



CHRISTIANITY TODAY

JULY / AUGUST 2014

BEAUTY AMID
ALZHEIMER'S *p.56*

ALEC HILL: MY SLAVERY *p.76*

THE HANDCRAFTED
GOSPEL *p.66*



33
UNDER

Thirty-three

*Thought that
millennials are
leaving the faith?
They're actually
leading it.*

*Trip Lee, Lila Rose, and
Joshua DuBois are 3 under
33 who hail from D.C. Meet
the others on page 34.*

CHURCH PLANTING Q&A

Dr. Ed Love, Church Planter, network strategist, and catalyst of the Certificate in Church Planting and Multiplication



What are your current ministry roles?

I currently serve as the narrative pastor for The Well, catalyst of the Greenhouse Planting Network, director of church multiplication for the West Michigan District of The Wesleyan Church, and training catalyst for the church multiplication department of The Wesleyan Church.

Why is church planting and multiplication important to you?

I am a firm believer that new churches and fresh expressions of the gospel will always be an essential strategy to reaching those who don't know Jesus Christ. When I think about church planting, I don't think about signs and buildings—I think about a lost soul who doesn't know the life-changing love of Christ.

Why a Certificate in Church Planting and Multiplication?

Church planting is not for the faint of heart. Since a new start has many unique leadership dynamics, it is important to receive as much training as possible. This certificate will provide leaders with the necessary knowledge, experience, and skills, in order to initiate new churches, sites, and venues with conviction and confidence.

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How is the certificate structured?

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What classes are in the certificate?

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Can I use these certificate classes toward a degree?

All of the certificate credits can be integrated and transferred into Wesley Seminary's Master of Arts in Ministry or Master of Divinity programs.

What if I only want to take one class?

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Valerie and Katelyn will both be hanging out with llamas at Machu Picchu later this year.

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With three young kids, Jake is no longer surprised by what he finds inside his shoes.

Ruth loves reporting on books (see her story on page 22) and reading them. This summer, she read a Jack Kerouac book in the Cascade Mountains, where he wrote it.



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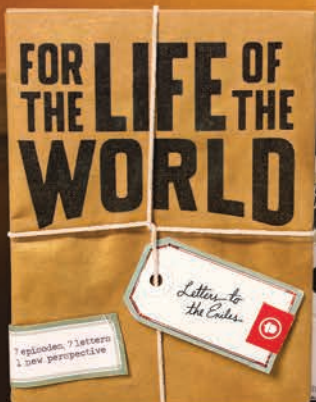
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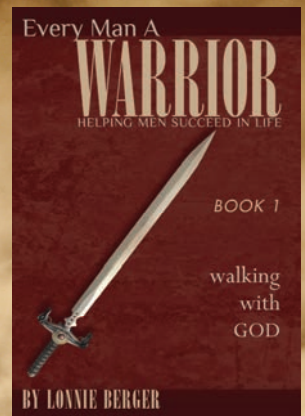
"I like EVERY MAN A WARRIOR because it develops skills as well as teaches solid, biblical truth. Too much of the church experience for many men has been observational and passive. EVERY MAN A WARRIOR requires they get involved!" Doug Redford, Pastor Men's Ministry Ada Bible Church, Grand Rapids, MI

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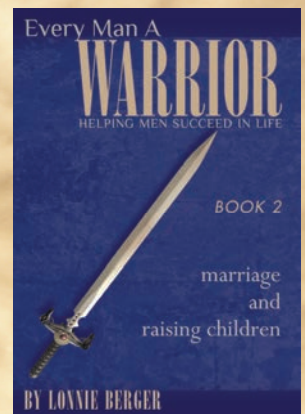
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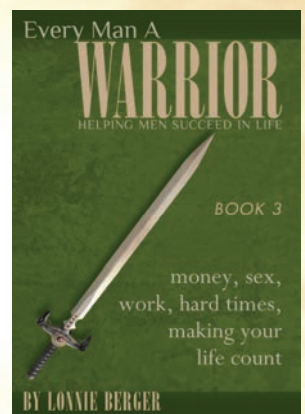
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EDITOR'S NOTE

YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH a lot by age 33. Just look at Jesus.

By that point in his earthly life, the Son of Man had turned water into wine, raised people from the dead, healed the lame, preached the Good News to unknown thousands, and sparked a religious and political revolution throughout first-century Palestine. Though some scholars recently noted Christ was probably 37 or 38 when he was crucified and resurrected, 33—or your “Jesus year”—has become a contemporary benchmark of maturity. Even secular folks and Jews (like Benyamin Cohen in 2009’s *My Jesus Year*) are picking up on the trend.

The 33 people in this month’s cover package have done a lot for Jesus, all by or before their Jesus year. Just take the three folks on our cover: One has prayed with the President; one has helped to shutter Planned Parenthood across the country; and one has rapped the gospel to John Piper’s satisfaction. They and the others featured in “33 Under 33” (p. 34) undermine the trope that millennials don’t care about institutional faith and are too busy taking selfies to do any earthly good.

ADAM CRUFT

Of course, our list is by no means exhaustive. If you know young believers leading the church in key ways, let us know at cteditor@christianitytoday.com or on Twitter @CTmagazine, using the hashtag #Under33.

One young believer leading the church is the editor behind the cover story, Kate Shellnutt. Her foray into journalism came at age 16, when she wrote a column for *The Virginian-Pilot* called—wait for it—“Life in a Shellnutt.” Since then her journalistic service to the church has blossomed, in her oversight of Her.meneutics (cr’s women’s site) and our social media presence. Kate notes,

The breadth of our audience is remarkable. I’ve caught tweets in foreign languages: French, Polish, Chinese. We recently reported on Southern Baptist baptisms and used a public domain photo. A Facebook commenter recognized it from his church and told us about the people baptized that day. . . . There’s something exciting about knowing that no matter the developments, we Christians will embrace new means to communicate news and Good News, truth and capital-T Truth.

Of course, *new* doesn’t always mean *good*, and we’re grateful for the examples in this issue of Christians communicating the Good News in timeless ways: walking alongside an elderly parent (p. 56) or bereaved strangers (p. 96), building rich community for the lonely (p. 52) or the mentally disturbed (p. 27). That said, we’re also pretty jazzed about the new faces and ministries spotlighted in “33 Under 33.” And we can’t wait to see what they do once they’re older than Jesus.

CT



WWJD BEFORE 33

Meet 33 who have done a lot
before their Jesus year.

KATELYN BEATY *Managing Editor, Magazine*



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The Logic of the Apocalypse

Stephen Beebe

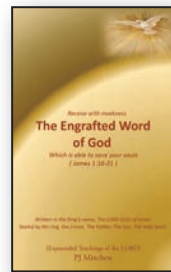
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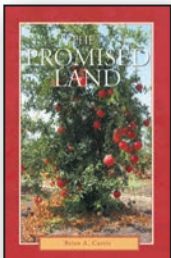
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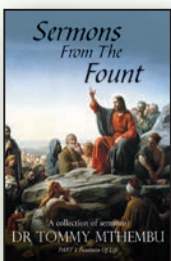
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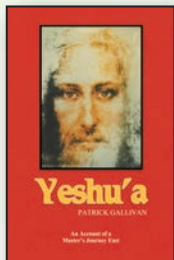
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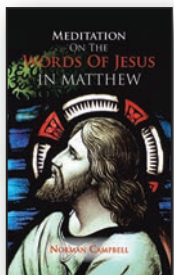
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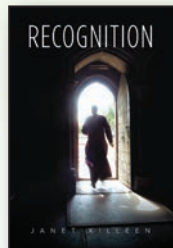
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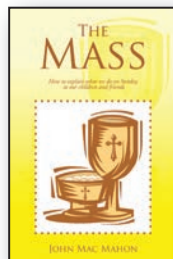
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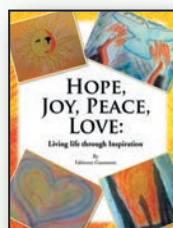
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REPLY ALL



WHAT WE FORGOT ABOUT FORGIVENESS

When I saw the cover of this issue, my heart leapt—not for joy, but with anxiety over the guilt I have over cutting off relationship with my parents during the past two years.

I identified with much of what Leslie Leyland Fields shared. And I wrestled yet again with what it might mean to forgive my parents. I forgave them for the demeaning physical discipline and their lack of interest in me. I loved them in the meager way I knew how, telling myself that they simply were not equipped to be better parents and partially believing I somehow deserved their criticism.

Fields had many years to heal and get ready to re-engage her father. Unfortunately, I skipped over the necessary healing process of time, distance, and accountability. I now cling to the love of a heavenly Father instead of the hope of a healed earthly one.

Janna Northrup
Edina, Minnesota

After reading your articles expounding biblical forgiveness, I am confused by the lack of emphasis on repentance. Doesn't Scripture suggest that in order to be

forgiven, one must repent (2 Pet. 3:9, Acts 17:30)? Fields's father teared up but didn't admit his sinfulness. Sorrow for sin is not necessarily repentance.

Christians have fallen into deceiving unbelievers by asking them if they want to accept Jesus into their hearts. He accepts us—if we repent.

John Thomas
Adrian, Michigan

GLEANINGS

I noticed a headline in News that referred to Menlo Park Presbyterian Church as "John Ortberg's church." But it is not Ortberg's church. It is Christ's church, where Ortberg happens to serve as a pastor for a while.

I served as a pastor to one congregation for 38 years. It was never mine; it was where I was privileged to serve. Words shape thoughts, and thoughts shape behaviors. I have noted this misuse of language in all sorts of publications. I shudder every time.

Harry J. Heintz
Henrietta, New York

A WORLD VISION FOR CHURCH AND PARACHURCH

As someone who has worked for parachurch organizations as well as denominational organizations, I read the World Vision editorial with mixed feelings. No parachurch should lead the church. A better formula would be to remember that parachurch groups have their origins in the church; they must work *through* partnership with the global and historical church; and everything they do must be directed to the church.

In an age of weak ecclesiology, the parachurch starts to think and act as if it were the church or a replacement for it. The recent World Vision conundrum showed this clearly.

Salaam Corniche
CT online comment

OPEN QUESTION

Having lived in a corrupt developing country for more than 30 years and taught ethics in an evangelical seminary, I have some convictions about "Under what

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

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circumstances should an overseas missionary pay a bribe?" The authors aren't far apart in their perspectives: Each condemns bribery when it perverts justice but acknowledges that sometimes a bribe is a gratuity, while other times it's extortion. There appears to be no option but to give in and pay up. But is that actually true?

When we give in to cultural norms to get things done, or to avoid inconvenience, we lose credibility with those who don't know Christ. And we rob God of the opportunity to provide another option. He is able to overcome even the most corrupt influences. While the short-term price may be delays, in the long term, God is honored by our faithfulness and the positive testimony of how he intervenes for his people.

Jim W
CT online comment

PAST IMPERFECT: THE ROAR OF WORSHIP

David Neff's column on how to use music in church was very good. I especially appreciated his comment about letting the people hear themselves. How we ever believed that blasting music over the voices of the congregation fosters worship is beyond me. Thankfully, many churches are rethinking this issue and toning things down. It's time to invite our congregations back to their *worship* services.

Cosmo V
CT online comment

I loved Neff's observation that making music is the domain of the congregation. I miss the energetic singing of hymns. This is not a dig at contemporary music; it's just that familiar hymns were designed for group singing more than some of the music we now hear in church. Nice work on this reflection.

David Thomas
CT online comment

THE JOY-STUNG PREACHER

I don't know Calvin from Luther from Lewis, but I know Matt Chandler's teachings move me to love Jesus and to want to know him for who he is, not for what he might do for me (beyond dying on the cross). God is growing his kingdom because of the way he has gifted Chandler.

Patty Bodanza
CT online comment

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

A GOSPEL FOR EVERYONE

Mark Dever highlights perfectly the Protestant dilemma: We all want to be "catholic," but without the clear implications of the big C—that is, a truly visible, worldwide, catholic church that is in communion with its bishops, rooted in the creeds and the ecumenical councils, and so on. Only the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church consider the ecumenical creeds as binding. Protestantism has no such clear, visibly unifying principle.

Dever also says the major problems in our churches today are provincialism, sectarianism, racism, and exclusivism. That is precisely what Protestantism entails by its very principles: *sola scriptura*, and the individual as the focal point of interpretive authority. A desire for global evangelism by itself cannot be the basis of Christian catholicity and unity.

Dan
CT online comment

THE NOAH EFFECT

Jesus told stories to illustrate God's kingdom, and posed questions rather than handed out answers (as art does). It's up to us to use our ingenuity, creativity, shrewdness, and strategic thinking to figure out how to do what Jesus did.

We haven't supported Christian filmmakers or artists as cultural missionaries to enable them to become world-class directors who can get these films made. Instead, we wait for the Darren Aronofskys and Ridley Scotts to do it for us.

Chris Cox
CT online comment

OUR RADIOACTIVE GOD

Thanks for the excerpt from Drew Dyck's *Yawning at Tigers*. Aren't God's holiness and love of the same substance? Over and over, he proclaims wrath because of injustice and the perversion of his commandments, and these acts of disobedience are rooted in a lack of love among God's people. Perhaps we have a poor approach to love, if we view it as somehow separate from or subservient to holiness.

Maybe instead we should see love and holiness as being inseparable: We can't be holy without love, and we can't understand the selflessness of love without striving for holiness.

Christian Marble
CT online comment

NET GAIN

Responses
from the Web.



"My husband said, 'I've got the perfect article for you. You'll think it was written just for you.' He was right. Thank you."

Heidi Scott, CT online comment.

"The Myth of Happy Parenting," by Rachel Marie Stone.

"Month after month @CTmagazine publishes gold. May's cover is balm for the soul."

Tyler Glodjo @tgldjo



"Thank you for showcasing a variety of complementarian views, rather than merely portraying it as monolithic."

Chandra Crane @ChandraLCrane

Under Discussion: "Should Christian colleges let female faculty teach men the Bible?"

compiled by Ruth Moon.

"What could have been a perfect opportunity for repentance and healing instead became a big fortress of pastoral ego."

Drew Brown @pastordrew

"Tim Keller, Don Carson Explain Why Tullian Tchividjian Was Asked to Leave Gospel Coalition," by Jeremy Weber.

"Thank you for the most comprehensive piece I have seen today."

Natalie Trust @NatalieTrust

"C. J. Mahaney, Joshua Harris Resign from Gospel Coalition after SGM Abuse Conviction," by Jeremy Weber.

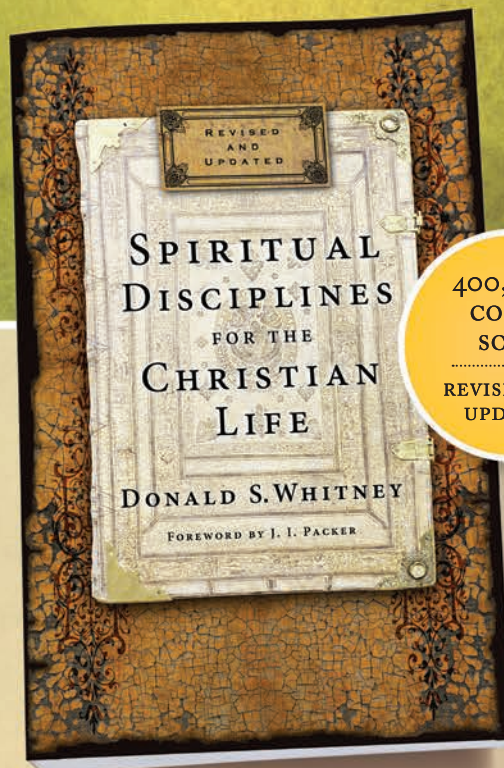
"Whenever we put people on a pedestal, we stop seeing them as the real and complicated people they are. We are all in need of God's transformative work, and can be used by God to bring grace and mercy to others. We don't need to be angels to do that."

Ronda Stewart-Wilcox, CT online comment.

Thin Places: "Please Don't Call My Daughter an Angel," by Amy Julia Becker.

Freedom...

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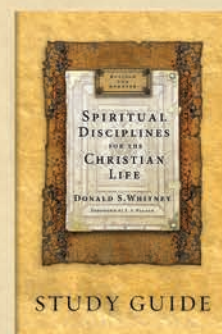


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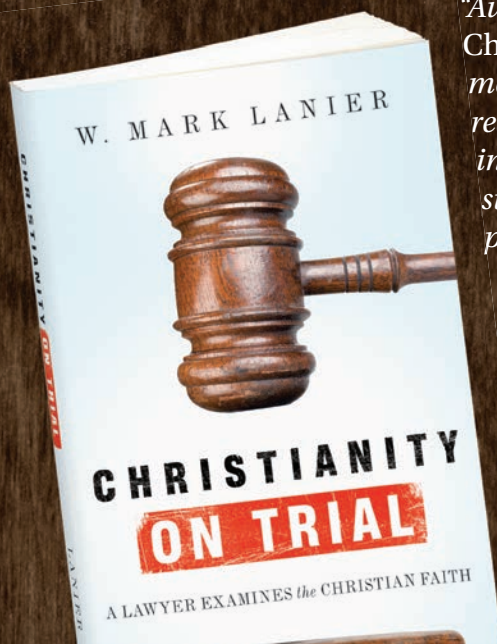
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—**KEN STARR**, former solicitor general of the United States and current president of Baylor University

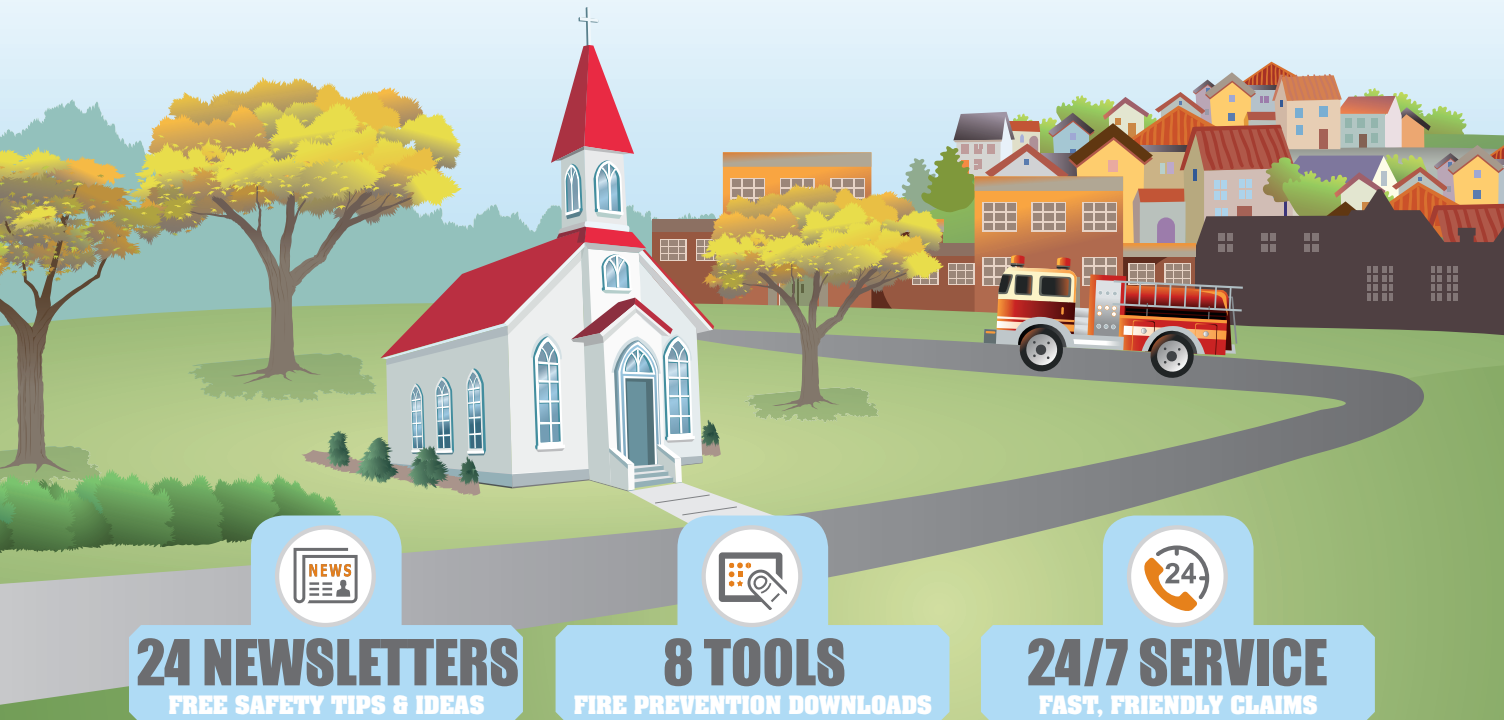

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NEWS



WITNESS



PERSIAN PLUNGE

IRAN: The plight of imprisoned pastors like Saeed Abedini make headlines, but the world's No. 9 persecutor of Christians is also seeing record conversions. Last year, 228 former Muslims participated in what Elam Ministries calls the Iranian church's largest baptism in centuries. Elam expects thousands more as the Islamic government's crackdown on Christianity backfires, making the faith more intriguing to Iranians disillusioned with theocracy. In other words, Jesus—the enemy of their enemy—is becoming their friend.

COURTESY OF ELAM MINISTRIES





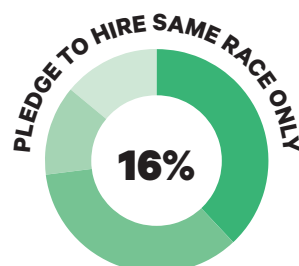
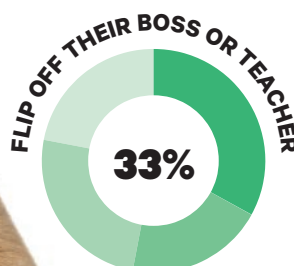
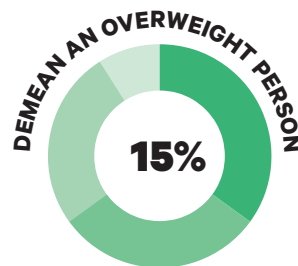
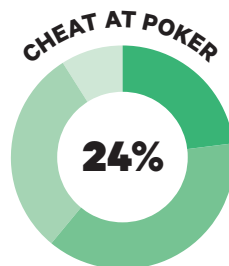
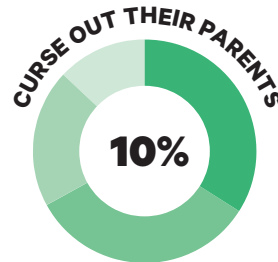
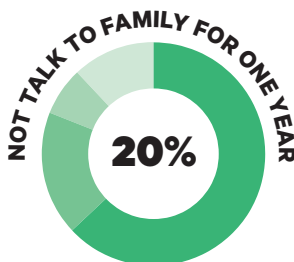
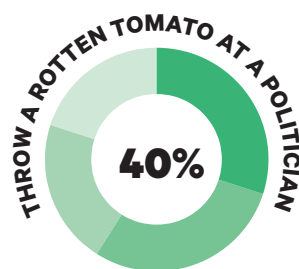
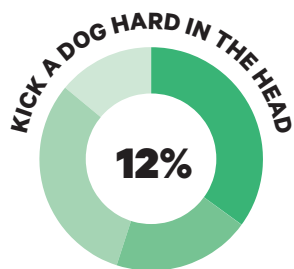
GLEANINGS



IMMORAL MINORITY

Would you kick a dog for money? Here's how many evangelical and born-again churchgoers agreed to do delinquent deeds for cash:

\$1 MILLION
\$10,000–\$100,000
\$10–\$1,000
FREE



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CHINA

Lift high the cross—right off dozens of churches

More than 60 churches in China's most Christian province have been threatened or destroyed this year in a government campaign to remove prominent crosses and other religious symbols. Among them was Sanjiang Church, a \$3.2 million, 8-story megachurch that wasn't spared from demolition even after hundreds of members formed a human shield to protect it. While Communist Party officials insist the "Three Rectifications and One Demolition" campaign was necessary because

the churches were illegally built, nearly 60 prominent Chinese scholars, ministers, and lawyers publicly condemned the "misunderstanding, violation, discrimination, and persecution," and urged the Chinese people to demand more religious freedom.



EGYPT

Copts to U.S. Christian leaders: Thanks but shush

Leith Anderson, James Dobson, Franklin Graham, and Bill Hybels were among 188 Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox leaders urging the United States to do more to help the dwindling Christians of Syria,

Iraq, and Egypt. But not all Egyptian Christian leaders welcomed the show of solidarity. "We value so much the prayers and concerns of our Christian brethren around the world," said Fawzi Khalil, pastor at Kasr el-Dobara Church in Cairo, the largest evangelical congregation in the Middle East. "But we don't believe outside pressure would be best for our daily life with our Muslim friends." The U.S. leaders asked Congress to appoint a special envoy on Middle East religious minorities, review foreign aid, and assist refugees and reconstruction. The U.S. House approved the envoy last fall; the Senate has yet to vote.

SHUTTERSTOCK

“[It] was not an image for the Christian environment.”

Paul Roof, former sociology professor at Charleston Southern University, on the reason the Southern Baptist school gave for firing him after a microbrewery adorned its new beer can with a photo of his award-winning beard. *CHARLESTON CITY PAPER*



Pastors repay \$1.2 million in diverted 9/11 donations

Assemblies of God pastors Carl and Donna Keyes agreed to repay their New York City church the \$1.2 million they took from donations for 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina victims. The Keyes had used the funds to buy a BMW, take a vacation to Florida, and build a farmhouse in New Jersey. The church's former executive director, Mark Costantin, also agreed to pay back the almost \$500,000 he borrowed illegally (some of which he used to pay his mortgage) after an Associated Press (AP) investigation exposed the diverted funds. While the Glad Tidings Tabernacle, located 2.5 miles from Ground Zero, was instrumental in relief work following 9/11, Keyes “embellished stories about relief work he performed,” in some cases taking credit for work others had done, according to the AP. An interim board appointed by the New York District of the Assemblies of God will govern the church for at least two years before it regains independence.



UNITED KINGDOM

Evangelical Alliance drops prominent member

Britain's largest evangelical group “discontinued” the membership of Oasis Trust, one of the country's most prominent ministries, for promoting founder Steve Chalke's support of same-sex marriage. Oasis says it has “no corporate view” on the issue, but the Evangelical Alliance (EAK) says the Oasis board refused to adjust online resources and social media to “equally profile the traditional Christian view” on human sexuality (per the EAK's request). The EAK said removing Oasis wasn't about either group's position on homosexuality, but about the failure of a member to “comply with a reasonable request.” Chalke, whose charity work has made him one of Britain's most famous Baptist pastors, raised hackles within the EAK a decade ago when he rejected the penal substitutionary theory of atonement.

One way to stop sex spats: Gym teacher-ministers

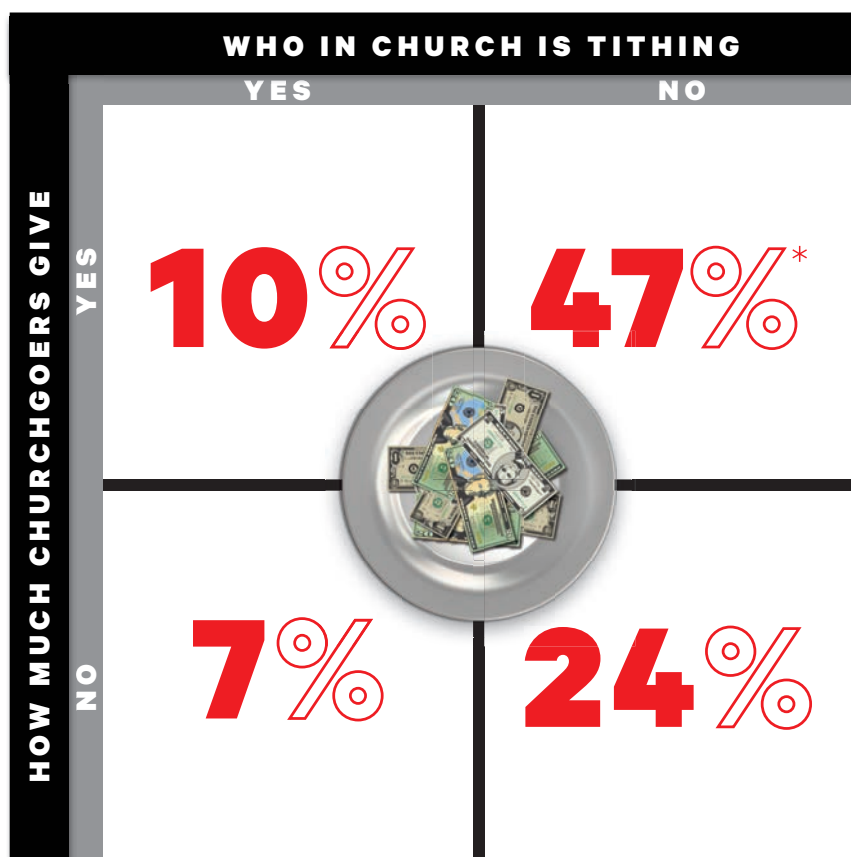
The Catholic Archdiocese of Cincinnati has asked all teachers to sign contracts that add “minister” to each of their job titles. The move—which also bans sex outside of marriage, cohabitation, using in vitro fertilization, living a gay lifestyle, or advocating for any of these behaviors—is meant to protect the archdiocese from employee discrimination lawsuits using last year's high-profile *Hosanna-Tabor* case. The Supreme Court unanimously affirmed that a “ministerial exception” exempts religious employers from federal employment and disability laws. A Cincinnati jury recently ruled that

the archdiocese unjustly discriminated against a teacher who was fired after becoming pregnant via artificial insemination. Experts predict *Hosanna-Tabor* won't stop more employment lawsuits like these from being filed, but that Christian schools are most likely to prevail.

A Muslim's first year at a conservative Baptist seminary

The first Muslim student at one of America's largest and most conservative seminaries finished his first year in May, the latest in a growing trend of Muslim students who are attracted to the traditional values of religious colleges. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) requires that

EVANGELICAL SENIOR PASTORS WHO KNOW:



EVANGELICAL COUNCIL FOR FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

students demonstrate a “mature Christian character,” “a desire for Christian ministry,” and “a record of active church service.” But president Paige Patterson said that Ghasan Nagagreh, a Sunni from Palestine, was accepted into an archaeology PhD program because he agreed to abide by SWBTS’s conduct code and because the school may be able to witness to him. Longtime Southern Baptist critic Wade Burleson and others questioned the exception, saying SWBTS was putting its stance on alcohol and tobacco above its stance on doctrinal matters.

Pregnancy centers losing online, winning in court

Internet giant Yahoo! confirmed it took down crisis pregnancy ads after NARAL Pro-Choice America claimed that nearly 8 in 10 ads displayed on searches for “abortion clinic” are funded by pro-life groups misrepresenting the actual services they offer. NARAL praised Google for also removing such ads, though many pro-life groups said their ads hadn’t been affected. Meanwhile, a Maryland federal court struck down a county requirement that crisis pregnancy centers post signs in their waiting rooms stating “the center does not have a licensed medical professional on staff.” And the Second Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that while such New York City centers must state they don’t have doctors on staff, they no longer have to announce that they don’t perform abortions or offer abortion referrals.

Bible college accused of overworking foreign students

The president of a Bible college in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, was arrested on accusations of forcing foreign students to work long hours at far below minimum wage—and threatening to revoke student visas if they did not comply. Students told investigators the nondenominational Cathedral Bible College’s classes were not real, and that their primary task was to work for president Reginald Wayne Miller full-time. (Federal law caps the workweek for foreign students at 20 hours, and the work must be integral to education.) Miller may be charged with forced labor, a felony

LEARNING WHO LATINO EVANGELICALS ARE

One out of five Latino adults in America is now Protestant. Of those, nearly half are converts from Catholicism, reports Pew Research Center. Evangelical Hispanics outnumber mainline Hispanics three to one. Other characteristics of Hispanic evangelicals:

60%

are foreign born. Of those, half converted after coming to the United States.

39% are Spanish-dominant
27% are English-dominant
35% are bilingual

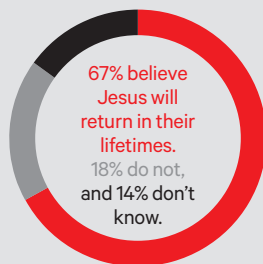
28%

are not Pentecostals or charismatics.

52%

believe in the prosperity gospel.

“God will grant wealth and good health to believers with enough faith.”



Compose **32%** of Salvadorans, **22%** of Puerto Ricans, **16%** of Dominicans, **13%** of Mexicans, and **8%** of Cubans.

Growth is most significant among Latinos ages 30 to 49, the foreign born, and those of non-Mexican heritage.

Reasons why Catholics converted:

59% stopped believing Catholic teachings.
51% found evangelical churches help members more.
45% gradually drifted away.
9% married a non-Catholic.

with a maximum sentence of 20 years for each charge. The college, which Miller himself founded in 1975, began accepting international students in 1999. Miller holds a doctorate from the college.

Crystal Cathedral rerun: Megachurch sold to Catholics

Evocative of the once-strong Crystal Cathedral's sobering 2011 sale to a Catholic diocese, the Fellowship at Two Rivers (formerly Two Rivers Baptist Church) in Nashville will sell its 220,000-square-foot building to the Bible Belt buckle town's Catholic diocese. Two Rivers, once boasting nearly 7,000 members, ran into trouble seven years ago when about 70 members filed a lawsuit against then-pastor Jerry Sutton over his alleged mishandling of finances. The lawsuit was dismissed, and about 80 percent of the church voted to affirm Sutton, but he retired the next year (even after the church removed the dissidents at his request). Now the multisite church has closer to 1,200 members and weekly attendance of 575. The diocese's current headquarters was purchased from the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. in 1974.

Southern Baptist baptisms up most among... infants?

America's largest evangelical denomination debated the “stark patterns of decline” in its baptisms at its recent annual meeting—as it has now for seven straight years. But in an attempt to “own the problem,” a special task force of pastors in the 15.7-million-member Southern Baptist Convention—which still baptized more than 310,000 people in 2013—highlighted how the drought differs by demographic. In 2012, 60 percent of its more than 46,000 churches reported zero youth baptisms (ages 12 to 17), and 80 percent reported only one or zero baptisms among millennials (ages 18 to 29). One in four churches reported no baptisms at all. Intriguingly, the “only consistently growing” group in the denomination that historically has epitomized adult believers' baptism: children under age 5.



Church and State

Sorry 666: Churches Fear 990 More

How more ministries going digital could unwittingly aid atheists targeting church tax breaks.

Critics of churches' favorable tax treatment gained ammunition from a recent investigation by National Public Radio, which questioned why the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has granted church status to 22 of America's 30 largest television ministries.

Only two are accredited by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability. But such filings can be legitimate, said president Dan Busby. "The advent of new technologies used by churches to disseminate their message has only served to make distinctions between church and parachurch organizations more complex."

Many churches leverage today's technology so those beyond their walls can participate. But Christian legal experts are concerned that blurred lines between "church" and "ministry" will eventually spur the IRS to reexamine what constitutes a church. (The agency last stripped a nonprofit of church status in 2004, largely because the broadcasting- and publishing-focused group mostly ceased to gather its followers in a physical space.)

In late 2012, the Freedom From Religion Foundation sued the IRS, arguing that churches should be subject to the same Form 990 paperwork as nonprofits are. A Wisconsin federal court decided that the atheist group had legal standing to proceed.

If the foundation prevails, church formation may be stifled, said Chicago attorney Rich Baker. Few of the hundreds of churches he has represented have the financial resources to complete registration forms and audited financial statements.

"Each signals a greater degree of

oversight," said Baker. "If they make churches file as charitable entities, it would have major repercussions."

A federal judge in Kentucky recently dismissed a similar lawsuit, ruling three atheist groups did not have standing. But the Wisconsin lawsuit is "of direct relevance to every church," warns legal adviser Richard Hammar. Form 990 is 12 pages long but can run to nearly 100, and includes disclosure of employee compensation, travel reimbursements, and charitable contributions from donors.

Legal experts say since Senator Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) completed his high-profile probe of televangelists in 2011, the federal government has been asking for more information.

Steve McFarland, chief legal officer for World Vision, said the forms now solicit so much information that they can potentially threaten religious liberty. "We're all for transparency," he said. "But you don't have to be a Chicken Little sort of person to be a bit concerned... where is this going to stop? Do we as a religious community want to continue answering ever-increasing questions?"

One underlying problem is that lawmakers have never defined the term *church*, said tax-law specialist Frank Sommerville. That means courts typically resort to a "duck" test to see if an organization "looks, acts, and quacks" like a church, he said.

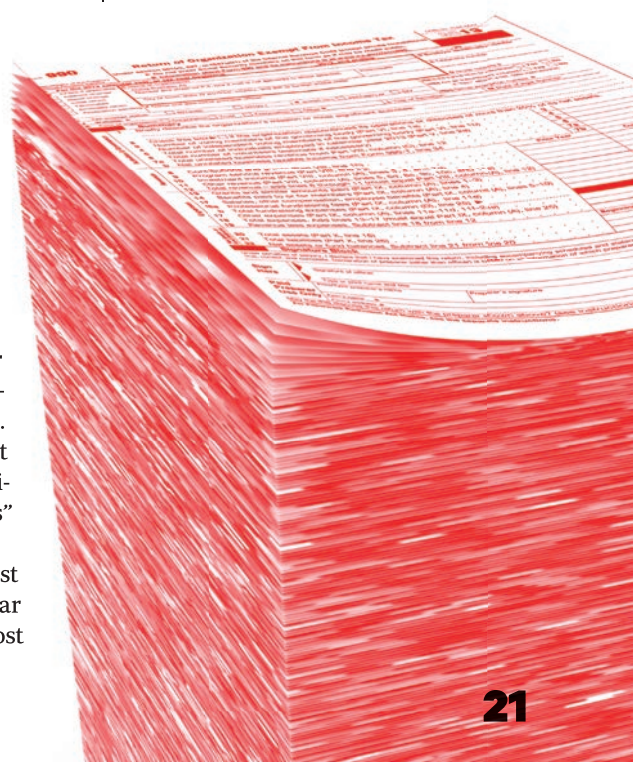
The IRS has its own 14-point test for assessing churches. "Regular congregations" is the criteria most

often cited in court. But Sommerville sees the essential of a physical gathering as no longer meaningful.

"When a church extends participation in its worship gatherings electronically, it is no less a church," he said. "The government is not free to claim that the organization loses its church status just because the electronic audience is bigger than the in-person audience."

Ministry Watch's Rusty Leonard advocates a middle road. The certified public accountant believes all churches should be required to disclose audited financial statements to the public—but not have to report them to the government. "This would go a long way toward cleaning up bad behavior," he said. "We could greatly improve things *and* keep the government out of the situation."

Ken Walker





Business

Too Close for Comfort

Secular companies have owned Christian divisions for years. Now those family ties are being tested.

As **Hobby Lobby** made its case to the Supreme Court, arguing that its business is sufficiently Christian to be exempt from Obamacare's contraceptive mandate, another business was arguing its evangelical bona fides, too.

WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group, the evangelical division of Penguin Random House (PRH), is one of the world's leading Christian publishers. Its backlist includes David Platt's *Radical*, John Piper's *Desiring God*, and Stephen Arterburn's *Every Man's Battle*. But it has resigned its membership in the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) rather than submit to an ethics review over *God and the Gay Christian*—a book it didn't actually publish.

The book, in which Matthew Vines argues that same-gender sex is not sinful, was published by Convergent Books. A 16-month-old PRH line, Convergent describes

itself as "for progressive and mainline Christians who demand an open, inclusive, and culturally engaged exploration of faith."

In a letter to board members, NRB president Jerry Johnson said WaterBrook Multnomah employees worked on the Convergent book, noting that Stephen Cobb is chief publishing executive for both groups. Cobb also oversees Image, PRH's Catholic imprint. All three divisions share offices in Colorado Springs, away from PRH's Manhattan headquarters.

"This issue comes down to NRB members producing unbiblical material, regardless of the label under which they do it," Johnson said. "I asked them to reconsider and end the practice of having Christian workers from their publishing house work on Convergent projects. They declined."

In a statement published before the NRB letter, Cobb said no employees were forced to work on the book, and that a few

took him up on his offer to abstain.

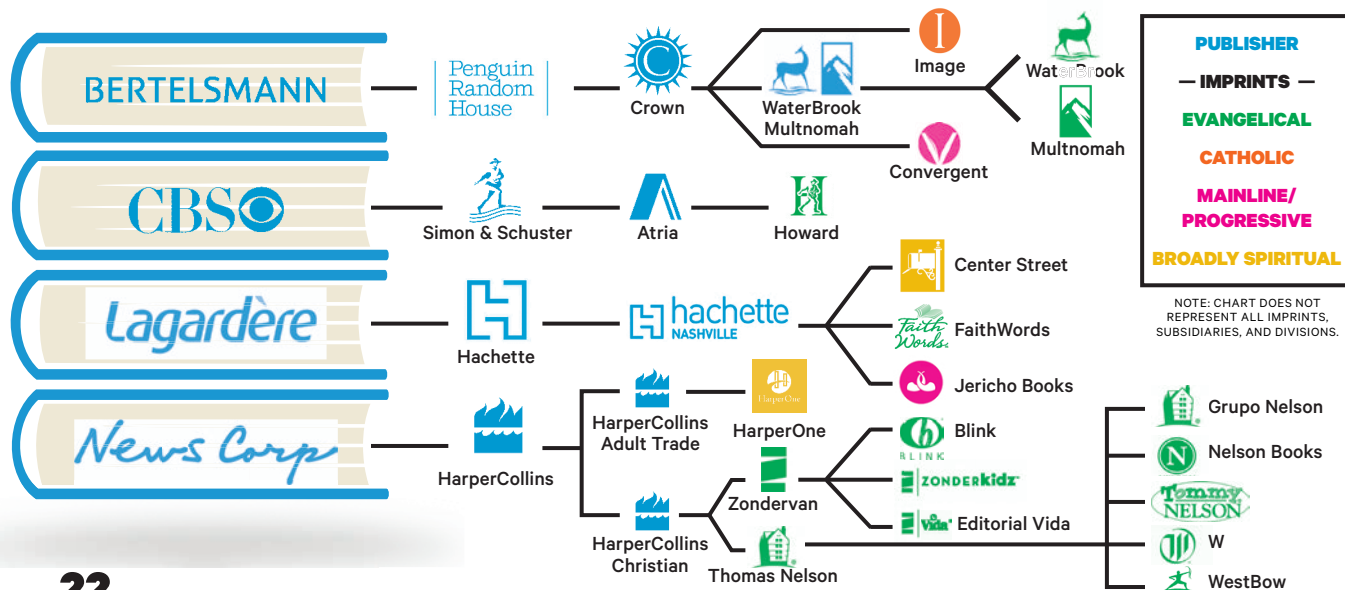
The point of imprints is to identify unique brands and styles to buyers, but boundaries within publishing houses are often blurred, said Lynn Garrett, senior religion editor for *Publishers Weekly*. Sharing offices and staff is common.

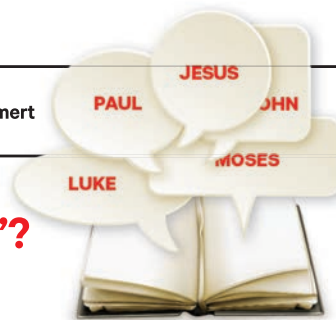
Michael Maudlin, executive editor of HarperOne, was surprised by the dispute. "WaterBrook has been very responsible, saying clearly that more liberal books will be published under the Convergent imprint, evangelical books under WaterBrook, and Catholic books under Image," he said. "I can't understand why that is a problem."

It's a problem "because they're all under one roof," said Dean Merrill, past editorial director for David C. Cook and Focus on the Family. While other PRH imprints have published material at odds with biblical teaching for years, it's Convergent's shared staff that matters, he said. "A brand is simply a public face to retailers and readers of what setting a book is coming out of. A publisher is not just a collection of typesetters and print buyers and people who put books in boxes. We're talking about the world of thought."

Meanwhile, another longtime evangelical imprint is getting even more directly involved in publishing a book that argues that same-gender sex is not sinful. Howard Books, a Simon & Schuster imprint (and not an NRB member) best known for its longtime Hugs series and hymnals, will publish a memoir in October by Jennifer Knapp, the Christian musician who came out as a lesbian in 2010. The book, a Howard spokeswoman said, "is simply a vehicle for us to encourage Christians to open their hearts and minds to having the discussion openly."

Ruth Moon





Q: Should pastors stop saying, 'the Bible says'?

Andy Stanley challenges one of Billy Graham's favorite phrases. Experts weigh in.

It's time to stop saying, "the Bible says." At least that's what Andy Stanley says.

At Exponential, a church-planting conference attended by 5,000 in late spring (with another 20,000 watching via video), the senior pastor of North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Georgia, said pastors should instead use phrases like "Paul says" and "Jesus says" when citing Scripture.

Stanley (who also made the case in his 2012 book *Deep & Wide*) told us the main reason for his injunction is "to keep people who are skeptical of the Bible's authority engaged in the sermon." It's a question of evangelism, not theology, he says. "The goal is to lead [people] to the place where they acknowledge Jesus to be who he claimed to be. They don't have to believe Noah built an ark and put animals on it to get there. . . . To get a person to the point where they believe the Bible is authoritative, they first have to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. The reason

Christians take the Old Testament seriously is because Jesus did."

But Stanley adds that the approach has "helped Christians in our congregation have a greater appreciation for the historicity of the New Testament, that these were actual people who said these things."

It's hard to know how many preachers today use "the Bible says" rather than more specific citations. But Paul Gutjahr, professor of American and religious studies at Indiana University-Bloomington, said the phrase "gained its popularity in the early 20th century with revivalists like Billy Sunday and later Billy Graham."

Grant Wacker, professor of Christian history at Duke Divinity School, said Graham probably copied the phrase from one of his professors at the Florida Bible Institute. "He was very conscious about what they did and why they did it," said Walker. "Graham would hold up the Bible and say, 'the Bible says,' because he sensed the Bible's authority in American culture,

and it resonated with his hearers."

A 2014 State of the Bible study conducted by Barna Group and the American Bible Society reported that half of American adults believe the Bible is a valuable resource for living well. According to the study, 80 percent of practicing Protestants, 60 percent of practicing Catholics, and 50 percent of the general public believe the Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life.

Barna vice president Roxanne Stone said that for participants who affirm this, "hearing a pastor point to it would likely add credibility to the statement." However, "younger generations are less likely to view the Bible this way," she said. Just over a third (35%) of "Millennials" (ages 18-29) believe the Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life, compared with 49 percent of "Busters" (ages 30-48), 55 percent of "Boomers" (ages 49-67), and 63 percent of "Elders" (68 and older).

YES

NO

"Many preachers use 'the Bible says' too glibly, as shorthand for 'trust me on the point I'm making.' Rather than tell people what the Bible says, preachers should show people what it says. By doing so, they will less likely use proof texts. A math teacher doesn't help her students if she simply gives them the answers. Instead, she shows them how to solve the problems themselves. Preachers should show their congregations how to properly interpret Scripture."

Krish Kandiah, executive director, Churches in Mission at the Evangelical Alliance UK

"It is better to demonstrate the authority of the Bible story by story, theme by theme, name by name, verse by verse, than to just assert its authority. If a listener's hackles go up at the mention of 'the Bible says,' then the preacher may have lost at the outset. But if listeners are captured by a startling story from Jesus, a bold claim by Paul, or an intricate argument from John, then little by little they drop their guard and open their heart, until one day they find their whole world turned upside down."

Mark Buchanan, professor of pastoral theology, Ambrose Seminary

"Paul was faithful to Christ and Scripture while immersing himself in the culture of the people he was trying to reach. The approach Stanley advocates models the same dual commitment. When we require ourselves to say to people who don't yet trust the authority of Scripture that 'the Bible says,' we are arguing from our own frame of reference and not starting from theirs. We must argue to and not from our basis of authority, if we are to be all things to all people so that by any means some might be saved."

Rick Richardson, director of Evangelizing Churches Project, Billy Graham Center

"Jesus often attributed passages to individual authors like Moses and Isaiah, but he also introduced passages with phrases like, 'It is written' or 'Have you never read in the Scriptures?' Both formulas are legitimate. But Stanley's reasoning is unsettling. It suggests unbelievers can't relate to 'the Bible says' because that phrase grants equal authority to all parts of the Bible. This thinking inevitably leads to a canon within the canon. We should counter the suggestion that Genesis is less reliable than Matthew."

Hershael York, professor of preaching, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

"The Bible speaks with a rich array of voices, and I generally highlight that in my sermons by using phrases like 'Paul says to the Corinthians.' But we also must worry about American individualism and subjectivity. Part of being a Christian is submitting to the rich, ancient, seemingly disordered, multivalent collection of writings called Scripture. Personal experience is the only revelation many people trust these days. For Christians, however, there is no 'Paul says' apart from what Scripture says."

Will Willimon, professor of Christian ministry, Duke Divinity School

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“

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Katelyn Beaty '06,
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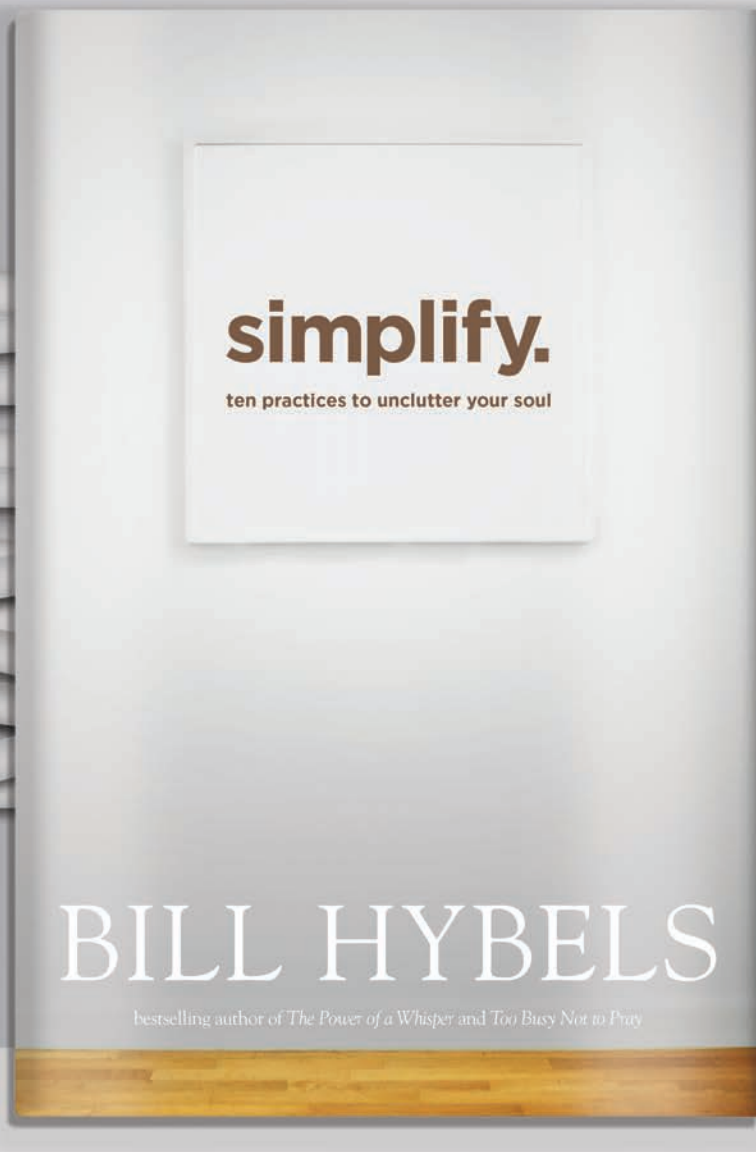
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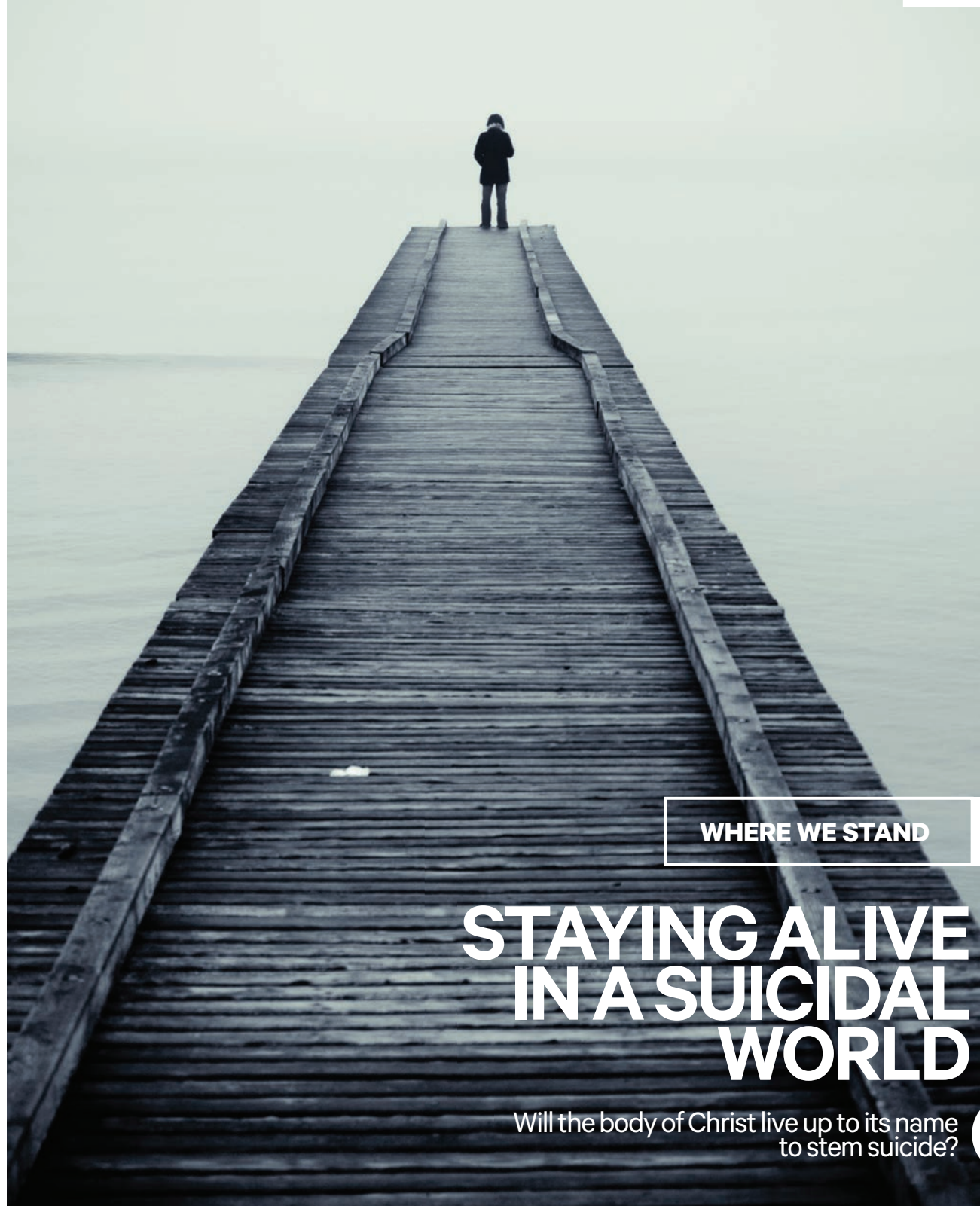


Bill Hybels is the founding and senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, a multi-site congregation with six locations and weekend attendance of 24,000. He is a bestselling author of more than 20 books.

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VIEWS



WHERE WE STAND

STAYING ALIVE IN A SUICIDAL WORLD

Will the body of Christ live up to its name
to stem suicide?



ISTOCK



WHEN FAMILY PASTOR George “DB” Antrim III took his own life this May, he left behind a wife of 17 years and two sons, the youth group he had led for two years, and, indeed, the whole community of Wauke, Iowa. His was the first death Westwind Church had faced in its five years. “I had no idea how horrific that day would be,” said pastor Brandon Barker, who read aloud Antrim’s suicide note one Sunday morning as congregants wept openly.

Antrim’s death was the latest in what is being called a “rash” of pastor suicides: the Illinois pastor who shot himself in front of his mother and son last fall; the Georgia pastor who took his life in between worship services; and Isaac Hunter, the Orlando pastor who killed himself last December amid a church resignation and divorce. In a note he wrote two years ago, Hunter epitomized one of the great lies of suicide: “I have become what I never wished to be, a burden on those I love the most.”

Suicide—and its frequent companions, depression and despair—has received renewed attention among U.S. church leaders. At a conference this March that drew 9,000, Rick Warren called mental illness “the last taboo,” and recently it hasn’t seemed that taboo at all. High-profile pastors Perry Noble and John Mark Comer have written candidly about their wrestling matches with depression. About half of self-identified evangelicals now say more than prayer and Bible study are needed to defeat mental disturbances. Efforts like Duke’s Clergy Health Initiative target the risks involved when a pastor’s well-being depends on ministry “success.” We’ve put programs and hotlines in place.

These are all good, but the church’s response to suicide has mostly stayed on the functional level. And because suicide is as much a spiritual crisis as it is a psychological one, we’ll need to infuse our practical resources with solid spiritual ones.

A 2013 book by Jennifer Michael Hecht—a Jewish atheist philosopher—may be an unlikely, fruitful place to start.

Every person is spiritually stitched to innumerable other persons. Here we find not only the strongest argument against suicide, but also a powerful antidote to it.

In *Stay*, Hecht traces the dominant Western views on suicide. Through the centuries, the church condemned it as a violation of the sixth commandment, while Enlightenment thinkers embraced it as an expression of individual choice. Both traditions are alive today, as seen among some Christians who insist that

NPR this winter. Suicide has a terrible copy-cat effect—it usually triggers more suicides, especially on college campuses, in military ranks, and among a loved one’s family and friends. The “suicidal influence” is so powerful, Hecht notes, that “a suicide might also be considered a homicide.” Given that suicide kills more people

than cancer and HIV/AIDS, and more people from ages 15 to 44 than war, we are wise to listen to her communitarian argument.

And of all people, Christians should see the profound truth in it. We are never “individuals” but always and inextricably bound together in profound ways. Our connectedness is so central to the gospel that Paul uses a compelling metaphor—the body—to capture it (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Eph. 4). In this body, all the parts are needed and work as a whole. If one part of the body cuts itself off forever, then surely the entire body will suffer. And just as the eye can’t say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” (1 Cor. 12:21), neither can it say, “You don’t need me!”

Every person is spiritually stitched to innumerable other persons. Here we find not only the strongest argument against suicide, but also a powerful antidote to it. Along with hotlines and health clinic referrals, we the church also need to foster communities where the darkest of impulses can be named without fear of rejection. Satan would love nothing more than to keep suicidal Christians isolated. But God has given us the answer in each other. As we are knitted together as the church, the gates of hell—and of suicide—will not prevail against us. **CT**

KATELYN BEATY is CT’s managing editor.



suicide is an unpardonable sin, and among secular progressives who lead the assisted suicide/“right to die” movements.

Hecht puts forth a third way. It’s a thoroughly nonreligious case against suicide, but one that resonates deeply with biblical teaching. “Rejecting suicide is a huge act within a community,” she writes. “If suicide has a pernicious influence on others, then staying alive has the opposite influence: it helps keep people alive. By staying alive, we are contributing something precious to the world.”

“Your staying alive means so much more than you really know,” Hecht told

ISTOCK



The Hidden Blessing of Infertility

There is more than one way to lead a fruitful life.

There's a certain narrative that dominates most stories of infertility. Their sense of overwhelming anguish and loss, regardless of outcome, contrasts so drastically from my own experience that sometimes I have to remind myself that I, too, have a story of infertility.

That term, *infertile*, may be medically and technically appropriate, but it's not a word I would use to describe my life. A friend recently asked my advice for someone struggling with being infertile. "I'm not sure," I told her, "because I don't really struggle with it at all."

Even though God has not fulfilled my longtime desire to have children, he has filled my life with so many other gifts that my greatest struggle has been to be a faithful steward of so much abundance.

I was 26 years old when my husband and I threw away the birth control.

But the babies didn't come.

When I was diagnosed with endometriosis—likely the culprit in my inability to conceive—I had corrective surgery. My doctor said I would be pregnant within six months.

Still the babies didn't come.

My husband and I decided that further procedures were off the table. Although we are Baptists, we believe in the principles set forth in the Catholic Church's *Donum Vitae* ("The Gift of Life"), which distinguishes between medical interventions that *assist* the marital union in achieving pregnancy and interventions that *replace* the procreative marital act. We agree with the distinction made by some Christian ethicists and theologians between procreation and reproduction: While reproduction

can be achieved any number of ways, procreation takes place in the mystery of two bodies becoming one flesh and producing another body.

These were our convictions. In adhering to them, I was ready to cope with what would be lost in doing so. I never imagined what would be gained.

I gained freedom from the tyranny of reproductive technologies that would have transformed our marital bed into a site of manufacture; turned my body into a repository for needles, artificial hormones, and drugs; and shrunk time into an endless series of 28-day cycles.

A friend, serving as a pastor for years, has seen many infertile couples "who demand success. When they don't achieve it, they despair more over the failure of the procedure than the absence of the child." Such failures of human effort and technology, he says, "can and often do cause even greater suffering." Our decision freed us from this potential suffering.

But even more important, with my eyes turned from this option, they were free to see the things God was bringing before me. If ever I felt inclined to lament the lack of children, God never gave me time to do so. In response to every private,

fervent pleading I've made before God, his answer has been a different door slammed open: a missions opportunity, a new writing assignment, a sudden book contract, an unexpected job, an unsought promotion, the chance to care for aging parents, a student needing extra help, another telling me I am her "true mother," or another taking my motherly advice to heart at last.

I never lost my desire to have children, never stopped storing away favorite names in my heart, just in case. But, thankfully, long ago I lost any desire to have anything that was not clearly given by the hand of God, anything that was not a good and perfect gift from above (James 1:17).

The Bible is replete with accounts of people who took childbearing into their own hands rather than trust God's ways and his timing. The consequences were devastating.

Today, according to the Centers for Disease Control, 6 percent of married women ages 15 to 44 are infertile. If our infertility stories are to be transformed into narratives of hope and healing, the church must teach women and men how to view and respond to infertility (or singleness or disability or any other way of life that doesn't line up with usual societal expectations) within the larger reality of the gospel.

To be sure, not all the pain of infertility can be eliminated. But much of this pain is perpetuated by a culture—including a church culture—that does not emphasize enough the flourishing that comes in accepting our limits rather than futilely insisting they be overcome.

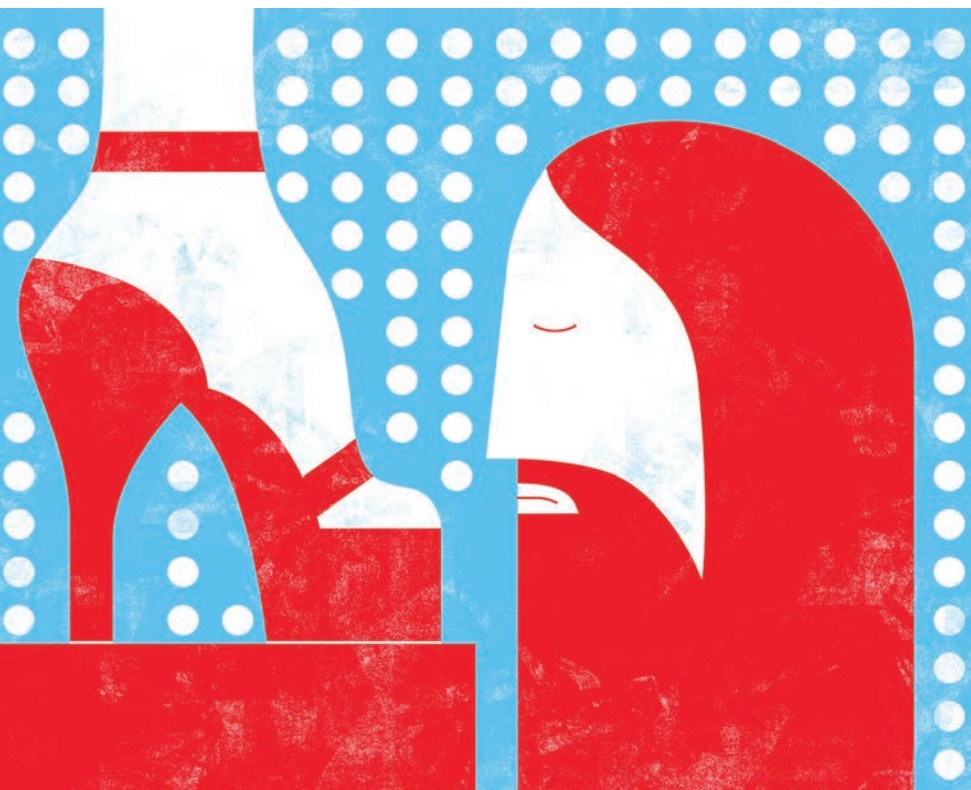
By choosing to accept the life and limits God has given me, my life has become richly fertile.

CT

If ever I felt inclined to lament the lack of children, God never gave me time to do so. His answer has been different doors slammed open.

Would Jesus hang out in a strip club?

Testing the boundaries of outreach evangelism.



Dawn Herzog Jewell
Yes, to Heal the Abused

An out-of-the-way topless bar and club off the highway was a regular Thursday evening destination for Anne Polencheck and her outreach partner. Every two weeks the women faithfully toted gift bags of hand-made cards, homemade cookies, earrings, and lotion to the bar and club. With a word of kindness, a prayer, or a hug, they hoped

to share Christ's compassion with women who worked there.

Polencheck, a former software engineer, leads New Name, a ministry to strip clubs, bars, massage parlors, and so-called spas in the western suburbs of Chicago. Volunteers pray together and regularly visit venues. It's a slow-going ministry that emulates Jesus leaving the safety of the fold to seek the one lost sheep. Often the workers are busy with customers or simply aren't interested in chatting.

One week, Polencheck met Debbie,

a 20-something who recognized the "church ladies" from their previous visits. "I'm seven months pregnant. I need a new job," she said. After their visit, Debbie stepped outside and prayed: "God, if you're real, can you help me?"

When Polencheck and her ministry partner returned one week later, they handed Debbie a flier for Refuge for Women, a Kentucky residential program for those choosing to leave sexual exploitation. It usually had a wait list, but it had one opening.

Debbie's plea came after years of despair. Her childhood was marked by sexual abuse that started when she was 5. At age 9, Debbie was placed in foster care after she showed up at school black and blue from violent beatings. Twenty times, she was shuffled in and out of foster homes in part due to her anger-driven rebellion.

The wounded girl grew to become a broken woman who numbed her pain with alcohol and drugs. Her husband, an abusive drug addict, introduced her to strip clubs. She began exotic dancing and using more drugs. Debbie's horrific background is not unusual for women working in strip clubs. About 90 percent of women who have received care at Refuge were sexually abused as children.

"Jesus would want us to look at these women as our sisters," says Ked Frank, director and cofounder of Refuge. "They're living out of pain and trauma, and our hearts should be broken for them." At the residential facility, Debbie found family in seven other women with similar experiences as well as a church community and mentors who listened,

JAMES O'BRIEN

prayed, and encouraged her.

Before graduating the yearlong program, Debbie gave birth to a healthy baby girl, accepted Christ, and was baptized. She now leads worship at her church and mentors teenagers in the youth group. Debbie holds a job as she raises her 2-year-old daughter and volunteers at Refuge, hoping to help other women who bear the invisible chains of abuse and exploitation.

"God is at work, and his presence is found in the clubs," Frank says.

So, would Jesus hang out with people in a strip club? I believe he's been doing just that.

Jesus unconditionally loves us all, including club owners, dancers, and customers. He is still calling us to leave the safety of our church walls and extend a hand of hope to a broken man or woman.

DAWN HERZOG JEWELL, author of *Escaping the Devil's Bedroom*, is communications manager for Media Associates International.

Joe Carter No, He Wouldn't

In 1896, Charles Sheldon, a Congregational minister in Kansas, wrote *In His Steps*, a novel that became an all-time bestseller and spawned the ubiquitous phrase, "What Would Jesus Do?"

Back then it was an open question—as Sheldon makes clear—whether Jesus would condone hanging out at a boxing match. Today, we're wondering if we can give reasons why Jesus wouldn't hang out at a *strip club*. Times have changed.

Initially, I assumed this must be a trick question. Are there Christians who ponder, "What Would Jesus Do?" and think, "Jesus would probably be hanging out at a bar where people go to watch women undress"?

It's hard for me to believe there are Christians who think Jesus *would* hang out in a strip club. Are we talking about the Jesus who had a high opinion of women and a low view of lust? Hanging out at a strip club doesn't sound like something he would do.

But since the question is being asked, I assume there are people who think he would. I have to assume they think that since Jesus ate with sinners, he'd have no problem eating at a buffet next to a stripper pole.

Jesus did sit and eat with sinners (Mark 2:16–17). In Luke 15, we again find the oft-quoted claim made by the Pharisees: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." What is often left out is the lengthy reply Jesus gave. After hearing their charges, Jesus tells three parables—about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a prodigal son. Each of these stories has the same theme: rejoicing over the repentance of sinners. It's possible, even likely, that some who ate with Jesus—such as during the feeding of the 5,000, or at Simon the Pharisee's house—left unrepentant. But there is no evidence that Jesus ever ate with sinners or even spent significant time "hanging out" with them without calling them to turn from their sin.

There is no place in Scripture where Jesus was uncritically present when sin was occurring or when an action that mocked God was taking place. In fact, in the most famous example of Jesus witnessing an act where sin was taking place and God was being mocked—a scene recorded in all four Gospels—he made a whip of cords and drove sinners from the temple. Do we think this Jesus would unreservedly hang out in a place where men and women were mocking the dignity of the human body?

I wonder if what many people want to know is not whether Jesus would hang out at a strip club, but whether he'd have an issue if *they* hung out there. For those people, I'd recommend meditating on the words of Matthew 5:28–29.

JOE CARTER, coauthor of *How to Argue Like Jesus*, is an editor at The Gospel Coalition and senior editor at Acton Institute.

Mike Foster Yes, to Shine in the Dark

Strip club? Crack house? Porn convention? Casino? Fill in the blank, and every response of mine is an absolute *yes*—Jesus would hang out in these places. Here's why: There is no context, environment, or event that Jesus would choose not to be in.

Our limitations on where he might go are based on not fully understanding the desperate need for Christ in these godforsaken places. There are an estimated 400,000 strippers working in nearly 4,000 clubs in the United States. As

followers of Christ, we should hang out in these places too.

In January 2002, Craig Gross and I launched a ministry at a Las Vegas porn convention. The organization, XXXchurch.com, is devoted to being the presence of Christ at these events. There, volunteers have handed out thousands of Bibles with the words JESUS LOVES PORN STARS on the cover. I was taught about the deep and lavish grace of God not by a seminary professor but by the sex industry. In our moments of pride, we say that "those sinful people" have nothing to offer us, that we are there to save them. But a great desire of God is to ruin our spiritual pride. (If you don't believe this, go to an AA meeting.)

Fear is the core reason why many of us would say "no" to Jesus hanging out in a strip club. Fill in the blank of what you might be afraid of happening: it might look bad; it wouldn't be very productive to do ministry in that environment; people would be dragged down into a life of sin; someone would have to explain our actions to religious people.

I am sympathetic to these fears and their power. But such comments expose the smallness of our religion. A Christian leader once said to me, "Don't blame the dark for being dark. Blame the light for not shining in the dark."

God is the God of "yes" and the God of "go." We have made our faith too heavy and our walk burdensome and scary. We are so great at making the gospel complex that we forget about the simplicity of Jesus. He is not held down by manmade restraints, restrictions, or rules. He easily strolls into the space of need and the lives that are desperate for healing.

Here is my purely marketing move: If I were acting as brand consultant for Jesus, I would tell him to go to the strip club. No place is off-limits to the gospel. In Luke 5:32 Jesus proclaims, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Everyone is looking for attention and trying to get their message out. Do you want to stand out? Then do what other teachers, religious leaders, and followers refuse to do. In my opinion, light shines the brightest in the darkest places—places like the neighborhood strip club. **CT**

MIKE FOSTER, author of *Freeway: A Not-So-Perfect Guide to Freedom*, is cofounder with Jud Wilhite of People of the Second Chance, a ministry to people in recovery.

PAST IMPERFECT

David Neff is
former editor in
chief of CT.



Divine Economics 101

It's about the common good, not just the individual good.

I recently heard sociologist Robert Putnam speak at a Georgetown University event that gathered people of faith and no faith to discuss the common good. In his speech, he complained about America's "radically shriveled sense of *we*." The author of "Bowling Alone," the famous 1995 essay on the decline of social capital—our connection to each other through activities and institutions—Putnam converted to Judaism in part because of its strong sense of community.

There was a time, Putnam argued, when churches and schools threw together youth of differing social class in ways that connected and motivated them, and helped poor youth escape poverty. This is not mere nostalgia. Putnam has surveyed decades of data to show how communities have become more segregated, and how the children of parents without a college education are now deprived of the things that create equal opportunity.

Kids from working-class homes used to be "our kids," he said. Now they are other people's kids, and we expect other people to solve their problems. But young people are our future. Their problems are ours.

Putnam was talking about inequality, which, he said, causes problems that need both conservative and liberal solutions. Liberals, he said, must learn to appreciate the conservative stress on family structures and the potential of faith communities. Solutions "have to involve churches," he said in a 2012 speech.

Further, he said, "I happen to think that hugs and time are more important than money." But, he went on, "money is important, too," and that means conservatives are going to have to recognize the need for government action in everything from tax structure to education reform.

College-educated parents spend far more "developmental time" with their children (what Putnam calls "*Goodnight Moon* time") than those parents who have a high-school education or less—with very positive outcomes. But it should be obvious why educated parents can spend more developmental time than those who hold down multiple low-income jobs with few benefits. Red solutions and blue solutions are both required.

One Christian leader is eager to talk about inequality: Pope Francis. His tweet this spring, "Inequality is the root of social evil," caused some controversy. It was paraphrased from his Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, which reads, "Inequality is the root of social ills."

In the subsection "The Economy and the Distribution of Income," Francis said inequality is a symptom of a growing tendency for the haves to ignore the have-nots. He did not offer specific policy solutions. Unlike French economist and media darling Thomas Piketty, he did not call governments to create a global wealth tax.

Instead, Francis wants to recover God's purpose for economic life and business

activity. "Casual indifference" to the poor "empties our lives and our words of all meaning," he said. "Business is . . . a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life; this will enable them truly to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all."

Divine economics is about the common good rather than the individual good, says Francis. Like Putnam, he wants to expand our sense of "we." He wants to liberate those "who are in thrall to an individualistic, indifferent, and self-centered mentality" so they can "attain a way of living and thinking which is more humane, noble, and fruitful."

Another Catholic thinker, Sister Simone "Nuns on the Bus" Campbell, says she learned from nuns who grew up under communism that the call to "shared responsibility" is very different from centralized planning. Under communism, the church must combat socialism's excesses by accenting individual responsibility. But in the United States, she says, "the excess is individualism, so the antidote is *communal solidarity*"—a fancy term for pursuing an expanded sense of "we." "We are a country based in community, not individualism," she writes, citing the preamble to the Constitution. "We are a country where we live—and die—for one another."

A lawyer once asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" That was a way of asking who is included in "we." Jesus recounted the compassionate action of a Samaritan businessman and told the lawyer, "Go and do likewise." We can indeed do likewise for our youth when we believe that their problems are our own.

ADAM CRUFT

Kids from working-class homes used to be 'our kids.' Now they are other people's kids, and we expect other people to solve their problems. But their problems are ours.

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Director of the Manhattan Declaration, Writer and Speaker

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DR. WESLEY HILL, '04

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Trinity School for Ministry and Author

"At Wheaton, I discovered my vocation to learn and teach Christian theology for the sake of the church. More than any other educational experience I've had before or since, Wheaton taught me how to study Scripture and the Christian tradition. I loved my time there and wouldn't be the teacher I am today without it."

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Meet the rappers,

COVER STORY

activists, writers,

preachers, artists,

and business leaders

shaping the next chapter

of American faith.

BY KATE SHELLNUTT

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CT'S 33 UNDER 33

MEET THE MILLENNIALS. They are 33 and younger. They are all on Twitter. And they are bringing innovation to the wide-ranging work of the kingdom. Behold, they are doing a new thing.

Ever since Paul began training Timothy in the faith, every generation has had to look to the next to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. Today, as American Christianity faces declining affiliation, intense public debates over religious freedom, changes in the family structure, and technological advances, millennial Christians have already picked up the baton.

For this story, CT set out to find young believers who we think are leading today's church in key ways—and who embody what it will look like in the years to come. We consulted ministry leaders, highly connected social media mavens, and millennials themselves to create the following list of 33 Christians 33 and younger to watch. The age cutoff corresponds with the start of the millennial generation in 1980.

Born in the '80s and '90s, millennials have grown up as digital natives. Most of them seamlessly incorporate technology into their lives, careers, and ministries. They also come from the most racially diverse generation in American history: More than 4 out of 10 U.S. millennials are non-white.

The following influencers span sectors of work, uniquely contributing in business and nonprofits, media organizations and ministries, academia and the arts. Some are up-and-coming in familiar institutions; others are venturing out with projects of their own. Plenty of names on our list will likely be unfamiliar—we wanted this project to introduce readers to all kinds of young, committed Christians, to put stories and faces to the millennial generation.

THE HIP-HOP THEOLOGIAN

TRIP LEE, 26

@TripLee | Washington, D.C.

Trip Lee has five rap albums, a book, and a seminary background, so when he takes the stage, he could be there to perform or to preach. Either way, he gets to brag about God. Lately, Lee has been doing more of the latter, shifting to pastoral ministry after years on the Christian and hip-hop charts.

A protégé and label mate of Lecrae, Lee grew popular in the late 2000s, endorsed by Reformed church leaders—most prominently John Piper. Anthony Carter, author of *On Being Black and Reformed*, called Lee a “clear, biblical, and prophetic” voice.

“I have great hope for this generation, not because of hip-hop but because of the gospel. Music can't change hearts any more than good public speaking can. Only the gospel can do that,” said Lee, now a senior pastoral assistant to Mark Dever at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C. “I want to write, preach, and do whatever I can to tell people about the goodness of Jesus.”

THE PEOPLE-BEFORE-PROFITS ENTREPRENEUR

DALE PARTRIDGE, 29
@DalePartridge
Bend, Oregon

When Dale Partridge has a new business idea, he asks himself, *If Jesus started a company, what would it look like?* And then he tries to create it.

Take Sevenly, for example. It sells apparel to raise awareness and funds for charities. Each week, the company creates a T-shirt or hoodie with a design inspired by the work of a different nonprofit. For seven days, Sevenly promotes and sells the gear, mostly through Facebook, giving \$7 of each purchase straight to a cause— orphan care, autism research, and clean water, among others. Since launching in 2011, they’ve given away \$3.6 million. (The number seven echoes the biblical symbol of fullness and completion.)

Partridge’s success has earned the attention of the broader business community, with a feature in *Forbes*, his face on the cover of *Entrepreneur* magazine, and speeches at Facebook and Adobe. Now, he says, it’s time to shift capitalism and consumerism with more businesses that value people over profit. “Like our God,” said Partridge, “entrepreneurs are great creators.”



THE RECONCILER

CHRISTENA CLEVELAND, 33
@CSCleve | Minneapolis

Christena Cleveland is a social psychologist who writes, advises, and speaks on racial reconciliation. She finds that fellow millennials in particular relate to her message, because her generation “has little patience for disunity and division.”

Raised in a multiethnic neighborhood and church planted by her parents in Fremont, California, Cleveland grew up with Filipino, Mexican, black, Korean, white, and biracial friends. “It never occurred to me that this cross-cultural contact was unusual,” she said. “Nor was I savvy enough to know that our motley crew would make for a great photo shoot for a cheesy diversity brochure.”

As a kid, she began to see her community in a gospel context, asking what it

would mean for them to unite as a church. Cleveland went on to study psychology at Dartmouth College and the University of California–Santa Barbara, where she earned her PhD.

“Both the Pentecost narrative and the metaphor of the interdependent body of Christ shape my work,” said Cleveland, who teaches at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota. “In order to fully embrace the kingdom of God . . . we must keep searching for it, calling for it, and fighting to embody it in our churches, neighborhoods, and lives.”

Last year, Cleveland published *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart* (InterVarsity Press), which prompts Christians to name

CLEVELAND: LINSEY M. YOUNG PARTRIDGE: LOGAN COLE

About half of millennials say the country's best years are ahead.

- PEW RESEARCH



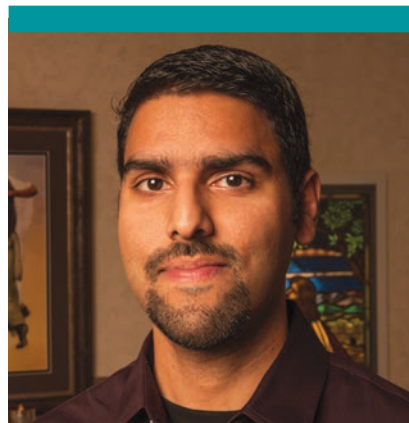
THE HISTORIAN

MATTHEW LEE ANDERSON, 32
@mattleeanderson | Oxford, England

As the 21st century pushes young people to embrace all things new, Matthew Lee Anderson looks back to the century prior, namely to the thoughts of C. S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton. Anderson combined *Mere Christianity* and *Orthodoxy* for the title of the site he launched a decade ago, *Mere Orthodoxy*, now a popular go-to for probing cultural analysis rooted in the Christian tradition.

"There aren't many people among the living who can think and write with the depth that previous generations of Christians had," he said from Lewis's old stomping grounds at the University of Oxford, where Anderson studies Christian ethics. "If my only legacy is introducing a few people to that tradition, then I'll be a relatively happy man."

Anderson has already done more than that, unafraid to raise tough philosophical questions in his books—*The End of Our Exploring* (Moody Publishers), on doubt, and *Earthen Vessels* (Bethany House), on physical embodiment—as well as in his writing for The Gospel Coalition, *The City* (of Houston Baptist University), and *ct*. "We have a faith that takes the same shape as our Savior's life," he said. "It is new in every generation, yet still—and must be—the 'same old thing.'"



THE EX-MUSLIM EVANGELIST

NABEEL QURESHI, 31
@NAQureshi | Atlanta

As more and more immigrants call the United States home, American Christians get to evangelize cross-culturally without leaving the country. Nabeel Qureshi has been on both sides of that exchange.

Raised in a Pakistani American Muslim family, Qureshi came to Christ in medical school after reading the Bible in order to debate a Christian friend. Now, he shares his testimony as a speaker for Ravi Zacharias International Ministries and in his recent book, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* (Zondervan). He clarifies the Islamic worldview (and debunks stereotypes) in lectures and debates, encouraging Christians to love, serve, and ultimately share the gospel with Muslim neighbors—of whom about 2.6 million live in the United States. According to Pew Research projections, that number is expected to double by 2030.

"We don't have to go overseas to introduce people to Christ. We can do it by loving our neighbors as ourselves while we love Jesus with all our hearts and minds," said Qureshi. "This generation has heart and compassion like no other, and God is the root of all such love. He is closer to them than we might think."

QURESHI: BEN MAY, COURTESY OF RZIM

dysfunction caused by division in the church and to respond to the gospel's unifying call—across racial, political, and theological positions. Cleveland brings a psychologist's eye to examine our perceptions of ourselves, our friends, and others, and research on group dynamics and group process to reveal sources of division. Thabiti Anyabwile, who pastors a church in the Bahamas with over 30 nationalities, calls the book an "insightful analysis of why we all say we want unity but find it so difficult to gain."

But the church is making progress, says Cleveland. Without as much cultural and theological baggage that kept earlier leaders in silos, today's young Christians give her hope for "an Acts 2 world."

Fifty-five
percent of
millennials
report having
posted a selfie.

- PEW RESEARCH

THE POP SINGER

FRANCESCA
BATTISTELLI, 29
@francescamusic
Nashville



THE VALUES VOTER

ERIC TEETSEL, 30
@EricTeetsel | Washington, D.C.

Eric Teetsel never set out to become a Christian voice, or a conservative voice, or a millennial voice, in the contentious debates over gay marriage and religious freedom. But here he is, leading a movement centered on those very issues, speaking with bold conviction in op-eds, sound bites, and ongoing campaigns.

Following Chuck Colson's death in 2012, Teetsel became executive director of Colson's Manhattan Declaration, convening Orthodox, Catholic, and evangelical Christians to defend the sanctity of life, traditional marriage, and religious liberty.

It's an overwhelming task, "but my life is not my own. . . . Jesus promises that whoever loses his life for Jesus' sake will find it.

I believe him, and so far, that's been quite an adventure," said Teetsel, who previously worked for the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

Barna Research reported last year that support for gay marriage increased in the past decade across faith traditions and age groups. "It is easy to become despondent in response to polling about religious participation and viewpoints on foundational issues like marriage, but God is the wildcard," he said. "As it has always done, the gospel will bring hope and healing and compel believers to fight for the good of their neighbor."

BATTISTELLI: ANDREW ECCLES TEETSEL: JOE PORTNOY

Francesca Battistelli is contemporary Christian music's top-selling new artist in a decade, and the first woman to win the Dove Award for Artist of the Year since Amy Grant in 1992.

In a recent interview on *Good Morning America*, the singer listed Sara Groves and Sara Bareilles among her inspirations, and Battistelli fits well between the two—a Christian artist with a catchy pop sound. Her Grammy-nominated "Free to Be Me" has sold more than a half-million copies with the hook, "Cause I got a couple dents in my fender, got a couple rips in my jeans / Try to fit the pieces together, but perfection is my enemy."

"A lot of my songs are autobiographical, and I think that's why people relate to my music. . . . it reflects real-life experiences from a God-honoring perspective," she said. The title of her third album, *If We're Honest*, which released in April, captures that theme well.

"The biggest trend I've seen since I started seven years ago is the rise of female artists in Christian music," said Battistelli. "As the mom of a daughter, I'm excited I will be able to introduce her to so many role models as she gets older."



American
millennial
Christians are
more likely to
share their
faith than any
other age group.

- BARNABAS GROUP



THE WATER ACTIVIST

JENA LEE NARDELLA, 32

@JenaNardella | Nashville

Jena Lee Nardella cofounded Blood:Water Mission alongside Jars of Clay and began working as its executive director at age 22, straight out of Whitworth University. The band was eager to lend their influence to the clean-water cause, and Nardella—who met them on tour at her campus—impressed them with her initiative as she quickly drafted a plan for what would become Blood:Water.

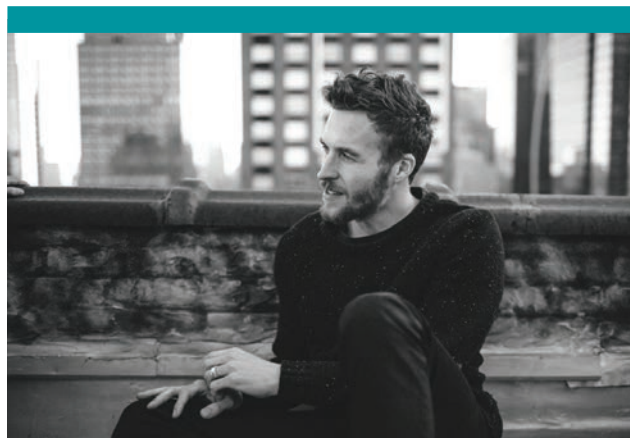
“Being so young, I was fueled by idealism and had yet to experience the disillusionment of the three-steps-forward, two-steps-back nature of addressing something as complex as the HIV/AIDS and water crises in Africa,” said Nardella. “My greatest personal challenge has been choosing to stay in the work, even after the idealism has crumbled.”

Through the years, their efforts have worked. Between 2005 and 2011, Blood:Water completed its 1,000 Wells Project, delivering water to 1,000 communities. Early on, Nardella was intimidated by this number, but Jars frontman Dan Haseltine told her, “A thousand is a number that only God is comfortable with, so if we reach that one day, we’ll know it is of God and not ourselves.”

In total, the organization has raised more than \$22 million. It partners with existing grassroots organizations in Africa to fund and establish new wells, filters, latrines, and advocacy campaigns in 11 countries.

In the new LifeWay documentary *Unconditional Love*, Haseltine says of Nardella’s 10 years, “She’s always willing to learn.” This posture and sense of humility has helped the organization grow and serve others with dignity, he said.

“Through Blood:Water, I get to be in the broken places where suffering and joy meet,” Nardella said. “Because of this work, my faith tends to be an active, broken, and constantly winding journey of simply trying to follow Jesus’ example of love.”



THE ‘FREAK’ CREATOR

SALOMON LIGTHELM, 28

@salomonligthelm | Sydney

Salomon Ligthelm may not be a household name, but millions of Christians know his work through the music, film, and design projects of Hillsong Church, based in Sydney. He helped write the lyrics to “Oceans,” which has spent months at No. 1 on the Christian Billboard charts.

“A few years back, a pastor friend told me, ‘Your work will possibly minister to and reach a lot more people than my sermons would.’ I was struck by that,” said Ligthelm, who grew up in charismatic churches in South Africa and Dubai.

Ligthelm resists the impulse to borrow from others rather than to create something new. He’s unafraid of the stylistic, conceptual, and experimental—the Hillsong Film team refers to him as “a freak of creative nature.” He’s currently working on his first longer-form narrative film, a Kickstarter-funded project called *ANOMOLY*, a retelling of the Christmas story set in the 1960s space race.

Ligthelm regularly runs into fellow Christians in the film industry: “That is one of the most exciting things to see—believers who are excellent and diligent in their field and are promoted because of their commitment to the craft.”

THE WASHINGTON LIAISON

JOSHUA DUBOIS, 31

@joshuadubois
Washington, D.C.

As President Barack Obama's faith adviser during his 2008 campaign and first term in office, Joshua

DuBois has spent his career at the intersection of faith and public policy. His work for Obama was both personal and political, as he prayed with the President and texted him Bible verses (becoming DuBois's first book, *The President's Devotional*, HarperOne). A former Pentecostal pastor, he led the administration's Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and launched the Easter Prayer Breakfast, which convenes faith leaders at the White House each year.

In 2013, DuBois left to start Values Partnerships, which connects faith communities with businesses and government groups. "There's far too much kingdom work to do for individual sectors of our society to tackle big challenges on their own," he said. "There are believers in each of these institutions—foundations, nonprofits, the church, business, and, yes, government—who can do powerful things collaborating."

DuBois also writes on race and religion for *The Daily Beast* and *Newsweek*. His 2013 *Newsweek* cover story explored the effects of racism, incarceration, and poverty on African American men. "The historical burdens that our parents and grandparents carried are beginning to lighten, and more and more young people are starting to see each other simply as children of God," he told CT.





THE PRO-LIFE HEADLINE MAKER

LILA ROSE, 25

@LilaGraceRose | Washington, D.C.

Lila Rose embodies the pro-life movement's growth beyond signs and marches to become a 21st-century multimedia force. She started Live Action ten years ago (yes, at age 15) to involve fellow youth in the fight against abortion.

Starting in 2007, Rose and other activists posed as teenagers seeking abortions in dozens of undercover videos to expose illegal or cruel practices at Planned Parenthood clinics. Live Action disseminates headline after headline of abortion news to rally support.

"Using online platforms, especially social media, has been a powerful way for Live Action to bypass traditional media structures that won't talk about abortion and human dignity," said Rose, a UCLA graduate and convert to Catholicism. Even though Live Action's stealth strategies have stirred controversy, "These tools have allowed us to reach millions on a monthly basis with the truth about human life."

Live Action has celebrated the abortion restrictions passed in states such as Texas and the recent wave of regional clinic closures. "As more young people join the movement, we get closer to a day when every life is protected, by love and by law," she said.



THE TWEETER FOR GOOD

CLAIRE DIAZ-ORTIZ, 32

@Claire | Atlanta

The title of Claire Diaz-Ortiz's first book sums up her job well: *Twitter for Good: Change the World One Tweet at a Time* (Jossey-Bass). Díaz-Ortiz manages philanthropic, social good, and cause marketing initiatives for Twitter, which currently has some 260 million active users worldwide. Inspired by Twitter's ability to connect people, @Claire has reached Christian leaders through events like Catalyst and consulted some of the site's best-known people of faith, including Pope Francis, AKA @Pontifex. She trains churches and nonprofits to use social media. Top Christian tweeters have enjoyed deeper levels of engagement—replies, retweets, and hashtag virality among their followers—than celebrity accounts.

Díaz-Ortiz knows how to leverage Twitter for social good because in its earliest days, she did so herself, using the platform to build awareness for orphans in Kenya. She went on to found Hope Runs, a charity that supports orphanages there.

"My greatest hope for my generation is that we will harness our collective power to make positive change in the homes, communities, and worlds we live in," said Díaz-Ortiz, who is a foster mom to a Kenyan boy and had her first baby this spring.



THE FRIENDLY PROFESSOR

WESLEY HILL, 33

@wesleyhill | Ambridge, Pennsylvania

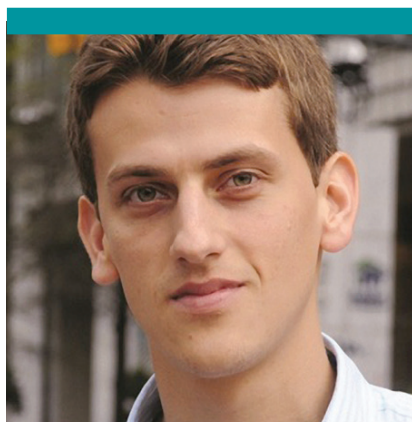
With a background in biblical studies and a commitment to live as a celibate gay Christian, Wesley Hill offers a unique perspective on relationships and sexuality. On the website Spiritual Friendship, Hill and fellow writers articulate a "traditionally Christian sexual ethic," but shift their approach to the positive, avoiding contentious political debates or suggestions of reparative therapy.

"I see a renewed awareness of the fact that you can't build a sense of calling around saying 'no' to certain sinful forms of sexual behavior. You have to embrace a positive 'yes,'" said Hill, who traced his coming-out story and decision to live chastely in his 2010 book, *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality* (Zondervan). "You have to learn to think about your sexuality in terms of stewardship and vocation, not just sacrifice and renunciation."

An Anglican who teaches New Testament at Trinity School for Ministry, Hill sees a great opportunity to reintroduce young people, even skeptics and cynics, to Truth. "We have the opportunity to say, 'The faith you think you already know and have rejected is actually more interesting, more compelling, and more hopeful than you imagined,'" said Hill.

Nearly 4 out of 10 practicing Christian millennials say they fact-check their pastors' sermons online.

- BARNABAS GROUP



THE SPORTS STORYTELLER

THOMAS LAKE, 33
@thomaslake | Atlanta

With all the talk about our role as “storytellers” and the gospel as “the greatest story ever told,” these phrases slowly become clichés. But when it comes to Thomas Lake’s work in *Sports Illustrated*—the kind of long-form journalism that makes people read more, and feel more, than they expected—you recognize the power of a masterfully told story.

The youngest senior writer at one of the most acclaimed magazines, Lake is a Christian—of the homeschooled, pastor’s kid, Gordon College–alum variety—which means he gets religion. “When I write about people of faith, I take that faith seriously,” he said. That goes for high-school football coaches, college basketball players, and big names like Tim Tebow, the subject of a 15,000-word story Lake wrote in 2013, offering a deeper look at his faith and career long after Tebowmania had faded.

Lake puts words to the heart and humanity of sports. “[Sports] can inspire us to achieve more than we thought we could: to go above our abilities, work together, love our brothers, succeed against all probability,” he said. “Sometimes it feels as if humankind is going for it on fourth-and-26, and the pocket is collapsing, and the quarterback is scrambling, and then—well, who knows. But at least we have a chance.”



THE INSPIRER

NICK VUJICIC, 31
@nickvujicic | Agoura Hills, California

Australian Nick Vujicic was born without arms or legs—an unexpected medical condition doctors could never explain. He spent years focusing on what he couldn’t do and doubting his purpose before finding a deep faith that engenders gratitude, despite limitations.

“I know that God didn’t give me this pain, but what the Enemy tried to use for bad, [God] turned into good,” Vujicic said alongside Rick Warren and Oprah Winfrey on the media mogul’s network. Winfrey called him a “symbol of triumph.”

Vujicic taught himself to swim, dive, surf, play soccer, and do most everyday tasks around the house, with accommodations for him to use his mouth and his single foot. He lives in California with his wife and son, traveling globally to speak with his ministry, Life Without Limbs. Vujicic has been allowed to speak in places unfriendly to Christians, including two visits to Vietnam.

In churches, schools, and hospitals, he tells audiences they are fearfully and wonderfully made. He reminds them God has a purpose for them. His recent antibullying message, and the core of his 2014 book *Stand Strong* (WaterBrook), addresses the taunting and thoughts of suicide he faced growing up.

HAVENS: JERSEAN GOLATT LAKE: CAROLINE KILGORE



THE URBAN APOLOGIST

D. A. HORTON, 33
@da_horton | Atlanta



THE PHOTOGRAPHER

ESTHER HAVENS, 30

@EstherHavens
Dallas

How can you love others through photography? How can you serve people from behind the camera? In an age of selfies, Esther Havens looks outward, past herself and comfortable Western borders. Her photography skews toward the selfless, honoring in bold imagery the triumphant spirit of each subject: beaming schoolchildren in Rwanda, proud artisans in India, energetic female entrepreneurs in Nicaragua.

“God opened my eyes and challenged me to capture the beauty he sees in all people, no matter their circumstance,” said Havens, a Dallas native who has traveled to more than 45 countries in the past decade on behalf of TOMS Shoes, charity: water, and Noonday Collection, among other non-profits. “Photography is the tool God has given me . . . to live out the gospel.”

Havens’s nomadic lifestyle forced her to rely on God to guide her career, through unpredictable freelance projects and solo trips to remote regions. She calls her work “humanitarian,” capturing images that put people first. “My hope is that we become a generation focused on promoting others over ourselves.”

Even as evangelicals grow attuned to seeking “the welfare of the city,” sending church planters and service trips, city-dwellers like D. A. Horton long for indigenous leaders: Christians who share the upbringing, culture, and language of the streets.

Their mission field is just two blocks over from hipsters’ city territory, where many Christians flock. Instead of evangelizing in coffee shops and cocktail lounges, Horton wants to bring the gospel to the barbecue joints, barbershops, and parks of the hood.

A former Southern Baptist church planter and Bible college lecturer, Horton teaches apologetics to address theological

strains common among African Americans and Latinos, including the prosperity gospel and liberation theology. His unique preaching style flows out of his familiarity with urban and hip-hop culture from living and serving in Atlanta and Kansas City, Missouri. Also a rapper performing under the name Azriel, Horton speaks in the cadence of hip-hop and employs gospel illustrations specific to his setting, such as likening the offense of sin to wearing the wrong gang colors.

Horton serves as the executive director for ReachLife Ministries, the outreach of Christian hip-hop label Reach Records. He’s also the national coordinator for urban student missions for the Southern

Baptist North American Mission Board. In both roles, he trains fellow young Christians to live on mission.

“We . . . have to be authentic to the context that raised us,” he told students in a promo video for ReachLife. “We have to understand and appreciate the value of where we came from. Praise God that of all the places in the world, he allowed us to be born and raised in the neighborhoods that he desired for us to come from.”

At ReachLife concerts and conferences, youth rally by the thousands. But when the music stops, Horton wants to make sure they follow through “both online and on the frontline,” helping the church grow to reflect the kingdom.



By the time he reached his mid-20s, Eddie Lee had given up on the American dream. “I always lived under this belief that the harder I worked, the more I could achieve and the happier I could become,” said Lee. After graduating from Harvard University, he scored a job at the White House as director of Asian American outreach.

But what followed was a period of severe depression. Lee, who had grown up in the church, ultimately discovered a renewed passion for the kingdom. He left the Obama administration in 2012 to team up full-time with his

brother and a friend to start the Jubilee Project. Named for the Year of Jubilee—and a nod to their shared last names—the production company makes short films about charitable causes, the gospel, and their motto that doing good is contagious.

Now drawing more than 100,000 YouTube subscribers, the project has created work for the Jeremy Lin Foundation (Lin, a well-known NBA star, was a classmate at Harvard), Alzheimer’s Association, American Society for Deaf Children, and other nonprofits. Lee calls himself an idealist, confident that the message in their videos, which are shown on tour in schools and churches, will inspire others to do good as well.

THE IDEALIST

EDDIE LEE, 28
@theeddielee
Los Angeles

GALANOS: KRISTIN BEDNARZ LEE: HANNAH GWEUN



THE MEGACHURCH PASTOR

CHRIS GALANOS, 32
@chrisgalanos | Lubbock, Texas

Chris Galanos is currently the youngest megachurch lead pastor in the United States. According to the Leadership Network, the average age for a pastor leading a church the size of his—2,000 or more worshippers—is 51. While Experience Life Church, the Lubbock, Texas, congregation Galanos

founded in 2007, works to draw young churchgoers, he tries to avoid getting mistaken for one. “Okay, some of y’all are like, ‘I thought you were 18?’” he joked at the start of a sermon this year.

Since he founded the nondenominational church, it’s ballooned to more than 3,500 congregants—appearing repeatedly on lists of the country’s fastest-growing churches. They broadcast services on a regional TV station, worship to original

music and flashing stage lights, and baptize by the hundreds.

The church also holds a popular weekly gathering for the college crowd downtown near Texas Tech University, Galanos’s alma mater. “It’s more difficult for people in their 20s and 30s to connect with a pastoral staff in their 50s and 60s,” said the married dad of two. “We present the Bible in a way that’s engaging to young people.”



THE REVIVALIST

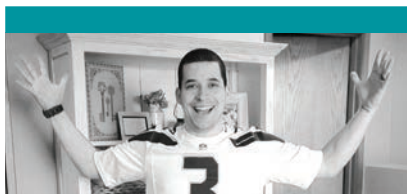
DANIEL KOLENDA, 33

@danielkolenda | Orlando, Florida

Daniel Kolenda is a Pentecostal preacher. Just like his father. And his grandfather. And his grandfather's father and grandfather before him. In his family, he's a fifth-generation pastor. He's also the successor to Reinhard Bonnke, the German-born founder of the evangelistic crusade organization Christ for All Nations.

As Bonnke's administrative assistant, he carried the evangelist's briefcase. Before long, Kolenda was tapped to preach alongside Bonnke as co-evangelist, then named president and CEO in 2011. Before masses, Kolenda has followed Bonnke's mode of charismatic preaching and healing. "The God of Reinhard Bonnke is the God of Daniel Kolenda," he said on Europe's Revelation TV. "If it was all up to my talent, ability, personality, I'd be afraid, but the Holy Spirit has never let us down."

Kolenda claims to have led more than 10 million to Christ, mostly through campaigns in Africa. The 40-year-old group says hundreds of thousands at each gathering submit decision cards indicating new faith in Christ.



THE YOUTUBE EVANGELIST

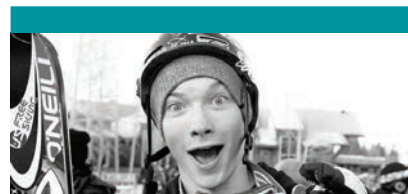
JEFFERSON BETHKE, 25

@JeffersonBethke | Tacoma, Washington

Jefferson Bethke's spoken word poem "Why I Hate Religion But Love Jesus" went viral on YouTube in early 2012, launching his career as a young voice speaking out—rhythmically, biblically, and rapid-fire—for the gospel. After a second viral poem about sex, his channel now totals 54 million views and features spoken-word poetry, Q&As, and conversations with his wife, Alyssa.

His YouTube videos inspired his best-selling 2013 book *Jesus > Religion* (Thomas Nelson). In his early 20s, Bethke worried he was too young for the exposure of his work. Then he realized, "There's no special age that makes you more able to worship Jesus."

"I think this generation is grasping the fact that all of life is worship. They can worship by giving thanks in every domain of life as good image bearers," he said. "That will provide a very powerful witness, because you will have people in all walks of life making disciples."



THE EXTREME SKIER

DAVID WISE, 24

@mrDavidWise | Reno, Nevada

Freestyle skier David Wise took home a gold medal in halfpipe at the 2014 Winter Olympics, adding to his stack of golds from a three-year winning streak at the Winter X Games. The coverage of his Sochi performance was dotted with the descriptors "alternative," "unusual," "uncool," and "weird." What's so strange about Wise? His faith and family.

A married Christian with one kid and another on the way, Wise bypasses the endless travel and partying that marks the extreme sports scene. He's sponsored by Monster Energy Drink—and Pampers diapers. He brings the family along to events when he can. At home, he and his wife, Alexandra, whom he met at church camp, lead the youth group at their Pentecostal church in Reno.

But don't picture Wise as a skiing Tim Tebow. "I don't tell my Christian friends I'm a pro skier. I don't tell my skier friends I'm a Christian," Wise told the magazine *Sports Spectrum*. "But you're going to find out if you spend enough time with me either way."

PAINE: JENNIFER FARIS KOLENDA: ROB BIRKBECK / C&N

Crystal Paine is best known, at least to savvy shoppers, as the Money Saving Mom. Her website is among the most popular personal finance blogs and mommy blogs of all time, fueling the extreme couponing craze. Paine doles out tips for scoring discounts, meal-planning, homeschooling, and managing money—all to help readers make more effective use of their resources. In between freebie offers and coupon codes, Paine recommends Christian devotionals, discusses favorite Bible verses, and lays out her plans to be "intentional" with her family and finances.

"Through Money Saving Mom, I not only get to share Christ in quiet ways with thousands of nonbelievers, I also get to challenge Christians to be intentional with their finances so they can become generous givers," said Paine. She gives her ad proceeds to Compassion International and orphan-care charity Show Hope.

A mom of three, her budgeting skills are impressive: Their family stayed out of debt while her husband went through law school by keeping their grocery bills down to \$35 a week, saving enough to pay cash for their first home.

In *Say Goodbye to Survival Mode* (HarperCollins), she advises readers to realign priorities and address stress before taking on major financial obstacles.

THE SUPER-FRUGAL MOM
CRYSTAL PAINE, 32
@MoneySavingMom
Nashville



THE ECLECTIC CHOREOGRAPHER

PRESTON
MILLER, 26
@iampreston
Chicago

On stage, choreographer Preston Miller turns the seemingly mismatched into the bold and unconventional. One example: C. S. Lewis and electronic music. Miller created a dance piece last

year inspired by heaven and hell as depicted in Lewis's *The Great Divorce* and performed to the pulsing beats of Grammy-nominated hit DJ deadmau5 (pronounced "dead mouse"), with the Grand Rapids Ballet Company. "The younger, more energetic music played into the idea of speaking about Christ in a different context," he said.

His current project joins artists from different genres, including a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet and YouTube's most popular dub-stepper. As the executive director of the United Artists Initiative, Miller wants to usher in a wave of collaboration and innovation in dance to get audiences to rethink fine art as relevant to them.

Miller comes from a family of ministers: his grandfathers, parents, and sister are all ordained in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), his dad leading an AME congregation in the Chicago suburbs. Following God gives meaning to art and dance beyond "some egotistic brain dump from a creative person," said Miller, a Fordham University graduate. His first dance film, *Enemy Within*, released in June.



THE IVY LEAGUE EDITOR

PETER BLAIR, 24
@PeterBlairAI | Washington, D.C.

As editor-in-chief of the two-year-old Christian journal *Fare Forward*, Peter Blair adopts the approach of "thinking well, living well." The publication and its website are filled with sharp commentary on significant books, trends, and cultural touchstones. *Fare Forward* analyzes movies and TV shows, spiritual disciplines, and big questions about identity, place, and relationships.

A government and philosophy major, Blair began the project at the end of his senior year at Dartmouth College, where he wrote for the student newspaper and the campus's biannual Christian publication, *The Dartmouth Apologia*. To launch *Fare Forward*, he teamed up with editors and writers through the Augustine Collective, a network of Christian journals on primarily Ivy League campuses.

Many of the current staffers are recent graduates of elite schools, carrying the academic and intellectual rigor of a university out into the Christian mainstream. Each topic offers an opportunity for deep discussion—whether incorporating Søren Kierkegaard into an analysis of Cinco de Mayo or exploring Alexis de Tocqueville's views on mortality.

The name *Fare Forward* comes from the T. S. Eliot poem "The Dry Salvages," chosen to reflect their place between the rich history and the ongoing creativity of the Christian faith.

"In one sense the challenges facing the Christian are the same today as ever: living the gospel in the era between the Resurrection and the Last Judgment, with all that entails," said Blair. "In another sense, the biggest challenge today is the popular

MILLER: MATT KARAS JACKSON: JUSTIN D. KNIGHT



assumption that faith and reason aren't compatible but are in conflict. Christians are stereotyped as ignorant know-nothings who have to turn off their brains to believe."

In the pages of their quarterly publication and posts on their Patheos blog, *Fare Forward* has defied that stereotype and drawn in a subset of highbrow readers excited to see a new title in the print landscape.

"As a Catholic who loves Marilynne Robinson more than most any other living writer, I find the prospect of ecumenical rapprochement between Protestants and Catholics very encouraging," said Blair, who works in Washington for conservative foreign-policy journal *The American Interest*. "A lot of what we've seen at *Fare Forward* is this sharing of the resources of our traditions."



THE RESTORER

ZAKIYA JACKSON, 31

@ZakiyaNaemaJack | Grand Rapids, Michigan

The call for churches to defend the disenfranchised, fight poverty, and improve their communities can be daunting. But Zakiya Jackson—with an MBA, years of nonprofit experience, and a full-time job in urban ministry—starts simple: Love Jesus, love your neighbor.

"In getting to know

Jesus and my neighbors, it has been impossible for me not to be passionate about justice for the marginalized and poor," said the Vanderbilt and Willamette University graduate. For nearly a decade, Jackson has offered her experience to the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), an

evangelical network that works to bring economic flourishing and racial reconciliation to under-resourced communities. She currently serves as a financial adviser and member of the CCDA's national leadership cohort.

The Nashville native also writes the curriculum and training program at the Grand Rapids-based DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative, which supports youth workers in more than 30 cities in the United States.

"In the middle of a generation defined by their religious indifference... millennial evangelists stand in stark contrast."

— DAVID KINNAMAN, BARN A GROUP PRESIDENT

“Those who are older than us poured into us in a 2 Timothy 2:2 fashion. My prayer is we’ll do the same to those who follow us.”

—D. A. HORTON



THE RELATIONSHIP MAVEN

JOY EGGERICHS, 32

@joyeggerichs | Portland, Oregon

Joy Eggerichs talks breakups, online dating, commitment-phobia, and more through her organization Love and Respect Now. She’s goofy, conversational, and practical: no prescriptive edicts, Christian catch-phrases, or aspirational lists (e.g., “10 ways to be a better spouse”). Rather, Eggerichs frankly addresses common hang-ups for men and women, single or dating, married or separated.

You could say that Love and Respect Now is “not your parents’ relationship ministry,” but for her, it kind of is. Eggerichs extends the work of her mom and dad—Sarah and Emerson Eggerichs, authors of the enormously popular marriage book *Love and Respect* and founders of Love and Respect Ministries—to the next generation of relationships.

“With all the divorce statistics and horror stories that people latch onto, my hope is that fear will not take root but actually become a catalyst for us to reevaluate what marriage really means, what the purpose of these partnerships can be, and where we look to for fulfillment in both singleness and marriage,” said Eggerichs. She recently teamed up with her dad in Portland for a live event called the Illumination Project, designed to bring wisdom into millennials’ relationships. It’s now available as a video series.

THE GOSPEL ENTERTAINER

JAESON MA, 33

@jaesonma | Hollywood

Like most kids, Jaeson Ma had big dreams of what he’d grow up to be: a businessman, an artist, *and* a preacher. He considers himself blessed to get to be all three. Ma is a jet-setting manager and producer for Asian artists in the entertainment industry while continuing to spread the gospel as a hip-hop performer and evangelist.

Ma has a powerful testimony of leaving shoplifting, drugs, and gang life as a California teenager to follow Christ. He spent his early 20s planting churches and preaching at crusades through organizations such as the International House of Prayer. A Chinese American, his ministry focused on the church’s surge in Asia, where Ma supported a movement to start house churches and student prayer groups.

“Christianity is not just a Western Christianity,” said Ma. His 2010 documentary, *1040*, tracked churches across the continent, focusing on China, where he says tens of thousands come to Christ each day; Indonesia, where a growing Christian population is gaining influence in the world’s biggest Muslim nation; and South Korea, where megachurches are mega-megachurches.

Earlier this year, Ma sang and prayed at a gathering of 50,000 students in Taiwan for World Vision’s 30 Hour Famine. He repeatedly shares one verse with young people: “Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession” (Ps. 2:8).

Ma’s 2011 album, *Glory*, features a collaboration with Grammy-winning pop artist Bruno Mars. Last year, he released a follow-up called *Confession + Resurrection*. As a teenager, Ma had connected with rapper MC Hammer, who mentored him in producing music. Hammer (Stanley Kirk Burrell) also appears in Ma’s documentary and has joined him on trips to Asia.

“There’s a widespread reception, connection, availability, and accessibility to God’s Word, and that excites me about this generation,” said Ma. “This is a generation in which the gospel can be preached to the nations.”

EGGERICHS: ESTHER HAVENS MA: PAUL SUN

A designer and music lover, Brannon McAllister cofounded the site NoiseTrade alongside singer-songwriter Derek Webb and others in 2007. On NoiseTrade, independent musicians (and now authors on NoiseTrade Books) offer free downloads in exchange for e-mails and zip codes of their fan base. “We’re putting them transparently and directly in touch with their audience. Neither stores like iTunes and Amazon nor streaming platforms like Spotify are doing this,” McAllister explained.

The site now boasts more than 1.3 million e-mail subscribers and 25,000-plus artists—spanning musical genres, Christian and not. McAllister still gets excited watching fans discover and fall for rising bands and writers he and his team love. And he’s optimistic fellow believers will maximize today’s technology in innovative ways.

“This generation of Christian creators has the same democratized tools that are available to anyone else,” said McAllister. “When combined with a vibrant theology of risk, we can take on massive entrepreneurial and missional problems that even 15 to 20 years ago would have been nearly impossible to tackle.”

THE MUSIC CONNECTOR

BRANNON
MCALLISTER, 33
@brannonmc
Brooklyn, New York



MELISSA MCALLISTER



THE ‘MISSIONAL MINORITY’ BLOGGER

TREVIN WAX, 33
@TrevinWax | Nashville

To borrow the wording from his daily link roundup, Trevin Wax is “worth a look.” On his popular blog hosted at The Gospel Coalition, Wax points readers to articles, books, and church trends he observes as a young Southern Baptist, seminary graduate, former pastor, and editor at LifeWay Christian Resources.

“Technological innovation is speeding up cultural changes, providing new opportunities for spreading

the gospel as well as new challenges,” said Wax, who sees evangelicals as a “missional minority” in the United States, echoing the language of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leader Russell Moore.

While other young Christians may be casting off denominational identity, Wax celebrates the legacy of the SBC with his blog series Know Your Southern Baptists, featuring the church’s pastors,

authors, and musicians. He oversees The Gospel Project, an all-ages Bible study from LifeWay, and has written four books, including a novel.

“I love providing resources that serve churches in their mission of making disciples,” he said. “I also love the opportunities I get to interact with church leaders who love God and their neighbors and are passionate about seeing people come to faith in Christ.”

THE POLITICIAN

SAIRA BLAIR, 17
@ElectSairaBlair
Martinsburg,
West Virginia



Before she graduated high school, or was even old enough to vote, politician Saira Blair had beat out an incumbent state legislator in a primary election. In May, the teenager campaigned on pro-life, pro-family issues to become her district's Republican candidate for the West Virginia House of Delegates.

The night before the primary, "I prayed that win or lose, I would be going down the right path," said Blair, who believes God will use her campaign to inspire and influence others.

After her win, Blair drew attention that she never expected, making headlines across the country and appearing on *Fox and Friends* to talk about her campaign and the need for fresh faces in politics. Her father, Craig Blair, is a state senator who previously held the spot she's seeking.

For the past few years, Blair has been involved at the Church at Martinsburg, a Southern Baptist church plant she describes as a close-knit community and "really supportive" of her campaign.

Blair begins her freshman year at West Virginia University this fall, majoring in economics and Spanish. If she wins the November election, she will become the youngest state legislator in West Virginia history.



THE KNIGHT FOR MODERN SLAVES

ZACH HUNTER, 22
@zachjhunter | Colorado Springs

According to Zach Hunter, "painfully normal" people can change the world—he says he would know. When he was 12, Hunter's school and youth group charity drive grew into a student-led campaign to fight slavery. He founded Loose Change to Loosen Chains, a youth program to raise funds for organizations such as International Justice Mission.

Throughout high school and college, Hunter spoke to churches to encourage students to take action and fight for justice. He was featured on CNN, interviewed on *The 700 Club*, and visited the White House. Journalists and human rights activists Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn named Hunter "a brilliant social entrepreneur" within a new generation of abolitionists.

Even after the novelty of being a 12-year-old abolitionist wore off, the attention has lingered. "Because I've had opportunities to do so much in my short life—none of which I'm qualified for—people now tend to listen to me because I've had experience disproportionate to my years," said Hunter, the author of three books by age 18. His fourth, *Chivalry* (Tyndale), takes teachings of ancient knights and connects them to Jesus' teachings about justice.



THE BILINGUAL PREACHER

JOSUE URRUTIA, 24
@JosueUrrutiaDC | Arlington, Virginia

About one in six Americans is Hispanic, and a growing number of those, particularly young people, either identify as evangelical or have no affiliation at all, according to Pew Research. Leading the outreach to this demographic is Josue Urrutia—the youngest member of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference's (NHCLC) board of directors and pastor of a vibrant bilingual congregation.

"Urrutia speaks the language of young Latino Christ followers while understanding the angst in Hispanics who . . . self-identify as nones," said NHCLC president Samuel Rodriguez.

A Nicaraguan American, he founded Ministerio Mizpa in 2009. Its worship band displays lyrics in Spanish and English, alternating between singing "Consuming Fire" and "Fuego de Dios." When the sharply dressed pastor preaches—pacing, pointing, and shouting—a translator follows him, echoing in English for the 250 congregants.

"I consider myself to be a young pastor with an old soul, so my challenge is always to be the bridge between two generations," Urrutia said. "My age engages the younger generation, but as they bring their parents, it's the heart of our message that keeps them here."

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It Takes More Than a Coffee Shop

fOUR YEARS AGO, the Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Project released the bombshell finding that millennials (born in 1980 and after) were the least religiously engaged generation in nearly 100 years.

The report said most millennials affirmed God's existence, life after death, and many other traditional beliefs. But young adults were significantly more disconnected from churches and other

religious institutions than previous generations. About 1 in 4 millennials have no religious affiliation. By comparison, only 5 percent of the so-called "greatest generation," born before 1928, is unaffiliated. That 21-point gap is historic, experts say.

In her 2013 book, *'Til Faith Do Us Part*, Naomi Schaefer Riley, a weekly columnist for the *New York Post*, explored how the rise of interfaith marriage benefits society, even while complicating the daily lives of such couples. Riley's latest book, *Got Religion?: How Churches, Mosques, and Synagogues Can Bring Young People Back* (Templeton Press), reports on why young adult Muslims, Mormons, Jews, Catholics, black Protestants, and evangelicals are defecting from their faith traditions. Her hope is that faith leaders will realize their common problem and learn from each other in order to solve it. Riley spoke recently with Timothy C. Morgan, CT senior editor of global journalism.

Your book paints a complex picture of the spirituality of young adults. What perspective do faith leaders need to adopt to address millennials' spiritual needs?

Religious institutions add an enormous amount to our moral and civic life, but they are weakened by the trends: the lack of religious affiliation by millennials as well as their own financial struggles. But I found rays of hope. This isn't a fixed pie. Leaders might say, "We're fighting over the last millennial," when in fact, what I found is that they could be saying, "We're all in this together. We all need to figure out a way



CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZIELLO



YOUNG ADULTS DON'T NEED ANOTHER HIP PLACE TO HANG OUT. [NAOMI SCHAEFER RILEY](#) DISCUSSES WHAT WILL DRAW MILLENNIALS TO THE FAITH.

INTERVIEW BY TIMOTHY C. MORGAN

to get this generation back into churches, synagogues, and mosques.”

Isn't competition, not collaboration, truer to the American religious experience? You spend a chapter on sheep-stealing, for example.

Competition breeds success. That is one reason religion in America remains vibrant. On the other hand, I have mixed feelings about the creative destruction of religious institutions. Something is lost when people invest in a religious institution only for a short time, jumping from one to another.

Collaboration ought to be considered, but it has to come from the grassroots. There have to be pastors and religious leaders who know each other and become friends. They work not to compete with each other, but to provide competitive alternatives to the nonreligious alternatives out there, like going to the movies or a bar.

The expectations of young people have been raised so much by the youth-church experience and the college experience. Flashiness seems necessary to get people through the door. CharlotteONE, where 52 churches put on worship for millennials citywide, has found that young adults will come for a few months to big productions, but what they really want is a place where they can settle in.

Some argue that the problem is that many traditional churches are actually behind the curve on adopting technology and social media.

One misconception about the millennial generation is that it's all about technology and social media. But media are simply a vehicle for meeting people in person. This generation longs for interpersonal interaction more because so much of their interaction is online.

They long for intimacy, having a close group of friends. I heard 25-year-olds reminiscing about their college years, a time when they were able to live in community and meet spontaneously. In their childhood, there was no spontaneity. Play dates were scheduled weeks in advance.

Young adults are attracted to urban environments. They like neighborhoods.

In many ways, they long to live in the way their grandparents did and walk to everything. This generation has the lowest rate of car ownership of any generation since cars became popular. They want the spontaneous, “Oh, I ran into so-and-so at the coffee shop.”

Religious institutions can take advantage of the millennial desire for community and spontaneity. I saw this at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New Orleans. Young people there are so willing to invest in each other's lives, not just on Sundays but throughout the week.

So millennials might be willing to try the 200-year-old Methodist church on Main Street if they can walk to it from their apartment?

I absolutely think so. The middle-class millennial wants to stay in the city. They want to walk to coffee shops, bars, and the park. Walking to church fits on that list. They want to run into people. They want the intimacy of being able to see the same people day in and day out.

You highlight as a positive example Rick Warren and his training the “Timothy generation,” a cohort of young Saddleback leaders. What other positive examples did you find?

Savvy religious leaders are saying, “We need to think about giving the next generation responsibility.” One pastor I talked to said his wife had led the women's ministry for 20 years, and he decided it was time to fire her. Not because she was doing a bad job, but because it was time to give younger people responsibility.

There's a complaint that millennials are selfish. But it's a two-way street. If you don't give people responsibility, they will act like children. When they act like children, then you're less likely to give them responsibilities.

Baby boomers are living long, healthy lives. They think to themselves, *I've been doing the church's books for 25 years. Why wouldn't I do them for the next 25?* Here's why: Younger people coming to church don't feel like they are needed.

There is tension between priorities. Is the priority the people who are here every

week? Or is the priority getting the people who are not here to come every week? Religious leaders are caught in a bind. If everybody in the congregation is over age 55, what's the future?

Some say the trend of delayed marriage is a big factor in millennial disinterest in church involvement.

For decades, religious institutions have depended on the idea, “Once you get married or have kids, you will be back.” But there are problems with that. Obviously, delayed marriage is one. But once couples do marry and have kids, they have been away from religious institutions for so long, it's not clear that church has a part in their life anymore.

What can be done? Congregations need a message for singles. The messages that young adults are getting from their own families are often to put off marriage. If you are middle or upper class, American culture says, “Delay marriage. Get your education. Get your graduate degree. Travel the world before you settle down.” Maybe parents should encourage earlier marriage.

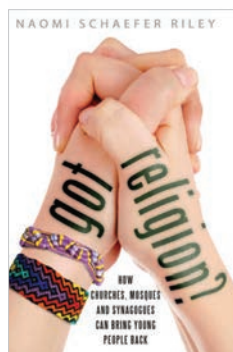
Many suggest that offering community service and short-term missions opportunities is the way to bring young adults into church life.

Doing service projects in a soup kitchen doesn't distinguish a church anymore. Secular colleges do community service. Millennials are probably looking for something else.

But a few churches distinguish themselves with service in the extreme. The Alliance for Catholic Education is the Catholic version of Teach for America. Young Catholics serve two years at a disadvantaged Catholic school. Millennials live in community with other people in the program. That appeals to them no matter what they decide to do after that level of service.

The challenge for many churches is to decide what is really important. Young American Muslims told me, “What distinguishes one mosque from another is not theology but the culture.” At CharlotteONE, for instance, pastors said, “We're not going to spend our time with this big crowd talking about the doctrines that divide us. We are going to focus on the things that unite us.”

Research estimates that 80 percent of





There's a complaint that millennials are selfish. But it's a two-way street. If you don't give people responsibility, they will act like children. When they act like children, then you're less likely to give them responsibilities.

U.S. churches are stagnant or declining. Will a record number of churches close their doors in the coming years?

Consolidation is inevitable. If you look at a typical small town, you see lots of these churches. Nobody is coming through the doors. It's not just young people. There is a potential for churches on the brink to turn themselves around. What I'd like people to take from my book is that the structure of the religious institution does matter, and that there are ways to talk to this generation without spending a fortune.

Churches don't need to open a swank coffee bar, for example.

There is something to the idea of getting people to hang out, to see their religious institution as a center of their community, where they can experience the kind of spontaneous meeting that would draw them further into the community.

But the way to start that process is not by offering expensive food or coffee. Start small and have individuals make commitments to each other to say, "It's two o'clock and I am going to be there hanging out doing x, y, and z for the church. Will you meet me there?" Those connections and commitments eventually cause growth.

This doesn't happen all at once, but for this generation, that kind of intimacy,

spontaneity, and the desire for community like they had in college—that's the way to go.

Do the attractions of secular culture sap young adults' desire to get involved in church?

We live in a culture of second-guessing. Everybody is looking over their shoulder, wondering if they've made the right choice. There are so many options. It is not just secular culture having cooler things to offer. There's the more basic, nagging question, *Have I made the right decision?*

People don't ask themselves that question when there is real intimacy, the kind of deep friendship that gets formed in religious community.

Based on your interviews, churches have an opportunity to reach early-career adults, but should perhaps start on the Sunday right after young adults graduate from college.

Exactly. One religious leader I talked to compared the experience of graduating from college from a spiritual perspective to falling off a cliff. It's moving around to new places, new friends, new roommates, and new jobs.

There's an opportunity for churches to distinguish themselves by saying to young adults, "We're going to be the rock. Other things in your life might be changing. We can't always help you figure out how to get the job that will last a few years instead of three weeks. But we will be here week after week to provide a community for you."

That's hugely appealing for young people coming out of college. The way you invest in young adults sends the message, "We're ready to give you responsibility."

Your book strikes a hopeful tone even though recent surveys about millennial church involvement have been so gloomy.

The 30 percent of people under age 30 who are unaffiliated are not people who say they are atheists or agnostics. They are not saying they don't care about spirituality or moral issues.

I wouldn't give up on this generation, writing them off as post-Christian. There is no social stigma attached to not attending religious services. The people who show up are the people not pressured to be there. This is the glass-half-full way of looking at it.

CT





MEDITATION

Mother in Late Bloom

*The unexpected beauty
I found amid Alzheimer's.*

BY JEANNE MURRAY WALKER



IT'S APRIL, and light sparkles in the leaves of my mother's old magnolia tree. I pull my rented white Ford Fiesta over to the curb, yank the hand brake, and sit gazing at the sun-drenched bungalow. For eight years, Mother lived here on the campus of the Christian Care Center in Dallas. Beside the two-bedroom house, the patch of soil where she once planted basil and thyme is now covered in roses.

I am revisiting the several houses where she lived and dropping in on the doctors' offices where we sat in waiting rooms together. I have eaten black-eyed peas with chili peppers. I have ordered grits to remind me of the tastes we shared. I have caught up with her friends at lunch, stopped by the greenhouses she frequented, and walked in the parks she loved.

Everywhere in Dallas, memories of my mother swim back. I see her turning the corner in her neighborhood grocery store, walking in her black flats down the ruby carpet in her church, stuffing a chicken with onions and loading it into her oven.

Now she is gesturing toward a brilliant pink peony on the lawn of the Christian Care Center. "Did you know a peony can live for 50 years?" she says. "This was dead in February, and look! Here it is again."

I get out of my rented Ford and walk over to the peony. It is blooming wildly. It has outlived my mother, who has been gone for years. I am thinking about how much she, a national flower show judge, loved perennials. I suspect that perennials reminded her of the Resurrection. It wouldn't be quite accurate to say that she had *faith* in the fact that there is life after death. I don't think the alternative ever occurred to her.

I touch the silky blossom of the peony, which shatters brightly on the grass.

TERRIFYING WORD

According to the most recent statistics, more than five million Americans have Alzheimer's disease. One in three seniors dies with some kind of dementia, of which Alzheimer's is the most common. And more than 15 million of us care for parents, friends, or relatives with the disease. *Alzheimer's*, like *cancer*, is a word that electrifies our conversations with terror.

It currently has no cure.

The disease can be terrible. My mother suffered from it. And there were years when taking care of her felt like a grim, dispiriting grind. Yet I think everyone in our family came away with what no one mentions in our Alzheimer's discussions: what I can call only gifts. Those gifts include a stronger bond with my mother and my sister, a truer sense of aging and death (realities our society mostly hides from us), a clearer understanding of my own past, and priceless spiritual disciplines, including prayer, patience, humor, hospitality—in other words, how to wait, and how to let go.

My mother died in January 2008, at the very bottom of winter. She had fallen, broken her hip. But her diminished ability to navigate was caused by Alzheimer's. It's fair to say that, though she cleverly avoided a diagnosis, she died of the disease. She was a nurse who pitted her cunning against every doctor she ever saw. More than anything, she wanted to escape a dementia diagnosis. My sister and I valiantly tried to secure one, believing that it might lead to more helpful medical intervention. But I often silently cheered for her as she outwitted her doctors.

After we lost her, I did what I always do when I can't quite grasp what has happened to me: I read books. They horrified me. They described such grim hopelessness, such utter and final despair, that as I read, my imagination kept falling off into disbelief. It was sort of like riding King, the black pony rented for me for two weeks almost every summer of my adolescence. For the first couple of days, without warning, King would take off toward the far field. Then he would abruptly stop. Riding bareback, I would fly over his arched neck and land on the ground in a bruised heap. That's how I felt, reading the Alzheimer's literature. The narratives of those books violently differed from my experience with my mother.

Shortly after that, I read an op-ed in *The New York Times* that argued that our discussion about Alzheimer's has become one-sided. What we tell one another about it is so appalling that some seniors are vowing to commit suicide if they are diagnosed, and their middle-aged children are fleeing from caretaking. Yes, I thought. *Even those of us with faith have become victims of our own terror.*

I began to realize that I needed to write

what I know about the Alzheimer's journey. The next day I applied for a grant to fly to Dallas and do research.

A JOURNEY WITH A DESTINATION

The word *pilgrimage* is less familiar to us than it was 100 years ago. It is less common in this country than it is in some Muslim countries. But *pilgrimage* implies a goal and an intentional journey toward that goal. Sometimes the goal is an actual church or site. Almost always the people going on a pilgrimage have not *seen* the site. They believe in it. They hope for it. But they are on a passage toward something that's not yet present and clear and obvious.

In fact, pilgrims often aim for something they can't locate on a map. One pilgrim might want to discover how to pray, for example. Another might long to learn how to be quiet. Yet another might have the goal of actively loving her neighbors.

A pilgrim needs faith to envision the goal, whether it is a literal or spiritual destination. A pilgrim needs to believe she might actually reach the goal. And since the pilgrim has never traveled that path, she learns—discovers as she goes—how to get there and exactly what her end will look like.

On a dark Dallas highway in the middle of a fall night, I finally realized our Alzheimer's years would be a pilgrimage.

But let me go back to the beginning of our journey. When my strong, practical mother began to forget phone numbers and then one evening reported that she forgot how to get home from the local dress shop, I was shaken. What was wrong? Was it her map-reading skills, which were always a little wobbly? Was it her eyesight? Was it that she needed to limit her driving to daytime?

I sent her a large print map. And soon after, I flew to Dallas to check on her, bearing her great-grandchild's drawings, art-choke dip, and tickets to the symphony.

Mother drove me around Dallas, as she always had. The gardens. The art museum. But she couldn't find her bank.

The next day I bought a map of Dallas for myself. I'd never needed one because my mother kept the scheme of its eastern suburbs in her head. That afternoon she and I, following the map, found her eye doctor's office. He prescribed new

**I suspect that perennials
reminded Mother of the
Resurrection.** It wouldn't be
accurate to say she had *faith*
that there is life after death.
I don't think the alternative
ever occurred to her.



glasses—trifocals, which cost over \$300. Then we drove to the place where she had always been fitted for glasses. She told me she thought she could find it again, if she needed to.

But a couple of weeks later, she told me on the phone that she couldn't find the trifocals. And she couldn't find the glasses place. My mother, who had taught us to save things, to keep what we were lucky enough to have.

It kept getting worse.

Because Alzheimer's and senior dementia have no clear, discernible beginning, and because the course and length of the disease vary with each person, the journey begins to feel not like a pilgrimage but like an endless, repetitive slog. Even with a diagnosis, there's no way to predict what's coming next.

Such ambiguity created practical difficulties for me: *What will this cost? Will I need to fly to Dallas this week? Where is the best place for Mother to live?*

More crucially, this vast uncertainty depleted my spirit. I felt confused and sometimes without purpose. How could I fix what was wrong? I didn't know much about medicine. Did we have the right doctors? What should I pray for?

With no clear sense of what was wrong with Mother, and with no end in sight, I felt colorless—bleached out, worn to a nubbin.

NOT MINE TO MAKE

Then one autumn I found myself on a Dallas expressway, driving from the airport after a flight to see my mother, and I realized that I was lost—not just off the map, but in a bigger way.

I had flown in after a day of teaching. The plane was delayed, arriving three hours late. I found myself madly

crisscrossing expressways, exiting one, merging onto another—until I realized that I no longer knew where I was. Now almost 2 A.M., the lights of fast-food restaurants and gas stations had been turned off.

I had been driving at 70 mph for almost an hour by the time I figured out I was headed in the wrong direction. I didn't know how long I'd have the strength to keep driving, and I thought of pulling over and sleeping in the car.

The landscape was a rat's nest of expressways heading in every direction, fierce velocity and incoherent markers. I felt that I had very little control over what happened to me next. I grasped how precarious my existence was. I couldn't even predict whether I would be able to draw another breath. One of my close friends—a woman my age—had just suffered a stroke. My life, I understood, rested in God's hands. My own perception, fortunately, was not the boundary or limit of all knowledge. The final decision was not mine to make.

My shoulders relaxed. I stopped gripping the wheel. I felt simple and humble and grateful relief.

I had enough sense that night to get off at the next exit. I spotted a young man closing up a Wendy's. When I asked him how to find 635, he cheerfully turned the restaurant's lights on again and reeled off exact directions. I wrote them down and thanked him profusely. He might have been the archangel Gabriel, who had suddenly learned English.

I made it safely to mother's assisted living home before 3:30 that morning.

That night I started letting go of my obsession with fixing my mother. I became like Sally in the Peanuts comic strip. I kept experiencing rude awakenings during the next several years—realizations that I couldn't control everything. Over and over I grasped that whatever pilgrimage our

family was on, I was not in charge of what the final destination would be or when we would get there.

I couldn't have said this at the time, but it was faith that allowed me to look forward and begin to define this seemingly random and endless period of caretaking as a pilgrimage. It was faith that made me believe I would find meaning in the heartbreaking need to buy Depends for our proud matriarch, to feed her as she had once fed me, and to help my sister make decisions about our mother's money and housing. It was faith that allowed me to enjoy some of the time I spent with my sister and mother. It was faith that allowed me, finally, to sometimes laugh.

SURPRISE GIFTS

Alzheimer's can be unsettling for both patients and caretakers because it is often isolating. On the one hand, patients need increasing physical care, but on the other, they seem not to "be there." They lapse into silence or say things that don't make sense.

One afternoon in September, I was sitting with my mother in the living room of the Christian Care Center. Her door to the hall was ajar, and smells drifted in from the dining room, where the third shift was eating. We sat in gloom because Mother's curtains were pulled against the blazing Dallas sun. She slumped, listlessly watching a newscaster on tv, the sound turned to a low murmur.

"I don't like his hair," she said.

"What don't you like about it?"

"It's dyed. Can't you tell?"

It didn't look dyed to me.

At this point, the caretaker often contradicts the patient. It leads to a quarrel and to the continuing isolation of both patient and caretaker. They both feel lonely.

Surely when we talk about Alzheimer's—particularly in the Christian community, where we all are practicing for eternity—we need to name the gains and gifts that come, even in the wake of a frightening disease.



But it doesn't have to be that way.

Five years earlier my mother had been a vibrant, popular woman. Now she was almost confined to her small apartment. She could no longer drive. She'd forgotten about flower arranging and given up her Bible study group.

I peeked at my watch. It was only 12:30. Five hours to dinner. I grabbed a magazine and leafed through it. It was full of ads for absorbent towels and magic face creams. I put it down. I got up to straighten a rug. My mind flitted to what was happening with my classes and my family on the East Coast. Then I tried to stop thinking. What could I do about any of it while I was here? Part of the problem, I realized, was that I didn't know how to sit still. I'm not good at being quiet. I would rather act. I like to make things happen.

"How about going to the shindig this afternoon?" I asked. Mary Francis, the hospitality director, had posted bright signs advertising a bash with cupcakes, cider, and a banjo band that would take residents' requests.

Mother snapped her head in my direction. Her black eyes were alert with interest. "He'll be there."

"Who?"

"The man who knocks on my door."

For months Mother had been telling me about a strange man who would rap on her door and invite her to go out. After seriously worrying about this, I decided he didn't exist. Her building was locked at

night and no one else had ever seen him.

I felt as if someone else had taken over my mother's body. The mother I had known all my life was reliable, whereas this woman sitting across from me seemed delusional. I wanted to jump into my rental car and drive straight back to the airport.

But I didn't. I felt obligated to tell Mother once again that there was no such man, no courtship. On the other hand, I was profoundly weary of dragging my mother back to reality.

"Do you want to see the guy?" Though I didn't want to encourage her illusions, I was desperate.

"Yeah, I kind of want to see him," she said.

"Do you like him?"

"Well, yeah, sometimes I do."

"What's he like?"

"He's kind of tall, and he's interesting."

I thought about this.

"And I can't stay on this farm forever," my mother said.

"That's true, you can't." She had been raised on a farm. I knew, because I was steeped in her life, that by the age of 16 she had understood that farming wasn't for her.

We went on talking. I got pulled into how she was feeling. That afternoon we went to the party, which she didn't actually like much. But she went to sleep that night feeling relaxed and cared for, because I had listened to her. We had met and shared her concern in a way I didn't

quite understand at the time, but which we repeated many times later.

It wasn't until later, when I was writing *The Geography of Memory*, that I figured out that the man must have been someone Mother remembered from her teenage years. She had described her boyfriends to me so vividly when I was a child that I could see them in my mind's eye. And then, sitting in my mother's living room in Dallas, they appeared again with presents: a potted geranium, the landscape painting, the pail of raspberries. I reinhabited those memories with her.

As I was writing the book, I understood that the gentleman who visited Mother at Christian Care might have been "real," even though he probably didn't knock on her door. She was imagining her own past so clearly that it felt to her as if it were happening again. Her description of him was puzzling, but it wasn't crazy. My willingness to listen to her instead of contradicting her—I think of that now as *hospitality*. And it led to an entirely new way of connecting with her.

During my adult life, Mother and I had enjoyed a cordial relationship that centered on the celebration of holidays and her grandchildren. During the Alzheimer's decade, instead of feeling increasingly isolated from her, I began to understand her in a new way.

Thinking about caretaking as a pilgrimage didn't stop my mother from getting sicker. Trying to act with faith didn't prevent her from dying. Connecting with her during her final decade didn't save her. Nor did learning spiritual disciplines such as *letting go* and *hospitality* deliver me from the grief of her death.

But surely when we talk about Alzheimer's—particularly in the Christian community, where we all are practicing for eternity—we need to name the gains and gifts that come, even in the wake of a frightening disease. I believe that my mother, even at her foggiest, always remembered that day follows night. After winter comes spring. The peony dies, but in March it gathers strength, and by April it is in full bloom.

CT

JEANNE MURRAY WALKER is a poet, playwright, and professor of English at the University of Delaware. Her most recent book is *The Geography of Memory: A Pilgrimage through Alzheimer's* (Center Street). She lives with her husband outside Philadelphia.

BY ROGER E. OLSON

water works

Why *baptism* is essential to the life of faith.

m

OVIES AND TV SHOWS have probably included more scenes of baptism than any other distinctly Christian ritual—wedding ceremonies aside. One that stands out as especially detailed (yet problematic) is the baptism of an escaped convict in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Delmar and his companions, Pete and Ulysses, are on the run from a posse when they hear heavenly singing in the forest.

The song is “Down to the River to Pray,” and it’s being sung by a parade of white-robed baptismal candidates moving toward a river where a preacher is dunking them under water. Delmar joins the group and comes up from the water, shouting, “The preacher done washed all my sins and transgressions!”—much to the amusement and cynical dismay of Ulysses.

Many Christians find the scene bittersweet. On the one hand, its solemnity, sincerity, and beauty are inspiring. On the other, it raises questions about how well moviemakers understand baptism. The preacher dips the baptismal candidates almost mechanically—quickly and without words. He doesn’t even know who Delmar is, and Delmar’s declaration has little in common with the beliefs of churches that dunk converts in a river (or baptize by another method).

Why is baptism such a popular trope in popular storytelling? Perhaps because it is, or can be, visually dramatic. Or maybe because it’s also a divisive issue and can add a dimension of tension to a plot line or scene. Baptism has long been a point of conflict and even division among Christians. Almost every denomination has its own twist on baptism. I realized this when I attempted to join the only English-speaking Baptist church in the European city where I studied theology. I came as a card-carrying, ordained Baptist—with my letter of recommendation from another Baptist church. The pastor and deacons explained that in order to become a full member, I needed to be re-baptized because my baptism had been an “alien immersion.” I grew up and was baptized in a Pentecostal church. (My baptism may not have been Baptist, but it certainly was dramatic: I was 10, and it





was in a gravel pit outside Des Moines.) I declined being re-baptized.

At least that Baptist church cared about baptism. Some churches today fall on the other end of the spectrum. For example, the Evangelical Free Church of America provides latitude on whether baptism should be required for church membership. Based on the denomination's autonomy, it's a local church matter. And some congregations believe the only requirement for church membership is simply being a born-again Christian. This stands in stark contrast with the New Testament and all of Christian history. For the apostles and faithful Christians after them, baptism was a necessary rite of passage for joining the church.

While Christians generally agree that baptism is important for discipleship, many have divided over its correct meaning and practice. Paul's words to the Ephesians—"There is... one Lord, one faith, *one baptism*" (4:4-5, emphasis mine)—seem to be wishful thinking. Baptism is an issue over which the church has split into innumerable denominations.

water that divides

In line with Cyprian (a third-century bishop of Carthage), most Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholics, and some Protestants believe baptism is the "laver of salvation." According to this view—known as "baptismal regeneration"—the water does not save, but God saves at baptism. An infant or adult believer is freed from condemnation and given new and eternal life. Protestants who affirm baptismal regeneration insist faith is necessary for salvation. So the faith of the infant's parents and of the congregation stands in until the child is old enough to confirm his or her personal faith.

The Reformation challenged this belief, though certain Reformers affirmed it to some degree. Much of the diversity within Protestantism is the result of disagreement over baptism among the Reformers. After the Reformation, Protestants continued to develop diverse views and practices of baptism so that today they constitute a blooming, buzzing confusion of baptismal beliefs and methods.

During the Reformation, Martin Luther and his followers rejected the Catholic doctrine that baptism imparts saving grace *ex opere operato*—by virtue of the act itself apart from faith, so long as

it is performed properly by a priest. However, Luther held fast to infant baptism and baptismal regeneration in the presence of faith. When critics asked him how an infant can have faith, Luther supposedly said, "Prove to me an infant can't have faith. Hah!" For him and his followers, faith is a gift of God bestowed at baptism. And proxy faith stood in for the infant's later, fuller, and more explicit faith.

Proponents of baptismal regeneration appeal to Scripture such as 1 Peter 3:21, "Baptism . . . now saves you," and Mark 16:16, "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved" (NRSV).

Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss contemporary of Luther and the father of the Reformed branch of Protestantism, denied that infants need salvation. For him, infants are innocent. So why baptize infants? To initiate them into the covenant relationship between God and his people.

According to Zwingli, infant baptism is the new covenant counterpart to circumcision in the old covenant. When an infant is baptized, she is assumed to be part of the people of God, unless she grows up to walk away from Christ. Proponents use Matthew 19:14 for support, where Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me . . . for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs" (NRSV). Zwingli believed children are free of original guilt; thus, he denied baptismal regeneration. In fact, he believed elect children are saved whether they are baptized or not. However, like Hebrew children, they need to be included in covenant relationship with God. And that's what baptism accomplishes, Zwingli said.

However, some Zwingli followers wanted to abolish infant baptism, or *paedobaptism* (from *pais* in Greek, meaning "child or infant"), because it reminded them of the Catholicism the Reformers rejected. In 1525, several of them were re-baptized upon confessing their faith. Thus, they were called Anabaptists (from *ana* in Greek, meaning "over again"). Anabaptist theologian Balthasar Hubmaier said infant baptism is like a pub putting out a sign that says GOOD WINE before the grapes are harvested.

For these "radical reformers" and their followers through the centuries, baptism is a public act of commitment and should therefore be performed only on believers old enough to profess Christ. The term for this view is *credobaptism* (from *credo* in Latin, meaning "believe"). Anabaptists

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linked baptism to church discipline and argued that all baptized persons are subject to it. Underlying the Anabaptist view is the belief that Christian initiation begins with conversion, not baptism.

Christians who reject infant baptism appeal to New Testament passages that suggest faith comes before baptism: Believe and be baptized (Mark 16:16).

Credobaptist ranks grew alongside revivalism in the Great Awakenings and later evangelistic campaigns. They include Anabaptists and Baptists as well as Pentecostals and many in Holiness churches. (Christians in the Stone-Campbell Movement, who typically belong to Churches of Christ, are also credobaptists. But unlike other credobaptists, they believe baptism is necessary for salvation.)

Some Christians, such as Quakers and members of the Salvation Army, reject baptism entirely. And recently, one Texas megachurch pastor reported that nearly a third of the people who receive Christ in his

church are never baptized. One response to the multiple views of baptism is to reject or neglect it entirely. Especially in large independent churches, baptism is often relegated to relative unimportance.

discipleship in the fullest sense

So why should we practice baptism, especially since it has caused so much division among sincere, God-fearing, Bible-believing, Jesus-loving Christians? Are there ways Christians can accept one another in spite of their diversity?

Most Christians throughout history have agreed that baptism is an act of obedience to Jesus Christ, who commanded that his followers be baptized and baptize each other. Jesus inextricably connects discipleship and baptism in the Great Commission: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). And at the conclusion of his Pentecost sermon, the apostle Peter told listeners, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you” (Acts 2:38).

The New Testament never speaks of unbaptized Christians. Rather, it assumes that baptism is requisite for following Jesus in the fullest sense. It’s not until recently that Christians have assumed baptism is irrelevant or unnecessary.

Indeed, some credobaptists will balk at the claim that obeying Christ involves being baptized, because they deny a necessary link between water baptism and salvation. However, the very word *Christian* means “Christ follower,” and rejecting or willfully neglecting baptism is disobeying Christ. Few Christians say baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation. But the vast majority of Christians throughout history, including credobaptists, have believed baptism is an essential part of becoming a member of Christ’s body, the church, and of being a disciple in the fullest sense.

Let me offer an analogy, though it will no doubt fall short of communicating baptism’s importance. Baptism is like a wedding ceremony. While it’s theoretically possible to get married without one, most Christians believe there is something defective about two people simply claiming to be married. Society may deem them married, depending on circumstances. But churches have tended, and with good biblical reason, to emphasize that it’s important if not required for a man and

woman to exchange vows before God and God’s people.

Similarly, a person who claims to be saved but refuses to be baptized may very well be saved but is not living out the Christian life in the fullest and truest sense. The majority of Christians everywhere and across denominations agree on that point.

toward unity

But a serious problem still exists: Many Christians, especially in liturgical churches, regard baptism as a work of the Holy Spirit in the person being baptized. To them, baptism is a sacrament that conveys grace—it may not save, but it plants a seed of grace and faith that will later blossom into personal repentance at conversion or confirmation (or both).

However, other Christians, mostly credobaptists in free church traditions, see baptism not as a sacrament that confers grace but rather as the individual’s response to regeneration, being born again at conversion. Thus, they categorize it as an *ordinance*. For them, the Spirit is already active in the person being baptized; baptism is simply a public testimony to the Spirit’s inward work, which began *prior* to baptism.

Perhaps both sides can find common ground in acknowledging that all good things, including baptism, are gifts of God and that the Holy Spirit is the giver. And credobaptists would be wise to recognize that the Spirit is the one who gives the Christian the courage and commitment involved in baptism. Not only that, baptism testifies to the Spirit’s washing our sin away. Without the Spirit, baptism would be just a work and therefore void of significance.

Another divide can be bridged by discovering common ground. Paedobaptists look at credobaptists—who insist that infant baptism is no baptism at all and thus re-baptize believers who were baptized as infants—with horror because they see them as invalidating real baptisms. To paedobaptists, re-baptizing seems just as absurd as requiring re-marriage for church membership. It appears prideful and sectarian. They also believe credobaptists deny children full participation in the family of God.

On the other hand, credobaptists look at paedobaptists and think they are deluding people into believing they can be Christians without having personal faith.

They see infant baptism, however understood, as no baptism at all but as infant dedication at best, with a little water. For credobaptists, persons baptized as infants often grow up thinking they’re already saved without having a true conversion experience.

The ferocity of the debate over sacraments has died down in recent years—Christians don’t execute each other for their differing opinions, as was common in Reformation times, for example. But credobaptists and paedobaptists still have trouble accepting each other. Paedobaptists think credobaptists assume they are not even real Christians. Credobaptists think paedobaptists see them as fanatics or sectarians. I have certainly heard paedobaptists say that about credobaptists.

To be sure, there is no one simple way forward. But both sides must be willing to compromise if they want to see unity. Credobaptists should work to assure paedobaptists, especially those in the evangelical vein, that they do consider them fellow Christians, insofar as they have accepted Christ by faith. And it helps for credobaptists to go one step further and reconsider infant baptism, performed within a context of genuine faith, as valid if imperfect. They can still require would-be members who were baptized as infants to undergo a “completion” of baptism—perhaps immersion upon making a public confession of faith.

Meanwhile, paedobaptists could work harder to understand credobaptist concerns and consider re-baptism as completing infant baptism rather than totally rejecting it. And they would do well to emphasize more strenuously that baptism itself does not save the infant. Similarly, they should not relegate children of credobaptist believers to the status of covenantal outsiders.

Both groups should look beyond their differences and focus on a bigger problem: the growing neglect of baptism among people who call themselves Christians. As followers of Jesus, we must prevent Christ’s call to follow him fully from being drowned out.

CT

ROGER E. OLSON is Foy Valentine Professor of Christian Theology and Ethics at Baylor University’s George W. Truett Theological Seminary, and author most recently of *The Journey of Modern Theology: From Reconstruction to Deconstruction* (InterVarsity Press).

VOCATION

T H E



O F T H E I R



Reclaiming the honor of manual labor.



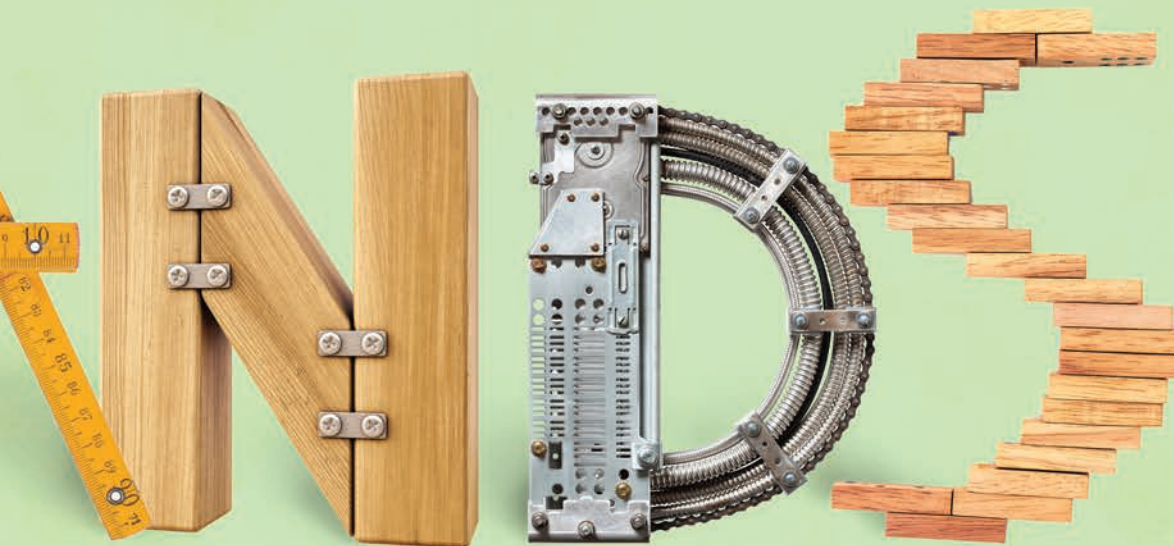
**By
Jeff Haanen
and Chris Horst**

***“I’ve always enjoyed building and fixing things,”
says Brandon Yates.***

After high school, Yates became an electrician. A fast study, he advanced quickly through the first two electrical certifications, apprentice and journeyman. Finally, when he became a master electrician in 1999, Yates founded KC One, an electrical contracting services company based in Kansas City, Missouri.

“*Craftsman* is a lost word in our day,” says Yates, now 37, who aims to change that by recruiting hardworking high-school graduates with an aptitude for making things. KC One’s apprenticeship program provides on-the-job training and certifications for one or two young electricians each year. “Society teaches these kids that they’ll become losers if they become electricians. My job is to unteach them.”

The perception that the trades offer less status and money, and demand less intelligence, is one likely reason young people have turned away from careers in the trades for several generations. In Yates’s school district, officials recently shuttered the entire shop class program. In our “cultural iconography,” notes scholar Mike Rose, the craftsman is a “muscled arm, sleeve rolled tight against biceps, but no thought bright behind the eye, no image that links hands and brain.” Thinking, it’s assumed, is for the office, not the shop.





"Society teaches these kids that they'll become losers if they become electricians. My job is to unteach them."

BRANDON YATES,
Master Electrician

But considering that Scripture identifies Jesus himself as a *tektōn* (Mark 6:3, literally "craftsman" or "one who works with his hands"), we think it's high time to challenge the tradesman stereotype, and to rethink the modern divide between white collar and blue collar, office and shop, in light of the Divine Craftsman who will one day make all things new.

CRAFTSPEOPLE (*harashim*)—masons, barbers, weavers, goldsmiths, stonecutters, carpenters, potters—are replete in the Bible. The first person Scripture says was filled with the Spirit of God was Bezalel, who was given "ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze" (Ex. 31:1–5, ESV). Passages like these suggest God cares about craftsmanship, above all in his most holy places. From the tabernacle to the temple, what was built was meant to reflect and reveal God's character. The temple was not just a majestic building; it spoke powerfully of his holiness.

Likewise, some of the most important New Testament figures worked with their hands. Like most Jewish sons, Jesus presumably apprenticed to his earthly father, Joseph, a carpenter. Paul built tents alongside Priscilla and Aquila, his friends and partners in the gospel.

Still, "mental work" has long been valued over and against physical labor. Greek philosophy elevated the mind and disdained the body. Christians have resisted this gnostic dichotomy for centuries, albeit often halfheartedly. Other Christians have resisted the spiritual-secular labor divide, notably Martin Luther. The reformer was one of the first to use the word *vocation* to describe

work beyond that of clergy. And he offered strong correctives against the Greek view of work, which prized the scholar's scroll over the weaver's loom: "Works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they may be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic laborer in the field."

"We have to pay attention to detail and care for the contractors we work for," Yates says. "As a tradesperson, I don't know any other way to do that than by doing a really good job. We believe that God exists; therefore, the things we do and make now matter. The whole apprenticeship process is also a discipleship process."

RYAN NICHOLSON

FOR MUCH OF HISTORY, the vast majority of workers have labored with their hands, often applying highly specialized skills passed down through guilds and families. In the United States, however, the hands-mind divide accelerated after 1911, the year Frederick Winslow Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* was published. A classic work of industrial-era ideals, the monograph focused on gathering the knowledge of craftsmen, organizing it into highly efficient processes, and redistributing that work to laborers as small parts of a larger whole.

Taylor's system, overseen by people in "management," allowed employers to cut costs and increase productivity by standardizing and simplifying manual labor. But, according to Taylor, "All possible brain work should be removed from the shop and centered in the planning or lay-out department." The previous union of craftsman and thinker, skilled laborer and scientist, began to disintegrate. What remained were "white-collar" planners and "blue-collar" workers.

CONSIDERING THAT SCRIPTURE IDENTIFIES JESUS AS A *TEKTŌN*—

LITERALLY ‘ONE WHO WORKS WITH HIS HANDS’—WE THINK IT’S HIGH TIME TO CHALLENGE THE TRADESMAN STEREOTYPE.

Concerned that craft knowledge was being lost, Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, which provided federal funding for manual training. But because the bill established separate state boards for vocational education, it had the unintended effect of sequestering the trades from the liberal arts.

This division between vocational education and college preparation affects today’s college-bound students as well as those who pursue the trades. Most college graduates have had little, if any, training in repairing a leaky toilet or hardwiring a smoke detector. For those brave enough to attempt such feats, the intellectual and technical skill needed to make or fix is often beyond reach. For an awful lot of college graduates, without help, their pipes would be forever clogged. Without reintegrating the trades back into the liberal arts, we will perpetuate the falsehood that plumbers, electricians, and other skilled laborers are somehow less intelligent.



“WE MAKE THINGS WORK,” says Adrian Groff, vice president at Groff’s Home Comfort Team. A business based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Groff’s team includes dozens of plumbers, carpenters, and electricians. Together they

ensure homes, schools, churches, and office buildings fulfill their good design. They repair broken toilets, install safe wiring, and construct ventilation systems. Embedded deeply in the heart of their craftsmanship is a sense of renewal.

Americans who think of skilled manual labor are more likely to think of industrial jobs than the trades. Yet industrial jobs—work performed in highly controlled factory settings—have been especially vulnerable to globalization. Chinese and Indian work forces can perform many industrial tasks previously done in the United States. Outsourcing has benefited other countries: Over the past 30 years, the percentage of Chinese families living in extreme poverty has dropped from 84 percent to less than 10 percent. But many of these jobs will not come back to the United States, causing deep and lasting damage to the livelihoods of American workers.

The manual trades, on the other hand, resist outsourcing. These jobs must be completed here and now. When lights require installation or framing must be constructed, the work can’t be done in India. Skilled manual labor has an incarnational quality—it requires a person in the flesh. Cement and rebar can be imported, but highways cannot. For those, we need skilled

“Every time I look
at reclaimed wood,
I see a story.
I see art.”

JOSH MABE,
Carpenter



RESPECT FOR SKILLED MANUAL WORK MAY BE AT A LOW EBB,

BUT WE SEE THE TIDE TURNING. IN CITIES LIKE DENVER, ADDING

THE WORD *HANDCRAFTED* TO A PRODUCT IS GUARANTEED

TO BOOST ITS HIP FACTOR—AND SALES.

craftsmen. Indeed, we need them more than ever.

"It's very, very difficult to find people," said Frank Greiner Jr., president of Greiner Industries, another company in Lancaster that employs all types of welders, machinists, and metalworkers. "We need trade-school grads."



CROSS THE COUNTRY, skilled manual labor is in high demand. But it's also in short supply. According to the Associated General Contractors of America, two-thirds of construction companies are struggling to find enough skilled workers, and 79 percent expect the shortage to continue. Meanwhile, craftsmen are retiring in droves. According to Manpower Group, 53 percent of skilled trade workers are 45 or older; 18 percent are between ages 55 and 64. There aren't enough new workers to replace the waves of skilled laborers retiring from the workforce.

Given the types of jobs that are expected to grow in the coming years, the looming skills shortage is particularly acute. A 2010 report published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicted

the fastest-growing occupations through 2020. Of the top ten, four were skilled trades: (4) brickmasons, blockmasons, stonemasons, and tile and marble setters; (5) carpenters; (7) reinforcing iron and rebar workers; and (9) pipelayers, plumbers, pipefitters, and steamfitters.

Mike Rowe, host of the former Discovery Channel show *Dirty Jobs*, recently launched a project to prepare students for the work force. He writes, "A trillion dollars in student loans. Record high unemployment. Three million good jobs that no one seems to want. ... The Skills Gap is here, and if we don't close it, it'll swallow us all."

The "skills" he is referring to are the manual trades—butchers and bricklayers, construction workers and carpenters. Rowe has dedicated the Profoundly Disconnected project to providing scholarships for students to attend trade schools—and to challenging the idea that a four-year degree is the key to success.

But can the skilled trades bring "success," especially the economic kind? Even if Americans will always need plumbers, will plumbers be paid enough to support a family?

In truth, skilled craftsmen in the United States earn salaries competitive to their cubicle-dwelling peers. Electricians and

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plumbers earn on average close to \$50,000 annually. The average annual wage for elevator installers and repairers: \$73,560; electrical repairers for power plants: \$65,950; transportation inspectors: \$65,770.

The less technical skill required for a job, the smaller the wages. But for those who have apprenticed in an in-demand trade, times are looking up. In the best-selling book *The Millionaire Next Door*, Thomas J. Stanley and William D. Danko note that the “typical millionaire” is the skilled craftsman who owns his or her own business.

“Sometimes these guys are so shocked at what they can do and earn,” says Yates. “They look at their college counterparts and see them saddled with debt and unable to find work.”



RESPECT FOR SKILLED manual work may be at low ebb, but we see the tide turning. In cities like Denver (where we live), adding the word *hand-crafted* to a product is guaranteed to boost its hip factor—and sales. Many young consumers celebrate firms that deindustrialize, restoring the skill and the unpredictable beauty of quality handwork. David Culp, a contributor to the American Craftsman project, a documentary photography series that celebrates skilled trades, captures the enthusiasm: “The American craftsman still thrives, because when it comes to getting certain things done well and with beauty, a human hand guided by a human eye, ear, and imagination can still be the highest technology of all.”

Indeed, at times the work of the trades approaches a fine art.

Stacked behind carpenter Josh Mabe’s shop in Palmer Lake, Colorado, is old wood gleaned from the rusty corners of the state: a barn door, wine barrels, discarded planks from truck beds, a railroad cart, lumber from the old Leavenworth Prison, oak floors from a 130-year-old Denver home. Each piece is worn, discarded by its owner. But for Mabe, such materials are treasures. “Every time I look at reclaimed wood, I see a story. I see art.”

Twenty1Five, Mabe’s small furniture business, has attracted statewide attention. The company’s name derives from Revelation 21:5 (esv), where Christ says, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

Each of Mabe’s pieces is a mosaic of shape and color. His work turns drab boardrooms into wild, elegant arrays of Colorado history, sterile dining rooms into collages of revealed beauty. “I love taking something useless and making it useful,” says Mabe.

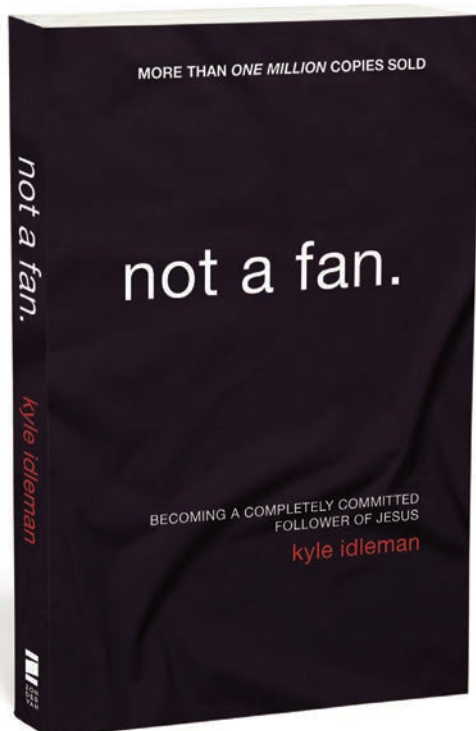
If there is a renaissance in craftsmanship, it should be welcomed—even heralded—by Christians. After all, we look to a day when we will inhabit a house God has built—a richly prepared mansion that owes its beauty to a single designer and laborer (John 14:2). God is Maker, Creator of the heavens and the earth; and God is Fixer, redeemer and restorer of a broken world.

As we look forward to the heavenly city, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:10), perhaps we owe it to our children and grandchildren to encourage more of them to be makers and fixers, too.

CT

JEFF HAANEN is the founder and executive director of the Denver Institute for Faith & Work. CHRIS HORST is the vice president of development at HOPE International and coauthor of *Mission Drift*.

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kyle idleman

is the Teaching Pastor at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, the fourth largest church in America. He is the author of the award-winning and best-selling book *Not a Fan*. He is also the author of *Gods at War* and the newly released *AHA*.



***CARYS PARKER,
THE ONLY PERSON
RAISED ENTIRELY
ABOARD MERCY SHIPS,
SETS A NEW COURSE.***

Dropping Anchor

BY KATE TRACY

WHEN CARYS PARKER told her friends she was going home to the Congo for Christmas, she realized she had left out a certain detail: She had never actually *been* to the Congo. That's because for Parker, who just finished her first year of college at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington, home is never a specific country, let alone city. Rather, home is a 500-foot-long hospital ship that sails along the west coast of Africa, treating those with little or no medical care. Most college freshmen experience a period of transition, but Parker's has been extreme, even when compared to typical third-culture students.

"I feel like I have one foot on the ship and one foot here," she says. "I never really belonged anywhere except the ship, and I don't have one country or one culture I can claim as my own."

For the first 12 years of her life, Parker lived on the now-retired *Anastasis*; her teenage years were spent on the *Africa Mercy* (right). For 27 years, Parker's father, Gary, has been an oral and maxillofacial surgeon for Mercy Ships, the maritime ministry that spun off from Youth With a Mission in 2003. Her mother, Susan, is an executive assistant on the ship, while Parker (whose first name means "mercy") attended the ship's school, along with her brother, Wesley.

Parker, 19, is the first person to have been raised entirely on a Mercy Ships vessel, and one of three to have completed high school on the ship. In 2013,



‘I grew up surrounded by suffering that I can’t even describe. I was comfortable around it. And yet I had never really experienced pain personally. When I first came here, my homesickness was so intense that I felt like I had an inner deformity.’

~ CARYS PARKER

she graduated from a class of three.

“It felt like when my family drove away I wasn’t just saying goodbye to them—I was saying goodbye to a very specific and unique way of life,” she says. “Once they were gone, no one on this campus would truly be able to relate to me.”

A Year of Firsts

The *Africa Mercy* has a Starbucks on board, but it didn’t prepare Parker for the transition from water to land she’s experienced since coming to Whitworth, a Presbyterian-affiliated private college 300 miles from the ocean. And while Parker has spent many summers in the States, they did not leave her feeling thoroughly American.

Almost all residential college students find their freshman year a mix of freedom, novelty, and self-discovery. For Parker, that included joining a ballet class—a hobby she couldn’t take up while on the ship. She plays Frisbee with her friends when they’re not doing homework, making late-night trips to Denny’s, or talking about theology.

This past school year saw Parker’s first concert, first basketball game, and first use of a debit card. She credits her friends for helping her adjust to middle-class American life, whether that meant assistance in finding her way out of Walmart, teaching her how to tip waiters, or showing her YouTube videos of the New Year’s Eve ball drop.

And then there was the time when she had to Google “go clubbing.” She declined a friend’s invitation once she realized it didn’t involve literal clubs.

Living on the *Africa Mercy* did prepare her for a few things, however. While many of Whitworth’s 2,300 students get campus fever, Parker feels free. To her, 200 acres of forest is worlds bigger than the “metal box” of her childhood. She is thankful for Whitworth’s grass lawns.

But as excited as Parker was about life on land, she found herself desperately missing her family, the patients, and Africa.

“She grew up living her entire life only a couple hundred feet from her parents at all times,” says Parker’s roommate, Rebecca Benedict. “It took her a little longer to adjust to independence and not seeing them.”

Keith Beebe, a Whitworth theology professor and Parker’s academic adviser, said Parker’s first few days of college were marked by considerations of whether she should leave Washington and return to the ship. Homesickness is common among freshmen, but “she was not like the typical American teenager, nor was she like the other international students.”

Early on, Parker didn’t freely talk to her classmates about her upbringing. Parker’s peers love calling attention to her so-called “ship quirks”: her two-minute showers and love for chocolate milk and mashed potatoes—two delicacies never offered in the ship’s cafeteria. But it took her time (and some prodding from Beebe) to talk about the more difficult aspects of life at sea and at some of Africa’s toughest ports.

“While she is learning some things



about the typical teenager, her peers are also getting the perspective of someone who—from all appearances—is just like them, but who also has had a very different life experience, with different sets of concerns,” said Beebe.

Shaped by Mercy

Once, when the *Africa Mercy* was moored off the coast of Liberia in 2008, a woman named Martha brought her daughter Blessing on board. Blessing had acquired minor injuries from falling into a ditch, but because she didn’t have the proper medical resources, her injuries turned into noma (an aggressive gangrene of the face). Martha saved all the money she had to buy penicillin for her daughter, only to receive fake sugar pills. As a result, Blessing lost both of her lips, and her leg was crippled—enough to make her an outcast from African society.

Blessing eventually received reconstructive lip and knee surgeries on the ship, resulting in her ability to walk and receive an education. But it was Martha’s attitude that stuck with Parker: “It was her only child. To know she would never be the

same and yet to remain hopeful, to hold on to the goodness of God and never to blame him—that inspired me.”

Still, only 82 beds occupied the wards on the *Africa Mercy*. What happened to the desperate crowds the ship couldn’t serve? Parker remembers walking the diseased back down the gangway. For the old man with the cancerous tumor, or the young girl suffocating from a growth in her throat, all Parker could do was pray they found care elsewhere.

But sometimes, she’d also pray *Why them, God?* or *Why not me?* She’d think about her comfortable cabin, her loving family, her access to legitimate penicillin, and her books. She couldn’t complain about her homework, the cafeteria food, or the ship’s cramped quarters for more than a few minutes before walking downstairs to see someone suffering from a tumor. *It doesn’t seem fair*, she’d often think. She was overwhelmed with guilt.

“I grew up surrounded by suffering that I can’t even describe,” Parker says. “I was comfortable around it; I could minister to people who were in pain. And yet I had never really experienced pain personally. When I first came here, my

homesickness was so intense that I felt like I had an inner deformity.”

It wasn’t until an afternoon walk with Judy Mandeville, wife of Whitworth’s dean of students, that Parker had her first breakthrough at college. Mandeville pointed out how they were walking in the shadows of the people in front of them. She told Parker, “All your life, you have been walking in your parents’ shadows, but now, it’s time to make your own.” Mandeville then grabbed Parker’s shoulders and shifted her out of the shadows.

From a young age, Parker wanted to pursue medicine and become a doctor or nurse.

“Growing up on a hospital ship, I really saw the hands and feet of Jesus. To witness the blind see, the lame walk, and the outcast restored to community is to see the compassion of Jesus lived out. I am so grateful for the chance to grow up where that happened almost every day.”

It wasn’t until age 16 or 17 that Parker realized there were other avenues to serve God. For a girl growing up in a place where people who wanted to make a difference did it through healing people, medicine seemed the only option.

“There’s another side to Jesus,” she says. “He was a healer, but he was also a rabbi—he taught people how to live in ways that make for peace.” Parker plans to return to Whitworth next fall. She’s thrilled about her new leadership position: a diversity advocate in one of the campus dorms, where she will welcome international students and plan events throughout the year, celebrating different cultures and countries. Parker will continue pursuing her theology degree with plans to return to Israel—a country she’s visited five times—to study biblical history and geography.

Meanwhile, “she loves to seek out lonely people and be their friend,” says Benedict. “She hates to see people alone.”

Parker hasn’t ruled out returning to Mercy Ships after college. For her, the *Africa Mercy* was the perfect mix of safety and opportunity, and she wouldn’t change anything about it.

“I definitely see myself returning for a season,” says Parker. “But I don’t think I’ll stay for 27 years. My parents have that one covered.”

CT

KATE TRACY is *Christianity Today*’s editorial resident.



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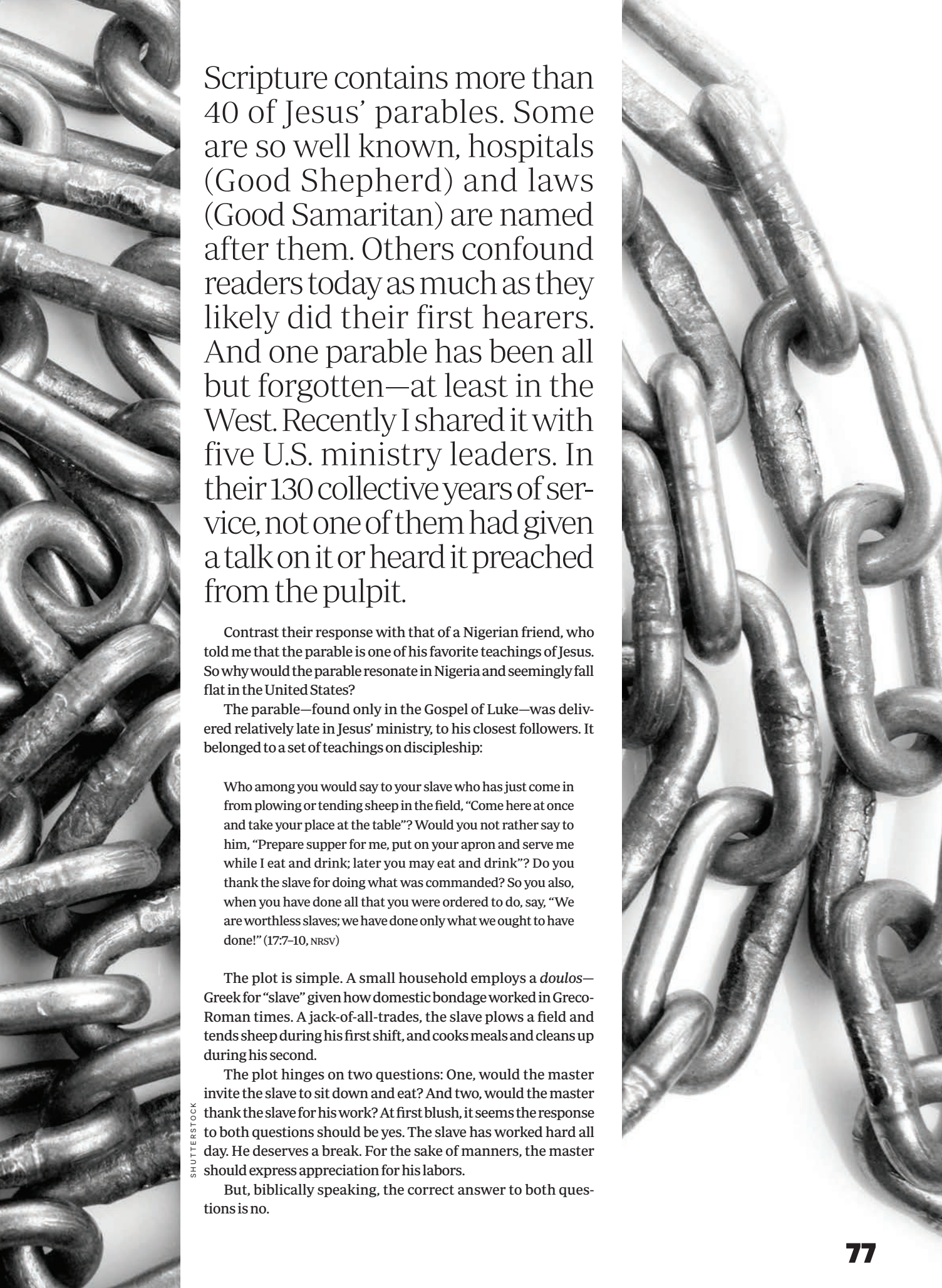
MOST

TROUBLING

PARABLE

**WHY
DOES
JESUS
SAY
WE ARE
LIKE
SLAVES?**

BY ALEC HILL



Scripture contains more than 40 of Jesus' parables. Some are so well known, hospitals (Good Shepherd) and laws (Good Samaritan) are named after them. Others confound readers today as much as they likely did their first hearers. And one parable has been all but forgotten—at least in the West. Recently I shared it with five U.S. ministry leaders. In their 130 collective years of service, not one of them had given a talk on it or heard it preached from the pulpit.

Contrast their response with that of a Nigerian friend, who told me that the parable is one of his favorite teachings of Jesus. So why would the parable resonate in Nigeria and seemingly fall flat in the United States?

The parable—found only in the Gospel of Luke—was delivered relatively late in Jesus' ministry, to his closest followers. It belonged to a set of teachings on discipleship:

Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, "Come here at once and take your place at the table"? Would you not rather say to him, "Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink"? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, "We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!" (17:7-10, NRSV)

The plot is simple. A small household employs a *doulos*—Greek for "slave" given how domestic bondage worked in Greco-Roman times. A jack-of-all-trades, the slave plows a field and tends sheep during his first shift, and cooks meals and cleans up during his second.

The plot hinges on two questions: One, would the master invite the slave to sit down and eat? And two, would the master thank the slave for his work? At first blush, it seems the response to both questions should be yes. The slave has worked hard all day. He deserves a break. For the sake of manners, the master should express appreciation for his labors.

But, biblically speaking, the correct answer to both questions is no.

TAKE UP YOUR YOKE

Thomas Jefferson once took a sharp instrument to the Bible to excise passages that offended his Enlightenment sensibilities. In a similar spirit, if given the option, I would consider deleting Luke 17:7–10. Throughout the mid-19th century, many British and American slave owners, clergy, and government officials used this and other Scripture passages to defend the institution of slavery. Today, as we continue to witness the sad effects of institutional racism and stories like *12 Years a Slave*, which remind us of past brutality, we instinctively read this parable as unfair and mean-spirited.

We must remember, though, that parables are designed to teach a limited number of focused lessons, not to be applied in every detail. And while the characters in Jesus' parables sometimes practice unseemly behavior, Jesus is not endorsing such conduct. Nor is he endorsing slavery, a practice diametrically opposed to his first recorded sermon (Luke 4:16–21) and subsequent teachings.

Still, I much prefer a similar parable in Luke 12. There a master returns home, finds his slaves alert, dons an apron, and serves them. I've heard this text preached many times from American pulpits. So if I initially react adversely to the Luke 17 parable, why am I also drawn to it? Why do I return to it time and time again?

Because it directly touches my deficiencies. By temperament, I am a people pleaser, and I am prone to narcissism. Combined, these traits produce a watered-down discipleship.

To counter the notion that I am the center of the universe, for the past eight years I have started my quiet time every morning with the same four words: *I am your slave*.

As I've pursued the disciple-as-slave metaphor, a rich vein of Scripture has opened up to me. Jesus used it a lot: "Take up your yoke"; "No slave can serve two masters"; "If I, your master, have washed your feet . . . do likewise"; and "A

slave is not greater than his Master."

In his book *A Better Freedom*, singer-songwriter Michael Card notes that almost half of Jesus' parables involved slaves or slave-like characters. He also observes that Paul's favorite title for Jesus is "master" (*kyrios*), and "slave" (*doulos*) for himself.

Use of slave imagery extended into the early church. In the second century,

Ignatius commenced several of his letters, "I salute the bishop, the presbytery, and my fellow slaves."

But didn't Jesus call his followers "friends" (John 15:15)? And didn't he encourage them to address God as "Abba" (Matt. 6:9)? Indeed he did. But family imagery is not the only descriptor of divine-human relationships that Jesus uses.

Imagine a four-part choir in which sopranos sing of an almighty Creator, altos, of a heavenly Father, tenors, of an incarnated Friend, and basses, of a divine Master. Together the voices create a balanced chorale. Each is true. Each is needed. While believers in the West revel in the soprano ("Creator"), alto ("Father"), and tenor ("Friend") voices, we are mostly tone-deaf to the bass ("Master") voice. That's why we miss the beauty and truth of Luke 17.

We might also object because of Paul's teaching in Galatians: In Christ, there is "neither slave nor free" (3:28). Doesn't this text undercut the logic of the parable?

On closer reading, however, we see that Paul is referring to human relations, not divine-human relations. While the former is wonderfully egalitarian, we must never import an egalitarian spirit into our relationship with God. He is the Lord of the universe; we are not. He is transcendent; we are not. He is perfect; we are not.

BECAUSE OUR

MASTER

IS ALL POWERFUL,

WE CAN LEAN ON HIS STRENGTH.

AND BECAUSE HE IS ALL GOOD,

WE CAN TRUST HIM

TO CARE FOR US.

WHAT WE SEE AS OUR

BONDAGE

IS REALLY OUR

FREEDOM.

SURRENDERED

If we read Jesus' parable on its own terms, we glean three insights on how to follow him.

First, we must cede control. Submission, obedience, and dependence are central to the parable's vision of discipleship. Reared on a diet of rights and entitlements, we unwittingly expect God to cater to our needs. But God owes us

ISTOCK

nothing. We owe him everything.

Thankfully, our heavenly master is nothing like the parable's human master. Whereas the latter is selfish, the former is "gentle" and "humble in heart," giving "rest to [our] souls." His "yoke is easy" and his "burden is light" (Matt. 11:29–30).

Herein lays a great paradox as well as the key to the parable. Because our master is all powerful, we can lean on his strength. And because he is all good, we can trust him to care for us. Our bondage is really our freedom.

Every three years, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship hosts Urbana, a large missions conference, in St. Louis. As 16,000 college students crowded into the Rams football stadium for Urbana 2009, leaders learned that the main waterline outside the Edward Jones Dome had burst. We were told repairs could take ten hours—or three days. If the latter, the fire marshal would have to shut down the conference.

For four long hours, the outcome hung in the balance. A type A personality, I wanted to run around panicked. Rather, to my surprise, I remained calm. Why? Because I had been learning that being the slave of a good and powerful master has its privileges. I had performed all of my duties, done everything I was supposed to do. And my master was in control.

Another Urbana story: In 1967, a student named Libby attended with her boyfriend, Tom. During the final commitment evening, both submitted their lives to the Lord. For 30 years, Tom and Libby Little served in Afghanistan, providing vision care to the people of Kabul throughout seemingly endless wars and conflict.

In August 2010, shortly after conducting a two-week medical camp in a remote valley of northwestern Afghanistan, Tom and his medical team were ambushed and killed. Upon receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her husband, Libby said, "Although Tom was killed in 2010, he had already surrendered his life to God's good purposes way back in 1967." For four decades, Tom had submitted himself to his divine master.

Second, we must do our duty. In some cases, such as caring for an elderly parent or a sick child, we need to be faithfully persistent. My mom, a single parent earning barely \$5,000 a year, sacrificed

for her three sons, sending each of us to the Seattle preparatory school that Bill Gates attended.

At other times, duty is thrust upon us. When Martin Luther King Jr. was 26, fellow clergy urged him to lead the Birmingham bus boycott. After agreeing to do so, he received regular death threats. Late one night, a caller threatened to bomb his house and kill him, his wife, and their infant daughter.

As King prayed past midnight, he heard: "Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo, I will be with you, even until the end of the world." He said, "I heard the voice of Jesus saying still to fight on."

King went to bed peacefully, no longer worried about death. That night changed his life. That night he accepted his duty. Whatever the cost might be to him or his family, he would be faithful to his calling.

During the 1940–45 Nazi occupation of France, the small Huguenot (Protestant) village of Le Chambon accepted a most difficult duty. As recounted by Philip Hallie in *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*, the hamlet of 3,000 farmers and artisans risked their lives to help 5,000 Jewish children escape to nearby Switzerland. When later asked why they had jeopardized so much to save strangers, their response was simple: They could not stand by and watch the innocent die. It was their God-given duty to resist evil and do good.

Disciples who see themselves as slaves do what their master commands. Ours is not to question the cost, the inconvenience, or the risk. Rather, ours is to hear the Master, delineate his imperatives, and perform them. Without theological training or advanced degrees, the people of Le Chambon understood this and acted accordingly.

Third, we remember we serve only one master. At age 26, Ken Elzinga joined the faculty of the University of Virginia. After a tenured colleague warned him that being explicit about his faith would hinder his career, Elzinga was stunned to see a flier with his face on it placed at a prominent campus location. A campus ministry had posted it to advertise a talk he had agreed to give.

A relatively new believer, Elzinga

worried. Would fellow professors think less of him? Might this harm his tenure chances? He experienced a dark night of the soul, returning to campus and secretly taking the poster down.

But the next morning, Elzinga put the poster back up. After hours of soul-searching, he concluded that his life was not about career ambition but about faithful discipleship, and that being private about his faith was not an option.

In the four decades since, Elzinga has been named professor of the year multiple times and is still a speaker in high demand. He will be the first to say that serving only one master has been liberating. Why? Because pleasing an audience of one makes us less anxious, less sensitive to criticism, and more courageous. Because in doing so, we become more secure and compete less for our honor.

CONSULTING THE MASTER

How has the forgotten parable of Luke 17 shaped my life? As president of a large ministry, I have faced disagreement with some of my decisions. I have also felt the sting of criticism from the academy for our adherence to biblical standards of truth, holiness, and the exclusivity of Christ. And, perhaps most painfully, I have suffered at the words of Christian bloggers.

I've been liberated, however, when I remember I serve one master. When criticized, I first ask if he is pleased with what I'm doing. After an often uncomfortable time of self-reflection—plucking a log out of one's eye is never pleasant—I can move on with confidence.

When we serve the divine Master, we are freed from meeting others' expectations. For people pleasers like me, this is a gift. When we think of ourselves as slaves to only one master, we can serve him and others with faith and joy. And at just the moment when we American Christians feel ourselves hemmed in by the cost of ceding control and letting go of entitlements, we find ourselves most liberated. **CT**

ALEC HILL is president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

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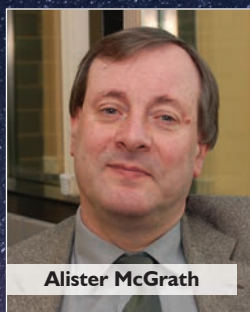
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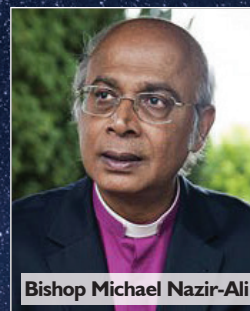
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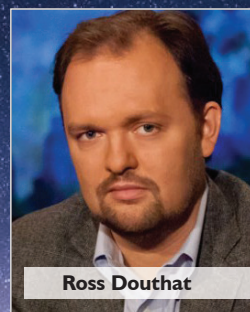
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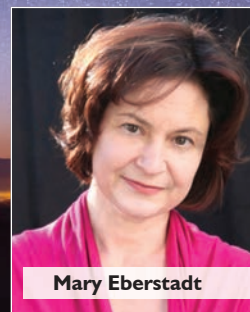
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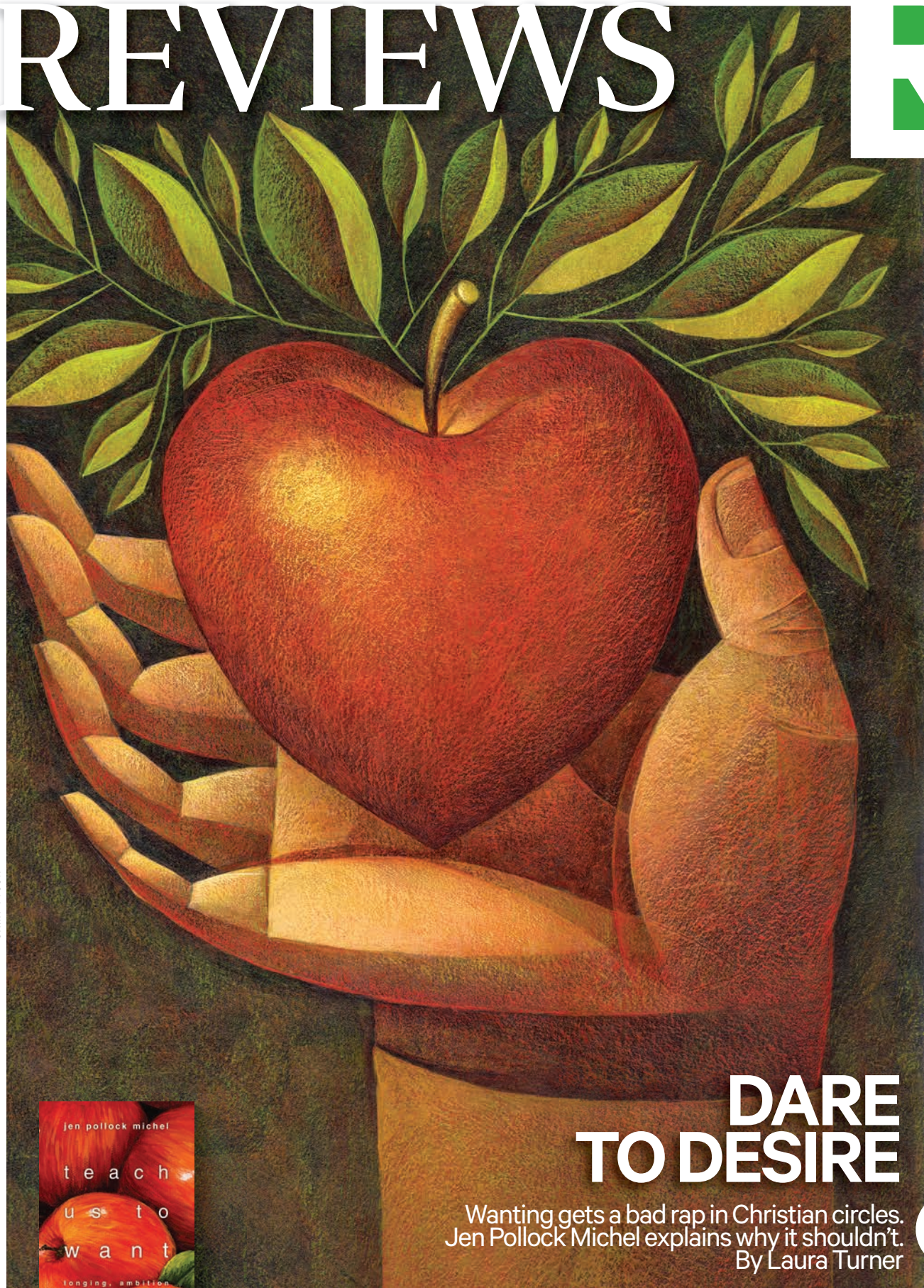
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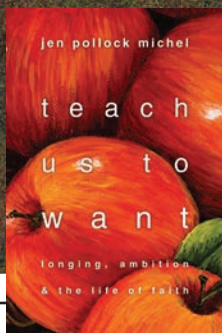
REVIEWS

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DARE TO DESIRE

Wanting gets a bad rap in Christian circles.
Jen Pollock Michel explains why it shouldn't.
By Laura Turner





I was 13 when I first learned that I needed to move to Ethiopia to be a real Christian. There was no single sermon or eye-opening book, just enough talk about selflessness and changing the world to nudge me away from what I wanted—to write and teach—and toward what God wanted for me: to become a doctor who cured malaria, or a missionary who taught the Bible, or a saint who built an orphanage. I thought that's what God wanted from all Christians, because those were the people held up as examples in church—people who gave away all they had, shunned the praise of the world, and embraced the will of God.

Imagine my surprise several years later when, in college, I read Gerald Sittser's book *The Will of God as a Way of Life*. Its premise is that God's will has less to do with our circumstances than with our character and who we become amid life's changes. I began to understand, bit by bit, that the God who had given me gifts in communicating simply wanted me to use them, whatever the setting. My life felt much less like a choose-your-own-adventure story that I was scared of messing up.

In *Teach Us to Want: Longing, Ambition, and the Life of Faith* (InterVarsity Press) ★★★★★, Toronto-based writer Jen Pollock Michel challenges conventional Christian notions about heeding desire. She helps us understand that what we want isn't our enemy, but can be one of God's most powerful tools for shaping and directing us. We might easily think of desire as all bad, but Michel argues that desire, rightly understood, should be followed.

'HOLY DESIRE'

"Here is how desire becomes corrupt," Michel writes of the human impulse enacted in Adam and Eve's eating the forbidden fruit. "Wanting derails into selfishness, greed, and demanding ingratitude when we've failed to recognize and receive the good that God has already given. Trust is at the center of holy desire: trust that God is good and wills good for his people."

The notion of "holy desire" is at the very heart of the book, as Michel distinguishes between desire aligned with God

and desire aligned with self. The latter is the kind of "wanting" that churches rightly rebuke, but we must be careful not to dismiss wanting altogether. The book's title is a kind of prayer: Michel wants to show us a right understanding of desire, a holy wanting, an effortless orientation of our own wills with the will of God. We need a full redemption of our small and selfish desires. When that happens, when we become aware of God's presence in our daily habits, our desires are actually good cues to follow. That is the whole aim of spiritual formation, after all: to recognize God in every moment of our lives so that God might orient us toward himself.

The sad corollary to desire is disappointment. If we, as humans, are beings who want, we are also beings who do not always get what we want. Michel quotes novelist Joan Didion on the death of her husband: "You sit down for dinner, and life as you know it ends." Michel's father died when she was only 18 and he, 49. Her brother committed suicide five years later. The question of desire hangs heavy over loss: *Where were you, God? Why did you take away this good thing you had given me? How can we want in such a cruel world?*

"To say that God is good is not the same thing as saying life is good," Michel writes, and that resonates. The book includes some examples: Michel's friend miscarries during a time of professional uncertainty. A friend's son, 15 years old, drowns in Lake Superior. Her sister-in-law (whose husband had committed suicide) is diagnosed with stomach cancer.

So we are left wondering. How do we align our desires with God's? How do we tether ourselves to the truth of God's goodness when life is anything but?

Michel distinguishes between desire aligned with God and desire aligned with self. The latter is the kind that churches rightly rebuke, but we must be careful not to dismiss wanting altogether.

We don't.

It's not that we don't put forth effort. Grace, as Dallas Willard was fond of saying, is opposed to earning, not effort. But the work is not ours to do, and we often get in our own way as we try harder and harder. Perhaps, Michel suggests, we need to try a bit less on our own and instead allow God to tether us to himself. "It is never we who seek God," she writes. "It is he who seeks us." But in a culture so committed to trying and working and winning, what can we possibly do to effect change without requiring grit and willpower?

We can pray.

In her book *The Empathy Exams*, Leslie Jamison writes about her boyfriend saying a prayer in the hospital chapel while Jamison was having heart surgery: "Prayer isn't about likelihood anyway, it's about desire." Michel agrees: "Prayer is the courageous act of bringing our authentic desires before God." These desires are in many ways like a lump of clay—unmolded, formless and uncertain, waiting to become what it's meant to be. When we bring our unlovely selves before God through prayer, we trust that he does something in us. In this way, prayer acts as a corrective to selfishness.

So does community, Michel reminds us. We practice love in community even when we do not feel like it. Our actions must, at times, precede our emotions. The right thing often requires training and obedience, which flies in the face of a culture that tells us to do what we feel. A friend of mine had a baby not long ago, and on the Wednesday night I had signed up to bring her dinner, I didn't want to follow through. I had a long list of other, more immediately gratifying things to do. But I had signed up, and she was my friend, and there was a baby, so I packed up the food and took it over. To some small degree, my desires were reoriented in exactly the right way.

SOMETHING UNDERNEATH

Throughout the book, Michel's voice is both intelligent and warm. Her sources are as varied as Leo Tolstoy, conversations around her own dinner table, Elizabeth Gilbert, and the Psalms. But what else is life made up of than the books we read, the meals we eat, and the Bible we study? She is equally at home with philosophers and popular authors, a rare gift

for a Christian writer.

Reflecting on her desire to have an orphaned nephew move in to her already-bustling house after he graduated college, she says, “There were forty-two and a half implausibilities.” There is whimsy here, a reminder to take ourselves a little less seriously than we might be tempted to. Michel comes across as a friend, not just a teacher dispensing wisdom (although there is plenty of wisdom here).

At times, *Teach Us to Want* wanders a bit, and might have benefited from a

tighter focus. But that seems an almost unwarranted complaint for a book that, on the whole, is so smart and instructive and engaging. We must trust that God gives us desires for a reason, and that if the desire is not, on its surface, good and selfless, there is something underneath it that might be. This is the task of desire—to bring the flourishing of the family, the town, the school, and the soul.

The good news is that I do not have to move to Ethiopia or become a pastor or memorize the whole Bible in order to be

a good Christian. Desire is not separate from thriving in our relationships with God. Understood rightly, redeemed desire will lead us exactly where God wants us to be. To want is a deeply human thing—we want to love and be loved, to know and be known. We want to offer our unique contribution to the world.

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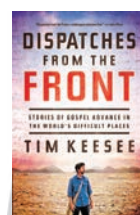
LAURA TURNER is a writer in California and a contributor to *Hermeneutics*. Her blog on faith and entertainment appears at Religion News Service.

The Broken Beauty of the Global Church

Tim Keese reports from places where Christians live in suffering and joy.
By Brian M. Howell

Dispatches from the Front: Stories of Gospel Advance in the World's Difficult Places

Tim Keese
(Crossway)



In Wheaton, Illinois, where I live, I'm surrounded by families who have fled their countries, leaving war, famine, political oppression, and sometimes religious persecution. Our small church is blessed to occasionally have one of these families join us. The depths of faith forged in hardship often overwhelm us. We are also reminded that millions of our foreign-born brothers and sisters, and millions more living without the hope of the gospel, continue to suffer.

These people, living in dangerous settings, are the subject of Tim Keese's book *Dispatches from the Front: Stories of Gospel Advance in the World's Difficult Places* (Crossway) ★★★★★. Keese, founder of Frontline Missions International, compiles stories from his travels to places where Christians live with profound suffering and joy. Though some of the accounts lack context, and some of the language veers into the sensational, Keese's stories and vivid writing bring the reader close to heroic and suffering people around the world.

Keese's organization originally produced a DVD series that documented his travels. The book follows a similar format, giving vignettes of places and people across the globe. In some places, we learn about

the political and religious history through Keese's tours of museums and historical sites, which adds a rich context to the stories of missionaries and local believers.

At other points, the book fails to supply relevant background information. Keese tells the harrowing stories of believers in Pakistan, fearing for their lives during a night of anti-Christian rioting he experienced firsthand. But he neglects to mention the political upheaval in that country, which would have helped to make sense of the violent convulsions. And occasionally, Keese's descriptions tilt towards flippancy: He describes a Hindu deity, for instance, as resembling “something from a bad movie.”

Yet the book provides an encouraging reminder that God's people continue to stand in his power around the world. We meet Dennis, a poor yet influential pastor in Liberia, who works with his North American partner to drill wells, preach the gospel, and lead Christians in villages throughout his country. Grace, a Filipina missionary working with her husband, Noe, leads a church and cares for sex trafficking survivors and HIV/AIDS patients in Cambodia. Allan Yuan, a 90-year-old pastor in China, baptizes dozens of believers on the banks of the Ye Xi River after spending

decades in prison for his faith.

But these are not always stories of triumph. Keese remembers the life of Gayle Williams, a nurse ministering to children in Kabul, Afghanistan, who was killed by a sniper's bullet. He tells of Ika, a Muslim-background believer from Indonesia, who was rejected by her family, kept from her children, and cut off from her community. These stories reveal that God does not always take away our pain even as he comforts us within it.

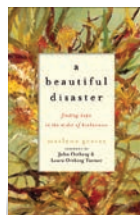
Dispatches from the Front assures us that God has raised people around the globe to bring his Word into difficult circumstances. Keese brings us face to face with the church in its broken beauty, working to see the gospel go forth. Where others call for violence and blood, we are called to bring peace. We are called to be content in all things in Jesus Christ, who gives us strength. We are called to be broken with our brothers and sisters, with all who suffer and weep. And as we recognize the church in these brave people, we are.

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BRIAN M. HOWELL is associate professor of anthropology at Wheaton College and the author of *Short Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience* (IVP Academic).



**A Beautiful Disaster:
Finding Hope in the
Midst of Brokenness**
Marlena Graves
(Brazos Press)



Seeking Solitude

An excerpt from *A Beautiful Disaster: Finding Hope in the Midst of Brokenness*.

There is a silence we choose. Our retreats into our cells of silence and solitude still the noise pollution in our lives so that we might eventually be still. Quieted enough to hear the whispers of God. Still enough to feel the Holy Spirit winds blowing through our lives and to observe the effects of the Spirit winds all around us. We retreat in hopes of delight, in hopes of tasting the good, the true, and the beautiful.

Our eyes adjust. We acquire night vision so that even on the darkest of nights, we're eventually able to see the glory and faithfulness of God. We're able to clearly see the beautiful truths concealed by the helter-skelter of a too-busy, disintegrated daily life.

Our hidden life—how we live in obscurity—is what shapes our character. In this intentional pilgrimage into the desert, our battered, bruised, and banged-around selves can finally crawl out of the fetal position. This is a space where we stretch out to reinvigorate the parts of us that have atrophied. It's where the stress fractures of our lives heal. Here we gain our footing and strength. Here we can finally breathe freely while silently seeking understanding. This cell is simultaneously a hospital for the soul and a training ground for holiness.

Our intentional pilgrimage is not only a form of self-care but also a form of communal care. It demonstrates our deep concern for others. If we truly love others or seek to love others, we'll detach ourselves from them for a while, trusting that our time alone with God will sensitize us to their needs and concerns. Solitary experiences with God form in us the kind of character that loathes sinning against another. Therein we find the motivation to do good to others, including our enemies.

Without solitude, we cannot fathom just how enslaved we are. So many of us are chained to the opinion of others. We're addicted to praise and affirmation and eviscerated by criticism. Vainly, we busy ourselves in managing the impressions others have of us. We exhaust ourselves in trying to become somebody in their eyes.

We simply cannot live our whole lives in full view of others—in the crowd. Our lives are not a peep show. Without the discipline of silence and solitude, we play to the crowds, always performing yet never being quite sure of ourselves. We become puppets on a string, easily manipulated by circumstances and the flimsy whims of others. Silence and solitude leech these poisonous addictions out of us. In the silent and solitary place, we hunker down in obscurity. It's just us and God. We don't have to impress anyone. We are who we are. Naked. Our vulnerabilities exposed. This silent space affords us the opportunity to take a good, hard look at ourselves. We force ourselves to forego the pursuit of seeking affirmation from others. Eventually, our internal unrest is stilled.

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Wilson's Bookmarks

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

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENTS

CHRISTOPHER BEHA (ECCO PRESS)

With *What Happened to Sophie Wilder*, published in 2012, young Catholic writer Beha made one of the strongest novelistic debuts in recent memory. Now he has followed up with a second novel that is likely to be one of the year's most widely noticed books. You could call it a story about reality TV—it is that, but it is also much more. When people reject or bracket out God, what pretender will take God's place? Beha's answer unfolds in a darkly witty tale that has the resonance of a parable and the dream-logic of a nightmare.

THE ILLUSTRATED ALPHABET

KP STAR (3 STAR STUDIO)

I've mentioned in this space that Wendy (my wife) and I relish good alphabet books. Here is a keeper for your shelves. Each letter gets a two-page spread. On the left-hand page, the letter is followed by an alphabetical list of words beginning with the letter in question. On the right-hand page, an illustration in the shape of the letter features a heterogeneous collage of images representing all the words listed (e.g., for *K*, *kale*, *kaleidoscope*, *kayak*, *kettle*, and so on). Full disclosure: This delightful book is dedicated to Wendy and me.

WHAT CANNOT BE FIXED

JILL PELÁEZ BAUMGAERTNER (CASCADE BOOKS)

Under editor D. S. Martin, Cascade's Poetima Poetry Series, launched in 2012, has published a deliciously capacious range of poets whose faith is central to their lives and work. They represent no one school or style, no single stream of faith. Each voice has its own inscape. Baumgaertner, Wheaton College's dean of humanities and theological studies, never strains to get our attention. Poetry is a language she has grown accustomed to over a lifetime—an inner speech, heightened but never grandiose, capable of encompassing family memories, meditations on Scripture, a moment in a parking garage: the miscellany of life in which a deep order is nonetheless apparent.



Fail: Finding Hope and Grace in the Midst of Ministry Failure
J. R. Briggs
(InterVarsity Press)



Pulpit Disappointment

J. R. Briggs addresses pastors who feel like failures. Interview by Drew Dyck

As a dynamic young preacher at a large church, J. R. Briggs felt God calling him to start a church plant. It quickly grew to 100—then stopped. Five years later it's roughly the same size. Disappointment led him to found the Epic Fail Pastors Conference—"a gathering for pastors and leaders seeking to understand how God works through failure"—and to write *Fail: Finding Hope and Grace in the Midst of Ministry Failure* (InterVarsity Press). Briggs spoke with Drew Dyck, managing editor of *Leadership Journal*, about redefining the notion of ministry success.

What attracted you to a topic that most people would rather avoid?

It started with attending pastors' conferences. They featured well-known pastors of large churches, but average pastors were never invited to share their experiences. These events were all about success and getting results. I was in the middle of a painful season of ministry. I needed something that wouldn't discourage me or add to my spiritual vertigo. I wanted to talk honestly. I needed an AA meeting for pastors, but there was no such thing.

Many pastors, ex-pastors, and Christian leaders were desperate for that type of forum. I wasn't trying to create a conference. I simply longed for a space where no one was scared by the shortcomings of other sinners, even if those sinners were also ministry leaders.

Do our issues with failure come from faulty notions of success?

I don't like using the word *success* when talking about ministry. I'd much rather use words like *health*, *faithfulness*, and *obedience*. Our culture is obsessed with success, and the church is not immune. Pastors are inundated with temptations to chase the wrong things. We need to take a hard look at how we define

ministry success and failure—and then measure it against Scripture. Eugene Peterson wrote, "The biblical fact is that there are no successful churches. There are, instead, communities of sinners. . . . In these communities of sinners, one of the sinners is called pastor."

What do you say to pastors who feel like failures?

Mostly I just listen. Pastors rarely have someone who will truly listen in times of deep hurt. Eventually I might encourage them to apply the grace they preach to their own lives. I remind them that our worth is not tied up in what we do or how well we do it. I often remind them (and myself) that Jesus won't say to us, "Well done, good and *successful* servant." I also encourage them to camp out in the Psalms. I've found praying the Psalms to be incredibly healing.

How transparent should pastors be about their failures?

Balancing wisdom and courage is crucial. Leaders should wisely and courageously model transparency for those we're called to serve. Henri Nouwen wrote that pastors are the least confessing people in the church. Few pastors have close relationships where they can have honest conversations, where nothing is off-limits.

It's been said that if you preach out of your weakness, you'll never run out of material. More important, grace, not the pastor, takes center stage. Instead of having people remark, "That preacher is so funny" or "He's such a charismatic leader," they start saying things like, "Wow, God is gracious" and "God's love is so extravagant!"

For many, a failure means the end of ministry. Others pull through and become more effective. What makes the difference?



J. R. Briggs

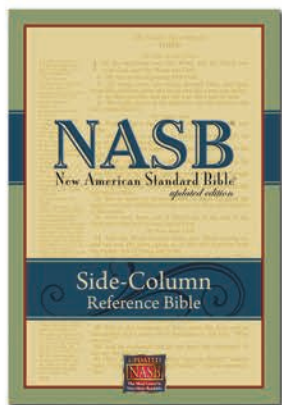
My friend Stephen Burrell did his dissertation on amoral ministry failure. He did hundreds of interviews with pastors and former pastors who failed in ways not involving moral failings. While we all handle failure differently, Burrell noticed patterns among those who responded in healthy ways.

Some habits were not surprising: They had support systems and mentors, and they pursued God through prayer, solitude, and Scripture reading. But there were three surprising factors. First, the majority didn't bounce back immediately. They took time to grieve and heal. Second, they developed significant relationships with non-Christians before reconnecting with the Christian community. These friendships seemed to assist the healing process. Finally, they experienced a spiritual breakthrough. They could look back to one powerful moment when they strongly sensed the Holy Spirit at work. These experiences enabled them to let go of bitterness, forgive, and begin to hope.

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REVIEWS



New & Noteworthy

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

"In a world increasingly tempted to despair in the face of dysfunctional politics and economic and ecological crises, we need now more than ever to be able to articulate clearly the hope we have in Christ."

~ from **Let Creation Rejoice**

by Jonathan A. Moo and Robert S. White



D. L. MOODY, A LIFE

Innovator, Evangelist, World-Changer

KEVIN BELMONTE (MOODY PUBLISHERS)

Few figures in American religious history have left a larger mark than Moody, the celebrated 19th-century evangelist who founded three Chicago institutions—a church, a Bible college, and a publishing house—that bear his name. Biographer Belmonte, also the author of works on John Bunyan, William Wilberforce, and G. K. Chesterton, is the latest to tell Moody's story. Belmonte's briskly paced narrative takes readers through the major episodes of the evangelist's life, pronouncing that Moody was "one of the great souls of history" whose "legacy as an author, educator, philanthropist, and preacher remains vibrantly alive."

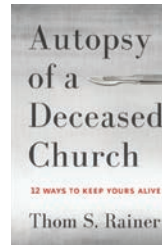


LET CREATION REJOICE

Biblical Hope and Ecological Crisis

JONATHAN A. MOO AND ROBERT S. WHITE (IVP ACADEMIC)

People have various ways of responding to environmental doomsayers, ranging from stubborn denial to shoulder-shrugging indifference to activist zeal. Moo and White, professors of biblical studies and geophysics, respectively, ask what difference it makes when Christians "take seriously the picture of the future that Scripture paints for us. What does the Bible say about the future of the earth, and what difference does that make to how we live now?" Reviewing the environmental issues on today's agenda, including climate change, the authors conclude that there are sound reasons for thinking we face challenges of unprecedented magnitude. But they articulate a gospel hope that discourages fatalism and fanaticism alike.



AUTOPSY OF A DECEASED CHURCH

12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive

THOM S. RAINER (B&H BOOKS)

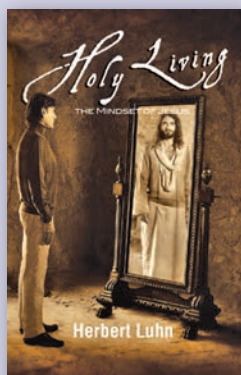
Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, shares lessons learned from studying 14 churches that, after falling into decline, finally went belly-up. "The churches," he explains, "are diverse in their denominational or nondenominational backgrounds. They are diverse in their locations. They are diverse in their local and regional demographics." But they all "followed paths"—nostalgia for past glories, obsessing over facilities, slacking off on missions and prayer—"that caused them to die." After revealing his "autopsy" report, Rainer ends on a more hopeful note, offering recommendations for churches just starting down troublesome roads, churches in advanced states of decline, and churches on the brink of collapse.

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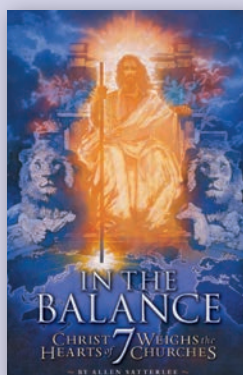
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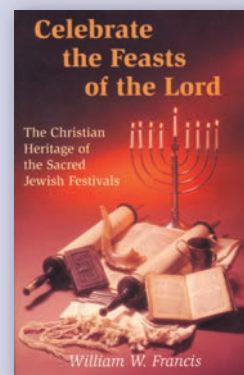
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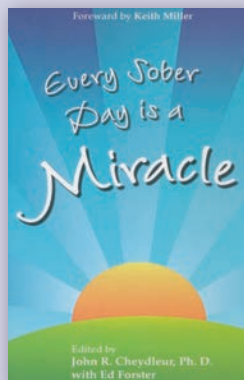
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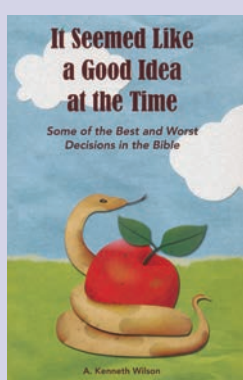
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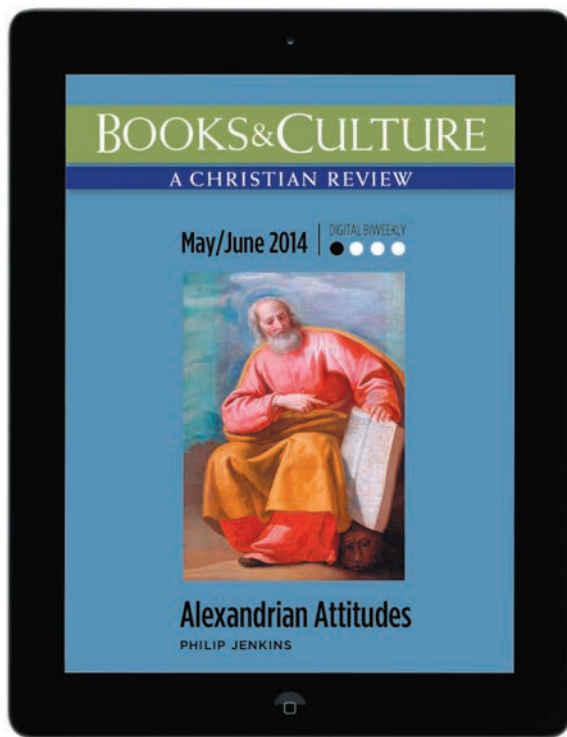


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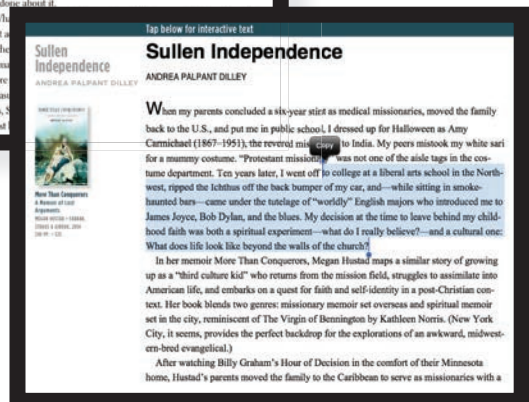
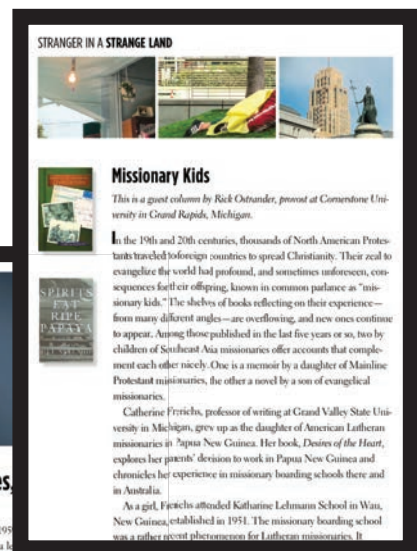


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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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The International Christian Fellowship—an evangelical, English-speaking church based in Frankfurt, Germany—is seeking an assistant pastor focusing on children, youth, and family ministries. With a passion for Christ's church, applicants should be university graduates with previous ministry experience, and ideally seminary or other theological training. Entering a multicultural, interdenominational environment, the ideal candidate will be familiar with the unique traits of an international community, and demonstrate a calling to faithfully build and lead youth, children's, and family ministry teams. Fluency in English is a must, and German language skills would be a distinct advantage. Please visit our website for the job description and online application form: www.icf-frankfurt.com.

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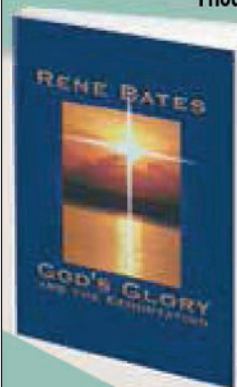
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imperceptibly at first, I was drawn into the life of faith.

It wasn't clear from the beginning which faith that would be. I visited psychics, read New Age thinkers, and attended meditation classes. I even tried praying to a god I didn't believe existed. My forays into faith were attempts to make sense of what had happened to me and, in some ways, to control a world in which I had far less control than I thought I had.

Then I started reading the Book of John with a friend. Tony was the only Christian I knew who didn't try to explain away the loss of my husband and baby. After many debates in which he tried to convince me of the divinity of Jesus, he said that if I would just read the Bible, God would do the convincing. So we read the Bible together over the phone on Saturday mornings. I was drawn to the text, even as nothing about it provided firm evidence of its truth.

I especially loved the story of Lazarus. Unlike the Eastern philosophies that maintain that suffering is the result of our attachments, this story was about a man who was unashamedly attached. A man who behaved as though death was not natural. As though everything was broken, and that the sane response was to snort and weep. I loved that man.

I had been reading the Bible with Tony for months when he began pestering me to find a church. I searched "liberal churches in New Jersey" online and went to the closest one. They practiced "open table fellowship." I had no idea what that meant, but when everyone got up to stand around the fancy table, I didn't want to be left sitting alone in my seat.

By the time I figured out that everyone was up to take Communion, I had a choice: Did I still want to go it alone, trying desperately to keep all the balls in the air? Or did I want to admit that Jesus had offered himself up so that I didn't have to be alone? To admit that I had little control but was infinitely loved?

Having the choice of Communion made it clear to me that I wanted it. After months of reading the Bible, of trying to find what I was looking for anywhere other than in the church, I had to admit what I had fought so long to resist: I was hungry for Jesus. For the Jesus who hung out with whores, who wept when his friend died, and who claimed to

be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In the end, all of my searching for something in which to place my faith didn't lead to a well-reasoned decision to choose Jesus over other gods. Instead, God offered me himself in the form of Jesus. I didn't have to find him or explain him or even make sense out of him; I just had to say yes.

After that first Communion, I returned to school to study childhood bereavement. I met and married a wonderful man, and we bore two beautiful sons. Three years ago, I became a mother to a teenager whose own mother had died, a teenager who is the same age my daughter would have been.

After getting married, I worked for two years with middle-school students whose parents had died. I facilitated a support group for surviving parents whose spouse had died, and taught a class at Harvard on bereavement. I often find myself the repository for stories of loss, told in lowered voices at cocktail parties and grocery stores.

I try to listen deeply as people share those stories, nodding in agreement with how awful it is. I bear their story and, in so doing, remind them that they are not alone.

In addition to solidarity, I offer my prayers. As I try to take in the magnitude of what they are telling me, I pray. Sometimes I pray for healing words. Often, I pray for the grace to be quiet.

When I am with someone whose losses ring of Job, I pray my faith would withstand another occasion of what appears senseless and unbearable. I try to remember that, despite my inability to discern otherwise, God's ways are never senseless. And I tell myself the story of what God was doing while I was in New Jersey, watching my life fall apart.

PIECING IT ALL TOGETHER

After Scott and Sarah died, a woman from Massachusetts named Liz stood up at her church for several weeks on end and asked

people to pray for me. Liz lived with my friend Ora, and Ora had told her about me. A man named Jeff went to Liz's church. He prayed with the congregation that God would take care of my body and heart.

Liz moved to England, and I never met her or heard about her efforts to solicit prayer on my behalf. Several years later, she asked Ora how I was doing. Ora told her that I had met a nice guy, a chaplain at Harvard. She mentioned Jeff's name. Liz said incredulously, "Jeff Barneson?" Liz told Ora about the times she had solicited prayer on my behalf, realizing that Jeff would have been praying as well. Ora called to tell us, and we were struck that, without knowing it, Jeff, my husband, had been praying for me before we met.

One afternoon six years ago, after I finished telling this story to my friend Kathy, she said, "So was I!"

"What?"

"I was praying for you too. Liz was in my prayer group. She came to our group so distraught by your story that she asked us to pray for you. We prayed for weeks, and then I forgot about that story. When I met you, it never occurred to me that you were the same woman. In fact, Jean and Julie would have been there at church as well, so they were also praying for you back then."

I spent the rest of that day crying. Jean, Julie, and Kathy are three of the five women in my prayer group. Knowing that Jeff had been praying for me before we met had always touched me. But learning that my spiritual sisters had also prayed for me left me shaken.

Piecing it all together, I wept and wept, unable to imagine the grace of it all. In 1997, when I was an agnostic widow living in New Jersey, a group of Christians in Massachusetts had been praying for me. And while my own attempts to find a faith never adequately explained my conversion, this did. I had been prayed into the kingdom.

These days I am in awe of how little we control, of how ugly life can be, and of the beauty that seeks us out in the midst of all the horror. Now, when I sit with the broken and mourning, I pray for God's love to do what I cannot: to bind up the wounded places, leaving their scars to bear witness of the power of both loss and love. **CT**

TARA EDELSCHICK is a Patheos blogger and a homeschooler who lives with her husband and three children in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Having the choice of Communion made it clear to me that I wanted it. I had to admit that I was hungry for Jesus.

TESTIMONY



CHRISTOPHER CAPOZZIELLO

A Grief Transformed

Losing my husband and daughter wasn't the last word.

By Tara Edelschick

When I was a child, my father, a secular Jew, paid me a dollar for each volume of the encyclopedia I read. He bought me electronics kits that we played with for hours on the weekends. My mother was a lapsed Lutheran who taught me how to find bargains at the mall. She once told me to put away my books during finals because I was hosting a dinner party that night. "You'll never remember your finals grades, but you'll never forget it if you serve a bad ham."

Our house was loving, loud, and fun, but an undercurrent of anxiety coursed through it all. We were always broke, my parents were usually disappointed with one another, and the world felt scarier than circumstances seemed to demand.

The message of my childhood was clear and insistent: Work, play, and love hard, and at all times stay in control, because

something scary is waiting to take you down. I heeded that message into adulthood. I went to a great college, found the perfect job, and chose a wonderful husband. Weaker souls might need a god, but I needed no such crutch. My anxiety would keep me on my toes so that I could orchestrate the perfect life.

That belief was obliterated when my husband of five years, Scott, died from complications during a routine surgery. Ten days later, I delivered our first child, Sarah, stillborn.

COME TO THE TABLE

During the next year, I became a Christian, a member of a tradition whose weak character and intellect I had long disdained. Nothing miraculous happened—no defining moments, blinding visions, or irrefutable arguments. But slowly,

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