

CHRISTIANITY TODAY

**DON'T FORGET  
SOUTH SUDAN** *p. 22***THE NEW BATTLE  
FOR THE BIBLE** *p. 31***ONE MARRIAGE,  
TWO CALLINGS** *p. 36*

# HOW TO **DEFINE** **HERESY**

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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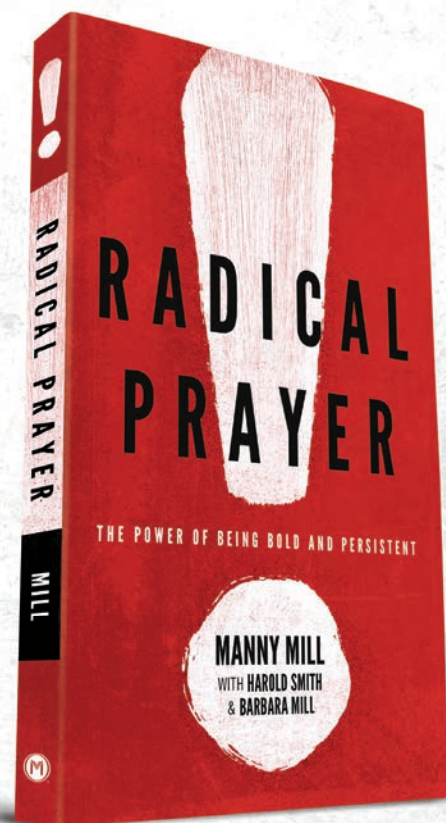
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Check out the latest news, information, blog posts, and more at [ChristianityToday.com](http://ChristianityToday.com)

This issue features an interview with illustrator John Hendrix about his church sketchings (p. 52). CT employees answer: **Of all Hendrix's illustrations for CT over the past decade, which is the best?**



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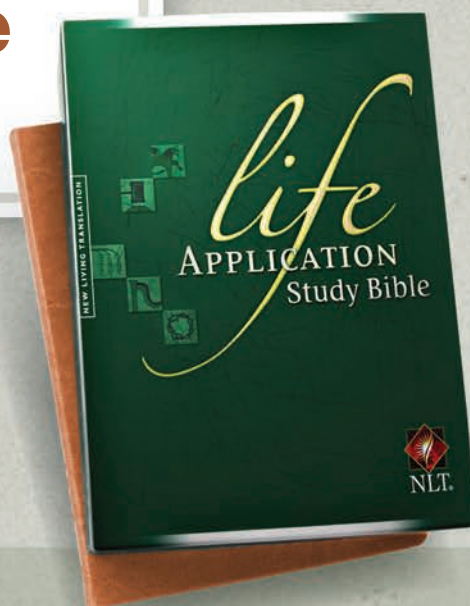
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# EDITOR'S NOTE

**F**ROM AGE 15 TO 21, I EXPERIENCED two ways to learn history.

The first was modeled at my public high school in southwest Ohio. My teacher (whose primary job was to coach the football team) would review dates and facts, then quiz us on how well we memorized them. He was clearly as bored by the litany as we were.

The second was the kind I witnessed at a Christian college in Michigan. There, our professors taught us dates and facts, of course. But they also explored the *why* behind the *what*: why the printing press was central to the Reformation, why King Henry VIII created the Anglican Church, why some 19th-century Christians supported slavery. History took on flesh and blood for me, and I became aware of our great debt to it.

We trust that this month's cover story (p. 38) is like the second kind of history.

Theologian Justin Holcomb provides an overview of heresy: what it is, how the early church councils came to define it, and what role the creeds play in defending against it. But if you walk away from the piece thinking that orthodoxy simply means getting all the right facts, we have not done our job. "Orthodoxy is not just a matter of theological precision," writes Holcomb. "It's about making sure the church rightly grasps our God and his work for us in Christ." The *why* behind the *what* of orthodoxy is not to score points in debate but to more deeply love the triune God.

We also study history to gain wisdom and avoid mistakes our forebears made. That is one theme of a new essay (p. 48) from Tish Harrison Warren (who wrote for CT last year on being the "wrong kind of Christian" at Vanderbilt). She recounts the racial injustice woven into US history, and asks how we should respond to it. That question will remain pertinent as Americans continue to debate displaying the Confederate Flag on public grounds.

But we also study history because we believe Christ is Lord over it. From a human vantage, history—including church history—will always be tainted by sin. But we believe God is at work through and in spite of us, revealing his power to bring good out of evil. "Divine interventions seem to be a necessary element in a Christian view of history," writes historian David Bebbington (best known for his evangelical quadrilateral). "The Christian . . . is aware of divine activity not only in the world but also in his own life."

Learning what happened before us helps us to see the God who is with us now—and to trust that he will lead us in his sovereign care until the end of time. **CT**



## A HISTORY LESSON

Why we need one from  
time to time.

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



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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

*"The Symphony represents for me my escape from the rather bitter type of modern musical realism which occupies so large a place in contemporary thought."*

**I** READ THAT QUOTE, from the late composer Howard Hanson, while listening recently to a performance of his "Elegy in Memory of My Friend." It reminded me of Beautiful Orthodoxy—a term you have no doubt seen in this magazine.

To refresh memories: Beautiful Orthodoxy, the cause of Christianity Today ministry, speaks of a community-shaping faith anchored on the gospel of God. It is expressed not with screams of self-righteousness, but in a language and with lives that model the unconditional love and blood-stained beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is contrary to the "bitter type" of realism that "occupies so large a place in contemporary thought" and action.

We live in an angry and confused world. The tone of our rhetoric, across most media and even behind some closed church doors, is more rage than redemption, more disgrace than grace.

You've seen it and heard it yourselves! On websites where attacking individuals and movements is second nature; and on social media where shameless epithets leave helpless targets scarred. Making matters worse, the truth of our convictions—the truth of God's Truth—seems increasingly worn down by attractive heresy on one side and ugly orthodoxy on the other. In the end, both options are destined to leave more of God's creation without hope.

Fewer people, including those raised in the church, consider biblical Christianity a viable worldview that causes individuals and cultures to flourish. But in the deserts of our times, God still fashions rivers that make our hearts glad (Ps. 46:4). And in a world under assault by the Evil One, he plants his church, and leads ministries like CT, and inspires causes like Beautiful Orthodoxy.

We believe that when it is lived faithfully and fearlessly, Beautiful Orthodoxy can and will boldly demonstrate for all that the Truth results in freedom and flourishing for the church and all the communities and cultures the church intersects. And those are the stories we want to tell more and more in the days ahead. In this magazine. In all of our magazines. Across our many websites. To encourage individual believers. To strengthen Christ's church. And yes, to effect change across communities in Jesus' name. And with that, to attest to the plausibility of the Christian faith in a skeptical culture. To paraphrase the Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor: We want to help those who dare to believe, to believe. And we can help those who believe to live life more abundantly.

Or, to quote Jesus: "I came so that they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of" (John 10:10, MSG). A Beautiful Orthodoxy, indeed. **CT**



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



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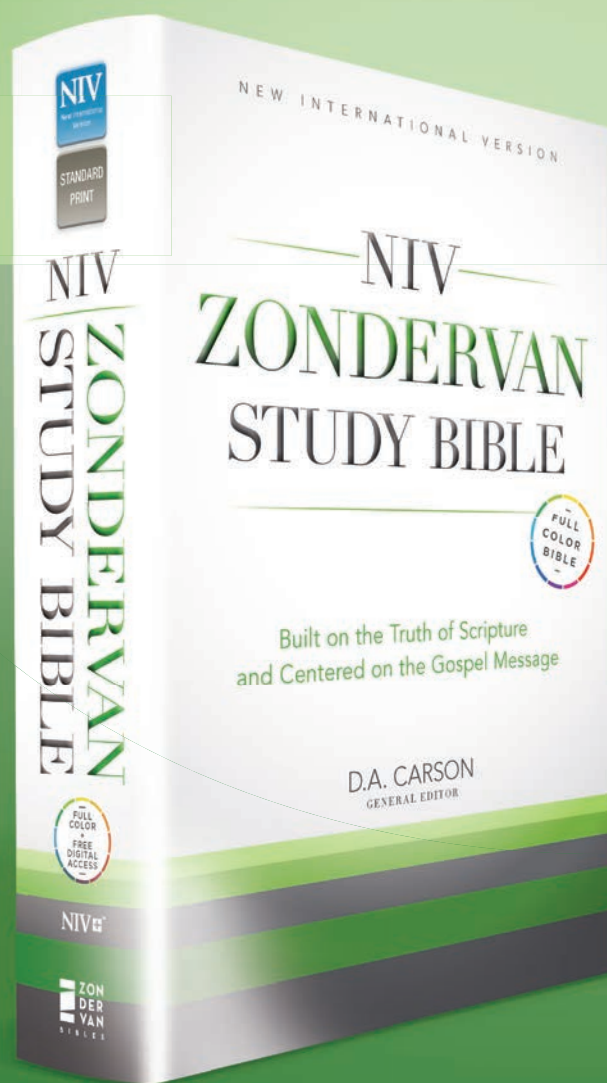
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# REPLY ALL

RESPONSES TO OUR JULY / AUGUST ISSUE

## ***Dear Pastor, Can I Come to Your Church?*** p. 32

Not often do I find myself reading one article after the next, thinking, *Wow, I have a new understanding and a new vocabulary to help me wrestle with these timely issues.* Case in point: Bradley Wright's article about churches and implicit racial bias. As I read the piece, I cringed at times, wondering: Would I more readily greet a white family than a Hispanic family visiting my church? As if that wasn't enough food for thought, I turned the page and read Mark Yarhouse's piece on gender dysphoria. I found the defining of terms helpful. Articles like these and the first-person narrative "Loving My Sister-Brother" challenge and encourage me. I feel more equipped with appropriate language and I am reminded, yet again, that extending grace and mercy to all is what it means to follow Jesus. Thank you.

**ALICIA BRUMMELER** Stony Brook, NY



"Dear Pastor, Can I Come to Your Church?" was both relevant and well researched. Surely, "racism is under our skins." However, there are numerous nuances to this question.

First, you and many others fail to distinguish between *racial* prejudice and *cultural* prejudice. Many years ago, when I studied under Peter Wagner at Fuller, a student asked him if the Congregational church Wagner attended would ever accept an African American pastor. His reply: "Yes, if he had the right accent." As Christians we need to move out of our comfort zones and relate to others who need Christ. But the problem is sometimes cultural prejudice.

Second, we often hear that the most segregated time in America is on Sunday mornings, and "segregated" is pejorative. Yet have we bought into the politically correct view of pluralism, so that a congregation must have racial representation that reflects the general population? If we have bought into it, then there is guilt of prejudice. But your article recognizes that

"birds of a feather flock together." This is natural and normal.

As Christians we must reach across barriers in order to show the love of Christ, but your research indicates that white evangelicals are very welcoming to racial minorities. So there is something else going on here: People of color *choose* not to attend many evangelical churches because those churches are simply not of their kin. They don't like the music or worship styles, or they feel more comfortable with people with similar backgrounds and interests.

**RICHARD J. GEHMAN** Minneola, Florida

Your July/August cover story was relevant, helpful, and consciousness-raising. However, I was disturbed by the bar graphs on page 41 that measured racial bias by denomination.

The graphs were set up in two boxes delineating mainline and evangelical identity. Even though these boxes appeared on the same page, the mainline church box was significantly smaller in



*Thank you for publishing the interview with Melinda Gates. It revealed the heart of caring that the Gates Foundation acts out in more ways than I knew. As I read, I found myself weeping in gratitude for the financial success that God has entrusted to them, and for the obedience they have displayed by answering his call to give and keep on giving.*

**PATRICIA CUMMINGS** Beaumont, CA  
*The High Price of Faith in Action*, p. 64

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height than the evangelical. The casual reader could have interpreted the graph as meaning that evangelical churches were less biased than mainline churches.

For instance, the Episcopal Church bar was 82 percent, and was pictured with a bar graph of 3.5 inches. But that same 3.5-inch bar length represented the 59 percent of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Visually, the Episcopal Church looked equal to the SBC, despite a difference of 23 percent. The Willow Creek bars—none of which exceeded 74 percent—were an inch taller than the Episcopal 82 percent bar. This visual discrepancy would never pass muster in a research paper.

My question to the CT staff: Was this unequal depiction of percentages the result of an explicit or implicit denominational bias?

**CHRISTINE TALBOTT** Hampden, ME

CT DESIGN DIRECTOR REPLIES:

*The three sets of bar charts on pages 40–41 were intended to display denominational responses in a comparable way by basing all of the charts on the same vertical scale. Unfortunately, an error occurred during editing that resulted in the vertical scale*

*being adjusted for some of the charts. We apologize for any impact this may have had on the perception of these charts. —AS*

## **Understanding Gender Dysphoria** p. 44

I'm confused. I'm confused about the transgender phenomenon. Apparently there is an exceedingly small percentage of people, mostly men, who are born with a disconnect between their brains and their bodies. Born with a male body, for example, they yearn to be female. Complicated, I know.

I'm confused as well, though, by the extraordinary media attention given to the story of Bruce/Caitlyn Jenner.

To help with my confusion, I found very helpful the outstanding CT article by Mark Yarhouse. This is a fair, thorough, thoughtful article from a professional who seeks to understand this issue in order to provide a Christian response.

**PHIL EATON** From My Study blog, June 11

I want to commend *Christianity Today* for addressing key issues around transgenderism. I have had a pastoral ministry for



40 years and have learned that ministry is messy. That doesn't mean not calling people to biblical discipleship, but where that goes for someone in pain is seldom simple. We need help thinking through the difficult ambiguities of human experience.

These articles are a good start, and though I'm sure you will get plenty of blowback, I hope they can open constructive exploration that is biblical, prayerful, and redemptive.

**NORMAN STOLPE** Dallas, TX

I just finished reading "Understanding Gender Dysphoria" and appreciate Yarhouse's thoughtful comments on gender dysphoria and the three lenses he describes. But it seems that he may misuse the term *redemption*.

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Redemption is the state of being bought at a cost. The cost is paid by none other than God himself, through Jesus Christ. We are redeemed from state A into state B: state A being that of willful disobedience to God, state B being the gift of gracious mercy to be righteous before a holy God. Yarhouse seems to equate redemption with our acts of grace, mercy, and acceptance. If we are to be redeemed, from what are we being redeemed, if not from state A? Is it only “a result of living in a fallen world”? His admonition to “reject the teaching that gender identity conflicts are the result of willful disobedience or sinful choice” seems to contradict the concept of redemption.

As one who has lived with depression, however, I do get living in a fallen world.

**JAMES P. BANDSTRA** Friedens, PA

### ***Fashion Matters*** p. 74

Hoorah for a Christian fashion show! If you have tried to buy clothing recently for a girl age 10 or younger, you’re aware of how sexualized it has become. Shorts less than an inch long, two-piece bathing suits with bikini bottoms—the list goes on. For



sale right beside them are boys’ shorts that come down to their knees. Little girls are taught to show as much skin as possible.

Your magazine’s opening ad [in July/August was] for “the battle plan for purity,” which leads with, “Every man, married or single, faces temptation.” Some of these men are battling against using child pornography. Shouldn’t we be protecting our little girls from predators instead of showcasing their bodies in every venue possible?

How can Christian parents and grandparents make their voices heard by the fashion industry? This article offers a start.

**BETTY HASSLER** Charlotte, NC

### ***From Jihad to Jesus*** p. 96

The [online] headline for the CT piece is,

“Saved from Islam on September 11.” I winced a little when I read that, because having read Charles’s book, he looks on Islam in a more kindly way than the headline suggests. Nevertheless, the headline is accurate, if blunt, because it is true that all Christian converts are saved “from” some form of unbelief. If I were a Muslim, I would look at converts to Islam from Christianity as being saved “from” Christianity, because they are passing from unbelief to belief in what I believed with all my heart to be the true faith.

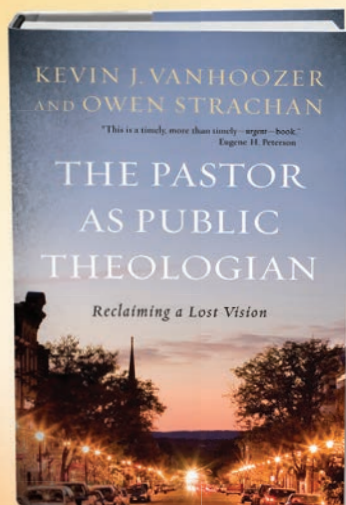
Read the whole thing—and, if you haven’t done so, buy Charles’s book [*The Love That Matters*]. It is a scandal that it has not gone to the top of the Christian bestseller list.

**ROD DREHER** *The American Conservative*, August 21

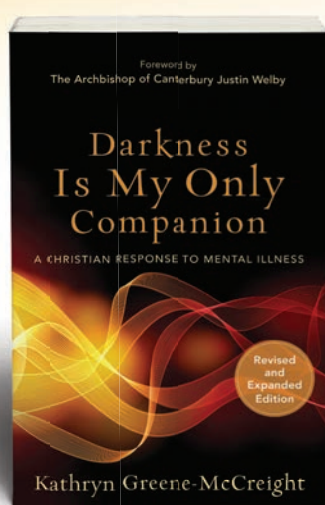
### **CORRECTION**

In *September Gleanings* (p. 17), based on a third-party report, CT stated that Gordon College laid off four tenured faculty. In fact, no tenured faculty were laid off. We apologize for the error.

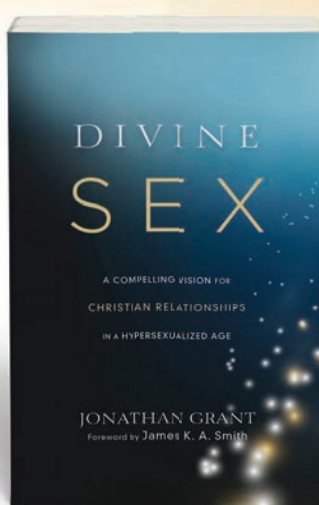
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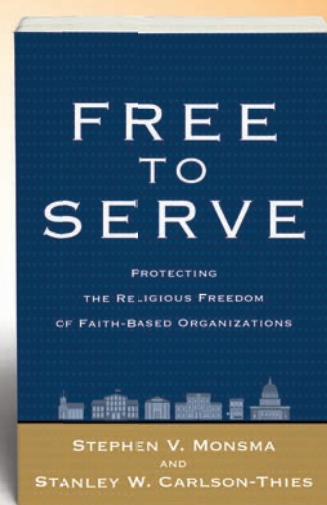
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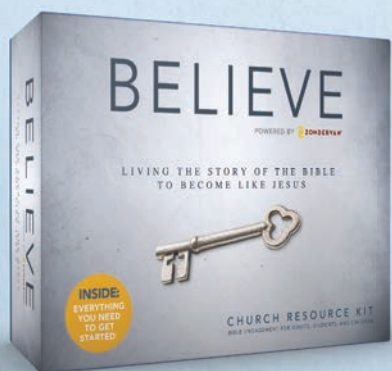
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# NEWS



WITNESS



## TENT OF GREETING

**FRANCE:** As migrants flee Africa and the Middle East in record numbers, those who survive crossing the Mediterranean Sea are welcomed by European Christians. In the port city of Calais, France, Christian charities and the local Assemblies of God have helped Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees build St. Michael's, a 500-member church. One refugee worker told World Watch Monitor, "They wanted a church before they even wanted a home."

PHOTO BY ROD STOTHARD / GETTY

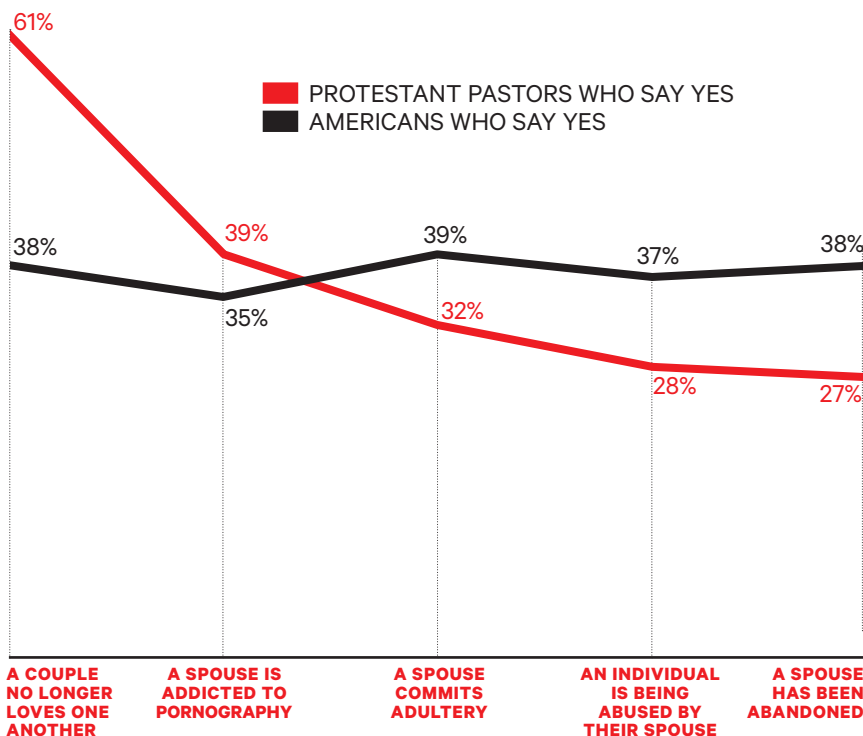


## GLEANINGS



## DIVORCE IS A SIN WHEN ...

Protestant senior pastors are more forgiving of divorce than most Americans in cases of adultery, abuse, and abandonment, according to LifeWay Research. However, Americans in general are about twice as likely as Protestant pastors to say divorce is never a sin (37% vs. 19%) in the below situations. The latest General Social Survey suggests 38 percent of weekly churchgoing evangelicals have been divorced.



## Baptist missionaries lose jobs

Two months after promoting plans to send out “limitless” numbers of missionaries, the International Mission Board (IMB) revealed it needs to cut 600–800 missionaries and staff in order to balance its budget. The Southern Baptist Convention agency, which overspent its revenue by \$210 million over the past six years, faces a \$21 million shortfall this

year. President David Platt said he didn’t want to question the decisions made by past IMB leaders, who used foreign property sales and cash reserves to help fund missionaries. And the IMB still expects to send 300 new missionaries in 2015. But Scott Moreau, editor of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, told *Christianity Today*, “This might be a step toward the demise of the centrally funded mission agency.”

## Family Christian sheds debt

After six months of wrangling in bankruptcy court, the largest US Christian retail chain will get a second shot at solvency. Family Christian Stores was able to shed \$127 million in debt during its sale to a related entity. The sale was approved 162 to 7 by its creditors, many of them Christian publishers and vendors hoping to keep the chain as an outlet for their products. (At least one publisher, Gospel Light Publishing, filed for bankruptcy in the wake of the deal, citing \$143,000 in lost income from Family Christian as a factor.) Suppliers will be paid cents on the dollar for products they shipped to the retailer, but “getting something is better than nothing,” said Mark D. Taylor, president of Tyndale House Publishers.

## Two universities leave CCCU over sexuality

Union University and Oklahoma Wesleyan University withdrew from the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) this summer. The schools said the umbrella association took too long to decide what to do about two other members—Eastern Mennonite University and Goshen College—that now allow faculty and staff to be in same-sex marriages. The CCCU consulted all the presidents of its North American member schools before a proposed September 21 conference call. The CCCU represents 35 denominations that differ on issues such as baptism, conception, and human origins. “Until very recently, there was not a divergence of opinion regarding hiring same-sex-married persons,” said CCCU president Shirley Hoogstra. “Now there is.”



## MYANMAR

## Acquire the Fire makes overseas debut

Ron Luce’s Teen Mania ministry picked Myanmar (Burma), a Southeast Asian country that regularly appears on lists of the hardest places for Christians to live, to host Acquire the Fire’s first overseas rally. The two-night conference in Yangon drew 13,000 people, a success that was important for Teen Mania, one of America’s most insolvent ministries. The Myanmar Evangelical Christian Fellowship invited Teen Mania because it is looking to stem secular values among Burmese youth, who are quickly embracing cell phones and Internet access.

PHOTO BY SHUTTERSTOCK



# People really do just recognize the Word of God.

**Moriah Daugherty**, a volunteer at BibleWalk. The Ohio museum includes celebrities among the 325 wax figures posed in 78 biblical scenes. Few of the attraction's 30,000 annual visitors notice Elvis Presley as Samson or Elizabeth Taylor as Pharaoh's daughter. *THE TELEGRAPH*



INDIA

## Christians happy that census shows few converts

Emboldened by the election of a Hindu nationalist last year, some Indian political groups have cracked down on non-Hindus, accusing Christians of forcible conversions. But the latest census data disproves that; it shows that Christianity grew more slowly than the overall population, and composes only a 2.3 percent share. Evangelism often doesn't cross cultural lines in India ["Babies Halt the Great Commission," CT Sept.]. However, Christianity is growing in underground communities, reports the Center for the Study of Global Christianity. It predicts Christians will grow to almost 7 percent of India's population by 2050.

## Workers protest biblical salary switch

In a modern-day rendition of the parable of the workers in the vineyard, top-paid employees took issue with the announcement by Dan Price—graduate of Seattle Pacific University and CEO of Seattle-based Gravity Payments—that the minimum wage for employees of his credit-card processor would be \$70,000. Two top employees quit in protest, and Price's brother and co-owner filed a lawsuit. However, other employees said they are replacing worn car tires and feeling secure enough to start a family. Price, who cut his own salary from \$1 million to \$70,000, told *The New York Times* that he was "committed to making my vision a business success."



ISRAEL

## Christian schools strike over funding cuts

Nearly 50 Christian schools in Israel stayed shut when the academic year began in September, protesting steep cuts in state funding that administrators allege are discriminatory. The Jewish state recently reduced its funding for the Christian schools, which teach about 33,000 mostly Arab students, from 45 percent to 29 percent of tuition. Meanwhile, it continues to fund 100 percent of tuition at Hasidic schools. Talks with the Ministry of Education, as well as a personal meeting with Israel's president, failed to reach a compromise. Christian administrators pledged, "We will not back off until we receive our full rights."

## Under Discussion

Compiled by Bob Smietana



## Q: Will the baker, the florist, the photographer, and the clerk win?

Conservative Christians have told judges that providing services for same-sex weddings violates their religious freedom. So far, courts in Colorado, Ohio, Oregon, and Kentucky have disagreed.

YES

NO

"We're absolutely on the right side of the law on these cases. We're probably going to see lower courts deciding different ways, but the Supreme Court has already twice found that First Amendment rights trump sexual orientation nondiscrimination laws."

**Jeremy Tedesco**, attorney, Alliance Defending Freedom

"Most of these cases involving Christian business owners have arisen on the West Coast and more liberal-leaning areas of the country. They have not fared well, but most are still in play. I hope that we will see better results in other geographical areas."

**Roger Gannam**, attorney, Liberty Counsel

"The best bet for these religious objectors is to seek accommodation in the political process. They're not likely to get a specific exemption in statewide law unless they bargain. In Utah, for example, laws protect LGBT individuals and religious objectors."

**Robin Fretwell Wilson**, professor, University of Illinois College of Law

"Exemptions for small vendors from providing personal services directly for a wedding when other vendors are available would protect providers' religious conscience without undermining access. Even so, courts thus far have been reluctant to recognize them."

**Thomas C. Berg**, professor, University of St. Thomas School of Law

"Society's compelling interest in preventing discrimination will likely trump religious freedom arguments, judging from how civil rights laws have been applied. This will likely be the case even in states with Religious Freedom Restoration Acts or strong free-exercise protections."

**Charles C. Haynes**, scholar, First Amendment Center, Newseum



## Ethics

# Burnt by the Offering

Should churches and ministries return stolen donations?

**W**ithin five years, a businessman tithed about \$300,000 to a Michigan megachurch. But after a grand jury indicted David McQueen in 2012 for running a \$46.5 million Ponzi scheme, the federal government asked Resurrection Life Church for the money back.

In February, the 8,000-member congregation in suburban Grand Rapids said no. “[We] had no knowledge of the source of the funds,” finance pastor Bernard Blauwkamp wrote to the US Attorneys Office. Regardless, the money—donated from 2005 to 2009—was spent, he said.

Cases like this arise every year, said attorney Bruce Van Heukelem. He defended a Christian camp in Wisconsin that, along with World Vision and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, argued against such repayments before a federal appeals court in 1995 and lost.

Given that precedent, ministries don’t have much of a choice but to reimburse the feds.

Receivers—those appointed by courts to collect the stolen funds—begin by asking for the money back. If the church or charity declines, the receiver can come back with a lawsuit.

Some states offer exemptions on so-called “clawbacks.” After Tom Petters’s \$3.7 billion Ponzi scheme was exposed in Minnesota, the state passed a 2012 law that put a two-year statute of limitations on donations—essentially exempting nonprofits from returning the money.

That didn’t stop a judge from ruling in June that the University of Northwestern in St. Paul had to return about \$5 million

it received from Petters’s partner. But the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities member school no longer has the money, having given the funds to charities.

If higher courts agree that Northwestern needs to repay the cash, the school will be forced to pursue litigation against the charities or ask students to write larger tuition checks.

“We would never have taken that money if we knew it was dishonest,” said Northwestern president Alan Cureton. “But we live in a fallen world.”

“It’s a moral question: Who should absorb the loss of this crook?” said Frank Sommerville, an attorney who counsels churches to prevent litigation. Churches and charities are generally better able to absorb a large financial loss than an individual, he said.

It’s difficult for churches to say, “We didn’t do anything wrong,” when they are holding somebody else’s rightful property, Van Heukelem said. “But in the practical world, it becomes difficult. What are charities supposed to do? They can’t possibly monitor the source of all donations.”

Resurrection Life’s lead pastor told his congregation in April that since McQueen’s dollars were spent, the church would set up a special fund for repayment.

Judges will rarely ask for the entire amount to be refunded, said Sommerville. “In my experience, they’re not here to put the church into bankruptcy.”

Giving back 100 percent of the stolen funds would be the ideal Christian response, said Van Heukelem. Asking donors for extra money, closing down programs, or taking out a second mortgage are all ways to pay back more, he said.

Paying it all back is great but not morally necessary, said Denver Seminary professor Craig Blomberg, who published a 2000 book on a “biblical theology of possessions.” “Herculean efforts that cause more problems for the church probably aren’t ethically mandated, once the law has been satisfied.”

Churches should return what is “possible” and “reasonable,” said National Association of Evangelicals president Leith Anderson. “The investor [in the Ponzi scheme] clearly is a victim. But the nonprofit or church has also been victimized. There are multiple victims; therefore, accountability and responsibility should be shared.”

The moral questions get trickier once the law steps out. A faithful donor who loses his job and asks for his donation back should probably get it, said Sommerville. So should a donor whose spouse gave property without permission.

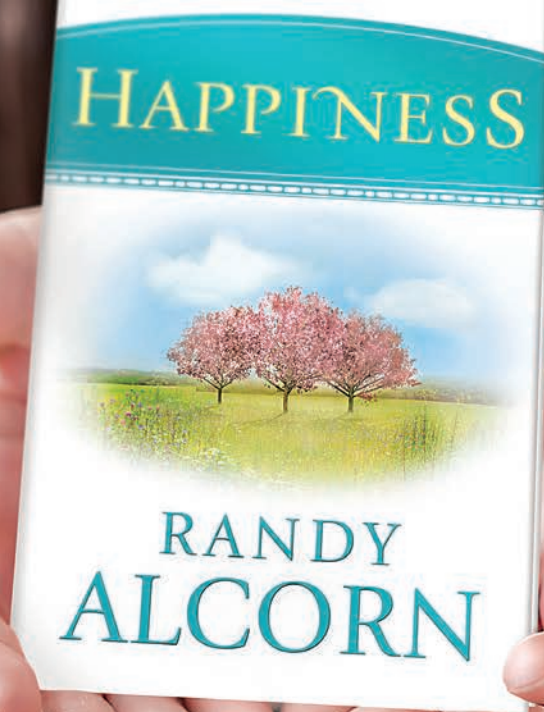
Personal hardship might merit a repayment, in order to “value the relationship,” he said. But other reasons—such as anger with the pastor—would not.

“The church shouldn’t knee-jerk give money back just because somebody asks for it,” said Sommerville. “That’s why they need counsel, so they can measure the risks and make a decision.”

Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra



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Special Report

# Richard Stearns: Don't Forget South Sudan

World Vision's president acknowledges US evangelicals aren't excited to support the world's most fragile state. But its own Christians are providing signs of hope. By Jeremy Weber in Juba, South Sudan





PHOTOS BY JON WARREN / COURTESY OF WORLD VISION • JEREMY WEBER

**S**outh Sudan is the kind of place where a sermon anecdote about gunfire draws hearty laughter. The sound of a firearm is such an everyday occurrence that South Sudanese only question whether it came from a pistol, an AK-47, or an M-16. “Many people right now are praying, ‘Thank you God for not making me South Sudanese,’” says the pastor.

Listening near the back of the sanctuary in Juba is Richard Stearns, the president of World Vision. He is visiting the world’s newest and most fragile state in his quest to revive the compassion American Christians had for Sudan years ago. The South gained independence from the Muslim-dominated North in 2011 with the solid backing of evangelicals. But two years later, a political power struggle engulfed the Christian-majority nation in bloody conflict.

“It’s a hard sales pitch,” he told *Christianity Today* as he stood among 50 mothers with malnourished children at a clinic. He said South Sudan is a perfect example of how enormously difficult it is to fulfill both the Great Commission and Great Commandment amid chronic conflict and violence.

CT joined Stearns as he toured World Vision projects in South Sudan to gather evidence to make his case. His appeal—for US churches to focus their aid on where poverty is worst, not where it is almost gone—is counterintuitive. But perhaps the best argument for it are the successes South Sudanese Christians are already achieving, far from the war- and poverty-focused eyes of the international media.

## AFRICA'S BROKEN BREADBASKET

The view flying into Juba is peaceful. Many metal rooftops are painted welcoming shades of blue, red, and green—the national colors. But once the plane lands, it's clear not all is well. Parked near the terminal are cargo aircraft bearing logos of several well-known relief and crisis intervention groups, including the United Nations World Food Programme and the International Red Cross.

South Sudan is now considered the world's No. 1 “fragile state,” according to World Vision's own algorithm of 50 variables of human suffering. Half of South Sudanese children are malnourished. A 15-year-old girl is more likely to die while giving birth than to finish school.

The landlocked nation slightly smaller than Texas has long been one of the UN's most expensive missions (\$1 billion per year). Its rainy season renders roads impassable and requires all aid to be delivered by plane. It's now also one of the most unstable, after a rift between the president and vice president in 2013 led to armed conflict along ethnic lines.

The problems are easy to see. But what's difficult is raising direct aid from Christians. Only a sliver of World Vision's \$64 million emergency-response budget in South Sudan comes from private donors. It is much harder to raise relief money for manmade disasters (wars, riots, or civil conflict) than for natural disasters, explains Stearns. Donors have more empathy after crises that could happen to them than after crises that are someone's fault.

The numbers betray the empathy gap. After Haiti's earthquake, World Vision raised \$68 million in 6 weeks. After Nepal's earthquake, the ministry raised \$8 million in 2 weeks. After 4 years of civil war in Syria, World Vision has raised only \$2.7 million. After 4 years of independence in South Sudan, it has raised only \$1.4 million.

US evangelicals are widely credited with motivating George W. Bush's administration to help secure the historic peace agreement that led to South Sudan's 2011 independence. Four years later, those evangelicals are largely absent.

“When the conflict was an Arab Muslim North versus an African Christian South, that framing resonated with many churches,” said Perry Mansfield, World Vision's South Sudan country director. “Now we are looking at armed conflict

between Christians. It doesn't resonate as well.”

Now Stearns is trying to get evangelicals talking about fragile states in terms of where “the most vulnerable children” live. He likens it to the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa. Christians showed little interest until the fight was rebranded from a “gay disease” or a “just punishment” for sexual sin to a leading creator of widows and orphans.

“That broke the heart of the American church, and they rushed to the frontlines,” said Stearns. “What we learned on AIDS is language is everything. We are trying to do a similar thing today.”

He admits that *fragile states* can be a confusing term and off-putting for Christian leaders. As one pastor told him, “That sounds like a job for John Kerry, not for me.” So Stearns is mulling a rephrasing: “Join us in the margins, where the poorest of the poor live.”

### STEARNS TAKES A TOUR

Entering the UN headquarters on the edge of Juba, Stearns drives past diplomats' dorms, barracks full of Chinese soldiers, and duplexes with screened porches before reaching the compound's far side.

Ahead of him are two sets of gates, barb-wired and guarded. Below him lies the UN's second-largest POC (“protection of civilians” site), a dense array

of refugee tents made out of tree trunks, tarp walls, and corrugated metal roofs. The dwellings are half the size of a typical American garage. Showers and toilets are communal. Small stores and a few gardens line the roads.

Along with UN soldiers from Nepal, Stearns observes Day 3 of World Vision's 4-day food distribution, where 21,000 people will receive a one-month ration of sorghum, beans, salt, and oil. Last summer, this POC had 5,000 residents. Now it has 29,000.

The next day, Stearns examines the development side of World Vision's work. In Tambura, he visits a beekeeping cooperative whose one-room processing plant boasts honeycomb-shaped window grates. Along one wall are the iconic yellow jugs made famous by Charity:Water, here used to store honey instead of well water. Driving through the village, where families build domed tombs alongside the dirt road, Stearns next visits a pineapple cooperative where 300 farmers have joined together to market their harvest.

The following day, Stearns visits the relief side of World Vision's work. In Kua-jok, where many of the mud huts have tall thatch peaks topped with crosses or cow figurines, he tours the state hospital. Seven feet tall, the head doctor towers over Stearns (as do many South Sudanese). The doctor explains how 100 patients come each day—mostly for diarrhea in the dry



Stearns (left) gives a TV interview near a successful pineapple co-op in rural South Sudan. Many think the country could become the ‘breadbasket of Africa’ if peace came.

# *'South Sudan is a perfect example of the trends of the future of poverty.'* **RICH STEARNS**

season and for malaria in the rainy season. On a happier note, Stearns is invited to the operating theater to see a mother who has just given birth to twins via cesarean section. A wedding parade passes by, escorting the bride over to the groom's house accompanied by drummers and several languid cows.

## **OVERFLOWING CHURCHES**

Back in Juba, the scene is quite different. The capital is urbanizing fast, explains a pastor in a rickshaw caught up in a new phenomenon: rush hour.

Most churches in South Sudan are now overflowing, thanks to the approximately 700,000 refugees who have

returned from Khartoum or East Africa since 2011 independence. But that's not as good as it sounds.

"All are Christians, but culturally they are very different," said Samuel Galuak Marial, principal of the Bishop Gwynne College in Juba. Former Northerners are now Arabic in culture and bolder in practicing their faith than Southerners, while former East Africans are now more educated and affluent than most Southerners. These differences can threaten Southern Christians, he said.

Freedom has actually fragmented South Sudanese Christians, multiple church leaders told CT. "The church was stronger before the peace agreement, because we had to depend on faith to

meet our needs under Arab pressure," said George Taban Tawad, the Lausanne Movement's representative in South Sudan. "Now that we have all this freedom, many influences have come and people are getting lost."

The first influence is tribalism. South Sudan has about 60 ethnic groups, with the two largest—the Dinka and Nuer—composing only half the population. "In the North, we didn't differentiate ourselves by tribes, because we were Christians against Muslims," said Taban. "But everything here is based on tribe: jobs, social activities, even churches."

Second, many ministries have arrived from Uganda, Kenya, and other countries, introducing new ideas, including prosperity gospel teachings. "Evangelical churches are guarding against the bad practices that have come," said Arkanjelo Wani Lemi, leader of the Evangelical Alliance in South Sudan (EASS). "There is a clash of incoming cultures—some beneficial, some not."

The upside of the population influx: Northern pastors are rejuvenating Christianity in South Sudan, multiple leaders



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told CT. Many Christians who returned from Khartoum are highly committed to their faith, having lived under constant challenge from Islam. By contrast, many Christians who returned from East Africa are more nominal after living in more peaceful Christian-majority countries.

“To live as a Christian in the North was not easy,” said Joseph Noel Sati, general secretary of FOCUS, the South Sudanese affiliate of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. “You were discriminated against and always bombarded with questions that pushed you to read your Bible or else you became a Muslim,” he said. “That context teaches Christians to be bold, to do things now, instead of waiting until things are good.”

Almost every Christian leader CT interviewed named the same thing—leadership training—as their church’s and nation’s greatest need. Marial cited the biblical example of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar in Mark 10 who beseeches Jesus outside Jericho. “He did not ask Jesus for money. He asked for sight.

“At the moment we have a quantity church. What we need is a quality church,” said Marial. “We have to ignore our differences and emphasize our identity is not our culture; it is the mind of Christ. Those who left have more education, but they lost touch. Those who stayed know the context ministry needs to be done in. We need one another to be complete.”

## STARTING WITH STUDENTS

If South Sudan’s biggest need is trained Christian leadership, the starting point is its youth. About 6 in 10 South Sudanese are under 18.

This illustrates the strategic position of FOCUS, which had 10,000 students pass through its ranks during its two decades in Khartoum. Now, Noel says, the ministry is rebooting at South Sudan’s 10 public and private universities.

At the entrance to Juba University, a tall sculpture surrounded by orange flowers with long stamens bears the school’s



Mayak Andrew returned to college after spending one year in a UN camp for safety, because his forehead scars mark him as a Nuer tribe member.

motto: “relevance and excellence.” Near the library gather the student leaders of FOCUS’s Bible study, which draws 20 to 100 students every Friday afternoon.

Three students agreed to meet with CT. Samson is Pentecostal, Victoria is Anglican, and Sylvia is Catholic. All are sophomores. And like college students anywhere, their cell phones keep going off as they talk. But they also speak fluent Arabic because they belong to the first generation of students who returned from Khartoum. And all are thinking about how “God-fearing leaders” can help South Sudan.

They discuss the many foreign ministries now operating in their new nation. “So many churches are coming now, sometimes you get confused which teachings are good,” said Victoria, an animal production major. White butterflies flit between her and four cows grazing next to the basketball court.

“People shallowly believe in Christianity, but they are not rooted in the Word,” said Samson, an industrial chemistry major. “People don’t know what direction to turn.”

“The biggest problem is that we love our tribe more than Christianity,” said Sylvia, also an animal production major.

“If we can love each other, we can do the best for our country.” The student leaders hail from three different tribes. “See, we can unite.”

## OFFERING (NOT SEEKING) REFUGE

Most Americans have heard of the hundreds of thousands of displaced people living in UN refugee camps in South Sudan. What they haven’t heard is that South Sudanese Christians actually run 2 of the 26 camps. The success of the camps is more evidence that South Sudanese can work together despite ethnic tensions.

ACROSS, an indigenous Christian nonprofit with 260 employees, runs a camp near Juba for 2,300 Ethiopians who fled a 2003 conflict, as well as a camp near Yei (one of the nation’s largest cities) for 8,300 Congolese who fled the Lord’s Resistance Army.

“It is biblical to look after aliens,” said executive director Elisama Wani Daniel. “When foreigners come into your home, the Bible says to take care of them. It is our Christian duty.”

Gorom, the Ethiopian camp, sits right where the paved road ends on the way from Juba to Yei. On the horizon sits South Sudan’s main military barracks—a mixed blessing, offering protection when soldiers are sober, and trouble when they are not.

In one of the camp’s two churches, 11 men and 8 women (5 of whom are nursing children) gather to meet Daniel for the first time. Nearby, children rehearse a dance for an upcoming Juba parade celebrating World Refugee Day.

“Being here is not our will,” said Margaret Ariet, a church leader whose green-striped sleeves emerge from beneath a tiger-print shawl. “But we worship God when we have problems and when we don’t. If there are no tests, you cannot be a good prayer.”

When they fled Ethiopia, the church’s 400 attendees came from different denominations. Yet when they reached Juba, they agreed to form a new denomination: Gambella Refugee Evangelical Church, or GREC, which they pronounce like the word

*'Many people see the gun as their savior; they don't know there is something better than the gun: Jesus.'* **MWAKA DAVID JOHN**

grace. They hope to replant it in Ethiopia. "And when God releases us from here and takes us back to our land," said Ariet, "we will still pray for South Sudan."

#### SECLUDED SUCCESS STORY

The dirt road that continues past Gorom eventually leads to South Sudan's biggest evangelical success story: Emmanuel Christian College (ECC).

The nation's only interdenominational college, ECC was built in a lush, remote corner of South Sudan years before

peace came in 2005. It trains hundreds of pastors and public school teachers from all ten states and the neighboring Nuba Mountains.

While driving from Juba to Yei to ECC, the number of *tukuls* (cone-shaped mud huts) in each family compound increases, as do the size of the subsistence fields of maize and other crops. An ECC driver explains that this land could be "the breadbasket of the world." Even the termites seem to be thriving, as their red mounds approach six feet tall.

*Idyllic* is not too strong a word to

describe the ECC campus. Children play on neatly mown lawns under an expansive cloud-studded African sky. Pigs and chickens graze freely, evidence of the college's own food production.

One of ECC's biggest achievements: getting its 350 students from different tribes and religions to accept one another, even the Dinka and Nuer, whose tribes are currently fighting.

Walking the campus under a full moon as thunder suggests the rainy season may finally begin, the student body president, Kafi Abdelkheir Kafi, explains how students are intentionally intermixed for housing, classes, meals, and activities. Tribes separate out for only one purpose: to pray for their home states.

"Christianity binds us together as brother and sister," says the 31-year-old Muslim convert from the Nuba Mountains. "Otherwise I could not have been president here, because there is only one of my tribe. I see this as a sign of God."

Tribes are distinguished by names, but also different patterns of facial scars. This

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# *'Do not abandon us now that we are fighting ourselves.'* **ARKANJELO WANI LEMI**

prevented Mayak Andrew from graduating last year. When fighting broke out in Juba, Nuer were targeted by Dinkas. So the 32-year-old student from Unity State fled to the POC at the UN, where he lived for one year.

"My wife and children are still in the POC," he said. "But it was important to come back and finish my diploma. I can help my family and my country.

"When I travel, I fear something could happen to me," said Andrew, pointing to the six parallel scar lines that span his forehead. "But here I feel at home. I don't fear anything. They are training us to unite South Sudan. I have to teach children not to accept tribal division."

"After decades of conflict, the South Sudanese heart is full of war," said Mwaka David John, a 29-year-old student from Eastern Equatoria who spent high school in a Ugandan refugee camp. "Many people see the gun as their savior; they don't know there is something better than the gun: Jesus."

He is grateful ECC has given him a nationwide network of new "brothers." "We can spread the Word of God into every state," he said. "What we are getting here, we will not keep for ourselves."

## **MESSAGE FOR AMERICA**

On his last day in South Sudan, Stearns attends the Trinity Sunday service of All Saints Anglican Church in Juba. The sermon title—"Unity in Purpose"—is appropriate, given this is essentially Stearns's own mantra.

"My dream is that we Christians would

astound the world by expressing our faith in action," said Stearns. "Let's show people the Jesus whom everybody loves."

All Saints' priest concludes the service by having everyone, including Stearns, turn to their neighbor, grasp their left hand, then their right, look into their

patient in the gospel with us, working together for peace.

"Listen to us when we say: Even with this situation, there is hope," he continued. "All is not lost. The good work done, the support you have given us, has yielded good fruit. We are hopeful that the God who has brought us this far has not gone on holiday."

Christian leaders have not been waiting in vain. The EASS recently relocated from Yei to Juba in a bid for more influence. This summer, hundreds of people from 10 denominations gathered in Juba for prayer and fasting. On August 26, South Sudan President Salva Kiir signed a new power-sharing agreement that may bring an end to violence.



Members of Gambella Refugee Evangelical Church, who live in a UN refugee camp run by a South Sudanese Christian ministry, hope to plant their church in Ethiopia if they ever return.

eyes, and pledge, "I promise to be in fellowship with you."

Overall, church leaders in South Sudan welcome the ongoing support of US churches. Most asked CT to tell American evangelicals to stay engaged and not worry about the complexity of South Sudan's problems or fears about heavy-handed neocolonialism.

"Do not abandon us now that we are fighting ourselves," said EASS leader Lemi. "Forty percent of South Sudan may be cancerous, but 60 percent is okay. Remain

"The future will be hopeful if the church is committed to the teaching of Scripture and to discipleship," said Taban. "The hope of this country lies in the church. Our tribe is now the tribe of Judah."

"The Great Commission is not tomorrow, it is today," said Marial. "The church cannot wait for things to get better. The church is what will make things better."

**CT**

**JEREMY WEBER** is CT associate editor, news.

PHOTO BY JEREMY WEBER



# “OUR EMPLOYEES ABSOLUTELY DESERVE FINANCIAL BENEFITS. *I wish we could afford them.*”

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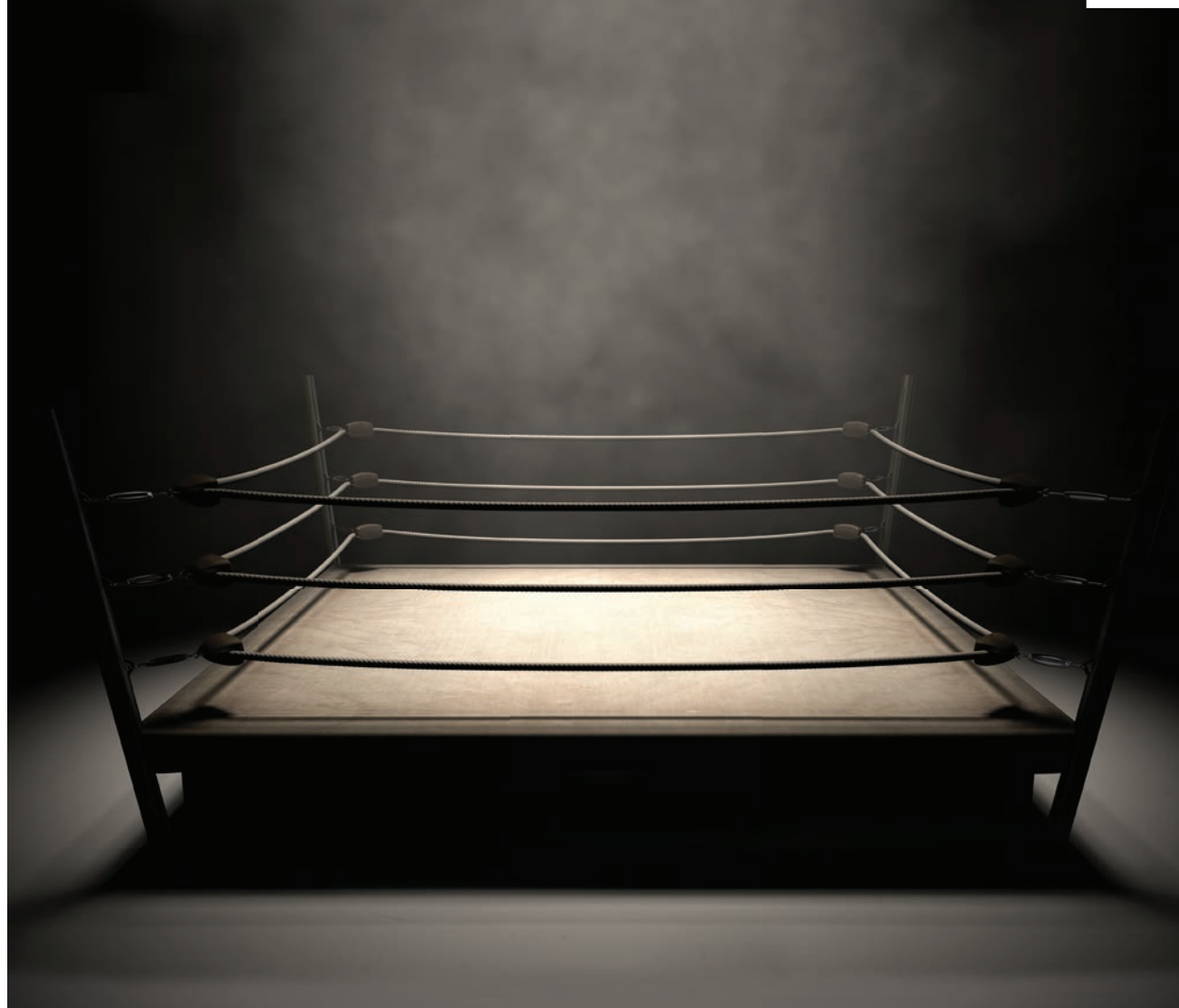
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# VIEWS



WHERE WE STAND

## THE NEW BATTLE FOR THE BIBLE

It's time to return to Scripture as our final authority.





**WHEN IT COMES TO DECIDING** how to follow Jesus Christ in our time, the Bible often takes a backseat even for evangelicals, who have long held a high view of Scripture.

Sometimes the desire to preserve relationships at all costs prompts us to ignore scriptural teachings. Other times, we have an ill-defined feeling of how the Lord is “leading” us, never mind that the leading contradicts scriptural teaching.

And when we do pull out the Bible, we are tempted to focus on one biblical theme to the exclusion of others, or treat it like a self-help book. We scour it only for verses that will bolster our sagging spirits or help us to love our spouse better.

This is not a new insight, but it is especially pertinent in light of this issue’s cover story, as the Bible is at the heart of evangelical theology and ethos.

Decades ago, Harold Lindsell, then editor in chief of this magazine, called for a “battle for the Bible.” He took to task evangelical institutions whose definition of biblical authority was, in his view, inadequate. His book of that title was divisive and unhelpful. Yet his basic concern cannot be faulted. Today we need a new battle for the Bible—not for a precise definition of biblical authority that all evangelicals can agree on, but a simple return to the Bible as the final authority in matters of faith and practice—and especially Christian doctrine.

### GOING DEEPER THAN NICAEA

As Justin Holcomb notes in our cover story (p. 38), the Nicene Creed is a significant standard that helps us determine whether a teaching is orthodox or not. But as he notes, it’s not merely important because it won a majority of votes back in A.D. 325.

Quite the reverse: The Nicene Creed has won the day, century after century, because it is the best summary of the biblical teaching on the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the major theme of the creed.

Yet as helpful as consensus is, it is not sufficient. Evangelicals in particular recognize that the larger community can be wrong for a long time.

Take the Nicene controversy. Even though the orthodox party won at the council, the Arian party had more political clout overall, so its views continued to spread. As the political battle raged, the champion of Nicene orthodoxy, Athanasius, was expelled from his bishopric in Alexandria on five occasions. Athanasius fought *contra mundum*, “against the world” and the current consensus. When he died in exile, it appeared he had lost; the Arian party had firm control of much of the empire. In the ensuing decades, Arianism only spread, in part because some of the church’s earliest and most successful missionaries—like Ulphilas, who evangelized the Goths—were Arians!

Today, however, Arianism can be found only in small

## Consensus, as important as it is at times, cannot be the final rule of faith and practice for evangelicals. The Bible is.

sects like the Jehovah’s Witnesses. What happened? The church slowly and surely recognized that Arianism was not the best way to integrate the Bible’s many teachings about the person and work of Christ. Nicene orthodoxy was. The history is complicated, involving politics, war, and sometimes nasty behavior by orthodox Christians. But theologically speaking, this is what happened: The church recognized the *biblical* truth of the Nicene Creed.

Consensus, as important as it is at times, cannot be the final rule of faith and practice, certainly not for evangelicals. The Bible is. Evangelicals recall that at times it is only a remnant who remain faithful to God (Rom. 11:1–5). It is crucial, despite a consensus to the contrary, that we remain faithful to what we believe God has revealed in his Word.

Fidelity to the Bible has long been an essential part of evangelical identity. More specifically, we are inclined to take the Bible literally. We believe it crucial to adhere to the plain meaning of the text unless overwhelming evidence suggests otherwise. We have heard, for example, the theological arguments that conclude that Jesus rose from the grave only in spirit, in the hearts of the disciples. But the textual and historical evidence supports our conviction that Jesus really did, literally, rise *bodily*!

Further, we are reluctant to declare an obscure passage or hard teaching outdated. If the passage seems to contradict other biblical teachings, we will work to come to a deeper understanding. And if we cannot immediately discern that, we are willing to live with the tension, and trust God through the Holy Spirit to reveal that to us in his time.

We believe that the Bible has the very fingerprints of God all over it, and we describe it as inerrant or infallible especially in all matters of faith and practice. We argue with one another about what exactly terms like *inerrancy* mean, and how to rightly read certain passages given their genre. But underneath those arguments is our strong bias to grasp and apply the plain meaning of the text.

Unfortunately, we have to deal with many false

teachings today. Each misreads the Bible in crucial ways.

### PARSING ORTHODOXY TODAY

Some currently teach that “You shall not murder” does not apply to human life in the womb. Others that true faith leads to physical health and financial prosperity. But perhaps no false teaching is more confusing or divisive than that the church should bless same-sex relationships. It’s a good example of the doctrinal challenge before us.

Some scholars and popular writers have tried to make a biblical case for this teaching. But they are grasping at straws. As Richard Hays, former Duke Divinity professor who wrote the now-classic *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, puts it, the biblical passages that deal with this issue “are unambiguously and unremittingly negative in their judgment.” In a 2010 study commissioned by the Episcopal Church, even revisionists acknowledged that same-sex marriage “exceed[s] the marriage practices assumed by Scripture,” justifying the new ethic because it “comports with the mission of God celebrated by the Spirit in the body of Christ.” Or, as those revisionists put it elsewhere, “The Holy Spirit is doing a new thing.”

Naturally, we remain unconvinced that the Holy Spirit would reverse course from a divinely inspired biblical teaching.

Whatever serious false teaching we are facing, the Bible is uncomfortably clear: When false teachers persist in their views, they will be subject to divine judgment (see especially 2 Peter). For the sake of these false teachers (that they might avoid God’s judgment) and church health (that we might flourish in God), we believe we need a shift in how we teach the Bible. In short, we need to spend more time teaching the Bible as first and foremost the revelation of God.

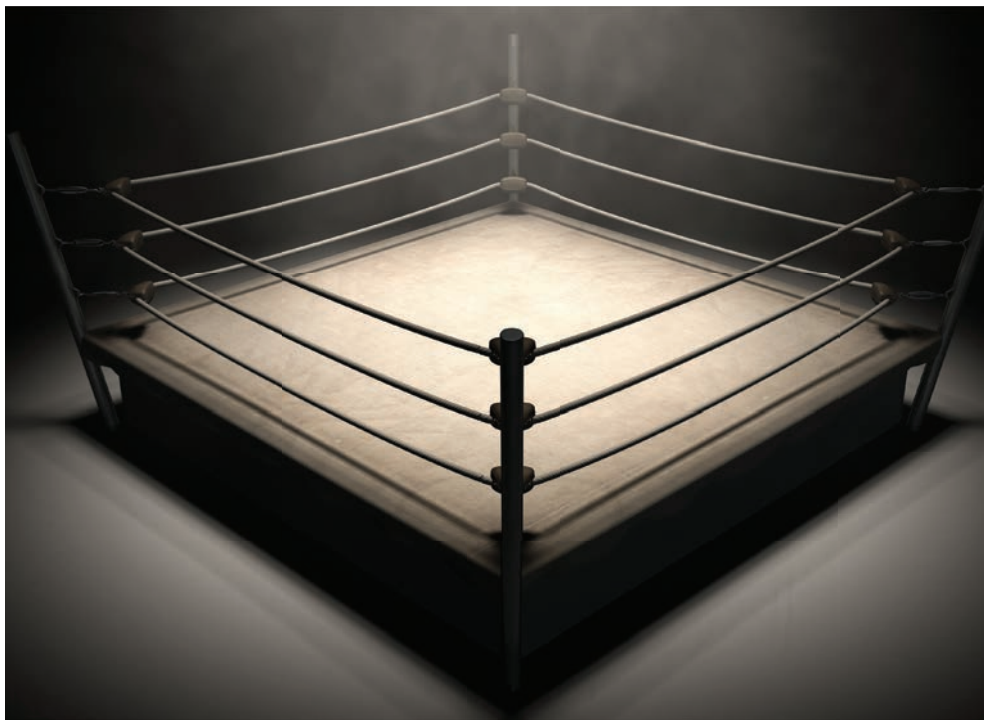
We understand the temptation to talk about the Bible mostly in terms of “what it means to me” and its “practical application to daily life.” But when this hermeneutic *dominates*—as it does today—Christianity becomes little more than self-help therapy. And it leaves people ignorant of Scripture’s deeper meaning, and therefore unable to spot false teaching.

The Bible is the Word of God primarily because it reveals the nature of God—who God is and what he has done for us. And that in turn shows us what it means to be those created in his image. Yes, it

includes practical teaching for daily living. But most biblical ethical teachings reflect God’s general revelation and so can be found in many philosophies and religions (e.g., “treat others as you would have them treat you”). The Bible’s unique message, its special revelation, is the revelation of the God who has brought us salvation in Jesus Christ.

Pastors, teachers, and small-group leaders would be wise to spend more energy showing how the Bible is the source of the great church doctrines—which are so often about God and his saving work. It’s time for our main pedagogical question to be not, “What difference does this make?” but, “What does this tell us about our good God?” To help churches answer that question, CT recently joined Zondervan Publishing, HarperCollins, to produce the *NIV Understand the Faith Study Bible*. This is but one of many resources that makes these crucial connections.

To emphasize theology will entail a battle, as any pastor will sense. It will be a battle against those who have fed too long on the milk of therapeutic Christianity, and who will



demand immediate application. It will be a battle against false teachers, who will react defensively. It will be a battle against our own sloth, as this type of teaching requires more intellectual labor than “10 ways to improve your marriage.”

But it is a battle well worth fighting. It will no doubt create scars, but God will also give us many a victory. Some false teachers may be saved from their pernicious ideas, and the church will have an ever-clearer picture of the beautiful God whose nature it is to save the world.

Which, really, is about the most practical thing we can offer it.

**CT**

MARK GALLI is editor of *Christianity Today*.



## The Army Out in Front

Since its sex trafficking fight 150 years ago, one group has taught us how to pursue justice and evangelism—at once.

**I**n the late 1990s, evangelicals began to wake up to the breadth and brutality of sex trafficking. But one group was way ahead of everyone else.

The Salvation Army has a history of fighting sex trafficking that stretches back to 1881. That's when Elizabeth Cottrill of the Army's Whitehall Corps began taking women and girls who had escaped sexual slavery into her home. When demand overwhelmed capacity, the Army rented a house and put Florence Booth, wife of the Salvation Army founders' eldest son, in charge. Over the next 30 years, she expanded the specialized ministry to 117 shelters.

In 1884, a girl who had escaped a brothel by climbing down a rainspout visited Florence's husband, Bramwell, in his office. Her story compelled him to look into London's East End sex trade. "The cries of outraged children," he wrote, "and the smothered sobs of those imprisoned in living tombs were continually in my ears."

Bramwell concluded that public sentiment must be aroused and laws must be changed. He approached his journalist friend W. T. Stead. Like most Brits, Stead needed proof that such evils occurred in England. So in league with Bramwell and several activists, Stead laid out a plan to purchase a young girl from her family, have her certified a virgin, then sell her to a brothel. From there she would be rescued immediately and sent to safety.

The scheme gave Stead the evidence he needed for a 10-article exposé in *The Pall Mall Gazette*. For months, the public talked of little else. Catherine Booth, Bramwell's mother, engineered a "monster petition" of 393,000 signatures on a scroll that

stretched two miles. The petition asked Parliament to raise the age of consent from 13 to 18 and demanded criminal penalties for procuring young people "for seduction or immoral purposes." Parliament raised the age of consent to 16, and the Army prepared housing for thousands of girls who suddenly found themselves on the streets.

Some government officials, however, not wanting to admit that sex trafficking was a problem, prosecuted the co-conspirators. A judge convicted some of them of one technicality: when Stead's agents purchased the girl from her mother, they did not obtain her father's consent. As a result of these events, the Salvation Army entered a new phase in which social ministry stood alongside and supported evangelism.

Over the past 130 years, the Army has done a remarkable job of holding individual salvation and social salvation in balance. In 2013 in the United States, they provided 58 million meals and 10 million nights of shelter; that same year, they recorded 455,000 faith commitments.

To celebrate its 150th anniversary this year, the Army is rolling out a major social initiative aiming to lift 100,000 families out of poverty over the next

15 years. Called Pathway of Hope, this innovative program will target qualified families that show the necessary "strengths and aptitudes" to benefit from in-depth support from Army caseworkers. The Army began to pilot programs in three Midwestern communities in late 2011. Early results show that 50 percent of the families who stayed in the program "demonstrated increased stability and sufficiency."

The US wing of the Army has the necessary reach to attempt a project of that scale. "Across the country, we have about 3,500 active officers, 60,000 employees, and 3.5 million volunteers," National Commander David Jeffrey told me. "We're in over 7,000 communities." In addition, the Army is collaborating with social work departments at colleges like Asbury, Trevecca Nazarene, and Olivet Nazarene.

But to identify and serve these families on the path to self-sufficiency, Jeffrey estimates, the Army will need to hire up to 700 more caseworkers. It will require an additional \$200 million to ensure that the program can retain its faith-based nature and stay free of government restrictions.

Faith commitments make a difference, Jeffrey says. For example, in their adult rehabilitation programs, about 33 percent of those who complete the program do not reoffend within the first year. But when graduates become involved in a faith community, about 80 percent stay on the straight and narrow.

The Salvation Army's history makes it clear: Evangelism and social uplift belong together.

CT

**In 2013, the Army provided 58 million meals and recorded 455,000 faith commitments.**

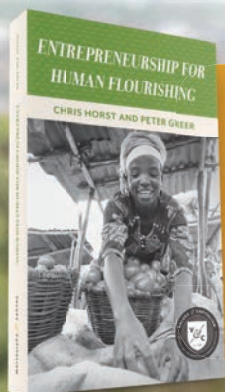
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## One Flesh, Two Callings

How I found my own purpose amid my husband's 'shiny' one.

**A**fter suffering a panic attack in a Shenzhen municipal office, I began to ask God why he had brought me to China at all.

My husband and I had moved overseas believing we were called to work on his startup. I left a job and friends I loved to support his dream of providing solar products for the developing world. I convinced myself that it was my dream, too.

But less than a year later, our attempts to forge a shared vocational path broke down. The nonstop work of entrepreneurship, coupled with navigating my Chinese American identity in a surprisingly foreign culture, pushed me into a debilitating depression. Without community, career, or the emotional health to pursue either, I no longer had a sense of purpose. And I blamed my husband's clarion call from God that had led us there.

In the end, we had to confront a question that many couples ask: God has called us together in marriage, but what callings does he have for *each* of us? How do we balance—and support—our distinct gifts and purposes?

In marriage, husband and wife offer themselves in mutual submission and sacrificial love. But one flesh doesn't necessarily mean one calling. Instead, "each person is given something to do that shows who God is" (1 Cor. 12:7, MSG).

How we live out our "something to do" amid marriage and family can be trying when one spouse's calling—whether in the home, the office, or the church—is all-consuming and requires significant sacrifice from the other.

It seemed like my husband and I had

to take turns living with divine purpose. As long as we were in China, I suffered while my husband thrived. If we returned to the States, he would leave a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity so I could return to the nonprofit work and people I loved.

Too many marriages—to entrepreneurs, pastors, missionaries, executives, advocates, and other passionate professionals—buckle under this imbalance. It can lead to dissatisfaction, resentment, and infidelity. And it has consequences for our faith. Both men and women are unsettled when they lose sight of God-given purpose while watching another go after theirs. The desire to find that purpose can be overwhelming.

Theologian William Placher wrote:

If the God who has made us has figured out something we are supposed to do—something that fits how we were made, so that doing it will enable us to glorify God, serve others, and be most richly ourselves—then life stops seeming so empty: my story has meaning as part of a larger story ultimately shaped by God.

We all share an innate desire to join our story to that larger story. The desire doesn't go away in marriage. During my

**It seemed like my husband and I had to take turns living with divine purpose.**

dark season, I learned that God does not ask us to choose between supporting our spouse and pursuing our own calling. He desires to give us both. And, in his infinite creativity, he can.

There may be periods when couples prioritize one spouse's vocation over the other's. But in those seasons, we can trust that God is still gifting both husband and wife with purpose—if not at that moment, then in his perfect timing. Today we remember Elisabeth Elliot as a missionary, speaker, and author, callings that crystallized after the death of her husband in the mission field. His commitment to live out God's purpose, despite ending in tragedy, ended up shaping her own life's work. And as her husband pastors a church and pioneers charitable outreach in Austin, Jen Hatmaker has found a dynamic calling writing and teaching the Bible across the country.

God's purposes for me were not to be achieved in my husband's calling, or separate from it, but *through* it. God absolutely meant for me to be in China—for my own sake. As I left behind what was familiar, he cleared out clutter in my life; as I desperately sought purpose, he opened the door to writing, a vocation I hadn't had the courage to pursue.

Even when one spouse seems to have the "shinier" vocation, the other is never sidelined. Each of us has a role in God's story, and discovering that role can enrich our marriages as well. We can bring more vibrant versions of ourselves to the relationship—creating more chances to learn from our uniquely created spouses, and to praise the God in whose image they are wonderfully made.

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Do you believe in God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen?

**YES NO**



Do you believe the founding of the state of Israel is foretold in Scripture?

**YES NO**

## THE TRUTH ABOUT

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God; begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father?

**YES NO**



Do you believe Christians can hear God speaking in dreams?

**YES NO**

Do you believe that for us and our salvation,  
he came down from heaven, by the power of  
the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the  
Virgin Mary, and was made man?

**YES NO**



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TEACHING DESERVES

THE LABEL. WHY WE

ARE WISE TO KNOW

THE DIFFERENCE.

BY JUSTIN S. HOLCOMB



A group of bloggers seeking reform in Southern Baptist circles recently decried pastor Rick Warren for teaching that God communicates to believers via dreams. The bloggers named Warren and other speakers at a 2015 Hillsong conference “heretical preachers that claim extra-biblical revelation from God.” To be sure, the nature of God’s revelation has been debated throughout church history, and overemphasis on dream interpretation can be theologically dangerous.

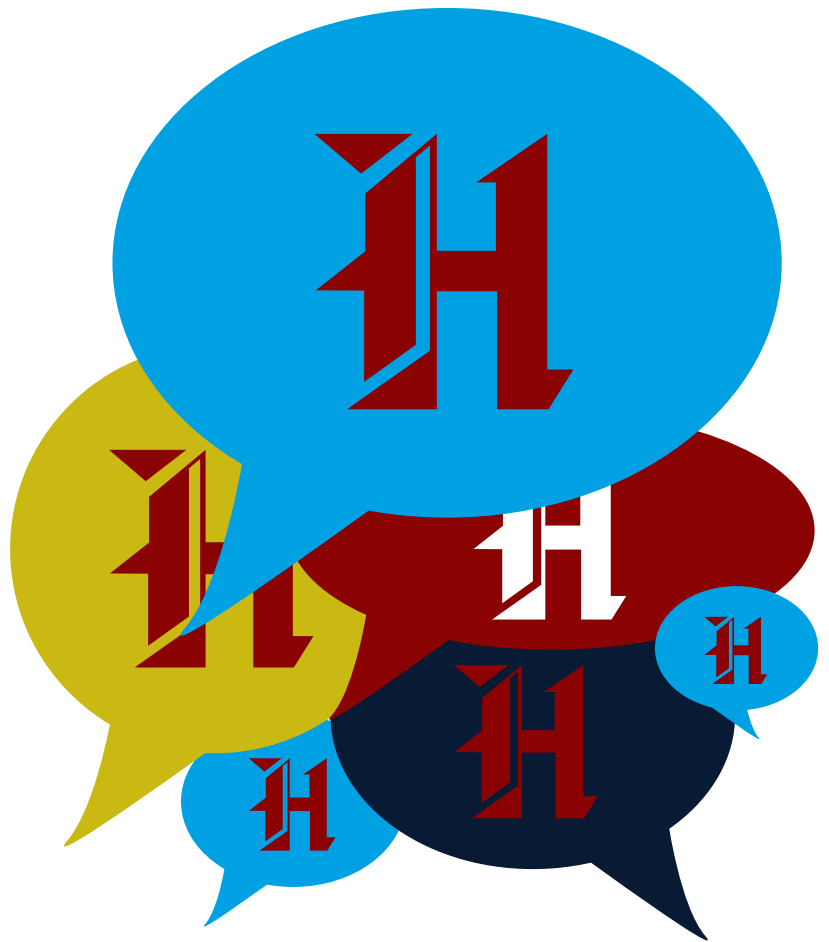
Elsewhere, a UK Christian leader has devoted much of his writing and teaching to criticizing Christian Zionism—the belief that the founding of the State of Israel is foretold in Scripture. He and others have begun calling Zionism and its political implications “heresy” in on-line columns. And their views are not unique: Many Christians believe that Zionism is a misreading of God’s promises throughout the Old Testament.

But are these problems of heresy? Both complementarian and egalitarian leaders have taken to the Internet to call each other's views on gender and leadership heresy. That, though their respective movements have officially existed for about 30 years.

Some say the Internet has democratized knowledge. Clearly, it has also democratized theologizing. Anyone with a computer and Wifi access can publish their thoughts and declarations onto a level pixelated playing field. Some blogs and Twitter accounts exist solely to cry foul whenever a well-known preacher makes a controversial statement.

Yet the frequency and volume of the proclamations from these sources—and from those who share and retweet them—suggest that some Christians don't understand the significance of right doctrine, or the gravity of heresy charges. Worse, these disputes lead some to believe that doctrine isn't worth the effort, since it seems only to breed division rather than promote Christlikeness.

Given our volatile online atmosphere, Christians in general and evangelicals in particular need a clearer definition of heresy. We need to know how to spot the difference between essential truths of the Christian faith and doctrines over which we can disagree and still remain faithful to Christian teaching. Even with a good definition, doctrinal assessment requires wisdom and discernment. It often involves two different ends: first, avoiding overuse of the heresy charge, which strips the word of its usefulness; and second, correcting Christians with beliefs that are false and that can undermine the integrity of the church.



## WHY DOCTRINE IS SO IMPORTANT

We may be tempted to think that since theology so easily divides, we are better off simply agreeing to disagree. After all, Jesus said that if we love God and others, we are fulfilling the law. “Why,” some ask, “does it matter that we believe the right things about God, so long as we love him?”

It is certainly true that loving God and others is at the heart of the gospel. But Jesus calls us to love God with our heart, soul, strength, and *mind*. Loving God involves thinking rightly about him, just as loving a friend or significant other involves rightly knowing their interests, beliefs, habits, and history.

When the Israelites taught their children about God, they recalled all he had done for them and their forebears. They worshiped the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the One who had delivered them out of Egypt. And they used specific phrases to describe him and what he had done. These specific phrases distinguished the God of the Israelites from the gods of their pagan neighbors.

Orthodox statements about the Trinity and Jesus Christ function similarly. They identify the God we worship and describe his saving relationship to us. Therefore, in order to love God aright, and to be assured of the salvation he offers, we must know who God is and what he has done for us in and through Jesus Christ.

The Bible reserves strong language for false teachers who promote beliefs that undermine or contradict the gospel. Bruce Demarest, a theologian at Denver Seminary, writes that the New Testament “expresses serious concern for ‘false doctrines’ and places the highest priority on

maintaining ‘the pattern of sound teaching.’ Scripture urges Christians to be alert to doctrinal deception and to avoid heresy by carefully guarding the pure content of the gospel.” Again, orthodoxy is not just a matter of theological precision. It’s about making sure the church rightly grasps our God and his work for us in Christ.

That’s why Paul wrote so forcefully to the Galatians, “If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God’s curse!” (1:9, NIV, used throughout). It’s why Peter warned against “false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves” (2 Pet. 2:1).

It’s also why early Christians wrestled for centuries over the nature and identity of Christ. The church held services and used prayers that worshiped Jesus. But wasn’t he a man in his earthly ministry? If so, did that mean they were practicing idolatry by worshiping a mere man? Or was Jesus in some way divine? Was he divine but only looked human? Or was he human but became divine, for instance, at his baptism? If he wasn’t fully human and fully divine, then could he accomplish salvation for us?

Such were the earliest doctrinal issues to be ironed out, and for very practical reasons: They affected how the church worshiped God and understood salvation. There were also pastoral concerns, to ensure believers living in a pagan world understood what they confessed together as one body. Doctrinal issues may require abstract language to explain, but they are not primarily academic. They have serious implications for how we live and talk about our faith.

## A WORD WORTH PRESERVING

What is *heresy*? Literally the word means “choice”—that is, a choice to deviate from traditional teaching in favor of one’s own insights. The word can also mean “school of thought.” That seems to be Paul’s usage in 1 Corinthians 11:19, where he uses the Greek word *haireseis* (“faction”). Gradually, the term came to mean “party or sect,” and over time it took on negative connotations.

Some today cast the word *heretic* in a positive light: a courageous rebel who thinks outside the box and stands up to the “institutional” church. To be sure, some whom the church called heretics have turned out to be heroes; think of how the Catholic Church responded to Galileo when he asserted that the Earth revolves around the sun.

Then there is the almost flippant use of the word, as when others use it to refer to anyone who doesn’t agree with their denominational or theological distinctives.

But just because a word is misused doesn’t mean it is no longer helpful.

Traditionally a heretic is someone who has compromised an essential doctrine, usually by oversimplification, and has thus lost sight of who God truly is or what he has done for us. While most heretics throughout history were asking legitimate questions, they weren’t called heretics simply for asking questions. Their *answers* were the problem, as was their unwillingness to accept clear and detailed correction. In many cases, the heretics went too far, trying to mold the faith into the shape of unbiblical ideas they found appealing, especially those of pagan Greek philosophy. Or they began to emphasize certain ideas in Scripture to the exclusion of others.

In order to use *heresy* properly, we must understand that not all theological errors are equal or carry the same ramifications.

Our own tradition, Protestantism, has outlined three kinds of doctrinal error: (1) an error that directly contradicts a fundamental belief (heresy proper, like Arianism—keep reading); (2) an error that indirectly contradicts a fundamental belief (e.g., to teach that God causes suffering implies that God is not good); and (3) an error beyond a fundamental article (e.g., teaching that Christians must speak in tongues to have the Holy Spirit).

More simply, many Christian theologians distinguish *heresy* from *heterodoxy*. Heresy, as historian David Christie-Murray explains, is a belief that denies a doctrine “officially defined” as orthodoxy. Heterodoxy, however, is a Christian belief that diverges from a “commonly accepted teaching.” Heresy denies orthodoxy, while heterodoxy adds a questionable or problematic teaching to orthodoxy.

For example, according to Protestants, the Catholic teaching that Mary was born without original sin and remained a virgin for life is heterodox. It’s not heresy, because Catholics affirm orthodox Christology. But it’s heterodox because we Protestants believe only Jesus—the Word made

flesh—was free of original sin, and that Catholic teaching adds something not taught in Scripture. However, Oneness Pentecostalism is an example of heresy, because it rejects historic orthodox Trinitarian theology.

The line between heterodoxy and heresy can be blurry, so we need wisdom, discernment, and humility before labeling a person a heretic. Additionally, we must remember that the sum of what Christians *should* believe is not identical to the essentials we

*must* believe for salvation. We need to leave room for believers to grow in their understanding of the faith. We believe in justification by faith in Christ, not justification by accuracy of doctrine. No one comes into the family of God ready to pen a book on systematic theology. We are saved by grace, not by intellectual precision.

However, we must also remember that faith is not ignorant or naïve. It is informed, resting on a firm understanding of the Good News. Genuine trust requires a reasonable knowledge of what—and more important, *who*—is being trusted. And growing in knowledge of biblical truth is a vital component of the Christian life.

## WHAT HERESY LOOKS LIKE

The apostles were not afraid to denounce heresy. If a teaching or practice threatened the gospel’s integrity, they strongly condemned it—as when Paul denounces Peter and the circumcision party



**THE APOSTLES WERE NOT AFRAID TO DENOUNCE HERESY.  
YET HERESY CHARGES WERE NOT LOBBED CASUALLY.  
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in Galatians 2. Yet heresy charges were not lobbed casually. Nor were they aimed at mere theological imprecision.

For instance, a couple named Priscilla and Aquila pulled aside an intelligent, competent teacher of Scripture named Apollos and “explained to him the way of God more adequately” (Acts 18:26). We don’t read of them calling him a heretic. Rather, we see them lovingly correcting a theological error. They wanted him to know the truth and the joy that accompanied it, not to condemn him or stir division.

The early church combated heresy by reinforcing biblical doctrine with creeds. Arguably, the earliest creeds appear in the Bible. Many scholars believe Paul is reciting a creed when he summarizes the truths “of first importance”: that Christ died for our sins, was buried, was raised on the third day, and appeared to the apostles and many others (1 Cor. 15:3–7).

After the apostolic age, the early church possessed what was known as “the rule of faith,” which Bruce Demarest describes as “brief summaries of essential Christian truths.” Some teachers, however, began to lead movements that blatantly opposed the apostles’ teaching, and the church was compelled to articulate more clearly the essentials of Christianity. Core doctrines like the Trinity and the person of Christ were developed through the early church’s struggle against heresy. And the rule of faith birthed more precise statements like the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. Thus, heresies forced Christians to think more precisely and definitively about the truth of the gospel.

Three important heresies stand out.

**MARCIONISM** Marcion was the son of the bishop of Sinope, Pontus (in modern-day Turkey). Around 140, he traveled to Rome, where he was welcomed by the church, but by 144, his views had gotten him into trouble, and he was excommunicated.

Among other troubling beliefs, Marcion taught that the God of the Old Testament was legalistic and wrathful, a fundamentally different being from the gracious and loving God of the New. He rejected the authority of the Old Testament, and also attempted to liberate the church from all law. He believed the only way to do this was to rid Christianity of all traces of Judaism. Marcion

ended up creating his own Bible, which included only a shorter and earlier version of the Gospel of Luke and ten epistles of Paul. Marcion also edited these books. For example, he cut all Old Testament citations from Paul’s letters.

The early church concluded that Marcion’s divisions between law and gospel, Old and New Testaments, were foreign to the apostles’ teaching. Second-century theologian and bishop Irenaeus spoke forcefully against Marcion. He wrote that Marcion “mutilated the Gospel according to Luke, removing all the narratives of the Lord’s birth, and also removing much of the teaching of the discourses of the Lord wherein he is most manifestly described as acknowledging the maker of this universe to be his father.”

**SABELLIANISM** During the second and third centuries, Christians struggled to reconcile the oneness of God—“I am the Lord, and there is no other” (Isa. 45:5)—with the three divine names that appear at the end of Matthew: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (28:19).

If there is no God besides the God of Israel, who are the Son and the Holy Spirit? Are they newer gods who had just been revealed? Are they less divine than the Father? A third-century priest named Sabellius concluded that *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Spirit* were labels for the three different ways God had revealed himself.

His views became known as Sabellianism, better known today as Modalism. This heresy teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not distinct persons but simply different modes or forms of God. Sabellians maintained that any Scripture passage suggesting that God is more than one person must be interpreted metaphorically.

But an African theologian named Tertullian argued that a metaphorical interpretation twisted the terms *Father* and *Son*, which were revealed to us to convey something real about God. “In order to be a husband, I must have a wife,” Tertullian wrote. “I can never myself be my own wife. In like manner, in order to be a father, I have a son, for I never can be a son to myself; and in order to be a son, I have a father, it

# DO YOU BELIEVE FALSE TEACHING? ❌

2014 survey conducted by LifeWay Research for Ligonier Ministries reveals that many American evangelicals hold views condemned as heretical by some of the most important councils of the early church. Nearly a quarter of participants believe false teachings about Jesus, and more than half about the Holy Spirit. **FIND OUT IF YOU ARE AMONG THEM BY ANSWERING “TRUE” OR “FALSE” TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.**

**1.** God the Father and Jesus Christ are equally divine.

**TRUE | FALSE**

**2.** Jesus is a hybrid, partially divine and partially human.

**TRUE | FALSE**

**3.** God the Son is uncreated.

**TRUE | FALSE**

**4.** The Holy Spirit is a force.

**TRUE | FALSE**

**5.** The Holy Spirit is less divine than the Father and the Son.

**TRUE | FALSE**

**6.** “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” are three different names for one divine person.

**TRUE | FALSE**

## ANSWERS

- 1. TRUE.** The Council of Nicaea in 325 affirmed that the Father and the Son are of the same divine essence, and condemned Subordinationism, which teaches that Jesus is inferior to the Father.
- 2. ❌ FALSE.** Apollinarianism, condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 381, taught that Jesus is not equally human and divine, but is one person with one nature. Jesus has a human body and soul, but a divine mind.
- 3. TRUE.** The Council of Nicaea affirmed that the Son is coeternal with the Father, and condemned Arianism, which taught that the Son was created by God before time.
- 4. ❌ FALSE.** The Council of Constantinople affirmed that the Spirit is coequal to the Father and Son, and condemned Pneumatomachianism, which taught that the Spirit was a created force or power, not a person of the Trinity.
- 5. ❌ FALSE.** Subordinationism, ruled out by the Nicene Creed, teaches that the Spirit is inferior to the Father and the Son. Similarly, some proponents of Pneumatomachianism, condemned at Constantinople (381), taught that the Spirit was of a different essence from the Father and the Son.
- 6. ❌ FALSE.** Modalism, ruled out by the Nicene Creed, teaches that God's names (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) change with his roles or “modes of being” (like a chameleon).

## THE ORTHODOX TEACHING ON THESE ISSUES IS TWOFOLD:

1. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are coeternal and coequal in essence, power, authority, and glory. The three persons are distinct, yet are of one substance or nature.
2. Jesus is fully human and fully divine. Being one person, his divine and human natures remain unconfused, unchanged, indivisible, and inseparable; the properties of each nature are preserved in this union.

Grasping the difference between orthodoxy and heresy can seem like a game of “gotcha.” Wording can get technical because how a doctrine is expressed has serious implications for how we live and talk about our faith. While we are not justified by accuracy of doctrine, genuine trust requires a reasonable knowledge of that which—and more important, who—is being trusted.

It's also good to remember that not all who believe false teachings are heretics. Each of us grows in our knowledge of the faith, and especially early on, we will likely imbibe one false teaching or another, until we are gently shown a better way.

being impossible for me ever to be my own father.” Further, he showed that Christ revealed his deity to the apostles by assuming attributes of the God of Israel (when he said, for example, “I am,” in John 8:58, harkening to “I Am Who I Am” in Exodus 3:14), and by calling on God the Father as a distinct witness to his own identity.

**ARIANISM** Theology doesn’t often cause urban uprisings, but it did in Alexandria, Egypt, in 318. That year, people streamed into the streets chanting, “There was a time when the Son was not!” The slogan expressed an idea that had become popular: that Christ was a created being. But that idea was opposed by another group of Christians, led by Bishop Alexander of Alexandria and his protégé, Athanasius. They insisted that Christ is eternally divine along with the Father.

This controversy had political ramifications, and eventually spread through the Roman Empire and threatened to fracture the church. What caused this crisis? The teachings of a Libyan priest in Alexandria named Arius.

Arius wasn’t trying to stir division. He thought that the relationship between the Father and Jesus was simple and needed to be freed from overly complicated explanations. Since the age of the apostles, Jesus had always been considered to be divine in some sense. But his precise relationship to the Father had not been settled on yet.

Arius argued that the Son was created before the rest of creation. As Arius put it, “Before he was begotten or created or appointed or established, he did not exist.” Further, Arius believed, the Son is not of one divine substance with the Father. He is rather of a *similar* substance (*homoiousios* in Greek) to the Father. The divine qualities of the Son are derivative—contingent, not essential—and given to the Son by the Father.

Arianism caught the attention of Emperor Constantine. Fearing that the church’s discord might fracture the empire, he called the Council of Nicaea (325), attended by 318 bishops, to resolve the situation. After dramatic debates, the majority stood with Alexander and condemned Arianism. (Only two other men were exiled with Arius. Thus, the outcome was virtually unanimous.) The bishops formulated a summary of the Christian faith that used precise wording to denounce Arianism: “We believe . . . in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance [*homoousios*] with the Father.”

Why the precise wording? Because, as Athanasius argued in *On the Incarnation*, salvation itself hung in the balance. The Bible’s teaching on Christ’s atonement requires a mediator who is fully God, with the holiness to make a perfect offering for sin, and also fully human, one who truly represents those to be reconciled to God.

As fourth-century theologian Gregory of Nazianzus famously put it, “That which was not assumed is not healed, but that which is united to God is saved.” Gregory understood that what we believe about Christ is directly connected to what we believe about salvation.

The orthodox bishops at the council struggled to gain popular approval. In fact, the council caused Arianism to grow more rapidly. It grew so much that Constantine—who was not concerned about fidelity to the strict wording of the Nicene Creed—restored Arius. He required Arius to submit in principle to the Creed. Arius did, but Athanasius, Alexander’s successor, and other bishops believed he was lying.

Athanasius was exiled five times for defending Nicene orthodoxy. In 46 years as bishop, he spent only 17 in Alexandria. But he remained faithful, even though he was up against what seemed like the entire world. Today he is recognized as the foremost defender of Nicene orthodoxy and the most prolific writer of Trinitarian theology in the fourth century.

A few years after Athanasius died, the Cappadocian Fathers—Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus—carried the torch to subdue Arianism and Semi-Arianism at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

## HOW TO IDENTIFY HERESY

This brief sketch shows that a mature definition of heresy draws on the rich biblical, theological, and historical teachings of Christianity. So we must recognize the various places and levels of theological authority.

Scripture is the highest authority, of course, followed by the great ecumenical creeds (Apostles’ and Nicene), and then by denominational confessions. Those include Anglicanism’s Thirty-Nine Articles, Lutheranism’s Augsburg Confession, the Westminster Confession, and Methodism’s Twenty-Five Articles of Religion. Many evangelical organizations use statements of faith to delineate their theological convictions. Creeds, confessions, and statements of faith can help us understand Scripture, but they should never be placed above Scripture.

That said, the creeds in particular are great summaries of biblical truth and are indispensable for pinpointing heresy. Accepted by Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians, the Nicene Creed—which should be called the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, since later debates led to an expansion of Nicaea’s formula at the Council in Constantinople (381)—wonderfully encapsulates the fundamental teachings of historic Christianity. If a believer genuinely accepts the Nicene Creed, they should not be dubbed a heretic. It’s worth asking: “Can they say the Nicene Creed without crossing their fingers?” If yes, they may still be wrong or heterodox on other matters, but we cannot call them heretics.

The creeds are bare-bones structures, the outlines of the sketch. Confessions and statements of faith color in the picture. They tie theology to everyday life and highlight denominational distinctives—how one Christian tradition differs from another. Confessions and statements of faith often define a particular group’s belief on secondary issues such as baptism, the Lord’s Supper, predestination, and the end times. They arise when particular theological issues are debated. For example, many evangelical statements of faith include affirmations of the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture. That’s because evangelicals have wanted to distinguish themselves from liberal Christianity, which often denied these teachings.

Today we rarely confront heresy as such, in part because those who adopt a heretical view frequently leave the church when they do so. But heresy is still alive and well. One practical example: The reason we don’t count Jehovah’s Witnesses as fellow Christians is because they espouse Arianism.

Even though heresy is rare, heterodoxy and false teachings are not.

In a pluralistic world, some sub-Christian or extra-biblical teachings—like the Immaculate Conception, that the only appropriate Bible translation is the King James Version, or that the Jewish laws are mandatory for Christians—find their way into otherwise orthodox churches. Most would not count as heresy, but that does not mean we can ignore them.

That said, we are called to confront with love, just as the early church confronted Apollos, patiently guiding people to a fuller understanding of the faith. Even this calls for discernment, because often we're not dealing with theological error as much as different interpretations of Scripture.

In those cases especially, we should eschew the word *heresy*. And in all cases, we should recall this saying: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things love." **CT**

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## HISTORY'S BIGGEST HERESIES

COMPILED BY KEVIN P. EMMERT

### ON THE TRINITY

#### ■ MODALISM

**Who taught it?** Sabellius (3rd century)

**What is it?** God is only one divine being, who plays different roles at different times. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not distinct persons of the same essence, but different modes or expressions of a single person. Modalism naturally leads to Patripassianism—the belief that the Father literally suffered on the cross.

**Key text?** Philippians 2:6: "... being in the form of God ..."

**Where does it show up today?** Oneness Pentecostalism believes that God's three modes of existence can act simultaneously, though God is still only one person.

#### ■ SUBORDINATIONISM

**Who taught it?** Eusebius of Caesarea (263–339)

**What is it?** The Son and the Spirit are divine persons, distinct from the Father but inferior to him. All three persons are truly God, but they exist in a hierarchy of power and authority.

**Key text?** Matthew 26:39: "... not as I will, but as you will."

**Where does it show up today?** According to a 2014 LifeWay Research study, 22 percent of evangelicals believe the Father is more divine than the Son.

### ON JESUS CHRIST

#### ■ ARIANISM

**Who taught it?** Arius (c. 256–336)

**What is it?** The Son as Word (*Logos*, in Greek) was created by God before time. He is not eternal or perfect like God, though he was God's agent in creating everything else.

**Key Text?** John 1:14: "The Word [is] the only Son, who came from the Father."

**Where does it show up today?** Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus is God's only direct creation, and that everything else was created by Christ. Jesus died for our sins, but he is not equal with God, who is not part of a Trinity.

#### ■ DOCETISM

**Who taught it?** Docetai, a Gnostic sect (2nd and 3rd centuries)

**What is it?** The divine Christ would never stoop to touch flesh, which is evil. Jesus only seemed (*dokeo*, in Greek) human and only appeared to die, for God cannot die. Or, the divine Christ left the human Jesus before the Crucifixion.

**Key text?** Philippians 2:8: "... and being found in appearance as a man ..."

**Where does it show up today?** Docetism by and large has been defeated, though many pastors report confusion among their congregants regarding Christ's full humanity.

#### ■ ADOPTIONISM

**Who taught it?** Paul of Samosata (3rd century)

**What is it?** Jesus was a mere man before his baptism, when the Father adopted him as his Son. The Father and Son are of different natures—the Father preexistent and eternally divine, and the Son born as Jesus and adopted into the Father's plans, but never one in essence with the Father.

**Key text?** Luke 3:22 (in some ancient versions): "You are my beloved Son; today I have begotten you."

**Where does it show up today?** Adoptionism by and large has been defeated.

#### ■ APOLLINARIANISM

**Who taught it?** Apollinaris of Laodicea (4th century)

**What is it?** Jesus is not equally human and divine, but one person with one nature. In Jesus' human flesh resided a divine mind (he didn't have a human mind). Thus, Jesus was only two-thirds human.

**Key text?** John 1:14: "The Word became flesh" [and not a human mind].

**Where does it show up today?** Apollinarianism by and large has been defeated, though many pastors report confusion among their congregants regarding Christ's full humanity.

### ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

#### ■ PNEUMATOMACHIANISM

**Who taught it?** Semi-Arians (4th century)

**What is it?** During the latter half of the fourth century, sects like Semi-Arians and Pneumatomachi (Greek for "Spirit fighters") believed the Spirit was of a different essence from the Father and the Son. Some said the Spirit was a creature, and others understood the Spirit to be a force or power, not a person.

**Key text?** Acts 1:8: "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ..."

**Where does it show up today?** Among Jehovah's Witnesses—but also among evangelicals. The 2014 LifeWay study reported that 51 percent of evangelicals believe the Holy Spirit is a force.



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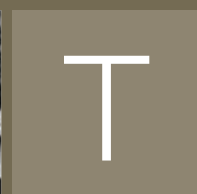
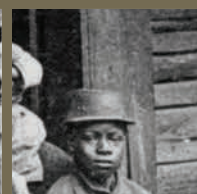
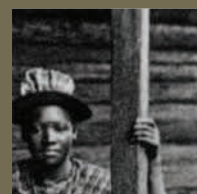
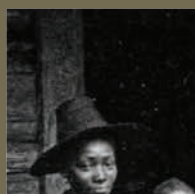
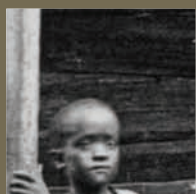
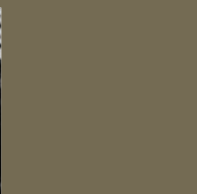
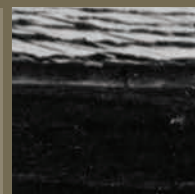
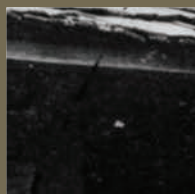
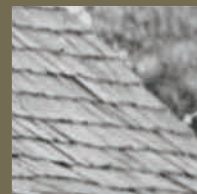
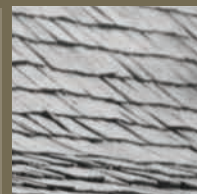
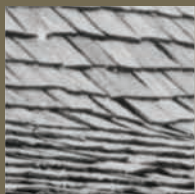
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AS A SOUTHERNER, I HAVE TO GRAPPLE  
WITH MY FOREBEARS' TAINTED LEGACY.

AS A CHRISTIAN, I HAVE TO DO THE SAME.



BY TISH HARRISON WARREN



But embracing the church does not rescue us from a painfully mixed legacy. It puts us smack-dab in the center of one.

## CHRONOLOGICAL SNOBS

Our Christian inheritance includes immense beauty, holiness, and grace, as well as immense violence, failure, and sin.

The hands of believers before us have blessed the poor, built cathedrals and universities, worked to abolish slavery and to secure women's dignity, embraced abandoned children, and passed down the faith from generation to generation in most every culture and place. And yet these very hands have blood on them. They are stained with the violence of the Crusades, with torture and the Inquisition, with the horrors of colonialism, slavery, the abuse of children, and the persecution of minorities.

When confronted with sin in the church, Christians can stumble into the faulty thinking of traditionalists and progressives alike.

On one hand, we are tempted to airbrush saints of old, glorify church tradition, and pine for a mythic, unadulterated past. In *The Anglican Way*, Thomas McKenzie tells of meeting an Orthodox priest who bragged that under no circumstance would his church innovate. I am sympathetic to this view. But the church is not infallible, nor can it be frozen in time. There are instances when, in order to be more faithful to Scripture, we must repent, reform—even innovate—in our thinking and worship. We belittle the gospel when we paper over wickedness or weakness in our heroes and traditions. (This temptation is not exclusive to liturgical types; I have met low-church, evangelical, and Reformed



I am a seventh-generation Texan who has ancestors from all over the South. When I think of the South,

I see my grandmother's hands, gnarled with arthritis—hands that picked and shelled native pecans and mastered a rolling pin. I imagine my great-grandfather's dusty feet as he walked from Arkansas to the Gulf Coast looking for cheap land, a kid leading a milk cow. I think of live oaks and tall pines, Jekyll Island and the Blue Ridge Mountains, Walker Percy and Flannery O'Connor, bourbon and fried okra.

I also think of my ancestors from Mississippi—small-scale cotton farmers who owned slaves. I think of the graveyard where my parents will be buried, where, according to local lore, slaveholders and slaves are buried side by side. I think of Jesse Washington, a teenager who in 1916 was lynched an hour from where I live. I think of segregation, Jim Crow, and redlining. This, also, is part of my culture and story, even part of me, my blood, and my kin.

Both the North and the South practiced racial injustice, but in the South the legacy is unavoidable. Nearly as soon as they are old enough for moral reasoning, white Southern kids face this complexity: those before us who have committed atrocities also gave us life. Their legacies of goodness and evil are entwined.

At the heart of the broad, longstanding debate about the Confederate Flag on US public grounds lies a deeper question: How do we respond to evil in our history?

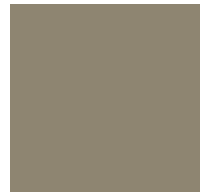
In the face of centuries of systemic racism, some Southerners have responded with a sort of ancestor worship, an idolatry of the past that makes us apathetic and defensive. Loyalty to those before us is exalted over love for those around us.

Clarence Jordan, a scholar and

co-founder of the Koinonia Farm intentional community in Americus, Georgia, denounced this false worship. Once, after Jordan preached on the ministry of racial reconciliation, an elderly woman rebuffed him: "I want you to know that my grandfather fought in the Civil War, and I'll never believe a word you say." Jordan, a Southerner himself, replied, "Well, ma'am, I guess you've got to decide whether to follow your granddaddy or Jesus."

It is a choice that we all face, wherever we are from, since we all inherit cultural and familial legacies marred by sin. But if the false gospel of some is ancestor worship, the false gospel of others is "progress." We mobile urbanites can deride our heritage altogether. Confident in our own broad-minded superiority, we adopt a historical determinism that smugly labels everyone on the "right" or "wrong" side of history.

We might hope to avoid the complications of a shameful history by looking to the church as our true family. After all, Jesus scandalized the Israelites by elevating loyalty to the family of God above loyalty to biological families. He proclaimed that our true family is composed of those who obey God—the community of believers, the church.



believers who idealize historical leaders and movements with as much zeal as their higher-church brethren.)

On the other hand, we are tempted to write off church tradition entirely, engaging in what C. S. Lewis famously described as “chronological snobbery.” When my husband was getting his PhD, he taught a course in church history to divinity students. One day after class, he mentioned that the students seemed disengaged. “Why?” I asked. In short, it was because they deemed John Calvin a homophobe, Augustine of Hippo a sexist, and Arius a marginalized voice. The students had taken their particular contemporary concerns—about inclusion and equality—and imposed them on all who had come before them. They could easily deconstruct, and dismiss, nearly every leader in church history.

While we could debate whether their precise charges were accurate, we needn’t debate that to value church history requires a willingness to learn from sinners. Take Augustine of Hippo, a fifth-century bishop in North Africa and perhaps the most important theological mind in the West. He has indelibly shaped our understanding of the Trinity, salvation, and grace. He profoundly loved God and the people around him, writing moving tributes to his friends and encouraging radical generosity to the poor. Yet he saw women as inferior to men, writing that women *as women*, in their female embodiment, do not fully bear the image of God, though we participate in the image of God in our general humanity. After his conversion, he sent the mother of his child back to her homeland, heartbroken and rejected.

We 21st-century believers may accuse Augustine of misogyny. Yet, within the context of his day, Augustine treated women with greater dignity than his contemporaries did. He taught that, in the Resurrection, women will be equal with men before God. He treated women around him with respect—his mother and a handful of women with whom he kept up theological and pastoral correspondence. And though he rejected his child’s mother, he grieved doing so, lamenting that she was “torn from my side,” leaving him “wounded and bleeding.”

Augustine’s status as a theological giant does not excuse his sexism or misogyny in his era or our own. Yet his views on women do not discount his gifts to the

church. I have an unbelievable debt of gratitude to Augustine, particularly for his teaching on sin and grace, without which I would likely not be a Christian.

## GOOD BAD, BAD GOOD GUYS

Standing in the muddy stream of church history, we recall that we, too, are blind to the evil within us and around us. In Augustine’s day, misogyny was the water he swam in, everywhere and invisible. Lewis wrote that the antidote to chronological snobbery is to realize that our current moment has its own myopia and illusions. These “are likeliest to lurk in those widespread assumptions which are so ingrained in the age that no one dares to attack or feels it necessary to defend them.”

Our era’s dearly held sins are ones that those on both the cultural Right and the Left take as givens; they are invisible and intrinsic to our way of life. It is difficult for us to speculate what they might be—just as misogyny was a category Augustine couldn’t have imagined. Yet listening to voices far removed from Western culture—voices from the Global South, for example—provides us hints about deep-seated evil in our midst: the idolatry of consumerism, individualism, and personal autonomy.

the gospel, is what allows us to look squarely at and actively repent of evil in our church, and national, heritage. And yet it also lets us recognize that we have no choice but to learn from past voices that are simultaneously sinful and holy. The gospel allows us to honestly confront evil in church history, and to embody the good news that God uses even sinners—despicable and broken, confused and conflicted, good bad/bad good guys—to glorify himself.

Clarence Jordan’s challenge remains: The way of Jesus and the way of our granddaddies (and even of Christian leaders) will, at times, diverge. And yet, following Jesus allows us to be grateful for both our familial and church ancestors. In their mixed legacies, we not only glimpse our own brokenness, we also glimpse that for which Christ died and which he will redeem.

Orthodox Christians today are increasingly accused of being on the “wrong side of history.” Without doubt, there will be plenty about us worthy of criticism. But we mustn’t fret over the imagined opinions of our descendants. We cannot control, and it is not our job to speculate,



## Embracing the church does not rescue us from a painfully mixed legacy. It puts us right in the center of one.

Martin Luther—whose legacy is clearly checkered—declared that each of us, in Christ, is rightly called both saint and sinner. My 5-year-old went through a phase when everyone was either a “good guy” or a “bad guy”—princesses and witches, superheroes and their nemeses, celebrities, friends, even strangers. One day she asked, “Mama, are you a good guy or a bad guy?” I responded with the gospel: that God created us in his image; that we have fallen into sin, idolatry, and self-worship; and that Jesus, through his life, death, and resurrection, declares us righteous and makes us new. From then on, my daughter referred to our family as “good bad/bad good guys.”

This view of humanity, rooted in

how future generations 100, 500, 1,000 years from now will judge us.

Rather, our call at all times remains to be faithful to the Scriptures and to the gospel we have received, in our own place and moment in time. Our shared hope—the hope of those past, present, and future—is that the Lord, the only true “good guy” and the Redeemer of history, will preserve his church, through us and in spite of us.

CT

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## DRAWING FROM FAITH

John Hendrix's church drawings are weird and sometimes scary. Then again, so is the Bible that inspires them.



Y

ou might think it childish that every week at Grace and Peace Fellowship, a PCA church in St. Louis, John Hendrix spends the sermon drawing. Most churches do not look kindly upon adults bringing crayons and paper to the pews. But for Hendrix—a professional illustrator who has sketched every day since age 7—sketching helps to capture the strangeness of the Christian faith.

"My faith story is very similar to the way I think about my sketchbook," Hendrix told CT. "It's a collision of words, images, ideas, and concepts that are metaphorical or challenging."

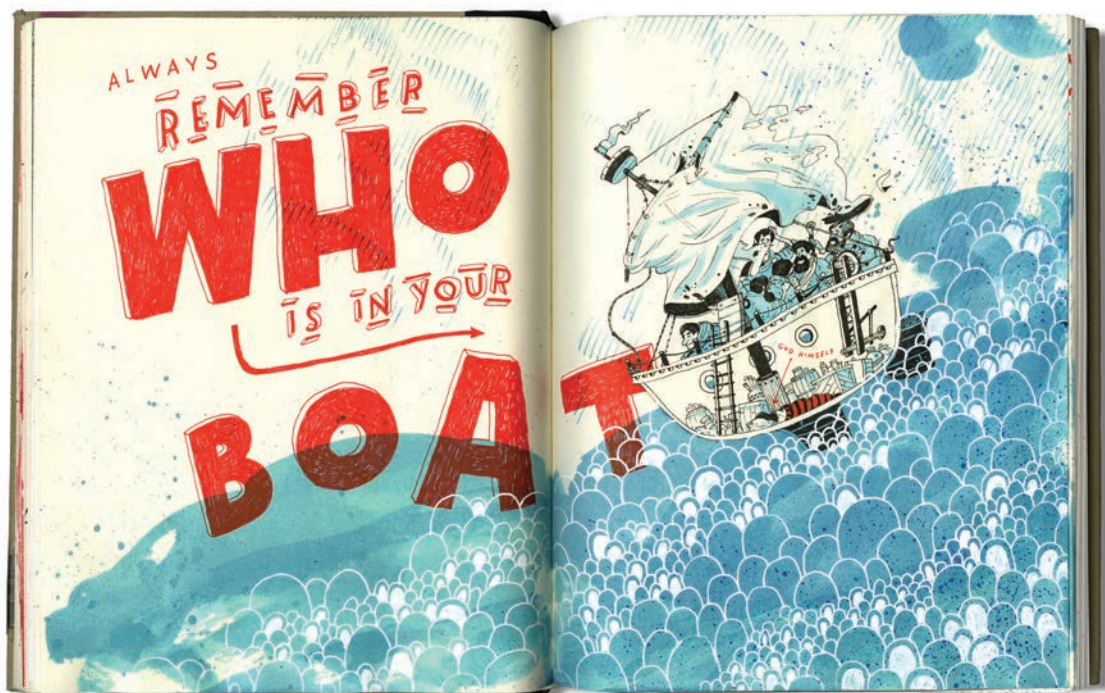
A St. Louis native, Hendrix never intended his in-church sketches for public viewing. Alongside teaching illustration at Washington University in St. Louis, he spends his week drawing for high-end mainstream clients. Those have included *The New York Times*, *Vanity Fair*, *Sports Illustrated*, children's book authors, and In-N-Out Burger (as well as this magazine). There, it's easy "to become a mercenary to making something that's good or productive," says Hendrix. By contrast, the sketches are play—"sitting down and having fun and trying to enjoy the act of creation." Friends began to ask him about the sketches, which are drawn

in pen, then painted in watercolor at home. So Hendrix compiled the best in an online series as well as in a new book, *Drawing Is Magic*. The following is a selection from those sketches.

The first thing you will notice about them is that they are—well, not Thomas Kinkade. There are sea monsters and birds dressed in priestly robes and mountains with mouths. The words of Jesus are set upon the bellies of cuddly creatures. Some of the drawings are ominous; in Hendrix's Nativity scene (p. 56), rendered in red and black, an underground monster appears to open his jaws to devour the Holy Family. "There's a *Where the Wild Things Are* vibe that runs through a lot of my drawings," says Hendrix. "I'm very drawn to the mysteries of the Scripture." Rather than providing "inspiration"—in the way that word captures a popular Christian



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approach to art—Hendrix probes the Bible’s odder passages, such as when God puts the deeps in storehouses (Ps. 33:7), or the beast in the Book of Revelation.

In this way, Hendrix recalls Hieronymus Bosch, the late-medieval painter best known for his busy allegorical visions of biblical scenes. But viewers this side of the Reformation will note that, unlike Bosch, Hendrix draws explicitly from the Word and words. Most of his sketches include passages of Scripture or hymn lyrics or

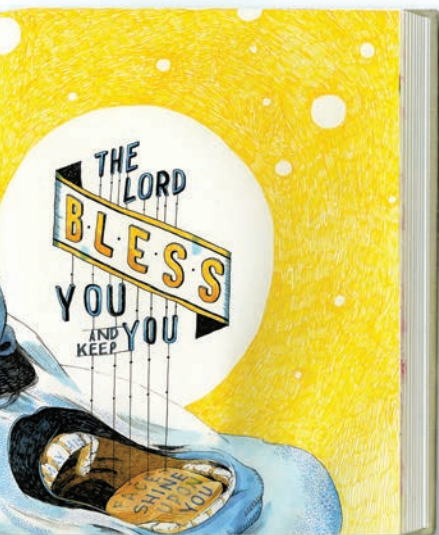
C. S. Lewis quotes. As such, Hendrix may offer a distinctly Protestant aesthetic, one that takes the Bible very seriously, without always depicting it literally.

Regardless, the sketches, Hendrix says, are best understood as a type of prayer. “I can look back at the times in my life when I struggled as an artist, and it’s the times when I did not have a regular sketchbook life.” Drawing during the sermon may be childlike, but such is the kingdom way of things. —Katelyn Beaty, print managing editor

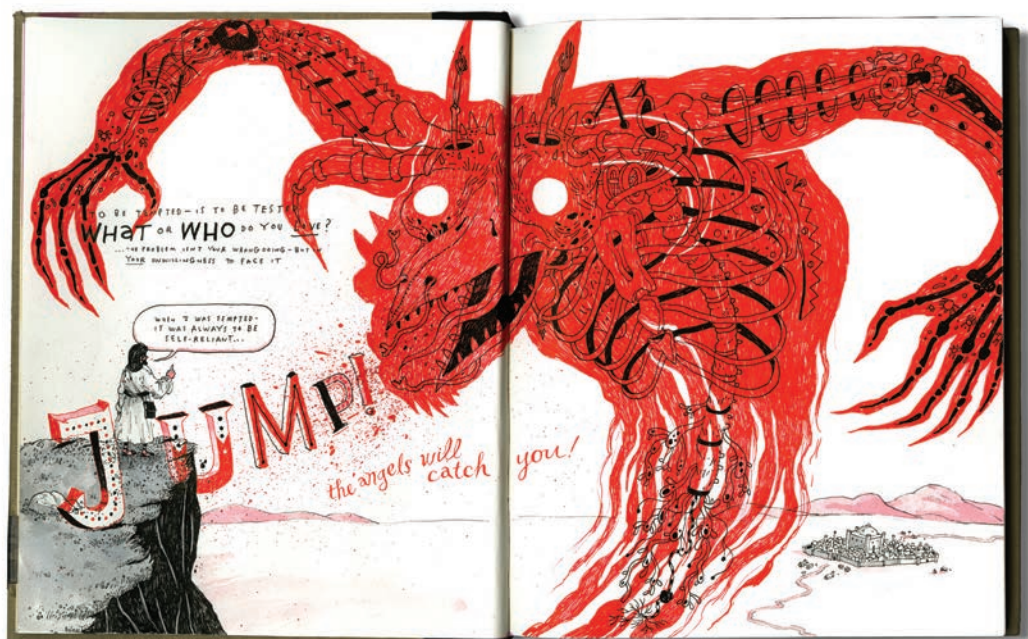


**K**IDS PLAY ALL THE TIME—IT'S THEIR WORK. FOR ADULTS, PLAY IS VERY DIFFICULT. SITTING DOWN AND HAVING FUN AND TRYING TO ENJOY THAT ACT OF CREATION—THAT'S AN ACT OF WORSHIP. THAT'S WHAT GOD WAS DOING WHEN HE MADE THINGS. THAT'S SOMETHING I TRY TO CULTIVATE.





**W**HEN THE PURITANS  
 CAME TO AMERICA, THEY  
 GAVE US AN AESTHETIC  
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**JOHN HENDRIX** teaches communication design at Washington University in St. Louis, where his specialties are hand-drawn typography and illustration. See more at [johnhendrix.com](http://johnhendrix.com) and on Twitter @hendrixart.



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TWO LEGAL SCHOLARS SAY RELIGIOUS NONPROFITS,  
SCHOOLS, AND BUSINESSES SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT  
THAN EVER ABOUT THEIR FAITH COMMITMENTS.

Under a

Bushel?

*Interview by* MATT REYNOLDS

*Still No.*

2014, Hobby Lobby won a landmark Supreme Court decision that exempted the home-goods chain from providing certain forms of contraception to employees. The Court ruled that closely held for-profit companies

whose owners have religious objections are protected under the First Amendment. But the 5–4 ruling left many in confused outrage: How can a for-profit company invoke a Christian identity? Shouldn't a business operating in the secular sphere have to play by secular rules?

For Stephen Monsma and Stanley Carlson-Thies—two scholars with long experience tracking tensions around institutional religious freedom—such protests rely on cramped notions of what counts as “religious.” Their new book, *Free to Serve: Protecting the Religious Freedom of Faith-Based Organizations* (Brazos), assesses the dangers an uncomprehending secularism poses to religious businesses, colleges, social service agencies, and student groups. CT associate editor Matt Reynolds spoke with Monsma and Carlson-Thies (fellows with the Center for Public Justice) about the religious-liberty challenges facing faith-based organizations.

#### What is the basic problem your book addresses?

**MONSMA:** The book grew out of our deep concern over challenges to faith-based organizations seeking to follow the religious commitments at the heart of who they are and what they do. You see this on many fronts. These challenges aren't random; they reflect prevalent assumptions in our society. Until these assumptions are shown to be false, we're afraid the religious freedom of faith-based organizations will remain under threat.

**CARLSON-THIES:** We looked at a number of areas. Some issues are matters of internal operations: Can a faith-based organization hold employees to religious standards? Do their health plans have to include coverage for contraception or abortifacients?

Other questions concern *how* they serve the public, and whether they have to abide by secular protocols: Can religious adoption agencies receiving public money refuse to place children with same-sex couples? Can Catholic agencies serving refugees under a government grant refuse to refer clients to abortion providers? These are just some of the controversies we consider.

#### What are some of the broader assumptions that place the religious freedom of organizations on shakier footing?

**MONSMA:** One very basic assumption is that when faith-based organizations provide public services—addiction treatment, college education, or overseas

relief and development—they have somehow left religion behind and are now engaged in secular activities. If this is true, you can regulate these organizations without really violating their *religious* freedom. Religion, under this assumption, is something that takes place within churches, synagogues, and mosques, not when religious people form organizations to live out their faith in public.

**CARLSON-THIES:** Jesus said there are two great commandments. One is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. We fulfill this in worship and in prayer. The other is to love your neighbor as yourself. That happens when we serve the needy. Our culture tends to see worshipping God as *real* religion; service, although it's something religious people do, is not shaped by religious convictions. If that's the case, then World Vision, Teen Challenge, and the church's soup kitchen are just engaged in humanitarian work. And if so, there's no problem requiring that it be done the way a secular organization would. This mindset paves the way for regulations and court decisions that forget the faith-shaped way these activities are carried out.

**MONSMA:** We saw this years ago in a case involving World Vision, which had fired some employees who no longer agreed with its statement of faith. The employees' attorneys argued that World Vision is not a religious organization: It doesn't ordain clergy, baptize people, or celebrate the sacraments. They argued that World Vision is not a church; therefore, it could not hold employees to religious standards.

#### Most believers understand that religion isn't limited to what happens inside church walls. How can we persuade those who adopt this narrow definition?

**MONSMA:** Examples are the best teachers. Organizations need to be as concrete as possible about the link between the services they provide and the faith commitments that shape them. The more explicit the connection, the easier it is for outsiders to see that feeding the hungry and visiting the sick are areas of Christian duty.

**CARLSON-THIES:** It's important for faith-based organizations to introduce themselves to local leaders, council members, and congressional representatives, to explain what they do and how that's related to their faith. This way, when political authorities are making decisions, they have an image in mind of what they're influencing and the possible consequences of interference. It's vital to lay this groundwork before the situation reaches a crisis point.

#### As an antidote to the pressures facing faith-based organizations, you develop the idea of “principled pluralism.” What does this look like in practice?

**MONSMA:** Nonbelievers respect and make room for believers to practice their faith, and believers respect and make room for people of all faiths, and for nonbelievers. Tolerance and respect go both ways. Organizations should be free to be secular, even to promote secularism.

**CARLSON-THIES:** A political system isn't a church. It needs to be fair to everybody. That means respecting different convictions. We don't imagine that all moral views are equally valid or that all roads lead to God. Pluralism isn't relativism. Ideally, we'll continue to argue vigorously about different principles and work on persuading each other to try a different path. But when we haven't persuaded each other, we need space to live out our convictions.

America, in particular, is so diverse that it's tempting to say, “Let's make everything secular. Then everyone will be treated equally.” But

that's equal treatment only in the sense that everybody's distinct convictions get privatized or suppressed. That isn't fair to this deep motivation people have to live out their convictions with integrity. Principled pluralism acknowledges basic human nature, and the fact that we have to live together, despite our disagreements.

**MONSMA:** As an example, we look at Christian student organizations on college campuses. A number of universities, such as Vanderbilt, have said that groups with religious standards for leaders cannot receive official recognition. Under principled pluralism, that's totally wrong. There should be evangelical Protestant groups committed to those beliefs. The same goes for Catholic, Muslim, or Jewish groups, or gay-pride organizations. That leads to diversity. But if groups want to advocate their positions in a university atmosphere, it's important that they have leaders who embrace their beliefs.

**Does principled pluralism have biblical underpinnings, or is it just a pragmatic plan for social peace?**

**MONSMA:** Our vision is rooted in the belief that human beings are created in God's image, as rational, thinking, creative beings with a moral sense and moral accountability. That means that no one should be forced into a secular mold—or a Christian, Muslim, or Jewish mold.

**CARLSON-THIES:** The Bible doesn't offer a rulebook for governance. But with sin having entered the world, there are going to be divisions.

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STANLEY CARLSON-THIES



Fundamentally, we're broken in different ways; we follow different paths, different idols. It's clear in the New Testament that God holds back his judgment and sends rain on the just and the unjust. It's not our task to separate the wheat from the tares.

Scripture indicates that it's not the job of government to play God and say, "We know exactly how things need to be done." We all tend to want our way of life to be the standard we live by. But others have very different views about how things ought to be done. On what basis is it fair, right, or honorable to say, "You can't live out that conviction"? Of course, some things are objectively bad, and the government can't allow them. But it ought to be careful about jumping in casually to resolve disagreements.

**Are there limits to a faith-based organization's religious freedom?**

**MONSMA:** We have to recognize that even though we are diverse, we are one society. Therefore, there have to be limits on, say, promoting violence, or advocating a violent overthrow of the government. Principled

pluralism isn't simply a free-for-all.

**CARLSON-THIES:** It's hard to say, in the abstract, where the line should be drawn. Of course, some things are fundamentally beyond the pale. People can't kill each other because they feel God calls them to. With such great diversity in our society, it's difficult to find consensus on what's reasonable or acceptable. But this very diversity of values is an important reason to allow institutional diversity, so that people of differing convictions have a range of choices.

**Let's say an organization has exhausted all possible legal avenues in protesting a wrongful restriction on its religious freedom. Are there ever grounds for further resistance, including civil disobedience? Or would that undermine the climate of mutual respect and trust that principled pluralism requires?**

**CARLSON-THIES:** These service organizations face a real dilemma. If they lose in court, do they just pack up and go home? God calls them to do adoptions, feed the hungry—whatever it is. But they are convinced God calls them to do that in a particular way. Civil disobedience is something they ought to think carefully about. It might help lawmakers, judges, and the public realize what's at stake, and maybe rethink the way the rules were applied.

But it's a tough spot for organizations. They have to meet budgets, and they are responsible for donated funds and any public monies they have. But I hope that, at least on occasion, some leaders would say, "It's not right for us to be forced to choose between our convictions and continuing to serve."

**MONSMA:** There is a line that organizations shouldn't cross. Every faith-based organization—their boards, their leadership, their staff—has to think about that line. Where can we be flexible, so we can keep serving? And where do we have to say, "This far and no farther"? Do we engage in civil disobedience, or just accept that we can no longer take government funding?

**CARLSON-THIES:** Organizations are dedicated to providing services, not spending their time on Capitol Hill. Also, many leaders are worried that speaking up publicly or signing a letter will get the organization in hot water. Government officials in charge of who gets the next grant or contract may take their protests into account. But organizations need to invest some time and energy, and even their reputation, in speaking up for their own freedom to serve in a way they believe pleases God. If they

can't find their voice, it shouldn't be a big surprise when restrictions are handed down.

### **Are faith-based organizations ever partly to blame for their present predicament?**

**MONSMA:** Many organizations downplay their religious character, so as not to jeopardize their eligibility for accreditation or government funds. But we argue that religious practices are better protected when organizations are explicit about their faith commitments in their mission statements and on their websites.

**CARLSON-THIES:** When American culture was more conventionally Christian, it was easier for an

many others. But the law won't be sufficient if enough legislators decide that religion is only about what happens in churches. There was an effort, in fact, to limit RFRA's jurisdiction over businesses. Fortunately it fell short, but that reminds us that these have to be *living* principles, not just words in a rulebook.

### **What effect can we expect from the Supreme Court's decision on same-sex marriage?**

**CARLSON-THIES:** The real dilemma is for organizations with a strong commitment to biblical marriage that have asked workers to abide by their values. On the surface, the Court's decision affects only state governments. The ruling did not say that a faith-based college or nonprofit has to change its views on marriage.

But now that same-sex marriage is legal nationwide, there are worries that federal, state, and local governments will press the logic of the decision

into new areas. Will this mean, for instance, denying accreditation to schools that don't accommodate same-sex couples as staff? We aren't at that stage yet. But organizations are worried. It's one thing to change your views because of conviction. Our fear is that organizations will feel compelled to change their views to avoid being punished for violating what government officials regard as a basic standard of equal treatment.

**MONSMA:** *Roe v. Wade* is instructive. Congress responded by passing the Church Amendment, named after Senator Frank Church of Idaho. The amendment guaranteed that no health-care professional with conscientious objections to abortion would be required to provide

one. In a rough sense, that could provide a pattern for our response, as a society, to the same-sex marriage decision. It may be the law of the land, but will it force a perspective onto everyone who disagrees?

### **Given the current climate, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the prospects of principled pluralism?**

**MONSMA:** Religious freedom has lost in a number of cases, and others have been very close. Yet many cases have been won, and often, when religious freedom is challenged, the religious community reacts. If faith-based organizations recognize the challenge they face and speak up clearly, we can turn this around. It's essential to insist that defending religious freedom is not about forcing our beliefs onto others; it's about remaining true to our beliefs, just as members of various faith traditions and nonbelievers should be free to do.

**CARLSON-THIES:** This year, the Mormon Church came together with LGBT advocates to help pass a nondiscrimination law. The Mormon representatives made clear that no one should be fired from a job or denied housing because of sexual orientation. But they also made clear the church's fundamental views about marriage and family, and the importance of being free to express them. The two sides arrived at a compromise that protects both the safety and flourishing of gay people and the rights of religious institutions to remain faithful to their values.

The result isn't perfect, and it can't be replicated everywhere. But it's a model of principled pluralism at work. This gives me hope that we can continue building on the best traditions of American history. **CT**

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STEPHEN MONSMA

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organization to be part of the woodwork. Nowadays, when governments give more scrutiny to religious expressions in public, it's tempting to stay quiet, because you could lose accreditation, a license, a grant, or a seat at the table.

But if organizations hide their religious character, then it's no surprise when society doesn't see their important role. A nonprofit that's masked its religious commitments to avoid offending public opinion is in a poor position to defend its prerogatives. Paradoxically, when lawmakers and regulators are suspicious of religious organizations, that's exactly when forthrightness is needed most. It's important not to hide the light under a bushel.

### **To what extent should religious organizations rely on legislative measures like the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)?**

**CARLSON-THIES:** The viability of faith-based organizations can't depend on legal protections, as important as those are. It has to rest on their willingness to testify to their religious character, to speak to their neighbors about who they are.

If RFRA disappeared, that would be a real setback. It helped determine the outcome of the Hobby Lobby case, and I'm sure it will be important in



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## ECCLESIASTES 9:3

le time is like a snare and an evil net that can end suddenly, then my attempts to control my own life are futile. A facade. Lord, help me entrust my time and opportunities to your lordship. What does it look like to live wholly for you each and every day?

We don't have as much control as we think we do. Our strength, knowledge, and intelligence do not guarantee our success in the race, in the battle, or with regard to wealth.

sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns in oath.<sup>2</sup> This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.<sup>3</sup> But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.<sup>4</sup> For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.<sup>5</sup> Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

### Enjoy Life with the One You Love

<sup>6</sup>Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

<sup>7</sup>Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

<sup>8</sup>Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain<sup>1</sup> life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.<sup>9</sup> Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might;<sup>10</sup> for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

### Wisdom Better than Folly

<sup>11</sup>Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.<sup>12</sup> For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

<sup>13</sup>I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me: "There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siege works against it."<sup>14</sup> But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man.<sup>15</sup> But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.

<sup>16</sup>The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.

<sup>17</sup>Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

**10** Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

<sup>2</sup>A wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left.

<sup>3</sup>Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool.

<sup>4</sup>If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for calmness<sup>5</sup> will lay great offenses to rest.

<sup>6</sup>There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler:<sup>7</sup> folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place.<sup>8</sup> I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves.

<sup>9</sup>He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall.

<sup>10</sup>He who quarries stones is hurt by them, and he who splits logs is endangered by them.

<sup>11</sup>If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one to succeed.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>13</sup>If the serpent bites before it is charmed, there is no advantage to the charmer.

<sup>14</sup>The words of a wise man's mouth win him favor,<sup>15</sup> but the lips of a fool consume him.

<sup>16</sup>The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness.

<sup>17</sup>A fool multiplies words, though no man knows what is to be, and who can tell him what will be after him?

<sup>18</sup>The toil of a fool wearies him, for he does not know the way to the city.

<sup>19</sup>Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning.

<sup>1</sup>Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of the nobility, and your princes feast at the proper time.

<sup>2</sup>Through strength, and not for drunkenness! through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks.

<sup>3</sup>Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything.

<sup>4</sup>Even in your thoughts, do not curse the king, nor in your bedroom curse the rich, for a bird of the air will carry your voice, or some winged creature tell the matter.

**Cast Your Bread upon the Waters**  
<sup>11</sup>Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.

<sup>2</sup>Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you know not what disaster may happen on earth.

<sup>3</sup>If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth, and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will lie.

<sup>4</sup>He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.

<sup>5</sup>As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb<sup>6</sup> of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

<sup>7</sup>As if the morning sow your seed, and as evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

<sup>8</sup>Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

<sup>9</sup>So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

<sup>10</sup>Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Walk in the ways of your heart and the

sight of your eyes. things God will bring about.

<sup>11</sup>Remove weariness away from you, for you have no power to do anything more.

**Remember Your Creator**  
<sup>12</sup>Remember the days of your youth, and the years drawn away from you.

<sup>13</sup>I have no pleasure in it, and the light is darkened and the

<sup>14</sup>in the day when tremble, and the

<sup>15</sup>grinders cease because of lack of food, who look through

<sup>16</sup>and the doors open, the sound of the

<sup>17</sup>up at the sound of song are brought

<sup>18</sup>of what is high, an almond tree blossoms itself along,<sup>19</sup> and going to his eternal

<sup>20</sup>snapped, or the go-pitcher is shattered broken at the cistern

<sup>21</sup>the earth as it was God who gave it. Preacher, all is vanity.

**Fear God and Keep His Commandments**  
<sup>1</sup>Besides being wise, the people know

<sup>2</sup>and arranging man's life, and the Preacher says, and uprightly he

<sup>3</sup>and uprightly he like nails firmly fixed they are given by

<sup>4</sup>beware of anything many books there is a weariness of the

<sup>5</sup>the end of the Fear God and keep in the whole duty of every deed into joy

<sup>6</sup>thing, whether good or evil.

BY LYNN H. COHICK

LETTERING BY JILL DE HAAN

LYNN H. COHICK is professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and author most recently of *Philippians: The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Zondervan).



# The Real Woman at the Well

We know her as an adulterer and divorcée. Her community would have known otherwise.

**F**lorence came to my house twice a week, selling vegetables. She carried on her back a bag weighing nearly 40 pounds. With its strap across her forehead and the load on her back, she hunched along dirt roads about two hours each way to the cluster of houses where my husband and I lived in Kijabe, Kenya. There, my husband helped start and served as the executive director of a children's hospital, and I taught at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.

One day, as Florence rested with me on my porch, we began to chat about her life. She told me her husband had died when her children were young. It was important that she remarry, she said, so her children could have a father figure. Her parents sought a suitable spouse, and the man they chose was her grandfather's age. Florence smiled, confessing that at first she disliked the idea.

**"I  
HAVE NO  
HUSBAND."**

*SHE  
REPLIED*

**JESUS**  
*said to her,*

**"YOU ARE RIGHT  
WHEN YOU SAY YOU  
HAVE NO HUSBAND.  
THE FACT IS,**

**YOU HAVE HAD FIVE  
HUSBANDS,  
AND THE MAN  
YOU NOW HAVE**

**IS NOT YOUR  
HUSBAND."**

**JOHN**

**4:17-18**

But then she saw the wisdom of their choice. I later met him, a wonderful, wizened man—mostly blind and deaf, but dignified. Florence cared for her elderly husband, and the marriage gave her stability and self-respect.

As I listened to her, I began to think about the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4–42). And I saw parallels immediately, even as I recognized the distinct qualities of each culture. Florence's experience with marriage seemed unusual to me, but her culture approached marriage in ways similar to the ancient world.

While in Kenya, I also learned that some couples didn't have a wedding, but simply "set up house" together. They called each other husband and wife, had children together, and were seen by their community as married. They had no money for a wedding ceremony, and no government certificate establishing their relationship in a legal sense. To my Western and evangelical Christian sensibilities, they were cohabitating. But in their culture, they were married.

With these new perspectives, I took a closer look at the Samaritan woman. I researched the life settings of first-century women and discovered details about ancient marriage customs that illuminated her situation. My research—along with that of a small but growing number of other scholars—led me to suspect that the Samaritan woman has been misunderstood.

## MARRIAGE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

**M**ost people in the ancient world got married—women often in their teens, men in their late 20s. Given the high death rate, people were often widowed and then remarried, perhaps two or three times. The Greeks and Romans did not practice polygamy, but evidence shows that some Jews entered bigamous marriages. The only legal document for marriage was a dowry document listing the property and wealth that the bride brought to the marriage. The husband could use this money however he wanted, and any profit he made was his to keep. Should they divorce, however, he must return the entire dowry. But if his wife was found guilty of adultery, he could

keep the dowry. Couples could live together as husband and wife without a dowry contract, or even a wedding. By setting up house together, they signaled to their community that they considered themselves married.

Divorce was an option; it was typically not shameful, unless it resulted from adultery. Women could not initiate a divorce, but they could ask a male advocate to do so and thus regain the dowry. It is difficult to determine how common divorce was, but the disciples' reaction to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:9–11 tells us divorce wasn't unheard of. Even Joseph considered it when he learned that Mary was pregnant (Matt. 1:19–20).

The culture in which Jesus taught was indeed diverse and complicated. To understand his conversation with the Samaritan woman, we must examine it within its first-century Jewish and Greco-Roman context.

## PROBABLY NOT AN ADULTERESS

**J**ohn 4 tells us that Jesus left Judea because his ministry was heavily scrutinized. Returning to Galilee, he decided to travel through Samaria rather than take a longer route around the territory. Jews usually took the long route to avoid interacting with Samaritans, whose false religious views they opposed.

After walking all morning, Jesus and his disciples arrived at Sychar, the place of Jacob's Well. Jesus stayed behind while his disciples went to town to get food. What follows is a one-on-one encounter between Jesus and a religious seeker, as is frequent in the Gospel of John.

Jesus is thirsty, and a woman comes along with a bucket. Some scholars suggest she was a prostitute looking for customers. They argue that morally upright women drew water in the morning when it was cooler, not at midday.

It certainly would have been more efficient to get water earlier, but this value did not govern all ancient societies—nor does it today. In the village near my home in Kenya, for example, women washed and dried clothes in the hot equatorial sun. It would be more efficient to wash clothes early in the day, so that by evening the dry clothes could be folded

and brought inside the house. But my Western assumptions were challenged when I saw women begin their washing at mid-afternoon and then hang the clothes to dry overnight and into the next afternoon. Hardly efficient, but perhaps more conducive to their food preparation and fellowship with neighbors.

Notice John doesn't say why the woman was at the well at noon. Perhaps she was helping a neighbor with young children. Or maybe she needed more water to finish her tasks. John tells us the time of day to explain why Jesus would be hot and tired, not to comment on when virtuous women drew water.

We might wonder why the woman appeared to be alone (although note that John doesn't explicitly say she was alone). Most people traveled in groups, for daily chores and life's burdens are more bearable when singing and sharing with friends. But in itself, the detail that she was alone doesn't speak to her character. It is a detail later in the story—that the man she is with now is not her husband—that seems to cast a shadow of shame on her.

When the woman says that she has had five husbands and the one she is with now is not her husband, it sounds like she is confessing sexual immorality. It sounds like she has treated marriage flippantly in the past, and is now cohabitating. But our assumption clashes with the other details John gives. He presents her as an inquisitive religious seeker who is trusted—perhaps even admired—by her fellow townspeople.

So if she wasn't sexually promiscuous, what could explain her history and current situation? It's unlikely that she was divorced five times, each for committing adultery. No man would dare marry a convicted adulteress with neither fortune nor fame. That she was a serial divorcée is also unlikely. She would've needed the repeated help of a male advocate to do so. Further, we have no evidence that anyone in the ancient world, man or woman, divorced five times. The closest parallel is the first-century B.C. General Pompey the Great, who married five times: he was divorced twice and widowed twice.

And since barrenness was not always a cause for divorce, we cannot assume she was divorced for that reason. Think of the long, childless marriage of Elizabeth and Zechariah, who were blessed late in life with a son, John the Baptist. Yet

if she was known to be barren, can you imagine five men risking marriage to a woman everyone knew was infertile? Not in their culture.

It is more likely that her five marriages and current arrangement were the result of unfortunate events that took the lives of several of her husbands. Perhaps one or two of them divorced her, or maybe she initiated divorce in one case. As for her current situation, maybe she had no dowry and thus no formal marriage, meaning her status was similar to a

it was clear that his knowledge of her was divine.

Second, her response reminds us of Nathanael (1:43–49). As Nathanael approached Jesus, Jesus said to him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit” (v. 47). Stunned, Nathanael asks why Jesus would say such a thing. Jesus replies that he saw Nathanael under a fig tree just moments beforehand. Jesus knew Nathanael’s earnest desire to serve God, thus demonstrating Jesus’ prophetic, messianic character.

a man who might have answers, so she asks him questions that have puzzled her.

Finally, the fact that the townspeople listen to her testimony suggests that she was not a shunned sinner. They believe Jesus is the Messiah not because of the disciples’ preaching, nor because she allegedly changed her ways, for that would take time to validate. Rather, they believe because of her testimony. They probably knew she had religious questions and was not easily swayed by every preacher passing through. She was, therefore, a credible witness.

For most early church and medieval interpreters, the Samaritan woman was a careful, polite seeker—a sinner who, once illumined, truthfully witnessed her new faith to others. But in the Reformation, she became a symbol of promiscuity. Whereas the church fathers believed Jesus was revealing *himself* to her, says historian Craig Farmer, the Reformers suggested that Jesus was revealing *herself* to her to get her to see her sin and repent.

Florence helped me to see marriage in a new way. She shared with me her dreams, disappointments, and joy in the Lord. Her situation encouraged me to research more deeply and to see the Samaritan woman as three-dimensional. I now see her as one who probably endured more than the typical number of tragedies, yet never stopped seeking God. She was not an outcast or sexually immoral—according to the social codes of her village. And she embraced Jesus’ message with such joy that her town believed.

All this has enhanced my gratitude for Christ’s amazing love. Though tired and thirsty, he looked to the needs of another. He made clear that the Samaritan woman sinned in rejecting the one true God. And he showed her that God’s love extended to her personally. He knows the longing of our hearts, as we see in his desire to engage the Samaritan woman’s questions.

Moreover, Jesus guides us to answers for which we had no questions. The gospel is far more encompassing than either the Samaritan woman or Jesus’ disciples realized. Jesus challenges social prejudices, and brings visibility and voice to the invisible and silent in society. In giving a voice to the Samaritan woman, John encourages us to tell others about our encounters with the Savior. And may those who hear our story, by God’s grace, respond like the townspeople, believing because of our testimony.

CT

## Jesus knows the longing of our hearts, as we see in his desire to engage the Samaritan woman’s questions.

concubine’s. Perhaps the man she was currently with was old and needed care, but his children didn’t want to share their inheritance with her, so he gave her no dowry document. Perhaps he was already married, making her his second wife. While the ancient Jewish culture allowed it, such an arrangement went against Jesus’ definition of marriage as a union between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4–6). It makes sense, then, that Jesus would say she wasn’t married. Scripture doesn’t tell us why she had five husbands, but exploring first-century realities helps us imagine how her life might have unfolded.

### LONGING FOR TRUTH

**F**ive clues in the text support the view that John’s Gospel does not condemn her as an immoral sinner, but highlights her as a seeker of truth.

First, while losing spouses was a tragic reality, being a widow or divorcée five times was unheard of. This means Jesus could not have guessed her situation;

Jesus could not say to the Samaritan woman that she served God well, because she, a Samaritan, held erroneous religious beliefs. But he could speak about her identity. Like most women, her identity was tied to her father, husband, or son. By knowing her history and current situation, Jesus signaled to her that he knew *her*. And, like Nathanael, she was astounded at Jesus’ power.

Third, John presents her—along with other women, such as Martha (11:21–27)—as theologically astute or inquisitive.

Fourth, Jesus does not label her as a sinful woman. He doesn’t say to “go and leave your life of sin,” as he enjoined the adulterous woman in John 8:11. Instead, he talks with her about deep theological truths, including the claim that God must be worshiped “in the Spirit and in truth” (4:24). Those who say she is licentious often argue that she tries to divert Jesus’ attention from her past by asking an unrelated religious question. But would Jesus really be dissuaded from pursuing his case? That happens nowhere in the Gospels. Why wouldn’t she have religious questions? She probably had a hard life, and perhaps, like Naomi in the Book of Ruth, wondered, *Where is God?* Here is

# Open My Eyes

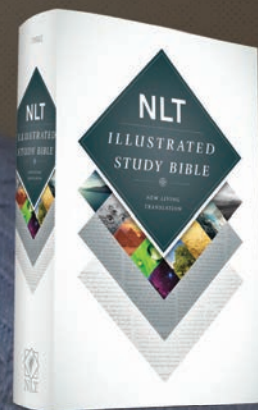


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# REVIEWS **R**



## OUR FAVORITE KNOCK-OFF JESUSES

Daniel Darling catalogs the impostors vying for your devotion. By Will Willimon

### THE ORIGINAL JESUS

Trading the  
Myths We  
Create for  
the Savior Who Is



**DANIEL DARLING**  
Foreword by **RUSSELL MOORE**



**Y**ou know the old saw: God created humans in his own image, and we have spent ages returning the favor. How ironic that Jesus, who came to transform *us*, has so many followers intent on remaking *him* into a more congenial idol. At first we dressed him in a royal robe and placed a crown upon his head—before nailing him to a cross. Today we continue to downgrade the original Jesus into someone less threatening and demanding.

In *The Original Jesus: Trading the Myths We Create for the Savior Who Is* (Baker) ★★☆☆, Daniel Darling takes aim at a score of popular but fake saviors: “Guru Jesus,” “Red-Letter Jesus,” “Braveheart Jesus,” “Dr. Phil Jesus,” “Prosperity Jesus,” and more. No matter how confidently you proclaim fidelity to biblical teaching, this book will snag you with at least one of its pseudo-Christ. In his usually gentle, sometimes funny, always astute skewering of trendy myths about our Lord, Darling (vice president of communications for the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission) vindicates a key insight of one of his theological heroes, John Calvin. The Genevan Reformer said that idolatry is our root sin and that the human imagination is an idol factory. Clear biblical thinking casts down our self-fabricated godlets. That’s what Darling does.

This book makes helpful reading for anyone willing to have his or her understanding of Christ critiqued and corrected. Church study groups, if they dared, would find the short, fast-paced, hard-hitting chapters great catalysts for debate. At various points I reacted with, “Hey, I really like worshiping that Jesus. I’ve been personally blessed by that Jesus. How dare you?” To which I hear Darling reply, “Gotcha!”

## JESUS MYTHS

Anyone setting out to correct our false, self-serving conceptions of Christ has got his work cut out. The challenge is not only that lousy Christology is rampant among us. Perhaps more insidiously, the critic presumes to have captured

the more correct, biblically defensible, surefire *original* Jesus. But should he be so certain? It’s easy enough to knock down Joel Osteen’s Prosperity Jesus, or the goofy, hairy-chested Braveheart Jesus. But Darling tends to get tangled up in his own Jesus myths when he goes after more subtle heresies like American Jesus or Post-Church Jesus. In those chapters he reveals the limits of his own Christology while correcting ours.

A favorite habit of liberal Christianity is to turn the living, lordly, resurrected Jesus into some abstracted essence or a set of propositions. By peeling away all the pious accretions of the ages, liberals in the past century attempted to go back to the original, historical, “real Jesus.” That’s the sort of reductionism Darling justifiably abhors (especially in his chapter debunking “Red-Letter Jesus”), but he’s often guilty of the same habit.

While Darling’s Jesus is clearly our divine Savior, he is not so much the Second Person of the Trinity (the Holy Spirit doesn’t make much of a showing in this book). It’s painfully true, as he argues, that we have attempted to cut Jesus down to size, making him into a self-help guru or enlisting him in our pet political causes. But in Darling’s telling, Christ’s work is mostly about individual salvation from our sins, leaving us unchallenged politically, economically, racially, and otherwise.

This may be a function of my Wesleyan background, but I didn’t hear enough about Jesus as teacher, master of disciples, healer, rabble-rouser, scathing critic of the rich, and lover of enemies. In short, Darling misses an opportunity to offer a picture of Jesus that’s half as rich as Scripture’s. Where’s the Jesus who said not, “Believe correct things about me,” but rather, “Follow me!”?

The church has a rich tradition, informed by Scripture, of reflecting about Jesus as God Incarnate, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Lord of the church, and the perfect Passover Lamb. While

**I didn’t hear enough about Jesus as teacher, master of disciples, healer, rabble-rouser, scathing critic of the rich, and lover of enemies.**

Darling certainly cites Scripture to make his case against false conceptions of Jesus, at times his approach seems to consist mainly of cutting and pasting. To grasp the reality of a Savior as rich and complex as the God-man Jesus, you need that deeper form of theological reflection that the church has nurtured. Scriptural citations alone are insufficient.

Darling’s finest chapter is his critique of the simplified, ripped-out-of-biblical context “Red-Letter Jesus.” But along the way Darling lapses into saying, in effect, that though Jesus is the Son of God, he is subordinate to Scripture. What about the living, active, revealing Christ *now*? I love the way Darling allows Scripture to keep Jesus difficult and demanding, but I can’t escape a suspicion that Darling would limit Jesus to his portrayal in Scripture, rather than worshiping Jesus as Lord even of Scripture. For all their flaws, at least some of the Jesus myths that Darling pillories emphasize his relevance here and now.

Jesus is not only the primary subject of the Bible—he is also the agent of revelation. People who met the original Jesus were forced to ask, “Who is this?” Theology didn’t just occur centuries later, as learned men distorted the obvious, self-evident Jesus. From day one, ordinary people were plunged into complex rumination because of what Jesus said and did. They weren’t simply presented with ready-made doctrinal truth.

Darling stresses that we must accept Scripture, all of it, as from Jesus. But he doesn’t give us a Jesus at work in us and through Scripture. Jesus, the church has always taught, is a speaking, revealing subject—not merely the object of a reliable historical record.

## ‘WHAT ABOUT THE JESUS WHO SAID . . . ?’

Darling seems keen on not offending his targets. In some ways this is admirable: Christian charity is a noble virtue, one that Christians themselves can easily neglect in this era of proliferating outrage. But at some point, names have to be named, and shameful teachings shamed. Who are these folks talking up a hyper-masculine Braveheart Jesus or a hyper-patriotic American Jesus? *The Original Jesus* would have been strengthened with more examples of wrongheaded rhetoric from specific Christian figures. Is there really someone out there preaching that

“Jesus is my buddy”?

Darling is well within his rights to attack “Left-Wing Jesus,” but where is his chapter on “Right-Wing Jesus”? Hard pressed to find any Scripture explicitly affirming capitalism, private property rights, and personal freedom, he tends to fall back on asserting conventional conservative political wisdom. (To be

fair, Darling does touch upon conservative misrepresentations in chapters on “American Jesus” and “Prosperity Jesus.”)

But perhaps fending off these charges of over- and under-emphasis just goes with the territory. There is a plague of fake Jesuses stalking the land, and I commend Darling for confronting them head-on. But it’s worth repeating: Anyone claiming

to possess the real, scripturally certified Jesus leaves himself open to fellow believers who are quick to counter, with no less biblical warrant, “But what about the Jesus who said . . . ?” **CT**

**WILL WILLIMON** is a retired Methodist bishop and professor of Christian ministry at Duke Divinity School.

# Submit No More

Scripture affirms patriarchy, says John Stackhouse—just not for all time. **By Craig L. Blomberg**

**W**hat are the proper, God-ordained roles for men and women—within the church, the family, the workplace, and broader society? In answering these questions, conservative evangelicals often identify as “complementarians” (men and women have distinct, *complementary* roles), while their counterparts call themselves “egalitarians” (men and women collaborate in fulfilling responsibilities given equally to both).

John G. Stackhouse Jr., the Canadian evangelical scholar and commentator, cuts across these familiar alignments in his new book. As a self-styled “conservative egalitarian,” he parts company with liberal feminists who reject Scripture for promoting a timeless patriarchy. But he also finds fault with evangelical egalitarians who reinterpret numerous passages to say something other than what the church has historically believed them to say.

In *Partners in Christ: A Conservative Case for Egalitarianism* (IVP Academic) ★★★★★, Stackhouse acknowledges that various New Testament passages advance a sweepingly complementarian viewpoint. He maintains, however, that once a culture has left its patriarchal origins behind, these passages are no longer meant to be obeyed.

The book identifies a double tradition in Scripture regarding slavery and the status of women. In each case, there are passages that appear to bless

the status quo, while other words and themes gesture in liberating directions. Stackhouse resolves the tension by viewing affirmations of the status quo as temporary—meant to be superseded, in time, by the larger message of liberty.

Stackhouse recognizes that most egalitarians will find his position too conservative. In mainstream Muslim cultures, for instance, he discourages Christians from trumpeting women’s rights too loudly, for the sake of preserving evangelistic opportunities. Nor will “soft complementarians” find Stackhouse a reliable ally, since he insists that “problem passages” from Paul and Peter mean what the vast majority of Christians in history understood them to mean: significant restrictions on women’s leadership roles inside and outside the church, and submission to male headship in marriage.

Stackhouse also dismisses the standard approach of biblical feminists, who point to historical, cultural, and linguistic reasons for not taking these passages as patriarchal in their original settings. Why, he asks, would God allow the church to misunderstand them so completely for so long?

Today, at least in the West, Stackhouse would have us jettison complementarian approaches because of the likelihood that they will impede the spread of the gospel. Women who are appropriately gifted and trained must step up to the plate and lead. Stackhouse has an excellent

catalog of reasons why women often fail to lead, even when men want them to. Men, he concedes, are often at fault, because they insist that women conform to male leadership styles.

Stackhouse’s analysis always repays careful consideration. But disagreements are sure to arise. Strong complementarians will no doubt object that Stackhouse fails to demonstrate that the key New Testament passages should be set aside as societies embrace new gender norms. Egalitarians will probably point to times when Christians led the way in emancipation efforts. They’ll caution that if believers wait for societies to progress beyond patriarchy before supporting women’s rights, the wait will be intolerably long.

With few exceptions (he occasionally labels opposing views as “ludicrous”), Stackhouse writes with a self-effacing, respectful spirit. He does not pretend to have the final word on gender roles and male–female relationships. *Partners in Christ* encourages believers to adopt the position with the fewest practical problems, rather than the one that ties up all loose ends. As important as it is to analyze (and debate) the Bible’s take on gender roles, our disagreements shouldn’t prevent us from coming together to love, serve, and advance the kingdom of God. **CT**

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**Partners in Christ:  
A Conservative Case  
for Egalitarianism**  
John G. Stackhouse Jr.  
(IVP Academic)





# Comedic Belief

An excerpt from *The Work of Theology*.

**M**ost of those who practice Christian theology think they are engaged in a serious science. This should not be surprising given the reality that at the center of Christian theology is a crucified Savior. Moreover, theology must well deal with the fundamentals of life—that is, life, death, and all the stuff in between. Stuff like love and the betrayal of love. Sentimentality and superficial nostrums must be avoided. Humor can be one of the ways that sentimentality and superficiality can be defied.

One might think the eschatological character of the Christian faith would make Christians a people who have learned to “live loose.” To be able to so live is made possible by the recognition that the use of humor in a defensive or attack mode is indicative of people enslaved by their fears. Christians can risk being subversive because they believe there is a deeper reality than the world determined by fear.

I do think . . . that theology can and should be, in some of its modes, funny. Theology done right should make you laugh. It should be done in an entertaining manner. Humor is not the only mode of entertainment the discourse of theology can take, but it is surely the case that we are often attracted to speech and writing that is funny. This calls into question the presumption by some that if you want what you have to say to be entertaining, then what you have to say cannot be serious. I have tried to defy that presumption by attempting to do theology in a manner that “tickles” the imagination.

A number of times, when being introduced before giving a lecture, the story is told of my encounter with a student at Harvard. It seems I was walking across Harvard looking for the

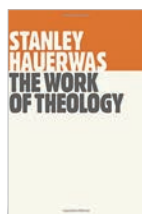
library. Not sure I was going in the right direction, I asked an undergraduate if he could tell me where the library is at. He responded by observing, “At Harvard we do not end sentences with a preposition.” I am said to have responded, “Can you tell me where the library is at, [expletive]?”

There is just one problem with that story. It did not happen. However, the story now seems to have reached a canonical stage.

I relate this phenomenon because the story also reflects the general presumption that I am a “funny guy.” Some even think I have a gift for the one-liner. It is not for me to claim to be funny, but I do hope that I have been able to do theology in a funny manner. I think my work is funny in at least two ways. First, I hope that people laugh out loud about something I have said or written. Second, my work is funny because I try to find ways to “do theology” in disguise. So I push the limits of the presumptions about “serious” theology in the hope that the difference might make a difference for how we live.

It is one thing to suggest that theologians need a sense of humor. It is quite something else to argue that their theology must be funny. I acknowledge the distinction, but I will maintain that not only should theologians know how to

laugh at themselves but also their theology should manifest the joy that reflects the glory of God. Of course, joy is not the same as what makes something funny, but what is funny depends first and foremost on a joyful recognition that God is God and we are not. The joke is on us.



**The Work of Theology**  
Stanley Hauerwas  
(Eerdmans)

This excerpt is adapted from parts of the chapter, “How to Be Theologically Funny.” Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

## Wilson's Bookmarks

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

### THE WITCHES

STACY SCHIFF (LITTLE, BROWN)

Another book about the Salem Witch Trials? Been there, read that. Yes—but Stacy Schiff's account is better written than any I have encountered. Far from feeling that you are slogging through an overly familiar tale, you are likely to find yourself turning the pages (as I did) with a sense that until now you'd never quite taken in what happened. You don't need to share Schiff's larger assumptions about first and last things (or about lesser matters such as “the paranoid style in American politics”) to profit from her brilliantly assured narrative.

### THE WEATHER EXPERIMENT

PETER MOORE (FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX)

Set in the 19th century, carrying the subtitle *The Pioneers Who Sought to See the Future*, this is both a lively account of the beginnings of weather forecasting and an Enlightenment fable pitting the virtues of science against the stifling constraints of religious dogmatism. Though his subject is different from Schiff's, the two books share notable affinities. And it's possible to learn a lot from *The Weather Experiment* and to be thoroughly entertained by it even as you are shaking your head at his caricature of know-nothing faith blown away by the “keen spring breeze” of scientific inquiry.

### SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

KATHERINE SONDEREGGER (FORTRESS PRESS)

Systematic theology is decidedly not my cup of tea (I have a very unsystematic mind), but I do take doses of it now and then. Until recently, I knew nothing about the work of Katherine Sonderegger, a theologian at Virginia Theological Seminary. But in the space of a few days, first Dan Treier and then Chris Green mentioned the just-published first volume of Sonderegger's systematic theology, focused on the doctrine of God. I am in their debt: This is one of the most exhilarating works of theology I have read in many years. Its combination of prodigious learning, superb insight, and unembarrassed piety is extraordinary—I've never encountered anything quite like it.



# From Pride Parades to the Pulpit

A pastor's journey out of his parents' gay-rights activism. Interview by Morgan Lee

**W**hen Caleb Kaltenbach was two years old, both his mother and father came out as gay, then got a divorce. Growing up, he absorbed their antagonism toward Christians, but went on to embrace Christianity as a teenager. In *Messy Grace: How a Pastor with Gay Parents Learned to Love Others Without Sacrificing Conviction* (WaterBrook Press), Kaltenbach, a pastor in Southern California, charts the path to reconciling with his parents, who are now both believers. CT assistant editor Morgan Lee spoke with Kaltenbach about his experiences ministering to people with same-sex attraction.

## Where did your youthful hatred of Christians come from?

My mom and her partner were active in gay-rights organizations. They took me to gay clubs, parties, and campouts. I marched in gay pride parades and went to political events. That was just my life.

I hated Christians because I saw how they treated gay people. At the end of one parade, I saw signs saying, "God hates you." Protesters were spraying water and urine on people. I asked my mom, "Why are they acting that way?" She said, "Caleb, they're Christians, and Christians hate gay people."

My dad and I sometimes attended an Episcopal church, but it didn't teach me much about God. I was an altar boy but fell asleep during most services. I learned that evangelicals were people who wouldn't like you if you weren't a white Republican.

## How were you able to repair the relationship with your parents?

After I came to Christ, my parents were

irate. My dad grounded me. He told me I was basically disowning him. My mom wouldn't talk to me for months. When I told them I believed that God intended sexual intimacy only for one man and one woman, that created more trauma.

But I always told them that God loved them, not based on their sexuality but because of what his Son accomplished on the cross. I had to continually show them examples of people, including my friends, who were not like the Christians they had known before.

## How has reconciling with your parents influenced your ministry?

After I first brought my mom to my former church, two elders basically said, "If you want to keep preaching here, don't ever bring someone like your mother again."

That was my last Sunday there. I prayed, "Lord, if you give me the chance to lead a church, I want it to be a place for people struggling with sexual identity, for addicts or gangbangers, for people who are bankrupt, for people having affairs."

At my current church, we absolutely believe God has expectations for sexuality. But I am not called to change anyone's sexual orientation. My goal is to preach the gospel and to share Jesus. The LGBT people who attend know about our traditional views. That doesn't stop us from loving and embracing them.

## What can evangelicals learn from the LGBT community?

We can learn that homosexual identity goes much deeper than sexual habits. Before

her partner died, my mom told me they had stopped being sexually active years ago. But she still called herself a lesbian. When gay people are invited to give up that lifestyle, they think, "You want me to give up my friends, my community, my movement, my acceptance? No, thank you"—especially when the church hasn't offered them an alternative community.

We can also learn a lot about loving other people. Are there militant activists like my mom? Sure. There are extremists in just about every community. But for the most part, they are some of the most loving and accepting people I know. They're not looking for the next battle to fight. They just want to live their lives.

At its best, the LGBT movement has many qualities we'd associate with the church. There's a love for people. There's a strong sense of justice and a commitment to a shared cause. They're intentional about sharing their views and unashamed to be recognized for what they believe.

## What do you find most frustrating about the divide between evangelicals and the LGBT community?

I see many churches digging in their heels instead of wrestling with issues of grace and truth. For example, how would you react if two men were holding hands in church? Could a lesbian couple attend a parenting class? Could they attend your small group or Bible study? What if a lesbian wants to be baptized, or an openly gay man wants to go on a men's retreat? These questions will come up eventually. **CT**



**Messy Grace: How a Pastor with Gay Parents Learned to Love Others Without Sacrificing Conviction**  
Caleb Kaltenbach  
(WaterBrook Press)

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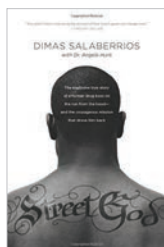


# New & Noteworthy

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

"I was too naive to realize how easily my life could have been snuffed out. In fact, 30 of my friends died violently in drug wars or in prison. The only difference between them and me is Jesus. So when the Lord asked me, 'Will you follow me back into the streets?' how could I say no?"

~ from **Street God** by Dimas Salaberrios



## STREET GOD

The Explosive True Story of a Former Drug Boss on the Run from the Hood—and the Courageous Mission That Drove Him Back

**DIMAS SALABERRIOS, WITH ANGELA HUNT** (TYNDALE)

As a young, ambitious drug kingpin, Salaberrios had an all-consuming quest: to exercise dominance over the mean streets of New York City. This pathway brought him to the brink of prison and death—until God intervened. Today, as pastor of Infinity Bible Church in the Bronx, Salaberrios ministers to the same community he once sought to control. "I know now," he confesses in this memoir, "that I'm not the one who should rule. I've given all of myself—the good qualities and the bad, the victories and the mistakes—to the real God, and in his grace he's taken it all and [is] using it for his goals, not mine."



## TRANQUILITY

Cultivating a Quiet Soul in a Busy World

**DAVID W. HENDERSON** (BAKER)

The frenzied pace of modern life has us perpetually protesting the seeming scarcity of time: Where does it go? Why can't I have more? And how can I make the most of what little I have? In *Tranquility*, Henderson, a pastor in the Covenant Church, invites us to step back from our anxieties about time management to consider how Scripture sets horizons for the ticking of clocks and flipping of calendars. "How," he asks, "does God view time, and how does he wish us to see it? And once we see it his way, how does he want us to live bountifully within its banks and currents?"



## 7 WOMEN

And the Secret of Their Greatness

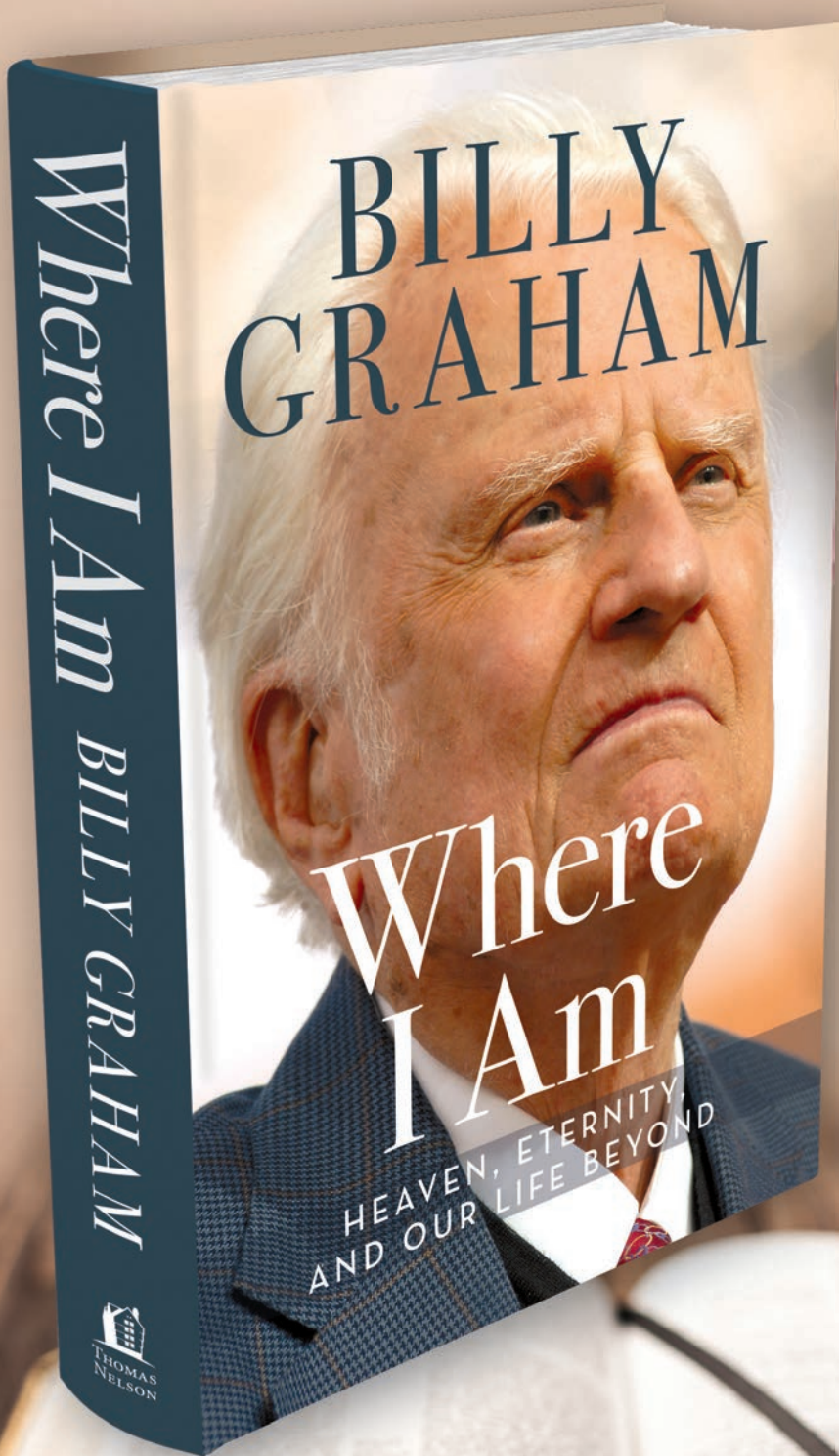
**ERIC METAXAS** (THOMAS NELSON)

In 2013, Metaxas followed up his bestselling biographies of Wilberforce and Bonhoeffer with a shorter book combining seven chapter-length profiles of history's finest, most heroically virtuous men (including Wilberforce and Bonhoeffer). Now comes the logical successor, *7 Women*, in which the popular author and raconteur contributes biographical sketches of Joan of Arc, Mother Teresa, Corrie ten Boom, and Rosa Parks, alongside some lesser-known figures. Metaxas looks to show how these women attained moral greatness as women, not as competitors with or imitators of men.

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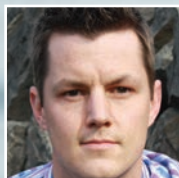


# Dear Future Pastor

Letters from a pastor's spouse, a pastor's child, and a church board member on what they've learned about ministry life.



**Kay Warren** *p.80*



**Barnabas Piper** *p.88*



**Scott Ellis** *p.90*

# Dear Future Pastor

What Kay Warren, Barnabas Piper, and Scott Ellis want future pastors to know about life in ministry.

**W**ho knows better what a future pastor needs to hear than those people who have had front row seats to what, exactly, it means to dedicate a life to full-time ministry? Those closest to a pastor—a spouse, a child, a church board member—will be there through it all, serving alongside the pastor and seeing things in their lives that others cannot. Take it from Kay Warren, Barnabas Piper, and Scott Ellis. Each has seen firsthand how ministry impacts a pastor's key relationships. They wrote these letters to offer wisdom from their experience so future pastors can start off strong and, perhaps, avoid some common mistakes.

## From a Pastor's Wife:



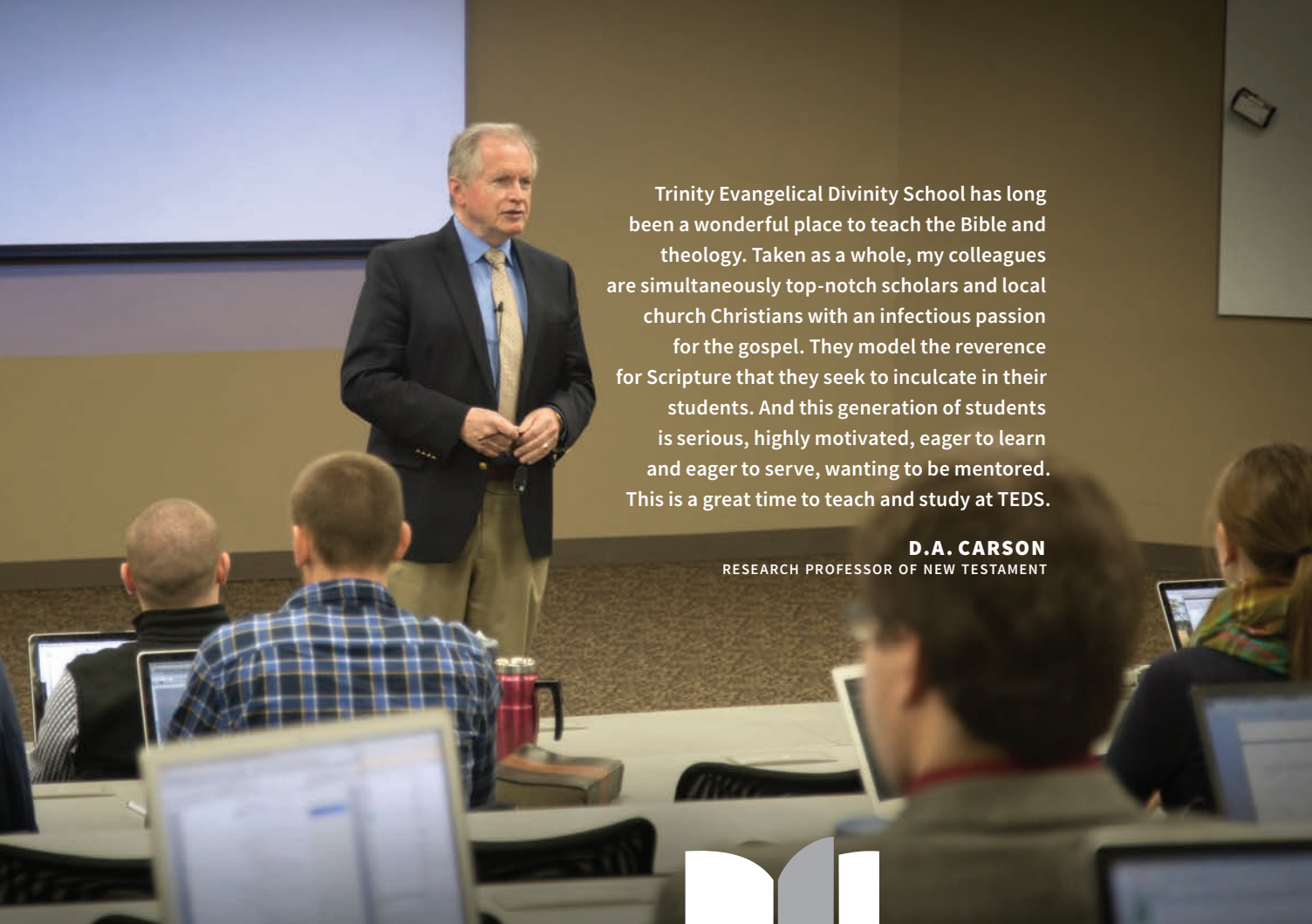
### KAY WARREN

Wife of Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California. Kay co-founded Saddleback Church with Rick, and

is an international speaker and best-selling author.

## Dear Future Pastor,

I'm writing to you as someone who's been in ministry her entire life. My dad was a pastor, and I've been married to a pastor for 40 years. Here are some of the most crucial things I've learned.



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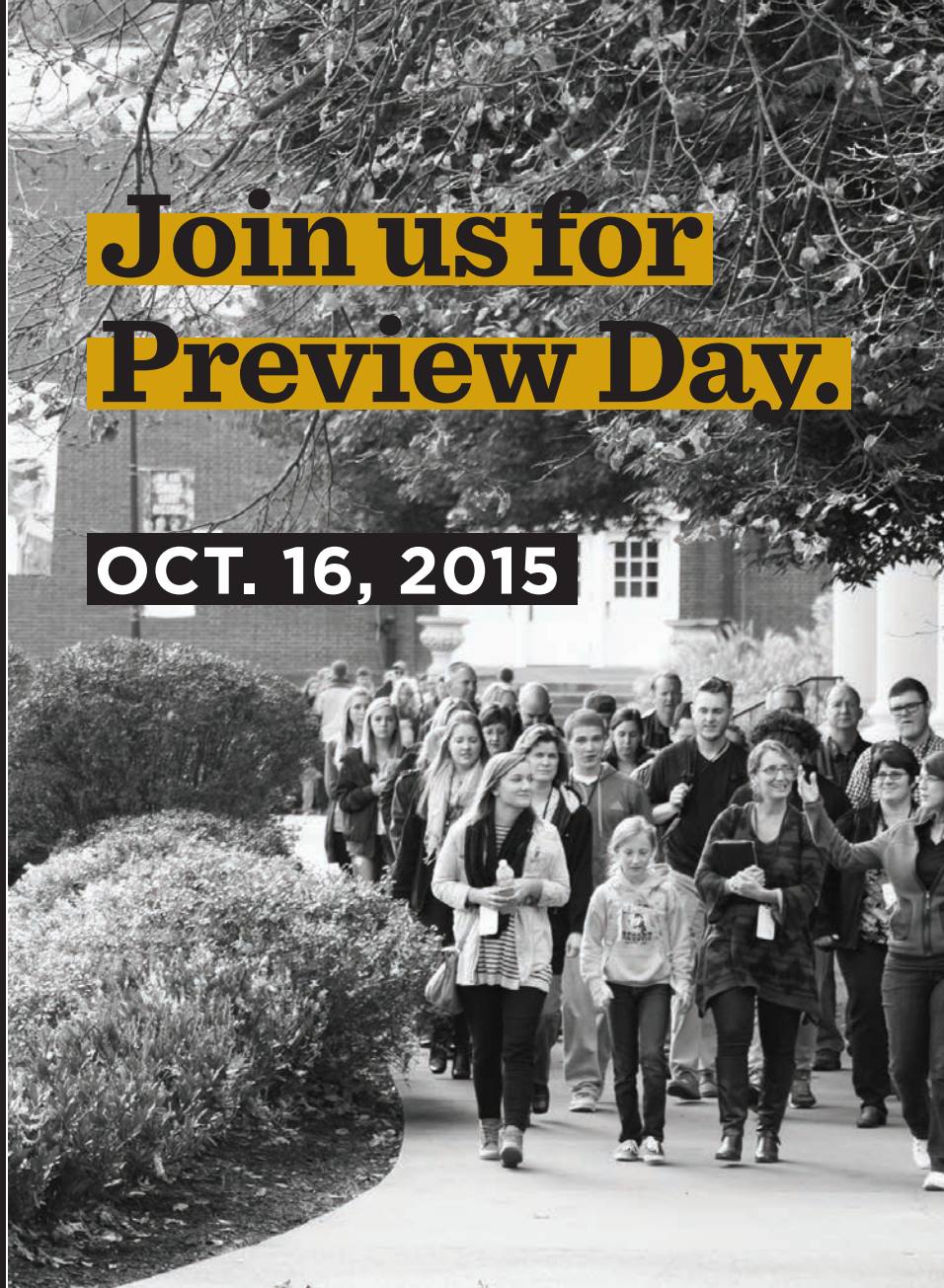
One of the best tips I can give you—one that will save you many hours of frustration and exhaustion—is this: figure out how to differentiate between the people who want to change and those who don't. My first child spent most of her first year taking her afternoon naps in my lap while I counseled women on the phone—one in particular who was much older than me. She had some serious marriage problems, and I would do my very best to give her good advice. But when I would ask her a few days later if she had implemented any of my suggestions, she always said no, and offered excuses for why she couldn't do what I had advised. It finally dawned on me that she wasn't really interested in working on her marriage; what she wanted was someone to listen to her complaints and reassure her that it wasn't her fault she had a lousy marriage. When I realized that she never put into practice the earnest advice I gave her, I told her to call me back when she was ready to actually make some changes.

It became a bedrock principle of ministry for me: move with the movers, and let go of those who aren't yet serious about doing the hard work of spiritual and relationship growth. I always explain gently why I'm declining to keep meeting with them, with the hope that it will galvanize those with a sincere but immature heart to buckle down and make the necessary changes. I promise you, this is gold.

Something no one warned me about: numerical growth has a cost. Gaining in one area will mean losing in another. I thought a growing church could only bring greater joy and fulfillment; I was not prepared for the sadness I felt when another leap in numbers occurred. I was sad when I no longer could invite the whole church over to my house for a Christmas Open House; when I stood on the patio and looked in all four directions and realized I didn't recognize a single face; when I stopped being asked for my opinion on what color carpet should go in the sanctuary or what design to use for the Easter bulletin; when more qualified musicians showed up and my mediocre piano playing wasn't needed; when people who had been members for 10 years stopped me on the patio and introduced themselves, and I realized I didn't know them from Adam. I was embarrassed and ashamed of myself

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for a long time, thinking my sadness over these losses was a sign of immaturity. But then I realized that it's okay to grieve what will never be the same again. Weep when it happens, and then thank God for new people coming to Jesus and finding a spiritual home. Both are appropriate responses.

This is probably obvious, but I can't help but say it: treat your spouse and children respectfully from the pulpit. I don't hear it as much anymore, but pastors used to make their wives and children the butt of every joke. His wife's cooking, her mother, her housekeeping skills, her intelligence, her Bible knowledge—all were fodder for sermon illustrations. The kids' private thoughts, words, and actions were woven into Dad's sermon, or they were the used as the point of a silly story. Don't do it. Know the boundaries of privacy and kindness that your family will accept, and don't cross those lines. Your family deserves that kind of honor.

If it stops being fun—if ministry becomes more of a burden than a pleasure—pay attention. Don't keep pushing until you're just a shell of the person you were. Don't keep pushing until your wife is bone-tired, weary of criticism, done with living in a

glass house where her every move is scrutinized and evaluated. Don't keep pushing until your children hate you, and God, and church.

If you need help dealing with damaged emotions, or wounds from your childhood, or the pressures and strains of ministry, ask for it. Boldly! Without shame! Don't lick your wounds in secrecy. Don't pretend to walk on water, no matter how many board members or cute little grandmas try to keep you up there on the pedestal. It's easy to fall off, and the fall is usually a hard one. You're just a person. You don't have to

do it alone, and you don't have to do it perfectly every time. Don't fall for the destructive myth that you have to be there for everyone else, no matter what. Too many broken men and women have, and then were left to wonder who would be there for them in their time of desperation. Pastors, and their spouses and kids, are prone to the same addictions, mental illnesses, hurts, habits, and hang-ups as their congregants. Don't wait—get help.

There's so much more I want to tell you, but I'll close with this: no matter what changes, some things will remain constant. Spouses will always need emotional connection, physical contact, empathy, companionship, and support. Your spouse will need you as a lover, a companion, a shoulder to lean on, a hand to hold, a partner to dream with, a fellow sinner to seek grace with, and a hero to look up to. Marriages thrive on shared history, chemistry, and mystery—the person you married will never be fully known to you, but oh, how fun

it is to try! Children will never out-grow their need for parents who are models, instructors, and coaches. They will crave unhurried time, focused attention, the knowledge that they're special, and a safe and secure home

*“If it stops being fun—  
if ministry becomes  
more of a burden  
than a pleasure—pay  
attention. Don't keep  
pushing until you're  
just a shell of the  
person you were.”*

filled with love, forgiveness, grace, 2nd and 3rd and 23rd chances, respect, honor, creativity, and an abiding love for God and his Word. You can take it to the bank that your parishioners will desire a pastor who listens, shows up in the special moments of their lives (births, deaths, marriages, parties, etc.), and genuinely loves them. You might not be the best preacher, but they will probably overlook your less-than-awesome sermons if they know you flat-out love them.

I'm praying for you and your family today!

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## *From a Pastor's Kid:*



### **BARNABAS PIPER**

*Son of John Piper,  
best-selling author  
and former pastor of  
Bethlehem Baptist  
Church in Minneapolis,*

*Minnesota. Barnabas wrote more  
about his experiences as a PK in *The  
Pastor's Kid: Finding Your Own Faith  
and Identity* (David C. Cook).*

### ***Dear Future Pastor,***

You are called, or at least you're pretty sure you are. That's why you are heading into the great unknown called "vocational ministry." I understand that. I believe that. I believe God lays it on people's hearts in an undeniable way to serve his church as pastors.

But you must know that this calling makes life difficult for your family, especially your children. While you feel the pull of the pulpit, they don't. Your kids aren't called to ministry, and they don't want to challenge your calling because that would mean challenging God. Neither, though, do they always *like* being the children of a minister. It can be difficult, but are they free to say so? Your calling casts a long and intimidating shadow.

You may think the challenges of being a pastor's kid (PK) are overstated. As one who spent my entire childhood, my college years, and my young professional and married life as a PK, I assure you they are not. You may be inclined to think you know what the challenges will be, but I suspect some are subtle enough as to have escaped your notice.

Take, for example, the scrutiny. Most people in your church will have good intentions and will be predisposed to like you and your family. But all that liking

means a whole lot of noticing. Parishioners will notice everything your kids do—whether they are misbehaving in the supermarket, talking during service or Sunday school, flirting, running a stop sign, seeing an R-rated movie, who they're dating, who they just broke up with, and so forth. Of course you'll unwittingly encourage this by telling stories about your kids in your sermons, too. No matter how kind people are, all that *noticing* piles on the pressure. It leaves no room for mistakes and erodes children's sense of freedom.

You are likely prepared for the expectation that will be on you, as a pastor, to be morally flawless. Did you realize your kids will face the same? They will be expected to behave better, to believe better, to profess better, to lead better, and to set an example. People will overlook the fact that by nature they're just like every other kid, and will expect someone a tick more angelic. This is annoying at best, but it can have a devastating effect on your kids' identities and souls.

Will they define themselves by others' expectations? Will they base their worth on an extra-biblical moral standard? Will they be people-pleasers, or will they

rebel against the expectations? Or might they hide their true selves, their questions, their fears, and their doubts behind a faux-moral façade just to survive, all the while not being sure what they actually believe? Will you be able to tell?

Teaching is what you do. Each Sunday you will stand in front of a congregation and expound upon

God's Word, his character, and his gospel. You will lead your family in devotions and have theological conversations. You will fill your kids with biblical truth as much as you can. The foundation of their faith will be laid, and they will have a storage shed full of building blocks for belief. But

*“One of your greatest challenges will be discerning which answers your children give you are merely the ‘right’ ones and which are truly windows to their souls.”*

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"Wacker examines not so much what Graham did as how he did it—a matter of manners and management as much as of vision and talent... If a great subject deserves a great book, Billy Graham has one."

—*Booklist* (starred review)

"In this elegantly written and compulsively readable account, Wacker... probes the ways that Graham touched so many so deeply while aiming to provide the moral voice for a nation. Interweaving biography with social and intellectual history, Wacker suggests that Graham's brilliance shone brightly from his many facets—preacher, pastor, Southerner, and entrepreneur."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"We emerge with a more complete, nuanced understanding of Graham's personality and ministry... Also shows us a profoundly authentic Graham, a true believer, a man who was not mercenary, who practiced what he preached."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

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will they know how to believe?

One of your greatest challenges will be discerning which answers your children give you are merely the "right" ones and which are truly windows to their souls. You will try to determine what they truly believe versus what they know they *ought* to believe. And the hard part is, they often won't know the difference themselves. PKs are adept at giving the right answers. But answers and belief aren't the same thing. One is mental assent or mere mimicry; the other is a life changed from the inside out.

The scrutiny, the expectations, and the lack of clarity about belief can create a witches brew of doubts and confusion. But to whom can PKs take their questions? Where is it safe? If they are expected to be "just so," to have the answers and to be more mature believers than their peers, then doubts and questions aren't okay. The church, where they ought to feel safest, becomes off-limits. Even your job security will rest on their behavior and profession of faith. What are they to do? Will they view you as safe, or will they fear their questions will be an assault on your calling?

Your children will need you to be their parent before you are their pastor. Talk with them; don't preach at them. Listen to them as a confidant, not as a professional counselor. When you can, protect them from the expectations heaped upon them. Your standing for them will be Superman-esque. While you won't always be able to protect them in public, be sure to make your home a haven of grace and consistency where you admit your faults and ask forgiveness so they know they can do the same. And have fun with them. All your lessons will pale in comparison to time spent with them playing baseball, Barbies, Legos, fishing, biking, drawing, or hiking. Enter into the hobbies they love and have a hobby you can fold them into so they feel part of your life. (Reading doesn't count; it's not a group activity.)

Be patient with your kids. They are kids, after all, just like all the other delightful little knuckleheads out there. They will hear you. They will know what you believe and what you stand for. They will absorb what you say, even if it doesn't show. Be patient and be present. Many PKs bloom late, because it takes time to sort through the pressures and expectations to find their own identity

and faith. They need your love, grace, and prayers along the way. And they need to know that you don't care what expectations anyone *else* has for them. All you want is for them to live a life that pleases Jesus.

## **From a Church Board Member:**



### **SCOTT ELLIS**

*Board member serving alongside Pastor Mandy Smith at University Christian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio.*

*Scott has served in church leadership for 26 years.*

## **Dear Future Pastor,**

After years of study, you have now arrived. You are getting ready to serve in your first pastorate. I assume you are both excited and intimidated. God has called you to an essential role in his church. As a church board member who has walked alongside pastors for 26 years, I would like to give you some advice on how to lead a church as you start out on this journey.

**Define success.** In the Great Commission, there is one imperative command: "make disciples." Success is not the number of seats you fill on Sunday morning, the size of the budget, or the beauty of your facilities. Don't sacrifice people over programs, budgets, and buildings—as your people develop into passionate servants of God, everything else will follow. The stronger the "living stones" that make up your church become, the sturdier the church will be.

**Model transformation, not perfection.** No one can live up to perfection. One habit I see in churches is putting on a façade that everything is great all the time. Weakness is hidden. We are afraid that if people see us falling short of God's standards in leadership, they will reject Christ and his church. However, at the center of the gospel is Christ dying for us, the sinful. Those outside of Christ need to see that his disciples are no better than anyone else—they are simply forgiven. Through modeling

continued on page 97

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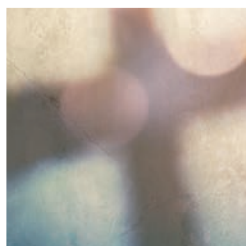
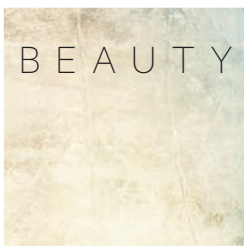
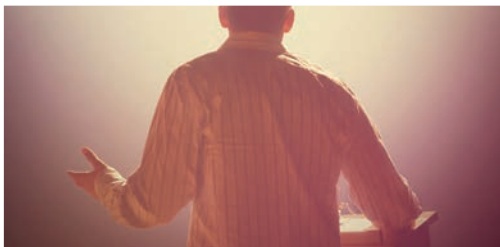
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continued from page 90

of transformation, they can see that discipleship is possible.

Transformation is not easy. As a disciple, I yearn for transparency from my pastors. As I see the process of transformation in them, I learn that I am not unusual in my struggles. Share hard times along with your joys. Part of Christian maturity is trusting God despite struggles. When your people stand firm in difficult periods of life, your church will become more resilient.

**Concede ownership.** Always remember whose church it is. Christ said, “I will build *my* church.” His will must be sought when decisions are made about the church. I have learned that the more I take ownership of my church, the less I listen to God. I make snap decisions that are not from God. This doesn’t mean I don’t care; I deeply do. I want the church to be healthy. Yet when things don’t go the way I think they should, I must continually remind myself to trust in Christ. If leadership humbly seeks Christ’s will, no matter what comes, then he is in

control. There are times that the best decision I make is to first stop and listen.

**Learn to observe.** When people grow in Christ, they bloom in passionate service. They are thrilled to be part

gifts. Observe where your people are growing and fan the flame! When I have created a program and then tried to recruit and sell people on its merits, the program has not been as successful as I would have liked. However, when I have

*“When you focus on fostering discipleship, you will see people becoming more excited in service that matches their gifts. Observe where your people are growing and fan the flame.”*

of a purpose greater than their selfish ambitions. They have aligned their lives to the workings of God. As I have grown in my awareness of how God has gifted me, I have also come to see how I can express these gifts in service. When you focus on fostering discipleship, you will see people becoming more excited in service that matches their

observed God working in the lives of my congregation and aligned the church’s organization to encourage God’s moving in his people, there is a deeper passion in the people and greater success.

**Distinguish between busyness and business.** I have observed a tendency of new pastors to earn acceptance

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by keeping really busy. They seem to believe that more activity means more business gets done. However, for some, their time and energies are spread so thin that nothing of major substance gets accomplished. To do the business of the church, first you must stop, look, and listen; then move in the direction of God's leading.

**Grow in Christ.** To nurture discipleship in others, you too must grow in discipleship. To understand the implications of discipleship in others, you too must live out the implications in your daily life. Model the balance between church and family. Model a life that is growing in trust of God's involvement in your everyday decisions. By example, show your people how to deepen their life in Christ.

Future pastor, I look forward with expectancy to your new ministry. As you foster authentic discipleship in your people and Christ takes greater control of the direction his congregation will go, you will see great results. As people passionately seek God, listen for the heartbeat of your church and nurture it. ■

#### Want to know more?

Here are the websites of the schools advertising in this issue of *Christianity Today*. You can also find more information about these schools at **ChristianCollegeGuide.net** and **SeminaryGradSchool.com**.

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Azusa Pacific University (CA) .....	apu.edu
Baylor Graduate School (TX).....	baylor.edu/graduate
Baylor University (TX) .....	baylor.edu
Beeson Divinity School (AL) .....	beesondivinity.com
Bethel University (MN) .....	bethel.edu
Calvin Theological Seminary (MI).....	calvinseminary.edu
Dallas Baptist University (TX).....	dbu.edu
Dallas Theological Seminary (TX).....	dts.edu
Denver Seminary (CO) .....	denverseminary.edu
Fuller Theological Seminary (CA) .....	fuller.edu
Gordon College (MA).....	gordon.edu
Northern Seminary (IL) .....	seminary.edu
Oral Roberts University (OK) .....	oru.edu
Regent University School of Divinity (VA).....	regent.edu/divinity
South University (GA).....	southuniversity.edu
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (KY).....	sbts.edu
The King's College (NY) .....	tkc.edu
Trinity International Divinity School (IL).....	divinity.tiu.edu
Truett Seminary (TX) .....	baylor.edu/truett
Wesley Biblical Seminary (MS) .....	wbs.edu
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## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### **Yale Divinity School Associate Research Scholar Joy and Its Analogs**

Yale Divinity School seeks to appoint an associate research scholar in the field of theology broadly defined for a three-year term to begin January 1, 2016. The successful candidate will support the Joy and Its Analogs project at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture funded by a three-year Theology of Joy and the Good Life grant from the John Templeton Foundation and led by principal investigator Miroslav Volf. In an ecumenical environment, Yale Divinity School prepares students for ordained ministry in diverse Christian churches and for a wide range of professional involvements, including higher education, law, medicine, the arts, management, and public service.

The Divinity School hopes to make an appointment of a junior scholar with a record of distinguished scholarship and a commitment to theological education. The successful candidate should have a PhD in Christian theology or a related discipline, experience teaching Christianity in dialog with other world traditions, and a research focus in a particular area of expertise relevant to the scope of the Theology of Joy and the Good Life project. Exceptional ABDs will also be considered.

A letter of application with curriculum vitae and a list of three references should be submitted online at [apply.interfolio.com/31102](http://apply.interfolio.com/31102). Review of applications will begin on October 15, 2015.

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## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

date will support the Theology of Joy and the Good Life Project at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture funded by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation and led by principal investigator Miroslav Volf. In an ecumenical environment, Yale Divinity School prepares students for ordained ministry in diverse Christian churches and for a wide range of professional involvements, including higher education, law, medicine, the arts, management, and public service.

The Divinity School hopes to make an appointment of a junior scholar with a record of distinguished scholarship and a commitment to developing, implementing, and managing quantitative means of evaluating a research project in the humanities. The successful candidate should have a PhD in sociology or a related discipline, knowledge of the literature of the sociology of intellectual change, and a research focus in a particular area of expertise relevant to the scope of the project. Exceptional ABDs will also be considered.

A letter of application with curriculum vitae and a list of three references should be submitted online at [apply.interfolio.com/31107](http://apply.interfolio.com/31107). Review of applications will begin on October 15, 2015.

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Yale Divinity School seeks to appoint an associate research scholar in the field of theology broadly defined, with a specialization in Christian formation in adolescents, for a three-year term to begin January 1, 2016. The successful candidate will support the Joy and Adolescent Faith and Flourishing project at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture funded by a three-year Theology of Joy and the Good Life grant from the John Templeton Foundation and led by principal investigator Miroslav Volf. In an ecumenical environment, Yale Divinity School prepares students for ordained min-

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

istry in diverse Christian churches and for a wide range of professional involvements, including higher education, law, medicine, the arts, management, and public service.

The Divinity School hopes to make an appointment of a junior scholar with a record of distinguished scholarship and a commitment to theological education. The successful candidate should have a PhD in theology or a related discipline, knowledge of the literature of faith formation in adolescents across a broad range of disciplines, traditions, and cultures, and a research focus in a particular area of expertise relevant to the scope of the Joy and Adolescent Faith and Flourishing project. Candidates with doctorates in psychology, sociology, or child development with research interests in theology are also encouraged to apply. Exceptional ABDs will also be considered.

A letter of application with curriculum vitae and a list of three references should be submitted online at [apply.interfolio.com/31108](http://apply.interfolio.com/31108). Review of applications will begin on October 15, 2015.

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### **Yale Divinity School Associate Research Scholar Theology of Joy and the Good Life**

Yale Divinity School seeks to appoint an associate research scholar in the field of theology broadly defined for a three-year term to begin January 1, 2016. The successful candidate will support the Theology of Joy and the Good Life project at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture funded by a three-year grant from the John Templeton Foundation and led by principal investigator Miroslav Volf. In an ecumenical environment, Yale Divinity School prepares students for ordained ministry in diverse Christian churches and for a wide range of professional involvements, including higher education, law, medicine, the arts, management, and public service.

The Divinity School hopes to make an appointment of a junior scholar with a record of

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

distinguished scholarship and a commitment to theological education. The successful candidate should have a PhD in Christian theology or a related discipline, experience teaching Christianity in dialog with other world traditions, and a research focus in a particular area of expertise relevant to the scope of the Theology of Joy and the Good Life project. Exceptional ABDs will also be considered.

A letter of application with curriculum vitae and a list of three references should be submitted online at [apply.interfolio.com/31109](http://apply.interfolio.com/31109). Review of applications will begin on October 15, 2015.

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The Yale Center for Faith & Culture seeks to hire a program manager for a three-year term to begin January 1, 2016. The successful candidate will support the administration of the Theology of Joy and the Good Life project at the Yale Center for Faith and Culture funded by a three-year grant from the John Templeton Foundation and led by principal investigator Miroslav Volf.

Responsibilities include overall direction and support of the mission, program development, program management, finances and reports, public relations, communications, fundraising, facilities, and information systems. For more information please visit [faith.yale.edu/jobs/projectmanager](http://faith.yale.edu/jobs/projectmanager).

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## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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### **Western Theological Seminary (WTS) Academic Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs**

Western Theological Seminary invites applications and nominations for the position of academic dean and vice president of academic affairs.

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The dean will have an earned PhD or equivalent in a field appropriate to theological curriculum, teaching experience at an academic institution, and a distinguished record of scholarship.

Please direct inquiries, applications and nominations to Rayetta Perez, Executive Assistant to the President; 101 East 13th Street; Holland, MI 49423; or [rayetta@westernsem.edu](mailto:rayetta@westernsem.edu). Full details of the position may be found at [westernsem.edu/about/jobs/](http://westernsem.edu/about/jobs/).

To ensure full consideration, please supply materials by December 7, 2015. Women and members of racial-ethnic minority groups are encouraged to apply.

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## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Pue, Brenda Susan August 29, 1955 – August 12, 2015**

A spunky, fun-loving leader of leaders, Brenda Susan Pue made a lasting impact through her work with Arrow Leadership, where she mentored and encouraged leaders from around the world to "Lead More Like Jesus."

On August 12, Brenda passed over the threshold peacefully while at home. She was 59. Surrounded by her loving family, and after courageously living with cancer for 588 days, she quietly slipped into heaven.

Throughout her life, and especially as she faced cancer, Brenda was a woman of courage and faith. Writing authentically about her journey, she impacted many readers who followed her blog ([caringbridge.org/visit/brendapue](http://caringbridge.org/visit/brendapue)). A charismatic woman, Brenda was known for her contagious laughter and winsome smile. Just being around this remarkable Vancouver resident made God seem closer at hand and easier to know and trust.

She will be lovingly remembered by Carson, her husband of 38 years, their three boys, Jason (Kristin Paterson), Jeremy (Shari Boileau), Jonathan (Kirstie White), as well as their five beloved grandchildren; Landon, Liam, Mac, Ellie & Georgia.


An inspiring Celebration of Life and Hope was held on Saturday, August 22, 2015, at Christian Life Assembly in Langley, B.C. The service was also broadcast across Canada and can viewed on line at [vimeo.com/user43063162/brendapue](http://vimeo.com/user43063162/brendapue).

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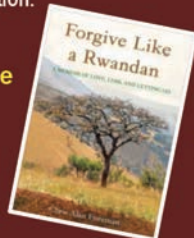
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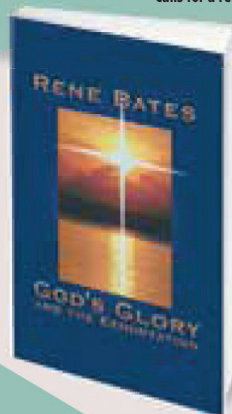
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#### RENE BATES'S BOOK URGES CHURCH TO PREPARE FOR SECOND COMING

### *God's Glory and the Exhortation*

Calls for a return to Christ's original teaching, shedding the "traditions of men"



Bates believes that there is one reason Jesus and the apostles were persecuted and killed, and that one reason is because they opposed "traditions of men" within the church. Today, he points out that there have been 2,000 years of these "traditions of men" within the church, contrary to the raw, undiluted message espoused by Christ and his followers during their time. To rectify this situation and set the stage for the second coming prophesied in biblical times, Bates wrote his book as a trumpet call to his fellow believers, calling on them to turn away from these "traditions of men" before the Lord returns, urging them to look at the original teachings of Christ. His words may be strong, but Bates believes they are true to the Word of God. —John 5:16 and Mark 7:6-9

By Rene Bates • 888-280-7715

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Audio Book Available

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myself falling short of its requirements. I struggled to pray the long, obligatory morning prayer. I skipped ceremonial washings because I didn't understand how to perform them.

It didn't help that I had started dating a non-Bahá'í a few months after joining.

### ABOUT A BOY

Aaron was a friend who identified as a "hostile agnostic." I quickly learned that spending time with him was way more fun than prayer and chastity. I tried to manage my dual commitment to God and to someone who found the Bahá'í faith strange. But the more serious our relationship became, the greater the gap grew between what I should have been doing (praying, reading scripture, fasting) and what I was in fact doing (showing up to class late wearing Aaron's shirts). So I became indifferent to spiritual matters, abandoning the pursuit of "holiness" to do whatever seemed right.

After graduation and two years of living with Aaron, I was still living without an anchor. I decided to take greater control of my life by becoming debt-free. With delusions of paying off loans quickly, I started working on the tech side of the Internet porn industry, populating websites with ads for porn sites. The company behind the scheme promised absurd wealth—with only one hour of work a day!

I plugged away at the job for about four months, only slightly bothered by its moral aspects. Since the pictures already existed, I reasoned, if someone was going to profit, it might as well be me. As it turned out, I never made a single penny. The venture was a way for the company to add a revenue stream, enticing people who would never buy porn files with the promise of cash.

Around the time I abandoned the stint, a former classmate invited Aaron and me, now engaged, to attend Alpha, a course exploring the basic teachings of Christianity. Our friend had just become a Christian, and even though we thought that was strange, we didn't want to hurt his feelings. After our leaders welcomed us to "the ten-week Alpha course," I made a face at Aaron. *Ten weeks?!* But we kept going. We learned that no human can enter God's presence by working hard enough or being morally good enough—but that

in God's mercy, Jesus gave up his life on the cross so that we may be saved from the wrath we all deserve.

After the Alpha course, our friend continued to evangelize us. But Aaron still didn't think much of Christianity. Several months later, he decided that if he was going to make fun of Christians properly, he should read the Bible. I had read the Bible and participated in youth group as a teenager, but seeing Aaron come home with one, I thought it would be good for me to read it again.

And that's when weird stuff started to happen to us.

Over several weeks, I received a preponderance of "unknown number" hang-up calls. Aaron and I would wake up in the middle of the night, scared to leave the room. Aaron started waking up with scratches on his body. At times, we both felt like there was someone else in the house.

One night I woke up to see Aaron half-risen from bed, like someone was pulling him up by his left shoulder. "Go away," I whispered. I shut my eyes and tucked deep into the covers, wishing that the terror would stop.

Later Aaron would tell me he didn't turn to me. But I saw him turn over and look at me. Only it wasn't his face. I screamed and pressed my face to the bed. I was going crazy; no, I was already crazy. I was going to die here in this room from fright, or end up in a psychiatric hospital.

But in that moment, despite the terror, I understood that Jesus was my hope.

So there in the bed that I shared with Aaron, I pleaded with God to save me. I already knew that I had to repent: of trying to be holy through a faith that promised perfection; of helping to sell online pornography; and ultimately, of relying on myself.

As I prayed in repentance, the fog I

cowered under lifted. There was a sudden clarity: Yes, this is true, this is real—Jesus really is the Son of God.

Then I waited to see what Aaron would do. Would he turn to Christ as well? Would he go back to sleep as though nothing had happened? I worried that I might have to say goodbye to my fiancé, that we might be on different paths from here on. Though it was only moments, it felt like eternity—and then Aaron asked Jesus to save him, too. And we were free.

### CONTINUING TO SURRENDER

And we lived happily ever after? Not really. Thanks be to God, the demonic oppression ceased. But converting to Christianity proved inconvenient and downright offensive to some friends and family. Some people assumed our change meant we thought we were "better" people. We also had to figure out how to own a house together and not have sex again until marriage. God gave us a gracious pastor who led us through that quagmire.

Since getting married, Aaron and I have seen the traditional wedding vows play out in real-time. We've faced seasons in which we had to humbly rely on the financial generosity of others. We've welcomed three beautiful children, but also lost a baby to a miscarriage during which I almost died. I developed epilepsy in 2012, which has meant I often cannot rely on my own body and brain.

Even so, there's so much in the Christian life that gives me joy. When our 5-year-old sees a piece of garbage in the street and declares, "I bet *that* person isn't going to heaven" (true story), I remind her that access to heaven has nothing to do with being good and everything to do with God's goodness. I know that when I pray, God hears me, because he responded to my prayer the night he saved me and has continued to provide for us through the years. I can see how much he loves me when I reflect on the experiences he has led me through, slowly, sometimes painfully shaping me into his image.

And I no longer have to strive for perfection, because Christ is my perfection. Even though I don't always like it, his grace is sufficient, and I would be foolish to disagree. **CT**

EMILY ARMSTRONG is a mom of three and freelance illustrator in London, Ontario.

**I thought it would be good for me to read the Bible again. And that's when weird stuff started to happen to us.**

## TESTIMONY



# It Happened One Night

I dabbled in the Bahá'í faith and the porn industry—before a demonic attack brought me to the end of myself.

By Emily Armstrong

I always wanted to be self-made. Raised in Caledonia, Ontario, I was identified in third grade as gifted, and from then on was keenly aware that I should “act smart.” I only participated in things I knew I would do well, and did my best to control all factors that could sabotage perfection. If I got a 93 on an essay, I demanded that the teacher tell me how I lost 7 points. For group projects, I asked my classmate to bring only the presentation board—and brought a backup board just in case. By age 17, I saw myself as a teenager who had everything under control.

Heading to college in London, Ontario, I was eager to be a grown-up. And the ultimate marker of my new independence, I thought, would be joining the Bahá'í faith. A local assembly met in Caledonia, and some of my closest friends were raised in Bahá'í homes, so I was already familiar with the faith. I remember leaving Bahá'í events buoyed by the leaders' optimism about the future: no more war, poverty, or racism. One language,

one currency, and equality of the sexes. It sounded perfect.

The Bahá'í faith grew out of Islamic culture in 19th-century Persia. A merchant, Sayyid Ali Muhammad, claimed to be the long-awaited *Báb* (“Gate”) to the knowledge of the twelfth Imam. Just before the Báb was executed, he appointed one of his followers as his successor. The new leader's half-brother would declare himself *Bahá'u'lláh* (literally “the glory of God”).

According to the tenets of the Bahá'í faith, all major religions before 1863 were founded by “Manifestations of God.” So Adam, Noah, Krishna, Moses, Abraham, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, and the Báb are all manifestations, with Bahá'u'lláh being the final and complete manifestation. The most appealing belief to me: a new order led by Bahá'í leaders that would usher in world peace.

Since I had managed to be so good at everything else, belonging to the religion that ensured perfect order seemed the right step. But I quickly found

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