

CHRISTIANITY TODAY

JULY / AUGUST 2015

SPECIAL SECTION **THE NEW
TRANSGENDER
MOMENT** *p. 44*

**WHY FASHION
MATTERS** *p. 74*

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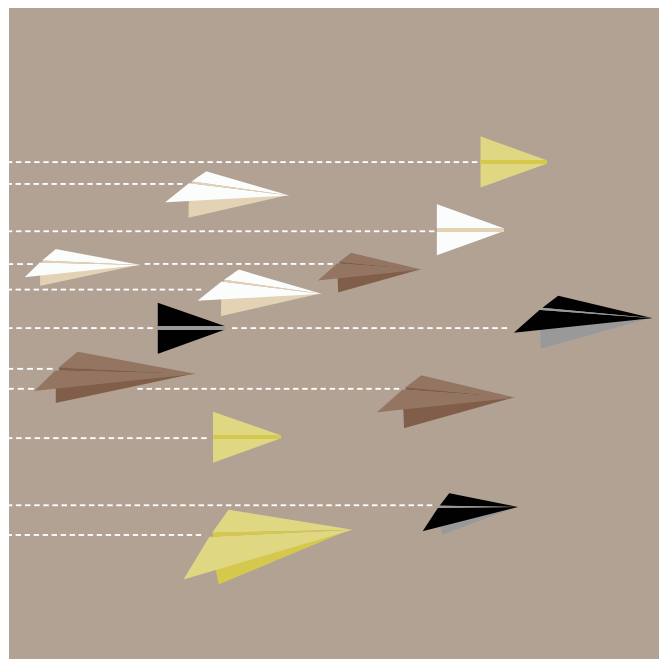
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"Years passed before I could sense how God was using Mark's death to refine my trust in and love for him." p. 58



Timothy (p. 70) enjoys reading poetry, taking walks, and listening to his favorite music: the Louvin Brothers and J.S. Bach.



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Tami is adjusting to round two of motherhood as her newly adopted 8-year-old fills their home with joy, wonder, and indescribable energy.

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Rachel (p. 27) is wild about animals; sometimes she goes to the pet store and the animal shelter just to visit.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



WHAT THE MIRROR CAN'T SEE

Only God knows what is in our hearts. But sociological findings can get us closer.

TED OLSEN *Managing Editor,
News & Online Journalism*



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WHEN JOURNALISTS DESCRIBE journalism as a mirror, quoting Joseph Pulitzer's old metaphor, it's usually to deflect criticism. "Let those who are startled by it blame the people before the mirror, not the mirror," Pulitzer said. But longtime *CT* editor David Neff rightly used the image to describe journalism's corrective function and calling. We don't use a mirror because we've forgotten what we look like (James 1:23-24). We use one because we want to see what needs fixing. At the same time, we don't want our mirrors to hector us or only show us our faults. Mirrors can reassure us, too: You no longer have spinach between your teeth.

If we need journalism to function as a mirror, we need sociology and other disciplines to function as a body scan. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7, esv). Somewhere in between, physicians and sociologists can reveal issues we hadn't seen before.

Consider a 2013 Baylor University study of 389 congregations. Many had accomplished what seems impossible to many US churches: they attracted and retained people from diverse races and ethnicities. But even in churches with a nearly perfect three-way ethnic split (with the largest racial group making up 35% of the congregation), the slim plurality is enough to create an in-group with strong attachments to the congregation, and out-groups feeling like they don't belong. People in the dominant group—even a barely dominant one—are more likely to have a close friend in the congregation, to be involved in small groups, and to say they feel like they belong.

It must be frustrating to hear this when you're a pastor who has worked hard to successfully integrate his congregation. And how aggravating it must be to feel like an outsider in a church that prides itself on inclusion! But the study isn't there to berate multiethnic congregations. Nor need it discourage churches from trying to become one. Instead, it's a diagnosis that should offer hope. A diverse church still struggling with racial bias and ethnic exclusion isn't struggling alone—nor against flesh and blood, but with the principalities and powers of long histories and sociological tendencies.

Portraits of American Life, a separate study from 2012, found that 69 percent of white evangelical Protestants think one of the most effective ways to improve race relations is to stop talking about race. (The percentage had gone up since 2006, and is significantly higher than it is for Americans overall who think this.) At *ct*, we respectfully but strongly disagree. We often dislike these conversations for the same reasons we don't like going to the doctor. We're afraid of what we might find—and think we're probably going to get yelled at. But those tests can reassure us, too. Go ahead, check our results, starting on p. 32. **CT**

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“In God I will praise his word!”

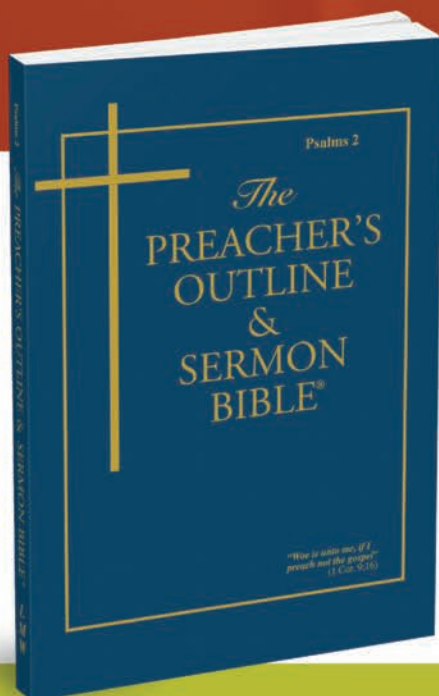
– Psalm 56:10a

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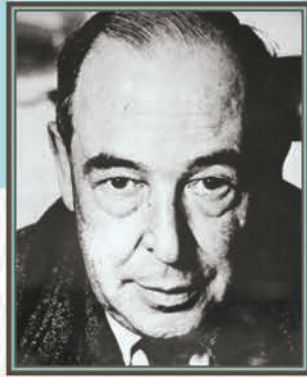


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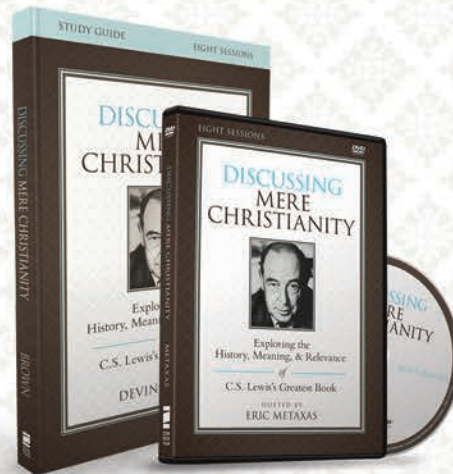
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RESPONSES TO OUR MAY ISSUE



WHY I STILL VACCINATE p. 32

Thank you for the thorough and well-researched cover story by Matthew Loftus. It is ironic and sad that, while vaccines have been so successful in reducing the threat of infectious diseases in developed nations, some parents now fear vaccinations are more deadly than the diseases they prevent. By contrast, in the global South, parents will go to great lengths to reach clinics providing vaccines to protect their children. Out of a desire to serve the vulnerable, Christian organizations carry these vaccines to remote areas, sometimes on foot (such as the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus). Recent outbreaks of diseases in the United States are a reminder why vaccinations became a standard component of preventive care years ago, should continue to be strongly encouraged, and should certainly not be taken for granted.

Garrett Grigsby, Executive Director
Christian Connections for International Health

People often trust their own experiences and the experiences of their friends (or stories from friends of friends of friends) over research and data. I thought it was smart of CT to have the article written by someone

who had had a bad personal experience with a vaccine reaction, but understands that the experience of a tiny minority does not outweigh the documented results of millions.

 **Brian Howell**

Out here in California, we are in a fight for our lives in opposing the elimination of personal/religious objections to mandatory vaccination via SB277. So your biased article, which lacked much integral information, was a grave disappointment and blow to our efforts.

I realize that most are ignorant of the other side of the story that the media, pharma, and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are desperately trying to keep under wraps. The apocalyptic fear being engendered by the media and CDC of the possibility of large-scale epidemics needs to stop. We don't have vaccines for typhoid, scarlet fever, or tuberculosis, but we have no epidemics of these diseases. What we do have is an epidemic of CDC fraud and cover-up on many different levels. We parents are not antivaccine per se. We are proinformation, proaccountability, and proparental rights in the medical care of our children.

The short-term protection afforded by vaccines certainly has a place in public health, but their godlike status does nothing in the way of ensuring they are the absolute safest they can be (they are not), and we use them sparingly when appropriate (we do not). Nor does that status allow for discussion of other variables that contribute to public health, like quarantine, sanitation, eating well, antibiotics, immunoglobulin treatment (for measles and tetanus), all of which we have, at least here in the United States.

We need a new paradigm, not a one-sided lecture whose title implies moral judgment.

Jackie Horton
Moorpark, California

NEWS: FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS p. 18

As an attorney specializing in church law and bankruptcy, I read the article about Family Christian Stores (FCS) with keen interest. If I were counsel to the charities in receipt of the donations from FCS, I

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would advise them to think twice before cashing those checks.

The Bankruptcy Code grants the bankruptcy trustee the power to claw back certain donations for the benefit of the bankruptcy estate. No recipient is safe from such strong-arm powers, no matter how small or noble. Although the Code provides a “safe harbor” for some donations made to charities by individuals or “natural persons” who become debtors in bankruptcy, that protection does not apply to corporate debtors such as FCS.

Bankruptcy’s unmerited forgiveness of voluntarily incurred debt may echo the gospel. But the Code is far stingier than God in its apportionment of grace. For those unsuspecting and innocent recipients of a corporate debtor’s largesse, what may have once been thought a blessing may, in fact, turn out to be a curse.

David M. Hyams, Associate
Lewis Roca Rothgerber LLP
Denver

WHERE WE STAND: IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING p. 23

I tend to keep my mouth shut when it comes to church drama. And I usually feel really guilty about it.

Mary McCartney

WAYFARING: THE BEST CHRISTIAN PARADOX p. 18

One of the most terrifying experiences of my vocation is to sit across the table from a person who suffers, who feels blown and tossed by the wind, and is not only wrestling with the question “Why?” but with the more penetrating question of

“Who?” Who is this God who allows suffering, then bullies us into considering it “pure joy”?

Wesley Hill’s article on the God who suffers answers this question, not by tidying up the *why*, but by pointing to the paradoxical *who*. Jesus, God of God, as the creeds tell us, is dying on the cross. And as his body drips with blood, his last words drip with doubt: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* It’s the questions “Why?” and “Who?” coming from the one who was supposed to answer them.

Wes’s recounting of a deep friendship with his mentor—one who was able to point him to the suffering Christ—reminds many of us that Jesus often draws us to himself by drawing us to others.

Doug Melder, Pastor
North Way Oakland
Pittsburgh

RE-WORD: WHEN JESUS WANTED ALL MY MONEY p. 46

A sobering yet inspiring essay by Craig Keener on what Jesus expects of his disciples in terms of their money and possessions. Being reminded that “half the global population lives on less than \$2.50 a day and 400 million people lack access to safe drinking water” can’t help but force me to realize how remarkably wealthy I really am.

On the heels of reading this piece, I received an email invitation to donate to a compassion ministry Patti and I have given to in the past. She doesn’t know it yet, but we did so again . . . just now.

Gary Tyra Ministries

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Illiberal Left today is actively opposing the hard-won free speech true Liberals fought for in ‘60s.

Ben Grizzle @bendgriz

“Kirsten Powers: The Rise of the Intolerant Left,”
interview by Katelyn Beaty.

I can’t believe that a person would be disqualified for such a reason. If anything, they need to be equipped with this gift to survive/thrive in the field. Unbelievable attitude. One would have thought more people should be encouraged to the field instead of less, instead of disqualifying someone based purely on their own tradition.

Kit Leong

“International Mission Board Drops Ban on Speaking in Tongues,” by Bob Smietana.

Good thoughts. Ten years ago I anticipated this. The church needs to find a way to come across as loving and open.

Gary S. Walter @gwalter

“What to Expect after the Supreme Court’s Marriage Decision,” by John Inazu.

Seriously. Stop fishing for apocalyptic narratives in the @PewReligion data. Christianity isn’t dead.

Chris Martin @ChrisMartin17

The Exchange: “Nominals to Nones: 3 Key Takeaways from Pew’s Religious Landscape Survey,” by Ed Stetzer.

JON ACUFF’S NEW DO-OVER p. 52



If a magazine ever asks if you want @jeremycowart to take your photo for an article, the answer is “yes!”

Jon Acuff @JonAcuff

The writer and speaker takes a picture of photographer Jeremy Cowart during his shoot.

BEHIND THE SCENES: Jeremy Cowart photographed Jon Acuff for the May issue of CT, as well as the women apologists for the April cover story. Cowart is one of the most accomplished portrait photographers today, having worked for celebrities such as Tim Tebow, Carrie Underwood, and Britney Spears. But Cowart’s passion lies with helping people through his art: the Christian has founded humanitarian projects like Hope-Portrait and recently launched See University, an online program to teach photography skills. “It’s cool to be able to give that to you and then for me to go back out there and find more interesting things to do,” says Cowart in his intro video. To learn more about his work, go to jeremycowart.com.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JON ACUFF (INSTAGRAM)



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NEWS



WITNESS

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UP HOPE

ATLANTA: A series of DUI arrests landed Veronica, an adoptive mom, in jail with few prospects and little hope. Another inmate told her about the Atlanta Mission. Founded in 1936, the mission believes “sustainable life change starts with the redeeming power of Christ and is best accomplished through life on life relationships.” Veronica, a trained chef, entered the mission’s recovery program two years ago. Now she’s working full-time and training to be a minister. “My life has been transformed,” she said.



PHOTO BY GARY S. CHAPMAN





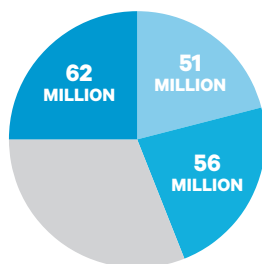
5 Key Findings on US Christians

In 2015, America remains a land filled with Christians, where seven out of ten people claim ties to a branch of the church. Yet the religious landscape is constantly changing, with people switching churches, exploring new spiritual paths, and sometimes abandoning faith altogether. A new major survey of 35,000 Americans by the Pew Research Center has tried to map this new religious landscape. Here are five key findings:

THE NEW BIG THREE

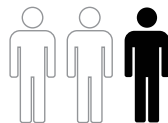
2/3

More than two-thirds of America's 245 million adults are evangelicals, Catholics, or "nones."



■ Evangelicals ■ Catholics ■ Nones

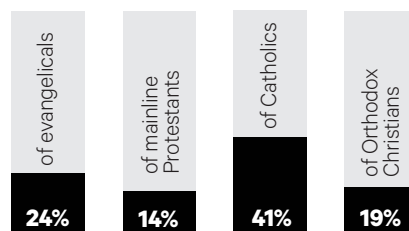
CHRISTIANS ARE DIVERSE



1 in 3

US Christians (34%) is a person of color.

AMONG ALL CHRISTIANS, PEOPLE OF COLOR MAKE UP



AMERICANS LOVE TO SWITCH RELIGIOUS TEAMS

42%

of Americans are in a different religious tradition than the one they were born in.

When people change faiths,

1 in 10

BECOME EVANGELICALS

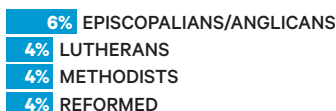
1 in 5

BECOME NONES

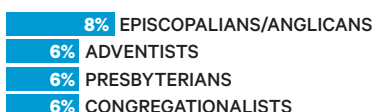
Most likely to have children switch within Protestantism



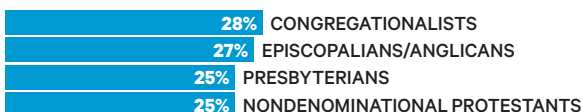
Most likely to have children become Catholics



Most likely to have children switch to other religions

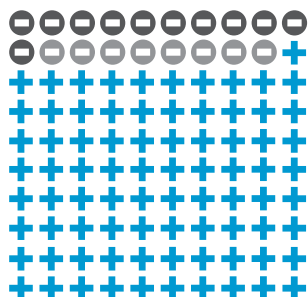


Most likely to become unaffiliated



LOTS OF PEOPLE HAVE LEFT THE CHURCH

About 19% of Americans are former Christians, and 8% are former evangelicals.

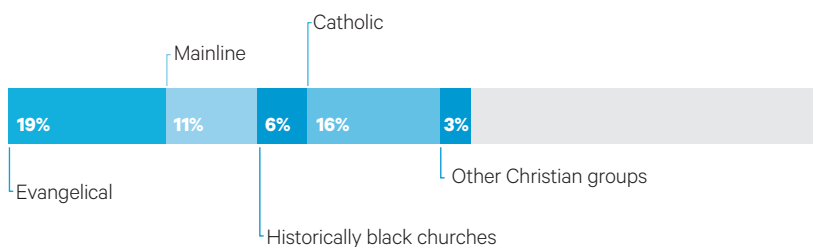


MILLENNIALS GET RELIGION

PEW RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE SURVEY

56%

of millennials say they are Christian.





“As the Amtrak crash casualties became more clear—eight dead; many more badly injured—I didn’t feel lucky or saved. I felt sick.”

Daniel Burke, religion editor for CNN, got off Amtrak Train 188 in Wilmington, Delaware, on May 12, shortly before the train derailed in Philadelphia. The wreck sent Burke, a Buddhist, on a spiritual quest to understand why he’d been spared and what to do next.

Birthright trips no longer just for Jews

About 200 Christian college students will head to Israel this year as part of the new Covenant Journey program sponsored by the Green family, owners of Hobby Lobby, and the Philos Project, a conservative pro-Israel nonprofit. The program is modeled on Birthright Israel, a 16-year-old Jerusalem-based group that provides free trips to Israel for young Jews in order to “strengthen Jewish identity, Jewish communities, and solidarity with Israel.” The Christian version, an 11-day journey, costs \$500. Five trips, each designated for 40 to 50 students, are planned so far in 2015. Organizers believe participants will connect to their faith and become “goodwill ambassadors for Israel.”

Evangelical groups attack loan sharks

Opponents of payday lending have a new ally in the fight against predatory lenders: the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). The advocacy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is part of the newly formed Faith for Just Lending coalition, whose members also include the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the National Baptist Convention USA, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, and the PICO National Network. Faith for Just Lending is just one evangelical group to criticize predatory lending as of late. The NAE added the practice to its list of advocacy topics in 2014, four months after the SBC passed a resolution denouncing such loans. Faith leaders in Kentucky, Alabama, and South Dakota have asked state legislatures to cap the loans, which

come with interest rates of more than 300 percent. The new coalition will also push for more government regulation. Bible Belt states like Alabama and Mississippi have the most payday lenders per capita, according to a study from Auburn University. “What looks like a way out of a desperate situation leads to more poverty,” ERLC president Russell Moore told CT. “This is an issue that affects many people in Southern Baptist churches.”

Progressive theology spat unites Arizona churches

Half of the 15 Protestant churches in Fountain Hills, outside of Phoenix, have teamed up to host a sermon series called “Progressive Christianity: Fact or Fiction?” The series launched with an op-ed and half-page ad in the local newspaper, along with banners at eight local churches, including Baptist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and nondenominational congregations. Church leaders say their efforts are about unity, aimed at promoting the gospel and not against any specific church. Critics say the series is aimed at the Fountains, a local United Methodist church that has claimed to be the only progressive church in the city of 23,000. The series is the latest salvo in a dispute that began after Fountains pastor David Felten spoke last year in favor of a proposed nondiscrimination ordinance. Felten told CT the campaign has galvanized his congregation, but “I don’t care what they do.”

AUSTRALIA Ex-drug lord faces execution with ‘Grace’

Brian Houston, pastor of Hillsong, the Sydney-based megachurch, praised the

faith of a convicted—and converted—Australian drug smuggler whose execution in Indonesia in April drew international protests. Andrew Chan became a Christian while in solitary confinement and studied for six years to become a pastor. He taught Bible classes, ran a cooking school, and was featured in an antidrug documentary for students during his decade in jail. “I have had the pleasure of speaking with Chan almost every day, and his faith and strength under extreme duress have inspired me,” wrote Houston. Before being executed by firing squad, Chan and six other prisoners sang “Amazing Grace” and “Bless the Lord, O My Soul.”

InterVarsity president resigns, starts cancer treatment

While the longtime leader of campus ministry InterVarsity Christian Fellowship leaves to begin bone marrow cancer treatment, a fellow executive will serve as interim president. Senior vice president and director of collegiate ministries, Jim Lundgren, will replace Alec Hill, who served as president for 14 years before being diagnosed with bone cancer. Before the diagnosis, Hill had intended to announce his departure in November and leave the organization next spring. The transition comes in the midst of a time of reinvention for InterVarsity, as campuses across the country begin to challenge the group’s belief requirements for leaders. “I look forward to serving InterVarsity and keeping our focus on Christ’s mission on campus,” said Lundgren, who has been with the organization for more than four decades. An internal task force is currently searching for a new president.



Missions

Babies Halt the Great Commission

Christian researchers think population growth will stall the gospel's spread.

Over the past century, the Good News has taken off faster than at any other time in history.

It took nearly 2,000 years for the gospel to spread from the early church to nearly half the world's population. In 1900, 45.7 percent of people everywhere were aware of the gospel, according to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity (CSGC) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. More than 100 years later, that number has grown to more than 70 percent.

Given that the number of mission organizations has grown from 2,200 in 1970 to 5,100 in 2015, the whole world should soon hear the Good News, right?

Not so fast, said the CSGC. By 2050, it predicts only another 2 percent of the world's population will be evangelized, totaling 72 percent.

The root of the slowdown: babies, rival religions, and the painstaking work of building disciples.

The evangelism boom of the 20th century came primarily from the work done among African tribal groups that had no ties to the world's major religions. The number of Christians on the continent rose from 7 million in 1900 to 470 million in 2010, according to Pew Research Center. But in the same timespan, the number of Muslims in Africa grew from 11 million to 234 million, while the number of those practicing tribal religions shrank from 76 percent of Africans to 13 percent.

In other words, most people today who have not heard the gospel already belong to a major religion, says CSGC director Todd Johnson. And those faiths are growing.

A recent Pew study found that Muslims have the youngest population—34 percent

are under 15, compared with 27 percent of Christians and 20 percent of Buddhists. They also have the highest fertility rates in the world: Muslim women average 3.1

where most of the world's Hindus live, the population of that nation is expected to grow from today's 1 billion people to almost 1.4 billion people by 2050. At that

Future missionaries will need to focus on places like China and India. 'If you're not evangelizing in an area that has a high population growth, you're losing ground,' said Todd Johnson, CSGC director.

children, while Christian women average 2.7 children.

Those Muslim babies—and a solid 77 percent retention rate—are predicted to help Islam overtake Christianity as the world's biggest religion by 2070, according to Pew's "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050" report.

The effect of births eclipses conversions by far. Pew states that before 2050, about 9.4 million Muslims will leave Islam, while about 12.6 million will join, adding up to a 3.2 million increase—not much when considering the overall leap Islam will take from 1.6 billion adherents in 2010 to 2.76 billion in 2050.

At the same time, Christianity is set to gain 40 million adherents but lose 106 million to religious switching. Christianity's much smaller overall growth, from 2.17 billion to 2.92 billion adherents, will also come primarily from babies.

While birth rates are falling in India,

time, Pew estimates, there will be about 1.3 billion Hindus worldwide.

Naturally, these estimates could change depending on future demographic shifts. Still, future missionaries will most likely need to focus on places like China and India to fulfill the Great Commission.

"If you're not evangelizing in an area that has a high population growth, you're losing ground," Johnson said.

MAKING DISCIPLES

In recent years, mission groups have focused on strengthening churches in countries that have already been introduced to the gospel, according to the CSGC. From 1974 to 2000, 9 out of 10 new missionaries were sent to plant churches or disciple new believers among reached people groups.

"Denominations and networks are 100 times more effective at planting where there are Christians than where there

aren't [Christians]," Johnson said. "They invest heavily in duplication."

That approach allows already established churches to grow, but doesn't always lead to evangelizing groups of unreached people. In other words, he said, "the gospel is sort of locked into people groups and unable to move."

That reality plays out among the clans of China and castes of India, where evangelism doesn't cross cultural lines. In terms of sheer numbers, the majority of the world's remaining 2.6 billion unreached people are in India (700 million) and China (440 million).

FUTURE PLANS

Mission agencies, such as the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board (IMB), are well aware of the challenges they face.

IMB president David Platt recently introduced the idea of sending out "limitless missionaries," a pivot from the IMB's traditional approach of sending out mostly full-time missionaries. Along with sending those full-time missionaries, IMB also wants to partner with other Baptists working overseas, such as doctors, business professionals, and students.

Another pathway to reach people is to follow them to urban centers. In 2009, the number of those living in cities worldwide surpassed the number of people living in rural areas.

"The church needs to be positioned in urban centers and to really engage people who are moving into these places," said John Brady, vice president for global engagement at IMB. If those coming to the city can be evangelized, they can bring the gospel back to their people groups.

It's also important for potential missionaries to learn the language skills needed to share the Good News.

"Mandarin isn't a bad language to learn," Brady said. "Arabic isn't a bad language to learn."

It's true that evangelism might slow as missionaries run up against major world religions, said Paul Eshleman. He's the director of Finishing the Task, a network of more than 1,200 denominations, churches,

and mission organizations that includes Wycliffe International, Youth With A Mission, and the Jesus Film Project.

But he doesn't believe the spread of the gospel will flatline. "The Great Commission will be absolutely started for all people groups by 2050," Eshleman said. "In fact, we'll have somebody working in every people group by 2017."

Part of the challenge is how to best count the unreached. Finishing the Task listed 639 unengaged, unreached people groups of 100,000 or more in 2005, Eshleman said. Now that list is shorter and smaller: 454 groups of 10,000 or more.

In order to be counted as "reached," a group must have at least one full-time worker for every 50,000 people, and an area must be 2 percent evangelical Christian. And getting started on the Great Commission isn't the same thing as fulfilling it.

That's what csgc tries to calculate, taking 24 measurements (including Scripture availability, access to Christian media, and the presence of local churches) to decide if a people group

has been sufficiently evangelized.

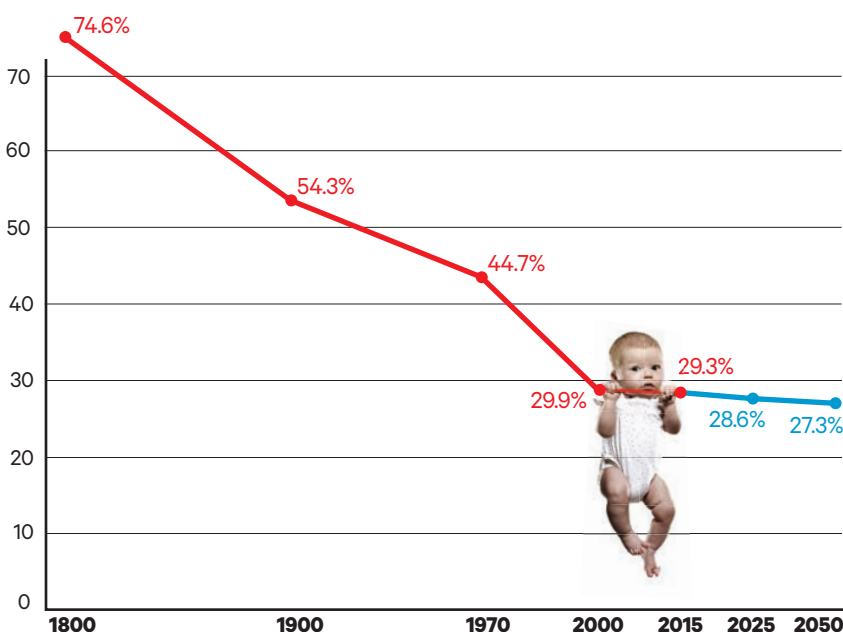
"We're talking more about the end of the task," Johnson said. "Did people actually hear or not? Were these things [Bible translations, churches] available? Did someone actually go?"

It's also tricky to define "nations" or people groups, he said. csgc's World Christian Database lists 13,600 people groups, defined by language. The Joshua Project, which includes castes and tribes in South Asia, counts more than 16,000.

"Not only that, but the world has changed dramatically since Jesus uttered those words [in Matthew]," said Bill Morrison, data manager of the Joshua Project. "Some current people groups had the gospel long ago, but no longer. Some people groups have disappeared from the earth completely, and others have merged."

Predicting the fulfillment of the Great Commission may be impossible, but maybe that's good, said Morrison. "Didn't Jesus tell the disciples it was not for them to know such things?" **Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra**

Global Percentage of Unevangelized





Kenya | Theology

When Christians Say the Shahada

African and Arab theologians assess the choice between martyrdom and survival.

During the 2013 terror attack at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, al Shabaab gunmen paused for a moment and made an announcement in Swahili: All Muslims could come forward and leave.

Among those trying to escape was Joshua Hakim, who covered up the Christian name on his ID as he showed it to the gunmen.

"They told me to go," Hakim later told *The Guardian*. "Then an Indian man came forward, and they said, 'What is the name of Muhammad's mother?' When he couldn't answer, they just shot him."

Other terror attacks by al Shabaab, a Somali terrorist group with ties to al Qaeda, have followed a similar pattern. Those who could prove they were Muslim—by reciting a prayer in Arabic or answering questions about Islam—were allowed to go free. Those who couldn't were killed.

As a result, some Kenyans have begun to share tips online about how to pretend to be Muslim, just in case. This includes learning to recite the *shahada*—Islam's main creed—in Arabic.

This pragmatic response to terror attacks is understandable. But is it biblically sound? Kenyan Christian leaders are divided on the issue.

No, says David Oginde, head of Christ is the Answer Ministries, one of Kenya's largest parachurch organizations with 45,000 members. "A true Christian must be ready to live and to die for the faith," he said.

But two professors at St. Paul's University, a conservative Anglican institution in Nairobi, say the answer isn't that clear-cut. Reciting the shahada doesn't amount to denying Christ, says Samuel Githinji, a theology lecturer.

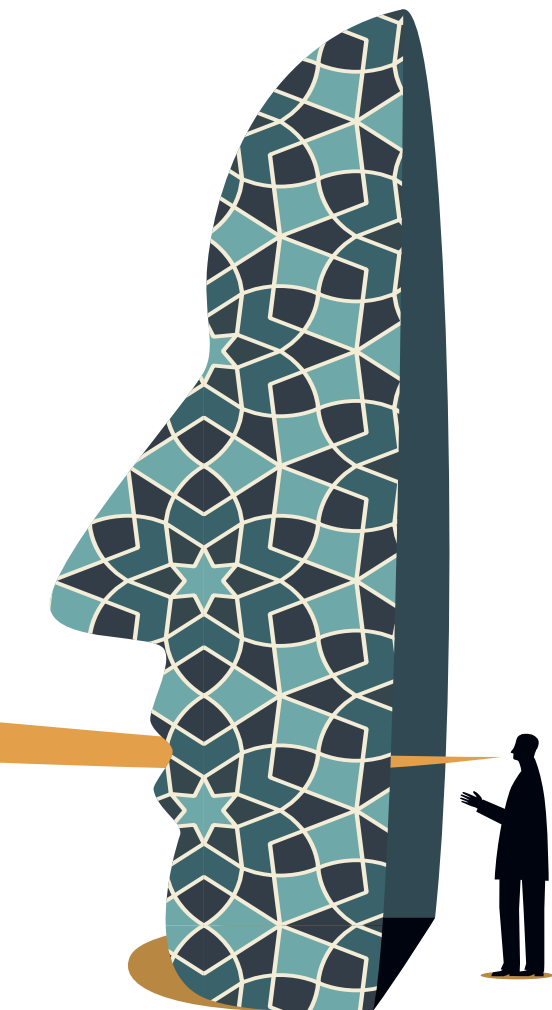
"Christians are obligated to save their

lives and others' lives as much as possible," Githinji said. "Denying the faith is more subtle than the mere voicing of certain words."

Joseph Wandera, coordinator of St. Paul's Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations, gives a biblical rationale for misleading an attacker: God tells a fearful Samuel to mislead Saul in order to anoint David as king, and Jesus gives false impressions in John 7:1-13, going secretly to a feast.

"The question deserves prayer," Wandera says. "Christians must ponder whether God is calling them to martyrdom or safety."

Christians in other countries have faced similar dilemmas. When ISIS insurgents burst into his apartment in Libya, Osama Mansour, a Coptic Christian, fled. A Muslim friend helped him to grow a proper beard, carry a prayer



'Life is more important than your possessions, so flee if you can. But Jesus is more important than life.'

AMGAD MIKHAIL

Peter, the head of the disciples, was a denier of Christ.”

Hani Hanna, professor of theology at the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Cairo, also counsels forgiveness for those who pretend to be Muslim in order to save their lives. “If anyone denies the Christian faith in situations like this and survives,” he said, “they must be embraced in love by the Christian community.”

Early-church members faced a similar dilemma under Emperor Decius, who ordered all Romans to offer a pinch of incense at altars set up in his honor. In many cases, Christians at the time did not have to deny Christ, but could offer the sacrifice “on behalf” of Caesar.

That practice was rejected, says William Black, senior lecturer in history and theology at St. Paul’s. “The idea of pretending to be a

Muslim seems to be a dodge on the line of those throwing a pinch of incense on the emperor’s altar,” he said. “The act in and of itself is trivial, but it is made monstrous in light of the suffering of the confessors and martyrs.”

Some of those who refused to offer incense were tortured, while Pope Fabian and a number of prominent Christians were put to death. But Cyprian, the influential bishop of Carthage, went into hiding while other church leaders counseled that offering the sacrifice was allowed. Ancient Carthage is now Tunisia, on the border with Libya, where martyrdom is again a reality.

Hanna says that Christians who deny their faith in the face of potential martyrdom would be ostracized by other believers. Their actions would be seen as a lifelong cause of shame.

“The choice ISIS presents is not one

of life or death. It is of death or another type of death,” he said. “The shame will stick with you until the end of your life, affecting also your family and children.”

Amgad Mikhail, an accountant in Cairo, agrees. As a Coptic Christian, he believes there can be restoration after repentance. But he has no patience for pretending.

“Jesus said, ‘If you deny me before men, I will deny you before my Father in heaven,’” he said. “Look at all those in Syria and Iraq who have lost everything. Yes, life is more important than your possessions, so flee if you can. But Jesus is more important than life.”

Theologians like Black say that martyrs can serve as Christian witnesses for centuries. He points to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who was captured by Roman soldiers in A.D. 156. The soldiers offered to release him if Polycarp denied his faith. “Eighty and six years I have served him, and he has done me no wrong,” Polycarp replied. “How then can I blaspheme my king and Savior?”

Just as Polycarp’s faithfulness has inspired Christians ever since, so may be the case for Christians killed by ISIS whose testimony has been shared internationally.

“The media of the ancient world were just as powerful as our own media are today,” said Black. Many persecutions of old backfired, bringing more into the Christian fold.

Ajaj is hopeful that martyrdoms today will have a similar effect. “I hope they give a good testimony and glory to God’s name,” he said.

Of course, nothing is certain. Martyrdom may not change a hardhearted terrorist, and pretending to be a Muslim may not save a Christian’s life.

But just in case: Muhammad’s mother was Aminah bint Wahb. **Jayson Casper in Cairo; Tom Osanjo in Nairobi contributed**

rug, and cover the Coptic tattoo on his wrist with a fake cast. Mansour, nervous at every checkpoint, eventually made it back home to Egypt.

Azar Ajaj, president of Nazareth Evangelical Theological Seminary, says Mansour’s actions were ethical, since he did not claim to be a Muslim or deny being a Christian. “It is okay to pretend to be a Muslim,” he said, “but not to lie and say so.”

George Sabra, president of Near East School of Theology in Lebanon, says Christians must rely on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in such situations. Sabra believes that Christians should not say the shahada. But those who do, he says, should be treated with compassion.

“To be a Christian is not about learning tactics for survival,” he said. “But denying Christ is not an unforgivable sin. We may not despair of God’s love and mercy. Even



Giving

Crowdfund My Outrage

Online fundraising turns to culture-war causes.



When leaders at Pilgrim Lutheran Church in Chicago wanted to update their school's playground, they turned to WeRaise, a Christian crowdfunding site. They posted a short video featuring smiling school kids and a brief description of the \$9,000 project. Before long, they had raised \$11,200 for the playground. Similar crowdfunding campaigns—which can raise money online through small donations for popular causes—helped to jump-start a small clinic in Nebraska, send a pastor on sabbatical, and fund youth programs in inner-city Detroit.

Crowdfunding sites have long been used to support starving artists and cover unforeseen medical expenses. Kickstarter, a site focused on funding creative projects, has been used to raise more than \$1.7 billion for about 86,600 projects since launching in 2009. GoFundMe started in 2008; by 2014, it was raising \$1 million a day.

Overall, about \$16 billion was raised by crowdfunding sites worldwide last year, with about \$3 billion going to social causes, according to a 2015 crowdfunding industry report from Massolutions.

More recently, however, crowdfunding has also been harnessed to fund outrage.

Take the case of Memories Pizza, the Indiana store whose owners said they wouldn't cater a same-sex wedding. It became the target of online threats, prompting the owners to close their doors. Propelled by the politically conservative website TheBlaze TV, a GoFundMe page for the store raised more than \$840,000 so the store could reopen.

Similarly, Aaron and Melissa Klein,

owners of Sweet Cakes by Melissa in Portland, Oregon, were the recipients of funds from at least three crowdfunding campaigns after the couple was fined \$135,000 for refusing to bake a wedding cake for a lesbian couple. A GoFundMe campaign on their behalf reportedly brought in more than \$100,000 before being shut down, although those funds were given to the couple, according to GoFundMe. The site also canceled a campaign for Arlene's

other projects has been going on for a long time, whether through a direct-mail appeal or passing the collection plate. What makes online crowdfunding different is that it allows fundraisers to reach a mass audience with relative ease.

"The bar for fundraising is extremely low," Josephson said.

Some observers are wary about the crowdfunding phenomenon. David Dixon, associate professor of journalism at Mes-

Crowdfunding lets Americans substitute money for hands-on involvement.

Flowers owner Barronelle Stutzman, who faces a six-figure fine for refusing to provide flowers for a same-sex wedding in Washington State.

Given online crowdfunding's relatively short track record, it has, perhaps inevitably, become a subject of controversy, with little prospect of economic, ethical, or cultural consensus in sight.

"Anyone who claims to be a robust expert and know this stuff inside and out . . . is ludicrous," said Brady Josephson, adjunct professor at North Park University's School of Business and Nonprofit Management, as well as a strategist and marketer for fundraising sites Chimp and Peer Giving. "We're talking about a form of fundraising that's only taken off in the past five years and exploded in the past three. It's early in the day."

On the other hand, suggests Josephson, raising money for charitable causes or

siah College in Pennsylvania, worries that crowdfunding can tempt Christians to give carelessly.

"The risk in crowdfunding is that the ease and convenience may lull us into giving impulsively all the time, rather than really seeking to understand how God would have us use our resources," said Dixon.

Fundraising ventures like the one for Memories Pizza can also become "bread and circus" spectacles that lead to more polarization, warns Tommy Givens, assistant professor of New Testament Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Many Americans are "starved for a sense of political participation," said Givens. Crowdfunding lets them substitute money for hands-on involvement.

"Money as a voice can't say very much. It mostly acts like a megaphone instead of clarifying anything."

Elizabeth Eisenstadt Evans

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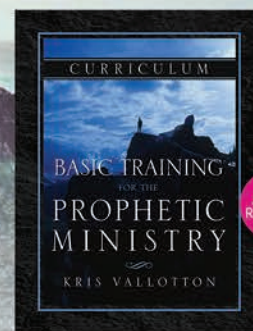
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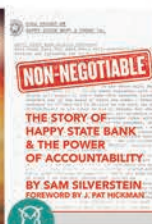


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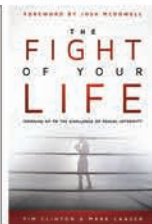
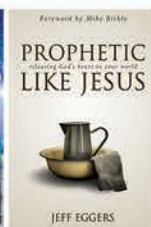
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VIEWS



WHERE WE STAND

HOPE IN THE FACE OF INTRACTABLE RACISM

The church's two gifts to the
conversation on race.





We cannot rid ourselves of racism any more than lust. Yet this seeming cause for despair actually prevents despair.

THE AVALANCHE OF STORIES of police mistreating African Americans—from pulling them over for “driving while black” to shooting unarmed teenagers—has caught many white Americans by surprise. With legislation passed during the civil rights movement in place, and an African American President, many people believed racism had been quenched. It makes many wonder, after all the progress, whether that’s even possible now.

The short answer, of course, is no: Racism has not been quenched, nor will it be in our lifetimes. But hidden in that answer is some realistic hope.

Many well-intentioned leaders, intending to “eradicate all forms of racism,” champion laws and programs to end or

A simple dictionary definition of *racism* is “discrimination . . . against someone of a different race based on the belief that one’s own race is superior.” Racism, like all sins, is the result of something good gone bad—in this case, affection for loved ones. Such affection makes possible familial, ethnic, and racial pride, as well as love and sacrifice for family and community. But just as healthy sexual attraction often turns into lust, and healthy self-esteem into pride, so healthy loyalty to one’s own too often turns into racism.

The point is this: Given the human

record. A CNN article published after the Ferguson riots noted, “Some whites confine racism to . . . the Ku Klux Klan [and] racial slurs in public.” But scholars say that instead of wearing a hood, “[Racism] causes unsuspecting people to see the world through a racially biased lens.” Duke University sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls this “racism without racists” (also the title of his recent book). It’s the reason Doreen E. Loury, director of the Pan African Studies program at Arcadia University, says racism “permeates every facet of our societal pores.”

Yes, and here’s the paradox: Only by acknowledging the hopelessness of eradicating sin can we avoid despair. Ennobled by honest confession, empowered by a sure forgiveness, we can abandon utopian hopes and instead focus on more modest and achievable ends: ensuring that the worst expressions of racism are checked, and a creating a church in which blacks and whites enjoy a measure of reconciliation.

This leads to the church’s second gift: its convening power. Local churches can bring together blacks and whites to hear each other out. As social psychologist Christena Cleveland (who is also CT’s newest columnist—watch for her debut in the September print issue) put it, “Groups [meaning blacks and whites] that are accustomed to being at odds with each other must acknowledge the grievances and then do what it takes to make peace.”

The process is not unlike reconciliation in marriage. As every married person knows, reconciliation is a lifelong process requiring patience and forbearance. It’s not about eradicating all tensions, but creating arrangements where people can treat each other with grace while securing a measure of peace and justice. All the while, we wait for the reconciliation we can only dream of now, when “a great multitude . . . from every nation, tribe, people, and language” (Rev. 7:9) will together worship their God. **CT**

MARK GALLI is editor of *Christianity Today*.



at least debilitate racism in America. But laws can only do so much. Eventually, we’re stymied by continuing racial tensions, as Matthew Loftus, a physician outside Baltimore, noted recently for *First Things*:

Conservative commentators and liberal do-gooders alike look at Sandtown, the neighborhood that I live in, and shrug their shoulders. . . . Police officers justify brutality towards citizens because conditions here are brutal, which only makes the nihilism stronger when people who have never been respected by the law in turn have no reason to respect the law.

When despair is in the air, both the powerful and the disempowered agree: Peace and justice can be secured only by violence.

condition, we will never rid ourselves of racism in this age, any more than we will rid ourselves of lust or pride. And yet this seeming cause for despair actually prevents despair.

Just because we cannot eradicate racism doesn’t mean we have to succumb to its nasty expressions. Take lust. Though we cannot eliminate it, we still create social norms and laws that keep it in check. We still expect men to refrain from making lewd comments to women, and we prosecute employers who sexually exploit their employees.

The church has two gifts to offer in this respect. The first is theological: the doctrine of original sin. Many recent studies of unconscious racial bias affirm its truth—like the study published in the *American Journal of Sociology* that showed that newly released white felons experience better job hunting success than young black men with no criminal





Hands-Off Parenting

Or, the grace of giving up control.

My hands shook as I packed my sons' brand-new lunchboxes. At ages 6 and 9, they were headed off to their first day of school after years of being homeschooled.

The house was quiet when I returned from dropping them off. I waited for waves of grief or guilt to wash over me. To my surprise, they never came.

There was nothing particularly unusual about this transition—except for the anxiety I'd had beforehand. I embodied the idea of “helicopter mom” long before I heard the term bandied about on the Internet.

Helicopter parents are the philosophical opposites of “free-range” parents, a phrase popularized by Lenore Skenazy. The columnist garnered controversy in 2008 when she wrote about the time she let her 9-year-old son ride the subway by himself.

As I prepared for the arrival of our firstborn a decade ago, I determined to be a great mom. I read all the books. I formed opinions, lots of them. And regardless of what my mother-in-law and mother said, and regardless of the kindly offers of help and support, I was convinced that my kids' well-being depended on me and only me. Homeschooling was just one way that I would pilot my parental helicopter.

Oh, there were other good reasons to homeschool. By the time my oldest was 9, we had lived in four different countries, and I couldn't bear uprooting my children from school again and again. But I homeschooled mostly because, for a time, I was unwilling to trust my kids' education to anyone other than me. In other words, I was terrified of taking my hands off the control panel. I was worried that something terrible might happen to them if I wasn't there.

In Marilynne Robinson's novel *Gilead*, protagonist John Ames preaches a sermon on Abraham, who, in Genesis 21–22, sends one of his sons out into the wilderness and is called upon to sacrifice the other. “The Lord in both instances sends angels to intervene at the critical moment to save the child,” he says.

Every parent, Ames suggests, “must finally give his child up to the wilderness and trust to the providence of God. . . . Great faith is required to give the child up, trusting God to honor the parents' love for him by assuring that there will indeed be angels in that wilderness.”

After seeing my children suffer three broken bones in three different countries, several rounds of malaria and other parasites, a couple of hospitalizations, and many lonely days far from family and friends, I came to understand more about the wilderness. There were days when I couldn't bear to let my children out of my sight; nights when I checked repeatedly to make sure they were all right. So how could I let them go off to school for the whole day?

Each step of the parenting journey—from releasing a baby's hands so she can

take those first wavering steps on her own, to sending a 5-year-old to kindergarten, to (my friends tell me) seeing a new graduate commence a new stage—requires great faith. It is hard to trust the providence of God, hard to trust that there will indeed be angels in that wilderness.

My children are flourishing in school. They run to greet their friends and teachers each morning; they run to greet me in the afternoon, to tell me all about their days full of lessons that I did not plan, activities that I did not oversee. Their teachers now joyfully share the burden I didn't know I was carrying.

In Numbers 11, Moses, exhausted from shouldering the responsibility of shepherding—essentially parenting—the grumbling Israelites, complains to God. “Did I conceive all these people?” he asked. “I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me” (vv. 12, 14). God tells Moses to gather 70 people so that God can grace them with a portion of Moses' spirit, so that Moses won't have to carry the burden alone.

No one can—or should—pilot the parenting helicopter solo and without breaks. But neither is the only alternative to put the kids out to pasture and declare them “free-range.”

Our culture idealizes independence and the do-it-yourself spirit. We love stories of ingenious self-sufficiency. But parenting, as I've learned the hard way, isn't a test of individual endurance. At times it's a team sport. At times it's a relay. It's always a race to be run in the company of others. Families, church families, teachers, librarians, medical professionals, neighbors—the Lord God places these people as angels in the wilderness.

It doesn't just take a village to raise a child. It also takes grace. **CT**

Each step of the parenting journey requires great faith. It is hard to trust the providence of God, hard to trust that there will be angels in that wilderness.



The Power of Gentleness

How one missionary responded when his charges were murdered.

Once upon a time in a land far away, a 4-year-old boy became an emperor. At first his aunt helped him rule, but when he turned 18, he took over, and he wanted to change many things. Imitating other countries, he founded a university. He streamlined the government payroll to eliminate cushy jobs. He hoped for a parliament, and he even issued a decree to protect Christian citizens.

But the emperor did not live happily ever after. His aunt and her cronies did not want so much change. They engineered a *coup d'état* and returned to power.

Now there came a tremendous drought, and the people became hungry. His aunt blamed the foreigners who had helped the young emperor. The ancient gods were withholding rain, she said, until all foreigners and all who followed foreign religions were banished.

A group of peasants trained in kung fu also blamed foreigners for their troubles. These peasants implored the gods to possess them and make them invulnerable to the foreigners' bullets. The emperor's aunt decreed that if they attacked and killed foreigners, she would look the other way. And so they destroyed the foreign-built railways and telegraph lines and murdered whatever foreigners and Christians they could.

The countries from which the foreigners had come were angry. They sent their armies to restore order. They demanded compensation for lost property and people. The emperor's aunt had to run away and hide. Xenophobia—fear and hatred of foreigners—turned out to be a poor political strategy.

At the end of the 19th century, eight

nations had significant numbers of businesspeople and diplomats in China. Their modern railroads and telegraph lines had greatly increased the vast country's internal communication. Their missionaries, educators, and health workers had served the Chinese people for centuries. Many Chinese had become Christians.

The Boxer Uprising (1899–1901) was an attempt to purge the country of foreign influence. Boxers, or members of the Society of Righteous Fists, laid siege for 55 days to the foreign quarter in Beijing. One provincial governor massacred 44 Protestant missionaries—men, women, and children—after luring them to his capital with promises of safety. The final death toll: 136 Protestant missionaries and 53 children; 2,000 Chinese Protestants; well over 200 Russian Orthodox Christians; and 30,000 Chinese Catholics.

Drastic repercussions followed. Some 20,000 soldiers invaded China and quashed the rebellion. Many foreigners—mainly soldiers and businesspeople, but also some missionaries—engaged in looting. Governments, companies, and mission agencies that lost people and property demanded huge reparations. Their demands put an already shaky dynasty into a worse condition and created further resentments.

Hudson Taylor, founder of the China

Inland Mission (CIM), stood apart. CIM lost more people than any other agency: 58 adults and 21 children. Even still, Taylor refused any payment for the group's losses in order to show the “meekness and gentleness of Christ.” This impressed the Chinese. But American newspaper writers focused on greedier Western foreigners. In the popular imagination, Christian missions and Western imperialism became firmly linked.

Fifty years later, Chinese Christian leaders were still living with the fallout of the Boxer Rebellion and intervening waves of Chinese nationalism. After the Communist revolution, many cut ties to Western churches, pledging that Chinese churches would be anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, and anticapitalist. Unfortunately, those promises played into the xenophobia of their political masters.

Nowadays, China's leaders are determined to be part of the world economy, and the officially recognized Chinese church no longer bows to xenophobia. The heirs of those midcentury Chinese church leaders appreciate the missionaries' contributions. They recognize that the church's strength largely rests on the dedication of those who gave their lives in 1900 and the many others who served after them—including *Christianity Today* cofounder L. Nelson Bell.

Hatred of foreigners is, however, resurgent around the globe. Xenophobia was bad politics in 19th-century China, and it is bad politics now. Retribution was bad religion then, and it's bad religion now. How would China's history have changed if all Christian missionaries had responded as graciously as Hudson Taylor?

CT

**Retribution
was bad religion
then, and it's bad
religion now.**

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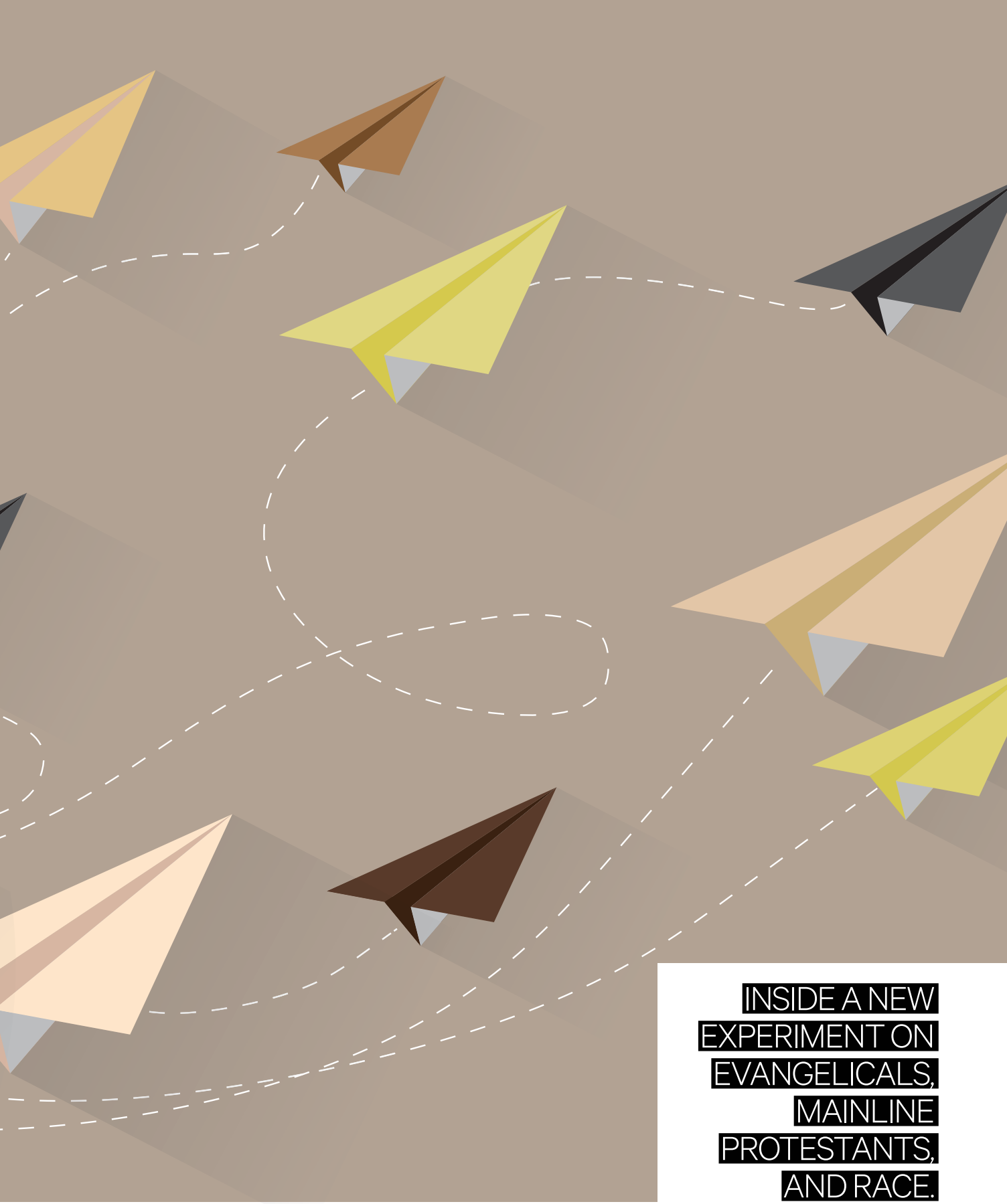
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Dear Pastor,
Can I Come to
Your Church?



**INSIDE A NEW
EXPERIMENT ON
EVANGELICALS,
MAINLINE
PROTESTANTS,
AND RACE.**

BY BRADLEY WRIGHT



IN A MULTIETHNIC CHURCH in Columbus, Ohio, white members addressed their minister by his first name. Black members viewed that as disrespectful, believing he should be addressed as “Pastor.” Conflict also broke out over disciplining children during worship services. Black parents tended to discipline their children when they were being disruptive, while white parents tended to let their kids move around.

Another multiethnic church, one located in Los Angeles whose core members were mainly Filipino Americans, faced similar discord. The whites and the blacks in the congregation were frustrated that they could not forge the deep friendships shared by Filipino American members. Conversely, some Filipino American members didn’t want to change their worship style to the hymns or gospel music that the black and white congregants preferred.

One church in Chicago selected both a white and a black pastor. They clashed over preaching styles until the church shut down.

In other words, integrating a church is rarely easy, and often leads to a litany of unintended slights and unrecognized biases. And this can happen at the earliest and most basic level: welcoming visitors. Do Christian churches in the United States actually welcome people from different racial and ethnic groups?

To answer this question, another sociological researcher and I conducted a nationwide field experiment to see how churches respond to emails from potential newcomers. More than 3,000 congregations received an email ostensibly from someone moving to their community and looking for a new church. We measured whether the churches replied to this email and, if so, what they said. But there was a catch: We varied the names attached to the emails so that they conveyed different racial and ethnic identities. Would the names alone change how churches replied?

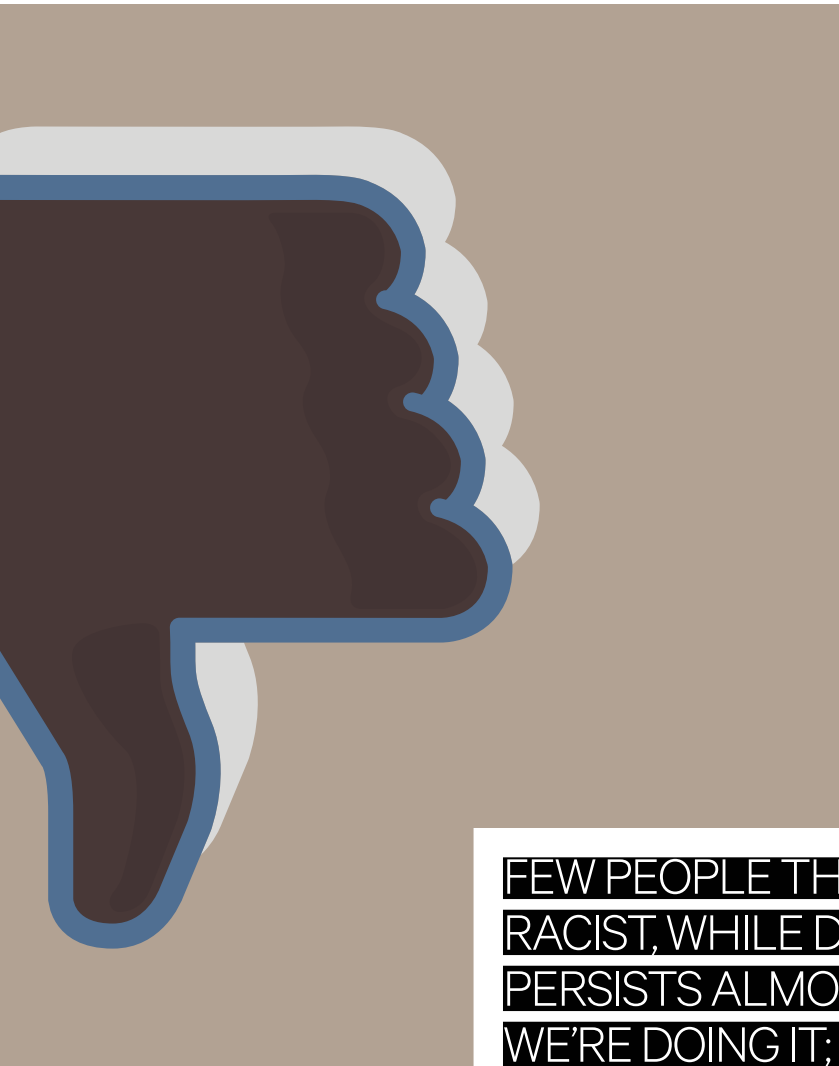
Yes, they did—but not for the churches that we expected.



The Racism Under Our Skins

First, some background. The past half-century has seen profound changes—mostly improvements—in racial and ethnic equality in the United States. Into the mid-1960s, racial discrimination was written into our laws. These “separate but equal” laws created inferior social conditions for racial minorities, especially African Americans. The laws affected every area of life. Georgia had a law that no “colored” barber could cut the hair of white women or girls. North Carolina legislated that white and black schools could not share textbooks. Oklahoma segregated whites and blacks when fishing.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related legislation abolished these laws. But prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior remained. Survey data from that time reveals a white America explicitly and openly hostile to minorities. For example, most whites in the 1970s supported laws for racial discrimination in housing sales. A substantial minority



**FEW PEOPLE THINK OF THEMSELVES AS
RACIST, WHILE DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOR
PERSISTS ALMOST EVERYWHERE.
WE'RE DOING IT; WE JUST DON'T REALIZE IT.**

how we unconsciously think about and act toward something or someone. It can lead us to treat people differently because of their race and ethnicity without us realizing that we are doing it. A host of studies have demonstrated the prevalence of implicit racial bias in white America. This explains why few people think of themselves as racist while discriminatory behavior persists almost everywhere. We're doing it; we just don't realize it.

To test for implicit racial bias, researchers can't ask people what they think. Most people will tell us what they want us to hear. Instead, we watch how people behave. A common research strategy is to put people—either real or fictional—of different racial or ethnic groups into everyday situations and see if they are treated differently. They usually are. Consider the following studies:

- Whites and blacks were sent to car lots to bargain for a used car. Dealers initially quoted a price \$700 higher for blacks than for whites, and gave black buyers fewer concessions (a 1995 study).
- Doctors were shown patient histories and asked to make a recommendation about heart disease. They recommended a helpful surgical procedure less often for blacks than for whites—even though

supported laws against interracial marriage. Many thought that blacks had a lesser inborn ability to learn. Not surprisingly, minorities experienced inferior social conditions. For example, in 1970, only about 55 percent of Hispanic children and 65 percent of black children graduated from high school, compared to 85 percent of white children. Disparities remained around income, wealth, health, and other important outcomes.

In recent decades, explicit racial prejudice has decreased. Now, only a trivial number of white Americans would outlaw interracial marriage. Even fewer believe that blacks have less inborn ability. Currently, about 70 percent of Hispanic youth and 85 percent of blacks graduate from high school. Even our language reflects this change. Decades ago, derogatory use of the n-word by whites was not uncommon. Now it is a deviant, punishable act.

Although explicit racism has subsided, another form has surfaced: implicit racial bias. An implicit bias refers to stereotypes and attitudes that affect

the medical files were otherwise identical (1999).

- Job applications were sent to thousands of employers. Some applications had stereotypically African American-sounding names, while others had stereotypically white-sounding names. The applications with African American names received 33 percent fewer replies from employers than did those with white names (2003).
- When a black hand was shown holding an iPod for sale on eBay, the auction received 17 percent fewer bids than when a white hand held it (2010).

This type of implicit racial bias has probably not gotten worse in recent decades. We have just become more aware of it as more overt, explicit racism has diminished. It is like a surgeon removing one cancerous growth only to find another one behind it. The insidious nature of implicit racial bias poses a major challenge for the church in America—because, of course, Christians aren't immune to it. Most harbor implicit racial bias that makes it difficult to integrate races and ethnicities in corporate life.

Why We Have a Race Problem

US Christianity remains substantially segregated by race at both the denominational and congregational levels. Only 15 percent of religious congregations

of any kind are racially mixed. (Sociologists generally define a congregation as mixed if fewer than 80 percent of members are from a single racial group.) For Protestant congregations, this number drops to 5 percent. Evangelical congregations display especially high levels of segregation. Imagine walking into the Sunday morning service of a typical evangelical church. You sit down. At that moment, if you were to randomly select two people in the service, there's a 98 percent chance that they would both be of the

IN-GROUP IDENTITY SERVES WESTERN EVANGELICALS WELL IN A SECULAR SOCIETY BECAUSE IT HELPS THEM TO RESIST OPPOSITION FROM OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. BUT IT CAN ALSO FOSTER A GENERAL PREFERENCE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE SIMILAR.

same racial group. That's segregation.

Segregation in churches reflects broader social trends, what journalist Bill Bishop has called "the Big Sort." Americans have a lot of choice with whom we interact. We choose which neighborhoods we live in, which colleges we go to, which clubs we join, and which churches we attend. When we make these choices, we often choose to put ourselves among people who are like us—in political belief, cultural background, or religious preference. This tendency has created a nation of microcommunities. Across all these communities we are quite diverse, but within the communities we are homogenous. Thus, in daily life, we mostly interact with people who are similar to us.

This certainly describes me. When my wife and I went house-hunting, one street in town just felt right. When we drove down it, we could easily imagine happily living there. We eventually bought a house on the street, and today we live with a bunch of other professors and university staff who have children about the same age as ours.

A similar, subtle process happens within our churches. Without realizing it, we are attracted to churches full of people similar to us, and this similarity typically includes race and ethnicity.

Protestant churches might be highly segregated because there are so many of them. With lots of choices, Protestants can find the church that's "just right" for them.

But evangelicals aren't simply more racially segregated. They also report relatively high levels of racially prejudiced attitudes. For example, in 2008, 34 percent of white US evangelicals reported being uncomfortable with a close relative or family member marrying an African American. This was significantly higher than mainline Protestants (28%), Catholics (25%), and the religiously unaffiliated (12%). Likewise, evangelicals feel less warmly toward nonwhites, and a small but meaningful minority of evangelicals is less likely to support a political candidate if they are black or Hispanic. Evangelicals are also more likely to support laws against interracial marriage and for racial discrimination in home sales. Sociologist Robert Putnam put it this way in his 2010 book, *American Grace*: "Evangelicals are no less—and perhaps even more—racist than members of other religious traditions."

Sociologists have attempted to explain the racial prejudice of evangelicals in various ways. Evangelicals have a strong in-group identity that gives them a sense of distinctiveness—an "us versus them" view of the world. (In general, religious groups that believe in absolute truth have stronger in-group identities.) This in-group identity serves Western evangelicals well in a secular society because it helps them to resist opposition from outside the church. Unfortunately, it can also foster a general preference for people who are similar along religious and other social dimensions, including race and ethnicity. Thus, a strong in-group identity in conservative religious traditions, including evangelicalism, has been associated with degradation of people from other racial groups.

Another factor in evangelicals' racial attitudes is their tendency to discount the power of larger, structural forces. The US historical liberal-conservative political split—with the former focusing on entrenched systems and the latter emphasizing personal morality—comes into play here. As evangelicals are more likely to align with conservative political views, they are less likely than mainline Protestants to use language celebrating racial diversity and more likely to oppose political and social changes, such as affirmative action, that create socioeconomic opportunities for African Americans.

Looking for the Right Mirror

My interest in race and religion came after publishing my 2010 book, *Christians Are Hate-Filled Hypocrites... and Other Lies That You've Been Told*. In it, I examined common critiques of American evangelicals. Using sociological research, I showed that many of those critiques are overstated or flat-out wrong.

All except for race. Reviewing the studies I just described (and, unfortunately, there are more), I concluded that indeed, as a group, evangelicals have a race problem.

At that point, I decided to do my own study. I thought that if I could demonstrate to evangelicals just how bad the race problem was in their churches, it might effect positive change.

I didn't want to do yet another survey on attitudes. As I stated above, attitudinal surveys can't capture implicit racial bias. Instead, I wanted to study how evangelicals *behave*.

During this time, a colleague, Mike Wallace, and I had been working on a separate line of research. We tested for religious discrimination in the job market by sending fake résumés to thousands of advertised jobs. The résumés mentioned involvement in one of several religious groups. We found clear evidence that employers discriminated by religion—especially against Muslim applicants. This type of field experiment appealed to me. It powerfully tested for discrimination, and it told a compelling story. (I wrote about it in a June 2014 *CT* article.) But how could the experiment apply to a church setting?

I mulled over this for a month. Then one day, I remembered my pastor telling me that potential visitors would sometimes call or email him before visiting to introduce themselves and get information. That was it. We could test how churches responded to potential newcomers. I ran this idea by Mike, and we were off—blissfully unaware of how much work we were in for.

The Email Test

Our first big research decision was how to contact the churches. We thought about hiring a team to visit churches in person, but this seemed too expensive and posed geographical limitations. Instead we decided to send emails. After all, most churches publish their email addresses online, and it's how most of us often communicate.

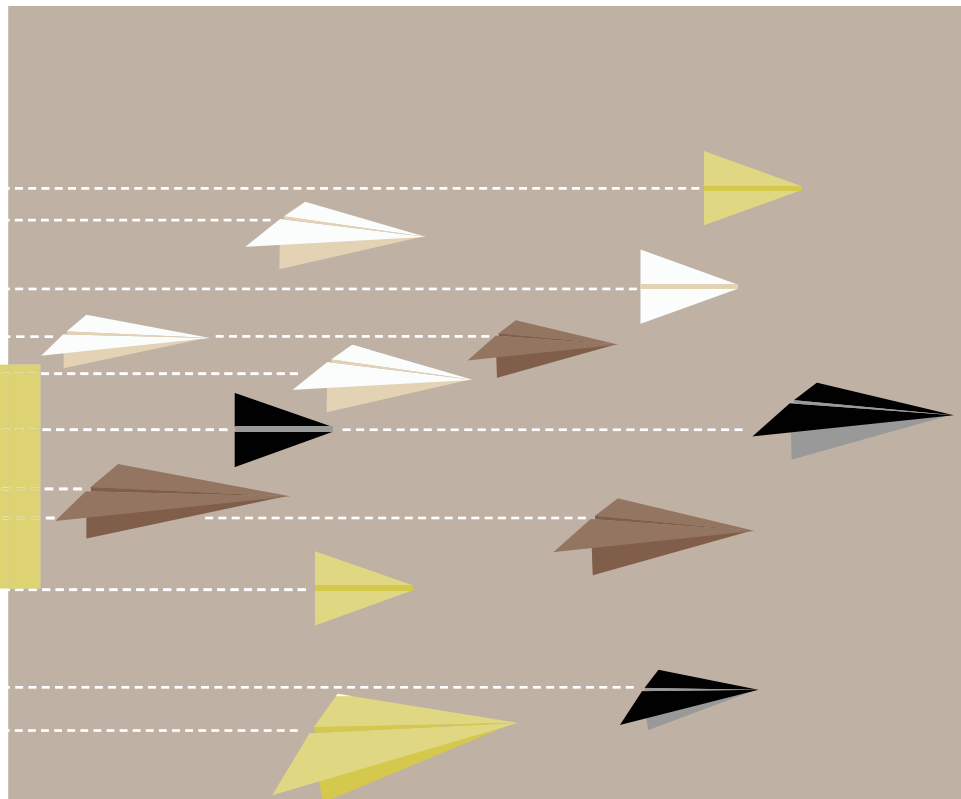
Next we had to write a letter.

It would go to every church, so it had to be general enough that it made sense to people in different types of churches but specific enough to gather useful information. We talked to Christian friends to see which questions they would ask if they were contacting a new church, and we ended up pretending to be a family moving to the church's community. Our letter asked about the size of the church and service times, and requested additional information that might be helpful.

But if we had just this letter and nothing else, we wouldn't have a study of race. I suppose that we could have sent the letter to churches and learned who was best at replying to potential visitors. But we needed somehow to convey the letter writer's racial or ethnic identity. We couldn't figure out how to do this within the text of the letter. What would we write: "My white family and I are moving to your community"?

Instead, we varied the names that signed the letters. We had decided on using four different racial and ethnic groups: African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and whites. So we needed names that people stereotypically associate with these racial groups. We studied US Census data and talked to people from each ethnic group, and we ended up with eight names:

- Greg Murphy and Scott Taylor (white)
- Jamaal Washington and Tyrone Jefferson (black)
- Carlos Garcia and Jose Hernandez (Hispanic)
- Wen Lang Li and Jong Soo Kim (Asian American)



With the letter and names, we had our experimental intervention all ready. Now we needed churches. Each church would get only one email, so we needed a lot of churches. There are 300,000 or so congregations in the United States—far too many for us to email. Instead, we compiled the 436 congressional districts in the United States—since each district has a more or less equal number of residents—and randomly picked 65, then selected churches from their communities. We ended up with Mobile, Alabama; El Paso; South Bend, Indiana; Minneapolis; Boulder, Colorado; San Francisco; Chugiak, Alaska; and a whole lot of places in between.

We wanted to compare the three major Christian religious traditions in the United States: evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, and Catholic. So we selected five different denominations in the mainline Protestant tradition: the United Methodist Church, the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the American Baptist Churches (USA). We then selected six different denominations and networks in the evangelical tradition: the Southern Baptist Convention, the Assemblies of God, the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, the Churches of Christ, the Willow Creek Association, and self-described Pentecostal churches. (We also selected Catholic

SEVERAL CHURCHES OFFERED TO MEET THE NEW FAMILY WHEN THEY ARRIVED AND HELP UNLOAD THE MOVING TRUCK. THAT IMPRESSED ME.

parishes, though after we finished our analyses, we realized that we had not selected enough of them.)

We selected churches from each of these 12 groups in the communities that we had sampled. Most denominations and organizations have online directories for finding churches by location. When they didn't, we used Google. After this time-consuming process, we had the names and email addresses of 3,120 randomly selected churches—about 1 percent of all churches in the country.

This meant that we had to send 3,120 emails. We recruited six undergraduate students whom we knew to be careful, thoughtful workers. We offered them the opportunity to learn about social research and to aid a groundbreaking study. When that didn't work, we told them that we'd buy them pizza.

We reserved the department computer lab for two afternoons, and the eight of us (six students,

Mike, and I) lined up in front of computers. On one side of each screen was a list of several hundred churches, and on the other side was a fictitious email account. In a flurry of typing, we started sending emails. After about 15 minutes, we heard an unexpected chime. None of us had our personal email accounts open, so the sound could only mean one thing: A church had replied to one of the emails. We all stopped.

The student whose account received the reply proudly read it aloud. It was a kindly message from a Baptist pastor welcoming Tyrone Jefferson to his community. The pastor answered Tyrone's questions and said that he looked forward to meeting Tyrone in person. The study finally seemed real. After so many months of meetings and endless detail work (you try randomly selecting 3,000 churches), we had real data. We ended up hearing back from more than half the churches.

Why the Study Works

Here's the logic of our study. Each church would receive one email. Some churches would reply and some would not. We couldn't know if the actions of any single church were discriminatory. For example, suppose Jose Hernandez sent a letter to St. Theodore's in Des Moines and a church staff member didn't reply. What would this mean? It could mean that St. Theodore's had a really busy week launching their mixed martial arts-themed children's ministry, and they forgot to write back. Or maybe they never reply to anyone. Or maybe they were put off by Jose's apparent Hispanic ethnicity. We don't know.

So no single email response tells us if a particular church harbors implicit racial bias. Where we can detect churches' bias is in the aggregate. Since each church got the same letter at about the same time, if churches replied differently to different names, it had to be due to the names themselves. And if Jong Soo Kim's letters received significantly fewer replies than Greg Murphy's, the disparity reveals a difference in the status conferred upon them.

Experiments usually work like this. For example, if a drug company wants to test the effectiveness of a new medicine, it recruits subjects and gives the new medicine to some of them and something else (a placebo, an old medicine) to the others. If the subjects who took the new medicine have different health outcomes, it is attributed to the new medicine.

At this point, you might be questioning the ethics of our study. After all, we lied to the churches. The letters were not from real people. Universities have rigorous and mandatory procedures for evaluating the ethics of proposed studies, and the key determination is whether a study's potential benefits significantly outweigh its costs. For our study, the main cost is that we asked church representatives

to take several minutes to reply to an email. This is a relatively low cost. In return, we tested for racial discrimination in churches nationwide. This is potentially quite important.

Checking the Inbox

We didn't know how long we'd have to wait until churches stopped replying to our emails. We ended up waiting for two months. A total of 1,830 of the 3,120 churches (59%) replied to us at least once.

Most churches replied only once, some wrote multiple times, and a few even put us on their church newsletter list. Catholic parishes replied more often (66% did) than did evangelical or mainline Protestant churches (58% each). The best responders overall were churches affiliated with the Willow Creek Association (72%) and Episcopal churches (70%). The worst responders were Southern Baptist, Presbyterian, and Pentecostal churches (49% each). The church replies were usually written by a pastor, administrator, or lay leader.

As far as we know, none of the church staff figured out that the emails were from a fictitious person, though we had one close call. One of the Pentecostal letters went to a church in remote Alaska, and another one went to a church in a small town in Texas. By sheer coincidence, the pastor of the church in Alaska was relocating to the church in Texas, and the timing was such that he received a letter from us at both churches. Luckily, the two letters happened to have the same name attached to them (a 1 in 8 chance). His reply sounded a bit puzzled, but he generously offered to help once we knew where we were going.

Taking all 3,120 churches together, we found moderate differences in reply rates by race and ethnicity. For every 100 churches that replied to letters with a white-sounding name, 93 replied to those with black- or Hispanic-sounding names, and 85 to Asian-sounding names. We expected something like this. The big surprise came when we analyzed the three religious traditions separately.

Evangelical and Catholic churches varied little across the letters. For every 100 evangelical churches that responded to white-sounding names, 97 replied to black names, 100 to Hispanic, and 94 to Asian. These differences were not statistically significant. Likewise with the Catholic parishes. (Though, since we included relatively fewer parishes, our tests of them were statistically weaker than for evangelical and mainline churches.)

The mainline Protestant churches? That is where the discrimination happened. For every 100 mainline churches that replied to white-sounding names, 89 replied to black names, 86 to Hispanic, and only 72 to Asian. Think about it. A letter simply having the “wrong” name significantly reduced these churches’ likelihood of welcoming a potential visitor.



Do Minorities Get Worse Replies?

One of the most interesting parts of the study was reading through the churches’ replies. In general, most of the replies were warm in tone and informative in content.

“We hope you will take a minute to visit our website and decide to come see us upon your move,” one church wrote to Carlos Garcia. “We would love to have you come and check us out to see if we are what you are looking for,” another wrote to Scott Taylor.

Some replies went much further and offered spiritual or logistical support. “I’ll be in prayer for your search for a new church home . . . that the Lord will lead you to the right church family where you can connect and serve!” said a letter to Tyrone Jefferson. Wen Lang Li was offered a place to stay while he looked for housing. Several churches offered to meet the new family when they arrived in town and to help them unload the moving truck. That impressed me; frankly, I wouldn’t do that even for family and friends.

Every once in a while, though, a reply would be curt. We ended up labeling these “terse” replies, and we defined them as being short in length, cool in tone, and relatively uninformative. For example, one church replied to Jamaal Washington without any greeting or salutation. They simply wrote: “The best

EVANGELICALS STRONGLY EMPHASIZE SPREADING THEIR FAITH ACROSS CULTURAL BOUNDARIES. THIS PERHAPS MAKES THEM MORE WILLING TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE ACROSS RACIAL AND ETHNIC BOUNDARIES, AT LEAST TO PROMOTE THEIR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES.

heart at a time.” From this perspective, racial discrimination is rooted in poor relationships and personal sin, not in systems of injustice perpetuated by the government, media, or education. It happens when individuals treat other individuals wrong. The solution, then, is also at the individual level. It involves having a faith commitment and loving others—even those who are different. While this individualistic approach might lead evangelicals to

way to get acquainted with us is to visit our website at -----.com. Our church is about 500–600 members.”

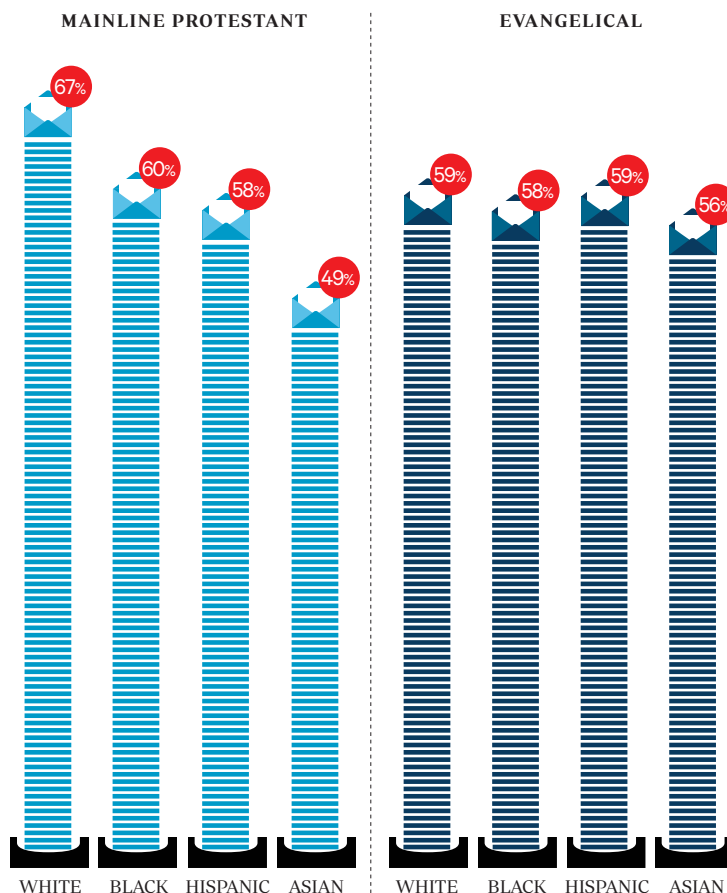
Few churches sent terse replies, but when they did, guess which letters received the tersest replies? Yes, it was the nonwhite letters. About 5 percent of all replies sent by mainline Protestant churches were terse. When replying to whites, this figure was only 2 percent. To blacks it was 3 percent, to Asians 5 percent, and to Latinos 10 percent. (Evangelical churches displayed a similar but less pronounced pattern.)

When replying to nonwhites, mainline churches were also less likely to describe how their church worshiped; they gave overall lower quality information; they sold the church less; and they were overall less warm. Mainline churches sent the most informative and welcoming replies to whites, the least to blacks, and Hispanics and Asians were in between.

distrust broader, societal-level programs for addressing racial inequality, it can make them more welcoming to the visitor in their midst.

Conversely, mainline Protestants’ pursuit of racial justice at the societal level appears not to trickle down into interpersonal behavior. They need

PERCENT OF EMAILS RESPONDED TO BY RELIGIOUS TRADITION



‘One Heart at a Time’

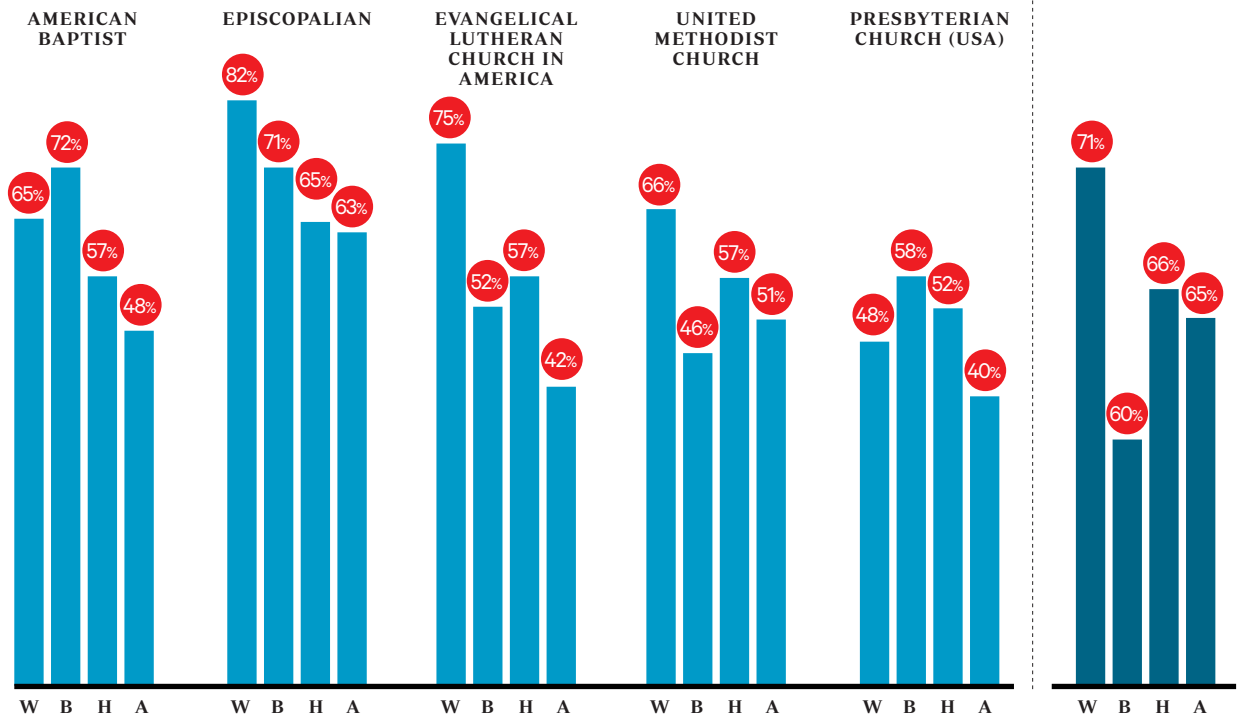
The results really surprised me. Going into the study, it had never occurred to me that mainline Protestant churches would display implicit racial bias and evangelical churches wouldn’t. These results were so unexpected that I redid the analyses several times just to be sure.

The obvious question is why. We went back to the research literature and started looking for potential explanations.

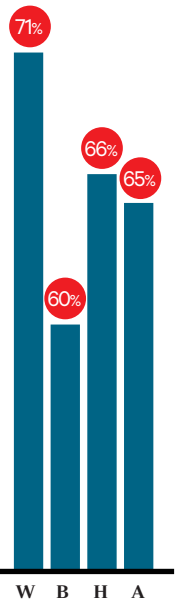
One explanation centers on evangelism. Arguably more so than mainline Protestants, evangelicals strongly emphasize spreading their faith across cultural boundaries—indeed, throughout the world. This perhaps makes them more willing to connect with people across racial and ethnic boundaries, at least to promote their religious activities.

Another explanation centers on perceptions of racial justice and fairness. What matters to evangelicals is how you treat the person in front of you. The phrase “You can’t legislate love” conveys the typical evangelical approach to transforming society “one

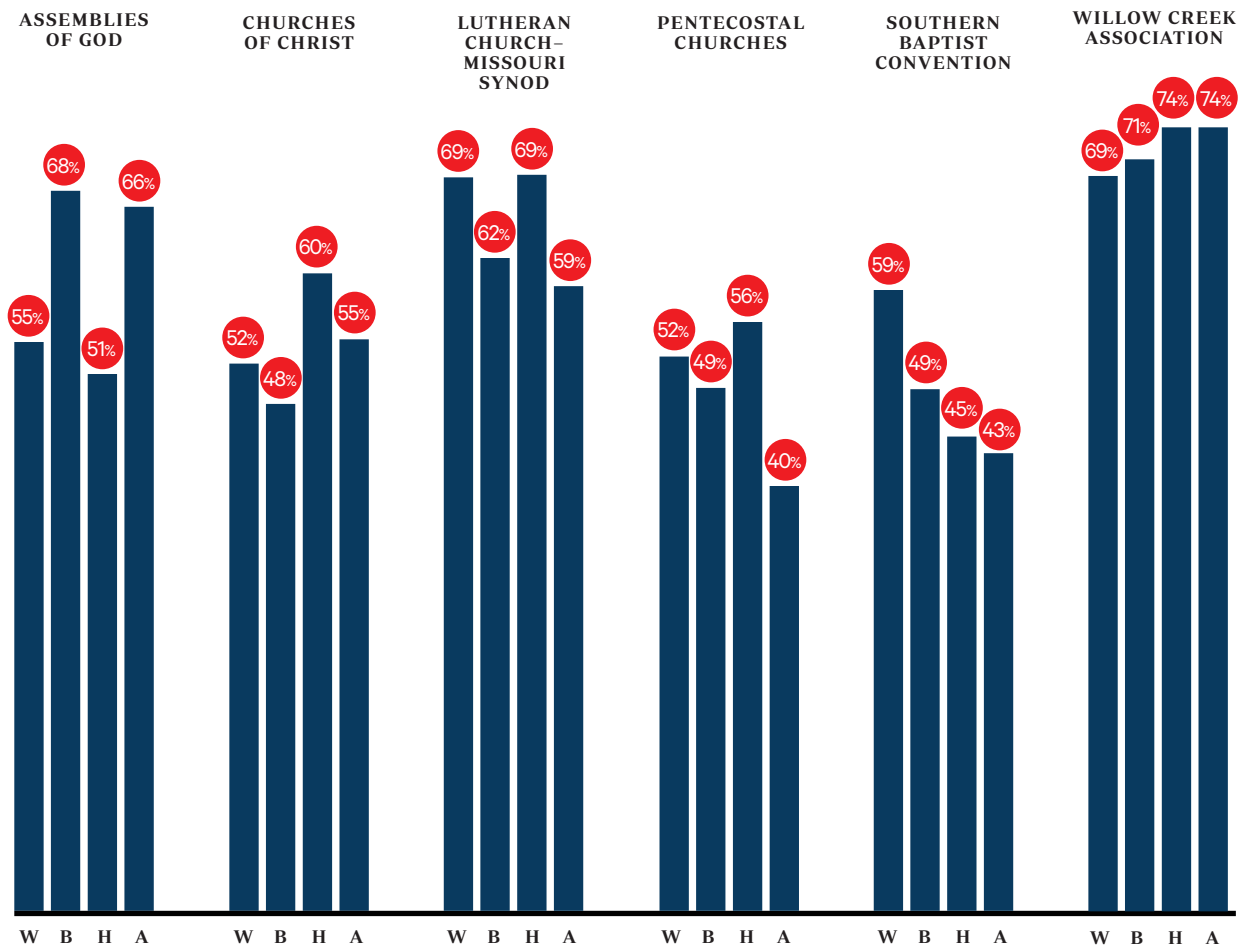
PERCENT OF EMAILS RESPONDED TO BY MAINLINE PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS



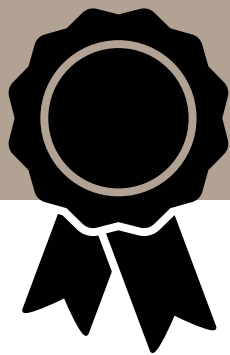
CATHOLICS



PERCENT OF EMAILS RESPONDED TO BY EVANGELICAL DENOMINATIONS



EVANGELICAL CHURCHES ARE MOSTLY SEGREGATED, BUT THEY ALSO DO A GOOD JOB OF WELCOMING POTENTIAL VISITORS FROM VARIOUS RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS. THIS MEANS THAT SOMETHING OTHER THAN WELCOMING BEHAVIOR IS GENERATING THE OBSERVED SEGREGATION.



THE 'WINNER'

THE WILLOW CREEK ASSOCIATION

This study was not a contest, but churches in the Willow Creek Association performed remarkably well in it. These churches did the best job of replying to emails, writing back more than 70 percent of the time. They also replied equally often to all four races and ethnicities in the study. White letters? Sixty-nine percent response rate. Black letters? Seventy-four percent. Hispanic letters? Seventy-one percent. Asian American letters? Seventy-four percent. Statistically, these numbers are indistinguishable.

In its early days, Willow Creek Community Church was “young, white, and affluent,” built largely on the “homogenous unit principle” of church growth theory—that people “like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers.” That changed starting in the early 2000s, when pastor Bill Hybels and church staff worked intentionally to diversify Willow Creek. Now the South Barrington, Illinois, church has a sizable minority of nonwhite attendees. Key to Willow Creek’s approach has been to “aggressively welcome minorities” to their congregation.

Not too many of the denominations in our study have had both a *CT* cover story (2005) and a *Time* magazine article (2010) looking at how they have made strides to “bridge the racial divide.”

Willow Creek matters because of its wide influence in American Christianity. The Willow Creek Association is a network of thousands of congregations, who are given training materials and participate in conferences. From what we have observed in our study, Willow Creek has been successful in passing along its value of being welcoming to people of all races and ethnicities.

more than just resolutions and presentations at denominational conventions. Perhaps mainline churches were less welcoming to racial minorities due to an implicit belief that minorities would fit poorly into their congregations. Mainline Protestant worship services typically use liturgies, music, and readings historically rooted in European cultures. This style of worship might be of less interest to people from other cultural backgrounds. In fact, studies have found that expressive, contemporary worship styles are most effective for transcending racial boundaries.

If the mainline Protestants who responded to our emails thought that people with nonwhite names might not fit well into their congregations, they might have changed how they replied without even realizing it. This is like a math teacher implicitly assuming that girls can’t do math as well as boys, and thus giving them less attention and fewer opportunities. Even if it’s not intentional, it’s still discrimination.

We also didn’t expect that Asian-sounding names would receive the fewest replies. Perhaps the mainline Protestant churches assumed that Wen Lang Li and Jong Soo Kim did not speak English as their first language. Given the centrality of language in religious practice, this would be another obstacle to them integrating into a congregation.

Our findings offer some clarity. We know that evangelical churches are mostly segregated, but they also do a good job of welcoming potential visitors from various racial and ethnic groups. This means that something other than welcoming behavior is generating the observed segregation. Maybe it’s a problem of attraction, with churches only drawing visitors who look similar to the people already there. Or maybe it’s a problem of assimilation, with newcomers who look different not being brought into the daily life and leadership of a church. Certainly evangelical churches seeking racial and ethnic integration have a long, difficult path ahead of them. But, as we have found, they have a solid foundation of welcoming behavior to build upon. **CT**

BRADLEY WRIGHT is a sociologist at the University of Connecticut, where he studies spirituality and well-being. He blogs at brewright.com. The research described here is published in the June issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.

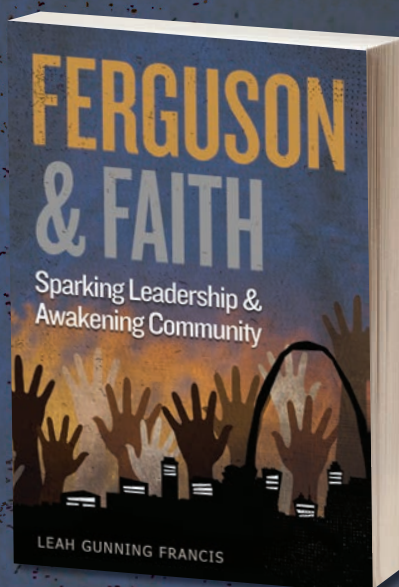
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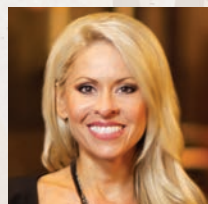
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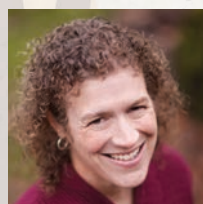
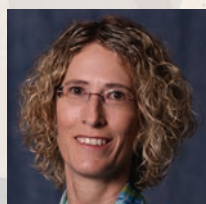


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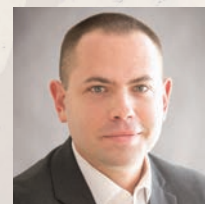
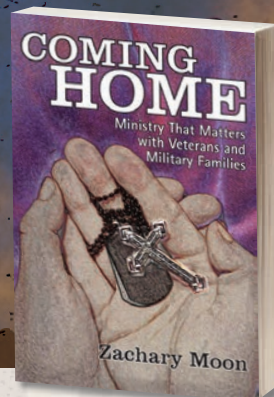
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UNDERSTANDING GENDER DYSPHORIA

THE LEADING
CHRISTIAN
SCHOLAR ON
TRANSGENDER
ISSUES DEFINES
THE TERMS
AND GIVES
THE CHURCH
A WAY FORWARD.

BY MARK YARHOUSE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM MADAY

I STILL RECALL ONE OF MY FIRST MEETINGS WITH SARA. SARA IS A CHRISTIAN WHO WAS BORN MALE AND NAMED SAWYER BY HER PARENTS. AS AN ADULT, SAWYER TRANSITIONED TO FEMALE.

SARA WOULD SAY TRANSITIONING—ADOPTING A CROSS-GENDER IDENTITY—TOOK 25 YEARS. IT BEGAN WITH FACING THE CONFLICT SHE EXPERIENCED BETWEEN HER BIOLOGY AND ANATOMY AS MALE, AND HER INWARD EXPERIENCE AS FEMALE. WHILE STILL SAWYER, SHE WOULD GROW HER HAIR OUT, WEAR LIGHT MAKEUP, AND DRESS IN FEMININE ATTIRE FROM TIME TO TIME. SHE ALSO MET WITH WHAT SEEMED LIKE COUNTLESS MENTAL-HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AS WELL AS SEVERAL PASTORS. FOR SAWYER, NOW SARA, TRANSITIONING EVENTUALLY MEANT USING HORMONES AND UNDERGOING SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY.

Sara would say she knew at a young age—around 5—that she was really a girl. Her parents didn't know what to do. They hoped their son was just different from most other boys. Then they hoped it was a phase Sawyer would get through. Later, two pastors told them that their son's gender identity conflicts were a sign of willful disobedience. They tried to discipline their son, to no avail.

Sara opened our first meeting by saying, "I may have sinned in the decisions I made; I'm not sure I did the right thing. At the time, I felt excruciating distress. I thought I would take my life. What would you have me do?" The exchange was disarming.

I have worked with people like Sara for more than 16 years. Although most of my published research and clinical practice is in the area of sexual identity, I regularly receive referrals to meet with people who experience conflicts like Sara's. The research institute I direct, housed at Regent University in Virginia, published the first study of its kind on transgender Christians a few years ago. My experiences counseling children, adolescents, and adults have all compelled me to further study gender dysphoria.

From this research and counseling background, I hope to offer the Christian community a distinctly Christian response to gender dysphoria.

DEFINING THE TERMS

First, let's define our terms. "Gender identity" is simply how people experience themselves as male or female, including how masculine or feminine they feel. "Gender dysphoria" refers

to deep and abiding discomfort over the incongruence between one's biological sex and one's psychological and emotional experience of gender. Sara would say she lived much of her life as a woman trapped inside a man's body. When a person reports gender identity concerns that cause significant distress, he or she may meet criteria for a gender dysphoria diagnosis.

The previous version of the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic manual included the diagnosis "gender identity disorder." It highlighted cross-gender identity as the point of concern. The newest version refers instead to "gender dysphoria," moving the discussion away from identity and toward the experience of distress. A lack of congruence between one's biological sex and gender identity exists on a continuum, so when diagnosing gender dysphoria, mental-health professionals

look at the amount of distress as well as the amount of impairment at work or in social settings.

It is hard to know exactly how many people experience gender dysphoria. Most of the research has been on "transsexuality." The term refers to a person like Sara who wishes to or has identified with the opposite sex, in some cases through hormonal treatment or surgery. The American Psychiatric Association estimates the number of transsexual adults as low as 0.005 to 0.014 percent of men and 0.002 to 0.003 percent of women. But these are likely underestimates, as they are based on the number of people who visit specialty clinics.

The highest prevalence estimates come from more recent surveys that include "transgender" as an option. "Transgender" is an umbrella term for the many ways people express or present themselves differently from those for whom there is a match between their gender identity and their biological sex. So not everyone who is transgender experiences significant gender dysphoria. Some people say their gender resides along a continuum in between male and female or is fluid. They do not tend to

report as much distress. Prevalence here has ranged from 1 in 215 to 1 in 300.

This means that transgender people are much more common than those formally diagnosed with gender dysphoria, but not nearly as common as those who identify as gay or lesbian, which is 2 to 4 percent of the US population.

While on the topic of homosexuality, let me clarify that gender dysphoria and transgender issues are not about having sex or attraction to the same sex; they are about an experiential mismatch between one's psychology and one's biology. People often confuse the two, likely due to transgender being a part of the larger lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) discussion.

Psychologists and researchers don't know what causes gender dysphoria. The most popular theory among those who publish on this topic is the brain-sex theory. It proposes that the brain maps toward male or female, which in nearly all cases corresponds with various biological indicators of sex: chromosomes, gonads, and sex hormones. In rare instances, the normal sex differentiation that occurs in utero occurs in one direction (differentiating toward male, for example), while the brain maps in the other direction (toward female). Several gaps remain in the research behind this theory, but it nonetheless compels many professionals.

Recently a mother came to me, worried about her 7-year-old son. "What can we do?" she asked. "Just last week, a woman at the park said something. I couldn't believe she had the nerve. I'm afraid the kids at school might do worse."

The mother noted that her son's voice inflection

seemed more like a girl's and that he pretended he had long hair. Over the past weekend, he had grabbed a towel and put it around his waist and said, "Look, Mom, I'm wearing a dress just like you!"

Whether and how to intervene when a child is acting in ways typical of the opposite sex is a controversial topic, to say the least. It's important to remember that in about three of four of these cases, the gender identity conflict resolves on its own, lessening or ceasing entirely. However, about three-fourths of children who experience a lessening or resolution go on as adults to identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual—a fact that psychologists don't fully understand at this time.

What happens to children when their gender identity conflict continues into adulthood? Psychiatrist Richard Carroll proposes that they face four outcomes: (1) live in accordance with one's biological sex and gender role; (2) engage in cross-gender behavior intermittently; (3) adopt a cross-gender role through sex reassignment surgery; or (4) unresolved (the clinician has lost contact with the person and doesn't know what happened).

Sara pursued the third outcome. Bert pursued the second. He's a biological male who for years has engaged in cross-gender behavior from time to time to "manage" his gender dysphoria. He wears feminine undergarments that no one apart from his wife knows about. He has grown his hair out and may wear light makeup, and this has been enough to manage his dysphoria.

Crystal pursued the first. She has experienced gender dysphoria since childhood. It has ebbed and flowed throughout her life, but she's able to cope with it. She presents as a woman and has been married to a man for 12 years. He is aware of her dysphoria.

Few studies have shown that therapy successfully helps an adult with gender dysphoria resolve with their biological sex. This may be one reason professionals generally support

WHAT'S IN A PRONOUN

A brief word about the pronouns we use to identify the people in this article and the next (p. 52).

As the experiences of transgender persons have come to light over the past several years, mainstream media have created guidelines for reporting on them. Following general journalistic practice, we at CT follow the rule to use the pronoun that the person uses. So, for example, we refer to Sara—the person at the beginning of this essay—as a "she," because Sara identifies as one.

Yet for the first-person essay from Margaret Philbrick—about her sibling who has transitioned from a man to a woman—we deliberated. Calling Philbrick's sibling a "he" risked insensitivity. Yet using "she" didn't accurately convey Philbrick's own conflicted experience. In the end, we kept the male pronoun, to underscore the tension the family faces in navigating this life change. Carly Lehwald, Philbrick's sibling, has given us permission to use the male pronoun in this story. —THE EDITORS



some cross-gender identification in therapy.

As someone with gender dysphoria considers different ways to cope, what might the Christian community distinctly offer them?

THREE LENSES

To answer this question, let me first describe three cultural lenses through which people tend to “see” gender dysphoria.

LENS #1: INTEGRITY The integrity lens views sex and gender and, therefore, gender identity in terms of what theologian Robert Gagnon refers to as “the sacred integrity of maleness or femaleness stamped on one’s body.” Cross-gender identification is a concern because it threatens to dishonor the creation order of male and female. Specific biblical passages, such as Deuteronomy 22:5 or 23:1, bolster this view. Even if we concede that some of the Old Testament prohibitions were related to avoiding pagan practices, nonetheless, from beginning to end,

Scripture reflects the importance of male-female complementarity set forth in creation (Gen. 2:21–24).

The theological foundation of the integrity lens raises the same kind of concerns about cross-gender identification as it raises about homosexuality. Same-sex sexual behavior is sin in part because it doesn’t “merge or join two persons into an integrated sexual whole,” writes Gagnon. “Essential maleness” and “essential femaleness” are not brought together as intended from creation. When extended to transsexuality and cross-gender identification, the theological concerns rest in what Gagnon calls the “denial of the integrity of one’s own sex and an overt attempt at marring the sacred image of maleness or femaleness formed by God.”

The integrity lens most clearly reflects the biblical witness about sex and gender. While it may be challenging to identify a “line” in thought, behavior, and manner that reflects cross-gender identification,

people who see through the integrity lens are concerned that cross-gender identification moves against the integrity of one's biological sex—an essential aspect of personhood.

It should be noted that some Christians do not put gender dysphoria in the same category as homosexuality. They may have reservations about more invasive procedures; however, they don't put gender dysphoria or trying to manage dysphoria in the same class of behaviors that Scripture deems immoral.

LENS #2: DISABILITY This lens views gender dysphoria as a result of living in a fallen world, but not a direct result of moral choice. Whether we accept brain-sex theory or another account of the origins of the phenomenon, if the various aspects of sex and gender are not aligning, then it's one more human experience that is "not the way it's supposed to be," to borrow a phrase from theologian Cornelius Plantinga Jr.

When we care for someone suffering from depression or anxiety, we do not discuss their emotional state as a moral choice. Rather, the person simply contends with a condition that comes in light of the Fall. The person may have choices to make *in response to* the condition, and those choices have moral and ethical dimensions. But the person is not culpable for having the condition as such. Here, the parallel to people with gender dysphoria should be clear.

Those who use this lens seek to learn as much as they can from two key sources: special revelation (scriptural teachings on sex and gender) and general revelation

(research on causes, prevention, and intervention, as well as the lives of persons navigating gender dysphoria). This lens leads to the question: *How should we respond to a condition with reference to the goodness of Creation, the reality of the Fall, and the hope of restoration?*

Those drawn to the disability lens may value the sacredness of male and female differences; this is implied in calling gender dysphoria a disability. But this lens also makes room for supportive care and interventions that allow for cross-gender identification in a way the integrity lens does not.

LENS #3: DIVERSITY This lens sees the reality of transgender persons as

something to be celebrated, honored, or revered. Our society is rapidly moving in this direction. Those drawn to this lens cite historical examples in which departures from a clear male-or-female presentation have been held in high esteem, such as the Fa'afafine of Samoan Polynesian culture.

Whereas the biological distinction between male and female is considered unchangeable, some wish to recast sex as just as socially constructed as gender. To evangelicals, those who want to deconstruct sex and gender norms represent a much more radical alternative to either the integrity or disability lens.

To be sure, not everyone drawn to the diversity lens wants to deconstruct sex and gender. What is perhaps most compelling about this lens is that it answers questions about identity—"Who am I?"—and community—"Of which community am I a part?" It answers the desire for persons with gender dysphoria to be accepted and to find purpose in their lives.

A DISTINCTLY CHRISTIAN RESOURCE

I believe there are strengths in all three lenses. Because I am a psychologist who makes diagnoses and provides treatment to people experiencing gender dysphoria, I see value in a disability lens that sees gender dysphoria as a reflection of a fallen world in which the condition itself is not a moral choice. This helps me see the person facing gender identity confusion with empathy and compassion. I try to help the person *manage his or her gender dysphoria*.

Even as Christians affirm the disability lens, we should also let the integrity lens inform our pastoral care. That lens represents a genuine concern for the integrity of sex and gender, and the ways in which maleness and femaleness help us understand the nature of the church and even the gospel.

Yet we should reject the teaching that gender identity conflicts are the result of willful disobedience or sinful choice. The church can be sensitive as questions arise about how best to manage gender dysphoria in light of the integrity lens. And we can recognize that we live in a specific cultural context, and that many gender roles vary from culture to culture. When I consider how to best counsel my clients to manage their gender dysphoria, however, I add the caveat: *in the least invasive way possible*.

Christians can also acknowledge how the diversity lens affirms the person by providing an identity not addressed by the other two lenses. The diversity lens emphasizes the importance of belonging. We must remember that the transgender and broader LGBT community are attractive because they answer the bedrock question, "Where do I belong?" Most churches want to be a community where people suffering from any "dysphoria" will feel they belong, for the church is, after all, a community of broken people saved by grace.

A few years ago, my research team at the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity conducted the first study of its kind on transgender Christians. We collected information on 32 biological males who to varying degrees had transitioned to or presented as women. We asked many questions about issues they faced in their home, workplace, and church,

**GENDER
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IT IS ABOUT AN
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BETWEEN ONE'S
PSYCHOLOGY
AND BIOLOGY.**

such as, “What kind of support would you have liked from the church?” One person answered, “Someone to cry with me rather than just denounce me. Hey, it is scary to see God not rescue someone from cancer or schizophrenia or [gender dysphoria]... but learn to allow your compassion to overcome your fear and repulsion.”

When it comes to support, many evangelical communities may be tempted to respond to transgender persons by shouting “Integrity!” The integrity lens is important, but simply urging persons with gender dysphoria to act in accordance with their biological sex and ignore their extreme discomfort won’t constitute pastoral care or a meaningful cultural witness.

The disability lens may lead us to shout, “Compassion!” and the diversity lens may lead us to shout “Celebrate!” But both of these lenses suggest that the creational goodness of maleness and femaleness can be discarded—or that no meaning is to be found in the marks of our suffering.

Most centrally, the Christian community is a witness to the message of *redemption*. We are witnesses to redemption through Jesus’ presence in our lives. Redemption is not found by measuring how well a person’s gender identity aligns with their biological sex, but by drawing them to the person and work of Jesus Christ, and to the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us into his image.

As Christians speak to this redemption, we will be tempted to join in the culture wars about sex and gender that fall closely on the heels of the wars about sexual behavior and marriage. But in most cases, the church is called to rise above those wars and present a witness to redemption.

Let’s say Sara walks into your church. She looks like a man dressed as a woman. One question she will be asking is, “Am I welcome here?” In the spirit of a redemptive witness, I hope to communicate to her through my actions: “Yes, you are in the right place. We want you here.”

If I am drawn to a conversation or relationship with her, I hope to approach her not as a project, but as a person seeking real and sustained relationship, which is characterized by empathy as well as encouragement to walk faithfully with Christ. But I should not try to “fix” her, because unless I’m her professional therapist, I’m not privy to the best way to manage her gender dysphoria. Rather, Christians are to foster the kinds of relationships that will help us know and love and obey Jesus better than we did yesterday. That is redemption.

If Sara shares her name with me, as a clinician and Christian, I use it. I do not use this moment to shout “Integrity!” by using her male name or pronoun, which clearly goes against that person’s wishes (see “What’s in a Pronoun,” p. 47). It is an act of respect, even if we disagree with the choice, to let the person determine what they want to be called. If we can’t grant them that, it’s going to be next to impossible to establish a relationship with them. The exception is that, as a counselor, I defer to a parent’s preference for their teenager’s name and gender pronoun. Even here I talk with the parent about the benefits

and drawbacks of what they want and what their teenager wants if the goal is to establish a sustained, meaningful relationship with their child.

Also, we can avoid gossip about Sara and her family. Gossip fuels the shame that drives people away from the church; gossip prevents whole families from receiving support.

CHAPTERS IN REDEMPTION

In some church structures, the person’s spiritual life is under the care of those tasked with leading a local congregation. In this case, we have to trust church leadership to do the hard work of shepherding everyone who accepts Christ as Lord and Savior. We trust, too, that God is working in the lives of our leaders to guide them in wisdom and discernment. We trust that meaningful conversations are taking place, and we can add our prayers for any follower of Christ.

In other church settings, it might be us as laypeople who are called into a redemptive relationship with the transgender person. After all, Christians are to facilitate communities in which we are all challenged to grow as disciples of Christ. We can be sensitive, though, not to treat as synonymous management of gender dysphoria and faithfulness. Some may live a gender identity that reflects their biological sex, depending on their discomfort. Others may benefit from space to find ways to identify with aspects of the opposite sex, as a way to manage extreme discomfort. And of course, no matter the level of discomfort someone with gender dysphoria experiences (or the degree to which someone identifies with the opposite sex), the church will always encourage a personal relationship with Christ and faithfulness to what it means to grow in Christlikeness.

Certainly we can extend to a transgender person the grace and mercy we so readily count on in our own lives. We can remind ourselves that the book of redemption in a person’s life has many chapters. You may be witness to an early chapter of this person’s life or a later chapter. But Christians believe that God holds that person and each and every chapter in his hands, until that person arrives at their true end—when gender and soul are made well in the presence of God.

CT

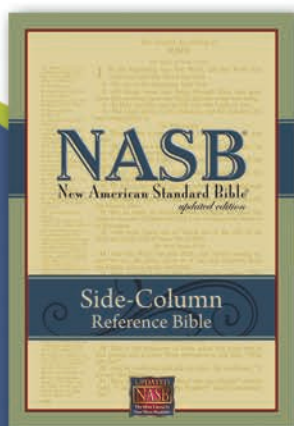
MARK YARHOUSE is the Rosemarie S. Hughes Endowed Chair and professor of psychology at Regent University, where he directs the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity. His most recent book is *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (IVP Academic).

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SEXUALITY



SISTER-BROTHER

OVER DINNER ONE NIGHT, MY SIBLING ANNOUNCED HE WAS BECOMING A WOMAN. AND SO BEGAN THE GREATEST TEST OF MY FAITH.

LOVING MY

BY MARGARET PHILBRICK

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM MADAY



“LOOK AT IT THIS WAY: YOU AREN’T LOSING A BROTHER. YOU’RE GAINING A SISTER,” SAID MY BROTHER OF 46 YEARS AT DINNER ONE NIGHT. A MONTH PRIOR I HAD NOTICED THE MAKEUP ON HIS FACE. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT IT, HIS RESPONSE WAS SIMPLE: “I FEEL BETTER ABOUT MYSELF WITH IT ON.” I ASSUMED HE WAS GAY.

AS WE SAT ON HIS BALCONY IN CHICAGO, OVER SALMON AND FOCACCIA, I LISTENED AS HE READ ALOUD HIS PERSONAL STATEMENT. THE LETTER, WRITTEN FOR HIS BOSS, EXPLAINED HIS DECISION TO TRANSITION TO LIVING AS A WOMAN AND HIS NEW EXPECTATIONS OF OTHERS. BY THE END OF THE READING, TEARS FLOWED. HE WAITED IN SILENCE FOR MY RESPONSE.

My only sibling. My ally. As children, our relationship was a wall of defense in the minefield of our parents’ dysfunctional marriage. We escaped to the woods behind our ranch house and sailed our bathtub boats in the creek. Creating blanket forts and playing army men in our beanbag chair kept us busy after our parents put us to bed. He called me “M. M. L.” I called him “Chobey.” He was my brother, and we did things that boys liked to do. Never once did I think, *He’s acting like a girl.*

We grew up in a Christian family. Our father was best described as a “wildcat,” adventurous and volatile, our mother, beautiful and genteel. My brother gave his life to Christ while attending an Arkansas crusade around age 6. Billy Graham’s ministry brought me to salvation at age 7. We were both baptized and confirmed, and attended Honey Rock Camp, run by Wheaton College. Dad taught our Sunday school class. Our family was “normal.”

Over dessert, my brother told more of his transition story. After work and dinner with his family, he’d drive into the city. He’d change clothes in his car and stroll through Chicago’s Boystown neighborhood trying to make transgender friends, then change back again to travel home, say goodnight to his son, and go to bed.

As I listened, I felt the tectonic plates of my heart shift, jarred by a combination of compassion and questions. *How could he live like this and why? What happened? When did it start? What would I call him now?* I studied his heartbreak, respected his courage, and managed to respond with a quiet, “I’m so sorry.”

To my surprise he shot back, “Aren’t you going to judge me?” My heart ached with the hurt of my faith being misunderstood and the recognition that the prevailing view of Christians as judges remains strong, even within the minds of those closest to us. I took some time and explained that judging is not my job. That’s God’s job. All I can do is try to love people in the

best of the Holy Spirit’s goodness and grace apportioned to me and in a manner consistent with my beliefs. Jesus and the woman caught in adultery came to mind. Who am I, a sinner, to cast a stone at my brother? The grievous sins I have committed are no less or lighter weight than what my brother is walking out. If I am following in the way of Jesus, then I am called to respond in this conversation like Jesus did: “Neither do I condemn you. . . . Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11).

But “Go and sin no more” is hard to say to someone sitting across the table, confidently explaining that his decision

to ultimately pursue sex reassignment surgery is, in his words, “what God has for me.” That decision, and its effect on his family, was the focus of a much-anticipated reality television show this summer, *Becoming Us*. Much prayer, soul-searching, and financial investment went into his decision. My brother searched the Bible for comfort and found it in 1 Samuel 16:7: “The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”



DEEP LISTENING

"He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed" (Isa. 50:4). The poet Luci Shaw quoted this verse at the 2014 Festival of Faith and Writing. It helped me to recognize how the dawn of each day brings with it a unique listening opportunity.

One of my spiritual disciplines is to begin each day with prayer before I set my feet on the floor. It is a prayer we taught our children in Sunday school: "Good morning Lord, this is your day. I am your child, show me your way. Help me to hear your voice and love the people you put in my path today."

Because my brother has a son in high school, a good deal of our conversation centers on him. My heart, hope, and prayer were for my brother to delay his full transgender transition to respect his son's need for a father during these critical years. Couldn't he at least wait until Ben's high school and puberty passed before having surgery? I enlisted praying friends to join my prayers and fast for my brother and Ben.

Fifteen months after our conversation on the balcony, my brother underwent sex reassignment surgery. I found myself on the phone listening to the trials of dramatic recovery, hormone therapy, and medically required dilation (a word I once assumed was confined to eye doctor visits and having babies). I returned again to deep listening, which calls for an inclination of the ear to understand that which is beyond our grasp. There is undivided focus and, while the person is talking, a constant silent prayer: "Lord, help me. I'm not getting this." Deep listening provokes the posture of Proverbs 2:2, "turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding." This is the kind of listening I would need to practice for my brother's and my relationship to flourish in this change.

Holy Week at our church is the centerpiece of the year, a season filled with the Lord's presence, compassion, and mercy. I invited my brother and his lesbian girlfriend to our Maundy Thursday service. The awkwardness of introducing them to our friends initially overwhelmed my joy in their participation. I fumbled through an unbearably confused greeting, "This is my brother, Carly, and his girlfriend, Cera." Even close friends who knew my brother before his transition stared and attempted to shake hands and close their gaping mouths. My brother and I look more alike now than ever, only adding to the confusion.

As the service progressed, it led to the traditional foot-washing. I was looking forward to washing my brother's feet, but his black tights, white skirt, and heels prevented me from doing so. Instead of



washing his feet, I poured water on the feet of his girlfriend and she on mine. The Lord met us in a white plastic tub of tepid water. In that moment I knew I loved her. I admired her courage going forward and embracing the unfamiliar. She hardly knew me, yet she came to my Anglican, evangelical, charismatic church and let me wash her feet. How like the Lord to transform our uncomfortable, twisted hearts and minds with his presence and love. I'm hoping to wash my brother's feet next Holy Week, but he'll need to wear sandals.

As I walk out this journey, I become increasingly aware of my own weakness and sinfulness. Loving people well does not come easy, but the Lord is abounding in steadfast love. As my cell phone rings, I often think, *I just can't talk about this today*. But the Lord is pressing in with his generosity and compassion. He is listening.

The older I get, and the more complicated my life gets, the more I find myself crying out to the Lord, "Help me." I've spent many hours in the small chapel of our church praying, asking for his resources and reservoir of love for those whose choices are hard for me to accept.

He is faithful to answer, most recently in the words of Gregory of Nazianzus, the bishop of Constantinople in A.D. 389:

Is it not God who asks you now in your turn to show yourself generous above all other creatures and for the sake of all other creatures? Because we have received from him so many wonderful gifts, will we not be ashamed to refuse him this one thing only, our generosity? Though he is God and Lord, he is not afraid to be known as our Father. Shall we for our part repudiate those who are our kith and kin?

**'GO AND SIN
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THE WILL TO EMBRACE

We as Christians are not called to repudiate. We are called to love. It is love to say to a brother or a sister, “Go and sin no more.” It takes guts and abandon to the way of Jesus, but it rings as truth when we speak it in love.

Gender issues are one of the great challenges of our day, and I believe we can rise to meet this challenge. Our forebears in this country emancipated the slave, and today we are called to set another kind of slave free, the sexually trafficked. We embraced the foreigner, and today we invite them into our homes through foster care and adoption. We hurt the LGBT community by ostracizing them from our churches. Let’s bless them with our listening ears, willingness to be uncomfortable, and hunger to seek the heart of Jesus in every conversation.

This spring, after years of smoking, my brother underwent open-heart surgery. Before the surgery, he could see how earnestly our family was struggling with his name and the use of acceptable pronouns. It

**IT IS HARD
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FOR MOST OF
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is hard to switch to “she” and “Carly” when you’ve known someone as “he” and “Charlie” for most of your life. I’m working on it, but the shift still feels unnatural and forced.

On the night before his surgery, he told our mother and me, “Call me Chobey. That will work best for everyone.” Chobey is a name we all adore. His grace moved me. Despite his knowing that I believe his decision to live as a woman is inconsistent with the tenets of my faith, he continues to draw near to me and I to him. As we all do this, may grace return. **CT**

MARGARET PHILBRICK is a gardener, teacher, and author most recently of the novel *A Minor: A Novel of Love, Music, and Memory* (Koehler Books). You can connect with her at margaretphilbrick.com.

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HE
SUFFERS

W
I

BY KEVIN P. EMMERT

THUS

AND
WE WITH HIM.



WHEN I MOVED FROM NORTH CAROLINA
TO ILLINOIS FOR GRADUATE SCHOOL,
I IMMEDIATELY FORMED A TIGHT
BOND WITH FOUR OTHER MEN.

We went to class together, studied in the library together, and relaxed together. We made a ritual of gathering every Friday night to eat pizza, drink beer, and watch a movie. It was a break from schoolwork and a time to talk about relationships and debate theology.

One Friday night, only my friend Mark and I were able to meet. After spending a few hours at his apartment, I said goodbye and went home. It was like any other Friday night.

But the next day was nothing like a typical Saturday. Mark and I had planned to grab coffee that afternoon. As I was leaving my apartment, an unknown number showed up on my phone. I usually ignore unknown calls, but this time I answered. It was a police detective. He asked if I had heard the news.

"No," I answered. "What happened?"

His response forced me to my knees. "Last night Mark's apartment caught fire. He was succumbed by the smoke, and his body was burned." I pictured Mark's apartment engulfed in flames. A haunting thought seized me: *Perhaps I could have prevented his death.* The fire started only two hours after I had left his apartment.

For weeks I was trapped in a nightmare. My grieving was interrupted by phone calls with detectives and visits to the police station. I wondered if anyone

was able to understand my strange mix of emotions: sorrow, confusion, paranoia, and complete exhaustion. Sure, my friends were also mourning Mark's death, but I felt like they couldn't understand my situation. I had been the last person to be with him. And as the first one notified of Mark's death, I had broken the bad news to them. My suffering felt unique and exclusive.

The semester after Mark's death was hellacious. On top of this pain, I contracted mononucleosis, and my relationship with my then-girlfriend deteriorated. I struggled to complete my schoolwork. My life seemed to be falling apart piece by piece.

But as I pushed forward with what little energy I had, I saw a glimmer of hope. It didn't come from counseling, prayer, or personal encouragement. It came through my theological studies. I discovered a doctrine—and, more important, a reality—that comforted me and forever altered my view of the Christian life.

OUR/CHRIST'S TRAJECTORY

The doctrine is called union with Christ. I had heard of it before, but in a class on Martin Luther, I encountered it in a way that excited me.

“Just as a bridegroom possesses all that is his bride’s and she all that is his—for the two have all things in common because they are one flesh—so Christ and the church are one spirit,” Luther preached in his sermon “Two Kinds of Righteousness.”

Coming across this passage, it dawned on me: *If I am one with Christ, as he and the Father are one, then he’s always with me, even in this terrible episode (John 17:20–26).*

This means that as Christians, we are inextricably linked to Christ, incapable of being disentangled. Nothing and no one can separate us from him or his love (John 10:28–29; Rom. 8:38–39). Not only that, we actually participate in his life. “Mine are Christ’s living, doing, and speaking, his suffering and dying,” Luther added, “mine as much as if I had lived, done, spoken, suffered, died as he did.” This is a profound mystery, indeed, but it is central to the gospel. As members of Christ’s body, united to him by the power of the Spirit,

we can’t see him.

And his story, his life trajectory, is also ours.

SIGNING OUR LIVES AWAY

This connection means we follow Christ on the path to glory, to be sure. But it also means we share in his sufferings (2 Cor. 1:5; 1 Pet. 4:13). Being “in Christ” means we are so united with him that we participate in every aspect of his life, even the sore, ugly, and stressful moments of his earthly life—including his death. We cannot choose between participating in his glory and participating in his suffering. Søren Kierkegaard explained,

The choice would not be right if someone thought he was to choose between Christ in his lowliness and Christ in his loftiness, for Christ is not divided; he is one and the same. The choice is not either lowliness or loftiness. No, the choice is Christ.

just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:3–4, ESV used throughout)

So, paradoxically, new life in Christ comes as we share in the sufferings of Christ (Rom. 8:17).

But what does it mean to share in Christ’s sufferings? He was mocked, tortured, and crucified 2,000 years ago. His suffering seems unique to him: he, infinite and holy God, became a finite human being and bore our sin on the cross.

Obviously, we don’t take credit for the redemption on the cross—we don’t bear the sin of the world. But there is a sense in which we have died *with* Christ on the cross. This is a mystery, but Paul indicates that whoever believes in Christ has been crucified with him (Gal. 2:20). We have died a spiritual death and have risen to a new spiritual life.

In addition, Jesus’ sufferings cannot be reduced to the last week of his life.

WE ARE INEXTRICABLY
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we follow Christ wherever he goes.

I understood this more deeply after I went tandem skydiving a few years ago. Though I couldn’t see my instructor—he was strapped to my back—as we jumped from 13,500 feet and whipped through the sky at 120 miles per hour, I knew he was there. After 60 seconds of freefall, he pulled the chute, and we soared. Every twist and turn we made, we made together. We were on the same trajectory.

Skydiving provided me an image of life with Christ. We are now “strapped” to Christ. He’s always with us, even though

The most nerve-racking part of my skydiving experience was signing the waivers, which included 20 different ways of saying, “You might die doing this.” *Tell me something I don’t know*, I thought as I essentially signed my life away.

When we commit our lives to Christ, we also sign our lives away. Paul says,

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that,

His whole life was marked by suffering. And he suffered in ordinary ways, ways you and I suffer. He lost loved ones, knew heartache, and was moved to sadness; he was unappreciated, reviled, maltreated, and even betrayed. And we are now united to the One who experienced all that.

To be sure, Christ did not experience firsthand every kind of pain we experience. He wasn’t sexually abused. He didn’t endure the agony of cancer. He didn’t have a stillborn baby. Yet he bore all our afflictions, not just our sins, in his body as he hung on the cross (Isa. 53:4–6). Jesus

felt and carried the weight of our pains, and can therefore sympathize with us in the midst of suffering. He bore them so that, someday, we may be ultimately freed from them.

But there is a converse side.

GOD WITH US, ALWAYS

In a 2013 NCAA basketball playoff game, Louisville player Kevin Ware suffered a gruesome compound fracture. Players collapsed on the court at the sight of it; some cried and some even vomited. Most of Ware's teammates turned away in horror, with one exception: Luke Hancock rushed to Ware, held his hand, and prayed for him. After the game, when asked why he did that, Hancock said he didn't want his friend to be alone during his extraordinary pain.

Because our redemption was wrought by Christ's suffering, we know that he is no stranger to suffering. In fact, he is uniquely present in our sufferings. He is "near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit" (Ps. 34:18). Weakness, pain, and even death—these are places

Christ inhabits, just as he did in his earthly ministry.

This doesn't mean we should deny our need for consolation or pretend we feel God's presence when we don't. Our union with Christ actually helps us to make sense of times when we feel that God is far away. Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Christ's passion is his cry of dereliction: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The Son, who enjoyed uninterrupted fellowship with the Father from all eternity, apparently felt abandoned by God.

Jesus was reciting Psalm 22:1. By speaking that line, he articulated that one aspect of grievous suffering is to feel Godforsaken, and that helps us to understand what happened in that dark hour.

In the opening of the psalm, David asks why God has abandoned him. Eventually he is reminded of God's deliverance: "For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him" (22:24).

David realized that God was with him all along, even when he felt abandoned.

The moment when he felt most disconnected from God was actually a time when God was incredibly near, inspiring David to prefigure Christ's crucifixion.

Similarly, even though Jesus felt forsaken by the Father, the Father was with him all along, reconciling the world to himself. Luke's gospel indicates that Christ sensed the Father's presence just before he died: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (23:46). And Isaiah prophesied, "Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge" (53:11, NRSV), meaning that in the darkness of his suffering, Christ nonetheless saw light.

This has several implications for those united to Christ.

EMBRACING SUFFERING

First, even during the darkest patch, when we feel forsaken by God, he is, in fact, present—as the Psalms and the Cross reveal to us. If we share in the fullness of Christ's life, we at times will feel Godforsaken. And in those moments we know something beyond our feelings: that God is present



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THE TWISTS AND TURNS OF LIFE AREN'T OBSTACLES TO GOD'S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES BUT NECESSARY STEPS TO GET THERE.

mysteriously at the moment he seems most absent. Furthermore, just as Christ saw light—the fruit of his suffering, salvation for others—as he was still suffering, so we have hope *in the midst* of our suffering, knowing that God will work all things together for our good (Rom. 8:28).

Second, *all* our sufferings are significant. The twists and turns of life aren't obstacles to God's plan for our lives but

necessary steps to get there. God uses our sufferings that we might share in the life of Christ. As Paul put it, "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:10–11, NIV).

Suffering is not something we want to avoid. Rather, like Paul, we want to

pass through it, for it is a key means of experiencing deeper union with Christ.

This side of eternity, we live in the tension between death and resurrection. While we sometimes feel that death overpowers the new life we have in Christ, we know that death will not be the resolving note of our lives.

And I felt that tension after Mark's death. I knew God was present and active in my life, but he often seemed far away. And I knew that God would somehow work good from such tragedy. Yet years passed before I could sense how God was using Mark's death to refine my trust in and love for him.

Despite my perception of reality, I could trust that God was present—not to mention good, loving, and powerful—all along. United with Christ, we can face the trials of this life with patience and confidence, knowing that the dissonant notes will eventually lead to melodies more beautiful than we can imagine. **CT**

KEVIN P. EMMERT is assistant online editor for CT. Follow him on Twitter @Kevin_P_Emmert.

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MELINDA GATES,
ONE OF THE WEALTHIEST AND
MOST CONTROVERSIAL WOMEN IN
THE WORLD, BELIEVES THAT ALL
LIVES HAVE EQUAL VALUE. SHE'S
WILLING TO SPEND \$3.6 BILLION
A YEAR TO PROVE HER POINT.



THE HIGH PRICE OF FAITH IN ACTION

INTERVIEW BY *Timothy C. Morgan*



Melinda Gates describes herself as an “impatient optimist,” something that was nurtured in her while attending Ursuline Academy, the leading Catholic all-girls school in Dallas.

Since Melinda and husband Bill created the Gates Foundation in 2000, they have given away \$33.5 billion of their massive wealth from Microsoft and from their close friend, billionaire Warren Buffett. The foundation started the same year as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the 15-year antipoverty campaign centered on 8 global objectives. The two programs share many priorities, such as fighting diseases, reducing extreme poverty, and improving maternal health. The foundation partners with a wide spectrum of organizations. Faith-based groups—including Catholic organizations, World Vision, Lutheran groups, and the Salvation Army—are key recipients of more than 125 foundation grants.

This January, Melinda and Bill Gates announced they were “doubling down” on their poverty-fighting efforts. “The lives of people in poor countries will improve faster in the next 15 years than at any other time in history,” they said. But along with the foundation’s big bets and big spending has come big controversy. In 2012, the couple helped launch Family Planning 2020, a global effort to make voluntary, artificial contraception available to 120 million poor women by 2020.

The foundation—which does not directly pay for abortions—plans to spend \$1 billion on contraception. This has stirred sharp criticism. In 2012, Melinda Gates made a public break with the Catholic Church’s opposition to artificial birth control. She said in an interview that when poor women have little access to family planning, “We’re not serving the other piece of the Catholic mission, which is social justice.”

Over the years, the foundation has granted millions to Planned Parenthood and Marie Stopes expressly for family

planning and contraception. Human Life International says the foundation’s claim about not funding abortion is “outright deception,” since some of the contraception methods work after conception, thereby ending the life of an unborn child.

But the new Gates-supported Faith-Based Coalition for Healthy Mothers and Children Worldwide has gained strong endorsement within the Christian community, including from singer Amy Grant, former Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Hope Through Healing Hands, Jena Lee and James Nardella of Blood:Water Mission and Lwala Alliance in Kenya, respectively, and Elizabeth Styffe of Saddleback Church’s HIV/AIDS Orphan Care Initiative. The coalition supports the goal of voluntary “healthy spacing and timing” of pregnancies—without resorting to abortion.

Timothy C. Morgan, CT senior editor of global journalism, recently spoke with Melinda Gates after she had returned from India, where she visited projects that the foundation supports. [Editor’s

guided those discussions. The nuns taught us to go out in the community and serve, and that serving one person could make a difference. I served in the local elementary school, the Dallas County courthouse, and the hospital.

How do you see your mission at the foundation in biblical terms?

For me, faith is about faith in action. With this deep-seated belief, Bill and I believe that all lives have equal value. We try to live that out in what we do as a foundation. I cannot explain how it is that I, a young girl from Dallas, fell in love with Bill, and we sit at the cornerstone of the wealth from Microsoft and Berkshire Hathaway. We, and later Warren Buffett, decided this money should go back to society. I do feel called by it.

What resistance did you have to confront in yourself before giving away such enormous wealth?

In terms of giving it away? Zero. When Bill brought this notion up, it was just

THE NEW TESTAMENT SPEAKS TO ME. JESUS WAS ALWAYS REACHING OUT TO THE POOR, ALWAYS TRYING TO GET PEOPLE TO NOT SEE THE POOR AS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PEOPLE. THAT WAS INGRAINED EARLY FOR ME.



note: The views expressed do not imply endorsement from CT.]

You have said that the Gates Foundation catchphrase, “All lives have equal value,” comes from your childhood. Where were you first exposed to this idea?

I went to a Catholic school from K to 12th grade and attended church with my family every Sunday during that time. The New Testament speaks to me. Jesus was always reaching out to the poor, always trying to get people to not see the poor as different from other people. That was ingrained early for me. Ursuline nuns let us question church teachings in class and

so what I wanted us to do. For me it was, “When will we do it?”

We were speaking about this while we were dating. We traveled to Africa for three weeks. It was life changing. We were near Zanzibar on a small island, Mnemba, walking on this beach. We had actually been working on a marriage questionnaire through the Catholic Church. On that walk, we discussed our similarities and differences. We were working on that as well at the end of the trip, and this decision [to start a foundation] naturally came up as part of it.

How have you resolved friction in the relationship between the foundation



Gates visits a young mother (center) and her mother-in-law in Bihar, India, which has more maternal deaths at 50,000 per year than any other nation.

and faith-based groups that have a mission to spread the gospel?

We look for places of common interest, whether it is around health or clean water or agriculture. You work on those parts of the mission together, and you agree to disagree about the pieces you don't agree on. If people are doing a piece on health and they are doing the faith-based piece, I have no problem with that. We're going to fund the piece on health. We're not going to fund the faith piece. But that's great. They will go out and get other funders to do the faith-based piece. We just always focus on where the commonalities are.

In the developing world, family planning has been coercive and violated personal freedoms. What are you doing to address that?

I know why that controversy exists. It's the history of the family planning community and the way things were started back in the 1970s with a top-down approach, which is completely wrong. There was coercion, absolutely. How can we move forward so that we put family planning in a woman's hands? We let her figure out how to do healthy timing and spacing of her births.

In India, I was talking to a group of teenage girls, all married already. They want their children to grow up healthy. They learned that if you space those births, the chance your child will grow up healthier is much higher. Then they said, "Okay, how do I do that?" If you educate the woman and let her decide voluntarily, you get different outcomes. Through all the projects in family planning, we are doing simple surveys: "Was contraception coerced or forced in any way?" We have to make sure that coercion just does not happen.

How do you reconcile your advocacy for artificial contraception when the Catholic Church has consistently opposed it?

I'm Catholic, so deciding to speak out on family planning took some personal reflection on my part. I actually spoke with my parents and my kids about the fact that I wanted to champion this issue. I realized that this is really about saving the lives of millions of women and children.

Women everywhere should have access to information on healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies and contraceptives if they want them. If a woman's faith or values lead her to not want to use contraceptives, we absolutely respect

her decision—that's part of the reason we believe so strongly in voluntary family planning. It's also the reason we support a full range of family-planning methods, including nonhormonal, natural fertility awareness methods that help couples identify the days during the woman's menstrual cycle when pregnancy is likely. I share the view of Pope Francis that the church should be a "home for all" and "not a small chapel." I'm encouraged by Pope Francis's focus on the world's poor and hope he continues to highlight the importance of combating poverty worldwide. In that respect, we have a shared agenda.

What do you see as the toughest of the poverty problems out there?

The one that I want to see us advance on further and faster is agriculture. We are still working deeply on vaccines, but we have a system now. In agriculture, we are still learning how to effect global change, to take the lessons from the green revolution that happened in other places in the world and scale up in places like Africa. We still have a long way to go.

In recent years, critics have said foreign aid creates harmful

dependencies. Do you push back against such criticism?

It's incorrect from what we have seen in countries that have lifted themselves out of poverty. South Korea is now a donor nation instead of a recipient. We speak out about what we actually see working, lifting up whole economies and societies. The best way we can push against that criticism is to show what works and why it works, and to show our optimism in the face of reality.

I try to be humble when I go in to do this work. We work through organizations that are on the ground already. So one organization I was just visiting in India does self-help groups around agriculture and livelihood. Every person working in that organization is Indian. They are the ones out giving the messages. That's much more acceptable and culturally appropriate, and that's how we have to do our work, through partners.

There are places where aid has never worked well. Haiti, for example, has received billions of dollars of aid, and it never seems to get any better.

You have to have good governance in a country to make progress. Some places are easier to work in than others. Bill and I try to effect change just within those systems. That's where we feel like we have levers and actually have impact. Anywhere you have conflict and unstable government, it is difficult. We tend not to work in those places—except with vaccines. You actually can deliver vaccines in those places. Even in times of unrest, they will stop a war for Days of Tranquility, and this allows vaccinators to come in.

Across 15 years and \$33.5 billion in Gates Foundation programs, where have you failed?

I will give you one example, and we have many. We were part of a group that was trying to end homelessness in the Pacific Northwest—a phenomenal goal. We were building transitional housing particularly for women and children who would drop into homelessness quite often.

Well, we cannot build enough transitional housing units. At the end of the day, if we want to end homelessness, we have to look at the root causes and

figure out how to prevent people from dropping into homelessness. If we can work upstream of the problem, we are going to have a lot more success.

What about a notable achievement?

The Gavi Alliance. Since 2000, there are 6 million children alive because of that vaccine fund, hundreds of millions of kids vaccinated, and 5 new vaccines that did not exist before. Two of them are for diarrhea and pneumonia, which are the two biggest childhood killers worldwide. So we feel like that has been a huge success, and it's part of why [global] childhood deaths are down so substantially since 1990.

Many women and children in some Muslim-majority nations face bleak lives and enjoy few rights. Is this a religious problem or something else?

I would not say it's a religious problem. It's a tradition problem. Any time you are trying to empower women, you have to change mindsets about what women are capable of doing.

One country doing this is Niger, a Muslim-majority country with the highest fertility rate in the world. Niger is educating men. They are explaining to men how more of their children will survive if they allow their women, their wives, to space the births of their children. At the end of the day, men want their children to survive. You go at it in a way that's beneficial to the father, then he will allow her to be educated and start to make that decision differently.

One promising point of light is the self-help group. In India today, 3 million women are in self-help groups. The government there has a goal of creating 70 million self-help groups. There is power in people coming together and planning openly as a community.

So there is a positive network effect?

Sociologist Nicholas Christakis talks about behavioral social networks. If you hit the root of the network in various places instead of just all the nodes, you can spread things out, because we know behaviorally we all affect each other in gigantic ways. Women are all part of social groups. In Niger, women said to me, "We talk when the babies are born. We talk when we grind millet every single day." They are already in their own social networks. You just have to figure out how to light up those social networks with new messages.

WE WANT AN EQUITABLE WORLD FOR EVERYONE. NO MATTER WHETHER THEY LIVE IN THE UNITED STATES, NAIROBI, OR BANGLADESH. WE HAVE TO PULL OUR OARS IN THIS BOAT TOGETHER.



Gates visits a clinic in Dakar, Senegal, which is on track to cut its child mortality rate by 50 percent.

PHOTO BY FREDERIC COURBET / COURTESY OF THE GATES FOUNDATION

What is the deepest spiritual change you have seen in yourself?

I'm living out my faith in action. Every day. Even the days I do not come into the foundation, I am reading something about the foundation, or Bill and I go out for a date night, and half the conversation is about the kids and the other half is about the foundation. We are putting the best of our hearts and our minds and our energy to try to get change in the world. That's how the foundation has changed me. It's not that I didn't have faith before. I had faith. I still have a profound faith. I have meditation books on my nightstand. I like *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young. You live your life wide open with gratitude.

I hearken back to those women I have met in the developing world, and I carry their stories and their lives in my head. I have a beautiful picture of one of the women I met in Africa a year and a half ago, that's prominently in a place I walk by every day in my house. It reminds me to be incredibly grateful for what I have.

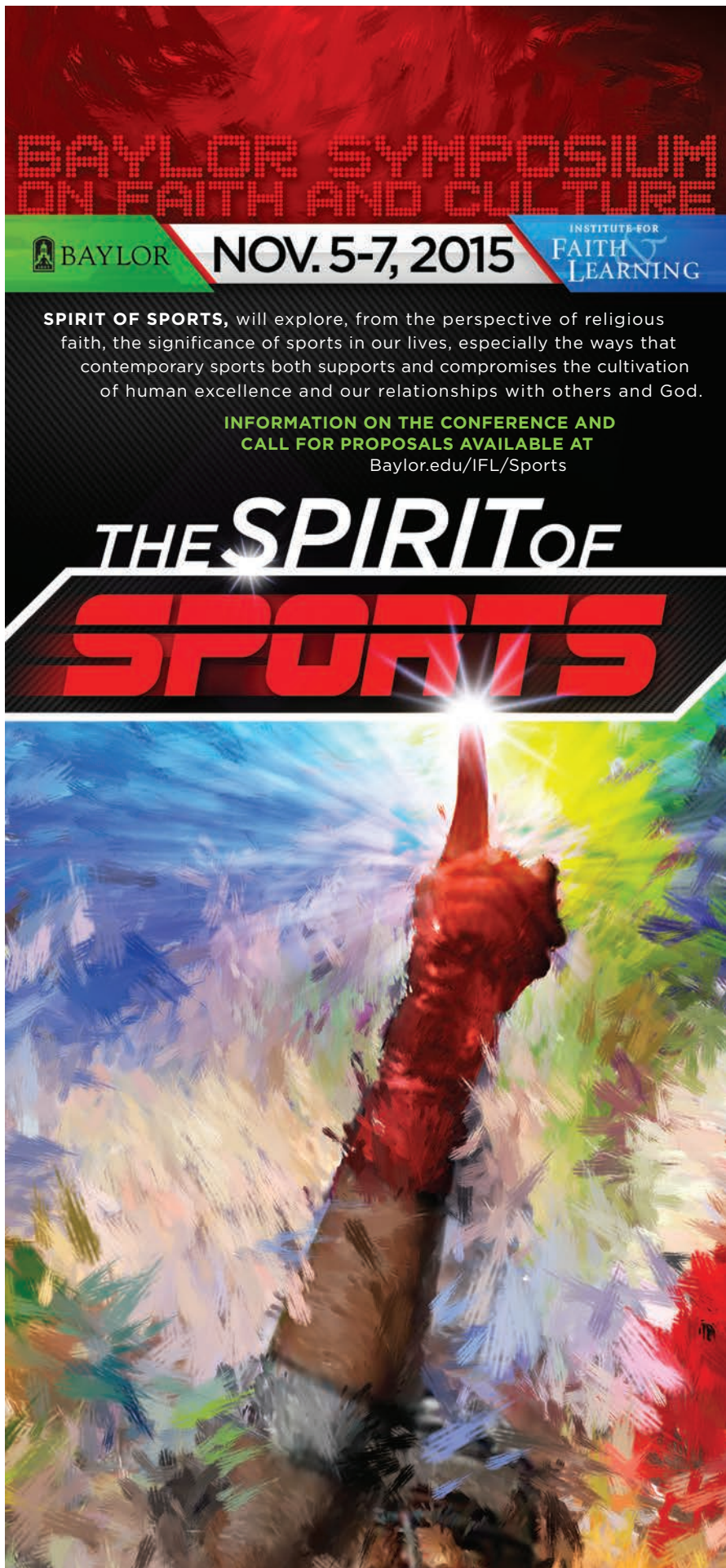
We want an equitable world for everyone. No matter whether they live in the United States, Nairobi, or Bangladesh. We have to pull our oars in this boat together.

There is a passage in Luke, that you do not put a light under a bushel basket. You put it up for everybody to see. We at the foundation are trying to shine light on the world, on the world's problems and inequities, so that other people will feel this calling too.

I show examples of what works and the optimism that comes from what works. Part of this comes from being a mom.

Parents dream of successfully passing their faith on to their children. How do you bring your Christian values to your children?

They certainly went to Sunday school, and one of them went through part of a Catholic school. My kids are getting a bit older now. I have a daughter who is 12, a son who is 15, and a daughter in college. At the dinner table many nights, we discuss what we have seen as a family in the developing world. We have this belief in faith and action. My children know I pray and meditate every day. In fact, sometimes they even like to tease me about how they are not allowed to interrupt that time in the morning. They see me living out my faith and my values, hopefully lived out before them. **CT**



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THE SPIRIT OF SPORTS

BY TIMOTHY GEORGE

LETTERING BY JILL DE HAAN

TIMOTHY GEORGE is the founding dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University and the general editor of the *Reformation Commentary on Scripture* (IVP Academic).



A Journey into the Unknown

Summoned by God, I learned to follow him in trust and vulnerability, even when I felt displaced.

AS I DROVE SOUTH on Interstate 65 one hot summer day, headed for Birmingham, I was uncertain about what lay at the end of my 376-mile trek. I had spent ten wonderful years in Louisville, Kentucky, teaching at a Baptist seminary where I had wonderful students and colleagues. I loved what I did and intended to stay there until I died. But a stirring deep within—an unexpected prompting from God, I believed—had set me on this journey to a future yet unknown to me.

One of the great metaphors of life with God is that of a journey. The journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. The journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. The journey of the wise men to Bethlehem. This theme resounds not only throughout Scripture but also throughout the Christian tradition. For example, one of Augustine of Hippo's favorite words was *peregrinatio*, Latin for "pilgrimage," which appears almost 100 times in his classic work *The City of God*.

In the evangelical tradition, we might resonate more deeply with John Bunyan's allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, about a character named Christian who leaves his home city, bids farewell to

BY Faith
ABRAHAM
WHEN CALLED *to* GO
TO A PLACE
HE WOULD LATER
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HE DID NOT KNOW
WHERE HE WAS
GOING.

— • HEBREWS 11:8 • —

his family and friends, and journeys to a place where he has never been. Along the way, Christian is confronted with dangers and demons of the dark. But he trudges on until, at last, he reaches that city “with foundations whose builder and maker is God,” which can be glimpsed but never occupied until he crosses the river of death.

My own journey began in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1950. My father was an alcoholic and died in prison when I was 12. My mother suffered from polio and struggled to care for my younger sister, Lynda, and me. For several years, Lynda lived in a Christian children’s home while I was left in the care of two great-aunts. We lived in a section of town called Hell’s Half Acre.

Back in the 1950s, before the civil rights era, our neighborhood was already integrated, since both whites and blacks there were simply too poor to live anywhere else. I know what it is like to go to bed hungry and to go to school wearing raggedy clothes.

Every Sunday, my great-aunts took me to a small Baptist church near our home. The worship was expressive, the prayers fervent, and the love palpable. There I learned John 3:16 and the chorus “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” Sunday school was a big deal, and so was the preaching. In that church, I first connected with one of the Bible’s great journey stories: Abraham and Sarah’s pilgrimage from an old home to a new one, from an old country to a different one (Heb. 11:8–16).

Our pastor, Brother Ollie Linkous, loved to preach from Hebrews 11. He would tell the stories of the great heroes of the faith mentioned in this chapter: Abel, Noah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, David, Samuel, and all the others. But Abraham and Sarah made a special impression on me.

With God’s Word—especially the story of Abraham and Sarah—dwelling in my heart as I grew up, my mind began to fill with questions that preoccupy many young Christians: How do I discern the will of God when faced with an important life decision? Should I go to this school or that one? Do I marry this person, or someone else, or remain single? Is this the right job for me?

Some believers say we shouldn’t worry about trying to discern God’s will. “God gave you a sound mind,” they say, “so

use it and you will likely make a wise decision.” But that response never satisfied me. The God in that scenario sounds like the distant God of deism—aloof and hands-off—rather than the intrusive God of the Bible who interrupts our lives.

As a young Christian, I was given good counsel about divine guidance. “Seek advice from wise and godly friends,” I was told. “Spend time in prayer and claim the promise of James 1:5: ‘If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding

Countless people asked me, “Why did you go to liberal Harvard?” Denise and I sensed that God was leading us there, but we had no infallible verification in advance. The decision was hard. While I earnestly prayed for direction, the counsel I received from others was decidedly mixed. Some friends thought I would likely lose my faith if I studied at such a school. (This had happened to others, so their concern was legitimate.) Others warned that I would forfeit all opportunities for ministry by leaving

There was a kind of communion of saints in the cemetery that day, and I knew I had come there by special appointment.

fault, and it will be given to you.” And, “Immerse yourself in Scripture, because God’s Word is ‘a lamp for my feet, a light on my path’” (Ps. 119:105).

I have tried to follow this advice when facing tough decisions. And on two separate occasions, intense meditation on Hebrews 11:8–16 has helped me in the decision-making process, shaping my life significantly.

FROM CERTAINTY TO TRUST

The first situation occurred as I struggled to decide which seminary to attend. As a dyed-in-the-wool Southern Baptist preacher boy, everyone assumed I

would choose one of our six denominational seminaries. My wife, Denise, and I visited one and met some of the professors. But after a long process of discernment, we decided to move to Boston, where I would attend Harvard Divinity School.

our cozy denominational cocoon. In this context, Hebrews 11:8–16 fastened itself to my mind and heart.

As I read this text in light of the Genesis narrative (11–25), it became clear that the journey of Abraham and Sarah was made in response to a summons: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out” (Heb. 11:8, ESV). We are not told exactly how that call came to Abraham and Sarah. Whether it was like Moses’ bush, glowing with supernatural fire, or like Ezekiel’s psychedelic vision, a whispered voice along a mountain trail, or someone calling their names in the middle of the night—we do not know. But one thing is sure: The call came from outside them. Abraham and Sarah did not take a personality or spiritual gifts test and then decide to become pilgrims. They were summoned, and they knew it. We, too, knew we were summoned.

But a journey always involves displacement—and usually uncertainty. I was struck by the number of negatives in this passage. “And he went out, *not knowing* where he was going” (v. 8, ESV, emphasis mine). When they died, they had *not yet received* what was promised

(v. 13). They saw the celestial city *at a distance*, from afar, and for that reason they acknowledged “that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (v. 13, *KJV*). Not knowing, not having, not receiving, not possessing. The great theologian John Calvin once wrote, “We cannot imagine any certainty that is not tinged with doubt, or any assurance that is not assailed by some anxiety.”

There are times when Christ followers want to sing with all the gusto in their souls that wonderful hymn by Fanny Crosby: “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine / Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!” But other times, the great hymn by John Henry Newman is more appropriate: “Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on. / The night is dark, and I am far from home; lead thou me on.” I’m sure that was the case for Sarah and Abraham. It certainly was for Denise and me. Two aspects of their journey seemed to portend our own pilgrimage of faith.

THE WAY OF VULNERABILITY

First, theirs was a journey *from certainty to trust*. Back in Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham and Sarah were persons of substance. Consider the number of animals and servants they had. They knew who they were and where they stood in society. Their sense of identity was shaped, no doubt, by generations of acquired wealth, status, and privilege. But on the journey, they could no longer rely on such certainties. The dangers of the road required the discipline of trust. *Trust*—a major theme in Scripture—appears 134 times in the King James Bible and basically means “to lean on” or “to cling to.”

Abraham and Sarah also made a journey *from security to vulnerability*. They became nomads. Like the Bedouins who still live in the Middle East, they were tent-dwellers, moving from place to place, with no walled city to keep them safe from marauders searching for easy prey.

During the seven years Denise and I spent in Boston—a thousand miles away from our home and families—we learned trust and vulnerability the hard way. I will never forget that empty feeling in my stomach when I came out of class

one day to discover that my car had been stolen. Our house and the adjacent church building were broken into on five separate occasions, our few valuable items stolen. And the cultural difference was enormous: imagine trying to find grits in a Boston grocery store!

In Hebrews, the honor roll of faith begins with Abel (11:4) and concludes with Jesus Christ (12:2). Like Abraham and Sarah, Jesus too was a sojourner. John 1:14 describes the Incarnation this way: “The Word became flesh and dwelt [literally, pitched his tent] among us” (*ESV*). Though Jesus found respite in the home of his friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, his ministry took place on the road. His was a life of itinerancy. Jesus said of himself, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20, *ESV*). At the end of his life, he found himself, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it, “crowded out of the world and on to a cross.” To follow the pilgrim pathway of Jesus, to take up our own cross on a daily basis, means that we walk in his way of trust and vulnerability.

SUMMONED IN A CEMETERY

A

fter completing my studies at Harvard, I joined the faculty of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. Our time there was among the best in our lives. I loved teaching and had hundreds of wonderful students. Denise’s own writing career began to flourish. And one of the benefits of teaching at Southern is the privilege of being buried in the nearby Cave Hill Cemetery. I loved walking through the cemetery and often took my students there on “field trips” to stand near the resting places of the seminary founders and other saints. I even chose the plot where I hoped to be buried.

Then, one day, I received an unexpected call from the president of Samford University, Tom Corts. He said, “We are thinking about starting a new divinity school here in Alabama, and we want to talk with you about becoming its founding dean.” I was taken aback. I had never been a dean, and had never wanted to be one. I was a scholar and a teacher.

Seminary administration was the last thing that either I or those close to me thought that I would do. But Corts was persuasive, and I agreed to an interview. I met the school’s benefactor, Ralph Waldo Beeson, and was impressed with his vision for theological education.

Faced with the decision, I consulted friends and again got mixed advice. I prayed and decided to spend an entire day at Cave Hill. I walked among the grave markers I had come to know so well. Some were elaborate monuments memorializing those who had done daring deeds of faith. But one of my favorite markers was that of the great New Testament scholar A. T. Robertson. His has a single verse inscribed on it: “To me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Hebrews 11:4 says of Abel that “through his faith, though he died, he still speaks” (*ESV*). There was a kind of communion of saints in the cemetery that day, and I knew I had come there by special appointment.

From early morning until sundown, I walked, prayed, and read two Bible passages over and again. The first was Psalm 119. In repetitive stanzas, like waves breaking against the shore, the psalmist extols the Word of God. This psalm is a paean to the righteous ordinances of the Lord, to his testimonies, statutes, precepts, promises, and commandments. God’s law, we are told, is an expression of his steadfast love and faithfulness. That day in the cemetery, my sense of vocation was confirmed as I allowed this psalm to shape me.

I also read and recited once again the story of Abraham and Sarah. When they were called by God, they obeyed, not knowing where they were going, not having received the things promised, but seeing them from afar and trusting that God would lead them at last to that city with foundations whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10).

As I drove from Louisville to Birmingham to begin the work of Beeson Divinity School on June 1, 1988, I cannot say I was free from twinges of doubt. But I was sure of two realities: that God’s Word will stand forever; for his promises cannot fail, and that I had once again been summoned by the same God who called Abraham and Sarah to pick up stakes and set out into the unknown.

More than 25 years later, those convictions sustain me still.

CT

FASHION

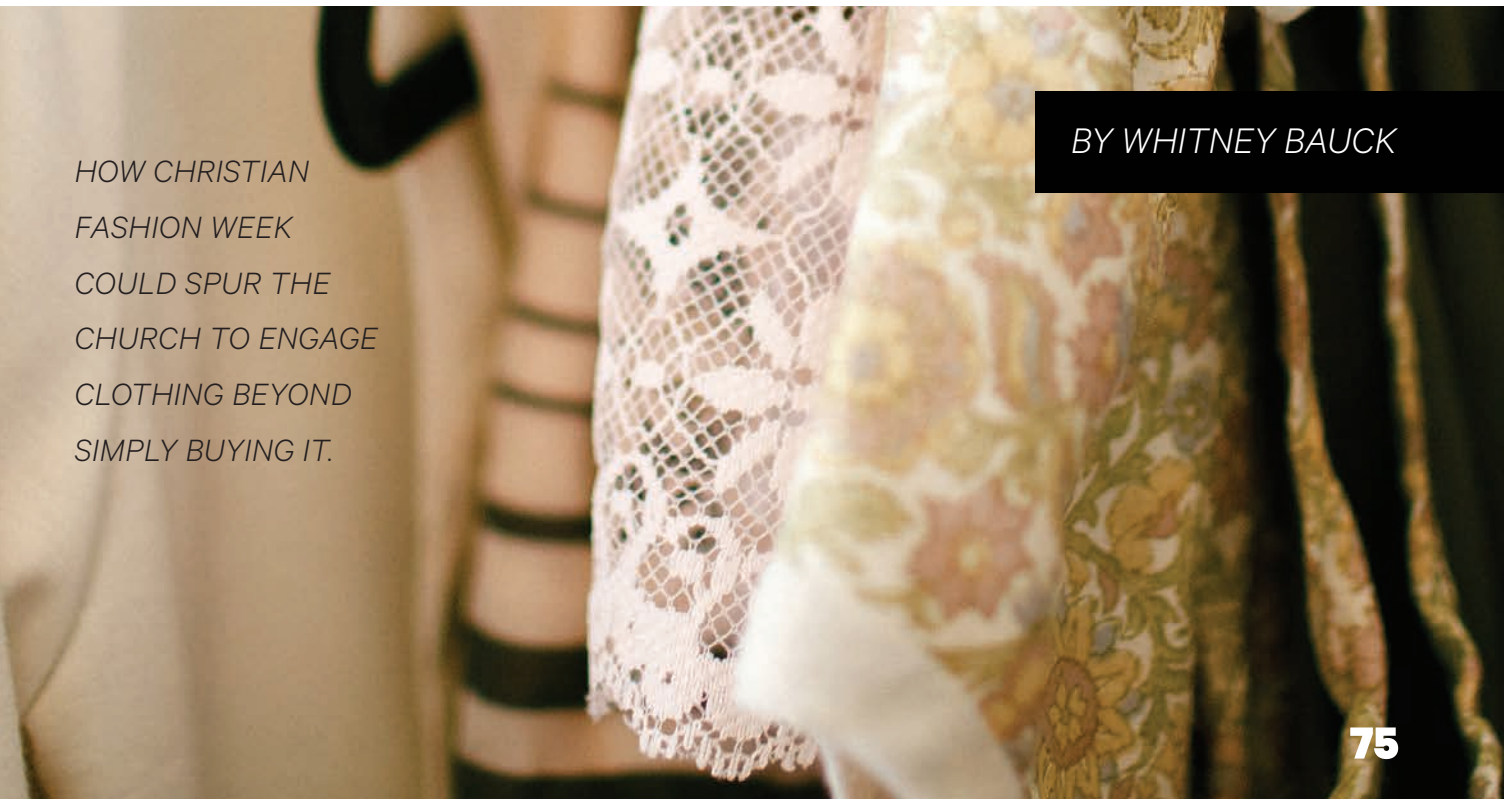
PHOTO BY WHITNEY BAUCK (LEFT) / STOCKSY (RIGHT)



MATTERS

HOW CHRISTIAN
FASHION WEEK
COULD SPUR THE
CHURCH TO ENGAGE
CLOTHING BEYOND
SIMPLY BUYING IT.

BY WHITNEY BAUCK





chorus of camera shutters clicks over a throbbing bass as models emerge onto the runway in single file. Clad in black leather and lace, they confidently maneuver the catwalk despite the veils over their faces and the towering stiletto heels on their feet. A woman in the front row pulls out her phone to Instagram a textured cape, and a reporter scribbles notes on a yellow legal pad.

As a fashion blogger, I've flown across the country to observe this fashion show for myself. But I'm not in New York or LA—I'm in downtown Tampa, Florida. And while I'm surrounded by media personalities and fashion aficionados, the audience is also peppered with pastors and Sunday school teachers. When the show closes, attendees stand up and fall into a queue as they wait to take pictures

on the catwalk. The sign they want to pose in front of? A simple red and white logo reading CHRISTIAN FASHION WEEK.

About a year before I took my seat at this runway, I learned of Christian Fashion Week (CFW) online—and my instinct was to cringe. Visions of T-shirts bedazzled with crosses danced in my head; proof-texted verses about modesty rang in my ears. Would this be another



example of well-meaning Christians baptizing one more creative medium in Christian “relevance”?

A rapid Google search proved my T-shirt premonition correct, as well as my guess about an emphasis on modesty. Its website explained that the focus on modest clothing was part of CFW’s desire to “create a series of international fashion shows and events around the idea of fashion from a Christian worldview.”

Now I was in Tampa at the invitation of CFW’s founders to see what “fashion from a Christian worldview” looked like to them. And what I found there was less easily dismissed than I expected.

MODESTY AND BEYOND

As someone who writes about fashion from a faith-based perspective, I spend a good deal of time interfacing with other Christians on the subject of clothing. You can’t do that for long without discovering one thing: Talking about fashion with the Bible in mind typically means talking about modesty.

The association is not unfounded. The Bible explicitly addresses modesty, perhaps most famously in 1 Timothy 2:9, which instructs women to adorn themselves “with modesty and self-control”

(ESV). Other Scripture passages similarly encourage Christians to focus on inner beauty over outer adornment (1 Pet. 3:3–4; Prov. 31:30).

Yet modesty discourse today rarely acknowledges how the meaning of the word has changed over time. *Modesty* in our 21st-century context typically means “not revealing too much skin.” Today, a burqa-clad woman encrusted head-to-toe in pricey designer goods is considered more modest than a homeless teenager wearing a handout tank top and running shorts. But the New Testament’s original audience would have understood the word *modesty* as “unassuming or moderate.”

In focusing the modesty discussion primarily on sexualized bodies, many Christians have lost the thread of the biblical discourse on clothing. The Bible addresses socioeconomic issues in the church as well as sexual ones when talking about apparel. For example, James 2 warns against showing favoritism to wealthy churchgoers who displayed their status through clothing. Paul’s charge in 1 Timothy 2 can be read as a similar caution for people choosing to flaunt their wealth. Today’s modesty rhetoric tends to add skewed gender politics into the mix without looking at the way motive

‘Fashion matters because bodies matter. We have to reconcile ourselves to bodies, the sensual and the creative. And fashion is a means for doing that.’

LUCY COLLINS
Fashion Institute of Technology

CLOTHED IN MERCY

CLOTHING TAKES ON RICH MEANING
THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE.

and context inform modesty. In general, Christian conversations about clothing tend to let modesty overshadow all other dimensions. Thus, I was unsurprised to learn that CFW's original platform in 2013 was built almost entirely on advocating modest clothing.

But after spending five days with the people behind CFW, I came away believing that, despite some imbalances, they still have much to teach the broader church. Most centrally, CFW believes that fashion *itself* matters. Engaging the industry—whether through design, modeling, or photography—is worth pursuing, because it's one more human endeavor that God intends to refine and redeem for his purposes.

"In terms of investing emotion and time, we're 150 percent in," said Mayra Gomez, cofounder of CFW, as well as president of the TruModel mentoring program. "I love working on this show."

Along with her husband, Jose, and cofounders Tamy and Wil Lugo, the Gomezes have put countless hours and their own money into making CFW a reality. Having worked in the industry themselves—Jose and Wil primarily as photographers, Tamy as a stylist, and Mayra as a model—the couples' desire to found CFW was born of their own experiences in a climate sometimes inhospitable to their values.

In the months leading up to CFW 2015, press releases announced that their platform was broadening beyond modesty to include ethical concerns that haunt the industry. CFW now intends to follow the CARE model:

Contextual modesty: A moderation that goes "beyond policing hemlines and cleavage."

Affordable, sustainable fashion: A commitment to "clothe our world affordably with garments that will last."

Responsible use of natural resources.

Ethical hiring, casting, and labor practices: "No one should profit from the abuse of human beings for the purpose of sex or labor."

Before becoming a PhD candidate at Fuller Theological Seminary, I served for 12 years at a church in Long Beach, California. A number of my congregants worked in the fashion industry. From them I learned that programs on fashion—fashion design, merchandising, and a body of literature called fashion theory—were popping up all over.

When I looked for a Christian response to the fashion industry, I didn't find anything. There are books on Christianity and film, Christianity and literature, Christianity and psychology, but I couldn't find anything on Christianity and fashion.

Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper famously said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" Like Kuyper, I want to understand every aspect of human life in relationship to Christ. This set me on a quest to understand the fashion industry and emerging fashion studies.

The Bible doesn't directly address *fashion*, which today refers to the rapid interplay of clothing in consumer societies. But the Bible has a surprising amount to say about *clothing*. Right from the beginning, after the Fall, Adam and Eve became aware of being "undressed." Then God provides for them in their nakedness. Theologians call this a *protoevangelium*—literally a "first gospel." The gift of clothing reveals a God who meets us in our shameful, sinful condition and covers us through a sacrificial death.

Clothing takes on special significance in the story of Joseph; in the way the prophets Samuel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah delivered their message; and at the Transfiguration, where Jesus appeared in clothing that "became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them" (Mark 9:3). Luke 12:27–28 tells us God dresses the flowers of the field, more splendid than Solomon in his fine dress. If that is how God clothes the fields, how much more does he care about clothing us?

The Bible also addresses modesty, and therefore, we must seriously consider it. But modesty is not the locus of biblical teaching on clothing. After all, Esther won a beauty contest to rescue her people. Conversely, any of us can wear modest clothing and still lack the generosity that Paul puts forward as the end game of modesty (1 Tim. 2). So here's a test to see if we are practicing biblical modesty: Do we reserve resources to bless those less fortunate? Or do we spend all of our resources on ourselves?

Further, as we are obligated to care for others, we might spend more money on high-quality clothes, as cheap clothing notoriously

PHOTO BY STOCKSY



relies on sweatshops and child labor. And consider the elaborate nature of the priestly clothing detailed in Exodus 28; the celebrated gold-laced bridal gown in Psalm 45:13–14; and the Proverbs 31 woman, who dresses her household in scarlet. From these and other texts, we learn that the Christian story embraces the festive, fine, and elaborate dress associated with fashion.

To truly engage fashion as Christians, we need to move beyond explicit verses about dress and examine the underlying values that are reinforced by fashion. Some of these values are good. It is no accident that modern fashion has arisen alongside suffrage and other aspects of democracy. The two cities known best for fashion—New York and Paris—are major cities in countries that have had powerful democratic revolutions. If we all get to choose what to wear, we are already practicing a form of voting for the public decorum.

But not all values put forth by fashion are reconcilable with Christianity. One of the parasites that feeds and fuels fashion is late-modern expressionism. I'm talking here not about the value of expressing yourself, but about making self-expression into an entire way of life. As Catholic philosopher Charles Taylor pointed out, self-expression has become the highest good for many people, pursued with a religious zeal. This new form of late-modern Romanticism teaches us that to not “follow your heart” is to diminish our humanity.

Clearly such expressionism is at odds with the Christian faith. Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, not pursue ourselves (Matt. 16:24). Self-denial, not self-expression, is at the heart of Christianity. Again, here is an opportunity for Christians to look beyond concerns about scanty dress to consider how we might make sacrifices in our choices for the sake of others.

Beyond this, Thomas Aquinas provides one more model for engaging clothing. He believed we have a moral obligation to compose our outward manners—including our dress—in light of the person we are addressing, the company we are with, the business we are pursuing, and the place we are in. He claimed that a truly virtuous life includes the art of *savoir faire*—“a sense of occasion discerning differences of situation”—and that this should inform the clothing we wear. May we rise to the occasion.

CT

ROBERT COVOLO is an ordained pastor and a dual PhD student at Fuller Theological Seminary and VU University–Amsterdam. His dissertation (under William Dyrness) is on fashion theory and theology.

Admittedly, other than an announcement before the final showcase that it was broadening its platform, it was difficult to discern what CFW was doing to address ethical and environmental issues. Jose announced before the runway show that “all of the designers adhere to amazing practices.” But he told me later that some of the designers know little about their own production, especially aspects with potential ethical costs, like textile sourcing. Picking a fabric to make a garment may seem morally neutral. But the process of manufacturing a textile may include using toxic dyes, dumping harmful chemicals, or employing workers in unsafe conditions. Further, Jose confirmed that the vendors who sold at multiple CFW events weren't asked about production and sourcing.

MORE FAMILIAL THAN CORPORATE

Even still, the change in modesty rhetoric was encouraging. At the week's finale, Jose said, “CFW has been dubbed in the past, ‘One more button, one more inch of fabric,’ like that's the difference between us and everyone else. But modesty is determined differently by a lot of people, so we leave that to the individual.” Coming from the person largely responsible for barring men from viewing the now-defunct swimwear portion of CFW two years prior, this is a marked shift.

Biblical principles permeated CFW in other, behind-the-scenes ways. Notable fashion weeks, like the one in Milan, are infamously lacking in diversity. By contrast, CFW—from attendees to founders and every level of model, makeup artist, and designer in between—represents a range of ethnic and national backgrounds. And while many fashion events feel cold and competitive, the spirit at CFW was downright friendly.

The Gomezes and Lugos show a sincere desire to love every person involved in the event. Models noshing on snacks backstage said they had never been better cared for. Young designers told me that they had been mentored after exhibiting their first line with CFW in years past. One makeup artist said that she was “living her dream” because of the Gomez family, who had



Christian Fashion Week founders Jose Gomez (left), Mayra Gomez, Tamy Lugo, and Wil Lugo celebrate the 2015 event.

I have been to fashion weeks in New York, Paris, Milan, London. This strikes me as an event driven by creativity and spirit and principles.'

ALEXANDRA JACOBS
The New York Times

taken her and her daughter in for months while she was weathering a divorce. For the Gomezes, hospitality is clearly a way of life; their living- and dining-room floors were littered with air mattresses the night before the showcase to accommodate out-of-town participants.

Whether due to its small scale or a genuinely Christocentric spirit or both, CFW felt more familial than corporate. Alexandra Jacobs, fashion critic and features editor for *The New York Times*, had flown in with her photographer to cover the final showcase. She noted this as one of CFW's unique characteristics.

"I have been to fashion weeks in New York, Paris, Milan, London. I feel sometimes like those are megabranded events and there's a sort of choreography to them," she said. "This does not strike me as a branding event. This strikes me as an event driven by creativity and spirit and principles."

NO DISEMBODIED BEINGS

Despite changes for the better, 2015 may be CFW's final year, due in part to losing sponsorship from Zondervan. But many attendees believe it will stay afloat. "The great thing about a Christian Fashion Week is that there can always be a resurrection," Jose told me, only half kidding.

And whether it's via CFW or some other

program, Christians are participating in fashion every day—by purchasing one brand over another, joining in the latest denim trend or not, choosing what to wear to work, or deciding how to talk to kids about their school's dress code. Further, some fashion insiders as well as theologians (see "Clothed in Mercy," p. 78) are doing the intellectual heavy lifting to develop a deep biblical engagement with clothing. One such person is Lucy Collins, a professor at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology. She says that Christianity informs her work because "ideally faith should saturate every aspect of our lives."

"Fashion matters because bodies matter," Collins said via email. "We are not disembodied beings existing only in a spiritual realm. We have to reconcile ourselves to bodies, the sensual and the creative. And fashion is a means for doing that."

Whether we prefer a bedazzled T-shirt or a couture gown, we all interact with clothing on a daily basis. My hope is that CFW will be joined by a growing chorus of Christian voices engaging fashion with a rich biblical vision in mind.

CT

WHITNEY BAUCK (Wheaton BA, 2015) is a freelance writer and photographer who blogs about the intersection of fashion and faith at Unwrinkling.com.

PHOTO BY WHITNEY BAUCK (LEFT) PHOTO COURTESY OF DANIEL GABER / FOTOCAFE LLC (RIGHT)



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This video is really the best thing ever produced about homosexuality. You've given the Kingdom of God a great gift.

Mario Bergner, Redeemed Lives

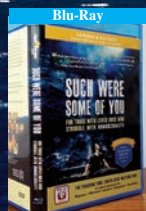


I watched the documentary again last night with my wife (my 3rd, her 1st) & we both felt it's the most powerful film we've ever encountered!

Kent Whitaker, Celebrate Recovery Sr. Rep.

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SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU



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Pastor Steve Berger - Grace Chapel, Franklin, TN



This is by far the most amazing "ex-gay" documentary ever made! WOW! Truth prevails over darkness! So powerful!

**Stephen Black
First Stone Ministries**

Our Highest Recommendation!

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REVIEWS



ABOVE ALL EARTHLY METAPHORS

No one image captures all of God. That's why the Bible uses so many. By Courtney Reissig





The Bible is full of beautiful imagery that describes God and our relationship to him. Some examples—Father, Creator, King, Great Physician—are familiar to most of us. But we overlook many other pictures and metaphors. What can they teach us about God's character and ways?

Lauren Winner—assistant professor of Christian spirituality at Duke Divinity School and author of *Girl Meets God*, *Mudhouse Sabbath*, and *Real Sex*—takes up this question in her new book. In *Wearing God: Clothing, Laughter, Fire, and Other Overlooked Ways of Meeting God* (HarperOne) ★★☆☆, Winner uses the Scriptures to show that God is simply too vast and wonderful to contain in a single image. “The Bible’s inclusion of so many figures for God,” she writes, “is both an invitation and a caution. The invitation is to discovery: discovery of who God is, and what our friendship with God might become. The caution is against assuming that any one image of God, whatever truth it holds, adequately describes God.”

Winner's main purpose is to stretch our imaginations, not to stir up controversy. She wants readers to grow deeper in friendship with God and find new ways to worship him. I'm confident her book can do just that. But in certain ways, she takes things too far.

TOO MUCH TO DESCRIBE

Most chapters in *Wearing God* explain a specific biblical image for God. God, in these chapters, is like clothing, a fragrant aroma, bread and wine, a woman in labor, laughter (at those who oppose him), and a raging fire. Each chapter fleshes out the imagery with biblical references, historical examples, and theological reasoning.

One of the most compelling aspects of the book is how Winner unlocks concepts of God that few readers will have considered. We are familiar with talking about God as our sustainer. But how often do we think of him as the literal bread that fills our hungry stomachs or

the wine that quenches our thirsts? He provides these things to meet our needs and shows all who feast on him that he alone sustains. Winner offers a view of God as deeply involved in creation, loving his children, meeting our every need, and walking with us through every season in life. This will refresh the soul of anyone who feels as if God is aloof or distant.

In her final chapter, “This Poverty of Expression,” Winner affirms that even after unpacking a multitude of biblical images for God, it's still impossible for our meager minds to understand him fully. Language has its limits, and God cannot be contained within them. In the chapter's most compelling passage, Winner captures this beautifully:

The point is not that our language is limited; the point... is that God is “too much.” God's utter difference from the world is too much to describe, and God's nearest intimacy with the world is too near to name. We cannot really say that nearness; we can only gesture toward it and surround the gesture with knowledge that what we have said is inadequate; and then sometimes stop altogether, and put away all gestures and all the description and all the speech.

Scripture tells us that we are God's image bearers. But in our smallness and humanness, we can't see God for all he is, because he is so “other” than us. He is sovereign, all-powerful, and all-knowing. We are not. We can spend our entire lives trying to wrap our minds around all that he is and still have a vastness left to discover.

There really is poverty in our language. But perhaps Winner understates the

In our smallness and humanness, we can't see God for all he is, because he is so ‘other’ than us. We can spend our entire lives trying to wrap our minds around all that he is and still have a vastness left to discover.

extent to which we can know God fully this side of heaven, through Scripture and the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the exact imprint of God's nature (Heb. 1:3). While we cannot look on the face of God apart from Christ because of our sin, we can look upon Christ and, through faith in him, be made like him (2 Cor. 3:18). When we see Jesus, we are seeing God (John 14:9). When we are brought into relationship with Christ, we are brought into relationship with God, and we can know him as a son knows his father.

GOD IS NOT WEAK

Thinking through the full range of the Bible's divine imagery is a helpful exercise, and *Wearing God* wonderfully enriches our sense of who God is and how he relates to his people. I couldn't help thinking, however, that Winner occasionally misinterprets the imagery.

For example, in talking about God as a woman in labor, Winner says it is “hard to imagine that a woman nursing her child every two hours for six months could possibly forget him. But God will forget us even less than that.” This is beautifully true and would resonate with any mother. In the same chapter, Winner references Isaiah 42, which uses a similar metaphor to describe how God cries out for his people's redemption. She sees God making himself vulnerable, suffering for us, and laboring in pain in order to redeem us: “The verse from Isaiah tells me that God squats and pants and bellows like a moose.”

But we must examine the chapter's larger context. God shows himself mighty against his foes; he lays waste to mountains and dries up rivers and pools. Winner wonders if he ever wishes that the “labor would progress” or that the “pain would stop.” Would a mighty God cry out for mercy in this way?

Other passages have the unfortunate effect of making God seem weak. In one chapter, “Smell,” Winner tells the story of a friend who wore her husband's shirts after his death because it comforted her. Winner wonders if God feels the same way about his separation from us. When our sin drives us apart, does he feel comforted by our lingering scent? “God is beside herself with the separation,” she says, before asking, “Is that the context in which God receives the scent of our prayers? Is that the reason God needs

to be soothed?"

We can imagine God being pleased by the aroma of holy lives and prayers offered to him. But likening him to a grieving widow makes him seem incomplete without us. It's clear from Scripture that God desires loving relationship with his people, but he needs no "soothing" in our absence.

Then, in "Bread and Wine," Winner wonders whether "providing food makes

God feel, as it makes me feel, needed and important." But God is not in need of such affirmation. He possesses everything in himself, and he delights in providing for us because he loves us, just as we delight in providing for children, friends, family, and neighbors.

Winner is known for crafting beautiful, thought-provoking prose, and this book is no exception. She helps us see God through a different set of lenses, opening

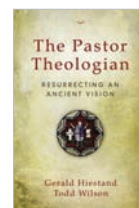
our imaginations to the many ways he loves and provides for us—and suffers on our behalf. But the God who cares for us so intimately, so sacrificially, is a God of awesome power. It's we, not him, who are weak, vulnerable, and needy. **CT**

COURTNEY REISSIG is a regular contributor to *Hermeneutics* and the author of *The Accidental Feminist: Restoring Our Delight in God's Good Design* (Crossway).

Calling All Augustines

The church needs more pastors who write and preach top-notch theology. **By Douglas Webster**

The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision
Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson
(Zondervan)



Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson like to tell the story of a girl and her father strolling through a church graveyard. The daughter reads the headstone inscriptions out loud to her father. She comes upon one that lists "Pastor Theologian." She pauses, then announces, "Papa, they have two people buried here!"

Hiestand and Wilson are pastors at Calvary Memorial Church outside Chicago and cofounders of the Center for Pastor Theologians. They have made it their mission to repair the modern breach between local church leaders and advanced theological study. In *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Zondervan) ★★★★★, they identify a need for pastors who write and preach top-notch theology for the entire body of Christ. They envision at least some pastors becoming 21st-century Augustines, Luthers, and Calvins.

"Today," Hiestand and Wilson write, "we find ourselves in a context where to be a theologian is, almost by definition, to be a professor in the academy. And to be a pastor is, almost by definition, to be anything but a theologian." Most pastors act as "passive conveyors of insights from theologians to laity. A little quote from Augustine here, a brief allusion to Bonhoeffer there. That's all."

It hasn't always been this way.

Hiestand and Wilson note that many early church fathers—Ambrose, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Athanasius, and so on—were both churchmen and leading theological lights. The pastor theologian, in short, has "a robust and storied place in the history of God's people."

So where has the pastor theologian gone? The authors point to several historical factors. The Enlightenment weakened the church's intellectual stature, pushing many theologians to the universities. The American Revolution and Second Great Awakening created a democratic culture that disapproved of preachers talking "over the heads" of the people. In the modern academy, with its emphasis on narrow specialties, theologians often study subjects too obscure to interest lay believers. It all adds up to a situation where churches can be suspicious of heady theology in the pulpit, while professional theologians can be suspicious of projects driven primarily by a heart for the church.

Wilson and Hiestand worry that American churches are left with a deep and chronic deficit in theology. They want to see pastors teach sophisticated theology to ordinary churchgoers—and, perhaps more important, to *create* theology tailored to the church's needs. Pastor theologians, the authors make it clear, aren't immersing themselves in rarefied abstractions

out of idle curiosity or a quest for professional prestige. They simply want to strengthen the church.

Despite the "inherently theological nature of the pastorate," Hiestand and Wilson note, not every pastor is called to be a pastor theologian. But for those who aspire to this office, they offer practical strategies. Their to-do list includes pursuing a PhD in theology, scheduling ample study and writing time, and gaining the support of church leadership. To some extent, though, these strategies presume a congregation rich in both finances and education. The authors might have devoted more attention to the theological apprenticing of pastors called to poor and rural areas.

Personally, I know many academic theologians who are deeply invested in the church. They write with such passion for God's people that I already think of them as pastor theologians. I also know many pastors whose theological writings have profoundly shaped my theology and ministry.

I imagine that accomplished pastor-theologians are more plentiful than Hiestand and Wilson realize. Even still, we could always use more. **CT**

DOUGLAS WEBSTER is professor of pastoral theology and Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School.



Speaking Truth Like God Does

An excerpt from *Fool's Talk*.

Should a speaker be concerned solely with truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and therefore with the strict logic and merits of his argument? Or does effective persuasion require that the speaker use whatever tricks of the trade succeed in winning others to his point of view, regardless of truth and logic? Quite obviously, speakers who are skilled in persuasion can turn the worse case into the better, truth into lies, lies into truth, good into evil, and evil into good.

Truth is crucial to persuasion, just as persuasion is crucial to truth, but it takes more than truth to be persuasive, and in the daylight between those two facts lies a gap through which every shape and size of demagogue, mountebank, trickster, con man, snake-oil salesman, and fraud can squeeze with ease.

We Christians must seek to communicate in a way that is shaped by the One who sends us, and therefore by the pattern of the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Holy Spirit. The manner in which Jesus was sent should shape the manner in which we are sent and the manner in which we speak.

God has disclosed himself to us in a form that is a shocking surprise, and one that contradicts and confounds all our human expectations and ways of thinking. And *all this was because he had to, as there was no other way to subvert the stubbornness of our sinful disobedience and reach our hearts*. The God of all power chose to become weak to subvert our puny power, the God of all wealth chose to become

poor to subvert our meager wealth, the God of all wisdom chose to become foolish to subvert our imagined wisdom, and the God who alone is the sole decisive one chose to be a nobody to subvert us when we stupidly thought we were somebody. If such dire lengths were necessary for God himself, it would be absurd to think we do justice to his incarnation by decking out our arguments in our best finery or speak worthily of his cross through arguments that preen with our own brilliance.

Shame on our folly when we think we know better than God! God's truth requires God's art to serve God's end. Any Christian explanation or defense of truth must have a life, a manner, and a tone that are shaped decisively by the central truths of the gospel. Like the Incarnation, our words are most effective when they are person to person and face to face. Like the Cross, our message must pay the cost of identification, so that from the inside out it may have a chance of succeeding in its high and worthy aim. And like our reliance on the Holy Spirit, it should always be evident that any power and persuasiveness in our communication comes from him and not us.

Humility and vulnerability should always be among the clear marks of the Christian advocate. We are mere midwives, and what matters is not us but the Spirit's gift of the fresh-born life of the new child of God.



Fool's Talk:
Recovering the
Art of Christian
Persuasion
Os Guinness
(InterVarsity Press)

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Wilson's Bookmarks

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

SIDNEY CHAMBERS AND THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

JAMES RUNCIE (BLOOMSBURY)

If you're acquainted with the Grantchester Mysteries, chances are you've already devoured this fourth installment in the series, which features the Anglican vicar and amateur detective Chambers (now the Archdeacon of Ely); his German wife, Hildegard (a superb pianist); and now their daughter, Anna, as well. Runcie is the son of the late Robert Runcie, former Archbishop of Canterbury, so he knows the territory well. Here, as in G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown stories, the deepest theological questions are handled with a light touch but never trivialized. The series began in the 1950s; we're now in the mid '60s. Don't read too fast!

THE SPEECHWRITER

BARTON SWAIM (SIMON & SCHUSTER)

It would be hard to find a better book in this year leading up to the 2016 election than Swaim's memoir. Swaim worked for South Carolina governor Mark Sanford from 2007 to 2010. His account is unlike the usual political insider's story. For one thing, it's better written, funnier too, blessedly concise, and free of huffing and puffing. But in the end, the joke is on us: We get what we pay for.

OPERATION LONG JUMP

BILL YENNE (REGNERY HISTORY)

This is one of the strangest books I've read in a long time. The cast of characters is huge, the narrative jumps here and there with abandon, but I found it utterly absorbing nonetheless. *Operation Long Jump (Unternehmen Weitsprung)* was a plan hatched by German intelligence to assassinate FDR, Churchill, and Stalin when they met in Tehran from November 28 to December 1, 1943. That alone is a compelling subject, but along the way, Yenne sheds considerable light on German influence in the Middle East; the struggles for power among various factions within Iran; and the competing interests of Britain, the United States, and the USSR. It would be good to have a parallel account of this period from an Iranian source.



Giving the Suffering Their Say

What the Book of Lamentations teaches about our grief. *Interview by Rob Moll*

We live in a world with untold amounts of pain from war, famine, and oppression. But our worship sometimes leaves little room for emotions of lament. In *The Message of Lamentations* (IVP Academic), Christopher J. H. Wright, Old Testament scholar and international ministries director for Langham Partnership International, introduces readers to one of the Bible's most heartbreaking, poetic, and neglected books. CT editor at large Rob Moll interviewed Wright about the role of Lamentations in understanding—and protesting—human suffering.

What is the likely setting in which Lamentations was written?

Almost certainly, it is the immediate aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C. It was the most traumatic moment in Israel's Old Testament history. The writer paints a portrait of utter devastation and appalling suffering: starvation, disease, slaughter, rape, scavenging, looting, and the desecration of holy things.

Unlike in Job and many of the Psalms, God says nothing to the writer of Lamentations. What should we make of his silence?

One commentator, Kathleen O'Connor, calls God's silence "inspired." This resonates on three levels. First, God allows the suffering people to have their full say. He listens, without interrupting to comfort or correct. Second, the Prophets had already explained that this would happen and why. And third, although God does not speak as a character in the book, he speaks by including it in his Word, within the canon of Scripture.

How does Lamentations differ from Job or the Psalms?

Job's suffering is clearly undeserved. In the Psalms, suffering is sometimes the result of sin, sometimes the result of wickedness of enemies, and sometimes simply inexplicable. But even though the suffering of Jerusalem happened at the hands of the evil Babylonian empire, it is recognized as the outworking of God's judgment on moral, social, and spiritual degradation. Lamentations accepts God's punishment while recoiling from its awful severity.

What does Lamentations offer us today?

There are people who are, at this moment, seeing murder, rape, the loss of homes and loved ones, and the destruction of holy places. For them, Lamentations describes reality. We can and should lament with them.

Lamentations, as O'Connor says, provides a bottle for the tears of the world. We cry out to God for those who suffer so terribly from the effects of sin and evil and sheer folly: in wars, racial conflicts, and all manner of injustice and oppression. Lamentations holds up to God the sheer horror of what this suffering feels like, and appeals to him to act justly, to demonstrate his faithfulness. The book affirms God's sovereignty—his throne is still in heaven even as the devastation of his temple happens on earth—in its closing verses.

What role should a book like Lamentations play in our worship, corporate prayers, and sermons?

The absence of lament, at least in many Western churches, is a great loss. We have quietly airbrushed great swaths of the Bible from our consciousness. We sing songs based on the Psalms, but often leave out the bits about suffering or oppression. We ignore the fact that in the Psalms, "lament," or protest, is the largest category.

So much of our worship is cover-up: pretending to have emotions we don't really feel, or smothering the emotions we do. That is not praise. It simply leaves us to pick up our suffering again on the way out—without bringing it into God's presence or hurling it at him in questioning (but trusting) protest. Spending time in Lamentations helps us learn how to plumb the depths of lament as well as scale the heights of rejoicing.

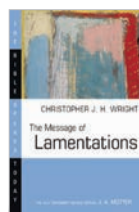
How has your perspective on global Christianity informed your reading of Lamentations?

I have friends and Langham Partnership coworkers in many countries where God's people are experiencing poverty, persecution, or outright destruction. And yet I know, because they tell me, that despite these horrors, they trust

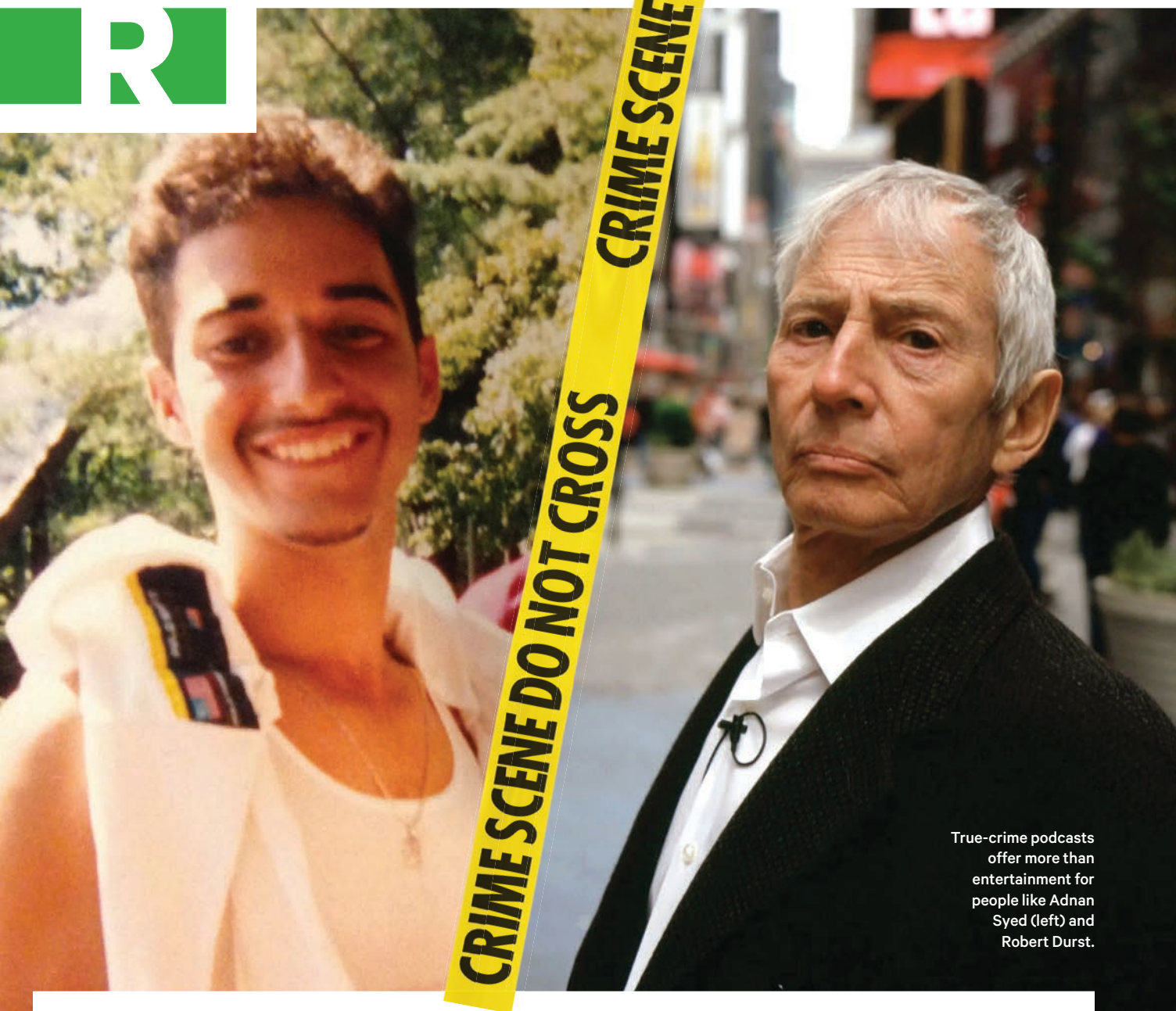
God and find him at work in amazing ways.

Lamentations helps us face the world's suffering and weep over and protest it. But it does so within the grand narrative of Scripture, with its redemptive center in the cross and resurrection of Christ, and its glorious, hope-filled climax in the new creation, in which all suffering, weeping, and death will be no more.

CT



The Message of Lamentations
Christopher J. H. Wright
(IVP Academic)



True-crime podcasts offer more than entertainment for people like Adnan Syed (left) and Robert Durst.

Jinxed and Serialized

Why true-crime dramas are making a comeback. **By Wade Bearden**

Last year's *Serial*—a 12-episode NPR podcast investigating the 1999 murder of a Baltimore student—sparked a phenomenon. Each week, millions of listeners anxiously looked to their smartphones, tablets, and computers for new installments of the true-crime drama to appear. *Serial* set off a slew of social media chatter, think pieces, and more podcasts. “In

the normally low-profile world of podcasting,” wrote Ellen Gamerman of *The Wall Street Journal*, “*Serial* is a certified sensation—a testament to the power of great storytelling.”

Serial cocreator and narrator Sarah Koenig recounts the case of Adnan Syed, a man convicted of strangling his ex-girlfriend, Hae Min Lee, during their senior year of high school. *Serial*'s first

season ended ambiguously, refusing to definitively answer the basic question, “Did Syed kill Hae Min Lee?” But the show's ambiguity only piqued listener interest. *Serial* quickly became one of the most popular podcasts in history, the fastest, according to Apple, to reach 5 million streams or downloads.

Similarly, HBO's documentary series *The Jinx* captivated audiences in early

Though the subgenre presents itself as an examination of truth, it can often subvert this ideal by sacrificing ethics for entertainment.

2015. Sketching the life of enigmatic millionaire Robert Durst, *The Jinx* tried to prove that Durst murdered his first wife, his best friend, and a next-door neighbor.

Arguably, *The Jinx* succeeded where *Serial* fell short. The final episode ended with Durst saying that he “killed them all, of course.” Durst’s apparent confession, combined with his arrest on the day of the show’s finale, incited strong commentary from the media and broader public. According to Canvs, a qualitative social TV platform, 35,108 tweets went out about *The Jinx* in the period surrounding its finale. Almost 11,000 exhibited some sort of emotional response.

The popular appeal of true-crime stories doesn’t seem to be waning. Listeners chipped in to fund season two of *Serial*, with a release date within the next year. There’s even a new podcast paid for by the Adnan Syed Trust, *Undisclosed*, taking its turn investigating Lee’s murder. And legendary documentarian Errol Morris recently announced plans to direct a six-part documentary series for Netflix.

RAISED STAKES

This isn’t the first time we have been captivated by the true-crime subgenre, which typically deals with murders. While Truman Capote’s 1966 classic *In Cold Blood* brought mass appeal to true-crime literature, nonliterary true crime experienced a renaissance of sorts when Morris, then a relative unknown, presented the film *The Thin Blue Line* in 1988. The film, which examined the 1976 murder of a Dallas police officer, threw light on judicial and law enforcement deficiencies and eventually

led to the release of a convicted killer from death row.

In a period when many critics began to question whether documentaries could reveal truth, *The Thin Blue Line* proved that true crime could be used to help solve criminal cases as well as critique the justice system. Morris’s film reestablished “the viability and even centrality of truth value to documentary in a way that impacted the public sphere and society at large,” argued Charles Musser, who teaches film and media studies at Yale University.

If true crime can teach us anything, it’s that stories of real-life murder and mystery strike a deep, enigmatic chord in audiences. We can’t look away, and if we do, it’s because we’re busy researching the backstory on Wikipedia.

Why are we fascinated? One, for the same reason we enjoy good fiction: well-crafted narratives appeal to our imagination and emotions. True crime, however, elevates the stakes in a way that fiction cannot. While a good novelist constructs characters that generate empathetic responses, we know all along that we are not empathizing with flesh-and-blood people. We are responding to an idea.

By contrast, blood shed in true crime is blood shed in our world. This is one reason the subgenre often produces a strong visceral connection between subject and viewer: What these characters have done can’t be reversed or rebooted, and what happens to them has real-world consequences. True crime plays into our curiosity about how a person violates the canons of justice and justifies their behavior—and it plays into our yearning to see justice. As human beings created

by a just and justice-seeking God, we are naturally attracted to these themes.

But also unlike fiction, true crime has the ability to produce positive social and personal change.

BECOMING ACTIVISTS

Serial ushered a stale case into the public forum, eventually leading the Maryland Court of Special Appeals to agree to hear arguments from Syed’s defense. The evidence uncovered by the producers of *The Jinx* indirectly resulted in Durst’s arrest.

True crime invites artists and audiences to become activists, and it often provides a microphone to those who have been silenced and marginalized. The credibility that ordinary audience members lend to these stories is key to the subgenre’s overall contribution. When large numbers of listeners simply talk about *Serial* and *The Jinx* with others, it indirectly puts pressure on authorities to reassess what they might otherwise ignore.

We see the effects of this type of activism with *Serial*. Though Syed’s appeal is a long shot, listeners just might be the key to his freedom. “[C]ourts are often influenced by public opinion, and in the ‘court of public opinion’—as distinguished from the court of law—Syed is widely, though not universally, seen as the innocent victim,” noted lawyer and commentator Alan Dershowitz in *The Guardian*.

This unique opportunity to secure justice also comes with grave responsibility. Though the subgenre presents itself as an examination of truth, it can often subvert this ideal by sacrificing ethics for entertainment.

For example, many have noted how the producers of *The Jinx* purposely rearranged the story’s timeline to enhance the drama of the show’s conclusion. Other critics argued that the crew withheld vital evidence from the police in order to generate further publicity.

To be fair, it’s not either-or in true crime. Producers, directors, and writers work not only to reveal truth but to reveal truth in a way that *engages* the audience. Neither *Serial* nor *The Jinx* would have been successful if their respective producers had not been artful and deliberate. The question we must always ask is whether artistry is being used responsibly. **CT**

WADE BEARDEN is a writer and podcaster for *Christ and Pop Culture*.

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New & Noteworthy

Compiled by Matt Reynolds

"The Bible says *something* about homosexuality. I think everyone can agree on at least that much. [But] if we think the big takeaway from this Big Book is the rightness or wrongness of homosexual activity, then we've managed to take a sublime narrative and pound it into a single talking point."

~ from *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* by Kevin DeYoung



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REALLY TEACH ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

KEVIN DEYOUNG (CROSSWAY)

In the coming years, many churches will face an acute dilemma: how to hold steady to the biblical model of marriage and sexuality without suggesting that the Bible obsessively condemns deviations from that model. DeYoung, pastor and Gospel Coalition blogger, seeks out this balance in another of his brief, punchy books (like *Crazy Busy* and *The Hole in Our Holiness*). The Bible, DeYoung writes, may not be "the story of God giving a lecture on same-sex marriage or trying a case before the Supreme Court." But it does contain clear, consistent teaching on homosexual behavior. DeYoung's book outlines that teaching while answering a range of possible objections.



THE GREAT FIRE

One American's Mission to Rescue Victims of the 20th Century's First Genocide

LOU URENECK (ECCO)

At first glance, Asa K. Jennings might have seemed ill-suited to spearhead a bold humanitarian rescue operation. The Methodist pastor from Upstate New York was "a small man in wire-rimmed glasses, barely over five feet tall. He stood not quite straight: his back was hunched, an artifact of tuberculosis, which had struck him in his 20s." Yet Jennings is credited with saving the lives of hundreds of thousands at the end of the Armenian genocide. On assignment with the YMCA in Smyrna, Turkey, Jennings—with help from an intrepid American naval officer—hatched a daring evacuation plan as Turkish forces set the refugee outpost ablaze. In *The Great Fire*, Ureneck, a Boston journalist, tells the story of Jennings and his brave companions.



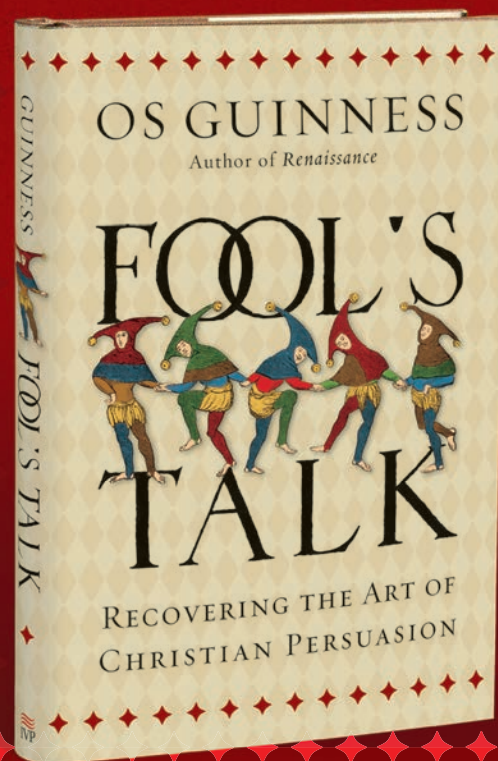
EFFECTIVE DISCIPLING IN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Scripture, History, and Seasoned Practices

DON LITTLE (IVP ACADEMIC)

Missionaries in Islamic countries are often encouraged by the surprising number of Muslims willing to profess belief in Jesus. (David Garrison's 2014 book, *A Wind in the House of Islam*, compiles many dramatic firsthand testimonies of recent converts.) But Little, a veteran missiologist, warns that cultural pressures will all but guarantee backsliding unless stronger efforts are made to help new converts grow in the faith. "We who are laboring to plant churches in the Muslim world must learn to disciple more effectively," writes Little. "Far too many of those who are coming to faith in Christ out of Islam today will fall away from Christ unless workers and believers seeking to disciple them learn to disciple well."

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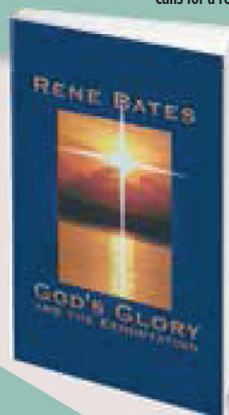
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RENE BATES'S BOOK URGES CHURCH TO PREPARE FOR SECOND COMING

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

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 96

me. By the time I graduated from high school, I found myself wondering: *Would anyone ever love and value me? Would I ever belong anywhere?*

There was a miserable stint in the Army, mercifully shortened by a psychiatrist who thought I had no business being a soldier. There were a couple of romantic relationships with married women. Casting about for something to do, I eventually settled on studying journalism at San Francisco State University.

That's where I found Islam. A friend introduced me to the Qur'an, and I was entranced by its words, which speak of a God who cares a great deal about the men and women he created. But it was also the people: the Palestinian and African American Muslims who first taught me what it meant to surrender. They welcomed me as no one else had before.

Some people look to faith for ideas of right and wrong, or some understanding of good and evil, or a set of principles with which to order the world. Not me. What I sought, what I ached for, was meaning and belonging. And Islam gave me both.

There is much I keep from that time as a Muslim. The Qur'an teaches that God gives freely to all creation, believers and unbelievers alike, and it is best to respond with thankfulness and wonder. And Muslims in America live their faith with tremendous courage in the face of a frequently hostile culture.

But Islam also provided religious and political fuel for my anger. At one mosque where I worshiped during the early 1990s, I fell in with a group of jihadis. We studied and discussed the texts of revolutionary Islam, mostly the writings of Egyptian intellectual Sayyid Qutb and Pakistani journalist Abul A'la Maududi. One brother went to fight in Bosnia, and I wanted to join him.

But there was Jennifer, whom I'd met at San Francisco State. There would be no one to care for her. She loved me enough to let me go fight a war in a faraway country because my conscience was pulling me there. But I could not leave her. I belonged to her, and she to me.

This was a turning point. The anger that had burned in my soul—an anger that nearly propelled me to war in southern Europe—was beginning to burn itself out.

Jennifer was slowly catechizing me. Not by telling me about Jesus or demanding that I convert, but simply by being with me. Unlike anyone before, she accepted me for who I was, loving me without condition or reservation. It was an early grace.

I strung together something of a journalistic career. I worked in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Washington, D.C., and New York. The job took me to offices in Lower Manhattan, right across from the World Trade Center. I was there on the morning of September, 11, 2001.

'MY LOVE IS ALL THAT MATTERS'

In the chaos and terror of the streets below, as I looked up at the burning twin towers and watched people tumble to their deaths, life-changing words came to me—words I suddenly heard inside my head: *My love is all that matters, and this is who I am.*

I knew then that everything I understood about God, about sin and redemption, about the whole human condition, had changed. I had no idea, in that moment or the days that immediately followed, who had "spoken" to me or what those words meant. I just knew the world was now a different place.

At this point in my story, if you are looking for a rationale for why I turned to Christ, well, there isn't one. This wasn't an act of reason on my part. What happened was a cataclysm, the kind of divine intervention that drove Abraham to leave home, trusting in God's promises. The kind of force that struck Saul blind on the road to Damascus.

"I think we should find a church," I told Jennifer a few months later, after we had relocated to northern Virginia. A pleased little smile spread across her face, and her eyes sparkled—the way she gets when she finally has *exactly* what she wants.

I found myself wondering: Would anyone ever love and value me? Would I ever belong anywhere?

Because of her Lutheran upbringing, we looked for Lutheran churches, selecting a congregation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The people showed me that it was the risen Jesus Christ who had spoken to me. In word, song, and deed, they taught me the gospel, the story of God walking among us, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins for the entire world and calling his disciples to continue to proclaim that good news.

This is who I had met that horrible day in September. It was Jesus Christ who, in the midst of terror and death, assured me that his love is all that matters.

If my conversion has a precise moment, it would be the Sunday I decided to first take Communion, more than a year after I started worshiping at the Lutheran church. Again, this wasn't a matter of reason—it just suddenly made sense: "This is for me, this meal, this table, this gift, this redemption. I am part of it now."

Before I had been in church for a month, much less baptized, people kept telling me, "You should be a pastor."

But my seminary training didn't go as planned. The Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago taught me well. Faculty thought I had a clear gift for ministry among the poor, homeless, and mentally ill. But the committees overseeing my candidacy told me not once, but twice, that I was unfit for pastoral service.

I don't have a church home now. Jennifer and I worship where and when we can, but we don't feel like we belong in the ELCA. It hasn't helped that I've been unable to find real work in over a year. Jennifer and I depend on the hospitality of strangers and friends. Without them, we would have no place to live.

Yet I know I belong—I belong to Jesus. He saw me in the marketplace and told me to follow. I left everything and obeyed. I still believe I am called to preach, teach, and witness this resurrecting love that met me, grabbed me, and won't let me go. Abraham also didn't know where he was going when God told him to set out and wander.

So I trust God. For the first time in my life, I know who I am. I know *whose* I am. And that is all that matters. **CT**

CHARLES H. FEATHERSTONE is the author of *The Love That Matters: Meeting Jesus in the Midst of Terror and Death* (Cascade Books).

TESTIMONY



From Jihad to Jesus

My anger drove me to Islam. Until September 11, 2001.

By Charles H. Featherstone

I've heard that Christians are made, not born. How true that is, I don't know. My wife, Jennifer, was born on a Thursday and baptized by her father, a Lutheran pastor, the following Sunday. She may not have been born a Christian, but she is about as close as one can get. For me, the path to Christian faith has been far rockier.

Both my parents were raised as Lutherans. But my mother never had much use for religion. And my father, who had taken religion seriously, lost his faith in God's goodness in the jungles of South Vietnam.

My father hoped to make a career in the Army. So we moved a lot, five times during my first ten years. When he finally resigned his commission in 1977, we settled in a Southern California suburb.

It wasn't home. It couldn't be. And by that time, I had been on the receiving end of my father's intense but sporadic violence for some years. I learned to both fear and hate him, and almost

all authority. School quickly became unsafe as well: I was bullied, terrorized, and abused regularly, not just by classmates, but also by my fifth-grade teacher. There was no one to trust. I was frightened, incredibly alone, and increasingly angry.

But whatever I lacked in religious guidance, I never blamed God. I didn't know how. Indeed, there was an intense God-hunger in my soul. I may not have known where I was going or even how to start, but I knew there was something out there worth finding.

MEETING GOD AS A MUSLIM

At age 14, I launched my quest for God, attending a fairly generic dispensationalist church. It proved incapable of asking difficult questions about life's meaning in the face of suffering, much less answering them. The people were kind, but I needed to know more than they could tell

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Elizabeth Ostling is the Associate Principal Flutist for the Boston Symphony Orchestra and a Master of Arts in Spiritual Formation student at Gordon-Conwell.

“Both the arts and the Christian faith claim to speak to the human experience. I am really intrigued and inspired by the similarities, and because of that, I am excited to be pursuing a Master of Arts in Spiritual Formation (MASF) degree at Gordon-Conwell.”

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