

# CT

CHRISTIANITY TODAY

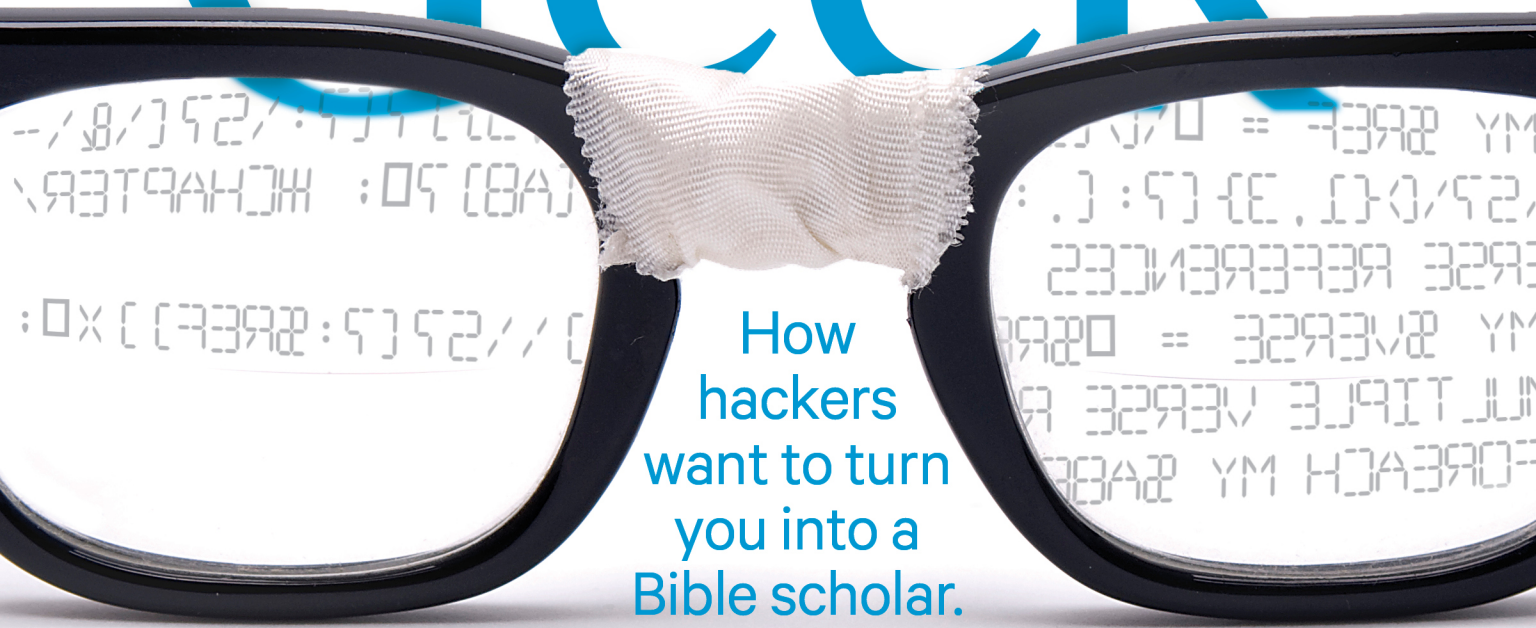
MARCH 2014

**BONG HITS  
FOR JESUS?** *p.21*

**FOOTBALL WAS  
MY GOD** *p.80*

**JEN HATMAKER  
KEEPS IT WEIRD** *p.40*

## The Bible *in the* Original Geek



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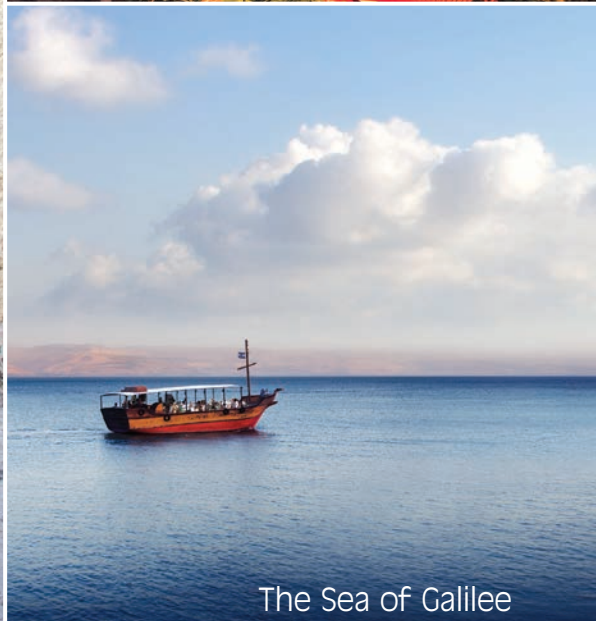




The Garden Tomb



The Holy City of Jerusalem



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**“Come see the place  
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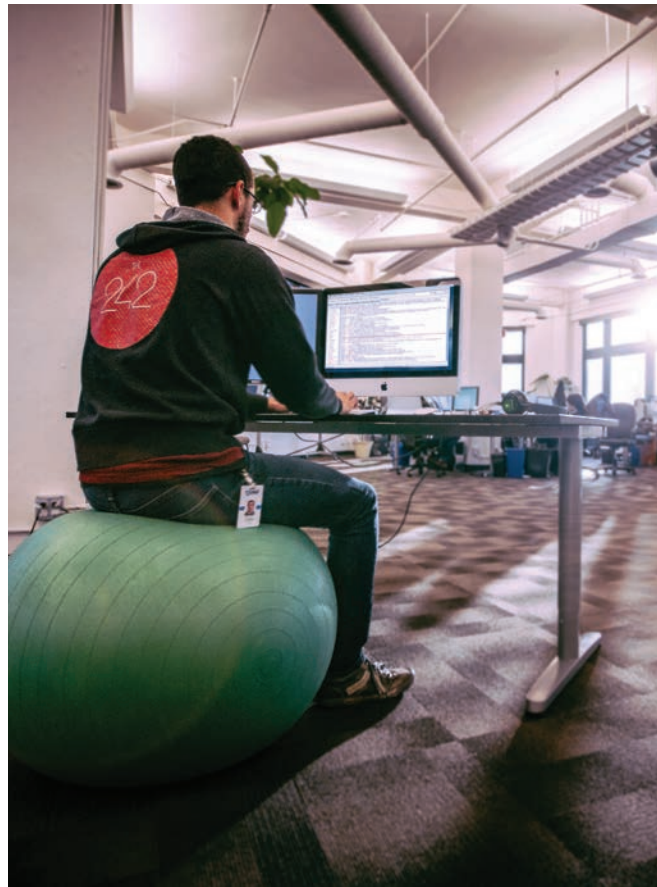
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### ONLINE

Check out the latest news, information, blog posts, and more at [ChristianityToday.com](http://ChristianityToday.com)

Kate's not ashamed of her love of reality tv, especially cooking shows. She recently talked HGTV with Jen Hatmaker (p. 40).



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David continues to pare down the large library he accumulated over 28 years at ct.



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ct reader Renny Schoonmaker was inspired by our November cover to create his own C. S. Lewis pipe. Says Renny, "My genuine thanks for reawakening that old craft from my past."



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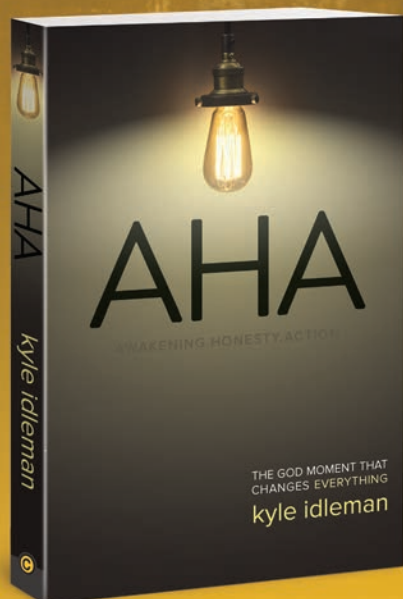
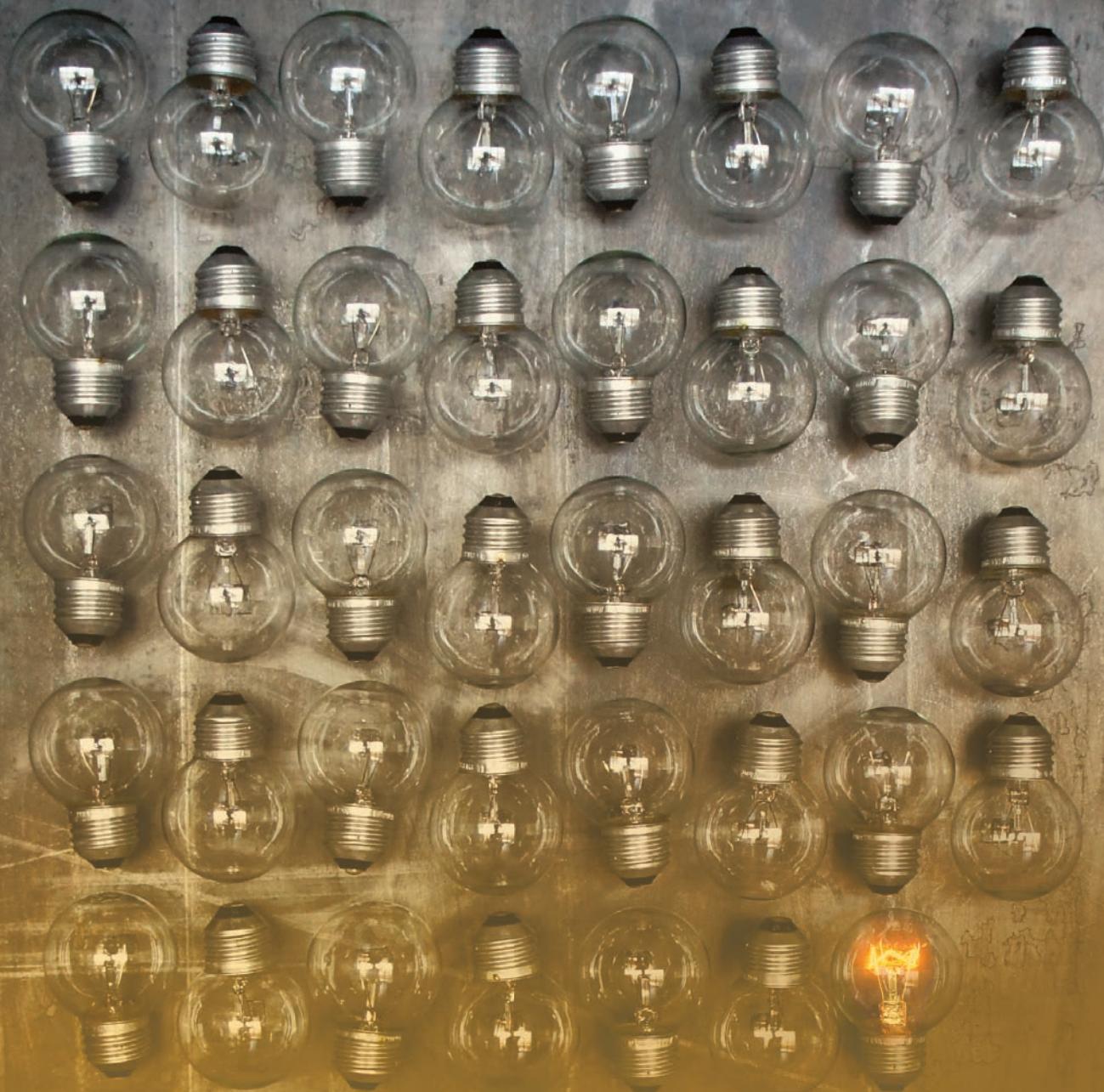
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# EDITOR'S NOTE

**I**N 1983, A LOCAL MISSIONARY named Dan discovered our ragtag band of Christian kids in a largely secular New England town, and offered to lead a Bible study on Thursday mornings. A dozen of us would show up bleary-eyed at 6 A.M. Dan would hand out a typescript passage—the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew, the last discourse from John—and we’d read, study, talk, and pray.

It was then that I discovered how rewarding the study of Scripture could be. Even the simplest text turned out to have layer after layer of meaning. Dan carried a small Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, and often he’d resolve our confusion or illuminate our conversation by explaining “the original Greek.”

I wanted to know Scripture as deeply as Dan did. And that, it seemed, meant learning Greek. If I did, I half believed, I wouldn’t just understand the biblical text better, I would also understand the Bible better. I would be not just a better student of the Christian text, but also a better Christian. So my freshman year of college I dove into classical Greek, showing up bleary-eyed on Tuesday and Thursday mornings with a few other classics majors for our induction into the mysteries of cases, particles, and moods. I loved it.

ADAM CRUFT But my classics education brought my Bible study ambitions down with a bump. Reading my own Nestle-Aland edition, I discovered just how bad much of the biblical Greek was. Luke was elegant, Hebrews was poetic, but Mark and John wrote like Galilean fishermen—choppy prose quite unlike Homer and Euripides.

More disturbing, while my facility with Greek was growing fast, my spiritual life seemed to be changing far too slowly. Perhaps most alarming was realizing that much of the New Testament was far too easy to translate. When Jesus says, “Take up your cross and follow me,” the original Greek is—well, “Take up your cross and follow me.” It was not understanding the meaning, but obeying it, that was hard.

My adolescent self had latched on to something Dan carried—his well-worn Greek New Testament—as a substitute for what I was really looking for. Dan was a follower who invited us kids into a deep and real conversation about following. He was not just a student. He was a disciple.

I thought of those Thursday mornings when I read Ted Olsen’s marvelous cover story this issue (p. 28). I was fascinated to learn how today’s Bible geeks are exploring and recombining the text’s layers of meaning. But information is not formation. And the real heart of the Bible is in its plainest texts, which are both the hardest and the best. To truly understand them, you don’t need just a database. You also need a Dan.

**CT**



## INFORMATION AND FORMATION

We need more than data to understand the Bible.

**ANDY CROUCH** Executive Editor



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# REPLY ALL



## NEW LIFE AFTER THE FALL

Patton Dodd's article on New Life Church offers caution and hope. Having served in two megachurches, I am reminded that while entrepreneurial talent is a volatile ingredient in the personal chemistry of a lead pastor, it is usually a necessary one. Yes, Ted Haggard eventually made destructive choices. But many of his choices were good, and New Life's current leadership is now pressing on to prayerfully pursue God's next chapter.

If the megachurch movement is to be an ongoing blessing, we cannot let the occasional train wreck force us off track. Entrepreneurial talent, like any other endowment from God, must be completely surrendered to the lordship of Christ.

**Jim Futrell**

Pastor of Pastoral Care, Fairhaven Church  
Dayton, Ohio

### LET MY PEOPLE GO

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *cr's desire is to nuance every story as accurately as possible within our space constraints. To this end, we include excerpts from two letters about our report*

*on South Sudan. An updated version of the story is at ChristianityToday.com.*

Barnabas Fund would like to clarify some points from the article:

1. There are no payments to "third parties." Almost all our support has been used to charter planes and hire buses and trucks. We are not paying slave-traders.

2. There is no danger of culture shock on arrival. They are leaving an alien culture (Arab and Islamic), and returning to their homeland (African and Christian).

3. They will not need "very long-term" support after making their journey. Both the South Sudanese government and the Africa Inland Church have programs to provide short-term care for the returnees, who then join their relatives and are re-absorbed into their old communities.

These people—who are too poor to buy plane tickets or even bus tickets—just want to go home to South Sudan. Barnabas Fund, at the request of the Africa Inland Church, is making this possible.

**Patrick Sookhdeo**

International Director,  
Barnabas Fund/Barnabas Aid  
Pewsey, Wiltshire, United Kingdom

The article refers to 3,400 Sudanese being relocated to South Sudan. Actually, those who have been repatriated in this exercise have been South Sudanese. They are citizens of the new country of South Sudan and have been formally declared aliens by the Khartoum government and ordered to leave. However, they were not given the necessary paperwork to leave, and they did not have the financial wherewithal to leave under their own steam.

The desire of the Africa Inland Church—Sudan in accomplishing this great exodus was not only to bring relief and help to thousands of needy brothers and sisters; it was primarily to bring glory to God, and that has been achieved in wonderful ways.

**John D. Brand**

Chairman, Friends of Sudan  
Livingston, West Lothian, United Kingdom

### RELAXING OVER DRINKS

I am sure there are benefits to admiring the beauty of craft beer. They just pale (no

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pun intended) in comparison to the negative effects. There is probably no single thing that causes more damage to people's lives than alcohol: One out of three traffic deaths in the United States involves drinking and driving, and 10 percent of the population is genetically predisposed to alcoholism. Other data show huge loss of productivity and acts of violence globally (usually against women).

People argue they can handle a drink of wine or beer, that they don't have a problem. That may very well be true. The problem comes when they model that for their children, students, and other young people who cannot. Like many CT readers, I know of committed, mature believers who drink and who have seen children's lives damaged or ruined.

I pray we can see past the cultural coolness of this amazingly destructive drug, especially among our young people.

**Greg H. Parsons**

Global Director, U.S. Center for World Mission  
Pasadena, California

Asbury Theological Seminary's current ethos statement continues to embrace an alcohol-free campus. The 2010 change to our ethos statement actually broadens our community understanding of holiness to embrace both personal and social dimensions. Furthermore, our community ethos is now more firmly rooted in the 18th-century Wesleyan covenant, which takes the seminary out of a more collegiate *in loco parentis* role to a more appropriate graduate model of mutual accountability for the whole community.

While we reframed our position on alcohol, it is unfair to characterize our position as "relaxing over drinks." On the contrary, we have deepened and broadened our historic commitment to holiness by moving it beyond a handful of issues, to a mature life lived in purity before God and the world, and in covenant with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Timothy C. Tennent**

President, Asbury Theological Seminary

## OPEN QUESTION: WHY CONFESS SINS IN WORSHIP?

I grew up in a Baptist church, lacking any type of public confession. In my 30s, I joined a Presbyterian church. Having experienced both traditions, I discovered how public confession exposes my heart. Public confession reveals the sins in my life that I have become "comfortable" with, sins I tell

myself "weren't really sins." Public confession also unveils any delusion that I am sufficient. Only God is sufficient. The ritual of public confession orients my life, my heart, my soul to God's standards, and displays my dependence on him.

**Chany Ockert**

CT online comment

## A WHIRLWIND TAKE ON CULTURE

Upon reading James K. A. Smith's review of David F. Wells's book *God in the Whirlwind*, I found myself dismayed. Smith makes several missteps, including perhaps not a false dichotomy, but a weird one, when he suggests Wells doesn't see that the Bible is a product of culture itself. Surely Wells's point is that we have lost—thanks to giving in to, borrowing from, and being influenced by our secular culture—any notion of wisdom that is trans-cultural, that is to say, objective.

Another misstep is the straw man that Smith sets up: he criticizes Wells for writing a book that does not emphasize the imagination as a panacea. Writes Smith, "He prescribes an intellectual antidote for an imaginative disorder." But from where does our imagination originate? Does it not require an intellectual realignment to direct our imagination rightly?

Finally, there is a snarky, if not downright offensive, comment: "It's like how I would expect a theological grandfather to harrumph about 'kids these days.'" It occurs to me that if a theological elder is harrumphing about something, we may be prudent to lend an ear.

**Rod Miller**

Conway, Arkansas

When we are in union with Christ, we find ourselves "walking to the beat of a different Drummer." We can't just try to change our ideas about God. Through worship and spiritual disciplines, we need to get our toes tapping to the new music of the kingdom. Smith's corrective of Wells is based on a fuller understanding of human nature. We are much more than the sum total of our thoughts and convictions. People are also (and maybe mostly) products of their affections and desires. Although Christian faith does bring a renewal of the mind, it starts with a change of the heart.

**Matt Kamps**

CT online comment

## MORMON NO MORE

Lynn Wilder's story of leaving the LDS

church left me breathless. A few months ago, a pair of Mormon missionaries came to our door. Rather than shoo them away or engage them in theological battle (as we often have done), we invited the young men in. As we shared a meal, God broke my heart for them. Reading this reminded me to pray that God may yet prompt them to "take up and read" the Gospels, and lead them to life and freedom in himself.

**Bronwyn Lea**

CT online comment

## CORRECTION

On the map for "What They Brought the World" (January/February), South Korea should have been identified as Democratic.

# NET GAIN

Responses  
from the Web.



"I have often wondered how these busy pastors can accomplish so much and still run/oversee a church. And here Andy gives us an insight into how. But also raises the important point of the perception being created of superhuman people."

**Darryl Schoeman, personal blog.**

"The Real Problem with Mark Driscoll's

'Citation Errors,'" by Andy Crouch.

"Does the fact that there is so much raunchy behavior mean that the review cannot be high? I don't think so."

**BJ Nelson, CT online comment.**

"The Wolf of Wall Street," by Alissa Wilkinson.

"My wife and I thank God for AA and thank AA for God!"

**Chuck Long, CT online comment.**

"Dealing with Alcoholism," interview by Ed Stetzer.

"Wait, not all #homeschooling is stupid and harmful!?"

**Bobby Ross Jr. @GetReligion**

"The Normal, Drama-Free, Totally-Healthy Christian Homeschool Movement," by Ruth Moon.

"@CTmagazine Thanks for being the source for those eager to engage the world for Christ & curious about trends shaping the church & culture."

**Lee Strobel @LeeStrobel**



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## NEWS



WITNESS



## STAND IN THE GAP

**UKRAINE:** Orthodox priests pray for peace during a January standoff in Kiev between stone-throwing protesters and riot police. In the capital's Independence Square, evangelical pastors handed out 100,000 copies of the Gospel of John. Younger evangelicals largely supported the pro-European Union protests, while older evangelicals largely urged submission to pro-Russia authorities, said Sergey Rakhuba, head of U.S.-based Russian Ministries. "Yet in a time of turmoil, people are more open to the gospel."

SERGEI CHUZAYKOV / AP





## GLEANINGS



WHERE PERSECUTION:  
INCREASED  
SIGNIFICANTLY  
DECREASED  
SIGNIFICANTLY  
IS WORST, BY  
CATEGORY

## ↑INSIDE THE PERSECUTION NUMBERS

This year, Open Doors not only ranked the top 50 countries where it's hardest to be a Christian (think North Korea, Somalia, and Syria). For the first time, the ministry also revealed the methodology behind its World Watch List. While martyrdoms did double in 2013 (to more than 2,100 deaths), most persecution isn't violence. Instead, it's a "squeeze" of Christians in five spheres of life: private, family, community, national, and church.

Fernando Ortega this January, he was only the latest in a string of well-known evangelicals—Richard Land, Albert Mohler, George O. Wood, and Richard Mouw—to speak before Latter-day Saints leaders in Utah. Mormon leader Jeffrey R. Holland explained that "the very least we can do is know and understand each other better than we do" in the face of America's "diminution of religious expression."

### MALAYSIA

#### Police raid Bible society for using 'Allah'

The debate over who in Malaysia gets to call God *Allah* escalated with the first known government raid on Christians. Religious police confiscated more than 300 Bibles from the Bible Society of Malaysia. In response, evangelical leader Eugene Yapp counseled his 2,500 churches to deny police entry without a warrant. "To allow one religion to be able to monitor and regulate how another religion is to be practiced is a distasteful recipe for disaster," said the Christian Federation of Malaysia. The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism agreed.

### John Howard Yoder's books get abuse disclaimer

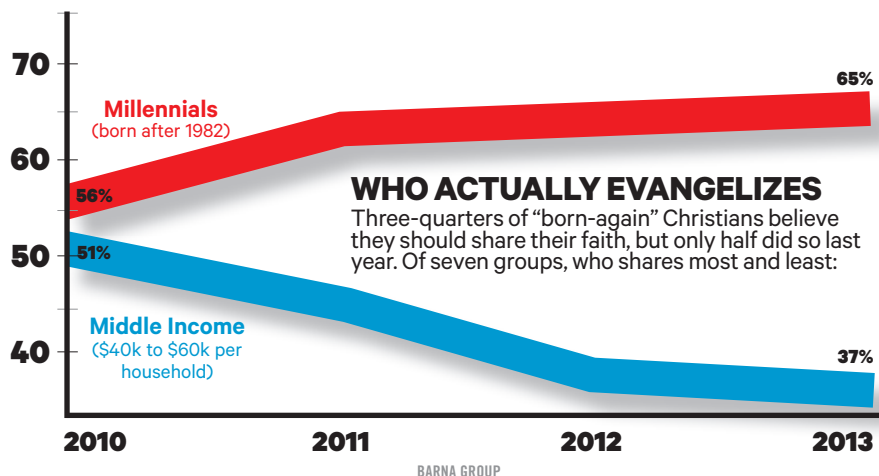
A Christian publisher will preface books by one of the 20th-century's acclaimed theologians with an unusual acknowledgment: remembering the pacifist author "for his long-term sexual harassment and abuse of women." Yoder was a Mennonite theologian whose work brought many to Anabaptism and whose groping landed him in church-supervised rehabilitation.

MennoMedia considered ceasing publication of his books, but opted to add the disclaimer so readers can keep studying the "complex tensions" of his legacy.

### Ravi Zacharias returns to the Mormon Tabernacle

In 2004, Ravi Zacharias was the first evangelical to speak at the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City since D. L. Moody in 1899. When the famed apologist returned with





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- 6 **Police officers** 54%

## 47% TRUST CLERGY

A record low, less than half of Americans now rate clergy (of all faiths) high on honesty and ethics. However, clergy still ranked No. 7 out of 22 professions in Gallup's latest poll.

- 8 **Day-care providers** 46%
- 9 **Judges** 45%
- 21 **Members of Congress** 8%

### UNITED KINGDOM Paper apologizes, donates to Pat Robertson

Britain's third-largest daily newspaper apologized for reporting that Pat Robertson "raised millions on the back of a non-existent aid project" in Africa. *The Guardian* said that despite the claims of the documentary *Mission Congo*, the broadcaster's Operation Blessing ministry did nothing wrong in arranging for six medical teams and 33 tons of supplies to be flown into Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) in 1994. The paper even donated to the ministry's relief efforts in the Philippines.

### NIGERIA Violence as students merge into mission schools

Islamist students attacked teachers at a Baptist high school and beat the Christian principal unconscious after the school sent a girl home for wearing a hijab. The clash came after Osun State in southwest Nigeria reclassified and merged missionary-founded schools with other public schools, mixing Muslim and Christian students. Meanwhile, other states are handing missionary-turned-public schools back to churches. The handovers are an attempt to improve education, though church schools' tuition rates in the struggling nation are causing heated debates.

### Thrivent Financial suspends pro-life, pro-choice groups

A major Christian financial services organization is rethinking how it lets many of its 2.5 million members direct donations. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans changed its rules in 2012, allowing its 1,300 local

chapters to add charities to its grant program. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod protested when one chapter approved Planned Parenthood of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The approval was withdrawn, but Thrivent also temporarily suspended all pro-life and pro-choice groups from the program. No other organizations will be added or removed until a comprehensive review is completed. Thrivent also assured members that no Thrivent Choice donations—\$47 million in 2013—had reached Planned Parenthood.

### College picks president because of controversy

Controversy surrounding Ergun Caner's testimony did not deter a Southern Baptist school in Georgia from unanimously electing the ex-Muslim-turned-academic as its 16th president. Instead, it was an incentive for Brewton-Parker College. "He has endured relentless and pagan attacks like a warrior," one trustee wrote. "We need a warrior as our next president." Caner was dropped as dean of Liberty Seminary in 2010 after it investigated whether he had exaggerated his life story in order to position himself as an expert on Islam.



**"God delights in using ill-equipped people for influence."**

**Joni Eareckson Tada**, on the surprise Oscar nomination (later revoked) for the song she recorded for a Christian movie, *Alone Yet Not Alone*. THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER



## Missions

# Native Approach

Missionaries from indigenous backgrounds may be the Great Commission's secret weapon.

**F**our years ago, missionary Doug Millar was frustrated by the lackluster amount of conversions in his Mayan village of Chan Chen, Mexico. Despite a steady stream of short-term mission teams, next to no one in the village had become a Christian.

Ministry partner Randy Carruth suggested a solution: Invite Native Americans.

In March 2013, after three such trips by Carruth's I Am Able Ministries, 25 to 30 Mayans attended the village's first worship service. Less than a year later, Millar's church has grown to 200.

It's not an isolated case. With many Native American communities reporting signs of revival and church growth, missions leaders are increasingly trying to send these missionaries to other indigenous groups worldwide.

"Native people typically are not unfamiliar with pain and suffering and injustice, with what it looks like to be poor," said Josh Charette, a church planter and pastor in Montana who is half Turtle Mountain Chippewa. "This gives them an incredible platform, and they are typically welcomed into a lot of places Anglo people are not."

Last fall, the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board brought together 50 Native American pastors and leaders for evangelism training in New Mexico. Similar conferences took place in February and March. These gatherings are the first of their kind, says Carruth, since they are trying not just to recruit Native groups but to approach missions and leadership development from a Native perspective.

Carruth has helped teams of Native Americans take short-term mission trips to indigenous groups in Mexico and Canada, and has requests from Chile and

Australia. But they're working outside indigenous communities, too. Hundreds of Ukrainians became Christians after a dozen people from several Oklahoma tribes visited on a medical missions trip last April, said Augusta Smith, head of Native American LINK, Inc.

If they do become a missions force, it'll be an irony. "Missions to Native Americans have the most abysmal record of any other group in the world," said Keetoowah Cherokee Randy Woodley, director of Intercultural and Indigenous Studies at George Fox Evangelical Seminary. "We have been the recipients of American missions longer than any other group. The results have been really meager."

The Center for the Study of Global Christianity reports that more than 80 percent of Native Americans self-identify as Christian. But only about 10 percent are actively involved in Christian churches, says Gary Hawkins, executive director of the Fellowship of Native American Christians (FONAC).

And even most of those who identify as Christians are completely unchurched, he says. About 70 percent live in greater metro areas, while most Native American churches are in rural settings.

It's hard to talk about Native missions without a coherent indigenous Christian community, said J. R. Lilly of Wiconi International, a Christian Native American advocacy organization. "Where are the Native theologians? Where are the Native churches and denominations? Where's the Native theology?"

Native Christian leaders say their community's experience with poverty and colonialism might open opportunities that are closed to Anglo missionaries—but they are wary of using it as a gimmick



## MOST-CHRISTIAN NATION: SAANICH

Of the 15,000 Saanich (or Straits Salish), more than 85 percent are professing Christians; 16 percent are evangelicals. Most live near Vancouver.

## LEAST-CHRISTIAN NATION: ZUNI

Of the 11,000 Zuni, only 15 percent are professing Christians; 1 percent are evangelicals. Most live near Gallup, New Mexico.

JOSHUA PROJECT

for otherwise Western approaches to missions.

"I don't think we should allow ourselves to be exploited for a [Western] approach to the gospel," said Woodley. "If we're going to leverage the fact that we're Native, we have to make sure that it actually is the Good News."

Kate Tracy



# Deadly Lightning

Cult violence prompts pastors to ramp up doctrine—and work with state officials.

**A** Chinese cult known for physical violence and coercion is prompting Chinese pastors to upgrade theological instruction in their congregations and help government officials understand the difference between orthodox Christianity and cultlike offshoots.

The Eastern Lightning sect began in the 1990s around Deng, a woman the group considers the second incarnation of Christ. Members of Eastern Lightning have severely beaten people who try to leave the group, often leaving them crippled, according to Tony Lambert, director of Chinese ministry research at OMF International. Recently, the cult has been advertising for members in Hong Kong and Taiwan, prompting local church leaders

to publicly denounce it.

Eastern Lightning leaders teach that followers must leave behind their families and property. According to Lian Xi, professor of world Christianity at Duke Divinity School, they brainwash, kidnap, and murder to grow their following.

The group, which may have several million members, is known for befriending single women and house church members, said Bob Fu, president of ChinaAid.

“The only positive effect is that it makes the house church more alert and vigilant of their teaching on biblical truth to their flocks,” Fu said.

In 2002, Eastern Lightning gained attention from the global church when members kidnapped nearly three dozen leaders of the China Gospel Fellowship, a house church network, by luring them to training sessions, Lambert said.

Since the kidnapping, China Gospel Fellowship leaders have been sharing information with government officials, said G. Wright Doyle, senior associate at the Global China Center. It’s a tricky step to take, since the churches have been wary of state persecution. But it’s an important one, said one Christian worker who regularly meets with house church leaders in China.

“The government isn’t very good at

**‘It’s like a virus. It may create an antibody, but it could get worse.’**

distinguishing between house church and cult movements,” the worker said, citing the case of a pastor who was mistakenly jailed for 11 days as a cult leader.

Lay Christians can have trouble telling the difference, too. In response, pastors told *CT* they are building up theological resistance in their churches by adding lessons on church history and doctrine to their Bible teaching. As a result, the cult is less successful at recruiting church members than it was a decade ago, though it still has strong followings in rural China, said an anonymous source who leads a large Chinese house church network.

“It’s like a virus that has entered the body,” another Chinese ministry leader said. “It may create an antibody resistance, but it also could get worse.” **Ruth Moon**



## Under Discussion

Compiled by Ruth Moon



### Q: Do celebrity debates persuade people on Christian topics?

On February 4, Ken Ham, CEO of Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum, and 1990s television host Bill Nye “the Science Guy” debated creationism. Tickets to the event at the museum’s 900-seat theater sold out minutes after they became available.

YES

NO

“Debates like the Ham-Nye one are indeed helpful, even though I don’t fully agree or disagree with either man. The event at least got people talking and thinking, and maybe even exploring the topic more fully on their own. That is the best outcome.”

**Michael Behe**, biochemist, Lehigh University

“Debates, badly done, are of no use to anyone. But quite a few Christians need to be persuaded that debating can ever be of profit. With the proviso that you have an able debater representing the truth, the cause of kingdom work can be greatly advanced through debates.”

**Doug Wilson**, senior minister, Christ Church

“Before all the media competition of today, these debates created more buzz and found a large audience, especially in small-town America, where entertainment and substantive public discussions were scarce. In more recent times, they tend to attract church audiences.”

**Edith Blumhofer**, director, Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals

“Persuasion is central to sharing the Good News, but persuasion is not manipulation. Speakers are not all-powerful, and audiences often resist if they already disagree with the argument. So the debate may have created spectacle, but it may not win any new converts.”

**Christine Gardner**, media studies faculty, Willamette University

“A debate on creation and evolution is almost sure to shed more heat than light, and before an audience of laypeople, debaters almost always revert to applause lines. If you find presidential debates illuminating on the issues facing America, you are bound to have loved this debate.”

**Tim Stafford**, author, The Adam Quest



## Outreach

# Ministry After Mary Jane

Legalized marijuana is a gold mine for Colorado revenue—and what else? Ask the churches.

**O**n January 1, Colorado stores selling recreational marijuana opened their doors. Within a week, *The Denver Post* reported, nearly 100,000 people—about 30 percent of them from out of state—had bought the drug.

Until New Year's Day, marijuana dispensaries could sell only to customers with a doctor's recommendation and a state-issued medical marijuana card. Now, any Colorado resident 21 and over can purchase marijuana.

Many Coloradans celebrate the legalization as a landmark victory in the war on drugs. The courts won't be clogged with recreational users, and sales will generate an estimated \$27.5 million per year for schools. With both a 25 percent state tax and 2.9 percent sales tax, state officials expect to yield a total of \$67 million a year and total sales of nearly \$580 million in revenues.

The buying spree may have slowed since its first week, but the church is thinking about how to respond to the new multimillion-dollar industry.

Jason Malec, founding pastor of New Denver Church and an American Bible Society executive, said it's too early to discern a cultural shift among Colorado Christians.

"No one has come to me saying, 'Because pot is legal at the state level, is it

okay for us?' That probably will happen, but it's too new for us," he said. "Most Christians I know just shrug their shoulders. Rarely do I hear people talking about it."

But Jared Mackey, a pastor at the Next Level Church in Englewood, said the legalization has caught the attention of his church, which includes both recovering alcoholics and brewers. They are having deep discussion "about substance use and abuse" and "issues of the heart, rather than focusing merely on external behaviors."

Similarly, Alan Briggs, director of Frontline Church Planting and a pastor at Vanguard Church in Colorado Springs, believes the legalization has created opportunities to talk about the motives behind marijuana use.

"Most times Christians look at the *what* of marijuana, but we don't talk much about the *why*," said Briggs. "It promises to dull physical pain, but most people use it to cope with relational and personal pain."

He is optimistic that the legalization will create chances to discuss personal suffering and point people to the gospel.

There are other reasons for some Christians to see opportunity in the new laws.

Jason Janz, a pastor at Providence Bible Church in downtown Denver, said the legalization will "decrease the incarceration rates, especially among minorities."

Colorado's 37 pot shops, including Denver's Medicine Man, reportedly sold \$1 million worth of the drug on "Green Wednesday," the day they opened. Some local governments, including Colorado Springs, have banned sales.

His church works with nearly a thousand ex-offenders, and he laments how minorities are criminalized more harshly than whites.

"When you live in a community under the burden of mass incarceration, you're glad for the legalization," said Janz, "whether you use marijuana or not."

Janz wonders, however, if people are aware of the drawbacks. "I talked to two Denver police officers about the legalization, and they said, 'The argument was we would eliminate the black market, but it [has] created the largest multistate black market in the West.'"

Malec notes legalization also presents challenges for parents. "I have three children—from ages 8 to 12—and every one of them knows the smell of marijuana," he said. "Walking down the street, they can pick out who is smoking it and whether it's a strong strain."

"As parents and believers, we will have to confront questions and ethical dilemmas in ways my parents didn't have to."

Kevin P. Emmert



BRENNAN LINSLEY / AP





# “I’M A PASTOR, NOT A FINANCIAL PLANNER. THANKFULLY, MY *benefits consultant understands me.*”

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# VIEWS



ISTOCK

**WHERE WE STAND**

## A CHANCE TO GROW

The legalization of pot  
provides an opportunity to examine  
Christian freedom.





**WITH THE RECREATIONAL USE** of marijuana now legal in Colorado and Washington (and the Obama administration disinclined to enforce federal laws against it), it's only a matter of time before it is completely legal coast to coast to take up. This is a great opportunity—not to use pot, but to reflect on the true nature of Christian freedom.

We at *Christianity Today* believe Christians are absolutely free to use marijuana (where legalized). And, when it comes to pot in our particular cultural context, we think it would be foolish to use that freedom.

Those who grew up with unhealthy legalism in their communities need to hear the apostle Paul's message: Strictures about what to consume or not consume are a sign that we are weak in faith, not that we are strong (Rom. 14:1–12). The one whom the Son sets free is free indeed.

So all things are permitted. But not all things are helpful (1 Cor. 6:12). The Christian's freedom is a gift that leads to serving others, with care, attention, skill, and singleness of heart. It's a freedom that willingly sacrifices easy pleasures in order to serve. And by that standard, it's hard to imagine that pot will be helpful any time soon.

Most ethical decisions, certainly those about food and our bodies, are made not in isolation but in the midst of culture and history—in a community of persons, and within a story. Consider alcohol, a toxic substance for which the human liver serves as a poison control center. Alcoholic beverages are part of many cultures, partly because before modern refrigeration, alcohol's toxicity to bacteria made such beverages far safer to drink.

But alcoholic drinks do not function the same way in every culture. If you are Jewish, you are part of a community with a low propensity to alcoholism. And you are blessed with a rich history into which is woven the gift of wine, one of the glories

## Most ethical decisions are made not in isolation but in the midst of culture and history.

of human beings' cultivation of the world over millennia. If you are Russian, you are part of a community with a devastating, tragic history of addiction to vodka. What is permitted for a Christian in both cases may be the same. But what is helpful may be radically different.

our time is between those whose affluence provides plentiful buffer zones for indulging in minor vices without major consequences, and those who are most vulnerable to consumer culture at its worst, tempted to depend on substances to numb the pain of lives robbed of dignity and meaningful work.

Why should Christians flaunt their freedom in matters of such grave consequence for the poor? It is hard to imagine a more direct application of Paul's admonition to the Corinthians: "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak" (1 Cor. 8:9).

Christians despise no created thing. The marijuana plant is a part of a world that was declared good by its Maker every step along the way. But enjoying the world's delights, including its panoply of aromas, flavors, sights, and sounds, must always remain subordinate to image bearing lest it become idolatry. Image bearing involves relationship, so our use and enjoyment of creation should foster relationship. Image bearing invites

us to deeper knowledge and mastery of the world, so our use and enjoyment should lead to deeper capacities and competence. Image bearing offers us gifts of attention and skill, the capacity to contribute to "the glory and honor of the nations" (Rev. 21:26).

Is marijuana a cultivated celebration of the created world, one that enhances and sharpens image bearing in all its dimensions? Or does it merely substitute for the consolations and comforts of life lived truly and honestly before God and other people? In our cultural context, the answer seems pretty clear, and the way to true freedom is clear as well. **CT**

**ANDY CROUCH** is CT executive editor.



In our North American context, what is the function of pot? It is associated with superficially pleasant disengagement from the world. It connotes a kind of indolence and "tuning out" that is not an option for people who want to become agents of compassion and neighbor love, not to mention its association with all kinds of immaturity. Are these the eternal truths of pot, the only possible way marijuana can be used? No. But these cultural realities are still relevant for the discerning Christian.

Then there is the question of how Christians' use of marijuana would affect those most susceptible to the idolatries of our culture. A great inequality of

ISTOCK





# The Accidental Complementarian

How I embraced the misunderstood label.

**T**wice my husband left me. The first time, he moved months ahead of our family to attend a prestigious Chicago business school. I was pregnant with our third child. The second time, he moved months ahead of us to Toronto, accepting what we both considered an irresistible opportunity. I stayed behind with five little ones—and the responsibilities.

Our arrangement could illustrate the burden of complementarian theology. Men are imagined leading in their marriages and churches, fleet-footed after their dreams. Women are pictured trailing behind, bedraggled with the demands of self-sacrifice. I sometimes can't help wondering if the stereotypes are true.

Yet they aren't the full truth, and misunderstandings about complementarians abound. At a recent women's conference, I heard a speaker describe her egalitarian upbringing, saying it wasn't until college that she recognized the breadth of theological difference on this issue.

"I was shocked. And to be honest, I was heartbroken. It had never occurred to me that in this day and age, so many people just like me were being sidelined," she said. Her implication: Complementarianism was theology that should have gone the way of the dinosaurs. Like me, the closet complementarians in the room may have sensed the muting of their voices in a circle designed to celebrate them.

When my husband and I graduated from Wheaton College, we married as committed egalitarians. I did not vow to submit on our wedding day. My husband and I both believed that male headship was a sign of the curse (Gen. 3:16).

But somewhere over the years, our ideas changed. Maybe our egalitarian

confidence eroded, slowly and imperceptibly, in our complementarian pews. However, if only to myself, I must insist that my theology has not formed exclusively through passive absorption.

From my earliest days of faith, I accepted the Scriptures' right to speak. I also owned my deaf ear. When it comes to interpreting God's Word, the only confidence I've maintained is in my own sinful hostility. Perhaps holiness was nearer in the answers I would rather refuse.

With this approach, many years into marriage, I—a headstrong, egalitarian woman—embraced a complementarian reading of 1 Corinthians 11:3: "But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." I sought the truth—and made an interpretive decision.

I knew from classes at Wheaton that *head* could be interpreted as "source," not "authority." Still, I couldn't deny the plain truth that while on earth, Jesus Christ deferred to his Father's authority.

I found a defense for the holy beauty of submission when I hadn't gone looking for it. Jesus, obedient to his Father, went willingly to his death—for me. Was I to argue against the disposition that saved me? Running, I was caught.

Being a complementarian woman in an egalitarian world is wildly unpopular;

it can also be perceived as decidedly ignorant. Some readers may sympathize with my hope for reprieve. And while the word has fallen out of favor with some, I know no other way to decide the contentions of my own heart than *biblically*. That verse continues to hold me in its grasp.

Recently, I returned to a commentary by New Testament scholar Richard B. Hays. I found hermeneutical candor from the strong egalitarian. Hays affirms that Paul is preaching male authority:

Any honest appraisal of 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 will require both teacher and students to confront the patriarchal implications of verses 3 and 7–9. Such implications cannot be explained away by some technical move, such as translating *kephalē* as "source," rather than "head," because the patriarchal assumptions are imbedded in the structure of Paul's argument.

Hays suggests that we "consider other readings that might stand alongside Paul's and provide a challenge to it." But if disagreeing with Paul is the leap I must make to egalitarianism, I remain reluctantly caught, even in this day and age.

*Jen is a complementarian*, we nod. I am described by the convenience of a category. One word makes me a friend or foe.

As generalizations generally go, the move to reduce complexity is unsatisfactory. In this debate, as in others, we cannot cram the wholeness of human beings and their faith and praxis into the corset of a single word.

I am a complementarian. But as is also true for my egalitarian sisters in Christ, that isn't all there is to know. **CT**

**We cannot cram the wholeness of faith and praxis into the corset of a single word.**

# How can churches reach nominal believers before they become ‘nones’?

Nominals don't hate Christianity. They just find it totally irrelevant.



crowd of would-be followers with some sobering words. Turning to the “large crowds,” Jesus said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (26–27).

We may balk at his approach. We instinctively want to make people comfortable and remove obstacles to faith. But on numerous occasions, Jesus made prospective followers decidedly uncomfortable and pointed out just how difficult it was to follow him.

There's still a place for this kind of frank conversation. Often, loving nominal Christians means presenting them with the hard truth of what it means to follow Jesus. Seeing their true spiritual status may be a necessary step toward faith.

Don't get me wrong. We shouldn't needlessly offend. We must be winsome and wise in how we communicate the Christian message. But at some point, like Jesus, we have to spell out what following him entails—and let the chips fall where they may.

In *Basic Christianity*, late Christian leader John Stott lamented that “thousands of people still ignore Christ's warning and undertake to follow him without first pausing to reflect on the cost of doing so. The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so-called ‘nominal Christianity.’”

My prayer for the church is that we will cease perpetuating this great scandal. When faced with the all-or-nothing demands of the gospel, many nominal Christians will respond with genuine faith. Others will walk away.

But at least they will go freed from the

**Drew Dyck**  
**Deliver a Jolt**

**W**hen we think of the evangelistic challenge presented by ardent atheists, outreach to nominal Christians seems like a breeze.

After all, nominal Christians have a positive view of the faith, enough of one to identify with Christianity. They're not apt to rail against religion or deny the existence of God. When it comes to reaching them with the gospel, it's tempting to think they just need a nudge.

But actually, they might need a jolt. Nominalism is essentially a spiritual delusion. And it's a particularly dangerous one, because it can inoculate against the real gospel. Atheists may be hostile to Christian faith, but at least they rightly understand their relationship to it. Nominal Christians, on the other hand, claim a Christian identity for a host of unbiblical reasons: “My grandma was a Baptist.” “I go to church on holidays.” “I'm a good person.” These misperceptions need to be sensitively but directly addressed with biblical truth.

Luke 14 describes Jesus confronting a

JAMES O'BRIEN



delusion that blinds them to their true need for Christ.

**DREW DYCK** is managing editor of *Leadership Journal* and author of *Generation Ex-Christian: Why Young Adults Are Leaving the Faith... and How to Bring Them Back*.

## Kenda Creasy Dean Radicalize Hospitality

**Y**ou could argue that the world's first recorded "none" was a young man named Eutychus, who started out in the church at Troas and then dropped out of it. Literally.

You know the story. Paul is preaching "on and on" to the disciples, and Eutychus—perched precariously by an open window—dozes off and tumbles three stories down to his death. Paul interrupts his sermon to look for Eutychus, finding him outside the church—dead. Yet Paul takes the young man into his arms and reassures the startled crowd, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him" (Acts 20:10, NRSV).

Most young adults in the United States claim to be at least nominally Christian, according to University of Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith. Yet a third of 18- to 30-year-olds also say they are religiously unaffiliated. And like Eutychus, most of them were once in church. Author Elizabeth Drescher says 70 percent of nones grew up in Christian homes, which means Eutychus is not someone else's kid. He's our kid. He attended youth group and heard Bible stories at bedtime and said grace at dinner. He started out in the church. And then he vanished. What might have prevented such a fate?

I don't think the so-called "rise of the nones" represents a new wave of religious rejection. We've had nones in our pews for some time. The difference is that it is now culturally safer than it used to be.

Nones may be prophets in our midst, calling the church to stop sermonizing long enough to pay attention to young people who are zoning out, dozing off, fading away, or slipping out the back door. Nones don't hate the church; they just find it utterly irrelevant to their lives.

Addressing nominal Christianity starts with the church. According to Smith's National Study of Youth and Religion, several factors during adolescence prepare nominally Christian teenagers to

remain faithful as young adults. These assets include having a highly committed personal faith as a teenager, having multiple adults of faith to turn to for support and help, praying and reading the Bible frequently, and especially having religiously devoted parents and identifying a religious experience—all before young adulthood.

Drew Dyson, a United Methodist pastor, found in his dissertation research at Princeton Seminary that congregations that emphasize meaning, belonging, and radical hospitality help young adults who have experienced "faith drift" re-imagine themselves as participants in the mission of God.

Churches that deepen nominal faith pull Eutychus into the center of the room, surround him with faithful mentors, and immerse him in practices of meaning, belonging, and radical hospitality.

When nominally religious people experience the church as a community of people who embrace first and preach later, who celebrate life in those given up for dead, who err on the side of grace in matters of doctrine and politics so that no one, ever, must sit on the margins—we're far less likely to lose people around the edges.

**KENDA CREASY DEAN**, author of *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church*, is professor of youth, church, and culture at Princeton Theological Seminary.

## Eddie Gibbs Disciple Constantly

**H**ow is it that so many people in the United States are Christians in name only? The causes are complex, and careful diagnosis is essential. Nominality is not a static state but a progressive one. Surveys suggest the vast majority of "nominals" will eventually become "nones."

Let's look at the major contributing factors. The church itself has inadvertently fostered the condition by succumbing to individualism and consumerism. Under such pressures, church becomes primarily about what pleases people and meets their needs. Under such conditions, attendance and even membership do not lead to authentic discipleship—understood as a lifelong commitment to follow Jesus.

The church members most at risk of becoming nominal avoid close personal

relationships, which provide the context for encouragement, accountability, and ministry opportunities. These are bored consumers who "go missing without being missed." At the other extreme, Christians who are burned out may also be at risk. It is not unusual for church leaders who are worn out by ministry demands to move elsewhere and drop out entirely.

Also, unfortunately, biblical illiteracy is disturbingly high among many churchgoers. This creates vulnerability to the prevailing secular culture.

We need to reimagine the church so that it engages all people relationally. Nominality should be constantly challenged, and disciples of Jesus who are facing similar issues can assist. When it comes to nominality, no Christian is invulnerable.

More churches are taking steps to address the challenge. Two programs in particular have been widely adopted and show encouraging results: the Alpha Course and MasterLife, a LifeWay book series. Alpha began modestly in 1977 in an Anglican church in London as a way to introduce never-churched and de-churched Brits to the basic truths of the gospel. Since its inception, churches ranging from Pentecostal to Roman Catholic have adopted it, and 15 million people worldwide have attended Alpha. Leaders at Pasadena Covenant Church, for example, use the original program, plus Alpha Marriage and Alpha Parenting courses. One couple told me that they had to "create a waiting list for future courses due to capacity limitations."

Leland Hamby, senior pastor of Alhambra Baptist Church in California, says they started MasterLife—an in-depth training experience to disciple believers—12 years ago. "You learn how to abide in Christ, live in the Word, pray in faith, fellowship with believers, witness to the world, and minister to others," says Hamby.

Both programs stress that conversion leads to lifelong discipleship. The sessions take place in small groups. They are spread out over weeks and often include a meal. In both programs, conversion to Christ leads to serving Christ within the church and in daily life. The learning environment is both relational and nonjudgmental.

**CT**

**EDDIE GIBBS**, professor emeritus at Fuller Seminary, is author of *The Rebirth of the Church: Applying Paul's Vision for Ministry in Our Post-Christian World*.

## PAST IMPERFECT

David Neff is  
former editor in  
chief of CT.



# Executing Justice?

The U.S. standards for the death penalty are far below the Old Testament law.

**T**he year was 1573, and 19-year-old Frantz Schmidt was beheading stray dogs in his backyard. He was not a troubled teenager in need of psychological attention. Frantz was practicing for his life's calling.

Unlike teenagers today, Frantz didn't have to decide what he wanted to be when he grew up. Young men followed in their fathers' footsteps. For Frantz, that meant becoming an executioner. It also meant having to live with enormous social stigma.

Despite the shame, Frantz, a Lutheran, believed his executioner's role was divinely sanctioned. Martin Luther wrote that "the hand that wields the sword and strangles is . . . no longer man's hand but God's." Executioners are "very useful and even merciful," said Luther, since they stop villains and deter crime. Historian Joel F. Harrington, in *The Faithful Executioner*, called Luther's comment "a celebrity endorsement for the profession." If hangmen are needed, and you are qualified, Luther urged, apply for the job.

Luther believed that civic order is divinely ordained. Frantz's native Bavaria needed order. Its cities had been plagued by bandits, feuds between noble houses, and roving knights who supported themselves by pillaging. Bavaria needed a justice system to curb the violence and discourage vengeance and vendettas.

Nevertheless, Luther's endorsement was sharply at odds with the teachings of the early church fathers. They didn't oppose the state's use of capital punishment. They didn't even address that question, since Christianity was still a countercultural minority with an ethic for "resident aliens."

But as Ron Sider noted in *The Early Church on Killing*, the Fathers who discussed capital punishment found it

unthinkable that a Christian should take a life, even as part of a judicial sentence. Lactantius said that a Christian should not even accuse someone of a capital crime, "because it makes no difference whether you put someone to death by word or by sword, since it is the act of putting to death itself which is prohibited."

Likewise, Origen recognized that capital punishment had a place under the old covenant, but he drew a stark contrast between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. Christians, he said, cannot "condemn [someone] to be burned or stoned." Tertullian asked whether a Christian could be a civil magistrate. He concluded that believers must avoid "sitting in judgment on someone's life."

Like Origen, Christians today can view the Christian ethic as distinct from Jewish law, radically altered by Jesus. Or, like Luther and Calvin, they can formulate a Christian ethic in conscious continuity with the Torah. Either way, because of the frequency of false convictions and unequal access to legal resources, and a key biblical argument, Christians should be very wary of how capital punishment is practiced in the United States today.

That was recently argued in a place many would not expect. One writer who has followed the path of continuity is *World* magazine editor Marvin Olasky. In an October 2013 cover story and ten blog posts, Olasky argues that following the Bible's teaching would greatly reduce the number

of executions. He points out that the law of Moses demanded two eyewitnesses who were so sure of what they had seen that they would stake their own lives on it. Most capital convictions today fall short of that standard of evidence.

Olasky also argues that in the Hebrew Scriptures, the death penalty is a maximum—not a mandatory—sentence for murder. That leaves room to adjust the punishment to fit the crime, the criminal, and mitigating factors.

Today, death-penalty cases are prosecuted and then appealed over many years at great expense. Many of those sentenced to life in prison without parole told Olasky their fate was worse than death. Given this, Olasky commends life imprisonment *without parole* for capital crimes—a practical solution that mirrors contemporary Catholic teaching. The 1997 revision of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that where "non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity with the dignity of the human person." Necessary executions, it says, "are very rare, if not practically non-existent."

Olasky rightly expresses concern about Jews and Christians who reject capital punishment simply because they find it barbaric. But he does not ask whether capital punishment, like slavery, fails when tested by Jesus' own teaching. It took centuries for the church to come around on slavery, but the earliest Christian writers were already pointing a new direction on the death penalty. It is time for us to re-examine what Jesus and those writers had to say about the value of human life—no matter how sinful that life may be.

CT

**Christians should be very wary of how capital punishment is practiced in the United States today.**



*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

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**-Kimalea Conrad**  
Stage 2 Breast Cancer Patient  
Telluride, Colorado



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A man with dark hair and a mustache, wearing a blue and white plaid button-down shirt and dark jeans, stands outdoors. He is smiling and has his left hand in his pocket and his right hand resting on a black wrought-iron fence. The background is a lush garden with green bushes and trees, with sunlight creating a bokeh effect.

Stephen Smith, who works for Zondervan's BibleGateway.com, 'remixes Bible data' in his spare time at OpenBible.info. One of his latest posts is a quantitative analysis of two centuries of kids' Bibles.

PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER SHANE





# THE BIBLE *in the* ORIGINAL



Inside the world of the new Bible coders—and how they will change the way you think about Scripture.

BY TED OLSEN

**S**TEPHEN SMITH doesn't look like a mad scientist, because he's not one. Not really. He's not even a code guy by training. But he has packed the room at BibleTech, an occasional gathering of coders, hackers, publishers, scholars, and Bible technology enthusiasts. And the standing-room-only crowd is starting to turn on him. No pitchforks and torches. But for once in this collegial, tight-knit retreat, you can feel the tension growing.

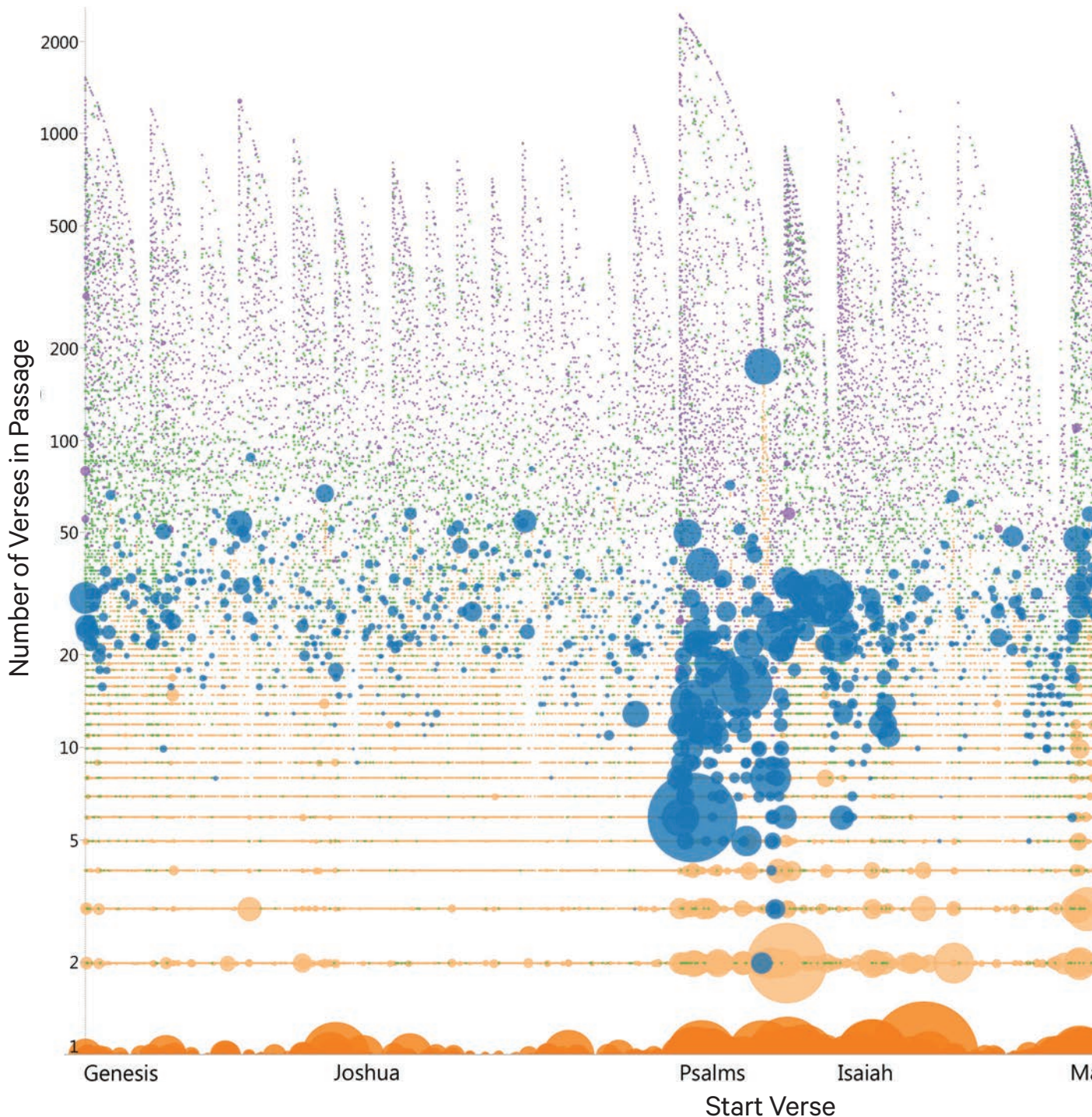
They've seen his experiments before. You might have, too. He's the guy who wrote the code to quantify what folks

on Twitter gave up for Lent and how the fasts change from year to year (forswearing swearing is up, dropping alcohol is down). He figured out what Bible verses went viral after Osama bin Laden was killed, or at any other time (chances are good that "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" and "For I know the plans I have for you" are doing really well right now), and the most popular saints and mountains in American church names. (Mt. Pisgah beats out Mt. Nebo. And Lutherans almost never call their church "First Lutheran"—though "First" is a fifth of Presbyterian churches.)

If someone releases a new API (code that lets applications interact with each other), or if Google unveils a new tool

in beta, or if a new dataset is published online, it's a fairly safe bet that Smith will try to connect it to the Bible. In 2012, Stanford University published a Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World. Smith used it to calculate the time and cost of each of Paul's missionary journeys. The photo-sharing site Flickr lets users search by GPS coordinates, and he created a tool to feature contemporary photos of Bible places. Smith also used Flickr's API to look up each word in each Bible verse, grab the top 30 photos for each word, layer them on top of each other, and then take all the images from all the words in each verse and layer *them* on top of each other. That experiment didn't turn out well. Almost every verse just becomes a big

# LENGTH OF SOCIAL MEDIA BIBLE PASSAGE REFERENCES



Crunching 35 million Bible references in tweets and Facebook posts (above), Smith found that people share individual verses 74 percent of the time and chapters 9 percent of the time. We love to share Psalms—and Paul's Epistles beat out the Gospels. But looking at BibleGateway.com data, he found that we read complete chapters more than half the time; only 20 percent read just a verse.

orange blob. But it was an interesting idea.

Smith's new idea isn't so innocuous. It's scary. And Smith knows it. But he loves it anyway.

## THE FRANKEN-BIBLE

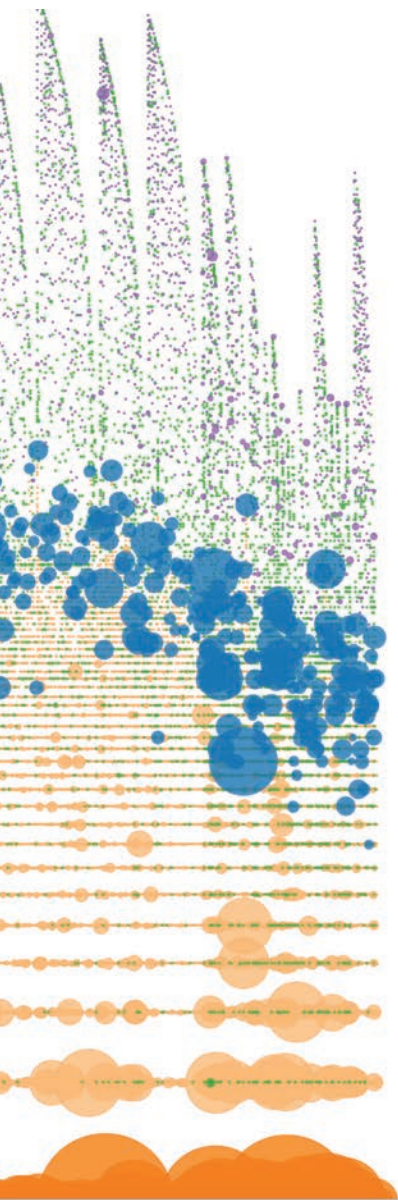
"There are about 30 modern, high-quality translations of the Bible in English," Smith announces to the BibleTech group. "Can

we combine these translations algorithmically into something that charts the possibility space of the original text?"

In other words, Smith is going to show the room what he calls his Franken-Bible maker. It's YouVersion, if that name actually meant what it suggests. With minimal effort—and no knowledge of Greek or Hebrew—you can create your own English



Multiple exact chapters  
 Verses from multiple chapters  
 Exactly one chapter  
 Multiple verses in one chapter  
 One verse  
 Size shows popularity



hew Romans

Bible translation. You, dear reader, may not be interested in having your own personal translation that's different from the three on your shelf. But might you like one from your favorite celebrity pastor? Wouldn't a Max Lucado Version sell well? The Southern Baptist Convention has its own translation. Can a Mars Hill Church Standard be all that far behind?

COURTESY OF STEPHEN SMITH

Algorithms are already used heavily for translating Scripture into new languages (see "Wycliffe in Overdrive," CT, Feb. 2005). And people are already remixing existing translations—last year, for example, Dallas Seminary's John Dyer created a Google Chrome extension that would indicate the plural sense of "you" in online Bibles, no matter the translation. You can choose between "y'all," "you guys," "you lot," and other regional options.

An essentially infinite glut of algorithm-created Franken-Bible translations is inevitable, Smith tells me later. "Someone is going to do this, and that will radically change how we interact with the Bible. There's no reason that I can think of why you wouldn't. I mean, obviously there are reasons—like the authority of Scripture. But from a technical perspective, it's very possible."

In fact, Smith has already done it, or at least a rough proof-of-concept version that anyone can start using at Adaptive Bible.com. As he demonstrates it, choosing among the many translation possibilities for each phrase in 1 Corinthians 13:2—"understand all mysteries" vs. "know all mysteries," and "have not love" vs. "do not love"—he assures the crowd, "I'm not saying that I think this development is a particularly great one for the church, and it's definitely not good for existing Bible translations." But you can tell that he thinks the idea is, from a technical standpoint, pretty cool.

"I definitely have mixed feelings about it," he tells me later. It takes the Protestant claim that we don't need priests to interpret the Bible for us and says we don't need academics and other experts to translate it for us, either. It thereby significantly undermines the authority of scholars and their convening institutions (translation committees and publishers). But it gives more power to informal networks, celebrity pastors, and those with a reason and means to push their own personal translation.

"It raises so many problems and doesn't really provide great answers," Smith continues. "I see Franken-Bibles as a transition. There's always this temporary chaotic phase when you have some disruption in an area. After that, things stabilize around something that is hopefully better than it was before. Whatever this will gel into will probably be better than introducing a new translation of the Bible every single year."

Still, it's a hard thing for Smith to say. "It'll be hard for the Bible industry, and this is a difficult position for me."

Smith, you see, works at Zondervan, publisher of the best-selling Bible translation of all time, the New International Version. Zondervan lured him away from Crossway, where he had been renowned as the web guy behind the launch of the English Standard Version. Now he works on Zondervan's Bible Gateway, which calls itself the most-used Christian website.

The room is filled with guys (almost entirely guys) like Smith—young men passionate about their Bibles and about writing great code, who say "disruption" with a wink because they know they say it way too often. They love Smith, but they're not buying this one. "Franken-Bibles might be easy to build, but they'll never disrupt traditional Bible translations. They'll be novelties," tweeted Keith Williams, senior editor of Bibles at Tyndale House Publishers. "People of influence won't trust them (even their own)."

Williams may be right. But consider that his employer got its start when editor Ken Taylor created an early Franken-Bible of sorts, paraphrasing the 1901 American Standard Version into words he thought people would better understand. He didn't use an algorithm, and he vetted his work with Hebrew and Greek scholars. But Billy Graham's celebrity endorsement of Taylor's *Living Letters* (and later the *Living Bible*) led people to trust it, disrupting Bible publishing unlike anything seen since.

And that's the point not just of Smith's whimsical Franken-Bible presentation, but also of almost every project everyone in this room is working on. We are all Ken Taylor now. Networked code has made us all small-scale publishers, travel agents, critics, and a hundred other job titles once left to trained professionals. Now technology is promising—or threatening—to turn all of us into Bible translators and expositors, too.

## 'LIKE MUSIC I NEVER KNEW EXISTED'

As the BibleTech guys discuss Bible translation algorithms and the prospect of a thousand new versions, other coders are working to make that quest less relevant. After all, would Bible readers need even more English translations if they could seamlessly understand the Hebrew and Greek, with access to all the information



***‘You can slice and dice a huge amount of information now that it doesn’t require memorizing lots of facts,’ says Logos’s Eli Evans. You don’t have to be an expert. You just have to know how to search.***

that trained Bible translators have?

In seminaries and on Bible blogs, everyone has their favorite Bible software, and the arguments over Accordance vs. BibleWorks vs. Logos can be just as feisty as any Mac vs. pc, Android vs. iPhone debate. (Generally speaking, Accordance and BibleWorks built their reputation as original language exegesis tools, while Logos traditionally emphasized integrated commentaries and other resources. Accordance has a heavy following among Apple fans; BibleWorks has a reputation for trying to keep user costs down.)

But few people grasp just how big Logos has become. It has 320 employees in Bellingham, a Washington port city 90 miles north of Seattle. Its website currently lists another 75 job openings. It has other offices in Seattle and Tempe, Arizona (there are daily meetings over Skype, with flat-screen TVs displaying live webcams of each others’ offices all day). A recent survey found that between 30 and 40 percent of downtown lunch restaurant business is Logos employees.

If you Google “Bob Pritchett,” Logos CEO, you’ll get the expected links to the company, his blog, and his provocative business book, *Fire Someone Today*.

You’ll also find a link to his slide

presentation on “How to Quit College and Get Away With It!” He’s serious. If technology is poised to radically democratize Bible publishing, it’s already toppling the ivory towers. “Colleges are guilds for academics,” says one slide. If you want to join the guild, or if you’re not good at learning on your own, then go ahead and finish college. But for most of us, he says, it’s a bad investment, now that education is essentially free. “Quitting college is not about quitting education,” he wrote. “It’s about taking responsibility for your own education.”

“You carry a device in your pocket that gives you instant access to the sum of human knowledge and lets you communicate directly with almost every intellectually or economically engaged person on earth,” he said. “This is unprecedented in the course of human history. This is not a modern twist on an ancient idea.”

This is not what you’d expect to hear from someone whose clientele is mostly seminary and graduate students. (Logos

just struck a deal with Dallas Theological Seminary to give all students the \$1,000 version of its program; if you graduate, you get to keep it.)

“I don’t want to denigrate wise and godly leaders,” Pritchett says when asked how his views on college relate to the goals of his software. “We still need experts.” But, he says, we don’t need them in order to access information and knowledge. “My mom used to use *Vine’s [Expository Dictionary]*, a classic English–Greek reference tool] in her studies because she didn’t know



Greek. Now she uses lexicons that a few years ago you literally couldn't use without knowing the Greek. We are removing the friction from studying the Bible."

Some of his presentation is simply tech-company entrepreneur boilerplate—after all, this is an industry dominated by college dropouts, from Bill Gates to Mark Zuckerberg. But Logos interaction designer Eli Evans says the company and, indeed, the whole BibleTech sector believes that the Information Revolution is doing to the "academic priesthood" what the Protestant Reformation did to Catholic priests—and laypeople.

"The academy does a good job of teaching you the tribal language and creating new initiates," Evans says. "It's not really about giving you information. It's about having great conversations." But working with BibleTech all day has had much the same effect, he says. "It has shifted my imagination of what's possible. It's like being introduced to different kinds of music I never knew existed. It demystified the text for me, making it more mundane and more beautiful at the same time."

BibleTech has provided personal epiphanies, such as when he learned the Hebrew word for bread, *lehem*. "*Lehem* is bread! Bethlehem means 'House of Bread'! Jesus is the Bread of Life! Hebrew is magic!" But the same software that draws such connections also taught him to think more skeptically—even about the very connections that got him so excited, Evans said. "What we're doing here makes it very easy to run with theological scissors."

The tools can be used, to use an example several people referenced, to develop an intense numerological theory about the significance of the 153 fish caught in John 21. It's kind of a throwback to the early church, when preachers loved pontificating on repeated words, images, and numbers in disparate biblical books. But database-driven interactive text seems to especially encourage this kind of reading, where one simple mouse click pulls up thousands of pages of cross-references and

commentary on each word. It's an awful lot like 2001's *A Beautiful Mind*, where Nobel laureate John Nash is able to see real patterns no one else had seen—but also sees patterns that don't really exist.

However, Evans says, "the access to information will dampen that effect. It makes possible easy information and easy verification."

Access to information was the old problem. Logos has been blowing up books for years now. They know how to take a new volume and turn it into data. Now the big issue is sifting through that information and curating it.

Hence the selling points for the latest version of Logos. Search for the word "Jesus" as a basic Bible word search on, say, BibleGateway.com or a paper concordance

that put Jesus in Jerusalem won't return "Then the devil took him to the holy city" (Matt. 4:5), but it will in Logos. True, most of those examples have long been compiled in books. The difference is that now they're compiled in databases. (So you can see, for example, whether Jesus talked more about money when he was in Jerusalem than when he was traveling the Judean countryside.)

At the Logos Outdoor Center (below), employees can get their bike professionally tuned or borrow a kayak or tent. The Commons has shelves full of DVDs and console games to borrow or to play on the massive flat-screen TVs, next to foosball and Ping-Pong tables. A music center has guitars, keyboards, and drums. But during CT's visit, everyone was just working at their desks (left).



dance, and you get about 800 references. Search for it on Logos, where all of the pronouns referring to Jesus are tagged (all 2,917 of them), along with every time Jesus is the implied subject of a verb (2,280 times), and all the times he's referred to as "Teacher" (33 times) or "Son" (96) or "Lord" (622) or anything else: That's more than 10,000 references to Jesus. That can get unwieldy. Then again, Logos's search function makes it awfully easy to find all the times Jesus heals, all the objects of Jesus' love, and all the things he said about money. Most searches for passages

"You can 'master'—by which I mean slice and dice—a huge amount of information now that it doesn't require memorizing lots of facts," says Evans. You don't have to be an expert, he says. You just have to know how to search.

Such was the genesis of Logos. "I got into using computers in the third grade," Pritchett says. "I had a word processor for Apple IIs, and I had to use 50 disks to search the whole Bible. It was interesting tech, but it wasn't that useful."

In 1986, around the time he found an online bulletin board where someone had

# Can a flow chart of Bible data help you see things that straight text can't? If you put the Bible in a flow chart, is it still the Bible?

posted the King James Version, he learned about a new algorithm that would search text files faster. He put the two together and built a mailing list of people he thought would be interested in a “faster Strong’s [concordance],” and sold it as a hobby while working for Microsoft.

“I still don’t fit the typical Logos user profile,” he says. “I’m not the Bible scholar I wish I was. When I go deeper into the Bible, it’s still pretty shallow [compared to] most of our users.” The son of a librarian, Pritchett says the thing he loves most about his software is that he can mark it up endlessly. “[In my childhood,] we couldn’t take notes in our Bibles. We couldn’t highlight anything. I take a lot more notes and highlights now.”

Most of the time, he says, he uses the program to follow a daily reading plan and to read an occasional sermon. He does carry it to church on his iPad. In Washington, he says, there’s no stigma about turning on a screen in the sanctuary, and no one wonders if you’re checking your e-mail. He doesn’t check e-mail, but he does find himself going from “following along” with the sermon to “skipping ahead” and reading Logos’s study notes.

“I usually can’t watch TV without looking stuff up on at Wikipedia, either,” he

says. “I like to follow rabbit trails. But I want curated rabbit trails. I want to be taken to places I’d never go to.”

## WHAT TO DO WITH AN OX

It’s no surprise that Pritchett finds himself following rabbit trails when he opens his digital Bible. Digital text is rabbit trails all the way down. The promise of a radically hypertext Bible is that it allows us to see and explore the unity of Scripture—its connections and themes and stories. “I think a lot more about intertestamental connections,” one Logos worker told me. “When I see the Old Testament quoted in the New Testament, I can go into the original languages and look at word meanings, and see harmony where I used to see discord.”

That connectivity is one of the reasons the Bible geeks are so enthralled by visualizations and infographics, which are pasted all over Logos cubicle walls and fill Stephen Smith’s OpenBible.info blog. One of Smith’s first Bible hacking projects was to crowdsource 340,000 cross-references and then chart them. Elsewhere, esv has a nifty chart of cross-references, as do other authors. The atheists have even made one, charting the supposed contradictions between verses. It’s silly, but then a lot of those 340,000 “cross-references” have

only the slightest of connections, too.

One unpublished infographic that was popular inside Logos was by Vincent Setterholm, an information architect in the company’s content innovation team. It’s a massive flow chart describing what to do with an ox. (Was your oxen harmed? Did your ox fall into a pit? Do you own the pit?)

“It was inspired by a handheld electronic 20 questions game that was uncannily efficient at identifying just about any object I could imagine,” Setterholm said. “It made me wonder if the 613 *mitzvot* could be represented in a flow chart of yes/no answers. My working title for the project, of which only ‘Oxen Law’ and ‘Mold Law’ are drafted, was the *Toracle*. It was a proof-of-concept, and perhaps more amusing than edifying.”

He’s probably right that some would find it snarky or irrelevant Bible trivia. (We liked it enough to publish it with Setterholm’s permission: [ChristianityToday.com/go/oxenlaw](http://ChristianityToday.com/go/oxenlaw)). But the point was never to tell people what to do with an ox. It was to try out one way to put some of the Bible back together after taking it apart and turning it into data. Could it be that a flow chart can help you see things that straight text can’t? If you put the Bible in a flow chart, is it still the Bible? That’s the question posed at BibleTech by Keith Williams and fellow Tyndale Bible editor Adam Graber (a media ecologist by training; it’s hard to find a Bible programmer who actually has a degree in a computer science field). Most evangelicals wouldn’t consider the History Channel miniseries *The Bible* to actually be “the Bible,” but do their neighbors? What makes it not “the Bible”? If you answered, “Because it leaves most of the Bible out and puts a lot of extrabiblical stuff in,” consider that most evangelicals, when they say they read “the Bible,” often read only a few verses with a commentary, study notes, or an attached devotional.

“Most of us read the Bible in a very atomized way,” Williams says. “It’s part of our Western culture and our Christian culture. And in one sense, that’s exactly what grad school does. In each course, you’re laser focused. My thesis was just on Paul and the law in Galatians 3:27–28.”

Study Bibles design, Bible tech, and advanced education essentially encourage the idea that reading “vertically” is better than reading “horizontally,” he says. It suggests that you’ll be wiser if you stop and drill down into commentaries and original languages than if you just read on to the



next sentence. “Atomization isn’t always bad,” Williams says. “But it is when people engage Scripture only that way. The problem isn’t created by digital culture, but it is exacerbated by digital culture.”

When we open our print Bibles, he points out, the most eye-catching things on the page are almost never what we would consider the text of Scripture. If it’s a study Bible, notes are usually given design priority. If not, our chapter numbers (introduced in the 1200s) or section titles draw the eye.

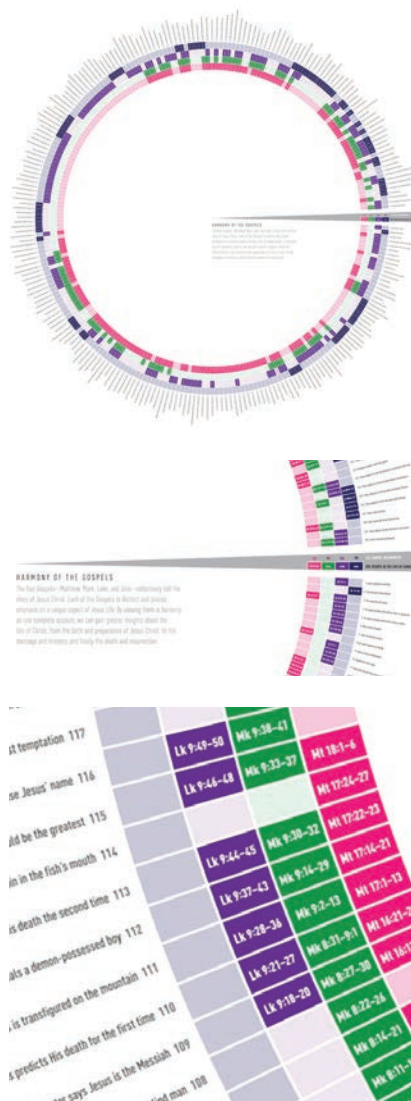
Online Bibles almost always make things worse, Williams says. Search for a verse, and search results often return only that verse—not that verse in context. But if digital media can really disrupt print media, he asks, why not disrupt verse numbers, added after the high-speed press so that multiple people in a room could refer to the same passage? “Now you can all go to Galatians 3:27, but none of you have to actually see that it’s verse 27,” he says. “You could treat the verse numbers as invisible metadata, and start referring to things as a community.” So long as individual verses are the primary way we engage with Scripture, he says, “Philippians 4:13 is going to refer to an athletic performance rather than perseverance through need.”

And if tagging verses in print led to unforeseen rampant prooftexting, what might be the side effects of digital Bible atomization, where every word is turned into its own piece of data and tagged (in Logos’s case) at least seven different ways?

## HACKING THE BIBLE

But that’s too clean a comparison, says Williams. Tyndale’s print Bibles are deeply tagged and based on a massive number of scripts and schemas. In the code for the Chronological Study Bible, for example, “The text is almost as atomized as it can be. The difference is that the final product reflects my decisions on how it should be instead of the user’s.” The code lets Tyndale create new Bibles in months instead of years, and lets them publish them simultaneously for bookstores, iPads, Kindles, and several other formats.

“I totally felt like I was hacking the Bible,” Williams said. “Almost everything I was doing wouldn’t have been possible in a predigital time.” And people still love their print Bibles: The New Living Translation came out in 1996, but Tyndale sold more print copies of it in 2012 (the last year it had figures for at press time) than ever before.



Christians have been publishing Gospel harmonies since Tatian’s *Diatessaron*, written around A.D. 160. Taking Scripture apart isn’t new. But graphics like this harmony, from New York designer Yingyan Huang, illustrate the current eagerness to remix Scripture as visual data, not just narrative text.

Zondervan, meanwhile, has tried to address some of the problems Williams noted about extrabiblical additions being given heavier weight than Bible text. In a recent Bible they published, the design did not highlight notes or chapter numbers, but rather the most popular verses, based on what verses people looked up on Bible Gateway.com.

“It did not do well in the market,” says Smith. It may have only exacerbated the versification problem. With different type sizes, weights, and colors, it was painful to read an entire chapter. Or it may be that, while evangelical Protestants have always wanted more and more people reading the Bible, they can get nervous about “popular” use of it. The Bible geeks may be right that the technology is radically democratizing Bible scholarship, undercutting traditional gatekeeping. But it may be a long time before we trust “collective intelligence” on the Bible, let alone our own.

As more of us switch from paper Bibles to data-driven electronic ones, our personal Bible reading may start to look like the Bible hackers’. Not all of them swipe tablets in the sanctuary; some avoid screens at church altogether. Some are drawn to liturgical churches; others find themselves leaving them. Most of them said that working on the Bible all day made them less likely to spend time with it after hours. They found it harder to read Scripture without technical questions distracting them. But almost all of them said their work made them more curious about different interpretations of the text, especially the text as a whole.

“I find myself more gracious,” said one Logos employee. “I’m a lot less likely to call someone a heretic since I can generally retrace their steps and see how they got there.”

Still, subtle heresies really can creep in, Smith says. It’s true of a digital library of thousands of commentaries. It’s true of Franken-Bible translations, too. “How do you trust that what you’re reading isn’t just wrong enough to lead you down a totally wrong path? You can get the questions. That’s easy. The hard part is getting the answers.”

But even that might be simpler than getting people to keep reading the Bible text, with all those questions and answers just a click away.

CT

**TED OLSEN** is CT’s managing editor for news and online journalism.



— GLOBAL GOSPEL PROJECT —

# Lament *for a* Divided





# E

*cumenism* is the word that describes the historical movement for global church unity. I used to think of it as either a boring academic exercise in doctrinal compromise, or a winner-takes-all struggle to forge one monolithic superchurch.

After five years in the field (I work for a Lutheran ecumenical organization), I'm no longer dismissive. The quest for church unity is a wild, wondrous, and strange act of penitence for Christians' often callous disregard of that little word *one* in John 17 and the Nicene Creed. We confess that the Holy Spirit has called one church into being. But almost all the evidence points in the opposite direction. What does this mean? And how should we respond to it?

**WHY THE  
ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT  
KEEPS WORKING TO  
OVERCOME FRAYING  
IN THE BODY OF CHRIST.**

## **Coping with Division**

Throughout church history, Christians have come up with many ingenious ways of explaining why the one church can be divided into many factions. The easiest, of course, is to say that everyone outside of a particular circle is not actually part of the church. That was how the church father Cyprian dealt with it: By definition the church is one, indivisible; so if there appear to be "divisions," the reality is simply the true church versus a wicked pretender. And outside the church, there is no salvation.

But this approach works only if the isolation is strictly maintained. What happens if Christians in one "church" encounter those of another "church" and are startled to find genuine faith, piety, and good works?

At this point the more generous but almost as problematic notion of the "invisible church" comes in. It's usually based on Jesus' parable about the wheat and the tares. The basic idea is that godliness describes only individuals, not institutions. We all know that our church is full of inauthentic Christians. Meanwhile, we've discovered that their church actually has some authentic ones. Therefore, the one true church is invisible, known only to God. Visible, historical communities are merely incidental to the business of being the real church.

These may seem like opposite solutions to the unity problem: one maximizes the

# church

BY SARAH HINLICKY WILSON

importance of church structures, and the other minimizes it. But underlying both is a refusal to take church history seriously. And that's a problem.

If there's any doctrine that must take real, lived history into account in order to be meaningful, it's ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church. But both approaches ignore inconvenient historical realities. Defining a specific church as *the* church ignores the Holy Spirit's capacity to move beyond boundaries and structures created by humans. But defining the church as authentically Christian individuals, wherever they are, reduces structural divisions to matters of indifference, when in reality they foster hostility among those who should be calling each other brother and sister. The protracted religious wars in 16th- and 17th-century Europe were proof enough that the notion of an "invisible church" couldn't stop Christians from killing each other.

Embarrassingly enough, Christians did not theologically confront their internal violence until outsiders called them out on it. It was the experience of competing on the mission field that exposed the hypocrisy (dare we say heresy?) of competing factions, all claiming to be the supreme bearers of the truth and love of Christ. Potential converts were not impressed, and the missionaries knew it.

## No Successful Model

The result, at the famous Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, was the birth of the ecumenical movement. The primary goal was not fattening up an underdeveloped doctrine or even reducing intra-Christian hatred. It was about making a credible witness to those who did not yet believe in Christ. "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another," Jesus said (John 13:35, ESV). But what if the disciples don't love each other, and even build up walls to keep it that way? Disunity is a scandal to the gospel and a stumbling block to faith.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus prayed three times to the Father on behalf of his



disciples "that they may be one as we are one" (John 17:11, 21–22). The desire to uphold that prayer has been the driving force of the ecumenical movement. But the way forward has hardly been obvious. The oneness of the church has proved to be a paradox like the other great paradoxes of faith: the humanity–divinity of Christ, the already–not yet of salvation, the sinner–saint reality of the believing Christian. The church is divided and yet somehow still one.

No single proposal for unity has won out. One difficulty is that each Christian community tends to create a model that reflects its own preexisting concept of the church, which is in turn based on the peculiarities of its history. It's a truism

by now that Catholicism absorbed the model of the Roman Empire, Eastern Orthodoxy took after the tight state-church alliances in its areas of origin, and Reformation-era Protestants embraced a growing separation between sacred and secular authority.

The same pattern continues today. Evangelicals and Pentecostals, in their penchant for dividing and subdividing, mirror the capitalist market in providing a product for every taste. Mainline Protestants follow a franchise model, with each congregation expected to be the outpost of a central headquarters. Unity secured through networks of congregations and parachurch ministries reproduces the interconnectedness of the Internet. The freedom of migration from one Christian community to the next reflects an economy and society based on individual preferences and opportunities.

None of this means that these models of church are necessarily wrong. But it does show that churches mimic the kind of unity they see around them. It's worth asking whether a truly ecumenical model of church unity—as opposed to a denominational or a worldly one—even exists yet.

Though they haven't solved the problem of disunity, ecumenical efforts have made a difference. Pan-Christian solidarity played a vital role in ending Communism in Eastern Europe and apartheid

in South Africa. It has fostered joint service projects between Christians who previously wouldn't have trusted each other with their money. And through careful dialogue, it has discovered the astonishing commonality among Christians—far more than an emphasis on divisive issues would lead anyone to believe. At its best, ecumenism seeks to hold together matters of doctrine, church governance, and missional outreach.

## Back to the Beginning

It would be tempting to blame some particular person or party for church division—somebody who disrupted the ancient harmony with false teaching or



bad behavior. But that disunity began in the pages of Scripture.

Dissension within the church started early. Think of the break between Paul and Barnabas, the conflict between Peter and Paul, the unjust Communion practices at Corinth, and the false teachers who led the faithful astray. Paul endlessly exhorted his fellow disciples to love each other, as did John. They wouldn't have had to repeat themselves had unity been happening naturally and automatically.

There are many reasons for internal conflict, some sinful and some legitimate (though nearly everyone thinks their reasons are legitimate and only minimally sinful). But Paul makes an important distinction: While he acknowledges that "there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized" (1 Cor. 11:19, ESV), there must be "no divisions among you" (1:10). The Greek word there is *schismata*, from which we get "schism." And the reason is that "in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13, ESV).

Church turns divisive and ideological when it is severed from the gospel that brought it into being. And at its most simple and radical, the gospel is this: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God came after sinners who wanted nothing to do with their Creator, gathering up a community of enemies and making them into a family, a fellowship, a church. The church is the epicenter of enemy reconciliation in the world, starting with the severest estrangement possible—between God and human beings—and working out from there to repair all forms of human estrangement.

This sort of gospel has incredible social consequences. In the New Testament, it united Jews and Gentiles. After ten chapters of Jewish-only missions in Acts, Peter is suddenly confronted first with a vision and then with the pious Gentile Cornelius, who comes to faith in Christ so fast that Peter can't even finish his sermon. The brothers back home in Jerusalem were none too pleased to hear that the "unclean" had been baptized. But Peter countered, "If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

That silenced their objections, allowing their disbelief to give way to a bigger and bolder faith: "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:17–18, ESV).

The Pauline communities later came to understand the intrinsic link between the gospel and the church: Christ "himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14, ESV). A mere invisible unity wouldn't do justice to the Cross. Its results had to be shown in the real, visible, lived fellowship between old enemies.

## Love the Heretic, Hate the Heresy

There is a serious objection to all of this and to ecumenism itself. What if enemies of Christ have snuck inside the gates? False

teachers were condemned and sent away by the apostles; shouldn't we do the same? Isn't division preferable in certain cases?

The matter finally comes down to how we view the "enemy" that the false teacher has become. Is the heretic an enemy like Satan, to be thrown into the lake of fire and tormented forever? Or one of the lost sheep whom Christ goes to great lengths to rescue, the ungodly for whom Christ died? The truth is, no heretic will recover from his heresy as long as the orthodox permanently reject him. And there's always the possibility that buried beneath the heresy is a neglected shard of truth. Lutheran theologian Arthur Carl Piepkorn liked to say that heresies were *Bußpredigten*, meaning "repentance sermons": They were rebukes to the mainstream church for overlooking some aspect of Christian truth and love.

Sticking with enemies and heretics is not for the faint of Spirit. It means forgiving seventy times seven. It means humbly counting others more significant than yourself. It means blessing, not cursing, those who persecute you. It means, in short, doing unto others as Christ has done unto you.

## Why Try?

Many still doubt the importance of unity. Often that's because of false perceptions about what unity might actually entail. And often it's due to a sinful protectiveness regarding one's own corner of Christendom. But refusing to strive toward unity is like saying, "Why bother trying to be holy when God has already declared us righteous?" God has given us the gift of salvation; we can live in contradiction to that gift, or we can be transformed by it into holy people. Likewise, God has called one church to be the one body of Christ; we can live in contradiction with that one church, or we can reconcile and make visible our unity in Christ.

In the end, it's not a matter of what we think would be best for the world or for the advancement of Christianity. It's simply a matter of living into Jesus' prayer for us: "that they may be one."

CT

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# Woman Under

# CONSTRUCTION

THE CT INTERVIEW

**Jen Hatmaker**  
**is joining the lineup of**  
**'super-Christian' reality TV stars.**  
**She just wants to love**  
**her neighbors.**



*Interview by Kate Shellnutt*

**E**VEN IN AUSTIN, TEXAS, a city proud of “keeping it weird,” Jen Hatmaker and her family of seven live a distinctly weird life. The writer and speaker calls their weekends a “crazy chaotic show, from Friday to Monday,” as she flies between Christian conferences before joining her husband, Brandon, at their Free Methodist church plant for worship each Sunday.

Amid quippy asides and Instagram photos of everyone smiling wide, Hatmaker chronicles her family—three kids “the old-fashioned way” and two adopted from Ethiopia in 2011—on her popular blog. Her 2012 book, *7: An Experimental Mutiny Against Excess* (B&H Publishing), remains a bestseller as it chronicles her family’s 30-day fasts to combat excessive consumption.

“Jen is not merely a writer or a speaker. She makes readers laugh, but she also makes them uncomfortable in their complacency,” said Jennifer Lyell, trade book publisher at B&H. “She leads them to conviction, but she also reminds them of the grace that binds.”

This summer, the Hatmakers’ family, faith, and 105-year-old farmhouse will debut on cable TV. HGTV reached out to

Hatmaker last June, after she appeared on the *Today* show to discuss her blog post confessing to being the “worst end-of-school-year-mom ever.”

“We told HGTV, ‘Listen, we are super-Christian, you guys. This is not gray. We’re all the way. Brandon’s a pastor, I’m a Christian author and speaker—this is who we are,’” she said. “They said, ‘Yes. All of it.’ That’s how they’re portraying us on the show, which is lovely.”

The eight-episode series, *Family Under Construction*, is scheduled to air this July, following the success of faith-friendly reality shows such as A&E’s *Duck Dynasty* and TLC’s *19 Kids and Counting*.

Nearly 15 years after moving to Austin and six years after planting Austin New Church, the Kansas-born Oklahoma Baptist University graduate has found a home in Texas’ artsy, largely unchurched music hub. “We are a city who loves mercy and grace. For me, it’s a real easy jump to

introduce my community to Jesus, because he kind of loves mercy and grace too,” she said.

A Women of Faith speaker and the author of eight books, the 39-year-old has joined a new generation of women leaders who reach audiences in both traditional ministry settings and online. She was also part of the team that launched last month’s sold-out IF:Gathering, a national women’s conference held in her hometown.

CT associate editor Kate Shellnutt talked to Hatmaker about her busy life, the decision to bring her family onto television, and the healing power of friends around a fire pit.

**You are a blogger, a teacher, an author, a pastor’s wife, and a mother. How do you describe yourself?**

Well, I’m a mom, I have five kids, and I’ve been married for 20 years, and I live in this little community, and these are my friends.

# ***I am almost embarrassingly optimistic about the generation coming up in Christ. I find them to be incredibly brave, educated, smart, passionate about the Word, and fairly fearless.***

I think of myself in ordinary terms. It seems hilarious and otherworldly that I happen to have these other things I do, like writing and speaking. They still surprise me.

**You have had so many milestones in your life: planting a church, adopting children, taking the 7 challenge, and now buying a house. How do you discern what big thing to take on next?**

Just this morning I was thinking about my family in terms of the show. We're smack in the middle of filming. We have enormous crews of people at our house almost every day. We're constantly on camera and in transit in terms of living. We are like squatters on our own property. I was thinking about how remarkably well my kids are doing with it. They're having a good time with it, and so are we.

Half my friends would be freaking out if this were their reality. They absolutely would have thrown in the towel already, and we are enjoying it. So I think God has just designed our family with a high tolerance for big moving parts.

**Some people are a little hesitant about the idea that your book 7 is against excess, and here you are on national tv, doing a home makeover. How did you reconcile those things in your mind?**

I addressed that with readers early on, completely understanding that tension and navigating it ourselves. When it comes down to it, it was a handful of factors that made us feel solid about moving forward, one of which is just that our little farmhouse is simple and right up the street. Honestly, when Brandon and I sat down together with the quiet of our own minds and the counsel of our closest friends and family, we thought, *For whatever reason, we have the chance to have a place in a world we never had access to.*

It's a completely different world from the one where Brandon and I have influence. I don't know if we'll get something like that again, where we have such a public place with a completely different

demographic. We think it's a gift, it's an opportunity, and we determined from the beginning to handle this well—with integrity and the love of Christ in us and through us and in our family.

I have no idea what God will do with it or through this show, but I hope that it makes him more famous.

**The idea of giving Christianity the good name we should be giving it, that God deserves, is a big theme for you. How did that start?**

We are in the one zip code that is nothing like the rest of Texas. Because my friends and neighbors and community and city are so unchurched, I have developed a heart and love for my community that doesn't know Jesus. I don't have the luxury of being completely immersed in Christian subculture, where you can insulate yourself. The recurring theme I hear is feeling alienated from and maligned by the Christian community. You can't hear that from people whom you have loved forever without admitting that where there's a lot of smoke, there's some fire.

I don't know if there was a moment when I thought, *I need to address this.* It's just deeply seated in my bones that I love these people, and that we're not really put here to be Jesus' defenders. We are put here to be his representatives. That is part and parcel of my mission, every day on earth. The best I can do in the human body, with all my failures and failings and struggles, is to represent him well because he is so good and so worthy, and I know if people know him, if they just get a glimpse of Jesus, they will love him.

**When you look at the church at large, at the conferences you attend, what excites you the most?**

I am almost embarrassingly optimistic about the generation coming up in Christ. I find them to be incredibly brave, more resourced than probably any generation ever, educated, smart, passionate about the Word, and fairly fearless. When I think

about my friends and myself when we were in our early 20s, we were clamping down pretty hard on safety, security, and comfort. What I'm seeing in the next generation is an abandon to follow Jesus, even as numbers are shrinking in American churches.

**You draw attention through your writing to a lot of charity causes. What would you tell people who are overwhelmed by the opportunities to serve?**

Pick one option and run with it. We don't have to have a hundred things; it won't make us holier to have so many irons in the fire. I wonder if God cannot use a group of committed believers who are willing to burrow deep down into single issues, more so than even a bunch of us who are spread so thin that we can go only an inch deep in all of them.

**Many popular women speakers and writers get positive comments on the way they look. As Christian women, how do we ensure that the desire to present ourselves well doesn't lead to superficiality?**

We Christian women are damned if we do, damned if we don't. Seriously. You tip too far one way, and you're vain. You tip too far the other way, and you're falsely humble. You just cannot win. Certainly, I can't. So when people are kind to me about my appearance, I'm like, "Whoa, thank you!" Because nine times out of ten, I have on my glasses and yoga pants and my hair in a dirty bun. "You think my hair looks nice? That's a miracle."

I wish we would hold this conversation a little looser. None of it defines our holiness or our walk with the Lord or even our identity. Sometimes I even grow weary of the conversation. I'm like, "Gals, let's just live and let live. If that's how you want to roll, man, roll with your press-on nails. If you want to be the kind of girl that wears jeans and a T-shirt every day, wear it."

**What do you do when you're worn out?**

DENNIS BURNETT PHOTOGRAPHY





God has always used people to nourish me. So when I am worn out, I know that I need my people. I know that I need unplugged space with my family and with my best friends. My best friends are the same ones I've had for years. I know I need to turn my phone and computer off and have my friends over for dinner so we can sit around a fire pit. That's it. God is in that space. To me, community is sacred and also healing.

**Wrapping up filming and renovation, Jen and Brandon spend the evening at home with kids (clockwise from the top) Ben (10), Remy (8), Sydney (13), and Caleb (11), while their oldest, Gavin, played soccer. 'It sounds like a lot going on in one family,' Hatmaker said. 'But this is the only family we have and the only life we know.'**

In addition to just circling the wagons with my people, a little bit of quiet time with God. And I don't mean it in the

Christian-y way of "quiet time." I mean, just a little bit of space with no distractions where I can hear from God. I'm with God a lot in powerful ways—at church, at big conferences, in big movements and real public spaces. But it's so renewing when I can be with God away from all eyes, from all writing, from all social media, from all listening ears. When I am in his Word just as a learner, as someone who's beloved, I can take a deep breath. **CT**





Survivor Teresa Lea says, 'I hit a wall around age 25. I was a successful professional with a great looking marriage... and a piece inside of me that was dying.'



# When Abuse Comes to Light

How a generation of children, sexually abused overseas, aims to protect others before it happens.

SALLY GUPTON

When Teresa Lea's parents signed up with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA) to become missionaries in Africa in the 1970s, they sent 5-year-old Teresa to boarding schools in Gabon and Ivory Coast. She spent 12 years there, learning how to add, read—and, if she wanted to eat, perform oral sex.

When Lea tried to tell her parents of the abuse, the school authorities told her parents she had an overactive imagination. Disbelieved by her parents, Lea didn't mention the abuse again until she was an adult. Lea went to therapy, ended her marriage, and changed her career. She slowly began to heal. In the process, she found other adult missionary kids (MKS) doing the same thing, in part by attending the first-ever interdenominational conference for MK abuse survivors.

For too long, the abuse of missionary children was hidden or dismissed as "false memory." No longer. Rich Darr, who survived physical and emotional abuse at the CMA's Mamou school in West Africa, said abuse there was rampant in the 1950s through the early 1970s. "Far from being an isolated incident in the CMA, abuse was going on at many of their boarding schools," Darr said. "As the Mamou Alliance Academy case was coming into the open, we heard many reports of similar abuses from Alliance boarding schools such as Quito Alliance, Sentani, Indonesia; Bongolo School, Gabon; Zamboanga School, Philippines; Dalat, Malaysia; and more."

The CMA wasn't the only Christian organization facing accusations. An independent investigation found New Tribes Mission MKS suffered sexual, physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse at the hands of 12 adults at its Fanda boarding school in Senegal. MKS at a Presbyterian Church (USA) boarding school and a Methodist-Presbyterian hostel in the Congo

were also abused, according to an independent inquiry.

In addition to survivors now speaking more openly about their abuse, many Christian institutions have prioritized abuse recovery and prevention. But the most significant changes are among the survivors. As a group, survivors are becoming more proactive, with many systematically pushing for awareness, reforms, new policies, and better laws.

## Religion Gone Bad

Ongoing support for abused MKS is mostly at the grassroots, said Moody Bible Institute professor and abuse survivor Andrew J. Schmutzer. Victims typically find each other online, through websites and Facebook.

"It's very much a ground-up movement," he said. "It's an imperfect and inefficient way. But what other alternative is there? We know our websites, we know the agencies and denominations that are doing a good job, and we're networking with them." Abuse of MKS, which began surfacing in the late 1980s, is still happening, he said. "We don't have statistics on prevalence rates. Obviously, the human heart hasn't changed."

It doesn't hurt to have leading evangelicals talk about their pasts. Compassion International president emeritus Wess Stafford and *The Shack* author William Paul Young were sexually abused as MKS, and both have spoken publicly about it. In 1999, adult MKS from Mamou School created MK Safety Net, a support

### MISSIONS

BY SARAH EEKHOFF ZYLSTRA

and advocacy group.

Last April, MK Safety Net sponsored the first interdenominational conference for MK abuse survivors. *Christianity Today* attended the event in Rolling Meadows, Illinois, where 45 survivors spoke of the abuse they had experienced as young children. Several of them said they believed that just being sent to boarding school—even if a child didn't get raped or beaten—was abuse in itself. Family was “something you did on holidays, not something you were in,” one survivor said. Several therapists were on hand to assist survivors.

In these and other forums, survivors are increasingly detailing the internal, psychological, and religious dynamics of abuse. Just identifying them aids the healing process.

For example, one problem for MKs is the pervasive God-talk, Schmutzer said. On the mission field, there is no place to express doubts. “You can't ever say, ‘I don't understand God,’ or ‘God is unfair.’ In the mission context where God is the wallpaper, you aren't allowed to question—that's dissent.”

This leads to an enormous amount of cynicism, Schmutzer said. “I see this in MKs at Moody who are spiritually cynical, in part because of hypocrisies they've lived close to.”

“All the pieces were contorted or twisted,” Lea said. “We were told we would be preventing the salvation of the people that our parents were here to save if we told the truth.”

India Baker, who endured emotional and physical abuse at Ivory Coast Academy in the 1990s, said, “They told us, ‘Don't tell your parents anything bad, because if you do, you're keeping them from doing what they're supposed to do on the mission field. You're keeping them from doing God's work.’ I wanted to be the good Christian girl. I wanted God to love me.”

In some ways, missionary parents unwittingly set their children up for abuse, said Rachel Steffen, a former missionary with New Tribes Mission whose children were abused at boarding school. “We taught them to be very compliant, very obedient. We talked about how important our work was for God. We even used words like, ‘You need to be a good little soldier for Jesus.’”

The boarding school model, which was required by the CMA until 2000, can weaken the family and isolate children, making them vulnerable to predators.

“There were a variety of things that



**Decades-old photos of life at Mamou (above, far right) depict chapel attendance and children at play. It would be years before allegations of abuse became public in 1995.**

happened when we lost the sense of family and even sibling subculture,” said Lois Kunkel, whose parents were missionaries with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Liberia in the 1960s and '70s.

The adults at Kunkel's school often used the threat of God's omniscience to coerce children to tell on one another, she said. “They would isolate us, take us one by one, and say, ‘Who did this? God knows. Will you tell?’ I remember crying and telling on my sister and some friends because God knew. There was an anxiety about God, who knew all things.”

Survivors need help in rethinking the many metaphors for God—loving Father, for example—and getting over the rhetoric of verses like, “I urge you, brothers, to present your bodies as living sacrifices,” Schmutzer said. “This language is toxic to survivors.”

Some survivors look to other religions

to find healing. Lea spent years looking for faith in Asian religions and dabbled in Wicca. “I knew that faith was important to me, but God as he was portrayed to me was not the God I wanted to love,” she said. “What brought me back was grace—that I could redefine who God was for me.” Still, Lea doesn't label herself a Christian. “The word *Christian* is associated with past pain,” she said. “I say I choose to follow Christ's example.”

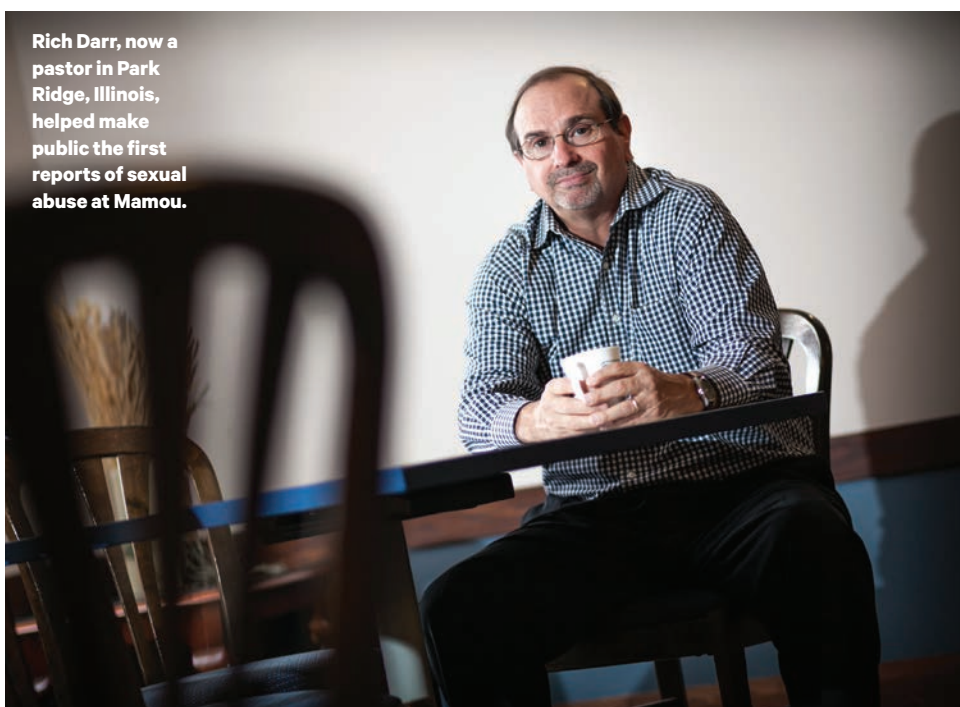
For other survivors, Christ's suffering has become an increasing source of hope, Schmutzer said. “God doesn't try to heal in absentia. He comes into the brokenness and absorbs it into himself on the cross. He identifies with the plight of humanity when he says, ‘I thirst.’”

“Survivors need this human point of contact with Christ's suffering. As many survivors have observed, they took his clothes, too.”

## Next-Generation Protection

“The mission field can be a very dangerous

**Rich Darr, now a pastor in Park Ridge, Illinois, helped make public the first reports of sexual abuse at Mamou.**





For some survivors, Christ's suffering has become an increasing source of hope, survivor Andrew Schmutzer said. **'God doesn't try to heal in absentia. He comes into the brokenness and absorbs it into himself on the cross.'**

place for a child," said Boz Tchividjian, founder and executive director of Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment (GRACE) and one of the most vocal organizers of survivor response. At a Religion Newswriters Association conference in 2013, Tchividjian (grandson of Billy Graham and brother of pastor Tullian Tchividjian) said he believed that U.S. evangelicals were worse than the Catholic Church in handling abuse. "The unique dynamic of mission abuse is that it is happening to children who are already in a foreign culture," he said. Still, there are many signs that large Christian institutions are joining survivors in addressing the controversy more openly.

The CMA has apologized and changed its policy on boarding schools. There are 150 schools globally that serve missionary children. But only about 30 schools still offer the option of boarding, said the Association of Christian Schools International. Many missionaries teach their children at home.

New Tribes Mission, based in Sanford, Florida, hired GRACE in 2010 to conduct an independent investigation. It made a public apology afterward and opened further investigations into boarding schools in Brazil, Bolivia, and Panama.

The CMA has also written clear policies, which require all accusations to be thoroughly investigated and followed through completely. "In the '50s and '60s, little was understood or known, and I don't think people believed things were taking place," said CMA assistant vice president for international ministries Jim Malone. The CMA wants to create an environment where



children can be believed, he said. "If there was more I thought we could be doing, we'd be doing it."

The CMA was one of the founding organizations of the Child Safety Protection Network (CSPN), which offers education and resources to about 53 international mission agencies and Christian schools, CSPN board chair Becky Leverington said.

It's impossible to prove that CSPN has prevented abuse. But adult MKS who reported abuse to CSPN's member organizations have been impressed that they were taken seriously and treated compassionately. "They have expressed appreciation for the thoroughness of the response process and follow-up care received. They are also glad to know that better prevention strategies are in place," Leverington said.

In recent years, other missions groups have upgraded their practices. The Southern Baptist International Mission Board expects any short-term missionary age 18 and older to undergo a criminal background check and be trained to spot and report sexual abuse of children.

The federal government also has stronger measures available. The 2003 Protect Act makes it a federal crime for Americans to have sex overseas with anyone under age 18. It also eliminates the statute of limitations for child abuse. (One former New Tribes missionary to Brazil was sentenced in a U.S. federal court to 58 years in prison for producing pornography involving tribal children.)

Mission organizations that do not have prevention and response policies in place could lure offenders, Leverington said. The culture of trust between staff members, staff turnover (leading to poor screening and training), and the sometimes naive belief that "it couldn't happen in our organization" can make mission organizations vulnerable.

"We are helping organizations adopt

best-practice standards in child safety, but there are a lot more out there who don't yet have this on their radar," Leverington said.

In Canada, the pressure to put focus on safety policies and training is aided by insurance companies, which won't cover abuse claims unless the faith-based organization has policies in place, said Melodie Bissell, president of the abuse prevention organization Winning Kids.

"Six years ago, maybe 50 percent of the ministries we worked with had a policy in place," she said. "Now, of those we work with, probably 80 percent have a policy in place. We're doing so much better than we were 40 years ago. But we still have a long, long way to go."

Survivors need to know that their denomination or mission organization is taking steps to prevent abuse. They also need the organization to acknowledge and accept responsibility, said Beverly Shellrude Thompson, president of MK Safety Net and a Mamou survivor. They need their perpetrator brought to justice in a criminal court and kept away from children. They need enough money for continuing therapy, and they need help with their families, she said. On the MK Safety Net website, the organization shows results of its survey of policies enacted by the 25 mission organizations associated with MK abuse. So far, 9 of the organizations have responded.

For Teresa Lea, being abused as a child had lifelong consequences. "I hit a wall around age 25," Lea said. "I was a successful professional with a great looking marriage and a good home, and a piece inside of me that was dying." She said her connection with other survivors in a Christian context has been an essential step toward recovery. MK Safety Net will have its next one-day conference on Saturday, May 17, in Corning, New York.

CT

**SARAH EEKHOFF ZYLSTRA** is a journalist in the Chicago area.



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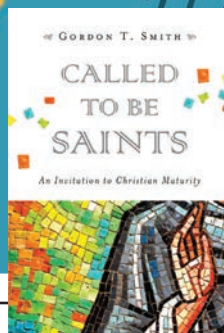
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# REVIEWS

R

KEITH NEGLEY



## HOW HOLINESS HAPPENS TODAY

Gordon T. Smith describes how modern disciples receive the DNA of Christ.





**O**ver the past 35 years or so, evangelical interest in the classical spiritual disciplines has grown exponentially, thanks to the groundbreaking work of writers like Richard Foster, Dallas Willard, and Henri Nouwen. We increasingly understand, as Nouwen expressed it, that the spiritual life “involves human effort,” a disciplined embrace of such concrete means of grace as prayer, silence, worship, simplicity, and service to others.

Gordon T. Smith, president and professor of systematic theology at Ambrose University College in Calgary, Alberta, applauds these developments within a tradition that, in its early years, had focused largely on evangelism and conversion. But what, he asks, is the underlying purpose of the spiritual disciplines? Why pray, worship, fast, or lead a simple life? In *Called to Be Saints: An Invitation to Christian Maturity* (IVP Academic) ★★★★★, Smith offers an answer: We do these things to grow as believers, to become ever more holy.

### CULTIVATING OUR UNION

*Holiness* is a loaded term, one with a checkered reputation. “Holy” people are often portrayed in film and books as mean, angry, self-righteous, hypocritical, screamingly judgmental, perfectionistic, emotionally stunted, and lifeless. Few of us would want to spend an evening with such people. And false holiness is especially unattractive (even though, in our honest moments, we know we often behave like the very people who drive us crazy).

Yet all of us have, at one time or another, encountered holiness with an attractive, loving face. For me, Julian of Norwich, Francis of Assisi, Billy Graham, Pope Francis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Mother Teresa come to mind. Most of us have been blessed with Christlike relatives, friends, and acquaintances whose holiness we long to imitate. Seeing their example, we yearn for something similar, for a harmony and integrity in our lives, a kind of

loving genuineness that weaves our words and actions into a seamless garment.

In Christ, we find the fundamental pattern and strength for becoming ever holier. Genuinely holy people, as Smith portrays them, remind me of trees in which the DNA of Christ has been fully replicated through the power of the Spirit. The transformation of an acorn into a mature oak tree—or, to shift the metaphor, of a fallen sinner into a restored image bearer—is a wondrous, grace-filled process founded upon our union with Christ.

“I will speak of how the whole of the Christian life is found ‘in Christ,’” writes Smith. “I will stress that this vision assumes a dynamic participation in the life of the ascended Christ, in real time. . . . We participate in the life of Jesus—literally, not metaphorically. . . . the extraordinary vision into which we are called is that we would be drawn into the very life of Christ and thereby into the life of God.” In summary, Smith defines spiritual formation as “the cultivation of this union with Christ.”

To be holy, then, is to be human in Christ, to find in him our life’s purpose and direction, and through union with him to become what we were designed to be from the very beginning, before sin took its toll. In Christ, our minds are invigorated. Spiritual lungs that were brittle and hardened inhale the Spirit’s fire and begin pumping life—wholeness, holiness—into us. Gradually our inner compass swings to its true north as we transition away from a self-centered life to a Christ-centered life. Our union with Christ is like a homecoming in which everything is perfectly prepared: The door opens, the lights come on, the table is set with food and drink, and fresh, clean clothing is laid out on the bed. We eat, we drink, we rest, we dress, and into the future we go.

**To be holy is to be human in Christ, to find in him our life’s purpose and direction, and through union with him to become what we were designed to be from the very beginning.**

### FOUR HALLMARKS OF HOLINESS

Union with Christ empowers a lifelong transformation toward spiritual maturity. Smith identifies four key markers in this process: the renewal of our minds and hearts through the cultivation of biblical wisdom; the discernment of our life’s meaning and the particular vocation to which Christ is calling us; the knowledge of God’s love for us and the call to love God and neighbor; and the consistent manifestation of deep-seated joy. To elaborate on each point:

First, a holy person is a wise person who possesses “a heart and mind informed by the truth, largely through the witness of the Scriptures.” Wisdom, as Smith describes it, is a healthy, well-developed moral intelligence. We especially see the evidence of it in how we spend our money, use our words, behave sexually, and willingly suffer with Christ in the midst of the present evil age.

Second, a holy person is someone who possesses “clarity about his or her calling—with the courage and humility and capacity to fulfill this vocation.” To be holy is to learn to “live in time,” to be gracefully empowered to say at the end of our days, “I have completed the work that was given to me.” Vocational holiness, then, is much more than finding the job God has for us. It is moving courageously, faithfully, hopefully, and joyfully into the life God offers us in our gift of years. “We let go of envy and resentment and embrace the life that has been given to us,” free of our sinful tendency toward self-deception and self-illusion, of “either thinking too highly of ourselves or discounting ourselves.”

Third, a holy person “knows how to love others in Christ as Christ has loved us.” Smith describes love as much more than simply being nice. Rather, love is an “invitation to social holiness. . . . It is never a stretch to speak of holiness and love in the same breath. . . . What is too often lacking is an appreciation of the deep substance of love; both its close relationship with the law and how it is fundamentally a matter of service.”

And finally, Smith identifies holy people as those who are skilled at living in a “fragmented world” with a “deep and resilient joy.” With Christ as their “emotional center,” they can endure all the storms of life without surrendering to despair.

In other words, the mark of authentic



holiness—not its caricature-driven counterfeit—is “emotional resilience, an emotional maturity that is perhaps most evident in a deep and abiding joy.” Even the reality of our own mortality nourishes our joy, rather than diminishing it. For “we truly learn to live in joy only as we learn to face our mortality and then allow that awareness to speak to us about the preciousness of life, of this day and of this moment. We can savor life by allowing this awareness to transform each moment, each day, into an opportunity

to live fully.”

Smith’s thoughts draw me, once again, to the metaphor of a mature oak tree. Its DNA has fully replicated. Its roots have gone down deep. It stands tall and strong, soaking in the sun. Its bark may have withered and some branches may have cracked, but its sap is strong and its leaves are healthy.

So, too, Smith helps us understand that the mature Christian is one whose root system has drunk deeply from the life Christ offers. In *Called to Be Saints*,

readers can gaze upon a genuine human being—ever more thoroughly rinsed from sin’s contamination—whose mind and heart have been shaped by the wonder and glory of the image of the invisible God, Christ himself. Christ’s holy image bearer has been both created and re-created, and the result is joy.

CT

**CHRISTOPHER A. HALL**, a CT editorial board member, is distinguished professor of theology and director of academic spiritual formation at Eastern University.

# Imagine All the People

Trillia Newbell casts a vision for a reconciled church. By David Swanson

United: Captured by  
God's Vision for Diversity  
Trillia J. Newbell  
(Moody Publishers)



**M**ost Christians don’t long for diversity in their churches with great passion. By and large, we rarely consider why our churches should (or how they could) more clearly reflect the global body of Christ. Other priorities compete for our attention, and however biblical it may be, tackling the complicated question of diversity often doesn’t make the cut.

But for Trillia J. Newbell, author of *United: Captured by God’s Vision for Diversity* (Moody Publishers) ★★★★★, diversity isn’t simply one issue among many, but a central way that the church communicates the gospel. It’s also very personal.

The reasons for Newbell’s passion become clear over the course of the book. Newbell, who is African American, attends a predominantly white church, one she loves dearly despite its lack of diversity. Adding to Newbell’s unique perspective is her location within Reformed theological circles, which historically have been very white. “Being black, female, and Reformed is one of those unique blends,” she writes. “I am a rare breed.”

From this perspective, Newbell does a few things I’ve not encountered in my reading on church diversity. Whether you appreciate her novel approaches will likely depend on two factors: your

experience (if any) with the challenges and joys of a diverse congregation, and how much you share Newbell’s Reformed sympathies and affiliations.

*United* often feels like a memoir. We learn about the author’s childhood and the influence of a father who displayed immense courage in the face of racism. Her time in college was especially influential. There, she met two women, one white and the other Chinese American, who would become close friends. These friendships play a prominent role through the book’s second half. Newbell quotes frequently from their correspondence to show both the complexities and rewards of diverse community. Being invited into the author’s story helps us understand her passion. It also helps us imagine what such diversity might actually look, feel, and sound like.

The book is about a tricky and somewhat discouraging topic, considering how segregated U.S. churches remain. Yet Newbell focuses her attention in other directions. Not that she ignores the challenges or ugly histories that typically hinder attempts at reconciled community. It’s just that she chooses to highlight the appealing elements of diversity, whether theological or relational. Many readers will find this approach inspirational, an

antidote to what Newbell calls “the difficulties of genuine diversity.”

*United* is closely tethered to the Reformed world of John Piper (whom she cites more than any other source), Thabiti Anyabwile, and like-minded church leaders. This is where *United* feels most limited. Given the breadth of her topic, it is surprising that Newbell didn’t interact with other evangelical perspectives on diversity, reconciliation, and multiethnic congregations. Engaging the work of scholars and writers like Soong-Chan Rah, Kathy Khang, Michael Emerson, and Christena Cleveland could have made Newbell’s passionate and inspiring vision more relatable to readers who don’t fit within the Reformed world.

Even so, with *United*, Newbell has done something admirable: She has made the conversation about congregational diversity accessible and winsome. I hope many will read this book and find their imaginations captivated by the goodness of diverse congregations that express our reconciliation, through Jesus, to God and to each other.

CT

**DAVID SWANSON** is a pastor on Chicago’s South Side and a *Leadership Journal* contributing editor. He blogs at davidswanson.wordpress.com.



**The Good of Politics:  
A Biblical, Historical,  
and Contemporary  
Introduction**  
James W. Skillen  
(Baker Academic)



# Jesus the Politician

An excerpt from *The Good of Politics: A Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Introduction*.

**T**he claim of Jesus that offended both the Jewish leaders and Pilate was that his authority came from another place, from God on high, and thus it had something directly to do with both Rome and Jerusalem. Pilate acknowledged no authority higher than the Roman emperor, who claimed to represent God on earth. If Jesus was correct, then he was indeed challenging the foundation of Caesar's claim to authority. Of course, if Jesus was a fraud or was mistaken in his claim, then he was no threat to Rome. The Jewish authorities believed they represented God, in accord with the covenant. If Jesus was correct, he was trumping their authority by the direct authorization of God.

If Jesus had been preaching the arrival of a kingdom that had nothing to do with this world, a kingdom removed from “real politics,” then neither the Jewish nor the Roman authorities would have been so upset with him. To the contrary, however, the claims that Jesus was making had to do with God's lordship over all kingdoms *on earth*, over every human authority *in this world*. Jesus presented himself as God's directly authorized prophet of the kingdom. His actions and words said even more; he was acting as if he were the promised Messiah, the promised Son of Man who had come to inaugurate the divine kingdom. Jesus, therefore, was either deranged and a fraud or his kingdom did pose a threat to everything Rome represented and challenge the position taken by the Jewish authorities.

We can see how relevant those claims are to every kind of human responsibility on earth, including human government. Jesus did not teach that his shepherding was “spiritual” and unrelated to life in this world. He did not say that his authority to teach disciples touched only theological matters. He did not teach that the brotherly, sisterly love he was urging his disciples to practice was sacred in contrast to their “secular” family relationships. To the contrary, the mission of Jesus in announcing the fulfillment of God's purposes with creation was to reconcile and redeem all that is human—all shepherding, schooling, family relationships, economic institutions, and political practices. God's kingdom does not originate in this world, nor is it confined to the life we live as sons and daughters of the first Adam. But that kingdom does have everything to do with human life in this age because our lives here and now have their entire meaning within the order of God's good creation and Christ's fulfillment of it.

CT

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## Wilson's Bookmarks

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

### EVANGELICALS ON PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

**HAROLD HEIE** (ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS)

This very helpful book grew out of a nine-month conversation among six politically diverse Christians at *Respectful Conversation.net*. The convener, Heie, summarizes it here, taking up in turn a series of contentious issues ranging from immigration, gun control, and abortion to a variety of foreign policy questions, noting where there is common ground and where there are sharp differences. The six participants—Amy E. Black, Paul Brink, David P. Gushee, Lisa Sharon Harper, Stephen V. Monsma, and Eric Teetsel—model the overarching commitment to “respectful conversation” even as they disagree.

### CONGO CALLING

**MARGARET MAUND** (Y LOLEFA)

Much writing about missionaries either demonizes them or bathes them in the rosy glow of hagiography. This delightfully unpretentious little book—subtitled “The memoir of a Welsh nurse in 1960s Africa”—does neither. Maund—later ordained as an Anglican priest—was in the Belgian Congo from 1968 to 1971 under the auspices of the Baptist Missionary Society. Before going to Africa at age 25 as a midwife and nurse, she went through a 3-year training course; she had also studied French. Her episodic account is touching, funny, inspiring, and blessedly down-to-earth.

### THE STAR BY MY HEAD

**EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY MALENA MÖRLING AND JONAS ELLERSTRÖM** (MILKWEED EDITIONS)

Eight Swedish poets are represented in this bilingual selection. Much-translated figures such as Gunnar Ekelöf and Tomas Tranströmer are here, but also less familiar voices. The poems are bracketed by Mörling's introduction and Ellerström's “Brief History of Modern Swedish Poetry.” “A poem,” Mörling quotes Tranströmer, “is a manifestation of an invisible poem that exists beyond language. Therefore, a translation of a poem into a new language is an opportunity to realize the original (invisible) poem.”





**Dare Mighty Things:**  
Mapping the Challenges  
of Leadership  
for Christian Women  
Halee Gray Scott  
(Zondervan)



# Leading Ladies

Why we need them—in the church and beyond. Interview by Sharon Hodde Miller

**A**ll around the world, there are women who are capable of great things, but they are afraid to step out and try. This is the central argument of Halee Gray Scott's debut book, *Dare Mighty Things: Mapping the Challenges of Leadership for Christian Women* (Zondervan). Author, wife, mother, scholar, and global leadership expert, Scott focuses her research on the experiences of women in leadership and the obstacles they face. In addition to sharing her findings, Scott's book casts a larger vision for women in the church and calls women to the faithful stewardship of their gifts. Hermeneutics contributor Sharon Hodde Miller spoke with Scott about the difficulties facing women in leadership.

## **Women don't always think of themselves as leaders. Why are they hesitant?**

Two things contribute to this problem. First, the business world has dominated the conversation on leadership. We see many churches adapting business principles to the church context. Whenever we take secular leadership and apply it to the church, we have an idea of leadership that is very masculine, very business-oriented, very "get things done." Women tend, instead, to organize around people and causes. It's hard for women, especially Christian women, to relate to the type of leadership models we most often talk about.

Second, many people don't look at women and think to intentionally develop their leadership gifts. But women need that encouragement. Women need someone to look at them and say, "Hey, I see potential in you."

## **What would be a more Christian understanding of leadership, one that transcends male and female?**

Authentic Christian leadership is more cause-centered—around the cause of

Christ—and focused more on developing people than on developing principles. It also takes a team approach. In the Gospels, Jesus built a team of people to go out and deliver the Good News. It wasn't just one person in charge.

Christian leadership pays attention to the people and to the cause. It's not about building a bigger church or audience, but rather about bringing people to experience and understand God.

## **Women have made gains both inside and outside the church, but you state that "women's advancement in leadership has altogether stalled." How so?**

Research has shown this is true—even in business sectors. The progress women are making is not that remarkable compared to the progress they made 15 to 20 years ago. Within the church, this is happening for several reasons.

First, there is a lack of mentoring between women who have become successful leaders and women who are still developing. Without that mentoring, women have no vision for all that God can accomplish through their lives.

Also holding women back is the myth of the exceptional woman—the belief that women who are leaders are somehow exceptional. We think they're innately different from other women in ways that can't be bridged with education and skill training.

## **Can women, as the saying goes, "have it all"?**

I hope to encourage women that they don't have to have it all together in order to find deep satisfaction. This is really hard for me, because I gave up a university teaching job I loved in order to stay at home with my girls.

If I let myself, I can get very discouraged, rather than seeing the beauty of this stage in life and how God is using my gifts



Halee Gray Scott

now. It's important for women to remember they can have it all—just not all at once.

## **Although your book is about women and leadership, does it have a message for men?**

In my research, I talked to a lot of men in leadership positions who wanted to know how to support the women around them. I hope men can use this book to understand the challenges women face, so they can help hold the doors open for them.

## **What about young mothers or other women for whom daring mighty things might sound overwhelming? What would you say to this sort of woman?**

We need to reconsider what we call "mighty." In college, I waited tables at an Applebee's. At the time, I was an agnostic and very bitter toward religion. But there was a hostess who radiated Christ. She was willing to talk about Jesus in ways that called me deeply to him. She didn't do any more than show up for her shift every day, but that was enough to transform my life.

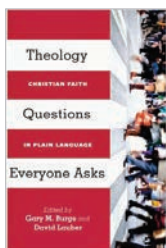
Like the woman who anointed Christ's feet with oil, sometimes the things we think are small are the very things God uses to accomplish the mighty. **CT**



# New & Noteworthy

You have questions—about God, his purposes for humanity, and the authority of his Word. Two new books from prominent evangelical teachers and scholars have the answers you're looking for.

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

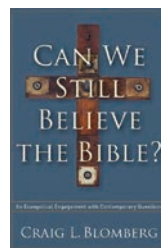


## THEOLOGY QUESTIONS EVERYONE ASKS

**Christian Faith in Plain Language**

EDITED BY GARY M. BURGE & DAVID LAUBER (WIP Academic)

"What is Christianity?" "What is the meaning of evil and suffering?" "What is salvation?" Maybe an inquisitive friend or colleague has asked you such questions, and you weren't sure how to respond. Maybe, despite a Christian upbringing or years in the church, you need more straightforward answers. This volume gathers short essays (and suggestions for further reading) from theology professors at Wheaton College. They have listened and reflected as generations of students have asked about human life and purpose. The book aims to assure curious or wavering believers that "good and thoughtful answers are at hand that can help."



## CAN WE STILL BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

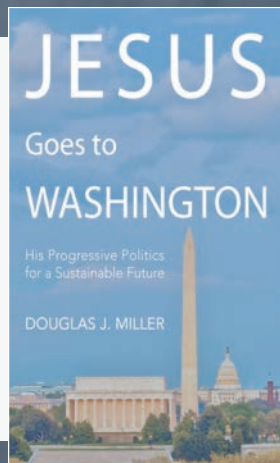
**An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions**

CRAIG L. BLOMBERG (BRAZOS PRESS)

Over decades toiling away in the weeds of biblical scholarship, Denver Seminary's Blomberg has seen fashionable theories and methodologies come and go. None of them has dented his confidence that Scripture is the revealed Word of God. In fact, that confidence has been fortified. In this release, Blomberg says that "a curious phenomenon has occurred over the past generation," wherein "new findings, or at least much more intense discoveries, have actually strengthened the case for the reliability and trustworthiness of the Scriptures." The problem, he says, is that the findings get drowned out by speculative headlines about lost gospels and church conspiracies, and also by a small band of conservatives skeptical of all modern scholarship.

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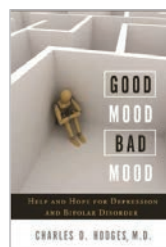
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# STUDENT LOANS: Know Before You Owe

The numbers on college debt in America are staggering:

- **\$1.2 trillion:** The approximate amount of outstanding student loan debt in 2013—second only to mortgages in household debt
- **7 million:** The estimated number of Americans who are currently in default on a student loan
- **40 percent:** The number of American households headed by someone under 35 that have student loan debt and are affected by student loan servicing <sup>1</sup>

Broken down to an individual level, the average debt load per student for the Class of 2012 was \$29,400.<sup>2</sup> Graduates of Christian colleges are in the same boat. “The best source of comparative data . . . is through the yearly Council for Christian Colleges and Universities’ (CCCCU) financial aid survey,” says Greg Gearhart, director of financial aid at Messiah College in Mechanicsburg,

Pennsylvania. “For the Class of 2012, the average debt for graduates from all CCCC schools was \$28,712.”

But while the numbers are sobering, not everyone who has student loans is in crisis. The high-profile stories of college graduates working at fast-food restaurants for minimum wage aren’t an accurate reflection of all, or even most, students. Christian college representatives don’t see these kinds of scenarios playing out with the majority of their graduates; many of their schools have a high percentage of employment following graduation.

“In a post-graduation survey conducted by our career center, 95 percent of the Class of 2011 respondents indicated they were employed or in graduate/professional programs within six to nine months after graduation,” says Gearhart. The same is true of graduates at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas, where “over 90 percent of graduates from the Class of 2012 were employed or in graduate/professional programs with an acceptance rate to medical, dental, law school, and all other graduate programs of 94 percent” according to Ed Kerestly, director of student financial services.

This is the case even at Houghton College (Houghton, New York), which has responded to student loan concerns with a new Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP). According to Eric Currie, vice president for enrollment

<sup>1</sup> Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Fact Sheet, December 3, 2013, [http://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201312\\_cfpb\\_factsheet\\_student-servicing-rule.pdf](http://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201312_cfpb_factsheet_student-servicing-rule.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> The Institute for College Access & Success, “Student Debt and the Class of 2012,” The Project on Student Debt, December 2013, <http://projectonstudentdebt.org/files/pub/classof2012.pdf>.

management, “95 percent of our graduates find employment or graduate school placement within six months of graduating.” So why the need for the LRAP?

### Lifting the Weight

Houghton College has established the LRAP for every one of their incoming students in Fall 2014. For graduates in 2018, that means there will be funds available to pay part or all of their loan payments until they’re gainfully employed and reach a certain income level. Once limited to very specific types of graduate schools or service professions, LRAPs are gaining ground.

“There is a concern nationally about the cost of higher education. Parents and college students alike are asking the same question: ‘Is college worth the student loan debt?’ We felt a need to answer this question by ultimately putting our money where our mouth is,” says Currie. “We have always felt confident about the type of education Houghton offers . . . we see the LRAP as a safety net for interested students to pursue their passions regardless

of income following graduation.”

The government, private lenders, and individual schools are answering concerns over student loan debt in a variety of ways. Federal assistance is available on certain types of loans through Income-Based Repayment (IBR) programs, which lower a borrower’s monthly payment (often by extending the life of the loan), as well as Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) programs for those working in certain fields such as medicine or education.

Unlike IBR or loan forgiveness programs, most LRAPs don’t lower or forgive your loan. Instead, they provide the funds to make your payments if you meet certain criteria. LRAPs are often available from schools, employers, states, and the federal government. With such a variety of programs available, all of which are being revised constantly, it’s important to ask the right questions, including:

- How much assistance does the program provide?
- Is the program structured as a

forgivable loan or as a grant?

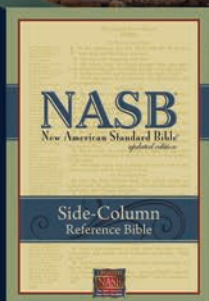
- How will the structure impact my taxes?
- How is the program funded?
- Which student loans are eligible?
- How are income and eligibility calculated?
- Is there a limit on how long someone can participate?
- How flexible is the program?

Even with the current high employment rate for its graduates, Houghton is excited to offer this program. “The main difference for students is the knowledge that Houghton will be standing by them not only during their time here at Houghton, but also after they graduate,” says Currie. “The LRAP covers all educational loans, even Parent PLUS loans, so now parents can have confidence knowing they are covered as well, which might help prospective students and their families make the best choice when looking for the right school.”

### A Four-Letter Word?

With all this talk of debt, default, and

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repayment plans, are student loans a good idea? Or has L-O-A-N become a four-letter word?

“Most financial aid administrators would love to put together financial aid packages that cover a student’s entire cost of attendance without loans, but only a few schools have the financial resources to do that,” says Kerestly. “Most of us realize that some borrowing is a necessity for many students, and most of us believe that a reasonable amount of borrowing is very manageable for students and represents a very good investment.”

Then the obvious question is, *What’s a reasonable amount?* While that answer differs for every individual, Marilae Latham, director of financial aid at Greenville College in Greenville, Illinois, offers some perspective.

“I like to drive,” says Latham, “so I relate borrowing a student loan to financing a car. After graduation, many borrowers will purchase a car costing between \$18,000 and \$27,000 without hesitation. The car depreciates as soon as it’s driven off the dealer’s lot. Financ-

ing is made over five years—certainly not 10 to 20 years. Trade it in after five years and it is worth so much less than the original cost. Now, relate this to purchasing an education. The graduate with a degree is more marketable for a job, and earnings over a lifetime will only be higher—an education does not depreciate. Student loan interest rates are low, and repayment options can make paying back the loan over time affordable.” Latham encourages students not to give up on their education because of money. “If a family doesn’t have the savings to pay the out-of-pocket costs, then keeping the loan debt at a level that can reasonably be repaid—with the chosen career salary expectation—is better than forfeiting a degree.”

#### **Before, During, and After**

“When it comes down to it, there are basically three ways to pay for college—before, during, or after,” explains Kerestly.

Saving for college obviously takes place in the “before” stage. This is the most desirable because every dollar

saved for college is one less dollar you’ll need to come up with either during or after college. However, the “during” part of paying for college offers lots of opportunities. Start by completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) each year, beginning in January of your student’s senior year in high school. The information you provide will determine which government grants and scholarships the student is qualified to receive. In addition to this “free money,” you should also search for other outside scholarship opportunities.

“I recommend starting close to home by checking out what information your high school or local organizations and businesses might have about scholarships. Then use free Internet scholarship searches,” says Kerestly.

Even a student’s involvement in certain programs or service organizations throughout his or her college years can lead to additional scholarships or financial assistance.

“Only after working on the before and during should you consider the



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after,” says Kerestly. “This is where loans come in.”

### Cut Costs

From tuition costs to interest rates to watchdog groups to legislation, it's impossible to accurately predict, let alone control, the direction student loan debt will take in the future. But the value of higher education remains.

“Despite a lot of recent media stories that question this, the data shows that a college education is still very worthwhile,” Gearhart says. “The additional earnings that a college graduate can expect to receive over his or her lifetime significantly outweigh the typical amounts borrowed.”

So whether or not the push to make higher education more affordable gains widespread traction, you can influence your personal experience. In the midst of this constantly changing landscape, you can do everything in your power to limit debt by controlling your costs. How? Start with these three tips:

1. Look carefully at a college's degree programs and student life

experiences to what best matches the student's interests and lifestyle. Compare the costs in relationship to the value you'll receive. Consider all aspects of a school, including things like its location, and how these might impact the final cost. The Project on Student Debt, through the Institute for College Access & Success, produced a report called “Student Debt and the Class of 2012.” It identifies the regions and states with the highest and lowest student loan debt. The high-debt states are mainly in the Northeast, topped by Delaware at \$33,649. The low-debt states are mainly in the West and South. The lowest average student debt was in New Mexico at \$17,994.

2. Look at housing options. While tuition is usually set, housing options and meal plans can provide an avenue for savings. Again, be sure to compare cost with value and make the best decision for the student, as well as the bottom line.

3. Make a plan. Encourage the student to stay in school and finish on time to help keep costs down.

### Walk Together

Perhaps the most important part of this discussion is the opportunity to engage and prioritize relationships in the midst of it all. Choose to invest in people—your child, your spouse—as you walk through the loan process.

“Students and parents should plan to work together through the entire process, from the earliest discussions about going to college, to completion of the FAFSA and other aid applications, to review of the financial aid packages offered by various schools, and, finally, decisions about borrowing,” says Gearhart.

By going through the process together, you open up communication about not only finances, but also the entire college experience. Talk together. Plan together. Pray together.

**Janna Jones** is a freelance writer and award-winning editor based in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She served as the editor of *Go!* magazine and currently contributes to publications and publishers including *Thriving Family*, *Clubhouse*, *Compassion International*, *HarperOne*, *Outreach*, and *Zondervan*.

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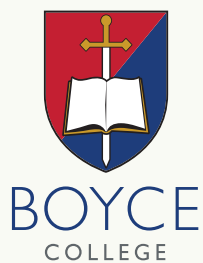
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special advertising section



## A Good Return on Investment

*Five tips for using student loans wisely.*

Is your child heading to college soon? Are you worried about being weighed down by debt as a result? These five tips can help you successfully navigate the world of student loans.

### 1. Comprehend

The more you know about specific schools, financial aid, and loans in particular, the better prepared you'll be to make wise choices.

Researching schools and understanding what they offer will help you recognize the value of your financial investment.

Ed Kerestly, director of student financial services at Abilene Christian University, says, "Determine what you value in the educational experience and make sure it's a match with the values of the college you choose. Then tackle the affordability issue by determining what assistance is available to pay for college."

And when it comes to financial aid and funding part of an education through loans, be sure you understand the process.

"When deciding to take out student loans, make sure you've taken full advantage of the federal loan options available," says Greg Gearhart, director of financial aid at Messiah College.

"Loans should be considered for paying college costs *after* you've exhausted all other options and determined the amount you'll need to



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**Victor Boutros**

Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit  
Trial Attorney  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Philosophy, Honors Program,  
Baylor University ('98)  
Harvard University ('99)  
University of Oxford ('00)  
University of Chicago Law School ('03)

Because the compassionate effort worldwide to fight global poverty continues to fall short of the goal, Victor Boutros continues to research and find evidence that identifies violence as the root of the matter and challenges others to ensure the poor are kept safe.

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borrow to cover those necessary expenses that remain,” agrees Kerestly.

## 2. Complete

Once you’ve narrowed down the school choices, be sure you know the schools’ schedules for completing financial aid and loan applications. Securing loans is typically the final step. But be careful—opportunities can be missed throughout the application process simply because tax filing or the necessary paperwork isn’t completed on time.

Kerestly gives this overview of the financial aid and loan timeline: “The timeline for applying for financial aid and receiving loans doesn’t begin until January of a student’s senior year in high school when both students and their parents will complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and have this information sent to the colleges they’re considering. The schools will then prepare award letters listing scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study opportunities, along with an estimate of the annual cost of attendance at their school. Beginning in March,

schools send out their award letters to assist [admitted] students in making their college decisions—typically by May 1. It’s not until after that time that parents need to begin the loan process.”

## 3. Communicate

Including all family members in conversations about money can be tough. While it may seem easier for the parents to take care of everything, remember that the student is the one who will be legally responsible for most types of student loans. So everyone needs to know the costs, benefits, and requirements of the different types. Talk openly and honestly about finances and how you can best work together.

“Among the first things students and parents should do as they start the college search process is discuss finances,” says Gearhart, “including how much each person can contribute to the college costs, and how much is reasonable for the student to borrow by the time she’s completed her degree. They should also have a good idea of employment opportunities and expected

salaries in the student’s intended major.”

And the discussion should be ongoing. “Students should plan to be involved in the entire financial aid process and, especially, keep track of how much they’re borrowing,” Gearhart says.


## 4. Connect

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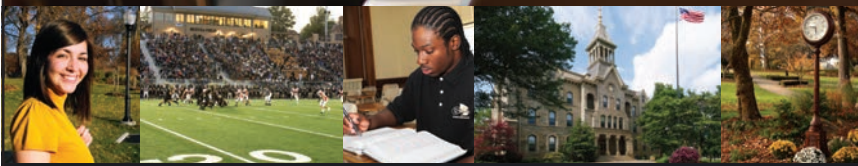
“Students and their parents often feel like they have to figure out everything on their own,” says Kerestly. “This is not the case. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and seek assistance. The financial aid or student financial services offices are there to help you.”

Latham recommends doing online research but discourages basing decisions on the experiences of others. “Don’t rely on the word of friends and neighbors,” she says. “Their experience with financial aid may not be

continued on page 74



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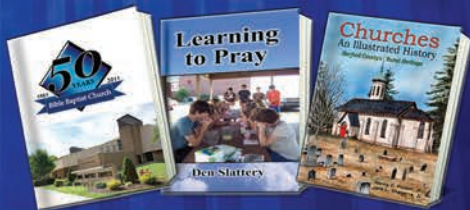
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## special advertising section

continued from page 68

like yours, and this can be the source of some misguided or outdated—although well-intended—advice."

Connecting with your college of choice can also keep you from paying unnecessary fees. "Don't pay anyone for financial aid searches or advice," Latham says. "You can get this same help and information for free from the financial aid office at your college."

Communicating with the school will also give you a clearer sense of its strengths. You'll be better able to determine how your educational investment will benefit your child during college as well as after graduation.

### 5. Control

Experts agree that the number one pitfall to avoid when it comes to loans is over-borrowing. It can be tempting to use loans to fund a lifestyle rather than an education. But while education is an investment with a good return, that spring break trip to the beach is not. Finding other ways to fund day-to-day expenses might cramp your child's style a little bit now, but it will help

preserve his or her credit score and open the door to future opportunities.

When you find yourself tempted to borrow more, sometimes a little reality check can help. Recent research by ProgressNow Education Network shows that the average repayment period for student loans is 21.1 years with a payment amount of around \$500 per month for people with bachelor's degrees, and about \$650 per month for those with graduate or professional degrees. Helping your child limit his or her living expenses can keep future loan payments low enough that he or she will still have the freedom to purchase bigger items after graduation, like a car or home.

Online calculators, such as FinAid's loan calculator ([www.finaid.org/calculators/loanpayments.phtml](http://www.finaid.org/calculators/loanpayments.phtml)), make it easy to calculate the actual cost of a loan, including the total amount of interest paid. Looking at what you'll owe upfront and keeping track of expenses throughout college will help you and your child stay focused on what's important enough to spend money on and what's not.

— J. J.

### Want to know more?

Here are the websites of the schools advertising in this issue of *Christianity Today*. You can also find more information about these schools at [ChristianCollegeGuide.net](http://ChristianCollegeGuide.net).

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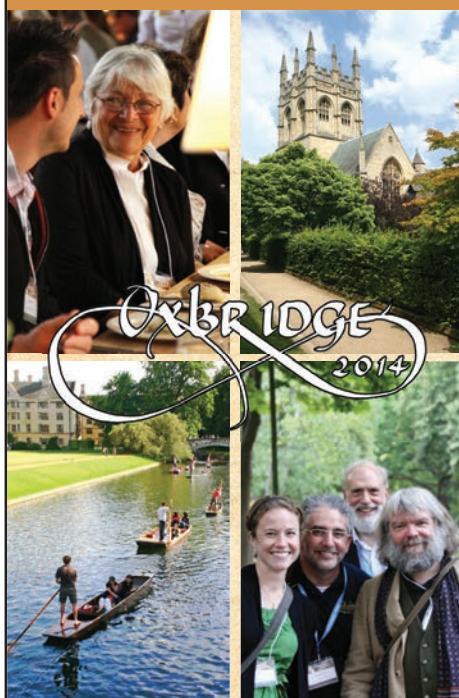
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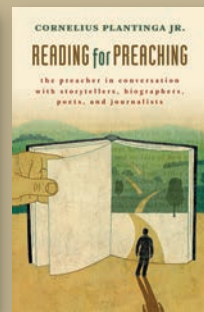
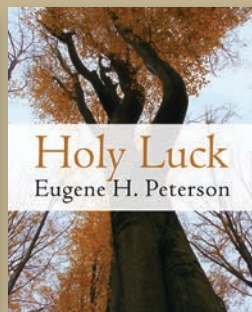
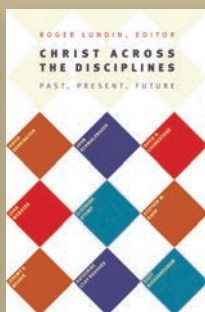
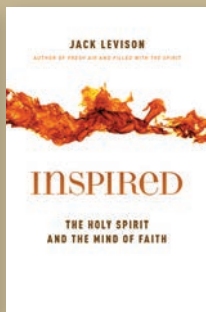
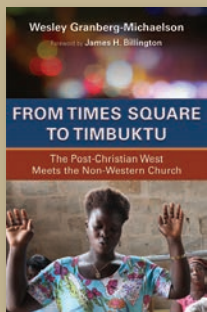
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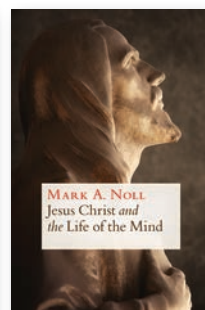
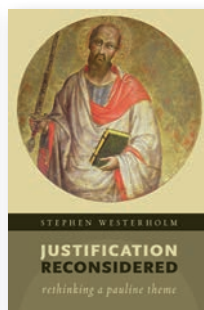
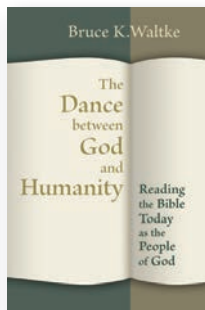
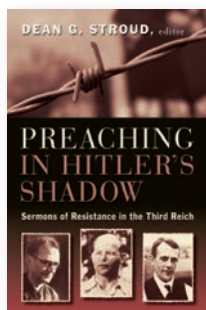
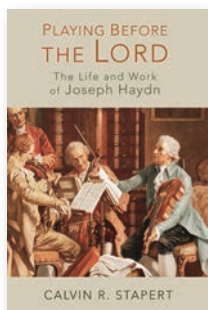
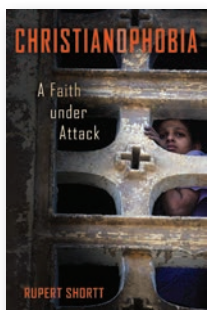
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 80

University (BYU). So, you have a black kid from a lower socioeconomic, multiethnic context with a Jehovah's Witness religious background (whose god is football) attending a Mormon university.

On January 15, 1990, during my freshman year at BYU, I met a beautiful young lady named Vicki Ensign. She was a javelin thrower on the track team. We fell in love fast and married on May 23, 1992, during my senior year. The first wedding I had ever attended was my own.

At BYU, my god had come through for me. I had an outstanding career and later was named to BYU football's "All Time Dream Team." Plus, I was loved at the school. I had the girl of my dreams. I was making something out of my life. On April 25, 1993, I was drafted by the Indianapolis Colts to strong safety. I had made it!

Then I met the Naked Preacher, a line-backer for the Colts in 1993.

It was impossible not to notice a line-backer who would take a shower, dry off, wrap a towel around his waist, pick up his Bible, and ask those of us in the locker room, "Do you know Jesus?" I would think, *Do you know you are half-naked?*

I asked the veterans on the team about him. They said, "Don't pay attention to him. That's the Naked Preacher."

At this point in my life, I did not want anything to do with Jesus or a half-naked man talking about him, so I tried to avoid him. One day after practice, I was sitting at my locker and saw the Naked Preacher (whose real name is Steve Grant) walking toward me.

"Rookie D. Gray, do you know Jesus?" he asked.

I pretended to not hear him and turned my back. He repeated the question, but this time he was at my locker. Even though I was not a churchgoer or involved in any religious group, I gave what I thought was a very religious answer: "I'm a good person."

I explained to Steve that I was one of the only men in my family who had not been to jail, who did not have a substance abuse problem, who had graduated from high school and college, and who did not have a child outside of marriage.

The Naked Preacher opened up his Bible and shared two verses with me: "And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone'" (Mark 10:18, ESV); and, "For all have sinned and fall short

of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

Steve explained that according to the Bible, only God is good; he is the standard of goodness and righteousness. Everyone else has sinned and falls short. This disturbed me.

I said, "Naked man, you are telling me that my moral comparison is to God and not to other people?" He said, "Yes."

"God is perfect! What can I do to be perfect?" He answered, "Nothing."

I said, "I'm in big trouble."

"Rookie D. Gray," he said, "now you are starting to get it. You can't do anything to reach a perfect God. But Jesus has done everything for the perfect God to come down and reach you."

I sat in silence. I needed time to think through what he was saying and what I was experiencing in my heart.

### LEFT WITH NOTHING

Over the next five years, I watched Steve live out the gospel. When my teammates needed advice, they were at the Naked Preacher's locker. Steve was involved in the greater Indianapolis community. He displayed Jesus in the way he loved his wife and children. He preached through his words and actions.

As the Naked Preacher preached, God's love crushed me. I had achieved the American dream, only to realize it could not empower me to love my wife or forgive my father. My fame and money could not erase my sin, shame, guilt, fear, and insecurity.

Then, between 1995 and 1997, I started getting injured on the field. When a professional athlete's body starts to fail, he knows his career is coming to an end. I was letting my god—football—down. I was unable to serve it.

My body was how I made my living. As it began to give out, I was stripped of

**As the Naked Preacher preached, God's love crushed me. I had achieved the American dream, only to realize it could not empower me to love my wife or forgive my father.**

everything I thought gave me meaning. I was left with nothing, even though I seemingly had everything.

On August 2, 1997, after lunch at training camp for my fifth season with the Indianapolis Colts, I walked to my dorm room at Anderson University in central Indiana. As I walked, I sensed an emptiness and brokenness like I had never experienced. When I got to my room, I immediately picked up the phone and called my wife. "I want to be more committed to you," I said. "And I want to be committed to Jesus."

At that moment I realized that God loved me. Not because I could run fast or jump high or because I was good, or even for what I could give him. I realized that as Jesus hung on the cross, I was forever loved and accepted by God. I realized my sin had been erased by Jesus' blood. It was as if I could see for the first time. That day I got infected with a virus called *grace*. The symptoms are now full-blown.

### ONGOING STORY

In the fall of 1999, I retired from the NFL after six seasons. I then began to travel to youth events and churches to speak about God's love. This itself was a miracle, not only because of my background but also because from an early age I had been a compulsive stutterer. All my wife and I knew was that Jesus loved us and that if he could transform my life, he could transform anyone's. So I took every invitation I received to share my testimony.

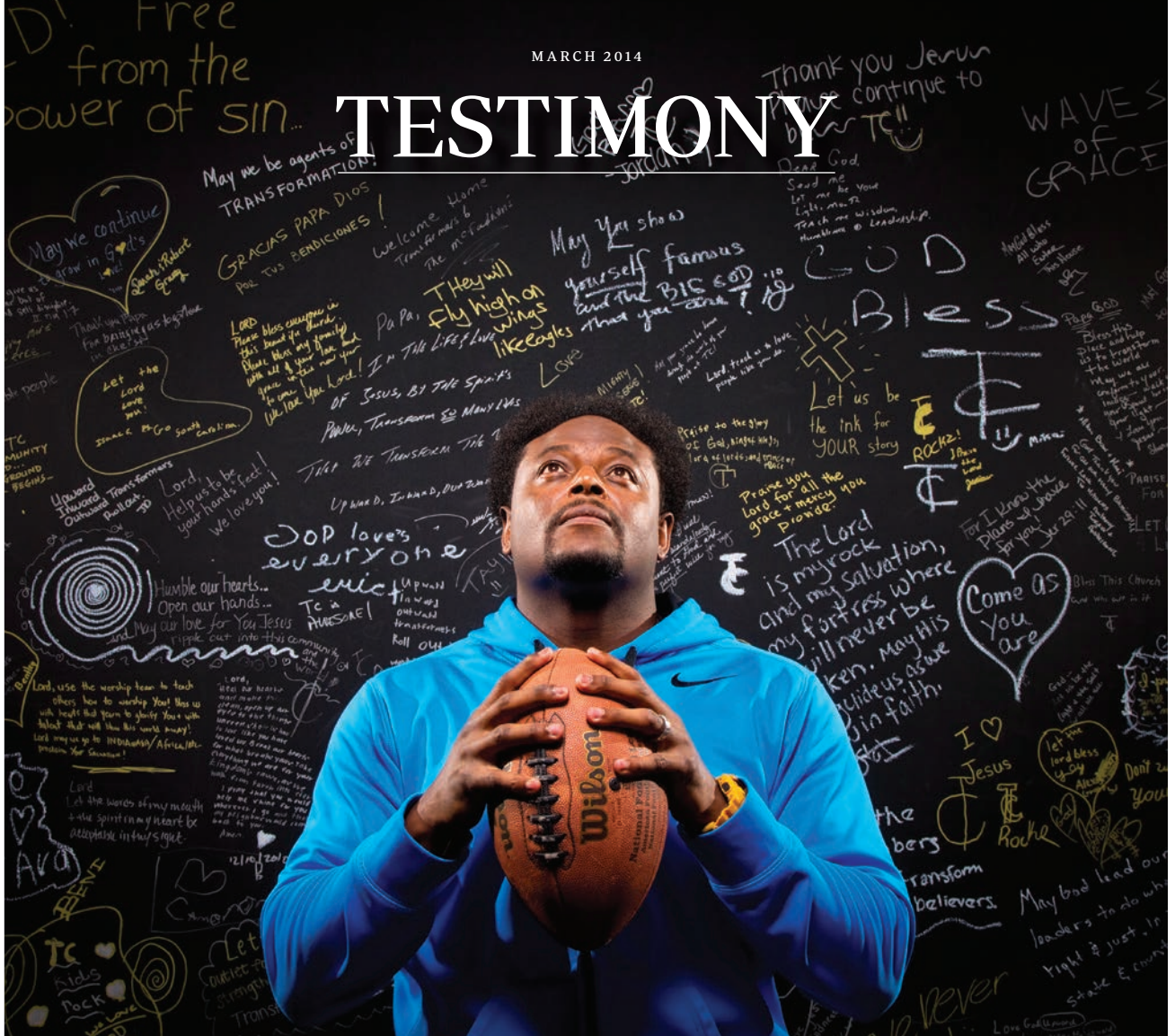
Eventually Jesus gave me a love for his bride, the church. My wife and I sensed deeply that we were being called to plant a church that reflects the diversity of the eternal kingdom and the New Testament churches of the first century (Rev. 5:9-12; Eph. 2:14-22).

On February 7, 2010, alongside many faith-energized, love-filled people, we launched Transformation Church, a multiethnic, multigenerational, missional church in Indian Land, South Carolina. According to LifeWay Research and *Outreach Magazine*, Transformation was one of the fastest-growing U.S. churches in 2010, 2011, and 2012.

This is my story of grace, one that Jesus continues to write to this day. **CT**

**DERWIN GRAY** is author of *Limitless Life: You Are More Than Your Past When God Holds Your Future* (Thomas Nelson). Get the first chapter free at [Limitlesslifebook.com](http://Limitlesslifebook.com).

# TESTIMONY



## Pro Football Was My God

Until a half-naked man showed up at my locker.

By Derwin Gray

**G**rowing up on the west side of San Antonio, I believed in god—the god of football. The game was my ticket out of an early life saturated with violence, addiction, abuse, and chaos.

I was raised by my grandmother, because my parents were only teenagers when I was born. They were children bringing a child into the world. As much as they wanted to care for me, the hurt and brokenness in their lives prevented them. “Grannie” was a Jehovah’s Witness, so that was the religion I knew. After a while, even that went away.

We were not poor. We were “po.” We couldn’t afford the other o and r. We didn’t eat meals together. We didn’t pray together. There were good times, like when we’d go fishing or when my grandfather would come home after work in the evenings. By the time I was 13, however, I looked at my environment and told my

grandmother, “I’m going to do something with my life.”

Football was my way out of the hell I was living in. I believed it would lift me into the heaven of the American dream.

Football functioned as my savior. It gave me love: If I played well, I was loved by fans. It gave me an identity: I was Derwin, the football player. It gave me significance: I was somebody because I was a great player. And football gave me a mission. My mission was this: *Derwin, you can go to college and make something of your life.*

### RUNNING FROM NAKED PREACHER

During my sophomore year of high school, I started to do just that. I transferred to Judson High School in Converse, a suburb of San Antonio, where I played for D. W. Rutledge, the Texas High School Hall of Fame coach. My senior year, I accepted a football scholarship to Brigham Young

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