YOUR NEIGHBOR IS ANYONE YOU COME IN CONTACT WITH. THE MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO SHOW THEM THAT SOMEONE CARES. — P. 67

2022
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As soon as I heard about the mission of Samaritan Ministries, I knew I wanted to be part of it.

— Moriah, member since 2017

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40

A STATE OF UNCERTAINTY
After Dobbs, Michigan officials give conflicting opinions on the legality of abortion in the state

by Leah Savas
Dispatches

13 NEWS ANALYSIS
A Supreme Court ruling curbs the EPA's authority to regulate CO₂ emissions

16 HUMAN RACE

17 BY THE NUMBERS

18 QUOTABLES

19 CARTOONS

20 QUICK TAKES

ON THE COVER
Illustration by Krieg Barrie

FOIBLES OF THE GODS

Thor: Love and Thunder is a zany rom-com and sci-fi mashup in which a polytheistic universe clashes with the problem of evil
by Collin Garbarino

Culture

25 MOVIES & TV
Thor: Love and Thunder; Minions: The Rise of Gru; The Sea Beast; Mr. Malcolm's List; Persuasion

30 BOOKS
Rescuing great literature

32 CHILDREN'S BOOKS

34 MUSIC
Deluxe editions bring back unique albums from Nancy and Frank Sinatra

Notebook

65 SCIENCE
How to fix a wombat's teeth: Australian designer builds custom surgical instruments for nonhuman patients

67 LIFESTYLE

68 ART

Voices

10 Joel Belz
22 Janie B. Cheaney
36 Q&A
70 Andrée Seu Peterson
What does it mean to be a man? That depends on who you ask. To most people, being a man is defined by their culture – what society expects a man to be. Tough and burly. Sentimental and woke. Confident and poised.

And they'd all be wrong.

You are not defined by culture. You’re defined by God’s Word. *Endure* is a collection of short, practical, real-world-centered chapters describing Christian principles to help you grow into a mature man of God, confident in God’s power to supply what you need for life in this fallen world. “Do you believe that God can do that for you?” *Endure* is a guide that challenges every man to answer that question in a way that pleases God.

Visit [BillNewton.us/Endure](http://BillNewton.us/Endure) to get your copy of *Endure*. Prepare to be challenged and encouraged.
What did you find in your reporting on abortion in cases of the life of the mother being at risk?

“I talked to an OB-GYN, Dr. Donna Harrison, the head of the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists. She pointed out that aborting an unborn baby is not the only way to separate a mother and unborn child when the mother’s life is at risk. The other options include inducing labor, or performing a C-section. Harrison said it’s her opinion that having an intact baby for the mother to grieve over is better than pulling the baby out in pieces.”

—WORLD Reporter Leah Savas, whose story begins on p. 40
AN ARMY OF SIGHTS AND SOUNDS
JUNE 4, P. 54: In Maryrose Delahunty’s article about the “Ghost Army,” she mentions “massive 500-pound speakers that could project 15 miles.” That made me think of the absurd amplifiers used in what’s still being called “contemporary worship.”

Robert Hellam/Seaside, Calif.

PRO-LIFE MEANS PRO-BABIES AND PRO-MOMS
JUNE 4, P. 60: I found your interview with Students for Life’s Kristen Hawkins inane and even insensitive, especially in asking what her favorite “chant” was and what she does to unwind after a long, hard day of protesting against those who find abortion their only way out of an unwanted pregnancy.

Bob Wright/Wheaton, Ill.

CONSUMING IDEOLOGIES
JUNE 4, P. 22: I’m sharing Janie B. Cheaney’s column with my family and friends who are frustrated but tongue-tied to capture the essence of these “consuming ideologies” in healthy conversations.

Susan Mackenzie/San Jose, Calif.

HEADING TO OCEANIA
JUNE 4, P. 70: We’re more than halfway to Oceania, and only a genuine miracle can save us. When King David humbled himself after counting his fighting men, God spoke to the avenging angel: “Enough! Withdraw your hand.” May our humbling produce the same result.

Ellie Gustafson/Haverhill, Mass.

I think Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn missed the mark when he suggested we walk out of any meeting whose speaker deals in lies, ideological nonsense, or shameless propaganda. Not wanting to be numbered among the cancelers, I think it’s more sensible to speak out than to walk out.

Jim McCausland/Port Orchard, Wash.

GOOD WITHOUT GOD?
JUNE 4, P. 38: Bonnie Pritchett made one of the most profound points I’ve ever read in WORLD Magazine: We have become a nation that equates quality of life with the value of life. This fallacy is used to justify presumed “rights” to abortion, euthanasia, and the end-of-life experience. Tragically, infanticide is next on the slippery slope.

Karen Davis/Exton, Pa.

Thank you, Andrée Seu Peterson, for pointing out the irony of the Biden administration’s attempt to install a “truth commission.” Thankfully, we have a God of justice and are called to be patient followers.

Kathy Connors/Medina, Wash.

SICILIAN FLIMFLAM
JUNE 4, P. 29: The fascinating story behind Operation Mincemeat has been told before in an excellent 1956 film The Man Who Never Was. I highly recommend the earlier film, especially if you want to skip the sensuality, blasphemies, and foul language your reviewer warned us of.

Julie Shields/Fayetteville, Ga.

Your review failed to warn of a homosexual scene. Was that even historically accurate, or just thrown in to satisfy some? It certainly was not needed.

Glenn Palmer/Norfolk, Va.

LIFTING UP OR TEARING DOWN?
JUNE 4, P. 31: I was taken aback by Timothy Lamer’s assertion that “mass immigration of low-skilled workers has held back wages among poor Americans (including poor black Americans).” What I have seen is how the exportation of manufacturing and industry has gutted the potential for the average Joe or Jane to make a strong middle-class living. Immigrants have taken jobs, they have accepted jobs, but surely not at the expense of poorer Americans, black or otherwise.

Kevin Fong/Beaverton, Ore.

CCM HAS GOOD NICHES
JUNE 4, P. 35: Whatever a Christian’s views on the Rapture, Larry Norman’s words in “I Wish We’d All Been Ready” apply just as much, if not more so, today as they did then. I thank the Lord I’m ready now for whatever happens next, because I wasn’t until I heard and responded to the Lord because of Larry’s song.

Dennis Webber/Tea, S.D.
Building news literacy to better live out the gospel

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TWO MONTHS AGO, in May, I introduced WORLD’s three new cross-platform content teams: News, Features, and Commentary. As I said at the time, those teams will provide content to our three distribution platforms, WORLD Magazine, WORLD Digital, and WORLD Radio.

What I didn’t tell you then is that, in addition to the new cross-platform teams, we’re planning big changes to the platforms themselves as well.

For starters: Lynn Vincent will be the new Executive Editor of WORLD Magazine, and Daniel James Devine will be the new Editor.

Prior to taking on his role at WORLD Digital about a year ago, Daniel was the longtime Managing Editor of the magazine. He’s happy to be back at the magazine, and we’re happy to have him back.

We’re happy to have Lynn back, too. By “back,” I mean Lynn was features editor of the magazine when she left in 2009 to pursue a career as a best-selling author. She returned last year as producer and host of WORLD Radio’s true-crime podcast Lawless, and brings with her 24 years of experience in long-form and investigative journalism.

So she’ll be leading both the features team and the magazine team. Lynn will be moving toward longer-form, features-driven coverage. The idea is that with the pace of news, we will be relying on our digital platforms to deliver breaking news, while the magazine will go broader and deeper, with analysis and packages that provide 360-degree coverage of topics of special interest to you.

Mickey McLean will return to the WORLD Digital platform, which he originated back in the early 2000s and led for over a decade. He’s been our Executive Editor for Audience Engagement for the past two years, and he’ll retain that role as he also retakes the reins at WORLD Digital.

Paul Butler isn’t new at WORLD Radio—he’s been leading that team for several years. But he’s planning a lot of new things for the platform, including a major new initiative in conjunction with the cross-platform news team (which I’ll share with you later—that’ll take its own column).

Really, the work of all of our platform leaders will rely on and coordinate with the work of our cross-platform teams. That’s by design. Having access to all of the content of those production teams will allow our platform leaders to put together packages of news and analysis that best suit their platforms.

To recap: three platform teams, led by Lynn Vincent, Mickey McLean, and Paul Butler; three cross-platform teams, led by Lynde Langdon (News), Lynn Vincent (Features), and Tim Lamer (Commentary). Those five editors make up our editorial council, along with Nick Eicher, our Chief Content Officer.

Those council members, and the teams they lead, have a lot of plans for the new fiscal year. I’ll let you know about each of them before they happen, when possible.
Fall Preview Day

OCTOBER 21, 2022

Whether you’re just beginning your journey, or have decades of experience, we will do whatever it takes to help you live your calling. And Preview Day is your chance to explore everything Southwestern Seminary and Texas Baptist College have to offer in both theological training and undergraduate education.

› Tour the Campus
› Meet Your Professors
› Talk to Current Students
› Explore Degrees

SWBTS.EDU/PREVIEW
A trustworthy source?
Some tests for whether a business is one to rely on

LET’S FACE THE FACTS: In most places these days, honesty in the business place is tough to come by—just as it is in government, politics, education, media, healthcare, and the rest of life. So let me point to what may seem an unlikely source for an example of uncomplicated straight shooting: He’s my auto mechanic.

Here are three simple tests—all rooted in Scripture—to help you determine whether a particular business is inclined to follow Christ-like practices in its day-to-day operations.

Test No. 1: How does that business treat a widow when no one else is watching? In this case, she wasn’t actually a widow, but her circumstances as an unmarried woman, new in our town, were the same. She needed major engine repairs on her aging car, and she was asking me to point her to a trustworthy and honest repairman. I still remember, more than 20 years later, being surprised by his estimate of something over $1,200! And I remember being equally surprised by his actual bill of only $850 or so.

Test No. 2: How does the business treat the “stranger” from out of town? The stranger in this case happened to be my son-in-law, whose van’s transmission had altogether quit and left him a bit overwhelmed by a repair estimate of way over $1,500. Yet in the end, a few days later, and in spite of his alien New York license plate, the actual bill was less than half that amount.

Test No. 3: What is the record of this business in honoring its word? Does it live up to its promises? My records are skimpy, and that is part of my point. I had bought a set of four new tires from my favorite mechanic a few months earlier, and now I had a sense they had worn out sooner than they should have. But I had no proof, and I was embarrassed to make my claim or to ask for an adjustment of any kind. It was a strange situation in which I actually trusted my mechanic’s word more than I did my own!

Wouldn’t it be wonderful—deliriously wonderful!—if the world operated on such a basis? What if widows never had to worry about trusting the word of those around them? What if strangers never felt they had to be extra careful about trusting the word of those around them?

What if all of us learned more and more about honesty and truth-telling by listening to someone who makes that his habit? What if that someone were your favorite auto mechanic?
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• The apostles entrusted the gospel to faithful, local leadership able to teach others also. (II Timothy 2:2)

• Today, only about 1% of western missions giving goes to reach the unreached.

• The apostle Paul said he aimed to “preach the gospel where Christ has not been named, so that . . . ‘those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.’” (Romans 15:20-21)

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—Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth, Author of Heaven Rules

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O CLIMATE ACTIVISTS, the Supreme Court’s June 30 decision to limit the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency was a step backward. To pro-energy advocates, it was a step forward. In reality, the decision may do little to change the course that the energy industry was already on.

In a majority opinion written by Chief Justice John Roberts, the court found that the EPA’s “Clean Power Plan” had overstepped the authority granted by Congress in Section 111 of the 1970 Clean Air Act. By enacting rules that would require a substantial change in the makeup of the American energy industry, the EPA had taken on an authority
that Congress would have likely reserved for itself, Roberts said.

“It is not plausible that Congress gave EPA the authority to adopt on its own such a regulatory scheme,” Roberts wrote. “A decision of such magnitude and consequence rests with Congress itself, or ... a clear delegation from that representative body.”

The EPA regulation in question, the Clean Power Plan, would have theoretically cut coal power plants out of the American energy picture by requiring them to meet impossibly high carbon dioxide emission standards. Coal produces higher greenhouse gas emissions than other forms of fuel such as diesel, propane, and natural gas. Instead of trying to whittle down the amount of carbon dioxide coming from coal plants, the EPA argued, the plants should be altogether replaced with less harmful sources of energy.

And that’s what the Clean Power Plan was poised to do—but it never got the chance. Almost as soon as the regulation was announced back in 2015, multiple legal challenges stopped the EPA in its tracks. The rule was later retracted, but the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case anyway.

To figure out whether the EPA acted out of line, Roberts explained, the court applied the “major questions doctrine.” Under this standard, government agencies must display a clear congressional mandate to wield industry-changing power. In a 6-3 decision, the court’s majority ruled the EPA failed to demonstrate such a mandate.

The court’s three dissenting justices disagreed with the application of the major questions doctrine and critiqued the majority for what they saw as a jump to an unnecessary level of scrutiny. Justice Elena Kagan, joined by Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Stephen Breyer, argued in her dissenting opinion that instead of focusing on what Congress “probably” meant, the court should have evaluated the case on three considerations: the rule itself, its relation to the regulatory body, and the context of the congressional statute.

Under that standard, Kagan asserted, the EPA had the authority to limit emissions—and had been expressly granted that power by Congress, if admittedly with vague boundaries. Kagan said that the change required by the Clean Power Plan wasn’t as extreme as the majority was making it out to be. Coal use had been on a downward trend for almost a decade, dropping by more than half since 2008, and the industry had shifted accordingly, moving to cleaner, more efficient sources of energy.

“In effect, the plan predicted market behavior, rather than altered it,” Kagan wrote.

West Virginia v. EPA won’t become a landmark case because of what it changes, but because of the precedent it lays for future cases. The decision will likely narrow the scope of what regulatory agencies can do.

The absence of EPA regulations directly limiting technologies like coal might make it easier for them to stick around longer. Alan Hamlet, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Notre Dame, said because of the court’s decision, state representatives have a bit more wiggle room to protect coal-powered plants—even as their use continues to decline. Political candidates trying to win or retain office in states that have large coal industries need to be done, that opens the door for politicians—either in individual states or collectively via Congress—to prop up the coal industry, even though it doesn’t make sense from a market perspective.”

He expects the court’s ruling will be challenged in some way in the next few months, but he said he doubts it will come from congressional action, citing a substantial political divide on the issue.

The Supreme Court ruling doesn’t eliminate the agency’s ability to tighten emissions rules, though, and the agency is expected to use its powers in the coming months to restrict coal-fired plants in other incremental ways. The Biden administration “will continue using lawful executive authority, including the EPA’s legally-upheld authorities, to keep our air clean, protect public health, and tackle the climate crisis,” the White House said in a statement after the decision.

"The EPA’s regulation] would have made it difficult for politicians to protect the coal industry,” Hamlet said. “Now, with the EPA not allowed to suggest moving away from coal as one of the key things that needs to be done, that opens the door for politicians—either in individual states or collectively via Congress—to prop up the coal industry, even though it doesn’t make sense from a market perspective.”
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**CONFIRMED**
The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that as of July 12 the monkeypox virus had spread to 40 U.S. states. The total count of confirmed cases stands at about 900, according to the CDC. Internationally, more than 10,000 cases of monkeypox have been confirmed in at least 65 locations. The virus has spread throughout the United States before in 2003 and 2021. Monkeypox is a variant of smallpox and has symptoms that include fever, headache, rashes, and exhaustion. Illness typically lasts two to four weeks. The virus spreads from person to person through the transmission of bodily fluids, often through sex, although individuals can contract it from being scratched by animals. The CDC has said that men who have sex with men make up a high number of cases in this outbreak. There are two vaccines available, but it is uncertain how effective they are against the current strain of the virus.

**ESTIMATED**
A report from the United Nations’ Population Division has pegged Nov. 15 as the day the world’s population will cross the 8 billion mark. An expert said the day was a rough estimate and could be off by as much as a year. India is projected to overtake China as the world’s most populous country by next year. The Population Division forecasts that the global population will grow to 8.5 billion by 2030, 9.7 billion by 2050, and 10.4 billion in the 2080s. The report says most of that growth will be concentrated in India, Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Tanzania.

**INCREASED**
World hunger rose for the second consecutive year in 2021 after remaining relatively stable since 2014, the United Nations reported. About 2.3 billion people experienced moderate or severe hunger, and the number of those unable to afford a healthy diet rose by 112 million to almost 3.1 billion. Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean were the most affected. One of the biggest factors was the global pandemic, but the report said Russia’s invasion of Ukraine could exacerbate the problem. Together, Russia and Ukraine account for a third of the world’s food supply.

**DISPATCHES | Human Race**

**TRANSPLANTED**
**From pig to human**

Doctors transplant pig hearts into humans, raising hopes for a life-saving procedure

**YU LANGONE HEALTH** reported on July 12 that it successfully transplanted two pig hearts into two brain-dead human patients during the past month. New York University-affiliated researchers carefully imitated the way that human-to-human heart transplants are performed—even down to traveling hundreds of miles away to retrieve the organ for the transplant. Doctors in Maryland six months ago tried a pig heart transplant on a man, but he only survived for two months with the organ. In that previous case, initial testing failed to detect that the pig organ had carried some sort of animal virus. Researchers are uncertain if the animal virus caused the man’s death or whether other factors played a role. More than 100,000 people in the United States are on the waiting list for an organ, and thousands die every year still waiting on that list. If doctors can successfully transplant pig organs into living humans, they will be able to save thousands of lives.

**YU LANGONE HEALTH**

![Image of surgeons preparing for a transplant operation](image)
$150M
The amount Juul Labs spent on research meant to demonstrate the value of its device as a safer alternative to smoking, according to Bloomberg.

90%
The share of Juul’s worldwide sales that originate in the United States, according to the Financial Times.

1/3
Juul’s share of the U.S. vaping market, placing it just behind a Vuse product as the most popular e-cigarette, according to Nielson data.

130,000
The estimated number of high schoolers who use Juul, making it the fourth most popular e-cigarette among youth, according to data from the 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey.

THE SHARE OF AMERICAN ADULTS who told Gallup in 2021 they had used electronic cigarettes within the previous week. That amounts to more than 15 million adults, many of whom will need to find a vaping alternative if the Food and Drug Administration succeeds in banning Juul’s vaping device, one of the most popular e-cigarettes, from the American market. On June 23, the FDA denied Juul Labs’ application for approval. Though the U.S. Court of Appeals placed the ban on hold the next day, the ruling is just the latest in a struggle between public health experts opposed to all nicotine products and a nascent vaping industry that promised to diminish the harm of cigarettes by transitioning addicts to less harmful alternatives.
“I assure you that Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin aren’t worried about the vaccines.”

Former Secretary of State MIKE POMPEO on reports that the Biden administration’s vaccine mandate for the military will lead to the barring from service of tens of thousands of guardsmen and reservists.

“It’s just not American to try and intimidate others by these kinds of acts of vandalism and theft, and it’s not going to intimidate us. It’s going to motivate us.”

JOSEPH FRED NAUMANN, Roman Catholic archbishop of Kansas City, Kan., after vandals spray-painted obscenities and pro-abortion slogans on Ascension Catholic School in Overland Park, Kan., and threw red paint on a statue of the Virgin Mary.

Kansans will vote Aug. 2 on an amendment to repeal a state Supreme Court ruling that created a right to abortion in Kansas. Ascension supports the amendment.

“I believe there were many things he left unfinished as a politician. But he planted many seeds and I’m sure they will sprout.”

AKIE ABE, widow of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was assassinated by a gunman on July 8. About 1,000 mourners, including Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, attended the former prime minister’s funeral.

“I don’t mind being a martyr for democracy and human rights.”

Hong Kong pro-democracy activist KOO SZE-YIU before being sentenced to nine months in prison on attempted sedition charges, despite his stage 4 colon cancer.

“We have not been able to harvest our crops, and we are currently here starving.”

HANNATU AHMADU on the food crisis in northwest Nigeria as violence escalates against farming communities and exacerbates chronic poverty. Ahmada currently lives in the Munya displacement camp with her four children.
INDEPENDENCE? DUDE! WHAT ABOUT UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME AND FREE HEALTHCARE? LIKE WHO’S GOING TO PAY BACK MY COLLEGE LOANS?

NO, I WANT THAT ONE...

IT WOULD BE COOL IF WE COULD USE THE CAR FOR TIME TRAVEL!

WE CAN FILL THE TANK WITH GAS WHEN IT’S ONLY HALF EMPTY AND PRETEND IT’S 2020...

FAMILY LEAVE? NO, WE'LL RATHER PAY FOR YOUR OUT-OF-STATE ABORTION.
New way to commute
One UK worker calls the River Lugg an “exceptional” way to get to the office

Rising fuel prices and a commuter rail strike in the United Kingdom haven’t kept George Bullard from getting to his job. Instead, he’s taken to the river. Bullard kayaks into Presteigne, Wales, along the River Lugg to work at his outdoors company City Camping each morning. And when he pulls himself from the water, the 33-year-old deflates his inflatable kayak and stuffs it into a backpack before walking into work. “It is nice to not have to worry about being stuck in traffic, and if I was in a car it would cost me a fortune,” he told Sky News. But Bullard, an expert kayaker who once paddled from Greenland to Scotland, warned that kayaking into work isn’t for everyone. Wet weather, he noted, can make for an unpleasant trip.

KANSAS GETAWAY
Some separation anxiety and canine doggy athleticism led Dexter the dog to make a grand escape from a pet hotel earlier this year. And of course, where do you think he went? Kansas resident Jeremy Henson said he and his wife got a notification on his phone from his smart doorbell system that someone approached their door while they vacationed in Las Vegas. “We kept thinking it has to be another dog,” Henson told USA Today. “Nope, that’s definitely Dexter.” To escape the kennel, Dexter had to jump a 6-foot fence and then navigate 2 miles back to the Hensons’ residence. After calming their dog using the doorbell’s intercom, the vacationers called the pet hotel to reclaim the pooch.

WORSE THAN LIMBURGER
A major United Kingdom cheese-maker has been fined nearly $2 million for fouling the air with unpleasant odors. On June 23, a British court found the Dairy Crest cheesemaker of Davidstow, Cornwall, liable for plant failures that led to air pollution. Courtroom testimony claimed that the dairy’s production exhaust had made it difficult for many to sleep and gave locals headaches. Following the ruling, a company spokesman apologized for fouling the air near Davidstow and promised the cheesemaker would undertake changes to fix the problem.
PULLING A FAST ONE
Police in Minnesota charged a 22-year-old motorcyclist with multiple offenses after clocking him traveling at a breakneck 144 miles per hour. According to Olmsted County officials, the young man explained to officers why he needed to ride so quickly: to cool off from the 95-degree heat. A sheriff’s deputy initially spotted the motorcyclist outside Rochester, Minn., on June 14 but opted against initiating a high-speed pursuit. The same officer saw the rider later in another part of town and executed a traffic stop. The rider then unsuccessfully attempted to evade arrest and was charged with reckless driving, obstruction, and other charges.

HIGH-FLYING HAMSTER
A Japanese company developing balloon flights to the edge of space successfully launched a hamster into the stratosphere in June. Not to worry: Flight controllers brought the animal safely back to Earth again. Officials for space flight company Iwatani Giken say the successful rodent launch gives them confidence to conduct a trial run with humans later this year. The voyage, which set out from Japan’s Miyako Island, elevated at nearly 21 feet per second for the duration of the one-hour climb, reaching over 14 miles in altitude. Had it not apparently been snoozing inside its clear plastic flight canister during the journey, the hamster would have enjoyed a view of the curvature of the Earth. It was reported in good health at the time of the balloon’s landing.

CHEAP TRICKS
Some residents of Greece are questioning the wisdom of the country’s state television airing a segment advising viewers the best ways to siphon gas. With gas prices reaching an average of $9.65 per gallon in Greece on June 20, according to GlobalPetrolPrices.com, reporter Costas Samou gave viewers tips and tricks on siphoning gas, including advice on how to break into a car’s gas tank. The video segment, which aired on the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation’s morning show, earned mockery online. At least one person on social media sarcastically asked whether the network will soon give advice on stealing wallets.

PROPERTY OF THE UNITED STATES
NASA has an official request for a Massachusetts auction house: Give us back our roaches and dust. In a formal letter, a NASA lawyer told RR Auction that it couldn’t sell off moon dust collected during the 1969 Apollo 11 mission because the dust still belongs to the government. Some of the dust had also been fed to cockroaches during a later experiment testing whether the moon dust contained any pathogens. Eventually the roach corpses and 40 milligrams of dust used in the experiment found their way to the auction house, where they were expected to fetch around $400,000. But the agency’s June 15 letter put an end to that, declaring that the dust had merely been on loan to scientists and that the dead roaches, too, remain NASA property.
Believe in the future

A society that disdains offspring rejects life itself

"I’ve got to say, in spite of the hottest, driest summer in 12 years, my garden could win a beauty contest.

Or at least, it’s the best-looking garden I’ve ever had. Just one thing was worrying me, though: While voluptuously rolling out vines and leaves, my pole bean plants weren’t producing any blossoms. It was past time, I thought. What gives?

Google could anticipate my question even before I finished typing it. The only applicable reason I could find for beans not blossoming was soil too rich. Yes, it’s possible to overfeed legumes, which take nitrogen from the air and don’t need it in the soil. That’s why they’ll produce almost anywhere—but not, it seemed, in my nice compost-enriched soil.

Picture well-fed, abundant, aspiring plants so intent on expanding themselves that they’d lost sight of future produce, and perhaps even of the future itself. There’s a parable here.

Part of the fallout after the reversal of Roe v. Wade were the furious memes and quotes vomited up by social media. All were distressing, but this one was a particular downer:

“If every time men had sex, they risked death, physical disability, social shunning, a life altering interruption of their education or career, and the sudden life-long responsibility for another being, I think they’d expect a choice in the matter.”

The quote is from Jean Yoon, a Canadian writer and actress. It echoes a prominent theme in the pro-abortion literature, expressed elsewhere as, “If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament.” It’s a surface argument with some obvious drawbacks: that as many women as men are opposed to abortion, for instance; that men generally find unpregnant women more attractive; and that men can beat the rap for child support if there is no child.

Below that sexist jab is a more substantial argument, an indispensable support of the pro-abortion argument. Seen from one perspective, it’s not false: Any pregnancy carries a certain amount of risk, and any child interrupts a life trajectory. Presenting a natural process in such threatening terms resonates with women who feel immediately threatened by it.

Happily for everyone alive, there’s another perspective. It’s something like this:

Every intimate encounter between a man and a woman presents the possibility of a future life to take hold and flourish. Before you are even aware of it, tiny fingers could be forming, which might soon mutely grasp your own finger. Before long, small hands could be reaching out for a hug, helping you roll cookie dough or hang ornaments on a Christmas tree, gripping a steering wheel for the first time, firmly shaking the hands of well-wishers at college graduation. Someday, a strong hand could be holding your frail one as your eyes close on this life.

To most humans throughout history, those embryonic possibilities represented the future. But I wonder if, as a society, we even believe in the future anymore. I mean the future for its own sake, not merely as an empty canvas on which to paint our plans. Furthering educations and advancing careers may be worthy goals, but goals are not the future, life is. You’ve heard the saying, “Life is what happens when you’re making other plans”?

That’s it. Life happens—except when it doesn’t. Together we make the future—unless we refuse to. For an overly distracted society, rooted in soil too rich, disdaining the womb may be the ultimate refusal.

About those beans, though, I needn’t have worried. Coy white blossoms that took their sweet time showing up now accent the thick vines. Lord willing, little Kentucky wonders and blue lakes will push the petals aside. Within days they’ll show up, hot and tender-crisp, on our table. So much for the parable.

But maybe not. Maybe we’ll come to our senses and believe in the future again, especially if the present becomes unbearable. Or if not, the Lord who has been our dwelling place through all generations has not changed residence, and He believes.
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Check Us Out!
IVE YEARS AGO, director Taika Waititi gave the ponderously self-important superhero Thor a jolt of fun with Thor: Ragnarok. This year, he revisits the franchise with Thor: Love and Thunder. Chris Hemsworth returns as Thor, and the movie boasts a host of Oscar winners. Besides Waititi, who also voices Thor's sidekick Korg, we see Natalie Portman as Jane Foster, Christian Bale as Gorr the God Butcher, and Russell Crowe as the Greek god Zeus. The movie doesn’t reach the same heights as Ragnarok, but everyone on the screen obviously had fun in this ’80s-rock-inspired joyride that adds a little spark to the struggling Marvel Cinematic Universe.
In the aftermath of *Avengers: Endgame*, Thor finds himself adrift. He’s become a wandering space Viking, questioning whether he has a larger purpose. Answering a distress call, Thor learns of a new villain threatening the universe. Gorr the God Butcher has begun a quest to kill all the so-called gods of the Marvel universe. Shocked out of his navel-gazing, Thor heads back to Earth to check on his fellow Asgardians who have indeed become targets of Gorr, but he’s surprised by what he finds there.

His ex-girlfriend Jane Foster is not only living in New Asgard, but she’s also become a superhero in her own right, wielding Thor’s old hammer Mjölnir, which he lost at the beginning of *Ragnarok*. Jane calls herself the Mighty Thor, and the original Thor has a lot to process.

Watching Thor and Jane navigate their complex emotions after so many years apart provides most of the entertainment value. Despite being a movie about magic hammers and space gods, *Thor: Love and Thunder* is a very funny film in which we see Thor wrestle with very human problems. He’s been searching for purpose and acceptance, and he discovers what he needs is love. But finding it isn’t easy. Instead, Thor ends up in an amusing love triangle with his ex-girlfriend and his magic hammer.

But despite the jokes and romance, this is a superhero adventure in which villains must be vanquished. Gorr the God Butcher is one of Marvel’s better villains because he’s both scary and sympathetic. The best MCU villains don’t think they’re the bad guys, and when they justify their misguided deeds, viewers think, “Well, they have a point.” Gorr has suffered greatly, and he ponders the classic problem of evil: If the gods are good and the gods are powerful, then why do bad things happen? Gorr concludes the gods must not be good.

For the most part, the film confirms Gorr’s assessment. Thor and Jane try to enlist the aid of Zeus and some of the other gods to stop Gorr. They discover most are petty, self-indulgent, or downright wicked. Zeus is too concerned with planning his upcoming orgy to help. It’s a depiction of the old gods that’s surprisingly consistent with fifth-century theologian Augustine of Hippo’s criticisms of pagan religion: The old gods aren’t moral and exhibit the worst excesses of humanity, which means they aren’t really gods at all.

There’s no sex in the movie, but *Thor: Love and Thunder* is rated PG-13 for sci-fi action, language, suggestive talk, and a scene in which Thor’s bare backside is played for laughs. There’s also a longish scene in which characters talk about past same-sex romances. The scene feels tacked on so Marvel can check the LGBT-representation box. We also learn Korg’s alien species doesn’t have women—despite his mention of a mother in a previous movie—which somehow makes the entire species gay men.

Sometimes the movie swings too wildly from its jokey side to its serious side, and there are points in which the dialogue borders on cliché. But Marvel fans who enjoyed *Ragnarok* will also enjoy *Love and Thunder*. It’s a zany mashup of romantic comedy and sci-fi adventure that reinforces the ideals of love and self-sacrifice while asking how we’ll respond to tragedy when the petty gods we put our trust in fail us.

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**AUGUSTINE ON THE ROMANS:** “Their gods were not in the least concerned to protect their worshippers from ... disasters.”
Despicable them
by Juliana Chan Erikson

With silly names like Svengeance, Jean-Clawed, and Wild Knuckles, the bad guys in Minions: The Rise of Gru might seem ridiculous, but make no mistake, they're vindictive, greedy, and traitorous.

Wild Knuckles risks his life to find a special zodiac amulet, and when fellow villain Belle Bottom throws him a rope, he's thankful for the rescue—until Belle grabs the amulet and not his outstretched arm. It's a dark moment of betrayal, but the movie has plenty of zany antics and bright 1970s tunes to keep it lighthearted and PG-rated.

There's no actual good guy, but young Gru (Steve Carell)—the lovable bad guy from Despicable Me movies past—has one virtue Belle Bottom lacks: loyalty. Eleven-year-old Gru's coming of age as a villain takes us back to '70s America, where he cheats at whack-a-mole and air hockey and soon graduates to swiping the amulet that Belle Bottom had herself stolen. A cross-country chase ensues, involving kung fu lessons in Chinatown and a giant disco record player that spins people to death. Those yappy yellow sidekicks whose name graces the title also figure into these shenanigans.

The fact that the movie has no good guys should force kids to think about the gradations of badness inherent in everyone. Just as good guys aren't entirely good, even bad guys like Gru and Belle Bottom are a mixed bag.

WAR AND BEASTS
Sea adventure with a simplistic worldview
by Marty VanDriel

IN THE MYTHICAL WORLD of Netflix's animated movie The Sea Beast, kings and queens appoint hunters to protect their kingdom by plying the seas in search of evil sea monsters. Captain Crow of the hunting ship The Inevitable seeks out his prey zealously. His right-hand man Jacob grew up on the ship and waits to take the helm once the captain completes his final mission—killing an infamous red beast known as the Bluster.

These plans are upset by a ship stowaway, a little girl named Maisie, who wants to become a hunter like her late parents. But in a strange twist of events, the Bluster rescues Maisie and Jacob after they fall overboard: With only grunts and growls, the giant sea beast wins over Maisie, and later Jacob. What if all the hunters' assumptions about sea monsters were wrong, or worse yet, were invented by a royal house in need of war to maintain power?

The PG-rated film is a straightforward adventure, beautifully animated, but parents should note a few troubling elements. Some viewers will sense an LGBT agenda by the inclusion of some strangely androgynous sailors and soldiers. And Captain Crow's obsession with capturing the Bluster leads him to procure a new weapon from a witch-like figure, perhaps at the cost of his soul. Lastly, Maisie's (somewhat mixed) message seems to be that war is really just a misunderstanding—peace is always the answer, and violent sea beasts just need to be appeased.

FAMILY SEA ADVENTURES

Captains Courageous (1937)
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (1954)
Moby Dick (1956)
Muppet Treasure Island (1996)
Finding Dory (2016)
Moana (2016)
Luca (2021)
R. MALCOLM IS CHARMING, rich, and handsome. But his high standards ruffle the headdress feathers of London’s young ladies vying for his attention. Mr. Malcolm’s List, adapted from the novel by Suzanne Allain, will appeal to Jane Austen loyalists and lovers of Regency-era romances. With a lovely setting and skilled acting, it’s an enjoyable if predictable story featuring good morals.

Privileged, silly Julia (Zawe Ashton) invites her more modest and intelligent friend Selina (Freida Pinto) to London. Julia feels spurned by the eligible Mr. Malcolm (Sope Dirisu) when she finds out she does not meet the qualifications on his list for a suitable wife: She’s unable to converse on current affairs and flutters her eyelashes too much. To exact revenge, she plans for Selina to win his heart and then reject him. Misadventures, masked balls, and pheasant shoots ensue.

The story is a nostalgic throwback for Pride and Prejudice lovers, and it even includes an awkward marriage proposal from a pompous man who won’t take a hint. The characters’ traits resemble those of Austen characters: Julia and Selina bring to mind Emma Woodhouse’s mischief, Elizabeth Bennet’s intelligence, and Fanny Price’s sweetness. Mr. Malcolm’s reserve and dignity echo that of Mr. Darcy and Mr. Knightley.

The film’s unoriginal dialogue and plot—following a classic romantic comedy formula—are enhanced by strong performances from the leads and from supporting actors Theo James (Divergent) and Oliver Jackson-Cohen (Lark Rise to Candleford). The film is also beautiful, highlighting the appeal of the English countryside.

In the spirit of Netflix’s Bridgerton, the film boasts a multiethnic cast, and most of the main actors are people of color. This nontraditional approach to a Regency romance gives the movie a fresh and charming characteristic, but it requires viewers to suspend disbelief with respect to historical accuracy regarding the English upper crust.

Rated PG for smoking and mild language, Mr. Malcolm’s List is largely wholesome, and its brief depictions of Christianity are positive. Selina’s clergyman father is thoughtful and kind. Characters experience moral growth, and a few scenes depict genuine repentance, revealing a coherent moral framework that champions integrity and humility. The film pushes back against materialism.

Love and good character, it ultimately suggests, are the most important aspects in a marriage.
OUT OF ALL OF JANE AUSTEN’S books, *Persuasion* is the one that still needed an excellent screen adaptation. Now Austen fans will continue to wait, because Netflix’s new movie version of the classic novel doesn’t do it justice.

For those who’ve read the novel, the film’s storyline won’t contain many surprises. Anne Elliot (Dakota Johnson) is the neglected middle daughter of a vain minor nobleman (Richard E. Grant), and her two sisters (Yolanda Kettle and Mia McKenna-Brace) are just as proud and silly as their father. Unlike the rest of her family, Anne is sensible, but she regrets one great folly from eight years prior: She allowed herself to be persuaded to refuse a marriage offer from Captain Wentworth (Cosmo Jarvis) on account of his poverty. Now, Wentworth has returned to England, and he’s made his fortune. Will circumstances, misunderstandings, and rival suitors keep the two apart?

Despite the movie’s beautiful cinematography and its faithfulness to the novel’s plot, Austen purists will find themselves disappointed with this new adaptation. In updating the story for a modern audience, Netflix robbed it of what made it special.

Anne possesses more goodness than any of Austen’s other heroines. She’s intelligent and sweet. She bears the injustices that her family heaps on her with an unassuming equanimity. She loves those around her with a steadfast kindness they don’t deserve. Netflix must have deemed Anne’s goodness too boring, because the filmmakers radically altered her personality.

In this PG-rated adaptation, Anne is ironic with a mischievous streak, and like her father and sisters she can act with some foolishness of her own. Anne doesn’t live with quiet regret. Instead, she drinks bottles of red wine alone to cope with her loss. She’s also impetuous and calls attention to herself in some cringeworthy scenes. This Anne has more in common with Louisa May Alcott’s Jo March than she does with any creation of Jane Austen’s.

Netflix also attempted to update the story in other ways. Here we have another instance of nontraditional casting for a story set in Regency England. People of European, African, and Asian descent all mix in the same social circles. I enjoyed some of the casting decisions, but some other modernizations didn’t work as well.

Anne continuously breaks the fourth wall to give viewers a glimpse into her internal world. In almost every scene, she looks directly at the camera to say something clever or give us a little wink. The dialogue, full of anachronisms and distractingly contemporary, often alludes to current trends.

To be fair, *Persuasion* isn’t a terrible movie in and of itself. There’s some enjoyment to be had. It’s just a terrible adaptation of Jane Austen.
IGN OF THE TIMES: a young person, head tilted at 45 degrees, staring at a palm-sized glowing screen. Mark Bauerlein has closely observed this phenomenon in classrooms and wrote about it 14 years ago, in his caustically titled *The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Our Youth and Jeopardizes Our Future.*

Now Bauerlein, professor emeritus at Emory University and editor at the Catholic journal *First Things,* has seen the future. It’s not encouraging.

*The Dumbest Generation Grows Up: From Stupefied Youth to Dangerous Adults* could have been the disgruntled musings of a sidelined academic who finds his discipline (English lit, of all things) hopelessly irrelevant in our glossy modern age. But he begins by blaming his Gen X peers for mistaking the tech savvy of millennials for a new kind of knowledge—even a new kind of wisdom for navigating the information age. “There should have been many more critics” of youth’s obsession with video games and social media. One enthusiast, John Perry Barlow, welcomed the coming of virtual reality as an Incarnation in reverse: “Now, I realized, would the Flesh become Word.” True enough; the glitter and headlong dash of media left printed words in the dust, and an entire generation intellectually poorer.

But “dangerous adults”? Possibly; sober-minded old fogies on the left as well as the right have begun to notice the weaknesses of young professionals: their thin skins, their shallow analyses, their lack of nuance, their solipsistic tendency to exaggerate every slight. When drama erupts in the newsroom or boardroom, it’s almost always from millennials who don’t feel heard, respected, or safe. The snowflakes of 2009 were supposed to get toughened up by the real world, but instead they brought their unrealistic expectations into the real world.

According to Bauerlein, teachers who should know better did not insist that their students learn to read and think and contemplate life in all its complexity. Discarding literature as a core discipline was a huge mistake, as literature is a proven path to character formation. Digital media are anti-formation, reducing human complexity to memes and emojis, with dire consequences for a pluralistic society.

Bauerlein sounds like a prophetic voice in the wilderness. On a similar theme, Roo-sevelt Montás opts to tell a story: his own. Montás arrived in mid-1980s Queens, New York, as a poor country boy from the Dominican Republic, with no English and a father who’d stayed behind. Family dysfunction and fervent Pentecostalism consumed his first years in the States, but in his midteens his life changed with the discovery of a discarded set of clothbound Harvard classics thrown out by the neighbors. Opening a volume of Plato, he recognized, however vaguely, “the treasure I had come to America to find.” It was the seed of Western civilization, sprouting within his own imagination.

*Rescuing Socrates: How the Great Books Changed My Life and Why They Matter for a New Generation* presents a case for a classical education. Montás examines four great mentors—Augustine, Socrates, Freud, and Gandhi—while recounting a series of fortunate encounters. A teacher noticed him reading Plato’s dialogues in the hallway of his high school and nurtured his interest in the classics. A program for low-income students at Columbia University introduced him to one of the few core-curriculum programs remaining at a major American university. Falling in love with Western philosophy and literature led him to a teaching career. Now he directs the same curriculum that redirected his life.

The American university model, as he sees it, has become a kind of glorified trade school. In contrast, rather than asking how to make a living, “liberal education asks what living is for.” Studying Plato and Augustine is as meaningful for plumbers and mechanics as it is for philosophy professors: “It shakes you from your certainties. It encourages intellectual humility, a tentativeness and skepticism about simple truths and absolute certainties.” Even though he’s discarded his boyhood Christianity for a genteel agnosticism, and writes from the opposite political spectrum as Mark Bauerlein, Montás makes a similar plea: Don’t ditch the classics. Is anybody listening?
From Maui to Montana

New or recent law enforcement action thrillers

by Sandy Barwick

**LIFE FLIGHT** Lynette Eason

Book 1 in Eason’s new Extreme Measures series, *Life Flight* opens at full speed and never lets up. EMS helicopter pilot Penny Carlton must make an emergency landing on a rugged North Carolina mountain in a raging storm. Desperate to get help for her injured patient, she sets out on foot and encounters an escaped serial killer prowling around the same area. An old friend of Penny’s—FBI agent Holt Satterfield—coordinates the effort to recapture the convict. Descriptions of the killer’s victims are nongraphic, but his motive and methods are truly creepy. A blooming romance between Holt and Penny, along with hints of backstories, leaves plenty of loose ends for book 2.

**ELYSIUM TIDE** James R. Hannibal

Workaholic neurosurgeon Peter Chesterfield isn’t happy about leaving London for a forced vacation in Maui. But once he discovers a mortally wounded woman floating in the surf, he has a new purpose: to find the person responsible for her death. Detective Lisa Kealoha is annoyed with this obnoxious, conceited Brit nosing into her investigation, but she can’t deny his knowledge has been helpful. As they dig deeper, they realize they’re dealing with something far bigger and more dangerous than anyone expected. When Dr. Chesterfield has a near-death experience, he begins to reevaluate his atheistic beliefs. Is his intelligence blinding him from acknowledging a greater power? He wonders if there’s something more beyond this life. *Elysium Tide* is slightly tamer than Hannibal’s usual international intrigue but still a fast-paced read.

**AMONG THE INNOCENT** Mary Alford

A masked man slaughtered Leah Miller’s family. She was the only survivor. Now 10 years later, she’s a Montana police officer and must investigate a wave of new murders with the same MO. These cases are eerily reminiscent of her past, but her family’s killer was supposedly now dead. Could they have blamed the wrong man? Is the real bad guy back to finish off Leah? Fresh from Denver, the new police chief, Dalton Cooper, arrives just in time to this quiet Amish community to help solve the crimes. He has his own hidden motives for wanting to exonerate the original suspect. The victims—young Amish girls—are frustratingly naïve, but the plot is plausible.

**FATAL CODE** Natalie Walters

When Elinor Mitchell’s scientist grandfather dies, she inherits his old notebooks containing pseudo codes to a nuclear weapons project he worked on in the 1960s. Nefarious players want the codes, so now Elinor has a target on her back. Meanwhile, someone is stealing information from Elinor’s aerospace company. The Strategic Neutralization and Protection Agency—or SNAP—is tasked with proving her guilt, but team member Kekoa Young, the hunky Hawaiian cryptologist installed as her neighbor to keep an eye on her, believes she’s innocent and being framed. Mutual attraction grows between Kekoa and Elinor, but before they can explore a relationship, they must first find out who’s out to get Elinor and her grandfather’s codes.
**Faraway adventures**

Summer reads for tweens and teens

by Emily Whitten

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**THE DRAGON AND THE STONE** Kathryn Butler

In this middle grade fantasy debut, homeschool mom Kathryn Butler combines well-crafted storytelling with innovative story elements. In the Somnium Realm, characters from human imagination come to life. When Lily inherits a magical stone pendant, evil shape-shifting “shrouds” hunt her to take the stone. To protect herself and others, she’ll need the help of fantastic characters like Cedric, a spunky dragon, and Adam, a bully at her school. While the plot feels contrived at times, this action-driven story with Aslan-like references to Christ will captivate tweens. *(Ages 9-12)*

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**CHINESE CINDERELLA** Adeline Yen Mah

When Adeline Yen Mah’s biological mother dies in childbirth, her father and stepmother treat her cruelly. Readers will be heartbroken as Yen Mah’s parents abuse her and strip away things she loves, including her pet duck. Still, like Ye Xian—a Chinese heroine similar to Cinderella—Yen Mah finds success through talent and hard work. Yen Mah portrays Chinese culture with fascinating insight, and readers will savor the many kindnesses of her grandfather, her Aunt Baba, and her school friends. *(Ages 12 and up)*

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**THE SINKING CITY** Christine Cohen

In Christine Cohen’s magical yet gothic version of Venice, Italy, an ancient group of underwater beings called Seleni threatens to destroy all the Carvatti family holds dear. Liona Carvatti, the daughter of a powerful Venetian merchant, resorts to masquerade and deception to save her family, her friends, and even her city. Cohen’s second novel follows *The Winter King*, which a WORLD reviewer said offered “deep Biblical truths.” *The Sinking City* doesn’t quite reach that level, but it may entertain fantasy-loving teens with solid, clean storytelling. *(Ages 12 and up)*

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**BITESIZE BIOGRAPHIES** Tim Chester

Although written for adults, this six-book set of Christian biographies can build the faith of mature teens. Chester features three Reformation-era believers (William Tyndale, Thomas Cranmer, and Lady Jane Grey) and three other saints (John Wycliffe, Mary Jones, and Aidan of Lindisfarne). Each ‘40-some-page biography isn’t well edited, but the entries capture the subjects’ contributions to the Church, with poignant quotes bringing each saint into focus (e.g., Lady Jane Grey’s admonition to “labour always to learn to die ... and delight yourself only in the Lord”). *(Ages 15 and up)*

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Nathan W. Pyle’s *Strange Planet* webcomics feature cute, alien-like creatures who poke fun at human culture and language. In Pyle’s alien-speak, words get transliterated in amusing ways: Cars become “rollmachines” and baseball players “orb-catchers.” Fans will have to wait until 2023 for the new animated show on Apple TV, but in the meantime, families can enjoy two more recent book versions. Pyle’s 2020 *Stranger Planet* (sequel to the No. 1 *New York Times* bestseller *Strange Planet*) features 144 pages of his trademark comics. Pyle doesn’t share much publicly about his Christian faith, but his work is clean, displaying morals consistent with a Christian worldview. He often draws on the beauty of family life and portrays aliens who care for one another.

Younger readers might prefer Pyle’s 2021 picture book about *The Sneaking, Hiding, Vibrating Creature*. This story of an alien family investigating a neighborhood cat will get kids laughing and puzzling over the quirkiness of our world and language. —E.W.
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Two Sinatras for 2022

Deluxe editions bring back unique albums from Nancy and Frank

by Arsenio Orteza

Nancy and Frank in 1967 during a joint recording session

WHO KNEW THAT 2022 would turn out to be a big year for the Sinatras?


Two weeks later, Universal Music Enterprises and Frank Sinatra Enterprises issued a deluxe, remixed edition of *Watertown*, the 1970 concept album by Nancy’s legendary father that, according to some, led to his (short-lived) retirement when it sold only 30,000 copies (or 470,000 fewer than *Nancy & Lee*).

Other than their DNA and having originally appeared on Reprise (the label that Frank Sinatra founded in 1960), the two albums have nothing in common.

Watertown’s thematically linked songs tell the story of a man who, abandoned by his wife, must face the vicissitudes of small-town life as a single father of two. *Nancy & Lee*, on the other hand, in keeping with a common ’60s format, is a randomly sequenced mixture of other people’s hits (including “Jackson,” “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling,” and “Elusive Dreams”) and originals (all written, like Nancy’s signature hit “These Boots Are Made for Walkin’,” by Hazlewood).

But if *Nancy & Lee*’s structure was typical for its time, its sound was not. Sonny & Cher, Johnny Cash & June Carter—the usual ’60s male-female duos stood out because of their voices. Not so Nancy and Lee. Although Sinatra made the most of her pleasant soprano and Hazlewood’s semi-spoken baritone made for a striking foil, it was Hazlewood’s hazily ethereal production that set *Nancy & Lee*—the beguilingly inscrutable single “Some Velvet Morning” in particular—apart.

“Some Velvet Morning” has at least one foot in the musical equivalent of *The Twilight Zone*. Never a radio staple (it peaked at No. 26), it enjoyed a renaissance when Art Bell added it to the bumper-music rotation of his all-night radio show *Coast to Coast AM*. It has since appeared on various best-of lists and remains unique.

Frank Sinatra’s *Watertown* remains unique as well, and not just for the linearity of its narrative arc or its poor sales. The latter, incidentally, is no reflection on the music. Not only had the market for sophisticated, adult-oriented pop all but dried up during the Woodstock era, but the album, which was greater than the sum of its parts, also lacked a knockout single.

But perhaps *Watertown*’s most distinguishing characteristic is its requirement that Sinatra inhabit a specific character for the length of an entire album, making it in some ways the most cinematic of his many recordings while at the same time telescoping his trademark universality.

“Frank Sinatra,” wrote Pete Hamill in *Why Sinatra Matters*, “was the voice of the 20th-century American city.” For one album, he convincingly became the voice of the 20th-century American town.
Roots you can use
And an album so nice they’ve released it twice
by Arsenio Ortega

SOARING WILD LANDS Dawda Jobarteh
Two elements make this music exotic. One is Jobarteh’s skill in coaxing undulating sounds from his kora (a West African lute-harp hybrid). The other is his accent, which, even when he’s singing in English, gives away his Gambian origins. What makes the music soothing is the Danish Admeta String Quartet’s willowy accompaniment, Salieu Dibba’s rippling percussion, and, on “Admeta Harmony,” Jens Christian Jensen’s sax. In “Tykke in Mandinka,” Jobarteh recites the story of a tree that provided people, birds, and insects with life, protection, and pleasure until one day it fell down. The implicit message: When a source of beneficence with deep roots collapses, the wise do not celebrate. They mourn.

A BEAUTIFUL TIME Willie Nelson
“Dusty Bottles,” the most direct getting-old-and-nearing-death song on this getting-old-and-nearing-death album, is one of the nine (of 14) that Nelson and Buddy Cannon didn’t write. So Nelson still knows how to pick ’em. And why not? He only wrote three of his 12 No. 1 country hits, and his best-selling album is the all-covers Stardust. But, reworking something Frank Sinatra once said, he and Cannon did write “Live Every Day,” the funniest and wisest of their growing stock of funny, wise takes on imminent mortality. They also wrote “I Don’t Go to Funerals.” It’s also pretty funny even if its vision of heaven as a bunch of Country Music Hall of Famers having a “big ol’ pickin’ party” leaves much to be desired.

DIRT DOES DYLAN Nitty Gritty Dirt Band
Forty-nine years ago, Coulson, Dean, McGuinness, Flint released Lo and Behold, a 10-track, all–Bob Dylan covers album that felt fresh because Dylan hadn’t yet released his own recordings of the songs and because the group’s performances evinced enthusiasm and imagination. This 10-track, all-Dylan covers album feels fresh even though it comprises almost nothing but what one might call Bob Dylan’s greatest hits and even though the performances are merely straightforward. Any self-respecting country-rock band could’ve come up with them. But this country-rock band has been around for over 50 years and has a lot more respect for itself than most. It has a lot more respect for Dylan than most too.

ASK FOR THE ANCIENT PATH Jim Ridl
The cover top-bills the jazz pianist Jim Ridl because he composed all five of this album’s selections. The music, however, is clearly a team effort between him and the bottom-billed Scott Robinson (sax), Martin Wind (bass), and Tim Horner (drums). Warm, swaggering, and contemplative in that order, it’s not all that hard to connect to the album title, which doubles as the title of the first selection and might sound familiar because it comes from Jeremiah 6:16. So does the title of the second song (“Walk in It”). And, lest anyone miss the reference, the fifth and final track—21 seconds’ worth of a gate (or maybe a vault door) clanging shut—is called “Thus Spake Jeremiah.”

Two weeks after his latest album, Soaring Wild Lands (Sterns Africa), dropped, Dawda Jobarteh released Soaring Wild Lands: The Instrumentals. Besides being exactly what it says (Soaring Wild Lands minus the vocals of Jobarteh and his guests that graced six of the nine tracks), The Instrumentals stands on its own, so interrelated and suggestive are the sounds of Dawda’s kora; the Admeta String Quartet’s violins, viola, and cello; and the contributions of the “featured artists” Anna Kolby Sonstad (violin), Julie Hjetland (vocalese), Francis Kweku Osei (drums), and Jens Christian Jensen (sax).

And what do those interrelated sounds suggest? Soaring wild lands for one thing. This is music through which you can feel breezes blow. But you can also feel something in “Tykke in Mandinka” that you might not have noticed when paying attention to Jobarteh’s story-telling on the noninstrumental version: a waltzing rhythm in a minor key gently tugging the song toward James Brown’s “It’s a Man’s Man’s Man’s World.” —A.O.

July 30, 2022
JEFFREY KORZENIK BELIEVES former prison inmates have a key role to play in America’s labor market. A chief investment strategist for one of the nation’s largest banks, Korzenik has appeared regularly on CNBC, Fox Business, and Bloomberg TV. He is the author of *Untapped Talent: How Second Chance Hiring Works for Your Business and the Community*. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

How did you get involved with second chance hiring? I oversee the allocation of over $40 billion in investments. You can’t understand
investments without understanding the economy, and you can’t understand the economy without understanding the labor force. About 10 years ago, I started researching problems in the labor force and predicted a labor shortage because 20 and 30 years ago we stopped having enough babies. I came to the conclusion that social ills such as long-term unemployment, the opioid epidemic, and justice system involvement are also economic problems, because they’re keeping people out of the workforce. In 2015, I began discovering companies that had made a practice of hiring people in need of a second chance, usually because of involvement with the justice system. Some businesses out there had figured out how to do this in a way that made sense for the business as well as for the individual.

What are the challenges former inmates face in seeking employment? Housing and transportation. As a felon you might be barred from certain types of public housing or lack the resources for a down payment. For some, their driver’s license expired in prison. It’s difficult to keep track of your documentation, particularly for people who don’t have strong families. But the biggest barrier is societal stigma, and the belief that people with criminal records can’t be good employees.

Can you give an example of a business that has been successful in hiring such employees? Dan Meyer is the CEO of Nehemiah Manufacturing, a for-profit, consumer goods manufacturing company in Cincinnati. Meyer located his factory in the heart of the inner city and started hiring people with criminal backgrounds. It didn’t work at first. He learned he had to provide different kinds of support. Many people in the criminal justice system come from deep poverty and lack mentors and family examples of successful work experiences. They don’t know how to be good employees, or they lack resources like easy access to transportation. So Meyer developed a support infrastructure. That was an investment, but now he has dedicated employees and low turnover, which is unusual in his industry. That contributes to his profitability. About 150 of his 220 employees are second chance employees. In 2018, Harvard Business School did a case study on Meyer that is now required reading for all Harvard MBA candidates.

Did any experiences influence your work in this area? I’m the son and grandson of immigrants. My mother is a German war refugee. My father is the son of immigrants from Russia and Poland. So in many ways, this country has been a land of second chances for us. My father, who passed away in 2003, did what I call the heavy lifting in our family. He enlisted in World War II at age 17 and was the first one to go to college. He went to law school and undergrad at the same time on the GI Bill. But he never lost track of his roots. When I was a kid, he would go visit his old neighborhood in Hartford, Conn., under the pretext of running errands. Sometimes I would go with him. Once he introduced me to a friend of his who ran a junk shop. As we were walking away, my father told me the man had gone to prison. I asked, “For what?” He said, “For murder, a crime of passion.” Then my dad said something that’s stuck with me for half a century: “He’s done his time.” That really resonated with me.

You call your second chance model the “talent acquisition model.” Companies using the talent acquisition model are committed to building partnerships, finding the people who are good fits for your company, and giving them the tools to thrive. This is different from the disposable employee model. You’ll hear some businesses say they can’t find any workers, so they have decided to lower their standards and hire people with criminal records. They’re just looking for cheap labor. So they’re not terribly selective or interested in longevity. That’s the wrong mindset. Another is what I call the undifferentiated model, where employers say, “I tried it.” This is generally a case where companies try to be selective and seek out talent, but they don’t understand the support mechanisms that are needed. They have employees who don’t show up and don’t call, so they terminate them. But the employee may not have known you’re supposed to call if your car breaks down because of their background of little to no work experience. Or that employee didn’t have a cell phone and couldn’t call an Uber.
What are common mistakes that companies make? A CEO may stand behind giving people opportunities but never actually hire second chance employees. These companies have a structural problem. The people who make the hiring decisions have too many career incentives to say no every time. More commonly, businesses don’t know how to judge people who come from nontraditional backgrounds. You’re looking at someone who might have spent several years in prison, has never had a career, and has a fairly low level of education. How do you judge that person’s talent? Businesses tend to overlook talent, or they think it is best to go with nonviolent drug offenders. Often those people aren’t the best candidate.

So, how do companies find good candidates? One way: They can use temp staffing agencies. For instance, Mixed Staffing and Recruiting in Grand Rapids, Mich., screens people with nontraditional work backgrounds for businesses and trains people in the soft skills and life skills that successful employees need. Another solution is to work with nonprofits that have partnerships with prison systems. Christian nonprofits care a lot about things that employers value, such as building character and giving people a foundation for good decision-making. Businesses can’t do this alone. They need partners.

How can companies address practical hurdles—lack of transportation, for example? Very often, all they have to do is ask. CKS Packaging is a second chance employer based on Biblical values and headquartered in Atlanta. They found that their employees lived in a neighborhood that didn’t have easy access to their factory. So they reached out to the Atlanta Department of Transportation and got them to change the bus routes. It didn’t cost the company a thing. The agency was happy to do it because it served their ridership.

How do employers balance accommodating second chance employees with the need to maintain excellent standards? If they’re doing this right, it takes care of itself. If they are picking the right people, those employees aren’t going to abuse that kind of flexibility because they are dedicated to their employers. You have to be flexible, but maintain discipline. I tell employers: If you give someone flex time to meet with a parole officer, they still have to make up that time. If they need an hour away from the office, they still need to work that hour at some other point. You’re not sacrificing quality. Businesses see this flexibility repaid in really dedicated employees, and that’s the return on investment. One caution: These employees tend to be very loyal to their employer. It’s kind of hard to get them out of there.

How has your religious background influenced your work? I come from a Jewish heritage, but my mother was raised a Catholic, so I like to say that we raise our children confused. This year it was a Passover Seder celebration followed by Easter Sunday. I embrace a Judeo-Christian view of the world. But I did not have a lot of exposure to evangelical Christians. My work with second chance employment has put me in touch with a lot of people and groups that are doing incredibly good work, like Prison Fellowship, which is changing hearts as well as minds. Many of the business owners who took a risk to hire second chance employees did so out of a faith-based worldview. Christianity, with its belief in original sin and the power of forgiveness and redemption, has inspired a lot of people to be pioneers in second chance hiring in the business community.

For a company still on the fence, what would you say? This labor shortage is not going away. We can’t do anything about low birthrates 20 and 30 years ago. We have over 11 million job openings in the United States and over 6 million people who are looking for jobs. That’s a shortfall of 5 million. We’ve never seen anything like this. Because the problem is not going away, businesses must consider second chance hiring now or their competitors will. Like anything in business that’s worth doing, it’s not easy and you’re going to make mistakes. But it’s a worthwhile investment when you know how to do it right.
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A STATE OF UNCERTAINTY

After Dobbs, Michigan officials give conflicting opinions on the legality of abortion in the state

BY LEAH SAVAS
IN GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

ORDAN SWEEZER can almost always tell when abortionist Thomas Gordon arrives at the Heritage Clinic. Sweezer preaches outside of the facility on abortion-procedure days, Wednesday through Friday, and offers help to the pregnant women. He recognizes the abortionist’s cars: one gray and one black BMW. Sweezer said Gordon is also easy to identify when he arrives at the Grand Rapids facility because he slows down in front of Sweezer and “gives me a one-finger salute every morning that he shows up.”

Sweezer was there on Wednesday morning, June 29, with a small group of pro-lifers. It appeared to be business as usual—until Sweezer and the others noticed the women arriving for their appointments could not get into the building. After the women waited for some time, a facility worker let them enter. But within three minutes, according to a video of the incident WORLD reviewed, the visitors came back out, got in their vehicles, and left. Within an hour, the staff started to leave, and eventually even Gordon left. It appeared that no abortions would happen that day.
and remain inside the facility for amounts of time consistent with abortion appointments. He said at least two customers confirmed they had come for abortions when he asked them. (In a GoPro video shared with WORLD, Sweezer calls out “Is your life in danger?” to a woman from across the facility driveway. She replies, “No it’s not. I just don’t want it.”)

Since the Supreme Court issued its Dobbs ruling on June 24, Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, has made repeated public statements claiming that abortion is still legal in the state. She points to a ruling from Michigan appellate Judge Elizabeth Gleicher, who is presiding over a lawsuit Planned Parenthood filed against Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel. Gleicher in May ruled to temporarily block the attorney general from enforcing the 1931 law. She purported to prevent county prosecutors from doing the same. But Becker in Kent County and another prosecutor in Jackson County, Jerard Jarzynka, said they can still enforce the law as separately elected officials who were not parties to the lawsuit against Nessel.

Still, enforcing a law that has been unenforced for nearly 50 years is easier said than done. Becker said that making a legal case against a facility like Heritage Clinic would be difficult: Just seeing women go inside isn’t
enough to call for police to rush inside. “There’s the exception to save the life of the mother under Michigan law. So how are we going to prove that? That’s going to be very difficult in terms of investigation,” he said. And that investigation is up to the police department, not to him as the prosecuting attorney.

Sweezer said he called both the Grand Rapids Police Department and the Kent County Sheriff’s Department to report the abortions happening at Heritage. He said the Kent County Sheriff’s Department told him that abortion is legal, while the Grand Rapids Police Department encouraged him to file a report but stated it would not send officers to the facility. (Both police departments, like the three Michigan abortion facilities WORLD contacted for this story, either did not respond to inquiries or declined to comment.)

Meanwhile, hospitals in the state have shown conflicting responses to the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling. The day the Dobbs decision came down, the Beaumont-Spectrum hospital system issued a statement saying it would comply with the 1931 law, only performing abortions when the life of the mother was in danger. In another statement the next day, the system reversed course and said it would continue providing “medically necessary” abortions as it had historically done, noting that practitioners “have not and will not” perform elective abortions. A spokesperson told The Detroit News that “medically necessary” includes serious risks to the woman’s health and situations in which the baby is unlikely to survive.

Responding to the initial news that the Spectrum-Beaumont hospitals would comply with the 1931 law, social media users worried that women would not receive proper care after miscarriages. But Jarzynka and Becker said they would not prosecute doctors who treated miscarriages or ectopic pregnancies since such treatment is not considered a crime under the law. “If the baby is dead, obviously, the health of the mother, probably the life of the mother, is at risk because you’re carrying a dead infant,” said Jarzynka. “Or if it’s an ectopic pregnancy, then yeah, I think the life of the mother is in danger from bleeding to death, for example.”
Opponents of the 1931 law complain the legislation is outdated. Instead of using the term “abortion,” it refers to the criminal act as employing any means to “procure the miscarriage” of a pregnant woman. It does not clarify that pregnant women themselves cannot be prosecuted. But Genevieve Marnon, the legislative director for Michigan Right to Life, said any remaining confusion over what is and what is not allowed under the Michigan law can be clarified in other statutes and in case law.

Elsewhere, a Michigan statute clarifies that if a mother causes the miscarriage of her unborn baby, she is not liable for that act. Another state law says removing an ectopic pregnancy, removing a baby that has miscarried, or performing an abortion to save the mother’s life does not count as an elective abortion. That same act also clarifies that the use of “a drug or device intended as a contraceptive” does not count as an elective abortion.

In a 1973 Michigan Supreme Court decision regarding the state’s abortion statute, the court also clarified that “the central purpose” of the 1931 law was “clear enough to prohibit all abortions except those required to preserve the health of the mother.” In a separate case from 1963 also involving the 1931 abortion law, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that the petitioner in the case—a woman who had an abortion—could not be prosecuted.

Under that jurisprudence, Michigan hospitals would still be allowed to perform abortions when the life of the mother is at risk, and women would not face the possibility of jail time for having an ectopic pregnancy removed. The only change that the Beaumont-Spectrum hospitals would have to make to abide by the 1931 law would involve halting abortions of babies with disabilities, what Marnon called “eugenic abortions.” She said Right to Life of Michigan recommends perinatal hospice—not abortion—for unborn babies suffering from severe abnormalities.

While Becker, the Kent County prosecutor, admitted enforcing the 1931 law would be “difficult,” it might be undercut by even newer legal realities: On July 11, a pro-abortion coalition turned in 753,759 signatures in favor of bringing a pro-abortion state constitutional amendment to Michigan ballots in November. Although the Bureau of Elections and the Board of State Canvassers must review the signatures before the measure can appear on the ballot, the number was almost double the 425,059 required.
In those cases, the baby won’t be able to grow properly. If allowed to remain, the fallopian tube will rupture, and the mother could bleed to death. Another life-threatening situation would be when a baby miscarries but does not fully evacuate the mother’s body. If the baby remains there, the woman could develop a dangerous infection. In those two cases there are good medical reasons to remove the baby.

Would that count as an abortion, though, if the baby has already died? Not under typical legal definitions. Even though one medical term for miscarriage is “spontaneous abortion,” many laws are specific about what legally counts and doesn’t count as an abortion. They clarify that miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy removals are not abortions in the legal sense. Arkansas is one state that makes such a clarification. That state has a conditional law that went into effect the day the Supreme Court overturned Roe. It prohibits abortion except to save the mother’s life. In the definition section, the legislation defines abortion and clarifies that the act is not an abortion if performed with the purpose to remove a dead unborn child caused by spontaneous abortion or to remove an ectopic pregnancy.

What about states with laws that don’t make that clarification? Michigan (see main story) is one of those states. The state has a law protecting babies from abortion in all cases, with exceptions for the life of the mother. But the law doesn’t make clarifications about ectopic pregnancies and miscarriages. However, Right to Life of Michigan notes that part of the public health code does define elective abortion and clearly states that it does not include treating a woman who has had a miscarriage or who has an ectopic pregnancy. But again, even if a state doesn’t make this clarification in another part of the law, doctors always have the life of the mother exception to fall back on.

Drugs that treat miscarriage and ectopic pregnancy can be used to abort a pregnancy. Will women in states with protections for the unborn have a problem getting meds they need for those conditions? A number of pharmacists told WORLD that doctors could write down the reason for the prescription and clarify, for instance, that the drug was specifically for removing an ectopic pregnancy, and that would solve the problem. And if the doctor doesn’t do that, the pharmacists can always call the doctor and ask for an explanation. If the doctor lies to them, and the drug is actually used for an abortion, then that’s on the doctor. The evidence would show that the pharmacist was not a party to the abortion.

Some abortion advocates are saying that women who get abortions now in certain states will wind up in jail. Do the laws actually say that? Short answer: no. No law says that the woman can be put in jail for getting an abortion. Many laws even explicitly state that the pregnant woman can’t be prosecuted for her own abortion. The Arkansas law has a section clearly stating prosecutors can’t charge or convict a woman in the death of her own unborn child. Other laws, such as in Michigan, do not make this explicit, but past court cases make it clear that a woman who obtains the abortion cannot be charged. —L.S.
SURE, THEY’RE PRO-LIFE," former U.S. Rep. Barney Frank once said of political opponents who worked against legal abortion. “They’re pro-life from conception to birth.” Frank’s argument was that pro-lifers supported life in the womb but then—in opposing the Democratic Party’s agenda for expanding government programs—were against life after children were born.

Frank’s quip/accusation was deeply unfair. Many pro-life Americans give their own money and time to support thousands of pregnancy resource centers and thousands of other compassionate groups across the country. Frank, a Massachusetts Democrat, simply assumed that the best way to help poor persons was through government programs. But what if that isn’t true? Poverty rates in the United States fell in the decades leading up to President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society in the 1960s but remained basically the same for decades after.

What if government welfare programs aren’t the most effective path to a reduction in poverty? What if a better way exists to help poor persons escape poverty and the social problems associated with it?

Every year, WORLD’s Hope Awards for Effective Compassion highlight some of the groups that are demonstrating a better way. WORLD looks for programs that offer challenging, personal, spiritual help—not groups that hand people money or a meal but do nothing to change counterproductive or even dangerous habits. WORLD looks for groups that are unashamed of the gospel and its life-changing power and make it the heart of their work.

This year, WORLD’s Addie Offereins traveled to Albuquerque, N.M., to report on a ministry that uses discipleship to help men coming out of rehab or prison find employment and housing; to Niles, Mich., to report on a pregnancy care center that focuses on holistic Biblical sexuality in addition to providing services to women; to Huntsville, Ala., to report on a Christian recovery program that holds men battling addiction accountable in a structured environment; and to Post Falls, Idaho, to report on a Christian recovery program that creates a gospel-centered family to provide loving accountability.

Turn to the following pages to read about these groups and the good work they’re doing. Then go to wng.org/compassion to vote for the finalist you think deserves this year’s Hope Award grand prize. Voting will end on Aug. 12, and the winner will receive $10,000.

Bad news isn’t hard to find nowadays, but God is always building His kingdom. Keep reading to see some of what He’s doing through these four compassionate groups. —Timothy Lamer

Gospel-centered and effective

Our four Hope Award finalists offer life-changing help to those who are struggling
A home for the broken

Northwest Hope Awards winner helps men and women overcome addiction in a family environment

by ADDIE OFFEREINS in Post Falls, Idaho

PHOTOS BY GREG LEHMAN/GENESIS

Very Wednesday evening, about 70 men, women, and children gather for a potluck in Post Falls, Idaho, a small city between Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, and Spokane, Wash. On one such evening in March, granite countertops were laden with chili, pot roast, potatoes, green salad, mac-n-cheese, and brownies. The blend of conversation and laughter made it difficult to hear anyone well.

As the sun sank lower, the guests traipsed downstairs to a basement packed with mismatched furniture—white and brown plastic chairs interspersed with leather recliners—for worship. A few people stood in the back. A pile of shoes and work boots by the back door kept growing as more people arrived. Kids sat on top of a bunk bed. Two wooden pianos and one microphone were crammed in the front of the crowded room where the worship leader sang in a black sweatshirt and gold chain, arms covered in tattoos.

With hands raised, the group sang: “You’re holding me right in the palm of your hand. The storm might shake me but it doesn’t break me. I’ll stand.”

Most of the men and women in the room had an experience in common: They or someone in their family had graduated from Good Samaritan Rehabilitation, an addiction rehabilitation program in Coeur d’Alene. The prayer and worship night felt more like a giant family reunion than a church service. That’s what makes Good Samaritan different from many addiction rehab facilities. Men and women who join the program experience the loving accountability of a gospel-centered family for the first time.

At the end of 1982, Pastor Tim Remington and his wife, Cindy, helped plant a church in northern Idaho. The old mining communities of the Silver Valley—tucked away in the Bitterroot Mountains just east of Coeur d’Alene—were thick with drugs. The church met in an elementary school for 12 years. At first, the church sent men and women struggling with addiction—about 500 in total—to Calvary Ranch, an addiction rehabilitation program in San Diego, Calif. But people kept coming, and the Remingtons realized they needed to start their own program.

Good Samaritan centers on five principles: the gospel, purpose, identity, confidence, and positive attitude. Their doors are open for men and women struggling with many kinds of addiction, not just drugs. For some, its bulimia, alcohol, or pornography. For Remington, when he was young, it was alcohol. The tall, salt-and-pepper-bearded pastor in a gingham button-down and a black suit professed faith in Christ in a 1969 Dodge van in Redding, Calif.

At Good Samaritan, the gospel is the cornerstone. Before a client joined the program, Remington asked: Do you or do you not want Christ? “The only thing I have to give you is Jesus,” he would tell
They. Now, other people do the intakes, but the goal is the same: to make it clear that while residents will receive many tools to wage war against addiction, true victory is found in Jesus Christ.

“But you can’t just rehabilitate a person, send them out into the world again, and say, ‘You’re rehabilitated now that you have Christ,’” Remington said, “Yes, they can still do all things through Christ who strengthens them … but they still don’t know how to live it yet. Because they have had no examples.” Many addicts come from divorced or dysfunctional homes.

The Remingtons decided part of the program would show them what a gospel-centered home could look like. “So we put them back into the home,” he said, “and the home worked.” They started the women’s facility first, and Remington and his wife opened their own home to everyone who graduated. The graduates stayed with them and their kids.

Once residents are grounded in the gospel, Good Samaritan focuses on helping them discover the gifts God has given them and putting them to use in the community. The women spend about four months in rehab and their last 30 days in a mentor home. The men spend two months in rehab. For six months after they graduate, residents complete an Intensive Outpatient Program. They meet with staff on Monday and Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings and must be employed. Men are assigned one-on-one counselors who help them build community. Good Samaritan helps residents find employment by connecting them with employers who could use their skill set—but only if they’re willing to work.

WHEN ADELLA FELLOWS arrived at Good Samaritan, she weighed 90 pounds—skin and bones. Methamphetamine had stolen her appetite. She hid sores on her stomach and legs under a dark gray knitted sweater. Fellows started stealing alcohol from her alcoholic parents when she was 12. At 14, she was introduced to meth: “That became my best friend until I was 32,” she said. She had her first daughter at 15.
Four abortions and three children later, her life continued to spiral downward. About 10 years ago, Fellows got into a fight with her brother. The police threatened to take her to Kootenai Behavioral Health, another addiction recovery service in Coeur d’Alene. Fellows had already tried that. Instead, the man she was living with called Pastor Remington. He came within the hour. Remington gently asked her about her story and introduced her to his wife, Cindy. That night, they took her to a Bible study at their home. People sat on the kitchen countertops and the stairways. Somehow, Fellows found a seat. An older woman who was a Good Samaritan graduate laid her hand on her knee and told her, “Welcome.” When the Bible study concluded, Fellows walked over to the women’s facility, Blue Creek House.

For two weeks, Fellows alternated between napping and sitting on the cold bathroom floor as her body detoxed. She remembers the grime floating in the water after she took her first bath. When she finished the bath, the women laid hands on her and prayed. Fellows cried out to the Lord.

The women followed a routine—got up at 6, ate breakfast, exercised, read their Proverbs devotional, worked on their Bible lesson, and did classes and chores—something Fellows had lost when the meth kept her awake for days on end. Through the opportunities to delve into Scripture, Fellows heard and accepted the gospel.

Fellows stayed at Blue Creek for three months and lived at a mentor home with Remington and his family for three weeks. She met her husband through the program, and they moved into a home. Fellows got involved with a ministry for children and helped out at Good Samaritan. Now, she works as a secretary at The Altar, Remington’s church.

NOW GOOD SAMARITAN has three homes: The women’s Blue Creek House and the men’s Sunnyside House and Bonnell House. At the rehab homes, residents and staff function as a family. The homes are cozy and orderly, set apart from the distractions of the city in the lush forest that surrounds the many lakes within driving distance of Coeur d’Alene. The scenery is strategic: Men and women struggling against the chaos of addiction wake up to soft bird calls and towering pines. An inviting porch with wooden railings makes Sunnyside House feel like a cabin.

For men and women who were once homeless or couch surfers, a well-kept home is key. Residents cook their own meals. A staff member supervises each house to ensure residents make their beds and follow the rules. At Sunnyside, men sleep in bunks downstairs. Outside, four smooth logs and a blue wooden bench surround a makeshift fire pit.

**MONEYBOX**

2020 revenue: $928,161
2020 expenses: $838,345
President’s salary: $0
VP’s salary: $53,853
Website: goodsonaritanrehab.com

FROM LEFT: A resident named John tells his story to men at Bonnell House; Adella Fellows; Blue Creek House; Tim and Cindy Remington with their grandchildren.
On the Wednesday evening in March, ambient music played as men talked and laughed in the kitchen at Bonnell House, a quick walk from Sunnyside House. The men seasoned garlic bread and chopped tomatoes for lunch. Large pine trees shaded the house, and a stack of firewood leaned against the wall by the door. Two thin wooden beams form a cross outside between two trees. A display of wooden stumps and blocks—the remnants of chopping firewood for elderly neighbors—bears the signatures of all of the men who have lived at the house.

Jason Jasinski is the administrator for Bonnell House. He ensures the men meet probation requirements and attend court dates. He calls their families and checks to see all their basic needs are filled. Jasinski, 46, also enforces house rules. Residents follow a “three strikes, you’re out” policy. Using drugs, sleeping around, or dishonesty results in one strike. If a resident gives someone drugs, he must leave immediately. After 30 days, clients can try again.

Jasinski went through the program eight years ago. His parents were drug addicts. He started selling drugs for his uncle at 14: “All I knew was either you were a drug addict or a drug dealer.” At 18, he started using. Soon he was addicted to methamphetamine. He moved to northern Idaho to escape, but eventually went back to the only life he knew.

When he walked into The Altar for the first time, he felt the love of God. “The love of Christ was there, and I’d never had it before,” he said. He told his old friends to come to The Altar if they wanted to see him. Many of them have now gone through Good Samaritan.

“Now I get to be a part of those people’s lives that I used to help ruin,” he said.

The schedule is rigorous. Both men and women are expected to show up to meals and classes on time. Every morning, they read a passage from Proverbs and ask the men to share a life application.

“It’s beautiful when you can see their hearts start to have an understanding for the Word of God,” Jasinski said.

For the first 30 days, residents watch assigned Bible videos. For the second 30 days, they can choose a Bible study topic. In the afternoons, they attend more classes that include Moral Reconation Therapy (understanding how their decisions have impacted others) and Cognitive Self-Change. Staffers don’t leave their Christian worldview at the door. They talk about Christ’s forgiveness.

MORE PEOPLE KEEP COMING. Good Samaritan is now booked four to five months out and has to squeeze in emergency cases wherever it can. Each year, about 120-140 people graduate. Almost 3,800 people have graduated since the program began. But expanding the program could risk sacrificing the family environment the residents need.

In 2013, John Padula started Set Apart, a place for men to stay while they are waiting to get into Good Samaritan. Some men don’t have money for the program ($3,000, but the group will sponsor people who cannot afford it) and need a place to detox. Padula and his wife bought a house and started taking people in. Men who have graduated from Good Samaritan each take a day of the week to mentor the men who are detoxing. “A lot of programs focus on building life skills, and the spiritual stuff usually takes a back seat,” said Padula. At Set Apart and Good Samaritan, men and women focus on their relationship with God.

Fourteen men live with Padula, his wife, and his 10-, 9-, 6-, and 5-year-old children. Twelve men live in another house. It’s strange when the house isn’t bustling with activity. The Padulas have hosted men for the past 10 years with only a three-day break after they moved into their current house and needed to finish the basement.

Helping men and women transition to the real world is also a challenge. Living in an Intensive Outpatient Home is only the first step. Men and women need to get plugged into a gospel-centered community that can become their family for the long haul.

So every Wednesday night, the Padulas host a potluck and worship night.

With a multitude of ranges, pitches, and harmonies, the group of men, women, and children who had crowded into the Padulas’ basement continued to sing: “Take a moment to remember who God is and who I am. There you go, lifting my load again. No longer am I held by the yoke of this world. Come up under the yoke of Jesus, His yoke is easy, His burden is so light.”
Beyond doorknob rehab

Southeast Hope Awards winner helps men break free from addiction through a Christ-centered residential program

by ADDIE OFFEREINS in Huntsville, Ala.

PHOTOS BY LARRY McCORMACK/GENESIS

A T EENAGER, Patrick McDonald tried a beer and hated it. Marijuana was disgusting. But one day, when he was 18 years old, his friends told him to “cook” cocaine by adding the white powder to boiling water with baking soda. The result was a solid substance that could be smoked. From that day he was hooked.

“My body said this is what you’ve been looking for. My brain said you’re finally happy, you’ve arrived. And that led to the next 30 years of hell.”

McDonald, 51, became what he calls a “part-time crackhead.” One week he’d be sober. The next, he’d become dependent again. He would put his finances in order and rebuild relationships only to have it all come crashing down. His longest stretch of sobriety was 18 months. Addiction led to divorce.

After he began selling drugs to support his addiction, he was arrested and went to prison for about 5½ years. When he got out, he did well for a while, fell in love, and remarried. Then, another relapse, another stint in jail, another divorce.

With past rehab attempts sobering him up only temporarily, McDonald initially didn’t want to go to His Way, a Christian recovery center in Huntsville, Ala., and slog through another program for a half year or more. He wanted to be healed in 28 days. But he knew something had to change. Other Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings emphasized spirituality and the importance of finding a “higher power”—a God of your own understanding. “At His Way, the Christ-centered approach was different,” he said.

At His Way’s recovery program, men battling addiction are held accountable in a structured environment where they are confronted by a loving community and, most importantly, the gospel of Jesus Christ. But many men find that change isn’t easy, and some go through the program multiple times.

HIS WAY BEGAN WITH a Bible study. The organization’s current director of ministry, Tom Reynolds, helped start an AA-style Bible study called the Bridge Group that met at the Central Church of Christ in Huntsville, where he was a pastor. The leaders felt that AA had moved away from its Christian roots and wanted to share the gospel with men in recovery.

Reynolds told the men that in AA you introduce yourself as “I’m Tom, and I’m an alcoholic.” Your identity is rooted in the problem.” At the Bridge Group, they began by introducing themselves as children of God. That was a crucial distinction, but the leaders soon realized the men faced challenges a twice-a-week meeting was ill-equipped to handle: Some didn’t have jobs or transportation.

Doug Stogner, who became interested in the Bridge Group’s Bible-based mission, had an idea for a solution. He had previously gone through a Christ-centered residential recovery program and...
came back to Huntsville passionate about starting something similar. He teamed up with the owner of a former nursing home, and they converted the building into a residential center for former addicts. They recruited Reynolds to oversee the program. (As director and board chairman, Reynolds is a nonemployee but is paid as a consultant.)

Reynolds had no idea how a residential program should work, much less a Christ-centered one. He sat down with the residents, about 12 at the time, and asked, “How would you design a program that would be helpful to you in your recovery?” Many of them had been in recovery programs before, and Reynolds used their responses as he formulated a structure. They drafted rules and expectations. Every rule in the handbook was backed by a Bible verse. The fundamental rule: clean drug and alcohol tests. Others involved bed and wake times, chores, and honesty.

Shortly after, Reynolds dismissed most of the men because they violated the same rules they said would be important to their recovery. But more men trickled in. Some were homeless or former inmates, and some still lived with their mom and dad. Some were former military officers or business owners. Others never had career ambitions beyond drug dealing. Most had been in trouble with the law.

His Way’s residential program, with space for about 43 residents, has now been running for 15 years. Men stay for nine months. An $800 initial fee is often covered by a relative or church group, and after the first 60 days, residents are required to start working and expected to contribute $250 a week from their earnings. His Way partners with companies in the community to find the men jobs. Others work at the organization’s four thrift stores that provide about 40 percent of the ministry’s funding.

When they first arrive, men aren’t allowed contact with anyone in the outside world for 60 days. For the first 30 days they don’t have access to cell phones. After that, only flip phones are allowed. There is little else to distract them in the facility’s serene environment. The campus sits on a spacious lawn on a quiet street. Birds call to one another from tall pines. Three Labrador retrievers—Sam,
missed for hiding smartphones, failing drug tests, or dishonesty.

Campus leaders—led by resident director Darryl Floyd, who arrives on campus at 4:30 in the morning and leaves at 8:30 at night—enforce discipline, ensure dormitories are clean, take men to work and appointments, and do “on-the-spot counseling.” High-level offenses end up on Floyd’s desk.

Men can’t break free of addiction without discipline. But there is also grace. If a man sneaks in a smartphone, for example, he can sign a contract acknowledging he made a mistake and pledging to change. If he violates the contract, he is dismissed. He can reapply for the program after 30 days.

Success isn’t just about graduating. Some men receive a certificate and then go back to their addiction. “Success stories to us are guys taking on Christ 100 percent and changing their life, giving back to their community, becoming the kingdom man that he’s supported to be,” said Floyd.

DOUG STOGNER UNDERSTANDS the challenges all too well. “My phone rings off the hook from guys who have fallen.” Men
do well in the program, but they may begin struggling within days of leaving. It is difficult to help men understand how to live out at home what they learned at His Way.

Stogner relapsed himself, going to prison for five years. In 2016, he went through the program he had helped design. At the time, most of the men didn’t know their fellow resident had helped design the program or that much of the furniture in the buildings was his. “I was so relieved when I came back,” Stogner said. “It was the best homecoming I could imagine.” Now he is reunited with his children.

Many men have relapsed and attended the program more than once. To transition out of the program successfully, men need accountability and community. Throughout their time in the program, men attend “family meetings” with a group of outside friends or relatives who know the resident well and are supporting his sobriety.

At the first meeting, Reynolds takes time to learn about the resident from the family while the individual sits outside the room. During the second meeting, the family and individual talk about what led to the addiction and the consequences. Later on, residents fill out a “success plan questionnaire.” The men discuss this with members of their group who can help them avoid old habits and triggers.

Across the street from the facility are three houses where men can rent a room when they graduate. Most stay about a year. Getting involved with a local church is also essential. They want the men to come back after they’ve graduated, for accountability and community. One slip-up doesn’t mean a closed door.

“Ultimately, sobriety is not about the absence of drugs and alcohol. Sobriety is about having a right relationship with God and being rightly aligned. And that’s about honesty, it’s about integrity, it’s about those kinds of things,” said director Reynolds. “It’s about character transformation, because when that changes, alcohol and drugs become irrelevant.”

McDonald first graduated from His Way in 2012. But then he relapsed again. Now he’s back. On Day 1, McDonald sat in the 8 a.m. Bible class with Tom Reynolds and thought: “I want to get high. Why am I sitting in this class? That was interesting. That’s a good point. Man, I want to get high.”

But soon, he started taking notes. “It’s weird because I’ve got a drug problem, I come to His Way, and you send me to a Bible class. Why?”

Sitting in the class, he realized he didn’t want to get high anymore. “And there’s nothing I did to not want to get high,” he said, “Jesus was doing it for me. This is the gospel. It’s nothing that I did… You’re a sinner and there’s nothing you can do to earn salvation. Jesus has to do it all… And that’s the difference.”

McDonald noted that typical AA meetings emphasize the importance of finding a higher power. It can be anything—even a doorknob, as some suggest.

“No. The doorknob can’t. Jesus is and can,” McDonald said.

By week four, he called his parents and asked them to send him a new Bible. He did devotions every night. He wanted to tell others.

His days now are full working as a house manager at His Way and an assistant manager at the Saving Way thrift store, where he supervises 10 other men and meets with them every two weeks to assess goals and ask how they are doing. They all have similar struggles: drugs or alcohol, ruined relationships, no money, legal trouble.

McDonald reminds them: They are not alone. He is right there with them.

“You’ve got a drug problem, I come to His Way, and you send me to a Bible class. Why?”
Building stronger families

Northeast Hope Awards winner is a pregnancy center that focuses on holistic Biblical sexuality as well as providing services to women

by ADDIE OFFEREINS in Niles, Mich.

PHOTOS BY DARRELL GOEMAAT/GENESIS

REANNA BRITTAINE carries her son with her right hand. In 2017, doctors amputated her left hand. An industrial machine that resembled a bicycle wheel at the fiber factory where she worked shredded her tissue and took off most of her fingers.

After the accident, Brittain didn’t want to get out of bed. She considered suicide and was admitted to a psych ward for five days. A few months later, she found out she was pregnant. As Brittain, 30, drove down East Main Street in Niles, Mich., she noticed a small, sage-green Victorian house with white trim. White pillars supported a shaded porch surrounded by a wrought-iron fence and a well-kept lawn. A white sign held up by a purple, wooden frame read “LifePlan” in large, purple letters and underneath: “you + baby + family.”

“I need a life plan.” Brittain thought. She decided to call.

THE CENTER SITS on one of the main thoroughfares in Niles, a quiet town of about 11,600. The closest airport is 30 minutes away in South Bend, Ind. Four countries—Britain, Spain, France, and the United States—have all laid claim over the centuries to the city that now has the nickname the City of Four Flags. From 1820 to 1865, slaves traveling the Underground Railroad stopped in Niles on their way to Canada. Now, the house on East Main is a station for women and their families escaping what seem like impossible situations.

LifePlan is one of nearly 3,000 pregnancy centers around the United States. But many crisis pregnancy centers focus their efforts on “you + baby” and unintentionally sideline a key component of effective compassion: strengthening the most fundamental community—the family. LifePlan offers traditional pregnancy center services, but staff and volunteers aim to provide women with long-term support by grounding the whole family on a foundation of Biblical sexuality.

In 1984, an abortion center opened in Niles. A group of churches responded by opening the Pregnancy Care Center of Niles in 1985. It offered basic pregnancy services. Finances were shaky, and the center had six directors in the span of 10 years. The abortion center closed in 2012, and now the closest one is in South Bend. In 2017, the organization changed its name to LifePlan to help change the assumption that a pregnancy center is only for women.

When you walk into LifePlan, the wooden floor creaks underneath scattered rugs. Lisa Smith, the volunteer coordinator, isn’t sure how old the house is but thinks it was probably built around 1895. House servants once used the steep back stairway. But the inside of the center looks freshly painted and feels like a home. Worship music plays in the background. A meticulously organized boutique bursts with racks of baby clothes, and white shelves hold other baby items.
LifePlan’s mission statement reads: “We exist to spread the gospel by helping people choose life and live a Hope filled life.” On the ground, this looks like equipping volunteers from various Christian denominations to understand the gospel and discipleship with two trainings: “What Is the Gospel” and “How It Forms Us.” Staff and volunteers share the gospel with clients on a case-to-case basis. At the end of a session with a client, consultants ask permission to pray. Every family gets The Jesus Storybook Bible since every story ties back to the gospel. They hope the parents will hear the gospel as they read to their kids.

At their first meeting, the consultants try to get to know their clients and encourage them to come back the next week. The Life Matters curriculum is divided into three phases of four classes from BrightCourse. The consultant helps customize the curriculum for the client. The videos range from how to keep your house clean to staying in your budget to what to expect from a newborn. Though not all the videos are explicitly Christian, they are based on Biblical values. Consultants can use companion discussion guides that incorporate Scripture when they work with a client.

LifePlan placed Brittain with Teri Stark, 57, one of the center’s consultants. They met once a week. Brittain vented about her stress and her doubts about keeping the baby: “I was really leaning toward abortion.” Stark listened. Brittain simultaneously dreaded and wanted her prayers. She was raised in church and had grown to resent God after the accident. Meeting with Stark slowly broke down her walls. Stark didn’t tell her what to do but offered suggestions, and they brainstormed next steps together.

Volunteers have their own stories of God’s redemption. Stark had her first son before she was married. Like so many of the women she sees, she was scared. “I didn’t even know the gospel or know Jesus died for me,” she said. Her baby was born dangerously early, and she begged God: “If you’re real, let my baby live.” Her son died, but God brought some Christians into her life. “God did a total miracle in my life,” she said. Now she has four children and seven grandchildren.
LifePlan offers ultrasounds on Thursdays and tests for sexually transmitted diseases on Mondays and Thursdays. Women can get a pregnancy test anytime.

But LifePlan offers more than services. The organization believes prevention is key to restoring holistic Biblical sexuality. Last year, LifePlan partnered with a church to host its ReMade youth conference that helps teenagers understand sexuality from a Biblical perspective. Every year, the organization puts on an anti-pornography campaign. LifePlan also speaks about prevention in two public schools: Niles New Tech and Eau Claire Middle School. The group conducts abstinence training and brings in its medical doctors to speak to the kids. The organization welcomes people to come in even if they don’t have children. Some come in for relationship advice or STI testing, and LifePlan staffers see that as an opportunity to explain Biblical sexuality.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LYNDON AZCUNA says a woman’s decision to abort her child depends in large part on the father. Azcuna radiates enthusiasm. His crisp blue gingham shirt tucked precisely into dark jeans matches his passion for organizational structure and a well-built program. He used to be a community developer with Outreach Community Center in Carol Stream, Ill., a suburb of Chicago. He is passionate about strengthening the family, the fundamental building block of any community.

Last fall, LifePlan started a ministry for men. When a woman comes in with her significant other, staff and volunteers immediately refer the man to this program. A local pastor, Greg Rensberry, heads the men’s ministry. Rensberry recruits and trains volunteer men from local churches who are committed to their families and want to help new fathers walk through the different stages of parenting. Men can watch the parenting courses and sign up for coaching.

They see a mix of husbands and boyfriends. Some clients are struggling to understand their role as a father. Others are battling addiction or are afraid and just need an older man to talk with. The coaches try to connect the clients with a local church. “That’s why there can even be an ongoing relationship. Hopefully, even years down the road,” said Rensberry.

LifePlan wants everyone who walks through the door to get plugged into a local church and get a community. “We are not going to do this without you,” Azcuna tells pastors. “We can’t do this without you.”

LifePlan wants everyone who walks through the door to get plugged into a local church and get a community. “We are not going to do this without you,” Azcuna tells pastors. “We can’t do this without you.”

In March the group had 81 visits and 30 distinct clients. LifePlan sees about 1,000 visitors a year and about 60-80 distinct clients. That is a challenge: getting the women, and especially the men, involved for the long haul so that they have more opportunities to hear the gospel. “Men’s ministry is very difficult in
“A lot of people hear ‘crisis pregnancy center’ and think that’s for those 15-year-old girls in the poor neighborhoods. And really it’s for anyone.”

our context,” said Azcuna. Most men see the center as something for women. And when they do come, the men don’t open up as easily.

Clients who miss an appointment two to three times have to restart the program. About 25 percent of people who come in complete the Life Matters program. When a woman completes a parenting or life skills class she can choose eight clothing items and earn 10 boutique bucks—equivalent to a package of diapers. Some choose to save up for something bigger like a crib.

If a man also attends, the rewards double. Jenny Sergio, 57, volunteers once a week as a consultant at LifePlan. Sergio has seen clients virtually from other countries. One man in India heard about LifePlan through recovering from a pornography addiction. He and his wife Zoom-call Sergio. She has had a couple of men come with their girlfriends. “It’s more than just the baby,” she said.

The very last verse in the Old Testament says that Elijah would come to turn the hearts of fathers to their children. That’s why the men’s ministry is important, said Katrina Patrice, 60, the operations director at a new LifePlan center in Benton Harbor, Mich. If men don’t see the value of their children, they won’t see the value of their girlfriends and wives taking care of their children. When WORLD visited the organization, no male clients had shown up that day. Usually they have about three on the books, but even those don’t always show up.

Effective outreach is another challenge. Last year, the FDA approved the abortion pill for online distribution. “Now the abortion provider is the mom herself. … That changes a lot of things,” said Azcuna. Fewer women feel a need to visit the center. “We need to be going out there.” LifePlan is working to expand its prevention efforts through Facebook and Instagram.

LIFEPLAN ESTABLISHED the center in Benton Harbor in 2019 and hopes to establish one in South Bend later this year. Clients are ushered into a clean and bright space in the lower level of an office building. The center boasts another spotless boutique with a garland of white, gray, and turquoise onesies held by clothespins hanging above the shelves. A black-and-white rug decorates the wooden floor. In the ultrasound room a placard that says “It is well with my soul” in flowing cursive surrounded by a white wreath hangs above the examining table.

Consultants usually see lower-income women, with about 80 percent of their clients qualifying for government assistance. But LifePlan doesn’t have any income requirements because strengthening the family is about more than services. “A lot of people hear ‘crisis pregnancy center’ and think that’s for those 15-year-old girls in the poor neighborhoods. And really it’s for anyone,” said Patrice.

Back at the Niles center, Brittain wondered how she had ever considered abortion when Mark was born on March 1, 2020. “He was so perfect, and he had all this dark hair,” she said, smiling.

She married Mark’s dad in November 2020. They live a few blocks away from LifePlan in Niles. Mark is now a spunky 2-year-old in a yellow jacket who has trouble sitting still. He turned the lights on and off as Brittain talked, only pausing his activity to watch the rain fall out the upper-floor window. Brittain still comes to LifePlan every two weeks and meets with Stark. Mark calls her Mimi.
HOPEAWARDS

Stepping into stability

Southwest Hope Awards winner uses discipleship to help men coming out of rehab or prison transition back into society

by ADDIE OFFEREINS in Albuquerque, N.M.

PHOTOS BY NICK LAYMAN/GENESIS

The Sandia Mountains rise to the north of Albuquerque, N.M., a dark shade of blue against the sunset sky. Sitting in the Chihuahuan Desert, the city is flanked by the Manzano Mountains to the east, with lava cliffs lying to the south and west. After Spanish colonists settled the area in 1706, the territory’s governor named La Villa de Albuquerque after a Spanish duke of the same name. Older neighborhoods in Albuquerque still mimic the Spanish-style adobe.

In 2021, Albuquerque broke a grim record—the city’s homicides jumped to 116, representing more than half of New Mexico’s annual homicide count. Seizures of the powerful drug fentanyl have climbed along with crime rates. An estimated 5,000 to 8,000 of the city’s 550,000 residents are homeless.

Doug Chandler, 70, served for several years in a Christian life transformation program for the homeless in Albuquerque. About 3 out of 4 homeless people typically struggle with addiction, mental illness, or physical disabilities. Chandler found that clients flourished in a controlled environment. But he saw about half of the graduates returning to old patterns shortly after leaving the program. That’s typical: Research suggests some 85 percent of men and women who receive treatment for addiction relapse within a year. For so long, every minute of their day has been scheduled for them, and they often aren’t equipped to transition from rehab or prison back into a world of freedom and decision-making without supervision.

“It was really depressing. You’d celebrate this completion of this program and what appeared to be a life change. And then they would fail,” says Chandler.

He realized that most of these men—some who were former prison inmates—had trouble finding housing and employment and weren’t plugged into a local church. They didn’t have healthy relationships or an ongoing relationship with God. The discipleship had ended.

The missing piece? Chandler came to believe he needed to start a program that equipped men for success as they transitioned back into society. So he and his wife purchased a small apartment complex and founded Next Step Ministries. The mission is simple: employment, housing, and discipleship. The program offers a taste of freedom to men coming out of prison or a structured rehabilitation program. As men jump back into society, consistent friendship and Christian accountability are key.

Richard Escobar, 39, knows what addiction is like. He started smoking marijuana when he was 14. Marijuana led to cocaine and cocaine to methamphetamine. Escobar committed a violent crime at age 17 and received a 13-year sentence: eight years in prison and five on probation and parole. Prison culture became his identity. He picked up a her-
A taste of freedom to men coming out of prison and transitioned back to meth on probation: “Emotionally, physically, morally, spiritually, I was just totally lost.”

He soon found himself back in the county jail for stabbing someone. That’s when he cried out to God for salvation. He spent another seven years in prison, but this time he got involved with a church. In 2016, he was up for parole. He met with a caseworker to make a parole plan. But all his first-pick parole program options fell through.

Scanning the list of approved programs, he noticed Next Step and gave Doug Chandler a call. Chandler picked up and asked a simple question: “Are you open to being in a Christian environment?” Escobar had no job experience and had never shouldered real responsibility. “I really had nothing to contribute to society,” he says, “except for the fact that I was a new creation in Christ.” One application and a couple of interviews later, Escobar arrived at Next Step’s small apartment complex in Albuquerque.

The ministry’s light-brown apartment building is unassuming, sitting across from a grassy park and a bus stop (most of the men don’t have vehicles). The scene is set against the rolling brown mountains and the noise of blaring traffic from a nearby thoroughfare.

Terra cotta–colored stairs lead to the second-floor apartments, where four homey, two-bedroom apartments house up to eight men. There is no curfew or on-site supervision. Director Todd Louden meets with each of the men once a week and goes over goals. Next Step has built relationships with local businesses and takes the men to meet potential employers or to employment agencies, helps them fill out paperwork, and helps them get to interviews and training. Residents work a full-time job and pay discounted rent: $425 a month.

On Tuesday evenings, the men discuss a chapter of the Bible verse by verse. On Thursdays, they meet for study on Biblical manhood and what it means to take responsibility. Each man meets with an accountability partner—a mature man from a local church—once a week, either...
Jeff Lesley is a Next Step accountability partner. Lesley started drinking as a teenager and says he was an alcoholic till he turned 40. “There were times I was so broken because I had fallen again,” he said. But he felt the Holy Spirit encouraging him and reminding him that Christ hadn’t died in vain.

Now, he can relate to other men struggling to break free from addiction. It takes time—at least 12 months at an addiction rehabilitation program like Steelbridge (the Christian ministry where Chandler used to work) and another year at Next Step—and a lot of support. Getting the men to hold down a job isn’t the only objective.

Escobar appreciated the balance of freedom and accountability. Instead of crowding into a halfway house lined with bunk beds, he had his own room and only shared a kitchen with one other resident. “I can’t even tell you what that did for me,” he said. “Next Step really gave me a great environment to make that transition from prison to life [outside].”

Weekly involvement in a local church is required. David Rosales, 49, graduated Next Step two years ago after completing two prison sentences for selling drugs. Before he came to the program, he said, he was scared to get close to anyone. Whenever he felt like a relationship was becoming too intimate, he responded with anger and disrespect.

Volunteering as a greeter at Legacy Church forced him to open up. On his first day, he hesitantly opened the door. But he soon greeted churchgoers enthusiastically with “Hey! How are you doing? Good morning!”

Living with a community of men who wanted to follow Christ broke down his walls even further. Rosales still meets with his accountability partner today. “God gave me these outlets to be able to talk to people,” he said. “He gave me people that care enough to listen.”

“Community is such a big part of it. My focus is supporting this program to create community, to create the culture of being a disciple of Christ,” he said.
Even though the small apartment complex limits the program to eight residents at a time, Chandler views that as a blessing. “We don’t want to lose who we are and what we're all about—it’s discipleship,” he said.

Finding enough men in the community willing to serve as accountability partners is challenging. Some men are intimidated because they haven’t had much exposure to this population. Others say they have the desire, but don’t have time to meet with a resident once a week for what could be a year or more.

“You can get guys to come over and do maintenance or give some money on occasion … but to get a guy to sign up to meet with another man on an ongoing long-term basis is really hard,” said Chandler.

Not all the residents at Next Step stick to the rules or embrace discipleship. Residents aren’t required to be Christians, but if someone doesn’t want to participate in Bible study or mentoring, the leaders tell him: If you don’t want to be discipled, this isn’t the place for you. They’ve asked a handful of men to leave.

On a recent day, Joseph Perez worked in a white T-shirt tucked into paint-splattered pants. Perez is helping turn 38 apartments into condominiums by opening up the living space and updating doors and fixtures. With arms and hands covered in plaster dust, he displayed the shower tile he had just laid. He’s been at Next Step for about a year. Last year, he failed a urine drug test.

When that happens, director Loudon holds the men accountable. If they lie about it, they have to leave. But if they are willing to change, he gives them another chance. He doesn’t send anyone away unless they have a place to go. After 30 days, a guy can come back if he’s willing to change.

Loudon himself once sold meth and went to prison four times. At age 39, alone in his cell in the Albuquerque county jail, he asked God for forgiveness.

“My heart goes out to anyone who’s struggling with addiction, especially the guys coming out of prison. I've walked through it. I've had the door slammed in my face even when I was doing all the right things,” said Loudon.

Perez was willing to change, so Loudon worked with him. Perez plans on staying at Next Step for two more years. “He’s come a long way in the last year,” Loudon said. “It’s nothing great that we're doing; it’s what God does with us.”

Next Step challenged Escobar to take control of his finances. He met his wife during his time at Next Step while she was going through the Steelbridge program. They married in September 2018. The wedding guests were “a cast of characters”: guys he was in prison with, people from his small group Bible Study, his family. He sang the Proclaimers song “I’m Gonna Be (500 Miles)” to his wife right before the reception. The couple continued to follow a budget and ultimately bought a house.

At Next Step, he began working in construction. Now he has his own handyman business. Doug Chandler remains a good friend, and Escobar still calls him for advice. Escobar now leads a men’s Bible study at Steelbridge on authentic manhood. He shares his enthusiasm for Christ and love of budgeting.

“There was nothing outside of Jesus Christ and Him crucified that could help me. It had to be the power of the gospel.”
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Founded in 1933
SCHOOL-BUS-YELLOW SIGNS along Australia’s roads sport a silhouette of a kangaroo, koala, or wombat—a reminder for motorists to drive safely. The signs aren’t only for the benefit of drivers: They also list an “Injured wildlife” telephone number to call.

In the state of Victoria, many wounded animals end up at one of Zoos Victoria’s three locations. One of those, Healesville

HOW TO FIX A WOMBAT’S TEETH

Australian designer Girius Antanaitis builds custom surgical instruments for nonhuman patients

by Amy Lewis

Antanaitis in his shop
Sanctuary, has a veterinary hospital that helps 1,500 injured wildlife a year.

In 2014, Girius Antanaitis sent Zoos Victoria staffers an email asking if they needed help with wildlife medical instruments. At the time, he was making surgical instruments for what he calls “large terrestrial creatures”—humans—after studying industrial design at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. But he had always been interested in animals and the bush.

The zoo staff answered him within a week and asked for a needle long enough to deliver euthanasia drugs to the hearts of beached whales that couldn’t be saved. “To alleviate suffering, it’s most humane to euthanize them. Other methods can be quite brutal,” says Antanaitis. But the intra-cardiac needles on the market weren’t designed for whales. So he made one.

He’s been busy designing, developing, and manufacturing surgical implementation, implants, and apparatus for wildlife healthcare ever since.

Antanaitis lists at least a dozen in-process projects, from specialized surgical instruments to screws for broken wings to external fixators for broken turtle shells. Tools ordered by size neatly line his workshop walls. Labeled chests of drawers support drills, micro-lathes, and the microscope he uses to check the precision of his inventions.

“A lot of instrumentation is either for human surgery or for domestic animals,” said Antanaitis from his garage workshop in the suburbs of Melbourne. “It’s either too small or too large, or it’s not suited for Australian animals specifically.”

The mouths of wombats, kangaroos, wallabies, and koalas have a very small “gape” or opening compared with non-Australian animals. Wombats, like beavers, have two incisors in front of their always-growing molars.

“In the wild,” explains Antanaitis, “wombats tend to have food which wears away the spurs on the molars, which means they don’t impinge on the cheeks.” But an animal’s injuries might prevent it from being released into the wild and to natural tooth-wearing foods.

Antanaitis watched the vets struggle to access and grind down a wombat’s overgrown molar spurs. Within a year, he had designed and manufactured a dental gag now being used for wombats and other Australian mammals.

Not every project takes as long to develop. In 2019, Antanaitis received a call from the Orangutan Foundation. A poached sun bear in Borneo named Hitam had been mistreated and fed only rice and milk in captivity. Her malformed pelvic bones meant every bowel movement caused extreme pain. She would have to be euthanized if she didn’t have surgery. Antanaitis had never designed an implant before, but he and Dr. Gordon Corfield, the head surgeon, drew up plans. Within weeks, Antanaitis had a prototype ready.

“I sent it to Dr. Corfield so he could test it on a skeleton of a large dog, which has the closest physiology to the sun bear he could find.” Antanaitis found a company to manufacture the final product, which needed locking screws, a part he couldn’t make in his home workshop. Hitam’s surgery was a success.

Although the Victoria government provides some grant money to registered wildlife rehabilitators (up to 230,000 Australian dollars total in 2022), wildlife hospitals rely largely on individual donations to stay afloat. The small-scale surgical needs of Australian wildlife hospitals don’t garner attention from large manufacturing companies. Antanaitis spent two years trying to find a company that could cost-effectively manufacture pins for avian orthopedics.

“These wildlife hospitals just don’t have the budgets to spend hundreds of dollars per set. And that’s how much it would have cost.” So Antanaitis did it himself. He often donates what he manufactures, and has to take side jobs to fund his wildlife work.

He’s currently working on a set of 300 pins for setting the broken wings of small birds. Ranging in thickness from 0.5 to 1.6 millimeters, each pin requires at least 12 steps to complete, not including microscopically quality-checking each pin. “If you’re off by a micron, a couple of microns, or even 0.01 of a millimeter, then you can ruin that whole batch.”

He recently sent a prototype of avian orthopedic wire benders to Bonorong Wildlife Rescue in Tasmania. Within weeks, vets used them and others of his tools to treat the broken wings of hundreds of seagulls nesting on a road at high tide at night and hit by a car.

Antanaitis said, “When I design and make things, I try to make things as practical as possible. And fit for a purpose.”
THE SIMPLE ART OF NEIGHBORING

In neighborhoods or small groups, opportunities for bridge-building are aplenty

by Lauren Dunn

When Phyllis Hall tried to surprise her neighbor with a spring gift bag in March, the neighbor’s doorbell (a Ring model with a camera) gave her away. That attempt prompted a laugh between the two ladies and also an impromptu conversation about the neighbor’s health.

The interaction was spurred by Hall’s desire to reach out to her neighbors, something she said she hadn’t done as much since her husband Jerry died about three years ago. “He was a great neighbor,” Hall said. “He was the kind of neighbor that waved to everybody, stopped and talked to everyone.”

Hall, 72, was encouraged to redouble her efforts at neighborliness after attending a conference on neighboring at her Springfield, Mo., church in March. She called the event at Ridgecrest Baptist a “wake-up call.”

More than 1 in 3 Americans say they don’t know many of their neighbors by name, according to a 2020 Lifeway Research survey. The conference at Ridgecrest, a church of about 1,100 weekend attendees, was part of a yearlong effort to encourage members to build relationships with those who live closest to them.

Church deacon David Burton (see “Getting to know you,” June 25) said many people have “adopted the cultural narrative of, I’m a good neighbor, because I’m quiet and I leave my neighbors alone.” Burton says that thinking doesn’t line up with the Biblical narrative: “It really is about being an engaged neighbor and showing hospitality.”

Ridgecrest leaders say they’ve encouraged members to take small, specific action steps—such as getting to know your eight closest neighbors. Missions mobilization director Kelsey Kleier said that people should find an approach that works best for them. “Introverts and extroverts both have beautiful things to bring to the table when it comes to meeting people and building relationships,” she said, adding that the shy and quiet members in her small group are some of the best listeners.

Prayer is important, and some bridge-building interactions may come from unplanned opportunities. One of church member Kevin Bowlen’s neighbors was rarely outside, so Bowlen prayed for an opportunity to have a conversation with him. Bowlen was working from home when he heard a noise outside his house: The neighbor’s son had accidentally ridden his bike into Bowlen’s trash can. The boy was fine,
and Bowlen finally got to talk with his neighbor.

“I wouldn’t put trash cans out in the sidewalk to cause people to run into them,” Bowlen joked, “but maybe that’s a new initiative process.”

Judy Stainback, 70, attends Second Baptist Church in Springfield but also attended the March conference at Ridgecrest. Just before that, in late February, she began inviting the 31 single women in her neighborhood, usually in groups of three, to her house for breakfast, brunch, or lunch. She has welcomed 17 women to her house so far.

She writes a handwritten invitation for each woman and sometimes gets handwritten thank-you notes in return. One came from a widow in her late 80s who wrote that she planned to pay the gesture forward, inviting women over for coffee and card games. Stainback kept the card and sometimes reads it to other guests: “If an 88-year-old widow can do something like this, so can they.”

Sometimes her neighbors’ schedules keep them from coming, and one time a woman whose husband died of COVID-19 turned down the invitation because she didn’t yet feel comfortable gathering in someone else’s house. During one gathering, one of Stainback’s guests monopolized the conversation. But Stainback said most of her neighbors are excited to come. “After I get through with the single ladies I’m going to start up and down my street,” she said. “There’s 26 houses on my street. I’m just not going to give up.”

As Phyllis Hall works to befriend her neighbors, she’s also putting her neighboring efforts to use within the widows group she started at Ridgecrest in 2020. “When you’re a widow ... you feel very alone—and just like a new neighbor can feel,” she said.

Her small group of about 15 women meets on Thursdays for activities like games, Bible studies, or speakers on topics like health or finance. Widows in the group are matched with other widows at Ridgecrest—some of whom haven’t yet joined the group.

“Your neighbor is anyone you come in contact with,” Hall said. “The main objective is to show them that someone cares.”

ICHHELLE AND JERRY SHELFER set a welcoming table: homemade herbal tea served in china teacups, peanut butter cookies, and an assortment of dark chocolate. A warm fire crackles nearby on an unusually cool May afternoon. But the topic the Shelfers want to discuss—post-abortion trauma—hardly attracts a steady flow of company.

For nearly a decade, Michelle has offered post-abortion counseling at the Marin (Calif.) Pregnancy Clinic. She has hosted occasional workshops at local churches in which she and her husband Jerry share their personal story of post-abortion regret and healing.

Two years ago, Michelle said a dream prompted her to revisit her artist background and begin a project to memorialize the billions of “faceless” children lost to abortion. She decided to create a “Quilt of Remembrance,” an art project that aims to bring attention to the issue through personal stories and artistic expression.

One abortion trauma counselor uses art to depict children lost to the procedure

by Mary Jackson in Sebastopol, Calif.

PHOTOS BY MARY JACKSON
abortion. The project is also intended to help post-abortive parents heal and experience Christ’s forgiveness and grace, as she and Jerry have in their 40 years of marriage.

Michelle and I first met in 2015 to discuss abortion regret as I reported on a popular push to normalize and celebrate abortion (see “Pro-abortion and proud of it,” Jan. 24, 2015). She shared her story of how pro-abortion ideals—she was raised in a family of San Francisco artists with parents who encouraged her to explore her sexuality—led her to abort her and Jerry’s first child in her early 20s. After the abortion, Michelle could not shake the pain and regret. She ultimately found forgiveness and saving grace in Jesus Christ.

Seven years after I reported that story, Roe v. Wade is gone, but some things haven’t changed. Michelle said most women, including many in church pews, still conceal their past abortions, holding on to shame and guilt. Of those who make appointments to talk with Michelle, many cancel or never call back. “They want the help, they desperately need the help, but they also run away from the help,” said Michelle. In 2020, she wrote a book addressing post-abortion trauma, Prepare a Room.

Now she has turned to art. Each day, for 778 days, Michelle has painted a portrait of a child. She uses various art mediums—chalk, acrylic, oil, pencil, watercolor, and digital. Michelle depicts the children as she imagines they might have looked had they not been aborted. She calls them “The Foundlings” and shares the portraits on her various social media platforms.

Michelle’s artwork has been printed onto organic cotton and made into a giant quilt. The Shelfers hired a quilter who uses freehand to sew the panels. The quilt is now 35 feet by 10 feet and includes 500 depictions of children. The couple travels with the quilt to various churches, using it as a tool to “put the message out about life,” Jerry said as he unrolled one large panel for me to see.

The children portrayed on the quilt are colorful and racially diverse, close up and far away, and of various ages—a teen, curled up in bed; a boy with a baseball cap and glove; a child with his face painted like a cat; a chunky baby in a purple swimsuit sitting in the sand at the beach. Over tea, I asked Michelle how women who experience abortion trauma react when they see the quilt. She said they often fixate on one particular child. One woman asked Michelle if she would be willing to depict what her aborted child might have looked like. “They are looking for what they lost among the faces … it can be overwhelming,” Michelle said. The Shelfers said part of their own healing involved imagining the child they aborted “as an ambassador of God’s grace and forgiveness.” Shortly after her abortion, Michelle became pregnant a second time, but that time, she walked out of an abortion facility, choosing life. That child, a son, is now married, as is the Shelfers’ daughter. They now have 12 grandchildren.

“Our hope is that the quilt acts as a ministry, that there would be a message that the children are saying, ‘Come and be forgiven; receive what God has for you, instead of bearing that terrible weight of guilt,’” Michelle said.

The Shelfers’ message is especially poignant in California, where lawmakers seek to establish the state as an “abortion sanctuary” after the U.S. Supreme Court’s reversal of Roe v. Wade in June. Pregnancy center directors in the San Francisco Bay Area told me they expect increased attacks and attempts to shut them down.

The Shelfers hope to create a coffee table book with Michelle’s “Foundlings” artwork. On Oct. 22, they will display the quilt during a four-hour “day of healing from the hurt of abortion” event at a church in Novato, Calif. Jerry and Michelle envision opening a local center where the quilt would be permanently housed to host “celebrations of life and grieving for the loss of life.”

“California is a spiritually dark place where the cult of death is powerful and strong. … This is where the message needs to be heard more than anywhere else,” Michelle said.
Is Paris well worth a Mass?
Finding a “creepy quotient” for symbolic gestures

Is Paris well worth a Mass? Henry IV of France decided yes in 1593 when for pragmatic reasons he converted from Protestant to Catholic to consolidate his realm.

In another Paris—France’s Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) soccer league—Senegalese player Idrissa Gueye made the opposite decision. Told to wear rainbow colors on the field in support of LGBT identities, he chose to sit out the game. The soccer federation, thinking itself more than reasonable, said he should at least submit to a photo in the promotional uniform. A harmless gesture, right? The answer was again “Non.”

There were three similarly stubborn men in the sixth century B.C. Merely asked to bow to King Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, these Hebrew recalcitrants wouldn’t even do that. Was Nebuchadnezzar not being eminently reasonable? When it is reported to him that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have refused such a trifling formality, he magnanimously extends a second opportunity:

“Is it true … that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image which I have made, well and good. But if you do not … you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?” (Daniel 3:14-15).

In 1981 I was sitting on a washing machine in Willow Grove, Pa., reading a Bible, when an elderly man approached and struck up a conversation. We spent the whole washing and drying cycle on chairs outside the laundromat, him telling me in detail of the persecution of Christians under the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945) and of his imprisonment along with others who refused to bow to the Shinto shrine. If they only acquiesced in this small thing, their magnanimous overlords had said, they could keep their Christian schools open. What’s in a bow, after all? Just a symbol, right? You don’t even have to mean it.

When I got home and told my Korean husband that I had met the author of *The Korean Pentecost and the Suffering Which Followed*, he was amazed and said there is not a Korean Christian in America who does not know the name Bruce Hunt.

George Orwell understood that the authoritarians of cultural symbolism do not settle for outward compliance. Mimicry is only the beginning. As Nineteen Eighty-Four protagonist Winston Smith learned during his interrogation, the State’s O’Brien was not satisfied with Smith’s rote regurgitation of “2 + 2 = 5.” Smith must believe it in his heart, he must embrace it with love.

Here is a test of whether you should go along with a symbolic gesture today out of pragmatic considerations: If it feels a little creepy, don’t do it. In my college days, transcendental meditation (TM) was introduced to me as a mere technique. But when they had me bring flowers to lay before an altar with candles, and gave me a mantra I was never to share with another human, it got too creepy.

You will have to discover your own “creepy quotient,” I guess. It will involve your relationship with the Lord and how far you are willing to go in accommodating the hell-bent culture. But we know what Jesus’ own creepy quotient was. In a Scripture passage unparalleled for its depiction of Christ the valiant, Christ the victorious rider who girds His sword on His thigh and rides in splendor and majesty, we read:

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness” (Psalm 45:6-7). That kind of “love” and “hate” will give you very low tolerance for compromise.

Henry IV of France, for all his calculation and compromise, ended up assassinated in 1610. But this other King lives forever, as do all those who fall in behind Him, who prefer the short-term suffering to short-term gain. As for me, I want to ride with Him.

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The abortion center from the *Dobbs* case aborts its last baby

**ON JULY 6, A PRO-LIFE PROTESTER** held a sign outside Jackson Women’s Health Organization (above)—the abortion center in Jackson, Miss., that was a party to the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* case in which the Supreme Court reversed *Roe v. Wade*. The center closed the next day, as Mississippi’s trigger law protecting babies in the womb went into effect. A trial court judge on July 5 rejected an attempt by attorneys for the center to block the trigger law. Jackson Women’s Health was the only abortion center in the state. “No more murdering innocent children here,” said Dr. Coleman Boyd, a physician and pro-life activist, outside the building on July 7 where about 30 pro-life activists had gathered. “Christ is exalted. Innocent bloodshed in this building is done.” The owner of Jackson Women’s Health said she plans to start an abortion center in Las Cruces, N.M. The reason: Abortion is still legal in New Mexico, and she expects to see women from Arizona, Oklahoma, and Texas, bordering states that restrict abortion.
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