

# WORLD

"THEIR GENERATION IS MORE TRUSTING. THEY THINK HANGING UP IS RUDE." —THE SCAMMING OF AMERICA'S ELDERLY, P. 42



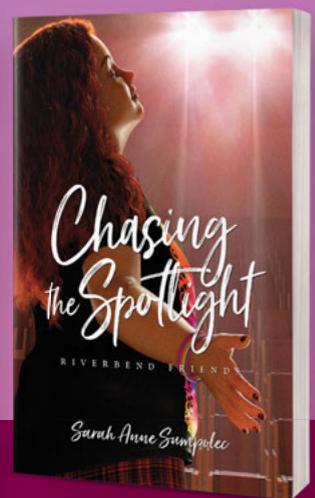
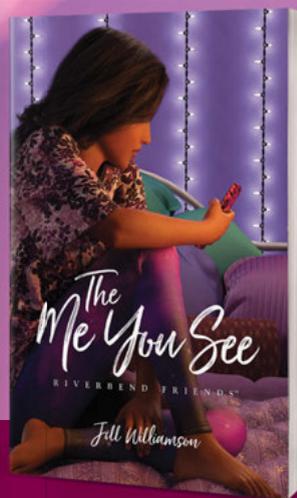
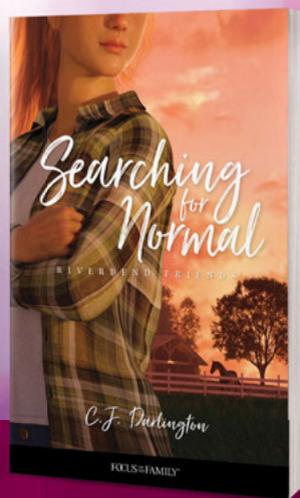
**SUMMER READING** *p.60*

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Illustration by Dan Page c/o Theisport

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—*WORLD Correspondent Kim Henderson, whose story begins on p. 42*

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**A LONG SHADOW**

**MAY 7, P. 44:** I was dismayed to find the content in the May 7 issue shallow in comparison to all that is happening in the world, including an old story based on last year's *Truth Be Told* podcast. Give me more relevant and substantial content.

*Kerry Dean/Henderson, Nev.*

It was a turnoff when I saw the cover of the May 7 issue. What happened to world news? That's what we look for, not cult practice.

*Richard C. Smith/Camp Hill, Pa.*

**WORLD ON THE WORLD**

I was so happy to see Jenny Lind Schmitt's ("Europeans affirm life," p. 50) and Onize Ohikere's ("Home-schooling journeys in Africa," p. 56) reporting in this issue. I love learning about and keeping up with what's going on around this great planet. What a way to live up to your name, WORLD!

*Elizabeth Edgren/Albuquerque, N.M.*

Thank you for the articles in your May 7 issue! I had considered not renewing for the sake of one less magazine—but you changed my mind with this issue.

*Susan Coomber/Lena, Ill.*

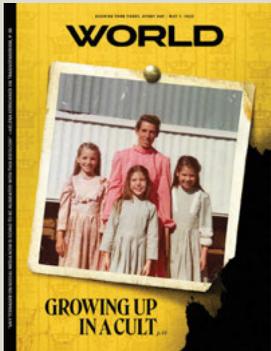
**WEB OF DECEPTION**

**MAY 7, P. 38:** Thank you for publishing an article about the very dark and dangerous lure of the web. "For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice" (James 3:16, NIV).

*Wendy Smith/Colorado Springs, Colo.*

Thanks to Mary Jackson for writing an article on an important, timely, and critical topic for Christians to understand. WORLD holds a special place in our culture to investigate and report the truth about gender dysphoria in a fair and balanced manner.

*Neal Cummings/Rexford, N.Y.*



**WORLD**

**GROWING UP IN A CULT**

**MAY 7:** Your cover story was enough to bring tears to the eyes of anyone who loves children. I'm so glad the three sisters eventually escaped from the cult, and I pray their brother Shawn will find peace and healing in Christ.

*Dan LaRue/  
Lebanon, Pa.*

**LETTERS AND COMMENTS**

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 LETTERS MAY BE EDITED TO YIELD BREVITY AND CLARITY.

**PRIZEFIGHTER TO PRIEST**

**MAY 7, P. 27:** With numerous good, clean, moral movies available, I wonder why WORLD continues to review films like *Father Stu* with its "F-bombs galore, vulgar talk, and bloody fight scenes."

*Roberta Denton/Redding, Calif.*

**MAILBAG**

**MAY 7, P. 5:** I commented to my wife, "Wow, there are some really tough letters in this edition!" What a difficult task you all have. We believe your direction and commitment to your mission have been rock solid. Keep forging ahead!

*Steve Futch/Peachtree City, Ga.*

Thank you for your service, for publishing harsh critics of your work, and for often providing some of the best reporting on the topics you cover.

*Aaron Spence/Richland, Wash.*

Alarmed by recent reader comments, I wish to thank WORLD for its Culture section. My family values your reviewers, who model thoughtful, mature Christian thinking in their appreciation for and engagement with the arts. Please, keep up this vital, good work.

*Jennifer Stewart/Abilene, Texas*

**CLARIFICATION**

WORLD does not view Mormonism as an expression of Biblical Christianity, and we did not intend for our article on religious versions of Wordle to imply that. We appreciate the many readers who wrote in to hold us accountable ("‘JESUS’ for the five-letter win," May 7, p. 68).

**CORRECTION**

The Signal Company Special mimicked combat troops' communications as part of the "Ghost Army" in World War II ("An Army of sights and sounds," June 4, p. 54).



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## ANSWERING STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

Even as WORLD grows digitally, print plays a crucial role

**AT THE TURN OF THE 21ST CENTURY**, WORLD's primary strategic concern was figuring out how to pack as much content as possible into a weekly news magazine, then figuring out how to place that magazine into the hands of the right people.

From a business perspective, those were simpler times. Not *easier* times, just simpler.

It won't be surprising to anyone to hear that the practical complexities increase dramatically with additional platforms. When you add websites, then apps, then podcasts, then video programming, then whatever comes next, you need, in order to run them well, to add people with specific technical competencies.

But I started this discussion by mentioning strategic concerns, not merely practical ones. As we develop our plans, here are the kinds of strategic questions we ask: How does the WORLD audience want to consume our content? How will they want it five or 10 years from now? What's the best platform for delivering particular sorts of stories? What is the investment required to open up new distribution channels?

Questions such as these become even more complicated when we consider multiple media platforms.

That's a lot of background leading to this: We believe WORLD Magazine, the ink-on-paper product you hold in your hands, is important to our future, primarily because so many of you have told us it's important to you.

It is true that most of WORLD's growth is on our digital platforms and that most of our content—including magazine content—is developed for those platforms. Still, quite a lot of content is best delivered on paper, and many of us prefer sitting down with a quality magazine instead of scrolling on a screen.

With that in mind, about 18 months ago we began planning to invest additional resources into WORLD Magazine. The strategy itself is a long-term one. A lot of details have changed since we began the planning, but the overall plan is still in place. You already have seen some of the results, even if you haven't specifically noticed them. Some of the changes still to come will be more conspicuous.

None of this means we will be short-changing our other platforms. As the Lord provides (primarily through the subscriptions, gift subscriptions, and charitable contributions of our WORLD family), we plan to keep up the pace of development of all of our channels, when we determine such development will serve you better. ■

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Martin'.

Kevin Martin



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## Micro schools, major goals

Christian education shouldn't  
be only an elite effort

**M**OST OF YOU READERS have no way of knowing that I wasn't always in the task of journalism. When I decided 45 years ago to leave the field of education and try my hand at publishing, I didn't really change my vocation.

By that time I had spent just long enough in elementary, secondary, and college level teaching and administration to know that my forte would have to be discovered elsewhere. I wasn't good at lesson plans, curriculum design, attendance records, and a hundred other high-demand habits of traditionally structured school life.

I had dabbled with printing and publishing for close to 20 years, and thought it was fair—by pouring myself into those tasks—to test my gifts on those fronts.

My goal—first for the students in the schools where I had served, and later for the readers of the publications for which I was responsible—was that they would always and naturally think of their Creator God as at the center of their existence. If that had defined my philosophy of Biblically directed education, it no less defined my philosophy of Biblically directed journalism.

And it has indeed been my delight to watch the growth (in numbers) and the maturing (educational and spiritual) of the Christian school movement. Nor have I had to watch all this from a distance. I've been welcomed to serve on three different boards of directors, where I'm sure I've learned much more than I've had to share with my colleagues.

From one perspective, however, a big chunk of all that success has come at painful cost. The Christian

**“WE’RE INTENTIONAL. WE  
THINK ABOUT WHAT STUDENTS  
WILL LEARN, AND WHO OUR  
STUDENTS WILL BE.”**

school movement has become more and more economically elitist—which has meant that there are still hordes of people who have no access to a Christian school of any kind.

(Even the homeschool phenomenon carries an inherent whisper of elitism, to the extent that it typically dictates one parent's staying at home—and the attendant costs of taking on that obligation. But that's another discussion.)

So I'm delighted to report to you the vision and commitment of at least one Christian school in responding to that challenge. Chattanooga Christian School, in southeast Tennessee, serves just over 1,000 students—and knows what we're talking about when it hears the charge of elitism.

But now CCS is forging strategic links with other schools in the region. Olivet Baptist Church says that for years it's wanted to launch a school—but doubted whether it had the resources to do the job well. Now, in a win/win agreement drawn up three years ago, the church provides the facilities, only nine minutes from the CCS campus, while CCS coordinates what the school calls the “educational infrastructure.”

It's not about ownership. Olivet Church's pastor, Bishop Kevin Adams, was excited about utilizing their space, while school Principal Nicha Jean says: “We're intentional. We think about what students will learn, and who our students will be. We treat the spiritual side and the academic side equally. All of it is important.”

But that's not all. This August, CCS is committed to open a second “micro school” in Chattanooga's Glenwood area, a minority community anchored by New City Fellowship (PCA). Highlighting the benefits, CCS Lower School Head Shonda Caines points to the tiny new schools' access to special education training and personnel.

Details of such innovative expansion almost make me think it's time to retire from journalism and see if I've any gifts left in the field of education. ■

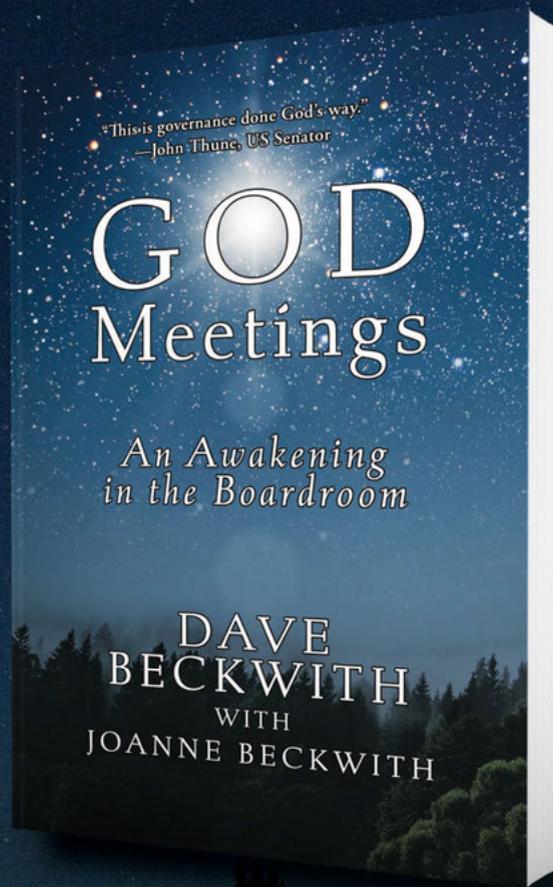
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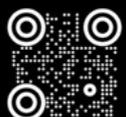


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## HONG KONG'S GAGGED PRESS

Amid media crackdown, the city's press club cancels awards

by Erika Kwong

**F**OR THE FIRST TIME IN 26 YEARS, Hong Kong's Foreign Correspondents' Club (FCC) canceled its Human Rights Press Awards. It had scheduled the ceremony for May 3, World Press Freedom Day, but announced the suspension on April 25. That decision of the FCC board, which includes journalists from *The New York Times* and CNN, prompted one board member and eight Press Freedom Committee members to resign in protest.

Observers consider the foreign press club's cancellation an act of self-censorship as the regime has cracked down on local media organizations. Keith Richburg, president of the FCC, cited legal risks for calling off the event: "Over the last two years, journalists →

Stand News Editor Patrick Lam is escorted by police into a van after they searched his Hong Kong office on Dec. 29.



in Hong Kong have been operating under new ‘red lines’ on what is and is not permissible, but there remain significant areas of uncertainty, and we do not wish unintentionally to violate the law.”

Hong Kong authorities used the Beijing-imposed national security law to shut down the pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* and arrest its executives. Violators of that law against subversion, secession, foreign collusion, and terrorism could face a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. Using a colonial-era sedition law, authorities shuttered the next biggest pro-democracy outlet, *Stand News*, and arrested its editors and board members.

The crackdown has cast a chilling effect. Between January 2021 and April 2022, 16 media organizations were among the 79 civil society groups that closed “due to state repression,” according to the Hong Kong Democracy Council based in Washington, D.C.

The now-defunct *Stand News* would’ve been a major winner of this year’s Human Rights Press Awards, sweeping up four awards and five merits, reported Hong Kong Free Press. Many believe the FCC scrapped the honors to avoid association with *Stand News*.

In past years, the FCC cosponsored the prizes with Amnesty International and the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA). Amnesty closed its Hong Kong offices in 2021 as the national security law made the human rights organization feel unsafe to operate there. Also nixing its press freedom award this year due to political concerns, the HKJA and its president Ronson Chan have been targeted by Chinese state media. Chan, a Christian, was a *Stand News* editor and was interrogated by the police in the clampdown on that outlet.

Hong Kong’s press freedom ranking plunged from last year’s 80th place to the current 148th out of 180 countries and territories, according to Reporters Without Borders (RSF). The sharpest drop of the year in RSF’s index puts Hong

**HONG KONG’S**  
**PRESS FREEDOM**  
**RANKING PLUNGED**  
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**148TH OUT OF 180**  
**COUNTRIES.**



Kong below the Philippines and above Turkey. Thirteen journalists are now imprisoned in Hong Kong, RSF reported.

More than 170 journalists signed a letter to Richburg and FCC members asking for transparency regarding the awards cancellation. The FCC’s insufficient explanation “arouses suspicion of political compromise with the oppression of press freedom in Hong Kong,” the petition read, and “constitutes an act of disrespect and irresponsibility to the journalists in Asia

who risk their lives and freedoms in the defense of professional journalism.”

Richburg wrote in his response that the petition’s questions “get into areas that I ... cannot speak about publicly at this time.” Dropping the awards was “the only plausible way forward” for the board that voted 15 to 1 for the move.

A day after the club announced the cancellation, the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan (FCCJ) presented Hong Kong journalists with its Freedom of the Press Award in the Asia category. The honor recognized their contributions to upholding the values of a free press while often under “extreme pressure.”

Taking over for the FCC, Arizona State University’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication will administer the Human Rights Press Awards as of 2023.

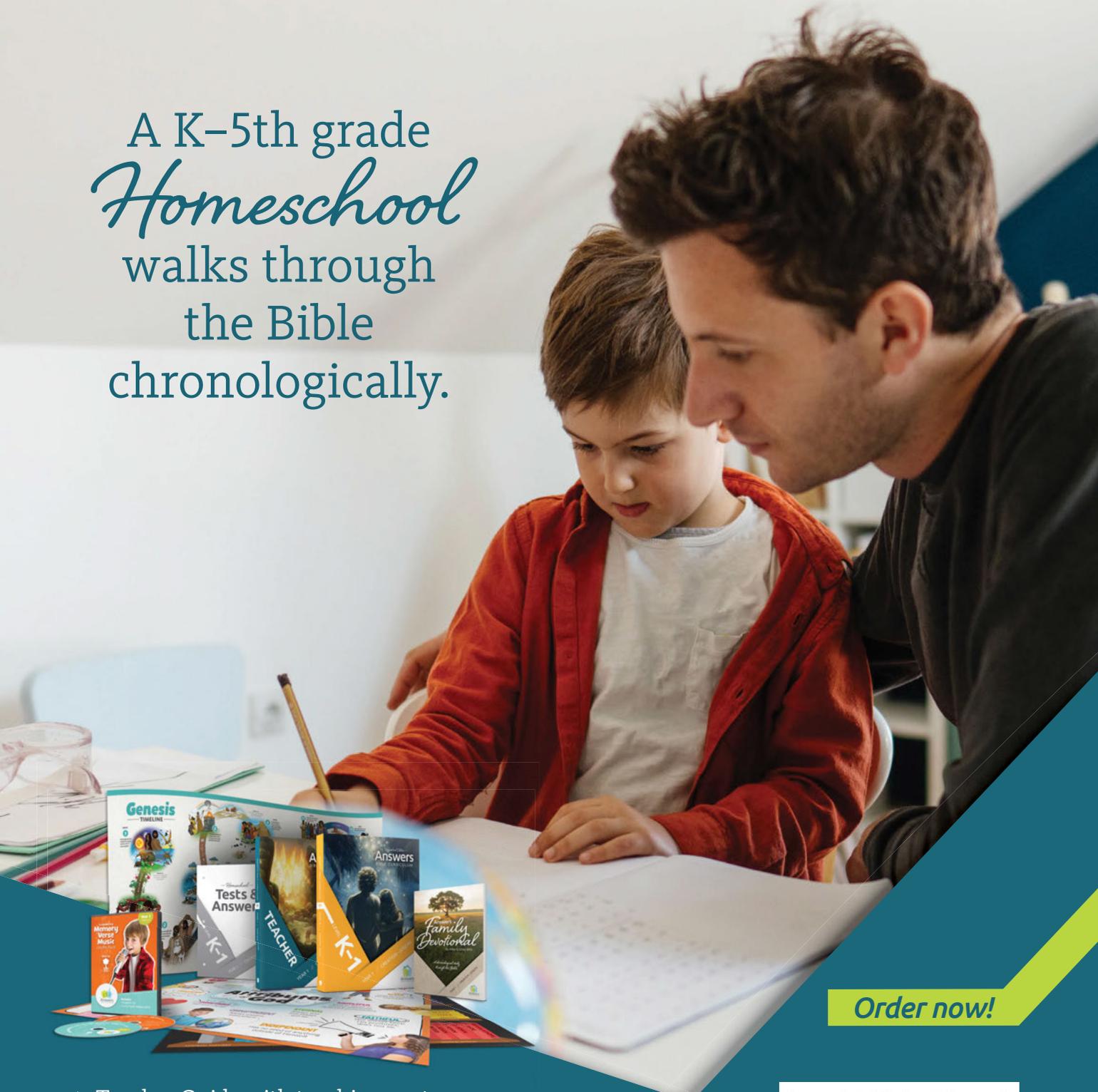
Hong Kong’s media environment will be more strained when John Lee takes office as chief executive, the city’s top leader, on July 1. Lee is among the Hong Kong and Chinese officials that Washington sanctioned over the national security law implementation, and he has vowed to bring forward an additional local security law that many think will further curtail freedoms.

Still, Hong Kong journalists persist. A group of reporters, whose outlets had closed, launched on May 16 a news website, *The Witness*. Covering the trials of prosecuted pro-democracy activists, its webpage states, “We are in Hong Kong and the courts to witness and record.” ■



HKJA President Ronson Chan stands outside the shuttered *Stand News* office on Jan. 7.

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Allison  
Fluke-  
Ekren

## TERRORIST

# Not in Kansas anymore

**U.S. woman trained a battalion of female ISIS fighters and planned attack on a mall**

**P**ROSECUTORS IN JANUARY charged Allison Fluke-Ekren, 42, with leading an all-female battalion of Islamic State (ISIS) militants in Syria. Fluke-Ekren moved from Kansas to Egypt in 2008, then to Libya, landing in Syria in 2014. She has been married five times, and almost all of her husbands were killed while working for ISIS, according to court documents. Prosecutors said Fluke-Ekren began training roughly 100 women and girls to fight using AK-47 assault rifles, grenades, and suicide belts in 2016. Prosecutors said Fluke-Ekren wanted to recruit operatives to attack a college campus in the United States and discussed a terrorist attack on a shopping mall. She tried to fake her death in 2018 to evade U.S. investigators. She handed herself over to local Syrian police in 2021. She was transferred to U.S. custody on Jan. 28 and pleaded guilty June 7. She faces a maximum 20-year sentence.

## NIGERIAN CHURCH TARGETED

Terrorists targeted St. Francis Catholic Church on June 5 in the southwestern Nigerian city of Owo. It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack. Gunmen opened fire and detonated explosives, killing dozens of people. Officials said the death toll could top 50, including many children. The Catholic Diocese of Ondo state in a statement later confirmed the attackers did not abduct any of the priests. Nigerian Christians have continued to suffer violent attacks from Muslim extremists in recent months. “No matter what, this country shall never give in to evil and wicked people, and darkness will never overcome light,” Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said.

## MONKEYPOX ON THE RISE

More than a dozen states had reported a total of 31 monkeypox cases in early June, leading the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to bump the disease to alert Level 2 out of 3. The agency is urging “enhanced precautions,” including wearing masks while traveling. The illness typically starts with flu-like symptoms such as fever, body aches, and fatigue. Some patients also develop rashes and lesions. CDC official Jennifer McQuiston said the rise in cases is unlikely to trigger another pandemic but needs to be curbed to prevent mass transmission to rodents and pets. Doctors say monkeypox appears to be sexually transmitted between homosexual men, but one heterosexual woman has been identified as a patient. There had been more than 1,000 cases globally as of June 7.

## RHEA KILLS BABIES

Catholic bishops from Colorado asked Catholic lawmakers who voted in favor of pro-abortion legislation earlier this year to “voluntarily refrain from Holy Communion,” according to an open letter signed on June 6 and provided to Religion News Service. “Voting for RHEA was participating in a gravely sinful action because it facilitates the killing of innocent unborn babies,” the bishops’ letter said, referring to the Reproductive Health Equity Act, “and those Catholic politicians who have done so have very likely placed themselves outside of the communion of the Church.”

# 5.3%

The interest rate on the average 30-year fixed loan as of May 12, according to Freddie Mac.

# 10.8%

The share, according to the Mortgage Bankers Association, of home loan applications accounted for by adjustable-rate mortgages—the most since 2008.

# 1.95M

The number of homeowners at least 30 days delinquent in their mortgage payment. That number has been increasing, but remains well below 2008 levels.

# \$428,700

The median price for houses sold in the United States as of April, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

# INTEREST RATES HEADED UP, HOME PRICES COOL



# 15%

THE SHARE OF HOME SELLERS who cut prices in April, according to real estate app Redfin. The volume of sellers cutting prices marks a six-month high and reflects a big increase over last year. In April 2021, just 9 percent of home sellers cut prices. But that was in the middle of one of the greatest bull markets for housing in memory. What's different this year? Interest rate hikes at the Federal Reserve have trickled down to commercial banks where interest rates on traditional mortgages are higher today than at any time since 2009. Rising rates mean higher housing costs, persuading some potential home buyers to wait for better times. Increasingly, those who remain in the market for a house are turning toward adjustable-rate mortgages—just like 15 years ago in the previous housing bubble.

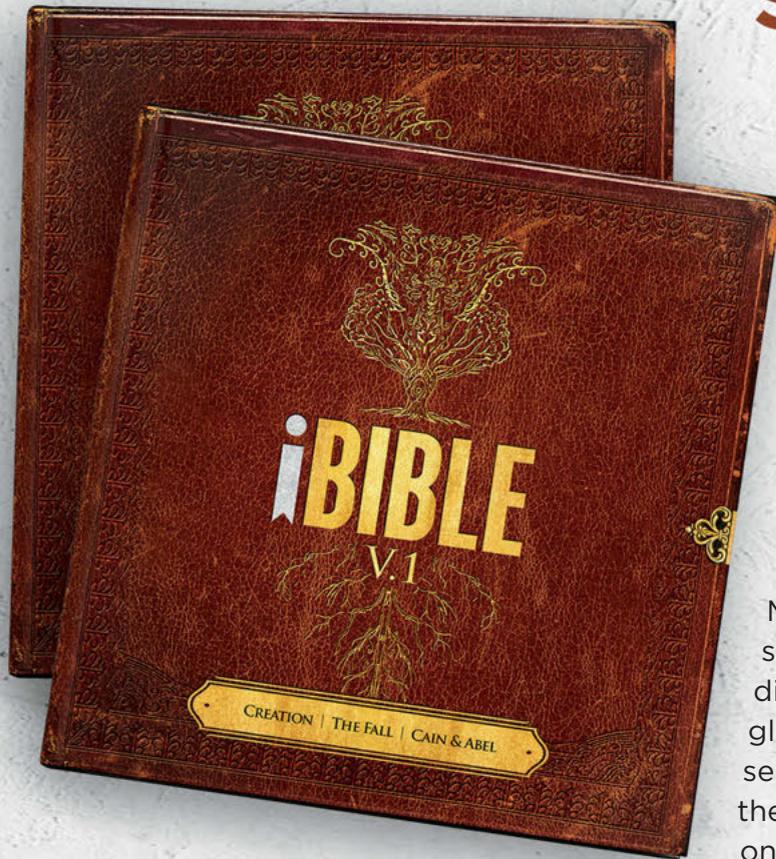
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**“It’s as if your neighbor’s house is burning and you just close your window and say it’s fine.”**

YAP BOUM, an epidemiologist in Cameroon about the monkeypox epidemic.

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**“The worst part is, even if they catch this person, he’s going to be out again.”**

GRISELDA VILE, whose brother, Daniel Enriquez, was randomly gunned down on a New York City subway on May 22.

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**“I’m pretty sure the jubilee atmosphere is a four-day wonder, and that the national mood will turn fairly sour again fairly quickly. It feels like we’re all waiting for ... the storm or the dam to break.”**

TIM BALE, a professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London, on the four-day celebration of Queen Elizabeth’s jubilee.

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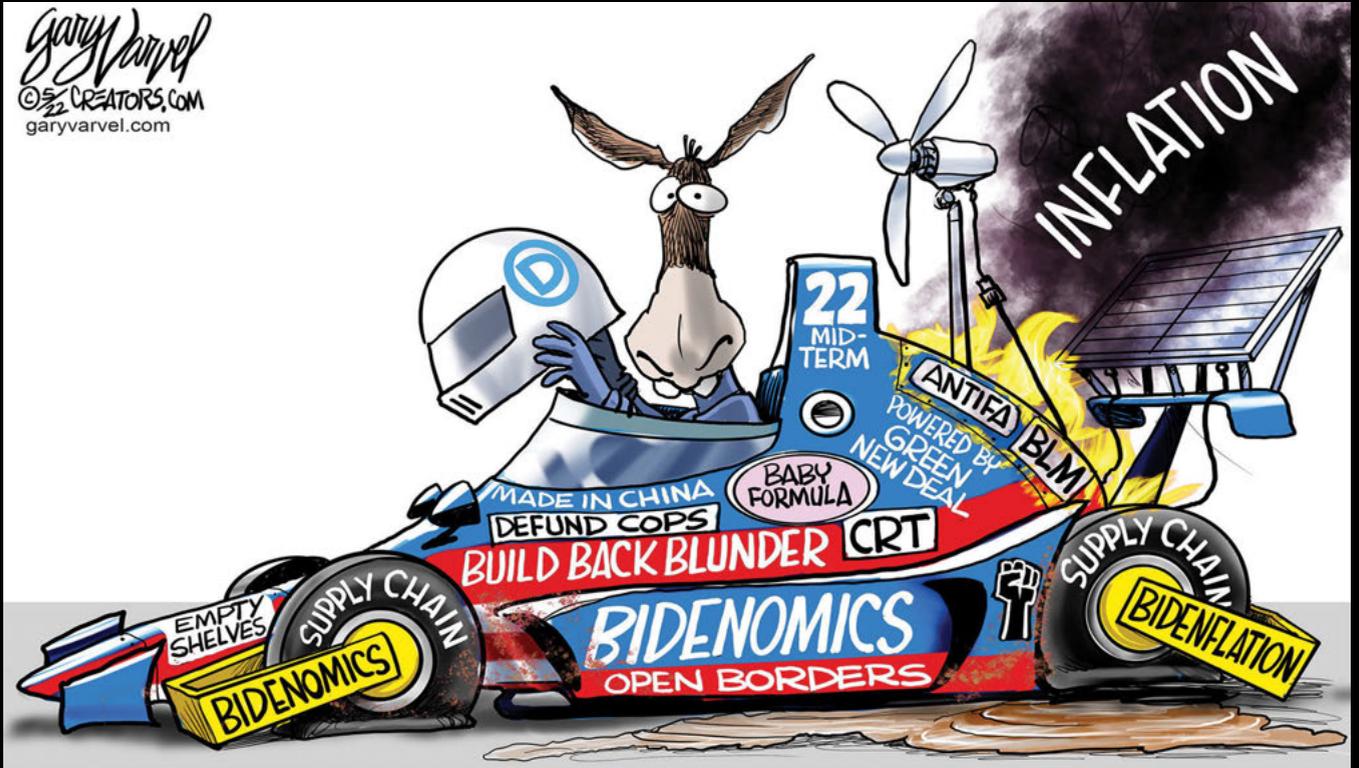
**“I was flabbergasted because it’s not every day that someone offers breast milk, certainly not for free.”**

DIANA FENG, a mother in Queens, when she found out about another mother in Queens, a woman who has Hyperlactation Syndrome and who has donated thousands of ounces to the New York Milk Bank.

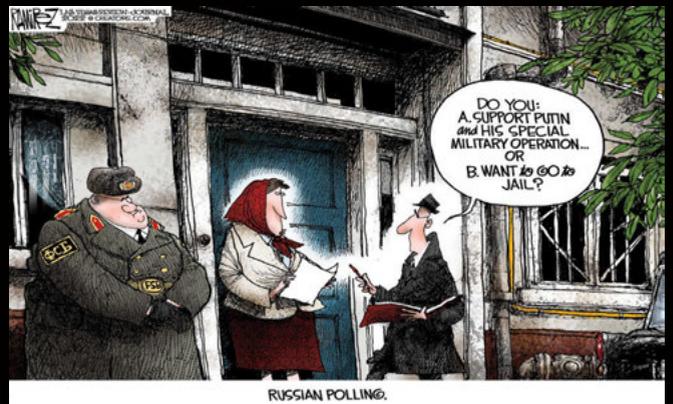
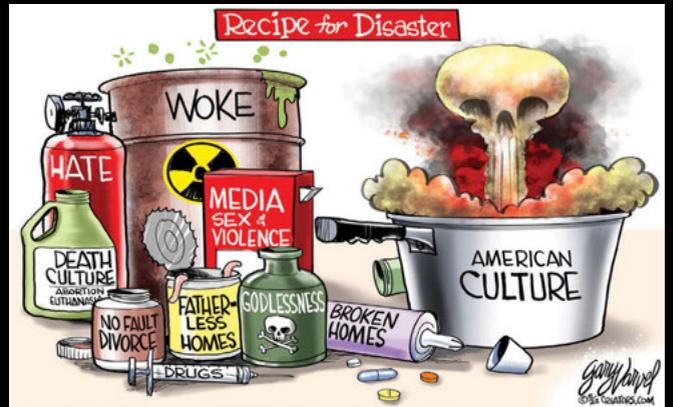
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**“It will cause a shake-up in the mental states of people and what they perceive as real or virtual. Virtual can’t be put back in the box.”**

Dream Overture’s TAYLOR BROWN on virtual reality technology.



The DEMOCRATS' CAR for the 2022 Midterm Race





## Reds earn a no-hit loss

The Pittsburgh Pirates walk their way to a victory without any hits

by John Dawson

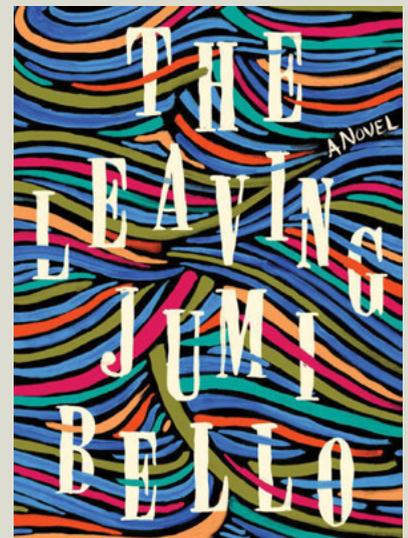
Cincinnati Reds pitcher Hunter Greene was close to perfect on May 15 against the Pittsburgh Pirates—but it just wasn't good enough. Greene pitched eight no-hit innings before finding trouble in the 8th inning. After getting an out, Greene walked the next two batters, leading Reds manager David Bell to bring in right-handed reliever Art Warren to finish up the game. But Warren walked the next batter on four pitches and allowed a fielder's choice to second that scored a run. Warren closed the inning without allowing a hit, but the damage was done. Pittsburgh's David Bednar closed out the scoreless Reds in the top of the 9th, giving the Pirates a 1-0 victory. The Reds' no-hit-ter marks just the sixth time in baseball's modern era that a team pitched a no-hitter and lost the game.

### GRANDBABY DUE

An aging Indian couple has filed a lawsuit against their son and daughter-in-law because the young couple won't provide them with grandchildren. According to the complaint filed in an Uttarakhand courtroom in the country's north, the elderly couple wants to be repaid \$640,000 for the cost of the wedding, reception, and other costs they incurred. "My son has been married for six years but they are still not planning a baby," the parents said in their court filing. "At least if we have a grandchild to spend time with, our pain will become bearable." The litigants' lawyer said the younger couple have a fiduciary responsibility to help their parents. Unless the family reaches an agreement, the case will move to court in May.

### CAN'T HELP MYSELF

In February, Riverhead Books canceled publication of writer Jumi Bello's debut novel after discovering that portions of the novel were lifted from other writers. Editors at Lit Hub, a literary website, allowed her to publish an explanation on May 9 titled, "I Plagiarized Parts of my Debut Novel. Here's Why." But readers quickly discovered Bello's explanation article also contained plagiarism and editors took the article down.





### LIFE AT SEA

A Seattle couple has traded their mortgage for a cruise ship cabin, saying luxury cruising helps them cut down on bills. Accountant Angelyn Burk ran the numbers last year and discovered she and her husband Richard could save money cruising for as little as \$43 a day rather than sticking with their house. So the travel-loving couple in their 50s quit their jobs, put their house on the market, and packed their bags. “We don’t plan to permanently live on land in the future,” Angelyn Burk told *The National Desk* in May. About a year in, the couple says their favorite destinations so far have been Singapore, Italy, Canada, Iceland, and the Bahamas.

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### GOODWILL TREASURE

Back in 2018, art collector Laura Young had a good day at the Goodwill thrift store. She spotted a stone statue in an Austin, Texas, Goodwill and thought it looked old. She bought the marble bust for \$35 and took it home. Eventually she was able to prove the bust was a Roman original from the time of Christ. Young placed the sculpture on display at the San Antonio Museum of Art until she could discover how it got from Europe to Texas. That answer came this year when a Sotheby’s consultant discovered the last known record of the bust showed it residing in a German museum prior to World War II. Young said she’ll return the bust to Germany next year. “It was bittersweet since I knew I couldn’t keep or sell the [bust],” she said.



**WE DON’T PLAN  
TO PERMANENTLY  
LIVE ON LAND IN  
THE FUTURE.**



### JEWS SINGLED OUT

A German airline has created for itself a public relations mess after refusing to board a number of Jewish passengers on a plane bound for Budapest. The row began at Frankfurt Airport on May 4 when the flight crew noticed some passengers in the terminal weren’t adhering to the masking regulations. That’s when, according to bumped passengers, the airline began removing identifiably Jewish passengers from the flight. Passenger Yitzy Halpern told CNN he protested being removed by Lufthansa officials, telling them he was wearing his mask properly the entire time. But according to Halpern, Lufthansa officials told him he and other Jews complying with the masking regulations would have to suffer alongside their co-religionists. The German airline has since apologized and reiterated its commitment to combating anti-Semitism.



### MAN VS. HOA

A North Carolina man is taking his homeowners association to court after the group threatened him with fines over his dog treat station. Five years ago, Bedford, N.C., resident Chuck Pringle set up a self-service station consisting of a plastic container of dog treats atop a stone pedestal. Pringle says dog walkers often stop and reward their pooches from his stash. But officials at the Falls River HOA have told him to take down or move his treat station. Pringle put the pedestal and treat container in between the sidewalk and the street, something the HOA told him was against the rules. But Pringle has countered that the right-of-way belongs to the city. Resolving the dispute will be up to a judge in Wake County District Court.





## Alive in Negative World

Even if America falls apart,  
God is still at work,  
still on His throne

**F**REDERICK DOUGLASS, the former slave turned ardent abolitionist, was not easily shut down, but despair sometimes got the better of him. At an anti-slavery event in the 1850s, Douglass was so pessimistic about his country's will to outlaw its gravest evil, he feared only armed conflict could overcome it—a shooting war with horrible consequences.

At that point, he was interrupted. Sojourner Truth, another former slave turned abolitionist, stood almost 6 feet tall and had a voice like a foghorn. “Frederick,” she boomed, “is God dead?” Douglass’ speaking gifts were legendary and heckler-proof, but the question left him speechless.

There’s some discrepancy about where this happened—Salem, Ohio, or Boston’s Faneuil Hall—but little doubt that it happened. Douglass recalled it in one of his memoirs and “Is God Dead?” is chiseled on Sojourner’s gravestone. As we know, the dreadful armed conflict occurred, but the institution of slavery ended.

Martin Luther King’s battle against gross racial inequity cost him his life but shocked the national conscience. On another front, the rise of Nazi Germany seemed unstoppable to the millions of Jews herded toward gas chambers. But it was stopped. Through all the horrors of history, God was not dead, and He isn’t dead now.

Obvious, but easy to overlook in today’s political squabbles, especially among Christians. We have always disagreed about political involvement, or whether to involve ourselves in politics at all, but both the volume and the stakes seem higher today.

Aaron Renn, formerly a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, is now cofounder of American Reformer,

## THE CHURCH ALREADY SEEMED LIKE A DESERT ISLAND IN A HOSTILE CULTURE.

an online journal of Protestant political thought. His article “Welcome to the Negative World” paints a grim picture of a political culture drifting—or speeding—to outright hostility. His scan of recent history sees a generally positive view of Christianity up to the mid-1990s, in spite of culture-war rhetoric and moral-majority protests. Then, a shift toward “Neutral” (Christians seen as quaint, perhaps, but harmless) inspired a strategy of winsome cultural engagement, exemplified by Tim Keller and churches like Hillsong.

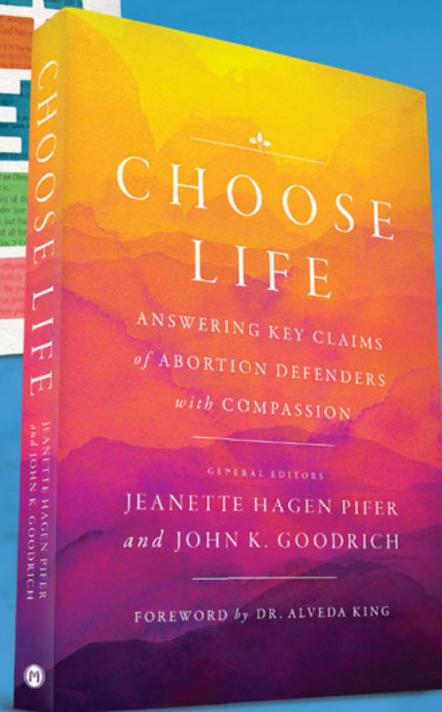
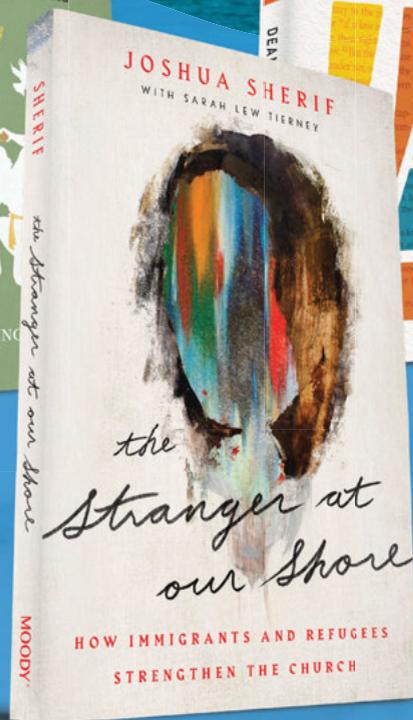
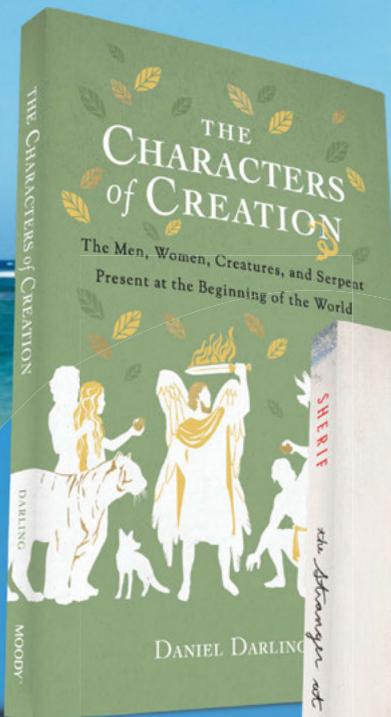
Now Renn sees the church struggling to define itself in “Negative World” where, in some circles, being a Christian could harm one’s reputation rather than enhance it.

Negative World doesn’t mean the culture war is lost or that cultural engagement is useless. But we haven’t decided what it does mean, or if it’s even a thing. Hasn’t the world always been essentially negative toward Christians? In the early 1970s I remember my delight at finding two fellow believers (one left-leaning hippie and one black lay pastor) on a bus trip between Dallas and Abilene, because the church already seemed like a desert island in a hostile culture. But maybe the fact that three of us could disagree respectfully about politics was a more positive sign than I realized.

I miss that respectful disagreement. Donald Trump, for all the judges, job growth, and low gas prices, threw a grenade into Camp Evangelical. Writing in *First Things*, Associate Editor James R. Woods recalls his admiration for Kellerite social engagement and his distaste for Trump, but, “During the 2016 election cycle, I still approached politics through the winsome model, and I realized that it was hardening me toward fellow believers. ... I didn’t like what this was doing to my heart and felt that it was clouding my political judgment.” Exactly: The way my pro- and anti-Trump Christian friends talk about each other is more discouraging than the way the left talks about all of us.

Yet God lives. He’s alive in the world but even more so in us. That’s why we should relate to the world the way Jesus did and does: with compassion for harassed and helpless sheep (Matthew 9:36). Can we do any less for our brothers and sisters, whether they’re banging the drum for right wing politics or watching with disdain? If the United States is falling apart, God is still at work. If our own house falls apart, we will have to answer for it. ■

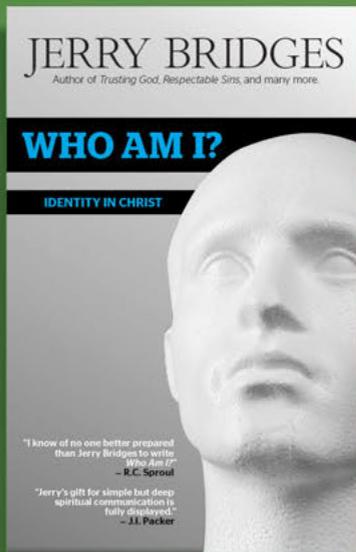
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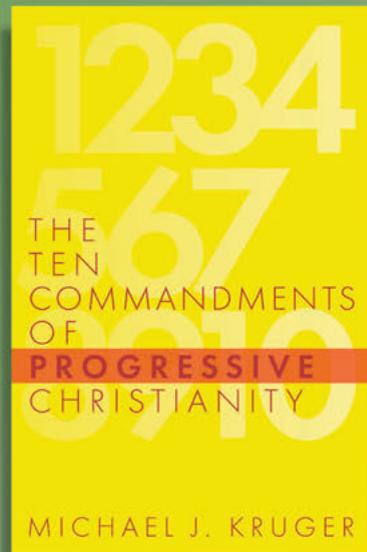


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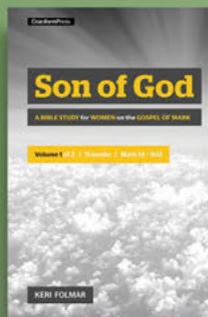
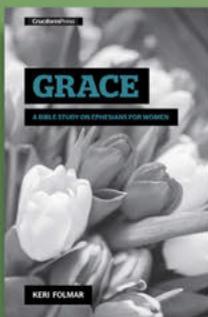
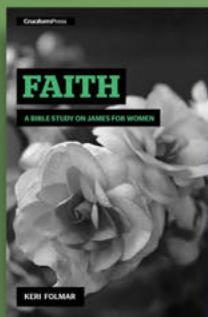
Jerry Bridges unpacks eight aspects of our union *with* Christ and our identity *in* Christ. Endorsed by R.C. Sproul and J.I. Packer.

Michael J. Kruger, President of Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, succinctly exposes and refutes the errors in each of these.



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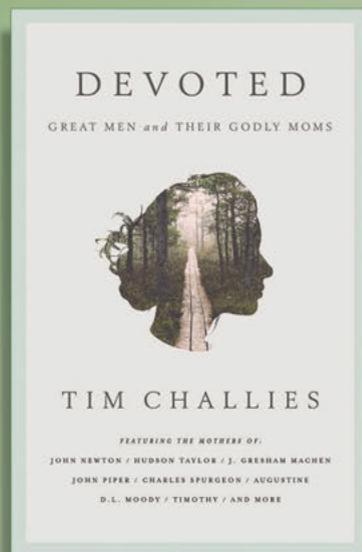
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# CULTURE

Movies & TV Music

## A CLEAR AND PRESENT MESSAGE

*Top Gun: Maverick*  
delivers high-octane  
thrills and a reminder  
of important virtues

by Jim Hill



**I**N 1986 A GALLON OF GAS COST \$0.89, the average price of a new car was \$9,255, and the most popular movie hero of the year was a young naval Top Gun pilot named Pete “Maverick” Mitchell. Over the last 36 years, more than the prices have changed in America, but it’s good to see this movie icon’s popularity remains consistent. *Top Gun: Maverick* launched in theaters on May 27 and immediately went vertical. The film had the highest Memorial Day weekend debut with an impressive \$160 million, making it the biggest opening of Tom Cruise’s career.

At the start of the film, Maverick (Cruise) is a test pilot still pushing the limits of aircraft speed and the Navy’s protocols. Maverick’s insubordination is about to get him washed out, but Tom “Iceman” Kazansky (Val Kilmer) pulls strings to get him reassigned to a special mission back at the Top Gun training academy. Iceman is now an admiral who, like Kilmer himself, is battling throat cancer. With his friend’s life nearing its end, Maverick knows this could be his last chance.

Maverick has a difficult assignment: train the “best of the best” to fly a seemingly impossible mission to destroy a plutonium enrichment plant in an enemy land. Just like in the original movie, this select group has colorful call signs. Instead of Goose, Viper, and Iceman, we now have Hangman (Glen Powell), Phoenix (Monica Barbaro), and Rooster (Miles Teller). Maverick struggles with the assignment because Rooster is the son of his deceased radar intercept officer Goose, and Maverick wants to shield him from harm.

The story and the action move at Mach speed with brilliant cinematography. The aerial footage relies on practical effects rather than computer-generated imagery. Cruise, who is known for performing his own stunts, prepared the cast by putting them through a rigorous monthlong training program that readied them to tolerate the maneuvers.

The actors shot their scenes in the cockpits of real F-18 Super Hornets pulling real G’s. Director Joe Kosinski said, “You can’t fake the g-forces.” The camerawork gives the film a dizzying sense of authenticity.

In addition to all its entertainment value, *Top Gun: Maverick* just might be the most culturally important film of the

year. The movie is unabashedly pro-military. The values the film displays are in stark contrast to the world’s prevailing nihilistic philosophy that tells us to do whatever makes us happy.

*Top Gun* reminds viewers that their lives are not meaningless. Things like friendship, teamwork, courage, and doing the right thing really matter. The movie highlights that each human life is precious and that our real worth and meaning are most often found in the service of others. The message of the film is clear: Never leave your wingman.



**THE MESSAGE OF  
THE FILM IS CLEAR:  
NEVER LEAVE  
YOUR WINGMAN.**



The film also brings refreshing clarity to the line between good and evil. The enemy remains nameless, but when that enemy is found to be doing something for wicked purposes, the movie does not portray the military as indecisive.

The pilots do not stop to discuss whether their actions might be perceived as imperialistic or whether America has the moral authority to act. Virtuous action is simply taken. Maverick teaches his students to trust well-formed values.

Truth, justice, and self-sacrifice are honorable values. *Top Gun: Maverick* may do nothing more than break box office records. But maybe, just maybe, it will remind audiences that truth is not relative and it’s much clearer than we think. ■

**TOP HIRED GUN** Born Thomas Cruise Mapother IV, Tom Cruise has starred in more than 55 films since 1983.



## A “strange new” return to Star Trek’s roots

by Marty VanDriel

More than 50 years ago, Gene Roddenberry created one of the world’s most popular science-fiction series. Paramount’s new show *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* (streaming on Paramount Plus) returns to the franchise’s roots, feeling much more like the original series than recent spin-offs.

The series (rated TV-PG for violence, it also has a few adult sexual references and homosexual characters) follows Captain Christopher Pike (Anson Mount), the predecessor of the better-known James Kirk, who leads the USS *Enterprise*. Joining Pike on the bridge is half-Vulcan Spock (Ethan Peck), first officer Una Chin-Riley (Rebecca Romijn), and new crew member Uhura (Celia Rose Gooding).

If you’ve watched any of the Star Trek movies or TV series, you’ll feel at home with these adventures. Spock’s Vulcan rejection of emotionalism makes for some funny lines.

Unlike recent series, *Strange New Worlds* has self-contained stories that wrap up by the end of each episode. The *Enterprise* crew members take their duty to the Federation of Planets seriously, and it is refreshing to hear Pike defend the Federation’s values to aliens that might be enemies or new allies.



## BREATHTAKING TEXAS

*Deep in the Heart* explores the natural wonders of the Lone Star State

by Bob Brown

THE LANDSCAPES AND WILDLIFE OF TEXAS are as exotic as anything found in Africa. That’s the impression the new documentary *Deep in the Heart: A Texas Wildlife Story*, currently in select theaters, is certain to give viewers. The documentary contains montages of breathtaking panoramas and close-ups of remarkable creatures.

Well-placed cameras eavesdrop on the family life of three of Texas’ 80 ocelots. A drone tracks a bison herd galloping across peach-colored soil against a backdrop of hills striated in various purples. Shown in slow motion, a red-tailed hawk snags one of the 20 million Mexican free-tailed bats choking the twilight skies around Bracken Cave near San Antonio.

Sadly, Lone Star–drawing narrator Matthew McConaughey sees only what “nature has selected.” There’s no acknowledgment of the Creator, whose handiwork this outstanding film captures so well. In the last

chapters of Job, God didn’t point to exploding volcanoes as proof of His power. He described animals—the behemoth and leviathan (whatever they are). God also could have made His case with any of Texas’ amazing creatures shown in this film: resourceful black bears, a tri-hued green jay that rivals the African macaw for beauty, or blind catfish in subterranean cave waters that can live four years between meals. *Deep in the Heart* (rated PG) laments man’s poor stewardship of God’s creation. One awful example: A late 19th-century photo shows bison skulls piled 20 feet high and 100 feet deep.

In July, the film will arrive on multiple streaming platforms.

### HIGH-GROSSING STAR TREKS



- 1 [Star Trek \(2009\)](#)
- 2 [Star Trek Into Darkness \(2013\)](#)
- 3 [Star Trek Beyond \(2016\)](#)
- 4 [Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home \(1986\)](#)
- 5 [Star Trek: First Contact \(1996\)](#)
- 6 [Star Trek: The Motion Picture \(1979\)](#)

# A NEW ADVENTURE FOR AN OLD HERO

Obi-Wan Kenobi fights against the empire and his own doubts in the new Star Wars series

by Collin Garbarino



**O**BI-WAN KENOBI, streaming on Disney+, is yet another Star Wars show attempting to fill in the gaps between the franchise's movies. Actor Ewan McGregor returns as Obi-Wan, the role he played in George Lucas' prequels 20 years ago. This series takes place 10 years after the prequels and 10 years before the original Star Wars trilogy. Obi-Wan is on the desert planet of Tatooine, protecting the young Luke Skywalker whom he's hidden.

Obi-Wan's failure with his former apprentice, Anakin Skywalker who became the dreaded villain Darth Vader, still plagues him. He's spent 10 years doubting himself and the Jedi Order. We see a hero who's lost his confidence—crushed under the weight of a cruel galaxy. But the Empire isn't content to let former Jedi retire. Vader's force-wielding minions show up to hunt down and destroy any remnant of the Jedi Order.

An inquisitor, obsessed with finding Obi-Wan, uses 10-year-old Princess Leia as bait to lure him out of hiding. The old Jedi will have to set his doubts aside if he's going to save Leia and face Vader.

*Obi-Wan Kenobi* isn't a bad series, though it's not without its problems. McGregor is a good actor, and he brings a measure of sorrow to this version of the character. The inquisitors approach caricature, but they're appropriately menacing without being too scary for most kids. Actress Vivien Lyra Blair looks a little young for 10, but she plays Leia with a pleasant curiosity.

The series employs the same special-effects technology pioneered by *The Mandalorian*, filming actors in front of a giant wrap-around screen. The effects are good, but we see the limits of the technology. Many scenes feel like a stage play in which actors are grouped in a small semicircle.

The script needed another round of editing for both dialogue and action. For example, in one scene we see inquisitors arrive on a street corner announcing they're looking for a Jedi on the planet. Tatooine might be sparsely populated, but there must be a more effective way of conducting a planet-wide search. *Obi-Wan Kenobi* also struggles with believable depictions of Jedi powers—a fault not uncommon to the Star Wars franchise. Sometimes these space wizards seem omnipotent, and sometimes, when the plot demands it, they forget they can use the force to do the simplest things.

Shoe-horning the story between the earlier movies feels awkward, robbing Obi-Wan's introductions to Leia and Vader in the original movie of their meaning. If you want to enjoy the show, don't try to connect the dots to other Star Wars installments. They don't sit alongside each other comfortably.

Just watch *Obi-Wan Kenobi* on its own terms. It has an engaging story—the old washed-up hero comes out of retirement and straps on his sword for another adventure. The theme of good versus evil is strong with this one, but our protagonist isn't always sure what his duty is or whether he can fulfill it. There's something satisfying about watching a hero pursue justice despite his own sense of inadequacy. ■

## BOX OFFICE TOP 10

WEEKEND OF JUNE 3-5, ACCORDING TO BOX OFFICE MOJO. QUANTITY OF **SEXUAL (S)**, **VIOLENT (V)**, AND **FOUL-LANGUAGE (L)** CONTENT ON A 0-10 SCALE, WITH 10 HIGH, FROM KIDS-IN-MIND.COM

S V L

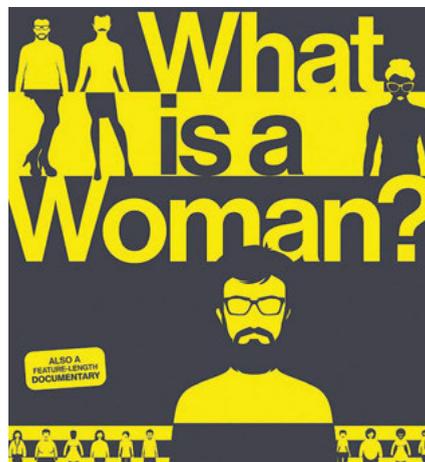
1	<b>Top Gun: Maverick*</b> <b>PG-13</b> .....	3	4	5
2	<b>Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*</b> <b>PG-13</b> .....	1	7	4
3	<b>The Bob's Burgers Movie</b> <b>PG-13</b> .....	2	3	3
4	<b>The Bad Guys*</b> <b>PG</b> .....	1	3	1
5	<b>Downton Abbey: A New Era*</b> <b>PG</b> .....	2	2	3
6	<b>Everything Everywhere All at Once</b> <b>R</b> .....	7	7	6
7	<b>Vikram</b> <b>not rated</b> .....	not rated		
8	<b>Sonic the Hedgehog 2*</b> <b>PG</b> .....	1	3	3
9	<b>The Lost City*</b> <b>PG-13</b> .....	4	5	5
10	<b>Crimes of the Future</b> <b>R</b> .....	not rated		

\*REVIEWED BY WORLD



## TOP 10 FOCUS

*Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* is a sad attempt to keep the unwieldy MCU moving toward another *Infinity War*-like show-down. This cinematic mess isn't so much a film as a lazy two-hour setup without any payoff. Captain America is rolling over in his grave. —from **Collin Garbarino's review**



## STUMPING EXPERTS ON GENDER

Answering the question, “What is a woman?”

by Juliana Chan Erikson

THE QUESTION “What is a woman?” shouldn't be an interesting one, but it is because, with today's shifting mores on gender, not everyone knows the answer. In the provocative, 90-minute documentary *What Is a Woman?*, conservative news site The Daily Wire confirms some people have been so immersed in the world of preferred pronouns and cross-dressing drag queens that they can't define “woman.” Or maybe they won't.

Matt Walsh plays the role of roving journalist, sitting down with gender therapists, doctors, academics, transgender activists, protesters, and typical Americans to ask them for their definition. Walsh has a reputation as a conservative firebrand, but he is fair and effective at warming up his subjects and gliding them into a tight spot with his questions.

The documentary is front-loaded with “gotcha” moments from those interviews: the pediatrician who acknowledges that 4-year-old boys who believe in Santa Claus can also believe the fantasy that they can become girls if enough cross-sex hormones are pumped into their prepubescent bodies, the gender studies professor who finds Walsh's pursuit of truth offensive and transphobic, and the congressman who would rather cut off the interview than give Walsh a proper response to his question.

Pinning down a politician for a straight answer on anything is tough enough, but the fact that medical experts and regular folks also give Walsh nonanswers, run-arounds, and circular definitions (e.g., “A woman is anyone who calls themselves a woman”) is troubling. If all this transgender stuff seems kind of fishy, Walsh would say, that's because it is.

Perhaps the closest to a real response comes from psychiatrist Dr. Miriam Grossman. “Sex is biology. Sex is unchanging. 99.9999 percent of the cells in our body are marked male or female. Gender, on the other hand, is a perception. It's a way of identifying.” Eventually the documentary becomes a forceful critique of the transgender movement.

In its waning minutes, the documentary loses steam and veers off message when Walsh, who had merely asked questions for most of the running time, steps back into his normal day job as the angry conservative commentator.

Transgender activists claim the documentary's makers requested interviews under false pretenses. It seems unlikely a transgender activist would willingly speak with The Daily Wire. Whatever the case, their convoluted on-camera responses still show that it's impossible to keep a story straight when it's not based in reality.

Available only through The Daily Wire, the documentary has spare foul language and one interview with a naked man seen from the waist up. But given the discussions of genitalia and sexuality, only adults and teens should be watching.

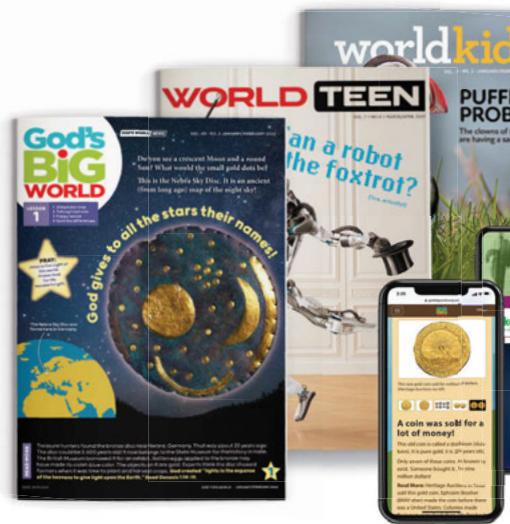
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# CCM stars shine in Stonehill tribute

Phil Keaggy, Amy Grant, Russ Taff, Steve Taylor, and others join forces

by Arsenio Orteza



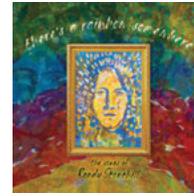
**U**NTIL A COMPILER WITH DEEP, cross-licensing pockets assembles a definitive box set, the closest that anyone is likely to come to capturing the history of Contemporary Christian Music in one place is *There's a Rainbow Somewhere: The Songs of Randy Stonehill*.

Made available to its thousand-plus Kickstarter supporters last November, the 23-track collection is now available to everyone else.

Randy Stonehill, one of Christian music's most prolific singer-songwriters, turned 70 in March. His recording career, which began with the underground 1971 Jesus-rock classic *Born Twice*, turned 50 last year.

To mark the occasion, almost everyone who has ever been anyone in the Christian music scene got together (figuratively speaking—the results were tracked at a dozen different studios) and paid tribute by recording selections from Stonehill's songbook.

Most recorded one, but Phil Keaggy recorded two. And the Choir, besides contributing an outstanding “The Last



Time I Saw Eden,” provided backup for Sixpence None the Richer, Tim Hawkins, Matthew Ward, Terry Scott Taylor, Michael Roe, and Julie & Buddy Miller

(not to mention reappearing, with Taylor and Roe, as Lost Dogs).

Other luminaries: Jars of Clay, Amy Grant, Russ Taff, Michael W. Smith, Steve Taylor (doing a *Twin Peaks*-worthy “Fire”), Ashley Cleveland, Fleming & John, Sara Groves, and Bob Bennett and Honeytree (duetting on “First Prayer”), to say nothing of the “Campfire Choir” that closes the album singing “I Love You” (Love Song, Paul Clark, Michele Pilar, and, singing the first line via the miracle of modern technology, Stonehill's late friend, mentor, and nemesis Larry Norman).

But *There's a Rainbow Somewhere* isn't special only, or even primarily, because of who's doing the singing and playing. It's special because of the songs.

That Stonehill, as a Christian, has written or co-written material intended to prime unbelievers for altar calls stands to reason. The melodies alone of “King of Hearts,” “Until Your Love Broke Through,” “Wonderama,” and “First Prayer” (which climaxes with the disarmingly simple “I don't want my life to end / not ever knowing why it began”) can melt defenses. “The Glory and the Flame,” “Hope of Glory,” and “Remember My Name,” meanwhile, prove that he's pretty good at giving voice to the hopes and fears of the converted as well.

He's less consistent with social commentary. “Barbie Nation” (possibly Stonehill's catchiest song) remains relevant, its dated reference to *Cosmopolitan*'s Helen Gurley Brown notwithstanding. But “Lung Cancer,” especially with Kevin Max refusing to come out with the British slang for cigarette or to update the price of a pack, seems like the work of an out-of-touch wiseacre.

He's hit-or-miss with character sketches too. “Charlie the Weatherman” telegraphs and thus depletes its sentimental conclusion. But the only surprise on *There's a Rainbow Somewhere* more pleasant than the twist of “Rachel Delevoryas” is that almost all of the performers take their respective Stonehill songs to a new level.

Considering the levels to which Stonehill himself has already taken them, that's high praise indeed. ■

# From piano to punk

Noteworthy new or recent releases

by Arsenio Orteza

## PIANO MUSIC OF MIKE GARSON

Danny Holt

Not only do the pianists Danny Holt and Mike Garson comprise a mutual-admiration society that goes way back, but they also share production credits on this album, a sure sign that Garson has given



Holt's interpretations the seal of approval. The selections break down into discrete categories, including formal exercises (“Contrapunctus,”

“Tremolando”), nocturnes, a prelude, “nowtudes,” and homages and tributes derived for the most part from identifiable strands of the composers’ musical DNA (Ives in particular would’ve gotten a chuckle out of Garson’s “La Marseillaise”—“I’ve Been Working on the Railroad” mashup). “Butterfly,” “More Love Now,” and “God Speaks 4” are the lyrical ones.

## LEEM OF EARTH Leem of Earth

Initially serialized as three three-song EPs (titled *Chapter One*, *Chapter Two*, and *Chapter Three*) and now combined into a long-player with the addition of a 10th song (“I Will Wait”), this concept album based loosely on Ezekiel 36 and 37 is short on hooks and long on dream-rock textures. So it would’ve been right at home next to Cranes and Seefeel in the indie-alternative enclaves of the era that the lead singer Gileah Taylor (aka LM) has identified as her favorite—the ’90s. But even



then it would’ve stood out: Not many acts would even dream of building an entire song around passages from George MacDonald’s *Phantastes* and C.S. Lewis’ *The Weight of Glory* (“The Beech Tree’s Song”).

## FRETS AND REEDS: GOSPEL STYLE!

El McMeen and Ed Maina

This seasoned instrumental duo keeps the melodies of these 16 hymns and spirituals (some combined into medleys)

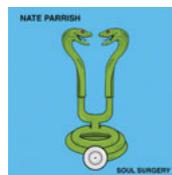


front and center. But there are twists—not so much McMeen’s finger-picked steel-stringed guitar (think John Fahey’s *Yes! Jesus Loves Me*)

as Maina’s saxes, clarinets, oboe, and flute, which at their most adventurous festoon the tunes with curlicued connections to klezmer, Dixieland, and, with the quote from Dizzy Gillespie’s “Salt Peanuts” that occurs at the two-minute mark of “Power in the Blood,” be-bop. But, unlike the liveliness suggested by those genres, the overall mood is reflectiveness suggesting that these guys have been treasuring this music for years.

## SOUL SURGERY Nate Parrish

On his second solo outing, Kutless guitarist Nate Parrish takes to its logical conclusion the Johnny Ramone syllogism: Punk is anti-hippie; hippies are liberal; therefore, punk is conservative. And although at 50 minutes the album is almost twice as long as any classic Ramones platter, its 14 songs charge past with a similar no-nonsense intensity, delivering rapid-fire shots to the liberal dome. Characteristic couplet (from “Religion of Relevance”): “We gotta save the earth for future generations, / but there’s no room for the womb in your safe spaces!” Characteristic mission statement (from “God Knows”): “God knows I tried, to keep this all inside. / And God knows it’s time / to take the cross and cross the line.”



## Encore



Danny Holt’s *Piano Music of Mike Garson* isn’t the only 2022 release with a Garson connection. There’s also **Toy: Box**, the three-disc edition of the “lost” David Bowie album on which Garson plays piano, synthesizer, harpsichord, and organ.

Recorded in 2000, when Bowie’s ability to score hits or points with critics had reached new lows, the project featured new versions of songs from Bowie’s pre-fame years (1964 to 1971 to be precise). EMI/Virgin, however rejected it, and Bowie moved on.

The label probably made the right choice. The incarnations on Disc 1 and the alternate takes on Disc 2 sound overearnest, the work of a self-conscious rock artist rather than the playful experiments of an ambitious up-and-comer willing to try anything.

Only on Disc 3’s “Unplugged & Somewhat Slightly Electric” renditions do the songs breathe, taking on an affectionate wistfulness in which Garson’s keyboards—especially on “You’ve Got a Habit of Leaving” and “Shadow Man”—play a key role. —A.O.



## A covenant kept

The power of a worthy example to propel

**A**NYONE WHO'S BEEN MARRIED long enough will tell you some days of matrimony are blissfully happy. Some are not. For those landing on the hard side of the meter at present, let me give you a bit of encouragement by way of Milltown Antique Mall.

Most towns have a Milltown, an unhurried place of second chances and frugal finds. Ours is of noble heritage, a two-story air conditioning-free wonder of creaking wood floors, soaring ceilings, and original wavy glass windowpanes. As best as I can determine, people end up cruising antique aisles when they've recently retired, have an hour to burn between lunch and carpool pickup, or, as in my case, they've spent an inordinate amount of time on Pinterest.

These days my redecorating objectives include outfitting a bank of walls with family photos. My quest for sturdy black picture frames—25 of them—had me digging through Milltown's dusty wares when I spotted a possible propped between a concrete yard fixture and a complete leather-bound set of *Arabian Nights*. I moved in closer and fingered the wooden edges. I could paint them, I reasoned. Sure. Maybe. Nah. But hold on a minute. What was this yellowed document it held?

Wow. A marriage license from 1914, and not just any old marriage license. A prized one. So how could it be here now, cast off, forgotten, and available for the taking to anyone with \$12.95? Layered price stickers gumming up the bottom corner told an even sadder tale. This one-of-a-kind item was at its second stop on the thrift sales circuit.

Bumping into Henry and Lula May like that had me wondering. What kind of happy and hard did the years hold for them?

## A LONG LOOK AT AN OLD MARRIAGE LICENSE CAN EVEN BE ROCKET FUEL ON A HARD DAY OF MARRIAGE.

Did Uncle Sam draft Henry when we entered World War 1? Did Lula May survive childbirth? Were they an Aquila/Priscilla-like team or the Ananias/Sapphira variety?

Back in that dark corner, I found I couldn't help myself. I snapped a photo of the marriage license with its official circuit court clerk's signature and started snooping around. Turns out the mystery was only 9 miles wide. That's all that stood between Milltown and Henry and Lula May, well, their graves, I mean. At Rose Hill Cemetery, I found their headstones, as well as engraved birthdates that revealed Mrs. Newman was just shy of 15 when she said her vows. She kept them until she died of a heart attack at 65.

In time, I managed to get in touch with one of the Newmans' granddaughters who was happy to fill in some of the family history blanks.

Groom Henry had a barber shop downtown beside the railroad tracks. To accommodate hardworking farmers, he opened at 5 a.m., six days a week. Lula May faithfully brought him home-cooked meals around noon. On Sundays they took their five kids to First Baptist Church.

Henry and his oldest boy managed to build a house during the Depression that's still standing today on land where their descendants live. When Henry retired, the local newspaper celebrated him and a career built around 75-cent haircuts.

The Newmans' three sons and two daughters grew up and married for keeps, too. No divorces in their family tree. The last leaf of the immediate branch, a daughter-in-law, died last August.

The granddaughter I spoke with has no idea how the marriage certificate belonging to "Big Daddy and Big Mama" got discarded, but she sent her sister to retrieve it posthaste. I heard down at Milltown, owner Melissa Meredith didn't charge her a dime. Seems a whole bunch of us agree that when it comes to framed masterpieces, beauty is definitely in the eye of the beholder. Worth, too.

Truth is, when Henry and Lula May started out, they probably couldn't have imagined a time when nearly half of all marriages don't make it.

Maybe that's why fading cursive on yellowed paper in an old 11x14 frame stopped me in my tracks. A covenant kept speaks. It preaches, too, admonishing us to admit there's a bigger picture and an eternal perspective to consider.

A long look at an old marriage license can even be rocket fuel on a hard day of marriage. ■



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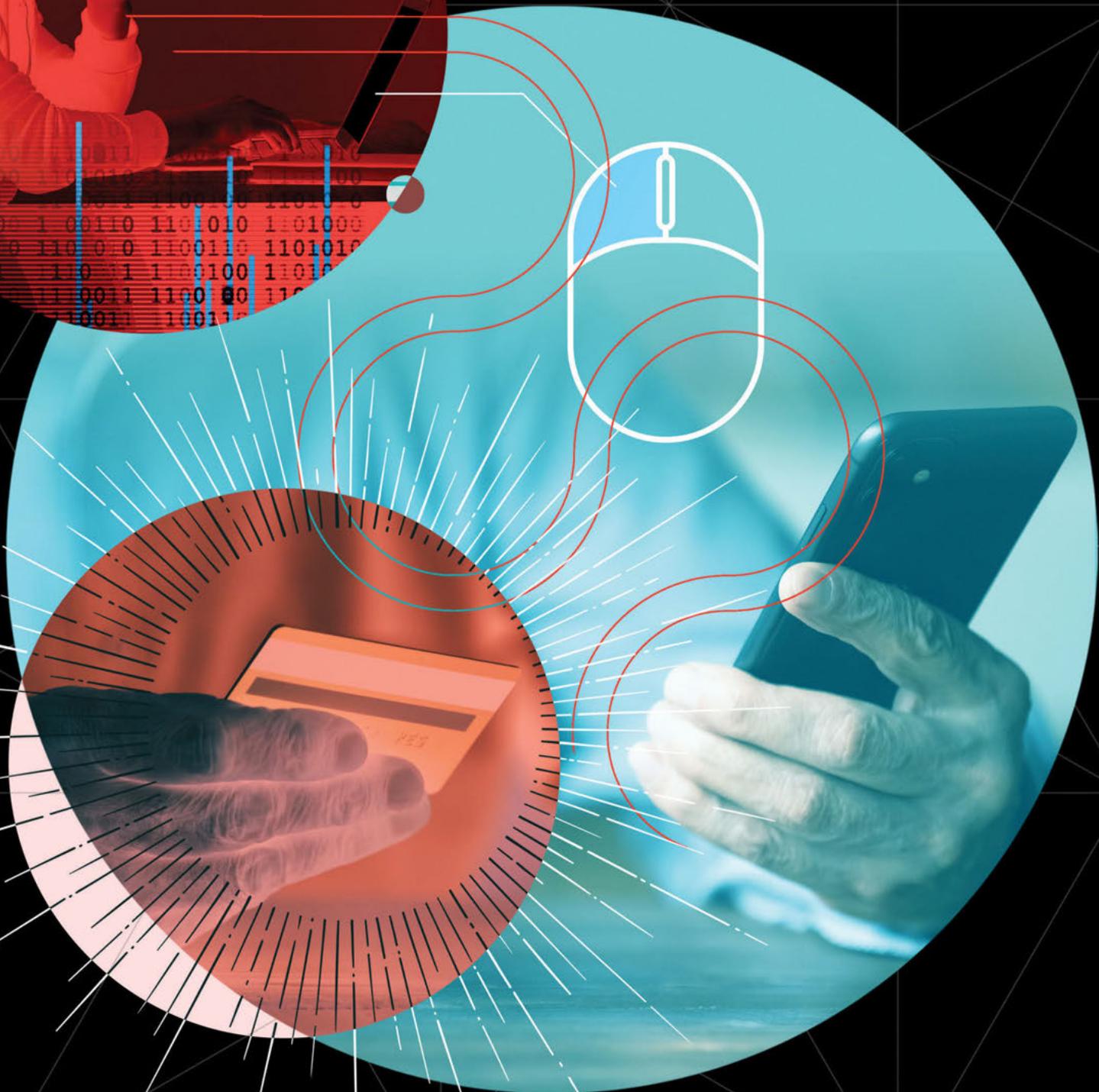
**THE FINANCIAL SCAMMING OF AMERICA'S ELDERLY  
HAS BECOME A BIG BUSINESS WITH SENIORS  
LOSING BILLIONS OF DOLLARS**

*by* KIM HENDERSON *in Memphis, Tenn.*

*illustration by* STEPHANIE DALTON COWAN

Sam Speed says he once taught mathematics at the University of Memphis. Standing outside the Bluff City's McWherter Senior Center, white hair combed smooth, he still looks the part of a disciplined academic. Sensible shoes. Wire-rimmed glasses. Shirt pocket gaping under the weight of a clip-on pen. At 84, Speed is thin and wiry, too, leaving little doubt he can manage his blocks-away walk home, even with a nagging ache in his left foot. But managing the problem of professional scammers who want to clear out his bank accounts? Well, that could be more difficult.





Like the nearly 1 in 5 older Americans who fall victim to financial exploitation each year, according to an AARP report, Speed is likely to reach his driveway and find his mailbox filled with phony prize-winning notices. He'll need to thumb through bills for magazine subscriptions he never requested and a few envelopes with counterfeit cashier's checks, too.

Then, as if the paper onslaught isn't enough, he'll probably field a barrage of phone calls from imposters who sound like the IRS, tech companies, even a grandson needing bail money to get out of jail. Unlike many of his peers, though, Speed says he knows when to hang up. He also has a methodical plan for handling telemarketers, thanks to his number-crunching bent. "I never pick up until it's rung at least seven times," he stresses.

That's good, because elder fraud is a growing national problem, with victims over the age of 60 reporting to the FBI last year losses of \$1.7 billion. That's a sizable increase since 2020—74 percent—and those figures don't include the losses incurred by victims too ashamed or too scared to call the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3). In fact, a True Link Financial study describes the FBI's numbers as a "dramatic underestimate." That firm believes criminals annually bilk U.S. seniors of more than \$36 billion—the gross domestic products of Brunei, Bahamas, and Bermuda combined.

In the book of Leviticus, honoring the aged is paired with having a right fear of God. That's why swindling tailored to this vulnerable population—the kind that can drain a life savings quicker than Grandpa can call out a routing number—is so scandalous. And such a threat.

**HOUSTON—HOT, HUMID, AND HAZY** this time of year—is home to the Texas Medical Center, the largest medical complex in the world. As a professor of geriatrics, Robert Roush has coveted office space in one of its many buildings, but at 80, he often prefers to "Zoom" lectures from his home in nearby Montgomery. There, he sits in front of paneled walls at a curved wooden desk, the kind that looks just right for the antique microscope holding down its left corner.

"Students sometimes ask me about it," Roush says, explaining the piece came from his employer, the Baylor College School of Medicine, when it moved from Dallas to Houston in 1943. The microscope still works, and that's fitting since Roush's interest in the old extends beyond medical equipment to people. He's spent the last 13 years training healthcare professionals to screen older patients for a specific risk: financial exploitation.

Roush's grant-backed initiative, known as the Elder Investment Fraud and Financial Exploitation (EIFFE) Prevention Program, has a direct tie to a scamming operation that had by 2006 emptied the bank accounts of at least one elderly California couple. Nothing new about that scenario except this—the couple's son was Christopher Cox, then-head of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Roush remembers feeling surprised when he read Cox's account in a national bulletin: "I



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“All people can fall for scams, but as we age, things happen in our brains that cause us to be more vulnerable.”

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Edna Schmeets, 90, poses for a picture with her children at her home in Harvey, N.D. On the table are some of the copious documents the family has collected detailing Edna's struggles since being scammed out of her life savings by Jamaican criminals.

realized if that could happen to the parents of the chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, it can happen to anybody.” Roush decided to ask his geriatrics colleagues what they thought about looking into the topic of financial elder abuse, little knowing they were about to step into a wide-open field of study.

At that time, behavioral economists were talking about financial exploitation of the elderly, but medical experts weren't weighing in. “I only found two doctors who had published writing about the subject in medical literature,” Roush remembers. He thought it was time for a clinical approach.

“All people can fall for scams, but as we age, things happen in our brains that cause us to be more vulnerable,” Roush says, adding that the main manifestation is Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI), a “slipping” stage of decline characterized by ongoing memory problems. Based on research from the Mayo Clinic, he found 1 in 4 people over the age of 80 have MCI. They can still go out to dinner and play golf, but they have trouble with complex financial skills.

As Roush began researching this vulnerability, he came across the Financial Capacity Instrument, an assessment tool developed by neuropsychologist Daniel Marson that measures an adult's ability to count coins, balance a checkbook, even detect mail fraud. Roush used the science behind Marson's work to develop a guide physicians could employ to spot patients who are at risk of being financially defrauded. Since 2009, Roush and his EIFFE team have conducted more than 100 continuing education events in 33 states, training nearly 20,000 healthcare professionals to spot potential fraud victims. The goal is to prevent losses at an age when there's no time to recoup them.

“Most of us have been socialized to never ask people about money,” Roush says, “but primary care physicians are in a unique position. They see older people when they come in for annual checkups and flu shots, and they can broach the subject without being offensive.”

Almost like first responders, doctors learn how to screen their older patients for exploitation vulnerability and what to prescribe in terms of referrals and reporting. That's a tall order, since most victims aren't eager to concede diminished capacity.

**RUSSELL FRAZIER HAS GOOD REASON** to think most elder fraud crimes go unreported. He came to such an understanding while working as an investigator in the Vulnerable Adults Unit of the Mississippi Attorney General's Office. “When people realize they've been taken advantage of, they're embarrassed. They don't want to admit it,” he says. Many times, falling for a scheme can represent the point of no return. “These older people want to stay independent in their homes, and they know if their kids find out [about the fraud], they'll put them in a facility.”

Frazier believes diminishing capabilities play a part in financial exploitation, but he points to another reason the elderly can't get off the phone when the scammer with the Caribbean accent calls. Manners.

“Their generation is more trusting. They think hanging up is rude, and these people know how to keep them on the phone, building a relationship. They know what they're doing, they know what they're saying, and they spot the ones that are good targets, and they latch on.”

The good targets are usually lonely and eager for conversation. They own their homes, a nest egg, and a checkbook they keep within reach. In contrast, good scammers claim they don't own much of anything, but in time they gain the one thing that really matters in such cases—trust.

Long distance or local, it really doesn't matter. A scammer can be as close as the Thursday afternoon housekeeper or as far away as the guy behind the computer screen in Nigeria. Both, it should be noted, have picked up on Aunt Jane's penchant for *Wheel of Fortune* and have memorized the names of all eight of her grandchildren. In time, they also know her Social Security number, savings account details, and what it will take to get her to go to the post office and send a blank check by overnight mail.



Often, it's sophisticated crime, according to Subrena Rivers, acting captain of the special investigation branch of Washington, D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department. She says tracking online fraud is especially difficult due to VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol), a technology that allows the scammer to be on a computer while the senior adult thinks he's on a local phone. "When we try to get a subpoena for the IP address, we find most often the IP address location is overseas," Rivers explains.

But even the nation's capital has its share of garden-variety elder fraud. Rivers points to a 2019 case when a perpetrator promising home repairs cheated an elderly woman out of \$77,000. Family members contacted law enforcement, and jurors the next year indicted the man on three counts of financial exploitation of an elderly person and 10 counts of first-degree theft of a senior citizen.

That case had a paper trail and bank involvement that made it easy to prosecute, but Rivers says in any fraud, situational awareness is key: "Have a conversation with your loved one. Teach them red flags, like pressure to respond quickly or wire money. Show them how to block numbers on their phones." Her department sends detectives into the community to conduct seminars and hand out pamphlets with tips. "We have some 83,000 residents over the age of 65. We want to try to prevent problems before they happen."

According to the Federal Trade Commission, older consumers are two times more likely than their younger counterparts to fall prey to sweepstakes scams, a type of fraud that has ballooned alongside the rise of social media. Chris Irving is vice president for consumer affairs at Publishers Clearing House (PCH) in Long Island, N.Y., and he says his organization is battling a brand war as scammers use the PCH name to convince consumers they've won prizes. The criminals have done their research. Some even throw in the names of legitimate PCH personalities who show up at prize winners' doors.

"We're putting our resources into a two-pronged approach—education and enforcement," Irving explains. Education includes YouTube videos that stress PCH sweepstakes never require fees to obtain a prize. That's in stark contrast to scammers who demand money for insurance, taxes, custom fees, or shipping and handling before promised phony winnings will be delivered. On the enforcement side, PCH officials testify at trials around the country, helping agencies convict individuals who claimed to be connected to their company.

PCH's sweepstakes have been around since 1967, and so have the scams that shadow them, but Irving has noticed something new: "They used to originate in New York or Las Vegas, but they now seem to be coming mostly from Jamaica and Costa Rica. Obviously, if they're out of range of U.S. territory,

it's much harder for enforcement to go after the bad guys.”

But officials do pursue international fraudsters, and sometimes they succeed. In 2017, the United States worked with Jamaica to extradite eight of their citizens to face charges related to a lottery scheme directed at elderly Americans, but it took the combined work of 10 enforcement agencies—the Jamaican Operations Linked to Telemarketing (JOLT) task force—to do it. According to Jamaican law enforcement, local gangs use telemarketing fraud to raise capital to smuggle weapons into Jamaica and narcotics into the United States.

Congress passed the bipartisan Fraud and Scam Reduction Act in late March. Part of it aims to get federal agencies and financial institutions working together to prevent scams that target seniors. Banks and gift card sellers are often strategically positioned to stop a scam before a payment is processed, and the new law will educate them on the role they can play.

**BACK IN MEMPHIS**, eight miles east of the McWherter Senior Center, Lindsay Jones has a first-floor office at the law firm of Patterson Bray, where she specializes in late-age legal matters. Like bankers and physicians, lawyers can sometimes put the brakes on elder fraud before it happens. Jones' work includes conservatorships, a step beyond a power of attorney that's often the last resort for those entrusted with someone who can no longer manage their money.

When necessary, Jones investigates to find out if undue influence is involved in the pursuit of a conservatorship, but more often a conservatorship is a helpful tool to protect financial assets, something a set of Jones' clients learned about the hard way.

The siblings noticed their mother talking about a girl who lived in her neighborhood. “It was a retirement community so it was a little bit unusual, but she was somebody's niece or granddaughter or something,” Jones explains. The siblings eventually discovered Mom had given the stranger thousands of dollars. After the dust settled, they pushed for a conservatorship.

Jones acknowledges that case involved multiple thefts of five figures, but the amount of loss is relative. “Here in Memphis, like in most larger cities, we have a fair number of low-income residents. For them, losing \$1,000 would be losing a lot.”

Either way, she says, emotions run high. Many times a parent doesn't want to acknowledge that they're having trouble with diminished capacity, and they push back against the children who are trying to look out for their best interest. It can make for an adversarial relationship.

But someone has to do it, this protective aspect of honoring the aged in the age of elder fraud.

Jones does offer a bit of encouragement to those facing such challenges: “A lot of times the negative reaction is temporary. If you can get through that initial phase, often the relationship will be restored.” ■

## SCAM ALERT

The FBI reports that millions of elderly Americans fall victim each year to some type of financial fraud or confidence scheme, including romance, lottery, and sweepstakes scams, to name a few. Criminals will gain their targets' trust and may communicate with them directly via computer, phone, and the mail, or indirectly through TV and radio. Once successful, scammers are likely to keep a scheme going because of the prospect of significant financial gain. Here are ways to protect yourself:

- ▶ Be cautious of unsolicited phone calls, mailings, and door-to-door service offers.
- ▶ Resist the pressure to act quickly. Scammers create a sense of urgency to produce fear and lure victims into immediate action. Call the police immediately if you feel there is a danger to you or a loved one.
- ▶ Never give or send any personally identifiable information, money, jewelry, gift cards, checks, or wire information to unverified people or businesses.
- ▶ Make sure all computer anti-virus and security software and malware protections are up to date.
- ▶ Disconnect from the internet and shut down your device if you see a pop-up message or locked screen. Pop-ups are regularly used by perpetrators to spread malicious software. Enable pop-up blockers to avoid accidentally clicking on a pop-up.
- ▶ Be careful what you download. Never open an email attachment from someone you don't know and be wary of email attachments forwarded to you.
- ▶ If a criminal gains access to your device or account, immediately contact your financial institutions to place protections on your accounts. Monitor your accounts and personal information for suspicious activity.

### HOW TO REPORT

If you believe you or someone you know may have been a victim of elder fraud, contact FBI Houston at (713) 693-5000 or submit a tip online at [tips.fbi.gov](https://tips.fbi.gov). You can also file a complaint with the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center at [ic3.gov](https://ic3.gov).

—from the FBI website



Mehdi "Ali" at a park near his Minneapolis home



# A pinprick of hope

Asylum seekers in  
Australia are often  
treated like convicts for  
years at a time

BY AMY LEWIS

photo by Jim Mone/Genesis

**MEHDI “ALI” IS FINALLY FREE** and living in Minneapolis, Minn., after spending nine years in detention. Yet he had committed no crime.

Mehdi, who uses “Ali” as an alias last name to protect his minority Ahwazi Arab family still in Iran, left home at 15 to seek asylum in Australia. He declines to get specific about the persecution he and his family endured. “What does it matter?” he says. “People have all kinds of reasons. When you have a life like me, going through age 12, 13, 14, you are just surviving, just living. And each time you have to face a surprise, and not a happy surprise, something you thought you’d never see, you think, ‘I’m this close to death. I’m going to die now.’”

He arrived as an unaccompanied minor on Australia’s external territory of Christmas Island in July 2013, just two days after the Australian government declared no asylum seeker could ever be resettled in Australia. Instead, people arriving by boat would be immediately transported to one of three offshore detention centers.

Australia’s government gave Mehdi and thousands of other asylum seekers no indication when they might be resettled. Canada’s asylum system averages 14 days between when an asylum seeker arrives and when he or she is resettled or deported. The U.S. average is 45 days. The Australian average dwarfs all others at 925 days, or 2½ years. Mehdi endured more than 3,000 days, even though it took the government less than a year to acknowledge he would be persecuted if he returned to Iran and granted him refugee status. Australia recognizes 90 percent of asylum seekers as refugees yet continues to detain them.

The conditions Mehdi and others endure have drawn strong criticism from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Doctors Without Borders, and numerous policy and advocacy groups. Meanwhile, as of late May asylum seekers to the United Kingdom will be sent to Rwanda in an asylum arrangement fashioned after Australia’s, in violation of the 1951 Geneva Convention that the UK and Australia signed.

Jana Favero, director of Advocacy at the Asylum Seeker Resource Center, told Australia’s public service broadcaster SBS News, “It is absolutely bewildering why another country would try to copy something which is such a financial and moral black hole.”

Australia’s financial black hole shows that, since 2013, Australia has spent up to \$9.65 billion to detain a few thousand people, the Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law reports. Even though the number of asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru, one of the offshore detention center locations, had plummeted to one-tenth of earlier numbers, the cost of the program remained the same. So by 2021, it was costing Australian taxpayers \$15,000 (all dollar amounts are in Australian dollars) a day per detainee, according to a *Guardian* report. The bill to detain Mehdi for nine years reached millions of dollars. The cost if he had been released into the community while his claim was processed would total \$4,400 a year.

Australia has historically welcomed refugees from around the world. More than 1 in 4 Australian residents was born overseas. Most refugees to Australia arrive by plane after securing appropriate travel documents and a visa. In 2012, Australia welcomed 20,000 refugees with visas.

But people fleeing oppressive regimes and ethnic or religious persecution are unlikely to have access to the right papers. Instead, they pay people-smugglers and travel by boat to countries that signed the 1951 Geneva Convention and have an obligation to assist those who

arrive. From 2008 to 2013, 50,000 asylum seekers arrived by boat, and 1,200 people drowned trying to reach Australia’s shores.

In 2013, then-Minister of Immigration and Citizenship Scott Morrison oversaw the beginning of Operation Sovereign Borders, a set of laws billed as a deterrent to the lucrative people-smuggling trade and an attempt to save asylum seekers from drowning at sea.

Besides not allowing asylum seekers to resettle in Australia, a 2014 legislative amendment committed the country to refoulement—returning asylum seekers to their country of residency, denying asylum seekers’ basic rights laid out in the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees.

Hanne Beirens, Director of the Migration Policy Institute in Europe, says of Australia’s and other countries’ asylum outsourcing, “My basic concern is that we’re carving away the pillars that territorial asylum rests on. The basic principle allows people to flee and seek safe haven. When offshore processing is used as a deterrent, asylum seekers take more dangerous routes and go underground, adding to uncertainty and possible exploitation and abuse.”

Mehdi and his cousin Adnan Choopani fled Iran to Indonesia and from there paid smugglers to take them to Australia. On Christmas Island, they were given the identifiers ANA020 and ANA023—numbers that replaced their names for nine years—and were moved to Nauru Detention Centre.

Nauru is an 8-square-mile sovereign island in the Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and Australia. In the 1980s, Nauru was the world’s richest country per capita because of phosphate mining. But poor investments, like a \$400,000 floating cocktail lounge in the Marshall Islands, plus administrative corruption and fraud decimated the \$1 billion trust fund intended to support the 10,000 islanders.

Nauru’s residents now depend almost completely on Australian aid, including imported water arriving as ballast in ships picking up phosphate. In 2001, the country accepted a \$10 million deal to house asylum seekers on their island.

The UK will pay Rwanda \$148 million

**“They’re transported to this remote island in extremely horrible conditions.”**

(U.S.) for the first 5 years. Legislation from Denmark’s Parliament passed last year permits third-party transfer of asylum seekers, and Israel likewise has reportedly reached agreements with Uganda and Rwanda to receive their asylum seekers, mainly from Sudan and Eritrea.

Mark Isaacs arrived at Nauru Detention Centre in 2013, a week after its reopening after being shuttered for four years. He and a host of others had been hastily recruited by the Salvation Army to provide humanitarian aid to an influx of asylum seekers. His recent arts degree did not prepare him for the work. His coworkers included 18-year-olds whose only other job had been at McDonald’s and others who didn’t know what an asylum seeker was.

Isaacs spent a year on Nauru in four-week stints. The Salvation Army determined that longer stretches contributed to deteriorating mental health among the workers.

The detention center occupied the center of the island in the old phosphate mine, surrounded by gray pinnacles of limestone. Up to 10 men slept in a tent on stretcher beds, with refugees from warring nations such as Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Syria housed together. Isaacs said, “The detainees would ask, ‘What’s going to happen to us? How long will we be here?’” He and his coworkers could only answer, “I don’t know.”

Two refugees who faced years of detention on Manus Island





A man in a room at the Park Hotel in Melbourne

The indefiniteness of detention demoralized the detainees and created despair and hopelessness. People began to hurt themselves and attempt suicide using broken light bulbs or swallowing laundry detergent. These were people who had already endured the horrors of war-torn countries and persecution plus dangerous ocean travel. Yet, now, on a tropical island, they were resorting to horrific acts of violence against themselves.

Thousands of incidents of self-harm, threatened self-harm, and traumatic withdrawal or resignation syndrome were reported on Nauru among the detainees. Sixteen people committed suicide.

Isaacs, now a Ph.D. student researching Australia's immigration policies, says, "The asylum seekers think they've reached safety and think they're owed protection because we're signatories of the Refugee Convention. Instead, they're transported to this remote island in extremely horrible conditions without any idea what will happen to them or how long they'll be there for."

When Doctors Without Borders left the island in 2018, it declared the mental health of the detainees was among the worst its organization had ever seen in all its years of caring for trauma and torture victims. They stated that "indefinite offshore processing predictably destroys the will to live on innocent human beings." Their statements were supported by University of Greenwich Research Fellow Ryan

Essex's study published this year, warning other countries against implementing similar methods of detention.

"That was the big thing, watching them lose hope," said Isaacs, "because that was what brought them to Australia in the first place, that pinprick of hope in a sea of darkness. And the purpose of the detention center is to destroy that hope."

Former detainee Mehdi tells of a man who resorted to self-immolation. "Those who choose to kill themselves, they choose the most tragic ways," says Mehdi. "There are easier methods than burning. Why do they do it? Because they feel numb, and they want to at last feel something."

When asked about hope, Mehdi said from his Minneapolis home, "I really

didn't know what hope was until now. Is it related to the future? In detention, the days you try to move, those days are hope."

Isaacs questioned why the people had to wait so long and why the asylum seekers were treated this way. "Ten years later," Isaacs said, "the questions are still very pertinent."

A 2015 scheduled court case questioned the detention center's legality. Before the case was heard, the government suddenly switched the Nauru Detention Centre to an open model. Detainees moved into the local communities against residents' wishes. The open model doesn't improve the situation. One detainee told Isaacs, "It's just a bigger prison." Detainees hold temporary Nauruan visas and constantly fear being deported.

With deteriorating mental health, Mehdi and Adnan spent two years in detention in Brisbane under a short-lived medical evacuation program. Attending doctors used the opportunity to highlight the devastating consequences of indefinite detention, some even breaking the law by refusing to discharge children to return to detention centers. The medevac program was repealed 10 months after it began.

Mehdi and Adnan were then transported to a hotel in Melbourne. Early in the pandemic, the Carlton Hotel housed returning Australians for their mandatory quarantine. After a COVID outbreak between guards and those in isolation, the owners changed its name to the Park Hotel and held more than 30 asylum seekers for two years. The detainees had no access to the outdoors and could not open their windows.

When asked about his time inside the hotel, Mehdi asks why he should focus on that. "That was such a short part of my time in detention."

Then, in January 2022, when unvaccinated, first-seeded Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic was housed in the same Park Hotel awaiting a decision about his visa status, the media camped outside. The detained men made banners saying "9 years 2 long." Mehdi used his hard-fought-for Twitter account to highlight the injustices imposed on the detainees. Mehdi became the face of the asylum seekers.

The Australian Federal Court quickly heard and ruled on Djokovic's status and deported him. His four-day stay garnered intense media coverage of both Australia's draconian COVID policies and its treatment of asylum seekers. Soon after, Australia accepted New Zealand's 9-year-old offer to resettle offshore asylum seekers as well as the U.S.' offer to receive some of the detainees. They released others into the community with temporary visas. Within two months, the Park Hotel was empty, three days before a federal election was scheduled.

Mehdi and his cousin were released to the United States, where Mehdi says he's been welcomed with open arms. When asked when he would be available for an interview, he texted, "I am free."

"But," he says, "I can't be really free while there are still people on Nauru." Australia still detains 112 asylum seekers and refugees on the island and 105 asylum seekers in Papua New Guinea.

Meanwhile, on another continent, the UK's recent embrace of Australia's detainment model has brought swift criticism from various corners. Migration Policy's Beirens said, "Sending asylum seekers offshore is not inherently wrong if the accepting country has an asylum system working and if the incoming people have an opportunity to integrate. As recently as last year, however, Rwandans sought asylum in the UK. What will happen to those fleeing Rwanda? It will become a refugee carousel."

Beirens says the advent of the UK's offshore asylum detention as well as Denmark's agreement and Israel's reported deal with Uganda and Rwanda to offshore their asylum seekers, and Australia's ongoing policies point to a greater number of political parties wanting to determine territorial integrity. "The Geneva Convention gives a sense of undermining the country's ability to control who enters. The right to asylum undermines or contradicts the country's ability to control who comes in," she said.

The solidarity for Ukrainian refugees seen in Europe and worldwide encourages asylum advocates, but it also brings a dose of caution. Beirens is happy for the welcome Ukrainians have received, but she warns, "Having solidarity because of a political crisis is not necessarily best. At the same time, there's always potential for crises to generate a mind shift."

If detaining asylum seekers indefinitely is expensive, resettling them in-country can be an asset to the community. The Center for Policy Development states, "Refugees are more than twice as likely to establish their own businesses, compared with the broader population."

Meanwhile, Mehdi wonders if talking about the injustices he endured is wrong. "What if the government thinks the propaganda will bring advantages and show how powerful they are? They might see it as a successful policy. Who cares about billions of dollars? Who cares about a few people harmed or not?"

Alexandra Mikelsons works for a mercy ministry in Geelong, Australia. She deals with people of all types, and said that Australians must start caring about the asylum seekers as people—sons and fathers and brothers and families who are just like their fathers, brothers, and sons. These refugees have lost years of their lives, with no compensation or acknowledgment of error or mistreatment, she explained.

What's next for Mehdi? "I don't know. Let's see," he says. "Like when you're in the middle of the ocean. You stop planning for life."

He has practical goals that are necessary for living. He bought a guitar and will talk with a guitar teacher soon. "Each time I practice, I try to figure something out. But I have no big plans," he says. ■



# ABUSE SCANDALS



Photo illustration of SBC headquarters using a screen capture from Google street view

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DER RECORDS.  
THE YOUNGEST AGE SEVEN  
Y CHARGES IN 2017. SERVING A 16-YEAR SENTENCE.  
SENTENCED TO 24 YEARS WAS SENTEN  
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ARS IN PRISON FOR 12 FELONY SEX CRIME  
NG THREE YOUNG GIRLS.  
ACCORDING TO A COURT

# L S W E E P S S B C

**Southern Baptists consider reforms  
amid scathing report on leaders  
mishandling sexual abuse cases**

*by Mary Jackson*

illustration by Krieg Barrie

SOUTHERN BAPTIST  
CONVENTION  
901 COMMERCE

## IN 2007 THOMAS DOYLE,

a Catholic priest and canon lawyer, penned a letter forewarning Southern Baptist Convention leaders. He said in the mid-1980s he attempted to warn the U.S. Catholic bishops of a “looming clergy sex abuse nightmare.” Catholic church leaders paid little heed until a 2002 *Boston Globe* investigation revealed to the public how scores of priests got away with molesting children.

“By then, countless more children had been severely wounded, families devastated, and the Church itself was reeling from the extensive scandal,” he wrote to then-SBC President Frank Page and Morris Chapman, former president of the Executive Committee, the 86-member elected body that oversees the day-to-day operations for the convention in between its annual meetings.

Doyle told Page and Chapman that a similar pattern was developing in the nation’s largest Protestant denomination. He urged Baptist leaders to learn from Catholic mistakes and implement structural reforms to ensure that children were safe. Doyle wrote the letter with help from David Clohessy of Survivor Network of those Abused by Priests and Christa Brown, the first victim to go public in 2006 with a substantiated claim of sexual abuse against a Southern Baptist minister.

In a return letter, Page told Doyle that the SBC was taking the issue of clergy sexual abuse seriously and would attempt to use its influence to provide protections, but “Southern Baptists truly have no authority over the local church.”

Now, a scathing 288-page investigative report released on May 22 from the firm Guidepost Solutions, which has investigated several high-profile Evangelical sexual abuse scandals, has documented how the men who ran the Executive Committee prioritized shielding the convention from legal liability over caring for survivors and protecting congregants from abusers.

Guidepost investigators said survivors “were ignored, disbelieved, or met with the constant refrain that the SBC could take no action due to its polity regarding church autonomy—even if it meant that convicted molesters continued in ministry with no notice or warning to their current church or congregation.” For nearly two decades, sexual abuse survivors and their advocates maintained that Baptist

leaders can do more to respond to and prevent abuse without undermining its doctrine of church autonomy, which Baptists believe is based on the Biblical teaching that Jesus Christ is the only Head of the church.

The report presented detailed evidence showing how a few senior Executive Committee leaders, along with the committee’s outside counsel, largely controlled its response to reports of abuse, often keeping committee members in the dark about the extent of the denomination’s abuse problem.

Page did not respond to WORLD’s email and phone requests for comment.

The report also included a previously unpublished accusation from an unnamed woman who said former Georgia pastor and past SBC president Johnny Hunt groomed and assaulted her in 2010 and urged her not to report the abuse. Hunt initially denied ever having contact with the woman. On May 13, he resigned from his role as vice president of the North American Mission Board, the SBC’s domestic missions agency. Two weeks later, Hunt admitted to a “consensual encounter” with a woman who was not his wife. Hunt did not respond to a request for comment.

Southern Baptists learned in the report that staff members kept a secret index of Baptist ministers and church workers accused of abuse. The 205-page list, released to the public in its original but redacted form on May 26, included about 700 cases of abuse by church workers, including about 400 tied to SBC churches. In most cases, the charges led to arrests and jail time. The list was kept secret for more than a decade.

The report said leaders, while compiling this list, repeatedly stonewalled initiatives from survivors and advocates to maintain a denomination-wide database of credibly accused sexual offenders in SBC churches. That database was proposed as a way to keep predators from moving from church to church and abusing more victims.

The report’s findings sent shock waves through the denomination’s 13.7 million members and more than 47,000 churches. Church delegates, called messengers, approved the independent investigation, a \$2.1 million undertaking, last summer as reports kept surfacing of the SBC bureaucracy mishandling abuse cases and mistreating survivors.

Now, thousands of church delegates will gather in Anaheim, Calif., on June 14–15 for the SBC’s annual meeting to consider carefully what actions they can take both immediately and in the coming years to address those survivors who were wronged and to ensure that SBC churches and entities are safe from sexual predators.

“It’s going to be a multistep process,” said Rachael Denhollander, one of two advisers to a seven-member SBC task force on sexual abuse. She is an attorney and well-known



**Guidepost investigators said survivors “were ignored, disbelieved, or met with the constant refrain that the SBC could take no action due to its polity regarding church autonomy—even if it meant that convicted molesters continued in ministry with no notice or warning to their current church or congregation.”**

advocate for survivors of sexual abuse. “We must get this right. It’s going to be up to the SBC—the messengers and the leadership—to follow through and to begin the slow process of rebuilding trust.”

The task force put forth a series of recommendations, which it will formally present to church delegates on June 14. Those proposed reforms present a sharp contrast from

the way the report depicts leaders approaching abuse in recent decades.

The sexual abuse task force proposed having a separate entity to oversee the denomination’s abuse prevention initiatives over the next three years. That entity would work with the Executive Committee to create a “ministry check” database, much like what survivors proposed, to alert churches and communities of credibly accused sex offenders.

Other recommendations include hiring a trained expert to field calls from victims and help them report their abuse.

**Activists demonstrate outside the Southern Baptist Convention’s annual meeting in 2019.**

That expert would also work with state conventions to train and educate pastors and congregants on abuse prevention. The task force said SBC boards and standing committees should be trained in preventing abuse and caring for survivors and include background checks as part of their hiring processes.

The task force recommended changes to the Credentials Committee, which was repurposed in 2019 to make recommendations to the Executive Committee over whether it should “disfellowship” churches for noncompliance to Biblical standards and doctrine, including knowingly hiring a sexual predator or mishandling abuse cases. The task force said Credentials Committee members must be properly trained, and they should outsource the portion of the inquiry process where survivors file reports against churches and pastors.

Southern Baptists are heading to Anaheim with a mix of heaviness, grief, and resolve. Many seem ready to pave

a new path of transparency and accountability after the denomination has spent years reckoning publicly with how its leaders have mishandled sexual abuse cases.

“I was one of all those other pastors who let it go by. I believed what [Baptist leaders] told us. I can’t change that, but I can make a difference now,” said Todd Benkert, pastor of Oak Creek Community Church in Mishawaka, Ind.

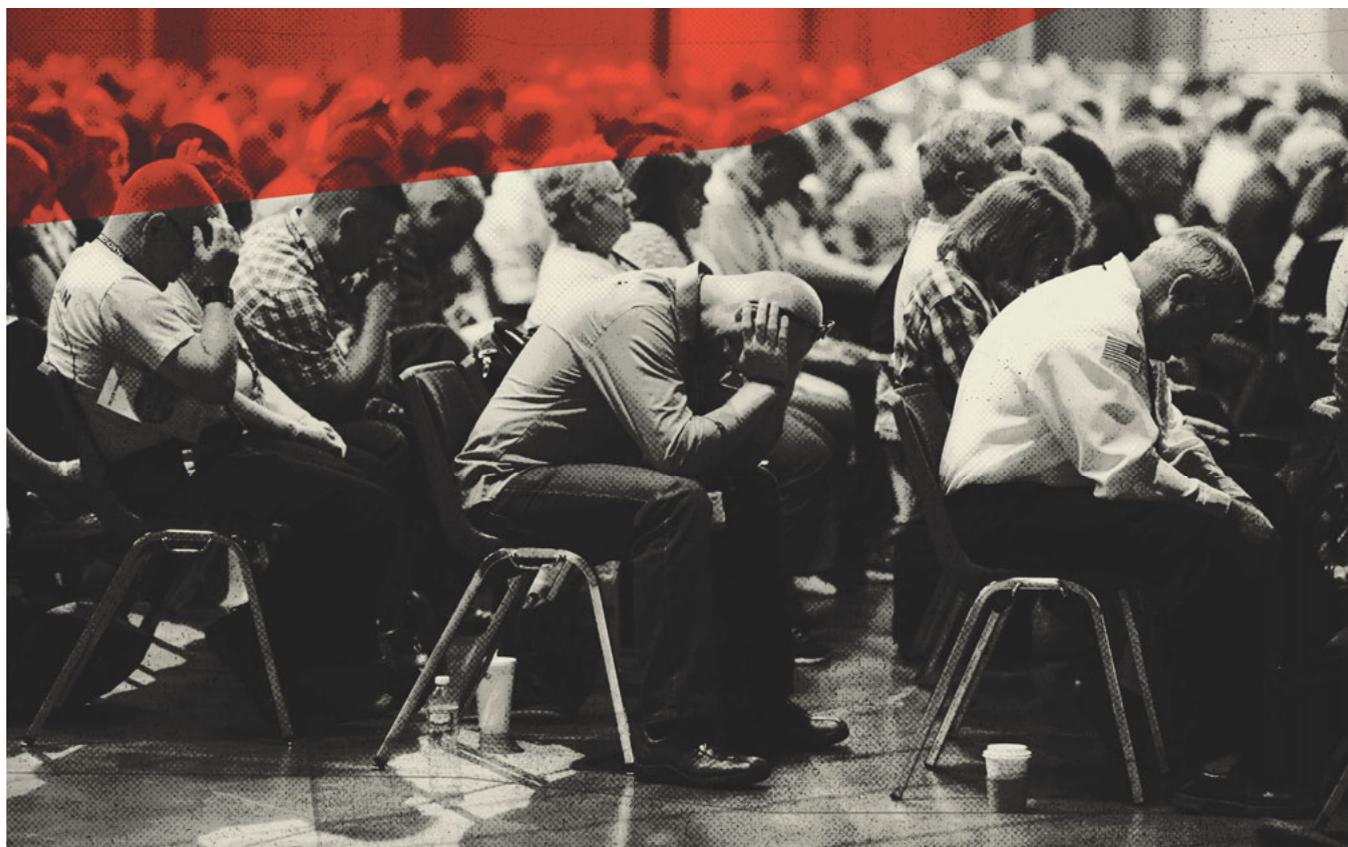
Benkert recalls learning about the Baptist clergy abuse in a 2007 episode of ABC’s *20/20* about “predator preachers.” He was at the 2008 annual meeting when one church delegate presented a motion calling for a denomination-wide database tracking known sexual offenders. (That motion was rejected.)

The issue became personal when Benkert realized he knew one of the abusers and his victim. He committed to listening to the survivor community and educating himself on abuse dynamics. In recent years, he has become a leading survivor advocate among Baptist pastors.

“The report put everything in one place,” Benkert said. “We can’t ignore it anymore.”

The Guidepost report said SBC leaders fostered a culture

**People pray during the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2016.**



**“There’s a lot of talk now  
about what the SBC may  
do moving forward. ...  
There must be a reckoning  
with the past and the harm  
that has been done—  
harm from the whole  
institutional failure.”**

in which survivors “felt ignored and unheard” when they reported their abuse to the SBC.

In total, Guidepost investigators interviewed 330 individuals, including 19 survivors of sexual abuse. “Some survivors received perfunctory and dismissive responses while others did not receive a response at all,” the report said.

In the days immediately following the report’s release, Baptist leaders sought to set a new tone.

Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, announced the seminary is renaming programs and facilities previously named after Johnny Hunt and a former SBC president, Paige Patterson, who was named in the Guidepost report for mishandling abuse allegations during separate tenures as president at two separate Baptist seminaries, including Southeastern. Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary fired Patterson in 2018.

Meanwhile, the Executive Committee on May 24 issued an apology for past comments that many interpreted as meaning SBC leaders did not want to hear from abuse survivors.

The Executive Committee said in its apology that engaging with survivors is “a critical step forward.”

The committee, Guidepost, and the task force have been fielding calls from survivors disclosing allegations of abuse, according to a statement from members of those three groups. The Executive Committee announced a confidential hotline, run temporarily by Guidepost. The firm will not inquire into the allegations at this time, the statement said, but “will hold the information confidentially ... while we work to put more permanent procedures in place.”

Denhollander believes more victims will likely come forward as the SBC takes steps to ensure its processes are safe and trauma-informed. Still, some sexual abuse survivors expressed concern and skepticism over whether the convention will act decisively and apologize to victims while also making restitution and reforms.

“There’s a lot of talk now about what the SBC may do moving forward. ... There must be a reckoning with the past and the harm that has been done—harm from the whole institutional failure,” Brown said in a tweet.

Survivor Tiffany Thigpen said the action steps Baptists take “could not only become a way forward, but also could allow a model for other denominations and organizations to follow.” Thigpen went public with her abuse account in 2018—her story was included in the Guidepost report. She says an SBC leader discouraged her from reporting an alleged attack by a Florida Baptist pastor who was later convicted of molestation and lewd texting with underage girls.

“You have a choice,” Thigpen said. “Will you rise up? Will you listen or look away? That’s what we’ve been asking these nearly 20 years.” ■



# Pointing to a different hero

The characteristics of heroes in movies don't come out of nowhere

BY EMILY WHITTEN

photo by Renée Ittner-McManus/Genesis

WITH MOVIE BOX OFFICE RECEIPTS up 365 percent from 2021, summer blockbusters seem poised to make a bigger splash than usual this year. Christians often disagree about what's worth watching, but we share the Apostle Paul's charge to take "every thought captive" for Christ.

Apologist Frank Turek's newest book, *Hollywood Heroes*, can help families and movie buffs do just that. The book, co-written with his son, Zach, reflects Turek's decades of apologetics work on his weekly radio program and his website, [Crossexamined.org](http://Crossexamined.org).

I recently spoke with Turek about how Christians—especially families—can get more out of the movies they watch this summer.

***Aren't movies just entertainment? Why should we think critically about them?***

When I go to a movie, I'm not really looking for moral stories. I'm just looking to relax and wind down. If you start ana-



lyzing movies, though, you start to see Biblical life lessons. So many movies have Christian figures in them—figures who sacrifice and people that are redeemed.

In fact, George Barna did a study that shows (and this is no surprise) that young people get more of their theology from movies than they do from the pulpit. So if that's the case, why not use movies to communicate good theology where we can?

***How do popular movies reflect good theology?***

Here's one way—whenever people sacrifice themselves to save others, or when people actually have to be selfless rather than selfish. I mean, obviously, in the original Star Wars series, the greatest example is Darth Vader, right? He's redeemed.

***Spoiler alert!***

Ha, spoiler alert. Yeah, I always have to say that.

But let me give you another example—the movie *Endgame*, the Avengers movie that (spoiler alert!) took out the ultimate villain, Thanos. One of the main characters, Tony Stark, starts as an immoral arms dealer and playboy, but through several movies he actually sacrifices himself to save the world. What are we enchanted with there? We're enchanted with the truth. And the truth is that to save people, sometimes you do need to sacrifice yourself. And of course, that's what Jesus did for us.

***So, our heroes don't come out of nowhere?***

It's part of reality. We all deep down want to be taken from this world of pain and suffering to a place of bliss. And that's what these superhero movies do, right? Someone comes in to save them, gets them out of danger, and takes them to a place where they can live happily ever after.

Well, that's the Christian story. Someone has to come and sacrifice himself in order to pay for our sins, and then he's going to take us one day to the Promised Land.

***That reminds me of J.R.R. Tolkien's idea of the "true myth" discussed in Hollywood Heroes. Do you want to explain that?***

Sure. Christian authors J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. (Jack) Lewis were buddies in a writing group called the Inklings. And before this point, Lewis was not a Christian. Tolkien noticed that Lewis was enamored with pagan stories about dying and rising gods. And he said, "Jack, why are you so enthralled with all these dying and rising gods in these myths, but you're not enthralled with a dying and rising God in the Bible?" Tolkien finally told

**“Lewis helped me see that if I believed in Christianity, it didn't mean all the other stories had no worth. They just point to the real Story of history—Jesus' story.”**

him Christianity is the true myth. It literally happened that Jesus came and rose from the dead. Lewis then researched and realized it was true—Jesus did die and rise again. And this was part of Lewis' journey to become probably the greatest apologist of the 20th century.

***How do we see the "true myth" in Tolkien's novels and Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings films?***

Tolkien uses three Christ figures in The Lord of the Rings series. One, of course, is Gandalf the wizard. Another is Aragorn, the king. And the third, believe it or not, is the hobbit Frodo. They all have attributes that Jesus has. Gandalf is the strategist. Aragorn, of course, is the returning king. And Frodo is the character who actually accomplishes the mission, even though Providence had to jump in at the end.

If you take a step back, you have sort of a Trinity here. You have Gandalf planning salvation, you have Frodo accomplishing salvation, and you have Aragorn inspiring salvation among the people.

***Tell me more about Frodo. He's not your typical hero—no capes, no***

Batman in *The Dark Knight Rises*



Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*



**tights, no magical powers like Gandalf. What can he teach us?**

In my book, I summarize Frodo's role like this: "In addition to the fact that he's only three feet tall, he is passive. He doesn't seek out adventure, riches, or power. You get the distinct impression he'd rather be at home in the Shire with his friends than trying to save the world. He also isn't the smartest or the bravest, even among the hobbits.

"Yet the tiny Frodo somehow endures hunger, thirst, heat, cold, physical injury, and countless other challenges without complaint. Over the course of his journey, he is stabbed with a poison knife on Weathertop; nearly freezes to death while trying to climb a mountain ...; is almost impaled by a spear in Moria; ... has to fight off several murder attempts by the Ring-coveting Gollum; is stung and nearly mummified by the giant spider, Shelob; and has to try to traverse the barren wasteland of Mordor with little food and almost no water.

"The entire time all of these trials challenge him, Frodo has to carry around the Ring, which seems to grow physically heavier the closer he gets to his goal. It weighs his spirit down so much that he

can't even remember the taste of food by the time they get to Mount Doom.

"How does he accomplish all this? His weaknesses lead to a strength we call humility."

**So, how does this illustrate Biblical truth?**

That weakness corresponds to Paul's statement in the Bible, "When I'm weak, I'm strong." Because when you're weak, you depend on God. And when you get God's help, now you're strong. So God uses weak people in the Bible, and Tolkien uses weak characters in Lord of the Rings to drive that point home.

***I first encountered the concept of the "true myth" in C.S. Lewis' book The Pilgrim's Regress. It was one of the last books I read before I got saved. I was an English major, so I loved stories. My favorites weren't pagan myths but lots of other kinds of stories. Lewis helped me see that if I believed in Christianity, it didn't mean all the other stories had no worth. They just point to the real Story of history—Jesus' story.***

***I realize now that Anne of Green***

***Gables (which I loved as a kid)—it's really about Anne learning to forgive Gilbert and find her true home. That's another echo of Christ coming for the church and bringing us home. When you understand, "Oh, they're all pointing to Him," then stories don't compete with the Bible anymore. There's great harmony. So I really appreciate you bringing out that point.***

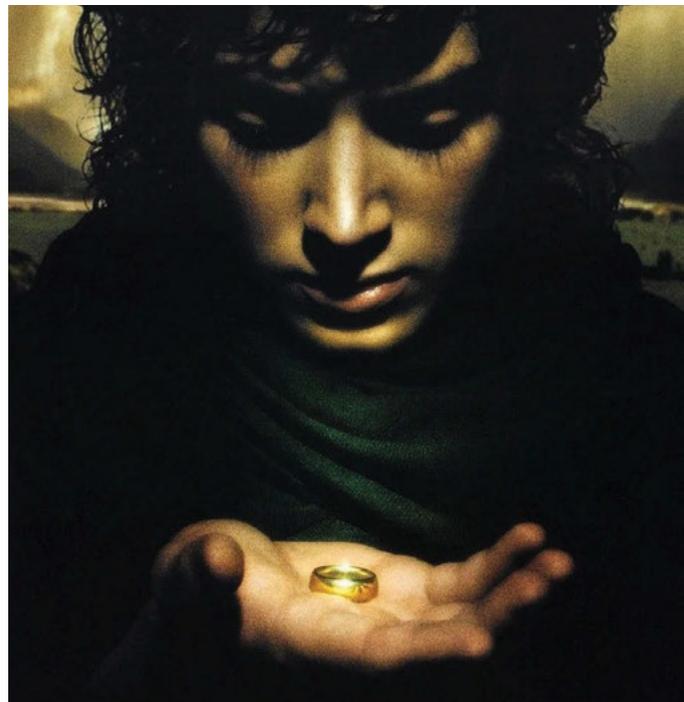
Of course, Jesus often created parables to tell either a moral or theological truth. These stories aren't really true. Like if you went back into the first century, you wouldn't find the Good Samaritan. You couldn't find out his name. These are invented tales that Jesus uses to make a true point about morality or theology. And that's what good movies do—either intentionally or unintentionally.

Here's how I apply this in *Hollywood Heroes*: "Imagine you could create someone who had Captain America's righteous idealism, Iron Man's genius, Harry Potter's willingness to sacrifice, Luke Skywalker's discipline, Sam's loyalty, Frodo's humility, Aragorn's courage, Gandalf's wisdom, Batman's focus, Superman's power ... you would have someone closer to Jesus than

Tony Stark in *Avengers: Infinity War*



Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*



any of these heroes individually.” In other words, none of these movie heroes are the ultimate hero, but they point us to Him.

***So you see Jesus’ character in their heroic qualities. But you’re not saying these characters are perfect, right? Or that everyone should watch them.***

Right. Not every movie is age appropriate for everyone. Look, whatever parents think is right or wrong for their kids, I agree with them. You might not show a certain movie to a 5-year-old, but you might show it to a 15-year-old. So, we always have to practice discernment.

But even if you don’t watch popular movies, you could talk to others about them. In Acts chapter 17, the Apostle Paul engaged the Athenians by quoting from Greek poets. These Greek poets weren’t Christians. They were non-Christians. But Paul noticed that there were things in their poetry that were true. So to create a bridge with the Athenians, he quoted those poets while sharing the gospel message.

In the same way, when I talk to kids, I always say, If you like Harry Potter, you’re gonna love Jesus. Jesus is the perfect version of Harry Potter. Jesus dies

and rises again, not just for his friends, but for his enemies, actually. There are so many parallels.

***So, people listen when you talk about something that they love?***

Exactly. I don’t know any teenager that would shoot you an eye roll if you said, “Hey, this Friday, or this Saturday night, we’re going to do movie night. You want to invite some friends over?” Invite them over to watch an Iron Man or Batman movie or whatever. Get the popcorn out, watch the film, and then afterward, have some discussion and see where it goes.

***Were movies touchstones for you with your own kids?***

Yeah, when they were growing up, we watched movies together and talked about them plenty of times. I mean, particularly for Zach—who’s a major in the Air Force and a graduate of Southern Evangelical Seminary—the Star Wars series is what really launched him into his love of movies. And our conversations about movies actually led to our writing *Hollywood Heroes* together. Zach would write the chapter, and then I would kind of come in behind him and edit it and

add my two cents. And so that’s how it came together.

***How do you recommend parents or others spark discussion after watching a movie?***

In *Hollywood Heroes*, we include questions to generate discussion among families or small groups. But one approach that’s often helpful—[author and apologist] Os Guinness has a technique he uses with his grandkids. It’s called Spot the Lie. So let’s say he’s watching something with them and the movie hints that characters had premarital sex. Maybe there are no negative consequences and everyone’s always happy. He’ll say after the show, “Were there any lies in what you just saw?” Then he’ll point out, “They’re saying there’s nothing wrong with premarital sex. Everyone’s always happy. No one ever gets hurt. Really? That’s a lie, isn’t it? OK, good.”

***What about before we watch? If my family decides to see Jurassic World Dominion this summer or another blockbuster, how can we prepare ahead of time?***

One question going into any movie is this: Is there going to be a confrontation

Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*



Luke Skywalker duels Darth Vader in *The Empire Strikes Back*



“So, you can only have hope or despair. That’s all you can have. One of the two. Christianity gives you hope.”

between good and evil? And normally there will be. That’s what makes these things interesting, right? And you can ask questions like, Who is going to be put into a moral dilemma? Who is gonna have to make a really hard choice? Most of the time in real life, our moral choices are easy. We know we shouldn’t lie. But what happens when no matter which way you go, there are negative consequences?

Another thing to watch—are characters following their heart or following the truth? Tony Stark offers a perfect visual demonstration of this. He has a device implanted into his chest to prevent shrapnel from piercing his heart. This is a beautiful picture of Proverbs 4:23 which says, “Above all else, guard your heart because everything you do flows from it.” Our culture says follow your heart. The Bible says guard your heart. If you follow your heart, you’re gonna wind up lost, confused, and full of anxiety like Tony Stark initially was.

***When we watch movies, we often see ourselves in the hero’s shoes. We want to be like Iron Man or Batman. But that’s not the ultimate goal, right?***

Well, you want to be like Iron Man where Iron Man emulates Jesus—where he

sacrifices himself to save others. Where he doesn’t follow his heart, he guards his heart. Where he yields to people who he knows can do a job better than him. These are all lessons that you ought to take from Iron Man because those things will conform you into the image of Christ.

***When you leave the blockbuster and you don’t have Christ, there’s nothing to take with you. But when you walk out with Christ, a good movie ending points to something real. Because of Jesus, you have a good ending coming up for your story.***

Right. I haven’t seen the new film *The Batman* yet. But my son did. Here’s a quote he sent me from the end (spoiler alert!): “Vengeance won’t change the past, mine or anyone else’s. I have to become more. People need hope—to know someone is out there for them.”

Well, there is somebody out there for us. It’s the Savior who’s already come once, and when He comes back, He’s returning as King. He is going to fold up this universe, right?

So, you can only have hope or despair. That’s all you can have. One of the two. Christianity gives you hope. ■

Captain America in *The Winter Soldier*



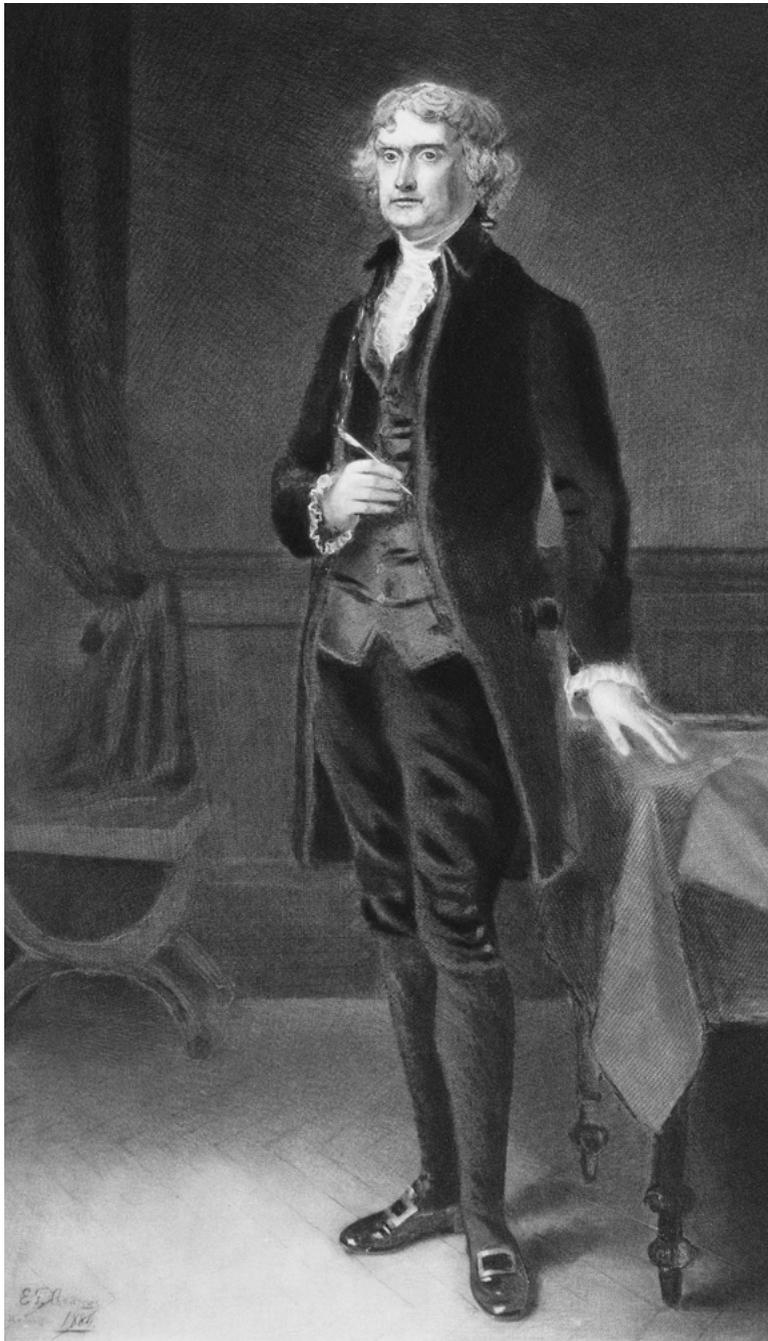
Harry Potter in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*



# A most inconsistent Founder

A new biography highlights the gap between Thomas Jefferson's enlightened rhetoric and his personal practices

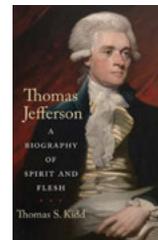
BY COLLIN GARBARINO



A GENERATION BACK, school curricula taught children America's Founders were great men who did great things. When we learned about U.S. presidents, we only learned about the good they did, or we were simply taught that whatever they did was in fact good. The situation has changed considerably in the last 20 years. Now schools are more likely to highlight the Founders' involvement with slavery or their abuse of indigenous peoples. Even Thomas Jefferson, who was once universally admired by progressives as a champion of Enlightenment thinking and as the author of America's beloved Declaration of Independence, risks getting canceled.

Our current cultural climate incentivizes black-and-white judgments about America's past, making Thomas S. Kidd's new biography, *Thomas Jefferson: A Biography of Spirit and Flesh*, refreshing. His book provides a nuanced and intimate analysis of Jefferson that illuminates the man's contradictory nature. Kidd, who was formerly a historian at Baylor University but moves to Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in the fall, has written numerous books about religion in America.

Kidd walks us through Jefferson's life chronologically: his upbringing and education, his contributions to the independence movement, his time as president, and his



later years as the founder of the University of Virginia. We're introduced to a man acquainted with loss—few of his children with his wife Martha lived to adulthood—and plagued by problems, many of which he brought on himself. Jefferson was an intellectual, but the book explains how his beliefs were often at odds with his practices.

From his youth, Jefferson doubted many of the claims of Christianity, and during his political career, he encouraged the separation of church and state. Historians—and sometimes Jefferson's contemporaries—often claim he had a fully secular worldview or was perhaps a deist. Kidd argues that while Jefferson wasn't an orthodox Christian, he espoused an idiosyncratic form of spirituality more robust than deism. Deists believed God created the universe and then ceased involvement. Jefferson's unguarded correspondence with friends shows he believed in God's providence, and his proof for providence was the triumph of

Enlightenment ideals brought about by the American Revolution.

Jefferson's public and private writings were steeped in the language of the Scriptures. He considered himself a Christian, even though he thought the Trinity an absurd doctrine and he refused to believe in Jesus' divinity. Jefferson located the truth of Christianity in Jesus' moral teachings. Everything else was superstition. He believed humanity could perfect itself, and he promoted a strict moralism for himself and his family. It was a moralism he was never able to live up to.

Financial woes dogged Jefferson throughout his life. His father-in-law left him with wealth but also hefty debts. Jefferson preached a gospel of financial stewardship, but his debts increased due to his profligate spending. He wanted a life of philosophical simplicity, but his expenditures on houses, books, and wine ensured he never achieved his goal.

Jefferson's slave owning seems most at odds with his stated doctrine "that all men are created equal." How is it that the author of the Declaration of Independence could deprive people of liberty? Jefferson himself recognized the contradiction. As a young politician, Jefferson suggested Virginians free their slaves but said emancipation couldn't happen until America could send blacks back to Africa. Throughout his life, abolitionists asked him to help their cause, but the older Jefferson got—and the more precarious his financial situation became—the less interested in emancipation he was, though he still held it out as an ideal.

Perhaps his greatest hypocrisy was his relationship with Sally Hemings. Hemings was the enslaved half-sister of Jefferson's wife. After Martha Jefferson died, Jefferson began a decades-long sexual relationship with the teenage Hemings that produced several children. This relationship calls into question Jefferson's philosophical idealism and his devotion to the teachings of Jesus, and it contradicts Jefferson's belief that different races should never reproduce together.

Despite Jefferson's inconsistencies and failings, Kidd doesn't condemn the Founder. Instead, the book provokes pity for this man who rejected Christianity, believing his own learning and rationality could lead to salvation. Jefferson doesn't just fail the test of orthodoxy, at every turn he failed to live up to the post-Christian ideals he had constructed for himself. ■



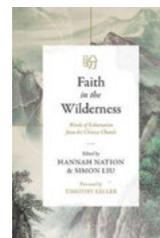
## SUMMER READING

# Faith that is tested and flourishes

New book proclaims faith amid brutality, while another examines faith and beauty

BY ERICA KWONG

PASTORS IN CHINA know persecution and preach from a faith that has been tested, which is the case with the sermons collected in *Faith in the Wilderness*, edited by Hannah Nation and Simon Liu. Nation and Liu, himself a Chinese pastor, selected these sermons out of an online preaching series that took place in China as COVID-19 began to break out. The Chinese house church pastors featured in this book



sought to make sense of the pandemic, criticized the Chinese government, imparted Biblical teachings, shared their personal struggles, all while conveying strong faith and convictions. Take for example this quote: "If you put hope in this world—whether it is hope for a democratic China, the continued centralization of power and dictatorship, isolationism, or the possibility of new leadership—then none of these are true hope. ... Look at one thing only: the

hope and identity God has given you.”

True to its subtitle, this book contains “words of exhortation from the Chinese church,” and it has garnered recommendations from leading Evangelicals such as D.A. Carson, Paul David Tripp, Tim Challies, and Nancy Guthrie, as well as a foreword by Tim Keller. Liu dedicates this collection to the believers who are imprisoned for their faith, and especially to Wang Yi. Pastor Wang, founder of Early Rain Covenant Church, is serving a nine-year sentence for “incitement to subvert state power.”

As China enacted additional internet regulations in March that further restrict the dissemination of religious content, it’s doubtful that the 2020 online sermons that gave rise to *Faith in the Wilderness* would still be permissible now. And that makes this book, published in April, all the more valuable.



If you’re interested in art and faith, *Rembrandt Is in the Wind*, by Russ Ramsey, is for you. Even if you’re not interested in art, Ramsey, a Presbyterian Church in America

pastor, makes a case for why Christians should care about beauty as he shares his love of art. Weaving in Biblical narratives and theological reflections, he features the greats—Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Vermeer, and Van Gogh—along with lesser-known artists.

Jean Frédéric Bazille would’ve established himself among the Impressionists had his life not been cut short by war. Henry O. Tanner had to navigate being an African American painter. Watercolorist Edward Hopper knew and painted loneliness. Lilius Trotter set aside her artistic aspirations for overseas missions.

Through the lives and works of these nine artists, readers get a sense of them as people who struggled with hardships and faith. The chapter on Rembrandt differs from the others as it is less about the Dutch painter, but more about the collector who owned his seascape and the museum heist that deprived the world of that painting. As Ramsey refers to specific pieces, readers of the Kindle version can swipe to the back of the book to see the color images of some of those works. ■

## SUMMER READING

# Three windows on God’s world

Novels old and new present lives in very different circumstances

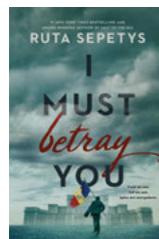
BY EMILY WHITTEN

DURING COMMUNIST DICTATOR Nicolae Ceausescu’s last years in Romania, people secretly gathered to hear or watch American media late into the night. Popular movies like *Die Hard* and music by Bruce Springsteen profoundly impacted Romania’s isolated population—serving as proof that another way of life existed. A life where food shelves weren’t empty, where men and women spoke freely, where people could choose a career or a place to live.

American “entertainment” helped them envision a better life, and it gave them courage when, in 1989, the opportunity for freedom finally came.

One such window on freedom today—*I Must Betray You*, Carnegie Medal winner Ruta Sepetys’ new “crossover” novel (read by teens and adults). In it, Sepetys brings the above Romanian history to life through high school student Cristian Florescu. Cristian writes,

*In reality, my desire to speak English had nothing to do with fighting our enemies. How many enemies did we have, anyway? I honestly didn’t know. The truth was, English class was full of smart, quiet girls. Girls I pretended not to notice. And if I spoke English, I could better understand song lyrics that I heard illegally on Voice of America broadcasts. Illegal, yes. Many things were illegal in Romania—including my thoughts and my notebook.*



In some ways, Cristian lives the life of any teenager. He goes to school, hangs out with friends, and secretly hopes for a date with Liliana, the girl with dark eyes down the street. But in Bucharest under Communist rule, Cristian’s mother works as a housekeeper for the U.S. ambassador’s family.

Soon, a Securitate agent coerces him to spy on the Americans, and eventually, Cristian’s agony over betraying friends turns to outward resistance. But as violent protests sweep Romania, Cristian faces life-and-death decisions, struggling to protect those he loves even as he tries to win freedom for his country.

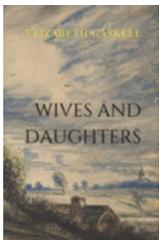
*I Must Betray You* has its downsides. The first half moves slowly and includes a few curse words. In one scene, Florescu and his girlfriend embrace alone. But by the book’s midsection, action comes fast and hard, and Sepetys brings Cristian’s tale to a satisfying end.

Adults and teens hungry for other helpful “windows” on God’s world might consider Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Wives and*



Ruta Sepetys

*Daughters*. Written roughly 50 years after Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Gaskell’s



tale captures similar delights—19th-century country life, class conflict, and of course, romantic love. Main character Molly Gibson doesn’t have the spunk of Elizabeth Bennett, but her kindness and steady character make her

a lovable heroine—even as her stepsister complicates her path to true love. (Anglophiles and rom-com lovers should check out the BBC dramatized version as well.)

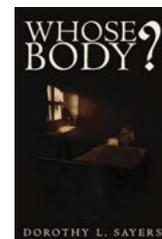
Gaskell professed Unitarianism, so you won’t find the gospel in her writing. Plus, she died before finishing the book, and the end (written by Frederick Greenwood) lacks some luster. But in our current LGBTQ+ confusion, Gaskell’s presentation of honorable sexual love between one man and one woman appears all the more lovely.

Finally, adults and teens who enjoy Sherlock Holmes or the Hardy Boys might pick up Dorothy Sayers’ mystery, *Whose Body?* The novel only lightly touches Sayers’ Anglican beliefs, and it does include a few curse words and significant alcohol use. Still,

“Eventually,  
Cristian’s  
agony over  
betraying  
friends  
turns to  
outward  
resistance.”

readers do see her Christian worldview at work.

In this, the first of the Lord Peter Wimsey novels, a London gentleman finds a dead body in his bathroom. Hours before, another man across town, Sir Reuben Levy, goes missing before a large financial deal. Wimsey, a young gentleman with nothing better to do, sniffs



his way onto the case. He then doggedly tracks the truth of these two mysteries across England, despite imminent danger, with the help of his friend, Inspector Parker at Scotland Yard, and his trusty butler.

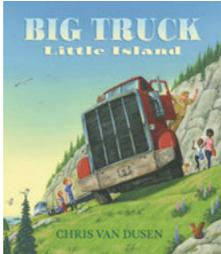
One clue to Sayers’ Christian themes at work—watch out for those who make claims such as “knowledge of good and evil ... is removable.” Set in Europe after World War I, such comments touch on materialistic viewpoints that led to the social Darwinism of World War II ... and still plague us today.

At times, America’s cultural landscape now seems as dark as any dystopian novel or dictatorship. But wise entertainment from other times and places can still provide a fresh vision of God’s world and His truth. ■

# Creative creation

Four noteworthy picture books

BY MARY JACKSON



## Big Truck Little Island *Chris Van Dusen*

Van Dusen's vivid illustrations and opening scene will capture children's attention quickly. A tugboat tows an oversized truck on a barge with an "extra large load ... all under wraps." The truck arrives at a little Maine island where it soon gets stuck on a narrow road, blocking traffic in both lanes. Hurried parents grow impatient, but their kids find a creative solution. A wrecker helps the truck deliver its surprise contents, to the islanders' delight. Inspired by similar events at Maine's Vinalhaven Island, the story is an "exam-

ple of problem solving and cooperation." (Ages 3-7)

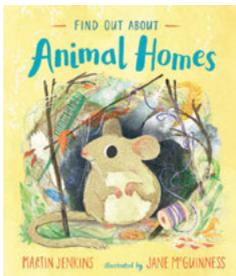
## The Creator in You *Jordan Raynor*

Two children observe fantastical scenes depicting "a working God" masterfully creating "in a matter of days, a world for exploring, for work, for play." Giant hands form mountains, hold planets, and fashion human beings "to look like Him—to act and work and create with Him." By working and creating new things, we reflect God's character. Raynor emphasizes in a note to parents that God's creativity is often overlooked, impacting how work is perceived. The story seeks to convey to children that the Biblical mandate to "fill the earth and subdue it" involves cultural creation, too. (Ages 3-7)



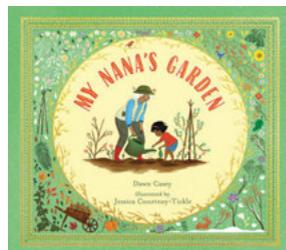
## Find Out About Animal Homes *Martin Jenkins*

Jenkins, a conservation biologist, describes with fascinating detail the variety of homes animals build for protection from predators, keeping warm, and having babies. Big animals, such as polar bears, build small homes, while tiny termites build mounds as large as a bus. Some animals use sticks, stones, or their own spit to make their nests. Endnotes include more information about animal homes and an index. The book's simple text and Jane McGuinness' mixed-media illustrations make for an engaging read aloud. (Ages 3-7)



## My Nana's Garden *Dawn Casey*

A little girl grows up experiencing her grandmother's "lovely and wild" garden through its various conditions and seasonal changes. Where she sees tangled weeds, Nana sees wildflowers and food for bees. In this special place, a girl and her mother make fond memories with Nana, including stargazing, picking apples, planting seeds, and having bonfires, until one sad, wintery day Nana's chair in the garden is empty. The book's artwork and rhyming couplets portray a mother-daughter duo carrying on Nana's garden. Soon, four generations find joy and healing in a place "blooming with life." (Ages 3-7)



## Afterword

In *How to Have a Birthday*, Mary Lyn Ray pens an ode to birthday milestones and the joy of celebrating them: "Maybe you wake early, wondering what will happen. You know something will. And that's your first present: you get to wonder." The book goes on to explore the different ways families mark the day through presents, pictures, traditions, and birthday cake. Cindy Derby's watercolor, pastel, and pencil illustrations vibrantly capture the excitement and fun of birthdays.

In *This Is a Gift for You*, Emily Winfield Martin focuses on the everyday "gifts" that parents and children can unwrap each day when they savor ordinary moments with their loved ones. The book highlights tangible and intangible gifts as well as relational ones such as "The gift of Sorry when we're wrong" and "The gift of knowing you better than most." Martin pairs her lyrical writing with soft acrylic, gouache, and pencil illustrations that feature diverse children and their families.

—Kristin Chapman



TODAY'S NEWS DELIVERED IN TEN MINUTES

## STREAM NEWS FROM CHRISTIAN JOURNALISTS

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Gunjan Devi  
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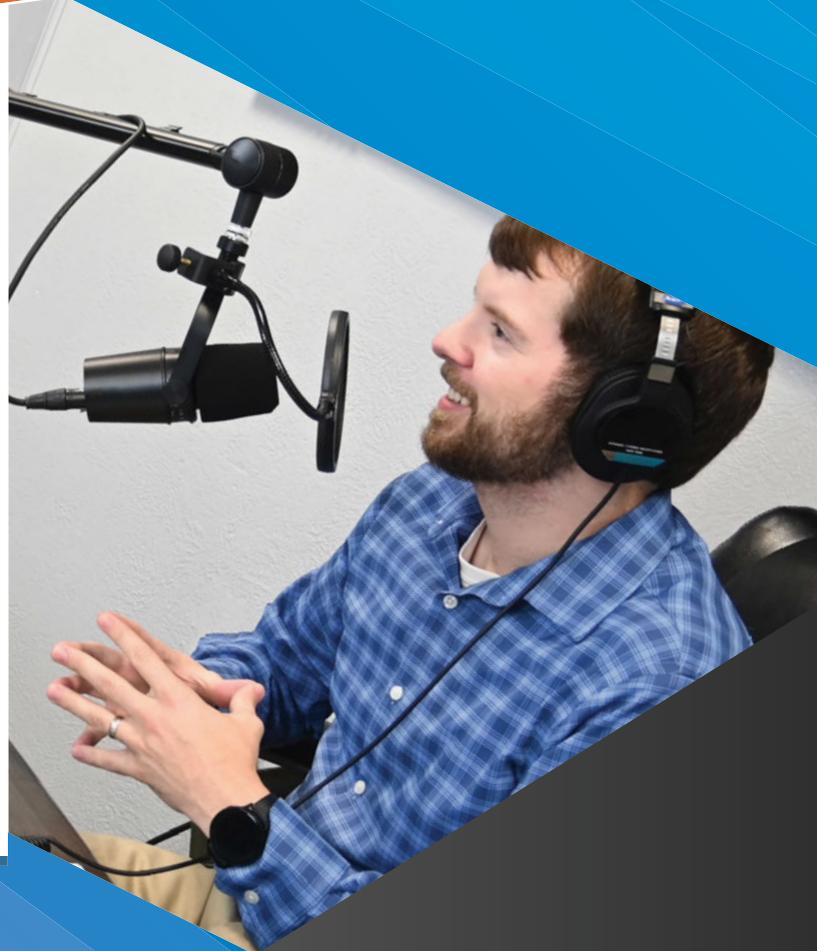
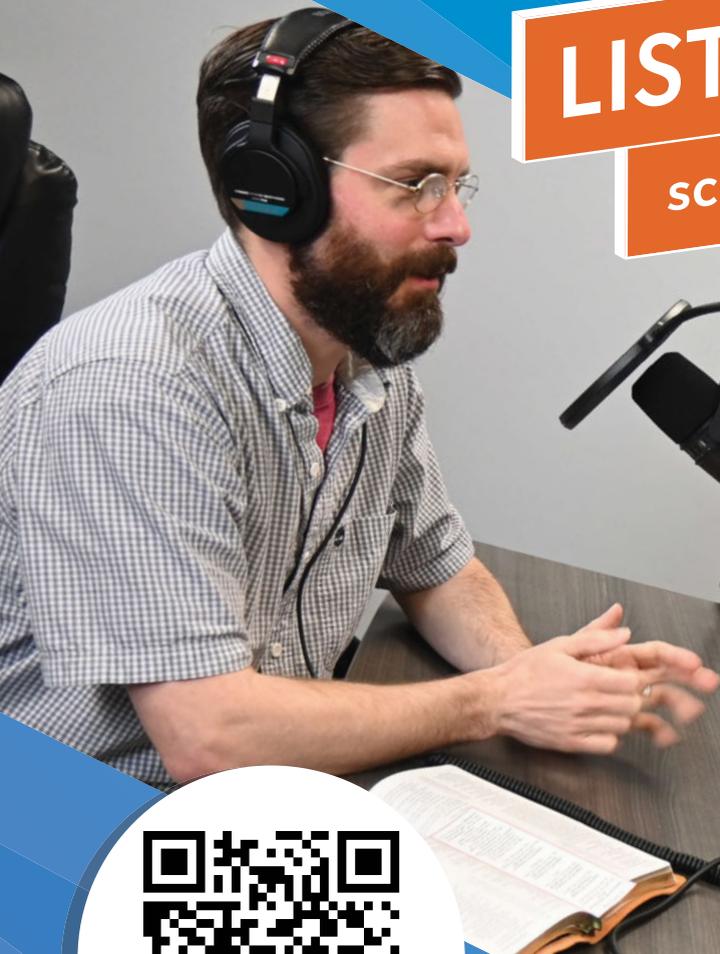
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# NOTEBOOK

Health Lifestyle Missions



Shelves empty of baby formula at a grocery store in Brooklyn, N.Y.

## FORMULA FRENZY

Some pro-life pregnancy centers can't provide specialized baby formula for clients

by Leah Savas

ON A WEDNESDAY IN MAY, a blonde, slender young woman walked into ChristyAnne Collins' Texas City, Texas, pregnancy center—a toddler on her hip and baby twins in a stroller. Collins recognized her: Years ago, Collins said, she had been a regular in the center's earn-while-you-learn program. In that program, moms could stick around to watch parenting videos and complete homework assignments that would earn them maybe 60 or 70 "baby bucks" →

in a given day, enough to cash in for a few packages of wipes and diapers and a couple cans of baby formula. Collins said this woman used to buy baby formula every week with her baby bucks.

She hadn't been back for a while when Collins saw her again that day. Collins said she's now working a job and doesn't need the day-to-day support of the center that she needed with her oldest, now in school. But a national shortage in baby formula brought her back to the center. This time, though, the center didn't have what she needed.

The shortage has left many parents unable to find the formula they need to feed their babies and turning to local pro-life pregnancy centers for help. While some pregnancy centers with an excess have been able to give cans away to families in their communities, others like Collins' center are either low or completely out and sometimes unable to help women as they usually do: a situation that has been hard on both pregnancy center clients and staff.

In February, the popular formula brand Similac issued a recall of formula

**A woman receives a can of formula at a food pantry in Chelsea, Mass.**



produced at a facility in Sturgis, Mich., connected to multiple cases of bacterial infections in infants. Because of that recall, centers across the country had to get rid of can after can of Similac that donors had either given to them or paid for.

Heather Lawless, director of Reliance Center in Lewiston, Idaho, said her center lost six cans. Sarah Bowen, executive director of the Promise of Life Network pregnancy centers in Pennsylvania, said her centers removed about 50 cans from their shelves. Collins estimated they sent back more than 70 cans.

The Food and Drug Administration ordered the Michigan plant to close in February due to an inspection of the facility that found unsanitary conditions. Since then, stock of formula on store shelves has declined even more until in some areas it has become almost inaccessible.

Some pregnancy centers, though, are set up to help their communities for a while longer. Staff at Bowen's centers in Pennsylvania said, through the generosity of donors and moms in their program sharing with one another, every formula need has been met so far, and they still have about 20 cans between their four offices. A pregnancy center in small-town Hillsdale, Mich., announced in a press release on May 12 that it had an excess of formula due to a drop in clients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March, staff members have been advertising the

free formula in Facebook posts that each get dozens of shares.

Jeri Lynn Scott, the director of a center in San Antonio, Texas, said they had no formula donations in March but haven't run out yet because one of the center's major donors is an Enfamil sales rep and donated a few hundred cans to the center sometime last year. Her center on May 16 started a baby drive for local families to pick up free cans of the formula along with other items like diapers and wipes. Of the centers she knows of, Scott said hers is one of the few that still has formula.

Collins said her Texas City pregnancy center usually keeps about 15 or 20 kinds of formula in stock, anywhere between 100 to 200 cans. "We are down to nothing," she said on May 16. Collins said the last donation they received came about three weeks earlier, when a mother—one of the center's clients—gave the center three extra cans of formula that she had purchased with her coupons through the government's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Collins estimated that her center receives about 15 to 20 calls a day from families looking for baby formula. On top of that, up to 10 women might stop by in a given day to ask for some, a massive increase from the roughly two to three drop-ins a week before the shortage, according to Collins.

"We just have a constant parade of women coming to the door just saying 'WIC sent me here to see if you guys have any formula,'" she said. The woman who arrived with her twins and toddler in May was one of the women sent by WIC. Collins said she was also one of the multiple women who have broken down in tears when they realized the center could not help. "These moms are so distraught that there's nowhere to meet the needs of their babies," she said, adding that it's been "heartbreaking to our staff and volunteers" too.

"It's extremely emotional when you see a mother wanting to provide for her child and no matter what she does she can't," said Collins. "We've got the reputation in the community of being the go-to organization when a mother needs assistance. And they come to us, and we can't help them." ■

# GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Being a neighbor is more than a condition; it's a calling

by Lauren Dunn

DAVID BURTON WAS WORKING in his garage on a Tuesday evening in March when his 5-year-old neighbor, Noah Crawford, showed up in his driveway to show him his hammer. Noah's mom, Tara, explained that Noah had hurried over to David's garage as soon as he knew he was outside. "He's welcome anytime," David said, turning to Noah.

Shane and Tara Crawford and their three children moved to the house across the street from the Burtons in May 2021, but they met David even before they closed on the house, often texting him with questions about area schools, utilities, or lawn mowing. "He was always responsive," Shane said. "Even late at night, he would send me these lengthy responses with all the information we needed."

Their friendship with the Crawfords is one of the many relationships David and his wife, Stacey, have worked to cultivate in their Stoney Creek Estates neighborhood in Republic, Mo. David, Stacey, and their two kids—since grown—moved to the neighborhood about 12 miles southwest of Springfield roughly 18 years ago.

The Burtons attend Ridgecrest Baptist Church in Springfield, where David is a deacon. For years, they thought of themselves as good neighbors—no loud parties and they kept their yard in good shape, David pointed out. But in the summer of 2019, he realized how low he had set the bar after his pastor preached about being a neighbor and David read *The Art of Neighboring* by Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon.



David, Stacey, and Lauren Burton stand outside their home.



**WE ONLY KNEW  
THE NAMES OF  
TWO OF OUR  
NEIGHBORS.**



"We only knew the names of two of [our neighbors]," David realized. He and Stacey knocked on their neighbors' doors, armed with homemade chocolate chip cookies, a family photo with David's contact information, and an intention to be better neighbors.

Soon David began turning other ideas into action. He invited neighbors to gather at the Burtons' driveway for what he called a "driveway chat." The idea was as simple as it sounds: Neighbors brought their lawn chairs once a month during the summer to a designated driveway to talk. David said the first driveway chat took place on a rainy evening, and →

only six people showed up. But Stacey was hesitant about some of David's efforts, especially when his ideas conflicted with family time with their children.

Stacey's lightbulb moment came when a neighbor who had resisted their efforts stopped David on his walk one day. He asked David to pray for him, adding that he thought David was a man of prayer. "There's ministry here," Stacey realized.

After a church ladies' event, Stacey decided to host and lead a small group study for women in Republic for five weeks, beginning on a Monday night this past January. Many of the women were meeting each other for the first time and learned that they all lived within about a mile of the Burtons' house.

After those five weeks, the women started a new study. Stacey said they will take the summer off but plan to jump back in this fall.

Tara Crawford also attends Stacey's Bible study. Shane and Tara both say that the ministry of "neighboring" is new to them and that they're still learning: Shane said he may host the neighborhood's upcoming pingpong league.

Shane and Tara's children, Noah, along with Ella, 8, and Myah, 10, are looking forward to another Fourth of July event. Last year they decorated their bikes in hopes of winning a cash prize. "The winner was a dog," Noah said.

This year, David said the city is providing a sound system and portable toilets for the event and police officers and firefighters to lead the parade.

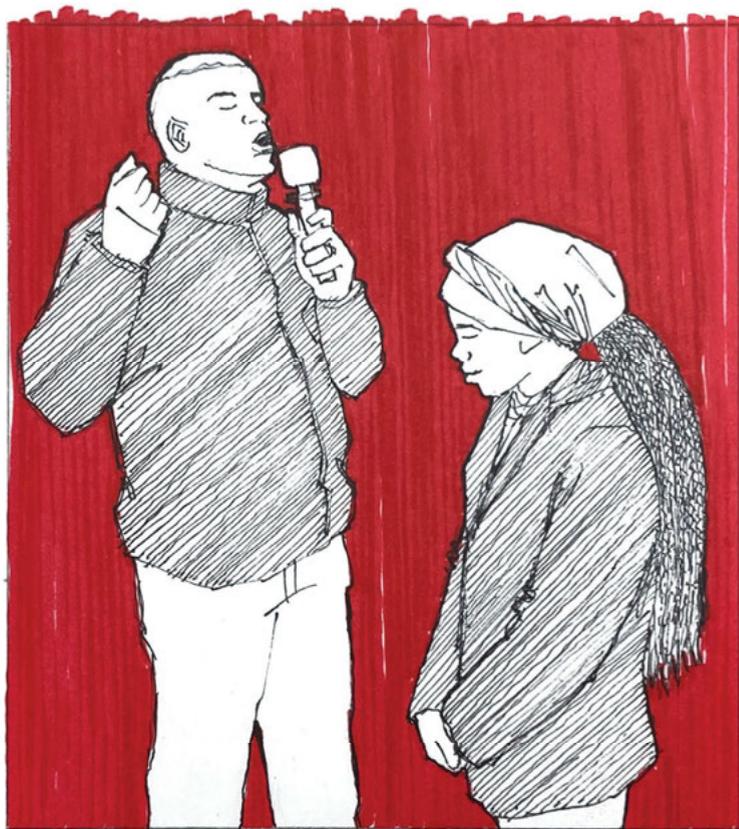
He also incorporated some changes that parents and other attendees suggested last time: offering participation and placing ribbons instead of cash prizes, adding a separate pets category, and starting the parade an hour later in the day. David doesn't know yet how many children will participate.

But whether activities are well received or not, or events are well attended or not, David said neighboring is more about an attitude. "It's the ... ministry of being available: You have to have some margin in your life and to be able to linger at the mailbox a little longer, to be willing to be interrupted on a walk, to be able to visit with someone," he said. "But it just takes a little time. ... It's a slow-cook process for sure." ■

## AN UNEXPECTED FIELD FOR MINISTRY

Angolan students grow and share their faith at Chinese universities

by Onize Ohikere



# W

EEKS BEFORE LEAVING his home in Angola for China in 2016, Stephen Siquila recommitted to his Christian faith. He was one of several students who received a government scholarship to study engineering at Huaqiao University in the city of Quanzhou.

Siquila describes himself as a "baby in the faith" at the time. He tried to set up a Bible study with his peers but lacked any training on how to run it or answer any of the questions that came up. That curiosity spurred a partnership with an Angolan student ministry back home and fueled other local efforts in a country still hostile to Christianity.

Angola provides the foreign scholarships to students like Siquila that allow them to study abroad, including in China, a nation that continues to grow its influence across Africa.

When Siquila was at a loss for how to make his Bible study work, he contacted Frederico Catihe, who leads the evangelical student ministry in Angola (otherwise known as International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in other countries). “He had a lot of questions about his relationship with the Lord,” Catihe recalled.

They started to exchange regular messages on WhatsApp, where Catihe answered Siquila’s questions. Siquila connected Catihe to more Angolan students who had questions, until WhatsApp felt insufficient.

Catihe has traveled to China three times since 2018 to meet with the group that had grown to include more than 50 students at one point. The visits allowed him to hold more study sessions and one-on-one meetings with them. “I could see it strengthened the group,” he said.

His last visit in 2020 saw the group welcome students from other Portuguese-speaking countries, including Brazil and Mozambique. Catihe credits Siquila’s curiosity for spurring the effort that now includes plans to set up a similar ministry for Angolan students in Poland, Portugal, and Russia.

He says this season in the students’ life, while they are away from their homes and comfort zones, offers a key ministry opportunity. “They’re studying in university and might become key influencers in the country or elsewhere,” he explained. “If we can reach them while they’re still students, they can influence the country or the world.”

Their global impact has already begun. Many of the students have also joined international churches. Priscilla Nobre, another Angolan student at the same university, found the church fellowship and other welcoming activities, despite some language barriers.

Several of the students said their spiritual growth has prepared them to reach



**IF WE CAN**  
**REACH THEM WHILE**  
**THEY’RE STILL**  
**STUDENTS, THEY**  
**CAN INFLUENCE**  
**THE COUNTRY OR**  
**THE WORLD.**



out to other Angolans and students from other countries. China allows the international students to run house churches and other faith activities but bars the locals from joining.

Due to the rules and some of the local students’ resistance, Nobre explained through a translator that she shares her faith in other ways, sometimes by saying “God loves you” or “Jesus loves you.”

English learning centers also offer opportunities. Siquila said such English Corners often allow them to share their faith with Chinese students. “Many Chinese students are interested in learning English,” he said.

Now back in Angola, Siquila says the outreach continues as Chinese construction and other companies become more visible across Africa. He recalled working as a translator at a Chinese company in Angola last year. “My boss was the one who started sharing about his faith,” he said. “He just started talking to me about the Bible just because of how I interact with him.”

Siquila said his boss shared about how he read the Bible and prayed but still struggled to believe after years of being told Christianity was a tool to control his mind. “I see that as an opportunity for ministry,” he said. ■



Catihe prays with a woman (left) during the 2020 conference for students from Angola and other Portuguese-speaking countries; a group of students at the 2020 conference (right).



## Sidewalk writing

### Philosophical differences at a chalk art event

**D**ARLENE SAID THE HIGH SCHOOL up the road was having an LGBT sidewalk art event on April 21 that was open to the community, and would I like to come. I said, ... Um ... OK. Darlene is not afraid of anything; she's from Long Island.

I told my husband, and his response was that April 21 is our 10th wedding anniversary. That turned out to be true. Wishing merely to remind him of the surpassing importance of the kingdom of God, I blurted the first verse that sprang to mind, "Let the dead bury their own dead," which my husband totally took the wrong way. But because he is a gracious man, in the end he agreed to postpone our celebration till the 22nd.

When the big day arrived (the chalk art festival), I found my grandchildren's box of chunky multicolored chalk and went to meet Darlene. She had Bible verses stuffed in her pocket. It looked like rain, which I was ready to accept as a sign from God that we should go home and try for another time. Darlene's view was that when chalk on sidewalks gets wet it becomes darker and richer.

After strolling the \$119 million campus, we spotted a stretch of the broad concrete apron where a man with a pink pony tail was unloading a van, and were sure we had found our objective. A woman was there directing three little girls. The girls were busy at work coloring in perfectly shaped rainbow-striped hearts and the word "PRIDE." One of them, a limpid-eyed artist of about 7, looked up at me from her tableau and said with the unfeigned modesty of innocence, "Do you like my colors?" I said, "Yes," and wanted to run away.

But instead I turned and said to the mother, "You

### DARLENE WAS CLEARLY NOT OF MY DELICATE CONSTITUTION, TO FLINCH AT LIGHTEARTEDNESS SUDDENLY DARKENING INTO CONFRONTATION.

must have drawn the outlines, they're so straight." She smiled in the affirmative, then introduced herself as the school librarian. Darlene, who is an extrovert, engaged the librarian in conversation about the new pollen garden and crab apple trees planned for the school yard. I was standing there listening but thinking this was already a disaster, like the time my son caught a crab at the Jersey shore, and on the way home to cook it made the mistake of naming it "Buddy."

Darlene was clearly not of my delicate constitution, to flinch at the prospect of lightheartedness suddenly darkening into confrontation, for she then abruptly chirped, "Well, time to write!" and retrieved her scrap with the verses. Choosing the most prominent square possible, she got on her knees and began: "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit." Her dutiful helper, I was coloring inside the lines, but we only made it to "The Lord is near to" before the librarian approached and said, "What are you doing?"

We were off and running.

It was at this point that came to light a slight philosophical difference between me and my fellow evangelist. I thought her chosen verse ambiguous, because it could be interpreted to mean that God is in league with the LGBT cause. I should explain that the school website's promotion had claimed "gender-different children" were being bullied; this is what Darlene thought to address with her chosen Scripture. Moot argument now. The librarian was pleading with rising crescendo that we go away, while Darlene and yours truly were emptying our gunnysack of reasons why the gay and trans agenda is destroying children.

Meanwhile my own internal dialogue was telling me we're accomplishing nothing.

Further up the sidewalk a pastor inscribed a verse, which I decided to copy on another square: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Jesus." When I was done, a little girl standing by broke from her pack, drew near with poise, looked sweetly into my eyes, and said, "I think what you wrote is nice."

And the rain held back. ■

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## SEVENTY YEARS ON THE THRONE

Britain celebrates Elizabeth II's platinum jubilee

**FROM THE BALCONY OF BUCKINGHAM PALACE**, members of the British royal family watched—and young Prince Louis reacted to the sound of—a flypast by 70 planes from the Royal Navy, army, and Royal Air Force on June 2. The flypast was part of the annual Trooping the Colour parade that marks the official birthday of the British monarch and that this year was part of the platinum jubilee celebrations honoring Queen Elizabeth II's 70-year reign. Throughout the four-day jubilee, Prince Louis drew attention with quirky facial expressions caught on camera. Mike Tindall, husband of Prince William's cousin Zara Tindall, attributed the behavior to a sugar high. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the celebration proved popular with Americans, as two specials related to the jubilee were among the 20 highest-rated television programs for the week of May 30 to June 5. On ABC, the "Party at the Palace" televised concert and jubilee event ranked 14th, according to Nielsen figures, and a CBS News documentary on the queen came in at No. 18.

# ENDURE

A book by Bill Newton

# Live Life with Godly Determination

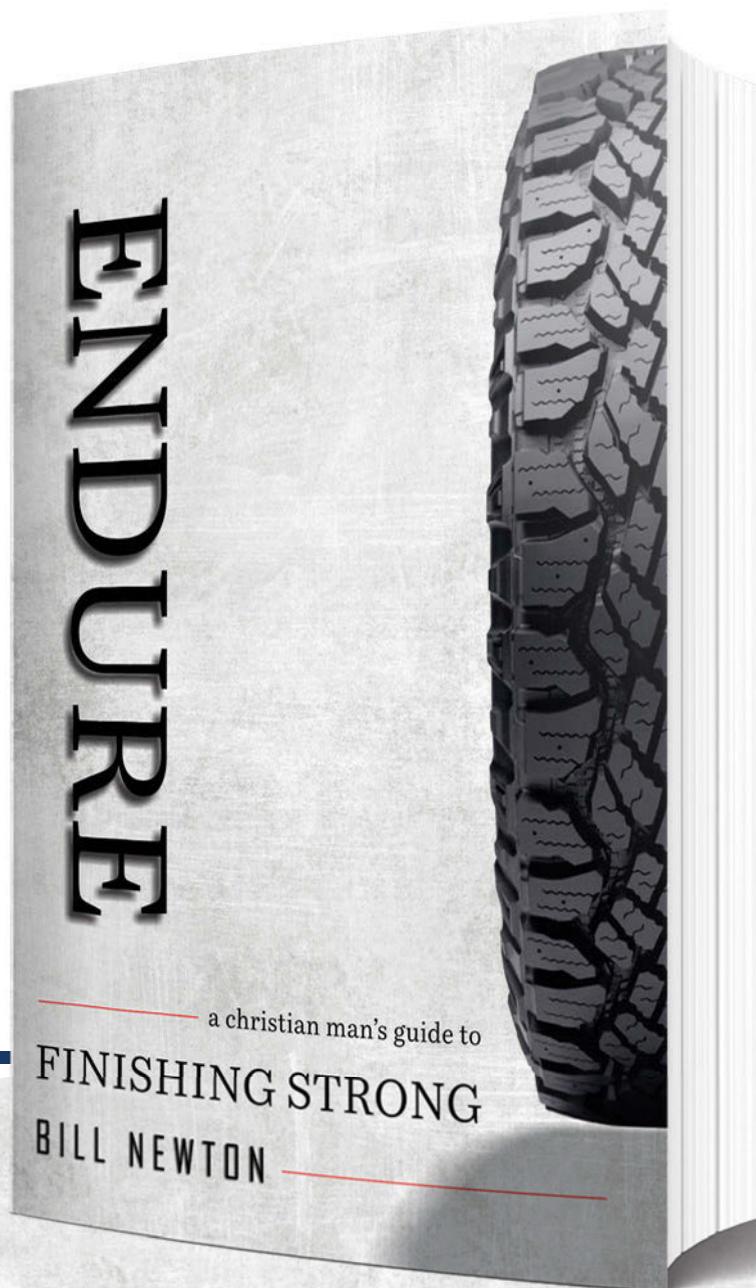
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