, a blond Southerner in blue jeans greeted me with the easy warmth of a middle-school Sunday school teacher.

"Thanks so much for your time," gushed a fellow interviewer, who like me was trying to snag 20 minutes with the Alabama preacher. "After reading *Radical*, my wife and I sold our home. This year we left for Thailand to preach the gospel." A second interviewer repeated the theme: Reading *Radical* meant good-bye to the suburbs and hello to the mission field. A third proudly handed the strikingly young pastor a button inspired by his book. It boasted: I REBELLED AGAINST THE AMERICAN DREAM.

As I quickly learned at this year's Urbana conference, where 16,000 totally-on-fire-for-Jesus college students descended on St. Louis to worship and discern God's call on their lives, David Platt has attracted quite the fan base.

The irony of this fandom—evidenced by best-selling books and speaking engagements and *Radical* testimonies like the ones above—is multilayered. For one, Platt regularly lambasts the very consumer Christianity that allows believers nationwide to hear his teaching, via book sales in the millions. And then there's his teaching itself. Here's a smattering:

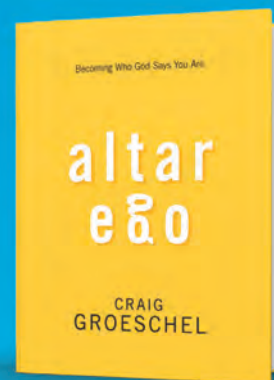
- "Your life is free to be radical when you see death as reward" (*Radical*).
- "We have reduced Jesus to a poor, puny savior who is just begging for us to accept him into our hearts" (Urbana talk).
- "I'm convinced there are scores of people who culturally identify themselves as Christians who are not followers of Christ" (to me).

It's ironic, at least striking, that in a time when surveys and reports spell the demise of the American church for not being relevant, tolerant, and culturally savvy, Platt, Francis Chan, Kyle Idleman, and other "extreme discipleship" pastors are gaining such a hearing while challenging the very idea of cultural savvy. But why?

That's the question driving this month's cover story (page 20), an in-depth look at how the radical craze is profoundly shaping suburban Christianity. After Urbana, I wondered if following Jesus could mean only one vocational path: overseas evangelism. But Matthew Lee Anderson's wisdom helped me, and will likely help you, gain a robust perspective on the nature of being a disciple.

We at *Christianity Today* are deeply impressed with the new radicals, partly because we share a slice of their core identity: We represent a community of believers that seeks to love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. In this month's editorial (page 45), editor Mark Galli and executive editor Andy Crouch lay out the fundamentals driving this storied, crucial publication—and why we cannot imagine a more exciting time than right now to be totally on fire for Jesus.

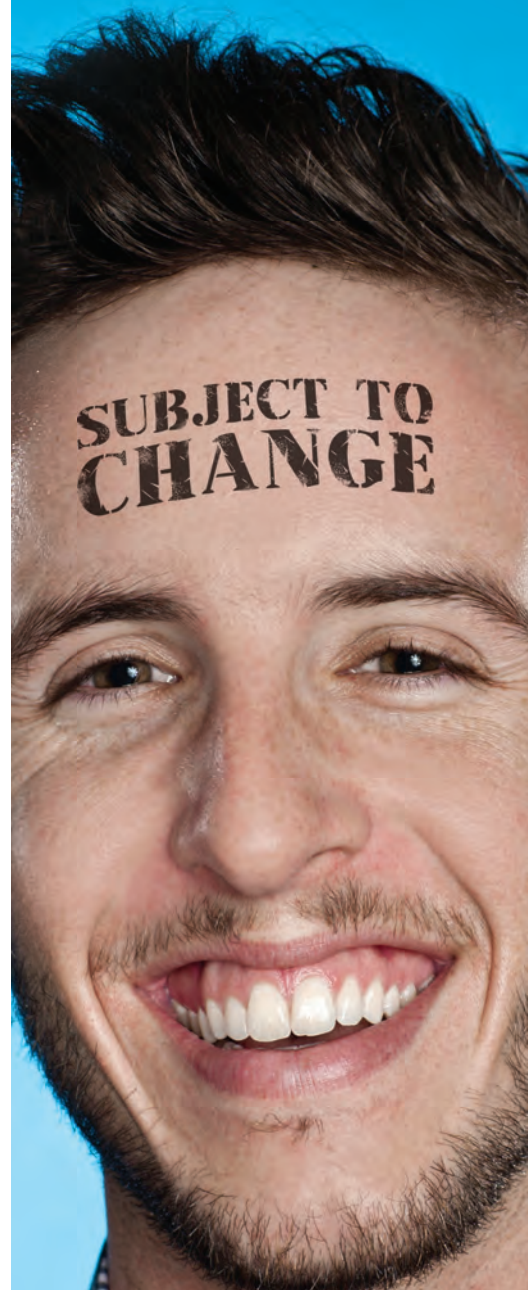
Next issue: Philip Yancey casts Newtown in the light of Easter; Rick Warren takes *Purpose Driven Life* to the moon; and April Burbank reports on a coffee roasting startup brewing hope for ex-felons.

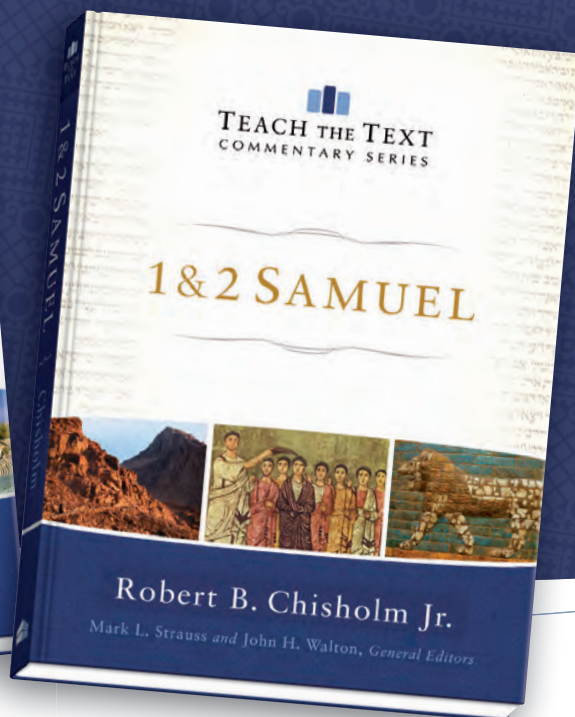
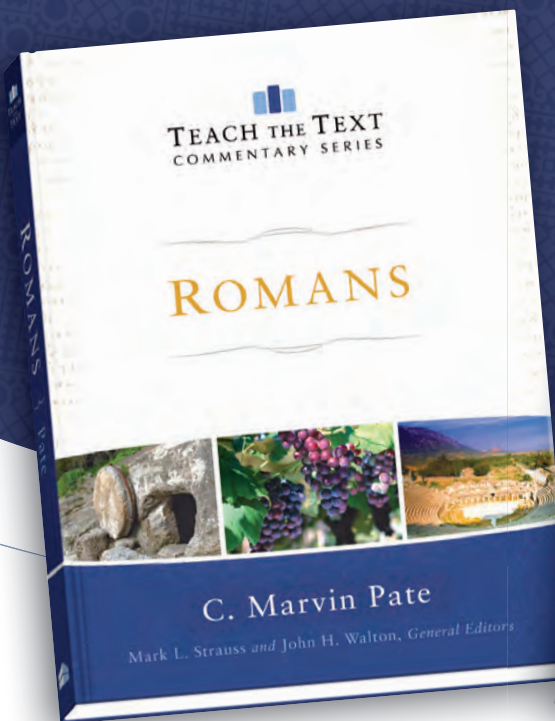


Out with the old and in with the you.

In *altar ego*, bestselling author and pastor Craig Groeschel explores how we can sacrifice our worldly self-image and replace it with God's view of us. To learn more visit zondervan.com or a bookstore today.

ZONDERVAN
.com





 TEACH THE TEXT
 COMMENTARY SERIES

 AN INNOVATIVE
 NEW COMMENTARY SERIES

Focused biblical scholarship that helps you teach the text effectively

This new commentary series provides the best of biblical scholarship and the information needed to move seamlessly from the meaning of the text to its effective communication. Each unit of the commentary includes the big idea and key themes of the passage; sections dedicated to understanding, teaching, and illustrating the text; and full-color illustrations, maps, and photos.

"Teach the Text is the commentary I have wanted for a long time. It deals with the kinds of questions that busy pastors have to ask and answer in order to preach the Scriptures every week."

HADDON ROBINSON, Harold John Ockenga Professor of Preaching, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

"I cannot think of a more urgently needed commentary series for the life of a pastor or teacher."

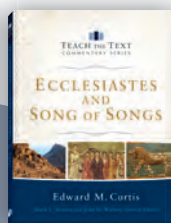
DAN KIMBALL, author and teacher at Vintage Faith Church, Santa Cruz, CA

"Pastors and Bible teachers, make room on your shelves. The Teach the Text Commentary series was specifically envisioned with us in the lens and emphasizes precisely what matters most: communicating the heart of the authoritative text itself."

BETH MOORE, author and Bible teacher



July 2013



Oct. 2013



Nov. 2013

www.TeachTheTextSeries.com

 **BakerBooks**
Relevant. Intelligent. Engaging.



download
sampler

Available wherever books and ebooks are sold.
Like us on  • Follow us on  ReadBakerBooks • Baker Books blog: reelligent.com

REPORTING & DISPATCHES FROM THE CHURCH WORLDWIDE

Briefing

SPOTLIGHT: I Love You—I Just Don't Trust You

➔ “Do not trust a neighbor,” says Micah 7:5. Theological conservatives seem not to have trouble heeding this Bible verse, according to a recent study in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. Three sociologists, led by Colorado State University's Lynn Hempel, looked at data from the reputable General Social Survey and found that theological conservatism (including among Catholics and mainline Protestants) correlates to distrust of other people.

THE STUDY'S FINDINGS

1 The more religiously involved you are, the more you trust others.

2 The more theologically conservative you are, the less you trust others.

BUT:

3 For the theologically conservative, more religious involvement doesn't mean more trust.

4 For the religiously active, conservative theology still means less trust.

“Theological conservatives believe in the fundamental depravity (sinfulness) of human beings and the social world and find evidence for this viewpoint in the Bible. . . . [Their] worldview suggests that trust in people, social institutions, and the like is not only naïve but reflects a dangerous misplacement of trust, which . . . should be granted only to God.”



IS CONSERVATIVE DISTRUST A PROBLEM? EXPERTS RESPOND:

The study found that theological conservatives trust people in their immediate circles and distrust ‘others.’ When you label that as lacking generalized trust, it sounds negative. When you realize that they live in a social arrangement that is the envy of most community scholars, it does not sound so bad.”

RAM CNAAN

University of Pennsylvania

I’m not sure that a robust view of human sinfulness is irrational or naïve in a society in which deception, ruthlessness, and betrayal are found in every sphere. But it must be held in tension with deep recognition that everyone is made in God’s image. Loving my neighbor does not require that I trust him or her, but partnering with him or her on projects for the common good probably does.”

CHRISTINE POHL

Asbury Theological Seminary

It’s unclear how important responses to these questions really are in day-to-day behavior. Theological conservatism may lead to lower levels of social trust (that’s still under debate), but it may also still lead, for example, to increased levels of civic volunteerism or increased levels of civic morality.”

CORWIN SMIDT

Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics at Calvin College

TEST YOURSELF

Condensed versions of the questions used to measure theological conservatism and trust.

- Do you believe in hell?
- Do you believe the Bible should be taken literally?
- Have you had a “born again” experience?
- Have you tried to encourage someone to accept Jesus as Savior?
- Can people be trusted?
- Would most people try to be fair to you rather than try to take advantage of you?
- Do people try to be helpful rather than just look out for themselves most of the time?



1



2



3

GLEANINGS

Important developments in the church and the world.

1 Christians lose landmark human rights ruling

UNITED KINGDOM When human rights collide, which trump which?

In a much-anticipated ruling, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decided that equality and safety laws trump religious conscience (most of the time). In January, it ruled that the United Kingdom did not unjustly discriminate against three out of four Christians who were fired because of their religious beliefs. The ECHR ruled in favor of Nadia Eweida (above), a Coptic Christian fired from British Airways for wearing a cross at work. But in the other three cases—a hospital chaplain also dismissed for wearing a cross (but, in this case, deemed a safety hazard), and a counselor and a registrar who refused to serve same-sex clients—the court said no European human rights laws were violated.

2 Government revises definition of nonprofit religious employer

In February, the government proposed two changes to its employer contraceptive mandate. The changes largely removed controversial language that narrowly defined religious organizations. However, the revised exemption still does not apply to for-profit companies that object to contraception coverage on religious grounds, or to nonprofits that aren't explicitly religious. "We're doubtful that anyone who wasn't already covered by the exemption will be covered by it," said Kyle Duncan, general counsel for the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which represents many of the organizations suing the government. Overall, for-profit businesses seeking an injunction against

the mandate had a 10-4 winning court record by early February.

3 Prominent pastor supports gay relationships

UNITED KINGDOM A well-known British evangelical has

publicly announced that he has changed his views on homosexuality. In the February issue of *Christianity*, Steve Chalke argued that churches should "consider nurturing positive models for permanent and monogamous homosexual relationships." Chalke's views have provoked controversy before: His strong criticism of penal substitutionary atonement theology broke up one of Britain's biggest Christian conferences (Word Alive) in 2007.

4 Where persecution is growing the fastest

AFRICA Christianity has long been

spreading the fastest in Africa; now persecution is, too. The Open Doors USA World Watch List ranks the 50 countries where Christians face the most religious freedom violations. This year, Mali skyrocketed from unranked to No. 7, while Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Niger also made debuts. (Africa has 17 countries on the list in total, including 6 of the top 15.) Meanwhile, China continued its descent from the Top 10, falling to No. 37 as arrests and confiscations no longer occur "on a large scale." Turkey and Cuba dropped off the list entirely.

5 Report: Televangelists don't need new laws

Five years after Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) began investigating six major televangelists for "possible misuse of

donations," the commission carrying on his project has concluded that no new laws are needed. Increasing financial accountability by ministries does not require "harsh or excessive legislation or regulation," said the Commission on Accountability and Policy for Religious Organizations, the group of experts convened by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. Instead, its 91-page report recommends that the government better enforce existing laws and better educate nonprofit leaders about those laws. The result disappointed Rusty Leonard, founder of MinistryWatch.com. "If you are a bad actor intent on separating well-meaning people from their money," he said, "a nonprofit entity will still be a legally safe and effective way of doing it."

6 Agency will defend secularism from religion

FRANCE President François

Hollande plans to create a new government agency that will monitor France's official secularist policies. Building on a plan from 2007, Hollande said the new agency will strengthen *laïcité* (policies established in the early 20th century) by developing a secular morality curriculum for public schools, monitoring religious extremism, and deporting those whose views tend toward "religious pathology." Deportations may include creationists, said France's interior minister.

7 World's biggest Bible translators unite online

Biblica, Wycliffe Bible Translators USA, the American Bible Society, and the United Bible Societies hope a new partnership will "catapult Bible ministry into a new digital age." Every Tribe Every Nation's first major project is the Digital Bible Library, a collection of hundreds of Scripture translations available to licensed ministries—especially those

GO FIGURE Pastors

52%

Americans who said in 2012 that clergy are highly honest.

50%

Americans who said in 2009 that clergy are highly honest. It was a record low.

7

Professions deemed more honest than clergy in 2012. (Nurses were No. 1.)

Gallup



5



8

QUOTATION MARKS

“There is no ‘Trust us, changes are coming’ clause in the Constitution.”

New York District Court judge **Brian Cogan**, ruling in favor of the Catholic Archdiocese of New York in its lawsuit against the Department of Health and Human Services’ contraceptive mandate.

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty

“We’ve not ceased to exist.”

Bishop Mark Lawrence of the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina, which disassociated from the Episcopal Church and sued the denomination for, more or less, identity theft. In January, a judge agreed and granted a temporary restraining order.

Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina

“Clearly, speaking on this issue has not been in the range of my priorities in the past 15 years.”

Passion founder and pastor **Louie Giglio**, withdrawing from delivering the benediction at President Barack Obama’s inauguration amid protests over a sermon he gave on homosexuality in the 1990s.

Passion City Church

“We must unwaveringly adhere to the One Child Policy.”

Wang Xia, chairman of China’s National Population and Family Planning Commission, detailing its goals for 2013 at a January national conference.

Zhong Xin China News Agency

“The promise of his release was a lie.”

Nagmeh Abedini, whose Iranian American husband, pastor Saeed Abedini, was sentenced to eight years in an Iranian prison for planting house churches.

Morning Star News

putting Bibles on mobile devices. The library, which would alleviate problems that organizations have had negotiating for rights and standardized formats, expects to add more than 1,000 additional translations by the end of the year. It is funded by Mart Green (whose family owns Hobby Lobby).

⑤ Stanford launches first religious liberty clinic

Thanks to a \$1.6 million donation from the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, Stanford Law School will begin offering a religious liberty clinic—“the only clinic of its kind in the country.” Part of Stanford’s existing Mills Legal Clinic, an in-house group that operates as a single law firm, the new clinic will focus on defending the free expression of religion and will avoid challenging perceived government endorsements of faith.

⑨ Blasphemy laws take hits in Europe

EUROPE Pakistan is not the only nation that bans blasphemy. According to the Pew Forum, 8 out of 45 European countries have laws against blasphemy, and 36 countries have outlawed defamation of religions. However, these figures might change in 2013. Russia recently postponed its controversial new anti-blasphemy legislation in order to gather more public input. Meanwhile, the Dutch parliament recently accepted a motion to abolish a 1992 law that made it a crime to insult God. And Ireland’s newly elected leaders favor reforming its 1937 constitution, including a law that criminalizes blasphemy.

⑩ Free campus finally given away

After two failed attempts to give away a 217-acre college campus, Hobby Lobby announced that it had given

the property to the National Christian Foundation (NCF), the largest Christian grant-making organization in America. The Green family, which owns the retail-craft chain, has been trying to unload the Massachusetts campus (founded by D. L. Moody) since 2011, when a proposed C. S. Lewis college failed to raise sufficient funds. Now the NCF will take over the historic site and continue to search for a suitable Christian institution to occupy it.

⑪ First permit in 100 years rejected by church

TURKEY Syriac Christians in Istanbul are far from pleased, even though the city has granted them a large plot of land and what appears to be Turkey’s first church building

permit in nearly 100 years. The reason: The land is a Latin Catholic graveyard. The property was confiscated by Istanbul officials in 1951, despite a law stating that local municipalities cannot confiscate minority cemeteries. So the “gift” is seen by many as an attempt to cause conflict between Christian communities. Istanbul’s 15,000 Syriac Christians currently worship in rented Catholic buildings throughout the city.

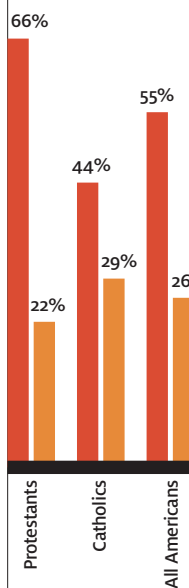
⑫ Children of divorce less likely to attend church

A new study from the Institute for American Values found that adult children of divorce are less likely to attend religious services or to express interest in God than adult children raised in intact marriages. People raised in happy marriages are more than twice as likely to attend as those raised in “good divorces,” in which both parents stay involved in the child’s life and attempt to minimize conflict. Among the reasons for the disparity, said lead author Elizabeth Marquardt, are “stories they tell of not feeling understood at church when their parents were splitting.”

GO FIGURE Sin

Americans who admit to the following temptations:

■ Eating too much
■ Gossip



The Barna Group



CHURCH UNITY NIGERIA

Disunited Front

Catholic withdrawal from the biggest Christian association may benefit radical Islamists.

By Sunday Oguntola in Lagos, Nigeria

Christian unity in Nigeria suffered a blow when the nation's Catholic leaders indefinitely suspended relations with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)—the first split in the umbrella body's nearly 40 years of existence.

Catholic and Protestant churches formed the association to promote Christian unity and to speak with one voice on national issues. But the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria—the largest of CAN's five blocs—said it was pulling out because of president Ayo Oritsejafor's leadership. Catholic leaders believe the Pentecostal pastor has made CAN too cozy with the government and too confrontational with Muslims (in response to continuing attacks on Christians).

In a letter listing their grievances, Nigeria's bishops alleged that CAN was "being dragged into partisan politics, thereby compromising its ability to play its true role as conscience of the nation and voice of the voiceless." They also alleged that CAN's interfaith mission was "not

given a priority attention to promote peace and unity in the nation," but instead CAN was being used as "an army put in place to defend Christians against Muslims."

The bishops will vote on whether to make the withdrawal permanent.

When founded in 1976, CAN comprised only the Catholic Secretariat and the Christian Council of Churches (CCC). It later expanded to include the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, the Evangelical Fellowship of West Africa, and the Organization of African Instituted Churches.

Catholics or CCC Protestants stayed in charge until 2010, when Oritsejafor won a contested election to become the first Pentecostal leader.

Since then, Catholic bishops have been increasingly uncomfortable with him. They accuse him of personal opulence and inappropriate public comments on national issues.

Things deteriorated this past November, when Oritsejafor received a multimillion-dollar private jet from unnamed members of his church. Some defended the jet as essential to

Kicking the CAN: Divergent views on how Christians should relate to power and resolve conflict have led to the first split in the Christian Association of Nigeria's nearly 40 years of existence.

the travel required by his ministry; others criticized it as a bad pastoral example when half of Nigerians still live on less than US\$1 per day.

The Catholic bishops frowned at the gift, even insinuating that President Goodluck Jonathan, who belongs to Oritsejafor's tribe, facilitated the gift and is backing Oritsejafor in his bid for re-election this July.

Catholic leaders have pressed Jonathan's government to dialogue with Boko Haram, the Islamist sect responsible for violence in northern states that has killed hundreds of Christians. Oritsejafor views the group as terrorists that should be crushed by Nigeria's military.

Oritsejafor told CT he declines comment "so as not to further inflame passions."

Sunny Oibe, spokesman for CAN's northern division, defended Oritsejafor's leadership and accused Catholics of arrogance. "They don't want to be under anybody, but they want everybody to be under them," he said. "It doesn't work like that, because there is no seniority in CAN."

Magnus Atilade, chairman of CAN's southwest division, is more wistful. "It is an unfortunate development," he said. "The motive for the formation of CAN was for all to be one. That is in danger now. [Division] can never make us stronger."

Evangelical leaders share his concern that the split will hamper efforts to counter Boko Haram.

"We need all Christians on board to fight the forces against Christianity in Nigeria," said Gideon Paramallam, regional secretary of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. "This [split] makes it harder for us to pressure the government to clamp down."

Reuben Adebayo, general secretary of the Nigeria Evangelical Fellowship, agreed. "We must resolve these differences as soon as possible, because it is a massive setback," he said. "We need everyone on the ship to curb all the challenges facing us together."

GO FIGURE Atheism

70%
Increase in church attendance among atheist scientists with children, compared to those without children.

Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion

CHURCH LIFE

Flip That Church

Why build when you can upcycle an old one?

By Melissa Steffan

Pastor Mike Connaway's newly planted VLife Church hasn't started holding official services. Yet the youthful non-denominational congregation is already embracing its new home at the previously vacant Trinity Presbyterian Church, one of the oldest church buildings in McKinney, Texas.

"All of our 20-somethings love this old building," he said. "This reminds them of a time when life wasn't broken."

Across the country, old mainline and Catholic sanctuaries are finding new life as evangelical churches upcycle and renovate them for modern use, says Gary Nicholson, director of LifeWay Architecture.

Seattle-based megachurch Mars Hill made a name for itself using the warehouse-church model. Yet it recently signed a five-year lease to use First United Methodist Church in downtown Seattle, one of the oldest churches in the city. It also purchased the downtown First Congregational Church building in nearby Tacoma.

Similar acquisitions by evangelical churches—including Oasis Church in Los Angeles, City of Grace in Phoenix, and Sojourn Community Church in Louisville, Kentucky—may reflect a cultural shift in thinking about worship and finances.

According to Nicholson, young churches that renovate old buildings and those that lease office or warehouse space are part of the same trend: leveraging facilities more wisely by acquiring rather than constructing. The trend is consistent with recent data from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, which shows that monthly construction spending

on religious institutions has fallen nearly \$5 billion since 2002.

Connaway says young worshippers want authenticity, so the building matters. Even though VLife is contemporary, the 19th-century pews and vintage light fixtures of its new home are important connections to tradition. "We get to lay hold of that heritage," he said, "and the young people—they just get it. Something subconscious in them [says], 'This is what it's supposed to be like.'"

Still, renovations—whether for a warehouse or for an existing church building—cost money. Mars Hill paid \$1.9 million for the Tacoma church, which required an additional \$600,000 in improvements.

As a result, Daniel Silliman, an instructor in American religion at the University of Heidelberg, says there is no need to be pessimistic. Whether spent on new buildings or just maintenance and repairs, \$3.5 billion per month is still "a lot of money," he said. "It's not the dusk of religious construction in America." ☩

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Limited 'Sovereignty'

Can courts 'second-guess' counsel of abuse victims?

By Bobby Ross Jr.

In response to a lawsuit alleging that it covered up child sexual abuse, Sovereign Grace Ministries (SGM) has pledged to "carefully review" each accusation.

The lawsuit claims that the association of Reformed church plants discouraged victims' parents from reporting abuse to authorities. In its defense, SGM says this is a matter of religious freedom.

"Allowing courts to second-guess pastoral guidance would represent a blow to the First Amendment that would hinder, not help, families seeking spiritual direction," said

director of administration Tommy Hill in a November statement.

Boz Tchividjian, executive director of Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment, says he does not know all the facts. But the former Florida child abuse prosecutor questions SGM's statement.

"Frankly, any time a [Christian] institution . . . responds or defends its behavior as it relates to sexual abuse allegations with quoting laws and hiding behind constitutions, it causes me concern," said Tchividjian. "I think an authentic, gospel-centered response to sexual abuse disclosures within an institution is to be transparent and to be vulnerable."

In the statement, Hill accused lawyers of "asking judges and juries, years after such pastoral assistance was sought, to dictate what sort of biblical counsel they think should have been provided."

In a January update, he stressed, "We take seriously the biblical commands to pursue the protection and well-being of all people—especially children. . . . [These] include fully respecting civil authority to help restrain evil and promote righteousness as Romans 13 instructs us."

Hill told CT he was unable to comment further.

David Skeel, a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania, said he needs more information to fully assess SGM's defense. However, he said First Amendment defenses have come under increased scrutiny amid revelations that churches concealed knowledge of child abuse.

"There's a pastor-penitent privilege that might protect some kinds of conversations relating to child abuse, although many states purport to override the privilege in [such cases], and require pastors to report any evidence," said Skeel.

It's unclear if such statutes—many enacted after the recent Catholic abuse scandal—would survive a court challenge, he said.

In Maryland, where the lawsuit

[continued on 14]

PASSAGES



Transitioning
David Dockery

President of Union University for the past 17 years, into a new role as chancellor no later than July 2014.



Leaving
Christian Wiman

As editor of *Poetry*, one of the world's most influential poetry magazines (see last month's issue of CT), to join the faculty at Yale Divinity School in July.



Selected
Robert Duffett

As president of Eastern University. He will replace David Black, president for the past 15 years.

Briefing [from 13]

was filed and SGM was based until relocating to Kentucky last year, state law does not require the reporting of child abuse if such notification would disclose a communication protected by the clergy-penitent privilege.

However, Tchividjian said the focus of the law “is on perpetrators who may ‘confess’ and not victims or their family members who may disclose the abuse to their pastor.”

CHURCH AND STATE KENYA

Facing the Judgment

Should courts vet clergy for integrity?

By Tom Osanjo in Nairobi

Willy Mutunga, a former Ford Foundation executive now turned chief justice of Kenya’s Supreme Court, has long made headlines. During his campaign, it was for the single gold earring he wore. Once elected, he submitted the nation’s judges to vigorous vetting sessions aired live on national tv. Some did not pass.

But recently, Mutunga ignited

debate when he publicly proposed that Kenya’s pastors undergo similar vetting by the courts in order to weed out opportunists. (He declined an interview with CT.)

The problem of “fake pastors” is not new to Kenya. Tales of dubious divine healings and questionable behavior have become common, notes Mwenda Njoka, founder of the Africa Center for Investigative Journalism.

What is new is the level of public awareness. For example, shortly before Mutunga’s speech, a tv exposé captivated the nation with the case of Michael Njoroge, pastor of Fire Ministries, who allegedly paid prostitutes to give false testimonies about miracles. (He denied the claims.)

Also new is how technology has made it easier to fleece the faithful. A pioneering mobile-to-mobile money transfer service called M-Pesa, which has won accolades from the Gates Foundation and others for making banking accessible to poor and rural Africans, is *en vogue* among televangelists. A pastor will display his cell phone number and ask those seeking miracles to send money. The sums get higher as the presumed difficulty of the miracle increases.

Given this backdrop, Mutunga’s

radical proposal has split Kenyans.

Paul Muasya, the regional head of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, gave Mutunga his full backing. “We believe it will ensure only those called to proclaim the word of the Lord do so, and not people who want to turn the church into a business venture,” he told *The Star*.

Philip Kitoto, an influential Assemblies of God pastor and author, disagrees. He believes existing church bodies should step up their watchdog role. “As much as the call of God on a person is key, God demands . . . the highest integrity,” he said. “As ministers, we should not fear scrutiny.”

Also opposed is Joseph Methu, chairman of the Federation of Evangelical and Indigenous Churches of Kenya. “Ours is a calling,” he said. “We are not answerable to any of the three arms of the government.”

Social researcher John Nyakwar Odande thinks vetting pastors—by courts or by churches—will prove to be quite an undertaking. “The moment the vetting team comes to your church and tells you that your pastor is fake, whom will you believe?”

“Kenyans are a spiritual lot, and are greatly attached to our pastors. I think it is an exercise in futility.”

DISCUSSION STARTER Adultery

Iowa’s Supreme Court ruled 7-0 that a male dentist was within his legal rights to fire an attractive female assistant because he and his wife “feared he would try to have an affair with her down the road.” The court said the dentist, who consulted his pastor first, did not discriminate based on gender.

UNDER DISCUSSION Topics in the current debate.

compiled by Ruth Moon

Should an Iowa dentist have fired his attractive assistant?

YES

“Owners should not have to choose between keeping their business or marriage, and laws should not make it difficult for men to remove temptations that threaten their marriage. Employees do have some discretion over whether they find themselves in this situation.”

BRAD DACUS

president, Pacific Justice Institute

“We have to walk away from temptation; we just cannot court it, which would be happening if she had remained. The best thing to do would be to show compassion and help the woman find another job so she’s not hurt by the firing.”

MICHAEL MCMANUS

president, Marriage Savers

“The dentist made the right choice in fighting to save his marriage. But we should take this as a cautionary tale. By establishing boundaries at work early on, the situation would not have gotten as far, and that assistant would not have lost her job.”

GARY SMALLEY

executive director of marriage and family formation, Focus on the Family

“If someone has many risk factors, then it’s important to adjust behavior to protect the marriage relationship. But the employer would have many other options if he feels that his self-control is going to be stretched beyond his ability to stop himself.”

JENNIFER RIPLEY

doctoral psychology program director, Regent University (Virginia)

“Jesus said ‘If your eye offend you, gouge it out,’ not ‘If you find your neighbor’s eyes to be too sexy, gouge them out.’ Every person will face temptations. Unless the assistant were pressing for a relationship, he should have found other means to keep his integrity intact.”

RUSSELL D. MOORE

dean, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“I value marriage. But too often in our Christian culture, women are still punished for the indiscretions of men. Perhaps if the dentist had honored his marriage early on, a more gracious and just outcome would have been possible for all.”

JAIME GOFF

chair of marriage and family therapy, Abilene Christian University

NO

Latino Enrollments Surge

A new alliance of Christian schools wants to see Hispanics compose 25 percent of their student body by 2015. By Andrew Thompson

For many in the United States, going to college is an unreachable dream. But for Andrea Reyes Ramirez, it's her offering to God.

Balancing life as a wife, mom, inner-city mentor, and full-time doctoral student at Regent University in Virginia isn't easy. But she "felt called to be a face, an example to other Latinas."

"I wanted [other young Hispanics] to see someone who looked like them, who made wise choices, and who pursued higher education," says Ramirez. She sees her degree as more than an example to others. "When you love the Lord with your mind, you are embracing the opportunity he's given you. If God has given you the opportunity to pursue higher education, then you can see that as worship as well."

The great-granddaughter of Mexican crop pickers, Ramirez is inspired in part by her remarkable family. Her grandparents only had a high school education. Her mom grew up speaking only Spanish before enrolling in an English-language school. Ramirez is motivated to succeed because her family worked hard to provide her with opportunities. Her desire to achieve a doctorate started early, inspired by her father, aunt, and uncle—who all have doctoral degrees.

"It was the idea of 'knowing where you come from' and being able to stand on the shoulders of those who have come before you to make their sacrifices worth it," says Ramirez.

IMPROVING GRADUATION RATES

Ramirez symbolizes the challenges confronting Hispanics who pursue a college degree to enter the American middle class.

There are now 50 million Hispanic Americans. Hispanics are the largest minority group on college campuses, and they composed 74 percent of the growth

HIGHER EDUCATION

Adapting to Change: As more Latinos complete high school, more of them are enrolling in college. In 2011, 2.1 million Latinos were in college, the most ever.



in all college enrollments in 2012.

Yet Hispanic students graduate from high school and college at much lower rates than Anglos. For every 100 high school students nationwide, 77 Anglo students receive diplomas, but only 55 Hispanics do so. While 27 percent of Anglos graduate from college with a bachelor's degree, only 13 percent of Hispanic students do.

Latino school and church leaders are eager to increase the rate of Latino high school and college graduation. The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC), America's largest

Hispanics are the largest minority group on college campuses, and they composed 74 percent of the growth in all college enrollments in 2012.

Hispanic Christian organization with 40,000 member churches, is making this educational challenge a top priority.

NHCLC leaders created the Alliance for Hispanic Christian Higher Education to focus their efforts on increasing Hispanic graduation rates. The alliance will partner with Hispanic evangelical churches and Christian colleges and universities, asking churches to designate the first Sunday of September as the annual National Hispanic Education Sunday. On that day, students will dedicate their academic work to the Lord, and church leaders will clarify to students that their congregation stands behind them.

Some pastors are innovating to raise the profile of academic achievement. In Los Fresnos, Texas, pastor Robert Cepeda has students place their report cards in the offering plate. This signals that the first-fruits of academic labor are given to God. Church members pray daily for students, and students ask church members for help with homework assignments.

Other pastors ask students to achieve 100 percent attendance in school as well as make the honor roll. Antonio Gonzales Sr., pastor of Hyde Park Baptist in Austin, Texas, recently held a youth rally to encourage students to improve their grades.

In their recent white paper, Jesse Miranda, the "godfather" of Latino Christians, and NHCLC education director Gus Reyes said Hispanic parents and churches should make college graduation a rite of passage. They want church members to tour college campuses and donate for scholarships. Miranda and Reyes believe that churches should network nationally to support students who are far from home while at college.

Another new program, the NHCLC's National Hispanic Christian Adopt-a-School Campaign, seeks to cut high school drop-

out rates, since failing to complete high school is a major reason students do not enroll in college. In this program, a high school and a neighborhood Hispanic church partner to reduce the number of dropouts. Pastors meet with principals and commit

to mentoring, English instruction, after-school tutoring, and training in computer technology.

AMBITIOUS GOALS

Several Christian universities and seminaries, all members of the new educational alliance, are actively networking with Hispanic pastors and churches to reach promising students for advanced degrees.

Alliance members include universities such as Oral Roberts, Regent, Liberty, Indiana Wesleyan, Cedarville, and William Jessup as well as Denver and Gordon-Conwell seminaries.

Carlos Campo, the Cuban American president of Regent University and the first Latino president of a U.S. Christian university, chairs the alliance. Campo's career success defies the odds—neither of his parents completed high school. "If you go by the statistics, he shouldn't be a Ph.D., much less the president of a Christian university," says Marcela Chavan-Matviuk, the director of Regent's Center for Latino Leadership.

Campo says alliance leaders posted "a crazy number" as their first enrollment goal: a minimum of 25 percent Hispanic full-time undergraduates by 2015. (Many Christian institutions lag behind their secular counter-

parts on recruitment of Hispanics.)

The federal government will classify a school as a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) when it reaches that 25 percent goal. HSI schools may receive Department of Education grants, which would pay for faculty development, facilities improvement, and student support. Such schools represent 10 percent of higher education nationally. But they educate more than two-thirds of all Hispanic college students.

Vanguard University in Costa Mesa, California, has already met the 25 percent goal. With an overall undergraduate population of 25 percent Latinos, its freshman class is 32 percent Latino. This year, Vanguard will qualify for HSI status. The university is 37 miles from Los Angeles and located within one of the largest metro Hispanic populations in the nation.

Other Christian schools, such as Cedarville in southwest Ohio and Gordon-Conwell near Boston, are at the other end of the spectrum, lacking the demographic advantage of Southwest and West Coast colleges. Yet administrators have accepted the 25 percent challenge.

Roscoe Smith, associate vice president of admissions at Cedarville, says schools like Cedarville need to adapt, in part because Asian and Latino populations are the fastest-growing segments of the American population. Cedarville now has a director of multicultural enrollment and a multicultural recruitment specialist in admissions. The new hires, Smith says, have contributed to a 69 percent increase in minority student applications since last year.

The population around Cedarville is about 1 percent Hispanic. Cedarville alumna Catherine Hernandez is now the school's multicultural admissions specialist and hopes to bring significant change to the school. A Cuban American from Miami, Hernandez loved her undergrad experience and decided to e-mail the president of Cedarville. She urged him to bring in more Hispanic students.

"I wanted more Hispanics to be trained in how to articulate the gospel, so I realized we have to recruit more Hispanic students," says Hernandez.

College administrators say recruiting Hispanic faculty and staff is part of their strategy to grow Hispanic student

enrollments. Gordon-Conwell's Alvin Padilla, dean of Hispanic ministries, says, "One of the easiest ways to recruit [students] is to have Hispanics on your faculty. Think about the importance of having role models. It is a subconscious appeal."

Current Hispanic undergraduates often draw inspiration from Hispanic faculty. Padilla believes the implicit message is, "If you can do it, I can do it too." Cedarville's Smith says Hispanic faculty and staff bring their culture onto the campus, creating a friendlier context for Hispanics.

Smith said Cedarville's diversity plan also seeks to expand ethnic diversity among the university's trustees.

FAMILY AND FINANCES

At Cedarville, the admissions staff hosted its first-ever multicultural preview weekend in November. Such events help recruit new Latino students, especially when the whole family shows up.

College visits are a family affair for Hispanics. "Latino students don't go to college; Latino families go to college," says Marco Davis, director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

"The whole family will come—*abuelos, abuelas, tios, tias*," notes Miranda. Research shows that in order to pay for college, Latino students will typically live at home and work part-time at higher rates than other students.

College admissions staff pay close attention to the needs of Hispanic families in paying for or financing a college education. More colleges and universities are trying new approaches. Regent is offering scholarships through NHCLC member churches. Active family members of affiliated churches are eligible to receive a 25 percent tuition scholarship for any of Regent's degree programs up to doctoral degrees.

The median household income for a Latino family is \$40,900, which is \$10,000 below the national average. Regent's Ramirez had to contend with several financial challenges during her academic studies. She was on her way to completing her doctoral degree when she became pregnant.

For five months, she juggled a full-time

job, her doctoral studies, and her pregnancy. But the physical burden became too much after a scary visit to a local hospital's emergency room. She recalled asking herself, *Do I stop the Ph.D. program, or do*



Role Model: Less than 1 percent of the entire U.S. adult population has earned a Ph.D. as Andrea Reyes Ramirez has.

I resign from my position? I'm not going to stop being pregnant.

She and her husband decided she would resign from her job and continue studying. She gave up her salary and a one-third tuition reimbursement program through her company. This caused the couple much financial hardship.

They turned to prayer. A short time later, the NHCLC awarded Ramirez a partial scholarship due to its partnership with Regent.

"It was so amazing to see the Lord provide for us in such an exact amount," says Ramirez, who says that absent the scholarship, she might have abandoned her dream of completing the Ph.D.

The other alliance schools have committed to provide three full scholarships to qualifying Hispanic students. Such full-ride scholarships are an attempt to remove obstacles to education for Hispanic students. According to the 2012 *How America Pays for College* report, 27 percent of Hispanic families received college scholarships, which averaged \$6,328 and came primarily from schools, not the government.

Loans can be crippling without significant aid and merit scholarships directly from schools. "Some families don't see past the sticker cost," says White House Initiative leader Davis.

Davis notes that many in the Hispanic community have their financing in the wrong order. They start first with private sector loans, credit cards, then government grants, and finally government loans. He suggests the opposite: Begin with grants (the "free money") and move on to low-interest government loans. Credit cards ought to be a last option. Even with these options, borrowing by Hispanic college students is below the national average of \$19,900. Experts say many Hispanic families tend to shun borrowing for college.

RETENTION BOOST

Keeping college students on campus can be just as difficult as recruiting them in the first place.

Gordon-Conwell's Padilla says that a college campus needs a "critical mass" of Hispanic students for the school to be more hospitable. This keeps student retention rates healthy.

In order to boost retention, Padilla suggests that schools target geographic areas and recruit several students each year from those areas.

Cedarville's Smith says, "We think we're headed in the right direction, but we still have a long ways to go." The annual Hispanic Alliance Education Summit, in its fourth year, will take place at Cedarville. At the summit, the NHCLC will provide guidance to schools that wish to increase Latino enrollment and improve retention.

Catherine Hernandez attended last year's summit at Indiana Wesleyan University. "For me, it was incredibly inspiring being at that conference as a young Hispanic woman. When I heard Campo talk about the need for more Hispanic students to pursue their Ph.D., I was convicted." Only 4 percent of Latinos over 25 have a post-graduate degree. Hernandez says, "Because of hearing him speak, I'm applying to grad schools now." ➤

Andrew Thompson is a senior communication major at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois.

You Don't Want To Think About Church Insurance. *That's OK – We Love To.*

Protect Your Ministry With GuideOne Insurance.

GuideOne Insurance and our 1,600 agents around the country specialize in protecting worship facilities and ministries. We know churches, we know insurance, and we know what you need.

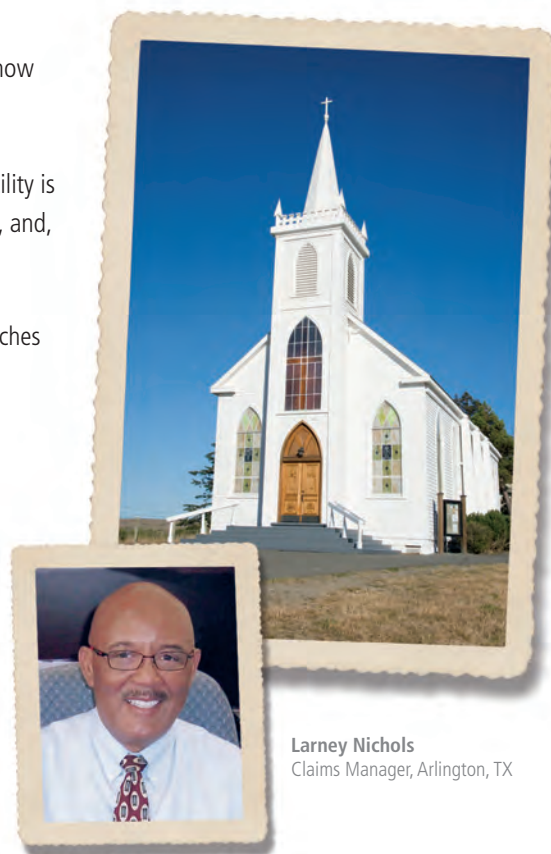
Call us for a free insurance review. We can make sure your facility is adequately covered, suggest safety and security improvements, and, in many cases, save your congregation money.

- Property and casualty insurance coverages tailored for churches
- Trusted by more than 43,000 religious organizations
- 60 year proven track record
- Fast, fair claims service
- Free safety resources at SafeChurch.com
- Rated A (EXCELLENT) by A.M. Best Company

Place your faith in the expert.

Call 1.888.218.8561

Or Visit weknowchurches.com today.



Larney Nichols
Claims Manager, Arlington, TX



THEY DEFEND **ME.**

In Louisiana, Christian students were denied equal access to school buses. In fact, as Christians, our rights are threatened every day. That's why Alliance Defending Freedom—formerly the Alliance Defense Fund—is dedicated to the unyielding legal defense of religious liberty, the sanctity of life, and marriage and family. Help protect our shared right to freely live out our faith. Learn how at AllianceDefendingFreedom.org



Here Come

David Platt, Francis Chan, Shane Claiborne,
and now Kyle Idleman are dominating
the Christian best-seller lists by attacking
our comfortable Christianity.
But is 'radical' faith enough?

By Matthew Lee Anderson

Illustrations by Paul Kisselev

IT'S NOT EASY to make the Church at Brook Hills, Alabama's second-largest congregation, look like a slum. But in 2010, the church collected trash all over Birmingham and set its stage in corrugated metal, scrap wood, plastic tarps, and other detritus. Three months before, their lead pastor, David Platt, had proposed that their church "take India," by which he meant pay for Compassion International's child survival programs in the country for an entire year.

The whole church couldn't jet off to India, but the rubbish on stage tangibly reminded its members of the country's impoverished communities.

With the stage literally set, Platt called his church to something more than giving \$525,000 to Compassion. Platt and the Church at Brook Hills (affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention) spent a full year praying for the world, reading the entire Bible, giving their money to those in need, spending time in a context beyond Birmingham, and building community.

The five components of "the Radical Experiment" may not seem that radical; they're more like basic Christian discipleship. But they struck a nerve at the church and beyond. Forty families and singles committed to moving into a disadvantaged area of Birmingham. As one attendee told me, the news created something of a reputation for the church. "People still ask me," she said, "whether I go that church where people are moving into the most dangerous parts of Birmingham." And the message spread well beyond the city of 1 million. After Platt released *Radical* in May 2010, it spent more than two years on *The New York Times* advice best-seller list. Three years later, it's still on CBA's (formerly Christian Booksellers Association) best-seller list.



A hand holding a red flag with a black 'R' symbol, with a large 'R' in the background.



The first thing you notice about Platt is how young he is. When he took the position in 2006 at age 27, he was almost certainly the youngest megachurch pastor in America. Yet Platt's youthfulness belies both the boldness of his message and the conviction with which he presents it. His style avoids the verbal pyrotechnics some preachers rely on for their message to stick. The rising and falling intonations of his slow Southern drawl, and the way he draws out particular words and hesitates before hurtling through a string of sentences, make his preaching like a lazy float down a river with the occasional burst of rapids. He reels people in, almost unwittingly, with his easy charisma and lack of self-awareness. One moment, he'll have a grin reminiscent of a schoolboy on Christmas morning. The next, his voice will crack with an intense, pleading tone that betrays heartfelt resolve. When Platt told his church, "Let's say, Brook Hills, 'We're going to take India,'" the final words had

in miserable mediocrity and should open our "imagination to the possibility that God has a vision for [our] life that is greater" than what we're experiencing. All of these have hit the Christian best-seller lists, and most are still on them.

In other words, the radical message has found an eager market. The books have their theological and pastoral differences, but the thrust of their rhetoric moves in the same direction. They have both incited and tapped into a widespread dissatisfaction with many Americans' comfortable, middle-class way of life and the Christianity that so easily fits within it. These pastors may not be saying much new about the Bible or Jesus, but their message says enough about us.



RADICAL CHRISTIANITY'S FAVORITE WORD

Really. If there's a word that sums up the radical movement, that's it. Platt's *Radical* opens with it, by describing what "radical abandonment to Jesus really means." Idle-

It's really hard to read these books, one after another, and confidently declare yourself a Christian at the end.

that raspy, gasping tone. It suggested Platt felt the weight of the responsibility too deeply for his words to convey.

At the heart of Platt's message is his claim that we mistakenly turn the "radical Jesus of the Bible . . . into the comfortable Jesus of 21st-century American culture." He warns that the culture of "self-advancement, self-esteem, and self-sufficiency" and our "individualism, materialism, and universalism" have neutered American Christians' witness and blinded us to widespread global poverty, an orphan crisis, and the massive number of those who still have never heard of Jesus.

Platt's critique goes beyond the people in the pews. In case anyone missed his criticism of budgets and church-growth strategies, Platt's follow-up book, *Radical Together*, brought it to the surface: "[J]udging by what we hang on to in our churches, convenient programs and nice parking lots are still more important than [impoverished and orphaned] children and their families."

Platt isn't the only one attempting to recover a more rigorous understanding of the gospel's demands. Six years ago Shane Claiborne introduced "ordinary radicals" into the American Christian lexicon. His book *The Irresistible Revolution* offers a critique similar to that of *Radical*, albeit with a political focus that includes a more explicit repudiation of American nationalism (Platt's own work has hints of this) and a pacifist critique of violence.

More recently, Kyle Idleman, teaching pastor at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, wrote *Not a Fan* after realizing he had made following Jesus "as appealing, comfortable, and convenient as possible." Francis Chan caught the wave with *Crazy Love*, a book that tries to affirm our desire for "more God," even if we are "surrounded by people who have 'enough God.'" Steven Furtick, whose Elevation Church in North Carolina is one of the fastest-growing megachurches, added *Greater* to the mix, proposing that Christians are mired

man says he's going to tell us "what it really means to follow Jesus." Furtick says that "if we really believe God is an abundant God . . . we ought to be digging all kinds of ditches [for when he sends the rain, as Elisha did in 2 Kings 3:16–20]." Do those who lead mediocre, nonradical lives for Jesus *really* believe at all?

The question has ample biblical warrant, of course. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to test themselves to see whether they are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). Chan draws on this verse explicitly, calling for "a serious self-inventory." Idleman draws on it implicitly as he calls readers to have a "define the relationship" talk with Jesus to "determine the level of commitment." (Idleman draws on Jesus' warning in Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven.") In his latest work, *Follow Me*, Platt makes his warning explicit: "There are a whole lot of people who think that they've been born again, but they've been dangerously deceived." It's really hard to read these books, one after another, and confidently declare yourself a Christian at the end.

But most orthodox Christians don't need to be told how far they fall short of discipleship—and even less how much their self-described Christian neighbors need a "serious self-inventory." We've seen how "moralistic therapeutic deism" has infiltrated our churches. And it is little wonder that reductionist Christianity, with its stunted notion of "belief," has prompted the radical Christianity reaction. Yet no one seems to want to say what sort of belief actually "counts" head on.

Last year, Platt made waves by calling the Sinner's Prayer "superstitious." He explained that his critique was partly driven by his own fears.

"I can remember lying in my bed at night as a child/teenager, wondering about whether or not I'm really saved, and then thinking, *Well, I just need to pray that prayer again—and really mean it this time—and then I'll know I'm saved.*" he said. "I don't want people to look to . . . a 'prayer they prayed' for

assurance of salvation. I want them to look to Christ for this. Assurance of salvation is always based on his work, not ours.”

Still, to join Platt and his church on their journey away from the American dream toward a “radical faith in a radical Jesus,” Platt gives two preconditions: We must “commit to believe whatever Jesus says” and “commit to obey what we have heard.”

These teachers want us to see that following Christ genuinely, truly, really, radically, sacrificially, inconveniently, and uncomfortably will *cost us*. Platt wants to safeguard the distinctness of God’s saving work over and against our effort. But his primary concern is for the “outflow of the gospel.” This means “putting everything in our lives on the table before God” and being “willing to sacrifice good things in the church in order to experience the great things of God.”

The reliance on intensifiers demonstrates the emptiness of American Christianity’s language. Previous generations were content singing “trust and obey, for there’s no other way.” Today we have to *really* trust and *truly* obey. The inflated rhetoric is a sign of how divorced our churches’ vocabulary is from the simple language of Scripture.

And the intensifiers don’t solve the problem. Replacing *belief* with *commitment* still places the burden of our formation on the sheer force of our will. As much as some of these radical pastors would say otherwise, their rhetoric still relies

on listeners “making a decision.” There is almost no explicit consideration of how beliefs actually take root, or whether that process is as conscious as we presume.

Or as dramatic. The heroes of the radical movement are martyrs and missionaries whose stories truly inspire, along with families who make sacrifices to adopt children. Yet the radicals’ repeated portrait of faith underemphasizes the less spectacular, frequently boring, and overwhelmingly anonymous elements that make up much of the Christian life.

There’s one significant exception to this: Each of these authors is keen to remind us of our mortality. Idleman lays out straightway that he’s going to talk “more about death than life.” Platt says, “Your life is free to be radical when you see death as reward.” Chan says his sense of urgency comes from going to funerals a lot, and from losing his parents at a young age.

By contrast, there aren’t many narratives of men who rise at 4 A.M. six days a week to toil away in a factory to support their families. Or of single mothers who work 10 hours a day to care for their children. Judging by the tenor of their stories, being “radical” is mainly for those who already have the upper-middle-class status to sacrifice.

Nor are there many stories of “failure”—of people sacrificing without visible signs of transformation. As a result, many of the narratives implicitly convey that the reason to go and die is the gospel success that will follow. In most stories, the results come during the lifetime of those who decided to “come and die.” That’s why the single most refreshing moment in the canon for me was Furtick’s lengthy acknowledgment that God’s “greater” often seems like disappointment and failure, and that in our “most dire moments [God] seems almost absent.” Given how prevalent such moments seem in the Christian life—and in Scripture—they are disproportionately underrepresented in the “radical” literature.

THE NEW HOLINESS MOVEMENT

Not a Fan begins with Idleman confessing that he had watered down the gospel “in hopes that more of you would fill these seats.” It’s reminiscent of another preacher’s admission: “I felt a great want in my ministry. Crowds came and went, and yet with small result. I could not believe that all was right, and I [wanted] to see what was the secret of the spiritual power which some of my brethren possess.”

That testimony came from a pastor attending a conference at Oxford in 1874. Americans Robert and Hannah Whitall Smith led the way, and called for a renewed focus on sanctification by prioritizing faith over action. One year later, the Keswick Convention began, which added theological muscle and legitimacy to the currents already at work.

Like today’s radical Christianity, Keswick theology proved controversial. Andy Naselli, whose *Let Go and Let God?* explores



the movement, says it was “based on the fundamental proposition that there are two categories of Christians.” The first may be “free from sin’s penalty,” but they are not “free from sin’s power.” A “second blessing” lifts us out of our “carnal state” into the “spiritual life” through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Today’s radical movement does not descend directly from Keswick. But there are genuine similarities. As David Bebbington has demonstrated, Keswick theology has shaped evangelical piety for the past century. The language of “total surrender” and “complete abandonment” certainly echoes the Keswick rhetoric. And both movements strive to overcome the gap between professed belief and behavior. Keswick’s two-tier solution tried to solve the lurking question about whether nominal believers are genuinely saved. While Platt goes a different route, questioning whether our conversions are real, the fundamental problem is the same.

Keswick’s emphasis on the inner, higher life is understandable. The industrial revolution made comfortable middle-class life possible for millions for the first time—a little too comfortable for the Keswickians. Meanwhile, developments in physics and biology tempted even Christians to think of the world as the working out mechanistic laws of cause and effect. There seemed to be little room for the transcendent. Today’s radical movement offers a similar complaint: The comfort of life numbs us to the life of God and eliminates any need to depend on his power.

In addition, Keswick theology arose just as evangelicalism started its decline in England—just as material comforts increased. Evangelicalism had exploded after a cholera

epidemic had killed thousands some 40 years before. An awareness of death’s imminence was one key to the movement’s advancement. In the later 1800s, though, as the Keswick fervor took hold, the death rate fell—which, Bebbington slyly muses, “must not have been advantageous for recruitment.”

For the poor, dying, and those excluded from upper-class leisure, it’s natural that the gospel very much is about comfort and good news. But today’s radicals believe that the church has become a country club. And yet, the poor and dying still exist in many places—and the radical movement keeps thrusting that fact before us. Because middle-class comforts inoculate us from those realities, it seems necessary to add adjectives—*total*, *radical*, *complete*—as though the substance of faith has dissipated.

‘REALLY’ VS. REALITY

The Church at Brook Hills’s slum stage reflects the tensions of the radical movement. The movement is marked by the sincerity of young, energetic pastors and writers eager to make a difference for the poor. Yet the message constantly fights with the medium. It occurs in massive church buildings in middle-class surroundings, spoken to people who shop at the Gap, on platforms called *stages* rather than *pulpits*. In order to inject the message with more power and meaning, we revert to the language and symbols of the theater—one of our culture’s favorite pastimes.

Which is to say, the problem with the call to radical Christianity is that it may not be radical *enough*. It’s clear that middle- and upper-class Christians are looking for a deeper,



more profound experience of faith. Yet it's unclear whether we can invigorate faith without revisiting our worship and community practices, asking whether they are forming disciples at subterranean levels.

Consider the reminder that we are all going to die. This truth is easily forgotten in a prosperous society where the aged and infirm are cordoned off in their own communities. It is one thing for pastors to remind us of death in their sermons. But that won't engender more serious discipleship any more than, as Platt recognizes, a sermon on missions will engender love for missions. Concern for missions grows when missions are embedded into the life of a church, such as regular short-term missions. The same is true



a counterbalancing concern for the public form our Christian worship takes, we stand in danger of assuming the messages of the surrounding culture as we mimic their methods.

Interior-oriented movements can generate a lot of energy initially. But the gospel is supposed to create a culture, and a culture takes root only within a society over time. It perpetuates itself to future generations without requiring a new revival in every season. The urgent rhetoric of preaching the gospel to the billion unreached and helping the poor right now leaves little space to create the institutions and practices (art, literature, theology, liturgy, festivals, etc.) that can transmit such an inheritance to the next generation, and to form belief in deeper and

The final paradox of emphasizing a radical faith is that the language of commitment and really risks allowing the very secularism they decry in through the back door.

when it comes to facing our mortality. In the early church, persecuted Christians met in the catacombs out of necessity, but later Christians buried their own in graveyards around the churches. In both instances, the church was surrounded with reminders of mortality; such reminders were built into its architecture and practices. Staged slums take a church only so far.

What's more, the radical message comes packaged in the Christian-conference-publishing-celebrity-industrial-complex. While Platt warded off critics early on by donating his profits to relief and missions work, the popularity of his call for radical living requires the existence of a lucrative publishing culture that, by its nature, has to think and act with profits in mind. The *really* radical path for a megachurch pastor these days would be to refuse to publish, to take a smaller church, to not podcast sermons, and to embrace a more monastic witness. The irony is that if they tried, we'd probably turn them into larger celebrities and laud their humility. The desert fathers had a similar problem. But if the message is going to critique the American dream for the people in the pews, then we may need pastors willing to show us the path of downward mobility with their lives.

The final paradox of emphasizing a radical faith is that the language of *commitment* and *really* risks allowing the very secularism they decry in through the back door. By emphasizing the interior aspect of faith over the formal and distinctive elements of Christian worship—Communion, baptism, corporate singing—they risk missing just how secularized our communal life as Christians has become. It is easy to see signs of secularism in how Christians live from Monday to Saturday. But what about on Sunday morning?

Of course, such critiques of formalist Christianity—"going through the motions"—have a long and estimable history, voiced by everyone from Søren Kierkegaard, who railed against institutional Christianity, to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who lamented cheap grace. But they weren't critiquing the church in the context of an anti-institutional, highly individualistic culture. When the call to individual radicalness is disconnected from

more permanent ways. Buildings cost money, and beautiful buildings even more. Universities don't feed the poor or win souls, yet they promulgate knowledge in the church and around the world. These are the gears of a transgenerational movement. Yet it's not clear whether radical Christianity has any room for them. Most of the stories that are told in these books clearly do not.

The need for a revived attention to form is most clear in worship, which is the main theater of the church's confrontation with God. If the people in the pews have been uncritically co-opted by the American dream (and indeed many have), let's also point out that our worship practices have been nearly uncritically co-opted by the American emphasis on celebrity, stardom, and performance.

For us in the pews, testing ourselves must include deliberating about our vocations and whether we are called to missions, or to a life of dedicated service to the poor, or to creating reminders with art and culture of the gospel's transcendent, everlasting hope. Discovering a radical faith may mean revisiting the ways in which faith can take shape in the mundane, *sans* intensifiers. It almost certainly means embracing the providence of God in our witness to the world. The Good Samaritan wasn't a good neighbor because he moved to a poor part of town or put a pile of trash in his living room. He came across the helpless victim "as he traveled." We begin to fulfill the command not when we do something radical, extreme, over the top, not when we're really spiritual or really committed or really faithful, but when in the daily ebb and flow of life, in our corporate jobs, in our middle-class neighborhoods, on our trips to Yellowstone and Disney World—and yes, even short-term mission trips—we stop to help those whom we meet in everyday life, reaching out in quiet, practical, and loving ways.



Matthew Lee Anderson is the lead writer at *MereOrthodoxy.com* and the author of *Earthen Vessels: Why Our Bodies Matter to Our Faith* (Bethany House). He is studying for an M.Phil. at Oxford University.



Bigger Than We Think

The doctrine of Creation goes deeper than just explaining how the world began. By David Wilkinson



It was a moment of crisis in my faith. As a young doctoral student in astrophysics, I had just read some work by Stephen Hawking that would eventually go into his classic *A Brief History of Time*. Up to this point in my Christian life, I had relied on a solid argument to use with my atheist friends. In response to, “The universe began with a Big Bang,” I countered with, “But who started it all off—who lit the explosion?” And at the time, science seemed to support my answer: There was no way to combine quantum theory and relativity and therefore no way of describing the first moment of the universe.

Hawking, however, was speculating on how the universe might have lit its own Big Bang. If that was true, did I need a Creator anymore? I asked Sir Robert Boyd, a leading physicist and Christian, about whether Hawking might be wrong.

Sir Robert simply replied, “The biblical Creator doesn’t need to hide in little gaps in science.”

The Christian doctrine of Creation has often been hijacked by controversies over how old the universe is. It has been hollowed out by the theory that God simply ignites the universe and then goes off for a cup of coffee, never touching his masterwork again. It is interesting that attacks on belief in a Creator, whether from Hawking, Richard Dawkins’s *The God Delusion*, or Lawrence M. Krauss’s recent *A Universe from Nothing*, tend to target this diminished deity. But the Bible has a much bigger understanding of God as Creator. Not only does the doctrine of Creation feature in Scripture beyond just Genesis 1, God’s creative activity permeates every moment of the history of the universe.

My Hawking-induced crisis of faith spurred me to move beyond a “God of the gaps”—a shrunken deity enlisted merely to fill any remaining pockets of mystery that

KEITH NEGLEY

science has yet to illuminate. Indeed, my experience has been that recapturing the doctrine of Creation in its scriptural fullness points us toward a much more exciting understanding of creation. It points us toward a God for whom science is a gift rather than a stumbling block. And perhaps most importantly, it points to a Creator God who is worthy of worship, enjoyment, and trust.

Let me identify a number of themes within the Bible that have been foundational in Christian history to understanding this Creator God.

A DYNAMIC AND PRACTICAL DOCTRINE

First, *the Christian doctrine of Creation is never an abstract, academic concept.* Western thought loves a simple philosophical understanding of things. But Scripture employs a rich diversity of styles in discussing creation. Even within the Old Testament, the relevant texts (Gen. 1–3; Prov. 8:22–36; Pss. 8, 19, and 148; Gen. 9:8–17; Job 38–42; Isa. 40:9–31) run a broad stylistic gamut, drawing from both the wisdom and prophetic traditions. This diversity testifies to the doctrine's dynamic and practical nature. The Bible's discussions of Creation always have a larger purpose: to inspire worship, to encourage the weak, to call for holiness, and to offer reassurance in times of trouble. Too often, Christians have forgotten this, especially when they have reduced creation narratives to attempted proof texts for God's existence. Christians have disagreed, for instance, over the historical nature of the early chapters of Genesis. I am saddened, though, that such controversy has obscured their power as hymns of praise, capable of engulfing us in wonder at such an amazing God.

Anglican theologian Dan Hardy once wrote that, at its heart, the action of God in creation demands a worshipful response. The call to worship is written into the very fabric of the universe. In light of this, we need to guard against letting discussions of Creation stray from its implications for worship and lifestyle. Now, of course that does not bar Christians from actively and enthusiastically participating in scientific and apologetic debates. But the scientific exploration of origins can never be conducted merely for its own sake. Put another way, we need to be very careful about focusing on the Creator—not on just creation.

LOOK TO JESUS

Second, *the Christian doctrine of Creation has Christ at the center.* Focusing on the Creator poses the fundamental question of how that Creator is known. In Colossians, Paul is explicit in saying that the Creator God is known supremely in Christ. Jesus is the “image of the invisible God” (1:15), the projection of God himself into space and time in a way that reveals his true nature. To know, then, what our Creator is like, Christians must look to Jesus. In the third volume of his *Church Dogmatics*, Karl Barth put this clearly: “I believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son our Lord, in order to perceive and to understand that God the Almighty, the Father, is the Creator of heaven and earth. If I did not believe the former, I could not perceive and understand the latter.”

This means that I do not need to prove God through some kind of logical argument. In fact, this kind of argument is always vulnerable to someone like Hawking finding a scientific way around it. This was exactly what happened with Charles Darwin. Many Christians had put their faith in the axiom that a created object—whether a single

watch or a whole world—implies a creator. When Darwin suggested that natural selection explained the biological world better than God's design, they felt very threatened. Those whose faith stemmed from biblical revelation were much more relaxed.

My belief in the existence and nature of a Creator God comes from his own self-revelation in Jesus. This is a word of caution to Christians who want to use science as an evangelistic strategy, whether through creationism or intelligent design. We need, of course, to speak with integrity about the relationship of science and faith. And indeed, there may be pointers to God embedded in creation: its beauty,



its mind-bending magnitude, its finely tuned hospitality for various species. But any apologetic that stems from the doctrine of Creation must have a key place for Jesus. It will not suffice to look for gaps in the scientific account into which God can be squeezed. Modern science, in its speculations about the intelligibility of the universe or the origin of the laws of physics, raises questions that lie beyond its capacity to answer. Christians should expose, and rebut, the unwarranted atheism that commonly results. But we can never isolate our efforts in this area from a Creator God who reveals himself in Jesus.

WITHOUT PEER OR COMPETITOR

Third, *the Christian doctrine of Creation affirms that God is the sole creator of the universe.* That is, he is without peer or competitor. The belief that God is the source of all creation has developed into the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*, which means “creation out of nothing.” In other words, God could create freely, unconstrained by the limitations of pre-existing matter. If the whole material universe is created by God, then science—the investigation of that universe and discovery of its workings—is affirmed. Indeed, many historians of science would say that the Christian doctrine of Creation was centrally important

in the development of modern science. At the heart of the scientific method is observation of nature, something the doctrine of Creation positively encourages. For if this world is the handiwork of God, then the created realm is to be observed in awe and wonder. And if Creator and creation are distinct from one another, we can freely investigate the operations of nature as opposed to blindly worshiping nature itself.

In addition, God is not merely the sole *creator*, but also the sole *sustainer* of what he has created. As an astrophysicist, this has always been an important insight for me. The simplicity of the physical laws underlying the complexity of the universe is one of the striking features of modern science. In Colossians, Paul proclaims that in Jesus, “all things hold together” (1:17). The universe “coheres” in such an amazing way, not through impersonal physical “laws” alone, but through the sustaining activity of God. Science is only possible because of the ongoing work of Jesus.

Seen, then, through the lens of the doctrine of Creation, science and technology emerge not as antagonists to belief but as gifts of God. Those who explore the order of the universe (such as scientists) and those who manipulate and reconfigure it (such as engineers) do so because of God, whether they recognize it or not. Science and

THE GIFT OF RELATIONSHIP

Fifth, *the Christian doctrine of Creation shows that humanity has the capacity for an intimate relationship with God.* The question of what makes humans special is one of the central questions of contemporary culture. And because of advances in artificial intelligence, greater understandings of the human brain and the capabilities of animals, and the development of the Human Genome Project, that question can seem more unsettled than ever. Theologians have traditionally listed possessing an immaterial soul and bearing the image of God as the hallmarks of human uniqueness. In the language and context of the ancient Near East, the concept of *image* refers less to the characteristic features of humanity than to its distinctive place within the created order. Bearing God’s image is about *relationship* with God more than any specific human attribute or pattern of behavior.

According to Babylonian stories of creation, the role of humans was simply to serve the gods. But the Bible views humanity in a very different way. Humanity is that part of creation that is capable of consciously apprehending—and responding to—its relationship to the Creator. This relationship involves sharing in the creative, sustaining

Those who explore the order of the universe (such as scientists) and those who manipulate and reconfigure it (such as engineers) do so because of God, whether they recognize it or not.

engineering can indeed be seen as Christian ministries. The German astronomer Johannes Kepler in 1595 wrote to Michael Maestlin, one of his teachers, that he had turned away from a vocation as a theologian, because “through my effort God is being celebrated in astronomy.” Likewise, we need to encourage Christian believers to see science as a Christian vocation rather than a secular threat.

THE CREATOR IS ALSO THE REDEEMER

Fourth, *the Christian doctrine of Creation needs to be seen in light of the reality of new creation.* To fully understand a story, you need both the beginning and the end. The same is true with the Christian understanding of creation. When we consider the biblical narrative as a whole, we see that the Creator is also the Redeemer. God’s work does not stop at Genesis. The agent of creation is also the goal to which the creation tends, its eschatological purpose. The Old Testament identifies Israel’s God, the one who delivered his people from slavery in Egypt, as the same God who created the whole universe (Isa. 40:12–31). The New Testament takes this theme much further, seeing the one who dies on the cross as the one who brought the stars into space.

If the same God who created the world has redeemed it, then creation, despite its present bondage to sin and decay, must ultimately be good. Otherwise, it would not have been worth redeeming. And if creation has been redeemed, then we can look forward to a new creation, the “new heaven and new earth” described in Revelation 21. The hope is not of God rebuilding creation from scratch, or helping us escape into some kind of disembodied, immaterial state. No, our final hope is for the transfiguring fulfillment of this present creation into all that it was originally destined to be. Given its redeemed status and promised transformation, the created order is not to be written off as evil or unimportant, but rather to be cared for, respected, and delighted in.

dominion of God, and thus acting as the visible representatives of his benevolent care for creation.

All of this adds a further dimension to our thinking about the present environmental crisis. If being made in God’s image involves stewarding the natural world, we need to steward in a Christlike way, as servants rather than as dictators. As Christians, we can share with all humanity a concern for preserving the environment for future generations. And we can share with other faith communities a sense of preserving the Earth as a divine gift. But we should want to go further, and proclaim environmental responsibility as a consequence of living under the lordship of Christ.

It is striking that Genesis 1 ends not in the creation of Adam and Eve, but in the Sabbath day on which, as Scottish theologian David Fergusson says, “the whole creation glorifies its maker.” That is, resting in, rejoicing in, and living out the Sabbath praise of God is regarded in Scripture as the very summit of earthly existence—the purpose for which it was breathed into being. Viewed this way, we humans are called not just to “use” material reality for our own ends, but to hallow it, to reverence it as God’s gift, to work for its flourishing, and, in this manner, to be viceroys of the world over which he graciously superintends.

In the Christian doctrine of Creation, we thus find a common theme. The meaning of the universe is not to be found in an impersonal cosmic force, or in a mathematical theory, or in a philosophical abstraction. Instead, it is found in a personal God who wants relationships with human beings. To be human is to receive the gift of relationship, to love and be loved by the God who created you. ☩

David Wilkinson is professor in the theology and religion department and principal at St. John’s College, Durham University.



[MEDITATION]

Why God's design for marital romance is hotter than all the Fifty Shades in the world.

By Megan Hill

A Holy

M

Y MARRIAGE OF NINE YEARS, one mortgage, and three insanely young children often seems to read more like a construction punch list than a Shakespearean sonnet: three daily loads of laundry, two car pay-

ments, one long meeting on Tuesday night.

Even this week's "buy Rob an anniversary card" loses sparkle, flanked as it is on the list by "fix hole in ceiling" and "remember multivitamin."

If not stoked, passion will get lost in the mundane.

To remedy this, many of us modern Americans turn to novelty. In my native state of Connecticut, a glass-paneled truck drives through the city of Hartford during normal business hours. Inside, two women perform an exotic dance for pedestrians and commuters.

And millions of otherwise traditional, married women have downloaded E. L. James's erotic fiction series, *Fifty Shades*, to their Kindles and Nooks, making the first book of the series one of the fastest-selling of all time.

Above all, the *Fifty Shades* trilogy promises readers an escape from boredom. *New Yorker* writer Jessica Weisberg interviewed a group of women about why they liked the book. They said reading the books took them back to a less responsible time in their lives, "when you can do whatever you want and have as much sex as you want and don't have to walk the dog."

In a recent *Atlantic* article about the series, James Parker posits that today, in matters of sexuality, "Above all, we fear numbness. We fear deadness."

Compared to exotic dancers and erotic fiction, married romance may seem dull. But to a culture seeking to flee sexual boredom, God's design actually provides the necessary spark for sustained passion.

Miss Manners calls that spark "tension." The white-gloved matriarch of etiquette may be the antithesis of *Fifty Shades*, but even she acknowledges that human beings love a challenge.

In her advice on dinner parties, she writes, "Contrary to popular belief, a good party atmosphere is not 'relaxing,' but the opposite. It should be full of tension." She goes on to explain that tension is what makes dinner party guests dress up, tell their best stories, and

ISTOCK

“live up to the occasion.”

She could have said the same about romance. Tension is intrinsic to a love story. Romeo and Juliet had it. Every knight on a white horse saving a girl in a tower had it. Every hero and heroine of every romantic comedy on the big screen has it.

And in God’s good design, Christian marriages have it too.

THE FIRST LOVE POEM

A marriage is not a *fait accompli*: Check it off the list and then go unclog the toilet. Rather, marriage is an ever-evolving challenge, and the tension created by meeting that challenge

is the key to its passion—and its success.

It all started in the Garden of Eden. After the creation of Eve, Adam, the first man, composed the first love poem:

*This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.*
(Gen. 2:23, ESV)

She is like me, says Adam. And she’s not like me at all. Even before there was sin, there was a love story, filled with difference and

holy tension. Gender is a challenge to which married couples rise every single morning.

My husband is tall and blue-eyed and scratchy. He can do complicated calculations in his head at an amazing speed. He is logical where I am intuitive, absent-minded where I am organized, and concise where I am wordy. He laughs loudly, snores louder, and preaches like no one else.

He is like me. And he is not like me at all.

For other couples, sadly, differences become the font of conflict. Each spouse’s strengths become weapons. Each weakness is an opportunity for blame. The very tension that should ignite love instead ignites a civil war.

But romance can be fueled by an honest acknowledgement of that potential to fail.

Nine years seems significantly long. Long enough to sprout gray hairs, gain and lose a few pounds, save a few dollars for someday. Long enough to outlast the marriages of others.

My husband and I, like other couples, have spent years in covenant together, regularly taking out the trash of each other’s sin and neglect. But, tragically, we have seen dear friends tumble from here

into recriminations, bitterness, and divorce. That could be us.

When our marriage bed sinks low, barely visible under crumpled laundry and half-read books, the Evil One scores a victory. So we meet the challenge. We persist in writing tender notes, and giving gifts, and making love: strategic maneuvers against the Devil’s drift. We hold the marriage bed high, honoring our pleasurable commitments there, to buttress ourselves against marital malady and nothing less serious than its death.

Marriage is a challenge; the stakes are high.

And the possibilities are endless. When we were dating, the possibility of something more, something permanent, fueled romance. Is he the one? Is this true love? Now, years and vows later, some possibilities are established reality. (He *is* the one. This *is* true love.) But another world of possibility—on a much grander scale—is still present.

It is not good to be alone. Two are better than one.

Two can multiply, fill, subdue. Two can spur good works. Two can sharpen as iron with iron. Two can reason together. Two can gather the Spirit.

WHY WE CLEAVE

Love has produced abundant poetry and metaphors (and, yes, clichés) perhaps

more than any other human experience. The urge to compare the beloved to a strong tower or a summer’s day is evidence: The gestures of romantic love are symbolic.

We haven’t come so far from the stilted gestures of the Middle Ages’ courtly love. Everything in romance—each wink and flower petal—is brimming with meaning. Romantic tension is in the thrill of playing the coded game.

After all, what is the point of red roses purchased and delivered in the dead of winter for an extraordinary price if not to communicate that something *bigger* is happening? If it comes to it, even the act of sex itself is an attempt to give shape to the incomprehensibility of oneness.

For non-Christians, the ultimate meaning of these symbols is love itself. Love: part emotion, part fantasy, part pleasure. A passionate equivalent to the iTunes Cloud, to which all human love songs and poetry and feelings are collectively entrusted.

For Christians, the symbols mean so much more. This mystery is profound.

In the tenderness, the holy jealousy, the delight, we mean to show Christ and his church. In the oneness, the sacrifice, the nourishing and cherishing, our weak symbols become something greater.

For this reason we have left, cleaved.

It is never easy. But then, we wouldn’t want it to be. My husband and I have begun our tenth year of inheriting the grace of life. The tenth year of electric bills, dentist appointments, and morning coffee, yes.

But also the tenth year of a passionate tension so vital it is fed, not diminished, by the passing seasons. Because we are always facing a challenge. He will always be like and yet unlike me. And we will always be fighting against the strong lure of sin, and symbolizing Someone stronger.

Megan Hill lives in Mississippi with her husband and three young sons.

She writes regularly for Her.meneutics. Go to ChristianBibleStudies.com for “Marriage by God’s Design,” a Bible study based on this article.

THE Love SHACK

WILLIAM PAUL YOUNG has touched a nerve—if sales of millions of books is any sign. Like his sleeper best-selling novel, *The Shack*, his new book, *Cross Roads* (FaithWords), covers God, the human condition, and the process of transformation—though a fair amount of teaching finds its way into the story. It's teaching that many Christians have found liberating, and many other Christians have rejected. Given the genre of writing, it's understandable that some readers are left confused about what Young really believes. *Christianity Today* editor Mark Galli decided to find out.

What are you fundamentally trying to address in your writing?

The nature of the character of God as relational, as a love that pursues us relentlessly and wants to burn out of [us] everything that keeps us from being free. I want to bring to light the process of transformation, what that looks like.

I grew up fundamentalist, evangelical, Protestant. Those are my roots, and they are good roots. But it means the Pharisees are my people. I grew up with an image of God that was not helpful—largely the face of my father expanded. My father and I worked for years to get to a place where reconciliation was possible, and we have. But that had a huge impact on how I viewed the nature and character of God, a theology that fundamentally taught that Jesus came to save us from the Father.

Your books playfully but insistently picture God as Trinity. Why is the Trinity so important to you?

Because it grounds both relationship and love. If you have a distinctiveness of persons within the very nature of God, and you have oneness (which is absolutely essential), you have a basis for love inside the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is what Athanasius and Irenaeus and the early church fathers started and ended with. To me, everything relational gets grounded inside of that.

You are fond of calling God Papa. That feels flippancy to a lot of readers.

That's my version of *Abba*. *Father* is used of God only 15 times in the

William Paul
Young
explains the
theology behind
his best-selling
novels—and why
he's no longer at
war with himself.

Interview by Mark Galli

Hebrew Scriptures. How surprising it is that as a 12-year-old boy raised within the Jewish culture, one of the first things [Jesus does is] refer to God as *Father*.

I arrived at *Papa* because *Abba* never worked for me, even though it's the Aramaic. I love the way Hispanic children refer to their dads: it's always, "Papi! Papi!" It has this sense of, "I love being around you!" *Papi* is combined with *Abba* and I ended up with *Papa*; it worked for me.

Do you call God Papa when you pray?

I do. It took me a long time. First it was *God*. Then it was *the Father*. One of the biggest transitions was to go from *the Father* to *Father*,



which became much more intimate, and then to *Papa*. It does smack of familiarity, but it's a shared familiarity that Jesus had with Abba. That's what he used almost exclusively.

What's up with picturing God as a black woman?

I'm trying to get far away from [picturing God as] Gandalf or Santa Claus. When I look at Scripture, imagery was never intended to define God. In fact, the more concrete your imagery gets, the more you're toying with idolatry. It's picture language to help us understand the character and nature of God. We have all kinds of imagery in Scripture. You have a woman who loses a coin in the Gospels. You have feminine imagery, masculine imagery, animal imagery—lots of bird imagery,

eagles and the mother hen who covers the chicks. We see inanimate object imagery: a rock, a fortress, a strong tower, a shield.

I don't want my kids growing up with the image of God that I had—Plato's white grandfatherly god—because that god is not a very good father. When it comes down to it, you can't trust him with your kids. Plato's god is the indivisible one, who is fundamentally self-centered, rather than Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the God who is self-giving and other-centered. That changes everything.

How would you describe the root of sin? What is the main problem?

Independence. It is declaring ourselves the arbiters of right versus wrong, rather than being in a dependent relationship. That's another



don't want my kids growing up with the image of God that I had—Plato's white grandfatherly god. That god is not a very good father. You can't trust him with your kids.

way of saying pride. It's where we declare ourselves or establish our independence from relationship. "You will be like God"—the lie.

How does that manifest itself day to day?

There are a thousand things that come immediately to mind, such as the inability to trust, or the need for control. That would be one of the biggest things, because we create systems in order to not have to trust someone. And systems largely are an expression of our fear, which desires to control so that we have some certainty. When we were children, our receptors got shattered into a billion bits, and the journey the Holy Spirit has us on is largely a journey into trust.

My religious background would say [faith is] about learning how to please God, which isn't about God at all; it's about my ability to perform according to whatever the requirements and the transactions are. Relationship is about learning to trust. Trust is connected in a huge way to the character and nature of God, because you cannot fundamentally trust someone you don't know loves you or is for you.

What is salvation? What does Jesus accomplish on the Cross and in the Resurrection?

For me, salvation is fully accomplished in the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was *God in the hands of angry sinners*—that's the phrase that I would use. I'm not a penal substitutionary guy. But I am a substitutionary guy. But I don't see the Father pouring out his wrath on the Son. I see the human race pouring out their wrath on the Son. So I see the only hope for the entire cosmos is what the Son chooses to accept, crawling upon the instrument of our greatest wrath. He met us at the deepest, darkest place.

That still gives every single person an eternal and ongoing right to reject this affection. But I don't think it changes the relentless affection. God's pursuit of me is eternal in nature. That's what Romans 8:38–39 is talking about. Read the list of things that cannot separate you from God's love, and you're going to run smack into this: nothing [can separate us].

But the Bible is replete with language of divine wrath, not just the Old Testament but the New as well. What do you make of that?

I am not opposed to wrath at all, but what's changed for me is this: I grew up inside a paradigm that said wrath was punitive and retributive in nature. I now see it as restorative. And part of that is affective.

Having children changed a lot for me. If my son was an

amphetamine addict, I would like to be a fire and burn that out of my son's life. If I had a daughter who believed a lie about her value, I would want to be a consuming fire—absolutely. I'd want to get inside of that and burn it out.

So to me, fire is something everybody has to deal with, because we all have crap. It needs to be dealt with, and it's going to be. To some degree we're dealing with it in this world, but we're going to deal with it at some point. But it's because of love, not because we fail to live up to expectations.

So do you believe in the Last Judgment—with emphasis on *last*?

Yeah, probably. If you've read C. S. Lewis's introduction to *The Great Divorce*, in a beautiful way he acknowledges that he and George MacDonald and other writers are dealing in speculation. The only certainty I have come to with regard to any of this is that I'm now way more certain about the kindness and the goodness of God, even if it's also a fire. I'm certain of his goodness. But I don't know how it all works out.

One question I get, of course, is, "Are you a universalist?" I'm not, because I don't think you can make that step doctrinally. I don't think Scripture is that obvious. There is this respect for the human creation's ability to say no. God will not force love. And we still have to choose to be reconciled. But Colossians says that's what we are to be praying for, that *everything* gets reconciled back to him.

So, to circle back, your writing is not just about God as relational love, but also about our union with him in the Trinity.

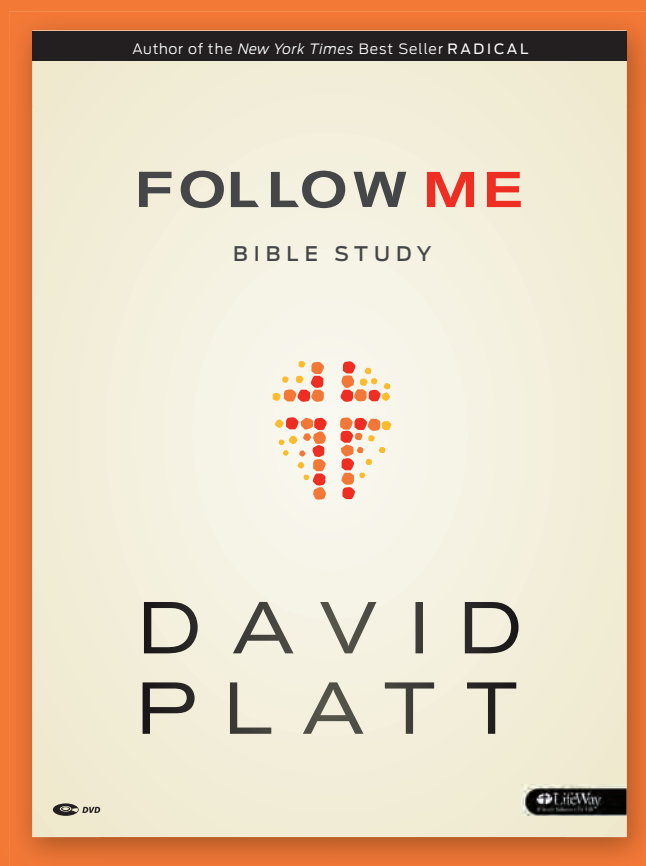
Yes, that objective union is where our hope exists, in the Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Not only were we included in their affection, but then they climbed into our damage. John 14–17 is the center of the Bible; right before Jesus goes to the Garden of Gethsemane, he talks about coming to live inside of us, bringing the Father and the Spirit. It's an objective union.

This is very different from how I grew up. Then, it was, "You are two natures warring it out," and, "Who are you going to feed today?" Instead of: "You're a new creation and you don't know it." Part of this transformation is for us to begin to think accurately about who we are. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." If you believe a lie, you will function according to a lie. I'm not at war with myself anymore. No. We are in the process of the healing of the heart and the soul and eventually the body—and all in terms of the reconciliation of this cosmos. I want to be a part of that.

STUART MULLENBERG

DO YOU GO WHEREVER HE LEADS YOU?

SECRET
CHURCH
lifeway.com/secretchurch
SEE PLATT
LIVE



Are you a follower of Christ? Are you sure? When Jesus says, "Come, follow Me," it is not an invitation to say a prayer. It is a summons to lose our lives. But have we? In this much-anticipated follow-up to *Radical*, David Platt continues to challenge cultural Christianity. And it just might challenge you and your entire church. So get with your group. Watch Platt on video. Take some time to retreat, reflect, and genuinely respond to Jesus' invitation, "Follow Me."

lifeway.com/followme | 800.458.2772 | LifeWay Christian Stores

 **LifeWay**
Biblical Solutions for Life

The Sabbath Swimming Lesson

When unemployment threatens to sink us, God keeps our heads above water. By Susan Wunderink

WHEN I WAS A SWIMMING INSTRUCTOR, I spent a lot of time trying to get little kids to float. I would tell them to put their ears in the water and their belly buttons out of it, and I'd say, "When I count to two, you won't feel my hands underneath you, but they're there."

As soon as I'd say "two," most of the children would frantically jerk their knees towards their chins and flail their arms, dropping their full weight into my hands. Almost all people float when they assume a posture of rest, but people who think they'll sink don't keep that posture for long.

Faith is about a posture of rest, too. Many of us are terrified by the life of faith, needing always to feel the support of steady jobs, steady relationships, and back-up plans. God, knowing that, signed us up for swim lessons. The swim lessons are the Sabbaths.

SABBATH IS FOR EVERYONE

Imagine the Israelites' first experience with the Sabbath. They had just been called away from everything they knew to live in tents. And in the middle of nowhere, where life-and-death emergencies seemed to come frequently, God was training them to worship him. God worked a steady stream of miracles that must have made the Israelites' hair stand on end.

The people got hungry two months into the journey. So God began to send them manna. Every day of the week but one, the Israelites gathered bread from heaven.

But on the seventh day—the day of the week that God had set apart as the holiest—he did not send the daily miracle. Nor did he want the people to work. Instead, they were to eat what they had gathered the day before, and to rest. It was the Sabbath, the day God's people didn't wake up to manna.

Sabbath always points to God's all-sufficiency. To use one illustration, it demonstrates that we do not live by labor alone. To use another, it shows us that God is still there when manna isn't. We are to place our faith in God, a surer bet than the predictable patterns of sowing and reaping.

If Sabbaths are times when we push away from our labor to practice the posture of faith, then Sabbaths are for busy people. They're for parents. They're for graduate students. They're for everyone who fears that God might let them sink. They're for all of us who believe disaster will strike if we stop doing things. They're for me.

WHEN THE BOTTOM DROPS OUT

In the past, Sabbaths have been viewed as either onerous or something Christians don't need. But the Sabbath isn't an unnecessary burden any more than swim lessons are a waste of time for future swimmers.

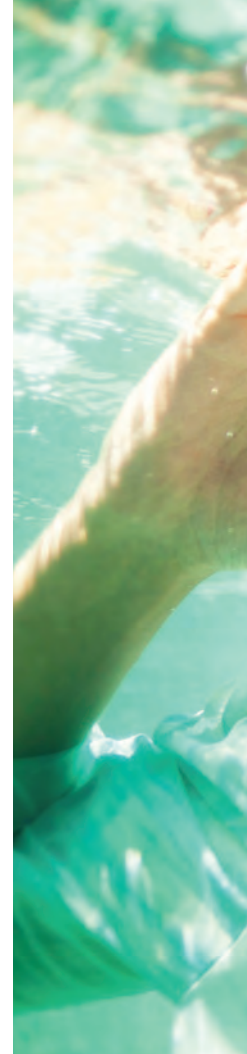
After all, a Sabbath is an act of both worship and preparation. *Preparation for what?* For living in faith when the bottom drops out. Observing voluntary days of rest can lay the mental and emotional foundations for enduring involuntary seasons of joblessness. Those of us who have lost jobs during the economic downturn have observed those Sabbaths of unemployment.

Like at least 12.8 million people in the United States last summer, I was unemployed. And like 14 million people the summer before. And like 15 million in the summer of 2009. And like about 7 million in the summer of 2006. And like about 9 million in the summer of 2003.

Each new release of monthly labor statistics is just a snapshot of people who are actively looking for jobs. (As 2013 began, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that about 12 million people were jobless and applying for jobs.) But there are lots of people who have given up.

If you don't know it firsthand, you can still imagine how unemployment can wreak havoc on your future. As you spend money without making it, you borrow from your future supplies. You will be older than ancient when you have enough money to retire. Your mortgage or student loans take on nightmarish proportions. If you fail to pay, your low credit score will make for years of financial misery.

Those aren't problems that unemployment insurance can solve. It won't cover the high-fixed costs of "investments" in education or houses. Going to the unemployment insurance office can make



ISTOCK



you feel like you're the straight man in a Marx Brothers film. Even if you've had only white-collar jobs, you start to realize that you're an illness or a car wreck away from moving into a relative's basement.

Crueler yet, some employers reject applicants who don't have a job. They may assume your former employer thought you were a liability—you were near retirement, or you were a stress on company health-care costs, for example. Every now and then, I still encounter someone who suggests that losing your job is just deserts for poor work or bad social skills.

But the money part isn't the worst of it. Unemployment shreds your self-respect. It leaves you with oodles of time to wonder why your colleagues or supervisors thought you weren't worthwhile. Workdays at home are like nice damp soil for mushrooming bitterness and anxiety. Volunteering for anything and everything helps, but only during the day.

You might expect joblessness to always be discouraging. But I've seen Christian friends who were strangely at peace while unemployed. They became wiser, humbler, and more prone to talk about God. I think I've become more grateful. God's hands *are* always supporting us, my friends and I have told each other. It hurts now, but all our anxiety will seem silly in a little while, we've told each other. Isn't this what a real Sabbath does to God's people?

REMEMBER HIS FAITHFULNESS

When I first wrote this, I was entering my last week of a seven-month job. I hadn't had an interview for a long time, and I assumed

that I would also go through the three- to four-month period that was the current average length of unemployment. I didn't think it was possible for this essay to end on a triumphalist note, let alone a triumphant one. But two days after I left the office for the last time, I got a completely unexpected and delightful job offer. Praise God!

I can't go out and gather manna during times of unemployment. Those are the days when I open the cupboard and draw from God's stored-up provisions. I'm trying to act on what he told the Israelites, who were not yet in the land of milk and honey: *Remember my faithfulness, which I already demonstrated in the times you were desperate.*

"Oh, you'll do fine!" people tell me, when I talk about my once and future job search. "You've got a strong résumé." I suppose most people say these things because they somehow still believe the world is fair. This kind of optimism isn't real encouragement. It's like telling kids to doggy paddle to the edge instead of taking them through the lessons that would help them swim for hours. I know my joblessness was not a cosmic glitch; it was meant to mold me into the posture of faith. God intends to make a swimmer of me, and he was teaching me to rely on him through what seemed like a disaster.

I hope someday I won't be terrified when my career drops out from beneath me. For now, I can look at my situation and tell the truth: Our labor and our circumstances fail to take care of us. God makes their failure holy to us, holiest on the days without manna. ☩

Susan Wunderink is a CT contributing editor.

Orphans in Limbo

Russia's recent adoption announcements leave American parents confused—and 700,000 Russian children waiting. By Ken Walker

AS QUICKLY AS Russia declared a ban on adoptions by Americans, it announced that the ban wouldn't go into effect until 2014. Even still, Teri and Ryan Froman have abandoned hope of bringing a second Russian child home to Spring Hill, Tennessee. "It's very disappointing and discouraging," says Teri, who recently halted the process she and her husband initiated last summer. "We're not one of the families who will be considered. Everything they're saying right now is very confusing."

The Fromans are among nearly 1,000 prospective parents dismayed by the ban passed by the Russian parliament in December.

The latest vote came just five months after Russia ratified an agreement with the United States. The terms of that agreement were prompted in 2010, when a Tennessee woman sent her 7-year-old adopted son back to Russia with a note on his bag, citing behavioral problems. Now the Kremlin has reversed course, saying it will hold off until next January, because of a one-year notification required under the agreement.

Adoption advocates have reacted with both cautious optimism and disbelief that any adoptions from Russia will proceed this year.

Some observers blame politics, specifically new U.S. sanctions related to the 2009 prison death of Russian attorney Sergei Magnitsky, who alleged widespread government corruption.

"It's an inhuman decision," says Sergey Rakhuba, president of Russian Ministries in Wheaton, Illinois. "It tells you about the Russian administration, using innocent kids as pawns in a big game."

The ban prompted uproar in Russia, with thousands turning out for protest marches in Moscow and St. Petersburg. An anti-ban online

petition quickly included over 135,000 Russian signers.

Russell Moore, dean at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and an adoption advocate, also calls the ban political maneuvering. Without international adoption, he says, many children will age out of the system to lives of chaos (an estimated 80 percent later turn to alcohol or drugs, and 10 percent commit suicide).

"The best solution for children is to be welcomed into families, with the love of a mother and a father," says Moore, who adopted two sons from Russia 10 years ago. "That ought to transcend international politics."

What concerns so many is the staggering number of children involved. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that at the end of 2010, just over 736,000 Russian children were living in orphanages or foster care; of some 11,000 U.S. adoptions that year, about 3,300 were international. (Worldwide, UNICEF estimates 151 million children are orphans.)

It's understandable why many agencies remain anxious and uncertain about the future.

WAIT AND SEE

For now, officials advise a "wait and see" attitude. That includes one of the largest faith-based U.S. agencies, Bethany Christian Services, which last year helped four families complete adoptions from Russia and has another 21 in various pre-placement stages.

President Bill Blacquiere says only those in a final 30-day waiting period after securing court approval can expect to proceed. About 50 American couples had reached that stage by January 1; up to half a dozen Bethany-affiliated families may fit that definition, depending on pending Russian action.

Families who paid up to \$2,500 for a study reviewing the suitability of their home may have to turn elsewhere to avoid losing the



COURTESY OF THE FROMANS

funds. The status of other fees is unclear.

“With Russia things are always uncertain,” Blacquiere says. “But we are not looking to sign up any new families or say to families, ‘We think there’s a chance.’ I have the feeling this could be it.”

Even though some Russian officials allowed a few adoptions to proceed in January, Paul Pennington, executive director of Hope for Orphans, says there is some evidence of the Russian government delaying finalizing adoptions.

“Russia is really significant,” says Pennington. “There are agencies in the United States that are so heavily invested in Russia that they may have to shut down for lack of income.”

In turn, Pennington says, the collapse of agencies that provide aftercare support for adopted teens and others suffering from personal problems could leave many American families searching for help.

Others cling to hope that further negotiations may scuttle the ban.

Where’s Baby #2?: Teri and Ryan Froman adopted Maxim from Russia almost two years ago. Their second adoption was halted in the ban.

The U.S. State Department has been seeking information on those who initiated proceedings before January 1, 2013; the number recently reached 950 families. An official says the department remains “actively engaged” with the Russian government to determine the impact on resolving pending adoptions.

“Our hope and prayer is that we’ll be able to continue to help children in Russia,” says Debbie Wynne, director of adoption and maternity services for Buckner International. The Dallas-based agency helped 41 American families adopt from Russia in the past two years and has supported foster parenting and adoption programs there.

“In doing international ministry, you never know if you can work [in a nation] forever,” Wynne says. “Sometimes we see doors close in one place and other doors open elsewhere.”

MORE DIFFICULT THAN EVER

A larger question is the possible impact of the cutoff. American parents have adopted more than 60,000 Russian children in the past two decades. But after peaking at nearly 5,900 in 2004, adoptions dropped to 748 in 2012.

The decline parallels other international adoptions by Americans, which plummeted from nearly 23,000 in 2004 to just over 8,600 in the 2012 fiscal year.

“That’s the \$100,000 question,” Phillip Wurster, director of the National Association of Christian Child and Family Agencies, says of the ban’s impact. “It’s become a lot more difficult in various countries to [adopt] internationally, and Russia has been one of the more popular places. I think more people who were interested in international adoptions may look [domestically]. If somebody is absolutely sure they want to go internationally, there are still other countries that do international adoptions. God has to lead folks.”

Domestic adoptions dwarf international ones. Intra-U.S. adoptions reached nearly 69,000 in 2011, including more than 50,000 children adopted out of foster care.

Yet domestic adoptions pose their own hazards, says the mother of a 3-year-old Russian boy. Ann-Marie and Brent Bowden, parents of a son and a daughter, didn’t want to expose them to the risk of bonding with a prospective adoptee, only to see a U.S. judge order the child returned to a biological parent.

After educating themselves about the worldwide problem, the Bowdens decided to look internationally.

“We sponsored a child in Russia through Children’s Hope Chest and prayed for [orphans],” says Ann-Marie, whose family attends a Southern Baptist church in Plano, Texas. “Ultimately we felt a call

to provide a home for a child who otherwise wouldn't have one."

Russian adoptions are costly and reportedly more complex than those from other countries. Even with an adoption tax credit of up to \$13,000, expenses can run \$50,000 or more, including travel costs for three required visits and court appearances.

Yet there are rewards that can't be measured in dollars and cents,

children have died of abuse or neglect by American parents, including the orphan whose name was attached to December's legislation.

Pennington says the ban may force closer pre- and post-adoption assessments, since parents can be motivated to take older and special-needs children more out of narcissism (the desire to impress others with their sacrifice) than selfless love.

Still, he says, critics of international adoption have to maintain a balanced perspective. The 19 Russian children who died in America are 1 percent of the Russian children who died in 2008 alone at the hands of biological parents or caregivers.

"Because we don't have accountability and assessment strategies for all the agencies involved, should we have not let those 60,000 kids come to the United States?" Pennington says. "We don't hear great news stories about special-needs kids who had almost no hope in Russia who came to the United States, got college educations, and are professionals."

The action may prove somewhat of a divine blessing as well, according to those who are part of Home for Every Orphan (HEO). The network is working to increase adoption in Russia and other former Soviet nations.

Karmen Friesen of the CoMission for Children at Risk recalls that the church in China exploded after its government drove out Western missionaries. He is praying for exponential adoption growth among Russian Christians.

He noted that a Russian partner said the ban has catapulted the plight of orphans into the national spotlight.

Russian culture has tended to minimize adoption, and the Soviet Union did little to encourage it, says HEO coordinator Anita Deyneka.

However, over the past two years, she says, Christians in Russia and Ukraine have adopted 1,500 Russian children, and one-third of Ukraine's 30,000 churches participated in the most recent global day of prayer for orphans.

In addition, a 92-member alliance created Ukraine Without Orphans in 2010, and sparked companion organizations in Russia and Belarus, as well as World Without Orphans.

"I don't think many Americans know how many people are doing something," says Deyneka, who cofounded Russian Ministries with her late husband, Peter. "For a long-term, mass solution, it's glorious what is happening with Christians [elsewhere] moving forward."

Even if the ban becomes permanent in 2014, Deyneka says there is much Americans can do to encourage adoption. She pointed out that monthly sponsorships can enable families overseas to bear special expenses, and at just a fraction of the cost of an international adoption.

Americans can also pray for and support groups that provide materials or counseling, and form partnerships with churches in Russia and elsewhere that are promoting intracountry adoptions.

The Fromans still plan to adopt a sibling for Maxim, age 2. They are praying for doors to open in Colombia, where they have family ties.

"My heart and my husband's heart are for the orphans of the world," Teri says. "We do a lot of education and advocacy for people to get involved. Growing up in an institution is not a good thing." ☪



Orphan Outrage: It's not just U.S. families displeased with the ban. Some 80,000 Russians have taken to winter streets, like this one in Moscow, in protest.

dozens of photos. John felt drawn to pray for a girl in one photo, Elya, who had been taken from her home after her parents neglected her.

Later John learned that Elya had given her life to Christ during a mission team's visit. When the team returned a year later, the girl asked his friend, who led the mission, if he would adopt her. John's friend promised to let the Nautuses know about her.

When their friend relayed the conversation, the family felt overwhelmed—especially John, who intended to retire from the fire department that fall.

"God had other plans," John says.

Not only did Elya's age require special permission from both countries, his wife also had to leave her job with a shipping company to stay home with her for at least six months.

But John says none of the demands they faced can compare to watching God work powerfully amid their journey, which included wading through a bureaucratic maze, sending a special appeal to their congressman, and submitting 14 documents in the month before a judge approved the adoption.

"There were times when we struggled [and] I was down about it," he says. "But God showed his faithfulness throughout the process."

A SILVER LINING

Russia's move could prompt some soul-searching in the American adoption movement: Besides the 7-year-old sent back alone, 19 Russian

Ken Walker is a freelance writer and editor from Huntington, West Virginia, and a regular contributor to *Christianity Today*.



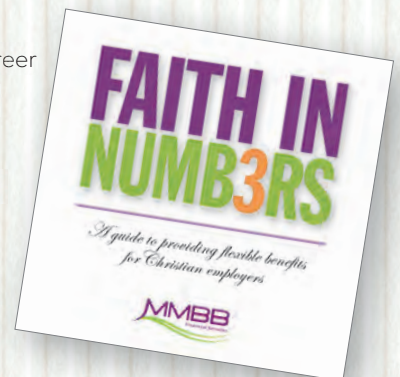
OFFER YOUR EMPLOYEES REAL RETIREMENT BENEFITS

(not just **PENNIES FROM HEAVEN.** *)*

Wouldn't it be nice to give those who are so faithful, hard-working and loyal the kind of retirement benefits they really deserve?

Now you can. In fact, when you add social security benefits to the equation, career members can enjoy their golden years with as much as 86%* of their pre-retirement income. Others can retire quite handsomely, too.

And no one will have to worry about where their next nickel is coming from. To learn more, send for our free guide, "Faith in Numbers," or download it now at: **MMBB.org/realsolutions.** Or call **1-800-986-6222.**



REAL PLANNING, REAL SOLUTIONS. THAT'S OUR CALLING.

*Source: 2010 Retirement Income Study. Based on 15+ years of participation.



SOME SAY IT'S OUTDATED.
WE SAY IT'S ALWAYS RELEVANT.

Talbot School of Theology. Holding Firm the Faithful Word.



TALBOT
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
BIOLA UNIVERSITY

Master of Arts | Master of Divinity | Master of Theology
Doctor of Ministry | Doctor of Philosophy | Doctor of Education

WWW.TALBOT.EDU/STUDYTHEWORD | 1.800.652.4652

OPINIONS AND PERSPECTIVES ON ISSUES FACING THE CHURCH

Viewpoints



The good news isn't that all people go to heaven or even that heaven is for real; it's that in Jesus, sin is forgiven and eternal life has begun.

D. Kevin Smith
Fresno, California

Heavenly Confusion

"Incredible Journeys" [December] provoked questions but danced around the theological issues created by the "heaven" books.

The good news isn't that all people go to heaven or even that heaven is for real; it's that in Jesus, sin is forgiven and eternal life has begun. The theological confusion in these books reveals that personal experience or private revelation is not trustworthy for doctrine. The scriptural model is that if the theology of the revelation is incorrect the revelation may not be used for public proclamation.

D. KEVIN SMITH
Fresno, California

Mark Galli's impressive article failed to sway me from my conviction that these experiences are, at best, delusional. These stories of journeys to heaven do not seem to make room for Jesus, and none of the voyagers seem aware of the extreme significance of God's holiness. In every biblical encounter between humans and God enthroned (Ezekiel, Jeremiah, John on Patmos), the human reaction to God's presence is an overwhelming desire to sink into the

ground, or have some nearby mountain range leap to shield them from his holiness. Occam's razor points the way on this one: These journeyers are fooling themselves and fooling others.

JOHN R. ALBREKTSON
Redlands, California

Valuing the Truth

In answering "Should churches discourage belief in Santa Claus?" [Under Discussion, December], I wonder about our teaching children the "value" of tolerance—letting others believe a destructive lie because it's only a game—or the "value" of not interfering with other parents who choose to teach lies. Would we also insist that our children never tell their Muslim friends the truth? Or discourage our ministers from saying so?

TERESA BENSON
E-mail

A Heart Thing

In regards to "Why Mere Christianity Should Have Bombed" [December], *Mere Christianity* and other apologetic books strengthened my own faith—after conversion. It was the good old-fashioned work of the Holy Spirit, not rational arguments, that initially

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

44%
Incredible Journeys
Mark Galli

11%
Three Is the
Loveliest Number
Michael Reeves

7%
Misreading the
Magnificat
David Neff

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



Incredible Journeys
Mark Galli

brought me to saving faith. In other words, it was a heart thing, not a head thing. So, are apologetic arguments more useful as evangelistic tools or as sources of edification for those who already believe?

TOM NASH
E-mail

Man of Integrity

Francis Chan says, "I'm still a coward when it comes to sharing my faith. . . . I don't love people as much as I would like to. . . . I'm just not as bold as I should be at times. And so I wish I could grow in those character qualities" ["The Relentless Passion of Francis Chan," December]. To be a best-selling author and a church leader teaching discipleship, and to admit that, speaks of real integrity. That

is what the church today lacks more than anything else. I don't know Chan, but it seems that he can teach today's shepherds what walking in the light is all about. Thanks, CT.

STEVE SKEETE
E-mail

Paging Holiness

The question raised in December's Village Green ["Do American Christians need the message of grace or a call to holiness?"] makes me wonder how current church music is answering that

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?

CT'S EDITORS WOULD LOVE TO HEAR THEM.

E-MAIL: cteditor@christianitytoday.com FAX: 630.260.9401

ADDRESS CHANGES, SUBSCRIPTIONS: ctfulfill@christianitytoday.com

question. Does the popularity of praise and worship songs and the relative decrease of hymns indicate that the message of grace is more important, or at least more popular, than the call to holiness?

While praise songs do well in expressing God's grace, they often fall short of a serious call to holiness. A well-edited hymnbook is a priceless treasury of Scripture and theological commentary that can teach us the value of grace and issue a serious call to holiness.

ROGER WAYNE HICKS
Sun City West, Arizona

Feeding Frenzy

I cannot speak with authority on "Breast-feeding in the Back Pew" [December]. But I find it highly disturbing that the sacred act of a mother feeding an infant would be problematic for anyone. It is, as the writer says, directly mirroring God's own nurture and bounty. There's nothing immodest or ungodly about a mother nurturing her baby in a place where we are in turn nursing at the breast of God. Purity is an important part of our faithful walk. Victorian prudery is not.

JON TROTT
E-mail

In my church we respectfully ask that no food or drink be brought into the worship center. I don't want to watch any feeding of babies or children during a service, from breasts or bottles or jars.

Parents of young children will miss things, such as sermons. But they have chosen something far more significant than hearing every possible sermon.

LAURA C. STEEL
E-mail

Class Warfare

Hats off to David Neff ["Misreading the Magnificat," December] for pointing out what is clearly written in Scripture but what many Christians ignore. For those who consider this class warfare, Christ made the statements that Neff only quotes. Nowhere else other than in the United States is talking about supporting the poor or giving to the poor seen as class warfare—especially by the Christian community.

PREM KURIAN
E-mail

CORRECTION

The first Gleanings article on page 14 of the December issue should have read "Sovereign Grace Charged with Failing to Report Child Abuse." Our apologies for the inaccuracy.

In "Why Mere Christianity Should Have Bombed," there were four sets of radio talks that eventually made up the book. See the postscript on our online article for a reader's explanation.



ONLINE POLL
AFTERLIFE EXPERIENCES
Do you believe people have gone to heaven and have come back?

29%
Yes, I believe some have experienced heaven in near-death experiences.

6%
Yes, but I don't think nonbelievers understood heaven correctly.

20%
Maybe, I'm undecided.

5%
Maybe, but they probably didn't write a book about it.

23%
No, I don't think people visited heaven.

17%
No, I believe people who claim they went to heaven were confused.

Total votes: 892
(Online polls do not represent a scientific sample.)

DAN REYNOLDS

compiled by Elissa Cooper

WORTH REPEATING

Things overheard at CT online.

"The ignorance of a few can lead to the folly of many."

Patrice Marker-Zahler, sympathizing with how words can be misunderstood, especially in the faith, and lead to other problems.

"Did Andy Stanley Really Mean Obama Is 'Pastor in Chief'?" interview by Mark Galli

"What a perfect portrayal of law vs. grace."

Pete Dayton, glad that the film *Les Misérables* took first place in CT's best-of list.

"The Most Redeeming Films of 2012"

"One of the greatest of the greats, who accurately discerned the times, and obeyed God accordingly. And, yes, he still speaks!"

Leina W., praising Lewis for how he understood and responded to changes in culture.

"Why C. S. Lewis Didn't Write for Christianity Today," by Dan DeWitt

"I have learned, changed, and grown over the last 15 years. I am going to assume others have as well."

Charles Stearns, reflecting how one's faith and stances on issues can change with time and experience. Passion City Church founder and pastor Louie Giglio had been asked to deliver the benediction at the presidential inauguration. He later backed out after an old sermon on the Christian response to homosexuality resurfaced, drawing negative attention.

CT Liveblog: "Louie Giglio Withdraws from Inauguration over Past Sermon on Homosexuality," by Melissa Steffan

"French vanilla ice cream tastes beautiful. Silk and velvet feel beautiful. God created a beautiful world."

Cheryl Okimoto, after football commentators were criticized for focusing on a female spectator's physical beauty instead of the game.

Her.meneutics: "Why We Should Celebrate Beautiful Women," by Laura Ortberg Turner

The Future of Today's Christianity

We have news to offer that is good for us and our children's children.

Christianity Today stands squarely in the evangelical tradition of the faith. We believe this is worth reaffirming precisely because of the way the word *evangelical* has become debased in our time.

Evangelicalism has become identified, at least in the media that shape so many Americans' imaginations, with the politics of fear—both Christians' fear of losing crucial cultural battles and secularists' fear of theocracy coming just around the bend.

When the word *evangelical* becomes associated with one position or party—let alone when it is uttered with a whiff of fear in the air—it falls far short of the glorious hope that makes the Good News good. That hope has nothing to do with the rising or falling of political parties or even nations. Instead it is the announcement of a coming kingdom that will never pass away. And the announcement of that kingdom begins with, “Be not afraid.”

To be sure, evangelical Protestants have often gloried in being, as sociologist Christian Smith once put it, “embattled and thriving.” The postwar evangelical movement saw itself, not entirely without reason, on the outside looking in at the institutions of global Christianity. Theologian Karl Barth once dismissed a pointed question from this magazine's original editor with a facile joke about “Christianity Today or Christianity Yesterday?” Carl Henry, never one to back down, caustically replied, “Yesterday, today, and forever.”

Henry's publication was of little consequence to the great German theologian, but

Henry's chutzpah was warranted. Evangelicalism—in the true sense of the word—was never meant to be a marginal movement within the Christian faith. And the focus of this magazine is not a small piece of the Christian story, but rather its living heart, the Christians in every tradition and communion who seek to love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

There will always be Christian fundamentalisms—strident calls to flee the world



and purify the church—and Christian liberalism—misguided attempts to align the church with the world's agenda. But as the past century shows, both are self-limiting movements. They are unable to retain their children or persuade a wider public. But only evangelical faith—immersed in the Word, animated by the gospel, waiting in hope, and empowered by the Spirit—can offer news that is good enough to pass on to our children's children and to engage a wary, weary world.

If this is true, though, it requires a new and deeper seriousness from us. Christianity in our time, especially in the West, suffers from a host of self-inflicted wounds. All too often,

the story of American Christianity, not least its evangelical varieties, is about the depth and power of the gospel being poured into the shallowest of vessels.

North American evangelicals can be astonishingly innovative and entrepreneurial, but we can also be indifferent to history and unconcerned about the future. We can be remarkably generous and dedicated, and blithely enslaved to consumerism and technology. We can be amazingly concerned about the needs of the world, and infuriatingly condescending to leaders from places where the needs are greatest. We can be unsurpassed in our cultural savvy, and embarrassingly thin in our cultural production. We are experts at building movements that last a few short years, and innocents at what it takes to sustain change over time.

As Fuller Seminary's Richard Mouw likes to say, “The church is in really bad shape today. It's almost as bad as it was in the first century.” The church that Christ promised to build survived the license of Corinth, the legalism of Galatia, and the lukewarmness of Laodicea. It will survive, and more than survive, in our time, because it is built not by human hands but by Christ himself. He constantly renews and reforms his people. He breathes new life and new forms into being in response to institutional decay. And every day he calls sinners from every nation to himself, transforming them into sons and daughters in a new family.

Christianity Today is for everyone who has been caught up in that story, everyone who wants to know how that story is unfolding in our time. We cannot imagine a more exciting time to be Christians than today, and we can't imagine a better job than leading *Christianity Today*. We hope you will join us for the adventure ahead. ✚

BY **Mark Galli** EDITOR

AND **Andy Crouch** EXECUTIVE EDITOR

The focus of this magazine is not a small piece of the Christian story, but rather its living heart, the Christians in every tradition and communion who seek to love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Growing
in Christ

What classic spiritual discipline needs the most renewal among American Christians?

FASTING

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove is a pastor, cofounder of the Rutba House, and author of *The Awakening of Hope: Why We Practice a Common Faith*.

In learning the spiritual disciplines practiced by ancient leaders of the faith, we also learn discernment. We need different disciplines at different times. Like apprentices in the master's workshop, we must learn what work is most needed and what tool can best do the job. One tool particularly useful to us today is the discipline of fasting.

Christians in America often express two deep desires. We long for a community where we know we belong. Stretched by fast-paced work, a high-tech social life, and a constant flood of information, Americans feel fragmented and alone. We ache for home.

At the same time, our hearts also cry out for justice. We who have experienced God's love know that this same love connects us to child soldiers in Africa, sex slaves in Asia, and the stranger on our block. More than any time since the late 1800s, justice has become a rallying cry, especially among young evangelicals.

But even as we long for our true home and the justice that makes for peace, we struggle to act each moment on our truest desires. We are often consumed by anxiety about image, fear about the future, and desires for cheap comfort and instant gratification. A thousand forces conspire to distract us from our truest desires every day.

For this reason, I'm convinced that fasting is the spiritual discipline we most need to renew today. In his most famous sermon, Jesus talks about fasting immediately after his introduction of the Lord's Prayer, suggesting that the former should be as common as the latter. Before Jesus began his public ministry, the Gospels tell us, he fasted for 40 days in the wilderness.

In the early church, if anyone in the fellowship was hungry, it was common practice in some places for the whole community to go without until they could supply their brother or sister's need.

Today we who are used to grabbing a snack when we feel the slightest pang of hunger are not sure how to receive the blessing that belongs to "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matt. 5:6). Self-denial seems so puritanical. Why not just go ahead and take care of our own needs so we can love and serve others to the best of our ability?

The practice of fasting helps us get in touch with our truest desires. It is not mere self-denial, but rather an earnest preparation for the feast of beloved community. The Baptist radical Clarence Jordan

used to say, "[F]asting is the opposite of slowing"; it is a "speeding up toward the kingdom." Just as an Olympic swimmer shaves to reduce drag in the water, followers of Jesus strip themselves of excess baggage and forgo meals now and again for the sake of rushing ahead toward the new creation that God is giving us even now.

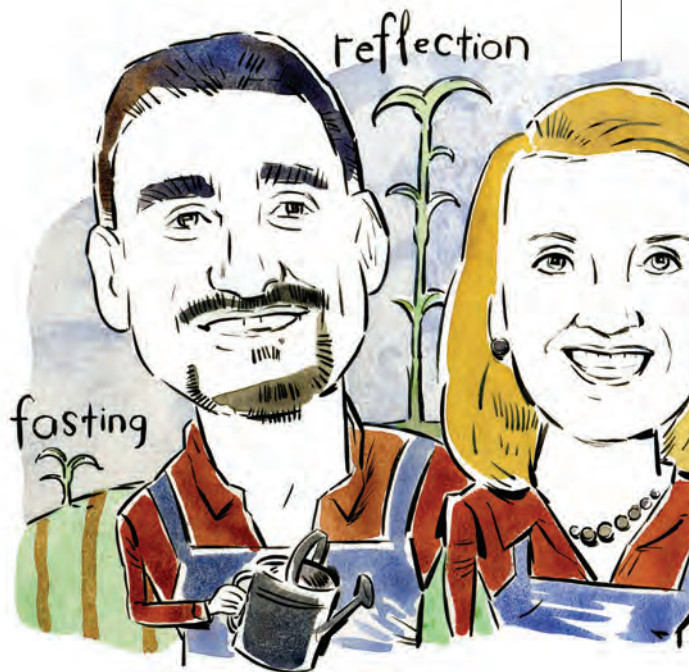
Fasting also reminds us that a true feast is made not by plentiful food, but by plentiful fellowship. As Dorothy Day used to say, "Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship." Those who learn to hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed because they will be filled—not with the cheap comfort of the passing moment, but with the true Bread that satisfies.

LISTENING TO JESUS

Anne Graham Lotz is an evangelist, author of *Just Give Me Jesus*, and daughter of Billy Graham.

The pressures of day-to-day responsibility, the news of crises in our world, and the problems I face within my family or ministry can unsettle me. My spirit gets overwhelmed; I can feel burdened and oppressed.

I draw encouragement from the fact that Jesus' disciples also experienced problems, pressures, and unwelcome news. In Mark 6,



they face an emotional roller coaster when they learn of John the Baptist's brutal beheading, they experience the power of God, and they have no time to even eat. Jesus invited them to come away. His solution for the disciples of old—"spend time with me"—is the same solution he offers disciples today.

The catch? We have to have time to spend time. And if you are like me, you have none to spare. I spend a few moments in prayer and in God's Word daily, but it's not enough. So at least once a week I draw aside for an extended time with him.

I begin the time with prayer, acknowledging his presence and asking him to meet with me and speak to my heart in a personal way. Then I open my Bible and read just a few verses—not an entire chapter. My goal is to hear his voice speaking to me through his Word. I might read a verse such as Mark 9:2: "After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them."

After reading the text, I look for lessons to be learned from what's taking place or being said. From Mark 9:2, I learn several things. "After six days" might imply a weekly retreat.

"Jesus took" shows he wants to spend time with me as much as I want to spend time with him.

"Led them up a high mountain": It can be difficult and challenging to draw aside from the beaten path of daily responsibilities.

"All alone": He wants me to give him undivided attention.

"There he was transfigured before them": He will reveal himself to me in fresh ways when I make the time and effort to draw aside with him by myself.

Once I have drawn out the lessons, I reword each as a question to myself. For example, when was the last time I went on a personal retreat with Jesus?

As I ask myself those questions, I listen for his voice to speak to me.

The Mark passage has another lesson about time with Jesus. When Jesus, James, John, and Peter returned from their retreat, they found that the disciples who had stayed behind were frustrated and

powerless to help others. Could it be that one reason the church today has not had more of an impact on our culture is that disciples are not spending time with Jesus? It's time to "come with me by yourselves"—now.

SILENCE

Dallas Willard is author of *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* and philosophy professor at the University of Southern California.

Silence is a crucial spiritual discipline for American Christians today. Contemporary life also makes it one of the most difficult to practice.

Silence is, in every time and place, an essential way of breaking free from the grip of a world turned away from God and his kingdom—a world that neglects the soul. In our time in particular, the ever-present noise of modern existence and the overwhelming barrage of relentless "communications" militate against living in divine presence.

Silence has two closely related dimensions. One involves evading noise or intrusive sounds. These reach deeply into our body and keep it (and us) at a constant low level of alarm. The other has to do with avoiding talk, which, without the spiritual depth of love, proves to be little more than another type of intrusive sound (1 Cor. 13:1).

The discipline of silence consists in the practice of abstaining, for significant periods of time, from noise and from talking. We step aside from them to allow development of attitudes and habits that can constantly hold us, with thankful hearts, in the loving presence of God.

Silence can be cultivated in many ways. For the novice, it is helpful to experience a retreat center, where the practice of silence is understood and accommodated. Then, families blessed with similar inclinations may practice silence in community at home. Silence must never be imposed, but practicing it together in a loving atmosphere is incredibly enriching and rewarding. As we progress in our habits and understanding of how silence works, the exercise of this discipline will depend less and less on circumstances. We will always need to return periodically to concentrated forms of the practice such as we have in a retreat center or other special arrangement. Even in a retreat or escape, though, the aim is to establish silence in the soul, a nourishing and sustaining reality.

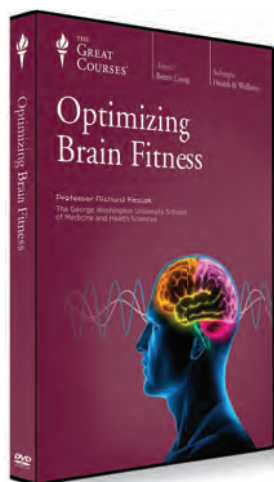
Silence well practiced opens a living space in which we can be effectively attentive to God, to our own souls, and to the genuine needs of those around us. The apostle Paul directs us, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear" (Eph. 4:29, NASB). James says, "If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man" (3:2). One cannot be like that by trying.

However, one can become the kind of person who is like that. A wise and seasoned practice of silence does much to bring it about.

It is up to us to choose silence and other practices of spiritual discipline that enable us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). The discipline of silence has substantially advanced multitudes in that "grace and knowledge."



NOW ENJOY BRILLIANT COLLEGE COURSES IN YOUR HOME OR CAR!



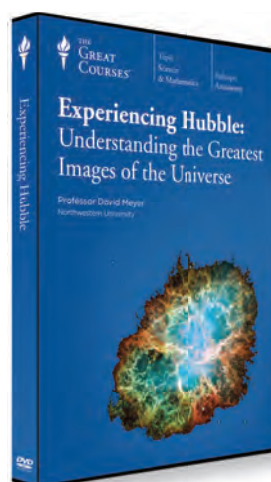
In **Optimizing Brain Fitness**, award-winning Professor of Neurology Richard Restak teaches you how to improve your memory, sharpen your attention, enhance your learning and creativity, and even fine-tune your sensory acuity—all by using one of the most revolutionary discoveries in modern neuroscience.

Course No. 1651
12 Lectures
(30 Minutes/Lecture)



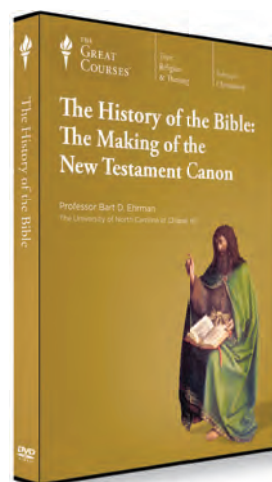
In **Museum Masterpieces: The Louvre**, expert art critic and historian Professor Richard Brettell takes you on an unforgettable journey through one of the world's greatest museums. This 12-lecture series explores some of the most beautiful and renowned examples from the museum's remarkable collection of masterworks.

Course No. 7175
12 Lectures
(30 Minutes/Lecture)



In **Experiencing Hubble: Understanding the Greatest Images of the Universe**, Professor and Director of the Dearborn Observatory David M. Meyer unlocks the secrets of the universe. In this 12-lecture series, he discusses the most spectacular images ever produced by the Hubble Space telescope.

Course No. 1884
12 Lectures
(30 Minutes/Lecture)



In **The History of the Bible: The Making of the New Testament Canon**, *New York Times* best-selling author and Professor Bart D. Ehrman reveals the secret history behind the making of the New Testament, including how and when each book was written and why it was chosen to be included.

Course No. 6299
12 Lectures
(30 Minutes/Lecture)



SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER!



Order any one of these
BEST-SELLING COURSES for only:

~~\$199.95~~ **\$9.95** on DVD
~~\$134.95~~ **\$9.95** on CD

+\$5 Shipping and Handling
Priority Code: 76710

All orders subject to approval.
Limit of one order per household.
Cannot be combined with any other special offers or promotions.
Offer valid for new customers only.



ORDER TODAY! Sale Ends Monday, February 25, 2013!

www.THEGREATCOURSES.com/6CTD

1-800-832-2412



More Than a Right

We need a better way to discuss women's ordination.

Last November, the Church of England shocked many watching Christians by voting against allowing female bishops. Justin Welby, the newly named Archbishop of Canterbury, declared it a "very grim day," while Rowan Williams warned that the Church had "lost a measure of credibility," acting "willfully blind to some of the trends and priorities of that wider society."

Christians across the theological spectrum threw in their opinions, which ranged from perplexed to near despair. Idaho pastor Douglas Wilson, a staunch complementarian, nonetheless confessed that he didn't understand the logic of "affirming the ordination of women priests and opposing them as bishops." Former dean of Duke Chapel Sam Wells, meanwhile, said that when he heard about the vote, he "sat down and wept. I hadn't allowed myself to imagine that this could happen."

The decision prompted much discussion outside the church as well. Most secular voices accused the church of sexism. British prime minister David Cameron said the church's leadership had to get with the times, "to be a modern church, in touch with society, as it is today, and this was a key step they needed to take." Viewing the matter as one of civil rights, some have questioned whether the church is denying these women theirs—namely, the right to assume positions of authority based on skill and not gender.

In the West, where civil liberty is a core value, it is indeed appropriate to consider whether women's ordination is a right. Appropriate, and complex. Whenever Christians draw on the language of rights, particularly as it pertains to the church body, we wade into murky territory.

On the one hand, Christians are to advocate for the marginalized and downtrodden, and the church championed civil rights movements that improved the status of women and minorities in our country and elsewhere. These are good, Scripture-mandated works.

But within the context of the church, in contrast with broader society, can Christians really claim a "right" to anything—especially to positions of calling and authority?

As the Church of England controversy demonstrates, some Christians would answer this question with a resounding "yes." In a similar fray within the Catholic Church, one woman arguing for ordination compared the fight to the civil rights movement: "We're the Rosa Parks of the Catholic Church."

But there is good reason to be concerned about the philosophical underpinnings of "rights" language. For one, most rights language is pervasively individualistic. Stanley Hauerwas notes in his essay "Memory, Community, and the Reasons for Living: Reflections on Suicide and Euthanasia" that

Rights language suggests we should be able to determine our lives . . . and what we shall do with [them]. But it is fundamental to the Christian manner that our lives are formed in terms not of what we will do with them, but of what God will do with our lives, both in our living and our dying.

Hauerwas grounds this conclusion in two central Christian doctrines: We are created beings, and we are ransomed individuals who were "bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). As Christians, we acknowledge God's claim on our lives as the One who created us for a purpose. We also acknowledge that in Christ, our lives are not our own (1 Cor.

6:19). Through sin we became indebted to him, so the economy of God is not one of rights but of grace. God provides out of his divine, gracious character, not because of any rights inherently owed to us.

This divine economy should guide the church as we face the ethical, and ecclesial, issues of the day. It's true that many Christian

ideals—fairness, justice, dignity, to name a few—overlap with those pursued by rights activists. But the means are quite often different. Rights language is humanistic in tone, placing the locus of authority with the individual rather than with God or his church. When Christians

put forth arguments ultimately based on human rights, they are making a costly theological statement, one that subtly supplants God as our true and ultimate head.

All this helps us grapple with women's ordination, whatever our convictions, in a truly *Christian* way. Theologians such as N. T. Wright have advocated for women's ordination by appealing to scriptural witness. As the debate continues within the Church of England and many other church bodies, his is an example to follow. On a subject fraught with strong opinions and high emotions, our language needs to be precise, biblical, and theologically nuanced. To this end, we have a rich vocabulary to draw on: the language of the love and salvation of God. ✚

Sharon Hodde Miller, a Ph.D. candidate at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, contributes to Her.meneutics (ChristianityToday.com/women) and writes at SheWorships.com.



Within the context of the church, can Christians really claim a 'right' to anything—especially to honored positions of calling and authority?

*Western Seminary trains students
around the world, in places like...*



MESSAGE FROM A REAL WESTERN STUDENT

Here in Bozeman at Montana Bible College we're busy training church leaders; all while I'm being trained by Western Seminary. I've been able to attend several intensive Master of Theology seminars, and occasionally through webcast technology, have joined classrooms in Portland from my home library in the Gallatin Valley. It's a wonderful arrangement, and I'm grateful to benefit from Western's innovative approach to quality training and scheduling. Maybe this could work for you too!

Sincerely,
Jim Carlson

POST CARD

THIS SPACE FOR ADDRESS ONLY

The Madeiras
5001 Smithfield Blvd.
Plattsburg, NY 12901

TRUSTWORTHY AND ACCESSIBLE TRAINING
FOR GOSPEL-CENTERED TRANSFORMATION



WESTERNSEMINARY.EDU/POSTCARD



**WESTERN
SEMINARY**

Gospel-Centered
Transformation



Who Defines Doctrine?

Often it's not the theologians but the people. Here's why.

Back in the 1780s, Noah Webster fought to create an American language based on the way American people spoke, not on rules laid down by English aristocrats. His populist philosophy did not entirely appeal to people who bought dictionaries, however. During the 19th century, people bought dictionaries in order to get the authoritative word on words. Having a large dictionary in the parlor became a ticket to culture, writes David Skinner in *The Story of Ain't*. Thus dictionary companies marketed their products to a set of consumers more conservative than Webster himself.

Webster must have rested uneasily in his grave until 1961, when *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* startled speakers of American English. Using the new science of linguistics, the dictionary returned to the authentic Webster tradition: Rather than prescribing how people should speak, it described how they actually spoke. As the dictionary's editor Philip Babcock Gove wrote, it needs to be "a faithful recorder . . . it cannot expect to be any longer appealed to as an authority."

In the controversy that followed, writes Skinner, detractors and defenders alike used moral language. A critic complained in the *Saturday Review*, for example, that "permissiveness, now on the wane in child-rearing, has caught up with the dictionary makers." Editor Gove celebrated that permissiveness, Skinner reports: He "compared the belief in one correct linguistic standard to a belief in revelation, in the Ten Commandments specifically," rejecting the notion that there is some language deity inhabiting a linguistic Sinai—some source and sanction for language other than usage.

Reading *The Story of Ain't* got me thinking about doctrine and ethics. Truth is eternal, but the language of truth—precisely what believers believe, how they summarize it, and what dimensions they emphasize—changes. Doctrine is conditioned by events and movements.

One example is the Rule of Faith—the words repeated by those about to be baptized into the early Christian church. It no doubt began as something like 1 Timothy 3:16 ("He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory," NIV 1984), a summary of the Christ event. By the year 381, it had become what is now called the Nicene Creed, a careful delineation of the life and work of the Trinity. The language of truth had changed in reaction to at least four heresies—Arianism, Apollinarianism, Macedonianism, and Chiliasm.

Not all change is provoked by heresy. Christianity often takes new cultural forms in response to new contexts. The Protestant Reformation with its emphasis on *sola scriptura* moved with the speed of the newly invented printing press. The missionary movements of the 16th and 19th centuries followed the trails laid by explorers and colonizers. I grew up in the revivalist tradition—a spiritual stream ignited by the democratization of American religion.

And yet change can be heretical, schismatic, or just dangerously lopsided. So how should we relate to populist religious movements? Do we appeal to tradition, or do we say anything goes?

Theologian Richard Mouw has modeled a middle ground between theological elitism and cultural permissiveness. In a 1994 *Christianity Today* essay, he drew on Cardinal John Henry Newman's respect for the "sense of the faithful"—"a sort of instinct . . . deep in

the bosom of the mystical body of Christ." If the church or the guild of theologians sets something forth as true, "it is a good sign of its truth that it is actually received by the membership."

Mouw was responding to theologians who criticized evangelicalism for being co-opted by the therapeutic and managerial strains in American culture. Mouw urged us to look at such developments with a hermeneutic of charity rather than a hermeneutic of suspicion. What is it about church life that needs to be balanced by aspects of contemporary

thinking? Has the church previously been lacking in therapeutic sensitivity or managerial wisdom? If so, theologians must change their perspective from judging the culture to paying attention to the

messages it may be sending.

When Newman wrote about making good use of the "sense of the faithful" in evaluating church doctrine, he stressed both *community* and *continuity*. We should approach the teachings of lone rangers with a hermeneutic of suspicion until the community comes to appreciate their insights. Similar suspicion is called for when teachings break radically with the continuity of the faith. Doctrinal development, Newman taught, is a gradual unfolding, not a radical break.

In that sense, doctrine is like language. New usages are mere novelties until they are mainstreamed by a critical mass of native speakers. But when a major historical event or cultural artifact gives us new usage or new vocabulary, wise linguists and wise theologians do well to pay attention. ✚



Truth is eternal, but the language of truth—precisely what believers believe, how they summarize it, and what dimensions they emphasize—changes.



Get Schooled, without relocating.

Denver Seminary is proud to introduce, **inContext**. An on-line and on-campus learning experience that lets you earn your Master of Arts in Leadership degree—without having to relocate. **inContext** gives you access to the knowledge, support and mentoring you need and the flexibility to learn when and where you want.

inCONTEXT

Learn more or get started by visiting:
DenverSeminary.edu/incontext


DENVER SEMINARY



BOOKS, MOVIES, AND THE ARTS

CT Review



Anxious About Assurance

How can we be sure we are saved?

A Calvinist and Lutheran answer. By Phillip Cary

Anxious about whether he was really saved, North Carolina pastor J. D. Greear kept asking Jesus into his heart—it must have been several thousand times, he says—until he came to put his faith in the truth of the gospel instead. The difference is subtle but fundamental, and Greear does a real service by getting it across clearly in ***Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart: How to Know for Sure You Are Saved*** (B&H Books) ★★★★★.

Asking Jesus into your heart by praying some version of the Sinner's Prayer, in which

you acknowledge your sin and need of salvation and then accept Jesus as your Savior, has become something of an evangelical ritual. It can mark the moment of salvation—"the hour I first believed," as the great hymn says. But like any ritual, we can wonder whether we've done it right—whether we were sincere enough and really meant it. At that point it becomes a kind of good work, something we do to get saved. And like every good work, it's not good enough to assure us of salvation.

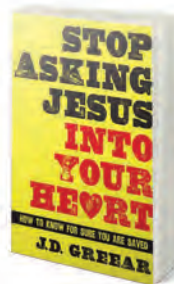
Greear is not saying it's wrong to ask Jesus into your heart. He's saying it's not the same thing as believing the gospel. And if we want to be assured of salvation, it's believing the gospel that actually counts. We are saved by faith alone, not by doing a good enough job praying the Sinner's Prayer.

THE HEART'S POSTURE

It was reading Martin Luther that brought the difference into focus for him. Greear speaks in very Lutheran terms when he says, "Saving faith looks outside of itself to what Christ has done, not back onto itself at what it has done." For the gospel is not about us and the decisions we make—not even our decision to choose Christ—but rather about Christ himself, his finished work on the cross and his sitting on the throne of heaven, where he himself is our all-sufficient righteousness before God.

Of course, we do make decisions, and they have their importance. Some people can narrate a specific moment of conversion, and such a moment may have included praying the Sinner's Prayer. But other people, Greear recognizes, grew up in a Christian home and learned to believe the gospel at such a young age that they cannot remember any decisive "moment of salvation," and they are none the worse off for that. What matters is believing the gospel of Christ, not remembering when you first believed.

Greear provides a helpful analogy here. He asks us to think of faith as a kind of "heart posture." Like the physical posture of sitting, it began at a specific moment. But if you want assurance that you really are sitting, do you try to remember when you first sat down, or do you make a point of noticing where you're resting your weight right now? Well, faith is resting the weight of your soul on Christ and his finished work. It's not totally irrelevant to remember



when you first rested your weight in that posture, but it's not the most helpful question to ask. Just as you may truly be in a sitting posture without remembering when you first decided to sit down, you may have true faith even if you can't remember making a decision for Christ.

This is helpful, but of course it does not solve every problem. It's always possible to worry whether your current posture really is one of faith and repentance—those two inseparable biblical requirements that Greear aptly summarizes as belief in the gospel and surrendering to the lordship of Christ. What if you have not repented and do not truly believe?

FAITH THAT PERSEVERES

This is an important matter, as Greear emphasizes by rejecting the perverse new version of the doctrine of eternal security, according to which salvation is a moment of decision that compels God to save you even if you later abandon the Christian faith altogether. Here Greear affirms, with the Calvinist tradition, that true saving faith is necessarily a faith that perseveres. The life of faith involves ongoing struggles with sin and

Greear is not saying it's wrong to ask Jesus into your heart. He's saying it's not the same thing as believing the gospel. And if we want to be assured of salvation, it's believing the gospel that actually counts.

doubt, and may include periods of backsliding as well, but it is always a life that ends in faith, not unbelief. This is the original Calvinist doctrine of eternal security: It is true that we are "once saved, always saved," but this is precisely because saving faith is always faith that perseveres to the end.

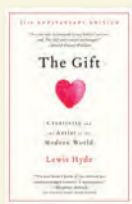
As John Calvin himself put it, there is a difference between saving faith and temporary faith. This difference, which Greear doesn't explicitly mention, is the source of Calvinist anxieties about the assurance of salvation. The assumption is that these two sorts of faith are fundamentally different, and that there is some way of telling them apart, at least in your own case. To see the anxieties this generates, imagine asking yourself, "How do I know that my current posture is going to last? I am sitting now, but is there any decision I now make that will

guarantee I keep sitting? I am resting the weight of my soul on Jesus now, but how can I be sure that I will keep doing this until the end of my life?"

What makes Calvinism distinctive within Christianity is its conviction that this question can actually be answered. According to Calvinism each one of us, in our own case, can have assurance of eternal salvation because we can know whether we have true saving faith. This is, of course, tantamount to knowing we are predestined for salvation—another issue Greear does not raise. Here is where Calvin parts company with Augustine, his great predecessor: not in the doctrine of predestination itself, but in the conviction that *we can know* we are among the elect, eternally saved in this life because God has predestined us for salvation. And we can know this precisely by

MY TOP 5 BOOKS ON CREATIVITY

By Makoto Fujimura, artist and author of *Refractions: A Journey of Faith, Art, and Culture* (NavPress, 2009)

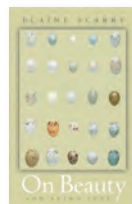


THE GIFT

Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World

LEWIS HYDE
(VINTAGE)

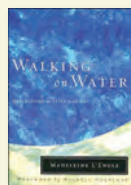
Simply the best book on what art ought to be. An underground best seller among the creatives in New York City since it came out over 30 years ago, *The Gift* articulates what artists know in their bones—that their creativity is a gift, not a commodity.



ON BEAUTY AND BEING JUST

ELAINE SCARRY
(PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS)

Though not a Christological reflection, this is one of the most thoughtful, and beautiful, discourses on the value of beauty and how seeking after beauty leads us toward justice. This book was also an underground best seller in the 1980s among creatives.



WALKING ON WATER Reflections on Faith and Art

MADELEINE L'ENGLE
(HAROLD SHAW PUBLISHERS)

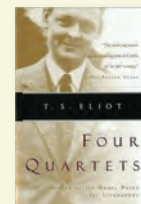
L'Engle illumines our creative journeys, prodding and nudging us to consider the mysteries inherent in our everyday lives and to infuse creativity with faith.



THE MIND OF THE MAKER

DOROTHY L. SAYERS
(HARPERONE)

Sayers, known as an Inklings friend of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien as well as for her popular mystery novels, develops an imaginative and provocative discourse between Trinitarian theology and creativity.



FOUR QUARTETS

T. S. ELIOT
(HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT)

Eliot is one of the most important thinkers on creativity in modern times, as evidenced by this mid-20th-century masterpiece. In "Qu4rtets," a collaborative project integrating creativity with various disciplines (fujimurainstitute.org), you can peek into his mind.

knowing that we have true saving faith, not the temporary kind.

ALL THE WAY WITH LUTHER

This conviction is meant to be reassuring. But it can also just as easily cause anxieties. These are addressed by a distinctively Calvinist tradition of pastoral care, which focuses precisely on the problem of assurance of salvation. Great books have been written on this topic, such as Jonathan Edwards's *Treatise on Religious Affections*. But it is helpful to recognize the distinctively Calvinist setting of the problem. Other traditions, with other assumptions, end up with different anxieties and a different set of pastoral problems. Catholics, for instance, have traditionally worried about being in a state of mortal sin—a problem addressed by the practice of sacramental confession. And Luther urged people in times of trial and doubt to stay away from all thought of predestination, returning instead to the promise of Christ in their baptism.

Greear's book goes about as far in Luther's direction as is possible for a committed Calvinist. The price for going all the way with Luther is dropping the notion that you can know in advance that your faith will persevere, and joining Luther (as well as Augustine) in believing that salvation is not complete until our faith actually does persevere to the end. What you get, for that price, is the freedom for faith to continue to "look outside itself" at Christ alone and not "back onto itself," not even for the sake of telling the difference between temporary and saving faith. What you lose is eternal security, the assurance that you are *already* saved for eternity.

Every tradition has its distinctive anxieties, the price it pays for its distinctive convictions. For my part, I go all the way with Luther, for I think Christian faith puts faith in Christ alone—and not even a little bit in itself. And I think we should pay any price for such faith. +

Phillip Cary is professor of philosophy at Eastern University, and author of *Good News for Anxious Christians: 10 Practical Things You Don't Have to Do* (Brazos Press).

Is Longer Better?

Gilbert Meilaender looks at the case for using science to extend human life. By Rob Moll

The hydra is a freshwater animal, just a few millimeters long. It acts like an upside-down sedentary jellyfish, collecting food with tentacles. The creature is especially interesting in this: It seems to be immortal. Because the hydra reproduces by budding rather than mating, it uses its stem cells to regenerate aging tissue. Scientists have discovered that the same gene responsible for the hydra's continual use of stem cells could allow human bodies to better repair themselves and potentially live healthier and longer.

The discovery is only the latest scientific breakthrough to make very real the possibility that we will, sooner or later, extend the human life span.

But should we? Gilbert Meilaender, a professor of theology at Valparaiso University and former member of the President's Council on Bioethics, takes up this question in ***Should We Live Forever? The Ethical Ambiguities of Aging*** (Eerdmans) ★★★★★. At a time when millions die without access to basic medical care, extending the life span of a few might seem morally dubious. But Meilaender leaves aside many related ethical questions, such as the problem of ensuring equitable access, for rich and poor alike, to these prospective fountains of youth. Instead, he zeroes in on the issue of whether, in and of itself, it would be good to pursue longer life.

Meilaender doesn't categorically reject extending life. If life is good, he argues, it very well may be good to have more of it. But there are costs, and that is the crux of the dilemma.

By seeking more life, we change what a human life is, and inevitably lose aspects that make it desirable. There is especially a tradeoff between life extension and reproduction. One life extension method—calorie restriction—works in part by shutting down the reproductive system, while another method prevents puberty.

Living longer, it seems, will pit the generations against each other. At the same time, seeking longer life in order to love others, Meilaender admits, "makes me hesitant . . . to dismiss too quickly the desire to retard aging."

Meilaender examines several other life-extending methods, like "downloading" our minds, removing us from our bodies, in order to live on as machines. What, he asks, are the possible consequences for future generations?

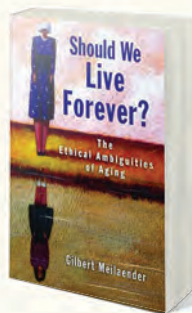
With each difficulty raised, Meilaender circles his subject, examining it from the perspective of one hoping to live forever, then from the view of someone who believes life is good in the shape and form we now enjoy. "Were those our only alternatives," he writes, "we might be hard pressed to say which is more to be desired."

Meilaender solves this dilemma with a Christian perspective. While sympathizing with our love of life and desire for more, he ultimately hopes not for life extension but life divine.

Life without aging, he argues, "may . . . begin to look more destructive than creative. That is why the qualitatively different life for which Christian believers have hoped has not been thought to be in any sense simply an extension of this life—or the product of human ingenuity. As the gift of God, a new creation, it means being drawn into the life shared by Father, Son, and Spirit."

We naturally desire more of the life we enjoy on earth, but it should point us elsewhere. "That longing," Meilaender says in the afterword, "could not possibly come from more of this life . . . not because this life is not good, but because it cannot finally bring the completion needed for us truly to flourish." +

Rob Moll is a CT editor at large and author of *The Art of Dying: Living Fully into the Life to Come* (InterVarsity Press).



Jesus Doesn't Need Help

from **THE WORLD IS NOT OURS TO SAVE:
FINDING THE FREEDOM TO DO GOOD**

TYLER WIGG-STEVENSON (INTERVARSITY PRESS, 220 PAGES)

Ephesians 4:16 tells us] that from Christ “the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” . . . [As activists], [w]hen we try to do everything ourselves, we risk disrespecting the diversity of gifts Christ has given to his body.

I remember facilitating a discussion on faith and activism at a conference for university chaplains and ministers. One young woman confessed that she was the consummate “joiner.” Give her a Christian cause and something to do, and she was on board. She’d like it on Facebook, follow on Twitter, buy the product, go to the conference, do the small group study. You name it; she’d do it. She was also exhausted, on the verge of burnout. As she spoke, sympathetic heads nodded around the table, including my own.

It struck me that those of us who shared such well-intentioned impulses were actually modeling ourselves after the wrong Christ. Our problem wasn’t a lack of concern for Jesus; his heart and compassion drove our response. But in taking the world’s burdens onto our backs, we were trying to grow in the image of Christ that we see in Colossians: the cosmic Jesus in whom “all things hold together” and through whose blood God chose to “reconcile to himself all things” (1:17, 20). Horrified by the sin and pain [of the world], we try to stretch wide enough and sacrifice hard enough to fix it. Does this sound like the faith of anyone you know?

Our shoulders aren’t big enough for that task. The miracle of the incarnation means that Jesus the man is also the Son of God, and so his sacrifice is sufficient for all of us. As disciples, we are called to conformity with his image, but not to his divinity (see Romans 8:29; Luke 6:40). In the student ministers’ discussion, Greg Carmer, the Dean of Chapel at Gordon College, put it well: a mature understanding of the unity of the body of Christ allows us to care about everything Christ cares about, but to carry only what he has given us to bear.

God has predestined us to become “little Christs” as we grow in maturity. Our resemblance to Jesus is like spiritual DNA, wherein all the parts of the body, though different in appearance and function, carry the same essential coding. This doesn’t mean

that we put our feet up and relax—but how liberating it is to remember that Jesus does not need any help being the head or the whole of the body, and that “each part” can simply focus on doing its own work!

Taken from *The World Is Not Ours to Save*, by Tyler Wigg-Stevenson. Copyright © 2013 by Tyler Wigg-Stevenson. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, PO Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515. ivpress.com.



THE EVE OF DESTRUCTION

How 1965 Transformed America

JAMES T. PATTERSON (BASIC BOOKS)



Here a distinguished historian chronicles a dramatic shift in American culture. Americans in 1964 “exuded a sense of consensus and optimism,” so he tells us; by the end of 1965, the national mood had darkened dramatically.

Somewhere in this account, a reader might suppose, the religious faith (and faiths) of Americans would have to be reckoned with. So you’d think, but no—though James Patterson does mention that the “Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, a right-wing student group,” denounced Barry McGuire’s hit song “Eve of Destruction.” It was obviously intended to weaken morale, hastening “surrender to atheistic international Communism.” Those weird Christians!

THE HIDDEN EUROPE

What Eastern Europeans Can Teach Us

FRANCIS TAPON (WANDERLEARN PRESS)



Russia isn’t exactly “hidden,” but we hear very little in the mainstream press about the rest of the 25 countries covered in this breezy, informative guidebook: part travelogue, part history, loaded with surprising

facts, unbuttoned opinions, and shrewd observations. Some readers, I hope, will be provoked to give more attention to our brothers and sisters in Christ in the region Francis Tapon surveys.

ELIOT PORTER

In the Realm of Nature

PAUL MARTINEAU (GETTY PUBLICATIONS)



In the late 1960s, when I was in college, certain books were ubiquitous: J. R. R. Tolkien’s trilogy, Hermann Hesse’s *Siddhartha*, and so on. One such book was Eliot Porter’s *In*

Wildness Is the Preservation of the World, coupling Porter’s photos with snippets from Henry David Thoreau. I condescended to that book and its admirers (the title alone drove me nuts), but I have long since repented. Now comes this gorgeous book, resplendent with the irreducible particularity of creation, the gratuitous excess of it.

Happy Meals

Rachel Marie Stone believes food is far more than fuel.

Interview by LaVonne Neff

Eating with joy means accepting food as God's gift. . . . It means choosing food . . . that affirms a flourishing life for the land, for the animals and for the people that bring us our food. It means eating food with others in ways that lead to our mutual health and flourishing. And it means embracing our creativity as people made in the image of the Creator God to prepare food in ways that celebrate God's gift while bringing enjoyment to all our senses." So writes Rachel Marie Stone in her debut book, **Eat With Joy: Redeeming God's Gift of Food** (InterVarsity Press)—but Stone hasn't always eaten with joy. For 10 years she struggled with an eating disorder "only slightly more dramatic than the eating disorder that most North Americans have." Today, however, she's a joyful wife, mother, gardener, meal-maker, and writer—often about food. Writer LaVonne Neff corresponded with Stone about connecting with God, his creation, and his people through the way we eat.

You've written that your decade-long fear of food was tied to your theology. What changed your attitude?

For many Americans, food is connected to morality. Menus describe chocolate desserts as "sinful," and labels describe healthier choices as "guilt-free." People speak of being "bad" when they've broken their chosen dietary rules and "good" when they haven't. I believed that keeping my weight down and my intake "pure" was crucial to keeping the rest of my life ordered and in check. I believed this meant not caring about food—or pleasure—very much, that apathy toward food, except as healthy fuel for the tank, was what pleased God.

As to what changed my attitude and allowed me to eat with joy—a lot of things. I'm a reader, and so I always turn to books when I'm

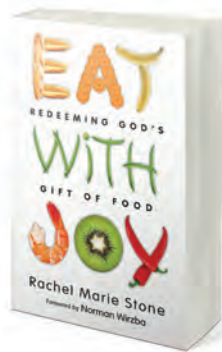
trying to figure something out. But finishing school—and thus leaving the student life of cafeteria and meals-on-the-run—and starting a family helped, too. I realized that I loved to cook, and that, in spite of all the dieting, I loved food. I had always wanted to have a vegetable garden, and as a young married person, I finally did. Through these things I began to see food as a gift of the earth, and thus a gift from God. It was not something God was holding out to tempt me. It was something God was holding out to entice me, to invite me to taste God's goodness.

INTERVIEW

Eating with joy is great, but lots of us get downright giddy—and our joy eventually becomes diabetes and heart disease. Shouldn't we worry about that?

Diet-related illness is serious, and it disproportionately affects people who are poor, so it's something to worry about on multiple fronts. Childhood obesity is a problem, too. But I don't think *joy* and that old word *temperance* (meaning moderation) are mutually exclusive. Joy in food should include awareness of the things God cares about. God cares about those who are hungry, those who suffer the effects of a nutrient-poor but calorie-rich diet, those who must work in farm fields and slaughterhouses at low wages and in unsafe conditions. Thinking about the real people and serious issues involved in food can encourage us in temperance.

Joy isn't a free-for-all. It's the deep pleasure that comes by slowing down, recognizing God's gift, remembering those who don't have enough, appreciating the labor and resources involved in bringing the food to the table, and purposefully eating with others. If other cultures can blend pleasure in eating with relatively low rates of diet-related disease (as do the French, as do the Italians), so can we.



So what do you do if your kids' grandparents regularly stuff them with things that aren't good for them?

Depends on how close the grandparents live! It's easy to go overboard on dietary rules and then apply them across the board so that there's no room for celebration. If your kids eat a reasonably good diet and are in reasonably good health, there's room to go a little crazy at Grandma's, as long as that's not every few days. Of course, in our culture, it's easy to think that every day is a reason for celebrating with some oversize dessert—which isn't reasonable. But swearing off all treats isn't reasonable, either. Too often there's this all-or-nothing mentality. You can see it reflected in the way people speak of their diets as a part of their identity: I am a vegan, for example.

Is the evangelical community starting to pay more attention to joy in the created order?

I think we are. Maybe we are moving away from a disembodied, "spiritualized" understanding of our faith and noticing that we have bodies, that we have senses, and that far from being a hindrance to our spiritual lives, these things can help us notice what God loves. And it's starting to be acceptable in evangelical circles to assert the importance of creation care, of recycling and reducing carbon footprints, of respecting animals, and so on, without being branded a "nature-worshiper." I don't think this was the case even 10 years ago.

You quote N. T. Wright on the importance of "the small but significant symbolic act." If a Christian wants to eat joyfully, what's a good symbolic act to start with?

Try to eat with someone for most meals. Ultimately, eating with joy is about connectedness—with God, God's creation, and with others in Jesus' name. There's a reason why we break bread together as Christians, why the early church's services looked more like a meal than a performance. Eating together brings us closer to the people we're eating with and gives us a glimpse of the hospitality of God. We can't change the whole system (or even ourselves) overnight, but little changes can add up to something big.

Blaze of Gory

Django Unchained and the quest for revenge. By Jeffrey Overstreet

On Christmas Day—while Americans were still grieving for victims of the Newtown elementary-school massacre—*Django Unchained*, Quentin Tarantino's latest film, opened nationwide.

Set in the 1850s, a slave (played by Jamie Foxx) is freed and trained by a bounty hunter (Christoph Waltz) to help him kill bad guys. Eventually, they set out to rescue Django's enslaved wife from a sadistic plantation owner. Extravagant shootouts, sickening carnage, and vigilante justice ensue.

Did the wounded American public boycott the movie and condemn Tarantino for insensitivity? Hardly. *Django Unchained* earned more than \$60 million in the first six days. And Hollywood, being a business-minded town, will get the message: "More, please."

Before we flog Tarantino for his extreme depictions of violence, or condemn *Django Unchained* outright, or call for censorship of artists who paint scenes of atrocity and bloody vengeance, consider these questions.

1. Are people really so bloodthirsty?

Stories of vigilante justice and revenge oversimplify the world into good guys and bad guys, and glorify individuals who resolve by force whatever grieves or offends them. They answer violence with violence, *ad infinitum*.

Such art lacks any vision for peace, reconciliation, or the redemption of enemies.

But it is also unfair to convict audiences of mere bloodlust. Many are compelled by an honorable passion, a perception of injustice, a desire to see order restored. When the audience cheers for the rescue of Django's wife, or for the punishment of a man who castrated slaves, there is genuine conscience at work.

It falls short of a mature respect for love, mercy, and grace, but it's a step in the right direction.

2. If gratuitous violence is harmful, what about dishonesty?

When a culture tells stories that deny or excuse its own evils long enough, the pendulum is sure to swing the other direction,

revealing and even exaggerating what has been left out.

Tarantino's vision of the 1850s is more truthful and less romanticized than most films about that period. He isn't afraid to acknowledge the murders, cruelty, and racism that should weigh heavily on America's conscience.

Violence that is easy to watch is potentially more damaging than scenes that make us sick to our stomachs.

3. Didn't Paul tell us to dwell on "anything excellent or praise-worthy" (Phil. 4:8)?

We should be just as quick to acknowledge and honor what is "excellent" and "praiseworthy" in Tarantino's movies as we are to object to his offenses.

Tarantino's screenplays are driven by sophisticated, quotable, nearly musical dialogue. His engaging characters are often brought to life in exquisite performances.

But if you find his films too troubling, steer clear. Writing to a church whose members disagreed about consuming pagan culture, Paul said, "One person's faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. . . . Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind" (Rom. 14:2–5).

Elsewhere, he said, "Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial" (1 Cor. 6:12, NIV 1984). Some of us can stomach Tarantino's work, others can't. Both can be faithful responses.

4. Are we remembering the violence in the great stories?

Homer, the Brothers Grimm, William

Shakespeare, Flannery O'Connor, Cormac McCarthy—great storytellers have consistently borne witness to violence.

The Old Testament paints a world in which violence is a method for committing sin and achieving justice. Samson. David

and Goliath. God's armies slaughter men, women, children, and animals. A woman drives a stake through a villain's head. Ehud shoved a dagger so deeply into an evil king's guts that "the handle sank in after the blade, and his bowels discharged"

(Judges 3:22). That's some gory, violent justice right there.

To a world without Christ, these stories were necessary. To those who love him, they're a reminder of how much we need him. To a world that rejects his example of sacrifice and grace, they remain a pleasing fantasy, but insufficient.

The apostle Paul walked among altars built to false gods and observed how they revealed a culture's incomplete vision. He did not condemn altars or worshipers, but engaged their longing for the missing piece, the "unknown God."

By listening to the conflicted and troubling visions of our own culture, we can answer Christ's call to love our neighbors. Moreover, we can learn to share, celebrate, write, and even film visions of something better than vengeance, a way that reconciles all of creation and breaks all captives' chains. 



High Gross: The successful *Django Unchained* offers gory violence and musical dialogue.

Jeffrey Overstreet, author of *Auralia's Colors*, *The Ale Boy's Feast*, and *Through a Screen Darkly*, reviews films at patheos.com/blogs/lookingcloser.

Homer, the Brothers Grimm, Shakespeare, Flannery O'Connor, Cormac McCarthy—great storytellers have consistently borne witness to violence.

KIDS

BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFEWHEN THE BIBLE
MEETS *HER* LIFE

She is wowed with something that lasts—the God of the Bible—and she'll see from an early age a God that is better and bigger than anything else she may face.

COMING FALL 2013

LifeWay | Kids

WOW ME

Preview three sessions for free
at biblestudiesforlife.com

CAST A VISION FOR
COMMUNITY

Before planting a church in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Matt LeRoy, an '07 Asbury Seminary graduate, and his family rooted themselves in the community to listen to its rhythms and its needs. Downtown, where the lives of the homeless and UNC college students intersect, Matt discovered that people with incredibly bright futures and people who were broken could come together and grow in Christ as part of the same family.

You can make a difference in your city too! To learn more about the NEW Master of Arts degree in Church Planting, launching Fall 2013, please visit asbury.to/churchplanting.

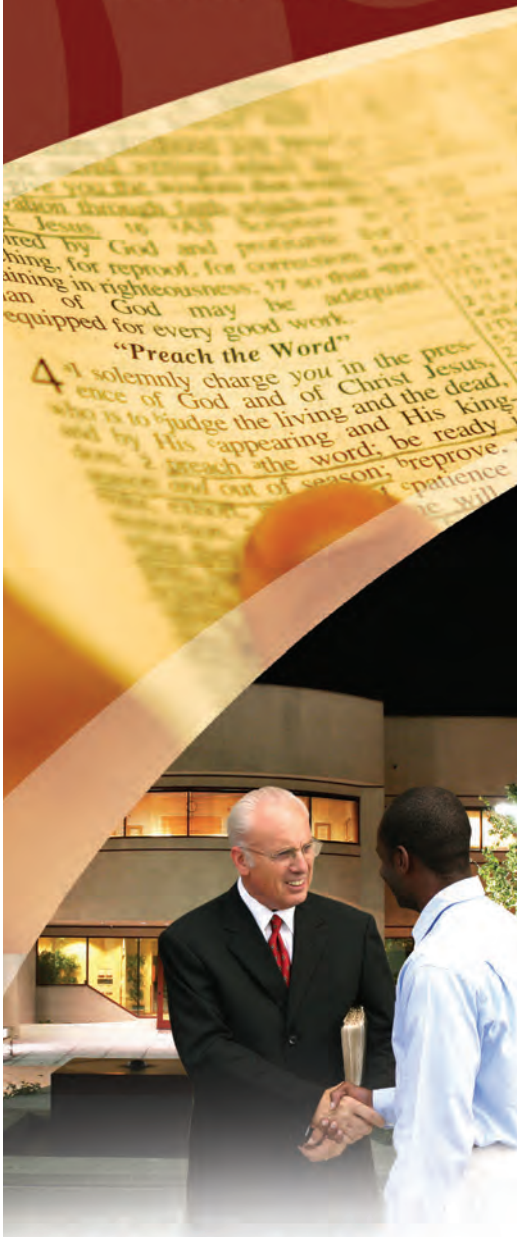
A full-tuition scholarship for this degree is available to 50 qualified applicants!

ASBURY
theological
SEMINARY
asburyseminary.edu | 800.2ASBURY

Scan the QR code or follow the web-link asbury.to/Leroy to see an amazing video of what God is doing through Matt and his church in Chapel Hill.



THE MASTER'S SEMINARY



*We Train Men
as if Lives
Depended on It*

Information: 800-CALL-TMS
Admissions: rmehringer@tms.edu
www.tms.edu

QUICK TAKES *More media of note.*

BOOKS

► PILGRIM THEOLOGY

Core Doctrines for Christian Disciples

MICHAEL HORTON (ZONDERVAN)

★★★★★ Since it first released in 2011, I've been meaning to read Michael Horton's massive work of systematic theology, *The Christian Faith*. Well, here we are two years later, and it still hasn't been cracked open. (Funny how that happens with 1,000-page books!) Thankfully, Horton now delivers us a condensed version of that earlier work in *Pilgrim Theology*. Aimed at a wider audience of nontheology buffs, the book ably sketches out the basic contours of the Christian message from the author's Reformed perspective. Each of the 19 chapters comes equipped with helpful study questions, lists of essential terminology, and sidebars on key theological distinctions. And Horton, knowing his audience will consist largely of readers too intimidated to pick up weightier systematic volumes, wisely includes an excellent introduction about the value of studying theology—and the inescapability of thinking, and living, according to some theology or another. "What happens when you die?" he asks. "What's the future of this world? These are not abstract questions, but questions that haunt our hearts and minds from childhood to old age. We can suppress these questions, but we cannot make them go away. Reality forces us to bump into them." —Matt Reynolds

► SENT

How One Ordinary Family Traded the American Dream for God's Greater Purpose

HILARY ALAN (WATERBROOK PRESS)

★★★★★ Not everyone can, or should, emulate the Alan family of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Which is to say: forsake the manifold blessings of a comfortable, upper middle-class American life and, convinced of God's call, resettle in tsunami-ravaged Southeast Asia. Or wherever else God's people are needed to house the homeless, feed the starving, or otherwise comfort the afflicted. But there's no doubt that many fortunate families really ought to consider uprooting themselves from all that's pleasant and familiar, perhaps a great many more than are willing to contemplate doing so. Even those of us with comparatively fewer

material blessings should feel similar tugs of conscience, prone as we all are to prefer easy paths to hard. Some of the lessons related in Hilary Alan's account might seem fairly obvious to believing Christians: Serve others, not yourself. Store up treasures in heaven, not on earth. Sacrifice everything to serve God and his kingdom, rather than living for comfort and pleasure. Things like that. But then, the most important life lessons are often those we've heard before—probably on occasions beyond numbering—but stubbornly refuse to put into practice. As Samuel Johnson was fond of saying, mankind has a greater need of being reminded than of being instructed. —Matt Reynolds

► WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

Man and Woman: A Defense

SHERIF GIRGIS, RYAN T. ANDERSON, AND ROBERT P. GEORGE (ENCOUNTER BOOKS)

★★★★★ Robert George, Sherif Girgis, and Ryan Anderson collaborated on a much-discussed article in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* defending the traditional understanding of marriage as the union of one man and one woman—characterized by permanence and sexual exclusivity, and ordered toward the bearing and rearing of children. Since the article's publication in 2010, they have kept busy answering their many critics in print and online venues alike. This book builds upon the original article and once again addresses a host of dissenting views. Evangelicals familiar with the scriptural case for traditional marriage should add to their arsenal of arguments the natural-law perspectives offered here.

But what about those who tend to slander any form of opposition to same-sex marriage as irrational and hateful? Can anything persuade them to rethink their views? The authors allude to this problem early on: "[W]e recognize," they write, "that some, having simply dismissed our view as a noxious mix of obscurantism and bigotry, will be unwilling—perhaps unable—to entertain defenses of [traditional marriage]. We harbor no illusions that those committed to shielding their ears from reasonable arguments will be reached by a book that aims to offer reasonable arguments." If anything, I'm even more pessimistic. I fear the book will do little, if anything, to make converts. But the authors can't be faulted for the wider social climate. As public intellectuals, they've acquitted themselves admirably—and he who has ears, let him hear. —Matt Reynolds



SHOW ME

Preview three sessions for free
at biblestudiesforlife.com

STUDENTS

**BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE**

WHEN THE BIBLE MEETS *HIS* LIFE

He will see that Jesus isn't a Sunday activity. His faith isn't just for the future but impacts his today, his school, his friends, and his choices.

COMING FALL 2013

LifeWay | Students

Managing ministry money isn't getting any easier.

How can you do it better? Thousands of ministries turn to Evangelical Christian Credit Union (ECCU) for banking resources like our free webinar recordings, including:



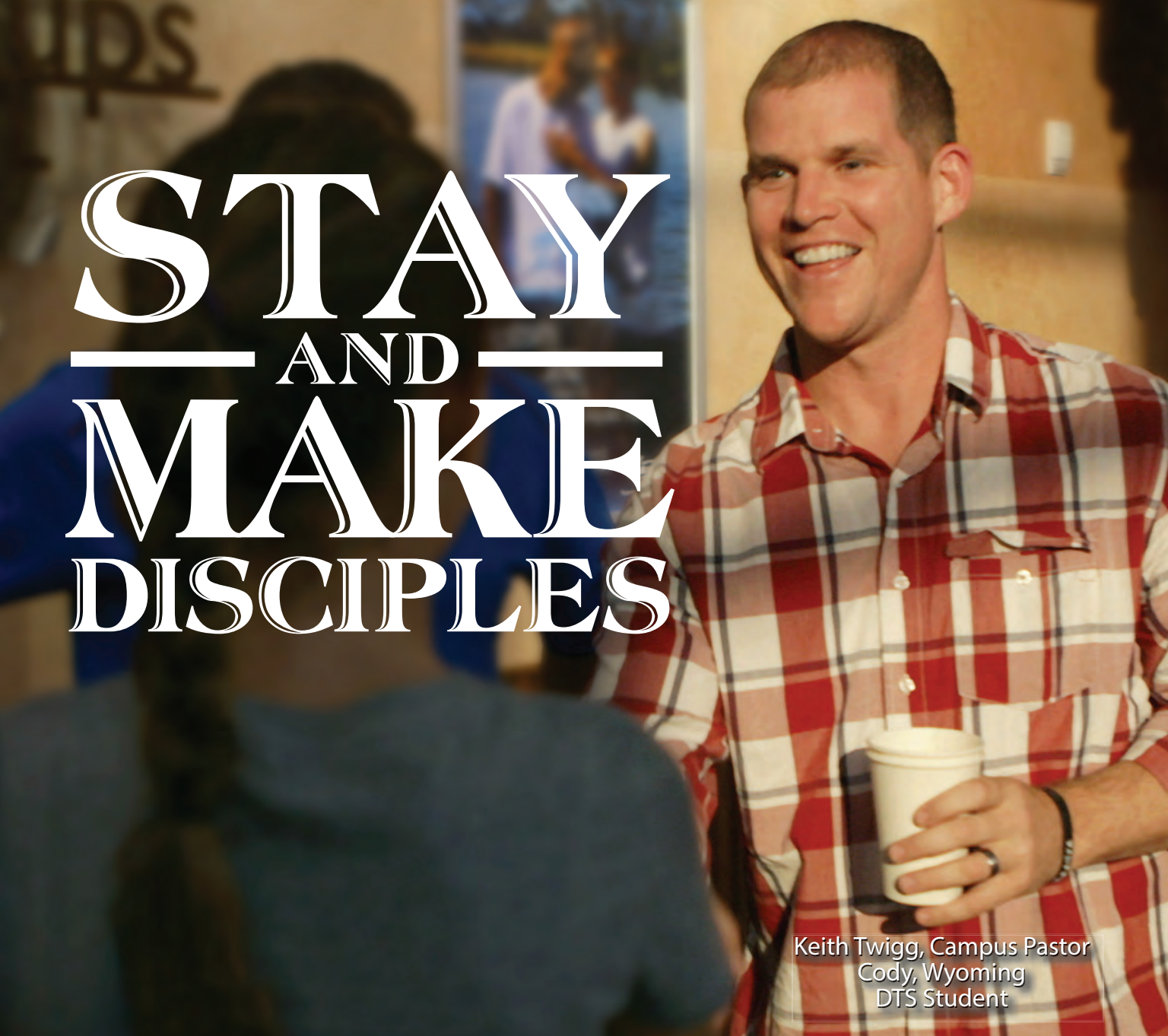
Investing in ministry.®

**How to
Look Like
a Healthy
Borrower**



Watch this free webinar recording.

To learn more, visit
www.eccu.org/resources/webinars.

A photograph of a man, Keith Twigg, smiling and holding a white coffee cup. He is wearing a red and white plaid shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a social setting.

STAY — AND — MAKE DISCIPLES

Keith Twigg, Campus Pastor
Cody, Wyoming
DTS Student

Complete your degree without leaving your ministry.

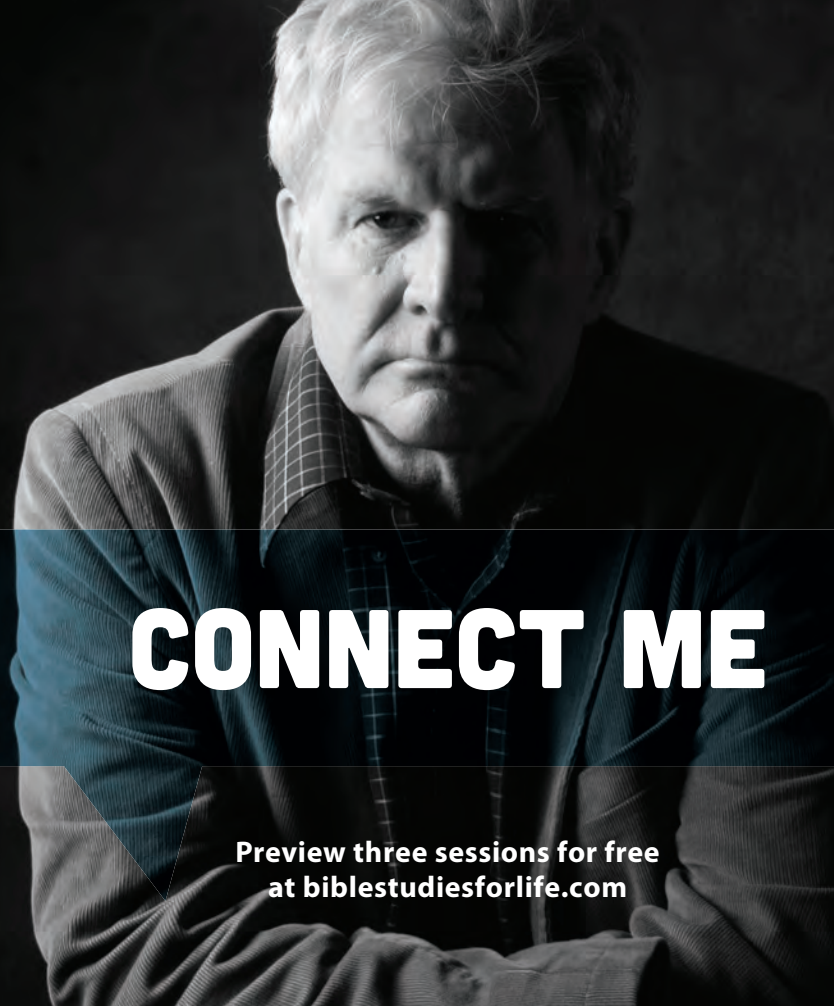
Through a combination of online classes, week-long intensives, and the ministry residency program, you can earn the M.A. in Christian Leadership from Dallas Theological Seminary.

Stay with the people God has called you to serve.



DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

See Keith's story at
www.dts.edu/stay



CONNECT ME

Preview three sessions for free
at biblestudiesforlife.com

ADULTS

BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE

WHEN THE BIBLE MEETS *HIS* LIFE

Bible Studies for Life deals with
real-life issues that will help you
connect him to a group.

So he's moved from observing
to participating; from loneliness
to community.

COMING FALL 2013

LifeWay | Adults



DORDT COLLEGE

Excelling in the sciences.

And almost every other
area you can imagine.

Since 2000, Dordt engineering students have
earned a 97% pass rate on the Fundamentals of
Engineering exam.

100% of Dordt nursing students passed the
NCLEX-RN on their first attempt for 5 years
running; they also have a 100% employment rate.

80% of Dordt students who apply to med school
are accepted; the national average is 33%.



Find your place in God's world

Sioux Center, Iowa
www.dordt.edu





WE ARE YOU.

Leaders in our homes. Mentors in our community. Champions of our values.

Christianbook.com offers a tremendous selection of books, Bibles, gifts, and music at huge savings, but we're much more than just an online store. We are you.

 **Christianbook.com®**
1-800-CHRISTIAN
everything **CHRISTIAN** for less!



WELL DONE

WHEN THE BIBLE MEETS *THEIR* LIVES

It's the first thing on my mind in the morning; my last thought before I go to sleep. *I'm accountable before God to disciple my people well. Are they being formed in the image of Jesus? Are the studies we're providing bringing about life change?* Bible Studies for Life lets you rest assured knowing that your people are being disciplined with a wise plan that will bring them to greater maturity in Christ.

COMING FALL 2013

**Preview three sessions for free
at biblestudiesforlife.com**

800.458.2772

**BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE**

 **LifeWay**
Biblical Solutions for Life

RATED IN THE TOP 2% OF U.S. UNIVERSITIES

REGENT UNIVERSITY: VIRGINIA'S ONLY RECIPIENT
OF THE AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND
ALUMNI'S HIGHEST RATING.



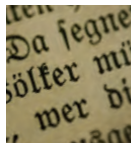
Regent University is one of only 21 universities nationwide to receive an "A" rating by the American Council of Trustees



and Alumni (ACTA)—from more than 1,000 schools reviewed—and Virginia's only university to earn this honor.*



What standards of academic excellence secured ACTA's highest rating? The commitment to critical core subjects including composition, literature, U.S. government and history, economics, mathematics, and science. From programs that demand critical thought to renowned faculty who inspire transformed character, Regent University is shaping accomplished students to make a lasting and positive difference. At Regent, preparing well-rounded future leaders isn't an elective. It's essential.



"Regent University has acted on its commitment to produce graduates educated for the challenges of career and community."

DR. MICHAEL POLIAKOFF
VICE PRESIDENT OF POLICY
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

Discover how Regent can prepare you for today's marketplace.

*Source: www.whatwilltheylearn.org

ASSOCIATE'S • BACHELOR'S • MASTER'S • DOCTORAL
ONLINE | ON CAMPUS • 800.373.5504 | REGENT.EDU



**REGENT
UNIVERSITY**

Christian Leadership to Change the World

When Your Child Goes to College

Influence, encourage, and connect from afar



**A new parenting style
to help your child
succeed at college.**

Page 68

**One mom's transition
to long-distance
parenting.** Page 80



Switching to Coach Mode

A new parenting style to help your child succeed in college.



College is a huge transition—and not just for the students. While incoming freshmen adjust to dorm life, roommates, and college classes, their parents learn to cope with an empty house and new daily routines. Even so, when your child lives on a college campus, that doesn't mean your parenting job is finished. Your job description may change, but your titles of Mom and Dad remain. Read on to learn about the skills you'll need in order to

influence, encourage, and connect with your child from afar.

Communicate: Listen and Encourage

Your son or daughter may live halfway across the country, but there are numerous ways to stay connected. Do you need to check up on him or her multiple times a day through Facebook? Should you call, Skype, or text your child every day? Mark Troyer, vice president for enrollment management at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky, says, "There is a great balance needed

between communicating that you care about and love your child, and giving him or her space to be able to solve problems, develop relationships, and experience college outside of Mom and Dad. I'm sure there is no hard-and-fast rule for how much contact is too much. But as parents we should ask ourselves, 'Am I giving my child more space than he or she had in high school?'"

The bottom line: Communication with your child needs to change. That doesn't mean parents shouldn't check in with their college students on a weekly



INDIANA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY PROVIDES
OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE,
SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

WORLD CHANGERS

Indiana Wesleyan University, an energized Christian comprehensive university, is committed to liberal arts and professional education offered through:

- College of Arts and Sciences
- College of Adult and Professional Studies
- School of Nursing
- Graduate School
- Wesley Seminary

Our residential campus in Marion, Indiana, is home to more than 3,200 students committed to faith, fellowship, the pursuit of knowledge and being a part of our extraordinary campus environment.

Through programs offered online and at education centers in three states, more than 12,000 adult learners turn busy schedules into fulfilling lives. Programs include business, education and nursing.

We believe that with God's help, ordinary people can become extraordinary world-changers.

INDIANA
WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY

indwes.edu
866-468-6498

Change your life. Change the world.

basis, but the *types* of conversations need to change. Gradually, parents need to become better listeners and encouragers instead of advice givers.

Asking your child if he's done his homework, if he's eating right, and what he did last Friday night may feel like normal questions to you. But as you see your child coping with all of the changes in his life, those types of questions should be asked less frequently. Instead, try asking him about the things he enjoys, what challenges him, what God is teaching him, and how you can pray for him. Such questions can give parents an open window into their children's world.

Most likely, this new world includes a roommate. Many college students don't know their roommates prior to setting foot on campus. So there may be some initial tension while they learn how to navigate each other's personal space and schedule. It's normal for a college student to get annoyed by seemingly small things, such as a pile of laundry, alarm clocks going off at odd times, and dirty bathrooms. But these are all part of the college experience. If your child complains to you about her roommate, don't jump in to solve the problem. Instead, advise her to seek help from her resident assistant (RA).

"Encouraging them, dropping them notes, and loving them is important," Troyer says. "But so is not intruding too much on how they are framing their experience. They need to begin feeling some autonomy in how they structure their time, who they choose as friends, and what they are involved in." When parents step back and become encouragers instead of advisors, it forces students to start thinking for themselves, which helps them mature socially, academically, and spiritually.

"Encouraging them to think for themselves about the best classes, majors, and study abroad opportunities is helpful," Troyer says. "But resist the temptation to set up their schedules. It is important that we encourage them to do their own research on academic issues and [campus activities]. They will make some mistakes in these areas; but remember, sometimes a small failure is

Is your student ready for the next step?



Worldview Studies Certificate

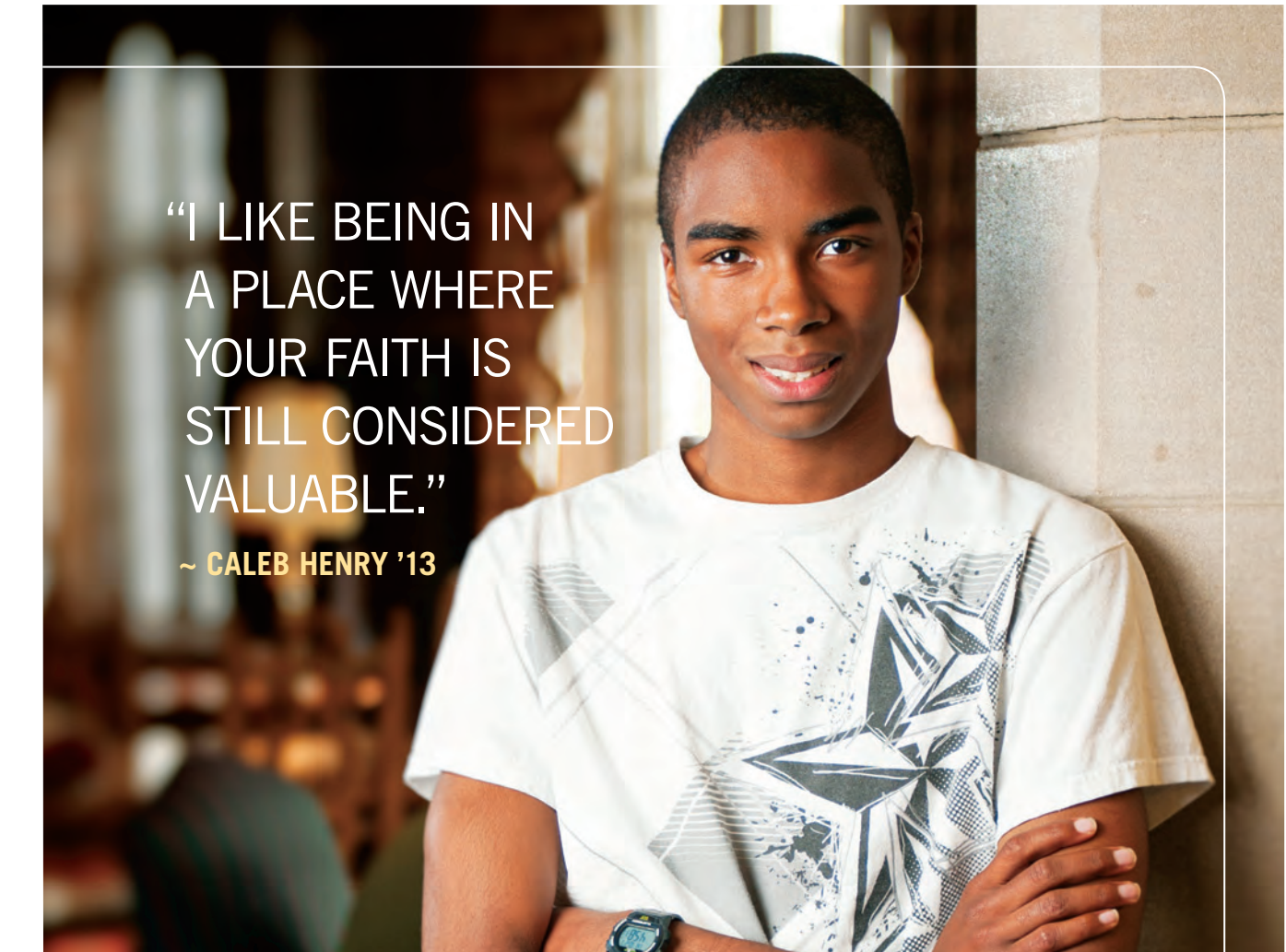
The worldview studies certificate at Boyce College is a one-year program designed to strengthen a biblical foundation for university-bound high school graduates. They can earn a year of college credit while learning from leaders like R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary, and Bland Mason, chaplain to the Boston Red Sox. It's a year that will change your student's life.

To get more information, visit boycecollege.com/worldview or call 1-800-626-5525 to speak with an admissions counselor.

Preview Day | April 26



BOYCE
COLLEGE



"I LIKE BEING IN
A PLACE WHERE
YOUR FAITH IS
STILL CONSIDERED
VALUABLE."

~ CALEB HENRY '13

"A friend recommended Grove City College to me and I'm glad she did. What I like best is that I'm able to pursue all my passions here, especially astronomy.

Faith remains at the center of everything, which encourages me to explore and learn more, including developing a deeper understanding of other denominations. The faculty challenge me daily. Plus, I'm able to participate in the sports I love.

I've made some awesome friends here. As a freshman, I was welcomed immediately, and by sophomore year the campus felt like home.

It's just been a great experience so far."



GROVE CITY
COLLEGE

Because faith and freedom matter



See what other students have to say. choose.gcc.edu/welcome | 724-458-2100

one of the best teaching tools.”

Be Honest: Talk about Money

College is a big financial investment that shouldn't be taken lightly. For many students, every penny counts. But with all of the newfound freedoms in college, some students get themselves into deep financial trouble. So what are Mom and Dad to do?

“Spending expectations is one of the many intentional conversations that parents and students should have throughout the college preparation process,” says Mike Loomis, dean of student development at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. “If parents have never had the time or opportunity to discuss finances with their students, then this is an excellent opportunity to begin their education on managing money by setting a budget and sticking to it, as well as taking on additional financial responsibilities.”

In addition to mounting college debt, students can quickly fall into the trap of credit card debt. More and more

colleges and universities today are doing some great work in the area of teaching students about financial literacy and debt management—important and worthwhile skills to learn during the college years. Parents and students should talk openly and honestly about finances, spending expectations, debt, savings, summer job responsibilities, and what it takes to successfully navigate financing an education.

Parents also need to keep tabs on—but not hover over—their students' spending. For instance, seeing a pizza on the credit card statement shouldn't cause alarm, but a \$100 shopping spree should—and it needs to be addressed quickly.

“Ideally, conversations about spending habits and financial issues should start with age-appropriate information early in life,” says Becky Phillips, associate director of church and parent relations at Geneva College. “If students are not making wise choices, it is important for parents to have oversight with the goal of ever-increasing

independence. Parents can help by encouraging students to take advantage of the many types of financial seminars that are offered by the college.”

Parent-Coach Mode: Build Their Academic Confidence

College is often an academic wake-up call. Students who were used to getting As in high school often find themselves getting Bs in college. And it's not unusual for even top-performing students to fail on a paper or two. But one or two bad grades don't make students academic failures. Instead, parents and students should see these disappointments as learning opportunities.

“The first six weeks of college are a critical time,” says Mike Sohm, vice president of student development at Crown College in Saint Bonifacius, Minnesota. “Students are assessing if they can do it, if they want to do it; Mom and Dad need to understand that some failure and frustration is good.”

A little preparation before the first class can help ease some of the

At Messiah, we don't just engage the questions of the classroom.

We set them into conversation with your Christian faith.

Equipped with a mature intellect and a discerning spirit, students are ready to [navigate a complex world](#).

Messiah College. [See anew](#).

Forge a thoughtful faith

SHARPENING INTELLECT
DEEPENING CHRISTIAN FAITH
INSPIRING ACTION

messiah.edu
800.233.4220

admiss@messiah.edu
Grantham, Pa.



Undergraduate students: 2,798 • Student/Faculty ratio: 13:1 •
All first-year students receive financial aid • Athletics: 22 NCAA
Division III sports • Majors: 80+ • Study abroad: 40+ locations

START HERE.
IMPACT
THE WORLD.

Asbury University media students
have worked as paid broadcasters
at 10 Olympic Games since 1984.



ASBURY UNIVERSITY

Academic Excellence & Spiritual Vitality

Whether you choose Media Communications or any of our other 50+ majors, Asbury University is committed to equipping you for a lifetime of learning, leadership and service.

We will encourage you to immerse yourself in a new culture, tackle those hard academic and faith questions and stretch your boundaries as you discover God's call for your life. At Asbury, academic excellence and spiritual vitality is not just our motto, it is our promise.



Visit us online!
Scan this QR code.

Undergraduate • Graduate • Degree Completion • Online Degrees
One Macklem Drive • Wilmore, KY 40390 • asbury.edu • (800) 888-1818

SHAPE YOUR
LIFE TO SHAPE
THE WORLD



SOMEONE'S GOING TO shape THE WORLD

WHY NOT YOU?

AS A FOUR-YEAR CHRISTIAN LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES UNIVERSITY, Judson University prepares students to shape their world, living out their gifts, talents and passions for God's glory. Visit Judson and discover:

- **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE.** Choose from more than 50 majors, minors and concentrations, plus 10 pre-professional programs.
- **REAL WORLD LEARNING.** 90% of recent graduates get real-world experience while still in school, through practicums, internships, and student teaching.
- **AN IDEAL SETTING.** The Judson campus, located on the banks of the Fox River, provides a close-knit community, while Chicago is only 40 minutes away.



Judson is Ranked in the Top Tier, Midwest Best Colleges,
U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges Survey



JUDSON
UNIVERSITY

IS JUDSON
a good fit?

Visit us for Preview
Days and find out!

April 12, 2013
September 2, 2013
October 13-14, 2013
November 10-11, 2013

CALL. 847.628.2510 **WEB.** VisitJudson.com/cti | 1151 N. State Street | Elgin, IL 60123

tension. Before your child goes to college, figure out what helped him or her succeed in high school. If your son or daughter had an Individual Education Plan (IEP), it is imperative that the college be aware of that. “College is a step up from high school,” Sohm says. “Some students don’t think they’ll need their IEP in college . . . but I highly recommend bringing it to the learning center and charting out ways to help your child succeed.”

Another big difference in college is the lack of direct oversight. No one will tell your child to study or go to class. Therefore, students need to be self-motivated. Helping your child map out study strategies may mean the difference between long-term success and failure.

But once students are deep into college life and classes, parents must switch to coach mode. Gone are the days of parent-teacher conferences, report cards, and helping with homework. In fact, because of today’s privacy laws, students don’t have to share their grades with their parents, although most still do.

One of the best things parents can do is give students the confidence to become their own advocates. This means checking in with their advisors. Academic advisors help students choose majors and map out class schedules, and they can also assist struggling students find help. But oftentimes students don’t tap into this invaluable resource. “One of the big problems advisors have is they call students to check in with them, and the students never return their phone calls. Parents need to encourage students to check in with their advisors at least once a semester,” says Sohm.

As a parent-coach, one of the greatest gifts you can give your child is a positive attitude. “Parents can tell their child, ‘If you fail one test, you are not a failure,’” Sohm says. “Mom and Dad can continue to give them confidence, and that’s a great thing.”

Encourage: Nudge Them to Find New Communities on Campus

No matter how excited or prepared for college your child is, it’s still a huge transition. And after all the excitement of packing, moving, and settling in dies

down, don’t be surprised if he or she feels homesick. It’s such a common condition that most first-year college students will experience it to one degree or another. Many believe the cure is a quick trip home. And most parents are ready and willing to welcome their children back—even if it’s just for a weekend. But is that the right thing to do?

Probably not, advises Dr. Todd Ream, associate professor of humani-

but also their transition to life in a new community.”

As they settle into college life, the majority of students will be able to conquer their initial feelings of homesickness. However, Ream warns that for a few students, a major life transition like college can trigger depression. So parents should be aware of the possible signs: abrupt changes in basic life patterns such as sleeping, eating, and

“Parents also need to keep tabs on—but not hover over—their students’ spending . . . seeing a pizza on the credit card statement shouldn’t cause alarm, but a \$100 shopping spree should . . .”

ties at Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana, and coauthor of *The Idea of a Christian College: A Reexamination for Today’s University* (Cascade Books, 2013). “What catches some parents off guard is that children who struggle the most at college are often the ones who had the greatest levels of involvement at home, church, and school.”

A student who is connected on campus is more likely to succeed academically than one who is not. In fact, according to Ream, most students who drop out of college do so not because they failed academically, but because they failed to make personal connections. And making deep, personal connections on campus won’t happen if a student goes home every weekend. Most dorms offer activities designed to engage students who are meeting new friends. Being on campus on the weekends and experiencing all that college has to offer helps students develop deep roots in campus life.

Parents can provide real guidance from afar. “Encourage your child to find new communities of their own,” Ream advises. “Finding a new church home can be a daunting challenge. However, the people they meet in that new community can be a great aid to not only the ongoing faith development of students,

communicating. “Although it seems simplistic, I would encourage parents to inquire about the basics,” Ream says. “Too often, college students have rather disconcerting daily habits. They become nocturnal, former high school athletes become mere observers, and pizza is now the lone food group. Establishing good habits in these basic areas can help students succeed in countless other areas.”

But if depression is a concern, parents shouldn’t hesitate to contact student development professionals, such as residence directors and student life counselors, who are trained to help students make successful transitions from home to college life. They can also guide a student to seek help from emotional or physical healthcare providers on campus, if necessary.

During this transition one of the most important things a parent can do for their child is pray. “Pray without ceasing,” Ream says. “Your children know and appreciate your commitment to pray for them. [Countless] students have told me how much the prayers of their parents mean to them. Especially when they are far away from you, pray all the more.”

Even though parents aren’t physically present in their college students’ day-to-day lives, they still have an enormous

amount of influence. Encouraging and praying for our children can mean the difference between success and failure. "Parents often underestimate how much influence they have," Ream says. "Most students love their parents deeply. . . . Keep pouring your wisdom into them."

Parents Need Support Too

Students aren't the only ones who need to make connections on campus—so do the parents. And many Christian colleges recognize this. Freshman orientation is no longer reserved for students. Instead, colleges such as Palm Beach Atlantic University (PBA) in West Palm Beach, Florida, have created programming to make the college transition as smooth and painless as possible for parents. "This type of orientation is worth your time," says Mary Jacobs, director of special projects and parent relations at PBA. "When parents leave their children at college, they know names and faces from campus. It really helps with the transition."

The foundation for a successful

transition begins after students move into the dorms. Parents are encouraged to stay the next four days for their own orientation. So while students are busy learning about dorm life, parents are invited to dinners and ice cream socials hosted by the college president. And just as resident directors work hard to connect students with similar interests, Jacobs and her team purposely try to connect parents from the same home state. "We found that connecting families . . . from the same geographic area helps them feel like they aren't the only ones who live far away," Jacobs says. "It makes it much easier when the time comes to finally say good-bye."

Another highlight of a typical parent orientation are forums that help ease some initial jitters. Panels are often made up of representatives from different campus departments, such as academic success, campus safety and security, and resident life. And panels consisting of parents of current PBA students are also popular because they help the new parents learn from those who've already

made the transition successfully. "This type of programming is very beneficial to the parents," Jacobs says. "We address topics like letting go and different ways to communicate with your child."

Prayer is also key in making a smooth transition, and it's a big part of parent orientation. Parents are encouraged to spend time praying over different parts of the campus, and for the student body and professors.

Six to eight weeks after classes begin, colleges typically host a family weekend. According to Jacobs, this is a great opportunity to return to campus because just enough time has passed for both parents and students to adjust to their new routines. And seeing their students happy, healthy, and well-adjusted is often just what parents need to fully transition into life at home without their college-aged children.

Amy Adair lives in the Chicago suburbs with her husband and three children. She is a freelance writer and editor. Her newest book, *One Thousand and One Tears*, was just released.



FIRST YEAR PROGRAMS

Not ready to commit to a major? Looking for an alternative to a traditional freshman year? Don't sit this one out. Join us and Walk a Different Path.



Israel & Archaeology



Urban Ministry



Arts & Culture



Outdoor Action

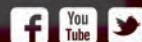
Learn more at cairn.edu



Great is Thy Faithfulness



BE CHALLENGED TO EXCEL



WHY TRINITY? >>>
WATCH THE VIDEO.



 **TRINITY**
CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

www.trnty.edu/visit
Schedule a visit to our campus in
Palos Heights, Illinois, just 30 minutes
from downtown Chicago.

THINK COURAGEOUSLY

Lauren, Anna, Nate and Ryan, Calvin's Goldwater Scholars, do.



“ Finding ways to care for God's creation drives everything I do. ”

Lauren Manck, '12
Goldwater Scholar, Fulbright Scholar,
National Science Foundation Grantee

WITH COURAGE AND WONDER

Calvin students see God's world as a gift to explore. With remarkable minds and hearts, they tackle big questions, discover new ideas and cover a lot of intellectual ground.

- + 11 Goldwater Scholars in 5 years
- + 15 Fulbright Scholars in 5 years
- + \$8.3 million in research funding in 2010–11
- + 2 science research programs for select first-year students
- + 100% professors who are committed Christians

Read their stories and explore Calvin's academic programs at:
www.calvin.edu/go/thinkcourageously

CALVIN
College

Palm Beach Atlantic University
Share the Spirit
West Palm Beach, Florida

At Palm Beach Atlantic University, our nationally-respected academic programs, opportunities for undergraduate research, and unparalleled setting on the water result in a college experience unlike any other.



- Programs and majors consistently **recognized for their quality**
- A faculty of **world-renowned scholars and experts**
- Opportunities for significant **undergraduate research projects**
- Hands-on internships **in West Palm Beach and beyond**
- A network of **successful alumni and solid career planning** to help you succeed

*Here, our shared spirit of purpose
shines across campus each day.
And we're ready to share it, with you.*



PALM BEACH ATLANTIC
U N I V E R S I T Y

Learn more at www.pba.edu



Letting Go

One mom's transition to long-distance parenting

When Katherine Magnuson drove her oldest son, Karl, to Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, for his freshman year, she was shocked by her reaction. Leaving her husband at home with their three younger children, she made the five-hour drive alone. And she expected to feel depressed and lonely when she left the campus, but instead she felt joy and excitement.

"It was very exciting," remembers Katherine. "I felt joy in his college choice. When I finally closed the door of the van and drove away, I did not cry."

Katherine didn't see Karl again until his Thanksgiving break, and she couldn't help but notice how much he'd matured in the short time he'd been away at college. She was proud of the young man he was becoming, and it confirmed for her that he really belonged at Union University.

But when it came time for Karl to return to campus, Katherine vividly remembers watching him back his car out of the driveway and raise a hand through the sunroof to wave good-bye. That's when the flood of emotions hit her.

"I stood in the middle of the street

and completely lost it," Katherine says. "It was like seeing him leave me, which was more powerful than my leaving him at college. It was like someone stabbed me in the heart. And that was when the true emotional separation happened."

That's also when Katherine knew her parenting style and her relationship with Karl had to change. She'd spent Karl's entire life praying that he would become the man God intended him to be, and she strongly believed that Union University was where Karl needed to go to develop into that man. That meant she needed to give him space to grow and mature academically, spiritually, and emotionally.

Katherine missed Karl, but she found the physical distance beneficial in helping her let Karl develop and grow. "If the college is too close to home," Katherine warns, "the temptation is to connect physically as much as possible. It makes it very difficult for a child to be released into adulthood. If they are at the right kind of college, then parents have to trust the core values of the facility and allow their child to grow and change and become the person God wants him or her to be."

Communication became an important part of Katherine's long-distance

parenting style. Although it was tempting to check Karl's Facebook page to get a real-time peek into his daily life, she decided not to. "I don't need to know everything," Katherine says. "I don't need to know whom he ate with, what every grade is, how late he stayed up. If you get obsessed with your child's Facebook page, you really need to step back and give him or her some space."

While Katherine wanted Karl to know she was available to talk anytime, she didn't want him to feel pressured to communicate with her. She knew he was busy, and she wanted to give him the space he needed.

"If you text your child and are waiting for a response, it puts him or her on the defensive. . . . Or if you call all the time—either your child has to ignore your call, or he has to answer and say he can't talk now and disappoint you."

So Katherine began writing letters and notes that didn't require her son's response. She loved to imagine Karl checking his mailbox after a long day and finding a handwritten note from home. Occasionally, she'd send him money for gas or pizza. Sometimes she'd include a picture of the family dog; other times it was just a note to say she loved him and was praying for him.



AS YOU ARE

We are a community of hope and purpose, full of thinkers and explorers who want to radically follow Christ. We come together as people both playful and sincere—people with space to be themselves—as we love, and serve, and learn. By integrating rigorous academics with steadfast faith we become more of who God wants us to be, as we experience Christ's kingdom and all it has to offer.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.WHEATON.EDU



Wheaton College®

For Christ and His Kingdom

She'd also text him only after he'd texted her. Karl eventually got into the habit of texting her right before a test. He'd text: PHYSICS TEST. And she'd reply: ON MY KNEES. Katherine established a set time to talk with Karl so she wouldn't interrupt him or feel disappointed if he wasn't able to talk when she called. She especially liked Skyping with him so she could see his dorm room and gain a bigger picture of his life at college.

When she had her weekly phone chats with Karl, she was an active listener. It was exciting to hear about the things Karl was becoming passionate about. Instead of telling him what she thought he should be doing, she simply listened to him. When he struggled with choosing his major or which classes to take, she encouraged him to seek counsel from his advisor. "Part of going to college is taking responsibility for your own decisions and life," Katherine says. "But that doesn't mean you can't help guide your child along the way—especially when you see a red flag."

While she missed Karl deeply,

Katherine kept busy with her other three kids. Eventually the emptiness and sadness that washed over her on the day she watched Karl back out of the driveway faded, and she worked hard at her new job as her son's greatest encourager. As each semester went by, it got easier and easier for her. And Karl graduated from

Union University in 2012. "I think the beauty of being a mother is that your heart for your child never wavers. I gave Karl space, but I was still very accessible to him," Katherine says. "It's a dichotomy. Deep down kids still need their parents' love and support, but they also want to grow up." —AA

Want to know more?

Here are phone numbers to request information about schools advertising in this issue of *Christianity Today*. You can also request information on any of these schools at www.ChristianCollegeGuide.net.

Christian College/University	Phone number
Asbury Theological Seminary (KY).....	800-227-2879
Asbury University (KY)	800-888-1818
Biola University (CA)	888-985-9858
Boyce College (KY)	800-626-5525
Cairn University (PA).....	877-786-2728
Calvin College (MI)	800-688-0122
Calvin Theological Seminary (MI).....	800-388-6034
Dallas Theological Seminary (TX) ...	800-DTS WORD (387-9673)
Denver Seminary (CO).....	800-922-3040
Dordt College (IA).....	800-343-6738
Geneva College (PA)	800-847-8255
Gordon College (MA).....	866-464-6736
Grove City College (PA)	724-458-2100
Houghton college (NY)	800-777-2556
Indiana Wesleyan University (IN)	800-234-5327
Judson University (IL)	847-628-2500
Master's Seminary, The (CA)	800-CALL-TMS (225-5867)
Messiah College (PA)	800-233-4220
Palm Beach Atlantic Univ. (FL)	888-GO-TO-PBA (468-6722)
Regent University (VA).....	800-373-5504
Seattle Pacific University (WA).....	800-366-3344
Trinity Christian College (IL).....	866-TRIN-4-ME (874-6463)
Western Seminary—Sacramento	(CA) 800-250-7030
Wheaton College (IL)	800-888-0141

GENEVA COLLEGE

If you're trying to figure out what to do next with your life, consider this.

We believe God has big plans for you. And that includes becoming everything He meant you to be.

ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE™

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS



With more than 40 majors, we have the programs you need to compete.

800-847-8255

Geneva.edu/undergraduate

GRADUATE PROGRAMS



Choose from 7 high-demand, advanced professional degrees.

724-847-6571

Geneva.edu/graduate_programs

ADULT DEGREE COMPLETION *with Online Options*



With 11 locations, and new online learning opportunities available, we make it convenient for you to finish your degree.

800-576-3111

Geneva.edu/adcp

PREPARING STUDENTS
**TO IMPACT
THE WORLD
FOR CHRIST**
SINCE 1883.

18  83
HOUGHTON
COLLEGE

www.houghton.edu
800.777.2556

Marketplace

Cost: 72 cents per character (each space and punctuation counts as a character); avg. 45 characters per line. Min. \$61.20 (85 characters). CHRISTIANITY TODAY check-marked box ☒ \$22 each insertion; box around ad \$43 each insertion. Ads set display style: \$425 per column inch. Combination discount rates available for LEADERSHIP JOURNAL. All classified ads will also run in the digital version of each issue at no additional charge. Prepayment and written confirmation needed to process ads. Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, or personal check accepted. Employment ads given priority. All other ads placed in first available issue. Deadline for reservation or cancellation is seven weeks prior to actual issue date. Address correspondence to: The Marketplace; 465 Gundersen Dr.; Carol Stream, IL 60188; or contact Stacy Smith, Sales Administrator, at: 630.260.6202 x4238; fax 630.260.9401; email Marketplace@ChristianityToday.com.

[Employment Opportunities]

SENIOR PASTOR

The International Protestant Church (IPC) of Zurich, Switzerland, with approximately 550 members, is seeking an experienced senior pastor to begin in late 2013. IPC is a member church of the AICEME and associated with the Swiss national church. For more information about IPC and the application process visit our website at www.ipc-zurich.org/pastoralsearch. Deadline for applications: April 2nd, 2013.

At the download site, you will find several PDF files with information about the position and the IPC. In addition, you will find the application form in MS-WORD format. Please complete this form, convert to PDF, and return it to pastoralsearch@ipc-zurich.org. Only fully completed application forms will be forwarded to the pastoral search committee.

A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN LEADERS

seeks a national director based in Washington, DC. Shepherding the Next Generation is a non-profit organization that seeks to influence state and federal policy makers with regard to proven programs that better the lives of at-risk children and their families. Our members work on issues such as early education, voluntary home visiting for at-risk mothers and children, programs that help troubled youth, and programs that promote responsible fatherhood. The director will be responsible for the overall operation of the organization. Applicants must have demonstrated experience working with evangelical Christian leaders, managing staff, and experience with public advocacy at the state or federal level. For more information about our organization and application instructions, please visit our website at www.shepherdingthenextgeneration.org.

CHRISTIAN TEACHERS NEEDED IN NORTH IRAQ

Join our teams serving at the School of the Medes in Dohuk, Sulaymaniyah, or Erbil, Iraq. 2,500 students enrolled, all instruction in English, Western curriculum, grades K-12, greatest need for English, history, and science teachers at high school level. Salary plus a percentage of housing and airfare provided depending on qualifications. www.servantgroup.org.

CHRISTIAN MOVIE THEATRE MANAGER

New summer ministry on the boardwalk of Ocean City, NJ. Send resume and cover letter to rstanislaw@OCTabernacle.org.

[Employment Opportunities]

CHRISTIAN BILINGUAL NON-PROFIT GEORGETOWN SCHOOL,

20 years in Jesús de Otoro, Honduras, seeking teachers for all grades. New facilities. Spanish skills not required. Student academics exceed national standards. Curriculum includes scriptural principles. For salary, room, board, travel stipend, contact Esperanza de Osorio, email: maesvac_33@yahoo.com.

[Books, Tapes & Films]

THE DEEPER CHRISTIAN LIFE AND HOUSE CHURCH MOVEMENT

Books and tapes. Free catalog; 800.228.2665; www.seedsowers.com.

GIANT DISCOUNT CHRISTIAN BOOK AND DVD SALE!

www.jesuspeopleinfo.org.

VERSE-BY-VERSE BIBLE STUDY

Free at www.berean-biblechurch.org.

WWW.WIPFANDSTOCK.COM

Your source for great Christian books!

WWW.GRACEANDSANITY.ORG

"A breath of fresh air." Books, talks for pastors and seekers.

SACRED APPLES, A BOOK LIKE NO OTHER

Inspired by true events, *Sacred Apples* is unique because the main characters are an ultra-orthodox rabbi and a Christian priest. Their relationship is forged by the very faiths that separate them. You'll cry . . . you'll laugh . . . it'll elevate your heart. www.sacredapples.com.

[Travel]

☒ GOLDEN RULE TRAVEL is a Christian agency specializing in wholesale and bulk rate airline tickets for church and missionary travel. We try extra hard to save you money! Call 800.950.3599 (FLYY) or go to www.goldenruletravel.com.

LONDON, U.K.

Highbury Centre Christian guesthouse. Quiet location on private road, close to bus and train/tube station. Reductions for missionaries and full-time ministers. www.thehighburycentre.org.

[Services]

CALLED TO PREACH?

www.IndependentBaptistAlliance.org; 352.621.4981. We can help with ordination and other topics.

☒ IRS 501c3 TAX-EXEMPT STATUS for missions, ministries, churches since 1981. Total package. www.Christian501c3go.com.

[Education]

EARN SEMINARY DEGREES ONLINE

Columbia Seminary; www.ColumbiaSeminary.edu; CES@ColumbiaSeminary.edu.

Washington DC University of Professional Studies Online, Accelerated, Accredited. www.fpstudios.org.

OPEN BIBLE COLLEGE COURSES

Maryland Bible College & Seminary, free Bible College courses available to everyone without signing up or logging in. Start your Bible training today. Open.mbcs.edu.

TEACHERS URGENTLY NEEDED IN CAMBODIA!

ELIC has an urgent need for teachers of English in Cambodia. This is an outstanding opportunity for singles, couples, families, and second-career adults. Two-year commitment. Opportunities to return to North America. Serve on a vibrant team. Teach at the university level to future leaders in every sector. Previous teaching experience not required. Complete training provided. Thirty years of sending and caring for teachers in Asia. Additional strategic opportunities in Mongolia, China, Vietnam, and Laos. We can get you there. www.elic.org; 888.475.3542.

DEGREES THROUGH CORRESPONDENCE

Associate's through Ph.D.; credit for life experience. Low tuition. Accredited schools. For a free catalog: www.lbcs.co; 352.621.4991; or write Liberty Bible College & Seminary; 5480 S. Suncoast Blvd.; Homosassa, FL 34446.

[Business Opportunities]

OPEN YOUR OWN READING CENTER

At home or commercial location. Students gain 2-4 grades in fewer than 60 hrs. Make a difference in the lives of others. We provide excellent training and materials. www.Academic-Associates.com; 800.861.9196.

[Ministry Opportunities]

Native Missionaries Have Home Field Advantage.

They are citizens of countries closed to American missionaries. They are winning souls among unreached people. They are planting churches where none exist.

Invest in God's kingdom by sponsoring a native missionary living in a poorer country.



Call: 1-800-977-5650

Online: www.indigenous-missionary.info



WWW.MISSIONNANNYS.ORG

Be a mission nanny. Volunteer women needed to serve overseas with missionary families as domestic/childcare help.

WRITE TO INMATES

Fellowship with a saved inmate or lead an unsaved inmate to the Lord! matthew25.36ministries2013@yahoo.com.



International Ministerial Fellowship®

YOUR MINISTRY CONNECTION

Ordination (appropriate rostering), military and civilian chaplaincy (Ecclesiastical Endorsement for qualifying applicants), Mission Sending Agency (41 countries), national conferences and full-support program. 1300 ministers.

Minneapolis, Minnesota
(952) 346-2464
www.i-m-f.org

[Conferences]

YOUR KEY TO GETTING PUBLISHED

and earning extra income: Write-to-Publish Conference, June 5-8, Chicago area. Classes for beginning through career writers, meetings with editors and agents, manuscript evaluations. Details: www.writetopublish.com, brochure@writetopublish.com.

[Church Supplies]

CUSHIONS AND UPHOLSTERY

Church cushions and upholstery. Nationwide. www.pewcushions.com.

Credit Card Debt?

Solutions that can help you get out of debt.

Advertisement

Tom Hill
CGA STAFF WRITER

Every three minutes another person falls behind on credit card debt. It's no wonder, since every major credit card company has nearly doubled the minimum monthly payment on consumers' bills. Federal Regulators forced the change because of their concern about the growing mountain of consumer debt, which stands at \$2.17 trillion. Many consumers can only pay the minimum payment, which can take up to 30 years to pay off. Now, relief is in sight for millions of Americans.

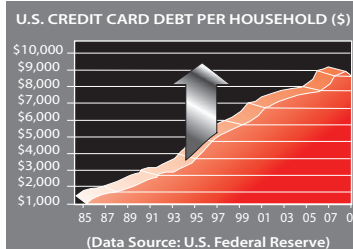
CreditGUARD of America, a non-profit licensed debt management service provider, is making a new program available to lower debt payments and become free of all credit card debt in only three to five years. Consumers need only \$2,000 or more in total credit card debt and behind on any account, to cut their payment by 35% to 50%, and reduce or eliminate interest charges altogether.

Over 200,000 families, located throughout the U.S. have regained financial independence with CreditGUARD's licensed, bonded and insured service. CreditGUARD of America has received high marks in consumer surveys showing high consumer satisfaction and confidence. The CreditGUARD debt management program can actually turn a person's life around.

One such case is Sandra L. who proclaimed "CreditGUARD cut my monthly payment by \$656 and saved me over \$29,206.53 in interest. They saved my way of life and gave me back my piece of mind! Now I can see myself on my way to becoming debt free." or Jeffery C. who said "CreditGUARD of America helped me consolidate 3 of my credit cards into one affordable payment. They are now saving me nearly \$200 a month. Now I will be debt free in 2 years or less"

Certified Credit Counselors at CreditGUARD of America provide Debt Relief Consultations at no charge, when you call 1-800-229-5682.

Calculate your interest rate savings instantly online when you visit their website at: www.cga4help.com/cti



Is Seminary or Grad School the next Step?

Find the right fit!

With Christianity Today's **SeminaryGradSchool.com** you can easily search schools by:

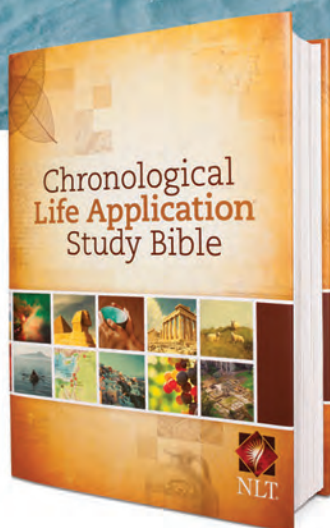
- location
- programs and degrees
- affiliation
- costs, scholarships, and grants

Easy-to-use search for FREE information on schools!



SeminaryGradSchool.com

A REFRESHING WAY TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S STORY



A TRUSTED WAY TO APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE.

The *Chronological Life Application® Study Bible* gives you a fresh Scripture experience by presenting God's story in the order it happened. Thousands of Life Application study notes. Hundreds of archaeological insights. Stunning full-color imagery. Fall in love with the story of God's Word all over again with the new way to experience the #1-selling *Life Application Study Bible*. Discover how refreshing the Bible can be at ChronoLifeApp.com.



Life Application is a registered trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

not merely divine, but God.”

Joseph also pushed me on the origins of the universe. I had always believed in the Big Bang. But I was blissfully unaware that the man who first proposed it, Georges Lemaitre, was a Catholic priest. And I’d happily ignored the rabbit trail of a problem of what *caused* the Big Bang, and what *caused* that cause, and so on.

By Valentine’s Day, I began to believe in God. There was no intellectual shame in being a deist, after all, as I joined the respectable ranks of Thomas Jefferson and other Founding Fathers.

I wouldn’t stay a deist for long. A Catholic friend gave me J. Budziszewski’s book *Ask Me Anything*, which included the Christian teaching that “love is a commitment of the will to the true good of the other person.” This theme—of love as sacrifice for true good—struck me. The Cross no longer seemed a grotesque symbol of divine sadism, but a remarkable act of love. And Christianity began to look less strangely mythical and more cosmically beautiful.

At the same time, I had begun to read through the Bible and was confronted by my sin. I was painfully arrogant and prone to fits of rage. I was unforgiving and unwaveringly selfish. I passed sexual boundaries that I’d promised I wouldn’t. The fact that I had failed to adhere to my own ethical standards filled me with deep regret. Yet I could do nothing to right these wrongs. The Cross no longer looked merely like a symbol of love, but like the answer to an incurable need. When I read the Crucifixion scene in the Book of John for the first time, I wept.

NO WALK IN THE PARK

But beauty and need do not make something true. I longed for the Bible to be true, but the intellectual evidence was still insufficient.

So I plunged headlong into apologetics, devouring debates and books from many perspectives. I read the Qur’an and Richard Dawkins’s *The God Delusion*. I went through *The Skeptic’s Annotated Bible* and looked up Christian rebuttals to apparent contradictions. But nothing compared to the rich tradition of Christian intellect. I’d argued with my peers, but I’d never investigated the works of the masters: Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Pascal,

and Lewis. When I finally did, the only reasonable course of action was to believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But my head and my heart suddenly switched places. Though I began to know the evidence for the Scriptures, my head full of answers, I began to feel distant from the story that had brought me to tears a month prior. When reading through the Passion narrative on retreat on Cape Cod in the spring, I remained utterly unmoved. I went out to pray.

I walked to a pond surrounded by trees and began praying by the water’s edge. I felt disconnected from God, from the friends I’d begun to hold dear, from my body itself. I begged God to make it all click, as a test for

The Cross no longer seemed a grotesque symbol of divine sadism, but a remarkable act of love. Christianity began to look less strangely mythical and more cosmically beautiful.

me to know that he was there. After an hour with no progress, I started to walk.

Following the pond to a stream, I began climbing through the surrounding thicket to see if I could reach the ocean a little ways down. I kept pausing, thinking, *Do I want to go back? I left all my stuff behind.* But each time, I renewed my steps, believing that I couldn’t quit until I’d made it to the end. I wouldn’t forgive myself if I just gave up and went back to where I’d started. I had some sense of direction of where I needed to go, but I didn’t know how to get there.

I climbed over branches and under bushes, sometimes going in the opposite direction for a while when the bramble grew too thick. I treaded lightly through marshes only to have the mud swallow my leg up to the knee. After pulling myself out, I started walking through the stream, since I figured I couldn’t get any dirtier, and the ground seemed to be most trustworthy along the middle of the river where the water had worn the path. So I followed it until the last light of day was waning.

I quickly realized that my journey through the briar patch was an apt metaphor. I’m trying to get somewhere, but I’m not sure how to get there. There’s no clear path, so I must proceed by trusting my instincts. I might even go off in the opposite direction for a little

while. In the end, I may arrive right back where I started. But that’s okay too, because I’ll get there with a clearer head and everything will be waiting for me when I’m done. It won’t be easy. Sometimes I’ll get mired in the mud, or caught up in thorns. But I’ll make it through, though not without a few cuts.

If I wanted to continue forward in this investigation, I couldn’t let it be just an intellectual journey. Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31–32). I could know the truth only if I pursued obedience first.

I’d been waiting for my head and my heart to be in agreement. By the end of the church

retreat, they weren’t completely in sync. Many days they still aren’t. But I realized that the unity could come later. If my heart had agreed at one point, and my head agreed now, then my heart would follow. I couldn’t let a malfunctioning heart delay the logical course of action, the obedience required by true faith.

I committed my life to Christ by being baptized on Easter Sunday, 2009.

This walk has proved to be quite a journey. I’ve struggled with depression. I would yell, scream, cry at this God whom I had begun to love but didn’t always like. But never once did I have to sacrifice my intellect for my faith, and he blessed me most keenly through my doubt. God revealed himself through Scripture, prayer, friendships, and the Christian tradition whenever I pursued him faithfully. I cannot say for certain where the journey ends, but I have committed to follow the way of Christ wherever it may lead. When confronted with the overwhelming body of evidence I encountered, when facing down the living God, it was the only rational course of action.

I came to Harvard seeking Veritas. Instead, he found me. 

Jordan Monge is the northeast regional director of the Veritas Forum and a regular contributor to *Fare Forward*.



JASON GROW

The Atheist's Dilemma

I tried to face down an overwhelming body of evidence, as well as the living God. By Jordan Monge

I don't know when I first became a skeptic. It must have been around age 4, when my mother found me arguing with another child at a birthday party: "But how do you know what the Bible says is true?" By age 11, my atheism was so widely known in my middle school that a Christian boy threatened to come to my house and "shoot all the atheists." My Christian friends in high school avoided talking to me about religion because they anticipated that I would tear down their poorly constructed arguments. And I did.

As I set off in 2008 to begin my freshman year studying government at Harvard (whose motto is *Veritas*, "Truth"), I could never

have expected the change that awaited me.

It was a brisk November when I met John Joseph Porter. Our conversations initially revolved around conservative politics, but soon gravitated toward religion. He wrote an essay for the *Ichthus*, Harvard's Christian journal, defending God's existence. I critiqued it. On campus, we'd argue into the wee hours; when apart, we'd take our arguments to e-mail. Never before had I met a Christian who could respond to my most basic philosophical questions: How does one understand the Bible's contradictions? Could an omnipotent God make a stone he could not lift? What about the Euthyphro dilemma: Is something good because God declared it so, or does God

merely identify the good? To someone like me, with no Christian background, resorting to an answer like "It takes faith" could only be intellectual cowardice. Joseph didn't do that.

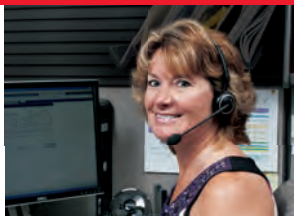
And he did something else: He prodded me on how inconsistent I was as an atheist who nonetheless believed in right and wrong as objective, universal categories. Defenseless, I decided to take a seminar on metaethics. After all, atheists had been developing ethical systems for 200-some years. In what I now see as providential, my atheist professor assigned a paper by C. S. Lewis that resolved the Euthyphro dilemma, declaring, "God is not merely good, but goodness; goodness is

[continue reading on preceding page]



A passion

for problem solving.



A story from Tracey Jaeger,
Church Mutual Customer Service
Representative.

Quick thinking saves the day for a youth group.

"One of our customers called me on a Saturday needing original proof of insurance cards for their vehicle — just one hour before a youth trip to Canada was scheduled for departure. I was able to print the cards, but there was no way I could get them there in time. I asked about their travel route and was able to find a Church Mutual representative who was right on the way. So I sent the cards to him overnight, and the group picked them up the next morning before reaching Canada."

We have a passion for solving problems, because it's what allows your congregation to function at full capacity. Find out for yourself by scheduling a detailed, on-site risk and insurance needs analysis. It's a value-added, no-obligation service that we offer at no extra charge.

Call (800) 554-2642 or visit
www.churchmutual.com/analysis
to schedule your appointment today.



Listening. | Learning. | Leading.®

Church Mutual has received consistently high ratings from industry analyst A.M. Best every year since 1952.
Listening. Learning. Leading. is a registered trademark of Church Mutual Insurance Company. © 2011 Church Mutual Insurance Company

THE
INAUGURAL
Year

SEATTLE PACIFIC UNIVERSITY'S
TENTH PRESIDENT
DANIEL J. MARTIN

Engaging the culture,
changing the world[®]



Advancing Seattle Pacific University's mission to engage the culture and change the world is President Daniel J. Martin's first priority and the theme of his Inaugural Year. The tenth president of SPU, Martin will be inaugurated in downtown Seattle on April 2, 2013. "SPU's mission is not only the essence of what a Christian university should be about," he says, "it is also the essence of my own calling."

Learn more about President Martin at spu.edu/inauguration.



Engaging the culture, changing the world[®]
Seattle Pacific
UNIVERSITY

spu.edu