CT
CHRISTIANITY TODAY
DECEMBER 2013

New Life After the Fall

What happened to the Colorado Springs megachurch after Ted Haggard.

p.36

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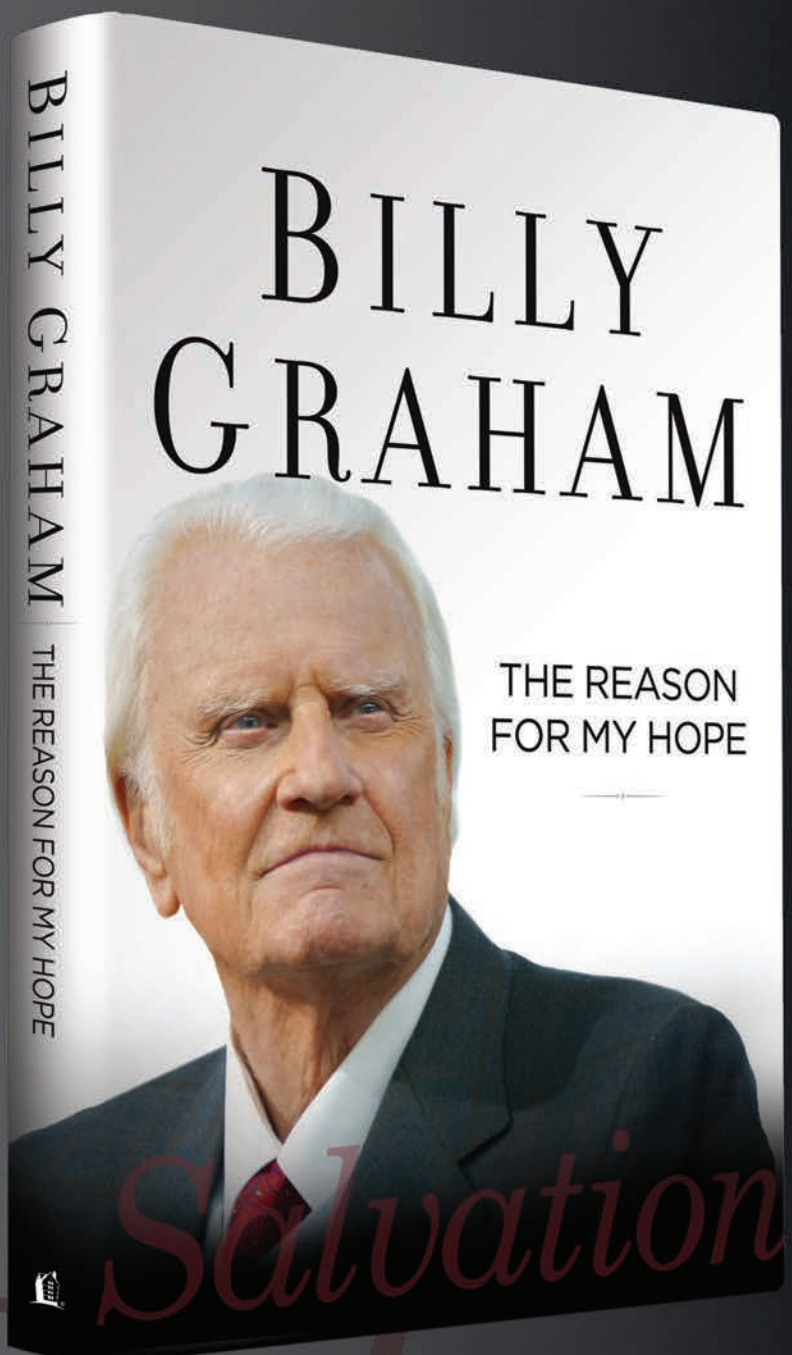

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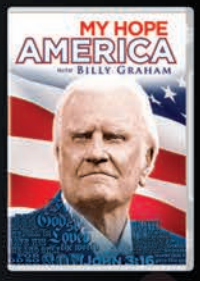

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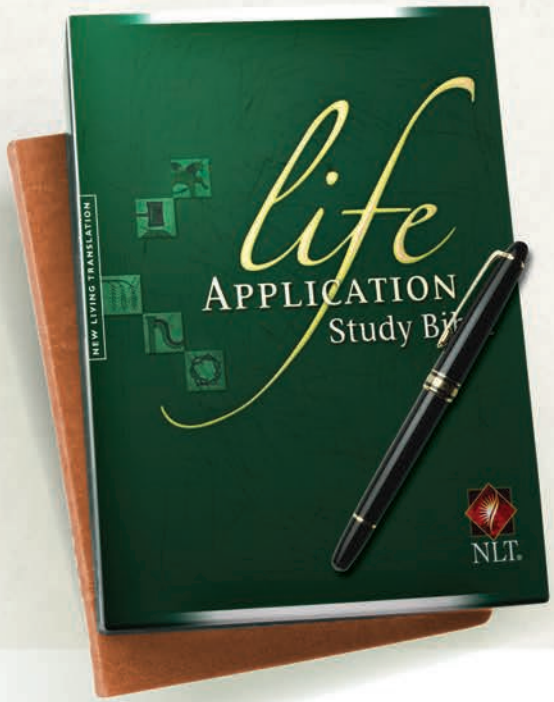

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CONTENTS

NEWS

'For many of us, Haggard's sex-and-drugs scandal was forgiven and forgotten most easily. Harder to forgive and forget was what the church had become.' p. 36

COVER STORY

VIEWS

REVIEWS

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NEW LIFE COVER AND CONTENTS PHOTOS BY LISA BETH ANDERSON PHOTO OF LYNN WILDER BY AUGUST MILLER

Last month Katelyn spoke to 200 women in New York City about calling, vocation, and singleness.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY

Toks can't wait to see his kids' faces on Christmas morning.

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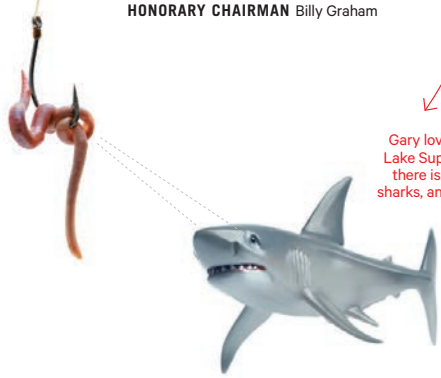

Gary loves being at Lake Superior, where there is no salt, no sharks, and no worries!

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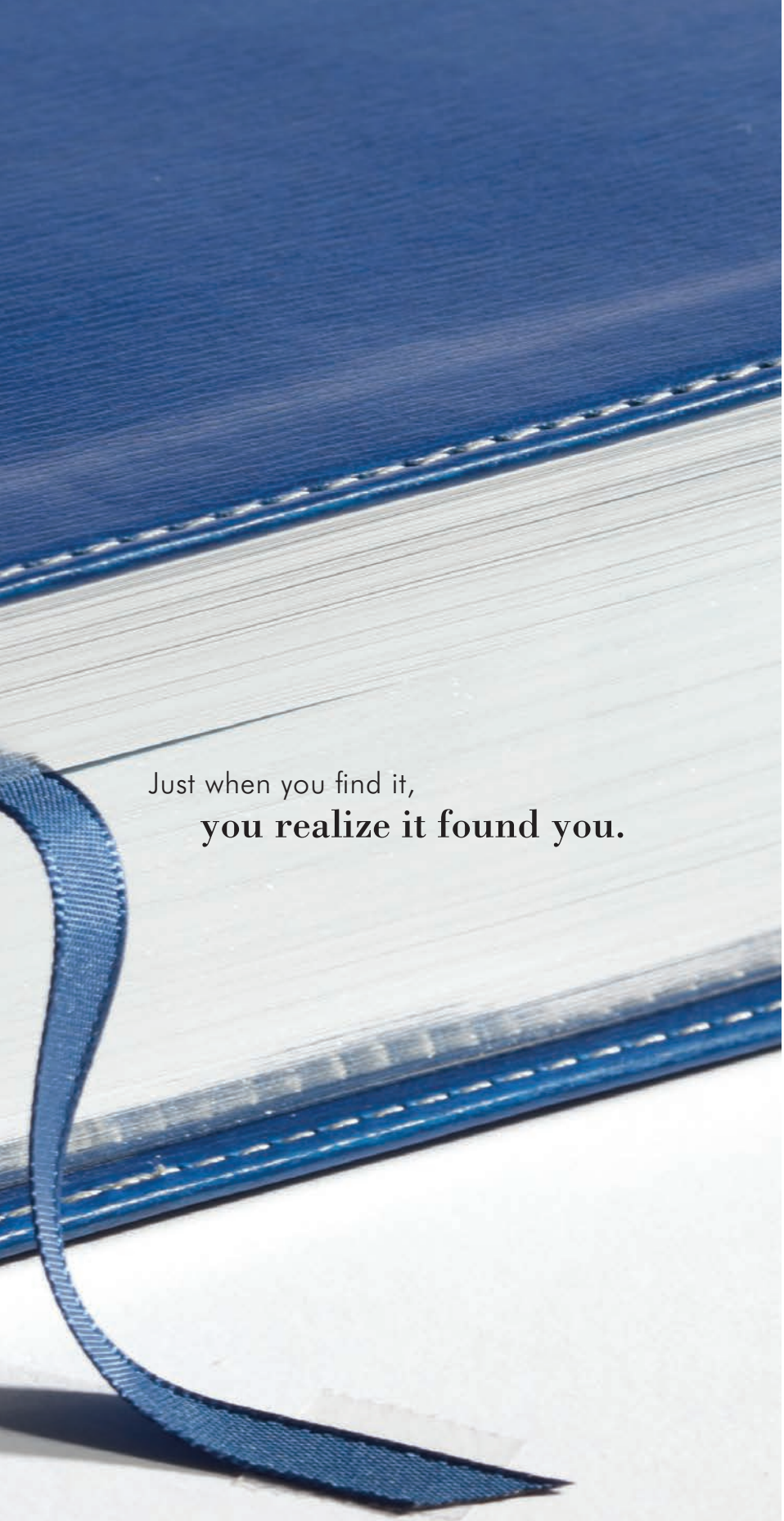

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EDITOR'S NOTE

GOOD NEWS FOR A CHANGE

The story behind the New Life story.

Katelyn Beaty *Managing Editor*

THERE'S A RELATIVELY NEW FIELD IN JOURNALISM that aims to help the depressed reporter. "Trauma journalism" emerged in the late 2000s in part to understand how reporters cope with witnessing war and natural disasters. Post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse are not uncommon among journalists on the frontlines of suffering.

As Christian journalists, we are bent on telling the whole truth about the church in the world. For that, we sometimes feel like we need our own kind of trauma counseling. Every time we hear that the bride of Christ has embezzled funds, had an affair, or fudged the truth to gain political power, we are tempted to grow cynical about her witness.

So when an established journalist comes to us with truly good news—especially good news that emerged from really bad news—we listen up. And then we put it on our cover.

You may not recognize the name New Life Church, but chances are you know the name Ted Haggard. Nearly a year before the pastor's highly public moral fallout, we put him on our cover. He and New Life, his then-booming Colorado Springs megachurch, seemed to signal an optimistic, entrepreneurial turn for evangelicalism.

Patton Dodd was close to the tragic events that unfolded after that. Too close, in fact: Up until four months before the scandal broke, Dodd was Haggard's ghostwriter and media liaison. Afterward, "I didn't attend the church for years," says Dodd.

Then, two years ago, Dodd started showing up at New Life at the behest of friends who had stayed. "After a handful of experiences of sitting in services, weeping in the face of remarkable change, I knew a new story was beginning to take shape," Dodd told me. Beginning on page 36 of this issue, we are privileged to share that story with you.

The truth is, national media feast on trauma. It's unlikely that *The New York Times* and Fox News will pick up on the New Life story. It lacks a celebrity and a major conflict. It is decidedly small, grassroots, and unflashy. "A Long Obedience in the Same Direction" (to quote Eugene Peterson, a mentor to many New Life staff) doesn't make for a sexy headline. But it is a true headline, one that summarizes life in countless U.S. churches. "They don't become part of our waking reality as we think of 'American churches,' but those churches are a huge part of the lifeblood of faith in this country," says Dodd.

To all the church leaders, members, and volunteers who serve Christ faithfully without any media noticing: Thank you for giving CT a chance to report good news. We know that for every story of a pastor's moral failing, there are hundreds of yours left untold. **CT**

Follow KATELYN BEATY on Twitter @KatelynBeaty

ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM CRUFT

FROM THE PRESIDENT

PERFECTING 'THE ASK'

What we learned from *Books & Culture*'s astounding turnaround.

HAROLD SMITH *President and* CEO

CT's sister publication *Books & Culture* had a problem. It was one that had plagued the publication for much of its history.

The problem was money—more to the point, a lack of money.

It's a malady common to nearly every thought journal, religious or secular. It seems not even award-winning content, like the kind in the magazine you're reading, is enough to ensure financial success.

Enter an aggressive fundraising strategy (another commonality between thought journals) that convened college presidents, some high-end donors, and a devoted community of longtime *Books & Culture* readers.

Following some initial tweets from editor John Wilson and me, responses moved quickly from a trickle to a torrent. The Twitter nation spoke with an appreciation and generosity that still has us both stunned and humbled.

In the end, the largesse of all those giving donations ranging from $20 to $25,000 not only secured the 18-year-old journal's financial stability in 2014, it also laid a track for its ongoing financial health and strength for several years after that. And all we had to do, according to one donor, "was ask!"

"The Ask" is something that CT has not done much since founder Billy Graham relied on Sun Oil's J. Howard Pew to help underwrite this ministry for its first 20 years. But times have changed. And as we heard directly and indirectly from assorted *Books & Culture* "angels," our own renewed willingness to step up and ask for operational help was a wake-up call to readers concerning the publishing realities that have brought big-dollar revenue dips to *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other lauded titles (remember *Newsweek*?).

Such realities have kept CT magazine and its parent company on our publishing toes, not to mention our knees. But they have also catalyzed us to find creative, up-to-date ways to deliver our content to faithful readers and reach new ones. Just some of the most recent digital content platforms include the *Today's Christian Woman* weekly digizine, a monthly online version of *Leadership*, and—especially exciting—CT's digital biweekly on the wonder of God and his creation, slated to launch in early 2014. Learn more at *ChristianityToday.org*.

I can't underscore enough how essential these efforts are if we are to maintain our ministry and financial equilibrium in the midst of an industry still very much in crisis.

And so "The Ask" is again in order. Your tax-deductible gifts will help underwrite editorial and design costs for these various efforts. They will also provide stability through the always tricky launch phase—ultimately strengthening the bottom line upon which everything, including this magazine, rests.

Learn more about ways you can partner with this crucial ministry at *ChristianityToday.org,* and then kick back and enjoy the look, feel, and read of another stellar edition of our flagship magazine. **CT**

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REPLY ALL

IT'S TIME TO TALK ABOUT POWER

There will always be a power differential between a pastor and a church member, and the temptation to conceal this is a slippery slope. Andy Crouch is right, the way faith leaders use power "will either reflect or distort the image of the true King of Kings and Lord of Lords." As a survivor of clergy sexual abuse, I have great difficulty trusting any pastor, and so often this has bled into what I believe about God. It's been a battle that I should've never had to fight.

Name Withheld by Request
E-mail

OPEN QUESTION

I was perplexed by "How Can Churches Best Support Parents Who Adopt from Overseas?" At times, it seems the church views international adoption as an exotic, special calling, while failing to understand that adoptees from our own neighborhoods also face identity issues, racial prejudices, prenatal or postnatal abuse or neglect, and inherited mental or physical disabilities.

Families who adopt domestically are not spared the "complaints from teachers" or the "annoyed glance from down the pew" simply because their child was born ten instead of a thousand miles away. The church would do well to stand up for *all* families who embrace this journey.

Carla Rodriguez
Rockford, Michigan

AN OLD, OLD ETHIC

I was delighted to see David Neff point out that the early church had a consistent objection to taking human life across the board.

As president of Consistent Life, I have been delighted to see how this ancient Christian message is now being recovered across an increasingly broad spectrum. I hope Neff's piece will inspire more evangelicals to prayerfully consider how the principle of opposing bloodshed upheld by the early church can be better incorporated into our witness in today's violent world.

Bill Samuel
Silver Spring, Maryland

YOUNG STILL HEARS JESUS CALLING

I was unfamiliar with Sarah Young until your recent article. The comments by various theologians were of interest, particularly the charge of blasphemy made against her. My experience and Scripture say that the Holy Spirit—the spirit of Jesus—dwells in the born-again believer. Does he then become voiceless, he who spoke the worlds into existence? Hebrews declares that in former times God spoke in diverse ways, but now speaks to us through his Son. It seems that saying Jesus doesn't or can't speak to the individual today is blaspheming the Word.

Carol Miller
Williamsport, Maryland

The comments from theologians in your profile of Sarah Young were disheartening. I believe the church today needs to lessen the gap between theology "proclaimed" and theology lived. Dallas Willard describes this as "with-God" life, taking our real life into the kingdom of God. This intentional kingdom living does not "downplay the sacraments of Communion and baptism," as one theologian said. Instead, they are an important part of the abundant living available to us as we respond to Jesus' call.

Mary Ohman
Grand Junction, Colorado

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS? CT's editors would love to hear them. **E-mail:** cteditor@christianitytoday.com
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WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

I loved the premise and approach of Andrew J. Wilson's article on origins and most of his arguments. But I hated where it ended, with the suggestion of pre-Adamic humans. Can you really read Genesis 2–3 and Romans 5 and with a straight face suggest pre-Adamic humans who presumably lived in sin and death? This is clouding the water significantly rather than presenting a theologically viable solution to the problem of human origins.

Paul Mickelsen
Peoria, Arizona

THE MANLY CHRISTIAN PACIFIST

As a Christian who willingly served as a soldier, I always appreciate discussion of the issue of pacifism. However, the issue should be stated carefully. Pacifism is a rejection of a resort to violence under any and all circumstances. If that definition is not accepted, then we are simply arguing over what the criteria for just war should be.

I object to characterizing non-pacifists as having "an unbiblical attachment to American nationalism and militarism," as the book review of *Fight* mentions. There are many of us non-pacifists who recognize that America has not always been ethical when resorting to violence. But that discussion is, again, debating when to resort to violence. The fact that some, if not many, wars are unjustified does not support total pacifism.

Wayne Shockley
Brooklyn, Wisconsin

HOT AND HOLY

I want to congratulate Lisa Velthouse for presenting the core theological issues regarding human sexuality in her interview with Denny Burk, author of *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* It is critical that believers use sound theology when engaging both fellow believers and nonbelievers on sexual practices. A discussion of sexual practices based only on three or four Scriptures passages is likely to lead to a fruitless sharing of personal opinions on those Scriptures.

John Torgerson
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

CT'S REDESIGN

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We spent hundreds of hours over the course of several months to give you, our readers, a better visual experience. As comments pour in, we continue to tweak the design based on your suggestions. Thank you for your insight as well as for referring to our staff as "young whippersnappers"—it's been a long time since some of us have been called that.*

"I really like the new @CTmagazine redesign. Up to date and well-suited to content. Bravo to @KatelynBeaty et al."

Hannah Notess (@hnotess)

Just a note of appreciation to CT and Metaleap Creative for the excellent redesign.

Andy Crouch wrote, "We wanted to convey how serious we are about serving our readers in print," and the redesign serves that purpose well, in particular because it is readily readable. Sometimes the excitement of doing a redesign can cause readability to slip down the priority list, with awful results. Thank you for keeping readability in mind.

Gary Weidner
Dubuque, Iowa

I have good news and bad news. First, the good news.

The new look is excellent. It combines

enough of the old familiar CT with some cutting-edge approaches so that the end result is a balanced blend. Kudos to all who had a part in this change.

Now, the bad news. The fonts you selected for most of the articles are too small.

Even if I have to use a magnifying glass to read CT due to the small print, it's worth it! But it would sure be a much more pleasant experience if the print could be enlarged.

Ken Williams
Swansea, Illinois

It really is a new look! My problem: I have great difficulty in discerning what is your stuff and what is an advertisement. Very frustrating in many places.

Robertson McQuilkin
E-mail

The "new look" issue arrived today. I can't read it. Like many seniors, I have vision issues. Are your graphic designers young whippersnappers completely inconsiderate (or incognizant) of the slings and arrows of outrageous aging?

Dorine Houston
St. Petersburg, Florida

NET GAIN

Responses from the Web.

"We shouldn't look at this article as a one-size-fits-all template for families, but amen, amen, amen! Parents are never going to create a Christian utopia for their children, so let's stop trying. Let's stop pretending this cozy-bubble lifestyle is what God wants for them anyway."

D. McDonald, CT online comment.
"Why We Send Our Kids to the Poorest Public School," by Jennifer Slate, This Is Our City.

"Reading this book now actually. Will definitely keep in mind as I get to that part of his life. Thanks."

Trena Wanless (@TrenaWanless) on the new C. S. Lewis biography by Alister McGrath.
Speaking Out: "C. S. Lewis's Joy in Marriage," by Gina Dalfonzo.

"Wish I could 'like' this 100 times. Electronic communications—whether via text, e-mail, or social media—are simply not constructive vehicles for discussion."

Stephanie Smith DeChambeau on Facebook.
"Politics, Social Media, and More Important Things," by Ed Stetzer

"Great article. Each Christian needs to decide how much culture they can 'consume' while still remaining in the Lord."

Elayna Gallea (@MrsElaynaG) on Brett McCracken's new book, *Gray Matters*.
"Yes, You Can Drink Beer and Watch *Game of Thrones*," review by Owen Strachan.

"What a long strange trip it's been!"

Bill Clinger on Facebook.
"Malcolm Gladwell Returns to Christian Roots: 'I Realized What I Had Missed,'" by Jeremy Weber.

"To work within the constraints of culture is both a blessing and a curse. This is a beautiful piece, and I love the idea of vision as a vital part of service. You've convicted me to remember that our efforts should be viewed as a team effort, not weighing action above vision or vice versa. Thank you!"

Aleah Marsden, online comment.
Her.meneutics: "The Good Female Samaritan," by Rachel Pieh Jones

While the eyes of the world are on the athletes in Sochi, Russia for the Winter Olympics, the gospel message will be shared with people in major cities across the nation of Russia

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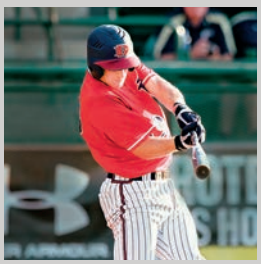

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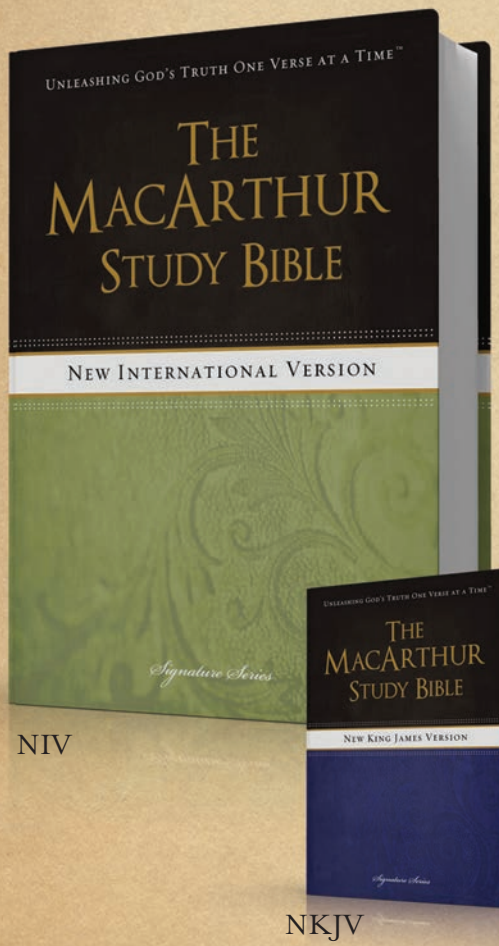

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NEWS

WITNESS

TRADING TRACTS FOR TRAFFICKING

For its "most ambitious outreach ever," InterVarsity Christian Fellowship combined street evangelism with an unexpected subject: human trafficking. During its 14th Price of Life campaign, students educated more than 12,000 peers about modern slavery at 100 events on 17 New York City campuses. At least 260 people reportedly accepted Christ.

PHOTO BY KYLE VAN ETTEN (NOSHORTCUTS.SMUGMUG.COM) / INTERVARSITY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP / USA

AFRICA

Few strange fires

After a decade of rapprochement between Christians who emphasize speaking in tongues and those who believe charismatic gifts ended in the early church, John MacArthur's Strange Fire conference stirred the pot by accusing the charismatic movement of blasphemy. One featured speaker: Conrad Mbewe, a Zambian pastor who criticizes the rise of his continent's charismatics. However, the surprise was not that MacArthur found an African ally, but that he found only one. Researchers estimate only 33 percent of African Christians are charismatics, Pentecostals, or otherwise "renewalists."

Presidents sent packing

Two presidents were recently released less than one year into their tenures. The American Bible Society fired Doug Birdsall, citing "significant differences" in vision for how to get more people reading the Bible. Weeks later, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities fired Edward Blews Jr. after "careful investigation" but wouldn't explain further. The D.C.–based group said it was "truly sorry for the disruption," and pledged to get a major February forum back on track.

ISRAEL

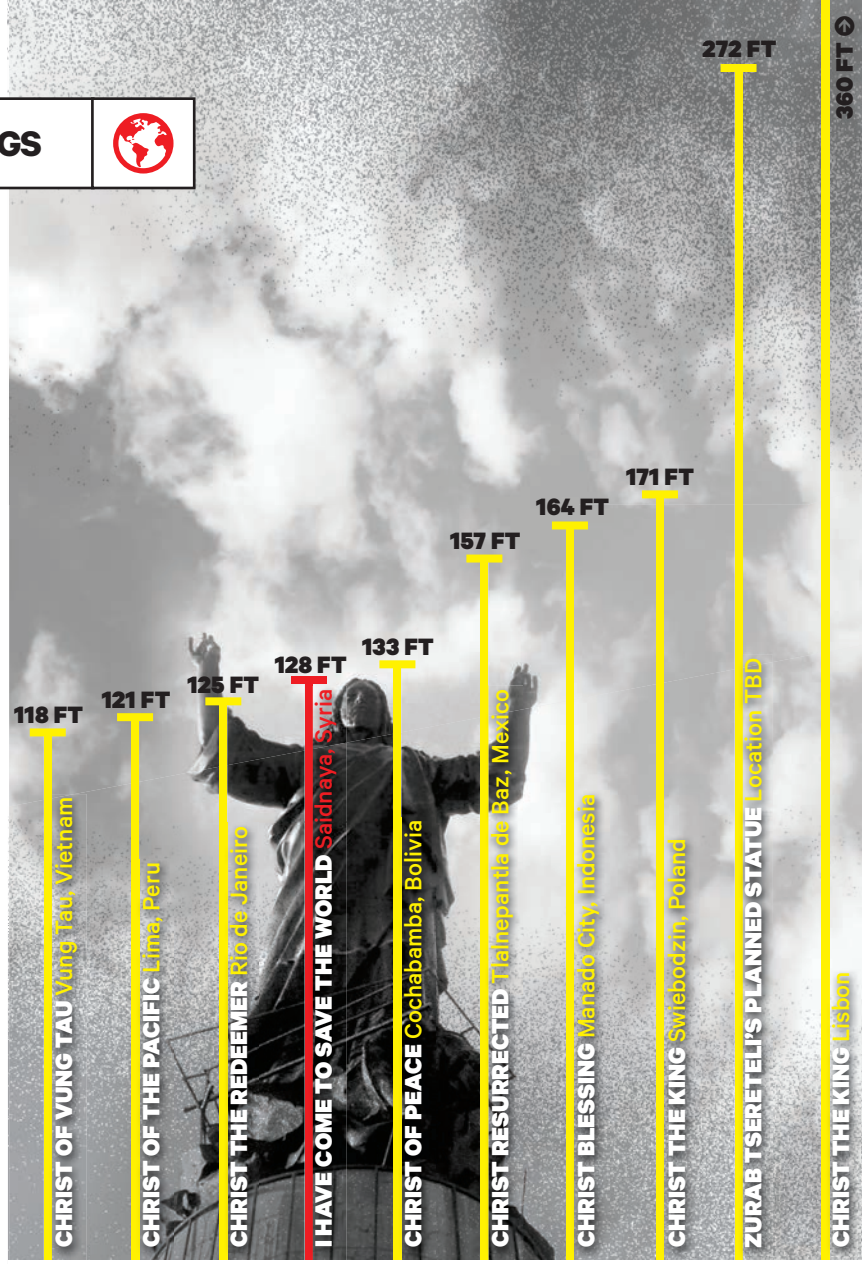
40%

American Jews who believe "Israel was given to the Jewish people by God."

82%

White evangelicals who believe this.

PEW RESEARCH



SYRIA

JESUS LIFTED HIGH ↑

Jesus' arrival in a Syrian city that still speaks his language was ironic, apropos, or both. "I Have Come to Save the World" is the latest Jesus statue in the worldwide ranks of those towering 100 feet or higher. Begun in Armenia in 2005, the bronze statue was installed in Saidnaya, a pilgrimage destination, this fall. It arrived just as the Aramaic-speaking region (most notably, Maaloula) became a hot spot in Syria's civil war. Slightly taller than Rio de Janeiro's famous Christ the Redeemer, the statue isn't the tallest—not by a long shot. Meanwhile, approximately 50,000 Christians in the mountainous region have appealed for citizenship in Russia. There, the president of the Russian Academy of Art happens to be building a Jesus statue twice as tall.

NAMIBIA

Christmas and Easter weddings banned

Holiday weddings are so popular in Namibia that a sizable group of churches has banned them. The western half of the nation's largest denomination—the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia—marries almost 1,000 couples each year. But now leaders have banned church weddings around Christmas and Easter—and have even asked families to avoid scheduling funerals then as well. Church leader Paulus Heita explained to Namibian newspaper *New Era* that the ceremonies take a toll on pastors and distract from the true focus of the holidays: Jesus.

Asian American Christians: 'Stop stereotyping us'

Failed attempts at humor by Rick Warren and a church planting conference led more than 80 "distressed" Asian American leaders to explain in an open letter why they are "weary, hurt, and disillusioned" with how the wider evangelical church represents them. Exponential conference leaders promptly apologized for their *Karate Kid*–related skit, as did Warren for his Red Army–related Facebook photo. Meanwhile, more than 900 people signed on to the letter's main allegation that Asian stereotyping among evangelicals is common and "has to stop."

AUSTRIA

Large enough to be legal: Evangelical churches

More than 150 churches in Austria once viewed as cults are now an official faith—at least in the eyes of their government. The new legal status of evangelicals—and the resulting education and tax benefits—come after five denominations joined forces in order to meet the Central European nation's minimum size requirements. Pastors hope it will boost their legitimacy in the eyes of their predominantly Catholic neighbors. Another benefit: They will no longer be breaking labor laws when they preach on Sundays.

> "I do not believe that we are going to heaven together, but I do believe we may go to jail together."

Albert Mohler, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president, addressing Brigham Young University. Christians and Mormons, he said, can help each other "push back" against "encroaching threats to religious liberty, marriage, and the family." In another recent example of religious freedom concerns producing strange bedfellows, the National Council of Churches (unsuccessfully) appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of the Church of Scientology.

Future Bible museum gets historic find

The Green Collection houses so many of the world's significant biblical texts and artifacts, dozens of scholars are now examining precisely what it has. In September, it revealed the first of four discoveries: the "oldest Jewish prayer book ever found," dated to circa A.D. 840. Comparable to what the Book of Common Prayer is to Anglicans, the tome will be displayed at a future Bible museum near the National Mall. Speculated to be among the remaining revelations: the earliest known text of the New Testament.

IRAN

'Gadfly' pastor plays Moses in order to save Saeed

A California pastor tried a novel way to free an Idaho pastor imprisoned in Iran. Eddie Romero sneaked away from his Tehran tour group to stand outside infamous Evin Prison, repeatedly proclaiming, "Let my people go!" while broadcasting the 35-minute protest live from his iPhone. Instead of freeing cause célèbre Saeed Abedini, an Iranian American imprisoned for more than one year, Romero was arrested and deported. But as his daughter explained, Romero—whose effort joined a *New York Times* advertisement by Billy Graham, a historic phone call by President Barack Obama to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, and a resolution by the European Parliament—"simply could not go into retirement and sit idly by. . . . He's there to literally bother the Iranian government, like a gadfly bothering a horse."

CONVERT COMPETITION

Hispanic Americans have long been leaving Catholicism. Today, 7 in 10 were raised Catholics, but only 1 in 2 stayed. The "Latino Reformation" has received most converts. But the religiously unaffiliated are catching up.

PUBLIC RELIGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

"I realized what I had missed."

Malcolm Gladwell, on why he returned to Christianity while writing his latest book, *David and Goliath.* The best-selling author told Religion News Service, "It was a slow realization something incredibly powerful and beautiful in the faith that I grew up with that I was missing."

EGYPT

Arab Christian TV comes to America

In the latest sign of how many Middle Eastern Christians have fled the Arab Spring, the Arab world's largest Christian broadcaster has followed them to North America. SAT-7 began reaching into American and Canadian homes in November. Its hoped-for audience of 4 million is far less than the 54 million homes targeted by Qatar-based news channel Al Jazeera America. But it underscores how the majority of Arab Americans—almost 70 percent, according to the Arab American National Museum—are Christians.

Creator of Left Behind games charged with fraud

The maker of Left Behind–themed video games may have committed fraud. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) alleges that Troy Lyndon, CEO of Left Behind Games Inc., issued close to 2 billion shares to his friend, Ronald Zaucha, in order to give investors a false sense of financial stability. Lyndon claimed the shares were payment for Zaucha's consulting services. But the SEC claims Zaucha sold the stock and used proceeds to, among other things, purchase nearly $1.4 million of unsold inventory when the company was struggling to stay afloat. Lyndon defended himself on his website: "Fact is, I'm just a video game guy. If any violation occurred, it would never have been intentional."

International adoption movement weathers critics

As the adoption movement grows, so do its critics. The fifth Orphan Sunday, supported by 130 groups, was preceded by a wave of suspicion. Critics such as Kathryn Joyce, author of *The Child Catchers*, largely blame evangelicals for the boom and bust cycle that has hit many countries, including Romania, Vietnam, Guatemala, and Ethiopia. The latest: the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which blocked children from leaving the Central African nation until at least September 2014.

The DRC is concerned over reports that adopted children may be abused or given to a second set of parents. Part of this fear may be founded: A lengthy Reuters investigation found a sizable underground market in the United States for "re-homing" unwanted adopted children. Yet a proposed House and Senate fix to streamline and reverse plummeting international adoptions—the Children in Families First Act—has won support from many evangelicals, including the Christian Alliance for Orphans (sponsor of Orphan Sunday) and Saddleback Church. (For more on the orphan care crisis, see page 27.)

4 of 10

Churchgoing millennials who fact-check their pastors' sermons online, often during the service using their smartphones. By comparison, 7 of 10 read Scripture online.

BARNA GROUP

Should bread and wine be banned online?

Shortly before World Communion Sunday, a group of United Methodist Church (UMC) leaders warned of a significant threat to unity across denominations: offering Communion online. A UMC church in North Carolina planned to launch an online campus serving the Lord's Supper. But a 27-person powwow urged a moratorium pending research on whether, given modern technology, the sacrament still "entails the actual tactile sharing of bread and wine in a service that involves people . . . together in the same place." Most concerned: the UMC's de facto state department, which—despite mainline partnerships having largely weathered divergent decisions on gay clergy—warned such a decision would fracture alliances, making the UMC "not only a stumbling block but also a laughingstock."

MALAYSIA

Christians lose fight to call God *Allah*

A Catholic newspaper can no longer legally use a word Malaysian Christians have used for centuries. In 2008, *The Herald* challenged a government ban on non-Muslims referring to God as *Allah*. In 2009, Kuala Lumpur's high court surprisingly agreed. But in October, an appeals court unanimously upheld the ban, ruling that the use of Allah by the nation's Christian minority "will cause confusion"—that is, conversions—among its Muslim majority.

Allah, the Arabic word for "god" that predates Islam, is used in Malay-language Bibles, especially in the Christian strongholds of Sabah and Sarawak on Borneo. Those communities vowed to keep using the term. As a workaround, an Indonesia publisher released a Bible translation in 2009 that changed Allah to less-common references to God. But the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Malaysia strongly opposed the translation, preferring to "maintain the right to use Allah as it has been so used for over 300 years."

Religious Freedom

Let My People Go

Groups that help persecuted Christians survive at home sometimes help them leave, too.

After successfully airlifting 5,000 Christians from Sudan in 2012, the Barnabas Fund is attempting a second rescue mission. This time the group plans to bus out another 3,400 Christians from the Islamic state.

The organization is partnering with the Africa Inland Church (which has about 125,000 members in Sudan) to take the group of mostly widows and children to South Sudan. Barnabas leaders say many of the Christians had lived in southern Sudan before it gained independence and had fled to slums outside the capital city, Khartoum, during the decades-long civil war.

The effort will cost $169 per person—all told, the total cost of the operation amounting to about half of Barnabas's annual revenue in recent years.

"Where at all possible, the aim is to assist people to be reestablished in their own environment," said spokesperson Brenda Dobbs. "It is only in extreme situations . . . that people are relocated to a different country—generally when they are directly threatened with murder or the death penalty."

Other religious liberty organizations say Barnabas's effort is unusual in its specifics, but that helping Christians leave their home countries is a small but important part of their work.

For example, Open Doors USA helped thousands of persecuted Christians move from Baghdad and Mosul in Iraq to the Kurdish north. Now that violence against Christians in Kurdistan is escalating, Open Doors is helping them leave the unstable country altogether, calling it a sufficiently extreme case.

Christian Solidarity International USA, best known for liberating Christian slaves in Sudan, also moves Christians out of their home countries, though it works with local church leaders to encourage most believers to stay.

"It is not unusual to be asked by local Christian leadership in the Islamic world to help certain individuals—such as converts from Islam to Christianity or those accused of blasphemy—find security elsewhere," CEO John Eibner told CT.

But Lisa Jones, executive director of Christian Freedom International, is concerned about Barnabas's Sudan evacuation because it involves paying third parties. "History has demonstrated that sometimes you end up creating a market for the problem," she said.

Religious freedom groups say the focus should be resettling—not relocating—endangered Christians. "They'll be safe from persecution, but they'll go through a complete culture shock," said Todd Nettleton, spokesperson for Voice of the Martyrs. "Wherever they're going, you have to see it as a very long-term commitment to stand with them and support them."

'It's not our decision as American Christians whether Christians in persecution choose to remain or flee.'

TODD DANIELS

"It's not our decision as American Christians whether Christians in persecution choose to remain or flee," said Todd Daniels, International Christian Concern's Middle East manager. And most persecuted believers, he and other leaders say, would rather stay where they are—even if offered a chance to move to the West.

"The human calculations dictate that we should pack our suitcases and immigrate to any other safer country," an Egyptian Christian told CT via e-mail. "However, God has always been faithful to us. . . . We live in Egypt today with hearts full of peace and joy, realizing that even as we are on that boat, in the middle of the dark night in the middle of the high waves, Jesus will . . . show up walking on the waves." **Kate Tracy**

Ethics

Relaxing Over Drinks

As colleges drop drinking bans, some see alcohol as a moral good.

In August, Moody Bible Institute lifted its alcohol and tobacco ban for its 600 full-time employees, following recent similar moves by Wheaton College, Huntington University, and Asbury Seminary.

Moody spokesperson Brian Regnerus said the change "came out of a desire in Moody's leadership to reflect a high-trust environment that emphasizes values, not rules," and to "require no more and no less than what God's Word requires."

"We are giving employees the freedom that God gives them," Regnerus said. "We trust that they have the wisdom and spiritual maturity to make appropriate choices for their lives and the communities in which they are a part." He also said that Moody is not advocating for alcohol use.

But some conservative Christians really are advocating for it.

Ben Smith, cofounder of Reclamation Brewing Company in Butler, Pennsylvania, said that for too long, American evangelicals have talked more about the "evils" of alcohol than its potential benefits.

"The craft beer industry has really boomed in the past 10 years and has shown people that beer isn't all about getting wasted," he said. "It's about admiring the beauty in it and seeing it as a gift." For Smith and the other founders of Reclamation (including his father, a Reformed Baptist pastor), craft beer is an art to be enjoyed, like all of God's gifts.

Peter Green, whose PhD research at Wheaton focuses on the theological significance of wine and vineyard themes in Scripture, says the Bible presents alcoholic drinks as an indicator and facilitator of human and divine relationships.

"The Old Testament is unambiguous that wine and other alcoholic beverages are a blessing, and their absence is considered a curse," said Green. He acknowledges the Bible forbids drunkenness and that some people should avoid alcohol due to addiction or family history. But he believes that most Christians should imbibe, not abstain.

Christians have always been concerned about drunkenness, but it wasn't until the Protestant social reform movement of the 1800s that temperance was equated with complete abstinence.

It's an "American oddity," said Jennifer Woodruff Tait, managing editor of *Christian History* magazine. "It's not that groups of people throughout history didn't practice complete abstinence. The Nazarites in the Bible didn't drink alcohol. But in the 19th century, a whole segment of the church said it's not just an ascetic practice that some people might choose; they said this is for everybody—all Christians must stop drinking or they're not Christians."

That climate has changed, said Larry Eskridge, associate director of the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals. While not a teetotaler himself, Eskridge said he's fond of the view that has dominated the evangelical landscape. "The underlying sensibility is taking care of your neighbor, taking care of your family, trying to be a good role model, and not being a stumbling block," he said. "Abstinence might easily be the way to go for a lot of people."

Woodruff Tait agrees. "[What's] important about the temperance movement was that it thought that what you did with your body had something to do with the holiness of your soul," she said. "It's an insight I don't want to see people lose. It is still important to think about how you live physically in the world—about the kind of food you eat . . . about all sorts of choices you make."

Meanwhile, Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, says his school won't be changing its policy requiring total abstinence—and not just because it's expected of all Southern Baptist leaders.

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise," he said, citing Proverbs 20:1. "There is no industry in America that causes as much sorrow and heartache. You don't have to look like the world. You don't have to ride as close to the edge as you possibly can without falling off."

Kevin P. Emmert

"It's not a sin to drink alcohol."

65%
PROTESTANT PASTORS

60%
PROTESTANT LAITY

"I drink alcohol."

22%
PROTESTANT PASTORS

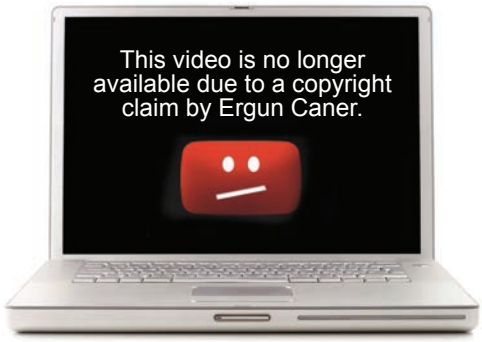
39%
PROTESTANT LAITY

LIFEWAY RESEARCH, 2007

Law

YouTube's Blocked Testimony

An ex-Muslim's lawsuit has implications for law and church.



Critics of ex-Muslim academic Ergun Caner say his attempt to remove online videos of his talks is designed to quell criticism. Caner's attorney says it's a case of simply defending copyright.

The case is slowly working its way through federal court, and has implications for how churches communicate.

Now a vice president at Arlington Baptist Theological Seminary near Dallas, Caner sued two men last June for posting the videos on YouTube.

The videos show Caner in 2005 warning U.S. Marines that Muslims are a danger. They were first posted by Jason Smathers, an Arizona Baptist pastor, who got them from the Marines through a Freedom of Information Act request. Jonathan Autry, a graduate of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, where Caner had been dean, saw them and became concerned. He believed Caner had tried to deceive people into believing that he (Caner) had been a radicalized Muslim from Turkey.

Autry believed that because Caner was "lying to Marines in the midst of two wars," he was someone "people needed to be warned about." He posted 34 videos of Caner on his own YouTube channel. YouTube took down the videos, but Autry and Smathers successfully appealed to have them republished. Caner is suing to have them removed permanently. He is also seeking compensation.

The coauthor of *Unveiling Islam*, Caner in 2005 became the first former Muslim to head an evangelical seminary. Liberty Seminary removed him as dean in 2010 after bloggers challenged his testimony.

Kel McClanahan, attorney for Smathers, says Caner is dodging accountability.

Caner attorney David Gibbs III says Caner has the right to control how his work is distributed. "Just like music and [books], speech can have copyright protection," he said.

Douglas Laycock, a law professor at the University of Virginia, said the case could shape how courts understand "fair use" exceptions to copyright. "Copyright holders think a lot of that [criticism] is infringing; those who make such works think they are engaged in free speech," he said. "Courts struggle to draw the line."

Gibbs warned church leaders that the long online life of digital content increases the possibility of litigation. The attorney advises pastors to think twice before posting every sermon online. "The cyber-attack crowd aims to hurt and destroy Christian leaders," he said.

Autry says his intent was not to hurt Caner's ministry but to inform people about it. He felt that because he previously promoted Caner as a trustworthy spiritual leader, he now needed to say something.

"The damage," Autry said, "is probably best described as having one's trust violated."

Ken Walker

Under Discussion

Compiled by Ruth Moon

Q: Should Christian colleges encourage students to marry each other?

The stereotypes of "ring by spring" and the "MRS degree" are proving true—at least at Christian colleges. According to Facebook's data science team, of the top 12 schools offering both men and women the best "chance of finding a spouse," 11 are Christian. (Council for Christian Colleges and Universities members include Dordt College, Oklahoma Christian University, and Kentucky Christian University.)

YES

"Christian colleges must challenge the unnecessary delay of marriage among millennials and teach them a worldview that honors it. I pray that college pastors, professors, and administrators would esteem marriage as highly valuable and teach healthy relationship formation."

Ted Cunningham, *author,* Young and in Love

"Not directly, but nor should colleges discourage marriage. When finding a mate becomes known as a goal of college, it hampers friendship. But solid friendship should definitely be part of their mission. If they succeed at that, good marriages will likely follow."

Lisa Graham McMinn, *writer in residence, George Fox University*

"Their mission is to educate students to engage the world for the kingdom. But when students focus their education on a Christian framework, God may bring couples together as they are obtaining their education to work in a unified manner toward the Great Commission."

Lynne Kohm, *professor of family law, Regent University*

"There is already enough pressure on young Christians to marry, and many are marrying early who shouldn't. Christian colleges should be in the business of encouraging students to follow God's calling in their lives. If that includes marriage, great. If it doesn't include marriage, great."

Christine Colón, *professor of English, Wheaton College*

"Making such a mission explicit would contribute to the same dating consumerism we see in the culture. I don't want my kids going to college to shop for a spouse but to get an education. Colleges should promote the Christian virtues of loving your neighbor in general."

Winston Smith, *faculty, Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation*

NO

Politics

Kerry Gets Religion

New adviser will (hopefully) make faith less foreign in foreign affairs.

If Secretary of State John Kerry were heading to college today, he'd study comparative religion. "That's how integrated it is [into] everything," he remarked in August.

Redoing college isn't an option for Kerry, who studied political science at Yale. But he's serious about religion. Kerry didn't waste any time launching the State Department's faith-based initiatives office just months into his appointment. To lead the office, Kerry selected his friend Shaun Casey, a professor of Christian ethics at Wesley Theological Seminary.

"My understanding is, in that first meeting, Kerry leaned over to a staff member and said, 'Let's get Shaun in here,'" said Casey, who grew up in the Church of Christ and previously coordinated evangelical outreach for President Obama.

Appointed through the end of Obama's term, Casey will be the first adviser to the secretary of state on the religious dimension of foreign affairs. He told CT that his new office will advise the secretary, help diplomats engage people of various religions, and teach faith-based groups to bring their views to bear on U.S. foreign policy.

Diverse groups from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs to the International Religious Freedom Roundtable have been suggesting such an office for years. In 2012, a white paper from the Interagency Working Group on Religion and Global Affairs made recommendations that appear to have been used as a blueprint for the office.

Before this summer, the State Department had its own Office of International Religious Freedom and worked with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent advisory body. It also had an ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom until the presidential appointee, Suzan Johnson Cook, resigned in October.

Yet none of these offices examined issues beyond religious freedom. Nor did they report directly to the secretary of state, says Institute for Global Engagement president Chris Seiple. He said the fact that Casey directly advises Kerry on a wide range of religious topics is a good sign that the State Department is taking religion seriously.

The new office is a clear conduit for religious communities to speak into broader issues—such as peace and development—that fall outside the issue of religious freedom, says Knox Thames, director of policy and research at USCIRF.

But not everyone is optimistic about Casey's appointment. Thomas Farr, who teaches religion and international affairs at Georgetown University, says the new office perpetuates an existing problem: American foreign policy—characterized by "the appearance of motion" on religious issues—is still not promoting religious freedom.

"There is ample reason to wonder why the goal [of engaging religion] cannot be achieved by a vigorous, effective IRF policy," said Farr, who directs the Berkley Center's Religious Freedom Project.

'NO ONE HAS BEEN ANGRY THAT WE OPENED UP SHOP.'
SHAUN CASEY (ABOVE)

But Judd Birdsall, a former U.S. diplomat and current PhD candidate at Cambridge University, says religious freedom policy doesn't encompass the whole picture. He says religious freedom and religious engagement are like overlapping circles: distinct but complementary, and mutually reinforcing if executed properly.

"If engagement is done well," he said, "it can foster greater respect between religions and governments."

Other critics say the office blurs the line between church and state. Casey says there's no conflict because faith-based groups don't seek funding from his office.

Still, he understands the nervousness. He says leaders are being scrupulous about the First Amendment and not discriminating against any groups—200 have visited the office in the first 12 weeks.

"No one has been angry that we opened up shop," he said. "They now feel like they have access, and they understand how we might partner to advance diplomacy."

Melissa Steffan

PHOTO BY CHIP SOMODOVILLA / GETTY

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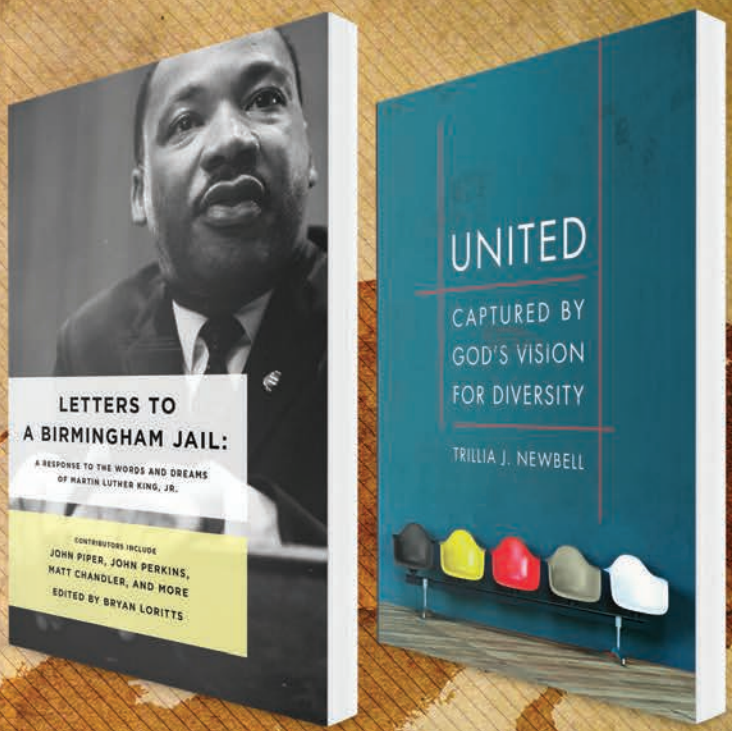

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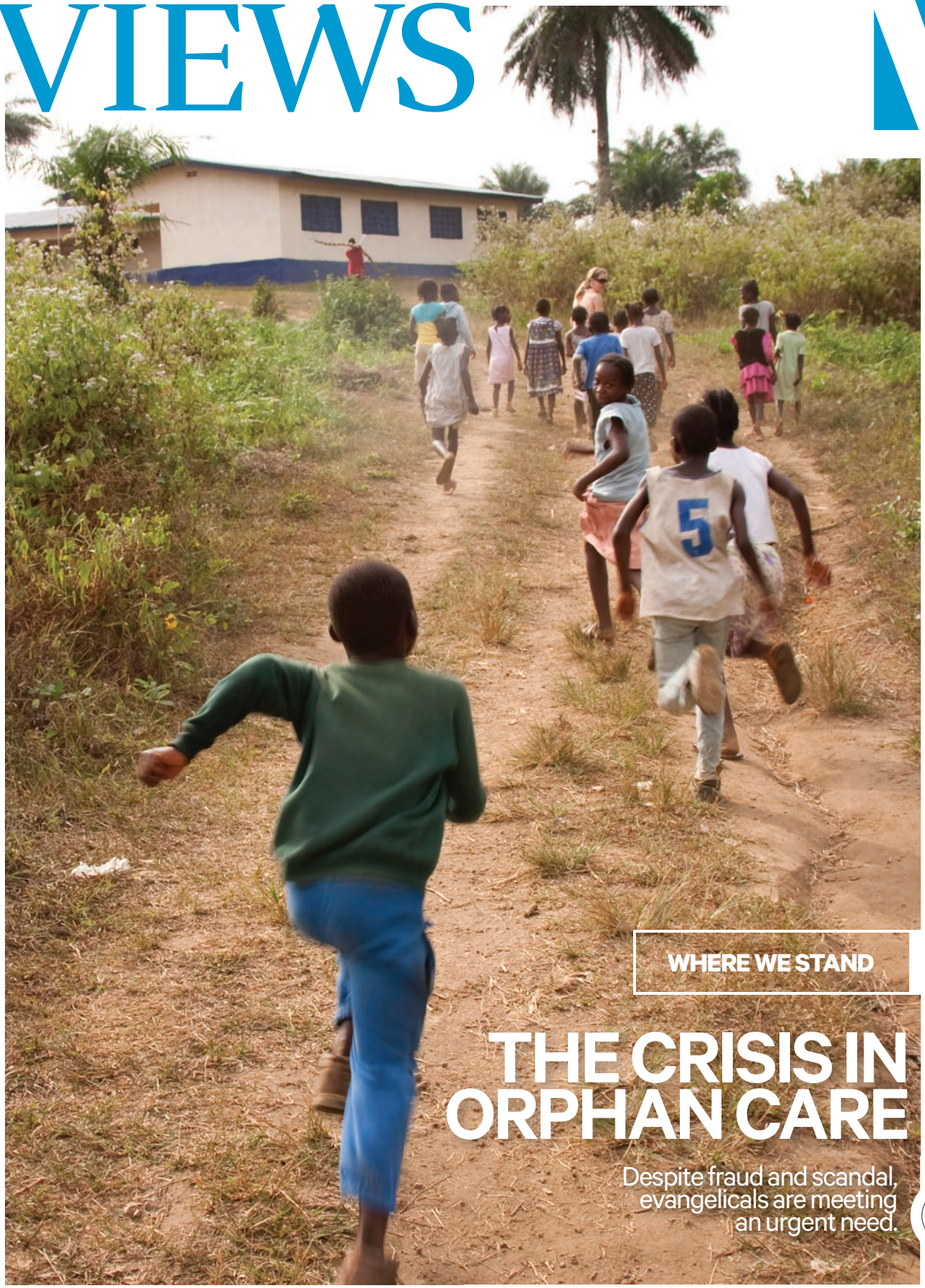

WHERE WE STAND

THE CRISIS IN ORPHAN CARE

Despite fraud and scandal, evangelicals are meeting an urgent need.

PHOTO BY DAVID UTTLEY / LUMINESCENT IMAGES

There is no silver-bullet solution for the challenge of orphan care.

JOURNALIST KATHRYN JOYCE caused a stir this year with her book *The Child Catchers*, a sweeping indictment of the evangelical overseas adoption movement. Joyce claimed that much faith-based adoption is corrupted by trafficking, patriarchy, and bad theology. On top of her report, covered on *The New York Times*'s front page, the number of adoptions by Americans has declined by 62 percent since 2004, even while UNICEF reports there are still at least 13 million children worldwide who have lost both parents.

Evangelical Christians are an adoption-happy bunch, because we were adopted once too. A family that welcomes needy children into a loving home provides a potent symbol of the in-grafting gospel. Yet we know all too well the gap between how things should be and how things are. Orphanage horror stories are sickeningly common. In 2010, 10 U.S. missionaries were charged with trafficking 33 Haitian children into the Dominican Republic. One of the world's largest sex abuse scandals took place at a Canadian orphanage run by the Christian Brothers until the late 1980s. Then there's the case of the vanishing orphanage: In a Kenyan village, a Christian orphanage hosted church leaders from Colorado. On an unannounced follow-up visit, one leader discovered the orphanage was a "highly sophisticated web of lies" that used fake staff and "rented" children.

Further, some government leaders and researchers believe orphanages don't address the systemic issues underlying orphan care. Rwanda, for example, had one of the largest concentrations of orphans—about 1 million—after the 1994 genocide. Since then, tens of thousands of Rwandan children have successfully moved into extended family and foster care. Next year, Rwanda aims to close all of its institutional orphanages as a reaffirmation of traditional village and family-based care for orphans.

Amid fresh doubts about orphanages, what can Christians, who are told to "look after orphans . . . in their distress" (James 1:27), learn? The answer is complicated—there is no silver-bullet solution for the challenge of orphan care. But first, we should remember that nothing is worse for a young child than the death of a parent.

Instead of pushing for orphanage shutdowns and halts on adoptions (as many governments have done after fraud and bad outcomes for children in institutions), we as the American church can help provide the best tailor-made option for each orphan.

For some children, this will mean staying in an orphanage. Richard McKenzie, a California economist who grew up in an orphanage, found from surveying 2,500 alumni of 15 U.S. orphanages that they *outpaced* the general population in almost all social and economic indicators. His findings corroborate the Duke University Positive Outcomes for Orphans study, which found positive results among orphans in Africa and Asia.

Fresh Moves: An instructor teaches dance at a Beijing orphanage run by Christians. Since 1999, Americans have adopted 69,320 children from China.

"We're not saying kids should be in institutions," Kathryn Whetten, a lead Duke researcher, told media. "[But] they're not necessarily a bad option. We need to look at [orphanages] as feasible options for communities that are overwhelmed."

For some children, this will mean being reunited with extended family. The Chikumbuso Women and Orphans Project, a faith-based nonprofit in central Zambia, won the 2012 "Best of Zambia" award for bringing together orphans, widows, and grandmothers for comprehensive support. Partnering with U.S. church leaders, it provides in-country care through education, skills training, and widows' microenterprise. In Tanzania, the African Orphans Relief Project seeks to stop dependence on adoption fees and donations altogether by sustaining itself through agriculture and brick-making. American churches can support similar, reputable programs that assess and place children in programs suited to their specific needs.

For some children, this will mean being adopted by families overseas. Most CT readers probably know a family or church member who has adopted a child (or 3, or 6), giving them a hope and a future by doing so. Christians who do not feel called to adopt can support those who do by welcoming adoptive families into the local church, setting up adoption-support funds, and walking alongside couples with "special needs" adopted children.

Ultimately, orphans reflect a broken world—young children were never meant to face life alone. To this end, American Christians can help solve the orphan crisis by addressing one of its major causes: parental death due to treatable disease. Africa is projected to gain another 1.3 billion people by 2050. But HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis will leave many children as orphans. While a beautiful symbol of the gospel, adoption doesn't address the problem of parents dying prematurely. We can support nonprofits that do so even while we remain zealous about overseas adoption. **CT**

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PHOTO BY GARY GNIDOVIC

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Coming Out Evangelical

Many of my peers lament their church upbringing. Why I celebrate mine.

I was a typical big sister growing up. The oldest of three, I saw myself as the guardian of tradition, the planner in an otherwise spontaneous family. Every Christmas Eve, if Dad forgot, I would round up the troops, lead the march to the carpet in front of the fireplace, and hand over the volume of O. Henry short stories that usually sat high up on the bookshelf.

In his soft voice, Dad would start reading *The Gift of the Magi*, reprising our family's Christmas tradition. It tells the story of James and Della Dillingham Young, whose poverty complicated the act of buying Christmas gifts for one another. Each sold their single prized possession to buy a gift for the other—Della her long hair, Jim his gold watch. Our family sat rapt for the 20 minutes it took to get to the conclusion—to Della's combs, Jim's watch chain, her short hair, his watch sold. "Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are the wisest."

There is power in a good story. And with that in mind, a few months ago I began to write my own story of growing up in an evangelical home. Unlike the tales of Christian kids (specifically pastors' kids—my dad is John Ortberg) that attract the most attention in blog posts and books these days, mine has a happy ending.

I grew up square in the middle of 1990s American evangelicalism, and I'm grateful and better for it. Sure, there were exceptions—a few moments that in retrospect make me cringe—but overall, it was a rich experience. I read books like *Mere Christianity* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*; talked about gender, racism, and social justice; and developed a remarkable group of friends who were committed to figuring out how best to live out the Christian faith.

The more I wrote about who I met and what I learned, I found that I was numbered among many who grew up evangelical without trauma or harm, with a full window into the world and no qualms whatsoever about the role of women in the church or at home.

Yet even we evangelicals now talk about brothers and sisters and our own stories with an eye roll or quick dismissal. We have come to believe that the experiences of exclusion and infighting that dominate the American religious landscape are the norm, rather than the exception, in our faith.

Evangelicals have long been painted with a broad brush: moralistic, right-wing, uneducated, unable to appreciate the earth or beauty, fearful, and not a little bit strange. That picture is not accurate or full; I don't know many people or movements that would stand up to it, even with their worst characteristics laid bare. Seeing past stereotypes takes work, but it is work that is worth doing.

This is why there is power in a good story, one that's not only well told but also promises redemption for us foolish people. We Christians often repeat the same sad stories as the broader culture around us. We trumpet our brokenness and silence our joy, we analyze and lament, but we don't celebrate our shared faith often enough. We look for the bad rather than the good, and we wonder why our souls have been ground to pieces.

Do we believe that the gospel is good news? Or have we grown tired and cynical, pressed down by the headlines and talking heads?

Growing up, I learned the importance of the life of the mind (thanks to my parents and Christian historian Mark Noll) and the power of vulnerability (thanks to the aforementioned group of friends). I discovered how to identify and use my gifts in the kingdom of God, and how to talk about my faith with folks who didn't share it—a hallmark of evangelicalism that's gotten a bad rap. "I don't want to force my faith down their throats" has become a too-common refrain among Christians. I have seen the gospel shared poorly and in damaging ways, to be sure. But far more often, I have seen people who love Jesus paint a stirring and winsome picture of the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

After all, that's what our movement is about. I have heard it said that the best litmus test for a person's take on evangelicalism is what she thinks about Billy Graham. The test may not resonate with all my peers, but the question remains central: Do we believe that the gospel should be shared? Do we believe that the gospel is good news—a good story—for all people? Or have we grown tired and cynical, pressed down by the headlines and talking heads?

Young Christians find themselves in grave danger of going the way of John Bunyan's Worldly-wiseman because we are drowning in what evangelicals are against, rather than what rallies us: Jesus Christ. He is the best news, the ultimate good story.

In *The Gift of the Magi*, Della and Jim sacrificed their best to bring joy to each other. Their actions highlighted a generous love, and that love undergirds their story. May it undergird ours as well. **CT**

ILLUSTRATION BY ADAM CRUFT

OPEN QUESTION *Three Views*

Why Confess Sins in Worship When It Seems So Rote?

How the habit heals us.

Kathleen Norris
To Guide Us In Between

The value of corporate confession comes simply from the fact that we are doing it with people—those we've been glad to share ministry with, and those we find more difficult to appreciate.

A person in the next pew may have slighted us; we may have just learned that a person across the aisle was insulted by something we said. Corporate confession is a time to air it all out and reflect on our regrettable tendency to harm one another. It is a great equalizer, reminding us that we are all guilty of sinful actions and omissions, and that we all need forgiveness.

In his classic rule for monastic living, Benedict recommends that the community recite the Lord's Prayer together several times a day to help uproot the thorns of contention that spring up in community life. I believe that corporate confession on Sunday mornings can work in much the same way.

Of course, anyone can sleepwalk through confession. You may begin to pray with good intentions, and may even be painfully conscious of having done something regrettable, when suddenly you are preoccupied with whether or not you took out the dinner rolls to thaw.

But I believe that saying the words—having them move through our breath and on our lips—has meaning in itself. Even if we don't pay close attention as we speak, the words become real for us. Our bodies will remember them. Later in the week, a phrase from that confession might come to mind when we most need it.

Much of worship works in this subliminal way. It engages our sensibilities in a way we do not fully understand. A line from a hymn, a passage from Scripture, or a sermon may seem to pass over us. Even if we feel an emotional tug, the moment passes. A connection has been made, however, and its meaning can become clearer over time.

We are not Christians only during worship on Sunday morning: our faith is intended to be lived every day. Communal confession remains with us, working on us as we go about our lives. Remembering that we have humbled ourselves before God and others during church last week, and knowing that we will be asked to do so again next week, can guide our actions in between.

KATHLEEN NORRIS is author of *The Cloister Walk* and *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith.*

John D. Witvliet
To Experience Grace

Corporate confession is indispensable, provided that it is bathed in grace, and that worshipers are led to understand why it's important.

ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES O'BRIEN

First, it is radically honest to confess that we have fallen short of God's glory. Since sin is both individual and corporate, confession should be, too (Ps. 51 and Neh. 9). If we avoid corporate confession, we convey the idea that sin—and thus salvation—is only an individual matter.

Second, corporate confession is a formative act that spills over into everyday life. Fruitful corporate worship involves learning to say words to God that do not come naturally to us. "We are sorry" is as hard for us to say as it is for misbehaving toddlers. But when we practice these words, they shape our souls, priming us to use them in the middle of ordinary life.

Early church theologians compared public worship to a spiritual gymnasium. Omitting corporate confession is a little like going to a gym and skipping the core toning exercises.

Third, penitence orients us to grace. Think of penitence not as a burden but as a place to *set aside* our burdens. Construed as such, it becomes a welcome practice.

Fourth, acts of candid corporate humility resist self-righteousness and triumphalism—two of the largest problems inside the church, and two of the biggest reasons many people can't stand the church.

But simply dropping confession into next week's worship service won't do.

We need leaders to teach us that confession is something to grow into, something the Holy Spirit uses to form us. They need to assure us that it is valuable even when we do not understand the depths of our folly, even when we doubt we are sincere. If we waited until we fully understood and meant every word, would we ever pray the Lord's Prayer or sing even an average praise song?

Further, we need leaders to immerse corporate confession in grace. Too often, corporate confession feels like a temporary suspension of good news.

But it is a gift to be in a church honest enough to confess sin corporately. It is a gift to confess sin to a God of covenant love. It is a gift to pray for the Holy Spirit's help and to pray in the strong name of Jesus, who perfects our prayers. It is a gift to have confession encircled by scriptural words of assurance that announce the sovereign grace of God at work through the sacrifice of Jesus. When we have gospel-shaped worship, grace abounds before, during, and after corporate confession.

Ultimately, confession "sings" when public worship and lifelong repentance and service seamlessly connect. Pastors can and should nurture this connection, but they can't coerce it. This means that every act of confession—like every praise song—can be at least partly hypocritical.

So let's confess hypocrisy alongside everything else, expecting the Holy Spirit to bless candor with healing grace and to help us, as God's dearly loved children, to "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15, NRSV).

The church is blessed today with artists, musicians, pastors, and others who have a renewed vision for shaping honest, grace-immersed corporate prayer and confession. Many are doing so by returning to the Psalms, the Bible's own school of prayer. Psalm 32 celebrates forgiveness, proclaiming, "Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven" (NRSV). Psalm 38, 51, 69, and 130 explore similar themes. May God's Spirit bless these worship leaders with congregations willing to embrace their vision.

JOHN D. WITVLIET is director of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship and professor at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Enuma Okoro
To Seek Renewal

I am often struck by the renewing power of liturgy, how repetitive acts of worship can remind me that the gift of faith is magnified when shared with others.

It is easy to say this about practices like singing and praying, which more overtly call us to our best selves. And we rarely shy away from showing our best selves in public. We sing praises to God. We pray for one another.

A practice like confession, however, is different. Speaking aloud that we have failed God and one another seems like it should be private, personal, and probably specific.

So why do we bother with the nondescript prayer of confession in worship? What difference does it make?

First, for many of us, that weekly point of confession might be the only time we acknowledge to ourselves, to God, and to one another that we cannot be left to our own devices without making grave mistakes. It might be the only time we focus on the fact that moving away from God is not just something thieves, adulterers, murderers, and other "real" sinners do, but something we each do daily in our words, thoughts, and actions.

Additionally, it might be the only time we remember that we all stand in the same miserable state of falling short of who God calls us to be. To speak aloud our shortcomings not only teaches us humility but reminds us that God's strength is made perfect in our weakness, and that mercy and love triumph over judgment. For some of us, this might be the only time during the week that we receive such words of grace.

Communal confession invites us to be gracious toward one another as God is gracious to each of us time and time again. It teaches us to release the burdens of failure we all carry, and to seek God's and one another's help as we try again to love God, others, and ourselves better. It reminds us that being vulnerable can heal and renew us, and it slowly habituates us to living more vulnerable—and therefore more intimate and honest—lives with one another, even if it's just once a week.

And when we practice confession before receiving Communion in worship, it beautifully reminds us of our stance before God. We are creatures forever faltering forward toward God, our creator. Confession symbolically cleanses and prepares our hearts to come before the One who forgives us while we are yet sinners, and who calls us each week, each day, each morning to try again to live into the life of Christ. We confess together because we are in this together.

In those spaces where we openly ackowledge our mistakes, our sins, and our steps away from God, we are inviting Christians to hold us accountable each week as we seek to live faithfully and work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Our public confession is another way of saying we need one another to do things better, to remind us in loving-kindness of places we have slipped, and to help turn us back towards the Christian way. Confession reminds us that the journey of faith is never fully concluded this side of heaven. Yet God has promised never to leave us bereft of his grace, renewal, and provision, even in our brokenness. **CT**

ENUMA OKORO is author of *Reluctant Pilgrim* and coeditor of *Talking Taboo: American Christian Women Get Frank about Faith.*

PAST IMPERFECT

David Neff is former editor in chief of CT.

Heirs, Apparently

The biblical take on adoption is much richer than we think.

I was an only child—except for the year I was in third grade. That year, Ronnie and Jerry invaded my bedroom and shared my parents. I thought it was cool to have brothers for a change, even if they were temporary foster brothers.

At the end of the school year, my father took me aside. We could provide a permanent family for Ronnie and Jerry, he said. My parents had discussed adopting them, but they didn't want to decide without talking to me.

There were complicating factors, Dad said. There was a third brother who was behaviorally challenged, and the social worker wanted us to adopt all three. She thought it was vital to try to keep the family together.

Then there was my inheritance. It would have to be split four ways.

In Romans 8:14–17, Paul teaches that we are adopted through the Holy Spirit, and that as God's adopted children, we become heirs. The apostle, in fact, addresses the same issues my parents did with Ronnie and Jerry.

ADOPTION THEN AND NOW

First, there is intimacy with the Father. Ronnie and Jerry didn't call my dad Dr. Neff, like my other friends did. He wanted them to call him Dad. If my parents had adopted them, he would truly, fully, legally, and in every way but one have been their dad. And Paul writes that the Spirit of God prompts us to call God *Abba*, the intimate Aramaic word for *Dad*. Not only that, the Spirit gives us an internal assurance that God is indeed our Abba.

Second, there is adoption itself. In 1984, Scottish law professor Francis Lyall published an excellent study of the legal metaphors in the Epistles (*Slaves, Citizens, Sons*, Zondervan). Lyall shows that Roman—not Jewish, not Greek—adoption law was at the heart of this teaching. There was no Jewish adoption law, because when a man died without male offspring to continue his line, his closest male relative was commanded to sleep with his widow and produce an heir. Roman law, by contrast, allowed a man to create an heir from outside his family.

The reason for legal adoption was never for the sake of the child, Lyall writes. Children could always be fostered, but adoption was to preserve the family. The Roman household was a worshiping unit, and it needed a male priest at its head to offer prayers and sacrifices to the family gods. Worshiping families were the building blocks of Roman society.

In adoption, the adoptee got a new identity. His old obligations and debts were wiped out, and new obligations were assumed. From the standpoint of the family religion, the adoptee became the same person as the adopter.

Third, there is the matter of inheritance. In modern law, we do not become heirs until someone dies (though we may be "heirs presumptive"—people entitled to the inheritance). Paul's metaphor fails in modern law because we can't be God's heirs without God's death. But in Roman law, all the members of a family held their property jointly with the *paterfamilias*. Youth were not automatically emancipated at age 21, and thus given control of their own property. All children of any age—natural or adopted—were already heirs while their father lived and had joint control of their property.

This is the legal background to Paul's saying that "if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). In other words, "Birth, not death, constituted heirship," says Lyall.

How does this legal background illuminate Paul's teaching? In summary, God has adopted us into his family to help carry on the worship life that, in Roman culture, made a family a family. He has made us certain of that new relationship by the testimony of his Spirit. And he has made us rich by granting us co-ownership of glorious things to come.

For about nine months, we lived as though Ronnie and Jerry were my parents' children, and if children, then heirs, and joint heirs with me.

SOMETHING PRECIOUS

I loved the consultative way my father ran our family. He was clearly concerned for my feelings. But what could a third grader grasp about inheritance? Or about raising behaviorally challenged children?

I'm sure my parents had good reasons when they ultimately decided not to adopt the three boys. I wish I knew how their lives unfolded after we left Ronnie and Jerry at their grandmother's trailer in rural Wisconsin. And I wonder how my parents' love and sacrifice bore fruit in their lives.

Still, that year gave me a taste of something precious. For about nine months, we lived as though Ronnie and Jerry were my parents' children, and if children, then heirs, and joint heirs with me. In human households, such trial periods are sometimes necessary. Fortunately, in God's economy, there are no probationary children. Our adoption—and God's promises—are forever. CT

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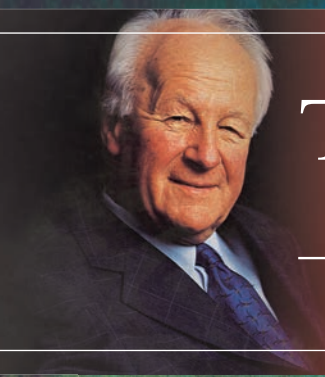

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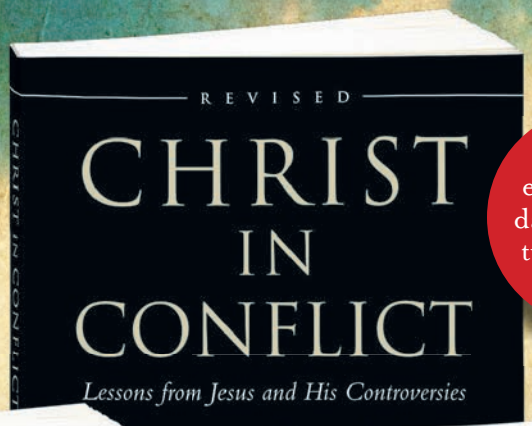

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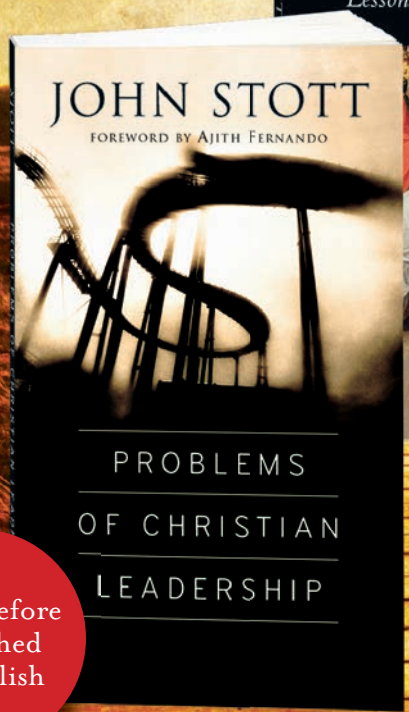

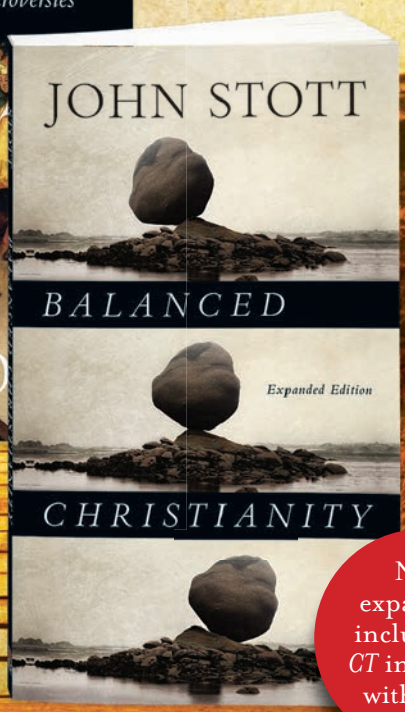

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New Life Givers: Pastors Bobby Mikulas (top left), Brady Boyd (top right), and Glenn Packiam (bottom left) as well as leaders at the women's clinic (below) and youth center (right) are a few of the thousands reviving Ted Haggard's former church by turning it outward.

New Life After the Fall

How the megachurch healed—by remembering what it means to be the local church.

By Patton Dodd

Photos by Lisa Beth Anderson

THE FOG from the smoke machine is especially thick this Easter morning in Colorado Springs. Green lasers dance across the stage and over the thousands gathered, making no discernible pattern as they slice into the fog. The service this morning is at a fever pitch. A sprawling praise band populates the stage: guitarists and singers, a cellist, a horn section, a DJ and turntable, percussionists of various sorts, a keyboardist, a pianist, and a full choir. It's a lot of sound, a lot of light—a lot of a lot.

A lot is the way Easter is announced at New Life Church. You take your standard megachurch service, and you turn it up all the way.

The year is 2006, and New Life has never basked in a brighter spotlight. Ted Haggard, who founded the nondenominational church in his basement in 1984, has been president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) for two years, and he's leveraged the position into a formidable platform. Hardly a Sunday goes by without media—TV and newspaper reporters, documentary filmmakers—roaming the building, or without Haggard delivering a tale of expanding influence. He recounts a conversation with a heady politician, or an interview with a cable news talking head, that lets him redefine the evangelical stance-qua-Haggard on whatever issues are making headlines that week: abortion (con), the environment (pro), immigration (pro), same-sex marriage (con), the war efforts in Afghanistan (pro), and Iraq (super-pro).

Those far outside New Life have taken notice. A year earlier in *Harper's*, journalist Jeff Sharlet christened it the "nation's most powerful megachurch," observing that "no pastor in America holds more sway over the political direction of evangelicalism than does Pastor Ted." The report revealed that the "most powerful megachurch" label was not just a warning to *Harper's* readers; it reflected the church's own wishful thinking, too. "There was a significant influence exerted on the [2004 reelection of Bush] by Colorado Springs," Haggard told Sharlet.

This Easter Sunday is as much about celebrating that power as about celebrating God's resurrection power. Easter has arrived without spiritual preparation—no Lent, no Palm Sunday, no Holy Week (though a Passion play has packed the house for two consecutive weekends). But preparation of another kind has been under way. The church's new auditorium, with a stage set in the round and 8,000 seats, is equipped with insane lighting and sound capabilities, all on display this morning. Christ will be preached this morning—and here he is preached as the head of Christendom, leading the charge for Christians to take over the world. He is risen, and we are on the rise.

Until, suddenly, we were not.

Over the first weekend of November 2006, New Life's meteoric rise came to a crashing halt. Haggard resigned from his church and the NAE in the wake of accusations of drug use and a sexual relationship with a man in Denver.

New Life was left with $26 million in debt, dwindling resources, and uncertainty at every turn. More accusers came forward. In the coming months, reports of Haggard's recovery and restoration popped up, usually putting both church and former pastor in a bad light. Soon, another senior pastor was hired—Brady Boyd of Gateway Church in Dallas, who brought with him changes driven by the watchword *stability*.

Then, another tragedy, this one more searing: On a Sunday morning 100 days into Boyd's tenure, a gunman opened fire in the New Life parking lot, killing two teenage girls before being shot by a volunteer security guard and taking his own life.

After the two tragedies, church numbers declined almost by half—down to 8,000 members or fewer, from a reported peak of 14,000—with a corresponding decline in income. Staff faced multiple layoffs. Longtime pastors and leaders moved on. In time, the spotlight faded. And the remaining staff and members were left to recover, to remember, to rediscover what it means to be a local church.

Christendom Crumbles

I was not around New Life for much of that rediscovery. But I've been privy to some of the conversations that fueled it. From August 1998 until about four months before Haggard's scandal, I was his writer and editor. And my New Life history goes back even further: I came to Christ there in 1993 after my senior year of high school, and it's tempting to paint that era as Edenic. Volleyball and boom-boxed Nirvana on a Sunday afternoon, praise and worship in the evening, all with my new Christian friends.

I was there because Haggard and his church expressed a generous, active faith—one that helped me make sense of the world and gave me clear priorities that boiled down to, *Be a blessing to the world around you*. There were questionable teachings and practices in the water back then, but as far as I knew, Haggard issued a straightforward gospel, one calling Christians to give their lives to steady prayer and acts of love. That message inspired an 18-year-old boy to make some key decisions that altered his life course. I was saved at New Life, well and true.

When I began working for him, Haggard was something of a saint and a father figure. But the job was always vexed; rather, I was always vexed within it. I had changed

From Christ to Christendom—that seemed to be the trajectory at New Life. By the end, we were writing policy position statements, sound-bite op-eds, and a dieting book.

No Big Platforms: Senior pastor Brady Boyd (top), 41, arrived from Dallas in early 2007—three months before a fatal on-site shooting; Matthew Ayers (center) oversees New Life's nonprofit spinoff; and pastor Dave Perkins (bottom) keeps New Life's charismatic past front and center.

since coming to faith—I had in fact lost faith and was trying to find it again—and the church was changing too. Haggard became famous within charismatic and evangelical circles during the 1990s, then achieved fame more widely in the early 2000s. As his profile rose, the church shifted its focus. From Christ to Christendom—that seemed to be the trajectory. By the end, we were writing policy position statements, soundbite op-eds, and a dieting book.

As news of the scandal broke, one of my closest friends at New Life, Rob Stennett, was 90 percent through drafting a novel with the working title *The Impastor* (later published by Zondervan as *The Almost True Story of Ryan Fisher*). The novel is about a non-Christian man who attends a megachurch to drum up business, then discovers that church itself can be good business. So he starts one that becomes wildly successful—until a scandal topples it over.

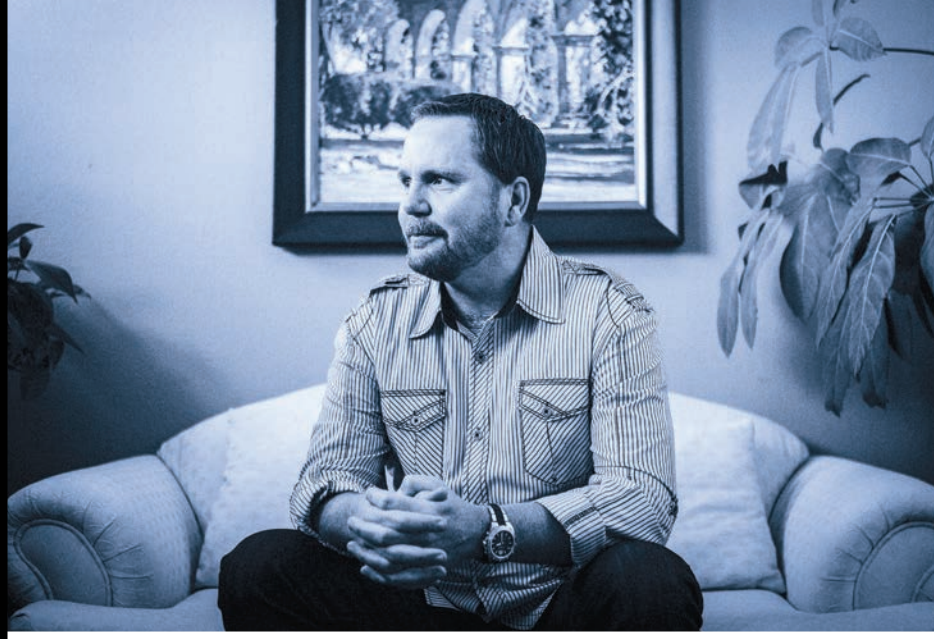
Stennett was writing his way through the questions we were facing during New Life's heyday well before we knew anything about our pastor's personal problems. For many of us, Haggard's sex-and-drugs scandal was forgiven and forgotten most easily. Harder to forgive and forget was what the church had become.

I resigned a few weeks after that 2006 Easter service. I would remain close to friends and fellow staff members, but I never wanted to darken the doors of a New Life service again.

And that brings us to today.

New, Yet Quite Old

This past Easter Sunday, my family and I attended New Life Downtown. Meeting in a high school near Colorado Springs' urban core, the fledgling church branch had been looking toward Easter for months, specifically since the beginning of Advent. Pastor Glenn Packiam, 35, teaches the congregation to follow the liturgical calendar, used for centuries by major Christian traditions. During Lent, we had been anticipating the Resurrection through fasting, repentance, and sacrificial giving. Easter was preceded by a Good Friday service at the



main campus. There, Packiam and associate pastor Daniel Grothe led a service of mournful prayer before dismissing us in hushed darkness.

This is part of the new language of New Life Church. Packiam is a key instigator of this new (yet quite old) way of speaking and thinking and worshiping. He's a fledgling devotee of the Anglican communion, which has attracted evangelicals seeking a historically rooted faith over the past half-century. Packiam is exploring Anglican ordination, after which he would be "sent" to New Life, a priest among evangelicals.

New Life Downtown's service remains couched in familiar evangelical expressions—there's a set of praise and worship songs, a half-hour sermon, and an overall tone of *de rigueur* Colorado casual. But it draws on aspects of traditional liturgy, straining to do so in a way that's both serious and inviting. Many Sundays, we recite the Nicene Creed and say the prayers of the people. Every Sunday we hear Scripture read (Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel) and do corporate confession. We share the Eucharist, receive a blessing, and sing the doxology.

The main campus is adopting some of these practices as well. For the first time in its three-decade history, it offers Communion every Sunday. Boyd says embracing Christianity's past is key to New Life's future.

"I'm slowly turning the ship toward a more contemplative, thoughtful time," says Boyd. "I inherited a big ol' building with gigantic lights and screens. I've got all the cool stuff. But that's not what we're about."

New Life's convictions have also been examined anew. Its elders recently voted to adopt the Nicene Creed as the church's statement of faith. Meanwhile, they are tackling the legacy debt—down to $19 million as of this writing—while reaffirming a commitment to the poor in Colorado Springs. Intercessory prayer and purposeful ecumenism are also being renewed.

A number of pastoral resources have helped slowly reorient New Life. So has listening to people whose faith was jeopardized around the time of the scandal.

Gary, a New Life member, is one such person. He is a former fundamentalist who started reading broadly after Haggard resigned. A business traveler whose faith foundered amid the scandal, Gary used long commutes to study Christian history, wondering why the faith at New Life bore little resemblance to the faith he was reading about. As he studied, he brain-dumped and peppered with questions any New Life staff member who would listen: "How does the way we worship determine the way we believe?" "Why don't our songs mention Father, Son, Holy Spirit?" "Would Paul assent to our statement of faith?" Gary pointed pastors to more traditional ways of thinking, praying, reading the Scriptures,

Letting Pastors Be Real

Dale Pyne says when we put pastors on a pedestal, they're more likely to topple.

Interview by Mark Galli

As president of Peacemakers Ministries—which has worked with hundreds of churches to quell disputes using biblical principles—Dale Pyne has seen his fair share of pastoral failings. He spoke with CT editor Mark Galli about what pressures tempt pastors to fall, and what they need to finish their ministry with a clean slate.

Aside from a pastor's personal weaknesses, what cultural forces make it harder for pastors to stay true in their calls?

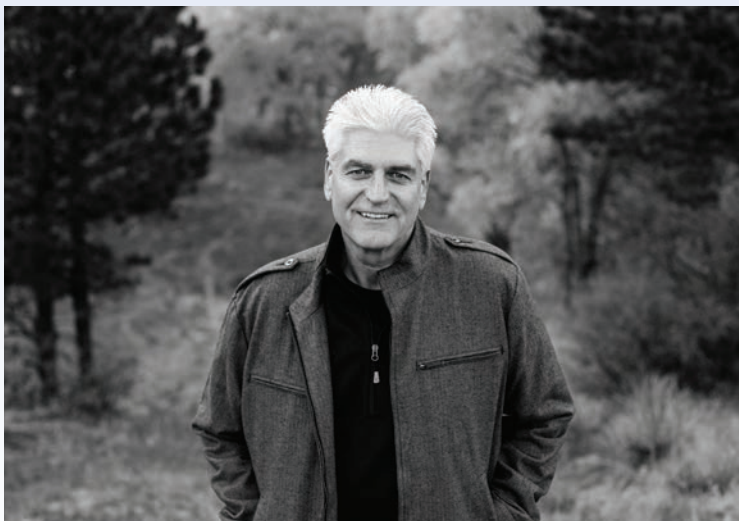
We have a cultural tendency to elevate leaders. Maybe it's because they have an extraordinary education or a title or a position. Maybe it is because they have had a great deal of success in the growth of their church, or as an author or speaker. Whatever the reason, we're creating minigods in our minds and hearts. That creates expectations in leaders, and expectations are the foundations for disappointment.

What does that look like in a local church?

Maybe the pastor receives disproportionately large gifts compared to what's given to associates or other staff. Or the senior pastor is seen as the person that we all go to. It's people saying, "The pastor sat at my table," or, "The pastor was over at my house." As if the pastor is a movie star or sports figure.

I don't know how many times in Peacemakers' work, after coming in to help a church, I've heard elders say, "I wanted to say something, but I thought, *Who am I?*" We elevate pastors to a place where we feel they know so much more than we do, so we don't hold them accountable to some fundamental issues.

We put them on a pedestal that gets taller and taller. When the pedestal starts to totter, the pastor doesn't have anywhere to go. If he realized that he had a sin problem and desired to address or confess it, his place on the pedestal sometimes facilitates pride and fear of man. So they die in silence and pain. And they fall. And because the pedestal is now so high, they hit the ground hard.



'I inherited a big ol' building with gigantic lights and screens. I've got all the cool stuff. But that's not what we're about.' ~Brady Boyd

and caring for strangers, and asked: "Why do we do it our way instead of this way?"

"Gary was a representative voice," says Packiam. "There's something about listening to someone who has de-converted as a result of the faith that we had embodied. What is the church if we're not responsible for the faith that we embody and also engender in others?"

The Peterson Plan

Like several New Life pastors, Packiam had never attended seminary or received much theological instruction beyond undergrad classes at Christian schools (Oral Roberts University, for example, was a longtime feeder school for New Life). As the dust settled after Haggard's resignation and the shooting, some of the pastors enrolled in graduate programs, chiefly the Colorado Springs extension of Fuller Seminary. There, many pastors learned for the first time about hermeneutics, biblical history, and social theory. New Life ideology, long determined by the freewheeling personality and politics of a senior pastor, is now centered on insights and objections drawn from a host of teachers and scholars beyond its walls: Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, John Stott, Stanley Hauerwas, N. T. Wright, and—perhaps most important for pastoral practices—Eugene Peterson, author of The Message.

On a Monday morning about a year after the scandal, Grothe—then a fresh-faced assistant pastor—stepped into Goodwill as he did every week on his day off. Scanning the bookshelves, Grothe discovered a 99-cent copy of Peterson's *The Contemplative Pastor*, which presents the pastoral life as intensely local, quiet, and ordinary, a life of house and hospital visits. Reading the book shook up Grothe. This was a pastor uninterested in production—both rapid accomplishment and staged events. Peterson seemed to be hosting a completely different conversation about what it means to follow Jesus and help others do the same in the local church.

Grothe got his hands on everything Peterson had written. Then he mustered the audacity to ask Peterson for help. "I felt like I had found a pastor who lived within

What other cultural attitudes pressure pastors?
You maybe have elders saying, "Listen, we're shrinking. We have problems. We have people leaving the church." Almost every church model I've seen focuses on coming to Christ, growing in Christ, and serving others as the central goals. But when we get behind closed doors, we count attendance. There is pressure to inflate or puff the numbers.

Peter Drucker, the management guru in the 1980s, said you cannot manage what you cannot measure. But if we start managing shepherding by the numbers, we're going to lose shepherding, and we're going to focus on the numbers. That's where the breakdown often starts.

But isn't a pastor supposed to lead, to be someone people look up to and follow, to make a difference for the church?
It is appropriate to look to the pastor as a leader. They are called, qualified, and ordained to be leaders. But the qualification for leadership is not full sanctification or perfection (1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1). Pastors walking in the light are going to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23 and Eph. 4:1–2, 25). Pastors who exhibit humility and live transparently are leading others by example. Leaders who misrepresent who they are to their congregation create distance and discourage connection. Jesus was perfect, pastors are not. Congregants need to hear this from their pastor.

How does a pastor develop humility to resist the idol worship and the pressure to perform?
We all must remember who we are in Christ and who we are not without him. We must genuinely redirect the glory and praise given us to the Lord (1 Cor. 10:31). Pastors are no different than you and I. They can only resist the temptation for self-glorification by staying in the Word, on their knees, and getting connected in a high-integrity accountability relationship with one or several spiritually mature individuals. It would bless pastors if church leaders who oversee pastors know who the pastor is connected with and could establish a way to verify ongoing accountability without compromising confidentiality.

There are different levels of accountability, of course. The kind I'm speaking of is personal. It's accountability for the leader's personal relationships and life. So if a pastor is having moral temptations, he needs to be able to go to someone in confidence. The pastor needs to have people to go to. And they must trust that the relationship is a confidential one.

In addition, I'd encourage pastors to be vulnerable from the pulpit. When I'm speaking and I tell a third-party story, people might say, "That's very interesting." But when I tell a story that involves me and my own sin, then people say, "Wow, here is Dale. He's a leader, and I respect him. But he's telling me that he's just like me."

If we're too busy denying and protecting and putting on a church face, then the congregation perceives that the pastor has it all together. We say to ourselves, *Wow, I am so far from that pastor. I am unworthy. Why isn't God working in me the way God's working in him?* The people start to elevate them. It's not all about the pastor, but that transparency releases the congregation. It helps the pastor be real. And releases the congregant to accept who they are and pursue hope in Christ. **CT**

The qualification for leadership is not perfection. The main qualification for leadership is transparency and humility.

PHOTO BY ABBY MORTENSON / LOVE ROOTS PHOTOGRAPHY

a congregation faithfully," he says. "I wondered, *Could this be done in my context?*" Could a slow, reflective, personal approach to pastoring translate at a megachurch?

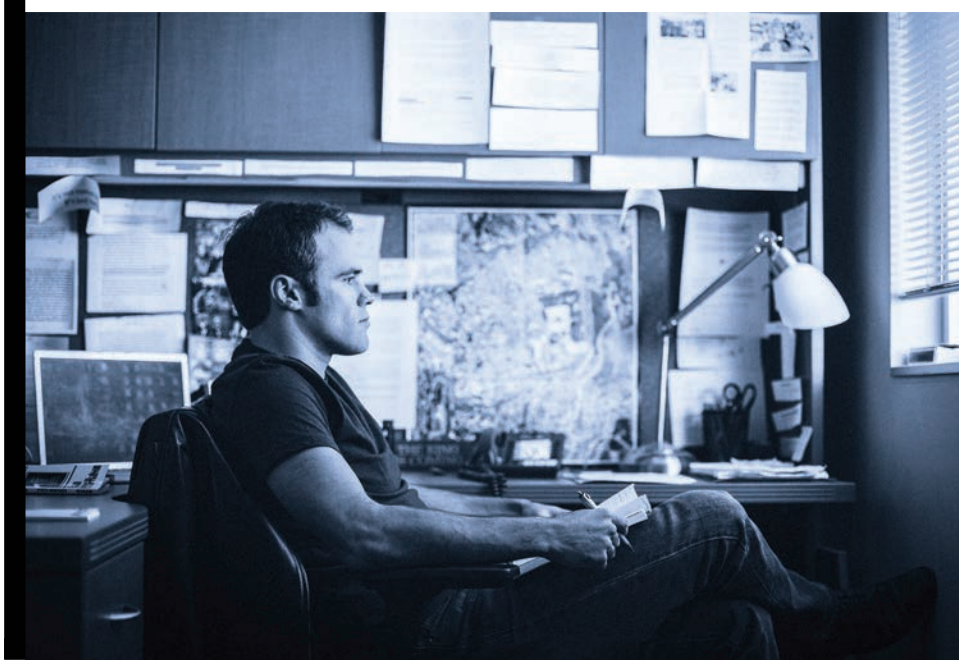
Grothe had already seen hints of the model. Both his parents had served at Victory Christian Center, a large church in Tulsa. As the church grew to 10,000, the Grothes did their best to treat it like a church of 200—lots of weddings, funerals, and weekly nursing-home drop-ins on the way home from church. Grothe wondered if New Life staff could adopt his parents' model and become more invested in a ministry of presence.

In the months after the shooting, Grothe wrote the most important letter of his young life. He explained his situation to Peterson and asked if he could receive in-person pastoral counsel. To Grothe's delight, Peterson wrote back. But the reply read, essentially: *Not so fast.*

"He told me that churches like New Life make pastoral ministry virtually impossible. It's not about making pronouncements. It's all about knowing people, and you can't possibly know 10,000 people." Peterson asked Grothe to write a series of essays—What is a pastor? What is the church?—and then, *if* the essays passed muster, they could talk about meeting.

Grothe first visited Peterson in spring 2009. Slowly, a few other pastors followed, each enjoying a couple days of asking questions, discussing books (of the Bible and others), and generally having their idea of *pastor* shattered and reconfigured.

"Peterson has accidentally become one of the chief rabbis around here," says Grothe, now 30 and head of New Life's college ministry. "Telling it slant, gently subverting evangelical cultural norms, dropping parables that have seeped into our imagination and exploded like the truth-bomb a parable was meant to be. The work he's done has been from a distance, but he can't be gotten rid of."



Contemplator: Daniel Grothe (below), who leads the 20-somethings ministry, helped inject Eugene Peterson's teachings into New Life's DNA.

No More Bottle Rockets

This is no bromide: Today New Life aims to be a church that thinks more highly of others than of itself. Staff has developed new ways of sending pastors to new ministries. In years past, it was tough to leave New Life. Leaving carried a sense of betraying the New Life way, because the New Life way was *the* way.

But in the past few years, Boyd has helped pastors plant new churches—in Austin, Texas, Denver, and Fort Collins, Colorado. All have thriving congregations led by former members of New Life's pastoral team, and Boyd plans to send more pastors to form new congregations near and far.

One former member, Ross Parsley, had long been Haggard's right-hand man and was interim pastor before Boyd. While in the teeth of scandal, Parsley helped turn New Life outward, launching a "Summer of Serving" that involved members in volunteer projects, from city parks to clothing drives to helping the elderly. Later, under Boyd, New Life audited its missions spending and discovered a scattershot approach: Globally, a high volume of missionaries were receiving support, but with little direction and no way to measure impact. Locally, the church was mostly invested in what Boyd calls "bottle rockets"—one-off events that produced a lot of light and noise, but few long-term results.

"There's been a massive shift in the way we attend to our city's most vulnerable," says Matthew Ayers, a 37-year-old former Air Force officer and New Life pastor. Since 2011, Ayers has run Dream Centers of Colorado Springs (DCCS). The church established the nonprofit because, says Ayers, churches "need to create or partner with task-oriented organizations that can focus on urgent and ongoing needs."

DCCS's first order of business was to open a health clinic for uninsured and underinsured women. Besides a director and two part-time staff, the workers—a dentist, receptionists, social workers, medical assistants, nurses, nutritionists, counselors, a massage therapist—are all volunteers,

'On Sunday nights, some of the things we do are two seconds old. Downtown and elsewhere, some of the things we do are nearly 2,000 years old.'
~ Brady Boyd

meeting with 15 to 30 women each day. They have gained a solid reputation—Planned Parenthood of Colorado Springs has referred women to the clearly Christian clinic. That bodes well for DCCS's two new projects: Joel's Home, a safe place for young men leaving foster care, and Mary's Home, an apartment complex for homeless single moms and their kids.

New Life's Local Ministries is led by Bobby Mikulas, a 24-year-old with a degree in philosophy. A few years ago, Mikulas was walking and praying in Knob Hill, one of the most troubled, blighted neighborhoods in Colorado Springs. New Life had hosted a block party there in the year after the scandal, complete with free food and shoe giveaways and events for kids. It was successful, but it was also a bottle rocket.

As Mikulas walked with some Knob Hill residents, one of them called him on it: "Look, if you're going to get involved down here, stay consistent with us. You can't drop in, give shoes away, and not come back. We'd rather you not come at all."

That feedback now drives most every Local Ministries project, such as a summer camp for abused and neglected kids in foster care, a program for gathering and redistributing used goods, and a hosting program for homeless families. In all cases, New Life is not pioneering anything. Instead, they're working with local agencies—an array of churches, state-run organizations, and interfaith nonprofits who already have expertise. Little of this is announced, much less ballyhooed.

"It's humble work for anyone who volunteers," says Mikulas. "We have a kids' mentoring program in Knob Hill. It's only 20 people. But it's every week. It's consistent. You show up every time. That reflects the character of God."

None of the programs are unique among local churches—nor are they out of character with New Life's long (for this Western town) history. But it's a crucial course correction.

"There were already people from the church hanging around the city and handing out clothes, buying meals for the homeless. But we're applying thoughtfulness and care," says Ayers, noting the church's new willingness to link up with expert organizations.

Big-Tent Megachurch

When I embraced faith at New Life, I started to do what Christians around me were doing: dancing in the aisles, speaking in tongues, pacing back and forth in prayer. New Life doesn't foreground these distinctives as much as it used to, but they're still present. There's a long prayer service every Sunday night and an intense noon prayer session each weekday. Both events are overseen by David Perkins, who also leads the church's youth program, Desperation Student Ministries, as well as a biannual youth conference that hosts 7,500 to 10,000 teenagers. Then there's the Youth Leader Prayer Summit, which draws 200 youth ministers to pray and talk, and the Desperation Leadership Academy, an internship program where college-age students spend at least 16 hours per week plus daily devotional time praying.

Perkins's approach is distinct from that of the other pastors I've mentioned. (His roots are the renewal prayer movement, expressed in places like the International House of Prayer in Kansas City, Missouri.) But it's not out of step with New Life's legacy—or future.

"I wanted to come here because New Life was known as the praying church," says Perkins, 36, who arrived in 2000. Under Haggard, Perkins built ministries that focus on prayer—teaching it, encouraging it, and doing lots of it. His work, more than that of any others I've spoken of, continues unabated on both sides of the twin tragedies.

Perkins wants to maintain New Life's prayerful past, including its association with charismatic and Pentecostal prayer movements. Desperation Leadership Academy is housed within the World Prayer Center (WPC), a 50,000-square-foot complex built in 1998 on New Life's campus for the sole purpose of prayer, especially intercessory prayer. The WPC took some strange and excessive turns over the years—politicizing spiritual warfare, for example, and encouraging intercessors to see God's hand in America's geopolitical efforts—but Perkins is determined to see it remain a house of prayer, "and not just become another conference center."

The various expressions of Christian discipleship at New Life—liturgy, reexamining theological commitments, refining and humbling the pastoral office, attending to the needs of Colorado Springs's most vulnerable, and charismatic prayer and worship—are possible in some ways only because New Life remains a megachurch. It remains a big tent, but now it's one without a unified brand or personality. Under the tent is room for multiple expressions of obedience to Christ in the 21st century.

These approaches aren't just different flavors of the faith. Each has its own internal makeup and core commitments, and sometimes one pastor's commitments are at odds with another pastor's. To be sure, tensions arise between the New Life leaders who have discovered liturgy and academic theology, and those who hew closer to the church's charismatic heritage. It is tricky to appropriate ancient Christian worship practices when those practices implicitly critique the popular, high-decibel approach of megachurch services. But the pastors talk it through—in staff meetings, over meals, even on Twitter for all to see.

Boyd wants these distinctives to flourish alongside one another. He tells me about a recent Sunday night prayer service where one of Perkins's musicians created a song on the spot and led the congregation in belting it out. "On Sunday nights, some of the things we do are two seconds old," says Boyd. "Downtown and elsewhere, some of the things we do are nearly 2,000 years old."

At worship one Sunday this summer, Communion stations were set up along the back of the New Life auditorium, waiting with their wafers and cups of purple. The band prepared their instruments, then the keyboardist offered a bed of music, a signal that it was time to begin. Worship leader Jon Egan stepped to the microphone, encouraging people to sing along, focus, and involve themselves in the service: "We're not here to be entertained by any man." CT

PATTON DODD is the editor in chief of On Faith and author most recently of *The Tebow Mystique* (Patheos Press).

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT GETS INVOLVED IN YOUR LIFE, WATCH YOUR BACK.

BY MARK GALLI

Back in the day, Mary of Nazareth set out "with haste," Luke tells us, rushing to a Judean town in the hills where her relative Elizabeth lived with her husband, Zechariah. She was anxious to tell Elizabeth, who was pregnant with the one to be named John, that she herself was also expecting. Mary's greeting was so over the top, apparently, that Elizabeth's "baby leaped in her womb." Luke continues: "And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit" (1:41).

Elizabeth is the first person in Luke's gospel to be filled with the Holy Spirit—although earlier the angel had said that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit (1:15). The Holy Spirit, in fact, shows up quite a bit in the Nativity. Zechariah is filled with the Spirit after his tongue is released. Simeon is said to have the Holy Spirit rest on him and guide him to the temple to see the infant Jesus. And, of course, there is the key moment of the drama: "Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:18, NRSV).

It's said prosaically, as if this sort of thing happens all the time. But no matter how it is announced, the careful reader of the Bible will know that something momentous is afoot. Because when the Holy Spirit gets involved, trouble lies ahead.

Peace and goodwill are the twin wishes of Christmas, echoing the angel's announcement about the birth of Jesus. And while our worlds—global, national, and even personal—may remain cauldrons of chaos, hope springs anew during Christmas.

Unfortunately, even if we enjoy this for a few weeks in December or a few hours on Christmas morning, we are soon plunged back into the chaos. It could be a dead-end job or a dead-end marriage. Perhaps just a dead end, such as a life-threatening disease. Maybe it's your kids, or your parents, who make life so confusing right now. Maybe it's finances. Maybe it's your church. (Come to think of it, what church doesn't know some chaos?)

The chaos of our lives could easily lead

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL MULLAN

From a state of perfect peace and harmony, the earth had been transformed in a few short days into a lush, rich, infinitely varied cacophony of color and sound and life.

to despair—unless we remember that not all chaos is bad and that some, in fact, is the work of the Holy Spirit.

In the Beginning, Chaos

When God created the heavens and the earth, the Bible says, "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2, ESV). Scholars debate the exact meaning of the opening line—is it a thesis for what follows? Or is it the first act of creation? I like a simple reading: God created in rudimentary form the sky and the earth. But the earth was formless. That is, it didn't have any land, lacking mountains and valleys, canyons and deserts. No shapes or form. No property with a view.

It was also "void" of plants, animals, and people. No roses or thorn trees. No eagles or mosquitoes. No giraffes or black widow spiders. No pesky neighbors with barking dogs or beautiful people with shimmering hair.

Not that one could have seen anything anyway, for the narrative assumes that there was darkness everywhere.

And water was ubiquitous. No ocean-front property—just ocean. No tides or waves, because there was no moon to pull the water to and fro. The water that covered the earth is pictured as a placid lake at dawn.

Except that there was no dawn, no rising sun, no crowing rooster, no sparrows chirping to welcome the new day. Just darkness, and silence in the darkness. Not a scary darkness or unnerving silence—for there was nothing yet to fear. No, this darkness and silence were utterly calm, like the peace of a deep, restful sleep. In the beginning, there was utter and complete order and tranquility.

The author of Genesis says that over this order and tranquility, the Spirit of God "brooded." Not a good sign, it turns out.

What follows is usually and rightly interpreted as the unfolding of the divine order of Creation. Six days, six distinct acts of creation. Everything in its place. There is indeed something steady and solid about the created order, for which we are grateful. But look a little closer, and we see something else going on.

What God first created was light. So now there was darkness *and* light. The creation became dynamic. Light and darkness opposed one another. So different were they, they received distinct names: *day* and *night*. And this was only day one.

Next God made sky, and so a new dynamic was introduced. Now there were "the waters" and "the heavens."

The next day land was formed, with another new dynamic: "seas" and "earth." So now there was night and day, sky and waters, earth and sea. God was up to something.

In the middle of the third day, God really got going. He created plants and trees and all manner of vegetation. Chrysanthemums bursting with color, stately redwoods stretching to the heavens, and prairie grass waving elegantly in the wind. And, we must assume, poison oak and thorn bushes and toxic mushrooms. And he gave this resplendent variety of plants and trees the ability to reproduce, to be fruitful and multiply by propagating their seed. As we know, this ability tends to wildness—the lush and verdant chaos of life.

The camera pans out, and we see the creation of the sun, a bright and warm energy that penetrates deeply into the skin of the planet. Then, by way of contrast, came the moon—a beautiful but distant orb that hung in the sky like a shiny earring. And then came an extravagant flourish: stars. Billions of them. This was variety gone to seed, variety without number, a chaos of the heavens.

When the Spirit Hovers

That was already quite a day's work. But unfazed, God turned his attention back to this planet and really set things on edge. Any vegetation is resplendent enough, but it's pretty much stuck in place, confined to spending its life in one spot. What if there were a life form that could travel the planet, that could crawl and run and jump and fly?

And what if these creatures didn't merely exist side by side but also interacted with one another? What if they absolutely depended on one another, so that, in a paradoxical dynamic, they had to both pursue and be pursued, devour and be devoured by their fellow creatures, in order for life to continue to explode?

So God created living creatures, swarms of them. Creatures in the ocean. Creatures on the land. Creatures in the skies. Trout and sharks, deer and wolves, robins and vultures, among others. And the living creatures would number at least millions upon millions. As he did with the plants, God gave

these creatures the ability to self-propagate. And just to make himself clear, God said, "Be fruitful and multiply." As if instinct would not have taken over soon enough.

The planet was now one fine mess. From a state of perfect peace and harmony, it had been transformed in a few short days into a lush, rich, infinitely varied cacophony of color and sound and life.

This is the sort of thing that happens when the Spirit of God hovers over things.

You'd think God had caused enough trouble for a workweek. Five days of activity that had left the planet in a state of holy confusion. But he had one more idea to put on the table before he took a break. What he did next suggests that one's best ideas are not necessarily those that come at the end of a hard week of work. But God went ahead anyway, unaffected by the consequences.

He created people. And he created them in his image and likeness: mischief-makers. Creatures who cannot leave well enough alone. Creatures like animals, restless and on the move. Creatures who pursue and are pursued. Creatures never satisfied with the status quo, born to create something new again and again. Creatures who plan and build and paint and weave and cook and carve and hunt and fish and play.

And if that were not enough, he created people in two varieties, male and female. Of the same flesh and blood, yet as different as night is from day, as the seas are from the sky, as the waters are from the land. Of the same being and substance, but as different as Mars is from Venus.

And here comes a most mysterious thing. To the man and the woman he gave the wild and unruly gift of sex. And without a warning label. Without instructions. Well, except this one: "Be fruitful and multiply." Have lots of unprotected sex. Not exactly family planning. No concerns about the woman's career or the man's freedom. No precise formula for 1.8 children. No questions about carbon footprints or affordability or spending quality time with each child. Just the command to create little communities of chaos and love called *families*.

The Spirit of God was finally through. The calm, orderly, and peaceful creation had been turned into a variety of form, a chaos of color and sound. And it was *eucatastrophe*—a good catastrophe—of life, exploding in all corners, spewing forth with the volcanic heat and energy of creativity and love and new life. If the Spirit had been brooding when he started, he must have been smiling by the end of day six. The scene was anything but peaceful. But it was wonderful. It was a holy chaos.

The New Beginning

When the Holy Spirit starts something new, things get a little crazy. It happens again at the Nativity. At one level, the Messiah came to save us from evil chaos—the chaos brought about by sin: injustice, guilt, suffering, and despair. But he's not going to save us from holy chaos, because that would thwart the work of the Spirit, who fills him.

So what we see in Jesus' ministry is one chaos-inducing moment after another, from the Virgin Birth ("How will this be . . . since I am a virgin?" Mary exclaims) to the boy Jesus confounding teachers in the temple, to the Spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness to be harassed by Satan, to onlookers being astounded at his miracles, to the overturning of the tables in the temple, to the startled and frightened witnesses of the Resurrection. Time and again, Jesus under the power of the Spirit creates holy chaos. Roofs come off houses, cripples cast away their crutches, pigs hurl themselves off cliffs, dead people sit up, the religious are confused, sinners are freed, and disciples are astonished when they find his grave empty.

Jesus under the power of the Spirit creates holy chaos: roofs come off houses, cripples cast away their crutches, dead people sit up.

And the Holy Spirit was just getting started. Luke tells us this was what Jesus "*began* to do and to teach" (Acts 1:1, emphasis mine). We see more holy chaos in Peter's crazy food dream, which leaves him confused about what to do with Gentiles. Then there's Paul, shocked into blindness at meeting the one he'd been persecuting. And, of course, there's the wild gift of tongues falling on the crowd in Jerusalem. Bystanders were so alarmed that they thought they had stumbled upon a drunken party.

When the Holy Spirit starts hovering, watch your back. Yes, the Spirit comes to assure us that our sins are forgiven (peace!) and that we are joined to Christ (love!) and that we have a blessed future with God our Father (hope!). But if the Spirit has started a new work in our lives—whether we call it a new creation or a new birth—we can be sure we'll know holy chaos.

Many people become religious because they want to get their act together. They are tired of living in confusion. They want commandments to follow, rituals to perform, spiritual disciplines to practice. They hope all this will bring them transcendent order. And it will.

But it will also bring something else, something alarming. The Bible describes it as trials, other times as suffering. Sometimes you'll be asked to take great risks. Some are called out of a life of suburban safety into an exotic land or job. Most are simply called to live into the radical freedom of grace wherever they are. Whatever it is, it isn't order. It's grounded on order, founded on the Rock of our salvation. But sometimes our lives will feel out of control. Like getting pregnant at the most inopportune time. Like life exploding uncontrolled in the wild. Like the joy of God falling on you so powerfully, you wonder if you are drunk.

That's holy chaos. Few things are more unexpected, shocking, even troublesome—ah, but also more glorious. As much as we wish each other peace and goodwill this Christmas season, if we have any sense of the way things really work, we'll wish each other a little holy chaos as well. **CT**

Mark Galli is editor of *Christianity Today*. Parts of this article come from his book *Chaos and Grace: Discovering the Liberating Work of the Holy Spirit* (Baker Books).

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"Nowadays, the middle east is like never before, considering the aftermath of what is so called the Arab Spring and the increasing turmoil that the region is going through, its a must to understand even deeper the purposes of God for the middle east and in particular what is the purpose and function of the Kingdom of God in the Holy Land? and how Christians from around the globe with their understanding, prayers and active involvement could advance the Kingdom in our region. I wholeheartedly invite you to come and attend with us Christ at the Checkpoint 3, Your Kingdom Come and I assure you after the conference, your life and perspectives will never be the same."

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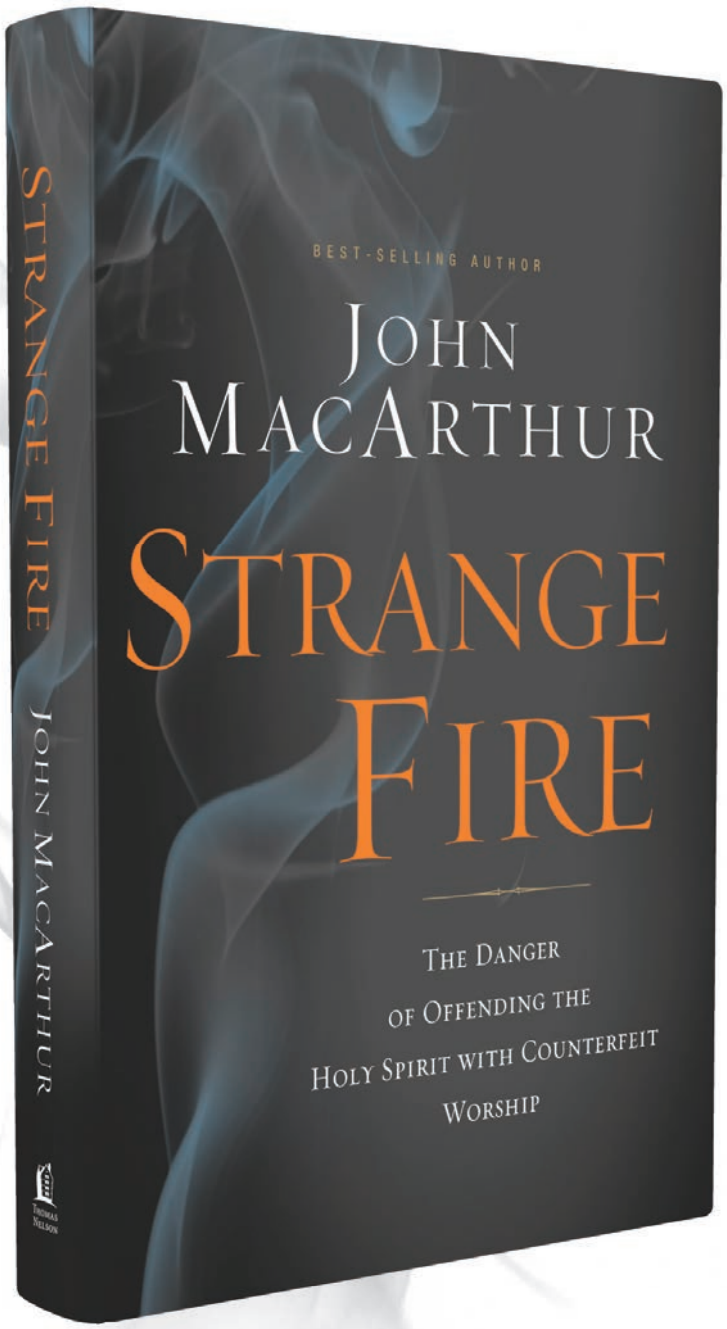
Are We Offending the Holy Spirit?



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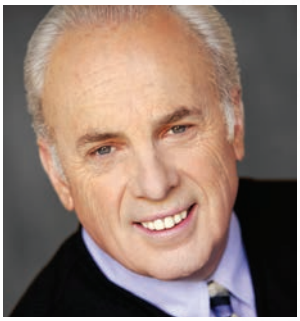

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THE CT INTERVIEW

HOW MICAH 6:8 INFORMS THE AWARD-WINNING WORK OF MICHAEL LUO, REPORTER AT *THE NEW YORK TIMES*.

INTERVIEW BY PAUL GLADER

Michael Luo strolls through midtown Manhattan to a sushi lunch, musing about his latest apartment renovations and the New York Knicks. But when conversation turns to his work these days—reporting for *The New York Times* on loopholes in current gun laws—Luo turns serious.

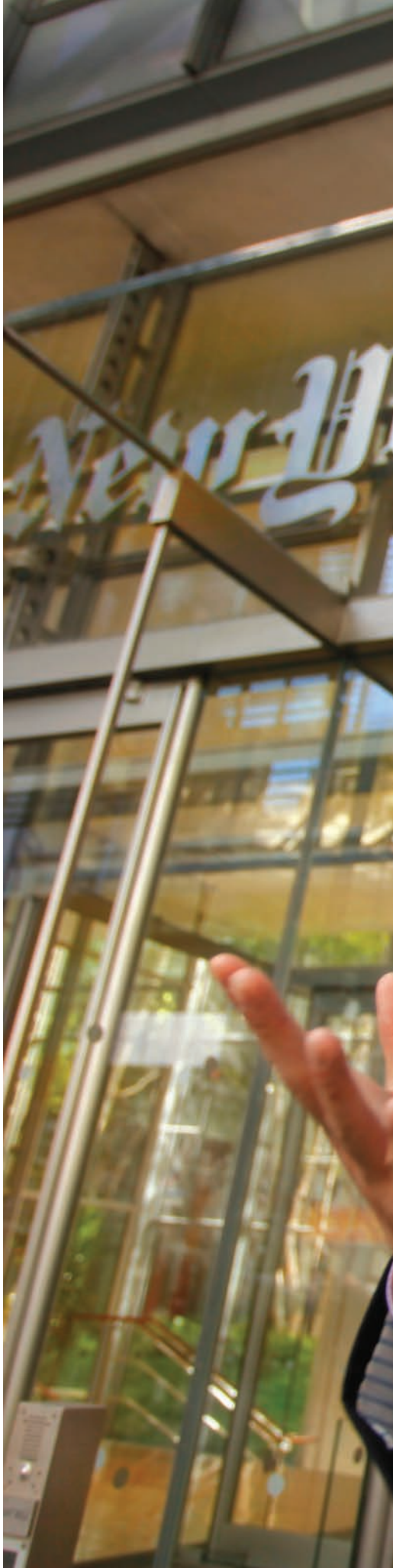

PHOTO BY BRAD GUICE

I'm definitely not alone. I know of a handful of Christians in the newsroom, including people who would really surprise outsiders.

"My wife would much prefer it if I covered something else," says Luo. "It has certainly led to some apprehension." While working on a story about mental illness and guns, he had to notify his editor where he was going and when he left—similar to his reporting protocols while briefly working in *The New York Times*'s Baghdad bureau.

Yet it's this kind of serious journalism that has earned Luo, 37, the George Polk Award for criminal justice reporting, the Livingston Award for Young Journalists while at the Associated Press, and a job at *The New York Times*, where he has worked since 2003. He has covered everything from the last two presidential campaigns to Hurricane Katrina to the war in Iraq. Recently, Luo has zeroed in on the gun industry and the wide availability of firearms—earning him a Pulitzer nomination and frequent spots on the paper's front page.

Luo became a Christian as an undergraduate at Harvard University, and today attends Redeemer Presbyterian with his wife and daughter. He recently spoke with Paul Glader, a journalism professor at The King's College and former staff writer at *The Wall Street Journal*, about his faith and his work.

What do fellow Christians most often misunderstand about journalism, particularly news reporting?

Their misunderstandings [aren't] so different from the misunderstandings that non-Christians have. Newspapers, including *The New York Times*, haven't done the best job in this period of profound skepticism of explaining what we do. It's just assumed that people know basic principles, like the fact that the editorial page and the news department are separate, or that opinion columnists are different from reporters. In a period of such political polarization, [explaining ourselves] is essential.

Many Christians consider *The New York Times* hostile toward evangelical faith. Is that a fair assessment?

Most evangelicals—and non-evangelicals—would be surprised by the lengths reporters and editors go to fairly report the news. We agonize almost daily over individual sentences, even phrases, in articles and headlines, web summary lines and captions, to make sure they are fair and unbiased. Do we always succeed? No, but the effort is almost always there.

On the other hand, sometimes you can't know what you don't know. A lot of reporters and editors at *The Times* don't know any evangelicals, have never set foot in a church, and have worldviews that are far removed from evangelicals'. . . . They might not know that evangelical is a theological orientation, not necessarily a political one; that there's a difference between fundamentalism and evangelicalism; that plenty of evangelicals do not believe the earth was created in six 24-hour days; that not all evangelicals believe in the Rapture. Ignorance can lead to inaccurate and misleading characterizations. And yes, it can lead to bias seeping through in the way Christians are depicted.

How to fix this? In many ways, this is a newsroom diversity issue. . . . Back in 2005, the paper convened an internal committee to examine ways we could improve our credibility among readers. We addressed our blind spot on religion in a final report . . . which suggested we look to hire talented journalists "who happen to have military experience, who know rural America firsthand, who are at home in different faiths."

As a reporter who publicly identifies as a Christian, are you alone at *The Times*?

The Times is like a lot of other cosmopolitan institutions: filled with highly educated people, many of whom went to elite colleges. Often, there is a dearth of Christians in these types of places, and *The Times* is no exception. I don't know about the faiths of all of my colleagues, but I'm definitely not

PHOTO BY BRAD GUICE

alone. I know of a handful of Christians in the newsroom, people whose faith looks like mine, including people who would really surprise outsiders.

Why did you pursue reporting and journalism?

I have always loved to read and write, so when I thought about potential careers in high school, being able to make a living writing was something I thought about. That's why I joined the school newspaper at Harvard. I also wound up starting a magazine there.

Having become a Christian in college, though, after growing up not religious, I tried to sort out my career plans with a kingdom perspective. For me, an influential verse has been, "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Journalism was a career in which I could pursue justice and mercy. Some people are drawn to journalism because of the words. I was more attracted to what the words could do.

How does your faith affect your work?

First, all reporters bring their backgrounds to their jobs, which helps them to cover certain stories better than others. . . . I did cover the religion beat for a year at *The Times*, but even when I haven't, I've always stumbled upon stories related to faith. When I was covering the war in Iraq, for example, I wrote about the plight of Iraqi Christians; when I covered the 2008 presidential campaign, I wrote about Hillary Clinton's faith.

Being a Christian also gives me a certain fluency. It has helped me build rapport with all manner of people, from the mother of a murder victim to people attending the Values Voter Summit.

Most important, though, my faith has animated why I do what I do. Believing I could make a difference has driven the stories and beats I've sought, whether a story about three poor black, mentally handicapped people imprisoned in Alabama for killing a baby who probably never existed [the story that eventually won the George Polk Award and Livingston Award for Young Journalists], or writing about the human impact of the economic recession, which I did for two years at *The Times*.

Your recent investigative stories have focused on problems and loopholes with existing gun regulations and policies. Why did you start writing about these issues?

My gun-related investigative stories this year actually trace back to 2011, when I moved over from the national desk to the investigations unit. I had helped cover the shooting of Gabrielle Giffords, among others, as a national correspondent in Tucson. I started asking public health researchers basic questions about what we know about the impact of high-capacity magazines, or background checks, or even whether communities with fewer guns were safer.

That was when I learned funding for research into these kinds of questions had slowed to a trickle in the mid-1990s, largely because of the clout of the National Rifle Association. That became a front-page article, which led to other gun-related pieces.

I was poking around in gun-related enterprise stories when I was asked to move over to investigations. My new bosses asked me if I had any ideas, and I mentioned to them that I had been exploring how a growing number of states were allowing people with a history of mental illness to petition to have their gun rights restored. That struck me as incredibly interesting and led to my first lengthy gun-related investigative piece. I went on to do several more, producing a series that was nominated by the paper for the Pulitzer Prize.

After the 2012 election, I had spent two months immersed in a project on poverty, when the shootings in Newtown, Connecticut, happened. My bosses asked me to go back to doing investigative stories related to guns. That led to another series of articles this year, called "Bearing Arms," on the impact of the wide availability of guns and the influence of the gun industry, including, most recently, a 5,000-word project on child gun accidents, in which we discovered that federal mortality statistics are significantly undercounting such deaths.

Pastor Rick Warren has been talking more about gun issues since his son Matthew committed suicide after obtaining a gun over the Internet. From your reporting and experience, how would you like to see Christians thinking and talking about guns?

This is obviously incredibly treacherous territory, particularly for a reporter who tries to simply let the work speak for itself. First, clearly, this isn't an issue that has gotten much traction in Christian circles to this point. It has not become a huge rallying point for either liberal or conservative Christians. I have read, however, some commentary by Christian bloggers after the interview Rick and Kay Warren gave to Piers Morgan, wondering if he might take up this issue and try to launch a Christian movement for gun control. I'm very interested in seeing what unfolds on that front.

In a good faith attempt to answer your question, it seems to me that this is one of those issues in which many people simply take the Bible and apply it in a way that fits their existing viewpoint. There are a variety of principles, of course, that might apply, from loving one's neighbor to rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's. Above all else, however, I would hope Christians bring to the gun control debate the virtues of civility and humility. How great would it be if Christians could help lead the way in ushering in levelheadedness and decorum on an issue that has become almost irretrievably polarizing?

Some readers will know the name John McCandlish Phillips, another NYT reporter and a Christian who passed away this April. What kind of example was he for you?

I met John at a meeting for a group for Christian journalists. . . . Here was this gaunt, elderly, extremely tall man—he looked like a modern-day Ichabod Crane—who introduced himself to me in this wheezy, high-pitched voice as "John Phillips, formerly of *The New York Times*." I had no idea who he was, but then I looked him up and discovered, of course, that he was a legend.

When I met John, I was still an AP reporter. He took an interest in me, as he did with a lot of promising young Christian journalists. He doled out advice and encouragement and was often just a listening ear. He was overjoyed when I moved over to *The Times*, and he'd regularly send me notes about stories I'd done.

At one point early in my career at *The Times*, I had sent a note to some top editors, which got passed around to more top editors, about some thoughts I had about our coverage of religion, in which I disclosed my personal faith background. A longtime editor sent an appreciative note back, in which he recalled John and how he used to lead prayer meetings in a room just off of the newsroom. John also, famously, kept a Bible prominently displayed at his desk.

A lot of what John used to talk about was not about evangelizing the newsroom, but simply being excellent at journalism, because that's what God would want. He was an example to me. **CT**

CHRIST IN

Why do we make Jesus so gray when he was anything but?

By Timothy L. Hall

"THOU HAST CONQUERED, O pale Galilean," wrote Algernon Charles Swinburne. "The world has grown grey with thy breath." Where, I wonder, did the Victorian poet get this picture of a Christ who draws the color out of life? Then it occurs to me: from Christians. He drew the image from observing people like me.

Those who follow Jesus have done a good deal to propagate an image of Christ as the cosmic killjoy, the divine naysayer, who never met a delight he could not dull or a dream he could not puncture. Puritanism, the 20th-century writer H. L. Mencken famously quipped, is "the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy." Puritans or not, Christians have done their part to vindicate his statement.

When Jesus stood up in the synagogue of Nazareth, the Gospel of Luke says, he was handed the scroll of the Book of Isaiah. Unrolling it, he found the place where Isaiah looked to the Messiah, whose coming would herald a joyful deliverance:

> The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (4:18–19)

Believers, though, sometimes behave as though Jesus made an altogether different announcement, one chiefly in praise of getting up early and working hard: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to see that everyone lives by the rules. He has sent me to make sure people settle down and lead respectable lives, to work more and play less, to grow up."

I stand as guilty of this as any Christian I know. I put faith in getting up for work, paying the bills on time, and having my daughter in bed at a decent hour on school nights. I think of myself sometimes as an ox in a furrow, eyes looking straight to the end of the row, feet trudging step by step toward the goal. I imagine this is what it means to follow Christ each day.

But what does this gray Christ have to do with the Jesus of the New Testament? That Jesus begins his ministry with a marriage celebration and eats regularly with "sinners." He ends a long day of teaching not with a tedious final exam but with a miraculous dinner with his disciples. He spoils more than one funeral dirge by summoning the departed back to life. Unlike his prophetic forerunner, John the Baptist, Jesus came "eating and drinking" so much that his critics called him a glutton and a drunkard (Matt. 11:19). There is nothing gray about his breath. When Jesus is present, the blind see, the lepers are cleansed, and the lame leap for joy. He is Christ in full color.

MEDITATION

Think also of the images and stories Jesus used to describe the kingdom of God. The kingdom is like finding buried treasure. It is like coming to work at 4 P.M. and getting paid for the whole day. It is like the father who throws a fabulous homecoming party for the ne'er-do-well son who stumbles home repentant. It is like the woman who misplaces a coin and, after finding it,

COLOR

throws a party to celebrate.

In Francis Thompson's poem *The Hound of Heaven*, the refugee from Christ fears what he will have to give up if he surrenders:

> For, though I knew His love Who followèd,
> Yet was I sore adread
> Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside.

There is some truth here, as we are indeed called to deny ourselves. Loss, though, does not have the last word. When Peter announces soberly that he and the other disciples have "left all we had" to follow Christ, Jesus insists that a proper accounting includes this: "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life" (Luke 18:28–30). Jesus promised his followers life to the full, not life that's nine-tenths empty (John 10:10).

Invaded by Joy

In his book *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale*, Frederick Buechner said the gospel is not just good news but knock-your-socks-off, couldn't-have-dreamed-it-up-in-a-thousand-years news. And so, Buechner says, "the high comedy of Christ" brings tears of joy and laughter, "tears at the hilarious unexpectedness of things rather than at their tragic expectedness."

Buechner also calls the gospel a fairy tale, where the evil dragon is slain and the princess finds her prince. But it is a fairy tale that is true, that finds its home here and now, in this broken and confused and harried world—that is to say, in my world. In fairy tales, J. R. R. Tolkien wrote, we catch "a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief." In Christ, the Joy beyond the walls of the world clambers into the world—into my world—through a stable in Bethlehem.

I'm trying to follow the real Jesus, the Jesus in color rather than the gray Christ. I still get my daughter to bed at a decent hour on school nights and pay the bills on time. But I know that Joy beyond the walls of the world has invaded my sometimes mundane life, and made its disappointments small in the bright light of God's presence and promises. I am living, after all, in the year of his favor.

"Joy," C. S. Lewis once said, "is the serious business of heaven." And joy is the serious business of all those who worship the risen Christ, the Lord of a thousand colors. **CT**

Timothy L. Hall is president of Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee.

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Teaching **Old Cells** New Tricks

Biotech advances could make destroying embryos for research a relic of the past.
By Bob Smietana

AS A YOUNG MEDICAL STUDENT three decades ago, Mark Magnuson learned the basic facts of human development. Among those supposed facts was this one: Adult cells can't change what they are. A heart cell is always a heart cell, a skin cell is always a skin cell.

That's not the case with embryos, whose cells eventually create the entire human body. As embryonic cells divide, they develop distinct identities, becoming heart cells and brain cells and blood cells and every other kind of cell.

It's a process called differentiation. And once it happens, there is no going back. "When I was a medical student, I was taught that a differentiated cell was a differentiated cell," said Magnuson, a professor of medicine and director of the Vanderbilt Center for Stem Cell Biology in Nashville. "That was the end of the line."

Then along came the induced pluripotent stem cell (iPS cell), and everything changed. Over the past eight years, a quiet revolution has taken place in stem cell biology as researchers have discovered that they can actually teach old cells new tricks.

They have learned how to reprogram adult cells so that they can do many things an embryonic cell can do. No human embryos are destroyed in the process. Along the way, embryonic stem cells—just a decade ago hailed as the future of medicine—have largely been bypassed. Some researchers still use them, but for now, the future belongs to adult stem cells and iPS cells, which are adult cells genetically reprogrammed to express specific genes.

ETHICS

Every year for the past 10 years, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has funded more adult stem cell research compared with embryonic research. For 2012, NIH grants totaled $146.5 million for embryonic stem cell research, but $504 million for adult stem cell research—a difference of $357.5 million. And the belief that adult stem cells are more promising than embryonic stem cells for therapies is now largely mainstream.

Seeking a Cure: Mark Magnuson at Vanderbilt University studies adult stem cells in mice to help devise a cure for diabetes in humans.

Turning Lead to Gold

iPS cells are the brainchild of Shinya Yamanaka, director of the Center for iPS Cell Research at Kyoto University, Japan, and a professor of anatomy at the University of California, San Francisco.

Yamanaka received the Nobel Prize in 2012 for his work undertaking the biological equivalent of turning lead to gold, transforming ordinary skin cells into stem cells.

PHOTO BY TAMARA REYNOLDS

His inspiration for creating iPS cells came while visiting a friend's fertility clinic.

Looking at an embryo under a microscope, the father of two had a revelation. "When I saw the embryo, I suddenly realized there was such a small difference between it and my daughters," Yamanaka told *The New York Times* in 2007. "I thought, *We can't keep destroying embryos for our research. There must be another way.*"

Yamanaka began trying to reprogram adult cells using a virus to introduce new genes into first mouse cells and then human cells. By 2007, he had successfully reprogrammed the cells to what's known as a pluripotent state—the ability to become other kinds of cells. He found that by making changes to four genes, those cells essentially went back in time and acted like embryonic cells.

That discovery democratized the field of stem cell research, said Maureen Condic, a stem cell researcher and associate professor of neurobiology and anatomy at the University of Utah's School of Medicine. She is a long-standing critic of embryonic stem cell research.

Before iPS cells came along, researchers either had to use embryonic stem cells collected by the NIH or create their own using embryos left over from fertility treatments. But donated embryos were rare and difficult to obtain. "You really had to have a close relationship with a fertility doctor to get access," she said.

Yamanaka changed that. "Using iPS cells is easier, cheaper, faster, and better," said Condic. "They have none of the ethical troubles of embryonic stem cells."

Her comment echoes the stance of the Christian Medical Association. Its CEO, David Stevens, said in 2010, "Compared to the speculative, controversial, and dangerous embryonic stem cell research that the [Obama] administration insists on funding illegally, iPS cell and adult stem cell research is a cheaper, faster, safer, more efficient and quicker path to the cures we need."

But miracle cures are not on the horizon—yet. Lost in the hype over the promise of adult stem cells is the reality that they are quite deadly. Stem cells excel at creating tumors.

"How many stem cells does it take to kill a mouse?" Condic said. "The answer is, only about two." In other words, implant two stem cells in a mouse, and those cells will crank out enough tumors to kill it.

Transferring either iPS cells or embryonic stem cells into a patient will not cure diseases, said Condic. Researchers want to get those stem cells to produce other kinds of cells, such as fully developed heart, skin, and brain cells.

That process has not been perfected. "It's very easy to make cells that look like heart cells," said Condic. "But transplant them into a mouse, and they die."

Long-Standing Critic: Maureen Condic, who conducts research on regeneration of adult neurons, believes that embryos are genetically unique human organisms.

Until recently, it took about a month to reprogram adult cells into iPS cells. And only a few of the adult cells would actually become iPS cells. The process was inefficient. But scientists in Israel recently discovered how to create iPS cells in about a week, with most of the cells being reprogrammed, according to *Nature* journal.

Reprogramming Cells

For researchers, the biggest practical benefit of the iPS cells is the so-called "disease in a dish" approach. Scientists take a skin cell, reprogram it into an iPS cell, and then use that cell to recreate human tissue in a petri dish. The idea is to study how a disease progresses in the body's cells.

That's not been possible before, said Magnuson. "There's no way that a doctor could say, 'Can I have a piece of your heart so I can study it in the laboratory?'" That's essentially what medical researchers can do with iPS cells. "These things are almost a fantasy. We are doing something beyond the next step beyond."

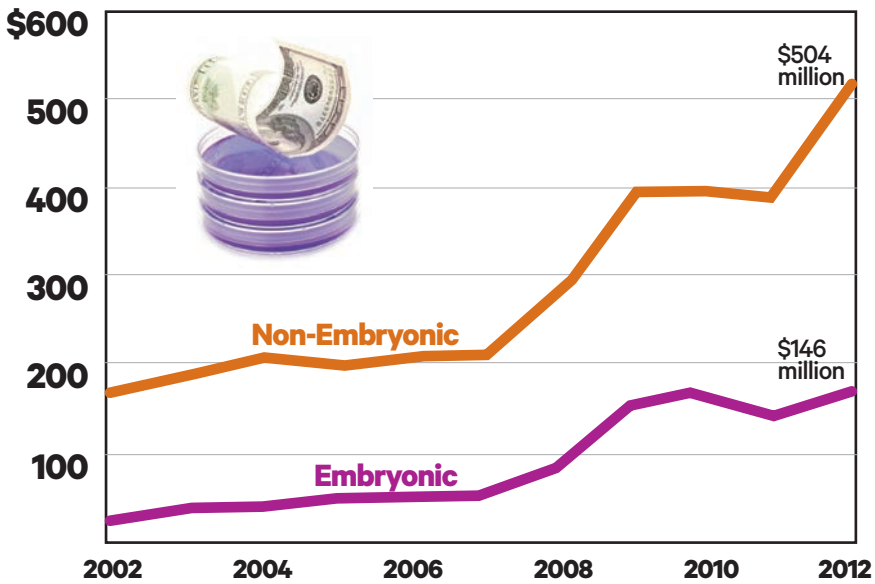
Scientists aspire to reprogram cells that are still inside a living organism. That's what scientists at the Spanish National Cancer Research Centre in Madrid did recently, according to *Nature*. Those scientists originally created iPS cells in the lab. This summer, they also created those cells inside mice. "This opens up new possibilities in regenerative medicine," researcher Manuel Serrano told Reuters.

Magnuson hopes to reprogram the cells in a human pancreas. What diabetes

Stem Cell Research Surging

Federal funding for stem cell research has grown 360 percent since 2002.

(Dollars in Millions)



STATISTICS FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

'Using iPS cells is easier, cheaper, faster, and better. They have none of the ethical troubles of embryonic stem cells.' **~ Maureen Condic**

patients need are more beta cells, which create insulin. In type 1 diabetes, an immune response kills off the beta cells, meaning the patient no longer produces insulin in her system. In type 2 diabetes, the body becomes resistant to insulin.

The advances made with iPS and adult stem cells have surprised researchers like David Hess, chairman of the department of neurology at Georgia Regents University in Augusta, Georgia. Hess said that many researchers were troubled by the idea of using embryonic stem cells. In 2001, President George W. Bush restricted federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. In 2009, President Obama lifted those restrictions.

Hess is currently working with researchers at the University of Georgia who are trying to use pig iPS cells to create adult pig neurons. He is also an investigator in clinical trials of adult stem cells found in bone marrow. Known as mesenchymal stem cells, Hess said, those cells are used by the body to help repair itself.

But sometimes the body's immune system makes it difficult for those mesenchymal cells to work properly, especially after a traumatic event like a stroke. Researchers hope to develop a technique that will calm the immune system and give the mesenchymal cells time to help repair the brain after a stroke.

Hess said that the early 2000s brought fierce public debate over the ethics of destroying human embryos to acquire stem cells. Researchers and advocates for the use of embryonic cells promised that scientists would discover a miracle cure for Alzheimer's or Parkinson's. "There was a lot of magical thinking going on," Hess said.

Hess does see valid reason to hope that diabetes or other diseases might be cured using therapies derived from stem cells. But right now, he said, the most important thing is to learn more about diseases.

Customized Medicine

For the most part, the switch from human embryonic stem cells to iPS cells has gone without controversy. Many of the original skeptics have been won over.

The California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM)—a state agency set up exclusively to fund embryonic stem cell research—is now investing millions in iPS projects, funding more than 100 such projects to date.

"Researchers we fund are using them to explore potential new therapies for deadly diseases and disorders," said spokesman Kevin McCormack. "But the main use at the moment seems to be for drug screening, seeing which medications that are already available might be useful against a wide variety of medical conditions."

CIRM still regards embryonic stem cell research as "the gold standard," he said. "It's

the cell type that we have the most knowledge about and experience using." But most of the new requests for funding come for projects involving iPS cells. Among recent CIRM grants was $6 million to the Human BioMolecular Research Institute in San Diego.

John Cashman, the institute's director, said that researchers there are using iPS cells to try to grow mature heart cells in the lab. It's part of an effort to fine-tune a drug used to treat a heart condition, using the "disease in a dish" approach. "It's one thing to make iPS cells—it's another thing to make fully mature cells," said Cashman. "We are not there yet."

Cashman said that those mature cells will be used to adjust a drug used to treat a specific heart condition. "It's called drug rescue," he said. "You take an existing drug and retain the helpful qualities while removing anything harmful."

Researchers believe iPS cells could one day aid individualized medicine. A doctor could take a skin cell, turn it into an iPS cell, and then grow a patient's own tissue in the lab. That tissue could then be used to test specific medicines to see which is right for that particular patient.

Growing Promise

At least two scientists feel vindicated by the recent advances in stem cell research. James L. Sherley, director of the Adult Stem Cell Technology Center in Boston, and Theresa Deisher, founder of AVM Biotechnology in Seattle, sued the Obama administration in 2009 to block the federal government from funding more embryonic stem cell research.

In August 2010, a federal judge in Washington, D.C., granted Sherley and Deisher an injunction that blocked federal funding. The injunction was overturned less than three weeks later, and the plaintiffs eventually lost. But their belief in the potential of adult stem cells has become conventional.

Both now work on projects designed to make adult stem cells and iPS cells easier to use. Deisher's company is creating a technique to make adult stem cell therapies more effective. She said that adult stem cells don't always stay in the organs they are supposed to be treating. Instead, they end up in the spleen or lymphatic system. Her team is trying to fix that.

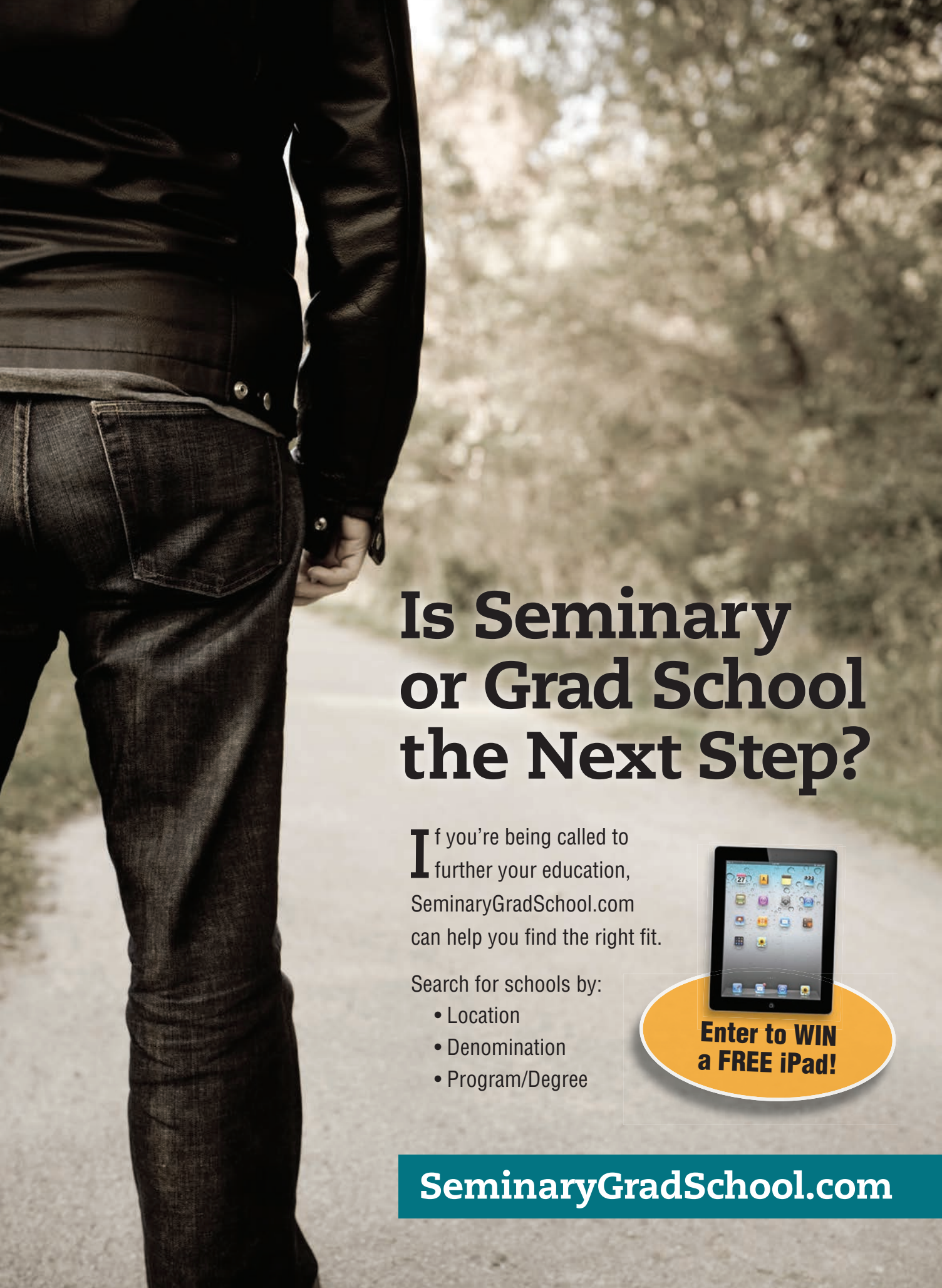
Deisher said that about 65 diseases now can be treated using adult stem cells. About a decade ago, there was a great deal of pressure on researchers to use embryonic stem cells; those who opposed doing so were ostracized. That's no longer the case, she said, believing some credit should go to the 2009 lawsuit.

Sherley, a Memphis native who grew up Southern Baptist, is a former MIT researcher who later joined the Boston Biomedical Research Institute. That firm closed this past year. He's now trying to incorporate his Adult Stem Cell Technology Center as a nonprofit.

Scientists are still unlocking the secrets of how adult cells work. "If [you] start with a human liver stem cell—and you put it through differentiation—you will produce mature adult stem cells," Sherley said. "That is what you need for medication or a transplant." The goal is clear, but researchers admit that it is beyond their reach for the moment.

Still, evangelicals' fears about federally funded embryonic stem cell research have proven largely unfounded, as stem cell researchers find that solid science and solid ethics can go hand in hand. **CT**

BOB SMIETANA is a journalist based in Nashville.



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REVIEWS

A WHIRLWIND TAKE ON CULTURE

David Wells misses the deeper problem with modern-day spirituality.

ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH NEGLEY

David F. Wells has written his book again. Indeed, reading a new book by Wells is something like my experience of reading new books by Anne Lamott. About 15 pages in, I find myself asking: *Isn't this the same book, again?*

Readers who pick up Wells's latest, *God in the Whirlwind: How the Holy-love of God Reorients Our World* (Crossway) ★★☆☆☆, will find themselves covering the same ground he's covered since *No Place for Truth* (1993).

Wells—a historical and systematic theologian at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary—has a fairly simple "big idea": a tale of loss and recovery. Culture has corrupted the church, and renewal means returning to a set of views we have lost. The argument is couched in potted histories that paint thinly with broad brushes, highlighting how the church has been corrupted by modernity and, especially, *postmodernity*. For Wells, the word is shorthand for everything-wrong-with-the-world.

The genre is pitched somewhere between jeremiad and rant, with predictable protests, retreaded clichés, and lots of complaints about the 1960s. It's like how I would expect a theological grandfather to harrumph about "kids these days." It will convince no one who doesn't already agree.

Because we've listened to the culture rather than Scripture, we've been suckered into a therapeutic rather than a moral view of God: God is reduced to a Therapist and Concierge. Even many conservative evangelicals effectively worship the god of Oprah. On this point, Wells's diagnosis is helpful.

FALSE DICHOTOMIES

But what's the antidote? As in his previous books, *God in the Whirlwind* outlines the "view" that needs to be recovered. This view has two countercultural features.

First, we need to recover a sense of the *objectivity* of God, the otherness and transcendence of God. "God stands before us," Wells emphasizes. "He summons us to come out of ourselves and to know him. And yet our culture is pushing us into exactly the opposite pattern. It is that we must go *into* ourselves to know God." Elsewhere, Wells writes, "When God—the external God—dies, then the self immediately moves in to fill the vacuum." God begins to look like us writ large.

Second, we need to learn to focus on the *character* of God, which Wells describes as "holy-love." By doing so, he is trying to hold together what we too often separate: Our therapeutic gods are loving but not holy; and our moralistic and legalistic gods are holy but not loving. But the biblical understanding of God, revealed above all in Jesus Christ, is holy-love. Wells ranges across the Bible to show how this holy-love runs counter to the erroneous cultural habits we've acquired.

But this also locates the book's limitations. Let me highlight two.

First, both the analysis and the prescription traffic in false dichotomies. "The shaping of our life is to come from Scripture and *not* from culture," Wells writes. But isn't Scripture itself the product of a culture (many cultures), and doesn't the gospel invite us into the alternative culture of the body of Christ? Our goal is not a biblical viewpoint bereft of culture, but a cultural formation that's biblically infused.

Perhaps the most puzzling (false) dichotomy is Wells's emphasis on the objective *versus* the subjective. This would confuse Augustine, for instance, who wrote: "Do not go outside yourself, but enter into yourself, for truth dwells in the interior self." Yet no one would confuse Augustine with Oprah.

Indeed, Augustine's *Confessions* recount the *interior* journey of a soul toward the majesty of God, culminating in the meditations of Book 10: "Through my soul I will ascend to him." By turning inward, Augustine's self-confidence is destabilized. "People are moved to wonder by mountain peaks, by vast waves of the sea, by broad waterfalls on river, by the all-embracing extent of the ocean, by the revolutions of the stars. But in themselves they are uninterested." Yet he finds his own interiority more awesome precisely because it is unfathomable: "I find my own self hard to grasp. . . . I never reach the end."

But in this internal vertigo, he also finds the One who is greater: "You are my true life." "Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you."

Instead of reverting to Wells's dichotomy of the objective *versus* the subjective, what if we engaged modernity with this kind of Augustinian strategy? What if we invited our neighbors (who are, admittedly, focused on the self) to honestly probe their depths? Might they learn to recognize—yes, even *feel*—the Creator who beckons from within?

The inward turn is not the problem. It's that people don't go far enough to experience the inadequacy of the self. They might be better served by exploring the writings of David Foster Wallace than by reading *God in the Whirlwind*.

The genre is pitched somewhere between jeremiad and rant, with predictable protests, retreaded clichés, and lots of complaints about the 1960s. It's like how I would expect a theological grandfather to harrumph about 'kids these days.'

BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUMMER

If the book's diagnosis of our cultural situation is off the mark, so too is its prescription. Wells rightly appreciates that we Christians have absorbed the cult of the self by osmosis. Nobody *convinced* us to view God as our concierge; to the contrary, this is more like what the philosopher Charles Taylor calls a "social imaginary" that we absorb unconsciously through the stories, images, and mythologies that suffuse our cultural milieu.

In other words, we are not just "thinking things" who have been "taught" to see God this way; we are desiring creatures who have been trained to "imagine" God this way. And our imagination is formed on a visceral, even unconscious level. It doesn't just change how we think; it shapes how we love.

Yet while Wells is attentive to the dynamics of our cultural *de*formation, he is oddly flatfooted when it comes to imagining *re*formation. He prescribes an intellectual antidote for an imaginative disorder.

Late in the book, he introduces a

metaphor that actually touches on this point. As Wells puts it, believers "live in the midst of their culture," but "they live by the beat of a different Drummer. They must hear the sounds of a different time, an eternal time, [and] listen for the music from a different place." The challenge is one of attunement: "How are we going to hear this music? How are we going to hear the Drummer whose beat gets lost in all of the noise of our modern world?" Indeed, this is the psalmist's question, too: "How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" (137:4, NASB).

But the metaphor is better than Wells's actual prescription. Instead of inviting us to absorb the rhythm of the Spirit, he prescribes a regimen of music theory, "a framework of ideas." But if we've been following the wrong drummers, isn't that because their beat got our toes tapping and captivated our imaginations?

The Spirit *re*forms our imaginations by a similar dynamic. By inviting us to inhabit the rhythms of embodied, intentional Christian worship, God not only informs our intellects but retrains our heart's desires. Worship, then, is not just how we express what we already believe. It is also *formative*—an incubator for a biblical imagination.

Amid the whirlwind of modern culture, what we need most is not a better message, but a fresh encounter with the holy-lover of our souls, who will sweep us off our feet. **CT**

JAMES K. A. SMITH is professor of philosophy at Calvin College and editor of *Comment* magazine.

What Birmingham Means Today

Birmingham Revolution: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Epic Challenge to the Church
Edward Gilbreath
(InterVarsity Press)

Four lessons from the improbable civil rights triumph. By Michael O. Emerson

Read the headlines these days, and it can seem like the country is splitting at the seams. The vitriol of our political and cultural debates is enough to make anyone wonder whether the "better angels of our nature" have gone into permanent hibernation.

Can the church work for justice in such a climate? Can it raise up leaders able to step back from the fray, take stock of the cultural terrain, and plead with God for direction? Can it communicate gospel truths to an increasingly secular people?

Reading Edward Gilbreath's *Birmingham Revolution: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Epic Challenge to the Church* (InterVarsity Press) ★★★★★ has given me a fresh perspective and renewed hope.

Gilbreath (a CT editor at large) hearkens back to the 1963 Birmingham civil rights campaign, to the world of Martin Luther King Jr., Fred Shuttlesworth, and other heroic Christian leaders. Today, we idolize these figures for leading a beleaguered people to the Promised Land. But as *Birmingham Revolution* makes clear, the civil rights movement was no slam dunk. Uncertainty, scarce resources, and outside hostility could have ground its progress to a halt.

The Birmingham campaign was pivotal. On the heels of defeat in Albany, Georgia, victory in Birmingham restored the movement's momentum. Failure could have crippled it, by drying up funding, discrediting the nonviolent method, and validating fears that the leaders were—take your pick—extremists, rabble-rousers, too Christian, not Christian enough, too Southern, or insufficiently urban.

How—amid the noise and ambiguity, the internal struggles and self-doubts, the bone-deep weariness and constant fear of death—did the Birmingham leaders maintain their focus? And how might their example instruct the church today? Gilbreath gives four answers.

First, and most important, they kept Christian faith front and center. Many people allow politics to shape their faith. But for King, it was always the reverse. Popular or unpopular, his positions were grounded in religious convictions.

Second, they practiced humility. Gilbreath calls this "embrac[ing] your inner Shuttlesworth." Shuttlesworth, the main civil rights leader in Birmingham, was a brave and bold Christian leader. Yet he recognized that victory in a thoroughly segregated Southern city required deference to King. Like a true Christian leader, he humbled himself for a greater good.

Third, the movement embraced youth. It would not have succeeded had the elders neglected to train junior partners and entrust them with leadership responsibilities. These younger activists recruited each other, filled the jails, and ultimately elicited violent reactions from the Birmingham police, which set the stage for negotiations.

And fourth, leaders lived out the principles of King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." This modern-day epistle charted a path through determined opposition toward justice and reconciliation. It is a treasure trove of timeless wisdom on distinguishing between just and unjust laws, understanding social and political change, grappling with root causes rather than effects, and preferring dialogue to monologue. It challenges us to work tirelessly for change, to engage the public square as extremists for righteousness, justice, and love.

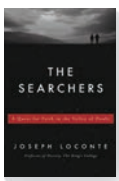
Even today, in the afterglow of triumphs in Birmingham and beyond, we continue to face massive racial problems. Immigration debates are far from settled. Family redefinition is a fierce battleground.

Those issues, and many others, demand that the church learn and apply the lessons outlined in *Birmingham Revolution*. Don't lose hope that God can do another mighty work through his bride. **CT**

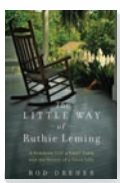
MICHAEL O. EMERSON is professor of sociology at Rice University.

MY TOP FIVE Eric Metaxas

Eric Metaxas may be best known for his biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, but he's also devoted much of his work to making Christian faith winsome and accessible—in his Socrates in the City lecture series and in books like *Everything You Wanted to Know about God (But Were Afraid to Ask)*. Here he lists **the 5 best books for nonbelievers seeking faith.**

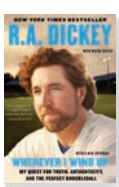


The Searchers A Quest for Faith in the Valley of Doubt *By Joseph Loconte*
Was there ever a more compelling writer than Loconte, who teaches history here in NYC? In *The Searchers*, he takes the familiar Road to Emmaus story and opens it up in fascinating ways. Along the way, he shows the infinite difference between phony religiosity and real faith in the Mysterious Stranger who appeared to the two pilgrims on that lonely road of grief.

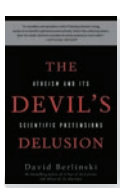


The Little Way of Ruthie Leming A Southern Girl, a Small Town, and the Secret of a Good Life *By Rod Dreher*
Journalist Dreher shares the poignant story of returning to rural Louisiana to be near his 40-year-old sister, dying of cancer. Powerfully affected by the faith and grace around her, he and his family decide to stay. As *New York Times* columnist David Brooks wrote, the Drehers "decided to accept the limitations of small-town life in exchange for the privilege of being part of a community."

Angry Conversations with God A Snarky but Authentic Spiritual Memoir *By Susan E. Isaacs*
Isaacs's true story of looking for God and a husband—not necessarily in that order—is both searingly honest and utterly hilarious. The kooky premise is that Isaacs takes God to couples counseling. Anyone who has ever wondered why faith can be so difficult, or why so many Christians seem positively kuh-razy, could hardly find a better companion for their own journeys.



Wherever I Wind Up My Quest for Truth, Authenticity, and the Perfect Knuckleball *By R. A. Dickey*
All-star pitcher Dickey tells of sexual abuse as a child; finding a refuge from his parents' divorce in sports; a jaw-dropping offer from Texas Rangers, promptly rescinded; and a hapless eternity in minor-league purgatory. Dickey finally hits bottom—figuratively and literally—with a near-drowning in the Missouri River. But stay for the ninth, when Dickey hauls back and throws everything into a single pitch: the ethereal and capricious knuckleball. What follows is sports history. Did I mention that faith is at the center of it all?



The Devil's Delusion Atheism and Its Scientific Pretensions *By David Berlinksi*
That Berlinski doesn't suffer fools gladly is the height of understatement. In *The Devil's Delusion*, he turns his terawatt gaze to the strutting popinjays of the New Atheist movement. William F. Buckley called this book "an incendiary and uproarious work of learned polemical writing, unique in its scientific sophistication and authority." Enough said.

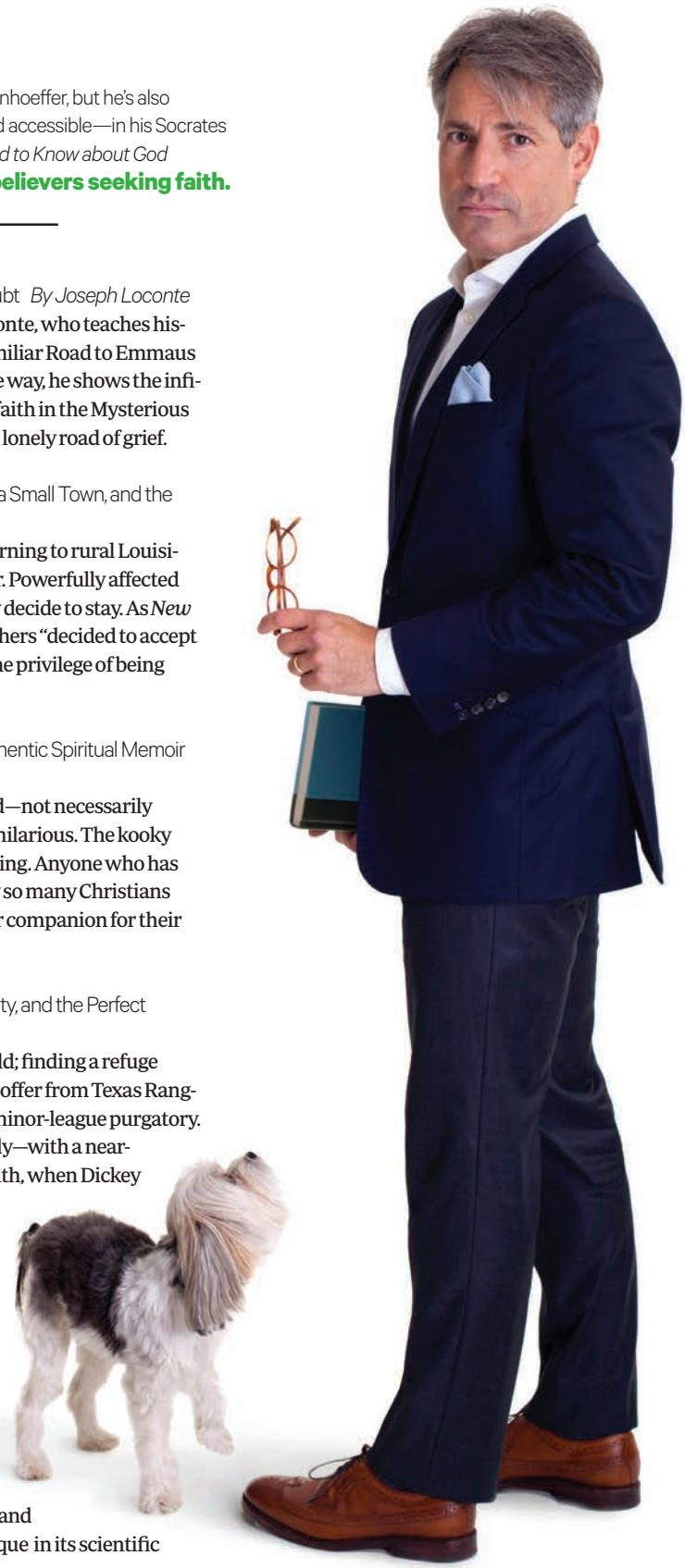
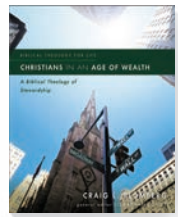


PHOTO BY DAN BIGELOW

INTERVIEW Craig Blomberg



Christians in an Age of Wealth: A Biblical Theology of Stewardship
Craig L. Blomberg
(Zondervan)

Give Until It Hurts

Yes, God wants you to have wealth—so you can share it. Interview by Rob Moll

The Bible gives a two-sided portrayal of wealth: It is good, but it can seduce us into sin. The solution, according to New Testament scholar Craig L. Blomberg, is to freely share it. In *Christians in an Age of Wealth: A Biblical Theology of Stewardship* (Zondervan), Blomberg, who teaches at Denver Seminary, argues that sacrificial giving is an essential part of good stewardship. He spoke with CT editor at large Rob Moll about our spending patterns and whether Christians are required to tithe.

If, as you argue, Christians are no longer bound by the Old Testament principle of tithing, what's so bad about low rates of giving?

Over the past 40 years, self-identified evangelicals have given between 2 and 3 percent of their incomes to churches and Christian organizations. Stewardship is a crucial part of the Christian life, and according to these figures, it is sadly lacking.

Now, on any topic, we have to filter the Old Testament through the grid of Jesus' and the apostles' teaching. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus tells the Jewish leaders that they neglect the weightier things of the law, though they did tithe. This is often cited to claim that Jesus still promoted tithing. Yes, he did—for Jews still under the Mosaic Law.

This is in no way a command addressed to his followers to tithe. But the teachings in Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation offer a consistent call for generosity and sacrifice. When you look at American Christian spending patterns, it is sometimes difficult to see much sacrifice.

Why should we be ruthless about getting rid of surplus wealth? Doesn't the notion of "redistribution" clash with much thinking on stewardship and economics?

I argue that it should be done voluntarily. The Old Testament Jubilee laws dictated a periodic redistribution. In the New Testament, however, giving is voluntary, although Christian leaders could make strong appeals for more generosity.

Still, those who take a conservative view of economics can be guilty of turning "redistribution" into a bogeyman. Everyone benefits from some form of redistribution. Northern Colorado, the area where I teach, experienced rain and flash flooding earlier this year. People have told me that FEMA is responding well. We appreciate that kind of redistribution.

I'm not calling on the rich to trade places with the poor. In 2 Corinthians 8:13 ("Our desire is . . . that there might be equality"), the word should be *equity*, meaning basic justice, not *equality*. Nevertheless, there is such a thing as too much as long as other people have too little.

Is materialism competing with God for the hearts of his people?

The Book of James famously says that faith without works is dead. What James adds to the key passage (2:18–26) comes immediately before it, in verses 14–17, which illustrate what a workless faith looks like. If a brother or sister needs food and clothing, and someone says "keep warm and well fed" but does nothing to help, James asks, "Can such faith save them?" The Greek terms he uses imply a negative answer.

The scary statistic is that 20 percent of self-identified evangelical churchgoers give nothing. It is reasonable to question their faith. If idolatry is what a person who claims belief in God actually gives allegiance to, does anything have greater idolatrous potential than material possessions?

How well are churches modeling sacrificial giving?

Churches need to apply to their own revenue streams the same principles that they encourage among members. If a church believes in the obligation to tithe, it needs to be contributing materially to the Lord's work in the world. A significant portion of the church's tithe should help the impoverished. Galatians 6:10 says to "do good to all people," especially to the household of God. Then, we should make money available for evangelism and issues of justice.

I know churches that claim 10 percent as a good benchmark for their giving.

This might mean spending less on building and maintaining facilities, or cutting back on paid staff. The average American church employs far more people than it did 20 years ago. Can we really afford the luxury of paying people to do what historically laity has done? Does it keep Christians immature because they aren't challenged to be involved?

I don't want to generalize inappropriately, as the health and wealth proponents do, but it has been true that the more we give as a family in the Blomberg household, the more God has given us to give away. **CT**

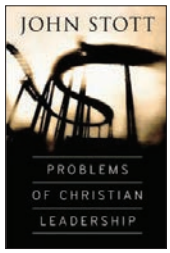
Go to *ChristianBibleStudies.com* for "Give Sacrificially," a Bible study based on this article.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CRAIG BLOMBERG

New & Noteworthy

It's always exciting to stumble upon new material from a beloved author whose works you thought you had exhausted. John Stott fans, rejoice! A first batch of unpublished material is on its way.

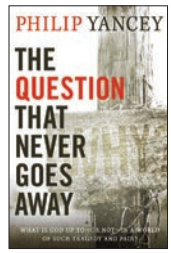
Compiled by Matt Reynolds



PROBLEMS OF CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

JOHN STOTT (INTERVARSITY PRESS)

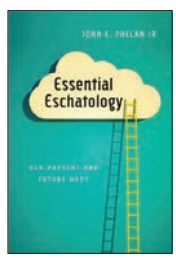
Stott's decades of public ministry took him around the globe to exhort evangelical audiences. *Problems of Christian Leadership* brings together four short speeches Stott gave to a conference of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Ecuador. These addresses—delivered in 1985 but never before published in English—offer practical advice to Christian leaders about persevering through discouragement, sustaining spiritual self-discipline, building strong relationships, and handling the burdens of leadership while still comparatively young.



THE QUESTION THAT NEVER GOES AWAY

PHILIP YANCEY (ZONDERVAN)

Yancey, a CT editor at large, has been reflecting on human suffering ever since his classic *Where Is God When It Hurts?* In *The Question That Never Goes Away*, published earlier this year as an eBook, he returns to the subject, writing in the shadow of 12 months that brought such horrific events as the Newtown shootings, the Boston Marathon bombings, and the explosion of a fertilizer plant in small-town Texas. Yancey moves seamlessly from newspaper headlines to private letters, from major tragedies to mundane hurts, to offer a spiritual framework for the "pain [that] plays as a kind of background static to many lives."



ESSENTIAL ESCHATOLOGY

Our Present and Future Hope

JOHN E. PHELAN JR. (IVP ACADEMIC)

Eschatology (the study of the "last things") often divides Protestant believers into two camps: They either dismiss it as arcane and irrelevant to the practical aspects of faith, or they pore over prophecies in a quest for chronological certainty. Here, Phelan, who teaches at Chicago's North Park Theological Seminary, hopes to restore the centrality of the "last things" to Christian faith and practice. He insists that "neither indifference nor obsession do justice to the importance of eschatology. . . . Far from being at the periphery of the faith, it is no exaggeration to say that eschatology is the *heart* of Christianity."

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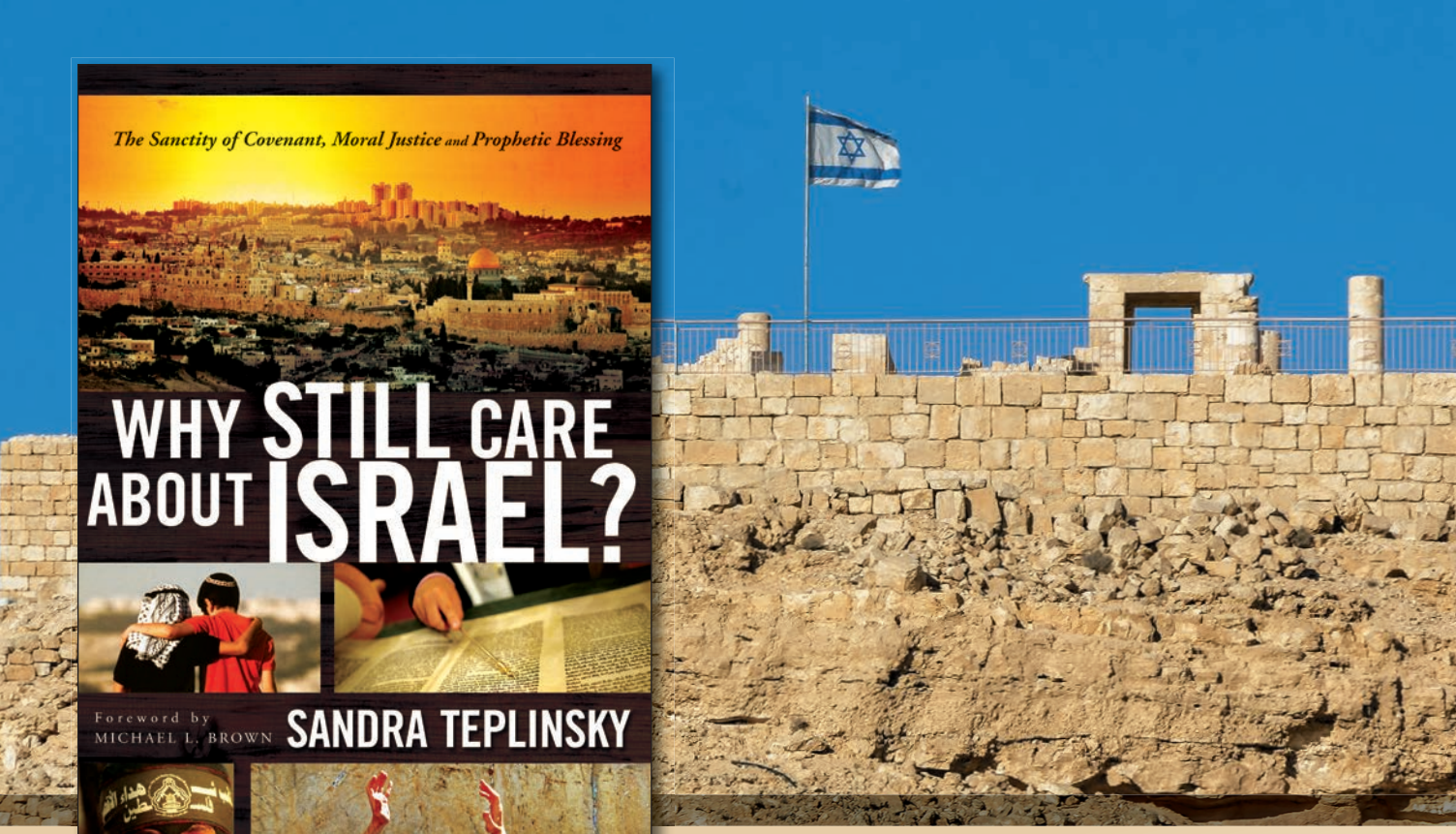

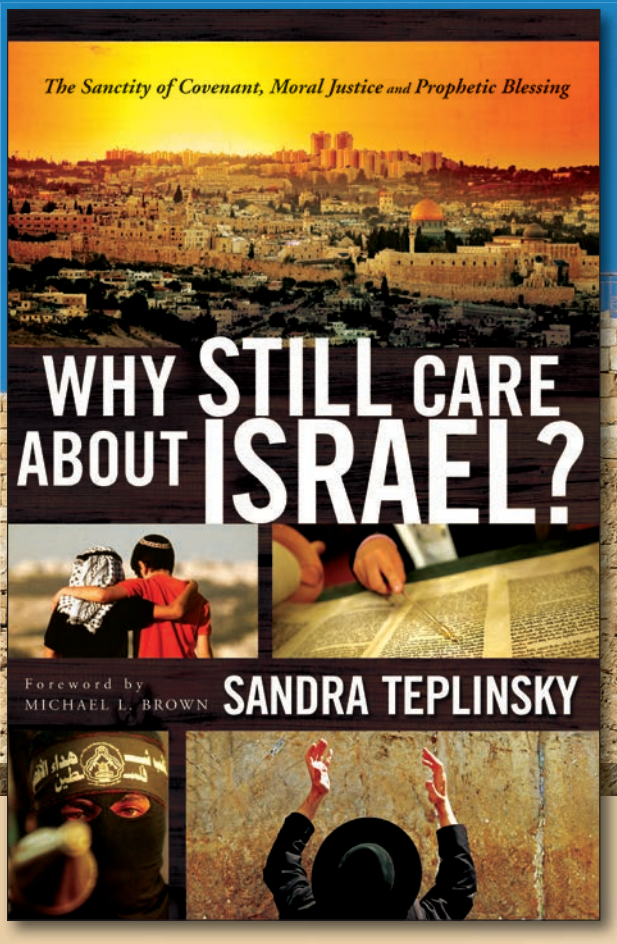

A Fresh Perspective on the Global Controversy Surrounding ISRAEL

Written by Sandra Teplinsky, an American-Israeli Messianic Jewish attorney, *Why Still Care About Israel?* balances exegetical acumen and scholarly research with prophetic passion and a commitment to social justice.

This lively book presents a strong biblical case for Israel while affirming God's purposes for Palestinian and other Middle East people groups. Topics include a response to Palestinian fulfillment theology, also known as Christian Palestinianism.

Why Still Care About Israel? The Sanctity of Covenant, Moral Justice and Prophetic Blessing
by Sandra Teplinsky
Foreword by Michael L. Brown, Ph.D.

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MESSIAH COLLEGE

College Pastor

Messiah College has an opening for the full time position of College Pastor beginning in July of 2014. The College Pastor provides leadership and vision for the Department of College Ministries and communicates the theological vision of the college to the Messiah College community and the broader community. The salary is commensurate with qualifications and experience. This position requires a Master's degree, Doctoral degree preferred. Three years of college campus experience and five years of ministry experience required. Other requirements include the ability to foster and nurture spiritual growth in individuals and in the community; demonstrated theological knowledge and understanding, excellent interpersonal skills; demonstrated managerial, organizational and budget skills; demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the stages of student development and the importance of holistic education; demonstrated commitment to continued learning/professional development. Messiah College is fully committed to a culturally diverse faculty, staff and student body. Successful candidates will evidence similar commitments. To apply, please visit: **http://jobs.messiah.edu/postings/2753**. Messiah College is located in south-central PA, 12 miles from the state capital of Harrisburg.

Messiah College, a Christian college of the liberal and applied arts and sciences, does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, ethnic/national origin, disability, race, gender or veteran status in its education programs, admissions or employment policies. Women and minorities are encouraged to apply.

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Winebrenner Theological Seminary, Findlay, Ohio

seeks a full-time assistant/associate professor in New Testament or theology. Candidates should have a PhD in New Testament or theology, classroom and online competencies, and the ability to support the school's evangelical mission, vision, core values, and basic beliefs. Details are posted at http://www.winebrenner.edu. Submit curriculum vitae to: Human Resource Office, hr@winebrenner.edu.

Good Shepherd Church

an independent, 54-year-old, evangelical witness on the west coast of Florida in Englewood is seeking a senior pastor. Candidates should be skilled in biblical exposition and comfortable with a congregation primarily of seniors with a traditional style of worship. Facilities for 250 worshippers are debt free. Desired availability early 2014. Send resume to Pulpit Committee, GSC; 2550 Englewood Road; Englewood, FL 34223.

North Shore Community Baptist Church

is an established, multi-generational, blended worship, evangelical church in the northern suburbs of Boston seeking to be a light in our community. We are searching for a senior pastor who will help us to be the Word-driven, pastor-led church we aspire to be. Strong candidates will have an MDiv or higher and will be a strong exegetical preacher and experienced shepherd. www.search.nscbc.org.

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Winkler Bergthaler Mennonite Church; 252 6th St.; Winkler, MB R6W 4B2. Please email resume to: search.bergie@gmail.com.

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH

The Board of Trustees of Providence Christian College has commissioned a Presidential Search Committee to identify the next president of the college; an individual who is deeply inspired by a biblical and Reformed world and life view, equipped to creatively implement the college's mission and vision, and will be significantly committed to the long-term success of Providence Christian College in such a way that brings glory to the Living God.

A complete prospectus for the position is available at ***presidentsearch.providencecc.edu***. Inquiries, nominations and applications may be directed via email to ***presidentsearch@providencecc.edu*** or mailed to: Providence Christian College, Attn: Chair, Presidential Search Committee, P.O. Box 93074, Pasadena, CA 91109-3074.

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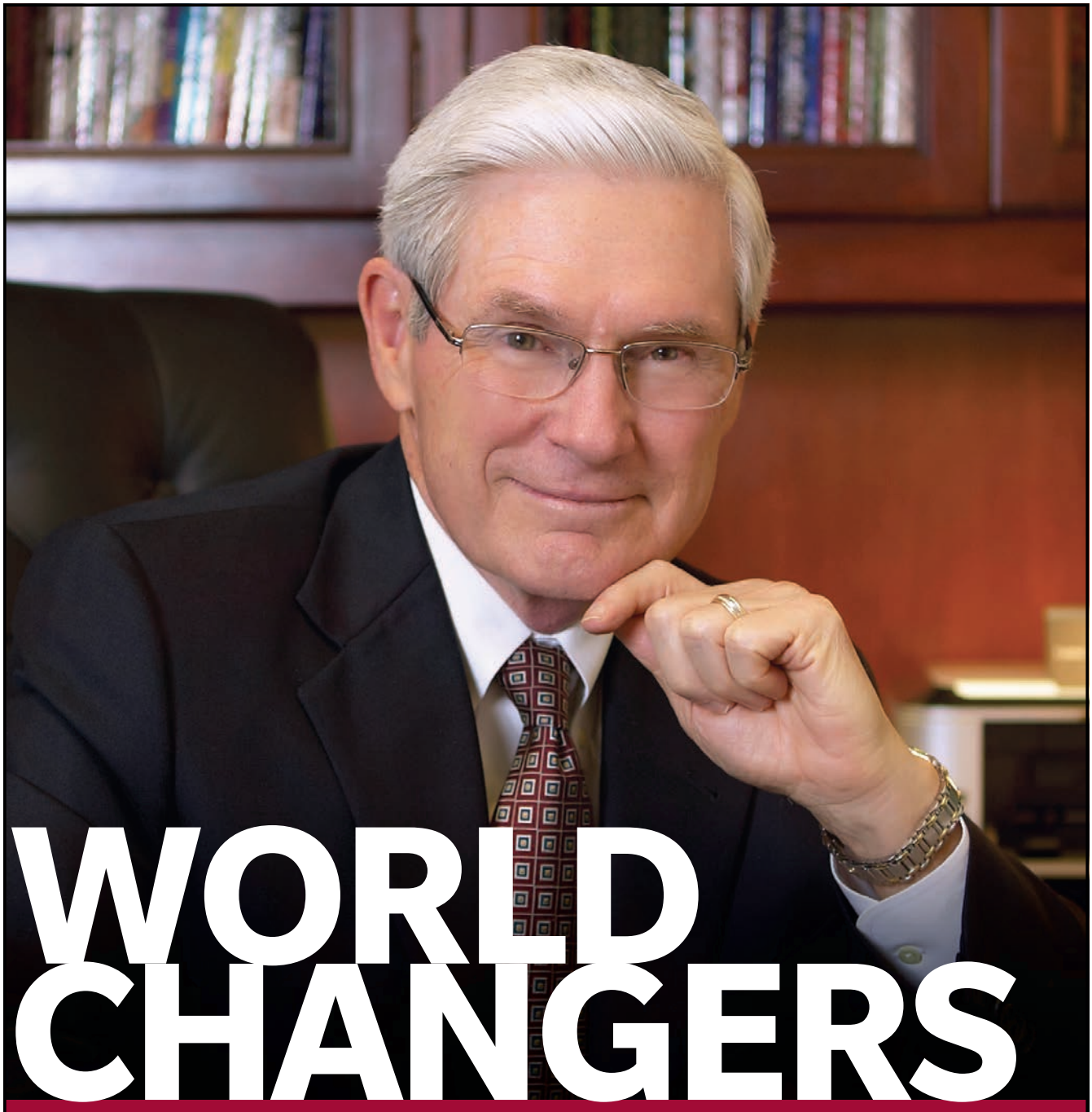

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[Proverbs 19:20]

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 80

scripture, tithing, attending meetings, keeping a health code, and doing genealogy so we could redeem the dead in the temple—these were a few of our offerings to the Mormon God.

In all the years of serving the church, I thought I knew Jesus. We believed he was born first as a spirit child to Heavenly Father and Mother and came to earth to receive a body. He atoned for our sins in the Garden. Like the Pharisee in Luke 18, I thought I knew him better than others through the exclusive instruction I received in the temple.

In 1999, I completed my doctorate in education and was hired at BYU. We moved to Zion.

And life was *good* there. On Sundays we sang:

> *Great is his glory and endless his priesthood.*
> *Ever and ever the keys he will hold.*
> *Faithful and true, he will enter his kingdom,*
> *Crowned in the midst of the prophets of old.*

Sound like Jesus? Nope, this hymn is about Joseph Smith. Here's the first verse:

> *Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!*
> *Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.*
> *Blessed to open the last dispensation,*
> *Kings will extol him and nations revere.*

Like Heavenly Father and Jesus before him—like Smith himself—Michael was working to become a god. This is one reason we attended the temple regularly.

Then, three weeks before the end of his two-year mission, our son Micah called to tell us he was being sent home early—a horrific disgrace in Mormon culture. He had been reading the New Testament. There he encountered a different Jesus than the one I was taught about in Mormonism—a God of grace, not of works, so that no one can boast. Micah was riveted.

To a roomful of missionaries at his parting testimony, Micah had professed faith in Jesus alone and not the Mormon Church. He told them he had found a deep and genuine faith—one that didn't include Mormonism. It did not go over well. Church leaders told us that Micah had the spirit of the Devil in him, sent him home, and subsequently, back in Utah, invited us to bring him before the high council. To prevent excommunication, we put Micah on a plane out of Utah. His expulsion put our family in turmoil.

When he boarded the plane to begin a band and ministry in Florida, Micah pleaded, "Mom and Dad, please read the New Testament." We commenced. As I read, I became increasingly consumed by reading about the God of grace. I barely ate or slept. It's all I wanted to do.

After Micah's expulsion, questions about Mormonism that I had harbored for years—about my patriarchal blessing, about the church's history of racism, about the scope of Christ's atonement—kicked into high gear. I heeded Micah's advice, and began reading the Bible in translations other than the LDS-authorized King James Version.

In John, I read, "These are the very scriptures that testify of me yet you refuse to come to me to have life." Salvation did not require the Mormon Church, only Jesus. I began to see that Mormonism taught a different gospel than what the Bible taught.

When I read what Jesus said in John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them," I knew I was being drawn—sucked, pulled, conveyed, transported. In physics, an event horizon is a boundary beyond which the gravitational pull is so powerful that there is no escape. This was my event horizon. As I read the Bible, my appetite for God grew exponentially. I felt myself drawn to him at an ever-increasing speed.

Then, on a chilly October evening in 2006, Michael and I settled in with Katie in our basement to watch the movie *Luther*. My heart pounded as I learned of the reformer's struggle against the Catholic Church. I seemed to be facing a similar struggle: Did I believe the Mormon system of obedience to laws and ordinances would secure my forgiveness? Or did I believe what the Bible taught, that Jesus alone was the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

Our son pleaded, 'Mom and Dad, please read the New Testament.' We commenced. I barely ate or slept because I was consumed by reading about the God of grace.

That night, speeding toward the point of no return, I lay face-down on the carpet, arms extended, and cried out to Jesus, "I am yours. Save me." Instantly I was sucked over.

From that point on, God became personal. I talked with him. He sometimes answered. I had stark dreams. Once I surrendered my will to his, he seemed to be gently leading me somewhere. He showed up at unexpected times and taught me through other people and through circumstances, through the Word and during prayer. It was bizarre at first—unnerving. I'd never experienced anything like this. Some days I pulled back to catch my breath. He got me a job I hadn't applied for so I could leave BYU. He sold our home the day after we resigned from the Mormon Church. This must be what Christians call a personal relationship with Jesus.

I discovered this Jesus could not be confined by the laws and ordinances of a religion. Jesus is *real*. This palpable relationship transformed me.

COMFORTING BLOOD

About a month after Katie came to Christ, she dreamed of a stone courtyard in the shape of a circle. She saw herself as a small girl, led by a man through the one entrance, which looked like a sheep gate. There were small pools of blood on the ground, but she wasn't afraid. This courtyard was where Jesus had been beaten and whipped until near-death. The blood was his.

Katie looked right at the man, who was wearing a robe and a shawl over his head, and immediately trusted him. He knelt in the dirt to gaze at her at eye level. Taking the shawl off his head, he touched it to the bloodstained ground and gently began to cover her with the blood, starting with her forehead. He smiled at her as if she were the *joy* set before him.

This is the Jesus my family and I now know. He loves me personally. I devour his Word and find him there. He knows me and teaches me. I do not need the laws and ordinances of the Mormon Church to be saved. Only my beloved Jesus. **CT**

Lynn Wilder is the author of *Unveiling Grace: The Story of How We Found Our Way Out of the Mormon Church* (Zondervan).

TESTIMONY

Mormon No More

How I escaped the church I had loved for 30 years.

By Lynn Wilder

On a Friday in January 2006, at home in Alpine, Utah, I received a phone call from my third son, Micah, that changed my life.

My family and I loved living in "Zion," the result of a decision that my husband, Michael, and I had made as young adults to join the Mormon Church. For eight years, I had been a professor at Brigham Young University (BYU), the flagship school of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). Michael was a high priest, bishopric member and high counselor, temple worker, seminary teacher, and Sunday school president. Our first son, Josh, and second son, Matt, had served the church's obligatory two-year evangelizing missions. Our daughter, Katie, pleased church leaders as well with her faith in Jesus Christ and Joseph Smith.

I looked down on Christians who followed just the Bible. They had part of the gospel, but I had the fullness of it. I kept the laws and ordinances of Mormonism. When I took the sacrament of leavened bread and water each week at our Sunday meeting house, I believed I was letting the sin janitor sweep away all iniquity. I believed the Mormon Church secured my eternal life.

LIFE IN ZION

My husband and I had joined the LDS Church at age 25 after Mormon missionaries knocked on our front door. We had attended Protestant churches growing up, but we rarely read the Bible. We assumed that joining was a Christian option (85 percent of LDS converts come from biblical Christianity). We were unable to counter the missionaries.

Immediately and always active in the church, we raised our four children in the faith in Indiana. Serving untold hours in church callings, reading Mormon CONTINUED ON PRECEDING PAGE

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