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TECHNOLOGY THIS
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QUEBEC'S VERY OWN
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CHURCH P.40

REG BIBBY EXPLAINS
EVERYTHING
P.26

CANADA'S CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

JULY / AUGUST 2015

FAITH TODAY

An illustration on a yellow background showing two people in profile, facing each other as if in conversation. The person on the left has short hair and is wearing a collared shirt. The person on the right has longer hair and is also wearing a collared shirt. Several speech bubbles are scattered around them. One large speech bubble at the top contains the text 'CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS'. Other speech bubbles are empty, some with solid outlines and others with dotted outlines. The overall style is simple and hand-drawn.

CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

What they are, how
to have them and
why they matter
so very much P.30

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Summer reflections

What is God inviting us to learn?

When we picture you reading this issue of *Faith Today*, we imagine you on a lakeshore in one of those classic wooden chairs – Muskoka or Adirondack, depending on where you call home.

Or, perhaps you're in a campground watching your kids throw a Frisbee. Or maybe you're in a lawn chair overlooking your backyard, with ice cubes clinking in your lemonade.

We're aware life doesn't necessarily become one long, idyllic, sunny adventure in the summer. Frankly, around here it's more a matter of one kind of busy-ness being replaced by another. But we do assume a slightly more relaxed pace, and we try to plan the summer magazine accordingly.

It's a chance to reflect and reassess, and be open to hearing invitations from God to consider doing things a little differently this fall.

The cover story equips us to think about crucial conversations, why they matter and how to do them well. All of us have found ourselves in these at times – the kind of conversations, often unplanned, where all of a sudden we realize it's a make or break moment. *This could go really badly!* Or *This might put our relationship on the road to recovery!* Or *Could this put our ministry team back on the same page?*


"The Joy of Missing Out" is also gently thought-provoking like that. We found ourselves challenged to consider that perhaps we are a little too attached to our social media streams and smartphones for our own good.

We were very happy sociologist Reg Bibby was available to speak to us for the FT Interview this issue. When the Angus Reid survey came out this spring showing that Canadians are more interested in religion than we might have thought, we turned to Reg (who worked with Angus Reid on this project) to unpack it and help us understand what is happening in our country. He's always a pleasure to speak with.

You'll also find some opportunities to consider the wider world – hear some good news from earthquake-damaged Nepal, understand more deeply and sympathetically a conflict in East Africa, and marvel at the growth and international influence of a francophone megachurch that grew up right near Montreal.

You may find yourself praying differently after reading these articles. We hope so.

And there's even more to come with the September issue – your subscription keeps the good news coming for you and for readers all across the country. Thank you! And have a blessed summer. /FT

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

You may find yourself praying differently after reading these articles.

We hope so.

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New at Blog.FaithToday.ca

THERE IS so much to write about from my just-finished trip to Cambodia. I was gone for almost two weeks – and on planes for almost two days on the way back – with Samaritan’s Purse, accompanying a Water for Kids trip. I will be working on a story for *Faith Today* about the trip and the work we did building filters to provide clean water to school children in rural Cambodia.
 –from “How Sweet Christian Community Is, Even Short-Term”
 by Karen Stiller

READING ACCOUNTS from the earthquake in Nepal to the latest Middle Eastern civil war, or details of the next shooting or terror attack to take place, it’s easy to get bogged down in discouragement. That’s why I jumped at the chance to write Inspiring

Ideas for *Faith Today*. The name says it all – it’s all about sharing encouraging ideas from churches across the country.
 –from “Really Inspiring Ideas”
 by Craig Macartney

WE WERE sleeping outside at night and so were the rest of Kathmandu. Every time there was a tremor, people would scream, and then the dogs would start barking. Even small tremors set the dogs off, so they were our sentinels.
 –David and Pauline Streeter quoted in “Canadian Volunteers Offer Eyewitness Account”

I STAY involved in the movement because I want to see a day that abortion is abolished in Canada; a day when human life is protected from its earliest stage; a day when Canadians sanctify human life



rather than destroy it.
 –Carter Grant quoted in “Voices From Canada’s Pro-Life Movement”

THESE STORIES of justice, of social activism, of personal pain and triumph shaped by faith, and of shining light in the world’s darkest corners, may not have been told – and certainly not in this particular way – by other more mainstream press outlets.
 –from “What the Best of Christian Press Awards Really Means”

Best magazine

Re: (May/June 2015)
 THIS IS one of the best issues of a Christian magazine – any Christian magazine – that I have read in a long time. Kudos on a job well done.
 Ross Muir
 Waterloo, Ont.

Vaccination and the gospel

Re: *Messy Faith* (May/June 2015)
 I TAKE issue with Sheila Wray Gregoire’s statement that “When we refuse to accept a tiny risk on behalf of our children to prevent a much greater risk to others, I’m afraid we violate the gospel.”
 All loving parents act out of what they believe to be the best for their children. To claim parents who reject vaccination are not carrying out their Christian duty is a little far-fetched.
 If the information you have

MILESTONES

APPOINTED

Stanley N. Helton as president of Alberta Bible College, a Calgary school of 130 affiliated with the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ. He holds a DMin and a PhD, previously served Western Christian College in Regina as a professor and academic dean, and has also pastored for almost 20 years, mainly in the United States.



Cesar Jaramillo (left) as executive director and **James Christie** as chair of the board of Project Ploughshares, an agency of the Canadian Council of Churches working for sustainable peace and disarmament. Jaramillo spent six years as program officer at Ploughshares, working on nuclear disarmament, outer space security and conventional weapons control. He

succeeds John Siebert. Christie is director of the Ridd Institute for Religion and Global Policy at the University of Winnipeg and a well-known ecumenist.



Don Hutchinson (left) as interim national director and **Myles Leitch** (below) as director of Scripture translation of the Canadian Bible Society. Rev. Hutchinson, who has agreed to fill the position left by Ted Seres as long as needed, was formerly vice-president and general legal counsel for The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and director of its Centre for Faith and Public Life. Dr. Leitch is a linguist and professor (most recently



at Tyndale University College & Seminary) with 20 years’ service in francophone Africa with Wycliffe-SIL. His new post supports translations into First Nations languages and technical support for translation and publishing around the world.



Neale S. Bennet as president of the Atlantic School of Theology (AST) in Halifax. Rev. Bennet is an Anglican priest who serves as director of organizational learning at Nova Scotia Community College. He succeeds Eric Beresford and interim leader Daniel O’Brien. AST is affiliated with Saint Mary’s University and offers MDiv and MA degrees. It was founded in 1971 by the amalgamation of Anglican, Roman Catholic and United Church of Canada institutions.

on a nonbiblical issue leads you to make a decision that is potentially wrong, that decision may be misguided, but to equate nonvaccination with violating the gospel is a mockery of the true gospel and a preaching of a different gospel. I understand Gregoire's motivation to have all society unite behind vaccination – I don't disagree with her motivation. But I disagree with her making this about the gospel itself, as though you cannot be living as a true Christian if you don't vaccinate your children.

The height of these types of arguments – where only true Christians act in a way mandated by certain people, not by the Scriptures – is what cults are based on.

The gospel is actually about how Jesus came to reconcile us to God and we ought to place our faith in Him in order to benefit from that. Yes, our part includes bringing what we can contribute to the people of the world – including good health care. But what that looks like changes and varies over time and geography.

What about mothers who took thalidomide? They did something they thought was best that ended up harming their chil-

dren. Were they in violation of the gospel?

I'm not promoting an antivaccination stance. However, I think understanding of parents who do not vaccinate and of

what the gospel is are both significantly lacking in this article.

Name withheld at author's request

f *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.

RENAMED

Concordia University of Edmonton is the new name for Concordia University College of Alberta, an affiliate of Lutheran Church-Canada. Concordia has 1,650 students and offers 45 undergraduate major and minor programs in arts, sciences and management, three master's degree programs and more.

AWARDED

Faith Today received eight awards at this year's Canadian Church Press Awards in May in Toronto. Five were second place, including in categories for news, design and original art, and three awards for third, including reviews, blog and general excellence. Top winners among the group's 59 publications were *Anglican Journal*, *Christian Courier*, *Presbyterian Record*, several Salvation Army periodicals and *Geez*.

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KINGDOM MATTERS

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



Solar first for Nipawin

Saskatchewan Bible college first to go totally solar

AN ARRAY OF solar panels longer than five football fields will provide a small Bible college in northeast Saskatchewan with all the electrical power it needs. And pay for itself in a decade.

Wes Fehr, Nipawin Bible College's president before he retired this past spring, credits Ryan Jansen with the idea. Jansen is the alumni president and sits on the college board as a non-voting member. He also runs a sustainable power company and used that expertise for the school.

"I was looking for some way to contribute," says Jansen. "So I put together a bit of a summary and brought it to the board."

It took about two years from presentation to implementation as the board explored the idea and lined up partners to make the project happen. In June 2014 about 20 volunteers took three days to drive pilings and erect the 664 m² of panels, making it the largest solar array in Saskatchewan and one of the largest in Western Canada. The array went online in December 2014 and the college had a grand opening this past April.

The school sells the electricity generated to SaskPower, minus what it uses. The solar array will generate about 150,000 kilowatt hours a year, equal to the power used by 20 homes. Fehr says

The newly installed solar panels in the fields around Nipawin Bible College.

the college will save between \$15,000 and \$18,000 a year in energy costs.

Other Bible colleges or postsecondary schools, such as Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ont., have installed solar panels. But Nipawin will be the first to use solar power to run all its facilities — auditorium, education centre, student centre, food services building, dorms, maintenance shop and streetlights.

Fehr says the project, after some fundraising and a rebate from SaskPower, cost \$170,000. The money came from a legacy fund that will be replenished with the savings.

"It also provides tangible evidence to the students of our sense of stewardship of creation," says Fehr. "Something we're all becoming much more aware of." —**ROBERT WHITE**

PHOTO: NIPAWIN BIBLE COLLEGE

Canada's first online encyclopedia of Canadian Christian leaders

FOR CHRISTIAN JOURNALIST Lloyd Mackey, retiring from his longtime position as a faith/political reporter on Parliament Hill marks a new chapter he hopes will have a lasting impact on the Canadian Christian community.

While earning his doctorate of ministry from Tyndale Seminary, Mackey embarked on a wide-reaching project that aims to document leading Canadian Christians from 1867 to 2017. It is the Online Encyclopedia of Canadian Christian Leaders (OECCL, at www.canadianchristianleaders.org).

With an anticipated completion date of July 2017 – the 150th anniversary of Canada's Confederation – Mackey has turned his full attention to sourcing and compiling a who's who of the country's leading Christians across seven categories including church/ministry, education, business/philanthropy, media, entertainment/arts, health care/family and government/politics.

"We will be drawing on people from across the Christian denominational/theological spectrum, as well as from the ethnic backgrounds they come from. Those are things we'll weave into the narrative," Mackey explains.

The OECCL's editorial advisory committee is made up of Eleanor Irwin, a retired classics professor, and Robert Burkinshaw, a professor of history at Trinity Western University. Together with Mackey, the trio hope to have the first 40 entries completed within the next six months, growing to 200 entries by the completion date. Contributions from Christian researchers, writers, historians and others will be crucial to forming the encyclopedia. "I hope to write quite a few of these entries myself, but by no means the majority. Over the next few months, I hope to hear from people who are both interested and qualified," says Mackey.

With his wife Edna keeping the project organized and running smoothly from their home base in Surrey, B.C., Mackey shares his hope for the completed encyclopedia. "As we've moved into what some people describe as postmodernity, where there's less of an emphasis on formal religion and more of an emphasis on spirituality rather than religiosity, I hope this will provide some historical context – ways of connecting the dots as we've moved through this era of change." –**JULIE FITZ-GERALD**



Oswald J. Smith (centre) was a strong advocate for missions. He founded The People's Church in Toronto in 1928.

Inspiring ideas from Canadian churches



52 days of prayer

Victoria pastors challenged local Christians to bless the city by doing daily prayer walks for 52 days, starting Good Friday and ending on Pentecost. A partnership of 52 local pastors put together a daily prayer guide to help participants. They hope to launch a Bless My City app next year. Participants were encouraged to talk with the people they met and look for additional ways they could be a blessing. www.blessmycity.com



Christian hospitality in Canada's North

Inuvik's Anglican Church of the Ascension is working to make the brutal Canadian winters a little more hospitable for the area's homeless. Throughout the winter months, they operate a warming shelter where up to 18 people can stay the night and enjoy breakfast in the morning. According to the church's priest, having a warm place for the homeless to stay has already led to a decrease in the workload of the local RCMP and hospital. www.christianweek.org



God works in all things

When a suspicious fire damaged King's Way Church of God of Prophecy in Vancouver, the congregation was offered a vacant space in a local mall until their building is restored. In addition to their weekly services, the church is now looking at running the Alpha course and other discipleship programs on weekdays, where they will be easily accessible to customers visiting the mall. www.churchforvancouver.ca



Walking in a stranger's shoes

Winnipeg Centre Vineyard's School of Justice has a unique approach to teaching compassion. During the seven-month program, students hear about life on the street directly from panhandlers, and even take time themselves panhandling on the streets of Winnipeg, to better empathize with the less fortunate. www.vineyardschoolofjustice.org



A touch of patriotism

Every year for Canada Day, Ottawa's Alta Vista Baptist Church hosts a free community barbecue. The event targets local families with crafts, face painting, a dunk tank, activities for kids and of course lots of food. This year is their fifth event, and every year more families come join the party. www.altavistabaptist.org –**CRAIG MACARTNEY**



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

Canadian worship blog

Providing resources for worship ministry around the globe



60,000

AVERAGE NUMBER OF HITS PER WEEK AT RE-WORSHIP.BLOGSPOT.CA

BACK IN 2011 Christine Longhurst felt the Internet lacked easy-to-find resources for worship planning. Drawing on her background as a former pastor and a teacher at Canadian Mennonite University, she set out to fill the void by setting up a blog at re-worship.blogspot.ca.

Since that spring day, her site has grown into a thriving online Christian community for worship leaders and planners.

Using the Revised Common Lectionary as a guide, she has produced a plethora of helpful resources for prayer, confession, thanksgiving, commitment, intercession and benediction, all at the click of a mouse.

After a few months of building the blog, Longhurst says God gave her a clear message to continue well beyond her initial plan. "I thought, I will do this until August 1 and then I'll see if this is where God wants me spending my time. By August 1, in fact it was that day, the blog reached 100,000 hits and I hadn't put very much stuff up. When I look back now, it was a fairly limited offering. That to me felt like a sign. It was

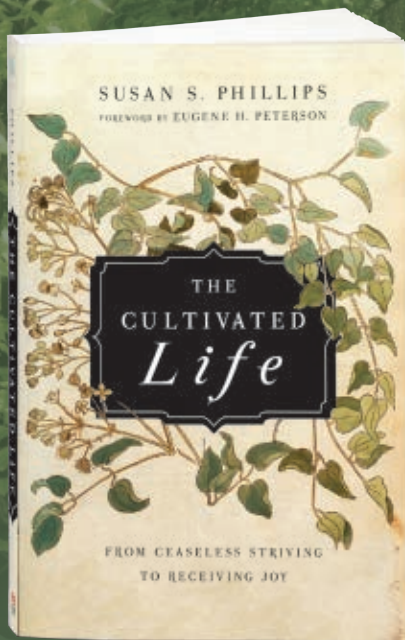
a number that, at the time, I couldn't even imagine."

According to Longhurst the site now averages 60,000 hits per week, often reaching 150,000 during seasons like Pentecost and Easter. Worship leaders from Canada, the U.S., Australia, South Africa, the Philippines, Germany and around the globe access the site each week to plan and prepare for Sunday services. Through extensive indexing created by Longhurst, searching for content is friendly to denominations across the spectrum.

With a global community of pastors and writers also contributing posts to the site, Longhurst says the blog will continue to stay true to scripturally based content. "It worries me when we approach calling people and leading people to worship without a scriptural basis," she says. "It just strikes me that God has chosen to reveal Himself through Scripture and so to use the images, the metaphors, the stories of Scripture as our inspiration feels to me to be the safest and probably the most creative way to plan and lead worship. We're rooting ourselves in God's story rather than our own individual story and experiences."

With the success of the Re: Worship Blog, Longhurst believes we've just scratched the surface of the ways Christians can help resource one another online. —**JULIE FITZ-GERALD**

Leave the Circus and Enter the Garden



Sociology professor and spiritual director Susan Phillips walks us through our circuslike cultural landscape to invite us into a cultivated life of spirituality and attentiveness. God extends to us an invitation to live in the garden of grace, and these pages unfold the spiritual practices that can lead us into a new and delightful way of living.



"Cultivation implies habits and discipline, and Susan winsomely invites us into new patterns of living. . . . Come into the garden with Jesus and journey into abundant life."

—**LYNNE M. BAAB**, author of *The Power of Listening* and *Sabbath Keeping*

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New association strengthens Quebec Evangelicals

THE RÉSEAU ÉVANGÉLIQUE QUÉBEC

(REQ, Evangelical Network of Quebec) is a new association of 13 evangelical denominations in Quebec, crossing barriers that are both linguistic (French and English churches) and stylistic (charismatic and evangelical).

Initiated in 2013 by Gilles Lapierre, director general of l'Association d'Églises Baptistes Évangéliques au Québec, REQ acts as a network of support and encouragement to each other. Lapierre has recently been named the network's moderator.

Initially the objective was to learn about each other and to meet in a spirit of trust, prayer and camaraderie. Very quickly, Lapierre says, denominational presidents realized that they have much to learn from each other and could work together on common problems, such as zoning of religious properties in new church plants or taxation laws for charities.

"We do not delve into theological disagreements, issues of pastoral training or other denomination-specific matters," explains Lapierre. "However, we can work together while still respecting each other's differences. The goal is not to merge churches, but to benefit from each other's experience and wisdom."

The REQ has written its own code of ethics on interdenominational relations, an attempt to diminish competition and conflicts between church plants, improve communication between neighbouring churches and agree on principles concerning transfers of members and pastors between denominations.

"There are almost 400 churches represented around the table,"



Gilles Lapierre, moderator of the REQ.

points out Lapierre. "That's a total of 50,000 Evangelicals." Lapierre feels that having those numbers as a unified voice will come across better in the public sphere than if they were scattered.

While the REQ is not intentionally seeking a voice in the public sphere, Quebec's political environment may require an evangelical spokesperson, sooner than later, says Lapierre. The province's recent legislation on doctor-assisted suicide and the proposed *Charter of Values* in 2014 (a code regulating the wearing of religious clothing or symbols by government workers) were matters of concern in Christian communities.

"Our goal, however, would be for Evangelicals to have a positive voice – for having well-thought-out opinions, for their spirit of mutual aid and social action, and for their spirit of unity."

—JENNA SMITH

RÉSEAU ÉVANGÉLIQUE QUÉBEC BY THE NUMBERS

13
EVANGELICAL
DENOMINATIONS

400
CHURCHES

50,000
EVANGELICAL
CHRISTIANS



one mission
three directions

Since 1893
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and continue to reach with the Gospel are
now sending their own missionaries around
the world...yes, even **TO** Canada.

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More and more SIM missionaries are serving
IN Canada, assisting the Canadian church to
reach their global neighbours in our
multi-cultural cities.

This is the new SIM - sending missionaries
FROM everywhere **TO** everywhere.

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in this new mission reality. We help leaders
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missions.

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moving God's people into God's mission
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NOTE WORTHY

RABBI'S LEGACY SPARKS REVIVAL AMONG ORTHODOX JEWS

Before his death Yitzhak Kaduri, one of Israel's most respected rabbis, claimed he had a vision of the Messiah. He wrote the Messiah's name in a note to be opened one year after he died. When opened in 2007, the controversial note gave the Hebrew version of the name Jesus. Today, numerous sources report growing numbers of Orthodox Jews becoming Christians as a result. It's called the Kaduri revival. www.israeltoday.co.il

CANADIANS NOT CONSCIENTIOUS CONSUMERS

A recent poll commissioned by World Vision shows that Canadians are more concerned about getting the best price for new clothes than on the working conditions in the factories where their clothes are made. Following



Child labour: An Albanian girl making shoes.

several recent, high-profile tragedies in overseas clothing factories, World Vision is challenging Canadians to educate themselves about child slavery and only buy clothing that is certified as fair trade. www.worldvision.ca

TOWERING CROSS BUILT IN PAKISTAN

Hoping to encourage and comfort local Christians, a Pakistani Christian businessman is building a 14-storey cross on the edge of a

Christian cemetery in Karachi. Pavez Henry Gill says God spoke to him in a dream about bringing hope to Pakistani Christians, who are regularly subjected to hostility in the Islamic nation. www.jpost.com

ATHEISM IN GLOBAL DECLINE

According to a recent research study conducted by the Pew Research Center, Western notions of the end of religion are out of touch with global trends. While highlighting that only 16.4 per cent of the world's population was "religiously unaffiliated" in 2010, the study points to demographic trends including higher fertility rates and a younger median age among the world's religious people. The study predicts the proportion of those who are religiously unaffiliated will drop to 13.2 per cent by 2050. www.demographic-research.org

—CRAIG MACARTNEY

PHOTO: WORLD VISION



**JO-ANN
BADLEY**



**MARK
BUCHANAN**



**BETH
STOVELL**



**MARCUS
TSO**



**TERRY
YOUNG**

**MENTORS THEOLOGIAN
PASTORS AUTHORS LEADERS**

EXPERIENCE

AMBROSE SEMINARY

**...OUR EXPERIENCE
WILL ENRICH YOUR
EXPERIENCE.**



**AMBROSE
UNIVERSITY**

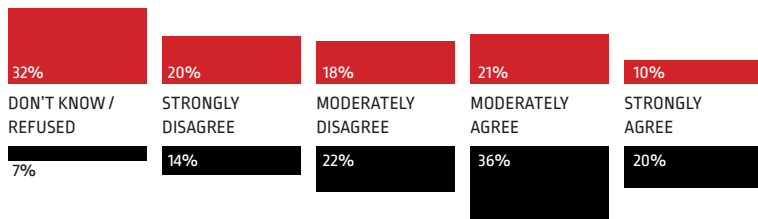
150 Ambrose Circle SW, Calgary, AB T3H 0L5 1-800-461-1222 ambrose.edu enrolment@ambrose.edu

Evangelicalism in Canada

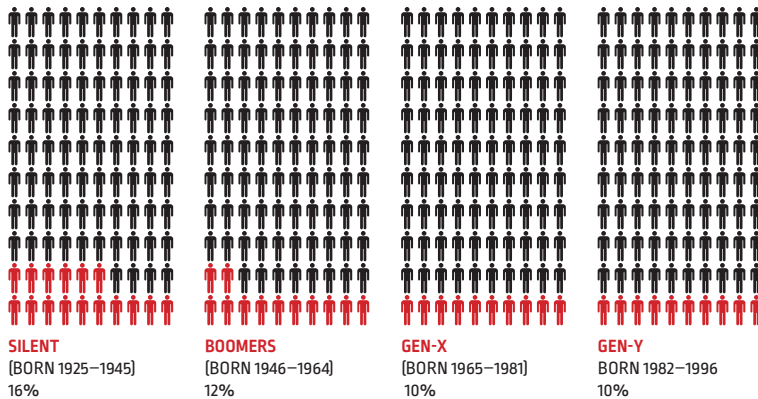
How are Evangelicals perceived in Canada, and how do we perceive other groups?

2013 V. 2007

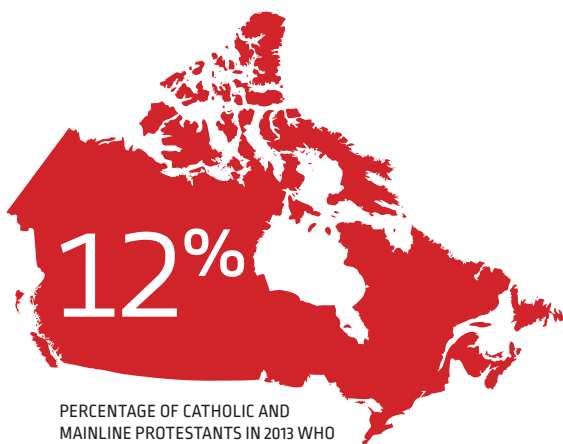
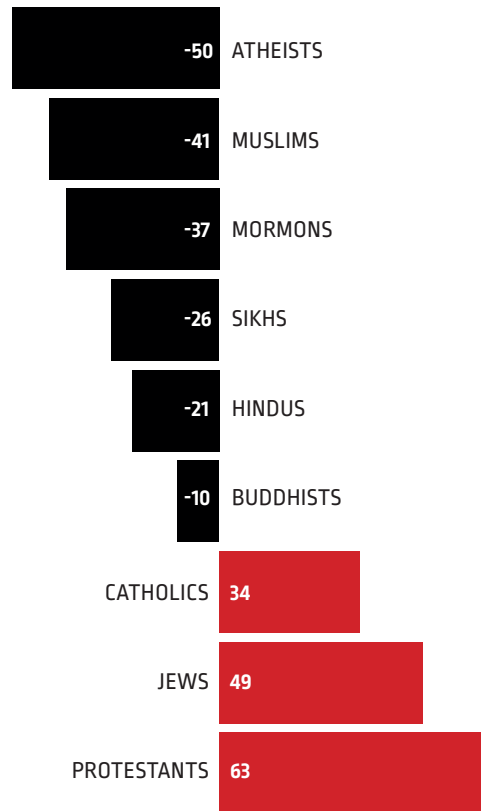
MOST CANADIANS HAVE **NO OPINION OR A NEGATIVE OPINION** ON WHETHER CANADIAN EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS MAKE AN IMPORTANT POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY



SIZE OF EVANGELICALLY ALIGNED POPULATION BY GENERATION, 2013



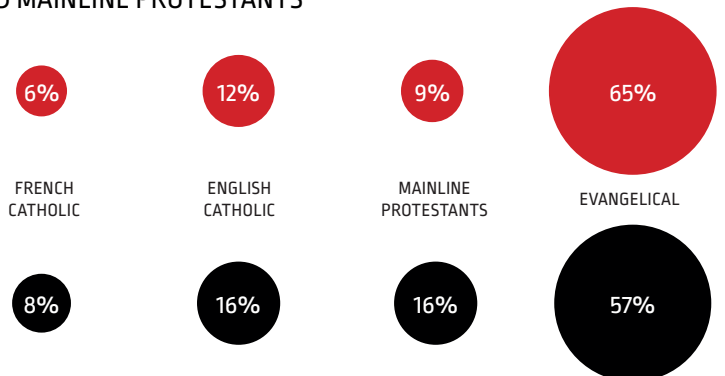
EVANGELICALS TEND TO SEE OTHER FAITHS NEGATIVELY, 2015



PERCENTAGE OF CATHOLIC AND MAINLINE PROTESTANTS IN 2013 WHO ARE EVANGELICALLY ALIGNED, DOWN FROM 16% IN 1996.

2013 V. 1996

EVANGELICALLY ALIGNED GROUPS SHRINKING AMONG CATHOLICS AND MAINLINE PROTESTANTS



SOURCES: ANGUS REID GROUP, 1996; ANGUS REID/CHEC-EFC 2007; ANGUS REID INSTITUTE, 2015. IN THE "TEND NEGATIVELY" SECTION, GROUPS ARE DEFINED BY SELF-AFFILIATION, AND "IMAGE SCORES" ARE CALCULATED BY SUBTRACTING PER CENT OF CANADIANS HOLDING A NEGATIVE VIEW FROM PER CENT HOLDING A POSITIVE ONE. ELSEWHERE "EVANGELICALLY ALIGNED" IS DEFINED USING THE CHRISTIAN EVANGELICAL SCALE, A SET OF EIGHT QUESTIONS DESIGNED TO MEASURE BELIEFS AND BEHAVIOURS.



Stewarding religious freedom

While we invite others to follow Jesus, we must respect their God-given freedom to believe otherwise

In Canada our choice of whether to attend church has nothing to do with personal safety. Those of us who carry around a big black Bible may be considered unusual, but we are free to do so. Those of us who bow for prayer before a restaurant meal may embarrass our neighbours, but we are free to do so.

We live in a country where religious liberty is fundamental – freedom of conscience and religion are the first freedoms listed in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Worldwide, religious freedom is often referred to as the “first freedom,” as history shows that when religious freedom is protected, all

other rights and freedoms are more secure. Where religious freedom is curtailed, soon other freedoms are compromised and lost.

We know religious freedom is something we should champion, but what is our biblical basis?

The first of the Ten Commandments says we should have no other gods, and the second commandment denounces idols. We are warned in Romans 1 about the dangers of worshipping idols. Yet we live amid diversity – linguistic, ethnic, cultural, structural and religious.

Evangelicals anticipate a day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is

Lord. The one form of diversity that will not remain is religious diversity.

So why do we champion religious freedom? We take our lead from Jesus. He did not dictate doctrine, nor did He compel belief. He reasoned with His listeners, instructed them in parables, called them to repent and invited them to believe the good news of God’s Kingdom.

We read in Luke how a Samaritan village refused hospitality to Jesus and His disciples because they were headed to Jerusalem – in the minds of the Samaritans, the wrong place to worship God. But when His disciples asked Him if they should command fire from heaven to de-

We take our lead from Jesus. He did not dictate doctrine, nor did He compel belief.

News FROM THE EFC

Webinar tackles religious freedom

EFC webinars are short midday meetings that anyone can connect to via computer, telephone or mobile device. Hear a brief interview on a crucial issue, then contribute to a live question-and-answer session. The EFC’s June webinar featured EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger discussing the topic of religious freedom. Recorded versions of previous webinars and news about upcoming ones are available at www.theEFC.ca/webinars.

Helping refugees from the Middle East

Leaders of several EFC affiliates are engaged in a co-operative response to the refugee crisis in the Middle East, particularly Syria and Iraq. This new Middle East

Refugees Resettlement Initiative offers assistance to some of the 10,000 displaced persons Canada has promised to welcome by 2016. Find out how your congregation can participate, at www.theEFC.ca/MiddleEastRefugees.

Evangelicals dialogue with Roman Catholics

The latest meeting of the ongoing dialogue between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals was held recently near Montreal. EFC Vice-President Aileen Van Ginkel attended as a representative of the EFC, one of the co-hosts of the dialogue. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is the other co-host. Local church and ministry leaders, including Glenn Smith of Christian Direction, spoke about community-focused collaborative efforts.

Supporting Trinity Western in Ontario court

The EFC was in court again in June to defend the freedoms of Christian organizations. The case involved a law school proposed by Trinity Western University, an EFC affiliate. The Divisional Court of Ontario is conducting a judicial review of a decision by the Law Society of Upper Canada not to accredit the TWU law school. For details see www.theEFC.ca/TWUlaw.

Education forum meets

EFC Vice-President Aileen Van Ginkel attended a meeting of the leaders of Canada’s Christian post-secondary schools in Winnipeg in May. This national forum is hosted triennially by Christian Higher Education Canada (www.checanada.ca).

Van Ginkel participated in board meetings and also presented a workshop on practising facilitative leadership.

Truth and reconciliation

EFC President Bruce J. Clemenger and Policy Analyst Julia Beazley attended the closing event meetings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In June the commission completed its seven-year task of hearing the testimonies of thousands of Aboriginal people who attended residential schools. The findings of the commission and video recordings of some of the closing events are available at www.trc.ca.

Summer calendar

The Global Leadership Summit, August 6–7, simulcast to various locations across Canada

stroy those who refused to receive Him, Jesus rebuked them.

Shortly afterward Jesus sent 70 of His disciples on a mission with explicit instructions to respect the freedom of others. If they were rejected, they were to walk away.

We reconcile this approach with the first two commandments. God is a jealous god. He expects our worship and praise. But He does not compel belief. He has given us free will to choose. The choice has eternal consequences, but it is a choice.

Religious freedom respects that choice. It is grounded in belief in the dignity of the human person. Each of us possesses a thirst for truth and a capacity to know truth.

Jesus invites, "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me" (Revelation 3:20).

Use the freedom we enjoy to share the good news of the gospel with others.

As Christians we respect people of other faiths. We respect their beliefs out of respect for their God-given dignity and God-given liberty.

We are called to love them and tell them about Jesus. We are not to judge or condemn, just as Jesus did not come to condemn, but rather to save. We do not ridicule the beliefs of others – according to Jude 1:9, even the archangel Michael when contending with the devil did not condemn him for slander but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

We are seekers after the truth. We are people on a journey of faith and understanding, and we engage all others who are in a similar pursuit. Some are confident they are on the right track, some not so sure. We welcome the conversation.


There are times we need to defend our freedoms. Part of this entails making public arguments and going

to court, but it also entails being good stewards of our freedom. We do this by using our freedom well. We live out the truth in love.

As Jesus instructed the 70, we also come in peace, seek to be in fellowship, care for others and pray for them.

Let's steward our freedom well and not take it for granted. Use the freedom we enjoy to share the good news of the gospel with others and live according to the gospel.

Some may want to silence us because the gospel can cause offence. The best response is that of love. It is what our freedom in Christ enables us to do – to speak the truth in love and be known for our love. /FT

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


Global Gospel Impact: Gideons Convention, August 14–15, Toronto



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 the EFC on Facebook and Twitter for breaking news, great links and lively discussion.

Meet the EFC Board: John Pellowe

Over the past few issues, Faith Today has been introducing members of the board of directors of our publisher, The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (listed at www.theEFC.ca/Board). We continue with John Pellowe, CEO of the Canadian Council of Christian Charities.

FT: What made you want to sit on the EFC board?

JP: I jumped at the invitation to join the board because the EFC is such an important ministry to Canada, it is something that I personally support and have a passion for, and it is a good way for me to contribute my specialized expertise for the EFC's benefit.

FT: What do you think is the most

important thing the EFC is doing these days?

JP: I thank God every time I read anything by the EFC that presents an evangelical perspective to our society. I feel that my interests, as an Evangelical, are being effectively presented in courts, in Ottawa, and to the public. The most important thing the EFC does, in my opinion, is represent our community to others.

FT: What's the biggest challenge facing Canada right now?

JP: We seem to have arrived at a critical turning point in our society, where opposing views on the place of religion in society are wrestling with the concept of religious freedom and how much we should have in the public realm. Those



John Pellowe values the way the EFC represents Evangelicals.

who believe there is no place in public society for religion are increasingly bold in trying to limit religious people's participation in public affairs. Our challenge is to ensure Canada remains a society where diversity and minority positions have a place.

FT: Thank you, John. /FT

Leading requires listening



Jeffrey P. Greenman is president and professor of theology and ethics at Regent College, an “innovative graduate school of theology” in Vancouver

■ **What mission drives Regent College?**

Enabling Christians to live deeper, better integrated lives in God’s service in every sphere of society. We are focused on equipping the whole person – heart, head and hands – to participate actively and joyfully in God’s mission to the world. For us, such people are pastors, artists, entrepreneurs, lawyers, scholars, teachers, engineers, accountants...

■ **How do you view Regent’s role within North American Evangelicalism?**

Regent has a place in the wider spectrum of theological schools as an example of theologically serious, culturally engaged, transdenominational Evangelicalism. It has been a pioneer in some ways as the first

theological school primarily intended for the laity, and by developing an extensive, internationally known summer school program. Regent has also pioneered as an evangelical thought leader in the areas of Christian engagement with the arts, in marketplace theology and in spiritual theology.

■ **You are leading in what has been publicly acknowledged as a challenging time in Regent’s history. What are you learning right now about leadership?**

It’s essential to face reality. Sometimes that means making very difficult or unpopular decisions for the sake of an organization’s viability and long-term flourishing. There’s a natural tendency to want to avoid as

long as possible making budget reductions when it means people will lose their jobs. One major role for the leader in such situations is to absorb the community’s pain. Clear and timely communication is the biggest challenge. People appreciate that I accepted personal responsibility for the decisions made.

■ **How do you take care of yourself as a leader? What feeds you?**

Like most leaders I am very aware of the importance of self-care for busy, under pressure people, but less than perfect at taking proper care of myself. Even so, I have a strong commitment to keeping the Sabbath as a day of real rest, and to spending time daily in prayer and scriptural meditation, especially soaking in the Psalms. I am sustained by the prayers of many people, and by the wise counsel of a close circle of trusted peers who have no connections with Regent and who give honest feedback and valuable advice.

■ **Top leadership book recommendation?**

If I could choose just one, it would be Henri Nouwen’s *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (Crossroad Publishing, 1992).

■ **What is your top leadership advice?**

Listen. The most important leadership skill is listening well – to God, to peers and mentors, and to the people you are serving. Really listening helps to prevent the problem of falling too much in love with your own ideas or theories, or being isolated from the real concerns of the people you are leading.

■ **Heroes?**

Rev. John Stott (d. 2011). His integrity, humility, biblical faithfulness, passion for Christ and global vision of the Church are truly exemplary. /FT

600

AVERAGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO ATTEND REGENT COLLEGE EACH TERM (FULL- AND PART-TIME), FROM OVER 40 COUNTRIES AND REPRESENTING MORE THAN 30 DENOMINATIONS

▶ Regent College (www.regent-college.edu) is an affiliate educational institution of the EFC (www.theEFC.ca/AffiliateSchools). Find more Q&As at www.faithtoday.ca/QandA.

Truth and reconciliation

From the mid-1800s to the late 1990s, Aboriginal children in Canada were removed from their homes and families and placed in residential schools run by churches and religious orders in collaboration with the Federal Government. The vast majority experienced neglect, suffered and were robbed of their culture and language. Where can healing begin?

On June 2 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its 94 recommendations. The commission was mandated to inform Canadians about the devastating history and impact of Indian residential schools and guide a process of national reconciliation.

Several recommendations specifically address church apologies and reconciliation:

We call upon the Pope to issue an apology to survivors, their families, and communities for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic-run residential schools. We call for that apology to be similar to the 2010 apology issued to Irish victims of abuse, and to occur within one year of the issuing of this report, and to be delivered by the Pope in Canada.

We call upon church parties to the Settlement Agreement to

develop ongoing education strategies to ensure that their respective congregations learn about their church's role in colonization, the history and legacy of residential schools, and why apologies to former residential school students, their families and communities were necessary.

The report also calls upon leaders of church parties "in collaboration with Indigenous spiritual leaders, survivors, schools of theology, seminaries and other religious training centres, to develop and teach curricula for all student clergy, and clergy and staff who work in Aboriginal communities, on the need to respect Indigenous spirituality in its own rights, the history and legacy of residential schools and the role of the church parties in that system." The report asks church communities to take responsibility for "the history and legacy of religious conflict in Aboriginal families and communities, and the responsibility that churches have to mitigate such conflicts and prevent spiritual violence." /FT

1996

THE YEAR THE LAST FEDERALLY RUN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL CLOSED – GORDON'S SCHOOL IN PUNNICHY, SASK.
WWW.LEGACYOFHOPE.CA

150+

YEARS THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM WAS IN PLACE IN CANADA
WWW.LEGACYOFHOPE.CA

80,000

NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL SURVIVORS ESTIMATED TO BE ALIVE TODAY

"Notwithstanding the good intent and care of many who worked in the schools, it is clear that Indian residential schools, in policy and in practice, were an assault on Indigenous families, culture, language and spiritual traditions, and that great harm was done. We continue to acknowledge and regret our part in that legacy."

—from the **JOINT STATEMENT** by The Anglican Church of Canada, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Roman Catholic Entities Parties to the Settlement Agreement, The United Church of Canada, and the Jesuits of English Canada

What can you do . . .

Read the recommendations of the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission** yourself at www.trc.ca. The site includes the latest news and resources to educate Canadians on the legacy of residential schools. Join in prayer for healing and restoration of healthy relationships among all Canadians.

 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.



Stories woven together

Black-Mennonite interaction in Canada

We are used to thinking of Canada as a as a country made up of immigrants from other places – first the Native peoples who came across the Bering Strait from Asia, then the French and British from Europe, and more recently many other peoples from across the world. Canada has a long history of cultural diversity.

Multiculturalism is part of our national self-image. Often we describe it as a mosaic – a composite image created by many separate tiles. While this metaphor has merits, it can also create an impression that Canada’s cultural groups are distinct “blocs” with separate lives and histories.

However, “Our stories are connected, often in surprising ways,” says Dr. Tim Epp, associate professor of sociology at Redeemer University College. In his study of the way Canadians think about Black (or African-Canadian) history, Epp was surprised to stumble across several connections between Black history in Canada and the history of his own community, the Mennonites.

Both groups have long and relatively well-known histories in Canada.

Many Black Canadians came to Canada as British loyalists during the American Revolution. Others arrived from the United States in the first half of the 19th century as part of their flight from slavery, following the famous Underground Railroad. In terms of religious convictions, most Black people in Canada in the 19th century were evangelical Methodists or Baptists.

Early Mennonite arrivals to Canada took place around the same

time, beginning during the American Revolution and continuing into the first half of the 19th century. Most of these Mennonites were of Swiss-German descent and were united by their Anabaptist religious convictions of believer’s baptism and pacifism.

Typically we think of these as separate histories, but in his research Epp has discovered many intersections.

In the 19th century, Waterloo County in Southern Ontario was

Both Black and Mennonite Canadians had histories of migration to Canada to escape oppression or persecution. Both knew what it was like to be an outsider.

home to both a large Mennonite population and several Black inhabitants.

Abraham Weber, a well-known local pioneer, employed a Black man named Levi Carroll. When Carroll was injured in the course of his work, Weber gave him and his family some land for a house and garden. In fact, they lived in the former one-room schoolhouse that still stands in Waterloo Park as a historic site.

In another example of interaction in the area, an African-American Presbyterian missionary, John Frederick Augustus Sykes Fayette, set up a school in what is now the city of Kitchener, which attracted interest from local Mennonites and was attended by some of their children.

Epp has also uncovered evidence of closer family ties. There are several accounts of marriages between Blacks and Mennonites, and in at least one instance a Mennonite family (the Kolbs) adopted a

Black child (Charlie Jones). As a result Jones grew up fluent in Pennsylvania Dutch, the German dialect spoken by many Mennonites, and ended up part of an interracial threshing team.

Similar patterns of interaction seem to have existed in other places in Canada, such as the Black settlement around Shiloh Baptist Church near Maidstone, Sask., or the one at Queen’s Bush in Wellington County, Ont.

Were these interactions simply due to the coincidence of geography? Or did they point to deeper links between the two communities? We can’t know for sure, but Epp thinks there may have been a level of sympathy between the two groups based on shared experiences. Both Black and Mennonite Canadians had histories of migration to Canada to escape oppression or persecution. Both knew what it was like to be an outsider.

Although there is evidence that a handful of Mennonites in the U.S. owned slaves, most Mennonites were opposed to slavery. In some cases they actively helped establish settlements of former slaves in Canada, like Queen’s Bush.


There are also intriguing instances of religious sympathy. In one example, young Mennonites reportedly found their way into a Black Methodist church service, drawn there by the powerful sound of the congregation singing spirituals.

Epp concludes that this history reminds us not to isolate our stories from each other. Instead of a mosaic, he suggests thinking of multiculturalism as a tapestry in which the individual threads are woven together. “It’s often more enriching,” he says, “to find ourselves in each other’s stories.” /FT



30,000–40,000

NUMBER OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS WHO CAME TO CANADA VIA THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

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



MESSY FAITH

SHEILA WRAY GREGOIRE

What the Duggar abuse scandal teaches us

Covering up and quick answers only bring more harm

This spring we watched the bizarre spectacle of some Christians defending the Duggar parents' decision (stars of the reality show *19 Kids and Counting*) to do nothing for a year after it was revealed their son Josh was a sexual abuser, then to send him for manual labour instead of proper biblical counselling. The parents also kept a TV appearance on how to instill healthy sexuality despite the reality that their son had molested some of their daughters and at least one girl from outside the family.

I watched as friends posted on Facebook, "It was in the past!" "Judge not lest ye be judged." "He was a teen and he made a mistake," or, my personal favourite, "It was only touching"

Sometimes, when high profile Christians like the Duggars come under fire, we close ranks. We think that by silencing criticism we will somehow win. The truth is the exact opposite. When the public sees Christians covering up sin, they run in the opposite direction.

I write, speak and blog about marriage. If I had had an affair early in my marriage, and even if we were completely healed from it, I could not have that ministry without owning up. The power of the Holy Spirit flows when the attention is on self-exalting Christ, not self-preservation.

King David and the Apostle Paul were both open about their sinful pasts and their present struggles. They knew their weakness showed the power of God. The Duggars chose to portray a family that did



Parents Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar from the reality show *19 Kids and Counting*.

not struggle sexually, despite this elephant in the room.

Authenticity is far more effective in evangelism than perfection. If the Duggars could not be authentic (because to do so would mean divulging secrets about their minor children), they should have refused to do their reality show.

But that's not my main criticism.

Everything we know about healing from sexual abuse shows it is usually not quick, or a one-step process. A person can deal with the abuse, but then something will trigger it even years later – hitting puberty, getting married, having a child of your own. At each stage a deeper level of healing is needed.

By saying that the girls were "healed" because they "forgave," when they were so young – at least one was only six – the Duggar parents showed they did not understand the healing process for sexual abuse.

When supporters say, "The girls were healed back then, why dredge

it up now?" we show an extreme insensitivity to those who were sexually abused. All survivors deserve room to heal, and that includes the freedom to be honest. Thrusting the Duggar girls on a reality TV show where their sexuality was one of the main focuses was hugely inappropriate.

Can any good come from this tragedy? It can, if we use our reaction as a litmus test for how we would handle sexual abuse allegations. Each year at my church, those who work with children or youth must take the Plan to Protect training program. We're taught that if a minor ever discloses abuse, we are required by law to contact Children's Aid and the police. As we're sitting in the seminar, all of us nod, picturing a poor, lost, unkempt girl telling us about her creepy father.

In theory, we believe we'd call the police in a heartbeat. The Duggar case makes us pause. Most sexual abuse victims won't have greasy hair and creepy parents. They'll look like the Duggar girls, and their parents may be in leadership.

When the news broke, many people started to justify the Duggars' decision not to notify the authorities immediately. If that was our reaction, I fear that, God forbid, if a real-life child did disclose something to us, we may rationalize it away as well. Most sexual abuse victims have to tell multiple people before they are believed. When adults dismiss them, they are further victimized.

Sexual abuse is in our churches, even in families that look perfect. Jesus does heal, but that healing will only happen if we treat abuse with the care it deserves – not by pushing quick forgiveness and handling things solely within the church or the family. /FT

Sexual abuse is in our churches, even in families that look perfect.

32

PERCENTAGE OF CANADIAN ADULTS WHO EXPERIENCED CHILD ABUSE (CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION JOURNAL)

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

PHOTO: DCL



Caring for the global poor

A businessperson's response to billions of hurting people

What does it look like for us to care for the poor in our increasingly globalized society? We are more aware than ever of the starvation in Somalia, the suffering of orphans in Sierra Leone and the loneliness and abandonment experienced by widows in Rwanda. We live in a world that is “groaning as in the pains of childbirth” (Romans 8:22).

Many organizations exist to respond to these needs, but the complexity of economic systems often makes it hard to tell clearly whether our international efforts are helping or hindering.

In her book *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2009), Dambisa Moyo tells stories of ineffective and harmful aid, such as the donated mosquito nets meant to fight malaria that destroyed the businesses of local suppliers and the jobs they created.

How do we personally respond to complex international problems that create extreme suffering?

In our context as businesspeople, three components to our response are most important: 1) be obedient 2) be wise in our generosity and 3) defend the weak.

1. Be obedient

Our first response should always be faithful obedience to what God has personally called us to, and trust He will take care of the rest. One of His gifts to us is a deep peace as we rest in His promises. The weight of the world is not our burden to bear.

On the other hand, God often calls us into difficult obedience, always for our own good and the good

of His Kingdom. Remember Jesus asking the rich young ruler to give his possessions to the poor? Jesus identified something that gripped the ruler's heart and would prevent full obedience. God will sometimes call us to give up the thing we love most so we can experience the joy of loving Him the most.

God will sometimes call us to give up the thing we love most so we can experience the joy of loving Him the most.

In our care for the global poor, God will work miracles with our faithful, loving obedience. It looks different for everyone, from the prayer warriors to the aid workers, but the attitude toward God is the same.

2. Give generously

Our second response is to give generously from the blessings God has given us. Although we often struggle with the relationship between sacrificial giving, wise financial stewardship, caring for the poor and trusting God to provide, we can find guidance in 2 Corinthians 9:6–7: “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Like a child who empties her piggy bank to help with her parents' mortgage payments, we could literally give away everything we have and God would provide for us.

At the same time, God encourages us to steward our resources with wisdom, as we find in several

of Jesus' parables. One of the blessings that comes from wise stewardship is raising our standard of giving, as the Apostle Paul reportedly said in Acts 20:35: “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

3. Defend the weak


Defending the weak is our third response. God's heart for the “poor and the oppressed” (Psalm 82:3) echoes throughout Scripture. As businesspeople, we have a special responsibility to use our influence to “act justly and to love mercy” (Micah 6:8).

As we consider our role toward the billions of hurting people in the world, let us have the courage to follow 1 John 3:17–18: “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

What does it look like to care for the global poor? We show the same care for others as Jesus showed for us. There is no greater joy than our unconditional surrender of everything we have and are into God's hand as we faithfully obey Him, give with wisdom and generosity, and courageously defend the weak and oppressed. /FT

1.2
BILLION

NUMBER OF PEOPLE
IN EXTREME POVERTY
IN THE WORLD TODAY
WWW.WORLDBANK.ORG

 Keith Brink is cofounder and CEO of www.Twassistant.com, which helps local businesses integrate virtual employees from developing countries into their team, creating stable, middle-class jobs in areas of highest need. Find more in this series at www.faithtoday.ca/BusinessMatters.



SYRIAN WAR DEVASTATES CHURCHES

SIXTY-THREE CHURCHES have been damaged or destroyed so far during four years of civil war in Syria, says the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR).

In a 21-page report the rights group, known for being antigovernment, launches a withering attack on Syrian president Bashar al-Assad's forces, claiming they were responsible for almost two-thirds of the attacks.

The report, *Targeting Christian Places of Worship in Syria*, took five months to compile, says the SNHR, which claims it verified each of its photos and videos that were provided by locals or obtained from social media. However, the group acknowledges it "might not have been able to document all incidents."

Both extremist groups and government and opposition forces are accused of committing war crimes through "deliberate targeting" of churches, and not just "random" attacks. All three are also accused of breaching international law by using churches as military bases.

"Christians have become trapped between the fire of the al-Assad government and the hell of extremist groups," says Dr. Wael Aleji, spokesperson for the SNHR, in the report.

—WWW.WORLDWATCHMONITOR.ORG

HILLSONG UNITED WINS BILLBOARD MUSIC AWARD

AUSTRALIAN WORSHIP BAND Hillsong United took home the award for Top Christian Artist at the Billboard Music Awards in May, shortly before debuting its fourth studio album *Empires*.

Billboard Music Awards are based on American year-end chart performance according to Nielsen data for sales, number of downloads and total airplay.

"At this point it's all so far beyond us that everything and nothing is a surprise," said Joel Houston, pastor of the Sydney megachurch where the band is based. "We've been riding on



At a remote Siberian village inaccessible by land and two days' travel from the nearest pharmacy, Canadian doctor Bill Etkorn (left) dispensed medicine in 2011 to heal Sergey (right), a retired trapper with bacterial conjunctivitis. Sergey also received Jesus as his Saviour.

this scandalous grace for so long and throwing everything we have into not taking a moment of it for granted."

An estimated 50 million people sing their songs every Sunday.

—WWW.CHRIStIANPOST.COM

MALAYSIA RULES ON USING "ALLAH"

AFTER SEVEN YEARS of legal battles, the Malaysian high court ruled that a Catholic newspaper can no longer use the word "Allah" for God in its publication because it could confuse Muslim Malays and inadvertently promote Christianity among them. The Arabic name for God has been used in Malaysia for hundreds of years, ever since Europeans first spread Christianity there.

In a similar case, the court ordered eight CDs with Allah in the titles to be returned to 33-year-old Jill Ireland. They had been seized from her at an airport in 2008 when she tried to bring them into the country from Indonesia. But the case isn't finished, as Ireland has appealed to resolve the issue over usage of the word.

The National Evangelical Christian Federation Malaysia sees her case as "another serious attempt to strip, restrict, and alter the right to profess and practise one's religion."

—WWW.WORLDWATCHMONITOR.ORG

TEMPLETON DIES

JOHN M. TEMPLETON JR., a former pediatric surgeon who was president and chair of the John Templeton Foundation, died May 16 at his home in Bryn Mawr, Pa. He was 75.

His father, Sir John Templeton, created the Templeton Fund in 1954, and established the foundation in 1987 to support what it describes as "discoveries relating to the Big Questions of human purpose and ultimate reality." He died in 2008.

From 1987 to 2007, the foundation's endowment grew from \$28 million to \$3.34 billion, with 188 grants awarded last year mainly to universities and scholars. —WWW.WASHINGTONPOST.COM

"The only way to save this generation is to engage them in the disciple-making process, and partner with them in ministering within their communities."

—Bambang Budijanti, 4/14 Window Movement Chair

(AT A 4/14 WINDOW MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP RETREAT AND ASIA-PACIFIC YOUTH CONGRESS IN BALI, INDONESIA)

Debra Fieguth of Kingston, Ont., is a senior writer at *Faith Today*. Find more of these columns at www.faithtoday.ca/GlobalVillage.



GUEST COLUMN

CAROLYN ARENDS

See no evil?

Three questions to ask of the art we receive and create

Last year some Christian artist friends urged my husband and me to see a production at a local theatre. The play contained some of the most profanity-laden dialogue we had ever heard. And yet, as the story unfolded, we realized we were witnessing a profoundly redemptive story – one that pointed surprisingly and unmistakably to the gospel of Jesus.

We left the theatre moved and confused. Without the gritty language, would the play have been able to point so powerfully to grace in the midst of brokenness? Was it okay to expose ourselves to the language for the sake of the story?

Those of us who love stories (told in all the various art forms available to us) face a quandary. What if to tell a story honestly, unsavoury or downright evil behaviours must be portrayed? The Apostle Paul encouraged us to train our minds on “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, [and] whatever is admirable” (Philippians 4:8).

Does that mean we are constrained – either as receivers or creators of art – to keep certain topics or words off limits?

In a class I was teaching on faith and the arts, I struggled through this question with a group of college students. We recognized that factors like maturity and personal history are important. Some things aren’t appropriate for children, and mature viewers might need to avoid any portrayals that are “stumbling blocks” in their particular context. And we could all agree on extreme cases of exploitative and gratuitous sex, violence and abusive language that are clearly out-

side the bounds of the Philippians 4:8 mandate.

But we were less sure what to do with greyer areas.

What if the questionable elements in a story are not there to titillate, but rather because they are an important part of telling the truth about the human condition? The Bible itself contains many frank and unflinching depictions of

What if the questionable elements in a story are not there to titillate, but rather because they are an important part of telling the truth about the human condition?

human depravity. If we were to legalistically and thoughtlessly apply the Philippians 4:8 mandate to Scripture, we’d have to censor a good deal of what is there.

Despite several lively debates, we never did arrive at a clear consensus. But we did settle on a framework that helped us at least begin to more thoughtfully and prayerfully engage with stories of all kinds.

When tasked with evaluating a piece of art in any genre, we asked ourselves three questions, inspired by the Church’s long history of appropriating (quite appropriately, I think) Plato’s three Transcendentals:

Is it good?

Is it true?

Is it beautiful?


Is it good? – involves ethics and morals. It requires us to consider not only whether a story contains offensive words or scenes, but also whether the worldview it tacitly conveys is an ethical one. It might be possible for a film to be rated G, but embody an insidious worldview in which material success is con-

sidered the ultimate meaning in life, or people are exploited as nothing more than means to ends. Conversely, it might be possible for a movie to contain violence, sex or language but provide a perspective on the human condition that moves the viewer toward a more ethical or moral stance.

Is it true? – is an even more theological question. Does the story – whether it is fact or fantasy or something in-between – say something honest about the world and the people who inhabit it? Does it hint at anything true about God? Even if the worldview in a story is in conflict with the gospel, can it teach us something true about the perspectives and needs of the people who hold it?

Is it beautiful? – has to do with aesthetics. It asks whether the art in question is well crafted and successfully formed. A depraved story may be breathtakingly depicted. (In such instances we should exercise caution.) Or, as is sometimes the case in explicitly “Christian” storytelling, a good and true story may be shabbily crafted. (Caution is required here too! Please!)

With these three questions, we begin a process of discernment that each of us will be working through for the rest of our lives. We might decide that a story lacking in one of the Transcendentals is still worthy of our attention due to its strengths in another. Conversely, we might discover that even a story we deem to be good or true or beautiful is out of bounds if it cultivates behaviour in us that is not. Most essentially, we’ll know that our challenge is to support and create work ourselves that is deeply good, unflinchingly true and as beautiful as we can possibly make it. /FT

 Carolyn Arends is a musician and author in Surrey, B.C. She has taught at Pacific Life Bible College, Columbia Bible College and ACTS Seminary.



Misrepresenting Jesus and Islam

Study calls out errors in Reza Aslan's research

When Muslim intellectual Reza Aslan says his prayers at night, I wonder if he thanks Allah for Lauren Green, the religion correspondent at Fox News Channel. Two years ago her interview with Aslan over his book *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* (Random House, 2013) went viral. Green, an evangelical Christian, was trashed in much of the media, and Aslan's book shot to the top of bestseller lists.

Just after I wrote my critique on Aslan's *Zealot* (in *Faith Today*, Sep/Oct 2013) and Craig Evans, the New Testament scholar at Acadia Divinity College, wrote a searing review for *Christianity Today*, we joined forces to do further study. This time we added scrutiny of Aslan's views on Islam, based on his bestseller *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (Random House, 2011 [2005]).

In spite of his media-darling status, it turns out Aslan cannot be trusted on Islam or Jesus. We document our case in *Getting Jesus Right: How Muslims Get Jesus and Islam Wrong*, just released from Castle Quay Books, where we use Aslan as a test case for studying the Christian-Muslim divide (www.gettingjesusright.com).

Despite its bestseller status, Aslan's *Zealot* got torn to pieces by virtually every major scholarly reviewer, whether evangelical (Robert Gundry), mainline Christian, Jewish (Allan Nadler, for example) or secular. In fact, it is hard to find another study of Jesus as thoroughly decimated for factual mistakes, ideological bias, and outdated and shallow research.

Aslan told Green he used about a thousand books, but his bibliography lists just 159. He told her he quotes "every scholar" who agrees with him and "every scholar" who disagrees. Not even remotely true. Craig Evans and I provide a long list of leading scholars he never refers to once, including Richard Bauckham, Bart Ehrman, Simon Joseph, Craig Keener and Paula Fredriksen.

Maybe Aslan was having a Brian Williams moment ("misremembering" his experiences like the NBC news anchor who lost his job earlier this year).

Aslan is a terrible guide on Islam as well. While we are glad he promotes a moderate version of Islam, Aslan is misleading on almost every major topic, whether Muhammad, the Qur'an, women in Islam, the Crusades, jihad or terrorism.

Given Aslan's high estimate of Muhammad, it is not surprising he ignores historical skepticism about the prophet's life, for example by Patricia Crone of Princeton or Andrew Rippin at the University of Victoria. A popular case for this critique is available in Tom Holland's *In the Shadow of the Sword* (Abacus, 2013).

Aslan also ignores traditional Muslim accounts that offend modern readers, for example Muhammad ordering the torture of prisoners, sanctioning sexual assault on female slaves and ordering the death of critics.

Though Aslan is very skeptical of the Bible, he does little to engage skepticism about the Qur'an. He does not address all the evidence that the Qur'an is a human text created in reaction to Jewish and Christian oral traditions circulating in Arabia

and Syria in the 7th century. He ignores its deficiencies and offers tortured explanations of various teachings, as on wife beating (Surah 4:34) or the infamous sword verses (Surah 9:5, for example).

He also gives insufficient attention to the way the terror texts in the Qur'an led directly to the military expansion of Islam (see *In God's Path* by Robert Hoyland, [Oxford University Press, 2013]), the tortured history between Sunni and Shia Muslims, and the persecution of Jews and Christians (see Michael Coren's *Hatred*, for example [Signal, 2014]).

Aslan does depart from traditional Islam on one important issue – the death of Jesus. While Aslan denies the Easter story, he does affirm, contrary to the vast majority of Muslims, that Jesus died on the cross. Aslan knows full well that the historical evidence for the death of Jesus at Calvary is overwhelming, contrary to Surah 4:157 in the Qur'an.


Jay Smith, the famous missionary to Muslims, has argued that the Muslim denial of the death of Jesus is Islam's greatest mistake. At least Aslan does not make that one.

Overall Aslan remains a sad figure. Once an Evangelical, he allowed rationalism to destroy his trust in the Gospels and abandoned the Bible for the Qur'an. His portrait of Jesus has little to do with the only trustworthy historical sources – the New Testament documents. In *Getting Jesus Right* we urge people of all faiths who want to find Jesus to go there. /FT

Aslan does affirm, contrary to the vast majority of Muslims, that Jesus died on the cross.



LIONSGATE FILMS BOUGHT RIGHTS FOR A MOVIE BASED ON ZEALOT, PLANNED FOR 2016, TO BE PRODUCED BY DAVID HEYMAN (GRAVITY, HARRY POTTER) WITH A SCREENPLAY ADAPTED BY JAMES SCHAMUS (CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON).

 James A. Beverley is professor of Christian thought and ethics at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. Find more of these columns at www.faithtoday.ca/ReligionWatch.



EZRA CANADA



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“Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders”.

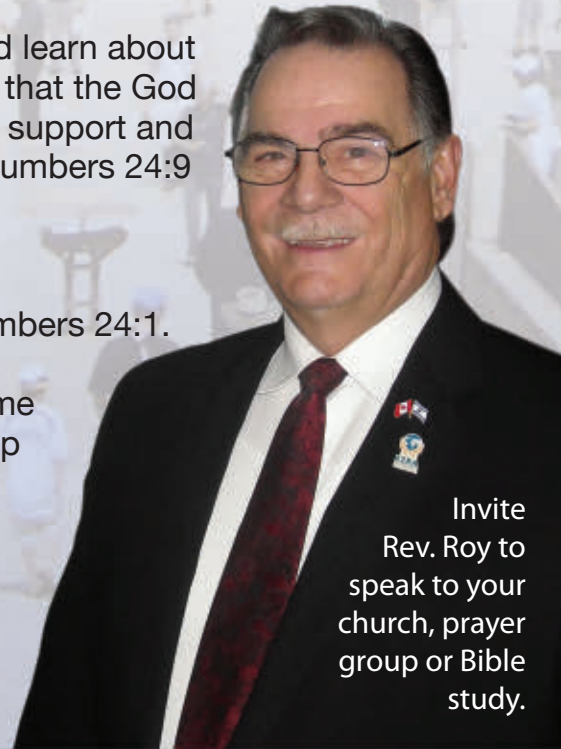
This Scripture declares that God will use the Gentiles to help get His Chosen people back to their promised land of Israel in the last days. That’s you and me, folks. There are only two kinds of people in God’s economy, Jews and Gentiles, and if you are not one, then you are definitely the other. Ezra Canada is a Christian Humanitarian ministry that assists God’s Chosen people to escape abject poverty and persecution in 10 of the former USSR countries and South America, and helps in the fulfillment of Isaiah 49:22 by returning them to their Promised Land. With over 500 “Fishermen” on the ground in those countries, we have assisted some 70,000 Jewish people (Olim) make their (Aliyah) back to their Promised Land over the past 20 years.

Help us help the “Apple of God’s eye” !!! Visit our website and learn about us. Use our PayPal link to donate and join in on the blessings that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has in store for those who love, support and pray for His Chosen people as outlined in Gen. 12:3, 27:29, Numbers 24:9 and Psalm 122:6.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and God’s Chosen people.
“And Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel”. Numbers 24:1.

Yes, **you** can please the Lord by joining with us in this End Time ministry of Ezra Canada. Time is short. Israel needs all the help the Christian community can provide. Will you help ?

Rev. Roy Trépanier
Executive Director
Ezra Canada
info@ezracanada.org



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WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD SUPPORT ISRAEL!!!

BY REV. ROY TREPANIER

Will the world ever learn? Will the politicians ever learn? Will the people ever learn? After 2,000 years of documented history, after being persecuted and pummeled, dispersed and distressed, harassed and harangued, massacred and mutilated, Israel exists, ALIVE and VIBRANT, a virtual powerhouse in the Middle East and a bastion of Democracy where Democracy should NOT survive.

This tiny nation, an example of fortitude and strength, dogged determination and grit, victorious in defense and a global leader in business and economics, a people to be admired and respected, emulated and praised for their sagacity and ingenuity, still stands virtually alone with most of the world either against her or indifferent to her plight. Why, you ask? Why should a people that have produced 187 Nobel Laureates (from a tiny global population of about 14 million), whose medical and technological inventions and achievements have benefited almost every person on the planet, in one form or another, why should they be constantly ostracized and emasculated?

As an Evangelical Christian, my simple answer will not satisfy the secular world or the casual observer, but I challenge them to give a better response, with some level of proof for their arguments. You see, my response lies in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who has Covenantally and contractually guaranteed to bless the entire world through them, "In thee shall all the families of the world be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). Numerous other Scriptures attest to the fact that Israel is God's Chosen Land, Jerusalem is God's Chosen City and the Jews are God's Chosen People. My response is simply that the world is anti-God, and, more precisely, anti-the God of Israel. It is easy to understand that a world full of "gods" of every kind that proffer many different paths to "eternal bliss" would conflict with a God that claims only one way to Heaven. But, one would not so easily comprehend that the offspring of that God, the Christian church that has irrevocable and indisputable Hebraic roots, would include so much misunderstanding and even willful demonization of the root which they are grafted into. Replacement Theology is that contrived, misguided doctrine that has infected Christendom for centuries by claiming that because the Jews rejected their Christ, all the Abrahamic promises were taken from them and given to the Christian church. Thankfully, there is an ever larger and growing Evangelical community that has and is dispelling this horrible lie, and herein lies one of, and I believe, the most important reasons WHY Christians should support the "apple of God's eye", His "firstborn".

Christians of every stripe and denomination should seriously study the Scriptures relating to the "Jewishness" of their Christ, His Apostles and the entirety of the early church. They should pray and seek God's wisdom in this regard, and then challenge the teachings of their ministers and pastors where they differ from Scripture.

With Israel under the threat of annihilation from another modern day Haman, Hassan Rouhani of Iran, with ISIS of the Islamic world forming a global Caliphate once again, it has never been more critical for the Christian world to come together in unity to support Israel as

commanded by God in Romans 15:27: "For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their (Jews) spiritual things, their DUTY is also to minister to them in carnal (material) things".

I would say that obedience to the Lord's command is a good reason "why" Christians should pray for and support His chosen people.

As well, in Deuteronomy 7:6, God states: "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above ALL people that are upon the face of the earth". Now this is a Scripture that sticks in the craw of most religions and "religious" people, but if the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob places that much importance on His people Israel. I believe that we, as Christians, would be wise to do the same.

Once one has come into agreement with the above, by prayer and study of the Word, how does one begin, where does one start to fulfill God's commandment to "minister" to His chosen people. What practical things can any individual Christian do for the people and the nation of Israel that would please Almighty Jehovah. The first "how" that I would recommend, and most obvious, is prayer. Prayer "moves the hand of God" and should always be a Christian's first line of attack in any situation. Prayer for their safety and God's continuous Hand of protection upon the land and the people. As most Jews today are secular or agnostic, prayer for them to return to their Judaic roots, their own God Jehovah and for

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their salvation would be appropriate. Prayer that God would continue to defend them from their enemies, as He has done for centuries, (when they were living in obedience to His commands) would be another positive avenue. The best thing is to seek out God's advice and listen for that still small voice that will guide you in how best to pray for our Jewish brothers and sisters.

The second "how" is to study and learn the history of the Jewish Nation, including the Holocaust up to present day. They have a history that is unique in the annals of nations, and have paid a horrific price down through the ages for being the "chosen people" and for their perceived wrongdoings, some rightly but most wrongly. For the Christian, it should go without saying that we owe our faith and our salvation to the Jewish lineage of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to the dedication of the Jew for the preservation of the Scriptures. Against all odds and throughout the most horrendous of trials and sufferings, the nation of Israel, as a people, have recorded and maintained the Scriptures accuracy and content as originally written, and this attested to by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls as one of many incontrovertible proofs. Learning about the Hebraic roots of my Christian faith has been one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences of my 71 years and I highly recommend it for all who wish a deeper understanding of their Christian faith and a closer walk with their Lord. Far too many Christians are unaware or uninformed that the Jesus they follow

was a Torah believing, Feast observing Jewish Rabbi who taught in the Synagogues, and, they also miss out on the richness and depth of the Word of God in its original language, as well as innumerable blessings that God promises for those who bless His people.

The next "how" is assisting the Jewish people in a practical, meaningful way on a regular or ongoing basis. There are numerous ministries and organizations that work with the Jewish people in providing food, clothing, and medicines for the poor in the Holy Land. And the number of poor in Israel grows almost daily. The cost of protecting herself and her people from terrorists, suicide bombers and enemies on her borders exacts an unbelievable financial toll on the Government of Israel and has cut deeply into the social services that she is able to provide. A brief Google search will bring up many of these wonderful groups and the people who have stood up and stand in the gap to fill in for these desperate needs. And there are others, like the ministry that I represent, Ezra Canada. As the Executive Director of Ezra Canada, (www.ezracanada.org) we partner with Ezra International in 14 different countries in the Aliyah, (10 are former USSR countries), assisting Jewish people to return to their God given land of Israel, (app. 70,000 to date), and to escape the poverty and persecution that they still face on a daily basis. (Anti Semitism today exceeds that of 1939 Germany, and is rising by the minute). God's chosen people have many, many physical and material needs and there are numerous ways to help, if one so desires.

Another way, and this is in addition to the other methods described above (not in place of), is to befriend a Jewish person or family. In simple, honest, loving Christian style, become a friend to a Jew and get to know them. Become a true friend and do what a true friend would do...love and respect them. Talk, laugh, help and enjoy getting to know them. Try to avoid "religious" talk. Remember, they had God for 4,000 years before we were "invited" to join "their" family. True Christian love is described as follows: "Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him" (author: Saul of Tarsus, a "Jew among Jews" 1 Cor. 13:4-7, Living Bible).

If one takes this Christian approach, I know that they will build strong, enriching relationships with many of their Jewish neighbors or acquaintances, in their neighborhoods or their workplaces, and the resulting friendships will become an example for many others to emulate. In addition, they will also call down the blessings of Gen. 12:3; 27:29, Numbers 24:9 and Psalm 122:6 into their own lives by their obedience to His commands regarding His "Chosen" people.

Visit our website at www.ezracanada.org for more information on how you can be blessed through supporting the ministry of Ezra Canada.



REGINALD BIBBY, sometimes affectionately known as “Bad News Bibby,” is a University of Lethbridge social trends analyst well known for his work on charting the rise, the fall – and apparently the rise again – of religion in Canada.

Together with the Angus Reid Institute, Bibby recently completed a comprehensive new study on religion in Canada. An online survey of 3,041 Canadians updates us on the religious beliefs and behaviours of our neighbours and ourselves. The survey is gaining attention because it challenges the pervasive belief in the death of religion in Canada.

Faith Today spoke to Reg Bibby about the survey, why Canada isn’t as secular as we thought it was, what churches could be doing – and the epiphany he had in the shower.

Faith Today: *The results of the survey became a Maclean's magazine cover story earlier this year. Here is what they said: "Religion in Canada isn't declining nearly as fast as we think. A remarkable new survey finds out what Canadians really believe." How is it remarkable?*

Reg Bibby: It is remarkable in the sense that we are documenting the reality of polarization in Canada over the topic of secularization. That is the broader story that *Maclean's* started to pick up on. Everyone has been talking about secularization in Canada; that idea is taken for granted by everyone, including church leaders.

But the data we are gathering is documenting a very different story. Rather than having a Canada that is secular and becoming more so – where things are bad and getting worse – what we have is a very vibrant core of people who continue to value faith. We have another core who are explicitly rejecting religion, and we have a third sector, probably the biggest one, who are in-between, neither rejecting nor embracing.

FT: *Is polarization better news than secularization?*

RB: The secularization model has become so pervasive. I was teaching it for three decades in my classes. Everyone would scratch their heads about why the U.S.

didn't fit that model. Church and denominational leaders buy into it. To even challenge the secularization stuff is difficult because it's so pervasive, and taken for granted.

I've been questioning it, and discovering that some of my heroes from seminary days like Peter Berger and Harvey Cox have said they were wrong. Religion is very vibrant in so many parts of the world.

In terms of the work in Canada, when we look at people, what has always been difficult to make sense of is there's been a consistent core of people who continue to value faith.

If you say maybe the norm for Protestants is not to attend every week, but twice a month, instead of those charts plummeting downward, you find that things have been relatively stable since the '70s.

And now, largely because of immigration, there is a levelling off, and for Evangelicals a slight rising of the numbers. This pattern of some embracing, some rejecting and the group in the middle, this is not unique to Canada.

Thanks to Pew and Gallup we have all this global data, that if you look at a place like Nigeria or Ghana, you find that there are people who are not embracing faith, some who reject it, some who are in the middle.

That pattern is a dynamic pattern. If you think of it as a continuum of embrace, rejection and the middle, remember that every dynamic thing can swing back and forth. That's what makes it an exciting thing to look at, instead of this static thing, that is, "We were once religious and now we're not."

Polarization reminds us that we are incredibly varied to our posture toward religion. If people are really embracing religion in Canada, politicians and so on have to allow for that. It means there is still lots of life, but everyone has to make room for everyone.

FT: *Your research also highlights how immigration is boosting the numbers of religious people in Canada. Can you explain?*

RB: One of the big new important variables is the reality of immigration. What immigration is doing to religion patterns in Canada is a story that is centrally important.

The proverbial bottom line is that increasing numbers of people coming to Canada, especially from Asian countries, are typically more religious than people here, whether we are talking Pentecostals, Catholics or Muslims. They are injecting all kinds of new life into the Church. Catholics, for example, don't have a thing to worry about in terms of their future.

In the last ten years of Statistics Canada data, 25 per cent or so of immigrants are Roman Catholic, another 20 per cent are Protestant. They are not only coming, but when we look at their levels of involvement, we are asking “To what extent do you embrace, reject or somewhere in-between?” Immigrants are far more likely to say they embrace.

FT: *Are immigrants who arrive in Canadian churches finding what they thought they would find? Or are they finding denominations very different from what they left at home?*

RB: No question about it. When we’re sorting it through, that is a second important part of all this. One of the questions is to what extent do people coming here from other countries find affinity with groups they think they should find affinity with? After all, they have the same name. Then there is the question of retention. Can the next generation of immigrants be retained or will we find slippage? People always ask the question with Chinese immigrants and their offspring finding the back door.

FT: *What questions should you be asking if you are on the board of one of those churches?*

RB: If I were on a board of some Lutheran church, or say a Korean Presbyterian church, what the Presbyterian immigrant finds is they may have very little in common with Presbyterians in Vancouver. The fundamental question is we have an opportunity to relate to these people. What can we do with integrity to help them facilitate that kind of adjustment? At least to be aware of it.

A more basic question. I remember a Catholic person out in New Brunswick at a big conference. We were talking about this thing, about new life coming to Roman Catholic parishes, and this person said, “I’m not sure we really want immigrants in our parishes.” When we have people respond to the [statement], “On balance, immigration is a good thing for

Canada,” we get 65 per cent who agree. But one in three do not. But we have the potential here for an enormous injection into new life in Roman Catholic churches.

FT: *Meanwhile we still see that downward trajectory in the mainline churches like the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada.*

RB: The United Church prepared a report for their General Council saying, “We are basically running out of money.” They have to cut \$3 million out of their budget in two years.

They are in such a retreat mode at a time when it could be argued that the market for religion is incredibly rich in Canada. Even forgetting about the survey results, there are all kinds of life and vitality from those embracing faith or those not far away from that middle group.

The Pew people released *The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050*. They are doing projections on what religious identification will look like. Within one day of the United Church report, Pew comes up with this projection that by 2050, people in Canada who say they have no religion will jump and the vast majority will identify themselves as Christian.

They are saying that looking down the road there will be an incredibly large, ongoing market for religion in Canada.

So then the question for the cold-hearted sociologist is, “If you have that many people who continue to identify, which religious groups will be stepping up and servicing these people?” You have all this dynamic and you have the biggest Protestant denomination saying they are close to receivership. Who is going to step up? The Catholics will. And you don’t have to worry about the future of Islam in Canada. But on the Protestant side, who can step up for the people arriving here who think themselves Protestant?

When you look at that overall picture of where things are and where they are going, that is where the creativity comes in. What can the United Church do, for example, if all these people arrive on the shores, but don’t think they are United Church? What about coming up with a sub-brand, we are the such and such of the United Church of Canada?

FT: *But there is this idea we have that liberal denominations are struggling because they are liberal. And evangelical denominations are not because they are not. Does that figure into this at all?*

RB: That is trying to look at things from a theological point of view. If you’re not looking at it theologically, but demographically, you see an aging group of people who are dying. They simply have more people die than they are replacing. That is what is happening with their numbers.

In the case of the Mainliners, the immigration pipeline has largely dried up as you’ve moved from the 1980s to now. The luxury of the Presbyterians benefiting from people coming from Scotland is gone. Demographically, there has been this major shift from Europe to [immigrants from] Asian countries. It’s largely demographics.

I had an epiphany the other day that I want to work with. People are always asking me, “What about the next generation? Sure, you have all these people coming from the Philippines, but what about their kids?”

Something like 85 per cent of the people who participated in a survey of the Toronto diocese of the Anglican Church had British roots. We’ve already had an interesting example of the failure of immigrants to hold onto their kids. Will the latest wave of immigrant learn from the failure of the first wave?

FT: *What should pastors and church leaders be thinking and feeling about this data?*

RB: One of the things I’ve been hollering for is a dramatic need for a mindset change – to get away from this idea that the sky is falling. The talk about prevailing churches and so on, it denotes the idea of hanging in there. Get away from buying secularization to realizing that there is a real vitality around religion in terms of

Get away from buying secularization to realizing that there is a real vitality around religion in terms of numbers that will only be enhanced with ongoing immigration.”



numbers that will only be enhanced with ongoing immigration. Religion has an ongoing place, and might have an even more significant impact on Canadian life. That is exciting stuff.

Secondly, for churches to be incredibly alert and prepared for people coming from other churches. In a community like ours, Lethbridge, you'd think we wouldn't be touched by immigration, but we have all kinds of Filipino temporary workers who are here right now. What an opportunity for Catholics for ministry to them! They show up, the Catholics don't even have to recruit them. Churches need to be alert and realize they are going to arrive in increasingly large numbers in the next few decades.

The third big thing, and our research has been documenting this for years, is that people aren't in a market for churches, they are in a market for ministry. If all a group can say is, "We have the top church in town," that's not what people want.

...people aren't in a market for churches, they are in a market for ministry. They want to know that their involvement is having an impact on their life and their family's lives."

They want to know that their involvement is worthwhile, that it's having an impact on their life and their family's lives. Significance is a huge topic.

We've asked people if they'd be open to greater involvement if they found it worthwhile, and if people in the middle are open to more involvement. They are.

When we ask them what they'd consider worthwhile, people talk about spiritual needs, personal needs, relational needs. They are interested potentially in church to the extent that religious groups can have an impact, help them to think their kids will turn out okay, offer help to marriages in trouble. We've had grandparents

say that if they thought their grandkids would benefit, they'd be involved.

It's kind of a pragmatic thing. If I could find that my involvement would enrich my life and help me with my life and my relationships with my kids and wife or husband, I'd be open to greater involvement.

I get these revelations in the shower, wondering what the connections are. If we are saying, "What do we need to do?" it's finding ways of being able to significantly touch the lives of the people that we are coming in contact with. No one is saying they are looking for a great church. They're looking for significance.

FT: Thank you so much, Reg. /FT

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An illustration on a yellow background showing two stylized human figures in profile, facing each other as if in conversation. Above them are two speech bubbles. The first bubble, on the left, is red with a white outline and contains the word 'CRUCIAL'. The second bubble, on the right, is white with a black outline and contains the word 'CONVERSATIONS'. A dotted line extends from the top right of the second bubble towards the top right corner of the page.

CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

What they are, how to have them and why they matter so very much
By Tim Schroeder



tor, is discussed at a church leaders' meeting. It is the appropriate time and setting for such a discussion. But the comments are vague and obtuse, leading the chairperson to summarize the discussion with this statement, to be recorded in the minutes – "Although our church hasn't flourished for the last few years, given the difficult times in which we live, we are doing fine and affirm our pastor's leadership going forward."

Moments after adjournment several clusters of folks gather in the parking lot. In those parking lot meetings, the comments are not vague at all. With crystal clarity the issues are identified and debated – and solutions proposed.

This all too familiar occurrence robs the church of the truth. The pastor is robbed of an opportunity to grow. Leaders are left feeling frustrated, and the health of the Body is seriously damaged.

At its core the problem is two-dimensional. It is a function of both courage and skill.

It is a matter of courage because hard truths are just that – they are hard. Grenny and his colleagues define a crucial conversation as the intersection where high stakes, high emotion and a difference of opinion collide. The most common response to such moments is to back away, tail squarely between your legs. It requires a rare level of maturity to view crucial conversations not as pain to be avoided but as crucibles of character possessing disproportionate opportunity for growth.

Grenny and his group are emphatic that the starting point for holding a crucial conversation well is not technique but rather a thorough examination of your own heart.

It is only when your motives and goals are clear and pure that you are postured to engage in a crucial conversation well. When your love for your spouse, children, calling or

You are having a crucial conversation when you...

- offer your pastor feedback on how to improve her sermons
- critique the work of a colleague or ministry coleader
- confront a Sunday school teacher about a negative teaching style
- ask a worship leader to occasionally use a different style of music.

Crucial conversations abound in family and personal relationships. When you talk to your spouse about issues of sexual intimacy. When you deal with a troubled relationship with your teenager. When you ask a friend to repay an outstanding loan. When you ask your in-laws to stop offering unwanted advice. All of these are crucial conversations.

church outweighs your fear of rejection or pushback, you will find the courage necessary to persevere through a difficult conversation.

Building a culture of honesty

The avoidance malady is not only a function of courage. Often, even when we have a willingness to address challenging issues, we lack the skill to do it effectively. The majority of us do not possess the tools necessary to navigate critical moments well. "When it matters most, many of us do our worst," observes Grenny. But there is a way to be 100 per cent candid and 100 per cent respectful at the same time. It is a skill that can be learned.

Bill Hybels, leader of Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago and author of many books, is one of the most high-profile practitioners of what Grenny advocates. When asked what caused him to engage in the concept of being fully candid and fully respectful, Hybels immediately replied, "Necessity."

Hybels says he simply can't stand to see the church function at less than optimal effectiveness, can't settle with a willingness to ignore the root causes of the struggle. If

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PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS WHO CAN'T GO 10 MINUTES WITHOUT TELLING A LIE (UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS STUDY, 2002)

CRUCIAL CONVERSATION

A DISCUSSION BETWEEN TWO OR MORE PEOPLE WHERE (1) STAKES ARE HIGH, (2) OPINIONS VARY AND (3) EMOTIONS RUN STRONG. (WWW.CRUCIALSKILLS.COM)

If you are a typical Canadian Christian, chances are you are a very nice person. Your manners are impeccable, respect is a virtue that you think is important. People like you.

That's the good news.

Now for the bad. In most cases you don't tell the truth very well. It's not that you are a liar, but when it comes to holding difficult conversations that involve hard truths, you don't do it very well.

Perhaps our national politeness is to blame, or maybe it is rooted in a misunderstanding of the Christian virtue of love, but one of the more significant disabilities limiting the health of the Church in Canada – or anywhere – is our aversion to hard conversations.

Joseph Grenny, speaker and co-author of *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High* (McGraw Hill, 2011) explains it this way. "I don't want to say anything uncomfortable to you, so I back into all kinds of justifications not to."

This malady of avoidance affects every dimension of our lives – our marriages, parenting, businesses and, of course, our churches.

Saying everything is fine, even when it's not

You've probably experienced this scenario. A controversial topic, such as the performance of a pas-

those causes are not addressed carefully and respectfully, he is sure that serious damage will be done to the church.

Hybels talks about how to raise the culture of honesty in a church. Here's his advice. "Put a flipchart in the room where leaders meet, go around the circle and simply ask the question, 'What percentage of the full truth do we tend to tell each other in here?'"

This "truth percentage" forces the group to face the question of whether the gap between the level of truth they tend to tell and the full truth helps or hinders their ministry. Hybels estimates the gap will typically be at least 10 per cent. Most of us, he says, tend to tell each other about 90 per cent of the truth, but hold back on the last 10. "And," he insists, "we all have a last 10 per cent."

This approach identifies the problem and provides common language with which to address it. In fact some church leaders influenced by Hybels on this issue are now starting to ask each other in meetings, "Can I have permission to speak to the last 10 per cent of this topic?"

By using that language, everyone in the room knows that the individual is not being mean-spirited or picky, but wants the group to deal with the full measure of truth necessary for a healthy outcome.

Respectful honesty, one step at a time

For individuals who want to heighten their personal ability to speak with 100 per cent truthfulness and

Crucial skills and insights for critical conversations from www.crucialskills.com:

- **START WITH HEART.** The first principle of good dialogue is that healthy dialogue starts with your own motives. Start With Heart means to start with the right motives and stay focused on what you really want throughout the conversation.
- **DESCRIBE THE GAP.** Bringing up a problem involving a disappointment by describing the gap between what you expected and what actually took place.
- **FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR.** The automatic assumption we often make that the other person's motives are bad. This can happen when someone says or does something we think is harmful or threatening. We immediately

attribute bad motive – we tell a villain story. For example, "They are evil or selfish – they do bad things because they enjoy it."

- **HELPLESS STORY.** A story we tell ourselves when we're disappointed, threatened or at risk. When we tell ourselves a helpless story, we make ourselves out to be powerless to do anything healthy or helpful. We convince ourselves that there are no healthy alternatives for dealing with our predicament.

- **MUTUAL PURPOSE.** Creating safety by assuring others that you care about their best interests and goals. More often than not, your goals will be compatible, but the strategies you developed to meet these goals are opposing.

100 per cent respect, Grenny suggests getting started by choosing just one area or skill to work on. A common mistake made by Type A personalities is to attempt to change the culture overnight, propose a complete makeover and blow things up. Grenny advises patience to learn one skill at a time. Here's one to begin with from *Crucial Accountability* (VitalSmarts, 2013).

CPR (Content, Pattern, Relationship): designed to help focus on the right conversation to hold.

Content refers to the first time an infraction occurs. A staff member shows up 15 minutes late for a meeting, causing the rest of the team to wait. A children's worker doesn't show up at all and doesn't call, leaving a Grade Two class without a teacher. Performance expectations have been violated, but it is a one-time infraction.

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PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS WHO SAY THEIR ORGANIZATION IS AT RISK OF AN ACCIDENT WAITING TO HAPPEN BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE AFRAID TO SPEAK UP (WWW.VITALSMARTS.COM)

Pattern describes the infraction occurring a second, third or even fourth time. This leads to a different conversation. It is not the specific violation that is at stake, it is the recurring pattern which results in distrust. Clearly this repeated behaviour will sooner or later impact *Relationship*. In choosing to address the issue, the skilled leader must decide which conversation to hold. Is it a matter of content, pattern or relationship?

More often than we recognize, our crucial conversations become derailed because we hold the wrong conversation. Something has reached the level of violating relationship, but we approach it on a content level, or vice versa. That's when things can go drastically wrong.

Grenny's CPR training resonates with the work of Henry Cloud, a popular Christian author and

The pseudo-community we too often experience in our faith communities is a reflection of the pseudo-intimacy we experience in our most personal relationships.



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Building a culture of honesty, one workshop at a time

Clearly the appetite to learn the skill and do better at crucial conversations runs deep in Canadian churches. In 2013, after the topic was introduced at Willow Creek's Global Leadership Summit, the Canadian arm of the ministry began offering introductory sessions called "Culture of Honesty."

As national pastor I had the opportunity to interview Bill Hybels and Joseph Grenny on the subject. I began engaging congregations coast to coast in the conversation. The intention was to raise the issue for one season and then move on to address other felt needs. The shift to other issues never took place.

The culture of honesty has increasingly gained traction, resulting not only in three-hour Culture of Honesty sessions, but leading to two-day Crucial Conversation training courses and even more intensive courses designed to train trainers for crucial conversations (www.growingleadership.com).

Although the training is not distinctly Christian in orientation, the fundamentals are absolutely biblical. Examples of how and how not to engage in such conversations are found peppered throughout the Scriptures. Consider Joshua and his confrontation with Achan over his sin which led to the defeat of the Israelites in Ai. Or Nathan challenging David's sin with Bathsheba by telling his ingenious parable about the rich man who took his neighbour's pet lamb? Consider Jesus' interaction with the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria, or Jesus restoring Peter after the Resurrection.

At the heart of salvation history is the combination of truth and love emerging from the very character of God. Our appetite to hold crucial conversations well should be strong. It is found in the heart of the One we worship. —TIM SCHROEDER

psychologist, who stresses the importance of identifying the different types of people we work with. Cloud's categories are The Evil, The Foolish and The Wise. Cloud argues it is essential for a leader to recognize which of the three individuals they are addressing, because each is approached differently.

Knowing which conversation to hold, and with whom, can change how we do conversation in our churches.

Find a truth buddy

As you seek to learn the skills necessary for holding crucial conversations well, Grenny advises to not take the journey alone. Most fitness programs suggest working with a training partner, so why not have a crucial conversation partner? Having a partner will not only motivate you to keep going when it gets difficult, but will call you back to the skills you are learning when your tendency is to do little more than vent or blow off steam.

Grenny also has advice for churches or organizations desiring to raise their culture of honesty. He offers four coaching tips:

- *Space your training over time.* Less-than-honest cultures did not accrue overnight and they won't be changed overnight. Take one chapter in the book *Crucial Conversations* or one conversation skill per month, read up on it and discuss it in your monthly meeting. Do it with a different skill each month for a year, and watch how the level of respectful, honest conversation goes up.
- *Clearly identify specific conversations that are not being held, but need to be addressed in your church.* Make a list of unmentionables or undiscussables. The act of naming the kinds of conversations you avoid will, in and of itself, be liberating. It may be necessary to have a conversation about having the conversation. A valuable issue to face is why issues don't get faced.
- *Leaders must lead.* If the senior leaders in the church refuse to hold hard conversations, it's unlikely anyone further down the organizational chart will rise to the challenge. If they do, it

Reach thousands of evangelical Christians

will be at great peril because the culture is not safe for those conversations to be held.

- *Practise.* As uncomfortable as it sounds, Grenny insists that healthy organizations practise holding hard conversations about items that aren't all that risky. When the high-risk events do occur, they are accustomed to discussing them.

As principles like these have been shared and debated in Culture of Honesty workshops (www.growingleadership.com) held by Willow Creek Canada across the country, one observation has emerged with such clarity we have been caught off guard.


The intent of the workshops was to focus on raising the level of respectful honesty in churches. As we have held those discussions, though, it has become apparent that the need is even greater in our marriages and homes. The pseudo-community we too often experience in our faith communities is a reflection of the pseudo-intimacy we experience in our most personal relationships.

This must change. We must find the courage and the skill to change the cultures in which we live, love and raise our families.

What can you expect if you embark on the journey to build a culture of honesty in your home or church?

It has been my experience that if you begin being more honest in an environment that isn't accustomed to it, people will wonder what's wrong. They'll assume you are upset or mad. This response will require you to persist calmly and respectfully to convince them you aren't upset, but rather are on a journey toward healthier relationships. You can also expect, to quote Grenny one last time, "If you experience even a little bit of progress in this area, the results will be enormous."

People are longing for authentic community. Even a taste of it is worth the risk. /FT

 Tim Schroeder of Kelowna, B.C., is national pastor for The Leadership Centre Willow Creek Canada.



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AFTER THE MASSACRE IN KENYA



A Canadian missionary reports on the aftermath of the April attack at Garissa University College

BY DAVID DONALDSON

Both Canadians and Kenyans will tell you, “It takes a village to raise a child.” It’s a truth that is especially obvious in rural Kenya, where “father and mother” describe biological parents and any adult providing care to a child. When a child from a Kenyan village goes to school, the whole village sends him. And when he is killed, the whole village loses its child.

Without exception, the dozens of murdered students of the April 2, 2015 massacre at Garissa University College were from poor families and villages from every province in Kenya. For this reason, this tragedy is qualitatively different from past attacks. It struck the heart of the whole nation.

The tragic facts have been well reported. At about 5 a.m. four gunmen from the Somalia-based group Al-Shabaab stormed the campus,

Opened just four years ago, Garissa University College was closed following April’s horrific events.

148

NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND GUARDS WHO WERE KILLED AT GARISSA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ON APRIL 2, 2015.

killed the armed guards and raced toward the student dorms. They first gunned down the Christian Union members opening their day with prayer and worship.

Then the invaders sent a sniper to the roof of a building from which he had clear sight of the administration houses, student residences and main gate. The other terrorists commandeered the second year students’ dorms, separating Muslims from Christians, shooting the Christian students and sparing the Muslim ones.

When the day ended 141 students and six armed security guards were dead. (One student later succumbed in hospital bringing the total to 148.)

Garissa is a prime target for Al-Shabaab. It’s the largest city in the North Eastern Province (that’s its official name). The Somali border is only a 200 km drive away, and the area has more in common with Somalia than the rest of Kenya to the south.

As I spoke with Pastor Peter Maluki, my host in Garissa and the pastor of its Africa Inland Church, he often referred to “across the river.” Garissa is north of the Tana River and feels cut off from the rest of the country to the south.

The feeling of isolation was made real to me as we drove out of the town early in the morning. Commuters – most on foot – were heading north across the Tana River bridge into town, and we were driving south. At the checkpoint on our side of the river, a heavily armed officer searched our van, then asked me for my passport – just like a border crossing.

Riding on the back of Pastor Maluki’s motorcycle, we arrived at the university’s compound. We weren’t allowed to enter the grounds. Part of the notice glued to the gate read, “Following the heinous act of terrorism meted out on our University College on 2nd April,



Kenyans attend a memorial concert in Nairobi for the slain Garissa University students.

2015, the University College Management Board has decided to close the University College with immediate effect.”

Over dinner that evening I asked Pastor Maluki about the wisdom of closing the university. After all, it was opened only four years earlier as an explicit attempt to bring the North Eastern Province into Kenya.

He replied, “Nobody wants to come here anymore. Teachers and students, all will stay away.”

Kenya is all too familiar with attacks by extremist Islamic groups. The deadliest in recent memory was an Al-Qaeda attack on the U.S. embassy in 1998, when 213 died. But since then Al-Shabaab attacks have become frequent events, especially since 2011, when Kenyan armed forces moved into Somalia.

That move became Al-Shabaab’s main excuse for its invasions. Since then over 600 Kenyans have been killed.

Very few of the assaults received media attention, except the Westgate Mall in September 2013 when 67 died. Frequent bus bombings often get minimal if any news reporting – the same with roadside ambushes and church attacks. (Roman Catholic and Africa Inland churches in Garissa were at-

tacked on July 1, 2012, killing more than a dozen people.)

Kenyans, as columnist Joseph Warungu is quoted by the BBC as saying, “have stoically absorbed the impact of each assault with a three-step reaction – shock, anger and then a shrug.” Garissa University’s tragedy is causing a different reaction in the country.

This attack is different because it affects families across the country.

Further, and more tragically, the murdered students were from poor families who struggled to send their children to university. Rich parents in Kenya send their children to Nairobi, Kisumu or Eldoret, never to Garissa’s university. But the parents of the slain students sold their farm plots or cattle, or borrowed from family and neighbours to give their children a future with education. A poor child’s completed education would benefit the whole village.

Kenya – literally village by village, region by region – mourns the killings at Garissa University. This didn’t happen in past terrorist attacks.

Professor Kirimi Henry Kiriamiti, who served as deputy principal of Garissa University College until its closure, confirmed this as we spoke in his Eldoret home. “This attack is different. In Kenya you

have to understand the importance of the firstborn. They concentrated the attack on the second year students in this dorm,” he said, as he pointed to the map of the campus on his computer tablet. By targeting the older students – the firstborn from the villages – Al-Shabaab turned this into an attack on the heart of the family in Kenya.

A surviving student, Frederick Gitonga, was the chairman of Garissa University’s Christian Union. He feels strongly the burden of supporting the families of the dead students.

“I and two other Fellowship of Christian University Students’ officials will travel to Bungoma [410 km northwest of Nairobi] to lay our friends Edward, Evans, Emily and Tobias to rest. Then I will attend Sammy and Philomena’s burials in Kitui [180 km east of Nairobi], before I finally go home to rest.”

To pay his respects he has to travel the width of Kenya.

Not only have families and villages felt the loss of the students, the tragedy has impacted institutions of higher learning across the nation. They are closing from east to west. In Garissa, not only has the university closed, but the Kenya Medical Training College’s Garissa campus is closing “for fear of terrorist attack,” according to an April 26 report in Kenya’s daily newspaper *The Nation*. The April 27 edition reported Migori Teachers’ Training College will close for the same reason. Migori is 372 km west and south of Nairobi, over 730 km from Garissa.

With increased Al-Shabaab activity, and now the whole nation reeling in grief, the relatively stable country is mourning national loss and grief – a likely part of Al-Shabaab’s goal all along. /FT

BY TARGETING THE OLDER STUDENTS – THE FIRSTBORN FROM THE VILLAGES – AL-SHABAAB TURNED THIS INTO AN ATTACK ON THE HEART OF THE FAMILY IN KENYA.



C. David Donaldson of Guelph, Ont., travelled to Kenya after the massacre to report on this story for *Faith Today*. He is a writer and teacher who leads short-term mission groups to Kenya twice a year (www.cdaviddonaldson.com).

PHOTO: THOMAS MUKOYA / REUTERS

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THE JOY OF MISSING OUT

This summer, here's how to take a technology break for your spirit's sake

BY CHRISTINA CROOK

The other day I needed to ask my neighbour a question. Instead of firing off a quicktext, I headed over to her front door with my two older children. Face to face, we slid easily into conversation. She spoke to me about the challenges of parenthood, her daughters and the demands at work. Then I saw it – the crack in her demeanour, the tears at the ready.

My neighbour was in need. My physical presence let it come out.

In most of our interactions today, we'll miss this kind of opportunity.

We live in a world where the

speed and gloss of our smartphones, tablets and laptops often make the connection to those far away seem more interesting and urgent than the world and people right in front of us. In rooms all over the world we are gathered side by side in cubicles, spending the currency of our lives in front of MacBook Pros with retina displays, iPads and Androids. Little buzzes and rings indicate messages received, interrupting conversations, thoughts and feelings. Neighbours are tucked indoors, isolated from each other.

Our energies, creativity and time – perhaps the best of us – are being spent committed to screens.

And through it all we may

hear the whispers. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened” (Matthew 11:28), “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). But the pervading voice of our never-off culture urges us on. One more like. One more episode. One more click.

American novelist Flannery O'Connor once wrote, “You have to push as hard as the age that pushes you.” What would we say is the great push of our age?

To consume more, faster. To remain separate, safe. To escape the mundane of the everyday. To keep on keeping on.

How then do we push back?

I believe it can begin with these ten steps.

10 STEPS to pushing back against technology's hold on our lives

1. By drawing closer, being real, perhaps most importantly when we are not doing well. We must practise expressing our own needs, not hiding and projecting an all-together image as too many of us do online. Then we can serve others in truth and dignity.
2. By saying yes to going to a live show to see your friend's band play, instead of spending another night in front of the glow of Netflix. To know what it is to feel the full range of human emotion, choosing not to numb out in the sea of entertainment available at our fingertips.
3. By stopping long enough on Main Street to listen to your friend's full story as he punctuates it with smiles and fist pumps.
4. By going to the care home to visit your grandmother or an elderly neighbour, sitting close enough to read the sorrow in her eyes.
5. By pausing our morning commute long enough to witness the majesty of the sun pouring through the clouds.
6. It's about standing in the face of disturbing television, in the promise of virtual reality, and saying both in our spirits and aloud, "No, I do not need this to be entertained. My life, my relationships, my world, are enough for me."
7. It's standing on release day of the next iPhone, and asking ourselves, Do I need this? Am I satisfied? And where, please tell me, will my old phone go?
8. By listening to the voice that says, "Do not fear." Do not fear missing out on things online. If it matters, really matters, it will find its way to you.
9. By carving out a weekly Tech Sabbath to engage with the people and world right in front of you, remembering that you are not the centre of the universe. The world, by God's good will, keeps on turning.
10. And, for goodness sake, delete social media apps off your phone – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Turn off all push notifications, every beep, buzz and vibration. Reclaim your life! Clear away the clutter so you can hear.

God's impassioned call for our lives is to love. To be real. The ancient Greeks called God the really real. That's what we are called to do in our on- and offline pursuits.

Yes, the Internet can help us to love, it can give us opportunities to be candid, to confess, it can help us in our work, bridge relationships, give us chances to minister to others.

But it can also become a crutch, a compulsion, an escape route. With our ever-increasing use of online technology, the idea of community is shifting profoundly – whether it be family, friends or relationship within a local church. The middle man, the mediation through the computer, allows us, for the most part, to remain at arm's length.

There is a simple way to counter it. Whenever you have an opportunity to see people in person – a meeting, coffee date, a street party – go! While the Internet has enabled elderly, sick and disabled people – those formerly isolated by mobility issues – to connect online, it has created an unnecessary hurdle for many of us to connect in real life.

In the Scriptures, God implores His people to have no other gods before Him. No addictions separating us from Him and our ministry of love to others. We must ask ourselves if our technologies are helping or hindering that.

It is here, in this age, that Christians are called to lead, because we believe we are embodied beings made by a holy God.

We believe we were created for relationship and meaningful work that provides for families, serves our neigh-

bours, engages our bodies and creative faculties. We believe we are called to carry burdens – good burdens – responsibilities that tether us to people and the physical world, to time and place, to our humanity.


We are called to consider which technologies help, and which hurt. We can consider Christian thinkers and Christian groups who have questioned other new technologies, sometimes rejecting them outright and other times using them in limited ways. We can ask which technologies engage our brother and which exclude? Which draw us closer to our need and to

American novelist Flannery O'Connor once wrote, "You have to push as hard as the age that pushes you." What would we say is the great push of our age?

the needs of those around us? Which draw us away?

Jean Vanier, the Canadian recently awarded the Templeton Prize in religion for founding the L'Arche network inclusive of people with intellectual disabilities, says, "To be human means to remain connected to our humanness and to reality."

We need less, not more. We seek meaning, not material. Let's choose people, not gadgets. /FT

 Christina Crook is author of *The Joy of Missing Out: Finding Balance in a Wired World* (New Society Publishers, 2015). www.jomobook.com



QUEBEC'S VERY OWN HUGE AND GLOBAL CHURCH

Nouvelle Vie bucks the trends and stretches around the world

BY DAVID GOSSELIN

As the St. Lawrence River flows by Montreal on its way to the Atlantic, cars stream into a parking lot in an industrial area on the South Shore of Montreal near the Jacques Cartier Bridge. It's Sunday morning.

People enter through the doors of a warehouse-sized building into a lobby teeming with a multicultural crowd. Music from the large auditorium filters through the walls. Inside, approximately 2,000 worshipers stand expectant, facing a 100-foot stage. There is a buzz in the air. Massive video screens display images of the people in the crowd.

As David beats Goliath

The band starts and the worship leader exhorts the crowd to lift up their hands. Thirty minutes later pastor Claude Houde takes the stage. He prays for the message he's about to deliver and ends in a loud "Amen?!" Over the next hour Houde methodically unpacks 1 Samuel 17 as part of an eight-part series "David, C'est Moi" (David, That's Me). Houde draws a parallel between David beating Goliath with a small stone and a Quebec-based evangelical church overcoming the odds to become the largest church in la Francophonie, the French-speaking world. He ends with application, or "takeaways" as they call them here, living up to the motto of Nouvelle Vie – "a church for today."

L'Église Nouvelle Vie (NV) has been making waves in French Quebec for some time now. With an American megachurch vibe and enthusiastic supporters, NV bucks the current trend in Quebec and much of the Western World – it's a

church that's growing, not closing.

But NV's impact extends even farther – to the entire French-speaking world. Part of the appeal to the broader French community, say those who come here, is the lead pastor himself, originally called as a young man from the back of an urban Montreal church by a preacher who proclaimed he would "do great things for the Lord."

Isabelle Depelteau is a longtime NV member. "Houde is able to bridge the cultural gaps not only because of his teaching skills, but because he has understood how to be and remain relevant using current affairs and trends to convey universal truths," she says.

From local outreach to global stretch

The church's beginnings are a far cry from its current worldwide high-profile status. The original 40 members in the early '80s wanted to create a church that would help poor families on the South Shore. The simple outreach attracted so many people



Claude Houde is lead pastor of L'Église Nouvelle Vie in Montreal, the largest church in the French-speaking world.

that NV had to relocate several times before settling in to its current spacious location. Today, it supports 800 families on a regular basis with food and other needs – even more at Christmastime.

“There are many churches that impact their community and la Francophonie. It's obvious that NV has reached beyond the borders of Longueuil or Montreal,” says Jocelyn Olivier, Claude Houde's assistant and one of the church's 25 pastors (many of whom lead “subministries”).

NV offers conferences, training for preachers and equipping for singers and musicians conducting worship. NV ministry teams are at work every week helping churches in the surrounding area, they say. And of course, online engagement stretches the church's impact even farther through la Francophonie, from Montreal to Sept-Îles, from Paris to Port-au-Prince.

“Teams of pastors and leaders regularly come for a few days from the four corners of the French [-speaking] world to learn and see how things are done around here,” says Olivier. They say they are inspired by NV's ability to build a church with impact in la Francophonie – a notoriously difficult group to reach.

The publishing arm of NV (Ministères Parole d'Espoir) and music production team produce material for the French-speaking world. Music from singers and songwriters like Luc Dumont, a popular Quebecois contemporary Christian singer/songwriter, spreads NV's message of hope. Effective use of social media plays a vital role in the life of NV, say the leaders.

In 2005, a group of churches including NV formed the new denomination l'Association Chrétienne pour la Francophonie (ACF). With Pastor Houde and Mark Lecompte, a fellow NV pastor at the helm, ACF dedicated itself to training people and planting churches.

ACF also founded L'Institut de théologie pour la francophonie (ITF), a theology school accredited by Laval University. Students from all over la Francophonie (including France, Belgium, Switzerland, New Caledonia, Haiti, Martinique, Reunion Island, Madagascar and Quebec) study each year at the school.


“Many students [most of them pastors] return to their native countries full of not only theological and theoretical knowledge, but also practical training as well,” says Olivier.

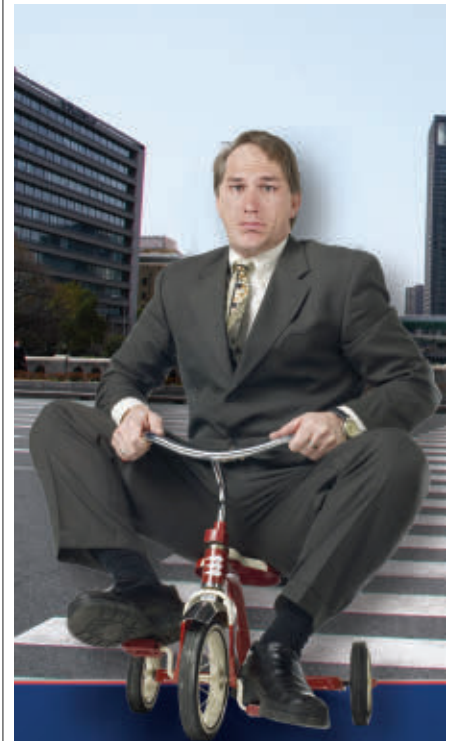
NV branched out from reaching just members, to the community, to the entire

THEY ARE INSPIRED BY NOUVELLE VIE'S ABILITY TO BUILD A CHURCH WITH IMPACT IN LA FRANCOFONIE – A NOTORIOUSLY DIFFICULT GROUP TO REACH.

French-speaking world, without a script or master plan, say its leaders. The Internet expanded the NV base with 12,000 Facebook “likes” at last count, 300,000 annual website visitors and the church schedule downloaded 18,000 times.

“NV has always been careful to not forget local members, but we found our members bonded even more when they saw the need in la Francophonie,” says Hélène Bergeron, an NV member. /FT

 David Gosselin is a writer based in Montreal. Lire une traduction française de cet article à www.faithtoday.ca/NouvelleVie



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The remains of Sukoth Prayer House where 30 lost their lives, including pastor Hima Sherpa.

Responding to the Nepal earthquakes

There's a young and enthusiastic indigenous church in this damaged country BY BRIAN C. STILLER

The 7.8 Richter scale earthquake in Nepal had been forecast, but like most calamities was still unexpected.

It was a Saturday morning, the day of rest for Nepalese. School children weren't in their shelters (often dilapidated, frequently not earthquake resistant), so countless lives were saved.

But sadly churches were meeting, mostly finishing up their services. Soon after the quake, I stood on one heap of rubble, the remains of the Sukoth Prayer House. Of the 120 worshippers, 30 lost their lives, including pastor Hima Sherpa.

Kathmandu was less affected than initially thought. But villages to the west, east and north, along with farms and villages hidden in mountain passes, were severely hit.

On a drive north to the Tibet border, I saw only decimated villages, people sitting outside fearing another aftershock.

Ten minutes after my visit ended and our plane lifted from the Kathmandu airport, another quake of 7.3 magnitude shook the nation.

Nepal is a landlocked country with a population almost of Canada (30 million). It has a mystique associated with the magnificent Mount Everest. But there is much more to Nepal beyond its postcard image.

For centuries a Hindu monarchy banned Christianity and other religions. In 1950 seven families claimed Christian faith. Ten years later a hundred believers were counted.

But during this time other factors were at play. Gurkha soldiers, known for their prowess, were recruited by the British army. As they travelled

within British military movements, some came to faith in Christ. On their return they did what the gospel impels us to do – give public witness, share one's experience, teach the Bible and build places of fellowship.

Added to them were Nepalese who, like Filipinos, serve in many countries doing work of accommodation and service. Again, like the Gurkha, some came to faith and upon their return lived it out contagiously.

Thus when the king in 1990 allowed for a modest amount of public faith confession, living cells of worship and witness were already percolating, and the number of Christians exploded to today's 1.4 million.

I wondered what attracted many to the Christian faith. Two factors have become clear to me.

A professor put it this way. "When your child is dying of a disease and the closest medical clinic is a day and a half away, and you have nothing at hand to help except the witch doctor, and that costs money, what do you do?"

Taking the Scriptures literally – when you are sick, call for the elders of the church, anoint the sick with oil and the prayer of faith will save the sick – they prayed.

"Imagine," he continued, "when a villager saw your child, yesterday at the point of death and today running in the streets, what would they choose to believe?"

I wasn't prepared for the second means of bringing Nepalese to Christ. Far from our rationalistic West and removed from our sense of social and psychological needs, for them the demonic is real, alive

and at times controlling. Within a faith culture of many gods, the worshipping of many has allowed the forces of darkness to attach to people, wreaking havoc in their inner and interpersonal lives.


Like in physical healing, when a person believed by others to be influenced by the demonic is set free, that faith is taken seriously. Given that their religious view allows for other gods, there is an openness to "taste and see," which in time leads to the conversion of communities.

Here in the shadows of mountains is a young and enthusiastic national church with a strong desire for witness. Schools are springing up for children, youth and Bible training.

Competition between leaders plays into these people as in any country I visit. But faith is fresh and alive. It hasn't had time to bog down in years of tradition, enclaves of ego or forms deemed sacred.

While outside organizations were quickly on hand to help after the earthquakes, we outsiders are only enablers. The Nepalese church is today led by its own indigenous leadership, a proven strategy for building a strong national Christian witness.

We should pray for these people, their church and leadership. And let's be generous in assisting those on the front lines of leading a growing church into strength, both to serve its own people and as a centre of mission, reaching out to its neighbours. /FT

 Brian C. Stiller is a global ambassador for The World Evangelical Alliance. He makes his home north of Toronto and blogs at www.DispatchesFromBrian.com.

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REVIEWS

**BEST WRITING OF THE YEAR AWARDED**

Writers from a wide range of Canadian churches won awards from The Word Guild, a national writers' association, in June. The annual Word Awards drew more than 100 entries published last year across 23 categories. Winners were presented with prizes at a gala event in North York, Ont., on June 13.

This year's \$5,000 Grace Irwin Prize went to Leonard Hjalmarson of Thunder Bay, Ont., for his book *No Home Like Place: A Christian Theology of Place* (Urban Loft Publishers).

Three articles from *Faith Today* won awards. "Being Evangelical in Quebec" by Jenna Smith was named best long feature, "When Christians Eat Healthy" by Lisa Hall-Wilson is best short feature, and Doug Koop's "Blessed is the Man" columns were awarded for best series. And sometime *Faith Today* writer Drew Dyck won the Christian living category for his book *Yawning at Tigers* (Thomas Nelson).

A complete list of winners is available at www.thewordguild.com/media.

The awards came at the end of Write Canada, a three-day conference for writers, also held by The Word Guild. —FT STAFF

**Tricks My Dog Taught Me – About Life, Love, and God**

By Phil Callaway

Harvest House, 2015.

208 pages. \$16.99

(e-book \$9.99)

TWO DAYS after the Callaway family brought home their Maltese shih tzu pup Mojo, she showed Phil Callaway her first trick. As she kept him company through a day of stomach flu, he saw the value of stopping the whining, of listening and just being there. And through the next 15 years she continued to perform tricks of faith, loyalty, devotion, forgiveness, appreciation, optimism and more for this Alberta humorist.

This memoir tackles serious issues. The book opens with Callaway facing his own depression, his wife's seizure disorder and a marriage that needs work. As the years go by his kids grow up, parents grow forgetful and friendships fade.

Despite all that, this book is upbeat and inspirational.

In the humour department, Callaway has his own bag of tricks. He employs exaggeration, irony, wit, self-deprecation, jokes and puns in ways that are not cutting, but kind. Reading *Tricks* is like spending time with a funny friend. We laugh because he sees and relates, with a wry touch and a twinkle in his eye, the ordinary stuff of life we all experience. For example, "At the ripe old age of thirteen ... Mojo's hearing vanished like a teenager when the waiter brings the check."

The most significant lessons Mojo teaches may be the ones about God. In Callaway's words, "She taught me a lesson in grace – God likes me. He wants to hang out with me, even when I've chewed a shoe or destroyed a lawn chair. Who wouldn't adore a God like that?" —VIOLET NESDOLY

**Generous Spaciousness: Responding to Gay Christians in the Church**

By Wendy VanderWal-Gritter
Brazos Press, 2014.

282 pages. \$21.99 (e-book \$9.99)

GENEROUS SPACIOUSNESS is a passionate call to the evangelical community to hospitable dialogue with Christians of diverse sexual identities. The author is uniquely situated to extend such a call. For more than a decade, she has been the executive director of New Direction Ministries of Canada, an organization that has aimed to minister to Christians with unwanted same-sex attraction.

Throughout the book, VanderWal-Gritter tells the story of how her ministry among gay Christians moved from an "ex-gay" approach to a "generous spaciousness" approach. That is to say she ceased attempting to change the sexual desires of those who experience same-sex attraction, or necessarily call them to strict celibacy, and became open to discerning a range of ways that God may lead people

to live out their sexuality.

She directs her call particularly to conservative Christians by touching on numerous obstacles she faced in learning how to extend generous hospitality to gay Christians. In particular she addresses certain modes of biblical interpretation that treat the theological status of, and pastoral approach to, gay Christians as something other than a "disputable matter."

She confesses her approach is neither one of rigorous theological-ethical analysis nor comprehensive social science research. Instead she offers a little of both mixed with reflection on her own journey and ministry experience.

As such, the book emphasizes the testimonies of gay Christians attempting to navigate their way through evangelical churches. This adds a certain human richness to the book and provides a helpful reminder that the way churches deal with issues of human sexuality is not merely an academic exercise. Nevertheless, I suspect the book's limited theological and social scientific research will leave readers from all sides of the debate skeptical of her proposal. —DUSTIN RESCH

...a helpful reminder that the way churches deal with issues of human sexuality is not merely an academic exercise.

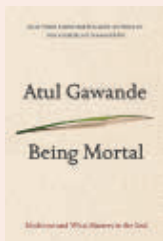
Canadian creatives



Creation [Chinese ink and paint on rice paper] by William Ho. www.theonegallery.ca / "The earth was formless and void. Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. From there and then God created

the beautiful and best stardusts, galaxies, and the world we can possibly imagine, the sky, the mountains and valleys. And then us, the human beings – His love! And masterpieces of art!"

Reading THE BESTSELLERS



Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End
By Atul Gawande
Doubleday, 2014. 304 pages.
\$32 [e-book \$10.99]

BESTSELLING AMERICAN author and surgeon Atul

Gawande's book on old age and terminal illness is brutally honest about the frailty of life and the difficulty of death. Doctors and health care institutions, Gawande argues, are systematically failing the dying because they focus on staving off death when they should be concerned with appreciating life.

The book deals first with the problems of old age, particularly in nursing homes. To demonstrate that our current practices have robbed the elderly of joy and hope, he weaves together elements of psychology, history, sociology and personal anecdotes. The stories are full of agony and triumph.

Gawande then moves from the elderly to the terminally ill. His stories here are not for the faint of heart. A young mother, for example, dies in agony from lung cancer. Gawande argues eloquently that her health care providers failed her because they kept offering her options to treat her untreatable cancer, rather than helping her and her family prepare peacefully for her death.

Of interest to Canadians (in light of the recent Supreme Court decision on

euthanasia), Gawande writes only a few paragraphs on assisted suicide. Although he does not dismiss euthanasia outright, he is much more focused on the advantages of hospice care, which he argues are many.

His writing style is absolutely lovely. He effortlessly unites personal stories and medical theories, and the book has a clear and unobtrusive structure. Gawande never shies away from terrifying questions, but writes with a compassionate and self-reflective manner.

Although Gawande never takes an explicitly Christian approach to the end of life, the book contains many resonances with the scriptural purpose of life and the manner in which we die. Gawande's book is an outstanding resource for anyone who will confront death, which, whether by old age or illness, includes us all. —DEANNA SMID



What I Know for Sure
By Oprah Winfrey
Flatiron Books, 2014.
240 pages. \$28.99
[e-book \$12.99]

I PICKED UP Oprah Winfrey's *What I Know*

for *Sure* with a measure of skepticism. She is known, after all, as the queen of pop psychology, and I fully anticipated that her musings on life might be "wisdom lite" and not much in line with my tastes.

I was pleasantly surprised. Clearly, in her 61 years, Oprah has earned her stripes and gleaned a good measure of wisdom. In the book she is part coach, part counsellor, part coffee shop girlfriend – championing and encouraging readers to seize hold of life and make the best of it.

Each of the brief essays in the book has been pulled from 14 years' worth of her "What I Know for Sure" columns in *O, The Oprah Magazine*. They've been updated, revised and organized around eight key themes – joy, resilience, connection, gratitude, possibility, awe, clarity and power.

If the book could be synthesized into 50 words of what Oprah knows for sure, it would say become the best self you can be, don't waste time looking for love in the wrong places, love yourself, have courage to follow your dreams no matter what others think, be fully conscious and alive, pursue stillness and silence, live with gratitude and generosity, and be attentive and joyful in the moment.

Throughout the book she frequently refers to God and God's role in our lives. She assumes a personal relationship, and while it's never overly theological, it's not unorthodox either.

Her book won't take the place of deeper spiritual reflection and contemplation, but she's candid, charming and honest, and the book sparkles with old-fashioned common sense and insight. —MARLA KONRAD



The delight of giving

Giving need not be selfish nor selfless

Why do we give? Why should we?

Charles Darwin ruefully admitted that altruism was one of the key problems for his theory of natural selection. A habit of giving to those who cannot give back to you seems like a sure path to the eventual extinction of your progeny.

His intellectual descendants have taken up this challenge and explained generosity as being, in fact, self-interest. Richard Dawkins & Co. have formulated the theory of kin selection – giving to those who share at least some of our genes helps our selfish genes propagate themselves better.

That explanation, however, doesn't account for human beings' widespread, if not universal, penchant for giving to strangers – even strangers far away. Some Darwinians have thus evolved “group selection” theory – groups of altruistic people will outcompete groups of selfish ones in fishing or hunting or farming, or waging war, on a large, efficient scale.

Yet other Darwinians cannot see how this model works on the genetic level, where they focus. And it still doesn't explain massive gifts to starving people an ocean away who cannot be expected to render anything useful in return. The intramural debate goes on.

Meanwhile, neurologists and psychologists examine the large-scale structures of the brain and note that generosity is not a function merely of the forebrain, a region that tends to help us with social reasoning and rational choice.

It turns out that giving is actually pleasurable, not just rationally satis-

factory, and that functional MRI machines show that when we give, our limbic systems light up as well.

As summarized in a recent article in *The Atlantic* (Sam Kean, “The Man Who Couldn't Stop Giving,” May 2015), it seems generosity is reduced once again to ... wait for it ... selfishness.

We give, it seems, only to get – namely, the pleasure our brains release via dopamine, the bonding

Love is not a zero-sum game, despite the Darwinist or agapist reductionists. Love is a circle of reinforcing delight, a spiral of ever-increasing joy in the mutual concern for everyone's welfare.

our brains reinforce via oxytocin, and so on. In what is supposed to be a witty epitome, but is instead a tellingly brutal summary, Kean writes, “Neurologically, giving is roughly on par with eating fudge or getting laid.”

Christian thought over the last century has glorified a version of altruism that is no less extreme. Many of us have been told the version of love known as *agapē* is the highest and best *because it is unselfish*. Erotic or friendly love provide enjoyment, but *agapē* is utterly self-forgetful and entirely concerned with the welfare of the other. God loves this way and so should we.

The problem is, God does *not* love this way. God does *not* love without regard for His own pleasure or purpose. What sense would that even make? *I want to help these people because – well, why? Whether God loves us because He enjoys our delight, or because He wants*

to bring glory to Himself, or because it's just the right thing to do, God is still getting something out of the bargain.

And there is nothing wrong with that.

Hebrews 12 directs us to consider Jesus “the pioneer and perfecter of faith ... [who] *for the joy set before him ... endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*” (12:2, emphasis added). And later in that chapter, “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (12:11).

Recall that “peace” means “shalom” or “flourishing,” and we see again the biblical validation of sacrifice and suffering *only to obtain something good for everyone involved*.

Love is not a zero-sum game, despite the Darwinist or agapist reductionists. Love is a circle of reinforcing delight, a spiral of ever-increasing joy in the mutual concern for everyone's welfare. It's a win-win-win situation.


We therefore ought not to be surprised that God designed our brains to glow with pleasure when we do what is right. Jesus promised that those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness” will be “filled” (Matthew 5:6) – and we know what it feels like to have a hunger or thirst satisfied. It feels *good*.

So let's jettison these errors on the extremes and instead do what the Bible says to do: *Delight* in following God's ways, in learning about God's truths, in worshipping God, and in caring for each other and the planet.

Don't “give until it hurts.”

Give until it *thrills*. /FT

“WOE TO THOSE WHO CALL EVIL GOOD AND GOOD EVIL, WHO PUT DARKNESS FOR LIGHT AND LIGHT FOR DARKNESS, WHO PUT BITTER FOR SWEET AND SWEET FOR BITTER.” – ISAIAH 5:20

 John Stackhouse is the author of *Making the Best of It: Following Christ in the Real World* (Oxford, 2008) and teaches at Crandall University in Moncton, N.B. Find more of these columns at www.faithtoday.ca/ChristAndCulture.

FROM THE CREATORS OF FIREPROOF AND COURAGEOUS

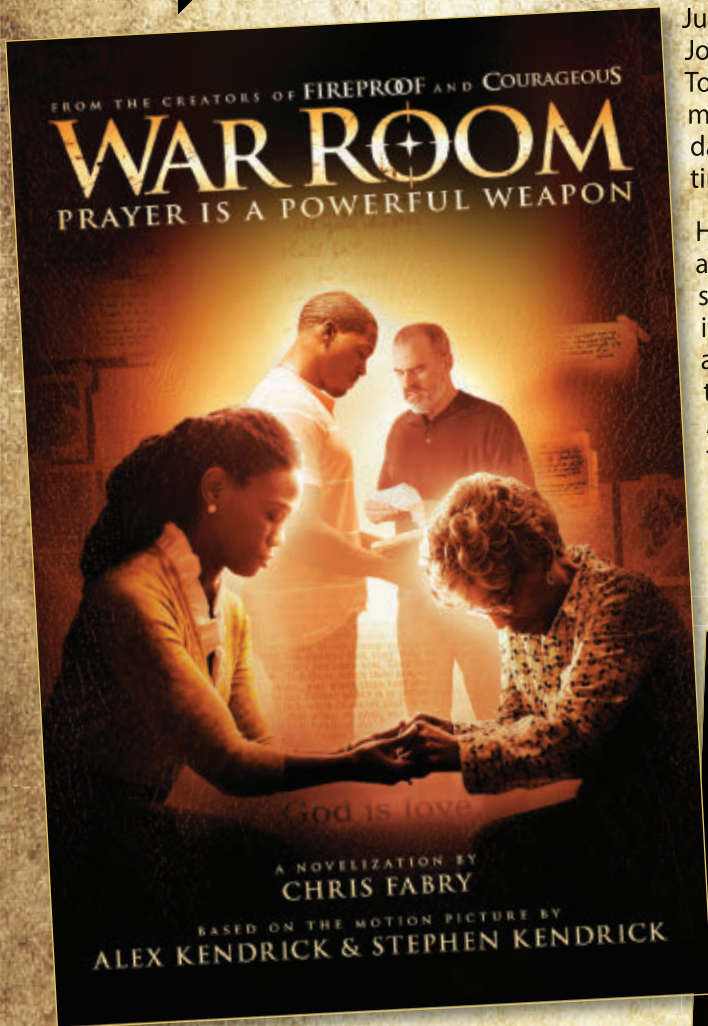
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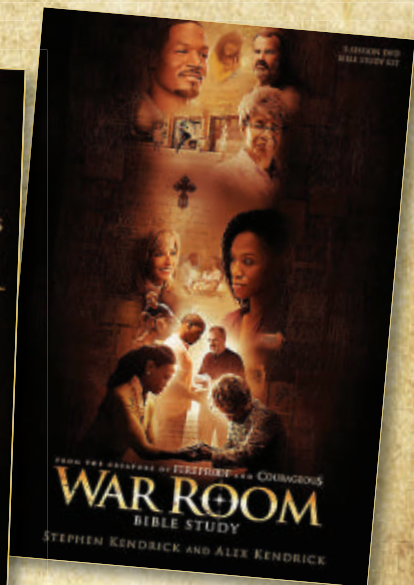
Book

Juggling motherhood and her job as a real-estate agent, Elizabeth Jordan wishes her husband could help more around the house. But Tony's rising career as a pharmaceutical salesman demands more and more of his time. With a nice home in the suburbs and a lovely young daughter, they appear to have it all—yet they can't seem to spend time together without fighting.

Hoping for a new listing, Elizabeth visits the home of Clara Williams, an elderly widow, and is both amused and uncomfortable when Clara starts asking pointed questions about her marriage and faith. But it's Clara's secret prayer room, with its walls covered in requests and answers, that has Elizabeth most intrigued . . . even if she's not ready to take Clara's suggestion that she create a prayer room of her own. As tensions at home escalate, though, Elizabeth begins to realize that her family is worth fighting for, and she can't win this battle on her own. Stepping out in blind faith, putting her prayers for her family and their future in God's hands, might be her only chance at regaining the life she was meant for.



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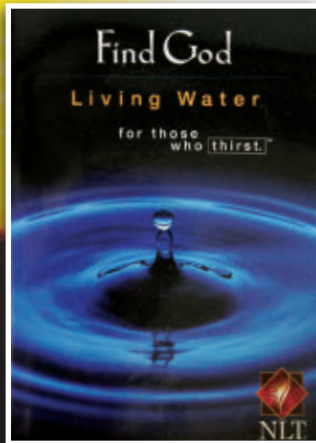
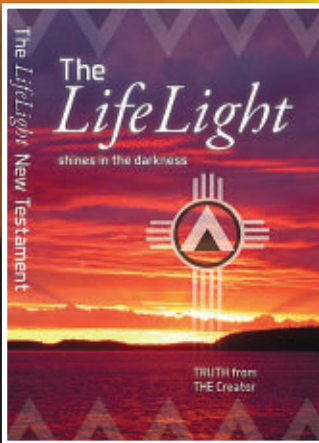


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NEW BIBLE REACHING CANADA'S FIRST NATIONS

Edition features testimonies from aboriginal leaders

BY STEVEN SUKKAU (MAY 28, 2015, CHRISTIAN WEEK)

Staff at Canadian LifeLight Ministries are hopeful that a new Bible for First Nations will strike a chord with aboriginal communities.

"We saw a need and we're trying to fill it," says LifeLight project facilitator Ken McGhie.

After four years of planning, LifeLight has printed 30,000 of the First Nations LifeLight New Testaments to be distributed to more than 600 aboriginal communities in Canada.

The New Testament features testimonies individuals such as well-known Christian hip-hop artist Fresh I.E, who shares of his story of overcoming a life of crime and substance abuse through God's love, as well as respected former Cree chief Kenny Blacksmith who shares how finding God helped him overcome a life of sin.

"It's important to see people finding hope in God," says McGhie.

The release of the new edition is timely, says McGhie, as Winnipeg was recently named the most racist city in Canada by Maclean's magazine and is in need of healing and hope.

"What can we do but share the good news of salvation," McGhie says. "As Christian people it should compel us to plant a seed."

The Bibles are already having an impact.

McGhie tells the story of a native woman in Alberta who clutched him by the hand saying, "Please do what you can to get this Bible out to my people."

"It's the greatest gift to humanity, God's Word," McGhie says. He encourages people to prayerfully consider partnering with LifeLight to have more Bibles printed. A donation of \$250 provides a case of 50 Bibles. Visit thelifelight.com for more information.

Dear Fellow Believer,

Yes, God is working! We want to thank you for your prayerful consideration towards supporting our ministry. Your support will help us get First Nations Bibles into the hands of those who need them most. Now more than ever the First Nations community in Canada need to hear the Good News of Jesus! Would you prayerfully consider sponsoring or distributing our First Nations Bible? These First Nations Bibles have a suggested donation of **\$5 each or a box of 50 for \$250**. Your financial support can help us reach a huge mission field right here in our own nation of Canada! Let's believe in faith together that God will use these First Nations Bibles to reach many souls for Christ!

The First Nations people are very dear to the heart of God. We want to be about the things that God is about and therefore **the Love of God compels us to reach over 850,000 First Nations people across Canada**. We have heard it said, "Many hands make light work." The same can be said of spreading the Gospel. Many hands contributing to the same cause makes a large task a lot more doable. **Would you and your church prayerfully consider donating towards the final \$18,000 we owe the publisher for our First Nations Bibles?** May The Lord bless you as you prayerfully consider contributing towards Canadian LifeLight Ministries' Bible outreach project and making an eternal difference in God's Kingdom today!

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THERE IS HOPE IN
LOVE



FT.

KYLE & KELSEY

KUPECKY

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ISSUE 10
JULY/AUGUST 2015

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ft. **KYLE &
KELSEY KUPECKY**

WORDS FROM THE EDITOR



A lot of events are happening in our country and around the world at this very moment of which are clear reminders of what is written in the bible regarding the End Times and the events leading up to it. These are matters that are affecting people in the areas of education, careers, freedom and privacy. Some of these matters include: the Racial Riots in Baltimore, wars in the Middle East, absurd educational and political decisions, police and citizen brutality, and the list goes on. In the midst of all of the chaos lies the question of whether or not any of this matters to young Christians? Sure, the information is inevitable: Everywhere you log into has information waiting for you. There are many opinions from many different people, however, arguably, there is very little evidence of actions being taken from the younger generations. Sometimes it seems easier to make a meme out of the situation or participate with laughter as apposed to using the information provided and doing something as simple and personal as praying.

We live in a world where we get the option to scroll past information, like it, comment on it or share it; but should be there a button that encourages us to act upon it? The world needs perspective from young Christian minds. What are your views on: power, equality, love, rights and freedom, and racism? Do we have to care? The answer is we should care because regardless of our age, we have been given an equal opportunity to have our voice matter, heard, and do something to impact our societies. This issue of LIA explores abortions, suicide, riots and women's power. You will encounter young perspective on what it's like to be a Christian and the actions, or lack of actions taken towards events that are occurring around the world.

~Crileidy Liriano, Senior Editor

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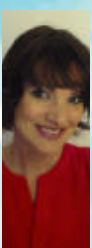
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REQUIEM COMPOSED FOR FACEBOOK APPS



BY: MIKE BONIKOWSKY // CREATIVE GOD, CREATIVE MINDS

There is an instrument
I have learned to play.
My fingers swift and calloused,
Know their fretwork in the dark.

I carry it always
Wrapped in polymer and steel
To spare the glass and brushed aluminum
Of this, my magic flute.

If you'll sit and listen,
Then I will play for you
The song that we wrote together
In the last year of the war.

It's the plainsong chant of everyday
New as the morning and old as death
Weddings and workdays
The birth of children and the breaking of bread.

It's battle hymns and the Mourner's Kaddish
Men in orange jumpsuits dead by the sea
Bullies and heresiarchs
And the earth in a fever that nothing can break

Call and response, call and response
Until the two harmonize
An apocalypse sung
In the voices of my friends

That forever crescendos but never resolves
A billion composers with no conductor
Scrolling down and down and down
But never finding bottom.

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What I've learn
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HOMELESS

BY: CANDACE MAXYMOWICH

ever considered my family to be poor, but we certainly weren't rich. While we were a long stretch from ever being homeless, we were constantly worried about finances. If we've never experienced poverty for ourselves, we may think about material possessions and constantly want the newest thing. Maybe that's clothing with the latest fashion trends or the newest iPhone or other gadgets. Living in poverty struggle to put a meal on the table and a roof above their heads, we take what we have for granted. We want the things we have because we think everyone else has them. We think that having these things increases our status and acceptance.

As a little girl, I had a doctor's appointment at Children's Hospital. A man was walking up and down the street, asking people for help. I saw no change. I watched as people passed him by. Many didn't even acknowledge his presence or his very existence. I had a heart for the marginalized and for the oppressed from a young age. I opened up my bright pink purse and handed him the only dollar of change I had. It wasn't much, but hopefully he would be able to buy himself something to eat.

When I moved to Winnipeg after graduating high school, I don't think I really understood how big of an issue poverty and homelessness were. One day on the bus, a woman approached me and asked if I had any money. I only had a \$20 bill on me. I passed it to her knowing that it was more than I did. Her smile lit up her face. She was beaming ear to ear. She gave me a big hug, kissed my forehead, and said "Thank you."

Years later that I would begin working in a ministry focused on responding to the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of homeless families that are homeless or living in poverty. It's a ministry through which God's love, as known in Christ, is expressed in practical, and concrete ways. It has been an overwhelming experience that has provided endless opportunities for me to learn about myself. I think that if we've never been on the margins ourselves, it can become safe to think of people who live in poverty or homelessness as 'the other.' Oh no, not like me. Couldn't happen to me. Even humanity gets lost... people with very diverse and complex needs tend to get lumped together in the media and at the water cooler as 'the homeless' or 'the mentally ill' or 'the addict.' Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and until you have heard someone's story, you have no right to make those assumptions about anyone.

I know so much about the hurdles of searching for housing, applying for social assistance or disability, and society's negative beliefs and attitudes towards people who are living in poverty or are homeless. Society would be quick to discredit these people and even say they are less than perfect or maybe even less valuable. Some have made poor choices that led them to less than ideal circumstances. Some have come from broken homes and abusive relationships. Some have struggled with addiction and self-harm. I believe that each person is deserving of love and acceptance. Each person is valuable. It was at a time when I needed it most that God brought me to this ministry. It was not a coincidence or a mistake.

When I struggled with feeling that I wasn't deserving of God's love, I believed that the people that walked through the doors to access our services were completely worthy of God's love and acceptance. I didn't see them as "less than" and I didn't think God did either. I saw them for what they were – valuable!

One lesson I learned from my work at this ministry is that some people need someone to listen to their story. Compassion and empathy are the keys to acceptance. Don't pass people by when they are asking for your help. Stop. Pay attention to their needs. Help!

NEIGHBOURS

3

MYTHS RATTLED BY THE **BALTIMORE** RIOT

BY: ROSEMON
ENNIN



"YOU CAN'T
HANDLE
THE
TRUTH!"

The Baltimore riots and protest that occurred late in April caught much local and international attention. Many of us watched the trending topics on social media or seen the “breaking headlines” in the news, saw disheartening images of a city in flames. However, before the escalation of the protest reached its peak with building and cars set ablaze, I must admit I was unaware of what was going on. I couldn’t understand how young people could take joy in destroying their own city. The more I looked into it though, the more I began to have a new perspective on the entire situation. Maybe there was more to the story than what I originally thought, maybe there was something to even learn from Baltimore. Many times God uses different things to get our attention and teach us the truth from the myths and lies we’ve held onto. So here are three myths and lessons I have learned from the “Baltimore Riots”:

Myth #1: Young people have no place in producing change.

Truth #1: “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” 1 Timothy 4:12(NKJV).

Being raised by parents who did not grow up in the Western culture always brought about a traditional notion about the place of a child. In many Eastern cultures, children are to be seen and not heard, they are not to raise questions or concerns, let alone rally together to bring about any type of change. It’s not only in Eastern cultures, sometimes this viewpoint seeps into our western society. Young people (myself included) can be slow to believing that they can truly be agents of change. We look at our age; we look at our current circumstances and have a Jeremiah type of response: “I can’t speak for you! I’m too young!” (Jer.1:6,NLT). But since when did our age become a reason NOT to believe that God can use us? If you actually look at the bible, there are so many examples where God used young people to do great things. Perhaps Baltimore is a current example to remind us of the power we young people actually have. I mean, I don’t agree with the violent approach that they used, but the riot was actually started by young people who came together through social media, and in their unity, boldness and courage, the entire world got their attention. In the words of Marilyn Mosby, the state prosecutor in the trial that sparked everything, “I have heard you... I will seek justice on your behalf”. It’s a lie for us to think that young people can’t produce change; we have every cause to believe that we can. Not only do we have the strength of our youth, but we have the strength that comes from Christ.

S
D

Dear young Christian, what's REALLY stopping you?

Myth #2: True Christian humility is clothed in passivity.

Truth #2: "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline" 2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV).

Sometimes as Christians we eat the lie the enemy serves us that says true humility is reserved, non-confrontational, lacking in initiative and passive at best. But that's not humility, that's fear. Looking at two of the greatest examples of humility in the bible, Jesus and Moses were bold, active leaders and never hesitated to confront wickedness. From the Baltimore Riots emerged bold Christians who took initiative to create "love lines" in between the fully armed police officers and the angered rioters. Their presence diffused the tension between the two groups. The rioters didn't penetrate the "love line" and neither did the police officers. Truth is, love confronts, and what the Spirit God has given us is powerful enough to stand up and be the solution.

Dear young Christian with the Spirit of God, when will you rise from your sleep of passivity?

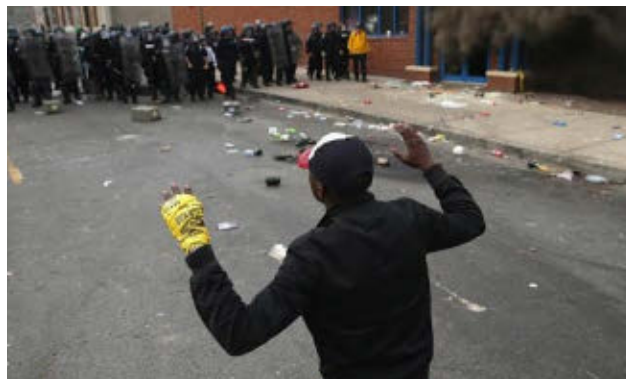
Myth #3: God can't use Women powerfully. They can't have significant positions of leadership.

Truth#3: "Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" Joel 2: 29 (NIV).

The Baltimore riots got the world's attention to see women in positions of power. The mayor of Baltimore, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, the state prosecutor of Maryland, Marilyn Mosby and the commander of the Maryland Army National Guard, Linda L. Singh, are all female leaders. I think sometimes the verse that says women are to be submissive, can easily gets misconstrued to mean God in places of leadership cannot use women powerfully. I love the story of Queen Esther, not only was she a beautiful face, but she was a woman who lead an entire nation to victory. Never allow the enemy's words or society's depiction to rob you of the reality that God CAN use women mightily. The three women I spoke about above are examples of that. The last days are here, if we are to make a change and be bold with our faith, then hanging on to such myths will hinder the great work God wants to do through us.

So lastly I write to you, young female Christians filled with the Spirit of God, "Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightening about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do... And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. "As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others" -Marianne Williamson.

For every lie the enemy presents, there is a greater truth that triumphs it. Jesus said it best, we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free (John 8:32).



A&A: DO YOU CARE?



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IN THE MIDST OF DESTRUCTION, THERE IS HOPE IN L O V E

FT. KYLE & KELSEY KUPECKY // BY: CRILEIDY LIRIANO

It's easy to think of this world as a mammoth hopeless, painful, discouraging and evil place to live in, as our eyes and ears are brainwashed with lunatic wickedness. With immense destructive events occurring around the globe, despairing movies and constant revolting images and information on social media, it can be disheartening to attempt to understand that in the midst of the mayhem, there is hope in love.

Meet Kyle and Kelsey Kupecky. A young, wholesome, talented, and driven couple who are a prime example that patience, prayer, worship, and listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit while living in a highly influential society proves God's promises are true: promises to give you a hope and a future, to never leave you nor forsake you, and to allow you to be the city on a hill and the salt of the earth. Kyle Kupecky is a recording artist with a debut EP album released in 2014, and who is passionate about sharing the love of Jesus with today's youth. Kelsey Kupecky is an actress and designer whose dream, as she tours with her husband, act and design, is to encourage girls to chase after God.

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and Kelsey's story is one that inevitably shows the world that God is able to write your fairytale if you allow Him to. Not only is their story unique and endearing, it is also powerful. Their humility, intelligence, and love for God have inspired many young people as they hear their hearts when they speak or come across their gifts through their music, acting and singing. The Kupeckys may be young, but the freedom given to them to help raise generations in such a catastrophic world inarguably is fruit of their obedience and love for God.

Kyle and Kelsey knew that they had gifts and talents of their own prior to getting married, but as their love was developed, leading to marriage, they identified that they both wanted to serve God together creatively. They sought God for doors to be opened and found ways that they could serve Him as one. A year of praying for doors to be opened, combined with spending more time with youth from their church's youth group, and Kelsey desiring to have coffee and chat with all of the young girls she comes across, the idea of writing a book was conceived. A book was an ideal place to share the fairytale God has written for their lives, while inspiring others to do the same and to follow after God.

With all of that combined, their first book "The Chase"-trusting God with your happily ever after, was born.

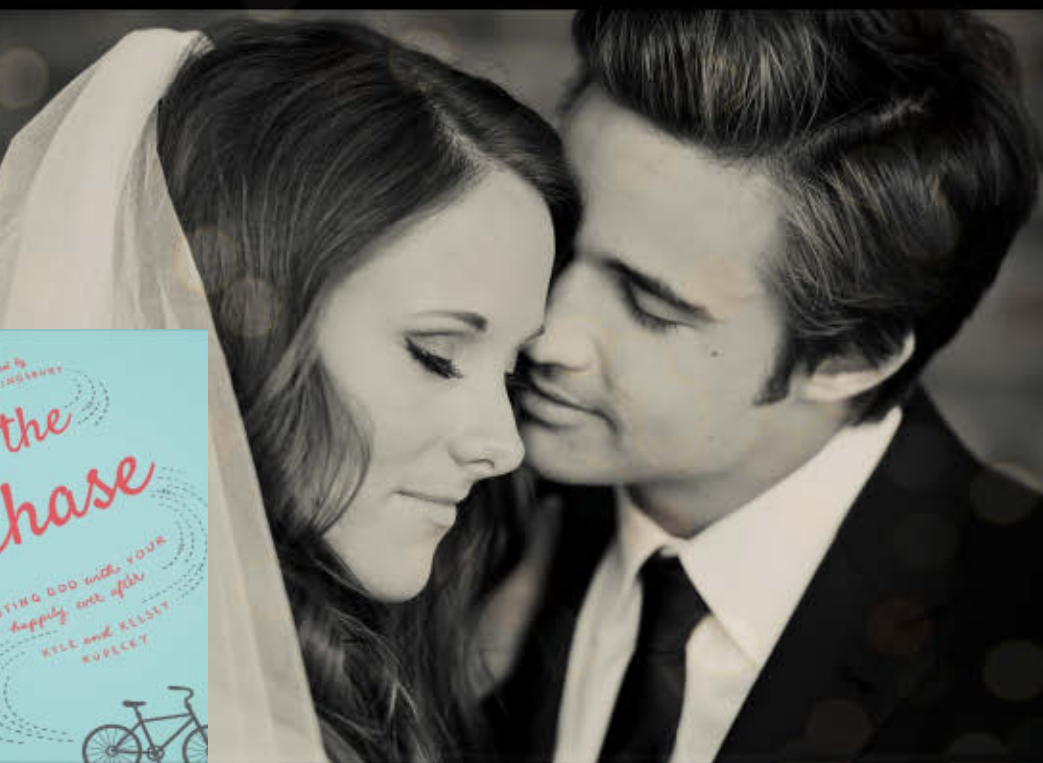
The warnings in the Bible regarding the End Times are being transpired before our eyes. We are exposed to exceptional amounts of corruption, insensitive executions and insubordinate behaviour on a day-to-day basis. We asked Kyle and Kelsey their perspective on these affairs while taking a look at the role we play, or should play, as young Christians.

We asked the Kupeckys if they think the young Christian community in North America cares about social or political issues happening around the world, or in our own countries? Kyle expressed that he believes they do, and that a lot of times they are growing in their maturity and are trying to figure out how to help. They have come across youth that are heartbroken with what they see and want to do something tangible, while at the same time, there is a large response online of youth actually talking about it like never before. Kyle expressed that he has observed that young people are either on fire for God, or they're not; there aren't too many in the middle, but nonetheless, he is excited for what the young generations will do in the future. Kelsey agreed with Kyle and expressed that social media can be a negative platform, but she has seen many young Christians, including Christian artists who are bringing a different outlook to these world issues as well.

The Internet is seen as a monumental place that appears to be limitless with freedom of expressions. We asked Kyle and Kelsey if they think young Christians are limited to the Internet regarding our role in these world issues and not taking action outside of it? They made an important point by stating that it can limit some people if you aren't plugged into a great church where you feel there's an avenue you can go down and get hands on and help. They convey that one cool thing about the Internet is that we are all connected, but it can isolate you from the world around you. Kyle and Kelsey both communicated it can be a struggle for all of us to figure out how to help and they believe we can all grow in this area.

We asked them what role they personally play, or what actions they take when they learn about the mass killings in the Middle East? They responded by acknowledging the platform they have been blessed with and using it to bring awareness to their friends and young people all around of what is going on. They appreciate the opportunity to shine a light on these issues since the media tends to give us only a portion of it. Kyle and Kelsey love supporting the brothers and sisters overseas through the Persecuted Church, as they accredited that in the end, we are all one body. They vocalized that their platform doesn't necessarily focus on world issues, but they make sure they pray and support Christians financially overseas who need the resources and support.

We also explored situations like Police Brutality, events happening much closer to home. We asked Kyle and Kelsey what should we do as young Christians when we see and hear such things? They simultaneously responded by saying, "positivity". They analyzed a critical point by stating that, people tend to have an immediate reaction, but we need to be very careful how we quickly respond, and rather pray and ask God how He specifically wants to use you for a positive change. There are a lot of Facebook and Twitter rants that you can't necessarily take back. Sit back and ask God what you can do or say that in the end will bring glory to Him?



Knowing that the Internet and social media are powerful tools today, we asked the Kupeckys if social media could affect our prayer life as young Christians? Kelsey expressed that it can be all consuming. She goes on to say that, it's one thing to be aware of what's going on and another to let it consume you to the point that tragic events break your heart. These issues and information should lead us to be more involved in our own communities and not let it cripple you, or let you make an impact in your own life or community. There needs to be the questioned raised to God as to how much time one should spend on the internet and how much time should be spent actually living? It's about finding the perfect balance, not that we will ever get it perfect, but attempting to strive for the equilibrium.

Kyle and Kelsey remind us that we will never be perfect, but God is right there. That we must remember there are Christians all over the world experiencing what we are experiencing and they are praying for you whether you see them or not. God has amazing plans for you and He wants you to finish the race strong as you follow Him. You're not going to be perfect, but if you keep seeking Him passionately, He's going to do amazing things in your life. God is for you, not against you. He will chase after you and He will chase after you!

Book The Chase comes out this fall! Go online and pre-order your copy today!

For more information on Kyle and Kelsey Kupecky, their fairytale, Kyle's music, Kelsey's designs, and their book The Chase, visit: www.kyleandkelsey.com

TRINITY FASHION: APPROPRIATE AND NOT?



We caught up with Josie La Corte, a Toronto Film School Student and Creative Visionary, and Armaane Testoni, a UK native and stirring Hair Dresser, two vibrant and fashionable young ladies from Toronto on what their thoughts are on shorts, bikinis and tight clothing.

1. When are shorts or skirts considered “too short” or “inappropriate”?

It's not only the length of the garment but the tightness, a skirt could be long but shows every crevice of your legs, is it really honouring God? Is a person, guy or girl distracted with your body as you're talking? Ask yourself that question when you're getting dressed and I think you will get the answer.

~Josie La Corte

Shorts and skirts or even dresses can start to look too short when you start feeling uncomfortable. If you find that you constantly need to pull down your skirt or dress or you can't sit comfortably, to me that would be crossing the line. Ladies, don't get me wrong, as a Christian woman you can dress modest and still look mighty fly! Always remember that you have the Holy Spirit to guide you when you're unsure in these situations.

~Armaane Testoni



2. When are bikinis okay to wear?

As women in general we all know it's nice to wear a bikini when we are on vacation or at our friend's pool party. However, being a Christian woman we know that's hard because of our brothers in Christ and we don't want to put them in a situation where they will fall; for example lusting. There are many different types of bikinis you can wear that aren't as revealing but still cute and fashionable. American Apparel for instance have cute high wasted bikini bottoms and a bikini top to match or you can even find a nice one piece bathing suit that looks like a two piece from the back. It's all about being creative by finding new ways to wear the things you like but still respecting others and yourself.

~Armaane Testoni

You can wear Bikinis any time you feel led by the Holy Spirit to. I hate to over spiritualize it. I went to a party with my fellow youth leaders last year, and I felt uncomfortable wearing a two piece around them, I didn't want to be a distraction to my fellow brothers, and so I opted for a more modest one piece that looks like a two piece from the back, yeah ladies you know those. It's about being who you are and having the responsibility of carrying the title of being a godly woman. If the motive behind your dressing is telling you other wise in your heart, change and go for something different.

~Josie La Corte

3. Is there such thing clothing that is “too tight”?

Yes there is. Sometimes what might not be tight for someone might be tight for you. Keep the above comments at the back of your mind when you dress and the Holy Spirit will lead you.

I was out buying clothes one day, when I stumbled on camel coloured corduroy skinnies. Now I loved them so I tried them on. They fit amazing! But for the first time ever the Holy Spirit checked me, and I didn't understand why. I asked my mom what she thought of them, and she liked them. But still the Holy Spirit was pressing onto my heart and I couldn't get it. So I took a few steps back from the mirror, Oh my goodness! I looked naked! The camel colour was blending into my skin and from far I looked pant-less! Invite God in every area in your life, including your clothing, and watch Him move mightily.

~Josie La Corte

Yes, there is such a thing as clothing being too tight when it starts to become revealing. For example, if your cleavage is showing or the material of your clothing is skin-tight and showing off all your curves. Use your discretion when it comes to dressing yourself and know where your motives are at. Are you dressing to please others at the end of the day, or are you brining glory to Christ by dressing as a Godly woman.

Be creative and have fun with your wardrobe! Show the world that Christian women can still be fashionable but in a different way. My sisters let's be trendsetters!

~Armaane Testoni



Racism in the Church: A South African Perspective

BY EMILY COOK

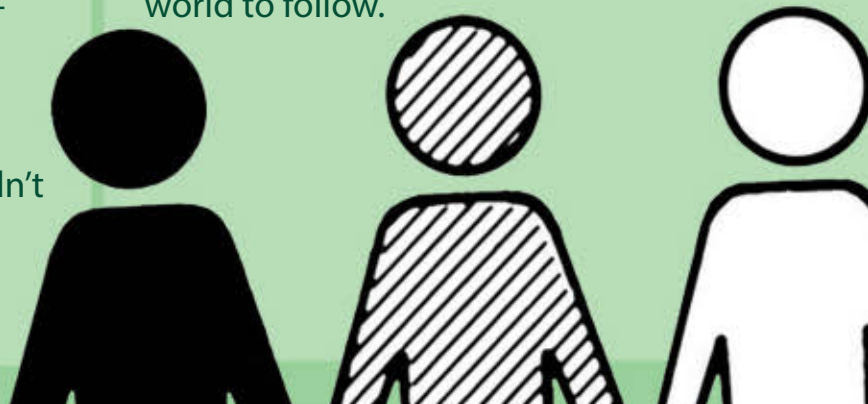
In 1994, the South African people were officially freed from the apartheid state they had lived in since 1948, the year the all-white National Party took power. Apartheid was a system of laws and regulations that enforced segregation between blacks and whites, forcing nonwhite South Africans to live in “townships,” among many other discriminatory policies. Unfortunately, many churches in the country were part of enforcing this discrimination, causing a string of all-white and all-black churches to emerge across the country.

In what seemed like worlds later, I found myself in South Africa in 2012, spending a month in Pretoria, the capital city, with a missionary couple. One of the hardest things I experienced there was the continued racism persisting despite the removal of the apartheid regime over 60 years earlier.

I met one man, probably in his thirties, who was intensely bitter towards Christianity. He had moved to South Africa from another African country that hadn't experienced apartheid the way this one had. He says he walked into a church where an older white gentleman asked to speak with him outside. There he was kindly told that as a black man, he was not welcome in their church. Needless to say, the man I met hadn't stepped into a church since.

Christians have not always been on the right side of history. We haven't always done the right thing, that statement in and of itself being a huge understatement. But that doesn't mean it has to stay that way. Christians need to be the first ones to stand up for the rights of every person, no matter where they come from or what skin colour they have. In case you're unaware, even today, and even in Canada, racism is an issue that still persists, and it's one we cannot turn a blind eye towards.

“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith ... There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise,” – Galatians 3:26-29. If these are truths we daily read about and profess as true, then our actions need to follow them. If God doesn't see a difference between us in skin colour, ethnicity, or gender, then who are we to consider any person lesser than any other? It's not enough to just stand by; we need to be active in denouncing racism and encouraging the world to follow.





SHINE YOUR LIGHT

BY. DAGMAR MORGAN

Lately it seems that the world has been speeding up. There is so much going on like: natural disasters, social injustice, poverty and inequality. Not only is there so much going on, but we also have access to all of it. There is no shortage of information, and news on social media can be seen even when we aren't trying to see it; it can be overwhelming.

For young people who have grown up in a culture of connectivity they are constantly navigating this kind of information and dealing with the everyday pressures of being a modern young person. All of this makes it more and more pressing to be actively connecting our young people to help them navigate the ups and downs and the pressure that comes along with fast paced, media drenched, pressure cooker of modern society.

I spoke to Woodney Pierre, the founder of the Matty Jae Youth Foundation (MJYF), who is doing this kind of work. No stranger to the struggle faced by young people today, Miss Pierre founded the MJYF in 2012 when her brother Matthew Jean Leger lost his battle with depression, resulting in taking his own life away. Recognizing the need for young people to have someone to reach out to she founded this fast growing non-profit foundation. This is what she had to say about the work they are doing and the landscape young people are navigating.

The loss of your brother prompted you to start MJYF. What was it that God was saying to your heart that made you want to reach out to other youth?

For me, there is a season for everything, an appointed time when God will bring forth a testimony or an opportunity to touch others. It is easy to not notice what is going on around you unless it hits close to home. For my family to suffer the loss of my brother to suicide, it really hit home the importance of mental health in young people. Seeing the generations coming up being bombarded culturally, socially and with the high expectations they have to meet, they don't always have the guidance or a voice to speak up for them. I think at this point we need to make it known they are valued; they are the future and we need to preserve their state of mind. It's almost like a sense of innocence once it is shattered it's hard to put back together. So, we want to let them know the importance of their wellbeing; the importance of who they are as a person and that the impact they are going to have on the future is important as well.

What does that MJYF do to help youth?

It says in the Bible that God will give you beauty for ashes. I have always had a heart for working in the community, and I always thought I'd do something but never thought it would be this. When the incident happened, it seemed like God's instruction was pretty clear. The foundation has three pieces: Mental Health Awareness, Mentorship and the Arts. For the mental health portion we do education on how to handle mental health and removing the stigma around it. For mentorship we have partnered with Evergreen Youth Mission and started a music-recording project where street youth can come and use the facilities for expression and creativity. We also had the chance to do work in Haiti through an organization called Viva Haiti. We did arts programming at a school, and Human Resource workshops with a local University.

Every year we hold a fundraiser to fund these programs and this year we added Stepstones for Youth, a camp for young and adolescent girls. They provide programs in mentorship and the arts to help at risk youth from the foster system.

You've done a lot in short period of time!

It's all God. It is all Jesus.

Speaking of God, we've talked about how youth are under attack today. It's a very turbulent world and there is a lot going on. What role does God have in the healing of these young people? Is healing possible without Him?

For sure, the answer is no. The healing requires God. He is the root of it all.

For me, it is impossible for youth to receive the healing and help they desire without God. It goes back to Psalm 139:14, "I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

Your works are wonderful, I know that full well." I think that is one of the biggest points. We have the tag line "Shine Your Light", which means to love your self the way God loves you. To see your self the way God sees you. A lot of young people have been through situations and it leads to a hardened heart. There is no time to adapt, no time to process, no one talking you through it. So, for them to meet someone who is able to shine a light to let them know you are valuable, you are important, there is hope for you and there is a future for you. This is what will bring them out of that dark place and help them shine their light.

To volunteer, donate or find out more, visit: www.mattyjaeyouth.com

CHANGED MIND, CHANGED WORLD

BY. JAMILA HOLDER

If you are like me, you may have grown up with similar aspirations to one day change the world. As kids we are told that we could do anything and be anything we dared to be and I believed I could; I wanted to make the world a better place. In retrospect, I don't know how I was going to do so but it didn't matter because I knew I had the ability to do so. However, as I grew older those dreams were silenced by fear, insecurity and doubt. Have you ever wondered what influenced individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr or Craig Kielburger to take a stand against injustice? Was there something about these individuals that caused them to take the actions that they did? Truth be told they saw an opportunity to make a change and took the challenge. I am reminded of the story of the Good Samaritan in the bible, three men had a similar opportunity to help a man that was in need, but only one took that opportunity. If you have ever taken a moment to ask the question, "why?" perhaps we could identify some of the reasons that prevent us from becoming more involved in social matters. Possibly it's as simple as we have become disengaged, or maybe we are afraid to take a stand, or that we don't think we have what it takes to make a difference. There are countless opportunities given to us to make a difference in the life of others, to stand against injustice and to influence the world around us. However, those opportunities often present themselves in ways that we may not expect. For the majority of my childhood I grew up in a small neighbourhood in Guyana; I had a fairly normal childhood, however during my teen years my once quite neighbourhood became notorious for gangs and gun violence. As I watched my community fall apart, I had lost hope that things were going to change. The more I focused on the magnitude of the problems of gun violence, corruption and inequality that faced my community, I felt powerless to change it. I wish I had done something to save my community but here are some of the lessons I learnt from being passive:

#1) No one can take away your personal power but you can chose to surrender it.

Was I powerless? No, I wasn't but I perceived myself as being powerless, therefore I did nothing. Sitting on the sidelines will give you front row seats to criticize what others are doing but it changes nothing.

#2) Change is a process.

I would argue that the biggest hindrance to change is that we can become so preoccupied with the problem that we fail to identify the solution. To change the situation in my neighbourhood in my mind meant I had to tackle the problem as a whole, but I had failed to realize that change, like many other things, was a step-by-step process.

#3) Teamwork is vital.

I visited my old neighbourhood last year and found that it had been restored for the most part because the community had rallied together to restore the neighbourhood. I could have been a part of that change had I chosen not to believe the lie that there was nothing I could do to help. If you feel overwhelmed by the task at hand, find a group of people that will be committed to help. I am learning that it's okay to ask for the help of others, you don't have to tackle it alone.

Every day we are all presented with opportunities to change the world around us; whether we take them is up to us. Choosing to believe that we are powerless to change the world actually hinders us from becoming the change we desire to see. Instead, choose to believe that you can. You are a solution to a problem in our world.



I Did Not Wake Up Like This

BY. DAGMAR MORGAN // CREATIVE GOD, CREATIVE MINDS

I have been in love with perfection.
Fallen asleep at night with
it tucked under my pillow.
And dreamt and prayed that in the morning
I would somehow be complete,
a finished product worth putting on your shelf.

Like a shiny gold trophy I would glitter at you.
You would admire me back.
But plated gold worth is not valuable; it's artificial.
And I am prone to falling short.
I never liked how it hurt.

I took it as proof that I was not resilient.
I did not bounce back easily.
That I deserved it,
I was not worth it.
I was worthless.

Besides, my legs get tired
From constantly getting back up.
I get weary carrying so much weight.
I crack easily under pressure of disapproval.
But even a diamond has to be broken into pieces
To reveal it's true shine.
It has to be uncovered,
Chipped away at,
Dropped a few times.
So, the dirt can be broken off its shoulders.

In the diamond business this is called cutting.
That is why it hurts.
It takes time and an expert hand to remove
The rock and dirt
Life is the chisel and God is the schooled technician
He knows what He is doing
Each Bang of His hammer means Fighter.
Each chisel mark = Survivor.
Each drop = Stronger.
Each stumble = Standing Taller.
The more He renames, the more He reclaims,
The more we begin to diamond shine.

Jewels that are heavy with purpose
Do Not Bounce.
They take strength to lift.
That's why some people cannot take the weight
But remember people only walk away from things
they cannot afford.
But a diamond is still a diamond
Small imperfections do not diminish your value.

Don't be mistaken by your size,
A diamond is small and precious but they are judged
by three things:

1. Their hardness – they are the only substance on earth that can cut through anything.
2. Their toughness - the measure of how well the gem can survive impact and resist breaking or cracking at its weakest points.
3. Their stability - how well can they withstand temperature change and how they cannot be broken down by acid spoken by others.

So I say if each struggle is a gem in the crown I wear,
Then each day crown me again.
How can I fall into perfection?
How can I take these rough-cut pieces
of life and buff them into a gem of strength?
How can I shine back the knowledge that breaking
has given me?

When you go to sleep
Tuck all of this under your pillow
And tomorrow you will wake up imperfect,
But still shining
Still the diamond of His eye
Still covered in His grace
And when people start asking
Why do you look so good?
Or
There is just something about you.
Or
Look how far you've come!
Or
What is your secret?
You can say:
I did not wake up like this
I worked for this
And God uncovered a diamond



WOMEN VS. ABORTION

BY. HOLLY STILLER

In the midst of 25,000 people, a few girls attempted to make a radical statement. They stood, surrounding a friend and I, and smirked at us. They then went on to shove an elderly lady out of their way, ran in front of the crowd, and yelled that they can do whatever they want with their bodies. It was both extremely upsetting and kind of ignorant.

I was at the March for Life in Ottawa on May 14, 2015. It was an incredible, eye-opening experience. There were mostly teenagers there, all passionate for human rights (and yes, that actually does focus on the rights of women). Many MPs spoke, as well as incredibly courageous women who shared why they regret getting an abortion.

The girls ripping off their clothing didn't really make the point that I think they wanted to, and I think that's because there is a lot of misunderstanding with what it means to be pro-life, or pro-choice. It's not women vs. men, or women vs. their children. If anything, it's women vs. abortion.

We live in a society that tells us that abortion is for the benefit of women, but I think that's a huge misunderstanding. Regardless of whatever group you put yourself into, in regards to this issue, compassion is needed. We need to be thinking of the millions of women and children having their lives forever changed by abortion. As Mary Wagner put it, "It's not about getting arrested or not getting arrested, it is not about us but about that poor mother and her utterly helpless child about to be killed, who are owed all the love and protection their neighbors can give them."

It needs to be understood that people who are pro-life are not ignorant of the awful circumstances that women facing abortion are sometimes in. Our hearts still break for them, and there are many pregnancy centers and organizations designed to help those women out, without taking away their independence. In most cases, it's actually giving them their independence back. Abortions are rarely independent decisions – how could they be in a society that makes it so difficult for women to be single mothers, and has tricky adoption systems? These decisions aren't independent, but a result of being formed by the society in which we live in.

Abortion hurts women, often leaving life-long traumas. There are physical risks like: sterility, infections, scarring, and increases risk of breast cancer. There are also usually long term mental and emotional effects. Women who have received abortions usually become depressed and anxious, develop eating and sleeping disorders, smoking, and in many cases, even suicide.

Being against abortion, is not being against women. It is being for women. The only people against the rights of women are the girls ripping off their shirts, adding to a culture of hyper-sexuality, which is actually degrading of women.

I am growing up in a generation that condemns disagreements. There is a set of unspoken rules, saying that you can never tell somebody that they are wrong, because that would offend their lifestyle. I want to challenge that. Because as Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously once said, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil", and as somebody who is pro-life, I care deeply about the women in these circumstances. But also, as a human being, and a Christian it is my duty to stand up and defend those with no defense. Nobody has the right to take a life away from somebody else, regardless of their situation. Being a woman doesn't give you the right to kill anybody, nothing does.

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