



CHRISTIANITY TODAY

JUNE 2014

**FEARFULLY AND  
WONDERFULLY MUD** *p.60*

**THE WORST SERMON  
ILLUSTRATION** *p.30*

**WORKPLACE BIAS IS REAL** *p.56*



*The Case  
for an  
Alcohol-Free  
Life*

---



CHRISTIANITYTODAY.COM  
U.S. AND CANADA \$4.95

# *Javier's mission is to* RESTORE HIS NEIGHBORHOOD



**Javier Mondragon**  
Pastor, Grace Point South

OUR MISSION IS INSURING HIS. AND YOURS.

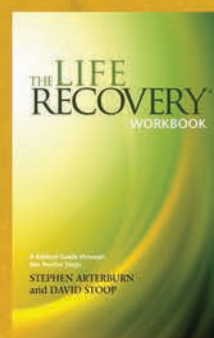
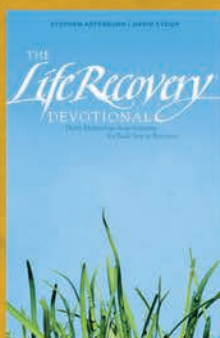
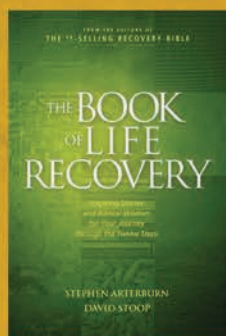
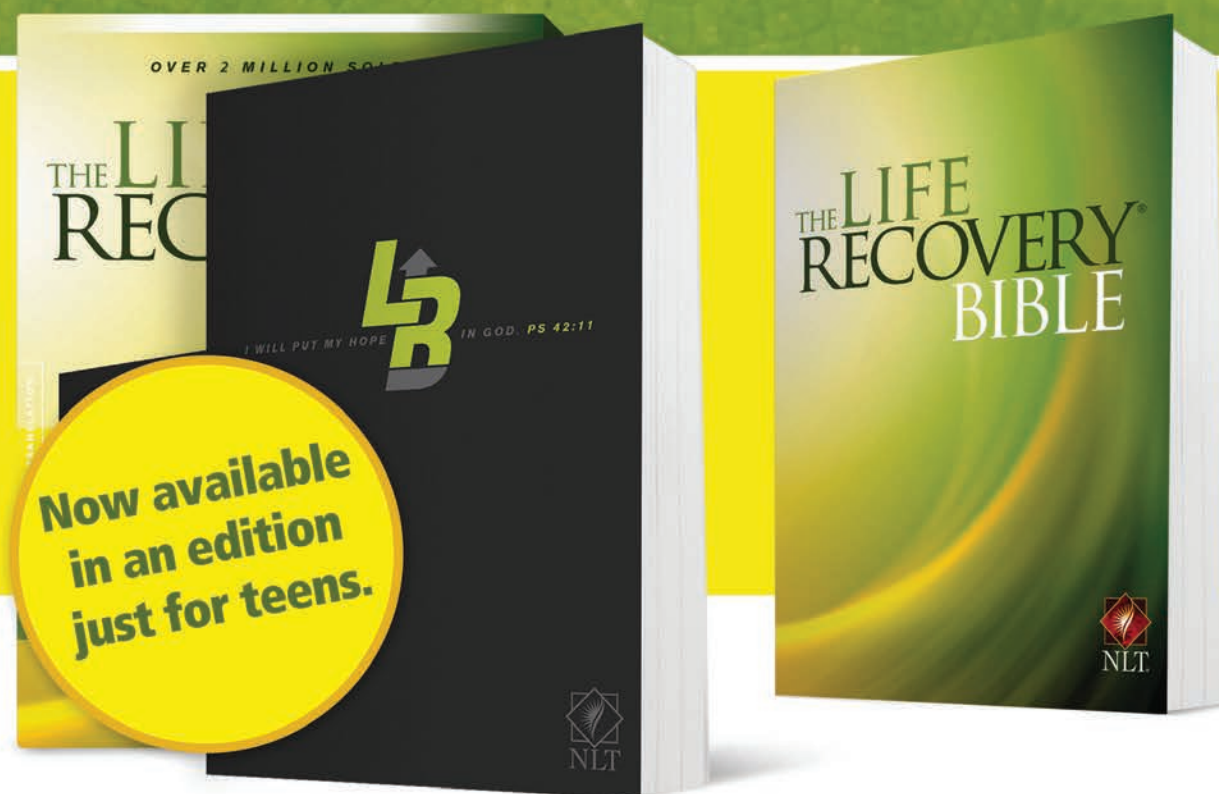
Churches like Javier's are why we offer insurance products, services, and resources that meet the unique needs of ministries. It's how we do our part, so you can do yours.

Read more of his story online  
[reachonemore.com](https://reachonemore.com)



# CELEBRATING OVER 2,000,000 COPIES SOLD!

Whether you're looking for resources to help your ministry, counseling practice, recovery group, or a loved one, choose the resources that have pointed millions of people to the true source of healing itself – Jesus Christ.



Help a loved one, or even yourself, start the journey of recovery with Jesus today with the Life Recovery Bible.

Available wherever books are sold.

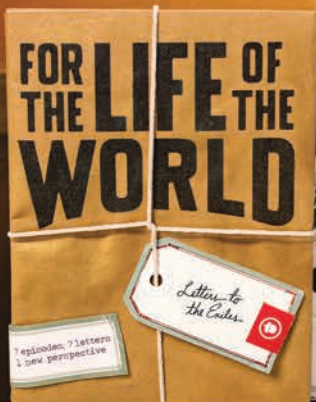
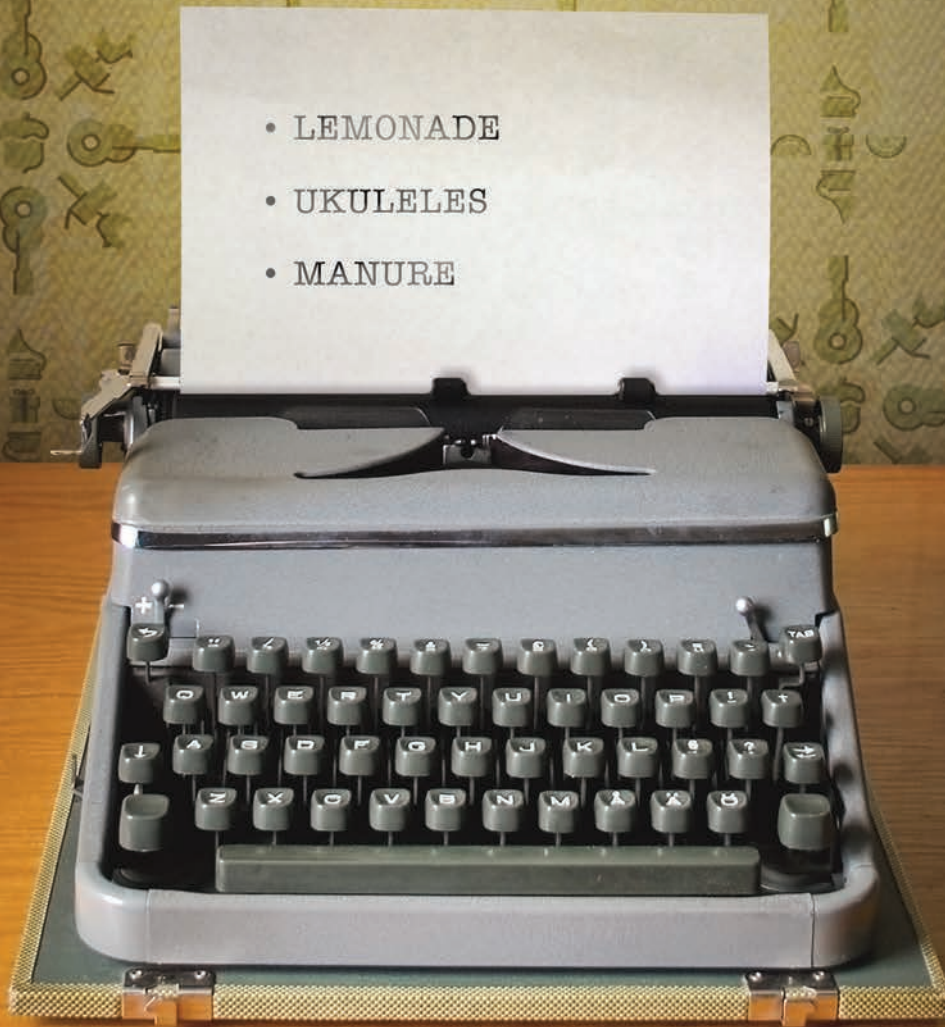
**Learn more at [liferecoveryproducts.com](http://liferecoveryproducts.com)**

TYNDALE, New Living Translation, NLT, the New Living Translation logo, Tyndale's quill logo, and Life Recovery are registered trademarks of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.



IF A HEADLINE WITH THE WORD 'OIKONOMIA'  
DOESN'T GRAB YOU, HOW ABOUT:

- LEMONADE
- UKULELES
- MANURE



We had you at 'oikonomia', didn't we.

Our seven-part film series, **FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD**, examines God's surprisingly wonderful "economy of all things" — from LOVE to WONDER to EXILE. And it's done in a way that's totally irresistible. Just like that word 'oikonomia'.

SEE THE TRAILER AT [LETTERSTOTHEEXILES.COM/GIFT](http://LETTERSTOTHEEXILES.COM/GIFT)

# CONTENTS

## 7 From the President

Harold B. Smith recounts his long, strange CT trip.

## 9 Editor's Note

Katelyn Beaty makes a toast to temperance.

## 11 Reply All

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

## NEWS

### 17 Witness

Making Christian music on the "Roof of the World."

### 18 Gleanings

World Relief's German merger, Qatar convicts American adopters, and the most popular church names.

### 21 Headlines

Christianizing Confucius, Georgia's 'fetal pain' falling out, and whether pastors' homes are that different.

### 23 Under Discussion

After pastors fall from grace, should we keep studying their teachings?



**"When my feet touch down at the end of the monkey bars, it feels like landing on gratitude for the simple joys of health."**

p. 60



### COVER STORY

# 34

#### WHY I GAVE UP ALCOHOL

In a rush to shed our separatist past, have young evangelicals forgotten to love their neighbors?

D. L. Mayfield

# 42

#### THIS IS WHAT A PROGRESSIVE LOOKS LIKE

Christian teetotalers of previous generations were radically committed to the common good. Jennifer Woodruff Tait

## 46 AN EXPLOSION OF JOY

**Global Gospel Project** What it means to be the apostolic church.

Krish Kandiah

## 50 CONFESSIONS OF A BAD DAD

What gave me hope despite my repeated parenting failures.

Peter Chin

## 56 YOUR FAITH MIGHT COST YOU YOUR NEXT JOB

How one experiment with 9,600 résumés showed that religious discrimination is alive and well.

Bradley R. E. Wright

## 60 ALONG THE MUDDY WAY

A pilgrim's progress through one of the fastest-growing sports in America.

Kent Annan

## VIEWS

### 27 Where We Stand

Not the Government's Prayer

### 29 Wayfaring

New columnist Wesley Hill on the poet who changed his life.

### 30 Open Question

Marguerite Shuster, Richard Allen Farmer, and Haddon Robinson name sermon illustrations that need to be erased.

### 32 Mud Alive

N. D. Wilson wants us to stop following the herd.

## REVIEWS

### 67 Books

Philip Jenkins's *The Great and Holy War*, review by Robert Tracy McKenzie

Hanspeter Nüesch's *Ruth & Billy Graham*, review by Laura Turner

Top 5: Books for every college student, by Gregory Thornbury

Interview: Chuck DeGroat's *Toughest People to Love*

### 72 TV

The joy of *The Tonight Show's* Jimmy Fallon.

### 80 Testimony

Buddhist-raised Alexander Chu went to a state university—and found it swarming with Christians.



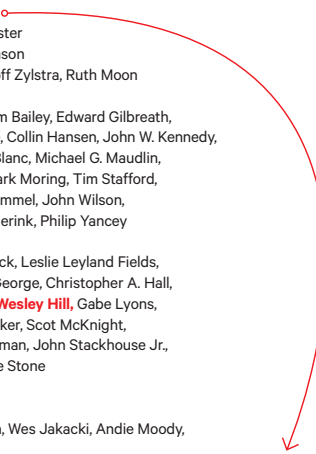
### ONLINE

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



## PRINT AND ONLINE

**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 Reynolds  
**ASSOCIATE EDITOR, HERMENEUTICS** 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 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

**MARKETING, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND ANALYTICS** Jacob Walsh, Wes Jakacki, Andie Moody, Josh Wood

**FOUNDER** Billy Graham 1956  
**LEAD EDITORS** Carl F. H. Henry 1956–68  
L. Nelson Bell 1956–73  
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.

## GLOBAL MEDIA MINISTRY

**PRESIDENT AND CEO** Harold B. Smith  
**CHIEF PUBLISHING OFFICER** Terumi Echols  
**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER** Carol Thompson  
**CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER** Kent Jensen  
**VICE PRESIDENTS** Theresa Hoffner, Marshall Shelley  
**SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT** Vicki Howard

### ADVERTISING AND ANALYTICS

Terumi Echols, **Michael Chuchvara**, Kathy DePue, Claudia Gerwin, Peggy Gomez, Walter Hegel, Julie Kaminski, Toks Olawoye, Kristen Privett, Luke Schoenrock, Stacy Smith, Josh Wood, Hazel Ziebell

**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** 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

New columnist Wesley just booked a flight to England for his godson Samuel's third birthday in July. Wesley's first column is on p. 29.



Kate marches down the aisle four times this year (as a bridesmaid).



### EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING OFFICES

Editorial: cteditor@christianitytoday.com  
Advertising: ctad@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.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES? GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS? ADDRESS CHANGES?** ctifulfill@christianitytoday.com, 800.999.1704 or write Christianity Today,

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



CLAIMS  
ABORTIONS  
ARE ONLY 3%  
OF SERVICES

ABORTIONS  
ARE OVER  
**50%**  
OF PATIENT  
FEES

**THERE'S A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT PLANNED PARENTHOOD SAYS, AND WHAT THEY DO.**

They say abortion services are a fraction of their business, yet more than half of their revenue comes from abortions. To make matters worse, former Planned Parenthood employees say clinics have abortion quotas. Isn't it time to investigate the plan at Planned Parenthood?



Get the facts for yourself.  
Learn more at [www.InvestigateTheirPlan.org](http://www.InvestigateTheirPlan.org)

**“From the very beginning, I knew we would do everything we could to battle my cancer.”**

**I firmly believe God led us to Cancer Treatment Centers of America®.**

Life was good. I'd gotten a big promotion at work, my daughter was getting married, we had an awesome trip planned. . . then I received the news that I had pancreatic cancer.

My first response was to pray—the second was to fight. Friends from church recommended that I go to Cancer Treatment Centers of America® (CTCA).

In addition to outstanding medical care, we had a spiritual connection with Pastor Gordon from the very first moment we met. His faith was based on the word of God—just like ours. To know that CTCA considers my faith just as important as the medical care means the world to me.

*If you or someone you love is fighting complex or advanced stage cancer, call us at **855.667.7675** or visit us online at **[cancercenter.com/faith](http://cancercenter.com/faith)** today.*

Sybil Redmon  
Stage 4 Pancreatic Cancer Patient  
Montgomery, AL

***“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



**Cancer  
Treatment  
Centers  
of America®**

Winning the fight against cancer, every day.®

*Care that never quits®*

Hospitals in:  
Atlanta | Chicago | Philadelphia | Phoenix | Tulsa

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

©2014 Rising Tide

# FROM THE PRESIDENT



**L**AST MONTH I PASSED SOMETHING OF A MILESTONE: 30 years of service here at Christianity Today! And if I can draw from my hippie past, it has been a long, strange trip.

From print-only (with 14 publications at our height), to print-plus with the onset of online media, to our current emphasis on “digital first,” *CT*’s content and the larger world of journalism have been in a steady state of change over my stay. (They are all reasons why *Forbes* listed “reporting” as one of 2014’s most stressful professions.)

That we are still here is no small note of praise. That we are actually growing, and reaching more people than ever before in our history, drops this 30-year veteran to his knees.

With eyes fixed on the throne of grace, I thank God for two constants that have kept this ministry from becoming lost and confused amid so much change over three decades:

**The top-tier quality of the staff.** With tenacious creativity, they have taken advantage of whatever content forms are available to effectively communicate “beautiful orthodoxy” to more and more readers, viewers, visitors, and event attendees.

Today, the *CT* audience is in the millions. Tens of thousands more are being drawn via new efforts such as the just-launched *Books & Culture* digital biweekly and *The Behemoth*, our wonderfully quirky digizine written and designed to force you to stop (no small matter) and behold the wonder of God (a very *big* matter).

**Our calling.** Namely, to engage, encourage, and equip the church of Christ. It was such when Billy Graham set *CT* into motion back in 1956. It remains so today. Thus our vision statement for staff and all would-be supporters: “To see the church grown up into the fullness of Christ.”

We continue to play a unique and, I believe, strategic role in accomplishing this task. As one recent letter put it, “What you’re doing is such a critical ministry, keeping the evangelical world connected and in many ways accountable to each other. You are supporting the kingdom of God at the highest levels.”

By partnering with such readers from across the globe, God has graciously allowed this evolving ministry to embrace and express evangelicalism’s theological fullness, bringing the best from across our movement to speak into the faith and calling of God’s countercultural people.

I’ve stood witness to this faithfulness for 30 years now. And I’m convinced that 30 years hence (but definitely without me!), God’s call on this ministry will remain constant as a new generation of editors, marketers, and designers create and distribute gospel-fueled content that captures what it means to “have life and have it abundantly.” **CT**

## THE LONG, STRANGE TRIP

What has stayed constant during my 30 years at *CT*.

**HAROLD B. SMITH** *President and CEO*



Follow  
**HAROLD  
SMITH**  
on Twitter  
[@HaroldSmithCT](https://twitter.com/HaroldSmithCT)

**TO CONTRIBUTE** Send checks (U.S. dollars only) to: Christianity Today, Attn: Donor Relations, Box CT0614, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188  
Christianity Today International is a 501(c)(3) organization.



# LONDON CALLING

7/12/2014

A BIOLA ON THE ROAD EVENT

## “Reasonable Faith in an Uncertain World”

BIOLA UNIVERSITY PRESENTS A UNIQUE ONE-DAY **CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS CONFERENCE** IN THE HEART OF LONDON AT THE HISTORIC WESTMINSTER CENTRAL HALL.



### **SPEAKERS INCLUDE:**

Craig Hazen, Clay Jones, Justin Brierley, Os Guinness, Ruth Jackson, William Lane Craig

LEARN MORE AT **BIOLA.EDU/LONDON**

Sponsored by Biola University's  
M.A. degree in Christian Apologetics and  
M.A. degree in Science & Religion

Explore these top-ranked distance-learning graduate  
programs at **biola.edu/apologetics**.



**BIOLA**  
UNIVERSITY  
*Christian Apologetics*

# EDITOR'S NOTE



**M**Y FRIEND AND I sat in swivel stools, watching the mustached bartender perform magic from behind the varnished wood counter. At his disposal were the expected items—limes and lemons, herbs, bitters, soda water—as well as more unusual ones: snow peas, eggs, a blow torch. At one point he lit a cigar, captured the smoke in a glass jar, mixed the smoke with an unknown liquid, and sieved the concoction over an ice sphere. The result tasted like what a humidor smells like: utterly delicious.

What was also delicious was our sense of Christian freedom. My friend and I had grown up in conservative Protestant families in which alcohol was either occasional (mine) or absent (his). My parents had seen alcohol abused in the military. His parents thought alcohol worldly and destructive. Being educated and culturally engaged believers, though, we had decided upon reaching adulthood that we were going to enjoy creation. Cheers to created goods! (Even ones that cost \$14.)

## A TOAST TO TEMPERANCE

A needed corrective for cocktail-sipping Christians.

**KATELYN BEATY** *Managing Editor, Magazine*

ADAM CRUFT But as we and other young Christians rush to show that we too can drink, dance, and swear—that our faith is much deeper than a list of behaviors—have we neglected to love our neighbors? Especially ones we won't find on Instagram or Twitter?

These are important questions at the center of this issue's cover package: D. L. Mayfield's personal story (p. 34) and Jennifer Woodruff Tait's essay on the teetotaling movement (p. 42). Together, they suggest that abstaining from alcohol can be a way that Christians stand with the vulnerable and pursue shalom. Mayfield, who lives in an inner-city Midwest neighborhood, writes, "I didn't give up alcohol because I wanted to flee the evils of the world. I gave up alcohol as a way of engaging the evils of the world." And Tait, managing editor of *Christian History* magazine, helpfully shows that our forebears' fight against alcohol was ultimately a fight for social justice.

Speaking of history, this month is filled with reminders of what it can teach us. Wesley Hill, cr's newest columnist, spends his first "Wayfaring" column (p. 29) praising a 17th-century poet for his musings on doubt. UK theologian Krish Kandiah recounts the earliest chapter of church history and its missional spirit (p. 46). And Philip Jenkins's latest book examines the wreckage of World War I, and the risk of confusing a civil battle for a holy one (p. 67).

There are moments in history when the church needs to preach liberty. There are moments in history when it needs to preach abstention. This cover story is not the definitive word on Christians and alcohol. But it is a well-timed corrective that cocktail-sipping believers can toast to.

**CT**

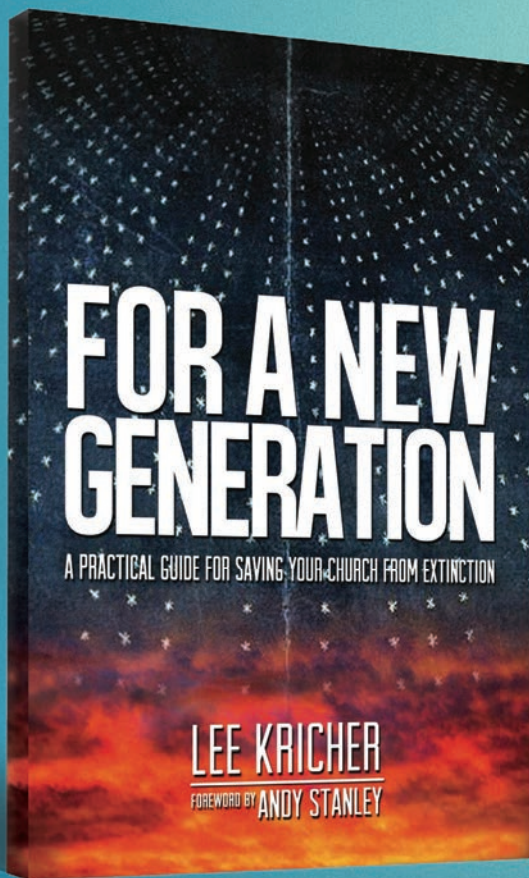


Follow  
**KATELYN  
BEATY**  
on Twitter  
[@KatelynBeaty](https://twitter.com/KatelynBeaty)

**TO CONTRIBUTE** Send checks (U.S. dollars only) to: Christianity Today, Attn: Donor Relations, Box CT0614, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188  
Christianity Today International is a 501(c)(3) organization.

“Lee Kricher is the first person I know who transitioned a struggling and aging church into one that un-churched people love to attend. He’s the expert I point people to with questions about transitioning a church. Now he’s sharing the principles he learned. If you want to ensure that your church is positioned to reach the next generation, *For A New Generation* is a great place to start.”

**ANDY STANLEY**



*Written for both church leaders and members, For A New Generation presents a pathway to allow the reader to become a catalyst in creating a church that will thrive for generations to come. It is based on the assumption that accepting the status quo is the greatest threat to your church’s core mission and, perhaps, to the very survival of your church.*

# REPLY ALL



new perspective on the gospel to America following the Civil War.

**Lowell W. Hoffman**

Allentown, Pennsylvania

I am grateful for the generous and flattering account of my work (particularly *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*). It may seem ungracious to question one detail, but since it regularly causes controversy, it may be important to do so.

Jason Byassee rightly stresses that I highlight Paul's courtroom language as part of his exposition of justification. But I was then surprised to read that I was "sidelining the courtroom," and later, "No lawcourt. No substitution." Even if those negatives refer only to Romans 10:9, the passage just quoted, they give a misleading impression. I have always stressed that Paul taught a penal, substitutionary atonement (e.g., Rom. 8:1-3). But precisely in the courtroom context it makes no sense to see "God's righteousness" as something that the judge imputes to the prisoner in the dock. When the judge finds in favor of a prisoner, thus declaring that they are "in the right," the "righteous status" that the prisoner then has is not the same as the judge's own "righteousness," which consists of hearing the case impartially, being true to the law, dealing properly with evil, and vindicating the helpless.

This fits well with Luke 18:14 (the justified penitent). As for Romans 4:5 and 2 Corinthians 5:21, I may perhaps refer to the full discussions in the books mentioned in the article.

**N. T. Wright**

Professor, University of St. Andrews  
St. Andrews, Scotland

## WRESTLING WITH ANGELS

Well said, Carolyn Arends. As you explore in "Faith Without Words," the "knowledge" of God that transforms our hearts is experiential and relational. This knowledge is mediated through hearing or

## SURPRISED BY WRIGHT

Thank you for the article on the tremendous achievement of Bishop Wright. My praise for this amazing scholar and fervent Christian (and having in mind E. L. Mascall's doggerel, "Hark! The herald angels sing, Bultmann is the latest thing, or they would if he had not demythologized the lot!"): *God's Word lay hid in Bultmannian night, God said: Let Tom Wright be! And there was light!* (with apologies to Alexander Pope).

This Sunday, I shall teach on "The achievement of Bishop Tom Wright: Why Borg will not assimilate us."

**Dale Coleman**

St. George's Episcopal Church  
Belleville, Illinois

Thank you for your incisive portrait of N. T. Wright's challenge for the church to return to a gospel of the kingdom of God.

In response to "Did the Holy Spirit really let the Western church run entirely amok from the day Paul died until the day Wright picked up his pen?" a careful reading of church history would reveal that

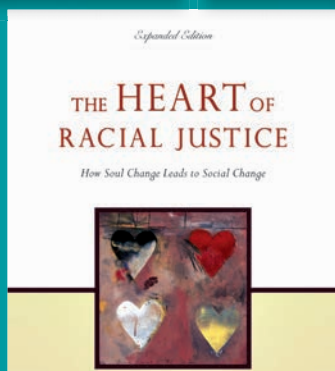
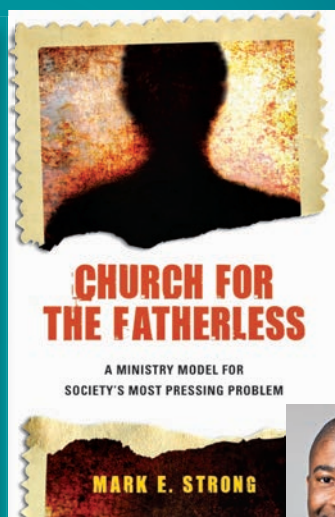
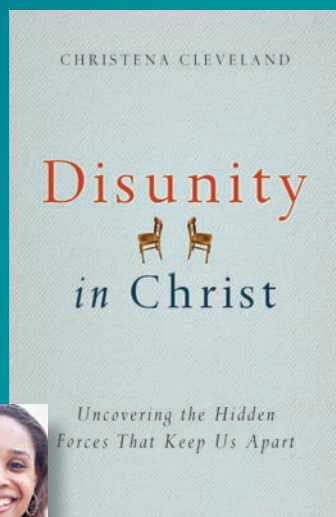
running "amok" is a relatively recent phenomenon. The pessimistic form of premillennialism advanced by C. I. Scofield, D. L. Moody, and others reset the church's focus of caring for souls to a limited preoccupation with saving souls. The "clever British sense" of Wright is surely a corrective to the likes of J. N. Darby, who brought his

**COMMENTS? QUESTIONS?** Our editors would love to hear from you. **E-mail:** [cteditor@christianitytoday.com](mailto:cteditor@christianitytoday.com)

**Fax:** 630.260.9401 **Address Changes, Subscriptions:** [ctfulfill@christianitytoday.com](mailto:ctfulfill@christianitytoday.com)

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

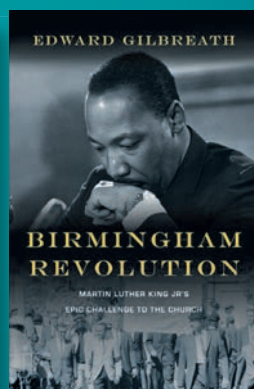
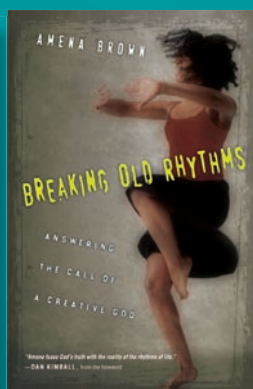
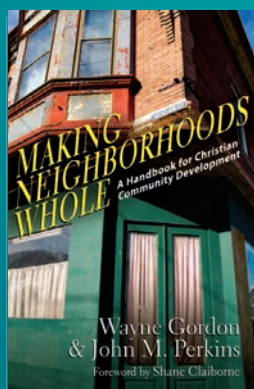
# CHURCH. CULTURE. MISSION.



BRENDA SALTER McNEIL  
& RICK RICHARDSON  
FOREWORD BY JOHN M. PERKINS



Get **30% off**  
any of these titles  
using code **506-398**  
Expires July 31, 2014



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

reading the Scriptures, prayer, our relationships with other believers, and our putting the commandments of Christ into practice. But there is a venerable tradition of verbal prayer and engagement with the Word of God leading to a transforming encounter with the very presence of God. This involves a spiritual perception beyond our capacity to put into words.

**Karen Cubberley**

[CT online comment](#)

## OPEN QUESTION

April's Open Question asked, "If a cure for Down syndrome is found, should parents accept it?" My 11-year-old son, Canaan, has Down syndrome. If there were a cure, my wife and I would do whatever we could to improve his life. But there is not some cure-all pill. Canaan's cure has come from a physical therapist, doctors, teachers, friends, pastors, cousins, siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. They have made the difference in his life and ours. His cure comes through our continuous prayer: "May Canaan exceed all expectations."

I am all for research, but we have found progress through people and the power of God. We all have something we are dealing with; Canaan just can't hide it. We are all looking for a cure. I have found it—it's in knowing Jesus.


**Caleb Rogers**

[CT online comment](#)

Some people with disabilities need additional supports beyond what most people need. Yet none of us is self-sufficient, nor should we strive to be. Paul's description of the church as the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12 assumes a radical dependence on one another—as much as the liver, heart, and lungs depend on one another.

When we who are the body of Christ embrace our dependence on one another, then a person with Down syndrome or any other disability will not seem an aberration or disturbance in the community, but an indispensable part of the body. When a church asks someone with a disability to leave because the church "cannot meet their needs" (as Diane Leclerc put it in "The Broken, Messy—and Holy—Church"), that church is suffering from an autoimmune disorder. It is rejecting a part of its own body, and the church, not the person, needs to be cured.

**Mark Stephenson**

  
**IVP Books**  
Church. Culture. Mission.

800.843.9487  
LEARN MORE AT [IVPRESS.COM/BOOKS](http://IVPRESS.COM/BOOKS)

INTERVARSITY PRESS PRINT AND EBOOKS

Director of Disability Concerns,  
Christian Reformed Church in North America  
Zeeland, Michigan

### A THREAD CALLED GRACE

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** A page of Jonathan Merritt's essay was dropped due to a production error. We apologize. The full version is available at ChristianityToday.com.

If there's one thing I'm certain of in this life, it's that the proof we need Jesus (grace) lies in the fact that we let even ourselves down. We desperately need a thread to hold on to. I love Jonathan Merritt's response, that the deep holes in his heart are not empty but are being filled with grace. Thanks for sharing his story.

**Diane Prokop**  
CT online comment

### THE HURTING GAME

Thank you, CT, for discussing mixed martial arts (MMA) and other combat sports. Too many people baptize their personal tastes without listening to what those who disagree with them have to say. As a Bible teacher and martial artist whom God has led to minister within the MMA community, I appreciate this piece and hope others come to realize that Christians can have differences of opinion without labelling one another disparagingly.

**James-Michael Smith**  
CT online comment

### THE TROUBLE WITH TOUCHY- FEELY FAITH

The review of *Homespun Gospel* reminded me that there is no model in Scripture for drawing a crowd that will return. The Lord alone will draw the lost, not the color of the welcome signs or an abundance of activities. The marketing that's plaguing much of the evangelical church isn't working. We need to tell the truth: Following Jesus will cost you everything, life will still be hard, you'll need to find your identity in Christ alone and die to yourself daily—but living for him is so worth it.

A. W. Tozer said, "Much of our difficulty as seeking Christians stems from our unwillingness to take God as he is and adjust our lives accordingly. We insist upon trying to modify him to bring him nearer to our own image." Jesus has been enough for 2,000 years.

**Howard Green**  
CT online comment  
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



# MISSION LEADERS CONFERENCE

## ATLANTA 2014

MISSION  
NEXUS®

The movement of people brings with it new cultures, ideas, beliefs—and their hearts are more **OPEN** to the gospel. It is an opportunity for the church if we will **OPEN** our eyes.

### IMMIGRATION & MIGRATION

**Leith Anderson** • President, National Association of Evangelicals

### GLOBALIZATION

**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

### Plus Learning & Networking for:

Globally Engaged Churches  
Diaspora/Ethnic Ministries  
Executive Leadership

Short-Term Mission  
Missiology Today  
Mission Finance & Administration

Thanks to our partners



Join us September 25–27, 2014  
MissionLeadersConference.com

# Welcome CERTIFICATE

Higher-Earnings • Supports Ministries

# 5.00 % APY\*

- 12 months
- \$500 minimum
- \$5,000 maximum per member



Your money helps provide low-rate loans to ministries, churches, and their members. Best of all, you're sowing seed money towards building God's Kingdom!



Open a Welcome Certificate today!

800.347.CCCU (2228), ext. 4145  
myCCCUCOM/CT



Must be opened within 30 days of joining the Credit Union. At maturity, the certificate will renew into a 12-month term share certificate at the prevailing rate. A penalty will be imposed on early withdrawals from certificates.

\*APY= Annual Percentage Yield. \$500 minimum. Annual Percentage Yield (APYs) assumes that dividends remain in the account until maturity. A withdrawal will reduce earnings. No additional deposits can be made during the term of the Share Certificate. Rates, terms and conditions are solely within the discretion of the Board of Directors. We may limit the amount you may invest in one or more accounts to a total of \$1,000,000. APYs are accurate as of 04/11/14 and are subject to change without notice.

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.

Scan QR code to learn more about Certificates!



Follow us



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

## NET GAIN

Responses from the Web.



"It's good art that clearly reads between the lines and adds imagination to the story. And that is okay. I walked away asking deeper questions about the Noah story than I ever had before."

Caroline McCain, CT online comment.

CT Movies: "Noah," by Alissa Wilkinson.

"My wife, our two daughters, and I are so very grateful for your willingness to be authentic and transparent. Your family's journey helps us feel not so alone."

Nick Watts, CT online comment.

"Kay Warren: A Year of Grieving Dangerously," interview by Timothy C. Morgan.

"A pastor proclaims God's Word, knowing he can fall into the very things he is warning others about. It does not make it hypocritical, but shows the reality of someone who can get distracted."

Patrick Walsh, CT online comment.

"Popular Pastor Resigns after 'Moral Failure,' But Followers Still Want His Sermons," by Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra.

"Finally, a humble rant that is worth reading."

Michael Bootsma, CT online comment.

Where We Stand: "An Open Apology to the Local Church," by Katelyn Beaty.

"I'm fairly sure this will be the most inspiring story you will read all week."

Chris Horst @chrishorst

"Like a Thief in the Night," by Shon Hopwood.

"What a tragic story. What a healing Savior."

Lauri Snipes, Facebook.

The Exchange: "Saved from Hate: An Interview with Mark Phelps, Son of Westboro Founder Fred Phelps Sr.," by Ed Stetzer.

"Everyone, read this. Spoke to me big time tonight. We don't have to hide when we have grace."

Jefferson Bethke @JeffersonBethke

"A Thread Called Grace," by Jonathan Merritt.



# TRAINING CHAMPIONS

to INFLUENCE CULTURE

“At some point in your life, you have to make a choice about your faith. It was at *Liberty University* that I began to make my faith my own. Liberty shaped me into who I am today and taught me how to use music to serve others — and ultimately God.”

**Toby Mac '88**  
*Christian recording artist*

**LIBERTY**  
UNIVERSITY.  
*Training Champions for Christ since 1971*

[www.Liberty.edu/CHAMPIONS](http://www.Liberty.edu/CHAMPIONS)  
(855) 466-9220



DOWNLOAD THE APP!

**Liberty University**, the world's largest Christian university, offers more than 300 residential and online programs from the associate to the doctoral level and is settled on a 7,000-acre campus in Virginia.

# 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](http://WWW.LEEUNIVERSITY.EDU)

CLEVELAND, TN

LEE  UNIVERSITY

A CHRIST-CENTERED LIBERAL ARTS CAMPUS

## NEWS



WITNESS



## GOD'S INSTRUMENTS

**NEPAL:** Christians among the Loring Rai, a Tibetan people group, are reviving leaf blowing music. The traditional means of communicating romantic interest is now at the heart of worship songs. Evangelistically minded music workshops are also reviving traditional Tibetan music, attempting to undo the effects of churches requiring only the Nepali language. But Nepalese are hearing the gospel through more modern means, too: Last year, state-run Radio Nepal aired Christian programs for the first time.

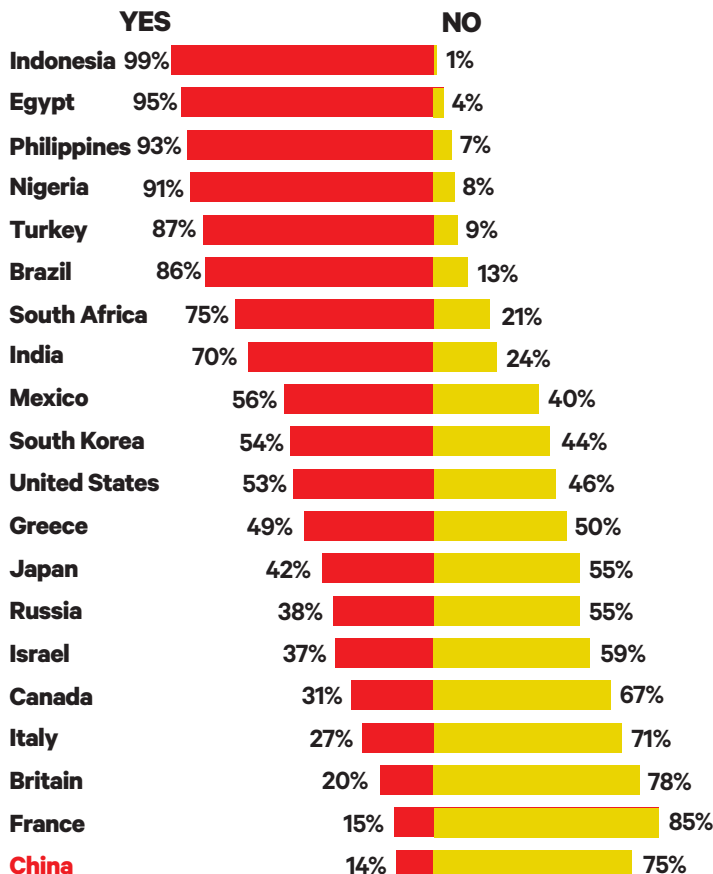




## WHY CHINA'S MORAL MINORITY IS GOOD NEWS

When the Pew Research Center asked people worldwide whether it is necessary to believe in God in order to be a moral person, China ranked the lowest of 40 nations: only 14 percent agreed. Stark, but not surprising at first glance, given 65 years of atheist Communist Party rule. But Beijing-based, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Ian Johnson noted that the survey question “used a term for ‘God’ [*shangdi*] that is applicable in modern China almost only to Protestant Christianity.” In other words, the number of Chinese in agreement was “actually astonishingly high”—another sign that China, currently estimated to have 60 to 100 million Christians (4 to 7 percent of its population) may soon become the country with the largest number of Christians.

Is belief in God necessary to be moral?



SELECTION OF COUNTRIES FROM PEW'S GLOBAL ATTITUDES SURVEY. EXCLUDES "DON'T KNOW."

## New York can ban churches in schools—but won't

Days after the Second Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2 to 1 that the New York City School Board can ban churches from worshipping in public schools, Mayor Bill de Blasio said he would change the city's policy. "I believe a faith-based organization has a right like anyone else . . . to use that space," he told *The Wall Street Journal*. The court weighed whether the city could bar churches from renting school space on Sundays under the First Amendment's free exercise clause, not whether it had to do so under the establishment

clause. But it warned that worship services give the "appearance of endorsement" and expose the school board to "substantial risk of liability." About 30 churches still meet in the schools, down from about 100 in previous years.

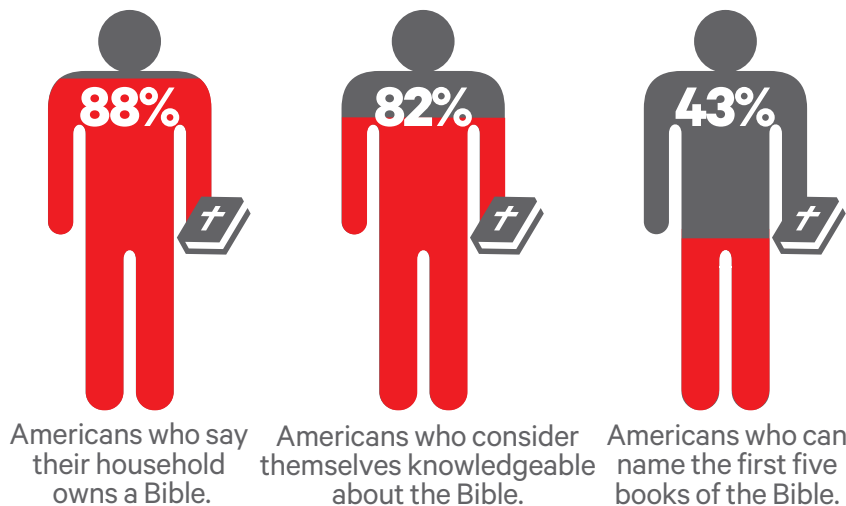
## World Relief merges with German nonprofit

World Relief, the relief and development arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, took its first step into Europe with a merger with Germany-based PartnerAid. The 16-year-old PartnerAid, with a budget of \$3 million compared with World Relief's

\$60 million, will continue to function independently but will adopt the name World Relief Germany. While World Relief works primarily through local churches, PartnerAid works in high-risk countries like Somalia where the local church is less visible. The groups will share contacts and strategies—especially on immigration and refugees—but will keep finances separate.

## Teen Mania faces foreclosure

Founder Ron Luce announced his decision to abandon Teen Mania's 472-acre Texas headquarters and move to Dallas to focus on a "broader global reach"—and,



STATE OF THE BIBLE 2014, AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY / BARNABAS GROUP

weeks later, fired communications director Cindy Mallette when she prodded him to acknowledge the campus had been foreclosed on. The ministry has raked in \$300 million since 2001, but ended fiscal year 2011 \$4.1 million in the red—making it one of America's most insolvent charities, according to Charity Navigator. The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability revoked the ministry's membership in March for "failure to provide complete renewal information." It has best been known for its Acquire the Fire rallies and short-term missions for teens.

### **QATAR** **Adoptive parents sentenced for child's death**

An American couple living in Qatar was convicted of the death of their adopted daughter and sentenced to three years in prison. Officials accused Matthew and Grace Huang of starving Gloria, who died suddenly last January, in order to harvest her organs. Police had suggested they could not have had a legitimate reason to adopt children who were not "good-looking" and who did not share their "hereditary traits." The Christian couple said their Ghanaian daughter had a history of malnutrition that led to an eating disorder. The Huangs, who still face 16 months of their three-year sentence, also face deportation. They will appeal the ruling.

### **Tenured Christian professors can seek court protection**

Tenure may be stronger in Christian higher education than many imagine.

Courts can decide contract disputes at religious institutions without violating the First Amendment, the Kentucky Supreme Court ruled in April. The court did throw out a racial discrimination claim by Lexington Theological Seminary professor Jimmy Kirby, given that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2012 that antidiscrimination laws don't apply to religious groups choosing ministers and leaders. But the Kentucky court let Kirby proceed with his lawsuit claiming the school breached his contract by dismissing him—despite his tenure—in 2009 when its endowment tanked. "Enforcement of a promise, willingly made and supported by consideration, in no way constitutes a state-imposed limit upon a church's free exercise rights," the court said, quoting an earlier case. Likewise, Kirby's colleague Laurence Kant can proceed with a similar lawsuit because his position as a teacher of Jewish religious history excluded him from being a minister (and thus was not covered under the "ministerial exception" doctrine), the court said.

### **Anti-Calvinist college president (kind of) ousted**

After two years of controversy, Joe Aguillard will step down from the presidency at Louisiana College and return to the classroom. Aguillard gained attention when critics accused him of attempting to purge the school of Calvinist professors. Focus later shifted to claims that he had misled the Baptist school's board and misappropriated funds. The conflict culminated in a lawsuit by a vice president who claimed he had been wrongfully let go after reporting the president's misconduct. Argile Smith, current dean of chapel, begins as interim president June 1 as Aguillard begins a one-year paid sabbatical.

### **Liberty University vp loses duties over Benny Hinn flap**

Ron Godwin, Liberty University's provost and vice president for academic affairs, stirred up controversy after he appeared in a video to endorse a partnership between Liberty and Texas televangelist Benny Hinn. Administrators disavowed any partnership and limited Godwin to his academic role, relieving him of his duties involving outside alliances and programs. "The incident with Benny Hinn Ministries convinced me how incompatible the two roles are," said Liberty president Jerry Falwell Jr., who credits Godwin with helping to create the aggressive enrollment growth plan that has made Liberty the world's largest Christian university. "I also realized it was not humanly possible for any one person to perform all the tasks necessary to do both jobs well."

### **HUNGARY, ALBANIA** **Evangelicals gain in Eastern Europe**

The European Court of Human Rights struck down Hungary's 2013 Church Act that deregistered most churches and restricted most of the delisted ones from

## **"We do this not because it is what Jesus would do, but because it is what he did."**



Dale Brantner, president of **CURE International**, explaining why the Christian hospital network "remains committed to loving and serving" in Afghanistan even after a security guard killed three Americans at its Kabul hospital.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICALS (2014) / OPENBIBLE INFO (2010)

Two Canadian provinces voted in April to not allow graduates from Canada's first Christian law school to join their bars. Trinity Western University (TWU), Canada's largest Christian university, will matriculate its first class of law students in 2016. It has a lifestyle policy that bans sexual intimacy outside of male-female marriage. The law society in Ontario, where Canada's capital sits, said TWU graduates would not be allowed to practice in the province. Nova Scotia's society issued a similar ban. But the society in TWU's home province of British Columbia approved the school by a wide margin. (Five other provinces and territories have done likewise.) Meanwhile, a national agreement conditionally allows lawyers licensed in a home province to practice for up to 100 days per year in another province.



# Confucian Christians

Can fast-growing worldviews collaborate?



A 1900 rendering of Confucius and Jesus.

**T**he hometown of ancient philosopher Confucius was a surprising place to build a multimillion-dollar megachurch. Yet local leaders hoped Qufu's first official church would integrate Christianity into Chinese culture.

Instead, Confucian scholars condemned the 136-foot-tall project, planned two miles from the long-standing Confucius Temple. They saw it as a concrete symbol of a foreign faith's threatening rise.

The church project was halted in 2011. But as Christianity and Confucianism continue as two of China's fastest-growing belief systems, thinkers on both sides continue to debate their proper relationship.

In March, ChinaSource devoted its academic journal to the topic. Recent symposiums held at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies convened Confucian and Christian scholars for renewed dialogue.

As a result, the two sides are experiencing a "warming of relationship," said David Ro, director of Gordon-Conwell's Center for World Missions and the Lausanne Movement's deputy director for East Asia.

"Only recently are some Christian thinkers in China making a deliberate effort [at] better integration," said Fenggang Yang, director of Purdue University's Center on Religion and Chinese Society.

The timing is ripe, given that Confucian leaders increasingly want their beliefs to define China, and the government seems to want the same, said G. Wright Doyle, director of the Global China Center. Some want Confucianism revived as an official religion, alongside Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism.

But most Chinese see Confucianism as

only a "moral system," said Yang. Meanwhile, he argues, churches have sought not to rival or replace Confucianism but to revitalize and transform it, emphasizing parallels with Christianity in order to evangelize in a Confucian context.

According to Doyle, compatible teachings include Confucius' "negative statement" of the Golden Rule: "Whatever you don't want others to do to you, don't do to them." Doctrines on benevolence, righteousness, honoring parents, and hard work also align with Christianity, he said.

However, Doyle said, "fundamental incompatibilities" remain. Confucianism treats mankind as inherently good and focuses on the material world. When Christians mesh the two, they risk reflecting a "humanistic orientation" and teaching moralism over faith, he said.

For now, Christians can point to

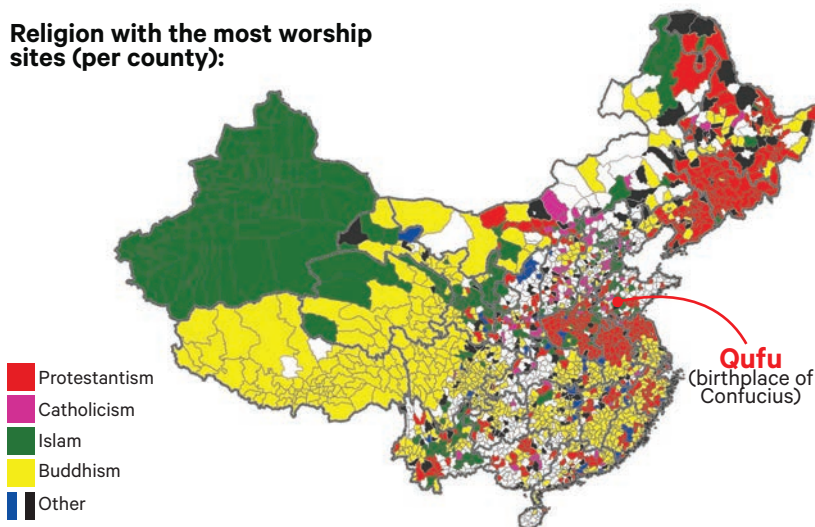
Confucian references to heaven in the same way that Paul used an altar to an unknown god to spread the gospel in Athens, Yang said. However, he believes Confucianism may soon serve as the basis for uniquely Chinese Christian theologies.

"The Christian message is contextualized in cultures, and Chinese culture may provide something that's distinctive from existing theologies based on European or ancient Greek culture," said Yang. With Confucianism "serving as the cultural source for theological thinking," it might "enrich our understanding of the Christian message."

Many Chinese Christians are not conscious of the debate, but "battles fought in the intellectual realm" affect many, Ro said. "The average person won't think, *Am I Confucian or Christian?* He's probably thinking, *I'm both, or a shade of either.*"

Katherine Burgess

Religion with the most worship sites (per county):





## Politics

# Taking Exception

Pro-life groups are winning across the country. Some say it's because they've surrendered too much.



A Georgia pro-life group, which marched through Atlanta in January, got booted from a national coalition for not supporting exceptions.

**I**n the past three years, states passed 205 restrictions on abortion—more than what passed in the entire previous decade. But pro-life groups are split over whether some laws, especially new ones focused on fetal pain, cede too much ground.

The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) jettisoned its 43-year Georgia affiliate after Georgia Right to Life (GRTL) encouraged federal legislators to vote against the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act. The national bill, which would ban abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, was heavily backed by NRLC and passed the U.S. House 228–196 last June. It currently sits before the U.S. Senate.

GRTL opposed the bill because it includes exceptions allowing abortion in the cases of rape, incest, or danger to the mother's health. Cleveland Right to Life supported GRTL's policy, saying the group's only fault

was being "too pro-life." (NRLC severed ties with the Cleveland chapter last year over its opposition to a NRLC-endorsed, pro-life senator who supported same-sex marriage.)

The national bill is similar to laws passed in about a dozen states so far. Several of them face legal challenges. Federal courts have blocked fetal pain laws in Georgia and Idaho, and in January the U.S. Supreme Court decided not to reconsider a ruling that struck down Arizona's version.

But the list of bans is growing: On July 1, Mississippi will be the latest state to ban most abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. In early May, another fetal pain bill bounced around South Carolina's Senate, while West Virginia legislators attempted to override a governor's veto.

The bills are an attempt to humanize the abortion debate, said Mary Spaulding

Balch, NRLC's director of state legislation. "We now have compelling evidence that the unborn child can feel pain," she said. "It's probably just one relevant factor, but we do have to start somewhere. Pain is one thing people can relate to."

Georgia's 2012 fetal pain law, backed by GRTL, is now in litigation. Georgia is one of two states with no exceptions in legal codes, and GRTL says no state officers support rape or incest exceptions. Since 2000, the only exception GRTL has supported is for the life of the mother. Candidates and legislation that make exceptions for rape and incest risk the group's opposition.

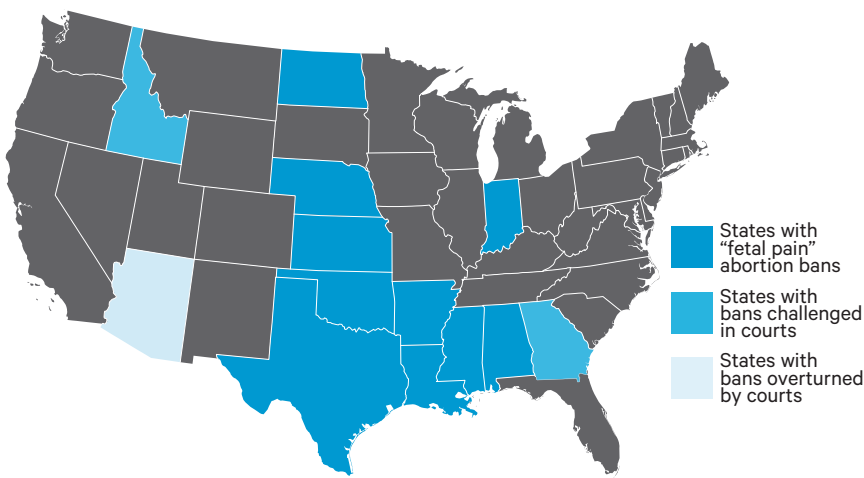
GRTL coexecutive director Genevieve Wilson said her organization's goal is not to pass as much pro-life legislation as possible, but to support the best legislation.

"Politicians are like water. They go to the lowest point," Wilson said. "Our responsibility is to set the standard, regardless of whether it's successful."

The debate over exceptions has gained traction in recent years, prompted by frustration that the Supreme Court's 1973 decision on *Roe v. Wade* still stands, said Dan McConchie, vice president of government affairs for Americans United for Life.

Strategy debates can cause headaches, particularly for legislators with short working periods who don't have time to sift through competing recommendations, he said. However, the debate over best tactics can be fruitful.

"A division in strategy is a healthy aspect of a vibrant movement," McConchie said. "It reflects the fact that there are a lot of people trying to figure out how we solve the problems that exist." **Ruth Moon**



NATIONAL RIGHT TO LIFE COMMITTEE / GUTTMACHER INSTITUTE

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFF BREED LOVE / GAPUNDIT.COM

# Are Pastors' Homes That Different?

Church and state rally to defend \$700 million tax break.

**W**hen Ric Stanghelle finished putting his third son through college, he thought he'd put the extra money toward retirement. Now the Wisconsin pastor might spend it on taxes.

The Obama administration and a broad spectrum of religious groups are urging the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals to reconsider a federal judge's 2013 ruling that pastors' tax-exempt housing allowances violate the First Amendment.

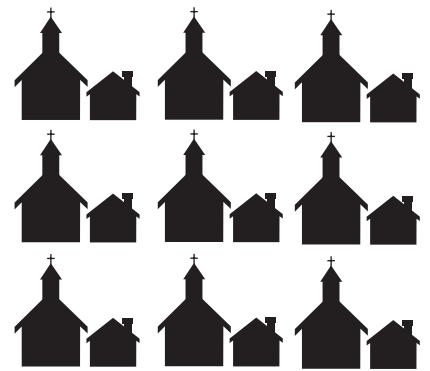
A congressional report says the exemption is worth about \$700 million a year. Stanghelle, who receives a \$23,400 housing allowance, would pay more than \$5,000 each year if the Freedom from Religion Foundation wins its case.

The exemption focuses on "housing provided for the employer's convenience." Assistant attorney general Kathryn Keneally told the Seventh Circuit that pastors are akin to "seamen living aboard ships, workers living in 'camps,' cannery workers, and hospital employees."

A pastor's house is an "extension of the church" and used as "an office, a study, a place of counseling, a place of small meetings, such as boards or committees, and a place in which to entertain and lodge church visitors and guests," according to her brief.

Church-owned parsonages (unchallenged in this case) were more common when the exemption was created more than 60 years ago. But today, only 11 percent of pastors live in such housing, while 87 percent receive a housing allowance, according to the *2014-2015 Compensation Handbook for Church Staff*. Meanwhile, studies suggest that most American workers now take work home with them, thanks to smartphones and tablets. Is clergy home life still so different that it warrants its own exemption?

"I'd characterize it as an anachronistic benefit . . . that once was somewhat narrowly focused," said tax attorney Case Hoogendoorn, who often represents churches and nonprofits. "But it has become an indefensible perk for everyone



Only **1 in 10** pastors still use a parsonage.



who is ordained."

Becket Fund for Religious Liberty attorney Luke Goodrich, who filed an amicus brief on behalf of Southern Baptist, Eastern Orthodox, Muslim, and Hare Krishna bodies, disagrees. Many churches still require the pastor to care for church property, and the government can't parse who warrants the exemption. "It's perfectly reasonable for Congress to say that ministers face a lot of burdens on their housing that other employees don't."

**Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra**



## Under Discussion

Compiled by Ruth Moon



### Q: Should Christians stop studying the teachings of fallen pastors?

After popular Florida pastor Bob Coy confessed to a 'moral failing' and resigned, his Fort Lauderdale megachurch took his sermons offline. It said it was preventing malicious use. But public demand for the sermons stayed strong.

YES

NO

"When leaders step away from ministry because of moral failure, their written and recorded teachings should be suspended for a season. Once restored—changed and humbled—to ministry, their teachings can become available again, telling the story of God's goodness and restoration."

**Kurt Fredrickson**,  
associate dean, Fuller  
Theological Seminary

"Potentially. The gray area is when the nature of the scandal is independent of the content. Then it is the reader's job to use discernment. Each time I read a book, I am choosing a teacher, and certainly their character, integrity, and relationships factor into what I want to learn."

**Michael G. Maudlin**, senior  
vice president, HarperOne

"King David committed adultery and murder, but the Psalms haven't been deleted from the Old Testament. David suffered the consequences of his sin, but we keep the truths of his poetry. Churches with failed pastors could find ways of retaining teachings while denouncing transgressions."

**Leith Anderson**,  
president, National  
Association of Evangelicals

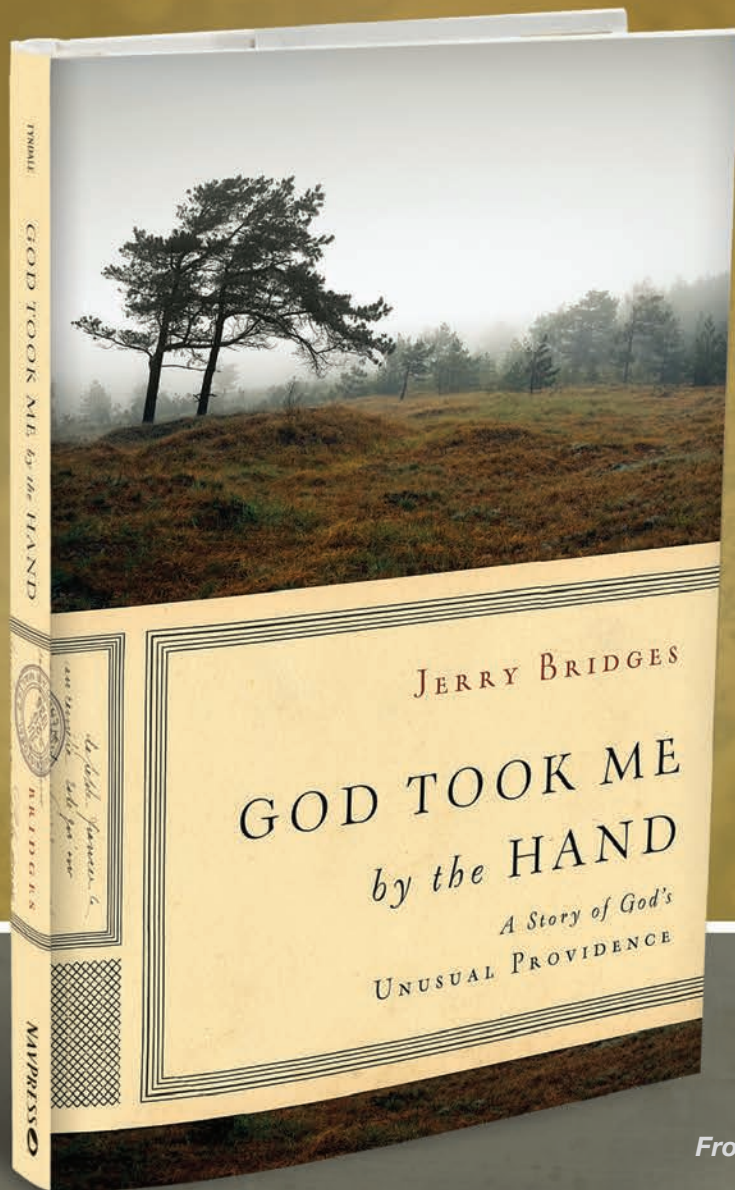
"If a text is good, it has value in and of itself as it refers to a higher unchanging truth. So let people decide for themselves how to value it. The texts should not be used in a malicious way, but they could be used as a testimony against the author."

**Patrick Nullens**,  
professor, Evangelical  
Theological Faculty, Leuven

"We don't stop reading Luther despite his terrible statements regarding the Jews. Nor do we stop reading Calvin because he was responsible for the execution of Servetus. God's Word is true, independent of the vessel that proclaims it. Failure does not make teaching invalid."

**George O. Wood**,  
general superintendent,  
Assemblies of God

MORE THAN A MEMOIR,  
THIS IS A LESSON IN RECOGNIZING  
GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN ONE LIFE.



*"I have written my life story,  
not because it is particularly  
important, but because it  
so clearly and consistently  
illustrates the unusual  
providence of God in the life  
of a very uncompromising  
young boy."*

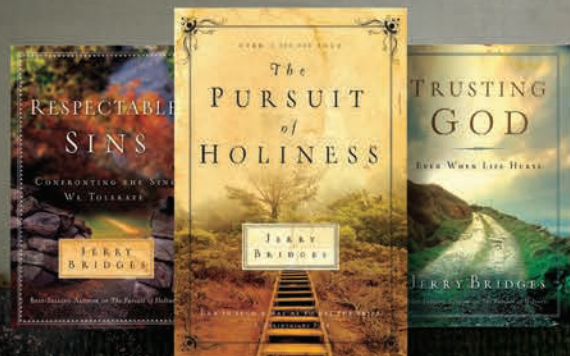
—JERRY BRIDGES

*From the bestselling author of . . .*

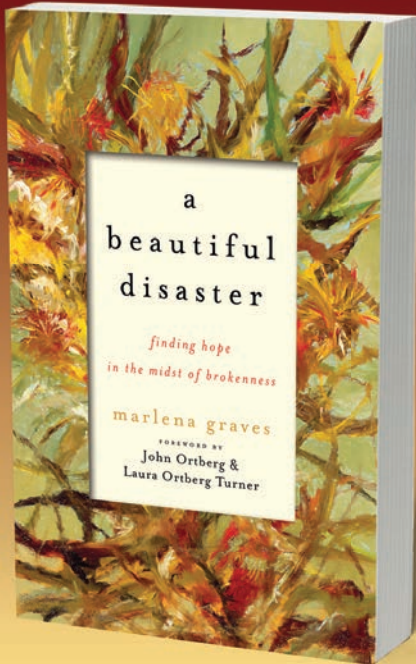
**NAVPRESS**

A NavPress resource published in alliance  
with Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

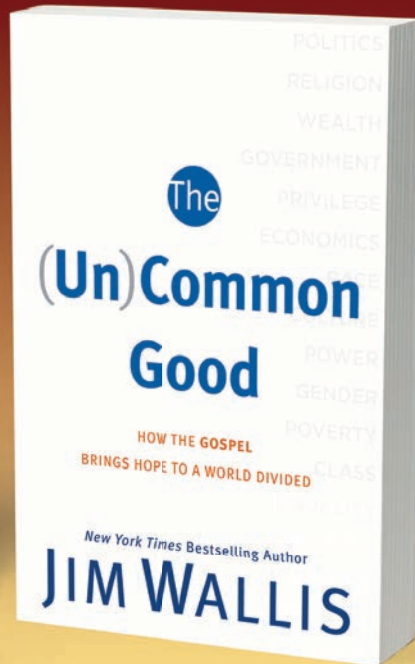
NAVPRESS and the NAVPRESS logo are registered trademarks  
of NavPress, The Navigators. TYNDALE is a registered  
trademark of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.



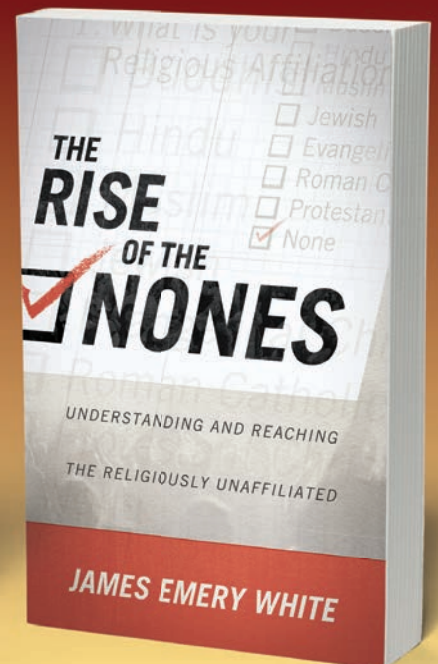
# Thoughtful. Faithful. Exceptional.



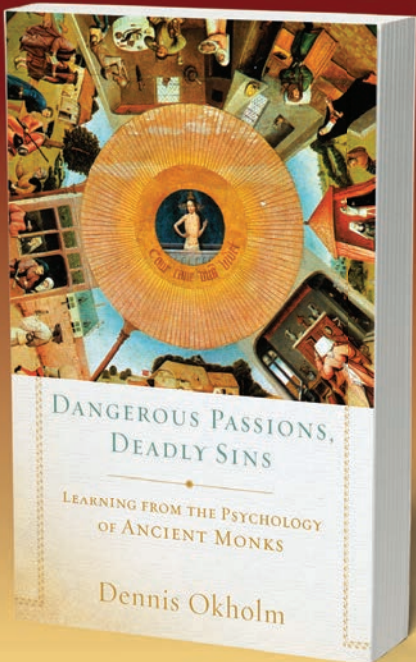
978-1-58743-341-2 • 224 pp. • \$15.99p  
How God uses suffering to form us into Christ's image



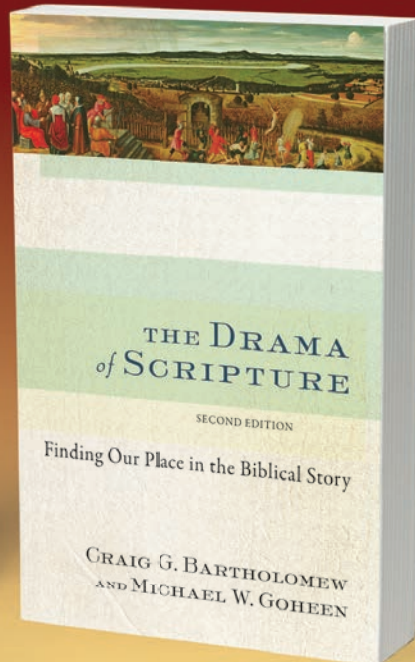
978-1-58743-362-7 • 320 pp. • \$15.99p  
"[A] challenging call to reclaim concern for the common good."—**Miroslav Volf**



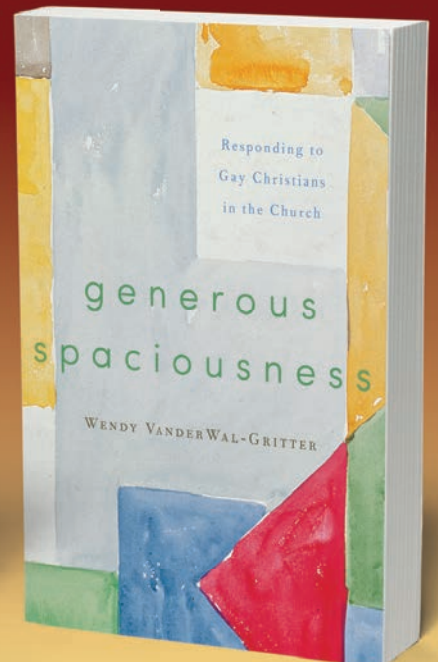
978-0-8010-1623-3 • 224 pp. • \$15.99p  
"In an era of increasing religious apathy, White has written a book that is helpful and timely."—**Ed Stetzer**



978-1-58743-353-5 • 224 pp. • \$16.99p  
Ancient monastic wisdom for human flourishing



978-0-8010-4956-9 • 272 pp. • \$22.99p  
"I am delighted to see solid scholarship made accessible in this splendid fashion."  
—**N. T. Wright**

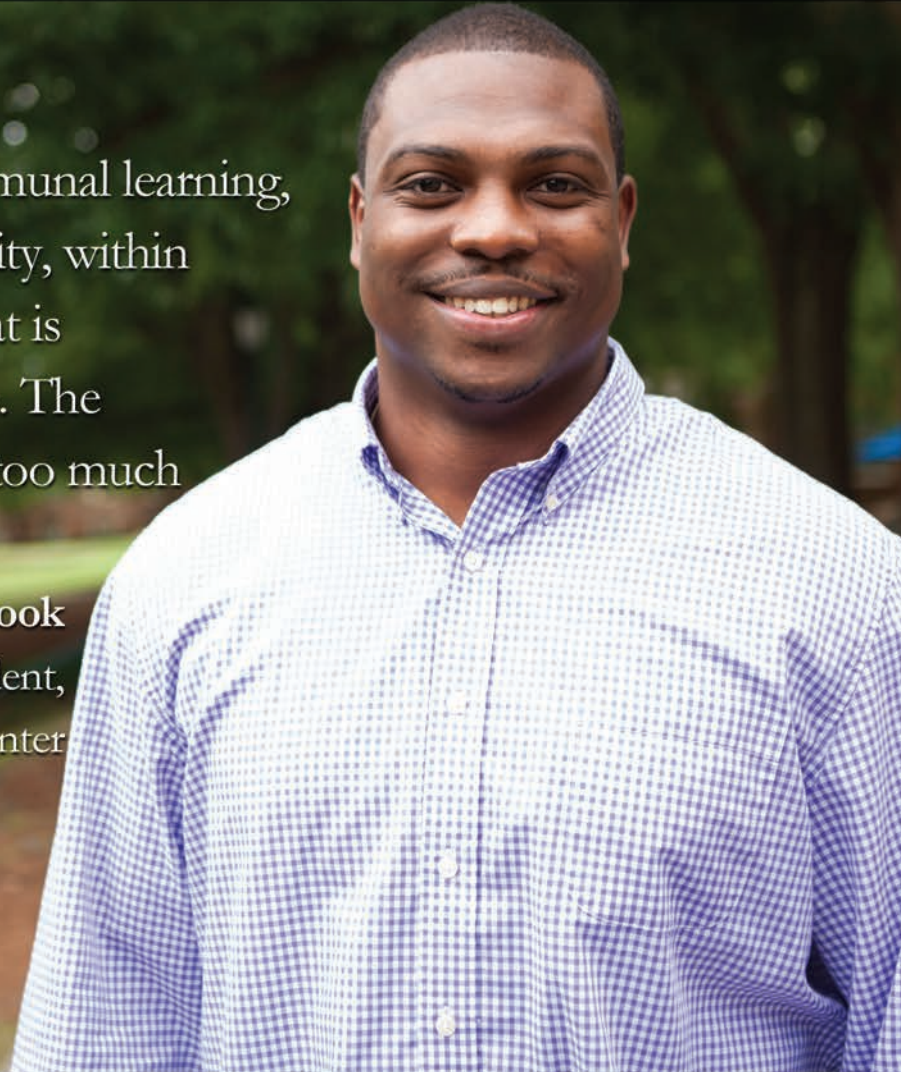


978-1-58743-355-9 • 288 pp. • \$16.99p  
A new paradigm for how the church engages gay and lesbian Christians

# Beeson Divinity School

“Beeson is a place of communal learning, encouragement and diversity, within doctrinal commonality, that is unparalleled anywhere else. The thrill of the challenge was too much to pass up!”

**Jason Cook**  
Student, SGA President,  
and Church Planter



Above all else, we want our students to be men  
and women of God.



At Beeson, we are committed to *personal* theological education. We keep our faculty/student ratio low (1:7). Beeson students learn not just from their professors' lectures, but from their lives.

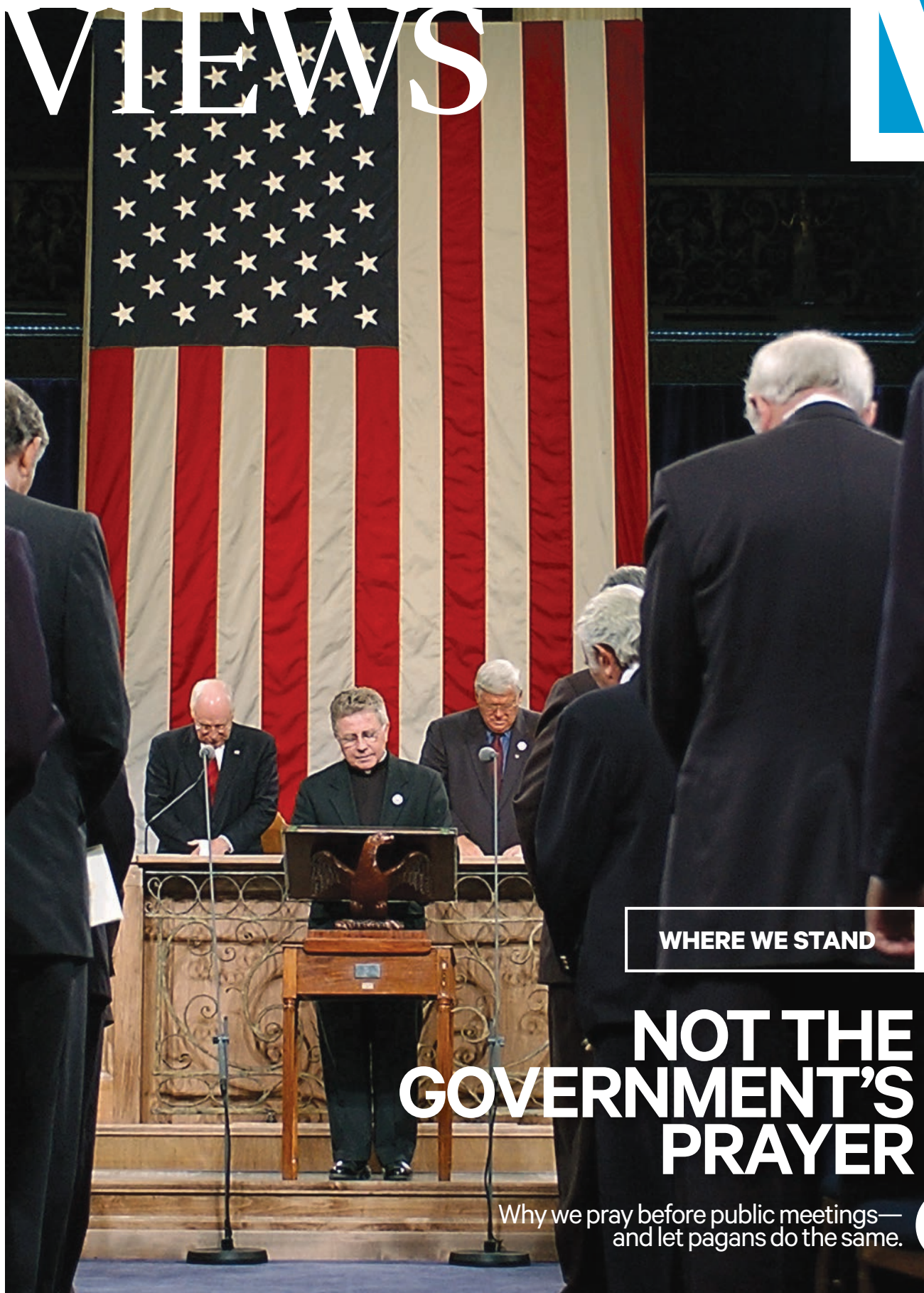


**BEESON**  
DIVINITY SCHOOL  
SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

800 Lakeshore Drive ✝ Birmingham, AL 35229  
[www.beesondivinity.com](http://www.beesondivinity.com)

Samford University is an Equal Opportunity Educational Institution/Employer.

# VIEWS



WHERE WE STAND

## NOT THE GOVERNMENT'S PRAYER

Why we pray before public meetings—  
and let pagans do the same.





## From a Christian perspective, of course, not all prayers are efficacious. But we'd rather the pagans pray as pagans than eliminate prayer altogether.

**"GREAT GODDESS ATHENA**, great god Apollo, we ask that you impart wisdom in these proceedings today," Jennifer Zarpentine, a Wiccan priestess, prayed at the town board meeting of Greece, New York, in April 2008. "Help the board to make the right, informed decisions that will benefit the greater good of this community. This we ask of you." As board members continued to bow their heads in prayer, several other meeting attendees responded with the pagan version of *amen*, "So mote it be."

Around that time, two Greece residents sued the town over such prayers. It wasn't the pagan one that set them off, though. It was the other ones—almost all given by Christian pastors. In May, the Supreme Court voted 5 to 4 in favor of the town.

Zarpentine's prayer illuminates the issues: Did the town of Greece officially beseech Athena and Apollo for wisdom? Was the local government endorsing paganism? Did the use of *we* imply the approval and participation of everyone in attendance? Should Christians be troubled by prayers to false gods? Should they protest? If they did so, would they have trouble presenting their other business to the board?

Now apply those questions to explicit Christian prayers.

Like the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, we wish Greece had been a bit better at indicating it wasn't, as a government, coercing anyone to worship Apollo (or Jesus). Unlike the Second Circuit, we think they stayed well within the constitutional rules.

The Supreme Court has generally approved invocations before government meetings. In 1983, the Court noted that we've had government prayer since the First Continental Congress, and that Congress authorized paid chaplains three days before it finalized the wording of the First Amendment. Such prayers are fine, so long as they are not "exploited to proselytize or advance any one, or to disparage any other, faith or belief." But it's not the government's job to "parse the content of a particular prayer," the Court said.

It even refused to bar a chaplain's prayer that declared, "Father in heaven, the suffering and death of your Son brought life to the whole world moving our hearts to praise your glory."

While some courts have tried to eliminate such specific Christian references, claiming that only "nonsectarian" prayers are welcome, the Second Circuit Court

a Christian perspective, of course, not all prayers are efficacious. But we'd rather the pagans pray as pagans than eliminate prayer altogether.

There is no constitutional or biblical mandate for such invocations, but they are a form of neighbor love. "To invoke divine guidance on a public body entrusted with making the law . . . is simply a tolerable acknowledgment of beliefs widely held among the people of this country," the Supreme Court said in 1983. But it's also a reminder that the government is neither omnipotent nor omniscient.

For Christians, such invocations let us bear witness to our own submission, to our gratefulness for God's provision on a community level, and to our need for his wisdom and guidance. We needn't "proselytize or disparage" in these prayers, just as we don't do so in our prayers before meals, or with our families before bed. And we need not protest pagan

prayers in our city council meetings any more than we protest them at our pagan neighbor's apartment. Instead, we should see their prayers as a triumph of religious freedom (and as reminders to compassionately share the gospel with them).

Christians see prayer not as a time when we try to force God's will or change his mind, but as a time to prepare and to cooperate with him in his will. When we pray before public events, we likewise do not see it as forcing God's will upon our neighbors or as a means of changing their minds, but as a time to prepare to cooperate with them in God's will for the common good.

**CT**

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



ISTOCK

of Appeals rightly disagreed. "Under the First Amendment, the government may not establish a vague theism as a state religion any more than it may establish a specific creed," it said.

"Because we've always done it" isn't a great reason to endorse invocations, but it's a sufficient one to tolerate them, constitutionally speaking. And there are other, "secular" reasons for these prayers. Credible social psychology studies reveal that introducing religious words and ideas may make us nicer to each other. In one notable experiment, people given religious sentences to unscramble were more generous to a stranger than folks given neutral sentences. Even that pagan prayer might help council members make better decisions for everyone concerned. From

Wesley Hill teaches New Testament at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, and is writing a book about friendship.



# Guide to a Barely Imagined Kingdom

Why 17th-century poet George Herbert is making a comeback.

I blame George Herbert for me becoming a Christian,” Miranda Threlfall-Holmes, an Anglican priest, wrote recently for *The Guardian*. Reading Herbert left Threlfall-Holmes

with the sense that I was standing on a cliff, staring out to sea, hearing marvelous tales of lands beyond the horizon and wondering if they were, after all, just fairy tales or whether the intensity with which the tales were told was evidence that the teller had indeed seen a barely imagined kingdom.

I know exactly what she means. I can’t claim such a dramatic encounter, but I do blame the great 17th-century English priest and poet for deepening my journey in Christ and leading me into a liturgical church.

And so do other believers, among whom it seems there is a small renaissance of all things Herbert. Scholar John Drury just published his biography of Herbert in the United States. Theologian and blogger Benjamin Myers is working on a small book of letters to the poet, entitled *Dear Mr. Herbert*. Each one will riff on one of the poems and describe how it has formed Myers spiritually. (A wonderful discipline: Compose letters to your favorite figures from Christian history, telling them how their witness has helped to fortify your faith.) And various church leaders, like Threlfall-Holmes, have been seeking to make Herbert accessible to a wide range of ordinary believers.

Why all this interest in Herbert, and why now? I believe it’s because Herbert writes with unblinking candor about both the joy of faith and the ongoing pain of our remaining weakness. We need his words

today, to remind us that the Christian life is one that invites hope, but makes room for struggle as well.

Born into an aristocratic family in 1593, and by all appearances destined for a successful political career, Herbert embraced a vocation as a “country parson.” His stint as a pastor was marked by simplicity and virtual anonymity: he wouldn’t become famous as a poet until after his death in 1633.

In the course of my reading of Herbert recently, I was struck by how much the Englishman has to teach us about the range of Christian emotions—repentance, yes, but more besides. As he memorably puts it in *Bittersweet*,

I will complain, yet praise;  
I will bewail, approve;  
And all my sour-sweet days  
I will lament, and love.

Though we might be tempted to keep poetry and theology separate, Herbert blended his vocations in a powerful way that influenced later poets such as Gerard Manley Hopkins and W.H. Auden. Lines like “Love is that liquor sweet and most divine, / Which my God feels as blood; but I, as wine”

show Herbert as a first-rate biblical interpreter. He links the love that prompted God to give up his Son for us, the blood that was the cost of God’s self-giving, and Communion, the place where we “feel”—tangibly, with our taste buds—that God’s atoning love was meant for us, today.

And yet the reason Herbert’s *Complete English Works* still finds readers like me is because he fuses such rich truths with a heartfelt, occasionally wince-inducing honesty about how those truths are so hard to grasp. Doubt and grief never quite dissipate from his verse. They don’t overshadow his proclamation of Christ. But they linger, like a chill that hasn’t been driven out of the room, despite the fire blazing in the hearth.

In one poem, Herbert pictures Christ making a place for his “sighs,” or what the apostle Paul called our “groan” (Rom. 8:23). “Look,” says Christ to Herbert, gesturing to the wound in his side, “you may put it”—whatever sighs or groans you intend to convey to God—“very near my heart.” Notice the impeccable theology: Christ intercedes for us before God the Father. But notice, too, how the theology isn’t detached from the poet’s own messy experience. “Away despair,” the poem begins, drawing on Herbert’s wavering belief. “Winds and waves” assault the boat of his faith, and he needs to feel that Christ is interceding for him in the midst of that storm.

Isn’t that precisely the shape of faith? We know that God has come to our rescue. Yet, in this time between the times, we live stretched like a tension wire between Christ’s resurrection and his future coming. We are vulnerable to grief, anxiety, and hesitation. Herbert knew that better than almost anyone, and it’s one of the main reasons he’s still worth reading. **CT**

**We need Herbert’s words today, to remind us that the Christian life is one that invites hope but makes room for struggle.**

# What sermon illustrations should be banned from pulpits?

Not every story helps the preaching moment.



banning it from the pulpit?

My uncle's response gives the first clue: Everyone has heard this anecdote already. It readily provokes parody instead of a deep understanding of the truth that love makes burdens light. I tell students that if they have heard an illustration even twice, using it themselves is risky. Of course, the problem for the preacher is exacerbated by the viral quality of today's good stories, to which nearly all of us have instant access. Such stories can be made to work only if the preacher signals a fresh twist upfront.

A subtler difficulty, but one all too common, is moralism and guilt-induction. Yes, love lightens burdens, but even the most loving people can become exhausted and overwhelmed by burdens, say of caregiving, that have pushed them beyond their strength. The last thing they need is to hear a pastor imply that if only they loved enough, their problems would seem easy. Jesus may have said that his yoke was easy and his burden light, but he also challenged disciples to take up their crosses—heavy instruments of death. The preacher needs to find the delicate balance between proper challenge of the cocky and self-absorbed, and mercy for the crushed.

Most serious is the likelihood that anecdotes of this type tend to overwhelm rather than bring home the biblical text. (How many times do we remember a story yet have not the slightest idea what the biblical point was?) And the wholly human-focused nature of the story often means that it works as well in a beer commercial as in a sermon. The point of the story neither directs us to God nor offers the hope of the gospel.

## Marguerite Shuster *Any We've Heard Twice*

**Y**ears ago, my church-going uncle, observing a tiny grandchild struggling to carry a Christmas present almost as big as he was, slyly intoned, "It's not heavy; it's my present."

Of course, he was invoking an illustration that is now 130 years old, of a little Scottish girl carrying a large baby. When asked if he is heavy, she responds, "He's

not heavy; he's my brother."

By the time I first heard the story, the girl had transmuted into an African boy trudging along a long, dusty road, trying desperately to get help for the disabled brother on his back. The line has become the slogan for the Boys Town nonprofit; the title, slightly altered, of a hit Hollies song; and the theme of a Miller Lite commercial (good deeds being appropriately rewarded, of course, by a tall cool one). The story clearly strikes a chord across time and genres, so why would I suggest

JAMES O'BRIEN

True, an illustration doesn't have to do everything; a good sermon will make contemporary connections in a variety of ways. But the material that carries the weight of the sermon needs to illumine and not obscure the biblical text, and to make clear that in the end, it is always God with whom we have to do.

---

**MARGUERITE SHUSTER** is senior professor of preaching and theology at Fuller Theological Seminary.

## Richard Allen Farmer Most of Them!

**W**hat sermon illustrations should be banned? Nearly all of them! We gospel proclaimers are told that the illustration is the "window" to the sermon. It illuminates and supports our points, which are apparently so weak that they need help standing.

We need a filter to help weed out the "there was a little boy" stories.

I want to ban the story that is vague. That vagueness is often seen in lack of detail: "There's a story of a man who made lots and lots of money. He found a family in need and helped them. By his giving, he showed the love of God."

We would serve our listeners much better if we did some writing and said, "Jon earned \$650,000 last year, counting his bonuses and stock options. He was excited, because he and Betty needed only \$80,000 a year to cover all expenses. He began to think about families he could help and bless. By their generous planned giving, Jon and Betty showed the love of God."

I want to ban the mono-genre illustration. I have a pastor colleague whose every illustration is from the world of sports. Another friend draws every illustration from politics and current events. To demonstrate a balanced and well-rounded life, I want to draw from the fields of literature, the arts, sports, military history, entertainment, and business.

I want to ban the illustration that doesn't fit the culture I am addressing. Some years ago, I was preaching in South Korea. I said that even if we had the house we desired and drove our dream car, we'd still be impoverished if we had not Jesus. My host missionary later told me that most of the university students to whom

I spoke would never own a car. The illustration, which would have been clearly understood in the affluent West, did not play well in Seoul.

I want to ban the illustration that doesn't make sense—that violates the laws of nature or common sense: "That massive 18th-century ship stopped at the exact point where the little girls were lost at sea and there, they wept and wrote the following poem." It is highly unlikely that a ship in the 18th century could find an exact spot in the sea. Every GPS-using listener in the audience dismisses the story as rubbish.

I am careful to introduce a story like that with an introduction such as: "There is a legend that says," or, "It is believed that," or, "In my sanctified imagination, it went like this."

I want to ban the illustration that is sexist. I have heard preachers say, "Now, you ladies love to shop. We know that." Then they proceed to talk about spending or about how much time the woman spends in a store while the husband waits. Don't men shop also? Perhaps we shop at different stores, but don't we all linger in the places that sell what we like? Even as a man, I was offended when a speaker said, "Ladies, when you get married and are able to buy a house. . . ." As if women cannot purchase houses without a husband's assistance.

Enough already. Illustrations should never distract or alienate people from the true message of God's Word.

---

**RICHARD ALLEN FARMER** is senior pastor of Crossroads Presbyterian Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

## Haddon Robinson Any Story That's Just a Story

**I**llustrations are the lifeblood of preaching. They take an ordinary truth and make it extraordinary.

The word *illustration* means "to throw light on a subject." Effective illustrations are like footlights that help us see the actors on the stage. But if a footlight shines in the audience's eyes, it blinds them to what they ought to see. A story told for its own sake may entertain or amuse, but if it fails to throw light on the truth preached, it is not an "illustration"

but simply a story. It gets in the way. In fact, the better the story, the more distracting it will likely be.

A preacher speaking about the courage of Daniel tells about a reporter at *The New York Times* who is a committed Christian. He uses his influence to help publish a story favorable to traditional believers. He risks a great deal in doing this, because most of his colleagues are members of the liberal elite. They will mock him and further distrust him. Many of those who work by his side have no time for Christians who speak well of the Savior.

One of the problems with this story is that it is not accurate. It makes up details that were never in the original story. Another is that although the reporter has courage, it is not the kind of courage that Daniel manifested.

Above all, the preacher tells this story because he knows there are listeners who have strong feelings about liberal media, not because it throws light on a key aspect of his sermon. When the listeners leave on Sunday, they may feel good about the sermon mostly because the preacher has demonstrated that he is against a liberal newspaper.

As I study Scripture, I go through at least two stages. First, I ask, "What does this passage mean?" Then I ask, "How does this passage apply to life today?" In the first stage my illustrations tend to appeal to the intellect, but in the second stage my illustration involves the whole person. *Can you think of a situation where someone in the seventh row two seats from the end might need this truth?* Then picture that situation, picture it specifically, and tell it with the delight someone has when they tell a joke, or with the seriousness someone has when they talk about a tragedy.

Illustrations serve a preacher in many ways. They can apply the Bible to people's lives. They can make abstract statements specific. They can stir people so that they are more open to difficult truths. They can make an audience laugh, weep, and understand and accept what the Scriptures teach. But stories should not be told for their own sake, but only because they light up the biblical concepts we want to communicate.

**CT**

---

**HADDON ROBINSON** is senior director of the doctor of ministry program and preaching professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

## MUD ALIVE

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



# Called to Be Uncool

When we fear no one but God, we're free to really serve him.

**C**ows like to turn their backs to the wind. At least, all the cows I know do. Slowly, awkwardly, eventually, all that beef will run parallel to the breeze.

People aren't too different. We align ourselves safely into herds, comforted by the hot breath of others breaking on the backs of our necks and ears. Then we huff and we puff and we blow at the fools turned in the wrong direction.

Is there anything more compelling to us than the heavy synchronized breathing of a mob, especially when combined with cocked eyebrows of disdain and curled lips of disgust? This is the zeitgeist, inside the church and out, and it will judge you until you conform and commune. This is cool-shaming, and it will make you squirm and itch to turn your back to the wind, to stand with all the other cows.

The trendsetters and vision-casters in a herd start the movement, motivated by profit or power or personal gain, as well as genuine striving for holiness and righteousness. They target their breath, their words, their media, and their coolness accordingly.

But for the rest of us, the single greatest factor in our decision-making is simple *compliance*. We turn with the crowd because we want the awkwardness to stop. We want them all to stop looking at us like that. We want to feel the wind of opinion at our backs.

How did otherwise intelligent people go along with the Third Reich, the invasion of Poland, the extermination of Jews? We may assume they were evil, brainwashed, or a bit of both, and in part we're right. But when was the last time you hedged on an opinion because of the hot

breathing of those around you? When did you last choose your words based more on the politics of a situation than on truth?

The power of the zeitgeist helped propel the agonies of race-based slavery, and the zeitgeist threw it away in a blood-bath. The zeitgeist gave us institutional racism, and when enough shame had been applied, the zeitgeist (at least officially) struck it down. The zeitgeist set the Medes and the Persians praying to Darius, and threw Daniel in the lions' den (Dan. 6). The zeitgeist can kick up the fervor of ungodly war, and it can hang its head in cowardice when a true challenge comes.

The zeitgeist is a fickle master, because the zeitgeist is us.

It's no wonder that one of the first tasks of any prophet was to make himself shameful. John the Baptist wore camel hair and ate insects. Isaiah had to walk around naked for years. Ezekiel had to cook his food over dung. Elijah ate only food carried by ravens—nasty carrion birds. The first thing God told Hosea to do was to marry a whore.

Prophets must be fearless, immune to the pressures of kings and crowds, aligned only with the breath of God.

We are in need of prophets now. Christians are scattered, but the world's wind is

heavy and unified.

Truth and ultimate glory may be in the hands of our Maker, but the keys of earthly shame are in the hands of the mob. Prophets must be immune to floggings on Facebook and Twitter. They must be fearless before friends and tenure committees and stadiums filled with the priests of Baal. The cool-shaming can have no sting. The world is busy applying pressure on "social issues," and Christians are busy caving left and right, trying to accept fresh cultural dogma simply so that they might be accepted.

Many of us would rather be in compliance with the crowd of *now* than successfully image the loves and hates of our Father. But his breath rolls the North Sea and props up mountains. His words ripen fields of grain and infants still hidden in wombs' warmth. May we run parallel to his breeze alone.

All of our positions—especially in controversy—should flow from honest exegesis, not from the mood at the local coffee shop. And we could all benefit from some shame. When the hot pressure comes, we need to be immune. If God wants it, we should be ready to wear camel hair while cooking locusts and raven scraps over a dung fire in the lions' den after our marriage to a whore.

Shame is easy to find. All we have to do is stop hiding. We already have seriously uncool friends. Moses. Paul. Christ himself. Enjoy them. Like them. In public. Offend the zeitgeist. Become immune.

When we turn, we must turn for Truth, never for the mob—not when it's running to the revival tents, and not when it's running to the guillotines.

CT

ADAM CRUFT

# COURAGE

to think deeply to act justly to live fully

“

[At Calvin] you're taught to think critically, not just about what books you read or what ideas you buy into, but how you shop, how you relate to your country, what neighborhood you choose to live in and how you volunteer and choose to help people.”

Daniel Camacho '13  
philosophy major



## Introducing the **John M. Perkins Leadership Fellows** program

Calvin's new program for first-generation college students cultivates Christian leaders who engage big issues like poverty, injustice, racism, reconciliation and materialism in our multicultural world.

Learn more about this scholarship program and refer a student at [www.calvin.edu/leadership-fellows](http://www.calvin.edu/leadership-fellows).

**CALVIN**  
College™  
[www.calvin.edu](http://www.calvin.edu)

*Calvin College admits students of any race, color and national or ethnic origin.*



# WHY I GAVE UP ALCOHOL

**Temperance:**  
moderation in all things  
healthful; total abstinence  
from all things harmful.  
...

FROM THE WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN  
TEMPERANCE UNION

IN A RUSH TO SHED OUR  
SEPARATIST PAST,  
HAVE YOUNG EVANGELICALS  
FORGOTTEN TO LOVE  
THEIR NEIGHBORS?

BY D. L. MAYFIELD

AM THIRTY, I AM AN EVANGELICAL Christian, and I don't drink. Not because I have a problem with alcohol abuse, although I enjoy a good sobriety story as much as the next person. My narrative is a bit more jarring, coming across to fellow liberated evangelicals as a throwback to our not-too-distant conservative past. In a culture that encourages us to celebrate the good things of life—Instagramming an artfully arranged salad, tweeting about Pinot Noir, posting Facebook albums full of vacations—choosing not to drink carries a stigma of pietism, a whiff of refusing to party with Jesus. A faith built on meaningless acts of righteousness, of disdaining the world and its evil values.

In the pastor's home I grew up in, alcohol was a nonissue: not a drop in our house, only grape juice in the Communion cups. Save for my mother's relatives—who served as a warning, since most of them abused substances at some point—nobody I knew drank alcohol. I believed we were teetotalers, just like all other Christians. Then, when I was 17, I discovered a stash of wine coolers in a broken dryer in our garage. As it turns out, my parents liked to indulge now and then, but had kept it a secret from my siblings and me. I suddenly had to mentally rearrange everything I

together, and the way it finally felt like we were starting to fit in, loosen up.

## No Longer Fun

In the past few years, though, my beliefs have changed—or been changed. My husband and I joined a Christian order among the poor, inspired by the likes of Shane Claiborne, who seek the face of Christ among the most marginalized of society. Our first shock when we moved into our low-income apartment in a Midwestern

my friends and neighbors, making them unpredictable and unsafe; it leaves me feeling helpless and afraid and vulnerable. It makes me question my faith in God, struggling to find hope for those who are addicted. There are other neighbors here too, people who are in various stages of recovery, and they help me. They drink their coffee black and smoke in the parking lots. They shake their heads and tell me they don't touch the stuff anymore. They find that every sober day is a gift.

After a year of living among them, I gradually just . . . stopped. I dreaded going

**My peers, most of them traveling along upwardly mobile career paths, constantly reference alcohol on social media. And with every picture, tweet, and event that centers on alcohol, I wonder: Isn't anyone friends with alcoholics?**

believed about alcohol. Wasn't it inherently evil? Didn't it lead to only bad things—sour breath, ruined relationships, cars full of teenagers careening out of control on the way to prom?

After I found them out, my parents began keeping a bottle of wine in the cupboard and some coconut rum on top of the fridge. And I began to see that having an occasional drink was a grown-up way of enjoying yourself. It became a signpost of the wider cultural appreciation our family was developing as we eschewed our fundamentalist past. When I was of age, my older sister bought me my first drink: a White Russian, à la *The Big Lebowski*. “Welcome to the club,” she told me, and we clinked glasses. It was the perfect amount of naughty, the perfect amount of sweet.

Since then, I have weaved in and out of various Christian circles, from conservative Pentecostal churches (no drinking) to Baptist seminaries (wine and craft beer okay) to ecumenical mission organizations (endlessly varied). All along I have been an occasional drinker, a social imbibor, free to live my life in a way that glorifies God. I have enjoyed the camaraderie that bars can create, the solidarity of good Christian kids enjoying a beer

inner city was the amount of substance abuse that surrounded us. I heard the sounds every day: the Patsy Cline blaring next door, the off-key singing, the shouting matches, the cackling, the doors banging, the bodies crashing to the floor in a stupor. I would go to get my mail and find a man blocking the stairs, passed out and unresponsive at 11 in the morning.

We have neighbors who eat raw chicken when they are drunk and get terribly sick; others who suffer from alcohol-related psychosis and bang symphonies on the trees outside our window at all hours of the night. People knock on our door with candy for my daughter, waving and talking to her even though she is asleep in the other room. People break windows, or almost fall out of them. Empty vodka growlers line the living room of one; another almost sets our building on fire when he forgets about the chicken-fried steak smoked to smithereens on his stove. There are people in our building who die because of alcohol—cirrhosis of the liver, asphyxiation from their vomit, slow-sinking suicides everywhere we turn.

And suddenly, alcohol is no longer fun. Instead it is a substance that changes

to the liquor store, imagining the faces I would see there. I saw my neighbors get off the bus with a 12-pack in each hand, and I was less likely to get a beer the next time I was out. Eventually, I realized I could abstain from alcohol entirely, that it could even be a spiritual discipline for me—a way to pray and identify with my literal neighbors, who could not stop.

The apostle Paul writes in Romans 14:17 that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit,” meaning that refusing any created good doesn't secure a right standing before God—and enjoying a created good doesn't hinder it either. And yet I was starting to take very seriously what Paul wrote a few short verses later: “It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble” (v. 21, ESV). In my neighborhood, it was becoming clear: righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit were tied to breaking the chains of my neighbors' addictions. Since so many were caught in the cycle of stumbling and picking themselves up again, it became good for me to not drink, as a way to stand with the brothers and sisters I was learning to love.



## Bulldogs for Jesus

**A**s surprising as my gradual new-found abstinence was, it began to seem like a concrete way to identify with the victims of alcohol I was seeing every day. As it turns out, I was walking a path well worn by Christians of previous centuries (particularly the past two) who also wanted to stand against alcohol's deleterious and systemic effects. Temperance movements, often founded and organized by women, were a direct reaction to the perceived social evils of alcohol in the 1800s and 1900s. As historian Ruth Bordin writes in her biography

of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the 19th century saw the heaviest period of drinking in American history (partially because both water and milk were relatively unsafe for consumption). Bordin notes that in the year 1900, Americans spent five times as much on alcoholic drinks than they did on public education. At the end of the 19th century, there were as many saloons in Chicago as there were grocery stores.

Women especially discerned the connections between alcohol abuse and the people who most suffered from it: namely, other women and children. As Bordin writes in *Woman and Temperance*, "The nineteenth-century drunkard's

reputation as a wife beater, child abuser, and sodden, irresponsible nonprovider was not undeserved." One prominent temperance advocate was Carrie Nation, a spitfire who believed she had divine orders to smash up bars with an axe (literally). Nation, whose first husband died of alcoholism the year after their daughter was born, called herself "a bulldog running along at the feet of Jesus, barking at what he doesn't like." Between 1900 and 1920, she was arrested 30 times for vandalizing saloons.

At this point in American history, women had little to no rights in regards to property and possession. The men of the families could legally drink their own





wages and those of their wives as well. Women, especially Christian women, started to organize and lobby against alcohol, starting from within their homes and gradually moving into the political sphere. Temperance became associated with a host of other women's rights, most notably suffrage—women's right to vote and run for office. So too did the temperance movement stem from the belief that alcohol disproportionately affected the poor and marginalized, usually in concentrated, urban areas. Many times the women involved in the temperance movement would gather inside saloons, singing hymns, prostrating themselves on the floor, and praying, begging the owners to

reasons why so many Christians before us chose to give up alcohol completely.

## Swung Back Too Far

If temperance has a historical context based in social justice, why do I find myself feeling so alone in drinking my sparkling water with cranberry juice? It seems as though the church—and our wider culture—has swung back on the pendulum in regards to alcohol. Young people and women in particular seem to be embracing alcohol as a sign of liberation (as well as a way to cope with increasing pressures at work and home). As journalist Gabri-

**It seems as though the church—and our wider culture—has swung back on the pendulum in regards to alcohol. Young people and women in particular seem to be embracing alcohol as a sign of liberation.**

close their doors.

The larger church culture, too, fueled by the spiritual revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries, began to denounce alcohol altogether. Protestant preachers such as Lyman Beecher and later Billy Sunday emphasized personal salvation and moral piety in preparation for the Second Coming. Nearly all of the largest Protestant denominations began to denounce alcohol hand in hand with what they saw as the other evils of the age: slavery, prostitution, and gambling. As early as 1820, denominations such as the Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists began to require abstinence for membership, causing a shift in mainstream teetotalism.

While the effects of the temperance movement were not all positive (e.g., Prohibition), Christians' willingness to advocate for social and civic change on behalf of suffering friends and neighbors is a powerful model for us today. Just as we currently have no problem denouncing slavery, prostitution, and, to a lesser extent, gambling—all for the ways they harm persons and communities—we'd be wise to reconsider the valid and pressing

elle Glaser writes in *Her Best-Kept Secret: Why Women Drink—and How They Can Regain Control*, recent studies on drinking in America point to a broader cultural shift where all people are encouraged to celebrate rather than hide their drinking, to view it as a meaningful rite of passage. For many Christians, that rite of passage includes eschewing the perceived fundamentalism of our past.

I see this evidenced in my own life. My peers, most of them traveling along upwardly mobile career paths, constantly reference alcohol, especially on social media. Posting pictures of a frothy, dark Guinness. Tweeting about needing a glass of wine after a long day with a toddler. Hosting a birthday party in a hipster whiskey bar. Churches are hosting small groups like "Think and Drinks," talking theology over craft beer. And with every picture, tweet, and event that centers on alcohol, I wonder: *Isn't anyone friends with alcoholics?*

Perhaps my peers are unaware of any neighbors, friends, or brothers and sisters who struggle in this way. But the reality is they likely *do* know someone who

struggles with alcoholism. *The New York Times* reports that about 1 in 6 Americans has a drinking problem (defined as excessive drinking or alcoholism). About 80 percent of college-age people drink, and half of them binge drink on a regular basis.

There are other, less visible, problems. Health risks stemming from alcohol use—cirrhosis and other liver diseases, for example—disproportionately affect minorities in the United States. Alcohol is a driving factor in assault and sexual

that some Christians would need to abstain from wine (and meat) as a matter of conscience.

Today Romans 14 is often held up as an example of engaging in cautious Christian liberty. All things are sanctioned by God. But if your choices actively cause someone to sin, it's your duty to think first of them. Neighborly love, we call it. Paul is quick to caution believers not to judge one another—either those who seem too “permissive” or those who don't want to

not drink at all.

But perhaps there is another way for the modern reader to interpret this passage. In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul is assuming that his recipients are doing life with people from an array of backgrounds: those who are fine with eating meat offered to idols, and those who are extremely uncomfortable with it. He is addressing a first-century world in which believers and pagan meat sellers interact in a civic society, a world where

## I didn't give up alcohol because I wanted to flee the evils of the world. I gave up alcohol as a way of engaging the evils of the world.

assault cases reported by people ages 18 to 24. One in ten children in America grows up with a parent who abuses alcohol. And 70 percent of children in the foster-care system are affected by some type of prenatal alcohol exposure.

I absorb these statistics, and I also see them played out in front of me. Alcohol starts to become an integral part of the brokenness I witness every day: violence, mental health issues, sickness, and premature death. I see how it becomes a form of oppression in marginalized communities. I see how easy it is for someone like me to proclaim Christian liberty and freely drink in moderation, in celebration. And I see how that reality is not the reality of many of my brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors. “Do not get drunk with wine,” the Scriptures say. For many, the disease with which they are afflicted makes them unable to drink *without* getting drunk. So what is a Christian supposed to do?

### Liberty Amid Diversity

**T**he church down through the centuries has engaged in drinking alcohol—the early church assumes wine for Communion, weddings, and medicinal purposes. But it also cautioned against drunkenness and understood

or simply can't engage in the good gifts of the Lord.

Christians also tend to apply 1 Corinthians 8, where Paul writes concerning eating meat offered to idols, to the alcohol question. Ever the pragmatist, Paul writes, “Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do” (v. 8, *ESV*). He then acknowledges that some believers won't eat meat offered to idols and that for others it may even prove to be a roadblock in experiencing the transforming work of Christ. In these cases, Paul makes it clear that there is no wiggle room: “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (v. 13, *ESV*).

Perhaps no substance fits the definition of “causing some to stumble but not others” quite like alcohol does. As our contemporary understanding of alcohol abuse grows, so too should our understanding of Christian liberty. We know that some just can't drink in a responsible way that doesn't end up harming themselves and others. This, at the least, should give pause to those of us who do not struggle in the same way, and lead us to pray for empathy. If we are in relationship with people for whom alcohol is a gateway to addictive and destructive behaviors, the Christian obligation to love compels us to think before we drink—or to

Christian beliefs directly inform how followers of Christ eat, dress, and drink. Paul is telling the early churches how to conduct themselves in a world where people are coming from very different places. And, as always, Paul asks them to land in the place of love, to think of their neighbors' needs before their own.

The problem arises when our neighbors and peers are people who are just like us. Churches in a consumerist, Western landscape can easily cater to specific demographics, ethnicities, and theologies. Social media allow us to curate our friends and acquaintances and influencers based on how similar they are to us. We gravitate toward people who look like us, think like us, and drink like us. And when we think about enjoying alcohol as Christians, this might be the real sin.

If you wear an “I heart bacon” T-shirt, I will have to assume you don't have many Muslim or Jewish friends. Likewise, if you are posting about how “Mommy needs her wine,” I will assume you don't know anyone struggling with alcoholism. At best, the progressive Christian social media world appears tone-deaf to many realities at the margins of society. At its worst, it speaks to a relational divide that is much more problematic than the question of whether or not Christians should drink alcohol.

I didn't give up alcohol because I



wanted to flee the evils of the world. I gave up alcohol as a way of engaging the evils of the world. Substance abuse and addictions affect every corner of our society. They keep people from relationships with God and one another. Have we swung so far on the swing of Christian liberty that we have lost sight of the greater purposes of looking out for the least of these, which includes many who struggle with alcohol abuse? Christian liberty is an important theological concept—it helps us remember and celebrate the grace and love of a very good God. But only in a context of diverse relationships do liberty and license makes sense. Casting wide our nets to include people

of different ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultures will naturally cause us to consider how our actions affect those not like us.

I have been changed by my neighborhood. I think carefully about how I portray my life and my liberties on social media, conscious that my reality is not the reality of everyone. When we throw parties, they are now delightfully awkward, people staring into sober cups. When we take Communion with our friends and neighbors, we use grape-flavored Kool-Aid as a symbol of Christ's blood, shed for us. My clothes, food, language, and—yes—drink have been altered as I try to align my liberty in Christ with the realities of my

admittedly unique context.

I am not calling on everyone to become teetotalers. But I am asking us to consider temperance as a valid and thoughtful option—as it has been for many Christians throughout the centuries. As my mentor, a 20-year veteran of working and living among the poor, often says, “we are free not to drink” because of our relationships with those who struggle.

We are free indeed—when love naturally tempers our actions. **CT**

**D. L. MAYFIELD** and her family serve with InnerCHANGE, a Christian order among the poor. She has written for *McSweeney's*, *Geez*, *The Curator*, and *Conspire!*, among others.

# THIS IS WHAT A PROGRESSIVE LOOKS LIKE

BY JENNIFER WOODRUFF TAIT

CHRISTIAN TEETOTALERS  
OF PREVIOUS GENERATIONS  
WERE RADICALLY COMMITTED  
TO THE COMMON GOOD.

HAVE A FRIEND who makes artisanal beers for Jesus.

He is devoted to the small and local, to slow food and slow drink. Inspired by Shane Claiborne and Wendell Berry, he named his beer company—if the word *company* is applicable to two guys making beer in a garage—Mad Farmer Ales, in homage to Berry's famous poem *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front*.

My friend sees the commitment to the simple and poor, to making things with his own hands, as central to who Christ wants him to be. And beer is a just aspect of heeding Berry's instruction to

Love the Lord.

Love the world. Work for nothing.

Take all that you have and be poor.

Love someone who does not deserve it.

... Be like the fox

who makes more tracks than

necessary,

some in the wrong direction.

Practice resurrection.

My friend finds affinity among fellow evangelicals. From the growth of "Theology on Tap" discussions in bars, to relaxed policies for faculty and staff at Christian institutions—most recently, the venerable Moody Bible Institute—to anecdotal everyday practice among devoted 20-somethings, one thing is clear: There

has been, as *The New York Times* called it in reporting on the Moody story, a "culture shift" regarding evangelicals and alcohol.

I don't know if my friend has ever considered that generations of evangelical forefathers and foremothers saw *not* drinking beer as central to who Christ wanted them to be. I do know that for many of his peers, the word *temperance* conjures legalistic rules ("don't drink, don't smoke, don't chew, don't go with girls that do") and a dim memory of learning in school that Prohibition was a Really Bad Thing: speakeasies, bootlegging, Al Capone.

But temperance has a longer history—and a more surprising one.

## In All Things, Moderation

Once, long ago, there was Plato. In *The Republic*, composed nearly 2,400 years ago, the Greek philosopher wrote of the virtues necessary for right living in a properly constituted social order. These were prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude—or, in terms we might better understand today, wisdom, justice, moderation, and courage. His list became known as the four "cardinal virtues." It was picked up by Christian thinkers, who added specifically Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love.

For centuries, *temperance* meant "moderation" to the average Christian

listener. It meant experiencing food, drink, and other pleasures in the right proportion to the experiences of one's life, and being aware of the inward effect of all outward behaviors. Sometimes it included ascetic behaviors such as abstaining from food, drink, or sex—either at certain times (in the Middle Ages, "don't have sex for three days before receiving Communion") or for certain people (then and now, "don't own property if you're a monk").

The Methodists would later define temperance as "distinctively a Christian virtue, enjoined in the Holy Scriptures. It implies a subordination of all the emotions, passions, and appetites to the control of reason and conscience." The Catholic Catechism still defines it as "the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable."

Of course, moderation wasn't always practiced. In many times and places, it was honored more in the breach than the observance. And it may sometimes have counseled practices that sound odd to us (*Wait, what was that about sex and the Eucharist?*). But at its best, the Christian tradition spoke the wisdom that all created things are good, but that all created things must be consumed in balance.

In the 19th century, *temperance* took on a narrower meaning to many American Protestants and a few Catholics. A

CARRIE NATION



## Temperance—defined as total abstinence, not just moderation—was a *progressive* cause in 19th-century America, and one rooted in what was understood to be the best science available.

number of factors led to that narrowing. From the time the colonies were settled, Americans had been a hard-drinking lot in general. But things changed after 1800. The century saw the rising popularity of whiskey (other drinks suffered from Revolutionary-era blockades) and lager beer (brought by German immigrants). Add to that the social disruption of industrialization. The nation moved from small villages where everyone watched out for the local drunk and where tasks were done slowly with hand tools, to urban settings where one could drink in perfect anonymity and where complete sobriety was necessary to operate heavy machinery. At the same time, a growing number of liquor outlets dotted the urban centers. All these factors led to a growing consensus that the best way to practice temperance in regard to alcohol was not to drink it at all.

### Three Misconceptions

**T**here are a number of misconceptions about the 19th-century temperance movement. The first, which was shared by temperance activists themselves, is that it didn't work. In fact, it did. American drinking dropped dramatically after the temperance movement took off in the 1830s. Americans in 1830 were drinking 7.1 gallons of absolute alcohol per year per person. (That's the equivalent of drinking 36 bottles of wine in a year.) By 1835, they were down to 5.0 gallons; by 1840, 3.1. By 1910, shortly before Prohibition, this had dropped to 2.6 gallons; post-Prohibition, it was down to 1.2, or about 6 bottles of wine in a year. Even after every moral loosening the 20th century wrought, from flappers to the counter-culture movement, by the year 2000, the average American drank less than a gallon of absolute alcohol. That's more than *six gallons* less a year than their ancestors had about 200 years before.

The second misconception—perpetuated for years by historians as well as average folk—is that temperance was a reactionary, backwards movement led by reactionary, backwards people to impose an

outdated morality. In the 1960s, a reputable American historian described temperance activists as the direct ancestors of those who protested in the 1950s against “fluoridation, domestic Communism, school curricula, and the United Nations.” Other historians argued it was all an economic plot to make workers labor efficiently with heavy machinery. One writer noted that the switch from moderation to abstinence was from “advocacy of a Christian virtue” to “insistence on a social taboo.” Goodbye, theological concern; hello, opiate of the masses.

The truth is that temperance—defined as total abstinence, *not* just moderation—was a *progressive* cause in 19th-century America, and one rooted in what was understood to be the best science available. Various famous experiments (including one where physician William Beaumont looked through an open wound at a patient's stomach and tested various food and beverages on it) made it clear that beer and wine were not a completely safe alternative to distilled spirits. Doctors were also getting better in the 1800s at outlining the exact physical and mental effects of alcoholic excess. The Methodist Episcopal Church could argue to a willing audience, directly after its definition of moderation quoted above, that “both science and human experience unite with Holy Scripture in condemning all alcoholic beverages as being neither useful nor safe.”

Whatever we might think of temperance science or exegesis, temperance also enjoyed progressive political bedfellows. Before the Civil War, temperance and abolition of slavery were closely linked; for example, Southern members of the Methodist Episcopal Church were nervous, when a debate on the matter arose in 1844, about restoring some of John Wesley's original behavioral prohibitions to their church laws because Wesley had prohibited slavery alongside liquor-selling. After the Wesleyan Methodist Church was founded in 1843 to protest mainline yielding to middle-class interests, Wesleyans protested against slavery, hosted the famous 1848 Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention, participated in the first-ever

female ordination in the Western hemisphere—and fought for temperance.

Later holiness denominations (Free Methodists, Nazarenes, and most famously the Salvation Army) would follow suit. Salvationists gave men and women equal rank in the Army and practiced urban ministry with the poor on a large scale; they also preached total abstinence as they labored in pubs to save the destitute.

Many temperance advocates also promoted voting rights for women. After all, women were more likely than men to vote to shutter the saloons that were destroying their homes. Carrie Nation and her hatchet may be the most famous image, but the 1873–74 Woman's Crusade—which led to the founding of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU)—is a more accurate representation, with its crowds of nonviolent protesters linked arm-in-arm before saloon doors. A later WCTU historian described the crusade in Ohio:

Walking two by two, the smaller ones in the front and the taller coming after, they sang more or less confidently, “Give to the Winds Thy Fears,” that heartening reassurance of Divine protection now known to every WCTU member as the Crusade Hymn. Every day they visited the saloons and the drug stores where liquor was sold. They prayed on sawdust floors or, being denied entrance, knelt on snowy pavements before the doorways, until almost all the sellers capitulated.

The temperance movement was even partially responsible for the introduction of public drinking fountains as a free alternative to alcohol.

The third misconception about the temperance movement—and many associated lifestyle issues, ranging from encouraging plain dress to avoiding dancing and theatrical productions—is that those lifestyle issues sprang from a desire to keep Christians from having fun. To be sure, lots of literature from the time suggests that temperance advocates *were* worried about uncontrolled passions—whether

H. E. FRENCH / CORBIS



for alcohol, tobacco, fancy clothes, the theater, or the opposite sex. But that concern was rooted at least partially in where they thought improper passions might lead—namely, to lower-class destitution.

As young men moved to cities to work, they disappeared into urban “sporting culture,” marked by easy access to alcohol and prostitutes. The boundary between working in the theater and working in the sex trade sometimes blurred. Even a desire to wear the latest fashions could bankrupt; churches encouraged plain dress by reminding members how much more money they could give to the poor if they didn’t spend it on fancy hats for themselves.

One temperance writer believed that referring to Jesus as a wine-drinker meant also claiming him on the side of “wife-beating and child-beating” and “seven-eighths of all the crimes committed in the civilized world.” At their best, temperance advocates labored alongside the poor, reminding their peers that what some moderate drinkers, safe in their middle-class safety nets, could handle, other people with weaker wills—or weaker safety nets—could not. Methodists wrote in their 1868 *Discipline*: “We entreat all who are tempted by the fashions of

worldly society, or of personal appetite, to abstain from this appearance and reality of evil. . . . Our wealth will bring with it the heaviest curse of Heaven if it becomes a source of corruption through any such complicity with popular sins.”

## In Remembrance

**M**any things combined to hide all these stories from the evangelical heirs of the WCTU and the Salvation Army. For one, Prohibition might have brought alcohol consumption down, but it failed as a social experiment. The resulting rebellion against it, especially among the intellectual elite, echoed through the decades. In the 1920s, an eminent historian described temperance folks as being on the side of “Philistinism, Harsh restraint, Beauty-hating, Stout-faced fanaticism, Supreme hypocrisy, Canting, Demonology, Enmity to True art, Intellectual Tyranny, Grape juice, Grisley sermons, Religious persecution, Sullenness, Ill-Temper, Stinginess, Bigotry, Conceit, Bombast.” It is not too difficult to find members of the intellectual elite—Christian and secular alike—who would


say the same today.

For another, some Christians forgot where their lifestyle rules had come from. Giving up drinking or smoking or wearing jewelry or going to movies remained as boundary markers of evangelical identity in settings where their connection with ministry to the poor and marginalized had long disappeared.

When a generation of young evangelicals arose who were concerned about the relationship of holiness to what we eat and drink, and who wanted to live their lives in tune with Berry’s poetic manifesto, they did not know that their temperance ancestors had traveled that road before them. As today’s evangelical Christians take up freedom to make beer for Jesus, it might help to also remember that freedom is not license—and that there is more than one way to practice resurrection. **CT**

**JENNIFER WOODRUFF TAIT** is the managing editor of *Christian History* magazine and the author of *The Poisoned Chalice: Eucharistic Grape Juice and Common-Sense Realism in Victorian Methodism* (University of Alabama Press). Research at Asbury Seminary’s Wesleyan Studies Summer Seminar contributed to this article.





# AN EXPLOSION OF Joy

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH. BY KRISH KANDIAH

**W**HEN I WAS YOUNG, growing up in the United Kingdom, my family and I could always count on our next-door neighbor, Mrs. Oglive, to be around. We left a spare key with her in case we got locked out. We forgot our keys quite often, and she was always there—morning, afternoon, and night—to let us in. Mrs. Oglive never went out. She suffered from agoraphobia, the fear of open spaces. Having lived next door to her for 40 years now, I still haven't seen her venture past her doorway. She wasn't always this way. She has pictures on her mantelpiece of less anxious days, from her honeymoon with Mr. Oglive and from a day at the beach with her children. But after her husband died, Mrs. Oglive began to isolate herself. As a child, I saw opportunity in this: Her garden resembled a jungle, and I earned some pocket money by pretending to be Indiana Jones armed with a machete slicing through the undergrowth, clearing the path to her front door.

As an adult, I can only imagine the heavy cloud of fear and frustration that surrounds her. Now frail and in the twilight of life, Mrs. Oglive's curtains are almost always drawn. But now and then, I still get locked out, and as she hands me the spare key, I am glad to see she is still alive.

I see parallels between Mrs. Oglive and the contemporary church. Many Christians observe the world from behind closed curtains, bemoaning culture instead of engaging it. Many local churches are isolated from the wider community and world, bunkered up like a coterie of doomsayers, suffering from fear of an open public square with divergent viewpoints and lifestyles. Meanwhile,

# Jesus doesn't send the apostles out on their own mission; he connects their mission with the very activity of the triune God.



many onlookers have read the church its last rites, so to speak, due to its dwindling numbers, scandals, and shrinking influence in Western society.

## LOCKED IN

These challenges are not unique to Western believers of today. The apostle John gives us a snapshot of a first-century church in a similar situation. Just three days after the Crucifixion—one of the most important events in history—where do we find the church? On a tenacious missionary charge, turning the world upside-down? No; the disciples are barricaded in, “with the doors locked for fear” (John 20:19). Who can blame them? After all, the Romans brutally executed their leader, and Jewish leaders are out to destroy the remnants of Jesus’ ministry. Naturally, the disciples thought these leaders would come after them next.

John’s account doesn’t end with the disciples hiding in fear, but let’s press the pause button and zoom in on the agoraphobic church of his time. Why should those early believers leave the safety of the bolted room? Why can’t they happily continue as a church in hiding?

To be sure, the locked-in church in Jerusalem fulfills several descriptions of the nature of the church, affirmed three centuries later in the Nicene Creed, which describes the church as “one, holy, catholic, and *apostolic*.” The locked-in church in Jerusalem is one: it is united in fear. It is holy, set apart from the world. It is catholic: by faith it is connected with every Christian in history. But can it be called apostolic?

Believers of various traditions have confessed the Nicene Creed since as early

as 381. But the adjective *apostolic* remains a point of controversy and disagreement.

According to both Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians, the church is apostolic because of the “apostolic succession”—that a minister can trace his ordination through a line of bishops back to the apostles. According to Protestants, the church is apostolic in so far as its teachings are in line with the apostles’ teaching. Along these lines, the locked-in church could be called apostolic. However, both of these approaches reflect limited understandings of the church’s apostolic nature. And the first-century church’s initial isolation contradicted what Christ intended for her.

When we release the pause button on John’s narrative, we discover that apostolicity is more than correct supervision and right doctrine. As the risen Christ walks into the fortified room, the despairing disciples are transformed into audacious apostles. The transformation helps us more fully understand the apostolic nature of the church and perhaps opens up the barricaded doors of our own congregations.

## A MISSIONARY CHURCH

In John’s narrative, neither death nor door locks prevent Jesus from commissioning his followers. After proclaiming peace and proving he has conquered death, Jesus utters these astounding words: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (20:21).

This scene is John’s version of the Great Commission. It helps us understand both the apostolic nature of the church and also the nature of God.

Both the noun *apostle* and the adjective *apostolic* derive from the Greek verb *apostello*, meaning “to send.” The Latin equivalent is *missio*, from which we get the English word *mission*. Therefore, the apostolic church is a missionary church; it seeks to faithfully take Christ’s mission into the world. True apostolicity is not so much a matter of succession of leadership or transmission of a message as it is obedience to God’s mission. And if the church’s mission is to be useful, the church’s leadership needs to model the apostolic gospel.

But Jesus doesn’t send the apostles out on their own mission; he connects their mission with the very activity of the triune God: The Father sends Jesus into the world, and Jesus sends the church in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mission begins not with the church but with God himself. This idea is known as *Missio Dei*, which literally means “the mission of God.” German theologian Jürgen Moltmann captured it well: “It is not the church that has a mission . . . it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.” South African missiologist David Bosch similarly said, “Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God.” This is why we should speak of “mission” rather than “missions,” because the church is caught up in the singular mission of the triune God.

The locked-in church that first Easter week may have been orthodox in its doctrine and supervised by the right leadership. But it was not truly apostolic because it had not yet received or obeyed its commission to go into the world.

# As Christ intimately breathes life into his moribund church, God initiates the new creation.



## A SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH

Jesus' encounter with the locked-in church in the Gospel of John raises a theological conundrum: Christ appears to impart the Holy Spirit nearly 50 days too early. This is essentially John's version of Pentecost, a sort of prophetic pre-enactment.

For John, the role of the Spirit is vital for the mission of the church. In fact, the church cannot carry out God's mission in the world without the Spirit's presence and power. That's why John includes this detail of the church's commissioning.

Recognizing how the Spirit animates the life of the church, the writers of the Nicene Creed placed the four marks of the church—"one, holy, catholic, and apostolic"—in the section describing the person and work of the Holy Spirit. According to British theologian and missionary Lesslie Newbigin, "The church is the place where the Spirit is present as witness."

By breathing on the disciples, Jesus demonstrates that he and the Spirit are inextricably connected. Both the Greek and Hebrew words for "Spirit"—*pneuma* and *ruach*—mean "breath," and this passage in John echoes the Creation account, where God breathes on fistfuls of clay to animate the inanimate. It also echoes Ezekiel 37, where the prophet is commanded to call forth breath to resurrect a dead army. By breathing on his disciples, Jesus doesn't simply impart to them a super power. As the Resurrected One, he resurrects their faith with his life-giving Spirit.

And as Christ intimately breathes life into his moribund church, God initiates the new creation.

This means that the locked-in church, with its correct theology and leadership structures, is not yet fully apostolic until God has sent his Spirit to empower it to participate in his mission.

## AN EXPLOSIVE CHURCH

The dejected, disappointed, and defeated disciples are shell-shocked after the crowds turn against them and make them enemies of the state overnight. It's understandable why their first reaction is to hide.

But John's account tells us that the proof of Christ's resurrection, the promise of the Father's authority, and the gift of the Spirit turn the dejected and fearful disciples into joyful and courageous missionaries. Somehow, many of our churches have failed to make the connection between joy and mission. As Newbigin observes,

There has been a long tradition which sees the mission of the church primarily as obedience to a command. . . . It tends to make mission a burden rather than a joy, to make it part of the law rather than part of the gospel. If one looks at the New Testament evidence, one gets another impression. Mission begins with a kind of explosion of joy.

Christ's resurrection, the gift of the Spirit, and the bestowal of the Father's authority resulted in an explosion of joy that propelled the church on its mission. Jerusalem was ground zero for this explosion, and its shockwaves spread

throughout Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Neither suffering nor persecution could prevent the apostles from carrying out God's mission. In fact, they rejoiced that they were "counted worthy of suffering disgrace for [Christ]" (Acts 5:41). An apostolic church, therefore, is one that spills over with the same joy that launched the apostles on their mission.

I was reminded of Mrs. Oglive the other day, when a friend told me that he had taken a local pastor out for coffee. It was Thursday afternoon, and the pastor explained that it was the first time he had left his house since the Sunday service. I assumed he had been ill or joking. But no, he had been doing administrative work and sermon preparation.

The pastor's work that week reflects the way many churches prioritize their ministries. His church is doctrinally sound, reflecting apostolic teaching. But because it has isolated itself, it is failing in one important sense to live out the apostolic mandate. The surrounding community wouldn't notice if that church ceased to exist, beyond the fact that more neighborhood parking spaces would be available on Sunday mornings. Of how many other churches could this be true?

Fulfilling the apostolic mandate is not something we can do on our own. Only by encountering the risen Christ and receiving the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit are we able to step beyond our doors and carry out God's mission. When we do so, we are transformed from an agoraphobic church to an apostolic church.

CT

**KRISH KANDIAH** is executive director for Churches in Mission at the UK Evangelical Alliance and author of *Paradoxology*.



# Confessions of a Bad Dad

BY PETER CHIN



WHAT GAVE ME HOPE  
DESPITE MY REPEATED  
PARENTING FAILURES.

**S**TILL REMEMBER the first time I suspected that, contrary to my early conceits, I might actually be a terrible father. When our oldest child was 2, I was clipping her fingernails and snipped her pinkie instead of the nail. As I saw the pinpoint of blood ooze from her tiny fingertip, I made a strange wailing sound, snatched her up, and ran her to the bathroom. I

apologized profusely as I wrapped her finger in a complex set of bandages that effectively quadrupled the size of her pinkie. (Any parent will tell you that, if there's anything more difficult than clipping the nails of a toddler, it's trying to find a bandage that will fit her fingertip.)

She returned my apologies with a look of confusion. Truthfully, I don't think she was aware that anything was wrong.

As a young man, I had imagined myself ideal father material, mainly because I loved holding cute babies at church and had served as a youth pastor for three

years. So I was ready. Then my wife and I had our first child, and it became clear to me that I was anything but.

Since the finger-clipping mishap, I have doubted my parenting skills on several occasions. There were the times I should have been paying attention to my four children, but was preoccupied with something of profound importance, like checking my Facebook news feed for the tenth time that day. I would hear the sound of *Thunk, thunk, thunk, THUNK*, followed by crying, which every bad parent knows is the sound of your kid tumbling down the stairs, her head hitting each

and every step along the way.

There were the times when I got upset at my children for being cranky, disobedient, or otherwise unpleasant, and tried to browbeat them into having a better attitude instead of checking to see whether they had a fever of 103. They almost always did.

What was more revealing than my technical incompetency was my attitude, which could have been described charitably as "impatient" but was often something closer to "mean spirited." Instead of correcting my children, I criticized. Instead of disciplining, I punished. I treated them as if they were short adults, not little children who were still learning.

## MEDITATION

DOUG FLEENER

If Christ's ministry to us was perfected over time through hardship, then there must be room for all people to grow and mature in the same way, even fathers in their ministry to their children.

And each time I acted that way, I became more convinced that I was indeed a terrible dad. To this day, I don't think that assessment is altogether wrong.

Where I was wrong was in assuming that I had to remain that way.

## BORN PERFECT?

I had always been of the opinion that the best fathers were born as such. Whether through some function of genetics, upbringing, or a combination of the two, fatherhood was a skill that a man either possessed from the start or did not. And if a man did not have that gift, there was no hope of sizable growth, only marginal adjustment.

I felt this way for several reasons. First, we increasingly discover that so many aspects of our lives are dictated by genetics: our features, our predispositions to certain diseases, even elements of our personalities. It is not difficult to imagine that parenting skills might function in the same way. Second, when it comes to careers—which for men are often cast as the central feature of identity—there is a strong emphasis on aptitude: we should pursue careers for which we possess an intrinsic skill. It's little wonder that men take that mentality and apply it to their parenting as well.

The belief was further reinforced whenever I observed a father in action at the playground or in the school hallway. I would watch these men as they communicated with their children, keeping their emotions in check and their smartphones in their pockets, unfazed amid the most epic of toddler meltdowns. And like a man who has just watched someone slam dunk while he has trouble dribbling, I concluded that these fathers must have been born with something that I lacked from the beginning. Nothing else could adequately explain the yawning gulf between us.

What most undermined any thought I had as to improving myself were the stereotypes of fathers I had witnessed growing up. On television, I watched Al Bundy from *Married with Children*, Homer from *The Simpsons*, and Peter Griffin from *Family Guy*. These fathers were bungling and lazy, oblivious and indifferent to the needs of their family. They normalized mediocre fatherhood, creating the impression that these types of fathers were, by their nature, irrevocably incompetent. Not only was there little possibility of improving as a father, but there was little need because nothing more was expected from a dad than to sit on the couch all day, a beer in one hand and a remote control in the other.

These thoughts undercut any of my inclinations to grow as a father. Every failure served only as incontrovertible evidence that I was simply not cut out to be a good dad, and never would be—and there were more than a few failures. My daily intake of cartoonish stereotypes only diminished my motivation. And so I resigned myself to my fate: that I would always be, at best, a mediocre dad. If I wasn't born the perfect father, what was the point of trying?

But a question we could ask ourselves at this point is, "Was Jesus born the perfect Savior?" Hebrews 2:10 says that Jesus himself, the pioneer of salvation, was *made perfect* through what he suffered. Such a statement might raise our theological hackles because it seems to imply that Jesus was somehow imperfect, or even that he was sinful in some way. However, that is not what this passage implies. The word used for "perfect"

here does not refer to moral perfection, which the writer makes clear in the fourth chapter, stating that although Jesus was tempted in every way, he was forever and always without sin. So what then does it mean that Jesus was *made perfect*, if not in a moral sense?

And what might it mean for our own imperfect parenting?

## DEVELOPING OUR ROLE

When we hear the word *perfect*, we think of it in its adjectival form: "flawless," as in a perfect diamond or a perfect performance. But the word used for "perfect" in that passage in Hebrews is the Greek verb *teleioo*, which carries the meaning of making something complete and whole, needing nothing further. When understood in this way, what that verse indicates is not that Jesus was morally incomplete in any way,



but that his ministry to us was made more complete, or perfected, through suffering experiences.

How can that be, that Jesus' ministry became more complete? Consider for a moment the events of Jesus' life. He lived

for years as a child in the household of Joseph and Mary, something that we can relate to. He then went into the desert to face his Enemy, and was tempted with the same things we are—glory, wealth, comfort—but Jesus resisted and overcame those

temptations. He mourned for his loved ones and suffered rejection and betrayal, as we all do. And then Jesus faced the ultimate icon of human brokenness and separation from the Father: death itself.

The result of all of these experiences shows that Jesus is not just a spiritual Savior who restores our relationship with our heavenly Father, as incredible as that accomplishment on the cross is. He is also our Friend who understands, our Encourager who sympathizes, and our Advocate who stands by our side. All of these roles developed and strengthened over the course of Jesus' human life. As hard as it is for us to believe, Jesus' ministry to us became richer and deeper over time, through experience and through suffering, so that by the end, we might call him not just Savior but Friend as well.

This helps us to understand Christ more clearly and to appreciate the fullness of his ministry to us. But it also serves to remind us about our own sanctification and growth: If Christ's ministry to us was perfected over time through hardship, then there must be room for all people to grow and mature in the same way, even fathers in their ministry to their children. This was a truth I learned firsthand.

## A BETTER DAD

Seven years into our marriage, my wife, Carol, was diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer, an especially aggressive form of cancer that didn't respond to modern therapies. She needed to have a mastectomy, followed by physical therapy, then months of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. When we discovered this plan, I despaired on many levels, not least of all for our children. My wife was the one who stayed at home with the kids and took care of most of their daily needs. Since she would be overwhelmed by her treatments, those tasks would fall to me. I shuddered as I imagined what the next year would be like, not just for my wife but for our two daughters as well.

To my amazement, and contrary to what I had always believed, I began to steadily grow and mature as a father. For instance, the washer and dryer used to intimidate me with all of their dials, buttons, and settings. *What does* *delicates* *mean again?*

Yet during that season of Carol's cancer battle, I learned how to do the laundry, and even how to tell my daughters' socks



I went from being a terrible father  
to a good one, or at least a better one.  
And it didn't take all that much for this  
to happen, only my wife falling gravely ill.  
Frankly, I'm not sure anything less  
would have gotten the job done.

apart (no small task). I did the dishes and cleaned the house daily. I cooked my daughters' breakfast and packed their lunches, picked them up from school in the afternoon and put them to sleep every night. I learned how to be more competent around the house.

My attitude improved as well. As I spent more time with my daughters, I learned more about their personalities and idiosyncrasies—how my eldest daughter was so eager to please, and my younger daughter was so eager to imitate her sister. I treasured them like I never had before. They were beautiful and precious, and that beauty and worth demanded that I treat them with respect and grace, not with impatience and annoyance, as I had done before Carol's diagnosis. In those nine months, I went from being a terrible father to a good one, or at least a better one. And it didn't take all that much for this to happen, only my wife falling gravely ill. Frankly, I'm not sure anything less would have gotten the job done.

## FORGED AND REFINED

What I took away from that season is this: Far too often, men are wrongly fixated on the fact that we aren't the fathers we want to be, which very well may be the truth. And because we lack those inborn skills and characteristics, we despair

and resign ourselves to mediocrity, or worse. However, the truth is that good fathers are not born, but made as they are forged and refined through difficult circumstances. The best fathers learned how to be the fathers that their families needed and God called them to be. And because of this, even though a man very well might have been born a quite terrible father, there is still hope he might become a better one in time.

Don't get me wrong: I still have innumerable moments of epic parental stupidity. And I still check Facebook far more often than anyone should. My fourth child fell down the stairs just last month.

It is okay that I'm not a perfect father, because flawlessness is for God alone. The goal of fatherhood is not that we

might never make a mistake ever again, but instead that we might persevere and so mature in our calling. Our ministry to our children is to be made more complete with every season and experience. And by the end, our children will look to us and be encouraged to know that they too can grow into whatever role God calls them to, no matter how unattainable they once thought that role to be.

CT

**PETER CHIN** lives in Washington, D.C., with his wife and four children. His first book, *Blindsided by God* (Bethany House), comes out in 2015. You can follow his work at [peterwchin.com](http://peterwchin.com) or on Twitter @peterwchin.





**TALBOT**  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
BIOLA UNIVERSITY

# ARE YOU READY *for* *the* JOURNEY *of a* LIFETIME?



## INSTITUTE *for* SPIRITUAL FORMATION

TALBOT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

AT BIOLA UNIVERSITY

### THE ISF GRADUATE PROGRAMS SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS:

- Experiential growth of the spiritual life including retreat, spiritual direction, psychotherapy and guidance in prayer
- Depth studies by interdisciplinary faculty in Theology, Psychology and History and Theory of Spirituality
- Apprentice training in spiritual direction
- Integration of spiritual formation with the ministries of teaching, preaching, discipleship, worship and mission

### THERE ARE FOUR PROGRAMS TO CHOOSE FROM:

- Master of Arts in Spiritual Formation and Soul Care (Practicum training in spiritual direction)
- Master of Divinity with an Emphasis in Spiritual Formation and Soul Care
- Master of Arts with an Emphasis in Spiritual Formation
- Certificate in Spiritual Formation

**Your**



# Faith Might Cost You Your Next Job

HOW ONE EXPERIMENT WITH 9,600  
RÉSUMÉS SHOWED THAT RELIGIOUS  
DISCRIMINATION IS ALIVE AND WELL.

**A**S A CHRISTIAN and social researcher, I have heard many stories over the years of religious discrimination in the workplace. Some are compelling and troubling, others are trivial and frivolous. And it seems like the workplace climate may be getting worse: the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) considered 3,721 religious discrimination complaints in 2013, up from 1,709 in 1997.

But the EEOC drops about four in ten of those complaints—a figure that’s remarkably stable across religions. One big reason is that discrimination can be surprisingly difficult to prove. If a member of a social group is treated badly, is it because of their social group? Was he laid off because his boss was tired of giving him Sundays off? Was she reassigned because

BY BRADLEY R. E. WRIGHT

customers were wary of being served by a Muslim in a headscarf? Were they discriminated against, or do bad things just happen?

I started wondering: How bad is religious discrimination in America, really? Horror stories abound. But are they examples of a systemic problem, or a few bad actors? Do some groups have it worse than others?

My colleague Michael Wallace and I conducted a large-scale field study to test for religious discrimination in one area of public life: the job application process. We found that not only is religious discrimination alive and well, it is so strong that simply adding one word to a résumé—a reference to a particular religion—reduced employer callbacks by almost 40 percent.

## What 9,600 Résumés Reveal

We started by creating four résumés, each one describing a fictitious job applicant who had just graduated from college. Two of the applicants were men, two were women. Their names had no obvious ethnic or religious connection. They had roughly similar work experience, with various part-time and summer jobs, and each was involved in extracurricular activities during college—including a student religious group. This is where we made it an experiment: We randomly changed the religious group listed on the résumés.

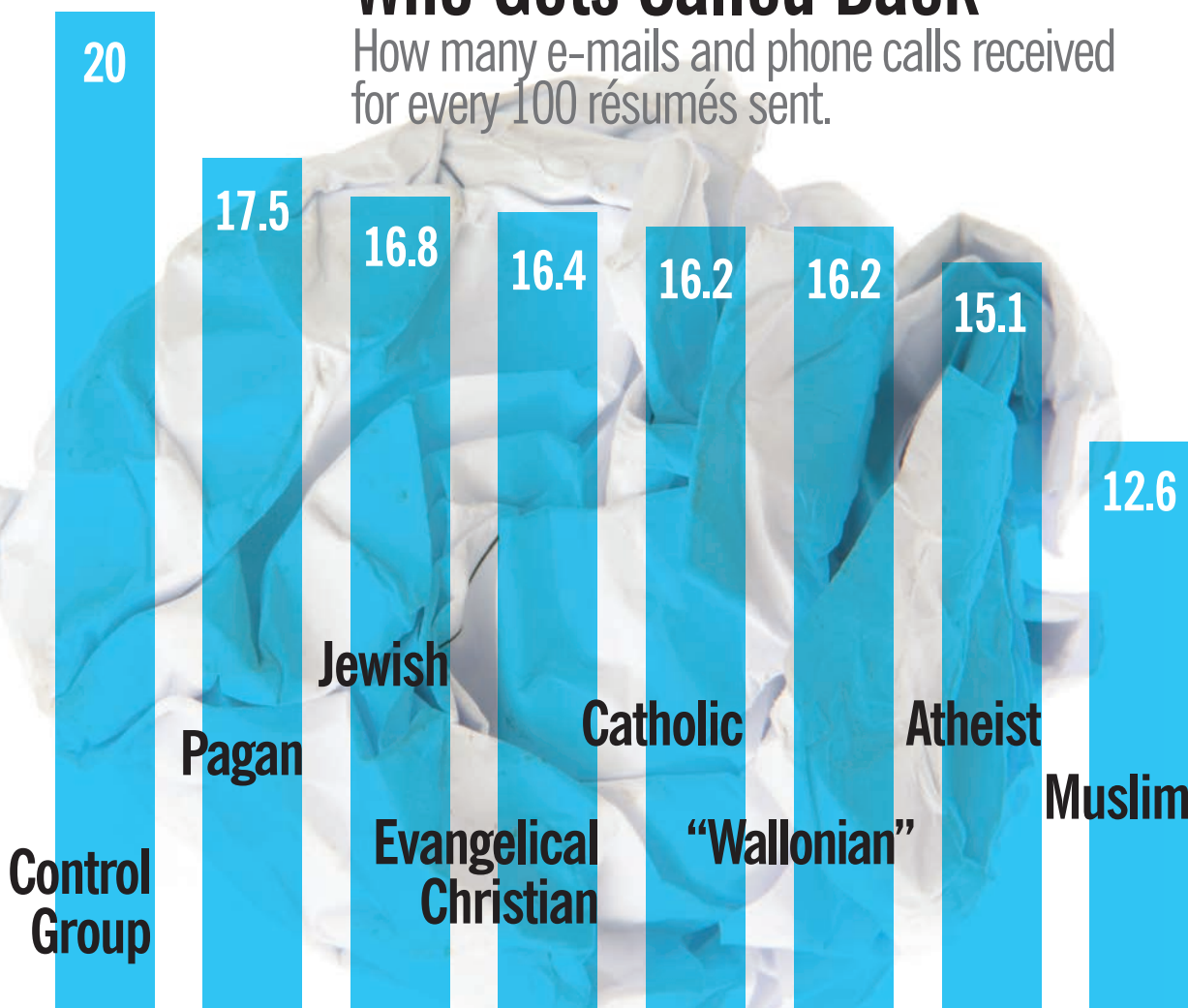
For example, one résumé listed the applicant as the former president of the “University \_\_\_\_ Student Group.” Another listed the applicant as the treasurer of the “University \_\_\_\_ Association.” We filled

the blanks with one of eight terms. Five of the terms referred to existing religions: “Catholic,” “Evangelical Christian,” “Jewish,” “Muslim,” and “Pagan.” The sixth term referenced a fictitious religion, the “Wallonian” religious group. (Wallonia is a region of Belgium, not a religion. We did this to test if employers discriminate against a religion that doesn’t even exist.) A seventh term was “Atheist,” which signaled a rejection of all religions. The eighth term was our control group. Here we simply omitted the blank, thus referencing a generic student group (e.g., the University Student Group). This provided a group against which we could compare the first seven groups.

After we created the résumés, we went looking for employers. Using a popular job-search website, we identified 2,400 job

## Who Gets Called Back

How many e-mails and phone calls received for every 100 résumés sent.



# If we're concerned about discrimination and want to encourage religious freedom in a secular society, it won't be the evangelical Christian number that we most lament.

listings that we thought would be suitable for someone graduating from college—entry-level jobs in a range of industries. We applied to jobs located in New England and the South. (We thought there might be regional variation in how employers responded to religion, but both regions turned up similar results.)

For each job listing, we sent four résumés, one from each of our fictitious job applicants. However, before we sent the résumés, we randomly selected which experimental terms to put on each. So for example, for one job, the first applicant might note having been in a Jewish student group, but for the next job listing, it was a Catholic group. All together, we sent out 9,600 résumés.

Employers could respond to the résumés by phone, by e-mail, or not at all. (Each of the four fictitious job applicants had separate phone numbers and e-mail addresses, so employers didn't know that the applications were from the same source.) We counted how many times employers responded to the résumés as a function of which student religious group was listed. If no religious discrimination existed, employers would have responded about equally often to the résumés, regardless of the religious group listed.

Unfortunately, that's not what happened. Not even close.

## Hide It Under a Bushel?

The control group résumés were the clear winner. Résumés that made no religious reference, that listed a generic student group, received about 20 phone calls and e-mails from employers for every 100 résumés sent. This was 20 percent more callbacks than the average of the other seven groups.

The Muslim résumés were the big loser. Résumés that listed involvement in a Muslim student group received only 12.6 phone calls and e-mails from employers for every 100 sent. This was about 40 percent

fewer callbacks than the control group résumés. Simply adding *Muslim* to a résumé decreased employer interest substantially.

The remaining six groups fell in between the control group and Muslims. Among them, the pagan résumés did relatively well, the atheist résumés did relatively poorly, and Jews, evangelicals, Catholics, and Wallonians were in the middle. (Our New England findings were published in the journal *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* in 2013; our Southern research was published recently in *Social Currents*.)

So yes, religious discrimination in hiring seems to be very, very real. Our study seems to confirm a social norm in America: that religious expression should be compartmentalized and private, something kept at home or brought out only in specific, limited circumstances. Publically identifying oneself with a certain belief system can be a faux pas with real and negative consequences. This norm applies to a wide range of religious and irreligious expressions. As such, both the proselytizing evangelical and the adamant atheist are suspect.

Many Christians intuitively sense this norm. We feel that we should be discreet, if not silent, about our faith. This creates a tension, because Scripture presents our faith as good news to be shared, as light to be shown, as salt to be tasted—not a hobby to be hidden. Negotiating this tension between the demands of society and the teachings of Christ is a fascinating, critical aspect of the Christian practice.

But if we're really concerned about religious discrimination and want to encourage religious freedom in a secular society, it won't be the evangelical Christian number that we most lament. The anti-Muslim discrimination we found is both dismaying and probably understated. If we had used names with a Muslim or Arabic association, we likely would have observed even greater discrimination. Furthermore, some employers probably didn't notice the word *Muslim* (or any of the experimental

terms), so its true impact would be even greater than we measured.

## Love Your Muslim Coworker

I anticipate that in the coming years, our awareness of Islamophobia will increase considerably. And it should. Diminishing the life opportunities of anyone due solely to their religious affiliation runs counter to religious freedom. It presents an interesting opportunity for Christians. In our study, we collected no information about the employers themselves, so we don't know if Christian employers are more or less likely to discriminate by religion. Still, it's probably safe to assume that churchgoing Christian employers are among those who discriminate, and that there's a discipleship opportunity here to teach why Christians want religious freedom for Muslims, atheists, and even the nonexistent Wallonians.

It's not just because we want to protect religious freedom for ourselves alone. It's because religious freedom is at the heart of Christianity. We believe that at creation, God gave humans the freedom to choose what and how they would worship. Jesus is reconciling all things to himself, but not through force or coercion. We weren't saved to make special deals for fellow believers but to bless the entire world. Christianity shines bright when it is looking out for the interests of the socially marginalized, and our research suggests that American Muslims are the most marginalized in hiring.

Leaving "Evangelical Christian Association" off our résumés would be one clear example of hiding our light under a bushel. But so would be looking the other way when our Muslim neighbors are treated unfairly.

CT

**BRADLEY R. E. WRIGHT** is a sociologist at the University of Connecticut. He blogs at *BrewRight.com* about social research and spiritual growth, and tweets @bradley\_wright.

A low-angle shot looking up at a person climbing a rope net obstacle. The person is positioned in the center, with their legs and arms visible as they navigate the net. A large, light-colored tree branch extends from the left side of the frame. The background is a clear blue sky with some distant tree foliage.

# Along the Muddy Way

A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS  
THROUGH ONE OF  
THE FASTEST-GROWING  
SPORTS IN AMERICA.

BY KENT ANNAN

**T**URNING FORTY, I needed a good alternative to financing a sports car or having an affair. My wife agreed. Forty is a simple actuarial milestone, but it kicks up existential waves in the inner ear. More life is

likely now behind me than ahead of me.

I needed something on the horizon that was physically challenging and involved friends. I decided to try a Tough Mudder, a 12-mile obstacle course that takes runners under barbed wire, over fire, across monkey bars, through ice water, and into live dangling electrical wires, all

along the muddy way.

Just four years since the first one, more than 1.5 million people, average age 29, have completed a Tough Mudder. *Outside* magazine has called it the fastest-growing sport in the States; this year, 55 events are scheduled in 15 countries. Other obstacle-and-mud events are exploding

RYAN PIERSE / GETTY



in popularity. What started as a sport for fringe athlete-masochists is now an industry generating hundreds of millions of dollars annually, and seen on the *Today* show and Wheaties cereal boxes.

Late one night a week before the challenge, I noticed the worn brown spine of

John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* on our bookshelf. My family was asleep. My legs were leaden from doing squats that morning. I sat down to read again about Christian setting

out on his metaphorical adventure of the spiritual life along winding trails, through the Slough of Despond, with

tempters and friends and pitfalls along the way.

Now, after my own adventure, I think that *Tough Mudder* is *The Pilgrim's Progress* for an intensified age.

After checking in, our seven-person team walks up to a seven-foot wooden wall you have to clamber over—just to get

#### CULTURAL TRENDS

# Do our entertainments lead us in joyful and even silly ways to feel lighter? Or do our entertainments merely sedate us in our failure to love others as we are called to?

into the starting area. My hand slips, and I barely make it over. Not a seeker-sensitive welcome to the event.

Some 10,000 people will attempt this course on a central Florida ranch today. About one of every five runners who start a Tough Mudder fails to finish. Our team, made up of friends and friends of friends, is nervous. We're in the first wave.

Upon landing on the other side of the wall, we are huddled with a couple hundred people for a mix of *Braveheart* pep talk and revival service to an insistent Eminem backbeat.

"Can I get a *Hoo-rah*?" Pastor MC Drill Sergeant (I'll call him) booms out.

"Hoo-rah!" hundreds shout back as he prepares us for what's ahead. It's fun and inspiring: you're going to push your limits; you might overcome, individually, together, heroically.

But Marine-like *Hoo-rah*s? The planners have raised more than \$6 million for the Wounded Warrior Project, a nonprofit that helps injured military service members readjust upon returning home. Some of the veterans do the course themselves. But there's also a guy nearby dressed in a full-body Scooby-Doo outfit. This is a morning outing for him and the rest of us, then back to our lives. Marines we are not.

One thing you learn when you work with people in poverty is to be skeptical about appropriating, at a discount rate, the suffering of others—in this case, people wounded in battle—for our own meaning. But right now there is little time for reflection.

"Can I get a *Hoo-rah*?"

"Hoo-rah!" we roar.

Everyone in the group is jumping, hands up, jacked up. Me too! The cost will be part of the reward—Dietrich Bonhoeffer as fiery football coach. This is not a race but a challenge, one of the core values we repeat collectively as liturgical pledge.

Music pumps. Nerves jangle. Hearts speed up to the beat.

Looking around at friends and

strangers—some in sleek Under Armour gear and some in tutus, some shirtless and perfectly toned and some who, well, seem unlikely to make it—I realize that each of us is on a Pilgrim's Progress seeking meaning and community.

The preacher sends us forth, and I high-five him as I run past.

## THE PHOENIX

We run in a pack down a trail that takes us through fields, around trees, beside canals. We jump into a three-foot-deep watery ditch, then scramble over a dirt pile. Our thighs are now slathered in mud. We arrive at an obstacle called Kiss the Mud—50 feet of low barbed wire. As I start to crawl, my shirttail snags on the first barb. I reach back to unhook myself. Friends let me know when I clear the final one.

We round the path to the Phoenix, named for the mythical bird that went up in flames every few centuries, only to rise from the ashes as a new, young bird. Some early Christians adopted the symbol as a foreshadowing of resurrection. The Tough Mudder Phoenix requires us to crawl through a smoky tunnel, scramble to our feet, sprint up an incline, jump over two feet of fire, and drop five feet into chest-deep water below.

It's not too physically demanding, but it is exhilarating. A Tough Mudder staff member took me on a tour of the course several days before the race. As we jostled in an all-terrain cart past this obstacle under construction, he said, "It's fairly new—and you get great photos!"

Indeed you do. A modern-day pilgrim gets plenty of help from a companion named Self-Aggrandizement, who is always whispering that nothing is worth doing, or even real, unless you can post a good photo of it.

## MUD MILE

We slog through a canal of waist-high water and squishy mud that can swallow your foot. Called the Mud Mile, it might as well be the Slough of Despond. The first wave of people is spreading out. About a quarter of them are women; minorities are in the minority.

I had been embarrassed to tell my friend and colleague Enel about preparing for this. Enel and I work for a nonprofit focused on education for schools and churches in Haiti. We've been in daily or weekly contact for ten years. Since my wife and I moved back from Haiti to the



MARATHON PHOTO



godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:7–8, NRSV).

How hard it is for our society to hit that mark: "physical training is of some value." Look around, and fitness seems like it is either of no value—our obesity rates, our profitable corporations peddling junk (Dr. Pepper is my favorite)—or of supreme value, as we gather reverently around the tv to watch football or idolize muscle tone at Planet Fitness.

When my feet touch down at the end of the monkey bars, it feels like landing on gratitude, for the simple joys of health and effort. And the splash on the first ring reminded me that exercise, especially as one passes age 40, can surely be a spiritual discipline for nurturing humility.

## OVER WALLS

My friend Companion (whose real name is Jonathan) is on our team, and we just met. We have to go over four walls on the course. At the first one, I find I'm not strong enough to pull myself up and over. Companion offers his shoulder for me to step on, helping to hoist me over. He does it again at the next wall.

Miles later at a 9-foot-high wall, Companion offers his shoulder again. When I look down, he is grimacing, rubbing his shoulder where my dirty cleat footprint is. He then climbs over the wall himself.

The next wall comes a few steps later. I help someone who doesn't have a teammate. Then Companion offers me his shoulder again. "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). Moments like this help explain why Tough Mudder is growing—and why church groups are doing it together.

For the past months, while I've been out running and doing burpees, people in Syria have been slaughtered. Perhaps at the very moment I was carrying a sandbag through the Sack Up obstacle, a Syrian father was running with his child in his arms in search of safety. This very morning, a mother in Haiti got up at 4:30, as she does every morning, to carry 30 pounds of vegetables in a basket on her head down a mountain, to sit on the concrete in the sun to sell them, then to buy provisions (not enough, never enough) to carry hours up the steep climb home.

If not renounced, privilege must be regularly confessed. Then it must be carried—heavy, complex—and given away

United States, my decisions about what to buy and where to live have been shaped by knowing that Enel will visit our home and ride in our car. Perhaps a more spiritual person would just evaluate such decisions according to a Christ-tuned conscience. I find friends like Enel a helpful stand-in. Let's call him Accountability.

After my explanatory powers in Creole were stretched describing Tough Mudder, Accountability said, "Interesting. It's like life: there are times you just have to persist and endure, then obstacles you have to overcome. Then you have to keep going." He was amused, wanted to hear how it went, and burst out laughing when I invited him to join us. It was a kind response to the fact that many in our country are affluent enough to pay for extra physical and psychological challenges in our lives. In Enel's world, the challenges are typically free and unwanted.

## FUNKY MONKEY

Hangin' Tough is an obstacle with eight rings like those used by male Olympian gymnasts. Our task is to swing, like Spider-Man or monkeys, across a 20-foot water pit to the other side. I hold a ring on the platform. Deep breath. Swing out to grab the

next one. Down I fall so fast, there is no story of struggle. It's a failure of strength and also will, I can't help thinking. It's an instant confession of weakness as I splash into the murky drink, which you'd best not sip.

Later the Funky Monkey bars loom with more importance than I care to admit. Until a few months ago, I could only go three bars. I trained at the playground, where my young daughter and son would cross all the way without effort, then taunt me as I tried to cross while bending my legs up.

I really want to traverse all 24 bars. It's possible but not probable. The bars are slippery. People grunt, succeed, splash down all around. I slip . . . recover . . . strain . . . slip . . . and make it!

Exercise is an act of stewardship with two primary aims: to care for our bodies so we can give them more readily to the loving service of God and neighbor, and to enjoy our bodies as the divine gifts that they are. Of course, our bodies can also fail and betray us—I'm partly doing the Tough Mudder because of my family history of heart disease. Vigorous exercise should raise my good HDL cholesterol. I need my body and spirit to help each other along.

"Train yourself in godliness, for, while physical training is of some value,

**I'm walking with a friend whose legs are cramping. Up beside us jogs a guy we'll call Discouragement. He is barefoot and wearing a tiny Speedo. 'I don't even like Tough Mudder. It's not even hard.'**

again and again. When I give myself, like Companion, to helping people over obstacles that they can't surmount on their own, I find firmer footing that feels like a pilgrim's path.

This relates to how I received the benediction from Accountability to do this event. I felt like I was carrying less guilt into it—as long as I was also carrying my weight in the more important challenges we face in our work together. Which leads to two questions for evaluating whether we're keeping pursuits like the Tough Mudder in the right perspective: Do our entertainments lead us in joyful and even silly ways to feel lighter—so that we can keep stepping under the heavy loads of mourning with those who mourn the most, and can keep energized for serving others? Or do

our entertainments merely sedate us in our failure to love others as we are called to?

### **ARCTIC ENEMA**

Nine miles and 15 obstacles in (the details, heights, and distances get a bit fuzzy at this point), we jump into the Arctic Enema, which requires you to submerge yourself entirely in a container full of icy water. The cold water shocks your breath away. You climb out of the frigid baptism on the other side.

Spartan Race is a competing obstacle event also quickly growing in popularity. "We came up with this idea to create a race," says the introductory video. "And during that process, [the participant would] become a new person."

Ten months ago in my first workout to prepare for this, I had made it 9 minutes into a 40-minute session. For the next 31 minutes, I lay on the grass as trees spun above me and my near-vomiting stomach. The trainer, Beth, hadn't expected me back. Now as we continue running on winding paths past palmettos, I'm grateful for the ache of every workout she led, for every extra mile I ran. Likewise, an important part of discipleship is the discipline of imagining the transformation and gratitude we will experience farther down the trail.

I'm now walking with a friend whose legs are cramping. Up beside us jogs a guy we'll call Discouragement. He is barefoot and wearing a tiny Speedo and a fuzzy-bear hat.

"I don't even like Tough Mudder," says Discouragement, who has paid with money and effort to be out here. "It's not even hard."

His words could deliver a defeating blow to someone already limping. But from now on when I hear Discouragement's voice in my head, I'll try to picture it in this Speedo and hat. Laughter is a wonderful companion to discipline.

TANIA ORTEGA-COWAN

# The Creative **Spark** for Sermon Prep. [preachingtoday.com](http://preachingtoday.com)

- ▶ The world's most powerful sermon illustration database
- ▶ Fresh sermon and series ideas
- ▶ Continuing education for preachers

**30-Day Free Trial!**  
**START TODAY** ➔





## ELECTROSHOCK THERAPY

After 12 miles we arrive at the last obstacle, Electroshock Therapy, which involves running through live electrical wires dangling overhead. I'm pretty sure when signing the lengthy tiny-print Tough Mudder disclaimer, we renounced any right to prayers of safekeeping.

I take a few shocks and my right triceps muscle tingles as I turn to watch friends come through. Chris almost makes it when a shock knocks him flat. Pushing himself up, he's shocked again, and his face plants

into the mud. A gasp comes from the couple hundred people who are watching.

Chris crawls out. I put my arm around him. He's dazed.

The seven of us walk the last few steps 3 hours and 20 minutes after starting. At the finish line, each of us is handed a cold beer. If this is a last temptation, I fail. Nothing could taste better.

With full physical satisfaction, we sit on the grass and peel off mud-caked shoes and socks.

"The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'" (John 9:11, NRSV).

Sprint and marathon, slog and soar, alongside Discouragement and Self-Aggrandizement and Companion: this is the pilgrimage of faith. Mud splatters all over, and we seek cleansing in dirty water. Silly as it might seem, all my preparation and these 12 miles might just be another way of straining to hear:

When you pass through the waters,

I will be with you;  
and through the rivers,  
they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire  
you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.  
Because you are precious in my  
sight, and honored, and I love you.  
(Isa. 43:2, 4, NRSV)

This Tough Mudder experience is so thoroughly physical that I experience it as profoundly spiritual. We Kissed the Mud (confession) and were dunked in an Arctic Enema (baptism). Now we're to keep pressing forward together in the soaring hope of the Phoenix (resurrection)—our discipline, bodies, and friendships strengthened. Because yes, each day our pilgrimage brings dirtying stumbles, and, yes, each day death steps closer. But the beautiful, ridiculous grace is this: life abundant steps closer too. **CT**

**KENT ANNAN** is codirector of Haiti Partners, a nonprofit focused on education in Haiti, and author of *After Shock* and *Following Jesus Through the Eye of the Needle* (InterVarsity Press).

# Training for Pastoral Care in the 21st Century July 24 – 26

## Redeemed Lives Equipping Conference & Seminar Series

Hosted by the Vineyard at Tuttle Crossing – Dublin, Ohio (outside Columbus)

Learning to engage in the public conversation concerning gender and to equip Christian leaders to provide pastoral care for those seeking help.

### 3-Day Equipping Conference

Training Christian leaders to use the 5 Redeemed Lives Pastoral Courses

July 24 – 26

\$250

(without start-up materials)

### 2-Night Series: Gender & Culture

The Conversation on Gender between Church & Society

July 24 – 25

\$30



**Mario Bergner** founded Redeemed Lives twenty-five years ago. He is the author of *Setting Love In Order* (Baker Books) and a contributor to the *Christian Educator's Handbook on Family Life* (Baker Books). For five years he taught and mentored global leaders at Gordon-Conwell's Doctor of Ministry program, who were writing pastoral courses for their unique cultural and ministry settings. His is a PhD candidate at Trinity College at the University of Bristol (UK) researching Christian Anthropology.

**Register** and pay online at  
[www.redeemedlives.org/equippingseminar](http://www.redeemedlives.org/equippingseminar)  
or contact us by email  
[info@redeemedlives.org](mailto:info@redeemedlives.org) by July 11.

**vineyard**  
tuttlecrossing

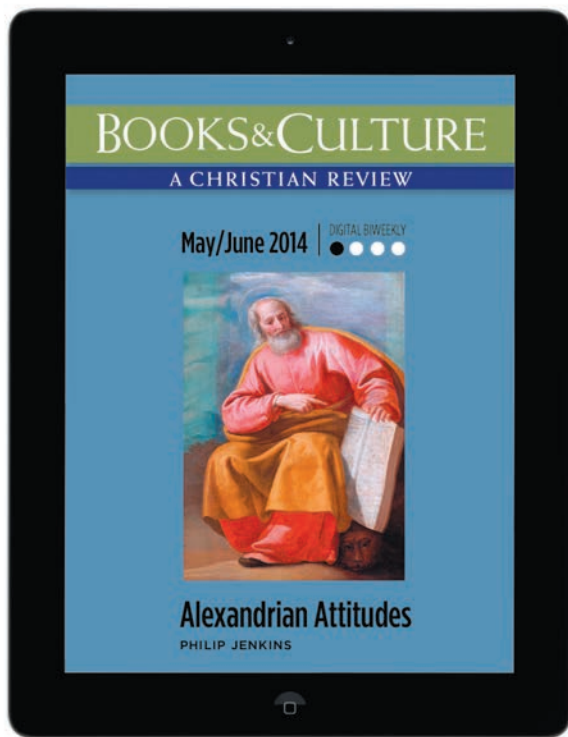
Vineyard Church at Tuttle Crossing  
5400 Avery Rd. | Dublin, OH 43016



**Redeemed Lives International**

*It was for freedom that Christ set us free.*

PO Box 451 | Ipswich, MA 01938



# The New Books & Culture Biweekly

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

**FREE** to subscribers.

Available now in the iTunes store.



Subscribe now at **OrderBAC.com/Join**

# REVIEWS

R

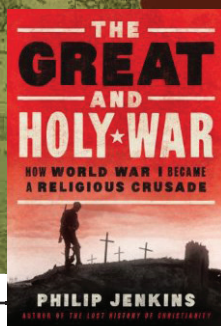


## CHRISTENDOM'S CIVIL WAR

Philip Jenkins recounts the religious passions that set the world ablaze a century ago.  
By Robert Tracy McKenzie



KEITH NEGLEY





**T**his summer marks 100 years since the guns of August 1914 signaled the eruption of an unprecedented global battle. Over the next four years, some two dozen countries would send more than 60 million soldiers to fight. When the guns at last fell silent in November 1918, 10 million men had fallen, and millions more were permanently maimed. Some 7 million civilians had also died, and the physically broken and psychologically scarred were beyond counting.

Shocked by its magnitude, its duration, and above all by its staggering human cost, contemporaries labeled the conflict simply the “Great War.” In a historical *tour de force*, Baylor University’s Philip Jenkins demonstrates that participants viewed it as a holy war as well. The story Jenkins faithfully retells in *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade* (HarperOne) ★★★★★ is both engaging and disturbing.

Jenkins’s central point is that we cannot comprehend World War I until we come to grips with its essential religious dimension. Religion is central to “understanding the war, to understanding why people went to war, what they hoped to achieve through war, and why they stayed at war.” Just as important were the long-term religious consequences. The war triggered “a global religious revolution,” Jenkins argues, and in the process “drew the world’s religious map as we know it today.”

#### ‘HELL AGAINST HEAVEN’

“Holy war” is a loaded phrase, and Jenkins is careful to define what he means by it. It goes far beyond what theologians such as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas meant by “just war.” Just-war doctrine says that, in a fallen world, as a last resort one fallen nation may use deadly force against another to promote long-term peace and avert grave injustice. When nations embark on holy war, in contrast, all moral complexity falls away. The country’s cause becomes God’s cause. The nation is wholly righteous, its enemies

purely evil. Those who serve the nation in battle are the instruments of the Lord. Those who fall before the demonic foe are “sacrifices” and “martyrs.”

The details may have varied from nation to nation, but once the shooting started in the summer of 1914, each of the major warring powers wound up embracing the language of holy war. This was more than a little ironic, given that World War I was effectively a civil war among Christians: With the exception of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, all of the leading warring nations shared a common religious ideology. Rather than wrestling with that unsettling irony, however, all sides rushed to condemn enemy nations as ungodly and to “proclaim fellow believers as de facto infidels.”

Examples abound. Russians denounced Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm as the Antichrist. German writers equated Britain with the great whore of Babylon described in Revelation. English bishops informed their countrymen that they were God’s “predestined instruments to save the Christian civilization of Europe.”

Americans were not immune from such ideology. They learned that God was summoning them to war against Germany, calling on them “to grapple in deadly strife with this unholy and blasphemous power.” As evangelist Billy Sunday boiled it down for the faithful, the struggle was “Germany against America, hell against heaven.”

This was no mere government propaganda. On all sides, clergy rushed to baptize the struggle. Far from merely supporting their respective countries, they became “vocal, even fanatical, advocates” and formulated “sophisticated arguments for holy warfare.” Nor did their arguments fall on deaf ears in the trenches. Jenkins pushes back against the common view that, however idealistic civilians may have been, the horrors of battle made soldiers

impatient with lofty ideals. To the contrary, Jenkins finds, men on the frontlines were “amazingly open to accepting and repeating... exalted interpretations of the war and the demonization of the enemy.”

On all sides and in all ranks, criticism of the war from religious leaders was scant. Traditional peace churches like the Quakers and Mennonites did speak out, as did Pope Benedict XV, who publicly lamented “the suicide of civilized Europe.” What stands out about such voices, however, is how rare they were. On the whole, Jenkins concludes, Christians found it easy to use “fundamental tenets of the faith as warrants to justify war and mass destruction.”

#### AFTERSHOCKS

It was perhaps inevitable that a global war loaded with such religious significance would bring long-lasting religious consequences. But subsequent historical accounts have too often overlooked them. One of the great contributions of *The Great and Holy War* is its careful survey of the war’s religious repercussions. As Jenkins shows, such aftershocks were profound and far-reaching, yet difficult to generalize.

If we focus on the short-term and concentrate on Europe, the conflict’s impact seems disastrous. Russia, in 1914, was home to nearly one quarter of the world’s Christians; the Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuing murderous upheaval nearly obliterated the Orthodox Church. Germany’s dominant Lutheran Church survived, but at the price of compromises with a secular messianic state. Christianity went dormant in both countries, and monstrous ideologies that centered on a different kind of “holy nationhood” filled the void.

Yet our conclusion changes when we shift our attention from Europe to the broader world. Most notably, World War I set in motion events that led eventually to the decolonization of Africa. Christianity in that continent was finally disentangled from the political ideologies of the colonizing powers. Although no one could have predicted it in 1918, African Christianity would flourish in subsequent generations, a trend that shows no sign of slowing: It is assumed that, by the middle of the 21st century, one-third of all Christians will live there. In a parallel development, the war precipitated

**When nations embark on holy war, all moral complexity falls away. The country’s cause becomes God’s cause. The nation is wholly righteous, its enemies purely evil.**

the collapse of the Ottoman Empire—long the political focal point of Islam. This forced Muslim thinkers and religious leaders to search for a new source of authority. What followed was the eventual rise of modern Islam as we perceive it today: “assertive, self-confident, and aggressively sectarian.”

The axiom rings true: We must know the past in order to understand the present. Jenkins’s penetrating study of World War I masterfully underscores that abstract truth. As the book repeatedly demonstrates, “the world’s modern

religious history makes no sense except in the context of that terrible conflict.” But history at its best always does more than shed light on the world around us. The best historians give us both a window through which to see the world, and a mirror in which to examine ourselves.

A century ago, Christians across the West enthusiastically rallied to nationalistic causes that wounded Christianity and wreaked untold misery. And they did so using the language of religious fervor that we now associate with

radical Islam. As we recall the catastrophe of a century ago, *The Great and Holy War* reminds us “how easily ideas of the church militarist emerge in times of crisis.” May we heed this sobering and necessary reminder. **CT**

**ROBERT TRACY MCKENZIE** is professor of history at Wheaton College and the author of *The First Thanksgiving: What the Real Story Tells Us About Loving God and Learning from History* (IVP Academic). He blogs at Faith and History: Thinking Christianly about the American Past.

# The Grahams in Full

A new biography aims to show what Ruth and Billy were really like.  
By Laura Turner

Ruth & Billy Graham:  
*The Legacy of a Couple*  
Hanspeter Nüesch  
(Baker Books)



**T**he marriage of Ruth and Billy Graham presents certain challenges to any writer who would portray it. How to write about a couple so beloved by evangelicals without slipping into hagiography? How to write about a famous man and his wife while giving equal consideration to both spouses?

Hanspeter Nüesch, the national director of Campus Crusade for Christ in Switzerland, attempts this balancing act in *Ruth & Billy Graham: The Legacy of a Couple* (Baker Books) ★★★☆. Despite some missteps along the way, this honest, straightforward book is an important addition to our understanding of the Grahams.

Nüesch offers regular reminders that Ruth and Billy, for all their godly qualities, were also sinners. They “were not perfect Christians,” he writes. For example, “although she was a very sensitive person, Ruth at times could confront people very bluntly, to the point of irritating them. Billy had weaknesses in other areas. There were times when Billy confused American culture with the kingdom of God, as he himself later admitted.”

But their weaknesses were often one side of a coin along with their strengths. Ruth’s characteristic bluntness, for instance, could be grating—but it was also

central to her giftedness in truth-telling and encouragement. She was honest about her opinions and her faith, which gave strength to many friends and family. And Billy’s confusion of the kingdom of God with American culture owed in large part to his deep concern that American culture be godly.

*Ruth & Billy Graham* is not quite a conventional biography. Nor is it a memoir, even though the author recounts personal experiences with Billy and his daughter Gigi, who wrote the foreword. Nor is it a personal devotion, although there are moments of sermonizing. (Some of the book’s weaker points appear when Nüesch spends pages pontificating rather than staying close to the story of the Grahams.) Instead, Nüesch frames the chapters around specific virtues that the couple embodied: partnership, authenticity, humility, intimacy, and so on. It is an innovative take on a story that has been written dozens if not hundreds of times.

Given the familiarity of the couple, this book could have been predictable. Yet it offers plenty of surprises. Ruth and Billy certainly kept traditional gender roles at home, but Billy also put himself under the teaching of a woman—Henrietta Mears, director of Christian education at the

First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood. Nüesch quotes liberal theologian Harvey Cox (of Harvard Divinity School) to remind us that Billy was among the originators of “the return in America of an ecumenical, prophetic, and peacemaking evangelicalism.” We learn, too, that Ruth’s boldness and mischievous nature enlivened their family with creativity and joy.

Careful readers will notice that the book is full of repetition. Ruth is called a “firecracker” at least twice by the same storeowner in Montreat, and Leighton Ford is introduced twice on the same page as Billy’s “brother-in-law and theologian.” And Nüesch sometimes goes overboard in stressing the Grahams’ imperfections. We can appreciate Nüesch’s willingness to acknowledge his subjects’ flaws, but his gestures in this direction are often vague and lacking in nuance.

But overall, Nüesch has made a compelling case that Ruth and Billy’s legacy as a couple surpasses even their individual legacies, formidable though they are. *Ruth & Billy Graham* makes a worthy contribution to our understanding of modern evangelicalism’s first family. **CT**

**LAURA TURNER** is a writer in California and a contributor to Hermeneutics.



## MY TOP FIVE Gregory Thornbury



**G**regory Thornbury is president of The King's College in New York City. Thornbury previously taught philosophy at Union University, and is author of *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry*. **CT** asked Thornbury to name **the five books that every college student should read.**



### Plato's Dialogues

Alfred North Whitehead once said that the European philosophical tradition is a series of footnotes to Plato. I, for one, cannot think of a more helpful oversimplification. Plato's dialogues are good for virtually everything that ails our society. He takes on relativism, skepticism, materialism, and incivility. *Gorgias* clarifies the difference between truth-seeking and posturing. *Meno* distinguishes between knowledge and true belief. The *Symposium* helps an erotically obsessed culture know that love is about more than sex.



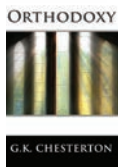
### The Confessions of Saint Augustine

Take this truth to the bank: Biography shapes theology. In *Confessions*, Augustine of Hippo charts his tumultuous journey to God in the greatest coming-of-age story of all time. Students struggling to control their passions and wondering whether to believe what their mother told them about Jesus will instantly see themselves in the Augustinian mirror. Early in life, Augustine was too smart for the Bible, his priest, and the church. The kindness of St. Ambrose made him take a second look. Do not read another memoir until you read this book.



### Strength to Love *By Martin Luther King Jr.*

Cynicism is the bane of our contemporary existence. Some see the decline of civilization as inevitable, refusing to believe that love, borne out of Christian conviction, can bring redemption and healing to society. This was not the worldview of King and his band of civil rights heroes. Armed with nothing but a Bible and the kingdom ethic of Jesus, he taught us how to love one another. In this toxic era of incivility, we need to hear that message again.



### Orthodoxy *By G.K. Chesterton*

This is the book for restless dreamers fantasizing about an alternative to their Christian upbringing, or a blueprint for a new social order. The funny thing is it always winds up sounding like a paraphrase of Christianity. So why not just accept the real thing? Like Augustine, Chesterton finds himself infinitely outflanked by the Apostles' Creed and the confession of the early church. *Orthodoxy* provides that same reality check. The faith delivered to the saints doesn't need improving.



### Either / Or *By Søren Kierkegaard*

Writing under the pseudonym Victor Eremita ("the victorious hermit"), Kierkegaard contrasts two ways to live: the aesthetic life and the ethical life. The former appeals to our senses: music and the arts, erotic love, and contemplations of beauty. The ethical life is one of reason and moral virtue. These two ways of being fight for supremacy, but ultimately, neither is satisfying. Must one choose? Ironically, Kierkegaard's answer is more "neither/nor" than "either/or": Only by dying to self and yielding to God can the two lives coalesce into a life of faith.



DAN BIGELOW



**Toughest People to Love: How to Understand, Lead, and Love the Difficult People in Your Life—Including Yourself**  
Chuck DeGroat  
(Eerdmans)



# No Heroes Need Apply

Why humility and vulnerability are essential to ministry leadership. Interview by Daniel Darling

**S**hepherding a church or ministry inevitably means dealing with difficult personalities. How can leaders handle hard relationships without buckling under the pressure? Chuck DeGroat, professor of pastoral care and counseling at Western Theological Seminary, as well as a pastor and therapist, tackles the question in his latest book, *Toughest People to Love: How to Understand, Lead, and Love the Difficult People in Your Life—Including Yourself* (Eerdmans). Daniel Darling, a pastor and author, spoke with DeGroat about embracing vulnerability and avoiding the pitfalls of the church-based “hero culture.”

**You write candidly about having nurtured suicidal thoughts, even while serving in ministry. Should church leaders publicly share their struggles this way?**

I’ve done research on seminary graduates who had been in ministry five or more years. They were excited to study the Bible, read deep books, and preach. But they weren’t prepared for the barrage of criticism, gossip, triangulation, stress, exhaustion, and more.

Throughout my own time in ministry, there have been dark times. I’ve felt worthless, like it just wasn’t worth it, like my wife and I were a thousand miles apart. I’ve had times when I felt like everyone was against me, when my inner critic was so loud I couldn’t think. As leaders, we need greater permission to tell stories that include the darker edges. Every good story involves suffering, death, and resurrection—that’s the pattern Jesus set! Why pretend we’re superhuman when Christ was fully human?

I distinguish between openness and vulnerability. Vulnerability is saved for a few close friends and one’s spouse. Openness is for larger audiences. Good leadership avoids both hypertherapeutic

oversharing and fearful undersharing.

**Why is personal spiritual health so important for leaders?**

I was fortunate, in my own life, to have a bold counseling professor tell me what he saw—immaturity, arrogance, insecurity. We live in a culture of affirmation, and I believe in affirming young men and women entering ministry or leadership positions. But not without some honest feedback—about their relational patterns, hidden insecurities, and messianic dreams.

Spiritual health is not about climbing some moral ladder, but about what Jesus calls “purity of heart.” This means that our inner life matches our outer. Remember, this was the problem of the religious leaders in Jesus’ day. They were hypocrites, play-actors, doing life on stage but hollow within.

It takes time and suffering for growth to happen. This is why the poor, broken, and unclean seem to be privileged in the New Testament—they’ve already hit bottom. Our humiliations breed depth, grace, forgiveness, strength, courage, curiosity, and hope—all the attributes that make healthy leaders. Otherwise we’ll quickly experience what happens to anyone living a lie: We’ll get caught, fall, or alienate everyone we love.

**Why is a proper view of the image of God vital for good leadership?**

It’s about knowing our story in light of God’s plan—our original design, how things went terribly wrong, and how restoration happens. To know ourselves as God’s image bearers is to know that God has designed us for relationship and mission. When life goes wrong and leadership becomes skewed, we’ve lost sight of that original design. Our relationships are strained. Our sense of purpose diminishes.

The best leaders are relationally and missionally healthy. As they turn to Christ,



Chuck DeGroat

they’re being re-tuned to live out that original design.

**How can we address the “hero culture” in many churches and ministry environments?**

We all want a leader we can admire. In a chaotic world, we tend to look for authoritative and omnipotent heroes who display little vulnerability or fragility. However, when we invest our leaders with authority and omnipotence that only Christ deserves, we’re probably naive and very likely ripe for abuse.

Healthy leaders don’t demand respect or allegiance. They invite it. They don’t need you to agree with everything. They empower you, and they’ve succeeded if you’ve grown—even grown beyond them.

Forgiveness is central to leadership: It’s not some cheap and quick pardon, but a surrender of one’s need to hold another in judgment. Of course, we’ve become leaders because we’re adept at analyzing, judging, and critiquing, but living exclusively from this posture is poison for the soul. We need to be able to forgive wounds and disappointments even before they are inflicted. This way, the organizational culture becomes freer. People don’t walk around waiting to make a mistake or disappoint.

CT



*Tonight Show* host Jimmy Fallon and guest Stephen Colbert—soon to be *Late Show*'s host—document the first episode on February 17.



# The Return of Late-Night Fun

Jimmy Fallon blessedly reminds us how to laugh at ourselves—not each other.  
By Kate Shellnutt

**N**o one on television has more fun than Jimmy Fallon.

As the new host of *The Tonight Show* on NBC, Fallon has incorporated the songs, skits, and celebrity games loved by audiences of *Late Night*. He dances to hip-hop megamixes with Justin Timberlake. He plays charades with Sheryl Crow and Pictionary with Kristen Bell. He makes goofy faces with Jude Law and throws glasses of water at Lindsay Lohan. Starting at 11:34 every night, he has a blast.

Fallon, 39, has made the show his own, and it's not because of his younger face, hipper band, or new reoccurring bits, but something profoundly more rare and special. To a time slot long reserved for cynicism and exasperation, Fallon has brought genuine joy.

During his first *Tonight Show* monologue, a beaming Fallon told 11.3 million viewers, "My goal is just to make you laugh, so that you go to sleep with a smile on your face and live a longer life. Isn't that the whole goal of what we're doing? To have fun?"

Fallon is a different kind of comedian from Jay Leno, David Letterman, or the host who started it all, Johnny Carson. Instead of insults, we get impressions. Instead of sexual innuendo, we get slapstick silliness. Instead of condescension, we get music parodies. Television critics have noticed that while other late-night comedians try to make fun of people, Fallon simply tries to have fun. Already, the ratings, YouTube views, and trending hashtags tell us America likes what

they're seeing.

Fallon's fun-for-fun's-sake attitude has died out in much of comedy, replaced with dark irony that takes itself too seriously or shock-value "adult" humor that seems more targeted at dirty-minded teenagers. Today's popular comics twist jokes into stories of death and depression and hopelessness. At the box office, the funniest broad comedy blockbusters are guaranteed an R rating, with an X-rated DVD box set soon to follow.

Every laugh seems underscored by derision, pain, or shame.

Even we Christians seem to have sidelined joy in entertainment to explore the bleaker side of reality. We find ourselves praising sad standups for what they can teach us about our faith. We binge-watch

# Just as we proclaim a God of grace and justice, of love and law, Christians need balance in our pop culture engagement. We need the light of the funny, silly, and joyful to glow in the dark.

shows like *Breaking Bad*, *House of Cards*, and *Mad Men* for the way their broken characters and their brutal worlds will reveal the dark side of human nature. Yes, we've seen how recent heavy dramas can show us the real weight of sin and the moral consequences of our decisions, but these kinds of programs can't become our only TV obsessions.

Just as we proclaim a God of grace and justice, of love and law, Christians need balance in our pop culture engagement. So do our neighbors. We need the light of the funny, silly, and joyful to glow in the dark. Shiny-happy shows don't tell the full truth, but neither do shows that punch us in the face. We've spent enough time embracing suffering and being skeptical of joy and happiness. All the more so if, as C. S. Lewis said, "Joy is the serious business of heaven."

## BREAKING CHARACTER

Fallon's spirit is no shtick. His joy has been there all along. As a cast member on *Saturday Night Live* from 1998 to 2004, he notoriously broke character, holding back laughter in the background of a sketch or cracking a smile in the middle of a punch line. His critics cite these incidents as weaknesses. I think they prove how much he likes his job.

Now a talk show host, Fallon no longer has to try to keep a straight face, so he grins big, chuckles along with the segments, and delights in his guests. Episode after episode, he involves celebrities and audience members in the fun. For good reason: Fallon's gifts shine when he's in a group—crammed in a dressing room with

his house band the Roots, a musical guest, and a dozen toy instruments.

Jimmy Fallon falls on the right side of the divide between laughing with people and laughing at them. His excitement is a sign of humility, as if to say, "I'm not too cool for this." Even as the host, he often plays stand-in for the viewer, a fan boy behind the desk. We're used to seeing comedians deemed authentic and honest for sharing their pain; Fallon earns those labels for being unabashedly giddy on camera.

To be sure, Fallon's all-smiles demeanor distances him from reality, particularly any tough topics. His monologues won't go into cutting cultural commentary; his interviews won't ask the difficult questions. We may find ourselves missing the cynicism and sarcasm that bites back at bad people and unjust situations. Even Jesus weighted his words with irony at times, and Christians can see the need for harsher humor when mocking the sin and silliness of the world. But the idealism of Fallon's *Tonight Show* requires a sort of simplicity, a surface-level engagement. It works because he wins us over—distracts us, really—enough that we'll put our criticizing and overanalyzing aside and just play along for an hour.

Fallon's success may usher in a positive spin on late-night programming, and, if we're lucky, television in general. CBS announced this spring that Stephen Colbert would take over Letterman's long-standing *Late Show* seat in 2015. Colbert and Fallon are pals and share a comedic background in improvisation—Fallon at *Saturday Night Live* and Colbert at the famed Chicago company Second City. While talk shows can come off as "host

versus guest," these improv alumni bring a collaborative spirit to the familiar format, wanting themselves, their guests, and anyone else on stage to get a laugh. That's the win-win mantra of improv. Or win-win-win, I should say, since this ultimately benefits the audience too.

Though it's hard to imagine Colbert without the quotation marks around his persona, I imagine he'll bring a similar positivity and sense of fun. He's been known to smirk through his lines on *The Colbert Report*. And if it's musical numbers that you like, the dude can sing.

Fallon and Colbert both come from Catholic upbringings. Fallon told NPR in 2011 that his "first experience on stage was as an altar boy," and that before he decided to pursue acting, he wanted to become a priest. No surprise: even back then, he struggled to suppress his laughter during Mass.

Though not one to toe the line as much as his devout *Colbert Report* character, the real-life Colbert raises his family in the Catholic tradition. "I do go to church, which makes me kind of odd for my profession. You know, most people can't understand why I do, other comedians," he said in an interview with *Fresh Air*'s Terry Gross. A Sunday school teacher, Colbert has been known to take down celebrity doubters like Bible scholar Bart Ehrman, and to break out his Catholic background in conversations with show "chaplain" James Martin. (No word yet on whether Martin will continue to drop in when Colbert moves from Comedy Central to CBS.)

While I can't find any Nielsen ratings by church attendance, I bet evangelical viewers would welcome a new, positive tone in comedy. Even if they're not staying up for the hourlong *Tonight Show*, it's hard to miss the YouTube clips of songs and segments that fill our Facebook feeds every few weeks. And it's hard not to watch them and smile.

We often read the well-known lines from Ecclesiastes 3 during difficult times—reminding us that we all have a time to die and a time to mourn, and that there will be struggle. Let us not forget the counterparts to those verses: that there are times to laugh and dance and hug as well.

More and more, in my house, those times fall around 11:30/10:30 Central. **CT**

**KATE SHELLNUTT** is associate editor of Hermeneutics, CT's women's site.



# New & Noteworthy

"What does it look like to bear witness in a secular age? What does it look like to be faithful? To what extent have Christians unwittingly absorbed the tendencies of the world?"

~ James K. A. Smith,  
*How (Not) to Be Secular*

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

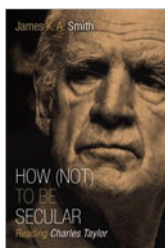


## PASSION & PURPOSE

Believing the Church Can Still Change the World

JIMMY SEIBERT (CLEAR DAY)

Antioch Community Church opened its doors in 1999, hoping to advance the gospel in one of the most impoverished and crime- and drug-ridden neighborhoods of Waco, Texas. Since then, Antioch has grown into an international network, planting churches in every corner of the globe. In *Passion & Purpose*, Seibert, founder of Antioch Ministries International, shares the story of how simple devotion to Jesus and love of neighbor bore astonishing fruit in the unlikely circumstances. "We learned to live *with* people instead of ministering to them," he writes. "Sure, we learned they had needs, but we also had needs. We learned from and loved one another."

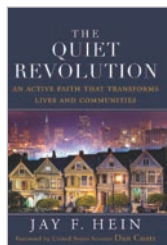


## HOW (NOT) TO BE SECULAR

Reading Charles Taylor

JAMES K. A. SMITH (EERDMANS)

Taylor's magisterial *A Secular Age* is too daunting and scholarly for most readers. But Smith, a philosopher at Calvin College and editor of *Comment* magazine, believes Taylor's inquiry into the sources of modern secularism has important insights that deserve a larger audience. *How (Not) to Be Secular* offers what Smith calls "a small field guide to a much larger scholarly tome." But Smith aims higher than a glorified book report. He wants to think about how we should then live, as residents of the world Taylor portrays. Smith invites readers into "an adventure in self-understanding, a way to get our bearings in a 'secular age'—whoever 'we' might be: believers or skeptics, devout or doubting."



## THE QUIET REVOLUTION

An Active Faith That Transforms Lives and Communities

JAY F. HEIN (WATERFALL PRESS)

As director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives under George W. Bush, Hein helped promote the notion, controversial then and now, of a fruitful partnership between government and religious charitable organizations. In *The Quiet Revolution*, Hein, now president of Sagamore Institute, describes the history behind Bush's faith-based initiative and examines how the program has helped to revitalize communities and neighborhoods. The book celebrates the "hometown heroes who put their faith into action quietly and powerfully to vanquish the enemies of disease, crime, poverty, and injustice."

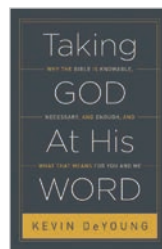


## A TRANSFORMING VISION

The Lord's Prayer as a Lens for Life

WILLIAM EDGAR (CHRISTIAN FOCUS PUBLICATIONS)

We're too familiar with the Lord's Prayer, says Edgar, professor of apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary. We hear and recite it so often, so unthinkingly, that we're prone to lose sight of its power. *A Transforming Vision* walks readers through the iconic phrases of the Lord's Prayer, shedding fresh light on how the passage can profoundly shape a believer's walk with God. But Edgar goes further, showing how "this extraordinary prayer is also an apologetic for a biblical worldview," one that offers "a remarkable statement of faith, as it stands opposed to a confused world."



## TAKING GOD AT HIS WORD

Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me

KEVIN DEYOUNG (CROSSWAY)

When it comes to knowing what the Bible is all about, Reformed pastor-writer DeYoung believes the best resource is the Good Book itself. "I want to convince you," he writes, "that the Bible makes no mistakes, can be understood, cannot be overturned, and is the most important word in your life, the most relevant thing you can read each day." In *Taking God At His Word*, DeYoung explores what the Bible says about how believers should respond to and rely upon its own words. He aims to "get us believing what we should about the Bible, feeling what we should about the Bible, and doing what we ought to do with the Bible."

# Read CT Anywhere You Go



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

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

Get it for yourself or sign up a friend at:

**OrderCT.com/AllAccess**

# Marketplace

Cost: 72 cents per character (each space and punctuation counts as a character); avg. 45 characters per line. Min. \$61.20 (85 characters). *Christianity Today* check-marked box ☒ \$22 each insertion; box around ad \$43 each insertion. Ads set display style: \$425 per column inch. Combination discount rates available for *Leadership Journal*. Prepayment and written confirmation needed to process ads. Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, or personal check accepted. Employment ads given priority. All other ads placed in first available issue. Deadline for reservation or cancellation is seven weeks prior to actual issue date. Address correspondence to: The Marketplace, 465 Gundersen Dr.; Carol Stream, IL 60188; or contact Stacy Smith, Sales Administrator, at: 630.260.6202 x4238; fax 630.260.9401; e-mail [Marketplace@ChristianityToday.com](mailto:Marketplace@ChristianityToday.com).

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### 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](http://www.belhaven.edu/belhaven/employment.htm) for details.

### 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 [jjorden@verizon.net](mailto:jjorden@verizon.net).

### Looking for a New Challenge?

Albanian Bible Institute in Durres, Albania, is looking for two new teachers for a long-term ministry of teaching, training, and mentoring church leaders. This exciting ministry is an investment in the maturity and stability of the Albanian church. ABI is a non-residential program that requires a flexible schedule of traveling to various churches in Albania and Kosovo to teach biblical courses and ministry skills, even on weekends and weeknights. For more information, please contact school director Lee Bradley at [jlbrad\\_62@hotmail.com](mailto:jlbrad_62@hotmail.com).

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### Houseparents

Shelter Care, an organization serving youth, has openings for mature couples. The program, located in Akron, OH, uses a family model. Each couple is responsible for four youth. Position is FT and includes salary and excellent benefits package. If interested send resume to 32 South Ave., Tallmadge, OH 44278; phone: 330.630.5600; fax: 330.630.5810; [www.sheltercareinc.org](http://www.sheltercareinc.org).

## BOOKS | TAPES | FILMS

☒ **INTRODUCING A WHOLESOME NEW BOOK SERIES** chock-full of smiles, giggles, and old-fashioned fun. Penelope's laugh-out-loud books will inspire and delight you. Ages 8 and older. Stop in for a visit! [www.PenelopeCorner.com](http://www.PenelopeCorner.com).

### Over 2,000 Hours of Verse-By-Verse Bible Study

Free at [www.berean-biblechurch.org](http://www.berean-biblechurch.org)

## SERVICES

### Called to Preach?

[www.IndependentBaptistAlliance.org](http://www.IndependentBaptistAlliance.org); 352.621.4981. We can help with ordination and other topics.

## EDUCATION

### Earn Seminary Degrees Online

Columbia Seminary; [www.ColumbiaSeminary.edu](http://www.ColumbiaSeminary.edu); [CES@ColumbiaSeminary.edu](mailto:CES@ColumbiaSeminary.edu).

**A PRESTIGIOUS HIGH SCHOOL IN CHINA** seeks experienced English teacher for one year. Contact Ray for details: 626.274.4556; [ray@amedu.org](mailto:ray@amedu.org).

## EDUCATION

### Degrees Through Correspondence

Low tuition. For a free catalog [www.lbcs.org](http://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](http://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](http://www.thehighburycentre.org).

## MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

### Write to Inmates

Fellowship with a saved inmate or lead an unsaved inmate to the Lord! E-mail [matthew25.36ministries2013@yahoo.com](mailto:matthew25.36ministries2013@yahoo.com).

## WANTED/NEEDED

### Finding God Through Fur, Feather, and Fin

Have you found or rediscovered God because of a human/companion relationship with a pet? Seminary student seeks stories from those who didn't believe in God until an animal came into their lives, or who had their faith restored as a result of an animal connection. If you are willing to share your story I would like to hear it. Contact [rolandhalpern@msn.com](mailto:rolandhalpern@msn.com).

## 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](http://www.Academic-Associates.com); 800.861.9196.

## MINISTRY AIDS


### Global Recordings Network

Free MP3 gospel messages in over 5,400 languages. [www.grnusa.net](http://www.grnusa.net).

## MISSIONS

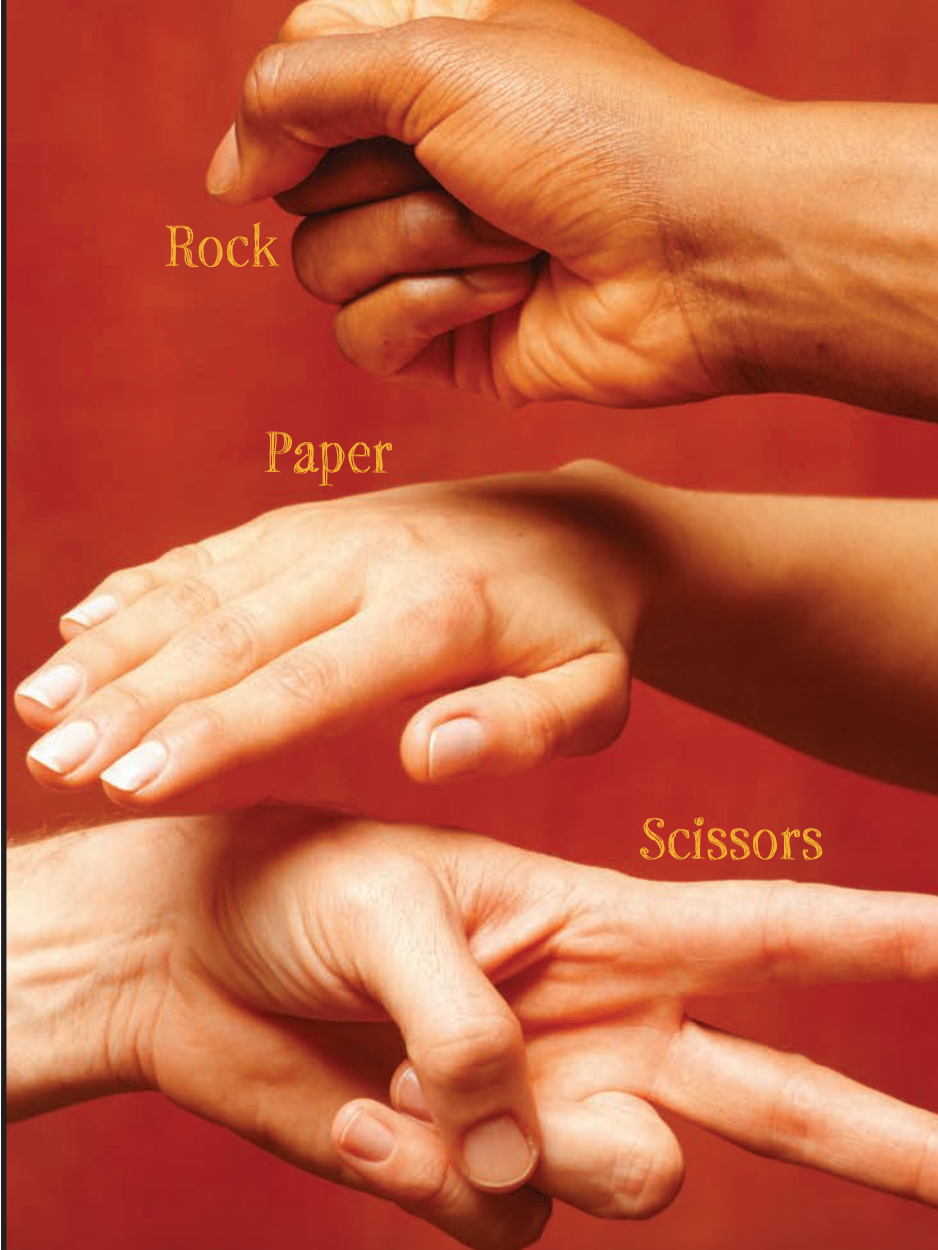
### MissionNannys.org

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



**Is Seminary  
or Grad School  
the Next Step?**

[SeminaryGradSchool.com](http://SeminaryGradSchool.com)



Rock

Paper

Scissors

There's a better way to find a college:)

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:

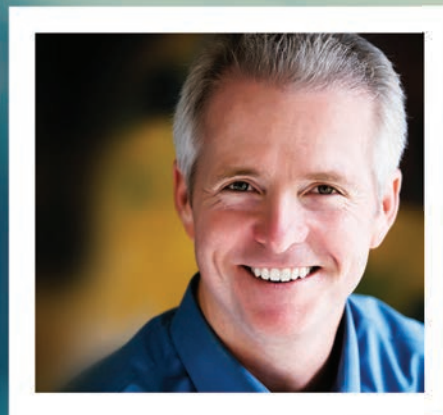
MAJOR • LOCATION • AFFILIATION • ATHLETICS • ENROLLMENT

Plus, enter to win an iPad Air!



**ChristianCollegeGuide.net**

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

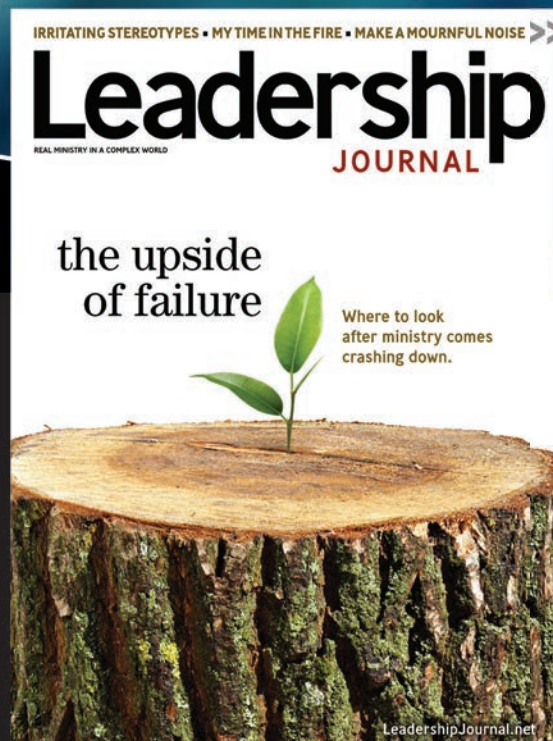


**John Ortberg**  
Pastor and author

**Find out for yourself  
why John reads  
*Leadership Journal*.**

**Subscribe for  
just \$2.99**

**[www.OrderLJ.com/Ortberg](http://www.OrderLJ.com/Ortberg)**



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 80

I managed to go through 18 years of life without ever hearing the Good News of Jesus.

### RADIATING LOVE

In the mid-1990s, I arrived at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) with eyes wide open, eager to soak in all campus life had to offer. I had chosen UIUC because of its engineering program and its closeness to home, plus its diversity and active student organizations. Back in Lawrence, I had been regularly reminded that I am in an ethnic minority. At UIUC, for the first time in my life, I met not one or two but a whole group of people who looked like me, had similar upbringings, and knew what it's like to be bicultural in a white-majority culture.

My dorm was full of fervent Christians: the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) students shared a bond with each other and seemed to radiate love. They were the first Asian American Christians I had ever met. They cared about things that were important to me—like living with purpose and having compassion for a cause beyond themselves. Living with them, I began to realize that the Buddhism of my upbringing was not in my heart.

Growing curious about Christianity during my sophomore year, I asked a friend if I could join him at an IVCF gathering. There I heard for the first time God's promises declared in worship songs and saw men and women praising him. I soon joined a GIG (Groups Investigating God) and began studying my first Bible, beginning with the Gospel of John. The authority with which Jesus spoke amazed me; it's as if his words jumped off the pages, addressing me directly.

Before I could place faith in Jesus, I needed to know there was a rational basis for Christianity's foundational truths. Early that summer, I attended Chapter Focus Week (a retreat sponsored by IVCF), where I took an apologetics track. I heard well-founded explanations of the inspiration of Scripture, the problem of evil, and the uniqueness of the gospel. After the doctrines were satisfactorily defended, my GIG leader recommended that I focus on the person of Jesus, so as not to let my endless philosophical queries distract

me from the main character of Scripture. Jesus' display of justice and compassion from the cross made perfect sense, and my reservations dissipated. I found that, contrary to the media's portrayal of it as narrow, crazy, and judgmental, Christianity was the most intellectually stimulating worldview I had ever encountered.

In October 1997, during my junior year, I decided to take a study break. I started reading John Stott's pamphlet "Becoming a Christian," which I had picked up at an IVCF gathering. While reading, I grew convinced of my sin and need to be forgiven. I drove to an open forest area that night, knelt down on the grass beneath the stars, and committed my life to Christ. I had grown up in a sea of deities, yet never had a relationship with any of them. On that day, I experienced the living God, *Emmanuel*: "God is with us." A peace overtook me as I gazed at the sky. That night I became the first Christian in our family's lineage.

### HONORING MY PARENTS

By presenting the gospel in a profound and simple way, Stott's booklet had sealed my conversion. But over a dozen believers had led me up to that point. I had heard the gospel both through the message and its messengers, who embodied the Word of God in their lives. Some had an intellectual style and could answer my tough questions. Others shared about Jesus' mark on their life. A few of them regularly invited me to events. God sent his only Son as both the message and the messenger. Likewise, the IVCF community served as the message and messenger united as a faithful witness.

For months I prayed about how to tell my parents what had happened. When I was at home for winter break, I sat in our

living room to read *Following Jesus Without Dishonoring Your Parents*. My father was stunned by my reading choice, but also pleased by the dutiful title of the book (written by a team of Asian American ministers, including Peter Cha and Greg Jao). When he asked why I was reading it, I told him I had become a Christian.

That evening, my dad, ever the scholar, took my Bible to his office and spent hours reading it to learn about my new faith. Being from a collectivist culture that emphasizes group identity, my parents insisted that our family religion was Buddhism. My mom recognized Jesus as a humble man with good character, but said he is one of many gods. Both parents held out hope that I would come to my senses and return to the Buddhist faith.

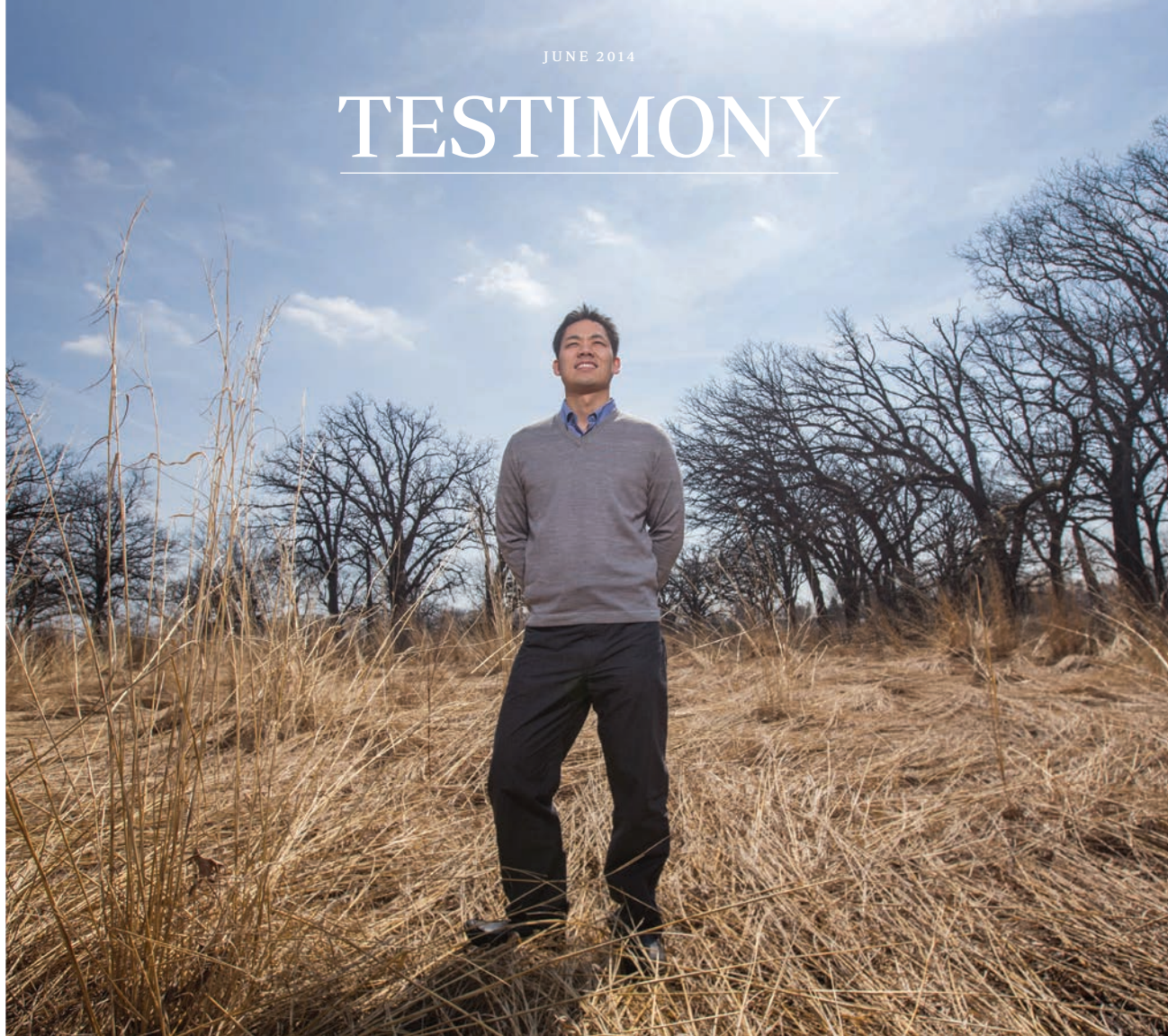
As the years passed, God's indwelling in my heart grew deeper, and I started to discern a call to vocational ministry. My parents said that if I followed through with this plan, they would cut me off. Sensing disunity in our home, I decided to stay and care for my father, who was battling heart disease. My presence and devotion built mutual respect and helped preserve our relationship. In God's timing, my family softened to my hopes of becoming a pastor. My parents continue to share their Buddhist experiences with me, and I continue to share my faith with them. My mom regularly prays to Jesus to bless and protect me.

Today I serve on staff at a multisite church in the Chicago suburbs. I help equip members to become ambassadors of justice and mercy within a ten-mile radius surrounding the church. I was fortunate to have experienced the love of God and now have the privilege to shepherd others in living out the gospel. There were a number of twists and turns in the road to reach this point. But every season of my life is in response to God's love, not a striving to achieve or obtain it. He who began a good work in me will carry it on to completion. Through the power of Christ's resurrection, my shame-based culture's search for affirmation is transformed and redeemed by grace. I am God's workmanship, approved and unashamed (2 Tim. 2:15). **CT**

**ALEXANDER CHU** is the outreach pastor of Christ Church in Lake Forest and Highland Park, Illinois. He is a doctoral candidate at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

**I had grown up in a sea of deities, yet never had a relationship with any of them. On that day, I experienced the living God, Emmanuel: 'God is with us.'**

# TESTIMONY



ALEXANDER GARCIA

## Beyond Buddha to Beloved

How I became the first-ever Christian in my family lineage.

By Alexander Chu

**C**lick...click...click. I could hear my parents in the other room using a handheld tally counter as they recited mantras. In one day in our home, the counter might reach 1,000 clicks, or 2 hours of meditation. They chanted in order to clear their minds and purify themselves, seeking perfect enlightenment in the way of the Buddha.

Each morning, I would wake up to the smell of incense burning. Oranges and pineapple cake were offered in front of Buddha statues in a room designated for meditation. Our home was like a temple. On each wall hung a Buddha portrait, totaling more than 30 deities throughout the house. A statue of the Grand Master, revered as a living Buddha, stood at the center of our home. My parents spoke often about discipline, wisdom, and training the mind according to the Four Noble Truths.

You might picture us nestled on a street in Thailand or China,

yet the story of my life begins in Lawrence, Kansas, home of the legendary Jayhawks. My father was a science professor, my mother a homemaker raising my two sisters and me. The influence of a Guggenheim Award-winning dad and a so-called “tiger mom” kept the pressure on for straight As. Academics, achievement, and ambition were nonnegotiable in my search for parental approval.

My Taiwanese family lineage includes generations of Buddhists, so religion was destined to be integral to my identity formation. Yet outside our home, our neighbors pursued an entirely different faith. As I practiced the violin on Sunday mornings, my attention drifted to the sound of cars pulling up outside. Families dressed in their best would get out and walk to one of the many churches down the block. I would watch them, and then return to the Suzuki method. Somehow

CONTINUED ON PRECEDING PAGE



## Change the World at Dallas Baptist University.

Dallas Baptist University is transforming lives and developing servant leaders every day through a Christ-centered education.

**This is DBU. Find your passion here.**

*"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." – Romans 12:2*



**67**  
Countries



**1** of America's  
**BEST**



**150,000**  
Volunteer Hours



**TOP 13**  
in U.S.

› Over 5,400 students are enrolled at DBU, representing 67 countries.

› We are recognized as one of America's Best Christian Colleges and America's Best College Buys.

› Seven-time recipient, U.S. President's Honor Roll for Community Service for 150,000 volunteer hours served annually.

› Our teacher education programs were voted in the top 13 in the U.S. by the National Council on Teacher Quality.



800.460.1328 | [admiss@dbu.edu](mailto:admiss@dbu.edu) | [whydbu.com](http://whydbu.com)

**DBU**  
DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



# RECLAIMING THE GREAT Christian Intellectual Tradition WITH STELLAR FACULTY

Union University is committed to serious, rigorous academics. Students and faculty work together engaging the great ideas of history and the issues of our day, prepared to think Christianly about those matters.

To learn more about Union's commitment to Christ-centered academic excellence, visit [uu.edu](http://uu.edu).



*"What we have here at Union is the unusual combination of high octane intellectual challenge with a deep, abiding and robust commitment to intellectual discipleship—to love God with not only our bodies and our souls and our strength, but also with our minds."*

**SCOTT HUELIN, Ph.D.**  
Director of the  
Honors Community



**UNION  
UNIVERSITY**

FOUNDED IN 1823 | JACKSON, TENNESSEE | [uu.edu](http://uu.edu)

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