CHRISTIANITY TODAY

JUNE 2015

HOW A PSYCHIATRIST—AND THE CHURCH—ARE DEPLOYING HOPE TO SOUL-SCARRED VETERANS.

WAR TORN

BIOLA
UNIVERSITY

Have the COURAGE *to have* CONVICTIONS

Founded in 1908 as the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA) in the heart of downtown L.A. (original building pictured here), Biola University is now one of the world's leading institutions of Christian higher education. Ranked by *U.S. News* as one of the top 10 "up and coming" national universities in the country, Biola is an institution with the courage to innovate but also to remain committed to unchanging convictions. Join Biola University in advancing the cause of biblically centered higher education.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE LARGEST CAMPAIGN IN BIOLA'S HISTORY AT BIOLA.EDU/CONVICTION

#JoinBiola

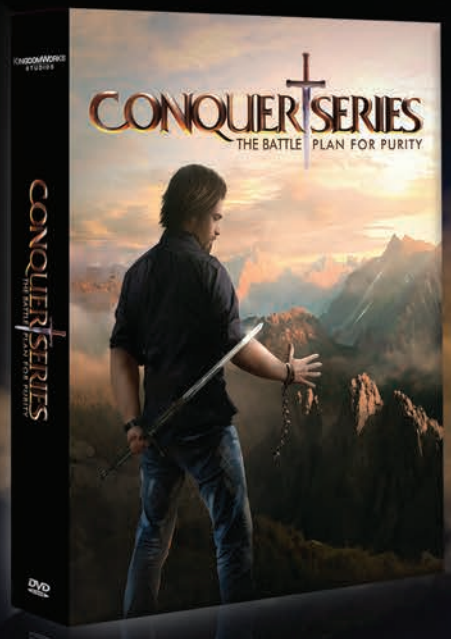
THE
CAMPAIGN
FOR BIOLA
UNIVERSITY

CONQUER SERIES

THE BATTLE PLAN FOR PURITY

THE TYPICAL CHURCH APPROACH TO HELPING MEN BREAK FREE OF PORN DOES NOT WORK

When a woman is nursing her child, her brain releases a neuroochemical called oxytocin, which emotionally bonds her to her child. When you watch porn, oxytocin along with other powerful neurotransmitters such as dopamine are released, which bond you to those images. What starts off as a moral problem, quickly becomes a brain problem. This is how men become enslaved to this sin. According to Dr. Ted Roberts, host of the Conquer Series, churches often treat this issue as a moral one, but fail to recognize it's mainly a brain problem. Teling a man to try harder only tightens the 'noose' of addiction. The mind must be renewed and this takes time.



The Conquer Series, unrivaled in its scope and authority, is a 6-disc cinematic set, hosted by former Marine fighter pilot and Pastor Dr. Ted Roberts who shares with you the powerful tools and bible-based strategies that he has used to help thousands of men renew their mind and walk in sexual integrity. The church now has a tool that actually works! It's perfect for church small groups or individual study. Recommended for ages 13+.

6-DISC DVD SET

OVER 5-HOURS OF IN-DEPTH TRAINING

AVAILABLE NOW AT CONQUERSERIES.COM

14-Day Money-Back Guarantee

"WE HAD 110 MEN GO THROUGH THE SERIES RECENTLY. WE HAVE SEEN TREMENDOUS CHANGE IN THE MEN! "

PAUL LEININGER
MEN'S MINISTRY LEADER

"I'VE SEEN GOD USE THE CONQUER SERIES TO GRIP THE HEARTS OF MEN AND BRING ABOUT LIFE CHANGE."

RICHARD DESSERT
MEN'S MINISTRY LEADER
GIG HARBOR, WA

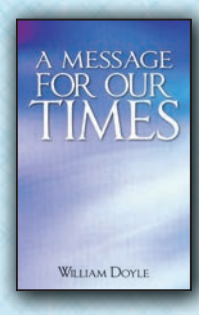
"AFTER I WATCHED THE FIRST DVD I JUST SAT THERE WATCHING THE CREDITS ROLL BY WITH TEARS OF THANKSGIVING TO GOD FOR WHAT HE HAS DONE THROUGH YOUR MINISTRY. "

STEVE
HALTOM CITY, TEXAS

"THE ONLY THING I REGRET IS NOT HAVING THIS INFO 15 YEARS AGO."

MATTHEW COOK

Great Books TO REFUEL YOUR SPIRIT



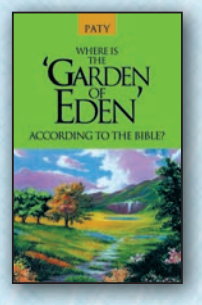
A Message For Our Times

William Doyle

www.authorhouse.com

978-1-4918-8775-2 | Hardback | $27.45
978-1-4918-8776-9 | Paperback | $15.18
978-1-4918-8777-6 | E-book | $3.99

A Message for Our Times written by William Doyle offers a clear and unshakeable understanding of the Christian Faith and clarifies scriptural text about the End Times. These spiritual messages answer many perplexing problems facing individuals.



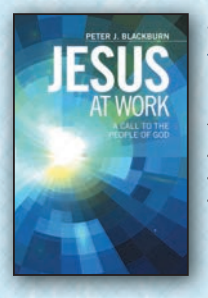
Where Is The 'Garden Of Eden' According To The Bible?

PATY

www.authorhouse.com

978-1-4969-7670-3 | Paperback | $13.66
978-1-4969-7671-0 | E-book | $3.99

Where Is The 'Garden Of Eden' According To The Bible? explains to readers that the Garden of Eden is not a physical world unlike what people think of it but is a heavenly world originated from the spirit realms.



Jesus at Work

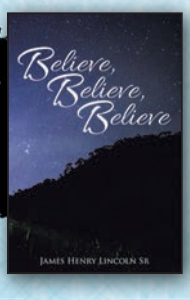
A Call to the People of God

Peter J. Blackburn

www.xlibris.com.au

978-1-4990-3306-9 | Hardback | $40.31
978-1-4990-3302-1 | Paperback | $24.19
978-1-4990-3307-6 | E-book | $4.99

Peter J. Blackburn lays out four major themes in new book – Building His Church (not our denomination), Growing His Body (not our corporation), Gathering His Harvest (not the spasmodic "outreach") and Coming Again (a goal and end-point to the mission).



Believe, Believe, Believe

James Henry Lincoln Sr

www.xlibris.com

978-1-5035-1919-0 | Paperback | $19.99
978-1-5035-1918-3 | E-book | $3.99

Embark on a journey of discovering where you are, who you are, and who God is. This book will aid you in establishing intimacy with the AImighty God as it reveals to you how to trust God completely.

Giving Up the Ghost

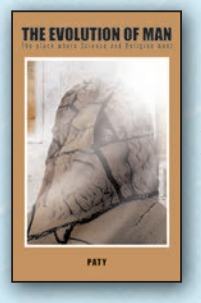
Let Go Of Grief and Restore Your Life

Karen Schultz

www.xlibris.com

978-1-4990-7751-3 | Hardback | $24.99
978-1-4990-7749-0 | Paperback | $15.99
978-1-4990-7750-6 | E-book | $3.99

Giving Up the Ghost explores the connection between the spiritual world (Heaven) and the physical world (Earth), revealing another life on the other side. It opens up a dialog about grief and the truth about life after death communication.



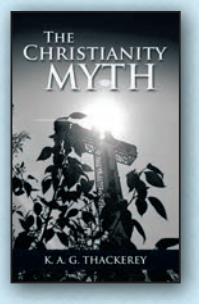
The Evolution Of Man

PATY

www.authorhouse.com

978-1-4969-8295-7 | Paperback | $13.66
978-1-4969-8296-4 | E-book | $3.99

The Bible story about Noah's ark is true, but the interpretation about the ark is faulty. *The Evolution Of Man* is calling for a religious debate to review the understandings about the ark and the beginning of our world system.



The Christianity Myth

K. A. G. Thackerey

www.authorhouse.co.uk

978-1-4969-9360-1 | Paperback | $13.66
978-1-4969-9361-8 | E-book | $4.99

The Christianity Myth is a very controversial, eye-opening expose that challenges Christianity's very essence. It examines what little we know and what little we think we know about first-century Christianity. Christians and non-Christians alike will find it a riveting read.

One Step to Happiness

Ken W. Davies

www.authorhouse.com

978-1-4969-9994-8 | Paperback | $15.18
978-1-4969-9993-1 | E-book | $4.99

How do you recognise pride? What does humility look like? Here you will find answers from scripture and human experience. In *One Step to Happiness*, Kenneth Davies reveals the devastating consequences of pride, and the tremendous blessings of humility.

REMARKABLE BOOKS TO ENJOY AGAIN AND AGAIN. ORDER YOURS TODAY!

JUNE 2015 VOLUME 59, NUMBER 5

CONTENTS

NEWS

COVER STORY

VIEWS

REVIEWS

ONLINE
Check out the latest news, information, blog posts, and more at **ChristianityToday.com**

"I wonder what burst of happiness might come from making every nook and cranny of my life just a bit neater." p. 27

COVER • JO HANLEY DUSTPAN • SHUTTERSTOCK PISTORIUS • CHRIS GLOAG

Bob (p. 42) enjoys a 6-mile run on a cool summer's night.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY

Hazel felt like spreading her wings at the Butterfly Palace in Branson, Missouri.

Chris is sad to be leaving Eastern ("I love the place") but excited about working with Renovaré as the new president.

CHRISTIANITY TODAY
(ISSN 0009-5753) is published monthly (bimonthly January/February and July/August), by Christianity Today, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188. Periodicals postage paid at Carol Stream, IL, and at additional mailing offices. ©2015 Christianity Today

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to Christianity Today, P.O. Box 37060, Boone, IA 50037-0060; 800.999.1704. Canada Publication Mail Agreement #: 040029733. Registration #: 126028836RT0001. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: WWM Inc., 2835 Kew Drive, Windsor, Ontario N8T 3B7. Printed in USA. Subscription Rates: Regular subscription price: one year $29.95. Outside US add $13.00 postage prepaid US currency. $4.95 per copy.

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

PERMISSIONS
Christianity Today grants permission for any original article (not a reprint) to be photocopied for use in a local church or classroom, provided no more than 1,000 copies are made, are distributed free, and indicate *Christianity Today* as the source.

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

AUSTRALIAN AGENT
MediaCom, 14 Eton Road, Keswick 5061, South Australia

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

SUBSCRIPTION RATES? GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS? ADDRESS CHANGES? ctifulfill@christianitytoday.com, 800.999.1704 or write Christianity Today, P. O. Box 37060, Boone, IA 50037-0060

Representative

With Church Mutual, you get more than just insurance. You get access to a team of experts who will be there when you need us most.

Maria Allen is a Church Mutual Account Manager with more than 10 years of experience. She leads a team of customer service professionals ready to serve your most immediate needs. Whether that means helping you file a claim or answering a question quickly and accurately, being present when you need us most is important to each and every one of our employees. Because with more than 115 years of experience, we understand how important it is to you.

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

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

Church Mutual®
INSURANCE COMPANY
Listening. | Learning. | Leading.®

The arts are simply God's gifts of creation, for our good and his glory. They are part of life that God has uniquely given us as human beings to give expression to our humanity—our joy, our pain, our praising God.

CONSTANTINE R. CAMPBELL
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT
AUTHOR, *PAUL AND UNION WITH CHRIST*
2014 CT BIBLICAL STUDIES BOOK OF THE YEAR

As a pianist, I learned to love the notes and to respect the composer's intention, to be faithful and creative in my interpretation. Performing music or drama requires creative fidelity that has rich parallels to biblical hermeneutics and theology.

KEVIN J. VANHOOZER
RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL AND SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
AUTHOR, *FAITH SPEAKING UNDERSTANDING: PERFORMING THE DRAMA OF DOCTRINE*
2015 CT THEOLOGY BOOK OF THE YEAR

ENTRUSTED WITH THE GOSPEL

TO SERVE THE GLOBAL CHURCH

TEDS faculty members Kevin Vanhoozer and Con Campbell are gifted scholars and dedicated teachers who believe that the gospel provides for and promotes whole life flourishing. They are recent *Christianity Today* Book Award winners, serious scholars and artists who bring their passions for music and drama to the classroom, to their understanding of theology, and to their mentoring relationships with students. They minister through their research and writing, through their creative expression, and through their teaching and caring for our students.

teds.edu

2065 Half Day Road | Deerfield, Illinois 60015
800 345.8337

TEDS
πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον
I THESS. 2:4

TRINITY
EVANGELICAL DIVINITY SCHOOL
TRINITY INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

EDITOR'S NOTE

HIDDEN CASUALTIES

How to really see veterans this summer.

KATELYN BEATY *Managing Editor, Magazine*

One side benefit of writing is the chance it gives authors to address pain in their own lives and personal histories. Such is the case with Annalaura Montgomery Chuang, who wrote this month's timely cover story (p. 32).

Chuang, based outside Boston, grew up in a family "where the trauma of World War II was a still-present and loaded topic." Her grandfather survived the Bataan Death March, when some 80,000 soldiers were forced to walk 60 miles to Camp O'Donnell in the Philippines, many of them beaten, shot, and killed along the way. Her grandmother and great-aunt were also interned by Japanese forces at a Filipino camp.

So when the United States went to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, "I was aware of what that might mean for our troops," Chuang says. She got involved with a nonprofit that provides free care for any New England veteran suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or traumatic brain injury. But, she told me, "I couldn't help wondering what more we could be doing as the healing community of Christ."

As more research and media coverage have illuminated the high rates of PTSD among veterans, church and parachurch groups have ramped up practical ministry. In 2009, CT reported on groups that provide in-home care and counseling to veterans and their families. While crucial, that care can't always address the wounds that lie deep in the soul.

Enter Warren Kinghorn, a psychiatrist whose innovative work on "moral injury" provides the crux of our cover story. "I was fascinated by the clear call that he was issuing to the church not to reduce combat trauma to a mental-health issue that can be left solely in the hands of mental-health professionals," says Chuang. In other words, the community of Christ has a uniquely Christ-shaped role to play in healing the wounds of war.

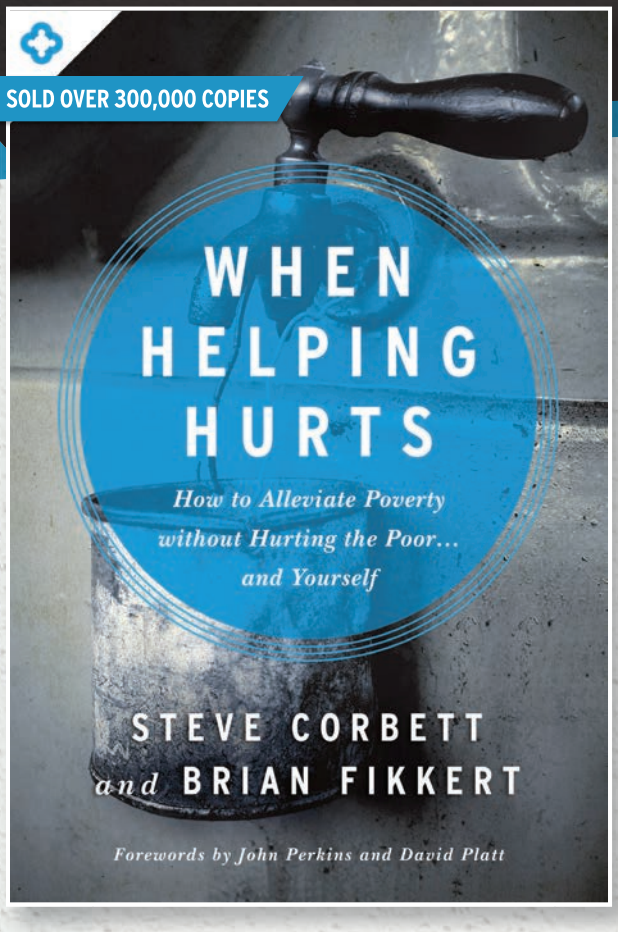
As churches honor veterans between Memorial Day and the Fourth of July, they are also wise to befriend and listen to veterans in their midst. In her research, Chuang found that

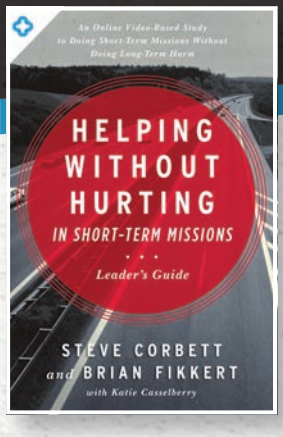
> churches tend to fall into two camps: the conservative ones who call veterans *heroes* and put them on a pedestal, and the progressive ones who opposed the wars but have nothing to say to veterans. My hope is that the church will begin to listen to our veterans and to make room for the full range of their experiences, even when what they have to say is painful or uncomfortable.

At the family picnic, in the fellowship hall, at the Communion table, we are ever in the midst of the walking wounded. But wounds that are seen have a better chance of healing than wounds that are hidden. May we stay with veterans long enough to see, to suffer alongside, and to serve. **CT**

Follow KATELYN BEATY on Twitter @KatelynBeaty

ILLUSTRATION BY STUDIO HELLOVON





UNLEASHING AND EQUIPPING PEOPLE

To effectively help the poor requires repentance and the realization of our own brokenness. Whether you're involved in short-term missions or long-term empowerment of the poor, these books will help in three key areas:

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS:
Who are the poor?

PRINCIPLES:
Should we do relief, rehabilitation, or development?

STRATEGIES:
How can we help people effectively here and abroad?

These resources are ideal for church leaders, missions directors, and youth pastors seeking to move beyond good intentions.

READY TO MOVE YOUR MINISTRY BEYOND JUST GOOD INTENTIONS?

Contact Gene Eble, Church Sales Manager, at gene.eble@moody.edu for more information.

MOODY Publishers™
From the Word to Life

REPLY ALL

RESPONSES TO OUR APRIL ISSUE

THE UNEXPECTED DEFENDERS *p. 34*

Thanks for highlighting women who have indeed been gifted by the Holy Spirit to teach and defend the faith. They are carrying on the tradition of women who taught and led authoritatively throughout Scripture. I imagine Priscilla, Junia, Hulda, Deborah, and Phoebe are smiling within that great cloud of witnesses.

JM Smith
Disciple Dojo, JMSmith.org

Appropriate since women were the first to share the news of the Resurrection!

Maurine Frost

Thank you for your excellent cover story highlighting women in apologetics: a truly worthy subject and a valuable and inspiring resource. In fact, I would consider it an unmitigated triumph, except for one irksome word: *unexpected*. My mind goes to early church martyrs Felicity and Perpetua; to Lady Jane Grey, a teenager who defended her Protestant faith against much older Catholic experts and died gruesomely because of it; to Dorothy L. Sayers, a participant in the famed Oxford Inklings; to British Catholic philosopher G. E. M. Anscombe, who famously debated and beat C. S. Lewis; and indeed countless others.

Women who defend the faith are nothing new. Perhaps *intrepid* or *fierce* would fit better than *unexpected*.

Elizabeth Glass Turner

It is gratifying to see Nancy Pearcey finally getting the national media attention she deserves. There are scores of young Christian journalists scattered in newsrooms around the country whom Pearcey has taught cultural apologetics. American journalism is better because of her.

Robert Case, Founding Director
World Journalism Institute

THE OXFORD REVIVALIST *p. 42*

Oxford's Unapologetic Female Apologist—inspiring other women to step into their calling. Thanks @amyorrewing.

Cass Tompich **@CassTompich**

UNDER DISCUSSION: SHOULD UNACCREDITED BIBLE COLLEGES BE ALLOWED TO GRANT DEGREES? *p. 18*

Shouldn't these schools do what they need to do to be accredited? If not, what's their purpose?

Sam Levy **@sdlevy13**

THERE'S STILL POWER IN THE BLOOD *p. 23*

An old pastor once told me, "Always preach the blood." Sing it. Preach it. Tell the world about the redeeming power of his blood.

Scott Primmer

"There is a fountain filled with blood. . . ." First hymn I learned to play for church and still a favorite. Great read.

Wanda Bryant **@worthymanner**

BY THESE SCARS *p. 28*

For faithful moms of any creed—Why Stretch Marks Remind Me of the Resurrection.

Anesa Miller **@anesam98**

SPIRITED LIFE: DON'T FORGET THE BORING BITS *p. 30*

Reading the genealogies is like figuring out a puzzle. Fun. Building instructions, not so much.

Alison Swihart

REVIVING HOPE AFTER GENOCIDE *p. 48*

While the Turkish government may never

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

admit to slaughtering the Armenians in World War I, Christians everywhere can bolster the faith of our Armenian brothers and sisters in practical ways. World Vision has a robust sponsorship program for Armenian children living in difficult circumstances. Thirty-five dollars a month provides education, healthcare, child protection, and, in concert with local Armenian churches, Christian teaching and summer camps. Microloans to Armenian farmers and entrepreneurs, facilitated by reliable Christian NGOs, lift hearts and hopes while providing practical resources.

My wife and I were privileged to help our Armenian "son" for eight years, as well as his mother and grandmother. Now that he has aged out of the program, we still exchange emails, expressing our love, prayer support, and encouragement in Jesus. Through contributing to a microloan along with 43 other contributors, we helped another family purchase seed to plant a year's worth of crops and hire farm workers to assist. The loan has been repaid and the family is experiencing greater financial stability and a better life.

Yes, the people of Armenia mourn terrible losses, and this affords the church the opportunity to come alongside. While the Armenian genocide may never be righted until Jesus comes again, God's people can always reach out in compassion and ease some of the hurt.

Clint Kelly
Everett, Washington

RE-WORD: GETTING BRUTALLY HONEST WITH GOD *p. 56*
In light of Nepal & tragedies in our own church family, we recommend these words on lament by Dr. Longman.

Free Methodist Church of Santa Barbara
@FMCSB

I love how the Psalms give us a glimpse of honest prayer.

Jen @jenmanglos

REVIEWS: LUKE FOR THE LEAST OF THESE *p. 79*
[Justo] González has a knack for expressing complicated ideas in pithy sound bites.

Daniel Hill
pastordanielhill.com

REVIEWS: NEEDLES IN A HYMNSTACK *p. 80*
What a revelation to find new artists and absolutely fantastic music ouside the CCLI. I love the soul groove of Liz Vice and the eloquent lyrics of Miranda Dodson. And the fact that it's virtually free is amazing. I would have likely never discovered these artists, so my thanks to Wen Reagan for the curation and discovery, and for sharing the treasures. As a librarian, I say well done!

Ramarie Beaver
Email

Happy to see Liz Vice getting this richly deserved write-up, and excited to discover other gems.

Angela @ThatKittenMimi

TESTIMONY: UNPLANNED GRACE *p. 88*
The piece "Unplanned Grace" by Christine A. Scheller is a well-written, concise, brave, inspiring testimony. In my 48 years of continuous, full-time, pastoral ministry, I've heard/read many testimonies. Her article is one of the best.

Michael Tucker
Chandler, Arizona

@ NET GAIN *Responses to our blogs and online articles.*

Hit way too close to home.

Graham Ware **@deo_favente1**
Third Culture: "How to Destroy Your Pastor," by Peter W. Chin.

Thank you so much for this. It helps me feel vindicated in retrospect. We took a lot of criticism and harsh looks when our daughter, now grown, was struggling through her difficult adolescence. I knew instinctively that she needed something other than "tough love," but I received little reinforcement on that. We somehow muddled through, and she has become a faithful, loving, attentive, adult daughter. Who knew? Christ is faithful.

Betty Lewis
Her.meneutics: "Adoption Doesn't 'Fix' Kids," by Kelly Rosati, guest writer.

My condolences to [Schuller's] family. This is a good analysis of . . . his work, both positive (more than I expected, to be honest) and negative. Even so, this is a cautionary tale that the church must learn from, first for the American church and then for what we ship overseas. "He did for the church what Disneyland did for amusement parks" is a line that makes me shudder.

Ellen Randall Dunn
"Died: Robert Schuller, Forerunner of the Seeker-Sensitive Movement," by Tim Stafford.

This article does a good job of taking some air out of the hyperrhetoric. Christians should advocate rights for all.

Mark Weinert **@mweinert_fcc**
"Why 'RFRA' Is America's Latest Four-Letter Word," by Bob Smietana.

As a baby Christian, I was so ignorant. I believed that anyone who suffered mental illness or depression was not trusting God. I believed that any form of medication was evil. Shame on me. Now I struggle with depression. It can be difficult, but I know my God is with me. I know many other believers who love God and struggle silently with bipolar or other mental illnesses.

I wholeheartedly agree with you: The church must offer help. Counseling, prayer, and a complete physical examination are so important. The brain is such an intricate, complicated organism; any brain surgeon or psychologist would tell you that they don't understand it completely. The effects of sin are felt in the brain as well.

I am an advocate for those who struggle. There are steps to take when helping your fellow brother or sister. I encourage every believer (not just pastors) to learn those steps. Please don't be like I was as a baby believer. I caused more harm than good.

Cherrilynn Bisbano
The Exchange: "A New Approach to Mental Illness in the Church," by Ed Stetzer.

A review of the new Sufjan album that won't make you pitchfork your eyes out, thanks *Christianity Today*!

Tomas Axeland **@axelanding**
"How Not to Listen to the New Sufjan Stevens Album," by Joel Heng Hartse.

INTRODUCING THE *new*

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL *of* DIVINITY

"The School of Divinity provides a world-class education in a university setting for biblical and theological studies, ministry training, and global studies. Our programs equip students to engage the culture and impact today's world for the cause of Christ."

ED HINDSON, *Dean*

D.MIN., WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
PH.D., UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA
FELLOW OF THE INTERNATIONAL BIOGRAPHICAL ASSOCIATION, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND

At the FOREFRONT OF RELIGIOUS *and* MINISTERIAL TRAINING

Liberty University has combined its undergraduate religion programs and its seminary to create the world's largest accredited school for religious studies and ministerial training. The recently established School of Divinity offers B.A., B.S., M.A., M.Div., Th.M., D.Min., and Ph.D. degrees in biblical and theological studies, Christian leadership, church ministries, apologetics, and global studies on campus and online.

LIBERTY ALLOWS YOU TO STUDY FOR THE MINISTRY IN A MAJOR UNIVERSITY SETTING WITH RENOWNED FACULTY, INCLUDING:

MARK ALLEN, *Ph.D.*
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

LEO PERCER, *Ph.D.*
BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

GARY HABERMAS, *Ph.D.*
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

DAVID BAGGETT, *Ph.D.*
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

CHRIS GNANAKAN, *Ph.D.*
UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

RANDALL PRICE, *Ph.D.*
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

GABRIEL ETZEL, *Ph.D.*
SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

KEVIN KING, *Ph.D.*
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

GARY YATES, *Ph.D.*
DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

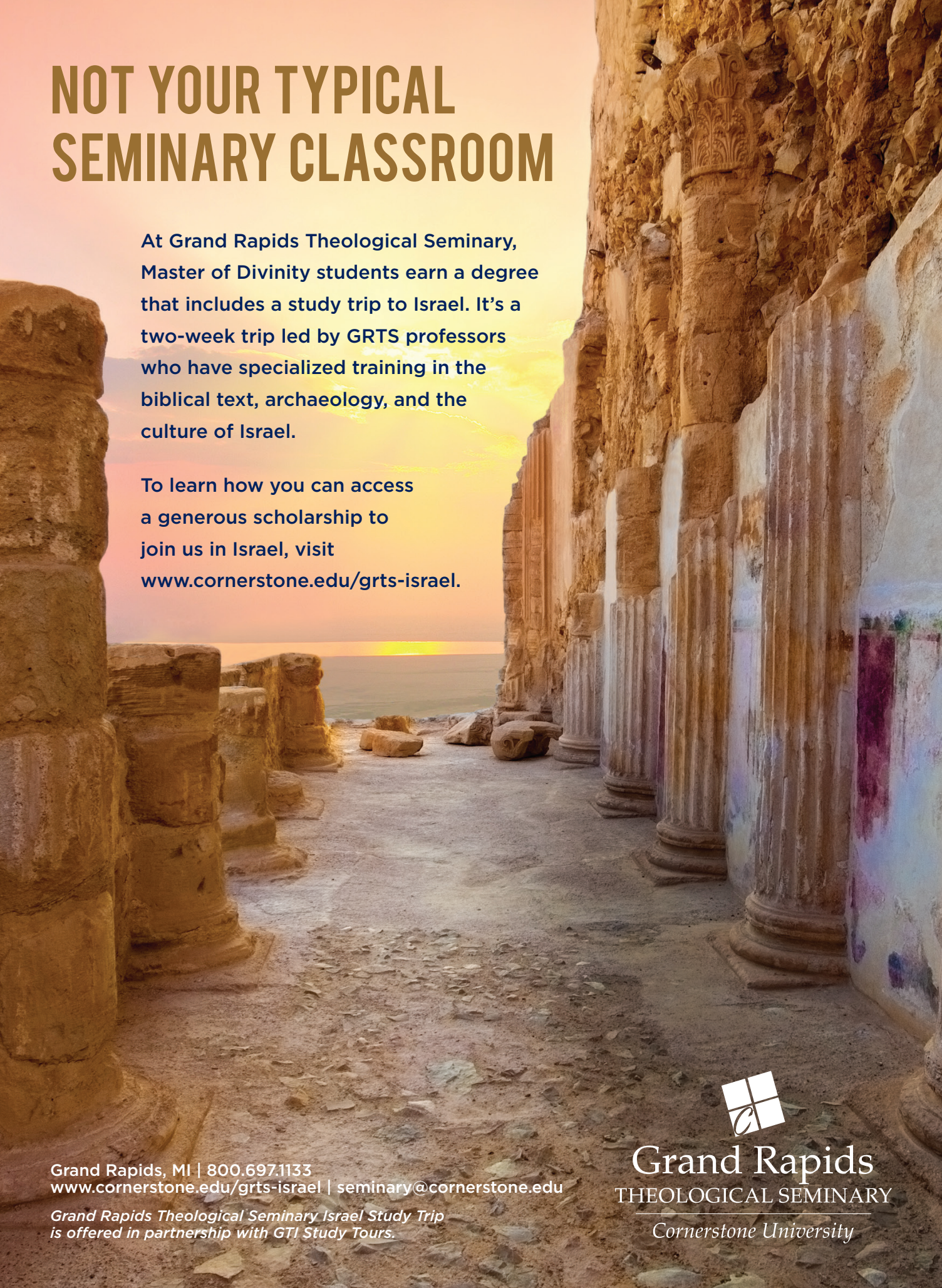
The LANDMARK TOWER | *A World-Class Facility*

The tower is expected to be complete in Spring 2017.

Liberty's School of Divinity will be housed in the Landmark Tower, which is now under construction. The tower's prominent location on the main campus emphasizes Liberty's commitment to biblical, theological, and ministry training.

EQUIPPING TOMORROW'S CHRISTIAN LEADERS TODAY

LEARN MORE AT WWW.LIBERTY.EDU/DIVINITYCT



NOT YOUR TYPICAL SEMINARY CLASSROOM

At Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, Master of Divinity students earn a degree that includes a study trip to Israel. It's a two-week trip led by GRTS professors who have specialized training in the biblical text, archaeology, and the culture of Israel.

To learn how you can access a generous scholarship to join us in Israel, visit www.cornerstone.edu/grts-israel.

Grand Rapids, MI | 800.697.1133
www.cornerstone.edu/grts-israel | seminary@cornerstone.edu

Grand Rapids Theological Seminary Israel Study Trip is offered in partnership with GTI Study Tours.

Grand Rapids
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Cornerstone University

NEWS

WITNESS

REVERSING ABORTION

A few weeks pregnant, Rebecca Medina (right) took 200 mg of mifepristone—an abortion drug—and fell asleep. When the 25-year-old nursing student woke up, she had changed her mind. A Google search led her to AbortionPillReversal.com, where family physician George Delgado explains his research on how a little-known procedure, using progesterone, can reverse a chemical abortion. For Medina, the treatment worked: her son, Elijah Gabriel, is now six months old. While more studies are needed, a 2,500-member group of pro-life ob-gyns back the treatment, and nearly 300 physicians offer it.

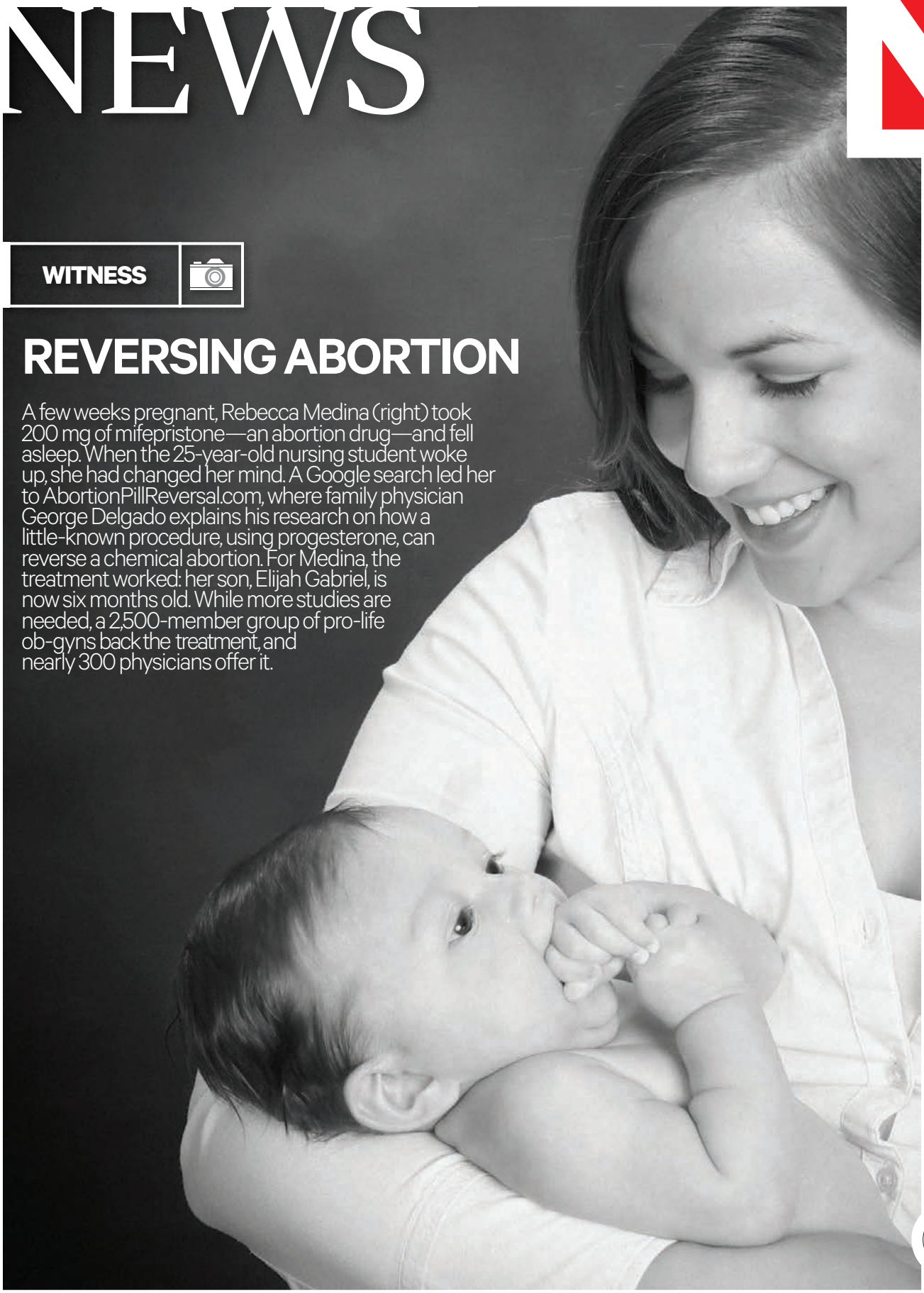


PHOTO COURTESY OF REBECCA MEDINA

GLEANINGS

NEPAL

THE 'ROOF OF THE WORLD' COLLAPSES

Christians are a minority in Nepal but were especially affected by April's 7.8-magnitude earthquake. It struck during their main weekly services, collapsing many churches with worshipers still inside. More than 70 died at Nepali Evangelical Church in Kapan, Kathmandu; hundreds of the more than 7,300 Nepali casualties were Christians. The deaths may revive communal tensions over Christian burials, opposed by Hindu activists who favor cremation. The disaster also delays the passage of a new constitution guaranteeing long-sought religious freedoms.

LIBYA

ISIS makes Christian migration even deadlier

The same day England's Archbishop of Canterbury arrived in Cairo to honor the 21 Coptic Christians martyred by ISIS on a Mediterranean beach, the terrorist group released a second propaganda video. This one showed the orchestrated execution in Libya of 28 Christians, mostly from Ethiopia. (Their country's main Orthodox church claims descent from the eunuch baptized by Philip in Acts 8.) The new martyrs were part of a record number of Africans attempting to flee by boat to Italy, a top destination for Christian migrants from Ethiopia and other African nations. But migrant drownings are also at record highs, including more than 1,500 deaths as of April. (A 2013 shipwreck killed 250 people; most were Christians fleeing persecution.) ISIS may be fueling sectarianism: Italian police recently charged 15 Muslims with murder for throwing 12 Christians overboard out of "religious hatred."

Layoff of Christian college professor paused

The president of Northwest Nazarene University (NNU) apologized in April for attempting to lay off a tenured professor. President David Alexander had clashed with theology professor Tom Oord over evolution and open theology. In March, Oord and another professor were laid off, attributed to budget cuts. The move came weeks after the NNU board renewed Alexander's contract, citing record enrollment and robust finances. Students and faculty objected, claiming Oord was being targeted for his teachings on evolution. That led to a no-confidence vote in the president by three-quarters of NNU's 100-plus faculty members. The board appointed a committee to review the layoffs, which were placed on hold.

RUSSIA

Europe's unlikely 'Bible belt' disappears

Last year, when citizens of Crimea voted overwhelmingly to leave Ukraine and join Russia, the region was home to 320 Protestant groups and 1,546 religious groups overall. Today, only nine Protestant groups and five others remain registered, according to Forum 18, a religious-liberty

PHOTO BY NIRANJAN SHRESTHA / APTOPIX / AP

"I'm kind of freaking out now."

Dan Price, **founder of credit-card processor Gravity Payments, after announcing plans to raise his company's minimum salary to $70,000 a year. Among the Seattle Pacific University grad's favorite books are *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* and *The Millionaire Next Door*.**

THE NEW YORK TIMES

watchdog group. Under rules imposed last fall, all Crimean religious groups had to re-register with Russian authorities. But to be approved, leaders have to become Russian citizens, join an existing centralized religious organization, or in some cases pass a state religion expertise test. Unregistered groups can still meet for worship, but they cannot rent or buy buildings, hire staff, or host foreigners.

Theologian's pen pal faces execution, again

Georgia officials have asked for permission to set a new execution date for Kelly Renee Gissendaner, a death-row inmate turned theology student. Gissendaner was convicted in 1998 for convincing her boyfriend to kill her husband. She has since befriended German pneumatologist Jürgen Moltmann and completed a theology program through Emory University. Her March 2 execution was postponed due to problems with the lethal injection solution. Hundreds of faith leaders have asked state officials to spare Gissendaner's life. "On the issue of the death penalty, we unanimously believe that fairness must be paramount," they wrote. "We also believe in the power of mercy." In March, the National Latino Evangelical Coalition endorsed a ban on capital punishment; in April, Lynne Hybels, Ron Sider, and Shane Claiborne joined 400 evangelical and Catholic leaders calling for the same.

LIBERIA

Christians oppose return of 'Christian nation'

Baptist leaders are protesting a move to officially make Liberia a Christian nation, after a constitutional review conference overwhelmingly approved the proposal in April. "We do not support any legislated domination of any group or individual, because we strongly are driven by the words of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 7:12 to 'treat others as you want them to treat you,'" said the Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention. The West African nation, which is 85 percent Christian, was founded by former slaves from the United States. The country's constitution credits God in "granting to us the blessings of the Christian religion," but Liberia became a secular state in 1986. A campaign to return the country to its Christian roots started three years ago. Supporters blame secularization for 2 military coups—and some for the Ebola outbreak that has killed about 4,500 Liberians. The proposal must be approved by the Liberian legislature and then voters.

Evangelicals unite among Mennonites

A new network of Anabaptist churches is set to debut this fall as a conservative alternative to the Mennonite Church USA (MC USA), which is wrestling with how to keep the peace over sexuality. Organizers of Evana—a combination of *evangelical* and *Anabaptist*—expect 100 US churches to join. The network was sparked after a lesbian pastor in a committed relationship was licensed by the Mountain States Mennonite Conference in February 2014. The MC USA didn't recognize her licensing, but also didn't discipline the group. The current Confession of Faith says marriage is "a covenant between one man and one woman for life," but the MC USA is considering ways to accommodate Mennonites who disagree.

NORTH KOREA

Court orders $330 million for missionary's death

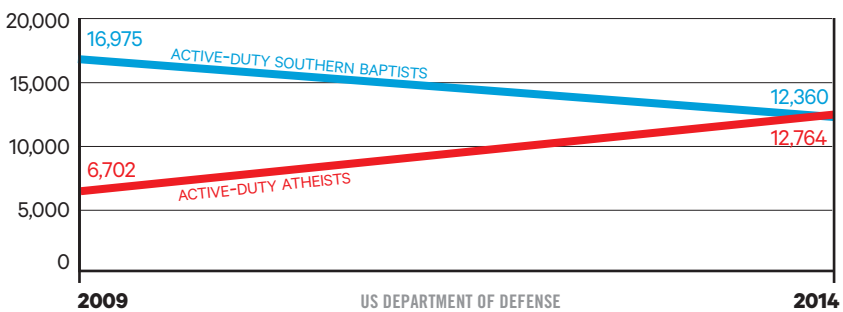
A federal district court has ordered the government of North Korea to pay $330 million in damages to the family of Kim Dong Shik, a Presbyterian missionary. Kim was kidnapped by North Korean spies in 2000 while working with refugees in China. He was forced into a cab and spirited across the border, where he later died in a prison camp. (President Obama advocated for Kim in 2005 as a US senator.) Asher Perlin, a lawyer for the Kims, told *The Washington Post* that the family may try to collect money from North Korean assets frozen in the United States.

NIGERIA

Christians support new Muslim president

Many Nigerian church leaders were grateful that this year's presidential election was peaceful—and that the Muslim candidate won it. Muhammadu Buhari, a former general who briefly ruled after a military coup in the 1980s, beat out incumbent Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian, by nearly 2 million votes. Many Protestant and Catholic leaders argued that Buhari would more effectively fight corruption and Boko Haram than Jonathan has done. Jonathan drew praise for peacefully ceding power. He had bested Buhari in the 2011 election, which the Council on Foreign Relations describes as Nigeria's first "genuine political contest between the predominantly Christian south and the Muslim north." But critics said his victory violated an informal agreement to rotate Muslim and Christian leaders. Resulting riots led to more than 800 deaths and 350 churches destroyed.

Southern Baptists provide the most military chaplains (437 out of 2,837) of any group. But their active-duty members are now outnumbered by **atheists.**

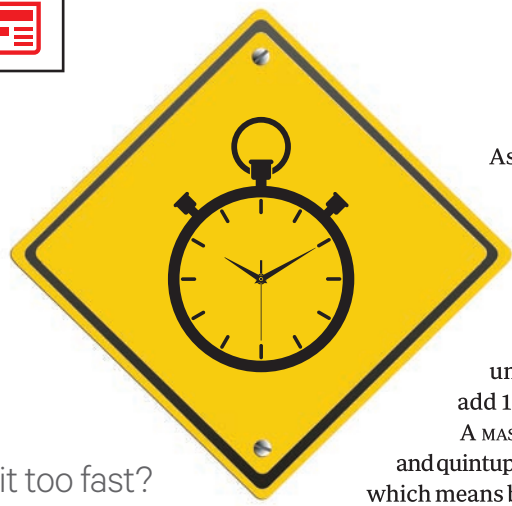


HEADLINES

Bible

The Bible in Two Months

That's to translate it, not read it. But is it too fast?



In February, Wycliffe Associates (WA), a smaller organization within Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT), announced that a team in Asia was able to translate almost half of the New Testament in two weeks.

The announcement prompted a flurry of responses from experienced translators who questioned the quality of the work. How could something produced so quickly be any good?

"That part is the most difficult for people to believe," said WA president Bruce Smith.

The project was prompted by an ethnic minority group from Asia that's too small to be "on anybody's priority list," he said. They asked WA to help them translate the Bible on their own.

Organizers made two changes from traditional translation methods to speed up the project. They worked simultaneously on the text instead of sequentially, and they skipped the weeks of training on translation principles (including proper names, idioms, and key terms).

WA made the changes after comparing translations done by trained teams and untrained teams last summer. Their accuracy rates were the same, said WA's Dan Kramer, who led the project.

The success of the "understandably absurd approach," said Smith, was rooted in the translators' "knowledge of their language and the languages of the source text."

When WA gathered 13 translators for its Asian project, it immediately split them up and gave each a part of Scripture, along with multiple translations in other languages that the translators spoke. Two weeks later, they had completed the Gospels and 1 and 2 Timothy.

The results surprised everyone.

There was "no decrease in the quality of the translation," WA announced after running the translation through five different checks: the original translator, a peer, an experienced translator fluent in the "language of wider communication," the team of translators, and an experienced consultant who checked the back-translated version against the original Greek.

WA dubbed the process Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation (MAST) and has since used it successfully in China, Myanmar, and Vietnam. WA has 115 MAST projects under way, and is set to add 120 more in 2015.

A MAST translator can draft and quintuple-check 34 verses a day, which means both Testaments could theoretically be written in 61 working days, Smith said.

Other translators are more skeptical. Bible translation balances on the tension between speed and accuracy, said Russ Hersman, WBT chief operating officer.

"Accuracy for us is the highest value," Hersman said. "That's not to say you can't be accurate and do things quickly, but the whole reason we have our checking system is quality control."

It takes WBT anywhere from 5 to 20 years to translate the New Testament into a new language. On-the-job learning is effective, and inexperienced translators hone their skills as they go, Hersman said. But a quick translation experience doesn't provide them the chance to practice extensively.

And speeding up the process leaves some things behind, said Valerie Martinez, who is translating Scripture with her husband for an indigenous group in Mexico through Commission to Every Nation. Taking time on a translation ensures that the people group, if preliterate, can have input on their alphabet and can learn to read their own language. Involving a group's influential citizens, which can aid acceptance of the Bible, also takes time.

"The indigenous people could easily think that a fast translation communicates that they aren't as important as people who speak a majority language, so [they're] not worth the effort to do it carefully and well," said Martinez.

For those waiting, the translation "cannot be done too quickly," Kramer said. "Yet, can we get ahead of ourselves? I hope we don't, because we do pray that God will stop us if we do." **Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra**

31%

WORLD LANGUAGES (1,859 OF 6,901) WITH NO BIBLE TRANSLATION STARTED.

72%

AMERICANS WHO BELIEVE THE BIBLE IS AVAILABLE IN ALL LANGUAGES.

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY

PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

Compiled by Kevin P. Emmert

Jesus Has Always Been Our Boyfriend

The biggest difference between old and new hymns.

If you think contemporary praise music lacks robust theology, you're not alone. Modern worship is widely criticized for not being Trinitarian enough, and its lyrics are often perceived to be more romantic than reverent—as if Jesus were a significant other, not the God of the universe.

A new study, however, finds that Jesus has always been the primary focus of evangelical songs. Further, traditional hymns and contemporary worship are more similar in describing the Trinity than is widely believed.

So says Lester Ruth, research professor of Christian worship at Duke Divinity School. He compared the 112 worship songs that topped the Christian Copyright License International lists between 1989 and 2015 with the 70 most-printed US evangelical hymns from 1737 to 1860. He found that both traditional hymns and praise songs are equally weak in referencing the Trinity—and equally strong in addressing Jesus (see stats at right).

Ruth also found today's praise songs never use *sin* as a verb per se, only as a noun; meanwhile, hymns primarily use *sin* as a verb. No single theory of the Atonement predominates in either era. And whereas hymns tend to exhort people to worship, praise songs are more likely to worship God directly.

The striking difference between the two groups is eschatology. Ruth argues that in hymns, heaven hasn't yet reached earth. In praise songs, heaven is already here.

Hymns emphasize patience and perseverance, portraying the Christian life "as a journey of harrowing dangers and temptations that, if one stays true and faithful, will safely bring the Christian, by the grace of Christ, to a destiny of unspeakable bliss," said Ruth.

By comparison, the fulfillment of heaven's blessings is immediate in praise songs. "As the angels and the heavenly host constantly sing 'holy, holy, holy' . . . so by our music we immediately access heaven and participate in our destiny to worship God," he said.

CT asked experts to weigh in.

39% Popular contemporary worship songs (1989–2015) that directly address Jesus.

40% Popular evangelical hymns (1737–1860) that directly address Jesus.

4% Popular worship songs that are Trinitarian (naming all three persons of the Trinity).

4% Popular evangelical hymns that are Trinitarian.

Q: Do our worship songs promise too much 'heaven on earth'?

YES — NO

"While we can celebrate how songs highlight our access to God's presence in Christ—a truth from Hebrews—something significant is lost if we forget another truth from Hebrews: We, like Israel of old, have a 'race set before us.' Our songs need to set realistic expectations for what we already possess in heaven, and for what is not yet ours while we sojourn here and now."

Michael Allen, associate professor, Reformed Theological Seminary

"Christians have always struggled to maintain the tension between the 'now' and the 'not yet' of our faith. To imply in our singing that there is no future expectation or present deficiency is to turn worship into escapism, smugness, and a dangerous denial of present sin and evil. That modern songs seem to deny the 'not yet' may imply the church has limited its reach to the affluent and content."

Will Willimon, professor, Duke Divinity School

"Charismatic piety since the Jesus People has led to the overrealized eschatology of modern songs. However, we should applaud songwriters trying to return Christian singing not back to the Wesley/Watts era, but to Scripture itself. For example, 'In Christ Alone' doesn't perfectly reflect the journey motif in hymns. But it certainly focuses on the mighty acts of God in history."

Douglas O'Donnell, senior lecturer, Queensland Theological College

"It's crucial to recognize the cultural factors at work in both groups. Life for Christians centuries ago was difficult. They were more inclined to celebrate the future kingdom that God promised. Believers today expect life to be good, and appreciate their present experiences in Christ. Neither is bad in itself. But if believers focus too much on one, they can be distracted from serious discipleship."

William Dyrness, dean emeritus, Fuller Theological Seminary

"Both groups of songs reflect biblical themes. Modern songs reflect a distinct biblical emphasis that we currently have access to God's presence. This access is not merely deferred. In Christ, we have everything we need to draw upon God's enablement (Eph. 1:3). Assured that our future is secure, we can be less anxious about the present and patiently endure difficulties."

Darrell Bock, professor, Dallas Theological Seminary

HEADLINES

China

400 Down, More to Follow

Government removes crosses from 'China's Jerusalem.'

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHINA AID

In the past year, the government of a wealthy coastal province in China has taken the same thing from more than 400 churches: a big red cross.

The removals in the Zhejiang city of Wenzhou, known as "China's Jerusalem," were ordered by provincial party secretary Xia Baolong. And the teardowns won't stop until 2016, the government told religious leaders.

To be sure, removing crosses is not as devastating as China's closing and crushing of churches during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and '70s. But it has provoked a similar response. Instead of demoralizing Christians, the persecution has "stiffened their resolve and commitment," China Source president Brent Fulton said. "It brought home that believers have a price to pay."

The cross removals are also prompting more Christians to self-reflect.

"Christians in Wenzhou [are] wondering what lessons God wants them to take from this campaign," said Fenggang Yang, director of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University. Some wonder if they need to shift their focus from the physical building to training ministers and sending out missionaries, or if the size of their churches revealed pride.

"[Christians] have learned that a church building is not the same as a congregation of believers," wrote Zhang Yuan, a columnist for the *Christian Times* newspaper in mainland China. "So now, instead of competing to see who can build the best building, the focus has shifted to the spiritual construction of believers."

The cross removals have also torn down a metaphorical wall between the unregistered house churches and the

official Three-Self Patriotic Movement churches, Yang said. Before the campaign, the two didn't cooperate, he said.

This is the first time the government has demolished Three-Self churches, said Kody Kness, vice president of China Aid. That destruction is bringing house and official church communities closer together "in a way only experiencing persecution can," he said.

For example, Huang Yizi, a Three-Self pastor, was sentenced to a year in prison for "gathering a crowd to disturb public order" when his congregation formed a human wall to try to keep their cross. House church attendees compose his entire legal team.

The government says it is removing crosses because the churches were built illegally. Some of the buildings were constructed larger than their permits allowed. But internal government documents obtained by *The New York Times* last year revealed a different motivation.

"The priority is to remove crosses at religious activity sites on both sides of expressways, national highways, and provincial highways," the document said. "Over time and in batches, bring down the crosses from the rooftops to the facade of the buildings."

> 'Instead of competing to see who can build the best building, the focus has shifted to the spiritual construction of believers.'
>
> ZHANG YUAN, *CHRISTIAN TIMES* COLUMNIST

The "Three Rectifications and One Demolition" campaign seeks to regulate "excessive religious sites" and "overly popular" religious activities. To the government, the cross-topped buildings are an evangelistic tool.

And that can be true, Fulton of China Source said. Some believers argue that in China's consumer economy, the church needs a certain level of visibility and sophistication. Younger Chinese Christians aren't as willing to sit in someone's living room and have a church service, he said.

Some argue the building itself, not just the cross, can draw seekers. "When outsiders see the good life of Christians, they are gradually drawn to the faith," wrote a *Gospel Times* commenter. "If worship took place in secret, do you think there would be so many Christians in Wenzhou?"

Though the physical cross can evangelize, an even bigger issue is the allegiance it represents, Yang said. "Both sides—the Communist Party and the Christians—see this as a symbolic fight. Who are you submissive to?" (Estimates suggest China has 70 million Christians over age 16 and 85 million Communist Party members.)

A Christian's loyalty belongs to Christ, but even Jesus counsels the Pharisees to "give to Caesar what is Caesar's," said Yang. That's something Chinese Christians are "thinking over and over."

Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra

With all the talk about the changes in healthcare, it's nice to know that our family has a God-honoring alternative.

Medi-Share is healthcare reform for Christians!

Medi-Share isn't insurance. It's a community of believers across America who share each other's healthcare bills. Our family share is about $300 a month! And **unlike insurance, we know our dollars never go to pay for procedures that are unbiblical.** Plus, the new healthcare law has a provision for health sharing ministries, so we don't have to buy insurance or face penalties.

Medi-Share is a healthcare choice Christians can believe in!

Request your FREE information guide today.
Visit **www.Medi-Share.org** *or call* **800-772-5623.**

- ***Over 129,000 members sharing your medical bills***
- ***Family options average around $300 a month***
- ***No enrollment period—you can join any time***

Medi-Share™
Affordable, Biblical Healthcare

Medi-Share is not health insurance. Medi-Share is not available in Montana.

VIEWS

WHERE WE STAND

LIVING PEACEABLY IN HOSTILE TIMES

Four ways to do so after RFRA and the Supreme Court's impending decision.

PHOTO BY LUMINA / STOCKSY

Kevin Palau, among others, offers a model: Sitting down with our LGBT neighbors and getting to know them.

"EXTREMISM IN THE DEFENSE of LGBT liberty is no vice." That seems to be the Goldwateresque mantra of many well-meaning Americans today. But it has unfortunately created a rather ugly atmosphere.

The latest flash point is Indiana's original RFRA (Religious Freedom Restoration Act) which was signed into law in April. It was designed, in part, to protect individuals and businesses from being compelled to use their creative services to celebrate, honor, or extol behavior they find morally objectionable. The presenting issue is gay marriage, and specific examples include the Christian photographer in New Mexico who was asked to photograph a gay commitment event. The

courts ruled that she could not refuse to provide such services.

We believe that Christian business owners should offer ordinary services to anyone who seeks them. But like just causes taken up during other eras of American history, some extreme partisans of a fundamentally good cause (equal treatment for LGBT people) are now discriminating against others.

The current challenge to liberty of conscience is serious, and it is likely things will get worse before they get better. But we are cautiously optimistic. Time and again in American history, wiser heads, committed to living in a just and pluralistic democracy, have prevailed at such times (from the Salem Witch Trials to the McCarthy era). More important, the church has weathered worse crises in more dire circumstances here and abroad, and by God's grace, Christ's church still stands. May Christians be among the calmer heads who work steadily and stubbornly to create laws that protect the rights and consciences of all who live in this land.

Here are four ways we can do so amid the storm:

1. We can remind people on all sides what is at stake: not just our but also their liberty of conscience if the logic of these cases against Christian conscience gets applied broadly. Imagine a gay baker being required to decorate a cake with an antigay message, like GOD HATES GAYS. Depending on a state's laws, stores may not specifically refuse to inscribe cakes that identify buyers as Baptist (that would be religious discrimination). But, writes UCLA law professor Eugene Volokh, "nothing in the law bans discrimination based on ideology more broadly." This baker could justifiably refuse to decorate that cake because it articulates a point of view he adamantly opposes. That's the liberty of conscience we cherish, whether it protects gay people, agnostics, Mormons, Muslims, or whomever.

2. As the example above suggests, we can continue to insist that the law make distinctions. While we believe basic goods services should be offered to all customers, we also believe Christian business owners should be able to act on conscience when customers ask them to celebrate or implicitly endorse behaviors or points of view that go against their conscience. This is not a contradiction; rather, it's the difference between selling your neighbor a doughnut and catering your neighbor's wedding. Of course, laws that make such distinctions are not easy to write, but it is the business of law to make important distinctions, even if gray areas remain.

3. We might moderate demanding our rights. Today, many believe we're masking mere self-interest when we wrap our cause in the flag of religious freedom and First Amendment rights. Such language is appropriate and necessary in the courts, but we may also want to frame our concern in terms of freedom of conscience as a way to find common ground with the religious and nonreligious.

4. Regardless of what happens in courts, we can continue to reach out to our gay and lesbian neighbors in friendship. Many of our LGBT neighbors believe we are no different from the vile racists of the civil rights era. One way to show them otherwise is modeled by Palau Association president Kevin Palau, Chick-fil-A's Dan Cathy, and others: Sitting down with our LGBT neighbors and getting to know them. That led Palau, for example, to work with the mayor of Portland, Oregon, on citywide projects and to support him during a personal crisis.

These four suggestions may not instantly quell the controversy, and each may bring its own complications. There is no magic formula when distrust and hate is in the air—only patience, perseverance, and hope. "If it is possible," writes Paul, "as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18). That biblical command is still possible to live out, even in our day. **CT**

MARK GALLI is editor of *Christianity Today*.

Kate Shellnutt
is associate editor
of Her.meneutics.
Follow her on Twitter
@kateshellnutt.

The Allure of Living with Less

Following Christ amid our culture's minimalist moment.

One of the most gratifying experiences during my workweek is "inbox zero." It's when I have responded to, filed, or deleted all of the emails I receive in a given week. Some have called it the "Holy Grail of the digital lifestyle," seemingly impossible because responding to emails only brings more . . . email. The pileup makes us anxious, each message carrying with it a decision to make, a task to complete, or a conversation to keep going. The inbox zero philosophy promises that a clean mailbox means a clean mind.

That even our digital "stuff" feels burdensome indicates a broader cultural distaste for clutter. At the peak of rampant materialism and must-have accessories, we have embraced a less-is-more mentality. Bloggers proudly declare how much one can do with little. A family of 4 can live in a 700-square-foot house. Anyone can stay stylish with a 30-item wardrobe. You don't need all those dishes, bins of holiday decorations, or kids' toys.

For much of history, possessions indicated wealth, and for many people, they still do. Since the 1950s, US homes have more than doubled in size to accommodate our belongings. Yet somewhere along the way, instead of signaling the good life, having too many possessions came to feel like the opposite. For extreme examples, the reality TV show *Storage Wars* depicts sad, forgotten remnants locked up in storage units. And *Hoarders* laments the struggle of excessive attachment to household items. No wonder minimalism—a lifestyle choice for the privileged, a necessity for the needy—has taken off.

Some Christians have embraced the trend, convicted to better steward their resources. After all, Jesus taught that "one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15, ESV). The writer of 1 John reminded early Christians that taking pride in what we own "is not from the Father but is from the world" (2:16).

Joshua Becker, blogger at Becoming Minimalist, said, "I used to view Jesus' teachings—on money and possessions and generosity and not stockpiling treasures on earth—as a sacrifice I was called to make. . . . But I began to realize that Jesus was just offering us a better formula for living." In other words, minimalism isn't just good practical sense, it's also good for the soul. Anyone who has dropped off a load at Goodwill knows the relief that comes with living with less.

This emotional payoff is the focus of a bestseller on *The New York Times* advice and how-to list. In *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, organizational guru Marie Kondo invites readers to evaluate their belongings, asking, "Does it spark joy?" If it doesn't, it gets purged. When our homes are in order, our lives are in order, declares Kondo.

How I wish to believe her. An organizer by habit, part of me wants to "kondo" my socks and underwear into neat folded packets. Just as I nod in satisfaction at my cleared-off bathroom countertop or empty inbox, I wonder what burst of happiness might come from making every nook and cranny of my life just a bit neater.

That even our digital 'stuff' feels burdensome indicates a cultural distaste for clutter.

Most of us could benefit from listening to the league of minimalists, from sifting through our clutter to thinking twice before adding new stuff. But even the spendiest collectors know that; we all acknowledge that stuff can't make us happy.

On the surface, minimalism seems like a holier pursuit than materialism. Won't it make us more like Christ, who told his followers to leave their belongings behind?

But treating any lifestyle change as the real key to happiness usually means idols are lurking underneath. As writer Pamela Druckerman recently noted in *The New York Times*, "It's consoling to think that, beneath all these distractions, we'll discover our shining, authentic selves, or even achieve a state of 'mindfulness.' But I doubt it. I'm starting to suspect that the joy of ditching all of our stuff is just as illusory as the joy of acquiring it all was."

The truth is, no matter how little we have or how neat our homes, on this side of eternity, we'll always carry with us the sense of being weighed down. Messiness and material items are inevitable in a messy, material world.

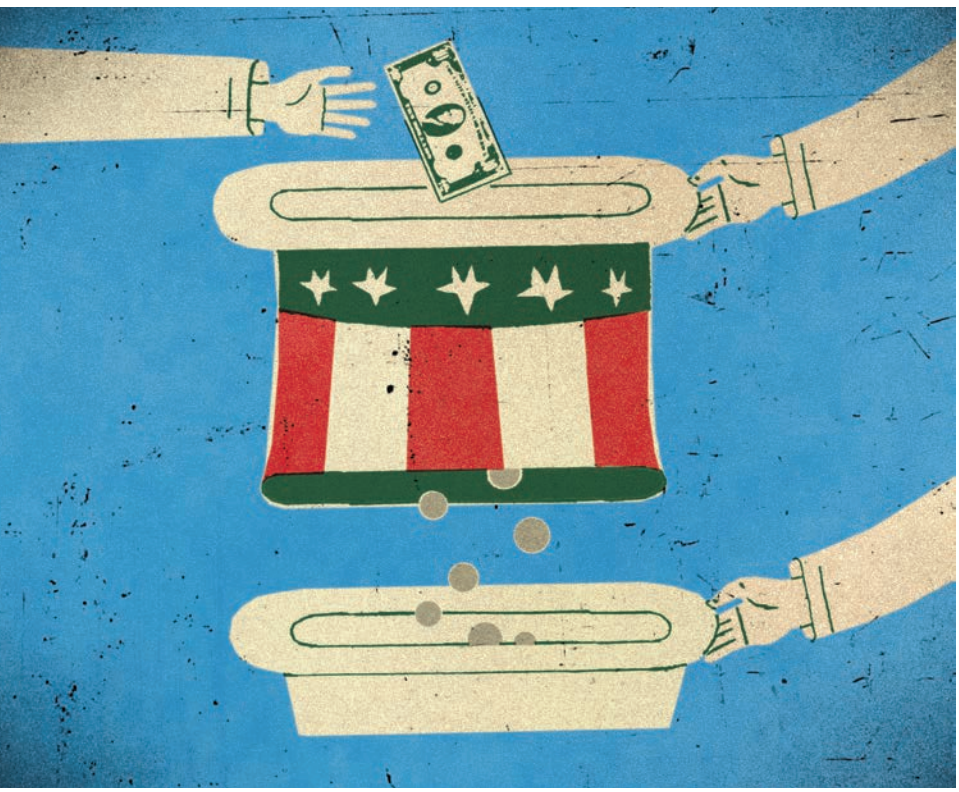
And while our possessions will be of no use to us in heaven, they remain a necessity here on earth. The things we own are often the tools for living our lives with hospitality, generosity, and service. Clutter or no clutter, God calls us to shuffle through our goods to prepare for his kingdom, the place he has perfectly prepared for us. **CT**

ILLUSTRATION BY STUDIO HELLOVON

OPEN QUESTION *Three Views*

Is it robbing God to tithe on your after-tax (not gross) income?

The Israelites were never subject to withholding upward of 15 percent.



Frederica Mathewes-Green

No, It's Robbing Yourself

My husband and I were newly Christian and in seminary when a friend told us about tithing. She stressed the importance of giving a full 10 percent before taxes, before anything else, so that we would be giving God the first fruits of our labor.

We recoiled at the thought, but she said this practice had given God room to work miracles in her life. She and her husband had once put their last dollar in the offering plate, only to have the pastor turn around and give them the whole collection. My husband and I began this plan right away and never even considered making our tithe after taxes. It seemed petty to make such calculations when giving to a God who gave us everything, including his Son.

Soon, we had settled into a pattern of giving 5 percent to our local church and 5 percent to charity. But one year, when it was time to renew our annual pledge to the church, I was convicted that a radical increase was necessary. God says, "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse" (Mal. 3:10, ESV). For our family, that means the local church. So the full 10 percent should go to our church, while charitable gifts (alms) were to be an additional offering.

When I began sharing this with my husband, we were in for a surprise. He had separately come to the same conviction. The problem was that we had just promised 5 percent of our income to a missionary. Overnight, we went from giving 10 percent of our income to giving 15 percent.

Yet we never suffered. We saw God meet our needs in ways that bordered on the miraculous. People were always giving us things we needed but couldn't afford: a sewing machine, a lawn mower, a new refrigerator. More than once, we found an inexplicable extra $50 in our savings account.

Over the years, our total giving (including alms) has ranged from 15 to 20 percent. We found, like others before us, that once we determined to make our tithe the first payment each month and this habit became routine, all other expenses fell into place.

God uses strong language about tithing (Mal. 3:8–9). We live in a time that is offended by that strong language, and resents any implication that we ought to do or not do something. We regard ourselves as customers, even in church, and expect to be treated with deference,

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID PLUNKERT

for the customer is always right.

This kind of exhortation has a way of backfiring. So the best I can say is: At least *try*. Aim to give a percentage of your income. Start with whatever percentage you give now, and raise it a little each year. In time, you will reach the tithe.

Then you will be giving as generously as the people of the Bible, who lived in conditions we would see as abject poverty. Like them, pay God before you pay Caesar, for there is no better indication of your priorities.

FREDERICA MATHEWES-GREEN, author of ten books, blogs on Christian spirituality and Eastern Orthodoxy at frederica.com.

David A. Croteau
No, Put Away the Calculator

The question here assumes that tithing in some way is required for Christians. The word *tithe* means 10 percent, not necessarily "a tenth of my income." The biblical definition of a tithe is "giving 10 percent of one's increase from crops grown in the land of Israel or cattle that feed off the land of Israel." It was consistently connected to the land of Israel. A tithe was done multiple times a year, probably equaling more than 20 percent of crops. No one was ever commanded to give 10 percent from their general income (just crops and cattle). So unless you are under the Old Covenant and have crops based in the land of Israel or cattle that feed off the land of Israel, you do not qualify to tithe (Lev. 27:30–33; Num. 18:21–24; Deut. 14:22–29).

Does the Bible teach that neglecting to tithe is robbing God? Sort of. The question refers to Malachi 3:8–11. But the word for *tithe* in Malachi 3 refers to the definition noted above. Christians live under the New Covenant, so our standard for giving has changed. It's not necessarily a higher or lower standard, but it is different.

Some people may hear, "Christians aren't required to tithe," and think it means, "Christians aren't required to give." Nothing could be further from the truth. The New Testament gives many principles for giving, but it never mandates a specific percentage or addresses after-tax or gross income.

For many prosperous US Christians, giving 10 percent could be considered "robbing God" (in a sense) because it does not meet the standard of generous giving. For those who make a more meager income, giving less than 10 percent could be generous and sacrificial. If I'm asking the question with the intent to decipher how little I can get away with giving, then a serious heart issue is exposed. When we are driven by the principles of giving from the New Testament, the after-tax question becomes irrelevant. God's people should try to find ways to give more, not less.

What are some of those biblical principles?

There are three driving forces for Christian giving in 2 Corinthians 8. First, it is grace-driven. Our giving is a response to the grace that God has shown to us through Jesus Christ. The more we recognize that we have done nothing to deserve salvation, the more likely we are to respond to God's grace by giving generously.

Second, Christian giving is relationship-driven (v. 5). Much Christian giving today is taught in such a way as to drive the Christian to a calculator. You type in your income, multiply that by 10 percent, and give the total, rounding up to include an offering. But God wants you to seek a relationship with *him*, not with your calculator.

Third, Christian giving is love-driven. In verses 8–9, Paul provides an example of this type of giving: Jesus' death on the cross, the ultimate demonstration of love. In this way, our giving is a barometer of the genuineness of our love for God.

DAVID A. CROTEAU, author of *Tithing after the Cross*, is professor of New Testament and Greek at Columbia International University.

Steve Stewart
Yes, God's Word Is Clear

There is no way to sugarcoat Malachi 3:8: "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' In tithes and offerings." Bible-based tithing does not fit comfortably into an era of complex payroll deductions.

To be sure, before-tax or after-tax giving of a tithe is not a salvation issue. Tithing is not in the Ten Commandments. God does not love us more or less because we adhere to an Old Testament mandate of giving a tenth of our first fruits.

Millions of Americans have jobs at companies that withhold Social Security, Medicare, and federal and state income taxes. This is done to assist individuals by placing money aside throughout the year so they don't have to come up with all the money at tax time. If we are to base our tithe on after-tax income, are givers in states with income taxes robbing God more than income tax–free states?

There is a joke that goes, "If you want only net blessings, pay on the net. If you want gross blessings, by all means, pay on the gross." But even while the joke encourages tithing on before-tax income, it approaches the topic in the wrong way. Tithing, based on any amount, is not about what we get but rather what we give.

I challenge Christians to consider off-the-top tithing another way to become more like Jesus. Giving is taking our eyes off ourselves. Giving with the right mindset steers our behaviors in a new direction. When we consider giving a tenth of our net versus our gross, we are really asking, "How much can I give without giving too much?" This is the spirit behind my daughter's heavy sighs when I remind her to give a dime out of each precious dollar she earns. This kind of nonverbal response is rooted in our selfish nature that resists God's request that we help build his kingdom by giving to our local church.

The definition of a tithe is a tenth of our first fruits (Prov. 3:9)—our income. And we are to pay Caesar what is Caesar's. So the answer to our plight becomes clear.

By giving 10 percent off the top—the whole top—I came to grips with my selfish desires and challenges. Once I changed my heart, I was able to let go and began giving 10 percent of our gross income. We were blessed before we started giving off the gross, and I believe we are more blessed today. It's not a quantifiable blessing or something I can show you. Erasing this debate from my mind allows me to focus more intensely on serving God.

Malachi is provoking our total dependence upon a loving, covenantal God, not an everlasting guilt trip. When we tithe off the top, we rely more on God and less on our wallets. **CT**

STEVE STEWART is founder of MoneyPlan SOS, a Christian coaching ministry.

Andrew Wilson is an elder at Kings Church in Eastbourne, England, and author most recently of *Unbreakable*. Follow him on Twitter @AJWTheology.

Brothers, We Are Not Managers

We have forgotten the Bible's rich language for loving the church.

Every time I write the word *elder* or *eldership* on my iPad, the spell checker kicks in and automatically corrects it to *leader* or *leadership*. Living as we do in a culture obsessed with "leadership"—in business, politics, academia, and so on—many of us do roughly the same thing to the New Testament.

Luke, Paul, and Peter talked about "overseers," "pastors," and "elders." We talk about "leaders." The New Testament charges particular people to shepherd, care, watch, and teach. We urge people to lead. Scripture uses specific terms and gives specific instructions, but overall we prefer generic ones.

Biblical words require explanations that mainstream secular ones do not. Our modern language is simpler: Leaders lead, but elders don't eld. And, to be sure, the concept of leadership is biblical: *leader* appears three times in Hebrews 13. Not only that, debate abounds over whether elders, overseers, and pastors perform different roles, or whether these terms describe one office. By contrast, the word *leader* is a catchall.

However, I don't think these reasons sufficiently explain why we prefer *leadership* over *eldership*. Christians use all sorts of words that sound strange to modern ears: *covenant, Messiah, anointing, atonement*, and so on. We don't abandon our language, however, because it's rich. While the New Testament indeed refers to leaders, it talks five times as often about elders—not to mention pastors, teachers, and overseers.

I suspect we autocorrect *eldership* to *leadership* for two reasons. First, especially in larger churches, we think of ourselves in organizational terms, as a firm rather than a family, let alone a flock. So we look for vision-casters and managers instead of fathers and shepherds. Second, most of us don't understand what elders are or what they are supposed to do. Are they like tribal chieftains? Advisers? Beard-stroking sages?

New Testament language about elders, shepherds, overseers, teachers, and even leaders is bound up with one key idea: *serving the church by protecting her from harm.* Elders, shepherds, and overseers (which I take as three different words for the same office; see Acts 20:17–37 and 1 Pet. 5:1–11) are guardians.

Shepherds guard sheep. A shepherd's main task is to protect the flock from harm: wolves, injury, scattering, robbers. This thread runs through the Bible. David kills lions and bears to defend his sheep. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, lays down his life to save his people. Paul charges his listeners, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God" (Acts 20:28). To be a pastor or shepherd is to be a guardian.

New Testament language about leaders is bound up with one key idea: serving the church by protecting her from harm.

The same is true of overseers. Many of us equate *overseer* with *supervisor*. But the Greek term suggests "keeping watch over." It is closely linked to the Old Testament word for "watchman," which is more a lookout person than a manager. This is the role Hebrews ascribes "leaders": speak the Word of God, and watch over the church (13:7, 17).

Elders do the same. Elders are appointed to protect the church from false teachers. Paul's charge to the elders in Ephesus (Acts 20:17–37) can essentially be summarized as: Wolves are coming, and you need to defend the church from them.

This doesn't mean that elders are only guardians, or that the other duties church leaders perform—evangelizing, equipping, vision-casting, strategizing, managing, communicating, exemplifying, disciplining, exhorting—are trivial. Rather, it puts those functions in context so that elders' essential role—protecting the church from harm—can be seen more clearly.

Vision-casting, strategizing, and managing, for example, can protect the church from fragmentation. Disciplining, exhorting, confronting, and exemplifying protect the church from sin. Evangelizing and equipping the church to evangelize protect the church from introspection, insulation, and lethargy. And preaching and teaching are crucial ways to protect the church from false doctrine.

It's a high calling, and even the best elders protect imperfectly. But it's a temporary gig that reflects the perfect work of Christ. Jesus is the Watchman over our souls, the great Shepherd of the sheep, the Elder of all elders, who will return and conquer all God's enemies. **CT**

ILLUSTRATION BY STUDIO HELLOVON

Beeson Divinity School

Confessional • Interdenominational • Personal

At Beeson, we are committed to *personal* theological education. Our small class size and faculty-led mentor groups allow Beeson students to learn not just from their professors' lectures, but from their lives.

BEESON
DIVINITY SCHOOL
SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

800 Lakeshore Drive ✠ Birmingham. AL 35229
www.beesondivinity.com
Samford University is an Equal Opportunity Educational Institution/Employer.

WAR TORN

PTSD IS NOT JUST TRAUMA OF THE **MIND** BUT TRAUMA OF THE **SOUL**.

BY ANNALAURA MONTGOMERY CHUANG

PHOTO BY JO HANLEY

THE HOUSTON CHURCH SANCTUARY GOES DARK AS A PSYCHIATRIST AND A US ARMY MAJOR PREPARE TO SPEAK.

A power outage has caused technical difficulties, but the dim setting illuminated only by light shining through the stained glass windows seems appropriate, they say, for their purpose: "talking about soldiers who are in darkness."

Major Jeff Matsler describes a bestseller at the military supply store just outside the gates of Fort Bragg, a large Army base in North Carolina. It's a heavy-duty black T-shirt with a single word emblazoned across the chest in white gothic letters: GUILTY.

The fact that the shirt "is purchased and worn by the soldiers of a volunteer army speaks to the very root of . . . the spiritual state of our modern warrior," says Matsler. The soldiers who buy it feel "at odds with what is right—including God."

The shirt, says Matsler, an Army chaplain now completing graduate studies at Yale University, "reflects the thoughts of so many combat veterans: *Where was—where is—the God who let me experience war? I am without him. He is not here.*"

After Matsler finishes his presentation, psychiatrist Warren Kinghorn describes how he diagnoses veterans who come to Durham VA Medical Center, one of the 1,700 VA (Veterans Administration) facilities set up for veterans and their families.

Then Matsler poses a startling question. "Warren, if one of your patients—a combat veteran—came into your office this morning and said he was living in the ruins of an abandoned church, and during the night the altar crucifix opened its eyes and spoke to him, commanding him to restore the church, what would you do?"

Combat can cause "a sickness of the soul," Matsler observes. "One of the most obvious markers of the war-torn soul is suicide."

The statistics are grim: Veterans commit one-fifth of all suicides in America today, at the rate of about 8,000 suicides every year. In 2012, the United States lost more active-duty soldiers to suicide than to combat in Afghanistan. It was the highest number in a year—349—since the Pentagon began tracking numbers in 2001.

While war is everywhere in human history, a clear sign that we live in a fallen world, only relatively recently have we begun to study the psychological trauma it can cause. Now, thanks to new research on combat trauma, veterans—and the church—are getting a better understanding of war's assault on the human soul.

MORAL INJURY

Matsler's question about the altar crucifix is the kind of inquiry that has intrigued Kinghorn since he began his medical career nearly 20 years ago. In the fall of 1997, Kinghorn was a first-year at Harvard Medical School. He was shadowing a clinician at an alcohol detox facility in one of Boston's poorest neighborhoods. Kinghorn noticed that patients commonly described feeling bound by their addiction. He began to wonder how that description connected to Christian teachings on sin.

So Kinghorn rode his bicycle across town to the Harvard Divinity School library, where he found an encyclopedia of religion. Under the entry for SIN, he read about the Pelagian controversy. Church theologians concluded that, rather than being free moral agents, human beings are trapped by their sin. Kinghorn realized that for nearly two millennia, the church had "sustained deep reflection about core issues that are absolutely relevant to modern medicine."

The insight disrupted Kinghorn's career path. He left Harvard to obtain a master of theology at Duke Divinity School. Then, after receiving his medical degree in 2003, he returned to Duke as a resident in psychiatry.

Kinghorn's first assignment was at the Durham VA, where he "learned the wrong things about posttraumatic stress disorder [PTSD]." Defined as an anxiety disorder, PTSD was believed to be driven by "intense fear, helplessness, or horror" following a traumatic event, resulting in an array of symptoms. In 2003, most of Kinghorn's patients were Vietnam veterans, some of whom complained of struggling for decades with insomnia. Many also suffered from nightmares and hypervigilance, avoided crowds, and had marital difficulties.

Kinghorn learned to give "a quick PTSD diagnosis" and apply "a simple formula" for treatment: Prescribe medication to blunt the fear response, recommend social support, and refer the patient for talk therapy. "You didn't have to get inside anybody's world," says Kinghorn, "or know anything about combat or that person's particular traumatic experiences."

But then a VA colleague, also a combat veteran, introduced Kinghorn to the writings of Jonathan Shay, a psychiatrist who began treating Vietnam veterans in the 1980s. Shay concluded that the "psychological and moral injury" sustained in combat destroys trust. He wrote that when "the capacity for social trust is destroyed, all possibility of a flourishing human life is lost."

As Kinghorn read Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, he was struck by one veteran's description of himself as a "typical young American boy," an 18-year-old virgin with "strong religious beliefs." When he went to Vietnam, "I wasn't prepared for it at all." He found that "It was all evil. All evil. . . . I look back, I look back today, and I'm horrified at what I turned into. What I was. What I did."

Kinghorn's training had taught him to focus on fear. But his patients didn't talk primarily about fear. They talked about right and wrong. He realized that the focus on fear had blinded him to veterans' deepest struggles. For those with severe, long-lasting PTSD, "the burner under the pot" was often "a combination of fear and guilt and shame." Those potent emotions came not only from what they had witnessed, but also from their own actions in the morally confusing situations of modern combat.

Michael Yandell, a veteran, wrote for *The Christian Century* earlier this year:

> For me, moral injury describes my disillusionment, the erosion of my sense of place in the world. The spiritual and emotional foundations of the world disappeared and made it impossible for me to sleep the sleep of the just. Even though I was part of a war that was much bigger than me, I still feel personally responsible for its consequences. I have a feeling of intense betrayal, and the betrayer and betrayed are the same person: my very self.

In the *Frontline* documentary *The Soldier's Heart*, Marine veteran Rob Sarra tells of manning a vehicle outside of an Iraqi town. He saw a burqa-clad woman carrying a bag approach another vehicle full of Marines. They gestured and shouted for her to stop, but the woman continued walking. Having been warned about suicide bombers, Sarra had seconds to decide whether to shoot the woman or risk seeing his buddies blown up.

He shot. Other Marines opened fire as well. As the woman hit the ground, she pulled out what was in her bag—a white flag. Sarra began to weep hysterically.

For Kinghorn, Sarra's story is a paradigm of the impossible moral situations of combat, of "the real stakes for people having to make these decisions."

In the final year of his psychiatry residency, Kinghorn began doctoral studies in theology at Duke. He researched the social history of PTSD, which was birthed out of the work of psychiatrists Robert Jay Lifton and Chaim Shatan and social worker Sarah Haley. Based on a series of "rap sessions"

IN 2012, THE UNITED STATES LOST MORE ACTIVE-DUTY TROOPS TO SUICIDE THAN TO COMBAT IN AFGHANISTAN.

WARREN KINGHORN

PHOTO BY BRYAN REGAN

with Vietnam veterans, Shatan penned a 1972 *New York Times* op-ed titled "Post-Vietnam Syndrome." The syndrome was marked by alienation, rage, feelings of betrayal by military leadership and the broader culture, and an inability to give and accept love. These are all "deeply moral categories," Kinghorn notes. But their "moral resonance" had been lost in the codification of PTSD and the 30 years of research that followed.

Kinghorn was not the only clinician who was dissatisfied. In 2009, VA psychologist Brett Litz and colleagues appropriated Shay's once-obscure term—"moral injury"—as another way of understanding combat trauma. They believe that moral injury occurs when a soldier is exposed to or partakes in "acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations." While traumatic events and atrocities can cause moral injury, so too can more "subtle acts" that "transgress a moral code."

IT 'WAS LIKE FINDING A MEMBERSHIP CARD TO THE KU KLUX KLAN IN MY WALLET—WITH MY OWN SIGNATURE ON IT. I COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT I COULD BE SO CALLOUS, SO IMMUNE TO THE HUMAN COST OF WAR.'

—LOGAN MEHL-LAITURI ISAAC

PHOTOGRAPHING DEAD BODIES

Logan Mehl-Laituri Isaac is a decorated Iraq war veteran who knows firsthand the moral pain of combat. In his memoir, *Reborn on the Fourth of July*, Isaac recounts how, after 11 months of active combat in Iraq, he was assigned to a hospital morgue. The morgue's capacity was so overwhelmed that bodies had to be left outside "to swell and stink mercilessly in the desert heat." He was ordered to photograph the corpses before they decomposed beyond recognition.

"Not one tear tumbled down [as] I photographed countless dead and dying Arab faces," writes Isaac. He recognized at that moment how numb he had become to human suffering. It "was like finding a membership card to the Ku Klux Klan in my wallet—with my own signature on it. I could not believe that I could be so callous, so immune to the human cost of war."

After being honorably discharged, Isaac struggled with profound nihilism, tempting fate repeatedly by surfing in dangerous conditions off the coast of Hawaii. "My church had nothing to say to me besides party lines like 'God bless the troops.'" As he struggled with depression, Isaac found that reading Lamentations was "incredibly therapeutic." The prophet's words gave voice to his own emotional and spiritual devastation.

PHOTO BY JO HANLEY

Isaac used his GI Bill benefits to study theology at Duke. His first year was "very challenging because of the things people would say, coming from this very liberal, academic, and young culture." Although he embraced pacifism—and found many classmates at Duke who shared his beliefs—Isaac was dismayed that many remained ignorant about and insensitive toward service members. When the Duke War Memorial was defaced by graffiti, his classmates questioned how, as a pacifist, he could respond with grief. He was similarly troubled when a classmate dismissed Lamentations, saying that now that we have Jesus, "Shouldn't we be encountering God with joy and clapping our hands?"

Then Isaac heard of a new professor who understood his concerns.

While finishing his dissertation, Kinghorn had been recruited to join the faculty of a new initiative in theology, medicine, and culture at Duke. He expected that his views on combat trauma would be relevant mostly in his clinical work. But that changed when Isaac sought him as an academic adviser.

Kinghorn (left) meets with Robert Densmore (back left), Todd Lovell (right, back to front), Sam Harris, and Alexis Arzuaga, leaders in Duke's student group Milites Christi (Latin for 'soldiers of Christ'), which advocates for service members and veterans.

PHOTO BY BRYAN REGAN

KINGHORN'S TRAINING HAD TAUGHT HIM TO FOCUS ON FEAR. BUT HIS PATIENTS DIDN'T TALK ABOUT FEAR. THEY TALKED ABOUT RIGHT AND WRONG. HE REALIZED THAT THE FOCUS ON FEAR HAD BLINDED HIM TO VETERANS' DEEPEST STRUGGLES.

As he supervised Isaac, Kinghorn grew increasingly dissatisfied with the medical approach to combat trauma. He concluded that the issues raised by PTSD and moral injury are the ones that mental-health professionals are not fully equipped to address.

Kinghorn resists the tendency of modern health-care systems to call on psychiatrists to prescribe medication and leave talk therapy to others. He believes medication is a useful and sometimes necessary tool that can help manage symptoms. But it hardly ever provides a cure.

New evidence-based talk therapies offer more hope. Such therapies, Kinghorn notes, ask the therapist to practice "moral guidance and discernment." One manual for practitioners of cognitive processing therapy, for example, teaches therapists how to help clients forgive themselves.

Kinghorn says this creates a "structural dilemma" for practitioners in a field that aspires to be scientific and value-neutral. To answer, "What does it mean to go on as a moral self in the world after an experience in war?" requires a vision of "the shape of a well-lived human life." This vision can't be conjured scientifically. It must rest instead on "thick and particular conceptions of human flourishing and failing." Clinical psychology does not always possess such a robust vision. But the church does.

THE GOSPEL AND PTSD

At the heart of the gospel is a narrative of creation, brokenness, redemption and reconciliation, and new creation. Kinghorn turns to this narrative for a rich language and set of practices through which each war veteran can understand "what it means to be claimed by a God who created a good world." He points out that in Jesus Christ, we have a "paradigm of mental health and flourishing." After all, Jesus was once rumored to suffer from mental illness (Mark 3:21) and endured physical and mental anguish. The church has language and practices to foster healing for veterans: lament, confession, and reconciliation. All of these allow us to "listen, reflect, bear, and grieve" with our veterans.

JESUS IS BETTER THAN

THE TESTIMONY OF A FORMER ANTI-MUSLIM COMBAT JUNKIE. BY JOHN MURPHY

The author in Afghanistan in 2005.

I ALWAYS KNEW I would end up in the military. I grew up in a military family, played "war" as a kid, and dreamed of the day I would put on the uniform. That day came in 2003. I was an airborne infantryman in a scout platoon in the 82nd Airborne Division, and my entire identity was wrapped up in being a soldier. The fact that I was getting paid to jump out of airplanes and shoot things blew me away.

In 2005, my unit deployed to Afghanistan, and I was thrilled. I had married the love of my life two months earlier, so it was difficult to leave her, but I wanted to get in the game. We all wanted to deploy; we all wanted to fight. That's tough for people to understand, I know. The only way I can describe the desire is that it's like an athlete practicing his entire life and never actually getting to play in the big game.

In 2006, we returned from deployment, and my military career was marching on. I had planned to apply to Special Forces training. I had my entire life mapped out and knew exactly where I was going.

It all came crashing down on January 24, 2006. To make a long story short, parachutes are supposed to open, and mine didn't. I experienced what is known as a "cigarette roll." My chute deployed but didn't open. I pulled my reserve, and it slowed my descent enough so that I didn't become a permanent lawn dart. But I broke my back while landing, and it became obvious that I would not be able to stay in the military.

THE HARDEST YEAR

What came next was the hardest year of my life as well as the hardest year of our marriage. I felt like an empty shell. In the fall of 2006, my former unit deployed to Iraq and experienced heavy casualties. This quickened my downward spiral. I couldn't shake the feeling that I should have been there. I struggled to support my family, experienced more depression than I let on, and contemplated suicide often. I felt like I should have died at war—and thought my family would have been better off if I had.

In the midst of all this, a recurring thought terrified me: *I'll never again get to go to war.* One of the most perplexing phenomena among combat veterans is that many of them *miss* war. In the service, I had a brotherhood. None of us soldiers probably would have been friends outside the military, but we had a clear mission and identity, and that unified us. We were soldiers, we jumped out of airplanes for a living, we were all itching to get in the fight, and we all would have jumped in front of a bullet for each other. We were young, aggressive, and ready to take the fight to the doorstep of the enemy. We became brothers. When I was discharged, that brotherhood was gone, and so were the mission and identity I had built my life on.

While processing a loss of identity, I began to experience something I had never heard a veteran discuss honestly: deep-seated racism toward anyone who appeared to be Middle Eastern. As a result of seeing and hearing about what was happening in Iraq and Afghanistan, I developed an intense hatred toward an entire people group. I wouldn't admit it at the time, but I wanted to do physical harm to any and all Middle Easterners. This terrified me. I was a Christian and loved Jesus, but I had no clue what to do about the hatred I concealed.

ENEMY OF GOD

Around this time, our family began attending a church in Michigan that talked about the gospel in a way I had completely missed growing up. I had harbored a dysfunctional view of the gospel: I believed that Jesus' work got me on the team on day one, but I thought it was my work that kept me on the team from day two on. This church talked about the gospel in the present tense rather than the past tense.

As I read 2 Corinthians, I was struck by Paul's line of thought in 5:17–21. He wrote that, through Jesus, we had been reconciled to God to be reconcilers. Sin had fractured my relationship with God, and he sent his Son to do everything necessary to restore my relationship with God. Then he tasked me with taking that message of reconciliation to the whole world. Through the gospel and the local church (Eph. 3:10), I had a mission again. In the local church, I found the brotherhood that had been lost.

I decided to put my "yes" on the table and prayed that God would do with it whatever he wished. I wanted to give my life to advancing the gospel, but I still hid a deep racism that I couldn't explain. Then one day, while again reading 2 Corinthians 5, it hit me like a ton of bricks: *God came after me while I was his enemy.* That's the premise of reconciliation. I wasn't morally neutral, I wasn't searching for God, I wasn't a pretty good person whom he was going to make better. I was a dead person whom he was going to make alive. I was his enemy, and he was going to make me his child.

God's grace toward me while I was his enemy floored me. He pursued me when I was an enemy; how could I withhold that same pursuit from my perceived enemies? The hatred slowly turned to acceptance, then to an all-out desire to see

WAR

adherents of Islam reached with the gospel.

In 2013, we planted Veritas Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina, near Fort Bragg. I want to give my life to planting churches that make much of Jesus. I want to see Muslims come to worship the gracious, pursuing God of the Bible. I want to see my enemies become children of God. I want to see fellow soldiers understand the love of Jesus and the mission they're invited into. I want to give my life to seeing others respond to the grace of God shown in Jesus.

In the local church, the brotherhood I lost has been redeemed. As I follow Jesus in authentic, life-on-life community, I'm continuing to see how the gospel frees me from depression and guilt and gives me a mission to give my life to.

Nine years after the day my military life ended, I cling to the truth that Jesus is greater than my identity struggle, Jesus is greater than my racism, Jesus is greater than my desire to return to war, Jesus is greater than the wounds I still carry. Jesus is all. **CT**

JOHN MURPHY is the lead pastor of Veritas Church.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN MURPHY

The church can acknowledge that while war may sometimes be justified, says Kinghorn, it is "always a tragic manifestation of human brokenness." We also have the hope of the Resurrection, and "the peace that is not simply the attenuation of distress but, rather, the right and ordered alignment of desire toward God and to God's good creation." Finally, we have the "healing resources of the community," which can be brought to bear as we create spaces where veterans can experience reconciliation.

Churches and faith-related organizations have launched programs in recent years to better care for veterans' mental and spiritual health. The Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas, started the Soul Repair Center in 2012 with a focus on research and recovery methods for those suffering from moral injury. They serve as a resource to educators, caregivers, employers, and religious and nonprofit organizations in general. Partners in Care, initiated by a chaplain in the Maryland National Guard and later expanded by chaplains in the Missouri National Guard, connects soldiers to their local congregations. Wheat Ridge Ministries, a Lutheran organization committed to assisting local congregations' healthcare ministries, gave a grant to a Lutheran pastor and former Minnesota National Guard chaplain to help widely distribute his book *Welcome Them Home, Help Them Heal* to congregations.

Moral injury is really "a rediscovery of an older set of truths," says Kinghorn. The church has a long history of ministry to and by veterans, and Kinghorn believes "the old stories need to be told." Matsler, one of Kinghorn's students, introduced him to just such a story—the life of Saint Francis—which takes on an unexpected shape when seen as a tale of combat trauma.

Kinghorn invited Matsler to share this story at Walking Together, a conference in Houston convened to unearth these stories and help the church envision "creative and faithful ways" to walk with people suffering from a range of mental-health issues. And so, in the darkness of the Houston sanctuary, Matsler tells the story of this "posttraumatic saint." This Francis hardly resembles the "pop-culture icon of… a pure and saintly youth who gave up wealth for the simple life." Matsler draws a more realistic picture based on early and recent biographies of Francis.

Francesco Bernadone was born in the medieval town of Assisi, Italy. When he was 16, armed conflict broke out between his wealthy merchant class and

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY DOES NOT ALWAYS POSSESS 'THICK AND PARTICULAR CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN FLOURISHING AND FAILING.' BUT THE CHURCH DOES.

the nobility. Trained as a member of the cavalry, Francis likely participated in skirmishes that culminated in a disastrous assault against the heavily fortified town of Perugia. Francis joined the "bloody day of fighting crowned by an even bloodier afternoon of extermination" in which many of his companions were killed. In a time when "no pity was shown to those whose lives were spared," and torture was used to encourage ransom, Francis and his fellow survivors became prisoners of war.

After nearly a year, Francis was released, and he began to show classic signs of trauma. He wept frequently and uncontrollably, stopped eating and sleeping, and saw and heard things that nobody else did. He "became convinced that in order to be happy, he must hate and despise all that he had loved and instead embrace that which brought him horror, including intimate contact with lepers—kissing them on the hands and mouth—perhaps the most dangerous act one could perform in his day," says Matsler.

Francis hid from friends and family, living as a recluse in a dark pit under a house. He was rumored to have a drug problem and to be possessed; fellow townspeople wrote him off as mad. Chased and mocked in the streets, he became an outcast.

One day Francis came upon an abandoned chapel outside of town. There, the figure of Christ on the cross appeared to come alive: "Francis, go, repair my house, which, as you see, is falling completely to ruin." Francis spent the next two years literally repairing abandoned church buildings.

To respond to Christ, Francis gave away not only his own possessions but his family's as well. Fed up, his father dragged him before the bishop in the town square and accused him of thievery and dishonoring his parents. Francis, rather than replying to the charges, stripped himself and gave his clothes to his father. He said that from then on, he was going to give his allegiance to his Father in heaven. With that, the bishop embraced him and became his champion.

That moment "set in motion a movement that salved war-weary souls across Europe and the Middle East," says Matsler. Francis' message "of rigorous discipline and obedience to Christ" was "a familiar and appealing method for a soldier"—and his first

WHILE THE CHURCH HAS MUCH TO OFFER VETERANS, VETERANS HAVE MUCH TO OFFER THE CHURCH.

7 PRACTICAL THINGS THE CHURCH CAN DO FOR VETERANS

As more psychologists and military leaders recognize that war hurts the soul as much as the mind, Warren Kinghorn and others say spiritual communities are a crucial resource. Beyond inviting veterans to receive healing in Christ, here are seven practical things churches can do. The following is based on our conversations with Kinghorn.

1 Connect veterans with each other. Veterans know veterans better than anyone else. Churches can build structures where these communities can happen. Methodist pastor Ralph Lepley, a Vietnam veteran, participates in a weekly gathering at a coffee shop in North Carolina that draws 150 veterans.

2 Know good therapists. Find clinicians who are highly experienced with trauma and sensitive to people of faith who can be called on when a veteran needs help.

3 Preach and study the hard parts of Scripture. Jeremiah asks, "How long must I see the battle flags and hear the trumpets of war?" (4:21, NLT). Many veterans share that question. We must not hide lament and the difficult sections of the Bible.

4 Connect veterans to the VA—and don't stop there. The Veterans Administration is doing good work in supporting veterans and military families, but they can never be as rooted in communities, or as powerful as what can emerge at the local level.

5 Listen. The church can allow veterans to define their own role in the community, not forcing them into the role of either hero or wounded warrior. Leaders need to give veterans space to talk—or not to talk—about their experiences.

6 Send veterans to seminary. The seminary context can form and encourage people to go out and start new practices. We try to incubate people who will be church leaders, who will form the ways the church speaks about war, combat, and killing.

7 Help veterans to work and lead. They have a lot to offer, and we need to find ways they can put their gifts to use both in the workplace and in church. We can empower them to lead with the experiences and virtues that have been formed in them.

PHOTO BY JO HANLEY (TOP) PHOTO COURTESY OF LOGAN ISAAC (BOTTOM)

recruits were fellow veterans. Together they created a community where they found healing, reconciliation, and a new mission.

COVERED BY GRACE

While the church has much to offer veterans, veterans also have much to offer the church. From Martin of Tours (a soldier who founded the first monastic community) to Francis to Ignatius of Loyola (the founder of the Jesuits)—all were veterans who laid down their weapons and pledged allegiance to Christ. But in so doing, they didn't abandon their gifts of military formation and training. As Isaac says, "There is good in war as well as bad." And one of the goods is soldiers' willingness to serve and sacrifice for the mission and for each other. The military forms people "to be ready to die, suffer, and persevere despite suffering—and that is something the church can learn from."

Inspired by the Franciscans, Matsler wants to create monastically inspired communities where veterans can experience healing. Isaac agrees that veterans need safe spaces to support each other: "Veterans will tell fellow veterans something different than they will tell a counselor or pastor." Kinghorn believes that programs designed to engage veterans must be done patiently and on a small scale, such as sharing a meal together. "I am becoming convinced that the most determinative thing Christians do is to eat together," says Kinghorn. "Things happen when Christians eat together that open up spaces."

Kinghorn cautions that, because there are many roles in the armed services, veterans' experiences differ widely. And while between 15 and 30 percent of veterans who have been deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan meet the criteria for PTSD, the remaining majority are fine.

If there is one thing veterans share, says Kinghorn, it's hatred for the question, "Did you kill anyone?" It's best to simply ask a veteran what their deployments were like, keeping in mind that people feel differently about their time in the service. Most important, says Kinghorn, is to "be human and work on friendship."

When Francis was an outcast, two kinds of people reached out to him and helped him find his path: veterans and church leaders. In the town square, the bishop removed his own red robe and draped it over Francis, claiming him as a child of the church now covered by grace. Matsler believes this was a "moment in history when restoration and healing of the human condition became the focus of the church."

Like the bishop, the church has the opportunity to dress the wounds of each war-torn soul among us. Good mental healthcare is a necessary and valuable part of that work. But if we seek the full flourishing of those who have been formed by war, Kinghorn is convinced, the church has an irreplaceable role to play. **CT**

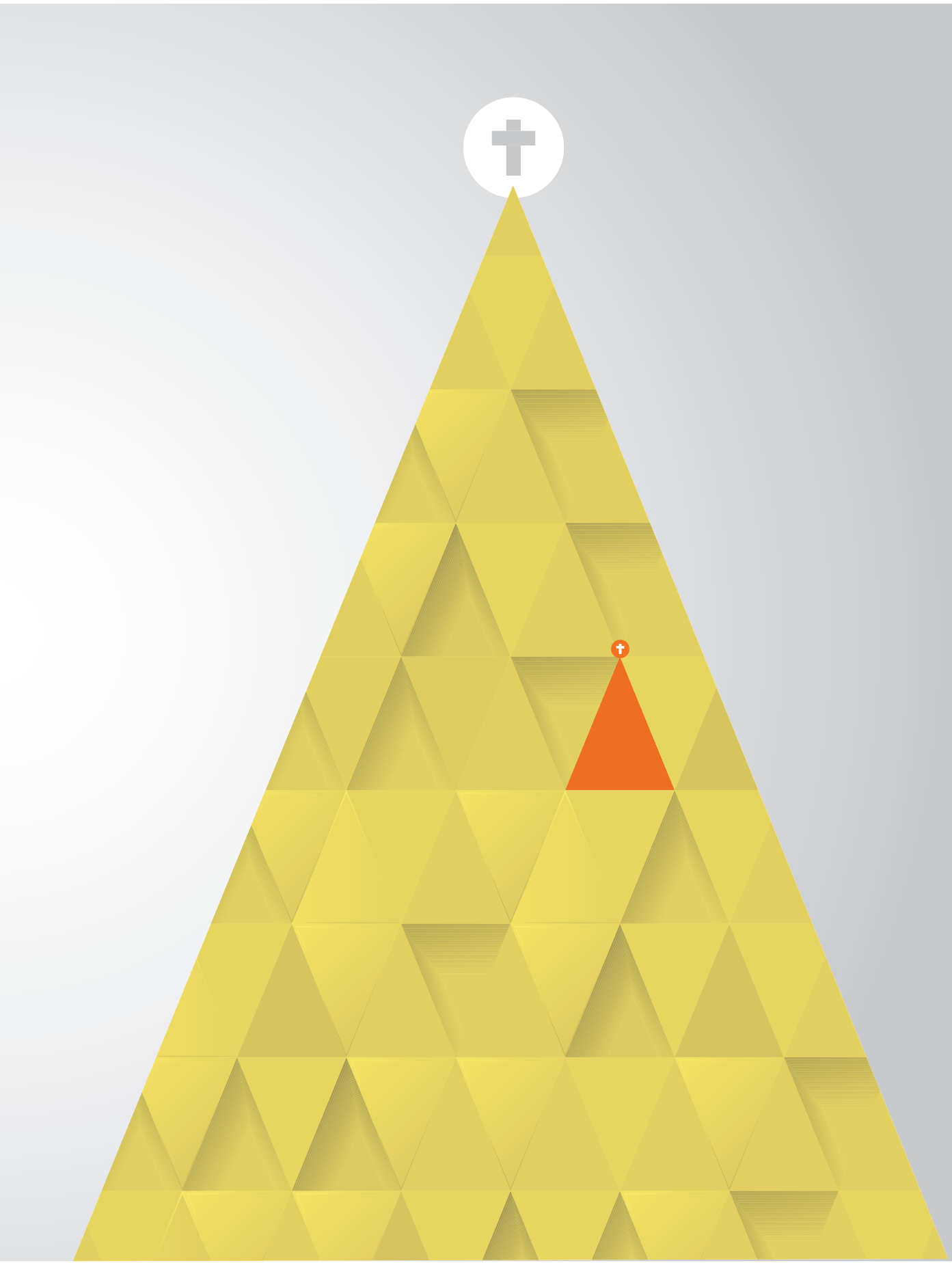
ANNALAURA MONTGOMERY CHUANG is a writer, editor, and church leader in the Boston area.

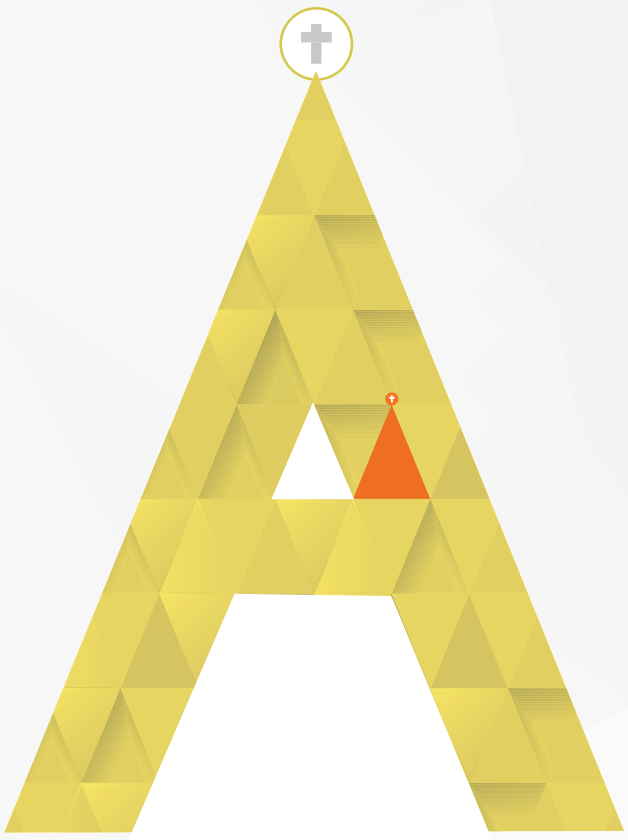
When he got married in 2014, Logan Mehl-Laituri and his wife took the last name Isaac, a symbol of Logan's decision to move forward from the pain of PTSD. He is working on a master in theology degree at University of St. Andrews, where his thesis focuses on 'how stories of soldier saints and military martyrs can enrich theologies about war and peace.'

Flip This CHURCH

MORE SMALL CHURCHES ARE JOINING BIG ONES IN ORDER TO KEEP THEIR DOORS OPEN. CAN THE MULTISITE MOVEMENT GROW WITHOUT TREATING CONGREGATIONS AS LITTLE MORE THAN REAL ESTATE?

By BOB SMIETANA





After two decades of wandering, Evergreen Christian Fellowship had finally come home.

Founded in 1990, the 800-member church had met for years in temporary locations. In 2008, they opened their first building—a 30,807-square-foot big-box church in Sammamish, Washington, about a half-hour from downtown Seattle.

Getting the 20 acres had been a godsend. The property first belonged to Plateau Bible Fellowship, which was about to close its doors. They had hoped giving it to Evergreen would ensure years of fruitful ministry. For Evergreen members like Tami Floyd, it was a time to celebrate. "It's a great place to call your own after 20 years," she told the *Sammamish Review*.

But 2 years later, Evergreen had shrunk to 200 people. The ensuing financial crisis left the church on the edge of shutting down.

Enter Mars Hill Church, a then-thriving 12,000-member congregation meeting in a dozen locations in the Pacific Northwest. (You may have heard of it.)

Afraid their church would close, Evergreen leaders approached Mars Hill about joining as a satellite campus. Although it would mean the end of Evergreen as an independent church—all of its assets would transfer to Mars Hill—the merger would allow the church to live on.

In 2011, Evergreen members voted to join Mars Hill.

"This is a big, grace-filled gift from God," Mark Driscoll told his congregation in a blog post. At the time, Mars Hill seemed to have the perfect strategy for growing membership, finances, and ministry, much of it hinging on the appeal of a charismatic pastor with a national following.

Church planter Neil Cole wrote in 2010 that he once heard the strategy for starting new Mars Hill locations summed up as, "Just add water and Driscoll and *poof*—you have a new church."

Within three years, Mars Hill would implode in spectacular fashion following Driscoll's resignation. The Sammamish congregation would find a new home, this time merging with another former Mars Hill church in nearby Bellevue. This May, the City of Sammamish bought Evergreen's shuttered building from Mars Hill for $6.1 million. The proceeds from the sale will likely go to pay off Mars Hill's debt.

Evergreen's story is one that signals some growing pains within the multisite movement, which many researchers say is now as ubiquitous as megachurches were 20 years ago. And it highlights the growing gap between the church haves and have-nots, between bustling large churches and struggling small ones.

When the multisite model (defined as one church in two or more locations) works, once-empty pews are filled with worshipers and an older church's legacy lives on while a larger church expands its outreach. But when things go poorly, multisite churches can become another struggling American franchise, precariously built on the brand of a celebrity pastor—and one step away from collapsing like a house of cards.

GETTING ACQUIRED

According to the National Congregation Study, most churches in America are small, with a median weekend attendance of 76 people. Yet most churchgoers attend a big church, with a median attendance of 400.

This means small churches have most of the church buildings, and big churches have most of the people and the money. In other words, small churches have what many big churches want: property, often on highly valuable land. And big churches have what most small churches want: money and people.

Increasingly, small and large churches are trading their assets. Or, to put it in less capitalistic terms, they are finding ways to partner as a growing number of multisite churches essentially become church flippers: taking over older, struggling churches and rebooting them as thriving worship spaces.

The enthusiasm for these mergers was summed up in a short promotional video for the 2012 Resurgence Conference organized by Driscoll. At the time, Mars Hill and Harvest Bible Chapel, a multisite Chicago-area church led by James MacDonald, were two of the most ambitious US congregations pursuing church mergers. "James has the spiritual gift of real-estate

acquisition," said Driscoll, introducing MacDonald during the video. He was half-joking.

But many small churches are actually happy to get acquired, so to speak. One early adopter of the multisite reboot model was Galilee Baptist Church. It once hosted one of Chicago's largest Sunday schools and a thriving mission program. Then, little by little, people stopped showing up. Eventually the church dwindled to a handful of worshipers meeting at the corner of Damen and Wellington on Chicago's North Side.

Fearing his church would close its doors, longtime member Chuck McWherter made a call to Mark Jobe. Jobe, the lead pastor of New Life Community Church in Chicago, had already helped to revive one struggling local church. McWherter hoped he could do the same for Galilee.

Eventually Galilee and New Life merged. Fifteen years later, New Life–Lakeview has about 200 members, many of them families and young professionals. It's one of about two dozen churches that have rebooted as campuses of New Life, one of the most successful multisite congregations in the country.

McWherter is thrilled. "Our story is a classic story of revival. It's one of the best things that's ever happened to me." These days, McWherter often tags along when Jobe meets with churches interested in merging.

"Usually you find one of these older city churches [that] have a dozen to 20 people," he said. "They have lost their financial base. They have lost their missionaries because they can't support them anymore. And they don't know what to do."

Steve Dawson is president of Chicago-based National Covenant Properties, a building-loan provider affiliated with the Evangelical Covenant Church denomination. He says joining a multisite church offers struggling congregations a chance to start over while maintaining full-time ministry.

Mergers make strategic sense for larger churches as well, said Dawson. They can expand ministry without facing the startup costs of acquiring land or building a new site.

LIKE AMBULANCE CHASERS?

But mergers carry risks, said Dawson. If the new site fails, where does the money go? Will the small-church members resent the larger church for failing to revive their church home? Even a successful merger means the old church has died, a painful reality for longtime members.

In a rush to expand their brand, larger churches can easily discard small churches' unique history. "If the church is trying to look for expansion space but dismisses the history of the ministry, they are doing a great disservice to the kingdom," Jobe said.

And small churches are tempted to give hero status to the bigger church.

That's a recipe for disaster, said Rick Egbert, executive pastor at the Chapel, a suburban Chicago megachurch with eight campuses. Of those, four came from mergers. The multisite model works only if members of a small church feel empowered by a relaunch, he said. "If you come in as savior, the entire relationship you have is as a superior to an inferior," said Egbert. "We want no part of that."

His approach to multisite acquisition is both aggressive and gentle. For a while, the Chapel hosted reNEWmychurch.org, a site explicitly advertising its reboots. Today Egbert and his team relentlessly scout for potential mergers. But once a potential merger is on the table, Chapel leaders move slowly.

'JAMES HAS THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF REAL-ESTATE ACQUISITION,' SAID MARK DRISCOLL, INTRODUCING MACDONALD. HE WAS HALF-JOKING.

Good candidates for reboots are churches whose pastor has left and who are having trouble finding a replacement, as well as churches in financial trouble that aren't ready to sell their property to the highest bidder. "You have faithful people who say, 'We don't want to see the church go down on our watch,'" said Egbert.

That was the case with Faith Lutheran Church in Mundelein, Illinois, which merged with the Chapel in 2006. Unable to afford the premiums, the church had let their insurance on the property lapse. "They were one slip and fall in the parking lot away from becoming a gas station," said Thomas McArthur, the Mundelein site pastor.

Today the campus draws about 500 people, including Egbert and his family, to 3 weekend services. Because it's a church where people know each other, he says, it shows the multisite model at its best.

"You get the pastoral presence of a small church while having the resources of a large megachurch behind you," said McArthur.

Most Chapel mergers start with a relationship. Campus pastors are encouraged to work with local churches on projects and to offer help when they can.

Sometimes that help comes in the form of prayer or a favor, like the time a church was looking for a guest preacher and approached the Chapel for suggestions. That favor led to a friendship and, years later, a merger.

Sometimes small churches approach the Chapel. The process starts with a series of conversations between the two congregations' staff. No merger is final without a vote by both.

The merger business can be surprisingly competitive. At one point, the Chapel was one of more than a dozen churches vying for the chance to merge with a church in Hinsdale, one of the wealthiest communities in Chicagoland. Egbert estimates that as many as 30 Chicago-area multisite churches are actively seeking struggling churches. But many more churches are struggling and in danger of closing. That's a loss for the kingdom, he said.

"People might look at us and think, *You are like ambulance chasers*," he said, referring to the pejorative label for lawyers showing up at disaster sites, offering their services to people

MULTISITES:

who have barely escaped death.

"But to think of the money and time that was poured into these churches to make them vibrant place of worship, and now to see them torn down or turned into restaurants and bars or whatever—that is heartbreaking."

But even a successful merger can be heartbreaking.

A WEDDING AND A FUNERAL

Becoming the campus of a bigger, more successful church is like "having a wedding and a funeral on the same day," said H. B. Charles Jr., pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Church.

The 8,000-member African American megachurch was looking to expand from its downtown campus in Jacksonville. They'd hoped to plant a church in Orange Park, about 35 minutes away, where a number of members already lived.

At the same time, Ridgewood Baptist Church, a mostly white congregation of about 500, had lost momentum and members after their pastor died in 2008. His death came on the heels of a major building project. Members were left with about $5 million in debt and no clear path forward.

After learning about Ridgewood from the Jacksonville Baptist Association, Shiloh thought about renting space from them. Eventually the conversation switched from planting a new church in Orange Park to creating a second campus.

The site will be intentionally multiethnic, drawing from the former members of Ridgewood as well as Shiloh members who already live in the neighborhood and can forgo driving into downtown. The staff will draw from both churches.

"God is forcing us as a church to put our money where our mouth is," said Charles. "This is a step of faith for us.

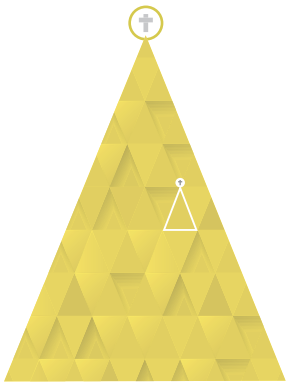
"At this point, we need to stop planning the wedding and start creating a family."

Not all "new families" last. According to a major 2014 report from the Leadership Network, about one in ten multisite churches surveyed said they had shuttered at least one campus.

That can leave hard feelings, as in the case of Addison Bible Church in Illinois. A self-described "blue collar congregation," it merged with Harvest Bible Chapel of Glen Ellyn (now Naperville) in 2004 in an attempt to draw in younger members, according to the *Daily Herald*.

The partnership proved short-lived. The two congregations proved incompatible, and one year after the merger, Harvest closed the church and eventually sold the property.

"They promised us they would keep the church open, and so forth, and they did not," one Addison member told the *Daily Herald*. "So, of course, we signed all our property over to them. And they took it and they sold it." (Representatives from Harvest Naperville have repeatedly declined to speak with CT.)



IN A RUSH TO EXPAND THEIR BRAND, LARGER CHURCHES CAN EASILY DISCARD SMALL CHURCHES' UNIQUE HISTORY. AND SMALL CHURCHES ARE TEMPTED TO GIVE HERO STATUS TO THE BIGGER CHURCH.

At their worst, multisite congregations fuel American Christianity's reliance on celebrity pastors rather than solid biblical teaching to grow.

Thabiti Anyabwile, pastor of Anacostia River Church in Washington, D.C., summed up this concern in a 2011 blog post for the Gospel Coalition titled, "Multisite Churches Are From the Devil."

"Try as one might," he wrote, "I can't escape the conclusion that those who take the multisite option are effectively saying, 'My preacher is better than your preacher, so we're gonna brand him and export him to a theater near you.' That's crass, I know. But that's really the bottom line."

And at least one longtime multisite church leader is nervous about the number of churches adding new sites. Ron Brown is executive pastor of the People's Church, which has campuses in Franklin and Spring Hill, Tennessee. Before that, he was executive pastor of the multisite Vineyard Church in Champaign, Illinois. He worries some churches are becoming multisite because it's the vogue thing to do.

"That is what a lot of churches are being tempted to do," he said. "The big churches are doing it, so if we don't do it, we are behind them."

Churches aren't McDonald's or other franchises. One size or model doesn't fit all. Brown says a multisite church can't be built around a pastor or a church brand. He compares starting a multisite campus to building an aircraft carrier. Both can be effective but only if the right support systems are in place. An aircraft carrier needs a whole fleet—supply ships, cruisers, frigates, and destroyers. The carrier can't

By the Numbers

Compiled by RUTH MOON

5,000

THE NUMBER OF MULTISITE CAMPUSES IN 2012

DUKE UNIVERSITY'S NATIONAL CONGREGATIONS STUDY

8,000

THE NUMBER OF MULTISITE CAMPUSES IN EARLY 2015

5 million THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WORSHIPING AT MULTISITE CAMPUSES ON A GIVEN WEEKEND IN 2015

1,000

The number of congregants a typical church has when it takes the plunge to a multisite model.

LEADERSHIP NETWORK

75

The minimum number of people a typical campus needs to be sustainable.

LEADERSHIP NETWORK

15 *to* 30

The number of minutes recommended as travel time between campuses

LEADERSHIP NETWORK

$145,000

MEDIAN COST OF LAUNCHING A NEW CAMPUS

LEADERSHIP NETWORK

60% *THE NUMBER OF CHURCHES THAT HAD BEEN MULTISITE FOR LESS THAN 5 YEARS WHEN SURVEYED IN 2015.* LEADERSHIP NETWORK

operate on its own, Brown says.

It's the same thing with a campus. You need all the support systems—technology, HR, staffing—to make it run. "You're building a whole fleet," said Brown.

FROM CONSUMERISM TO COMMUNITY

Given Mars Hill's highly visible collapse, questions remain about the long-term viability of multisite churches.

Chuck North, an economics professor at Baylor University, said the fall of Mars Hill mimicked what happens with successful startup businesses and their founders. (Full disclosure: North and I once collaborated on a book about economics and faith.)

One of the big challenges for such businesses is succession planning. Who will take over when the founding or longtime CEO leaves? Likewise, "the pastor is the face of that church," he said. "How do you get a successor who is going to fill that role?"

Yet North sees an upside to multisite. He thinks they help to fill the void left by the decline of denominations. In their heyday, denominations often had a consistent approach to worship and outreach. So a newcomer to a Baptist, Presbyterian, or Methodist church knew more or less what to expect when he walked in the door.

With many multisites, North said, people know what the church stands for ahead of time. That makes it easier for them to walk in the door without being caught off-guard. And in sheer numbers, if multisites were a denomination, they would be the fourth-largest in the country.

Scott Chapman, senior pastor at the Chapel, argues that the multisite model is preferable to the traditional megachurch, often charged with becoming centers that distribute religious goods rather than foster deep, authentic communities of faith. He says the multisite model leads to better pastoral care and stronger discipleship than the megachurch model.

In most megachurches, the average church member has no trained pastoral presence in his or her life, Chapman says. There's the pastor in the pulpit—or on the screen—and her small group leader, typically a layperson. But few members get hands-on spiritual care or direction from a pastor.

Breaking a big church into smaller worship spaces makes it easier for people to personally connect with the pastor, in what he calls "midsized community"—groups of 30 or 40 people, rather than just in a crowd.

"We are moving out of the social contract of consumerism and into the contract of community," said Chapman. "We are not there yet, but we are pushing in on that."

In a few cases, struggling churches that once merged with a multisite church have regained their strength and are ready to step out on their own. That's the case for the Denton campus of the Village Church (whose lead pastor is Matt Chandler), which has taken the first steps to becoming independent.

The process began last May, when Denton campus members voted overwhelmingly to become an independent church. In part, Denton leaders and members didn't want to build their strategy on the Matt Chandler brand. It began a yearlong transition.

This past December, campus pastor Beau Hughes began preaching at about 60 percent of the services. Before that, the sermons by Chandler had mostly been delivered by video.

'PEOPLE MIGHT LOOK AT US AND THINK, *YOU ARE LIKE AMBULANCE CHASERS.* BUT TO THINK OF THE MONEY AND TIME POURED INTO THESE CHURCHES, AND NOW TO SEE THEM TORN DOWN OR TURNED INTO RESTAURANTS AND BARS—THAT IS HEARTBREAKING.'

RICK EGBERT

Becoming a freestanding church is actually a return to the Denton campus's roots. It was born as a merger between Grace Temple Baptist Church, a congregation of 50 or so, and the Village. Today the campus has just over 1,000 members and draws between 1,500 and 2,000 on Sundays. Many are college students or young professionals, as Denton is home to North Texas University and Texas Women's University.

Becoming a self-governing church isn't simple. For most of the past eight years, the Denton campus ran a deficit, in part because it drew so many college students. Denton's leaders also hadn't emphasized stewardship and giving.

This year, with the transition in mind, the church has a financial surplus for the first time.

"It's like a kid moving out of the house," Hughes said. "This is part of growing up."

Hughes believes most multisite churches are taking the same approach. They've not had to think through a succession plan or consider the long-term sustainability of multisite.

That's changing, he thinks, with the collapse of Mars Hill. All of a sudden, having a long-term plan is a necessity.

Meanwhile, out in Seattle, former members of Mars Hill–Sammamish are starting over again. The newly replanted congregation of about 800 people, Doxa Church, went through a 12-week sermon series designed to get the church off on the right foot. Doxa also received Mars Hill "seed money" to cover startup costs, and will receive a gift after Mars Hill liquidates assets and pays its debts.

By March, the first wave of members had officially joined. "I have been thoroughly blessed and encouraged by the willing hearts and ready hands of the people who are joining us on this journey," Jeff Vanderstelt, Doxa's new pastor, told CT via email. Whether Doxa will survive the relaunch, time will tell. **CT**

BOB SMIETANA is CT senior news editor and president of the Religion Newswriters Association. He previously worked for LifeWay and *The Tennessean*.

WE WANT EVERYONE TO GET IT —

THE BIBLE. Delivered by the truckload, package or by hand. Free to all. To men, women and children throughout Eastern Europe. In more than 20 languages to nations of the former Communist Bloc. Sharing God's Word, educating and inspiring people everywhere. Eastern European Mission, a veteran in the field since 1961.

EEM
EASTERN EUROPEAN MISSION

THE BIBLE. WE WANT EVERYONE TO GET IT.

facebook.com/EasternEuropeanMission twitter.com/@EveryoneGetsIt 800-486-1818 eem.org

BY **KRISH KANDIAH** LETTERING BY **JILL DE HAAN**

KRISH KANDIAH is president of the London School of Theology and author most recently of *Paradoxology: Why Christianity Was Never Meant to Be Simple* (Hodder & Stoughton).

Trusting the Great Director

Though unseen and unheard, God orchestrates the details of our lives—even when they are falling apart.

ONE OF MY EARLIEST MEMORIES is of holding my mother's hand on my first day of school. I was so nervous as I entered the classroom that I wouldn't let go. The smoothness of her palm and the warmth of her fingers reassured me as my heart pounded in my chest. When I felt scared and alone, she was my lifeline and my security.

I was reminded of that day a few years ago as I sat in a dark room, once again holding my mother's hand. The silence was deafening as I strained to hear the muted words coming from the dehydrated mouth of a woman whose body had been ravaged by cancer. This

PHOTO BY LUKE KANDIAH

BY **KRISH KANDIAH** LETTERING BY **JILL DE HAAN**

KRISH KANDIAH is president of the London School of Theology and author most recently of *Paradoxology: Why Christianity Was Never Meant to Be Simple* (Hodder & Stoughton).

Trusting the Great Director

Though unseen and unheard, God orchestrates the details of our lives—even when they are falling apart.

ONE OF MY EARLIEST MEMORIES is of holding my mother's hand on my first day of school. I was so nervous as I entered the classroom that I wouldn't let go. The smoothness of her palm and the warmth of her fingers reassured me as my heart pounded in my chest. When I felt scared and alone, she was my lifeline and my security.

I was reminded of that day a few years ago as I sat in a dark room, once again holding my mother's hand. The silence was deafening as I strained to hear the muted words coming from the dehydrated mouth of a woman whose body had been ravaged by cancer. This

PHOTO BY LUKE KANDIAH


DO NOT THINK
THAT BECAUSE YOU ARE IN
THE KING'S HOUSE
YOU ALONE OF ALL THE JEWS
WILL ESCAPE.
FOR IF
YOU REMAIN
SILENT
AT THIS TIME,
RELIEF AND DELIVERANCE
FOR THE JEWS WILL ARISE
FROM ANOTHER PLACE.
ESTHER 4:13-14

time my mother held on to my hand, seeking reassurance from its warmth in her time of distress. The comforter had become the comforted.

Those were heartbreaking days. One moment I was praying for a miraculous recovery, the next for the end to come quickly. Sometimes I gave in to uncontrollable tears, yet sometimes I felt completely numb. I was also haunted by God's conspicuous absence. What I would have given during those long, languishing hours for his still, small voice of calm.

I know I'm not alone in experiencing the silence of God. I've spoken to many people over the years who have shared my longing: youth devastated by a broken relationship, parents trying to deal with their child's disability, couples desperate to conceive, a wife distraught over her husband's infidelity, a woman whose innocent son was imprisoned.

All these people, confident in their faith as mature Christians, spoke of doubts about God that piled atop the struggles they were already facing. Why is it that in the times we need God most near, he seems most distant?

A MUTE GOD?

When we read the Old Testament, we see a God who speaks to his people. The vocal God whom the Israelites worship is contrasted with the mute gods, made of wood and stone, of the surrounding nations. Habakkuk declares that all the earth must be silent and listen to the true God (2:18–20). Yet some of us may read his taunt to the idolaters and wonder whether our God, too, is a human fabrication. Many people testify to God drawing closer to them in times of distress, as he often does. But there are also times when the opposite is true. In *A Grief Observed,* C. S. Lewis put it strikingly:

> But go to him when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence. . . . Why is he so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?

It may console us to know that experiences of God's silence are common. Just because we don't sense his presence doesn't mean he isn't actually present. During World War II, a Jew in hiding scrawled on a cellar wall: "I believe in the sun, even when it isn't shining. I believe in love, even when I do not feel it. I believe in God, even when he is silent." These words have inspired many people, but how can faith survive if it is starved of the oxygen of God's voice?

The story of another Jew, who faced a similar threat of genocide thousands of years previously, helped me as I struggled to deal with God's apparent absence.

Esther is one of two women in the Bible to have a book named after her. Her story is strange. It's full of sexual exploitation, personal vendettas, and a real threat of anti-Semitic ethnic cleansing. As I read it during the final weeks of my mother's life, I noticed that nowhere in the story does anyone mention God. Not once.

No one refers to the Scriptures, and no one explicitly prays. There is no visible intervention, no class-A miracle like a flood, lightning strike, plague of frogs, or earthquake to stop the impending genocide of the Israelites—none of the good stuff that stopped such attempts earlier. While murder is plotted, mass rape is legislated, and lives are ruined, God is on mute. Yet this book made it into Scripture, and despite his silence, God's sovereignty rings out loud and clear.

PLOT TWIST

Reading Esther is like watching a film. There are plot twists, setups and setbacks, crises, dilemmas, and a perfect grand finale. There are heroes and villains, supporting actors, and extras. And every good film needs a good director—the person who shapes every scene and guides every character. The placing of each prop, the arranging of each camera angle, and the positioning of every incidental character are deliberately and strategically orchestrated from start to finish. It is the most important role, yet in (virtually) every film, the director is silent and invisible.

For most of Esther's story, it is difficult to see how the brushstrokes could paint a beautiful picture. But in the final scene, we see God's hand clearly as he brings things to a satisfying resolution.

Esther, an orphaned Jewish girl, is taken in and raised, apparently singlehandedly, by her cousin Mordecai. She is contrasted with the egotistical Persian King Xerxes, who deposes his queen and exploits young women.

Their worlds collide when Xerxes makes Esther his new queen. This puts Esther in a dangerous position: Her life now lies in the hands of a fickle and heartless king who has not yet discovered her Jewish heritage. When Mordecai refuses to pay homage to the king's right-hand man, Haman, a descendant of one of Israel's long-standing enemies, Haman plots to exterminate God's people in general and Mordecai in particular. Xerxes approves Haman's plan and decrees the Jews' destruction. However, it soon becomes clear who really has the power, and how God has positioned Esther to rescue his people.

At a pivotal moment in the story, Mordecai challenges Esther:

> "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (4:13–14)

Esther then steps forward and reveals her Jewish identity in an 11th-hour attempt to save her people. She assembles all the key characters in this ethnic-cleansing crisis for a series of banquets, outwits Haman, and petitions the king to protect her people. Remarkably, Xerxes is pleased with Esther and overturns his prior decree of genocide. Haman's plot is foiled, and Esther's people are saved.

While God never makes an appearance, his role in the story is hard to miss. Haman rolled dice to determine the day on which his despicable plan for genocide would take place. But his plan backfired, and he was hanged on the oversized

gallows that he built for Mordecai. And the day determined by Haman's lots for the massacre is the day Jews today commemorate their liberation, on the Feast of Purim ("lots"). The Jews recognized that God rules even when he's silent and it seems all chaos has been unleashed.

Perhaps Esther felt God was silent during those traumatic years. But somehow, even in those dire circumstances, God was with her.

The Feast of Purim holds the tension expressed in Proverbs 16:33: "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord."

Esther's story helped me realize that even when God may seem absent, he's incredibly near, orchestrating the events of our lives. Reminded of God's ultimate control, I initially hoped for Esther's happy ending in my life: an 11th-hour miracle to destroy those multiplying cancer cells and heal my vibrant, caring mother. In the early days—the diagnosis, oncologist appointments, chemotherapy sessions, and blood transfusions—I prayed expectantly with my children for healing. But as my mother became emaciated, tired, and distressed, our prayers shifted to "Please, Lord, take her home quickly." The ordinariness of Esther's pragmatic and diplomatic role reminded me that I, too, would have to make plans—for my mother's final days, to help my children work through their loss, for my family as we faced a future without her.

I was also struck by how Esther didn't worry about her personal happiness and safety, but rather about the future of her people. This encouraged me to keep walking through a dark season, to be concerned for others rather than myself.

Esther's story also helped me in another way. We often understand God's activity in our lives only in hindsight. Esther's loss of her parents as a young child, her forced marriage, and her confined life probably made sense only much later. Perhaps Esther felt God was silent during those traumatic years. But somehow, even in those dire circumstances, God was with her, providing for her, protecting her, and building in her a trust so strong that she was willing to risk her life for others.

THE MERCY OF SILENCE

My mother, born in north India to a villager mother and an upper-class British father, had a difficult start in life. When her father was killed in World War II, her home and her protector disappeared, and she was sent to an orphanage. But God was at work.

My mother and her sisters were eventually reunited from their separate orphanages, and they lived and were educated in an Anglo-Indian community in the Himalayas. After many years of traveling and working as a nurse, my mother became a Christian. God enabled my mother to trust him despite all the difficulty she had faced. Knowing the big picture of my mother's life helped me trust God, too, even in those harrowing last days of her life.

Just as plants deprived of water put down deeper roots, so the struggle to keep trusting God during his silence in tragic times helps us grow in faith. The same is true in our human relationships. When trust, respect, or communication erodes, our struggle to rebuild the relationship proves our commitment to and love for the other person. Feeling bothered by God's silence might indicate how much we love and need him.

Or perhaps the silence we sense in our relationship with God during times of crisis reveals that we actually stopped listening for God a long time ago. Paradoxically, the silence of the God who speaks could be a mercy, offering us a chance to resolve anew that we will make time and space in our lives to listen to him. As Lewis said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures . . . but shouts in our pain: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Some Christians believe experiencing God's silence results from weak faith or some egregious, unconfessed sin. But the stories of Joseph, Job, and Paul dispel that myth. It was not Joseph's lack of faith that led to his imprisonment. Nor was it Job's sin that led him to lose everything and almost everyone precious to him. Paul was inspired by God to retell his story of unanswered prayer: "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take [the thorn] away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'" (2 Cor. 12:8–9).

Ziya Meral, a Turkish friend working in the Middle East, once wrote in this magazine:

> Where is God when millions of his children are being persecuted in the most brutal ways? Why does he keep silent in the middle of persecution but speak loudly in the middle of conferences with famous speakers and worship bands? I have prayed many times like Luther: "Bless us, Lord, even curse us! But don't remain silent!"

Meral's struggles eventually led him to consider Jesus' own experience:

> The greatest glory Jesus brought to God was not when he walked on the water or prayed for long hours, but when he cried in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and still continued to follow God's will, even though it meant isolation, darkness, and the silence of God. Thus, we know that when everything around us fails, when we are destroyed and abandoned, our tears, blood, and dead corpses are the greatest worship songs we have ever sung.

Similarly, Pete Greig, in his book *God on Mute*, says, "Even Jesus experienced the silence of God and unanswered prayer, but these became the occasion for the greatest miracles of all time."

Scripture doesn't skirt tough issues like suffering, struggling to believe in God's goodness in tough times, and God's silence. Biblical authors often didn't find resolutions to their struggles, but lived in tension, hanging on to faith amid famine, destruction, and bereavement. The psalmists' doubt, despair, and depression; sorrowful books such as Job, Ecclesiastes, and Lamentations; Habakkuk's complaints; John the Baptist's questions from prison; and Jesus' anguished prayers in Gethsemane—while these passages don't usually make for cheery preaching, they nonetheless offer us incredible consolation during hard times.

That's how I see the Book of Esther. It's not just a story of one family and one nation, but also a poetic example of the perfect justice that will come at the culmination of history when God will gloriously rescue all his people. He is the unseen director, not only in the sublime scripting of the Book of Esther, but also in the intricate details of our own lives today. One day we will see this.

As a young boy, I didn't know how to pray. So my mother gave me words to pray. She would kneel by my bed and put her arm around me. She taught me that even reciting a simple prayer could help me connect with the almighty God.

In the agonizing days before she died, when we both were lost for words, I knelt by her bed. I struggled to pray, but as my wavering voice read Scripture to her, we heard God's voice, even in the silence. **CT**

PORTABLE CHURCH
INDUSTRIES

WE FOCUS ON THE DETAILS
SO YOU CAN FOCUS ON THE PEOPLE

CHURCH IN A
HOTEL BANQUET HALL

CHURCH IN A
4H AG CENTER

CHURCH IN A
GYMNASIUM

CHURCH IN A
HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

YOUR VISION. OUR EXPERTISE. REMARKABLE SOLUTIONS.

Over twenty years ago, we set out to make portable church® more efficient. Today, with over 2000 churches using our solutions, we are redefining what's possible for mobile churches worldwide. Regardless of where you choose to meet - movie theaters, schools, community centers, or any building in your city - we help you mobilize your ministry. Our solutions are all-inclusive, providing creative and functional solutions for signage, children's ministry, audio, video, lighting, staging, coffee service, aesthetics, storage, transportation and anything else you need to turn your building into church. Discover your portable possibilities.

FREE EBOOKS & WHITEPAPERS
FOR CHURCH PLANTERS & LEADERS
PORTABLECHURCH.COM/RESOURCES

NEW & EXISTING CHURCH PLANTS
MULTI-SITES | CHURCHES LEAVING BUILDINGS
800.939.7722 | PORTABLECHURCH.COM
@PORTABLECHURCH

DRAMA KING

BY WESLEY HILL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID JOHNSON

THEOLOGIAN KEVIN VANHOOZER WANTS TO HELP CHRISTIANS PLAY THEIR PART IN THE GREAT DIVINE STORY.

When Kevin Vanhoozer returned to the United States after a year of ministry in France, he did something characteristically imaginative. He wanted to go to seminary. He already had an undergraduate transcript full of Bible and theology credits; the only problem was that it was already August, and classes would begin in a matter of days. Vanhoozer needed a way to convince a seminary to admit him, quickly.

A classically trained pianist, Vanhoozer and others with Greater Europe Mission had spent a calendar year talking to unchurched audiences about how "the joy of music" pointed to Christ. Flush from the success of the mission, he decided, "I don't have time to apply to seminaries, I want them to apply to me." So he designed "an inversion or parody of the recommendation form," he says, with questions such as, "What are the strengths and weaknesses of the seminary?" He promptly dispatched 60 forms.

"Professors didn't get it," Vanhoozer now laughs.

Except for one. Vanhoozer's eyes light up as he describes it. John Frame, then a professor in the honors program at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, wrote back. On the form, under "Weaknesses," he scrawled,"Totally depraved." For a Calvinist theologian, it was a wickedly funny joke. Vanhoozer loved it.

In many ways, his seminary admissions story captures a lot of what you need to know about Kevin Vanhoozer. Formerly a senior lecturer at Edinburgh University, now a longtime research professor of systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, Vanhoozer is one of the biggest names in academic theology. The author of six books and the editor of at least a dozen more, his sessions at the annual American Academy of Religion and Evangelical Theological Society meetings are always overflowing.

But in and through all the groundbreaking research and years of teaching, Vanhoozer views himself principally as one who practices the "care of words."

"Theology is a bridging exercise," he says. "We're always trying to reach people." The way Vanhoozer does it is by looking for the playful, visionary, creative angle from which to speak and write.

WHAT IS 'BIBLICAL'?

If you know Vanhoozer's name, chances are it's because of his work in biblical interpretation. Most of the research from the first phase of his career centered on Scripture's authority in the church. Vanhoozer urged believers to become attentive, loving interpreters of the Bible in all its bewilderingly diverse glory. *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* has been a standard textbook for many upper-level seminary classes on biblical interpretation since it was published in 1998. When I took a class on hermeneutics at Wheaton College in the early 2000s, the book was high on the recommended reading list. Students were buzzing about it.

One late-night conversation with a fellow undergraduate led me to pick up a then-new Vanhoozer book called *First Theology*. "It shows you how to read the Bible like a Christian!" my friend gushed. Vanhoozer was pursuing largely uncharted territory in evangelical thinking: namely, whether there's a special way to *read* if you happen to believe in the triune God. "What would it mean if we thought through hermeneutics with a Trinitarian framework?" Vanhoozer asks now, looking back on what he was trying to accomplish then. Since the Bible really is God's Word, shouldn't there be a special, God-directed way to engage with it?

It wasn't always a welcome question in the years before Vanhoozer began publishing. For decades, evangelicals relied on secular theorists like E. D. Hirsch to set the agenda for biblical interpretation. Hirsch had drawn a neat distinction between the *meaning* of the Bible and its *significance*. The biblical meaning is fixed and unchanging, grasped by using the right *method* of reading. The significance, by contrast, is constantly changing, depending on the cultural space you inhabit.

When I studied the Bible in evangelical academic settings, I was steeped in this thinking. I learned to mine Scripture's meaning the way I'd mine the meaning of any book: I'd read the text in its original language, diagram its syntax, learn its historical and literary context, and so on. Only when I later asked about the *significance* of Scripture did I need the help of the Holy Spirit (or so I thought). A godly mentor told me, "You don't need the Spirit to figure out what the Bible means. You can do that on your own, just like any unbeliever can. But you *do* need the Spirit if you're ever going to submit your life to that meaning."

Vanhoozer disagreed, and still does. "Method will never be enough without the Spirit's work in helping us discern," he says. He replaced Hirsch's crisp distinction between meaning and significance with a more overtly Christian agenda. In a new preface to *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* Vanhoozer wrote, "We should begin our thinking about meaning and interpretation as Christians with the paradigm of the triune God in communicative action."

Or, as Vanhoozer puts it, the Bible is best defined as God *doing* things with words. If we're ever to do justice to what the Bible *is*, we have to talk about the Spirit, with the Father and the Son, at the beginning, middle, and end of that definition.

The stories, poems, letters, and visions in the Bible aren't simply the products of human authors who were infused with divine insight. Instead, says Vanhoozer, the Bible is God's way of addressing and guiding the church, of administering his saving covenant with us. Studying the biblical books in their historical contexts is, of course, vital. But the Bible achieves its present purpose—of making us all like Christ—because of how God *speaks* through it, present tense.

As Vanhoozer put it in his first scholarly publication in 1986, "[The infallibility of Scripture] means that Scripture's diverse . . . forces will invariably achieve their respective purposes." God will ensure that his Word will not return void (Isa. 55:11). And no human method could ever guarantee *that* outcome.

HEARING THE FULL SYMPHONY

But what does it mean that God speaks in and through Scripture? Vanhoozer's work appeared at a time when evangelical theologians were fiercely debating that question.

By the time Vanhoozer published his first essay on interpreting the Bible in 1986, evangelicals had already engaged in multiple "battles for the Bible" at places like Fuller Theological Seminary. Conservatives had held up the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, which affirms that "Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching," for almost a decade. The Scripture Principle—simply that the Bible is God's Word—had been in the air for years, often finagled and fine-tuned but never abandoned.

Vanhoozer's work somehow broke new ground. Retreading the footsteps of others, he found a way to neither repudiate everything that came before nor simply repeat it. (As a Trinity professor and Evangelical Theological Society member, Vanhoozer continues to affirm inerrancy.) "I've never been so committed to my [theological] team that I didn't recognize that we commit fouls too," Vanhoozer told me. So, armed with a confessional and evangelical tradition, Vanhoozer pressed beyond where evangelicals had arrived. As he wrote in the 1986 essay "The Semantics of Biblical Literature," "Scripture does many things with words and hence its authority is multifaceted."

Vanhoozer was concerned that evangelicals' approach to biblical interpretation was narrowing and hardening. Given the right conditions, evangelicals could well stop appreciating the diverse ways in which God's Word comes to us. By saying that all of Scripture was "without error," evangelicals risked implying that all of Scripture came in the form of "true or false" statements. How, then, to understand an exclamation of praise in the Psalms? Or what could the cry of "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!" mean if it could only be slotted into a "true" or "false" box?

"To read always for the proposition is like always listening to a Brahms symphony only for the melody," Vanhoozer says. "My motivation for saying that [is] to hold Scripture up high, to let it be everything it's supposed to be."

> 'TO READ SCRIPTURE ALWAYS FOR THE PROPOSITION IS LIKE ALWAYS LISTENING TO A BRAHMS SYMPHONY ONLY FOR THE MELODY.' **KEVIN VANHOOZER**

In short, Vanhoozer shook up evangelical thinking about Scripture at just the moment when it could have calcified. He insisted that evangelicals were right to keep a high view of Scripture's authority. But he was equally firm that God does many things with the Bible: God prompts lament, incites adoration, urges repentance, wounds pride, and announces forgiveness and new life. Of course, Scripture also asserts truth statements to be believed, but that's not the only thing it does.

The biblical canon doesn't just make claims about the world. It seeks to reinvent that world—and remake us in the process.

RESISTING THE STATUS QUO

Vanhoozer's creative approach risks leaving all theological camps unsatisfied. Later this year, Vanhoozer will publish a book on the pastor as theologian with Owen Strachan, who teaches theology and church history at Boyce College, a conservative Southern Baptist school in Louisville, Kentucky. Strachan also leads the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, which promotes male headship in the church and the household. Vanhoozer is celebrated in circles like this. As one conservative theologian puts it, Vanhoozer is "a reforming but committed evangelical." For that reason, the theological Right trusts him.

Others are less certain of his consistency. When Vanhoozer's recent tome on the doctrine of God, *Remythologizing Theology*, hit shelves, Paul Helm worried that it underplayed Scripture's truth claims. Helm, a Reformed philosophical theologian, wrote on his blog, "The omission from his list of [the Bible's] communicative acts—poetry, song, parable, apocalyptic, story, and argument—of statement, or assertion, is significant." Vanhoozer wants to remind us of the conversational covenant between the speaking God and the listening believer. But in doing so, does he sideline the core evangelical emphasis on the Bible's truths that "transcend [their] occasion and context"?

Vanhoozer is also valorized by more

progressive evangelical thinkers. Post-conservative theologians like John Franke appear to have drawn on Vanhoozer's work for their own projects. And many outside the evangelical fold—Kathryn Tanner of Yale and George Hunsinger of Princeton—have praised his work for being generous and incisive.

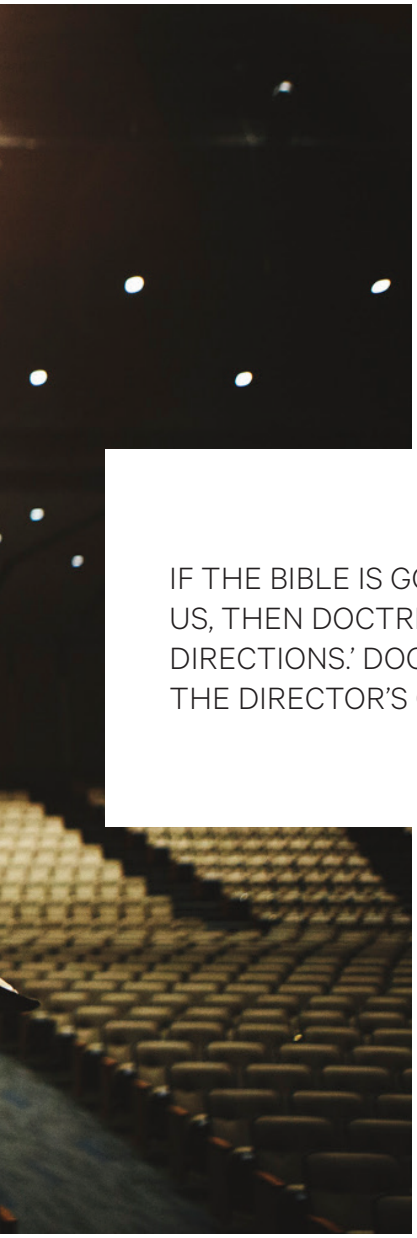
Still others suspect Vanhoozer of dressing up garden-variety evangelical "bibliolatry" in fancy new garb. Peter Enns left the faculty of Vanhoozer's alma mater, Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, over disagreements about the Bible. He accuses Vanhoozer of papering over the Bible's genuine errors.

Enns supports Vanhoozer's description of an "inerrancy of the Cross." This is Vanhoozer's way of saying that biblical truth always communicates God's loving faithfulness. But, by the same token, Enns has said the Cross suggests that God speaks *humbly* in Scripture. That is, God uses biblical authors' errors and missteps, rather than preventing those mistakes from creeping in. Vanhoozer suggests that any apparent contradictions in Scripture may await resolution in the future, in God's timing. Enns views this as a classic inerrantist ploy to wriggle out of genuine tensions in the biblical canon.

"I have received criticisms from the Left and the Right," Vanhoozer tells me. In the end, he wonders aloud whether his "creative fidelity"—his efforts to hold up an evangelical doctrine of Scripture in a fresh, lively way—leaves him open to misunderstanding from all quarters. "Those toward the Left don't like fidelity when it appears to be status quo," he concludes. "Those toward the Right don't like creativity when it appears to be infidelity."

THE THEATER AND THE SCRIPT

n the classroom, Vanhoozer finds that even the most committed evangelicals can be suspicious of theology. When he wrote his acclaimed 2005



book *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine*, Vanhoozer did so with those students in mind. He had observed "that doctrine and church life [had] come apart, and that disturbed me."

I understand. When I was younger, all my Christian reading consisted of devotional books and the occasional Christian novel. My dad once suggested I try reading some meatier, more demanding theology. At first I balked, put off by the idea that controversial topics could be edifying. And I wasn't alone. Many churchgoers, young and old, have found that doctrine divides, and that avoiding theological debates can hold a community together.

Vanhoozer is out to change that perception. Don't be repelled by the word *doctrine*, he says in effect. If the Bible is God's communication to us, then doctrine functions as the "stage directions." Doctrine helps us take our place to perform the Director's commands. "Theo-drama" is the way Vanhoozer speaks about the Christian life. Doctrine is part and parcel of making sure that drama gets from the printed page to the well-lit stage.

"Doctrine helps disciples act out what is in Christ," he says. "And what's in Christ is the new creation, the new humanity."

IF THE BIBLE IS GOD'S COMMUNICATION TO US, THEN DOCTRINE FUNCTIONS AS THE 'STAGE DIRECTIONS.' DOCTRINE HELPS US TO PERFORM THE DIRECTOR'S COMMANDS.

Doctrine, in short, assists Christians to perform their faith, to live in ways that display to an eager audience redemption in Jesus. "We need to learn how doctrine directs us to live out the life of Christ," he says. And you believe him when you see that flash of excitement in his eyes.

Vanhoozer's more recent work completes an unfinished arc from earlier in his career. His first published writings tried to explain how the Bible holds authority in the church. His later books—including his most recent, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine*—describe what it looks like to hear and obey the voice of God in Scripture in mundane moments, in the church foyer or at the local multiplex.

A hallmark of Vanhoozer's theological style is the way he spins out a metaphor beyond where more trepid thinkers would venture. When talking about church life, Vanhoozer suggests that the pastor is the stage director who ensures players all know their lines and can improvise when necessary. Individual Christians are the actors. Scripture furnishes the script. The theologian is a "dramaturge," using expert knowledge of acting and classic performances to help the director proceed. There is masterpiece theater (the creeds). There is local (the congregation) as well as regional theater (the denomination or confession the congregation belongs to).

You can almost picture Vanhoozer smiling to himself as he extends the metaphor, twirling it further and further out to demonstrate just how rich theology can be. "Systematic theology should be exciting," he tells me. I imagine his students agree.

FROM COMMUNICATION TO COMMUNION

When Vanhoozer completed his doctoral studies at Cambridge, prior to his first job at Trinity, he worked with the revered Catholic theologian Nicholas Lash. In an essay published the same year as Vanhoozer's first, Lash wrote, "The fundamental form of the Christian interpretation of Scripture is . . . the life, activity, and organization of the Christian community." He went on: "Christian practice consists . . . in the performance or enactment of the biblical text: in its 'active reinterpretation.'"

So, you know a church is heeding Scripture when you look at the church in action—preaching the Good News, feeding the hungry in Jesus' name, offering music and joy to a fractured world in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Vanhoozer is still committed to Lash's vision. Doctrine is for living. And the church is to embody and implement, not just catalog and classify.

Toward the end of our time together, Vanhoozer steps back and draws some threads together. "Theo-drama," he says, returning to the metaphor of performance, "is something that's not just telling us what to think." The truth of Scripture isn't grasped merely by a bare mind, peering through the microscope. "There's beauty," Vanhoozer says. "There are a lot of beautiful scenes in Scripture. But there's an odd beauty, of course, a strange beauty."

It's the odd beauty of the Cross—and the odd beauty of the cross-bearing troupe who progresses across the stage, performing the drama of salvation for the healing of the world. **CT**

WESLEY HILL teaches New Testament at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. His most recent book is *Spiritual Friendship* (Brazos).

Gre

atness & Grace

DAVID BROOKS OF *THE NEW YORK TIMES* SAYS WE'VE FORGOTTEN NOTIONS OF SIN AND VIRTUE— AND LOOKS AT HISTORICAL FIGURES TO LEAD US BACK.

Interview by JEFF HAANEN

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, David Brooks hit a wall. Although his résumé sparkled—a columnist for *The New York Times*, a political commentator for PBS and NPR, and the author of best-selling books like *Bobos in Paradise*—his inner life felt impoverished.

Brooks's quest to fill that hollowness culminated in his latest book, *The Road to Character* (Random House). He pairs sketches of historical figures like Augustine and Dwight Eisenhower with analysis of our culture's retreat from biblical notions of sin and righteousness. Jeff Haanen, executive director of the Denver Institute for Faith & Work, spoke with Brooks, a cultural Jew, about recovering the classical quest for virtuous living—and great men and women who can light the way.

PHOTO COURTESY OF RANDOM HOUSE

You note that since roughly World War II, we've lived in a different "moral country." What's changed?

Most people believe the big cultural shift happened in the 1960s. But when I investigated the books and culture of the late 1940s, I found that the transformation happened then. There were tons of best-selling books, and some movies, arguing that the notion of human sinfulness was outdated, and that we should embrace the idea that we're really wonderful.

When you lose awareness of sin and start thinking that, deep down, human beings are pretty wonderful, you lose the struggle of character building. Building character is not like being better than someone else at a career. It's conquering your own weakness. But you won't make that effort if you lose a sense of what your weakness is and where it comes from.

How did losing sight of human weakness pave the way for what you call today's "Big Me" culture?

We've encouraged generations to think highly of themselves. In 1950, the Gallup organization asked high-school seniors, "Are you a very important person?" Back then, 12 percent said yes. Gallup asked the same question in 2005, and 80 percent said yes.

There are surveys called "The Narcissism Test" that ask whether respondents agree with statements like, "I like to be the center of attention because I'm so extraordinary," or "Somebody should write a biography about me." The median narcissism score has gone up 30 percent in 20 years.

Our economy encourages us to promote ourselves with social media, to brand ourselves and get "likes." In theory, we know humility is important, but we live in a culture of self-promotion.

Much of the book is about historical figures who stand in contrast to the culture of self-promotion, such as Frances Perkins, Franklin Roosevelt's secretary of labor and a major player behind the New Deal. What about her upbringing and education shaped her character?

Perkins went to Mount Holyoke College back when the main purpose of higher education was not intellectual skills (though that was certainly a priority) but character-building. Since she was weakest in chemistry, the school made her major in chemistry. If you can do what you're weakest at, you can handle any challenge. Holyoke also sent its students around the world on missionary trips. They picked up this heroic sense that they could do something brave.

Perkins was unsure of how to dedicate her life until, in 1911, she watched workers die in the Triangle Shirtwaist

Factory Fire. That gave her what some have called "the call within the call." She had her career, but now it had become a vocation. Forever after, she would do anything she could to advance the cause of workers' rights.

You also write about Augustine of Hippo and Dorothy Day. What can these portraits of Christian faith teach us?

Augustine is quite simply the most capacious mind and intelligent man I've ever encountered.

He was a successful young rhetorician, but the more he achieved, the more uncomfortable he felt. So he investigated his own mind to see what was going on. He understood psychology, 1,600 years ago, as well as we do today. When Augustine plumbed the depths of his mind, he found infinity there. In other words, he found God. As Reinhold Niebuhr said, the road into the self leads right out of the self.

As a bishop, Augustine fought many battles over church doctrine. But he had achieved a certain tranquility. If you focus only on your outer life, you never can. Worldly ambitions always have a way of demanding more.

Dorothy Day is another amazing character. Some people come to faith in moments of suffering and pain, but she came to faith in a moment of joy, at the birth of her child. She said, "I've never felt as great a love as I felt in the days after the birth of my daughter." And with that came a need to worship and to adore God.

Day became a Catholic, a social worker, and a newspaper writer, and she spent her life building communities. There's a phrase from Nietzsche that Eugene Peterson turned into a book title, "a long obedience in the same direction." Our culture praises choice and individualism, not obedience. But obedience is where Day found joy.

Your book describes two paths to character. One is the path of moral effort, of emulating great heroes like the ones you profile. The other is the path of grace, the experience of receiving the gift of goodness. Which path works best?

It's both. You may be able to build character and greatness through disciplined effort, but I don't think you can experience the highest joy without grace. Nor can you experience tranquility. That only comes from gratitude, the feeling that you're getting much more than you deserve.

My book includes a beautiful passage from the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich. He writes about certain moments when you are feeling down, and then suddenly you feel this tremendous sense of acceptance. You're not asked to do anything—only to accept the fact that you're accepted.

The word *character* can sound tough and austere. But most of the characters in my book had moments of profound joy, of feeling overwhelmed by gratitude.

You end the book with "The Humility Code": "We don't live for happiness, we live for holiness." "Humans are flawed yet deeply endowed." "Humility is the greatest virtue. Pride is the greatest vice." "We are all ultimately saved by grace." Is it any accident that these sound like the teachings of Jesus and the apostles?

I spend a lot of time going to Israel. Christian art there has a certain "face." When you walk the Stations of the Cross, you enter different chapels from different traditions: Greek Orthodox, Catholic. But the art features the same facial expression: one of gentle, loving kindness. In Greek or Roman art, the expressions are much "harder" and less grace-filled. But the Christian art has a kind of joy-filled humility.

The Gospels brought about a revolution in morals. To put it broadly, there was a shift from a desire for power to a desire for sacrificial love. Even just speaking as a historian of ideas, culture, and behavior, that was a radical revolution that created a radical counterculture.

Today when we hear the word *counterculture*, we think of hippies in the 1960s. But the hippies ultimately represent the same individualistic striving we see from Apple computer and Ben & Jerry's.

The true counterculture is found in faith, whether Jewish or Christian. It's about living by a totally different moral logic. The logic of the Bible and the language of humility—that's the real counterculture.

When I read your book, I couldn't help thinking about how evangelicals (myself included) often capitulate to Big Me culture—positive psychology, the self-branding of social media, "life plans." What can evangelicals learn from both secular and religious people who have taken the road to character?

Recently I met with the Gathering [a group of Christian philanthropists] in Orlando, Florida, and spoke, as an outsider, on the ramps and the walls the evangelical community builds for outsiders. Ramps are things that welcome people into a community, and walls are things that drive people away. I argued that what drives people away the most is a mixture of an intellectual inferiority complex with a moral superiority complex.

Intellectual standards in the evangelical community are not as high as they could be. It's getting better. Everyone wants to be kind to each other. But sometimes you have to be a little cruel to disagree, and to disagree sharply and honestly to raise the intellectual standard of the enterprise.

On the other hand, as someone who has come to know a lot of evangelicals in the past years, many through writing this book, there are so many people who embody serenity and joy. They radiate caring love.

Words and theology are important. But I'm a big believer that "the message is the person." When you run across somebody who is joyfully giving, humbly giving, that's a more attractive evangelical move than any book or tract could be. **CT**

YOU MAY BE ABLE TO BUILD CHARACTER AND GREATNESS THROUGH DISCIPLINED EFFORT, BUT I DON'T THINK YOU CAN EXPERIENCE THE HIGHEST JOY WITHOUT GRACE.

REVIEWS

How Dante Can Save Your Life

Rod Dreher leaned on *The Divine Comedy* when his world was falling apart. By Ralph C. Wood

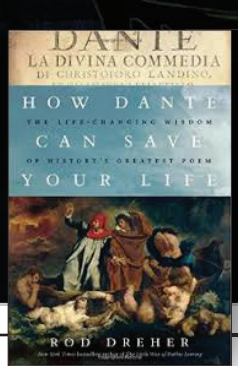


ILLUSTRATION BY JONATHAN BARTLETT

Walker Percy—the novelist, philosopher, and Christian convert—once expressed his bemusement at those who read Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* merely for its "poetic structure." Percy knew, of course, that the poet carefully constructed his three-part epic (Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso) around complex allegories. He also knew that readers can learn a great deal about the medieval mind by reading it. Yet Percy was mystified that anyone would follow Dante's arduous journey without getting the real point: Dante wants to save *our* souls no less than his own.

Rod Dreher gets it. The popular blogger's new book, *How Dante Can Save Your Life: The Life-Changing Wisdom of History's Greatest Poem* (Regan Arts) ★★★★★, does more than retrace Dreher's own Dante-driven recovery of life and faith. Just as the poet Virgil leads Dante into the pit of hell so that he might climb to the edge of paradise, Dreher hopes to lead readers out of their own "dark wood" toward heavenly delight.

Yet Dreher doesn't turn Dante into a preacher. On the contrary, he attends to the *Comedy*'s poetic nuances, its rich characters and events, its stunning metaphors, and its piercing insights. Even so, this book is more about Dreher than Dante, and I don't say this to damn with faint praise. By filtering his own personal struggle through the greatest of all Christian poems, Dreher strikes depths not otherwise possible.

RETURN TO ROOTS

How Dante Can Save Your Life is, in effect, a sequel to Dreher's 2013 best-selling memoir, *The Little Way of Ruthie Leming*. In that book, he narrated the marvelous life and crushing death, from cancer, of his schoolteacher sister. Unlike most tales of lives that end too soon, Ruthie's story stood apart. It taught Dreher that he was wrong to regard his small-town upbringing as benighted and constricting; that he had been wrong to flee it for the bright lights and high times of big cities.

For the first time, Dreher discerned what a hard-driving, large-salaried, ambitious life of urban success couldn't provide. It couldn't offer what the local folks of Starhope, Louisiana, gave the Dreher family during Ruthie's passage to death. Dreher's mother and father had exhibited splendid moral and religious strength as they lost their daughter. In turn, they received unstinting care from the Starhope community, especially its church people.

The evangelical physician who had attended to Ruthie spoke stunning truth when Dreher asked him to declare the significance of her life and death:

> He had rocked in his chair for a few seconds. "That the American dream is a lie," he said at last. "The pursuit of happiness doesn't create happiness. You can't work hard enough to defeat cancer. You can't make enough money to save your own life. When you understand that life is really about understanding what our true condition is—how much we need other people, and need a Savior—then you'll be wise."

So Dreher wised-up and determined to go home. He left his flourishing career as a journalist in the urban Northeast and returned with his wife, Julie, to raise their three children in the small town of St. Francisville, Louisiana.

Yet he soon learned the jarring truth of the adage birthed by Thomas Wolfe's novel *You Can't Go Home Again*. Not all was well back where he began. His sister had died while harboring a deep distrust of her sophisticated brother, with his refined tastes in books, wine, and artisanal cuisine. Dreher had looked forward to helping raise his two nieces in their mother's absence, but they kept him at bay, shaped by their late mother's distrust. Neither had Dreher's father forgiven his son for not becoming like him—a hunter and fisher, a man of the land rather than a man of culture. No matter what Dreher said or did, the father was always right and the son always wrong.

Dreher's "return to roots" shriveled up. It did not sprout with the tree of life. He contracted the Epstein-Barr virus, an anxiety-induced fatigue that often confined him to his bed. He seethed with rage over the seeming ruin of his noble intentions. In short, he fell apart.

Yet he gradually made his way back. Now we have the story of his remarkable recovery, aided by a Baptist psychotherapist, an Orthodox priest, and, above all, a medieval poet.

Dreher rightly reads Dante as a 13th-century man whose life had also been shattered by his acts of pride, lust, and other deadly evils. Though he distinguishes between Dante the poet and Dante the pilgrim, Dreher deftly links his own spiritual quest and Dante's journey down to the depths of hellish sin, up the steep mountain of moral cleansing, and into the glorious precincts of paradise, of life with God.

One doesn't need to be an expert on Dante to follow Dreher's personalized reading of *The Divine Comedy*. He shows the awful relevance of the damned souls who populate the Inferno. He enables us to struggle with the sinners who are overcoming such deadly evils as sloth, envy, and gluttony.

Dreher highlights two overarching themes that serve to weave the complex strands together. They form the primal heartbeat of the Christian life: sin-and-grace, sin-and-grace.

The first theme derives from Dante's teaching that we condemn ourselves, in Dreher's words, not chiefly "because of what we hate but because of what we love and the way we love." For Dante, almost all sins come from desiring the wrong things for the wrong reasons, to the wrong degree and in the wrong places.

The lure of the local, Dreher discovered, is not always redemptive. He came to discern that his rural Louisiana family and home—the people and place he loved most—had made an idol of themselves. In the name of love, they had created a closed world, sealing each other into rigid

Just as the poet Virgil led Dante into the pit of hell so that he might climb to the edge of paradise, Dreher hopes to lead readers out of their own 'dark wood' toward heavenly delight.

character types: the dominant father who was always right, the loyal daughter who stayed at home, the rebel son who threw it all over—with the mother caught in the middle. Having frozen each other in fixed images, they came also to *embrace* these distorted masks. The family realm, where life should be most productive, became most destructive.

A MAGNIFICENT BEGINNING

Dreher was freed from this strange hell by his second and far more transformative discovery: Dante's insistence on the freedom that springs from a divinely enabled humility and love. Dante's call to Dreher was akin to the one Virgil gives Dante. There is no detailed plan or guaranteed result—only the summons to descend into the dark before climbing to the light. Virgil asks only that Dante make a beginning, that he not remain calcified in his ruinous pattern of living, that he act upon his freedom to say yes rather than no. Dreher said yes to his psychotherapist, his pastor, and his poet. From them he learned that the life of grace is not mainly a matter of intellectual assent but of yielding the will in repeated acts of obedience.

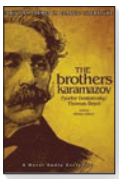
A reviewer should avoid spoilers. But candor compels me to say that Dreher is healed but not cured. Not until the life beyond life is there a cure to all evils, what we call *salvation*. But Dreher has made a magnificent beginning. There are moments that will move all but the flint-hearted to tears. Especially compelling are the scenes where he helps prepare a friend's body for burial in Orthodox fashion (Dreher left Catholicism for Orthodoxy in 2006), and where he asks forgiveness from the father who doesn't really comprehend the blessing he grants his son.

Above all, Dreher dedicates the book to Julie as his own Beatrice, the earthly embodiment of divine love through whom Dante made his way to Paradise. Even though it may require a long by-path through hell to arrive there, the nearest way to the reign of God often lies closest at hand. **CT**

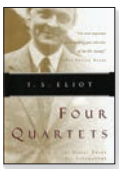
RALPH C. WOOD teaches theology and literature at Baylor University. His books include *Chesterton: The Nightmare Goodness of God* (Baylor University Press) and *Flannery O'Connor and the Christ-Haunted South* (Eerdmans).

MY TOP FIVE Gregory Wolfe

On his blog this spring, Rod Dreher invited readers to chime in and list books that have rescued them from a downward spiral, as *The Divine Comedy* did for him (see p. 67). CT asked Gregory Wolfe, editor of *Image Journal* and author of such books as *Beauty Will Save the World*, to run with this theme. Here, Wolfe lists **5 books that can save your life.**

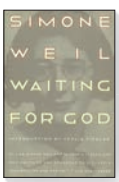


The Brothers Karamazov *Fyodor Dostoevsky*
Like Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, *The Brothers Karamazov* has it all: heaven, hell, and the purgatorial world in between. Part murder mystery, part novel of ideas, this sprawling story of passion, betrayal, and the fragility of hope is held together by the young monk Alyosha. His innocence and faith are challenged not only by earthly passions but by his brother Ivan's nihilism. Alyosha passes through fires of tribulation to a hard-won vision of compassion and grace.



Four Quartets *T. S. Eliot*
Though legendary for being cryptic and obscure, Eliot's poem has rewarded generations of readers with profound insights into the spiritual life. Written just before and during World War II—and infused with the suffering and grief of those years—*Four Quartets* raises the ultimate questions about time, suffering, ecstasy, and death. The central theme is the difficulty of holding on to truth; the poem suggests that moral and spiritual disciplines shape our capacity to draw near to the "still point of the turning world."

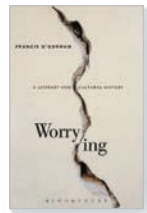
Cloudstreet *Tim Winton*
Set in mid-20th-century Perth, Australia, *Cloudstreet* chronicles the lives of two families forced to inhabit the same home. Sam Pickles, who was injured in an accident, inherits the rambling house but must take in the Lamb family to make ends meet. The Lambs have also known tragedy: Their son Fish is left mentally disabled after nearly drowning. Winton, an enormously gifted novelist who is criminally underrated in North America, combines moments of magical realism and comedy with the rawness of grief and despair.



Waiting for God *Simone Weil*
Written by a brilliant French Jew who became something of a Christian mystic, these scattered essays and letters don't make for easy reading. And yet Weil's meditations on attention as a form of prayer and the nature and meaning of suffering (which she calls "affliction") offer illuminating insights. Weil died young, so her theology was a work in progress. But that doesn't mean her wisdom can't aid one's pilgrimage through life.

Master and Commander *Patrick O'Brian*
This novel and the 20 that follow are known as the Aubrey/Maturin books. Set during the Napoleonic Wars, these stories take place largely on board His Majesty's fighting ships. Jack Aubrey is an intrepid captain, brilliant at sea but confused and hapless on land. Stephen Maturin is a doctor and naturalist, clumsy at sea but a shrewd spy and gifted scientist. Human and moving, these books make reading itself a "saving" joy.

Worrying: A Literary and Cultural History
Francis O'Gorman
(Bloomsbury Academic)



The Weight of Worry

Francis O'Gorman seeks out the roots of a peculiarly modern habit.

By Karen Swallow Prior

Worry is a peculiarly modern condition. Its history can be traced through its etymology: from its Old English meaning of *to strangle*, to its Renaissance sense of physical harassment, to its current connotation of mild anxiety.

The word *worry* as it is understood today did not emerge until the 19th century, with the growth of major cities and modern industry. Since then, Francis O'Gorman explains in *Worrying: A Literary and Cultural History* (Bloomsbury Academic) ★★★½☆, worry has crept into the affairs of "busy, high-pressured nations" and those "who [use] their brains too much." Anxiety took on a hint of glamour, as reflected in works by Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, and others cited generously by O'Gorman, a professor of Victorian literature.

According to O'Gorman, worry develops when reason edges out faith as the privileged source of knowledge. "The birth of worry," O'Gorman writes, is "the moment of a culture's shift from unquestioning faith in omnipotent powers to *thought* or *reasoning* as the way of understanding human existence within the world."

This emphasis on reason—and its array of seemingly infinite choices—promotes the idea that we must "use our own powers to discern" the one best choice. No wonder we worry so. Indeed, O'Gorman argues, "Worry is only possible in a world of choice. It's even more possible when human beings think, in turn, that they have the capacity, let alone the right, to choose for themselves."

Yet paradoxically, as O'Gorman shows, worry also demonstrates the limits of reason. "Worrying exposes what we really have faith in," he says. Despite "all our faith in reason, for all our hopes to think of ourselves as logical creatures, we're really shaped by what we believe." The worrying mind, O'Gorman suggests, is "like great Gothic architecture," featuring "invention, fantasy, and asymmetry." And the mental rituals of the worrier—the repetitions, circularity, and obsessive tics—show "how deeply the need for rites remains."

But worry is more than a hyperactive source of folly. In some cases, at least, it can sharpen our perceptions. "Worriers," O'Gorman suggests, "are good at analyzing states of mind, responses, nuances, and fine shades of feeling." He gets rather carried away, however, in labeling them "philosophers in ordinary," who are like

> the monks of the old days in new clothes . . . the theologians and the scholars, made freshly commonplace, newly familiar on the streets and in the offices. Even if we can hardly claim our inner thoughts to be intellectual ones, we live the life of the mind all the same.

Exaggerations aside, the worrier may have a firmer grasp on reality than the cheery optimist. After all, O'Gorman writes, "A blithe confidence that all will work out may be exactly the reason why it won't. Happiness can be a distraction; a smokescreen that hides a deep failure to look at problems as they really are." Research shows that worry may even provide a buffer against more serious mental ailments.

Worriers are natural storytellers. Our imaginations seize upon 'What if . . . ?' scenarios with astonishing ease—and near-ceaseless energy.

Worrying is not a self-help book. In fact, it frequently pokes holes in that genre. Nor is the book spiritual in any sense. As the book's subtitle suggests, this is a literary and cultural history, as well as a personal one (O'Gorman is a self-confessed worrier). The book is an exercise in worrying about worry. Thus, like worry itself, it's too often repetitive, disorganized, and a bit self-indulgent.

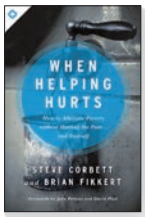
Of course, self-indulgence, as O'Gorman points out, is the essence of worry. "To worry silently is to feel a certain kind of closeness to oneself," he writes. Worry can become, ironically, a source of comfort.

Worriers are natural storytellers. Our imaginations seize upon "What if…?" scenarios with astonishing ease—and near-ceaseless energy. *What if I'm late to the interview? What if the boss refuses to see me? What if I get pulled over for speeding?* Perhaps all we can do is learn to tell ourselves better stories. For Christians, that will mean telling ourselves stories in which God is in control of past, present, and future. Stories where we give all our "What ifs?" to him and trust in a hopeful outcome. **CT**

KAREN SWALLOW PRIOR teaches English literature at Liberty University. She is the author of *Fierce Convictions: The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More—Poet, Reformer, Abolitionist* (Thomas Nelson).

ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX NABAUM

When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself
Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert
(Moody)



The Poverty Fighters' Bible

The book that's shaking up the church's approach to charity. By Lesa Engelthaler

In 2009, knee-deep in volunteering in the United States and abroad, I bought three newly published books on poverty. I was feeling uneasy about the way I related with the poor, and I hoped these books might help identify the problem. One volume was written by two then-obscure college professors, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. Its title was provocative: *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* (Moody, new edition, 2014).

By the end of the introduction, I was infuriated. The authors, economics and community development scholars based in Georgia, accuse the North American church of not doing enough to alleviate poverty. And they suggest that Christians who *are* doing something are probably doing more harm than good. Determined to prove them wrong, I read on.

By chapter two I was underlining compulsively. Upon finishing the book, I was a convert. I'm far from alone in the way *When Helping Hurts* (*WHH*) has transformed my relationship with the poor.

Westerners often think of "poverty" as simply a lack of material resources. But the premise of *WHH*, the conviction that sets it apart from other books on aid, is that, in one way or the other, "every human being is poor." The book offers theological grounds for a fuller, richer understanding of poverty, challenging Westerners to repent of well-intended but ultimately harmful practices.

Many books criticize global institutions (like the World Bank) and governments for providing ineffective assistance to developing countries. Evangelicals, especially those with conservative political leanings, tend to like these books because they cast doubt on large, bureaucratic, money-driven approaches. But *WHH* (like Bob Lupton's *Toxic Charity*) was among the first to argue that evangelicals are not immune from causing harm despite meaning well.

'THE BOOK'

Before they became household names in the world of Christian charity, Corbett and Fikkert had been teaching on poverty alleviation at the Chalmers Center, the research institute Fikkert founded in 1999. In response to explosive demand, they decided to put their courses into one book, hoping to free up time for teaching and research. The authors are the first to admit their surprise at the book's staggering popularity. They even joke about it ruining their lives.

To date, *WHH* has sold more than 300,000 copies and been translated into 5 languages. It has been so well received that some refer to it, simply, as *The Book*. "Agencies have told me that their staff on the ground internationally can tell when the team has or has not read the book by how they behave," Peter Greer, president and CEO of Hope International, told me. "The authors [articulated] what so many of us had been experiencing: the realization that good intentions don't automatically lead to good results."

Blake Mankin, of the Christian nonprofit Every Village, agrees. "I quickly came face to face with my own misguided belief that the answer to poverty is found in my ability as a person, and the church's ability as a whole, to solve a problem," he said. *WHH* is now required reading for Every Village missionaries serving in South Sudan.

Rich Stearns, the head of World Vision, told me it opened the eyes of many North American pastors. "It caused them to ask, 'Are we giving to the right people who are doing the right things in the right way?' "

"The book is unapologetically addressed to the church," Fikkert said. Three evangelical megachurches—Willow Creek, Saddleback, and LifeChurch.tv—use the book in various ministries. Willow Creek has even designed an outreach center built upon its foundational teachings.

Those teachings can be summed up in four basic propositions:

1. Poverty is not simply a matter of material resources. People of all socioeconomic backgrounds often lack one or more of life's essentials: spiritual intimacy, a sense of self-worth, relationships in community, and an ability to work productively and steward the fruits of that labor.

2. The solution to the underlying issues of poverty involves *walking with* people, as opposed to *doing for* them. The trick is to understand their realities, look for solutions, and partner to take action.

3. All people have resources that can be used to change their situation. Outside resources can build upon what's already there, but those resources should never supplant one's innate capacities.

4. Overcoming poverty requires that person's direct involvement in the decision-making process. People own what they participate in.

The authors insist there's nothing revolutionary in *WHH*. They claim only to have repackaged sound principles from the world of community development. Sometimes, people in the development world don't speak the language of the church, so *WHH* makes the theological and philosophical case that secular and religious organizations can join hands for the sake of a common mission.

THE SAVINGS-GROUP STRATEGY

Last summer, I traveled to Togo in West Africa to visit some "savings groups." Championed in *WHH*, these groups combine Bible study and prayer with practical training in saving, lending, and other aspects of money management. They are started by, and meet in, local churches. (Full disclosure: I took this trip as a guest of the Chalmers Center.)

Over the past three years, *WHH* concepts have been used to launch about 1,200 West African savings groups comprising roughly 19,000 members. About 800 of these groups are in Togo. Pastors see them as a way to help low-income people in their congregations, or as outreach to people in their community.

Over a lunch of fufu and fish soup—with my Togolese hosts using their hands for forks (and spoons and knives), and me awkwardly dipping in as well—I asked Kwasi Ayivi, a pastor and Savings Group Lead Trainer, what Togolese pastors think about the concept. He said, "They tell me that when savings groups get installed in their church, pastoral care goes down and the giving goes up!"

I first visit a savings group that meets in a high-ceilinged, open-air thatch building with a pressed dirt floor. The poles holding up the roof are wrapped in bright ribbons. This group, all women, collects 600 West African francs (CFA) every week, the equivalent of $1. As we scooched our plastic chairs together to form a circle, I asked the members to tell me about their businesses. Listening to their responses, it felt less like church than happy hour, after the inevitable icebreaker, "So, what do you do for a living?" Answers came in rapid-fire succession: beans, shoes, cakes, plastic goods, bananas, salt, hairdressing. As the meeting went on, there were rounds of applause for accomplishments shared.

Afterward, I met with a local Muslim woman. Through a translator, I found out that she was a relatively new member, so I asked why she had joined. With a baby strapped on her back and three other children tucked close by, mother-hen style, she explained that she and her husband made wooden furniture but had recently made some poor business decisions. She had heard of the group's good reputation. Now she and her children, and sometimes her husband, attend the church service that precedes the meeting.

‘Christians should not be talking about *helping* anyone,’ said Celestin Musekura, CEO and founder of African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministry. ‘We should be talking about *mutually giving* to each other so we can grow.’

The core concepts of *WHH* are relatively easy to understand, but putting them into practice can prove difficult. “There is enormous mystery in this type of work,” Fikkert said. “There is no silver bullet.” As I saw firsthand, Togo’s savings groups are no exception. Probably the most difficult aspect of this work is determining whether low-income individuals or communities are receptive to change.

Unfortunately, since North American Christians have been giving things away for so long, many people in the majority world have come to rely on handouts. To get a better grasp on this problem, I met with Gregg Burgess, West Africa program director of the Chalmers Center. Burgess and his team believe that requiring the local church to pay something to receive training is essential to ensuring a genuine commitment to the savings groups. But he conceded that some compromises were necessary. “In practice, our national trainers will train churches for a very small fee and sometimes whatever they can afford.” The churches that agree to pay the small fee feel more ownership of the program.

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) is another *WHH* concept that sometimes looks better in theory than in practice. (These accounts encourage saving by offering grants that equal, and sometimes exceed, the amount saved.) As a part of the Chalmers Center’s work in North America, Jerilyn Sanders, director of US training, was tasked with piloting a program that would ramp up IDA participation. “The concept of matched savings to empower a motivated person seems like a no-brainer,” said Sanders. “Who wouldn’t want to double or triple their money?”

However, Sanders soon encountered challenges that mirrored what secular providers were discovering: The people who could benefit most from IDAs are the least likely to sign up for and commit to them.

As with many grassroots ideas, an initial failure contained the seeds of a superior alternative. Sanders worked with the Chalmers Center to create a program called Faith & Finances, a basic church-based education tool. She found that it “took on a life of its own and in a way that IDAs never did.” The program has successfully built meaningful, reciprocal relationships across socioeconomic lines.

Celestin Musekura, CEO and founder of African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministry, offered another point of view. He read *WHH* and has a good pulse on how fellow Africans are receiving the book. Musekura observed that the authors should change the title. “Christians should not be talking about *helping* anyone,” he said. “We should be talking about *mutually giving* to each other so we can grow.”

Along this line, he advocated placing a higher priority on ensuring that leadership comes from the community where the Christian agencies work, and not from “a white man or woman living in D.C. or London.” Musekura believes that *WHH* has helped to shift leadership patterns in this direction, but much change is still needed.

DON’T PULL BACK

Despite everything *WHH* has accomplished in six short years, I asked Corbett and Fikkert if there is anything they regret leaving out or underemphasizing. “I wish that we had said more strongly that there is a deep economic poverty out there and that the consequences are horrendous,” Corbett said. “And I, as an average American, am the rich young ruler in Scripture, because I’m closer to LeBron James economically than I am to millions, if not billions, of people around the world. Just to make sure people realize: ‘Guys, this poverty is really real.’ ”

Fikkert has found that many people who read the book begin worrying that their helping causes unintended hurt—so they stop helping. Many observers speak of “*When Helping Hurts* paralysis.” Fikkert said, “The idea that we would want people to stop helping the poor is just goofy. The point wasn’t paralysis. The point was a pause and some redirection.”

“It goes back,” Corbett said, “to a faithfulness message of ‘a lot more is going to fail than succeed in this work,’ but don’t let that stop you.”

“We do not want to see people pull back from helping the poor,” said Fikkert. “We just want to see them do it better. Our book has a very positive message; it’s not just a warning.” **CT**

LESA ENGELTHALER is a freelance writer and a senior associate with Victory Search Group’s nonprofit executive search practice in Dallas.

The Selfie's Deeper Tale

It's not always about self-aggrandizement. By S. D. Kelly

Not too long ago I took my first selfie. I figured out how to take a front-facing photo, maximize my arm extension, and include my friend and the concert-stage backdrop in the frame. I uploaded the photo and self-consciously attached a series of hashtags, most of which pointed out that I never take selfies because, as everyone knows, selfies are terrible. That people snap photos of themselves for the rest of the world to see reeks of entitlement, self-obsession, and boredom. Right now on the Internet, billions of lonely little images are floating in the cloud, a steady stream of self-aggrandizement.

No matter the amazing backdrop in each—say, the Eiffel Tower or the Grand Canyon—what's most amazing is the fixed point in every photo: me. Wherever you go, there I am, an image on your screen, waiting for your likes and comments. I'll take anything, as long as you respond.

And that may provide a clue into selfies' enduring popularity.

'SO THEY WILL KNOW WHO I AM'

Consider that the selfie has been around for a long time. Artists such as Rembrandt, Leonardo, Goya, and Cezanne all painted self-portraits, and even many of the oldest cave paintings are of the painters themselves. Yet we rarely think of these self-portraits as self-aggrandizement.

Recently, *Pacific Standard* interviewed a woman named Giulietta who suffers from schizoaffective disorder. She has regular hallucinatory episodes wherein she loses all sense of reality. Yet Giulietta managed to open a coffee shop that she named Trouble, after the hardships she can't quite shake off.

Giulietta's restaurant has been wildly successful, not in spite of her illness but because of it. She desperately needs other people, strangers even, to help her maintain a grasp on reality. When customers greet her as she pours their coffee and makes her way among the tables and chairs, she knows she is seen. When asked why she sports the same clothes day after day and makes sure to show her tattoos, she has a ready answer: "So people will recognize me. So they will know who I am."

That, in turn, helps Giulietta to recognize herself and to stay tethered to her

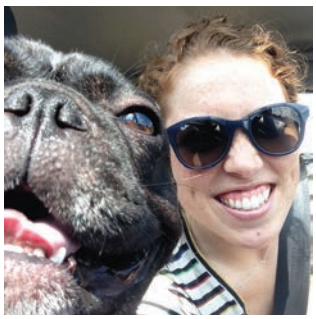
PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK

MORGAN LEE, EDITORIAL RESIDENT, HARD AT WORK

ASSISTANT EDITOR ELISSA COOPER TRIES A FRENCH BRAID

KATELYN BEATY, PRINT MANAGING EDITOR, AT NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL

ALECIA SHARP, DESIGN DIRECTOR, AND HER TWO FAVORITE GUYS



ASSOCIATE EDITOR KATE SHELLNUTT AND CASH

BECKY CUSTER, EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATOR

CT EMPLOYEES (LEFT TO RIGHT) LUKE SCHOENROCK, JAKE WALSH, AND DREW DYCK

ANDIE ROEDER MOODY, ASSISTANT EDITOR AND MARKETER

The desire to be seen and known drives us not only toward each other but also to God.

surroundings, freed from alternate realities, those places in her mind where she gets lost and can't be seen.

The desire to be seen and known is as old as humanity. It drives us not only toward each other but also to God. We are lonely, and we want to know that others notice us. We see this desire expressed everywhere, from the young-adult classic *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* to the litany of laments in the Psalms, such as Psalm 42: "I say to God my Rock, 'Why have you forgotten me?' " In other words, "Are you there God? It's me, David."

HERE I AM

We see this yearning in a fair amount of contemporary worship music. While much of that music is accused of being light on theology and heavy on feelings, CCM lyrics reveal our desperate psychological yearning to be seen and known. Note lines from the songs "Blessed Be Your Name," "Here I Am to Worship," and "I Can Only Imagine," respectively:

Blessed be your name
When I'm found in the desert place
Though I walk through the wilderness
Blessed be your name. . . .

Here I am to worship,
Here I am to bow down,
Here I am to say that you're my God,
You're altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me. . . .

I can only imagine what it will be like
When I walk by your side
I can only imagine what my eyes will see
When your face is before me
I can only imagine. . . .

When I'm found in the desert place. Here I am.
I can only imagine when I walk by your side.

The words express a loneliness and longing that we all know.

The writer Annie Dillard once recounted joining her young college students in singing worship songs every morning on campus. In one intense song session, Dillard, who is not an evangelical, marvels as the students extend their arms and turn their palms upward toward heaven. Finally, the singing ends and the students disperse. "We have dismantled the radar cups; we have closed the telescope's vault," Dillard writes. She considers the singing and hand-raising attempts to reach God, to extend the telescope as far as it will go, to get in touch with Someone who will recognize us.

Our worship songs rarely reach the pinnacle of human expression, but the impulse that drives them remains the same. We want to be seen; we want to be known. In other contexts, this impulse is made manifest in the selfie.

The psalmist expresses this most simply: "Search me, God, and know my heart… lead me in the way everlasting" (139:23–24). It is our heart's desire, the plea that follows life's deepest question: *Are you there, God?* We need that question answered and yearn to hear a response. **CT**

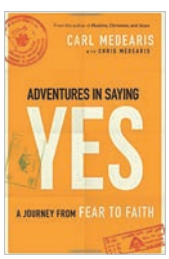
S. D. KELLY writes about culture, high and low, from her home in coastal Massachusetts where she lives with her husband and three kids and runs a nonprofit community organization.

New & Noteworthy

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

"We say yes to God and then work out the details later. Is that a smart, rational approach to life? Maybe not. But maybe there's no such thing as a rational way to approach life. After all, a whole lot of people make decisions based on fear, and most fear is irrational."

~from ***Adventures in Saying Yes*** by Carl Medearis

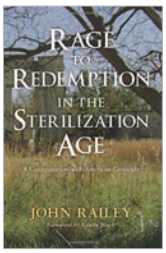


ADVENTURES IN SAYING YES

A Journey from Fear to Faith

CARL MEDEARIS WITH CHRIS MEDEARIS (BETHANY HOUSE PUBLISHERS)

Medearis, an expert in Muslim–Christian relations, moved his family to Beirut in 1992, when wounds from Lebanon's long civil war were fresh. *Adventures in Saying Yes* recalls the many risks he has taken traveling across the Middle East to promote religious and political reconciliation between long-standing enemies. But Medearis avoids portraying himself as a hero. His book urges all believers to free themselves from the grip of comfort and take bold steps for the gospel. "Feeling safe and secure is a good thing," he writes, "until . . . it isn't. Stop for a moment and think of all the things that your need for security might actually stop you from doing."

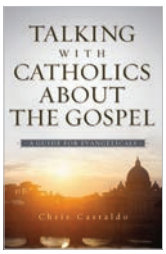


RAGE TO REDEMPTION IN THE STERILIZATION AGE

A Confrontation with American Genocide

JOHN RAILEY (CASCADE BOOKS)

Railey, a veteran journalist, reported for North Carolina's *Winston-Salem Journal* in 2002, when the paper shed new light on the state's 20th-century sterilization program, one of the nation's most aggressive and enduring. As editorial page editor, he has energetically sought out the program's victims and lobbied the government to make amends. (In July 2013, state officials approved $10 million in victims' compensation.) In *Rage to Redemption*, Railey centers this ugly history on the ordeal of Nial Cox Ramirez, who was diagnosed as "feeble-minded" and sterilized at age 18. "Nial," he writes, "found her redemption through her fight for justice, roaring back against the system. . . . And she'd found it through her God, who had freed her of most of her hatred of the whites who had sterilized her."



TALKING WITH CATHOLICS ABOUT THE GOSPEL

A Guide for Evangelicals

CHRIS CASTALDO (ZONDERVAN)

As an evangelical pastor who regularly writes and speaks about his conversion from Catholicism, Castaldo often fields questions about whether Catholics truly have saving faith in Jesus. "Many Catholics," he answers, "don't seem to know Christ (of course, this is true of many Protestants). Such people may possess certain pieces of Christian tradition, but they have not personally appropriated the gospel. . . . Among such people, we are compelled to share the Good News." How to do so, with grace and kindness, is the subject of this book. Castaldo (author of the memoir *Holy Ground: Walking with Jesus as a Former Catholic*) takes readers through Catholicism's history and doctrines, addressing recurring questions and common misunderstandings.

Is Seminary or Grad School the Next Step?

If you're being called to further your education, SeminaryGradSchool.com can help you find the right fit.

Search for schools by:

- Location
- Denomination
- Program/Degree

SeminaryGradSchool.com

Marketplace

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

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

International Church

Located in historic Istanbul, our multi-cultural, multi-denominational, evangelical church seeks a new lead pastor. Applicants with senior pastor administrative experience, strong preaching skills, a commitment to discipleship, and a multi-cultural ministry background are encouraged to visit ucistanbul.org for more information.

Houseparents

Shelter Care, an organization serving youth, has openings for mature couples. The program, located in Akron, OH, uses a family model. Each couple is responsible for 4 youth. Position is FT, includes salary and excellent benefits package. If interested send resume to 32 South Ave.; Tallmadge, OH 44278; phone: 330.630.5600; fax: 330.630.5810; sheltercareinc.org.

TRAVEL

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

Short-Term Teams, Missionaries, and Churches

Best, most popular overseas medical insurance including free emergency medical/political evacuation. About $1.00 a day when traveling. Missionary furlough, terrorism, church-based teams, maternity, & more. We insure hundreds of agencies and churches. See missionaryinsurance.info. Good Neighbor Insurance, 866.636.9100 or gninsurance.com.

MISSIONS

MissionNannys.org

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

EDUCATION

Earn Seminary Degrees Online

Columbia Seminary; ColumbiaSeminary.edu; CES@ColumbiaSeminary.edu.

Earn a College Degree by Mail

Int'l Christian College & Seminary; P.O. Box 530212; Debary, FL 32753. Send for a free evaluation. Low payments, scholarships, ordination. Inmates welcome. Iccsonlinebiblecollege.com.

Degrees Through Correspondence

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

SERVICES

Called to Preach?

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

A Growing Church

Your church can thrive, and we can help! Download our intro at thechurchgrowthinstitute.com/method for more information.

BOOKS | TAPES | FILMS

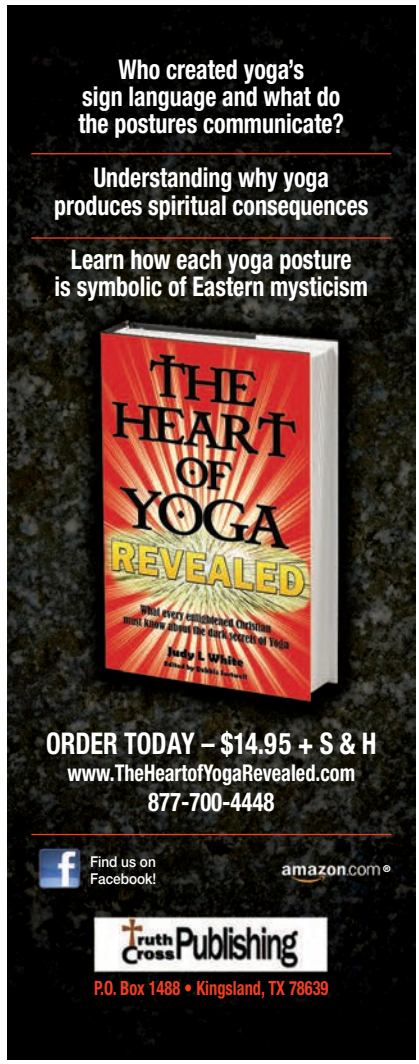
The Deeper Christian Life and House Church Movement

Books and tapes. Free catalog; 800.228.2665; Seedsowers.com.

New Book on the Greatness of Jesus

There's No One Like Jesus, by Blake Western. Available at Books-A-Million Stores, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Christianbook.com.

BOOKS | TAPES | FILMS



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

Free at berean-biblechurch.org.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Christian Home-Based Business Opportunity

$100,000 a year is now a reality! Web: http://scrip.cc; or call toll free 844.246.6760.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 80

I was severely brain damaged. And so I was fed and cleaned while being sat in front of reruns of *Barney*. I dreamed of smashing the television screen.

People looked around me and through me. However much I tried to beg and plead, shout and scream, I couldn't get them to notice me. I had woken up as a ghost.

ANGELS BECKON

Soon after I started to become aware, God came into my life.

One night I suddenly "awoke" from sleep. It felt as if I were floating far above my bed. Instinctively, I knew that I was not breathing. I could see angels with me, a male and two females. They were comforting and guiding me, and although we did not speak, I could hear their voices. They wanted me to come with them.

For a moment, I wanted to go with them. I had nothing to live for, no reason to continue my journey. But I couldn't leave behind the family that loved me.

The next moment, breath filled my lungs.

As I became fully aware, the only certainty I could cling to when so much didn't make sense was that God was with me. Without understanding the rules and structure of the church, without a concept of sin, the Bible, or repentance, I simply believed in him. I can't explain it, other than that, on the fringes of human experience, perhaps I was in a place in which I didn't need theological teaching to understand faith. The people around me didn't know I existed, but God did. And I knew he existed. It was instinctual, not intellectual.

I started praying to God. I couldn't clasp my hands or kneel, of course. But as I lay on a beanbag or sat strapped in a wheelchair to keep my useless torso upright, I started to talk to him. I prayed for someone to come and move my aching body. I prayed for him to keep my family safe. I prayed for some sign that one day I would be rescued from my silent world.

Sometimes my prayers were answered. Sometimes they weren't. But when I felt disappointed and powerless, my conversations with God taught me that gratitude could sustain me. When the smallest prayer was answered, I gave thanks to the Lord. Caught in perhaps the most extreme isolation a person can experience, I grew ever closer to God.

I lived for nine years without anyone realizing there was intelligence trapped inside me. During this time my family occasionally took me to church, but formal worship meant little to me. Visiting my grandparents, I would watch as they said grace but felt no connection to the words.

One day, my father pushed my wheelchair into a shop where a woman, seeing my broken body and staring eyes, prayed for me as she touched my head. But all I felt was confusion that a stranger would do this. My faith was so tightly locked inside me that seeing people practice theirs together or in public seemed strange.

Then, in 2001, my most central prayer was answered.

FINDING LOVE, AND CHURCH

A massage therapist at the care center I attended became convinced that I could understand what she was saying to me. After she persuaded my parents to have me assessed, I was taken to a specialized communication center. I sat on one side of a transparent screen, praying once again for God's guidance and grace. An expert sitting on the other side asked me to identify pictures of everyday objects with my eyes. Seeing that I looked at the correct pictures on command, she told my parents that I could learn to communicate.

The intelligence that had been trapped inside me soon became apparent. I quickly learned to use flashcards and switches to communicate. Then I mastered advanced computer software. Within 18 months, I was able to speak using my "computer voice." I started to lecture about alternative communication and to volunteer. In the years since, I've graduated with an honors degree and set up my own business as a web developer, all the while communicating via computer.

I could see angels with me, a male and two females. They were comforting and guiding me. They wanted me to go with them.

During this time, my faith remained an integral part of my life, but I still didn't feel connected to the church. On New Year's Day 2008, I met someone who did. My parents and I had Skyped with my sister, who was living in the UK. Her friend Joanna was in the room. She captivated me. We started to exchange emails and chat online, Joanna talking and me typing. We quickly fell in love.

Joanna had been brought up as a Christian and understood much about the church. As we talked and discussed faith, I began to understand more. Six months after we met online, I visited Joanna for the first time in the UK. One of our first activities together was to attend a church service. There, for the first time, I understood that

> Two are better than one,
> because they have a good return
> for their labor:
> If either of them falls down,
> one can help the other up.
> But pity anyone who falls
> and has no one to help them up.
> (Ecc. 4:9–10)

That December, I moved to the UK, where Joanna and I did a Bible study class together. I began with a child's Bible before moving on to an audio Bible that I could listen to alone. Six months later, Joanna and I were married. The Lord had brought us together, and now he was with us as we were joined in his presence.

Joanna and I continue to attend church. My life, like that of so many people, has become so full of work and commitments that it's sometimes hard to find the time and space to connect to God. It's the time and space that I had so much of during my enforced silence. Now I find peace in worship.

In many ways, my relationship with God looks the same as it always has: quiet, private, and intrinsic to my life. Without the Lord, I would not be here today. I have no doubt that it was only his intervention that saved me. It is only through God that I have found my voice. **CT**

MARTIN PISTORIUS has written about his experience in *Ghost Boy* (Thomas Nelson).

I Couldn't Move or Speak for 12 Years

In my enforced silence, another voice spoke.

By Martin Pistorius

People often ask how I found God. I was never taught to believe in him. I didn't read books or go to church to discover him. I simply knew he was with me. My path to faith may not seem so unusual if you know the miracle of my life—a miracle of survival that could only have happened by the hand of God.

I grew up in South Africa, a normal, healthy child, until I came home from school one day in 1988, complaining of a sore throat. I was 12 years old. From that day on, my parents fought for a diagnosis from doctors who couldn't explain what was happening to me. First I stopped eating. Then I stopped speaking. I lost all sense of time. The bonsai trees I had once tended grew dense as I lost mobility in my limbs. My body weakened as I stopped using it.

Test after test was run, but doctors couldn't say what had happened to me. They concluded I had suffered profound brain damage due to a degenerative neurological disease, and that I would soon die. I spent my days in a center for children with severe disabilities, and my parents cared for me at home at night.

For the first four years after I fell ill, I was lost in a dark, unseeing world, unaware of anything around me. I was awake but unresponsive. I have no memory of these years. After the medical profession had washed its hands of me, my parents were left to care for me, having exhausted every avenue in search of a cure.

Then, when I was around 16, I started to become aware again. It was flashes at first, moments of awareness that left me almost as soon as they appeared. It took time for me to realize that I was completely alone in a sea of people.

Since my limbs were unresponsive and my voice was mute, I was entombed in my own body. I couldn't tell anyone that I had returned to life. People knew that I had become more responsive, but they still believed CONTINUED ON PRECEDING PAGE

PHOTO BY CHRIS GLOAG

Kicking the Can Has Consequences

Debt Enslavement of a Generation?

The Bible records in Deuteronomy 28, specific blessings or curses which would ensue depending upon Israel's obedience or disobedience of the Lord's commands. Consequences for disobedience; 'the alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him, he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.'

Proverbs 22:7 states; 'the rich rules over the poor, the borrower is a servant to the lender'. Since abandoning all monetary ties to gold in 1971, America has accumulated the largest debt in world history, currently over $18 trillion!

Recent Fed policies of "quantitative easing" may have set the stage for a future inflationary or even hyper-inflationary climate that could devastate the value of the dollar. The possible monetary implications and economic legacy for our children or grandchildren could be ominous.

The Great Global Wealth Shift

Many foreign nations that hold large sums of U.S. treasuries have begun a pronounced transition out of dollars and into real, tangible forms of wealth. China, the largest holder of U.S. debt, has embarked on a massive global buying spree of natural assets, real estate, oil interests, and over the last three years Chinese imports of gold bullion have increased over tenfold!

As the wealth of the West moves eastward, plans are already set in motion to replace the dollar as the world's reserve currency. Eventually, international trust in Washington's monetary and fiscal policies could evaporate, and the dollar could suffer a huge devaluation, similar to what the British suffered when the pound lost the distinction of reserve currency status over a century ago.

Preserving Purchasing Power - *The Key to Protecting Your Wealth*

Following President Nixon's decision to cut all ties between the dollar and gold in 1971, no other primary asset class has served to protect purchasing power and grow in value as successful as gold. Gold has outperformed the gains in real estate, bonds, mutual funds and the DJIA since the government discontinued the policy of fixing gold's price in 1971.

3 FREE Offers You Need Now:

FREE Bonus CD #1

When Money Dies - The Nightmare of Deficit Spending, Devaluation and Hyperinflation in Weimar Germany

In a recent McAlvany Weekly Commentary interview, best-selling author of "When Money Dies," Adam Fergusson, discusses the similarities between monetary policies enacted by Weimar Germany in the 1920's and the current fiscal policy of the Federal Reserve. Economic history has demonstrated repeatedly the dire results that affect currencies when increased devaluation is enacted in order to deal with the debt problem. Call today to receive this interesting and alarming interview CD as part of our FREE Bonus to you.

GOD, Gold and Government

Why People of Faith Should Take a New Look at the Oldest Form of Financial Protection.

This report attempts to offer Christians a foundational basis for reconsidering and rediscovering a proven centuries-old method of protecting your assets in an era of rising economic, political, and geo-political uncertainty. You may be surprised what the Bible says about gold and money.

FREE Bonus CD #2

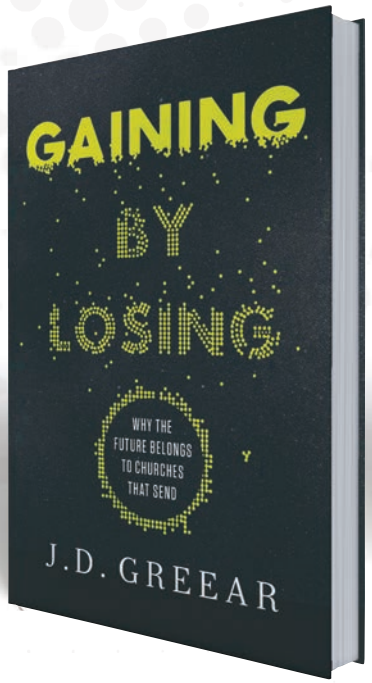
Understanding America's Debt Crisis - A complimentary CD containing the interview by Focus on the Family and U.S. Senator Tom Coburn, author of "The Debt Bomb" will be sent FREE along with our two additional offers.

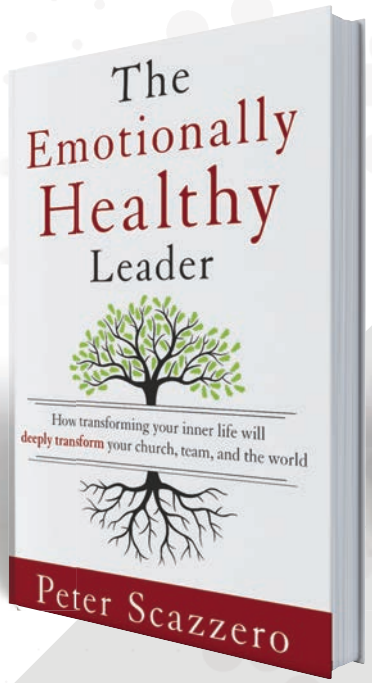
To receive all three FREE offers, call anytime on our toll-free 24-hour recorded information line. ICA, "America's Most Trusted Precious Metals Firm", serving our customers coast to coast since 1972, carries the highest A+ rating with the BBB. **www.mcalvanyica.com**

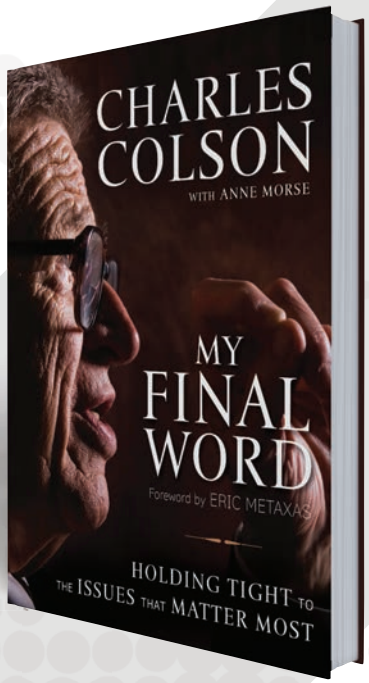
1.855.393.5840

CHALLENGE CONVENTION.

NEW BOOKS for church and thought leaders.







GAINING BY LOSING

J.D. Greear

People are leaving J.D. Greear's church. And that's exactly how he wants it to be. Discover how sending people out into the world will help multiply your ministry.

Learn more
gainingbylosingbook.com

THE EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY LEADER

Peter Scazzero

Go beyond the quick fix. Becoming a better leader starts instead with a transformed inner life. Learn how lasting change will help you lead with less stress and greater impact.

Learn more
ehleader.com

MY FINAL WORD

Charles Colson

A timely encore, Colson's final book will help you think through the critical discussions of our day—radical Islam, gay marriage, Christian persecution, and more.

Learn more
bit.ly/myfinalword

ZONDERVAN®