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SEPTEMBER 2014

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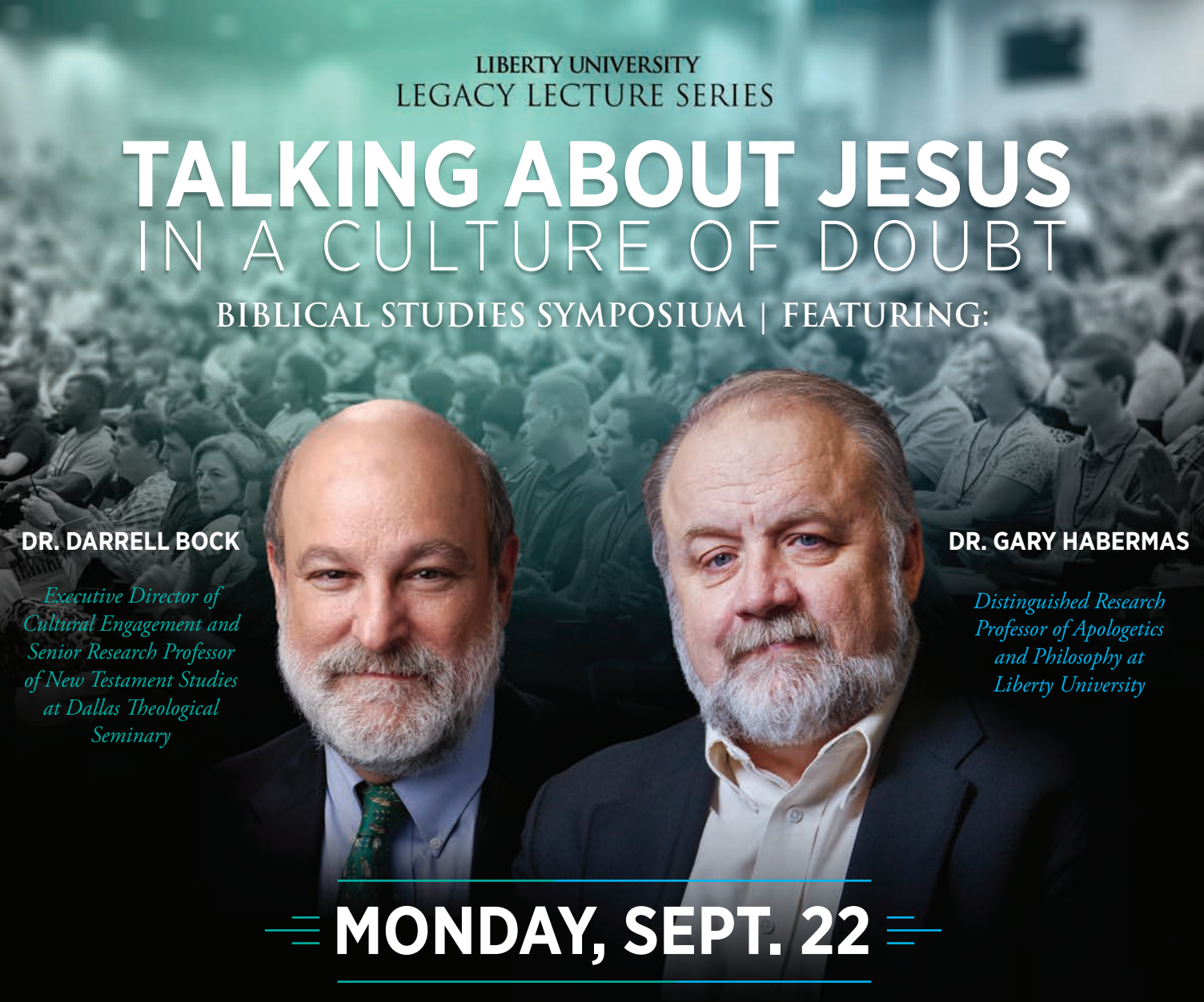

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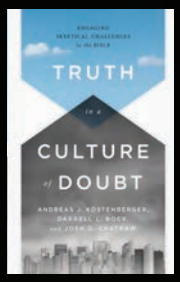

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SEPTEMBER 2014 VOLUME 58, NUMBER 7

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"The church makes a stronger claim on us than the state. According to Jesus, it makes a deeper claim even than the family." p. 29

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VIEWS

REVIEWS

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CHRISTIANITY TODAY

Having grown up on a farm, Theresa once paid for a car using four cows.

PRINT AND ONLINE

Whatever you're facing, Rob has you covered: He explores economic issues this month (p. 66) and how to develop your spiritual senses in *What Your Body Knows About God*, coming out in November.

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GLOBAL MEDIA MINISTRY

Kevin and Ashley Moore (another editor in our parent company) just returned from their honeymoon in Antigua.

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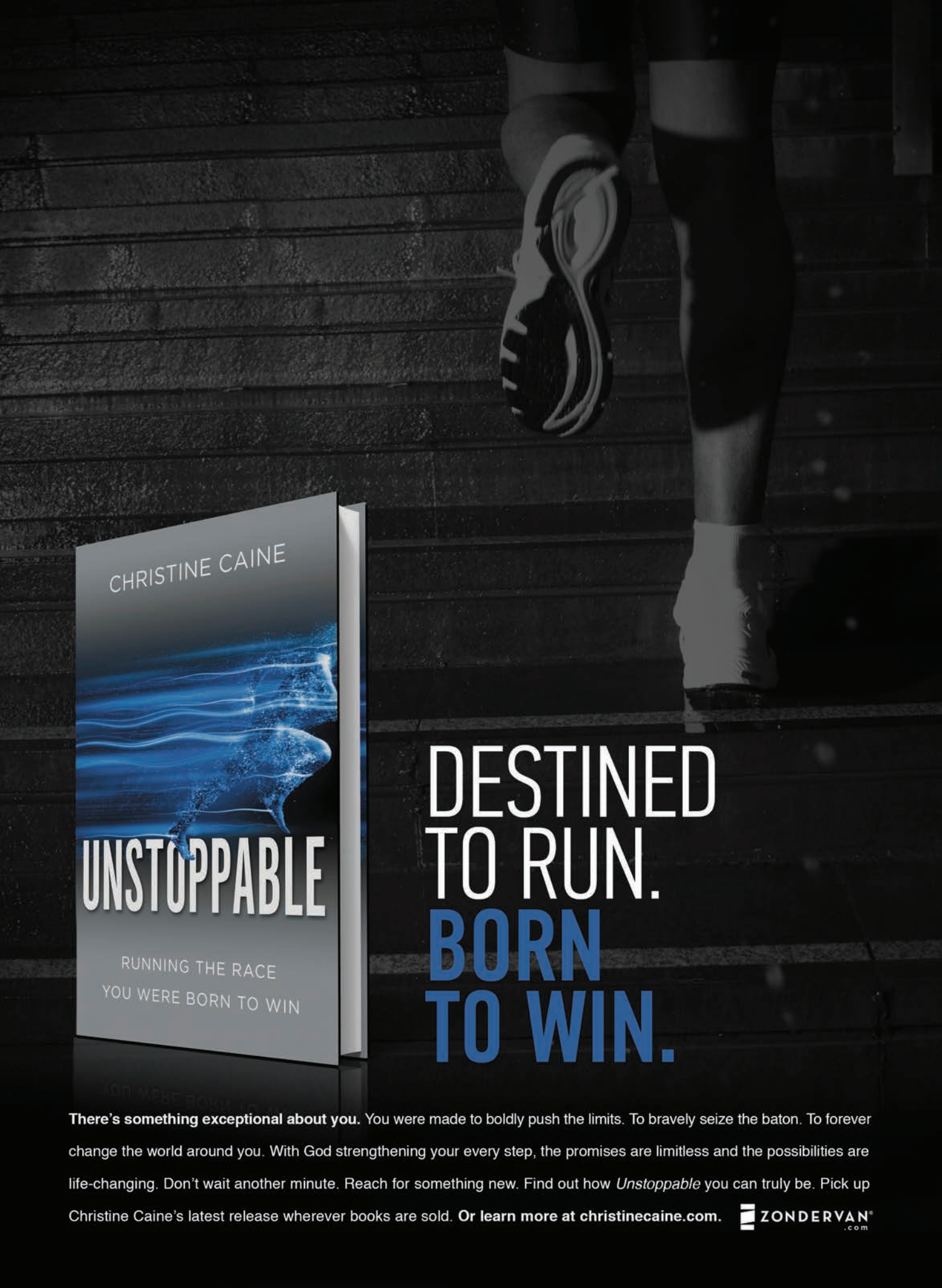

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EDITOR'S NOTE

ADAM CRUFT

THE ONES I LOVE

Who knew that dinner out with friends could be so misleading?

ANDY CROUCH *Executive Editor*

I HAVE BEEN BLESSED with a few friends. They have heard my confessions and pronounced my sins covered and forgotten. They have laid their hands on my shoulders and prayed for me in my darkest moments of doubt.

No one has many friends like this, but I have just enough—barely enough, I would say. Several live in far-flung cities, and when travel takes me there we seize the opportunity to enjoy one another's company. Often we make time for a long dinner at a nice restaurant. And over 20 years of friendship with these men, we've become accustomed to knowing glances from our servers and fellow diners. They see us laughing unrestrainedly, talking deeply, listening intently. With reactions of enthusiastic approval or mild discomfort, they let us know quite clearly—once in a while, in so many words—what they think they know.

What they think they know is that we must be gay.

In the cities where I live and travel, a display of open, honest love and affection between two men is linked, it seems, with the assumption that those two men must be romantically involved, or at least attracted to one another.

Elsewhere in the world today, male friends still hold hands as they walk down the street. At other times and places, men would sleep with their best friend rather than sleep alone. They would read of David's all-surpassing love for his friend Jonathan, of the one Jesus loved leaning on his bosom at the Last Supper, and see those friendships reflected in their own: intimate without being in any way sexualized.

But today intimacy means sex, and sex means love. Our age has almost forgotten a love between brothers that is more than awkward slaps on the back, *bro*-ing and *dude*-ing our way through performances of emphatically nonhomoerotic masculinity.

This is why I find Wesley Hill's eloquent call for a return to deep friendship (p. 38) and Kate Shellnutt's delightful refusal to limit best-friendship to marriage (p. 46) especially timely. If more of us modeled this kind of intimacy, we might confuse our neighbors even more. And for those of us who believe the Christian story is still good news for our masculinity and femininity, for our sexuality and our longings for intimacy, that would be a very healthy confusion indeed. **CT**

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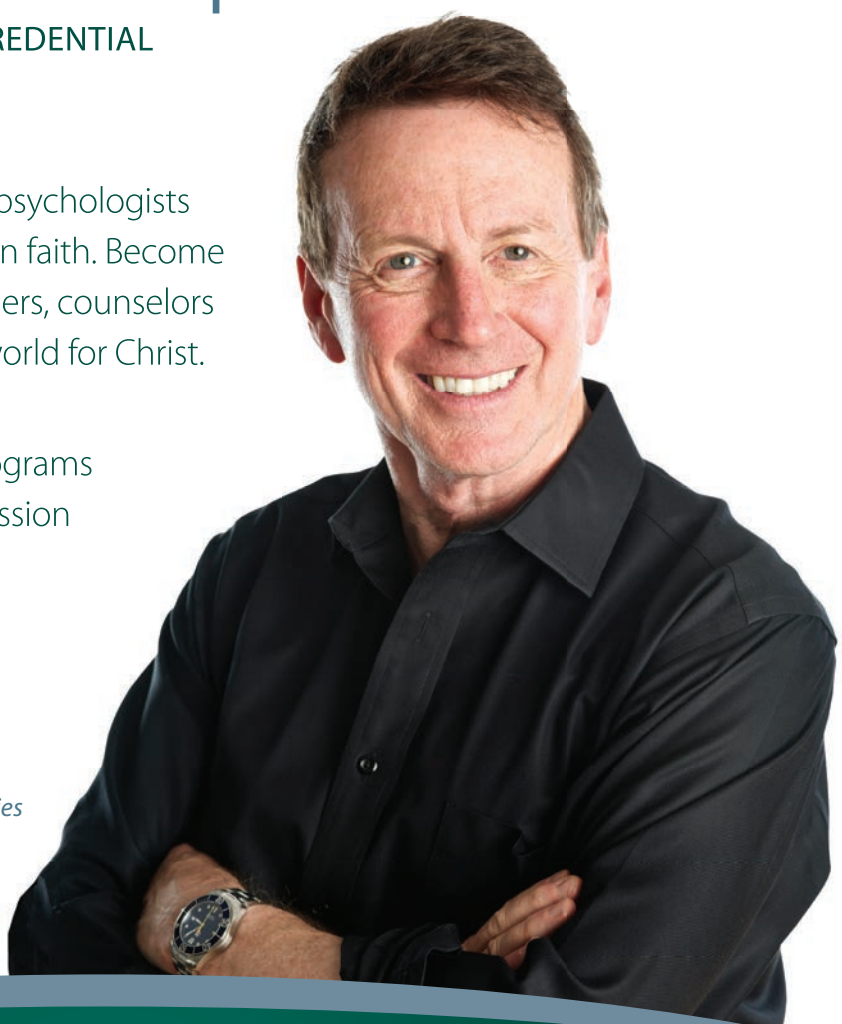

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REPLY ALL


COVER STORY

WHY I GAVE UP ALCOHOL

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

BY D. L. MAYFIELD

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

PHOTOS BY BRIAN MACDONALD

34

35

WHY I GAVE UP ALCOHOL

D. L. Mayfield's "Why I Gave Up Alcohol" offered a unique perspective. I gave up alcohol a few years ago as I realized that my purpose in life is to know God and to make him known. Alcohol made me less discerning of the Holy Spirit or unable to perceive him at all. And it lowered my resistance to sin. I was more apt to say and do things I normally wouldn't do when sober and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. I want to be able to respond to the Spirit without hesitation or question when he prompts me to action.

Leslie Montgomery
Lake Norden, South Dakota

Mayfield explains her abstinence from alcohol in light of her ministry to inner-city poor whose lives are often ravaged by alcohol abuse. Her drinking in front of neighbors would certainly cause them to "stumble" (1 Cor. 8). But what of us Christians who live in prosperous suburbs?

I'm not a theologian, but I do run a small business, so let me offer something of a cost-benefit analysis with eternal consequences.

1. A DUI is expensive and a poor testimony. But how many of us drive home after a respectable evening with Christian friends that included a couple margaritas and some wine?

2. The most frequent cause of fatal car accidents is alcohol. At 60 mph, a half-second slower reaction time can result in an accident.

3. While drinking socially, how much is required before my inhibitions and speech code are loosened, bringing embarrassment and damage to the name of Christ?

4. Nearly every adult child of an alcoholic will tell you of their lifelong pain. Some are more susceptible than others, but alcoholism starts with social drinking.

Considering these facts, do the benefits outweigh the risks? Shouldn't we ask ourselves if our choices are not rooted in pride as much as in Christian freedom (1 Cor. 10:12)?

Grady Hauser
Elgin, Illinois

THIS IS WHAT A PROGRESSIVE LOOKS LIKE

Jennifer Woodruff Tait's historical essay was fascinating. I was raised in a family and a church that were both strong on temperance, but I never understood why. Trying to make a case for alcohol consumption being strictly forbidden by the Bible is a lost cause—it just isn't there. With these two articles, I have a much better grasp of why my spiritual predecessors took the strong stance they did. Thank you for enlightening 21st-century Christians to the causes of 19th- and 20th-century believers.

David Bess
CT online comment

Tait labeled the 19th-century temperance, abolitionist, and women's rights leaders "progressive." I believe they would be more accurately labeled "radical reactionaries": *radical*, in that they were attacking the root causes of social ills; and *reactionary*, in that they were going back to the biblical standards against sin and abuse.

Paul Lloret
Lancaster, South Carolina

GUIDE TO A BARELY IMAGINED KINGDOM

Wesley Hill's column reminded me of when, in 1964, my English lit instructor

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introduced me to George Herbert and John Henry Newman. She never said whether she did that for theological rather than literary reasons, but they (Herbert especially) powerfully shaped my own newly found Christian faith. It was a short trip from Herbert to John Donne, then Lancelot Andrews, Richard Hooker, and all the rest. I sensed myself "surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses" even then. If you are discovering Herbert for the first time, your soul will be blessed.

John West
CT online comment

YOUR FAITH MIGHT COST YOU YOUR NEXT JOB

The beauty of this article . . . was its final section, where it called attention to . . . an opportunity for discipleship—for Christians to ask the question [of] what it means to love our Muslim neighbors.

[Bradley R. E.] Wright pinpoints Islamophobia as a present reality that we need to become more aware of. And this "awareness" should lead us to engage the issue in Christlike love: we do not grasp and cling to religious freedom just for ourselves, but we demand it for our neighbor.

I would put it like this: [T]he way of Jesus is the way of the Cross, which means refusing to secure power and freedom at the expense of the other, and, instead, securing power and freedom for the other (even my enemy) even if, in the process, it costs me my life.

J. R. Daniel Kirk
Storied Theology blog

THE RETURN OF LATE-NIGHT FUN

Kate Shellnutt is spot-on regarding Jimmy Fallon's joy, humility, and wholesome innocence. I am a rather serious person who's always loved being moved to chuckles and belly-laughs. Fallon is a catalyst for both. While there is plenty to take seriously in our fallen world, let's not forget the portion of Ecclesiastes that Shellnutt so carefully noted.

Julieana Britt
CT online comment

EDITOR'S NOTE: *In "First church planned for Muslim nation" under Gleanings, we should have clarified that Our Lady of Arabia is the first Catholic cathedral in Bahrain. The information has been updated at* ChristianityToday.com/Gleanings.

33 Under 33

We've included some early feedback to July/August's "33 Under 33" cover story. Look for more in the October Reply All.

"Thank you @CTmagazine for encouraging the work of #under33."
Ann Voskamp @AnnVoskamp

"Loved discovering many I didn't know and all they are doing with their passions."
Melanie Gillgrist @MelanieGillgris

"Proud of my friend @EstherHavens making @CTmagazine's 33 influentials #under33 (she's also my daughter's secret hero)."
Brandon Hatmaker @brandonhatmaker

"Dang, I didn't know some of you were so young!"
Trina Lee @TrinaKLee

"You know you are getting old when @CTmagazine sets the bar for young influentials at #under33."
Steve Woodworth @steve_woodworth

"It's neat to have my (mostly undeserving) work recognized for this sort of thing. I try not to put too much weight on these sorts of things, as youth is a fickle thing and the real meaning of my life will not be known until the end of it. . . . But it would be a disservice to those who have formed me if I did not extend the commendation where it properly belongs: to my parents and family, to the Torrey Honors Institute at Biola [which] gave me such a great education and . . . continues to support me, to my many friends and interlocutors whom I have learned so much from, and to all of you readers here at Mere-O for sharpening my thoughts along the way. There's a 'we' that stands behind the 'I,' which is never to blame but which invariably sets the conditions for success and so necessarily shares in the reward."

Matthew Lee Anderson
Mere Orthodoxy

NET GAIN

Responses from the Web. @

"Christian or not is irrelevant; the copyright law does not allow for one to take notes from one song and put them into another song without obtaining the original owner's permission."
Stanley Straughter, **CT online comment.**
Gleanings: "Lecrae v. Katy Perry: Christian Rappers Sue Pop Star," by Kate Tracy.

"Good thoughts on how Christian ideas may seem pretty uncool in a world built on cool. But that's normal."
Gabe Lyons @Gabe Lyons
Mud Alive: "Called to Be Uncool," by N. D. Wilson.

"I loved this. Especially the exegesis of the difficult passage in Hebrews. But please, just buy a baby gate!"
John Schweiker Shelton, **CT online comment.**
"Confessions of a Bad Dad," by Peter Chin.

"Watered-down corporate prayer among people of unknown convictions gathered for a secular purpose is like disparaging retailers for refusing to use the word *Christmas*. It will always be stripped of the meat that truly pleases God."
Phil Conkling, **CT online comment.**
Where We Stand: "Not the Government's Prayer," by Ted Olsen.

"Rather than allowing Scripture to look over their shoulder and submit to it, they have done the opposite. By doing so, they are rewriting truth to mirror culture. When you walk in the fear of God, the fear of man is no longer an issue."
Rev Darrell Bowen, **CT online comment.**
"Is Gay Marriage Destroying the United Methodist Church?" by Timothy C. Morgan.

"Can we stop comparing all fallen pastors to David? He was placed on the throne by God and there was no set of qualifications by which he could be disqualified."
Mandy Boudreaux, **CT online comment.**
Under Discussion: "Should Christians stop studying the teachings of fallen pastors?" compiled by Ruth Moon.

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The spiritual support I received gave me that extra little bit of something it took to continue the fight—and it's helped me concentrate on healing.

Sybil Redmon
Stage 4 Pancreatic Cancer Patient
Montgomery, AL

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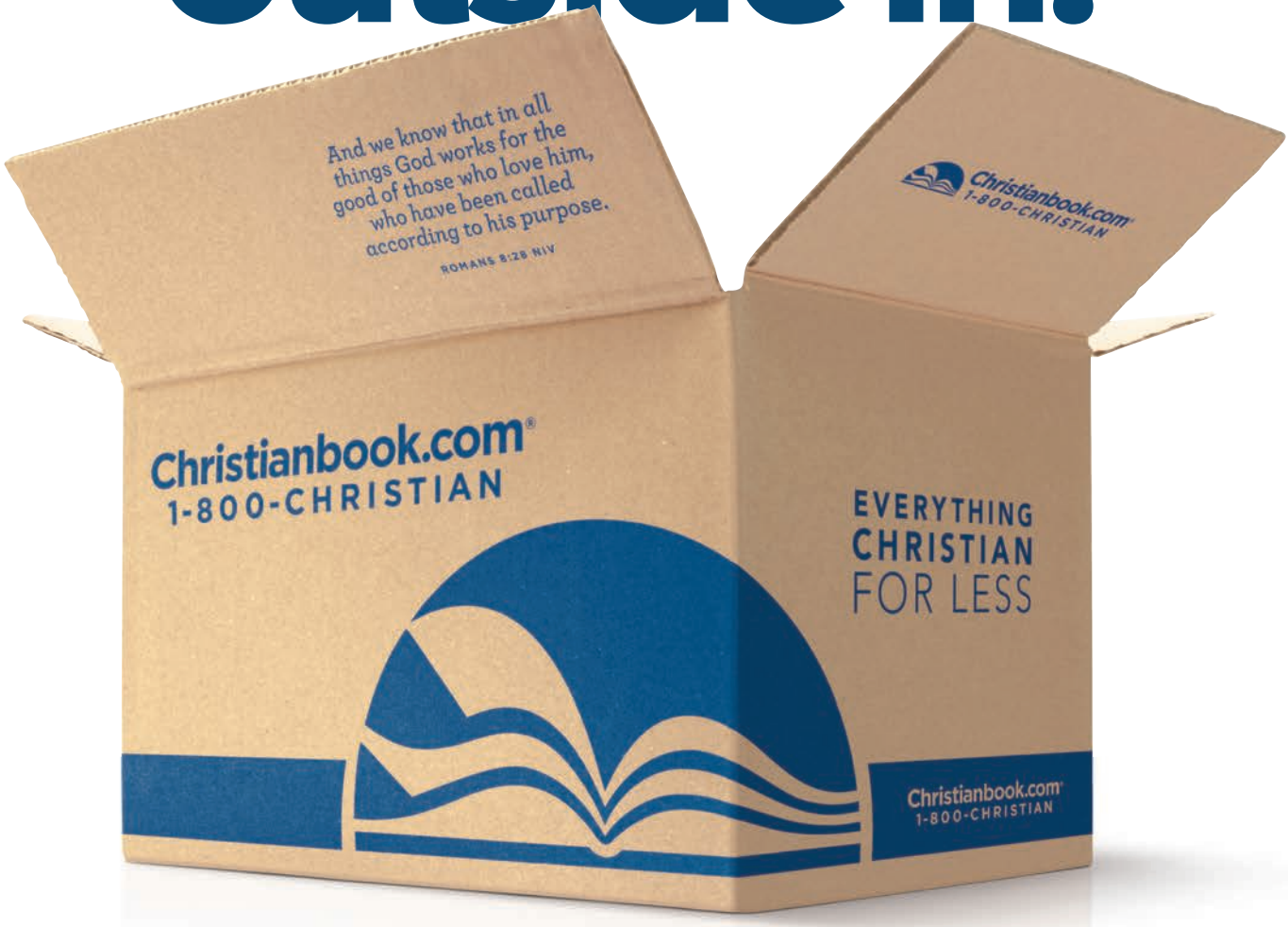

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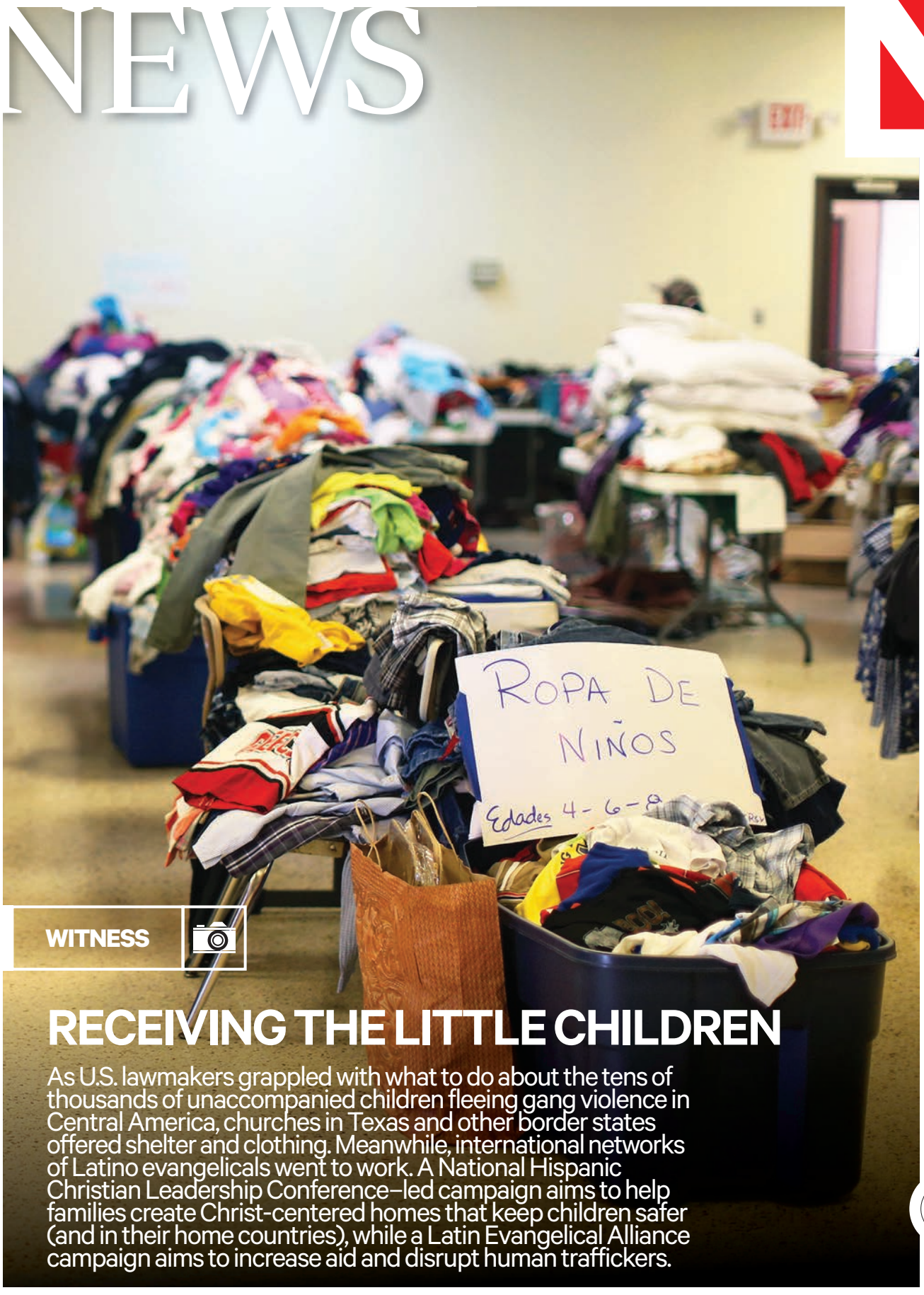


WITNESS

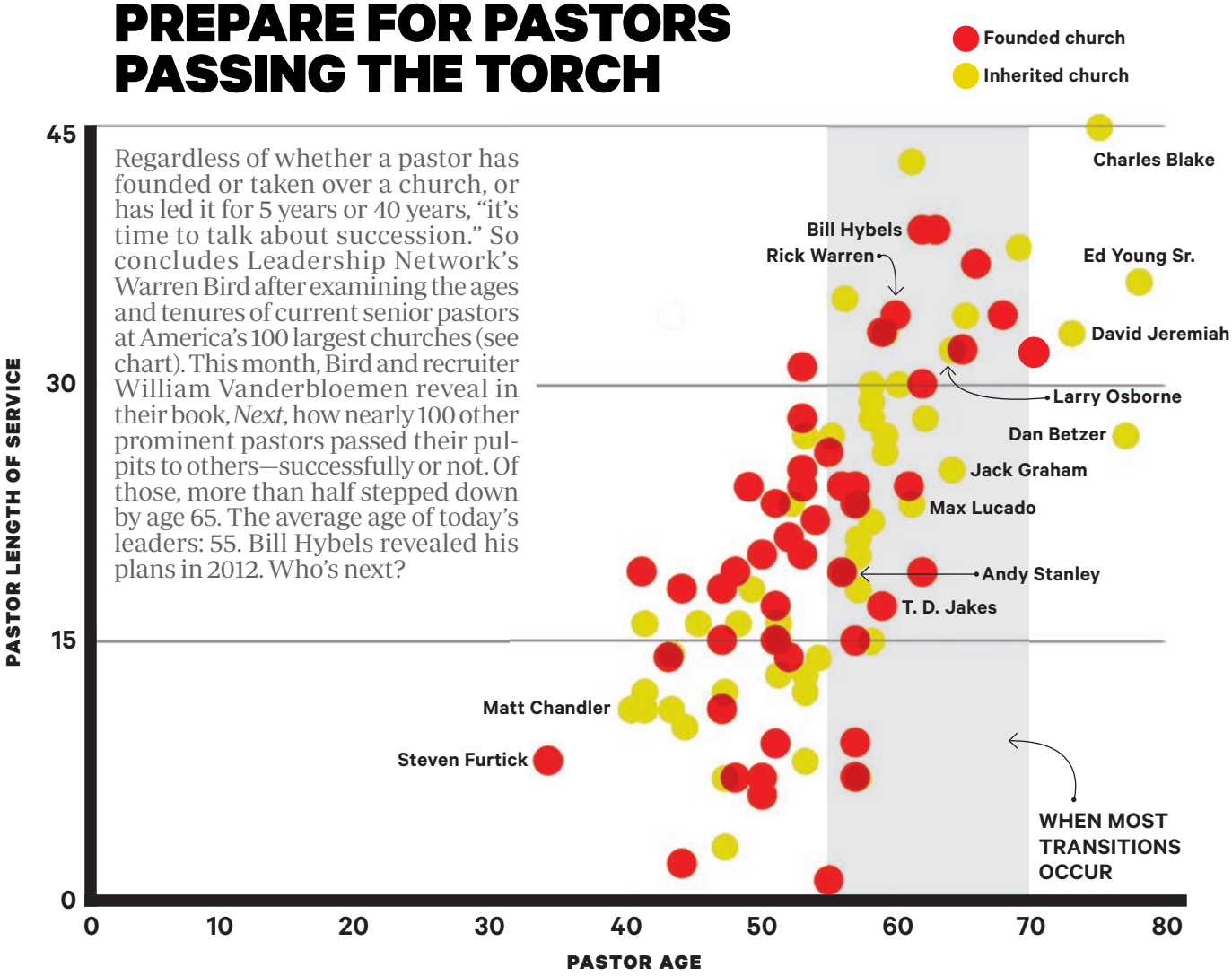
RECEIVING THE LITTLE CHILDREN

As U.S. lawmakers grappled with what to do about the tens of thousands of unaccompanied children fleeing gang violence in Central America, churches in Texas and other border states offered shelter and clothing. Meanwhile, international networks of Latino evangelicals went to work. A National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference–led campaign aims to help families create Christ-centered homes that keep children safer (and in their home countries), while a Latin Evangelical Alliance campaign aims to increase aid and disrupt human traffickers.

JENNIFER WHITNEY

PREPARE FOR PASTORS PASSING THE TORCH

Regardless of whether a pastor has founded or taken over a church, or has led it for 5 years or 40 years, "it's time to talk about succession." So concludes Leadership Network's Warren Bird after examining the ages and tenures of current senior pastors at America's 100 largest churches (see chart). This month, Bird and recruiter William Vanderbloemen reveal in their book, *Next*, how nearly 100 other prominent pastors passed their pulpits to others—successfully or not. Of those, more than half stepped down by age 65. The average age of today's leaders: 55. Bill Hybels revealed his plans in 2012. Who's next?



IRAQ

Historic Christian communities swallowed up by terrorists

Jonah survived three days in the belly of a giant fish, but it took far less time for the reluctant prophet's revered tomb to turn to dust after militants rigged it with explosives. The destruction symbolized the seizure of Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The group ordered the city's Christians to convert, pay a protection fee, leave—or be killed. Almost all chose to flee the Nineveh plains, long Iraq's Christian heartland and intended by its government as a future Christian province. Meanwhile, the Arabic letter *N* used by ISIS to mark Christian homes became a worldwide symbol of solidarity.

GIOTTO DI BONDONE (C.1266–1337) / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

HOW NON-CHRISTIANS VIEW THE BIBLE

GALLUP

1 in 10 Believe the Bible is the "actual word of God," and should be "taken literally, word for word."

3 in 10 Believe the Bible is the "inspired word of God," but should not be taken literally.

IRS agrees to investigate churches

After a long hiatus, the IRS has promised to investigate churches that preach politics, and says 99 merit "high priority examination." In return, an atheist group asked a Wisconsin federal court to dismiss its own lawsuit claiming the IRS has failed to enforce the ban. The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) has a strange bedfellow in demanding church investigations: Since 2008, the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) has organized thousands of pastors (including 1,600 in 2012) to deliberately disobey tax code regulations that say nonprofits cannot endorse political candidates. ADF hopes to prompt a lawsuit that will prove the ban unconstitutional. The next Pulpit Freedom Sunday is October 5. However, all investigations are on hold until Congress finishes investigating the IRS's controversial scrutiny of "tea party" organizations.

Christian college punts decision on gay professors

The first Council for Christian Colleges and Universities member school to openly weigh dropping its de facto ban on employees in same-sex relationships voted this summer to delay its decision. Trustees at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) said they would defer to "ongoing discernment of human sexuality" in its affiliated denomination, the Mennonite Church USA. The following week, the denomination voted to not recognize the licensing of a Colorado pastor in a same-sex relationship, and asked its Mountain States Conference not to ordain the pastor. In November, EMU said that during its own "listening period," it will "suspend personnel actions related to the current hiring policy" indefinitely.

ITALY

Pope apologizes for Pentecostal persecution

In an unprecedented papal visit to a Pentecostal church, Pope Francis apologized for the way Catholics treated such Protestants during Italy's fascist years. The apology drew praise for the popular pontiff from evangelical leaders worldwide. But mere weeks beforehand, a "near totality" of Italian evangelical leaders had urged their counterparts in other countries to stay on guard against Roman Catholicism. Leaders of the Italian Evangelical Alliance, the Federation of Pentecostal Churches, and the Assemblies of God in Italy expressed concern that evangelicals outside Italy were so enthusiastic about "ecumenical openings." In a statement, the leaders asserted that many Catholic teachings are incompatible with the Bible, and that points of commonality are not "reasons for hope in a true change."

> "I SUSPECT WE NEED TO LOSE A MILLION MORE."

Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, on seven straight years of losing members making Southern Baptist churches smaller but stronger.

Ex-Muslim sues church for publicizing baptism

A Muslim convert to Christianity sued his Oklahoma church for negligence, claiming he was tortured and almost executed on a trip to his home country after the church announced his baptism online. He asked for $75,000, claiming that the baptism notice by First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa resulted in death threats in Syria, where his son still lives, and that he lost his Syrian business and possessions. The church's pastor said in a congregational letter that the church followed its normal baptism procedure and that the lawsuit's claims were "not proper."

Supreme Court pops abortion 'buffer zone'

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that a Massachusetts "buffer zone" law was unconstitutional because it over-restricted the free speech of pro-life advocates in a public space. The decision did not, as pro-life groups had hoped, overturn an older Colorado law. But Americans United for Life and other groups still hailed the ruling as a landmark for getting all nine justices to support sidewalk counseling. However, a month later, Massachusetts lawmakers passed a law creating a smaller, temporary buffer zone around misbehaving protesters outside abortion clinics.

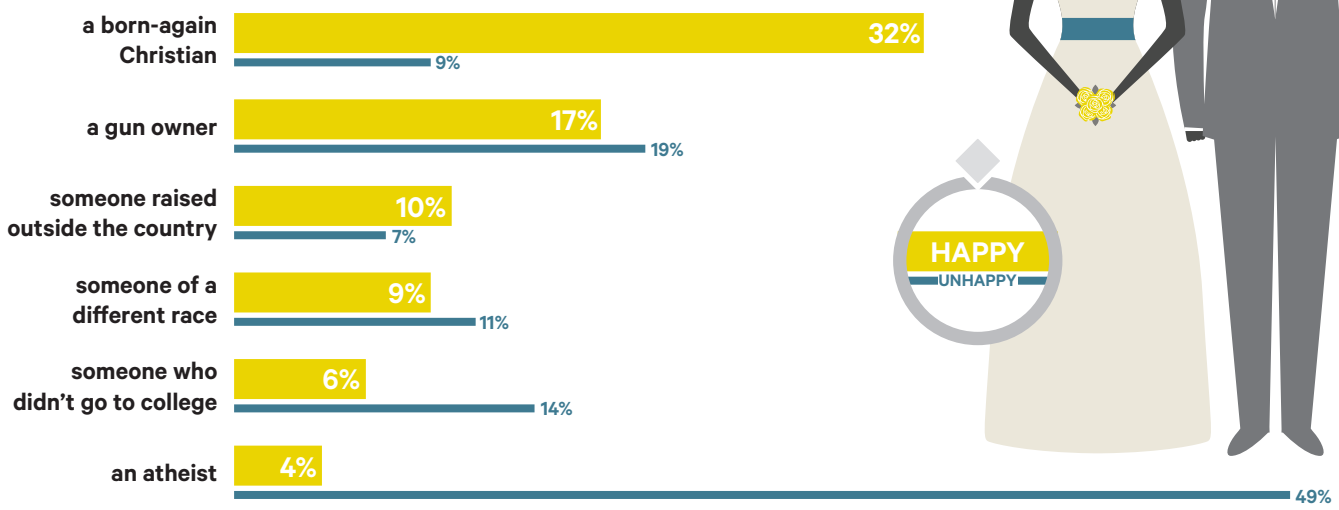
EGYPT

Infamous Christian convert gets jail sentence

The first Egyptian to try to legally change his religious identity from Muslim to Christian was sentenced to five years in prison for "disturbing the peace."

FAMILY WELCOME

How Americans would feel if an immediate family member married . . .



PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Bishoy Armia Boulous, formerly known as Mohammed Hegazy, was arrested after allegedly documenting political protests by Islamists for a U.S.-based television station owned by Coptic Christians. He was briefly released on bail in late July but imprisoned again on new charges of "defaming Islam."

Three SBC colleges learn accreditation fate

Three Southern Baptist schools with presidents dogged by controversy received varying accreditation decisions. Officials voted to revoke accreditation from Brewton-Parker College over concerns about financial stability. The Georgia school, which appointed ex-Muslim speaker Ergun Caner as president in December, remains on probation pending an appeal. Louisiana College, where president Joe Aguillard recently stepped down amid accusations of financial and administrative misconduct, was placed on probation. And Georgia's Shorter University, where a new conservative lifestyle statement prompted a mass faculty exodus, was taken off warning status to full accreditation.

Biblical mediation: not preventing lawsuits

A Christian couple implicitly agreed to handle disputes through biblical mediation when they joined the largest Vineyard church in the world. But an Ohio appeals court ruled that their family's lawsuit (filed against the church after an associate pastor had an affair with the wife while counseling her for sex addiction) can move forward. Vineyard Columbus requires biblical mediation or arbitration among its 9,000 members, and told the court that the couple signed its membership application. But the couple said they never received a copy of the policy, nor was it addressed in their membership class. Similarly, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities protested (but didn't sue) earlier this year when its fired president, Edward Blews, broke from a required biblical mediation process to sue the group for breaching his contract 10 months into the job. Meanwhile, pastor Mark Driscoll announced that Mars Hill Church will replace its criticized nondisclosure agreements and other policies with more Bible-based covenants.

Lecrae: Katy Perry stole my beats

Pastors' kid turned pop starlet Katy Perry was hit with a lawsuit from Christendom when hip-hop artists Lecrae, Flame (Marcus Gray), and two others claimed she stole their riffs for her "witchcraft" hit, "Dark Horse." The rappers claim Perry ripped beats from "Joyful Noise," a song from Gray's 2008 Grammy-nominated album, *Our World: Redeemed*. Fans of both songs noted similarities when "Dark Horse" hit the radio. Lecrae's new album, *Anomaly*, was set to release in early September and had already hit No. 2 in iTunes' best-selling album chart by late July. In other pop culture news, media mogul Tyler Perry won an unusual trademark battle for the use of "What Would Jesus Do?" as an entertainment title.

Theology

Seeing Too Much Jesus in the Bible

Why a seminary is sending an Old Testament scholar into early retirement.

The Old Testament anticipates a Messiah—one who would fulfill the law and redeem Israel—and the New Testament presents Jesus as the fullness of God's revelation. Evangelical scholars agree on that much. But they debate the extent to which the Old Testament—specifically which passages—can be read Christologically.

For example, some believe Psalm 23 describes only the relationship between David and God, while others say the psalm anticipates Christ's ministry as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11–18). Douglas Green, professor of Old Testament and biblical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary (WTS) in Philadelphia, goes further. He argues that Christ is also the *sheep*.

Green argues that the psalm is messianic prophecy. "'David' is no longer historical King David, but rather, 'eschatological David.' . . . The psalm now predicts that Yahweh will be faithful to his promise to protect and preserve his Messiah at every point in his life's journey," he wrote in one published paper.

Seminary trustees were troubled by Green's interpretation, saying it clashed with WTS's standards. But in 2009, they unanimously approved a paper he wrote as containing "acceptable clarifications and allowable exceptions" to the school's document on biblical interpretation.

In November, the trustees reversed their decision, stating that portions of Green's interpretive methods were "inconsistent with the seminary's confessional standards." His "Christotelic" hermeneutic, they said, "severs the organic link between the Old Testament and New Testament." In essence, the school wants to prioritize authorial intent: If you can read Jesus as the sheep when that's not what David had in mind, you open the door to making a passage be about anything.

WTS offered Green, who has been at the seminary for 22 years, the chance to modify his statement and revise and republish his Psalm 23 article. Green declined. On June 6, WTS announced Green's "honorable retirement," effective October 1, 2015.

"I recognize the seminary's right to draw distinctions between its views and mine, and to determine that mine are confessionally unacceptable," said Green. Still, he believes his views are traditional and conservative.

Christians should interpret the Old Testament with the same stance as the New Testament writers, "with the conviction that the Old Testament is read correctly only when it is read with Christ as the goal or *telos* of Israel's story," said Green. "Christian interpretation of the Old Testament is ultimately an act of re-reading or reinterpreting that section of the Bible through the lens of what God has done in Christ."

Tremper Longman III, professor of biblical studies at Westmont College, supports Green's approach. "There is a deeper divine intention that the human authors are not conscious of," he said. "It's not that you can't know certain things until the death and resurrection of Christ. But in the light of Christ, it all becomes a lot clearer."

But WTS New Testament and biblical theology professor G. K. Beale thinks we shouldn't assume New Testament writers held new ideas that contradicted or diverged from the Old Testament passages they quoted. "The Old Testament writers were aware of an implicit meaning (known completely by God) that New Testament writers expressed more fully and explicitly," he said. The New Testament authors were simply "unpacking" what the Old Testament passages meant, especially in light of the revelation in Christ.

John Walton, professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College, says the focus should be on the original intent of the Old Testament authors. "We don't want to ignore that the biblical text is ultimately taking us to Christ. But our first step is to understand its [immediate] context, and that could be totally independent of reading it in light of Christ," he said. "People point to Luke 24, where Jesus says the Old Testament speaks about him. But unless he or the New Testament authors tell us which Old Testament passages speak about Christ, then we don't know what they are."

SHUTTERSTOCK

Not every text is specifically about Jesus, said Walton. "Any given portion of Scripture might be revealing more about God the Father or God the Spirit than God the Son." **Kevin P. Emmert**

HEADLINES

Church and State

Contract Killer

Why ministries were concerned about Obama's executive order—though few were directly affected.

When the White House announced plans to bar federal contractors from considering sexual orientation or gender identity when hiring, Christian leaders mobilized.

Dozens of leaders at colleges, relief and development organizations, publishing houses (including CT's parent company), and megachurches signed letters urging President Obama to include explicit protections for religious organizations. Without such exemptions, one letter warned, the move—intended to circumvent Congress's long-standing impasse over the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)—"will come at an unreasonable cost to the common good, national unity, and religious freedom." The letters made national news, with signer Michael Lindsay, president of Gordon College, becoming a focus for criticism in Massachusetts and Washington, D.C.

Obama signed the executive order in late July, and it included no such exemptions. (The U.S. Senate passed an ENDA bill that explicitly exempts religious organizations, but it languished in the House.)

But Obama's order also didn't directly affect most organizations whose leaders signed the letters.

Many Christian organizations that work with the government—such as World Vision and World Relief—do so not through contracts but through grants, in a process that is much less regulated. Meanwhile, the President left untouched a 2007 Bush administration memo allowing World Vision (and, implicitly, other religious organizations that partner with the government) to hire and fire on the basis of religious belief.

So was the order actually a quiet win for religious groups? Leaders say no. They believe that, even though few ministries contract with the government, lobbying for an exemption was important.

"Our main concern is its implication… down the line, where future executive orders could also include not just federal contractors but grantees as well," said Jenny Yang, vice president of advocacy and policy for World Relief. "It's a slippery slope, and we feel the need to speak up whenever we feel like religious freedom is threatened."

Experts say government departments such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) are pursuing fewer grants and more contracts. A few large religious organizations currently work through contracts. Catholic Charities recently completed a five-year $1 million federal contract to aid in U.S. disaster relief. And the Salvation Army operates federal contract facilities for some prison ministries and social services. (The Salvation Army, which has hundreds of millions of dollars in federal contracts, declined to comment to CT, except to note that it has a "deep commitment to nondiscrimination in hiring practices and service.")

The Department of Labor is still working out how to implement the executive order. But Carl Esbeck, law professor at the University of Missouri, says the order opens the door to lawsuits challenging the "World Vision" memo and other Bush-era provisions that form the current patchwork of legal protection. A Christian organization is likely okay with hiring a gay Christian who affirms its beliefs on sexual ethics. But is asking about that belief a religious question or a sexual orientation question?

For small organizations thinking about contracting with the government, "you might very well just say it was marginal anyway because of the administrative costs, and now with this new burden it's just not worth it," Esbeck said. "Only if you're big can you say, 'Well, we can do some risk planning and adjust to the new environment' and soldier on."

Because so few religious organizations are currently federal contractors, it seems Obama passed up a chance to make an easy but important statement on religious freedom, said Galen Carey, vice president for government relations of the National Association of Evangelicals. "It's a lost opportunity for the government to create a more tolerant space for a very divisive issue," said Carey. "That's what we're particularly concerned about. If religious freedom is not clearly protected here, it's less likely to be protected elsewhere."

Ruth Moon

SHAWN THEW / EPA

Publishing

The Book of No Numbers

Delete the Bible's chapter and verse marks, make a million bucks.

About 24 hours after California designer Adam Lewis Greene posted his plan for Bibliotheca—a four-volume minimalist Bible—on crowdfunding site Kickstarter, he met his $37,000 goal. A month later, when the campaign ended, he had $1,440,345.

"I set out hoping 500 people would back the project, which would have been an enormous feat," Greene told CT shortly after the Kickstarter clock ran out. He ended with nearly 15,000. "I didn't anticipate it reaching beyond a very niche audience."

It's still a niche—15,000 would be a small run for a traditional Bible publisher. But it's unequivocally the surprise Bible-publishing hit of the year, and one of Kickstarter's biggest successes.

Bibliotheca is no study Bible. Unlike most printed since Gutenberg, Greene's version has one column, wide margins, large typeface (which Greene created from his own handwriting), and no notes or chapter marks. And it uses Greene's personal mash-up of the 1901 American Standard Version and the 1862 Young's Literal Translation, with "thees" and "thous" dropped. In many ways it is an example of the "Franken-Bibles" predicted by Bible technologist Stephen Smith (see "The Bible in the Original Geek," March 2014).

Bibliotheca's Kickstarter launched the same week that Crossway released a similar Reader's Bible of its English Standard Version. Like Bibliotheca, it has one column and no chapter and verse notations. Biblica, which publishes the New International Version, released a similar project, The Books of the Bible, in 2007.

"Reference Bibles traditionally look like dictionaries," says J. Mark Bertrand, author of the Bible Design Blog. "Reader-friendly Bibles are more like novels. We're lamenting that people don't read their Bibles enough, and now we've realized the design of Bibles has an influence on that."

"Though it's a new wave, it's really getting back to the way people originally wrote and read or heard the Bible," said Dane Ortlund, senior vice president for Bible publishing at Crossway. "Verse and chapter numbers are only 500 years old."

"They're reference tools," says Glenn Paauw, Bible publisher for Biblica. "But when they're in the regular Bible, the message is: Use this like a reference book, not like a book to sit and read."

Reading the unbroken narrative of the ESV Reader's Bible feels different, said Bertrand. "I find myself engaging more with the ideas presented rather than looking for a verse number," he said. "Even though I've advocated for this kind of thing, I didn't think it would make this big a difference."

Reading without tripping on chapter numbers or footnotes can help people see the Bible anew. But a reader-friendly version probably shouldn't be the only Bible on your shelf, Ortlund said.

Paauw notes the main thing lost in a reader-friendly version: "Money. The double column saves pages and costs." (Bibliotheca is separated into four volumes, between 450 and 650 pages each.)

But publishers don't see them as inevitable losses now, Bertrand said. "While I can't speak for every publisher, the people I talk to are scratching their heads over this. It's awakening them to the reality that people want more readable Bibles."

Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra

Under Discussion

Compiled by Ruth Moon

Q: Should Satan be part of evangelism and early discipleship?

Parents and godparents no longer have to promise to "reject the Devil and all rebellion against God" at baptisms in the UK's largest denomination, but can instead pledge to "turn away from sin" and "reject evil."

NO — YES

"For many people, the Devil has been turned into a cartoon-like character of no particular malevolence. The problem is helping people with little doctrinal appreciation to understand what we mean by affirming that the Devil is a defeated power."

Robert Paterson, bishop, Church of England (via Anglican Ink)

"No, and for some good cultural reasons. C. S. Lewis said that there are two errors to avoid regarding the Devil—to ignore him, or to become fascinated with him. The problem is that many in our culture seem unable to engage the concept of the demonic without becoming fascinated in problematic ways."

Jim Beilby, coeditor, *Understanding Spiritual Warfare*

"Jesus' temptation account comes somewhat early; perhaps that could be a standard for when to introduce new believers to the wiles of the Evil One. But if one were to judge by standards of doctrinal importance, I would put it way down the list. I would give the Devil his due, which isn't much."

Jerry Root, coauthor, *The Sacrament of Evangelism*

"One's beliefs about atonement matter, since baptism is identification with Christ in his death and resurrection in reconciling with God the Father. If the essence of atonement is in Christ's conquering Satan, then yes. If Christ's death was a substitutionary atonement for our sins, then perhaps not."

Laura Barwegen, Christian formation professor, Wheaton College

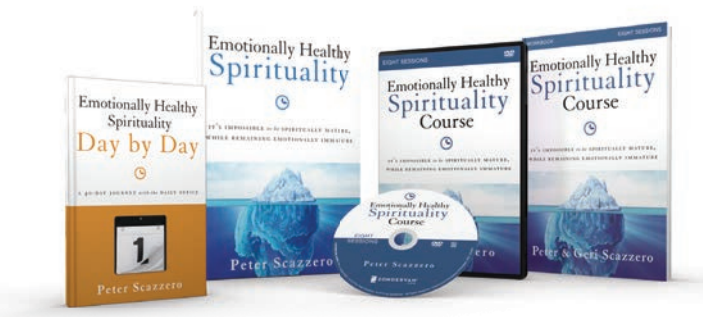
"It would be perilous to the spiritual formation of anyone to discount the power of either sin or the Devil in their life, and Scripture shows us that the connection between evil and sin and the Devil is unbreakable."

Matt Carter, author, *Released: The Power of Everyday Christians on Mission*

SHUTTERSTOCK

Go Beneath the Surface and Transform Your Life

85% of Christians admit to being stuck in their walk with Christ.



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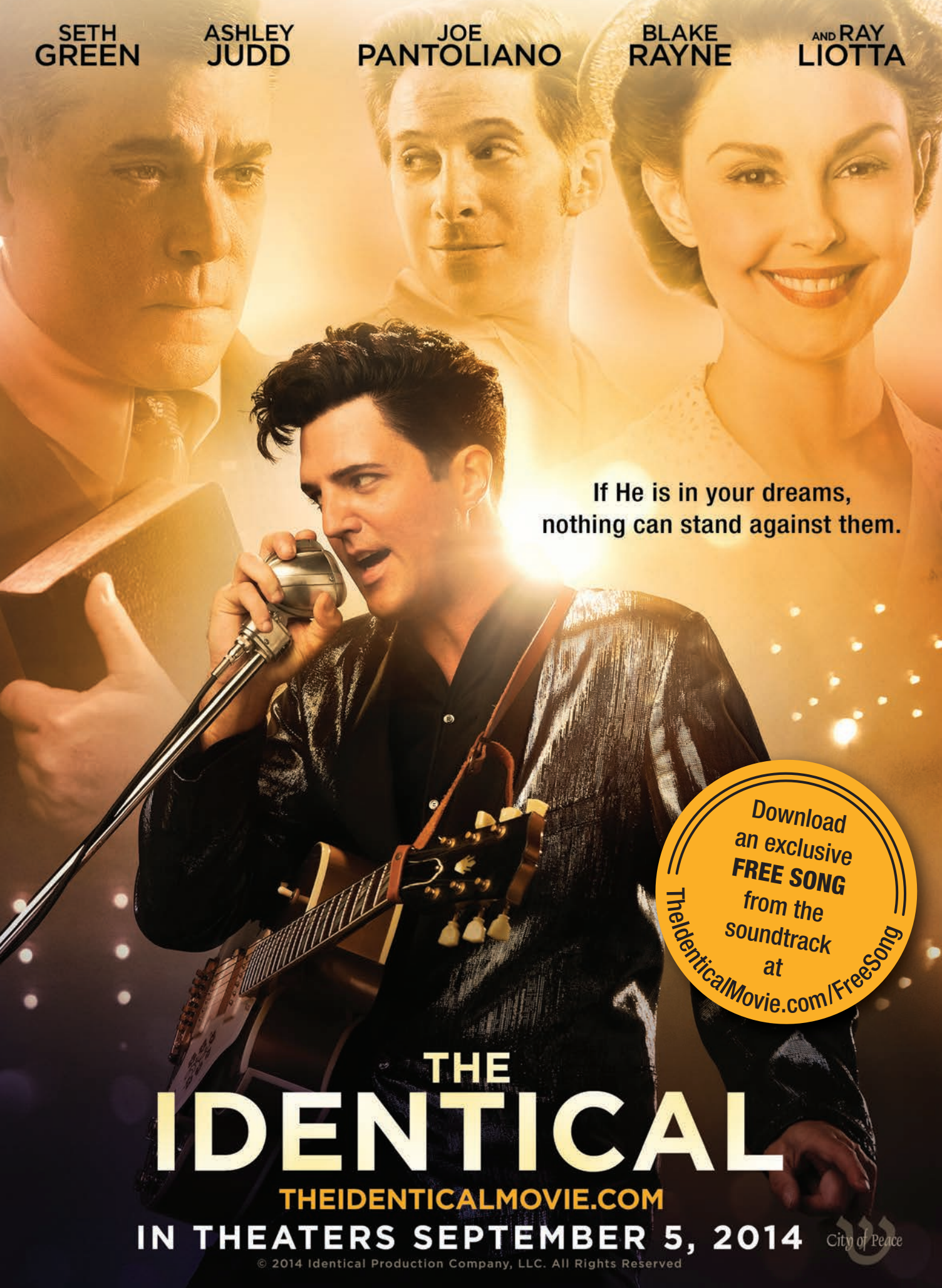
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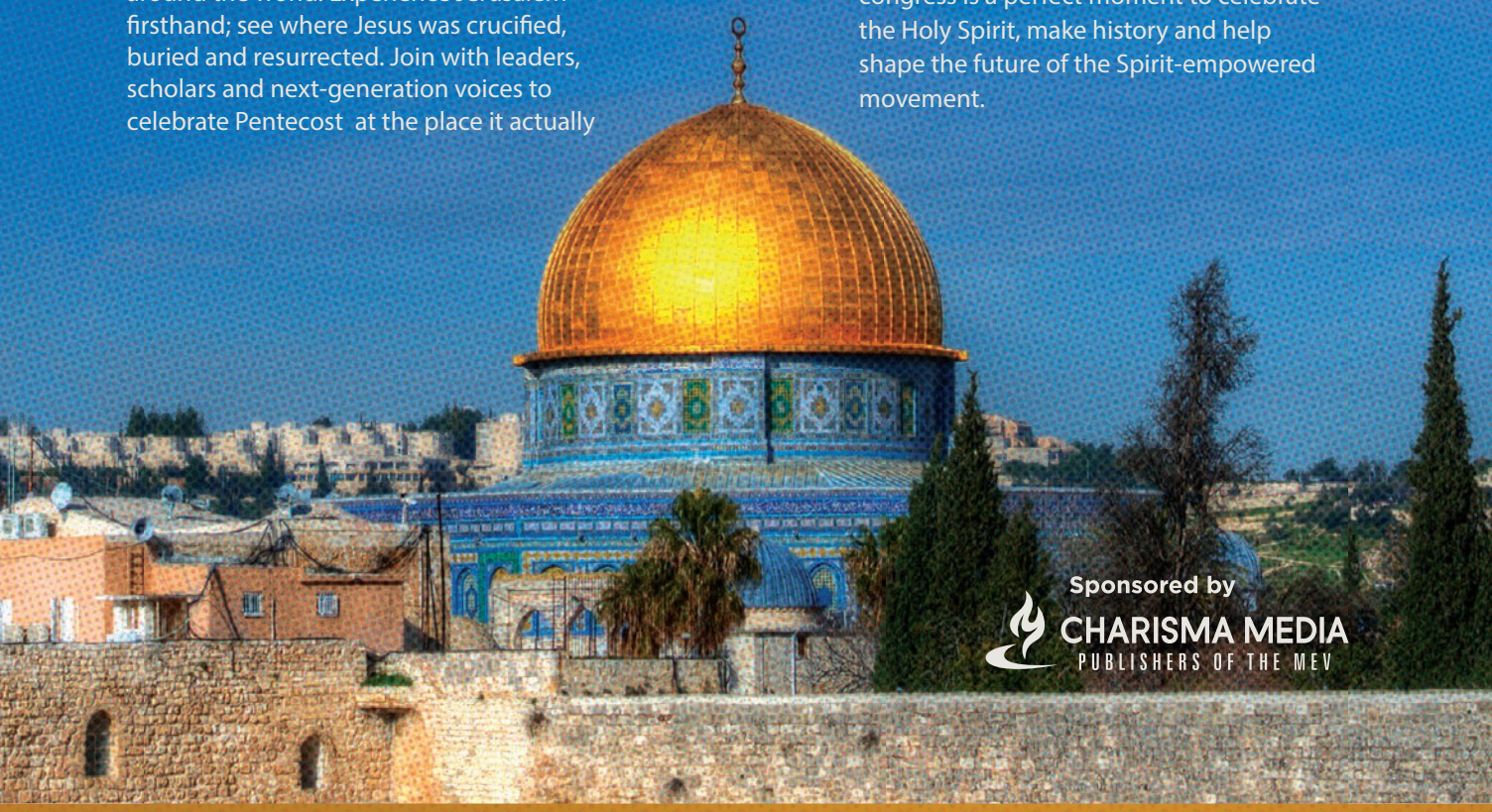

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VIEWS

HEATHER WESTON / GETTY

WHERE WE STAND

LIFE TOGETHER, AGAIN

After Hobby Lobby, vibrant corporate life is needed more than ever.

Religious communities hold their members to unique and often higher standards than the broader society.

SHUTTERSTOCK

IF WE LIVED in normal times, few would notice if the Supreme Court agreed that a group had the right to practice its religious views without government interference. The plaintiffs would sigh in relief, the chastised government agency would formulate new rules, and we'd all move on.

Obviously, we do not live in normal times. The farther we get from the Supreme Court's decision on behalf of Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties, the less it feels like a victory for anyone. Instead, it reminds us that fewer and fewer of our neighbors understand how religious organizations—and all communities smaller than the state—contribute to human flourishing and the common good.

One essential question in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* was the extent to which a for-profit corporation can hold to a religious (in this case, Christian) identity. In her dissent, Ruth Bader Ginsburg cited approvingly the idea that for-profit groups "use labor to make a profit, rather than to perpetuate a religious-values-based mission."

The words *rather than* are key. In Justice Ginsburg's view, it seems, corporations cannot serve—or at least the law cannot recognize that they serve—any god other than Mammon. She articulated an equally small view of nonprofits when she wrote that "religious organizations exist to foster the interests of persons subscribing to the same religious faith."

This may indeed describe the mission of some churches and synagogues. But tragically, it seems Justice Ginsburg has never met a religious community that takes seriously William Temple's words that the church "exists for the benefit of those who are not its members." Such communities, which we regularly cover in CT, call their members to radical sacrifice on others' behalf.

Even for-profit corporations can and do serve all kinds of purposes other than profit. From large public companies like Whole Foods to the new "for-benefit corporations" that are now legal in 14 states, many corporations explicitly seek more than a return on investment. When a liberal jurist echoes the economic dogma of Milton Friedman, something odd is happening in the culture.

What is happening is the erosion of corporate identity. We get our word *corporate* from the Latin word for "body." It echoes the biblical (and Greco-Roman) comparison of a community to a human body, with many parts working together for some greater good. The widespread alarm that "the Court thinks corporations are people!" is misplaced. As journalist Megan McArdle observed, we want our society to treat corporations—whether for-profit or not-for-profit—like persons in many respects. Otherwise, "the government would have the right to shut down the presses at *The New York Times*; search Google's servers without a warrant whenever they liked; tell churches (usually organized as corporations) what they could believe . . . and otherwise abridge fundamental human rights."

Many of those fundamental human rights can be exercised only in community, in a form that *embodies* our shared commitments to one another.

And yet we are witnessing a great withering in corporate life—the very forms that gave previous generations of Americans a sense of belonging and identity, as well as a place to work for the common good. Fifteen years after political scientist Robert Putnam coined the phrase "bowling alone," small- and medium-sized civic associations, businesses, and churches have only continued to wane. Fewer and fewer Americans have thick connections to the small-scale communities that used to mediate life; indeed, with 41 percent of children born out of wedlock, many Americans now grow up without even a stable and committed family, the smallest yet most crucial community.

The problem with corporate life, from a modern view, is that any community, like any physical body, requires boundaries to survive. Political parties need to exclude some policies in order to advance others. Families are constructed by exclusive vows and bonds of loyalty. Likewise, religious communities hold their members to unique and often higher standards than those of the broader society.

And here lies the rub: an individualistic world is scandalized by any community whose boundaries threaten the freedom of the individuals within it. Especially, we are discovering, when those boundaries place restrictions on the choices individuals make about sex.

Such a world promotes transactional relationships, overseen by the only form of community that remains: a centralized and powerful nation-state. Rather than existing to protect small- and medium-sized communities, the state views them with suspicion. Or the state redefines them, as did Justice Ginsburg, by reducing them to the most venal of motives.

What is the most deeply Christian response to such a world?

It can only be to commit ourselves even more completely to that countercultural, corporate reality known as the church, in all its imperfect and local expressions, and in its wider global reality. The church makes a stronger claim on us than the state. According to Jesus, it makes a deeper claim even than the family. And by being stronger and deeper than the family and the state, the church provides a family for those without families, and a people for those discarded and marginalized by society. True, it asks a great deal of us—sacrifice and holiness, rooted in humility and repentance. But it also gives us the corporate life for which every human is made, and for which many of our neighbors still long. **CT**

ANDY CROUCH is CT executive editor.

Michelle Van Loon is the author of *If Only: Letting Go of Regret* and maintains her own blog, Pilgrim's Road Trip, at the Patheos evangelical channel.

The Midlife Church Crisis

In Christ, there is neither empty nester nor new mom.

ADAM CRUFT

A while ago, my husband and I went to a newcomers' luncheon at a church we were considering attending. We watched as church staff, almost all in their early- to mid-30s, schmoozed with the young families. While I recognize the demands at these types of events, only one staff member connected with the newcomers who were obviously the oldest people in the room. We left the gathering feeling like we'd become an anachronistic punch line.

I've had one too many conversations with empty-nester peers about what it's like to go to church once our kids are grown and gone. Our midlife crisis of faith came from questioning not our beliefs, but our role in the body of Christ.

When the bulletin is filled with announcements for mothers of preschoolers' gatherings, family camping weekends, and Vacation Bible School, I know I'm welcome to lend a hand by baking muffins or doing crafts. I've gotten the message that, now that my own children have grown, my role is to support the real focus of the church: families.

Decades ago, baby boomers and older Gen Xers pushed to create churches centered on the young, nuclear family. Sadly, this ministry model now excludes many of us. Having outgrown the local church's core programs, we're left to usher, teach fourth-grade Sunday school, or attend committee meetings. At times, I can't help thinking: *Been there, done that. Got the Christian T-shirt to prove it.*

While local churches work to reach a younger generation, some of their graying members are stepping away. In our 50s, 60s, and beyond, we face a new set of challenges: relationship shifts, loneliness, health risks, divorce, and death. Boomers have begun attending church less frequently, according to Barna Research, while Gen Xers registered a significant uptick in those with no church affiliation.

I recently took an informal survey on my blog, and heard from nearly 500 believers about their church experiences as they've gotten older. Most stayed involved, using their extra empty-nester time to serve and continue their relationships with other congregants. But a little less than half said they'd scaled back their involvement from what it had been a decade ago. Those who had downshifted or left cited weariness with church politics, increased career demands, significant time devoted to caring for parents or grandchildren, health issues, and a sense that they'd somehow outgrown their church. "I'm tired of the same programs year after year," one said. "I want deeper relationships with fewer people, more spiritual exercises like prayer and meditation than the canned studies offered."

Those who'd scaled back emphasized that they hadn't quit their faith. Many churches categorize churchgoers only as *committed* or *not-so-committed*, sorting the two based on participation in already-existing programs.

I've gotten the message that, now that my own children have grown, my role is to support the real focus of the church: families.

Anecdotally speaking, it seemed that those over age 40 who discovered meaningful service, worship, and connections reported that their church was committed to intergenerational ministry rather than family-centered, child-focused programming. Though there is some overlap between the two ministry philosophies, the congregations that concentrate on families with children under 18 unintentionally marginalize those who don't fit the profile. Churches with intergenerational ministry have invested in building connections between members of different ages and nurturing fruitfulness in every season of life.

The boomer attendance decline is forcing many congregations to rethink the way they've done church. Those in their second adulthood are most aware that they don't have time to waste on church busywork. They may in fact be signaling the way forward for all of us.

When we church leaders ape our culture's obsession with all things young and cool—targeting the same desirable demographic groups as do savvy advertisers—we communicate to those who don't fit those specs that they are less desirable.

But congregations willing to do the hard work of attending to the basic components of pastoral care and spiritual formation among every demographic in their midst can rekindle the connection of the burned-out, faded away people who've been pushed to the margins. They may burn away the chaff of a subculture that seems to better reflect the folly of a couple of generations than it does God's all-ages-welcome family. CT

OPEN QUESTION *Three Views*

Should Christians resist greater government surveillance?

In the era of massive data collection, Uncle Sam snoops on a grand scale.

JAMES O'BRIEN

Keith Pavlischek
No, Demand Oversight

First, we need to understand the difference between internal communications content, and the bulk collection and analysis of telecommunication data. When we do, it becomes clear why the National Security Administration's (NSA) use of this data does not necessarily violate our privacy rights under the Fourth Amendment.

The debate over the proposed USA Freedom Act has little to do with whether the government is spying on Americans by listening to their phone calls or reading their e-mails. This legislation, simply stated, would restrict the bulk collection and analysis of data about data (known as metadata—numbers dialed, length of call, billing records) in the fight against terrorism. It has long been settled that the Fourth Amendment doesn't protect a conversation that merely has taken place. The Supreme Court ruled in *Smith v. Maryland* (1979), "While the guarantees of the Fourth Amendment are broad, they are not boundless."

The bulk collection of this kind of data is constitutional, yet informed debate on this issue is as difficult for Christians as anyone else. Too often, the debate is reduced to a simplistic choice between good (the right to privacy) and evil (government surveillance). Scholar Benjamin Wittes summarizes this polarized view in his review of *No Place to Hide*, journalist Glenn Greenwald's book about Edward Snowden: "NSA is unrelentingly evil, its appetite voracious, its purpose political control and the suppression of dissent. Terrorism and other national security interests are mere smokescreens and pretexts for collection that is, in fact, just a repressive instrument."

When privacy advocates don't embrace such hysterical nonsense outright, they tend to stress the *potential* for abuse. Of course the bulk collection of phone and Internet data could be abused. If the information gleaned from bulk collection did not have the potential for abuse, it would not be such an indispensable tool in our counterterrorist toolbox. But that simply highlights the need to vigorously monitor the program through compliance protocols and legislative and judicial oversight, not to abandon the program altogether. Oversight and use of the least intrusive methods are what Christians should advocate for in the public arena.

My views are based on my direct experience working at the NSA and in the intelligence community as a military intelligence officer. The prevailing suspicion

that NSA "spies" are cavalier about the privacy rights of citizens couldn't be further from the truth. The culture of the NSA, from its leadership to entry-level analysts, tilts radically in the opposite direction, toward an almost fanatical obligation to protect Americans' privacy rights.

Christians should support the legitimate use of counterterrorism surveillance under classic just-war reasoning, historically based on Romans 13. There is no justice in terrorism, only injustice. I said that in September 2001, and it's still true.

KEITH PAVLISCHEK, a U.S. Marine Corps colonel (ret.), is vice president of operations at Veteran Solutions Inc.

David Lyon
Yes, It May Be Necessary

Has a threshold of government surveillance been reached beyond which Christians should actively push back? Did it take former NSA contractor Edward Snowden's 2013 disclosures to wake us up to surveillance?

Almost all surveillance today is massive computer-based monitoring of phone call records, e-mails, and Internet use. The days of defining surveillance as the targeting of specific suspects (think Frog One in *The French Connection*) are long gone. Now surveillance organizations seek to suck up as much data on individuals as possible. An individual's online choices, Facebook views, durations of phone calls, and food fads and fancies all help to tag him or her for police, marketers, and the NSA. The government claims to use this data, merged on a massive scale with other information, to foil terrorism.

The era of Big Data raises important questions for Christians. The biblical account shows us the proper aims of surveillance. The God of Scripture practices surveillance: "Unless the Lord watches over [surveils] the city, the guards stand watch in vain" (Ps. 127:1). This God is especially vigilant for the vulnerable, as Hagar found, calling him "the God who sees me" (Gen. 16:13). As a foreigner, a female, and a fugitive, Hagar was at a triple disadvantage. So *watching over* (which is what the French verb, *surveiller*, means) should always be judged by a criterion of care, with human flourishing as its aim and ultimate purpose.

But do we necessarily flourish when we are seen? Are we meant to live totally transparent lives? It depends. Sometimes we reveal ourselves, and sometimes we hold back.

Complete self-exposure is not automatically the best choice. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that when giving alms, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing (Matt. 6:2–4). One day, we'll know God and be known face to face (1 Cor. 13:12). But until then we need to take great care because surveillance has become an unavoidable aspect of all our lives.

We must be alert not only to the excesses of the NSA, but also to the surveillance society that we have created—of which the NSA is only one part. Today, democracy is threatened by the chilling effects of surveillance. Resisting may have its moment, and we may be called to courageous action. But what's needed on a daily basis is steady and digitally informed engagement based on values that have marked robust Christian involvement in the past—such as democratic participation, social justice, and human dignity.

So, should we resist greater government surveillance? Yes, if it is uncaring, and if it makes certain groups and individuals more vulnerable. We should be concerned about all kinds of surveillance—in schools, churches, neighborhoods, marketing, policing, and management—as well as in the NSA. As we seek to hold them accountable, we remember we're all accountable to the One before whom all creation is laid bare (Heb. 4:13).

DAVID LYON is director of the Surveillance Studies Centre, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

Rachael Jackson
No, It's the Wrong Fight

My heartbeat is that of a soldier. I enlisted in the Army at age 18 and graduated from West Point six years later. In Iraq, I served as a captain and Apache helicopter pilot. After a medical discharge and difficult transition to civilian life, I can say God wanted me to be a soldier—just not for the reasons I originally thought.

I know the value of intelligence. There are no clear frontlines in the war on terrorism. Intelligence is the greatest weapon we have to equalize the battlefield and neutralize potential threats. As an American citizen, I understand the idea that big government can be scary. As a Christian, I feel it can be invasive and may infringe on our religious freedom.

In *The Christian Century*, Daniel Schultz contends that we should resist negotiating for our perceived safety and security in exchange for freedom. He invites Christians to scrutinize this promise of security from our government, claiming, "History shows how easily national security becomes conflated with maintaining the political status quo. Jesus, after all, was executed as a threat to the Roman government of Palestine."

The battle between freedom and security persists. But is it a battle we *should* be fighting? When U.S. Christians engage in this fight, we likely overestimate our perceived freedom and focus our efforts in the wrong place: our safety. Should our safety be what we are seeking in the first place? Biblically speaking, shouldn't we as Christ followers welcome the same fate that befell Jesus? "Do you remember what I told you? 'A slave isn't greater than his master!' So since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you" (John 15:20, TLB).

As American Christians, where does this leave us? Let me suggest the following: pray for our leaders (1 Tim. 2:1–4); give unto Caesar what is Caesar's (Matt. 22:21); and educate ourselves to vote wisely for Christian leaders and their oversight in our government (Prov. 28:12).

As long as we are not mandated to do something that contradicts the teachings of Christ, we are free to quit battling the government. Then, together, we can go about the business of making disciples and sharing the gospel.

When we are tempted to fight the government on issues with little eternal impact, we need to remember what matters in God's eyes. It is highly doubtful that anyone will ever be saved because of a battle waged against government surveillance. Jesus converts hearts. The struggle for hearts is our *true battlefield*. That is why God invited me (and you) to put on his whole armor as a soldier for Christ. **CT**

RACHAEL JACKSON is the founding editor of *Shattered* magazine.

SPIRITED LIFE

Andrew Wilson is an elder at Kings Church in Eastbourne, England, and author most recently of *If God, Then What?*

It's All Gift

What if success doesn't come from hard work after all?

Grace—it is central to the gospel. As Christians, we understand that. Yet many of us operate with an inadequate theology of gift, and gift presupposes grace.

Imagine asking two successful people how they managed to accomplish what they have. The first says, "I'm just very gifted." The second says, "I've just worked very hard." Who sounds more smug?

Our meritocracy—in which people are valued based on ability alone—has conditioned us to consider it arrogant to attribute our accomplishments to God's gracious gift. For some reason, gift talk sounds elitist. Conversely, we think we're being humble when we say we worked hard for our success. The gospel polarity of grace versus works, though correctly understood in theory, is capsized in practice: "You succeeded? You must have worked harder than others," we think. "You didn't succeed? Try again."

For it is by works you have succeeded, not by gifts, so that no one can boast. Logical as it may seem, it's far from the gospel.

For good reason, Paul referred to spiritual gifts as *charismata*: gifts of *charis*, or grace. We all have different gifts, according to the grace given to us (Rom. 12:3–6). Paul also knew that using those gifts was essential for everyone's flourishing. So he urged people to use what God had given them—but always as stewards, not earners. Sailors work hard to harness the wind, but they're never so foolish as to take credit for moving the boat.

Yet the meritocratic meme pops up everywhere. Instead of talking about their distinctive gifts, wealthy entrepreneurs often explain their prosperity as the result of diligence, focus, and commitment. While these characteristics are supported in Scripture and crucial to business, they can be equally found in sweatshops and refugee camps. And high achievers in health care, education, and politics talk far more about long hours and intense effort than unusual brainpower or charisma. Such talk makes sense in a culture like ours that prizes individual striving, but in Christian circles, it's indefensible.

A few months ago, a well-known Christian speaker tweeted (and I paraphrase), "I'm not especially gifted. I've just worked very hard. If you keep pursuing your dreams, God will accomplish dramatic things through you!" She was well-intentioned, no doubt, and sincerely aiming to encourage others. But her gifts of intelligence, communication, and creativity are far greater than average. She has no way of knowing whether her work rate is unusually high or whether her readers will accomplish "dramatic" things. If the apostle Paul were on Twitter, I imagine he'd respond, "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" (1 Cor. 4:7).

It's not that we fail to celebrate work. Rather, we so emphasize our work that God's gifts to us are often minimized. By doing so, we convince ourselves that our success is the result of work rather than grace. Meritocracy has replaced charismata.

If you're gift-minded, you steward things and give them away as soon as you're asked. Easy come, easy go.

When we elevate our work above God's gifts, it shifts glory from him to us. "Gift" language points to an abundantly generous gift giver. "Work" language credits the worker and points toward the self. It also generates a sense of entitlement: If I have something because of my efforts, then I deserve it. "To the one who works," Paul says, "wages are not credited as a *gift* but as an *obligation*" (Rom. 4:4, my italics). But if God gave it to me, then I will hold it loosely, knowing I have no rights to it, that it could have been given to someone else just as easily. If you're work-minded, you own things; if you're gift-minded, you steward them and give them away as soon as you're asked. Easy come, easy go.

Charismatic, or grace-centered, theology sees the church as a body, where different gifts are given to different people and so foster interdependence. Meritocratic, or work-centered, theology tells us that if we study more, pray harder, or evangelize more regularly, we too can be as effective as so-and-so. If everything is within our own reach, then why need one another? Why be the church?

I'm preaching to myself here. For years I've struggled with envying a friend who is more gifted than I am. He's a better leader, a more prolific writer, a superior linguist, and a more effective preacher. When I think like a meritocrat, I feel dispirited: *He's a better Christian. He deserves success.* When I think like a charismatic, I experience freedom: *He's been given a different gift and doesn't deserve it any more than I do.* Grace—gloriously—brings liberty. What do you have that you did not receive? CT

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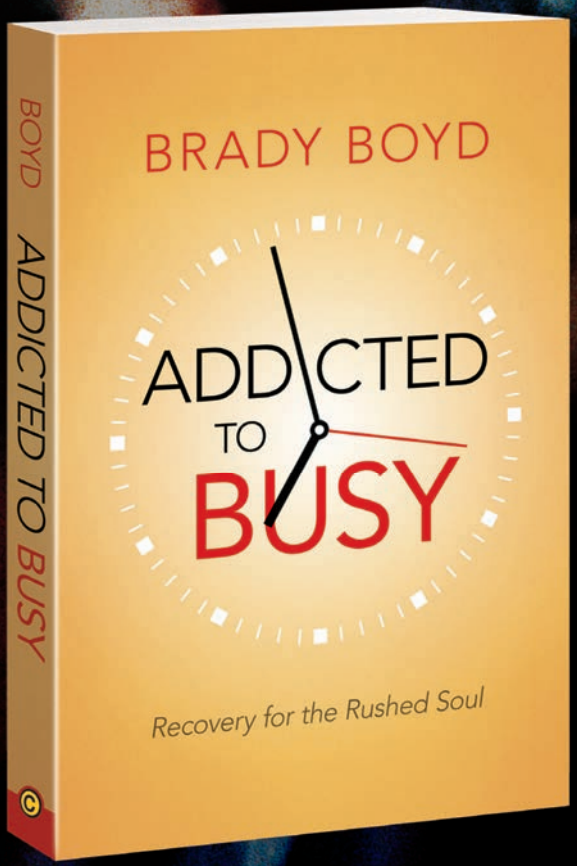

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Brady Boyd is senior pastor of 10,000 member New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and author of *Fear No Evil* and *Sons and Daughters*. He is a contributor for ChurchLeaders.com and the Huffington Post. He is married to his college sweetheart, Pam, and has two teenage children, Abram and Callie.

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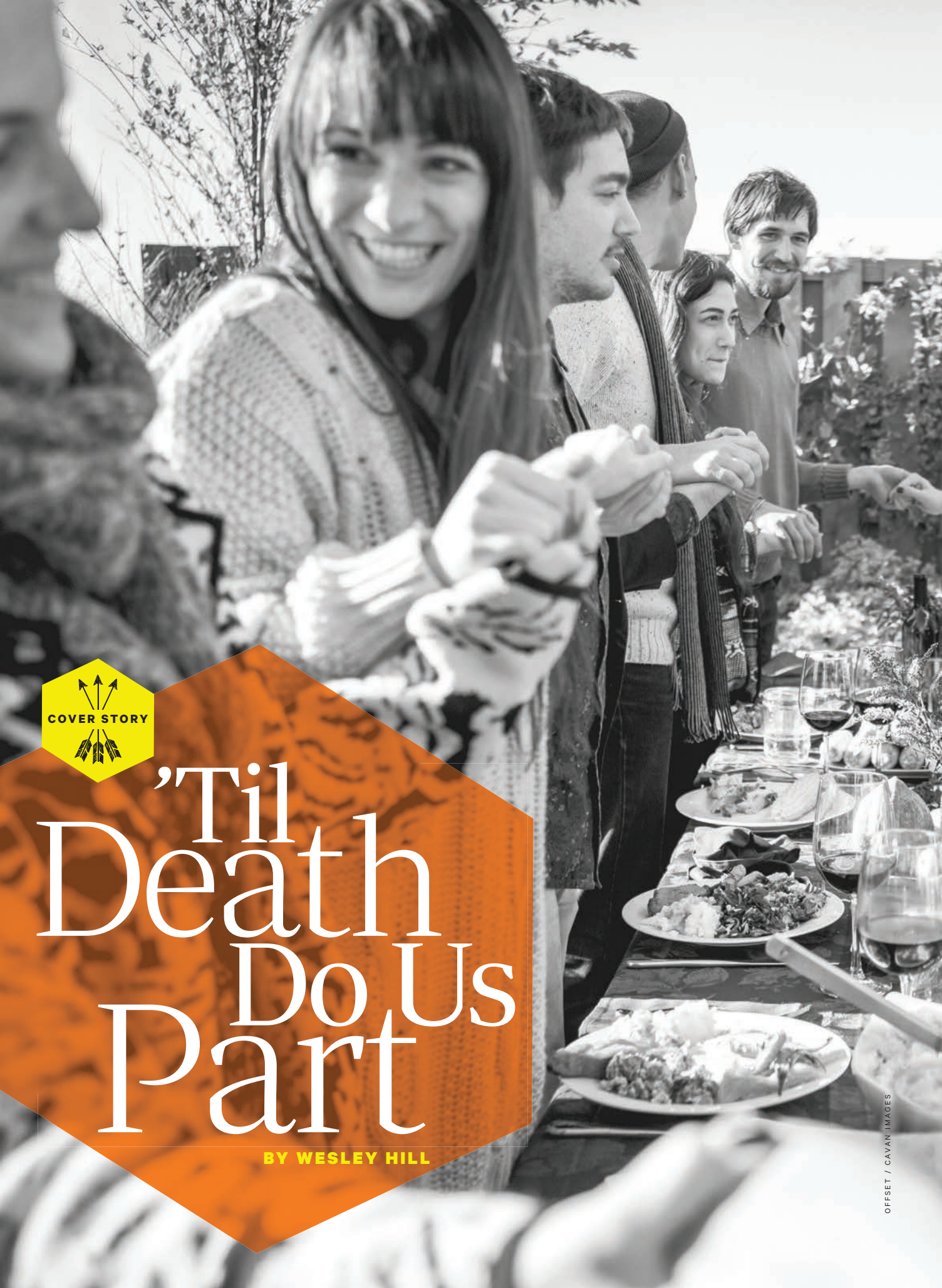
COVER STORY

’Til Death Do Us Part

BY WESLEY HILL



OFFSET / CAVAN IMAGES

WHY NOW MORE THAN EVER, WE NEED TO RECOVER A RICH VISION OF LIFELONG FRIENDSHIP.

IN JANUARY 1944, several months after he had been imprisoned by the Nazis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a letter to his friend Eberhard Bethge. In it, he reflected on what their relationship meant to each of them. Bonhoeffer wrote that, in contrast to marriage and kinship, friendship "has no generally recognized rights, and therefore depends entirely on its own inherent quality."

OFFSET / CAVAN IMAGES

COVER STORY

As he penned those lines, Bonhoeffer must have had his fiancée, Maria von Wedemeyer, in mind. With Maria, Bonhoeffer knew where he stood. They were pledged to be married, and all their family and acquaintances recognized their love and were prepared to witness their wedding ceremony, provided Bonhoeffer was released. With Eberhard, on the other hand, Bonhoeffer admitted there wasn't a similarly public recognition. That led to a question: What were Eberhard and Dietrich to one another, and how might their love be preserved and sustained?

Years later, Eberhard addressed an audience member who had come to hear him speak about his friendship with Bonhoeffer (one explored in depth by Charles Marsh in the acclaimed biography *Strange Glory*). Surely, the questioner said, theirs "must [have been] a homosexual partnership." What else could Bonhoeffer's impassioned letters to Eberhard have signaled?

Bonhoeffer was aware that his friendship with Eberhard was breakable—that no public ceremony or vow kept them tied. That awareness that friendship is fragile has grown more pronounced since Bonhoeffer wrote his letters from prison. Words like *suspicion*, *unsettledness*, and *doubt* best describe our instincts about friendship. We are uncertain about it—perhaps especially between people of the same sex. And, like Bonhoeffer, we wonder how much we can expect from it, how solid and durable it is, when we compare it to other bonds. Is friendship a weaker tie than marriage or family? Further, many of us doubt that we can attain intimacy without there being deep down some sexual element to the friendship.

AN ECLIPSE OF FRIENDSHIP?

In *Deep Secrets: Boys' Friendships and the Crisis of Connection*, social scientist Niobe Way recounts her study of (mostly nonwhite) subjects in the northeastern United States over two decades. Before adolescence, the boys talked in shockingly intimate terms about their male friends. Their "closest friendships share the plot of *Love Story* more than the plot of *Lord of the Flies*," Way notes, puncturing our stereotype that while girls want deep conversation, boys communicate in grunts and prefer to shoot each other with toy guns.

But Way also found that as they grew older, the boys lost the intimacy they once enjoyed. Afraid of being perceived as gay or feminine, they withdrew. Many of them told Way "that they don't have time for their male friends, even though their desire for these relationships remains."

The boys Way studied aren't the only ones facing the loss of deep friendship. Afraid of crossing boundaries of propriety,

We wonder how much we and durable it is, when we

can expect from friendship, how solid compare it to other bonds.

'I love you because you're mine.' Here, my love for you isn't the basis of our connection. It's the other way around: We are bound to each other, and therefore *I love you. You may bore me or wound me, but that doesn't mean I'll walk away.*

many Christians, both single and married, never develop meaningful friendships with people of the opposite sex. Not unlike Bonhoeffer and Bethge, they face suspicion from fellow Christians about whether those kinds of relationships are attainable at all.

It's not just nervousness about sexual indiscretions that keep us from forming deep friendships. I speak, for instance, with many young mothers who tell me they are lonely. Where they once were close with other women, the demands of feedings, naps, and early bedtimes now hinder those friendships. Our modern routines and nuclear living arrangements hinder our finding and keeping close friends. A friend recently told me, "In college, there was a recognized script for finding friends. Now that I'm in my 30s, everyone seems to have their friend groups settled, and I don't know the script anymore."

As researchers like Laura L. Carstensen, director of the Stanford Center on Longevity, have observed, people approaching middle age tend to retreat to the relationships they already have, rather than seeking out new communities. "You tend to focus on what is most emotionally important to you," she told *The New York Times*. "So you're not interested in going to that cocktail party; you're interested in spending time with your kids."

But our widespread feeling that friendship is harder to come by hasn't always been prominent among Christians. On the contrary, many of our forebears in the faith celebrated the love of friendship. Far from occupying a suspicious or wistful vantage point, they invested enormous effort in making and keeping friends. And therein lies a tale—one we need to heed today.

'AS BINDING AS A MARRIAGE'

In 1914, just after a young Bonhoeffer moved with his family to Berlin, an eccentric Russian polymath published a book in the form of 12 letters to an anonymous friend. The author, a young man named Pavel Florensky, had an unusual craving for friendship. As one fellow student described him, "When he takes someone to his heart he puts everything into the relationship." Not content with acquaintanceship, Florensky "wants to draw his friend into every detail of his life and enters wholeheartedly into their life and interests."

Whatever Florensky's sexual orientation—he eventually, to the shock of many, married a woman—we know the Orthodox theologian cared especially about strengthening the bonds between male friends. As young adults, he and his friend Sergei exchanged vows of commitment, pledging fidelity to one another even as they made promises to remain chaste. According to biographer Avril Pyman, Florensky regarded this pact "as binding as a marriage or monastic vow."

In his letters, titled *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, Florensky explains their commitment. "There are many temptations to turn away from a Friend, to remain alone or to start new relationships," he wrote. "But a person who has broken off one friendship will break off another, and a third, because he has replaced the way of *ascesis*"—the way of costly, self-sacrificial love—"with the desire for . . . comfort." By pledging to be there for one particular friend, come what may, Florensky thought he could better learn the meaning of Christian love. He concluded, "The greatest . . . love is realizable only in relation to *friends*, not in relation to all people, not 'in general.'"

Elsewhere Florensky compared the love for one friend to a "community molecule": Just as a molecule depends on the connections between atoms, so too the church isn't reducible to individuals but rather relies on pairs of friends in order to flourish. We aren't called to exist as isolated units who love God set apart from those around us. Instead, Jesus says, God's love is manifested in love for our *friends*—and here, notably, he doesn't settle on the words *spouses* or *children* or *family* (John 15:13).

A HISTORY FOR THE PERPLEXED

As we spend time with Florensky's writing, we realize that modern views of friendship aren't the last word on the subject. True, speaking of friendship as the freest of loves, as Bonhoeffer does, makes sense in our late-modern world. It's a world in which old friends can be left behind as quickly as we sign the contract for a new job halfway across the country. But that hasn't always been the case.

Florensky's hope for a sealed commitment between spiritual brothers and sisters is found in all major strands of the church, East and West. In the ancient East up until today, a rite exists—*adelphopoiesis*, "brother-making"—in which friends make promises to each other and solidify their commitment by sharing in the Eucharist. (Although it was primarily men who exchanged these vows, the rite was open to women as well.) In the West, 12th-century English writer Aelred of Rievaulx upheld a similar ideal. Speaking primarily of friendships between monks, Aelred writes that we call such people friends "to whom we have no qualm about entrusting our heart and all its contents." But he goes further: "See how far love between friends should extend; namely, that they be willing to die for one another," unmistakably echoing

Jesus. Dying for one's friends is the apex of love.

We might want to write off Aelred's vision of "spiritual friendship" as pious idealism. But his model of devoted friendship bore noticeable fruit. In the centuries following his death, pairs of Christian friends were buried together to signal their love. Looking forward to the bodily resurrection of the dead, the shared tombs ensured for each friend that "the first figure his awakened eyes will see will be [the other friend]," notes historian Alan Bray. With that belief, 19th-century Catholic John Henry Newman was buried next to fellow cleric Ambrose St. John. After St. John's death, Newman lamented, "I have ever thought no bereavement was equal to that of a husband's or a wife's, but I feel it difficult to believe that any can be greater, or any one's sorrow greater, than mine."

Evangelical Protestants have lacked the formal liturgical apparatus of friendships like Newman and St. John's. Yet they, too, found ways of underscoring friendship's permanence. I think, for instance, of John Newton's friendship with the troubled poet William Cowper. It was burdened by Cowper's mental illness, but Newton sought to preserve it across the years and miles at great personal cost. Cowper, for his part, understood the depth of Newton's commitment. Facing a debilitating sadness in 1788, Cowper wrote to Newton: "I found . . . comforts in your visit which have formerly sweetened all our interviews, in part restored. I . . . felt my sentiments of affectionate friendship for you the same as ever."

There are many more instances I could mention. They illustrate how much of our Christian past we've forgotten.

I LOVE YOU BECAUSE YOU'RE MINE

Some might say, at this point, that it's just as well we've consigned these intimate, vowed forms of Christian friendship to the rubbish heap of history. When I shared some of these thoughts with Christian college students recently, one of the young women said she worried about the dangers of such relationships. She mentioned an especially close friendship between two women that she'd witnessed, how it seemed ingrown, obsessive, and unhealthy. Perhaps Bonhoeffer was right, she said: Friendship, in contrast to marriage or family ties, has no publicly recognized rights. And that's a *good* thing.

For a couple of generations now, C. S. Lewis has probably influenced evangelicals' thinking on friendship more than anyone. In *The Four Loves*, Lewis takes pains to distinguish friendship from erotic attachment. In contrast to lovers, whom we picture face to face, friends are side by side, engaged in a common task and needing to know very little of one another's life outside the friendship. This, in Lewis's view, is friendship's true glory: "the exquisite arbitrariness and irresponsibility of this love." Unlike romantic partners, who are absorbed in one another, Lewis says, each friend can say to another, "I have no duty to be anyone's Friend and no man in the world has a duty to be mine." Here, friendship lacks utility—it isn't for anything in particular, such as procreation or productivity. And that's precisely what makes friendship what it is.

I confess my sympathies are not with Lewis on this point, not least because I'm not sure I've ever had a friendship of the sort he describes. For him, the love between friends "ignores not only our physical bodies but that whole embodiment which consists of our family, job, past, and connections." It's "an affair of disentangled, or stripped, minds."

We picture Lewis with J. R. R. Tolkien or Owen Barfield, discussing some scrap of Old English literature over a pint at the pub. British theologian Janet Martin Soskice parodies the scene: "How, we wonder, would Lewis react if another 'stripped mind' arrived at the club and told him that his child had been knocked off a bicycle and was mortally ill? Blustering silence?—'terribly sorry, old boy, didn't know you were married—had offspring—that sort of thing . . . but let's get on with translating Beowulf.'" Soskice is caricaturing, of course, but she hits close to home.

And that's why I'm inclined to say that, for all the ways such relationships need to be carefully guarded and tended, what we really need in our churches today is a return, not to Lewis's vision of a circle of male friends before a roaring hearth, but to Florensky's hope in vowed spiritual *siblinghood*. What we need isn't disinterested, disembodied camaraderie, in which we keep distance from one another's hearts and stories. We need stronger bonds for *brothers and sisters* in Christ.

Writer and activist Maggie Gallagher describes two kinds of relationships. To the first she gives the tag "You're mine because I love you." In this relationship, you and I may belong to a special friendship and share many of the joys that friendship makes possible. But such joys will last only as long as my love lasts. If I tire of you or am hurt by you, I'm free to walk away—no obligations, no hoops to jump through, no strings attached.

The second relationship Gallagher describes has the tag "I love you because you're mine." Here, my love isn't the basis of our connection. It's the other way around: We are bound to each other, and *therefore* I love you. You may bore me or wound me or otherwise become unattractive to me, but that doesn't mean I'll walk away.

What would it mean to see friendship—specifically Christian friendship, the kind we want to strengthen and nurture in our churches—as the second kind of relationship rather than the first? What would it mean if we made promises to each other, precisely *as friends*?

EVERYONE CAN BE A FRIEND

As a single person, I acutely need intimacy and loyalty from my friends. I'm eager for them to say to me, "We love you because you're ours," without leaving an escape clause. Part of the reason I need that kind of friendship is because I don't think marriage is in my future. I'm gay, and also committed to the traditional Christian view that marriage is the union of a man and a woman. When I contemplate a lifetime of celibacy, I know I want committed friends who will walk beside me on the journey.

What I'm yearning for isn't just a weekly night out or circle of people with whom to vacation. If marriage offers husband and wife the opportunity to cultivate long-term fidelity and the quiet intimacy of a shared history—the opportunity to witness each other's "moments of being," to use Virginia Woolf's resonant phrase—then I need a way of being single that affords me a similar (though not identical) opportunity.

I need people who know what time my plane lands, who will worry about me when I don't show up when I say I will. I need people I can call and tell about that funny thing that happened in the hallway after class. I need to know that, come hell

I imagine a church where genuine love isn't located exclusively or even primarily in marriage, but where marriage and friendship and other bonds of affection are all seen as different forms of the same love we all *are called to pursue.*

or high water, a few people will stay with me, loving me in spite of my faults and caring for me when I'm down. More, I need people for whom *I* can care. As a friend of mine put it, you want someone for whom you can make soup when she's sick, not just someone who will make soup for you when you're sick.

As a single person, I feel these needs with a special poignancy. But these needs aren't limited to single people. I know two married couples in their 20s who recently decided to share a large house together. One of the couples has a small child, and the wife of the other couple said to me, "Living together, I see more clearly how raising kids was never meant to be something two parents do on their own." Being a young mother or father can be among the most isolating experiences in our fragmented culture. And what young parents need—perhaps above all—is the devotion of close friends who won't bail when the dirty diapers and spit-up and nighttime cries are overwhelming.

COVER STORY

Recovering the historic Christian practice of vowed friendships can help with all of these needs. Certainly such friendships will look different than they did in Aelred's or Newton's days. I hardly expect my local church to get excited about the Orthodox rite of "brother-making" anytime soon (as much as I might wish for that). But, translating the practice of committed, promise-bound friendships into our time, we can retrieve some of the wisdom of those relationships and apply it afresh in our own changed contexts.

I imagine a future in the church when the call to chastity would no longer sound like a dreary sentence to lifelong loneliness for a gay Christian like me. I imagine Christian communities in which friendships are celebrated and honored—where it's normal for families to live near or with single people; where it's expected that celibate gay people would form significant attachments to other single people, families, and pastors; where it's standard practice for friends to spend holidays together or share vacations; where it's not out of the ordinary for friends to consider staying put, resisting the allure of constant mobility, for the sake of their friendships. I imagine a church where genuine love isn't located exclusively or even primarily in marriage, but where marriage and friendship and other bonds of affection are all seen as different forms of the same love we *all* are called to pursue.

By shifting our practice of friendship to a more committed, honored form of love, we can witness—above all—to a kingdom in which the ties between spiritual siblings are the strongest ties of all. Marriage, Jesus tells us, will be entirely transformed in the future, barely recognizable to those who know it in its present form (Matt. 22:30). Bonds of biology, likewise, are relativized in Jesus' world (Mark 3:31–35). But the loves that unite Christians to each other across marital, racial, and familial lines are loves that will last. More than that, they are loves that witness that Christ's love is available to all. Not everyone can be a parent or a spouse, but anyone and everyone can be a friend.

EXPANDING OUR SPIRITUAL FAMILIES

A few years ago, I was washing dishes at my house when the phone rang. It was my friend Jono. Would I consider, he asked, being his daughter Callie's godfather, a witness to her baptism and a help to her parents as they sought to raise her in the faith? "Think and pray about it," Jono suggested. I felt honored. And I was instantaneously drawn deeper into the circle of his and his wife Megan's friendship.

Several weeks later, I stood near the baptismal font in a small Anglican church, warmed by the cascade of sunlight pouring through the windows behind me. The priest lifted Callie, clad in her new white dress, above the font, dipped his hand in the water, and made the sign of the cross on her forehead. "Parents and godparents," the priest said, "the church receives Callie with joy. Today we are trusting God for her growth in faith. Will you pray for her, draw her by your example into the community of faith, and walk with her in the way of Christ?" Alongside Callie's godmothers, I answered, "With the help of God, we will."

It wasn't an exchange of vows between a friend and me—at least not directly. But it was as close to that as I might hope for today. Becoming a godparent meant that my relationship to two of my good friends, and their children, had been sealed through baptism and witnessed by other believers. It was a small step in transforming a "You're mine because I love you" relationship into an "I love you because you're mine" relationship. A small step—and hopefully the first of many on a long journey. **CT**

WESLEY HILL is assistant professor of New Testament at Trinity School for Ministry and the author of *Washed and Waiting* (Zondervan). A CT columnist, he blogs regularly at *Spiritual Friendship.org*. **Go to** *ChristianBibleStudies.com* for a Bible study based on this article.

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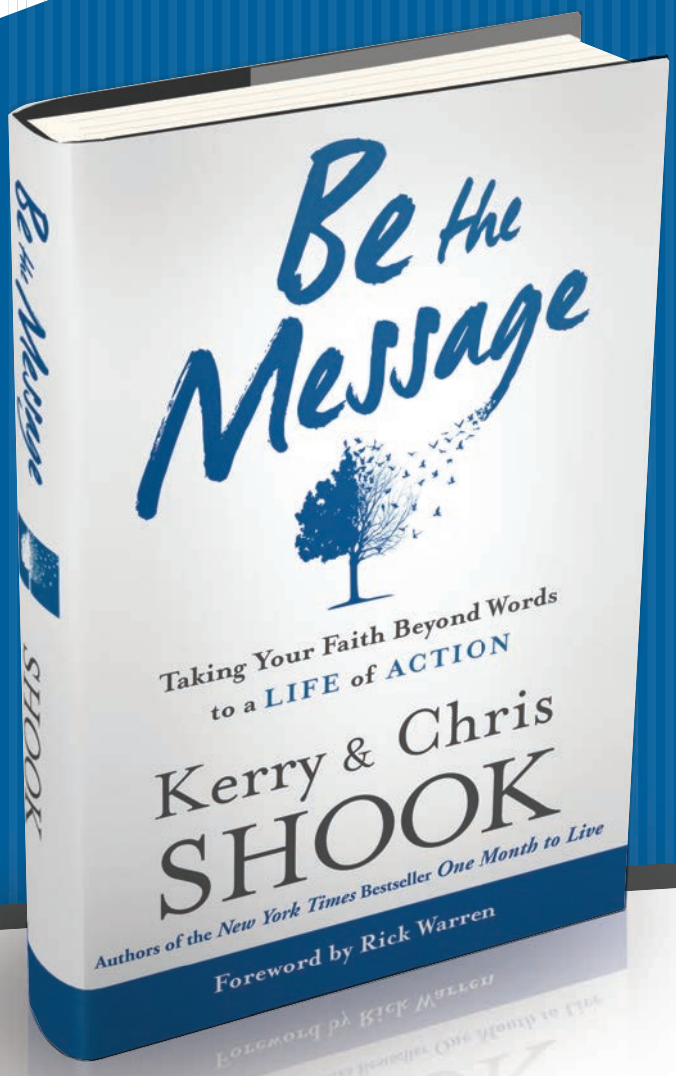

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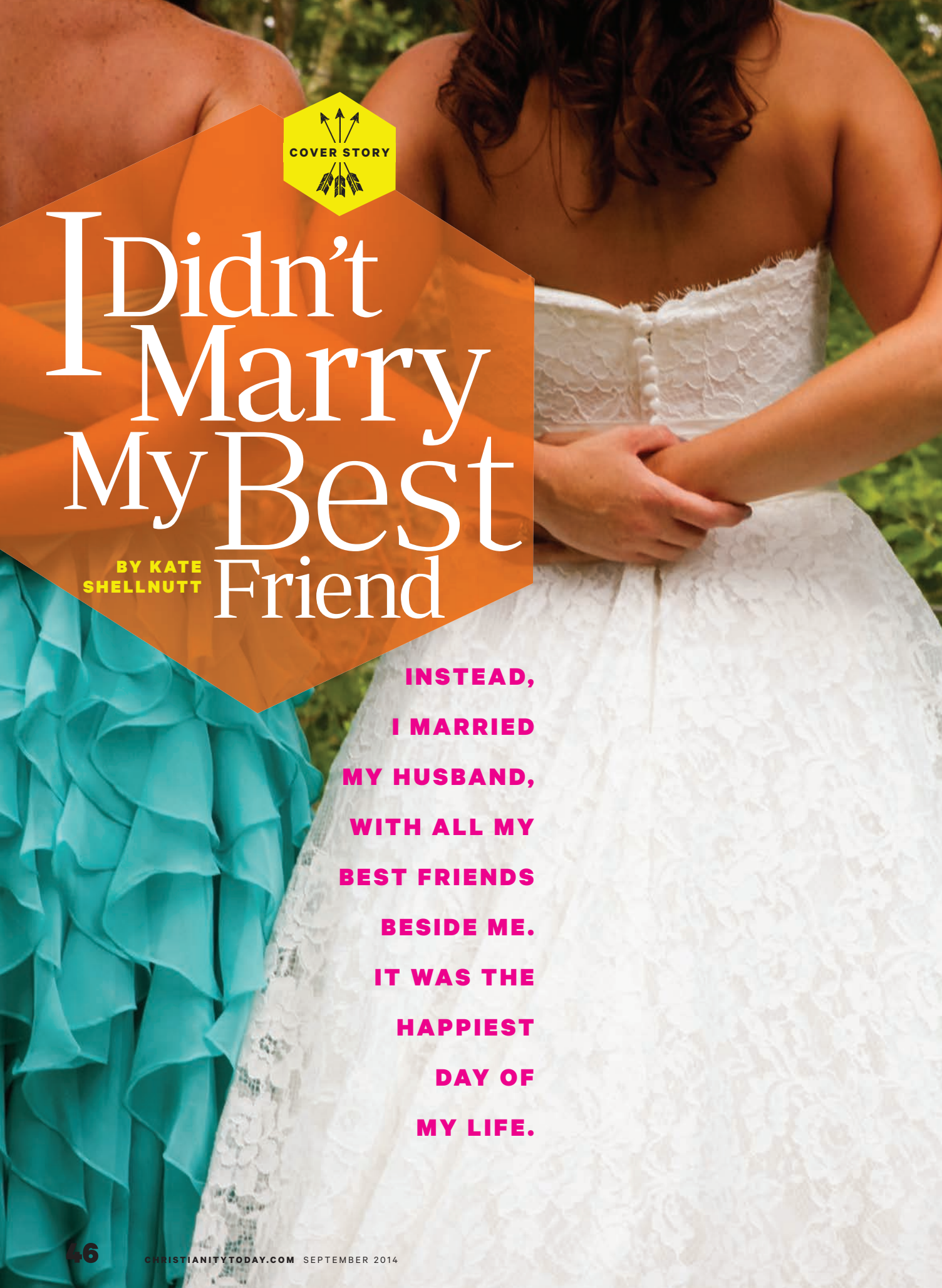

COVER STORY

I Didn't Marry My Best Friend

BY KATE SHELLNUTT

INSTEAD, I MARRIED MY HUSBAND, WITH ALL MY BEST FRIENDS BESIDE ME. IT WAS THE HAPPIEST DAY OF MY LIFE.

AT MANY WEDDINGS THESE DAYS, whether on picturesque hillsides or at funky warehouses or in swanky ballrooms, newly minted husbands and wives proudly declare to friends and family, "I married my best friend."

If you attended a wedding this summer, you likely heard the phrase, now so standard in romantic rhetoric that we forget it's not part of the traditional ceremony. "I married my best friend" appears in vows, program dedications, toasts, and other *aww*-inducing moments (not to mention the cards, frames, cufflinks, wine glasses, and other Etsy-inspired wares that attend modern weddings).

The sentiment, repeated in Facebook posts on anniversaries, is shorthand for the special relationship with someone we are comfortable with, who listens, loves, and encourages. From secular folks to Christians who firmly believe that God sent them *the one*, nearly all the married people I know are "so blessed" (or "lucky") to get to spend their lives wedded to their best friends.

Even if couples don't announce that they're marrying their best friend, many newlyweds live out this philosophy, dropping out of the friend-making game once they have a ring on their finger. Sociologists find that these days, we typically form our most meaningful friendships prior to age 28. Not coincidentally, that's also the average age we get married.

Marrying your best friend is enough of a cultural expectation that if I admit I didn't, people might pity me. But here's the secret: I'm actually the lucky one. I have a husband who isn't my best friend. And I have a best friend whom I'm not married to. They play different roles in my life, and I need them both.

My marriage remains my priority, the place where God has done the most to reveal the gospel to me. But without my friends, my relationship with my husband—and with God—would suffer.

ONE PERSON CAN'T MEET ALL YOUR NEEDS

For Christians, marriage is a relationship set apart, wherein we assume the cares and concerns of our spouse (1 Cor. 7:32–35; Eph. 5:22–33) in a way that supersedes any other friendship. Of course married people find their most significant relationship in their husband or wife—but that doesn't equate to being BFFs.

I worry that the saying "I married my best friend" conflates the two types of relationships, distorting our views of both. Researchers have already noticed the trend: People increasingly expect their husbands or wives to meet all their social and emotional needs. The phrase implies that, since married people have each other, they don't have best friends anymore and don't need them. And it exaggerates the risks young couples already face: setting up unhealthy expectations, looking to each other as the sole source of fulfillment. It also relegates best friends to the realm of singleness.

COVER STORY

Making friends in your late 20s and beyond is a whole different game. Not only are there fewer opportunities to meet people, there are also fewer people to meet, since married folks tend to pull themselves off the friendship market. Plenty of young couples dedicate more time to catching up on their Netflix queue than seeing their neighbors, coworkers, and old buddies. My husband and I have been guilty, and so have plenty of our friends. They update Facebook about spending yet another weekend in, joking about becoming "a boring old married couple."

And yet friends can actually support—not detract from—our marriages. Psychology journalist Carlin Flora writes in her book *Friendfluence*:

> Putting your best self forward for new friends allows you to shine and to see your partner through new eyes as she shines, too. Maintaining older mutual friendships also strengthens the bond between long-term partners: Having people around who think of the two of you as a unit, who admire your relationship, and who expect you to stay together can sustain you through times of doubt or distance.

When I got married, I knew I didn't want us to become one of those couples who stopped making friends or fell out of touch. Maybe it's because I knew I couldn't rely on my husband, who is in the Army, to always be there to meet my needs. Or maybe it's because I have really incredible friends, whom I'd much rather see *Twilight* with or ask fashion advice from than my spouse.

Don't get me wrong: My marriage remains my priority, the place where God has done the most to reveal the gospel to me. But without my friends, my relationship with my husband—and with God—would suffer. I gain much from being around others and receiving their perspectives and their prayers. Time spent with friends also keeps me from idolizing my husband as "my everything," a habit many married people struggle to resist.

MAKING FRIENDSHIP A PRIORITY

I want to intentionally be open to the multiple relationships God will use to work in my life and the many opportunities I may have in others'. But those kinds of relationships don't happen by accident. Here's where friendship is like marriage: It takes work.

On her sitcom *The Mindy Project*, Mindy Kaling declares, "A best friend isn't a person. It's a tier." I'm in her camp. I have a best friend from growing up, a best friend from college, and others from my early 20s. It'd be easy for these relationships to fizzle out, so I make it a priority to visit, even when it requires sacrifice, and to regularly text, call, and write in between.

We moved around a lot when I was growing up. Always the new girl in school, I think back to a note my mom placed in my lunchbox: "To make a friend, you have to be a friend." Decades later, I've found it still takes initiative and effort to sustain friendships. If we look to Jesus as an example, he selected friends to invest in. He had a best friend (John) and a best friend tier (the disciples). He says to them in John 15:12–15 (ESV):

> This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

Verse after Bible verse speaks of the "sweetness" (Prov. 27:9, ESV) and value of faithful friends. God wouldn't have us give up these relationships for marriage, but continue to sharpen (Prov. 27:17) and grow one another in this special context.

We regularly talk about upholding and enhancing marriage and family life for their gospel witness, as we should. I'd like us to start doing the same with friendship. We need friends not only for our health, careers, and happiness, but more importantly, for the way they witness to our siblinghood in Christ. And from the meaningful ties of friendship often come opportunities to introduce others to Jesus, the one who calls us his friends in the first place (John 15:15).

I didn't marry my best friend. Instead, I married my husband, with all my best friends beside me to celebrate. It was the happiest day of my life. I got—and still get—to have both. **CT**

KATE SHELLNUTT is associate editor of Her.meneutics, CT's women's site.

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Feast of Love

At the Communion table, we grasp the grace of God—and our need for each other.

I ATTENDED CHURCH twice a week growing up. I had no choice. It's not that I disliked church. But like many children, I struggled to understand much of what went on. Easily growing bored, I found ways to entertain myself. I doodled on the bulletin and occasionally timed the pastor's sermon. I counted the overhead lights, wall panels, and segments in the stained glass windows. While I occupied myself with trivial activities, two details caught my attention: the baptismal pool situated above the choir loft behind the pulpit, and the white table at the center-front of the sanctuary, etched with the words, DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. Something about the white table got me thinking: Why do we eat bread and wine at the table every few months? And who can eat it?

My church cele brated the Lord's Supper (also known as Communion and the Eucharist) four times a year. I remember asking why we celebrated it so infrequently. The answer I got never satisfied, and it still doesn't: "If we do this very often, it will lose its meaning." Precociously I thought, *It doesn't seem to mean much to us anyway, so why worry about it losing any more meaning?* As I grew older, I discovered some churches took the meal weekly. I was then even more dissatisfied with the answer I had received.

Whether you've been a Christian since childhood or accepted Christ just recently, you likely have a story about the Lord's Supper. Your story might include questions or frustrations, maybe even doubts. Our stories explain a great deal, not only about us as Christians but also about how important we think Communion is to our faith and practice.

By John H. Armstrong • **Illustration by Michael Mullen**

hristians throughout history have traced their practice of the Lord's Supper back to a story, one that took place on the eve of Jesus' execution. That evening, Jesus gathered his disciples to share the Passover meal. Passover commemorated Israel's liberation from Egypt, and the primary aim of the meal was to transmit the Exodus story to future generations.

No doubt the disciples around the table had the Israelites' freedom from slavery in mind. But they didn't grasp that Jesus was about to undergo a new exodus—one that would liberate all humanity from sin and death and inaugurate his reign as Lord and Savior. Jesus told them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:15–16).

The institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Jesus gave the disciples bread, saying, "This is my body" (Matt. 26:26). Then he gave them a cup, saying, "This is my blood of the covenant" (Matt. 26:28). Luke tells us Jesus instructed his disciples to follow the pattern he gave them: "Do this in remembrance of me" (22:19). Just as Passover was intended to commemorate God's deliverance over and over again, so was the Lord's Supper. Thus, the earliest Christians ate the meal regularly, to remember and celebrate their redemption in Christ (1 Cor. 11:24–26). Through his death and resurrection, Jesus has redeemed us and prepared us for eternity with him. But we so easily lose sight of this in our day-to-day lives. The meal reminds us that Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again.

With a few exceptions—Quakers and members of the Salvation Army, for example—Christians of all denominations and backgrounds have affirmed the importance of regularly sharing the meal. And virtually all agree on this: Christ instituted the meal as a memorial of his sacrificial death and resurrection; the New Testament commands us to celebrate it until Jesus returns; and we should do this together, in the unifying power of the Holy Spirit. Further, most Christians believe the meal should be given only to those who have been baptized.

While the meal is rooted in a singular event, it goes by several names. The simplest designation is "the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. 11:20). It is also called the "the Lord's table" (1 Cor. 10:21) and "the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42). By the second century, Christians began calling it *Eucharist*, a word expressing the most characteristic element of the meal: giving thanks (from the Greek *eucharisteo*; Matt. 26:27; 1 Cor. 11:24). It's a meal of thanksgiving for what God has done for us in Christ.

One of the most commonly used terms is *Communion* (1 Cor. 10:16, KJV), from the Greek word *koinonia*, which means "a participation together." Thus, many Christians believe that when we receive this meal, we actually participate in the presence of Christ through the witness and power of the Holy Spirit. And virtually all Christians affirm that the meal is to be taken in communion with others—that it's a core sign of our unity in Christ.

So important was this meal in the early church that Luke listed it as one of the four marks of a Spirit-filled community (Acts 2:42). And a prayer in the *Didache*, a second-century teaching manual, asserts that unity is a chief goal of the meal: "As this broken bread was scattered over the hills and then, when gathered, became one mass, so may your church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom." From the earliest days of the church, Christians have affirmed that the meal represents our union both with Christ and with each other. Not only that, many Christians have testified to having experienced profound unity with Christ and his people when they eat it.

A Meal That Divides

You don't have to be in the church for long to realize that instead of uniting around the Lord's Supper, many Christians have divided over it. One somewhat trivial example: Bible scholars agree that the New Testament alludes to it in places besides the references I mention above. But they disagree on where those allusions are and how to rightly understand them. (John 6:22–59 is one debated text.) More consequential debates focus on what the meal means, how often it should be taken, and who should partake in it.

It's important to note that the words etched on Communion tables like the one in my childhood church say, DO THIS, not DEBATE THIS. When we move beyond Christ's command and debate various theological nuances about the Supper, we move toward disunity.

For the first 1,500 years of church history, believers held a fairly common understanding of the Lord's Supper. In the West, the Catholic Church believed the Lord's Supper was a sacrament that conveyed grace to all who received it worthily. The Supper made Christ's sacrifice on the cross truly present (though without being bloody). Through it, the forgiveness of sins could be obtained. Upon consecration, the bread and the wine change into the actual body and blood of Christ. This change is known as *transubstantiation*, a view officially adopted by the Western church in 1059, though the term wasn't used until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

From the earliest days of the church, Christians have affirmed that the Lord's Supper represents our union both with Christ and with each other.

The Eastern Church didn't go as far as the Western to explain what happens in the Eucharist. Orthodox believers use the term *mystery* for the Lord's Supper—the bread and wine mysteriously become the body and blood of Christ. They don't try to explain how this change occurs. Neither do they teach the doctrine of transubstantiation, though they affirm the sacrificial nature of the Supper and Christ's real presence in it.

The Reformation dramatically changed things in the West. The Reformers looked upon transubstantiation, and the doctrines that had grown up around it, with suspicion, thus rejecting it. At least three views of the Lord's Supper arose from various Protestant traditions.

Real Physical Presence. This view, following the teachings of Martin Luther, affirms that the bread and wine are the flesh and blood of Jesus yet remain bread and wine. Luther took Jesus' words "this

is my body . . . this is my blood" at face value. So his view describes Christ's body and blood as being "in, with, and under" the bread and wine, though his body does not become the bread and wine. Luther said, "These prepositions were intended to affirm that the earthly elements were really Christ's body and blood and not to explain how earthly and divine elements were spatially related." Luther did not want to separate Christ's humanity and divinity, so he didn't want to imply that Christ was only spiritually present in the meal. For Luther, the elements are truly, substantially, and mysteriously Christ's body and blood—that is, Christ is physically present in the meal.

Memorialism. This view, following the teachings of Ulrich Zwingli, denies any form of Christ's physical or spiritual presence in the bread and wine. Zwingli believed Christ was physically present only in heaven, and that the bread and wine are signs that direct us to that heavenly presence. Zwingli believed these signs enable us to rise above this world of sense perception to spiritual reality. He connected Jesus' words in John 6:63 (NRSV) to his understanding of the Supper: "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."

Zwingli believed the idea of Christ's physical presence was contrary to sense experience. So he took the word *is* in "this is my body" to be figurative. He believed the Lord's Supper is only a *memorial* of Christ's suffering, a visible reminder of his death and resurrection. Christ is spiritually present in the gathering of believers, not in the elements themselves.

Real Spiritual Presence. This view, following the teachings of John Calvin, is a middle way between Luther and Zwingli. It affirms Christ's spiritual presence in the meal. Calvin rejected Zwingli's memorialism and Luther's "monstrous notion of ubiquity"—that Christ could be physically present everywhere, all the time. Calvin believed we actually receive Christ's body and blood in the meal, but in a spiritual manner. While Christ's physical body is in heaven, the Holy Spirit communicates the power of his body to us so that we really receive Christ in the Supper—so long as we consume the meal in faith.

The difference between Calvin and Luther centers on where Christ's physical body is. Luther argued Christ's physical body has to have the same omnipresence (in some sense) as his divine nature. Calvin believed that Christ's physical body was located only in heaven, though his divine presence is everywhere. For Calvin, the Spirit makes Christ truly and really present spiritually.

United at the Table

While we debate the finer doctrinal points of the Lord's Supper, we often forget and even violate one of the most important aspects of the meal: church unity.

In his 2013 book *Subversive Meals*, biblical scholar R. Alan Streett argues that in the first century, the Lord's Supper promoted "an off-stage political act of nonviolent resistance," one that "challenged Rome's 'great tradition' and offered a Christian social vision in its place." Celebrating the meal was a way for believers to resist overbearing human lords and to express their loyalty to Christ alone. For Streett, the meal gives us a new identity that's wrapped up with God's divine rescue project of the cosmos. At the Lord's table, we come together as equals, as persons who are given the gift of God's Spirit—unconditionally and impartially.

The social implications of the meal are illustrated radically in a story about the Duke of Wellington. After his defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo, the British general attended a small church where he came forward and knelt down to receive Communion. An old man in tattered clothes knelt beside him. A deacon approached the old man, placed his hand on the man's shoulder, and whispered for him to keep his distance from the duke. Overhearing this, the duke immediately clasped the old man's hand and told him, "Don't move—we're all equal here."

The Lord's Supper is an invitation: to identify with Christ's death and resurrection in the power of the Spirit. And we come to the table together, to have communion with Christ and with one another. The late Baptist theologian Stanley J. Grenz reinforced this in his book *Theology for the Community of God*. Grenz underscored three orientations of the Lord's Supper that most Christians can agree on. Together, they can help us to more greatly honor the meal and to unite despite our different ways of observing and understanding it.

First, the Lord's Supper directs our attention to Jesus' crucifixion and the future fulfillment of his kingdom. Second, it expresses the unity of one body and constitutes the church as an eschatological community in which Christ is present. This is a communal meal, not a private act. Third, it reflects our personal identity in Christ, through participation in the church.

It seems younger Christians are discovering these truths in a profound way. I've had the joy of speaking in churches, colleges, and seminaries for more than 20 years, and I've witnessed among younger Christians a growing interest in the Lord's Supper. My interdenominational experiences have led me to believe they are looking for intimate expressions of both Christian community and divine mystery. It helps them connect with each other and with the church historic. For those reasons, many of them desire to receive the meal more often. And some of them—as I did when I was younger—have started attending congregations that take Communion every week.

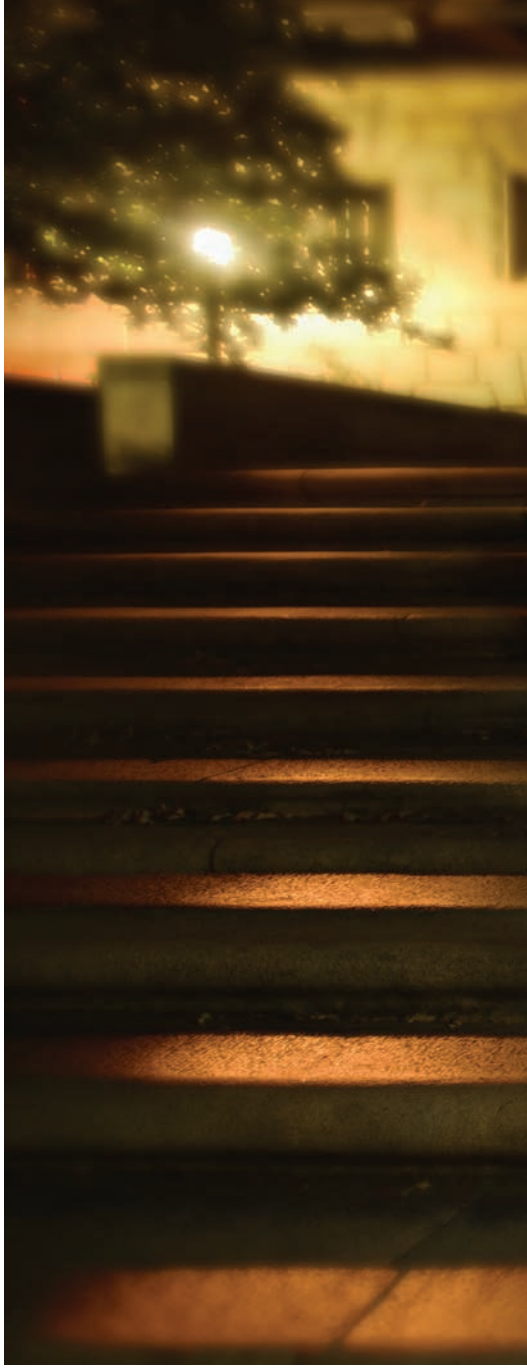
No doubt Christians will continue to hash out finer doctrinal points regarding the Lord's Supper. But let us unite around what we all can agree on. The Lord's Supper tangibly reminds us of what Christ has done for us: He has reconciled us to God and to one another. And that's worth feasting over. **CT**

JOHN H. ARMSTRONG is president of ACT3 Network in the Chicago suburbs and editor of *Understanding Four Views on the Lord's Supper* (Zondervan).

The Wrong Kind of Christian

I THOUGHT A WINSOME FAITH WOULD WIN CHRISTIANS A PLACE AT VANDERBILT'S TABLE. I WAS WRONG.

By Tish Harrison Warren



KEVIN VANDIVIER / GENESIS

I THOUGHT I WAS an acceptable kind of evangelical. I'm not a fundamentalist. My friends and I enjoy art, alcohol, and cultural engagement. We avoid spiritual clichés and buzzwords. We value authenticity, study, racial reconciliation, and social and environmental justice.

Being a Christian made me somewhat weird in my urban, progressive context, but despite some clear differences, I held a lot in common with unbelieving friends. We could disagree about truth, spirituality, and morality, and remain on the best of terms. The failures of the church often made me more uncomfortable than those in the broader culture.

Then, two years ago, the student organization I worked for at Vanderbilt University got kicked off campus for being the wrong kind of Christians.

In May 2011, Vanderbilt's director of religious life told me that the group I'd helped lead for two years, Graduate Christian Fellowship—a chapter of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship—was on probation. We had to drop the requirement that student leaders affirm our doctrinal and purpose statement, or we would lose our status as a registered student organization.

I met with him to understand the

change. During the previous school year, a Christian fraternity had expelled several students for violating their behavior policy. One student said he was ousted because he is gay. Vanderbilt responded by forbidding any belief standards for those wanting to join or lead any campus group.

In writing, the new policy refers only to constitutionally protected classes (race, religion, sexual identity, and so on), but Vanderbilt publicly adopted an "all comers policy," which meant that no student could be excluded from a leadership post on ideological grounds. College Republicans must allow Democrats to seek office; the environmental group had to welcome climate-change skeptics; and a leader of a religious group could not be dismissed if she renounced faith midyear. (The administration granted an exception to sororities and fraternities.)

Like most campus groups, InterVarsity welcomes anyone as a member. But it asks key student leaders—the executive council and small group leaders—to affirm its doctrinal statement, which outlines broad Christian orthodoxy and does not mention sexual conduct specifically. But the university saw belief statements themselves as suspect. Any belief—particularly those about the authority of Scripture or the church—could potentially constrain sexual activity or identity. So what began as a concern about sexuality and pluralism quickly became a conversation about whether robustly religious communities would be allowed on campus.

In effect, the new policy privileged certain belief groups and forbade all others. Religious organizations were welcome as long as they were malleable: as long as their leaders didn't need to profess anything in particular; as long as they could be governed by sheer democracy

ISTOCK

and adjust to popular mores or trends; as long as they didn't prioritize theological stability. Creedal statements were allowed, but as an accessory, a historic document, or a suggested guideline. They could not have binding authority to shape or govern the teaching and practices of a campus religious community.

At first I thought this was all a misunderstanding that could be sorted out between reasonable parties. If I could explain to the administration that doctrinal statements are an important part of religious expression—an ancient, enduring practice that would be a given for respected thinkers like Thomas Aquinas—then surely they'd see that creedal communities are intellectually valid and permissible. If we could show that we weren't homophobic culture warriors but friendly, thoughtful evangelicals committed to a diverse, flourishing campus, then the administration and religious groups could find common ground.

When I met with the assistant dean of students, she welcomed me warmly and seemed surprised that my group would be affected by the new policy. I told her I was a woman in the ordination process, that my husband was a PhD candidate in Vanderbilt's religion department, and that we loved the university. There was an air of hope that we could work things out.

Line in the Sand

But as I met with other administrators, the tone began to change. The word *discrimination* began to be used—a lot—specifically in regard to creedal requirements. It was lobbed like a grenade to end all argument. Administrators compared Christian students to 1960s segregationists. I once mustered courage to ask them if they truly thought it was fair to equate racial prejudice with asking Bible study leaders to affirm the Resurrection. The vice chancellor replied, "Creedal discrimination is still discrimination."

Feeling battered, I talked with my InterVarsity supervisor. He responded with a wry smile, "But we're moderates!" We thought we were nuanced and reasonable. The university seemed to think of us as a threat.

For me, it was revolutionary, a reorientation of my place in the university and in culture.

I began to realize that inside the church, the territory between Augustine of Hippo and Jerry Falwell seems vast, and miles lie between Ron Sider and Pat Robertson. But in the eyes of the university (and much of the press), subscribers to broad Christian orthodoxy occupy the same square foot of cultural space.

The line between good and evil was drawn by two issues: creedal belief and sexual expression. If religious groups required set truths or limited sexual autonomy, they were bad—not just wrong but evil, narrow-minded, and too dangerous to be tolerated on campus.

It didn't matter to them if we were politically or racially diverse, if we cared

My husband and I liked being in pluralistic settings, mining for truth in Nietzsche and St. Benedict alike. But if Christian orthodoxy was anathema in a purportedly broad-minded university, where did that leave us?

about the environment or built Habitat homes. It didn't matter if our students were top in their fields and some of the kindest, most thoughtful, most compassionate leaders on campus. There was a line in the sand, and we fell on the wrong side of it.

My husband and I love the idea of the university, a place of libraries and lawns, a space set aside to grapple with the most vital questions of truth, where many different voices gather to engage in respectful conversation. Both of us had invested considerable time and money into pursuing advanced degrees. He was preparing to be a professor.

We liked being in pluralistic settings, mining for truth in Nietzsche and St. Benedict alike. But if Christian orthodoxy was anathema in this purportedly broad-minded university, where did that leave us? What did that mean for our place in the world and how we interacted with culture?

And what did that mean for all the PhD candidates in my student group who were preparing for a life of service in the secular university? Did we need to take a slightly more Amish route of cultural engagement?

And what did all this mean for the university?

Facing an Impasse

A culture of fear seemed to be growing on campus. There were power plays and spin. A group of professors penned a thoughtful critique of the new policy, but remained silent when sympathetic department heads warned that going public could be "career damaging."

As a private university, Vanderbilt had the right to adopt particular beliefs and exclude certain religious groups. What bothered me was that they didn't own up to what they were doing. I wanted them to be truthful, to say in their brochure, "If you are a creedal religious person, don't expect to find a campus group here." I wanted intellectual honesty and transparency about their presuppositions.

Instead, top officials seemed blind to their assumptions, insisting all religious groups were welcome while gutting our ability to preserve defining beliefs and practices.

Those of us opposed to the new policy met with everyone we could to plead our case and seek compromise. We published essays and held silent protests with signs calling for pluralism and religious liberty. Hundreds of students and some faculty respectfully objected to the new policy. Catholic and Protestant students, low-church and high-church, met together daily in front of the administration building to pray.

As a writer and pastor, I value words, love careful argument, and believe good ideas prevail. I believed that if we cast a vision of principled pluralism, showed how value-laden presuppositions are inherent in any worldview, and reiterated our commitment to Vanderbilt and avoided the culture wars, the administration would relent.

But as spring semester ended, 14 campus religious communities—comprising about 1,400 Catholic, evangelical, and Mormon students—lost their organizational status.

A year later, my family and I moved to a different state to plant a new InterVarsity chapter. It was painful to leave beloved faculty, students, and ministry colleagues with the campus conflict unresolved. There was no happy ending, no triumphant reconciling moment. After that long and disorienting year, I left not in confident, defiant protest, but in sadness. What I thought was a misunderstanding turned out to be an impasse.

We Are Here

What's happening at Vanderbilt is happening at other universities. Increasingly, orthodox beliefs and practices are forbidden as those in power forfeit a robust understanding of religious pluralism.

Our task moving forward is to resist bitterness, cynicism, or retaliation, demonizing the university or the culture. As Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said, the line between good and evil runs through every human heart, a reality that makes everything more complex. We have to forgive and to look squarely at places in our own heart that require repentance. In community, we must develop the craft of being both bold and irenic, truthful and humble.

And while we grieve rejection, we should not be shocked or ashamed by it. That probationary year unearthed a hidden assumption that I could be nuanced or articulate or culturally engaged or compassionate enough to make the gospel more acceptable to my neighbors. But that belief is prideful. From its earliest days, the gospel has been both a comfort and an offense.

N. T. Wright points out in *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* that the unlikely message of a crucified Jew raised from the dead "was bound to cause hoots of derision, and, if Acts is to be believed, sometimes did." Throughout history and even now, Christians in many parts of the world face not only rejection but violent brutality. What they face is incomparably

We need not be afraid; the gospel is as unstoppable as it is unacceptable.

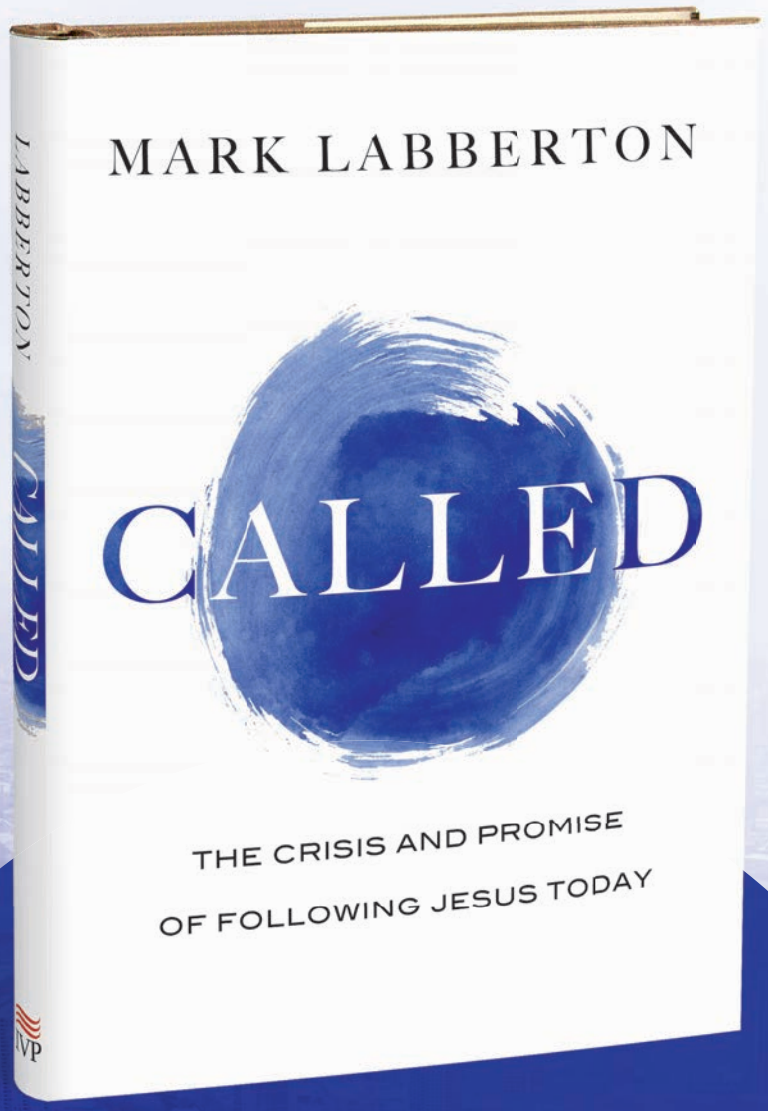
worse than anything we experience on U.S. college campuses, yet they tutor us in compassion, courage, and subversive faithfulness.

We need not be afraid; the gospel is as unstoppable as it is unacceptable. Paul persisted, proclaiming that Jesus was, in fact, the world's true Lord. And, as Wright notes, "people (to their great surprise, no doubt) found this announcement making itself at home in their minds and hearts, generating the belief that it was true, and transforming their lives with a strange new presence and power."

After we lost our registered status, our organization was excluded from new student activity fairs. So our student leaders decided to make T-shirts to let others know about our group. Because we were no longer allowed to use Vanderbilt's name, we struggled to convey that we were a community of Vanderbilt students who met near campus. So the students decided to write a simple phrase on the shirts: WE ARE HERE.

And they are. They're still there in labs and classrooms, researching languages and robotics, reflecting God's creativity through the arts and seeking cures for cancer. They are still loving their neighbors, praying, struggling, and rejoicing. You can find them proclaiming the gospel in word and deed, in daily ordinariness. And though it is more difficult than it was a few years ago, ministry continues on campus, often on the margins and just outside the gates. God is still beautifully at work. And his mercy is relentless. **CT**

TISH HARRISON WARREN is a priest in the Anglican Church in North America and works with InterVarsity at the University of Texas–Austin. For more, see tishharrisonwarren.com.



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CAPITALISM AND THE COMMON GOOD

How to gear the free market toward human flourishing.

BY KEVIN BROWN

TWO YOUNG GIRLS sit on the front porch of an idyllic suburban home, staring at the wonder that is the modern smartphone. After one girl lists all the things the smartphone can do—"I can watch movies on it, read a book, talk with my friends on the other side of the country, face to face!"—the phone comes alive.

In a cheery British accent, the smartphone names its seemingly unlimited features, prompting the other girl to say, "I want one; make me one!" The smartphone then explains that "no *one* knows how to build even one of these things"—that millions of inventors, designers, miners, oil drillers, and factory owners around the world are needed to create just one. The smartphone enthuses that the competitive forces between smartphone providers help "inspire my company to make me more fabulous!"

Market MATTERS

Market MATTERS

While the girls listen in awe, the smartphone concludes that its existence seems "magical." And when it comes to grasping the reach and forces of the market system, *magical* seems appropriate. Markets have enabled progress and prosperity far beyond what anyone even a century ago could have imagined. Productivity per person, an enhanced standard of living, and the incentive for innovation all trace back to the forces of the market system (the producers, buyers, sellers, and others who participate in the creation, distribution, and use of a product or service). A well-functioning market offers lower prices and higher quality products. Indeed, as the smartphone reminds us, when we consider the various goods that emerge out of the "flowering of free cooperation, competition, and creation," we have reason to marvel.

This is the lesson of *I, Smartphone*, a short film created in 2012 by the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics (IFWE). The film pays homage to economist Leonard Read's 1958 essay "I, Pencil," in which a pencil describes all the economic forces, materials, and human labor that combine in the production process (what economists call "spontaneous order") to create him.

Read's essay creatively illustrated Adam Smith's invisible hand concept, and philosophers and political conservatives have canonized it as an apologetic for the free market. IFWE created *I, Smartphone* for similar reasons, but with an eye toward theology and vocation. As the Virginia-based think tank explains:

> . . . God has given us the market process as the most powerful tool we have in a fallen world to serve each other by using our gifts.
>
> Yes, that's right.
>
> Smartphones allow thousands of dispersed people from across the globe to bring their gifts to serve people they don't even know, and most likely never will know.
>
> At IFWE, we see Jesus in that: helping people without knowing who they are, without discrimination, but within the context of using your gifts as God has called you.

Is it really that simple?

The Coltan Conundrum

One thing that the chatty smartphone fails to mention are *market externalities*—a euphemism for unintended consequences. Here's one: Nearly all smartphones (and many other electronics) contain a chemical element called *tantalum*, also known as *coltan*. The majority of coltan comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo, an utterly war-torn, poverty-stricken country, and one of the worst places in the world to be a woman. The DRC is also one of the most mineral-rich countries, and its resources have been aggressively, even savagely, plundered by other countries for centuries.

All this pillaging has helped create a corrupt DRC government, warring factions, and a general sense of hopelessness. The United Nations, in addition to other international groups, has documented the illegal smuggling of coltan from the Congo, a process often accompanied by rape and murder. These sobering realities clearly counter IFWE's sentiment that "we see Jesus" in the process of creating smartphones, and that we are "helping people without knowing who they are, without discrimination."

Some DRC citizens, such as coltan traders and miners, benefit from market forces. Others are tragically harmed in the process. This hardly seems like a faith-based approach to wielding the market system to serve others. That said, measures can and have been taken to distinguish between legitimate mineral mining and illegitimately obtained minerals ("conflict minerals"). One such example is the recent Dodd-Frank Act, which requires technology companies to report where their materials come from.

But reactive legislation is hardly a praiseworthy outcome of markets; neither is the "magical" processor depicted in *I, Smartphone* a pure gift from God. At the very least, market externalities like rape and murder give us Christians reason to pause.

To be clear: I am an advocate for the market system. Better than any other economic system, it fulfills the goals of economics: to create, sustain, and distribute goods and services that benefit entire populations. However, what may be *best* is not the same as what is *perfect*. Those who want to sanctify the market often dismiss very real labor-ethics concerns (such as conflict minerals like coltan). We can easily note other repugnant effects of the global supply chain: child labor, fatal fires in clothing factories that lack appropriate exits, low wages, and large corporate demand for products unaccompanied by an eye toward workers' rights. The market is regularly tempted to think of humans less as persons and more as "factors of production."

What, then, is a Christian to make of this? Responses have been polarized. Some

A scene from *I, Smartphone*

VIDEO CREATED BY COLDWATER MEDIA

Christian ethicists criticize the hyper-consumerism, power relationships, and inequality produced by markets. Some have called for a totally new economy, advocating distribution systems that close the gap between rich and poor. Some see this as a function of the church ("radical orthodoxy"). Alternatively, others demand greater state intervention ("liberation theology"). Where the former tradition, in the words of theology professor Stephen Long, proposes that the "task of the church is to produce countless alternatives" to the reigning economic order, the latter patently rejects capitalism as an economic system because of the inequality and material poverty it allegedly produces.

Other Christians believe that the market system is the biblical ideal. The free enterprise mechanism, they argue, champions personal freedom, rewards virtuous behavior such as honesty and prudence, and best creates wealth as a tool to fight poverty. American Enterprise Institute president (and Christian) Arthur Brooks recently claimed that markets are not only a more efficient means of wealth creation and distribution (in contrast to government intervention)—they are a moral imperative. In a 2012 article, he writes: "Everyday Americans [need] to stand up for free enterprise—not just because it makes us better off, but because it makes us better."

Is there a way to close this gap and find common ground? I believe there is. UK political philosopher Jonathan Wolff says that for an economic system to survive, it need not be optimal, just superior, to other systems. It doesn't have to be perfect. It just has to be the best available option in an imperfect world. As an economist and a Christian, this strikes me as a helpful vantage point in moving the market debate forward.

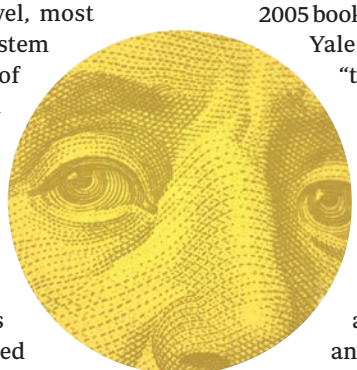
Consequences Matter

To be sure, I do not think such a weighty and long-standing debate can be so easily settled. Still, I submit that this "superior system" argument offers several helpful perspectives for the Christian concerned about justice and the least of these.

First and foremost, we should begin by stripping markets of their spiritual labels. This does not mean we can't morally evaluate the free-enterprise system. But describing the market system as either "evil" or "divine" is no more helpful than using such labels to evaluate an entrance exam or a train schedule.

If markets as such are not moral or immoral, good or bad, what is there left to say? This is where Christians can give critical and biblically minded scrutiny to market externalities—to outcomes and consequences. For example, those who dismiss markets altogether must answer: What is the alternative? Two responses are generally given, one practical and one theological.

At the practical level, most critics of the market system advocate some form of a planned economy, in which decisions regarding the production and distribution of goods and services are made by a central authority, usually the government. But this only introduces new problems. In planned economies, we do not see the same level of innovation or effectiveness. And it's hard to imagine a planning authority successfully coordinating all of the productive resources necessary to create a smartphone, a nearly impossible task.



Planned economies also hinder the supply and demand forces that ultimately provide consumers with the best prices. The market price is one of the most important features of the modern free-market system, and its absence would lead to underproduction, a shortage of goods and services, a surplus of demand, and, in general, chaos. The economy of the former Soviet Union serves as a prime example, where overproduction of some materials, underproduction of others, slow growth, lack of innovation, limited trade, and social unrest became the norm.

We must also note that a paternalistic environment usually discourages human creativity, initiative, and industry. And these are all ways in which we bear the image of God. There is a spiritual cost to a planned economy.

The theological level offers other proposals. One example is Kathryn Tanner's 2005 book, *Economy of Grace*. The Yale theologian calls for a "theological economy," in which grace is the operative principle and unconditioned giving is the result. As admirable and kingdom-like as this perspective is, it's hard to imagine its adoption in policy circles anywhere in the world.

Still, even if the alternatives to a market economy are found wanting, we must not (as some market champions are tempted to do) downplay or ignore what is sometimes called "collateral damage." Some argue that if the market is inherently good, we don't have to think too deeply about some of its horrific consequences, because the market itself will take care of all that. Sometimes it does—and sometimes it doesn't. U.S. child labor laws were needed precisely because the market was not making appropriate corrections back in the day.

Better than any other economic system, the market system creates, sustains, and distributes goods and services that benefit entire populations. But what may be *best* is not *perfect*.

We can actively advocate for the environment that best makes for free markets and allows them to flourish so that humans can flourish.

In addition, the "moral market" perspective risks relegating our deepest values to questions of "efficiency" and "growth." Each semester I share an article with my students about how a young woman in New Zealand sold her virginity online in order to raise money for college. The winning bid was $45,000. Most students grimace or shake their heads as I detail this market exchange. But they often conclude that this was indeed a legitimate market: her need was met (money for college), and the *value* of virginity is, evidently, $45,000 in New Zealand. A "market" was present in the transaction: Two informed and consenting agents freely entered into a mutually beneficial exchange. And yet the externality is human degradation.

Or take the now infamous 1991 memo written by then–World Bank chief economist Larry Summers. In the memo, he suggested that an open market in toxic waste between developed and third-world countries was economically efficient and mutually beneficial for both groups. (In exchange for dumping their toxic waste, developed countries would pay cash to the less developed countries who would inherit it.) The memo referred to the economic logic of dumping toxic waste in low-wage countries as "impeccable." Still, the moral logic is reprehensible.

More Than a Cleanup Crew

So, attending to the externalities provides a natural balance by which to appreciate the benefits of markets without deifying them. Of course, this risks Christians being merely reactive, serving as a cleanup crew for market hiccups, rather than challenging the very forces that created such infractions in the first place.

But nothing could be farther from the truth. Christians can, and should, actively advocate for the environment that best makes for free markets and allows them to flourish so that humans can flourish. In her book *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale*, Stanford ethicist Debra Satz says that in Adam Smith's classical economic vision, markets flourish when they are grounded in property rights, with appropriate government regulation and social conventions. In other words, well-functioning markets do not so much produce these attributes; they need to be grounded in them. Thus Christians can be actively involved in shaping the regulatory environment and the moral and ethical social conventions that allow for healthier markets.

Market MATTERS

One small but significant example: My wife contacts the companies from which she buys clothing and various household items. She does this to champion just and ethical labor conditions, wages, and workers' rights. Additionally, she connects with the lawmakers active in corporate legislation. She participates in the market, but her advocacy, motivated by her Christian faith, aims to shape the regulatory environments of markets.

Small as this example may seem, a collective effort would have a significant effect. (I constantly remind my students that *they* are the economy.) If we understood ourselves as active members of the economic environment, markets would flourish in a healthier manner.

Economics is in the business of maximization, that is, of what is "best." And there is good reason to advocate for a free-enterprise system. Whether it be a pencil, a smartphone, or any other innovative product or service, markets mobilize production, growth, and efficiency. They tend to allow for the most optimal distribution of scarce resources. In the grand competition of economic systems to achieve these outcomes, markets win.

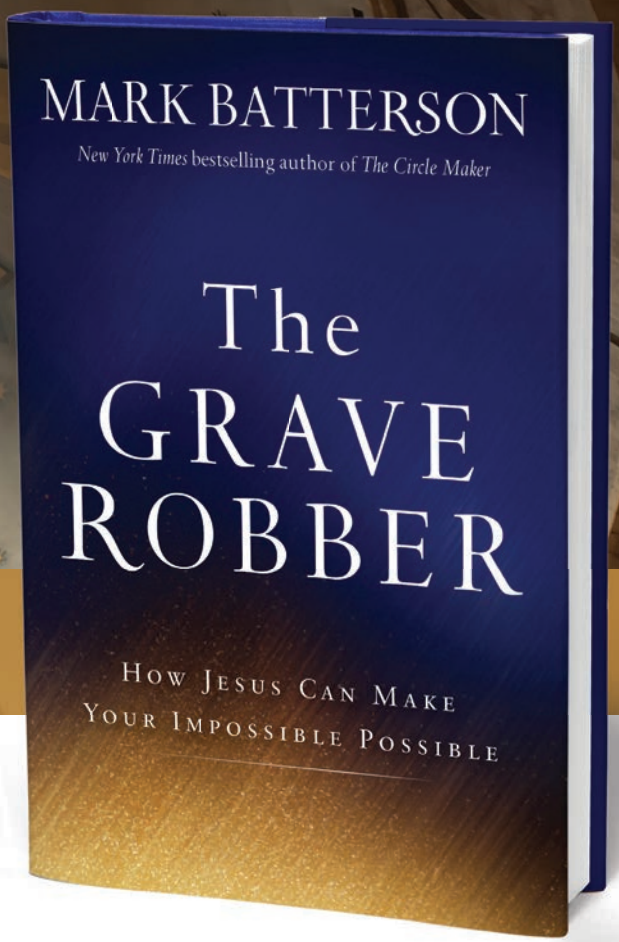
Yet we live in a world of consequences, good and bad. In an increasingly globalized age that is still, in many ways, in its infancy, this is a crucial point. The Democratic Republic of Congo is mired in war, violence, corruption, and hopelessness. At home and abroad, we still see considerable poverty, which leads to a gross power asymmetry between the rich and poor. It would be tragic, not "magical," if our consumption of goods and services only made matters worse.

As people of faith, we need not deify or demonize the market. Instead, I propose we focus on ensuring that the market's consequences create the least possible damage and the greatest common good for our neighbors near and far. The market may be one gift from God, but he's given us a greater gift in the church. Together, we can watch out for the most vulnerable members of society lest they slip through the cracks of our global marketplace. **CT**

KEVIN BROWN is an assistant professor at the Howard Dayton School of Business at Asbury University.

Do we believe that God still does miracles?

Do we expect Him to move in miraculous ways day in and day out?



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THE NEW PURITANS

Impact investors are changing the development game—and human lives.

BY ROB MOLL

THREE YEARS FROM NOW, the largest port in all Africa is set to open its docks in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. But the hands that are building the $10 billion port are not Tanzanian; they are Chinese.

China has emerged as a powerhouse in the global market, and many expect it to surpass the United States as the world's economic superpower in years to come. But the same growth that has improved the quality of life for millions of Chinese is arguably hampering it in Tanzania, Nigeria, Mozambique, and other African countries where China is buying land at astonishing rates. For example, in just two years (2011 to 2013), China's investments in Tanzania grew from $700 million to $2.1 billion. "China is very keen on establishing brand-name equity or recognition among African consumers, because the African population is going to double by the middle of the century," Howard French, author of *China's Second Continent*, recently told NPR.

Market MATTERS

Critics of "land grabbing" say the widespread practice displaces local workers, provides fewer jobs, and extracts natural resources (oil, coal, gold) that skip local communities and go straight to international corporations. "Poor farmers and cattle herders across the world are being thrown off their land," says investigative journalist Fred Pearce. "Land grabbing is having more of an impact on the lives of poor people than climate change."

One for-profit corporation founded by Christians, however, sees growth potential in poor people themselves. Part of a relatively new investment category called "impact investing," the company is tilling fertile ground in Tanzania,

Mozambique, and Ukraine not only for economic growth but also for spiritual revival.

Do Good While Doing Well

In 2012, JP Morgan and the Global Impact Investing Network found that $8 billion was committed to impact investments in 2012, with an intended $9 billion committed for 2013. Impact investing aims to "do good while doing well," creating social and environmental good while making a profit (which means it isn't charity). It also wants to build sustainable businesses, which makes it different from microfinance. Something of a darling cause among Christians, microfinance gives very small loans to small business owners. But most will not outgrow the market stall or fishery they started; they will earn back only enough money to reimburse the loaner, not to expand their business.

The story of impact investor Aslan Global Management starts in 2005, when Paul Larsen and Jes Tarp attended the same church. Larsen had worked at a major Wall Street firm until aligning with Gary Moore's Financial Seminary in Sarasota, Florida. Tarp had been teaching seminary classes in Ukraine, where he saw that communism's collapse had left Ukrainians with plenty of valuable farmland, but little know-how to develop it. Tarp began leasing land from Ukrainians, then hiring them back to farm it.

The practice was more than a business venture. Tarp was teaching Ukrainians a work ethic that all but vanished under communism. The respect he gained by treating landholders and employees fairly provided a chance to share the gospel. And there was almost no limit to the business, with so much undeveloped farmland.

Tarp shared his budding enterprise with Larsen, who began providing staff. Over time, Larsen became more involved until he was at it full-time.

Aslan drew investors quickly. As a financial adviser at Merrill Lynch, Dwight Short spent the later part of his career exploring faith-based and socially responsible funds. In 2005, he met Larsen and visited the farm in Ukraine. He saw that Aslan didn't follow the country's typical business practices such as bribing local officials. Unlike other firms, Aslan paid farmers half their earnings upfront so they wouldn't have to wait until harvest to be paid.

"It's a cool thing to say we were profitable," says Short, "but the most significant profit is to be making a difference in the lives of people." Short says his investment "worked out far above my expectation," as he has seen baptisms and churches planted in communities where Aslan invests. "Which is greater?" Short asks. "I love seeing the ministry. The financial positive is a bonus."

Today, with Tarp as president/CEO, Aslan leases more than 98,000 acres in Tanzania. In 2013, it received a lease from neighboring Mozambique's government to develop 25,000 acres to grow primarily soybeans and corn.

Larsen was Aslan's fund manager until 2012. Now he wants to bring faith-infused capitalism to other developing countries, where he hopes to address economic and spiritual poverty at once. He's working to launch similar firms and to educate Western Christians about the unusual approach to development.

"It's very important for us to not be in Africa to extract wealth," Larsen told Minnesota Public Radio. "We are in Africa to create wealth or to create value. And that's a very big distinction between what we're doing and what others do."

To keep that distinction—between extracting wealth and creating value—Larsen looks to an oft-maligned, misunderstood group from church history.

'Serve God in the Serving of Men'

It's not quite right to say that the Puritans—those Protestant Christians seeking religious freedom in the 17th-century New World—were capitalists. Historians have grown reluctant to tie Puritan beliefs directly to capitalism in the way Max Weber famously did in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Still, historians see an undeniable link between the early U.S. Christian communities and the economic system that catapulted America to its superpower status. In *The Puritan Gift: Reclaiming the American Dream Amidst Global Financial Chaos*, brothers Kenneth and William Hopper say the Puritans brought "a rare ability to create organizations that serve a useful purpose, and to manage them well."

Early Puritans' tie to capitalism is in part circumstantial. Since the Puritans opposed the state church and therefore the state itself, they were cut off from other economic opportunities. After arriving in New England, they were forced to abandon their communal system when they failed to produce enough food and other goods needed to feed themselves and repay their investors. Still, they embraced the values of virtuous commerce, believing the trader's and farmer's work to be as important as the preacher's. As Richard Steele, an English Presbyterian minister, wrote in *The Tradesman's Calling* in 1684:

> God doth call every man and woman . . . to serve him in some peculiar employment in this world, both for their own and the common good. . . . The Great Governor of the world hath appointed to every man his proper post and province.

The Puritans saw industry as a way to serve not only God but also neighbor. "The main end of our lives," wrote

COURTESY OF ANDREAS WIDMER

'The best spiritual practices and the best business practices belong together.' ANDREAS WIDMER

‘It’s very important for us to not be in Africa to extract wealth. We are in Africa to create wealth or value. And that’s a very big distinction between what we’re doing and what others do.’ PAUL LARSEN

clergyman William Perkins, “is to serve God in the serving of men in the works of our callings.” But the Puritans’ “common good” capitalism, lament the Hoppers, has given way to one that heavily depends on financial engineering.

Entrepreneur Andreas Widmer had to experience the ups and downs of “casino capitalism,” with all its high risks and volatility, before he saw the deeper value of business. In the early ’90s, he started a software company, sold it, and made a lot of money. But he promptly lost it all in his next company.

“Only through strong successes and failures did I think deeply enough” about faith and business, Widmer says. He began reading theology, seeing the connection between faith and enterprise. “Prosperity has three legs,” he says. “The free-market system requires a participatory form of government, a legal framework, and a robust public moral culture.” Recent business scandals on Wall Street, for example, show the need for personal morality. “I can’t do business with you,” he says, “if you keep lying to me.”

“The system I fell in love with is a good system,” Widmer says. “It’s just that we need more virtuous businesspeople.” Now, as director of entrepreneurship programs at the Catholic University of America, he is investing in small- and medium-sized businesses in developing countries. “The best spiritual practices and the best business practices belong together.”

As evidence of the principle, Eventide Funds, a Christian investment adviser in Boston, has been posting returns more than double the market. It’s been ranked at the top of its category by *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*. Robin John at Eventide says, “We seek out companies that are having positive impact on their customers, employees, host communities, vendors, supply chain, and broad society.” It isn’t simply about avoiding certain companies, he says, “but about partnering with companies that are serving real needs and creating blessing and provision in the world.”

Twelve years ago, Steve Beck left a career in strategy consulting to merge his business experience with philanthropy. He spent several years running Geneva Global, which provided grants to fund humanitarian projects in the global South. “By and large we saw real-life change,” he says. “But we also saw the dangers and limitations of grant making.” Beck says the uneven relationship between grant maker and recipient fostered dependency.

So Beck launched SpringHill Equity Partners, a private investor circle that funds commercial businesses in East Africa with the kind of goals sought at Geneva Global. “We invest in businesses that provide goods and services to low-income households whereby the commercial growth and success of our investments generate scalable social benefits for the poor. The poor are treated as consumers with the dignity of choice rather than beneficiaries of charity.” One investment, Sanergy, is a sanitation business in Nairobi’s slums. Other investments are in schools and fuel-efficient stoves in Kenya.

Sovereign’s Capital is another fund similar to SpringHill. Launched in 2012, it invests private funds in health care, technology, and consumer products in Southeast Asia. It provides capital to business owners guided by strong ethical principles.

The industry is in its early days, says Beck. However, “there are a growing number of entrepreneurs wanting to grow businesses with a double bottom line.” As proof, Beck recently launched an impact

COURTESY OF PAUL LARSEN

COURTESY OF ASLAN GLOBAL MANAGEMENT

Paul Larsen (in orange) leads U.S. and local pastors on a tour of Rei do Agro, Aslan’s 3,000-acre farm in Mozambique. It’s expected to employ 250 Mozambicans.

'There are a growing number of entrepreneurs wanting to grow businesses with a double bottom line.' STEVE BECK

COURTESY OF STEVE BECK

venture that is attracting institutional investors such as hedge funds.

Investments Aren't Enough

Brian Fikkert, executive director of the Chalmers Center and coauthor of *When Helping Hurts*, says that these double-bottom-line ventures can do a great deal for those in poverty. Most important, they put the customer in charge rather than the interests of aid organizations or development donors. In other words, if poor families don't buy the fuel-efficient and environmentally-friendly stove being sold by one impact investor, for example, the business fails. "Markets are good at processing information from customers," says Fikkert, also an economist.

However, business meets a need only when it can make a profit. Not all families in poverty can pay for services they need. Some goods may always need to be subsidized, Fikkert says, which is why nonprofits are needed too.

Michael Miller is research fellow and director of Acton Media at the Acton Institute, a religion and liberty think tank. He warns that, just as a single charity project won't "cure" poverty, neither will an impact investment.

"When people create prosperity though institutions, private property, rule of law, and other foundational conventions, then prosperity takes off," he says. But that requires a range of solutions from government, legal and civil institutions, and nonprofits. Business is only one piece of the puzzle.

Fikkert serves on the advisory board for Sovereign's Capital. He warns that transformation—from a Christian perspective—encompasses much more than access to jobs or goods. "In the social entrepreneur space, the focus is on getting some product to a poor person, [like] a malaria net or a cell phone. Implicit in that, however, is the idea that poor people really need access to a malaria net, a cell phone, or water," Fikkert says. "It reduces development to providing greater access to material resources. To think that lacking goods and services is the sum total of poverty is wrong."

Not only is investing an incomplete cure for poverty; Christians have not always supported values-based investing. Regular churchgoers earn somewhere between $1.7 trillion and $3.4 trillion annually. Yet investments in faith-based funds are tiny compared with the size of mainstream investments.

Funds geared to average investors often struggle. GuideStone, which offers individuals and employers everything from retirement plans to mutual funds packages, is the largest Christian-screened investment firm. It has just $10 billion under management, where a firm like Charles Schwab has $2.3 trillion in client assets.

Rusty Leonard runs his own Christian investment firm, Stewardship Partners. He has followed the new attempts at Christian impact investing, watching as many firms come and go. "I am not naturally a pessimist, but it's hard to be optimistic on these efforts," he says. "Evangelicals in particular seem to be oddly resistant to investing based on their beliefs."

There is also the sheer amount of money required from individuals to invest in firms like SpringHill and Sovereign's Capital: The entry amount for each is $50,000 and $100,000, respectively.

The Common Good and Your 401k

"The Christian community has done a remarkable job of compartmentalizing money and faith," says David Gautsche, senior vice president of products and services at Everence, a family of funds launched 25 years ago and associated with the Mennonite Church. But an increasing number of people—especially as the opportunities have grown—are choosing faith-based investments. There were only about two fund families in the early '90s, Gautsche says, but there are now roughly a dozen with new ones launched quarterly. "How we spend our money and invest our money should reflect who we say we are as people of faith," Gautsche says. And it makes a difference in real life. Gautsche notes that Everence has partnered with Hershey to encourage the chocolate company's commitment to use only cocoa produced by certified nonslave labor.

Larsen says average investors can have "skin in the game" in making a difference. He hopes to steer African communities toward feeding themselves and even exporting produce around the world thanks to Christian investors and businesses. "Africa has two billion acres of arable farmland that costs between $500 and $1,500 [an acre] to develop," Larsen says. "Africa needs some know-how and capital, not a handout. If we don't come alongside then it will be recolonized [by international corporations] and Africa will be feeding half the world but Africans will be eating on $3 a day. Then Africa won't flourish."

At the same time, Larsen says, Western Christians are sitting on an estimated $400 billion in retirement accounts. "I've never heard anyone talk about using their IRA to grow the kingdom, promote human flourishing, and feed the hungry.

"We want to inspire people to think beyond writing checks to missionaries. We've got a part to play." CT

Market MATTERS

ROB MOLL is a CT editor at large whose book, *What Your Body Knows About God* (InterVarsity Press), releases this fall.

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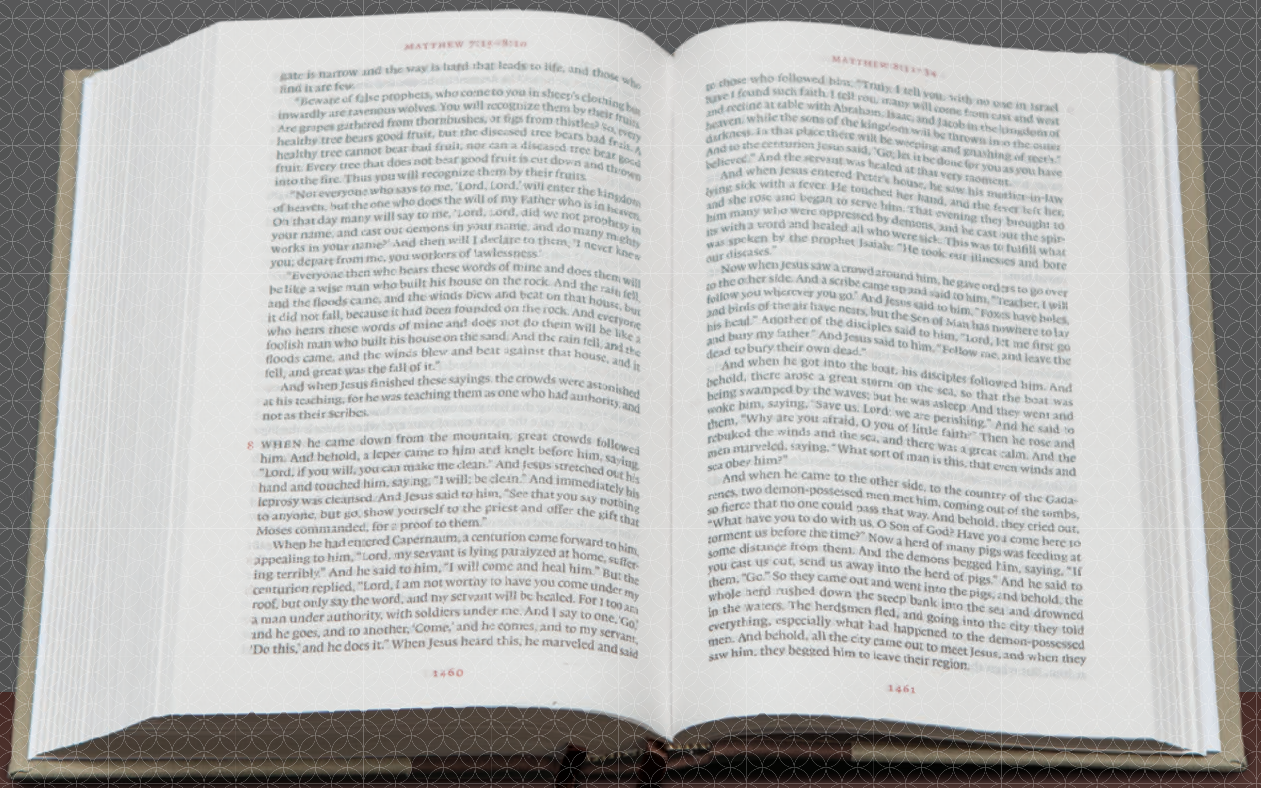

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Why 68% of Christian Men Watch Porn

A new generation of porn addicts is about to flood the Church - are we ready?

By Terry Cu-Unjieng

Are we really supposed to buy into the idea that 68% of men in Church watch porn regularly? Could this just be sensational rhetoric? Not according to a national survey among churches. The survey conducted over the past five years revealed that 68 percent of Christian men and 50 percent of pastors view pornography regularly.[1] But even more shocking is that 11-17 year-old boys reported being its greatest users. The Church is in the sexual battle of its life. As these boys become adults, the Church will be flooded with porn addicts. Pastor James Reeves of City On A Hill Church DFW has successfully tackled porn addiction in his church. He warns, "This problem is going to sweep through the Church like a tsunami wave of destruction and we're not prepared for it".

Dr. Ted Roberts, Host of the Conquer Series

A Grassroots Movement for Change

In response to this growing epidemic in the Church, a group of filmmakers took it upon themselves to create a DVD teaching curriculum on sexual purity called the Conquer Series. The Series is the first of its kind to show men how to retrain a brain that's hooked on porn, using biblical principles and powerful insights. "The shocking statistics were the game-changer for me," says director, Jeremy Wiles. "So, we spent two years developing a five-hour discipleship curriculum, interviewing top Christian experts on this subject and shooting battle reenactments to illustrate the war that every man faces with sexual temptation. I wanted to give men proven principles on how to find freedom," adds Wiles.

The team recruited Dr. Ted Roberts, a former U.S. Marine fighter pilot, to be the host of the Conquer Series. As a former Pastor and head of Pure Desire Ministries, Dr. Roberts has counseled men for over 30 years - mainly dealing with pornography issues. "Our goal with the Conquer Series is to give men a battle plan for purity. We've got a great tool here that will change lives, but we need pastors to partner with us to fight this battle," Dr. Roberts said.

The Typical Church Approach Doesn't Work

According to Dr. Roberts, churches often treat this issue as a moral one, but fail to recognize it's mainly a brain problem, "We tell men to try harder, pray harder, love Jesus more."

Dr. Roberts adds, "But, what starts off as a moral problem, quickly becomes a brain problem. Telling a man to try harder is only tightening the 'noose' of bondage." Today, science sheds new light on biblical truth regarding strongholds of the mind and how a person becomes enslaved to sin.

A Highjacked Brain

Understanding the brain is pivotal. When a woman is nursing her child and she's skin-to-skin with her baby, her brain releases a neurochemical called oxytocin, which emotionally bonds her to her child. The same thing happens during sex. God designed oxytocin as the glue for human bonding. During a sexual release, oxytocin, along with other neurochemicals, are released and cause us to emotionally bond with our partner.

1. Pure Desire Ministries, "Porn Usage in Evangelical Churches" (2009).

When you watch porn, powerful neurotransmitters such as dopamine are also released, which bond you to those images. This is why Satan attacks our sexuality so much, because in attacking human sexuality it actually interferes with human bonding.

According to neuropsychologist, Dr. Tim Jennings, "Any type of repetitive behavior will create trails in our brain that are going to fire on an automatic sequence." The result is years of bondage. This is how 68% of Christian men can love the Lord with all their heart, but be trapped in sexual bondage. The repeated viewing of porn literally changes the physical structure of their brain.

A Process for Pastors to use to Fight Pornography

Wiles is confident the Conquer Series will embolden church leaders to tackle the problem by giving them a high-quality video curriculum and study guide that can be used by leaders in small men's group meetings. "Pornography is a really tough subject for a lot of pastors to openly confront," said Wiles. "This cinematic Series will give them confidence that they can restore men using proven Bible-based principles."

The Conquer Series has been getting a lot of positive feedback. Jason Royalty, a men's group leader from Springfield, Tennessee, said, "This DVD series has been so helpful to the 15-18 men that meet together for this class. Understanding how God has made us and also understanding the enemy's tactics has been key to seeing victories in these men's lives."

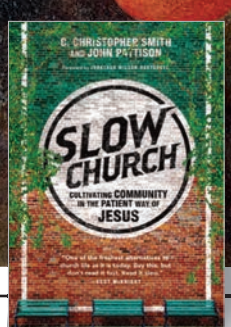
Paul Cole, President of Christian Men's Network, agrees, "When the Conquer Series begins to be a part of who we are, it will begin to change what we do and who we are as a church."

The Conquer Series is a 6-disc DVD set, which includes five 1-hour long teaching DVDs and a leader's DVD. They are currently offering a 14-day money back guarantee, so if you want to see if this is something for you or the men in your church, then here's a chance to try it risk-free.

Order at ConquerSeries.com

REVIEWS

SARA TYSON



SLOW IS BEAUTIFUL

More churches are learning that discipleship requires patience—and that it's worth the wait.
By Leslie Leyland Fields

I **visited a church** down South recently that left me starved and speechless. Immediately after the sermon, the pastor began baptisms. A parade of children, one after another, was immersed and toweled crisply and efficiently. I discovered later that the children were brought in on the church's bus from some distance away.

At some point, the baptisms stopped, and the service ended with a prayer and a final hymn. People got up to go, but the pastor, inexplicably, returned to the baptismal and kept pumping more children through as if on a factory line. The congregants ignored the proceedings and lit out the door—late for a barbecue, maybe? They were too busy to witness baptisms or greet visitors. I left confused and disturbed by the whole show.

If I remembered the exact church, I would overnight a copy of *Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus*, by C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison (InterVarsity Press) ★★★★½. In fact, I'd like to send one to every church I know. I would highlight the chapters on hospitality, Sabbath, wholeness, and patience. I would do this gently, confessing my own sins of self-absorption and speed, because the book should not be wielded as a weapon or an accusation but rather given as a gift. Or, perhaps more apt, it's an invitation to sit down for dinner after church (minus the takeout buckets of fried chicken).

WENDELL BERRY GOES TO CHURCH

Slow Church joins a host of movements inspired by the Slow Food revolt begun in the 1980s, a global coalition that resists the industrializing of all aspects of food. Not all churches have been seduced by what Smith and Pattison call "Franchise faith" or "McDonaldization." Still, the authors say, at least some fast-food, consumer-culture values—an obsession with efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control—have unwittingly crept into many houses of worship.

Smith and Pattison contrast the dominant "attractional" church model with the "incarnational" model, described by missiologists Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, who founded the Forge Mission Training Network 15 years ago. Up to 95 percent of Western churches, they estimate, function essentially as mission outposts luring unbelievers to their doors through imported, prepackaged programs and services. They tend toward top-down leadership structures and dualistic thinking about the church and the world. Because the church is often far from its commuting congregants, it can feel not only disembodied but also displaced, even "placeless." This model sees people as "in or out," belonging or not.

A Slow Church, in contrast, attempts to be "incarnational," focusing less on attracting outsiders and more on the quality of its common life. The authors' congregations work at "cultivating together the resurrection life of Christ," not through a Sunday "consumerist experience," but by the daily discipline of "deeply and selflessly loving our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, and even our enemies."

The main attraction, then, is not the building or even what its members do, but *who* the church is: ideally, a people marked by love for Christ and service to neighbors. They prize stability above mobility, relationships above efficiency, generosity above scarcity, and Sabbath renewal above perpetual activity. These communities are likely praying what Paul Sparks, a cofounder of the Parish Collective, calls the reverse Prayer of Jabez:

> God,
> Shrink our territory,
> And narrow our boundaries
> That we might truly be a blessing
> to all.

Fans of Wendell Berry, the author and agrarian apostle, will rejoice in this book. It could very well be subtitled, "Wendell Berry Goes to Church." But *Slow Church*, like Berry's work itself, is more than trendy: Its theological and historical roots run deep. Churches should cultivate long-suffering with one another because God himself cultivated his people patiently, over generations. Anxiety over "scarcity" pervades our culture, feeding competitiveness rather than cooperation. But the church's generosity and hospitality are fed by a God of abundance. The Sabbath allows us to enter God's own time and economy, to "pause our striving and start abiding."

A Slow Church attempts to be 'incarnational,' focused less on attracting outsiders and more on the quality of its common life.

What might an "incarnational" church look like in real life? The authors don't leave us guessing. Smith takes us inside his own church of 180 in a gritty urban neighborhood outside Indianapolis. Pattison describes his experience in an evangelical Quaker meeting in rural Silverton, Oregon. They share their own practices of keeping the Sabbath, working for the good of their neighbors, and even sharing jobs, presenting a whole menu of ideas to strengthen the bonds between Christ, people, and place.

Slow Church is a manifesto and handbook rolled into one. Unlike most manifestos, it is beautifully written, blending historical analysis, personal narrative, and scriptural exegesis into prose that is languid, incisive, and eloquent. It reads like what it is: the long, patient fruit of two men deeply rooted in a particular place, among neighbors they know, love, and serve.

CREEPING CLUBBINESS?

For all this good, I do have a few concerns. The authors quote a pastor who hangs out at McDonald's every day rather than, say, an independently owned coffeehouse where they hand-roast their fair-trade beans and serve it in crockery made by refugees. The pastor defends his presence under the golden arches: He's there because his neighbors are there. Enough said, you might think. But the partisans of all-things-slow might not buy that excuse. So the pastor goes on to explain, "We might have to actually inhabit, engage, and be present in order to bring justice to overwhelmingly large systems." Is it really necessary to justify drinking a cup of coffee at McDonald's? And isn't this kind of hipster overspeak a little pretentious?

This touches on a larger issue with the Slow Church movement—indeed, with the many countermovements that represent its closest kin: the new monasticism, agrarianism, and intentional communities, all

of which I admire and support in some way. We might critique the "attractional" church for dividing people along an "in or out" fault line. But isn't the slow, incarnational church susceptible to the same temptation? Any dissenting group with shared values will develop its own lexicon and look, but the danger is a creeping clubbiness and self-righteousness that parses the "ins" from the "outs" even more adeptly. The net effect can be division and isolation from the larger body of Christ. But Smith and Pattison won't take us there. They are too sincerely insistent on gratitude and humility.

I worry, too, that church leaders, seeing the words *slow* and *patient*, will steer clear, believing their own mega, mobile, urban, or rural congregants are simply too busy to profit from this work. Yes, the book describes a life not available to all. We will always be fighting the clock, but that needn't consign us to a drive-through church or a "fast-food faith."

No matter the size of our church body or the kind of neighborhood we live in, we would all do well to slow down and examine ourselves in the clearest light available—the light of history, the light of Scripture, and the light of Christ himself—rather than the fluorescent light of business models and burger joints.

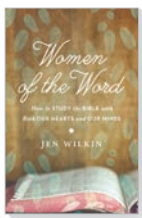
Make haste, then. Run, do not walk, to your favorite bookstore, buy a copy, and set your church table for a feast. **CT**

LESLIE LEYLAND FIELDS is the author of *Forgiving Our Fathers and Mothers* (Thomas Nelson).

Put Down That Pink Bible

Jen Wilkin equips women to study Scripture deeply.
By Sharon Hodde Miller

Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds
Jen Wilkin
(Crossway)



I have a confession: I knew I would like Jen Wilkin's new book, *Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds* (Crossway) ★★★★½, before I read it. Having become familiar with Wilkin after finding her blog, I was struck by how she proclaims difficult truths without alienating readers. Her teaching—on display as a leader at the Village Church in Flower Mound, Texas—is saturated in scriptural insights and demands serious attention.

There is an increasing number of Bible resources for women rooted in sound theology, thanks to teachers like Beth Moore and Kay Arthur. *Women of the Word* goes further in equipping women with the tools to study Scripture rightly.

Wilkin identifies two significant problems among Christian resources for women: They tend to be emotion-driven and human-centered. Too often, women approach Scripture asking not "Who is God?" but "Who am I?" The latter question certainly has its place, but, as Wilkin objects, "Any study of the Bible that seeks to establish our identity without first proclaiming God's identity will render partial and limited help."

She warns against a list of mistaken approaches, such as the "Xanax Approach," which "treats the Bible as if it exists to make us feel better," and the "Magic 8 Ball Approach," which demands that "the Bible tell us what to do rather than who to be."

Wilkin then offers a five-step primer for studying Scripture, which she calls the "Five *P*s": Study with Purpose, Perspective, Patience, Process, and Prayer. The goal is to help women grow in Bible literacy. Although the approach is rigorous, Wilkin is quick to extend grace and understanding to busy women whose season in life may not afford them the time.

The book ends strongly, as Wilkin argues for the value of female teachers, explaining that women in our churches need their example, perspective, and authority. She offers helpful guidance for women who discern a call to teach. As a Bible teacher myself, I would recommend this chapter to any woman who discern a similar call.

Women of the Word is a necessary improvement from many popular resources for Christian women, and it would benefit any woman who desires to know God and study his Word. Beyond the tools within its pages, it will help women discern the quality of the Bible resources they already consume.

My only quibble is with Wilkin's understanding of the heart. For Wilkin, women's Bible study materials too often exhibit an overreliance on loving God with one's heart, which comes at the expense of loving God with one's mind. Wilkin defines the heart as the seat of one's emotions and will, and she believes we must place "the mind in charge of the heart," reasoning that "the heart cannot love what the mind does not know."

Wilkin makes her case using Scripture, but I am not convinced the Bible presents us with such a dichotomy. When Scripture refers to the "heart," its authors have something broader and more holistic in mind than mere emotions. A stark distinction between the emotions and mind evokes Plato more than Scripture. I would caution, therefore, against an overcorrection that neglects the nuanced, organic relationship between the heart and the mind that the Bible depicts.

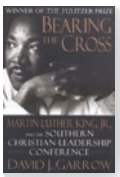
That caution aside, *Women of the Word* is excellent. Wilkin speaks prophetically into the women's ministry landscape. She is a leader in what I hope will be the next chapter of women's ministry. **CT**

SHARON HODDE MILLER writes for Her.meneutics and is a doctoral student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. She blogs at SheWorships.com.

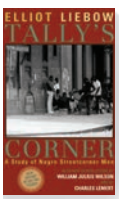
MY TOP FIVE Joshua DuBois

As former head of the White House's Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Joshua DuBois was hailed by *Time* as "pastor-in-chief," sending President Obama an e-mail every morning with a snippet of Scripture. CT asked DuBois—who recently compiled *The President's Devotional* (HarperOne) and who now heads the Values Partnerships consulting firm—to choose **the five books every political leader should read.**

JEFF ELKINS



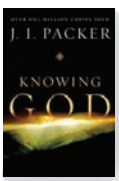
Bearing the Cross *By David J. Garrow*
This biography of Martin Luther King Jr. is a must-read for anyone seeking to build, join, or marshal the forces of a movement. It shows King at his soaring heights and tragic depths, and reminds us that heroes are also flawed human beings. Garrow beautifully recounts King's dialogue with God—stretching from quasi-agnosticism to genuine relationship with Christ. *Bearing the Cross* reads like a novel in its retelling of some of the most important decades in American history, and leaders should be able to apply its lessons over and over.



Tally's Corner *By Elliot Liebow*
We often see the poor as "other"—people who deserve help but are not really like us. *Tally's Corner*, Liebow's classic sociological study of men on a particular corner in Washington, D.C., brings us face to face with the working poor. Liebow provides a window into their world, showing that their values are well developed, albeit lived out in situations very different from our own. A great book for anyone interested in serving the poor.

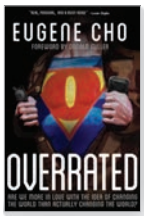
The Things They Carried *By Tim O'Brien*
More than any other book, O'Brien's short stories—told from the rivers and deltas of Vietnam—ground readers in the sacrifices that our soldiers endure every day. I couldn't put this book down. And I don't think anyone can read this without thinking twice about when and how we commit our soldiers to war, and how those of us back home should support them.

The New Jim Crow *By Michelle Alexander*
If we had lived in the antebellum South, or Jim Crow Mississippi, how would we have responded? What if we're living in a new Jim Crow era today? Alexander explores this possibility in her treatise on the American criminal justice system. I've seen both Republican and Democratic politicians carry this book, and it is motivating criminal justice reforms across the country. I highly recommend it for anyone interested in justice.



Knowing God *By J. I. Packer*
If I can't put the Bible on this list, I'll choose a Packer book instead. Every national and world leader must seek to know the nations and world in which they serve. And in order to know this world and its people, we must first know the God who shaped and molded us all. Packer simply and powerfully re-introduces us to God: his attributes, actions, and, most important, his grace.

Overrated: Are We More in Love with the Idea of Changing the World Than Actually Changing the World?
Eugene Cho
(David C. Cook)



Uncomfortable Justice

Eugene Cho examines what keeps us from pursuing it. Interview by Bethany Hoang

Eugene Cho, founder of Seattle's Quest Church and the One Day's Wages antipoverty nonprofit, is known for his zeal for justice. Yet he's deeply doubted the sincerity of his and his generation's commitment—doubts best expressed in the title of his debut book, *Overrated: Are We More in Love with the Idea of Changing the World Than Actually Changing the World?* (David C. Cook). Bethany Hoang, funding director of International Justice Mission's Institute for Biblical Justice, spoke with Cho about rooting our pursuit of justice in the gospel.

What prompted you to write this book?

I went to a basketball game a couple years ago, and the crowd was screaming, "Overrated! Overrated!" at the other team. It's not that I've heard people scream that when I'm preaching, but the possibility of being "overrated" myself is something I've sensed throughout my life.

For example, I've been speaking, writing, blogging, and preaching about justice. It's easy to fall in love with the idea. But something gets lost in the actual practice and application. When I started sensing this, I personally felt exposed and began to see the problem in the larger church.

This book began for me when I went to Burma on a research trip. I had thought I would come home with a conviction to write a sermon, maybe a blog post. But instead I sensed the Holy Spirit convicting me to give up a year's worth of pay.

The conviction was really uncomfortable. It took about three years to come to terms with it, simply because I like stuff. I like money. I like being able to provide for my family. Eventually I came to realize that I really am more in love with the idea of changing the world than actually changing it. When there's a personal cost to justice, we back off.

You suggest that working for justice *is* evangelism. What concerns you about the way Christians understand the relationship between justice and evangelism?

I understand the concern that justice can distract from evangelism. We have to be careful, because any ministry can become idolatry. You can idolize justice. You can idolize evangelism. You can idolize the Scriptures. Ultimately, everything needs to be a response to the gospel.

It's important to speak to people who are apathetic about justice, but also to people who are saying, "Let's stick with preaching Jesus." Justice is part of the full scope of the gospel—it's part of who Jesus is. Jesus' words are more credible when his followers live them out, including God's call to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with him.

You discuss a season in life when you worked as a janitor at a Barnes & Noble. What did you learn?

I don't like to share stories about God humbling me. I was so angry. I was so hurt and broken. I never departed from my relationship with him, but I felt I had lost control of my life. It's beautiful that I can look back and say, "Wow. That was a holy time."

Being a janitor was difficult, not because of the work itself but because it was the last thing I thought God had prepared me to do. I was supposed to be planting a church. I had a full flow chart written out. Working as a janitor was not part of the plan.

But when you're cleaning a 40,000-square-foot space all morning, you're confronted with something called *silence*. And that season became a gift, because God resurrected my prayer life. I came to see silence not as an enemy, but as a necessary companion. It was a time to pray not for the sake of productivity, or because I was speaking at a conference or preaching a sermon, but because my soul desperately needed to encounter the Holy Spirit again.


Eugene Cho

AMY KONYNDYK

What can prevent us from, as you put it, "sizzling out" from justice work?

There's a wisdom and power in naming the reasons we don't get involved, or the reasons we don't feel sustained and thus quit and back away. One reason is that there is such brokenness in our world.

Recently I was chatting with a couple friends, and I started tearing up. We were talking about the situation in the Middle East and Palestine, about Nigeria, about the situation at the border in the United States. I felt paralyzed. I couldn't move. It was a powerful reminder that brokenness can easily lead to paralysis. When this happens, we need to name it.

It's also important to be aware of our savior complex. Not everything is contingent upon us. Our culture loves heroes. This isn't bad in itself. But if we're not careful, we can make ourselves into messiah figures, and that's unsustainable. CT

Nicolas Cage takes charge in *Left Behind*, out October 3.

Enraptured

Why are movies about the last days still so popular? By Brett McCracken

Are Americans more enraptured with the Rapture than ever? Seth Rogen's 2013 apocalypse comedy, *This Is the End*, poked fun at the concept, while next month's cinematic "reboot" of *Left Behind*, starring Nicolas Cage, takes it seriously. The bleak HBO drama *The Leftovers*, developed by Damon Lindelof (co-creator of *Lost*), explores what life would be like for those left behind after a Rapture-esque event.

The Rapture is a relatively recent idea in church history, as well as a minor theme in Scripture: Many Bible scholars argue that it's not there at all, while descendants of 19th-century dispensationalists see it in passages like 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17; 1 Corinthians 15:51–55; and John 14:2–3. But it has become a fixture in U.S. pop culture, showing up unexpectedly like a thief in the night.

BIG-BUDGET DESTRUCTION

Pop apocalyptic—the larger genre of disaster movies and end-of-the-world scenarios—has been a big business for a long time. It flourished after World War II and during the cold war. Just as Amish romances have provided an evangelical-friendly niche within the larger genre of romance novels, Rapture media allowed Christians to carve out a space within the larger (and quite profitable) genre of apocalyptic. Whereas Amish romance provides a "safer alternative" to bodice-rippers, however, Christian Rapture fare often seems more intent on upping the terror factor than providing toned-down, family-friendly fun.

Take the 1941 evangelistic film *The Rapture*, produced by Charles Octavia Baptista. In 11 minutes, the film chillingly depicts the chaos to be wrought on earth when the Rapture occurs. The narrator predicts that "speeding trains will plunge unsuspecting passengers into a black eternity as Christian engineers are snatched from the throttle. Operations will be halted midway when believing surgeons are caught up to be forever with the Lord."

Rapture terror hit a new high in 1973 with *Thief in the Night*. The film combined the tropes of low-budget horror (George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* had come out a few years earlier) with dispensationalist anxiety fueled in part by books

COURTESY OF STONEY LAKE ENTERTAINMENT

At a time when fears of apocalypse were everywhere in pop culture, the worldwide disappearance of millions didn't seem farfetched.

like Hal Lindsey's *The Late, Great Planet Earth*. Produced by Russell S. Doughton (*The Blob*), the 69-minute film terrified audiences and spun off three sequels: *A Distant Thunder, Image of the Beast*, and *The Prodigal Planet*.

The Rapture renaissance we enjoy today is probably most indebted to Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins's 16-book Left Behind series (1995–2007), which has sold more than 63 million copies and launched three films as well as video games, parodies, and a 40-installment children's series. The Nicolas Cage treatment of *Left Behind* is just the latest in a crowded pack of 21st-century Rapture movies. They include Cloud Ten Pictures' Apocalypse franchise, Pure Flix Entertainment's *Revelation Road: The Beginning of the End*, and the Carman-starring *Final: The Rapture*, which director Tim Chey said he made to "scare the living daylights out of adult nonbelievers."

While most Christian-made Rapture movies seek to scare nonbelievers into reconsidering Christ, many secular films in the genre aim merely to entertain. Recent comedies such as *Rapture-Palooza*, *The World's End*, and the aforementioned *This Is the End* have mined the apocalypse for laughs.

The ease with which the Rapture has crossed over into secular culture may reflect a broader societal anxiety. The destabilizing effects of two world wars and the cold war, coupled with nuclear fears and worries about technology, infused the 20th century with an existential urgency and expectancy of calamity. When fears of apocalypse—whether by contagion, nuke, robot, zombie, mutated spider, or giant lizard—were everywhere in pop culture, the worldwide disappearance of millions didn't seem farfetched.

It could be, indeed, that the original resonance of the dispensational Rapture among Christians had more to do with the anxious effects of modernity than with its theological merit. "Signs of the times" is a common trope in Rapture narratives, but in a profound sense, the Rapture's popularity is itself a "sign of the times," a byproduct and manifestation of larger societal unease.

TIME IS TICKING AWAY

In dc Talk's early-1990s song "Time Is," the trio sing, "Time is definitely on the go." It's a ubiquitous sentiment in popular culture, and not just among Christians: time is running out. Who would have predicted that in the most secular age in human history—an age in which events are thought to have no ultimate or eternal meaning—a constant sense of apocalyptic dread would loom large?

In *A Secular Age*, philosopher Charles Taylor talks about the gradual emergence in modernity of a sense of "secular" time as opposed to sacred or "higher" time. In ordinary, secular time, one thing happens after another on a single plane of progression. But before the modern era, "higher times" offered an "organizing field" that gathered, grouped, and imbued ordinary time with meaning. When we lose a sense of the "higher times," writes Taylor, we are cut off from our past and out of touch with our future: "We get lost in our little parcel of time."

The dangers of getting "lost in our little parcel of time" are also noted by media critic Douglas Rushkoff in his book *Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now*. Rushkoff argues that 21st-century society is oriented around the present moment. "Narrativity and goals are surrendered to a skewed notion of the real and the immediate; the tweet; the status update," writes Rushkoff. "What we are doing at any given moment becomes all-important."

And yet a byproduct of the focus on the present moment is the rise of what Rushkoff calls "Apocalypto"—a fascination with disaster, doomsday, and zombies. "A seemingly infinite present makes us long for endings, by almost any means necessary."

Our age's "lack of regard for beginnings and endings drives us to impose order on chaos," he writes. "We invent origins and endpoints as a way of bounding our experience and limiting the sense of limbo."

Both Taylor's loss of "higher times" and Rushkoff's burden of the "infinite present" help us understand why we're so compelled by things like the Rapture—or anything apocalyptic. Living in a flattened timescape, we long for moments to take us out of the profane and everyday. In the absence of "higher times," global disasters and narratives of apocalypse stand in as sacred moments that rupture the monotony of secular time. "Where were you when . . . ?" is a question of almost spiritual gravitas for anyone alive on 9/11 or the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Especially since the advent of mass broadcasts of breaking news, we mark time by shared moments of global calamity and terror, existential pauses that give us transcendent perspective.

These are real if perverted expressions of our longing for the "higher" time we've lost, for pivot points in history, for an escape from the present. In a world where there's "nothing new under the sun," where generations come and go "but the earth remains forever" (Ecc. 1:4), we long to be part of an unexpected story, to witness something significant. But must that "something significant" be the earth's fiery end?

Christians of all people need not buy into the prevailing culture's preoccupation with doomsday. Let the world have its apocalyptic versions of the Rapture—Christians have something better. Surely there are movies to be made about not destruction, but resurrection. **CT**

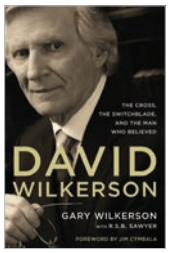
BRETT McCRACKEN is a film critic for CT and author of *Gray Matters: Navigating the Space Between Legalism and Liberty* (Baker Books).

New & Noteworthy

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

"He had the pure faith to believe that what he envisioned would come to pass. And he possessed the ability, drive, and trust in God to pull it off."

~ from ***David Wilkerson: The Cross, the Switchblade, and the Man Who Believed*** by Gary Wilkerson



DAVID WILKERSON

The Cross, the Switchblade, and the Man Who Believed

GARY WILKERSON, WITH R. S. B. SAWYER (ZONDERVAN)

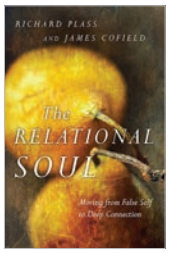
Wilkerson, the great 20th-century evangelist, made a habit of ministering to society's outcasts: drug addicts, gang members, and other down-and-outers populating New York City's meanest streets. As his son Gary explains in this biography-cum-memoir, he followed "lines of human desperation leading him to the world's most needy areas." Wilkerson, who founded Times Square Church and drug recovery ministry Teen Challenge, died three years ago in an auto accident. Gary, who inherited his father's missions organization, World Challenge, recounts episodes from the evangelist's life as well as the doubts that plagued him.

THE PASTOR'S KID

Finding Your Own Faith and Identity

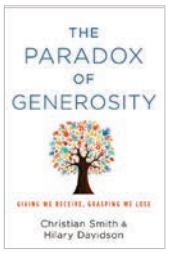
BARNABAS PIPER (DAVID C. COOK)

Being a pastor's kid (PK) can be tricky. You face a scrutiny unknown to many of your peers, complete with heightened expectations of devout faithfulness and holy living. Sometimes there's subtle pressure to follow in your father's footsteps. And that's the case even when the pastor *isn't* a household name. Piper (his famous father, John, writes the foreword) grapples with both the challenges and rewards, drawing on his own experience. "The life of a PK," he writes, "is complex, occasionally messy, often frustrating, and sometimes downright maddening. It can be a curse and a bane. But being a PK can also be a profound blessing and provide wonderful grounding for a godly life."



THE RELATIONAL SOUL

Moving from False Self to Deep Connection
RICHARD PLASS AND JAMES COFIELD (INTERVARSITY PRESS)
We all experience loneliness. Some of us spend entire lifetimes craving companionship. Plass (founder of CrossPoint Ministry) and Cofield (a spiritual director) argue that our loneliness testifies to something fundamental about human nature. "We were born," they write, "with a relentless longing to participate in the lives of others. Fundamentally, we are relational souls. We cannot *not* be relational." Blending biblical and psychological insight, Plass and Cofield offer guidance on building (or rebuilding) our relational capacities, while sharing the good news that we worship an inherently relational God.



THE PARADOX OF GENEROSITY

Giving We Receive, Grasping We Lose
CHRISTIAN SMITH AND HILARY DAVIDSON
(OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS)
"'Tis better to give then to receive." The old proverb has an empirical foundation, as Smith (a Notre Dame sociologist) and Davidson (a doctoral candidate there) demonstrate in *The Paradox of Generosity*. That giving freely of one's time and treasure redounds to giver's benefit is "not only a philosophical or religious teaching," they claim, but also "a sociological fact." The book, based on Smith's five-year Science of Generosity Initiative, marshals evidence that "the more generous Americans are, the more happiness, health, and purpose in life they enjoy."

A BRIEF THEOLOGY OF SPORT

LINCOLN HARVEY (CASCADE BOOKS)
Many Christians have a complicated relationship with sports. Like so many Americans, we root for our favorite teams and enjoy playing the games themselves. But many critics worry that sports can glorify brutality and ultra-competitiveness while fostering idolatrous attachments to celebrity superstars. Harvey, a theologian teaching in London, takes the middle road, arguing that "neither blind celebration nor debilitating suspicion is the right approach." *A Brief Theology of Sport* explores how the church has understood sports throughout history and ruminates on their role in God's creative purposes.

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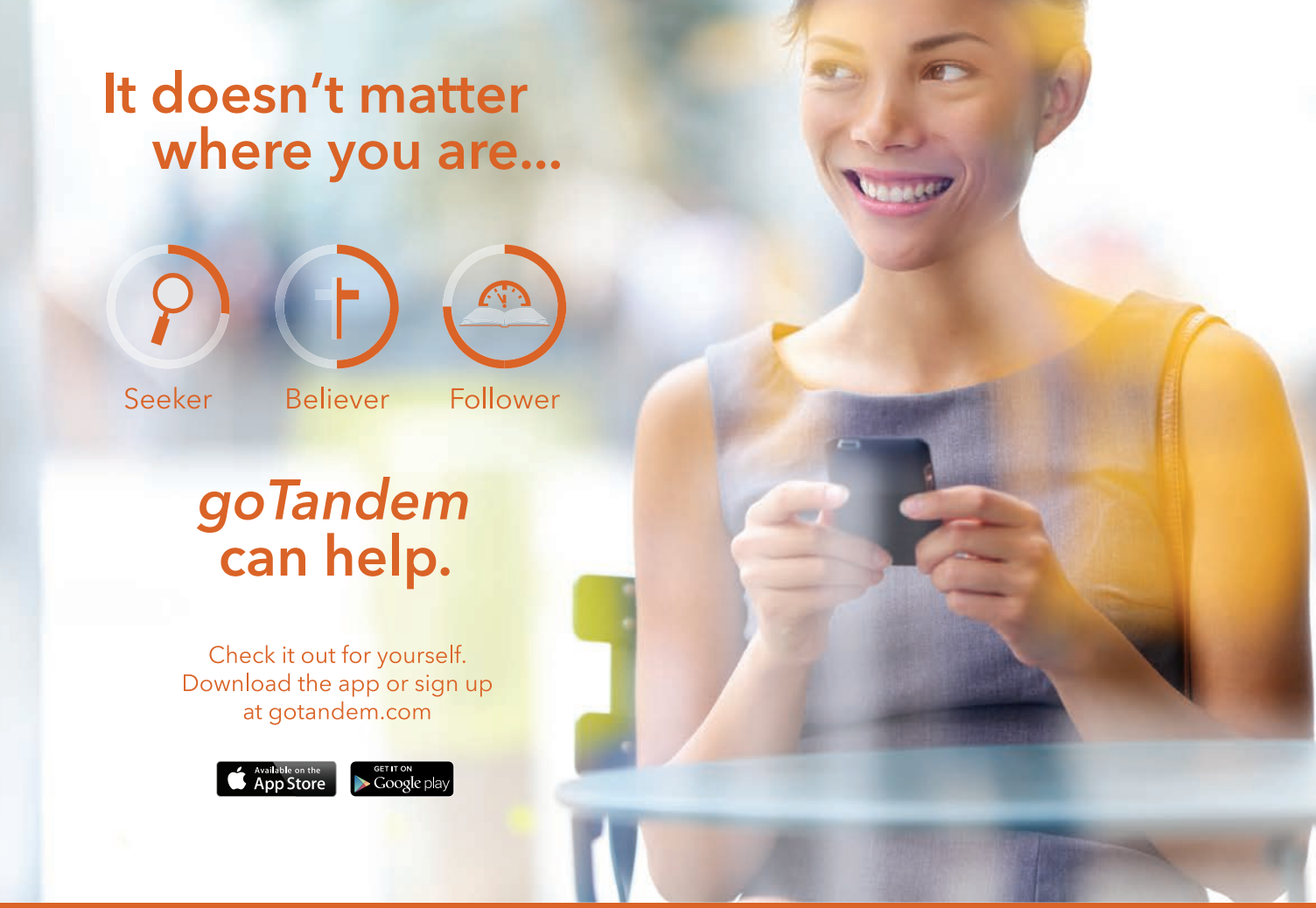

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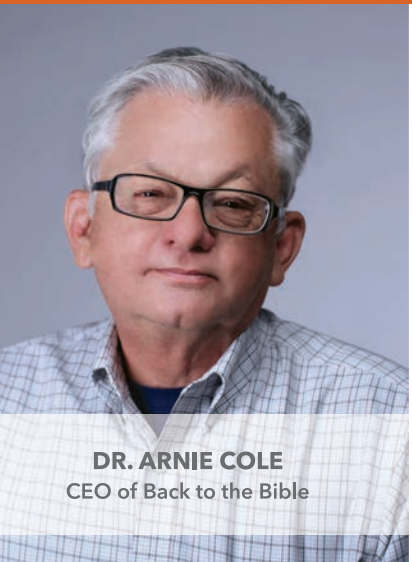

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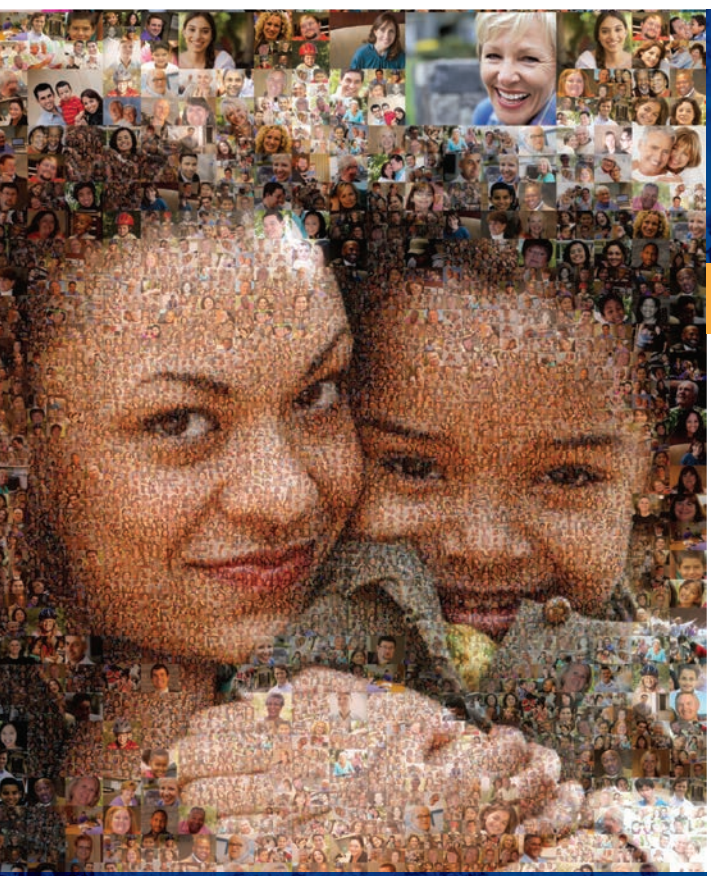

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 88

back with an invitation to "come home to the Lord."

The next evening he returned, and so did I. Despite my outsider status, I boldly entered the tent. Ushers seated me near the front. I have no memory of the sermon. I sat waiting for the invitation.

The call came and the evangelist led me through a sinner's prayer. I confessed my need for forgiveness. While being led in prayer, I strongly felt the presence of Jesus Christ. I sensed his love and forgiveness as well as his call to preach the gospel.

My parents were supportive of my experience at the revival. Within a few weeks, we were baptized and became members of Ruhama Baptist Church. We seldom missed a service, and my parents' faith grew enormously there.

Never before had I experienced such peace and joy. I even met two young men from Howard who took me along when they preached in small mining towns. The students involved me in their ministry at every level, including preaching.

VEERING

Eighteen months later, everything changed. My father's work took us back to Kansas City. I never felt comfortable in the church we joined, and I drifted. Although never deliberately turning from God, when I became a college student I sought intellectual respectability and embraced the prevalent materialist worldview. The call to preach sometimes haunted me, but I pursued graduate studies in history and embarked upon an academic career. Soon it became my identity.

Five years after my first academic appointment, Mary and I married. She believed attending church would be good for us. Because her background was Catholic and mine Baptist, we decided that the Lutheran Church might be a good compromise. In Boulder, Colorado, we found a church home where Mary encountered grace, surrendered her life to Christ, and began praying for me.

During the first six years of our marriage, I taught full-time and pursued research. Promotions came quickly, as did publications and grants. But despite the blessings of a lovely wife, two children, and professional success, no rest came to my soul. To fill the void I began to drink heavily. Although most people didn't know it, I became an alcoholic. I never missed classes and seldom drank during the week, but I often binged on weekends.

Mary continued to pray. And one of my favorite students spent money he couldn't afford to buy me a copy of G. K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*, then challenged to me read C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*. Simultaneously, my car radio malfunctioned and stuck on a gospel station. I kept the radio on because I needed noise. Gradually the programs began to warm my soul.

Still doubting, I received a year's leave to write a book. When I finished it early, I rewarded myself with a binge. One evening when Mary implored me not to drink around the children, I stomped out, found a bar, and drank until closing time. I left armed with a six-pack, drove up a winding mountain road, stopped at an overlook, and blacked out. The next morning I found myself on a dirt road next to the old Pioneer Cemetery in Boulder with no memory of the drive down.

Despite the hangover, I realized I had experienced a miracle. In utter desperation I cried out, "Lord, if you are there, please help me." That same Presence I had met years earlier in Birmingham blessed me again. I knew he was in the car and that he loved me despite my wretchedness. This liberating encounter with Jesus Christ eventually brought healing.

When I sobered up and proclaimed my new birth to our Lutheran pastor, he said, "I think you have finally realized what you were given in your infant baptism and confirmation." I did not believe him at the time, but sometimes I have flashbacks to the church of my childhood. I can see the choir processioning in; a mural shows Jesus ascending to heaven; I hear the pastor's call to worship: "The Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before him." The boy who had been marked with the covenant stayed there long enough to sense that our God is awesome.

Despite the blessings of a lovely wife, two children, and professional success, no rest came to my soul. I began to drink heavily.

WAY OUT IN FRONT OF ME

I moved many times, made countless mistakes, and experienced two encounters with the Lord who never gave up on me. He gradually brought healing and restored the years the locusts had eaten. He opened doors for me to witness in Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and preach in rescue missions, jails, and convalescent centers. He then called me to full-time ministry, ordination in the Anglican Church, and eventually to the Billy Graham Chair of Evangelism at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, where I had first heard his call to preach.

Over the years God has proved to be a gentle Comforter—like when Mary underwent massive surgery for cancer, and when our 10-year-old daughter died unexpectedly. Occasionally his Spirit illumines Scripture in an amazingly clear way. There are moments during devotions when he brings to mind a person—and the person needed my call and the assurance that it was the Lord's initiative. Sometimes Mary and I are nudged to give money to a person, and we both "hear" the same amount. The Lord also manifests his Father's heart by sternly rebuking me for a willful act of disobedience or prideful disregard for his holiness.

Certainly the most humbling and reassuring lesson coming from a three-quarter-century backward glance is his persistence in drawing me to himself. Now I know that God was always way out in front of me, initiating life-giving knowledge of himself. And it was he who pursued me and sustained the relationship when I strayed in ignorant sheeplike fashion, doubted his existence, and then like the Prodigal Son deliberately moved to the far country.

And it is all grace—unearned, undeserved, unrepayable grace. **CT**

LYLE DORSETT is Billy Graham Professor of Evangelism at Beeson Divinity School and serves as pastor of Christ the King Anglican Church in Birmingham.

TESTIMONY

CARY NORTON

A Sobering Mercy

I met Christ in a Baptist revival tent, but I wouldn't surrender to him for years.

By Lyle Dorsett

One of the advantages of growing older is the perspective it provides. From a vantage point of more than seven decades, I increasingly marvel at the sovereignty and love of God. Only the passage of time enabled me to see that my salvation has been God-initiated.

Two events separated by more than two decades bring into focus an unbroken chain of God's grace. At the time, they seemed to be singular and unrelated situations coming from a God with whom I had no relationship.

For many years, I believed my initial encounter with God came a few months after my 15th birthday. My parents and I were living in Birmingham, having recently moved there from Kansas City, Missouri. Despite having been baptized and confirmed in a Lutheran church, I never understood why it was important to have a relationship with Jesus. My parents must have had similar thoughts, since we attended church sporadically.

Our family's relationship with the Lord changed greatly one hot Alabama night. Walking home from a summer job, I took a shortcut through the campus of Howard College (now Samford University) and came upon a sight totally foreign to me. A large tent adorned the football field. Inside, a dynamic preacher paced across an elevated platform.

Later I learned that I had come upon a Baptist revival meeting. The magnetic preacher, Eddie Martin, spoke on the Prodigal Son, applying the parable to the congregation gathered. He declared there were some prodigals inside the tent and that they needed to "come home."

I was not a particularly errant lad, but I knew I was one of those prodigals. I was not inside the tent, however, and when the invitation came, I was not sure I would be welcome. You see, in the 1950s my family and I were outsiders—Yankees. I feared going forward. But before the preacher closed the meeting, he said there were more prodigals there. And if God gave him one more night to live, he would be

CONTINUED ON PRECEDING PAGE

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