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Bruce Clemenger, President of the EFC, with lawyer Geoffrey Trotter, at the Supreme Court of Canada for the *Carter* case on euthanasia and assisted suicide.

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March / April 2015

Volume 33 · Number 2

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The gift of listening

It's key to sharing our faith (and producing Faith Today)

If you've ever been stymied – and who hasn't? – by a pointed question about the Christian faith, you will be encouraged by our cover story written by Andy Bannister, director and lead apologist for RZIM Ministries Canada.

This is a guy who knows how to talk about faith, and how not to talk about it. And he has good news for us – we don't need to have all the answers. We need to be able to listen and ask good questions back.

One insight that we really appreciated was simply his encouragement that we can talk about our Christian faith in a changing Canada. In fact, these days may be one of the best times ever.

"We live in a cultural moment when the need for apologetics – and a fresh vision and passion for evangelism – is greater than ever," he writes. Then he goes on to show us how it's done.

We came up with the idea for this cover story when we heard about a number of apologetics conferences happening across Canada this spring. This is a topic folks are talking about.

It's clearly time for all of us to be a little more bold about what we believe – and a lot better at listening to the legitimate and heartfelt questions of those who have them.

Those apologetics conferences are just a few of the many, many great things God is doing from coast to coast, in churches and

ministry organizations, in small groups and individual lives. From our vantage point at *Faith Today*, where we work as gatherers and tellers of stories, we have the privilege of hearing inspiring news like this every day.


And it's a privilege to share as much of it as we can with you.

Recently a writer friend of ours emailed to ask if there is truly still a place in Canada for journalism like ours. Stories about good things. Stories that encourage the Christian community, that sometimes call us all to task and that connect us. We answer unequivocally "Yes!"

That does not mean it's an easy time for Christian journalism in Canada. All the print publications we know are facing struggles, and *Faith Today* is not exempt.

But we have used those challenges to sharpen us and produce a magazine full of gifted writers and great information and inspiration. A magazine that is going from strength to strength.

Would you do us a favour? If you know of a friend who should be reading *Faith Today* but isn't, or someone who has never heard of the magazine but you think they should, email us at subscriptions@faithtoday.ca and we will send them a free copy. No strings attached. Just a meaningful gift from a friend. /FT

 Bill Fledderus of Hamilton, Ont., and Karen Stiller of Port Perry, Ont., are senior editors of *Faith Today*.

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Keep Canadian

Faith Today has to be one of the best evangelical Christian publications coming out of Canada, if not the very best. As an expat Canadian living in the U.S., I miss the Canadian perspective on many things and FT helps offset that lack.

Brian Stewart
Albion, N.Y.

Devotion to teaching

Re: *Messy Faith* (Jan/Feb 2015) “WHY SUNDAY mornings have to change” highlights an important concern – the need to continually evaluate if what we’re doing is effective. However, suggesting that Sunday teaching should be cut short to permit community interaction seems to run contrary to the “devotion to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42) which helped build the early Church.

Is it time for some of us to restructure our lives and devote

ourselves to those things which deserve our highest priority?

Richard John Kopanke
Kitchener, Ont.

Needed more than ever

JUST BECAUSE people have access to Bibles, commentaries and other materials doesn’t necessarily mean that they are using them. Studies by George Barna and Gallup show that professing Christians and others may own Bibles, but they rarely study them and even more rarely can they explain some of the fundamental doctrines in the Scriptures. So the teaching [element of worship services] is in fact more relevant and needed than ever in our secular society.

Dean Love
Richards Landing, Ont.

Not self-directed learning

MANY WHO are limiting their worship service times are not

allowing God to move, and wonder why we don’t see any signs following the teaching/preaching of the Word.

Certainly one may press a button on their computer and bring up what they wish to read or hear, but is this what God desires they should learn about Him?

C. James Link
Keswick, Ont.

Wants expository

YES, I would like to see change on Sunday mornings – change back to expository preaching. I was converted through such preaching by the late Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (see www.mljtrust.org/sermons).

On another note, I thoroughly support Bruce Clemenger’s article “Making Moral Judgments” in the same issue [Jan/Feb 2015].

Tony Brown
Kanata, Ont.

Image bearers of God

Re: *Christian Horizons’ Janet Nolan* (Jan/Feb 2015)

I APPRECIATE *Faith Today’s* support of *Christian Horizons* and the recent opportunity to be featured on the Question & Answer page. I am writing to address the incorrect title of the article in the printed version of the magazine. Thank you for working to quickly rectify the error. I want to take this opportunity to tell your readers about *Christian Horizons’* beliefs, as the printed title could leave the wrong impression about the people we support.

We do not consider the work of *Christian Horizons*, nor the people we support, to be connected to “Freeing the Enslaved” as was the incorrect title of the printed article. *Christian Horizons* works to promote full citizenship of people with exceptional needs

MILESTONES

APPOINTED



Jeffrey Greenman as president of Regent College, Vancouver, a transdenominational graduate school of 600 students. He was Regent’s executive vice-president and academic dean, and

before that a dean and professor at Wheaton College in Illinois and at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. Dr. Greenman succeeds Rod Wilson, who has served 15 years as president and remains as outgoing president until August 31.

Keith Elliott as national director of Camino Global [originally The Central American Mission], an international ministry focused on Spanish speakers. He succeeds Charlene de



Missionary Church in various roles in Canada, Mexico and Ecuador. He and his wife Ruth Ann were both raised and educated in Ontario.



and CEO for WorldServe Ministries Canada. He has also been deputy executive director

Haan, who served in the Toronto-based position for five years. Elliott has served with the Evangelical

Stephen Wile as the new chief executive officer of The Mustard Seed, an Alberta charity ministering to people experiencing poverty and homelessness. Dr. Wile was president

for Samaritan’s Purse Canada and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association of Canada and pastored for 12 years.

LAUNCHED

A new **Centre for Christian Scholarship** at Redeemer University College near Hamilton, Ont., with the aim to better enable Christian scholars to participate in the cultural, political and social conversations of our day. Director is Dr. Robert Joustra. It offers a \$5,000 Emerging Public Intellectual Award and an annual conference.

New provincially authorized bachelor of arts degrees in English and history at Briercrest College and Seminary. Previously the degrees were accredited by the Association for Biblical Higher Education, but the Saskatchewan government had restricted

and recognizes that they are at risk of being marginalized and excluded. We value all people as image bearers of God to be respected for their gifts, abilities and attributes. Preconceptions about gifts and talents often need to be challenged in order that each person can effectively steward their gifts and belong to communities in which their God-given gifts are valued and respected.

You can learn more about our organization and the people we support on our website: www.christian-horizons.org.

Janet Nolan, CEO, Christian Horizons
Waterloo, Ont.

Editor's note: To compound this mistaken carryover of a previous issue's headline in our print editions, we also mistakenly referred in an article on codes of conduct to the firing of a Christian Horizons employee, when in fact the employee resigned. Faith Today regrets these errors, and we thank Janet Nolan for her gracious response.

 *Faith Today* loves to receive your letters. Even when you disagree (or we disagree with your disagreement), your letters remind us all that we live in evangelicalism's big tent, where there is ample room for many opinions. Visit us at www.facebook.com/faithtoday to join in discussions sparked by letters to the editor and more.

all its authorizations to the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina.

RENAMED

Our Daily Bread Ministries Canada is the new name for RBC Ministries Canada, chosen to match the ministry's most popular product, a devotional periodical available around the world in 55 languages. The parent media ministry, a nondenominational nonprofit, was founded in Michigan in the 1930s and came to Canada in 1959.

CLOSING

Bethany College, Hepburn, Sask., will close this summer after almost 90 years due to declining enrollment. The Mennonite-sponsored college began as a Bible school in 1927.

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KINGDOM MATTERS

The latest news, notes, ideas and analysis from the Canadian Christian community



(clockwise from top left) Stuart Spani with a young man in Darzo, India; teaching the women; drying artemisia tea; Stuart using a village cart.

Bye-bye, malaria, says Canadian Christian

A village-by-village approach to eradicating malaria

FAR IN THE northeast of India, nestled between Bangladesh and Burma, is the state of Mizoram, home to the remote mountain village of Darzo. If Stuart Spani's hopes are realized, that's where a medical revolution will start that could change the lives of millions around the world.

Spani, an 82-year-old Vancouver resident, is founding president of the Bye, Bye Malaria Society (www.malaria-defeated.org), a small Christian ministry with no smaller aim

than the worldwide eradication of malaria. It all starts with a year-long experiment in the tiny village. Spani's dream of a world without the killer disease revolves around a bitter and unpleasant beverage called artemisia tea, a concoction made from the same plant that provides the pharmaceutical industry with the basis for the popular antimalarial drug artemisinin.

The idea is to have the whole village, population around 1,500, drink four cups of the tea each day for a week, then

one per day for three weeks, followed by one cup per week for the remainder of the year. The hope is that after 12 months of treatment, the village will be entirely free from malaria.

"By the end of [2015], we should have completely eliminated it in the village of Darzo," says Spani, "and by the end of 2016 in the whole state of Mizoram." At which point, he says, the work of spreading the word will begin in earnest.

"I feel I can't start making a lot of noise until we've got some places where it's eradicated," Spani continues, "but then it's just trying to get it to as many agencies as possible and say, 'Look, the seeds are available. You can propagate them quickly. Here's what we did. Please go ahead and copy us,' but it's village by village."

—RYAN PAULSEN

3.2
BILLION

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AT RISK OF MALARIA
(WWW.WHO.INT)

PHOTOS: WWW.MALARIA-DEFEATED.ORG

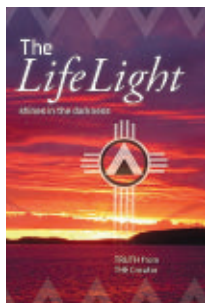
Revamped New Testament geared for First Nations readers

CANADIAN LIFELIGHT MINISTRIES

plans to distribute a redesigned New Testament to Canada's 640-plus First Nations communities within two years, starting with an initial print run of 30,000.

The Winnipeg-based ministry has been distributing Bibles in First Nations in Northern Manitoba for nearly 15 years. About 100,000 copies of the LifeLight New Testament have been distributed, with the majority of them driven or flown to remote Northern Manitoba communities by staff or volunteers.

After four years of planning, a new edition of the LifeLight New Testament (www.FirstNationsLifeLight.com) was created specifically for First Nations



readers.

"We thought perhaps a redo, enhanced by adding some testimonies of Christian First Nations

leaders, would have more punch," says president and founder Raymond Dueck.

One of the initial supporters of the project was Winnipeg rap musician Fresh I.E. Other leaders included are Chief Kenny Blacksmith, founder and executive director of the ministry Gathering Nations International, and Peter Loewen, one of the Canadian LifeLight volunteers who distributed Bibles in Northern Manitoba.

First Nations ministries were consulted about the testimonies, says Dueck.

The new edition uses the easy-to-read New International Reader's Version translation and includes highlighted memory verses, a dictionary and help sections such as "Beginning Your Journey With God."

Dueck says the new focus will help First Nations readers relate more to the Scriptures. —**ROBERT WHITE**

59+

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES SPOKEN BY FIRST NATIONS CANADIANS (FIRST NATIONS STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA)

700,474

NUMBER OF OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOEBOXES PACKED BY CANADIANS IN 2014 (WWW.SAMARITANSPURSE.CA)

Inspiring ideas from Canadian churches



Bible reading challenge

Gloucester Presbyterian Church in Ottawa resolved to increase Bible reading with a New Year's challenge. Congregants were invited to sign up for a New Year's resolution to read all of Luke, Acts, Romans and Colossians in January. After a February service the church threw a party, serving a cake with the names of everyone who completed the challenge written on it. "We get so busy doing all the other things around Christmas that the habit of reading the Bible gets shoved off. The discipline of this gets you back on track. It's like getting in shape for the soul," says congregant Geoff Matthews. www.gloucesterchurch.ca



Taking a little bit of the sermon home

Côte-des-Neiges Presbyterian Church in Montreal is using simple, tangible reminders to help their congregants live out the Sunday message. On the last Sunday of a sermon series about worrying, the pastor, Joel Coppieters, displayed a collection of riverbed stones. Tying the display into a chorus they sang about "peace like a river," he invited congregants to take a rock home as a reminder of a concern they were entrusting to God. "One single mom keeps a stone for each of her two little ones on the windowsill, where she looks at them while working in the kitchen. Several of the stones are now sitting next to people's computers at work and a few are apparently kept in the console armrest of a car," Coppieters says. www.montrealpresbyterian.com



Backpacks for the weekend

Members of Ross Road Community Church in Abbotsford, B.C., were heartbroken when a local teacher brought attention

to the fact that children involved in a school feeding program were not getting sufficient nutrition on weekends. They decided to supply the kids with weekend backpacks containing two breakfasts, lunches, dinners and snacks that are "kid-preparation-friendly." With very little notice to congregants, the church collected a special offering, and on one Sunday managed to raise enough money to supply the schools with backpacks for almost a year and a half. www.rossroadcc.ca



The mission trip that didn't leave home

While planning a mission trip, the youth of Winnipeg's Ness Avenue Baptist Church made a decision that kept their team from ever reaching the airport. They were given the opportunity to choose any destination in the world, but after spending considerable time in prayer, the team felt God called them to reach out in their home city of Winnipeg. www.christianweek.org



Churches offer severe weather drop-in

On especially cold or stormy nights, many homeless shelters suffer a shortage of available beds, so a group of Abbotsford churches have opened up their facilities, providing hot meals and warm beds. Each church is on call for one month in the winter. Any night the weather dips below 0°C, volunteers stay overnight to greet their guests and provide a snack, games, a movie, laundered sleeping bags and a place to sleep. In the morning a new team of volunteers visits with the guests while serving a hot breakfast. www.rossroadcc.ca —**CRAIG MACARTNEY**



Visit www.faithtoday.ca/InspiringIdeas for more. Does your church have great ideas to share? editor@faithtoday.ca

Filmmaker gives ancient tales a modern twist for young viewers

Paul Plett is filming a series of Kid Shorts films

GOLIATH is a bully, the lost sheep is a wandering goat, and Job's trials appear as a Kenyan dry season in Winnipeg filmmaker Paul Plett's series of Kid Shorts films (www.ode-productions.com).

Plett grew up on the mission field watching the relief and development work his parents did with the Mennonite Central Committee. He also grew up watching Christian videos *McGee and Me* and *Adventures in Odyssey*. The experiences created a love for both art and international development issues, which took Plett down a path that led to filmmaking.

"Film engaged me, allowing me to use photography, composition and writing," says Plett, a graduate of the Toronto Film School. He has created international development shorts for the Mennonite Church Canada. When the idea of creating his own series of children's videos came up, Plett added something that was missing from the videos of his youth. The videos "were wonderful, but didn't come from the Mennonite or Anabaptist perspective," he says. "I wanted to

do something from my heart, from my perspective."

The criterion was simple – well-known stories that could be tweaked with a modern twist. The pilot, *Dave Versus the Bully*, was filmed in Winnipeg and retold the story of David and Goliath.

"The theme that was relevant to today looks at conflict transformation, or how to solve conflicts non-violently," says Plett. *Hope in the Dry Season*, filmed in Kenya, looks at Job, suffering – and the issue of water conservation. Sponsorship money from the Mennonite Church Canada and crowdsource funding covered the cost of the first three videos. Plett plans to make two more to complete the series at a cost of \$6,000 to \$7,000 each.

The videos can be used as teaching tools, says Plett. Mennonite Church Canada prepared study guides for both Christian and secular settings to enhance the films. Next up for Plett? The Parable of the Good Samaritan called *Sam and the Thief* and a look at the feeding of the 5,000 that he hopes to film in Central America. —**ROBERT WHITE**



Pro-life campus group fights for free speech in Victoria

THE YOUTH PROTECTING YOUTH club at the University of Victoria in B.C. has found itself in a harmonious working relationship with a strange bedfellow – the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA).

"As you can imagine, BCCLA members are not usually pro-life, and it's generated some interesting conversations," admits Cam Côté, a past member of the pro-life group, still their spokesperson and now



Cam Côté

also activism and outreach director for the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform (CCBR).

More importantly, though, is the two organizations' common goal – free speech – especially in their fight against the recent B.C. Supreme Court decision that universities are not subject to the

Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The situation began in 2011 just after a University of Victoria pro-life Choice Chain event. The graphic images of both aborted fetuses and developing babies in utero resulted in a "huge number of complaints," Côté says.

Although the pro-life club (www.youth-protectingyouth.com) was paid up on its dues, the University of Victoria Students' Society banned them permanently from doing Choice Chain, and from holding any outdoor events for one year. Questioning whether the university had the authority to do such a thing – essentially banning free speech – the club investigated ways to appeal the ruling.

In the meantime, they sought permission to hold another event, writing to associate vice-president of student affairs Jim Dunsdon, explaining that the university's students' society had obstructed the club's Charter rights of free speech by such a ruling. After being told that ten days minimum was required for such a request, the club pushed the date back a month, applied again, and then met with Dunsdon to talk about details and security.

On January 31, 2013 – the night before the event – they received notice it was being cancelled because Dunsdon just learned about the university's permanent ban on Choice Chain. Côté met with Dunsdon the next day, reminded him of their previous conversations, and expressed his belief that "It was unfair of him to say he was unaware of the ruling because it would have crossed his desk."

The club went ahead with the event anyway, and a month later received notice the university was taking away its booking privileges for a year.

It surprised Côté that they would go that far with censorship. While he disagrees with the pro-choice stance, he fully supports their right to speak their beliefs. “I believe in engaging in debate and conversation, and if I don’t want pro-abortion students on campus, I’m not going to try and silence them. I’m going to try and engage them in discussion.”

The club decided to enlist the help of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association. When the B.C. Supreme Court ruled recently that publicly funded universities aren’t subject to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the club and BCCLA were catapulted into another realm – a battle not just for free speech,

“I believe in engaging in debate and conversation, and if I don’t want pro-abortion students on campus, I’m not going to try and silence them. I’m going to try and engage them in discussion.”

but about ways public funds are used.

“We know the issue itself is very controversial,” says Côté, “but it’s precisely on such controversial subjects that freedom of speech must be upheld.”

While these legal activities will tie up Youth Protecting Youth club activities for some time, the university has already retracted its ban – in writing – on the club’s ability to make public bookings.

The club intends to press on. “We have to fight for this every time the university makes a decision, then apologizes, and then they do it again,” says Côté. “It’s happened plenty of times and leaves us in constant upheaval about what we can and can’t do. We’re hoping this will put an end to it for good.” –ALEX NEWMAN

NOTE WORTHY



STUDY SUGGESTS CHRISTIAN FAITH HELPING CHINESE ECONOMY

A study published by the China Economic Review found that Christianity is the only religion which has a consistent “significant and robust effect on the economy.” The study reviewed Chinese provincial data from 2001 to 2011 and found that areas with stronger Christian populations and more Christian institutions had more robust economic growth. One possible reason cited by the study is that, while Christians make up only about 5 per cent of the Chinese population, almost 17 per cent of all religious institutions are Christian. The study, published in the December 2014 issue, says more research is needed. www.chinaeconomicreview.com

CANADA RELIES ON CHURCHES TO SUPPORT NEW REFUGEES

The Canadian government has announced it will accept an additional 10,000 Syrian refugees and 3,000 Iraqi refugees in 2015, and it expects churches and other private organizations to assume responsibility for resettling 60 per cent of them. Many refugee support groups are concerned about the strain such high numbers will have on their already limited resources. The government also indicated persecuted minorities, including Christians, will be given priority. www.theglobeandmail.com

GLOBAL PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS ON THE RISE

According to the 2015 Open Doors World Watch List, which rates the top 50 countries where Christians are persecuted, global persecution of Christians is increasing, especially in Africa. For the 13th straight year, North Korea was rated the most difficult country for Christians to live in. However, the report identified Islamic extremism as the main source of persecution in 40 of the 50 top countries. Somalia remained in second place, followed by Iraq and Syria. More than 140,000 Iraqi Christians have been forced to flee since the rise of ISIS. In Syria, 700,000 Christians have fled since the outbreak of civil war in 2011. www.opendoorsca.org

DECISION ON ABORTION PILL PUSHED BACK AGAIN

Health Canada has asked for additional information from the manufacturer on the abortive drug mifepristone (RU-486). Initially submitted in 2011, a decision was expected on the application in mid-January, but is now more likely to come in the fall. The drug is controversial, not only among pro-lifers, but also among pro-abortion activists. In 2001, trials of RU-486 were stopped in Canada when one of the patients died of septic shock. The drug has been linked to deaths in the U.S. and other developing countries, leading some abortion advocates to denounce it as a bad option. www.theglobeandmail.com –CRAIG MACARTNEY

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Credit union emphasizes dignity over profit

TWENTY-TWO DOLLARS TOSSED into a hat in 1964 launched the faith-based financial institution Mennonite Savings and Credit Union (MSCU) in Waterloo.

"In the 1960s it was hard to get credit," says MSCU CEO Brent Zorgdrager. "But Waterloo County was a hotbed of activity then for faith and social justice. This group of Mennonites, looking to live out their faith, decided to financially help people in their churches."

Chipping in a buck apiece, the 22 members founded the credit union, meeting with people at their homes, making loans and taking deposits right at the kitchen table.

"A bank exists to serve its customers and to delight its shareholders," explains Zorgdrager. "In a credit union, though, customers are the same people as the shareholders, so it's not about satisfying customers in order to deliver a maximum return."

MSCU's faith perspective affects everything from how it invests to how it lends. "We follow the biblical principle of helping people maintain their dignity and value," Zorgdrager says.

The credit union's investment arm offers socially responsible investments (SRIs). These have three components – screening to determine which companies are ethically aligned and follow best practices for their sector, shareholder advocacy to ensure those companies will improve practices, and investing in community development.

As Zorgdrager points out, no company is perfect when it comes to ethics, and there's always room for improvement. It's finding the companies that are open to change.

Through its Meritas arm, MSCU exerts influence on global child labour practices, and works with companies "to nurture the soil for change," Zorgdrager says.

MSCU puts its money to work closer to home as well. Members investing in GICs can choose to donate 0.05 per cent annually to their church. In 2014, the church builder investment cut cheques for \$50,000 and since its inception a total of \$300,000, Zorgdrager says. —ALEX NEWMAN

Visit www.faithtoday.ca/KingdomMatters for more. Have a story to share? editor@faithtoday.ca

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we see the *hope* and *potential* in every young person

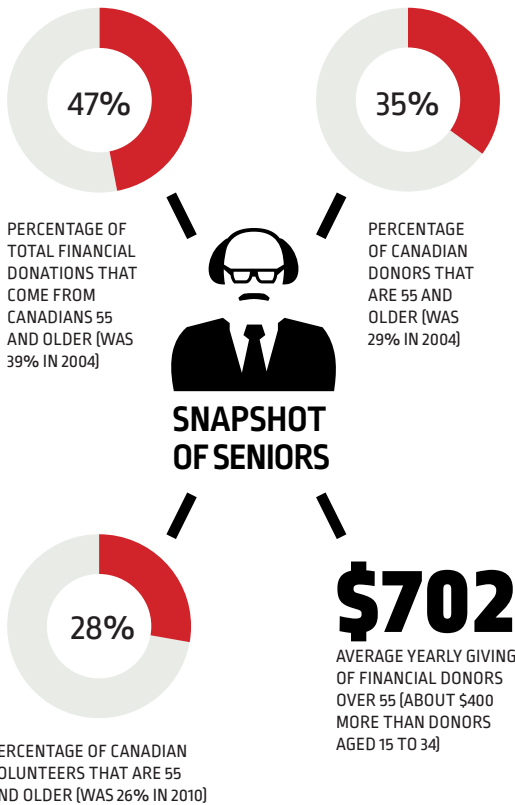
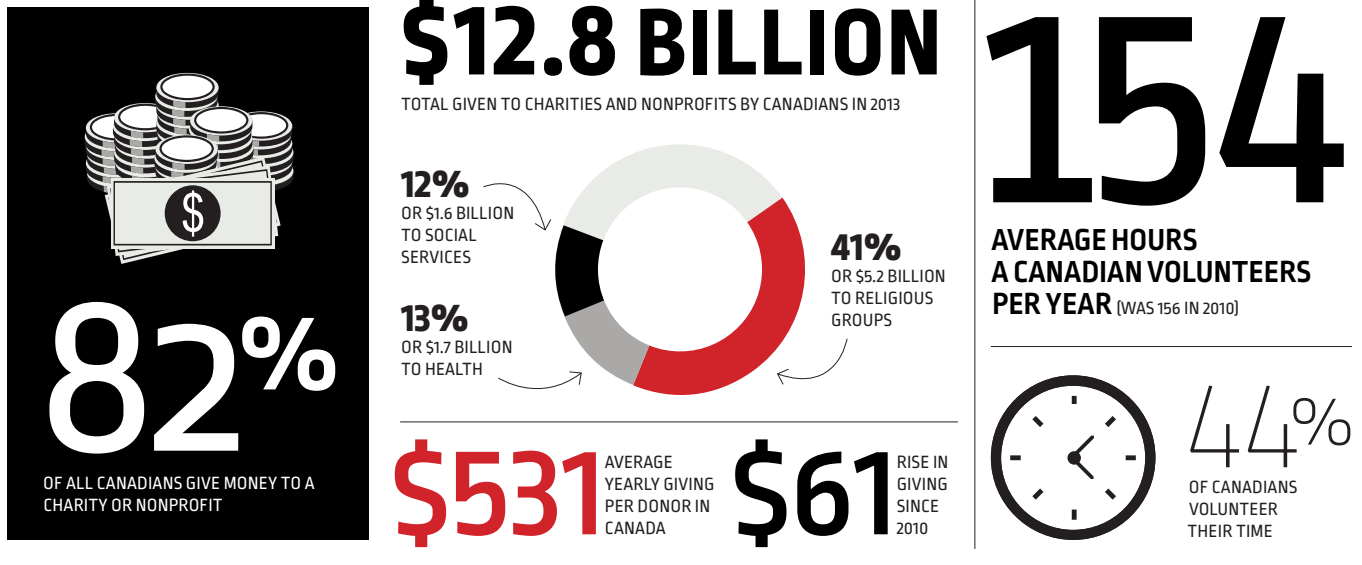


To find a chapter in your area, please visit www.yfccanada.org and click on Locations in Canada.

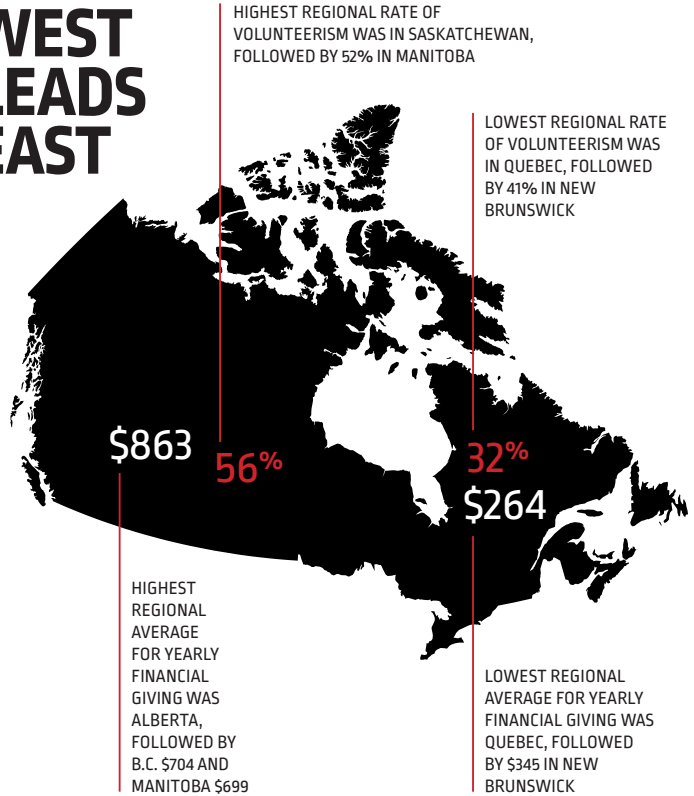
Questions?
 Call 1-800-899-9322

Giving and volunteering

Canadians gave \$5.2 billion to religious groups in 2013. The average age of givers is rising, but the number of volunteer hours is holding steady



WEST LEADS EAST



SOURCE: VOLUNTEERING AND CHARITABLE GIVING IN CANADA, A JAN. 30, 2015 REPORT FROM STATISTICS CANADA BASED ON THE 2013 GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY



Choosing between life and death

How to promote the sanctity of human life after the Supreme Court decision on assisted suicide

“Landmark” and “historic” were words used to describe the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision on assisted suicide and euthanasia. The decision will definitely have far-reaching implications.

Canada’s longstanding ban on assisted suicide and euthanasia is suddenly considered unconstitutional, and Parliament has just 12 months to amend the *Criminal Code* accordingly.

The Supreme Court decision, made unanimously by the nine justices, reverses a 1993 decision made by the same court.

What has changed in the inter-

vening years? Internationally several jurisdictions now permit assisted suicide and euthanasia, though the vast majority of countries still reject it. Our Supreme Court is now saying safeguards can be put in place that will prevent abuse. However, evidence from these other jurisdictions shows that over time the practice expands to include people who do not consent.

Until now Canadian law had adhered to the commandment “You shall not kill,” but we will soon see legal permission for consensual killing in Canada, what the Supreme Court calls physician-assisted death.

A physician will be allowed to

provide or administer medication to end the life of a person who consents to his or her own death, and has an “irremediable and grievous” medical condition that causes suffering intolerable to the individual.

The condition need not be terminal – it can be an illness, a disease or a disability. Some have argued this could include severe depression.

The government has argued the prohibition on assisted suicide and euthanasia was necessary to promote life and protect vulnerable persons. What a confusing message our society will now be sending, particularly to our youth. On one hand we promote suicide preven-

9

JUSTICES REVERSED A 1993 SUPREME COURT DECISION THAT HAD PRESERVED CANADA'S BAN ON PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA

News FROM THE EFC

Physician-assisted death decision

The EFC, a court intervener in the *Carter* case on assisted suicide, has been quick to respond to the Feb. 6 Supreme Court decision to strike down the existing law. The webpage www.theEFC.ca/Carter includes links to EFC news releases and to TV appearances by EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger responding to the court decision. There’s also an EFC letter to the Minister of Justice urging the government to respond quickly to the decision.

In the EFC’s initial news release, Clemenger said the EFC is “deeply disappointed with the *Carter* decision” and called for quick action from the federal government. “With the 12-month time frame given by the Court, Parliament must move quickly to

ensure that stringent safeguards, protections and oversights are in place,” said Clemenger. “The experience of other countries is that overtime the safeguards are ignored or weakened, placing vulnerable people at risk. As Canadians, we need to ensure that high quality palliative care is available and comfort and care are provided so that no one comes to believe being killed is their best option.”

In the letter to the Minister of Justice, Clemenger wrote, “We urge you to ensure that the practices of assisted suicide and euthanasia are only permissible within very strict parameters so as to minimally impair Canada’s commitment to the sanctity of human life and to protect the lives of vulnerable Canadians. It is also imperative to protect

the freedom of conscience and religion of all medical practitioners, so that no one will be compelled to directly or indirectly participate in any procedure that violates their beliefs and conscience.”

Letter: Don’t force doctors against conscience

The EFC wrote recently to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario regarding its draft policy on “Professional Obligations and Human Rights.” The EFC expressed concern over the proposed requirement that doctors provide referrals, and in some situations undertake procedures, that might violate their conscience and/or religious beliefs. Compelling doctors to act against their conscience would be

a violation of their Charter rights and freedoms, argues the EFC. Doctors who don’t offer certain procedures are not discriminating as long as all patients are treated the same.

Read more at www.theEFC.ca/letters. You will also see recent letters there to the Ontario Minister of Education about the province’s new sex education curriculum and to Ontario’s Premier about government comments suggesting Ontario might not enforce Canada’s new prostitution law.

Reflections on TWU decision

EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger recently published his reflections on the Nova Scotia court victory for the proposed school of law at Trinity Western University. That

tion, but we also offer suicide assistance.

The impact on the health-care system will be profound. The language of physician-assisted death suggests both the medical profession and public health care may be involved. Some doctors and nurses are concerned they will be involved in an act that violates their conscience or religious beliefs.

A hospital unit may be preserving the life of one patient while taking the life of another in the next bed.

Consider a patient with a condition that meets the Supreme Court's criteria. Previously the health-care system and its professionals defaulted to providing medical treatment intended to promote and protect life according to the wishes of the patient.

Now the burden has been shifted. A suffering person, perhaps

feeling like a burden to their loved ones and to the health-care system, has a choice to make. And assisted suicide or euthanasia are now legitimate options.

The onus is now on the patient to make a decision. Should anyone ever be put in a situation where they feel the need to justify their life, their continued existence? Society now says you may be worthy of death and will help you die.

It will be for Parliament to devise language that will establish safeguards and protocols. With a federal election scheduled within the 12-month timeframe given by the Court, there is not much time for Parliament to ensure the safeguards are stringent and the practice rare.

In its decision the Supreme Court affirmed the sanctity of human life is "one of our most important fundamental societal values." But this


value has now been compromised.

It is now up to Canadians who affirm the sanctity of human life, from their respective religious or philosophical beliefs and commitments, to continue to promote life.

The Christian belief that life is a gift from God and has inherent worth and dignity regardless of someone's abilities or capacities leads us to promote and protect it.

Now more than ever we need to live in ways that affirm the value of life. In our daily routines and those seasons when we walk in the shadow of death, we celebrate life. And we respond with compassion for those who suffer and need care and companionship. /FT

A hospital unit may be preserving the life of one patient while taking the life of another in the next bed.

 Bruce J. Clemenger is president of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. You can follow him on Twitter @bruceclemenger or @theEFC. Please pray for our work. You can support it financially at www.theEFC.ca/Donate or toll-free 1-866-302-3362.

Jan. 28 court decision agreed with several arguments the EFC put forward in its legal intervention.

Read Clemenger's thoughts on the principles that underlie the case, namely the freedom of religious organizations to maintain their religious identity and serve the public good, at www.theEFC.ca/TWUlaw.

There are also links there to EFC media releases and a brief response from EFC lawyer Albertos Polizogopoulos, who says the decision marks a "great day for religious freedom."

Welcome new EFC director

Cecilia Wu is the EFC's new director of development, resuming a position she held from 2001 to 2005. Previously, she carried out extensive

fund raising activities for the Banting Research Foundation, the Christian Children's Fund of Canada and the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre Foundation. Learn more at www.theEFC.ca/LeadershipTeam.

Quebec leaders listen for Holy Spirit

Forty Quebec evangelical leaders gathered in January for the province's 17th annual prayer summit. The EFC's Quebec director, Pierre Bergeron, reports it was an enriching experience with a range of evangelical denominations represented. The focus was to take time collectively to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church and intercede for the province. One emphasis that emerged was the importance of prayer for Quebec's younger

generations. The goal next year (Feb. 8-10, 2016) is for each participant to bring a young church leader.

Support fostering: Video for your church

Foster homes are urgently needed in Canada. About 80,000 Canadian children and youth are now in foster care. Make your congregation more aware with a new EFC video at www.theEFC.ca/fostering. It's free, six minutes long and designed for use in churches and small groups.

Calendar


Our Whole Society, Vancouver, March 22-24. Conference on how religion can and ought to play a vital role in public life. EFC leaders Bruce Clemenger and Aileen Van Ginkel will chair sessions.


National Prayer Breakfast, Ottawa, April 20-21. A breakfast and related events for politicians and others.

Visit www.theEFC.ca/calendar to find out what else is new or to publicize your own event.



The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

 Find out about news stories like these and more at www.theEFC.ca/SocialIssues.

 Learn how to take action on the issues you care about at www.theEFC.ca/TakeAction.

  Visit *Faith Today* and the EFC on Facebook and Twitter for breaking news, great links and lively discussion.

Big story people



Lawson Murray is president of Scripture Union Canada (SU). Through Scripture resources, Bible reading guides, camp ministries and more, SU works “to connect Canadians with Jesus and His story.”

■ **How do you view and nurture the relationship between SU and the Canadian Christian community?**

Collaboration is crucial. We’re convinced that Kingdom work is best accomplished when we do it together. Partnerships are in our DNA. People matter to us because they matter to God. Our staff intentionally develops or participates in ministry ventures and resourcing that are relationally driven. *The Story Bible* reading guide, *More Than Gold 2015*, and the *Canadian Bible Engagement Study* are a few practical examples of how SU embraces, enjoys and advocates for the Christian community.

■ **What has Scripture meant in your own life?**

I love the Scriptures and believe the Bible is the greatest story ever. Since coming to know Christ as my Lord and Saviour, I’ve tried to immerse myself in His Word. I know that if my story isn’t located in and directed by God’s story, I’m like a rudderless ship adrift on the high seas. But it’s about more than what the Scriptures mean in my life. True Bible engagement is communal in nature. God’s given me His story to live it out and share it with the millions who hunger and thirst for something more.

■ **Who are your heroes?**

Everyday Christians who live only all for Jesus. I was recently invited to speak at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology campus church in Oshawa, Ont. Some of the students in attendance had recently served as SU coaches at our sports camps. I began by saying, “It’s a privilege for me to be here because some of my heroes are in this room. Marie, Ace, Jean, Jonny – you’re my heroes.” They looked surprised. I continued with, “You’re my heroes because your priority this past summer was to share the love of Christ with the next generation.”

■ **What leadership book do you recommend most often?**

There are 21 great leadership books on my study shelf. How do they compare to what I’ve learned about leadership from the Bible? Frankly, and hopefully I don’t sound corny, they don’t match up to what I’ve gleaned from Saul, David, Job, Esther, John, Peter, Paul and Jesus. So I recommend the Scriptures ... because we don’t need to learn about leadership as much as we need to learn about being servants (Mark 9:35).

■ **What is your advice to young Christian leaders?**

Go for it! Keep stepping out in faith. With only one life to live, make every moment count for Christ. Please God, not man. Be full of grace. Persevere. Walk in the light and the way of love. Expect God to do far more than you can imagine. Be filled with the Spirit. Don’t rely on your natural strength and abilities. Stay focused on the cross. Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8). **/FT**

3R

READ, REFLECT,
RESPOND:
SU’S THREE-FOLD
APPROACH TO
SCRIPTURE

Scripture Union Canada (www.scriptureunion.ca) is an affiliate of the EFC (www.theEFC.ca/Affiliates). Find more Q&As at www.faithtoday.ca/QandA.

Palliative care

As the issue of euthanasia and assisted suicide captures the attention of Canadians, a national palliative care strategy still does not exist in a country with an aging population and a shortage of end-of-life care options

There are approximately 9.6 million people in Canada between 46 and 65 years old. Most of these Baby Boomers will die in the next 25 to 40 years.

The reality in Canada in 2015 is that:

- There are too few hospital beds.
- Elderly patients are sometimes given few compassionate care options in their dying days.
- Canada only has 86 residential hospices.
- A shortage of palliative care beds exists in almost all Canadian hospitals.
- The House of Commons passed a motion in 2014 calling the government to “establish a Pan-Canadian Palliative and End-of-life Care Strategy” (www.theEFC.ca/M456)

What exactly is palliative care?

Dr. Camilla Zimmermann, head of Palliative Care Services at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, says many Canadians misunderstand palliative care. “The big myth is if you go to see a palliative care physician, you’ll be talking about dying.

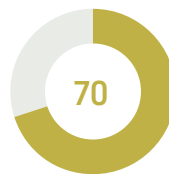
We don’t really do that. We talk about how we can help you with your symptoms, your pain, your family, helping you cope really with what is happening, and providing resources,” says Zimmerman. “It’s about helping people cope with their cancer or whatever life-threatening illness they have. If they want to talk about dying, [that’s] great, but we don’t need to do that.”

The World Health Organization defines palliative care as “an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual” (www.who.int).

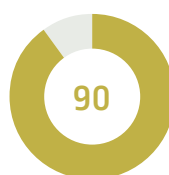
Right now in Canada where you live matters, says Zimmerman. “There are different types of access to palliative care depending on where you live, which is not fair, obviously. That is the reason for a national strategy. We have to have certain standards of care that are applied to the whole country.” /FT

16-30

PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO HAVE ACCESS TO PALLIATIVE CARE
WWW.CSPPCA



PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO DIE IN HOSPITAL, ALTHOUGH MOST CANADIANS WISH TO DIE AT HOME
WWW.CHPCA.NET



PERCENTAGE OF CANADIANS WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE
WWW.CHPCA.NET

“We believe life is a gift from God which should be respected and protected through all of its stages. Each human life has inherent worth, regardless of age or physical, mental or other abilities. Care for the sick and the elderly is part of God’s call for Christians.”

—Palliative Care and End of Life Therapies, an EFC position paper (www.theEFC.ca/palliative2012)

What can you do . . .

- Speak to your Member of Parliament about the need for a national palliative care strategy.
- Investigate the options in your own community. Perhaps there is an opportunity to volunteer in a palliative care ministry or service.
- Support the EFC’s efforts to help craft a national palliative care strategy

www.theEFC.ca/PalliativeCare

Please pray for the public policy work of The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. You can also support it financially at www.theEFC.ca/ Donate or toll-free 1-866-302-3362. Read more of these columns at www.faithtoday.ca/AtIssue.

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MESSY FAITH

SHEILA WRAY GREGOIRE

Responding to bondage

Things are black and white with 50 Shades of Grey

When our family vacationed in Cozumel earlier this year, my 17-year-old was appalled at how many women were reading *50 Shades of Grey* by the pool. “That’s like a guy watching porn in the open!”

This book series has become mainstream. After \$100 million in book sales, and the highest advance ticket sales of any R-rated movie ever, the story of a naïve 21-year-old being introduced to a world of sexual submission by a 25-year-old billionaire (yes, *billionaire* – the series is not exactly known for its realistic plotting) has made bondage fantasies seem normal.

It’s easy to dismiss this series as evidence of how sinful our society has become. But sexual deviance has always been with us. Something has made this series take off. Before we can speak into it, we need to understand the root of its appeal.

In her book *The Fantasy Fallacy: Exposing the Deeper Meaning Behind Sexual Thoughts* (W Publishing Group, 2012), Shannon Ethridge shows how the root of our fantasies often speaks directly about an unmet heart need – and illuminates our particular brokenness. If we get rid of the whips and chains from this story, what is the root appeal to women? A strong man rescuing a young woman adrift in the world.

I remember being 20 and feeling alone and scared. I had a multitude of decisions in front of me. I was on my own. The idea of a strong, confident man who would swoop in and take charge would have been awfully alluring. We don’t have to do anything, decide anything, even think anything. We just have to *feel*.



There are no shortcuts on the road to true intimacy.

To frantic multitaskers, that’s pure intoxication.

Then there’s the allure of vulnerability. Sex is not supposed to be solely physical. We’re supposed to truly “know” each other when we make love. When we take sex outside of the marriage context, we lose the commitment and therefore the emotional and spiritual intimacy. The physical is all we have left. Then, anything goes.

The fear of being alone, the yearning for intimacy, and the replacing of that intimacy with someone else being in control – those are all things God warned us about in Genesis 3:16: “Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.” It’s not surprising we’re seeing it acted out on such a large scale.

Here’s where things get really ugly. God created our physical sexual response to be paired with a committed marriage relationship. When women (or men) start reading erotica, we’re pairing sexual arousal with something other than a spouse. We’ve already seen that large-scale social experiment go awry with pornography. Italian researchers have found that porn use

is the leading cause of sexual dysfunction among men.

Now, erotica is doing the same thing for women. Arousal is paired with fantasy, not relationship, making it more difficult to achieve arousal in marriage. You’re not making love to your husband – you’re using him while your mind is elsewhere.

If we have to fantasize to perform, then it’s only a small step to acting out those fantasies, leading to relationships that are degrading and abusive. A study out of Michigan State University found that women who read the series were more likely to have abusive partners, binge drink and suffer from eating disorders.

How should the Church respond? First, address the root needs. Churches need to major in authentic community with real discipleship and accountability, rather than just being an intellectual or social club. Raise up men to step up to the plate and act responsibly. Start with the young men in your church who seem to be adrift. Help women recognize that books like *50 Shades of Grey* are just as much porn as what their husbands might be viewing online.

Then let’s be vocal about healthy sexuality. There are no shortcuts on the road to true intimacy. Let’s preserve the promise of a great sex life that doesn’t need erotica by the bedside, handcuffs on the bedposts or something requiring batteries in a drawer. Intimacy is the best aphrodisiac. When I did my surveys for *The Good Girl’s Guide to Great Sex* (Zondervan, 2012), I found that the women who enjoyed sex most were those who felt the most spiritually intimate with their husbands. And that’s not grey. That’s black and white. /FT

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NUMBER OF LANGUAGES 50 SHADES OF GREY HAS BEEN TRANSLATED INTO (WWW.THEGUARDIAN.COM)

Sheila Wray Gregoire of Belleville, Ont., is an author and speaker. Find more of her columns at www.faithtoday.ca/MessyFaith.

PHOTO: UNIVERSAL PICTURES



Building a better Lego car

Experiencing the joy of creativity at work

On a recent trip to Boston, my family made a visit to the new Legoland Discovery Center. For our three children aged ten and under, it was everything they expected and more. Delighted kids ran to and from enjoying Lego-themed rides, movies and the like. In the midst of the mayhem, however, I was struck by one particular activity centre comprised of mounds of vehicle parts (wheels, axles, windshields) and racing tracks.

Perhaps 20 children were there working almost in silence, earnestly constructing vehicles of all shapes, sizes and configurations. When a car was completed to the designer's satisfaction, it was off to the track to launch this brave new construction and observe its performance.

Some cars raced along the track almost effortlessly, amid much laughter and delight, while others met with spectacular destruction as they failed to navigate a turn or flew off the track altogether.

What was so fascinating about all of this was that whether a creation survived the test run or not, the designers would scoop up their cars (or pieces thereof) and return to the workbench to continue improving their designs. Neither success nor failure seemed to bring unhappiness in these young engineers as they joyfully continued to engage in the building process.

The joy of creativity is something that has perhaps been lost to many of us.

As we engage in our work, we may be tempted to despair in its drudgery and routine, looking forward to the reprieve offered by the weekend or an all-too-short vaca-



Don't despair if the wheels fall off. Instead, revel in your God-given creativity.

tion. But work was not always so. As we read in Genesis, God is a worker, shaping a world and all that is within it – including human beings. And to these humans He gives direction – to work and keep the Garden (Genesis 2:15) and have dominion over His creation (Genesis 1:28).

Work was created for human engagement *before* the fall into sin, and – like all of God's creation – was good and intended for our blessing.

Implicit in this call to work is a call to be creative. As Jeff Van Duzer explains in his excellent book *Why Business Matters to God: And What Still Needs to Be Fixed* (IVP Academic, 2010), humans were created in God's image (Genesis 1:27) and thus with a capacity for creative activity – not creating out of nothing as God does, but rather deriving from the works of the Creator. Van Duzer likens this to God having made an initial capital investment through creation, giving humans in turn everything they need to engage in the creative and meaningful work that *should* flow from our very nature.

What would it be like to experience the joy of creativity in our work? Is it really possible to partake in the absolute delight of creativity that seemed to flow from the work


of those children as they built and raced their cars, regardless of the outcome? Can my work, seemingly so tainted by the unpredictable nature of a broken world, be a space in which to experience creative joy?

It can, if we adopt the right perspective on work. A good place to begin might be to approach it in light of the Apostle Paul's admonition that in "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Colossians 3:23–24). An understanding of work as having been designed by God as an outlet for the creative impetus hardwired into human beings – and as something in which we are ultimately responsible to Him – will go a long way toward helping us recapture the joy of creativity we may have believed lost.

As Dennis Bakke, founder of AES Corporation, writes, "The good news of the Bible is that God plans to redeem us and that we were made in His image so that we could continue His work of creation. We glorify God through our enthusiastic and creative stewardship of the resources He has given us" (*Joy at Work: A Revolutionary Approach to Fun on the Job*, Penguin/Viking, 2005).

So unashamedly build that Lego car in your own workplace and don't despair if the wheels fall off. Instead, revel in your God-given creativity, and consider how you might use it to His glory. /FT

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WAYS YOU CAN
COMBINE SIX EIGHT-
STUDDED LEGO
BRICKS.

 Robert A. MacDonald is the Stephen S. Steeves Professor in Business at Crandall University in Moncton, N.B. Find more of these columns at www.faihttoday.ca/BusinessMatters.



FILIPINO BISHOP HEADS WORLD EVANGELICALS

BISHOP EFRAIM TENDERO is the new secretary general of the World Evangelical Alliance, the network that serves and represents more than 600 million Evangelicals. Bishop Ef, as he is widely known, succeeds Canadian Geoff Tunnicliffe, who held the position for ten years.

Upon his appointment, Tendo said, "I am humbled by the trust given to me. This is an enormous task and I put my whole trust and confidence in the Almighty God who called me into this ministry, believing that He will provide the wisdom, favour and grace needed."

Tendo has served for more than 20 years as national director of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches, an EFC sister association that represents some 30,000 evangelical churches across the Philippines.

—WITH FILES FROM WWW.WORLDEA.ORG

CHRISTIANS CALL FOR END TO CORRUPTION

EVANGELICALS FROM SEVERAL global coalitions are working to help keep the problem of corruption before leaders in government and the Church.

Evangelical leaders gathered for the Micah Summit, an event held at the United Nations in New York in December, to mark a new phase in their co-operative work to tackle economic injustice. Many have been involved in campaigns over the past decade to encourage Christians to address goals adopted at the United Nations around fighting poverty.

Weeks earlier, the Exposed Campaign had presented a petition of 148,000 signatures to the leaders of the G20, the world's richest nations. Exposed was a two-year initiative on corruption issues. Supporters included the Salvation Army and the World Evangelical Alliance.

Joel Edwards, head of Exposed and former head of the Evangelical Alliance UK, welcomed commitments made at



Community theatre spreads positive health-care messages including encouraging family planning in Varieque, Mozambique (www.pwrdf.org).

the G20 Brisbane Summit to address corruption with new rules for sharing tax information, taxing profits where they are made and preventing profit shifting. G20 leaders also committed to help developing nations implement these tax plans.

"Corruption hurts the poor around the world most of all," Edwards says. "Nations rich in resources have missed out on billions because of tax deals, shifting income around the world and the use of tax havens. Now the G20 has sent a clear message that this is theft and it has to stop."

Pope Francis also expressed concerns about the issue during a January visit to the Philippines, where 80 per cent of the population are Roman Catholics.


"The great biblical tradition enjoins on all peoples the duty to hear the voice of the poor," Pope Francis said, according to www.ecumenicalnews.com. "It bids us break the bonds of injustice and oppression which give rise to glaring and indeed scandalous social inequalities." —WITH FILES FROM WWW.EXPOSEDCAMPAIGN.COM

CHURCHES TORCHED IN NIGER

IN THE WAKE of the January *Charlie Hebdo* killings in Paris and the satirical magazine's decision to publish yet another cover portraying the prophet Muhammad, angry Muslims attacked churches and businesses in former French colonies in West and North Africa.

Hardest hit was Niger, where 45 churches were torched on January 17 and 18, including seven evangelical ones in the capital Niamey. Ten people were killed. A video at www.theguardian.com shows protesters overturning pews and destroying Bibles while shouting, "Allahu Akbar!" Reports say Christian homes and businesses, as well as businesses operated by French citizens, were also attacked.

The Association of Evangelicals in Africa, which received distress calls from Niger, condemned the attacks and called on Muslims, the majority population in Niger, to "reclaim" their religion from jihadist sects. —WITH FILES FROM WWW.AEAFRICA.ORG

 Debra Fieguth of Kingston, Ont., is a senior writer at *Faith Today*.

Being a pastor in [Syria in] this crisis is not as much about preaching as it is being with the people in their difficult time. Even if we cannot give money or fulfill their physical needs, we can at least pray with them, at least try to comfort them.

—Ibrahim Nsier, pastor of the Arab Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Aleppo, Syria

(Mennonite Central Committee Newsletter, January 2015)



When a hippie meets Jesus...

The Jesus People movement brought colour and challenge to the Church in the 1970s

Everyone has heard of the hippie movement of the 1960s and 1970s. With their bright clothing, outlandish behaviour and psychedelic music, hippies attracted attention – often intentionally.

But what about a Christian hippie? Was such a thing even possible?

The Jesus People thought so.

Jesus People was the name of a North American movement of the early 1970s made up of hippies who had become Christians through charismatic evangelicalism. The hippie subculture was in a state of crisis at the time, as many hippies descended into drug addictions and abject poverty. The Jesus People movement provided a way out at a time when the established churches and “straight” society as a whole seemed remote and unfamiliar.

While the Jesus People movement began in California – early Christian rock musician Larry Norman was an important figure in the movement there – it also sprouted up in various parts of Canada.

Downtown Toronto had a thriving Jesus People scene. According to historian Bruce Douville the focal point for this movement was the Catacombs Fellowship, which began as a small Bible study led by Scarborough high school students, but quickly grew into a major weekly downtown worship service of up to 2,000 young people. One of the Catacomb’s aims was to introduce hippies to Jesus, and at its peak it was not unusual for there to be 50 conversions per week.

Another manifestation of the Jesus People in Toronto was the House of Emmaus, a small Christian commune. Robert Velick, the

founder, had been heavily involved in drugs and Eastern spirituality – even renaming himself “Wu,” a term from Daoist philosophy – but had become a follower of Jesus after a friend encouraged him to read through the Bible. Like the Catacombs Fellowship, the House of Emmaus had a significant outreach to the downtown youth community, and even conducted mass public baptisms – in Toronto Harbour in May, no less!

In fact, Douville points out, there were five Christian communes in Toronto in the early 1970s, which played an important role in helping new believers recover from serious drug addictions and begin a new life.

So how did Jesus People compare with the typical hippie? There were lots of obvious differences. Instead of a spiritual quest vaguely connected to Eastern religions or the occult, Jesus People embraced Jesus as their saviour and the Bible as their guide to the meaning of life. Instead of the elusive comforts of sexual promiscuity or the high offered by drugs, Jesus People sought out the love of a Christian community and the “high” of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Like other hippies, Jesus People emphasized individuality and authenticity while rejecting what they saw as the stifling nature of institutions and traditions. They shared the hippie disdain for materialism, and like hippies prioritized emotion and experience over intellect.

There were sometimes tensions between Jesus People and the established churches. Some Jesus People looked down on these churches as ultraconservative and legalistic, while some in the

churches looked down on Jesus People as dirty, unruly children.

In the end, the Jesus People movement faded as its main mission field – the hippie movement – dried up and its members grew up, married and had kids. Many also realized nothing lasting could be built on a rejection of institutions, traditions and authority, and sought deeper roots. House of Emmaus founder Wu concluded, “You can’t completely cut yourself off from the history and tradition of the Church.” He became a Roman Catholic, while the Catacombs Fellowship struggled to survive for a time before ultimately joining the Christian & Missionary Alliance.

Indeed, many Jesus People made their peace with the established evangelical churches and several went on to become pastors in them. The churches recognized the traits of the Jesus People movement held great appeal for young people, and adopted some of these traits as part of their youth ministries. Even today, Canadian evangelical youth groups tend to emphasize what the Jesus People emphasized – informality and authenticity, experience and emotion.

Whether such traits are legitimate and effective ways of connecting with young people, or merely the unwelcome hangover of a transitory ’70s subculture, is open to dispute. What cannot be disputed, however, is the life-changing impact an encounter with Jesus can have in every time and place – even the hippie scene of 1970s Toronto. /FT

There were sometimes tensions between Jesus People and the established churches.



30-50,000

NUMBER OF JESUS PEOPLE IN CANADA IN THE 1970S

Kevin Flatt is associate professor of history and director of research at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ont. Find more of his columns at www.faithtoday.ca/HistoryLesson.



From Swedenborg to Tolle

Four insights on Christian responses to New Age spirituality

One advantage of getting older is you can look back and see how things changed shape, where predictions were wrong, when opinions were right, and more fairly assess events from the distance of time. I've been thinking along these lines in relation to the New Age movement, now not so new.

While scholars actually trace the New Age back to the rise of various esoteric groups and leaders in the 18th and 19th centuries (Emanuel Swedenborg, Theosophy, Christian Science, New Thought, Swami Vivekananda), the New Age is more commonly linked to developments in the West since the 1960s and 1970s.

A few readers might remember hearing about the Findhorn community in Scotland (1962), Esalen in California (1962), Werner Erhard's Est (1971) or *A Course in Miracles* in 1975. All of us who lived through the musical *Hair* remember its line "This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius." Believe it or not, that was 1967. It would take another two decades for New Age to become a household term.

If any one moment and person epitomize the apex of New Age religion, it would be Shirley MacLaine in 1987. That year the American actress made the cover of *Time* and her life story *Out on a Limb* was featured in a TV miniseries. She'd travelled a long way from Baptist Sunday school (courtesy of her mother Kathlyn MacLean, who was raised Baptist in Wolfville, N. S.) to the shores of the Pacific, where the actress proclaimed under the direction of her New Age spiritual guide, "I am God."

With MacLaine you get all the central themes and practices of

New Age spirituality – humans are divine, karma, reincarnation, channeling, UFOs, use of crystals, astrology, Jesus went to India to receive New Age teaching, unity of religions, morality as relative and peace on planet Earth. While MacLaine has created some bumps for the New Age (most famously when she swore at David Letterman during an interview in 1988), she is still highly regarded in New Age circles and in Hollywood.

Since her heyday we have seen a long string of famous New Age teachers: Jane Roberts, Neale Donald Walsch, Elizabeth Clare Prophet, David Spangler, Ken Wilber, Marianne Williamson, Deepak Chopra, JZ Knight, Marilyn Ferguson, James Redfield, Rhonda Byrne and Vancouver-based Eckhart Tolle. As I look back at these leaders, four insights emerge in terms of the Christian response to New Age.

First, on the error side, some Christian writers hurt analysis by mixing proper critique with sloppy Bible prophecy theories. No, the New Age did not usher in the return of Jesus. Likewise, Satan did not create a One World Church through the New Age. Sadly, Christian prognostication about the future is often as pathetic as New Age predictions.

Second, all Christian critics (from fundamentalist to evangelical and mainline) correctly recognized that New Age teachers offer a fundamentally different gospel and a different Jesus than provided in Scripture. As nice and cozy as New Age theories sound, this is a spiritually deadly paradigm on God, the identity of Jesus, human personhood, proper biblical interpretation, the way of salvation and

proper moral teaching.

(On the latter, people should have abandoned MacLaine as a spiritual guide as soon as she defended her adultery with a British politician by claiming they used to be lovers in a previous life.)

Third, New Age spirituality provides a perfect example for Christians to realize that what makes no sense to us is viewed as incredible and liberating truth for others. Consider, for example, the New Age obsession with channeling spirits from another realm.


When you get a moment, ask your search engine to show you clips of JZ Knight getting messages from Ramtha, a 35,000-year-old warrior from the lost city of Atlantis. I can't imagine Christians wanting to pay \$1,000 to hear Ramtha speak through JZ at her headquarters in Yelm, Washington. However, our effectiveness in witness is directly proportional to gentle truth bearing. "Speak the truth in love."

Fourth, the New Age also shows something incredible about Jesus. It doesn't matter which New Age teacher you read – Jesus is always referenced positively. It's like the old gospel song teaches, "There's Something About That Name." Certainly, New Age teachers distort the identity and teachings of Jesus – that is beyond tragic – but let's celebrate that there is at least a deep realization in New Age circles that Jesus is a precious gift to humanity. That is a foundation to build on. /FT

Our effectiveness in witness is directly proportional to gentle truth bearing.



NEW AGE BELIEVERS, LIKE SHIRLEY MACLAINE (ABOVE), PROMOTE A FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT GOSPEL AND A DIFFERENT JESUS THAN PROVIDED IN SCRIPTURE.

 James A. Beverley is professor of Christian thought and ethics at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. He offers more analysis of New Age movements in his book *Religions A to Z* (Thomas Nelson, 2005). Find more of these columns at www.faithtoday.ca/ReligionWatch.



STEVE BELL is a Canadian Christian music icon and co-owner of Winnipeg's Signpost Music. He has 18 solo CDs under his belt, including *Pilgrimage*, his most recent collection celebrating 25 years of music making. Bell is a two-time Juno Award winner and multiple Covenant Award winner – among many other professional recognitions. Bell's reputation is that of a thoughtful, musical poet-theologian. He spoke to Faith Today about the joy and pain of writing, why his music is not played more often on Canadian Christian radio – and the beautiful advice he offers young artists.

Faith Today: Your song "Moon Over Birkenau" emerged after a painful visit to Auschwitz. What is your songwriting process?

Steve Bell: There is no normal, really. Some songs seem to just happen. Sometimes I think they're like angels, pre-existent and looking about for someone with their antennas up. When you've experienced something as traumatic as Auschwitz, you become hyper-attuned. Your soul is malleable and softened, ready to receive. With the song "Moon Over Birkenau," I sat down at the piano, my hands went to the notes, and I just started to play. That has only happened to me maybe a dozen times over several decades.

Other times I'll be reading a book, and a particular constellation of words will strike me as lovely, or I'll sense a peculiar energy in them so much so that I'll "attend" a little deeper. Inevitably I'll see a pattern emerge suggesting a rhythm. Melody follows. That's when I know I

have a song coming down the pike and I'll clear my schedule and grab my guitar.

FT: Writers are told to rewrite again and again. Is it the same for songwriting?

SB: I tweak endlessly. I'm often performing new songs for over a year before I record. The more I sing them and tell stories, the more I discover what's in them. I've often remarked that my songs seem to know more than I do. Over time, they become more of themselves until my manager will say it's time for an album. We'll book the studio, and then they are done. But I still look back on songs I've recorded ten years ago and wish I could tweak them.

The last while has been a little different for me. I started plundering the poetry of Malcolm Guite after meeting him at a C. S. Lewis conference a few years ago. We've become friends and have since worked closely together on my last couple of albums. His influence has renewed my astonishment at the power of poetry and





melody to say what can't be said. I was becoming a little tired and cynical, I think, but am enchanted once again.

FT: *Tell me your thoughts about contemporary Christian music in Canada.*

SB: There's really no effective Christian music industry in Canada. We don't have vigorous, well-resourced record labels, publishing houses or management companies. We have a handful of radio stations and in the last few years our modest retail industry has been decimated.

We're mostly a group of moderately successful independents trying to do meaningful work while staying one step ahead of the bank. Those who are tied to industry are tied to U.S. industry.

This is one of my frustrations with the Canadian Christian music awards organizations. They have made attempts to posture after the Americans, even though we have a completely different reality here. I've been to award shows replete with smoke machines, whirling lights, video graphics and booming-voiced announcers. I suppose it's kind of fun, but I sit there and think, "Is this anyone's reality?"

I just wish we could be more Canadian about it. I'm proud of us, even as I have a lot of respect for much of what goes on south of the 49th. I wish we could be content with humbler gatherings more focused on our craft.

FT: *When I turn on Christian radio, I don't often hear Steve Bell. Why is that?*

SB: It's true that I get far more airplay from CBC than I do Christian radio. I'm not sour grapes about this. I understand that I don't go out of my way to produce "radio-friendly" music as it is defined primarily by the Nashville Christian music industry, but it saddens me that we in Canada still seem to have a cultural inferiority complex. We already have an America. We don't need two. We have something to contribute in our own unique way that can be extremely valuable to other cultures. It seems to me that a faith that understands God as triune – a unity of difference – would be eager to celebrate variety.

FT: *Who do you listen to?*

SB: Oddly, I don't listen to a lot of music.



I'm more likely to read a book. Having said that, I have every album Bruce Cockburn has made. I love Alison Krauss and Gillian Welch. I love the whole Emmylou Harris camp, The Bros. Landreth, Jacob Moon is magnificent, Leo Kottke, James Taylor. My favourite singer would be Billie Holiday. Bob Bennett's music has been significant for me.

FT: *I'm thinking of you as an artist who makes his living from art created from his faith. Have you had a faith crisis and how did you cope with that?*

SB: Yeah, I mean without making too much of it, our family has suffered a lot with mental illness. My mother has lived her life with a sometimes crippling anxiety disorder. My dad is bipolar and I've been prone to depression. We've had suicide in the family, financial terrors, eating disorders and like anyone, all manner of disappointment and loss. These are the things you wrestle with in the middle of the night when you question God about the content of His "friendship."

My dad was a prison chaplain and I grew up going to church in prison. When you awaken to the profound dignity of every human person, and to the social dynamics that exclude and alienate, you begin to ask how this can happen in a culture that claims to be foundationally Christian.

I've been criticized for writing beautiful or even light melodies to sad or dark lyrics. I can't help it. Darkness does not have the last word. I believe that in my bones.

Other crises of faith have been brought on by trips. My first time to Kolkata and Palestine shut me down from writing for long periods of time. I felt I had nothing to say in the face of some of the tragedies I saw. I have a First Nations foster daughter. I've gotten a clearer picture of how brutal this society can be if you are not in the mainstream. If you look at the wounds that colonial Christianity inflicted on First Nations people, you have to ask, Is there a fatal flaw in this faith? That's the kind of thing that gnaws at me at 3 o'clock in the morning.

But I can't stay there. I'm constantly overwhelmed by resilient beauty. My foster daughter lived with terrible addictions she financed through prostitution. Now she's a beautiful mom with great kids, struggling and yet overcoming. She awes and inspires me.

I've been criticized for writing beautiful or even light melodies to sad or dark lyrics. I can't help it. Darkness does not have the last word. I believe that in my bones.

FT: *What guidance do you offer young Christian artists?*

SB: I'm in the happy place of life now where I have some resources to share. My manager Dave Zeglinski and I own a nice little studio we've increasingly made available to young artists. I love to tell them they belong to a noble, meaning-making guild that has brought comfort and beauty for thousands of years, and the commercialization and celebrity that goes with it is an almost criminal distraction.

Ours is an honourable and indispensable craft, and we need to take it seriously. We need to think deeply, feel deeply and avoid anything that is simplistic and cliché.

I had a wonderful experience recently with a new Canadian band. Dave and I had a little bit of money kicking around that we thought might help them get started. We invited them over to my house for burgers and beers, to offer them some financial assistance and, if they wanted it, counsel.

I was out cutting the lawn that morning, and God spoke to me very clearly that this was not to be a burgers and beer thing – this was to be a feast. I cleaned the house. I thought through the best meal I could remember my wife making, she was away at the time, and I went out and bought a few great wines. I felt strongly that God wanted me to bless them. This was potentially awkward because there was no consensus of faith between us. We had a great time, and just before we were about to eat, one of the brothers, who would not identify as Christian, held out his hands and said, "We need to thank somebody." I knew it was blessing time. I affirmed their gifting, impressed upon them that they had the honourable charge of leading people through their music to experiences of the transcendent divine, and then asked if I could bless them. They bowed their heads as I prayed over them and blessed their journey.

That is what I want to pass along – more than how to get a gig or a grant. That's important, but not as valuable as fostering the dignity of the work we've been called to do for the sake of the world.

FT: *Thank you so much, Steve. /FT*



APOLOGETICS WITHOUT APOLOGY

Andy Bannister, director and lead apologist for Ravi Zacharias International Ministries Canada, offers a way forward for every Canadian Christian to talk about their faith – without apology

Speakers' Corner in London, England's Hyde Park is known as the world centre of free speech. Every Sunday, dozens of speakers perch precariously on soapboxes or stepladders to proclaim their views. It's a place to encounter people of all beliefs and none – and it was there I had my first proper conversation with a Muslim.

Ibrahim was, as the saying goes, loaded for bear. "You're a Christian?" he began. Without

pausing for breath he launched into a laundry list of objections to Christianity, beginning with the Trinity, taking in the Crusades, and then landing on the reliability of the Bible. “Your Scriptures have been corrupted! Only the Qur’an has been perfectly preserved and is the true word of God! Allahu Akbar!”

I went home with my head spinning, with no idea how to answer Ibrahim’s questions. I’d never met somebody with such passionate objections to my faith. Nothing in my ten years as a Christian had prepared me.

But I knew there had to be answers.

The journey to finding them, which began that rainy afternoon at Speaker’s Corner in 1997, led eventually to full-time theological education, a PhD in Islamic studies,

THERE’S A GROWING ANXIETY THAT EVANGELISM ISN’T POSSIBLE IN SECULAR, PLURALISTIC CANADA.

hundreds of conversations with people like Ibrahim, and full-time ministry with Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM). First launched 30 years ago in Canada, RZIM is committed to evangelism undergirded by apologetics as we seek to engage the thinking skeptic.

THE DREADED E AND A WORDS

Evangelism and apologetics rank high on the list of what makes Christians nervous. There’s a growing anxiety that evangelism isn’t possible in secular, pluralistic Canada (or only if we carefully disguise it so that our non-Christian friend doesn’t realize what we’re doing until it’s too late). If people have even heard of apologetics (that branch of Christian theology concerned with giving reasons



Andy Bannister, Canadian director and lead apologist for Ravi Zacharias International Ministries

why Christians believe what they do), they often perceive it to be about dry, dusty arguments in ivory towers, or about trying to argue people into the Christian faith.

This is a tragedy.

We live in a cultural moment when the need for apologetics – and a fresh vision and passion for evangelism – is greater than ever. Here you will find a primer for apologetics – why it is needed and what I have learned works in today’s Canada.

ARROGANCE AND CERTAINTY

There is only one good reason to be Christian, and that’s if the gospel is true. And if it’s true, then presumably you can give reasons *why*. But we live in an age where many people fear truth, especially truth with a capital T. Last year, I interviewed the Unitarian Universalist chaplain of a leading university for a documentary. He stressed, again and again, that certainty led to arrogance. This was his basic problem with Christians, especially the evangelical variety. “If I ever find myself more than 60 per cent certain of anything,” Jeff said, “I begin to worry.”

The fear of appearing arrogant, intolerant or narrow-minded has

crept into the Church. One of the most common questions I hear from Christians, especially university students, is, “How can I talk about the uniqueness of Jesus without looking like a bigot?”

It fascinates me that in all my years of dialoguing with Muslims, I have never been accused of arrogance. I have been told I am wrong and misguided. I have had many passionate discussions with people like Ibrahim. But never – not once – has a Muslim told me I am narrow-minded for my insistence that it is through Jesus, not Muhammad, that salvation is to be found.

A friend of mine passionately debated with a Muslim at Speakers’ Corner. An elderly atheist gentleman wandered up to them and said, “You religious people. Always arguing!” The Muslim stopped, mid-flow, put his arm round my friend and replied, “This man and I believe in God. You do not. This man and I believe in prophets. You do not. This man and I believe in miracles. You do not. This man is my friend. You are not. Now go away.”

Befriending and talking with those who follow other religions actually helps us see the uniqueness of Christianity. The widespread

idea in our culture that the major religions of the world are fundamentally the same, with just superficial differences, is not true. It is the differences, in fact, that are fundamental. If we ignore the differences, we ignore the person. There’d be nothing to learn if they’re just a carbon copy of me. If what they believe is *different*, then I need to get to know them.

THE OPPORTUNITY DISAGREEING BRINGS

Everybody makes truth claims: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, athe-

Five common **FAITH CHALLENGES** and how you can answer them

THEY SAY: “Science has disproven God.”

YOU ASK: “What would you say are some of the things that science can’t tell us?”

Things to think about

Science has limits. There are a whole range of questions it can’t answer, from philosophy to math, politics to literature to, most profoundly, what it means to be human. Science is simply one tool for investigating reality. The problem is that to a man with a hammer, everything often looks like a nail.

Further reading

John Lennox, *God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Lion UK, 2009)

THEY SAY: “Religion poisons everything.”

YOU ASK: “What about the chaos you can’t pin on religion?”

Things to think about

Human beings have an uncanny ability to take a whole range of things – science, politics, economics, sexuality, technology (and, yes, religion) – and use them for great evil. Rather than blame the things themselves, perhaps the problem lies within us.

Further reading

Douglas Wilson, *God Is How Christianity Explains Everything* (American Vision, 2008)

THEY SAY: “If there is a God, why is there evil?”

YOU ASK: “What do you mean by words like ‘good’ and ‘evil’?”

Things to think about

If there is no God, terms like ‘good’ and ‘evil’ really just collapse to personal preference. The atheist can say, “I don’t like murder,” but not “Murder is wrong.” Instinctively, most of us recognize evil when we see it. And when we experience evil, what we want is not something said about evil, but something done. And that’s what the cross is all about.

Further reading

Ravi Zacharias and Vince Vitale, *Why Suffering? Finding Meaning and Comfort When Life Doesn’t Make Sense* (FaithWords, 2014)

THEY SAY: “Christians are narrow-minded and judgmental!”

YOU ASK: “Tell me your story. What happened?”

Things to think about

Behind many people’s rejection of the gospel is often not an intellectual objection, but bad experiences with the Church or Christians. We need to take the time to listen, understand and then show a different side to Christianity. Behind every question is a questioner, and unless we remember that, we’ll end up obsessed with winning arguments and lose the person in the process.

Further reading

Ravi Zacharias, *Has Christianity Failed You?* (Zondervan, 2010)

THEY SAY: “You’re only a Christian because your parents were!”

YOU ASK: “So what about an atheist whose parents were atheists?”

Things to think about

Many objections to Christianity self-destruct when you turn them around and shoot them back at the questioner. If what we believe is determined purely by our culture or upbringing, then everybody (not just Christians) is in the same boat. Nobody can claim to believe for rational reasons. And, of course, it wouldn’t explain conversion.

Further reading

Abdu Murray, *Grand Central Question: Answering the Critical Concerns of the Major Worldviews* (IVP Books, 2014)

—ANDY BANNISTER

ists – everybody. My atheist friends are increasingly confident about putting their truth claims out for all to see, whether it's bestselling books from atheist authors like Richard Dawkins, snarky remarks by atheist chat show hosts or secular advertisements on the sides of buses.

We live in a world in which Christianity is under fire from all directions. But this is a tremendous opportunity. The gospel stands up powerfully in the marketplace of ideas. And the more people are aware of some of the competing worldviews on offer, the easier it is to show people that ideas really matter. There is no such thing as neutrality.

I received an email from a student at the University of Toronto. He asked whether I could meet him for lunch and answer some questions about Christianity. John fired dozens of objections at me for a couple of hours. I'd deal with one, he'd shoot another. At the end of our time I racked my brains, trying to think of something I could leave him with. As he opened the door of his car, I said, "I've enjoyed our lunch and I hope some of my answers helped you. But more than that, I hope you felt that I treated you with respect and

who showed how much He values you by sending His Son, Jesus, to die for you. That's why I treated you the way I did. Now, I know that you do not believe this. In fact, you have told me three times in the last two hours that you believe humans are nothing more than atoms and particles, that we are just an accident of biology. But you have not treated me as an accident. You have treated me as person of value and significance. In other words, you have treated me on the basis of my worldview, not yours. For this I am grateful, but it raises some questions, wouldn't you say?"

SPIRITUAL – BUT NOT RELIGIOUS – CAN BE GOOD NEWS

It's one thing to engage with atheist or Muslim friends, but what of the people who describe themselves as spiritual, but want nothing to do with organized religion? A friend and I sat in Tim Hortons when a man saw my Bible. He piped up and told us he was a reincarnation of Jesus' brother James – and invited us to a conference to discover our inner divinity.

Spirituality seems to be everywhere. My colleague Ravi Zacharias spoke at McGill University. We were warned not to expect a huge audience. This was, after all, secular Montreal. Almost 900 people turned up. Even the overflow had an overflow! The organizers had chosen a great title for the event – "Does Spirituality Matter?"

How do we engage this kind of vague spirituality, one that is dogma- and commitment-free? Paul in Acts 17 offers a lesson. Rather than condemn the Athenians for their cunningly-catch-all altar to the unknown god, Paul uses it as a leaping-off point to the gospel.

Lying behind the trend toward a do-it-yourself spirituality in our

culture is the same nervousness about truth that we saw earlier, a sense that organized religion is too straight lined, too dogmatic and too moralistic.

But to people like my friend in Tim Hortons, who believe spirituality is about the right *experience* or *feeling*, I like to ask, "What about those who haven't had that feeling?" The very attempt to be inclusive and nondogmatic ends up exclusive. If you haven't felt what I've felt, if you haven't learned what I've learned, or, in the case of my Muslim friend, kept the commands that I've kept, then you're inferior.

Jesus, by contrast, is the great leveller. At its heart the gospel isn't about what you've done, learned or experienced. It is about transformation, as Jesus pointed out to Nicodemus. In a culture in which post-moderns are so desperately trying to find themselves, this is a message that can powerfully connect.

THE FOUR PRINCIPLES WE ALL NEED TO KNOW

At its heart, apologetics is beautifully simple and intricately connected to the heart of the gospel. As I've wrestled with people's questions, I've learned there are a number of basic principles that apply time and again, no matter who I'm talking with.

1. Know what you believe. This is a challenge for those of us raised in the Church, or who have been Christians for decades. Too often we give how-shaped answers to why-shaped questions. If somebody asks you *why* you are a Christian, giving a narrative of how you became one isn't always helpful. Many of our friends want to know *why* you're a Christian *now*, today, with all of the challenges to your faith that daily attack you. What's your elevator speech for Christianity?

...SHOW PEOPLE THAT IDEAS REALLY MATTER. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS NEUTRALITY.

dignity, despite our profound disagreements."

He told me I had been kind. I thanked him for his courtesy as well, despite his clear difficulties with Christianity. And I knew I had found the thought to leave him with. This is what I said. "The reason I have treated you with respect is I believe that as a human being, you are made in the image of a God who created you and loves you, and

Now that you know you can do it, here's how you can **GO DEEPER** into apologetics

RZIM SUMMER SCHOOL 2015: Learn from Ravi Zacharias, Andy Bannister and a galaxy of other speakers from June 28 to July 3. This year's theme is Reduced or Redeemed? What Does It Mean to Be Human? – a hugely important question that affects every area of culture and how we do evangelism in 21st-century Canada. www.rzimsummerschool.ca

BURNING QUESTIONS: A six-part TV documentary exploring the big questions of life (from the existence of God, to faith and science, to the problem of evil). It aired on Canadian TV last year and the DVD is now available. Also grab the free study guide designed for churches and small groups. www.burningquestions.ca

SHORT ANSWERS TO BIG QUESTIONS: A new 50-part series of videos offering quick answers to a wide variety of questions about the Christian faith. Presented by RZIM's Andy Bannister and Nathan Betts. www.rzim.org

IDEAS FOR EVANGELISTIC EVENTS: Is your church or organization struggling for ideas about how to reach your community? Check out RZIM's list of ideas at www.stayintheconversation.org/rzimcanada/ideas-for-evangelistic-events

READING RESOURCES: If you're a reader and want to go deeper, check out Ravi Zacharias' and Vince Vitale's latest *Why Suffering? Finding Meaning and Comfort When Life Doesn't Make Sense* (FaithWords, 2014); Nabeel Qureshi's story of his journey from Muslim missionary to Christian evangelist, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* (Zondervan, 2014), or look out for Andy Bannister's *The Atheist Who Didn't Exist: Or the Dreadful Consequences of Bad Arguments*, a new popular-level and funny (yes, apologetics and humour) book on skepticism coming this fall (Monarch Books, 2015).

2. Rediscover the power of questions.

We've tried to reduce evangelism to formulas or methodologies. But the most powerful form of sharing the gospel is talking to people. Learn to ask your friends what they believe (or don't believe). If a colleague at work is a Muslim, try saying, "I've never really talked to a Muslim before. What do you believe?" Or if a friend self-describes as an atheist, respond, "'Atheist' tells me what you don't believe. But what do you believe?"

3. Engage people's honest questions.

Don't ignore objections. A few

months ago I met Alex, a young university student, who introduced himself to me as an agnostic. "I used to be a Christian," he explained, "but I was raised in a fundamentalist family." Questions about religion were forbidden in his family and church. Alex began to read atheist books and eventually abandoned his faith.

"But you introduced yourself as an 'agnostic,'" I said gently. "What happened?" Alex explained he attended a local atheist group, and discovered that they were, in his words, "fundamentalists too." Questioning was not allowed there

either. Alex told me he didn't know what to believe or disbelieve anymore. Then, he asked me if I thought he was lazy. I replied, "There are two types of agnostics. A lazy agnostic is somebody who can't be bothered to find the answer to the God question. An active ag-

WHAT PEOPLE NEED IS NOT A CLEVER ARGUMENT, BUT TO SEE THE GREATNESS AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF JESUS.

nostic is genuinely searching for the answer, but just hasn't found it yet." We talked long into the evening and slowly began to deal with some of the questions Alex had buried for so long.

4. Finally, we need to know what the gospel really is. That sounds obvious, doesn't it? A good deal of our problems in the Church stem from forgetting. We've allowed the gospel to get tangled up with political positions, culture wars or moralism. As an atheist friend once put it to me, "I know what you Christians are *against*, but I have no idea what you're *for*." A brilliant, if tragic, observation.

CLEARING THE GROUND

Ultimately, the task of apologetics is largely one of debris clearing – removing the obstacles so people can see Jesus clearly. Arguments can't bring somebody to faith, but they can help create a climate in which faith is possible. Ultimately, what people need is not a clever argument, but to see the greatness and attractiveness of Jesus. Our task, and the task of apologetics, is simply to present Him as clearly as we can. And then get out of the way. /FT



Andy Bannister is the Canadian director and lead apologist for Ravi Zacharias International Ministries Canada.



CHRISTIAN RADIO THRIVING

Canadian stations aimed at Christian listeners are overcoming financial and regulatory challenges **BY DAVID F. DAWES**

Bill Stevens fondly recalls the exact moment he knew Christian radio was making an impact in his city.

“In 2011, the number one station in Ottawa was emceeding the annual Christmas parade. As we drove by the reviewing stand with our float, the radio station’s announcer said, ‘There’s Family Radio CHRI. During the year they’re competition – but we all come together at Christmas!’ ”

Stevens, general manager at CHRI 99.1 FM, was elated at the friendly attitude, but even more at the recognition. “All we could think was, ‘We’re competition? Hey, we’re competition!’ ”

Recognition for Canadian Christian radio has been in short supply since it began in 1929 with the founding of VOAR (Voice of Adventist Radio) in Newfoundland. Until the late 1990s there were only

ILLUSTRATION: SERGIY KOROLKO

MAJOR COMPANIES WITH CHRISTIAN STATIONS

- **Christian Hit Radio** – based in Ottawa, with repeater stations in Cornwall and Pembroke www.chri.ca
- **Golden West Broadcasting** – based in Manitoba, includes 40 stations across four provinces www.goldenwestsites.com/goldenwest/radio.html
- **International Harvesters for Christ** – several stations in Halifax, Moncton and surrounding areas www.harvestersfm.com
- **Sound of Faith Broadcasting** – Faith FM, Your Inspiration Station, several Ontario stations in Waterloo, London and surrounding areas www.faihf.org
- **Touch Canada Broadcasting** – Shine FM, several Alberta stations including Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton www.shinefm.com
- **Trafalgar Broadcasting Ltd.** – Joy 1250 AM in Toronto www.joy1250.ca
- **Trust Communications Ministries** – Life 100.3, Ontario's Christian Superstation – several stations including Barrie across Central Ontario www.lifeonline.fm
- **United Christian Broadcasters Canada** – UCB Canada – several Ontario stations including Kingston and Belleville www.ucbcanada.com

a few Christian stations in Canada, due mainly to regulations that restricted religious broadcasting.

But those regulations eased in the mid-1990s, and by 2004 there were more than 30 stations. Today there are 100. They feature programming from contemporary pop and praise music, to the teaching and entertainment offered by ministries such as Focus on the Family and Insight for Living.

“Considering the environment, just the fact that [such radio] exists is a success,” says Stevens. “Once it was not legal. Now we have Christian stations coast to coast. I think we’re being recognized more and more as a part of mainstream media.”

Measuring success

As Christian radio becomes mainstream in some parts of Canada, its leaders increasingly face comparisons with more familiar commercial radio. Some Christian stations aim

to compete, while others say it’s a mistake to try to compare stations with radically different goals.

Jeff Lutes of Moncton, N.B., president of International Harvesters for Christ, says the success of Christian stations is evident in how they are “unifying Christian communities by sharing announcements of events to help increase attendance” and in their “promotion of Canadian Christian artists.”

Most importantly, he says, Christian radio has facilitated evangelism. “People who previously have not been exposed directly to the gospel have come to Christ.”

Christian radio meets a need that “no other radio genre does,” says Johnny Rocket, program director for Edmonton’s Shine FM. “We are able to be safe for the family with what we say and do. We find, a lot of times, that parents are tired of hearing the raunchiness” on some secular stations.

“The impact of the gospel on lives and families” should not be understated, says James Hunt of Belleville, Ont., executive director of United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) Canada.

But if you measure in the number of listeners, he says, “Success has been limited to a handful of [Christian] stations” which emulate the broadcast standards of “commercial secular radio.”

Stations that broadcast mainly preaching and teaching programs work on an unusual financial model, says Don Millar, program director at Joy 1250 AM in Toronto. Ministries pay the radio station to broadcast their shows and recoup those costs through donations from listeners. The ongoing donations prove there is a dedicated audience.

Scott Jackson, president of Trust Communications Ministries in Ontario, considers the commercial numbers one of the more important parts of self-evaluation.

“I measure success by three things – revenue from sales and donations, ratings and listener feedback,” says Jackson.

But looking industry wide, he agrees, the most common yardsticks are “by wattage, or by population, or by ministry impact.”

Radio goals

Christian radio stations differ widely even among themselves because there are so many different kinds of Christian and so many different kinds of radio.

Much of Christian radio attempts to walk a middle line within the diverse Canadian Church, not aligning itself with any particular denomination or political position. James Hunt of UCB is perhaps typical in pointing out he attends a “nondenominational evangelical church.”

Jackson, who attends a Pentecostal congregation, agrees it would be unwise for a radio ministry to focus on denominational distinctives. “We are Christianity 101, down the middle. That’s it. Anything else is for your Bible study.”

Whereas both Hunt and Jackson work at stations set up as charities, other stations operate as for-profit businesses.

“We are a secular broadcaster, not a Christian nonprofit,” says Lyndon Friesen, president of Golden West Broadcasting in Manitoba.

Golden West “operates with Christian principles,” says Friesen, who attends a Lutheran church. “I think our whole group would characterize themselves as Christians, but it’s not a requirement.”

Back in Ottawa, Stevens says CHRI has “a statement of faith – what you might call the Billy Graham Creed. We try to serve Jesus Christ, period. We’re connected to 300 congregations. We don’t advertise any particular church service – but we do offer free ads for events.”



BILL STEVENS,
GENERAL MANAGER
AT CHRI 99.1 FM



JEFF LUTES, PRESIDENT
OF INTERNATIONAL
HARVESTERS FOR
CHRIST



SCOTT JACKSON,
PRESIDENT OF TRUST
COMMUNICATIONS
MINISTRIES

TOP 10

CHRISTIAN SONGS OF 2014

1. "We Believe," Newsboys
2. "This Is Amazing Grace," Phil Wickham
3. "Do Something," Matthew West
4. "I Am," Crowder
5. "Love Alone Is Worth the Fight," Switchfoot
6. "One Sure Thing," The Color [Canadian]
7. "More of You," Colton Dixon
8. "Press On," Building 429
9. "He Knows My Name," Francesca Battistelli
10. "We Walk on Water," Shonlock [Canadian]

SOURCE: WWW.LIFEONLINE.FM/2014.PHP

Observers sometimes point to CHRI as a rare example of a station that clearly has strong participation from both the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities.

Not the USA

Drive south across the border, turn on your car radio and you won't dial far before finding a wide range of Christian radio to choose from. Christian radio in the United States is a juggernaut that reaches more than half that nation's adults each month.

More specifically, Christian music reaches 43 per cent and Christian talk-driven formats reach 38 per cent in a month, according to a Barna survey.

So it makes sense that most of the music and talk heard on Canadian Christian radio originate in the United States. Lutes says his stations in Atlantic Canada "air 20 per cent Canadian Christian content," perhaps a typical target for many of his peers.

Thanks to its longer history, "Christian radio in the States is miles ahead of Canadian radio," says Rocket at Edmonton's Shine FM. "The impact radio stations have in the States in some cities is amazing. I find that sometimes in Canada, some stations are just happy to be playing Christian music."

Because Canadian Christian radio "is a lot younger," says Hunt, "it still needs to develop. It is more 'polite' when it comes to asking for funds. It is less political, and also does not want to ruffle feathers."

There are also pragmatic factors limiting Christian radio in Canada, especially a shortage of trained and talented staff, less money and still some regulations requiring the broadcast of a "balance" of different religious views.

American broadcasters, Friesen points out, also have distinct prac-

tical advantages. "Some are able to produce their own programming. Also, in the U.S., they syndicate everything. We have less syndication."

Internet has potential

Many small Canadian Christian broadcasters see hope for growth using Internet broadcasting.

Thanks to the web, smartphones and CHRI's app for smartphones and tablet computers, "We have more and more people online worldwide," says Stevens. "We now ship contest prizes to Wisconsin, Atlanta and Africa."

Even for Rocket, who initially thought the web "was a fad like parachute pants," Internet broadcasting "has been great to reach an audience that doesn't have Christian radio, or an audience who just likes what you are doing."

Friesen, however, sees the Internet as "just a distribution channel. Our audiences don't differentiate between radio and the Internet. If you've got an awesome program, they'll listen. The business is still about producing compelling programming."

BESTSELLING CHRISTIAN CDS IN CANADA 2014

- 1 **WOW Hits 2014**, various artists
- 2 **Thrive**, Casting Crowns
- 3 **WOW Worship [Lime]**, various artists
- 4 **Sovereign Ruler**, Michael W. Smith
- 5 **WOW Hits 2015**, various artists
- 6 **The Art of Celebration**, Rend Collective
- 7 **Love Ran Red**, Chris Tomlin
- 8 **17 Bible Songs**, Songs Kids Really Love to Sing
- 9 **Restart**, Newsboys
- 10 **Welcome to the New**, MercyMe

SOURCE: DAVID C. COOK DISTRIBUTION. TOP CANADIAN CD WAS ALL THE PEOPLE SAID AMEN BY MATT MAHER, AT NUMBER 16.

TOP TALK RADIO FOR CHRISTIANS



The Drew Marshall Show (www.drewmarshall.ca) bills itself as Canada's most listened-to

spiritual talk show. It broadcasts live Saturdays from 1 to 5 p.m. both online and on air in the Toronto area on Joy 1250 (CJYE 1250 AM).



Sunday Night with Greg Glatz (www.sundaynightradio.com) is broadcast live Sundays from 9 to 11

p.m. online and on air in Winnipeg at CJOB 680 AM.

Business challenges remain

While the web has made it possible to reach wider audiences, Christian radio is more often preoccupied by a variety of other challenges.

"Many stations are operated by godly people with no radio experience," Jackson contends. "It's a bit like wanting to play in the NHL just because you own a pair of skates. Sure, passion is a big part, but product knowledge is needed to run a business."

The hard realities of entrepreneurship, says Hunt, are indeed a serious obstacle to some Christian radio outlets. "One of the biggest [problems] would be cash flow. But there are others such as affordable talent, usually old equipment (due to cost), and unfortunately the willingness to settle for substandard broadcasting."

The general economy, says Lutes, is also a factor. "Financial stagnation is creating a strain on household budgets, making it difficult for people who appreciate Bible programming to support the ministries." He also identifies satellite

radio, iTunes, and MP3 players as “strong competitors for Canadian ears.”

“In some cases the programming is really good, but the business plan is not,” says Friesen. “I often get calls from stations in crisis. One owner recently called me wanting help to turn his operation into a commercial station.”

A key problem, says Friesen, is that “We’ve tried to make Christian radio a business. The trouble is, it is not a business. It’s a niche market. There aren’t enough listeners to make it appealing to a mass of advertisers. And some advertisers, even if they are Christians, feel Christian radio is too polarized.”

However, for advertisers who want to market to Christians, Christian radio is a great fit, says Millar. He points to recent advertising that his station carried for a family friendly Christian movie.

Rocket puts it concisely. “The most significant challenge for being a Christian radio station is – being a Christian radio station. I remember we went to a car dealership, and they couldn’t advertise because we are a Christian station that sings and talks about God. I wonder if they realized that Christians also drive cars?”

CRTC guidelines less important

Being a clearly Christian voice has at times led to wrangling over guidelines established by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). “The regulation with regard to balance,” says Hunt, has sometimes caused problems historically.

The CRTC’s Religious Broadcasting Policy, published in 1993, states, “To attain balance, a broadcaster need not necessarily give equal time to each point of view. Rather, the Commission expects that a variety of points of view will be made available . . . over a reasonable period of time.”

Current Christian broadcasters know they can’t be theologically narrow or aggressive, and so have almost no difficulty with balance.

“I think the CRTC is supportive and fair,” says Friesen, who maintains the regulatory body is more concerned about

the “financial viability” of applicants.

“Revenue is the big challenge” for all Christian radio, says Friesen.

He admits he also worries sometimes that stations will be “challenged by human rights groups.”

Bill Stevens is more optimistic. “How

we reach people may change,” he says.

“But people will always want to have a relationship with someone who believes what they believe – and who encourages them.” /FT



David F. Dawes is a freelance writer living in Greater Vancouver, B.C.

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Female deans shaping the Canadian seminary coast to coast

The stories of three female deans who have found their calling

BY PATRICIA PADDEY

There's a saying that "two is a coincidence, three is a trend." With four and more, you pay attention. Across Canada it's increasingly normal to find female deans heading up seminaries in a formerly male-dominated role. [A dean is a senior administrator who heads a faculty, department or school at a college or university.]

Janet Clark arrived at Tyndale University College & Seminary in Toronto from McMaster Divinity College in 2005. She is senior vice president academic and dean of the seminary on one of Canada's largest Christian campuses. "It's hard to know what constitutes a trend," she says, "but I do think what we're seeing in the academic world is reflective of changes we're seeing in the broader culture and in the broader Church. The gifts and talents of women are being recognized, affirmed and welcomed."

While Clark says gender has never really been a major obstacle for her, "I have the great privilege of working in contexts where my leadership has been supported and affirmed, regardless of my gender," she acknowledges there are women who have had to struggle in the realm of Christian academe. "It's not easy when you want to work well, serve well, but feel you need to justify your place. Being in academic leadership is tough work."

To women considering academic careers, Clark advises careful discernment to get a deep sense of what God might be calling them to, courage to step boldly into that calling and then to walk faithfully, trusting God will equip and enable. Here are the stories of three women doing just that in Canadian seminaries.



Anna Robbins

Acadia's funny and fearless force

A LITTLE over a year ago Anna Robbins, academic dean, director of doctoral studies and associate professor of theology, culture and ethics at Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, N.S., took to the stage to publicly debate the question, Why worry about a godless world? Her sparring partner was friend and fellow academic Dr. Paul Abela, a self-proclaimed atheist and associate professor of philosophy at Acadia University.

As she took her place behind the podium, Robbins looked relaxed and self-assured. She spoke passionately and can-

didly about her subject and her personal faith, garnering chuckles, murmurs and thoughtful silence in turns from the standing-room-only crowd. It was just another day at the office for Robbins.

"Anna is a larger than life personality," says Harry Gardner, president of Acadia Divinity College and dean of theology at Acadia University. "She has a great sense of humour, a lot of wisdom and discernment. She's not afraid to speak into controversial or difficult situations, and does so with both grace and conviction."

As chief academic officer of

“I kept studying because my questions were big,” she explains. “For me, it’s a drive for a deeper understanding. Not just for my own edification, but so that I can pass that on to other people.”

—Anna Robbins, Acadia Divinity College

the seminary since 2012, Robbins is responsible for (among other things) oversight of the school’s curriculum, its administration and application. Profoundly curious, passionate about the intersection of faith and culture, a self-described “extreme extrovert” and a gifted communicator, Robbins says she doesn’t see herself as being on a career path per se, but just following her vocation.

As a young woman she wanted to be a journalist. But after a year of journalism school she changed her mind. Robbins took up communications work with the Red Cross. It was there, dealing with humanitarian concerns, that she began to wonder what her faith had to say about justice issues, and decided to pursue theological study.

“I kept studying because my questions were big,” she explains. “For me, it’s a drive for a deeper understanding. Not just for my own edification, but so that I can pass that on to other people.”

Her calling, says Robbins, is to serve the Church. But after more than a decade working in England – at the London School of Theology (including stints as acting principal, sen-

ior lecturer and vice-principal) – she’s glad to be pursuing that calling once again on Canadian soil, working at the school she describes as “a gem” in Eastern Canada.

While moving from a city of eight million to a town of a few thousand has required some adjustment, Robbins describes bits of her daily life in idyllic terms. She lives with her husband and elementary school-aged son in the small town of Wolfville, “Just a stroll through the woods to work,” she says. “I can almost see my son’s school from my office window.”

The work itself, while challenging and clearly something she loves, can feel somewhat overwhelming at times – because of its sheer volume and multiple details. “When you have so many things to do, it’s easy to get lost in the mire. Part of that is the job itself, and part of that is because I’m an ideas person, and sometimes my ideas are bigger than my resources.”

Still, it is an interesting time for theological schools in Canada, she says, because of the decline in the Church. “It’s a matter of colleges owning some responsibility for addressing [that decline]. If the churches are in decline, what is our role as seminaries?”

She believes part of the answer lies in helping churches do a better job of engaging culture. “I’m excited because I don’t think what’s coming is going to look anything like what came before,” she says, “except that it will be all about Jesus.

“We could be a holy huddle and hide away, but we’re working really hard to be engaged. And that’s an awful lot of fun.”

Jo-Ann Badley

Bringing renewal to Ambrose

IT WAS in August 2014, mere months ago, that Jo-Ann Badley took up her post as dean of theology and professor of New Testament at Ambrose University in Calgary, Alta. But she’s already having a perceptible impact there.

“From the beginning, she has been engaging the faculty in strategic conversations around the mission of the faculty and what it is we’re trying to accomplish,” says Paul Spilsbury, vice-president for academic affairs and also professor of New Testament. As a result of Badley’s influence, Ambrose’s faculty are already trying to formulate “new ways of thinking” about that mission. “There’s a sense

of excitement, encouragement ... it’s leading to a kind of renewal,” he says.

Sparking that kind of energy might seem incongruous for a woman who began her postsecondary studies in the field of economics and her working life as a statistical analyst. But there’s nothing dour about Badley. Spilsbury says she’s got a sense of humour and “her outlook is optimistic without being saccharine.”

She’s also thoughtful and passionate about her subject. Badley describes theology as “fun” and clearly communicates that passion to those around her. Author and theologian Brian McLaren



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NUMBER OF CANADIAN SEMINARIES WHO ARE MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CANADA (WWW.CHECANADA.CA)

has called her “one of the best Bible expositors I’ve ever been exposed to,” and the online comments of former students describe Badley as a “favourite.”

Theology, she says, “is a discipline that presses you to think about how life is meaningful.” While she didn’t come to theological education until midlife, wrestling with the big questions of life started much earlier.

“One of the great hurdles of my life was that my mother died when I was 27,” Badley says. She was the oldest in her family, but that didn’t lessen her sense of loss. “All of us still needed her,” she says. Coming to terms with the pain of her mother’s death forced her to sort out her deepest convictions about the nature and character of God.

“We have so many resources as Christians and as Canadians to speak a word of hospitality to a world that has a hard time with that.”

—Jo-Ann Badley, Ambrose University

“It’s easy to lose sight of the goodness or faithfulness of God in those kinds of crises,” she explains, describing the process of reconciling her beliefs as “absolutely seminal to my own development as a person.”

Her academic journey has taken some unlikely turns. She taught in a Roman Catholic theological college for nine years, and more recently,

during a yearlong sabbatical from The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology (where she was professor of biblical studies from 2006–2014), she began what remains an ongoing research project to this day, developing a Protestant theology of Mary.

She’s delighted to be back in Canada. She and her husband of 40 years have two adult daughters who live in Alberta, so the move represents something of a homecoming.

Badley recognizes the Church is in a time of transition, and schools face many challenges as they educate and equip tomorrow’s Church leaders. But she says she is hopeful about the future. You sense it is her confidence in the biblical



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text – which she describes as “God’s revelation of God’s self . . . intended to inform us so that we can live well” – that lies at the root of that optimism.

“We have so many resources as Christians and as Canadians to speak a word of hospitality to a world that has a hard time with that,” she says.

As she settles into her new role, Badley says her priority is listening carefully to the faculty, students and accrediting agencies with whom she interacts. But she is also having fun – dreaming and imagining ways in which a seminary and a school of ministry can have continuing impact on the development of leadership in the Church in Canada and around the world.

PHOTO: REGENT COLLEGE

Diane Stinton Regent’s warm heart

AS THE youngest of six children born to medical missionaries serving in Angola, Diane Stinton spent her earliest years in West Africa. The continent clearly imprinted on her soul. Currently associate professor of mission studies and dean of students at Regent College in Vancouver (since 2011), she has spent much of her working life crisscrossing back and forth between Canada and Kenya, where she also teaches at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.

Ask her how Africa has shaped the person she is today,



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and her passion erupts. “It’s definitely enhanced my sense of what God is doing in the global Church through my exposure to a place where the gospel is flourishing,” she says. “I’ve been deeply impacted by the sheer vitality of African Christianity, the calibre of African leaders in my church and in the Christian universities where I’ve served, as well as the quality of students I’ve engaged with from across the continent.”

Africa has also shaped her personally, from her worldview and values to her faith, which, she says, has been “significantly stretched” by interacting with African Christians “whose passion for

“We all need to grow more in our awareness of and our engagement in being part of God’s global family.”

—Diane Stinton, Regent College

Christ and depth of faith in Him” often leave her feeling “challenged and inspired.”

As dean of students, Stinton is responsible for the well-being of Regent students beyond the classroom – spiritually, emotionally and socially – overseeing everything from a student’s initial orientation to their final leaving and all points in-between.

She is “the warm heart of Regent,” according to president and professor of theology and ethics Jeff Greenman. He describes Stinton as “intelligent and godly ... deeply prayerful ... and a very sensitive, caring person which makes her ideally suited for her role.”

Lately, that role has seen Stinton coming alongside students as they attempt to navigate challenging issues like human sexuality. “She’s waded into a very complicated and sensitive matter with great wisdom and care,” says Greenman. “And it’s bearing really good fruit.”

Read her curriculum vitae backwards, and you see a life-

long love for learning, teaching and students, so much so that when you finally arrive at her present position at Regent, it seems almost inevitable. “In a sense [an academic career] does go back to childhood desire,” Stinton admits. But she insists she feels “humbled and privileged” to be where she is.

The college played a significant role in her personal formation. Stinton says she was deeply shaped – by both the friendships she developed there and by what she learned – while pursuing first a master of theological studies and then a master of theology (her thesis supervisor was Eugene Peterson). “I wouldn’t have left Kenya for any other institution than Regent.”

PHOTO: REGENT COLLEGE



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FT151



Diane Stinton (centre), dean of students at Regent College, Vancouver, also teaches at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology in Kenya.

She is most challenged by the constant juggling required to stay on top of two demanding

roles – dean and professor. She’s also a single parent – never married, she has an adopted

Kenyan daughter who, Stinton laughs, is “nine going on 16.”


As she looks at her students and at the Canadian Church today, Stinton is hopeful – because she believes God is faithful to every generation – but also concerned, “particularly coming from Africa back to Canada.”

“We all need to grow more in our awareness of and our engagement in being part of God’s global family,” she explains. “For so long we’ve thought in terms of ‘the West and the rest.’ And we’ve thought of mission as being what we take to them. And no matter how much we learn and know about the rise of the Church in the Majority World today, it doesn’t seem to

have much impact on our thinking, on our theology, on our mission strategies, on our openness to receive as well as to give to those whom God is raising up.

“I think we need greater humility, greater participation, greater anticipation of what God is doing throughout the world.”

She’s doing her part to help cultivate those things. A new summer intensive program she developed brings together the best of her passions, taking Canadian and international students to Kenya for two-week stints to explore African theology and ministry. /FT

 Patricia Paddey is a senior writer for Faith Today living in Mississauga, Ont.



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SEEKING KINGDOM GOLD IN THE YUKON

Living and working in Canada's North is the stuff of dreams and legends. The reality is harsh. And beautiful.

BY MEAGAN GILLMORE

Mark Carroll knows the Yukon has gold. But he left – sooner than he expected.

While studying at seminary in Langley, B.C., Carroll heard church leaders' vision for growth in Pacific Canada. He "knew he wanted to be on the front lines."

Carroll packed his bags and headed North, to the most western and smallest of Canada's territories. In September 2013 he became senior pastor at Whitehorse Baptist Church – his first pastorate. Just over a year later, he resigned. "This is, in a lot of ways, the front line of gospel ministry," he says. "I get excited when I think about what sort of Kingdom gains you can get here." It was too harsh, too much, too little, not the right place for a guy who had his heart in the right place. Wilderness City is not for everyone. It is the North.

A land that captivates and captures

The isolation is intense. Drivers travel for hours on two-lane highways. Intermittent rest stops – with outhouses, possibly with toilet paper – can be the only reminders of fellow travellers. Mountains frame the land, blinding with snow in winter, and

the valleys are dotted with purple fireweed in summer. Countless rivers and lakes weave along, many of them still not named – at least in English. Bears wander through untamed bush. The cold can kill. Winter stretches on.

The communities are sparsely scattered across the landscape. Approximately 37,000 people live in the Yukon, roughly 28,000 in Whitehorse. Many communities have less than 500 residents. In wintertime, some settlements are reached only by travelling over roads made of ice.

The Yukon, for all its harshness, holds a rare mystique. Most seekers never struck the gold that first put the Yukon on the map, but the allure remains. The History Channel's *Yukon Gold* reality show enters its third season this year.

Ministers in the Yukon can be forgiven for feeling like those old gold seekers. The rewards seem small and barely visible. But when they come, it is all worth it.

Greg Anderson is pastor at Riverdale Baptist Church in Whitehorse and current president of the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada. He arrived for his first job in the '70s. He was an accountant, but felt called to ministry while attending Riverdale. In the church's long 50-year history, Anderson is one of only three pastors to

remain longer than three years. "Everybody from Southern Canada wants to come to the North for a few months," he says. A lonely profession can become even lonelier in the city far, far away.

Things are very different here

Jeremy Norton is an Ontario native who moved from Calgary last fall to become associate pastor at Whitehorse Baptist Church. He intends to stay. He married an Alaskan and he's wanted to pastor in Whitehorse for years.

"I'm looking at a long game here," he says. But he still had to learn some things. "If you're travelling from a big city to the Yukon, you're going to think that you're a big fish in a small pond," says Norton. "But you're more like a blue fish in a sea of red fish. You're totally different."

People burst with pride at the phrase "Made in the Yukon" – whether describing crafts or a strategy to expand 9-1-1 service across the territory. There is a territorial pride here that, combined with a skepticism of those who parachute in, can make starting new things more challenging.

"The worst way to pitch something to a Yukoner is to use something that you've used before," says Norton.

Norton's congregation is growing (they've purchased land for a new building), but growth numbers here are modest and hard won. Note: a high-rise building in Whitehorse is six storeys tall. Some Yukoners consider a 300-person congregation a "megachurch," says Norton.

Even when Norton introduced the idea of small groups, standard fare in other parts of Canada, he put a Northern twist to his presentation. "I would pitch [groups] saying, 'You put a log on the fire, put the kettle on, a nice stew on the go, and just invite some folks over and talk about the Word and



share, have a good time of prayer.' That sounds more like church to a Yukoner than anything that happens on Sunday morning."

You can hide or you can reach out, says Reid Fowler, who served at Riverdale Baptist Church in the late '70s. "People who are willing to go and live there [are] either going to be hermits and they're going there to hide, or they tend to be more gregarious and they will be open to new relationships and friendships," he says. Now semiretired in Chilliwack, B.C., Fowler has also pastored in Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. The deepest Christian fellowship he's experienced happened in Whitehorse, he says. He also

volunteered with the RCMP in Whitehorse, and saw the potential for loneliness in the community. As a pastor Fowler says he saw the community consistently encourage people to follow Jesus.

Missionaries and fluid boundaries

Most residents belong to one of the Yukon's 14 First Nations. Reserves don't exist here – 11 of the First Nations have signed land claims agreements. Boundaries can be unclear. First Nations' land is interspersed with non-First Nations' land, even in cities. Within Whitehorse, named for the nearby rapids that used to resemble the wild, flinging mane of a horse on

the run (before it was dammed, of course), the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council have territory.

Anglicans came before prospectors. The first Anglican bishop to the North, William Carpenter Bompas, arrived in the Yukon in 1891, before gold was discovered. Anglican church buildings dot the horizon, home to often dwindling congregations.

There are missionaries here, of course. Send North (a partner of Send International) and Northern Canada Evangelical Mission have had ministry personnel in various communities for years, sometimes pastoring churches. Dawson Community Chapel, for example, was pastored by Send missionaries for years before joining the Evangelical Free Church of Canada in the late '90s.

Ken Pregizer is a Send missionary, and has been for 30 years. Training church leaders can be difficult, he says. According to Pregizer, some members may think they lack the education or experience to pray, share or read Scripture publicly. Sometimes a missionary will train a prospective leader only to watch them fall back into destructive habits. It can be discouraging. "That was the one person that you wanted to lead the church," he says. "You don't have a Plan B."

Oldtimers abound

Henry Klassen is a longtime member of Riverdale Baptist. He isn't convinced ministry and life here as an Evangelical differ much from anywhere else in Canada. "Don't think anything is unique to us," he says of Riverdale, a church he's attended since moving to Whitehorse in 1967.

Klassen also doesn't consider Whitehorse as transient as its reputation leads people to believe. People are staying longer. More seniors are retiring here, he

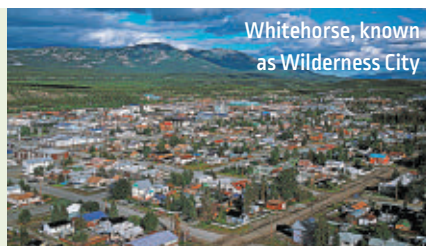
Immigrants to the Yukon enrich local churches

All Whitehorse has to offer – the city was ranked first in *MoneySense* magazine's 2011 list of top places to live in Canada for cities fewer than 25,000 people – is not lost on a growing Filipino community. The word diaspora is not misused here. Filipinos are attracted to Canada's North for the wages, healthy and high compared to back home where the average annual salary hovers at around US\$2,500.

The Yukon Nominee Program promotes immigration to Canada's North, streamlining the process for foreign workers happy for the opportunity.

Bethany Church, a congregation of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, found itself ministering in a changing city. The church now hosts a Filipino church service to meet the needs of this growing segment of its 300-member congregation.

The presence of the Filipino congregation and culture in Bethany has changed the church for the better, says associate pastor



Robert Young. "It brings a richness, it brings a family together. God's family has different ethnicities. Why wouldn't we in the four walls of the church as well. It's been a good challenge for us to be able to stretch ourselves to make room for the people God is bringing to our church. It means not being so limited, so focused on one people group."

Church, says Joy Allen, who arrived in the Yukon knowing "not a soul," is like a magnet for her and for the other Filipinos she knows in Whitehorse. "You can speak your own language and feel more at home. You can sing songs in your language. It brings you back home."

— **PATRICIA PADDEY, KAREN STILLER** (adapted from *Shifting Stats Shaking the Church: 40 Canadian Churches Respond*, a World Vision book to be released March 24, 2015)



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IN DEPTH

says. Nearly 17 per cent of the territory’s population is over 60, compared to 14 per cent between the ages of 20 and 29. Back in 1974 Riverdale lost half its congregation because people moved away. In its first 11 years the church had nine pastors.

Klassen is matter of fact about the reality of pastors coming and going. “We feel that when they are here, they are called of God to serve us,” he says, speaking as a veteran of several pastoral search committees. How long they’ll stay, he says, is a spiritual matter.

Often, past members or pastors return or stay connected. “They consider this to



Riverdale Baptist Church, Whitehorse

be a precious part of their life,” explains Klassen. “Whatever has happened here has been good.”

Northern lights

Andy Nieman says there have been “Holy Ghost knock-me-down-drag-me-out revival” services at his church. For 10 years he’s pastored a United Pentecostal church in Carmacks, a village right on the Yukon River, two hours down the Klondike Highway from Whitehorse. It boasts a store, gas station, First Nations’ band office, school, police station and approximately 500 people.

The congregation is small, about 20. But it’s active. A church plant from Whitehorse, they plan to start congregations throughout the territory. For the past two years they’ve held music festivals in October, after hunting is done and people have stocked woodpiles for winter. Musicians play and sing during the day. The church hosts revival meetings in the evening.

THE YUKON HAS ITS OWN LINGO, WHICH CHEECHAKOS REALIZE THEY MUST QUICKLY LEARN

“OUTSIDE” SOUTHERN CANADA

“CHEECHAKO” A NEWCOMER

“SOURDOUGH” SOMEONE WHO HAS LASTED LONG ENOUGH TO SEE THE YUKON RIVER FREEZE AND THAW.

For years, when Nieman would drive to Carmacks from Whitehorse to hold Bible studies, very few people came. Potential pastors in the Yukon need to have “supernatural patience,” he says.

Nieman’s earliest memories of a church don’t involve preaching. They involve stealing communion wine. He was 12. Nieman says he drank because some

of his first interactions with Christianity weren’t revival services. He suffered abuse at a residential school in Lower Post, B.C. He remembers his mother praying for him – even as he spent years incarcerated or panhandling to support his addictions.

At 39, in a Vancouver hotel room, he found Jesus.

Today, Nieman passionately describes the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “He’s not just a Creator up in heaven,” says Nieman. “He actually lives in us, which the Bible says is ‘the hope of glory.’”

Nieman is that Yukon ministry mixture of hard work, long-term vision and dogged determination.

In front of the Elijah Smith Building, a federal government building in Whitehorse, there is a statue of a prospector and his dog. “This statue,” the inscription reads, “is dedicated to everybody who follows their dreams.”

Visitors flock from as far away as Japan to visit this place, mostly drawn by the promise of the world famous aurora borealis – even when it is so cold that street lights have been known to shatter, and temperatures can keep outdoor Christmas lights from working.

Sometimes, though, the Northern Lights fill the sky, dancing in red, purple and green, enchanting the earthbound audience.

Other nights, they’re faint – white threads, barely moving. Either way, the darkness does not overcome it. /FT

 Meagan Gillmore is a freelance writer in Toronto. She previously worked in Whitehorse where she attended Riverdale Baptist Church.

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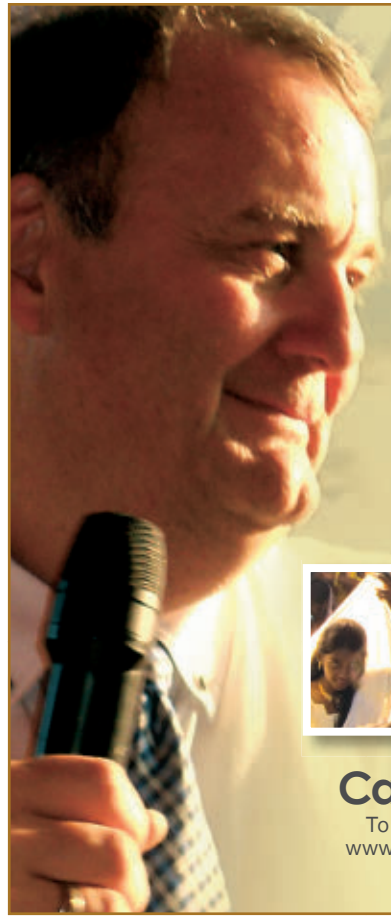
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Canada was shocked by the murders of five university students in an ordinary Calgary house last April. The house is ordinary no longer.

BY ALEX NEWMAN



The house that redemption

A 23-year-old Calgary plumber – and evangelical Christian – has become a minor media celebrity, but not for the usual reasons of preaching unpopular opinions about hot topics. In fact, he doesn't preach at all. Rather, Kadin Osborne purchased a house where the mass murder of five university students took place in Calgary in April 2014.

Osborne wasn't surprised by the attention – he was interviewed at least a dozen times for major radio, TV and print outlets – and says it was one of the reasons he bought the stigmatized house in the first place. “I knew whoever bought it would be interviewed by media, and I said, ‘Lord, wouldn't that be cool if a Christian bought the

house, and could tell people about you and about the gospel.’ The thought to be the one to buy the house came into my mind so fast, it felt like the Lord planted it.”

In spite of the plethora of interviews, Osborne says the media still didn't really “get” what he was doing or why. “Most people don't understand what's been broken here or what the devil has done.”

One of his friends – and a fellow choir member – does. He was in the house the night of the stabbings. “He was really broken up about it, so some of us from the church came over the night after it happened, stood at the yellow tape and prayed for the community, and the victims and their families.”

Although Osborne had been looking for a house in which he

could live with other Christians in an intentional community, it never occurred to him to buy this particular house until months later when it came up for sale. “It was a stigmatized property and might be difficult to resell, but I couldn't shake the thought of what it could be. I prayed and talked to my pastor and my parents, and decided if the Lord was in this, and I was obedient to Him, He wouldn't let me be devastated financially or any other way.”

Although every reporter's first question was whether the house had ghosts, his first night in it – last September – was pretty much like any other for Osborne. “I'm not the kind of person who gets freaked out easily. But before moving in, my pastor and about 40 people from the church came over and prayed



Kadin Osborne kneels beside the memorial outside the home that was the scene of the worst mass murder in Calgary's history.

giving us the opportunity to do that. You expect your own church to give their blessing, but it's cool to hear regular people, who deep inside have this moral knowledge that this is a good thing, and that it's different."

Other neighbours, however, would have been happier seeing the house razed and a memorial put up in its place. But Osborne feels that a gravestone would have been a constant permanent reminder of what happened there, and would not have given the neighbourhood a chance to heal.

Meanwhile, the group of five or six young men – one an ex-convict, and others who showed up at church with no place to live – are committed to this notion of living intentionally as Christians. "I was hoping to make this a place where anyone is welcome, while being careful and prayerful about who we have move in," Osborne says. "The split-level house, with six bedrooms, a common room and kitchen, is ideal for communal life."

Healing the neighbourhood is an idea that isn't yet crystal clear, but starts with being the "presence of Christ in a place scarred by tragedy."

And in the few months they've been there, Osborne says miracles have happened. For instance, the local gang member controlling a network of high school kids peddling his drugs became so inspired by the housemates' purpose-filled lives that he turned his own life around.

It was a typical story, Osborne recounts – lots of money, drugs and women, but an emptiness inside. "One night in this kitchen, he said he was done with trying to make his own life happen. I told him to tell that to God. I don't know if there was more snot or tears on the table,

but he did and right after Christmas he was on his way to Bible college in Central America. His mom came over recently and said we've helped redeem her son, and in turn it's redeeming the neighbourhood."

Now that the media storm has abated, the nitty-gritty of real work – building relationships with neighbours and even victims'

"I KNOW IT SEEMS CRAZY WHEN SOMEONE GOES ON TV AND SAYS, 'I'M NOT AFRAID BECAUSE JESUS CONQUERED DEATH 2,000 YEARS AGO,'" SAYS OSBORNE.

family members if they want it – has just begun.

"The spotlight made it easy to be excited, and I could have become very prideful with all the attention," Osborne says. "But during that I boasted a lot about Jesus, and now I have to trust it will happen. If we in the house stay the course of what God gave us, we will see fruit. We are called to be soldiers, and the battle isn't always easy, but the rewards are out of this world."

Osborne, who attends two churches and leads a youth group in a third, says he's not "content sitting in the pew just hoping life goes well. We don't have much time on this earth. If I could say anything to the Church in Canada, it's that we need to be excited about this Jesus. He so desperately wants us to open our arms and say, 'Okay God, where are we going today? How can we advance the Kingdom today?' And when we hear that voice, are we ready to buy that pearl of great price?" /FT

 Alex Newman of Toronto is a senior writer at Faith Today.

built

throughout the house for about two hours, anointing various spots."

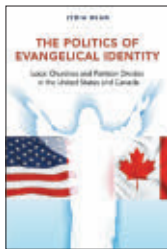
Everyone else asks him the same thing, wondering if he's terrified to stay there. But Osborne, who believes in the spiritual realm, uses such questions as a jumping off point to share the gospel about Jesus "who has overcome death, is so much bigger than death."

While media and onlookers have accused Osborne of "using people's deaths to promote our own propaganda," neighbours have taken a different tack. "I know it seems crazy when someone goes on TV and says, 'I'm not afraid because Jesus conquered death 2,000 years ago,'" says Osborne. "But we're just regular Christian guys who want to make a difference in the world, and the neighbours have been awesome in

5

YOUNG PEOPLE WERE STABBED TO DEATH ON APRIL 15, 2014, AT THIS CALGARY HOME. MATTHEW DE GROOD HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH FIRST-DEGREE MURDER.

REVIEWS



The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada

By Lydia Bean
Princeton University Press, 2014. 316 pages. \$40 [e-book \$24]

LYDIA BEAN, who received her PhD in sociology from Harvard and until recently was a professor at Baylor University, has written an excellent book comparing evangelical politics in the U.S. and Canada.

Having grown up with strong connections to the evangelical subculture, with experience on both sides of the border, Bean set out to discover how Evangelicals create political boundaries by doing ethnographic work in four evangelical churches – two in Hamilton, Ont., and two in Buffalo, N.Y.

Her perceptive study parses how American churches subtly signal that the Republican party is the right party to vote for in ways the matching Canadian churches did not signal partisanship. This was true even though all four churches had similar theological and moral beliefs – particularly against abortion and same-sex marriage – and similar tendencies to silence overt political talk.

She observes that Evangelicals on both sides of the border have

similar charitable practices, but in Canada addressing poverty was understood to be in co-operation with Canada’s government, whereas American Evangelicals did so in spite of the government’s failures.

In general, minor differences in the way Evangelicals draw sub-cultural boundaries explain very different political outcomes.

The books is scholarly but accessible, and very helpful for those interested in comparative evangelicalism and politics. –SAM REIMER



Atlas Girl: Finding Home in the Last Place I Thought to Look

By Emily T. Wierenga
Baker Books, 2014. 288 pages. \$12 [e-book \$2.50]

LIKE MANY children of missionaries and ministers, Emily Dow grew up confused and hurting. Ironically, even as her parents were working to share the love of God with people in Africa, and later with their congregation in Ontario, Emily wondered if she was loved or lovable.

Her mother’s depression and her father’s devotion to his ministry, combined with ten moves before she turned seven, all resulted in her developing anorexia by the age of nine.

Finally at age 13, hospitalized and weighing only 60 pounds, she encountered grace. “Jesus became the grace I spoke to,” she writes, “but never let get too close.”

Her push-pull relationship with God took her to Bible school and mission trips, while still struggling with doubt, anger and family relationships. Even marriage to a devoted husband didn’t fill the hole in Emily’s heart, and her anorexia returned.

When her mother became debilitated from brain cancer, Emily moved home to care for her. Finally, as she served she began to recognize the love that was always there. She saw her parents’ romance rekindled, and she began to recognize how her illness and anger had damaged her family.

When she asked her mother why God hadn’t healed her cancer, her mother replied, “Well, the way I see it is, healing has already happened. Look at us. We never used to be friends. And now we’re very close.”

Originally a blog, *Atlas Girl* is written in a poetic style that jumps back and forth in time. It is moving and profound. At times it suffers from overwriting and needs more rigorous editing, but it is a real and powerful memoir that will speak to many who wrestle with the contradictions and beauty of life. See also www.atlasgirlbook.com.

–MARIANNE JONES

...minor differences in the way Evangelicals draw subcultural boundaries explain very different political outcomes.



Amazing Grace
Marie-Josée Lord
ATMA Classique,
2014. \$17 [digital download \$9]

MARIE-JOSÉE LORD is an award-winning Quebec opera singer. But you won’t find opera arias on this her second CD. Instead, the 12 works here are four spirituals (including “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”), the hymn “Amazing Grace,” semi-classical Christian works such as Stephen Adams’ “The Holy City,” the classical Bach-Gounod “Ave Maria” and Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas” (the latter oddly out of place and

given a slow hymnlike treatment with organ accompaniment).

Lord conceived this as a Christmas CD, but [except for “White Christmas,” one of the spirituals and a satisfying version of the much-loved “O Holy Night”) the content isn’t Christmas related and can be enjoyed anytime.

Lord has a powerful voice with a large range. She sings with a fairly heavy vibrato, common among opera singers. But

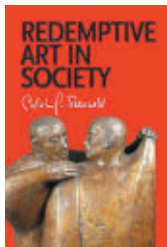
she also sings with passion and nuance, so if you don’t like operatic voices, you may be surprised. Most songs are accompanied by organ, a violin here and there, and substantial support from an excellent vocal ensemble.

Most of the tempos are very moderate, even slow. (Her “Amazing Grace” may be the slowest, most soulful rendition of this hymn you ever hear.) The slow tempos are helped by the songs having been recorded

in a reverberant church, the Église Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Montreal. Even so, Lord seems to be miked fairly closely for the recording. Only when her vocal ensemble joins her can the listener really tell this was recorded in a large building. The slow tempos overall may reflect Lord’s desire, stated in the notes, that this CD be a respite for listeners from modern busyness, especially at Christmas.

–MARIAN VAN TIL

These are essays packed with a wealth of insight and experience as well as the pithy, imaginative language that is a trademark of Seerveld's writing.



Redemptive Art in Society
By Calvin Seerveld
Dordt College Press, 2014. 328 pages. \$24

THIS BOOK is one of six volumes of the “sundry writings and occasional lectures” of Calvin Seerveld. His contributions to the discussions on art and Christian faith are significant for their wisdom and insight, and have been widely influential both within and beyond the community of believers.

Each of the six volumes addresses a particular theme with essays written over a career of teaching and lecturing. This particular volume consists of essays, nearly all of which were written since 1995, the year the author retired from teaching at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto.

It is a rich and instructive collection for anyone interested in thinking about the arts in a biblically informed way.

In the opening essay he tackles the problem around employing “Christian” as an adjective for art making, yet ultimately affirms it by investing it with deeper mean-



Canadian creatives

“This painting alludes to the conundrum of suffering. The birth of Jesus indirectly caused the heartbreaking deaths of many infants. There is suffering on the scale of genocides and suffering on the scale of individual sexual abuse. I only know that God suffers with us.”

The Massacre of the Innocents (oil and gold leaf)
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ing than is often allowed.

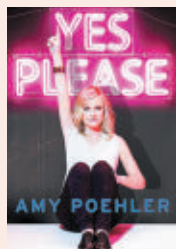
In other chapters he argues that our understanding of art must go beyond museums, concert halls and literature courses. He advocates for a strong Christian presence in the world of theatre. He draws effectively from the story of the Babylon captivity and invites the Christian to

“work hard for the shalom of the city.”

These are essays packed with a wealth of insight and experience as well as the pithy, imaginative language that is a trademark of Seerveld's writing. Special series ordering site for Canadians at www.seerveld.com/tuppence.html.

—JOHN FRANKLIN

Reading THE BESTSELLERS



Yes Please
By Amy Poehler
HarperAvenue, 2014. 332 pages. \$20 [e-book \$16]

UNLESS YOU have a sense of humour, or liked Tina Fey's *Bossypants* and want more, or you want to understand contemporary culture, you can skip this memoir-ish book by actor and comedian Amy Poehler.

After all, she openly discusses her drug use and how good she is at sex right alongside advice on careers, friendship and motherhood. Her language is blunt, sometimes rude, and,

at a few points, downright foul. But she is consistently honest and charitable, and says some things Christians need to hear.

For example, in explaining *improv* – improvisational comedy – she argues for saying yes. If your improv partner says we are riding on the Prague subway, then that is what we are doing. Your job is to say yes, add to the story and keep it moving. We all know people whose default answer to new ideas is no. They would be nicer to work with if they took improv lessons from Amy Poehler.

To underline the point that even today we have philosophers among us, I recently took *Yes Please* to class. My university

students thought me clever to classify Amy Poehler as a philosopher, but they argued she really didn't qualify. “Socrates, Poehler, Aristotle?” As I explained my classification, they agreed that for most of their lives Amy Poehler has presented a philosophy of life on both *Saturday Night Live* and *Parks and Recreation*. Here's the kicker. Several asked to borrow my copy. For that reason, I recommend *Yes Please*. It is an accessible, major work of reflection on contemporary society.

—KEN BADLEY

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~Bertrand Russell

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To judge, to help

Can moral judgments actually help bring shalom?

Canadian Christians often feel confused about how to respond appropriately to issues like female genital mutilation, the Hindu practice of *sati* (widow burning) or the censoring of religiously offensive cartoons.

We are often warned to avoid imposing our own cultural values on others. If we are white and middle class, we may be told not only to shut up, but to feel guilty about the oppression in which our forebears engaged.

Yet we are also often told, sometimes by the same people, that we should support campaigns for justice on behalf of all who lack it.

Is it still acceptable to declare certain actions as moral wrongs? The University of Chicago's Richard Miller considers this question in the wake of acts of terrorism such as 9/11 in his book *Terror, Religion, and Liberal Thought* (Columbia University Press, 2010).

He argues that yes, these acts were not just "harmful to the interests of me and mine," but objectively, categorically evil.

But on what grounds can we say so in the face of cultural relativism?

Feminist scholars have raised similar questions for decades. If there are no universal moral values, feminism itself is doomed as a political movement. It will have no purchase on the conscience of anyone who doesn't already agree with its ideals.

As a privileged white man myself, I am delighted to hear the message of cultural relativism. It tells me that I have no right to judge, let alone meddle in, the affairs of others – such as the cultural practices of poor women of colour.

We are not in fact living in a culture in which anything goes.



"RIGHT IS RIGHT EVEN IF NO ONE IS DOING IT; WRONG IS WRONG EVEN IF EVERYONE IS DOING IT."
—AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO
(AD 354–430)

That's great news, since we privileged white men have a long history of not caring a whit about poor women of colour. Thus I happily receive their implicit permission to focus on my own cultural values – making money, extending power, silencing dissent and ignoring the busybody activists seeking to impose their values on me.

That can't be the way forward. And, paradoxically, most Canadians are not in fact consistently relativistic. Rather, we are fiercely moralistic, at least about the things we care about. From child molestation to littering, most Canadians today are quick on the draw with absolute judgments.

Negotiating this shifting ethical ground, then, requires sensitivity and fast reflexes. We can be in the middle of a conversation in which we're all shaking our heads at the values held by some other group – "Well, I don't agree with that, but if I'd been raised in that group, I'd probably agree with it, so I guess we just 'live and let live,' eh?"

Then, without warning, we can be expected to join in the denunciation of those horrible Muslims for doing A, or those heavy-handed Israelis for doing B, or those stupid Tories for doing C, or those maniacal Pentecostals for doing D.

So what do we do?

First, we recognize that nowadays we are not in fact living in a culture in which anything goes. We note that cultural relativism is usually deployed as a defensive weapon against opponents who seem close to winning the ethical argument.

Second, we give thanks that so many Canadians really care about justice, even if we don't always

agree with how this or that Canadian conceives of it or seeks it.


Third, we recognize that we do not see everything correctly. Most readers of *Faith Today* don't believe in the infallibility even of the Pope, so we had better not award that privilege to ourselves. Since we have only limited and distorted views of reality, we must get together with people who disagree with us, ask them questions, and listen hard and long.

We must listen to them as fellow human beings who don't have simply different values and experiences than we do, for if we listen that way, we're just tourists visiting among exotic "others." Instead, we listen to them as people who might actually know things we don't, see things we don't, value things we don't – and things that we might be better off knowing, seeing and valuing.

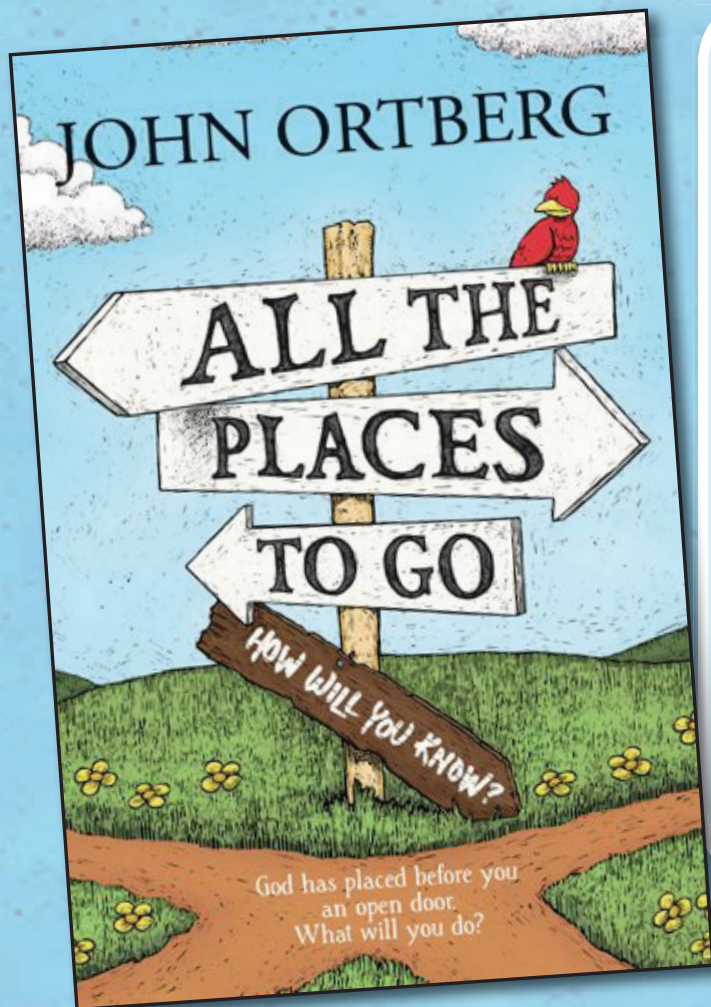
Fourth, we consult Scripture, listen to church tradition, do our analytical homework, pray for guidance, and rely on the Lord Jesus to guide us to right thought, right passion and right action.

And, finally, we act. We trust God to supervise things such that, if we are actually wrongheaded in our quest, God will prevent us from doing too much harm and correct us in time that we may join the right side. But in the meanwhile, we do all we can to love our neighbours as ourselves and bring to the world as much shalom as we can.

We must venture, humbly but resolutely, in faithful action. The alternatives are either imperialistic overreach or paralyzed relativism. And neither of those ever did anyone any good. /FT

 John Stackhouse is the author of *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World* (Oxford University Press, 2008). Find more of these columns at www.FaithToday.ca/ChristAndCulture.

God has placed before you an open door. What will you do?



Very rarely in the Bible does God command someone to “Stay.” He opens a door, and then he invites us to walk through, into the unknown. How we choose to respond will ultimately determine the life we will lead and the person we will become. In fact, to fail to embrace the open door is to miss what God has prepared for us.

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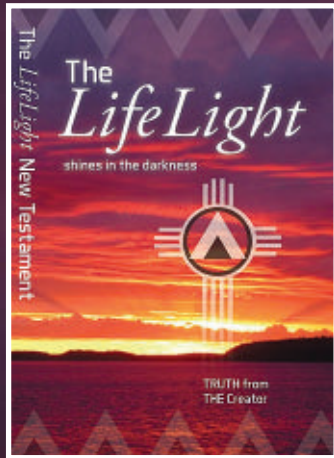
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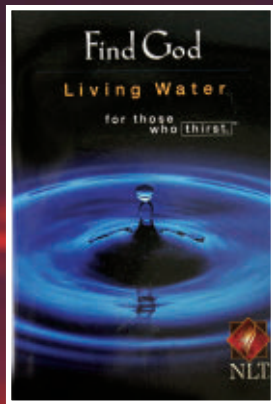
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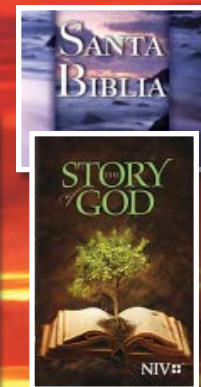
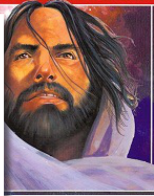
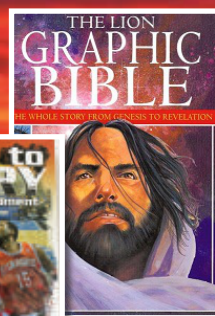
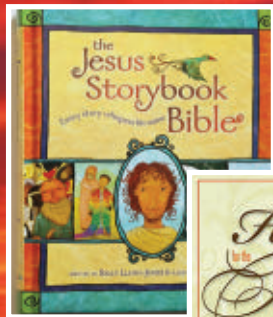
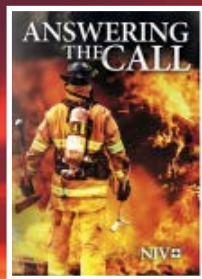
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DALIT FREEDOM NETWORK

Hope For India's Forgotten Children



IT'S THE LARGEST HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN THE WORLD TODAY

THE DALITS OF INDIA, formerly known as “untouchables”, have been oppressed for over 3,000 years, living at the bottom of India’s rigid social order - 250 million people oppressed simply for being born into the wrong caste.

Untouchability was banned under the law over 60 years ago, but little has changed for the Dalits in daily life. They still face widespread discrimination. They have little or no economic, social, or spiritual rights. As social outcasts, they often have no choice but to perform occupations that are considered “dirty”, such as handling bodies in preparation for cremation, street sweeping, or removing human waste and dead animals. Dalits are extremely vulnerable to human trafficking, bonded labour, and other forms of slavery. **In fact, they make up the majority of those enslaved in India today.**



Dalit children are condemned to the same life-long oppression as the generations that came before them. At a very young age, these children accept the belief that they lack dignity and are destined for a life of poverty and exploitation.



WHO IS DALIT FREEDOM NETWORK?

In 2001, 100,000 Dalits gathered in New Delhi to appeal for the equal rights and privileges that they had been denied for 3,000 years. Their cry was simple, **“Give us freedom from caste bondage and untouchability, and give our children equal opportunities to determine their own personal identity and destiny.”**



Dr. Joseph
D'souza

Dr. Joseph D'souza, Founder and International President of Dalit Freedom Network, attended this gathering. He asked the Dalit leaders, “What do you want us to do?” They replied:

“Free our children. Give them an English medium education that they may have a better future. Teach them that they are created with dignity and worth.”

This was the beginning of Dalit Freedom Network and our Good Shepherd Schools which not only provide quality education, but truth and spiritual hope to Dalit communities.

“He will rescue the poor when they cry to Him. He will help the oppressed who have no one to defend them.” Psalms 72:12 NLT

OUR PURPOSE:

- Provide quality education to Dalit children in the rural villages of India.
- Impart to Dalit children human worth and dignity, spiritual renewal, and social equality; give every Dalit child an opportunity to know that they are created by the God who loves them.
- Provide vocational training to Dalit men and women that will enable them to achieve economic independence.
- Develop public health education and disease prevention in rural areas of India.
- Bring about a Canadian awareness of the plight of the Dalit people.



IT ALL BEGINS WITH A SCHOOL



DISTINCTIVES OF OUR GOOD SHEPHERD SCHOOLS:

- Education in our Good Shepherd Schools is given to children regardless of caste, creed, or faith; creating a setting where children of all backgrounds can interact.
- Each school has trained, caring, national Christian teachers who communicate a biblical worldview.
- Our schools provide English education, as requested by Dalit leaders, so that students can pursue higher education and careers.
- Schools are accredited by the Indian state governments, giving students the certification required to advance to higher education.

For a Dalit child and their family, education is the path to freedom. Without it, Dalit students cannot advance to higher-level schools, better paying jobs, or gain entrance to government universities.

At the request of Dalit leaders, Dalit Freedom Network is building Good Shepherd Schools in rural villages across India. As a result, thousands of Dalit children are experiencing the transformational power of education and spiritual values. **Receiving an English education in a Christian environment provides Dalit boys and girls with confidence, socio-economic opportunities, and the potential to claim a place in society.**

Our schools not only transform the lives of the students, but also the surrounding communities. Many of these villages have been neglected and forgotten by the rest of society.

Good Shepherd Schools help these downtrodden communities see their own value and dignity, and give them hope that the cycle of caste discrimination and oppression can be broken.



FREE A DALIT CHILD

**In many Indian classrooms,
Dalit children are segregated to the back row.**

They frequently attend school hungry, and endure a daily barrage of verbal and physical harassment. Often they drop out of school early, or don't go at all. The result is that Dalit children end up roaming the streets or in child labour, vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation.

Good Shepherd Schools change everything.

In our schools, Dalit boys and girls benefit from a welcoming and nurturing environment as they learn and grow daily in confidence. A biblical worldview enables them to discover their intrinsic worth as individuals. Generous Canadians sponsor the Dalit children through our education program and make it possible for them to attend our schools.

Sponsorship covers the cost of uniforms, textbooks, school supplies, tuition, and everything that adds up to a quality education.





HEALTH

HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Community healthcare workers are an important aspect of our health initiative. These dedicated men and women serve both the students and the surrounding community. Their responsibilities include physical check-ups, offering de-worming treatment, encouraging immunization, making home visits, and providing nutrition and hygiene education.

Our healthcare workers are given extensive training in community health. This includes proper nutrition, the importance of clean drinking water, personal hygiene, family planning, prevention and treatment of common illnesses, sexual health, and AIDS prevention. The healthcare worker plays a critical role in rural Dalit communities as they often work in areas without available health care.

FEEDING PROGRAM

Malnutrition is a widespread issue in rural India, especially among children. It is estimated that 50% of children in India are malnourished and the majority of these children are lower caste or Dalit. For many families, eggs, meat, and even milk are luxuries that are only affordable for special occasions. Malnourished children are more susceptible to illness, absent from school more often, and have a harder time focusing and learning in class.

We provide supplemental lunches in our most needy schools. These lunches can include eggs, milk, and fruit to ensure that our students have energy for their studies.



HOPE FOR DALIT WOMEN

Dalit women are oppressed and exploited both for their status as untouchables and for their gender. As males are given preferential treatment, many village women never attend school. Many are pushed into marriage at an early age or limited to manual labour and domestic servitude.

Illiterate and impoverished Dalit women are stripped of their dignity and often forced to sell themselves, or their children, out of desperation.

Our “Hope for Dalit Women” initiative provides practical skills, economic assistance, and spiritual hope to these women, allowing them to provide for their families. By teaching them marketable skills, we are providing them with a respectable, stable opportunity to have a better life.

When a woman is empowered with knowledge and skills, she is able to change her story of despair into a story of hope.

We establish vocational training centres for women throughout India. These centres work in partnership with our Good Shepherd Schools and offer six-month training programs to women from the community. The programs not only open economic doors for these women, but also help them recover their own dignity and worth. As our staff teach and share God’s love, the women discover a new freedom.





Every morning, Smruti watches her older siblings walk to school. While they learn in classrooms, Smruti stands on the side of a busy road washing dishes and serving customers.

Her parents could not afford to send all their children to school. As the youngest girl, Smruti was chosen to stay home and work at the family tea stall.

One day, some of our staff stopped at the stall. They were surprised to see such a young girl serving chai when she should be in school. Our staff shared with Smruti's mother about the Good Shepherd School - where Dalit children like Smruti could receive quality education without paying school fees. The following week, Smruti was enrolled at our school.

Were it not for our Good Shepherd School, Smruti would still be serving tea by the side of the road and heading towards a lifetime of poverty and servitude. But today she is the top student in her class. Her favourite subjects are Math and English. She dreams of becoming a flight attendant.

There are currently 107 Good Shepherd Schools across India, primarily in rural villages, with over 26,000 students enrolled.

Imagine a child, barely six years old,

forced to work long hours as a domestic slave to pay off his family's debt. This was to be Dileep's fate.

Dileep's parents had been exploited by a dishonest debt collector. They worked hard to pay off the debt, but the interest rate was too high for them to ever pay it off. In their desperation, Dileep's parents decided to sell him as a debt labourer.



But because generous Canadians provided financial support, our staff was able to intervene on Dileep's behalf and persuade his parents to send him to our Good Shepherd School instead. At our school, Dileep is receiving a quality English medium education that is breaking the cycle of poverty and debt. Today, Dileep is a brilliant student who is developing the skills and knowledge that will help him and his family have a bright and successful future.



There is no escaping it - the daughters of prostitutes often become prostitutes too.

It happened to her mother, who was forced into prostitution at an early age and endured years of exploitation and brutal abuse. Prema accepted it as her fate too - until she saw a future with hope.

Prema was given the opportunity to attend a Good Shepherd School. Education is now changing everything. She is being equipped with English, Math, Science, and spiritual values - everything she needs to succeed. For the first time, Prema's mother can imagine her daughter's life without the horror of prostitution. Full of hope, Prema dreams of becoming a teacher herself.

GET INVOLVED

The Dalit children need your help so they can continue to experience freedom through education and a biblical world view. Will you respond to this great challenge and help bring freedom – one child at a time?

Join the freedom movement.

1. Pray for the Dalits

Pray that the Dalits will come to know God's love for them and realize that He created them for a purpose. Pray also for students in our Good Shepherd Schools and women in our vocational training programs. Our prayer updates are emailed quarterly and contain specific prayer items. To receive this email, contact us at info@dalitfreedom.net.

2. Give the Gift of Education

Every year, our Good Shepherd Schools give Dalit children the opportunity to receive a quality, English medium education. Without this opportunity, these students would be condemned to a life of abuse, exploitation, and hopelessness. You can give the gift of education with a monthly sponsorship or a one-time gift. You will be giving a Dalit child the tools to work towards a new destiny and the freedom to dream. Sponsorship is \$25/month or \$300/year. Visit www.dalitchildcanada.com to sponsor a child.

3. Building - Brick by Brick

Our Good Shepherd Schools are becoming well-known in their communities and are continually receiving enrolment applications. Several schools are at full capacity, and without immediate funding for additional classrooms they will have to turn prospective students away. New schools are also requested by other Dalit communities. For \$1 you can provide two bricks to help build a classroom. Each classroom costs between \$25,000 and \$30,000.

For more information on ways to give or be involved, contact us:

DALIT FREEDOM NETWORK CANADA
P.O. Box 45645, Surrey, BC, V4A 9N3
PH: 604-535-4240 or 1-888-592-2238

Email: info@dalitfreedom.net
Online: www.dalitfreedom.net



“When I first learned of the Dalit people of India and began to meet the Dalit children at our Good Shepherd Schools, my heart was deeply touched that these children have been deprived of basic dignity and the knowledge of a loving God. I determined that I would do whatever I could to impact these children. It has been thrilling for me to see so many other Canadians also taking a stand to bring freedom to the Dalits.”

Sherry Bailey, Executive Director



“As a medical researcher approaching retirement, I first travelled to India during a one month sabbatical in 2003. I developed a deep connection to the country and was amazed by the generosity and diversity of its people. I was also deeply disturbed by the poverty and living conditions. When I returned home, I heard Dr. Joseph D’souza speak about the Dalits and their struggles, and was asked to start a Canadian organization of the newly formed Dalit Freedom Network. Today, I can clearly see God’s hand of favour on this work.”

**Dr. Greg Hislop, Chairman of the Board,
Retired Research Scientist**

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Dalit Freedom Network Canada is a Christian organization working together with concerned friends and international people in a joint commitment to the oppressed Dalits of India and their children. Income tax receipts are issued under Registered Charity No. 844803544 RR0001. Dalit Freedom Network is audited annually by an independent accounting firm. Financial statements and a list of our Board of Directors are available upon request.

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pg.8

CRYSTAL
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ASK AND
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WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

Everywhere we look today there is destruction. There is the constant battle of living in this dark, daunting world while trying to remain blameless and righteous. Anything from the Educational System, to the Government, to Relationships, have evidence of lawlessness and corruption. As Christians, we face the challenge of remaining rooted in our walk with Christ as we are regularly being drowned with the infinite distractions and influences of this world. For this issue of LIA, I want us all to search deep in our hearts as we are challenged by God to find ways on how we can remain sane, safe, productive and focused in this temporary world we live in, ultimately as we try to fulfill our destiny and assignment.

It can be easy to get distracted and steered away from what truly matters, living for the Most High God. We believe it's crucial that as Christians we help each other remain accountable for our actions and walk with Christ not only through prayer, but through the conscious effort of looking out for one another and being that godly example, brother or sister in Christ we all need. As the generations keep rising, it seems as though it is becoming more difficult to live for Christ by means of the world presenting ungodly products, ideas and messages. It is our job as a family in Christ to continue to persevere and keep focus on the truth. LIA wants to be an active part of helping our young people remain focused and encouraged. As you flip through the magazine, our prayer and hope is that you will find ways that will help you on your journey to conquering fear and living between the two worlds.

Remember that God is on your side and that through Him, nothing is impossible.

- Crileidy Liriano; Senior Editor of LIA Magazine

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LOVE
MOVEMENT



HE

*He reaches down
No one is looking
"Trust me."
"Now?"
"Yes. Now."*

CREATIVE GOD CREATIVE MINDS

By. Dagmar Morgan

Baptism

*Tell me, Christian
Again and again,
Over and over
Fire consuming
Tears streaming
Kneel and with one hand
Kiss me alive*

WHEN YOU THINK YOUR YOUTH GROUP SUCKS

BY. HOLLY STILLER

Although forgiveness is one of the biggest parts of Christianity, it's also probably the hardest thing to live out. I don't know about you, but I find it about 10 times harder to forgive Christians that have hurt me, than to forgive people who don't know Jesus.

It's like – shouldn't they know better? And there, I decide not to forgive them, because I can't find a valid excuse for their action.

This is where I have it all wrong.

I live in a small town; it's a mix of older people trying to enjoy their retirement, and young people itching to move away.

We've got a decent sized high school, with about 1200 students. Out of these students, about 20 kids would probably be caught dead anywhere near a church youth group. Mix that fact with the reality that I'm a Pastor's kid and the youth group at my own church was my only option. Now, don't get me wrong, I have a couple of great friends at my church, and we have a lot of fun together. We have countless inside jokes, and have gone on numerous trips together. There's almost never a dull moment – but it took a really long time before we were able to connect on a deeper level.

I'm somebody who craves the "real deal". I have really wanted to be a part of a complete community like the one described in Acts 4:32: "All the believers were in one heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had." Believe me, I'm not saying that I wanted to move in an apartment with everybody, but there's something I find really attractive about the commitment of that kind of community. Unfortunately, that's not what I found at my youth group. I had to learn how to deal with my own bad attitude before things got any better.

I liked my youth group, but I wanted more. I was dealing with some pain in my own life, so I was hoping for a place where our conversations could go beyond surface level talks. So I dove in. I started to risk. During prayer time, I prayed simple but honest prayers, and with different members of the group, I began to share some of the pain that I was experiencing. I thought that people would gather around me, and say the right things. That didn't happen. Our "popcorn prayers" felt like they were only made with one kernel. When I shared my problems, people looked at me like I was crazy. Talk about awkward...

Now maybe I'm just a hormonal teenager, but it seemed that no one wanted to dig deeper or give support. It upset me. I got bitter. I judged my friends. I bought into the lie that having hate towards people who hurt me would somehow make me feel better.

I believed that since they knew Jesus, I was allowed to hold grudges against them. I thought forgiveness was important only if the person doesn't know any better. The reality is, God's message of love and forgiveness matters during the difficult parts of life, not just where or when it's easiest. When it's hard to forgive, you probably need to do it all the more.

It's easy to buy into the message that the world owes us attention, that we have a right to not like those who hurt us. But of course, I am lately reminded that God gives us all of the love and attention that we could ever ask for. Holding grudges are the ways of the world, but God offers us freedom through forgiveness as Jesus teaches patience and love. If I want to follow him, I shouldn't be a part of a community to get the attention that I think I deserve. Community is about sacrifice and giving, as much as it is about receiving.

I am trying to live in a place of forgiveness and peace, supporting others when I can – God will give me the support that I need. I'm walking the very thin line between forgiveness and grudges, and I like my youth group a whole lot more as I find my way forward.

Don't you just hate it when you go to a youth retreat, or a church service, or a bible study, and they talk about "sharing your faith"? I mean, sure, you're going to pocket that information for your life a few years from now, but how is that supposed to help you currently? You're in school, you have a part time job, you're living in your parent's house, etc... etc.... How could they possibly expect you to tell people about JESUS? Of course, it's only temporary, because once you're settled somewhere, or don't have school assignments all the time, then you'll surely focus on telling people what God has done for you.

Let's hope you caught the sarcastic tone.

It's understandable, that right now in your life, the idea of reaching out to someone to share your faith with is scary and overwhelming, even daunting. You aren't a pastor, you don't see yourself going into ministry, and you're just trying to survive day to day.

TAKING IN THE MOMENTS: LIVING INTENTIONALLY TODAY

BY. EMILY COOK

But you're not "just" a student. You're not "just" a part-time worker. You have an incredible gift and an incredible duty to share with those around you the hope you hold on to. Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." Note here that in this verse "holding" and "professing" are inseparable. If we are tightly holding onto the hope that we have in Christ, we also have to be professing it.

Your story is important, and it's important right now. Let's strip this down, so you can stop feeling intimidated. This doesn't mean you need to drop out of school to go to a bible college or become a missionary. What this looks like is being intentional in your day-to-day actions and choices. It's about deeply caring for those around you and allowing that to impact everything you do.

As a believer, you must remember that, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden". In the same manner, people cannot light a lamp and put it under a basket, expecting the home to be illuminated by the light. In the same way, "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven," Matthew 5:14-16.

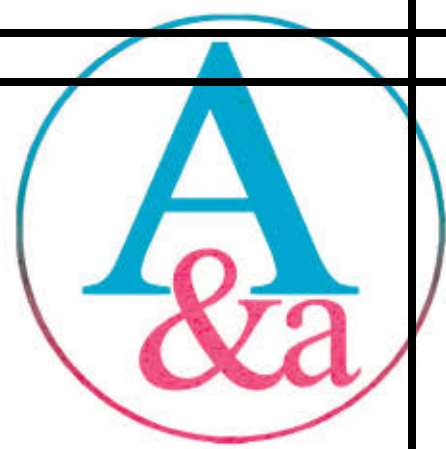
This verse from Matthew makes a few things pretty clear. One is that we are directly called to shine the light of Christ through our lives to others, so that God will receive the glory. The other is that if we want to cover that light, we have to actively snuff it out.

You don't have to try to be someone else; you don't need to wait until you have a different life situation. Right here, right now, all you need to do is ask God to shine through you, to impact people by you, to help you resist the urge to cover your light. Start being intentional about your life, right now. Start seeing each day as a new opportunity to love someone, serve someone, and be kind to a stranger, an enemy, or a friend. And watch God change your life, one day at a time.

"If both have not only a mutual love and respect for each other, but have Christ as a mutual priority, the relationship will work. If not, say in the case that one or both have selfish priorities, it won't. Why? If both love God, they will love each other unconditionally."

-Paolo Vidal

WHAT SHOULD A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP LOOK LIKE?



Ask and we'll answer

"Connection, authenticity and vulnerability, which I believe includes compassion and empathy. I think these things are more challenging to cultivate when we're not as kind, accepting, or compassionate toward ourselves. In a healthy relationship, people support each other in what brings each person joy, and they feel joy in witnessing each other's joy."

-Candace Maxymowich

"One in which both are equally willing to sacrifice for one another; time, comfort, convenience, and resources."

-Paolo Vidal

"Emotional safety and security, LOVE, truth and transparency. Putting effort in understating each other and also putting effort in appreciating each other's imperfections."

-Michael

"Creating a safe place of trust and honesty. Also making sure you have a life outside of that relationship, with friends and loved ones who can look out for you if they feel the relationship is no longer healthy. I also think respect is huge. Respect for the other person, for their family, friends, and for a future spouse that potentially may not be you."

-Emily

RELATIONSHIPS ARE CHALLENGING AND CAN BE A VERY TOUCHY SUBJECT THAT CAN HAVE MANY DIFFERENT OPINIONS AND VIEWS. THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA, WE POSTED THE QUESTION,

'WHAT SHOULD A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP CONSIST OF?' AND WE WANTED TO SEE WHAT THE WORLD HAS TO SAY ABOUT THEM!



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To get to know Crystal Neil even more, visit her at:
<https://lipstickshoesandgod.wordpress.com>

WAITING
WHAT
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Depending on where you are on your walk with God, the level of intimacy with your personal relationship with Jesus Christ varies from person to person. Some may be in a committed, solid relationship with Jesus for a long time, while others may have started not long ago, making their relationship a bit less mature. Often times we hear people say, "I'm waiting for God's timing", whether it'd be for a financial breakthrough, a new job, the perfect school or the right God-sent partner to get married to. What may be complicated however is the question that all Christians ask at one point or another, "what does waiting on God even mean?" It can be frustrating when you are at a point in your walk with God when you constantly hear people say, "God spoke to me and said this or that" and you don't know how to hear God's voice for yourself. We have all been there and done that, but the beautiful aspect of this dilemma is that, the closer you get to God, the more you learn to understand how God speaks to you and when He does. It's a process that takes time as you learn God's characteristics and get closer to Him.

Relationships with the opposite sex are a topic that all Christians around the world talk about and experience in one way or another. For many, it becomes an issue that can consume a lot of their mind and time as we try to figure out whom we will marry. This is a particular area where we regularly hear women in the church say, "God has the perfect husband for you", and "wait on God to give you your partner". These are comments that as young people can be challenging to accept considering we are emotional beings with hormones that don't always want to cooperate, alongside the fact that Satan is out there trying to distract you from fully understanding what "waiting on God" consists of; resulting for many to get into the wrong relationships and experience unnecessary pain.

In today's highly social and distracting society, young people are more exposed than ever to people's romantic relationships and love quotes all over the Internet, which can at times make us feel lonely, worthless or desperate if we don't understand the concept of God's Timing. Crystal Neil is a young, brilliant, educated, professional and God fearing woman who recently got engaged. Crystal is in her early 30's and is no stranger to the knowledge of the challenges of this world, nonetheless has been able to overcome obstacles and allow God to work in and through her to be where she is today. We took some time with Crystal to ask her a few questions about what does it mean to wait on God in today's world? Let's take a look!

GOING ON GOD, DOES IT EVEN MEAN? BY. CRILEIDY LIRIANO

Why did you decide to “wait on God” for the right person before getting into a serious relationship?

Other than being busy with school, I didn't want to rush that part of my life because it's a major decision and I didn't want to screw it up. When I was younger, I always knew to wait on God. As I got more mature in my relationship with the Lord and understand that He has a plan for my life it made it easier. I also didn't want to date a lot of different men and give myself emotionally to a whole bunch of people, primarily because I knew I wasn't ready for marriage. I truly decided to wait because I understood He has someone to compliment my life and I compliment his. Don't get me wrong, there were definitely points along my journey where I made massive mistakes- dating guys that weren't even Christians, but if I had the chance to tell myself back then some advise, I wouldn't make those mistakes.

Did you feel any social or peer pressure to get married earlier in your life? If so, why?

I didn't necessarily feel any societal pressure, mainly because I guess growing up it geared more towards, “Go get your education!” But I think I felt the unspoken pressure in the Church world. I often got asked, “Oh when are you going to get married?” Even now I speak with some friends and their thoughts are that older women are saying, “Life starts when you get married.” – But I disagree with that. It makes people feel the pressure to go find their Boaz. I think whatever season you're in, your have to be content with who you are. You have to know that God knows the desires of your heart and He knows you want a companionship. We have to learn how to trust the Holy Spirit to lead our lives and you may be surprised that sometimes it may not be something super spiritual why God hasn't brought you your partner yet, it may be a matter of, “you're not financially ready at 22 for a relationship”.

As a young, educated and professional Christian, and committed to decide to wait on God for the right person, did you ever fear the idea of ending up alone?

Maybe when I was in my mid teens. I remember one day when I was having my morning devotions and Him telling me that that area of my life would be fine because I knew He loved me. It was one of things that came out of nowhere. I had actually forgotten He told me that and in my 20's, it wasn't so much a “fear” of being alone, it was more so, “If I don't get married, how will my dreams work out? Or what will I do to get there without a partner? What is plan B? Was I okay with the fact I wouldn't have a husband? Not so much, because I'm a social person and I want companionship. That being said, we have to be careful that it's not, “I want to be in a relationship so I'm not 'lonely'; but rather, “I want someone who God will use both together to accomplish His goals.” You have to be content in who you are and who the Lord presented to you. The idea should be, “how can we enhance our lives together for God?”

Did you ever feel left out when your friends were getting engaged and you weren't?

I didn't feel left out. I rejoiced with them and was happy for them. I was content in that area of my life and was okay that I wasn't ready yet. One principle my parents taught me growing up was, “if you can't rejoice with someone then it might block a blessing for you”. Within my group of friends, we encouraged each other, plus a lot of my friends ended up getting engaged around the same time anyway.

What would you tell young people today who think “waiting on God” for the right partner is an ancient act and who argue we are “modernized” today?

I think people see “waiting on God” is doing nothing. To wait is not passive, it's active. While you are “waiting”, you are going on with your life by going to school, working or opening up a business. I find that people might not always properly express what these words mean. While you “wait” you are seeking God. You are allowing God to change your perspective on certain things and allowing Him to change your character. Seeing and recognizing your future spouse right away doesn't happen for everyone. Most times you're going into a “potential” mentality to do your research and get to know the person. I think that as you are living life and you are old enough, if someone asks you out for a coffee, it's okay to say yes because that's sometimes how we get to know people. You want to be open but you don't want to take the opportunity to go into a very intimate friendship or relationship. You must always carry yourself in a way where the other person will respect you as a woman of God. You should know who you are so you won't be moved by societal or peer pressure. On the contrary, if you don't feel you have to wait on God, it means you're going ahead of Him and you're not living a surrendered life. When you're moving ahead of God you're actually being prideful.

Is there any additional advice you would give young Christians who face the pressures of social media, temptations and racing against time?

I'm a firm believer that the Lord holds the balance of my days. He knows your days before you were even born. People need to get a deeper understanding of the love that God has for us. God knows how to give good and perfect gifts. Knowing that He gives good gifts, He's not going to send you garbage. When you race against time, that's a lot of pressure you're putting on yourself. Try new things on your own so you can discover more about you. When you do meet someone, don't manipulate situations or force things. When you see things on social media that make you feel and think negative thoughts, capture those thoughts and declare God's promises because the enemy will try and play with your emotions. The enemy wants to destroy how you see yourself, but don't let it get to the point where you bring yourself down. Remember that everything you see on social media is not always the real picture.



TRINITY



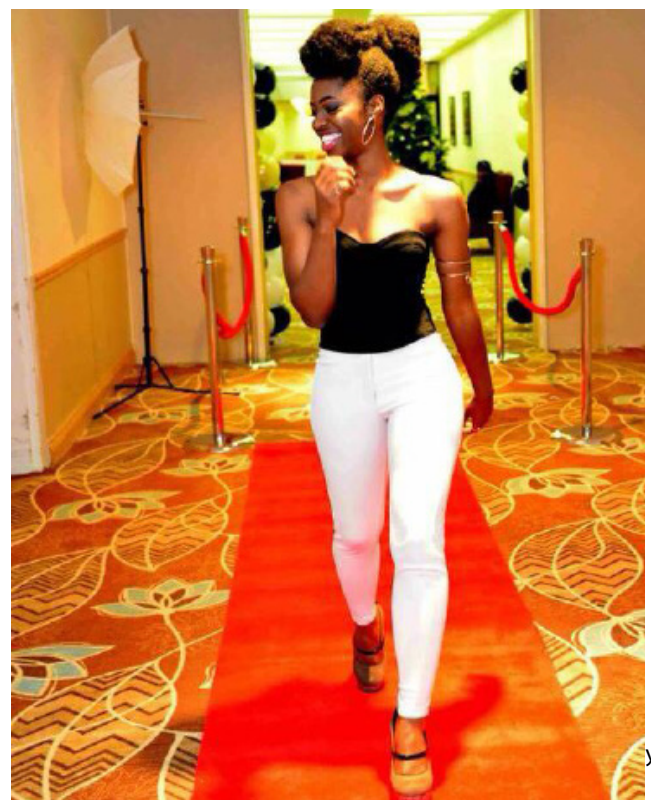
**BY. CRILEIDY
LIRLANO**

**LEAS
IC**



Our computers, phones, TVs, Ipads and tablets are constantly flashing images of the most popular and current “role models” targeted towards the majority of North American youth. These are images that no one can escape being exposed to because they are everywhere and at all times. They are the images that appear to take over the Internet and some make it a priority to want to take the Internet and “break it” – whatever that means. Kim Kardashian, Rihanna and Miley Cyrus are a few examples of people we see all over Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TV who many times use their sexuality to boost their career and ratings. Our fashion, physical image and identity are influenced by these human beings and their careers, furthermore, making it challenging at times to resist the pressure of following the latest trends, read the most current gossip or look down upon oneself because one’s reality doesn’t match the Star’s. Having such strong secular influences can be confusing when attempting to find a balance between what is appropriate and what is considered fashionable and acceptable in our society as young people living out love for Christ.

As young Christians, it may appear at times that the presence of virtuous, godly role models is lacking in the media, leaving fewer options to have descent styles to be inspired by and people to look up to. It is important as old and young Christians, and the rest of the world, that we to steer away from the mentality that Christians are boring and lack modernism- yes many still think this way. Most young people nowadays have parents who don’t necessarily understand that times have changed drastically and that a large portion of our time is dedicated to social media; the place where anything and everything is exposed, criticized and judged, and if you are the only one out of the loop and out of style, it is a big opportunity for Satan to send loneliness, anxiety and depression to knock at your door.



There are two worlds that as Christians we are trying to live in: on one hand the physical world, a place where our "old man" thrives, where the flesh is constantly glorified and where sin is exalted; a place where all of us Christians have come from. On the other hand, we are trying to live in a world where God is glorified, where His Word gains the final authority over every feeling, thought and action. This is the world where we should always thrive to stay in, but truth of the matter is that the old, physical world that we try to leave behind calls our name and still desires our allegiance.

For some this world calls out for you to come back to the thought patterns of lust and sex. For others, it calls them to return back to failure and faulty thinking. Regardless of what it is, I believe this war rages in every Christian's life as they progress in their walk with God. It is important that as young Christians we aim to recognize these patterns, because it's difficult to defeat an enemy you do not know.

GROWING PAINS

BY. ROSEMOND ENNIN

I believe one of the biggest enemies any young Christian will meet is the enemy of progress. It is an enemy that comes directly from Satan's world- a world that despises our growth in Christ. You see, it's one thing to say the sinner's prayer, but what truly makes the sinner's prayer a life transforming moment for any Christian is the growth that happens after. It generally doesn't tend to be an instant growth where someone changes overnight. It may take some time, but the key is that there is progression- little by little there is a transformation happening where the person begins to look like Christ and ultimately win the battle between the two worlds.

Comfort is the voice that tells you to ignore the voice of the Holy Spirit. Comfort tells you that you have all of the time in the world to procrastinate, to read your bible and pray at a different day and time. Comfort is a lying voice that tells you where you are right now is good enough and there is no need to look on further to grow. It is a deceiving voice that in some way says, "You have arrived, put your feet up and rest". The scary part about believing this voice is this: the moment you think you've arrived is the moment you've reached deception. When it comes to God and our faith walk, there is no moment where we should ever say, "I've arrived. I learned all that there is to know about God and I am now done". We will never arrive at that moment because the bible constantly shows us that God is all Knowing, all Wise and beyond the depths of our understanding; therefore, comfort shouldn't be a feeling we wait on to gauge our level of progression. We should desire the need to grow more in Christ, as well as the willingness to let the Holy Spirit teach us.



What is it that makes us lose the battle over comfort? There are many factors involved but I think the main one is self-centeredness. Self-centeredness eats at our desire to hunger after God and our willingness to be obedient to the Teacher's instructions-the Holy Spirit. Self-centeredness causes us to be lazy in our personal development and settle with making excuses. When our hearts are fixed on ourselves, we have in one way turned around and walked right back to the very world of sin we left.

To win the war between the two worlds of comfort and growth first begins in our heart. When we rededicate our hearts onto God and willingly ask for Christ to sit at the throne of our hearts again, we begin to take the crucial steps necessary to regain ground and win the battle.

BEAUTY OF AKNOWLEDGING BROKENNESS

BY. JESSE HOVE

What is at the heart of following Jesus? Is it making sure you are sexually pure? Never getting drunk? Is it making sure you pray and read your Bible every day? Have you ever tried really hard to follow God's Law, only to find yourself becoming self-righteous and proud? Have you ever tried really hard to follow God's Law only to be left feeling guilty and worthless? The Apostle Paul understood this problem.

As a Pharisee he was intensely dedicated to following God's Law line by line. Paul, who at the time was known as Saul, thought he was following God and growing closer to him through what he perceived to be righteousness; yet at the same time he was murdering Christians. As a Pharisee, he was really good at following large portions of God's Law while remaining deeply entrenched in his own sin. This is why Jesus responds to the Pharisee's questions about His association with tax collectors with the declaration that, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Jesus tells them that he has "not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). The Pharisees had probably never gotten drunk, they remained sexually pure, they read Scripture all the time, they prayed day and night, but Jesus never actually thought the Pharisees were righteous, only that they thought they were. And that was the heart of the problem. When you convince yourself that you are doing the right thing it is easy to commit all kinds of horrible sins. This is why when Paul became a Christian, he regularly reminded himself of his own capacity for sin. He experienced the trap of moral self-righteousness and tried his best to avoid it. In 1 Timothy 1:15, Paul declares that he is the worst of sinners and in Romans 7:19, he speaks desperately of his endless struggle with sin even as he has now found new life in Christ. In a radical, world-altering revaluation of God's good and perfect law, Paul declares that the central purpose of God's Law is not to make us righteous but to make us "conscious of our sin." (Romans 3:20).

This doesn't mean that God wants us to feel endless guilt and sorrow for being sinners. It does mean that God wants us to be honest with ourselves. It means that as you rightly pursue a holy life, recognizing your mistakes, your failed attempts at goodness, acknowledging your endless struggle with sin, will actually be the most important part of seeing where God is working in your life and where God is working in the world. Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that he "will boast all the more gladly" about his "weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest" on him. And Colossians 1:20 tells us that "God was pleased to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of His cross." The acknowledgment of our sin, brokenness, and need for God is not about guilt and a lack of worth, rather it is about finding peace in something that is for us, and ultimately bigger than us. All too often we have turned God's good and perfect Law into a means for pursuing our own ideology instead of showing us our brokenness and sin. Like Paul in his earlier life, we choose to deeply entrench ourselves into following God's Law, only to miss its very point. And like Paul, this often leads to a deeper entrenchment of the sin we have chosen to deny.

During the middle-ages, Christians used passages from all the over the Bible to convince ourselves that we should destroy Muslim aggressors (Psalm 9, 21 Revelation 5,19), in spite of Christ's teaching for us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). During and after the Reformation we formed thousands of different denominations; all were convinced they were following Jesus the right way. Inevitably, these denominations would commit murder against one another for some very similar reasons that Paul killed Christians 1500 years earlier. To this very day we falsely interpret Scripture in light of our own ideologies. Jesus is a Capitalist we say, read the parable of the talents. Or Jesus is a Communist, read Acts. As we abstract Scripture away from the truth of Christ, and our need for him, a deeper entrenchment of sin follows.

The heart of following Jesus then is not in a political ideology or moral action, but in recognizing our need for him. It is in our shared brokenness and sin with the world that we proclaim Christ's healing and reconciliation for the world. We share in this brokenness not as a means for condemnation and guilt, but as a means to experiencing the peace of Christ breaking forth in the world. When we acknowledge our brokenness, we share in Christ's brokenness, and it is in this way that we imitate His image in the world. As Christians we are not called as advocates for moral ideology or guilt ridden fatalism but as those who bear witness to Christ's grace and forgiveness in the world. Our witness becomes most powerful not when we condemn ourselves or others to feelings of guilt or unworthiness, nor is it when we claim some type of moral high ground over competing worldviews. Rather, when we choose to forgive those who sin against us, we do so out of the acknowledgment that we are just as broken as they are. This is not something that comes naturally, but through the power of Christ's Spirit working in us and the world.

In 2006 when the Amish community of Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania forgave a man who murdered 5 school girls in cold blood, the world became astonished by what they saw; when the world could only understand a need for retribution and vengeance, the community in their brokenness chose grace and forgiveness.

When the largely Christian nation of Rwanda became subject to internal genocide in 1994, a radical movement of forgiveness and reconciliation arose amidst the horror and ashes. Slowly communities which should naturally be filled with hate and animosity began to reunite. As Christians we cannot claim these moments as some type of superior or evolved morality, but as shared moments of brokenness formed into beauty through the power of Christ's grace and forgiveness.

BY. JAMILA HOLDER

WALKING A TIGHTROPE BETWEEN THE SACRED AND SECULAR



I recall the weekend I became a Christian and accepted Jesus into my heart. It's one of those moments you can never forget. I remember the joy, the peace and the freedom that I felt. As I sat in a little sanctuary in Paris, I felt alive again and like many of us that have accepted Jesus, I felt unstoppable. I remember being so eager to get home and tell my friends all about that amazing weekend and how much they needed Jesus. As I packed my bags to go home I could sense that the other girls in my cabin felt it too, we were so free and empowered, the type of empowerment that only comes from encountering Jesus. However, our laughter and joy was damped by a sudden sense of fear knowing that in a few hours we would be going home. I remember one young lady stopped packing her bags in protest as she said what we were all thinking, "I don't want to go back". None of us wanted to leave a place that felt like Heaven on earth to return to the various hellholes that had imprisoned us and kept us blinded for years. Little did I know that fear would linger for the first couple of years of my relationship with God. I felt stuck in neutral without any idea of how to switch gears into the freedom and liberation I felt the weekend I got saved. My relationship with God began to feel like a marriage that was way past the honeymoon phase as I comforted myself with the lies that perhaps I wasn't meant to be free. Perhaps God had abandoned me because I could no longer feel Him near.

That was the moment legalism became a stronghold in my life. Condemnation, fear and guilt became daily counselors as reading the word of God became a painful experience. I had begun an endless journey, walking a tight rope between the sacred and secular world. At church I felt the need to pretend that I had it together, meanwhile I had to pretend for the world that I was madly in love with Jesus, after all how else was I going to win them to Christ? I recall many sermons reminding me of my responsibility to win others to Christ as Matthew 28:19-20 states, but I was confused by other sermons that warned against being conformed to the things of the world just like what Romans 12:2 remind us of. I felt utterly frustrated; how was I supposed to win a world that I was afraid would overpower and influence me to go back to sinning? To make matters worse, I was of the view that I was not an effective Christian unless I was constantly upsetting unbelievers with my actions, as a way to guilt them into repentance.

Charged with this method of winning souls, it became my goal to pick fights with and upset unbelievers everywhere I went; if they were not uncomfortable in my presence I was not doing my job as a Christian.

For the years to follow I walked a tightrope between two extremes; I was either cowering with fear as to how to please God and win souls or I was a "radical Christian" upsetting unbelievers by condemning them of their sins. It's a sad reality but many Christians find themselves caught in this very dilemma. Truth be told, the results are the same for both extremes, both are ineffective. The cowering Christian lacks power and the "radical Christian" lacks love. Consider this verse for a moment, John 13:35 says, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"; this verse changed the course of my walk with the Lord. For the first time since I got saved I felt free from the weight of striving to please God while navigating through a broken and fallen world. It took me a while to learn that I didn't have to strive and contend with unbelievers, and to rest in the assurance that they would know that I was a follower of Jesus if I showed love. Now there are some who are of the view that if you are not an aggressive evangelizer then the world may influence you. I think such a belief is not biblical and is rooted in fear, and to make such a claim is to undermine the power of love. I would even be as bold to say, I don't want anyone witnessing to me if their primary objective is to fill the pews; is that not falsehood and pretense? and it's no wonder the world rejects our invitation to church when we do so. I am not advocating not witnessing to others, what I am advocating however is how to be effective when doing so. The answer has always and will always be love. Is it not stated in the bible that we love Him because He first loved us? Then we are also required to do the same. This is a call to all believers to get off the tightrope and grow in love. If we truly believe that we are ambassadors of Christ and we represent Him, then our primary goal is to re-present Him; to re-present His love, grace and compassion in the same way that we received it. If we truly believe that the Holy Spirit lives in us, then we carry the very presence of God wherever we go; if we desire to see the Lord manifest Himself in our everyday lives, then we must walk and abide in love.



DON'T SET
HIM OFF
JOHN

JOHN WICK

STARRING KEANU REEVES, WILLEM DAFOE
DIRECTED BY CHAD STAHELSKI AND DAVID LEITC

RATING: *** 1/2 (OUT OF 5)

BY STEVE NORTON

"People keep asking me if I'm back... yeah, I'm thinkin' I'm back!"

John Wick tells the story of John Wick (Keanu Reeves), a hit man that's described by those that know him as "the man who you send to kill the Boogeyman." Retired and having finally broken free from his life of killing, Wick has settled down with a woman he loves and seemingly found a sense of peace in the process, however, when his wife dies from a serious illness, Wick is shaken to the core in his grief. Soon after, he is surprised to discover that his wife has left him one last gift in the form of a small puppy, giving him a sense of hope for the future, but when a senseless home invasion results in the death of his beloved dog, Wick decides to channel his rage by seeking revenge on the man who took his last reminder of his loving wife away from him.

Still, in addition to the non-stop action, one of the more interesting aspects of this film is the struggle within John Wick. Despite his skills as a gun for hire, Wick is a man who really desires to break free from his past, desiring to bury his weapons. He has cut all ties with his mob associates and out of his love for his wife; he has built a new life of freedom and stability. In her, he has hope.

Then again...

It is also interesting to note that his 'old life' is never entirely gone. Although his weapons are buried under a concrete floor, they are still available to him. Even though he doesn't speak to his former contacts, they continue to 'check in' with him from time to time. While he wants redemption, John Wick continues to walk a very fine line and thus, when he is finally crossed, goes on a vengeful rampage. All of a sudden, the man who sought peace goes on the offensive side, digging back into the darkness that still existed deep within him.

In many ways, John Wick is just a fuse waiting to be lit.

Still, I would argue that Wick's return to violence isn't less the fault of his past than it is the root of his hope. While his love for his wife does offer grace for Wick's wandering spirit, that sense of hope that he finds isn't permanent. Although this type of love is what we're told can save us, stories like John Wick remind us that this isn't fully the case. As a Christian, I recognize that this type of redemption can help but doesn't truly offer a change in nature. For instance, Wick's freedom is based on the love of someone who can't stay with him forever. So, when she's gone, so too is his stability. Conversely however, Scriptures offers us a different picture. When Paul claims that, in Christ, "the old has gone, the new has come", he's making an argument for God's desire to offer genuine, deep healing:

The kind that reaches deeply into our souls and offers light where there was none.

The kind that allows us freedom from our past and hope for the future.

The kind that lasts.

Without this type of healing, John Wick inevitably falls back into his old life for a time as he seeks to 'make things square'. For him, vengeance becomes the only equalizer as he desperately looks to quiet his soul. As a result, he also has little resolution and, as the film ends, one can't help but see the inevitable sequel.

After all, Wick remains a man ready to explode.

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