

SUMMER 2015

resourceful

Equipping the Church

GLOBAL INITIATIVES 13

Do Something:
Compassion as an
Action Word

LEADERSHIP 53

The Number One
Leadership Hang-up



A Dying Church Replanted

KYLE IDLEMAN • DARLENE ZSCHECH • JON EGAN • LESLIE JORDAN • FRANCIS CHAN • JAMIE GEORGE

To equip the Church

with Christ-centered resources for making and teaching disciples
who obediently transform today's generations.



Integrity Music



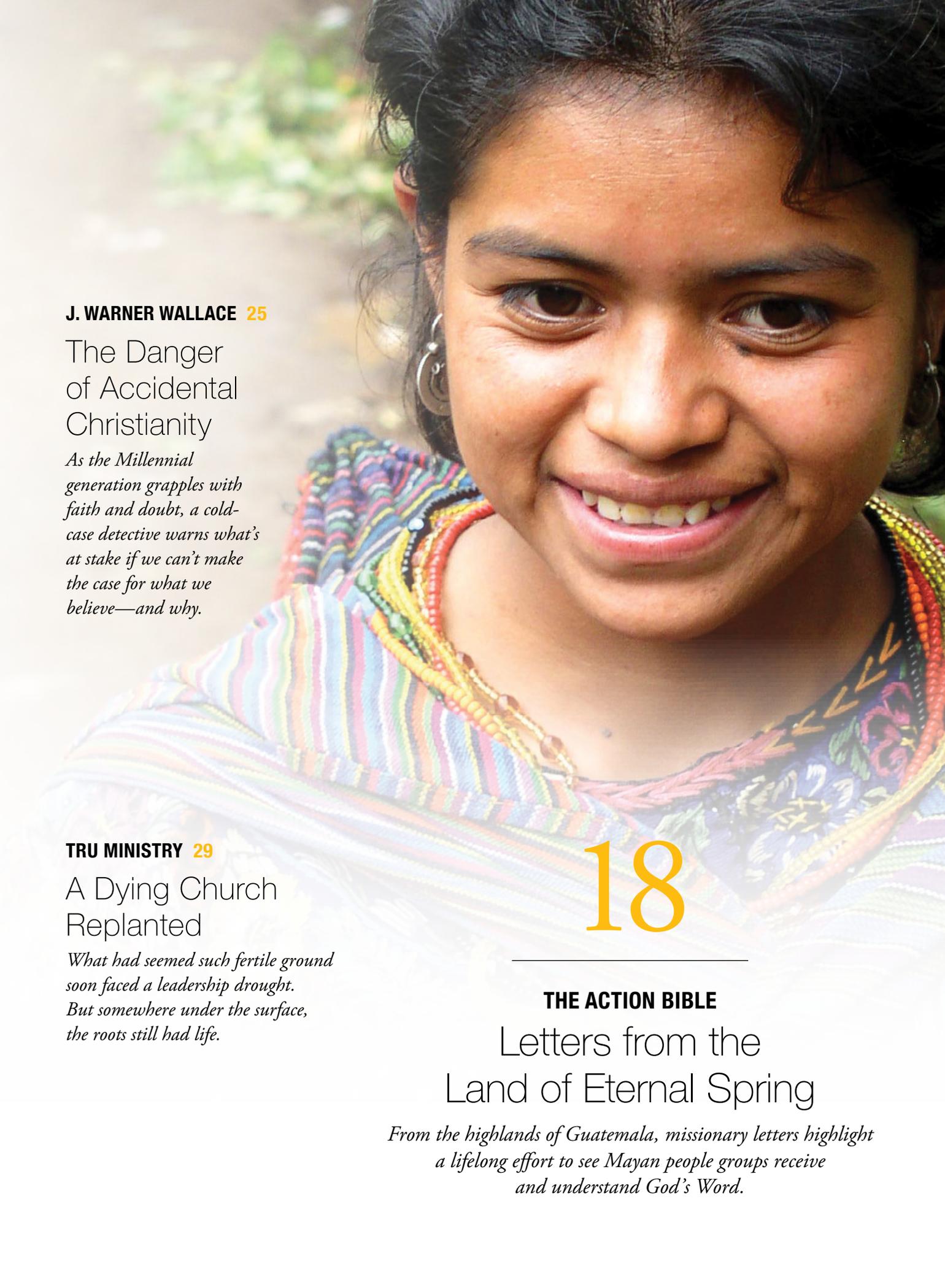
Books



Learning Resources



Global Initiatives



J. WARNER WALLACE 25

The Danger of Accidental Christianity

As the Millennial generation grapples with faith and doubt, a cold-case detective warns what's at stake if we can't make the case for what we believe—and why.

TRU MINISTRY 29

A Dying Church Replanted

What had seemed such fertile ground soon faced a leadership drought. But somewhere under the surface, the roots still had life.

18

THE ACTION BIBLE

Letters from the Land of Eternal Spring

From the highlands of Guatemala, missionary letters highlight a lifelong effort to see Mayan people groups receive and understand God's Word.

FEATURED CONTRIBUTORS

Kyle Idleman (p. 13, *Do Something*) is a pastor, author, husband, and father. He's also a master of 1980s Nintendo games and song lyrics.

Darlene Zschech (p. 34, *Clinging to Jesus*) has been writing and singing worship songs for over two decades. She loves being a pastor and a grandmother.

Jon Egan (p. 36, *In Tune*) leads Desperation Band and is a worship pastor. He also serves on the board for Heartwork, a ministry that connects young people with orphan projects around the world.

Leslie Jordan (p. 39, *Longing for Connection*) of All Sons & Daughters, is a worship leader. She refuels by building stuff and going on bike rides with her husband.

Lisa Anderson (p. 40, *Five Reasons*) infuses humor into every area of her life. She hosts *The Boundless Show*, a podcast for single young adults.

Francis Chan (p. 43, *Imprint*) lives life with a *Crazy Love*, which happens to be the title of his best-selling book. He has also written three children's books.

Patrick M. Quinn and Ken Roach (p. 44, *Helping Your Children*) both serve at Frazer United Methodist Church in Alabama. Patrick is a teaching pastor, and Ken uses art and communication to pursue God's beautiful story.

Jamie George (p. 46, *Love Well*) calls himself a storycollector. He founded Journey Church, which became the starting place for the band All Sons and Daughters and now his sons' band, The George Twins.

Hans Finzel (p. 53, *The Number One Leadership Hang-up*) has been all over the world teaching leaders. He hosts *The Leadership Answer Man* podcast.

resourceful

A publication of the David C Cook family:

Integrity Music • Books
Learning Resources • Global Initiatives

Chief Executive Officer **Cris H. Doornbos**
President, Integrity Music **C. Ryan Dunham**

Chief Global Officer **Gary Hopwood**

Chief Information Officer **Sean Everhart**

Chief Operating Officer **Scott Miller**

Chief Advancement Officer **Tim MacDonald**

Executive Vice President, Global Distribution
Greg Tombs

Vice President/Publisher of Books & Media **Kyle Duncan**

Communications Project Manager
Rebekah Ormord

Photography Contributions
Chantelle Edwards,
David C Cook and Integrity Music archives

Managing Editor, Copy Editor, Design & Production
Cahoots Communications, Inc.,
CahootsInc.com

Contributing Writers
Amy Tracy, Gary Webb

Get resourceful

Subscriptions by mail free of charge
in the United States and Canada

Tablet edition available online at
DavidCCook.org/Resourceful

Sample requests and distribution as a courtesy,
not for sale, through your event, church, organization,
or Christian retail outlet

Interested? Simply contact us:

Web: DavidCCook.org/Resourceful

Email: Resourceful@DavidCCook.org

Toll Free: 800.426.6596



Look for these icons throughout the magazine to
take advantage of extra resources. Special downloads
are designated for **\$\$\$ SUBSCRIBERS ONLY** —
but subscriptions are free.

So join us today at DavidCCook.org/Resourceful.

THANK YOU

Through the stories and songs of authors and artists, and with the support of customers and donors, and in collaboration with ministry partners, all of us engage together in the Great Commission—which is truly a co-mission—to equip the local church on a global scale.



David C Cook®

4050 Lee Vance View
Colorado Springs, CO 80918 USA

David C Cook Distribution Canada

55 Woodslee Avenue
Paris, ON, Canada N3L 3E5



4050 Lee Vance View
Colorado Springs, CO 80918 USA

26-28 Lottbridge Drive, Eastbourne
East Sussex BN23 6NT, UK

The Action Bible® and the graphic circle C logo are
registered trademarks of David C Cook.

Unless otherwise noted, excerpts are published by
David C Cook and used by permission.

All rights reserved worldwide. No part of this publication may
be reproduced in any form without specific permission from
David C Cook.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from The Holy
Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973,
1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights
reserved worldwide.

David C Cook is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit
organization in the United States of America.

David C Cook Foundation is a registered charity in Canada;
registration number 11914-3261-RR0001.



GLOBAL INITIATIVES 13

WORSHIP 34



HEART & HOME 40

LEADERSHIP 50

BIHAR, INDIA 15

From Graveyard to Vineyard: Praying for Bihar's Revival

WORSHIP ANTHEMS 38

A.D. The Bible Continues

THE DATING MANIFESTO 40

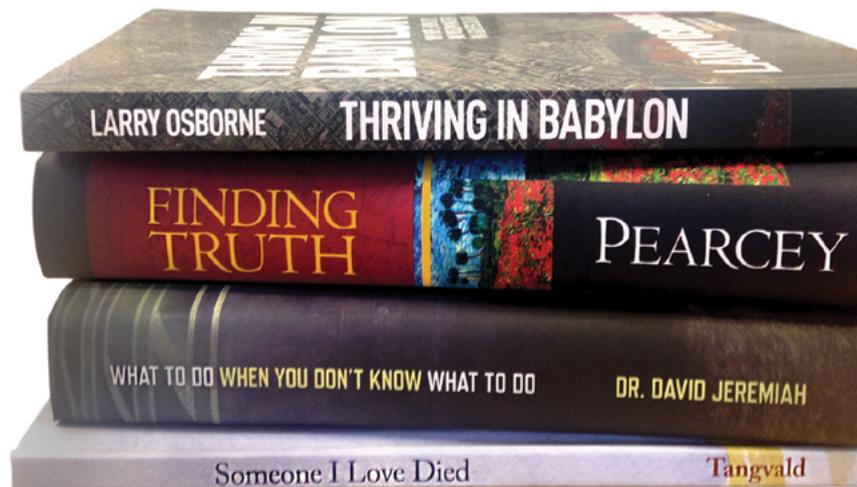
Five Reasons Your Love Life Sucks

FRANCIS CHAN 43

Reflecting on the Truest Thing About You

48

SHELF LIFE



“ Kindness is not the same thing as its socially manufactured substitute, niceness. 44

WORLDVIEW

It's 2015. Do you know where our kids are?

TOP 10 COUNTRIES BY POPULATION OF CHILDREN AGES 0 – 14

India	28.5%	352,065,096
China	17.1%	231,627,840
Nigeria	43.2%	76,505,041
Indonesia	26.2%	66,503,088
Pakistan	33.3%	65,393,715
US	19.4%	61,801,455
Bangladesh	32.3%	53,737,443
Brazil	23.8%	48,140,461
Ethiopia	44.2%	42,684,697
Philippines	33.7%	36,247,027

Worldwide
1,849,989,691
25.79%

❶ *It's ten o'clock. Do you know where your kids are?* Maybe you've heard this question on television—either as a public service announcement or as a late-night comedy spoof. No doubt, every parent has asked this about their own kids.

Now let's ask more broadly as members of the family of God: *It's 2015. Do we know where our kids are?* For the sake of the gospel, we ask again and again, generation after generation. Then we answer in evangelism and discipleship resources that teach children and raise them up in Christ.

Among the top countries with the most children fourteen years of age and younger, David C Cook and Integrity Music have a ministry presence through Christ-centered resources. We align with local and global churches and ministries to serve the unique needs of these countries. Altogether, we serve churches and ministries in more than two hundred countries and territories that help us create and utilize our books, music, and learning resources. You're one of them—and it's an honor to be on mission with you.

In this issue of *Resourceful*, you'll be inspired by the revival of a dying congregation in Canada. But you may be surprised at how: through a ministry focus on families. It turns out that inviting parents to invest in their children's faith can capture the hearts of both generations.

Yet as Millennials in the United States reach adulthood, there's concern that some have grown up with what Jim Wallace calls "accidental Christianity." Grounding the faith of this generation will demand digging deeper into what we believe and why—and doing so in ways that allow them to own and articulate their faith.

In other glimpses of the global Church, you'll read about the growing numbers of children who discover God's message of love and salvation through *The Story of Jesus* and *The Action Bible New Testament*. Our latest examples come from Ghana, India, and Guatemala.

Finally, let me highlight the personal reflection from Kyle Idleman. His encounter with a two-year-old girl in Haiti can teach all of us something about active compassion. Kyle is one of many authors and artists who lend their time and talent to engage you in Word and worship, so you can fulfill your role in the Great Commission by teaching disciples who are transforming today's generations.

As co-laborers in the gospel, we carry on the legacy that began when Chicago businessman David Caleb Cook saw the potential for the local church to teach children left homeless by the Great Chicago Fire. He responded by publishing Sunday school resources—because in 1875, he knew where the kids were. He reached out to them and invited their families to church. *Do you know where our kids are?*

Transforming lives together,



Cris H. Doornbos

CEO, David C Cook

CURRENT

News

SEEING AND STORYTELLING: GOD'S WORD FOR VISUAL AND ORAL LEARNERS

Although it was created for children and youth, *The Action Bible* also appeals to adults who are oral or semi-literate learners. Illustrations readily overcome language barriers, and reach people who have little or no ability to read.

Some cultures around the world rely on oral traditions to pass down their history and values from generation to generation. Pictures, proverbs, songs, and dances convey their worldview.

To help oral cultures come to know Jesus and understand the gospel, local churches and missionaries must find visual and relational ways to communicate. Fortunately, God's Word is filled with stories, parables, graphic word pictures, and analogies.

The Action Bible is one of many ministry resources that can overcome literacy barriers. Audio recordings, videos, plays, pageants, and object lessons help too. With tools like these, a native-language speaker can share God's Word with cultural insight and idioms that a foreigner simply can't duplicate.

Pictured above: A man in Guatemala looks at a Spanish translation of *The Action Bible New Testament*. See the story on page 18 to learn how this Bible is becoming a valuable literacy tool in the country's schools.



EVENTS & TOURS 11

SNAPSHOTS 12

NEPAL

5,000

pastors are already equipped with audio libraries to help them share God's Word



PRAYING FOR PASTORS IN THE AFTERMATH OF AN EARTHQUAKE

Please join us in praying for pastors in Nepal as they minister to hurting people since a powerful earthquake struck the country in April. Last year, in response to the rapid growth of Christianity in Nepal, ministry collaborators and donors joined with David C Cook to provide 5,000 audio libraries to Nepali pastors. The libraries are packaged on digital memory cards that plug into mobile phones, so pastors can use them anytime, anywhere.

Now as the tragedy of the earthquake raises spiritual questions of life and death, 5,000 pastors are already equipped with resources to help them share God's Word. We pray that the message of Christ will bring hope to many in Nepal who are suffering loss at this time.

Album Releases

AVAILABLE NOW

Planetshakers
Outback Worship Sessions

Sheldon Bangera *Raaja Hai Mahaan (Our King Is So Great)*

JUNE

Graham Kendrick *Graham Kendrick: The Ultimate Collection*

JULY

Tim Hughes *Pocketful of Faith*

New Wine *Wildfire*

AUGUST

The City Harmonic *We Are*

Christine D'Clario *Eterno*



INTEGRITY SIGNS NEW ARTISTS SETH & NIRVA

It was a match made in heaven in more ways than one. Nirva sang with TobyMac, and Seth was a backup vocal for Kirk Franklin and Chris Tomlin.

Though each artist had a bright music career before they met in 2003 at a Billy Graham crusade, it wasn't until 2013—seven years after they married—that they started recording together. Now they're working on a new album with Integrity Music.

Their creative collaboration taps into the talent of Israel Houghton too. The result? Worshipful blends of pop and R&B that will make you want to dance.



I feel like I'm a little girl at a party whose dad is asking her to leave early, and I'm throwing a fit. I'm not afraid of dying, I just don't want to go.

Kara Tippets, recorded for a documentary about her cancer journey of living, loving, and dying

A Whole New Tru

A whole new online experience delivers ministry resources around the world as *Tru* celebrates five years of transforming the spiritual lives of families. Trusted *Tru* resources are now available at TruMinistry.com with new features and content:

- A sliding-scale price structure, making *Tru* curriculum accessible to ministries of any size
- Streamlined lesson planning with fewer pages and simpler supplies
- An online Teacher Management tool to help recruit volunteers and coordinate lesson plans
- A whole quarter of curriculum available three months in advance, so teachers can plan ahead
- Lessons that can be printed or presented straight from the website

Tru also releases *TruIdentity*, a new curriculum developed for middle school youth groups. At an age when students are increasingly self-aware, each lesson empowers students to own their faith as they seek and respond to God, finding their identity in Him.

5TH ANNIVERSARY SNAPSHOT

TRU MINISTRY NOW REACHES FAMILIES IN 14 COUNTRIES



- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Australia | New Zealand |
| Canada | Singapore |
| Dominican Republic | South Africa |
| Great Britain | Thailand |
| Hong Kong | Trinidad and Tobago |
| India | United States |
| Korea | Zimbabwe |



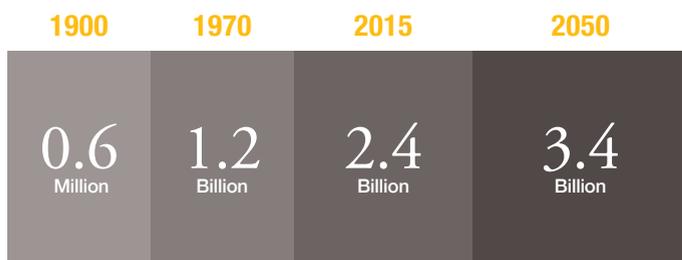
I walked through the library pulling philosophy books off the shelves, thinking, 'If I can't get the live adults to help me, maybe these dead white males will.'

Nancy Pearcey, on her crisis of faith as a young adult, quoted in *Christianity Today*, April 2015 cover story

By the Numbers

A 2015 STUDY ON THE STATE OF CHRISTIANITY REPORTS POSITIVE TRENDS FOR PEOPLE OF FAITH.

CHRISTIANITY ON THE RISE—NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS



A steady rise in the number of Christians around the world is attributed to growing faith in the global South: Africa, Asia, and Latin America. By 2050, almost one out of every eight people in the world will be an African Christian.

Changing Traditions

EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS

The number of evangelicals grew two percent in the last fifteen years—a rate faster than Islam, Hinduism, or other Christian denominations. At this rate of growth, evangelicals will make up six percent of the world population by 2050.

PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC CHRISTIANS

In 1900, Pentecostal and other charismatic Christians were in the minority, with less than one million followers. Today, they number more than 640 million. By 2050, they will top one billion; one in ten people around the world will be a Pentecostal or charismatic.

Data from International Bulletin of Missionary Research, Vol. 39 No. 01, published by Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Book Releases

AVAILABLE NOW

Mark and Jan Foreman *Never Say No: Raising Big Picture Kids*

Dan Lioy *David C Cook's KJV & NIV Bible Lesson Commentary*

David Jeremiah *What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do*

JUNE

Michelle Anthony and Megan Marshman *7 Family Ministry Essentials*

Pamela Havey Lau *A Friend in Me*

Patrick Quinn and Ken Roach *How to Ruin Your Child in 7 Easy Steps*

Mark Batterson and Joel Clark *Jack Staples and the Poet's Storm*

Varina Denman *Justified*

William Lane Craig *On Guard, For Students*

Miralee Ferrell *Silver Spurs*

JULY

Warren W. Wiersbe *Deuteronomy
Minor Prophets*

Hugh Halter *Brimstone*

Barnabas Piper *Help My Unbelief*

AUGUST

Lisa Anderson *The Dating Manifesto*

J. Warner Wallace *God's Crime Scene*

Tim Chaddick *The Truth about Lies*



Genuine faith does not go around our doubts but through them.

Tim Chaddick, via Twitter

The Action Bible Celebrates One Million Copies Sold

NEW ONLINE RESOURCES FOR YOUNG READERS

TheActionBible.com celebrates its fifth anniversary with a completely new website with free extras. Young readers can explore reading plans, try their hand at drawing pages, and study their favorite Bible characters.

THE ACTION BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS NOW ON CD

Churches and Sunday school programs have asked for more ways to use *The Action Bible* as they share God's message with their children. Now, a media kit CD joins *The Action Bible* Collection with more than a hundred full pages of illustrations and a dozen custom posters to decorate student classrooms or provide high-quality media presentations of *The Action Bible*. These great resources provide ministries with digital access to Sergio Cariello's vivid illustrations.



Let us be eager to leave what is familiar for what is true.

Francis Chan, via Twitter

THE ACTION BIBLE REACHES IRAN

Iran is a difficult place for Christians. But a ministry director like Azar will smile and tell you that Iran is at the center of some of the greatest things God is doing.

“The Lord is revealing Himself to many through dreams in the night,” he said, “and people are waking up knowing and believing in Jesus. The Iranians’ hearts are so ready for the gospel that they can be led to the Lord within three minutes. Though if someone is more hard-hearted, it might take five minutes in such cases.”

Today, an estimated one million Iranians confess Jesus as their Savior. That’s still a small percentage of Iran’s population of seventy-seven million. But technology is overcoming barriers to reach Iranians with the good news of Christ.



BROADCASTING ACROSS BORDERS

Satellite television is popular in the Middle East as an accessible alternative to government-controlled media. Today, inexpensive dishes dot the roofs of millions of homes. The region has access to almost three hundred satellite television channels. Viewers can watch news, comedies, sitcoms, dramas, and more—including Christian media provided through networks like Iran Alive Ministries, headquartered in the United States.

Building on the global popularity of David C Cook’s publications, *The Story of Jesus* and *The Action Bible*, Iran Alive Ministries is creating a children’s television series based on *The Action Bible New Testament*. Thirteen, ten-minute segments will feature Bible stories from the Farsi translation. The broadcasts will reach families before bedtime not only in Iran, but also in Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Each night, *The Action Bible* series is expected to reach eight million viewers with the gospel message. Please pray that the program will not only encourage and strengthen Christian families in their faith, but also open Muslims’ hearts to Christ.

Events & Tours

Join your favorite authors and artists at these upcoming events



J. Warner Wallace

Summit Worldview Conferences, Wednesdays, **June–August**, ColdCaseChristianity.com



Nancy Pearcey

Association of Classical & Christian Schools Conference, **June 18**, ACCSconference.org



Planetshakers

International Christian Retail Show, **June 28–29**, ChristianRetailShow.com



The City Harmonic, Darlene Zschech, The Brilliance, Planetshakers, Israel Houghton

National Worship Leader Conference, NWLCConf.com for dates and cities



NewSong

Tour, **June–October**, NewSongOnline.com



Desperation Band

Desperation Conference, **July 8–10**, DesperationOnline.com



Brady Boyd

Experience Conference, **July 6–9**, ExperienceConference.com



Hugh Halter

BiVo Conference, **August 7–8**, HughHalter.com

Events & Tours



Lincoln Brewster
Tour, **July–September**,
LincolnBrewster.com

Matt Chandler, Joni Eareckson Tada, and Gary Thomas

American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference, **September 23–26**,
WorldConference.net

“ Any formulation of ‘gospel’ that doesn’t reveal the love of the Father, the grace of Christ and the fellowship of the Spirit is insufficient.

Glenn Packiam, via Twitter



Kelly Minter
SpringHill Camps Women’s Retreat,
October 2–4

Snapshots

Children’s Clubs in India Bring The Action Bible to Life

In India, church-sponsored children’s clubs use *The Action Bible* to share the gospel and bring soul-care to orphans. For Children’s Day, a national holiday in India, twenty-nine clubs gathered to reenact their favorite *Action Bible* stories and compete for the best skit.



The Birth of Jesus



The Sermon on the Mount



Jesus and Zacchaeus



Moses in Pharaoh’s Court

GLOBAL INITIATIVES



Do Something: Compassion as an Action Word

Pastor and author Kyle Idleman has spent the last five years sending teams and missionaries to Haiti, helping the local church there care for orphans. On his most recent trip, he delivered a sermon remotely to his congregation back home in Kentucky.

Kyle Idleman • I was standing in these streets a few days after the earthquake, and you could smell death and you could smell hopelessness. And I saw this two-year-old little girl in the street. She seemed to be by herself, so I walked over to her. She put her arms up toward me, and I scooped her up in my arms; I held her for a few minutes, and someone took a picture.

If someone had not taken a picture, I'm not sure I'd be standing here today, but someone took a picture. And I found an older girl who seemed to know her, and I let her take care of this little two-year-old girl. I came back to Louisville and kind of got back in the routine of life, when somebody sent me the picture of me and that two-year-old little girl. I've seen that picture many times sitting on my desk, and almost every time I see it I hear this whisper, "Do something. Do something."

Toward the end of the gospel of Matthew in Matthew 25, we read about the last day when we are told that all of us will stand before Jesus. And on that day Jesus will say to



BIHAR, INDIA 15

From Graveyard to Vineyard:
Praying for Bihar's Revival

LIFE AND DEATH 16

Facing Fear
After Ebola

“Every day we have an opportunity ‘on the go’ to stop and love Jesus by loving others.”

some of you, “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was sick,” or, “I was in prison,” or, “I was alone,” and He kind of goes through this list of ways that these people showed Him love. And the people will say, “Well, I don’t remember you being hungry. I don’t remember you being thirsty, Jesus.” And Jesus will say, “Whatever you did unto the least of these ... unto the least of these children of Mine ... that’s what you did for Me.”



So that’s our motivation. It’s what keeps our hearts strong and what keeps us passionate. That whenever we do for the least of these, it’s like we’re doing it for Jesus. Every day we have an opportunity “on the go” to stop and love Jesus by loving others.

But let’s be honest. It’s hard for us to always be on the go. Instead we like to be more comfortable. We like to be more predictable. Richard Stearns paraphrases Matthew 26, and he wants to help us see that passage more clearly. In his book *The Hole in Our Gospel*, he paraphrases Jesus saying:

I was hungry, but you went out to eat again. I was thirsty, but you wanted a bottled water. I was a stranger, and you wanted me deported. I needed clothes, but you needed more clothes. I was sick, and you pointed out my behavior that led to my sickness. I was in prison, and you said I was getting what I deserved.

I don’t know how you feel, but that’s pretty convicting to me. As we go throughout our day we have opportunities to love Jesus, but we’re oftentimes very much focused on ourselves. But when we love others, when we stop for the down-and-out, for the overlooked and the undervalued, for the unnoticed and the unworthy—that’s when we’re showing the love of Christ.

One of the things I have to be careful of is confusing my good intentions with loving people. You see, sometimes I feel compassionate for someone who’s hurting or I feel loving toward orphans in Haiti, but that’s different than actually being compassionate. It’s so much more than a feeling. I think a lot of the times we think, “Oh, because I feel a certain way that means I am a certain way.” But compassion is a word that is action. If you look at the gospels, oftentimes it’s attached with the word *and*. So Jesus had compassion *and* He met the specific need. Our compassion for others should always have an *and* attached to it. It should be able to tell a story. Don’t confuse just feeling compassionate with being compassionate. God has called us to take action and to show love to the least of these.

If we were honest, most of us would say—at least to one degree or another—we don’t really want to go; we want to stay. Because staying is comfortable and staying is predictable and staying is safe. And going can be uncomfortable and unpredictable and it can be risky. But when Jesus gave us the Great Commission and told us to “go into all the world,” we don’t call that the Great Suggestion, and we don’t call that the Great Recommendation. It’s more than just an idea; it is a command for all believers.

One of the most common questions I’m asked as a pastor is, “What is God’s will for my life?” People ask me that all the time. If you’re wondering what God’s will is for your life, that’s His will.

His will is that you go and you share His love. It’s not His will for you to live a safe, ordinary, and mundane life. It’s not God’s will for us just to live these comfortable, predictable, self-ish, self-centered lives consumed by our own interests and our own desires and our own opinions. It’s God’s will that we go. And as we go, we become His hands and His feet, showing His love to people along the way. ●

Adapted from *Love Where You Go* sermon by Kyle Idleman © 2015 Southeast Christian Church. Used by permission.



The Nepal earthquake in April also shook nearby Bihar, India, with aftershocks measuring 5.1 magnitude. The region faces its own losses and road to recovery.

FAST FACT



From Graveyard to Vineyard: Praying for Bihar's Revival

Once labeled a “graveyard” of missions, Bihar state in eastern India now has pastors praying for revival and sharing *The Story of Jesus* as a spiritual “vineyard” takes root.

● A group of two hundred rural pastors from India Mission, one of Bihar’s fastest growing church planting initiatives, hosted a week of fasting and prayer last year. One evening in particular they prayed fervently for resources to reach the thousands of children in their villages.

Why so focused on reaching the next generation? Bihar, one of India’s twenty-nine states, is one of the toughest places to live—rife with hardship and injustice that oppresses children. More than forty percent of the population lives below the poverty line, mostly in rural areas. Violence and caste discrimination are commonplace. Only half of students achieve basic competency in the fifth grade; more than half drop out. And the state accounts for ten percent of the entire nation’s child labor.

Bihar is desperate—and ripe—for revival. Christians there have labored for decades and yet seen little fruit from their efforts—only 53,000 Christians are counted among the state’s population of 103 million. However, in recent years they’ve witnessed unprecedented openness to the gospel, in part due to a focus on oral Bible storytelling and the creation of materials that speak to people in their local dialect, or heart language.

In collaboration with New India Evangelistic Association, David C Cook has come alongside Bihar Christians to collaboratively develop a twenty-four-page rendering of *The Story of Jesus* in six local dialects. Illustrations, adapted from *The Action Bible*, need no translation; they fill the pages with color as the story of salvation captivates children ages four through fourteen, especially in cultures with weak literacy levels and strong oral learning traditions.

The New India Evangelistic Association serves throughout the state, networking and distributing three million copies of *The Story of Jesus* through churches, schools, Bible clubs, teachers, village leaders, and evangelists. The association reports great enthusiasm as ministry workers see how the story opens the hearts of children and adults alike.

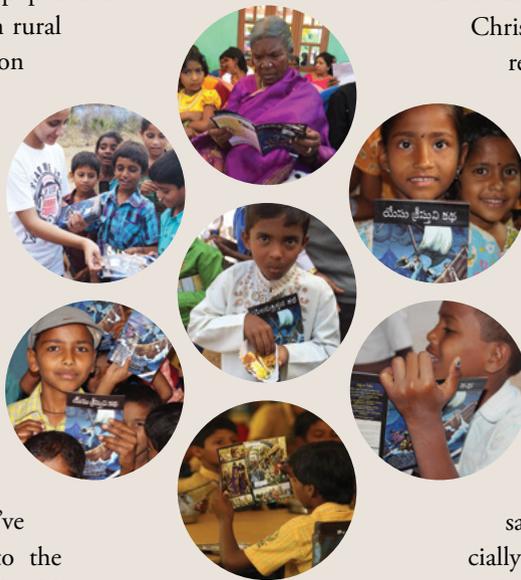
For example, a high school principal and science teacher distributed three hundred copies of *The Story of Jesus* in their rural school. They said, “We are happy to understand Christian worship and to learn about the real God who created the whole world.”

Both men accepted Jesus Christ. They have since shared *The Story of Jesus* with their families. The pastor who initially asked them to distribute the booklets now comes once a month to teach the students and teachers more about Jesus.

Pastor and evangelist, Rajiv, has carved out a special place at the Gaya Railway station. Thousands of people arrive each day to pilgrimage to the birthplace of Buddha. He says, “I want people and children especially to hear about Jesus. Even though this is considered the birthplace of Buddha, they will

hear about Jesus’ love. I enter the railway compartments and share with passengers traveling to and from this holy city.”

And the pastors from India Mission who fasted and prayed for children’s resources? The next morning, they were surprised to see a team from New India Evangelistic Association arrive at their campus with copies of *The Story of Jesus*. Said one of the pastors, “You have come at the right time, just when we prayed for this—and now God has answered our prayers!” Each pastor received two boxes to share with children in their communities. ●



Facing Fear After Ebola

In the wake of losses that hit close to home, churches in Ghana reach out to children and families.



Last fall as the Ebola virus continued to spread in West Africa, mission-minded donors received word of an urgent global initiative to deliver *The Story of Jesus* to churches in Ghana.

The churches had already come together in 2013 to envision a national evangelism effort. They selected the illustrated story as an ideal resource to reach children and their families. Then Ebola raised the stakes.

The donors' response was swift and generous. Because of the initiative, 5.3 million copies of *The Story of Jesus* were printed and delivered to Ghana by spring—all for about sixteen cents per copy.

The virus came frightfully close to the country's borders. It never crossed into Ghana, but it awakened a spiritual need.

FEWER HEADLINES, MORE HEARTACHE

North Americans see fewer Ebola headlines as experts say the epidemic is finally showing signs of slowing. On one hand, that's good news.

But on the other hand, since last fall ...

The number of cases has *tripled*.

The number of deaths has more than *doubled*.

So while the spread of Ebola may be slowing, it is leaving a lot of heartache in its wake. Experience shows that the time

after a trauma is when a different kind of suffering sets in—the kind of suffering that deals with hard questions of life and death long after the news story fades from the headlines.

LINGERING QUESTIONS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Churches in Ghana are just beginning to address the spiritual needs of people who face those lingering questions of life and death. They need a spiritual remedy that only the gospel can provide.

"This project is more important to me and my colleagues than anything else right now," said Reverend Johnson Asare in his January ministry update to David C Cook. He founded Markaz Al Bishara—that's Arabic for Center of Good News—and serves as a ministry partner in Ghana.

"*The Story of Jesus* is going to turn Ghana inside out for Christ. We will very soon embark on a massive distribution throughout the country."

Donors and friends are praying for the children who receive *The Story of Jesus*—that they would embrace the message of salvation, and that entire families would be drawn to Christ through the outreach and ongoing ministry of local churches across Ghana. ●

How the Story Comes to Life

Reports from churches in Ghana affirm how *The Story of Jesus* comes to life in the hearts and minds of children. Each booklet includes a contact card from a nearby church to invite children and their families to attend and learn more about Jesus.

IN A DREAM

As Christians were distributing *The Story of Jesus* in a village, they came upon some boys playing soccer in a dusty playground. At first none of the boys showed interest.

Then one of the spectators, who was watching the game, accepted a copy of the story and sat down to read it. One of the boys became curious—because he knew that the spectator was not a reader. Yet why was he so interested in the booklet? The boy accepted his own booklet and began reading the story.

Within moments, the game came to a halt. Soon all twenty-three boys had *The Story of Jesus* in their hands.

A boy named Fadi read the booklet on his way home. He finished reading it before nightfall and couldn't stop thinking about Jesus as he went to bed. *If Jesus is the way to heaven, then I want to follow Him. But to do so would go against my family tradition.* Scenes from *The Story of Jesus* filled the boy's dreams.

The next morning Fadi gave his life to Jesus. Three days later, he walked seven miles to a village to meet with a Christian who lived there.

IN THE BUSH

As a full-time missionary and pastor in northern Ghana, Donny works in the rural "bush" places to reach people for Christ. Through Markaz Al Bishara, he received 2,030 copies of *The Story of Jesus*. It's one of the most powerful tools to reach children in the areas where he works.

Most of the children are illiterate, but *The Story of Jesus* consumes them. "The pictures speak a thousand word of Jesus Christ to their hearts," Donny says.

"These booklets are like hot cakes—all of the children want a copy. I will go to a village and hand them out, and the next time I go to do follow up, I have different children begging for their own copy."

In some of the villages, Donny hosts meetings and sees the crowd double with children and even adults. Through this tool, he says, "children are coming to the saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."





Letters

from the Land

of Eternal Spring

From the highlands of Guatemala, missionaries **David and Helen Ekstrom** sent letters that highlight the story of their lifelong effort to see Mayan people groups receive and understand God's Word.

Sifting through an archive of letters from just the last ten years, you can see the spark of dry wit and determination that persisted through many decades of missionary endeavor.



NOVEMBER 29, 2005

Translation is not a spectator sport. The excitement comes later. Most of the time we have been working on 2 computers with 2 or 3 translators about 7 hours a day.

These few sentences capture more than a momentary update in a missionary prayer letter
—so much is sacred in the mundane.



David and Helen wrote letters to provide glimpses of their lifelong effort to embed God's Word among Mayan people groups living in remote towns throughout the highlands of Guatemala.

They affectionately noted the names of local teammates and fellow missionaries who served alongside. They shared frequent prayer requests for ministry projects, as well as for traveling mercies and health concerns. And in nearly every letter, they expressed gratitude for the provision that enabled them to press on.

The Ekstroms began their missionary work as newlyweds in 1950, serving with Central American Mission, or CAM, now known as Camino Global. They engaged in Bible translation and distribution, church planting, leadership training, radio programming, and children's ministry. Their many collaborators included ministry staff of Wycliffe Bible Translators, United Bible Societies, and Good Samaritan International, as well as Guatemalan church leaders.

Their adopted homeland is nicknamed "the land of eternal spring" because of its year-round temperate climate. Across a landscape of mountains and plains, lakes and volcanoes, Mayan ruins stand as emblems of the ancient civilization. Huehuetenango—pronounced *WEH-weh-te-NAHN-goh*—is the name of a western state and its capital city. Many people in that region speak Chuj (*Chuke*), K'anjobal, and Jacalteco—which were the focus of the Ekstroms' work—among fifty-three living indigenous languages in the country.

To this land, and to these people, David and Helen devoted their lives. Even during the 1980s when many people were killed or disappeared during civil conflict, the Ekstroms stayed. Without biological children of their own, the couple envisioned a future for the families and communities they served. And in time, when their health and strength began to wane, David expressed no intention of changing course:



OCTOBER 19, 2010

Nothing has changed. Our lives are still in the hands of God to Whom we long ago committed them.

Little more than a year later, he died of a heart attack at age eighty-five. Helen, now eighty-seven, continues to live in Guatemala and maintain close connections with ministry collaborators.

And, after more than sixty years of their missionary work, the words still ring true: *The excitement comes later.*

Mayan peoples, like many descendants of ancient cultures, are steeped in oral tradition and indigenous languages.

A TOOL FOR TEACHING ABOUT JESUS

God used decades of work by the Ekstroms to prepare the way for a breakthrough in 2013. Leading up to that year, Christians in Huehuetenango had taken initiative to work with directors and teachers in public schools, and received permission to teach a weekly class about moral values. When volunteer teachers retired or moved, others stepped in to continue the classes. Eventually the network of teachers grew to 180.

Bible resources served as curriculum for the weekly classes in Spanish, Guatemala's official language. Yet many of the children came from families that spoke indigenous Mayan languages, so literacy had to be taught in tandem with the Bible lessons. Helen and her teammates wanted to be sure that the children would really understand the lessons. Over the years, they tried various

materials as new options became available. In 2012, during a visit with mission project partners, Helen spent time with them to research the latest children's resources. She found that most books were too expensive or didn't offer greater benefits than what teachers were already using.

Then she discovered a little picture book that caught her attention. For about ten cents a copy, *The Story of Jesus* could be provided to hundreds of thousands of children. In sixteen pages, vibrant illustrations and simple Spanish language present the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and outline the message of salvation. And the story, excerpted from *The Action Bible*, goes beyond language with vivid illustrations by comic book artist Sergio Cariello. Children readily understood the pictures while learning to read the words.



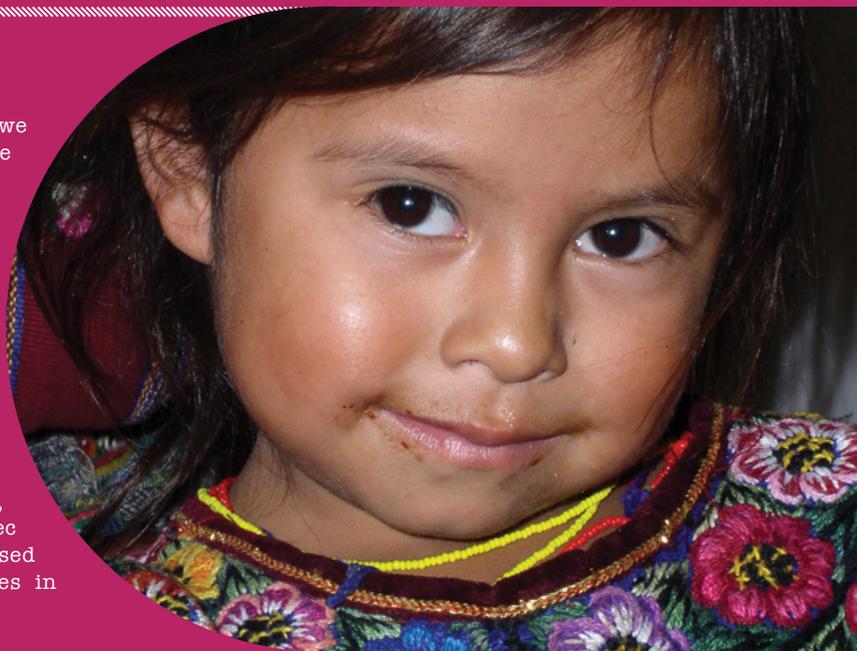
SEPTEMBER 9, 2005

Dear Support Team, You who receive this letter know that the Jacalteco New Testament has been very much on our minds for some years, so it is a joy to report to you that it is now in the hands of the people. Praise the Lord for all His help over the years. It was a blessing to us to see the joy of the people getting copies of God's Word in their own language.



JANUARY 29, 2006

During the last week of 2005 we printed 5,000 booklets of five lessons apiece for the children's classes in the villages of San Mateo, and the first week of 2006 we met with the teachers to help them understand how to use the book. We have named a national coordinator for the program, and she has really gotten to work. Two young ladies from the Jacalteco church in Pebilpam came by here on their way to study at the Guatemalan Bible Seminary, and told us that the Jacalteco New Testament is being used enthusiastically by the churches in the area.



In Guatemala, rural literacy is less than 25% compared to 75% nationally.

FAST FACT



So in 2013, volunteer teachers began presenting *The Story of Jesus*. Their students' enthusiastic response—and understanding of the story—prompted a quest for a more complete textbook: *The Action Bible New Testament*. Beyond schools, many church-based ministries across the country began using the same resources in after-school clubs, Sunday school, and VBS outreach.

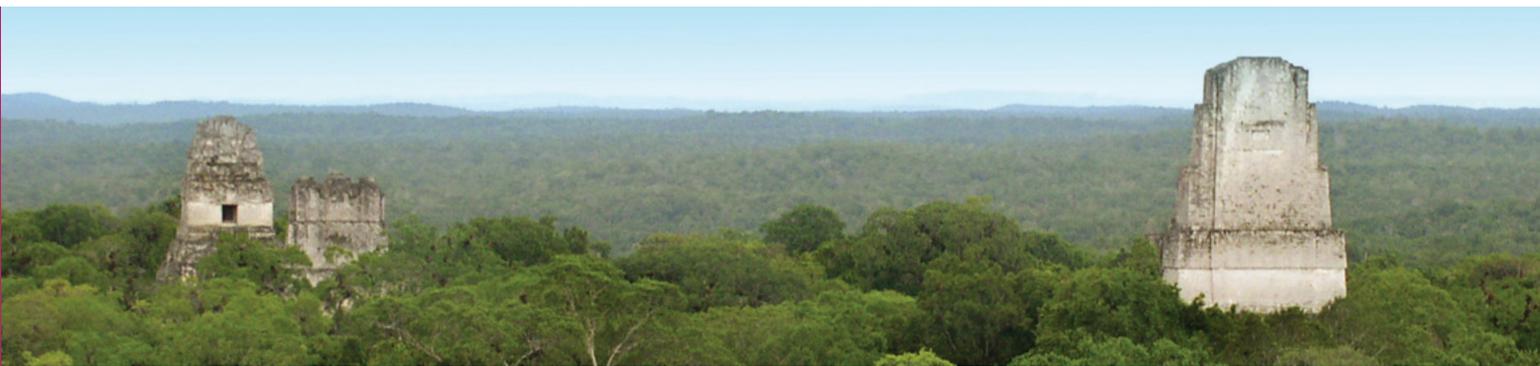
STORYTELLING AT SCHOOL CONTINUES AT HOME

Mayan peoples, like many descendants of ancient cultures, are steeped in oral tradition and indigenous languages. Not only is storytelling deeply rooted in their history, it continues as a way of life among adults, passed down to their children.

Half the population of Guatemala is under age nineteen, making this nation of 15.4 million the youngest in Central America. The emerging generation isn't old enough to remember the civil war that finally ended in 1996 after nearly four decades. They are growing up with greater economic and educational opportunities than their parents had.

In this cultural context, the network of volunteer educators embraced *The Story of Jesus* with creative insight. They distributed the story during class time, talked through several pages of the story, then asked questions and developed skits to help children interpret and act out the scenes. Children would also practice reading skills on short sections of text.

At the end of each class, booklets were collected until the next week's lesson. Only after completing the series of weekly



AUGUST 4, 2006

We are working to finish correcting the dump draft of the Chuj Bible. We have almost finished the Old Testament, and are beginning the New. Our hope is to have this ready for typesetting by the end of this month.

Another project that has become very urgent is putting all the Mayan language New Testaments currently available here in Guatemala into audio format on small units for personal or small group listening. Very few people are fluent readers of their own languages. Pray with us for this whole project.



DECEMBER 9, 2006

A full month of our time and effort after turning in the Bible went into preparing for a workshop for the teachers in the church-sponsored classes to teach Bible as well as reading and writing in Spanish and Chuj in the villages that speak Chuj.

Our translation helpers, Ovidio and Ambrocio, worked with us on the workshop project and preparing materials for teaching mothers how to lead their children to know the Lord and the basics of the Christian life, and a series of 8 simple lessons to use in working with unbelievers.

Yours that others might see Jesus,
David and Helen Ekstrom



FEBRUARY 10, 2008

Greetings from the “land of eternal spring.” Since getting back we have been to the villages 3 times. The first time was to attend church association meetings to find out how we can work together with them to advance the work of winning people to the Lord and helping them in their spiritual lives.

The second visit was for a workshop with the teachers in the Supplemental Education Program out in the churches. Helen and Ambrocio worked to teach how to use storytelling with questions to communicate with oral learners—people whose learning style is through what they hear and not what is on paper.



JULY 23, 2007

The planning committee had asked those of us who were coming for the service to take a route up through the heart of the Chuj area so that groups coming from the villages could join us along the way to form a caravan going into town. Most of us spent the night of the 11th at a town part way to our destination to cut down travel time the next morning. Even so we had to be rolling at 3:00 a.m.

At 4:00 a.m., when we arrived at the point where we had to leave the pavement and head into the hills, we were surprised to see a large number of trucks, buses, vans, and pick-ups waiting for us; and about 5:30 we were joined by a lot more vehicles.

Someone said the total number in the caravan was 59. They were decorated with balloons, flags, and banners stating the reason for the parade, the church represented, or just joy at the occasion. There were several different Protestant groups represented as well as traditional and charismatic Catholics.

But it had rained heavily in the highlands, and about 60% of the way to our destination we reached a steep, tight switchback, which stopped some of the heavier vehicles. Someone finally called for a grader to come and clean the mud away. We were due in San Mateo to begin the service at 9:00, but it actually started at 12:25.

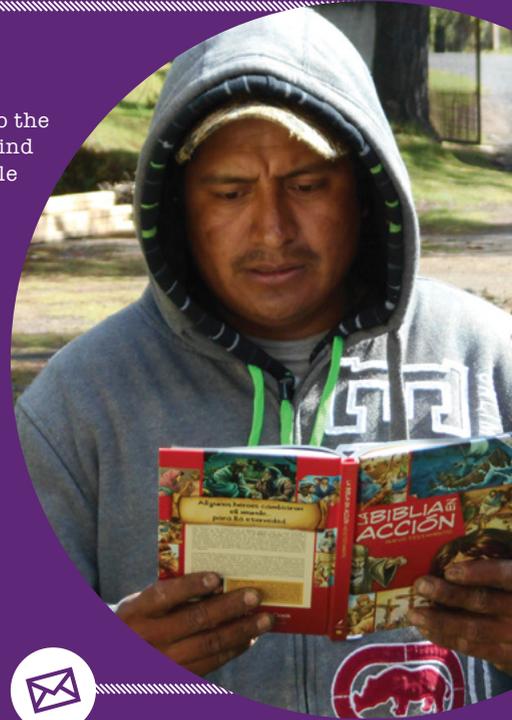
The service was held in a natural amphitheater among the ruins of the Mayan temple complex. There was no building adequate for the crowd.

Thank you each one for your part by your gifts and prayers over the years, which made this day possible. Pray with us that the Word will be applied by God’s spirit to the lives of those who read and hear. Our current project is to get this Word in audio format for those who cannot read.



DECEMBER 5, 2009

Just a few days ago we were in Jacaltenango for a workshop on how to teach children using Bible story videos produced by Vina, an offshoot of Wycliffe Bible Translators’ work here in Guatemala. The stories are told with finger puppets, and besides the video, each story comes with a handbook for teaching 5 lessons. The handbook is also on an audio CD.



MARCH 25, 2008

We have been out in several villages in the Chuj and Jacalteco areas and been impressed with the tremendous need to work with the young folks. That segment of the population is just exploding.

Pray the Lord would give us new insights on how to reach them.



APRIL 18, 2011

Pray with us for additional members and funding for the Jacalteco team, and for the Lord’s continued blessing on the Lopez’s work with children and with young people in our area. Our aging bodies and minds need special help from Him. But “He who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead” is adequate for these much smaller things.

A Joyous Easter to each of you.

Your fellow servants,
David and Helen

They are learning to treasure God's Word on the printed page and imprinted on their hearts.

lessons about *The Story of Jesus*, children finally got to take their booklets home.

And there, a whole new ministry opportunity came to life: *The Story of Jesus* made children into evangelists at home. They would read the booklets out loud to their families. Many parents and grandparents who grew up illiterate were eager to look at the pictures, ask questions, and listen in as the words were read and explained. As a result, families came to know Christ.

To date, a million copies of *The Story of Jesus* have been distributed in schools and churches in Guatemala with the help of ministry teammates, churches, and missionaries throughout the country.

TREASURING GOD'S WORD

Now, children and families are hungry to know more of God's Word. One of the local educators developed a curriculum guide for weekly lessons based on *The Action Bible New Testament*. Through a mission initiative of Guatemalan believers, sponsors are underwriting the printing and shipment of the Spanish New Testaments. In collaboration with David C Cook, the books are printed at a fraction of the price.

With 170,000 New Testaments already in Guatemala, the ministry plan maximizes the use of each Bible toward a goal of reaching the nation's 5.3 million children. *The Action Bible New Testament* is distributed with careful accountability for every copy, specifically and only for educational use in classrooms and



APRIL 17, 2014

Dear Friends, These [booklets of *The Story of Jesus*] have been used especially in the public schools and have been a very effective tool to present the gospel.

At the moment the New Testaments are being printed in Japan. We trust they will be able to be brought into the country without paying duty. I would appreciate your prayers about this and also that this material will be used by the Lord to reach many children.



JUNE 21, 2014

Last fall after the booklets were given out to students in the agricultural school, I was invited to visit and took Bibles to the students. René López who has been working with me visited the school a number of times, and a good group of the students professed to accept the Lord.

We are grateful for the opportunities to give the gospel freely here in Guatemala.

Thanks so much,
Helen Ekstrom

church programs. While participating churches include various Protestant and Catholic traditions, the lessons must focus simply on the Bible.

Bibles supplied to each classroom are so precious that each copy may be used by several different students during different class periods throughout the week. Each school or ministry is expected to retain and care for its inventory for two years. As word of this ministry spreads across the country, requests for *The Action Bible New Testament* are on the rise.

Christian children in Western nations are likely to own their Bibles. But among children in the highlands of Guatemala who

may have never owned a book, using *The Action Bible New Testament* is a privilege. They are learning to treasure God's Word on the printed page and imprinted on their hearts.

Although the letters of a lifetime have nearly all been written, the legacy of the Ekstroms' story continues—sixty-plus years and counting.

By the grace of God, as the gospel reaches and redeems children and their families in Guatemala, it brings eternal hope to the Mayan peoples who live in the land of eternal spring. ●



TOGETHER IN MISSION: A FOUNDATION OF FRIENDSHIP

First Helen met Lois at a Bible study, then the two wives introduced their husbands, David and Phil, and a friendship was born between the two couples.

That was 1979—nearly thirty years after the Ekstroms settled and set to work in Guatemala. In more than thirty-five years since, Phil, Lois, and their children grew attached. From the United States, the family adopted Guatemala at a distance and spanned the gap with prayer and occasional visits.

David and Helen received financial support from Phil and Lois, and from a number of other donors and local churches in the United States and Canada.

When Phil and Lois established a private foundation, Guatemala already had a place in their hearts. And when Helen identified *The Story of Jesus* and *The Action Bible New Testament* as ideal resources for children's ministry, the foundation generously granted full funding.

As Phil and Lois reflect on the legacy of David and Helen's ministry in Guatemala, they encourage a global view: "Our hope would be that this story of what's happening in Guatemala would inspire others to become involved in other countries of the world, to see what resource would meet the needs there."

THE
DANGER
OF
Accidental
CHRISTIANITY



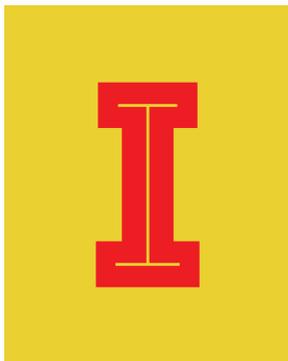
As the Millennial generation grapples with faith and doubt, a cold-case detective warns what's at stake if we can't make the case for what we believe—and why.



DCC.is/ColdCase

Watch the video:

Jim Wallace shares how pastors can equip their churches for a melting-pot culture of beliefs.



couldn't believe how fast they walked away from Christianity," says Jim Wallace of the high school seniors who graduated in 2001 after his first year as a youth pastor in California.

"I think all but one became an atheist before the Christmas break of their freshman year in college. Of course, they were going to pretty aggressively

secular schools. But it bothered me so much that I said: *OK, we're done with that. Whatever we were doing that first year, it is not effective.* So we shifted everything toward apologetics, and we did case-making from that point on."

And Jim knows how to make a case—not only to defend the faith, but also to solve a murder. He attended seminary and became a youth pastor in the midst of his twenty-six-year career as a Los Angeles County homicide detective. He specializes in cold cases, the ones that go unsolved for years, long after the death has occurred and long after evidence and eyewitness accounts have been collected and examined to no avail.

The official name on his badge, and on the books he's authored, is J. Warner Wallace. But in conversation, in television appearances on shows like *NBC's Dateline*, and in numerous YouTube videos, he's simply Jim—an engaging, relational guy who clearly spells out the evidence for a case in everyday language.

Since retiring from law enforcement last year, Jim continues to work as a consultant on cold cases. He has also transitioned from youth pastor to adjunct professor of apologetics at Biola University.

WHY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE LOSING FAITH

Jim wants to help young people understand the evidence for Christian beliefs so they can address "pockets of doubt" in their minds as they make sense of their faith and, ultimately, make the case for what and why they believe.

"If you're my age, you can pretty much choose your peer group and surround yourself with people who agree with you," Jim explains. "But when you're in the younger age group, going off to university, you don't get a choice of who you're surrounded by. In fact, you're probably going to be surrounded by people who don't hold your view, and this is the first time you're going to have to defend it."

His experience that first year as a youth pastor echoes troubling statistics about the faith of many young adults today.

"Over half of Millennials with a Christian background (59 percent) have, at some point, dropped out of going to church after having gone regularly, and half have been significantly frustrated by their faith," according to research conducted as part of the Barna Millennials Project.

David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, calls them *nomads*, *exiles*, and *prodigals* in reference to three kinds of spiritual journeys that have led them away from the church. Nomads consider church to be optional and faith to be relatively unimportant in their lives. Exiles want to connect their faith to the world around them; they claim to see God at work outside the church more than inside. So-called prodigals—representing 21 percent of Millennials with a Christian background—say that Christianity just doesn't make sense to them. It fails to meet their spiritual needs. And they're likely carrying baggage from a negative church experience.

SOLVING A CENTURIES-OLD COLD CASE

Jim became a Christian only after he approached the case for faith like a cold-case detective—long after the death of Christ. The evidence and eyewitness accounts have been studied for centuries by skeptics and believers alike, but Jim wanted to conduct the investigation himself.

"For me, when I first examined this, it would not have mattered if Christianity was true or false. I wasn't trying to debunk it, and I wasn't trying to become a Christian. I just became interested in the evidence, and I tried to look at things pretty fairly."

Jim was an atheist at the time, but open to ancient wisdom from any source—Buddha, Bahà'u'llàh, Jesus, and "even fortune cookies," he jokes. "But that doesn't mean I thought the writers were divinely inspired." He did, however, accept the possibility that Jesus actually lived in the ancient past.

Like many young people today, he had been turned off by church. His mother, who had grown up a "cultural Catholic," felt she was unwelcome to receive the sacraments after she and Jim's father divorced. "As a young boy, watching how divorced people were treated, at least in the parish she was in, I thought it was nonsense."

All the while, his father was a staunch atheist, and is to this day, even after remarrying a woman who shortly thereafter became a Mormon. To Jim, different strains of faith seemed to be personal preferences, not necessarily worth opposing or defending.

38% OF MILLENNIALS WITH A CHRISTIAN BACKGROUND ADMIT TO GOING THROUGH A PERIOD WHEN THEY SIGNIFICANTLY DOUBTED THEIR FAITH

So when Jim married and had children of his own, and his wife wanted to attend church, he was willing. After all, Jim acknowledged that Jesus was a “smart guy.”

“I bought my first Bible in an effort to mine out the words of Jesus.” He read the Gospels like a detective, evaluating the discrepancies in the eyewitness accounts to discern what had actually happened. He reached the conclusion that the claims of Jesus, Son of God, are true. Jim could make the case.

FROM ACCIDENTAL TO EVIDENTIAL CHRISTIANITY

“When it comes to what I’m seeing in the church, there’s a lot of work to be done,” Jim says during a recent discussion about his new book, *God’s Crime Scene*. He wrote and illustrated the book with the particular intention of appealing to high school and young adult readers. He thinks parents and pastors would do well to read it too—for good reason.

“I’m concerned, and here’s why: I have a full speaking calendar. I’m in a different church every single week. I get a chance to assess and take the pulse of youth groups and congregations around North America. I ask this question almost everywhere I go: *Why are you guys Christians?* And the answers are the same almost everywhere I go.”

I was raised in the church. I’ve always been a Christian.

I’ve had an experience that I can only attribute to God.

My life was transformed by God. I was a horrible sinner, and I got saved.

“These are all the same answers in the same order that my Mormon family gives for being Mormon. I’m okay with those answers, but they’re not sufficient to discern truth from error.”

The detective-pastor-professor advocates that Christians could and should make a case with evidence for what they believe, but many have settled for what he calls “accidental Christianity.” He spots it among “people who happen to be in the right place, who happen to hold to something that is in fact true, but they can’t tell you why it’s true.”

“And if you’re that kind of Christian, and you’re twenty, and you’re encountering your first stiff opposition in university, then stand by, because something bad is about to happen ... because that kind of belief system—no one in our culture has patience for that anymore. Our culture wants the truth to be determined immediately by some empirical science and then summed up in 140 characters I can retweet on Twitter. If you

can’t make a case for what you believe that’s rhetorically powerful, and can be expressed quickly, good luck with that. It’s not going to last long.”

FAMILY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT FAITH

For Jim, advocating the case for Christianity includes his own family. He has two daughters and two sons, ages seventeen to twenty-six. He’s grateful that all of his children have experienced Christianity as a faith they can own and defend.

“This is the age group that’s under attack. My kids ended up catching what I call ‘ricochet apologetics.’ I was pitching this at high schoolers, and it would bounce off the walls. My kids, who were ages four to twelve at the time, would catch it. So when they became high schoolers, they were solid, because they’d been listening. This is the only form of Christianity they’ve ever known. They weren’t raised in the church; they were raised with this crazy case-maker.”

At the opposite end of the generational spectrum are Jim’s parents. His mother has found new faith in Christ and was among the first people Jim baptized after he became a pastor. Jim says his father “won’t mess with anything that produces good people,” yet he is simply not interested in religious belief of any kind.

That hasn’t stopped Jim from sharing the gospel with his dad. “You have to speak the truth as articulately as you can, with as much evidence as you can.” He describes their relationship as incredibly close despite the difference in their worldviews. “It’s not as if he doesn’t know what I believe, but now that I’m on the other side of those conversations, I need to love on him so he can see that what I believe has feet.”

Jim urges families at all stages of life to engage in thoughtful discussion about Christianity. “When that student comes home from college with doubts—or more likely when they’re in high school or junior high—be ready to talk about it. Don’t just tell them, ‘Read this guy’s book.’ They need to know how you handle this. You’re a Christian.”

It’s not enough to know that the information is available for someday when you need it, because by then it’s too late, Jim says. “By the time they’re asking, they’re already losing belief.” A book like *God’s Crime Scene* can be a great tool for proactive family conversations.

“You have to know what you believe so when the first little gap comes up, you can talk about it in a very calm, thoughtful way that isn’t reactive, panicky, or over the top—it’s just that you know this is true, and you know the reasons why.”

CASE IN POINT

JOSHUA

NOW IN HIS TWENTIES, JOSHUA REFLECTS ON HIS SPIRITUAL JOURNEY, INCLUDING THE INFLUENCE OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH JIM WALLACE, WHO SERVED AS HIS YOUTH PASTOR.

Before I began to join Jim in the “case-making” form of worship, I was like many pre-high-school students who were engaged in sports, worked hard in school, and encountered some challenges at home.

I did believe in God, but I didn’t have a relationship with Jesus. I prayed for success in soccer games, prayed before each meal, paid some attention during church, and tried to treat people with kindness and respect.

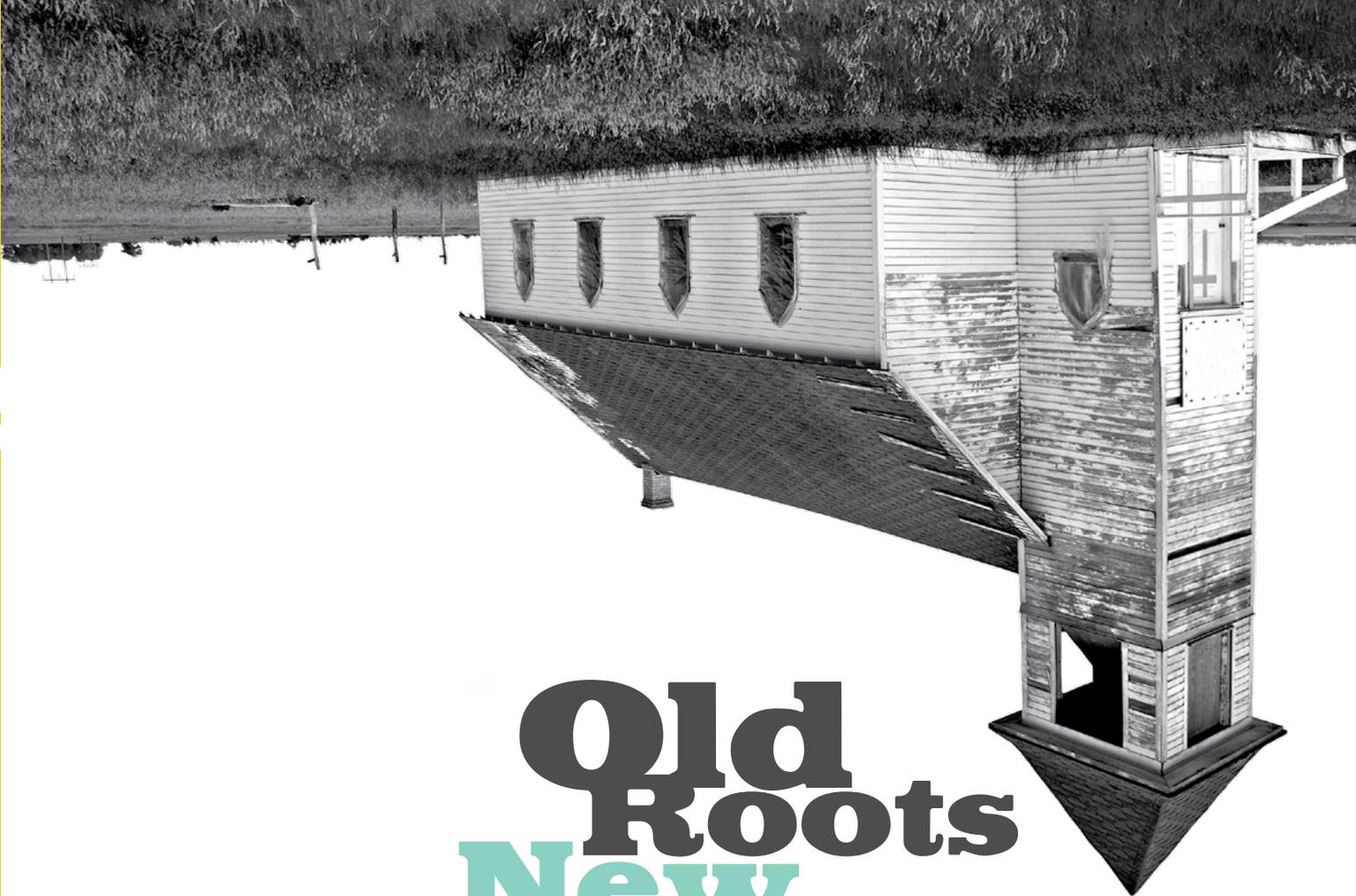
Jim got me asking myself: **Why am I a Christian?** But he did this in a way where I felt comfortable to ask questions, some of them concerning the foundations of Christianity. For example, I remember asking: **How do I know that the God’s Son really lived?** and **How is Christianity any different from other worldviews?**

I asked these big questions in a safe environment where people had answers to offer. We would discuss the arguments ... and then go to UC Berkeley to hear challenging arguments and share more about Jesus. Through years of doing this, I started to change drastically. I went from being a very shy, introverted, distracted-with-life-events kid to one who started to consistently attend fellowship. I would volunteer to read Bible verses during Saturday worship, offer to pray for others, and join actively in mercy outings. Later, during my second mission trip to Utah, I would leave my Christian buddies and start sharing the Word with Latter Day Saints.

There are so many young believers who grow up in the church and are pretty knowledgeable in Scripture. I’ve recently encountered many who can recite verses from memory and talk about their meanings by giving the definitions of original Greek and Hebrew words. This is great, and I’m excited to see their zeal for learning—but there were very few who could give an articulate defense of their Christian identity, and even fewer who were willing to step out into the community (college campuses included) and talk to their friends and fellow students about their personal worldview and the worldview of others.

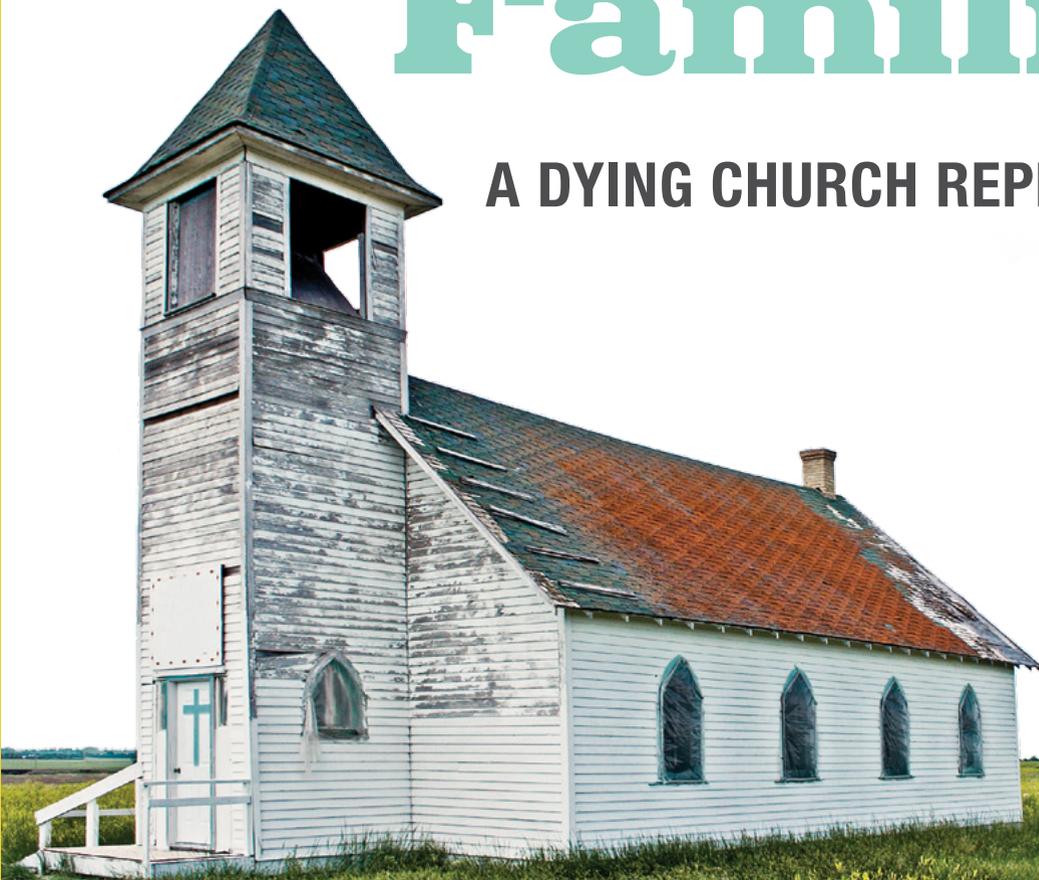
I went to Biola University largely because of my experience with Jim Wallace and our trips to Utah. I wanted to learn more about the reasons why I called myself a Christian and how to better reach out to others including my atheist and Mormon friends. I figured that if Christ is real and did what is mentioned in the gospels, then the goal of life is to know Him, love Him, and pursue Him; nothing else compares in importance to this. ●

Data and quotations from the Barna Millennials Project, accessed March 25, 2015 from www.barna.org. Used by permission.



Old Roots New Families

A DYING CHURCH REPLANTED



The church began optimistically. Even the name of the neighborhood, Heritage Green, sounded promising in 1989 when church founders secured land in the developing community of Stoney Creek, Ontario. But what had seemed such fertile ground soon faced a leadership drought.

The founding pastor died unexpectedly just before the church building opened. The new plant wilted. In the years that followed, a series of pastors came and went. None could revive the congregation.

“People started losing hope in who they were,” says Alex Douglas, who began serving in July 2014 as a pastor at Heritage Green Presbyterian Church. “For several years in the last ten, the church was basically closed. There were no services here on Sundays, but they continued to collect rent checks from a day care center. That was the only reason they stayed open and kept the lights on.”

Virtually everything in the original church had been pruned. About fifteen members faithfully gathered, hoping for growth. And then last year they rallied to bring life to Heritage Green again, proving that somewhere under the surface, the roots still had life.

A VISION FOR REPLANTING

Alex remembers the moment God spoke to him: “As much of a burning-bush experience as I’ve ever had.” In the spring of 2013, during a day away for prayer and reflection, he dedicated an entire hour to rest in God’s presence, “unplugged” and silent, listening not asking. “The words that came to me were: *Heritage Green*, *replant*, and *family*. I’d been inside this church once before for an ordination service four years earlier. I knew nothing except that it was on hard times, which could be said of many churches these days.”

As he later consulted with trusted mentors and teachers, Alex saw the idea of replanting as recommitment to mission—that this church still had a role to play in God’s work in the community, but in a new way. “Family was the answer of the new way, that we would be unapologetically family focused. That is our mission field. Pizza places don’t apologize for not selling egg rolls, and plumbers don’t apologize for not changing light bulbs. A lot of churches do a lot of different things. This is what we do, and this is the role God has for us.”

Alex was then serving another local congregation where he had introduced *Tru*, a family ministry philosophy with learning resources published by David C Cook. So he knew, “there’s already a curriculum that is written and spelled out, that is gospel-centered and true, that is good and life-giving.”

Most churches implement *Tru* in the context of programs designated for children and families. But he saw a bigger opportunity to fulfill the vision for the church as a whole. “It helps to answer: What is our operating orientation going to be?”

So Alex and his ministry colleague, David Moody, drafted a proposal to replant Heritage Green Presbyterian Church. They sensed God calling them to lead the church and serve families. Both are ordained pastors in the Presbyterian Church

in Canada who had met in 2004 while attending seminary at Knox College, University of Toronto. Alex brought the *why* of the church replant. David brought the *how*.

The church sought to hire a half-time pastor. But instead, the proposal recommended two full-time staff. It outlined six-year budget projections and modest capital improvements to equip the facility for ministry that would attract families. Boldly and thoughtfully, the proposal presented church members with the rationale for replanting.

“We were able to sufficiently challenge them to reconsider ... to undertake this new mission,” Alex explains. “We wanted them to say *yes* first before we brought it to the denomination for a final vote. We didn’t want to force this on an unwilling church—because then we would not be replanting, we would be restarting. That wasn’t the idea.”

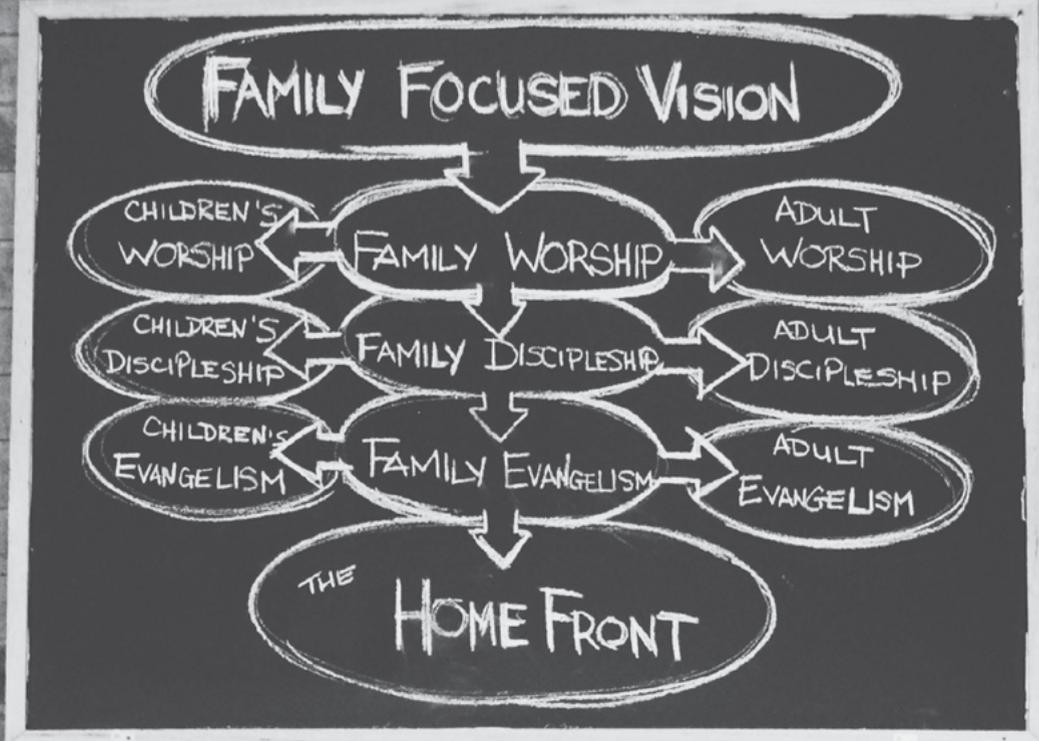
Replanting is a delicate process. First, till the soil to make the existing church healthy to receive new life. Then, seed the ground by asking Christian families nearby to join with original members to bolster attendance and volunteer service. And finally, spread the word through invitations to church-sponsored events such as parents’ night out and children’s story time. Doors are open for services every Sunday.

GROWING IN WORSHIP TOGETHER

Roots of traditional Presbyterian liturgy grow in renewed expressions at Heritage Green. Time-honored Scripture readings, songs, and prayers during Sunday services fit the structural form of *Tru* lessons: Anticipate, Celebrate, Teach, Respond, Bless. After all, liturgy is simply a form in which Christians worship God together.

Alex keeps a sense of humor when he hears different opinions about the approach to worship. “There are people who would say, ‘I don’t like liturgy and structure in worship’—and I’m thinking, ‘You know we do that, right?’ We just don’t use the same words.” He avoids using “a cookie-cutter answer or a stained-glass phrase that we’ve leaned on in Christendom.” The church presents the Christian doctrine and tradition of the Apostles’ Creed and communion in everyday language.

When it comes to music, the classic hymn “Be Thou My Vision” more readily connects with families in its new interpretation as “You Are My Vision,” recorded by Rend Collective. Other favorites include “Jesus of Nazareth” by Martin Smith and “Awake My Love” recently released by I Am They.



We want our kids to have a heart for worship that doesn't grow in a different room of the church. We want them to understand what sanctuary worship is, to have ownership, and not wait until they're a certain age to do that.

The way we're talking about the gospel, and the way we're presenting it, is appealing to a girl who has never been to church before.

“There’s a great resurgence in this soulful, folky music that seems to fit the family atmosphere so well,” Alex says. “In chatting with our young families, we hear that most were going to the pubs with their friends before they had kids. And it’s that kind of Celtic, acoustic music that people are hearing and loving. When they’ve never been to church before, it’s a lot more natural for them to hear and sing that kind of music.”

It matters that the kids like it too, because they spend all but a half-hour in “big church” with their parents. Everyone gathers in the octagon-shaped sanctuary, typically set with chairs in a wide arc wrapped around the room. “We want our kids to have a heart for worship that doesn’t grow in a different room of the church. We want them to understand what sanctuary worship is, to have ownership, and not wait until they’re a certain age to do that.”

OPEN DOORS FOR THE GOSPEL

Since July 2014, the church has attracted an increasing number of families. Sometimes more than a hundred adults and children attend on Sundays—an encouraging measure compared to the few families before replanting. Yet it’s not only *how many* are coming, but *who*. The neighborhood reflects Canada’s multicultural mosaic that includes families of South Asian, African, South Korean, and Filipino descent. Many of them have little or no experience with Christian faith.

The day care center that rents space in the church brings an ideal audience through the doors on weekdays. Alex is a familiar face among the children because he reads books out loud to them during a weekly story time. And last fall, Heritage Green began to build relationships with parents by inquiring about their needs and responding with family-friendly opportunities.

For example, parents’ night out offers childcare while moms and dads enjoy an evening together. The church also hosted a Family Day breakfast on the February civic holiday celebrated in Canada, when stores and many public places are closed. The Family Day event was so well received that it inspired a unique service format with breakfast on Easter Sunday.

These gatherings allow families to spend time together as they get to know others and the church. “Our efforts right now are on building the relationships so that we have the opportunity to speak into them with the gospel,” Alex explains.

Sometimes that opportunity walks right through the door. Alex recalls a man came into the church one night while a meeting was underway. “As he was out walking in the neigh-

borhood, trying to clear his head, he found himself stepping into the church.”

True to its replanted mission, the church embraced the man and his family, and then included them in a special distribution of Bibles at Christmastime. “One of the things we were very intentional about—in terms of placing the church as secondary and the home as the primary faith place—was giving each child a copy of Scripture that is age-appropriate. So for our primary-age kids, we gave them *The Big God Story*, for elementary-age kids, we gave them *The Action Bible*.”

Alex began to see spiritual fruit almost immediately. “On Christmas Eve, the man’s family came to church—and it was just a week after we had given the Bibles. They had made it a family routine to watch *The Bible* miniseries together when it was on TV. When they were watching the segment on King Saul, their daughter said: ‘Spoiler alert: That guy’s going to die really soon.’ The dad asked, ‘How do you know? You’ve never seen this before.’ And the daughter answered, ‘Because I read it.’” She had been reading *The Action Bible* given to her by the church.

“It’s stuff like that brings a smile to my face—transformation within a family. The way we’re talking about the gospel, and the way we’re presenting it, is appealing to a girl who has never been to church before. The tools we’re putting into her hands are not irrelevant or token. They’re inspiring her to do her own study of Scripture.”

WHAT’S NEXT?

Alex and David don’t have a network of similar churches or the benefit of hindsight to help them evaluate and improve. “We’re in a new place where nobody is yet. There are no easy meetings,” says Alex. Heritage Green contrasts the departmental model common to many churches. This church doesn’t *have* a family ministry—it *is* a family ministry.

“It feels like something we’re receiving from God. It’s been a big challenge for us to continually go back to the source and not try to make it our own thing based on our own ideas. We have to say, ‘Okay, God, this is your thing—undoubtedly. What’s next? Where are you taking us?’”

God only knows what’s ahead. But the church has a new name—Family Church of Heritage Green—and it’s replanted and ready for new life that is just beginning. ●



Uniquely Tru

The story of replanting Heritage Green demonstrates a unique and creative way to integrate *Tru*, especially for new church plants or those seeking a fresh start.

Established and growing churches take different approaches. *Tru* equally lends itself to common departmental models for ministry to children and families—particularly Sunday classes, but also midweek gatherings.

Tru is so adaptable because it's more than a curriculum. It's a philosophy of how to envision and engage the spiritual potential of a new generation. With the June release of *TruIdentity* the span of *Tru* resources now includes lessons, videos, and other resources for ministry to families with children age three through middle school.

7 FAMILY MINISTRY ESSENTIALS OF TRU PHILOSOPHY

Tru resources capture seven guiding essentials to build a strategy for the children and youth in your family ministry.

Empowering Family as Primary

God's design for faith replication is through the context of the family (Deut. 6; Ps. 78) where the church plays a supportive, equipping role.

Spiritual Formation for Lifetime Faith

A new generation needs a strong foundation of biblical knowledge in an environment where they can encounter the living God. Children and students can open their hearts to God, learn to discern His voice, have a desire to obey Him, and do so in the power of the Holy Spirit (Phil. 2:13).

Scripture Is Our Authority

The Bible is God's truth for daily living that guides us to know God and interpret our lives through the lens of His character and perfect will (2 Tim. 3:16–17).

The Holy Spirit Teaches

We intentionally create environments where the Holy Spirit is free to move, teach, and lead through His Word and other believers (John 14:26).

God's Redemptive Narrative

"The Big God Story" is God's ENTIRE story. It incorporates all of history, stretching from Genesis to Revelation and beyond, sharing the good news of redemption through Jesus (Rom. 8:1–2).

God Is Central

Because it is one story, the emphasis is on God's love and redemption through Jesus. God is central to His Word, our lives, and the gospel (Col. 1:20).

A Community of Ministry Support

The Holy Spirit supports each believer in living as a disciple. Then a unified community of ministry leaders inspires, equips, and supports each other to transform the lives of a new generation (1 Cor. 12:18–27).

Excerpt from *7 Family Ministry Essentials* by Michelle Anthony and Megan Marshman.
© 2015 David C Cook.



WORSHIP



PERSISTENT CONSISTENCY 36

InTune

WE BELIEVE 38

The Story
Behind the Song

FREEDOM FROM FACEBOOK 39

Longing for
Connection in
the Digital Age

Clinging to Jesus, My Highest Hope

To Darlene Zschech, cancer is an old enemy—one she has faced countless times alongside friends and family battling the disease. When the enemy turned on her in 2013, she turned her suffering into beautiful songs of praise.

This year's release of her latest album, *In Jesus' Name*, captures a legacy of songwriting that has inspired millions of worshippers. Yet these songs are deeply personal too, as Darlene reflects on a season of struggle when she was clinging to Jesus, with little else to be sure of.

● My Highest Hope

I know You listen / Pray to the Risen One / My highest Hope

I trust You with my life / Lord over every fear / Your love is holding me

Writing the song “My Highest Hope” as I was walking through a life or death battle was actually such a privilege because I had Jesus to cling to. To be honest, I don’t know how people walk through massive life challenges without Him. I just was so aware of every moment.

Sometimes it was breath by breath—in the worst times during chemo, going in and having scans, and being there on your own, and just praying that everything is going



to be okay. While having radiation, I could picture Jesus with me. I could speak the promises of His Word over me:

Nahum 1:9—*that “trouble will not come a second time.”*

Psalm 91—*declaring “with long life I will satisfy Him and show Him my salvation.”*

In all the treatments and subsequent waiting, I had a lot of time to think and pray—to really go deep into my personal theology. When it all boils down, I got that fire in my belly that said there is no cancer that determines whether I live or die. My highest hope and the final word on my life is God Himself. The fact that Jesus is the author, perfecter, finisher of our faith gives me continual confidence in this hope we have. It is an anchor for my soul.

In Jesus' Name

God is fighting for us / God is on our side

He has overcome / Yes He has overcome

We will not be shaken / We will not be moved

Jesus You are here

The song “In Jesus' Name,” came about while I was walking through final stage cancer with a dear lady from our church. And to be honest, I got so angry that cancer takes so many. My husband, Mark, and I both lost our fathers to cancer ... and the list goes on and on, so many loved ones lost to this horrible disease. So I just wanted to write a statement of faith straight from the Word of God that would confront the fear head on.

The Potter's Hand

Beautiful Lord, Wonderful Saviour

*I know for sure, all of my days are held in Your hands,
crafted into Your perfect plan*

“The Potter's Hand” was written when I had friends walking through a cancer battle. It was inspiring my heart to just sing, sing, sing, sing praise.

Psalm 27—*“The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? When enemies come against me, whom shall I fear or dread?”*

It tells us later on to sing, sing. I will lift up my voice in song. So that is what I do ... that's what we do when life brings challenges.

Worthy Is the Lamb

Thank you for this love, Lord.

Thank you for the nail-pierced hands.

Wash me in Your cleansing flow, now all I know ...

Your forgiveness and embrace.

I am really excited about this album *In Jesus' Name*. Some of these songs, like “Worthy is a Lamb,” mean so much to me. I remember sitting at the piano and getting so bowled over by the presence of God as I started to focus on the cross and what Jesus has done for us. “Worthy is the Lamb” came out of a simple, but very heartfelt moment like that.

All of these songs are very precious to me for different reasons—some were written by me, some written by others. But I can say in all honesty that each of these songs, at the time of their impact, truly brought new life, new language and genuine spiritual transformation as they were sung with great passion around the globe, in our church, and churches large and small.

I have received thousands of letters over the years telling God-stories about the impact of these songs. Some were the songs that enabled first words to be released from the lips of special needs kids. Some helped parents bury children as they sang their kids home to Jesus. Others have been cradled in the hearts of orphans as they've encountered God's closeness and presence in the hard night hours.

LEAVING A LEGACY

I love the word legacy. After last year, I'm living with legacy in mind. My passion is to always write songs that declare and announce that God is here. My passion is that more and more people would really encounter the love of Christ wherever they are around the planet ... that the local church would really rise up in stature.

The other thing about legacy is that I'm really very committed to training and releasing generations of young people who know why they do what they do when it comes to worship. For me, it's really simple: I feel God calling me there, like a clarion call to my heart.

But the thing that is more important than all of it to me is my husband and my children and my grandchildren—that I would inspire them to really live a life that is the same in the unseen as it is in the seen, and that their lives would be known for loving Jesus and living out the Great Commission in their lifetime. ●

A year after her diagnosis, Darlene announced the good news that her latest medical reports showed no sign of cancer in her body.

InTune



PLAYLIST



DCC.is/InTune

Stream the playlist of songs—and maybe even select a few for upcoming church services.

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE
The Brilliance | 5 | THERE IS POWER
Lincoln Brewster |
| 2 | WHERE WOULD I BE
NCC Worship | 6 | OUR FATHER HAS WON
WorshipMob |
| 3 | BREAK OPEN
Desperation Band | 7 | FAITHFUL
NewSong |
| 4 | MY HIGHEST HOPE
Darlene Zschech | 8 | HOSANNA
Sidney Mohede
with Israel Houghton |

Persistent Consistency

Jon Egan ● Recently, I was sitting in our office thinking about what to share at our next team night. I sat there with a blank screen, and I realized something that has now had extraordinary impact on our team and me.

In Luke 18 Jesus tells a provocative story about a woman, widowed and in need of protection. She shows up every day at the courthouse and makes a scene. She needs rescue, and her best hope is a corrupt judge to hear her plea. She doesn't have an appointment. She's disruptive. She's persistent. Her need is real, and her heart is pure. So the basic laws of manners and etiquette just had to take a back seat. Eventually, the judge gives her what she desires, not because he's moved with compassion about her situation, but because he's annoyed by her constant disruptions.

Jesus tells his people that because of her persistence, she got what she desired. Of course, he then highlights the good Father who is not corrupt but will surely come to our rescue. Now here's the stinger ... He says, "But how much of that kind of persistent faith will the Son of Man find on the earth when he returns?" (Luke 18:8 MSG).

With the amazing world we live in, what are the things that hold us? What keeps our attention? It's the newest, sexiest, coolest product that not only delivers something great but also convinces us that what we once held in our hands is old, dated, and really uncool.

I sat there with that blank screen and had to confess something to myself and to God. With more than fifty volunteers under my care, I fell into the same thinking a marketing guru has. I must wow, woo, and lead this team into the great and wild unknown with reasons why it's better, sexier, and worth following. Though I love vision, direction, and leadership, I

began to wonder if my approach was creating "consumers" in the worship ministry by constantly encouraging new vision, new direction, and new breath.

I realized that the vision I had pumped into our team started feeling old because it was articulated a month ago. Then I looked at the question Jesus was asking, "Will I find that type of persistent faithfulness on the earth upon my return?"

In front of our team, I shared about the persistent widow and confessed my own temptation to sell everyone in the room each time we gathered. My vulnerability invited others to open up, and it changed the whole meeting. We felt it.

Then I said, "We're gonna get back to beating the drum of persistent faithfulness." We started to awaken as we thought about prayers we stopped praying because the answer wasn't quick enough. We leaned in as the Father beckoned us back. Our role is to beat the drum of persistence and not stop. We will be the persistent ones He finds faithful.

We prayed for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to refresh, heal, and renew. The rest of the meeting was an emotional rush of the team leading out, praying for things that have not been uttered for too long. The innocence and simplicity was stunning.

I'm a vision guy. I just love it. I won't stop promoting vision, but by the grace of God, I pray I never forget what this woman at the courthouse taught us.

To anyone reading, pick up the prayers on the bookshelf that have sat there for years collecting dust. The good Father wants to hear them. Be faithful with your prayers and let the faithfulness of God remind us that we are alternative people. The world may need something every other day to capture their attention. Let us never forget that we need to beat the drum of faithfulness, and that takes time. ●

REFLECTION

In what areas of your life are you constantly seeking change? Have you presented your requests to God and pursued Him for answers? Do these topics of unrest point to a larger issue with your faith?

Don't lose your grip on Love and Loyalty. Tie them around your neck; carve their initials on your heart.

PROVERBS 3:3 MSG



The Story Behind the Song

“We Believe” was written in the spirit of declaration – one that everyone can own.

Travis Ryan, Matt Hooper, and Richie Fike sat in a small cabin in Colorado for one purpose: to write a powerful new song. As they discussed the importance of living out the lyrics we all sing at church on Sundays, they wanted to give worshippers a faith language for the challenges they face and words to overcome them.

Similar to the Apostles’ Creed, together they wrote a declaration of faith and put it to music. More than a simple reminder of beliefs, the lyrics proclaim the truths that we as Christians build our lives upon.

We believe in God the father, we believe in Jesus Christ.

We believe in the Holy Spirit and He’s given us new life.

We believe in the crucifixion, we believe that He conquered hell.

We believe in His resurrection and that He’s coming back again.

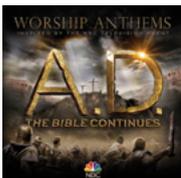
The three writers took the song back to their congregations, and for each, the results were the same: worshippers claimed it as their own. “We Believe” became a unifying anthem, resonating with the Creed shared by believers all around the world. ●

Worship Anthems

The Newsboys’ rendition of “We Believe” anchors a collection of *Worship Anthems*, for *A.D. The Bible Continues*, the NBC television series that premiered on Easter Sunday, April 5, 2015. From executive producers Roma Downey and Mark Burnett, *A.D.* picks up where *The Bible* miniseries left off, exploring the events that followed the crucifixion of Christ.

Integrity Music, in association with Wildfire7, selected twelve songs to complement the themes of the *A.D.* television episodes. “Our hope is that *Worship Anthems* deepens the viewing experience of *A.D. The Bible Continues* and gives people a ‘take away’ musical resource that keeps the wonder alive while pointing listeners to Jesus,” said Integrity Music’s President, Ryan Dunham.

On NBC.com, viewers of *A.D.* can also enjoy performances and interviews with *Worship Anthems* artists All Sons & Daughters, Christine D’Clario, Paul Baloche, The City Harmonic, Lincoln Brewster, and NewSong.



DCC.is/SongStory

Watch the video:

The three songwriters share the song and the motivation behind the lyrics.

Longing For Connection in the Digital Age



A worship leader and songwriter from *All Sons & Daughters* reflects on the place of social media in our lives and prompts the question: As a community that worships and follows Jesus, what is it that truly connects us?

Leslie Jordan ◉ Every morning, I have my social media routine. Instagram first—it's my favorite. I open Twitter, check my email and finally Facebook where I mindlessly scroll and swipe, pausing on the stories that I'm most interested in seeing. Sound familiar?

Throughout my day, I used to unconsciously open my browser on my phone, type in "f" and hit enter. My phone knows that "f" in the search bar means Facebook. I've trained it that well. Then, I quit Facebook.

To be honest, I was struggling to see the purpose of my scrolling. I would find myself just wasting time and getting lost in the deep abyss of updates, religious rants, and cat videos. I would log off and fail to recall seeing anything of value. Yes, it was nice to be "connected." But the more often I said it, the less I believed it was actually true.

The average American spends forty minutes a day on Facebook.¹ And among adult users on the social media site, the average number of friends is 338.² So if we do the math, we spend roughly seven seconds per friend (assuming we haven't blocked half of them because of their political views, baby pictures, or Farmville invitations)!

I suppose this is why I quit. I didn't need one more excuse to perpetuate false connections with friends. Being a traveling musician, I am learning to value the time spent face-to-face with people. I long for deeper relationships, broader conversations; to know and to be known. It is becoming more and more difficult to cultivate offline relationships in our online world.

The late Henri Nouwen, beloved Dutch Catholic priest and author says this: "What we see, and like to see, is cure and change. But what we do not see and do not want to see is care: the participation in the pain, the solidarity in suffering, the sharing in the experience of brokenness."³

Care takes time. True connection takes time and presence—much longer than the seven seconds we allot while we are online. Social sciences professor and author Brené Brown defines connection as "the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship."⁴

In our ever-present need for social connection, the temptation is to believe that it happens online. That by sharing our opinions, favorite selfies, and blogs, we are seen, heard, and valued. But we were designed for more. We were designed for an exchange. Jesus' ministry was not only focused on the masses, but also spent intentionally with His twelve best friends. The night before He was betrayed and murdered, He gave them the greatest charge. "Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other" (John 13:34-35 MSG).

Jesus revealed that connection was an exchange. A receiving of love and a giving of love. Connection is not something we observe, but rather something in which we participate.

Love is cultivated over time. Quitting Facebook didn't free up a ton of time and I don't believe it is the solution to our problem with connection. But it is one less distraction I fight against each day. My hope is to be more present in each moment. To love more fully. To care more deeply. To take serious the charge of Jesus, to love the way He has loved me. ◉

¹ Mark Zuckerberg, Q2 earnings call. Reported by nbcnews.com.

² Pew Research Center, "6 New Facts about Facebook." Aaron Smith. 2/3/14

³ *Out of Solitude*. By Henri JM Nouwen. Copyright 2004 Ave Maria Press.

⁴ *The Gifts of Imperfection*. By Brené Brown. Copyright 2010 Hazelden.

HEART & HOME



THE TRUEST THING ABOUT YOU 43

Imprint

PARENTING 44

Helping Your
Children Become
Their True Selves

FINDING YOUR IDENTITY 46

Love Well

Five Reasons Your Love Life Sucks (Or Doesn't Exist)

In her new book, *The Dating Manifesto*, Lisa Anderson takes a bold and humorous approach to helping single people find their value and pursue marriage with purpose.

Lisa Anderson ▶ Okay, so you know you've been messed up by Hollywood. You realize you haven't given marriage a fair shake. You suspect you've left the rational, realistic, and serious pursuit of a spouse on the back burner and have instead waited for your Ideal List Man or Ideal List Woman to show up. But they haven't, and you're still single.

While not an exhaustive list by any means, these are the biggies—the ones that trip us up over and over again. These are the ones that are keeping us single. And lest you think I stand on my high horse and wag a finger, let me assure you that I've been guilty of all five. Some at the same time, even. So much for moral superiority.

So here we go. The five reasons your love life sucks (or doesn't exist).

1

YOU'RE WAITING FOR THE ONE

Two-thirds of Americans believe in soul mates or this concept of “The One.” This is the idea that there’s one ideal match for you in the world, and he or she is “out there” somewhere. It’s the person we’re most compatible with; the person who’ll complete us, and who has been reserved (by God, fate, or the universe, depending on your worldview) exclusively for us.

Stop the craziness. Know that there are a number of women in the world (we don’t know how many, but let’s conservatively say hundreds and hundreds) whom you can be attracted to, love, live with, serve with, share a calling with, start a family with, and honor God with.

This should be majorly freeing. You don’t need to find The One. You just need to find one. Of many. And once you cut the clutter, focus on what’s important (we’ll get to that), and choose, you’ll be on your way to a marriage that makes sense and ultimately makes a difference. You’ll find your one.

2

YOU'RE STILL A KID

Look, no one wants to date a kid. Maybe you’re still figuring life out. Or you don’t have a job. Or you’re a daddy’s girl who can’t let go. Or you call your parents the minute you have a question or can’t figure something out. Or you’re foolish and immature; you tell dumb jokes, make fun of others, and waste time on frivolous pursuits. If this is you, it’s time to put your big boy (or girl) pants on.

So if your friends are dragging you down, maybe it’s time to get new friends. If you’re still in school, it’s time to pick a major and see it through. If you’re looking at careers, it’s time to get some solid internships, show up on time (actually, show up before everyone else) and be a self-starter. Ask questions. Seize opportunities. Take an interest in the real world, and get unstuck.

You’ll be glad you did. You’ll set yourself apart from many of your peers. And you may actually get a date.

3

YOU'RE NOT DATING

I’ll say something that’s not often said, and should be very freeing. Here it is:

Guys are under no obligation to ask girls out, and girls are under no obligation to accept. Get it? There’s power in both camps, and that’s okay. Dating isn’t a science; it’s a dance. It’s a mystery that involves risk, chance, and a fair share of sweaty palms.

That said, it’s only dating. You’re not marrying anyone—yet. If you’re only going to ask out or accept the person who makes your heart instantly race, you’re going to eliminate a big pool of potential candidates.

I’m a big fan of giving chances. No, I’m not saying give everyone a chance. If the person terrifies you, don’t go out with him (or her). But if it’s someone with a good reputation who loves Jesus, is of good character, and is in your acquaintance, you may be surprised what you learn. Don’t rely on fireworks, a feeling, or the need to know everything about the person beforehand. Don’t get paralyzed by all the potential “what-ifs” of a relationship. Because guess what—you’re not in a relationship.

My mom has been in an assisted living facility for about a year now. She’s already had two or three of the elderly men there interested in her, and they haven’t been

afraid to show it. I was lamenting to her that her dating potential is better than mine, and she replied, “Oh, I’m not going to date any of them. I don’t want things to get messy.”

Get messy. Start dating.

4

YOUR DATING IS DIRECTIONLESS

So you’re in a relationship. Or at least you’re pretty sure you are. He calls you his girlfriend, or at the very least you go out one-on-one pretty often and he (usually) pays. And you hold hands.

For now, let’s call that dating. So what’s your plan? Where do things stand?

Um, what?

Yeah, you heard what I said. Where is this thing going?

Therein lies the problem. There are a lot of you who by definition are dating, but rather than being a means to an end, your dating life is more of a holding pattern—something you define yourself with now but can’t explain in future terms.

You’re stuck and you don’t know it.

Not that dating isn’t great in and of itself; it is. It’s a lot of fun, and can be downright exhilarating with the right person. But having fun isn’t the end goal. Neither is creating history and memories, keeping one another accountable, maturing one or both parties, or practicing communication and commitment.

The purpose of dating is to find a suitable marriage partner. Period. You’ll have fun in the process, and yes, you’ll grow (and hopefully your boyfriend or girlfriend will too), but in dating there is something to accomplish. And it’s not to be treated flippantly or casually.

5

YOU'RE STUCK IN A FRIENDLATIONSHIP

It goes something like this:

Ben and Ashley are friends. Maybe they met at school or church, in their singles group or small group, or at a party. They struck up a conversation, joined in a few group activities, had fun, and decided to stay in touch.

As friends, they hang out. They hang out a lot. Soon Ashley starts like-liking Ben. She doesn't know how it happened, or when, but it happened. Now he's all she can think about, and she starts hoping for more.

Meanwhile, Ashley and Ben are becoming best friends. They do a lot together: dinners out, movies, game nights, long talks on the phone, texting throughout the day. They have inside jokes, non-verbal cues, and, when it matters, each other's back.

One night after dinner, before Ashley pops in the Red Box DVD that Ben brought over, Ben says he needs Ashley's advice.

"Of course," she answers. "Anything."

"I'm wondering what you think of Kate. The new girl at church."

"What about her?"

"Well, I think I'm going to ask her out."

Ashley, dear readers, is in a friendlationship.

By this time, Ashley is either faking calm or bursting into tears. She's rationally beginning to assess (read: subtly or not-so-subtly tear down) Kate's merits verbally, or she's throwing Ben out of her apartment. I've seen both.



Poor Ashley. What a mess, and she didn't see it coming. Most don't. And guys, you're not immune to this. I know many men who've fallen victim to a friendlationship, being a girl's confidant, buddy, fix-it man, rescuer, comforter, chauffeur and more, all because he hoped to win over a heart that had little chance of being won. Guys play too often the role of honorary girlfriend, letting women use them, abuse them, and toss them aside when the guy they really want comes calling.

This doesn't have to be you. How can you safeguard against the friendlationship? First, by taking to heart all the advice I've given so far. Have a realistic yet hopeful view of marriage, an understanding of what dating is, and a game-plan for getting there.

It also helps to know your worth. God created you for a reason, and it was good. He doesn't intend for you to drift in and out of go-nowhere relationships. If he has marriage in your future, it will be to a guy who knows you're worth pursuing, or a girl who sees your value as pursuer. If he's not scrambling to treat you with care, win your heart and claim you for his own, he doesn't deserve your special attention. If she brushes you off, wants to "just be friends," or ditches you on a whim, she doesn't deserve your unique protection and pursuit. ●

Excerpt from *The Dating Manifesto* © 2015 Lisa Anderson

“ Ask questions. Seize opportunities. Take an interest in the real world, and get unstuck. You'll be glad you did. You'll set yourself apart from many of your peers. And you may actually get a date.

IMPRINT

Francis Chan wrote this letter of thanks as he reflects on personal lessons and reminders from *The Truest Thing About You*, written by his friend and fellow pastor Dave Lomas.

◆ Dave,

I have such a fear of leaving the earth without leaving an impact, and that can cause me to run frantically from task to task. I get busy doing everything I think I need to do, and I forget to thank God for what He has already done. I often work mindlessly, rather than letting my actions spring from the deep enjoyment of being God's child.

Looking back, I can see how I've tried to get others to perform, regardless of their motivation. I've focused a lot on their work and not enough on their identity. In hindsight, I realize I was shooting myself in the foot. I was trying to squeeze Christ-like actions out of people who hadn't been transformed by Christ. You've helped me remember that when we trust in Christ, and take hold of that identity, our actions begin to happen naturally—or supernaturally.

This may be a corny illustration, but I think about the Gatorade commercial where they ask, "Is it in you?" It shows athletes literally sweating Gatorade out of their pores. The point is that since Gatorade is inside of them, it naturally pours out. This resonates with what Scripture teaches. God promises an internal change that takes place in those

who believe, and then godly actions pour out of us as a result. That makes us ask: if the actions aren't naturally pouring out ... is God in you?

It's the good tree that can't help but bear good fruit. It's out of the overflow of the heart that the mouth speaks. It's God's promise to change our hearts of stone to hearts of flesh. And it's because God put His Spirit in us that we hate evil and love what is right.

Once this internal change takes place, it's as if we can't stop ourselves from acting. That's how the Christian life is supposed to work. Something wells up inside us and then overflows. We have to love God. We have to serve God. We have to love people ... not because we're supposed to, but because we can't help it! We don't try to love the poor—we can't help but love the poor! We want to. It's flowing out of every fiber of our being. We hate lust and pride and try to rid ourselves of them, not because we're supposed to be good, but because those things aren't who we are. When we're filled with God, His commands aren't burdensome—we actually love them! He makes us slaves of righteousness, and we love it!

Thank you for reminding me to dwell on the promises of Scripture. I'm guilty of ignoring those promises, and it often

leads to pride or discouragement. So many of us grew up in homes where we never felt secure. We had to work extra hard, trying to earn approval or love that never came. Our tendency is to carry that mind-set into our relationship with God. We end up anxiously working to gain approval, not realizing that we already possess it.

Thank you for taking the time to articulate what the Lord has taught you in this area. I believe it will help many and bring glory to God. Personally, I believe I will become a better pastor, dad, and lover of God because of it. People like me need a book like this. I pray that my lifestyle changes in light of what I have just read.

I love you, brother. I knew God introduced us a few years ago for a reason. I thought it was so we could "do" something together, like "bring revival to SF!" But I see now that it was to enjoy the revival He's already given us. I still believe we will see great things happen in the future, but it will be the result of you and me living out our identity as a couple of God's beloved kids.

Thank you for writing this book.
Your friend,

Francis ◆



We have to love God. We have to serve God. We have to love people ... not because we're supposed to, but because we can't help it!



Helping Your Children Become Their True Selves

Seven virtues, seven paths to becoming the persons that God created us to be, and helping our sons and daughters to do the same.

Patrick M. Quinn and Ken Roach ♦ When we think of the word virtue today we often think of it in a negative sense, meaning “without sin” or “not giving in to impurity.” However, in ancient Greek (and thus in the New Testament Scriptures) the word translated virtue meant something closer to unique strength. The virtue of a thing was what it was good at, or good for. So the virtue of a knife is its sharpness, the virtue of a spoon is its roundness, and so on. Each thing’s virtue is different.

To put it another way, your virtue is what makes you truly you. It is what reveals your true self, as you were created by God and redeemed in Christ to be.

The seven cardinal virtues are traits that equip and enable our true humanity to shine out as God intended. They make us who we really are.

HUMILITY

Humility is the opposite of pride, but it may be the most misunderstood of the seven virtues. Humility is not the same thing as poor self-image or low self-esteem.

Teach your son or daughter to look for the good in others, take an interest in their strengths and abilities, and verbalize praise and encouragement for their achievements. Remember, humility does not come from trying to think poorly of yourself, rather it comes from thinking well of others.

CHASTITY

Chastity is the opposite of lust. To be clear, though, the virtue of chastity is much more than just “not lusting” in the same way that “being healthy” means much more than just “not drinking poison.” In the ancient traditions, the practice of chastity included fully developing yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally.

I would suggest that one of the best ways to nurture chastity in our sons and daughters is to create an interesting world for them through challenging education and intentional exposure to new ideas and experiences. Try new things together. When you discover an interest in them, fan it and fuel it into flames. Never speak of education as a drudgery that they should look forward to being done with when they grow up; instead, teach them to be lifelong learners and students of life.

KINDNESS

Kindness is not the same thing as its socially manufactured substitute, niceness.

If we attempt to teach our children to act kindly without cultivating the true spirit of kindness, it will feel like a burden to them—a load of guilt rather than a free gift. On the other hand, true kindness is an incredible opportunity for joy. It’s amazing how much it can lift your mood when you’re having a bad day to pause and do something genuinely kind for someone else. Somehow getting “out of yourself” is like hitting a reset button on your attitude.

“Your virtue is what makes you truly you. It is what reveals your true self, as you were created by God and redeemed in Christ to be.”

CHARITY

Charity is love in action. I almost hesitate to use the word because it has so often been misused. However, if we can recover the true meaning of the word, we will discover that it is a rich and multilayered concept that can add much to our lives.

To nurture charity, help your sons and daughters identify the potential in others, and invest in that potential with their time, energy, and money.

TEMPERANCE

Temperance is a social virtue. It's not really about self-control, it's about us-control. It's not willpower, it's we-power! In other words, the only way to successfully nurture the virtue of temperance over the long haul is to surround ourselves with others who share the same goals.

To nurture the virtue of temperance in your children, teach them how to make and be the kind of friend who thrives on healthy accountability.

DILIGENCE

Diligence means working with your full energy in order to reach your full potential. You can't halfheartedly become a whole person.

Our goal should be for our children to recognize that the true goal of all work is to glorify God. As Paul wrote to some of the early Christians, "Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ."

PATIENCE

Patience is the last virtue and, in many ways, it is the virtue that makes all the other virtues work. No matter how we look at it, becoming the person God created us to be always takes one thing: time. And time seems like the one thing we all hate to give.

To nurture the virtue of patience, put before your children a vision of a God so loving and trustworthy, that they will know He is always working for their good even in the midst of their greatest suffering and pain. Seven virtues. ●

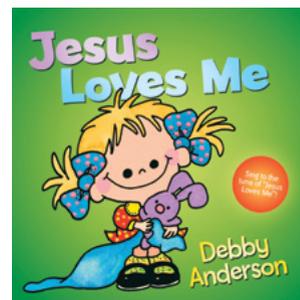
Excerpt from *How to Ruin Your Child in 7 Easy Steps* © 2015 Patrick M. Quinn and Ken Roach

Growing up in Christ

As you help your kids become their true selves, here are a few tools to encourage their spiritual development at every age.

READ OR SING ALONG

Jesus Loves Me teaches your toddlers that no matter what they may be doing throughout the day—running and playing, getting dressed, or even eating lunch—Jesus will always love them. Like other books in the *Cuddle and Sing* series, the brightly illustrated board book is perfect to read or sing along to classic children's songs that reinforce simple biblical truths.



WEEKLY DEVOTIONALS FOR KIDS

Your children are more likely to grow spiritually through healthy habits they see you model as a parent. *Storytime*, a 52-week devotional and Bible storybook, can help you. It provides your family with structure and a fun way to walk through the Bible together. Each week includes a Bible story, contemporary story, and reflections to guide family devotions.

HOMEFRONT

HomeFront magazine shares inspiration, practical advice, and creative ideas for spiritually forming activities to do with your family. Sign up for a print or digital subscription at HomeFrontMag.com

Love Well

Have we lost our identity in the midst of our lives? Could we love our way back into our true identity?

Modern man [is] plagued by distractions, addictions, obsessions, never at home in his own skin, never truly connecting with others, never at one with present reality, and anxiously awaiting a plane going nowhere.

Mike Mason

The imagination should be allowed a certain freedom to browse around.

Thomas Merton





At a conscious and unconscious level, we choose between fear and faith each and every moment of our day.

Jamie George • “This past Friday I checked myself into a hotel. I had a number of drinks, took eleven pills, and told God I was done. If I woke up the next morning, then I would talk to someone about why I am still here.” This thirtysomething, well-to-do soccer mom confessed that she was without hope.

“She wants a divorce. I don’t want one. I am just waking up, beginning to feel for the first time in my life. But I don’t think it matters. She has felt so lost for so long that regardless of our three children she wants out. I am afraid there is not much hope.” My friend, a very successful British musician, was desperate.

“My husband and I have been in this oppressive religious system for so long, I feel like I have lost my soul. He is loyal and has tried to do everything in his power to adjust to the ridiculous demands of our leadership. His spirit is crushed. I am angry and not sure how much more of this I can take.” My friend and her husband were missionaries who were holding their lives together by tattered spiritual threads.

IDENTITY LOST

I have spent many years listening to people’s stories. My heart has always leaned toward those grasping tightly to hope.

They are without pretense.

They are not trying to sell you something.

They are not obsessed with being right (on the contrary, they usually hope they are wrong).

They are awake.

They are aware of pain.

Suffering has forced them to go on a quest.

They are looking for something or someone.

They are teachable.

They are grateful.

I have learned something about coming to the end of your rope.

You fall in terror until you crash, or you fall in exhilaration until you fly.

At a conscious and unconscious level, we choose between fear and faith each and every moment of our day. Why? Because no matter how much we structure our lives and build in layers of control, we cannot shake the reality of the unknown.

When life’s circumstances make us acutely aware of its chaotic churning, we often choose to numb ourselves, to temporarily relieve pressure.

We cut.

We self-loathe.

We punish ourselves to remind us that we are real, all the while gouging out our souls. We forget who we were and who we were made to become.

PUT ASIDE THE RANGER

J. R. R. Tolkien extraordinarily captures this tension in his character Aragorn from the Lord of the Rings trilogy. Aragorn’s father, the only descendent of a long-dead king, dies in battle. Aragorn’s mother takes the two-year-old boy to be raised by Lord Elrond and the Elves. When Aragorn comes of age, he learns that he is the rightful heir to the throne of the world of men.

But Aragorn has watched men. They are crude and vengeful, untrustworthy. He fears the blood that runs through his veins. He is anxious that were he to lead, he would become just like them.

He resists his destiny. Aragorn lives under an alias, content to fight trivial skirmishes in far-off lands. Eventually, fate thrusts him into the center of the world of men. One day, with the freedom of Middle Earth hanging in the balance, his mentor Lord Elrond visits him.

Lord Elrond uncloaks the sword of the ancient king and gives it to Aragorn with this charge: “Put aside the ranger. Become who you were born to be.” •

Excerpt from *Love Well* © 2014 Jamie George



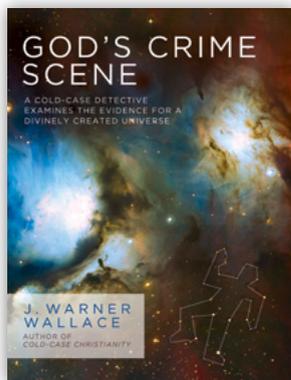
DCC.is/eBooks

Take advantage of free Christian ebooks provided weekly, and sign up for email reminders.

Shelf

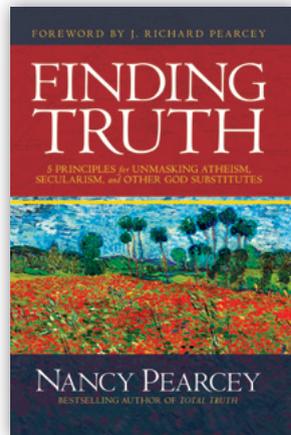
Asking tough questions in the quest for truth.

It's impossible to walk through life without encountering difficult situations. And as much as we crave right and wrong, black and white, yes or no answers when trouble comes, more often than not we find gray areas. Seeking the Lord in the gray areas happens by acknowledging tough questions rather than avoiding them—and pursuing truth.



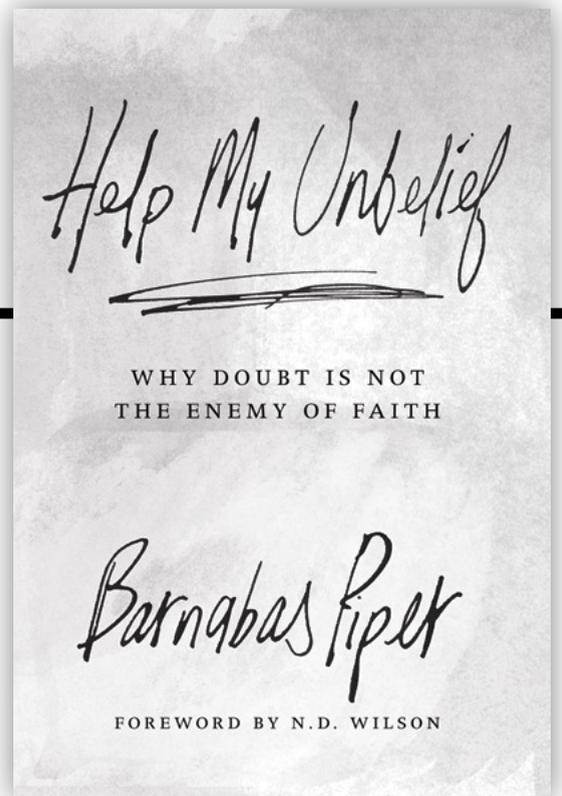
God's Crime Scene
J. WARNER WALLACE

The oldest cold case in the world is the mystery of the beginning of the universe. God planted pieces of evidence along the path of this "crime scene" that can only lead us to belief in His existence and divine creation.



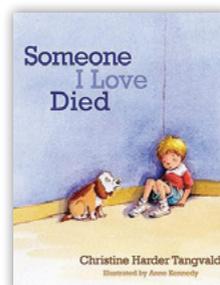
Finding Truth
NANCY PEARCEY

Studies find that the most frequent reason for rejecting Christianity is that people could not get answers to their doubts. The bedrock truths that everyone wants and needs—from atheists like Richard Dawkins to hip-hop artists like Lecrae—are uniquely found in historic Christianity.



Help My Unbelief
BARNABAS PIPER

Navigating the tension between faith and doubt begins with an acceptance that belief is not the final destination but rather a pursuit and process filled with questions, failures, victories ... and God.



Someone I Love Died
CHRISTINE HARDER TANGVALD

Children experience grief and a sense of loss when they lose a friend or relative, but often they don't know how to express their feelings. They need answers and someone to understand their feelings and comfort their fears.



DCC.Is/ShelfLife

Enjoy a free download of *Finding Truth* by Nancy Pearcey. Download before September 1, 2015.

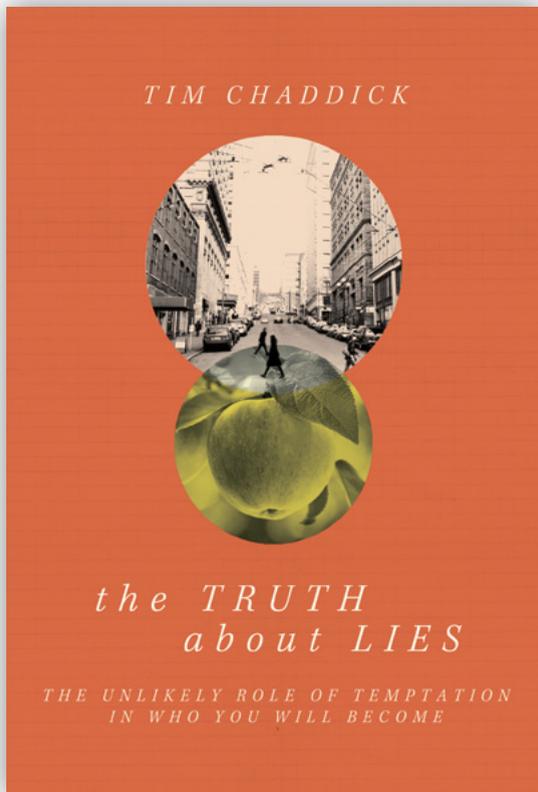
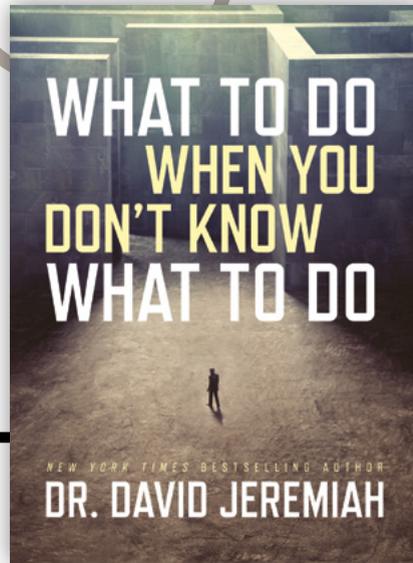
S SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

Life

What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do

DR. DAVID JEREMIAH

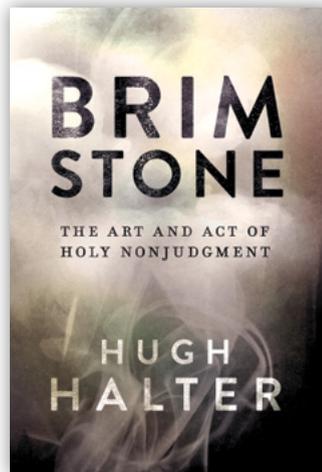
The book of James demonstrates that a life lived with focused devotion to God should make a genuine difference in the way a person lives. Your creed should determine your conduct. Only God's supernatural strength can meet the challenges of our lives as we walk the rough road of true Christian maturity.



The Truth about Lies

TIM CHADDICK

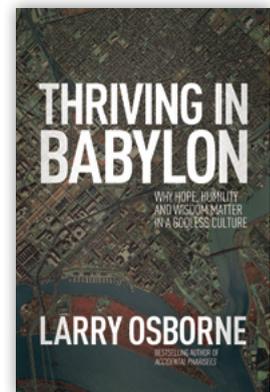
By learning to live in the Spirit, lies are exposed and moments of temptation are turned into powerful displays of our true identity as followers of Jesus.



Brimstone

HUGH HALTER

People can't see God clearly because Christians keep creating a fogbank of failed legalism and self-focused religion that keeps the world at a distance. The solution? A ministry of nonjudgment.



Thriving in Babylon

LARRY OSBORNE

Daniel had amazing success and powerful spiritual impact upon one of the most godless cultures of all time. But even in our increasingly godless world, those who take the path of hope, humility, and wisdom can not only survive—they can thrive like Daniel.

LEADERSHIP



FOUR KEY VALUES 52

What Volunteers Really Want From Their Leaders

ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT 53

The Number One Leadership Hang-up

LIFE COACH 56

Q&A with Rod Olson

DiscipleShaping

Learning from people in your stream of life.

● The amazing thing about scuba diving is the beauty you would never see on the surface, from coral reefs and sea turtles to angelfish and eels. I love the underwater wonder of God's creation.

Some of my favorite diving spots are the Santa Rosa Wall in Cozumel, Mexico and the National Marine Sanctuary in the Florida Keys, near where the Gulf Stream waters begin their flow toward the Atlantic Ocean. I have a pretty good idea of what to expect in those marine environments as I go along with the current. But I don't get to choose exactly what colorful creatures I might see—only whether I'll pay attention and what I'll learn to appreciate from the experience.

The same thing happens in the stream of life too. As we go along, we constantly encounter new possibilities for DiscipleShaping, which is the lifelong learning process for living the full life God intends for us.

Our stream of life is filled with potential relationships and resources that can build our faith and develop our abilities. When we immerse ourselves in certain environments, we don't get to determine exactly how each day flows, who we might meet, or where certain opportunities might lead. But if we're paying attention, we can learn from each other in ways that keep us growing personally, professionally, and spiritually.

CHOOSE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Imagine if I attempted snorkeling in a plastic kiddie pool instead of diving into the ocean. Not only would it be ridiculous, it would be disappointing. The only colorful fish in that

“ If you want to experience the fullness of DiscipleShaping, choose carefully where to dive in, then pay attention and learn from the people God has already put into your stream of life.

environment are the ones printed on the bottom of the pool. If I want to explore underwater caves and tunnels and reefs, I have to choose the right place to dive in.

Like diving, all learning happens best in specific environments.

Want to be a top chef? It won't happen if you don't spend time in the kitchen.

Want to run a marathon? Then you had better start hitting the trail.

Want to be more like Christ? Let's dwell on that thought for a moment.

I've said before that DiscipleShaping doesn't automatically happen because you go to church. But in your stream of life, the local church is an ideal environment for connecting and developing meaningful relationships that encourage personal, professional, and spiritual growth. There's no substitute for immersing yourself in a community of Christ-followers where God's grace and truth are celebrated and shared.

PAY ATTENTION

Once you've chosen your local church environment, you have to be on the lookout. God puts people in your stream of life who can come alongside you with insight and wisdom. A few of them may become lifelong friends, while others may be only for a season. They may be

at a similar stage of life or much further back or down the path.

I've learned that people in my stream of life often come and go over time, but it's possible for us to make a meaningful connections, however brief. We can learn from one another as we're moving in the stream together.

While I was still in my twenties, I was promoted to my first management role leading a team where everyone was older than me. And I remember one middle-aged man from my church who was respected for the way he ran his business. We were acquainted, but not really friends. One day we started a conversation, and I told him about the promotion I had just received.

"Is this your first time leading people?" he asked. "Yes," I answered.

"What are you doing to learn how to do that exceptionally well?" I didn't have a good answer. I figured they wouldn't have chosen me if I weren't qualified, right? He said, "God doesn't always choose the qualified, but He always qualifies those He chooses."

To this day, I'm grateful for that man's wisdom and just as grateful that I was paying attention. I recognized that I could and needed to learn from him. We met a few times over breakfast or coffee, and he taught me how to build

relationships that would help me earn the trust of my team.

Those lessons helped me grow professionally and spiritually—because I genuinely wanted to cultivate a Christ-like character in every area of my life, including my work. It was part of the DiscipleShaping process that continues to equip me to live the full life God intends.

Today, my local church is still an environment where I pay attention to learning and teaching opportunities. When I considered becoming a member, I remember the pastor explaining the reasons not to join. He said, with a little humor: "Don't come for the preaching, and don't come for the worship."

But, he continued: "One of the biggest reasons you should join this church is because if God has called you to something you know is important, you can connect with right people here so you will not fail at what He has called you to do."

If you want to experience the fullness of DiscipleShaping, choose carefully where to dive in, then pay attention and learn from the people God has already put into your stream of life. ●



Cris H. Doornbos
is the CEO of David C Cook.

Resource

As you're on the lookout for intentional connections in the stream of life, it's helpful to develop greater awareness of your own people skills. John Maxwell's book, *Be a People Person* offers principles for relating positively with those you are drawn to, with those who are drawn to you, and even those who are difficult to love. Consider the ways you can improve your influence to others and your receptivity to learning from others.

Relationship

Do you have a concern or prayer request that's been on your mind? This week, take extra notice of those around you, especially in your local church. If you sense that someone might have insight about what concerns you, request an opportunity to learn from them—even in a brief interaction. Most people are more willing than you might realize, and often, we don't receive wisdom because we're hesitant to seek it.

What Volunteers Really Want from their Leaders

Valuing your volunteers in emotional and tangible ways.

● There was a time I believed that all a leader needed to do for a volunteer was to explain their role, give them timely resources, and keep them in the information loop. Long ago I learned that this was not enough. If your expectations of a volunteer are to show up and serve, that is exactly what you will get. Some volunteers can serve this way for many years, but most will not.

I have discovered that there is more going on in the hearts and minds of our volunteers. What follows is a short list of values most of your volunteers possess. Some may never be able to verbalize them, but they possess them. Others will offer clues that the wise leader must receive and act on.

Volunteers want to be valued. Volunteer service requires sacrifice and commitment. I often think about the average week a volunteer experiences, and all they have to navigate through to show up and serve. Some of your volunteers give amazing service away, at no monetary cost, but at a great price. What have you done lately to value your volunteers? Have you shown them? Have you told them? Find new and creative ways to express value to the volunteers that serve with you.

Volunteers want to be challenged. One of the great challenges of leading volunteer teams is knowing each volunteer as a person. Much like raising children, no two volunteers are alike. Each one is uniquely made. Every volunteer that serves with you has a God-given calling and shape. It may be up to you to call out the best in your volunteers. This challenge will stretch some on your team, but they will grow because of your faithfulness and obedience. Most ministry professionals I know started pursuing their calling when one person challenged them to be all God wanted them to be. What are some fresh ways you can challenge your team?

Volunteers want to be inspired. Showing up and serving can grow old when there are no inspirational stories or events. Ministry events and weekend services come and go with great frequency and take an emotional toll. Inspire your team with life-changing stories, answers to prayer, and evidence of fruit from their efforts. For many volunteers, this is their paycheck. Inspiration is fuel to the soul of a weary volunteer. When was the last time you shared in inspirational story with your team?

Volunteers want to be included. Share ministry with your volunteers! Nothing honors your team more than when you share ministry with them. How this looks at your church, and on your team, is only limited by your willingness to give ministry away. So often, church staff find the work of ministry easier and more efficient to do ourselves. It is harder, and may take more time to include others, but in the absence of inclusion your volunteers will feel left out and beneath the leader they serve under. Do what you can to include your volunteers in deeper levels of leadership. ●

Gary Webb, TruMinistry.com



“ Inspiration is fuel to the soul of a weary volunteer.

The Number One Leadership Hang-up

A top-down attitude is the worst one a leader can have. Here's how to avoid it.

Hans Finzel ● I believe that the number one leadership sin is that of top-down autocratic leadership.

You would think people would have learned by now, yet it still keeps cropping up: that age-old problem of domineering, autocratic, top-down leadership. Of all the sins of poor leadership, none is greater and none is still committed more often, generation after generation.

The top-down approach to leadership is based on the military model of barking orders to weak underlings. It goes something like this: "I'm in charge here, and the sooner you figure that out the better!" Take, for example, this story related to me by one of my students when I was teaching a course on leadership:

My organization was looking for a new regional leader. Those making the decision had somebody picked out. However, before finalizing it, they were going to meet with different people to receive feedback on the individual they had chosen. I gave them my serious concerns and observations. Even though they took the time to listen to us, they really didn't hear what we were saying. In the end, our input and feedback was rejected. And our predictions came to pass. How did this whole situation make us feel? We concluded that the leaders at the top had already made up their minds regarding their choice, and that, almost as an afterthought, they had decided to talk to us "underlings" to try to get our rubberstamp approval. It made me feel as if they didn't really want or need my input. If they would have listened to us, we would have been spared the pain, misunderstanding, and hurt when it became obvious to everyone that this individual was the wrong choice for leadership.



“ View yourself as working side by side with others or as leading the charge, but not as being on the top of a giant pyramid.

One blatantly irritating practice of some leaders who exercise a top-down style is the use of knowledge—or really the lack thereof—to keep people in line and in place.

Knowledge in an organization is power. A leader can use this power to dominate underlings by keeping them guessing and in the dark.

Dictators have long recognized that others' knowledge is their worst enemy. I grew up in Alabama in the Deep South, where the whites kept the blacks ignorant so their knowledge could not become dangerous. I'll never forget the day our governor stood before the entrance to the University of Alabama to bar a young black girl from becoming our state's first black student at a white university. It was a sick and mistaken attitude of arrogance that, fortunately for us all, soon crumbled.

If people are kept in the darkness of ignorance, they are less likely to revolt against a ruthless ruler. For that reason, for years communist border guards were ordered to confiscate current magazines and newspapers from Western tourists. In the years when I traveled in Eastern Europe, the border guards always asked us if we had three categories of "contraband": weapons, books and magazines, and Bibles. They knew that if the truth got into the hands of the citizens, the task of maintaining tyranny would become more difficult.

Why do a lot of people fall into the trap of top-down leadership attitudes? For at least five reasons:

- 1 *It's traditional.* Historically, autocratic, top-down leadership has been the most commonly practiced method. This is true in most of the more than one hundred countries I have visited. Far too many people simply learn this method by default.
- 2 *It's the most common.* Even though much has been written about alternative forms of leadership, top-down leadership is still the most common kind.
- 3 *It's the easiest.* It is much easier to simply tell people what to do than to attempt other, much more effective leadership styles.
- 4 *It comes naturally.* For some reason, the natural self prefers to dominate others and to try to amass power that can be

held over other people. Leadership, by nature, seems to entail one person lording over another.

- 5 *It reflects the dark side of human nature.* For those of us who believe what the Bible teaches, humans don't need any help to be depraved. A naturally sinful nature moves us toward dominating others and lording over them whenever possible.

THE ONE WHO SHOWED US THE WAY

People follow leaders for many reasons. People follow you because of who you are and what you represent.

And so when it comes to servant leadership, there is no better model than Jesus Christ. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus showed his followers just how much he loved them. We read in John 13:1 that he "knew that the time had come

for him to leave this world and go to the Father.

Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love." At that moment Jesus gave us the ultimate demonstration of servant leadership: he washed his disciples' feet!

The first thing I always notice in this scene is Jesus's all-encompassing power and authority. The foundation for his servanthood was a true realization of his power, position, and prestige. He was God himself in the flesh and had every right to be a dictator. In fact, in my opinion, he is the only man who has ever walked the face of the earth

who has had the right to be an absolute autocrat!

Having this foundation, Jesus demonstrated servant leadership by taking off his robe, picking up a towel, and washing his disciples' feet. If I had been there that night, I would have been embarrassed beyond words the moment I saw him kneel before the first disciple. I would have been embarrassed and humiliated, because I had not been willing to lower myself to the same dirty task. Yet Jesus demonstrated that the greatest among his followers would have to become servant to all.

The explanation of Jesus's servant leadership comes at the end of the story, when he says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (vv. 15–17).



Another place in the New Testament that speaks eloquently about servant leadership is 1 Peter 5:1–7:

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

FINAL THOUGHTS

What are the alternatives to the top-down attitude hang-up? In terms of leadership style, I would summarize them as:

- 1 **Participatory management.** Give a group of employees the privilege of input before you move on a course of action. This can be messy and time consuming, but it motivates and inspires people.
- 2 **Facilitator style.** See your role as that of a facilitator who makes it possible for those who work for you to be successful. You are there to empower others to effective work.
- 3 **Democratic leadership.** Build a leadership team with a democratic process that enables the group to have a vital role in the nature and direction of the organization.
- 4 **Flat organizational characteristics.** View yourself as working side by side with others or as leading the charge, but not as being on the top of a giant pyramid.
- 5 **Servant leadership.** If Jesus was a servant of his followers, how can I, in my right mind, think that I should be served by those I lead? This is what Jim Collins calls “Level Five Leadership” in his book *Good to Great*.

In closing, this ancient legend illustrates perfectly the significance of quiet servant leadership:

As construction began on a magnificent cathedral, an angel came and promised a large reward to the person who made the most important contribution to the finished sanctuary. As the building went up, people speculated about who would win the prize. The architect? The contractor? The woodcutter? The artisans skilled in gold, iron, brass, and glass? Perhaps the carpenter assigned to the detailed grillwork near the altar? Because each workman did his best, the complete church was a masterpiece. But when the moment came to announce the winner of the reward, everyone was surprised. It was given to an old, poorly dressed peasant woman. What had she done? Every day she had faithfully carried hay to the ox that pulled the marble for the stonecutter. ●

Excerpt from *Top 10 Mistakes Leaders Make* © 2015 Hans Finzel





Q&A

with Rod Olson

A college football coach turned sought-after leadership consultant sheds light on what it's like to integrate personal faith into a career that spans all spectrums.



How has leadership changed during your time in this field?

Leadership now isn't about authority, it's about authenticity. The big rush in social media and the speed of it makes us crave real relationships. Employees and players and athletes and students are starving for healthy, boundary-filled relationships with their leaders.

It used to be that if people had the title, we would listen to them. Those days are gone. Now it's all about whether you're authentic. We're finding that if people can be relationship-driven leaders who are highly competent, cutting edge, and relevant, that's a huge deal.

But the best leaders were the same way fifty years ago. It's just that this generation has exposed that they won't tolerate anybody who isn't relationship-driven.

The big difference in generations is not laziness or apathy. It's that the world operates now as: slow is bad, fast is good. But the problem is that things aren't built to last if they are built fast. So we teach coaches and business leaders how to use that as leverage, how to coach young people in that you don't get good at things quickly. We want to give them comfort in the fact that even though it's taking a while, it isn't wrong and it shouldn't feel wrong.

What is the number one leadership mistake you still see across all channels?

Definitely not having any empathy. We talk about this in baseball a lot. The longer you're away from the game, the easier it seems. Coaches look at a hitter and say, "Dude, what's the big deal? It's only a 92-mile-an-hour slider. Just hit it." And that hitter is thinking, "When is the last time you were hitting in front of fifty thousand people against the best pitcher on the planet with ESPN watching?" People forget how hard stuff is.

“ We leaders have amnesia.
We forget how hard it is to be a kid or an employee.

Even in parenting and school: My kids come home with Geometry homework, and I am reminded of how hard it is. We leaders have amnesia. We forget how hard it is to be a kid or an employee.

We teach them to ask themselves the questions:

What's it like to be led by me?

What's it like to be coached by me?

What's it like to be married to me?

We teach them to ask those questions continually, to keep an others-focused perspective.

People often say that you can't let your identity be your job. What about leadership? Can that be an identity?

For me, everyone is a leader and everyone is a coach. We all have to coach and lead ourselves. We have to be able to do that. There are people who are more comfortable in those roles, no doubt. But our identity needs to be wrapped up in Christ, not in what we do or who we are.

How does faith play into what you do? How does it make you a better leader?

My life was changed when someone taught me how to integrate biblical principles into my coaching. I was keeping them separate only because I didn't know how to integrate them.

The biggest advantage we have, from a mental toughness standpoint, is that we can tap into the Holy Spirit, to help us control the uncontrollables by giving them to Christ. It allows us to let go of things. People who don't have that and can't let it go—that's a pretty heavy backpack to carry.

But you find yourself in mostly secular arenas. How does your faith influence that?

After my college coaching career, I was running the coaches ministry for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in Colorado. But my kids were playing college sports so I started doing coaching workshops for secular colleges. They asked me to leave out the Jesus part. But then there would be executives in the room who wanted me to come teach at their company. And then I was asked to come to Quantico with the Drug Enforcement Agency, so it just evolved.

People wanted the leadership principles and the tools. I wrestled for a while asking myself: Am I really being a follower of Christ if I take that out? But I realized that I can share biblical principles in a secular format.

I think God's got a plan. It's funny how He equips us to help people and stay humble at the same time. I don't think there is a trick or an angle, but much like Paul who was trained to reach the Gentiles, I find myself more and more in these specific environments. It's been a great experience and I love it. I think of it as trying to take back territory that belongs to Christ.

What was the best job you ever had?

The one I have now. I'm very fortunate to be in a lane that's very diverse and to have many different clients and environments. To work with elite leaders across our country from the coaches from the Pittsburgh Pirates to the Commander of the Navy Seals is really, really fun.

Rod Olson is the author of *The Legacy Builder: Five Foundational Principles That Work in Sports, Leadership, and Life*.

TRAVELOGUE



NIGERIA'S GOT RHYTHM

Traditional music of Nigeria features complex rhythms that meld together in lively, energetic expression.

Ostinato provides a continual rhythmic pattern repeated throughout a song.

Polyrhythms combine two or more different beats played at the same time.

Hemiola creates asymmetrical rhythm, often by replacing two groups of three beats with three groups of two beats.



Les Moir is the Director of Artists and Repertoire for Integrity Music UK. Pictured above with Muyiwa Olarewaju.

What was the purpose of your recent trip?

The fastest growing church in England is the African church. We have a good connection with Muiywa Olarewaju, who is one of the best-known African worship leaders in the United Kingdom. Muiywa invited me to come to Lagos, Nigeria, to teach three hundred young musicians about twenty things that I had learned in twenty years of working in music. I taught on having the heart of a worshipper, not just being a musician.

The invitation was also a good opportunity to check out what is happening with worship music in Nigeria. There are huge gatherings, hundreds of thousands of Christians meeting to worship. In the Psalms, we read about praising God in the Great Congregation. That is what is happening in Nigeria.

What was the most valuable experience you had there?

I have been involved in music ministry for quite a while now, so I valued the chance to pass on what God has taught me. I felt like I was standing on the shoulders of other Integrity Music guys who had visited Lagos before me—people such as Don Moen, John Pac, and Ron Kenoly.

How does the Nigerian sound fit in with Integrity Music?

In Nigeria they have a rhythm all their own, and with it comes movement and freedom in praise. They have a tone and harmony in singing that is unique.

The Church is multicultural and we desire to see that reflected in Integrity's songs. One of the joys of being a global publisher is that we are working more and more with worship leaders and songwriters from around the world. We are keen to see and hear the sound of every tribe, tongue, and nation on earth as it is in heaven.

What made a lasting impression on you?

My favorite part of the trip, apart from experiencing the African culture, was a moment in the seminar. I wanted to encourage the students in their songwriting and in their expression.

The desire in Nigeria is to sound Western. But I explained that I wanted to hear their sound, and that the Nigerian ingredient is essential in the "every tribe, tongue, and nation" sound.

Well, it was like I had sparked a fire. The students jumped up and started dancing and cheering. They came and hugged me. I love their freedom! The global Church needs this. It was an unforgettable experience. You go somewhere to give something to people, but are often surprised by what you get back.



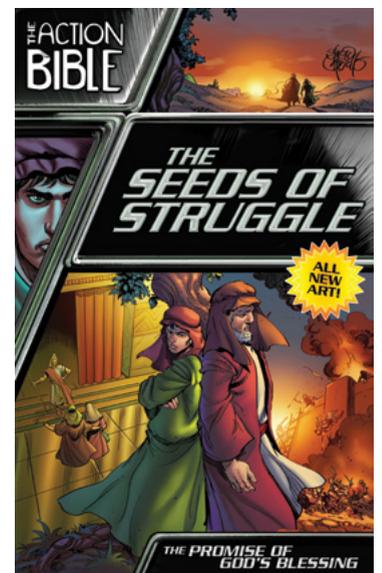
The Art of Transformation

Illustrator and comic book artist Sergio Cariello transforms another biblical story into an *Action Bible* graphic novel.

“Working on this gives me the experience of drawing a ‘forever’ newspaper,” Sergio explains as he draws *The Seeds of Struggle*. This second of a four-book series lets the reader listen in on a conversation between father and son, Abraham and Ishmael, reflecting on their family’s jolted journey.

“The struggles we Christians live with today, especially in Arabic cultures, mirror pretty much the struggles of yesteryears. This story closes the circle of prophecy and history as we know it.

“There is no difference in my process between illustrating this and *The Action Bible*. Every new story I draw, I treat the same: I read the script, I look for references, and I start retelling the story the way I see it—with drawings—trying to make it as clear as possible, without any words to decipher it. At the same time, I want to make the pages interesting and dynamic.”



The Seeds of Struggle: The Promise of God's Blessing will be available October 2015, in sequel to *The Battle Begins: The Story of Creation*.

THE STORY OF JESUS REACHES CHILDREN IN GHANA

Thanks to the help of generous donors, children read the first of 5.3 million copies of *The Story of Jesus* that are on their way to families all across Ghana. The booklets are part of local churches' evangelistic effort to reach their entire country with the good news of Christ. See the story on page 16.

