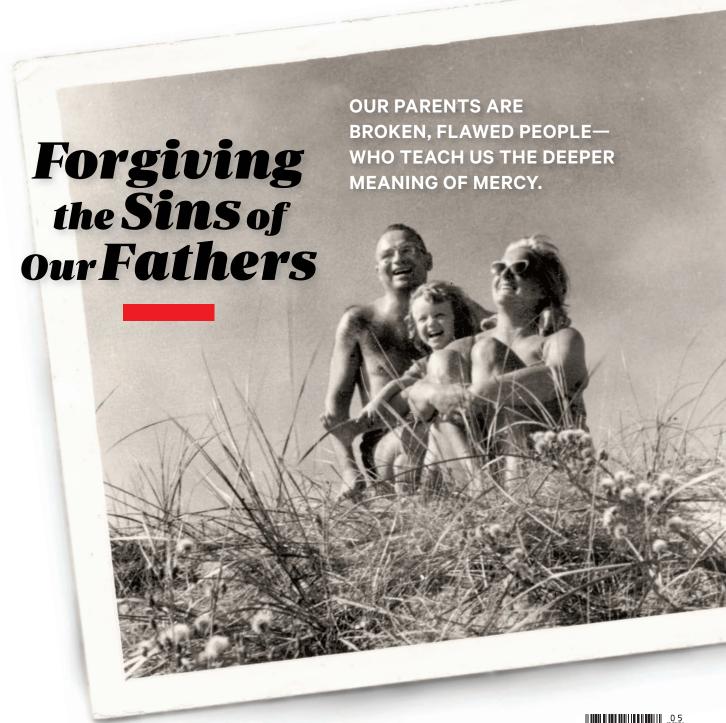
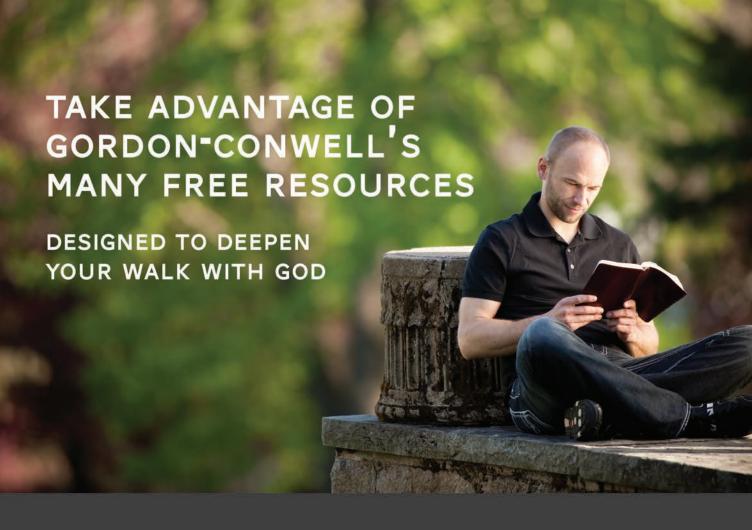


THE DANDY BONHOEFFER p.53

MARK DEVER: WE ALL SHOULD BE CATHOLIC p.42

A BETTER WORLD VISION p.23







Online courses



Podcasts



Events and conferences



Ministry publications

www.gordonconwell.edu/resourcesforyou



THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ACCESS RESOURCES INSTANTLY!





Union is committed to integrating top-tier academics and Christian faith in every program of study. As a result, Union has earned national honors and accreditations.

Now Union offers adults—whose location, travel or work schedule may prevent traditional class participation—online options for earning graduate degrees. These online programs have the same Christ-centered academic excellence and faculty interaction that have become the hallmark of a Union education.

Learn more by visiting uu.edu/online.





ONLINE DEGREES IN

Business Administration

Education

Nursing

Theology and Missions



FOUNDED IN 1823 | uu.edu/online

EXCELLENCE-DRIVEN | CHRIST-CENTERED | PEOPLE-FOCUSED | FUTURE-DIRECTED

"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



No case is typical. You should not expect to experience these results.

Atlanta | Chicago | Philadelphia | Phoenix | Tulsa

CONTENTS

7 Editor's Note

Katelyn Beaty honors her merely human parents.

9 Reply All

Readers respond to the March issue via letters, tweets, and blogs.

NEWS

15 Witness

Prison ministries are doing such good work, even Congress agrees on it.

16 Gleanings

Dayuma dies, Ortberg switches sides over multisite, and kids' Bibles become theological.

18 Headlines

Christian organizations try to stay neutral, Kenya's Christians fight over polygamy, and the Nigerian American Great Baby Commission.

19 Under Discussion

Complementarians debate whether women college faculty should teach men the Bible.



"Bonhoeffer was preoccu-pied with dressing well. illustrate almost every turning point in his life with sartorial commentary."

p.53



THE JOY-STUNG PREACHER
Texas pastor Matt Chandler is tasked with taking the Acts 29 Network to the ends of the earth. Why he may be just the man to do it.

42 A GOSPEL FOR EVERYONE
Global Gospel Project What we mean when we profess 'one

catholic church.'

46 THE NOAH EFFECT A decade after *The Passion*, can filmmakers bring an artistic twist to Scripture without alienating moviegoers?

Plus: Darren Aronofsky's Midrash **Peter T. Chattaway**

VIEWS

23 Where We Stand

A World Vision for Church and Parachurch

25 Her.meneutics

Rachel Marie Stone dismantles shiny-happy parenting.

26 Open Question

Samuel Kunhiyop, Sharon Mumper, and Marvin Wilson discuss whether missionaries should pay bribes.

28 Past Imperfect

David Neff preaches to the

REVIEWS

53 Books

Charles Marsh's Strange Glory, review by Timothy Larsen

Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb's Is It My Fault? review by Rachel Marie Stone

Excerpt: Yawning at Tigers, by Drew Dyck

Interview: Marilyn Chandler McEntyre's What's in a Phrase?

80 Testimony

Twitter expert Claire Diaz-Ortiz traveled the world, only to run into God again.









Kent appreciates a good breakfast, especially with family and friends.

tes ast, th nds.

PRINT AND ONLINE

GLOBAL MEDIA MINISTRY

EDITOR IN CHIEF Harold B. Smith
CHIEF PUBLISHING OFFICER Terumi Echols

EDITOR Mark Galli EXECUTIVE EDITOR Andy Crouch MANAGING EDITOR, MAGAZINE Katelyn Beaty MANAGING EDITOR, NEWS & ONLINE Ted Olsen SENIOR EDITOR, GLOBAL JOURNALISM Timothy C. Morgan DESIGN DIRECTOR Gary Gnidovic ASSOCIATE EDITOR. NEWS Jeremy Weber ASSOCIATE EDITOR, BOOKS Matt Revnolds ASSOCIATE EDITOR, HER.MENEUTICS Kate Shellnutt ART DIRECTOR Alecia Sharp

ASSISTANT EDITORS Elissa Cooper, Kevin P. Emmert

EDITORIAL RESIDENT Kate Tracy
EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATOR Rebecca Custer
CHIEF FILM CRITIC Alissa Wilkinson
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Sarah Eekhoff Zvist

RIBUTING EDITORS Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, Ruth Moon

EDITORS AT LARGE Sarah Pulliam Bailey, Edward Gilbreath,
Stan Guthrie, Collin Hansen, John W. Kennedy,
Douglas LeBlanc, Michael G. Maudlin,
Rob Moll, Mark Moring, Tim Stafford,

Madison Trammel, John Wilson, Susan Wunderink, Philip Yancey

EDITORIAL BOARD Darrell L. Bock, Leslie Leyland Fields,

Timothy F. George, Christopher A. Hall, Megan Hill, Wesley Hill, Gabe Lyons, James I. Packer, Scot McKnight, Amy L. Sherman, John Stackhouse Jr.,

Rachel Marie Stone

Leslie hates shopping

except in thrift stores, because she believes

that even clothes

no matter their former

life, are worthy of redemption. Her cover

story is on page 30.

MARKETING, SOCIAL MEDIA,

AND ANALYTICS Jacob Walsh, Wes Jakacki, Andie Moody

FOUNDER Billy Graham 1956

LEAD EDITORS Carl F. H. Henry 1956–68 L. Nelson Bell 1956–73 Harold Lindsell 1968–78

Harold Lindsell 1968-78 Kenneth S. Kantzer 1978-82 V. Gilbert Beers 1982-85 George K. Brushaber 1985-91 Terry C. Muck 1985-90 David Neff 1993-2012

CHRISTIANITY TODAY

(ISSN 0009-5753) is published monthly (bi-monthly January/February and July/August), by Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188. Periodicals postage paid at Carol Stream, IL, and at additional mailing offices. ©2014 Christianity Today

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to Christianity Today, P.O. Box 37060, Boone, IA 50037-0060; 800.999.1704. Canada Publication Mail Agreement #: 040029733.

Registration #: 126028836RT0001. Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to: WWM Inc., 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, Ontario N8T 3B7. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription Rates: Regular subscription price: one year \$29.95. Outside U.S. add \$13.00 postage prepaid U.S. currency. \$4.95 per copy.

MANUSCRIPT POLICY

Unsolicited manuscripts and poetry are not accepted. A query letter must be sent first, describing a proposed manuscript. Any unsolicited manuscript will not be returned.

PERMISSIONS

Christianity Today grants permission for any original article (not a reprint) to be photocopied for use in a local church or classroom, provided no more than 1,000 copies are made, are distributed free, and indicate Christianity Today as the source. PRESIDENT AND CEO Harold B. Smith
CHIEF PUBLISHING OFFICER Terumi Echols
CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER Carol Thompson
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
VICE PRESIDENT Marshall Shelley
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT Vicki Howard

ADVERTISING AND ANALYTICS

Terumi Echols, Michael Chuchvara, Kathy DePue, Peggy Gomez, Walter Hegel, Julie Kaminski, Toks Olawoye, Luke Schoenrock, Stacy Smith. Josh Wood. Hazel Ziebell

BRAND SUPPORT SERVICES Nancy Nance, Adrian Carrion,

Kathryn McQuaid, Tim Platek
FINANCIAL OPERATIONS George Sifnotis, Gary Johnson,

Sandra Johnson, Philip MacDonald
HUMAN RESOURCES Richard Shields, Jaime Patrick

FACILITIES Paul Ross

PRODUCTION Cynthia Cronk, Diana Prange
CUSTOMER SUPPORT Pamela Ferrill

TECHNOLOGY Therese Hoffs

TECHNOLOGY Theresa Hoffner, Clayton Anderson,

Valerie Broucek, David Dougherty,

Kent Oxley, Stephen Swithers, Matt Wistrand

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIR John Huffman

Thomas Addington, Miriam Adeney, John N. Akers, Claude Alexander, Sandra C. Gray, Eugene B. Habecker, Alec Hill, Darryl L. King, Michael Lindsay, Samuel Rodriguez, John M. Sommerville

HONORARY CHAIRMAN Billy Graham



Jaime is off writing a one-woman play where she is every character from *The Princess Bride*.

EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING OFFICES

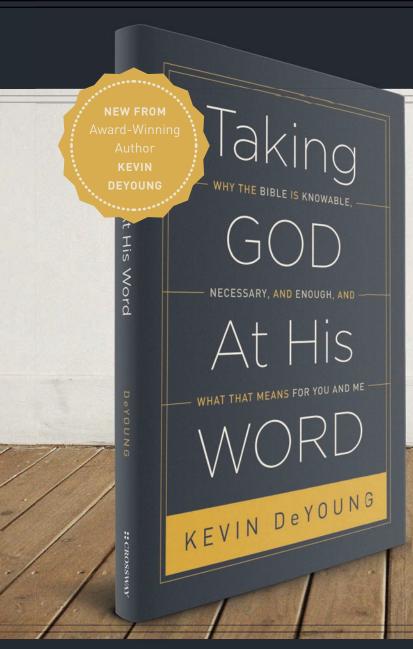
Editorial: cteditor@christianitytoday.com
Advertising: ctiad@christianitytoday.com
Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188-2415, 630.260.6200,
Fax: 630.260.9401.
Advertising in Christianity Today does not imply editorial endorsement.

AUSTRALIAN AGENT

MediaCom, 14 Eton Road, Keswick 5061, South Australia

INDEXES

Christianity Today is indexed in Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature; Christian
Periodical Index; Religion Index One: Periodicals, Religious and Theological Abstracts; Book
Review Index; and Academic Abstracts and Magazine Article Summaries.
Occasionally we share subscriber information with select organizations.
If you wish to remove your name from direct mail, e-mail, or telephone lists,
call 800.999.1704 or send e-mail to ctcustserv@christianitytoday.com.
Please specify the types of promotions you do not wish to receive.



IS THE BIBLE RELIABLE, AUTHORITATIVE, & NECESSARY?

KEVIN DEYOUNG tackles these questions and more in his latest book as he builds a compelling case for trusting, using, and relying on Scripture as the Word of God for all of life.

"My trust in God's Word is greater, my submission to God's Word is deeper, and my love for God's Word is sweeter as a result of reading this book. For these reasons, I cannot recommend it highly enough."

—DAVID PLATT, Senior Pastor, The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, Alabama; best-selling author, *Radical*

"One of my prayers for the next 20 years of ministry is that we might see the level of biblical literacy exponentially grow. For that to happen we must learn what the Scriptures are and how heavily we can lean on them. DeYoung serves this end well in *Taking God At His Word*."

—MATT CHANDLER, Lead Pastor, The Village Church, Dallas, Texas; President, Acts 29 Church Planting Network

DOWNLOAD A FREE STUDY GUIDE & A SAMPLE CHAPTER AT TakingGodAtHisWord.com

Phristian Faith shouldn't be Blind Faith

I anticipate Truth Matters becoming one of my most recommended resources, both for students struggling with challenges to their faith as well as seekers asking honest questions."

J. D. GREEAR // Ph.D., best-selling author of Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart and Gospel

TRUTH Matters

CONFIDENT
FAITH in a
CONTUSING
WORLD

Andreas Köstenberger, Darrell Bock, & Josh Chatraw

Truth Matters is written for the inquisitive audience. It supplies them with well-reasoned responses to their often honest questions, or to the objections they read or hear. Those questions may come from professors, friends, or their own personal reflections.

Available Now

Special \$5 Bulk Price Available When You Buy 10 or More.

Contact your local store for details.

Apologetics Study for Students also available.

Every WORD Matters® BHPublishingGroup.com

EDITOR'S NOTE

IM AND KAREN BEATY are wonderful people. They spend their mornings with God, perched in their respective comfy spots. They frequently tell my brother and me that they love us. They do the same to each other. They have cared for my grandparents, absorbing the pain of watching them age and pass away. They've taken us hiking and birdwatching in Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons. I count them among the great blessings of my life.

And until about age 25, I thought Tim and Karen were basically perfect—that when they gave me advice, it was right; that our relationship couldn't get any better. Psychologists call this *idealization*. In layman's terms, it means I put my parents on a pedestal. When I got old enough to see the Beatys not just as my mom and dad, but as distinct creatures with their own inner worlds and lives, the pedestal started to break; the ideal had a crack running through it. I began to see them as mere humans, and it stung.

Leslie Leyland Fields, who wrote this month's cover story (p. 30), never had a chance to idealize her father. Abuse and abandonment kept her and her five siblings from ever forming a loving bond with their dad. Even as an adult, when Leslie determined to forgive him and reenter his life, he was defensive and disinterested. But a shift happened in Leslie:

I began to see him more fully. I realized I was not the only one jumped, robbed, and bleeding beside the road: he lay there too.... I was laying down his selfishness and crimes, and leaving them in the hands of God.

A central truth of the gospel is that every one of us, parent and child, bears the mark of original sin. Sinners are always raised by sinners. The magnitude of the sin is different in each family, but seeds of selfishness, impatience, and malice are in them all. Without the intervening grace of God—whether by common grace or the grace of salvation—we're doomed to repeat the mistakes of the generations before us.

Another central truth of the gospel is that grace is enough to pull us out of the muck of sin into a glorious life in Christ. It's what made Dietrich Bonhoeffer not just an eccentric dissident obsessed with fashion but a hero of the faith (p. 53). It's what can make parenting not an elusive quest for "happiness" but a journey of joy (p. 25). It's what makes the church not a squabbling social club but a loving family (p. 42). And it's what empowers my parents and me to accept and enjoy one another after nearly 30 years of life together, mere humans though we are.



SINNER RAISED BY SINNERS

What it means to see our families through a gospel lens.

Katelyn Beaty Managing Editor, Magazine



TO CONTRIBUTE Send checks (U.S. dollars only) to: Christianity Today, Attn: Donor Relations, Box CT0514, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188 Christianity Today International is a 501(c)(3) organization.



"I'M A PASTOR, NOT A FINANCIAL PLANN THANKFULLY, MY benefits consultant understands me."

If life itself is a journey, then financial planning is a road on the journey - and one that needs to be carefully navigated.

At MMBB Financial Services, we're a ministry that offers, among other services to the faith-based community, financial planning - we understand where you need to go as well as where you're coming from. In other words, we're with you every step of the way.

Our benefits consultants will create a plan that is tailored to meet your financial needs - the financial needs of a pastor, which means affordable benefits. And we'll help you develop sensible strategies that can lead to a comfortable retirement - one that is richly deserved.

To find out more, visit us at MMBB.org/journey. Or call 1-800-986-6222.

And by the way, we're happy to involve wives, husbands, and family members, too, in your financial plan. After all, it's not just your financial well-being that we want to help secure.



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

REPLY ALL



THE BIBLE IN THE ORIGINAL GEEK

Access to the Bible is no longer our challenge. We lack attention. Too often our engagement with the Scriptures happens in the midst of juggling other interactions. But what if our collective engagement with the Bible could be facilitated and enriched by technology?

In "The Bible in the Original Geek," technology seemed the territory of "geeks" on the margins rather than a key question for all of us. Interaction, engagement, and application are more important than ever. And digital platforms are beginning to enable these wonderfully.

Let us make every effort to correctly handle the Word of truth, taking advantage of new opportunities technology affords. This task is not just for geeks.

Paul Kulp, Director of Technology Strategy
Lindsay Olesberg, Director of Scripture Engagement
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship USA

My enthusiasm for digital Bible programs is well known to my students and I use each of the "big three" academic programs (Logos, Bible Works, Accordance). I was, however, disappointed that

the benefits of using such programs were sacrificed amid discussion of marginal and sometimes inane subjects like the "Franken-Bible" in *Christianity Today*'s cover story. You missed an opportunity to

COMMENTS? QUESTIONS? Our editors would love to hear from you. E-mail: cteditor@christianitytoday.com
Fax: 630.260.9401 Address Changes, Subscriptions: ctifulfill@christianitytoday.com

encourage your readers to get connected with the Word.

William Varner

Professor, The Master's College & Seminary
Santa Clarita, California

THE ACCIDENTAL COMPLEMENTARIAN

I appreciated Jen Michel's Her.meneutics column, but am a bit saddened by the church's understanding today of malefemale roles. Headship did not begin in Genesis 3 but as part of creation in Genesis 2:15. People miss the imperative for the human "head": Man is not the head of the woman to dominate her but to love her—just as Christ loved the church. The one who leads is the servant of the other (John 13:14). Anyone who says that any label allowing a man to dominate his wife and subject her to a lower, servant status has not read Ephesians 5 and, sadly, has a compartmentalized view of Scripture.

In a land and time where women were considered inferior, women in the early Christian community were to be treated differently. The husband was to love his wife and be her example in love. Through that, he would actually deserve the respect Paul calls for the wife to show her husband.

In my marriage of nearly 28 years, I am the primary cook. We share household responsibilities, and right now my wife works while I'm a student. In circumstances that can be difficult, I love her and she loves me in return. I sincerely desire a complete view of the marital relationship that began in Genesis 2 and is reflected through the words of Jesus and his servant Paul.

Allan Harmening

Maryland Heights, Missouri

OPEN QUESTION

March's Open Question on "How can churches reach nominal believers before they become 'nones'?" stated that CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Get \$100

when you open a Checking Account!

Features FREE Checking • \$100 BONUS¹ • NO Monthly Service Fee • Nearly 30,000 FREE ATMs² • FREE Online Banking & Bill Payer ✓







Open a Checking Account today!

800.347.CCCU (2228), ext. 4145

myCCCU.com/ct

Scan QR code to learn more about Checking!



1. Get a \$100 bonus when you open a FREE Checking or Checking Plus Account. Minimum deposit to open is \$100. The bonus will be deposited into your Checking Account after membership eligibility and Checking Account is approved. The bonus is available on your first Checking Account. Offer not available to existing Christian Community Credit Union members with Checking Accounts or those whose membership or Checking Accounts have been closed within 90 days. The bonus is considered taxable income and will be reported to the IRS on your 1099-INT form. The bonus cannot be used as the opening deposit and cannot be combined with other promotions. The bonus will be available for withdrawal after 90 days. If your Checking Account is closed within 90 days, the bonus will be deducted from the closing balance. Offer effective 03/14/14 and is subject to change without notice. 2. ATMs available through the CO-OP ATM Network. A surcharge fee from the ATM owner may apply on non CO-OP ATMs. Follow us

Christian Community Credit Union is privately insured by American Share Insurance up to \$250,000 per account. By members' choice the Credit Union is not federally insured or insured by any state government.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

nominals find Christianity "totally irrelevant." However, in the New Testament, the irrelevant Jesus is an oxymoron. The purpose statement of John's gospel puts forth the best case for Jesus' relevance: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:31).

"Life in his name" cannot be irrelevant. The biblical word *name* means who that person is and what he or she did, does, and will do. Jesus' atoning work in our lives began "while we were still sinners" (Rom. 5:8). If someone finds Jesus to be irrelevant, the likely cause is that the nature of Jesus' work has never been fully ingrained.

Sermons, fellowship, communion, songs, and baptism must clearly communicate that there is nothing we can do to have life in Jesus' name; Jesus has done it all. All we can do is believe and respond by accepting the Spirit-led life in his name. That kind of church culture is our best hope for making nones obsolete.

John Torgerson

Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

LAMENT FOR A DIVIDED CHURCH

Sarah Hinlicky Wilson speaks of the evangelical and Pentecostal penchant for dividing and subdividing. This makes me wonder if the starting point for evangelical ecumenism is refusing to give up on a unifying dynamic among ourselves. If so, I'll offer three suggestions.

First, the most likely catalyst for unity among evangelicals (traditional, missional, emerging, Pentecostal, and so on) is our commitment to the mission received from Christ. Second, while learning to love the heretic while hating the heresy is necessary, surely it's possible for goodhearted evangelicals to arrive at a shared understanding of mission that's faithful to both Jude 3 (the biblical text) and 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 (the missional task). Third, given the way Jesus connects Christian unity with a missional fruitfulness in his "high priestly prayer" (John 17:20-21), the most poignant motive for evangelical ecumenism might very well be a passionate desire to render to Christ the missional faithfulness he desires and deserves.

Gary Tyra

Professor, Biblical and Practical Theology
Vanguard University
Costa Mesa, California

What a well-written piece—cogent, sobering, yet hope-inspiring. Ecumenism is in my blood, and thanks to the article, I'm better equipped to resume my quiet ecumenical role in my corner of the body of Christ. Thank you, Sarah.

Kathryn R. Deering Ann Arbor, Michigan

WHEN ABUSE COMES TO LIGHT

In Wilson's Bookmarks, John states, "much writing about missionaries either demonizes them or bathes them in the rosy glow of hagiography." As a longtime ct reader, I have noted a general demonizing of dorm parents, including in "When Abuse Comes to Light."

As a missionary kid, I grew up in Japan and chose to board at the Christian Academy in Japan during my last two years of high school (1964–66). I have great memories of my dorm parents as positive role models.

I believe God calls special people to the role of dorm parents. As I look back, I wonder how they were able to put up with the behavior and temperaments of so many young boys. I am most grateful for those willing to take on the difficult task of providing boundaries and spiritual guidance. To those who have been dorm parents in the past and the present, my sincere thanks. Your ministry is important and most appreciated.

Jim Youngquist Burnsville, Minnesota

As a survivor of sexual abuse, I appreciate any recognition within the church for recovery. The most difficult thing for me to comprehend is that God didn't do that to me. I was not raised in a Christian home, but the person who facilitated what happened to me attended a Christian school and weekly chapel. He should have known better.

Becoming a Christian as an adult has taught me that because God is holy, what happened to me should not have happened. I should have been protected from it. But what is more difficult to understand is that God is good, kind, and loving. Even though God is in the business of healing and restoration, I still can believe that only in theory. And all of the insurance policies and lifting of statutes of limitations cannot change that for me.

Name Withheld by Request
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



The world is in motion. People are moving faster and farther than ever before. This global reality is an **OPEN** door. The movement of people brings with it new cultures, ideas,

Join us at the annual Mission Leaders Conference to **OPEN** the way for new appoaches to mission and ministry in response to:

beliefs—and their hearts are more **OPEN** to the gospel. It is an opportunity for the church

IMMIGRATION & MIGRATION

Leith Anderson • President, National Association of Evangelicals

GLOBALIZATION

if we will **OPEN** our eyes.

Robert Doll • Chief Equity Strategist, Nuveen Asset Management

URBANIZATION

Leroy Barber • Global Executive Director, Word Made Flesh

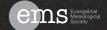
EXPLOITATION

Nikki Toyama-Szeto • Senior Director of Biblical Justice Integration & Mobilization, International Justice Mission

September 25–27, 2014
MissionLeadersConference.com

Thanks to our partners









NET GAIN

Responses from the Web.



"Though I have a specific stance on this issue, I no longer think it is as relevant as the hate, insults, slander, selfish anger, and division that have been made because of this."

A L, CT online comment.

"World Vision Reverses Decision to Hire Christians in Same-Sex Marriages," by Celeste Gracey and Jeremy Weber.

"And to think I was considering getting rid of cable."

Zabrina Kelly, on Jen Hatmaker's Facebook page.

"Woman Under Construction," interview by Kate Shellnutt, in which Hatmaker discusses her forthcoming reality TV series.

"I absolutely believe that there are crimes worthy of death. But I am less and less confident in governments' ability to judge justly."

Ben McClary, Facebook.

Past Imperfect: "Executing Justice?" by David Neff.

"The more I read about this man, the angrier I felt. Now I want nothing more than a chance to show others that God is not a god of hate but of love."

Naomi Tilley, cT online comment.

The Exchange: "Hate and How to Overcome It: How Should We Respond to the Tragic Death of Fred Phelps?" by Ed Stetzer.

"Thanks, Dr. Jenkins. As always, your knowledge of history and clear insights and analysis helped me gain a better understanding."

Michael Basham, cT online comment.

"The 160-Year Christian History Behind What's Happening in Ukraine," by Philip Jenkins.

"Occasional reliance on others isn't necessarily a sign of privilege: it's a sign of humility."

Laura Reu, ct online comment.

Her.meneutics: "When a Stay-At-Home Mom Needs Hired Help," by Marie Osborne.

Senseitivity



With Church Mutual, you get more than just insurance. You get access to industry experts who can help you make sense out of a senseless crime.

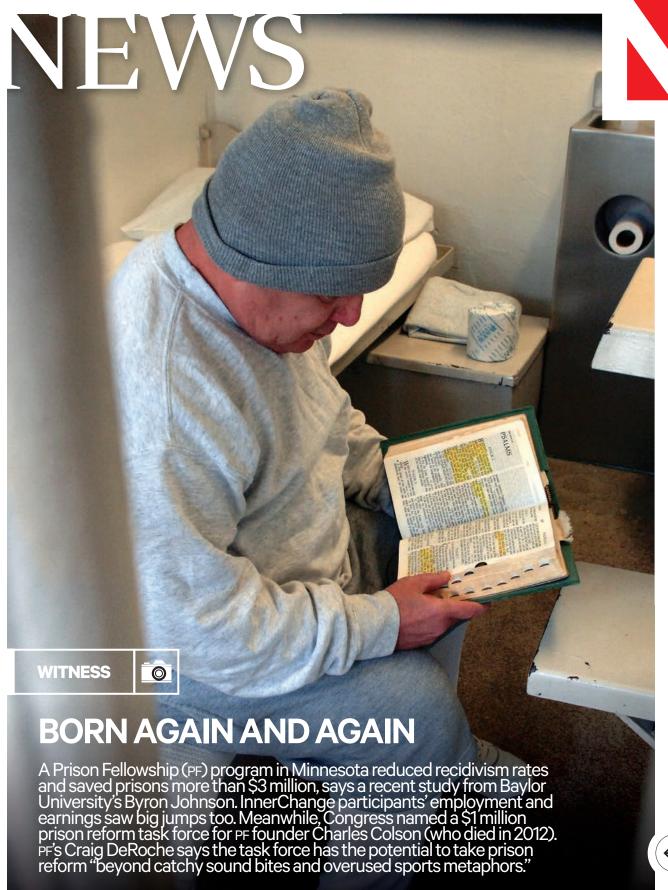
Judy Frymark, a specialist in sexual misconduct claims at Church Mutual, handles up to 100 cases at any given time. Like everyone at Church Mutual, she works with religious organizations, day in and day out, giving her unique insight into what it takes to find common sense solutions when dealing with a senseless situation. Should you find yourself faced with a sexual molestation incident, isn't that the kind of experience you'd like on your side?

Church Mutual has received consistently high ratings from industry analyst A.M. Best every year since 1952.

To learn more, call us at (800) 554-2642 or visit www.churchmutual.com.







GLEANINGS



THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD ... TO KIDS

Seeking the most-selected stories in children's Bibles, Stephen Smith of OpenBible.info analyzed 33 Bibles available on Google Books that were published between 1831 and 2013. While Noah's ark and Jesus' birth proved to be most popular out of more than 400 stories, it seems that stories that emphasize morals and character are on the decline, while stories that emphasize theology are on the rise.





THE CHILDREN'S BIBLE PICTURE-BOOK (1858)

YOUVERSION'S BIBLE APP FOR KIDS (2013)

	1800s Bibles		2000s Bibles
PENTECOST	14%	\uparrow	67%
CREATION OF THE WORLD	57%	\uparrow	100%
SERMON ON THE MOUNT	29%	\uparrow	67%
SODOM & GOMORRAH	71%	\downarrow	33%
SAMSON	69%	\downarrow	36%
CAIN & ABEL	71%	\downarrow	56%

"We were heartbroken."



Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church, after \$600,000 in offerings (including \$200,000 in cash) was stolen in March from the safe of America's largest congregation. The Houston megachurch and Crime Stoppers offered a \$25,000 reward for clues.

John Ortberg's church pays \$9 million for multisite move

The latest wrinkle in the ongoing exodus from the mainline: multisite. John Ortberg's Menlo Park Presbyterian Church (MPPC) overwhelmingly voted to leave the Presbyterian Church (USA) this June—despite a \$9 million penalty. Prompted in part by doctrinal disputes, the move was mainly meant to pave the way to five new campuses in five years. (The PC (USA) stalled over video preaching and competition for existing churches.) "We want to be part of a denomination that celebrates and accelerates our capacity to do this," explained MPPC. The 3.400-member church is not alone: Recent research by Leadership Network suggests nearly 1 in 10 Protestants now attend one of America's 8,000 multisite churches.

Top Pentecostal pastor converts to Catholicism

Sweden's most influential pastor spent 30 years building a charismatic movement that reached dozens of nations with Bible schools, broadcasts, and books. Then Ulf Ekman, who retired from his 3,300member megachurch in Uppsala last year, stunned his Livets Ord (Word of Life) movement in March by announcing he and his wife were converting to Catholicism. Ekman decided Livets Ord was "part of the ongoing Protestant fragmentation of Christendom" and wants to focus on Christian unity. Swedish Evangelical Alliance general secretary Stefan Gustavsson admires Ekman's integrity but noted, "One should not underestimate the pain and disillusion that this creates in many people today."

Bill Gothard resigns amid harassment investigation

Popular seminar speaker Bill Gothard resigned as president of his Institute in Basic Life Principles (IBLP) after his board began investigating sexual harassment accusations from more than 30 women. IBLP said the 79-year-old, who drew 2.5 million people to his family-focused Basic Seminars but never married, explained that he "wanted to follow Matthew 5:23–24 and listen to those who have 'ought against' him." According to Recovering Grace (RG)—the website that published

"Praise God for her life."



HOTO COURTESY OF WHEATON COLLEGE

Steve Saint, after **DAYUMA**, the first convert from the Amazon tribe that martyred Saint's father and four other *Gates of Splendor* missionaries, died in March. Dayuma helped Nate Saint and Jim Elliot begin their short-lived but legendary missionary work in Ecuador, and helped Rachel Saint and Elisabeth Elliot convert the Auca to Christianity. She was later baptized (left) at Wheaton College.



the women's stories—Gothard later held a 90-minute conversation with RG leaders to understand the pain his behavior had caused. "We are hopeful that Mr. Gothard will choose the long and difficult path of repentance," RG stated. Meanwhile, IBLP said it is "startled and concerned" by the allegations and will respond "in due time" after completing a "Christ-honoring review process."

SBC faces first liability in sex abuse suit

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) faces an unusual legal loss in Florida. The state convention was ordered to pay \$12.5 million to a 22-year-old man molested at age 13 by a former church planter. The SBC's bottom-up structure of authority, where autonomous churches (not the denomination) supervise leaders, usually gets such claims dismissed. But the victim's attorney argued that planters receive training and support from the denomination. SBC attorneys expect the verdict to be overturned on appeal, since the jury found that the offender was an independent pastor not hired by the convention. If upheld, the ruling could set a precedent for future lawsuits. Either way, the SBC's Florida director told Baptist Press, "We cannot let this case hinder our efforts to support church planting efforts in our state."

Adamant stances in the home of the Scopes trial

Faculty overwhelmingly issued the first no-confidence vote against a Bryan College president in school history after trustees clarified the school's Statement of Belief to mean that Adam and Eve were historical persons not created from existing life forms. (One trustee resigned over the change.) Faculty told media they were

more upset with how the change was implemented than with what it said. The administration "does not consult faculty when it makes crucial decisions," professor of natural sciences Stephen Barnett told the student paper. "It has no obligation to do so, but effective leadership should... involve stakeholders in decisions that affect them." The board said it "stands fully" with the president.

Anglican seminary's olive branch breaks

One board member resigned and another withdrew support for Nashotah House, a theologically conservative Anglo-Catholic seminary, after it invited Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori to speak in May. Students prompted the invitation, saying they wanted her to see the harmony between Episcopalians and members of the Anglican Church in North America. But conservatives take issue with Jefferts Schori for supporting openly gay bishops and for suing dioceses and parishes that have left the denomination. The furor was tempered when one of the students who asked for the invitation died suddenly; Jefferts Schori's planned chapel speech was switched to a eulogy.

Want refugee status? Bone up on Paul

A Chinese Christian is getting a new chance for asylum in America after an appeals court overturned an immigration judge's denial. The judge had quizzed Chang Qiang Zhu on the apostle Paul: Zhu could explain that Paul was a disciple of Christ who persecuted Christians and later converted to Christianity after being blinded on the road to Damascus. But the judge found Zhu's answers "hesitant"

ADOPTIONS:

Down But More Diverse



International adoptions by American parents have hit their lowest rate since 1992, dropping 18 percent in fiscal 2013 to 7,094 (a third of 2004's record high of 22,991). Yet they are also broadening beyond infant girls:

1 in 10

Kids adopted in 2004 who were 5 years or older 4 in 10

Kids adopted in 2013 who were 5 years or older

1 in 3

Kids adopted in 2004 who are boys 1 in 2

Kids adopted in 2013 who are boys



ukraine has replaced Russia as the third-largest source of adoptions by U.S. parents (438 versus 250 in 2013). Russia, now No. 7, had been No. 3 or higher since 1999.

U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT

when asked what year Paul converted to Christianity and what form of persecution Paul had used. Requiring such specific details isn't allowed because persecuted Christians often lack access to religious education, the State Department has said. The case is the latest example of how immigration boards often deny refugee status based on religious knowledge—and how courts continue to reverse such rulings, saying knowledge is not the same as faith.

HEADLINES



Ethics

Is Neutrality Neutral?

Policy changes aiming for unity at two major Christian organizations spark backlash.



Seeking a broader Christian base, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans dropped the last part of its name in March with little controversy. But saving it won't fund advocacy on 'abortion, sexual orientation, or guns' has upset members.

wo billion-dollar Christian organizations recently announced new policies meant to shield them from culture-war conflicts. Instead, the policies only landed them in the middle of those fights.

In late March, World Vision's U.S. branch said it would no longer bar its more than 1,100 employees from samesex marriages. In a letter to supporters, president Richard Stearns noted that its employees are from more than 50 denominations, some of which have sanctioned gay marriage. "We have not endorsed same-sex marriage, but we have chosen to defer to the authority of local churches on this issue," he said. "The board and I wanted to prevent this divisive issue from tearing World Vision apart and potentially crippling our ability to accomplish our vital kingdom mission."

Less than two days after Christianity Today broke the story, World Vision U.S. reversed its decision. Citing "trusted partners and Christian leaders who have come to us in the spirit of Matthew 18," Stearns said the board decided the change was "not consistent with our Statement of Faith and our commitment to the sanctity of marriage."

Meanwhile. Thrivent Financial. a Christian financial services organization with \$8 billion in revenues (ranked No. 325 on the Fortune 500), is struggling to unify its core membership as they drift apart on moral and social issues.

In 2012, Thrivent said it would give greater deference to its local chapters.

Instead of running the list of organizations that members could give to through its national headquarters, it would allow local chapters to decide. (Thrivent has donated more than \$120 million to nonprofits since 2010.) When a chapter added Planned Parenthood of Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota to the list, prolife members protested. Among them were the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) and Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). Since the company had been called Thrivent Financial for Lutherans until March, and until last June had limited its insurance and financial services to Lutherans only, the LCMS and wels protests were significant.

Within days, Thrivent announced it would not fund the Planned Parenthood affiliate. Then, in February, it announced

Child sponsorships canceled over World Vision's decision (and its reversal) to hire employees in same-sex marriages. The loss was 1 percent of total sponsors.



that it would not fund organizations that primarily advocate or provide services on social issues "such as abortion, sexual orientation, or guns." Because its members' views diverge, Thrivent said, it would not "support organizations and issues that distract, or have the potential to distract, from its common purpose." Communications director Brett Weinberg told ct that Thrivent distributed less than \$200,000 to groups that are now ineligible.

The move did not placate critics. "While we applaud the restrictions on funding pro-abortion organizations, this is not the outcome we had envisioned for the more than 50 pro-life charitable organizations that have received Thrivent assistance in the past to provide key support for women, children, and families," LCMS president Matthew Harrison said on the church's website. Similarly, wels said, "We are deeply distressed that an organization that describes itself as 'faith-based' has taken a position of neutrality on issues in which there can be no neutral position."

Opposition is brewing among Thrivent's liberal constituency as well.

"Thrivent took away the ability of people to support the causes they feel passionate about," said Katrina Foster, a Long Island pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and chaplain to the board of ReconcilingWorks, which led the denomination's 2009 decisions to allow same-sex union ceremonies and ordained pastors in same-sex relationships. "It did not stop controversy. If anything, it created more division." Ken Walker

Polygamy and Pews

Churches call bill unbiblical, but Christian politicians push it through.

enyans have many approaches to marriage, and in March their government consolidated types under one law. One change has drawn the lion's share of attention: legalizing polygamy for men-even if the first wife protests.

Africa has a so-called "polygamy belt" (see chart) that stretches from Senegal to Tanzania. A 2009 government survey indicated that 13 percent of Kenyan women were in polygamous relationships.

The Evangelical Alliance of Kenya (EAK) says the law will erode recent gains against HIV. and lead to more divorces and court fights over inheritances. "We are promoting an old practice in a modern context, which is like putting new wine in an old wineskin," said David Oginde, leader of Christ Is the Answer Ministries. "It will burst."

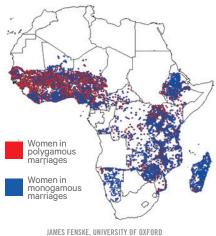
But Samuel Chepkonga, former chair of Kenya's Scripture Union, is among the Christian lawmakers who helped Muslim politicians pass the bill. He even led the effort to remove a clause that let a woman veto her husband's effort to take another wife.

"Not all Kenyans are Christians," said Ken Okoth, a Christian politician who represents Kibera, a poor, largely Muslim community on the edge of Nairobi. "If church leaders want to completely outlaw polygamy, they should propose a bill. [But] that's impossible under our constitution." Approximately 4 in 5 Kenyans are Christians, but that leaves 4 million Muslims who tolerate polygamy.

"I am surprised that Christian politicians don't stand for Christian values," said Wellington Mutiso, former leader of the EAK. "It is very unfortunate. Maybe it is a failure on the part of the church to disciple its members so that they can stand for its values."

Joseph Obwanda, pastor of Lavington United Church, thinks the bill goes too far. "Respect of dignity as the premise of covenant relationship is lost," he said. "Scripture grants man a senior position in marriage as the head of family. But seniority is not superiority."

Martin Wesonga, who heads an Anglican seminary in Mombasa, supports the bill, in part noting Old Testament



acceptance of polygamy. And while the New Testament is clear that polygamy is unacceptable for Christian leaders, he said, it does not explicitly condemn it in all contexts for everyone. "The bill defines Christian marriage, which is monogamous," he said. "Those who want to be polygamous will not go for Christian marriages."

James Fenske, an Oxford economist who studies African polygamy, thinks church leaders needn't worry. The law will have little effect since polygamy has been declining in Kenya for decades, he said. "I see no reason to expect this trend to reverse." Moses Wasamu in Nairobi, Kenya

Under Discussion

Compiled by Ruth Moon



Q: Should Christian colleges let female faculty teach men the Bible?

Cedarville University's new president is solidifying the cccu school's stance on gender roles. One example: Classes taught by the only female Bible professor are now open only to women. Complementarians (to whom we limited our question this month) disagree over whether this is necessary.





"A college is not a church. It does not baptize, exercise church discipline, have elders and deacons. and so on. Biblical restrictions refer only to office (usually elders) rather than function, and that view simply can't be fairly transferred to a college or even a seminary.'

Craig Blomberg,

New Testament professor, Denver Seminary

"It comes down to your view of ecclesiology. I don't think you take an 18-yearold, crank him through a 4-year degree, and once he has a letter behind his name he's a church leader. I think that's a worldly way of looking at the office as an institution."

Mary Kassian, women's studies professor, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

"The university is a gray area, but we should stay as much to the center of God's Word and principles as we can. He is going to have far greater pleasure in seeing a male theologian in the classroom than in our seeing if we couldn't put a woman in simply because she's gifted."

Dorothy Patterson, first lady, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

"While Scripture addresses church settings, teaching roles that are elder-like should be shaped according to biblical eldership. Other aspects of elder qualifications would be operative for schools, so there's no reason to lop off the requirement that they be men."

Owen Strachan, executive director. Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

"Mixed-gender theology classes should be taught by men. It is illogical to say a woman should train men to be Bible teachers and pastors when she shouldn't be one herself. If women shouldn't be pastors or elders in churches, then they should also not have that role in other contexts."

Wayne Grudem,

theology professor, Phoenix Seminary



Denominations | Nigeria

The Great Baby Commission

One of Africa's fastest-growing churches wants to expand by having as many children as possible.

Leora Olorunnisomo, a Dallas social worker and lawyer, preps some of the thousands of seats at the Redeemed Christian Church of God's Redemption Camp in Floyd, Texas, before last year's annual North American convention. RAD LOPER/THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

ne year ago, the reportedly "fast-est-growing church in Africa" dedicated a \$15.5 million, 10,000-seat conference center in a sparse prairie town northeast of Dallas whose population is less than 1 percent black.

The auditorium was just the beginning, said officials with the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG)—a fish farm, schools, and a university were on the way. The church is offering free land to members willing to build a home on the 788-acre campus, and plans to expand its Pavilion Center to seat 1 million.

It sounded audacious, but then so did its statistics: The Pentecostal denomination that started in Nigeria in 1952 opened its first American congregation in Detroit in 1992. Between 2009 and 2013, it nearly doubled its churches in North America to 720.

But when the RCCG's longtime leader, Enoch Adejare Adeboye, returns for the North American branch's convention in June, not much will have changed. Doyin Oke, chief operating officer, says the RCCG has about the same number of North American churches it did a year ago.

Church planting, however, is not RCCG'S only strategy for growth. Even among West Africans, who have some of the highest birth rates in the world, the RCCG has a reputation for promoting baby-making among its members. (The World Bank

says Nigeria has 40 births per year per 1,000 people; the United States has 14.)

In 2011, as Adeboye neared age 70, he asked that RCCG give him a birthday present of adding 70,000 babies to the church. He later raised the goal to 100,000. (He also called RCCG to make 700,000 new converts.)

"If I had my way, I would have had 100 children," Adeboye told convention-goers, according to Nigerian newspaper *Vanguard*. "But I thank God; he is now giving thousands of babies because he knows my love for babies."

The Nigeria annual convention keeps a running tally of the babies born *at* the convention itself over its eight days. Last year it hit 101.

Oke says the North American branch "also rejoices when families are blessed with children, because 'happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them'" (Ps. 127:5, KJV). James Adekunle, an RCCG pastor in Nigeria, said having children is simply obeying the Genesis mandate to multiply and conquer the earth. He also says that "every Christian has a responsibility to have

101

Babies born at last year's weeklong convention in Nigeria. as many children as possible."

Even for Nigerian Christians outside the RCCG, having many babies is a way to preserve Christianity. "Today there exists demographic warfare by certain elements within the Muslim community who see this as a means of Islamization," says Gideon Para-Mallam, regional secretary for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. "This is a global reality we cannot ignore."

The average fertility rate among Muslims in Nigeria is between six and seven children per woman, while non-Muslim women have five children on average, according to the Pew Research Center.

Not all Nigerian Christians think outbirthing Muslims is the answer, however. "It's not about how many [children] we have but how we train the few we have," says Francis Bola Akin-John, president of International Church Growth Ministries.

Impoverished Christians should not have more children than they can afford, he said. "Of what use is giving birth to children into poverty? If we don't disciple and train them, they will be converted to Islam."

Praises Omole, a doctor and member of the Methodist Church Nigeria, disagrees. "It's not our business to figure out how those children will be fed," he says. "Ours is simply to trust God and obey him."

Sunday Oguntola in Lagos; Kevin P. Emmert



YOUR LIFE IS DIGITAL.
YOUR KIDS' LIVES ARE DIGITAL.
AND NOW YOUR MINISTRY CAN BE TOO.

OneHope has helped the Church reach more than 1 BILLION young people with the Gospel message—now we're making it even easier to connect. Click to personalize a Scripture book; swipe to start an interactive Bible story; launch a virtual world to memorize verses or play a game anytime or anywhere; text to tithe or donate to your favorite organization.



CUSTOM SCRIPTURE MATERIALS



BIBLE APP FOR KID



ONLINE GAMES



MOBILE GIVING SOLUTIONS



EXCITING NEW INSPIRATIONAL TV SERIES

JOHN MICHAEL TALBOT

GS POSSIBLE



Shows every Wednesday 9 pm ET / 8pm CT / 7 pm MT / 6pm PT on The Church Channel

Visit www.churchchannel.tv to find the broadcast schedule in your area.

SET YOUR DVR



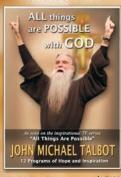
Visit us on Facebook www.facebook.com/johnmichaeltalbot



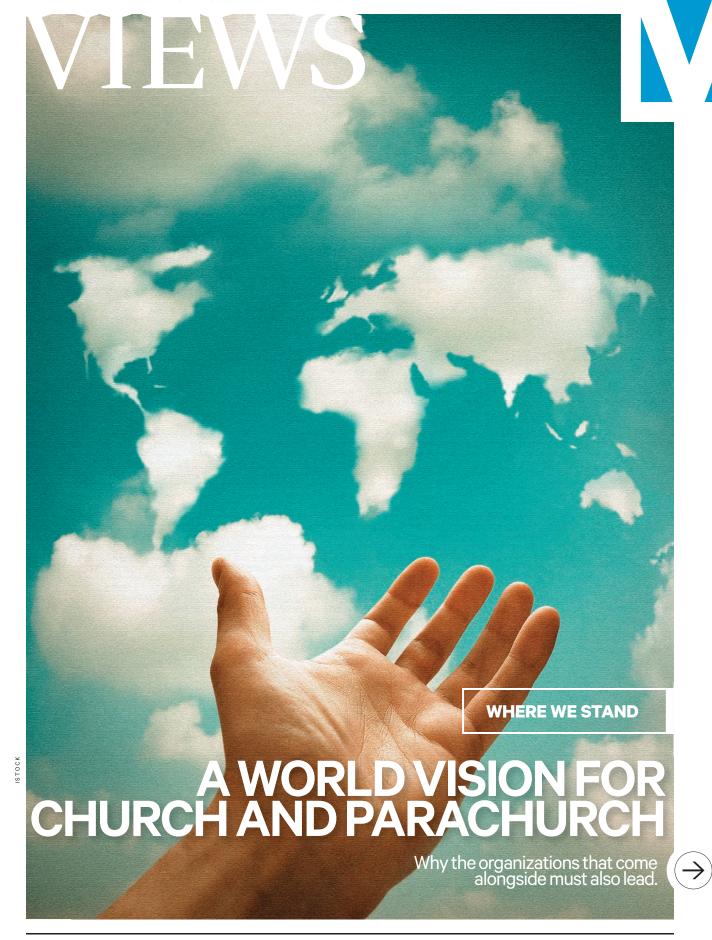
For complete information about John Michael Talbot's new Television Ministry and to purchase new DVD please visit:

FOR THE LORD John Michael Talbot.com/TV or call toll-free 877-504-9865

NEW DVD "ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE WITH GOD" **Features** 12 Premier Episodes from the TV Series



DVD PRICE \$35



"IT IS DIFFICULT to overstate the significance of parachurch organizations in contemporary American evangelicalism." So writes historian John G. Turner in Bill Bright and Campus Crusade for Christ: The Renewal of Evangelicalism in Postwar America. That's due in part to the size and scope of such organizations. Evangelical Christians donate billions of dollars annually toward humanitarian, political, and evangelistic causes, from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) to Youth with a Mission to Young Life to Prison Fellowship to the Evangelical Environmental Networkthe list goes on and on.

The extraordinary anxiety—and

relief—over World Vision's (wv) twin policy statements about hiring married gay men and women signaled again the centrality of parachurches to evangelical life. In fact, the incident suggests that parachurches do not merely come alongside the church in ministry but also lead it in crucial ways.

Parachurches have played a long and important role in our movement, beginning with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810. But since World War II, evangelicalism has more or less

been defined by parachurches like BGEA, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Compassion, and wv. Michael Lindsay, in Faith in the Halls of Power, argues that cosmopolitan evangelicals—prominent leaders in a variety of fields—"are more active in parachurch groups than in local congregations." The most gifted and ambitious influencers in our movement serve and take their cues from the parachurch. In short, the parachurch has become a defacto leader in contemporary evangelicalism.

It's still very much true that the parachurch comes alongside the local church to help its ministry. World Relief, for example, doesn't replace local churches' calling to tangibly show compassion to the poor. But World Relief gives those churches a place to send people and

Parachurches can pursue laser-like focus on core issues.

And they can ignore other issues that the local church cannot.

resources so that the poor can be served.

But the parachurch leads the church in important ways. Most churches, especially those in denominations, are called to a variety of ministries. Parachurches can pursue laser-like focus on core issues. And they can ignore other issues that the local church cannot. International Justice Mission, for example, doesn't have to worry about helping parents raise their



children in the faith or teaching people how to tithe.

Parachurches also enjoy a focused theology and ethics. In mainline denominations (to which some cr editors belong), one finds diverse views on Scripture: the inerrant Word of God, merely a historic document, and everything in between. Or take the issue at hand in the wv controversy. In some denominations, gay people can be married and serve in church leadership.

Many evangelicals believe the faith should be more focused—in ways that speak to the truth and splendor of the gospel. Thus they are committed to parachurch institutions, because they can do just that. As Andrew Walker wrote for *First Things*, "In American evangelicalism, you can't believe in anything you want and

call yourself an evangelical." There's much greater latitude in mainline Protestantism. "That's [what] 'professional dissidents'... want evangelicalism to become," continues Walker. "But that only leads to eternal pottage."

This is one large reason we evangelical Christians were so discouraged when wv announced its decision to hire married gays—and why we were heartened

when wv reversed itself. As president Rich Stearns explained to ct, wv maintains "certain beliefs that are... core to our Trinitarian faith" such as "the authority of Scripture" and "marriage as an institution ordained by God between a man and a woman—those are age-old and fundamental Christian beliefs. We cannot defer on things that are that central to the faith."

Those of us who support or work for parachurch organizations would do well to remember, then, that the parachurch is not first and foremost designed to foster church unity by sacrific-

ing theology or ethics for the sake of a narrowly defined mission. Instead, at their best, parachurch organizations keep alive focused, integrated visions of theology, ethics, and mission. That's the way parachurches can lead the church.

It's not that mainline Christianity is utterly corrupt and evangelical Christianity is the only true and perfect form of faith. But evangelical Christianity too has been mightily used by God and brings extraordinary gifts to the broader church. When our parachurches faithfully maintain the unique beliefs and practices that have come to define the evangelical movement, that's when we have something special to contribute to the body of Christ.

MARK GALLI is CT editor.

Rachel Marie Stone is the author of Eat With Joy, a regular contributor to Her.meneutics, and a blogger for Religion News Service.



The Myth of Happy Parenting

How did we come to expect pain-free child rearing?

ith my first pregnancy, it seemed everyone was more excited than me.

My mother squealed when I told her the news. People at church kept hugging me and grinning in my general direction. Even my ob-GYN's secretary shrieked, "Congratulations!" when I asked for a prenatal appointment.

None of them were spending hours curled in bed, barely moving due to nausea. They did not endure 12 hours of labor, during which I cried, "Why, God? Why do you want me to suffer so much?" To which my nurse replied, "This is what it takes to have a baby, sweetheart."

Then I'm not sure I want to have a baby, I thought.

As a friend recently put it, raising children requires holding joy and sorrow in the same hand at once.

When my son finally arrived, I was in love. But soon it became clear that he was not one of those coveted "easy" babies. He cried incessantly and slept little. Frankly, there was a lot I didn't like about him. I carried a crushing burden of guilt. Weren't children a blessing from God, as the Bible and church people told me? Shouldn't I like him more? Shouldn't I be happier?

As he grew, he became a delightful child. Still, my guilt continued. I felt bad that endless peekaboo, reading the same board book for the 100th time, and changing dozens of diapers left me bored and restless. It left me wishing for a small injury to land me in the hospital, where someone would take care of *me* for a change.

Of course, my secret resentment of the difficulties of raising children has deep roots. In her satiric novel of 1927, *Twilight Sleep*, novelist Edith Wharton uses the

title concept ("twilight sleep" being an anesthetic regimen that let wealthy women sleep through labor and delivery) to sum up the privileged 20th-century attitude toward pain, including the pain of childbearing:

"Of course there ought to be no Pain...
nothing but Beauty.... It ought to be
one of the loveliest, most poetic things
in the world to have a baby," Mrs. Manford declared, in that bright efficient
voice which made loveliness and
poetry sound like the attributes of an
advanced industrialism, and babies
something to be turned out in series
like Fords.

The idea that there ought to be "nothing but Beauty" is, I think, part of the modern myth of parenting. Our expectations for our kids and for ourselves get higher and higher. (Writer Micha Boyett recently said that if she hears about another toddler taking Mandarin lessons, she'll heave.) We want our children to be perfect, and we want to be perfect parents. Yet we don't even know what that means. In her recent book, All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenting, Jennifer Senior notes that "happiness" is a vague concept, and perhaps the wrong goal for parenting.

The way of the parent is often the way of the Cross: the glory and grace and joy in it come at significant cost.

The truth is that parenthood is not always fun. In the church, where we rightly acknowledge that children are gifts from God, perhaps we are especially afraid to say this. There's so much pain and heartache. The way of the parent is often the way of the Cross: the glory and grace and joy in it come at significant cost. We relinquish our time, energy, money, and personal desires for our children.

English novelist John Lancaster recently called for "a revival of the concept of duty." It's the moral obligation to fulfill a responsibility to another, regardless of whether it makes us happy. By God's grace, duty often yields not to happiness but to something better: joy. As the early church in Acts teaches us, joy can coincide with suffering and struggle.

"Gift love longs to serve or even to suffer" for the beloved, wrote C. S. Lewis. Perhaps it is advanced industrialism and the advertising age that have beguiled us into thinking that parenthood should always be fun, satisfying, and merrymaking. It's the same cultural trap that convinces us marriage should last "as long as we both shall remain happy with each other."

Lightening the burden of raising our children begins with recognizing that as imperfect beings, neither we nor they will always be our best or happiest. Instead, gift love—the kind of love God bestows on us, his children—calls us to fulfill our obligations to one another, personal happiness aside. The way of gift love necessarily entails cost, sacrifice, and pain. But God's grace is such that even a semi-sleepless night curled next to a small, feverish boy has a certain beauty in it. It's the small hands reaching for me, seeking and finding a measure of comfort, even joy.

ADAM CRUFT

OPEN QUESTION Three Views

Under what circumstances should an overseas missionary pay a bribe?

Widespread corruption presents ethical dilemma for outreach.



Samuel Kunhiyop Only Involuntarily

issionaries must not pay bribes, cash or in-kind. It is biblically and ethically wrong.

The Bible condemns paying bribes. Exodus 23:8 states, "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the innocent." The evils on par with paying bribes include adultery (Prov. 6:20–35) and breaking a political

treaty (1 Kings 15:18–20). Judas received a bribe to betray the Lord (Luke 22:3–5); the chief priests bribed the guards to tell a lie (Matt. 28:11–14). Felix wanted a bribe before releasing Paul (Acts 24:26).

Simon even tried to bribe Peter and John in order to get the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18–24). This is a case of voluntary bribery, and it deserved the full condemnation that Peter and John gave.

Yet some bribes are involuntary. The policeman at a checkpoint who uses his gun or uniform to force motorists to give

money is clearly practicing extortion, and the motorist cannot be blamed for paying a bribe. In this situation, it is involuntary bribery and not blameworthy. The givers (including missionaries) should not be blamed for forced payment of money. We should trust veteran missionaries to make the best of a bad situation regarding involuntary bribery in war or other times of conflict.

Apart from an involuntary bribe or extortion, we must be slow to assume that a missionary is giving a bribe. When someone gives a gift to a service worker who is significantly underpaid, it is not necessarily a bribe. In the West, even in Africa, we should not classify tips as bribes. Both the restaurant server and the one served expect this tip for their service. It is completely voluntary, and we must not interpret it as bribery. There are situations, especially in Africa, where a missionary may give a gift (cash or in-kind) to a worker for service rendered.

When a visitor declines to show appreciation by giving a token of appreciation, a service worker or host might interpret this as being stingy, unfriendly, or lacking compassion.

African traditions and governments prohibit giving and receiving bribes, and those caught are liable to be prosecuted and punished. Just because there is widespread bribery does not mean that it is acceptable. Corruption is out of control in Africa: In 2010, Transparency International named it the most corrupt region in the world.

Missionaries should not give bribes when they have the power to do otherwise. Bribery clearly violates the clear teaching of Scripture and the ethics of free will.

SAMUEL KUNHIYOP, author of *African Christian Ethics*, is general secretary of Evangelical Church Winning All, an evangelical denomination in Nigeria.

Sharon Mumper Only If Necessary

issionaries should not pay bribes to get an official to flout the law and give preferential treatment. But paying a bribe to get a corrupt official to do his duty may be necessary.

Even Jesus was willing to pay an unjust temple tax when it was necessary to keep the peace. There was plenty of corruption in that day. Yet in Matthew 17:24–27, Jesus said to do it willingly.

There may be times when it is necessary to give a payment in order to get an official to follow the law. One such occasion occurred years ago when I was exiting Ukraine at the end of a conference.

The Ukrainian exchange rate had plummeted, and expenses were much lower than anticipated. Under intense questioning by customs officials, I admitted I had a considerable amount of cash with me. I was taken into a separate room, where an official demanded to see the money. He spread it out on the table and then began to ask a series of irrelevant questions.

As my flight time neared, it became apparent that he was both aware of my departure time and willing to continue the interview indefinitely. Finally, minutes before my flight's departure, he picked up two \$100 bills and looked at me. At that point I understood that I was going to have to ransom myself.

"That's too much," I told him, and he put one of the bills back. I gathered up the remaining cash, jammed it into my purse, and ran for the gate.

I had done nothing wrong. It was not illegal to leave the country with the amount of cash I had. Yet I was forced to pay a corrupt official in order to catch my flight. I felt robbed. But I was not willing to miss my flight in order to wait him out, if possible, for the sake of principle.

What about voluntary bribes in the form of tipping? I do not consider tipping

a bribe if it is done after the performance of a service. However, I will admit that on occasion, in countries where service tends to be poor, I have made it clear in advance that I appreciate good service and that I am a generous tipper.

Some missionaries in countries where corruption is rampant may become so used to greasing palms that they fall into the trap of paying for undeserved preferential treatment.

Some may even say that the laws are so vague and applied so unevenly that paying bribes is a necessary evil in order to achieve the good that they want to do. But the end does not justify the means. Westerners typically have more funds at their disposal than locals. Using those funds to obtain special privileges in the same way the local drug lord does distorts and taints their image as Christians.

Using Western wealth to get undeserved benefits is wrong and dangerous.

SHARON MUMPER is founder and president of Magazine Training International and has been in Christian publishing since 1967.

Marvin Wilson Rarely, If Ever

he Bible does not specify a particular penalty for bribery, but it clearly warns against it. Bribes may lead to partiality and a distortion of justice (1 Sam. 8:3). Judges are to be especially wary of such gifts, for they may easily "blind the eyes" (Deut. 16:19).

The decision to refuse bribes may show godly, ethical character (1 Sam. 12:3; Job 6:22). Conversely, an act of bribery may lead to bloodshed (Ezek. 22:12), sexual looseness (Ezek. 16:33), or neglect of widows and orphans (Isa. 1:23).

Bribes sometimes bring temporary relief, yet in the end may prove to be deceptive security. Such is the lesson Judah twice discovers as she bribes foreign kings to come to her rescue (1 Kings 15:16–24; 2 Kings 16:5–9). Bribes are often associated with lying, betrayal, and the promotion of selfishness and greed.

Yet today, as in the ancient world, it is not always easy to distinguish between gifts and bribes. The differences are often subtle. Indeed, as Proverbs observes, "A man's gift eases his way and gives him access to the great" (18:16, Jewish Publication Society, Tanakh). However, we may perceive giving gifts to effect an urgent and seemingly just cause as a gray area involving situational ethics. This conflict—especially for Christians serving abroad—may be brought to the fore when, after fasting and prayer, the only apparent means to effect results seems to be a gift of money. These Christians are conflicted. Their motivation should be love, not manipulating a situation with money.

Official corruption has existed for generations in rich and poor countries alike. But in the developing world, there is so little prosecution of official corruption that is normalized. By the nature of their ministry, missionaries are more at risk of bribery since they are so often at checkpoints and border crossings in times of crisis. Godly discernment is essential.

Biblical social ethics are about community flourishing and the priorities and teachings that guide our thoughts and actions. Real-life situations involving potential bribery require us to wrestle with tough questions, and we need great sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's leading. One concern must be to affirm the inestimable value of human life. Each person is created in the divine image (Gen. 1:26–27).

When Jesus confronts two biblical teachings in conflict, his priority is often to uphold the one that supports and promotes life (Luke 6:1-11). Rabbis later developed the principle of *pikuach nefesh*, "saving a life," as one of the highest teachings of Judaism.

How do our decisions promote the great commandment: love for God and for our neighbor and his welfare (Lev. 19:13–18; Mark 12:28–34)? Do we seek justice and mercy as we weigh inaction against the potential benefits of acting, often struggling to find the lesser evil or to affirm the greater good (Deut. 16:20)? In the end, if we opt for "bribe" money, it may only prove, at best, a quick fix.

How might God's redemptive power to transform the hearts of people and their ethics bring greater justice and permanent change within this fallen world? In this hopeful vein, two centuries before Jesus, Jewish sage Ben Sira longed for the day when "all bribery and injustice will be blotted out" (Sirach 40:12, NRSV).

MARVIN WILSON, author of *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, is professor of Bible and theology at Gordon College.

David Neff is former editor in chief of cT.



The Roar of Worship

A primer on the best way to use music in church.

n my last Sunday at Saint Barnabas, where I led music for almost 27 years, the new music director asked me to share myphilosophy of church music with some key instrumentalists. It was a good occasion to rehearse what to me is the role of music in biblical worship.

First, be eclectic. Select the best from a variety of styles and sources. This is fundamental to being the church.

The Christian church exists almost everywhere because, as missiologist Andrew Walls discovered, Christianity has been far more culturally adaptable than other religions. Yes, I know the horror stories of Western missionaries imposing insipid Victorian hymns on African and Asian converts. But I also know about missionaries-from Baptist to Jesuit-who have helped new groups of believers cultivate worship in their culturally unique musical vocabulary.

To worship as part of a global church, we must find small ways to incorporate music from other cultures. At Saint Barnabas, we recently sang a Tibetan arrangement of the Lord's Prayer, the multilingual Xhosa-Zulu-Sesotho hymn "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" ("Lord Bless Africa"), and an Old Church Slavonic chant.

The Christian church has culturally cross-pollinated its worship for almost two millennia. Egeria, a fourth-century Spanish pilgrim, wrote an eyewitness account of worship practices in Jerusalem. Those practices became the basis for the emerging liturgical year. In the sixth century, after retaking the Italian peninsula from the Ostrogoths, Emperor Justinian appointed three popes. The result was "blended worship," a mix of East and West that brought the Hebrew Halleluia and the

Greek Kyrie Eleison-"Lord, have mercy"to our common worship.

The Reformation also produced tremendous cross-pollination. Though Elizabeth I didn't like them, the psalms of John Calvin's Geneva spread to her realm, and they set the stage for scripturally dense hymn writing. Among my favorite paraphrases (especially nowas I move to a new state) is Isaac Watts's 23rd Psalm, which concludes, "There would I find a settled rest, / While others go and come./Nomoreastranger,noraguest,/But like a child at home."

Second, avoid the performance temptation. The purpose of church music is not artistic excellence, but enabling and encouraging people's worship. The role of musical artistry in worship is to freshen up the overly familiar, to highlight shifting moods, and to engage the people with God and the Christian community. All our creativity and artistry must be in service of these goals. This implies a number of things:

- Use singable melodies. "Amazing Grace" was first published in 1779, but it didn't become popular until 1900, when a Chicago publisher made it singable by simplifying one of its several tunes. Melody matters.
- Allow people to listen to themselves and their neighbors. Our voices should not be overwhelmed by the band or pipe

Allow people to listen to themselves and their neighbors. Our voices should not be overwhelmed by the band or pipe organ.

organ. Some of the best congregational singing is a cappella, because unaccompanied singing lets us attend to the voices of our neighbors. In addition, our voices shouldn't be muted by dead acoustics. We are all tempted to sing in a tiled shower. Conversely, nothing discourages singing like an acoustically dry, carpeted worship space with low ceilings and padded pews.

• Strive for a balance of simplicity and complexity. Worship is shaped by the preaching of the Word and by our celebration around the Communion table.

The Word portion of the service demands textual complexity: for example, Martin Luther's defiant paraphrase of Psalm 46, "A Mighty Fortress"; Samuel Stone's lyrical celebration of Paul's ecclesiology in "The Church's One Foundation"; and Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty, and Stuart Townend's versification of Hebrews 11. "By Faith."

Participation at the Lord's Table, however, requires simplicity as music undergirds action. Many spirituals alter just a few words from verse to verse and can thus be sung as people receive Communion. Taizé chants offer simple material that deepens with repetition. It's important that simple songs be authentic. If they arise from a deep spirituality, especially if formed in adversity, sing them often. If they arise from a shallow or manipulative piety, shun them.

Eclectic breadth and full participation-I see these reflected in the worship of the redeemed multitude described in Revelation 7,14, and 19. Heavenly worship includes the cultures of every tribe, tongue, and nation. Participation is so full (and acoustically live) that John can describe it only as sounding "like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder" (Rev. 19:6). That's something to aim for.



EVERYTCUS (S)

THE GOSPEL IS THE REMEDY.

NEW FROM MATT CHANDLER
RECOVERING
REDEMPTION

recovering redemption.com







COVER STORY

EN YEARS HAD passed since I had seen my father. At the time I had no photographs of him, just a vague memory of his face from our last visit. When we pulled up in a rented van to the VA housing complex in Sarasota, Florida, my husband saw him first.

"There he is." Duncan tipped his head to point.

I turned my eyes slowly. A man was standing under the awning of the complex. I saw his dark skin, his head, nearly bald and square, and a barely visible neck. It was him. He was just as I remembered but bigger, maybe 40 pounds heavier than the last time, when I had left my young children to fly down for three days. I had not forgotten those three days of silence.

Now I stared at him, frozen. How do I play this scene? I thought. Loving daughter greeting long-lost father? Kind daughter bringing her children to meet their grandfather for the first time? Angry daughter wanting just a few words from her father?

after another. My father stood there seeming not to see them, as if they were inconsequential to his life—which they were. He knew nothing about them, had never even seen photographs of them. I had never sent any because my father was barely interested in his own children, let alone his children's children.

When the last one jumped out, suddenly I was on. I knew what to do. I hugged the strange man, patting him on the back with the tips of my fingers. I did not want to get too close to him.

"Hi. How ah ya?" he asked in his Massachusetts accent. He smiled a little, showing a few remaining teeth, all broken.

"Good. We had a little trouble finding

this place," I said with false brightness. Duncan stopped the van. I got out It had taken us two days to get here. slowly and opened the doors for the kids, We had flown from Kodiak, Alaska, from holding my breath. They piled out one WHAT W FORGOT ABOUT CHRISTIANITYTODAY.COM MAY 2014



the far northwest corner to the far southeast corner of the country. It was spring break 2006. Mostly this was a trip to see him. He was 84, so I knew this might be my children's only chance to meet him.

They didn't know anything about him, and they never asked. But over my then-28 years of marriage and 16 years of parenting, I had learned from my husband and my children what fathers were for. And I wanted them to know who my father was, for themselves. Someday they would care.

Two hours into our visit, I had run out of conversation. I was quiet and grim. He hadn't asked the names of my children or spoken to them. He had barely spoken to me. Scrambling to claim a memory from the visit, I suggested we go for ice cream, his favorite food. We stood in line for our cones and ate them under a tree, watching the traffic. Just before we left the stand, I told Duncan to take a photo. I wanted to remember this moment.

My father sat at the picnic table with a slight smirk on his face, looking utterly content. I stood behind him, my lips taut, mouth clamped shut, containing as much emptiness and anger as I could hold. How can I still want? How can I forgive him for

believe that out of the six siblings, she was the one calling him. It was her room he had visited at night when he was home, when the rest of us were in bed. We didn't know until decades later.

That was not his only offense. He either couldn't or wouldn't keep a job, leaving us to a childhood of shameful poverty. When I was 13 years old and my mother was going to school so she could seek work, my father took the bit of money we had left and drove away in his car, intending never to come back. Unfortunately, weeks later, he returned. Years later, when he finally scraped together some money, he moved 2,000 miles to Florida to live on a dilapidated sailboat.

"Why are you doing this?" I asked my sister.

"I've forgiven him, Leslie."

I hung up. The room was spinning.

As the way such things happen, suddenly the entire world felt abuzz with the matter of forgiveness. The Lord's Prayer became unsettling: Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. How many times had I said those words and not heard them? How could I let go of his sins and crimes against us? And what of

U.S. children are raised below the poverty line. Forty percent of first-time marriages will fail, leaving children in relational crisis and loss. More than 7 million children live with a parent who has alcohol or drug problems, and one in four families are affected by mental illness. Among families with two parents, about half (44 percent) are headed by two parents who work; another one in four families (26 percent) are headed by a single working parent, leaving these adults absent far more from their children than they would like.

Jill Hubbard, a clinical psychologist with New Life Ministries in Laguna Beach, California, sees the fallout of family brokenness up close and personal. "At least half of the people I see each week are battling some degree of unforgiveness, especially of parents," she told me. "They may not always realize the condition of their hearts, but you can see in their lives the replay of the hurts they haven't dealt

Even relatively healthy and stable and stable with mes suffer from wounds and deficienhomes suffer from wounds and deficiencies. No matter how dedicated to her children, no matter how churchgoing and God-loving she is, every parent is plagued

'Why are you doing this?' I asked. My sister said, 'I've forgiven him, Leslie.' I hung up. The room was spinning.

all the years past, for this moment even now? He is utterly content with his ice cream, while his daughter sits beside him starving to death, and thinks the ice cream is pretty good today, isn't it?

I would not come back to see him again, I decided, no matter what.

Sinners Raising Sinners

Five years later, I got a call from my sister. "Leslie, Dad was at the VA hospital last

week. They thought he might have had a heart attack. I found out today."

"How did you find out?"

"I talked to Dad on the phone."

"You're talking to Dad?"

"Yes. I've been calling him almost every week," she said, her voice calm and assured.

"Every week? And he talks to you?" I couldn't hide my confusion. I couldn't

the commandment "Honor your father and your mother"? Surely if a father or mother acts dishonorably, we need not honor them. I had built most of my life around that premise.

I did not have to look far or long to find others struggling to forgive a father, a mother, a stepfather, a foster mother, a grandparent—all the people who were supposed to love and nurture us and for many reasons did not. It's an ancient story, as old as Cain and Abel and their fallen parents: sinners raising sinners. The iniquity of the fathers and mothers visited upon the children to the third and fourth generations (Ex. 34:7; Num. 14:18). But however universal, and however inevitable it feels, the issue is particularly compelling in our own time and place.

Families are unraveling at what seems like an unprecedented rate. Nearly half of first births in the United States are now to unmarried mothers. About 1 in 5 by failures. I know I am. That's part of the reason I wrote my book-to give it to my own children.

After walking the stony path of forgiving my father, I am convinced we must all walk that same path. If we are to thrive as image bearers; if the church is to be a salve to a wounded culture; if our country and our communities are to prosper; if our own families and children are to break free from generational sins, we will need to learn and practice forgiveness toward those who often have hurt us most: our mothers and fathers.

TForgive for Myself'

As I urge others in this call, I'm not a lone prophet bleating a strange message in the wilderness. Forgiveness is trendy. In the past 15 years, the topic has been ushered out of the church and into mainstream and primetime, so much so that Jeanne



Safer wrote for Psychology Today, "From the political to the personal, Americans are caught in an orgy of forgiveness." A number of academic institutions have formed forgiveness projects and institutes, including the International Forgiveness Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the Stanford Forgiveness Projects. Fueled by foundation grants and hope, hundreds of studies in the fields of medicine, mental health, and the social sciences affirm the extraordinary power of forgiveness to lower blood pressure, reduce stress and depression, boost the immune system, and increase feelings of compassion and optimism even for the most traumatized individuals.

Beyond the West, forgiveness projects have brought healing and reparation to countries devastated by state-led and ethnically driven brutality, including Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, and

South Africa. These projects have at least interrupted generational cycles of vengeance, hatred, and genocide.

Back in the States, the message of forgiveness has taken a decidedly American tone, becoming increasingly secularized and individualized, particularly in the past five years. The names of authors and articles are too many to list here, but a theme emerges: Forgiveness is a choice, and it's primarily for our good. Fred Luskin, director of the Stanford Forgiveness Projects, delineates a nine-step process to "forgiving for good," stating outright, "Forgiveness is for you and not for anyone else." Some forgiveness outlets counsel empathy toward the offender, but for many the impetus is personal health: releasing bitterness toward the offender, detaching from the offender, and regaining well-being and control.

The "therapeutic forgiveness" model has entered the public parlance as a kind

of self-administered miracle cure. A New Age blog running the headline, "I Forgive for Myself," typifies the reigning therapeutic understanding of forgiveness. The author states, "I am not forgiving for the good of the other person. I am forgiving for the good of myself so I can be free and move forward." So goes the mantra: "Forgive and set yourself free." Dr. Phil joins the chorus, urging his readers toward forgiveness to gain "emotional closure." To get there, we do no more than is absolutely necessary. He says we are to find our "Minimal Effective Response"-"the easiest thing you can do to resolve your pain."

Christian theologians have played a significant part in crafting the therapeutic forgiveness message. Lewis B. Smedes, the late ethicist, was one of the first to pitch forgiveness as a gift to ourselves (in the classic Forgive and Forget): "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you." The quote is so widely used it has taken on the force of gospel truth. Such messages have

only increased since then. Joyce Meyer's 2012 book on forgiveness is titled *Do Yourself a Favor* . . . *Forgive*. And in January, speaking on *CBS This Morning* about his new book on the topic, megachurch pastor T. D. Jakes assured the panel that "forgiveness is a gift you give yourself." The book is pitched as "the most important step you can take right now toward personal healing and professional advancement."

To be sure, a fuller Christian witness has remained in the public square—the forgiveness of the shooter of five Amish schoolgirls, for example, and the forgiveness offered by the mother of slain black teenager Jordan Davis. But multiple articles appear online in Christian outlets every month extolling the same message: Forgiveness is a choice, and forgiveness is for my own happiness and peace.

All these proclamations, from both inside and outside the church, demonstrate that we have not lost the concept of

We may begin the journey of forgiveness to ease our own burdens. But along the way we discover a chance to live out the fullness of the gospel.

forgiveness as a moral good. But we have narrowed the good to ourselves alone. (Unsurprisingly, the near unanimous chorus to forgive for our own sake has spawned a minority but notable backlash—like the author of the *Psychology Today* article above, who rightly argues that if forgiveness is truly for our happiness, we might feel happier withholding forgiveness.)

Loving Mercy

I do not wish to diminish the aspirations and achievement of anyone who pursues forgiveness. But I worry that abandoning its deeper biblical foundation has gutted it of its full power and aim. We have to return to the New Testament commands to "forgive as we've been forgiven." This raison d'etre rescues the whole project of forgiveness from its worst forms of superiority and selfabsorption. Jesus uses the parable of the unmerciful servant to illustrate our true condition and need—and the full scope of the remedy.

We know the parable: That man with massive debts who is called before the king is us. We're hopeless before the holy King. We stand there shoulder to shoulder with every other debtor, even those who owe us money and honor and parental love all of us complicit in what

parental love, all of us complicit in what L. Gregory Jones calls "the universal disaster of sinful brokenness." Our only hope is the King himself, and he does it. He clears our debts entirely. We know what it cost to clear those debts: the death of Jesus, the only one who could pay them.

In the parable, the debt-free man sings and skips out of the presence of the king. But then he collars the poor man who owes him a piddling amount, and we know he missed it all. He failed to recognize himself in that pitiful man, a fellow debtor. He sees himself instead in the role of the master. And he fails that role as well.

He misses this essential fact:

Forgiveness is not for his personal freedom and happiness alone. It's to bring freedom and restoration to all, *especially* to those who owe him. It's to bring the mercy of God among us frail humans, waiting for redemption in a broken world. This right response to God's forgiveness is so serious and essential to the Christian life that Jesus warns the disciples after teaching them the Lord's Prayer, "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matt. 6:14–15). God is not

never liked him. And in every kindness I extended to him, I mourned that he had never done the same for me.

But I began to see him more fully. I saw his eagerness when I showed up each morning to visit. He called on my birthday. After his stroke, when he awoke to see me standing beside him, he began to weep. I placed my hand on his shoulder, the first time I had ever touched him with compassion, and we wept together silently, both of us for his long, sad life, and for all that had divided us. I finally recognized his mental illness, the root of his inability to love others. I realized I was not the



hinging his forgiveness on our release of others' debts—his salvation doesn't depend on any action on our part. Still, it's clear God requires forgiven people to be forgiving people.

Believing all of this did not make my own forgiveness of my father simple or immediate, of course. After that phone call with my sister, I made several trips to Florida over the next year and a half. I went at first with the words of Micah in my ears, "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (6:8). I went wanting to love mercy, but my father and I clashed. He proclaimed his atheism. I was defensive. I remembered all the reasons I

only one jumped, robbed, and bleeding beside the road: he lay there too. With every recognition, my heart both broke and healed. Between visits, I called and sent letters, presents, and books. I was loving my father. I was loving mercy. I was laying down his selfishness and crimes, leaving them in the hands of God.

Reconstituted Family

But things did not end as I hoped. My father never voiced interest in or love for me. He did not acknowledge his wrongs. My extension of mercy did not lead him to plead for God's mercy. When his heart

so weakened that he fell into a coma, my sister held the phone up to his ear and I spoke words of love and forgiveness, but he was unable to respond. When he died two years after my return to his life, I cried for days.

Some might interpret these events as proof that Christian forgiveness—the kind predicated on God's forgiveness of us—doesn't work in the real world. I released my father from his debts against me, but it didn't seem to change him. Then I made a crucial mistake: I reentered relationship. I loved him and served him. In the end, I was hurt far more than if I had simply found my "minimal effective response" and then moved on with my life.

But that final event is not the real end of the story. I end at an earlier time, when four of my siblings and I gathered in my father's tiny room. We perched wherever we could, all of us turned toward him. He was wearing a beige shirt with green stripes and the khaki shorts my sister and

impossible even, it was. The 10 older brothers sitting below him had ended the life Joseph had known some 16 years before. But their intent to harm had not utterly destroyed Joseph's life, and neither would he let it destroy their lives.

So it was with us. Our father had wounded each of us in significant ways, but we had decided the same thing: We would not pay back what was given to us. We were there to bless. We were there to honor. We were there not to silence the past but to reclaim it together. We were there to become forgiving people, people who could forgive one another as well.

My father was confused by our presence, but I saw him tear up with emotion one afternoon. Another time he acknowledged with stuttering words that he was not worthy of our attention. But we were not there to measure worth: we were there to love. When he died months later, he did not die alone. Two of his children were by his side.

the world to others. Forgiveness does simplify: the more forgiving we become, the less offense we take from others. Forgiveness does liberate: it opens our hearts rather than closes them to the suffering of others. Forgiveness does empower: it enables us to heal families and break generational sins.

We may begin the journey of forgiveness to ease our own burdens. But along the way we discover a chance to live out the fullness of the gospel: loving the unlovely, forgiving seventy times seven. In so doing, we reflect the kingdom of God among us.

I could so easily have missed it. I could so easily have listened to those voices rather than to the man who hung on the cross praying over his betrayers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In the moment of his executioners' greatest wrongdoing (and therefore their greatest need), Jesus offered forgiveness. We are called to do the same. We



God requires forgiven people to be forgiving people.

I had bought him.

I looked around the room that day and blinked with wonder. It had been 16 years since we'd all been together. Now, our family was reconstituted around the very one who had split us apart so many years before. I thought of the Old Testament story of Joseph, of the scene in the dining hall with all his brothers, the reconstitution of his own family. How unlikely,

The ministers of therapeutic forgiveness have a role to play, but their message is deficient in significant ways. They have made forgiveness too emotional, too private, and too small. But they are right about its power and freedom. Biblical forgiveness does release us, and not simply from our own anger and hurt. Biblical forgiveness releases us to bring the mercy we received from God out into will not mend the entire human family, nor will we ever forgive as perfectly and completely as Jesus. But we are called to try, out of obedience and love for the Father who forgave us.

Let us begin with our own families, bringing to our ruined homes the balm of Christ's boundless mercy. From there, who knows where forgiveness will lead?

LESLIE LEYLAND FIELDS is a CT contributing editor and the author most recently of Forgiving Our Fathers and Mothers: Finding Freedom from Hurt and Hate (Thomas Nelson), from which this article is adapted. She lives in Alaska, where she works in commercial salmon fishing with her family.



JOY-STUNG PREACHER

TEXAS PASTOR

MATT CHANDLER IS

SUPPOSED TO TAKE THE

ACTS 29 NETWORK TO

THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

WHY HE MAY BE JUST

THE MAN TO DO IT.

A THREE-DAY STUBBLE adorns Matt Chandler's handsome, boyish face, belying his booming voice. It's actually "six-day" stubble, says Chandler, 39, laughing. Over lunch, Chandler's metaphor-driven mind is busy condensing big ideas into practical concepts, a trademark of his preaching and writing. As someone who preaches both "the gospel on the ground" (how Christ came to save individual sinners) and "the gospel in the air" (how Christ came to redeem all of creation), he may be well positioned to take a Reformed church-planting movement to new corners of Christendom.

"I think I'm intrinsically gifted when it comes to metaphors," he says. "I am constantly thinking, *This resembles* that." He tosses humor into sermons and conversations like pitching salt, so fast that listeners may miss words but get the flavor. His energetic preaching makes him a fitting choice to lead one of the fastest-growing international movements of "churches planting churches" today.

The busy Tuesday that *Christianity Today* visits him, the 6'5" Chandler wears a black T-shirt and jeans. He chats while wolfing down a mixed salad in his modest office at the Village Church in Flower Mound, a Dallas-Fort Worth suburb. Posters around the building don't explicitly tout his Calvinism as one might expect, just "biblical" teaching. Cubbyholes and hangout areas in the rehabbed Albertsons grocery store promote the

By Joe Maxwell

Photos by Jesse McKee

coffeehouse-casual feel that's nearly ubiquitous in large evangelical churches. Even Chandler's first book, *The Explicit Gospel*, takes a scented-candle approach to Calvinism, freshening up its more arcane teachings to attract a new generation.

A leader at the Village Church for 12 years, Chandler is entrancing if demanding to hang with. "His intensity is one of the first things you notice," says Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "Just sharing a meal with him—the man's intense. He's confident but he's ready to learn." "I can be overbearing at times," says Chandler, a trait he says he wants to tamp.

And just as Mohler became president of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) flagship seminary at the young age of 33, Chandler has now become the president of the Acts 29 Network. The 16-year-old "gospel-centered" band of churches aims to write the next chapter of the missions described in the Book of Acts' 28 chapters. Seattle pastor Mark Driscoll cofounded the network with late Presbyterian pastor

and spend the first part of my day making my heart happy before the Lord." Later that morning, he began casually critiquing a certain group (and perhaps drawing hasty conclusions).

Lauren asked, "Have you heard them say that?"

"No," he said. "I just said that their hermeneutic would lead me to believe that."

"Well, I think until they say that out loud, we should probably give them the benefit of the doubt," said Lauren.

And so Chandler did. Such openness enlivens the Village Church, which has 11,000 members spread out among four Dallas locations. It has added 1,000 members each year, and Chandler's sermons are regularly ranked among iTunes' top podcasts. Less than 20 years ago, Chandler says, he couldn't define "Reformed"; today he leads a movement that claims five doctrinal distinctives shaped by that theology—justification by grace through faith as the core gospel message; God saves whom he will; the Spirit empowers believers to believe the gospel and live holy lives;



'His intensity is one of the first things you notice. Just sharing a meal with him—the man's intense. He's confident but he's ready to learn.' ~ Albert Mohler

David Nicholas in 1998. In March 2012, during a meeting with board members present, Driscoll tapped Chandler to succeed him, shifting the offices to Dallas. (Driscoll remained on the board for a time, but is no longer listed as a member of Acts 29 leadership.)

Observers expect Chandler's relational wiring to take the network in a different direction from the one marked by Driscoll. How do the two pastors differ?

"There is no question [Driscoll] is an introvert, and I am not an introvert," Chandler says. "I feed off of people where maybe he would grow weary by it."

GROWING GREENHOUSE

For Chandler, relationship starts with his wife, Lauren, who reviews his weekly schedules and signs off on travel and outside speaking gigs. "Nobody speaks truth to me as well as Lauren does," says Chandler, who believes men should lead at home and church. "She did it to me this morning."

The morning cr visited, Chandler rose as usual at 5 A.M. "I like early mornings best

men lead in the church and home; and the local church's primary mission is spreading the gospel. The network currently has some 500 church planters, with about 510 currently applying to join.

Chandler wants to help the network expand globally and ethnically. It's like "changing out an engine" on a plane "that's going 500 miles an hour at 30,000 feet. 'Everybody, it's going to get bumpy. Everybody, hang on!"

In another metaphor, he says Acts 29 is like a greenhouse. Acts 29 church plants have sprouted and grown spontaneously over the past decade or so. But for its plants to keep thriving and sprouting, the greenhouse needs mechanical finetuning. And it's about to welcome plants from new climates and environments.

The challenge is to become more of a global network. "We want to plant a lot of churches in Europe, Africa, and South America," says Chandler. "How do you organize around that? You have Fortune 500 companies trying to answer that question right now."

The answer may be at the two ends of a Flower Mound strip mall.

QUASI-DENOMINATION?

Village Church's main site whispers warmth and breathing room. A 1,400-seat auditorium includes a baptismal that once may have been an orchestra pit. Prayer rooms, children's areas, and high-ceiling rooms jut off the sides. Everything appears unintentionally eclectic, exuding a laid-back vibe that nonetheless takes a lot of work to pull off.

Meanwhile, 300 yards away at the other end of the strip mall, the new Acts 29 Network "Central" storefront resembles an independent insurance agent's office. Half man cave, half hollow headquarters, it houses five full-time staff: Tyler Powell, Leana Adams, Derrin Thomas, Chris Bristol, and Matt Adair. Powell, Thomas, and Bristol moved with Acts 29 from Mars Hill Church to Dallas in 2012.

"Here, we're our own entity," says Powell, North American assessment director. "We're not planting mini-Mars Hills or mini-Mark Driscolls. We're centrally located but decentralized."

Adair became the staff's fifth member in 2013. The 38-year-old director of



operations is commuting while pastoring a Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) congregation in Athens, Georgia. His job is to make hierarchy hip instead of heavy. Among other things, Adair helps Acts 29's 16 regional directors connect and encourage local pastors. Chandler and Adair constituted a new seven-member board to guide the network.

Does all this mean Acts 29 is becoming a denomination?

"No intention," says Chandler. "I'm already involved in the Southern Baptist Convention." Chandler, who was ordained by a local church pastor, not a denomination, adds: "A network has far more flexibility because . . . we are churches that plant churches—bottom-line."

Nonetheless, Mohler quips, "You know the old expression: If you have to keep saying, 'We're not a denomination,' look in the mirror and realize you are one." Some of Adair's PCA peers call Acts 29 "a quasi-denomination or something like that," he says.

"I understand the perception. I just disagree with it."

Adair and the team want Acts 29 to remain fresh, so church planters set their own budgets and choose their elders and worship styles. At the same time, the central office is creating more network events

such as regional boot camps and conferences. Adair knows it sounds contradictory. "How do you function as an actual, genuine network, not an organization that's still command-and-controlled from the center and just calling itself a network?" he says.

Maintaining principled passion while navigating growing complexity is the new challenge for Acts 29. Chandler's own story suits it well.

CHARISMATIC CALVINIST

An Army brat born in Seattle, Chandler grew up bouncing around lower-class neighborhoods in many cities. As a teenager, Chandler took a job at a factory, "which was an awful, awful, awful place to work." His mom was a "fundamentalist legalist," his dad, "a mess." In high school, a fellow football player kept the gospel in front of him. Then, on a retreat, a pastor taught from Hebrews 12 about how Jesus, "for the joy set before him," went to the cross for Chandler. He got up, walked outside, and sat in a tree swing. He got me, Chandler thought. I am one of them now.

After graduating, Chandler became a janitor at a local high school, where he also led Bible studies. He was invited to speak at the school's chapel and rocked it. After entering college, the accolades kept coming. "I could preach the walls off," Chandler says. Still, he didn't understand what the church is, let alone how to run a meeting or lead. He became a youth minister in Abilene, Texas, where the senior pastor helped shore up his deficiencies. There Chandler also experienced speaking in tongues and healing. Despite disagreement in Reformed circles about the so-called "sign gifts," he believes they continue to this day.

For a long time, Chandler had prayed for his dad to know Christ. "I remember being confused with the idea of [Dad having] free will, but then me asking God to save him. To me those two things were incompatible."

He found the answer in classically Reformed teachings, especially those of John Piper. Chandler embraces the view that God predestines some to heaven and others to hell. Another turning point came at the first Passion conference in 1997—"probably the most delightfully devastating moment of my growth," says Chandler. Piper spoke on being a Christian hedonist, and Chandler signed up.

After that, people flocked to his Bible studies, and his itinerant preaching drew thousands. In 2002, Chandler took over First Baptist Church of Highland Village, with about 160 members; today, it is the Village Church, ranked the ninth largest in the SBC.

The high-speed trip hasn't stopped. Nor has it been easy.

Just as his church was mushrooming in late 2009, Chandler suffered a seizure on Thanksgiving morning and was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. Bald from chemotherapy, he kept preaching, inviting people to pray for his healing via regular video updates. Eight months later, doctors proclaimed him cured. Chandler says God miraculously healed him. Later that year, Chandler told Justin Taylor of the Gospel Coalition, "I'm not sure how men and women without a strong view of God's sovereignty and authority over all things handle things like this."

It was much easier trusting God when "the stakes" were lower, "when we were a small church with no money, and thousands of people weren't downloading my sermons every week," says Chandler. Today he is familiar with wild rides; perhaps he's been prepared to lead hundreds of pastors on one doozy of a future spin.

OPEN-AND CLOSED-HANDED

Powell's desk is awash in hundreds of membership applications. Over the past seven years, 487 (of 808) Acts 29 applicants have been approved as candidates. (Of those, 106 didn't complete the candidacy process for various reasons, 30 have resigned as members, and 8 have closed their church doors.) Pastors fill out about 50 application pages, take the DiSC ("dominance," "influence," "steadiness," and "conscientiousness" personality types) and Harvard Business tests, and submit to interviews. The tests, most often used in corporate settings, gauge entrepreneurial drive and sociability, among other psychosocial traits. About 50 pastors per year complete the process.

Chandler and other network leaders don't apologize for seeking a certain type of man as leaders. Like a football team, says Chandler, his offense requires quick and agile players. In others words, pastors must be able to adapt to change even as they help create it. They have to set up systems that give feedback, says Chandler, and then listen to that feedback.

The network recruits through conferences, social media, and personal invitations to ministry-minded college students to Acts 29 boot camps. Chandler wants more Asian and African American pastors in the network. He's also starting to lean heavily on new board member Steve Timmis, global director for more than 50 English churches. Acts 29 Central wants more European church plants, though leaders say they wouldn't even try to tell planters how to evangelize and disciple in their post-Christian context.

What attracts pastors to Acts 29? They're encouraged and yet are free to lead in their own personal or denominational style. The annual pastors' conference is like a "family reunion," Thomas says. One pastor in the PCA told CT it's not about political or doctrinal squabbling, but "strengthening pastors' marriages, planting churches, and enhancing their personal walks."

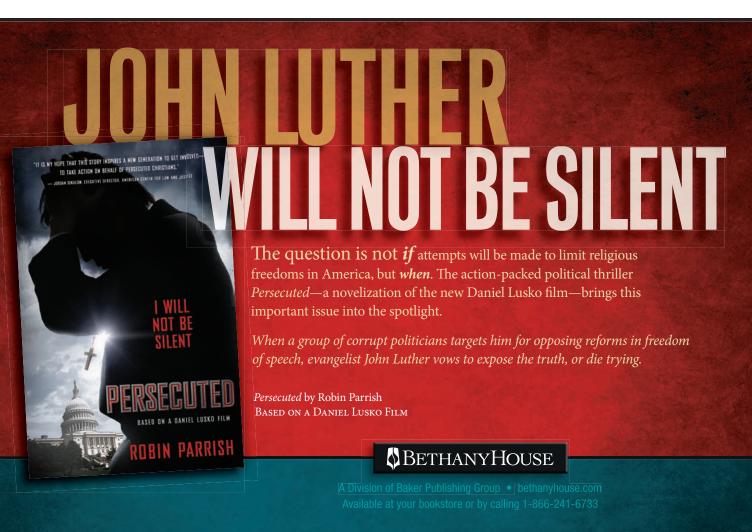
"The beautiful thing about Acts 29 is that it divides doctrinal issues into two groups," says the pastor, who asked not to be named. "One is 'closed-handed issues'—the things none of us as Reformed pastors would ever argue about.... Then there

are 'open-handed issues,' things that [we disagree on] but that we've agreed we will not argue about." Those would include doctrines that SBC and PCA churches—the two largest denominations represented by Acts 29 pastors—typically differ on, including infant versus believer's baptism, traditional versus contemporary worship, and congregational versus presbyterian forms of leadership.

QUICKSTUDY

Although never educated or trained in a denomination or major church association, Chandler has absorbed theology, polity, and pastoral studies. He's a quick study. His passion for reading came in his 20s, on his own terms. "I think I have authority issues. If I can decide what I want to learn, then I can learn anything." He says he doesn't have trouble submitting to theologians such as Jonathan Edwards and John Calvin, who enrich his understanding of the gospel-centered life.

He recently finished *A Separate Peace*. A coworker just wrapped up *Of Mice and Men*. Together they relished its shock ending, exclaiming, "He kills Lennie!"



At press time, more than 40 Acts 29 pastors had published books on topics ranging from theology to marriage to "dead guys" (the category description on the webpage of Resurgence Publishing, founded and still operated by Driscoll in partnership with Tyndale House). Well-known titles from Acts 29 members include *Church Planter* by vice president Darrin Patrick, *Date Your Wife* by Silicon Valley pastor Justin Buzzard, and *A Meal with Jesus* by UK church planter Tim Chester.

The speed at which books have been churned out mimics the speed that churches are planted. But can this all last, or will detail management wrangle everything?

For instance:

- How will Acts 29 monitor the doctrinal fidelity, and compliance with Network policies, of the swelling numbers of senior pastors? Currently, pastors renew their covenant yearly, says Chandler. They should part company then before becoming divisive. If necessary, he says, "I'll remove someone." (Other Acts 29 staff say no single person can remove a member from the network.)
 - · Might a pastor receive divergent

guidance from Acts 29 and from their own denomination?

• Acts 29 requires senior pastors to give 1 percent of their churches' budgets to Acts 29 Central; is that basically asking pastors to proclaim their allegiance with an offering?

JOY STINGS

Chandler regularly fasts and prays and turns down a percentage of mounting speaking requests. Such tough calls don't hamper his joy, he says. "It takes one thing to go wrong... and your happiness is gone," he tells a seminary crowd. His nimble, long fingers mesmerize as he speaks. "Sometimes joy stings."

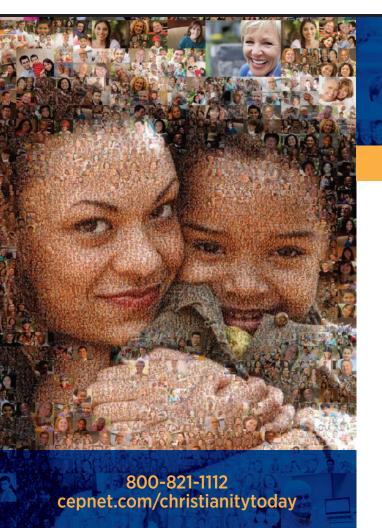
Joy stings while battling cancer; while growing up in a poor family; while maneuvering churches toward growth. Chandler expects the sting. But is there a sting limit? Mohler's chief concern is that Chandler "could take on too much. He's in a very unique position at a very young age."

Chandler's Acts 29 staff says their leader won't let Acts 29 interfere with his main commitments to Lauren, their three children, and the Village Church. A hand-carved walking stick in the corner of Chandler's office serves as a reminder that people trump organization pyramids. The stick—a present from a podcast listener—lists his family members' names with verses about loving them.

Recently, as Chandler prayed before a large audience, he said, "What is ... exciting in my heart is that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of men and women who do not yet know you; have not yet worshiped you; have not yet exalted you as God; who will in the future because of your Spirit's work."

That's the Reformed-blue jean movement's goal—to plant churches and harvest lives. Chandler seems ready to lead it. "I've got to wait for the Lord to tell me 'well done,' and I need to live with convictional courage. If you lack courage, you have no business being in ministry."

JOE MAXWELL is a former Christianity Today news editor who has authored hundreds of articles for mainstream and religious magazines. His company, LifeStory Publishing in Jackson, Mississippi, produces personal memoirs, biographies, and business and ministry histories.



Be a part of something bigger.

Investing with Church Extension Plan changes lives.

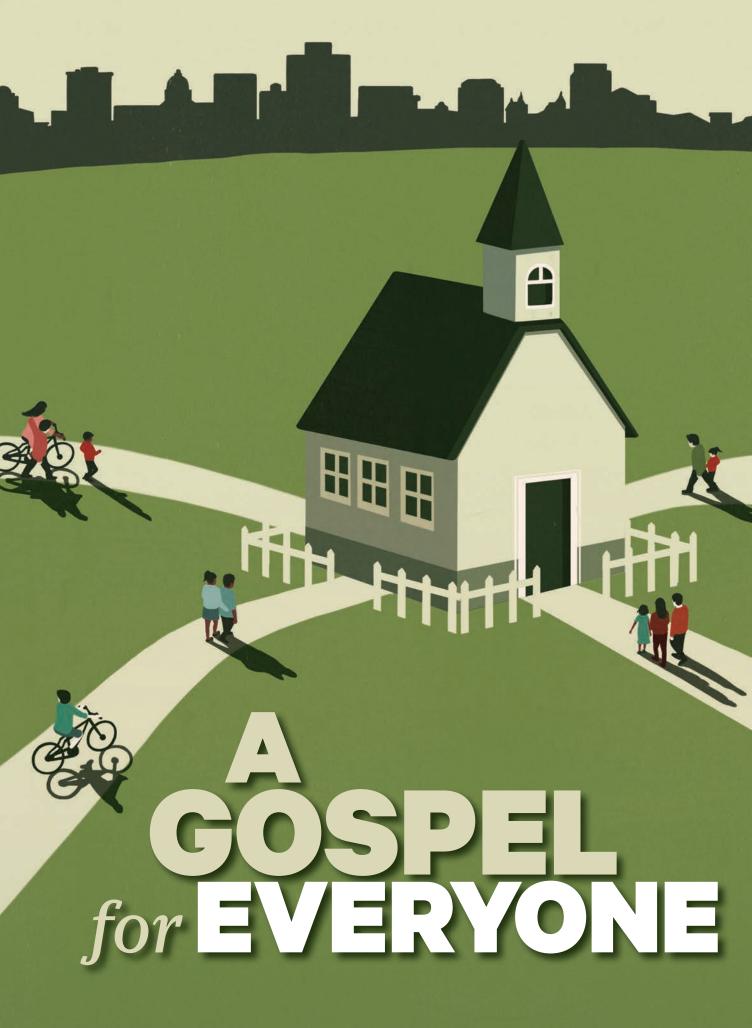
Be a part of the big picture and join thousands of Church Extension Plan investors who are changing lives and making a difference for Assemblies of God churches and ministries.

- Rates up to 3.5% APR*
- Start with as little as \$250
- Terms from 6 months to 5 years
- Support Assemblies of God churches and ministries



PARTNERS IN MINISTRY®

*Rates subject to change. Investments consist of Promissory Notes and are not bank deposits or checking accounts and are not FDIC insured. This is not an offer to sell our securities to you and we are not soliciting you to buy our securities. We offer our securities only in states where authorized. This offering is made solely by our Offering Circular. © 2014 Church Extension Plan.





WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE PROFESS 'ONE CATHOLIC CHURCH.'

By Mark Dever

F WE SPOTTED A CHURCH located in a racially mixed neighborhood, and all its worshipers were white, we'd rightly be concerned. Or if we attended a church that focused so much on reaching young families that singles and seniors felt uncomfortable, that too would bother us. Most of us would suspect the first church to be racist and the second, exclusivist. Both suspicions might certainly be true. But there is more going on: Each church is failing to live out the gospel.

An essential part of the gospel is that it is *catholic*—that is, the Good News is given to all people. And the church the Holy Spirit creates is catholic.

Putting the matter like this may make some Christians squirm. Many Protestants affirm, either weekly or semi-regularly, the Nicene Creed, proclaiming, "We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church," but many balk at that word, catholic. (That's why in my own congregation, we use the word universal rather than catholic, because the original Greek term katholikos means "whole, entire, universal.")

When most of us hear the word *catholic*, we think of the Roman Catholic Church. By naming itself "Catholic," the Roman Church has claimed that it alone is the true universal church. Its argument is severalfold: (1) Only Rome has a unified, worldwide authority; (2) only Roman Catholics exist in every global region; (3) the Catholic Church is the only Christian tradition that dates back to the time of the apostles; (4) only the Catholic Church has the fullness of grace and truth; and (5) the majority of Christians in the world are Catholic. In short, they claim to have always been everywhere—truly catholic.

I personally cannot affirm that "catholic" is an accurate description of that visible organization that submits itself to the authority of the pope, the bishop of Rome. The combination of *Roman* and *Catholic* is oxymoronic—one word implies spatial and cultural limitations, while the other implies universality and inclusivity. No one church alone can rightly be called "the Catholic Church."



Still, there is much more to be said than that "catholic" simply means "universal." Let me rehearse all too quickly the history and biblical theology behind the term, why it's included in the great summary of the Christian faith, and how it challenges churches today.

The Authentic Church

As far as we know, Ignatius of Antioch was the first person to use the word *catholic* in relation to the church. In his letter to the Smyrnaeans, written around A.D. 112, he wrote, "Where Jesus Christ is, there is the universal church." Early Christian writers believed in the catholic church—that Christians everywhere trusted in one God, confessed one faith, received one baptism, and shared one mission. In that sense, *catholic* meant "real" or "authentic."

From the third century on, the word became synonymous with orthodoxy. Thus, "the catholic church" was in contrast to heretics and schismatics. Ninety years after Ignatius, Clement of Alexandria wrote,

The one church is violently split up by the heretics into many sects. In essence, in idea, in origin, in preeminence we say that the ancient Catholic Church is the only church. This church brings together, by the will of the one God through the one Lord... those who were already appointed; whom God foreordained, knowing before the world's foundation that they would be righteous.

By the middle of the fourth century, the word came to mean more than authentic

and orthodox. It was also used to connote the church's extensive reach to every land and every class of people. In his lectures to baptismal candidates around 350, Cyril of Jerusalem said that the church

is called Catholic then because it extends over all the world, from one end of the earth to the other: and because it teaches universally and completely one and all the doctrines which ought to come to men's knowledge, concerning things both visible and invisible, heavenly and earthly; and because it brings into subjection to godliness the whole race of mankind, governors and governed, learned and unlearned; and because it universally treats and heals the whole class of sins, which are committed by soul or body, and possesses in itself every form of virtue which is named, both in deeds and words, and in every kind of spiritual gifts.

In 381 at the Council of Constantinople, the original Nicene Creed was altered to describe the church as "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic." By the next century, the word *catholic* was inserted into the Apostles' Creed. And by the 11th century—when the Eastern and Western churches split—Eastern writers preferred the description "orthodox," while those in the West preferred "catholic," though both meant essentially the same thing.

So from the early church until the modern period, the word *catholic* has been used to distinguish the church from that which is irregular or erroneous, much like conservative American Christians use

evangelical in opposition to cult.

While the term *catholic* never appears in the Bible, the ideas behind it are found throughout Scripture. For example, Paul says in Galatians that anyone—no matter who they are, where they live, or what time period they live in—can have a relationship with God, so long as they have faith in Christ:

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (3:26–28)

And in Ephesians, Paul practically gives a theological treatise on the universal nature of the church: "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles

What unites us as Christians must always be valued more highly than the things that distinguish us.

God, as Trinity, is unity in diversity: he is one God in three distinct persons. And this perfect God is not white. He's not black. He's not of any skin color.

are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (3:6).

According to Scripture, the church is a universal entity, and anyone can be a part of it.

A Challenging Blessing

The universal nature of the church is one of the great blessings of the gospel. The Bible gives us a grand picture of what the church is—and what, on this side of the coming kingdom, it should set its sights on. That said, the catholicity of the church cuts against four major problems we see in our churches today.

Provincialism. Our traditions are sometimes not as firmly rooted in the gospel itself as they should be. They often reflect the particulars of our own country, denomination, and personal preferences more than the spirit of Galatians 3:26–28.

The universal church is not called to entrust itself to the will of any one earthly pastor, whether in Rome or elsewhere. While the universal church exists in all cultures, it's limited to none. The gospel is displayed powerfully when Christians of different cultures all believe, preach, and embody the same gospel.

This is one reason traveling is beneficial. By visiting Christians in other regions and countries, we discover the many facets of Christian practice and thought. And one of the best ways to better understand your own culture is to live in another one. By doing so, you realize the things you've always assumed are not necessarily assumed by others. You're more prone to ask yourself questions like, "Is there a correct way or a right answer?" Sometimes there is, but many times there is not. By interacting with Christians from different cultures and traditions, we discover what the essence of our faith is and what merely a particular expression of it is.

Sectarianism. From a Congregational

perspective like my own, denominations are in some ways very much like parachurch organizations—that is, they are specialized ministries. Even churches with a presbyterian or episcopal polity recognize that their distinctives are not always coextensive with other churches'. Since we all profess the same faith in the same Lord, the denominational lines that distinguish us from other Christians should never mark an ultimate separation.

Insofar as denominations do not breed an uncharitable and divisive spirit, and allow Christians to work for the kingdom, they can be helpful. But what unites us as Christians must always be valued more highly than the things that distinguish us.

Racism. The universal nature of the true church seriously challenges the racial segregation we see in our churches. God forgive historically Caucasian congregations for any ways they have marginalized Christians of different skin colors. White Christians would do well to learn about the history of the African American church. In those first churches, black Christians were allowed to exercise leadership and make decisions. And from tiny financial means, they built great churches and denominations.

Nevertheless, our racially divided congregations only harm the church and its mission. So what can be done to better display the catholicity of the gospel?

The great Anglican preacher and theologian Charles Bridges gives us an excellent image: "The Church is the mirror that reflects the whole effulgence of the Divine character. It is the grand scene, in which the perfections of Jehovah are displayed to the universe."

God, as Trinity, is unity in diversity: he is one God eternally existing as three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And this perfect God is not white. He's not black. He's not of any skin color. As image bearers, all humans reflect our Creator God. And as the church, we image

the unity of the Trinity, especially in our diversity.

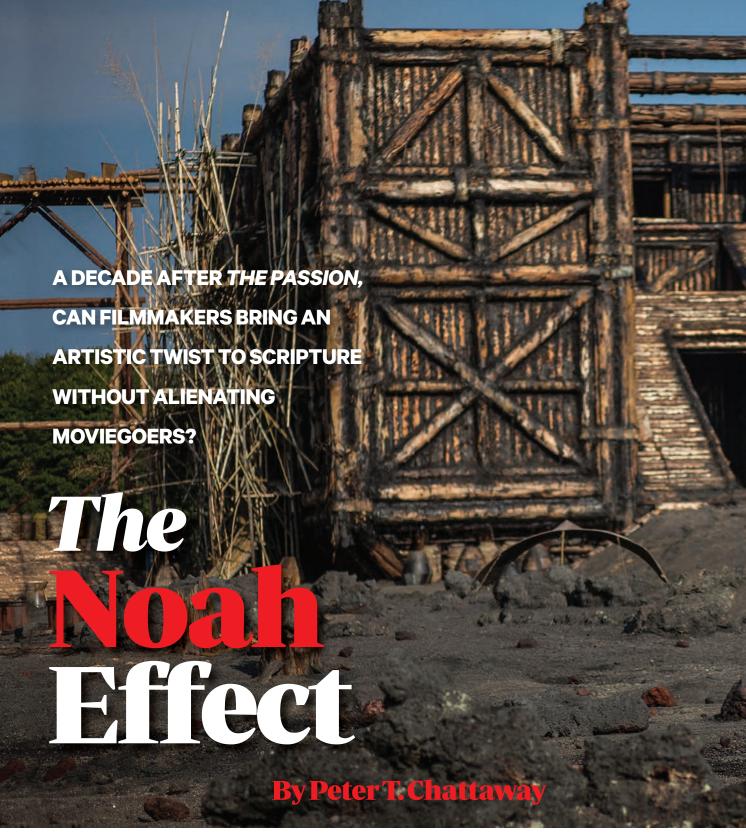
We may need to divide for practical reasons such as language. But, as much as we can, let us not divide our churches for other cultural reasons. The gospel is powerfully displayed when unlikely groups of people—especially those who formerly showed animosity toward each other—are united together in love.

Exclusivism. It's appropriate and commendable that ministries focus on evangelizing or discipling one group of people—college students, businesspeople, mothers of young children, skateboarders, military personnel, and so on. By identifying with specific groups, Christians often can present the gospel in an accessible, relevant, and personal way. Many parachurch ministries do exactly that. But when an entire congregation focuses on one particular niche or group so that others are sidelined, the universality of the church is undermined. The gospel is for every kind of person, and our congregations should reflect that as best as they can.

To be sure, God in his sovereignty will use different congregations in different ways to accomplish his work. But we should never make our congregations more specifically focused than God wants them to be. The gospel is more greatly magnified when our churches strive to include the full range of people whom Christ saves by his mercy. Christ chooses the living stones who make up his church (1 Pet. 2:4–9). That's not our task.

Anytime and anywhere, anyone—regardless of ethnic identity or social status—can be forgiven of his or her sins by trusting in the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. That is the true catholic doctrine of the true catholic church.

MARK DEVER is senior pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., and coauthor of *The Church: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic* (P&R Publishing), from which this article has been adapted.



T'S NOT OFTEN that moviegoers can go to the multiplex and catch a film that begins with Adam and Eve and the forbidden fruit. But by spring 2014, many theaters will be showing two films that start at the very beginning—of everything.

In Son of God, which came out in late February and grossed more than \$56 million during its first month, the apostle John recites a slightly modified version of the first chapter of his Gospel. It emphasizes both Jesus' preexistence and his presence at specific Old Testament scenes. Each scene is illustrated with a clip from

last year's hit History Channel miniseries $\it The Bible$.

Down the hall, the title sequence for Noah—which earned \$44 million when it opened in late March—mixes the story of the Fall and Cain's murder of Abel with apocryphal elements such as a group of fallen angels known as the Watchers, who



are described in the noncanonical Book of Enoch.

CULTURAL TRENDS

as Moses.

Those aren't the only Bible films hitting the big screen in 2014. In December, Ridley Scott, who revived the ancient epic in secular form with *Gladiator*, will put the finishing touches on *Exodus: Gods and Kings*, a 3D movie starring Christian Bale

Together, the three films—produced by very different film-makers with very different sensibilities—would seem to herald the return of a long-neglected genre. But the films themselves don't necessarily resemble Bible movies of the past, and it's not yet

clear whether they will inspire more in the near future.

Films based on the Bible were very popular during the silent era, when dramatic realism took a back seat to iconography. They regained popularity during the postwar boom, reaching their peak with the 1959 film *Ben-Hur* and its record

11 Academy Award wins.

But the genre faded in the 1960s as audiences turned to spy movies and science fiction. While there has been a steady stream of Bible stories on television ever since, the genre has mostly lain dormant on the big screen, certainly where major studios are concerned.

The Bible films that have come out over the past few decades have tended to be flops (1985's King David) or controversial arthouse films (1988's The Last Temptation of Christ). The Prince of Egypt (1998) was the top-grossing non-Disney cartoon ever for a short while, but it was animated and thus not perceived as a Bible epic per se.

Even Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, which grossed a surprising \$611 million worldwide a decade ago, was made and distributed independently without involving the major studios. It had a budget of only \$30 million, a pittance by modern Hollywood standards.

Ten years after *The Passion*'s preeminence, several studios have begun to develop new big-budget Bible movies—and the results are finally appearing in cinemas everywhere. But not without

hitting bumps and hurdles along the way.

After The Passion Is Gone

Jonathan Bock is founder and president of Grace Hill Media, a company that markets Hollywood films to faith-based audiences. He says the major studios have been out of the Bible-epic business for so long that, when *The Passion* turned out to be a huge hit, they didn't have anything in the pipeline to hurry into production.

In addition, they had no idea what any given Bible movie could expect to earn from the usual revenue streams: domestic, foreign, theatrical, DVD, and so on.

"So the studios did what smart businessmen do," says Bock. "They toe dipped. They took small bets... to figure out how the game works."

Initially that meant setting up "niche" labels such as FoxFaith, a branch of the Fox home entertainment division that arranged theatrical releases for modestly budgeted independent films, such as *One Night with the King* (2006), based on the Book of Esther.

One "maverick" studio, New Line Cinema, took the plunge and made a Bible movie of its own. *The Nativity Story*, produced for \$35 million and released in time for Christmas 2006, grossed only \$46 million worldwide, mostly generated in the United States.

While the film wasn't a flop exactly, it certainly wasn't a hit, either. Some studio executives began to wonder if *The Passion* had been a fluke.

"I remember feeling like a brake [was] being put on," says Stuart Hazeldine, a screenwriter who at the time was working on a big-budget adaptation of John Milton's Paradise Lost for Warner Brothers. "There was a lot of head-scratching around Hollywood, people trying to figure out why this one film did well and the other film not so well."

At the time, some people argued that The Nativity Story had played things too safe, offering a Hallmark version of the birth of Christ rather than mimicking the gritty, bold artistic vision that The Passion had offered. So the studios kept developing other films, especially those that could pack in lots of action that might appeal to

Darren Aronofsky's Midrash

irector Darren Aronofsky is known for dark independent

films that center on characters with self-destructive

The acclaimed director talks about the sources that inspired Noah.

personalities: the drug addicts in Requiem for a Dream, for example, or the ballet dancer in Black Swan, which earned him an Oscar nomination for Best Director. Now the director, who was raised culturally Jewish, has made Noah, a \$125 million-budget biblical epic that puts an unorthodox spin on the familiar story. While the story of the ark has often been played for laughs on the big screen (think Evan Almighty), Aronofsky considers the Flood "the first apocalypse story," and his film underscores the psychological toll it takes on Noah (Russell Crowe) and his family (Jennifer Connelly, Emma Watson, and Anthony Hopkins, among others). ct chief film critic Alissa Wilkinson commended the film for its visual work, strong writing, and superb acting talent.

Peter Chattaway spoke with Aronofsky and cowriter and producer Ari Handel about the film. The following is an edited version of their conversation. I was struck by how your film addresses justice and mercy.

DA: That was a big part of the movie for us. When Ari and I started working on the project and started reading the Bible over and over, there's this term where they call Noah "righteous." There are a lot of ways to define it. So we started talking to theologians and scholars. We came upon this idea that "righteous" is a perfect balance of justice and mercy.

Ari put it a good way: If you're a parent with too much

justice, you destroy your child with strictness. And if you're a parent with too much mercy, you destroy them with leniency. So being a really good parent is about finding that balance, which I think is in the story of Noah.

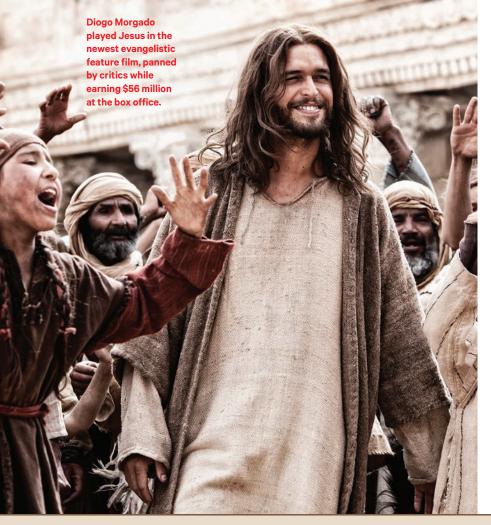
Actually, it's similar to the story that God goes through. At the beginning of the story of Noah, he wants justice, and by the end he [offers] mercy through the rainbow, and grace. That balance interested us.

Multiple characters are trying to imitate God.

Noah is trying to follow the will of God, and that
means possibly going too far, but Tubal-Cain,
the villain, also says a couple times, "I'm made in
God's image too."

DA: The normal way to go with this in a movie is the bad guy wouldn't believe in God; but of course, the

The second of th



a broad audience. Yet most of these films have not actually been made.

J. Michael Straczynski, best known for creating the science-fiction TV series *Babylon 5*, wrote a script about King David for Universal. Benedict Fitzgerald, who cowrote *The Passion*, cowrote a screenplay about the Virgin Mary for MGM. Scott Derrickson, a Christian who specializes in spiritually tinged horror films like *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, was hired to work on a film about Goliath for Relativity. And two studios, Warner and Fox, set up rival Moses projects: *Gods and Kings*, which briefly had Steven Spielberg attached to direct, and this year's *Exodus: Gods and Kings*.

Meanwhile, Darren Aronofsky, a filmmaker known for dark, stylish independent films (see "Darren Aronofsky's Midrash"), was trying to get a movie about Noah off the ground that would highlight the apocalyptic aspects of the story, rather than the cuddly-zoo elements that have dominated earlier films. He says studio executives had no idea what he was talking about when he first pitched the project over a decade ago, pre-*Passion*.

bad guy in *Noah* does believe in God, because they're ten generations descended from Adam, so the Creation is a recent memory for all these characters. So of course God exists.

What's reported in Genesis, after the mark of Cain, is that God doesn't show up until he calls Noah. So from Tubal-Cain's point of view, he thinks, "Well, God's left us alone, and now we messed things up and now he wants to come back and punish us?" He's a little upset, and I think Ray [Winstone, who plays Tubal-Cain] was like, "I'm a latchkey kid and I've burned down the kitchen, and now Dad's mad at me." That's the way he perceived it. But it was very important that his character always believed in God.

In developing the script, what attention did you pay to extrabiblical sources, such as the Book of Enoch?

AH: We read a lot. We read Enoch, we read the Jubilees, we read a lot of *midrash* [Jewish literature that explains Torah], we read a lot of different legends, and in midrashic tradition, there are tons of competing stories and legends and ideas circulating.

Some of those stories posit that God wanted to wipe out *everybody*, including Noah.

AH: I don't remember seeing that specifically, but almost every idea you can imagine is floated, because they're all debated. Certainly, the righteousness of Noah is something that people have thought about a lot.

DA: There's that one line, he's "righteous in his generation" [Gen. 6:9].

AH: And a lot of people have said that, compared to some prophets of later generations, Noah would not have been righteous.

DA: Abraham pled with God [on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah]. He

said, "Let me go and try to save humanity."

AH: He said, "What if there are 50 righteous men? What if there are 10?" But Noah didn't say, "God, don't." Noah just built the boat. So it's not that he was a bad man, but where was the mercy in that? Whereas Abraham was merciful. A lot of people have been exploring these ideas, to try to make sense of the tale. We tried to read everything we could. **DA:** Is it okay that we're getting so theological?

Absolutely!

DA: Oh good. What intrigued Ari and me was that Noah is the fourth story in the Bible. You have Creation, original sin, the first murder, and then it jumps forward and everything's terrible, and God wants to start over again. What was clear to us was that Noah is a descendant of original sin. That brought to us this question: Why restart if that possibility of sin is still there? Man still has the possibility of being tempted. **AH:** You finish reading Noah and all the wicked people have been wiped out, and one family survived, and you flip the page and it's Babel. If you look at the context of the story within the Bible, what is that trying to say about the sinfulness and wickedness within us? That was what we had to explore, not the good guys and the bad guys, but both the good and the bad within us.

DA: Within our tradition, being Jews—a long tradition of thousands of years of people writing commentary on the biblical story—we're not doing anything that's out of line or out of sync, but within that, you don't want to contradict what's there. In all the midrash tradition, the text is what the text is. The text exists and is truth and the word and the final authority. But how you decide to interpret it, you can open up your imagination to be inspired by it.

"The biblical epic as a genre was really dead and very hard to imagine," he told *Christianity Today*. "There were a lot of jokes when we went around to the different studio heads, because they saw *Noah* as a comedy and silly subject matter. It took Hollywood a long time to get the idea: 'Oh wow, this is a really interesting genre.'"

Aronofsky finally got the go-ahead to make the film when *Black Swan*, a 2010 psychological thriller he produced for only \$13 million, grossed \$329 million worldwide and earned an Oscar for its star, Natalie Portman. That success coincided with Hollywood's willingness to finally commit huge resources to telling a biblical story. So in 2012, Paramount announced it would produce *Noah* at a reported cost of \$125 million.

One year later, while *Noah* was in editing, Fox, which had been developing *Exodus: Gods and Kings* since 2009, announced that it was going ahead with its \$150 million Moses movie.

Around that time, Fox also revealed that it would distribute *Son of God*, a full-length film distilled from the Jesus-themed episodes of *The Bible*, which had just become one of the top-rated cable TV shows and top-selling TV-based DVDs of all time.

Hazeldine, who worked on the other Moses film, *Gods and Kings*, says the studios are turning to Bible stories now because, as they focus more on making big-budget "event" movies, they tend to rely on stories with a built-in recognition factor. It's easier to market a film when the audience is somewhat familiar with the story.

"They've also realized they can make these films in a tangibly different way than they did in the 1960s," he says. "Instead of epic filmmaking based around scale and large numbers of extras, it's now based around cg [computer-generated] effects. There are a lot of miracles in the Bible, so there's the opportunity to use cg [computer-generated imagery] to



generate huge crowds and the Red Sea parting and the Flood."

Entertain and Challenge

There's also the growth of the foreign market. Today the typical blockbuster makes two to three times as much overseas as it does in North America. This gives biblical stories, known all over the world, a special edge.

And because the most popular films worldwide tend to be action films, this also means the studios are ensuring that the newest Bible epics will have many of the action-oriented elements that have made other recent sword-and-sandal movies (e.g., Clash of the Titans, 300, and their sequels) fairly popular globally.

For example, *Noah* turns Tubal-Cain, a figure so minor he gets just one verse in the Bible, into the leader of an army that

tries to capture the ark when the rains come. Exodus: Gods and Kings, meanwhile, will reportedly open with a battle scene between the Egyptian army and rebel Hittites. It's rumored to climax with a scene in which Moses does not merely walk with his fellow Hebrews across the Red Sea but leads a cavalry charge against Pharaoh's chariots.

But as filmmakers revise and improvise with the stories, sometimes straying far from the biblical text, they risk alienating a huge part of their target audience.

Noah, in particular, has been the focus of controversy ever since an early draft of the script leaked in 2012. Brian Godawa, a Christian screenwriter and novelist who has written his own books about Noah, wrote a critique of that script with the headline "Darren Aronofsky's Noah: Environmentalist Wacko" that went viral.

Earlier this year, Christians who saw the finished film said they appreciated parts of it, such as its serious take on sin, judgment, and forgiveness. But they voiced concerns about other parts, such as when Noah becomes so convinced that humanity deserves to die that he is prepared to kill his own grandchildren.

In late February, at the request of the National Religious Broadcasters, Paramount—which called the film "a close adaptation of the biblical story" when it was announced two years ago—agreed to add a disclaimer to the film's promotional

Biblical material needs to be handled differently. It's not fodder for the filmmaker's imagination. The filmmaker is fodder for the biblical story.' ~ Barbara Nicolosi

materials. The disclaimer states that the film was "inspired by" the story of Noah and had taken "artistic license" with it.

Similar concerns could arise when *Exodus: Gods and Kings* comes out in December. Scott, an agnostic, has said the Moses of his film will undergo a crisis of faith. And according to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the film will contain "an unconventional depiction of God."

Speaking to French magazine *Premiere*, Scott suggested the appeal of the story might lie in Moses' rejection of Egyptian polytheism rather than in Moses' monotheism per se. "Moses rises against the thousands of Egyptian gods in the name of one god," he said. "This is a very modern idea."

But films that go too far in the other direction—by catering to the church-based market—have faced criticism, too.

Christian blogger Matthew Paul Turner wrote about Son of God for The Daily Beast. He said the "biggest mistake" made by producers Mark Burnett and Roma Downey was that they consulted with dozens of church leaders and produced precisely the sort of Jesus that Christians want to see—rather than a Jesus who might "surprise"

or challenge the faithful.

Barbara Nicolosi, who worked on the script about Mary with Benedict Fitzgerald, says Christian and non-Christian filmmakers alike can suffer from a lack of theological depth. Secular filmmakers "don't have any sense at all of reverence toward the source material," she says, while films like Son of God tend to be "banal" and have no "mystery."

She cites *The Passion* as a rare example of a film made by someone who had experience, a strong directorial vision, and a proper attitude toward the text.

"Biblical material needs to be handled differently," she says. "It's not fodder for the filmmaker's imagination. The filmmaker is fodder for the biblical story. When you pick up a comic book and use that as source material, that's fodder for your imagination as a filmmaker—it serves you. When you make a biblical movie, you serve it."

Son of God was a modest success, but it played to the same audience as other faith-based films such as *Fireproof* and *Courageous*. And with the Book of Acts–themed series *A.D.*, in the works for NBC next year, the producers have turned their attention back to television, where Bible stories

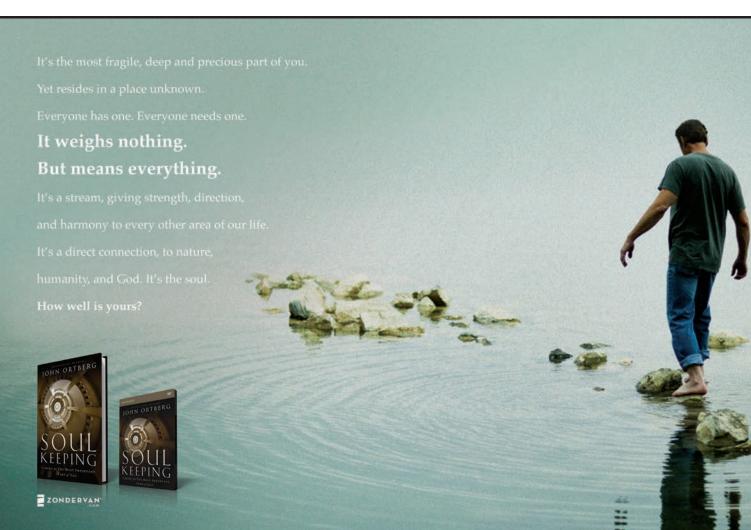
have always had a home.

The real test, from Hollywood's perspective, will be whether a wider audience embraces big-budget ventures like Noah and Exodus: Gods and Kings. If both are hits, other projects may be ready to hop on the bandwagon, such as a movie about Pontius Pilate starring Brad Pitt, or a remake of Ben-Hur being written by John Ridley (the Oscar-winning writer of 12 Years a Slave).

Hazeldine holds out hope that one of his own Bible-themed projects might get a boost if the trend takes off. He says it can be tricky to make films that are both innovative and respectful of their core audiences, but he says it's a goal worth aiming for.

"There are dangers in being too slavishly faithful and not challenging the audience at all, because you're not going to make great cinema that way," he says. "But there are also dangers in dismissing what's important to them. Somewhere there's a happy medium where you entertain them and inspire them, but hopefully also challenge them as well."

PETER T. CHATTAWAY is a regular film critic for *Christianity Today* and blogger at Filmchat.





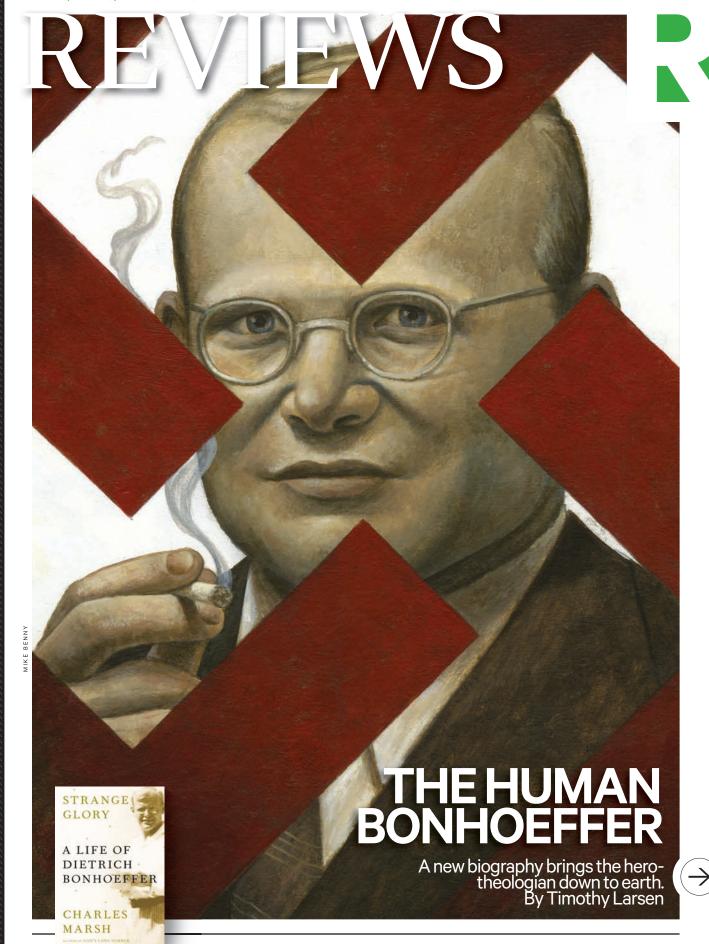
Find your perfect college fit.

ChristianCollegeGuide.net has the tools you need to find the right school for you or your teen. Search and compare over 115 Christian colleges and universities by:

Major • Location • Affiliation Athletics • Enrollment

ChristianCollegeGuide.net







been one of my great heroes of the faith. Such appreciation, of course, hardly makes me distinct. Bonhoeffer, the German pastor-theologian who opposed the Nazis and was executed in a concentration camp, is passionately admired by millions of Christians.

One could even compare him to Athanasius, the defender of Christ's divinity whose brave stance also drew state persecution. The fourth-century bishop's unflinching willingness to defy even emperors and their armies was honored with the title "Athanasius contra mundum" (against the world).

Charles Marsh's welcome biography, Strange Glory: A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Knopf) ****, paints a painstaking portrait of a faithful disciple every bit as resolute against Aryanism as Athanasius was against Arians. Marsh's exquisite eye for detail reveals the sheer unlikelihood of Bonhoeffer's emergence as the boldest opponent of efforts to Nazify the German church.

Athanasius was bishop of Alexandria, the most powerful ecclesiastical figure in the Eastern empire. He wielded so much influence that emperors were afraid of opposing him too forcefully, lest they provoke a popular uprising.

But what power did Bonhoeffer wield in 1933? He was 27 years old, financially dependent on his parents, and virtually bereft of experience in the working world. His sole professional appointment was an unpaid, non-tenure-track position as a voluntary lecturer. Adjunct professors don't normally stand athwart emperors.

Yet Bonhoeffer did. Within weeks of Adolf Hitler's rise to power, Bonhoeffer declared in public that the Führer was offering a false path to salvation—and, in private, that Hitler was an antichrist. When the Nazis called for ethnically Jewish Christians to be expelled from the churches, he alone insisted that the gospel was at stake. (Initially even Karl Barth, like other anti-Nazi dissenters who founded the Confessing Church, claimed that this was merely a question of church order, not a theological issue.) Marsh, director of the Project on Lived Theology at the University of

Virginia, makes a convincing case that by 1933, Bonhoeffer was the most radical and outspoken opponent of Nazi church policy.

QUIRKY HUMANITY

I have read numerous books on Bonhoeffer. I have also seen documentaries and dramatizations and visited commemorative sites in Germany. For me, one of Marsh's greatest contributions is putting on display the quirky humanity of his subject. If you are used to accounts that emphasize the mythic Bonhoeffer of faith, this one will help you grapple with the eccentric Bonhoeffer of history.

To take a trivial example, Bonhoeffer was endearingly preoccupied with dressing well. You could illustrate almost every momentous turning point in his life with sartorial commentary. When he takes a pastoral internship in Spain, he bombards the senior minister with written inquiries regarding the proper formal wear for dinner parties. The poor, overworked man eventually remarked sarcastically that the new intern should bring his preaching robe.

Bonhoeffer was thrilled by the writings of Barth, but his confidence in the brilliant theologian was shaken when he first met him and observed that helacked dress sense. When Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's student and close friend, arrived at his underground seminary, Bonhoeffer was identified as "the sporty dresser." He even arranged to get his favorite brown suit delivered to him in prison. Later, knowing he would never leave the concentration campalive, he wrote a last will and testament. It carefully catalogued some of the most cherished items in his wardrobe: his dinner jacket, his felt hats, his salt-and-pepper suit.

More substantively, Marsh makes a convincing case that Bonhoeffer harbored feelings for Bethge that extended beyond friendship. Those feelings were unrequited, and Bonhoeffer probably did not consciously acknowledge them. Still,

If you are used to accounts that emphasize the mythic Bonhoeffer of faith, this book will help you grapple with the eccentric Bonhoeffer of history.

Marsh notes, he was possessive and smothering in his attention. He created a joint bank account and sent Christmas cards signed, "Dietrich and Eberhard."

This turns into a major, recurring theme in *Strange Glory*. It fascinated me at first, but I grew tired of Marsh directing the camera angle of every scene so as to rather heavy-handedly keep it in view. Particularly regrettable is his decision to describe this relationship using words from Emily Dickinson—"The heart wants what the heart wants"—given the association between the quotation and Woody Allen's use of it to justify unsavory behavior.

Bonhoeffer, by contrast, was so sexually innocent that I would not assume Athanasius himself surpassed him in this regard. Any such possible desires for Bethge appear sublimated and regulated. Even Bonhoeffer's physical relationship with his fiancée, Maria—whom Marsh says Bonhoeffer was "smitten" by—comprised only a solitary occasion when, as a prisoner, he kissed her on the cheek in the presence of the public prosecutor. In a late prison letter, Bonhoeffer observed that he had lived a full life even though he would die a virgin.

THEOLOGICAL HOARDER

Strange Glory is strengthened further by its highlighting of how willingly Bonhoeffer learned from disparate ecclesial influences. He was a kind of theological hoarder. When he went to Rome, he did not react with disgust as Martin Luther had, but rather gained a new appreciation of the church's universal nature. One is supposed to have to choose between Adolf von Harnack and Barth, but Bonhoeffer managed to value them both. Indeed, to extrapolate, one might see Bonhoeffer's late musings on "religionless Christianity" as blending Barth's insight that "Jesus simply has nothing to do with religion" with Harnack's method of separating the kernel (of biblical truth) from the husk (of cultural and historical circumstance).

Initially, Bonhoeffer was disgusted by American Christianity. He was bewildered and frustrated by theologians who did not care about doctrine and preachers who were not interested in the gospel. Everyone wanted to pontificate on social issues. In time, however, he came to learn that his fellow Germans were also half-wrong in refusing to recognize the ethical demands of the Christian faith. Moreover, Bonhoeffer found in the African American church

a community committed to both gospel proclamation and social action. Why, at the tender age of 27, was Bonhoeffer the lone German minister who immediately saw the scandal of excluding Jewish Christians from the church? Precisely because his experience in America taught him to connect faith and practice.

One of the delightful details in this biography is that, as an undergraduate, Bonhoeffer joined a university fraternity, the Hedgehogs. The Jewish philosopher Isaiah Berlin divided the world, intellectually, between the "Fox" and the "Hedgehog." While the Fox's worldview draws upon a diversity of ideas and experiences, the Hedgehog claims to know one big, supremely important thing. Theologically, Bonhoeffer may have had the Fox's broadmindedness, but in his highest convictions, he was a Hedgehog. His one big thing was that Christianity is not merely a matter of what one believes, but of how one lives.

As German Lutherans rested complacently in their commitment to faith alone, while turning a blind eye to suffering and injustice, Bonhoeffer pointedly preached a Reformation Day sermon on 1 Corinthians 13:13: "And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love." It turns out that even an unemployed 20-something can stand against the world when empowered by the Love that moves the sun and other stars.

TIMOTHY LARSEN is McManis Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College and coeditor of Bonhoeffer, Christ and Culture (InterVarsity Press).

Justin S. and

Is It My Fault? Hope and **Healing for Those Suffering**

Domestic Violence Lindsey A. Holcomb (Moody Publishers) An Unequivocal 'No'



Justin and Lindsey Holcomb offer a truly biblical take on domestic violence. By Rachel Marie Stone

can't write about domestic violence without a nod to my current context: I live in a small, impoverished country in sub-Saharan Africa where domestic abuse, including physical and sexual violence against women and girls, is rampant. Women have few resources for getting out, getting safe, and getting help.

One of my friends and colleagues-a minister in the largest Protestant church in this country-says churches are seldom able to address the issue. Domestic violence is considered more or less "normal," she tells me, and clergy are inclined to dismiss it either as unimportant or as something to which a God-fearing woman should submit.

Until I read Is It My Fault? Hope and Healing for Those Suffering Domestic Violence (Moody Publishers) ★★★★, by Justin S. and Lindsey A. Holcomb, I had no idea that the leading cause of death for African American women ages 15 to 45 is murder at the hands of a partner. Nearly three out of four Americans personally know someone who has faced domestic violence (90 percent of the victims are women). As the Holcombs show, the effects of domestic abuse are wide-ranging, unpredictable, severe, and long-lasting, affecting both the women and their children. Boys witnessing domestic violence, for example, are twice as likely to become abusers themselves.

Justin (a pastor and adjunct professor at Reformed Theological Seminary) and his wife, Lindsey (a case manager at a domestic violence shelter), answer the title's question with an unequivocal "no." They also acknowledge that while "many victims believe clergy have the most potential to help them," in fact "[clergy] are too often the least helpful and sometimes even harmful."

Indeed, years ago, I sat through lectures in which a Bible professor insisted that spousal abuse was not grounds for divorce, and that submission required enduring some forms of abuse. A popular pastor-theologian once made a similar suggestion in a Q&A session. He said that if the household abuse is "not requiring her to sin but simply hurting her," then he thinks she can endure "verbal abuse for a season" and "perhaps being smacked one night" before going to the church for help. (He later clarified that women could seek help from the authorities if the situation warrants it.)

By contrast, the Holcombs are unapologetically bold, refusing to minimize or dismiss any form of abuse in any circumstance. Following Georgetown professor Leo D. Lefebure, the authors define abuse as "the attempt of an individual or group to impose its will on others through any nonverbal, verbal, or physical means that inflict psychological or physical injury." They offer sage and sensible advice (including a list of comprehensive resources in the appendices) for sufferers and also for family, friends, and ministry professionals to whom victims may turn for help. And they persuasively address distorted theologies that are sometimes marshaled to defend abuse.

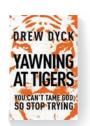
Is It My Fault? insists passionately on the sufficiency of God's grace to strengthen and heal victims and survivors. It also invokes the biblical category of lament. The Holcombs say professional help-including psychiatric medication and counselingin no way conflicts with finding healing through the gospel of grace. Victims of abuse are "invited by God to cry out for him to do what he has promised to do: destroy evil and remove everything that harms others and defames God's name."

Women facing domestic violence often feel that they have no good options: They can honor God or report abuse; they can rely on prayer and divine intervention or seek professional help. Rejecting false choices, Justin and Lindsey Holcomb speak into the lives of such women with balance, compassion, and biblical authority.

RACHEL MARIE STONE is a contributor to Her.meneutics.



Yawning at Tigers: You Can't Tame God, So Stop Trying Drew Dyck (Thomas Nelson)



Wilson's Bookmarks

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

Our Radioactive God

An excerpt from Yawning at Tigers: You Can't Tame God, So Stop Trying.

e've forgotten how big God is.

I remember having this point presented in dramatic fashion when
I visited Israel. Our Jewish guide, Amir, had been leading trips through
the Holy Land for 30 years and had a profound grasp of Scripture. I remember one
talk in particular. With the Mount of Olives shimmering in the background, Amir
described what he saw as the basic problem with the universe.

"God longs to come down to earth to redeem the righteous and judge the wicked," he said. "But there's a problem. His presence is like radiation, more dangerous than plutonium. Nothing can live when God comes near. If God came to earth, both the righteous and unrighteous would perish. It would be like a thousand nuclear bombs exploding at once. We would all die!"

Initially Amir's God-as-plutonium metaphor struck me as strange. I've heard God described as father, master, king, warrior, judge... but plutonium? Plutonium is pretty nasty stuff. If inhaled, it's one of the deadliest elements known to man. Just one-millionth of a gram of plutonium will kill a person if it enters the lungs.

 $But as I \, recounted \, God's \, interactions \, with \, the \, ancient \, Is rae lites, I \, wondered \, if \, Amir \, was \, onto \, something.$

I thought of all the stories surrounding the ark of the covenant, where people were struck dead or sickened from coming in contact with God's immediate presence. I thought of poor Uzzah, the Israelite who was killed just for putting out his hand to steady the ark of the covenant (2 Sam. 6:7). Or the times when God warned Moses to keep the people back from his glory lest God "break out against them" (Ex. 19:24). In these stories it almost seems like there was some kind of radioactive field surrounding God. You get the unmistakable idea that his holiness is dangerous, even deadly.

We tend to avoid these passages or explain them away. Each time a popular atheist writes a book accusing God of being mean (and somehow simultaneously nonexistent), we spill gallons of ink trying to defend God's actions. While I appreciate the works of apologists, this sort of enterprise often becomes a subtle way of domesticating God. After we get through explaining him, he comes off as misunderstood or hapless. I'd prefer just to say, "Yes, God is dangerous. He's not a house cat; he's a lion. You're free to deny his existence or pretend that he's harmless. Go ahead and pet him if you'd like; just don't expect to get your arm back."

Don't get me wrong. God is not cruel and capricious. But Amir was right—he's dangerous. And that presents us with a huge problem. God's holiness is deadly, incompatible with life, especially for sinful mortals like us. "No one may see me," God warned, "and live" (Ex. 33:20).

Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

SAVING KARL BARTH

D. STEPHEN LONG (FORTRESS PRESS)

One unsatisfying aspect of most narrative theology is its failure to embody the distinctive virtues of narrative. By contrast, Long's account of the long "theological friendship" between Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar—not a work of "narrative theology"—has the feel of a compulsively readable novel. I can't remember when I last read a book of theology like this. The issues at stake—fundamentally, the rift between Protestantism and Catholicism—are as timely today as they were during the decades of conversation between Barth and Balthasar.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG, MASTER OF MODERNISM

THOMAS BROTHERS (NORTON)

Occasionally in this space I have vented about the caricatures of "modernism" and "modernity" that continue to flourish (especially, alas, among evangelicals) even as whole shelves of interesting new books are deepening our sense of "the modern" from a wild diversity of perspectives. A case in point is Brothers's superb new biography, a sequel to his excellent 2006 volume, Louis Armstrong's New Orleans. We aren't used to hearing "Louis Armstrong" and "modernism" in the same sentence. Brothers makes it very clear how the one illuminates our understanding of the other, and vice versa-and gives us many other treasures as well. This is not a book for jazz initiates only!

WORST, PERSON, EVER.

DOUGLAS COUPLAND (BLUE RIDER PRESS)

Warning: This novel is scabrous, obscene, deliberately offensive, and incorrect in every imaginable way (as you would discover on the very first page). It is also satire. Does this make a difference? Aha, you say, here it comes. In a moment, this Christian "intellectual" will tell us that this vile book is "redemptive." We're supposed to be flattered by this pseudo-sophistication. Evangelicals are so broad-minded nowadays. Well, yes. Several suitably Couplandish rejoinders come to mind, but I'd better save those for when we meet in person, offline and off the page.

INTERVIEW Marilyn Chandler McEntyre



What's in a Phrase?
Pausing Where
Scripture Gives
You Pause
Marilyn Chandler
McEntyre
(Eerdmans)



Pardon the Interruption

How to respond when Bible passages give you pause. Interview by Laura Turner

arilyn Chandler McEntyre's many books show a concern for fostering careful habits of reading and writing among Christians. In her new title, What's in a Phrase? Pausing Where Scripture Gives You Pause (Eerdmans), McEntyre, professor of English at Westmont College, offers brief meditations on biblical phrases that, for one reason or another, have stopped her short and occasioned further reflection. Laura Turner, a Her.meneutics contributor, spoke with McEntyre about the value of dwelling on passages of Scripture that grab our attention.

How should we react when a Scripture passage gives us pause?

For me, it is rooted in *lectio divina*, the practice that Benedict taught his monks in the fifth century. It's slow reading of very short passages of Scripture, listening for the word or phrase that addresses you. You're listening for something that invites the Spirit to open doors of association, memory, and feeling.

Say you encounter a phrase like "is my shepherd." On the second reading you might ask, "What is this about? Where I am being summoned? Why did this touch me in some way?" Then you could give those thoughts some silence. On the third reading, you can open up further and ask what the invitation might be, and how this might be giving you specific direction.

You talk about memories that arise while pondering a phrase in Scripture. Is there power in reexamining them?

Allowing a phrase to work as a trigger can create little moments of summoning. Those moments say, "Just walk through this door and see what comes up."

We all have a repository of memories that we can unearth and put to new purposes as life continues. Flannery O'Connor said that if you've lived through eighth grade, you have got enough writing material to last a lifetime. Our memories provide a personal foundation, and as a poet friend of mine put it, the past keeps changing. Or, as William Faulkner said, "The past isn't dead. It isn't even past."

Can certain phrases offer a kind of sustenance we can return to time and again?

Jesus uses the image of scattering seed. I think about what happens to seed, how even some of the seed that fell on rocky ground may have been washed by the rain into the ground. Storytelling, like Jesus' parables or accounts of Israel's history, offers a way of gathering seed for later use.

Stories are not mere propositions. They invite ongoing interpretation. So much of the gospel is story material that you can keep revisiting and opening up in new ways. Instead of providing the closure of a rulebook, it invites you into a process and into a way, and you need to keep coming back and looking again. To ask, "What is this saying now? How am I being spoken to?"

What broader philosophy of reading should we bring to Scripture?

I hope to contribute to the long conversation about what it means that Scripture is the living Word and, by extension, a living tradition. I'm troubled when people take possession of Scripture and read it with hardcore theological agendas. This tends to ignore Scripture's subtlety, its malleability, and the way it summons you into encounter, which is how Jesus was. He met people at very different moments in their lives, with different needs.

Scripture invites us to imagine. When it comes to the story of the rich young ruler, who went away sorrowing because he couldn't sell all his possessions, you get the feeling that this isn't the end of the story. It's the same way with the Prodigal



Son: there's more to the story than meets the eye, and the passage allows us to imagine our way into it.

This kind of reading is not necessarily about being faithful to the plot line of a particular story. It's about being faithful to the way the Spirit works, which is that you drop your nets and follow its leading. In so many of the Gospel stories, Jesus allows himself to be interrupted, like by the diseased woman who touches the hem of his garment. He's on his way to the house of a synagogue leader, and she touches him, and he just stops and says, "Who touched me?"

I take that as a model for reading Scripture—to read until you find you've been touched, and say, "Who touched me? What was that about? Let me stop here, and not feel compelled to go on."



New & Noteworthy

"What would C. S. Lewis say to someone trying to cope with grief? Or someone wondering how best to explain the Christian faith to an atheist friend? Or someone wanting to be a better person?" ~ Alister McGrath, If I Had I unch with C. S. Lewis

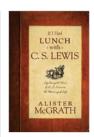
Compiled by Matt Reynolds



THE GOOD NEWS OF REVELATION

LARRY HELYER AND ED CYZEWSKI (CASCADE BOOKS)

The Book of Revelation is a part of the Bible many would prefer to skip over, whether out of confusion or horror at its apocalyptic imagery. But Helyer (emeritus professor of biblical studies at Taylor University) and Cyzewski (one of Helyer's former students) have the audacity to call it "an encouraging book of good news, especially for people who are suffering," despite its "accounts of water turning to blood, evil beasts rising from the sea, and plagues wiping out most of humanity." They compare its themes and images with the Old Testament's prophetic literature to show how the final book of the Bible yields a hopeful message about justice, perseverance though suffering, and the triumph of good over evil.

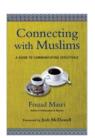


IF I HAD LUNCH WITH C. S. LEWIS

Exploring the Ideas of C. S. Lewis on the Meaning of Life

ALISTER MCGRATH (TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS)

We've all been asked, at one time or another, which historical figure we'd most like to meet over a meal. McGrath's latest book imagines a series of lunchtime discussions with Lewis themed around faith, friendship, and other enduring matters of life. "He is clearly someone whom many regard as helpful, informative, and reflective," writes McGrath. "So why not see him as a mentor, coach, or critical friend?" McGrath, the author of a major 2013 Lewis biography, scoured the Oxford don's writings for evidence of how he might "help us as we wrestle with questions and try to become better people."

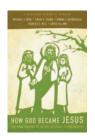


CONNECTING WITH MUSLIMS

A Guide to Communicating Effectively

FOUAD MASRI (INTERVARSITY PRESS)

Masri, founder of the Crescent Project, has devoted his life to breaking down walls of suspicion between Christians and Muslims and building new bridges of outreach. With a foreword from Josh McDowell, Connecting with Muslims addresses two difficulties Christians face in befriending and evangelizing Muslim neighbors: a lack of knowledge about Islam, and a lack of practical advice for how to share the gospel with them. The good news, says Masri, is that "you do not need a PhD in Islam to share your faith with a Muslim. Instead, you need to know Christ [and] have a heart of an ambassador and an array of effective communication tools."



HOW GOD BECAME IFSUS

The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature— A Response to Bart D. Ehrman

MICHAEL F. BIRD, CRAIG A. EVANS, SIMON J. GATHERCOLE,

CHARLES E. HILL, AND CHRIS TILLING (ZONDERVAN)
Ehrman, the Wheaton College graduate turned celebrity Bible skeptic, published a book called How Jesus Became God. In it he argues that neither Jesus nor his earliest disciples regarded him as a divine being. In response, five evangelical scholars joined forces to simultaneously publish How God Became Jesus, critiquing Ehrman's methods and conclusions and demonstrating that Jesus was indeed God in the flesh. As Aussie theologian Bird explains in the preface, "Not everything Ehrman says about the origins of Jesus' divinity is wrong. Some things are quite true, some things we'd

agree with but say differently, some things we'd suggest need better nuance, and other things we contend are just plain out of sync



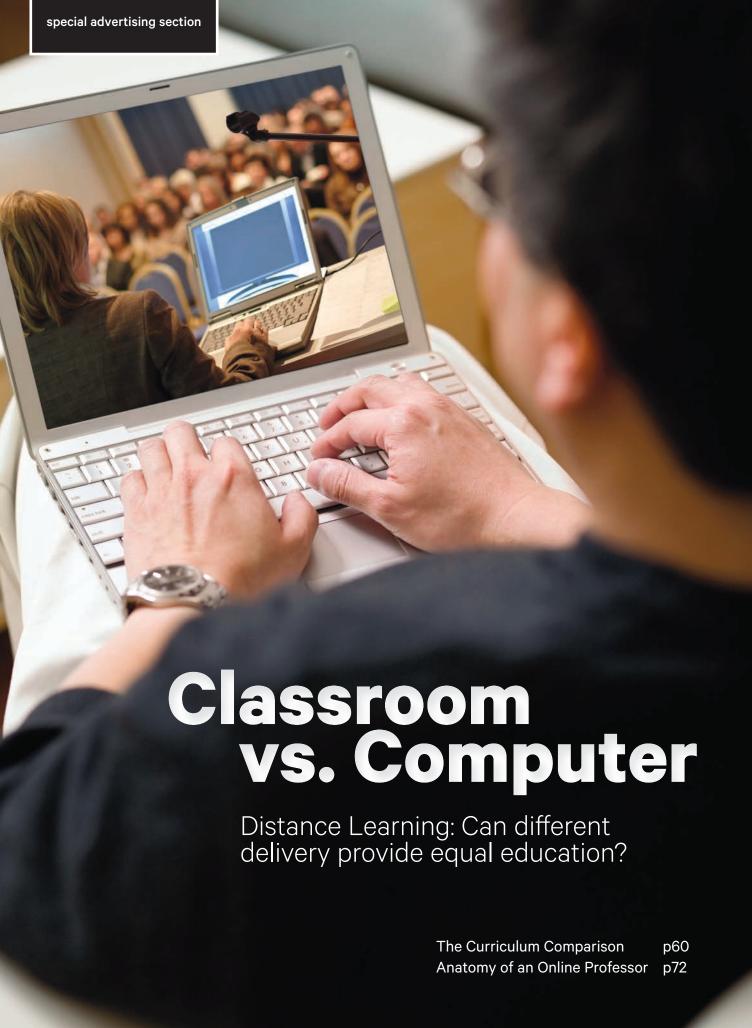
with the evidence."

SOUL KEEPING

Caring for the Most Important Part of You

JOHN ORTBERG (ZONDERVAN)

Dallas Willard's life and thought loom large over this latest book from megachurch pastor and author Ortberg. The two men shared more than two decades of close friendship before Willard, the renowned philosopher and writer on Christian spiritual formation, died last year. Ortberg delighted in every opportunity to pick the great man's brain at Willard's home in California's Box Canyon region. "Over the years," writes Ortberg in the introduction, "I sought Dallas's wisdom to help me understand the human soul, and in this book I will share what I have learned."





The Curriculum COMPARISON

How Christian institutions are creating consistency between online and on-campus courses.

arrie Jo Smith knew what she was looking for in a seminary, but she wasn't sure where she'd find it. Serving as a missionary in Costa Rica, Smith didn't want to leave the mission field to obtain a high-quality education. "I wanted a program that was flexible, academically challenging, and with minimal travel requirements," she says. The answer was as close as her computer—she enrolled in the Online Master of Arts in Religion program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS).

Smith's story is becoming increasingly common. According to a 2012 study by the Babson Survey Research Group, 48 percent of all private, nonprofit, postsecondary institutions in the United States provide full online programs—more than double the percentage reported in 2002. And roughly 80 percent now offer at least one online course. The survey also revealed that nearly a third of all higher education students in 2012 reported taking at least one course online.

As more students opt for distance learning, Christian postsecondary institutions are realizing the importance of achieving equivalence between their online and on-campus courses. "One of the values that guided our work as

we planned the distance curriculum was maintaining parity between the distance and residential programs. We wanted to make sure students are able to receive the same high-quality education regardless of the medium they choose for pursuing their studies," explains Peter Choi, director of distance learning at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

In order to develop consistency between the two formats, schools are focusing on high standards for distance curriculum, along with providing the academic and support resources critical to successful online learning.

Identical Outcomes, Different Approaches

At Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee, online bachelor's and master's degrees are tailored to the "busy adult students" who seek them, says Joshua Black, executive director of the Division of Adult Learning. "Distance education curricula overall are typically more intense in reading and self-directed work.... The workload can be more aggressive in order to achieve the same learning outcomes," he says. "Most of the program requirements are the same, except for ones that are geared for this student population." He notes as an example the

development of a theology of service course and study-abroad opportunities for adult learners, designed to capture the benefits of some of the off-campus opportunities available to traditional students. "Lee has a commitment to service, global perspectives, and diversity, so these components are built into the online curriculum for adults."

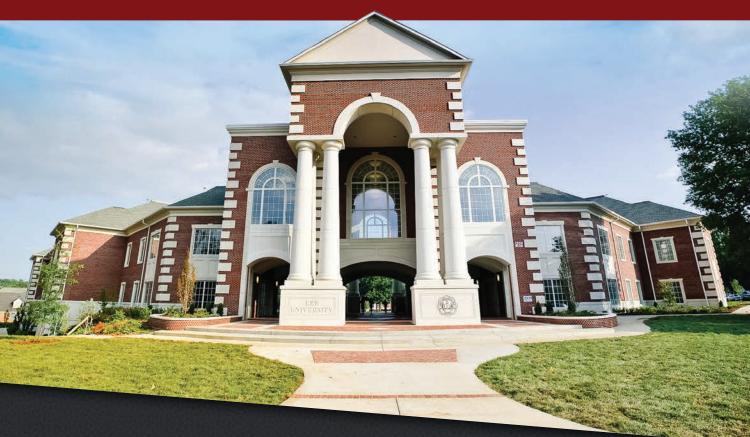
Large Christian universities, such as Dallas Baptist University and Liberty University (Lynchburg, Virginia), provide distance education over a wide range of academic and professional disciplines. With over a thousand online courses available, "Liberty University aims to provide all of the programs, amenities, facilities, and benefits of a major state school, but in a Christ-centered environment," says Johnnie Moore, senior vice president for communications. Faculty who teach on-site and online teach the same courses in both contexts, with identical learning outcomes. They do, however, exercise flexibility in how these goals are accomplished. "A traditional course may require two smaller papers to satisfy a particular learning outcome, [whereas] an online course may require one larger paper-slightly different assignments but both fulfilling the required outcome for the course," Moore says.

continued on page 64

AT LEE UNIVERSITY

you can expect more than world-class facilities, a talented faculty, and superb programs.

EXPECT SOMETHING GREAT.



1-800-LEE-9930

WWW.LEEUNIVERSITY.EDU

CLEVELAND, TN





WHERE ARE YOU LEADING?

Earn your degree without leaving your context.

Our fully online programs make it possible to earn your degree wherever God has placed you.

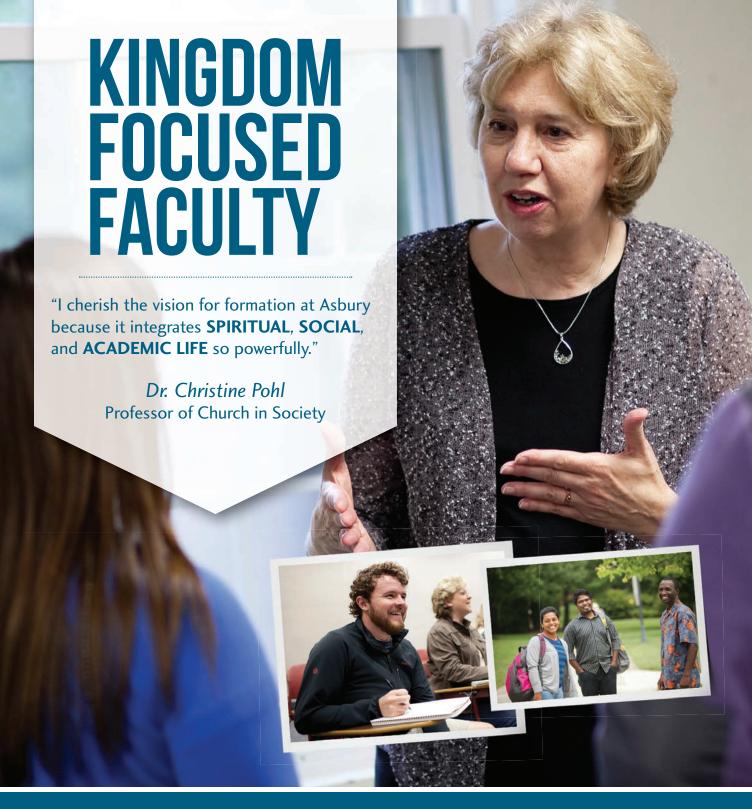


PhD in Leadership StudiesMA in Intercultural StudiesMA in New Testamentand More...

Learn more about online degree opportunities by visiting

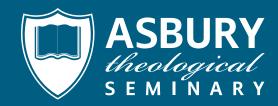
Johnson U.edu/Online





Academically Rigorous | **Scripturally Sound** | **Transformative Community**

Contact us today to start your Master of Divinity, Doctor of Ministry, Ph.D., or your choice of 13 distinctive Master of Arts degrees, which can be pursued at our campuses in Wilmore, Kentucky and Orlando, Florida, or through our on-line program.



Call. 800.2ASBURY **Click.** asbury.to/degrees **Visit.** asbury.to/visit **Learn more.** asburyseminary.edu

204 N. Lexington Ave., Wilmore, KY 40390 8401 Valencia College Ln., Orlando, FL 32835

special advertising section

continued from page 60

Because the eight-week online course is half the length of its oncampus counterpart, Liberty advises its distance-learning students to carefully consider their workload when registering for classes. "All of the comparable learning outcomes must be met in half the amount of time of a traditional course offering," Moore says. "And whereas any student can successfully complete any of our courses within eight weeks... the student should remain mindful of this reality when considering enrolling in multiple courses during the same eight-week period."

Despite the shorter course length, the total amount of work expected is the same, says Bill Hall Jr., dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky. "Assignments, papers, and exams are comparable in substance and rigor," he says, but they may be modified to better fit the way the online curriculum is delivered. "Our online programs are designed for nontraditional students who are typically around age 30. [They] often use project-based learning and

"Distance education curricula overall are typically more intense in reading and self-directed work.... The workload can be more aggressive in order to achieve the same learning outcomes."

have fewer quizzes and tests compared to the on-campus programs that rely more heavily on traditional forms of assessment," he says. "The project-based learning model allows students to showcase their life experiences in the context of the curriculum."

At Dallas Baptist University (DBU), which offers 58 degree programs online,

maintaining high standards over a large number of programs requires careful planning and evaluation. "We utilize a comprehensive course design and implementation process that ensures each online course includes identical learning objectives across a variety of delivery methods, including face-to-face, hybrid, and online," says Randy Byers, director of online education. "Each course's content is created by an individual faculty member and then peer reviewed by at least three additional faculty with expertise in the subject matter." The same texts are used regardless of delivery format, but, he adds, "Faculty have the flexibility to add additional lectures, modify topics for student discussion, quote current research, and adjust assessments based on their expertise. This ensures a standard of quality while allowing faculty to customize the course and share their individual expertise."

While the majority of schools focus on course-by-course continuity across delivery formats, some take a different approach. By design, the online programs of Moody Bible Institute Distance

continued on page 68





It's greater than that.

It's about saving the oceans. It's about pioneering techniques to measure pollutants in the icy currents of the Arctic Circle using the earwax of the 100-ton bowhead whale. It's about a unique team of Baylor researchers and students, working together to track pesticides, PCBs and other contaminants in detail not found in any other organism. It's about a world-renowned faculty creating life-changing experiences that transcend the classroom. And it's about a university where teaching, discovery, scholarship and faith all work together. To challenge minds. To change the world.





Would you let your child on a bus that can't promise safety?

Of course not. So why should anyone trust you as a Christian leader if you cut corners in ministry training? When it comes to ministry preparation, some offer tips and trends that may soon fall flat, or quick degrees that stop short of the skill and understanding you need. Western Seminary helps you to forge ministry tools for your context by reflecting deeply on the timeless truth of the Bible and the gospel it unveils. After all, when it comes to shepherding souls you can't afford to be an accident waiting to happen.

No shortcuts. No regrets. Just trustworthy and accessible training for gospel-centered transformation.

WESTERN
SEMINARY
Gospel-Centered
Transformation

www.westernseminary.edu/noshortcuts



What Can You Do in Two Years?

In as little as two years, you can earn a graduate degree online while keeping your work and family commitments. Moody Distance Learning now offers:

- M.A. in Christian Leadership
- M.A. in Biblical Exposition (Ministry Emphasis)

Take one class at a time to become better equipped for full-time or part-time ministry.

Learn more

www.moody.edu/ct



special advertising section

continued from page 64

Learning in Chicago (MDL) are distinct from those offered on campus. "While the aims of the curricula are similar, the manner in which those aims are achieved is conditioned by the students enrolled in MDL's programs," says James Spencer, vice president and dean of Moody Distance Learning. "These students live off-campus, work full-time, have families, and take courses parttime." MDL designs its online courses to allow part-time students "to progress through a highly integrated curriculum in which each course builds on the next."

For these students, the typical freshman-sophomore-junior-senior progression through a baccalaureate program isn't particularly meaningful, Spencer says. Instead, Moody's online degree progression is organized thematically. Completing thematic milestones "offers several intermediate moments within the curriculum in which students may celebrate their achievements and prepare to pursue the next milestone." Careful thematic arrangement also fosters meaningful focus and forward momentum for students who are taking

only one or two courses at a time.

Resources and Support

Beyond course materials and tools, access to various support services and academic resources is crucial to successful online learning: not being able to find answers or the appropriate research presents an unwelcome and frustrating distraction. DBU's Byers says, "Online students have all the same academic resources as our traditional students. We offer online access to a wide array of student support services including our library, writing center, online registration, advising, and gradebook."

Today academic libraries offer myriad electronic resources—online databases, academic journals, reference tools, commentaries, eBooks, even art collections—that are available to all students and may be particularly helpful to those engaged in distance education. And many schools employ a dedicated distance learning librarian. Additionally, academic libraries that serve distance learners provide many different kinds of support, including

mailing books and digitizing articles. Carrie Jo Smith, online student at GCTS says that the "incredibly helpful and supportive" library staff has assisted her by locating good online sources, scanning and e-mailing chapters of books, and more. "They have been key to my success so far," she says.

Schools also provide training opportunities to help students make the best use of their time and resources. Liberty University, for example, offers weekly seminars to undergrad and graduate students on the use of the library's subject research guide; help is also available to distance-education students by phone, e-mail, and chat. The library at Lee University offers "distance specific" training to the university's online faculty, "in order to promote and train faculty in how the library serves distance students," Black says. And beginning in the fall of 2014, Moody Distance Learning will incorporate information literacy skills into the curricula. MDL wants to "ensure that students are able to critically evaluate a variety of information sources," Spencer says. "Information is

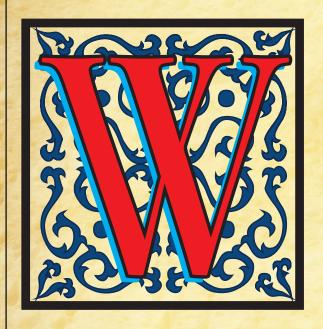
Read CT Anywhere You Go



Explore all of Christianity Today's award-winning content on your desktop, tablet, or mobile device.

Access single-issue PDFs, or browse 20+ years of online archives.





IRED

WE HELP YOU "TELECONNECT" INSTEAD OF JUST TELECOMMUTE.

UNLIKE MANY ONLINE PROGRAMS,

Western Theological Seminary's distance learning courses are academically robust and equivalent to in-residence courses in learning quality. Our collaborative and discussion-rich distance learning model helps students form meaningful relationships with their professors and with each other. Visit westernsem.edu and see for yourself why Western is thriving.



continued from page 68

A Student's Story

Karen Edwards was already familiar with Trinity International University (TIU) in Deerfield, Illinois, when she began investigating distance-learning options. Her husband is an alumnus. Living in Costa Rica, where Edwards disciples women and trains and equips Christian leaders (among other ministry activities), she decided to



Karen Edwards

pursue a BA in Christian ministries. "I chose to pursue the online degree because of where I live," she says.

Having taken classes both online and on the TIU campus, Edwards says she experienced consistency in the curricula and workload across delivery formats. She sees value in both ways of learning. "Although I love the interaction of a classroom setting and being with other students, the reality is, being in class is not a social event," she says. "So without that expectation with the online courses, it ended up being a refreshing way to study." The ability to get online and work from anywhere—even while traveling—was a significant benefit as well.

Edwards also appreciated her professors' accessibility, clear communication of expectations, and honest critiques that contributed to meaningful preparation for ministry in ways that were immediate and direct. A course in small-group leadership, for example, coincided with her leading a small group of women in Costa Rica. "I think the biggest help for me was the opportunity to do a lot of hands-on learning," she says. "I was able to put into practice right away what I was learning in class."

everywhere.... We want to be sure they can discern the wheat from the chaff."

Learning Well Online

With the possible exception of programs for which necessary "hands-on, laboratory experiences" are difficult to achieve from a distance, says DBU's Byers, such as music or cell biology, there is a growing consensus that just about anything can be taught well online if it is carefully constructed and thoughtfully evaluated. Where distance learning was once dismissed as a substandard form of higher education, "that perspective has been on the decline as more and more research has shown that students learn as well, if not better, in online and accelerated programs," says Moody's Spencer. Drawing on Moody's long history of distance education, beginning with correspondence courses in 1901, "MDL's stance is that there is always a way to train more students effectively, regardless of subject matter," Spencer says. "All it takes is the right model."

Kathy Furlong is a freelance writer living in Philadelphia, PA.





mbts.edu 800-944-MBTS

Kansas City, MO

From start to finish, Midwestern Seminary strives to dramatically transform students by renewing their minds with

biblical truth, igniting their hearts with ministry passion, and enriching their souls with deepened Christ-likeness.

We are growing the future leaders of the church who are whole-heartedly dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission as they go forth into all the world.

MIDWESTERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY exists for the Church.

Complete your degree online or on campus.



At Bethel Seminary, we're committed to equipping ministry leaders. But here, leadership means something more. It's about living our beliefs and bringing theology to life. It's about becoming thoughtful scholars and faithful servants. It's about developing our God-given talents while gaining the biblical foundation we need to think critically, discern faithfully, and act wisely. It's about using everything we've learned and everything we believe to make a real difference in our communities and our world.

seminary.bethel.edu



Anatomy of an **Online Professor**

What it takes to teach effectively from a distance.

s critical as an excellent, engaging curriculum may be, the right-or wrong-instructor can make or break any course. Teaching in an online environment differs significantly from teaching in a classroom, however, so instructors must rethink how they approach and prepare their courses. And it's not just a matter of mastering the technology.

"We've found that technological ability is not the primary factor in what makes an effective distance-learning teacher. It's teacher presence," says Nathan Bierma, educational technologist at Calvin Theological Seminary. An instructor's reliable presence and accessibility requires "effort and initiative to log in to courses, listen to students, respond, interact, and facilitate. Distance learning encourages teaching that is dialogic more than transmissive, which is pedagogically sound whatever the format; but it is certainly true of distance learning."

The characteristics of a good online instructor are pretty much the same as those of any effective teacher: clear, concise communication; the ability to facilitate meaningful discussion and learning; openness to new ways of doing things; and a passion for teaching and for the subject matter. But because communication happens differently in an online environment, the online experience is more sensitive to the presence or absence of these qualities.

One of the major differences between on-site and online classrooms. says Johnnie Moore, senior vice president for communications at Liberty University, "is the depth of relationship the faculty and students develop. . . . The online course provides the structure, but the real engagement comes in the interchange of ideas. The more time the

online faculty take to engage with students . . . the more [likely it is that] the students will, in turn, engage and learn."

One strategy that large universities like Liberty and Dallas Baptist University (DBU) employ to help professors create and protect these opportunities is to cap class sizes to "reasonable levels" of 20 to 30 students. DBU's director of online education, Randy Byers, also notes the importance of training faculty in online pedagogy before they attempt to create or teach an online course. Regular workshops on new technologies and teaching strategies, as well as access to additional training in online

teaching skills, round out the support DBU provides its online instructors.

"According to students, the best online faculty are 'present' multiple times per week, and at best daily. Consistent and thoughtful communication shows students the instructor cares about who they are, their questions and concerns. Students also know the instructor is present for mentoring, challenging, and guiding their learning experience," says Bill Hall Jr., dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies at Asbury University.

Faculty at Moody Bible Institute Distance Learning (MDL) complete a

A Professor's Perspective

Teaching online has made Tanya Grosz a better teacher.

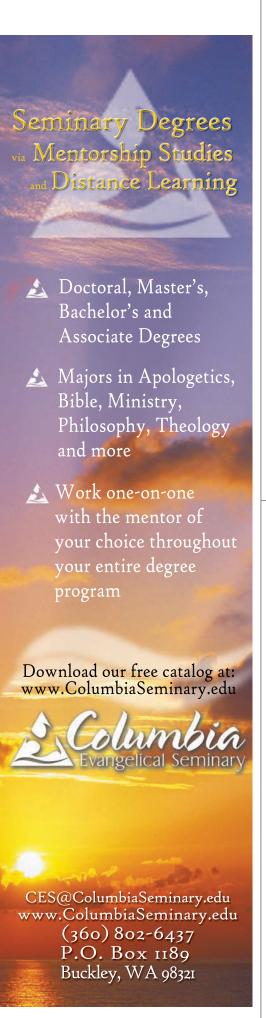
Grosz, assistant professor of English and director of the Undergraduate Pathways online learning program at the University of Northwestern-St. Paul, firmly believes that becoming an effective online teacher has transformed the way she teaches in the traditional classroom.



"It didn't take me very long to figure out that my grading of my online students' essays was more effective, clear, and in-depth than my in-person critiques," she says. And when Grosz found herself teaching a course online during the same semester she was teaching it on campus, she realized she could use her well-crafted online materials to teach the fundamental concepts to her on-campus students ahead of time, and then use class time to focus on application, discussion, assessment, and more. "The use of strong online digital learning objects to supplement face-to-face learning . . . prepares students for that critical face-to-face time," she says.

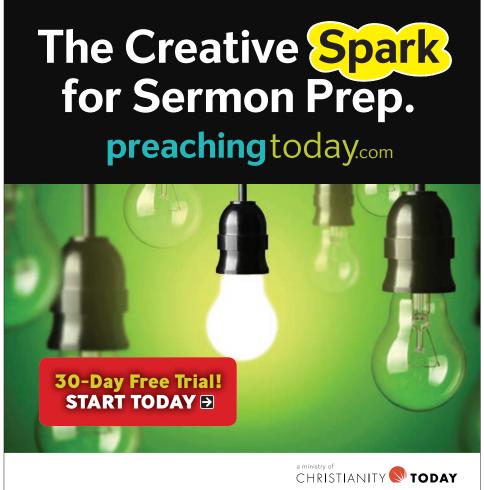
In a typical online literature class session, Grosz says, students read and analyze a text, complete assignments, and engage the text further via discussions. "Meaningful interaction occurs when everything is laid out on a course site clearly . . . and [students] can focus on the learning," she says.

Teaching online has given Grosz invaluable experience in scripting an engaging lecture and moderating discussions "without feeling somehow stripped of my authority as a teacher," she says. Online teaching also reinforces the value of relationships in learning "because it's so vital to online students.... It's critical to a successful student experience."





Where Faith and Learning Intersect Further your education when and where you want with Faulkner University Online. Online programs include: Master of Arts in Biblical Studies Master of Arts in Christian Ministry Master of Science in Counseling Doctor of Philosophy in Biblical Studies And More... Learn More by visiting us at online.faulkner.edu/ct





17 FULLY ONLINE DEGREES

Master's Degrees in Ministry

Children's Ministry Christian Education Christian Ministry Student Ministry Worship Leadership

Master's Degrees in Business

Management MBA

Master's Degrees in Education

Curriculum and Instruction Educational Leadership Higher Education Teaching

Interdisciplinary Master's Degrees

Professional Development Liberal Arts

Undergraduate Degrees

Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies Bachelor of Arts and Sciences Bachelor of Business Administration Bachelor of Business Studies

God has designed you for a special purpose and given you a unique calling.

Now, with Dallas Baptist University's 17 fully online degrees, you can prepare for that calling wherever you are and engage in learning whenever you want at one of the top Christian universities in the nation.

Learn from faculty practitioners who integrate faith and learning and teach not only from a rich academic context but also from their personal ministry or work experience. Apply what you learn immediately as a servant leader in your current profession or ministry to make an impact in the lives of those around you.

Explore one of DBU's fully online degree programs today!









Pursue your calling with DBU Online.

go.dbu.edu/online 1.800.460.1328

Want to know more?

Here are the websites of the schools advertising in this issue. You can also find more information about these schools at **ChristianCollegeGuide.net** and **SeminaryGradSchool.com**.

Asbury Theological Seminary (KY)	asburyseminary.edu
Azusa Pacific University (CA)	apu.edu
Baylor University (TX)	baylor.edu
Bethel University (MN)	
Cairn University (PA)	
Calvin Theological Seminary (MI)	
Dallas Baptist University (TX)	
Faulkner University (AL)	faulkner.edu
Gordon College (MA)	gordon.edu
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (MA, NC, FL)	gordonconwell.edu
Johnson University (TN, FL)	johnsonu.edu
Lee University (TN)	leeuniversity.edu
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (MO)	mbts.edu
Moody Bible Institute (IL, WA)	moody.edu
Regent University (VA)	regent.edu
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (KY)	sbts.edu
Union University (TN)	
Western Seminary (CA, OR)	westernseminary.edu
Western Theological Seminary (MI)	westernsem.edu

five-week online training program before teaching online courses. Experts in online instruction then mentor them through their first three courses. Besides learning to make the most of the technology and online classroom practices, faculty learn to monitor their students' level of engagement in the virtual classroom. "Instructors work with administrative teams to identify students who are not participating... and provide them with the motivation or assistance they need to be successful in their studies," says James Spencer, vice president and dean of MDL.

According to Hall, finding the right balance between organization and flexibility in online teaching is another area in which faculty experience a learning curve. Online faculty need to be adept at "organizing the entire class in detail from start to finish before they begin teaching the course." At the same time, they need to be able to adapt to the unexpected. "A flexible instructor will come up with a plan for unplanned glitches and help maintain course continuity," he says. "The most successful online instructors are also willing to try new technologies or teaching methods."

- K.F.



YOU ARE CALLED TO SERVE.

BECOME EQUIPPED TO SERVE.

CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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

Marketplace

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

WHEATON COLLEGE EVANGELISM AND LEADERSHIP

Wheaton College announces a search for a Chair and Professor of the Graduate Department of Evangelism and Leadership, and Director of The Billy Graham Center For Evangelism. For a complete description, visit bit.ly/wcevangelismchair.



Pastor

for interdenominational congregation located in the city of Horseshoe Bay, Texas, a retirement/resort community in the Texas Hill Country, sixty miles northwest of Austin, near Marble Falls, on Lake LBJ. The Church at Horseshoe Bay, a 750-member congregation, is seeking an experienced, ordained minister to serve as pastor. Job emphasis will be on preaching, pastoral care, and community outreach. Will work collegially with the senior pastor whose job emphasis is similar. Opportunity exists for future advancement, depending on performance. This congregation is an equal opportunity employer. Respond to Jim Jorden; P.O. Box 8111; Horseshoe Bay, TX; 78657; e-mail jrjorden@verizon.net.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, a non-denominational church located in Traverse City, Michigan, is searching for an intentional interim minister who is theologically evangelical, homiletically superior, a committed spiritual leader and a visionary with a servant's heart. FCC is a 300-active member church that currently offers a weekly Sunday traditional service and a monthly Saturday evening contemporary service. A church profile, expectations and opportunity in this pastoral position, as well as the application process, may be requested by emailing cheryl.chism @fcctc.org.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

K-12 Faculty

Fort Bend Christian Academy is a K-12 private Christian school located in Sugar Land, Texas, one of the fastest growing and most diverse communities in the United States. Applications for the 2014-2015 school year are now being accepted for teaching professionals dedicated to training the next generation for Christ. For more information or to apply, visit www.FortBendChristian.org/CT-Faculty.

Belhaven University

teaches each discipline on biblical foundations, and seeks faculty with terminal degrees in the following areas: business administration/finance (Chattanooga, TN), business (Memphis, TN), director of graduate teacher education, biology (Jackson, MS) and a dean of online studies (Jackson, MS). See www.belhaven.edu/belhaven/employment .htm for details.

BOOKS | TAPES | FILMS

The Meaning of These Days: Memoir of a Philosophical Pastor

is the thoughtful, well-written book by Kenneth D. Stephens. Visit www.themeaningofthesedays.com.

EDUCATION

Earn Seminary Degrees Online

Columbia Seminary; www.Columbia Seminary .edu; CES@Columbia Seminary.edu.

A PRESTIGIOUS HIGH SCHOOL IN CHINA

seeks experienced English teacher for one year. Contact Ray for details: 626.274.4556, ray@amedu.org.

Degrees Through Correspondence

Low tuition. For a free catalog www.lbcs .org; 352.621.4991; or write Liberty Bible College & Seminary; 5480 S. Suncoast Blvd.; Homosassa, FL 34446.

TRAVEL

GOLDEN RULE TRAVEL is a Christian agency specializing in wholesale and bulk rate airline tickets for church and missionary travel. We try extra hard to save you money! Call 800.950.3599 (FLYY) or go to www .goldenruletravel.com.

London, UK

Highbury Centre Christian guesthouse. Quiet location on private road, close to bus and train/tube station. Reductions for missionaries and full-time ministers. www.thehighburycentre.org.

SERVICES

Called to Preach?

www.IndependentBaptistAlliance.org; 352.621.4981. We can help with ordination and other topics.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Write to Inmates

Fellowship with a saved inmate or lead an unsaved inmate to the Lord! E-mail matthew25.36ministries2013@yahoo.com.

MISSIONS

MissionNannys.org

Be a mission nanny. Volunteer women needed to serve overseas with missionary families as domestic/childcare help.

Thinking about doing a short-term mission trip?

Perhaps a few weeks in Italy? If so, please visit GOSPEL to ITALIA at www.gospeltoitalia.com for more information. Please note: Trips are self-funded and no compensation is offered by GtI.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Open Your Own Reading Center

At home or commercial location. Students gain 2-4 grades in fewer than 60 hrs. Make a difference in the lives of others. We provide excellent training and materials. www .Academic-Associates.com. 800.861.9196.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES



800.585.5873. Web: http://scrip.cc.

MINISTRY AIDS

Make 3-Minute Evangelistic Videos

Earn \$100 per video. Visit www.ChristianVideoClips.com.

Global Recordings Network

Free mp3 gospel messages in over 5,400 languages. www.grnusa.net.

THUNDER ROAD

Theology Free Christianity

The Final Reformation

thndrd1@peoplepc.com

719-635-5742

Marketplace Classified **Advertising**

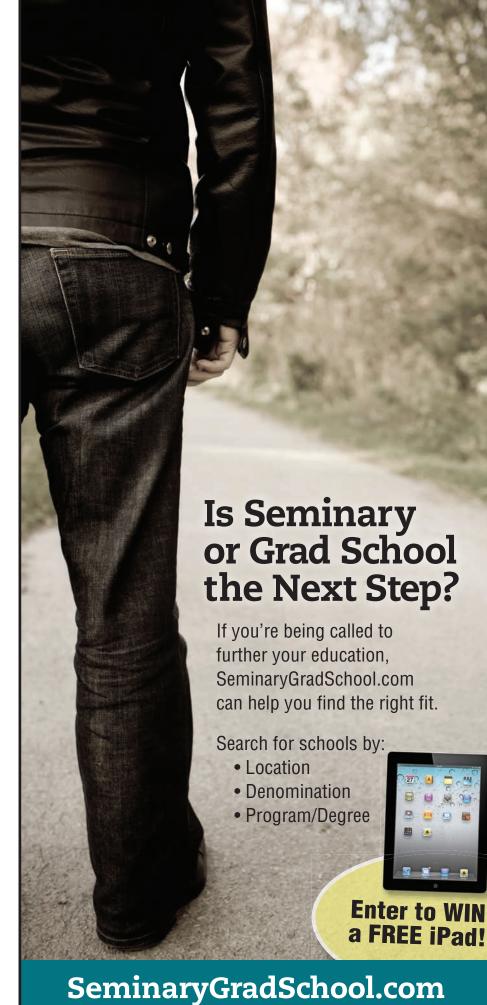
Ads available in Christianity Today & Leadership Journal

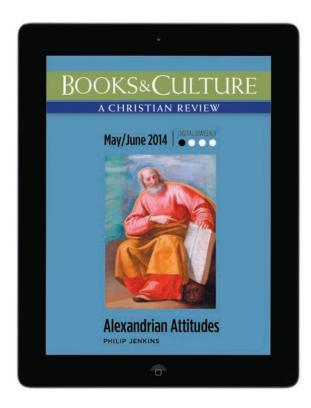
Display Ads: \$255-\$425/col. inch

Text Ads: 46¢-72¢/character

For details contact: **STACY SMITH**

630.260.6202 x4238 Marketplace@ChristianityToday.com



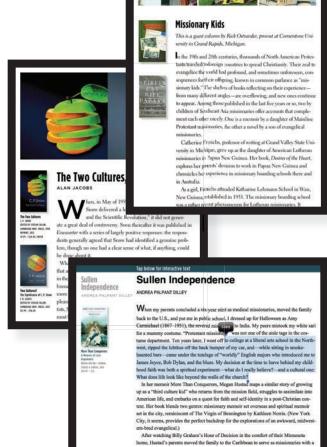


The New Books & Culture Biweekly

The print magazine packaged neatly into **26 tablet issues.**

FREE to all *Books & Culture* subscribers.

Available now in the iTunes store.





Subscribe now at OrderBAC.com/Join

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 80

Study Bible, her name scrawled in pink and dotted with hearts inside the front flap. I use it to this day.

For the next dozen years, my faith rose and fell. Some years I felt close and connected to God. Other years I went through the motions.

Leaving Berkeley to complete my undergraduate and graduate degrees at Stanford University (less than an hour away, in Palo Alto), I was amazed at how the atmosphere of faith could feel so different so close to home. I found more fellowship in my early 20s, both in and out of church, than I had in my teenage years. Over the next few years, I continued my Christian walk, going to church, attending a small group Bible study, and teaching Sunday school.

But I still wasn't all in.

UNEXPLAINABLE STIRRING

In 2006, I traveled to Kenya to climb a mountain. It was the last stop on a year-long journey around the world.

Although I had already spent several years living overseas at that point, an entire year on the road was a new kind of high. My passion for travel took my best friend and me to 19 countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Lara and I spent months on beaches in far-flung locales, climbed to Everest Base Camp, and took the Trans-Siberian Railroad until the dust and grime got to us, then hopped off to reach Moscow by plane instead. That year included moments when I experienced the presence of God more tangibly than ever—on a run in an Indian monsoon, on the rooftop of a hostel in Morocco, in a cemetery in Paris.

I anticipated that I would experience his presence again atop Mount Kenya.

Altitude sickness on the trek to Everest Base Camp had had me shivering in my sleeping bag for 24 hours before I could stumble down several thousand feet to clearheadedness. But I had heard that one experience with the sickness didn't predict another, so Lara and I charged ahead with our plans to scale the second-highest peak in Africa.

After a few days in Nairobi, on a friend's recommendation, we decided to move on to a guesthouse near the base of the mount to rest up before the big hike. It was cheap, thus meeting the only criterion we had for our lodging decisions. When

we heard that the guesthouse was owned by a nearby orphanage, we didn't bat an eye; for us, it was just a place to sleep.

We were taking tea the morning we were supposed to leave for the guesthouse, when a yellow truck filled with teenagers pulled up at the front gate, honking. In keeping with the orphanage's extravagant hospitality, they had sent their only vehicle on an eight-hour journey to bring us back to the guesthouse.

We climbed in the back, wary but grateful to save money on a hired car. During the drive, the teenagers vacillated between shy silence and a barrage of questions about life in the United States. My own questions rose to the surface as well. "Are they all orphans?" I whispered to Lara as we tumbled along the winding roads.

When we arrived, we were taken straight to the orphanage and told that the elders had invited us to lunch, and would then show us to the guesthouse. Famished, we gladly took our seats at a formal lunch in a room off the side of the orphanage's church.

It was in the middle of lunch that life as I knew it changed. In the hour since we had arrived at the children's home, I had felt the stirring of something I couldn't explain. I asked to use the restroom.

Looking into the bathroom mirror, I asked God to come into my life and heart again, as I had done all those years before. Then I went further, asking him a question that I already knew needed an answer: If you put this orphanage in our road for a reason, will you open my eyes so I can see the way forward? It was an experience I had never had before and have never had since—not even in my first, adolescent attempt to invite Jesus into my life. In that still exchange in a Kenyan bathroom, all the power of God's presence entered my heart, telling me to trust.

As soon as I closed the bathroom door behind me, things seemed to happen all at once

In that still exchange in a Kenyan bathroom, all the power of God's presence entered my heart, telling me to trust.

NEW PATH

Within the hour, I met Sammy, a boy whom I would ask my parents to adopt, whom I would end up entwining my life with and bringing to the States three years later.

An hour after that, I began to believe that God was telling me to stay. I decided that, instead of climbing Mount Kenya with Lara, I would stay at the orphanage to fast on the decision to live there for a longer period of time. My fast would end when I finished reading through the Bible (I'm a fast reader, I reasoned absurdly, and I figured I could skim parts of the Old Testament).

Istarted fasting Friday night and spent most of Saturday reading, looking for an answer that was already revealing itself, from a God I had just invited into my heart for the second time. On Sunday, I attended church with the children of the orphanage, the elders, and the local community.

I fainted sometime thereafter.

I'm a bad faster, it turns out, but by that time I was convinced that God was clear on what my next steps were to be. I would stay at the orphanage. Lara, still on the mountain, remained in the dark.

When she returned several days later, I told her about the strange series of events. We hatched a plan: After a trip home to see our families for the holidays, we would come back to live the next year in Kenya. To live with the children, to understand their lives, and to serve in any way we could in this new place. For me, it was the clear result of an invitation for God to change me.

That moment at the bathroom mirror set my life on an entirely new path—one that led to starting a nonprofit (Hope Runs) and joining a then-tiny startup called Twitter. By sending my first tweets from that orphanage in Kenya, I placed myself early on at the nexus of Twitter and social good. In 2009, when Twitter cofounder Biz Stone offered me a spot at the company to pursue this very passion, I leaped.

Throughout it all, I have often thought back on that moment in the orphanage bathroom. The moment I became the Christian I was born to be. The moment where I fell, headlong.

All in. CT

CLAIRE DIAZ-ORTIZ is Twitter's manager for social innovation (@Claire) and coauthor of Hope Runs: An American Tourist, a Kenyan Boy, a Journey of Redemption (Revell). She is credited with getting Pope Francis on Twitter.



All In

What happened the second time God flooded my life.

By Claire Diaz-Ortiz

city most famous for its leftist political history and hippie youth movement, Berkeley, California, doesn't always appear brimming with committed Christians. They're there, of course, but they're sometimes hard to spot.

Born, baptized, and raised in this town I love, I spent my early years trying to find folks who walked and talked like me. Our small Presbyterian church was of little help. It seemed to lose members every Sunday, and my parents often shook their heads at the everemptying pews. My younger brother once returned from Sunday school telling our mother he never wanted to go back.

"Why?" she asked, concerned.

"Because I'm the only one there."

My youth group bore an equally small population. Don't get me started on Vacation Bible School.

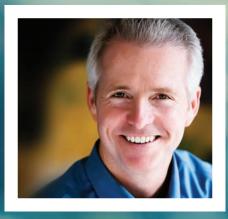
But I had camp. Every summer for the 11 years before I departed for college, my parents shipped me off to Westminster Woods among the redwoods of Northern California. Those weeks of music, fellowship, and requisite felt hats (don't ask) were one of the highlights of my year, and kept me grounded in a faith that sometimes felt like it took a backseat in Berkeley.

For several years at camp, I had learned about what it would mean to accept Christ into my heart—that it would change my life and the way I approached the world. I had heard, but I hadn't been ready.

Until the summer I was 12. One night, after a miserable, strange day spent wandering the grounds, wondering what it would mean if no God existed at all, I made my decision. A simple solo prayer on the steps of my cabin sealed the deal. My counselor gave me her NIV Student

CONTINUED ON PRECEDING PAGE

"Leadership Journal
keeps me in touch
with the best practices
in the church world.
Hove the print info
and learn from the
online resources.
It makes me smarter,
deeper and more



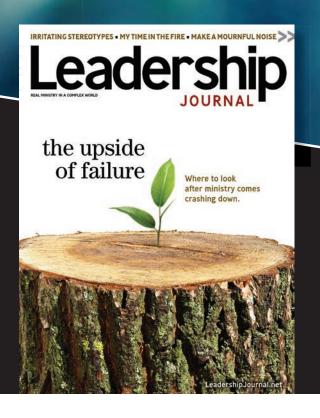
John Ortberg
Pastor and author

Find out for yourself why John reads Leadership Journal.

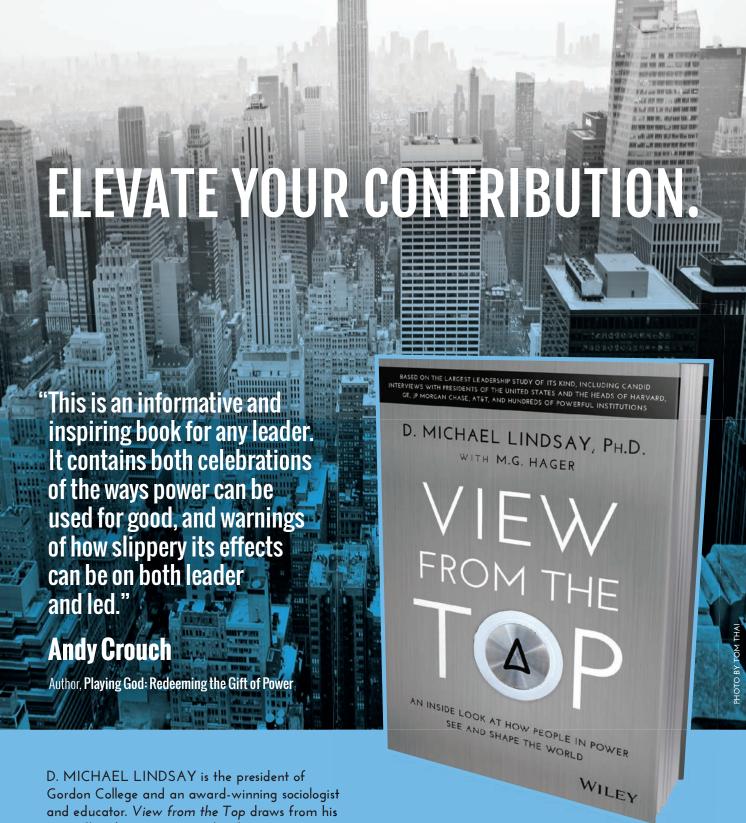
Suscribe for just \$2.99

effective."

www.OrderLJ.com/Ortberg







groundbreaking 10-year study of 550 CEOs, senior government leaders and nonprofit executives.

ON SALE NOW

Available at viewfromthetopbook.com or wherever books and eBooks are sold

