

Sad Psalms Say So Much p. 56

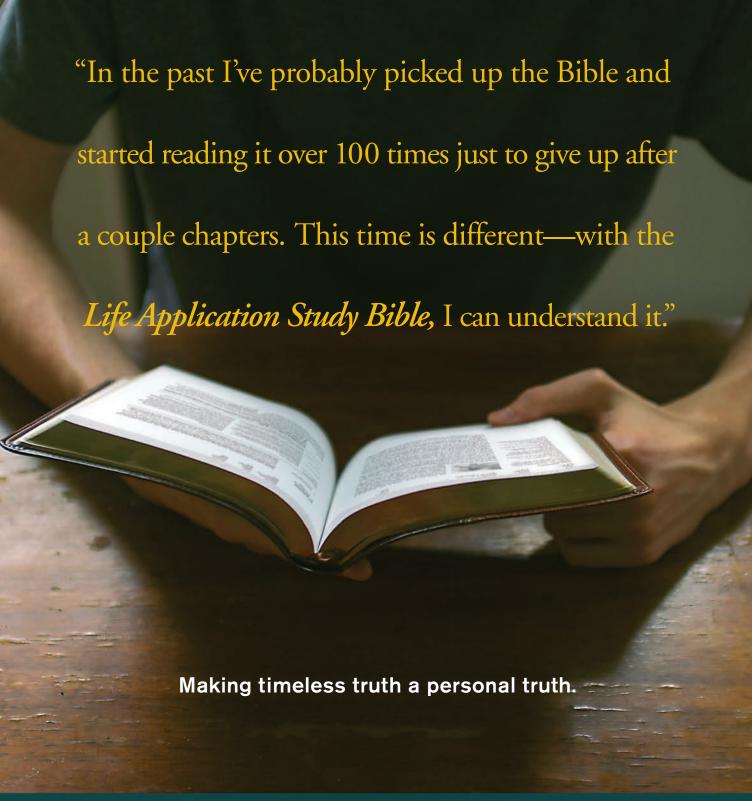
REVIVING ARMENIA AFTER GENOCIDE p. 48

BRING BACK THE BLOOD p.23

CHRISTIANITY TODAY

DEFENDERS

Apologetics has long been a bastion of men—until now.





















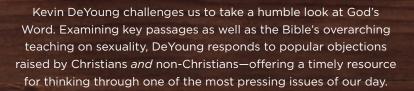
#### "EVERY CHRISTIAN CONFRONTED WITH THESE ISSUES SHOULD READ THIS BOOK."

-RUSSELL MOORE

#### KEVIN DEYOUNG

What Does the Bible Really Teach About

# Homosexuality?





# **WHY 68% OF CHRISTIAN MEN WATCH PORN**

By Terry Cu-Uniiena

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

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.

re 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. But even more shocking is that 11-17 year-old boys reported being its

greatest users. The Church is in the sexual



Dr. Ted Roberts, Host of the Conquer Series

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".

#### 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.

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

#### 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."

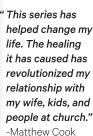
#### THE CONQUER SERIES HAS BEEN GETTING A LOT OF POSITIVE FEEDBACK:

"Extremely well done. Not Christian cheese." - Mark Punchard Jr.

CONQUERTSERIES

"We had 110 men go through the series recently. We have seen TREMENDOUS change in the men!" -Paul Leininger

" This series has helped change my life. The healing it has caused has revolutionized my relationship with my wife, kids, and people at church."



The Conquer Series is a 6-disc DVD set, which also includes 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

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Mark Galli points to Scripture that says women will prophesy.

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"Somehow I can sing, There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from **Emmanuel's** veins,' and not pass out." p.23



**REVIVING HOPE AFTER GENOCIDE** 

My family, displaced by the Great Catastrophe, returned to see Christ at work. Ann-Margret Hovsepian in Yerevan, Armenia

THE MEANING IN THE MONOTONY No matter how boring, unseen, or ordinary, our work can powerfully transform us into Christlikeness. **Bradley Nassif** 

RESWORD GETTING BRUTALLY HONEST WITH GOD The psalms of lament invite us to voice our frustrations—and provide a reason to hope. **Tremper Longman III** 

THE SUN RISES IN SWEDEN Ten years ago, a scandal put the free churches on edge. Now their prospects are brighter than ever. Lisa Ann Cockrel in Stockholm

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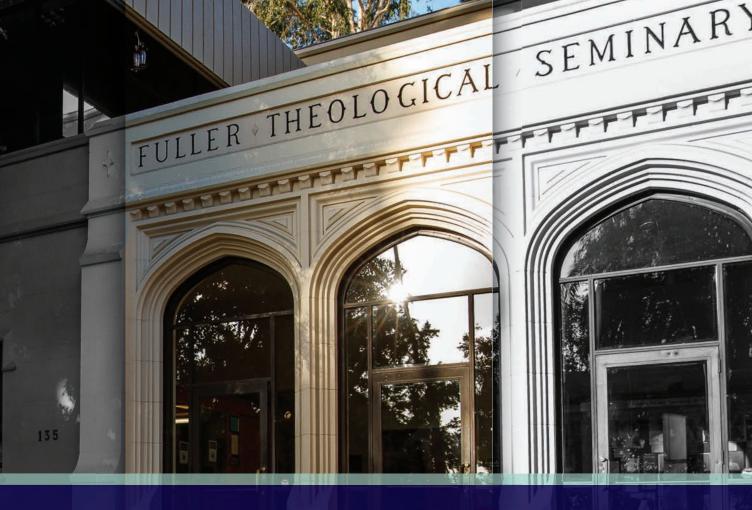
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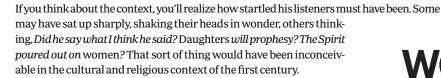


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### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

ong ago, in a land far away, the apostle Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said something remarkable. He was merely quoting his Bible, which in itself would not alarm listeners. But in quoting this passage, he was suggesting something extraordinary:

In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy. (Acts 2:17-18)



It has also been inconceivable for much of church history. But no longer. Let's skip the issue of women's ordination, over which Christians of sincere convictions still arm wrestle. Let's just consider the proliferation of powerful female evangelists (e.g., Anne Graham Lotz) and Bible teachers (e.g., Beth Moore) and, as our cover package shows, female apologists (p. 34) we are seeing today. I mean "prophesying" here broadly: proclaiming the truth of the gospel in whatever form—preaching, evangelism, teaching, or apologetics—whenever the name and work of Jesus is announced publicly.

I sometimes joke that we must live in the last days, because Joel's prophecy about the Spirit giving the gift of prophecy to women is being fulfilled in dramatic ways today. Then again, to the Lord a day is as 1,000 years. I suspect we will have to wait a bit more.

More seriously, I'm grateful for women's entrance into this male-dominated field. In my university days, a male friend and I gave an intellectual defense of our faith to a religion class of theists, skeptics, and atheists. It fell on deaf ears, of course, because we appealed only to their minds. What I now see—and that which our cover story demonstrates—is that we are called to appeal to both mind and heart. Male apologists can do this, but in my experience, female apologists move more comfortably between the reasons of the heart and the reasons of the mind.

Men are said to be more competitive in general. So I trust that our male apologists will take note.



# WOMEN WHO 'PROPHESY'

We were told God would do this.

MARK GALLI Editor

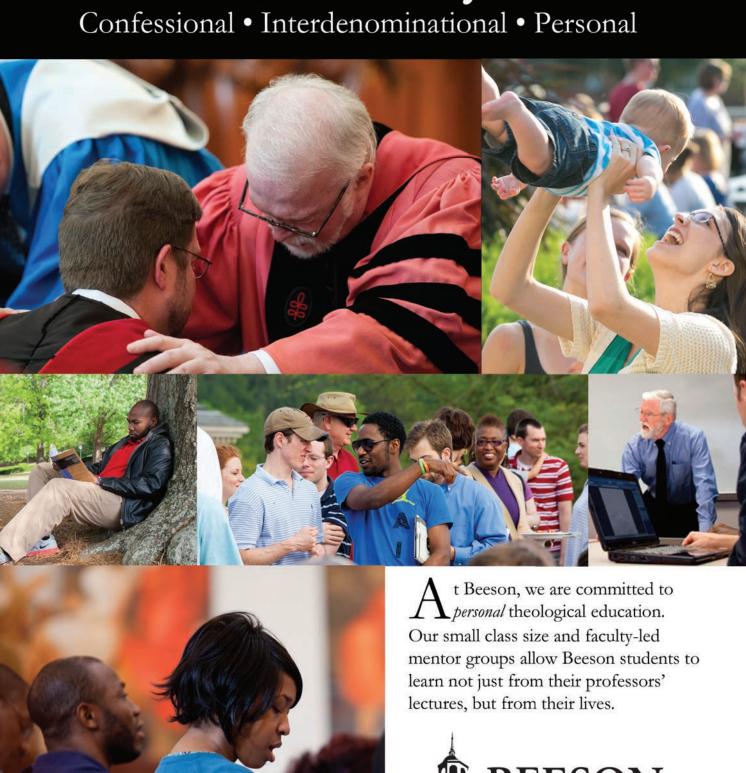


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## REPLY ALL

RESPONSES TO OUR JANUARY/FEBRUARY ISSUE



#### STOP WORRYING ABOUT THE MILLENNIALS

The cover story in the January/February issue... raises timely observations about the faith formation of emerging adults.... Andy Root is right to indicate that much of this anxiety is less about the legitimate concerns and fears of millennials than it is the lack of nerve among some mainline and evangelical church leaders. Are we really worried for millennials, or worried about what their anxieties might mean for our future? Are we nervous that if they leave, our churches will become increasingly empty and irrelevant, or are we concerned with their spiritual development and life with God?

Truly caring for 18- [to] 25-year-olds demands that we... instead focus upon discipleship. Helping them to navigate this crucial period of life well is an honorable and deeply Christian form of ministry. If we do *this* well, they will inevitably see the place that the church can play in their ongoing growth and formation....

If there is any real ground for anxiety vis-a-vis the millennials, it should be this: [H]ave we busied ourselves with the task

of seeking to "capture" their attention and, in the process, actually failed to teach and proclaim the Word of God?

Mark Husbands
Theology for Common Life blog

A bit convicting and a lot insightful.

Laura Phillips 🔰 @HippoluATX

Good read. I modified the title: Treat Millennials as People, Not a Demographic.

Joshua Shull > @joshisthinking

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#### **GLEANINGS: FAITH OR THERAPY FIRST?** *p.* 16

I am disappointed by the LifeWay Research survey that asked pastors, family members of people with acute mental illness, and those with such illnesses whether "psychological therapy" should be used before or after "sharing spiritual principles." This implies a conflict between psychological therapy and faith.

For decades, graduate schools of psychology have taught the integration of faith and psychology. Churches have developed wonderful support programs that combine the two. As a psychologist and ordained clergyperson, I work with pastors and church staff so that people benefit from both sources of healing. Great strides have been made in psychology so that our ethical standards now require respect for a person's belief system.

To balance the impression of this survey's results, please consider an article that will further discuss how psychology and faith can be seen as partners that are not in conflict.

Bob Justice Lancaster, Pennsylvania

#### WHERE WE STAND: AMNESTY IS NOT A DIRTY WORD p. 23

No doubt Mark Galli's editorial regarding amnesty for illegal immigrants is motivated by a Christian perspective. However, critical elements are missing.

Amnesty is pardon granted to groups of persons who have broken laws regarding (human) government. Nowhere is amnesty suggested in the Bible as God's method of dealing with our sins; they are dealt with individually. Moreover, amnesty makes no attempt to pay for the laws broken: God's salvation was paid for in full by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. There is no place for repentance in amnesty.

People who avoid or break legitimate and righteous laws generally do not deserve, nor should they expect, pardon for illegal acts. Legitimate governments are established by God in order to enforce legitimate laws. To willfully break those laws rejects God and his ordained structure for peace in a fallen world. And it's a slap in the face for those who seek lawfully to immigrate.

Robert W Pointer The Villages, Florida

Your editorial is so refreshing, both in substance and tone. Sadly, conservative evangelicals tend to react in simplistic and often ugly ways to what is a tragic and messy situation. The hostility of much of the evangelical community to these people and to any change in their legal status grieves me. Your essay was like a breath of fresh air. Let's pray for a genuinely Christlike response by the church.

Harold Netland

Professor, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Deerfield, illinois

#### THE QUIET FIGHTER p. 38

This feature, like much of Western media, centers a powerful white person as the most important figure of an African story. The title and the accompanying image present a powerful woman, Shannon Sedgwick Davis, with access to some of

the world's powerful movers and shakers, yet who is identified as a "mom." Her motherhood has nothing to do with her work in this story, and we would not say the same of a man in a similar situation.

Davis is presented as the major actor in blocking Joseph Kony's work-which she argues against herself. This is tied to neocolonialism. Davis's connection with Invisible Children (IC) and Kony 2012 is emblematic of problems of this article, particularly those of ic being white messiahs who erase voices of the local leadership. Ugandans are largely presented as ineffectual, as brutes, or as helpless victims. This furthers presentation of Africans as being either savages or weak children. Additionally, the article features a violent paramilitary that has taken valuable African land, a remnant of the colonial practices that have kept these countries substantially poor in the first place.

> Jason Dye Chicago

#### **BUYING BESTSELLERS** p. 50

Of course it's wrong to buy your way onto a bestseller list, but bestseller lists don't

mean anything anymore. If Snooki's book and 50 Shades of Grey can be bestsellers, being a bestseller isn't a compliment.

**f** Steve Lawrence

#### **RE-WORD: UNDERSTANDING SEEKING FAITH** *p.* 56

If ever there was an article needed, it was this one by Alister McGrath.

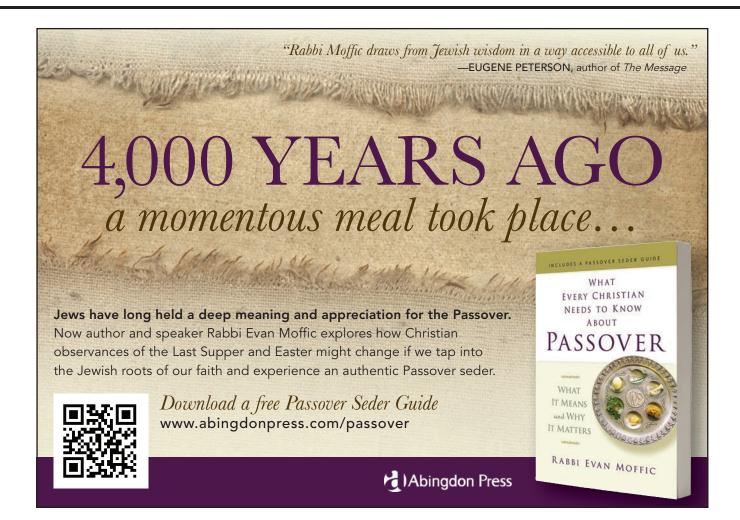
So many times we have a sound theological head and an empty heart. We go through the motions but have no real sense of the Master before us. McGrath points to the need.

I have found that once we experience the enormity of death and Jesus' victory over it, and realize that he ascended bodily into heaven and is there now, we may come to him as his disciples did. Time and space make no difference. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

> Wallace A. Bell Oceanside, California

#### REVIEWS: MoMA'S FRAGILE PRAYERS p. 66

Daniel Siedell asks the reader to look at modern art as an expression of the human experience asking the observer, even God



himself, to look closer and "Be with me." There is a perspective in grace here that is instructive to the nature of Christ lived out through his followers.

Unfortunately, his article takes a turn in the last line: "With them, I wanted to make sure that if Christ were speaking to us in these galleries—asking us to come closer, to look again, to be with him—we would have ears to hear." Elevating modern art and its (at times profane) expression of the human experience to the level of Christ asking us to draw closer is just too far of a stretch. To look up on the art of others with grace is Christ; to make it an object of worship is heresy.

Amanda Schroeder Hammonton, New Jersey

#### MY HIGHER CRITICISM CRISIS p. 96

A powerful read. I celebrate Gregory Alan Thornbury's willingness to go where the evidence leads, as all too many do not seem to be willing to do that.

**Fill Greenwood** 

This is a perfect example of why Christians should also be academics.

Jared Doyle > @jradio90



What Joshua Harris is doing will actually benefit not only himself but also the church. Entering college means being able to see and become exposed to different people of different backgrounds, and real experiences that will make him more effective in being relatable.

**If** Daphne Celine Ramos

Gleanings: "Why Joshua Harris Kissed His Megachurch Goodbye," by Morgan Lee.

The majority of women posting here agree that women should dress modestly. I suspect that the strident tone of some of the comments may be because, in the past, churches have put the burden of responsibility on women. Women were harped on continuously to dress modestly, sometimes with ridiculous dress codes enforced, but little was said about a man's responsibility to guard his own heart from lust.

If a man sees a woman as a fellow human being and joint heir with Christ, that will shape his reaction to her regardless of what she wears. That does not mean she should wear inappropriate clothing, but men will find the battle with lust to be different when they begin to look at women differently—not just as bodies to be enjoyed, but as whole persons made in the image of God.

Anne Acker

Her.meneutics: "To the Christian Men and Women Debating Yoga Pants," by Lore Ferguson and Paul Maxwell.

A great question! Chances are we all grow/mature/evolve in our faith. Labels often fail to capture that nuance/complexity.

Jeffrey Barker 📂 @jtbarker310

"Is Billy Graham an Evangelical?" by Ted Olsen. Review of America's Pastor by Grant Wacker.



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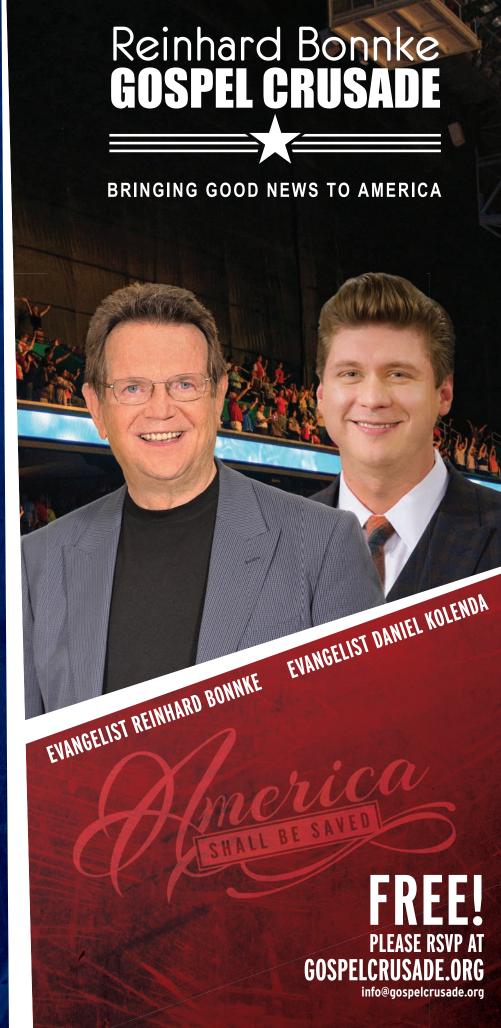
ATLANTA VANCOUVER SAN DIEGO



There is urgency in my heart to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ in America. These two American crusades are coming SOON! I hope that you will be there with us to help promote, pray, volunteer and give as God leads us into this great harvest of souls in America.

My team is now on two active Gospel fronts: Africa and America. I have seen God in His omnipotence in Africa. Over time our ministry saw 74 million people respond to the call of salvation. Our God is an awesome God. Thankfully, believers in America have enabled us financially to bring in this harvest of souls in Africa, but now "the bread cast upon the waters shall return to you." God spoke to me that the time had come for a mighty wave of salvation to sweep the USA from city to city, from state to state, and from coast to coast. And since Jesus Christ is the same there and here, I expect no small outcome. America shall be saved.









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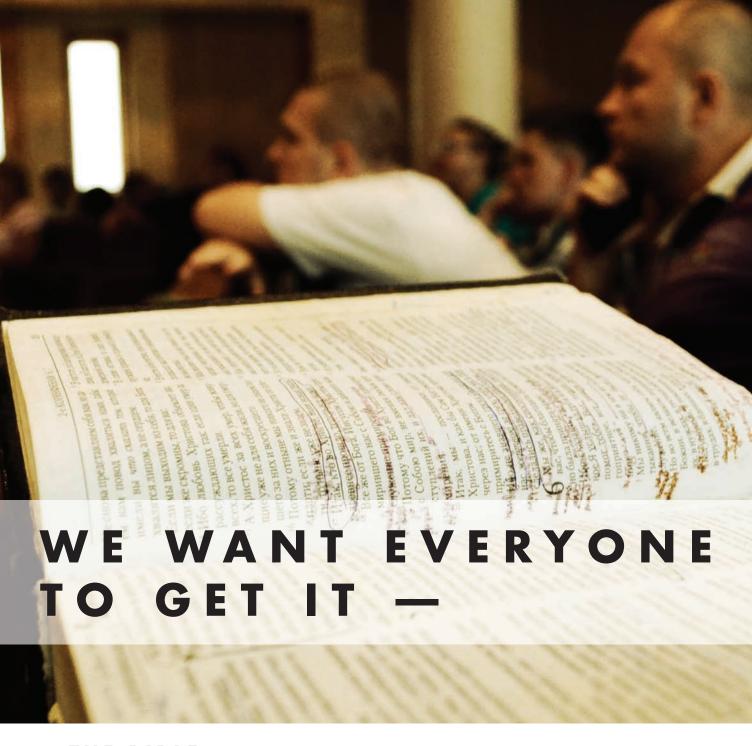
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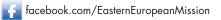
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#### **CLOUD OF WITNESSES**

**EGYPT:** Islamist terrorists in Libya sought attention in filming the beheading of 21 Coptic Christians. And they got it—for the martyrs, honored with an icon (above) and a day in the Coptic church calendar. The Bible Society of Egypt transformed the ISIS propaganda video's "two rows by the sea" into its largest outreach in 130 years. In 1.65 million tracts on God's promise of blessing amid suffering, it asked: "Who fears the other? The row in orange, watching paradise open? Or the row in black, with minds evil and broken?"

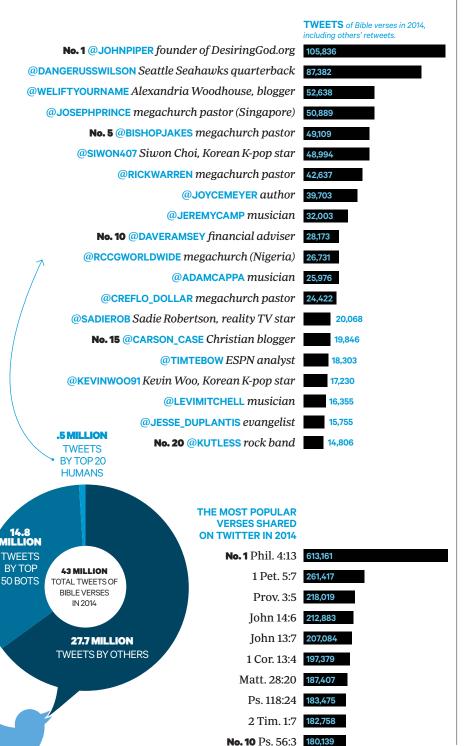


### GLEANINGS



#### Who Makes the Bible Go Viral

Last year, 2.6 million Twitter users shared Bible verses 43 million times. After filtering out spambots, OpenBible.info calculated the top sharers and how many verses circulated thanks to them:



#### InterVarsity firing bolsters parachurch rights

Good news for parachurch organizations: The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that ministries can hire or fire employees based on religious criteria, just like churches can. A divorcing employee sued InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) for sex discrimination after she was fired for "failing to reconcile her marriage." But the court ruled that since IVCF is a religious group, its "ministerial employees" can't challenge their termination under federal or state employment discrimination laws. It didn't matter that the employee was a "spiritual director" and not a "minister," since the title conveys a religious meaning, the court said.

#### Bible society (ironically) moves to Philadelphia

Two centuries ago, the Philadelphia Bible Society was the leading opponent when America's dozens of societies merged into a national group. The American Bible Society (ABS) formed in 1816 and was headquartered in Manhattan. This year, ABS made the "heart-wrenching" decision to leave its 12-story building on Broadway in favor of the lower cost of living in the City of Brotherly Love. ABS will help displaced ministries—including Young Life and the Museum of Biblical Art—relocate, and hopes to move in before Pope Francis visits Philadelphia in September.

# UNITED KINGDOM Barnabas Fund founder resigns after conviction

The founder and director of one of the world's largest advocates for persecuted Christians has been convicted of sexually assaulting a woman in his office. Patrick Sookhdeo, 67, led Barnabas Aid International, which focuses primarily on supporting Christians living in the Muslim world. The charity investigated the incident prior to the British jury verdict and expressed "full support" for its founder. Sookhdeo denies the victim's accusation that he groped her, saying he accidentally touched her breast while pulling away from a hug. He was also

#### 'Racial reconciliation is a gospel mandate.'

77%

White pastors who strongly agree

64%

African American pastors who strongly agree

#### 'My church is involved with racial reconciliation at the local level.'

32%

White pastors who strongly agree

53%

African American pastors who strongly agree

LIFEWAY RESEARCH

convicted on two counts of intimidating witnesses. The charity's work in 60 countries "is in no way impacted," a Barnabas trustee told ct. "The work is much bigger than one man."

### CANADA First Christian law school can set sex standards

A law society can't deny graduates of Canada's first Christian law school the right to practice because of the college's position on sexuality, a Nova Scotia Supreme Court justice ruled. Last spring, the Nova Scotia Barristers' Society offered Trinity Western University (TWU) law graduates recognition—but only if the school struck its rules against "sexual intimacy that violates the sacredness of marriage between a man and a woman." Asking TWU to change its community covenant is akin to dictating that professors should be offered tenure or setting admissions policies, justice Jamie Campbell wrote. Half of Canada's 10 provincial law societies have approved the law school, which had hoped to open in 2016. But the school is still waiting on approval from the minister of advanced education and from provincial law societies in Ontario and British Columbia.

#### Christian hip-hop changes how *Billboard* ranks music

After the wild success of Lecrae and other Christian hip-hop artists on the *Billboard* gospel charts in recent years—Lecrae won four top spots in gospel categories last year, including No. 1 gospel artist of

the year—*Billboard* said most Christian rap and hip-hop titles will no longer count as "gospel" music. They'll still qualify for Christian, rap, and overall sales charts. Lecrae's Reach Records label supports the change, and some industry experts wonder if Christian rap should become its own category. "*Christian* and *gospel* are not musical genres, rather labels that let a consumer know that the content in the lyrics are Christian-based," wrote Chad Horton, cofounder of Rapzilla, a Christian rap site. *Billboard* should roll gospel music into the Christian charts too, he said.

### Muslim nation gets first Christian TV channel

Turkey's Christian population has dwindled to less than 200,000, but their voice just got louder. For the first time, a Christian television channel is now broadcasting on Turkey's government-regulated satellite, which reaches more than 50 million viewers. Produced by Turkish Christians, the channel SAT-7 TÜRK streamed online for 360 hours last year; it's expecting to expand its airtime significantly under the new deal. "So many things have miraculously fallen into place over the past few months that it is impossible to miss the hand of God," said Terence Ascott, founder and chief executive officer of SAT-7. Open Doors put Turkey back on its 2015 list of countries where it's hardest to be a Christian. But in January, prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu approved the building of the first Christian church in Istanbul in 100 years.

## Pastors punished for failing to heal sick woman

When five Christians prayed for a sick woman who later died, a Laotian provincial court imprisoned and fined them for being "illegal doctors." The woman who died asked for prayer from local Christian leaders after unsuccessful treatments from healers and doctors. Morning Star News reported. The Christians were arrested following a dispute over her burial. The case is an example of Buddhist-majority Laos targeting minority faiths, said Human Rights Watch's Phil Robertson. "If this group of five is charged and convicted for doing nothing more than praying at a dying woman's side, then this could mark a new nadir for religious freedom in the country."



# "We were surprised and delighted."

Playmobil, on its new Martin Luther figurine becoming its fastest-selling toy ever. Made in honor of the upcoming 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, 34,000 of the mini-Reformers sold out within 3 days.

#### **Under Discussion**

By Morgan Lee



#### Q: Should unaccredited Bible colleges be allowed to grant degrees?

Some Christian schools challenge an Illinois requirement. Experts weigh in.

ollege students strive for one goal: a degree. Dayspring Bible College and Seminary wants to give them one after they complete its programs. But the suburban Chicago school only issues certificates and diplomas. The Illinois Board of Higher Education forbids Dayspring from offering a "degree" because it doesn't meet accreditation standards.

Earlier this year, Dayspring and a handful of other Illinois-based Bible colleges filed a federal lawsuit accusing the state board of overstepping the First Amendment and infringing on their rights to free religious exercise and free speech.

The lawsuit argues that the current ban financially hurts unaccredited Bible colleges because it communicates that their education is inferior and thus dissuades prospective students. And if the schools pursued accreditation, which is costly, they would become unaffordable. (According to the lawsuit, Bible colleges generally run 25 to 30 percent of the cost of a liberal arts school.)

Twenty-eight states currently exempt Bible colleges from regulation. One of the most recent states to deregulate was Texas.

In 2007, the state supreme court ruled

that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board could not forbid the unaccredited Tyndale Theological Seminary and Bible Institute from calling itself a "seminary" or using words such as *degree, bachelor, master*, and *doctor*. Such terms belonged to the church before the government claimed them.

Nearly 30 Bible colleges were established in the decision's wake. Yet not all similar schools in Texas liked the ruling. B. H. Carroll Theological Institute continued pursuing accreditation in spite of the outcome. Its spokesperson said, "Accountability is a biblical mandate."

The ruling even led to one Bible college losing its state endorsement. Texas had not permitted Rio Grande Bible College to grant degrees because of operational concerns, such as professors having to raise their own support. But the school gained permission (separately from Tyndale's victory) when the state agreed to accept Rio Grande's accreditation from the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE).

Then, in 2013, a Texas education board decided that solely religious degrees were outside of its jurisdiction, and revoked Rio Grande's bachelor of biblical studies.

Instead, the degree is now overseen by a nonacademic entity, the Texas Workforce Commission, which Rio Grande president Larry Windle believes stigmatizes the school. He says the move gives the perception that the degree is inferior to those overseen by the higher education board. Additionally, he finds it ironic that some religious schools are more hesitant to accept Rio Grande's credits than secular schools are.

In recent years, due to the rise of distance learning and increased oversight of financial aid, government scrutiny has increased, said ABHE president Ralph Enlow. The ABHE accredits more than 100 Bible colleges.

If Dayspring is allowed to call its diplomas "degrees," Will Friesen, provost of nearby Judson University, doesn't think it would undercut the value of his accredited four-year program. But, as a Bible college alumnus himself, he finds unaccredited schools' claims that they offer equivalent degrees "troubling."

The questions remain: Do the current restrictions violate schools' religious freedom? Or do they safeguard the meaning of the word *degree*?



(NO)

"Degree is an important word that impacts attracting students, faculty, and donors. It impacts students' ability to get jobs. Thousands of Illinois teenagers want, but cannot afford, higher education. It is time we save taxpayers and religious groups the expense of unnecessary regulation, and give teenagers more choice to keep them from leaving the state."

**John Mauck,** attorney, Illinois Bible Colleges Association "We oppose obtaining state approval to grant degrees. Doing so would interfere with our religious liberty to direct religious education as we see fit, predicated on the Bible. Seeking state approval would also burden us with added costs, make the college less efficient, and limit our ability to develop members of the church."

Reginald J. Saffo, president, United Faith Christian Institute and Bible College, Illinois "I empathize with those who want to insist on a more fully unfettered claim to religious liberty. But there is a reasonable state interest in protecting the meaning and integrity of the word degree in light of the large and growing number of degree and diploma mills—including many religious ones."

**Ralph Enlow,** president, Association for Biblical Higher Education "The problem isn't that this will cheapen degrees from accredited programs, or give unregulated schools unwarranted advantages for recruiting students. It's the propensity of religious entities to offer bogus programs in 'degree mills.' Who will make them accountable for fraud in an unregulated industry?"

**Bruce Corley,** former president, B. H. Carroll Theological Institute, Texas

"For Bible colleges to say that they're doing the same thing with their degrees as liberal arts schools is troubling. We expect that doctors and nurses have had the right exams and that they keep up with their fields. Higher education has the same standardization, and to have one portion do something nonstandard and call it a degree is suspicious."

**Will Friesen,** provost, Judson University, Illinois



Evangelism

# Messianic Judaism Flourishes in Holocaust Towns

Ukrainian Jews who follow Yeshua also plant congregations worldwide.

early one year after Jews for Jesus launched one of its most successful and controversial evangelism campaigns, more than 1.3 million people worldwide have watched *That Jew Died for You*.

The three-minute YouTube video depicts Jesus carrying the cross to a gas chamber. The film's goal was to "reshape views of Jesus and his relationship to the Holocaust." Pegged to Yom HaShoah, a day when Israel remembers the Holocaust (held April 15 this year), many Jews called it the "most tasteless YouTube video ever."

In Ukraine, where nearly 1 million Jews were murdered during World War II, Holocaust references are usually used to make political points. During January's 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Russian and Ukrainian leaders compared each other to Nazis and publicly fought over which country should get the credit for freeing the Polish concentration camp.

But Ukraine's Messianic Jewish community is talking about the Holocaust in its evangelistic efforts. And now Messianic congregations are thriving in many of the same communities that suffered the deepest Holocaust wounds.

#### REMEMBRANCE AND EDUCATION

The Soviet Union suppressed information about the Holocaust in its effort to create a "common Soviet people," said Igor Rusniak, director of the Bible college at Kiev Jewish Messianic Congregation (KJMC). Thus, many Ukrainian Christians still don't grasp that the Holocaust targeted

Worshipers celebrate during a Saturday evening Shabbat service at the world's largest Messianic church: Kiev Jewish Messianic Congregation.

Jews in particular. Rusniak says, "Practically every Jewish family in Ukraine has relatives who were murdered by Nazis during the war." For these Jews, the Holocaust only proved that Christians with power are not to be trusted.

One way Messianic congregations like KJMC have tried to bridge the gap between Jews and Christians is through an annual interdenominational prayer meeting against anti-Semitism. Rusniak's Bible college also trains Jewish and Gentile ministers how to identify, understand, and oppose anti-Semitism, and teaches



how the Holocaust shaped modern Jewish identity.

It has also shaped their location. KJMC, reportedly the world's largest Messianic congregation with 1,600 attenders, is less than 10 miles from the site of one of the Holocaust's largest massacres: Babi Yar. This Kiev ravine is where Nazi soldiers and local police killed more than 33,000 Jews in 2 days. In Berdichev, a northern city where German soldiers slaughtered

half the country's population.)

Now, as Jews emigrate en masse from Ukraine, its Messianic believers are planting churches around the world.

#### **PLANTING LIKE ANDREW**

Judaism and Christianity share a long history in Ukraine. Jews may have lived in Greek communities in the Dnieper River valley as early as the fourth century B.C. From the 1790s to 1917, a large portion of the Jewish Pale of Settlement—the area where Jews inside Russia were required to live—fell within Ukraine.

"Before the revolution, in the days of Imperial Russia," notes longtime evangelical Ukrainian leader Grigori Komendant, a Messianic leader in Berlin who immigrated to Germany in 1995, told ct that almost every Messianic believer from his former congregation left Ukraine to launch ministries in other countries.

KJMC is now 1 of about 150 Russianlanguage Messianic congregations worldwide. Before the *perestroika* (restructuring) movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s across the Soviet Union, there were maybe a couple such congregations, according to Mitch Glaser, president of Chosen People Ministries (CPM) in New York City.

Of the 1,600 who regularly attend KJMC, some 30 to 40 percent are Jewish by birth. (Glaser says this is roughly the same as US Messianic congregations.) And it now has 19 daughter congregations worldwide.

"We live in a special time of restoration," says Boris Grisenko, κJMC's leader and founder. "Now we see hundreds of Jewish Messianic congregations in different countries. It's an unusual moment when Jews are coming to the Lord—to their own Master, King, Messiah, Savior."

Ukrainians are also shaping Messianic life in Israel. Michael Zinn, Israel director for CPM, estimates that almost half of the 20,000 Russian-speaking Jews in Israel who believe in Christ are from Ukraine.

All these trends together make Ukraine highly influential for reaching Jewish people globally with the gospel, said Jonathan Bernis, founder of Phoenix-based Jewish Voice Ministries International. "Ukraine probably represents the greatest opportunity to reach Jewish people," he says.

LCJE director Jim Melnick agrees. He says growth inside Israel and among ethnic Russians means there are more Messianic believers now than at any time since the first century.

It would be better if there was more evangelistic growth inside Ukraine, says Anatoli Emma, Jews for Jesus' branch director in Kiev. He saw large numbers of Jews coming to Christ right after Ukraine declared independence from Russia in 1991. But conversions have slowed significantly.

He's undeterred. "As Jews, our goal is to minister to the nations," says Emma. "We are those who God has used for thousands of years, and he wants to use us the same way now."

Lincoln Brunner in Kiev

# 'Ukraine probably represents the greatest opportunity to reach Jewish people.'

JONATHAN BERNIS founder, Jewish Voice Ministries International

15,000 Jews, a Messianic Jewish congregation of about 200 people gathers weekly.

"We...rejoice that many Jewish people are coming to faith in Messiah in places that witnessed some of the worst atrocities of the Holocaust period," stated the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE). The group met in Kiev for its 10th European conference last April. More than 80 participants from 19 nations gathered largely "to affirm and encourage these Jewish followers of Jesus," and to recognize "the enormous number of Jewish followers of Jesus who perished in the Holocaust."

Today, an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 Ukrainian Jews worship Jesus as Messiah. This makes Ukraine, a nation of 45 million, the region's fulcrum of the Messianic Jewish movement. (By comparison, Ukraine has about 1.7 million evangelical Christians and more than 23 million Orthodox Christians, who constitute about

"there were more synagogues in Ukraine than in Israel itself."

Christians may have arrived in Ukraine as early as the first century. According to tradition, the apostle Andrew—whose green-domed namesake church overlooks Kiev's historic Right Bank—traveled to the area around A.D. 45. (This symbolically makes him the first Messianic Jew in Ukraine.)

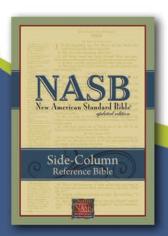
Tens of thousands of Jews have left Ukraine over the past 25 years. The 1989 Soviet census listed more than 487,000 Jews living in Ukraine. The National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry estimates that 300,000 Jews remain today, but other estimates range as low as 63,000.

Most Jewish immigrants have relocated to Israel, the United States, and Germany. From 2000 to 2012, about 68,000 Ukrainian and Moldovan Jews moved to Israel. In 2014 alone, more than 5,100 Ukrainian Jews immigrated to Israel. Vladimir Pikman,



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23



**IF YOUR CHURCH TENDS** to use contemporary worship songs and leave hymns aside, on Good Friday you'll probably sing plenty about the Cross, the death of Christ, salvation, grace, and related topics. But you're unlikely to sing about the blood of Christ. That's too bad, because as the old hymn goes, there is not only power in the blood, but also a rich well of meaning that the biblical writers were not even aware of.

This isn't an editorial about worship wars. This isn't about Wesley versus Wickham. In fact, if you look at the modern worship being *produced*, there's a fair bit of sanguinary speech. Chris Tomlin's latest album is titled *Love Ran Red*. On David Crowder's most recent album he

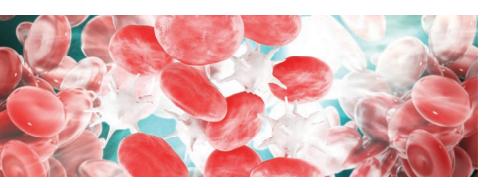
#### As the old hymn goes, there is not only power in the blood, but also a rich well of meaning that the biblical writers were not even aware of.

And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

His blood can make the foulest clean, his blood availed for me.



sings, "Whatever you've done can't overcome the power of the blood." And Matt Redman goes for the jugular:

Your blood speaks a better word than all the empty claims I've heard upon the earth. Speaks righteousness for me.

The song—an update of Robert Lowry's Reconstruction-era hymn "Nothing but the Blood"—gained popularity when it was released a decade ago. But it's no longer sung in many churches. Only 8 of the top 100 songs licensed by Christian Copyright Licensing International (which covers almost all modern worship sung in churches) even *mention* Jesus' blood. And none of the top 100 focuses on it.

That's remarkable, given how blooddrenched our sung faith has been in ages past. I have a funny reaction to these hymns: I love them. They are among the most common songs that get stuck in my head—especially William Cowper's "There Is a Fountain" (specifically Willie Nelson's 1976 honky-tonk cover). What's ironic is that like about 4 percent of the US population, I am mildly hemophobic. Seeing blood or hearing people describe injuries makes my heart rate and blood pressure drop. But somehow I can sing, "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains," and not pass out.

One of the most famous pieces CT ever published was Philip Yancey and physician Paul Brand's 1983 three-part series on blood. In it, Brand describes how the blood in each of us does physically what Jesus' blood does metaphysically. Blood cleanses us, it gives us life, it is life. More recently, Horace Smith, a clinical hematologist as

well as the pastor of Chicago's Apostolic Faith Church and a former World Vision board member, took up those themes in *Blood Works*. It's clear that both physicians are as absolutely enthralled with blood as I am horrified by it.

"The wonders within us . . . showcase God's masterpiece of creation and redemption," Smith writes. "Our blood is one of the most powerful examples of common grace in our lives, and it tells volumes about God's tender, tenacious care [as it also serves] as a metaphor of the second kind of grace God gives us: special or saving grace. . . . Far from being barbaric, blood is truly beautiful."

Blood nourishes. Blood eliminates toxins. Blood protects us from pathogens. White blood cells sacrifice themselves. Blood heals our wounds. Blood identifies us. Blood unites us.

Meanwhile, Christ's blood justifies, redeems, reconciles, sanctifies, justifies, cleans, frees, ransoms, brings peace, and unites us. There is not an aspect of the work of Christ that the New Testament does not connect to his blood.

Blood is beautiful. Blood is horrifying. Blood means life. Blood means death. Jesus' blood is an object of deepest devotion and deepest horror.

But the power of the image is not the only reason we could use more explicit blood language as we contemplate the Cross. We should also consider how important it has been in God's own discussion of that work. Early 20th-century Methodist theologian Vincent Taylor noted that the New Testament writers used the word three times more often than *cross* and five times more often than *death* to talk about the Atonement. As we might sing ever more often: There really is wonderful power in the blood.

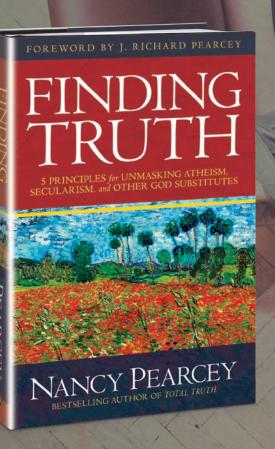
 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{TED}}$   $\ensuremath{\mathsf{OLSEN}}$  is CT managing editor for news and online journalism.

# Don't Think, Just Believe?

That's the mantra in many circles today—whether the church, the classroom, the campus, or the voting booth.

In *Finding Truth*, Nancy Pearcey explains 5 powerful principles that penetrate to the core of any set of ideas—secular or religious—to uncover its deepest motivations and weigh its claims.

A former agnostic, Pearcey demonstrates that a robust Christian worldview matches reality—that it is not only true but also inviting, granting higher dignity to the human person than any alternative.



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# Which false teachings are evangelical Christians most tempted to believe in?

Hidden heresies come in many shapes and sizes.



#### **Cherith Fee Nordling** hat Jesus Isn't Human

hristians profess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Scripture, the historic creedal traditions, and the church's worship robustly intersect at this point.

However, when we examine what it means that Jesus is God's Son, it's not long before some common misperceptionslet's be frank, false teachings-come to

light. They center on Jesus' humanity.

Throughout most of church history, and certainly within historical evangelicalism, the deity of Christ has been undisputed. Not so concerning his humanity. While we affirm Jesus as both fully divine and fully human, we do not take his humanity seriously, especially as his human life relates to our own.

The New Testament takes Jesus' humanity for granted. That's what made Jesus' messianic claims, and the early church's worship of him as Lord, so radical.

In the words of Paul, the incarnate Son "did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage" (Phil. 2:6). He relinquished his own power by submitting to the limits of a truly human life. This means he lived (and was raised) as we are called to—through the empowering Holy Spirit.

Church leaders in the first several centuries pressed for clarity in worship and proclamation of this one person, the incarnate, preexistent Son, Jesus of Nazareth. Heresies (false teachings that tried to relieve the tension of this mystery) abounded. These false teachings prompted the creeds. The Nicene and Apostles' creeds among others are shorthand presentations of the gospel. They declare the divine lordship of the Father, Son, and Spirit, the unity of Jesus' human and divine natures, his place in history, and our subsequent place in the triune story.

In the face of modern challenges to Jesus' divinity, we often fall into heresies regarding his humanity. Too often he is the divine Son who borrowed a human body in order to teach, heal, and perform the miracles that proved his divine authority and his power to save us from sin.

Embedded in this "gospel" are some utterly false implications: that the material world is evil: that the divine Son of God was and is not truly a man "sharing Z our humanity"; and that, because he is God, Jesus had power to be sinless and to do cool stuff. We're not, so we don't.

When we fail to take Jesus' humanity seriously, the consequences are dire. Such a Savior knows nothing about our broken, tempted humanity and our need for the Spirit's empowering presence. And we know little about his glorious cruciform power, authority, and renewed righteousness in our own experience. We have no new Adam, no mediating human high priest, no king with whom we participate in our final resurrected destiny as image-bearing children of God.

If Jesus isn't really like us, then we are excused from being like him. Yet that is what 1 John tells us is the evidence of lives anointed by the Spirit, discerning truth from falsehood by the evidence of God's love in and among us—that "in this world we are like Jesus" (4:17), conformed to the truly human, gloriously cruciform image of the Son.

**CHERITH FEE NORDLING** is associate professor of theology at Northern Seminary, Lombard, Illinois.

#### Marguerite Shuster That Grace Isn't Supreme

resumably all evangelicals who know what the e word means affirm that we are saved by grace alone. Ask them, "Friend, are you saved?" and they know that a "yes" depends on trusting in something irreplaceable Jesus did for them at the Cross, not on their being nice. In this basic sense, evangelicals are not confused about the fundamental tenets of their faith.

The problem is behavioral denial. If the ancient formula *lex orandi, lex credendi* ("the law of praying is the law of believing") can teach us anything, it is that how we behave, how we worship, and what we do eventually will be reflected in what we teach.

Consider our worship services. The preaching in many evangelical churches frequently majors in heart-rending stories in service of motivational speeches, pop psychology, and "helpful hints for happier homes"—or at best a series of "biblical principles" to apply to live better lives. What we can and should do almost wholly displaces what God has done on our behalf. A call to worship from the transcendent God is often supplanted by a cheery, entirely secular "Good morning," repeated until the requisite response volume is achieved.

A student told me of a service at a megachurch where there were no prayers at all. Those designing the service determined that there was no time for them. No time for speaking to God in worship? And when a charge (instruction as to what we should do) displaces a benediction (blessing from God to go forth empowered to live lives worthy of our calling), we truly are shut up to our own strength.

With respect to salvation, the problem is at least as severe as our neglect of Paul's words in Romans 6:1, urgently  $warning\,us\,not\,to\,suppose\,we\,may\,sin\,so$ that grace may abound. Salvation does not entail entire sanctification in this life. But surely it entails a reorienting of our hearts' desires, so that we are at least grieved by our besetting sins. How is it that seminarians can vigorously defend profanity, obscenity, and vulgarity as proper evangelistic tools, as I have heard them do? How can "holiness" have become a term evoking scorn, derision, avoidance, except by confusing it with obnoxious, sticky, pretentious piety? Do we actually even want to be saved, in the sense of being freed from the dominion of sin?

Or is it that we have forgotten, or do not wish to believe, that we are the sorts of people who actually need to be saved? And who can by no means save ourselves, but are wholly dependent upon grace?

**MARGUERITE SHUSTER** is Ockenga Professor Emerita of preaching and theology, and senior professor at Fuller Seminary.

### Amos Yong **That Racism Is Gone**

n the early church, false teachings were designated as heresies—from the Greek *hairesis*, meaning "choice." False teachings were insidious because they promoted dissension within the one, holy, and catholic church.

If we want to know which heresies abound today, we should examine the teachings and beliefs that cause division in the church. To be sure, any truth claims are going to divide those who affirm and those who reject such. In that sense, Christian teachings will naturally divide.

But we might label some teachings as false if they inappropriately divide an already fragmented people of God. In a time when the body of Christ is divided along political, ethnic, and racial lines, we must work especially hard to weed out the teachings that hinder church unity.

Two false teachings are especially

pernicious. The first is political correctness, which arose out of ethical and even prophetic intentions to promote harmony across ethnic divides. It has deteriorated into a stance that advances one's racial or ethnic group's agenda against those of the dominant culture. Political correctness presumes a zero-sum game so that the gains of "my" group mean the losses of the dominant group.

One reaction to political correctness opens us up to the second false teaching: that we evangelicals live in postracial churches and communities. This is rarely if ever promoted as official teaching or doctrine. It is much more destructive because it is communicated in so many subtle, unquestioned ways. For instance, in multiethnic and multiracial churches, and in some megachurches, visible congregational diversity is presumed as conclusive evidence that Christians have overcome the racial and ethnic divides of the past.

Yet the long-standing Euro-American cultural privilege persists in many churches. Too many times, ethnic minorities, especially blacks and Hispanics, are marginalized and then blamed for it. In contrast, as ct reported in its October 2014 cover story, Asian Americans like myself are considered "model minorities." By naming this mindset as falsely suggesting we live in a postracial society and culture, I confirm my own (Asian American) stereotypical status as a "perpetual foreigner." Will majority-white evangelicalism always keep the nonwhite, brown, or black on the margins?

As a Pentecostal, I embrace the incomprehensible unity of the day of Pentecost narrative. Acts 2 points a way forward between the falsity of either political correctness or postracist presumption. The voices at Pentecost speak together and yet remain distinct, showing us that perplexing harmony is possible and biblical. It is a harmony that does not require all voices, cultures, and ethnicities to be the same in order for the wondrous works of God to be revealed. May this Pentecostal message retrieve the half-truths of these false teachings and redeem their ecumenical promise for the North American church.

**AMOS YONG,** director of the Center for Missiological Research and professor of theology at Fuller Seminary, is author of *The Future of Evangelical Theology*.

#### HER.MENEUTICS

**Sharon Hodde Miller** is a wife, mom, writer, and speaker. She blogs at SheWorships.com and tweets at @SHoddeMiller.



# By These Scars

What Jesus and women who have given birth have in common.

efore I had children, I thought pregnant women were adorable. Their faces glowed; their bellies rounded out trendy maternity wear. I dreamed of one day donning a baby belly, as if it were the latest accessory.

Then I became pregnant, and I didn't feel cute at all. I felt only large.

Naturally petite, my weight never fluctuated much as an adult. I prided myself on my positive body image, but pregnancy revealed that self-esteem can be easily stripped away. As soon as my weight began to rise, my confidence plummeted.

My body has since expanded and contracted twice to make room for two little boys. Each time, I reveled in the miracle of a tiny life growing inside me, in awe of the delicate flutters that grew into kicks and rolls. But each pregnancy also tested my notions of beauty and of the body. In a culture where thin reigns supreme, where "skinny pregnancy" is an aspiration, and where Hollywood touts actresses' impressive postbaby bodies, it's easy for women to see their weight gain and belly fat as problems, even during pregnancy.

When I became pregnant the first time, I grieved the changes that my body endured. My body will forever bear the marks and scars of bringing life into the world. But I have come to realize that those scars place me in good company.

This month. Christians all over the world celebrate the death and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ, On Good Friday, we mourn his crucifixion. On Easter Sunday, we rejoice at his victory over the grave. Yet we don't yet celebrate Jesus' complete physical restoration. Even after he rose from the dead, Jesus bore the wounds of his execution, openly showing them to his disciples (John 20).

The bodily resurrection is one of the

great mysteries of our faith. Scripture passages such as 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 5 promise us that we will receive "heavenly bodies." Revelation 21:4 assures us we will be free from pain. We do not know much beyond that, making Jesus' scars a curious remnant of his earthly life. Why did his wounds remain even after his resurrection?

Celebrated 19th-century preacher Charles Spurgeon set out to understand the reason for Christ's abiding wounds. He wrote:

Beloved, these are to Jesus what they are to us; they are his ornaments, his royal jewels, his fair array. He does not care for the splendor and pomp of kings. The thorny crown is his diadem.

Spurgeon goes on to say that Christ's wounds are also his trophies,

the trophies of his love. Have you never seen a soldier with a gash across his forehead or in his cheek? Why every soldier will tell you the wound in battle is no disfigurement-it is his honor. "If," said he, "I received a wound when I was retreating, a wound in the back, that were to my

My body will forever bear the marks of bringing life into the world. But I have come to realize that those scars place me in good company.

disgrace, if I have received a wound in a victory, then it is an honorable thing to be wounded."

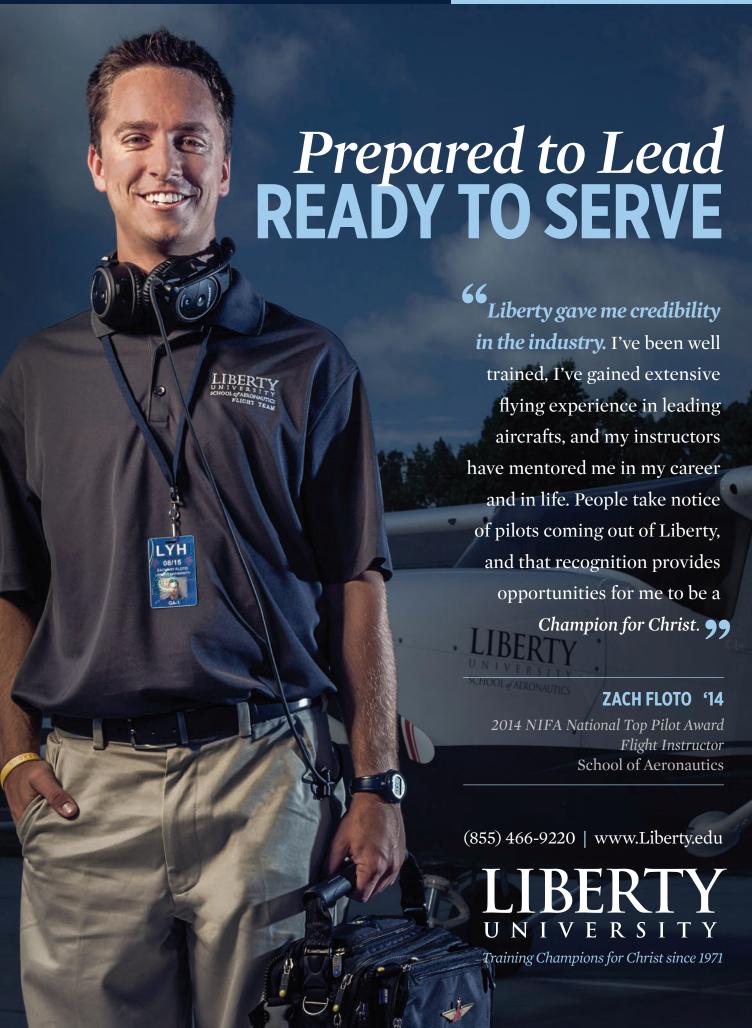
Here Spurgeon introduces a new way of seeing wounds. Although some scars remind us of pain or regret, other scars take on a kind of beauty. Jesus' wounds gave us life and set us free. They are among the latter type of scars. As Isaiah 53:5 puts it, "by his wounds we are healed."

After giving birth to my first son, I experienced this new way of seeing my scars. My husband surprised me when he confessed that, postpregnancy, he was more attracted to me than ever. My hips had widened and my belly softened, but the changes were the ornaments and trophies of bearing his sons. To him, my scars were beautiful.

My husband's perspective reminded me that the postbaby body is not a thing women need to be ashamed of. Rather, it is a signpost of the ever-greater loveliness of the postresurrection Christ. Conversely, Jesus' scars can inform the way we view women's bodies, an important witness in a culture like ours. Rather than try to overlook or fix pregnancy's changes, Christians can celebrate the beauty of a body whose physical sacrifice bore new life.

Jesus' scars also remind us that God can redeem all wounds, no matter the cause. Whether your scars are the result of something good or something terrible, God can take your afflictions and turn them into life.

I am still learning to embrace this perspective. Rather than strive after  $\frac{1}{2}$ the ideal postpregnancy body, I hope I  $_{\mathtt{z}}^{\circ}$ can glory in the body that gave my sons life. After all, these scars and marks echo a much greater beauty, of the One who laid himself down so that we may have



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# Don't Forget the Boring Bits

Even the building instructions and genealogies provide crucial teaching.

'm convinced the most boring parts of the Bible can teach us far more than we realize.

If we were to list the most tedious sections of Scripture, three types of passages would probably dominate. First would be the lists: genealogies, exile records, and census information. Second: purity laws, like those associated with the Book of Leviticus. The third type consists of descriptions of buildings, like the second half of Exodus, parts of Kings and Chronicles, and the end of Ezekiel. Many of us are exhausted by reading these sections, skimming them in our Bible reading plans and rarely expounding on them in our preaching and teaching.

Yet they all contain gems that we easily fail to mine. One bit of popular theology, in particular, would be soundly squashed by carefully studying one or two "dull" texts. I'm referring to the idea taught-and even sung-in many churches today, that we need to wait for the Spirit's presence. A close look at the building descriptions throughout the Old Testament challenges this common misconception.

In the second half of Exodus, God tells Israel how to construct the tabernacle. He gives instructions, in minute detail, on how to fund, build, furnish, and decorate the house of God (Ex. 25-31). They did it all exactly as the Lord had commanded Moses. After 15 chapters of detail, we are relieved to hear that "all the work of the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, was completed" (39:32). And Moses blessed God's people (39:43). With the house of God finally established, a fiery cloud covered the tent, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (40:34). Notice the chain of events:

God commands  $\rightarrow$  the people obey  $\rightarrow$ "the work was finished" → a blessing is given → God's presence comes.

The next building project we encounter is Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 2-7). Instructions are given to David (1 Chron. 28:11-19), then carried out by his son Solomon (2 Chron. 2-4). After Solomon finished the work, he blessed the people (6:3), fire came down from heaven, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple (7:1–3). We see the same sequence of events as in Exodus: commands, obedience, "the work was finished," blessing, presence.

This is what happens when God prepares a home for himself. He speaks, his people obey, it gets finished, God blesses, and he dwells. It extends back to the Creation, actually: "God said ... and it was so ... the heavens and the earth were finished ... and God blessed ... the Lord God was walking in the garden." As it turns out, these long, repetitive passages about buildings tell us something profound about how God comes to live among his people.

Yet each of these stories is just a shadow

Some popular theology would be soundly squashed by carefully studying one or two 'dull' texts.

of what Jesus accomplished to build God's permanent house. God gave commands. Iesus obeyed them, perfectly: he resisted temptation, honored the law, fulfilled the Scriptures, and submitted himself to the Father's will. As his accomplishment reached its fullest expression on the cross, Jesus cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Then, after rising from the dead, he blessed his people and told them to wait for the Father's promise (Luke 24:49-50). Ten days later, God's fiery presence fell from heaven—the Spirit filled the place where the disciples had gathered (Acts 2:1-4). The house of God is complete. God commanded, Jesus obeyed, the work was finished, the priest-king blessed the people, and now God has come, by his Spirit, to live with his people forever.

The apostles never say that we need to wait for God to come and dwell among us. They insist he already has. "Don't you know that you are God's temple?" Paul exclaims to the hapless Corinthians. "We are his house," says the writer of Hebrews, whose audience was on the verge of falling away. And Peter says, "You're being built into a temple of the Spirit." In other words, God has chosen his home, moved in, and put his feet up. He's not going anywhere.

So to "wait for God's presence" is to neglect a profound biblical reality. It's like going on a date and spending the entire time explaining why you'd love to go on a date. God's great building project, the church of Jesus Christ, is finished. Rather than asking him to dwell in us, we should simply enjoy the fact that he already does. Commands, obedience, "it o is finished," blessing, presence. Thank God for the boring bits.

# Presbyterians: We can do better than divestment

We, the undersigned leaders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), are deeply committed to a just and lasting peace between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. We have watched the events of the past few months with great dismay: the murder of Israeli and Palestinian teenagers; the trauma of increasing rocket attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians; the extensive suffering and death of Palestinians from Israel's military response; the discovery of tunnels for major terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians; and the unabated expansion of settlements. More broadly, the rise of ISIS, the persecution of Middle Eastern Christians, and a wave of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe and North America all point to the same conclusion: that the extreme elements of this conflict are gaining strength and influence. Meanwhile, those committed to the well-being of all are tempted to join in the polarization or to sink into silence and despair.

Last June, the General Assembly of our church voted very narrowly to approve the divestment of stock in three companies deemed as complicit in the occupation of the Palestinian territories. We are among the many Presbyterians all over the country who have worked against this action, believing that divestment would strengthen the extreme positions on both sides of this conflict without alleviating the suffering of Palestinians — and further divide and discourage the vast center of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that longs for justice with love for both peoples. We continue to dissent strongly from this divestment action, and many of the Presbyterians who fill our pews on Sunday mornings share this conviction.

Yet we are more convinced than ever that those who are concerned for justice and peace in the region must reject polarization, silence, despair, or inaction — starting with ourselves. Only by working together — Muslims, Jews, and Christians; Americans, Palestinians, and Israelis — can we hope to find the true path to a just and lasting peace for both peoples. To this end, we invite Presbyterians and all people of faith and moral conviction to join with us as we commit ourselves to the following aspirations and goals:

To reclaim the church's role as "repairer of the breach," nationally and locally, among ourselves and between Christians, Jews, and Muslims through deep and relational work that models peace and reconciliation with justice and compassion.

- To reaffirm boldly the church's commitment to a two-state solution with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace, each with secure borders, territorial integrity, and a fair share of natural resources. We also restate our profound condemnation of the threats to a two-state solution, including: violence and terrorism, the Israeli settlements, and any denial of the legitimate aspirations of either party including their rights to a viable and secure homeland.
- To seek out opportunities in Palestine, Israel, and between Israelis and Palestinians for proactive investment in economic, educational, and interfaith ventures that promote understanding across ethnic and religious divides and that offer the tangible signs of a future where both Israelis and Palestinians may dwell in justice, security, and peace.

Most of all, we pledge ourselves anew to work with Israelis and Palestinians, with American Jews and American Palestinian Christians and Muslims, to affirm the aspirations and address the deep needs of both peoples, and to work toward the day when "they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:4).



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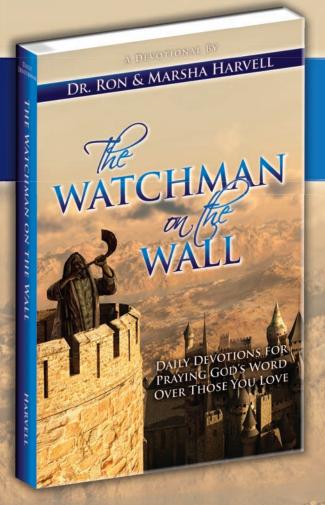
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—ISAIAH 37:21



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THE

# UNEXPECTED DEFENDERS

APOLOGETICS HAS LONG BEEN the bastion of men.
How a group of scholars is changing that.

By ANDREA PALPANT DILLEY Photography by JEREMY COWART

IN HOUSTON



olly ordway began her conversion to faith in a casino in Reno, Nevada, surrounded by slot machines. She had just competed in a North American Cup fencing tournament and was having dinner with her coach and his wife. "One of the Narnia films had just come out," Ordway told me.

"Our discussion of the film led to the question, Does God exist?"

As they talked late into the night, she traveled through a Lewisian wardrobe that landed her in a mysterious new country. "I discovered it was possible to think rationally about the faith," says Ordway. "There were arguments that at least stood up to preliminary testing. That was a fundamental *aha* moment, when my intellect was able to wake up and say, *Okay, this is interesting*. It was frightening and exciting."

At the time, Ordway was in her early 30s and teaching literature and composition at a public college in Southern California. Since graduate school, she had thought of Christians as superstitious, Christianity as a "blemish on modern civilization," and the Bible as a collection of fairy tales. "I was radicalized as an atheist and hostile toward Christians in general," says Ordway.

But as she continued talking to her coach and reading works of apologetics—including N.T. Wright's defense of the Resurrection—Ordway confessed faith in Christ. Now she finds herself in another new country, directing the master in apologetics (MAA) program at Houston Baptist University (HBU), a small liberal arts college in the heart of the nation's energy capital. There, she is among a burgeoning group of women who are reshaping apologetics in the West.

"These women are expanding the scope of apologetics beyond the traditional male bastion," says Lee Strobel, author of *The Case for Christ* and now on faculty in the MAA program. He sees his colleagues as building a movement that's "cutting across gender and racial barriers" to draw more people to faith.

"Women bring a deep relational intelligence to apologetics," says Kelly Monroe Kullberg, founder of the Veritas Forum, a university-based organization that hosts apologetics events across North America and Europe. "They bring a sense that biblical truth is the highest love for human beings."

"The next big breakthrough in apologetics will come from women," says John Mark Reynolds, HBU's provost and former Biola University philosophy professor. "If Genesis is true—if you believe male and female are deep categories that are tied to the creation of humankind and the image of God—then to fail to hear a woman's voice on a topic would be to fail to hear something the Holy Spirit is saying to our generation."

The MAA program was born in part from Reynolds's experience as a public apologist. "When I would give a talk about the Russian Revolution, a particular kind of person would light up," recalls Reynolds. "I knew there must be people who wanted something *more* than analytic philosophy. For every person I met interested in 'five reasons to believe in God,' a thousand others were interested in thinking Christianly about film and literature and economics."

A few years ago, Reynolds was sitting at his desk when the

idea coalesced. It eventually became the first US program in "cultural apologetics," which looks at faith and reasons for faith through an interdisciplinary kaleidoscope of art, literature, film, history, theology, and philosophy. The program has an online arm that draws nontraditional students, many of whom are also raising kids, pastoring churches, and working jobs. "I've got everyone from an engineer to an opera singer," says Ordway.

For some, apologetics brings to mind a bespectacled white male at a podium brandishing the intellectual equivalent of a semiautomatic rifle. Other critics join Martin Luther in calling reason a "whore" who offers herself to the master with the most money. Faith is about heart knowledge, not head knowledge, they say. Some academics dismiss the enterprise of apologetics as presupposing a secularized, Enlightenment view of faith and reason.

Cultural apologetics has emerged in the midst of this discussion. It draws from the best of classical apologetics and yet meets objections by expanding in new, innovative directions. The program at HBU is leading this project. Among the faculty are Nancy Pearcey, author of Total Truth and Saving Leonardo; Mary Jo Sharp, director of the ministry Confident Christianity; Melissa Cain Travis, a national speaker and author for Apologia Press; Kristen Davis, an engineer who runs DoubtLess Faith Ministries; and Ordway, an Inklings scholar with a PhD in literature. They're thinkers who can pull their weight and evangelists motivated by a deceptively simple objective: Tell people the Good News. And for those who already know that, equip them to "give the reason for the hope that you have."

# DIAGNOSING DISBELIEF

"W

HAT CAN WE learn about unbelief?" Ordway asks her class, holding *The* 

Top 500 Poems. On the table next to her rests The Portable Atheist, a 2007 salvo edited by the late Christopher Hitchens. She looks nearly pastoral in her black blazer and gray button-up shirt. At 5'3", she commands the class with her voice. Opposite Ordway are seven MAA students, among them a working single mom, a businessman, and a female Chilean doctor. They're eating Chick-fil-A and

TYLING: VICO PUENTES HAIR & MAKEUP: BIANCA RIVAS





Besides teaching at HBU and running DoubtLess Faith Ministries from Jacksonville, Florida, Davis is a "tentmaker apologist" as a systems integration engineer at a software company. "People see faith as something nebulous and relative, and engineering as something dealing in facts," says Davis. "But as an apologist I deal with facts. Both fields focus on finding what is true and applying it to all other areas." A member of the Evangelical Philosophical Society, she plans to pursue a PhD in philosophy of religion.

# MODEL APOLOGIST

Justin Martyr. In a period when persecution against Christians was rampant due to ignorance and misinformation, he informed the masses and corrected assumptions about Christianity.

# MISSION FIELD

The Internet. Last year, DoubtLess Faith reached people in 117 countries. We had people visiting our website from China and the Middle East.

# FAVORITE PLACE

Israel. I remember driving through the Judean desert, a desolate and dry wasteland, when we came upon Ein Gedi, the oasis David writes about in the Psalms. Immediately I could see with my own eyes David's relief, how he felt God's provision in the midst of utter despair.

# 'WOMAN APOLOGIST' OR 'APOLOGIST WHO HAPPENS TO BE A WOMAN'?

I've never thought much about it. I just call myself an apologist.





Snapea Crisps while listening to Ordway discuss the poem *Carrion Comfort*.

"How does despair seem like comfort?" asks one student, incredulous that poet Gerard Manly Hopkins has linked the two.

"As a former atheist I quite understand that—the comfort of despair," says Ordway. "Wrestle with it some more."

After a moment, the student responds. "If my vision of reality is one of despair, at least I'm fully aware of who I am and what my context is."

"It's about being brave and facing the dark," says another.

"I'm glad you see that connection," says Ordway, nodding. "Now we're pulling on some of the threads in the emotional content of atheism."

If Hitchens could return from the disbelieving dead and hover over the classroom, he might be disarmed by the pastoral care on display here. He might get the sense, as I do, that Ordway is trying to understand disbelief the way a good doctor understands the pain of a patient, conveying that sympathy to her medical students as they lean over a hospital bed.

"You can't just expect people to hear a debate and then convert," says Ordway, snapping her fingers. "We should keep in mind the pain and difficulty involved in taking a step of faith."

Ordway's colleagues share her philosophy. "We have to learn the language of our culture," says Pearcey, who teaches other MAA courses. "This person in front of you has been influenced by the entire scope of Western intellectual history, and often *he* doesn't even know where those ideas came from. Your job is to understand him."

"Apologetics is an integral part of evangelism," says Cain Travis. "More often than not, the non-Christians we encounter have at least one serious intellectual objection to the faith."

Cain Travis, one of two newer faculty members in the MAA program, specializes in philosophy of mind and "natural theology," which looks at arguments for God based on reason and scientific study. She holds a master's in science and religion from Biola University and is currently working on a PhD while teaching at HBU and speaking at conferences and in churches. Davis, the other new faculty member, is a software engineer who teaches part-time at Southeastern University and HBU. Her ministry, DoubtLess Faith, offers classes and conferences throughout the Southeast.

Although each faculty member has a specialty, all consider cultural apologetics essential to their interdisciplinary approach. For Ordway, it offers a framework for connecting people to those deep parts of ourselves that search for beauty in films, books, and music. The goal is not to foster a vague transcendence, but to enable an encounter with the living God.

"Who is Jesus? is a question that matters," says Ordway. "What can we do to help people become interested in asking that? The arts have a huge role to play."

Ordway, also a published poet and prose writer, spent last summer at the University of Oxford researching for a book of literary criticism on J. R. R. Tolkien and other modern fantasy writers. She recently released a revised edition of her memoir, *Not God's Type*, which maps her journey from atheism to Catholicism. In writing the story the second time, says Ordway, she added a storyline: the role of the imagination.

Ordway grew up reading Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, and although she didn't know it at the time, their books opened up a space in her for something sacred, holy, *other*.

"God was working in my life below my conscious awareness," says Ordway. "My imagination was growing toward faith when my reason was



explicitly rejecting it. If I hadn't found satisfactory answers for my reason, I wouldn't have become a Christian. But the imagination played a huge role in making the questions *meaningful*."

### RAPPER'S DELIGHT

OW MANY OF youknow hip-hop artist Lecrae?" asks Pearcey during a lecture at the College of Biblical Studies, located in a converted real-estate complex near Highway 59 in Houston. The class of 30 is mostly minority, first-generation students, among them a woman in East African dress and a man wearing a yarmulke. Copies of Pearcey's Saving Leonardo are splayed open next to banana peels and fast-food cups. Here, Pearcey is both guest lecturer and celebrity-her book Total Truth is a bestseller, and she is perhaps the best-known scholar among the MAA faculty.

"Ikeep getting Facebook friend requests from other Christian hip-hop artists who say, 'Lecrae told me to read your book,'" she says, referring to *Total Truth*.

"You're hip now," quips a student in the front row.

"Tmhipnow," sheechoes, "Tmhopnow."
Both the class and Pearcey seem humored that she—a diminutive, middleaged woman wearing a paisley scarf and beige button-up jacket—could forge a friendship with a rapper. "[Pearcey's work] has given me more confidence," Lecrae told me. "She's not concerned with creating some kind of subculture for Christians."

Her project, in fact, is to obliterate the notion that faith is a subculture. Expanding on the work of Francis Schaeffer, Pearcey's main project is to critique the fact-value split, where faith gets relegated to the realm of subjective experience, while everything else—science, industry, politics—is protected as "truth." Schaeffer described the problem using the metaphor of a house: the lower story is where the public facts reside; the upper story is where we keep our private preferences, values, and religious beliefs.

Women have this misperception that theology and apologetics are something men do. But the more women entering apologetics, the more women we can disciple and draw into loving God with their minds.' MELISSA CAIN TRAVIS

Pearcey sees this split manifest especially in the educational realm. "I know of a private-school teacher who on the first day of theology class drew a heart on one side of the blackboard and a brain on the other. He said, "The heart is what we use for religion, and the brain what we use for science."

"Even some Christian colleges teach with a sacred-secular split. Course material is taught as technical knowledge while Christianity is nurtured through extracurricular activities—chapel, Bible studies, mission trips. It's training students in a sacred-secular mindset."

As a young adult, Pearcey fell prey to this thinking, which drove her into a crisis of faith. Visits with her parents, her pastors,



and a seminary dean were fruitless. A professor even replied glibly, "[Faith] just works for me."

"It was a difficult and dark time," Pearcey tells me. "I walked through the library pulling philosophy books off the shelves, thinking, 'If I can't get the live adults to help me, maybe these dead white males will.'"

After rejecting Christianity, she ended up almost by accident at L'Abri, Switzerland. Like many others coming of age in the early 1970s, she found there an enclave of culturally savvy Christian hippies who understood the questions she was asking and were doing the hard work of finding answers. They identified her worldview as *relativism*, pointed out its logical flaws, and

discussed Jackson Pollock paintings and epistemology over candlelit dinners. In the shadow of the Swiss Alps, Pearcey became open again to the intellectual tenability of faith. Within two years, she had given her life to Christ.

Pearcey has worked in cultural apologetics for more than four decades. She's taught at the World Journalism Institute, was founding editor of Charles Colson's radio program *BreakPoint*, and has written four books, including most recently *Finding Truth: 5 Principles for Unmasking Atheism, Secularism, and Other God Substitutes*. She now directs HBU's Christian Worldview Center, but her most important work might be her quiet, almost-invisible teaching ministry.

"How can a person employed at a prominent public school be open about his beliefs?" asks a student in the front row wearing a Texas A&M hat.

Pearcey steps out from behind the podium. For the next 45 minutes, she fields questions from students—here, a pastor who does prison ministry; there, an immigrant from the Middle East. She wants to offer others what was not offered to her amid crisis.

"Apologetics is driven by love," says Pearcey. "You have to love people enough to listen to their questions and do the hard work of finding answers for them."

### **HUMAN APOLOGISTS**

BU BOASTS THE HIGHEST concentration of women of any apologetics department in the country. Naturally, I asked Reynolds: "Why so many women?"

He seemed amused and mildly offended by my question. "Why not?" he said.

The department's female majority reflects the fact that most cultural apologetics scholars are women. Behind this fact lurks a question—what do women bring in contrast to men?—that cracks open a big, messy debate about gender differences. Reynolds is as sensitive as anyone to the potential pitfalls of their enterprise. "The errors that we could commit doing this are so subtle," he says. Reynolds wants to avoid what he calls a "weird tokenism" that treats women as quota fillers or icons of femininity rather than as individuals who reflect the complexity of the *imago Dei*.

Ordway shares his concerns. "I'll grant that women are more attracted

to a cultural approach to apologetics and men to a propositional approach, as long as we don't try to say that's true for *all* women and *all* men," she says. "That's blatantly false. If you define apologetics in such a narrow way, you'll shut out women as well as men with artistic temperaments. It becomes self-limiting."

Iask what, if anything, sets female apologists apart. "Whether it's innate or socialized," says Pearcey, "women tend as a generalization to be more empathetic." Sharp agrees. "Women often have a specific person in mind that they care for—a child, a spouse, a friend, a cousin. They want to help that person rather than just answer a question or combat the culture."

Sharp in particular promotes what's called *conversational apologetics*, which underscores caring for the whole person. She uses the method in her teaching at HBU, on faculty with Summit Ministries, and also in Confident Christianity, her ministry that sends her to speak to youth groups, women's ministries, and apologetics conferences.

I first met Sharp on Galveston Island, where I heard her speak at a Christian Medical and Dental Association event affiliated with the University of Texas. The group met in a nondescript brick building at the narrow end of the island. To the south is the seawall that failed to stop Hurricane Ike from destroying the city back in 2008; to the north is a small business district that looks like a fraction of New Orleans's French Quarter. The 25 attendees include a few former medical missionaries but mostly medical students. They sit on folding chairs on the faux wood floor raptly listening to Sharp, who's telling a story about a guy she met recently on a flight.

"He noticed my notes and said, 'There is no empirical evidence for God.'" Instead of quoting Scripture or expounding on the fine-tuning of the universe, Sharp asked, "'What do you mean by that?'

"He told me, 'We can only know what our senses tell us.' Then I asked him: 'How do you know that? What's your ground for thinking your senses are telling you the truth?'

"That's when he cussed me out and said, 'I don't know.'"

After the laughter dies down, Sharp tells the group that her goal was not simply to poke holes in the man's logic but rather to listen to his story—which he went on to tell—and to dignify his questions. He followed her all the way to the baggage claim. "Conversational apologetics keeps in mind that we're trying to develop excellence in *relationships* as well as in our arguments," says Sharp. "That's the metanarrative."

As I watch Sharp pace the room in her coral blazer and boots, her pastoral heart is more than evident. "First, know doctrine," Sharp tells attendees. Be able to clearly state what you believe. Second, listen to people. Try to understand their objections, doubts, and longings. "Bonhoeffer calls it the ministry of listening," she says. "It seems basic, but it's huge." Third, ask questions. "Finding errors in reasoning is a loving thing to do," she says, but let others own the experience. Finally, respond. "If you don't know the answer to a question, say, I don't know.' Then go look it up."

Sharp grew up in a secular home in the Northwest, came to Christ during college, and then, not unlike Pearcey, stumbled into a faith crisis. Unable to find anyone who could answer her questions, she went to her church library, where she discovered *The Case for Christ*. Strobel's classic introduced her to other authors such as William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland. After completing Biola's master in apologetics program, she started Confident

Christianity. Within four years, the nonprofit was blossoming especially in one area: women's ministry.

"Women are the last frontier," says Sharp.

"No one [in apologetics] is writing for them." Often a woman in her 60s will come up after a talk to say, "Where have you been all my life?" Many of them want to meet in women-only groups, where they feel safe expressing doubts and questions they've never asked in church or anywhere else.

APOLOGETICS

In response, Sharp wrote Defending the Faith: Apologetics in Women's Ministry, and is currently working on a curriculum for churches titled Living in Truth. Her last study, Why Do You Believe That? also written primarily for women, was released by LifeWay Christian Resources and is being used in 1,600 US churches.

"Women have this misperception that theology and apologetics are something men do," says Cain Travis. "But the more women we have entering apologetics at the lay and academic levels, the more women we can disciple and draw into loving God with their minds."

Even though Sharp and some of her colleagues feel called to minister to women, I get the sense that MAA faculty are after something bigger and broader: the church. They want it to flourish in an age of pluralism. That flourishing, they believe, depends on training both men and women to disciple believers and draw in nonbelievers through the bilingual apologetics of reason and imagination.

"Cultural apologetics is not just a nice offshoot—it's part of the larger mission of reaching people," says Ordway during a group lunch. We're sitting in the corner of Houston's Salt Grass Café, cutting into steaks and sipping iced tea before the three professors scatter to their various classes. "We're taking a pastoral approach and addressing the full person," says Sharp.

As they talk back and forth, they're describing the pastoral spirit that I saw exhibited in their classrooms and one-on-one conversations. It's a spirit that grows out of the Spirit in them. They're living out what Schaeffer called "the final apologetic": the love of Christ reflected in us.

**ANDREA PALPANT DILLEY** is a writer based in Austin, Texas. She is the author of *Faith and Other Flat Tires* (Zondervan) and ct's 2014 cover story on 19th-century missionaries.

'Ultimately, apologetics is driven by love. You have to love people enough to listen to their questions and do the hard work of finding answers for them.'-NANCY PEARCEY





THE

# OXFORD

# REVIVALIST

AMY ORR-EWING proclaims the faith, once the bedrock of Britain, to an audience wanting more than rationalism.

By KATELYN BEATY

IN OXFORD. ENGLAND



MY ORR-EWING, among the most prominent apologists in the UK today, found her voice in a place where she wasn't allowed to speak at all.

It was 1996, and Amy and Francis "Frog" Orr-Ewing were 19-yearold students in love and planning their second mission trip together. Having met at St. Aldate's, a lively charismatic church in the heart of

Oxford, England, the couple chose to spend Easter break in Afghanistan. By that spring, the Taliban controlled three-fourths of the country. The fundamentalist Islamic group would go on to capture the capital, Kabul, shooting or kidnapping many who failed to follow their harsh enforcement of Shari'ah.

Not quite the backdrop for a wild spring break, but nonetheless the place Amy, Frog, and a ministry friend, Miles, believed God was telling them to go. The editor of a University of Oxford student newspaper wrote a letter explaining that they were journalists, one of the few groups granted visas into Afghanistan at the time. Then they filled their rucksacks full of Bibles and flew to Herat.

What followed was a series of highly improbable events. And since Amy isn't a real journalist, she's fine calling them miracles: being transported by a woman named Angela and a taxi driver named Aslan to a hidden apartment; passing through 12 gunned checkpoints without a hitch; and, finally, being invited to interview Taliban leaders at a secret military headquarters.

Upon arrival, the Taliban's education minister turned to Frog. "Does she have to come in?" he asked, nodding at Amy, her uncovered blonde hair no doubt offending his propriety. "Yes, she does. I fear for her safety."

The three students were escorted into a room filled with guards holding Kalashnikov rifles. Like good "journalists," Frog and Miles began asking questions. They spoke with the leaders for hours, over time finding ways to subtly bring up Jesus. Amy sat and took notes but didn't say a word.

Then it was time to leave. Frog pulled out a Pashto Bible. "We think this is the most precious gift anyone can give another person," said Frog, holding his breath while handing the book to the education minister.

The minister's eyes grew wide. "I know exactly what this book is. I've been praying to God for years that I could read the Bible. Thank you for coming this far to give me my own. I'll read it every day until I finish it."

Amy's eyes glisten as she recounts the story. "We discovered that at the heart of the world's most fundamentalist Islamic regime, there was someone praying that God would send him a Bible, and God chose us to do that. Gospel proclamation can happen in impossible places."

### **OLD GOOD NEWS**

S DIRECTOR OF THE Zacharias Trust, the European headquarters of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM), and program director at the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA), Amy Orr-Ewing is proclaiming the gospel in another impossible place. Granted, you won't find many Oxford dons leading tutorials with Kalashnikovs in hand. But throughout the UK, you will

find a heady cynicism and existential shrug toward the faith that remains the motto of Oxford University. *Dominus illuminatio mea*—"the Lord is my light"—reflects a chapter of Western history when Christianity did not simply have a seat at the table of cultural influence. It *was* the table.

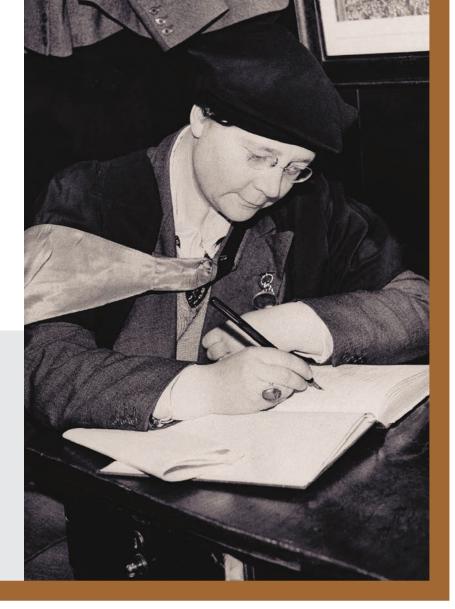
"Our main systems of ethics, the way we do law and justice, the values of society, how we decide what is fair, the protection of the poor, and most of the way we look at society... all have been shaped by and founded on Christianity," said Justin Welby, head of the Church of England, last year. But regular churchgoing has sharply declined:

### THE RELUCTANT APOLOGIST

An acerbic Anglo-Catholic, Dorothy Sayers (1893–1957) hasn't gained the global approbation that her Oxford contemporary C. S. Lewis has. But her apologetics work—notably in *The Mind of the Maker* and *Creed or Chaos?*—remains a wellspring for people presenting the faith amid "intellectual chaos," one of the British mystery writer's nemeses. As she wrote Lewis in 1943, "You like souls. I don't. God is simply taking advantage of the fact that I can't stand intellectual chaos." Even still, Sayers became one of the foremost Christian communicators in her time, writing BBC radio plays to winsomely show that, in her words, "the dogma is the drama."

Welby's own denomination had just 800,000 worshipers on an average Sunday in 2012, fewer than half its numbers in 1962. And the number of Brits who identify as "nones" (of no religion) is now 1 in 4, double what it was a decade ago.

"A primary challenge is that Christianity is not new good news. It's old good news," says Orr-Ewing. "People just don't think it will be relevant to them." We're sitting in her airy third-story office, sipping coffee on stylish gray couches. I glance at her vast book collection, trying to pick out familiar names. Mark Noll, J. I. Packer, and Michael Behe make an appearance, as do the multivolume theological dictionaries of the Old and New Testaments. All testify to Orr-Ewing's own academic training: She received a first-class degree (given to a fraction of Oxford students) in theology at Christ Church before earning



a master's in theology at King's College London. Now—amid occalectures, evangelistic talks throughout the UK, the States, and Southeast Asia, and raising three boys with her husband, Frog—she is also completing a PhD at Oxford on the apologetics of Dorothy Sayers.

Sayers, the celebrated novelist and essayist, is one of the luminaries occa professors and students draw on to show why Christianity still matters to mind and heart. OCCA is jointly run by RZIM and Wycliffe Hall, the only evangelical school in the Oxford system. Cofounded by Alister McGrath in 2004, OCCA trains Wycliffe students to winsomely defend the faith by drawing on its rich intellectual heritage. At the end of the one-year program, students receive Oxford certification. "We wanted to make sure we had the best resources for the best questions, so Oxford was the obvious place to have it," says McGrath. C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, William Lane Craig, and Timothy Keller are standard sources for occa students, who include 20-something missionaries but also older laypeople who want to evangelize in their workplace or neighborhood. Students have included London accountants and chancellors from Hong Kong.

"Alot of apologetics in the States happens in Christian conferences and by people giving papers to each other," says Orr-Ewing. "We're



not doing apologetics in the church. The whole purpose is to engage with people who don't agree with you already." OCCA's annual "uni events" take Orr-Ewing and other speakers to UK universities, where they host free lunchtime talks and evening lectures. Topics include, "Is Christianity a psychological crutch?" "How could a loving God judge people?" and "Does prayer change things?" According to RZIM, during last year's missions, more than 250 students came to Christ, and 500 more said they would attend a local Alpha, Uncovered, or Christianity Explored course to learn more.

At one such talk when I visited, about 100 students crowded into St. Ebbe's, built on a site in central Oxford where Christians have worshiped for 1,300 years, to hear Orr-Ewing speak on "Can we trust the Bible?" Instead of the brash booming of a preacher or the detached droning of an academic, Orr-Ewing speaks in warm, lilting tonesthe kind that invite you to a conversation in the living room. But this is no teatime chatter: Orr-Ewing takes students through the origins of Scripture, explaining how the New Testament was compiled from more than 5,000 manuscripts. She compares the most popular male names in firstcentury Palestine with the male names in the Gospels, noting their remarkable correlation. "The Gospels contain verifiably correct details about names, geography, culture, architecture, botany, leading us to conclude that the New Testament ought to be taken seriously," she says. "It can be trusted."

But what of the miracles? Here, Orr-Ewing draws on Oxford friends Lewis and Richard Swinburne, the philosopher best known for using probability theory to prove that it's 97 percent likely Jesus arose from the dead. "The miracles of the Bible are not about a fantasy world," says Orr-Ewing. "They reflect the Divine breaking into the world we all know—the world of pain, disappointment, violation, and dysfunction."

Afterward, Orr-Ewing answers a flood of questions. One comes from a young man near the front. He doesn't like her argument that to discredit the Bible for

its miracles is a bit closed-minded. "If you are unable to provide any evidence, how are we expected to follow?" he asks. Orr-Ewing thanks the crowd for coming, and then sits down next to him. A circle of students forms around the two, waiting their turn to meet with someone whose authority in this moment comes from her willingness to sit and listen.

### NOT THE SECRETARY

ICHARD DAWKINS LIVES just blocks from the Zacharias Trust. Onlookers this side of the Atlantic might assume the evolutionary biologist typifies a biting atheism entrenched throughout England, where 38 percent of youth now say they don't believe in God.

But many Brits are simply lukewarm about faith, not coldly against it. In a 2012 study, UK think tank Theos helpfully distinguished between atheists and "nevers"—those who respond thusly to the question, "How often do you participate in a religious service as a worshiper?" Among the nevers, 35 percent said they believe in God; 44 percent, in a soul; and 28 percent, in life after death. Further, about 1 in 3 nevers still identify as Christian. So while church attendance is faltering, vestiges of Christian faith still mark the psychosocial landscape in the UK. The work of the apologist, then, is to bring faith to bear on the challenges and strains of human life, not simply to run it through a clinical test of verifiability.

This is where apologists like Orr-Ewing may have an edge on many of their male counterparts.

"Amy has good relational skills, which is important," says McGrath. "She's not a lecturer delivering a talk in a disengaged way. Apologetics is reaching out from the churches to our culture. We need the range of speakers and experiences to connect up with that culture."

Sharon Dirckx, who earned a PhD in brain imaging before becoming an occa tutor, agrees. "Amy has an amazing capacity to think rationally through a problem and present it coherentlybut with compassion," she says. "Amy has the heart of a mother and the mind of a theologian. The combination is powerful." Dirckx and Orr-Ewing had their first children within a year of each other, in 2005. "I remember people saying to Amy that there was a new intensity to her preaching that had come as a result of having children. Giving birth certainly made me more empathetic to the suffering of others."

McGrath notes that some Brits reject Christianity as patriarchal, believing it keeps women subservient and justifies their mistreatment. "As a man I could answer that question; it's much better if a woman does." Orr-Ewing answers it in her life as much as in the content of her talks and books. She first started preaching as a teenager in her father's church; in 1998, she became the first woman to join RZIM'S itinerant preaching team. Though hosts occasionally assume she's the secretary, only twice out of hundreds of speaking invitations in 16 years has a group asked that the Zacharias Trust not send women.

"To know with conviction that the New Testament is clear, that women ministered in the early church—having that sense of calling is critical," says Orr-Ewing. "It can be oppressive and draining and discouraging, but having that sense of this being right before God-then it doesn't really matter."

"Since Amy started young, there weren't that many role models Amy could spot, where the woman is the preacher who travels and the guy is the one who stays local," says Frog. "Now that's becoming much more normal. A couple where both workthere's going to have to be give and take."

Frog is a ministry powerhouse in his own right, having been the youngest incumbent in the Church of England as pastor of All Saints Church in southeast London. Now he leads Latimer Minster, a sapling congregation that meets on an old farm in Buckinghamshire, a wealthy suburb halfway between Oxford and London. He has ambitions to grow Latimer beyond its 200 regular attendees. But "Amy and I don't believe there's a tension between these two jobs," Frog tells me as we walk Latimer's impressive grounds. "There are many timetable crashes, but it's a diarizing, juggling match rather than a calling thing. I've always tried to invest in apologetics ministry, and Amy is utterly committed to the local church."

Today, 10 of RZIM's 36 itinerant speakers are women. One, occa graduate Alycia Wood, says Orr-Ewing has been the role model that Amy herself lacked. "Women face unique challenges as apologists because of the demands of travel, and that many events are in the evenings or on the weekends. I learned a lot by watching Amy be a brilliant apologist and an excellent mother to three boys." That Orr-Ewing does both informs the Zacharias Trust's flexible workplace culture, one that doesn't force female staff to opt out of teaching and traveling should they choose to have a family.

"We need men and women ready to make disciples of all nations," says Dirckx. "If you let women use their gifts as evangelists, you have the potential for reaching more people. In the West it's a numbers game, isn't it?"

And what may seem like a practical concession is really a bedrock truth of Christianity: God has always used unlikely people-like three Oxford students meeting with the Taliban-to resound the Good News. "Without women we wouldn't know what happened at the Cross," says Orr-Ewing. "John's there, but all the other witnesses to the words from the cross are female. And women are the first witnesses to the Resurrection.

unintentional. That's amazing."

"If you're a Christian, you believe the Lord arranged for that. That's not

good news. It's old good news. People just don't think it will 'A primary challenge to faith is that Christianity is not new be relevant to them.' - AMY ORR-EWING

> KATELYN BEATY is managing editor of Christianity Today magazine.

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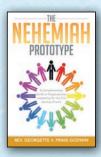
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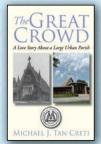
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# BENOCIDE



BY THE GREAT

ATASTROPHE,

RETURNED TO SEE

CHRIST AT WORK IN

THEIR HOMELAND.

By Ann-Margret Hovsepian in Yerevan, Armenia

NE HUNDRED YEARS ago this April, the first genocide of the 20th century began in modern-day Turkey.

From 1915 to 1923,

1.5 million Armenians were executed or massacred or died from starvation, torture, or disease. The phrase "crimes against humanity" was first used to detail the carnage, which many scholars and historians label genocide. During World War I, killing Armenians was the official policy of Ottoman rulers, who suspected Armenians of supporting Imperial Russia, one of their long-standing adversaries. (At that time, the Ottomans ruled western Armenia, and Russia ruled the smaller eastern region.)

"A campaign of race extermination is in progress," Henry Morgenthau, US ambassador to Turkey, said in a telegram to the State Department on July 16, 1915. Turkish soldiers took all males ages 12 and older from their villages and executed most of them. They sent women, children, and the elderly to concentration camps and the deserts, allowing them to starve by the tens of thousands. About 200,000 were forcibly converted to Islam and had their names changed.

The Ottoman government confiscated churches, monasteries, farms, businesses, and money. Dozens of eyewitness accounts were published at the time. But Western nations did little to stop the slaughter, which Armenians call Meds Yeghern ("the Great Catastrophe"). Nearly all the fatalities occurred in Turkey or border areas.

The Ottoman Empire's extermination campaign ultimately failed. Today, Armenia is an independent nation about the size of Maryland. The Armenian diaspora now numbers close to 10 million, including some who live in Turkey. The Armenian church lives on in hundreds of congregations worldwide. (In the third century, Armenia was the first nation to accept Christianity as its national faith.) Countless family lines were not extinguished. The Hovsepians-my family-are numbered among them.

In 1919, my great-grandfather, Vartan Deumbekjian, married a teenage war widow, Annig, who had a 4-year-old daughter, Osanna. Vartan joined the Armenian freedom fighters and remained behind in their village. A pregnant Annig and Osanna joined the refugees fleeing to a safer place. Hungry and barefoot, they walked for about a month, crossing the mountains and eventually reaching a harbor from which they sailed to Greece.

Armenian children grow up hearing tragic stories of the war. But because my grandparents and parents were born in Turkey, Egypt, and Greece, and I was born in Canada, I was never drawn to my ancestral homeland of Armenia. Neither was my father, Joseph Hovsepian-until he was almost 70.

In 2008, my mother visited Armenia to reconnect with childhood friends. My father, pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Montreal, joined her, hoping to connect with local pastors in Yerevan, the capital. Though majority-Christian, Armenia is a spiritually thirsty land.

Since then, my father has returned to Armenia four times. He's brought clothing, medicine, reading glasses, gospel tracts, and books he authored, and has developed solid relationships with many pastors. Local Christians have taken my father from home to home to counsel and pray with people.

His efforts became a puzzle piece in the still unfolding picture of the gospel-based reawakening of Armenia's soul—one person, one household, and one church at a time. The reawakening is happening amid fresh violence: Last September, fighters from the Islamic State blew up the Armenian genocide memorial complex in Der Zor, Syria—close to the site where Armenian refugees had been forced to march to their deaths in 1915.

To this day, Turkey's government refuses to recognize the mass killings as genocide because 5 million perished during the war—Muslims, Christians, and Jews. Turkey also pressures Western allies not to categorize it as genocide, and many nations, including the United States, don't in any official way. Such "denialism" means Armenians struggle to gain a hearing for the crimes against their ancestors. The genocide's perpetrators were never convicted.

Because of this, many Armenians lost their faith or were influenced by communism or secularism. "The genocide has scarred all Armenians," said my father. "Many still blame God. Some have become atheists. Our aim is to rekindle their spiritual heritage."

# REVIVING A SPIRITUAL PAST

**BOUT 32 PERCENT of Arme-**

nia's population is poor.
The plight is even worse
if a widow is the head of
household and one of her children has
a disability. Annie, 17, lives in a family
like that with her mother, two siblings,
and her grandmother in Sayat Nova, a
town in southwest Armenia.

When Annie's mother was pregnant with her youngest child, Mary, her husband killed himself. He'd had an affair with a woman, who became pregnant. Unable to face the fact that he had broken his marriage vows, he took a lethal dose of poison. Annie's mother was overwhelmed, faced with adultery and suicide all at once. The stress caused severe health



Joseph Hovsepian (left) reunites with Samvel, who recommitted his life to Christ. Surveys show only one in ten Armenians attend church weekly.

problems. Mary was born with multiple disabilities and is unable to walk.

Annie's mother had a family to support but few ways to earn a living wage. Her grandmother was in shock over the loss of her son and the condition of her grandchild. Annie was depressed and withdrawn. "I did not want to talk to anyone," she said.

Then Annie read a book my father had written. After meditating on its message, she was overcome. "I had suffered from the thought, *Idon't have an earthly father*," Annie said. "Suddenly, God told me that he is my friend, my Father, and my Lord and Savior."

Some weeks after Annie's conversion last summer, my father and I arrived in Armenia to minister through local churches. Annie was ready for baptism. A natural evangelist, she already had introduced her best friend to Christ. Then my father shared the gospel with Annie's grandmother, who agreed she needed Jesus.

This one-to-one grassroots outreach is effective across the board in Armenia. Larger ministries such as Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) also use it in urban settings. Cru arrived in Armenia 16 years ago, about 9 years after the nation gained its independence after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Vardan Blbulyan, the Armenian national leader of Cru, said the ministry's goals are to build relationships among churches and ministries, multiply disciples, and, when possible, befriend

Muslim neighbors in the region. "At the end of the 18th century, Turkey wanted to make Armenia an Islamic country," he said. "Islamic people thought of Armenians as a bone in their throats." But today Armenia and Georgia are the only Christian-majority nations in the region. Relations with Turkey continue to be poor.

From 1922 to 1991, the Soviet Union ruled Armenia and suppressed the church. But in 1988, an under-the-radar revival among Armenians began that grew many congregations and launched new ones. It occurred around the time of the devastating earthquake in Spitak that killed about 30,000 people. During those years, Blbulyan came to know Christ. "It was as if the earthquake destroyed the gates and the Holy Spirit's wind began to blow in Armenia."

Since independence in 1991, Armenia has struggled economically and spiritually. American researcher Anie Kalayjian has found evidence that the postgenocide generation of diaspora Armenians struggles with anxiety, "inherited anger," and helplessness. "The scar is there," said my father. "We acknowledge the genocide and then bring people the good news of the love of God. The spiritual past of the Armenians who were persecuted needs to be revived."

"Today there are signs of spiritual revival again in Armenia," said Blbulyan.
"The number of believers is increasing, and people are responding to God's Word."
More than 90 percent of Armenia's





In Horom, outside Yerevan, Hovsepian baptizes Nakhshoum. About 92 percent of Armenians say they are religious, but trust in the church is low.

population is culturally Christian. The majority belong to the Apostolic Church; a minority are Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or evangelical. Operation World estimates that, while there is an annual decline of 0.3 percent among Christians in general, evangelicals are seeing a 1.4 percent growth per year.

As one of the most influential Protestant missions, Cru has organized its outreach under the banner of the New Life Armenia movement. In its 16 years of operation, it has seen steady growth and sponsored more than 1,000 events and operates 28 fellowship groups, organized generationally. The movement has created new relationships with other Christian groups for coordinating outreach.

More than 8,000 young adults have made decisions to follow Christ through these efforts. "People who come to Christ through New Life Armenia can choose which church to attend," said Blbulyan. "New Life Armenia is like a bridge between different churches, organizations, and people. We don't compete but cooperate. My motto is: success needs everyone."

# 'GOD HAS VISITED YOU'

HOSE INDIVIDUALS who respond to the gospel are returning to church in greater Yerevan and its surrounding villages. Pastor Tigran Muradyan serves with his wife, Valya, and their teenage

son, Timothy, in Horom, a farming community about two hours outside Yerevan.

Village life is hard all year round. The hot, typically rainless summers dry out the countryside. Women and children are plentiful, but men are scarce. Husbands and fathers who once provided for their families through farming have gone to Russia for work. A few men return home occasionally; others remarry and never return.

The Muradyans live like their neighbors. They have no running water in their house, which they heat with a wood-burning stove. Their church is heated by burning dung bricks. They grow their own food and don't own a car. Valya disburses funds that church members give to help local families. One impoverished family, a mother with three preteens, lives in a rusty rectangular container, a remnant of the Soviet era, with one door and two windows. The family, abandoned by the father, responded to the Muradyans' invitation to attend church and Sunday school. Over time, they all decided to follow Christ.

But gospel outreach at the grassroots rarely goes so smoothly. Muradyan said many Armenians already see themselves as Christians. The challenge is to help them see Christianity as a living faith, not just a cultural tradition. "Few have any idea about being born again. If you ask them whether they have eternal life, you will get many confused responses," he said. "Our people know how to endure,

but they forget that God is the one who has rescued them."

Last year, my father helped the church in Horom renovate its building to provide a warmer, safer worship space during the winters. He never expected that financing the rebuilding of a rundown structure would bring spiritual reawakening. Laborers from 16 families managed to find work because of the renovation project and have been able to take care of their families' needs. Many Horom villagers watched the renovation. One said, "God has again visited you."

## **GRIEF AND CELEBRATION**

ersonal testimonies and addressing unmet spiritual needs are crucial for spreading the gospel in Armenia. "Every single Armenian needs a unique approach," said Blbulyan. "You have to reach each person in his safe environment. When you share the gospel with your friend, that friend will share it with his friend."

After a baptismal service for five people in Horom last summer, an elderly woman who said she was an atheist publicly challenged my father for half an hour. She gradually let down her guard and suggested she might yet become a believer. "Perhaps I am a lost sheep," she declared. Another woman, bedridden for ten months, covered in open sores and close to death, listened to him explain the gospel. She was barely able to speak but managed to call out to God to forgive her sins.

Evangelizing a postgenocide people group is not comfortable or easy, but it can be fruitful. "I'm a child of genocide, but I have not allowed the genocide to hinder my future," said my father. "I believe God will raise workers to rekindle the flame of the gospel in Armenia."

On April 24 and 25, millions of Armenians around the world will grieve the horrors of 1915 and recall the names of lost ancestors. But in places like Horom, believers will also look toward their future: renewed life in Christ.

**ANN-MARGRET HOVSEPIAN,** author of three devotional books for preteen girls, is a women's ministry leader at Temple Baptist Church in Montreal. Her latest book, *Truth, Dare, Double Dare*, was published in 2014.





No matter how boring, unseen, or ordinary, our work can powerfully transform us into Christlikeness.

BY BRADLEY NASSIF

who lived in the deserts of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. Out there in the desert, the most menial tasks take on the most sizeable significance for the soul.

# **HEAVENLY SANDPAPER**

For the great desert fathers and mothers, manual work was soul work. It carried eternal significance in part because Jesus honored it in his incarnate life, laboring as a carpenter. Manual work also anticipated the Second Coming, in which the new creation is the crowning goal of all God's purposes (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1–4). The earliest monks believed daily chores could transfigure the old creation of fallen people into the new creation of Christ's deified humanity.

Mundane duties were like God's heavenly sandpaper. They could mold character, cleanse away impurity, and transfigure a person to reflect the beauty of Christ. For the monks, the "workplace" was a spiritual garden. They viewed work as being not only about us tilling the soil, but also about how the soil tills us.

Many of us assume that godliness is cultivated primarily by escaping daily drudgery, such as during retreats away from "normal" life. If only we could pray in stillness, then we could experience God's holiness and become more like him. Some of the desert dwellers assumed the same—but later repented.

Take John the Dwarf (339–409). In a story taken from his earliest days in the desert, he said to his elder brother, "I should like to be free of all care, like the angels, who do not work but ceaselessly offer worship to God." He took off his cloak and went into the desert.

John returned a week later. When he knocked on the door, his brother asked, "Who are you?"

"I am John, your brother," he said.

His brother said, "John has become an angel, and henceforth he is no longer among men." John begged him, saying, "It is I." But his brother did not let him in, leaving him outside in distress until morning. Then, opening the door, he said, "You are a man, and you must once again work in order to eat." John lay prostrate before him, saying, "Forgive me."

It took John a week of failure and a cold night's meditation to learn that, no matter how hard he tried to escape his mortality with all its ordinary labor, he was still a human who needed to earn his bread.

### THE GOAL OF WORK, THE GOAL OF LIFE

The word itself seldom appears in the literature of the desert fathers, but *theosis*—meaning Godlikeness or deification—lies at the heart of the desert fathers and mothers' theology of work. They believed that our highest vocation is not the *kind* of work we do, but the kind of people we become doing it.

Theosis is mostly associated with Eastern Orthodoxy, but it also resonates with Catholics and Protestants of various stripes. It means God created humans so they could grow ever more like their Creator. But after Adam and Eve fell off this path, God became human and did for us what we could not do for ourselves: In Christ, he restored our lost union with himself. We now can participate in the life of God through communion with Christ in the Holy Spirit.

This transforming union occurs through worship, prayer, submission, and loving actions. By grace, we become "divine"—but not in the sense that one becomes a fourth

member of the Trinity or acquires divine powers. Rather, because God became human in Jesus Christ, we can be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). Theosis is a lifelong process by which we take on the likeness of Christ as we advance "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18, NASB).

Theosis offers an ancient and powerful way to find the purpose of God in our daily work. Our workplace is not only a means of livelihood, but can become a place of redemption. It's not that work redeems us through the deeds themselves, as if we could somehow earn our salvation just by being nice or honest

Our highest vocation is not the *kind* of work we do, but the kind of people we become doing it.

in our dealings. Rather, each person's work is a sacred task given to them by Providence in order to achieve Christlikeness. Our daily tasks and personal relationships become the hands of God to shape and fashion us into the image of his beloved Son. Theosis is the goal of work, just as it is the goal of life.

# DEATHLY DESERT AND DAILY CHORES

By definition, the desert is a place of death. Life is scarce, water is limited.

The desert was a place where God's people repented and their sins were atoned for. In the Old Testament, the desert tested the heart and trained it for obedience (Deut. 8:2). On the Day of Atonement, the high priest placed his hands on the head of a goat and sent it far into the desert, never to return. In the New Testament, the desert is a place of spiritual warfare: "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tempted by the Devil" (Luke 4:1–2).

The desert fathers and mothers understood these biblical images. That is why the desert and its bleak landscapes provided the outer environment for fostering the inner work of holiness. Their workplace environment beckoned them to die to self. It was a place where God worked *in* them as much as he worked *through* them.

Through warfare of the heart, the passions were conquered and the fruit of the Spirit was grown. Planting vegetables or weaving mats was not just a livelihood; it was a way of integrating soul-work with daily chores.

The desert and our own places of work are more alike than we might realize. Where we labor is where our character is formed and we are made Christlike. Much of our work, especially the more menial tasks, teaches us to repent and die daily to our sins.

Washing dishes, cleaning house, and making meals are the hands of God that fashion a bouquet of godly virtues in the heart of a homemaker. Theosis develops whendealing with a rude customer teaches a store clerk the spiritual grace of patience. A Christlike nature silently appears in the soul of a doctor who sacrifices sleep in order to take a 2 A.M. emergency call from one of his patients. A factory worker gradually becomes living prayer as she integrates the monotony of the assembly line with Paul's admonition to "pray

without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17, NASB). Our workplace is an arena where we train to transform our daily chores into spiritual causes. It will often make us great saints or great sinners.

When I was a car salesman, these truths became so real to me that I found myself leav-

ing home with these parting words to my wife: "Barb, it's time for me to go to my monastery. God is waiting there in order to work on my heart and make me like his Son."

Our daily life is nothing less than a sacred journey into the being of God. Our most important spiritual work, then, is located wherever we find ourselves. That is the place where we till the soil of our jobs, and where the soil of our jobs tills us. It's where God meets us, transfigures us, and leads us from glory to glory. Our workplace is our monastery.

**BRADLEY NASSIF** is professor of biblical and theological studies at North Park University in Chicago, and author of *Bringing Jesus to the Desert* (Zondervan).

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BY TREMPER LONGMAN III

LETTERING BY JILL DE HAAN

**TREMPER LONGMAN III** is Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies at Westmont College and coauthor of *God Loves Sex: An Honest Conversation about Sexual Desire and Holiness* (Baker Books).

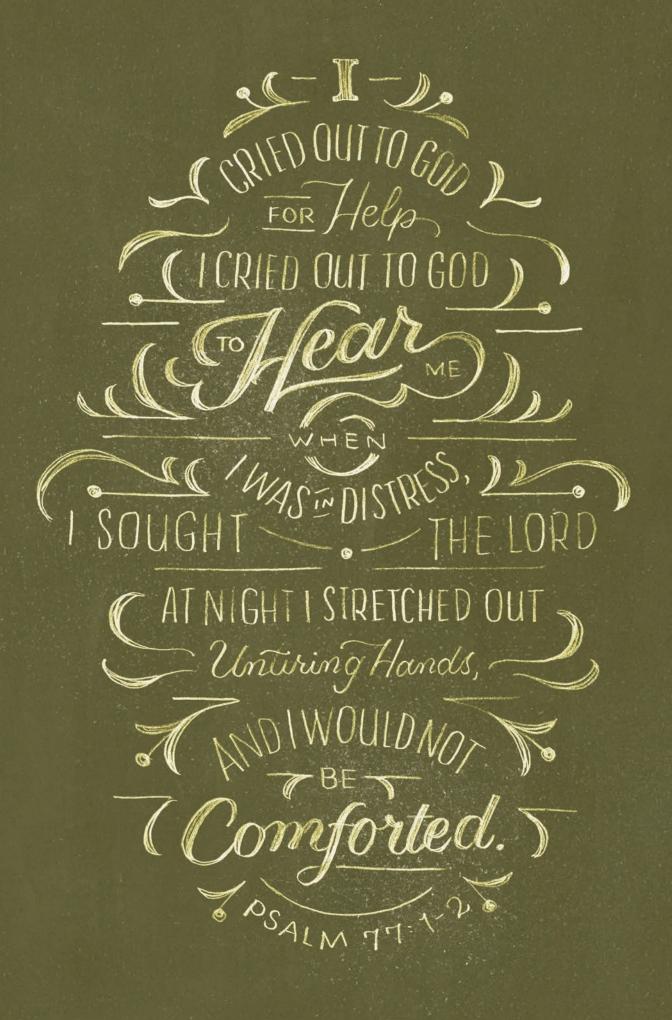


# Getting Brutally Honest with God

The psalms of lament invite us to voice our frustrations—and provide a reason to hope.

REMEMBER HITTING MY FOREHEAD over and over on the glass door of the shower. My mentor and dear friend, Ray Dillard, had just died at age 49. He had trained me in seminary, encouraged me to go to graduate school, and eventually hired me to teach Old Testament alongside him. Besides the loss, his death meant that my already heavy workload would double, as I would need to teach his classes in addition to my own. This increased responsibility came at a bad time: my teenage sons were acting up at school and needed my attention. To say I felt sad and stressed was not even half of it.

That year, my friend Dan Allender and I were writing a book on psalms of lament. What a mistake, I thought. When we started our work, we both were in good places with few troubles in our lives. Apparently God thought that anyone writing on lament psalms should have something to lament. Sure enough, I thought as I continued to bang my head on the shower door. God was starting to



come through in spades. I realized he was going to show me what lament really is.

I already understood that the lament psalms gave me permission to complain to God. God invites us to speak to him with utter honesty and boldness. This is different from grumbling against him, as the Israelites did when they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land (Num. 11). The Israelites spoke about God behind his back-or so they thought. Conversely, the complaints of the psalmists are spoken directly to God. And whereas the wilderness generation had given up on God, the psalmists had not. Even though they often addressed God in anger, they spoke to him, asking for help and hoping that he would answer them in their distress.

I was not ready to turn my back on God. But the laments, at the time, took me only so far. Sure, they helped me express frustration and anger. I could resonate with this cry from David:

I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. I am worn out calling for help; my throat is parched. My eyes fail, looking for my God. (69:2-3)

And David expressed the hope I felt comingle with the pain: "But as for me, afflicted and in pain—may your salvation, God, protect me" (v. 29). But it exasperated me how David could, in the next verse, begin to praise God: "I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving." What moved David from the pit of despair to the ecstasy of praise? As I was struggling with these questions, I came across another psalm of lament that powerfully guided me through my grief.

### LOOKING TO THE PAST

had read the psalm many times, but as I was writing the book in the midst of my grief, exhaustion, and anxiety, I noticed something I had previously neglected. Unlike other psalms of lament, Psalm 77 names what moved the writer from weeping to rejoicing.

The composer—identified in the title as Asaph, the temple musician—starts by explaining his sorry situation to the congregation:

I cried out to God for help;
I cried out to God to hear me.
When I was in distress, I sought the
Lord;
at night I stretched out
untiring hands,
and I would not be comforted.

(vv. 1-2)

Asaph doesn't specify his problem. We don't know whether he or a loved one was ill, or whether he or his community was under attack or threatened. We do know that the Psalms, while borne of personal experience, were composed in such a way that later generations could use them for similar, though not necessarily identical, situations. I wasn't the first person—and I certainly won't be the last-to find my own thoughts and feelings fleshed out in this psalm. John Calvin called the Psalms a mirror of the soul: "I have been wont to call this book, not inappropriately, an anatomy of all parts of the soul; for there is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror."

Just as a mirror helps us see how we're doing on the outside, so the Psalms help us find words to articulate what's going on inside. That was certainly the case for me as I read on. In the next few verses, the psalmist addresses his anger and disappointment directly to God:

I remembered you, God, and I groaned;
I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.
You kept my eyes from closing;
I was too troubled to speak.
(vv. 3–4)

As I beat my head against a literal wall, I too groaned, and my spirit grew faint. I had trouble sleeping, tossing and turning as I worried about class preparation and my children causing trouble at school. I couldn't help thinking about the past, as the psalmist did, and wondering why life had grown so difficult:

I thought about the former days, the years of long ago;

I remembered my songs in the night. My heart meditated and my spirit asked:

"Will the Lord reject forever?
Will he never show his favor again?
Has his unfailing love vanished forever?

Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?" (vv. 5-9)

The "former days" were good days, ones of celebration and singing songs, presumably praise hymns. After all, those are the songs we sing when life is going well. Laments are for times when life is difficult. And when we're in a season of lament, remembering the good times usually just deepens our pain.

The psalmist's angry disappointment with which I keenly identified—that God did not appear to be listening or helping escalated, as is seen in the series of guestions he directs at God. We can appreciate the pain behind these questions, which are not only rhetorical but also veiled accusations. Words like favor, unfailing love, promise, and compassion, as well as the reference to God's mercy, relate to God's covenant with his people. God had promised to treat his people with favor, compassion, mercy, and love; the psalmist questions God's faithfulness: "You said you would be our God and take care of us. But the way my life is going-I think you were lying!"

The psalmist expressed what I felt at the time. I was glad God wanted me to speak directly to him, even if in anger, rather than feign feeling fine, only to grow bitter like the Israelites had in the wilderness. But the psalm did more than help me pour out my feelings to God. It also directed me to him. This certainly didn't happen overnight, but as I continued to read and pray through the psalm over the next couple of weeks, I found hope, especially as I meditated on the last part:

Your ways, God, are holy.
What god is as great as our God?
Youare the God who performs miracles;
you display your power among
the peoples.
With your mighty arm you
redeemed your people,
the descendants of Jacob and Joseph.

Like Psalm 69, this one ends on a positive note. But unlike most other laments, this one tells us what had caused Asaph's change in attitude:

(vv. 13-15)

Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High

stretched out his right hand. I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds." (vv. 10–12)

In order to live in the present with confidence and to approach the future with hope, the psalmist looks to the past. But how does remembering the past help us now, especially when we're in a season of turmoil? At the end, the psalmist gives us a concrete example:

What is it about the Exodus that so encourages the suffering psalmist and us as we identify with him? Asaph can't sleep because he can't see any way out of his predicament. There's nothing he can do to help himself. The only way he could understand his situation was by comparing it to that of the slaves in Egypt. The Israelites had no escape from a gruesome fate, an impassable sea before them and Pharaoh charging furiously behind with "600 of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them" (Ex. 14:7).

In the face of what looked like

If God can save Israel from Egypt and raise Jesus from the dead, then he can help me in times of despair.

The waters saw you, God,
the waters saw you and writhed;
the very depths were convulsed.
The clouds poured down water,
the heavens resounded with thunder;
your arrows flashed back and forth.
Your thunder was heard in the
whirlwind,

your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. Your path led through the sea, yourway through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen. You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. (vv. 16–20)

Asaph is referring to Israel's exodus from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 14–15). He pictures the event as a battle between God and the waters, which represent chaos and evil. God fights the waters to open a path for Israel, his flock, whom he leads through "the darkest valley" (Ps. 23:4) to safety.

certain destruction, God parted the sea and provided a surprising escape. And in the light of this event, Asaph remembered that God could continue to rescue his people, even when redemption seemed impossible.

# A GREATER DELIVERANCE



s I thought about the psalmist's testimony, I too began to see that my situation was not hopeless. To be sure, we have no guarantee of rescue

or escape from trials in this life. But we needn't bow to despair when we have a God like the one who led his people out of Egypt. And according to the New Testament, the Exodus anticipated an even greater deliverance. The Gospels go to great lengths to show that Jesus' life and ministry follow the pattern of

the Exodus. Many Christian readers miss this because we're not as familiar with the Old Testament as we could be.

The parallels between the Exodus and Jesus' work are so extensive that we can only scratch the surface here. Let's look at a few. First, Jesus' baptism corresponds to the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. After Jesus was baptized, he spent 40 days in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11), which echoes Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. After fasting 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus experienced the same temptations that Israel had, yet came out victorious.

Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread. The Israelites constantly grumbled about food, but Jesus resisted the Devil by citing Deuteronomy 8:3: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Second, Jesus was tempted to test God-which the Israelites did time and again-by throwing himself down from the temple. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy a second time: "Do not put the Lord your God to the test" (6:16). Jesus' final temptation was to worship the Devil, and he quoted Deuteronomy yet again: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only" (6:13). Jesus, therefore, is the obedient Son of God, contrasted with the disobedient Israelites.

The comparisons continue. Jesus chose 12 disciples, who correspond to the 12 tribes of Israel, to reflect a new people of God. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus discussed the law (Matt. 5–7) and alludes to God's giving of the law on Mount Sinai. And the analogy culminates with Jesus' crucifixion during Passover, the annual celebration of Israel's deliverance from Egypt.

As a Christian reading Psalm 77, I looked back not only to the Exodus, but also to its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. If God can save Israel from Egypt and raise Jesus from the dead, then he can help me in times of despair. Not only that, I could recall times in my own life when God brought me out of trouble. I also came to realize how he could sustain me even when he, for his own good reasons, might choose not to provide an escape route.

While reading Psalm 77 anew didn't "solve my problem" of grief and stress, it nevertheless bolstered my confidence to face trials. Jesus doesn't remove suffering from our lives when we follow him. Rather, he gives us hope and even joy to endure it, knowing that one day we will be delivered once and for all.

CHURCH LIFE

TEN YEARS AGO, A MURDER SCANDAL PUT THE COUNTRY'S FREE CHURCHES ON EDGE.

NOW THEIR PROSPECTS ARE BRIGHTER THAN EVER.

# THE SUN

# RISESIN

# SWEDEN

BY LISA ANN COCKREL

0

ur taxi driver feigns nonchalance, but we are lost. More than once he has reversed our sedan back down one of these serpentine streets, only to try another route to a park that's supposedly tucked into this residential hill overlooking Stockholm. Perhaps to relieve some of the pressure building in the cabin, I open my window. I can hear the faint strains of Vampire Weekend, so I tell the driver we can take it from here.

We follow the bass line, cutting a path between two homes, then up and to the right. There we're greeted by a stack of speakers, a Spider-Man bounce house, and a crowd eating hamburgers hot off a nearby grill garnished with tiny American flags. It's past 8 P.M., but the summer sun is just starting its descent, bathing the city below in a warm light that amplifies its medieval splendor. Red, white, and blue bunting blows in the slight breeze. Snoop Dogg thumps into rotation. Welcome to the Fourth of July, Hillsong Church–Stockholm style.

"We take any chance to have a party," says senior pastor Andreas Nielsen, smiling at the thought of reporters traveling 4,000 miles only to balance paper plates of potato salad and Frescas at a Fourth of July picnic. Throughout the summer, Hillsong Stockholm hosts weekly parties like this one—"barbeque parties, beach parties,

IN STOCKHOLM



whatever we can come up with"—to let members mingle and invite unchurched friends. It's a somewhat counterintuitive evangelistic strategy: Swedes get more vacation days than almost anyone in the world, and they spend much of the summer away from the city.

"There's this perception that no one comes to church in the summer. And a lot of churches shut down for eight to ten weeks," says Nielsen. "But everyone has the need to be seen, to be missed, to have a place to belong, whether it's winter or summer. Some of our biggest weeks have been in the summer."

Hillsong Stockholm is considered the fastest-growing church in Sweden's capital. Nielsen estimates that in a given week, between 2,000 and 2,200 people attend services and other church events. In addition to their main campus in the city center, Hillsong recently opened a campus on the north side. "It's never been easier than it is today to lead people to Christ in Sweden," he says.

Ten years ago, evangelism wasn't so easy. The story above the fold of every Swedish newspaper and at the top of every news broadcast was about a bizarre coterie of Pentecostal pastors implicated in a murder.

### **KICKED BY THE HORNET'S NEST**

On the morning of January 10, 2004, in the small town of Knutby, Sara Svensson—a nanny living with Helge and Alexandra Fossmo—shot Alexandra while she slept in her bed. Svensson then walked next door and shot neighbor Daniel Linde. Helge, a prominent pastor in a local Pentecostal church, rode to the hospital in the ambulance with Linde, who survived. Alexandra's body was found later.

The investigation and trial that ensued riveted the country as the Knutby case

grew to include psychological manipulation and sexual abuse. Today, the name of the small town an hour north of Stockholm connotes murder, cults, and the Pentecostal congregation at the center of its now eponymous scandal. In 2010's The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest, Swedish crime novelist Stieg Larsson wrote ominously, "They became like Knutby." His readers didn't need further explanation.

Svensson had moved in with the Fossmo family after dropping out of Bible college to join their church. Soon she was in Helge's thrall. Fossmo invoked God's will that they have a sexual relationship,

reportedly telling her that through sex they "celebrate God's victory." In the two months leading up to the murder, the pair exchanged more than 2,000 text messages, many of which Svensson didn't realize were from Fossmo. He used an anonymous number to send messages to the psychologically fragile Svensson, convincing her that killing Alexandra was an act of mercy.

In one of the more dramatic scenes from the trial, the entire court decamped to the Fossmo home. They conducted experiments to determine whether Helge could have slept through the shots that killed his wife as he claimed. It was deemed impossible, and Fossmo was eventually sentenced to life in prison. Svensson received institutional psychiatric care.

Rumors of unusual practices in Knutby had reached church leadership in the months before the murders. Sten-Gunnar Hedin, then-spokesperson for the Swedish Pentecostal association, told Christian newspaper *Dagen* that he was scheduled to meet with Knutby leaders the Monday following the murders. Instead, Hedin was plunged into one of Sweden's largest media events. Newspapers changed their headlines as many as three times a day during the trials of Fossmo and Svensson, chronicling tawdry revelations in breathless headlines.

Hedin repeatedly explained that the Knutby congregation's teachings and prac-

tices—including one pastor's claim to be the literal bride of Christ—did not align with Pentecostal teaching. "I had to represent 90,000 Pentecostals. But I also had to make [the Pentecostal faith] understandable for 9 million Swedes," Hedin said. "It was not easy."

TO TRUST GOD FOR THE SUMMER **TO BE A GREAT** TIME,' SAYS ANDREAS NIELSEN. HILLSONG STOCKHOLM PASTOR, MANY **CHURCHES SHUT** DOWN, AS DOES MUCH OF THE CITY, **DURING SUMMER VACATIONS. 'BUT WE'RE GOING TO** RE OPEN FOR IT **AND MAKE THE** MOST OF IT.'

# SKEPTICISM WITHOUT SCANDAL

On a Sunday morning about a decade after the Knutby scandal, I sit in the back of Pingstkyrkan Bollnäs, a small Pentecostal church in a town of 13,000 about 3 hours north of Stockholm. It's the weekend of Midsummer—a national holiday with the cultural purchase of the Fourth and New Year's Eve rolled into one. Pastor Simon Wennstig assures me that the

sea of gray heads in front of me is due to younger members leaving town for the holiday weekend. After a special program by a visiting minister—an elderly man who sings the story of a Pietist preacher, accompanied on keyboard by his wife—we follow the crowd to a café next door for *fika* (Sweden's version of teatime, with coffee). We're there to talk about how churches like Pingstkyrkan Bollnäs are faring after Knutby.

"Most people in the community were worried for me when the news broke," says Wennstig, a 22-year ministry veteran. "Parents would ask me how I was doing now that being a Pentecostal pastor was suddenly suspect business." But Wennstig says his church weathered the scandal fairly well since it was already known in town. Churches more isolated from their communities struggled.

Three years ago, *Dagen* asked pastors of free churches—churches unaffiliated with Sweden's official Lutheran church—if

the Knutby scandal had affected their work. Some 61 percent said yes, it hurt the image of the free church. When asked whether Pentecostalism suffered suspicion, 36 percent said yes. The survey also suggested that many pastors think Swedes' attitude toward the free church has worsened in the past 10 years: 46 percent say

'YOUNG SWEDES HAVE BEEN
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ENOUGH TO REACH THEM.'

### **STEFAN SWARD**

DIRECTOR, SWEDISH EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

attitudes have become "worse to much worse"; only 18 percent say attitudes have gotten better.

Sweden's Protestant "free" churches are largely heirs to 18th-century Pietists who rankled the state by meeting in private homes to study Scripture together. Such gatherings—seen as criticizing the government-aligned church-were banned in 1726. As recently as 1977, new religious groups had to get government permission to form. Many free Christians immigrated to the United States and started denominations, including the Evangelical (formerly Swedish) Covenant Church and the Evangelical Free Church in America. Groups that stayed continued to draw suspicion in Sweden's increasingly irreligious society.

Despite a precipitous decline in the past 30 years, the national church still claims 68 percent of Swedes as members. The best estimate of the total number of free church members—including Catholic and Orthodox churches—is about 5 percent of the population. The Pentecostal church is the largest of the Protestant denominations, with less than 1 percent of the population.

Christians outside the national church are often viewed with a skepticism that can billow into disgust when stoked by scandal. But Knutby no longer looms over the ministries of any of the pastors I interviewed. When asked about the *Dagen* survey, Nielsen said, "If you make it an issue, it will be an issue. I haven't thought about it for years."

# **PRO-IMMIGRANT, PRO-MUSLIM**

"It's serious and horrible when something like Knutby happens, but most realize it's people who do these things, not churches," says John van Dinther, founder and head pastor of New Life Church, a growing network of Evangelical Free churches based in Stockholm. Sitting in the rose garden of a prison-turned-hotel, van

Dinther says he doesn't worry about the scandal's effect on outreach. His energy is focused on ministering to the residents of Stockholm, both native Swedes and its growing immigrant population. The latter is expected to reach 18 percent nationwide by 2020. It's already 27 percent in Stockholm. That's less than the foreign-born population of New York City (36%), but Sweden has a millennia-old reputation for cultural uniformity.

The pastor's driving passion is to build Christian communities that reflect Sweden's new diversity. "Revelation 7:9 talks about how people from all the nations





and tribes and tongues will be standing before God, and that reality is not just in heaven," says van Dinther. "That reality starts here." Typical services at his church are 50 percent native Swedes and 50 percent immigrants, representing more than 50 countries.

Stefan Sward directs the Swedish Evangelical Alliance and pastors Elim Church in central Stockholm. He points to Hillsong Stockholm as an example of a church that has succeeded since Knutby. "Young Swedes today have been brought up in secular homes, and many of them are curious about Christianity," he tells me. "There is great potential, but many churches are not flexible enough for effective outreach. You have to go where the people are." His own church takes to the streets on Friday nights with coffee and Swedish pancakes.

Most growing Stockholm churches focus on reaching immigrants, says Sward. "The church can be a place for friendships [with native Swedes] to develop, which are important for healthy social integration." Religious immigrants—such as Pentecostals from South America and Africa, and Muslims and Orthodox from the Middle East—are credited with challenging the secular status quo in Sweden. Up to 1 in 3 Swedes claim atheism, and only 18 percent say, "I believe there is a God." Thus, many committed Christians see immigrants as allies in the public square.

"While a minority of [Muslims] lack respect for democratic principles, the majority are quite open-minded, religious people," says Roland Martinsson, a Swedish Catholic philosopher. "Give me a Muslim with good sense for democratic values over a secular liberal any day of the week."

Sweden's theologically conservative churches, then, have become some of Sweden's staunchest supporters of liberal immigration policies. Meanwhile, the liberal national church has been targeted by xenophobic conservatives who want to stoke fears of cultural dilution brought on by immigrants.

Homosexuality is not the wedge issue among Swedish Christians that it is among American ones. "I think sex is something beautiful that God created to be experienced between one man and one woman within the context of marriage. Having said that, I've said everything I want to say," says van Dinther, whose church might be described as open, but not affirming. "At our church on Sunday morning, you will find couples who are living together without being married, people who might be cross-dressers, people who have been or are in homosexual relationships. You will find all kinds of people and they know what we teach, but our focus is not on the 'don'ts.' Our focus is on what God can do."

SAYS SIMON WENNSTIG,

PASTOR OF THE PENTECOSTAL

CHURCH IN BOLLNÄS. 'BUT

IT DID PUSH US TO MAKES

SOME GOOD CHANGES.'

# **IRENIC AND OPEN**

The Church of Sweden's membership decline plays into the narrative of a godless Europe. But prior to 2000, Swedes were de facto members of the church at birth and had to actively opt out. It should come as no surprise that these hyperinflated numbers would decrease once the state church transitioned to a national church. It's a distinction that means membership requires a bit more than being born. Sward goes so far as to call the shift a "vitamin injection" for the Church of Sweden.

Meanwhile, free churches have seen membership drop too as they've tried to more accurately reflect participation. In 2011, in the face of dwindling numbers, 3 prominent denominations decided to pool resources. The Baptist Union of Sweden, the United Methodist Church, and the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden are now known as the Uniting Church in Sweden, with 760 congregations and 70,000 members.

Sward says the irenic spirit goes beyond formal alliances. "There are debates, but there's not much hostility between Christian groups," he said. "I frequently criticize the national church because it's still influenced by state politics. But we must respect that the old national Lutheran church still has the main connection with the common people."

Forging strong relationships is also key to Pentecostals' strategy to avoid another scandal like Knutby. Leaders are working on a formal set of values and fostering closer relationships between pastors.

"As a Pentecostal congregation you have the liberty to decide whether or not you want to be in fellowship [with the denomination]," Pelle Hörnmark, current head of the denomination, said in an interview with *Dagen*. "That is the advantage and disadvantage with free local congregations." But churches won't avoid and weather scandal unless they have strong relationships outside the church, too. "I encourage all Pentecostal congregations to have good contacts with their community, with the school system, and with those in authority. It is terribly important."

Wennstig says Knutby motivated his church in Bollnäs to be more open. It now publicizes the church's democratic UP TO 1 IN 3 SWEDES CLAIM ATHEISM,

AND ONLY 18 PERCENT SAY, 'I BELIEVE THERE
IS A GOD.' THUS, MANY COMMITTED CHRISTIANS
SEE MUSLIM IMMIGRANTS AS ALLIES IN
THE PUBLIC SQUARE.

structure and monthly business meetings that are open to everyone. "Knutby didn't help us," he says, "but it did push us to makes some good changes."

Knutby still makes headlines. In October 2014, Helge Fossmo petitioned a district court and was granted the option of parole by 2020. But that ruling was overturned this January, and a higher court reasserted the full length of his original life sentence. Most news outlets led with the story.

Back at the Fourth of July picnic, friendly faces look surprised and puzzled when I ask whether Knutby was a barrier to getting involved with a free church. I often have to explain why it might matter.

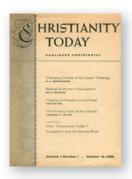
Instead, they seem more interested in the smartphone app that Hillsong Stockholm has developed for use in the summer to help people find each other in real time. This might have been handy back in the cab.

"Sweden's a pretty tech-savvy country. But it's not like we just make an app and hope people find each other," says Hillsong pastor Nielsen. "Events and apps help out a little, but it's always going to come down to one person opening up their life and making room for another person."

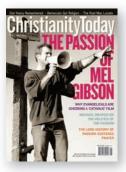
**LISA ANN COCKREL** is an editor for Brazos Press and Baker Academic in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Follow her on Twitter @lacockrel.

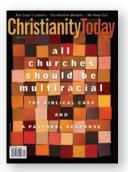


# A Long History of Thoughtful Dialogue

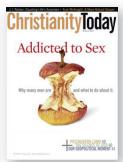






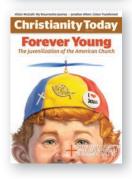


















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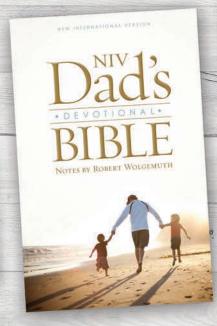
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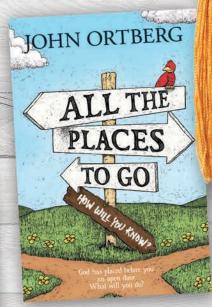
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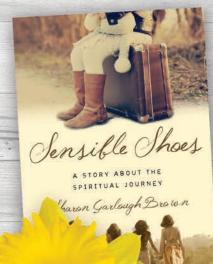
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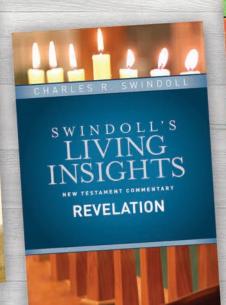
God, the Gospel, and Our Quest for Something More

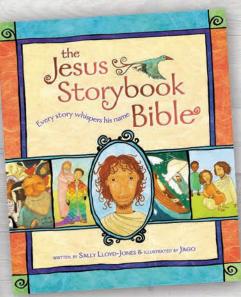
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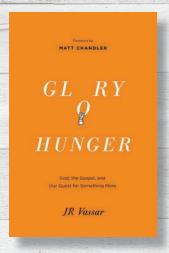








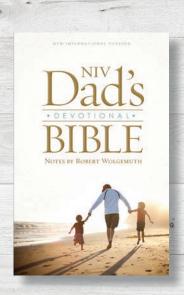
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# Glory Hunger: God, the Gospel, and Our Quest for Something More

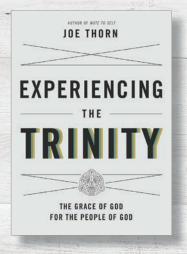
by JR Vassar

We all want to be significant. To a certain extent, this is natural and good, but left unchecked, this craving will ultimately enslave us. In *Glory Hunger*, JR Vassar encourages readers to refocus on what really matters: living a life marked by the passionate pursuit of God's glory above all else.



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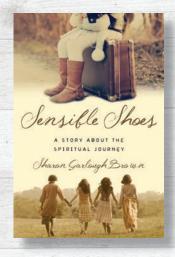
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by Joe Thorn

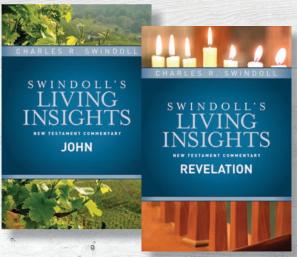
Overflowing with scriptural truth, pastoral wisdom, and personal honesty, this collection of 50 meditations on the Trinity will help connect theology to your everyday life. Author Joe Thorn reflects on common experiences of doubt, fear, and temptation, pointing readers to the grace that God provides and the strength that he promises.



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Sharon Garlough Brown tells the moving story of four strangers as they reluctantly arrive at a retreat center and find themselves drawn out of their separate stories of isolation and struggle and into a collective journey of spiritual practice, mutual support, and personal revelation.

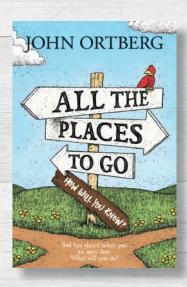


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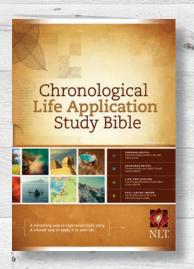
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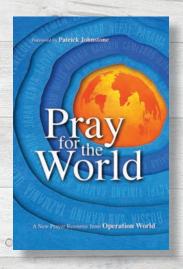
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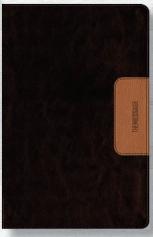
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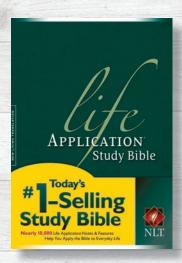
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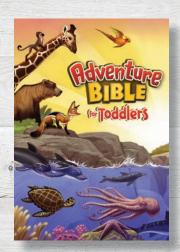
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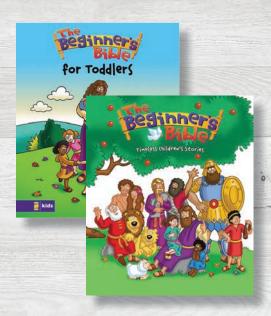
The Adventure Bible for Toddlers starts children ages 2–5 on the journey of a lifetime, teaching them about the Bible's great stories and themes. It helps young children grow in their relationship with God using stories and art from the wildly popular Adventure Bible Storybook.



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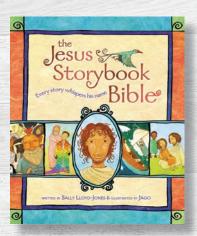
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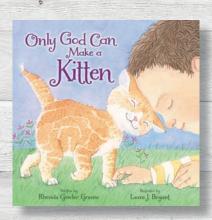
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#### Tiny Bear's Bible

by Sally Lloyd-Jones



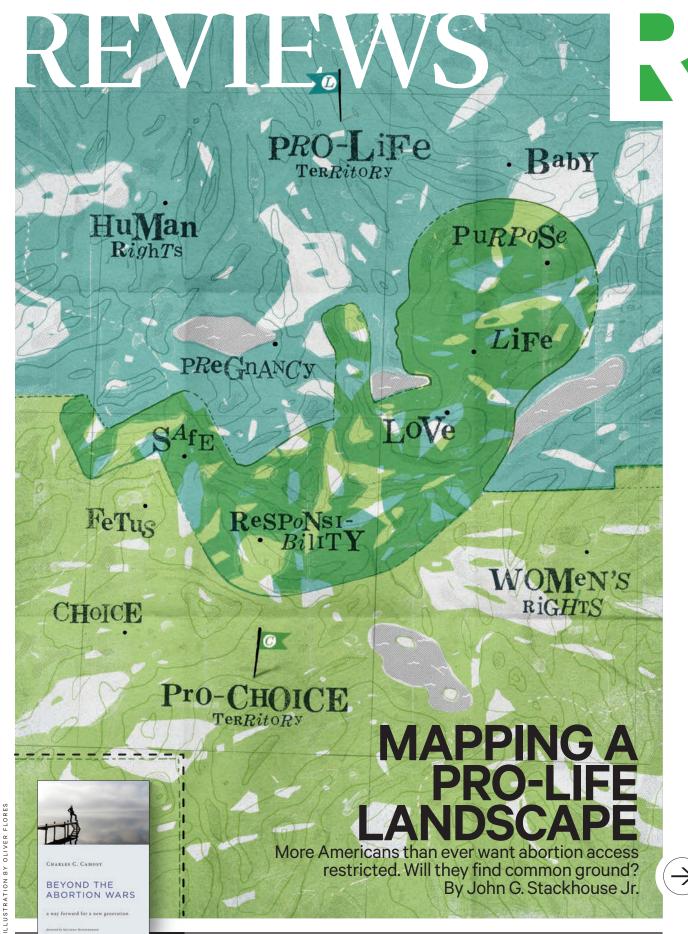
Tiny Bear's Bible is a warm and fuzzy reminder of how God loves his children. Bestselling author Sally Lloyd-Jones presents eleven of the most familiar Bible stories to children in a book they can carry and snuggle with wherever they go. Available in pink and blue.

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## Faith that Unites.



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he test of a democracy is not whether the people vote, but whether the people rule,"
G.K. Chesterton oncewrote. In other words: Does the average citizen see her values and concerns reflected in public policy?

Charles C. Camosy, a Catholic ethicist at Fordham University, argues that a moral consensus has emerged in the United States around the issue of abortion. Yet neither the major political parties nor the federal government reflects that consensus. Citing poll after poll, from sources across the political spectrum, Camosy demonstrates that the vast majority of Americans would prefer much more limited access to abortion.

In Beyond the Abortion Wars: A Way Forward for a New Generation (Eerdmans) \*\*\*\*\*, Camosy takes stock of the polling data and concludes that abortion policy could comfortably shift in a restrictive direction. Under his preferred settlement, national public policy would allow abortion only in cases of imminent danger to the life of the mother, conception by rape or incest, and a few other extraordinary instances. To this end, Camosy outlines an actual legislative proposal, what he calls the Mother and Prenatal Child Protection Act (MPCPA).

#### **STATE OF THE DEBATE**

The abortion debate has long been framed as a deadlock between two extremes. Camosy—who has written elsewhere on animal compassion and health care—argues persuasively that this framing persists because it serves the interests of major news media, political parties, and advocacy groups. Polarization and demonization attract viewers and listeners, galvanize supporters, and mobilize volunteers. Binary categories harden edges, stiffen spines, and arouse passions.

Polls show, however, that two-thirds of Americans identify with both "prochoice" and "pro-life" labels. And women, millennials, and Hispanics—three groups increasingly involved in US public life—are among the least supportive of abortion.

Indeed, freedom to abort is championed

most by men and practiced most by the well-to-do. Among many women and the poor, survey groups find grave reservations. Camosy cites one major study indicating that, after their abortions, only small percentages of women reported improvements in their relationships or self-regard. By contrast, a majority reported "guilt," sentiments like "Part of me died," and an inability to forgive oneself.

Feminists like Catherine MacKinnon have long argued that legalized abortion does less to emancipate women than to empower irresponsible men. If the woman has sole authority over whether to give birth, men argue, then she alone is responsible for the baby she chooses to keep. So much, then, for child support.

If we're truly committed to the sanctity of life, we need to support women choosing to keep their babies and raise them. The United States lags well behind other Western countries in terms of parental leave, welfare, medical insurance, and other fundamentals of true choice for pregnant women. Fortunately, Camosy's MPCPA contains these kinds of provisions, not just restrictions on abortion.

Beyond the Abortion Wars surgically exposes and overturns assumptions and claims typical of pro-choice advocates, such as the "woman's right to her own body" (forgetting that there is another body who has rights), or the notion that pregnancy so burdens a woman that she ought to be free to abort the troublesome child—as if children outside the womb aren't at least as much trouble. Camosy thus dramatically narrows the grounds of abortion on philosophical terms.

But here I disagreed with Camosy on a few points.

Camosy notes that 97 percent of those identifying as pro-choice endorse "saving the mother's life" as legitimate grounds for abortion. Yet around two-thirds of those identifying as pro-life want to allow it in this case. Has Camosy forgotten that his own church's tradition used to privilege

Citing poll after poll, Camosy demonstrates that the vast majority of Americans would prefer much more limited access to abortion. the unborn child's life above that of the mother's well into the 20th century? Yes, each of us has a "right to self-defense," as Camosy puts the matter. But a fetus is not an attacker with malicious intent, but instead the picture of vulnerable dependence. Why should this question be taken out of the hands of God, nature, or medical prowess and transferred to merely the stronger of the two parties?

Camosy rightly exposes the intolerable asymmetry in claiming that the mother's mental health or financial security, or the welfare of her other children, justifies an abortion. (For infanticide would then be justified as well.) It's disappointing, then, to find him arguing that rape makes abortion permissible. Quite apart from the potential legal quagmire—will women have to accuse their nonviolent partners of rape in order to qualify for a legal abortion?-there is the fundamental question of why the innocent offspring of a violent conception should pay such a price. One must never underplay the horrible implications for the woman who keeps a child conceived this way. But at most, she faces nine months of pregnancy and then either motherhood or giving up the child for adoption. How can such suffering outweigh the certainty of a baby's death?

Camosy is nowhere more vague than on this point—except on the related category of incest. If the incest is nonconsensual (or involves a minor), then rape is the governing category. Either way, we're still dealing with a human being made in God's image.

#### **POLITICAL PRUDENCE**

Camosy notes that only 2 percent of US abortions occur because of rape, incest, or a threat to the life of the mother. But since polls show strong support for these allowances, he incorporates them into his MPCPA proposal. At least in practical political terms, I agree that this would represent a good step forward given the constraints of the current climate, whereas a more conservative reform would be doomed to defeat.

In fact, I strongly urge people to read *Beyond the Abortion Wars* and to take up its general thrust. The time is indeed ripe for a new abortion policy in America. (In my native Canada, such rethinking has been overdue for decades. It is a national disgrace that none of the leaders of our major political parties are willing to consider

introducing even minimal regulations.)

Iwish, however, that Camosy's concern to advocate for the MPCPA hadn't muddied his generally lucid logic and prose. I wish he had recognized, instead, that his own convictions, the convictions of his church, and indeed the convictions of orthodox Christianity dictate an uncompromising (what Camosy might call

"extreme") stance on abortion. Having recognized this outlook as their ethical bedrock, he and other political players would then be free to formulate legislation curtailing abortion as much as circumstances will allow.

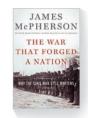
Again, I am all for political prudence. Let's just be clear that, in the meantime, our compromises put many unborn babies at risk. And let us keep working to transform not only the law but also the values of our neighbors, so that no more innocent lives will be terminated in the awful name of "freedom of choice." **CT** 

**JOHN G. STACKHOUSE JR.** teaches religious studies at Crandall University in New Brunswick, Canada.

# American Redemption

The Civil War continues to shape us. By Robert Tracy McKenzie

The War That Forged a Nation: Why the Civil War Still Matters James McPherson (Oxford University Press)



mericans have written more than 70,000 books about the Civil War—1 for every 19 hours since Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant. We are awed by its sheer magnitude, staggered by its appalling human cost, and inspired by its looming heroes. According to James McPherson, a leading Civil War authority and retired Princeton historian, these factors help to explain why the war fascinates us, but not how it continues to shape us a century and a half later.

The War That Forged a Nation: Why the Civil War Still Matters (Oxford University Press) \*\*\*\* brings together a dozen of McPherson's essays about the conflict. They range widely, investigating the morality of the war, President Lincoln's effectiveness as commander in chief, and the cultural impact of such unprecedented death and destruction, among other topics.

But McPherson's most provocative writing explicitly addresses the war's enduring relevance. He emphasizes three basic factors. The first involves what caused it. "Many of the issues over which the Civil War was fought still resonate today," he observes. These include "matters of race and citizenship; regional rivalries; [and] the relative powers and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments."

Equally striking are the war's consequences. The United States as we know it

was conceived not during the American Revolution but in the crucible of the Civil War. The struggle prompted an expansion of the role of government, transformed the US financial system, dramatically expanded the role of the federal court system, and—in the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau—introduced the first major social service agency.

Finally, the conflict initiated a lasting constitutional shift embodied in amendments abolishing slavery, guaranteeing equal protection under the law, and recognizing voting rights for black Americans. Although a century would pass before anything like substantial progress was made, these amendments both reflected and accelerated changing popular attitudes toward government. Whereas 11 of the first 12 amendments had limited the federal government's power, those ratified in the war's wake dramatically expanded it. If the patriots of 1776 had seen government as a threat to liberty, the Civil War convinced many to view government as an agent for protecting it. These two perspectives continue in tension to this day.

Religion, however, is strangely absent from McPherson's analysis. In recent years, a spate of provocative works has underscored religion's centrality to the conflict. Historians such as Mark Noll and George C. Rable have linked the struggle to an underlying theological crisis, demonstrating how Americans in both the

North and South made sense of the war in providential terms. They argue that popular religious zeal helped propel the conflict from a limited to a total war.

Above all, scholars agree that the war dramatically bolstered America's civil religion, one that confused loyalty to country with the cause of Christ. But I can't help wondering whether McPherson recognizes this phenomenon. At times he uncritically adopts the language of civil religion—speaking of battlefields as "hallowed ground," for example. And he is flat-out wrong in describing the Gettysburg Address as secular. To the contrary, Lincoln's speech is relentlessly religious, although in a way that conflates sacred and secular.

In words now enshrined in marble on the Washington Mall, Lincoln invited Americans to situate the Civil War in a larger story of redemption. The body being redeemed, however, was not God's church but the United States. The author of redemption was not the Lord but "we the people." This is the religion of patriotism at its poetic best. Reminding (and warning) us of its allure is surely another way of illuminating how the Civil War "still matters."

ROBERT TRACY MCKENZIE teaches history at Wheaton College. He is the author of *The First Thanksgiving: What the Real Story Tells Us about Loving God and Learning from History* (IVP Academic).



#### **MY TOP FIVE Ron Sider**



on Sider's many books—about poverty, politics, and global justice—emphasize some of the most difficult and easily overlooked ethical obligations of following Christ. In Nonviolent Action: What Christian Ethics Demands But Most Christians Have Never Really Tried (Brazos Press), the author of the now-classic Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger makes the biblical case for pursuing peaceful alternatives to conflict. Here, Sider chooses 5 books on how nonviolence really works.



#### A Testament of Hope Edited by James M. Washington

Martin Luther King Jr. is the most famous and successful Christian proponent (and practitioner) of nonviolent action. The civil rights movement changed US history—ending legal segregation in the South, prompting historic legislation, bringing new opportunity for African Americans, and slowly reducing racism. In powerful books and eloquent speeches, King argued that loving the racist while resisting his oppression was the only way to make racism and oppression disappear. Washington's anthology is the easiest way to access King's vision.



#### Nonviolent Soldier of Islam Eknath Easwaran

Badshah Khan raised history's first nonviolent army: at least 80,000 Muslim "Red Shirts" with officers, uniforms, and a flag. Trained in Gandhian techniques of nonviolence, they played a crucial role in India's independence. Khan's Red Shirts were Pathans hailing from India's northwest frontier, a violent area (and ethnic group) that gave rise to the Taliban. As Khan's biographer explains, if he "could raise a nonviolent army of people so steeped in violence as the Pathans, there is no country on earth where it cannot be done."



#### Why Civil Resistance Works Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan

Chenoweth and Stephan, former fellows at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, argue that nonviolent action works better than violence in promoting freedom and justice worldwide. In this book, they look at all 323 known cases of major armed and unarmed insurrections from 1900 to 2006. Based on their sophisticated statistical analysis, they conclude that "nonviolent resistance campaigns were nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success as their violent counterparts."



#### **Just Peacemaking** Glen H. Stassen (2nd ed.)

Stassen, who taught ethics at Fuller Seminary, was at the forefront of a long-standing conversation between pacifist Christians and those embracing just war. These ethicists understood that, even as they disagreed about the use of military force, they should work together to find non-violent ways to promote peace. In *Just Peacemaking*, Stassen discusses and advocates ten nonviolent strategies vindicated by recent history.



#### Waging Nonviolent Struggle Gene Sharp

For decades, Sharp has been the foremost scholar on nonviolent strategies for addressing injustice and oppression. His three-volume *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973) offered an articulate analysis of the theory and tactics of nonviolent action. Activists from every continent have studied his writings, sought his advice, and worked to implement his ideas. *Waging Nonviolent Struggle* provides an accessible overview of Sharp's scholarship and a history of two dozen important nonviolent campaigns.





The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel Justo L. González (Eerdmans)



## Luke for the Least of These

Justo González reads Luke and Acts through Latin American eyes.

Interview by Gary Burge

usto González is one of today's most influential theologians and church historians. Born in Havana, González has taught at the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico and at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. He has published more than 100 books, including the 3-volume A History of Christian Thought, the 2-volume The Story of Christianity, and Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective. His latest release—The Story Luke Tells: Luke's Unique Witness to the Gospel (Eerdmans)—applies a Latin American lens to familiar parts of Scripture. Gary Burge, New Testament professor at Wheaton College, spoke with González about underappreciated themes in Luke and Acts

### How does a church historian end up writing on Luke?

I'm interested in Luke because he is the closest thing in the New Testament to a historian. His history functions as a kind of evangelistic invitation. He wants us to join the story that began with Jesus.

Another reason I'm drawn to Luke's gospel is because of the themes he emphasizes. Luke pays great attention to issues of gender equality, justice, and caring for the poor. These issues have always been important in my own writing.

## When a Latin American theologian reads Luke, what themes get noticed that others might underplay?

When you read Luke with poor people who have no hope, or with people hiding from dictators and death patrols, you see things you might not see otherwise. The most important underappreciated theme is what's often called "the great reversal." This is the idea, from Luke 13, that when the kingdom of God arrives, the last shall be first and the first shall be last.

Or take Mary's song (the Magnificat)

from Luke's first chapter (vv. 46–55). It talks about God filling the hungry with good things and sending the rich away empty. Traditional readings of this passage aren't necessarily wrong, but they can neglect the themes of wealth and poverty. We need a variety of perspectives, including the poor's, to get at the full meaning.

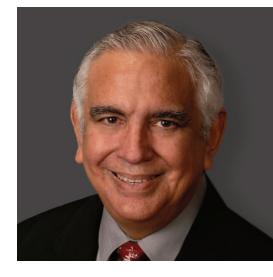
### What are American evangelicals most apt to overlook?

Compared to the other gospel writers, Luke takes care to emphasize the word salvation. We tend to overlook the economic, political, and social implications of this salvation. Luke helps us to see what it looks like for the poor.

Luke's account of the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41) is a good example of attentiveness to these matters. Paul's ministry to Ephesus had a direct social and economic impact. The riot began because he was challenging the city's worship of the Greek goddess Artemis, and this threatened the economic interests of those who made shrines for her. Or take the story about Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13. When Paul preaches the gospel to a group of Jews and Gentiles, he is talking in part about including diverse cultures, and how majority cultures feel pressure when too many outsiders come in. He's addressing the problem of racial rivalry. All of these themes remain relevant today.

## You use the word *liberation* to describe the church's life and work. What does liberation mean, and how do we pursue it?

Liberation means freeing people from anything that keeps them from being what God wants them to be. This means sin and condemnation—and it also means poverty, oppression, and violence. In a broad sense, liberation is a synonym for salvation. It is the work of God restoring



us to what he meant us to be.

Inevitably, this means involvement in political activity. But the church has to be careful about entering partisan debates. Anyone who thinks their political position is in some way the incarnation of God's will is falling into idolatry. Conservative Protestants in the United States can fall into this trap, but so can the liberal liberation theologians of Latin America.

## If you were to preach to Christians in Cuba, how would you incorporate themes from Luke and Acts?

Obviously many things in Cuba need to change. And I hope Christians' commitment to the people of Cuba trumps their distaste for the Cuban government.

People outside of Cuba should be careful about telling people inside Cuba what to do. However, Cubans need a message of hope. I would contrast fear and hope, reassuring them that God will be with them and their future. I would say, like the angel said to the shepherds, to fear not, for the Lord brings good news of great joy (Luke 2:10).

## Needles in a Hymnstack

Today's best worship artists probably won't be heard on Christian radio. By Wen Reagan

tudying the cultural history of contemporary worship music means I listen to a lot of albums. Arriving at the dissertation stage of my doctoral studies has required listening to 40 years' worth of music from one of the most significant movements in modern church life-the good, the bad, and the downright ugly. It's a lot of music. And trust me, there's a lot of ugly.

But because I also serve as a worship director at a local church, listening to contemporary worship music is not just a scholarly exercise—it is also serious pastoral business. My people need solid spiritual food from their church music. They need songs that will sculpt their theological imagination and give voice to their praises, prayers, and confessions. The good news is that both as a researcher and as a worship leader. I have found many artists worth hearing.

To find these artists, I had to go beyond the Top 25 song list from the ubiquitous Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI). Today hundreds of talented songwriters are crafting excellent music that will never land on the ccli charts. Their craft is just as good as that of the heavyweights, and their songs are more musically and theologically diverse. Consider three that represent the breadth and range you'll find beyond the charts: Liz Vice, Miranda Dodson, and Cardiphonia.

Vice's There's a Light is a breath of fresh gospel air. If Grammy-winning artist Israel Houghton fuses gospel with Michael Jackson pop and worship arena rock, then Vice lands on the other side of the gospel coin. She fuses 1970s funk and soul with indie rock layerings, and tops it off with a smoky-even gritty at times—vocal performance. Imagine if Al Green and Adele got together to sing about Jesus. Some of that smoke and grit  $\frac{1}{2}$ is baked into the album, which throws out the clean compression techniques

# Imagine if Al Green and Adele got together to sing about Jesus.

of digital recording for analog tape. The result is warm, slightly distorted vocal tracks over the bass-heavy signature sound of 1960s and '70s R&B.

What if you don't have a vocalist with gospel chops, doo-wop backup singers, or a killer bassist in your congregation? Don't fret. The album features several tracks with simple progressions and easy-to-learn melodies, like "Entrance," "Truly Today," and "All Must Be Well." You can thank the album's songwriter for that: Josh White, the pastor of Door of Hope Church in Portland, Oregon.

White is the former frontman for Telecast, whose sound was about as pure an example of Coldplay pop rock as possible. On this album, though, White shows a rougher side. The talent supporting Vice include most of the members of Deeper Well, a "gospel collective" based in Portland that includes Wesley Randolph Eader, La Liberte, and Holly Ann Winchell. The whole cast of Deeper Well has produced quality, unconventional worship albums and are dedicated to releasing their work for free for the church at Deeper-Well.com. Their industry subversion is your gain.

#### **TRINITARIAN TUNES**

Miranda Dodson, the worship leader at City Life Church in Austin, Texas, is an alt-country singer-songwriter whose music has been featured on NPR's Morning Edition. Recently Dodson paused her solo act to record a five-song indie-rock worship EP, Ascend, with City Life musicians and the church's pastor (and her brother-inlaw), Jonathan Dodson. Ascend features singable ballads about the Incarnation ("We Are Waiting"), the Resurrection ("King Rise"), and the return of Jesus ("Victorious").

The EP rounds out with a beautiful take on the Apostles' Creed and an Augustinian, Trinitarian tune, "Divine

Love." Trinitarian songs are one of the most pressing needs in modern worship music, worship historian Lester Ruth has argued. Miranda Dodson is answering the call. Not only are the songs full of eloquent theology and catchy arrangements, but Dodson has also made sure that they are accessible to worship leaders. Her website, Ascendep.com, features not just the usual chord charts but theological summaries as well.

The worship collective Cardiphonia (to which I'm a regular contributor) is the brainchild of Bruce Benedict, the chaplain of worship music at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. Over the past decade, Benedict has gathered songwriters to retune old hymns and write new ones for what he calls "worship music flash mobs." These are crowdsourced recording projects centered on a specific theme, such as the Lord's Supper, Pentecost Sunday, or the biblical canticles.

Cardiphonia wants to create a "worship research and development" hub, releasing albums that are less commercial and more pastoral. The projects support eclectic approaches to liturgical worship, creating folk and pop hymnody for sacraments, church seasons, and other liturgical settings that the worship industry has neglected. Since 2010, Cardiphonia has released 10 full albums and 210 songs. And it has featured 80 songwriters, including the Welcome Wagon, Brian T. Murphy (formerly of Red Mountain Music), and Matt Boswell (founder of Doxology & Theology).

#### THEOLOGY AND ARTISTRY

Cardiphonia's approach to crowdsourcing has its weaknesses. Recordings sometimes lack the consistent, polished sound that comes from recording and mixing in professional studios. Some tracks were recorded and produced in such settings, but others sound like (and literally are)

basement demos. The albums also lack a consistent style. If you are used to playing Hillsong at your church, some tracks might be just right. Others will feel far out in left field.

But out in left field is where Cardiphonia's crowdsourcing reveals its strengths. With such a diverse set of songwriters and no limitations besides a given album's theme, wonderful hymn arrangements emerge: Michael Van Patter's "Breathe on Me, Breath of God" on Pentecost Songs, Zac Hicks's "Bread of the World in Mercy Broken" on Songs for the Supper, and Bruce Benedict's "Jesus, My All, to Heaven Has Gone" on Hymns for the Ascension. (This last one is a reconstruction of one of the most popular shape-note hymns of the 19th century.)

Cardiphonia's collection offers great original worship songs as well (all available for free at Cardiphonia.org). These include Jered McKenna's "Arise, Shine, for Your Light Has Come" on Canticles and Wendell Kimbrough's "Who Is Like the Lord Our God?" on Hallel Psalms.

One of my favorite originals is Naaman Wood's "Holy Spirit, Come Our Hearts Inspire," on *Already/Not Yet*. Here, Wood narrates salvation history through the work of the Holy Spirit. The song sets the stage with the confounding of language at Babel: "But God poured out peculiar tongues, / Peculiar, odd, and vain / They scattered all the human fires / That burned on Babel's plain."

After several verses that follow the Spirit's fiery appearances throughout the biblical narrative, the song ends with the inversion of Babel's curse: "Then God poured out peculiar tongues, / From nativelands abroad / And birthed the church as holy flesh / In unity with God." It's not that often you get biblical pneumatology, lyrical artistry, and a keep-on-trucking folk-rock groove in a single package.

Stereotypes of monotonous and repetitive worship music die hard. But artists like these show just how much musical diversity and quality is emerging in our time, thanks to the digital era's low production and distribution costs. The challenge has become curation and discovery. There are treasures to behold—you just have to know where to look.

**WEN REAGAN** is a doctoral candidate in the department of religion at Duke University. He released his fourth album, *Love & Lightning*, *Winter & Warm*, in 2014.



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## New & Noteworthy

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

"Grace goes beyond forgiveness to acceptance and even adoption by God... it restores hope when none is left... and it allows us to forgive those who caused our most intimate wounds."

~ from **The Case for Grace** by Lee Strobel

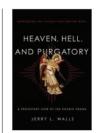


#### THE CASE FOR GRACE

#### A Journalist Explores the Evidence of Transformed Lives

LEE STROBEL (ZONDERVAN)

Strobel, the hard-boiled Chicago crime reporter turned popular apologist, has made a career of sifting the evidence behind claims made for and against the faith. In The Case for Grace, however, he focuses less on rational arguments than on stories of radically transformed people he encountered during his travels. These remarkable narratives, he writes, "illustrate the power of God to revolutionize human lives—to turn a homeless junkie into an ordained pastor; an adulterer into a marriage counselor; a reckless rebel into a selfless servant of God; and a mass murderer into a pardoned saint." Strobel (The Case for Christ, The Case for Faith, and The Case for a Creator), also writes of his own pilgrimage from atheism to faith.



#### HEAVEN, HELL, AND PURGATORY

#### A Protestant View of the Cosmic Drama

JERRY L. WALLS (BRAZOS PRESS)

Walls, who teaches philosophy at Houston Baptist University, has written a trio of scholarly books defending the doctrines of heaven, hell, and-more controversially among Protestants—purgatory. Here, he packages those arguments into a single volume pitched at ordinary readers, delivered at a moment when debates about the hereafter have picked up steam. "The Christian story is extraordinary, to be sure," Walls maintains. "but it is radically incomplete and ultimately unsatisfying without a robust doctrine of the afterlife, and one simply cannot seriously affirm Trinity, incarnation, atonement, and resurrection without going on to heartily affirm 'the life everlasting.'"



#### **SAYING IS BELIEVING**

#### The Necessity of Testimony in Adolescent Spiritual Development

AMANDA HONTZ DRURY (IVP ACADEMIC)

For many, nothing induces anxiety quite like the prospect of speaking in public. Mix ordinary worries about audience reception with personal subject matter, and the dread worsens. Despite all this, public testimonies have long held a prominent place in evangelical communities, including in CT (see p. 88). Based on interviews conducted at several Midwestern churches, Drury, assistant professor of practical theology at Indiana Wesleyan University, argues that personal testimonies are vitally important for younger believers. Such stories not only give thanks for past progress but also shape future growth. "Regardless of what form the testimony takes," she writes, "articulating where we understand God to be at work within our life is a powerful form of spiritual formation."



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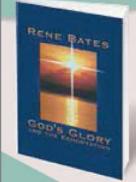
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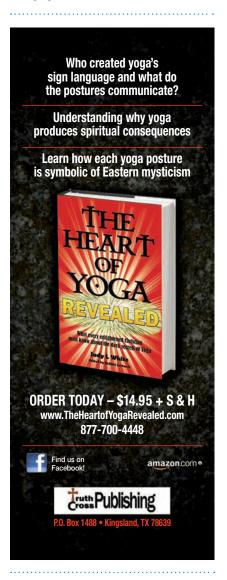
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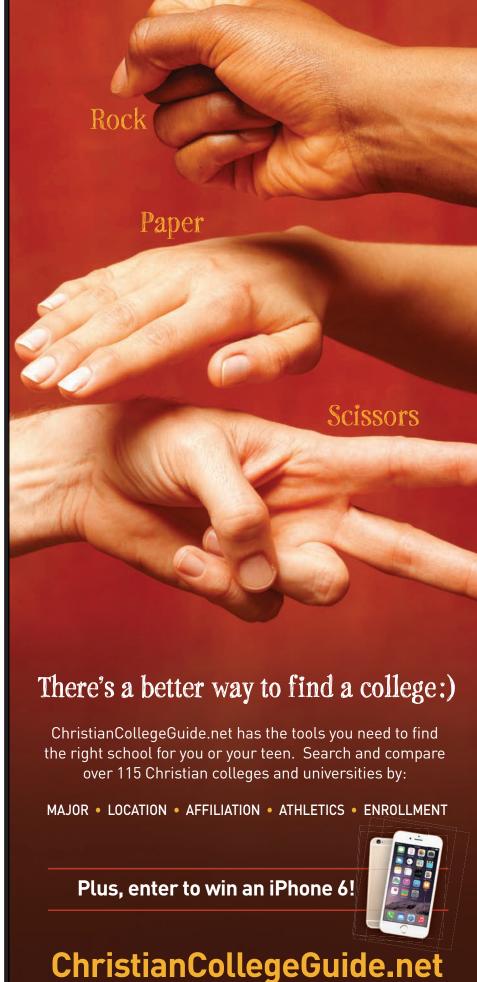


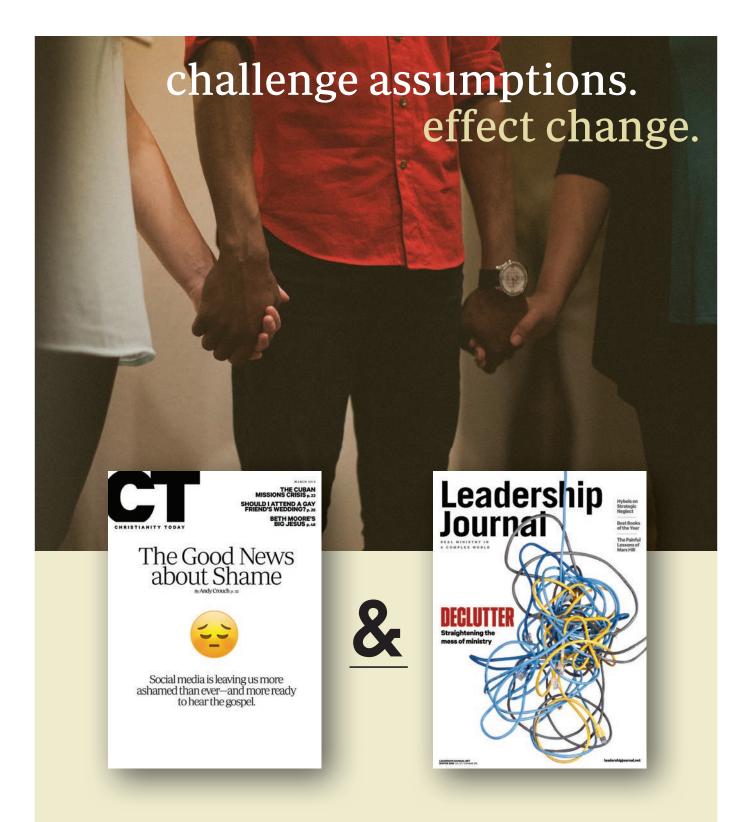
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**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 88** 

provided me a fresh lens through which to consider the gospel.

After a couple weeks, I returned home and began pursuing a future without drugs. On a subsequent visit, I found myself kneeling in prayer on the opposite side of the coffee table from Pat while the Bakkers preached on TV. Pat raised her hand toward me and began praying. Though she never touched me, I was thrown backwards into the couch by an invisible force. With tears streaming down my face, I raised myself up and surrendered my life to Jesus. I would no longer live for myself. Instead I would devote myself to following him.

Driving home, I wondered why I didn't feel much different. The Holy Spirit had simply startled me into acknowledging that I had reached the end of myself.

Some folks in my tiny hometown were skeptical. Could the wild child really have been born again? In my senior year of high school, I became a model student as well as a compulsive perfectionist. I had been really "bad," so now I would be really "good."

The first Christian book I read was Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Disciple-ship*, a worthy place to start for someone who is not a perfectionist. But for me, it inspired failed two-hour prayer sessions before school, misguided evangelism attempts, and excessive judgment of my parents' and my own faults.

I hurt and offended people with my zealotry. Having sworn off other pleasures, the only safe indulgence was at the table. I packed 20 extra pounds onto my slender frame. I took the SATS and did just well enough for Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) to admit me.

At EMU's Virginia campus, I was introduced to the terrifying idea that I could lose my newfound salvation if I died with unconfessed sin or didn't persevere in following Jesus. I was entirely unprepared for the challenge this Arminian doctrine posed to my softly Reformed faith.

Being far from home in a closed community didn't help. While I earned mostly As in class, I grew seriously anxious about my eternal security. It got so bad that I couldn't read the Bible without applying every negative verse to myself.

In my sophomore year, I gave up the struggle and sank into depression.

Thinking it might make me feel better, I entered a brief relationship with a classmate. The emptiness of it reminded me that I didn't want my former life. But following Jesus felt impossible.

I pored over the only Scripture I could read:

I waited patiently for the Lord;
And he inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a
horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps. (Ps. 40:1–2,
NKJV)

I prayed, "God, I don't even know if I'm really a Christian. But I know that if I am, you didn't save me to leave me in this pit."

I had already broken up with my boyfriend and transferred when I found out I was pregnant. The first person I told outside my immediate family was Jeff, an old friend who had become a Christian in prison after one too many drug busts.

#### **LOVE INCARNATE**

Jeff was leading worship at my church's youth group and was on his way to Bible college. I told him I thought I'd give the baby up for adoption. "You'll take one look at that baby, and you won't be able to go through with it," he said.

With my parents encouraging me to keep the baby and a counselor pressuring me to choose adoption, I spent my eighth month of pregnancy at a home for unwed mothers. There, I decided to raise my child.

When my son was two months old, Jeff came to visit. I hadn't seen him since the day I'd told him I was pregnant. I also hadn't been to church.

I was confused about everything that

'God, I don't even know if I'm really a Christian. But I know that if I am, you didn't save me to leave me in this pit.' had happened since I became a Christian. I didn't have the courage to face a few condemning people at church, including a leader who had tried to have me and other inactive congregants removed from membership.

My patient and loving parents, having decided he was the man for me, hired Jeff to drywall our basement stairwell. He stretched the project out over months, falling in love with my baby and me.

I was conflicted about laying aside my dream of becoming an artist to mother my child and become a wife. But the first time Jeff kissed me, I knew I would marry him. Never before had I felt so unconditionally loved and cherished by a man, or so challenged and stimulated by another person's natural intelligence and radical faith.

Sitting in my living room one day early in our renewed friendship, I told Jeff I didn't know if I was really a Christian, given how I had been living. He explained the grace of God in such a way that I finally understood that I could not make myself good enough to earn forgiveness.

"The Bible says Jesus paid the price for all your sin—past, present, and future," he said. "As far as the east is from the west, that's how far God has removed our sins from us. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus."

I had heard it all before, but the words finally sank in. They were coming from a trustworthy friend whose background was similar to my own.

While it can be rightly said that religion brought structure to my out-of-control life, living out my faith over decades has required a level of self-abandonment that defies easy explanation. Rather, as Jesus taught, those who have been forgiven much, love much. I've been forgiven much—both before and after my conversion—and I never forget it.

Even so, a roommate once said it doesn't ultimately matter what benefits the gospel offers. What matters is whether or not it's true. From the testimony of the saints and my own experience, from spiritual and intellectual inquiry, from divine revelation and the power of the Holy Spirit, 33 years after surrendering to Christ, I still believe it is.

**CHRISTINE A. SCHELLER** is an award-winning journalist and ct contributor. She and Jeff will celebrate 30 years of marriage this year.



## **Unplanned Grace**

Wayward teenage years and a surprise pregnancy had me fearing I had lost my salvation.

By Christine A. Scheller

neeling at her bedside after three years of family strife, my mother surrendered me in prayer to Jesus. While she was still there, the phone rang. I had just been arrested for smoking hash in the drive-through of a bank while the driver was trying to cash a stolen check. I was getting high while committing bank fraud. That's how out-of-my-mind stupid I was at age 16.

My mother was relieved-not because of the arrest, but because she finally knew where I was. I hadn't called home in days. It was 1980 and the off-season in my seaside hometown of Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey. Some friends and I were at a deserted motel on a drug binge. When it was time to rustle up funds to keep the party going, I'd followed a guy through the window of a senior citizen's house. There was nothing else worth stealing, so we took the checkbook.

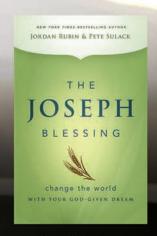
After being arrested I moved back home, but other drama followed until I landed in a juvenile shelter. Free of the drugs and relationships that had clouded my thinking, I realized my life was going nowhere fast. After a month at the shelter, I went to stay with a family who offered transitional housing to wayward teenagers through a 4-H program.

Pat and Carl were born-again Christians. In court, I had complained that my mother and stepfather were trying to "shove Christianity down my throat." Now it seemed like I couldn't get away from Christians. But there was no tension with my hosts. Compared to the faith that had transformed my home life after my father died and my mother married into a Baptist family, Pat and Carl's piety was laid-back.

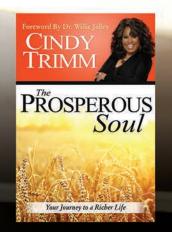
They didn't go to church much, but were so moved by the ministry of televangelists Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker that eventually Carl went to work for the Bakkers' Praise the Lord ministry. Their Christianity didn't seem inordinately focused on rules and right doctrine like some of the Baptists I knew. Theirs was an eclectic approach that CONTINUED ON PRECEDING PAGE

## LIVE INSPIRED

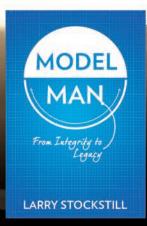
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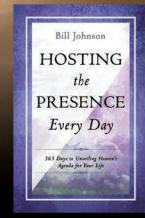
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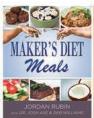


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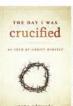




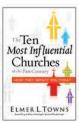






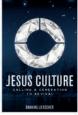




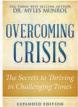














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