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CHRISTIANITY TODAY

How Lewis Lite

50 years after his death, the apologist shows us how to make a fuller case for faith. p.36





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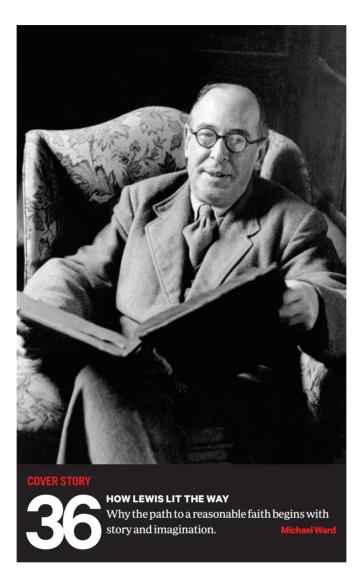
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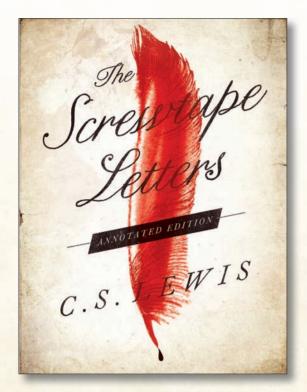
Fox News' Kirsten Powers: highly reluctant Jesus follower. \checkmark



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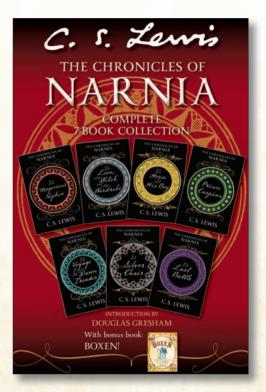
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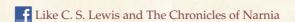
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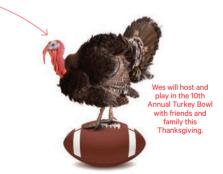
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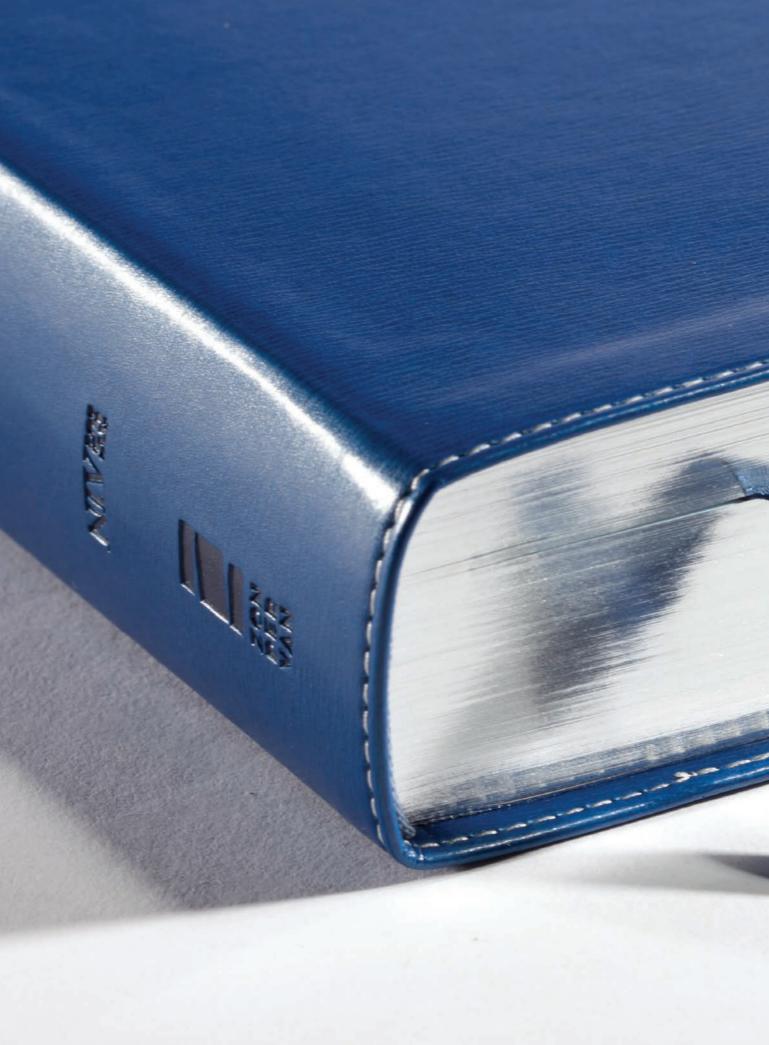
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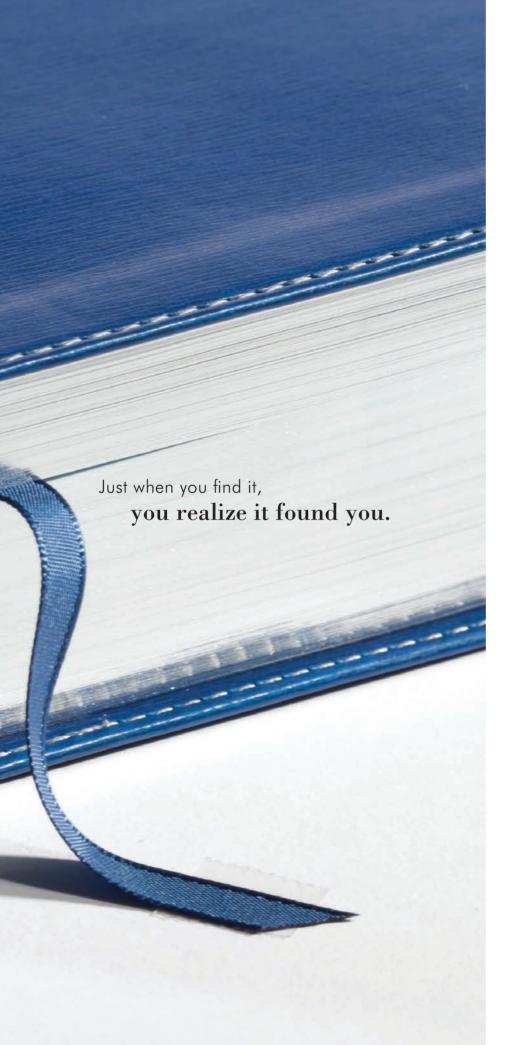
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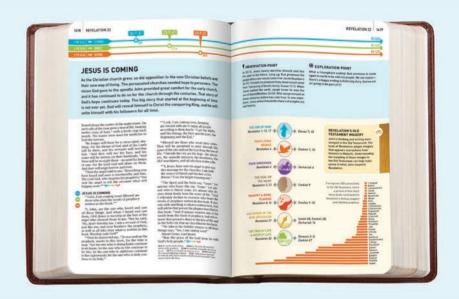
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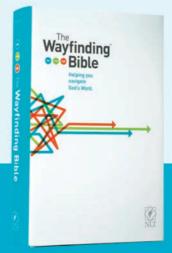
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EDITOR'S NOTE

WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL to Michael Ward, author of our cover story on C. S. Lewis (p. 36), for the role he played in my son Timothy's life—even though the two have never met.

Several years ago, I came home from a delightful dinner with Ward and some mutual friends with a copy of his newly published book *Planet Narnia*. It makes the audacious case that the seven books of the Chronicles of Narnia are laid out according to a medieval understanding of the planets and their particular qualities (Jove for joy, Mars forwar, and so forth). It exploded like a firework over the landscape of Lewis studies, illuminating much in Narnia that had seemed random and obscure. And it showed just how deep Lewis's imagination and intelligence went.

My son devoured *Planet Narnia*. We as a family had read the Narnia books for years, but I don't think my son had ever attempted to plow through this kind of scholarly book. He was transfixed and transported by the way Ward took familiar stories and made them both so much stranger and so much clearer, more complex and more comprehensible, than before. It was one of Timothy's first encounters with the idea that scholarship—the rigorous work of paying close attention to the world—could be thrilling.

It occurred to me that Ward had done for Lewis what Lewis himself did for so many ancient texts. Before he was an apologist, a children's author, or a radio broadcaster, Lewis was a literary scholar. He paid dusty medieval texts the ultimate compliment: he loved them. He attended to them, memorized them, puzzled over their every quirk and cranny. And by loving them that much, he was able to uncover riches in them that others missed.

This issue of cr is full of that kind of attention. Not just Ward's cover story, but my interview with Detroit pastor Christopher Brooks (p. 42), who has been listening and responding to his own community in remarkably creative ways. Like Lewis, Brooks holds together what so many others have tried to separate: the intellect and the soul, righteousness and justice, and proclamation and demonstration.

And Bret Mavrich's slightly bloody but stunning story about Lamppost Farm (p. 56) is also ultimately about loving attention, this time to the creatures we depend on for sustenance. It's surely no accident that the farm is named for the lamppost in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. From medieval planets to urban streets to chicken coops—Lewis still can inspire imagination, reason, and loving attention in the most unlikely places. Enjoy. $\ensuremath{\mathbf{CT}}$



LEWIS IN UNLIKELY PLACES

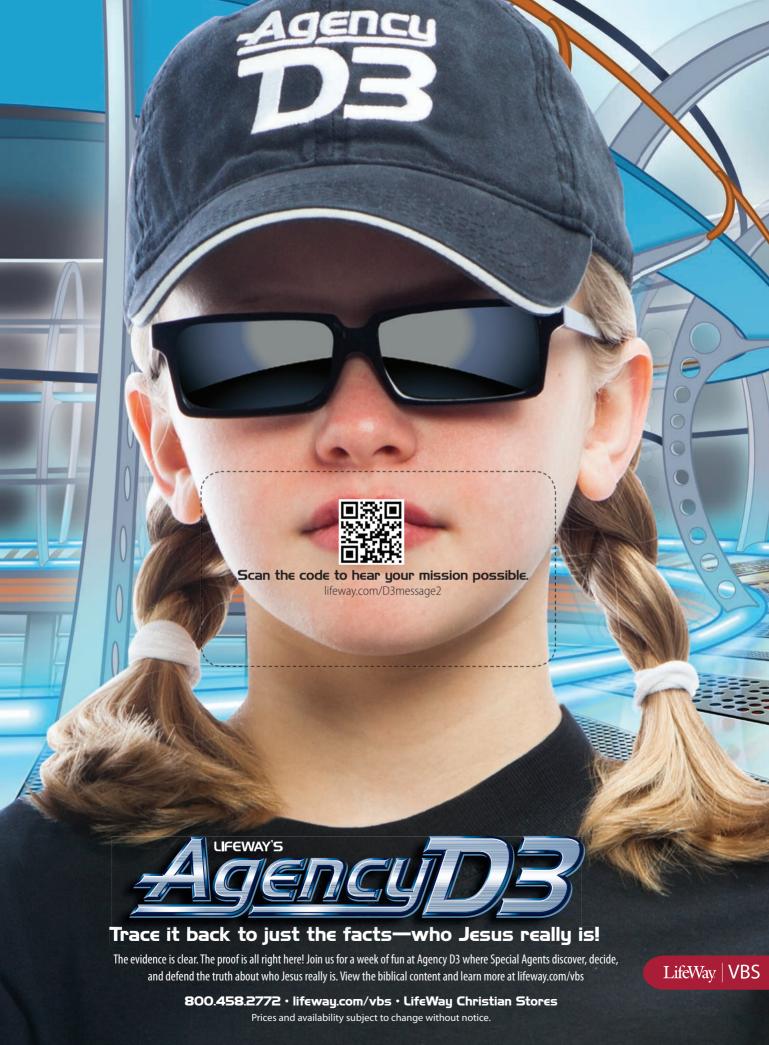
He's still showing us how to pay attention.

ANDY CROUCH Executive Editor



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REPLY ALL



CHAOS AND GRACE IN THE SLUMS

I read the September cover story with great interest. I am seeing points of Light injected into the deep darkness of cities and the urban core. However, feeding programs and educational assistance are not the full gospel. I pray that while the New Friars are living holistically with the people, they are also preaching repentance and faith.

Nathan Swenson cT online comment

I enjoyed reading the article written by Kent Annan, who extolled the virtues of the New Friars. I beg to differ with one of his statements, that there are only about 200 missionaries in this network. There is a much larger group outside the New Friars, such as those serving with New Tribes Mission, who live and minister with great financial sacrifice. And there are probably thousands of such impoverished servants of the Lord—who one day will be richly rewarded!

David M. Denlinger Hutchinson, Kansas

UNDER DISCUSSION

The example of pastor Jim Standridge berating individual church attendees during a sermon is such an extreme case of pastors rebuking from the pulpit it is hardly worth attention. (And it wouldn't have any if not for YouTube.)

A discussion of cases that are closer to the boundaries of how church leaders commonly deal with individual sin would have been more useful.

David Randall

ст online comment

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS? cr's editors would love to hear them. **E-mail:** cteditor@christianitytoday.com **Fax:** 630.260.9401 **Address Changes, Subscriptions:** ctifulfill@christianitytoday.com

GOD'S WORD IN TWO WORDS

I love Tullian Tchividjian's way of incorporating his love for family in his writing—beautiful. But it seems he is driving down a theological dead-end road. A view that sums up the Scripture in ways that ignore New Testament categories isn't all that helpful. The reformational fathers were asking questions of the biblical text that the authors of Scripture weren't asking. That seems anachronistic at best. Paul doesn't line up Scripture into law and gospel—Luther does that. Paul uses the categories of law and promise in Galatians 3. He also states that the fulfillment of that promise is the coming of Holy Spirit.

The law is really irrelevant—it is good, but its purpose has been fulfilled. The exile is ended, the King sits on the throne. Jesus is King—that's the gospel! When the churches were in trouble, John didn't write a treaty on gospel and law. He told them that those with ears to hear should listen (Rev. 2:7). We must learn to hear the Holy Spirit.

Gary Archibeck

CT online comment

CHRIST IN THE CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Very nice article. I found it encouraging that the capital of the world has people within it that are attempting to turn the culture there into something besides the stereotypes a lot of us have concerning NYC. Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and Paul eventually made their way into the major cities, spreading the gospel all over the Roman Empire, NYC (or, in my view, the Rome of today) has large sway not only in the United States but all over the world. The un, major banks, and many centers of the world emanate from New York. The gospel could be reinvigorated from NYC in the same way that the Holy Spirit started spreading the Good News from Jerusalem on Pentecost.

Joshua Scranton

ст online comment



REPLY ALL

WHY WE NEED SMALL TOWNS

As a pastor serving in rural communities for the past 10 years, I have witnessed first-hand the "ecclesial desert" that Jake Meador described. The lack of pastoral leadership, uncommitted pastors, and denominational indifference that Meador notes as plaguing small town churches are all too real.

Thankfully, this is not the whole story. In small communities all over rural America, there are vibrant churches where the gospel is preached by faithful pastors committed to their communities. Organizations such as the Rural Home Missionary

NET GAIN

Responses from the Web



'Christianity Today just keeps nailing it on their articles. No, seriously.'

Johnny Wakefield

➢ @johnnywakefield on "Can Noise-Trade's Free Downloads Still Save Music?" by Wes Jakacki.

'Gender roles controversy? Child's play compared to suggesting for @CTmagazine that football is too violent.'

Owen Strachan

> @ostrachan, on his c⊤ op-ed "Our Shaken Faith in Football."

Encouraged by this piece on seeking the shalom of #Honduras.

Tim Høiland

@tjhoiland on "The Hope Dealers," by Allison J. Althoff.

'Absolutely delighting in and cheering for your article in *Christianity Today* this month, @ndwilsonmutters.'

Morgan Day Cecil

@MorganDayCecil on N. D. Wilson's first column.

Association and Village Missions are working in small communities to keep the small town church alive and thriving. And not every denomination has turned its back on rural America, either.

I suggest that you take a second look at what is happening in the rural church. Here in our corner of western Nebraska, you would find many positive things. I encourage you to consider an article that presents not just the "ecclesial desert" but the flourishing rural church as well.

Chris Costrini

Venango, Nebraska

PRODIGAL LOVE

What a beautiful, thought-provoking, kickin-the-heart article from Karen Swallow Prior.

I am a prodigal who took more than 20 years to return. My own walk through those absolutely turbulent years can only be described as descending to hell, selecting a seat, and making myself at home. I knew full well the emotional turmoil I caused my family. Those memories are almost more that I can bear. Stranger and more painful now is watching my own father, sisters, and brother walk away from their faith. I pray for their return and for the love, grace, and mercy of Christ to lavish upon them.

Lynn

ст online comment

ct did a fine job treating a neglected—or, perhaps avoided—topic. The church has a spotty history of dealing with those who abandon it, as well as those who come slinking back.

Glen A Land

c⊤ online comment

HUNGRY FOR OUTRAGE

Katelyn Beaty's editorial makes a very good point. Modern media trade on outrage—the more outrage they can generate, the more they can sell. The search is on to tell us why "we" are better than "them," and it's done in a way to reinforce our natural inclinations to consider "us" superior to "them." The result is self-perpetuating outrage.

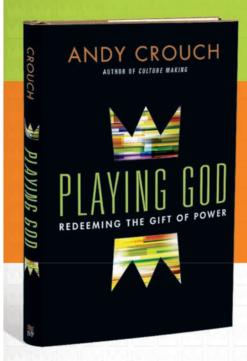
The gospel has a powerful message in this milieu: that whatever the differences, they lose their importance in the light of the Crucified and Risen One. Christians, fewer pitchforks, please.

Martin Jacobs

ст online comment

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

DANGEROUS GAME "OR DIVINE GIFT?"

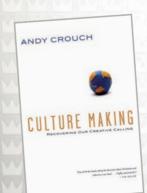


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- SCOT MCKNIGHT, Northern Seminary

With *Playing God*, Andy Crouch opens the subject of power, exploring its subtle activity in our relationships and institutions. He gives us much more than a warning against abuse, though. Turning the notion of "playing God" on its head, Crouch celebrates power as the gift by which we join in God's creative, redeeming work in the world.

IVPRESS.COM/PLAYINGGOD



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-TIM KELLER, pastor, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, author, *The Reason for God*

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REPLY ALL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

VILLAGE GREEN

As the attorney who handled the Encinitas (Sedlock v. Baird) voga trial for the plaintiffs, I would like to clear up some confusion. Although the judge found that apparently enough religion had been sanitized from the program, the judge ruled that yoga is religious. This finding was based on the consensus of religious studies scholars that yoga is "pervasively religious," which was brought to the court's attention by our eminent religious studies expert witness Candy Gunther Brown [see p. 73 for an interview with Brown]. This truth may surprise Christians who falsely believe that they can "do yoga" with their body, and "think about Jesus," without any spiritual implications.

This specious mind-body separation is not based on Judeo-Christian biblical theology about the nature of man but is rather based on false dualism. We communicate what we value, believe, and worship not only by our thoughts and words but also by our bodies. Yoga poses represent prayers, meditations, and worship of pagan Hindu deities. For a Christian, practicing yoga

is like bowing down to a golden calf and saying that it is not idolatrous because she is thinking about Jehovah.

There is no holy yoga. If Christian teacher-initiated prayers are not permitted in public schools, neither should Hindu indoctrination occur in the form of yoga.

Dean Broyles

President, National Center for Law and Policy
ct online comment

SUMMIT IN THE SPIRIT

Regarding Everett Worthington's testimony: Forgiveness is something I struggle with too, especially the latter forgiveness you mention: forgiving oneself. Christ's forgiveness is such an amazing thing—forgiveness from our past, present, and future! A love that surpasses all understanding! It's just so hard for me to understand sometimes. I'm glad Worthington has found that and has been able to share it with others.

Brianna Hein

ст online comment

CORRECTION In Spotlight's "The Wars Over Christian Beards," Alan Robertson is Phil Robertson's beardless son.



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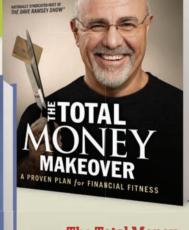




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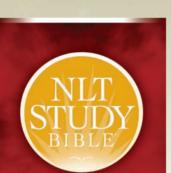
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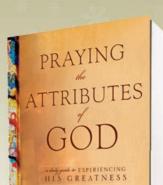
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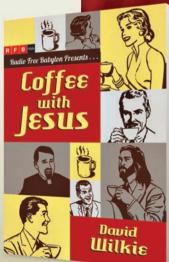


ANN SPANGLER

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Praving the

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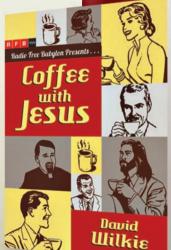


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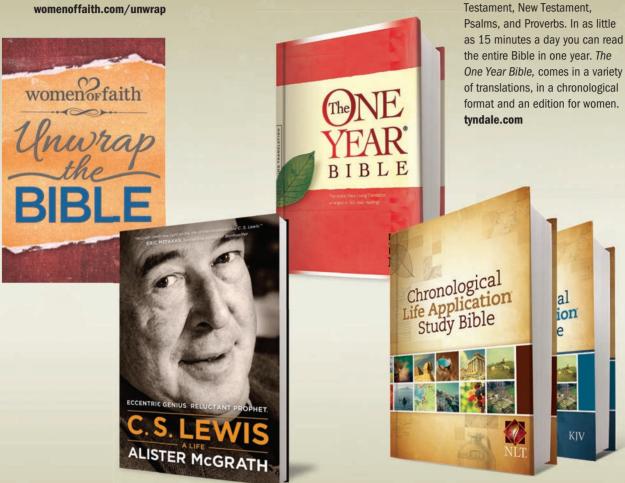
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†MAPPING MISSIONARIES

Missions has become truly global—yet remains imbalanced. The top 10 sending countries sent almost three-quarters of the world's 400,000 international missionaries in 2010, but are home to only one-third of the world's church members. Meanwhile, the top nine receiving countries received more than one-third of the world's missionaries, but are home to only 3.5 percent of the world's non-Christians. When the Center for the Study of Global Christianity calculated missionaries per capita, it produced very different rankings. Top senders per million church members: Palestine, Ireland, Malta, Samoa, and South Korea. The top receivers per million people? Majority-Christian islands in the Caribbean and Oceania.

Pat Robertson's successor resigns from Regent

Carlos Campo went from valet parker to university president within 10 years. Then, three weeks into the current school year, the Regent University president resigned. The surprise decision by the first Latino president of a regionally accredited Christian university was actually not the school's first September departure: in 2000, Paul Cerjan was similarly replaced as president by Pat Robertson, founder and broadcaster. "I knew it was likely to happen with me," said Campo, a rising leader among Latino evangelicals who now expects to become more vocal and active on higher education and immigration reform. But he believes the situation is "pretty appropriate and typical of founder-led institutions." Robertson now heads Regent for the fourth time. "Frankly," said Campo, "it's his place."



"I am a sinner."

• Pope Francis, when asked, "Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?" in an unprecedentedly frank interview with Jesuit publications worldwide. "This is the most accurate definition," he said. "It is not a figure of speech."

LA CIVILTÀ CATTOLICA

"I don't know if what D. L. Moody's opinion might have been was really taken into consideration."



• Moody Bible Institute spokeswoman Christine Gorz, on the school dropping its ban on alcohol and tobacco consumption by employees in order to emphasize "values not rules." Amid the 19th-century temperance movement, its famed evangelist founder argued for voluntary abstinence rather than prohibition enforced by law.

RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

Death penalty is good news for Christians

A symbolic church whose mosque-like architecture promoted peace between religions bore the deadliest attack against Christians in Pakistan's 66-year history. Two suicide bombers killed more than 120 Sunday worshipers at All Saints Church in Peshawar, prompting protests nationwide for more government protection. However, good news emerged days later on the Christian minority's other main challenge: false accusations of blasphemy. The influential Council of Islamic Ideology, which advises Pakistan's lawmakers, urged that the death penalty for blaspheming Muhammad or Islam be expanded to those who falsely accuse others. The decision may produce fewer victims like Rimsha Masih (now in Canada) and still-imprisoned Asia Bibi.

Can prayer and Bible study overcome mental illness?

Rick and Kay Warren's candid CNN interview regarding their son Matthew's suicide aired hours after LifeWay Research reported that nearly half of evangelical, fundamentalist, or born-again Christians (48%) believe that serious mental illness can be overcome through prayer and Bible study alone (35 percent of Americans agree). Adults under 30 were both more likely to believe this (50%) and more likely to know someone with mental illness (54%), while older adults were both less likely to believe this (30% of those 55-64) and less likely to know someone with mental illness (37% of those over 65).

Animist worldview imposed on churches

Pastors led protest marches in five Bolivian cities against government orders to promote the "horizon of good living." The phrase may

sound innocuous, but church leaders are suing to revoke Law 351. It requires all churches to standardize leadership, report finances, and promote the indigenous Aymara concept of "living well"—or else lose their legal status. "This is an imposition of a cultural and spiritual worldview totally foreign to ours," Agustín Aguilera, president of the National Association of Evangelicals of Bolivia, told Morning Star News. Protestant leaders fear animism is replacing Catholicism as the Andean government's favored religion.

'Play Hard, Pray Harder'

This motivational slogan can no longer be used commercially by Los Angeles Angels outfielder Josh Hamilton after a small Christian clothing company took him to court. Dallas-based Play Hard Pray Harder began selling such sports apparel across state lines before the MLB star did. So Hamilton settled and relinquished his right to the trademark, citing the Sermon on the Mount's imperative to turn the other cheek. A wry twist to Jesus' words: "And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well."



The **Assemblies of God** continues to grow and diversify at an enviable rate. Today, one-third of its 3.1 million U.S. members are under 25. But is its distinctive teaching on speaking in tongues being lost amid outreach efforts?

3.9%

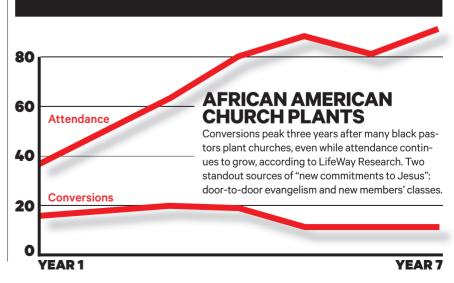
Increase in water baptisms in 2012, to a near-record high of more than 131,700.

2.9%[©]

Decrease in spirit baptisms in 2012, to the lowest total (less than 82,000) since 1995.

Superintendent George
O. Wood denies that
speaking in tongues is waning,
saying many spirit baptisms
take place at youth camps
and other church-sponsored
events not accounted for in
annual statistics.

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD



HEADLINES

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Finance

Churches: The New Risky Bet

Foreclosures are slowing—except for congregations.

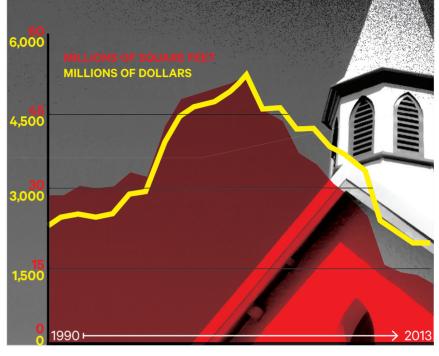
ess than 30 minutes from Disney World, Celebration of Praise Church of God has 1,200 members and a 47-acre campus. The Clermont, Florida, church boasts an Olympic-size swimming pool, a spa, a gym, and the county's largest auditorium. It also has a \$7 million "balloon" payment due on its mortgage. All the church lacks is the funds to pay it.

It looks like Celebration's story will have a happy ending of sorts—it's currently selling its property to the city for \$6.3 million, and will be able to rent the property for Sunday and Wednesday meetings.

But things haven't been so good for nearby Lakeland's Without Walls International, once the fastest-growing church (and among the 10 largest churches) in the country. The Evangelical Christian Credit Union (ECCU) foreclosed on the church in 2008 over a \$13.9 million loan default. That case has been in the courts ever since, with claims, counterclaims, and the church founded by Randy and Paula White sitting dormant.

The 5-year-long dispute and the empty 9,600-seat sanctuary symbolize the state of church-building finances during that time period.

Hundreds of congregations have filed for bankruptcy or defaulted on loans. University of Illinois law professor Pamela Foohey, who tracks church bankruptcies, says more than 500 congregations filed Chapter 11 between 2006 and 2011—and the pace hasn't slowed since. About 90 congregations filed for bankruptcy in 2012, even as the overall rate of bankruptcy filings



Steeple Chase: U.S. church construction peaked in 2002, according to research from McGraw-Hill Construction. And it started to decline rapidly long before the 2008 recession. The most dramatic declines were in 2010. While square footage was still down 13 percent in 2013, actual spending went up 1.1 percent.

declined 13.4 percent.

Meanwhile, the church bond market, once a refuge for cautious investors, is now a black hole, says Rusty Leonard, CEO of Stewardship Partners, a Christian investment management firm.

Before the 2008 economic crash, church bonds had strong investment appeal due to a decades-long safety record. Now, "the market has disappeared," said Leonard. "The options for a new church trying to build a building are significantly reduced. We'll see fewer buildings."

In fact, Capstone Church Bond Fund—a mutual fund that invests almost entirely in church bonds—closed to new share sales earlier this year, saying that it doubts it can grow its assets or generate cash reserves in the current climate for church bonds.

Scott Rolfs, managing director of the religion finance division at Ziegler Investment Group, agrees that it's been a hard several years. But he thinks the outlook has improved since early 2013.

"The church bond market is healthier

now," he said. "Our requests for new construction loans are up 50 percent this year over last year."

Similarly, ECCU spokesman Jac La Tour said the credit union has ended its two-year hiatus on new loans. In fact, for the first half of 2013, the ECCU ranked second among all credit unions in the country for the amount it lent in business loans, according to Thomson Reuters Bank Insight.

The ECCU says its foreclosures declined 30 percent between 2011 and 2012. Although it initiated a dozen foreclosures in 2013, by August 31 only three remained active—a tenth of the foreclosures it was dealing with at the peak of the recession.

John Walling, president of the Christian Community Credit Union, says delinquencies are likewise down at his company. He doesn't expect to deal with any foreclosures or defaults this year.

"Nine out of ten churches owe nothing," Walling says. "I go to a church that has no debt and \$1 million in reserves. There are a lot of churches like that." **Ken Walker**

Brothers in Arms?

A priest and a sea captain's solution to saving Mideast Christianity: Join the Israeli military.

ou wouldn't expect Palestinian Christian leaders to embrace a movement that enlists Christian Arabs in Israel's military. And you'd be right.

"Our people struggle with our country for statehood," Boutros Mansour, general director of the Nazareth Baptist School, told *Christianity Today*. "I oppose it, and I think about 80 percent of Arab Christians oppose it."

But the new movement, started by a Greek Orthodox priest and a Galilee sea captain, is meeting with some moderate success. In 2013, approximately 100 Arab Christians enlisted in the Israel Defense Forces, triple the number from 2012.

"We plan to integrate Christians into Israeli society and state institutions—to serve the country and do their part," said cofounder Gabriel Nadaf, a Nazareth-based priest, at a recent recruitment forum. "This

country protects us, and it deserves to have our contribution to its defense and prosperity."

Last year's expiration of a law that exempted most of Israel's ultra-Orthodox Jews from mandatory military service was one of the Jewish state's hottest debates. But Israel has for a long time wanted to enlist more Arabs in its military beyond the "incredibly small fraction" of current conscripts, says Noah Haiduc-Dale, a Mideast history scholar at Centenary College in New Jersey.

Bishara Shilyan, the other founder of the movement, is concerned the status quo has led to a loss of Christian identity in the Holy Land. He points to Nazareth, where Christians had recently been the majority but now make up only 30 percent of the population.

"We are emigrating out of our historic places," he recently told the Hebrew daily *Israel Hayom.* Israelis dismiss Christians as Arabs, he says, and Arab Muslim leaders dismiss them because they are Christians. "They have abandoned and left us Christians alone as a minority among minorities in Israel."

Salim Munayer, a Jerusalem-based reconciliation expert who has studied Christian Arab political activism, says Shilyan's Arab Christians who enlisted in the Israel Defense Forces in 2012.

~100

Arab Christians who enlisted in 2013.

frustration mirrors how many Arab Christians are "withdrawing both from the Jews and the Muslims." He sees a trend away from civic involvement.

But instead of controversial military service, Munther Na'um, chairman of the Association of Baptist Churches in Shafr Amr, believes that Arab Christian youth can better serve Israel by doing two years of service in civilian hospitals and schools. An estimated 500 youths did so this year, part of a current surge in Arab volunteerism.

"I see the forces impacting them, pushing them to choose isolation," said Munayer.
"But we, as Christians, need to engage in the issues of society. We cannot live in a ghetto."

Dale Gavlak in Amman, Jordan



Under Discussion

Compiled by Kevin P. Emmert



Q: Should foreign policy be determined by its impact on Christians?

Syria's alleged use of chemical weapons—and whether it called for American military intervention—prompted much debate among Christian leaders over just-war theory and whether the fortunes of local Christians should determine the U.S. government's decision.





"Military intervention should be determined by many factors, including its effect on Christians. If true shalom is found not in killing all the bad guys, but in the death and resurrection of Jesus—the one who died for bad guys—then destroying his body hinders true peace."

Preston Sprinkle, *author,* Fight: A Christian Case for Nonviolence

"Countries that protect religious minorities tend to be good global partners. Thus, it makes sense to prioritize religious freedom in foreign policy. However, military intervention is rarely an effective way to promote religious liberty abroad."

Peter Feaver, professor of political science and public policy, Duke University

"Foreign policy should be guided by principles of public justice, which require that all persons be treated equitably. It should never favor one religious group over another, but should take into account the possible impact on minority groups."

David Koyzis, professor of political science, Redeemer University College

"Foreign policy shouldn't be shaped to favor Christians as Christians. Instead, governments should use their global influence to encourage other governments to do what they're supposed to do: maintain order and secure some reasonable sort of justice."

Bryan McGraw, associate professor of politics, Wheaton College

"It's never right for Christians to ask one government to attack another only to spare Christians. God authorizes government to punish wrongdoers (Rom. 13:4), but not outside its own jurisdiction and never to promote any ideal—even if it keeps Christians safe."

Daniel Heimbach, professor of ethics, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary



Books

Bestseller Best Practices

The NavPress-Tyndale alliance could signal a new publishing normal.

he Message, published in 2002, is still the ninth best-selling Bible translation, according to the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association. But that wasn't enough to save NavPress from downsizing this September.

Gary Cantwell, chief communications officer for the Navigators, the ministry behind NavPress, says The Message's success was "not a problem." NavPress "is still a thriving publisher. [Tyndale House

Publishers] will just be handling distribution and marketing."

NavPress announced a partnership with Tyndale in September, ostensibly to "grow the influence and impact of the well-established and respected NavPress brand." But NavPress itself isn't growing: the publishing house laid off 24 of its 29 full-time employees who worked in production, sales, and distribution. The remaining five to seven editorial positions will continue business as normal, said Cantwell.

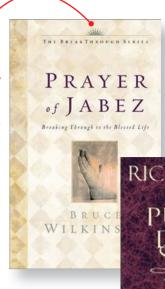
The new setup is similar to the way Tyndale has worked with Focus on the Family for nearly 20 years. That successful partnership informed NavPress's decision to pursue a similar relationship, Cantwell said. (Meanwhile, Focus cut another 40 positions this fall and added 11.)

In today's publishing world, such a partnership was the right move for NavPress, says Lynn Garrett, senior religion editor at *Publishers Weekly*. "Profit margins in publishing are razor-thin," she said. "They make their financial projections based on sales, and if they have a best-selling product that falls off, it changes everything."

Similarly, InterVarsity Press associate

The Prayer of Jabez

(2001): Multnomah
Books expanded
significantly after
the runaway bestseller. But by 2006, it
was financially battered and sold to
Random House and
merged with WaterBrook Press, with
few employees
transitioning.



publisher Andy Le Peau said runaway growth can lead a publisher to cash-flow problems and bankruptcy if the company overestimates a book's future sales. But Christian publishers have traditionally relied on a few hot titles to support a variety of others, especially important books that may not sell well.

What is the takeaway for publishers?

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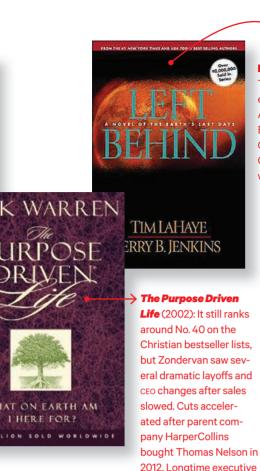
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- Funding Your Vision (webinar series)



Visit www.eccu.org/resources for these resources and more.



Left Behind (1995): After the series went viral, Tyndale mostly spent money on one-time capital expenses rather than on expanding its catalogs. A new film starring Nicolas Cage is in the works. But in September, the Securities and Exchange Commission charged the head of Left Behind Games (which licenses its name from Tyndale) with fraud

"It's counterintuitive, because you'd think success is good, but the problem is too much success," Le Peau said. "Every product has a bell curve, and all bell curves have a downslope."

Such was the case for Multnomah Publishers, a small, Oregon-based publishing house. In the early 2000s, the company went under due to "bad business decisions" after sales for its breakthrough book *The Prayer of Jabez* leveled off, Garrett says. Multnomah later merged with Random House's WaterBrook Press after its purchase in 2006.

Multnomah's bankruptcy was "ironic, given the message of the book," Le Peau said. "The key [to managing success] is to ask what would happen on the other side

of the bell curve."

But publishers also can make business-savvy decisions when sales skyrocket, says Jeff Johnson, chief operating officer of Tyndale House. "When you see that one series is making more than the rest of the company, then you know you can't plan on that staying," he said.

Such was the case in 1998, when Tyndale released the Left Behind series. Sales quadrupled between 1998 and 2001, but when Tyndale saw numbers drop in 2002, the company started to pull out of its Left Behind–related products. Doing so kept them from getting stuck with inventory in reserve after sales leveled off, Johnson said.

Bibles present less danger, says Johnson. "It's less likely that a Bible will be a grand slam," he says. "[Yet] having a Bible line gives you a lot of stability because the Bible in its various forms sells year in and year out."

And Tyndale's success in both arenas looks good to small publishing houses looking to partner with an expert in Bible publishing, Garrett says. "Consolidation is the name of the game," she said. "It's a survival thing these days."

Melissa Steffan

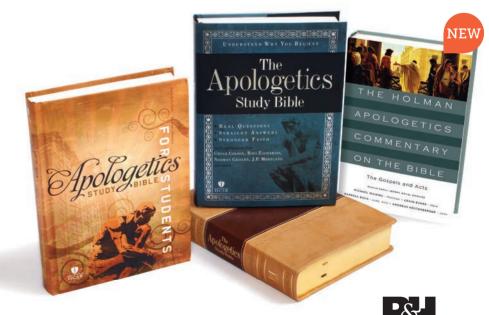
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editor Sue Brower was

cut this September.





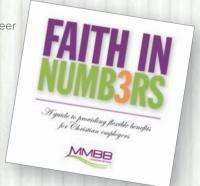
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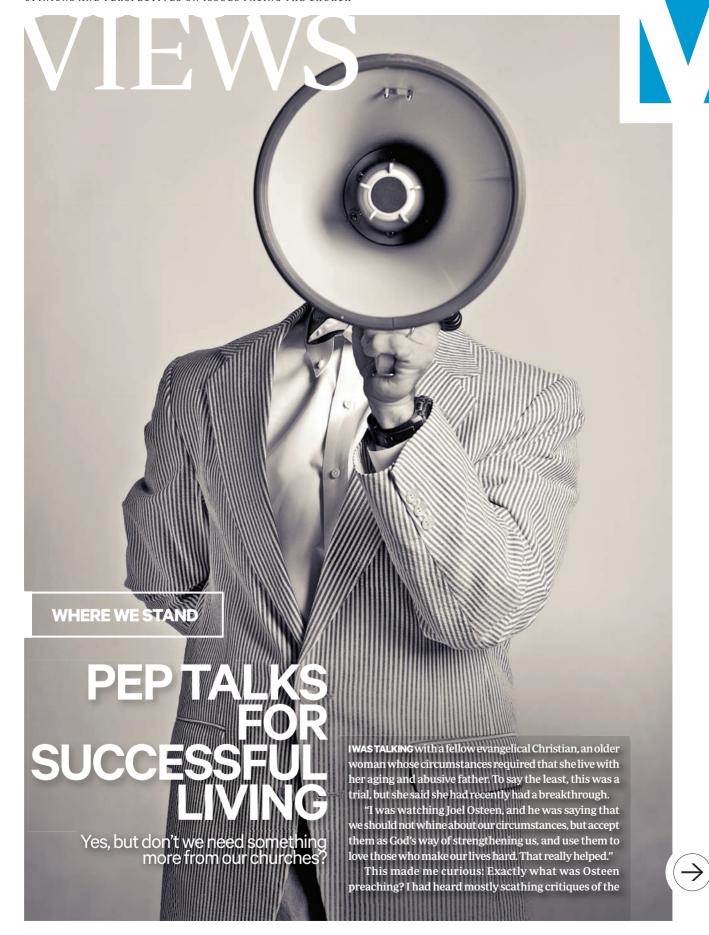
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best-selling author and Houston pastor. So I listened to a few of his sermons. It's been said that even a broken clock is right twice a day. Osteen is right more frequently than that. As I flipped though the channels and caught messages by other so-called prosperity preachers, I found the same thing. They regularly offered wise counsel on how to strengthen marriage, raise kids, handle suffering, and so forth. They often talked about how trusting God can offer calm and hope in the face of adversity.

Yes, I cringed at the occasional allusions to faith and financial prosperity. But that was rare. Most of what I heard was a combination of biblical and psychological wisdom shaped for an audience that knew hardship. Or, as historian Kate Bowler put it in *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*, the prosperity preachers

The theology of the Cross says that God is most deeply met not on the other side of suffering, but in the suffering itself.

apparently not much. Tune in to many a church website, and you'll find comparable sermon series on improving relationships, raising kids, practicing faith in the workplace, and, in general, living successfully. You'll find lots of good, practical advice, much of it grounded in Scripture, very often the Book of Proverbs. No wonder people flock to such churches; they are some of the

content as much as it is to point out that God in his grace has made such principles available far and wide. You don't have to be a Christian to raise good kids or succeed in business or learn from suffering. A little philosophy here and psychology there, and you can construct a life that "works."

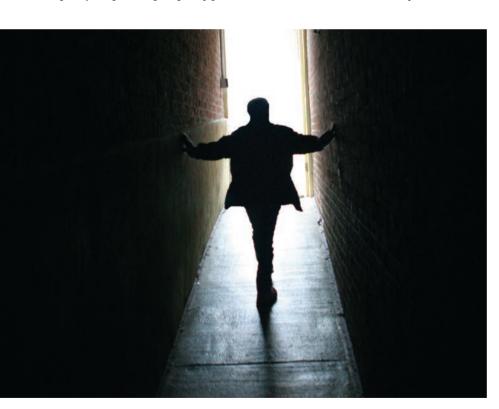
The problem is that preachers and teachers of such messages are not telling us the whole truth. They are not giving us a full understanding of the Good News.

Proverbs is only half of wisdom. The other half is found in the Book of Job. And Ecclesiastes. And Jesus at Golgotha. The other part of wisdom—the deeper wisdom—centers on the folly of the Cross.

Not the Cross as a mere rest stop on the way to Resurrection. Not suffering as a means to an end. Not hardship that builds character and makes us better. That's more Proverbs wisdom and is true as far as it goes. That's the theology of glory—if we do this and that, and endure this and that with the right attitude, all will be well.

The theology of the Cross says that God is most deeply met in the suffering itself, not just on the other side of it. Forgiveness of sins is not found after the Cross, but in, with, and under the Cross. This is the "wisdom of the cross" (1 Cor. 1–2) that is folly to the world.

The question, then, is this: When we Christian leaders have this astounding message, one that transcends run-of-the-mill wisdom, that grounds us in unshakable reality, that shows Christ as the end itself, that invites us to meet God in the darkest places, that shows us where God's glory is revealed (John 12)—why do we spend so much time doling out wisdom that is merely helpful?



offer "a comprehensive approach to the human condition"—one that gives hope to desperate people.

So what's the problem?

If we look at the preaching and teaching in mainstream evangelical churches,

few places where they can hear commonsense wisdom about daily life.

But if you think about it, you'll realize that most of that advice can be found in pop psychology books, self-help conferences, and other religions. That's not to slam this

MARK GALLI is editor of Christianity Today.

WRESTLING with ANGELS

Carolyn Arends, an author and songwriter, lives in British Columbia with her husband and two children.



Duct-Tape Disciples

What really sticks when leading a friend to Christ.

ascale Honore loves watching her sons tackle the Australian surf. A woman not easily intimidated, she would join her boys in the waves were it not for a 1995 car accident that left her paraplegic. Bound to a wheelchair, surfing was not an option—until one of her sons' friends had an idea.

Tyron Swan, 23, is a strong and skillful surfer. "I could duct tape you to my back and surf," he said to Pascale, 50. Pascale didn't see why he couldn't, and, armed with several roles of tape, they set out to test their plan.

Pascale "can't find the words to explain" what it's like to move through the ocean, to feel like she's "part of the water" after years of immobility. For his part, Tyron notes that surfing with an extra 88 pounds taped to his body is "a pretty good challenge." But his nonchalance can't mask the significance of his gift. "It's changed her life in a way," he admits.

Pascale and Tyron's adventures have been chronicled in a short documentary, *Duct Tape Surfing*. It's the sort of clip you think would take the Internet by storm, and that's exactly what it has done. How could anyone not be moved by Pascale's courage and Tyron's tangible friendship?

If my fellow Christians are anything like me, I suspect they can't watch the footage without seeing a powerful metaphor for spiritual friendship. Is there any more vivid embodiment of "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2, ESV) than a sturdy Tyron rising up on his surfboard with a grinning Pascale on his back? Is there any richer example of the way trust can make possible things once thought impossible? When we use words like *evangelism* and *discipleship*, are we not daring to dream that we

who have already experienced the waves of God's mercy might somehow lead a friend or two into the water?

I must resist the urge to reduce Pascale to a sermon illustration. But there is a detail in her story that I can't help relating to the matter of spiritual friendships.

Wherever the *Duct Tape Surfing* documentary is posted, there is space for viewers to leave comments. Several folks have asked about having a company make a professional-grade harness, eliminating the need for the reams of silver tape that Tyron cuts off with a fishing knife after every outing.

"Pascale was sent a number of harnesses to try but realized that duct tape is the best as Ty needs her in a certain position," explains Mark Tipple, the film director. "Too low, and he's off balance, or if she's too high, he can't raise his head while paddling and can't see. For now, duct tape is the best!"

Where prefabricated solutions have failed, duct tape lets Pascale and Tyron customize, adapt, and fit themselves together as needed. Here is where my mind makes the leap back to spiritual friendships. There are many evangelism and discipleship programs available, chock-full of

Successful spiritual friendships are built upon adaptive, responsive, trusting relationships as unique as the people who inhabit them.

great ideas. But I am learning, in my halting attempts at spiritual friendships, that no one believes, disbelieves, questions, or grows in exactly the same manner. There is no one way to share the faith or invite someone deeper into it. While programs give us ideas, successful spiritual friendships are built upon adaptive, responsive, trusting relationships as unique as the people who inhabit them.

As a teenager, I spent several weeks going through a life-changing disciple-ship program with my youth pastor's wife, Pam Mitchell. Although I'm grateful for the material we worked through, I can't remember anything about the curriculum we used. What I remember, above all, is our friendship—the way I could trust Pam completely with my hurts and hopes. As she lived out the Scriptures we were exploring, I longed to swim where she swam—to follow her as she followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

There is a give and take to discipleship, a discovery of how a would-be mentor's strengths and experiences align with a friend's questions and quandaries. Spiritual friendship should be as much listening as leading, as much discovery as discourse. Forcing that friendship into preconceived patterns will almost certainly sink it.

And so, whether I am the mentor or the mentee (or, often, both), I am trying to embrace something like duct-tape discipleship. It's stickier, and messier, than some of the prefabricated solutions. But it takes an approach as adaptable—and tenacious—as duct tape to be the kind of friend who dives in deep and, like the Proverb says, "sticks closer than a brother" (18:24).

Go to *ChristianBibleStudies.com* for "Custom-Fit Discipleship," a Bible study based on this article.

ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM CRUFT



OPEN QUESTION Three Views

Should Christians Read the Qur'an?

Whether or not to immerse ourselves in Islam's holy book.



Nabeel Qureshi **An Emphatic No**

y earliest, most precious memories revolve around my family and the Qur'an. Every day, head covered, right index finger moving leftward across Arabic text, my mother recited the holy book to me, halting for me to recite it back to her.

In each of the five daily prayers, my father recited aloud portions of the Qur'an. His cadence was spellbinding. By age 5, I had finished reciting the entire Qur'an in Arabic

and memorized its final seven chapters.

My experience was not unusual. The Qur'an is the linchpin of the Islamic worldview—the basis of Muhammad's prophetic claims, the foundation of Shari'ah law, and the common denominator among all devout Muslims who interact with it dozens of times a day. It is the most frequently recited book in the world, and for Muslims, it is the closest thing to the Word made flesh.

So it is with due gravity that whenever a Christian asks me whether he should read the Qur'an, I answer with an emphatic "no."

I have two reasons. First, the Qur'an was

not designed to be read the way we read the Bible. The composition of the Qur'an began around A.D. 610. When Muhammad was alive, there was no such thing as an Arabic book. As Muhammad began to reveal verses to his followers, the primary purpose of those verses was recitation in daily prayers. For many years before him, Syriac Christians had been doing something similar: reciting Bible verses during church services. The Syriac word for these liturgical recitations? They were known as the "Qur'an."

At that time, the Syriac word became an Arabic word, and this tells us much about how the Qur'an is intended to function—as a compilation of oral, liturgical recitations. This explains why those who have tried to read the Qur'an often walk away confused or frustrated. It does not read like a written book because it was not composed like one, with clear beginnings and clear endings.

This leads to my second point. Muslims do not learn Islam by reading the Qur'an, but by being immersed in life alongside other Muslims. The Islamic way of life mostly comes from traditions called *hadith*. Christians who wish to reach their Muslim neighbors should do the same thing: Be with Muslims. See the world through their eyes. It is far more important to understand how Muslims view the Qur'an than for us to read it and impose our view on Muslims.

Love your Muslim neighbors as yourself. When you do, and when they see you loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, you will open the door to God-honoring, life-changing dialogue. That is more valuable than anything you can learn by reading the Qur'an.

One college student followed that advice and befriended a young, zealous Muslim

before knowing anything about the Qur'an. It is through this friendship that I accepted the Lord Jesus.

NABEEL QURESHI, formerly a Muslim, is a member of the Ravi Zacharias International Ministries speaking team.

Roy Oksnevad Yes, to Witness

get an earful about the Qur'an. Some former Muslims say, "Don't ever read the Qur'an." Zealous Christians say, "All you need to know is the truth of the Bible, not the falsehood of the Qur'an." Missiologists, on the other hand, say, "We need to regularly read and study the Qur'an to see Christ in it."

How to discern between these multiple views? I believe there is no better way to begin understanding a person than by reading the foundational sources that form his worldview. Too often, we let news outlets become our source for understanding another religion or culture. My Muslim friends say I would understand them better if I would simply read the Qur'an. I agree, but Christians must have clear purposes in mind

One purpose is for Christians to realize how the Qur'an reinterprets the Bible. By reading the Qur'an, Christians learn that Islam considers Abraham to be a Muslim. Adam is considered a Muslim, as are Jesus and the disciples. In addition, according to the sayings of Muhammad (Hadith), all people are born Muslim (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 23, Number 441). Christians will discover passages that sound familiar. References to Moses and Joseph are pleasant surprises. But there are other surprises, such as the story of the Christian sleepers whose slumber lasted three centuries. Familiar Bible characters get unique twists, such as Solomon's ability to talk with animals (Qur'an 27:16-18).

Second, Christians who read the Qur'an will better comprehend why Muslims believe the text to be miraculously dictated by the angel Gabriel to Muhammad. It describes itself as "the mother book" and "the revelation." Muslims consider its Arabic text as beautiful, perfect, and the literal words of God. The Qur'an is held in such high esteem that a rumor of desecrating the Qur'an has brought the full rancor

of angry crowds. It is protected through blasphemy laws in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Somalia.

Third, in reading it, Christians will discover points of connection between the Qur'an and the Bible. There are 50 biblical people and events mentioned in the Qur'an. But many of those are incomplete. The fuller story is found in the Bible itself.

When Christians discuss these points of connection with Muslims, it provides a natural bridge to share the fuller meaning of the Bible's stories. Generally, when the Bible agrees with the Qur'an, Muslims will accept it.

These three purposes for reading the Qur'an will not unlock for Christians a complete understanding of Muslim belief and practice. The serious student must go to other sources, such as the Hadith and the biography of Muhammad (Sira), to better grasp the context of the Islamic worldview.

Christians can miss great opportunities to witness by not knowing what the Qur'an actually says. If we are to be salt and light, reading the Qur'an for ourselves can help us be better witnesses for Jesus. Ultimately, that's the higher purpose.

ROY OKSNEVAD, director of the Muslim ministry program at Wheaton College, has engaged Muslims as a missionary for 25 years.

Mark Pfeiffer Yes, to See Differences

t goes without saying that Christianity and Islam are worlds apart. Christian tradition teaches that there are keys to God's character everywhere we turn. In contrast, Islam teaches that humans can know God only through what he reveals in the Qur'an.

Without the Qur'an, Muslims believe, humans are incapable of knowing God, who is distant and transcendent. Behaviors are right or wrong based solely on what God commands and prohibits in the Qur'an. God is free to command and prohibit what non-Muslims might otherwise think is evil or good.

With this in mind, Christians should read the Qur'an carefully, chronologically with a commentary, and with a mission to understand. By reading the Qur'an chronologically with the aid of a commentary, Christians can uncover a rich narrative of theology and practical instruction within the context of 7th-century Arabia.

The Qur'an poignantly reveals how minor shifts in theological thinking, relative to Christianity, can produce major differences in morality and ethics for believers. In the Qur'an, God does not establish perfect and absolute morality. Instead, he is often arbitrary in declaring when and to whom good behavior is to be shown. Rights and obligations are fluid and depend on one's status as a Muslim or non-Muslim, male or female, husband or wife, and so on.

Love and hatred are contingent on one's relationship to the Muslim community. God loves believers but hates unbelievers (Qur'an 2:276; 3:32; 3:57; 4:36), leading them astray and deceiving them (Qur'an 4:142; 16:93; 17:97; 47:23). In other words, God is outside morality.

This touches on a long-standing question among philosophers and theologians: Is behavior right or wrong because God calls it so, as Islam teaches? Or does God command and prohibit based on what is objectively right or wrong? If the former is true, then God could conceivably command evil and prohibit good as we see in the Qur'an. If the latter is true, and God issues edicts according to a standard of morality outside himself, then we might ask: Where does this objective morality come from?

Christianity provides a third option. The Bible teaches that morality is a part of the essence of God, that God is love (1 John 4:8). God is perfect in justice, righteousness, and holiness. God commands good and prohibits evil. These commands flow from his perfect essence. Morality emanates from the essence of God and does not exist outside of him.

In accordance with this essence, the Bible declares there is no distinction between persons. God loves even enemies and commands his followers to treat them with love, turning the other cheek when mistreated. God desires that none perish, that all come to repentance.

The chasm between the moral teachings of Islam and Christianity results from different views of God. Understanding these differences is necessary to interact fruitfully with Muslims.

MARK PFEIFFER is director of the Christian Institute of Islamic Studies at Baptist University of the Americas and author of *True Jihad: Winning the Battle for Muslims*.

MUD ALIVE

N. D. Wilson is is a best-selling author, observer of ants, and easily distracted father of five. His latest book is Death by Living.



Our Own Worst (Art) Critics

Why do we keep insisting Christian works are so cheesy?

or most people, Christianity and art no longer resonate as a glorious pairing. It's a sad and sorry truth that even as Christians, we've largely lost our respect and reverence for "Christian art."

Wandering through Western Christendom, in which artists are currently arting, I've sampled just about all the flavors of Christian creator and Christian consumer. The too-sugary-sweet, message-is-master types. The respect-me-at-all-costs-hardbitten types. The ironic. The naïve. The truly talented. The posers. The Christians who can't tell a story without an altar call and the Christians who write as if all of reality fits into that one guilt-ridden moment when Cain was busy slaving Abel-giving man's sinful nature the last word. And of course, there are also those Christian artists who don't want their art to be "Christian" at all. (And the Christian consumers who feel the same way.)

Despite the vast confusion of taste in the kingdom, and the proliferation of art of varying quality, we share one profoundly common bond: Everyone is insecure about the branding of Christian art. Everyone worries about being labeled cheesy—even the cheesiest people I know. Some artists delude themselves into thinking that they aren't, and others attempt to divorce their faith from their creations with a secular firewall.

Many actually believe that they are building something that has never been built before, like they are the first to stand against the raging tide of schlock and do something worthwhile. They are in pursuit of Christian art, but, you know—good this time.

As Christian artists and Christian consumers, it is all too easy for our eyes—particularly (but not only) the eyes of the

young—to look ever sideways. Is this cool? Is it cool enough? We get embarrassed by a movie celebrating life and grieving over abortion carnage and bemoan the state of Christian film. Why? Because of the camera work? Because of the acting? Maybe. But more likely because we believe a worldly lie about our own branding.

I come to you with strange news. Brace yourselves. There is a hundred times more schlock and garbage in unbelieving art than in ours. More terrible camera work. More bad acting. More mindlessness. More soullessness. More pitiful lyrics. More misery. Not to excuse our own inadequacies (which are all too real), but we should stop fearing the snarkiness of those performing worse than we are.

Need some confidence? Take a look beyond our own pop-frothy moment.

Christian art? Are you kidding me? Christianity has produced the greatest art of all time. Get some swagger, people, because we're undefeated. Did a culture of atheism bring us Handel's Messiah? Bach? What faith fed the Dutch masters? Give the cathedrals a glance and then find me better architecture. Have a listen to some American spirituals. To the blues. To gospel. Our brothers illuminated manuscripts (and don't you forget it). Narnia. Hobbits. Folk songs. Symphonies.

I come to you with strange news. There is a hundred times more schlock and garbage in unbelieving art than in ours. Through the history of the Christian church there runs a wide and roaring river of artistic glory, feeding believers and unbelievers alike.

Now before you start pointing to some of the unbelieving masters, watch me cheat: All beauty is God's. All truth is God's. All goodness is God's. Even those who hate him are made in his image, and if they, by grace, craft glory, we should thank them very much for their contribution and swipe it.

Oh, and speaking of craft, monks still make the best beer.

Don't be scared by the trashcans on our curb (though there are plenty). Come all the way inside and see what men and women can do when they faithfully set their minds to being as much like God as they can. Do likewise. In all that you create-paintings, books, sweaters, meals, bedtime stories, birthday parties-imitate God. Pursue excellence in your moment even when only he sees, because he always does. Strive to do better, to improve, to create glory, not because you fear catcalls from the bleachers of unbelief, but because the bar has been set so high by saints who have gone before, because you would love to be an accurate image of God, as true a reflection of his creativity as you can be. Take joy in your craft, lofty or lowly, because you would be like him.

God has spread out his glorious reality on a canvas that we can't even fit in our imaginations. And the critics of the world have sneered at it as mindless. Pointless. Accidental. Do you think he cares? Does that reduce the joy he has in belting Orion? In a bumblebee's wing?

In all that you create, aim to please him. In all that you consume, attempt to mirror his tastes.



COVER STORY

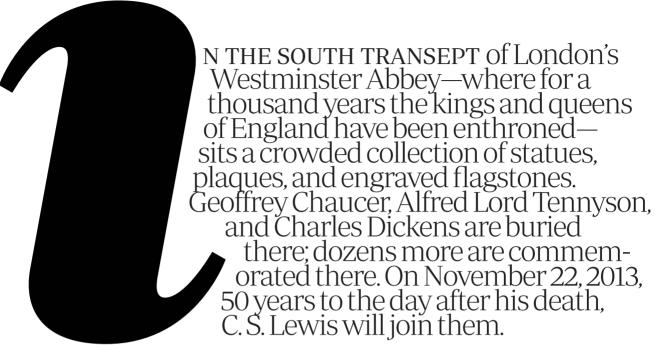
Why the path to reasonable faith begins with story and imagination.

How Lewis Litthe

Way

By Michael Ward





Poets' Corner may seem like an odd place for a writer whose poetry is largely overlooked (though his first two publications were volumes of verse, and Lewis's poetry is far better than many remember or realize). But you needn't be a poet to join Poets' Corner. Musicians like George Frideric Handel and actors like Laurence Olivier mingle with Tennyson and Chaucer. The Corner is devoted to poets in the older, deeper sense of the word. They are "makers" who assemble words (or musical notes or dramatic performances) for artistic ends.

In this older, deeper sense, there is no

place Lewis more rightly belongs. Indeed, perhaps we should think of the celebrated Oxford novelist, literary critic, and apologist above all as a poet. For Lewis believed that knowledge itself was fundamentally poetic—that is to say, shaped by the imagination. And his poetic approach to commending and defending the Christian faith still lights the way for us today.

Of course, everyone recognizes Lewis's great imaginative gifts. Often people will say that his great strength was his ability to present Christianity both rationally and imaginatively.





His rational approach is seen in *The Abolition of Man, Miracles*, and, at a more popular level, *Mere Christianity*. These works show Lewis's ability to argue: to set forth a propositional case, proceeding by logical steps from defined premises to carefully drawn conclusions, everything clear, orderly, and connected.

And his imaginative side, so the argument goes, is seen in *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, and, at a more accessible level, *The Lion*, *the Witch and the Wardrobe*. These works show his ability to dramatize: to set forth an attractive vision of the Christian life, proceeding by means of character and plot to narrate an engaging story, everything colorful, vibrant, and active.

By these accounts, Lewis's rational works and imaginative works are different and distinct. They are two discrete modes in which he presented the faith. And it makes sense that we would think this way: The dichotomy between reason and imagination is how we have been taught to think ever since the so-called Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries. Reasonable people don't need imagination. Imaginative people don't need reasons.

Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626), the father of the scientific method, declared, "All that concerns ornaments of speech, similitudes, treasury of eloquence, and such like emptiness, let it be utterly dismissed."

statements. Fanciful rhetoric may indeed be used to disguise or confuse. It can certainly become a cover for "emptiness" and "deceit"

But are "similitudes"—that is, metaphors and analogies—always and necessarily bad? You couldn't find a view further from Lewis's own, for Lewis was far from an Enlightenment thinker.

"All our truth, or all but a few fragments, is won by metaphor," Lewis wrote in his essay "Bluspels and Flalansferes." Similitudes, seeing one thing in terms of another, finding meanings here which correspond with what we want to say there, are for Lewis the essence of meaningful thought. "For me, reason is the natural organ of truth," Lewis wrote, "but imagination is the organ of meaning. Imagination . . . is not the cause of truth, but its condition." In other words, we don't grasp the meaning of a word or concept until we have a clear image to connect it with.

For Lewis, this is what the imagination is about: not just the ability to dream up fanciful fables, but the ability to identify meaning, to know when we have come upon something truly meaningful.

Blinking Lights

Imagine for a moment that I take my car to the auto mechanic for its annual checkup. At the end, as I am about to drive away, I realize I have forgotten to check one thing. I roll down my window and call over my shoulder to Billy, the mechanic: "Is my rear turn-signal light working?" He responds, "Yes. No. Yes. No. Yes. No. Yes. No. Yes."

Billy's ability to perceive meaning is obviously limited. It's not absent—he knows the basic meaning of electrical circuits. He knows that when a light shines a connection has been made, and when a light goes out a connection has been broken. But he is lacking the ability to perceive that, in this

the light, and even understand electricity, but his organ of meaning here is broken.

Lewis took this one step further. For Lewis, meaning is "the antecedent condition of both truth and falsehood." In other words, before something can be either true or false, it must *mean* something. Even a lie means something, and a lie understood as a lie can be very instructive. Reason, "the natural organ of truth," is our ability to discern true meanings from false meanings. But the meaning comes first. So, imagination has to operate *before* reason. Reason depends on imagination to supply it with meaningful things that it can then reason about.

Back to Billy and the car. Not every flashing light is in fact meaningful. Sometimes loose connections cause lights to flicker on and off at random. We should describe this as nonsensical: the connections are arbitrary, meaningless.

But if the connections were regular or patterned, we would likely conclude that they were significant, meaningful. What kind of meaning would they have? A true meaning, showing that the driver was about to turn onto a street? Or a false meaning, showing that the driver had forgotten to cancel the signal?

In Lewis's view, reason judges between meanings, helping us to differentiate those meanings that are true from those that are false. But until we have meaning, we have nothing to reason about. And for Lewis, the way you get to meaning is imagination. Reason can't work without it.

Imagination can work without reason, though. It can produce meanings that are simply "imaginary." Meaningful images flood our dreams at night, for example, but trying to rationally investigate them will get you nowhere.

What does all of this teach us about Lewis's legacy? It means that when Lewis took up the role of apologist, he didn't have to choose between rational and imaginative

'ALL OUR TRUTH, OR ALL BUT A FEW

Clergyman Thomas Sprat, in *The History of the Royal Society of London, for the Improving of Natural Knowledge*, urged his readers "to separate the knowledge of Nature from the colors of Rhetoric, the devices of Fancy or the delightful deceit of Fables."

Like all of the most misleading ideas, there is some truth wrapped up in these case, a steadily flashing light means "turning," not "bad connection."

Billy can see the raw information—light on, light off, light on. But he cannot discern the correct meaning of the brute facts. Lewis would say that the problem is a deficit in Billy's imagination—what Lewis called "the organ of meaning." Billy can see

presentations of Christianity. There is just as much imaginatively discerned meaning in *Miracles* as in *Perelandra*, but of a different kind, put to a different end.

Not only is imagination as necessary as reason in Lewis's approach; in a sense, imagination is *more* important than reason, because it comes first. Reason

Lost in a Story: The scholar poses for famed photographer Burt Glinn in Cambridge, five years before his death. FRAGMENTS, IS WON BY METAPHOR.' ~C.S. Lewis

depends on imagination in a way that imagination doesn't depend on reason. And certainly, in Lewis's own path to faith, imagination came first.

Discovering the 'True Myth'

Lewis's conversion was sparked (humanly speaking) by a long nighttime conversation with J. R. R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson. They were discussing Christianity, metaphor, and myth. In a letter to Arthur Greeves (dated October 18, 1931), Lewis recounted the conversation. It is clear that questions of meaning—that is to say, of imagination—were at the heart of it.

back up"—religamenting, if you like. Doctrines come from analytical dissection; they recast the original historical material into abstract categories. Because of this, doctrines are not nearly as richly meaningful as the historical material they reflect.

A Living Apology

And here is where Lewis had a breakthrough. He understood that the story recounted in the Gospels—rather than the outworking of that story in the Epistles—was the essence of Christianity. Christianity was a "true myth" (myth here meaning a story about ultimate things, not a falsehood), whereas pagan myths were "men's myths." In paganism, God expressed himself in a general way through the images that humans created in order to make sense of the world. But the story of Christ is "God's myth." God's myth is the story of God revealing himself through a real, historical life of a particular man, in a particular time,

At that point, Lewis's problem with Christianity was fundamentally imagina-CHRISTIANITY IS THE TRUE MYTH, tive. "What has been holding me back... has not been so much a difficulty in believing as a difficulty in knowing what the doctrine meant," he told Greeves. Tolkien and Dyson showed him that Christian doctrines are not the main thing about Christianity. Instead, doctrines are translations of what God has expressed in "a language more adequate: namely the actual incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection" of Christ. The primary language of Christianity is a lived language-the real, historical, visible, tangible language of an actual person being born, dying, and living again in a new, ineffably transformed way. When Lewis realized this, he began to understand what Christianity meant, because he was already fascinated (he had been since childhood) by stories of dying and rising gods. Many ancient mythologies include characters whose deaths achieve or reveal something on earth: new life in the crops, for instance, or sunrise, or the coming of spring. Lewis had always found the heart of these pagan stories "profound and suggestive of meanings beyond my grasp, even tho' I could not say in cold prose 'what it meant." And so Lewis accepted that Christian-

of the faith.

ity had to be understood in its own terms as a story, *before* being translated into codified doctrines. And in this way, he moved from an analytic to a religious perspective

Analysis literally means "loosening up," while religion means something like "tying

in a particular place—Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, crucified under Pontius Pilate outside Jerusalem, circa A.D. 33.

Pagan stories were meaningful but not true. The Christ story is both meaningful and true. Christianity is the true myth, the "myth become fact," as Lewis would come to call it.

A couple of weeks after his conversation with Tolkien and Dyson, Lewis became certain that Christianity was true. But it's important to note: Before he could accept the truth of Christianity, he had to clear an imaginative hurdle. His "organ of meaning" had to be satisfied. Rational assent to Christianity cannot occur unless there is meaningful content to which the higher faculty of reason may assent. Reason can't operate without imagination.

And in this, Lewis, who called himself a "dinosaur" in his inaugural lecture at Cambridge, is in many ways closer to our postmodern contemporaries than he was to his own. Our challenge in the post-Christian world is not so much to prove that Christianity is true as to show that it has *meaning*, that it is not gibberish. Unless people see that Christian terminology actually makes sense and is not a foreign language, they are unlikely to care whether it is also true. And what is needed is not just dictionary definitions or brief

of real human beings in real times in real places. Actions speak louder than words. If faith has to be turned into apologetic words, it is best to use a story, as in the synoptic Gospels, or words that are richly resonant and connotative, like the mighty nouns of John's gospel (Word, Light, Life, Way, Water, Glory, Vine, Bread). These words convey the meaningfulness of faith much better than do abstract arguments.

This is why Lewis did not limit himself to propositional, nonfiction apologetics. His most notable attempt was, of course, the Chronicles of Narnia. These stories have achieved more, perhaps, than any of his writings in communicating the heart of his faith. Chad Walsh, author of the first study of Lewis, *Apostle to the Skeptics*, wrote, "In these books where his imagination has

full scope, he presents the Christian faith in a more eloquent and probing way than ever his more straightforward books of apologetics could."

THE 'MYTH BECOME FACT.'

illustrations, but an immersive story in which aspects of the Christian life can take hold in a person's imagination.

Lewis wrestled directly with how much to focus on the arguments and abstract categories that apologetics requires, and how much instead to reframe apologetics as story. How much to re-present the narrative account of a person being born, growing up, teaching, dving, and rising again.

As an apologist, Lewis realized that debate, with abstract propositions designed to demonstrate and persuade, is less adequate than story, with its characters and plots and atmospheres. In a debate, the apologist has to thin down his language to communicate with opponents—since, almost by definition, they do not possess the imaginative embrace of what the apologist believes.

The apologist has to work at the university lecture podium or at the bar of the courtroom, all the while talking about something that goes on at neither place. How can the apologist turn the holistic life of faith—prayer, fellowship, Communion, reading Scripture, service of the needy—into an argument? It is like Mozart trying to prove his musicality not by writing a symphony but by standing gagged at a blackboard using only numbers.

This is what Lewis means when he talks about "the great disadvantages under which the Christian apologist labors." The life of faith is best communicated in its own terms, namely "life": the lived language

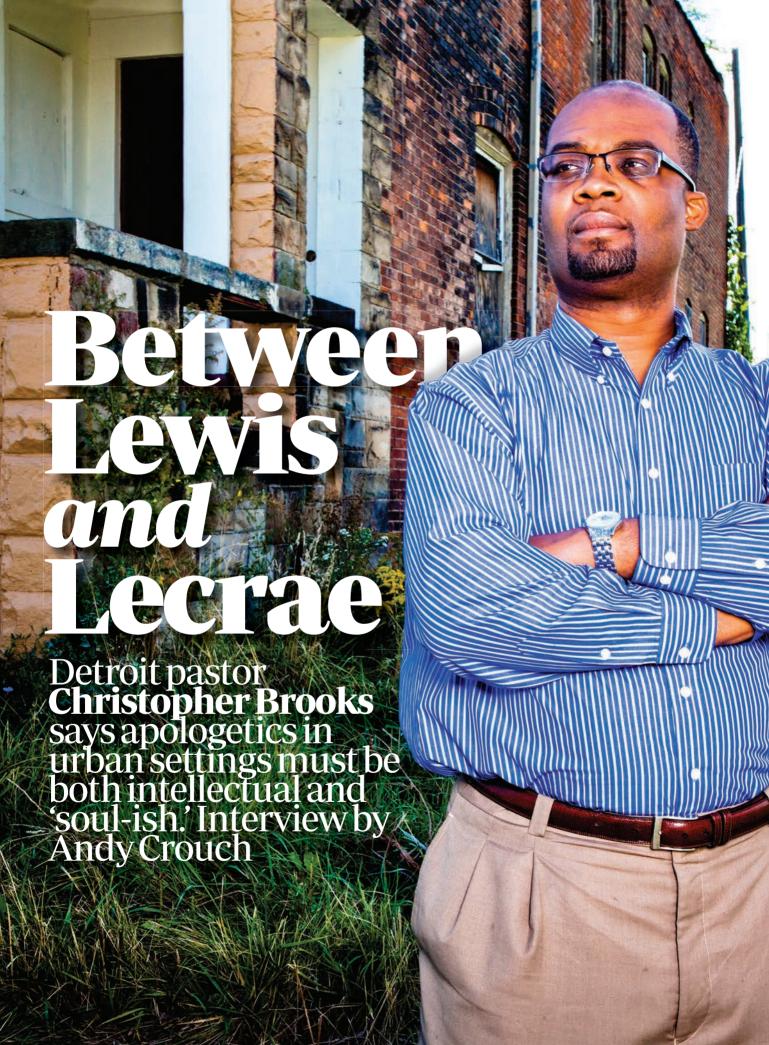
The Great Wedding

Life is more like a story than like an argument. And so, all things being equal, a storied presentation of Christianity will always be more effective than an argued one. But, of course, things are not always equal, and therefore the church needs both methods. Different people will have different callings, depending on talents and context. But even propositional apologetics should be as concrete as possible. Narrative apologetics, meanwhile, is not just imaginary. It is imaginative, relating at all times to reason, "the natural organ of truth."

Both propositional and poetic apologetics point beyond themselves to the historical story of the incarnate God. It is that story, as G. K. Chesterton put it in *The Everlasting Man*, which satisfies "the mythological search for romance by being a story and the philosophical search for truth by being a true story."

In Christ, poetry and philosophy have met together. Meaning and truth have kissed. C. S. Lewis understood, like few in the past century, just how deeply faith is both imaginative and rational. That which God has joined, let no one put asunder. CT

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N 2007, MEMBERS of evangel ministries in northwest Detroit went out into the surrounding neighborhoods to share the gospel in a summer-long program called Dare to Share. They came back with reports of new connections and conversions—and new questions. Many of their neighbors had voiced powerful objections to the faith.

Senior pastor Christopher Brooks realized

that the apologetics he had studied at Biola
University and later at the Oxford Centre
for Christian Apologetics needed to be placed in a new context. "We
realized that we needed to respond to not just the historic topics of
theology and philosophy, but also to the pressing, present question:
'Does the Lord see what's happening in the hood?'"

Brooks's forthcoming book, *Urban Apologetics* (Kregel Publications), tells the story of how Evangel enthusiastically embraced that challenge. The newly appointed campus dean of Moody Theological Seminary–Michigan recently spoke with crexecutive editor Andy Crouch.

You are consciously doing apologetics from and for a minority community. What difference does that make?

Being part of a minority group is a battle for definition: being able to define your own narrative and the world. When you are in the minority, other people begin to define these things for you.

When urban Christians, in particular minorities, have approached apologetics, we've often found a disconnection between what popular apologists are defining as reality and what we are experiencing.

The New Atheism and other intellectual challenges to the faith are real and relevant, but they are not a part of the fabric of everyday life for an African American. When it comes

to the quest for the minority to reclaim its narrative and to connect with a heritage,

THE CT INTERVIEW

religious movements like Moorism and Egyptology and Five Percenters have been prevalent in our communities since the civil rights movement. If I want to defend Christianity in this environment, I have to talk about them. I can't just talk about atheism and orthodox Islam.

Many people in our community are simply asking, "How do we make it in this country right now?" Unfortunately, traditional Protestant apologetics has rarely addressed questions of justice. Pick up a Catholic catechism, and you will find a section on social consciousness, social responsibility, and social justice. But in the average evangelical systematic theology, it's not there. Sadly, in the black community, we have conceded these issues either to liberation theology or to black nationalist groups like the Nation of Islam. There needs to be a strong evangelical voice in our urban areas that says, "Here is what the gospel has to say about justice."

White evangelicals typically are drawn to the righteousness of God—the importance of right doctrine and right practices—whereas African Americans and minorities are drawn more to the justice of God. Yet Psalm 89 says the foundations of God's throne are righteousness and justice. We can't bifurcate the ethics of God into categories of righteousness—issues like abortion and human sexuality—or justice—issues like educational and economic equality.

PHOTO BY TOM McKENZIE 43



The pro-life argument, for example, is much more persuasive in our community if you approach it through the anti-youth-violence movement. Our community has already been mobilized to stand against youth violence. It's a natural extension to say, "Shouldn't we protect our children in the womb as well? Shouldn't the womb of a mother be the safest place for a child?"

Some people would say that we can rationally argue for and defend matters of righteousness and truth, but issues of justice are so much more complicated. Can apologetics actually address those issues effectively?

Christians believe that truth is a Person. Truth is more than a proposition. Truth took on "flesh and dwelt among us," according to John, and we beheld him as "the only begotten of the Father." As he comes full of grace and truth, he comes healing us and

addressing our woundedness. A truth that is not living, vibrant, and active is not fully expressed truth. Yes, there are intellectual aspects of truth, the dialectic conversation that has to go on to refine our understanding of truth. But for truth to be fully expressed, it has to be incarnated. Apologetics is best done when we have both conversation and incarnation.

The problem with apologetics and why it has not had "stickiness," to use a marketing term, in a lot of minority communities has been that it's been conversational but not incarnational. If we restrict truth to an academic exercise instead of seeing it lived, "dwelling among us" in a visible way, then truth isn't fully expressed.

You also have to reckon with the rise of the "apathist," the person who is simply uninterested in God. How do we awaken the heart to even dig into the question of God? It demands a balanced approach between orthodoxy and orthopraxis. Right practice becomes just as important as right doctrine, particularly in urban settings. For example, when I'm speaking on what the Bible says about manhood and womanhood, the Christian definition of family and its purpose, it's just as important that I live that out with my wife as it is that I preach it accurately. You just have to do both.

You've said that the decline of the family, or the lack of intact families with a father present, is the biggest challenge to discipleship.

We are proclaiming a gospel that God is the Father who loves us, who sent his Son to die for us. The very terms are hard to even relate to if you don't know a father.

Think about this for a moment. You're an African American child growing up in a single-parent, female-led home. Your mom is struggling to meet the bills. Who makes

For truth to be fully expressed, it has to be incarnated. Apologetics is best done when we have both conversation and incarnation.

up for housing and food and all those things? The government does. Government becomes a quasi-father.

Now consider 2008, when a black President was elected. Now Dad has a face. If a social conservative tells us to "vote your values," meaning vote for the Republican candidate, for the minority population it's like saying, "Reject your dad." My own children aren't going to wrestle with that because government isn't their dad. They have a father in the home. So they're able to approach government on the merits of Scripture, without any of that confusion around identity and psychology. Government is just government to them, because Dad is providing all those things.

So we had better show them what a father is, what a family is, so that when we see analogies to family relationships in the Bible, they can relate. When John writes, "What manner of love is this that we should be called the sons of God?" what does that look like? If I can see that in a visible example, the text will come alive.

How have you included both righteousness and justice in your etting?

By allowing the biblical text to speak for itself. We have to come to the text not through the eyes first of class or race or social position, but as the self-revelation of God. Then we try to identify what issues are important to him. Taking an exegetical approach to both preaching and apologetics means we ask, "What does the text say?" and, "What does it reveal in its totality?" That approach brings to our attention things that we would not have stumbled on if we had just let our own presuppositions be our guide.

I think about C. S. Lewis, who had the challenge of building the bridge between the culture of Oxford and Cambridge and the culture of the church. These cultures were worlds apart by his time, but he was bilingual, in a sense: able to speak the language of Oxford to the church and the language of the church to the intellectuals and naturalists.

I hope there are Christians who can speak the language of righteousness to minorities. I think that is part of my call. On the other hand, I'm speaking the language of justice to those who haven't had to deal with justice issues. We need more bilingual Christians who can speak the languages of both justice and righteousness.

Has this exegetical approach led you and your congregation to any surprising places?

Yes: adoption. Our church has embraced adoption and foster care in a huge way. The foster-care system is disproportionately populated by minority children. There has been an antagonistic relationship with the state because of the perception that the state somehow profits from pulling our children out of our homes.

But as we were studying Scripture, talking about the Father God, we encountered the language of adoption in Ephesians 1 and the orphan and the widow in James 1:27. We had to ask, "What is our obligation to the orphans in our community?"

We have a goal that there would be no children in our community waiting for a home. There are about 2,000 children waiting, and our goal is to be able to find 2,000 homes for them. We have 3,000 churches in Detroit. So if each church can get just one family to adopt, we can eliminate the need for children to wait. That is a matter of praxis and apologetics: showing how the gospel makes a difference.

It seems like a kind of Christian culture persisted in the African American community longer than it did in the dominant culture: church leaders were granted unquestioned respect. Is that changing?

Absolutely. When I'm doing question-andanswer sessions with high school and college students, I'm hearing questions along these lines: "What is the church?" "What is the church for?" They aren't so much searching for a technical definition as asking, "Where does the church fit in this moment? Where is the place of the church in all the shifts and changes we're seeing?" That is on the table for the first time in our community. And let's not discount the role of improved social-economic standing, which gives access to the best universities. I come back from that experience and need more from my pastor than a great choir or whooping and preaching. I need something that's going to match what I'm getting not only in the classroom but in my corporate training. If I'm intellectually challenged there, I will want to bring my mind to church as well.

There is a great deal of theological and philosophical dialogue going on in minority communities. There is just as much of an appetite in the urban community in Detroit for that conversation as there is in Manhattan for Eric Metaxas's Socrates in the City. We bring many of the same great theological minds into our setting for our Answering the Challenge conferences, and the philosophical and theological dialogue is just as rich.

Hip-hop addresses theological and philosophical questions as well.

The Christian hip-hop artist is the modern equivalent of the ancient prophet. Hip-hop artists have a very interesting and complex relationship with pastors. The relationship between the pastor and the prophet is always complicated. But hip-hop artists have done a great job at liberating apologetics from the prison of the classroom. They demand to express apologetics in a creative way.

It's beautiful that apologetics has invaded the realm of music and movies and media, through the playwrights and the poets and the spoken-word artists. At our Answering the Challenge events, there's always a spoken-word artist or a poet or a Christian rapper who can give a rhythm to this. For the minority person, truth has to resonate not just in an intellectual way, but in a soul-ish way. There has to be a rhythm toit

I appreciate Lecrae and the 116 Clique and Cross Movement and all of the young urban apologists who know how to take it to a street corner. Now you're finding hiphop heads on seminary campuses—you go to Dallas and you go to Biola and there they are. This is how the gospel expresses itself when it hits my community.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE REALLY GRASP THAT GOD IS ALMIGHTY.

BY MARK GALLI

ar J12WS

GLOBAL GOSPEL PROJECT

ETWEEN 10,000 and 2 million years ago, during an earlier global warming, glaciers moved through a mountain of granite nearly 9,000 feet above sea level, carving wonders through what is now Yosemite Valley in central California. Among the glaciers' wondrous work is the Half Dome, which rises nearly one mile above the Yosemite Valley floor.

From the valley you can gaze up at the bald rock, or, if you're a rock climber, you can scale its face. Many visitors climb a path that winds to the top. Or, as I am wont to do, you can drive to Glacier Point and behold Half Dome across the valley, face to face.

When visitors get out of the car and start walking toward Half Dome, they typically have two reactions: they grow afraid and awestruck. Or awestruck and afraidit's hard to tell which comes first. It's a combination of the sheer size of the dome face combined with the dramatic drop to the valley below. They start walking more carefully as they approach the edge. Parents grab their children's hands; friends grasp each other's arms.

The view literally takes one's breath away, and visitors tend to start whispering. They dread falling into the abyss, and yet they want to get as close to the edge as they can.



Approaching the edge of death and wonder like this inevitably leads to silence. LA journalist Christopher Reynolds recently put it this way about Glacier Point's "jaw-dropping views": "The spectacle is an invitation to consider eternity and forget petty human affairs."

For the Christian, the experience may bring to mind the first line of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth." It's that "almighty" part—and the human reaction that goes with it—that interests me here: fear. More precisely, the fear of the Lord.

Those of us in ministry circles today try to banish fear from our vocabulary. Fear is such a downer. Isn't ministry about helping people overcome their fears? Doesn't Jesus say, "Do not fear, only believe" (Mark 5:36, Esv)? Doesn't John say, "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18, Esv)? Perhaps the fear of the Lord is an Old Testament idea, a religious relic of a distant past when people thought the finest thing to say about God was that he was all-powerful. We on the other side of the Resurrection know that the greatest thing to be said about God is that he is love. Perfect love, in fact, that doesn't produce fear but instead banishes it.

And yet, when we go to places like Glacier Point, we find ourselves attracted to the very thing that makes us afraid. And rather than running from it, we want to get closer, at least as close as we can without getting killed. At such moments, we realize life is a little more complicated.

To Fear and Not to Fear

I can hardly count the number of times in the Bible that "the fear of the Lord" is extolled as a virtue, or when people meet God almighty and are left stammering. At the foot of Mount Sinai, "there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled" (Ex. 19:16, ESV). When Isaiah sees the glory of God in the temple, he thinks he's going to die: "Woe is me! For I am lost" (Isa. 6:5, ESV). We get the distinct impression that God wants us mostly to fear him:

Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God; the fear of me is not in you, declares the Lord God of hosts.
(Jer. 2:19, ESV)

When "gentle Jesus" shows up, things get worse. The disciples are frightened after Jesus stills the storm (Mark 4:35–41) and "terrified" at the Transfiguration (9:6). The woman healed of a blood flow is at first filled with "fear and trembling," and on the first Easter morning, the witnesses are seized with "trembling and astonishment ... for they were afraid" (16:8).

When people witness the power and glory of almighty God, they are terrified. They think they are going to die. When we blithely sing to God to "show us your glory, Lord," we might as well be making a death wish. Or maybe we just want to get close to something that scares us to death.

Then again, notice what the people of Israel do when they encounter God almighty. They don't run. They keep hanging around the mountain. Isaiah doesn't bolt from the temple. The result of Jesus' terrorizing miracles is that more people than ever flocking to him. Yes, the women run from the tomb in fear. But they are not running from God as much as obeying the heavenly messenger to tell others something that may well scare the living daylights out of them: Jesus is alive and well.

Perhaps evangelism is not so much one hungry person telling another hungry person where to find bread, as one terrified person telling others where they can go to experience this beautiful fear. It would appear that, at least initially, the Resurrection was not intended to bring witnesses a warm, fuzzy comfort that all will be well. Rather, the message seems to be, "Do not just believe, but also fear!"

And yet how many times in the Bible does almighty God tell people, "Fear not"? And this, just after he has scared the bejeebers out of them by displaying his might. This is a steady refrain in the opening chapters of Luke, when epiphany after epiphany begins with the angel telling the witnesses to fear not. Perhaps the best-known example—partly because it preaches so well—is Jesus' admonition to the ruler of the synagogue who has just learned his daughter has died: "Fear not, only believe" (Mark 5:36, Asv).

Of course, these repeated fear-nots are God's Twitter way of saying that "neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor

WHEN WE GO TO PLACES LIKE GLACIER POINT. WE FIND OURSELVES ATTRACTED TO THE VERY THING THAT MAKES US AFRAID. AND RATHER THAN RUNNING FROM IT, WE WANT TO GET CLOSER.

things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38–39, Esv). In the end, there is nothing so big or ominous or powerful in this life that compares to God. There are many things that harm us, and some of them we could even call mighty. But they are only mighty. God is all-mighty. And if almighty God is for us, who can be against us? So chill out. Fear not. Or at least don't fear relatively petty things.

The Beginning of Wisdom

But God almighty? Yes, fear him.

Not respect him. There are plenty of good words in Hebrew and Greek that communicate honor and respect. But the biblical writers rarely use them when talking about God. Honor your father and mother (Ex. 20:12). Respect the emperor. But when it comes to God, they tell us to "fear" him (1 Pet. 2:17). When it comes to God, they keep using the word that scares us. (We may have nothing to fear but fear itself, but that seems to be what we fear.)

Like many biblical commands, the command to "fear not" comes with a promise: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). If we fear God, then we will become judicious, understanding, knowledgeable, and astute. Perhaps we have abandoned teaching about the fear of the Lord because, really, we no longer want to be wise. Loved, yes. Comforted, hopeful,

forgiven-yes. But not wise.

Then again, the Lord is gracious, because the very mention of forgiveness suggests that he is opening a back door to let proper fear sneak in.

There's a surprising verse in the Psalms that points to this. The psalmist is meditating on his behavior as he prays in the presence of a holy God. He concludes that, all things being equal, things look pretty hopeless. He expresses it differently than Isaiah, but it amounts to the same thing: "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" (130:3, Esv). If God's righteousness were the first and last word about God, we would be as good as dead. Then he continues, "But with you, there is forgiveness." Whew-we are not dead men walking. The kindling of our sinfulness and the fire of God's holiness are not going to touch. Instead, the mountain of sin is crushed and reshaped by the glacier of God's forgiveness.

What comes next may surprise the modern reader. The psalmist does not continue by saying, "And you've done this that we might sing your praises." One hopes that people will praise God for such a gift. But this is not what the psalmist says. Nor does he say, "And you've done this that we might love you forever." Nor, "And you've done this so that we will forgive others." Again, true enough, as far as it goes.

No, the psalmist says, "But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared."

It's hard for us to imagine what the psalmist is talking about. We expect him

to suggest that we'll be thankful. Or joyful. Or relieved. But not fearful. There are many reasons for this, but I suspect one of them is this: we generally start talking of forgiveness way before we have seen and understood the utter devastation of sin and the magnificence of redemption.

Redemption is like that massive glacier, nearly a mile high, that shoved its way through the immense granite block, sweeping away mountains here and splitting others there. If we grasped the power that removed the granite mountain of sin and carved from it a scene of unimaginable beauty, I dare say we'd be inspired by a beautiful fear.

Beautiful because of the sheer glory of redemption, and yet filling us with a fear that attracts. We feel in our souls that if we get too close to the God who pulled this off, we will fall into an abyss. Yet we can hardly help edging closer and closer, with friends grabbing our arms telling us to be careful, to watch ourselves.

That's because our friends suspect something that we may have forgotten today: that to free fall into the hands of almighty God is a dreadful thing (Heb. 10:31).

It is also the most wonderful thing. Because to know this beautiful fear is to know grace, for "his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation" (Luke 1:50, ESV). And to know beautiful fear is to become like Christ, who, according to Isaiah, is one whose "delight shall be in the fear of the Lord" (11:3, ESV).

MARK GALLI is editor of Christianity Today.

Out of Africa: Bonnke, a native of Germany, preached September 27–28 in Orlando, Florida, where he relocated his headquarters 12 years ago. He became an American citizen last year.



The Crusader

In his career of 54 years,
Reinhard Bonnke has encountered
jealous rivals, angry witch doctors,
violent thunderstorms, corrupt heads
of state, and rioting Muslims.
But this fall the global evangelist
journeyed on uncharted ground—
his first revival in the United States.
In shifting his schedule to include
U.S. audiences, he must overcome a
major obstacle: In 2000, Reinhard Bonnke
preached to 1.6 million people attending a
single meeting in Lagos, Nigeria.
But as he steps on U.S. shores
few Americans have even heard of him.

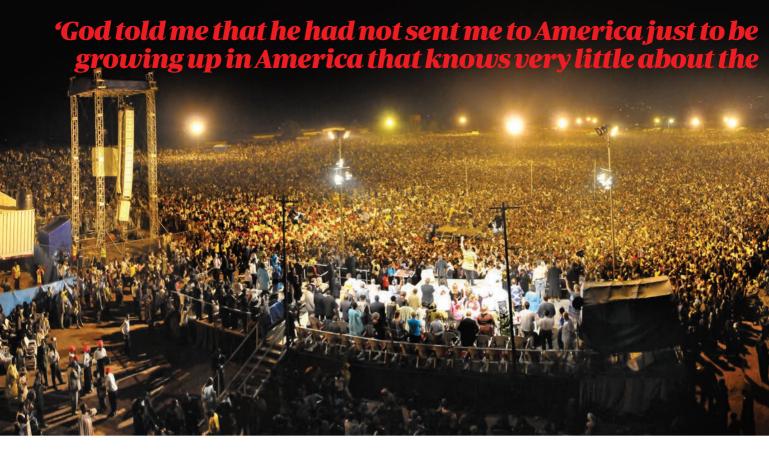
Bonnke is up for the challenge. The 73-year-old evangelist has preached in many places with low expectations and emerged with massive attendance and conversion numbers. In fact, Bonnke's ministry, Christ for all Nations (CfaN), claims 72 million people have filled out decision cards in response to Bonnke's salvation invitations since the 1970s.

Most of those conversions—55 million, according to CfaN—have occurred in Africa. The harvest appears especially bountiful in Nigeria, where Bonnke has focused his ministry for the past decade. While Bonnke plans to keep preaching in Africa, he is devising a still-unspecified revival circuit in the United States.

"We will go from city to city, from state



By John W. Kennedy



to state, from coast to coast," Bonnke told *Christianity Today*.

For the past 30 years, CfaN has relied heavily on funds from American donors. In 1995, Bonnke told cr he had no interest in preaching in a land with around-the-clock Christian television. Yet Bonnke says the Lord made the need for an evangelism shift evident to him last year.

"God told me that he had not sent me to America just to be the offering plate for Africa," Bonnke says. "I've seen a new generation growing up in America that knows very little about the gospel of salvation. It must be preached."

Paul Cedar, CEO of Mission America Coalition, supports CfaN's expansion: "We thank God for how he has used Bonnke in other nations of the world and pray God's best for him as he ministers in the United States."

With his signature proclamation, "Hell Empty, Heaven Full," Bonnke started CfaN in 1974 in Johannesburg and moved to Frankfurt in 1985. He has conducted gospel outreaches in 47 nations. The vast majority —227 tent and open-air meetings—have taken place in 34 African countries.

Indeed, Bonnke has shown no fear in treading where few Christians venture because of violence, strife, or extreme poverty. He has escaped murder plots of Islamist extremists, but refuses to demonize Muslims or Islam.

"I do not preach against religions; I

preach Christ," Bonnke told cr. "I do not consider those who oppose us enemies, because Jesus died for them as much as he died for me."

Crowds typically grow during a weeklong revival when word spreads about miracles. In 2000, Bonnke preached to 1.6 million people attending a single meeting in Lagos, Nigeria, and, according to CfaN, nearly 1.1 million of those accepted Jesus as Savior.

"I still have only one sermon," Bonnke wrote in his 630-page 2010 autobiography, *Living a Life of Fire*. "I preach the simple ABCs of the gospel."

Since his early years, Bonnke has sought the cooperation of a wide spectrum of Christian denominations. CfaN lined up 150 churches in Orlando. Bonnke follows the crusade organizational playbook created by Billy Graham. Local pastors spend months beforehand preparing because their churches stand to reap the rewards of the outreach. "I tell the pastors I am an evangelist," Bonnke says. "I bring my nets; I want to borrow your boats so that we together will have a mighty catch of fish and then pull that net to the shore. I will not take a single fish with me. I take my nets and go to the next city."

Ron P. Johnson, lead pastor of One Church, an Assemblies of God congregation, was a local leader of the Good News Orlando planning committee. He says non-Pentecostal churches had no qualms about participating. "Increasingly as we live in a post-Christian nation, we all desire to see the gospel go forth," Johnson says.

After Graham

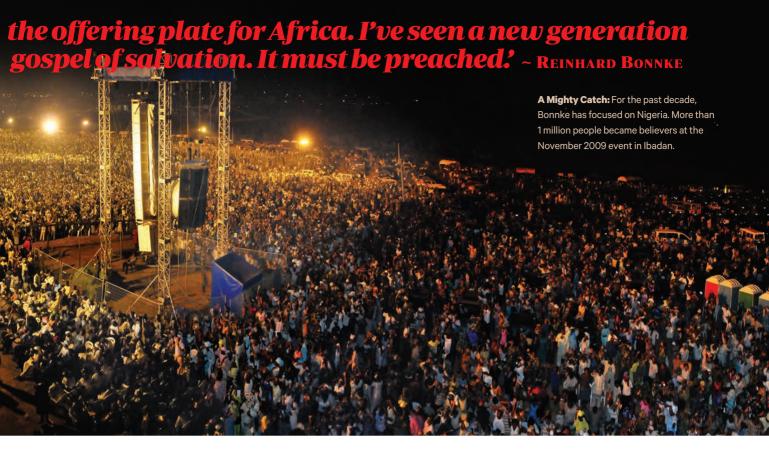
Still, if Bonnke is going to branch out, he must raise his profile. "The reason people don't know more about him is that the divide is wide between orthodox evangelicals and our charismatic and Pentecostal friends," says Lon Allison, executive director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College in Illinois. "It's not an intentional divide; it's just that there are different camps in a very big Christian world."

Cecil M. Robeck Jr., director of the David J. DuPlessis Center for Christian Spirituality at Fuller Seminary, wonders whether mass public meetings still are an effective form of evangelism in the West. He notes that Americans relate primarily in other ways, especially through social media.

"Billy Graham's day has passed," Robeck says. "I don't think Bonnke can raise anywhere the level of anticipation or participation that Graham did in the 20th century."

Candy Gunther Brown, a charismatic/ Pentecostal historian at the University of Indiana, questions whether Bonnke's

New Ground: At the Orlando event, right, over 1,000 came to Christ, not including outreach efforts following it.



old-fashioned traditional techniques of evangelism can transcend a culture saturated with high-tech media preaching. "In Africa, Bonnke is a novelty; his meetings are big events," Brown says. "People come to his meetings often because they are sick, disabled, and feel spiritually oppressed."

H. Vinson Synan, dean emeritus of Regent University's School of Divinity, says history will vindicate Bonnke's contribution to global evangelism.

"He will go down as the greatest mass evangelist of all time, even greater than Billy Graham as far as numbers of converts and huge crowds that hear him speak," says Synan, who first attended a Bonnke tent crusade in Zimbabwe in 1986.

"I saw the greatest miracles I've ever seen," Synan says. "Blind people received sight, people got up out of wheelchairs."

Synan, who convinced Bonnke in 1987 to begin keeping meticulous records about

his events, says mass revivals in the United States featured few true converts. Many "decisions for Christ" involve backslidden believers rededicating their commitment to live for the Lord, he says.

Bonnke has had a different impact in Africa, according to Synan. "Everybody goes to Bonnke crusades—Catholics, Muslims, people from all religions, and those with no religion," Synan says. "Muslims are converting because they are healed in Jesus' name."

Not all Christian scholars are so enthusiastic. Grant Wacker, professor of Christian history at Duke Divinity School, saw Bonnke preach in Oslo in 1992. He found Bonnke to be a charismatic preacher in every sense of the word.

"At the conclusion, hundreds of people ran to the front for healing and to have demons exorcised," recalls Grant, author of Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture.

Yet Wacker rejected the sermon emphasis he sensed Bonnke projecting. "Bonnke's God was a God of terror," Wacker says. "His world was filled with demons and demonic powers."

Prosperity Label Rejected

To reach a broader audience and burnish his credibility, Bonnke has moved to establish that he is financially accountable and transparent, selected a reliable leadership team, and kept his distance from prosperity theology.

But since the 1980s, Bonnke has been a visible friend of Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn, both strongly associated with prosperity teaching. Copeland has been CfaN's largest financial partner, beginning with an \$800,000 donation for a massive tent in 1984.

Bonnke does not espouse a name-it, claim-it theology. He believes that God chooses to heal or not heal. "When I pray for someone and that person is not healed, I do not blame it on a lack of faith," Bonnke says in his autobiography. "The longer I live, the less I pretend to know about the mind of God. I do not know why some are healed and others are not. I only know that sometimes it is the faith of a sick person that makes them whole, and sometimes it is the faith of others."

While some high-profile health and wealth preachers have eschewed financial oversight, CfaN joined the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA). The ministry took in \$12,851,281 in 2011 and spent \$10,273,545, according to the ECFA. Ministry Watch, a financial watchdog organization, gives CfaN a three-star overall efficiency rating (out of five stars). CfaN reports that the average cost of a crusade is \$900,000.



Healings Proclaimed at Orlando Event

Some 20,000 people and 305 congregations join in Bonnke crusade. By Hope Flinchbaugh

he Amway Center in Orlando reported that 20,000 people attended Reinhard Bonnke's gospel crusade during the last weekend in September. Christ for all Nations reported that 1,908 people filled out decision cards to indicate they had received Christ during the event. Four weeks before the crusade, volunteers went out to share the gospel, and 305 local churches, 35 parachurch ministries, and 1,700 Christian volunteers pitched in over the weekend.



After hundreds of people turned in their decision cards on the first night of the crusade, Bonnke invited associate Daniel Kolenda to come to the platform to pray for the sick. Afterward, Kolenda welcomed to the platform several people who said they had experienced healing. Lenora Gauthier (pictured above) told the audience that her right eye had been damaged in a car accident decades ago. She has been legally blind in that eye since then. When Kolenda mentioned that God was healing someone's eye, Gauthier asked two women near her to pray with her. After the service, 44-year-old Gauthier told Christianity Today, "The whole time we were praying I had my left eye closed, because I believed. All of a sudden I could see." In October, her eye doctor said her right eye acuity had improved to 20/200 from 20/4,000.

HOPE FLINCHBAUGH is an author, editor, and journalist from Pennsylvania.



Anticipation for miraculous healing follows Bonnke wherever he goes. Bonnke emphasizes healing prayer for the ill, diseased, and disabled. Without a doubt, much of the overwhelming response in Africa stems from reports of the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, and the lame walking.

Skeptics regularly deride the "come and receive your miracle" aspect of Bonnke's ministry as deceptive. One of the most controversial healings was the reported resurrection from the dead of Nigerian pastor Daniel Ekechukwu in 2001. Three days after the pastor was declared dead by a local doctor, Ekechukwu's wife took his body to a nearby Bonnke-sponsored prayer service, where pastors prayed and massaged his body. He suddenly revived. Since then, Ekechukwu has resumed ministry, including speaking at Bonnke events.

"Some people call me a healing evangelist. I do not like that," says Bonnke. "I define myself as a salvation evangelist who also prays for the sick. Wherever we go, 95 percent of the meeting is a clear preaching presentation of the gospel. We pray for the sick because many people cannot find healing through conventional medicine."

Leadership and succession in organizations with a charismatic founder are tricky. Several renowned pastors and evangelists keep the leadership reins in the hands of family members—with mixed results. Bonnke's son, Kai-Uwe, is part of CfaN's technical television team and told his father he isn't called to be an evangelist.

But Bonnke has already selected a successor, Daniel Kolenda. "Tam getting older," Bonnke says. "I desire to pass the burning baton to the next generation." Kolenda, a graduate of Southeastern University in

Lakeland, Florida, is a fifth-generation preacher. He began working in the CfaN mailroom in 2004 as a way to supplement his church-planter income.

In 2009, Bonnke promoted Kolenda to president and chief executive of CfaN. Kolenda, 32, has been at Bonnke's side for seven years, preaching to millions on his own. Far from mass evangelism being a relic of the past, Bonnke believes CfaN could realize even more salvation decisions under Kolenda's mantle. Allison, Brown, and Synan commend Bonnke for having his successor primed and ready. "It is the best case of a Timothy coming alongside for active training that I have ever seen," says Synan.

Brown says it's sensible for Bonnke to work in tandem with Kolenda so that CfaN contributors keep giving after the transition. CfaN has offices in 10 countries, with a combined workforce of 130.

The day after Bonnke debuted Good News Orlando, California evangelist Greg Laurie began his annual two-day evangelism event called Harvest America. Laurie, long associated with Calvary Chapel founder Chuck Smith, has hosted in total 4.4 million people at his evangelism events. But in addition to the live stadium event in Philadelphia, Laurie will be webcasting Harvest America.

Bonnke, who also makes extensive use of live webcasting, announced Raleigh, North Carolina, as the next location for a U.S. event in May 2014. In the meantime, CfaN has crusades in Ghana in November and Cameroon in December.

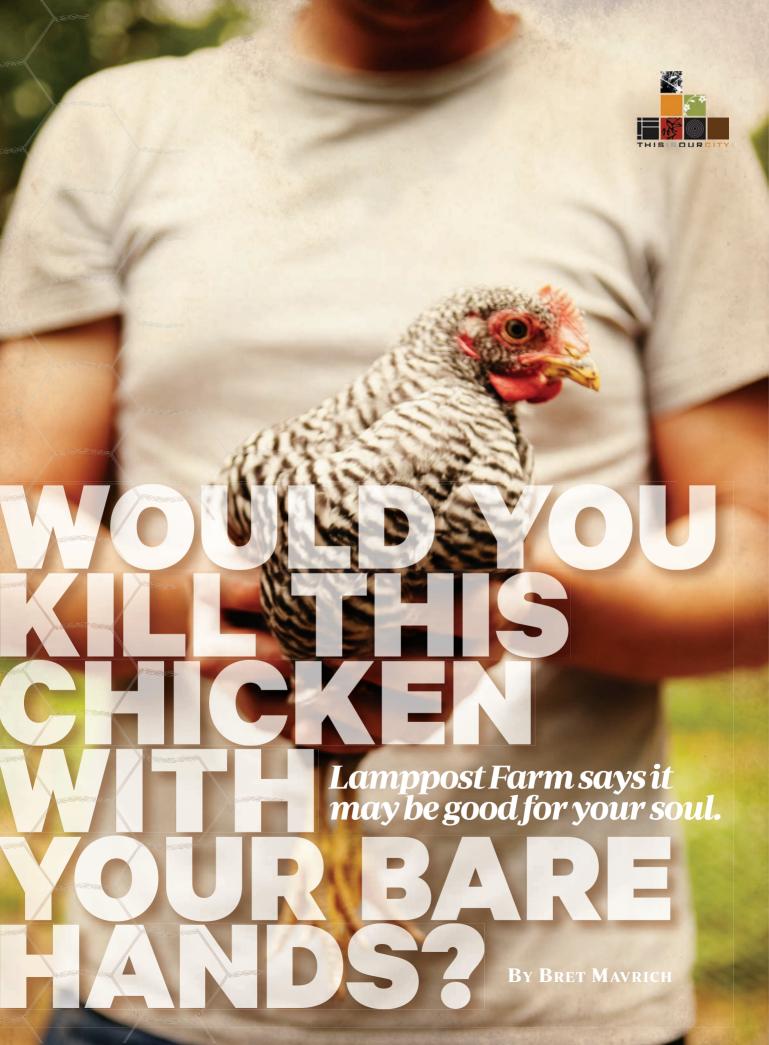
JOHN W. KENNEDY, a former ct news editor, is news editor of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, the weekly magazine of the Assemblies of God.



Are you willing to go down without a fight?
Because it could be happening. Your marriage,
your family, and your heart are in the battle zone.
It's time to man up—for God. Join bestselling
author Craig Groeschel for Fight. For more
info on the book and worldwide simulcast
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The chicken defeatherer is a marvel to behold. It's a 55-gallon drum lined with rubber fingers and a motorized, spinning floor that keeps chickens tumbling in the drum. The first time I watch Steve Montgomery lower two dead birds into the machine, only to pull them out seconds later, nude and ridiculous-looking, I feel like I've just seen street magic.

"Someone should Vine that," says Tim, the guy next to me. He's referring to the latest social media platform that allows users to share six-second videos. Tim is a line chef at Salt of the Earth, a Pittsburgh restaurant that serves dishes prepared with local ingredients. Salt is by no means unique. Concerns about the economic and health implications of long-distance food supplies have coalesced into the local-food movement, complete with a bevy of documentaries and artisan restaurants in every major U.S. city. The local-food movement runs on the trust between consumers who are close, relationally and geographically, to the people who grow and prepare their food. It's the dietary equivalent of, "I know a guy who knows a guy."

And Steve Montgomery is happy to be that guy. Which is why I've come to Lamppost Farm, a 75-acre patch of land near Columbiana (pop. 6,400) in eastern Ohio that Steve and his wife, Mel, have run since March 2007. After leaving college ministry, the couple founded Lamppost to raise cows, pigs, and chickens for slaughter, and established it as a nonprofit ministry—a subtle signal that more is going on here than the sale of fresh eggs.

SLAUGHTER AS GOD INTENDED

I join the huddle as Montgomery demonstrates the defeathering process to the Salt staff. From the truck bed next to us comes a cacophony of 50 chickens all asking the same question: "WHAAAT? What, what,

WHAAAAAT?" We try to ignore them as Montgomery demonstrates how to hold the knife.

Which is, of course, the first step. One by one, the birds are hung by their feet on a backboard of metal sheeting with wood bracers, where their throats are cut and bled out. Next, the limp birds are scalded in 150-degree water before visiting the defeatherer, then the stainless-steel cleaning table. There, the feet, head, organs, lungs, and trachea are removed, in that order. Finally, the birds, now meat and bones, are rinsed and stored in a tub of ice water.

Everything about the morning is "by the book," meaning in accordance with the Ohio Department of Agriculture's protocols to ensure that food preparations are sanitary—and humane. That's why Salt's chefs and servers are here, to learn how to process the birds they will sell to patrons.

But Montgomery is reaching for more than just a workshop in keeping with agricultural protocol. He wants to kill chickens as God intended—and, by that, connect people with the goodness of God and his grace that overcomes human sin and limitations.

The Montgomerys drew their farm's name from the first book in C. S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia. When the four Pevensie siblings tumble through a coat closet into the strange world, they first see a lamppost, inexplicably burning in the middle of a snowy wood. For Montgomery, the scene references a window into a new world and a new way of thinking. He and Mel want to teach visitors about the



connectedness of creation and the goodness of the Creator—something Westerners can miss when the sources of our food are obscured. They've found that putting someone on kinetic tilt, using tactile experiences like slaughtering hens, is the best way to teach this.

"Farming, because it is 'rooted' in the creation of food, caring for the land, and doing so in a hands-on manner, enables us to see beyond the blur of our fast world," says Montgomery.

He is masterful at coaching the group past our limitations. Luke, a former Lamppost intern, is about to cut into a bird when Montgomery stops him: Luke has the insulator glove on the wrong hand, the one holding the electrified knife that momentarily stuns the bird before cutting it. And he is holding the bird's head in place barehanded. It's an honest mistake, particularly for someone who is not totally clear about how an electric current travels through conductive materials.

"Listen up, everybody! We just learned something over here," says Montgomery, explaining the proper procedure. Cornelius, a tall young man wearing suspenders, halfway raises his hand to get Montgomery's attention. "Yeah, the same thing happened to me," he admits. Montgomery has created a culture of mutual discovery, where we're not afraid to make mistakes because we understand that they can benefit everybody.

Today's workshop with Salt is possible because of rich relationships between the Montgomerys and their "core partners," who help host events and draw visitors to Lamppost. Currently, ten families have made a one-year commitment to partner with Steve and Mel.



Cornelius, a former core partner himself, works for Salt as a farmer, filling its kitchen with produce from a local garden run by a pastor who also

happens to be a Lamppost board member. Through this network of friendships, Cornelius connected Salt to Lamppost Farm, the type of free-range chicken provider that the local-food eatery had been looking for.

We're about halfway done processing chickens when a curious Buff Orpington rooster bebops around the corner. Before him is the grizzly scene of hens in various stages of processing. He freezes, then saunters off as if to say, "I'm going to pretend I didn't see that."

LIFE IN THE BLOOD

Frankly, at this point I wish I could join him. Before this morning, I'd been blissfully unaware of modern food production. Every now and again on a visit to the grocery store, I would see a succulent chicken on a rotisserie and try to visualize what the bird must have looked like with feathers and a head. But I could never mentally bridge the gulf between a live hen and the oddly shaped "chicken" turning over the

Don't Tweet This: Slaughter at Lamppost Farm, which also raises cattle and pigs, is up close and personal. heat, holes conveniently positioned at either end for the spit.

And now it's my turn to kill such a bird. I retrieve two hens from a cage in the truck. The

chickens are heavier than I thought they'd be, and warm (but of course). Their legs have a fleshy texture (what did I expect?). I turn them upside-down and hang them from the cutting board. I put the glove on my left hand, flick the switch to give the knife juice, grip the bird's head and—buzz! Electricity zings through my index finger on my knife hand. Montgomery and I look to see a small gap in the tape that's supposed to insulate the handle. I move my hand down a bit on the knife and get back to business.

I press the tip of the knife into the bird's head, behind the cheek. The tip sparks, and the bird flinches, drawing in its wings. The cut requires more pressure than I thought it would, and Montgomery tells me I can cut deeper, that I can press until I feel the blade against the spine. Finally, the artery is cut, and the bird goes limp and bleeds out.

The next bird does not die as gracefully. I make the cut more quickly, drawing the knife deeply through the throat in a single back-and-forth, like a violin bow. But when I release her, she flaps wildly for a moment

in spasms that don't seem involuntary. So violent is the reaction that the chicken actually kicks loose one of her legs from the holding prongs, and I must refasten her. Then, she's still.

I look at the blood streaming down the corrugated metal and soaking into the sawdust on the ground. *The life is in the blood*. Then I look up at Montgomery.

"How are you doing, May?" he asks. I grimace. Montgomery is as interested in helping me face the trauma of killing an animal as he is in ensuring that the animal dies with dignity.

"It's disturbing."

"It's supposed to be," he says. "We're not supposed to take a life and then say, Well, whatever. That's not how we're made."

That simple truth resonates long afterward. Everything at the farm, from Montgomery and me to the chicken to the land, has a Creator. And because of this, I hold no ultimate mastery over the bird I have just killed, because it wasn't mine to begin with. The hen was a gift. I'm intimately bound to a chicken in a relationship because I took its life, in the sight of God and with my own hands, to nourish mine.

Suddenly, I'm thinking new thoughts, the kind the Montgomerys had hoped for. Food doesn't come from a grocery store. The grocery store delivers to me, a consumer, not chickens but pieces of chickens, without a trace of the process or the living animal. Food doesn't even come from Lamppost Farm, a sustainable, GMO-free, free-range operation that's as close to Eden as you could hope for in Ohio. No, food comes from God.

SIMPLE GIFTS

Here, at Lamppost, knowing this enhances what you're eating because every hen is a gift, and has been received as such and treated as such every step of the way. And if we've overlooked gifts as bountiful as these, where else have we missed God reaching out to us in small ways, maybe all the time?

"I want to change the way people pray before dinner," says Montgomery. "We have people who will buy 50 chickens, and those are the birds they eat for the whole year. Eating that chicken is so much more than just consuming. They're connected; they're interwoven; they pray with knowing."

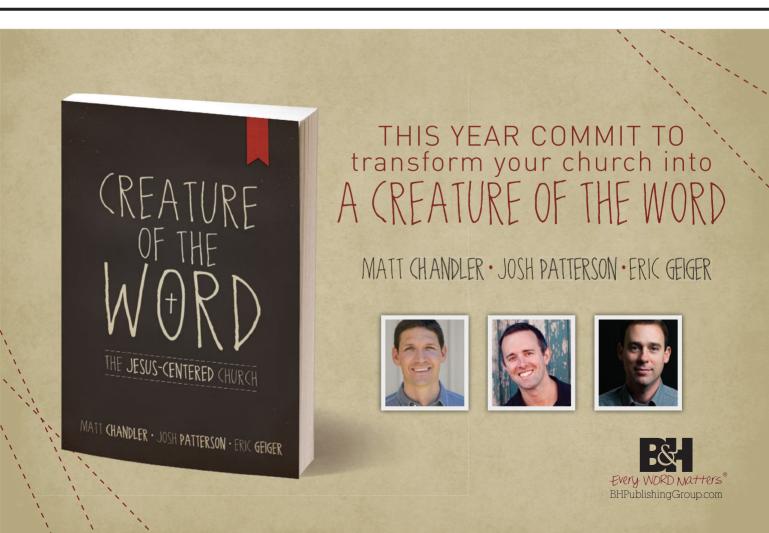
After the birds have been processed, Salt of the Earth packs up and heads back to Pittsburgh. But they'll be back, every month in fact, to process all of the chicken I look at the blood streaming down the corrugated metal and soaking into the sawdust on the ground. The life is in the blood. 'How are you doing, May?' he asks. I grimace. that is served in their restaurant. As we say goodbye, I experience a flutter of satisfaction at the thought that some happy patron of theirs would be enjoying the very bird I processed, cooked *sous vide* and paired with outlandish and inventive ingredients. I'm interwoven.

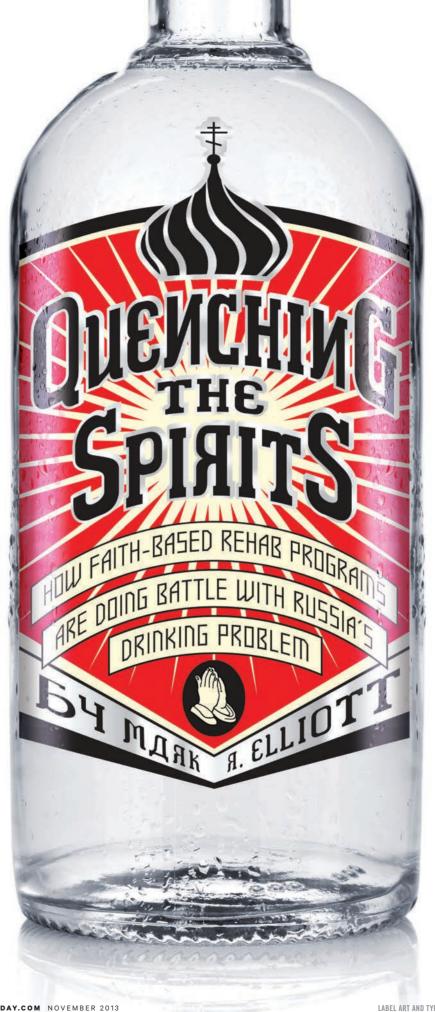
At the table that evening we're all tired. We're eating chicken. Montgomery has lightly fried a few birds, then coated them in herbs and spices. The flavor of North Woods, a spice mix that Cornelius has introduced to the Montgomerys, enhances the sense that I've stepped through a wardrobe into someplace patently more magical than Ohio. But before we feast, Montgomery says grace.

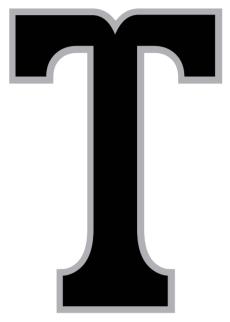
"Thank you, Lord, for work, and for the opportunity to work alongside those whom we love." It's a hearty thanks for the gift of food, the relationships we share, and the animals God has given us to eat.

God is great. God is good. Now let us thank him for our food.

BRET MAVRICH is a journalist living in Kansas City, Missouri. He writes about faith and startups and blogs at *BretMavrich.com*.







THE DEATH TOLL WAS SEVEN: a teacher, her husband, and five orphans with disabilities. They were returning home from a crafts fair last September when a drunk driver, traveling 125 miles per hour through the streets of Moscow, plowed into them as they waited at a bus stop.

Following his arrest, 29-year-old Alexander Maximov, who had been drinking for two days straight and had landed a DUI arrest two years prior, told investigators, "I always do what I want."

Under current law, a drunk driver will spend less than 10 years behind bars if convicted of manslaughter. But the public outcry after the accident caused lawmakers to call for life imprisonment as a maximum punishment when fatal car crashes are fueled by intoxication.

The national tragedy also stirred soulsearching among pastors, priests, and other Christian leaders. Could the church help solve the country's addiction to alcohol?

Europe has the world's highest rate of alcohol consumption. But Russia's consumption rate of 15.8 liters (or about 4 gallons) of pure ethyl alcohol per capita annually is even higher. It is exceeded in Europe only by Moldova (18.2), the Czech Republic (16.5), and Hungary (16.3). Working-age men are Russia's heaviest drinkers,

consuming the equivalent of 155 half-liter bottles (or about 20 gallons) of vodka yearly on average.

Russia's drinking problem affects every facet of national life. There's the sheer fact of 30,000 deaths each year from alcohol poisoning. Russian moonshine, called *samogon*, as well as "surrogate alcohols" like antifreeze, perfume, and cleaning solutions, play a large role in alcohol-related deaths.

Experts estimate that one out of every three Russian men regularly binge drink, which is linked to homicide, suicide, drowning, fatal industrial accidents, and fires. Government research shows 75 percent of murders committed in Russia and 42 percent of suicides occur under the influence of alcohol. Research from one urban area shows that 83 percent of those who died in fires, 63 percent who drowned, and 62 percent who fell to their deaths were intoxicated.

In addition to deaths, the social cost of afford Russian alcohol abuse includes high rates of theft, assault, rape, domestic violence, divorce, child neglect, and orphaned children. Misuse

of alcohol by pregnant women causes high rates of fetal alcohol syndrome.

The economy suffers a hangover too: Heavy drinking on the job reduces worker productivity by 15 to 30 percent. Harvard scholar Boris Segal estimates economic losses from alcoholism at one-third of Russia's GNP of \$3.2 trillion in 2012.

Programs Expand

rthodox and Protestant churches began opening alcohol and drug rehabilitation centers after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 1994, a Pentecostal church in Kiev opened the first Protestant residential rehab center. A year later, the charismatic New Life Center opened its residential rehab program near St. Petersburg. It may be the largest church-based program in Russia, with a client population of up to 400.

Based on interviews nationwide, most church-sponsored rehab centers are modest in size, working with 20 to 25 alcoholics. Now numbering upwards of 900 (an estimated 100 Orthodox and 800 Protestant), the programs bear striking resemblances. Most operate on miniscule budgets in primitive facilities and are run by recovering alcoholics.

And all of them insist that spiritual—rather than medical—intervention is the key to recovery. So far, their approach seems to be paying off: Taken together, they report higher recovery success rates than Russia's state or commercial programs.

Going "cold turkey" to break an addiction is out of favor among many recovery professionals. But in Russia, church rehab programs still rely on complete withdrawal. In most cases, the programs cannot afford expensive drugs to curb cravings.

Alison Giblett, a Christian substance-

abuse expert based in Ukraine, credits the "healing power of prayer" for sparing alcoholics

withdrawal at its worst. At the heart of church-based rehabilitation is the conviction that only God can reform alcoholics. Bible study, prayer, worship, and Christian community are the practical, spiritual means of deliverance.

Residents who successfully complete rehabilitation programs and make their way back into society face the ever-present danger of relapse. Rehab centers encourage their graduates to steer clear of old haunts and instead live in halfway houses, transition apartments, and—in the case of the Orthodox—monasteries, nunneries, or remote parishes. Clients are encouraged to get jobs and attend reunion meetings, all as steps on the path of sobriety.

Unexpected Church Growth

ehab and church growth are going hand in hand. Churches start rehab programs, and over time, rehab programs start churches. Moscow Pentecostal pastor and rehab director Andrei Blinkov



Counting Their Losses: Teachers and schoolmates mourn the deaths of the victims of Alexander Maximov's drunk driving. Russia estimates it has 7 million alcoholics.

said recovering alcoholics who stay active in church are the program graduates most likely to stay sober. And the benefit is mutual: Giblett reports that "drug and alcohol rehab ministry in Russia and Ukraine is the strongest determining factor of church growth."

Four features of church-based alcohol rehabilitation programs contribute to their success. First, nationwide, directors and staff at church-based rehab centers are themselves recovering alcoholics.

According to Giblett's field research, 14 of 20 evangelical rehab center directors were themselves graduates of recovery programs. Likewise, all 40 leaders of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist Good Samaritan rehab centers are graduates.

The graduates serve as role models. At the Mill, Father Maxim and his staff urge residents to look to Christ and the saints for lives to emulate. Yet residents view program staff who are rehab graduates as the best models.

A second key to success is the residential aspect of rehab. In day programs, alcoholics are still surrounded by temptation, whereas the "separated space" of residential rehab provides clients "some semblance of what might be called a normal life," says anthropologist Jarrett Zigon from the University of Amsterdam.

Third, churches almost always locate their rehab programs in rural areas, far from temptation. "It was often in the small 'family-run' isolated homes located far from the cities and modern life that I sensed the strongest commitment to change and joy in their transformed lives," says Giblett.

Finally, church-based rehab centers operate frugally. Rehab programs such as Teen Challenge and Betel sometimes receive help with startup costs. But most church-based rehab centers receive little operating support from clients, the government, or Christian sources abroad. But that may be changing. Last November, the Russian Federal Drug Control Service announced a grant of 1 billion rubles (\$32.2

million) for 2013 in support of rehab centers, including ones run by churches.

Hands to Work

he self-sufficiency of most church-based rehab programs is strengthened by a wide range of business ventures. New Life near St. Petersburg, for example, derives income from

burg, for example, derives income from residents employed in auto repair, carpentry, and sawmill, electrical, plumbing, and construction work. The Mill, also near St. Petersburg, grows vegetables, raises cattle, sheep, chickens, and geese, and makes furniture for its own use and for sale.

Together, these programs give every appearance of success. But measuring results proves difficult. There's the problem of definition: Experts cannot fully agree how to define sobriety. "In Soviet times," University of Chicago anthropologist Eugene Raikhel notes, "a remission was considered effective if the patient didn't drink for two months." But church programs' yardstick is abstinence for life.

'Drug and alcohol rehab ministry in Russia and Ukraine is the strongest determining factor of church growth.' ~Alison Giblett

Based on a survey of reports over the past decade, government and commercial rehab centers have success rates of less than 10 percent on average.

In comparison, on average, 61 percent of graduates of church-based rehab programs in Russia and Ukraine reported remaining sober either for long-term periods or for life. A medical doctor in Ukraine who worked for nearly 30 years in state rehab programs concluded that her past efforts had been "hopeless and senseless." She now volunteers in a successful church-based program in Kiev.

Governments are waking up to the success of church-based rehab. In Ukraine, state ministries, after evaluating various drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs, designated the church-based Know the Truth curriculum (used by the 80-member All-Ukrainian Christian Rehabilitation Centers Association) as one of four approved resources for substance-abuse treatment.

In Russia, an outside specialist judged the success of the church-based New Life

Center "on par with... the very best Russian centers for addiction treatment." President Vladimir Putin awarded a medal to New Life's director in 2005.

That's not to say all church-based programs work. In November 2010, on charges of unsanitary conditions, forced detention, and the mistreatment and death of a client, Russia's Ministry of Justice closed the Protestant charity Transformation of Russia, which reportedly worked with 7,000 people in rehab.

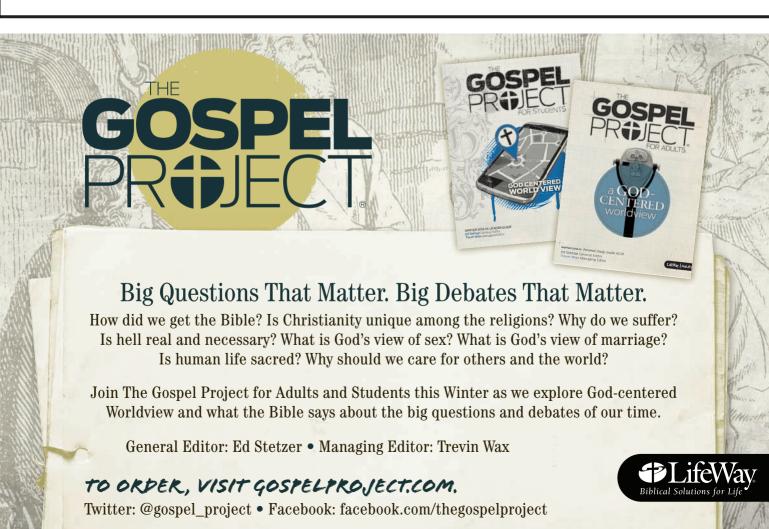
About 1985, the Soviet Union relaxed restrictions and allowed Western groups to run recovery programs, including Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) with its signature, 12-step program for recovering alcoholics. This was about seven years before greater religious freedom allowed faith-based rehab groups to debut.

Inside Russia, AA counts 370 chapters and 6,000 to 7,000 participants. While some Russian Orthodox churches host AA meetings, conservative, nationalistic Orthodox

are suspicious of AA because of its Western and Protestant roots. Another challenge is addressing the need for clergy rehab. A priest at Moscow's Danilovsky Monastery runs AA meetings for Orthodox clergy, and estimates one quarter of Orthodox priests are themselves battling alcoholism.

Replacement addiction is another worry. Father Maxim Pletney, who directs a St. Petersburg rehab center, dismisses Protestant rehab centers using AA 12-step programs as replacing one addiction for another. "They may be saving people from drugs, but these people display a dependency on the sect very similar to narcotic dependency," he says.

It is true that successful church-based residential rehab programs—in Russia and elsewhere—rely heavily upon strict and demanding house rules. However, Orthodox as well as Protestant rehab programs could be accused of fostering new dependencies—and, in fact, neither would care to disavow fostering dependence upon God. Orthodox



Church-based alcohol rehab in Russia and Ukraine constitutes perhaps the most ambitious social outreach undertaken by Christians since 1991.

sociologist Sergei Filatov of the Russian Academy of Sciences contends that Protestant rehab work in Siberia and the Russian Far East serves as a productive incentive for greater Orthodox efforts to aid alcoholics. Primitive living is often integrated into the program. Many church-based centers sleep six to ten persons per room. Residents and staff often go without running water, indoor bathrooms, washing machines, or central heating.

Born-Again Civil Society

hurch-based alcohol rehab in Russia and Ukraine constitutes perhaps the most ambitious social outreach undertaken by Christians since 1991.

The Russian word *miloserdie* ("charity"), once labeled as an archaic word, has regained currency. Civil society is being reborn without state or national church

micromanagement. Pentecostals, for example, have undertaken the recovery of alcoholics with relatively little Western input. Their church-based rehab provides a subculture of abstinence that counters the majority culture that tolerates alcoholism.

The question of whether the programs' success will turn the tide on national attitudes about alcoholism remains unanswered. "Millions of personal tragedies [linked] to drinking do not coalesce into a public sentiment against alcohol," says Alexander Nemtsov, a leading researcher on alcoholism. "Heavy consumption has become a part of daily life."

Many Christians in rehab agree that reining in alcohol abuse requires deep change. Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kyrill, an advocate for rehab programs, said, "The problem [of alcoholism] is deeper and has a more spiritual aspect. A man with this ruinous passion not only experiences distortion of his nature and suffers material losses, but also spiritually dies, falling into the slavery of sin." In 2009, Kyrill created a

new group of community leaders to design programs to fight alcoholism.

Over time, the sober graduates of church-based rehab programs are growing in number and influence as they return to the church and the working world. Their stone-cold sober lifestyle, work ethic, and social activism may spur wider changes at the grassroots.

While Russian lawmakers work to increase prison sentences for people like Alexander Maximov, Orthodox and evangelical churches are redeeming lives broken by addiction, one by one. In the meantime, Maximov is serving a prison sentence of eight years and six months. Despite killing five children and two adults, his driver's license was suspended for just three years.

MARK R. ELLIOTT is founding editor of the East-West Church and Ministry Report based at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky. The unabridged version of this article is available at EastWestReport.org.





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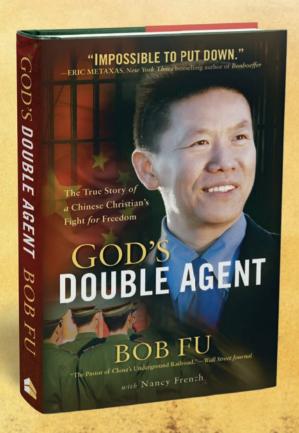






"IMPOSSIBLE TO PUT DOWN."

—ERIC METAXAS, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Bonhoeffer*



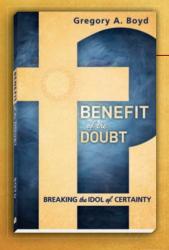
Bob Fu, whom the *Wall Street*Journal called "The pastor of China's underground railroad,"

is fighting to protect his fellow believers from persecution, imprisonment, and even death. This is his fascinating and riveting story.

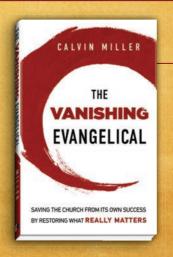
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BEING FAITHFUL IN THE FACE OF UNCERTAINTY



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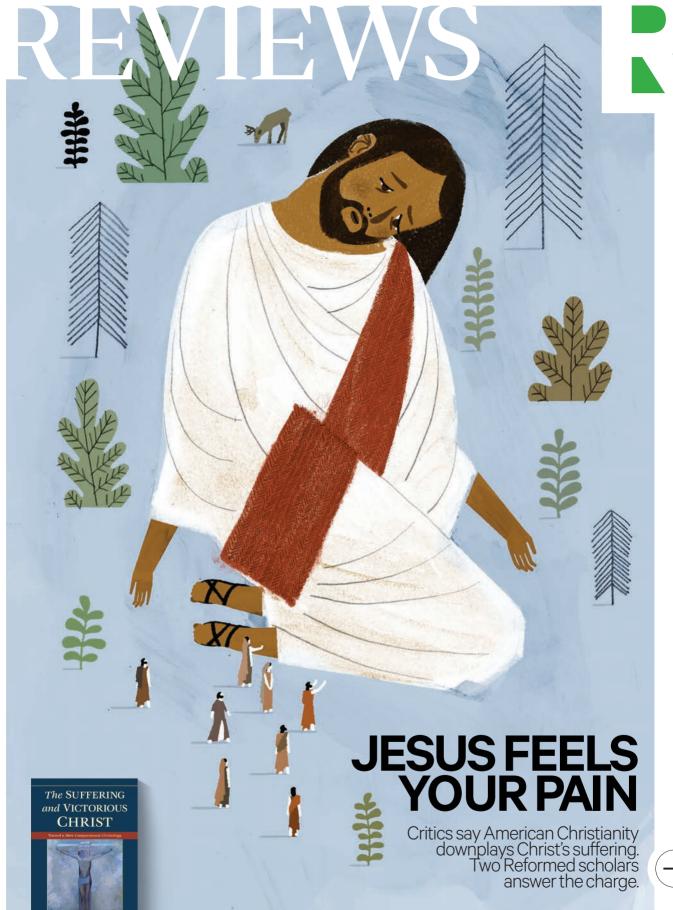
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f non-Western critics are right, American Christians have a skewed view of Jesus. Asian and African American theologians have consistently emphasized the suffering, compassion, and humiliation of Jesus—not just on the cross but in all stages of his earthly life and ministry. Most Americans, on the other hand, like our Jesus triumphant and our Christianity muscular.

Since the "muscular Christianity" movement of the 19th century, preachers from Billy Sunday to modern pulpiteers have favored a Jesus with (in Mark Driscoll's phrasing) "callused hands and big biceps." Sure, we acknowledge that Jesus suffered on the cross for our sins. But we struggle to express how Christ stands in solidarity with the destitute, diseased, and disenfranchised because we fixate on the glorified Lord and forget the suffering Savior.

Because of this, claims one Japanese theologian, "Christianity in the West has become an anomaly." But perhaps it's no wonder. Theological traditions in the Protestant West have plenty to say about *Christus victor*—the triumphant Christ—but little to say about *Christus dolor*—the grief-stricken Christ. Is the American theological tradition deficient in its view of Jesus?

Richard J. Mouw and Douglas A. Sweeney aim to answer this question in *The Suffering and Victorious Christ: Toward a More Compassionate Christology* (Baker Academic) *****. Mouw (former president of Fuller Seminary) and Sweeney (a professor of church history at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) have taken the criticisms of their non-European colleagues to heart. They have mined their own traditions (Sweeney's Lutheranism and Mouw's Calvinism) for resources that articulate a more compassionate understanding of Christ, who stands with the marginalized.

REFORMATION RESOURCES

Mouw and Sweeney lead readers on a brisk walk through 19th-century American theologians that typify Reformed thinking during that era. Some of them, like Charles Hodge and Sojourner Truth, are familiar figures. Others are more obscure. Taken together, they demonstrate that the

Reformation traditions can in fact speak meaningfully about God's association, through Christ, with the marginalized.

Reformed theology of the era tended to emphasize sin and conversion as the linchpins of Christian faith while deemphasizing other doctrines. A few theologians, though, were recovering the importance of the Incarnation. John Williamson Nevin, a Princeton seminarian and member of the German Reformed Church, championed the Incarnation as the "true measure and test" of Christianity. He insisted that through it, God identified with suffering humans and that he maintains this solidarity today, even after the resurrection and glorification of Christ. Explained the right way, the Incarnation helps us discuss God's companionship with the weak.

A generation later, Franz Pieper, a Prussian immigrant and later president of the Germanic Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, argued that because Jesus suffered, God himself also suffered. This did not please Calvinists. Reformed thinkers preferred to emphasize the distinction between Christ's two natures, to the point of suggesting that sometimes Jesus operated from his divine nature, and at other times operated from his human nature. Even so, Pieper faithfully recovered an important Lutheran conviction. Martin Luther had said that Christ's divine and human natures were so completely united in the Incarnation that "Mary suckles God with her breasts, bathes God, rocks him, and carries him; furthermore, that Pilate and Herod crucified and killed God." Pieper presented "a passionate God who truly makes himself available to finite, fallen sinners, drawing near to those who seek him in their distress."

Within the Reformed traditions were tools for constructing a more compassionate Christology. But these theoretical affirmations of a suffering Savior went only so far. They still needed to connect to the realm

Theological traditions in the Protestant West have plenty to say about Christus victor—the triumphant Christ—but little to say about Christus dolor—the grief-stricken Christ.

of actual suffering. As the authors say, Reformation formulas lacked "immersion in the realities of the human condition."

This is where African American perspectives provide an important correction. In what may be the book's most interesting section, the authors demonstrate the harmony between the formal theology of the Reformers and the lived theology of American slaves and their descendants. "The suffering Messiah that is latent in Lutheran and Reformed dogmatics," they write, "comes boldly to life in the hymns, sermons, and prayers of subjugated American slaves and their descendants." Sojourner Truth, for instance, was raised (and served) in a Dutch Reformed home where she learned scholastic Reformed theology. She was an heir to the Reformation and agreed with its core theological convictions.

In other words, Truth, along with other slaves and their descendants, held views of Christ, his nature, and the Atonement that Reformation giants like Luther and John Calvin would have shared. But they expanded the scope of the Reformed tradition by emphasizing the suffering of Jesus at every point in his life.

FAITHFUL AND CRITICAL

The Suffering and Victorious Christ tackles complex themes and uses scholastic theological vocabulary, especially in the early chapters. Nevertheless, this is the best kind of academic book. The writing is clear and engaging, and it speaks both directly and indirectly to issues of importance to Christians outside the academy.

The authors model how to engage one's own tradition both faithfully and critically. Sweeney and Mouw believe critique should be humble and constructive. They recognize the limits of their own traditions, yet they "also think Japan needs Nicaea and that the African American churches need the Reformation."

Younger evangelicals are sensitive to the plight of the poor and eager to embrace a faith that serves the homeless, illegal immigrants, and those underserved by typical church or government programs. The authors share these concerns, but they are not willing to embrace a compassionate Christology at any cost. They acknowledge in a short interlude that the Roman Catholic tradition speaks of Christ's association with human suffering explicitly and movingly. But it does so in ways that violate Protestant doctrine. The key weakness,

they argue, is an overemphasis on the "real presence" of Jesus in the suffering. Mother Teresa believed, for example, that to touch the bodies of the poor was literally to touch the body of Christ. The authors insist that Christ is physically risen, in the flesh, and reigns "at the right hand of God the Father Almighty." To serve the poor, then, is not *literally* to serve the Lord. Instead, they propose that "God will credit our service to the poor as an act of service to himself."

Some readers might be disappointed to discover that the book is not an introduction

to Asian or African American Christology. Asian critiques of Western theology are ultimately a springboard into the questions the authors are asking of their own traditions. And the African American voices are presented mainly to show their harmony with Reformation thinking on the nature of Christ. That said, if you are interested in either Asian or African American sources, the appendix is thorough.

The 19th-century sources Mouw and Sweeney explore are from an age when "most theologians still assumed the responsibility of thinking with the church." The Suffering and Victorious Christ recovers that sense of responsibility. It is a deep and careful reflection on a serious subject. And the questions it seeks to answer are shaped by the experience of the saints in churches both at home and abroad.

BRANDON J. O'BRIEN is editor at large for Leadership Journal. He is a coauthor of Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible (InterVarsity Press).

> Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart Christena Cleveland

Why Unity Is So Hard

(InterVarsity Press)

Disunity
in Christ

Uncoming the Hidden
ferior that Keep III Apail

How to overcome the cultural differences that thwart the church.

hristians value Jesus' prayer that they—his followers—may be as one (John 17:22–23). But valuing Christian unity is not the same as realizing it. Sometimes we settle for bland homogeneity rather than delighting in the church's mix of cultures, ethnicities, and social backgrounds. Those like me who work deliberately to cultivate Christian unity face trials and failures along the way. Despite our good intentions, we end up getting mean and nasty, or just plain weary, hurt, and discouraged. Why?

Individual personalities, faults, and sins are not the only factors. Group dynamics also make a difference. "Sometimes," according to social psychologist Christena Cleveland, "we are affected in hidden ways by those around us. The values and perceptions of the groups with which we identify can have a covert effect on us."

Where can we turn for assistance? In Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart (InterVarsity Press) ****, Cleveland helps readers view people of diverse cultural backgrounds as God's gifts, not thorns in the flesh. She provides invaluable insights, practical recommendations, and tools to help the Christian community identify and address the dynamics that fracture Christ's body.

Cleveland's analysis tackles difficult questions about the social forces that frustrate our quest for unity. What leads people to associate with those who are similar, while distancing themselves from diverse others? What causes us to categorize other groups in distorted ways? How do social identity and self-esteem play into group perceptions of others? How do "cultural threats" lead us to approach other groups with hostility? And how do cultural influences shape beliefs and practices in limiting and divisive ways?

Cleveland does not discount substantive ideological and cultural differences or deny how hard it is to discard our various "labels." She agrees that principles and theological convictions are important. But "the trick is to wisely use our Christian friends' ideology to humble us, strengthen us, and enhance our understanding of God and the role we're called to play in his kingdom."

While I find this "trick" beneficial, it does not fit every scenario. As an evangelical theologian committed to ecumenical unity framed by grace and truth, I wish Cleveland would have helped distinguish more clearly between areas where theological reconciliation is possible and areas where it is not.

Take, for example, 1 John 4:18 ("There is

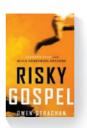
no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear"), to which Cleveland refers briefly in her treatment of the culture wars. The epistle's emphasis on love in chapter 4 appears only after a renunciation of teachers who deny the Incarnation. While doctrinal differences can be used to humble, strengthen, and enhance our perspectives, they often convey unbridgeable boundaries. "Perfect love" insists on certain rightful boundaries between truth and falsehood. This is not because we "fear" those on the other side, but because out of love we don't want them to be deceived.

My hope, ultimately, is that *Disunity in Christ* will create new momentum toward fulfilling Jesus' prayer for unity amongst his followers. Those involved in building and supporting multiethnic Christian communities will be moved by Cleveland's stories, perspectives, and gracious spirit. Her book will, I hope, help us resolve generational, economic, political, and theological differences—and teach us to see that, truly, we are better off together.

PAUL LOUIS METZGER is professor of theology at Multnomah Biblical Seminary. He is the author of Consuming Jesus: Beyond Race and Class Divisions in a Consumer Church (Eerdmans) and coauthor of Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction (Brazos).



Risky Gospel: Abandon Fear and Build Something Awesome Owen Strachan (Thomas Nelson)



Wilson's Bookmarks

From John Wilson, editor of *Books & Culture*.

Decaf Faith

An excerpt from Risky Gospel: Abandon Fear and Build Something Awesome.

here are seasons in life when we fall in love with an awesome God. We want more of him and less of ourselves and this world.

But seasons like this do not always last. When they subside, they can be very hard—impossible, even—to reclaim. You don't plan for that to happen. It just does.

When we see our vitality slip, a switch flips. We stop working hard at the daily discipline of godliness. We're building a young career in a fast-paced city, and that consumes us. We go days without reading God's Word. We're finishing a tough degree program, and without knowing what's happening, we end up buried in our books, barely coming up for air. We're not seeking to avoid the Bible or prayer or church. It just happens. And slowly, quietly, the strength of our faith wanes. We begin compromising morally, watching stuff we shouldn't, doing stuff we shouldn't, talking about unedifying things. We lose our nerve to witness and live a bold life, because deep down we know that we're not about backing up our talk. We may continue to be aggressive about certain things—careers or the pursuit of money or degrees or friends or having fun—but not about what matters most: the Lord. Worshiping our Trinitarian God. Delighting ourselves in him.

And we gradually lose enthusiasm for building godly things. What do I mean? Well, if you're not thriving in your walk with Christ, you're not going to be in a position to help others thrive, are you?

Do you see this? Do you feel it? I think many people do nowadays. We know it'd be better to be building something great. We're well aware that there is lots of gospel work to do, no matter what fields we're in. We understand that God has given us certain talents and roles and opportunities to use for his glory. But we don't have the zeal necessary to pull off the work.

We can see where we should be. We just don't really have the oomph, the spiritual horsepower, to get there.

And so we shift into maintenance mode. You know the difference between, say, a restaurant that strives for excellence, and one that's content to serve an average product? That applies to us. We settle for average. Our marriages are okay. Our kids are fine. Our church—well, it's getting along. We're not setting new benchmarks for Christian laborers in our jobs, but we're doing what we need to do. Sometimes we pray. Occasionally we read the Bible. Once in a while we talk with someone about the Lord. But it's all very maintenance-y. Ordinary. Without zip.

This is decaffaith. And that means the people around us, those we should lead and influence to live on mission for the living Messiah, who reigns in heaven, live decaf lives. They may not be crashing and burning, but they're not soaring, either, because we're not building something big.

THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYICH AND CONFESSION

LEO TOLSTOY (TRANSLATED BY PETER CARSON)

(NORTON / LIVERIGHT)

We're all dying, as N. D. Wilson reminds us in Death by Living, but I have a friend who is dying now, and I read Carson's fine new translation of Tolstoy's great story in light of that. Like many, I first read The Death of Ivan Ilyich in high school, and have read it a number of times since in various renderings, but it hasn't lost its power. This little volume also includes Tolstoy's self-examination, undertaken when he was at the height of his powers. Endnote: Carson died two days after he completed this translation.

SOMETHING BORROWED. SOMETHING DEAD

M. C. BEATON (MINOTAUR BOOKS)

The prolific Beaton doesn't have many (if any) of her books assigned in high school or college English classes, but people read them, and read them again. Beaton maintains two long-running series, one featuring Scottish policeman Hamish Macbeth, the other starring the absurdly named Agatha Raisin. That name is important: it punctures a reader's sense of self-importance. And to make matters worse, the covers of the books are shockingly bright. Death in Beaton's books is different from death in Tolstoy's, but there are many mansions in the house of fiction.

CHRIST ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

EDITED BY ROGER LUNDIN (EERDMANS)

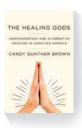
For this outstanding collection of essays, Wheaton College's Lundin assembled an all-star lineup: David Bebbington, John Schmalzbauer, David Livingstone, John Webster, Eleonore Stump, Stephen Barr, Jeremy Begbie, Katherine Clay Bassard, and Sujit Sivasundaram. In addition to representing different academic disciplines, they come from various traditions within the broad range of Christian conviction, and they speak in distinctive voices. The result is an energizing volume to keep at hand next to Mark Noll's Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind and Arthur Holmes's The Idea of a Christian College.

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INTERVIEW Candy Gunther Brown



The Healing Gods: Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Christian America Candy Gunther Brown (Oxford University Press)



Healer Beware

Are we ignoring the non-Christian roots of alternative medicine? Interview by Ruth Moon

hen Candy Gunther Brown interviewed Christians in the Pentecostal tradition for her 2012 book. Testing Prayer: Science and Healing, she made a surprising discovery. Many Christians who believed in the healing power of prayer were also using alternative medical practices such as homeopathic medicine, chiropractic medicine, acupuncture, and yogapractices stemming from non-Christian traditions. In her new book, The Healing Gods: Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Christian America (Oxford University Press), Brown, a religion professor at Indiana University, explores the faith underpinnings of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) and the ways Christian America has appropriated it. CT reporter Ruth Moon spoke with Brown about why CAM appeals to some American Christians.

Why examine the religious underpinnings of CAM?

Some Christians, if they knew more about the religious connections of alternative medicine, wouldn't want to participate. Some people I interviewed started off as enthusiasts for different alternative medicines. But once they found out about the religious dimensions, they didn't want anything to do with it.

There's also evidence that practicing something connected with religion can actually change people's beliefs. Christians, in particular, tend to think a person's intent determines whether something is religious. They don't realize that active participation can actually change someone's intent. Over time, people who start off attracted to an alternative practice because there's a perceived health benefit start to embrace the religious ideas underneath these practices.

How are these practices different from Christian faith?

Many CAM practices share the assumption that there's a sort of spiritual energy at work. It's not something physical. You don't have to touch it directly. The underlying assumption is that creator and creation, divine consciousness and nature, are essentially one substance.

In historic Christian theology, however, God is distinct from his creation, and the Holy Spirit is actually a person, a member of the Trinity, not just a kind of impersonal energy. And the remedy to the separation between humans and God is repentance and faith, not just physically unblocking impersonal energy.

You note that Protestantism, as opposed to the Catholic tradition, is particularly word-centered, which makes Protestants likely to gloss over the religious dimensions of these medical practices. Are there other implications?

Protestants have a blind spot regarding religions that emphasize practice and experience. Words may not be spoken, but the performance of ritualized or symbolic actions can create moods and motivations that support a worldview, a philosophy of life. Protestants, because they're focused on words, do not always recognize how other religions can be religious even if they're not like Protestantism.

Protestants also tend to worry about learning too much about other religions, because they intuit that this kind of knowledge can be corrupting. The irony is that they end up likelier to participate in practices that come from other religions—because they don't recognize them as religions—even though they're trying to avoid them by not reading about them.

Christians have been appropriating other religious traditions for centuries. What's the difference between, say, yoga and Christmas?

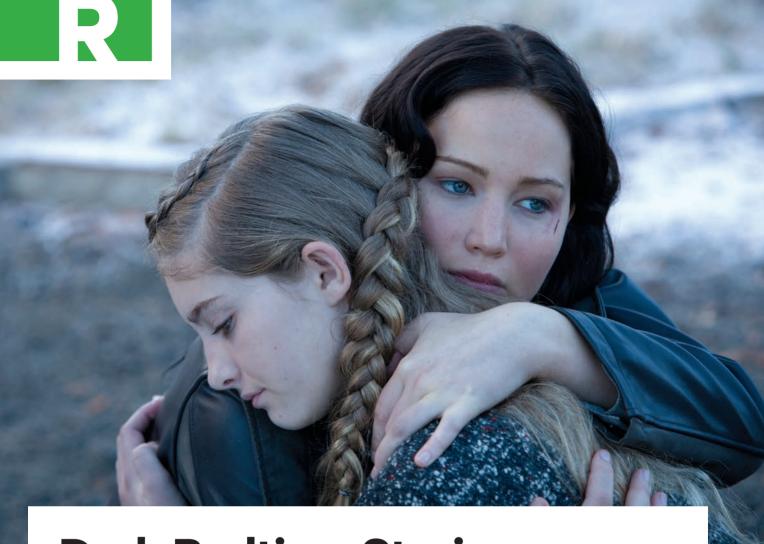


The assumption is that religious traditions and practices become more secular over time or lose their earlier associations. That's certainly true for some practices. Take Easter. It used to be a fertility ritual; you have bunny rabbits and eggs so that you'll get more babies. But that association is essentially defunct.

That's a key difference between Christmas or Easter and something like yoga. With yoga, those religious associations are still very present. If you look at what's being done in yoga classes, they're still very religious practices.

Another problem is psychological. People tend to reason, for example, that yoga equals good posture and therefore feeling good. They may at first seek out Christian yoga, but even if it's relabeled, the non-Christian content remains. Christians may say it's a neutral container, and we'll just shift the contents or replace ingredients like in a recipe. But in terms of what actually happens, it's not necessarily easy to shed the associations that go with the practices.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CANDY GUNTHER BROWN



Dark Bedtime Stories

The power and appeal of dystopian tales aimed at young readers.

t's dystopia season at the movie theater again. On November 1, the screen version of Orson Scott Card's science-fiction *Ender's Game* arrives; three weeks later, *Catching Fire* by Suzanne Collins will attempt to match the performance of last year's installment of *The Hunger Games*, the third-best-grossing film in the United States in 2012. A dark take on mid- or post-apocalyptic America seems to be required for box-office success these days—the two films that surpassed *The Hunger Games*' \$408 million were *The Avengers* and *The Dark Knight Rises*.

But the current crop of dystopias has an even darker twist: their heroes, and victims, are children, perpetrating and witnessing distinctly adult levels of violence. When Stephen King (yes, that one) reviewed the

book version of *The Hunger Games*, he dared: "Let's see the makers of the movie version try to get a PG-13 on this baby."

The 2012 movie, and this fall's sequel, did achieve a PG-13 rating, for what that's worth. But even many admirers admit that the violence requires a heavy dose of parental discretion. One of those fans, Mary Pols, explained to readers of Time.com "Why I'mNot Taking My 8-Year-Old to The Hunger Games," citing a passage where genetically altered dogs gnaw a particularly vicious player for hours (and over the course of four pages). Finally, "the raw hunk of meat that used to be my enemy makes a sound.... Pity, not vengeance, sends my arrow flying into his skull."

Pols imagines reading to her son at bedtime with the family dog at his feet, saying, "Sweet dreams kiddo! I'll just take the dog with me after this chapter, shall I?"

DEFINING DYSTOPIA DOWN

Literary critic Carter Kaplan has observed that dystopias have been with us, in one form or another, at least since *Gulliver's Travels*, by Jonathan Swift, in 1726. "Dark, pessimistic, and often reflect[ing] paranoia, alarm, or hysteria," dystopian literature "describes how bad things could be."

Dystopias gained new ground, Lev Grossman noted in *Time*, with John Christopher's series The Tripods, first published in 1967. "Up until then, novels of that kind tended to be for adults," Grossman wrote. "But from the late 1960s on, books about mankind's miserable future began to skew younger."

When you go deeper, you find that dystopias are both more disturbing, and more potentially rewarding, than they initially seem.

As they skewed younger, they became more popular. Booksellers and librarians find dystopias appeal to both male and female readers, to bookworms and bandwagon-jumpers alike. Although books like Ender's Game and the Hunger Games trilogy are written for teenagers, both younger and older readers like to indulge in the stories. The one group that tends to struggle with the genre is parents. After all, they get little respect in stories where kids are the heroes. Profanity comes from the mouths of babes trying to act tough, as do sexual innuendo and various kinds of prejudice. But these are relatively superficial reasons to condemn dystopias. When you go deeper, you find that they are both more disturbing, and more potentially rewarding, than they initially seem.

Catching Fire and Ender's Game both take place in a world driven by fear and the memory of devastation-in Collins's world, civil war, and in Card's, alien invasion, In Ender's Game, a sadistic battle school recruits children, like 6-year-old Andrew "Ender" Wiggin, whose skills might ward off the next attack. In these worlds, children are reluctant heroes, even more reluctant saviors, and ultimately scapegoats-which complicates the idea that young readers enjoy the stories because they like seeing fellow children and teenagers save the world. Adults use Katniss as a pawn in their fight to control the country throughout the Hunger Games trilogy; the army manipulates Ender to achieve its own goals.

Indeed, the appeal of these stories may lie partly in their counterintuitive reverence for childlike innocence. In a poignant scene in Card's book, Ender's platoon leader Dink admits that he had to look up the word children in a library archive: "I've got a pretty good idea what children are, and we're not children. Children can lose sometimes and nobody cares. Children aren't in armies, they aren't commanders, they don't rule over 40 other kids. . . . We really are trying to be adults." Card has said his story is ultimately about "a child, our ultimate icon of vulnerability, put under almost impossible stress." Some theorize that perhaps the real reason children devour these books is to see their own vulnerability reflected and affirmed.

FAITH CREEPS IN

In one sense, dystopian books are the very opposite of religious texts. True dystopias, they portray a world without the slightest consolation of faith. And yet faith creeps in all the same. Amid strongly encouraged secularism, Ender's parents secretly baptize their children, name them after saints, and read Scripture to them. But religion in these books is a distant and secret memory. When Ender's friend Alai kisses his cheek and says, Salaam, a word Ender has never heard, Ender remembers his mother praying over him when she thought he was asleep. Ender sees their gestures as "a gift so sacred that even Ender could not be allowed to understand what it meant."

The very bleakness of the books—both their premises and their sober, near-tragic endings—suggests that in the end, both heroes and readers need something bigger than themselves. They raise the question of whether a world without God is bearable.

And their worlds are, after all, not so distant from our own. In the film version of *The Hunger Games*, armed guards surround the children waiting for the lottery on the

platform. The silent, tense scene, down to 1940s-style hair and clothing, recalls a time when families and children were sent to death camps in a world all too much our own. When we dismiss dystopian stories as farfetched or inappropriate, we forget that human beings are indeed capable of standing by silently while others suffer, sacrificing even children for some alleged greater purpose.

SERIOUS BUSINESS

As children, my sister and I had a book of illustrated Bible stories. It was filled not with cute cartoons or gentle water-colors but with horrifying images: Abel's smashed head oozing thick blood among the rocks; panicked men and women looking in horror at the tethered Samson as he smashed the temple walls; a guard holding a naked baby by the heel in one hand with a sharp sword in the other, awaiting Solomon's instructions.

We disliked the pictures, but they made it clear that the Bible was serious business. It wasn't about spooning us feel-good bedtime stories. The Bible would teach us hard lessons. It would warn us about the wages of jealousy and pride and lies. And it would teach us how to avoid toying with those temptations.

When all else is twisted in these dystopias, love remains. Katniss and her sister Prim. Ender and his sister Valentine. To save their beloved sisters, Katniss and Ender fight and suffer and survive for them. In another contemporary and controversial dystopia, Lois Lowry's Newbery winner *The Giver*, the young protagonist Jonas catches a glimpse of hope if love did exist: "Things could be different. I don't know how, but there must be some way for things to be different." In the subsequent books of the Giver Quartet, love overcomes evil again and again, crumbling the dystopia and building a better world.

Ender's memory of his mother's secret prayer is "a memory of holiness," the book tells us, "of how his mother loved him when she thought that no one, not even he, could see or hear."

Even dystopias, at least the best ones, keep alive the memory of that kind of holiness, and love.

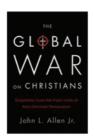
ELISSA COOPER is an assistant editor at ct. She is earning a master's degree in library and information science at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



New & Noteworthy

In any given month, we at ct receive an impossibly large stack of praiseworthy books, and we can't give them all the attention they deserve. Here are some additional volumes that we believe will challenge, inspire, and edify God's people.

Compiled by Matt Reynolds



THE GLOBAL WAR ON CHRISTIANS

Dispatches from the Front Lines of Anti-Christian Persecution

JOHN L. ALLEN JR. (IMAGE BOOKS)

If there's a story about the global church, chances are that Allen, the National Catholic Reporter's Vatican correspondent, can sniff it out. Here, Allen brings his meticulous reporting and judicious temperament to a subject about which, he claims, there ought to be a much steadier drumbeat of worldwide outrage. "However counterintuitive it may seem in light of popular stereotypes of Christianity as a powerful and sometimes oppressive social force," writes Allen, "Christians today indisputably are the most persecuted religious body on the planet."

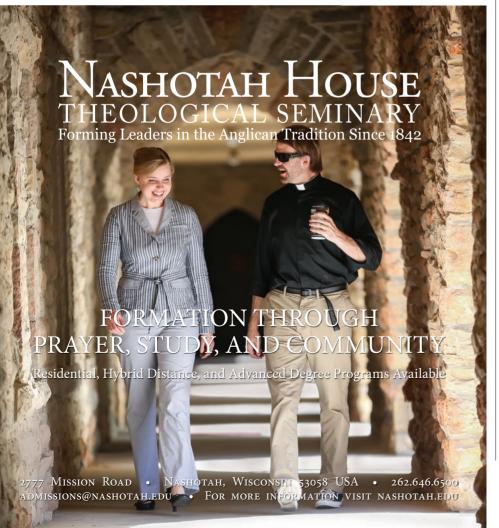


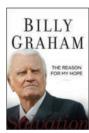
THE WALL AROUND YOUR HEART

How Jesus Heals You When Others Hurt You

MARY DEMUTH (THOMAS NELSON)

As a victim of sexual abuse, DeMuth is well acquainted with the shame and anxiety that cause people to surround themselves with walls of distrust. In The Wall Around Your Heart, she employs themes from the Lord's Prayer to discuss the process of repairing fractured relationships. "We've heard the prayer a thousand upon a thousand times," writes DeMuth. "But have we considered the power of Jesus' words in this prayer and how it perfectly relates to broken relationships, interpersonal hardship, or even abuse?" DeMuth walks readers through 11 distinct phrases in the Lord's Prayer, considering what each says about forgiveness and reconciliation.





THE REASON FOR MY HOPE

Salvation

BILLY GRAHAM (THOMAS NELSON)

For many decades, Graham would travel across the globe to preach to stadium-sized audiences. Now, though confined to his home in the mountains of western North Carolina, the mass evangelist is still able, through the marvels of modern technology, to continue proclaiming the gospel. November marks the beginning of the "My Hope America with Billy Graham" campaign, which features a video evangelism course designed for individual and small group use. The Reason for My Hope, a companion volume to the "Hope" campaign and possibly the evangelist's final book, holds out the promise of redemption for both sinners and a wayward culture.



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OTSTRAPS NOT REQUIRED



CHRISTIAN COLLEGES ARE
ADDRESSING STUDENT MENTAL
HEALTH ISSUES AND CHALLENGING
THE STIGMA OF THERAPY

arah* was in therapy when she was younger. Her parents divorced when she was in sixth grade, and she attended a few counseling sessions around that time. During her senior year of high school, she started going to counseling again to help her deal with the animosity she felt toward her stepdad. Sarah ended these sessions once her counselor felt satisfied with her progress.

After high school, Sarah attended George
Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. It was
there that she began using a new coping
mechanism when emotional issues from
her past resurfaced. Whenever she
felt stressed or lonely, she started
sexting. She never felt too ashamed
about it—in fact, she considered
it just a fun thing to laugh
about with her friends. But her
thinking changed when a friend
called her out on it. "One day a friend
confronted me. Said she thought it was disgusting
and I needed help," says Sarah. "She made me

feel horrible, so I called the college counseling department and set up an appointment."

Sarah started attending counseling once a week to discuss the deeper issues that caused her to seek the comfort she found in sexting. "I knew *some* of the issues, but my counselor made me realize some connections that I had missed," says Sarah. "And he helped me understand how God wanted me to live my life."

The Need for Counseling

Statistics show that Sarah's story isn't unusual: More and more college students today are seeking counseling. The 2012 National Survey of College Counseling** performed by the International Association of Counseling Services, Inc. (IACS) suggests that approximately 2.2 million college students across the country sought professional counseling during the past year. And 88 percent of college counseling center directors reported that a greater number of students with severe psychological problems continues to be a trend on their campuses, while 87 percent believe there has been a steady increase in the number of students who are already on psychiatric medications.

Cindy Kok, director of the Broene Counseling Center at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan,

^{*} Not her real name

^{**} www.iacsinc.org/NSCCD%202012.pdf

says these survey results line up with her experience. More and more students are entering college with an existing mental health diagnosis such as anxiety, ADHD, or depression; and many major mental illnesses, such as bipolar disorder, depression, and schizophrenia, often appear during the late teens and early 20s.

But as a result of the stresses that come with making the transition from high school to college, the need for counseling also extends to those students who've never dealt with a serious mental illness. College freshmen especially may have a difficult time adjusting. "The increasing amount of independence that college offers is a source of stress," says Kok. "This can come from tasks such as managing your own schedule, sleep, leisure activities, study time, and social time."

In addition, many students experience grief and loss for the first time while they're away at school. The death of a family member, a relationship breakup, or a parental divorce can lead them to question God's faithfulness and presence, adding an additional

burden to an already turbulent time.

Rae Staton, campus counselor at Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio, says managing newfound freedom is a stress that comes with identity development during college. "They've come from their parents' home where they likely had curfews and much closer monitoring. Now students are completely free to come and go as they please," she says. "For the first time, students get to decide who they are and what rules they want to abide by. This transfers to their faith as well. In their first-year religion classes or in conversations with others, they'll often hear ideas they didn't hear in their home churches, which will challenge their belief systems."

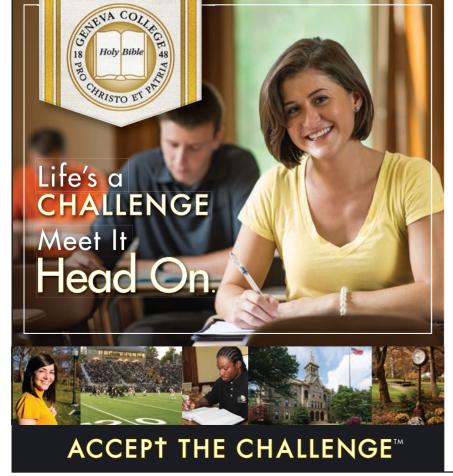
Another stressor is that college freshmen are inundated with numerous new opportunities to get involved on campus. Students are invited to join organizations such as campus ministries, student government, intercollegiate or intramural athletics, or the dorm council. And if a student has a job either on or off campus in addition to taking a full load of classes, then he or she is quickly thrust into a balancing act that

produces a huge amount of stress.

Of course, most students go to college to study and learn, which can be yet another major source of anxiety. "I can't tell you how many times I've heard, 'I didn't study that much in high school. But this is hard,'" says Jim Koch, director of counseling services at Bethel University in St. Paul, Minnesota. "Students come [to college feeling] confident in their chosen major, encounter their first difficult class, and start questioning why they're here—and there are all sorts of ripple effects from that."

Bettie Ann Brigham, vice president for student development at Eastern University in St. Davids, Pennsylvania, adds that there is an additional "high anxiety factor" for first-generation students—students who are the first in their families to attend college. "This population might suffer in silence if they fall through the cracks," she says. "Residence life staff, faculty, other campus staff, and their fellow students need to reach out to them and offer assistance and mentoring. If this issue is not addressed, these

continued on page 84



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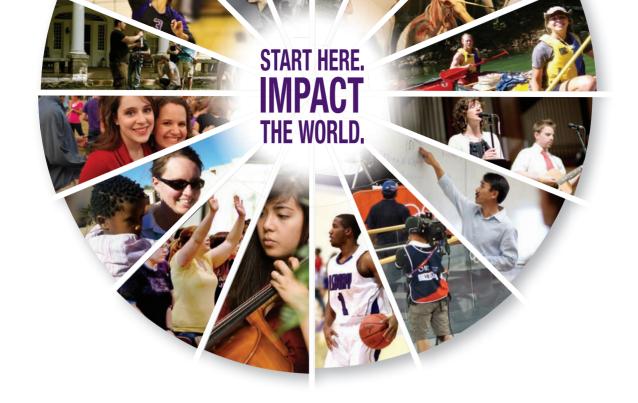
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students tend to drop out."

All of this can be complicated by the fact that students aren't able to unload their worries with their usual circle of family and friends. "Homesickness may not sound so severe," Staton says, "but when every comfort they're used to turning to (e.g., petting the family dog, talking to Mom, hanging out with a best friend) is no longer around, it leaves students feeling very vulnerable. There is no 'safe' person with whom to share their concerns."

When to Seek Help

Stress and anxiety are common among incoming freshmen, so it may be hard to discern when someone should seek professional help. On the short list of signs to look for are declining academic performance; extreme levels of sadness, anxiety, or anger; relationship problems; a recent traumatic event or loss; substance abuse; suicidal thoughts; or self-harm behavior.

Brigham explains further: "Anyone who has thoughts or behaviors that keep them from enjoying everyday activities should seek help," she says.



People are generally more accepting of therapy, on the one hand, but there are still pockets of resistance. "'Just pull yourself up by your bootstraps,' 'Big guys don't cry,' 'Quit whining about the past'... those cultural stereotypes are still out there."

"Disturbed sleep patterns over a period of time, irregular or troublesome eating habits, or a complete lack of joy are all signs that you should consider speaking to a counselor."

Bill Buhrow, dean of student services and director of health and counseling services at George Fox University, says students should practice personal coping strategies to help them deal with the issues they encounter—things like getting enough sleep, exercising, and eating right. But if they're doing all of these things and their situation isn't improving, they might want to think about seeking counseling. "If they find themselves isolating; having panic attacks; or not going to class, doing homework, or sleeping at night, then counseling would be a benefit," he says.

Turning to a support system of family, friends, resident assistants (RAS), and spiritual resources such as chapel

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or church is another way students often cope. However, counselors agree that students should seek counseling if these usual supports aren't enough. "If they hit a bump in the road but those [support] mechanisms are working, then they'll right the ship and be fine," says Koch. "The problem arises when what they're used to doing [to cope with their stress] doesn't work anymore."

On the other hand, students might not want to confide in their usual network if they're dealing with secrets, shame, or a fear that no one will understand. Perhaps a student's emotional state is such that he can't recognize his need for counseling. That's where friends and faculty come in. "We train faculty and staff to recognize when a student needs help. If students stop showing up at class, professors are the first to notice," says Julie DeGraw, vice president for student life and dean of students at Bluffton. "But the people who typically notice it first are peers—friends, classmates, and resident assistants. We also train RAS so they immediately notice students who are struggling."

"If a friend, RA, or professor suggests counseling, then students should be open to the invitation," adds Kok. "That might be God's way of nudging them to use those services."

Counseling Sessions

Most campus counseling centers are open during normal business hours (Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and offer both walk-in and scheduled appointments. Smaller colleges like Bluffton have one counselor on campus, while larger schools like Calvin or Bethel have the equivalent of four to six full-time staff, utilizing a combination of full- and parttime counselors. Most schools offer counseling services free of chargewith the exception of a charge for any necessary medication (although insurance often covers this expense), a fee for certain types of tests, and a small "missed session fee" if the student doesn't call ahead of time to cancel the appointment. The most common service provided is individual therapy.

Staton shares what a student can expect during the first session: "Our

first meeting is generally an information gathering session, and following sessions are scheduled depending on the urgency of the situation," she says. "Goals are established, and then we work to identify barriers to those goals and how to overcome them. It's a very relaxed process, just 'talk therapy."

Sessions typically last about an hour and will occur every week or two. When students have achieved their goals and feel their functioning has improved, the counselor and student begin a step-down process and spread the remaining sessions further and further apart until they're able to terminate. The average number of sessions is seven to eight, but the counseling centers don't impose time limits—counselors will see students for as long as necessary.

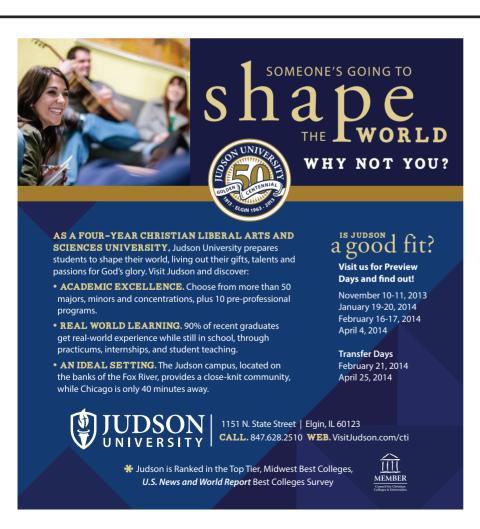
Kok says one of the goals of therapy is to increase students' flexibility. "Often, students have tried to solve the problem in the same way over and over," she says. "We try to help them look for another solution, and we give them tools to deal with challenging situations."

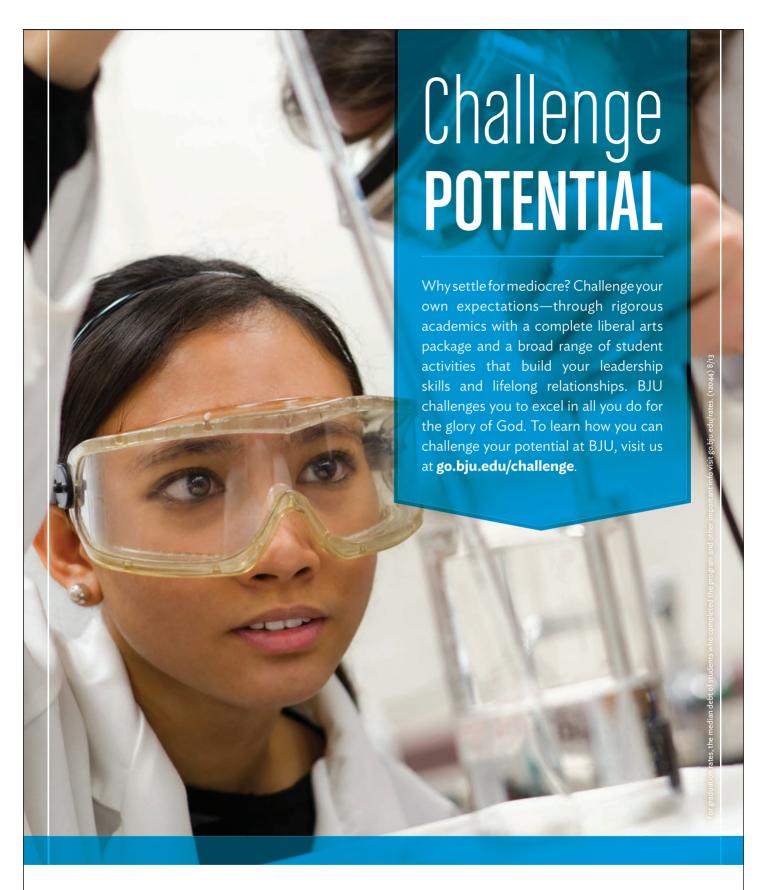
Counselors see their fundamental duty as helping students get healthy, which helps students get their degrees. "Kids go to college to get an education, not to go to counseling. But things come up that impede their education," says Koch. "Our goal is to walk alongside students and sort out what's keeping them from their goals. In that respect we're not only helping them succeed, but we're also a part of the school's retention. We're helping kids stay in school."

Additional Counseling Services

Colleges also offer services such as group therapy, testing, campus consultation, and medication and psychiatric referral. The counseling center and health center are often located in the same building, allowing a nurse to immediately prescribe medication or consult on any other health issues that might be related to a student's therapy.

Group therapy is offered depending on the size of the counseling staff and the perceived need. For example, Calvin College offers group therapy for substance abuse, pornography, body image issues, LGBTQ issues, women affected by pornography, and perfectionism. Bethel has provided educational groups on body image





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and on divorce, and therapeutic groups focused on sexual abuse.

Bethel also has the benefit of a parttime nutritionist who works in the health center one day a week. "Whenever we have a student who has dietary issues that complicate mental health issues, we refer [that person] to [the nutritionist]," Koch says. "[These issues] include everything from eating disorders like anorexia, bulimia, or overeating, to living with Crohn's disease or a gluten allergy."

Psychiatric services are included in most schools' counseling services. The counseling center will either bring in a psychiatrist for a few hours a week, or partner with a local hospital to make psychiatric referrals as needed.

Is Christian Counseling Different?

Counselors on Christian college campuses are licensed psychologists or social workers with credentials similar to those you'd find among the mental health staff at any university or medical clinic that's not faith-based. But given the fact that counselors and most of the students at a Christian college profess a common faith in Christ, counseling sessions may look slightly different than the ones taking place at a secular institution.

The first time a counselor meets with a student, he or she might ask about the student's faith history and how the current problem is affecting his or her faith. But that might happen at a secular institution too, says Kok. "What's unique is that we see students as people who are created in God's image," she says. "We also come to work with an awareness of the effects of sin and a belief that God is renewing the world. We believe there is hope for managing mental illness and living in God's kingdom in a meaningful way."

Buhrow believes the integration of faith and counseling at George Fox University allows both the counselor and the student to utilize spiritual resources that may assist in addressing the student's issues. "The student's faith can provide guidance for healthy behavior, rational and constructive thought patterns, and healthy relationship development," he says.

A natural result of the Christian counseling environment is that one's faith comes up more often—the students know the counselors are Christians, so they feel more comfortable discussing

their faith issues and struggles.
Counselors are well equipped to walk students through the process of asking the hard questions, but they're also intentional about distinguishing their role from that of a pastor or spiritual

classmates say they shouldn't have any problems if they have faith in Christ, and they wouldn't need their medications if they truly trusted God.

Koch says he observes a strange bifurcation: People are generally

MOLLY'S STORY

A tragic event led Molly* to seek counseling while she was a student at George Fox University. In October 2012, her brother died unexpectedly. The fact that she was away at college and living in a different state than her family and friends made the loss even harder for her to process. Molly's parents recommended that she seek counseling, so Molly went to the counseling center right away to set up an appointment. She ended up scheduling weekly appointments through the end of the school year—roughly seven months.

"At first I didn't want to talk to someone I didn't know about something he or she didn't know," she says. "But I quickly realized how helpful it was to be in counseling, and I began looking forward to my time when I could go to a neutral place and get help. My counselor was awesome and helped me grieve and process better than I ever could have done it on my own."

The majority of her counseling sessions were spent talking through her week, unpacking her relationship with her brother, and setting goals. Molly is extremely grateful for her counselor—she feels she wouldn't have gotten through the last year without him. "Not only did he help me with grief and depression, but he also helped me understand how to ask for help and rely on others," she says. "Those skills will stick with me throughout my life."

* Not her real name

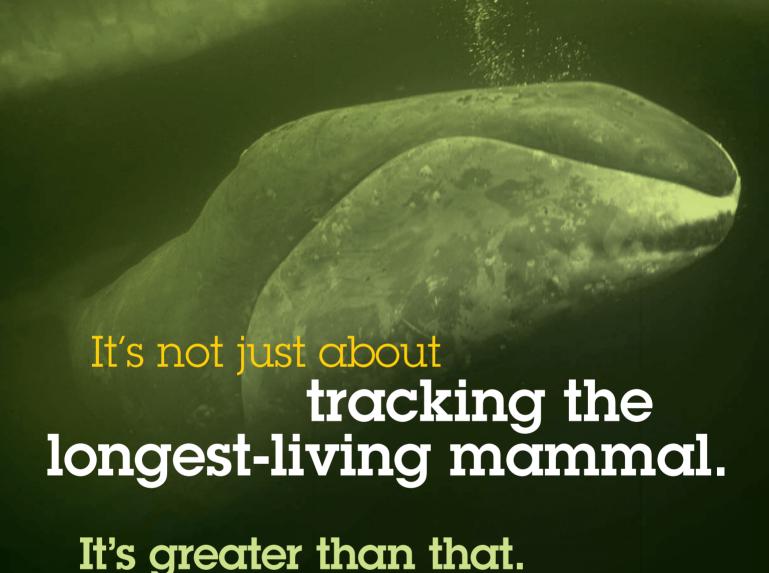
director. "We're a little slower to give the answers, and we allow more space to sit with the questions," says Kok. "We want to make sure students don't feel guilty or ashamed for asking the questions, and we want them to search for [the answers] themselves. We don't want them to say, 'This is what my therapist told me.'"

For some students, their spiritual issues are simply shorthand for their psychological issues, says Koch. Many students' issues are so fundamental—they can't feel loved by God because they're tangled up in their abuse or their depression. "We're here to help [students] sort out their emotional world and their spiritual world," he says. "We're here to see them as a whole and see how these worlds are intersecting in their lives."

The Stigma of Therapy

In some Christian circles, therapy can be seen as a sign of spiritual weakness. The belief that prayer, faith, and Bible reading are enough to solve one's mental illness is not as prevalent as it once was, says Staton, but it's still there. Students report that some more accepting of therapy, on the one hand, but there are still pockets of resistance. "'Just pull yourself up by your bootstraps,' 'Big guys don't cry,' 'Quit whining about the past'... those cultural stereotypes are still out there," he says. "But they're not reflective of the general population."

Kok believes the stigma associated with counseling has decreased significantly, and this is evidenced by the numbers—17.7 percent of Calvin students sought counseling during the 2012-2013 school year, and most of their referrals came from other students. This means students are taking the lead in promoting therapy. In fact, Calvin recently started a chapter of a national nonprofit group called Active Minds, a student organization whose goal is to reduce the stigma of mental illness and educate college students about issues related to mental illness and the various resources that are available on and around campus. Students in the organization, which has more than 400 chapters on college campuses across the United States, are inspired to bring about change on



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MARK'S STORY

As a child, Mark* was diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), an anxiety disorder characterized by recurrent, unwanted thoughts and/or repetitive behaviors. He received counseling during elementary and middle school, and he managed to control his OCD during high school. But during the fall of his freshman year at Calvin College, he experienced a major OCD attack. The trigger? Papers. "I would irrationally worry about plagiarism to the point where I was deleting whole paragraphs," he says. "I had 15 papers that semester, and it pushed me overboard. I started to feel depressed, which was a huge sign I needed help because I've always been a very positive, upbeat person."

Mark scheduled appointments with Cindy Kok, director of the Broene Counseling Center, and they started meeting every week. He soon realized he was struggling with guilt, which led to his obsessive thoughts. "She told me everyone has thoughts; I was just obsessing over them instead of letting them go like everyone else does," says Mark. "I'm learning to very intentionally let those thoughts go. Now I worry much less about plagiarism."

Mark can't say enough about his counseling experience. To begin with, he's thankful that campus counseling is free. He acknowledges it would be difficult for a college student to pay for the level of counseling he receives.

He also strives to reverse the stigma he's witnessed on the Christian college campus. "Counseling helps so many people," he says. "But I think there is a negative stigma because some people feel it's a sin [for a Christian] to not be joyful, or maybe the things a person struggles with are sinful in nature and he or she feels ashamed."

"Thankfully, I know the counseling center is there if I ever need it," he continues. "It feels like a good safeguard."

*Not his real name

their campuses and promote student dialogue about mental health.

"This generation has grown up with counseling," says Buhrow. "Many of our students have already used counseling services or are taking a psychotropic medication. As a result, university counseling centers often provide continuity of care for students who have received mental health services in the past."

Familiarity with counseling can result in a newer openness on campus. Counselors train RAS and other student leaders on what to look for, how to intervene, and how to refer, recognizing that peers are on the front lines of their work. And the students are supportive of each other. "I ask Bluffton's student leaders to encourage students to 'go talk to Rae' versus 'go talk to the counselor,'" says Rae Staton. "I try to be visible enough on campus to help the students see me as approachable and nonthreatening."

Koch strives to be approachable as well, but he won't initiate conversations with counselees when he sees them around Bethel's campus. He tells them



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he's just respecting their privacy. "Some students take that to heart and won't even look at me," he says, "while others consider counseling to be a badge of honor and will yell out, 'Hey, there's my shrink!' when walking down the hall."

While the stigma of Christian counseling exists on varying levels, DeGraw sees stigmas across cultural and gender lines. "I don't feel like the stigma is any different than in a non-Christian environment," she says. "But there are other things we struggle with: Fewer men come in for counseling than women, international students are hesitant to come in, and our African-American students on campus also seem to be less likely to seek out therapy."

Parental Reactions

While the students' views of therapy may tip toward acceptance, parents' attitudes can be more complex. "Parental support exists on a continuum," says Koch. "On the one hand you have secrecy, skepticism, and prohibition. On the other, you have absolute support and transparency." Koch also says that parental disapproval of a child's therapy sessions is sometimes just a "fantasy"—students are deathly afraid of telling their parents, but many parents are actually supportive once they find out.

During new student orientation, many schools will host a parent session about mental health and counseling. In fact at Bluffton, this is one of the most popular sessions. They discuss transition issues, a topic which seems to resonate with families. And many parents see counseling as another source of support for their child. However, on the secrecy and prohibition side of the spectrum are those students whose families tell them-either explicitly or implicitly—"we don't talk about family problems outside the family." Therefore, counseling isn't viewed as a viable option. Brigham sees this attitude as being more prevalent in Christian families than in non-Christian ones.

Campus counselors report that oftentimes parents will call them and recommend that their child receive counseling. Yet many are hesitant about letting their child be put on any kind of medication. Others support their child's attendance in counseling,



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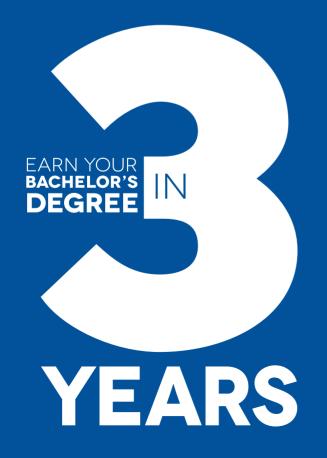
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but they don't like the fact that HIPAA laws prevent the release of private information to parents. "They want to know more than what we can tell them." savs DeGraw. "That's a constant problem for us. Parents want their child to go to counseling, but they also want to know everything that happens."

A Learning Experience

No matter what the students' or parents' perception of therapy might be, Staton tries to get people to see counseling as just another learning experience of college. "If students have never been taught how to do something academically, there's no shame in learning it," she says. "The same holds true for mental health issues. If they've never been taught how to be in a healthy relationship, manage stressful situations, make their own decisions, or survive away from home, then the counseling office is the perfect place for them to gain new skills. It is nothing to be ashamed of."

Jill DePasquale is a freelance writer and editor living in the Chicago suburbs.



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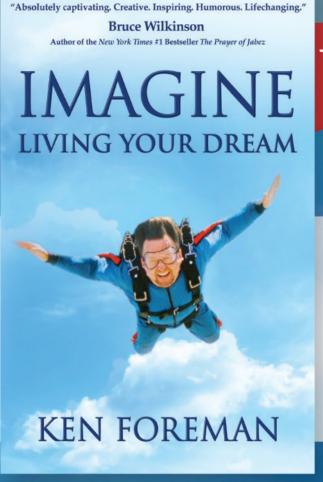
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TESTIMONY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 104

To the extent that I encountered Christians, it was in the news cycle. And inevitably they were saying something about gay people or feminists. I didn't feel I was missing much. So when I began dating a man who was into Jesus, I was not looking for God. In fact, the week before I met him, a friend had asked me if I had any deal breakers in dating. My response: "Just nobody who is religious."

A few months into our relationship, my boyfriend called to say he had something important to talk to me about. I remember exactly where I was sitting in my West Village apartment when he said, "Do you believe Jesus is your Savior?" My stomach sank. I started to panic. Oh no, was my first thought. He's crazy.

When I answered no, he asked, "Do you think you could ever believe it?" He explained that he was at a point in life when he wanted to get married and felt that I could be that person, but he couldn't marry a non-Christian. I said I didn't want to mislead him—that I would never believe in Iesus.

Then he said the magic words for a liberal: "Do you think you could keep an open mind about it?" Well, of course. "I'm very open-minded!" Even though I wasn't at all. I derided Christians as anti-intellectual bigots who were too weak to face the reality that there is no rhyme or reason to the world. I had found this man's church attendance an oddity to overlook, not a point in his favor.

As he talked, I grew conflicted. On the one hand, I was creeped out. On the other hand, I had enormous respect for him. He is smart, educated, and intellectually curious. I remember thinking, What if this is true, and I'm not even willing to consider it?

A few weeks later I went to church with him. I was so clueless about Christianity that I didn't know that some Presbyterians were evangelicals. So when we arrived at the Upper East Side service of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, I was shocked and repelled by what I saw. I was used to the high-church liturgy of my youth. We were meeting in an auditorium with a band playing what I later learned was "praise music." I thought, How am I going to tell him I can never come back?

But then the pastor preached. I had never heard a pastor talk about the things he did. Tim Keller's sermon was intellectually rigorous, weaving in art and history and philosophy. I decided to come back to hear him again. Soon, hearing Keller speak on Sunday became the highlight of my week. I thought of it as just an interesting lecture—not really church. I just tolerated the rest of it in order to hear him. Any person who is familiar with Keller's preaching knows that he usually brings Jesus in at the end of the sermon to tie his points together. For the first few months, I left feeling frustrated: Why did he have to ruin a perfectly good talk with this Jesus nonsense?

Each week, Keller made the case for Christianity. He also made the case against atheism and agnosticism. He expertly exposed the intellectual weaknesses of a purely secular worldview. I came to realize that even if Christianity wasn't the real thing, neither was atheism.

COMPLETELY TRUE

I began to read the Bible. My boyfriend would pray with me for God to reveal himself to me. After about eight months of going to hear Keller, I concluded that the weight of evidence was on the side of Christianity. But I didn't feel any connection to God, and frankly, I was fine with that. I continued to think that people who talked of hearing from God or experiencing God were either delusional or lying. In my most generous moments, I allowed that they were just imagining things that made them feel good.

Then one night on a trip to Taiwan, I woke up in what felt like a strange cross between a dream and reality. Jesus came to me. He said, "Here I am." It felt so real. I didn't know what to make of it. I called my boyfriend, but before I had time to tell him about it, he told me he had been praying the night before and felt we were supposed to break up. So we did. Honestly, while I was upset, I was more traumatized by Jesus visiting me.

I tried to write off the experience as misfiring synapses, but I couldn't shake it. When I returned to New York a few

While I was upset by the breakup, I was more traumatized by Jesus visiting me.



days later, I was lost. I suddenly felt God everywhere and it was terrifying. More important, it was unwelcome. It felt like an invasion. I started to fear I was going crazy.

I didn't know what to do, so I spoke with writer Eric Metaxas, whom I had met through my boyfriend. "You need to be in a Bible study," he said. "And Kathy Keller's Bible study is the one you need to be in." I didn't like the sound of that, but I was desperate. My whole world was imploding. How was I going to tell my family or friends about what had happened? Nobody would understand. I didn't understand. (It says a lot about the family in which I grew up that one of my most pressing concerns was that Christians would try to turn me into a Republican.)

I remember walking into the Bible study. I had a knot in my stomach. In my mind, only weirdoes and zealots went to Bible studies. I don't remember what was said that day. All I know is that when I left, everything had changed. I'll never forget standing outside that apartment on the Upper East Side and saying to myself, "It's true. It's completely true." The world looked entirely different, like a veil had been lifted off it. I had not an iota of doubt. I was filled with indescribable joy.

The horror of the prospect of being a devout Christian crept back in almost immediately. I spent the next few months doing my best to wrestle away from God. It was pointless. Everywhere I turned, there he was. Slowly there was less fear and more joy. The Hound of Heaven had pursued me and caught me—whether I liked it or not.

KIRSTEN POWERS is a contributor to *USA Today* and a columnist for *Newsweek*/The Daily Beast. She is a Democratic commentator at Fox News.



The God I Can't Write Off

Most of my life I thought Christians were crazy—until I dated one.

By Kirsten Powers

ust seven years ago, if someone had told me that I'd be writing for *Christianity Today* magazine about how I came to believe in God, I would have laughed out loud. If there was one thing in which I was completely secure, it was that I would never adhere to any religion—especially to evangelical Christianity, which I held in particular contempt.

I grew up in the Episcopal Church in Alaska, but my belief was superficial and flimsy. It was borrowed from my archaeologist father, who was so brilliant he taught himself to speak and read Russian. When I encountered doubt, I would fall back on the fact that he believed.

Leaning on my father's faith got me through high school. But by college it wasn't enough, especially because as I grew older he began to confide in me his own doubts. What little faith I had couldn't withstand this revelation. From my early 20s on, I would waver

between a theism and agnosticism, never coming close to considering that God could be real.

After college I worked as an appointee in the Clinton administration from 1992 to 1998. The White House surrounded me with intellectual people who, if they had any deep faith in God, never expressed it. Later, when I moved to New York, where I worked in Democratic politics, my world became aggressively secular. Everyone I knew was politically left-leaning, and my group of friends was overwhelmingly atheist.

Christians sometimes talk about how terrible life must be for atheists. But life actually seemed pretty wonderful, filled with opportunity and good conversation and privilege. I know now that it was not as wonderful as it could have been. But you don't know what you don't know. How could I have missed something I didn't think existed?

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