

God in focus. World in scope.

# new identity

MAGAZINE

Winter 2008/09

PREMIER  
ISSUE

## Art To Glorify

*How artists reveal their faith through works*



**SUB**

BRINGING GOD INTO THE NIGHT CLUBS OF SPAIN  
REDEEMING THE HEART OF HIP HOP  
EARTHBOUND: STEWARDSHIP OF THE PLANET

[illegible]

# TO NEW LIFE

WITH

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MAGAZINE

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## Discovering what Christianity is and what Christians are about.

Welcome to New Identity Magazine! I am so excited to introduce you to the very first issue. With a desire to bridge gaps and create understanding between different individuals, I wanted to create

a magazine that could openly share stories and opinions from a diverse group of people with different cultures, upbringings, backgrounds, ethnicities and nationalities. In the midst of variables, you often need one constant, something that everyone can agree on when all else is stripped away. For New Identity Magazine this constant is Christ.

When I became a Christian in college, I naively thought that all Christians were alike. I figured they were all similar to the Christian friends I had encountered and identified with. I remember sometime afterwards, dating a guy who I assumed would be just like them, simply because he was a Christian. I found out later that he and I were drastically different. I was confused and concerned. How could this be? We were both Christians, doesn't that mean we should have the same ideas and values? Was something wrong with me? Was I not who I was supposed to be?

I now understand that the friends who introduced me to the God I now know were divinely and specifically tailored to meet my needs and my heart at that time in my life. They represented what in God I had been searching for. The characteristics in those friends were perfect for me to see this God-after-my-own-heart in reality. Everyone is different though, and God wants to reach your heart as well. There is something that God loves in everyone and something everyone can love in God. As I've grown and changed, I'm beginning to understand that diversity has been God's intention all along. God has allowed me to accept who He's created me to be, uniquely different than any other of his creations on this earth. God has been shaping me to have an identity first in Him, and have the rest of me fall aside as peripheral; to see commonality in Christ despite our differences. This is my new identity.

In the pages of New Identity Magazine I hope you will gain a better understanding of different Christian perspectives and the cultural and ethnic differences that can be embraced through education. So whether you're just curious about Christianity, deciding to try out this 'God-thing', or interested in discovering faith-based viewpoints, you've come to the right place. I pray that the people, articles, stories, and insights contained inside will help you on your journey in life and encourage you. Perhaps you too will find your new identity in Christ.

*Cailin*

CAILIN BRIODY HENSON  
Editor-in-Chief

## The Elements of New Identity Magazine:

Why we do consider four main departments essential for a new identity in Christ? They represent important aspects of God's plan for his people in creation and redemption.

### COMMUNITY

God really wants us in community, helping each other, sharing and doing life together. Acts 2:44-47 (AMP) says, "And all who believed (who adhered to and trusted in and relied on Jesus Christ) were united and [together] they had everything in common; And they sold their possessions (both their landed property and their movable goods) and distributed the price among all, according as any had need. And day after day they regularly assembled in the temple with united purpose, and in their homes they broke bread [including the Lord's Supper]. They partook of their food with gladness and simplicity and generous hearts, constantly praising God and being in favor and goodwill with all the people; and the Lord kept adding [to their number] daily those who were being saved [from spiritual death]."

### CULTURE

Everyone has a different culture. Whether it's how you were raised, what ethnicity you're a part of or what country you're from, culturally, we're all different—but God stays the same. By highlighting cultural differences, we can better understand the diversity of the body of Christ, and we can learn to see within that diversity the foundational similarities and commonality that we all have through Christ. In Romans 15:7 (NIV), "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

### GLOBAL

God is global. His love and compassion are far-reaching, extending to every corner of the globe and every people on earth. We want to represent the reality of the diversity of God's people. Acts 10:34-36 (The Message) says, "Peter fairly exploded with his good news: 'It's God's own truth, nothing could be plainer: God plays no favorites! It makes no difference who you are or where you're from—if you want God and are ready to do as he says, the door is open. The Message he sent to the children of Israel—that through Jesus Christ everything is being put together again—well, he's doing it everywhere, among everyone.'"

### ENVIRONMENT

God wants us to enjoy, take care of and be a part of our environment, such as through outdoor recreation, nature appreciation and sustainability, which help us value our Creator and His creation. Genesis 1:26-27 (The Message) says, "God spoke: 'Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle. And, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.' God created human beings; he created them godlike, reflecting God's nature, He created them male and female."

## WRITE TO US:

What are your thoughts on our first issue? What topics or perspectives do you want to read about or hear from? We love getting feedback. Send your message via e-mail or letter and please include your name, address and daytime phone number. *New Identity Magazine*, P.O. Box 375, Torrance, CA 90508. Phone: (310) 947-8707; [feedback@newidentitymagazine.com](mailto:feedback@newidentitymagazine.com)



SOUND BITE

## The Eco-“iPod”

In the age of portable media, you can't get much more portable than an MP3 player that doesn't need a plug. The Trevor Baylis Eco Media Player, with FM radio a built-in LED light, and 2GB of storage to play either music or video, can be charged by the simple winding of a hand crank. And with its phone adaptor, you can even charge your dead cell phone by cranking away on the little machine. This handy music player/on-the-go tool helps the environment by not requiring electric power, and for as little as one minute of winding, you get 40 minutes of audio play. With the worldwide diminishing of God's resources, every little bit of energy saved may help—or at least help you feel better. Available at the [Ethicalsuperstore.com](http://Ethicalsuperstore.com).



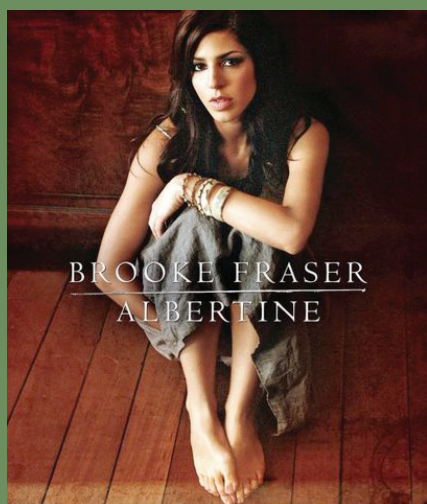
REACHING OUT

## Finding Fullness

Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, a partnership of World Vision, Mercy Corps, Samaritan's Purse, Global Resource Services, and Christian Friends of Korea has agreed to deliver food assistance to North Korea after devastating floods damaged crops and produced severe shortages just over a year ago. Food aid will be strictly monitored in the communist country, but there is hope of reaching more than 5 million people through sixteen representatives from the five non-governmental organizations, who will be living in North Korea to monitor food distribution. -*Religion News Service*

Photo: Melanie Kuipers/Stock.xchng

*Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. - 1 Timothy 4:12 (NLT)*



AUDIO TREASURE

## Born To Praise

Released in May '08, New Zealand native Brooke Fraser's new album, *Albertine*, certainly delights. An occasional guest songstress of popular Australian group Hillsong, Brooke effortlessly brings faith into the pop music world in her sophomore work. Creative and heartfelt lyrics met with intelligent, delicious melodies make us applaud her talents. And she's proof that sharing your life and faith and worshiping God through music doesn't always need obvious Christian references to be sincere and God-glorifying.

CREATIVE IDEAS

## Building Blocks

The Bible illustrated with LEGOS? That's exactly what Brendan Powell Smith decided to do when he first launched his website, [www.thebricktestament.com](http://www.thebricktestament.com) in 2001. Since then he's published a book series, the latest being *The Ten Commandments*—and yes, the illustrations are entirely constructed from LEGOS. Today, the Brick Testament has retold more than 300 stories from the Bible through over 3,600 illustrations. This number continues to grow as Brendan Powell Smith dedicates himself to adding on to the illustrated Bible stories on his website. Visit [www.thebricktestament.com](http://www.thebricktestament.com) to read the latest installment.





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MAGAZINE

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VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1

For new believers and those that are interested in who Christians are and what Christians think about the world we live in.

God in focus. World in Scope.

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new identity

MAGAZINE

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## MISSION STATEMENT

New Identity Magazine's mission as a publication is to help people find their new identity in Christ by representing interesting topics, issues and ideas from multiple Christian perspectives. New Identity Magazine plans to generate the communication and understanding to unite people that hail from different ends of the spectrum and encourage thought provoking discussion and commonality through Christ. By using scriptures of the Holy Bible as the source, the Word that binds Christians together, and highlighting different insights into their intention and application, New Identity Magazine will help readers live a more stimulating, inclusive, and passionate life with God. In addition, New Identity Magazine will be a publication that encourages learning, wisdom, creative expression, and showcases the cultural and world aspects of life and following God.

Our goal is to represent true-to-life followers of Christ that have questions, wonder, ponder, dream and have a willingness to learn about varying viewpoints. We desire to dissolve the rules, categories and stereotypes placed on Christians and non-Christians, shed God's light into the areas that may be forgotten or rarely talked about but are vital in many people's lives, and provide coverage of topics often overlooked by the mainstream media or in religious circles.

## REFERENCING THE BIBLE:

There are many Bible translations out there. Just a few are the New International Version, The Message, and the New Living Translation. You'll see these referenced as NIV, NLT, The Message etc. When we reference a Bible verse, such as John 3:16, 'John' is the book in the Bible, there are 66 books total. 3 is the chapter in the book and 16 is the verse in the chapter.

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God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. - Hebrews 6:10 [NIV]


Photo: NatalieMaynor/Flickr



**W**ell known throughout the world, you might be surprised to discover that Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit, nondenominational Christian housing organization and ministry. They welcome all races, religions, and ethnicities to be a part of projects that build simple, decent, affordable houses with and for those who lack adequate shelter.

Habitat for Humanity was founded in 1976 and since then has built more than 200,000 houses, providing shelter for more than 1 million people, in nearly 100 countries around the world. Every 24 minutes a new Habitat house is completed somewhere in the world, and they continually strive to do more.

Affiliates of Habitat for Humanity work locally in communities around the world to select and support homeowners, organize volunteers and coordinate house-building. According to Habitat for Humanity International, homeowners are selected based on their need for housing, their ability to repay their mortgage, and their willingness to work in partnership with Habitat for Humanity.

There is no discrimination on the basis of race, religion, or national origin. The houses are sold through a no-profit mortgage; individuals, corporations, faith groups and others provide vital financial support, and, finally, homeowners and volunteers build the houses themselves, under trained supervision. The result is a fully functional, entirely livable house to call home. 

## Ways You Can Get Involved

### *Donate*

Your donation will help families around the world build decent shelters, and it means putting your money toward positive action and helping others. You can easily and simply give online.

<http://www.habitat.org/donation/>

### *Volunteer*

You can look up where Habitat for Humanity is working close to your community and help local families in your area. Visit

<http://www.habitat.org/cd/local/>

### *Travel*

You can cure your travel bug and help a family build a house by traveling to their location on a Global Village trip. Aid in making someone's habitat happen. Take a look at

<http://www.habitat.org/gv/>  
for more information.

### *Get Others—and Yourself—Involved*

Spread the word and bring friends and family into action, helping build communities and friendships, sharing Habitat opportunities at school or work and join together to make a difference in a family's life. For even more ideas and ways to be involved with Habitat for Humanity go to

<http://www.habitat.org/getinv/>



For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.'  
-Matthew 25: 35-36 (NLT)

## taylor's closet

hope & love for girls in  
foster care



Photo: Ryan Aréstegui/Stock.xchng


**L**indsay Giambattista founded Taylor's Closet in 2005 when she was just 15 years old. She had been praying for some sort of way to give back, where she could play a part, one that might use the unique gifts and talents she'd been given. Among those gifts were smarts—she was an A-student—and skills as an experienced shopper with a love for fashion. And what she most desired in her heart was to somehow give the love of God to un-loved children.

After much prayer, she simply started giving her own clothes away to girls in need. But soon, the passionate idea bloomed into Taylor's Closet. Lindsay credits God with the idea and name of the project, which is named after Lindsay's twin sister who died at birth.

At Taylor's Closet, girls don't have to rummage through piles of hand-me-downs. The store-like environment, with carefully designed racks and orderly displays, caters to girls in foster care and allows them to come in and shop for whatever clothes they like, free of charge. The items are the best new brands, cool and trendy styles that young women appreciate. Each girl who visits can hand pick 6 items to take with her.

Taylor's Closet has had clothing donations from all over the world. In December of 2006, several local businesses in Fort Lauderdale, Florida paid the bill for erecting the first permanent store for foster girls in North Lauderdale.

Since then, God has continued to bless Lindsay's ministry, and she hopes to have a Taylor's Closet in every state some day, demonstrating to foster girls all across the nation the love that God has for them.

Taylor's Closet is a nonprofit organization entirely run by volunteers. To find out more about how you can help, donate, or even open your own store to help foster girls, visit [www.taylorscloset.org](http://www.taylorscloset.org) 

### The Mission of Taylor's Closet:

To bring the love of Jesus to girls in need, throughout this country and the world, by providing places for them to shop for clothes - for free.

To build a worldwide community of people and companies who will give of themselves in order to care for girls in need.

To create a network of "stores" where these girls can come in and feel safe, where they can feel special, and where they can encounter the love of Jesus in that place.

To facilitate and empower these "stores" so that they can focus on their primary mission, which is to love on, and minister to, every girl who comes there.

We believe that Jesus has a love and a divine purpose for girls in foster care and girls in need in general.

We believe God has called us to use shopping as a vehicle to bring them into contact with Him.

We believe that every city where foster kids live is an ideal place to demonstrate God's deep love for them through Taylor's Closet.



# community

## art to glorify

by Cailin Henson

*Many artists are trying to find a role for themselves in society and in the church. See the different ways that artists who are Christians are glorifying God through their creativity.*

"Today most people don't look at the art world as having Christians involved," says Deborah Laurin, a contemporary artist, who got her Bachelor's Degree in Art at Biola University, a private Christian university in La Mirada, California.

"They are two things that most Christians assume don't go together in current culture."

Studying and joining the community at Biola, Laurin developed a different perspective as she noticed Christian professors' continued commitment to art.

"[A] lot of professors still spent days in their studios, doing art and shows, and were really involved in the art community. It showed me that Christians can be artists; it is possible, especially in the contemporary art world."

In the past, churches often commissioned art projects, and much of the classical art that you see shows Biblical scenes. But this relationship culminated during the Renaissance and began to decrease as the separation of church and state became greater around the time of the Reformation. The relationship between the church and the artist continued to

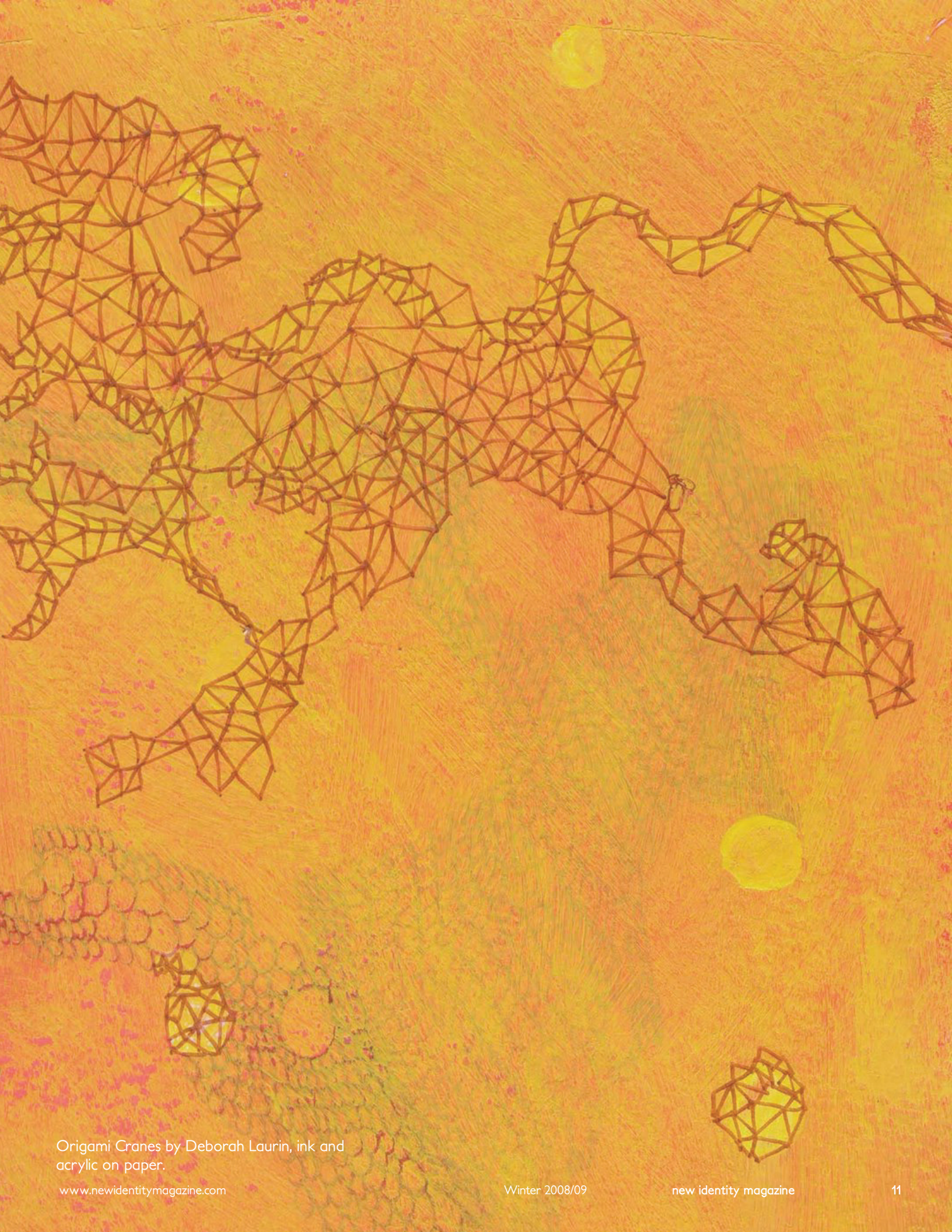
gradually change on into the modern age, when artists were seldom commissioned by churches and so had to find a role in the wider society.

"It is not surprising that at the beginning of the twentieth century Christians looked at the arts more as a field for evangelism than as an ally in expressing and living out their faith. Becoming an artist was not considered ... a viable option for the serious Christian, and those Christians who did manage to go to art schools encountered an environment that was not encouraging to their faith," remark Robert Banks and R. Paul Stevens, editors of *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity: An A-To-Z Guide to Following Christ in Every Aspect of Life* (Intervarsity Press, 1997). "The result," they continue, "is that, outside of music (mostly classical or Christian) and an occasional drama, Christians do not typically give much thought to the arts in their everyday life."

As to the source of the separation between faith and fine arts, Laurin traces it to a misconception about art among believers.

"They see contemporary art as something they don't





Origami Cranes by Deborah Laurin, ink and acrylic on paper.

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**ABSTRACT OF INFLUENCE:** Deborah Laurin's piece titled 'Baptism'. Mixed media; tea bag, thread, magazine clipping

understand. The way art has developed, you can't just walk into a contemporary gallery and understand what everything means. People that usually come in to an evangelical church want to understand things, have things laid out and explained, but the nature of art is very ambiguous, based on perception. It can mess with people's emotions. It can stir up some truth and cause reactions; it's provoking."

"Because of this," Laurin explains, "there's a misunderstanding and fear about art, making art and the church kind of at odds. Often there's a fear that it's going to have naked people or stuff that is subversive, like something children should not see. Often [believers are] really skeptical at first, but once they allow artist[s] to do their thing, they're pleasantly surprised and realize that art is a great gift."

In fact, the church has been more accepting of art in recent years, seeking to be more relevant in culture and making the acknowledgement of art a big part of that endeavor.

"Some communities have been more accepting, usually the relevant, emergent churches or the more structured Eastern Orthodox church. Offering a place for contemporary and traditional art, there are both expressions," says Laurin.

But artists still feel a tension. Laurin shares, "Being an artist and being a Christian, you often wrestle with a lot of things because you're put in a tight spot. You're between two worlds and have to find out why you're called to art, what God wants you to do with it and how that fits in the church community as a whole. I see the church community as members around a banquet table, and everyone brings their different gifts and fill[s] a different role. Like a flambé dessert, the artist's gift [is one] not everyone understands. Why would you light a dessert on fire? But once you try it, it's delicious, amazing, and enriches the quality of the entire meal and brings something to the experience that makes it so dynamic and impacting. Art really has the power to engage people's minds, to help them think and consider things they might not consider

otherwise."

"I can't say what every artist's role is," she continues, noting that "some might feel called to do biblical illustrations, others called to be immersed in the contemporary art scene or [to play] a more commercial role, like graphic design or web design. It's something every artist has to figure out." But regardless of their particular niche, Laurin affirms that "[m]ost artists need encouragement or support in their practice, because it's a really competitive world"—where the artist who is a Christian must face "not being completely understood either as a Christian in the art world, or as an artist in the Christian world."

Banks and Stevens further encourage, "If God has given particular talents in the arts, these need to be developed and put in God's service—whether in the church or in the larger world of culture. But even if we do not feel a particular call or interest in the fine arts, we can still seek to make our lives into vehicles for God's own beauty."

Laurin expresses similar sentiments. "As an artist, God has given you an amazing gift that I think a lot of artists don't realize. It's something that can reach people in a unique way." So much so, Laurin says, that, as an artist "you must be conscious of what you're creating, because you're creating an image that affects people. You have to consider what your message is, your goal, why are you creating art and what you want it to say, because in doing so, you can bring God and Jesus with you into your art world and then into the art culture as a whole." 🎧

To view other works by Laurin visit [deborahlaurin.blogspot.com](http://deborahlaurin.blogspot.com)

## Other Artists Using Their Gifts

### TRADITIONAL IMAGERY

#### *International Christian Art Competition*

Art 4 God was started by artist Stephen Sawyer, a portrait artist who chose Jesus as his main subject. He and his family now annually put on an International Christian Art Competition. He says, "Not having a Christian arts team to be part of in the early years, I struggled to make my way. My Art Competition is one of the ways in which I hope to serve others by giving them help that I did not receive." You can visit [www.art4god.com](http://www.art4god.com) for more information about submitting your work in this year's 4th Annual International Christian Art Competition.





Dancer  
Hiker  
Actor  
Gamer  
Parent  
Singer  
Doctor  
Dreamer  
Baker  
Tennis player  
Sculptor



Who are you in Christ?

WRITE, PHOTOGRAPH OR  
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MAGAZINE

Photo Bobby Deed/Dreamstime





“God is really only another artist. He invented the giraffe, the elephant and the cat. He has no real style, He just goes on trying other things.”  
- Pablo Picasso

## LIVE INSPIRATION

### *Matthew Bivens*

After a moment of feverish paint slinging and hand motions, Matthew Bivens sets down his supplies to behold a finished piece. He has just completed a live art session.

Bivens had interest in the arts since he was a child, tuning into PBS shows that showed basic drawing concepts and spending his allowance on how-to-draw books through elementary school. In high school, Bivens had the opportunity to take an art class that expanded his knowledge of techniques and materials. When he went to college, he gradually shifted from a desire to make comic books to a deeper understanding of the variety of fields in the arts. When Bivens found out that he liked helping others to make art, he began to pursue a career as an art educator.

A teacher by day, painter by night, Bivens is often a part of a variety of art scenes, including live painting art shows. In these shows, the artist performs the creation of a work of art in front of an audience. Bivens' experiences have all included a sculptural aspect and performing alongside another act: the two most recent shows he's done have been to music, but his first experience doing live art was accompanied by a lecture on “Where Is Heaven?”

God often inspires his creativity, and that first lecture experience of sculpting and painting sticks with him as particularly pertinent to his identity as a Christian artist because the concept of heaven was addressed through the abstract concept of the difference between a two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) world, providing an analogy to the difference between where we are and the where Heaven is.

“In my painting/sculptures I seek to express my under-

standing of the difference between Heaven and Earth, while listening for God to speak to me. The recent works I've done have shown me how the abstract 2D shapes reflect my sinfulness and the 3D forms swirling chaotically reflect my limited understanding of the glory that awaits me in Heaven,” says Bivens.

Bivens recognizes the challenges that confront artists who follow Christ. “Being a Christian in the art world can be tough,” he admits, adding that he has felt his faith and belief sometimes attacked by the works of others. But he does what he can to use those times to share how God is active in his own life. “The art world is a place where a Christian needs to remember to be in the world, but not of it,” Bivens cautions. “Gallery openings and art events can offer both positive and negative things at times.”

But working as a Christian artist has its upside, too. Within the variety of reasons that motivate Christian artists' expressions, their shared purpose provides a common foundation for fellowship and encouragement. “It is awesome to be in a studio with fellow Christian artists creating works and discussing our relationships with God or just enjoying fellowship,” Bivens reflects.

## DESIGN AND PURPOSE

### *Creativemyk.com*


Creativemyk.com is a networking hub for Christians in the graphic arts to discuss and critique their art and designs. The community helps encourage artists who are designing for churches and other events and also offers free graphics and photos contributed by Christian artists from around the world. 





Photo: Michel Pistrin/Stock-xchng

# Are You a Deadbeat Dreamer?

*Holding on to your dreams in the face of opposition.*

by Yvette Mayo

**T**hey said it couldn't be done. A dreamer who is yet practical, logical, and focused. A creative thinker who can also analyze, be realistic, and lead. How unlikely is it that one with her head so far in the clouds all the time could also be a firm pillar to society and even help balance the order of things? Can this truly be the case?

Why are there so many dreams that die and never see the light of day? In a land where "anything is possible," why are so many struggling to keep their dreams alive, the daily grind and details of living keeping them too busy to feed their dream? What does it take to achieve your dreams and keep living in the meantime?

I've always been what some would call "a dreamer," full of idealistic expectations of the world and especially of my own shaky life here on planet earth. I mean, really, how much can be expected of a goody two-shoes, chubby little black church girl from the south side of a Podunk town called New Castle, Pennsylvania?

My dreams certainly came in chunks, with each step of the way being a struggle, to say the least. From my perspective, I was doing pretty well at dreaming big—and accomplishing big—by attaining two degrees, a minor and a certificate in

4 years of undergraduate work, all while being highly involved in non-academic endeavors. And I really thought it was a nice cherry on top to have earned an MA degree by the age of 24.

But it wasn't until I found myself direction-less at this point that I ever considered the idea of myself as a "deadbeat" dreamer. You know the term, right? It is often heard used in conjunction with a father who is not quite living up to his end of the parenting bargain – a "deadbeat dad" is how it is phrased.

You see, when I attained this final academic degree, the voices in my head started yelling out. No, not the crazy voices in my head, but instead the skeptical voices, asking me how I could justify "wasting" my hard-won achievements on unrealistic dreams of an idealistic and probably unrealistic future. Wasted

achievements? Idealistic and unrealistic future? Wow. Strong and crushing words to my little head that was so full of ideas and plans to live out a better future than just an expected pattern

**I've always been what some would call "a dreamer," full of idealistic expectations of the world and especially of my own shaky life here on planet earth.**

of climbing some imaginary ladder to acceptable success after graduation.

Typically, I have heard the word "dreamer" used with a subtle hint of negative tone. However, with the addition of the word "deadbeat" to the word "dreamer," we have finally come all-out in declaring that we do not believe in those who dream.

They are in fact considered “deadbeats,” or those not living up to the standards of their responsibilities. In short, they are stagnant, unmoving, stuck. What a waste we consider those who appear to be floating around in the cloud of “not there yet.”

But maybe it’s not the dreamer who is the deadbeat after all. Maybe, just maybe our criticisms should be addressed to the “skeptical, realistic critic.”

What stands in the way of a dream? What causes a dreamer to cease to dream? I have surprised myself with my own productivity in times when I have X’ed out the negative voices about my amazing, yet hard to believe dreams. If my gift is to dream, what better to spoil that gift than one who has little to offer my dream but some grueling “reality” about why it cannot and will not happen? My goodness, it’s a tough crowd of skeptics out there, as you’re reminded every night you lay your little dreamer head down on your pillow. Learn to shut it out. Let the fire of your dream rush you on toward your goal.

To the dreamers out there, I say the following: Dream a dream, say a prayer, do the work and see it all happen right before your eyes. You will amaze yourself at how much your dream can impact your life and the lives of those around you when you stay true to it. Don’t sell out to the critics. Give them no power over your dreams; after all, skeptics are a dime a dozen, but dreams are once in a lifetime. Fretting over what to do with those ever-so-present skeptical voices ringing through your head? No worries. Pursue your dreams with passion, and before you know it you won’t even recognize those old voices. Instead, you’ll be bombarded by the soft, sweet sounds of the adoring fans your dream has accumulated along the long road to success.

To the skeptics who love to live in the heads of those dreamers, I say this: Please get out of our heads! You really don’t belong there. There is a better place for you to thrive, and you’ll be happier when you’re out of our heads, too. Trust me, quietly is the best way to support us, and if you take this approach, we promise to give back the favor by sharing our innovation and creativity with you when you most need it.

“For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of [yourselves] more highly than [you] ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality” (Romans 12:3, 12-13, ESV).

The Lord calls us to serve each other in ways of encouragement, so let’s check any skepticism at the door. I know I plan to encourage and be encouraged the best I can. Maybe others will, too, and I will no longer be—just a dreamer. 🙏

## 5 Steps On How to Stay a Deadbeat Dreamer If You Don’t Care To Live Your Dreams

**Step #1** Research. Research a lot and then research some more. Keep on gathering piles of information and tidbits concerning your dream. You may think that you have done all the research you need but try collecting magazine articles and bookmarking dozens of websites. Let all of the information overwhelm you enough to keep you sitting on the couch doing nothing. Then take the information that you have and analyze it from every angle and complexity until you are paralyzed. Then you will finally succumb to not doing anything about it at all because you know too much.

**Step #2** Don’t do enough research. Get out there and do as much as you can while you can. This will stop you from actually planning on how you will accomplish your vision. Don’t waste time reading—or praying, for that matter. After all, you know what needs to be done. The AIDS crisis must be solved, now. Global warming is in need of cooling off. The church needs to get her act together. You can go out and make attempts to change these things with lavish passion and enthusiasm and then realize that you don’t know exactly where you are going with your excitement. You will eventually realize that the solution is not as simple as you thought it was and that you could have saved yourself and others a lot of headaches by realizing this sooner. This actually may discourage you so much that, although you started off doing a lot, you may choose to sit out the rest of the game on the sidelines ... doing nothing.

**Step #3** Let fear grip you and squeeze the life out of any dream you have in your heart. Think about how many challenges await you concerning your dream. The embarrassment you will feel if it doesn’t come to pass. The discomfort you will experience in the midst of it. The naysayers who will certainly find the path to your doorstep. Don’t ever get close to bravery because that is what it takes to see a dream happen. If you want a deadbeat dream then release all the darkest fears that your mind can conjure and let them swamp you at night as you lay in bed and wonder about the “*if only*.”

**Step #4** Think about the resources you *don’t* have.





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This will most assuredly keep you from ever accomplishing anything. Let the fact that you don't have money keep you from raising it or earning it. Let the fact that you don't have the ability keep you from learning it or inviting someone else to do it. Let the fact that you are dreaming this dream by yourself keep you from sharing it with others so that they can join in. And whatever you do, keep your eyes off of the resources you do possess. After all, you do have more than the 1 billion people in the world living on one dollar a day, but it's still not enough to thrust you into actually doing something.

**Step #5** Just stay distracted. Don't think about your dream. Let it become one of those things that pops into your mind every now and then, when you're taking a shower or standing in line at the DMV. Get involved in a lot of meaningless activities. When you go to church, just stay long enough to keep from being inspired. Just let it be a boring pain, like getting dental work. Run around like a chicken with your head cut off, trying to stay up to date with the latest trends. Never think that you could actually set trends. Don't pick up books or read the news—except for the comics and the sports page. Reading anything more might actually cause you to think, and truly thinking may lead to action. So keep your eyes glued to reality TV, and be stimulated by other people who are not doing anything with their lives. Stay up late playing video games and eating Hostess cupcakes. After all, in the absence of pursuing your dream you need some kind of comfort.

If this doesn't help you become a deadbeat dreamer, there is always the chance that you have been the recipient of the lazy gene. This gene resides in the lazy bone somewhere between the funny bone and the knee bone. If you have the lazy gene, you probably feel you are exerting a lot of energy just by reading this article. If by chance you have gotten this far, your condition is probably not terminal, and you may actually feel indignation with yourself after reading this. You may actually start living your life with a little more courage and intention. If so, you can probably kiss the whole deadbeat dream gig goodbye and go out and make a difference in this world. But this probably isn't all so bad. After all, the entire world is populated with many deadbeat dreamers, and we probably need more people who are actually going to change the world. -Ramon Mayo

**FIND  
YOUR  
PLACE  
AD  
HERE  
WE  
MEET  
YOUR  
NEEDS**

[adsales@newidentitymagazine.com](mailto:adsales@newidentitymagazine.com)







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# A Journey to Forgiveness

*The story of a woman who sought God and discovered His forgiveness.*

*by Jena Campion*

**M**eanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So he went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way [Jesus] he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains.

As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down on him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"

"Who are you?" Saul asked.

And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" Acts 9:1-6 (NLT).

My name is Jena. I am only one year old in Christ. I am a very different person than I was a year ago. I can truly relate to Paul in the above passage, because I was Saul. Here is my journey of how I came to know Jesus Christ.

I was born on Easter Sunday in Port Washington, Wisconsin. I lived in the middle of nowhere in a small farm neighborhood called Holy Cross. I didn't have the best of childhoods. I am a survivor of child abuse; my father was an alcoholic and a very bad man. He hated my existence. He would openly physically, mentally, verbally abuse my mother, right in front of me. Then he would sometimes turn that rage on me. When I was four years old, my little brother was born.

I vowed to protect him at all costs; even if that meant sacrificing myself, I would do it.

Other relationships provided little solace. I lost my best friend, my grandfather, who became sick with a brain tumor and "forgot" who I was. He died when I was five. At seven, I was sexually molested by another friend, Jacob, who was two years older than me. He died of cystic fibrosis a year later. Shortly after that, I was kicked out of a Christian church for being a nuisance and questioning authority. So that started the rage against all Christians. I passionately hated all Christians. Abused at home, I went to school every day only to get bullied and picked on. At thirteen years of age, I plotted to kill myself. I couldn't handle the pain from these people. But then I realized that Beverly Hills 90210 was a new episode that night, I so didn't do it.

One year later, I would be faced with death again. My parents went through a very ugly divorce. Before they split up, one weekend right after my birthday, they were fighting (as usual) while my father got ready to go to work as a sheriff's deputy. I was in the living room with my brother and cat. My father came stomping down the stairs and put his jacket, hat, and gun on the couch next to us. They continued to argue in the kitchen. When they came back into the living room, my father picked up his loaded, safety-off gun and put it to my head. He was shouting to my mom about how he hated all of us. She and my brother were in complete hysterics. But I was deathly calm. My fourteen years of life flashed before my eyes.



All I could do was stare down the barrel of his gun into his cold eyes. I knew I was about to die. I was so scared. I was supposed to be the first to die. But he never pulled that trigger.

That night, I was consumed with rage and hate. I made a deal with the devil. I promised to follow him if only he would take away my father. A few weeks later, my parents got divorced.

My father didn't take it well. He stalked us, bugged our phones, and made a plot to kidnap my brother and me. That fall, he let out two prisoners from jail early, a Wisconsin state prisoner and a Federal prisoner. (Side note: a few years later this story was featured on America's Most Wanted, 1996. The Wisconsin State prisoner was killed in Texas by the Federal prisoner. The Federal prison was later caught on the San Diego/Tijuana border.) When they court-martialed my father, they found an unregistered gun and a suicide/murder confession note. He was only three days away from successfully killing us and himself.

We went into hiding, and my mom got a job offer that lead us to Los Angeles. Moving from farmland in Wisconsin to the immense, never-ending city of L.A, I went into culture shock. I fell into a deep depression and started to make really bad choices for my life.

But only slowly did I sink into the depths of darkness. It started out with me skipping classes to go to the beach and not doing my homework. Then things got a lot worse. I kept my promise to the devil and studied witchcraft for almost 10 years.

I barely managed to graduate high school. Although I started to go to community colleges, I dropped out of several schools. I hung around with the wrong crowd, had a very promiscuous dating live, and started to get deeply involved with all sorts of drugs. In 2002, I went to Japan; it was a last effort by my family to motivate me to clean up my act. I began to reject my previous beliefs and started studying Buddhism.

After many failed jobs, many terrible boyfriends, and many various mistakes, one dramatic consequence was about to hit. I got pregnant—twice. When I was twenty-three years old, I had two very gut-wrenching decisions to make. I chose to abort both pregnancies. Shortly after, I went into a more dramatic depression. I wanted to slowly kill myself via drugs, food, alcohol, and more careless choices. I was kicked out of my mom's house for staying with my abusive ex-boyfriend. I struggled daily to pay the bills and feed my unemployed ex-boyfriend.

By 2006, I needed to change. My family's relationships were breaking apart. My own spirit was dying. I started to reconnect with old friends. By chance, I met a Sensei (teacher) of free martial arts. I started to attend his classes. Slowly, my self confidence began returning. I was able to free myself from that bad relationship. My teacher suggested that I read the Bible and visit the church he attended.

On November 17, 2007, I stumbled into the church and was baptized a Christian. God spoke very clearly to me a few nights later. He introduced himself as Jesus Christ. He politely asked me to marry him and follow him. It has not been a smooth road. But at each crossroad I face, I am continuing to follow him.

God has healed me of my past wounds, even though I am still very much a work in progress. He is sharpening my gifts in Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11, NIV) God has blessed me with the gifts of prophecy [insight to interpret God's will and purpose], encouragement, and [the power to express] words of knowledge [understanding], and I've found that I love to pray for people. He has allowed me to exercise my talents in foreign languages, too. I speak, read, write, and understand German, French, and Japanese. I still struggle with being single, but I am enjoying the intimate time with the Lord. My family and I are now closer than we have ever been. God has also provided a stable job and an opportunity to finish my education at university.

I am a survivor because the Lord Jesus Christ is so good. Instead of fighting against him and all Christians, I am fighting for Him. Please have hope and never give up. Only the Lord in his perfect timing can show the way to a brighter future and a new identity in Christ. 🙏

If you have questions for Jena, please email her at [jena@newidentitymag.com](mailto:jena@newidentitymag.com)

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# DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES

*Helping make sense of today's variety of church choices.*

*To some extent, Christian denominations can be seen as ways to 'do church' differently. Usually, what sets denominations apart is their take on certain biblical subjects, beliefs, interpretations, and practices. Variations on a recipe, if you will. In some denominations, the style of the church gathering is different; others have different perspectives on topics such as the meaning of baptism or the proper response to contemporary cultural issues. In each magazine issue, we'll highlight a couple of denominations and try to sum up some of the differences, some subtle, some more major. Only you and God can decide which denomination is the best fit for you, but it's important to know what different denominations believe and practice.*

## LUTHERAN

**Notable Distinction:** In 1517 Martin Luther, a German monk and professor, posted *The Ninety-Five Theses on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*, speaking out against the practices of indulgences, and this action led to the formation of the Lutheran denomination, the first Protestant denomination to branch off from the Catholic church.

**Written Statements of Beliefs:** The numerous theses that Martin Luther and the confessions of he and other early Lutheran leaders, helped establish common doctrine and practices that are considered essential by all Lutherans. This 'guide book' is today called the Book of Concord and represents the Lutheran formal position on biblical principles and practices.

**Baptism:** The Lutherans stress that baptism is commanded by God and that infant and adult believers alike should be baptized to be cleansed from sin, saved from the power of Satan, and given everlasting life.

**Notable Lutherans:** Martin Luther, Composer Johann Sebastian Bach, Director John Woo

For more information try the websites of the two largest Lutheran church bodies in America at [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org) and [www.lcms.org](http://www.lcms.org) or the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, one of the largest Lutheran churches in the world at [www.evl.fi/english/index.html](http://www.evl.fi/english/index.html)

## BAPTIST

**Notable Distinction:** Baptists are typically considered Protestant. Some distinctive tenets are that salvation is by grace through faith alone and not grace/faith plus baptism or ritual or church membership. Baptists believe in the self-governing of the local Baptist churches and local congregational determination of pastors and other church leaders. Historically, they have played an important role in encouraging the separation of church and state and religious freedom.

**Written Statements of Beliefs:** They have no official written doctrine but instead have different Baptist associations of churches, societies, conventions, fellowships, unions and alliances. The American Baptist Churches (ABC) states, "We have tended to avoid embracing prepared creeds or other statements that might compromise our obligation to interpret Scripture as individuals within the community of faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

**Baptism:** The name *Baptist* comes from the conviction that Jesus Christ commanded believers to be baptized, which Baptists interpret as immersion in water as a public display of their faith and a sign of their conscious decision to follow God. Because of this, most Baptists reject infant baptism.

**Notable Baptists:** Martin Luther King, Jr., Charles Spurgeon, John Bunyan and Billy Graham.

For more information try the websites of American Baptist Churches at [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org) or the Southern Baptist Convention at [www.sbc.net](http://www.sbc.net)



# 4 Things To Consider When Choosing a Local Church

by Sean and Sandra Estill

## Teaching the Bible, God's Word—Not Someone Else's

2 Timothy 4:3 (NIV)

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

Essential to the function of a church is its exhortation from and study of God's word, the Bible. Going to a church that preaches its soapbox will detract from God's message and ultimately His glory. Also, be careful of the church that consistently uses scripture out of context to make its point.

## Evangelism, Spreading the Gospel, Missionary Work, Mercy

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

The primary means by which the salvation and glory of Jesus find their way into broken and needy hearts is through evangelism. While the complete work of salvation in an individual's heart is done by the Holy Spirit, the church should be intentional in its work of sharing Jesus Christ and making His life and love known.

## Small Groups, Life Groups, Connecting, Community

Acts 2:42 (NIV)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The church that meets weekly all together in one place but does not meet in smaller groups throughout the week misses out on building deep community. While the unified, large-group setting has its place, the smaller, more personal meetings often offer additional opportunities for personal growth and fulfillment. It is there that the things of life are experienced together. Look for the basics of the church to be alive in smaller gatherings as well: worship, instruction, fellowship, and evangelism.

## Prayer and Worship


James 5:16 (NIV)

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

John 4:23-24 (NIV)

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Find a church that prays and worships God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In a fundamental sense, we exist for the glory, honor, and pleasure of God. In prayer, we talk with God and find out what he is doing in and around us; in worship, we focus our attention on the Lord, doing what he has asked us to do. Be sure that the church is engaged in these practices.

Remember that no church is perfect, and even if there were a perfect church, it would be imperfect just as soon as you stepped in the door. So, don't forget to exercise grace and understanding when checking out a church. 

### Purpose of the Church

(from *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*

by Wayne Grudem)

Ministry to God - Worship

Ministry to Believers - Nurture

Ministry to World - Evangelism and Mercy

Keeping The Above Purposes In Balance





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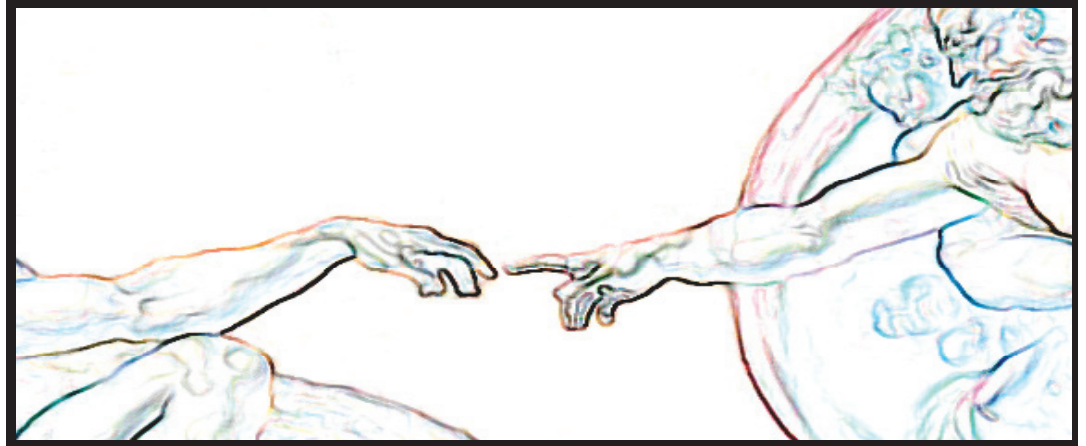
# IN PERSPECTIVE

*Showcasing today's touchy subjects.*

**H**ow exactly did we come to be? The debate about Creationism continues to stir the hearts and minds of individuals since it first became a hotly discussed topic in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Creationism is the belief that human life, the Earth, and/or the universe as a whole was created by a supreme being (namely God) or by other forms of supernatural intervention.

Oftentimes the term *Creationism* specifically describes belief in a literal interpretation of the biblical account of God creating the universe. But such a view of Creationism (see Young Earth Creationism) is just one of many. Here you'll find the many variations of Creationism among Christians.

"Nature is too thin  
a screen; the  
glory of the  
omnipresent  
God bursts through  
everywhere."  
-Ralph Waldo  
Emerson.



## Young Earth Creationism

**Definition:** The belief that the Earth was created by God within the last ten thousand years, literally as described in Genesis, within the approximate timeframe of biblical genealogies. It also interprets geological records largely as a result of global flood (Genesis 7).

Because of the description in Genesis of divine creation of every "kind" of plant and animal during a week about 6,000 years ago, this view disputes parts of evolution which describes all species developing from a common ancestor, independent of divine intervention, by random chance and over a much longer time.

## Old Earth Creationism

**Definition:** The view that the physical universe was created by God, but that the creation narrative of Genesis is not to be taken strictly literally. Old Earth Creationists generally believe that the age of the Universe and the age of the Earth are as described by astronomers and geologists but that details of evolutionary theory are questionable.

## Day Age Creationism

**Definition:** A type of Old Earth Creationism, this is the view that the "six days" of Genesis are not ordinary, twenty-four-hour days but rather much longer periods (for example, each "day" could be the equivalent of millions, or billions of years in human time). This theory often states that the Hebrew word "yom", which has been interpreted as "day" in the context of Genesis 1, actually means "age." Some claim we are living in the seventh age ("seventh day").

# Is it easier to believe in a higher being like God, or in Natural Selection (Evolution)?

## A STARTING POINT DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF

GENESIS Chapter 1 & Chapter 2

Other References:

PSALM 8

NEHEMIAH 9:6

JOB 9:8

JEREMIAH 10:12

PSALM 102:25

GENESIS 7



### Gap Creationism

**Definition:** Another type of Old Earth Creationism, also called “Restitution creationism,” this is the view that life was immediately created on a pre-existing old Earth. This group generally translates Genesis 1:2 as “The earth became without form and void,” indicating a destruction of the original creation by some unspecified large-scale event.

### Progressive Creationism

**Definition:** A third type of Old Earth Creationism, Progressive Creationism believes that species have changed or evolved in a process continuously guided by God, with various ideas as to how that guidance operates—maybe at precise moments, maybe through a pre-set plan. This view accepts most of modern physical science, including the age of the earth, but it rejects much of modern evolutionary biology or looks to it for evidence that evolution by natural selection alone is incorrect.

### Theistic evolution

**Definition:** Also known as “evolutionary creationism”, this is the general view that, instead of faith being in opposition to biological evolution, it is compatible with some or all of modern scientific theories, including evolution. It generally views evolution as a tool used by God and maintains that divine intervention brought about the origin of life or that divine laws govern the formation of species. In the creation-evolution controversy, its proponents generally take the “evolutionist” side.

### Intelligent Design and Neo-Creationism

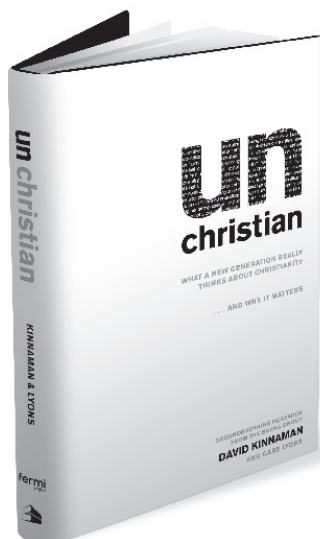
**Definition:** Intelligent design (ID) is the concept that “certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected, chance-based process such as Darwinian evolution.” says Ideacenter.org.

Its proponents claim that intelligent design is a scientific theory that stands on equal footing with, or is superior to, other current scientific theories regarding the origin of life. Intelligent Design is the most recognized form of Neo-Creationism, the goal of which is to restate creationism in terms more likely to be well received by the public, education policy makers, and the scientific community. It aims to re-frame the debate over the origins of life in non-religious terms, without scripture, and to bring the scientific debate before the public.



# culture

## BOOKS



### ARE CHRISTIANS HYPOCRITICAL?

*UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity: And Why It Matters* by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons (2007), with research from the Barna Group, details nonbelievers' view of Christians. They highlight the ways Christians are viewed in a negative light, especially among young Americans, ages 16 to 29. The authors present research indicating that Christians are best known for the things they are *against*, rather than the things they are for. They pinpoint six broad themes that represent the most common negative perceptions found in their study. These include the views that Christians are hypocritical, too focused on getting converts, antihomosexual, sheltered, too political, and judgmental. Many of those interviewed in the study were quick to agree that "Christianity is no longer as Jesus intended."

What do you think? Many of you may feel that you, too, have similar negative perceptions of Christianity or have often wondered where such perceptions have come from. In the next few issues, we'll pick apart each negative perception and discover in what ways they're true or false. Please write to us what your interpretations and thoughts on the perception are. Why do you think it's true or false? How are Christians understood or misunderstood? How have you seen faith in action? We'll start with the view that Christians are hypocritical. Write to us and share your own thoughts, opinions and experiences at [letters@newidentitymagazine.com](mailto:letters@newidentitymagazine.com)

## JARGON HOLY SPIRIT

### DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIAN JARGON FOR THE ORDINARY PERSON

You may have heard Christians talking about the Holy Spirit. Many followers of Christ say things like "The Spirit led me to do this or that" or "The Holy Spirit moved in the church service." For those who do not follow Christ this may be puzzling and a bit weird. It may seem like Christians are out to lunch. What exactly are Christians talking about when it comes to the Holy Spirit? How do we define the Holy Spirit?

We should start off with what the Holy Spirit is not. Ironically the Holy Spirit is not a "what" but a "who". The Holy Spirit is not a ghost like Casper or Beetlejuice. Although the Holy Spirit is similar to the force in Star Wars, he is not that and yet so much more than that. The Holy Spirit is the living presence of God. The Bible says that God is Spirit. (John 4:24) Spirit is something that is invisible and yet at the same time present. In a way, this helps us understand something about the Holy Spirit because the nature of God is almost undefinable. That is why throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit is described through metaphors like breath, wind, fire, and even a dove.

All of these things say something about the Holy Spirit but they only scratch the surface. There are a couple of things we do know about the Holy Spirit. He is a comforter and a guide. In the absence of the physical presence of Jesus, the Holy Spirit reminds followers of Christ of God's love and guides his followers into all truth. He is as the Giver of Life. (John 6:63) Wherever there is creativity and life, the Holy Spirit is there even beyond the four walls of the church. When we are able to sense the good in this world it is because of the Holy Spirit. The next time you stand in awe of a powerful sunset or a jaw dropping mountain range, it is God as the Holy Spirit reminding you of his love and care for you and all of creation.

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In the footsteps of the very popular Youtube.com, other similar sites are popping up with specific content dedicated to a single cause or action, such as Godtube.com and Eco-tube.com. We



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Amena Brown, spoken word artist, writer and poet shares some wisdom and encouragement in her poetic piece titled "Your Words".



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WE SAT DOWN WITH  
AYA NOEL, A YOUNG  
JAPANESE CHRISTIAN  
WITH A DESIRE TO SEE  
THE PEOPLE OF HER  
COUNTRY FIND GOD  
{and she wants to find  
a husband too}.

New Identity Magazine: Where were you born?  
Aya Noel: I was born in Tokyo, Japan. It's a big city.

NIM: In what year?  
Aya Noel: 1976, I'm 32.

NIM: And how long have you been a Christian?  
Noel: Since I was 10 years old. So 22 years.

NIM: How did that come about?  
Noel: There was a big evangelistic concert and at the time I was just, you know, my heart was really opened to receive Christ because I was inspired by the preaching. And Jesus needed help, you know, Jesus needed disciples to go to the world. So I was 10 years old and was really pure and I loved Jesus, so I just said yes. And received Christ.

NIM: And where was this concert? Did your parents bring you or did you go with friends?  
Noel: Well, I grew up in a Southern Baptist church in Tokyo called Oui Baptist Church, my home church. My parents are still there. But the preacher was an American missionary from the United States, and since I was a little kid I've been interested in different cultures. So maybe the American missionary opened my heart to receive Christ.

NIM: Is it rare to grow up in a Christian church in Japan?  
Noel: Yes, it's very rare. The Christian population in Japan is only less than one percent of the population. But the really active Christians are maybe only 20 percent of that 1 percent. ... [M]aking a Christian home is so hard because a lot of women are Christian but not men, so it's hard to get married to Christian guys ...that's why creating a Christian family is so difficult.



Photo: Peter Hanzs/Stockxchng

NIM: When did you come to the U.S.?

Noel: July 2002, 6 years ago.

NIM: Why did you come?

Noel: At the time, I was working at the YWCA, the Young Women's Christian Association in Tokyo. ... I was a foreign student advisor and volunteer organizer, and I loved the work. Since I was a kid I loved to dance, but the work was so busy that I couldn't dance at all while I was working at the YWCA. So that's why I decided to come to the U.S. to get a Master's Degree in Dance Therapy in Boston. But my brother was in Los Angeles, and I needed a certificate of dance and psychology degree at a community college, so I just came to Los Angeles first to get some dance credit before going to Boston.

NIM: [Joking] So you didn't come here to find a husband?

Noel: [Laughs] I hope so.

NIM: How often do you go home to Japan?

Noel: Like once a year or twice a year; 'cause of my age, my friends have weddings a lot in Japan, so I have to go back to Japan for their weddings.

NIM: Does it seem different each time you go back? How does it differ now with regards to your community and relationship with God or home church?

Noel: I used to really have the feeling, the commitment to be with my home church in Japan. ... [G]radually my heart of commitment and the feeling of belonging to the church is becoming less. So, each time I go back to Japan, I feel kind of like an outsider ... like a stranger in my home church.

NIM: Here in the U.S. you have a big heart for the Japanese. What made you decide to share God's love for the Japanese population in Los Angeles versus your native Japan?

Noel: Japanese people here are more open to Christianity, I think, because in Japan there are a lot of other religions and cults, and it's really hard to find Christians in Japan. But here we can meet many Christians, you know, just in normal life. Like maybe if you go to the grocery store you can meet a Christian cashier [laughs] or...

NIM: You have more support.

Noel: Yeah, from the community.

NIM: Right.

Noel: And also TV and radio; here we have Christian stations, but in Japan we don't have Christian stations. And also we can see many churches here, but not in Japan.

NIM: They're few and far between.

Noel: Yeah, and also the artist and musicians, the Christian artists and musicians are of real influence on Japanese people here because many Japanese people from Japan want to get musical skills; that's why they came. ... [T]hey want to be actors, dancers or musicians—artists. But you know we have a

lot of opportunity to meet Christian artists here, so that's why they meet. And they get Christianity through their lifestyle and friends.

NIM: So do the Japanese view Christians as 'cool' in general?

Noel: That's kind of a hard question. But in Japan recently the black gospel choir is really popular, and they really want to sing gospel in a gospel choir. And not only Christians, but non-Christians provide the opportunity to sing in a choir, in a community. Like at art schools; they provide a lot of gospel choir classes for Japanese people, so they think it's kind of cool. ... [A]lso, ... there are a lot of Christian schools in Japan, mostly high school and university, ... founded by missionaries from the United States, and it's good status for the Japanese people to enter ...[a] Christian school. So it's kind of cool to have a good reputation in the community; St. Paul's School, St. Peter's School, or something like that, sounds cool to Japanese people. And they usually have a morning service before classes.

NIM: So being that there are so few Christians in Japan do you feel an spiritual difference when you go there?

Noel: It's kind of sad each time I go back to Japan; I can see real darkness. Not only in the non-Christian community but also the Christian community, because they're so struggling. ...[I]n the Japanese community, there is drinking a lot and smoking, so [even] as a Christian, it's hard to avoid that value as [a] Japanese. So if people are ... judgmental, they cannot survive there. It happens in the church also, so if you want to be really pure and holy it's really hard... to be really pure and holy in Japan. But I grew up there, so I'm not shocked from those things anymore. ... [W]e need more power to reach out, and we need more wisdom to reach out and [about] how to reach out. Like Paul said for the church, I'm Jewish for the Jews, Gentile for the Gentiles, like that—flexibility to be anything is what we need for Christians in Japan.

NIM: What are your plans for the future in the U.S. to share God's love with the Japanese?

Noel: Like Paul, I want to have a community-based event, to listen to the community's voice. To have an event with my church and invite more people from the community. Not only pure and holy people, but normal people from the community to have an event. And through our support and love to the community, I want them to realize the love of God through the atmosphere and the conversation with the church people. So, consistently I want to get such an event for the community to invite more community people to come to the church.

NIM: Our readers may be Christians or non-Christians; what would you want to say to the Japanese and others who are seeking God, or who may not know God?


Noel: Without Christ, without love, people can enjoy life. But knowing the truth is a totally different experience from such a joy. So I just want people to seek the truth and the life and to get a really meaningful life. Because your life is only one time, so you should know the truth in your life. 





Photo by Dennis Owusu-ansah/Dreamstime

# REDEEMING THE HEART OF





# DOES HIP HOP HAVE A PLACE IN CHRISTIANITY?

Is it coincidence that walking out of the bank a Japanese kid drives by playing 50 Cent? Is it just happenstance that young boys in Ethiopia talk about the death of Tupac? Is it simply chance that the majority of songs on the billboard chart are in the hip hop/rap category?

After thirty years, the musical identity of hip hop has walked out of the ghetto and onto the nicely trimmed streets of suburbia. It has left the realm of house parties and parks to be displayed on primetime television and in corporate board rooms. Hip hop is more than just an urban music trend. It is a culture. The culture that was born out of the poverty and pain of the inner city has become a tool of self-expression and identity for millions on a global scale. So, as a Christian, the question worth asking is, "Does hip hop have a place in Christianity?"

## HIP HOP

**Does hip hop have a place in Christianity?**  
*Associate Pastor Ramon Mayo tackles this question, and the answer may be something you might not expect.*

BY RAMON MAYO

### SO WHAT EXACTLY IS HIP HOP?

With a closer look at the culture, hip hop can be broken down into four elements: DJing, emceeing, graffiti, and B-boying or breaking. These elements were mixed together in the atmosphere of the South Bronx in the early seventies.

The DJing element of hip hop is foundational; it is the cornerstone of the whole culture. In the early '70's, a Jamaican-born DJ named Kool Herc gave his signature Caribbean rhythms and flavor to the start of this worldwide movement. Back in the day, he and other DJs developed a remedy for when they ran out of music to play at house parties: they would loop (repeat con-



tinuously) their favorite part of the song. Known as the break, this became the key element in hip hop DJing and gave rise to a whole new style of dancing.

Breaking, or B-boying, is another essential element of hip hop culture. Commonly called break-dancing, it is a skillful, acrobatic display of rhythm and poise on the dance floor. Whenever the DJ would play the breaks, the B-boys, or breakers, would take center stage. The movements became so complex and competitive that the breakers would battle to see who was the best. This provided an alternative to fighting in the streets; it was a peaceful way to let out aggression and solve conflicts.

Next in the elements of hip hop is graffiti. The phenomenon of tagging has been seen as a blight on the community, but in reality it is often a street form of artistic expression. It offers a way of brightening up the dull and drab urban landscape. Graf writers, as these artists are nicknamed, have been known to paint murals that rival the works of Van Gogh or Cezanne. With the absence of inner city art programs, the Graf writers took spray cans and markers and used subway cars and playground bricks as their canvases.

Last in the four elements of hip hop is emceeing (MC-ing). This is the most popular of the four elements. It is more commonly called rapping and has spawned a whole musical genre. Its origin is found in the form of Jamaican toasting, MC originally standing for 'master of ceremonies'. Originally, while the DJ spun the record, the emcee would get up and stir the crowd with a rhyme or two about the greatness of the DJ. The rhymes eventually became more about the emcee and how great he was or how many ladies liked him, etc. In essence the emcee became the life of the party.

### HOW WE INTERTWINE

I became acquainted with hip hop at an early age. I remember coming home from church and hearing the sound of Doug E Fresh's "La Di Da Di" being played at a house party next door to our apartment building. From the moment I heard the first drum kick and scratch, I was drawn to the music, to the art form, and to the culture. It was raw expression. It was a new identity. When playing in the 3rd and 4th grades, I would create my own rhymes as all my friends gathered around at lunchtime to bang on the tables and imitate our favorite hip hop heroes. Interestingly enough, at the same time I was experiencing an entirely different culture on Sundays—one that included preaching on the danger and sin of rap music and hip hop culture as a whole. As time went on and I was continuously drawn to both cultures, the question arose: "Does hip hop have a place in Christianity?"

Certainly. There is a place for hip hop in Christianity,

and there is also a place for Christianity in hip hop. As a culture, there are positive and negative aspects to hip hop, and just like any other culture, it can be redeemed by God for his purpose and his glory. There are a lot of ungodly things in hip hop culture that cannot be redeemed, such as the degradation of women, the glorification of violence, and the rampant materialism that are seen in today's rap videos. But there are also many things that are positive and even very Christian, such as expression, community, and improvisation.

Expression is a very essential component in hip hop, just as it is a central component in Christianity. After all, Christ is described in John 1:1 as the Word; God is all about expression, and Jesus is expression personified. We are also described as God's expression, or his poem, which in Greek means artwork. He has expressed himself through his people. God is and has made us expressive, and that is what hip hop culture is founded on.

Another important piece of the hip hop Christian puzzle is community. Nothing in hip hop is done alone. Even the emcee who gets up on stage needs the crowd. This sense of community permeates every aspect of hip hop and is one of its biggest draws. As I grew up, the way I learned hip hop culture

was through a group of guys in my neighborhood. They didn't give you a course or a textbook on

rhyming or B-boying. You just showed up and were part of it because you were a part of the community. One aspect of hip hop's origin that is often overlooked is that this is a culture of improvisation. The dictionary defines the word improvise as "to make, provide, or arrange from whatever materials are readily available." And that is exactly how and why the culture of hip hop was formed. It sprang up during a time in the history of New York City when people did not have enough, unemployment was high, crime was on the rise, and inner city programs were being pulled. Kids needed an expressive outlet, and instead of getting that outlet from the government they created one for themselves. So, with the tools that were in their hands, they built a city called hip hop from the ground up. The Bible talks about such industriousness when it says, "He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty" (Prov. 28:19, New International Version). The creators of hip hop culture did not chase after what could have been – they worked with what they had. They improvised a whole new art form and way of life.


So, hip hop has a place



Commonly called rapping, emceeing is the most popular element of hip hop culture.

in Christianity. And there is also room for Christianity in hip hop. There is a generation and an entire global culture that is talented, industrious, creative—and yet godless. We should open up our hearts and reach out to these young men and women who can add so much value and life to the church. Jesus has already shown how much value they have by dying for each and every one of the people in the hip hop culture.

As a result, hip hop is and can be redeemed for Him. With music acts like the Cross Movement of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, we see that Christianity can be expressed through the hip hop culture. The Cross Movement, led by William Branch (a.k.a. The Ambassador) has paved the way for quality hip hop that is also theologically sound and ministry focused. With their group and solo efforts under the banner of Cross Movement Records, people young and old can see a vision of Christ in hip hop through the sound that many have already come to love. It is a vision of hip hop, as The Ambassador's song "The Thesis" says, "properly submitted to the glorious Lord." There are also ministries like the youth and young adult hip-hop church called The House Covenant in Chicago, led by Pastor Phil Jackson (not the basketball coach). The House Covenant church incorporates many elements of hip hop, including emceeing, DJing and dance. This is an example of an entire ministry being geared toward connecting those in the hip hop generation with the God who is faithful to all generations – including ours.

Hip hop and Christianity can coexist—and they do. Believers from the hip hop culture have a place in the church body, and those in leadership must strive to open their hearts toward those who are a part of this culture, even if it's foreign or unfamiliar to them. God has a place for the hip hop culture, and now we, in spite of our prejudices or stereotypes, must open up to them as well. Hip hop and Christianity are not diametrically opposed. They are just waiting for someone to bridge the gap between them. 

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### NEW BEATS TO TRY

Interested in trying out some Christian hip hop music or learning about urban culture in a Christian context? Trailblazin' Ministries offers many tools and resources related to hip hop culture. They even feature Hip Hop Devotions where you can listen to a provided audio track by a Christian hip hop artist and read a bible study corresponding to the lyrics and Biblical message of that particular song. There are also music and book reviews. Check them out at [www.trailblazinministries.com](http://www.trailblazinministries.com)

#### IN TUNE:

Check out some audio Hip Hop Devotions.





# world

Los tres Santos Reyes, los tres y los tres,  
los tres Santos Reyes, los tres y los tres,  
Los saludaremos con divina fe,  
los saludaremos con divina fe.

Los tres santos Reyes, yo los sé contar,  
Los tres santos Reyes, yo los sé contar,  
Gaspar y Melchor y el Rey Baltazar.  
Gaspar y Melchor y el Rey Baltazar.

Llegan con cautela, la Estrella los guía  
Llegan con cautela, la Estrella los guía  
se sienten sus pasos, en la noche fría  
se sienten sus pasos, en la noche fría

Señores, adiós . . . doy la despedida  
al corazón santo, dulce de María  
Señores, adiós . . . doy la despedida  
al corazón santo, dulce de María

Señores adiós porque ya nos vamos  
Señores adiós porque ya nos vamos  
todos los presentes pasen feliz año  
todos los presentes pasen feliz año

The three Holy Kings, three and three,  
Holy Kings three, three and three,  
Greetings with divine faith  
Greetings with divine faith.

The three Holy Kings, I know the count,  
The three Holy Kings, I know the count,  
Gaspar and Melchior and King Baltazar.  
Gaspar and Melchior and King Baltazar.

They come with caution, the Star guides  
They come with caution, the Star guides  
Will feel their footsteps in the cold night  
Will feel their footsteps in the cold night

Gentlemen, bye. . . I farewell  
Holy heart, sweet Mary  
Gentlemen, bye. . . I farewell  
Holy heart, sweet Mary

Gentlemen goodbye because we are going  
Gentlemen goodbye because we are going  
All present pass happy new year  
All present pass happy new year

(Tune sung on Three Kings Day)

## PUERTO RICO



## Puerto Rico

### *El Dia de los Tres Reyes (Three Kings Day)*



**A**fter Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. - Matthew 2:1-12 (NIV)

Every year in Puerto Rico, as well as other Latin countries, including Mexico, there is a special celebration on January 6th. The morning after the end of the Twelfth Night after Christmas Day is Three Kings Day or El Dia de los Tres Reyes.

On the eve of El Dia de los Tres Reyes, January 5th, children cut grass or greenery and place it in a box under their bed for the camels to eat (similar to the tradition of leaving Christmas cookies for Santa). The grass is replaced by gifts from the Three Kings. The Three Kings only come if the children have been good all year, and if the children are awake, they will carry on to another house.

This day, often called the Feast of the Epiphany, is considered the day in which the Three Kings, Melchior, Gaspar and Baltazar, arrived bearing gifts for the Christ child. It is also traditionally the day Puerto Rican children receive their Christmas gifts in commemoration of the Three Kings’ visit—rather than from Santa Clause on Christmas. Some say there may have been many more visitors to see Christ when he was born, but however many they were, the “Three” Kings were significant because they were not from Israel but rather from far off lands, signifying that Jesus came to heal the world, all nations and peoples. 🎁







By Helen Chen

GIVING THE BEAT: A young woman spins music at a crowded night club.

Photo: Carl Dwyer/Stockxchng

*One woman's call to fly half way across the world to reach people with the love of Christ in one of the most beautiful, intriguing and gritty social scenes – the Spanish Night Club.*

## 6:30 a.m.

You're packed in with two hundred people who love the music as much as you do, dancing to the same beat. DJ Marcos Cruz is blasting through the speakers that surround the dance floor. Bass thunders through the whole place. You love not only the songs the DJ is playing but also the way he mixes them together. Ingenious, subtle, and smooth. It's only natural that you want to dance. You become a little annoyed as the dance floor fills and the concept of personal space ceases to exist. It's dark, and you're pushed up against the strangers behind you. A girl trying to get to the bathroom crushes your foot with her high heel and doesn't notice. You get nervous that someone is going to accidentally singe your arm with their cigarette like last week, or burn a hole in your sweater like last month. After all, it is early morning, the most crowded time, when the most intense music is played.

People are partying like there's no tomorrow—but, actually, it is already tomorrow. The sun is starting to come up outside. You yell a comment about the music to one of your friends, but you can't hear his response. You look around you. One of your friends pours her smuggled bottle of whiskey into her drink to save money. A couple of your friends split an ecstasy pill in half to share. Another two go outside to snort coke again. Others take amphetamines to keep going.

By this time of the night, the drugs have taken their full effect, and you are the only sober one there. People who were previously standing still are now dancing. They begin to stutter, stumble, sweat. Some have become friendlier, more open and honest. Others withdraw into their own worlds, eyes glazed over or half-closed. You debate whether or not to talk to your friend Ignacio who is next to you, since you know

from experience that he probably won't remember half of the conversation.

Although you worry about your friends' health at times, it's not hard to look past all the substance abuse to the people. They are, after all, your friends. They're wonderful people, and you love and accept them the way they are. You continue to enjoy the night without and in spite of the drugs, soaking up the music and ambience, enjoying friends, and dancing. The music feels like a sweet taste of heaven. There's no place you would rather be, not only because you love it, but also because you know that this is the world God has called you to be a part of: the nightclubs in Southern Spain.

I want to see the nightclubs in my city transformed for the glory of God. When people ask, "Why nightclubs?" I say, "Why not nightclubs?" Clubbers, people who go to nightclubs regularly, make up their own subculture, defined by their musical tastes and lifestyles. Just as Jesus hung out in gathering places, talking with all sorts of people, even tax-collectors and prostitutes, I believe He would hang out in a nightclub today.

I'm a deliberate clubber on a long-term mission. Music and dancing are great, but in the end, it's all about the people. I want to show the people around me the kind of love that Jesus lived and taught. But people don't go clubbing to make friends; they just go to have a good time. So it has been a long, slow, and often disappointing, process. It's easy to strike up random conversations with different people every weekend but difficult to find a consistent group of Spaniards that I can get to know well. I had to reach out to many people before finding the friends that I have now.

God has been gracious in hastening the process. It has taken me only one year to find these friends, and the landlord of my apartment turned out to be an ex-DJ. Once, I got a phone call from one of my favorite DJs two days after a party, telling me that he couldn't stop thinking about a few comments I had made about the Christian community I am a part of and that he wanted to partner with us to reach the poor. God is consistently answering prayers.

Still, there are no quick results. Relationships take time, and I want to make life-long friendships. Time is an investment that we give to other people. In Spain, the way to gain people's trust is through spending a lot of time with them. I'm not shy in a nightclub, but I spent at least 25 hours with some of my current friends before they spoke their first sentence to me. In the world of clubbing, you bond through dancing and appreciating the music together. It's a universal, yet unspoken, language.

A more immediate way to meet people and build

relationships is through DJing. The world of DJs is an exclusive subculture within a subculture, and as with clubbing in general, music is a means, not the end. DJing is a way to relate to people who have their own language and jargon. I want to be a positive influence and blessing to the people in clubs, and I wouldn't have been able to connect with the DJs that I know, were it not for this shared medium. DJs are also, in a sense,

worship leaders who affect the spiritual realm. They determine the ambience, influence the crowds. They

control the ebbs and flows, the highs and lulls. People look to DJs to guide them through the night, and famous DJs are literally idols. As a DJ, I can use my gift to worship God. I believe the spiritual realm is radically affected when the DJ is a Christian. I don't intend to change people by playing "Christian" music; I intend to change the unseen through who I am, a follower of Jesus.

Nightclub ministry can be summed up in one sentence: get yourself out there and stay there, no matter what. It's necessary to be consistent in getting out there, even on the nights you'd rather go to bed. But trying too hard isn't a good idea either, because it makes going out with your friends a burden. Clubbing and DJing are intense and time-consuming, and to prevent burn-out I have to take breaks. When your passion is your ministry, the very thing you love can also drive you crazy. But it's so richly rewarding and deeply satisfying. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

In a city where many foreigners come and go as tourists or students who don't get to know or respect the culture, the locals here are genuinely touched when someone takes the time to understand them and wants to stay. A guy once told me, "I appreciate that you've stayed around long enough to really understand our culture, because most foreigners don't." Since many traditional Southern Spaniards have never departed from a 60-mile radius of their hometown, they haven't had much contact with people of other colors, cultures, and countries, and the little they see or hear in movies and the media is often negative. Plus, Spaniards are naturally proud of their own culture and closed to outsiders. All this makes it difficult to integrate yourself into the culture.

Take my clubbing friends. Here is a group of intimate friends who grew up in the same neighborhood and have known each other for 15 years. Then I come along, an outsider, and they don't know what to make of me. In general, I'm not exactly welcomed with open arms. I often find myself in a circle of people talking to each other as if I wasn't there. They're not trying to be exclusive or pretentious. They just don't know what to do with a foreign newcomer. It's not like

**When your passion is your ministry, the very thing you love can also drive you crazy.**



we come around very often. There's no reason for them to feel that they need my friendship, and it's hard for them to understand why I would want to be friends with them, especially when I don't do drugs. I want to be friends with the people I meet in clubs because I care about them like Jesus does, but from their perspective this must be a bit perplexing.

During those awkward nights when no one talks to me, I persevere in the uncomfortable because I know that my presence speaks words. I'm often ignored, but I am never unnoticed. When people see me sticking around weekend after weekend, I become a familiar face, and that's when they start smiling when they see me, when they start to open up to me, when conversations go beyond the typical, "Where're you from?" and "Are you studying here?" This is the point where real relationships begin.

I'm a Christian, and I'm a clubber. A part of me comes out and flourishes in a nightclub, where I feel the freest to be the person God created me to be. When you love the music and dancing as much as everyone else, it shows. I'm not out there just to have fun, but I do have fun because it's what I love. When "going out" is also your work, it's a challenge to know how to balance ministry and leisure. It is nearly impossible for me to separate the two, but maybe it isn't necessary. I cannot separate being a Christian and being a clubber. I am both.

But the truth is, no one there knows I'm a Christian—at least not yet. That's partly because it hasn't come up, partly because it's not time, and partly because of the erroneous ideas in Spain of what a Christian is. Here, the concept of Christianity revolves around ornate crucifixes and statues of Mary, superstitions, and a multitude of confusing or irrelevant traditions and rules. I want the people who know me well to one day find out what I really believe as a Christian, correcting these misconceptions. At this time, though, overtly sharing my faith could be inappropriate and even detrimental to my goal of revealing God's love. So, I work undercover, praying for the friends God has given me, trying to be Jesus to them, and waiting for opportunities to arise.

In the beginning, I expected that God would bring me another Christian to go clubbing with on a consistent basis. One year later, that still hasn't happened, but there are advantages to going out alone. Being an individual, female, and Asian makes it easier to get into the places I want to reach—and easier for people to approach me and incorporate me into their groups. I've prayed and thought a lot about taking teams into the clubs here, since it sounds like the thing that I "should be" doing. But to be realistic, it would be nearly impossible for a group of foreigners to assimilate into a circle of Spaniards. Instead, I've been tremendously blessed by my community here, who pray for me when I am out. They are "the team." We cannot all enter the club scene, nor is it necessary. God hears every single prayer, and this is the most important thing.

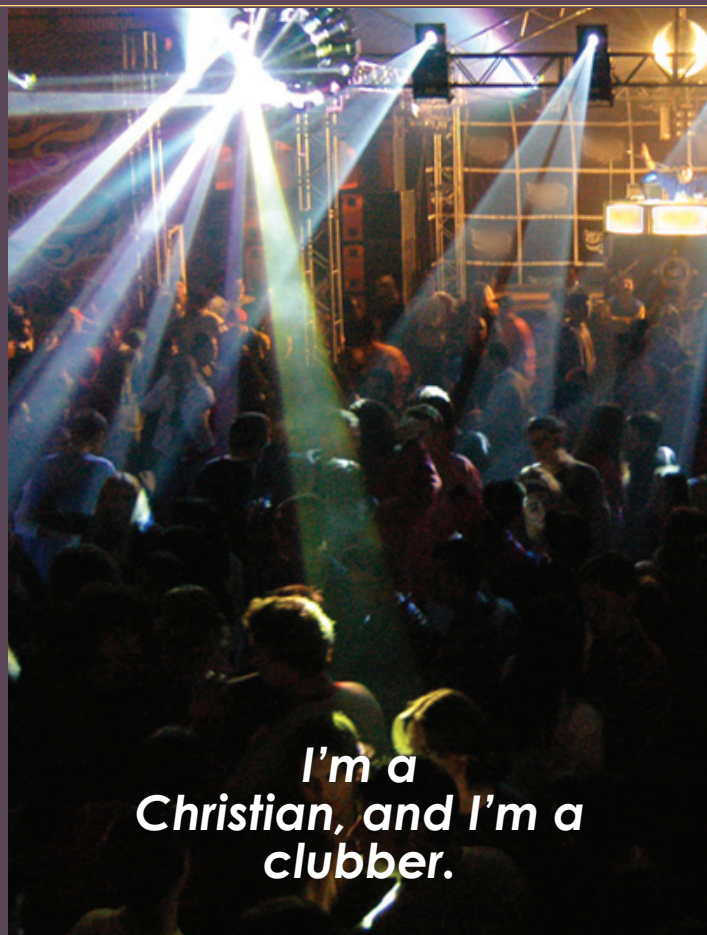


Photo: Diego Baez/istockphoto

The best way to change anything is through prayer, and since night clubs are huge and impersonal, prayer plays an especially key role in nightclub ministry. You don't have to be there to make a difference; you can pray for entire clubs in general, or for specific individuals, as you would pray for a friend. I pray that God will reveal Himself to the people in these places and that they will come to know God. It doesn't matter what state people are in. I know that God is bigger than any substance they are taking. I'm not condoning drug use, but God can speak through and use anything. I have a friend in Spain who became a Christian after God used his drug use to convict him of his need for God.

Not only is there plenty to pray about, there's plenty to praise God for in a nightclub. I see beauty in nightclubs. Hearing great music makes me want to worship God as the Creator of all good things. If the created music is so wonderful, how much more wondrous must the Creator be! I worship, acknowledge, and praise God's name in a place where it is not normally lifted up, and I dream of seeing others also celebrating God in nightclubs. The many good things there are from God: music, dancing, friendship. My prayer is that people will recognize that.

In fact, if God hadn't specifically called me to this scene, I wouldn't be going clubbing on a nearly weekly basis either. This ministry is not for everyone. Clubbing for one night actually takes up to three days. In order to pull an all-nighter

dancing and without drugs, I have to keep Fridays work-free and stay off my feet as much as possible. I even have a special stool I use for DJ practice so that I don't have to stand unnecessarily. And then there is a subsequent day of recovery.

## Party's Over

It's 9 a.m. The party ran over the official closing time by two hours because the DJ was that good. You stayed out that late to be with your friends. Your friends all go crash at someone's house. You decide to go home. You're so tired that you feel sick. You've not only pulled an all-nighter like in college, but also danced a marathon. When you get home, you down a couple of bananas and go straight to bed.

You force yourself to get up at 5 p.m. after 7 hours of sleep, still feeling off and zoned out. I hate the day after clubbing, you mumble to yourself. Even though you swap your days and nights nearly every weekend, you still can't get used to it. It's like having jetlag once a week.

You want to see your Christian friends who prayed for you all night, but you're too tired to compose sentences, so the day—your Sabbath—is spent in a solitary state of vegetative recovery on the sofa. It's only on the following day that you are able to talk about the party with one of your friends. By then, it's already the end of the weekend. Tomorrow is Monday, time to get back to teaching English.

## Behind the (Club) Scene

Nightclub ministry sounds "great, awesome, and cool," but it's also hard work and brutal at times. I find the actual clubbing to be relatively easy simply because I love it so much. The hardest part is the day after, when it has taken a toll on you physically, and spiritual warfare hits the hardest.

I used to be afraid that people would condemn me for what I do, and this is where many of my spiritual battles took place. I would have thoughts like, "What I am doing is all so wrong. I'm not supposed to be going into nightclubs—and never alone, not as a girl, and most definitely not as a girl alone." Nowadays, instead I have doubts like: "What do I think I'm doing? I can't make a difference in a huge nightclub; I am only one person. All of these hours are a waste. What if all this comes to nothing one day? I should be doing something more worthwhile, something more 'Christian.' What I'm doing is less valid than what other Christians do. Maybe it is invalid, period."

This onslaught of thoughts also comes at other times during the week, often conveniently right before something

important or when I practice DJing. Starting out, I discovered that the more I prayed in a club, the worse the warfare the day after. It got to the point that I stopped praying when I went out, because I couldn't take the attacks anymore. Now my whole community prays for me, and things are a lot better; I don't experience so much direct attack. But the reality remains the same: nightclub ministry can be brutal—both physically and spiritually.

It's only by the grace of God that I'm doing what I am. If you knew my personal life, you'd know what a mess my life has been and how broken I've been at times. I struggle with anxiety and depression. I've had a history of mental illness and have been on medication for 10 years. And I've paid for clubbing with chronic insomnia.

I don't see myself as a missionary. I'm a Christian who happens to be living in Southern Spain. In *Walking on Water*, Madeleine L'Engle writes:

*In a very real sense not one of us is qualified, but it seems*

*that God continually chooses the most unqualified to do his work, to bear his glory. If we are qualified, we tend to think that we have done the job ourselves. If we are forced to accept our evident lack of qualification, then there's no danger that we will confuse God's work with our own, or God's glory with our own.*

The vision that God has given me is enormous, and I feel small and inadequate. I've been told that the opposite of fear is faith, but if that's the definition, then I have no faith. I'm scared. The spiritual influences in a nightclub are fierce, and the stakes are high. Following where Jesus leads will cost me everything.

I'm DJing because God has called me to. It's not something I would have ever dreamed of or dared to do. It's expensive, takes a great deal of time and practice, and worst of all, I'm terrified of performing in public. There have been days when I tried to hide in bed or run from God, telling Him I couldn't go on with this clubbing stuff. Other days I get so freaked out by the thought of DJing publicly that I don't practice at all. I balk. How I wish sometimes to be able to stand back as a spectator and support another Christian DJ!

It's not like I know what I'm doing. In this ministry, I have no one else's example to follow, except the example of Jesus Himself. I have this long-range vision of seeing the nightclubs in my city transformed, but I have no idea how to get there. I don't walk by faith, I stumble. Every night out is like a box of chocolates: I never know what I'm going to get. I just get out there and then God somehow works.





I still don't pray and read the Bible enough. I don't do all the things that I should. But I don't have to be a "good Christian" before God can use me. God uses me in spite of the way I am. I'm being supported from the U.S. to live out my life here, not

to be a super-Christian. When I boarded the plane to Spain, nothing changed. Being a missionary doesn't make you a super-Christian. If anything, living in a different country brings out all of your weaknesses and humbles you.

When I lived in Southern Spain five years ago, I used to get a lot of comments about my race. People on the street would shout at me, "la china" (the Chinese girl). Once, I walked out of the house and a 5-year-old boy said to my face, "You're stupid because you're Chinese." Another night, a teenage guy imitated kung-fu and blocked me from walking down the street. I had to maneuver around all his laughing friends to get past them. I wanted to put a brown bag over my head, and I came to hate the way God created me.

Since then, God has dealt with those issues. I don't have a problem walking down the street anymore, because I'm no longer ashamed of who I am. The problem didn't originate with the Spaniards. It originated with my own shame. And I now see that their behavior is not racism. It is just ignorance.

I unintentionally shatter stereotypes everywhere I go. Spaniards think I'm Japanese, but I'm Chinese. Actually, I'm not Chinese but Taiwanese, and yet my nationality is American. I'm not a tourist; I actually live here. I'm Asian, but I'm an English teacher. And I speak Spanish. I look young and innocent, but I'm a clubber. People think I must do drugs; I don't, yet my friends do. I'm small and petite and not afraid to go into a big nightclub alone. And yes, I'm a girl, and I DJ.

The issue of my appearance will never go away. I can't hide it, so the question is what to do about it. And so I hash it out with God: God, what do you want to do with me? Why do you want to use me in this situation? How are you going to use me, as opposed to, say, a male or a blond, blue-eyed American?


It's no coincidence that God created me this way. Psalm 139 says so: For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. God didn't make a mistake in making me Asian and female and then calling me to go clubbing in Spain. In the underground nightclubs where I go, it's as local as local gets; there simply are no other foreigners. I stick out like a sore thumb, and God uses that. No one forgets my face. If they don't remember my name, they can always refer to me by my race. They like to guess where I'm from. People come up to me because they're so curious about me, and that is how some friendships begin.

## Up Close and Too Personal

I feel comfortable in a club full of Spaniards, but as with any ministry, sometimes I get stretched way beyond my comfort zone. Two months ago, the group of guys I go out with finished clubbing early at 5:30 a.m. Sunday morning, when there were no taxis. I had no way to get home. There was a 15-minute discussion about "what to do with her." The whole conversation took place in front of me in the third person "she"; I wasn't included in the discussion. Stranded and helpless, I had no choice but to sleep over at a stranger's house, where there was already not enough space for me. One of the guys drove home drunk so that I'd have a place to sleep. It was terribly awkward, and I wanted to disappear.

I unwittingly walked in on their 72-hour weekend lifestyle. They were all drunk, some of them doing more cocaine. They were nearly on top of each other on the small sofa. Neither awake nor asleep, they mumbled to each other in slurred fragments. One by one, each left to fall asleep in different parts of the house. It was like one big slumber party. Except this wasn't one where you neatly pulled out your toothbrush and pajamas and got ready for bed. Here, you could fall asleep wherever you were, even sitting up.

At last, it was just my good friend Manolo and me in the living room. He graciously gave me the couch and slept in the armchair. Unable to fall asleep, I laid awake all night listening to him breathing and snoring. I thought to myself, "This is really intimate, a little too intimate." But I admired how comfortable his friends were around each other. Things that mattered to me didn't matter to them. They had obviously woken up to one another a lot. None of them got off the couch to shower or brush their teeth that weekend. I, on the other hand, wanted to get out of there as soon as the sun came up, before anyone could see how awful I looked by then.

They had let me in on a raw, intimate part of their lives, a part that few, if any, foreigners would ever see. It was a critical junction. Not only was I uninvited, I was sober, which could either divide us or bring us closer together. I wasn't sure which way it would go. To my pleasant surprise, Manolo called three days later to ask me two things for the first time: 1) whether I wanted his friend to buy presale clubbing tickets for me (which meant that they were starting to see me as part of their clubbing group), and 2) whether I would hang out with them before going clubbing (which meant that they saw me as more than someone to go clubbing with). It may sound superficial, but this seemingly insignificant gesture was significant progress to me. This is what answered prayer in nightclub ministry looks like. I thanked God that we were becoming closer friends. Without hesitation, I told Manolo, "Of course, I'll be there!" I grinned to myself in excited anticipation. It was the beginning of yet another weekend. 

## The Joy of Food and Company

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:44-47 (NIV)

As demonstrated in Acts above, Christian community thrives when being engaged in each others' lives, aware of people's needs, sharing meals together, and honoring God as one. We hope that as you hear different perspectives and learn about God, culture, community, the environment, and the world in each issue, you may want to bring your friends together to eat and converse. Here we share recipes from the countries featured in the world section. Enjoy!



### Artichoke and Pine Nut Casserole (Spain)

6 Tbs olive oil  
8 bacon or vegetarian bacon (try Morningstar Farms) slices, cut into strips  
2 large onions, chopped  
6 garlic cloves, minced  
2 lbs plum tomatoes, chopped  
4 cups vegetable or chicken stock  
4 - 14oz cans of artichoke hearts, drained and cut in half  
salt and pepper to taste  
6 Tbs toasted pine nuts

Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a medium frying pan and cook the bacon over medium-low heat until it is lightly browned. Turn off heat and set aside. In a separate large frying pan, heat up the rest of the oil and sauté onion and garlic for about 5 minutes. Stir in chopped tomatoes and cook for 10 minutes more uncovered or until the tomatoe juices have reduced to a sauce-like consistency. Add in the stock and salt and pepper then bring to a boil. Add the artichoke hearts, cover and simmer for 15 minutes. To serve, pour into a serving dish and scatter cooked bacon and pine nuts on top. Serve hot.  
Serves 8

Coconut Pudding (Puerto Rico)  
Called Tembleque (taym-BLAY-kay), this is Puerto Rican Christmas dessert.

4 cups coconut milk  
2/3 cup sugar  
3/4 tsp salt  
1/2 cup cornstarch

Directions: In a medium saucepan combine coconut milk, sugar and salt. Take a little of the milk mixture to dissolve the 1/2 cup cornstarch into. Add the rest of the milk mixture and cook over low-medium heat, stirring constantly (this is key), until it thickens. Turn down the heat to low and cook another 5 minutes. Turn off heat and sprinkle ground cinnamon on top. Refrigerate and chill before serving.  
Serves 8





God in focus. World in scope.

# new identity

MAGAZINE

Winter 2008/09

PREMIER  
ISSUE

## Art To Glorify

How artists reveal their faith through works



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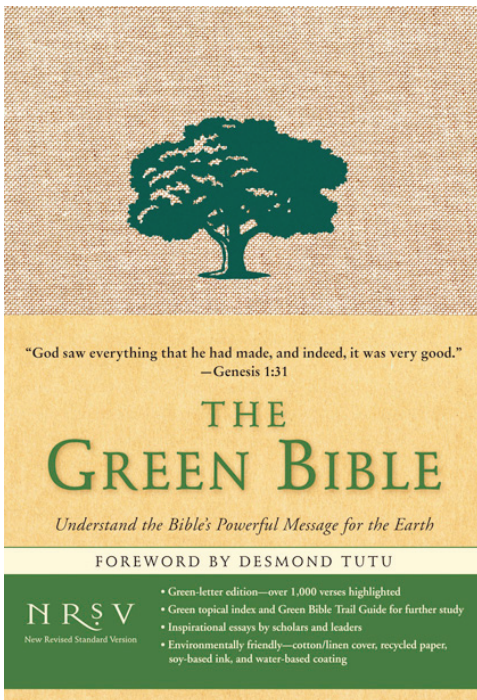
BRINGING GOD INTO THE NIGHT CLUBS OF SPAIN  
REDEEMING THE HEART OF HIP HOP  
EARTHBOUND: STEWARDSHIP OF THE PLANET



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# environment



## READING GREEN

### *The Green Bible*

*The Green Bible*, by Harper Bibles, is the first of its kind, printed on recycled paper using soy-based inks and with a cotton/linen cover. This New Revised Standard Version engages people to see God's vision for creation and encourages them to look after the earth and restore it. The verses and passages that speak to God's care for creation (over 1,000 references) are highlighted in green. Available at most bookstores.

In God's wildness lies the hope of the world—the great fresh unblighted, unredeemed wilderness. The galling harness of civilization drops off, and the wounds heal ere we are aware.

- John Muir

## FRESH IDEAS

### *Living Stones*

Want to create a relaxing 'environment' for your family and friends? For those of you who love the outdoors and God's green earth or who like to bring the outdoors in, check out these Living Stones. The floor cushions from Smarin Design look like oversized pebbles and come in various sizes and shapes. What a fun addition at any room! See more at [www.livingstones.fr](http://www.livingstones.fr)

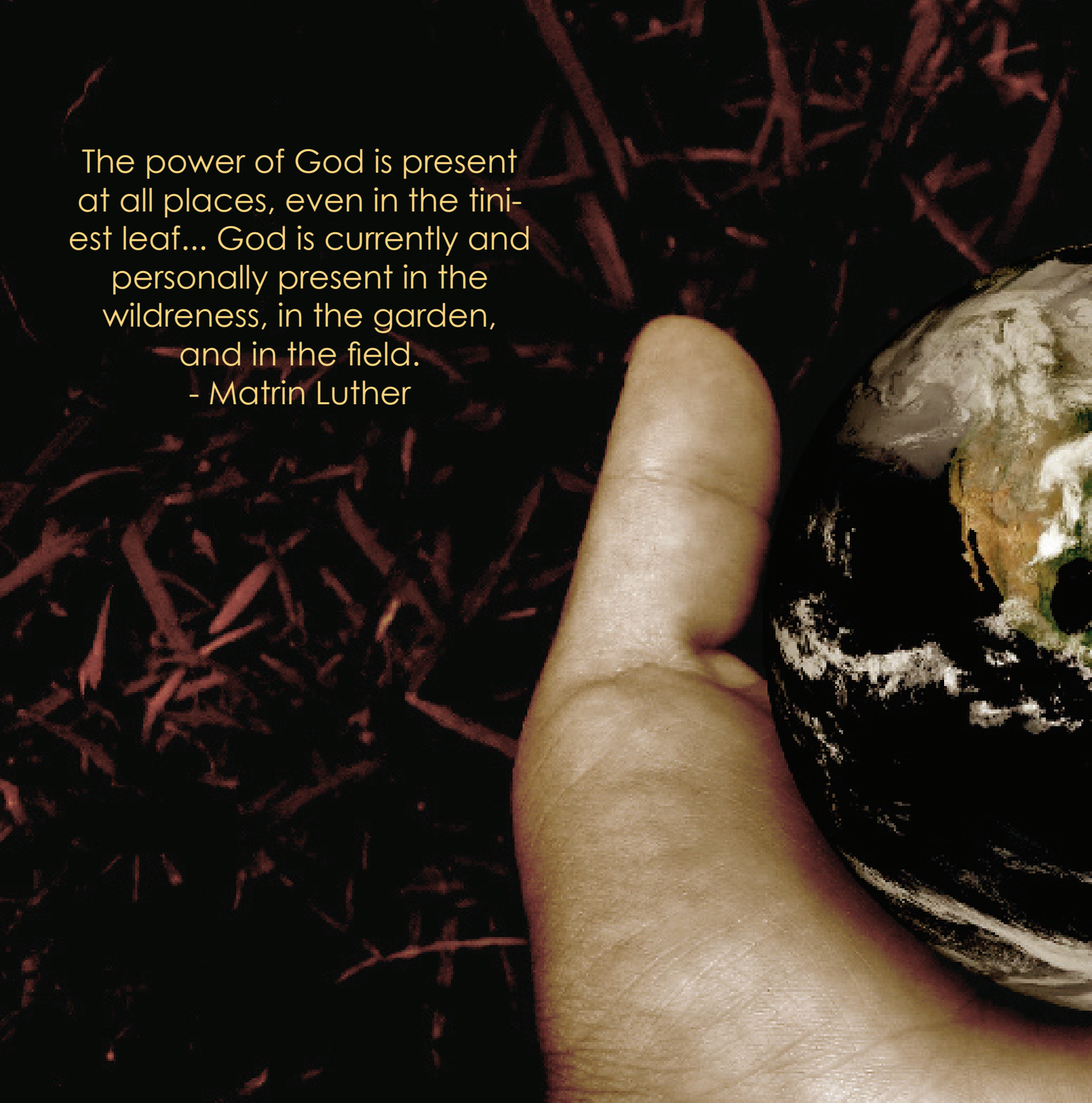


## TRAVEL TRENDS

### *Commuting Solutions*

To encourage biking to work in a polluted world—and to stimulate interaction between neighbors—these bike stands include a built-in air pump to re-inflate flat tires and keep your ride fast and safe. Designed by Studio HiMom, a design studio dedicated to public space phenomena, the stands were originally conceived for an art project in the area of Ypenburg, a neighborhood in the Netherlands. Now, the Heklucht bike stand model *Ypenburg* exists at eight locations in the area. We hope it'll catch on and move into other cities, becoming a real life solution. For more details, head over to [www.heklucht.nl/](http://www.heklucht.nl/)



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a small, realistic model of the Earth. The hand is positioned on the right side of the frame, with the thumb and index finger visible. The globe shows continents and oceans. The background is a dense, dark layer of dry, brown leaves or twigs, creating a textured, natural setting.

The power of God is present  
at all places, even in the tini-  
est leaf... God is currently and  
personally present in the  
wilderness, in the garden,  
and in the field.  
- Martin Luther

# Earthbound: Stewardship

Photo: Miguel Ugalde/Stock.xchng



I was an Ecology major at the end of the 1960s during the height of the environmental movement, but eventually began a career as a school teacher. My wife Nancy and I spent the first 14 years of our marriage without electricity because we lived in an older home on our family ranch in southern California. We truly lived off the land; we grew some of our own food and always valued the natural balance of surroundings. Because of that lifestyle, our two kids grew to know the worth of nature. But later in life when I became a Christian and entered into the ministry, somehow I disconnected from all these values and affections. I never stopped loving nature, but it was somehow set aside because there was no real value for environmental stewardship in the church in the 1970s was rife with a theology known as Dispensationalism, which implied—if not explicitly stated at times—that “Jesus is returning and the earth is going to burn up anyway, so go ahead and use it up.” During that time, a lot of Christians—people who had once seen the value in cherishing and protecting the environment—lost their ideals and didn’t see them as a value in the church, myself included.

Since 1989, I have pastored and led a church in Boise, Idaho, a place where God’s beautiful creation surrounds you on every side. Outdoor recreation is a high value here. People hike, ski downhill and cross-country, mountain bike, fish and hunt. But for years, I was always afraid to use the word “environment” because I didn’t want to be labeled a “liberal.” In the political landscape of the United States, environmentalism has always connected with a liberal perspective on the world. If you were a liberal, you were also supposedly for many other things that I simply could not accept or attach myself to. And while I shared many of the ideals of “conservatives,” I viewed the environment as one issue that I could let slide. But that began to change when I realized I couldn’t let political affiliation dissuade my higher allegiance to God’s Kingdom, and from my charge as a Christian to be a good steward of all God’s creation.

In recent election years, this issue struck close to home when we had political discussions with our grown children. As a result of the way they were raised by us, they have a strong love for nature. While I found choosing a political candidate to vote for relatively simple, they were conflicted. On one hand, they sided with candidates who stood for human rights and the right for people to live, including the unborn. But on the other hand, they also strongly agreed with those who were dedicated to protecting the environment from destruction for the purpose of economic gain. And while most Christians in the United

# of the Planet

by Tri Robinson with Jason Chatraw



States today make the value judgment that human life is more important than plant and animal life (and rightly so), God still values both people and nature. This tension was keenly felt by both of our children and raised the question: “Why do we have to choose? Why can’t the Body of Christ be for both?” After all, God is for both.

Both predominant political parties in the United States stand at odds over this issue, yet it simply remains an issue. Liberals are unable to gather the necessary support in the court of public opinion and through social action to actually make a difference. Conservatives and the evangelical church have, for the most part, avoided supporting the issue altogether. In taking a strong leadership role on this issue, the church must grow thick skin and help provide a solution rather than be frozen in fear over people’s perceptions from either side of the political aisle.

A few years ago during a wedding reception at our church, I was cornered by a woman who asked me, “Are you the pastor of this church?” The tone with which she asked the questions made me think maybe I didn’t want to be at that moment! However, I confessed that I was and braced for whatever criticism she was going to hurl in my direction. “This wedding reception should be a crime,” she stated matter-of-factly. “I’ve never seen so many items going to waste instead of going into recycling bins.” I was embarrassed and tweaked by the stinging truth: I had not led our church in this area, thus we had no church-wide recycling program.

God had already been at work in my heart about the issue of environmental stewardship, but this incident began to push me toward taking action. While the pressing question was, “How can I make caring for the environment a value in my church?” the more troubling question for me personally was, “How did this once strong value in my life all but disappear?”

## WHY GOD VALUES CREATION

All of God’s creation is important to him, down to the last sparrow and blade of grass. The story of mankind in the Bible begins in a garden and ends in a restored garden. The first commission to God’s people is found in the opening chapters of Genesis, which exhorts us to be caretakers of the gift of creation. But why?



The first chapter of the book of Roman tells us that all of humanity knows there is a God because God has revealed Himself, and His very nature, through creation. God directed this assurance, this undeniable proof, to people who are struggling with the most basic spiritual issue: The very existence of a loving Creator.

As the Bible opens, the author of Genesis chronicles God’s magnificent creations—man, woman, plants, trees, animals, sun,

moon, stars, land, sky. With the creation of Adam, the scene shifts to the new garden, where the fall of humanity eventually occurs and introduces sin into the world. Suddenly the garden was defiled. But as we read ahead—all the way to the end in the last book in Scripture, Revelation—we see the way God brings us back to a restored garden. The Bible begins in a garden and concludes in a restored garden. (See Genesis 2 & Revelation 22) Shouldn’t this make us sit up and take note that

there’s something about a garden, something that tells us God values the relationship between His people and the rest of His creation? If one of the ways God reveals Himself to people is through His creation, doesn’t it stand to reason that we should

share in His high value of caring for the environment?

Not only is creation an assurance, but its loving care is the biblical responsibility of God’s people. One of the first commands to mankind was to “tend His garden.” And then, after the flood, God made a covenant, not just to Noah, but between Himself, the earth and humanity. We refer to it as the Covenant of the Rainbow, an idea we’ll explore more in-depth later.

## DEFINING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

As we seek to become good stewards of the environment, we have to define environmental stewardship. Environmental stewardship is the idea that we should care for, manage, and nurture what we have been given. In our desire to take a biblical perspective on environmental stewardship, we find four major areas that require our attention. Unfortunately, many people have become disillusioned by the way some environmentalist express their support for the earth, resulting in disdain toward any group or movement that cares for the earth. However,

behavior such as spiking trees, eco-terrorism, or burning down houses in unwanted developments is not true environmentalism. That is a destructive brand of activism that leads to nothing but confusion and division about the true purpose and intention of their cause. In our desire to take a biblical perspective on environmental stewardship, we find four major areas that require our attention.

*Resource and provision.* The first thing we must understand is that environmental stewardship views nature as a resource and provision. More extreme environmentalists tend to contradict this idea because they don't have a biblical worldview. God has given us His creation not to abuse but to use.

God has given us his creation as a way of providing for people. Plants and trees produce fruits, vegetables, and herbs which are all healthy sources of nourishment for people and animals. Properly managed land is what sustains these plants to grow. Then the fruit of the land sustains human existence. It's a way God shows care for us through what He has created. Our day-to-day choices—how we manage the land with our crops, how we treat animals, and how we take care of our natural resources such as water and air is important because they are part of God's great plan for resourcing and providing for his creation.

*Accountability.* Secondly, there must be a balance between the use and protection of the creation. God has given us the responsibility for life on all sides. One thing that stands out to me while reading through the Old Testament, especially during when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, is that God called Moses to be a game warden of sorts and protect the balance of creation. (see Deuteronomy 22:6-7) God calls people to be responsible in terms of game loss and make sure harvesting animals is done in a responsible way. An animal that becomes endangered because of human abuse is unacceptable. We must be accountable for the way we handle the delicate balance of nature.

*Blessing.* A third element of environmental stewardship is that of blessing. Environmental stewardship must look at God's creation as a blessing—something sacred. Whenever we see the splendor of God's creation, we stand in awe, slack-jawed at the beauty in a sunset, of the creativity in a mountain range of the pure serenity surrounding a pond hidden away in the woods. It's in these moments that we realize how sacred these places are. It's a sanctuary for God's creation—a place where plants, animals, and people should be able to live together in harmony. And we should treat creation with such regard, showing reverence toward the One who created it by making sure other have the opportunity to experience the unspoiled wonder as we have.

*Passing it down.* A fourth aspect of environmental stewardship is its intergenerational nature. Stewardship is a value to be passed from generation to generation emphasizing the great importance of caring for God's creation. Most of the values we adopt from our parents are "caught," actions and behavior we observe and absorb. What our parents say to us is important,

but what they *do* leaves an indelible mark on who we are as we grow up and mature.

At our church, heritage is an important element in our ministry philosophy. We want people to understand that following Jesus isn't something you simply do—it's part of who you are. And when it becomes part of who you are, it's something you naturally desire to pass down to the generation behind you. As our church began to weave heritage into the fabric of our faith, realizing that this value was of great importance to walking out what it means to be a follower of Jesus, we presented many opportunities for people to get involved. And one of the ways that enabled parents to pass stewardship values down to their kids was through organizing camping trips, where many parents took their children into the woods with other families for wilderness cleanup and restoration projects. Kids were seeing first-hand ecological values being lived out by their parents. When we model how to steward what God has given us, our children will catch the lifestyle and it will become part of who they are.

## PASSING IT DOWN IN BOISE

Before I started teaching on the importance of environmental stewardship in my church, one of the things I did was gather a group of specialists into a "secret" task force. People in our community love the outdoors and care for it passionately. I knew that there were men and women in our church who worked with the U.S. Forest Department and the Fish and Game Department as well as various other areas of outdoor recreation. While I hadn't really heard them express this to me, I knew they were people working in the area of conservation who identified themselves with the call and mission of Jesus.

As we began to explore what it means to be good stewards of the environment, two men from the Parks Department brought me a shocking statistic: They said in the past 10 years in the state of Idaho, there was one-third less exploration of the state's wilderness area. At the same time, there was a one-third increase in the state's population. This puzzled me. How could Idaho, which has the largest wilderness areas in the continental United States, experience such a decline with an inverse boom in the population?

It didn't make sense. Then, the reality hit me that fathers have quit taking their children hunting, fishing and hiking. More kids were sitting in front of the television play-





video games on the weekend. And the families who were getting out weren't doing so in the traditional sense—they were going in vehicles or machines where they couldn't possibly hear nature and were probably going too fast to appreciate it. I know that what people don't see, they can't appreciate. And what they don't appreciate they won't value. People weren't getting into the mountains.

One of our strategies was to get the people in our church outside the city limits where they could see the stars at night and the beauty of their surroundings. Many of them had not seen it because of their lifestyle. I realized in order for the environment to become a value in the church, it had to be experienced individually and passed on generationally.

While the components of environmental stewardship seem simple enough and make good sense as we shall soon see, why has the church in the Western world today refused to embrace these simple values?

### MISLED BY FEAR

I believe many Christian leaders, myself included, have been fearful of what might happen if we actually advocate something that has been decisively tagged as a value that belongs to those who oppose many Christian values. In our fear, we have been unfaithful to our responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation. Because of my desire to stay bipartisan I stayed away from the issue altogether for many years, viewing environmental conservation as a political hot button. But apathy toward the environment doesn't mean we have avoided getting involved in the issue—it simply means we have decided its value is not worth fighting for. And this is where many evangelical Christians in the United States have gone awry.

In one sense, it's hard to blame Christians who experienced the environmental movement of the 1960's. We saw hypocrisy in the "earth first" approach and it seemed meaningless. The whole "mother earth" theology took no one to God—and this had the effect of polarizing us from our neighbors who expressed any kind of ecological concern, blinding us from theologically sound and practically balanced approaches. However, it's getting more and more difficult to ignore the signs that the earth is under siege by gross human mismanagement.

Over and over again, evil has a way of stealing things out of God's camp, values that the church is called to champion. As a result of the Western church's apathy toward the environment, much of the world perceives the church as championing a way of life that is destructive in the planet. And in the United States many people perceive the church as conservative and therefore intimately allied with the Republican Party, which is more interested in capitalistic strength than environmental stewardship when it comes to managing our beautiful country. One environmentalist remarked in obvious irony: "It's interesting that conservatives are the least likely to support conservation." I believe it's time Christians begin to rediscover the values

we have lost and be on the leading edge of promoting environmental stewardship with practical instruction on how to implement these ideals in our daily lives.

### OUR FUTURE IN MIND


In implementing the value of environmental stewardship into our lives, we will make a necessary shift from thinking about the here and now to thinking about the future. As a member of the Baby Boomer generation, I have seen firsthand how people in my generation have made shifts from short-sighted thinking to serious reflection on the future with the addition of each generation to their own families. When people have their first child, this tends to initiate a sudden transformation in the way they view the world around them. New parents begin to ask some challenging questions; Will the world be safe for my kids? Will my children have all the same opportunities that I did? Will they be able to succeed? Will they have all the same freedoms I have? Will they be able to enjoy life the way I did?

As we have seen the earth abused and misused, those same questions are being asked about the environment, sometimes with much regret by the same people who unknowingly failed to think about the future of the earth. It's why Jesus did what He did; he came to earth to live and die for the sake of mankind—and indeed, the entire cosmos—for eternity. Failure to adopt this future-driven element in our thinking—and subsequently, our actions—may result in a missed opportunity to experience a revolution in our own hearts as well as in the world around us.

One powerful example of a leader in the Bible who failed to think about the future was King Hezekiah. In Second Kings chapter 20, we find him confronted by the prophet Isaiah, who informs the king that some of his descendants are going to be exiled to Babylon. And Hezekiah's short-sighted reaction was this: "At least there will be peace and security during my lifetime" (vs. 19). He was more concerned about his current popularity than his eventual legacy.

The moment is right for the church to reverse its wrongs in the area of environmental stewardship. By abandoning our short-sighted thinking and returning to long-term vision to the church, Christians have an opportunity to change things. It won't be easy. Many people from both liberal and conservative camps alike are likely to cast a suspicious eye on such sudden reversal of position. But if the statistics are true and one-third of the world is comprised of Christians, what would happen if one-third of the world became serious about upholding the value of environmental stewardship? This would make a difference. This would change the world.

*Reprinted from Saving God's Green Earth (Ampelon Publishing, 2006) by Tri Robinson with permission from Ampelon Publishing*

To read more, or buy the book, please visit: [www.savinggodsgreenearth.com](http://www.savinggodsgreenearth.com) or visit your local bookstore. 



These items for the office are made out of recycled phone books, and reusing these phone books is said to save the Philippines approximately 40% of their total paper waste, reduce pollution, create jobs and preserve forests. Available at your local Cost Plus World Market or on their website at [www.worldmarket.com](http://www.worldmarket.com)

## Green Gift Guide

This Christmas, try a recycled gift. With less of an impact on the environment, they can also inspire creativity; maybe this year you'll even think of your own ideas for recycling an old item and changing it into a new one.



## What Can't You Do With Duct Tape?

This duct tape wallet has all the qualities of functionality, with a hip silvery shine. Reinforced with metal eyelets and made from the strongest tape on earth. Available online at [Uncommongoods.com](http://Uncommongoods.com)



## Jewelry With Purpose

A group of refugee women in Uganda makes beautiful beaded jewelry out of recycled magazines. By supporting their co-op, you can help these women earn a fair-wage price for their beads and enable them to work in a safe environment, afford medical care, and send their children to school. For more information visit Acholi Beads, [www.acholibeads.com](http://www.acholibeads.com)

## Previously Loved Tunes Become Functional

These bowls are made from actual old LP records. They can be used for any dry goods, but as with any LP, be careful around hot sun and high heat. Fun for any music enthusiast. Available at online at [Greenfeet.com](http://Greenfeet.com)



# Winter 2008-09 Prayer Plan

A summary of this issue's main features that you can print or cut out and think or pray about in the next few months.



PRAY THAT ARTISTS CAN  
FIND A ROLE FOR THEIR  
CREATIVITY AND LIVE OUT  
THEIR PASSION FOR GOD.

Pray to discover your own creativity.  
In what areas do you enjoy being  
creative?

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PRAY TO REVEAL GOD'S LOVE  
IN NIGHT CLUBS



PRAY THAT THE  
CREATIVITY AND ENERGY  
OF HIP HOP CAN BE USED  
FOR GOD'S GLORY



PRAY FOR  
EMBRACING  
STEWARDSHIP OF THE  
ENVIROMENT

In what ways do you enjoy God's  
creation? By hiking, watching sunsets,  
or participating in beach clean-ups?  
These next few months remember  
to appreciate God's hand in nature,  
in your favorite way.



So here's what  
I want you to do,  
God helping you:  
Take your everyday,  
ordinary life—your sleeping, eating,  
going-to-work, and walking-around life  
—and place it before God as an offering.  
Embracing what God does for  
you is the best thing you can  
do for him. Don't become so  
well-adjusted to your  
culture that you fit into  
it without even  
thinking. Instead, fix  
your attention on  
God. You'll be  
changed from the inside out.  
Readily recognize what he wants  
from you, and quickly  
respond to it.  
Unlike the culture  
around you, always dragging  
you down to its level of immaturity,  
God brings the best out of you,  
develops well-formed maturity in you.  
—Romans 12:1 [ *The Message* ]

