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We are not what we shall be but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished but it is going on; this is not the end but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory but all is being purified.

— MARTIN LUTHER

The Journey IS the destination...

The context of our journey takes place within a much larger story...

A larger story that reaches into our souls to discover ancient battles, great peril, a villain's betrayal, and unlikely heroes. Our hearts are wired to recognize this story as captives are set free, the fight for freedom rages, redemption is found, and original glory shimmers.

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SERENDIPITY
by LifeWay

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CS (CHRISTIAN SINGLE®) IS THE MAGAZINE FOR PURPOSEFUL SINGLE LIVING, PROVIDING PRACTICAL ANSWERS TO THE REAL-LIFE NEEDS OF TODAY'S SINGLE ADULTS, CHALLENGING THEM TO INTENSIFY THEIR FAITH AND IMPACT THEIR COMMUNITY.

Volume 30

Number 8

A Fond Farewell

Tn the past I've openly admitted that writing editorials isn't always the easiest thing for me. This month is no different, but my reasons are.

After about 13 years — and more than 150 issues — CS is saying goodbye to our graphic designer, Susan Maywald. She is moving on to another magazine in the LifeWay family and we wish her all the best. She's a gifted and talented designer who autographs her work with excellence. And this is my attempt to send her off well and express how much she means to us.

I've only worked with Susan for the last year, so I decided to call in some past and present CS team members to help me out. I asked them to share what they most appreciated or enjoyed about working with Susan, and this is what they had to say:

Susan always had a keen balance on what she was thinking and when it was best to say it. When I introduced some hair-brained idea, I could see the reserve in her eyes as she was taking her time to formulate her response. She would usually respond with a very insightful question that had a way, more than once, of altering my perspective. It is a gift of tact and diplomacy that has served her well.

Stephen Felts, former editor-in-chief

Susan is always creatively cool. Lots of design talent but no high-temp drama. Ah, as sweet as it gets.

Ivey Beckman, former editor

Susan is one of the funniest people I've ever met. Life on a magazine is oftentimes hectic and stressful, and when those times would rear their ugly heads, I would bolt to her office for a good story and a good laugh. Her tales and her delivery were and still are hilarious. There are lots of things I miss about working with "Slusan," but most of all I miss laughing with her.

Nathan Magness, former copy editor

Picasso once said, "The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls." One of the things I loved about working with Susan is the way she made me shake some of the dust off my own soul.

Beth Clayton Luthye, former editor-in-chief



When things get stressful, I can always talk Susan into taking a break to grab a popsicle, cupcake, or ice cream — we have a mutual sweet tooth and sense of humor. Susan has become one of my closest friends and I've learned so much from her. It's amazing to see how she brings pages of black and white text to life month after month. I'll miss her dearly.

Larissa Arnault, current editor

As I read "Thank You Very Much" (page 28), Marlene Baer reminded me how important it is to express thanks to those who have played significant roles in our lives. Susan, I hope in this little bit of space you get a feeling for how much we love and care about you. Thank you so much for your patience, your dedication to CS, and your friendship. We're going to miss you.

Are there special people you need to thank this holiday season? Don't waste another minute — tell them what they mean to you today.

Blessings,

christiansingle@lifeway.com

PRODUCTION & MINISTRY TEAM

Editor in Chief GENA ROGERS
Editor LARISSA ARNAULT
Graphic Designer SUSAN MAYWALD
Copy Editor NANCY CORNWELL
Technical Specialist BRENDA SHOEMAKE

Send questions/comments to:
 Editor, *Christian Single*
 One LifeWay Plaza
 Nashville, TN 37234-0175

Or make comments on the Web at lifeway.com

MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

Director, Leadership & Adult Publishing BRET ROBBE
 Senior Managing Director, Leadership & Adult Publishing
 RON BROWN
 Managing Directors, Leadership & Adult Publishing
 LARRY DRY, RON KECK
 Director, Leadership & Adult Ministry BILL CRAIG
 Director, Publishing GARY HAUK

ADVERTISING & CIRCULATION

One LifeWay Plaza, MSN 136, Nashville, TN 37234
 Phone (615) 251-2289 Fax (615) 251-2039
 E-mail: magazineadvertising@lifeway.com
 Media kits: www.lifeway.com/magazines/media
 Director RHONDA EDGE BUESCHER
 Advertising Production SCOTT HANCOCK

cover photo: Micah Kandros

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Empowering **single adults** to live out an extraordinary faith

Is your spiritual health important to you? We've identified four areas that work together to produce a spiritually healthy person — Connect, Grow, Serve, Go. Look for the following icons on various features throughout issues of CS to identify how each article can help get you on your way to a more balanced spiritual future. Learn more at lifeway.com/adults.



CONNECT highlights the importance of worship, prayer, and fellowship in positive relationships at church, work, and home — as youconnecttoGod,Heconnectsyoutoothers.



GROW cultivates an increased understanding and knowledge of God through His Word. Knowledge is about more than information — it's about Scripture coming alive in your life.



SERVE feeds your soul and points the way to ministry needs inside your church. From teaching Sunday School to stocking the food pantry — it takes all of us working together for the church to function as God intended.



GO moves you into the community and the world to share the good news of Christ through evangelism and missions. From a Habitat build to tutoring at the YMCA — the opportunities are limitless.



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FEEDBACK

We asked you ▼

Besides turkey and dressing, what Thanksgiving food do you most look forward to?

Here's what you said ▼

We have ham and cornish hens, dressing, potato salad, collards, cranberry sauce, and either lemon or coconut pie.

Med

Hot buttery rolls.

Derek

Sweet potatoes (made with cinnamon, cloves, and sugar) topped with melted marshmallows — my mom's family recipe that has been handed down from several grandmas.

Robin

Pistachio pudding.

Katie

My grandma's sweet potato pie, homemade biscuits, and sweet tea. Also, my mama's macaroni and cheese.

Kimmy

Mashed potatoes made with my mom's love.

Terri

Homemade macaroni and cheese.

Bethany

It wouldn't be a true Thanksgiving dinner without homemade pumpkin pie with real whipped cream.

Tammy

Made-from-scratch dumplings and the plethora of deserts.

Christopher

All the great pies to choose from, with ice cream or whipped cream depending on which pie you choose. I usually choose one of each.

Donna

Sweet potato casserole, chocolate cake, and fresh green beans.

Paula

Pecan pie — Thanksgiving wouldn't be the same without it.

Nathan

Cranberries because they are the perfect amount of sweet and bitter, plus they can

be served multiple ways: jellied, whole, dry, cold, hot.

Lynn

I'm going to have to say the chocolate pie. My mom makes them from scratch without following a recipe. I'll never learn the secret.

Jennifer

Our family just married-in a new member with an Italian heritage. His 96-year-old grandmother came over to the U.S. on a boat from Italy and still makes meatballs from scratch for every meal. Now, I look forward to his grandmother's favorite dish as a fun, new additive to our otherwise classic Thanksgiving fare.

Sissy

Back on Track ▼

Hi. I just wanted to write and let all those associated with this magazine know that it has truly helped me out. First, let me say that I am not single — I am married with three beautiful children. However, right now my family and I are going through a [rough] time. Thank you to all those involved with this blessed magazine. It gave me the info and confirmation that I needed, and I know everything will be OK if I just trust in Him and let Him help instead of trying to move mountains all by myself. Again, thank you all and God bless.

Dwight

Your Letter Here

Please share your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions. Send your **feedback** to CS at christiansingle@lifeway.com.

CONTACT

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: E-mail your questions, comments, kudos, or criticisms to: christiansingle@lifeway.com; mail them to: Editor, *Christian Single*, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0175; or fax them to: (615) 251-3734. Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters become the property of CS magazine and may be edited for clarity and space.

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WRITING FOR CS: For a copy of the CS writer guidelines or for information about writing for the magazine, e-mail christiansingle@lifeway.com.

& COMING IN DECEMBER



MELINDA DOOLITTLE
this American Idol alum moves from behind the scenes to centerstage

PLUS:

- IS YOUR KITCHEN A DISASTER ZONE? FIND ORGANIZATION IDEAS HERE.
- OUR GIGANTIC CHRISTMAS SPECIAL: GIFTS, DATES, DECORATING, AND MORE
- PARTY IDEAS TO BRING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH A BANG
- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CROSS-CULTURAL CHRISTIAN?

CONTRIBUTORS



SANDY SIRATT

"Are We There Yet?" (page 26)

Sandy Siratt says the happiest place on earth for her is, "at the altar, on my knees, worshipping God. There is no other place more fulfilling or more joyful than His presence." After a vacation to what's known to most as the happiest place on earth — Disney World — a then third grade Siratt said her favorite part of the trip was standing in line. If Siratt could offer one piece of travel advice it would be to enjoy the journey. "Part of the fun of any vacation or destination is getting there," she says. "Don't dread it, make the most of it." Siratt's most memorable trip was to New York City to celebrate her 21st birthday with her best friend. "We spent two days there and did a 'marathon' sightseeing tour, visiting as many tourist spots and seeing as many shows as possible," she recalls.



AMY JACOBS

"United We Stand" (page 32)

If Amy Jacobs could interview anyone in history it would be a Holocaust survivor. "I think if I sat across a table from a survivor, listening to their story, I would leave that interview a different person," she shares. "The challenge of doing his or her story justice on paper would be an exercise of refining." This month Jacobs profiled Matt Maher and quickly discovered they are involved in some of the same ministries. "Those experiences allowed me to connect easily with his heart," she reflects. Along with those ministries, Jacobs finds another thing that is dear to her heart is her favorite holiday — Thanksgiving. And for the past 31 years she has celebrated it the same way — going to her grandmother's with all her aunts, uncles, and cousins. "There are usually 30 to 40 of us in her house. What could be more fun than that?"



DEAN NELSON

"Present Peace" (page 40)

Hockey enthusiast Dean Nelson says the best advice he's ever received is to "always skate with your head up." He considers this a life lesson. "Don't get so engrossed in what you're doing that you miss the good stuff — or the trouble — that might be headed your way," he notes. In high school Nelson could have used that sage advice when he crashed his mom's car into his dad's car while his dad watched the whole thing. Nelson was forgiven, though, as he's still been allowed to spend Thanksgiving with family and friends in Big Bear, Calif., for the past 20 years. One of Nelson's favorite Thanksgiving traditions is a touch football game after the big dinner. "It's mostly a lot of yelling and smack talk," he admits.



Don't hold back.
Be bold & SPEAK UP.

Log on to lifeway.com/christiansingle
& let us know what's on your mind.

JOTT THIS DOWN

Forgetting birthdays, let alone all you have going on at work? Life sometimes moves faster than your mental to-do list can keep up.



© MCMILLAN DIGITAL ART / GETTY IMAGES

Do you write things on scraps of paper only to find them shredded in your pants pocket on laundry day? Do you need to get your life in order, but you can't afford to hire a Betty Suarez-type to remind you when you're supposed to be where? No need to despair. Jott.com converts your voice into whatever it is you need to be reminded of. E-mail or text yourself important (or just semi-important) reminders or add items to your to-do list — all by making a call from your cell phone. You do the talking, and it does the typing — for free. So sign up at the Web site and start jotting today.

— Beth Clayton Luthye

Tip Sheet

Tasty Turkey Day Leftovers

You can gobble that whole butterball (and the fixin's)



© ANNABELLE BREAKEY / GETTY IMAGES

1

Talk turkey.

Since a big bird is typically the star of the Thanksgiving show, don't let a bite go to waste. Sandwich making may be the traditional method for utilizing that leftover meat, but it's not the only one. From tetrazzini to nachos to curry, there are tons of ideas to help you turn that boring container of leftover turkey into taste bud bliss. Try razzledazzlerecipes.com for a long list of scrumptious recipes.

2

Heat things up.

Twenty seconds in the microwave may increase the temperature of refrigerated tidbits, but it does nothing for their flavor. Take some extra time to preheat the oven and warm things up thoroughly for better taste. Got extra carrots, potatoes, and green beans? Combine them in a skillet with olive oil and some seasonings to make a delightful stir-fry. For a protein boost, add some of that aforementioned turkey to the mix.



© IAN GARLICK / GETTY IMAGES

4

Pass the peas.

Few things are more satisfying than helping others, so look for ways to share some of the blessings you've been given — like cans of peas or cranberry sauce that never made it to the table. Check with local food banks or national organizations like secondharvest.org for details about donating items. Or start an annual food drive in your neighborhood, maybe in conjunction with a block party, and give the goods away to a reputable community organization.



— Ande Fanning

3

Party hearty.

To prevent any dishes that didn't quite get finished on T-Day from going straight to the trash bin, invite your best buds over for food-filled festivities. Whether you make it a potluck picnic or an indoor buffet, consider having a contest to see who can create the most interesting dish using their leftovers.

© RYAN MCWAY / GETTY IMAGES



DON'T YOU DARE

Three no-nos when you've been handed a pink slip.

- 1. Don't dip into your 401(k).** That money is for your golden years, not rainy days.
- 2. Don't be lazy.** It's easy to look at the first few days of a layoff as a "break," but you can't waste any time goofing off. You need a job.
- 3. Don't get down.** While losing a job can be depressing, stay positive and focused. Look toward the future and what God has planned for you.

On the Job *Not So Pretty in Pink*

What to do when you've been laid off

TIMES ... THEY ARE TOUGH. With prices sky-rocketing on practically everything, most of us are making adjustments to our budgets, and we're not alone. Many companies are also having to make some hard decisions regarding finances, and you know what that means — pink slips and layoffs.

Being laid off is a scary thing, but it's not the end of the world. According to essortment.com, there are things you can do to ensure survival.

First, apply for unemployment, especially if you weren't given a severance package or don't have an emergency fund. You should have no problem receiving unem-

ployment checks, but remember that the checks will only be a fraction of your previous salary.

Next, determine where you can cut back on spending. As difficult as it may be, forgoing some of the pleasures of life — gym membership, cable, Netflix, and meals out on the town — will be a must.

From there, update and rework your resumé. If it's been awhile since you've been to resumé-land, look for tips online to make it top-notch. And start spreading the word among friends and contacts that you are in the market for a j-o-b. You'll need all the help you can get. —Nathan Magness

dinner defrost:

THAW YOUR BIRD

THERE ARE THREE safe ways to thaw a turkey. The preferred way is (of course) the slowest, so plan ahead.

Best/Slowest Method: Refrigerator. Keep the turkey in its original

wrapping on a baking sheet in the fridge, and plan on 24 hours of thawing for every 5 pounds of bird. That means two days for an 8-pound turkey, and up to six days for a 24-pound gobbler.

Next-Best/Medium Method: Cold water. Submerge the bird, in its original wrapping, in

cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes, and allow 30 minutes to thaw each pound. A 16-pound turkey could take around eight hours.

Worst/Fastest Method: Microwave. Defrost the turkey in the microwave using your manufacturer's instructions. Hint: The bigger the bird, the

bigger microwave you'll need to nuke it. — Jason Boyett



At Home Wake-Up Call



© ISTOCK PHOTO

SOME PEOPLE LOVE

waking up. They easily rise to the sound of music or first ray of sunshine. For the rest of us, it takes something stronger to blast us from our beds. Check out the following creative alarm clocks from alarmclocksonline.com to help you lose the snooze.

WACKY WAKERS \$13.99

Don't love waking up to an annoying buzz or too chipper morning DJ? The roar of a dinosaur, moo of a cow, or squeal of a pig will help you hit the ground running. With 13 animal sounds to choose from, you're sure to find a furry (or scaly) friend to help you rise and shine.

CLOCKY \$50

This sneaky alarm rolls away after you hit snooze the second time. It's known to jump off your nightstand and hide in a corner. Catch it if you can, but you'll have to leave your comfy covers (which is kinda the point).

BOUNCING SPORTS ALARM CLOCK: \$24.99

Does the alarm clock buzz make you so mad you could throw something? Name your sport — baseball, basketball, football, soccer, or golf — and blow off that steam by chucking this clock against a non-breakable surface to turn it off. But make sure you're wide awake — there's no snooze on this one.

THE SOLEIL SUN: \$90

While pricey, this device provides a sunny alternative to blaring alarms. The built-in light gradually gets brighter, simulating a natural sunrise, so your body reacts as if waking at daybreak. And you control the speed of light — wake-ups can last from 15 to 120 minutes. Bonus: You can also reverse the process to mimic a sunset.

WEB WAKEUP: FREE

If you sleep near your laptop, go to onlineclock.net for a free wake-up call. Simply choose the size of the numbers, and set the alarm. The best part: It's completely free.

— Jennifer McCaman

RECIPE

Sweet Potato Puffs

(2 Servings)

- 1 cup mashed sweet potatoes (without milk and butter added)
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 6 large marshmallows
- 1/3 cup graham cracker crumbs



- ▶ Combine mashed sweet potatoes, brown sugar, salt, and cinnamon.
- ▶ Shape a small amount of the sweet potato mixture around each marshmallow.
- ▶ Roll in graham cracker crumbs.
- ▶ Place on a greased baking sheet and bake at 350 degrees for six minutes or until lightly puffed. Be careful not to overbake as the marshmallows will melt.

How to ...

Gas and Go Farther

Increase your miles per gallon

IT'S NOT EXACTLY BREAKING NEWS: Gas is expensive. Really expensive. While you can't control gas prices, you are in charge of how you drive. Here are a few reminders to get more out of each overpriced tank.

SLOW DOWN ▶ It saves time to drive fast, but it doesn't save gas. Your car's fuel economy plummets as your speedometer ticks upward. Experts suggest that every 5 mph you drive over 60 mph is like paying an extra \$.30 per gallon.

CLEAN OUT ▶ Junk in the trunk adds weight, and extra weight decreases your efficiency. According to fuel economy.gov, every extra 100 pounds in your car or truck drops your mpg by two percent.

CRUISE ON ▶ On flat roads, the constant speed of cruise control keeps your engine running smoothly and efficiently. Use it whenever possible on the highway.

IDLE NOT ▶ Guess how many mpgs you get while waiting at the drive-through window? Zero. An idling car wastes fuel. So cut the ignition when you can.

AIR UP ▶ Underinflated tires require more energy to keep them turning, and that translates to increased fuel consumption. And beware of overinflation hype. The money you'll save on gas isn't necessarily worth the risks. — J.B.



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BEST & WORST

According to fueleconomy.gov, the car with the best mpg is the Toyota Prius with 48 mpg around town. The worst? A Lamborghini, clocking in at 8 mpg.



© ANDREA GINGERICH / ISTOCK PHOTO

MONEY MATTERS

Cover Me

Are extended warranties worth it?

EACH TIME YOU PURCHASE a new appliance or electronic, you face the same "coin toss" decision — should you pony up for an extended warranty? A few years ago, the answer was likely no (Note: vehicles are a different breed). But according to a "CBS News" report, that answer may need some rethinking. Recently many appliance manufactur-

ers have consolidated the terms of coverage to one time period covering all parts and service, and that is typically for one year. After that, you pay all the costs. The chances of the item failing within a year are slim to none. But those chances rise in the second and third years — time typically covered under an extended warranty. If you'd rather be safe than sorry, loosen the purse strings when it comes to extended warranties. And always read the fine print of the agreement because no matter how trustworthy a company may be, they don't want to pay out of their own pockets.

—N.M.

If the weather outside is turning frightful, escape to Phoenix. Known as the "Valley of the Sun," it's surrounded by mountains on all sides. And this Arizona gem offers plenty for everyone — whether you're an outdoor enthusiast or prefer a peaceful trip to the spa.

Travel Guide

Hooked on Phoenix

Rise from the ashes to the occasion

BY CHRISTA A. BANISTER



© JOSEPH H. BAILEY / GETTY IMAGES

Hot Spots

Fashion Forward: Like Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills, Scottsdale Fashion Square is the place-de-jour for upscale shopping and people watching. Stroll across cobblestone streets and spot everything from Jimmy Choo to Juicy Couture. For far more budget-conscious buying, visit outlet stores galore at nearby Mesa's Factory Stores of America.

Kick Back: For some great R&R, there are a slew of spas providing everything from massages and mud baths to aromatherapy and various other beauty services. One of the more picturesque (and most expensive) locales is the Asian-inspired Sanctuary on Camelback Mountain in nearby Paradise Valley.

Ciao, Baby: OK, so you're not in Italy, but the food at Sassi might convince you otherwise. Not only is their pasta handmade and paired with decadent sauces, but

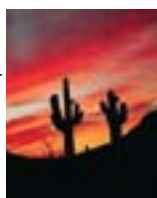


the rustic Tuscan décor and fantastic views are equally swoon-worthy.

Be a Tourist

See the Stars: To get up close and personal with the twinkly, star-lit sky, take a blanket and a beach chair to the Challenger Space Center. Telescopes are set up and guides provide the skinny on constellations and the night sky above Phoenix. azchallenger.org. More adventurous stargazers can take off-road expedition tours that offer specific ways to view celestial bodies. Professional tour companies feature excursions through the Sonoran Desert. stellaradventures.com

Head Downtown: While its stark, abandoned feel used to make it great fodder for ghost stories, downtown Phoenix has recently evolved into one of Phoenix's must-sees. From the gorgeous gardens and fountains of the Arizona Center to the chic, Spanish colonial decor of the Orpheum Theatre, there's something exciting around every corner.



On the Town

Nature Calls: Sure, you can rent a car to see sights like Superstition Mountain, Piastewa Peak, and South Mountain (the nation's largest city park). But for a unique perspective, take a tour by Hummer or a hot air balloon ride. pneonixasap.com.

Get Sporty: With more than 200 golf courses, Phoenix and Scottsdale are the places to hit the links. If you've never played, several golf schools can help with your swing. phoenixgolfsource.com

Art Smarts: Phoenix's art scene is impressive. The much buzzed-about Heard Museum features a unique anthology of Native American art, while the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art

covers the current era with style. The Phoenix Art Museum is the resident crown jewel, though, with more than 17,000 offerings.

City of Lights: In nearby Tempe, the locals get into the holiday spirit with a remarkable parade called

"Fantasy of Lights." In addition to the community tree-lighting ceremony, there are fireworks, music, and 50 tons of snow brought in to make it feel more like Christmas.

Christa A. Banister is a St. Paul, Minn.-based freelance writer and author of Around the World in 80 Dates and Blessed Are the Meddlers. When she's not camped out in front of her computer, she loves to take in the new sights and sounds that traveling provides.

Go Away A New Frame of Mine

No patience for scrap-booking? No problem. Artistically arrange a few of your favorite travel souvenirs in a 3-D photo shadowbox display that you can enjoy every day. A shadowbox can show off items that you've collected from a trip abroad or those you've discovered while walking along the beach. Include anything from maps to postcards to ticket stubs to brochures. For a more artistic look, search for



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items to match a theme — a certain color palette, paper with the name of the place you visited, or striking images from afar. A little glue and some creative placement are all it takes to preserve and protect your travel memories for years to come.

—B.C.L.

STUDY UP

Try the following helpful Web sites as you research and attempt to learn more about the presidential election — the candidates, the issues, all of it.

ivotevalues.com

Developed by The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, this faith-based site offers information on everything from the candidates and hot-button issues to the latest news surrounding the election.

votesmart.org

A nonpartisan organization, Project Vote Smart works to provide citizens with updated, thorough information on candidates and officials. Here you'll find the scoop on topics ranging from voting records and campaign finance figures to issue positions.

opensecrets.org

Nonpartisan, independent, and nonprofit, the Center for Responsive Politics strives to inform citizens and educate voters on how money in politics affects their lives by providing detailed information on campaign contributions and lobbying data.

Power to the People

To vote or not to vote? We say, "Vote!"

Make a difference by casting your ballot in this year's election

BY NATHAN MAGNESS

Unless you've been living with an undiscovered tribe in the Amazon, you know all too well that our country is on the verge of electing a new president.

On November 4, millions will step into a voter's booth to pull a lever or touch a screen or even punch a chad, casting a vote for an individual who will lead our nation. But, the question remains, will you be a part of this election? Are you even prepared to make such a decision?

When Duty Calls

Agree or not, it's your responsibility as an American citizen to vote in the presidential election. But, more importantly, it's your duty as a follower of Christ. Some may disagree with this, saying that we are "citizens in God's kingdom" and should not be concerned with "earthly kingdoms." While that can sound like a logical argument, nothing is further from the truth.

Just look at Jesus' response to those who asked whether they should pay taxes to Rome. "Give back to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," (Matthew 22:21).

"Jesus' answer assures Christians that they have a duty to meet the expectations placed on them by the civil authorities," says Barrett Duke, vice president for Public Policy and

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Research and director of the Research Institute of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "When we apply Jesus' answer to life in a democracy, where voting is part of responsible citizenship, we must accept it as given that Christians have a duty to vote."

If the word *duty* causes you to cringe, think of it this way: "Christians also should think about voting as an act of compassion toward others," Duke adds. "To think of voting as an act of compassion ... is an appropriate application of what Christ had in mind when He called His disciples the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world.'" (See Matthew 5:13-16.)

It's your responsibility as an American citizen to vote in the presidential election. But more importantly, it's your duty as a follower of Christ.

When you vote, you're not only thinking of yourself; you're also helping individuals in our country enjoy "happier, healthier, more fulfilled, more productive, and more meaningful lives," Duke explains.

I Take Issue

As salt and light, followers of Christ are to be the change this world needs. We all want to make a difference, and casting a vote — as simple as it may sound — is one way we can do just that.

Think of all the issues swirling around today — poverty, social injustice, the war, abortion, health care, immigration, the environment. The actions of our government affect all these problems and more. So it's only logical that Christians would and should take part in elections.

Jacob, a 30-something in Nashville, Tenn., will do his part and join millions in casting a vote for the next president. He is concerned with a myriad of issues, ranging from the economy to abortion. But there's one subject that stands out to him.

"Potential Supreme Court appointments is one of the most important factors for me in a presidential election because their decisions will long outlast most decisions made by any president," Jacob says.

Amy, another 30ish singleton, is also following this election and a number of its top issues. "I am concerned about the war in Iraq and when that might come to an end," she voices. "I'm also incredibly concerned about the economy — the cost of living, minimum wage, and how to get a handle on the oil situation. And the environment is another important issue to me."

Get Smart

Though Jacob and Amy both mention several hot topics, there are more out there. And, with all of our varied sources of information — from talking political heads to Web sites galore — it can be very easy to cast an ill-informed vote. But it is so critical to stay informed of where candidates stand on the matters that are most important to you.

As the writers of *Make Your Vote Count* say, "The choices are many, and the time is now to get your homework done in preparation for November 4. When you step into the voter's booth ... you will need to be armed with godly wisdom in order to make choices that honor the Lord and obediently serve His kingdom."

Amy and Jacob have done their homework, and so should you. "Research helps

me make my decision," Amy shares. "I look at a candidate's record as a politician and how they've voted on issues that are important to me. I also really get into the debates. I like to watch how candidates handle things that likely anger them."

Jacob, on the other hand, reads books written by candidates regardless of whether he thinks he'll vote for them, and he also studies trusted and objective Web sites such as CNN.com and USA Today.com.

You would never make a huge decision at work or in your personal life without weighing all the pros and cons, and you would never choose a church without determining where it stands on all matters of faith and community; so why would you cast a vote for a person who could potentially become a leader of our country without knowing all there is to know about him or her?

So this year study up and get out there and vote — seriously. And on your way to the polls, avoid passing judgment on those who lean more to the left or even to the right. Just remember these words from a popular bumper sticker: "God is not a Republican or a Democrat." Very cheesy, yet very true. 🗳️

Nathan Magness, a writer in Nashville, Tenn., is a big nerd when it comes to politics. He loves it! And, yes, he has his homework done and will be voting in this year's election.

& count your blessings

► It Could Be Worse

As you're standing at the end of a forever-long voting line on November 4, just be glad you're not voting in India. The process for electing a new Lower House of Parliament (aka Lok Sabha) is considered by some to be the largest event in the world. India's electorate includes more than 668 million people, voting in 800,000 polling stations. And it's doubtful that India's polling stations are anything like our comfy ballot boxes in America. In fact, India's polling stations are located in the snow-covered mountains of the Himalayas, in the deserts of Rajasthan, and on islands in the Indian Ocean. Makes standing in line at the community middle school seem like a cakewalk, doesn't it?





THE TIMES are a changing — quite literally — as we roll those clocks back. Want to update your light sources *and* stay on a budget? Before you throw away one more item ask yourself, *Could I reinvent this object's identity and give it another chance to sparkle and shine?*

Lighten Up

By MEGAN CICCOLINE WHITE



Bird Cage Pendant

▷ Under \$25.00

SUPPLIES ▶

- 1 Medium to large metal bird cage with a hole at top ▷ \$ price varies (Look for a used one at garage sales, thrift stores, or flea markets.)

- 2 "Make-A-Lamp" kit (craft store) ▷ \$4.99
- 3 Decorative light bulb ▷ \$3.00 to 5.00
- 4 Paint ▷ \$5.00

TOOLS ▶

- 1 Ruler

STEPS ▶

1. Paint the birdcage to your liking using spray paint or acrylic paints.
2. Open the kit to ensure you have all the necessary parts. Read over the diagram given in the instructions to familiarize yourself with part names. ↓



3. Thread the provided wire through the hole at the top of the birdcage.
4. Measuring with the ruler, make a knot two inches from the end of the cord inside the birdcage to determine how low you want the bulb to hang. Knot distance is based on the size of the birdcage and personal preference. Use trial and error to find the perfect length.
5. Tie a second knot in the wire on the top of the hole outside of the birdcage. →

6. From the birdcage door, thread the wire through the socket cap and socket interior.
7. Place the blunt end of the cord through the quick snap hole. The ribbed side of the cord goes to the negative conductor of the socket.
8. Snap together, ensuring that you hear a "click" sound.
9. Place socket shell on top of snap-together socket and secure over socket cap.
10. Add a light bulb and hang.

GENERAL ELECTRICS ▶

You can also hang a birdcage directly from a ceiling outlet. This is a lovely alternative, but it should be handled by someone who has experience with electrical work.





Paint Can Spotlight

▷ Under \$15.00

SUPPLIES ▶

- 1 New empty paint can ▷ \$5.00 (home improvement store)
- 2 "Make-A-Lamp" kit (craft store) ▷ \$4.99
- 3 Spotlight bulb ▷ \$3.99

Green Light

- ▶ Remember — there's always a way to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Who would've thought that old paint cans and glass jars had any life left in them?
- ▶ Always turn the lights off when you leave a room.
- ▶ Replace old light bulbs with compact fluorescents.

TOOLS ▶

- 1 Standard power drill
- 2 Drill bits (1/8-inch, 3/8-inch, and 3/4-inch)
- 3 Ruler
- 4 Pencil
- 5 Hammer
- 6 Punch or sharp nail

STEPS ▶

1. Find the center of the paint can base. Using the ruler measure the diameter (across the widest point). With a pencil trace the line of the ruler across the top. Turn the can 90 degrees; measure and mark again. The center of the paint can base is where the two lines intersect to make an X.
2. Take the hammer and the punch (or sharp nail) to puncture a hole through the paint can base.
3. Using first the 1/8-inch, then the 3/8-inch, and lastly the 3/4-inch drill bits with the power drill, widen the punch hole on the can lid. The end result will be a 3/4-inch diameter hole.
4. Open the "Make-A-Lamp" kit and look over the diagram provided for knowledge of each piece. (Most kits come with how-to instructions.)
5. Thread the provided wire through the hole in the paint can base.
6. Make a knot two inches from the end of the cord.
7. Tie a second knot in the wire on the top of the hole outside of the paint can base.
8. Thread the wire through the socket cap and socket interior.
9. Place the blunt end of the cord through the quick snap hole. The ribbed side of the cord goes to the negative conductor of the socket.
10. Snap together, ensuring that you hear a "click" sound.
11. Place socket shell on top of snap-together socket and secure over socket cap.
12. Add a light bulb and hang.

HANG UPS ▼

1. Use a light cord to hang the paint can as a pendant.
2. Hang the paint can from its handle.
3. Hanging the paint can on an angle using the cord and the handle gives a spotlight effect.



Bright Ideas

- ▶ Some do-it-yourself lighting kits come with extra parts that allow you to make lamps out of different sized bottles or jars.
- ▶ Hang a cluster of mason jars for a "firefly in the jar" look using three little mason jars turned into pendant lamps.
- ▶ Following directions for the paint can spotlight, try different sized cans such as coffee cans or juice cans.



Mason Jar Lamp

▷ Under \$40.00

SUPPLIES ▶

- 1 Large mason jar or glass jar with lid
▷ \$10.00
- 2 “Make-A-Lamp” kit that includes an electrified candlestick and bottle adaptor (Must also have side entry for electrical cord.) ▷ \$6.99
- 3 1-inch nipple thread (home improvement store) ▷ \$2.99
- 4 8-inch, 2-piece detachable harp ▷ \$4.99
- 5 Decorative washer ▷ \$2.99
- 6 Lampshade ▷ \$10.00

TOOLS ▶

- 1 Standard power drill
- 2 Drill bits (1/8-inch, 3/8-inch, and 3/4-inch)
- 3 Ruler
- 4 Pencil
- 5 Small screwdriver
- 6 Hammer
- 7 Punch or sharp nail
- 8 Pliers

STEPS ▶

1. Find the center of the jar lid. Using the ruler, measure the diameter (across the widest point). With a pencil trace the line of the ruler across the top. Turn the jar 90 degrees; measure and mark again. The center of the lid is where the two lines intersect to make an X.



2. Take the hammer and the punch (or sharp nail) to puncture a hole in the top of the jar lid.
3. Using first the 1/8-inch, then the 3/8-inch, and lastly the 3/4-inch drill bits with the power drill, widen the punch hole on the jar lid. The end result will be a 3/4-inch diameter hole.
4. Open the “Make-A-Lamp” kit and look over the diagram provided for knowledge of each piece. (Most kits come with how-to instructions.)
5. Screw the thread nipple into the socket cap and tighten with a small screwdriver. → 
6. Thread the provided wire through the side hole of the socket cap and make a tie. → 
7. Using the small screwdriver, loosen the screws on the socket shell a little. Wrap each copper wire around the screw one time. Retighten the screws to secure the copper wire. ↓



8. Slide the socket shell over the interior of the socket.
9. Attach the harp for the lampshade and then the decorative washer. → 
10. Remove the jar lid to put the nipple thread through the jar lid hole going from the top to bottom.
11. On the underneath side of the jar lid,

screw on the nut from the kit and tighten with pliers.

12. Fill the jar with your choice of items and reattach the jar lid.
13. Add a light bulb and lampshade to complete the look.

GLOW CRAZY ▶

1. Fill up the jar with marbles, coins, rocks, dried flowers, or random knickknacks.
2. Add a different color light bulb to reflect off the jar or its contents.
3. Make your own lampshade to add an additional personal touch. □



MEGAN CICCOLINE WHITE is a freelance artist from Nashville, Tenn. She wants to give tons of thanks and love to her father Joe, who taught her how to “Do-it-Herself.”

Shady Business

Can't find the perfect lampshade? Make one yourself.

- ▶ Spruce up a blah lampshade you already have using coordinating trim and accessories. Simply adhere with a hot glue gun.
- ▶ Pick up a plain white lampshade, decorative paper, and decoupage glue. Cut out a variety of shapes and bond them to the inside or outside of the shade using the glue and a brush.
- ▶ Buy a pre-adhesive lampshade from the craft store. Each comes with a pattern to attach fabric of your choice. Choose coordinating trim and accessories to make it truly one of a kind.

Every one of you reading this article — *look out!* Because soon, very soon, the most *horrifying* monster menace ever conceived will be *oozing* onto the scene. It crawls. It creeps. It *eats you alive!*

The Horror of Holiday Guilt & How to Get Over It



© V E E R

By ANDE FANNING

NO, IT'S NOT THE BLOB, nor is it Grandma Ethel's infamous fruitcake. It's holiday guilt, and it's on its way — lingering in crowded shopping malls where all those gifts await purchase, lurking in hall closets with the unaddressed Christmas cards, sneaking into your bedroom at night ripping your peace of mind to shreds as you lie awake wondering how you're going to make it to five parties in one weekend. You feel trapped, with nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. Impending doom is closing in ... but wait! There's hope. You don't need fire extinguishers and a special military team to defeat the monster. Just follow these steps for survival.

Survey the Scene

Shopping for gifts, wrapping them, and then returning them — ugh! One trip to the mall is enough to send you screaming, let alone three or four. Then there's decorating, cooking, going to church programs, planning parties, attending parties, trying to figure out how to get out of parties. With all this and more, you and your calendar are bound to be

consumed in the holiday chaos unless you take serious action. Start by looking at the months of November and December differently. As with the rest of the year, there are 24 hours in every day, so think about using those hours wisely. Time management is key in keeping the guilt beast at bay.

You and your calendar are bound to be consumed in the holiday chaos unless you take serious action.

Plan the Attack

As illustrated in most monster movies, a strategy is essential when going head-to-head with a creepy creature. Granted, it usually goes awry when someone forgets to lock a door or look over his or her shoulder, but in this situation, a plan is foolproof.

The earlier you make and start your list of to-dos, the better chance you'll have of actually getting through the holiday season in one piece. Don't wait. Address Christmas cards now — in November — or create and send cards online with hallmark.com. And take care of any other details you can pre-Thanksgiving.

Physical Education teacher Erica Lynn begins her Christmas shopping in the summer and gives herself a November 1 deadline to finish. "If there's anyone left to shop for after that, I try to buy online to save the stress of fighting crowds at shopping centers," Lynn says. Amazon.com is one of her go-to sites because of the wish list feature.

Make a Stand

To protect priorities from being devoured by the season's stresses, make a decision to stick with them no matter what.

If spending time with family and friends is one of the most important things to you, then don't feel guilty about passing

on invites to random holiday gatherings such as a coworker's ornament swap. Just catch up with that crew in the New Year when things slow down a bit.

Be sure to make time for the things that you think are fun, like a movie night or a service opportunity at a local shelter, instead of doing stuff out of obligation. And don't forget downtime — a day or afternoon dedicated to nothing but rest, relaxation, and reflection.

Call for Backup

Even if you follow these survival tips to the letter, chances are gruesome guilt will be hard to defeat. Just when you think he's down for the count and the battle is won, he — in classic horror film style — rears that ugly head for another round. That's where the good guys come in to help save the day. In this case, those good guys are your best buds.

If you're hosting a party so you can see all your friends at once instead of going to 10 different parties (a great idea, BTW), then call in some reinforcements to help with the prep work. With several helping hands, you'll find that tasks are finished in no time at all, leaving you plenty of time to visit with guests instead of working around the clock and wishing you were hanging out.

Golf lover Jody Dodd likes to turn holiday tasks into an adventure with his best pals. "We start with a big breakfast and then see how quickly we can get all the gifts on our lists," Dodd shares. After a trip to the driving range and a quick stop for a tree, Dodd and his gang invite more friends over to decorate, eat, and watch whatever football game is on TV. "That way," he says, "I get to do things I like and still knock out all the other stuff in one fell swoop."

As inevitable as Aunt Sally's sequined Christmas sweater at the family dinner on Christmas Eve, holiday guilt will be out to get you this season. So be ready. Make time your ally, not your enemy; instead of letting all the things you're not doing get the best of you, focus on the things you want to do and do them well.

Above all remember the reason for the season — Jesus — who, incidentally, is bigger than the Boogiemani, the Blob, and even grimy gross holiday guilt. □

10 Stress Busters

Don't let busy-worry-scurry buildup haunt your holidays. Try these ideas to banish burdens and keep everything holly and jolly.

- ▶ Watch a funny movie.
- ▶ Don't go into debt to buy gifts. Set aside a certain amount of cash — that won't break the bank — and shop creatively to make it cover all the folks on your list.
- ▶ Keep a level of normalcy. If you work out five times a week, cut back to three so you'll have time for Christmas preparations while still maintaining most of your typical routine.
- ▶ Have a snowball fight. If it doesn't snow where you live, there's always mud.
- ▶ Don't get caught up in calories. If you (like most people) tend to overdo it on all that delicious, homemade holiday food, try to practice moderation with portions instead of denying yourself completely. The season is much tastier and enjoyable that way.
- ▶ Do something nice for someone else — even a complete stranger — to help keep things in perspective.
- ▶ Get out the board games and enjoy old-fashioned fun.
- ▶ Dedicate a night to celebrating the Christmas spirit. Read from the Gospels, sing a few carols, and light an advent candle.
- ▶ Make a snow angel, take a picture, and remind yourself that you're never too old to be a child at heart.
- ▶ Laugh. A lot. As much as possible. And share it with others.

A writer/editor in Birmingham, Ala., ANDE FANNING has battled holiday guilt a number of times. She wishes a call to the Ghost Busters would rid the world of it forever, but realizes Bill Murray has long given up that role. Fortunately, she enjoys a challenge and does her best to make sure the season stays merry and bright.

Twitter Bug

What are you doing?

It's the latest craze in social networking. A *twitter* is a free status update alerting others to what you're doing at the moment. It's like instant messaging meets texting meets the blogosphere. *Watching "Lost," Sitting in a car wash, or Running late to a meeting* — all twitter-worthy. After creating an account, you can "follow" friends and let them "follow" you (aka read your updates). Submit and receive *twitters* via cell phone, IM, or from *twitter.com*. Sick of hearing about your buddy's boring business trip? Turn Twitter off and on throughout the day. Messages can't exceed 140 characters, so you'll



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never have to read any twitter novels. OK maybe it's a little stalkerish, but the whole point is to connect with friends and let them into your world. Visit *twitter.com* to learn more and see which of your friends are already twittering.

— J.McCaman

Dating Moment

Espresso Yourself

Mastering the coffee date

COFFEE MAKES A GREAT FIRST DATE. You can meet at the café, drink on the cheap, and bolt quickly if it doesn't work out. On the flip side, you don't get very much time to make the all-important first impression. Use these tips to make sure your first latte date becomes grounds for a second:

KEEP IT CASUAL ▶ Meeting for a cup of joe is more laid back than a dinner date, so try not to look like you're at a job interview. Just wear jeans and a nice shirt.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT CAFÉ ▶ Head to an independent coffee shop rather than a chain. Check the schedule for live entertainment such as bands or poetry readings for a more memorable experience.

ORDER YOUR USUAL ▶ If your drink takes 20 words to order, that's OK. Make a joke out of it, and tip the barista a little extra for getting it right.

GET YOUR JOE TO GO ▶ If the café is overly crowded, don't freak. Take a walk outside. If it's too cold to stroll, have fun leaning and chatting until a table opens up.

LET HIM TAKE THE TAB ▶ It might sound old school, but guys should foot the java bill. Gentlemen: Be smooth. Insist your date take a seat while you pay and wait for her beverage.

STAY FOCUSED ▶ Coffee shops attract activity, but be sure to keep your eyes on your date. Sit in a corner to lower distractions, and turn off your phone (this includes texts).

ASK FOR SECONDS ▶ If things go well with coffee, suggest splitting a cookie or bagel. If you're still hitting it off, go ahead and plan your next date. — J.McCaman



COFFEE TALKS: What your java says about you.

Instant: You know what you like and stick to it.

Whole bean: You take your time and notice detail.

Black: You have a strong, creative side. You're honest and like a challenge.

With cream: You're a social coffee drinker who prefers coffee with friends.

IN THE NEWS

Car & Driver

What your wheels seem to say about you

LISTEN UP, GUYS. Your ride may be saying more about you than you think. According to *leasetrader.com* and dat-

ing coach DeAnna Lorraine, a dude's vehicle sends messages about his character that ladies immediately pick up on. "A man's car reveals a lot about his personality and values, and may determine a woman's attraction toward him," Lorraine says. So what do your wheels say about you? After analyzing LeaseTrader's five most popular rides, Lorraine created a profile to represent each vehicle's personality traits. Here's what she determined: Chevy Suburban drivers like travel, adventure, and hanging out with friends and family. Men scooting around in Mercedes S-Classes are classy, successful, stylish, and "sugar daddies." Guys who drive Ford F-150s tend to be insecure and overcompensate on a tough, macho level. Corvette men are conservative but are trying to satisfy a mid-life crisis by displaying their wild side through a car. And those tooling around in Toyota Camrys are solid, reliable, and committed. While this wasn't a study of the scientific variety, Ms. Lorraine may be on to something. And, if not, at least it's good fodder for your next date. — N.M.





▷ With Dr. Cloud

Dr. Henry Cloud is a clinical psychologist and the cofounder of Cloud-Townsend Communications in Southern California (cloudtownsend.com). His latest books include *9 Things a Leader Must Do*, *How to Get a Date Worth Keeping*, and *It's Not My Fault: The No-Excuse Plan to Put You in Charge of Your Life*.

Dark Thoughts

Q: I have struggled with thoughts of suicide for the past few years. While it's not something I wake up to every day, the thoughts do resurface at times. I know life is a gift from God, but He also has heaven waiting on us after death. What is wrong with wanting to jump ahead to that and skip all of this mess on earth?

A: My heart truly goes out to you. Suicidal thoughts indicate that you are experiencing significant depression or other kinds of emotional distress, and I feel for you as you are going through that.

First and foremost, there is help. Suicidal thoughts, depression, and other kinds of emotional struggles can be treated and healed. They are symptoms that something is wrong, and whatever is wrong can be treated. I have worked with people who are suicidal for over 20 years and can honestly tell you that after getting help, many successfully find happy and fulfilling lives.

Begin by getting a referral to a professional psychiatrist for a medical evaluation. Your pastor might know of someone, but if not, ask your doctor. Sometimes the kinds of depression that generate suicidal thoughts are biological in nature and require medication to restore biology to a normal place. This can be life-saving, so start here.

The next step is seeking counseling with a professional who has dealt with this kind of pain before. A reliable, experienced Christian psychologist will help you get to the root of what is making you feel this way.

In addition, make sure that you are fully connected to a solid spiritual community with close friends who can walk through this with you. Your tendency may be to isolate yourself when you are experiencing these feelings, and that is not good. You need a community to heal. See if your church or one nearby has support groups for people who are hurting.

There are lots of reasons you shouldn't skip life on earth. The Bible talks about the importance of perseverance many times.



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There is joy-filled life on the other side of depression.

As you persevere, God will heal you and continue to direct your life. You are here for a reason, and He has promised to complete His plan through you. God gave us life and only He can decide when to take us home. Until then, it's our job to discover what He wants us to do and how he wants us to grow.

God bless you as you seek help. And please know that there is joy-filled life on the other side of depression.

Editor's note: For some help in understanding some of the roots of emotional pain and guidance in faith, check out Dr. Cloud's *The Secret Things of God*.

Girlfriends Interrupted

Q: I just ended a long-term dating relationship. While I was going out with my boyfriend, I spent all my time with him and neglected my girlfriends. Now that the relationship is over and I want to spend time with my girlfriends, I'm getting the cold shoulder. How can I make this up to them and do a better job of balancing dating and spending time with friends?

A: Begin by honestly apologizing to these women. Reach out to them and tell them that you realize you ignored them and allowed yourself to get "kidnapped" by your dating relationship. Admit that you did not honor your friendships with them, and let them know that you realize this was wrong and not healthy. Explain to your friends that you want to make the situation right, and ask them how you can do that.

To keep from finding yourself in this position again, think about why you allowed yourself to drop out of the rest of your life. This behavior typically happens for a reason. When a person is dating someone and the rest of his or her life disappears, that's usually not a good sign about the person or the person he or she is dating. Healthy people are not dependent in their dating relationships to the point that they lose the rest of their lives. So when that happens, it's an indication that something deeper is wrong.

You could have been too dependent, or your ex-boyfriend could have been so self-centered that he wanted you to give up other aspects of your life for him. Guys who will not integrate into your life are usually a concern.

So take some time to figure out why you entered the "lose your life for a guy" syndrome, and fix it before you get into that situation again. What was it that drove you to pick him out of all the other guys out there?

Figure that out for the sake of your next relationship, and for the sake of maintaining your friendships.

Editor's note: For more information on this topic, check out Dr. Cloud's *How to Get a Date Worth Keeping*.

Got a question for Dr. Cloud? Send it to CS Editor, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0175 or e-mail it to christiansingle@lifeway.com. You will not be identified.

HOPSCOTCH METHOD



HAVE FUN GETTING A WORKOUT

Ever notice how much laughter is involved with kids playing tag or Duck, Duck, Goose? Those youngsters know a thing or two about having a good time, so follow their example by letting your heart be free — you might be surprised by how quickly it burns calories and helps you stay in shape.

AVERAGE CALORIES BURNED PER HOUR

Bowling: 204
 Rollerskating: 476
 Hopscotch: 340
 Frisbee: 204
 Ultimate Frisbee: 544
 Croquet: 170
 Wall Darts: 170
 Kickball: 476
 Information from calorie-count.com.

Don't forget to include your friends in the fun. Invite the gang over for a game of Red Rover or Capture the Flag, and revel in the joy of reliving those carefree childhood days. Even a game of Twister or tennis on the Nintendo Wii helps melt away a few calories. Plus it's a perfect way to make sure you've included plenty of playtime in your daily routine. — A.F.

Stay in touch

[KEEPING UP]

YOU'VE GOT A LOT GOING ON, IT'S TRUE. You may even be kind of a big deal (we'll let someone else be the judge of that). But if you're too busy to keep in touch with people you care about, then you either need to do some serious life evaluating or take advantage of these ways to use technology to your relationship advantage.

▶ **Instant Convo.** Mom's on AIM, your former college roommate uses Google Talk, and Grandpa's got Jabber. There's no need to join all three to stay in touch. **Meebo.com** lets you chat it up with all of them. The Web-based system grants you access to all your online peeps on major IM networks with one easy log-on.

▶ **Branch Out.** Build a virtual family tree with your loved ones at **Geni.com**. In addition to info that updates the past, you can add present photos, mark events on a timeline, and celebrate birthdays that will become part of your family's history. And since members join through invitation only, it's private.

▶ **Connect One.** You finally joined Facebook. Then there's LinkedIn to keep your career networked. And you feel like you were there when you click on your friends' photo updates at Flickr. Now **SocialThing.com** puts all your news feeds in one place to help you organize your social life. It's like an aggregator for your relationships — so you can focus your time on staying connected in real life.

▶ **All in the Family.** **MyFamily.com** is a free, private site for sharing photo narratives, videos, and stories with the whole fam. Keep long distance relatives in the loop through "voice news" or discussions. Or create a virtual family by making a site for a group of friends or coworkers or anyone else you jolly well please.

▶ **Take Note.** Let's be real. Most of us are too busy to blog even if we still like the idea. If you want to let people know what's up but don't have time to craft clever entries, a tumblelog might be just your speed. Sites like **Tumblr.com**, **Twimble.com**, and **Soup.io** let you post a couple of sentences, a link, or a single photo in a few seconds. — B.C.L.



VID KIDS

Need something fun to do with the kiddos in your life? YouTube is a great place if you want to find videos of the darndest things kids say, but it isn't the greatest place for, say, your niece or nephew or your own child to hang out online. So the maker of Totlol.com has come up with his own user-generated video site.

A Canadian software developer and dad of two created the idea with clips safe enough for kids ages six months to six years. Some are posted to make tots LOL, while others sing lullabies from around the world or even tell Bible stories in cartoon form. Sure the online entertainment is for kids, but watch with them. You'll find yourself laughing along and recalling your favorite Sesame Street moments.

BE KIND REWIND

A throwback to nice behavior



Remember the old days of renting VHS tapes and their prominently-placed "be kind rewind" labels? Back then, the simple gesture of rewinding was the golden rule of video renting. The rewinding rule is no longer relevant — but kindness still is. World

Kindness Day is November 13th. Celebrate by remembering that kindness is often found in the little things, like opening a door for a stranger or saying a nice word to a friend. — Kristin J. Martin

It's All Gravy

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS OF THANKSGIVING

Impress your fellow diners this Thanksgiving with some Turkey Day trivia.



● **Original 1621 Thanksgiving Cuisine**
 Popcorn, ham, sweet potatoes, and pumpkin pie were not at the first Thanksgiving meal. Indian corn can only be half-popped and was just good for making cornmeal.



● **Cranberries Galore**
 690 million pounds of cranberries will be consumed by Americans this Turkey Day. Wisconsin will produce around 390 million pounds of those sweet and sour treats.



● **Toms on the Loose**
 A turkey can run 20 miles per hour. Ben Franklin named the male turkey "Tom" after Thomas Jefferson refused to let the fowl become America's national bird. — K.M.

Friends for all Seasons

Who helps you weather the storms of life?

BY LINDSAY WILLIAMS

Life is quite the revolving door. We're constantly caught in the motion of a spinning wheel, never knowing who will pass through our lives at any given moment and never expecting anyone to leave.

But very few friends are meant to be "life-long" fixtures, and I think that's the way God intended it. He brings people in and out of our lives to give us just what we need at just the right time.

During my senior year of college, Hurricane Ivan took its toll on the south. I was four hours away from home, and it was safer for me to stay on campus than risk being stranded on the highway. So I put some batteries in my flashlight and went to find others who were also waiting it out. Fortunately two girls who lived upstairs — Rachel and Mary Beth — were staying as well.

God brings people in and out of our lives to give us just what we need at just the right time.

When the horrific winds knocked the power out, we decided to take inventory of the food we had between us: peanut butter, stale bread, chips, salsa, and some rice cakes (i.e. poor college kid food).

When peanut butter no longer satisfied, we donned our rain gear and headed into the elements. The cafeteria across campus had food, and vans were coming by every so often to drive students there.

When we arrived at the cafe, we found wet floors, pathetic looking students, and hustling cafeteria workers. The generators weren't working, and students were guided to collect all of the perishable items. We filled several to-go boxes, and then waited for quite some time for the vans to return. But they never came, so Rachel, Mary Beth, and I decided to take our chances.



© VINCENT BESNAULT / GETTY IMAGES

We ran at lightning speed, trying not to spill our precious cargo. The rain was coming down in sheets, making it hard to see. We waded through water that quickly soaked our jeans. It was an exercise in hopscotch as we trudged through muddy water and hurdled fallen limbs.

By the time we made it back to our dorm, we were drenched. After changing into fresh clothes, we resumed our "party," digging into our cafeteria treasures. With our stomachs full, we turned on my flashlight and the radio to hear the weather report and broke out a deck of cards. Somewhere around the 100th game of Rook, we were spent; yet the storm still raged, and it was growing darker.

As night fell we huddled on my bed and talked and laughed until we were delirious. Sometime after we dosed off, the power came back on and the rains ceased. The three of us had spent 36 hours with no power, no air, and little food. But it was one of the most memorable times of our college careers.

The three of us had a special bond from that point on. God used a storm to cull out a beautiful friendship. Today we live in three different states, but when we talk on the phone, one of us always mentions Hurricane Ivan and the fun that we shared during those 36 hours.

It's remarkable how many people, like Rachel and Mary Beth, have passed through my life — their journeys colliding with mine at intersections of life, love, faith, and decision, if only for the briefest of moments. May God keep turning the wheel and coloring my life with those special gifts of friendship.

Lindsay Williams is a Web editor residing in Nashville, Tenn. She loves watching old episodes of "Get Smart," eating plain M&Ms, and spending time with her fabulous friends.

WHAT'S YOUR VANTAGE POINT? If you'd like to share your first-person insights on how faith and life intersect, let us know at christiansingle@lifeway.com.

▶ **THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT**

If your children get tired of drawing or coloring on your road trip, help them tap into a more creative side.

▷ Stock up on the usual crayons and markers, but also offer them a supply of holiday stickers, stencils, and stamps. They can make holiday gift tags and Thanksgiving or Christmas cards for the family members they're about to see.

▷ Visit familyfun.com to print free activities with a road-trip theme like mazes, word scrambles, and puzzles. The site even has state-specific printable activities like "California's Big Tree Country" and "Florida's Everglades." As your children play and color, they can learn more about their destination.

▷ Bring along a bag of linking cubes or large building blocks and encourage your kids to build something they've seen during the trip, like a bridge or sky scraper.

▷ Remember, it's best not to give out all the toys and art supplies at once. Hand out a few items each hour or half hour so that the kids have something "new" to look forward to.

Are We There Yet?

Making the most of holiday travel with your kids

Family trips really *can* be fun and festive



© STOCK4B / GETTY IMAGES

BY SANDY SIRATT

"Are we there yet?" Ah, the dreaded words you hear from the backseat as a road sign reminds you that your destination is still hundreds of miles away. To kids, traveling even a short distance can seem like days or weeks. But traveling with your children during the holidays should be part of the joy and celebration, not a tiring event that puts you into survival mode. A little preparation can ensure that you and your children look forward to time on the road and look back on fond memories.

▶ **Fast Food**

Depending on your route, healthy roadside restaurants could be few and far between, so stock up on wholesome snacks and drinks before hitting the road. Load a small cooler with ice, juice boxes, and water bottles. And fill another cooler with fresh fruit, raisins, crackers, and sandwiches. The kids can easily reach in and grab a bite when they get hungry.

Don't forget to include a special snack just right for the holidays like sweet potato chips for Thanksgiving or gingerbread cookies for Christmas. Also check out roadtripamerica.com to find advice and recipes for road-friendly, kid-friendly fare.

Q&A

With Shawn R. Lilly



Fear Not

QUESTION: My 7 and 10 year olds lost one parent to a car accident, and they often worry I will disappear too. How can I help them feel secure?

ANSWER: Losing a parent to death is one of the most earth-shattering things that can happen to a child. Children depend on their parents to provide stability and security. When death suddenly removes one of them, nothing seems certain anymore.

The surviving parent may be consumed with his or her own grief and the reality of life as a single parent. A stay-at-home parent may need to seek employment, or a working parent may need to work extra to make ends meet. Child care arrangements will probably be altered. All of this compounds the grief that the children are already experiencing.

The most important thing to do is to sit down with your children and take inventory of the changes you need to make as a family — like seeking a new home, changing child care arrangements, and changing the normal routine.

Children should also be assured of the things that will remain the same, such as staying in the same school, attending the same church, or maintaining extra curricular activities. Talking about these things can help your children know what to expect and lessen the fear of an unknown future.

Some regressive behavior is normal after a significant loss. Children may appear less mature emotionally than they did previously. Some children will want to cling to the remaining parent to ensure that they don't lose them too. When you recognize this conduct as symptoms of their fear, talk with your children and help them find behaviors that are productive rather than destructive.

Talk with your kids about feeling afraid, share verses about God's protection, and pray with and for them. Remind them that God will be with them even when you are apart from them. Be a person of your word, even in the little things. Small demonstrations of your faithfulness will help your children believe you in the bigger things and eventually help them rebuild faith in the God they cannot see.

Shawn R. Lilly, LPC, MHSP, is a professional counselor at the Babb Center in Hendersonville, Tenn.

► The Comforts of Home

Single mom Amber McNeil of Texarkana, Texas says her biggest challenge with travel is making sure her 10-year-old daughter Madison is content during long trips. "We travel to Austin, Texas to visit my sister and her family," she explains. "I have to make sure Madison has things to do."

McNeil creates a cozy atmosphere in the back seat with Madison's favorite blanket, pillow, and stuffed animal. She also brings along paper, pens, and crayons.

"I make sure [Madison] has her MP3 player so that she can enjoy her Hannah Montana tunes while I listen to my own choice of music," McNeil adds. She also suggests playing games like "The License Plate Game" and seeing how many different states you can spot.

projects during nighttime travel. To order, visit shop.avon.com, locate the children's area, and then click on "entertainment."

► On the Side

McNeil tries to make family trips with Madison memorable by stopping along the way to visit friends and relatives, and they always make time for one of their favorite things — shopping.

Before leaving home, scan a map for places you may want to visit on your way. Contact the chamber of commerce for cities you will drive through to find out about upcoming events or tourist attractions — museums, historical markers, gardens, parks, festivals, and parades. Planning for special stops can help break up the driving for you and be educational for your children.

► Fly Away Home

If your holiday gathering is located far from home, flying could be a must or just a more comfortable choice.

Priscilla Elliott, a former flight attendant, says parents should take time to prepare before taking off in a plane. "You never know what the weather will be or how much turbulence there will be in the air. Never feed your children a heavy meal before flying because it could make them airsick. Always take a few saltine crackers along too, to help settle their stomachs," she advises.

Elliott also suggests bringing an MP3 player and headphones for your children so they can listen to audio books during the flight. "Children really have to use their imaginations while listening to the story," Elliott says. Some audio books that will get your children into the holiday spirit are *Thanks for Thanksgiving* by Julie Markes and *Arthur's Christmas Cookies* by Lillian Hoban.

Make your traveling experience the start of your holiday celebration this year. Use the time to build excitement about all you plan to do when you arrive at your destination. And those long hours on the road or in the air can also be the perfect opportunity to discuss what the holidays are really all about.

Sandy Siratt is a teacher and freelance writer in Texarkana, Texas. She and her husband, Josh, enjoy road trips with their travel buddies, Sydney Grace, 4, and Annie Beth, who is almost 2.

Traveling with your children during the holidays should be part of the joy and celebration.

If you have more than one child traveling with you, they can play games together, but traditional board games or puzzles with lots of pieces can get too cumbersome for the car. Magnetic games and puzzles can withstand the bumpiest of roads. Purchase a variety at orientaltrading.com or learn how to make your own using magnets and a metal lunch box at kaboose.com.

► Keeping Up Appearances

When the car doubles as a kitchen, dining room, and play room it can quickly get messy. Never leave home without road-trip cleaning supplies: a handheld vacuum, grocery bags for collecting trash, hand sanitizer, and Clorox wipes — good for cleaning almost anything.

Organizers that hang over the back of the seat are perfect for keeping toys, art supplies, books, and other gear at arm's reach. Avon has a "Light & Write Car Organizer" that includes a small foldout desk with a dry-erase board as its surface and a night-light so your kids can continue reading or finish their art

THANK YOU Very Much

The Power of Gratitude

G.K. Chesterton once said, “I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought, and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.” Expressing gratitude by saying “thank you” is a profound and simple act, but has it become a forgotten art?

With Thanksgiving around the corner, it seems appropriate to reflect on all the things we are thankful for. But those thoughts can often be fleeting as we become consumed with holiday travel plans and look forward to a meal of turkey topped off with pumpkin pie, followed by the tryptophan sleepiness that will render us replete before the football game of the day.

So before you start scheduling your trip and making a mental list of all of the things you're thankful for, let's first examine the source of our thankfulness. We're reminded in Scripture again and again about God's goodness: “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His

faithful love endures forever” (Psalm 107:1). “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

When we are truly grateful for God's power at work in us and God's gift of life, we cannot contain this joy. From this thankfulness comes an outpouring of gratitude that is contagious, infectious, and life-giving to those around us.

In an online *Christianity Today* interview on his book *Ruthless Trust*, Brennan Manning said, “When somebody is aware of [God's] love, the same love that the Father has for Jesus, that person is just spontaneously grateful. Cries of thankfulness become the dominant characteristic of the interior life, and the

By
MARLENE
BAER



© TOM GRILL / CORBIS

by-product of gratitude is joy. We're not joyful and then become grateful; we're grateful and that makes us joyful."

This joy, an outgrowth of our gratitude, also inspires us to act and to utter, in word or in deed, two very powerful words — thank you. Knowing exactly how to express those two words can be unique to each situation and to each person. Perhaps you've wondered how to best give thanks when more than words are necessary. In the spirit of Thanksgiving, express to your friends, family, roommate, coworkers, and mentors just how much they mean to you.

When somebody is aware of [God's] love, the same love that the Father has for Jesus, that person is just spontaneously grateful.

— *Brennan Manning*

It's All About Love



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IN HIS BOOK *The Five Love Languages for Singles*, Gary Chapman shares that we express our love and appreciation for others in the way we like to have love shown to us. Different personalities show love in different ways through five specific love languages: quality time, words of affirmation, acts of service, gifts, and physical touch. Learning someone's love language is a unique lens for conveying gratitude.

"If we know a person's primary love language, then whatever the relationship, we will be more effective communicators of our thankfulness," Chapman says. "After all, what we want the person to know is that we are grateful for what they have done or said. Expressing love and appreciation in the primary language of the person will communicate more deeply."

While giving a wrapped gift or a physical pat on the back are often our default expressions of thanks, move beyond autopilot by considering some of these ideas.

Now That's Quality

Rather than giving a store-bought present to show gratitude, offer the gift of your time. Quality time can be expressed in a conversation over

a cup of coffee, where you really take time to listen and dig beneath the surface. Thankfulness can also be conveyed through time spent enjoying an activity together. "The emphasis is not on what you are doing but on why you are doing it," Chapman says. And sometimes that means doing things that you don't necessarily enjoy.

Krista, 35, of Santa Barbara, Calif., has learned that the gift of time is the perfect way to express thanks to her mom. "When I've promised to spend the day with my mom and help her with computer issues, she feels blessed," Krista shares. "I also have to promise that I'll be patient, because patience is *not* one of my gifts!"

Say It With Words

Showing appreciation for someone can also be expressed through words of affirmation and encouragement. Whether written in a card or expressed verbally, the dialect of affirmation has the power to restore and deepen any relationship.

Before John, 31, from Morgan Hill, Calif., was diagnosed with cancer, he would often bring smiles and laughter to his friends. "When I was going through chemotherapy and really struggling, I had 'fairies' come by my house and decorate my driveway with Bible verses, drawings, and special quotes that made me smile and laugh. It seems they wanted to return the favor."

John's friends articulated their gratitude for his friendship in such a tangible way that John's neighbors were even able to witness God's love in action.

Serve It Up

Do you have the gift of hospitality? Do you like to cook or fix things? Are you a lean, mean cleaning and organizing machine? Rather than mailing a thank-you card, consider expressing your gratitude for others through an act of service, utilizing your own special gifts.

To thank his friends for always opening up their bachelor pad for dinners and social functions, Carl, 36, from Silicon Valley, Calif., decided to surprise his compadres by fixing up their neglected bachelor bathroom. He bought new towels and a shower curtain and scrubbed down the entire lavatory to a "Mr. Clean" shine.

Adah, 40, of Mountain View, Calif., thanked a mentor couple in her church community group by surprising them with breakfast and fresh flowers when they returned from a long vacation, knowing they'd be too exhausted to go to the store after their long flight.

Whether you show your gratitude through a hug, a gift, quality time, encouraging words, or service, learning someone's primary love language is an incredible way to say "thanks."

Many Thanks

NOW THAT YOU'RE thinking of all those people you wish to thank, here are additional ways to show appreciation. And anytime you say "thanks," be sure to tell that person specifically what it is you appreciate about him or her.

Practically Grateful

- Take a surprise dinner to a friend who helped you through a tough time.
- Give an after-the-party survival kit (stain remover, paper towels, and a gift certificate for a pedicure) to a party-hosting friend.
- Do something unexpected for your roommate, like washing his or her car.
- Write a letter of appreciation to a former teacher who influenced your life.
- Place an unexpected phone call to your grandparents, parents, or a mentor and thank them for how they've impacted you.
- In a friend's name, sponsor a well where clean water is scarce, or donate to his or her favorite charity.

"When we show thankfulness to those we meet each day at the cleaners, grocery store, or at our job, we are extending blessings into their lives." — *Carole Lewis*

- Volunteer to serve a meal at a homeless shelter, or provide a Thanksgiving grocery gift bag with all the traditional eats for a family in need. Consider making this a church community outreach effort by coordinating with your local Salvation Army or transition house.

Originally Appreciative

- Arrange a bouquet of flowers, attach a note of thanks, and leave it on a friend's doorstep to greet him or her after work.
- Inscribe a favorite or meaningful book for a mentor or helpful coworker.
- Host an appreciation party and invite all the significant people in your life to one

special event. Write a note of appreciation to each friend, or honor each guest with public words of thanks.

- Create a book of thankfulness for your parents, pastor, or friend. Have different people write notes of personal thanks for how that person impacted their lives.
- Frame a collage of verses that remind you of the person you want to thank.
- Get to work early and leave a piece of candy, some fruit, or a flower at every desk with personal notes of appreciation.
- Send a hand-written thank-you note on your own hand-crafted card.

On the Big Day

BEFORE YOU START feasting on sweet potato casserole, here are some unique ways to share your gratitude on Thanksgiving day and start new thankful traditions.

- Express your thanks through decorations. Make napkin rings or place cards, writing down each guest's name and why you're thankful for him or her.
- Create a family Thanksgiving album of your favorite pictures throughout the year. Reflecting on your memories from trips or time with friends is a great way to count the blessings of life. Have everyone write something they're thankful for alongside the pics. Bring out the album each Thanksgiving and continue the tradition.
- As a way of saying thanks by paying it forward, organize your own food drive by asking guests coming to Thanksgiving dinner to bring along a canned food item to donate to a local food pantry.
- Put everyone's name into a bowl, and draw names before dinner. Afterwards, share why you're thankful for the person whose name you drew and what quality in him or her you admire most.
- Show thanks for the chef and hosts by taking charge of clean-up duty.
- In Joshua 4:2-7, Joshua created a monument of thankfulness for his children to see for ages to come. In the same symbolic way, pass out smooth stones and a sharpie to everyone and have them write down a word, symbol, or phrase on the stone (along with their initials) to signify what they are most thankful for. Place the stones

Making the Thanks Fit the Favor

Wonder what the etiquette experts have to say about how to say thanks for specific favors? RealSimple.com has surveyed the experts and gracious gift-givers regarding 20 common and confusing situations that mandate thank-yous. From good deeds such as watching your pet while you're on vacation to family friends hosting you for a night at their home, the site offers creative suggestions that will strike the right note of showing your appreciation.

At a Loss for Words?

Sometimes it's hard to get past the first two words in a thank-you card and to put your gratefulness into a meaningful expression. If you're suffering from writer's block, my-thank-you-site.com has ready-to-use verses, quotes, and poems to help you jump start your outpouring of thankfulness to coworkers, family, and friends in a plethora of ways.

- in a basket to bring out each year, adding more to the collection.
- Through prayer, thank God for His many attributes — Creator, Healer, Sustainer, Provider, Comforter, Savior, Holy One.

Carole Lewis, author of *A Thankful Heart*, says, "When we show thankfulness to those we meet each day at the cleaners, grocery store, or at our job, we are extending blessings into their lives. God tells us in Mark 12:30 that the greatest commandment is to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. He says that the second greatest commandment is that we love our neighbor as our self. We show love to God by loving others."

This simple act of showing love to others by saying "thank you," no matter how you choose to say those two important words, is a contagious act that will change your heart in the process. ❤️

Now that she lives in the city of San Francisco, MARLENE BAER is thankful for public transportation, coffee shops on every corner, and Google Maps. She also thinks her family and friends are pretty great. Baer writes a column for conversantlife.com.

United We Stand

Matt Maher is crossing lines that were drawn long before his time. Lines that — in his opinion — must be crossed, because to stay within the boundaries of a denomination is to miss the point. And for Matt, the point is lifting high the name of Jesus. So how does this Catholic Christ-follower do it? One musical note at a time.

Growing up in Newfoundland, a Canadian province rich in music, Matt was exposed to everything from Sinatra tunes that drifted through the air while his father cooked dinner to classic rock his cousins blared to folk music he heard on weekends. “You’d go to someone’s house to hang out and someone would break out the guitar or piano and it turned into a sing-a-long,” Matt recalls. Even summer Saturdays revolved around Casey Kasem’s American Top 40.

Music was always a part of everything Matt did, and he knew early on that he’d spend his life chasing melodies. He pursued music throughout high school and later auditioned for music school with the intention of becoming a film scorer.

One might assume that audition launched the career Matt embraces today as a recording artist, worship leader, and Grammy-nominated songwriter. But that’s not the case. While Matt had it together musically, his spiritual life started a little off-course.

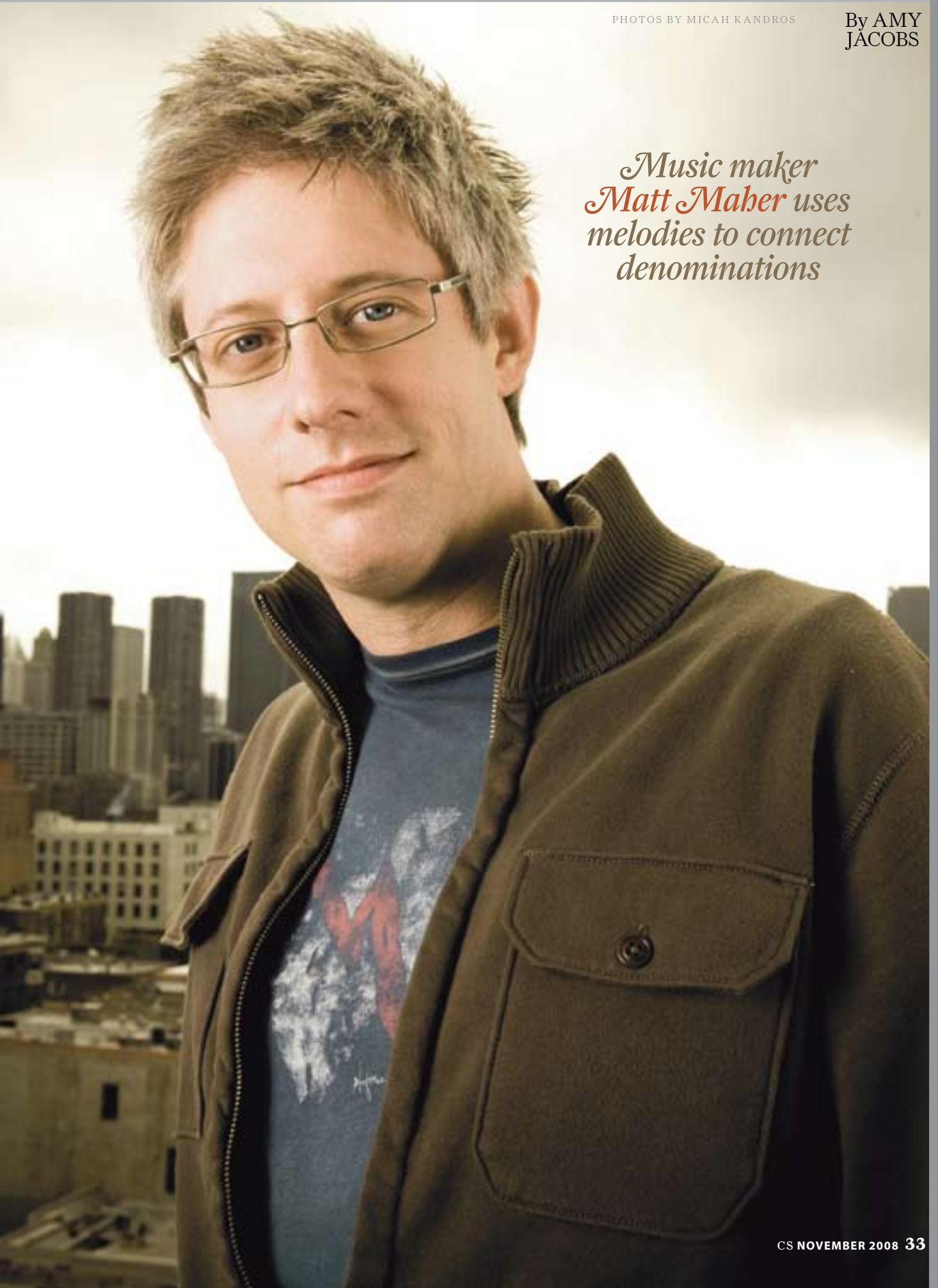
Having grown up in what he describes as a Judeo-Christian society, Matt had an understanding of God. But at age 20 he found himself in a difficult season, desperate for something new.

“My parents’ divorce was the final straw,” he shares. “I wanted to start over.” Matt’s mother returned to the states and Matt followed. “The day after I moved to Arizona my cousin invited me to church. And that’s where the massive love of God rescued me.”

PHOTOS BY MICAH KANDROS

By AMY
JACOBS

*Music maker
Matt Maher uses
melodies to connect
denominations*



THE RIGHT TRACK

Unbeknownst to Matt, he was on a fast-track to ministry. “I moved in July, gave my heart to Christ in August, and by the end of August our youth pastor took me out for lunch and asked me to help lead worship.”

But Matt still grappled with God’s unconditional love. “For the rest of my 20s, I constantly second-guessed the love of God. And His constant answer to my ‘What about this?’ was ‘I just love.’ It took me several years to work through [the truth that] God doesn’t stop loving you ever, ever, ever. His love and mercy are free. And that’s hard to believe,” Matt confesses.

In a fallen world, it’s difficult to trust that anything is really free — there always seems to be a string attached. And that may be the greatest misunderstanding about God’s love.

“The misconception is that you have to earn [God’s love] by accomplishing a set of tasks,” Matt shares. “In a world that encourages the individual to be driven, it’s easy to think of our faith with the same concepts — that the more driven we are, the more favored or loved we’ll be. ... Our lives as believers, as Christians, are to be lives lived in love of God, not [in] pursuit of God’s love.”

LIVE AND LEARN

As Matt’s path continued to unfold and his spiritual life continued to grow and flourish, he entered music school at Arizona State University — this time to study jazz piano.

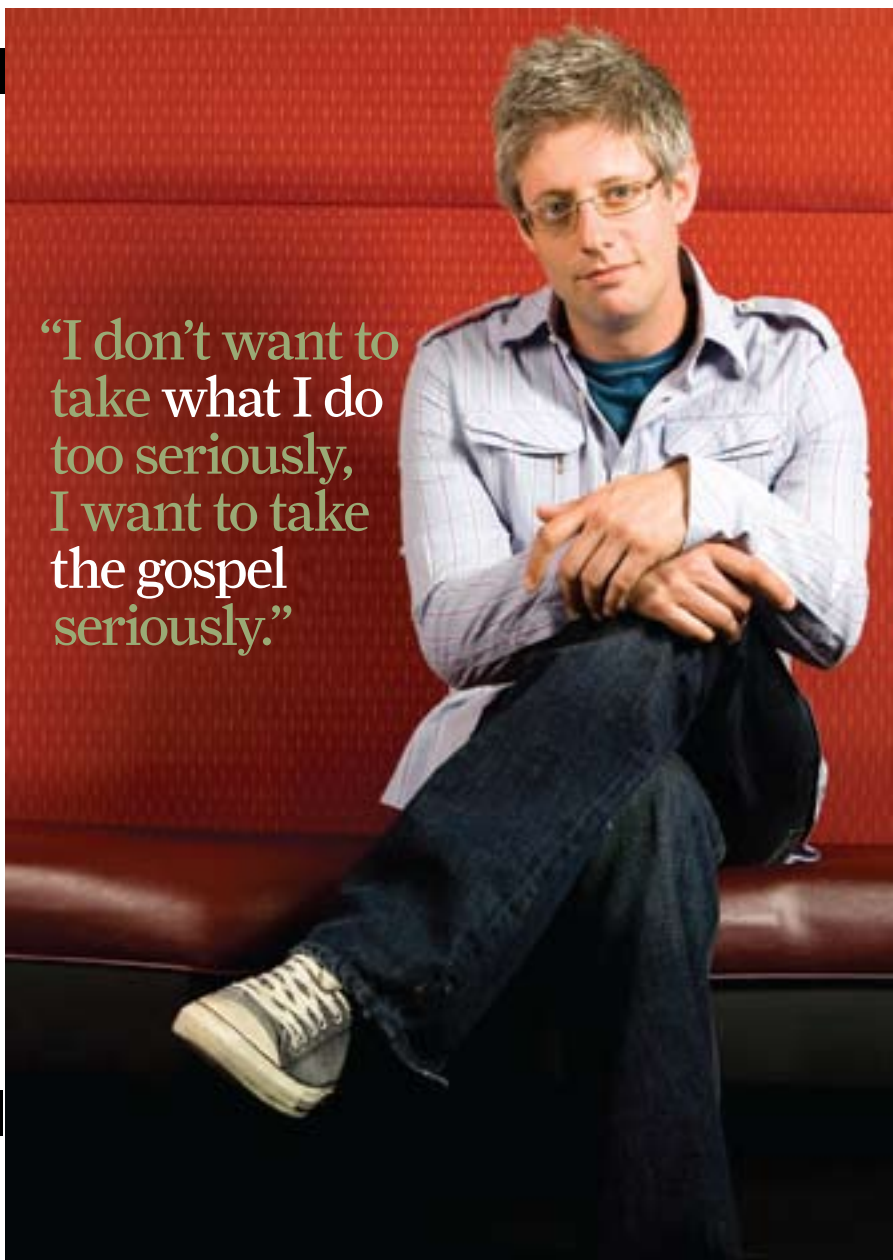
“In my last year of college I heard the songs of Delirious? and songwriters like Paul Baloche and Darrell Evans, as well as songs from the Passion movement. This stuff blew me away,” he remembers. “It was in those simple expressions that I realized my desire to do the same thing.”

But school wasn’t all Matt had on his agenda during this time. He truly believed that to write authentic worship songs — songs that would lead a church into intimacy with God — it was essential for him to stay connected to his church community. So Matt continued to serve at his church but in a full-time position writing songs.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Fast-forward to present day and Matt’s a very busy artist recently signed to Essential Records. He and his band are lapping the globe leading worship at a variety of gatherings.

“I don’t want to take what I do too seriously, I want to take the gospel seriously.”



As Matt’s popularity grows, so do questions regarding his beliefs. “I’m not here to straighten out every misconception between denominations in a judgmental fashion. My job is to be the most authentic lover of Christ I can be,” he explains. “The reality is, there are 500 years worth of wounds and anger and hurt and fear on both Catholic and Protestant sides.

“I think praying for healing and the humility to help deal with it is desperately needed if we’re going to come together under the foot of the cross.” But Matt’s focus is to stand in the shadow of the cross and lift high the name of Jesus. “Why spend energy on denominations when the world still doesn’t know?” he asks.

Matt’s heart is for unity — unity among the Catholic church and across denominations. “Basically it boils down to this: In John 17 Jesus is walking to Gethsemane and prays a massive prayer for unity. If He stopped to pray that we would be one, He had to know that we would be where we are today — He knew the predicament we would find ourselves in,” Matt says.

“We need to take [unity] seriously, and make it part of the mission of the church. To be one again — not just symbolically, but in reality

“Why spend energy on denominations when the world still doesn’t know?”

— that is something that only the Kingship of Jesus Christ can accomplish in the hearts of men.”

While it may seem that there are miles to go, Matt’s already been witness to God’s ability to unify. “Unity is happening through worship — the worship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” Matt shares.

“More and more, as hearts are freed from the bondage of slavery to sin and the idolatry of the world, the followers of Jesus Christ are gathering together for what I believe to be another global great commission. *Global* in the sense of not just American Christians being sent everywhere but believers from all nations and tribes and tongues gathering under the banner of heaven to hear the voice of Jesus say, ‘Go — make disciples.’”

Years laced with God-sized experiences have passed and taught Matt more about God and less about denominations and divisions among the church. From World Youth Day 2002 in Toronto, where Matt’s “Litany of the Saints” was sung with 700,000 young pilgrims from around the world, to Passion 2005 where Matt watched Chris Tomlin lead more than 11,000 college students in singing his song “Your Grace Is Enough,” Matt has seen God at work. “[Through these events] I got to see the full measure of how it effects things when you leverage your life for Christ,” he says.

God continues to speak loudly and clearly to Matt. The message he hears is: *This is what God can do with an entire human life if you say yes.*

CURRENT EVENTS

And it seems these gatherings with young adults have given Matt a new vision for ministry. When he’s at home, Matt worships at the ASU campus. “When I’m back, I serve there,” he shares. “More and more my heart is drawn to college students. I have to let God unfold that plan.”

As he approached World Youth Day 2008 in Sydney, Matt couldn’t help but dream about what might happen if young adults experienced a release of the Holy

Spirit in their lives. “That would change everything. If half a million young adults woke up for the cause of the gospel,” he says. Perhaps one day Matt will see his dream come true.

IN THE REAL WORLD

For Matt, community is his band, his manager, and the friendships he maintains on the phone — he’s still learning, just like everyone, how to maintain community and make it authentic.

When the tour bus comes to a stop, Matt finds respite in a house he shares with three other guys — a worship leader, middle school minister, and his bass player. As his “world” gets bigger, real life shrinks. “Anytime you lead, your life gets smaller,” Matt admits.

“The best thing I can do when I’m home is not talk about me. ... And as a worship leader you have to have the kind of place where people say: ‘Oh, it’s only Matt. It’s your turn to take out the trash,’” he laughs.

“In my heart I don’t want to take what I do too seriously. I want to take the gospel seriously.” And what is the gospel according to Matt Maher? It’s the good news of Jesus Christ. That God loves us so much and wants us to spend our lives living in His presence. It’s the reality that God sent His only Son to die for the sins of all mankind for all of human history and that in suffering, dying, and rising He showed us how to live.

So Matt continues to cross the lines. But the gospel crosses lines, too. God’s Word goes forth and does not return to Him void. It accomplishes all that He desires regardless of denominational boundaries. And that’s something worth singing about. □

AMY JACOBS *loves music just about as much as Matt Maher does. Her favorite childhood pastime was recreating the Grand Ole Opry using Christmas lights to line the front porch. Once the stage was ready, she belted out songs for hours. It’s no wonder she ended up in Music City working as a writer. There’s sure to be a country song buried somewhere inside her.*

Behind the Music

Matt Maher’s most recent release, *Empty and Beautiful*, begins and ends strong — “Your Grace Is Enough” opens things up and “Empty and Beautiful” closes the project.

Here Matt reflects on the inspiration behind these tunes.

Your Grace Is Enough

“This is probably the oldest song on the record, and I’m thankful so many people have appreciated it. I wrote it when I was going through some hard times in my life. I found myself on the back patio at home with my guitar reading the Psalms. I kept singing the same word: ‘Remember. Remember. Remember.’”

“In the Psalms, David is crying out to God to remember His people. I was fascinated by that and began writing this song I was calling ‘Remember,’ asking God to remember us as we remember Him. ... The chorus came from Paul’s letter to the Romans, and the idea of the thorn in Paul’s side, begging God to take it away. In my mid-20s, the thorn in my side was loneliness; I was like, ‘OK, God, give me something to fill that space.’ I think God comes to us and says, ‘No, I need to be enough.’”

“At the time I thought maybe if I write this and sing it, it will stick to me. It was a song of lament, now it’s a joyful declaration. I can sing it and think, *Yeah, it’s still true God.*”

Empty and Beautiful

Of the 12 songs on this project, all penned by Matt, he’s most partial to the title track.

“Right now it’s a favorite. I got to the chorus and suddenly realized — I don’t need to fight it. The Holy Spirit is able to convict the heart. As a Christian, I’m realizing more and more that the world isn’t my worst enemy — I am.

“The chorus says, ‘You fought the fight in me/ You chased me down and finished the race/ I was blind but now I see/ Jesus, You kept the faith in me.’ If I could spend more time letting God love me, then maybe I’d be a more effective apostle.

“Second Timothy inspired the chorus: ‘I fought the fight, I’ve kept the faith, I’ve finished the race.’ I believe Paul’s not saying that as a boasting man; he’d been abandoned and rejected, scorned and lost. But Paul knows grace. He knows the biggest battle he’s fought is not against the world, but against himself.”



U.S. PRESIDENTS AND THE GOOD BOOK

November isn't just when we elect the next Pres. It's also the month of National Bible Week (November 23-30). According to nationalbible.org, here's what a few notable presidents had to say about the Word:

"I have myself, for many years, made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year."
— John Quincy Adams,
6th U.S. President

"I believe the Bible is the best gift God has given to man. All the good Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this Book."
— Abraham Lincoln,
16th U.S. President

"The more profoundly we study this wonderful Book, and the more closely we observe its divine precepts, the better citizens we will become and the higher will be our destiny as a nation."
— William McKinley,
25th U.S. President

"Speaking from firsthand experience for myself and all my family, I know what a difference Bible reading can make in inspiring confidence, stability, reassurance, and courage to deal with the challenges of everyday living."
— Jimmy Carter,
39th U.S. President
— J.B.

Live It Out

Get the Word Online

dailylit.com

If you're like most of us, you open your inbox many more times a day than you open an actual book made of paper — including your Bible. There's no need to beat yourself up, but you may want to change your approach to meditating on Scripture. Sign up here for chunks of the Gospels to show up in your daily e-mail. It's already a habit, so why not add devotional reading to the mix?

thebiblepodcast.org

If you'd rather have someone read the Bible to you, sign up for a daily audio dose. Or try one of the many other free audio versions like faithcomesbyhearing.com or dailyaudiobible.com. Don't have access to the net when you want to listen? Head to podlinez.com to have podcasts sent to your phone.

backtothebible.org

The "devotions" tab at this site will lead you to daily readings from more than nine different devotion options, including classics like Charles Spurgeon's *Morning and Evening* and *Streams in the Desert* by Mrs. Charles Cowman. Or go to myutmost.org for Oswald Chambers' *My Utmost for His Highest*.



bible.cc

This parallel Bible project lets you dig into specific passages by placing 14 translations next to each other. It also links to other helpful study resources

so you can take advantage of Strong's dictionary for meanings in the original languages; click on a function that presents all cross-referenced verses or study parallel Bible commentaries of the section you're reading.

oneyearbibleonline.com

If you've never read through the entire Bible, you're not alone — but you are missing out on some good stuff. Head to this site for two easy-to-follow reading plans. The first includes a passage each day from the Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs. The second offers a narrative approach by presenting the sections to you in the chronological order the events happened. Just choose from 20 different translations, and you can read the passages on your computer screen each day for a year.
— B.C.L.

church chat

Seeking Refuge

THIS YEAR, the global population of refugees has climbed to a staggering 11.4 million. According to a U.N. report, the sharp increase marks the end of a 10-year decline, and is largely due to international conflicts in countries like Colombia, Darfur, and Iraq. To make matters worse, refugees face incredible hardships due to complicated international laws and the need to acclimate into a foreign culture.



Many refugees flee to the U.S., which presents the church with the difficult task of reaching out to displaced people. Joining with World Relief, 121 Community Church in Grapevine, Texas, has creatively answered the call with a refugee adoption ministry.

Volunteers make a six-month commitment to help

refugees find housing, get a job, and learn basic English. They also donate household items and clothes and take the refugees grocery shopping. Since this ministry's inception last year, over 300 people have received assistance.

Jesus said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me" (Matthew 25:40). As refugee resettlement becomes an increasingly pressing problem, followers of Christ need to find ways to share and show Christ's love to those in our communities who need it most.

— Jonathan Merritt



RUINED

“Woe to me!”
I cried. “I am ruined!
For I am a man of
unclean lips, and I
live among a people
of unclean lips, and
my eyes have seen
the King, the LORD
Almighty.”

Isaiah 6:5, NIV

© PHOTOGRAPHER / ISTOCK PHOTO

Do Something Help for the Helpless



THERE ARE 143 MILLION ORPHANS worldwide. Over 60 million of them will go to bed hungry tonight, and 400,000 will die this year due to malnutrition. If you're a comfy American and a follower of Jesus, that should shake your soul and move your feet to action.

Bethany Christian Services, the nation's largest adoption agency, is a Christian organization that empowers and equips Christ-followers and church leaders alike to solve the world's orphan crisis. Their local offices across the U.S. offer volunteer opportunities ranging from coordinating banquets honoring birthmothers in local communities to taking mission trips to orphanages all over the world.

Johnny Carr, Bethany's National Director of Church Partnerships, says that any form of volunteering can have a strong impact. “When you think about 143 million orphans, many people don't think they can make a difference,” Carr shares. “But when a person goes to an orphanage, it certainly makes a difference in those lives you touched by bringing the spirit of Christ into a difficult place.”

After witnessing the terrible conditions under which many orphans must survive, Carr and his wife adopted two children. “I wonder who needs this more. Do orphans need us or do we need orphans?” Carr asks.

Most importantly Carr says we must get our churches involved. “If we hope to make a dent in the global orphan population, people must encourage their church leadership to start intentional and organized orphan care ministries.” Bethany produces materials to get your church started.

To volunteer or learn how to engage your church in orphan care, contact your local Bethany office or visit bethany.org. —J.Merritt

Monthly Meditation

Head on Collision

How will you be changed?

BY DAVID NASSER

ONE OF MY BEST friends, Michael John, was driving his SUV along the road one night and hit a deer. That deer was stunned, but wasn't hurt. Neither was Michael John's SUV. Because there was no damage to his vehicle, the collision had no effect on Michael John's driving habits.

A few weeks later, I was in a friend's car and a deer ran out in front of us. We tried to miss it, but that deer went right over the car and landed behind us. It was shaken up, but it limped off into the woods. The car had some minimal damage. The encounter left us a little shaken, so it really affected how we drove for the next few weeks.

A couple of months after that, a friend told me about a guy and his wife who were driving along on a pretty day with their windows down. They saw a deer stumbling down a hillside next to the road in front of them. They weren't too alarmed. They saw

deer all the time, but this time the deer couldn't stop his slide. It got to the bottom of the steep hill right as the car drove past, and the deer somehow dove headfirst into the open window of the car! When it was all said and done, there was major damage to the car, and the experience forever changed the driving habits of that couple.

All three of these stories involved a collision with a deer, each with very different results. In the same way, each of us will have an encounter with God. For some of us the encounter with God produces no change in who we are and how we live. For others, God might collide with us and it changes us temporarily. However, for some of us, a head-on collision with the living, holy God will ruin us — alter us forever.

*Adapted from A Call to Die by David Nasser,
Redemptive Art Publishing*

LEND A HAND

Before the holidays get hectic, consider a few ways you can help others.

Operation Christmas Child

This ministry provides gift-filled shoe boxes to children around the world. All ages can be involved in this simple, hands-on project while focusing on the true meaning of Christmas. But get started right away because collection week is November 17-24. samaritanspurse.org

Help for the Homeless

Brighten the holidays for those living in homeless shelters. Start by contacting local shelters, food banks, and soup kitchens to find out what their needs are. Ask if you can provide a Christmas tree to liven up a shelter. Or bring cookies and punch for a holiday party. Go beyond the shelters and look for people living on the street. Pass out food vouchers so they can get something to eat.

Aid for Animals

Share holiday cheer with a homeless pet. Ask local humane associations and animal shelters for their wish lists. Most organizations will be looking for things like food, collars, leashes, pet toys, and treats. And cash donations are always welcome — especially around the holidays. Schedule a tour of a local shelter and spend some quality time loving on the animals there.

A Quote

“Thanks-giving, after all, is a word of action.”

—W.J. Cameron



* 3 WAYS * TO PLAY THE QUIET GAME

The holidays are busy:

Buy the gifts, cook the meal, decorate the tree, wrap the presents. Don't get so caught up in the chaos that you forget to slow down and spend some quality quiet time with God.

- **Light the Fire.** As day fades into night, light a candle (wax or electric) in each window of your home, praying for someone or something different with each new flame. In the last room, sit down and pray, enjoying the warm glow that flows from floor to ceiling.
- **Fan the Flame.** For the months of November and December, make a special calendar that has daily quiet time scheduled. Write down your struggles with and hopes for the holidays, and use your list as a map to help ignite your prayers.
- **Let it Shine.** When the stress starts to get you down, stop whatever you're doing and take a break. Give yourself 15 minutes to sit in God's presence, and then return to your task. Both you and the people around you will see the difference some quiet time can make. — A.F.



© BENJAMIN GOODE / ISTOCK PHOTO

The Plan It's a Mystery

“THERE IS MORE HUNGER for love and appreciation in this world than for bread,” Mother Teresa once said. What a simple truth. At the deepest part of our souls, we long to be loved. Really loved. We long to connect with others in ways that mean something. Really mean something.

The thing about relationships, though, is they're sometimes messy and difficult. But that's part of what makes them so mysterious, so beautiful.

The God of the universe, our Creator, wants to be in a relationship with us. That's a truly mysterious concept that's hard to grasp at times. We tend to hide from God and rebel against Him. That's what the Bible calls “sin” and it's something that keeps us

separated from God. Romans 3:23 says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Yes God loves you and wants to offer you a life of hope and purpose and meaning. To do this, God sent His Son, Jesus. Romans 5:8 says, “God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!”

Salvation can't be earned. You receive it by faith alone. Ephesians 2:8 says, “By grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift.” Faith is a choice you make, demonstrated by your actions. Romans 10:9 says, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

If you are choosing new life by committing yourself to Christ in faith and answering His call to “follow Me” (Matthew 16:24), pray a prayer similar to this:

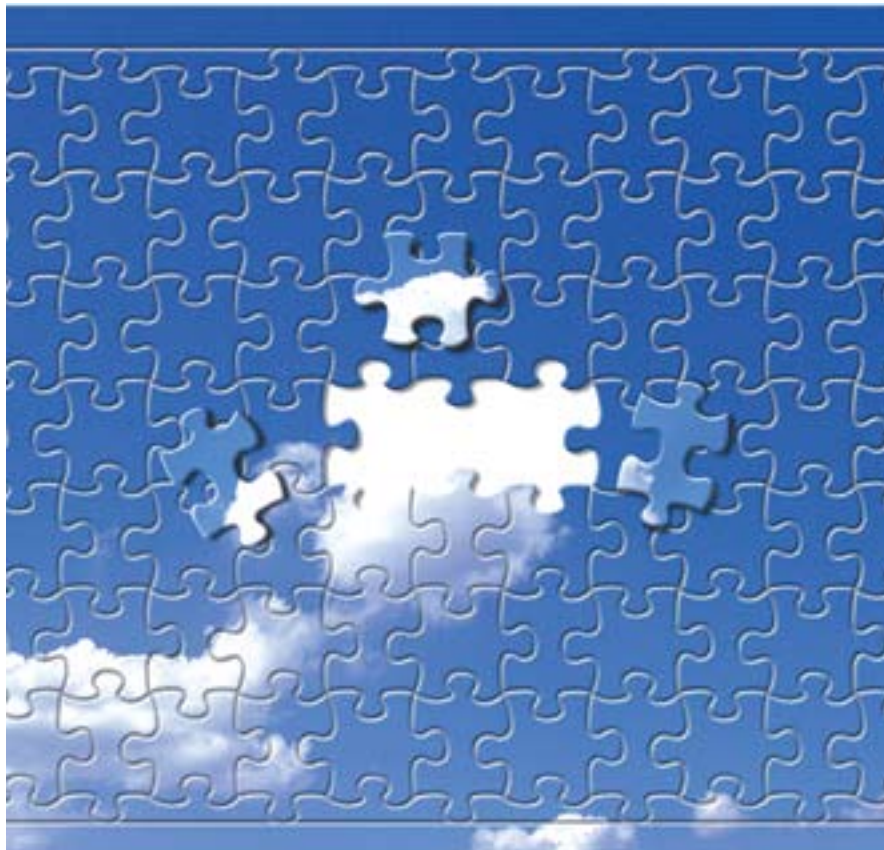
Dear God, I need You. I cannot live this life on my own. I know I'm a sinner, but I want to be in relationship with You. I believe Jesus died so that I could experience forgiveness of all my sin. I accept Your offer of new, abundant, eternal life. Thank You. From this day forward, I will choose to follow You.

If this expresses the prayer of your heart, we want to help. Call (888) 537-8720 or write to *Christian Single*, c/o New Life, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0175.

Real Meets Ideal

Who's responsible for minding the gap?

Self-effort can't close the space between what should be and what is. But God can.



BY C. D. BAKER

From time to time I travel the labyrinth of subway tunnels in London known as the “tube.” At every stop, a polite female voice repeats: “Mind the gap.” The caution, of course, is for passengers to take care not to fall into the space between the train and the platform.

It has occurred to me that “minding the gap” describes the Christian life. There’s a dangerous distance between the ideal — the kingdom of God — and the real — our “off the tracks” reality.

There really is a huge, cavernous gulf between what should be and what is. We *should* love God with all our hearts, minds, and souls. We *should* have more faith. We *should*

I now realize that I can't live the Christian life on my own. ... And that's why I'm finally free.

love our neighbor as ourselves. We *should* pray without ceasing. We *should* be obedient. We *should* be witnesses to the world. We *should* be perfect, even as Christ is perfect.

The lifestyle of work-harder-and-perform-better has characterized our Christian experience. Many of us run hard on holy treadmills. We make promises to God, we commit to more Bible reading, more prayer, more fellowship, more volunteering, more money in the offering plate, more evangelism, more, more, more.

The problem is, self effort doesn't close the gap one inch, and some of us are beginning to figure that out. As a result, we're jumping off the train, worn out and bitter.

Others of us keep trying. We talk ourselves into believing that our gap isn't so big. Or we redefine what “should” looks like so that it becomes easier to attain. Or we start blaming others for messing up our efforts. Or we start church-hopping in search of affirmation. Or we begin to secretly scorn God for asking too much of us in the first place.

Does any of this sound familiar? I'm guessing probably so. The hard truth is that the gap is impossible to mind; God *does* ask too much. Even the stalwart apostle Paul recognized how impossible it is for us to do and not do what we should apart from Christ.

So I now realize that I can't live the Christian life on my own. I can't love God with all my heart, soul, and mind. And I certainly can't love my neighbor as myself. And that's why I'm finally free.

Only Christ can close the gap — and He already has. He has set me free from the shame of “should” because all that should be is already accomplished in Him.

So how do we actually experience this reality? Through faith. I know, it sounds like a really spiritual answer. But that's the simple truth. And that truth is huge.

Knowing that Jesus has already closed the gap between our imperfect reality and the perfection of God's kingdom sets us free. And living freely means living differently.

We feel less pressure, fear, and anxiety. We dare to dare. We celebrate joy. We experience the power of gratitude. We love others authentically.

We don't have to muster up the faith we need to cling to Him. Faith is a gift. All we need to do is ask, and once we do, we'll begin to realize that “minding the gap” is no longer about “should” but about Jesus.



C. D. Baker has published five novels and recently released a devotional titled *101 Cups of Water*. He lives on a farm in eastern Pennsylvania and is currently completing his master's degree in theological studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. For more information about his work visit cdbaker.com.

Believe

Present Peace

You can't turn back time but you can begin the process of family forgiveness this holiday season.



IN THE MOVIE “27 Dresses,” Jane embarrasses her younger sister Tess in the days just before Tess’s wedding by confiding to a newspaper reporter how greedy, demanding, and out of control the bride-to-be is. Tess explodes when the feature story appears, and it seems the sisters’ relationship is ruined forever.

But a remarkably brief time later, Tess tells Jane, “I’ve decided to forgive you.” She then checks off a line on a piece of paper she’s holding — as if forgiving her sister was an item on her to-do list. If it were only that simple.

Everyone knows that forgiveness is not so easy that it can be put on a chore list next to “pick up dry cleaning” and “rotate tires.” It’s complicated. Messy. Guilt-inducing. Especially as the holidays approach.

A New Kind of Normal

Jana Cranmer knows the difficulty involved in forgiving family. The California native was rocked when her parents split up after 27 years of marriage. The divorce was complicated and took a full year to finalize. Family traditions that

Cranmer and her adult siblings had enjoyed their entire lives had to change as their family changed. And since Mom and Dad weren’t speaking to each other, it was unclear how the situation would all work out.

Cranmer, her brother, and her sister had to make decisions about where each holiday event would occur and with whom. “Every holiday is stressful,” Cranmer confesses. “The kids have to be the adults.”

There is a constant give and take of how each new wrinkle should be handled. “Every holiday there was a new issue,” Cranmer recalls. “I resented having to take responsibilities that I shouldn’t have had to take.”

The divorce caused Cranmer to experience aspects of the grief cycle. At first she didn't want to believe it was true. Then anger set in; she withdrew from her dad and kept her distance for more than two years. After a particularly blistering phone call from him, Cranmer told her father to never speak to her again. "I wondered if I could have any relationship with my dad at all," she shares. "Were the wounds worth it?"

Cranmer's reaction makes perfect sense to Dan Jenkins, director of Lighthouse Psychological Services, Inc., a counseling center in San Diego. "Withdrawing builds a wall of protection around the person who feels wronged. We don't want to get hurt again, so we cut that person off," Jenkins explains. "In the short run, it is easier to avoid dealing with it altogether." But that choice comes with a price.

Eventually Cranmer's stance toward her father softened. "I decided I needed to continue this relationship," she remembers. "To deny the relationship meant I had to erase my past. I didn't want to not think about my childhood. I still loved [my dad]."

That meant forgiving him, even though he had not asked for it. "I may never get an explicit apology," Cranmer says. "The closest he's come is when he said, 'I know this has been really hard for you.' So in some ways I feel like my pain hasn't really been validated."

What's in it for You?

While many feel justified in waiting for an apology before granting forgiveness, Jenkins says this perspective misses the point. "A lot of the times it simply won't happen," he admits. For forgiveness to occur, one must choose to do so regardless of what the other person does. "Forgiveness has more to do with the person who has been hurt than the offender," Jenkins adds.

In his book *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu says there is a significant precedent for choosing to forgive before a person asks for it.

"Jesus did not wait until those who were nailing him to the cross had asked for forgiveness," Tutu writes. "He was ready, as they drove in the nails, to pray to his Father to forgive them and he even provided an excuse for what they were



“Forgiveness has more to do with the person who has been hurt than the offender.”

— Daniel Jenkins, psychologist

doing. If the victim could forgive only when the culprit confessed, then the victim would be locked into the culprit's whim, locked into victimhood, whatever her own attitude or intention. That would be palpably unjust."

Forgiveness is a choice to not resent the offender any more. And it's rarely instantaneous. "I tend to not use phrases like, 'I have forgiven that person,'" Jenkins says. "It's more accurate to say, 'I am forgiving that person.'"

A Work in Progress

Christians sometimes think they have forgiven someone, but then are surprised when they still feel anger toward that person. "When Jesus told us to forgive 70 times 7, He was telling us that forgiveness is a process — that we are to wake up the next day and know we are in the process of forgiving, that we are seeing things differently from how we used to see them," Jenkins explains.

Forgiveness is also a choice, and anger is a sign that there is still more work to be done. But one has to be realistic about what is possible. Our feelings, despite our wanting to forgive, can't be ignored. Jenkins recommends that people find someone trustworthy to talk with about their emotions or journal about them — whatever it takes to keep from burying them under the surface. The old saying "time heals all wounds" is actually a myth. If past hurts aren't

confronted, they'll keep opening up and making us miserable.

"How you deal with your feelings determines your moral value," Jenkins says. "You don't have to act on your feelings. You can choose to behave despite your feelings."

For Cranmer, the choice was her future or her past. She realized that it might take her and her father a long time to reconcile, but at least she could choose to do something about their relationship. Cranmer began talking with her father more. She opted for openness and honesty over avoidance.

"Forgiveness means releasing my father from blame," she shares. "I know that it won't restore my relationship with him to what it was or rewrite history. [But] I decided that it was time to move forward."

Cranmer hopes to have clearer lines of communication with both of her parents this holiday season. She hopes to be a little more honest, to choose forgiveness more frequently, and to take away some of the tension by not letting the past rule the present.

"They were good parents," she shares. "They instilled basic principles in me, even though they didn't adhere to their own standards. I know they're human. It won't be easy, but it's still my choice to forgive and live differently."

In "27 Dresses," it took a long chat about past hurts before true forgiveness could take place between Tess and Jane. And while that's just a movie, those who have had similar experiences know that the future — especially future holidays — depends on how we confront the past.

As Christians we are called to love and forgive others, and we are never more like Christ than when we forgive.

Choosing forgiveness, while risky, is essentially choosing the future over the past. We can't bring back the past, but we can have the strength not to let it rule what's ahead. Sounds a lot like the meaning of Christmas, doesn't it? □

Archbishop Desmond Tutu was the chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission — assembled in an unprecedented attempt by a nation to reconcile with its former oppressors. While the lessons from his experience apply to nations, they're also helpful for individuals:

"When you embark on the business of asking for and granting forgiveness, you are taking a risk."

"Forgiveness does not mean condoning what has been done. It means taking what happened seriously and not minimizing it; drawing out the sting in the memory that threatens to poison our entire existence. It involves trying to understand the perpetrators and so have empathy, to try to stand in their shoes and appreciate the sort of pressures and influences that might have conditioned them."

"Forgiving means abandoning your right to pay back the perpetrator in his own coin, but it is a loss that liberates the victim."

"[Forgiveness] is difficult, but because we are not infallible, because we will hurt especially the ones we love by some wrong, we will always need a process of forgiveness and reconciliation to deal with those unfortunate yet all too human breaches in relationships. They are an inescapable characteristic of the human condition."

"True forgiveness deals with the past, all of the past, to make the future possible."

*From No Future Without Forgiveness
Desmond Tutu (Doubleday, 2000)*

It Is What It Is

For anyone moving toward forgiveness, it helps to fully understand the meaning and benefits.

FORGIVENESS IS:

- 1 **Moral** — a response to an injustice; turning to the good in the face of wrongdoing
- 2 **Goodwill** — refusing to pursue resentment or revenge
- 3 **Paradoxical** — foregoing resentment or revenge when the wrongdoer's actions deserve it and giving mercy, generosity, and love when the wrongdoer doesn't deserve it
- 4 **Beyond duty** — a free gift (not an obligation)

It's a big decision to choose to forgive someone who has hurt you deeply. That's why it's equally important to understand what forgiveness is not.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT:

- 1 **Forgetting/denying** — letting time pass or ignoring the effects of the wrongdoing
- 2 **Condoning** — acting as if nothing bad happened or as if it won't happen again
- 3 **Excusing** — like it wasn't really their responsibility
- 4 **Condemning** — as if she or he deserves to know they wronged you; forgiving with a sense of moral superiority
- 5 **Seeking justice or compensation** — forgiveness doesn't demand compensation first

IMPORTANT DISTINCTION:

Forgiveness: One person's moral response to another's injustice

Reconciliation: Two parties coming together in mutual respect

Adapted from The International Forgiveness Institute (forgiveness-institute.org).

DEAN NELSON *directs the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego. His book on living the sacraments will be published by Brazos Press next year. After writing this article, he is contemplating throwing away his list of grievances against people who have wronged him.*

Spotlight

JEREMY COWART: THROUGH THIS LENS

BY JEWLY HIGHT



It's not a stretch to say that Jeremy Cowart has a special sort of power: He can direct people's eyes to view someone or something in the way that's most compelling. In other words, he's a photographer.

Cowart — a Nashville, Tenn., native and former graphic designer — shoots photos of musicians, actors, athletes, models, and other subjects for everything from album covers to magazines to advertisements. "I don't want to be limited to any one thing," Cowart says. He's even won a Dove Award for Recorded Music Packaging of the Year for his work on Jeremy Camp's *Beyond Measure*.

But Cowart doesn't just pursue work that pays well financially. He also uses his ability to zero in on a single face or capture the big picture for greater good. That's where the real perspective-shaping happens. He got the opportunity to do exactly that for a project called *Hope in the Dark*. "I hit the ground running," he reflects. "As soon as I started [full-time photography], a month later I was going to Africa and shooting my first book."

Hope in the Dark combines Cowart's striking images of African people affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic with notes and reflections from Jena Lee, director of Blood:Water Mission, and proceeds

from the book go to the faith-based, nonprofit African aid organizations African Leadership and Blood:Water Mission.

"I'm most proud of that [book] just because of what it means," Cowart says. "It's really changed people's perspectives — and even mine. I know some people that have adopted kids in Africa because of that book. Those things are forever, whereas a music photo shoot is just a project. The main goal was just to humanize, put a face on these people."

Cowart's journey is remarkable not only for the important projects he's taken on, but also because he's repeatedly encountered intimidating new challenges, yet embraced them and continued growing professionally and artistically.

"For some reason, I've always been the type that's been scared of things," Cowart confesses. "When I was a painter in high school, I was scared of

"There are some celebrities and musicians who are always pointing to bigger things in the world, and I think those people serve as role models for the rest of us."

computers. And then when I first started doing computers, I fell in love with graphic design. Then I was scared of Web design. I ended up doing that. And then I was intimidated by photography, and started doing it and fell in love with it. People asked me if I wanted to do music videos, and I was too intimidated by it." But now he's taking on even that challenge.

As Cowart's career advances, his goal is to continue to serve. "It's definitely important for me to bring light to things that matter," he shares. "The photojournalism stuff and the nonprofit stuff, I think, goes hand in hand with all the celebrity, Hollywood-type stuff.

"There are some celebrities and musicians who are always pointing to bigger things in the world, and I think those people serve as role models for the rest of us. Use what you're doing to point to bigger things. That's definitely a goal, to not just be another name in the photography industry."

Jewly Hight lives in Nashville, Tenn., and finds it a fruitful place to indulge her love of live music, the written word, and clogging.

Q&A

Hello Kelly's Francois Goudreault



The class of 2008 has definitely produced a slew of great new rock bands including Canada's Hello Kelly. Get to know the group's lead singer, Francois Goudreault, as he dishes on everything from who Kelly is to his bandmates' little quirks.

CS: For someone who hasn't heard your music before, how would you describe your sound?

Goudreault: There's definitely a variety to our sound, but simply put, Hello Kelly is a pop-rock band with big guitars, hyper synths, and fun melodies.

CS: Who exactly is Kelly?

Goudreault: The "Kelly" in Hello Kelly represents anybody who listens. Kelly can be a boy or a girl, young or old. What we do know is that Kelly is unsure about a lot of things: Who he or she is, what he or she believes in, what his or her dreams and ambitions are. Hello Kelly exists to encourage, challenge, and empower Kelly to ask those tough questions and develop a strong identity.

CS: Describe the members of your band and the quirks that make them unique.

Goudreault: I'm the lead singer and rhythm guitarist. I guess you could say I'm the visionary guy who can get a little too ambitious sometimes. James, our bass player, is the oldest and most responsible member. Even though he's usually the one keeping us in line, James can get pretty hyper when he gets an energy drink in him. Josh, our drummer, is the grounded one. He did merch [merchandising] for some other bands in the past, so he's got lots of experience and wisdom when it comes to industry stuff. Mat, who plays synth and acoustic guitar, would be Michaelangelo if we were the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Sometimes his jokes can be a little wacky, but it's his edgy attitude that often helps Hello Kelly stay real. Danny, our lead guitarist, isn't an official member of the band, but he's touring with us right now. He's actually a fully-trained tool-and-dye maker, but he likes rocking more.



Superchick

★★★★★

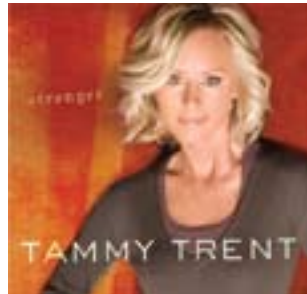
Rock What You Got

Inpop

Alternative Pop/Dance Rock

Anyone with an affinity for the 1980s will dig Superchick's overflowing references to the days of Blondie, Pat Benatar, and Cyndi Lauper on this latest effort. *Rock What You Got* is a delightful hodgepodge filled with self-esteem anthems and encouragement. Band members speak from experience on topics like disease, death, and divorces in their families. But songs like the ethereal "Stand in the Rain (Symphonic Mix)" and the tear jerking "Crawl (Carry Me Through)" hold fast to hope. Amidst those emotions, there are plenty of reasons to party, like the catchiness of "Hey Hey," the boogie-infused title cut, and the album's ultimate rocker "Cross the Line." — *Andy Argyrakis*

▷ iPod Pick: "Crawl (Carry Me Through)"



Tammy Trent

★★★★★

Stronger

Independent

Pop

In the past, Tammy Trent has been known for spunky bubblegum-pop music with a positive message. But this time around Trent is having her breakout moment with *Stronger*. Not only does it have more of a sophisticated musical flare, but Trent invests more of herself personally. Rather than speaking in generalities about the up-and-down emotions she's had since losing her husband in a diving accident, *Stronger* rings with the authenticity of someone who's been there. And whether your struggles have been the same as hers or not, hopeful tracks like "God of Impossibles" and "Edge of the Water" certainly hit the spot (as does the album as a whole). — *Christa A. Banister*

▷ iPod Pick: "I'm Letting Go"



Jonezetta

★★★★★

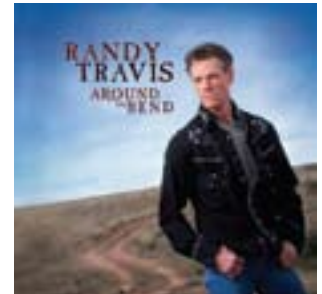
Cruel to Be Young

Tooth & Nail

Indie Rock

While their debut disc *Popularity* was certainly loaded with memorable dance/pop pleasantries, Jonezetta's sophomore effort steps up the artistry to intriguing heights. In the absence of the first album's electronica, expect super-charged guitars, slightly more organic instrumentation, and melodic vocal presentations. The piano-filled "Everything Is" and the ultra-high harmonies of "Holding on to You" are among the group's most unpredictable musings to date, while "Wide Awake" and "Busy Body" expand upon Jonezetta's infectious, fist-pumping base. Expect lyrics that aren't overtly spiritual but still trace the cycle of despair through hope from a Christian perspective. — *A.A.*

▷ iPod Pick: "Wide Awake"



Randy Travis

★★★★★

Around the Bend

Warner Brothers

Neo-traditional country

Lately it's been mostly gospel-themed albums for Randy Travis, but *Around the Bend* marks a return to pure country roots. Yet spiritual sensibilities are still apparent on this new 11-song set; they've just been woven more organically into the fabric of the songs. A trio of emotionally-potent ballads form the backbone of the album wrestling with the tried-and-true country themes of love, the destructiveness of addiction, and death. Two of which are "You Didn't Have a Good Time" and "Dig Two Graves." But Travis' rawboned baritone plumbs the greatest depths of desperation and repentance during the third, the George Jones-esque "From Your Knees." — *Jewly Hight*

▷ iPod Pick: "From Your Knees"

Featured Artist

Seabird

★★★★★½

'Til We See the Shore

Credential/EMI

Pop/Rock



Imagine if Coldplay hadn't gone all artsy with their latest album, *Vida La Vida* and made the project that

everyone was expecting. Chances are it might have sounded a little something like Seabird's superb debut, *'Til We See the Shore*.

It's not that Seabird is just another Coldplay copycat, mind you, (they're from Cincinnati, not England, after all); but they've definitely got a similar knack for creating a huge atmospheric ambience.

Thanks to intricately crafted pop/rock tracks like "Black and Blue" and "Cotton Mouth (Jargon)," there's plenty of that swoony, sweeping piano that instantly makes one think of Coldplay. But instead of tackling the usual relationship chatter, Seabird's tracks contain a far more redemptive message.

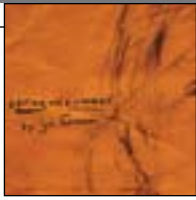
In fact, the band's first radio single "Rescue" is easily the album's most overtly Christian tune: "The earth moves and you find me alive and unworthy/ Broken and empty, but you don't care/ 'Cause you are my rapture, you are my Savior/ When all my hope is gone, I reach for you." Later "Patience" ends up sounding like a slightly more abstract version of the prodigal son account, and "Apparitions" thoughtfully explores the tension of being a Christian who happens to live here on Earth.

While Seabird's faith doesn't play out as overtly as many Christian bands', the songwriting definitely points the listener in the direction of hope — a winning combination for both your ears and soul. — *C.B.*

▷ iPod Pick: "Black and Blue"

REVIEWS

★
★
★
½



Jon Foreman

Spring EP
Credential
Indie/Folk

The idea of recording an EP for each season gives Jon Foreman the chance to explore a wide range of moods. The melodies, singing, and arrangements on his *Spring EP* are far subtler and more whimsical than Switchfoot fare. "Instead of a Show" is the sunniest track, with acoustic guitar and strings circling in a sprightly bossanova, and Foreman singing of new beginnings and redemption. Against that background, he enters a transcendent moment of divine communion with "The House of God Forever." Altogether, Foreman traces an arc from lifelessness to renewal that truly feels like spring. — J.H.

▷ iPod Pick: "Instead of a Show"

★
★
★



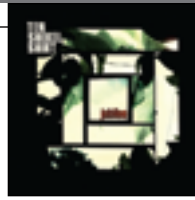
Article One

Colors and Sounds
Inpop
Modern Rock

After Article One limped out of the gate with a somewhat generic debut, its sophomore CD thankfully expands upon a modern/alternative rock base. The band's gotten a lot tighter (thanks to endless touring), and they sound razor sharp behind the lush violin orchestra of "Never Too Late to Call" and the horn-spiked "Without You (I'm Not Alright)." Even so, the group could stand to add some songwriting depth beyond the predictable romance of "Love You Tomorrow," and the even more common take on getting caught up in life's busyness during "Above All Else." — A.A.

▷ iPod Pick: "If the World Gives Up"

★
★
★
½



Ten Shekel Shirt

Jubilee
Rounder
Pop/Rock

After a five-year hiatus to focus more on humanitarian work, Ten Shekel Shirt is back with *Jubilee*. Staying true to the pop/rock formula (with tinges of folk) that made them a breakout act in the past, Ten Shekel Shirt offers a taut, 11-song set of call-to-action anthems. While the lyrics are superb (especially on tracks like "Love From a Lesser God" and "Daylight"), the overall pacing lags a little and doesn't offer much of a surprise factor musically. But the band makes up for what's missing with stellar content calling us all to do our part to help those in need, which is probably exactly what they intended. — C.B.

▷ iPod Pick: "Surprised"

★
★
★
★



Kutless

To Know That You're Alive
BEC Recordings
Alternative Rock

The critics have never been all that kind to Kutless, but even the most frowning skeptic won't be able to slam *To Know That You're Alive*. That's because Jon Micah Sumrall and Co. are plugging in with more power than ever before. "The Feeling" charges with sputtering guitars and the frontman's ferocious delivery, the title track features contagious riffs over an equally memorable chorus, and the brooding ballad "Promise You" escalates with chilling orchestration. The disc's strings were recorded at the famed Abbey Road Studios, fleshing out the already engaging sounds with epic appeal. — A.A.

▷ iPod Pick: "Promise You"



out on dvd

Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull

PG-13. Action/Adventure.
Starring: Harrison Ford, Cate Blanchett, Shia LaBeouf, and Karen Allen.

The latest "Indiana Jones" adventure brings us to the jungles of South America in search of a mythical golden city and the home of an otherworldly crystal skull that the Russians want for sinister purposes. With plenty of the same ingredients as past Jones flicks — from eye-popping special effects sequences to runs of feisty dialogue — this latest installment looks great on paper. But you'll find it often treads over familiar fantastical turf.

"Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull" incorporates a little bit of all the things that made the old-time adventure films so great: alien beings, lost civilizations, good guys turned rotten, and a few surprise twists. But as Ford dodges poison darts, machine gun fire, and swarms of ravenous ants, one can't help but wonder if this film, compared to others in the series, is long on sizzle but short on substance.

Cate Blanchett makes a nefarious baddie as Irina Spalko, a Communist scientist who abducts Jones to help her unlock the skull's secrets. Along for the ride are Shia LaBeouf as Mutt Williams and Karen Allen, reprising her role as Indy's love interest from "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

On its own, this film stands as a fine diversion. But against the other films in the series, it comes off flat on the human and thematic sides. Scenes that invoke McCarthyism and the destruction of Amazon jungle stop short of delivering deeper messages. And the finale, thrilling and



swirling as it looks, lacks the gripping resonance of "Lost Ark," which had a lot to say about the timeless struggle of good versus evil.

A viewer's best bet is to watch this one with the same cautious attitude and cool reserve Jones shows when crawling through a maze of spider webs and corpse remains. Some of the so-called surprises may seem all too predictable this time out, but like Indy himself, "Skull" pulls through in the end. — *Lou Carlozo*

CS IN NO WAY RECOMMENDS OR ENDORSES THIS MOVIE SELECTION BUT PROVIDES INFORMATION FOR INSIGHT AND CONTEMPLATION.

Having trouble making decisions? **This one's easy.**



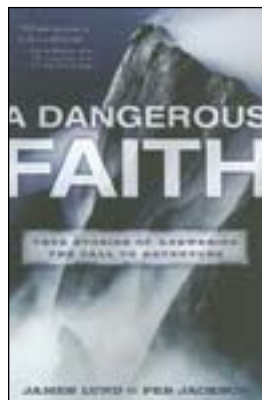
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{Faith}



A Dangerous Faith
by James Lund and
Peb Jackson
WaterBrook

Life is an unpredictable adventure. Our daily existence is often interrupted by illness, accident, disaster, and other events. *A Dangerous Faith: True Stories of Answering the Call to Adventure* reminds us of God's close presence and tenacious power in such interruptions. This book is filled with stories of people who have stepped into unexpected and dangerous situations, ranging from individual accounts of surviving a plane crash in the frigid Bering Sea, enduring a violent avalanche, fighting to save lives in the midst of the 9/11 Pentagon tragedy, and many more incredible narratives. What is most significant about James Lund and Peb Jackson's compilation is their sharing of the common faith held by the ordinary men and women in these amazing stories. These accounts of survival are told through the lens of God's supernatural participation in dangerous contexts of life. Whether you live in relative comfort or on the edge of civilization, this book will affect your perspective of God and the way you live each day He gives you.

— Joe Beckler

{Prayer}



The Sacred Echo
by Margaret Feinberg
Zondervan

Every believer sometimes wonders, *Does God really hear my prayers?* Speaker and author Margaret Feinberg addresses that very question in *The Sacred Echo: Hearing God's Voice in Every Area of Your Life*. Though consistent prayer is hard for most of us, God continually gets our attention through echoes — ongoing reminders that draw us back to Him. Drawing from Scripture and her Jewish heritage, Feinberg paints a fresh picture of how to connect with God. She teaches that prayer includes speaking and listening, but it also requires a third ingredient: waiting. Authentic and almost poetic at times, *The Sacred Echo* captures the beauty in God's pursuit of us. Personal examples, specific tips, and Scripture passages provide practical application without becoming too formulaic. If you're stuck in a prayer rut, this book is an excellent resource to awaken your desire for God. But be sure to read with a highlighter — Feinberg's poignant, "squeeze the marrow out of words" style makes for a captivating, spiritually-inspiring read.

— Jennifer McCaman

{Warfare}

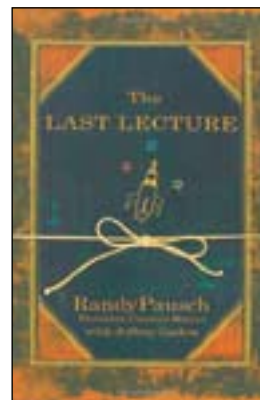


No Small Snakes
by Gordon Dalbey
Thomas Nelson

It's common for Christians to dismiss or just ignore the power of Satan and the working of his demons within the world. While it's not a subject prone to give warm and fuzzy feelings, it's nonetheless a reality found in God's Word — one to be taken quite seriously. In *No Small Snakes: A Journey Into Spiritual Warfare*, author Gordon Dalbey takes readers through his personal experiences with the power of the Holy Spirit and Satan's fight to keep him in the dark. As Dalbey joins the front line in the battle against spiritual warfare, he reveals more and more truth about the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of His children. Often sensing evil spirits and constantly seeking truth, Dalbey's spiritual journey makes for an interesting read. And most importantly, it reminds us that while the spiritual world may not always be seen with the naked eye, it's alive and active around us.

— Libby Lovelace Britt

{Best Seller}



The Last Lecture
by Randy Pausch with
Jeffrey Zaslow
Hyperion

What would you do if you only had a few months to live? Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, Professor Randy Pausch of Carnegie Mellon University gave up precious moments with his family to deliver a last lecture. While others might discuss death and dying, Pausch delivered a talk entitled "Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams." His best-selling book, *The Last Lecture*, is based on this now-famous address and serves as an inspiring tribute to life. Pausch shares adventures like flying with NASA for 25 seconds, working with Disney's Imagineers, and painting on bedroom walls — all evidence of his determination and passion. His positive, genuinely enthusiastic tone invites readers to celebrate alongside a life well-lived, not mourn for time cut short. Instead of tears and gloomy goodbyes, Pausch fills his pages with jokes, adventures, and precious memories with family. As believers, Pausch's legacy challenges us to love our friends and families, to seize the dreams God calls us to accomplish, and to live each day with no regrets.

— J.M.

The Fine Art of Being

Moving beyond “if only” to what is

BY CAMERIN COURTNEY

“I’ve been fighting the ‘if onlys’ lately,” a friend recently confided in me.

“The ‘if onlys?’” I questioned.

“Yeah, the thinking that life would be great *if only* I had that car, that gadget, that relationship,” he explained. “Actually, I finally have many of the things I’ve always wanted. A motorcycle. All kinds of ‘toys.’ Lots of open doors professionally. And yet I’m still not really happy.”

“Do you have any sense of why?” I asked.

“I want someone to share this with,” he confided. “And yet, I don’t want to make that into a holy grail. I have a feeling that won’t suddenly make me happy either.”

What is it that makes us long for things we think will make us happy? What keeps even the most grounded and least materialistic people longing for something more?

I’m certainly not immune. I’m a 30-something single living in an apartment that’s tall on charm and short on amenities. I long for a godly husband, central air conditioning, a cooler wardrobe, thinner thighs. And I often feel a vague sense of needing to acquire or upgrade something.

Most of the time I barely notice this feeling or its origins, but conversations like the one with my friend — and one we had recently at church — force me to look at the roots of my discontent with the status quo.

At church we talked about how easy it is to get ensnared by materialism. With everything at our grasp, and with big neon signs reminding us of that fact at every turn, it’s hard not to think we need everything ... or at least more.

Our teacher read a quote from Ronald Sider’s book *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, “Affluence is the god of 20th Century North Americans, and the adman is his prophet. ... We have been brainwashed to

© CHRISTIAN LARTILLOT / GETTY IMAGES



I long for a godly husband, central air conditioning, a cooler wardrobe, thinner thighs. And I often feel a vague sense of needing to acquire or upgrade something.

believe that bigger houses, more prosperous businesses, and more sophisticated gadgets are the way to joy and fulfillment.”

I thought of some of the commercials I’d giggled at or rolled my eyes over recently — disposable cat litter boxes (how lazy are we?), new improved bras (don’t they still basically have the one function?), medicines that come in 27 varieties (non-drowsy, extended release, dissolvable strips, mango-flavored liquid), and this season’s latest trends (don’t go looking five-minutes ago).

Is it any wonder that we have a difficult time being happy and content with what is? Or that we think our fulfillment is really

this conditional? But what really struck me about these conversations is the suspicion that at least part of my desire to get married stems from this need to acquire, upgrade, or keep up with the Joneses.

Sure, there’s a God-given desire to do life with a beloved. But I wonder if a consumer mentality has snuck into my thinking and motivations regarding romantic relationships, making a good desire sometimes unbearable and often mutually exclusive with feelings of contentment and fulfillment.

I wonder if we have a decent grasp on what contentment truly means. At times I’ve erroneously equated contentment in

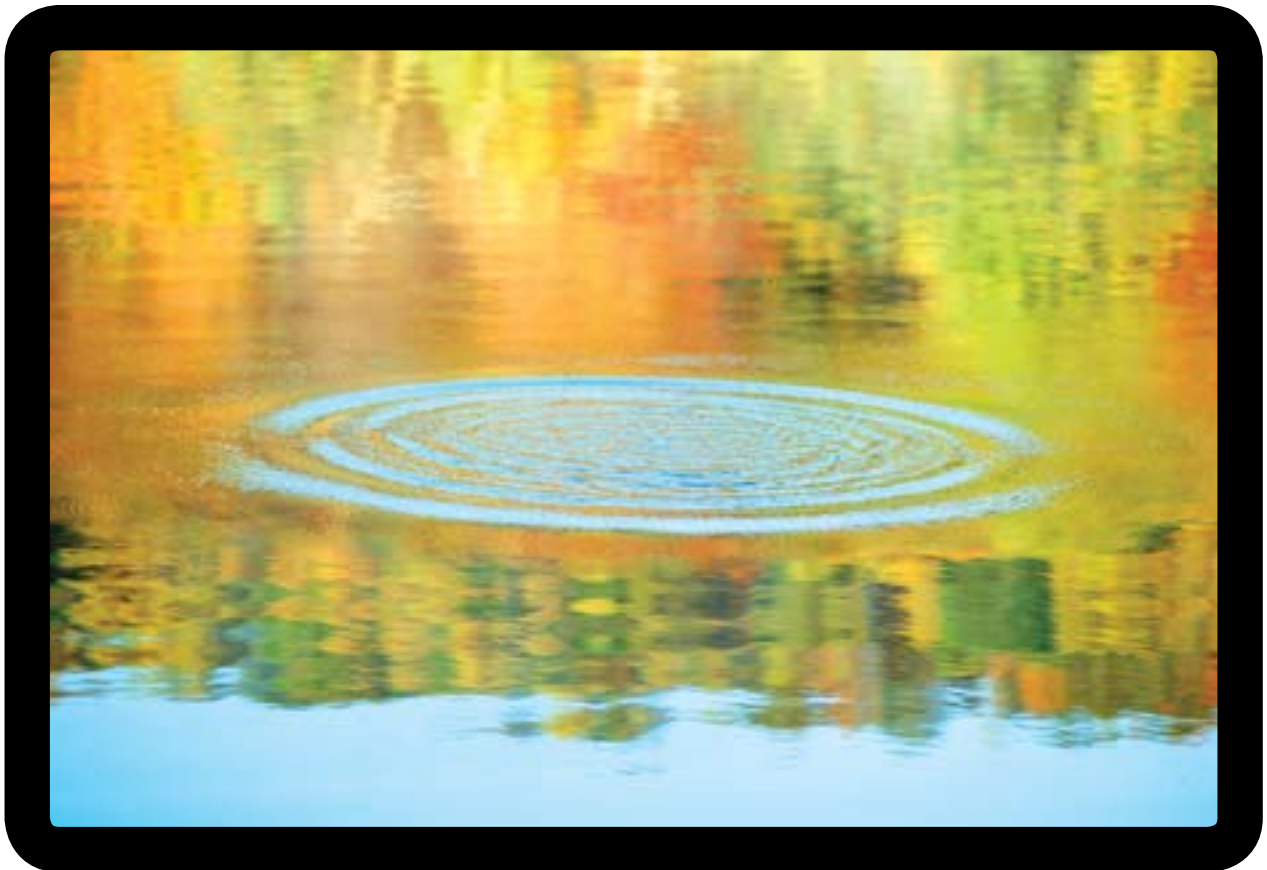
this single stage of life with the act of relinquishing my desire to get married. But once again, that’s conditional: *I’ll be fulfilled if only I give up my desire to have a husband.* And I don’t think being content in our singleness is really the right goal. I think contentment has nothing to do with our marital status.

True godly contentment looks more like Psalm 46:10, “Cease striving and know that I am God” (NASB). Or in considering the ravens or the lilies (Luke 12:24-28) and how God provides for them. Or in knowing that our fulfillment won’t come through purchasing, acquiring, marrying, accomplishing, doing, impressing, or any other-ing than simply being. Being a child of God. Being in His presence. Being lost in His love and guided by His unique purpose.

If we’d learn that art of being, I think we’d be on our way to contentment — whether or not there’s a motorcycle in our driveway, whiter teeth in our mouth, or a spouse at our side.



Camarin Courtney, columnist at *ChristianSinglesToday.com* and author of *Table for One*, seeks contentment (and thinner thighs) in the Chicago suburbs.



**"Do a deed of simple kindness;
Though its end you may not see,
It may reach, like widening ripples,
Down a long eternity."**

— Joseph Norris

repurpose



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restore



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