

new identity

God in focus. World in scope.

MAGAZINE

HOW DO I CALL THEE? LET ME COUNT THE WAYS

A LOOK INTO THE
NAMES OF GOD

AN OFFER YOU CAN REFUSE

OVERCOMING
TEMPTATIONS
THROUGH JESUS

FAITH & TECHNOLOGY

CREATING A BALANCE OF
BEING CONNECTED AND
STAYING CONNECTED

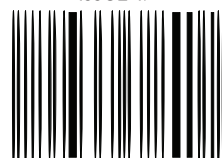
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IT'S EASY TO OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE; IT'S HARDER TO ACTUALLY

use it. I feel like that's one of the hardest parts about being a Christian. We can learn so much about God in the Bible, about how we are to live, who we are to be, but it's knowing God intimately, allowing God to go deep and move us to change our habits and change our minds that is more difficult. Like it says in Romans 12:2, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (NIV). This is something that I desire to do in my life. I desire to know God in the way that I am transformed. Not just head knowledge, but heart application.

When I read about generosity, I long to *be* more generous, not just know that I *should* be generous. But how do I become that way? When I read about hospitality, I want to create a more peaceful and comfortable home to open up to others, rather than keep things to myself. But what if I'm a pretty relaxed housecleaner? It's hard to turn Biblical knowledge (even with enthusiasm) into action. It's hard to know where I should start making a change that I hope will stick, or what little steps I can take to grow in the way I desire to go—becoming more like Jesus. It is also hard not to rely on my own willpower to change (which it pretty faulty by the way). I must remember that it is the Holy Spirit that moves inside me, takes knowledge and shapes it into something real and tangible—something that is lived out.

I pray that the Holy Spirit would use many of the articles in this issue to help lead you in your growth from knowledge to action that you seek. Many writers give some practical ideas to help aid you along the way. Lindsey Frederick talks about ways we can train our thinking to be less judgmental, Delbert Teachout shares some important principles on how to live as a Christian in an unfriendly environment, and Steven Butwell talks of facing temptations and leaning on God in the midst of them. It is God's power within us, not our own, that produces true and authentic change and transformed minds and habits.

I pray all the best for you throughout this exciting journey!

Cailin

CAILIN BRIODY HENSON
Editor-in-Chief



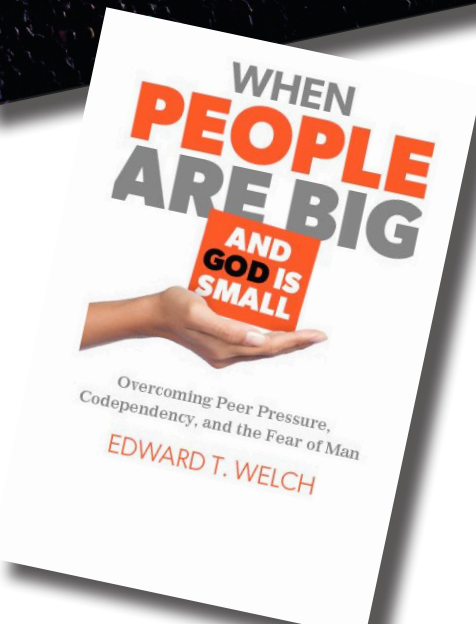
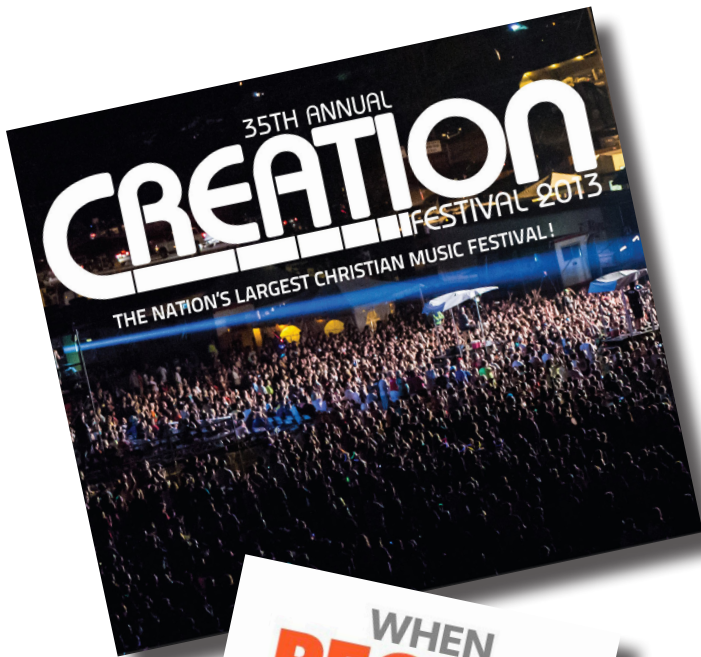


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The Creation music festival has been around since 1979. Today it happens in two locations in the United States, Pennsylvania and Washington. Tim Landis, the co-founder says “Each year Creation seems like a family reunion, a chance to put aside our theological differences and to worship the Lord as one Body.” This year the festival in Pennsylvania will take place June 26-29 and in Washington August 7-10. Not only does the festival offer music from artists such as Skillet, Chris Tomlin, Switchfoot, Newsboys, Crowder, Family Force 5, Lecrae, Tobymac and Audio Adrenaline, there are also multiple booths selling Christian books, t-shirts and other merchandise. Attendants camp out together bringing tents and sleeping bags, or stay at local hotels. Each night of the event there is a special speaker and a community bonfire. Tickets can be purchased for one day, two days or the entire event, \$47, \$75, and \$107 respectively. You can get more information at www.creationfest.com – Anna Anderson

“Who cares what they think? I tried to persuade myself,” says author Edward T. Welch. “So what if they don’t think I’m great? I have already measured up because of what Jesus did. I figured that if Jesus thought I was great, that should be enough.” In his book *When People Are Big and God Is Small: Overcoming Peer Pressure, Codependency, and the Fear of Man*, Edward T. Welch grapples with our many insecurities and frustrations related to how we fear the opinions of others, but so easily ignore all the goodness and confidence that God communicates through his Word. Check out his book at your local library or buy it in a print or Kindle version on Amazon.com –Cailin Henson

Asian Rural Institute started as an international organization training leaders who engage in rural development in developing countries, and to satisfy the demand for training by Christian churches and groups that had already taken part in rural development in Southeast Asian countries. The training focuses on sustainable agriculture through integrated organic farming techniques, community building, and servant leadership. It is community based and hands-on learning is emphasized in all areas, working together to grow and share food. To get more information about how you can become involved, please visit www.ari-edu.org –Mary Leano

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MISSION STATEMENT

New Identity Magazine's mission is to help people find their new identity in Christ by presenting interesting topics from multiple Christian perspectives. Through this, *New Identity Magazine* hopes to generate communication and understanding to unite people that have different perspectives 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* aims to help readers live a more stimulating, inclusive, and passionate life with God. In addition, *New Identity Magazine* is 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 wonder, 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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ON JUDGING LESS

.....
*Five Concepts to a Healthier
 Perspective*



LINDSEY A. FREDERICK

Lindsey A. Frederick is a communications manager in the Washington DC area and writes frequently about life, art, and faith. You can follow her on Twitter @la_lafrederick or visit her online: lindseyfrederick.wix.com/writes

“**T**he world is not simply divided between judgmental and nonjudgmental people,” writes Terry D. Cooper in his book *Making Judgments Without Being Judgmental*. If you think it is, you’re caught in the very vortex of black-and-white thinking from which judgmentalism is spun. The reasons we judge, versus the reasons we are judgmental, are as deeply embedded as the popular and polarizing myth that all judging is bad and all tolerance is good. So why don’t we skip the debate altogether? Instead, let’s bust the myth and face the ugly truth. It’s the only way to get better.

Nature vs. Nurture: Why We Judge

By nature, we cannot escape making judgments about people and things, nor should we. Judging is a powerful organization tool that helps us manage our time, our energy, and our resources. Judging is part of choice-making. Cooper suggests that without it we risk floating in a state of “ethical neutrality and moral indifference,” missing the gravitational pull of conviction, which is a necessary foundation to our faith-life. Theologian Oswald Chambers writes a breath-snaring description of the special nature of conviction in *My Utmost for His Highest*: “Conviction of sin is one of the rarest things that ever strikes a man. It is the threshold of an understanding of God. . . . [W]hen the Holy Spirit rouses the conscience and brings him into the presence of God, it is not his relationship with men that bothers him, but his relationship with God.” Making healthy judgments both helps us make good choices about the everyday and helps us stay spiritually in-tune and in-check in our relationship with God and others.

Case in Point

You started judging this article from the first word. Subconsciously, you asked yourself value questions like *is this topic important to me? Does the content apply to me? Is its presentation engaging?* You might have even made a few mental evaluations about the article's tone and readability. By the end of the first paragraph, you totaled your answers to determine if it was worth your while to continue reading. If you're still reading, thanks for hanging around—I think you made a good choice.

Judging gets sticky when we use our value system to draw radical conclusions about *people*, rather than their *behaviors* or *ideas*. Cooper says when we unfairly judge people we place them into a category that makes life more manageable for ourselves. We turn judgment into judgmentalism when we are frightened by differences between ourselves and others, feel insecure, and our private sins risk public exposure.

Think of judgment like a baseball bat. The bat is created and intended for a specific recreational purpose. But should a bat holder's safety be threatened, the bat can easily double as a weapon, bunting heads instead of baseballs. So how do we use the tool of judgment and not the weapon? First we need to determine some characteristics that differentiate healthy and harmful judgment.

Concern vs. Callous

As I often like to point out, you and I are crazy different. It's a pretty cool thing God did on purpose. And we love to celebrate that diversity—at least in theory. How we act, or rather react, might be a better determinate of what we actually believe about differences. If we're honest, we might see we only "love" diversity when it fits within our dominating theology or set of values. And if we look just a little deeper—feelings deep—we might recognize that most things outside of those beliefs actually make us a little uncomfortable, scared even. Differing opinions and perspectives have the potential to confuse us and rock the foundation of our carefully constructed mental world.

And that's when we snap.

We snap to judgmentalism when the things we believe passionately—the things we perhaps base

our identities upon—are challenged. If that's really true, who wants to be wrong? Wrongness threatens identity. Rather than seek to understand, we resist acknowledging our fallibility by quickly constructing defensive walls and launching offensive verbal attacks. We resort to "nothing but" statements: "she's nothing but a liar," and "he's nothing but a cheat." Healthy judgment, however, involves care and concern for others and seeks to understand their position. It has learned how to separate people from the things they do.

Case in Point

Consider my following adaptation from the book of John (8:1-11).

She stumbled as the community leaders pushed her in front of the jeering crowd. Finding her footing, she kept shoulders slumped and head low; her hair curtained her crimson cheeks, sponged their salty rivulets. She had been caught, exposed. She stood bare in her public shame.

"Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" the leaders asked, placing Jesus on the judge's bench, gavel in hand (4-5). What they were really asking was who is right? They were convicting the woman in a duel attempt to condemn Jesus for his claim to be the Son of God. What could he say? How could he make a judgment without responding to the Pharisees in the same judgmental manner?

His response was peculiar: he bent down and doodled in the sand with his finger (6). Murmurs echo through the crowd—some confused, some annoyed. The impatience grew to a mobbing rumble.

"Teacher!" the accusers pressed, "What do you say?"

Finally, Jesus stood. The crowd sucked in a collective breath and the leaders poised their arms across their puffed chests, as they awaited his verdict. "Let any one of you who is without sin, be the first to throw a stone at her." Waving them off, he stooped again and continued his doodle (7-8). *Silence*. Confused and disarmed, the accusers dispersed one-by-one. Jesus waited to address the women until they were alone.

"Woman, where are they?" he asked. "Has no

condemned you?”

“No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. His eyes were kind and his voice was a gentle mix of urgency and authority, “Go now and leave your life of sin” (9-11).

Both concern and callous are demonstrated in this story. The Pharisees judged the woman by her bad behavior. Pious pride puffed their chests and conveniently blinded them to their own shortcomings. We often criticize and disassociate in order to avoid the “appearance of evil” or being seen as hypocritical. “It is not hypocritical to care for someone who behaves badly,” writes Cal Thomas in a *Washington Times* article titled “Judgement vs. Judgmentalism.” “In fact, it is the height of love to do so, because you want [them] to have a changed life and attitude.

... Denouncing that person and condemning him to hell is not likely to make him more open to things that will lead him in the other direction. Who among us has lived a perfect life that would be acceptable to God?”

This is where Jesus shows us how to “love the sinner and not the sin,” as we like to say. Although the woman brought before Jesus was guilty and her actions deserved to be judged, Jesus refused to see her as “nothing but” an adulteress. His gentle and simple reply was heavily and thoughtfully loaded: he showed concern for the woman’s spiritual, physical, and emotional wellbeing as he acknowledged her guilt, admonished her behavior, and spurred her to repentance (*Go now and leave your life of sin*). Yet his response also spared her dignity; he deflated the crowd’s demand for “justice,” by turning it into a self-reflection exercise. In doing so, he demonstrated healing grace to the woman and defense-dissolving mercy to the crowd.

Charity vs. Contempt

Our attitude toward the fallen, the weak, the different, and the difficult should be one of charity. That is, gracious and tolerant. Just as we throw around

how much we “love diversity,” we buzz about the idea of “tolerance.” Unfortunately, it seems that word has been distorted to mean “the antithesis of judging.” But tolerance is not a blind acceptance of another’s position or choices. It doesn’t take a fist-bumping “whatever works for you, man” attitude toward what the Bible clearly tells us is sinful and evil. And it also doesn’t shy away from open disagreement. Dictionary.com offers the following definitions, which cloak the word in an air of respect, openness, and relationship-building curiosity: “a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward opinions and practices that differ from one’s own” and “interest in and concern for ideas, opinions, practices, etc., foreign to one’s own.”

Unhealthy judgment spews contempt. It shouts *You’re way off base!* and slings *You’re such a fool!* It stuffs and tapes people in unfavorably labeled boxes: wacko, crazy, heretic, fundamentalist, liberal. Before you know it, the baseball bat is a weapon. “Reactivity begets reactivity,” says Cooper. But healthy judgment is free to think a person’s ideas are crazy and misguided, but it extends respect and does not feel the need to control thoughts or opinions. It is open to healthy discussion in which views are exchanged, yet not necessarily adopted.

Case in Point

When I met my new coworker Jessica, I thought I knew everything about her within the first five minutes. She didn’t wear makeup. She didn’t pay attention to fashion. She didn’t eat pork. She didn’t watch movies, listen to popular music, or read fiction. She was so shy the mention of her name flushed her cheeks. After a few stilted conversations, I ticked Jessica away on my uber-conservative-crazo-Christian list and dismissed her.

One day, Jessica didn’t show up to work. I later learned she was sick. When she didn’t show up the next two days, I went to her apartment. Jessica didn’t answer the door because she was too sick to get out of bed. She was taken to the hospital where she had emergency surgery. During my week of hospital visits with Jessica, I learned she grew up in an emotionally abusive and

*We live under the
constant assumption
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something we don’t.*

.....

controlling family. She wasn't allowed to have friends outside her family, attend school outside her home—especially not college—or move out of her parent's house until she was married to a man of her parent's choosing. Although she was still highly conservative, the Jessica I knew was a college graduate, who was single and living abroad. When she left home, her family cut ties. My new understanding of Jessica grew my respect for her and reshaped my perspective. Underneath her exterior, Jessica was one of the bravest people I'd met.

Curious vs. Close-minded

When we approach new viewpoints respectfully, we learn another component to healthy judgment: our own ideas and beliefs have blind spots. Cooper says judgmentalism insists on absolute certainty. "If it is challenged, it frequently reacts with hostility toward the questioner. It is proud of its conviction and expects immediate agreement." A person using healthy judgment, however, does not claim to own truth. He realizes he doesn't have all the answers and he cannot see the bigger, context-giving picture. He removes himself from the judge's seat, allowing God to reclaim his rightful position, because he knows only God can see into the secret heart-places. As he feels less and less threatened that a different view will shake

or change him, he develops a healthy curiosity: *I wonder why Mary is so strongly in favor of adoption? What about Joe's past makes him so resistant to religion?* Thus, begins the journey into another's struggle—a birth place of compassion.

Case in Point

Shayla was offended her sister was considering not attending a mutual friend's bridal shower. "Is she selfish, or am I just judgmental?" she asked. "Well . . ." I hesitated then switched gears, "why do you think your sister doesn't want to attend the shower?" Shayla's reply came slowly, thoughtfully, "Well, Nadine is single

and she's not really happy about it. I imagine a bridal shower is another reminder of what she feels is missing in her life." I asked Shayla why her sister's potential absence felt so personal. Her gaze traveled to the ceiling and back to me before she shrugged. "Supporting your friends is something that's really important to you," I offered. Shayla nodded and explained that showers and weddings were some of the few events that brought her group of high school friends together now that they were older and starting families. "I've noticed some of the ways you show your friends you care is by giving gifts and hosting parties, so it also makes sense this feels personal to you. But maybe Nadine shows her friends support in a different way." An "aha" look lit and softened Shayla's face as she considered what support looked like to her sister.

Calm Evaluation vs. Critical Reasoning

"Making healthy judgments involves a calm, sober insistence on looking at all the evidence before reaching a conclusion," says Cooper. In short, it does not rush.

Cooper also suggests the opposite of careful judgments are snap decisions.

These emotional reactions are often the result of a bruised past. Anything that triggers memories of hurts or injustices can bring a tide of emotion, which, if we're not aware

When we allow our fear and anxiety to manipulate our assumptions, our judgment turns an unhealthy, relationship-threatening corner.

of, the triggers-points can ebb into ready judgments. Just like I did with my coworker Jessica, we stereotype, we categorize, we dismiss. This mentality also carries distrust toward people's motives.

Case in Point

When Tom gave his wife Shelly flowers, rather than gush in gratitude, she eyed him suspiciously, *I wonder what sort of an apology he's buttering me up for* she thought.

Earlier that day, Tom's coworker learned his wife was in the hospital as a result of a freak accident. On her way down a flight of stairs, she slipped on their son's toy

truck on the bottom step and fell backwards, fracturing her spine. Although she wasn't permanently injured, Tom was reminded of the fragility of life and wanted his wife to know how much he appreciated her. After hearing the story, Shelly sheepishly admitted her suspicion and adjusted her marriage-lens, realizing it had blurred some over their years together.

When we allow our fear and anxiety to manipulate our assumptions, our judgment turns an unhealthy, relationship-threatening corner. Some symptoms include refusing to give the benefit of the doubt or claiming certainties about other's motives. Most are accustomed to carefully considering important decisions, such as what college to go to, who to marry, or what house or car to buy. But if our attitude toward people's behavior and ideas directly impacts the quality of our relationships with them—either drawing them close to or driving them away from ourselves and ultimately Christ—then shouldn't we treat our judgments with the same weight as our most important decisions?

Courageous vs. Cowardly

When one comes to carefully evaluated conclusions, they are unafraid to commit to a conviction or decision. They know their identity is not wrapped in their conclusion, because they continually remain open to new ideas. There is no pressure to "get it right."

Unhealthy judgment is fear-driven. It is unreflective and careless, as it is afraid to examine new evidence because doing so has the potential to weaken the structure of our mental framework, which we have built our lives and identity upon. It's important to note that judgmentalism is not just something we project outward, but many of us struggle with low self-esteem that manifests in silent self-loathing and secret condemnation. We question the validity of our thoughts; we hold rickety opinions we're hesitant to voice. We live under the constant assumption we're wrong and everyone else knows something we don't. Rather than

launch offensive attacks, we choose to cower behind our defensive wall and watch our shame-shadows loom large in the rising light. "No one likes his dark soul exposed to the light," says Thomas in his *Washington Times* article. "It is one reason some of us wear makeup and nice clothes and blow-dry our hair and why others consider plastic surgery as they age. If we seek to cover external flaws in these ways, how much more would we undertake to hide the internal ones?" Exposing our internal flaws might shake our foundation and bring our whole world crashing down—a terrifying place to be.

Case in Point

Months of perpetual hardship over the last year brought my true view of God to the surface and rattled my comfortable faith. I realized I only believed God was good when life was rosy. When life was hard, I thought he was punishing me and I felt he was cruel and dismissive. I had several choices: I could walk away from God, I could live in denial, or I could brave my inner ugliness. I decided to spend time in counseling, tearing down and rebuilding my perspective of God. It was scary and painful and exhausting. But through discovering the roots of my skewed perceptions, I was able to uncover

more of the true, good, and loving nature of God. Sometimes being wrong is the only way to figure out what's right.

We need to gray some of our black-and-white thinking and welcome grace into our mental space.

The Verdict

When we look inward, we begin to see our judging problem isn't because of others. It's because of our own flawed nature. Harsh condemnations of ourselves and others indicate a lack of grace and acceptance in our own lives. To counter, we need to gray some of our black-and-white thinking and welcome grace into our mental space. The heavenly marriage of grace and truth helps us understand we will never fully extinguish our judgmentalism. Rather, through acceptance of our own shortcomings and the cultivation of concern, charity, curiosity, calm evaluation, and courage, we can endeavor to become *less* judgmental.



How Do I Call Thee?

LET ME COUNT THE WAYS

.....
A look into the names of God
.....

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NICHOLAS SOWELL

Nicholas Sowell has been involved in full time ministry since age 16. He has served as a lay minister, youth pastor, Christian radio DJ, Christian music production company owner, surf missionary, and now young adults pastor. Nicholas has used his love for writing to inspire, educate, and most importantly: further the kingdom of God. Now married and living in Austin, Texas, Nicholas enjoys staying active and passionately seeking after the Lord.

What's in a name? We all have one. We are all categorized by our names, and we go through life by such. In our culture today however, it doesn't seem too prevalent to hear one's name and understand their nature, their calling, or even their personality. We may be just over two thousand years past Jesus' culture and rarely do we recognize one of the biggest differences of our time and his: names. The difference, though not in the names themselves, may lie within the thought process behind naming. It can be argued that the majority of parents name their children based simply on what sounds good, or what they like. This seems to be a growing movement of child naming based on pop-culture, world news, or naming trends. However, a trend that seems to have gone out the door decades ago is the one of naming your child based off of the meaning of said name. I have yet to come across a new couple in the past two years who have named their child with an understanding of what the name actually means. Many name their child on what sounds good or cool, or contemporary. For instance, you just found out you and your betrothed are with child, the question in Jesus' day would have been, "What kind of destiny do we want to give him?"

You see, the culture of the time agreed on something: the name we give a child will

be his prophetic covering, a means by which we are declaring who he will be to the world, a sound by which people will know what kind of a person he or she is. For example, the name *Jacob* means "supplanter" or "scheming, an over thrower, taking the place of another." We go on to read years after Jacob is given this name that he schemes to take his brother's birth right. Another example of this biblically would be the name *Malachi*, whose name means "Messenger of God," the boy who grows up to become a prophet for God, warning his people. Tons of examples of the same point can be given throughout the entire Bible. The culture of Jesus' time understood that a name wasn't just an identifier given to acknowledge someone, but rather, an inheritance they'd grow into and become. To say the least, the naming of a baby was very important in the Bible. Now I'm not making a case for every individual whose name's meaning has a negative connotation will grow up to be an awful person; I am however, making a case for an awakening to the importance of one's name as it pertains to who they become, and ultimately who they are. In this article I want to focus on the names of God and who he is as it relates to his many, many names.

When you first heard the Gospel message, the one you accepted when you said yes, chances are it was the person with the name of Jesus or Jesus Christ you said yes to. Those of you who grew up Christian are familiar with the one we call God and

With over 625 names for God, Jesus and Holy Spirit combined, each one can be described as a piece to a puzzle that each make up a facet of the nature of God.

Jesus. In fact, if you were raised Christian, your church most likely taught in order to give you an understanding of who God and Jesus were. Basic church education explains a lot of the Gospel through the names of God such as Father, Creator, Protector, or ultimate authority. And often the church describes Jesus as our Savior, our Redeemer, or our Shepherd. The first name we see in scripture is the name "God." This name is used all throughout scripture in almost every way possible. The

phrase “God of _____” appears thirty-eight times. The phrase “God, that (insert action word)” appears twenty-two times. When Moses tells God he will tell the children of Israel he was sent to them by God, he asks God what his name is, God replies with “YHWH” or “Yahweh,” meaning “I am that I am” ...which certainly doesn't clear up the nature of God. If you were to count the names of God in scripture, there would be over 625 names. What does this mean? In a culture that I've explained understood names to be a vital connection between the name and the person it identified, it means that God's identity and nature are much more vast than anyone who has ever lived. With over 625 names for God, Jesus and Holy Spirit combined, each one can be described as a piece to a puzzle that each make up a facet of the nature of God.

The Jewish culture had great names for God, all of which give us a glimpse into who God is in a personal way. Many of their names began with the Jewish name “Jehovah” meaning “the Lord our Sovereign.” Though Jehovah cannot be found in any English translation, it can be found in the original languages over 7,000 times. It's referred to as the name that literally translated into “YHWH” or “Yahweh.” Once this became a baseline and the

understanding of the name declared who Jehovah was to his people, they were able to add descriptors. For example, “Jehovah Jireh” (Gen. 22:14) means “the Lord will provide,” or “Jehovah Rapha” (Ex. 15:26) meaning “the Lord who heals,” “Jehovah- Rohi” (Ps 23:1) means “the Lord is my shepherd,” and “Jehovah-Nissi” (Ex. 17:15) meaning “the Lord is my banner.” These names were in no way random, but given upon experience of God. For example, “Jehovah Jireh” in Genesis 22:14 is given to God by the Israelites right after God spares Abraham's son Isaac and provides a ram instead. As a people group, the Israelites came upon tough times, a biblical reality still transcendent and applicable today; as

they used these names specific to the times and needs they faced, they had an understanding that “El-Shadai” or “the all-sufficient one” was all powerful and they could easily see him as a provider, shepherd, healer, and banner of love. If Jewish parents gave their children a name, it did not change, unless something about the child's nature changed, or an experience changed their identity, and God changed their name (i.e. Saul to Paul). It wasn't a personal choice, it was the decision of the living God. We see Abram being changed to Abraham “from ‘high father’ to ‘father of many’” and Saul being renamed Paul “from ‘asked for’ to ‘humble.’” But God remained the exception to the cultural norm. He was given more and more names, not because his nature or experience or character changed, but rather because the people of God continued to explore him and find more and more experiences, personalities, natures, and aspects of who this God really is. They didn't try

to rename God over and over, instead they let the vast amount of his names act as understandings of who he is, just as one singular name would to an Israelite of the day.

Once God decided to redeem humanity from sin, and come to earth in the form of a baby through a virgin, he had angels pave the way. One of the first instructions that Mary

If Jewish parents gave their children a name, it did not change, unless something about the child's nature changed, or an experience changed their identity, and God changed their name (i.e. Saul to Paul).

received was what to name him. The ever-powerful God of the universe came to give instruction for what would come and he began it with what his son was to be named! It was in the form of “...you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and *shall call* His name Jesus.” (Luke 1:31, NKJV) As if one instruction to Mary wasn't enough, God further emphasizes this to Joseph for safe measure: “And she will bring forth a Son, and you *shall call* His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21, NKJV) The name Jesus (Yeshua in Greek) can literally be translated “God is Salvation.” So the instruction Mary and Joseph received was to name their son “God is Salvation.” Additionally

one of Jesus' names is "Immanuel" meaning "God with us." If the Jewish people understood the nature of God through his names and thus experience his nature and character, many would understand Jesus as God by being named "God with us" and "God is Salvation." With an understanding of the names of Jesus, it becomes more vast, yet at the same time more clear, in being able to explore the nature of God.

One of the most interesting aspects of God's names include those that describe Jesus' and the Holy Spirit's functions, denoting them by their names. Jesus' names include "Advocate" (1 John 2:1), "Almighty" (Job 22:23), "Bread of Life" (John 6:35), "Cornerstone" (Mat 21:42), "Deliverer" (2 Sa 22:2), "King of the Ages," "Light of the World" (John 8:12), "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev 5:5), "Mediator" (1 Timothy 2:5), "Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6), "Savior" (Phil. 3:20), and "Truth" (John 14:6). Though it's impossible to touch on all of Jesus' names in this article, you can see that his names

act as descriptors and metaphors, lending yet another set of aspects to the functions of God. One aspect of God that often gets left out is the Holy Spirit. Ironically enough, I seemed to get plenty of teaching on who "God" and "Jesus" were to me in relationship to them while growing up. I did

not however, understand the role of the Holy Spirit or have any kind of connection to him. When I first heard the name, it was actually Holy Ghost (though the original term is Holy Spirit,) which to me seemed unlike something I'd want to partner with or grow closer to. The term Holy Ghost honestly kind of crept me out, most likely because of my understanding of ghosts being scary. I was familiar with the name "The Trinity" and that God was made up of the Godhead, Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, though I knew nothing of the third aspect of God. I mention this because as we explore the names, and thus all three parts of God, it's important to


discover as much about God through his names as we can, including that of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is known by names such as "Author of Scripture" (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16), "Counselor" (John 14:6), "Comforter" (Lam 1:16), "Convictor of sin" (John 16:8), "Guide" (Act 1:16), "Intercessor" (Romans 8:27), "Revealer" (John 14:17; 16:13), "Spirit of Life" (Romans 8:2), "Teacher" (John 14:26; 1 Corinthians 2:13), and "Witness" (Romans 8:16, Hebrews 2:4). It's with a composition of the three aspects of God we see him become more complex, more vast, and more omnipotent. As if the seemingly innumerable names of just the Godhead weren't enough, his names as Jesus and Holy Spirit lead us to new aspects and higher levels of understanding in regards to who he is. Names carried extreme weight and value, they let the world understand who you were, who you were going to

be, and at times, what you would do.

My prayer is that by examining the names of God we come to an even greater revelation of the vastness that is God, that you come to a greater revelation of who God is, and how that can be translated to who he is in your life. This

[God] was given more and more names, not because his nature or experience or character changed, but rather because the people of God continued to explore him and find more and more experiences, personalities, natures, and aspects of who this God really is.

all-powerful God of the universe declares who he is through his names, before the world, while in the world, and long after it's gone. May you come to know God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in a new way that welcomes them into your life as an advocate for you, as a comforter, counselor, teacher, savior, provider, and healer. May you become aware that God knows and sees your needs, wants, struggles and desires. May you become aware that God knows you physically, spiritually, and emotionally. And may you know God as El Roi, the God who truly sees you. 

AN OFFER YOU CAN REFUSE

.....
*Overcoming temptations
through Jesus.*
.....

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STEVEN BUTWELL

As a pastor and missionary, Steven's zealous ambition in life is to preach the Gospel message of Jesus to anyone and everyone he sees or knows. A former atheist, Steven came into relationship with Jesus at age 19 as a result of a vision where he met Jesus face to face. Since then he has devoted his life to serving Jesus whole heartedly. Steven's passions include reading the bible, writing, travel and public speaking.

As a young man I was not raised in a Christian home. I never attended church. I never opened a Bible. I didn't believe in the existence of God—I was an atheist. I wallowed in drunkenness, womanizing, illegal drugs, lawbreaking, rebellion to parents, arrests, nights in jail, deception, theft, and pride. These actions were acceptable to me because everyone else was doing them. It was not rebellion, it was life. Sadly, I ignored the pain my behavior caused to those around me and didn't know I was grieving the very heart of Jesus, let alone my own heart. Accepting Jesus as my God and Savior and reading God's word made me realize these behaviors were rebellious, immoral, and hurtful to my family, myself and most importantly my Creator, Savior and Lord, Jesus.

If I write this article not confessing the very temptations I battle and overcome through Jesus each day this would be a page of empty words. I have a serious addiction to nicotine via chewing tobacco. It's been an ongoing battle since the age of 15 with many victories and countless failures (I am currently 28). I am able to quit for months at a time, however, when stressful times come or I am alone, bored, or my mind starts to drift I could find myself behind the wheel of my car contending the urge to not drive to the nearby gas station to purchase tobacco. Jesus teaches me that if I conceal my addiction I would not do well, but if I confessed and quit then I would obtain mercy and forgiveness from both God and people. I came clean with my lies. I therefore confessed to Jesus, Jamie (my wife)

and friends that I was a liar. Even more, I was grieving the heart of God by lying about, and hiding my sin. The look on Jamie's face when I confessed after having told her I had previously quit was enough to never put another shred of tobacco in my mouth. In our eight year relationship Jesus has frequently used people close to me to convict my heart. This time he used my wife's face to get me to stop.

My struggles don't end with nicotine. An initial reaction to a beautiful woman was to look with lust and not to mention I vividly recall "friends" incessantly pleading with me to join in their drunken debauchery having previously struggled with alcohol. I willfully chose to avoid parties and instead shared how Jesus had changed my heart having completely removed the urge to drink. I battled sexual impurity with my wife before marriage. Jamie and myself desired to remain pure before entering into marriage to keep the sacredness of marriage and most importantly to honor God. To help overcome these issues I enlisted the help of an accountability partner whom I can call/text at all hours in order to receive prayer or a word of encouragement. And I was under the impression that once my life was given to Jesus that it is smooth sailing! Sadly though, my heart is corrupt. It is continually conceiving new opportunities to grieve God's heart by lying, being drunk, and having lustful thoughts about women other than my wife, to name a few. (see Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Mark 7:14-15)

The good news is that aside from accountability from others, Jesus modeled strategies to resist and overcome temptations. Did you know Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil?

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted

there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry. During that time the devil came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread." But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus modeled strategies to resist and overcome temptations.

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Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, 'He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.'" Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say, 'You must not test the Lord your God.'"

Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. "I will give it all to you," he said, "if you will kneel down and worship me."

"Get out of here, Satan," Jesus told him. "For the Scriptures say, 'You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'" Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus. (Matthew 4:1-11 NLT)

To persevere in life we must understand what the Bible teaches, be in constant prayer, and have a relationship with Jesus. Jesus' reply to each of the three temptations is: "The Scriptures say." Each time quoting from the book of Deuteronomy.

If Jesus persevered utilizing the scriptures, walking with his Father daily, and accepting his trials with joy how much more should we because Jesus himself walks with us through it all! As our example of living a perfect life in obedience to God the Father, Jesus demonstrates all things - including overcoming and resisting temptations.

When tempted, Jesus quoted the Scriptures and the devil fled. This isn't an isolated incident. The same scripture Jesus used to resist Satan we use—and Satan must flee. I vividly recall nights where I began to sweat because I wanted a drink so badly or chew. To this day, I still drive past gas stations with difficulty. I often call Jamie and ask her to pray with me. I regularly pray: Father, please remove my anxieties (1 Peter 5:7). Father, please give me the Holy Spirit, that I not give in to my evil desires. (Luke 11:13) I daily use scripture as prayers to resist temptations: Father, help me to be strong and courageous. May I not be frightened, nor be dismayed, for I know You, Jesus, are with me wherever I go. (Joshua

1:9) Father, command Your angels concerning me to guard me in all my ways. Have them lift me up, so I not stumble. (Psalm 91:9-12) Teach me your way, Jesus, that I may walk in Your truth; unite my heart to Yours. (Psalm 86:11) Psalm 121 is a great prayer and reminder of who our help is. I recommend committing the Lord's prayer to memory: "Father lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil" (Matthew 6:9-13). All scripture can be utilized as powerful and effective prayer. To humble ourselves before God is to ask Jesus for help—you cannot overcome temptations by yourself. Let us not be proud; for God opposes the proud but he gives grace to the humble. So humble yourselves before God, ask for help.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

It's important to remember that you and I are never "being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. "But

each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to disobedience to God, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death (physical and spiritual)" (James 1:13-15). The temptations we

face don't become rebellion until we give in to them and death doesn't occur until we are so entrenched in our lifestyle of rebellion against God that it's too late to turn back from our error. Jesus will always accept us, we have forgiveness for every act committed against him even in our final breathe of life in this world we can cry out for him in belief, but there can come a point when we just don't want to have anything to do with him and our hearts are hardened against the idea of a Savior. You see, we sometimes understand our rebellion, however, we have no real desire to change. God wants to change our hearts toward him and if we don't allow him too then we have already made our decision and we live in our rejection of him. The repeated choice to chew over obedience to the Lord made me a liar because I told those closest to me I had quit and I hadn't. I made a promise to Jesus and my wife that I would no longer use chew after he had asked me not too. The Bible teaches

To persevere in life we must understand what the Bible teaches, be in constant prayer, and have a relationship with Jesus.

.....

that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) therefore we were not created to lie. When God says “Do not lie” (Leviticus 19:11) he is not condemning us, he is informing us that when we do lie we are not reflecting his character. This is for our own benefit. Jesus is aware of the very real consequences that accompany lying: distrust, disobedience, deception, death, and a consistent sinking deeper and deeper into our lie until we are so chained down by our web of lies that we are no longer walking anywhere near the truth, in fact, our lies have become our truth. To lie is contrary to God’s character who relentlessly desires a deep relationship with him, that’s why he created us to know us and love us as a Father loves his children, unconditionally. I am now a broken image of God. I cannot reflect God’s perfect image anymore due to the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, who in themselves were tempted with a lie (funny enough I am talking about lying and it’s consequences) from Satan that they could be like God—knowing good and evil. The irony in this is that they were already “like” God, being created in his perfect image. Unfortunately, because of Adam and Eve’s belief in Satan’s lie we too must live with the consequence of their actions. A selfish desire to be our own God, that is lord’s of our own lives. (see Genesis 3:1-7) The consequences of rebellion against God impacts everyone around you. The lies we can choose to perpetuate are only one example. Anything you or I do that is contrary to the character of God (in whose image we are created) is considered an act of rebellion.

The way we live should reflect Jesus. The moment you establish a relationship with Jesus you receive the free gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in you and guides you into all truth. (John 16:13) What once seemed normal behavior (lying, sexual immorality, stealing, etc) now is abnormal and is now one of many temptations you will face and overcome with Christ. Once suppressing Jesus—you now embrace him. “If you abide in Jesus’ word, you are truly his disciple,

and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). To abide in Jesus’ word is to allow it to transform your way of thinking and your life should reflect this transformation. If you claim to know Jesus yet continue to live opposed to God you will remain rebellious. Jesus is the only one who can shed light on your temptations so that you are able to even identify them and he never allows you more than you can handle and he always provides a way out. (1 Corinthians 10:13) Our attempting to overcome temptations without Jesus will only create more opportunity for failure. Of course when your way of thinking and life change dramatically, your friends are surprised when you no

longer live as you once did. So they won’t understand your new way of life. Explain to them, not casting them aside, your relationship with Jesus. Consider what is right, and stop choosing the old way of life over Jesus. Jesus died to give us freedom from our old way of life and thinking. Live as people who are free, not using the freedom Jesus gave us in his crucifixion and resurrection as an excuse to continue in rebellion, but live life walking with God accepting the gift of grace.

When tempted, Jesus quoted the Scriptures and the devil fled. This isn’t an isolated incident. The same scripture Jesus used to resist Satan we use—and Satan must flee.

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We are not alone in the temptations we face, Jesus faces them with us. “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4 NIV). The abuse we incur comes because we no longer walk in the dark but have the light of Jesus. People are astonished by the strength we have (in Jesus) over these temptations which once seized us. The victories over temptation serve as witness to others of Jesus’ heart changing power because they see your changed life and commitment to him as Lord. Even so, we all will continue to struggle. My daily struggles to resist alcohol, tobacco, women and illegal substances keep me humble and continually relying on Jesus and the prayers and encouragement of friends. Of course I plead

with the Lord that they should leave me. But he continually says to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore we can boast all the more gladly of our weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon us. For the sake of Christ, then, we are content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and tragedies. For when we are weak, then we are strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to God, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16). God tests our faith to strengthen it and to see if it’s genuine. Our capacity to endure trials measures our true commitment to God. Are you sincerely a disciple of Jesus? Are you authentically walking with him daily? Are you no longer conforming to the pattern of this world but rather, being transformed by the renewing of your mind by him? As disciples we will experience trials and temptations so that we may overcome and give glory to Jesus and in the future also be able to comfort those afflicted with the same hardships.


I encourage you to hear me out if you haven’t changed your mind about who Jesus is. Jesus is the way you and I are made right before God. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved and receive the free gift of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 10:9) who helps to steer you from all temptations. The time has come to cleanse hearts, purify minds, confess rebellion and completely submit to the Lordship of Jesus in our hearts. Please understand that

We are not alone in the temptations we face, Jesus faces them with us. “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4, NIV).

walking with Jesus is a life-long process and things won’t change overnight. However, “I am certain that God, who begins the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns” (Philippians 1:6). We are daily becoming more like Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, prayer and study of the Bible. You are a “work in progress” and Jesus is the craftsman. In collaboration with Jesus we overcome trials, temptations, and hardships. We don’t walk alone in this life through hardships, Jesus walks with us. He is our strength to

overcome.

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Go to Jesus. Get away with him and you’ll recover your life. He’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Jesus and work with him—watch how he does it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. Jesus won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with him and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly. Jesus is a Savior who can sympathize with our weaknesses” (Matthew 11:28-30 MSG).

Jesus knew hardship—and endured it. He willingly went to the cross and died for us. He was betrayed, falsely accused, called a bastard child, spit on, mocked, scorned, flogged, beaten, denied, and abandoned by his closest friends. Jesus knows what temptations you face. Let him bear the burden. “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Our daily temptations won’t cease but what we take away from this is that we aren’t alone in facing them; trust Jesus. I’m encouraged through God’s word knowing that Jesus is the way to peace. So let’s endure another day, for even while the days are evil, we face them with the one who overcame evil for us. His name is Jesus. 

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new identity

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You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

-Exodus 20:4-6

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God Within

The 2nd Commandment

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ERICA MONGÉ-GREER

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“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments” Exodus 20:4-6.

Symbolism is powerful. If there is one thing that has consistently shown up throughout ages and across cultures, it is the use of and response to symbols. Symbols have been used to represent ideas and concepts. Symbols are used to communicate values and incite emotion. In the ancient world, all of nature served as symbols to people of things bigger than they. Symbols can be created as well. Humans create, shape, and form things to symbolize qualities and remind them of something important.

The second commandment found in Exodus twenty is a commandment that guides a follower's understanding of relationship with God. The ancient Hebrews lived in a world that was fraught with opportunities to worship heavenly beings. In a world where separation of religion and state did not exist, the worship of gods, primary, secondary and others, filled the world. Not only did the King of any nation rule with authority from a god, but each household built connections to particular gods and goddesses. Divine beings held answers for people—how to be successful in love, in wealth, in family, in friendship, in business, in politics, etc. And, so the ancient people became adept at manipulating the gods by containing divine beings in small idols. These “graven images” were hand crafted, and archaeology has produced examples that could easily fit into a purse or on a nightstand. Ancient people thought that when they showed honor to the god inside the idol, that they could receive, in return, favors. So, this was a common practice.

The Hebrew people were the first to worship Yahweh, the LORD God of Israel. They had to learn what it meant to worship and be in relationship with both God and others who worship God. This was no easy thing. God demanded things of the people that were very different from the ways they had known. One of the things God commanded was to avoid having any


image of God that is like anything known to humanity. This was a tall order: ancient people imagined that divine beings inhabited everything in nature. Each star represented a god; the ocean, with its power to give and to take, represented a god. But, this God, the LORD God of Israel, could not be contained by anything; moreover, God was the creator of everything, and the godself could not be created or contained within a human creation.

How does this apply today? It has been a long while since I have seen a shrine dedicated to a particular god or goddess; although, this is a practice held by

people today in many countries. But, what about for those who choose to follow God, as the ancient Hebrew people did; how does this commandment instruct?

While it is common for modern believers to wear, carry and display symbols that represent God, these symbols don't always represent a person's desire to manipulate God. A symbol, such as a cross or a crown, may serve as a reminder of God's love or character. There is danger when God becomes imagined to be held within an image. In this way, any human

construct can become a graven image. People often try to contain God, imagining God to exist only within the confines of a certain building or a particular country. The truth is that God cannot be contained, in fact the second commandment warns against attempting to contain our concept of God within anything among creation.

There is a distinct difference between looking to something as a symbol of God and believing God to be contained within a thing. The distinction is when a person begins to believe that the honor of an object will bring a desired result from God. The truth is that God is not confined to any particular church, culture, image or human reality. It is us who are finite, limited beings, held within God's creation with limited access to conceptualizing God. It is humanity's highest display of trust to never attempt to contain God. 

People often try to contain God, imagining God to exist only within the confines of a certain building or a particular country. The truth is that God cannot be contained, in fact the second commandment warns against attempting to contain our concept of God within anything among creation.

KEEPING THE FAITH

.....
Nurturing a child's spiritual growth
.....

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ERIC LEE

Eric Lee lives in Orange County and is an active member of Converge Family Church. In his spare time, he enjoys rooting for the Los Angeles Angels, packing his mind with as much trivia as he can, and blogging. Eric is a stay-at-home dad and takes care of his two-year-old son. You can read Eric's blog at e-rock-wwwericmleeblog.blogspot.com or email him at elee64@gmail.com.

With the closing of this parenting series, comes perhaps the most crucial part. Now that you have children, what are some of the best ways to continue the faith in the family? It seems like a simple enough question. I think we as Christian parents might assume our children will accept our faith and that will be that. What happens if they don't though? What about those tough questions? Peer pressure? Going away to college? Why are there so many stories of kids that grew up in the church that just leave and disown their faith? What can we do to try and prevent this from happening?

What The Bible Says

The Bible clearly says in Deuteronomy 6: 5-7 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words (the Ten Commandments) that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

One survey done by Focus on the Family seems to cut to the point. It asks three telling questions:

1. "Do you think it's important to pass down your faith to your children?" As you might expect, more than 90 percent said, "Yes! It's very important!"
2. "Do you think your child will have a strong faith when he or she gets out of college?" Again, 90 percent of those responding said, "You bet!"
3. "Outside of going to church, what are you doing intentionally to introduce and build a growing

faith in your child?" Fewer than 30 percent were doing anything purposefully to meet that goal during the 166 hours a week their children were at home. Adapted from *FaithLaunch: A Simple Plan to Ignite Your Child's Love for Jesus* by John Trent, Ph.D., and Jane Vogel (Focus on the Family/Tyndale, 2008)

Two big problems were brought up by an article on the CRI (Christian Research Institute) by Chris Sherrod:

1. We let our youth get overexposed to the world's humanistic philosophies via the Internet, movies, and other TV) The average American child sees 15,000-30,000 hours of TV by the age of 17. In comparison, they spend about 2,000 hours or less of quality time with their parents (www.khouse.org/articles/1997/134). With these kinds of numbers, as parents we may not be counteracting this exposure with positive influences at home. There aren't strong alternatives being offered by parents to some of the more culturally prevalent topics like pre-marital sex and drug abuse that are so frequent in movies.

2. Over-dependence on church programs. Many youth just see fellowship groups as a "social gathering" instead of for spiritual growth. When asked who influences their attitudes and actions the most, seventy-eight percent said parents. Once they leave the "Christian bubble" of the youth group, their values return to those that their parents hold.

Since I'm a relatively new parent and did not grow up in the church, I looked to some more experienced Christian parents for some nuggets of wisdom.

I asked three of my friends, Thomas, Donna, and Don the same five questions:

1. How do we nurture spiritual growth in our children?
2. How do parents encourage Christianity without stifling the flame of it?
3. Why do a high percentage of kids raised in a Christian home never embrace the faith or walk away from their faith? What are their parents doing that is so unappealing to them?
4. Is it a good approach to choose a church because it has a good "children's ministry?" Or does that put too much pressure on the ministry?

5. Should our faith be equally or more lived out at home in front of our children?

On Spiritual Growth

So how do we nurture spiritual growth in our children? Thomas says, “By identifying, describing and demonstrating how Jesus’ world view is, in fact, the best view of reality. What Jesus said and did, what he thought about, what he valued—I want my kids to see that Jesus is the very best example, the very best model, not just now, but for their entire lives. My task is to help them navigate their daily experiences by integrating and relating to Jesus as the frame of reference.”

Having multiple expressions of the Jesus-following lifestyle reinforces that this is not simply their parent’s peculiar way of looking at things. In other places like at school, Sunday classes, family events, children can be exposed to others who live a Christian lifestyle. Having them experience the relationships that form around those places: school mates, teachers, leaders, friends, siblings of friends, parent’s of friends, relatives, they see variety in how people integrate God into their lives.

Another way is to maximize their experience of celebrating meaningful Biblical events like the birth of Jesus (Christmas), and Jesus’ resurrection (Easter) with decorations, TV specials, attending events, services, having dinner discussions, etc. You can also use historical holidays to talk about and live out your faith like celebrating God’s provision, serving others, and being grateful on Thanksgiving, or discussing different ways to live out your faith when celebrating the life of Martin Luther King Jr., and others. It’s important for children to understand why these holidays warrant such effort. Then, making every Sunday something worthy of anticipating as a fresh experience with God and looking forward to something new from God. Expect to learn

something new and apply it. Plan a picnic after church service and discuss what you learned or felt that God spoke to you during worship and discuss with your children how God’s Word is changing your life and how you look at life differently because of Jesus. It’s important to incorporate your Jesus-following lifestyle into everyday life and not just on Sundays and holidays. Otherwise your faith may seem trivial to your children.

Donna says, “Nurturing spiritual growth always starts with the parents. You have to have a

relationship with your children.

They have to love and respect you as parents. Not that we have to be perfect, but show Christianity through pain and hurt and anger and that through our imperfections we need Jesus... Help them see that Christianity is about a relationship with Jesus; not a religion. That being a Christian is not about “doing” but “being.” That the Bible is not just about rules. Showing our kids how Jesus has changed our life.

My pastor, Don, also expounded on this subject by saying, “Principally, we do our best to impart that ‘church’ is not

something we go to. It’s a part of who we are. We are a part of a larger community of diverse people that love Jesus. That’s one of the reasons why we encourage our kids to call other older people, ‘Uncle’ or ‘Aunt.’ If you are a real uncle, you’ll always be an uncle...not just for an hour on Sunday.”

In addition Don says, “I’m discovering that the keys to effective spiritual growth are very similar to the keys to a good marriage: communication and intentionality. My children are at an age where they’re starting to have doubts and ask challenging questions. It doesn’t matter whether I know the answer or not. What encourages their spiritual growth *more* is if I take the time to listen and help them process their answers. It helps to be curious in how they even came up with the doubt or question. They appreciate an active listening ear that wants to help find answers. And that kind of

“I want my kids to see that Jesus is the very best example, the very best model, not just now, but for their entire lives. My task is to help them navigate their daily experiences by integrating and relating to Jesus as the frame of reference.”

communication takes intentionality. I have to choose to listen. I have to make time to listen and care for them instead of just saying answers like, “Just believe it!” or “Because the Bible says so...now go to bed!”

Obstacles To Faith

Though we’ve covered some of the ways of encouraging spiritual growth and the importance of spiritual growth, it’s necessary to remember that we can’t force our children or any other children to accept our beliefs. It’s ultimately a choice they will have to make on their own. Sometimes the choice is made more difficult though by the examples children see (i.e. hypocritical) or other obstacles that hinder the understanding of and truth of the Bible.

Thomas says the main obstacle is the “Lack of observable, detectable patterns of the integrated life. The people they look up to, don’t demonstrate a clear form of relying and depending on God in matters large and small. They see that the faith life is marginalized, compartmentalized for private experiences, not public – a duality. Another reason for tune out for older kids is the absence of training and opportunities to think and communicate their faith, to defend and make a case for Christianity up and against skepticism and competing world views. They see big disconnects between saying and doing. They see big decisions being made, but don’t see the spiritual work-through, especially through challenging times, not just the sunny side. Also discouraging or not taking their questions, doubts seriously.

Donna adds, “There are many different reasons children reject the faith: 1) Because Christianity is forced upon them vs making it a relationship. 2) They sometimes feel that their parents have double standards.

3) Sometimes kids feel that their parents put more time into others and not into them. Making them 2nd priority. 4) Sometimes they are more worried about the action vs being. Works vs grace. Or what others think of them.”

As Christians, we are all flawed in how we live out our faith, but it’s important to be upfront and honest about our shortcomings as people, even as family leaders. Wouldn’t it be a much more powerful to admit a mistake in front of your children, than for them to think you are perfect?

“I’m discovering that the keys to effective spiritual growth are very similar to the keys to a good marriage: communication and intentionality. My children are at an age where they’re starting to have doubts and ask challenging questions. It doesn’t matter whether I know the answer or not. What encourages their spiritual growth more is if I take the time to listen and help them process their answers.”

Don talks about the pressures of being a pastor and having children in the spotlight so-to-speak, “As for ‘Pastor’s kid syndrome,’ this is a unique situation all in itself that most lay-children will not have to face. PK syndrome goes beyond Sunday School and its negative effects shouldn’t necessarily be attributed to good or bad Sunday Schooling. PKs have to deal with additional social pressures from

the congregation along with normal peer and parental pressures.”

“‘Shouldn’t you know that? You’re the pastor’s kid?!’ An adult member said jokingly to my daughter once and I wanted to punch them because though it was said in jest, it just adds to the pressures pastor’s kids have to face.”

Intentionality in their spiritual growth also plays out in our actions as parents. As parents, do we *really* believe in and depend on Jesus? Or have we reduced our faith to an hour on Sunday and possibly a midweek small group meeting? Kids are observant. They know. How often do we bring up how good Jesus has been in our conversations at home? Is God present at home or is his presence assumed? If it’s the latter, I’d doubt the children pick up on those assumptions.

Choosing A Church For Your Children?

Many families feel that the spiritual growth of their children is more important than their own spiritual growth and will choose a church because it has a strong children's ministry. While some argue that the Biblical foundation laid at a young age through Sunday School is extremely important, others argue that if the parents aren't being equally spiritually encouraged in their own life, that it may have more of an adverse affect on a child's spiritual foundation than good teaching can produce.

Thomas says, "We chose our church specifically for the children's program. While we recognize that church is a family affair, in that it should provide sustenance and engagement for the whole family, we believe that during the kids formative years, we'll prioritize their spiritual development."

Thomas also adds, "Both parents and Sunday school teachers should understand that we're partners in the child's spiritual development, that it's a shared responsibility, that we have a vested interest, and our goal is common."

Donna says, "I think that we as parents are ultimately responsible for our children's spiritual growth. The church is only there to help guide us. It truly takes a village to raise your children."

Don adds, "As for Sunday school, I believe it's a great supplement and catalyst to their spiritual growth, but whatever is learned and experienced needs to be lived out at home. It's like trying to learn French. If you go to an hour long class for once a week and French is not spoken at home at all, you may pick up a few words here and there, but you won't master the language. You could be learning from the greatest French linguist, but it won't necessarily produce better results. However, if my child goes to that class once a week *and* it's also spoken at home with parents and other family members, the child's fluency in French will skyrocket."

Being A Good Example Of Jesus


Living by example and living life as Jesus would is so important in raising up children well. So much of our own behavior and habits we learned from our own parents: the examples set by them, we undoubtedly imitate in some way, if not many ways. How can we let Christ shine in our parenting?

Thomas believes, "It is important to find the right moments and opportunities then vary the application methods. It is living it out while teaching, but doing the best to make it consistent, at home, in public, when kids are present or not."

Don says, "As for other practical steps, I know of a few parents that hold weekly family worship services where they sing a song and read through the Bible. That's amazing! I grew up in a similar context, but never really enjoyed it when I was a kid. However, now that I'm older, I do appreciate my parents for their intentionality with the time together and the discipline it took."

In addition Don says, "I had some awesome Sunday school teachers growing up. They made me *want* to come back each Sunday. They helped shape a strong foundation in my faith. I also had awesome parents that lived their life in a firm faith through highs and lows, through arguments and laughter that helped make that foundation unbreakable."

Looking ahead

Even though my own son is only three and a half now, I still need to keep in mind a lot of the wisdom that my friends have imparted to me. How will I choose to integrate God in my life in a way that will be both real and practical? Will I let my children see me depend on God in the good times and bad? How active will my prayer life be? When and how will I show my child weakness and rely on God? It is a challenge for sure, but a challenge worth pursuing. If we can't live out our faith in front of our children, how can we live out our faith in the presence of anyone else and share Christ with those around us? 

JARGON DISCIPLE

Dictionary of Christian Jargon for the Ordinary Person

What is a disciple? When I was younger I used to watch martial arts movies. In these movies there would be a master and he would always have one or more disciples. These disciples chose to learn kung fu from this master and they would follow his every move and hang on every word that he said. They ate, drank, and lived near their master and wherever he would go they would go. They became totally identified not only with his teaching but also with him as a person. They identified with him as a person so much that if you dishonored the teacher then you dishonored the disciple. If the teacher was about to go into battle with someone then the students would fight with him.

In the same way the Christian use of the word disciple means someone who is a learner and imitator of Jesus. It is a word that is used in the New Testament for a student of Jesus. Some of Jesus' followers stayed on the perimeter. They were the ones who showed up at different incidents of Jesus' teaching and to receive healing from him. But there were others, most notably the twelve who for the space of three years traveled with Jesus learning everything they could from him. This is the type of disciple similar to the ones that I observed in watching martial arts movies on Saturday mornings.

How can we be the type of disciple that eats, sleeps, and goes wherever Jesus goes? How can we imitate Jesus if he is not here in physical form? A follower of Jesus in the 21st century can still be the type of disciple that fully imitates Jesus because he has two things: Jesus' words and Jesus' invisible presence, the Holy Spirit. The early church left a collection of Jesus' sayings and stories about him in the four gospels of the Bible. These stories and sayings are the primary way we can learn about Jesus. The way he lived and wanted his disciples to live is spelled out in his teachings. So we can definitely get an idea of what he wanted us to do. His invisible presence is also here to help us do what he wanted us to do and to guide us when our choices are confusing or uncertain. We can learn to be disciples when we study his words; become in tune with his presence through prayer and meditation; and translate what we've learned into action.

—Ramon Mayo

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Composer
Teacher
Poet
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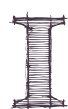
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*Creating a balance of being connected
and staying connected*
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LARA TOVMASSIAN

Lara Tovmassian is an English Writing major at Biola University who has been passionate about writing since she was a child. Lara is eager to use her writing for the advancement of God's kingdom and hopes to pursue a career in magazine writing after she graduates. Some of her favorite past-times include journaling, reading, exercising, and baking.



I wake up to my phone alarm every morning. Cuisinart makes my coffee. Toyota drives me to work. Facebook counts my friends and AT&T raises the bar on my friendships.

Apple pushes me through my workout and takes down my notes in class. Finally, when my work is finished and the next day's outfit has been laid out on my dresser, I edit through the events of my day and flip the light switch to call it a night.

Modern technology makes life incredibly convenient. When we take the time to consider how many of our daily habits depend on industry and electronics, we will greatly appreciate them. Many tasks that we now find to be crucial have been made possible through technology.

The technological resources that have been made available to us in the twenty-first century have had a significant impact on societal development. Industries and corporations have become increasingly aware of our wants and needs and have worked hard to accommodate for them. The fact that we have advanced technology at our finger tips allows society to continue expanding.

In recent decades, there has been widespread debate regarding our generation's dependency on modern

technology. Successfully arguing that technology itself is harmful to our generation would be extremely difficult, as technology has undeniably had its benefits. Where would we be without computers, cell phones, and vehicles? These tools have certainly made life easier in many ways and allowed our society to advance. Even the connectedness that we gain through social mediums such as Facebook, Skype, and Twitter can be a positive effect of technology; through this, we are easily enabled to maintain or develop relationships in places where we otherwise would not. Whether social media is being used to keep in touch with a long distance friend or to become familiar with people of unfamiliar backgrounds, individuals can most certainly benefit from the relational conveniences for which technology allows.

After acknowledging the benefits of modern technology, we must equally acknowledge and explore the concerns that arise out of our dependency on it. The main problem becomes that this dependency can both distort our priorities and lessen the quality of our relationships. It does these things by nurturing a mentality of excess and by masking our need for interpersonal relationships.

Living in the convenience of modern technology nurtures a mentality of excess. In a culture where

In a culture where unnecessary gadgets and the newest household appliances inevitably rise to the top of the upper-middle class shopping list, many of us find ourselves accruing possessions for the mere sake of it.

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unnecessary gadgets and the newest household appliances rise to the top of the upper-middle class shopping list, many of us accrue possessions for the mere sake of it. We have more than we need but we must have more. This mentality is often subconscious, sneaking into our minds when we are making even the smallest of decisions. Do I really need that electronic wine bottle opener? What about the \$8 strawberry stem remover? Depending on how much of an impulsive buyer I am, I may or may not be tempted by such purchases. Regardless, the question of whether or not these items are necessities is painfully

apparent—that is, when we are not wandering around Brookstone or Williams-Sonoma.

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul speaks to the idea of moderation in wealth. He writes “As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up

treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19). Here, Paul reminds Timothy to maintain an eternal perspective in regard to wealth by remembering to store our treasures in heaven. At times, technology can complicate this calling by offering us luxurious conveniences such as fancy cars or the latest Apple product. Making use of technology is healthy; technological developments have occurred and ignoring these advancements would be foolish. Even so, problems arise when this mentality of excess prevails over our calling as believers to be generous and live moderately.

The diminishing quality of interpersonal relationships is another concern that arises out of modern technology. Varied social mediums that have been popularized in the past decade allow us to develop and maintain relationships with people without being physically present with them. The rise of these mediums has enabled closeness between people who are physically distant and distance between people who are physically close. While these mediums can be a wonderful convenience for long-distance relationships and friendships, they can also lessen the quality of immediately present relationships by assuming less of a need for them. Online relationships require less effort, but they also allow people to create unrealistic but appealing personas for themselves. Over the


The rise of [social] mediums has enabled closeness between people who are physically distant and distance between people who are physically close.

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past several decades, we have experienced the shift from phone calls to text messages, dinner dates to Skype dates, photo albums to Instagram. Hebrews 10:24-25 says “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” It’s possible that we have watched the intimacy of physical presence be undermined by these

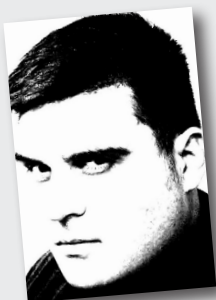
varied social mediums. Reclaiming this intimacy would necessitate an increase in the time and effort that we invest in relationships. By moderating our use of social media, we can create a balance between meaningfully maintaining distant relationships and actively investing in the people with whom are immediately present.

Social media and modern technology have helped me remain connected with loved ones and continue nurturing precious relationships in my life. Many of my closest friends live far away from me, and without cell phones and the Internet, it would be exponentially more difficult to remain invested in each other’s lives. Even so, these mediums are not enough to maintain meaningful relationships. By making an effort to visit a friend who is far away, we express appreciation for the person and allow the relationship to grow stronger. There are also moments in which these tools can cause distractions from things like academics or from people who are physically present in one’s life. Technological advances will always create opportunities for distraction. Distraction from work, from family and friends, and even from the priorities that we hold to as believers. In light of this, our mission must be to learn how to balance a healthy use of modern convenience with a commitment to the fellowship, selflessness and generosity of Christ that we are called to reflect. 

What does it mean to have a Christian worldview?

*Incorporating Christ into
how you see the world*

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MATTHEW HAMILTON

Matthew Hamilton is a published photographer and writer that lives with his wife, two cats and a dog in Wilmington, Delaware. He has written articles for New Identity and the pop culture blog The Critical Masses at criticalmassesmedia.com. You can also check out his personal blogs Black and White in Color and Five Questions Blog at blogger.com.

The phrase “Christian Worldview” is one that is open to wide interpretation. If you think about it, there are actually as many worldviews as there are people that identify themselves as Christians. That is because all of our life experiences affect how we see our past, present and our future. A Christian worldview means recognizing that Christianity has made significant impact throughout human history, from the formation of nations and empires to the hearts

and minds of a significant portion of the global population. It also means that the actions of many, working for the health and well being of others worldwide are performed in the name of Christ, as a demonstrative way of expressing a worldview. But what makes a personal Christian worldview is incorporating Christ into how you see the world, the way it is at this moment and what it will be.

You could spend years in training at college and divinity school, studying the concept of a Christian worldview. You can read about many denominations that have their traditions centered around the history of Christ and his impact on how we can and should live our lives today. Methods of worship along with tithing and other expressions of giving, allow the putting into practice a worldview that acknowledges Christ's importance in our daily lives by devoting our time and resources that have been so graciously given. It means taking and recognizing that all that we have is from him: "All things were made by him, and nothing was made without him. In him there was life, and that life was the light of all people" (John 1:3-4 New Century Version).

While different Christian denominations may differ in practice of worship, they share this common aspect, incorporating a faith in Christ in an outlook for the individual life and for the world in general. One idea that is common through many expressions of a Christian worldview, is the idea of "the world to come." This is the final phrase of the Nicene Creed, a responsive reading that is used in Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches. This simple four word phrase expresses the ideal of seeing the world as a believer, which is looking forward to something better. This better thing that we are promised is mentioned throughout the scriptures, but is expressed simply by the Apostle Paul in his first

letter to the Corinthians: "No one's ever seen or heard anything like this, Never so much as imagined anything quite like it. What God has arranged for those who love him. But you've seen and heard it because God by his Spirit has brought it all out into the open before you. (1st Corinthians 2: 9-10 The Message).

While it is easy to focus all of our attention to this world to come, we may forget our place in this world at the present and where our efforts can have the most impact. Which means that while we can have an outlook incorporating following Jesus that goes beyond our neighbors, our town, or even our nation, much of the most meaningful work can be done by helping those immediately around us. While we as Christians

strive for something better, something that may not be on this earth but rather saved for a place reserved later, it's still important to realize that the world we live in changes daily, in ways both good and bad. The constant presence of Christ allows us to find new ways to both perceive the people around us and the different ways that we can positively affect them.

According to Dr. Gregory

Johnson, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Wilmington, Delaware, there are two major components to a Christian worldview. "I have found light in the thought that God is trying desperately to save his world. Isn't that what it was always about? 'For God so loved the world, that he sent his only Son.' He is using two tools - Forgiveness and Grace."

The concept of forgiveness is one of the central themes of the Bible and if we are applying it to our daily lives it also should be central to our Christian worldview as well. The apostle Paul tells of the example that Christ has set for us and its practical application: "Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another

What makes a personal Christian worldview is incorporating Christ into how you see the world, the way it is at this moment and what it will be.



as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31-32 The Message). This forgiveness and the grace that allows it should lay the foundation for our worldview. If we as Christians see the world through the filter of this redemption, we start to see the world as God sees us, mainly of what we can become. This means that we should share our focus with what God has done for us and can do with everyone to which we share this planet. Dr. Johnson adds: “Jesus Christ has shown us a way to survive—graceful living. God is challenging us to have a “world” viewpoint—where all are one so that we can all survive well together on this very small planet in the deep openness of space. There can be no “Star Wars” in our future, if we are to survive and thrive as God’s most blessed creation—in his image.”

The moment that you decide to become a believer, whether you are five or fifty, your outlook changes. There is a realization that you are a child of God, not just another citizen of planet earth. You are still surrounded by the same people as before, but others should see a positive difference in you, much as you should see the opportunity to act in a positive way to them. The Apostle Paul spoke of this practical daily application of faith and how the simple and mundane activities of daily life can be used as a blessing. He recognized that Christ did mention that we as Christians should be in the world but not of it, but that does not mean separating ourselves from those around us, but living with others and offering our work and time to others as a blessing to God. This is illustrated in The Message’s translation of Romans 12:1-2:

“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.”



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Transport for Christ

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*Bringing church to truckdrivers
 across the country*

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SARA NAPIER

Sara is a full-time writer and sometime musician in Northern Arizona. The twenty-something enjoys working in ministry with Kingman Foursquare Church and celebrating Taco Tuesday with her friends. In her spare time she performs music, designs clothing and writes for various blogs, including her own KingdomJournalist.tumblr.com.

It was the early 1950s. At the time, truckdrivers made their living in harsher conditions. With fewer highways and interstates, a trip that would take a couple of days in present time could take close to a week. There were fewer places to rest and less means of communication which sometimes made the profession much more dangerous. A driver would have to be away from his home for weeks and even months at a time. He would have to leave behind



everything he held dear including family, friends, a home and his church.

The roads were lonely – missing the comfort and some of the conveniences made available today – and it would test a truck driver's faith. Knowing that a church could be hard for a driver to find, in 1951 Transport For Christ began their ministry in America. They decided to bring church to the drivers by constructing their first chapel out of the very type of trailer their trucks would carry each day. Inside of this large freight trailer, they laid out chairs, a pulpit and Bibles and drove to the truck stops and rest areas where drivers would seek comfort.

TFC has declared that their goal is "that no trucker should have to drive more than a day without being able to find a TFC Mobile Chapel." Combined with a mission "to lead truck drivers as well as the trucking community to Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith," they have taken some of their largest steps yet towards these goals in the last 13 years.

For the first 35 years as an active ministry, TFC was primarily mobile by moving from truck stop to truck stop along the U.S. highways. During that time, they were able to launch a magazine in 1957 called *Highway News and Good News*, originally called *Highway Evangelist*. With the success of six chapels and a magazine, TFC was making a genuine difference for people with unique needs and schedules.

By 1985, only two of the six original chapels were in operation. Though even with the number of locations being limited, thousands of truckers were able attend church services on the road and more than 100 truck drivers were dedicating their lives to Jesus Christ each year. In 1986, a truck stop owner requested that the first permanent chapel be created at their Harrisburg, Pennsylvania location where 150 drivers gave their lives to Christ in the first year alone.

Having a home base gave members of the

community the chance to volunteer for the church. From that point on, Transport For Christ's formerly Mobile Chapels were placed permanently at truck stops around the country. This made a dramatic difference in the operational costs. By 1990, TFC was a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, an agency that is dedicated to keeping transparency between the public and a ministry. The ECFA acts as a middleman between the ministry and their financial backers to ensure that money is spent ethically and managed responsibly.

Through the mid 90s, TFC placed Mobile Chapels in six new locations: Council Bluffs, Iowa; Nashville, Tennessee; Toledo, Ohio; Omaha, Nebraska; Cordele, Georgia and a second chapel in Elkton, Maryland. This brought the gospel to truck drivers all over the map, proving that TFC was ready to branch out to the world. In that same time, they inaugurated their second Russian chapel by planting one at the largest truck stop on the famous Ring Road in Moscow, Russia.

With the new millennium came eight more chapels and the chance to ship a third chapel to Russia, where it proudly stands in Moscow. Shortly after, Transport For Christ spread on to the West coast of the U.S. with chapels in California, Colorado and their first one in Canada.

With the organization placing so much focus on planting permanent churches, for a brief time none of the TFC chapels were mobile. This changed in 2005 when the International Office of Transport for Christ built a special Mobile Chapel to be displayed at truck shows, conferences and events in North America. This helped to bring attention to the ministry and it's unique way of sharing the gospel.

By 2007, TFC saw an opportunity to spread its ministry even to locations beyond where its chapels could go by starting a website. They named it Drivers Wellness and it serves as a place where truck drivers can find resources for a number of problems they may face

[Transport For Christ] decided to bring church to [truckdrivers] by constructing their first chapel out of the very type of trailer their trucks would carry each day.

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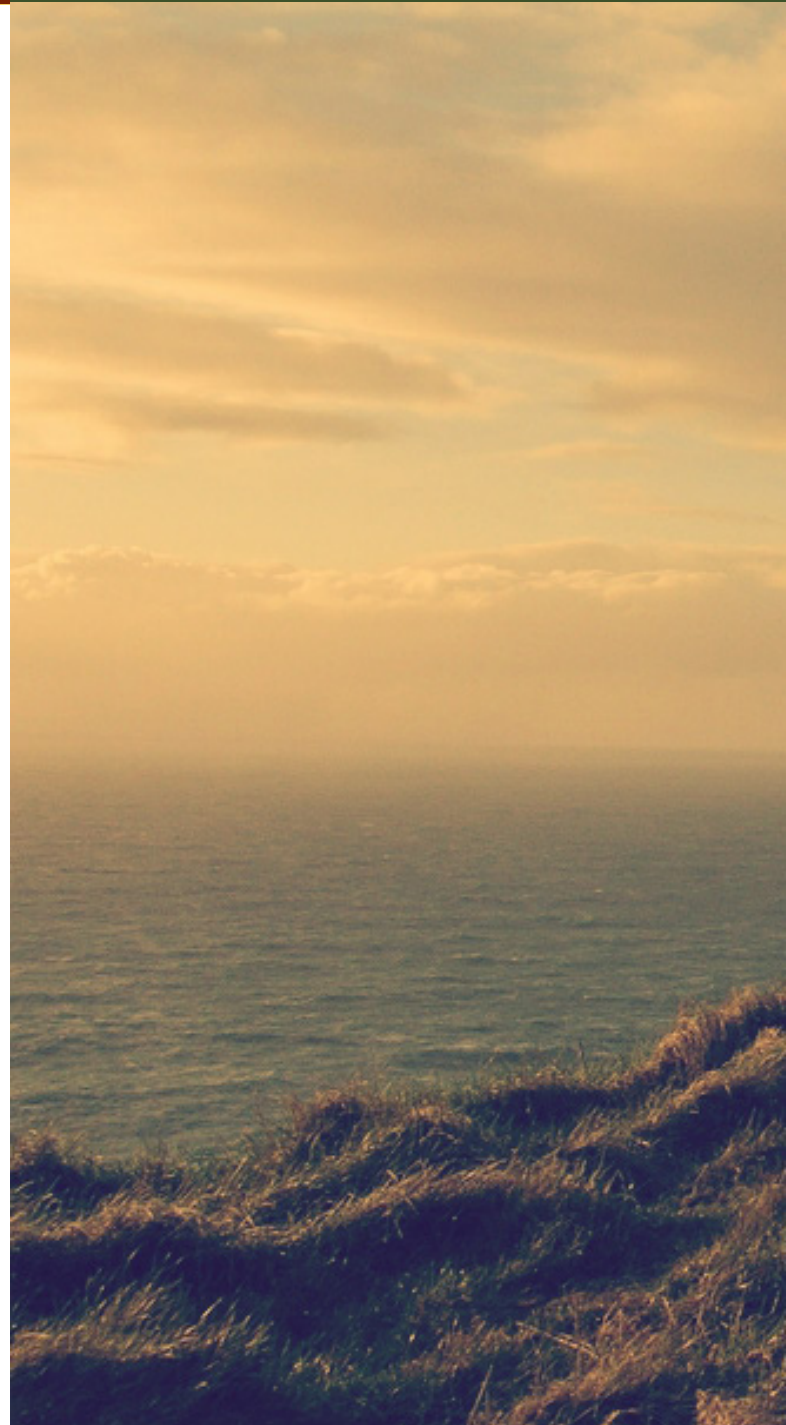
Today, Transport For Christ preaches the gospel in permanent churches located in communities all over the world and brings their famous mobile chapels to highways across America.

on the road including loneliness, stress and health. On the site, drivers can find helpful videos and podcasts put together by truckdrivers and pastors that understand how exhausting the profession can be at times.

Today, Transport For Christ preaches the gospel in permanent churches located in communities all over the world and brings their famous mobile chapels to highways across America. In the last few years, they have placed five new Mobile Chapels in the U.S. and Canada and continue to plan for more in the coming years. Since 2010, TFC has taken their ministry a step further by partnering with Truckers Against Trafficking in an effort to fight against human trafficking worldwide.

The ministry transports the love of Christ to the trucking community and its supporters through 34 locations in North America and active ministry in Russia and Zambia. Their magazine also reaches Africa and Australia and Driverswellness.com is available worldwide. With the combination of their fully operational permanent and Mobile Chapels across the globe, their successful magazine and helpful website, it is clear that Transport For Christ has no plans of slowing down anytime soon.

As they continue to travel the globe, bringing the love of Christ with them, they are changing the world. They are helping a community that reaches across the globe and have taken the road less traveled to give to those that are always on the highway. To get involved, contact Transport for Christ International by calling (717) 426-9977 or emailing tfcio@transportforchrist.org. 



EMILIE SCHMIDT

Emilie Schmidt lives in beautiful Colorado. She has a passion for reading, writing and anything to do with the written word. Her favorite book is *East of Eden*. If she manages to pull herself away from the world of words then she enjoys spending time swing dancing, taking walks, and baking. Traveling has become a passion and she adores the way the struggles and excitement of a new environment have such a profound personal impact.

IN THE HOLLOW OF HIS HAND

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On mission in Ireland

Photo © J Voitus | Flickr (CC)

It was there in that room that it happened; my heart swelled, broke down and opened up to what was being shown to me. The cheerful yellow paint popped a little too loudly off the walls and the deep red chairs offered little hope for comfort. Across the circle of people her large innocent eyes curiously glanced at me from behind her thick square glasses. As her face pulled into a smile I could not help my own from following suit. I

relieved the red chair of my weight and tentatively crossed to sit by the woman with the sweet smile. As we shared words, silence, and shy smiles I felt connected to this little old woman. My feelings soared as we sat together, until she broke my heart. She uttered in a sudden and panicked manner, “What time is it? My mother will be mad if I am not home before dinner. She doesn’t like when I am out so late. It’s not good for a young girl.”

It was at the Birches Alzheimer's Patients Home that I met this woman with the sweet smile, Molly. Far from my home in Colorado, the lush new landscape of Ireland held more than simple tourist excitements and breathtaking views. It was here, so far from home, that I learned how much I did not realize about myself, my strengths, and God given gifts. It was here that God restored my heart. Cleaning off the specs of anger and discouragement God brought sweet little Molly into my life. To this day she has touched my heart so powerfully.

Just fifteen days before Ireland became real, I sat deliberating how many scarves to bring, and whether I would really need rain boots.

(Answer: yes) Filled with anticipation and apprehension I found time quickly propelling me towards my first mission's trip. Though I had considered myself a Christian since high school, this marked the first time that I actively took a step in my faith. Boarding the plane, and awaiting the fourteen hour trip ahead of me, the unknown loomed. I had finally garnered the courage to live out my faith in a real way, however, I could not stop the pessimistic thoughts from generating. The sinking ache of homesickness already began to settle into my bones and all I could do was to attempt subduing my selfish thoughts.

After the initial glow of being in a stunning new fairytale landscape, the entrancing accents, and the initial fulfillment of helping Dundalk Community Church with renovations had somewhat dimmed, the real homesickness and petty frustration settled in my heart. Though I had felt called to this missions trip, so far I really had not felt anything. Expecting a shocking transformation story I was left with unfulfilled expectations. One of my team members shared in devotions how she had tangibly felt God's presence while helping clean the prayer chapel at Dundalk Community Church. She spoke enthusiastically about her experience. Every other team member had similar experiences and revelations, and as the "whispers of the divine" remained

silent to me my bitterness festered.

One night I angrily let my frustration flow from my head to my journal, "I'm done. I am done with people feeling God as I feel nothing. I never feel it, I never do. I feel like I am drowning, lost and here without a purpose." Wavering and confused as to the point of my presence here in Ireland, I plodded on through church renovations, devotions, and interactions with my team. By the second week our daily service activities changed. We had finished church renovations and having gotten our fill of paint chips, mopping, and organizing; we were all looking forward to helping in a new way.

The next morning in devotionals we prepared to go to the Birches, an Alzheimer's patient care home on the outskirts of Dundalk. I had never before worked with the elderly and I don't consider myself a gregarious person. An image of me freezing during conversations, awkwardly trying to connect petrified me. I was also worried about managing with the patient's varying severity in their stages of this terrible disease. My worries tethering me to the apartment, I slowly treaded after my team hoping that maybe I would be okay.

We arrived at the Birches, a beautiful picturesque little place. Flower blooms in every color greeted us as we arrived. The nurses warmly smiled at us as they showed us where to place our jackets and bags. Their warmth eased my fears. I knew this was out of my element but I found myself willing to try. We entered the main room. Large windows cast in the slight bit of sun that peaked over the fog left from the morning's rain. Various chairs were arranged in different circles around the room. The patients sat in the chairs drinking their morning tea. We were instructed by the busy but kind nurses to just sit with the clients, talk to them, and allow them feel heard. I sat next to a boisterous man of eighty whom very quickly went into his life story. I smiled at him thrilled to hear about his childhood, but soon realized the true sadness of this disease when he introduced himself to me a second


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time, and with the same enthusiasm as before launched into the same story word for word. After nodding to his story for the sixth time Molly's sweet tentative smile caught my attention. I sat next to her and we talked occasionally, enjoying the presence of the other's company. We sat together for three hours. As each minute ticked by I was surprised how much I cared for Molly.

Lunch time rolled around and Molly suddenly turned to me, her innocent eyes welled with tears, as she told me that she needed to go home and it was not safe for a young girl to be out so late. As her confusion mounted she became frantic trying to leave and fighting with nurses. I was heartbroken. Alzheimer's had stolen her memory and as she worried about going home I felt as though I had somehow caused the episode. My mind spun through the last few hours figuring out how I could have prevented Molly from being so scared and sad. I left with a heavy heart. I fretted about returning, I thought the nurses would be angry I had not done more.

When we returned the nurse met me with a surprise. She pulled me aside and emphatically told me, "Thank you." Apparently Molly was very far along in the stages. The more memories that are lost, the younger the patient tends to believe they are. She said that for months Molly would refuse to sit down. She would get worried about home and try to leave within minutes of arriving. She then told me that that was the first time she had seen Molly sit down for so long contently. "You two must have some special connection," she said and then she went back to work.

My perspective shifted I was so joyous I had been able to help Molly. That special connection was the reason I was here. Through the weeks my heart was stolen by Molly and the people of the Birches. There was Frank who loved to sing, and we would sing everything together. Marie loved to talk about her children and her daughter in America. Kay and I did crafts together and she named a clay owl we made Bright Eyes. Though Molly never remembered me I became her friend each day. We would talk, I would paint her nails, and sometimes we would just sit. I loved all of them and I found myself experiencing God. Though it was not in the way I expected, the Birches patients showed me God through their smiles, stories, and songs. 

Cellist
Surfer
Comic
Cyclist
Vegetarian
Composer
Teacher
Poet
Chef
Golfer
Carpenter
Dancer
Hiker
Actor
Gamer
Parent
Singer
Doctor
Dreamer
Baker
Tennis player
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Who are you in Christ?

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THE GOSPEL GRAFFITI CREW

*Depicting the Gospel message in the
form of legal graffiti art*



LARA TOVMASSIAN

Lara Tovmassian is an English:Writing major at Biola University who has been passionate about writing since she was a child. Lara is eager to use her writing for the advancement of God's kingdom and hopes to pursue a career in magazine writing after she graduates. Some of her favorite past-times include journaling, reading, exercising, and baking.

Visual art has the ability to uniquely impact its viewer through the interplay between image, color, and purpose. Through this careful interplay, we can experience messages with various senses, and therefore be more holistically impacted by them. The Gospel Graffiti Crew has identified the world's need to know and understand the Gospel message and has also recognized that art is a powerful medium through which to reach people. The combination of these

Photo © Peat Bakke | Flickr (CC)

two convictions has led them to travel to various cities and even foreign countries including France, Canada and Mexico to visually depict the Gospel message in the form of legal graffiti art. Legal graffiti art is graffiti art that is done on approved properties such as abandoned buildings and some parks.

With members from all over the globe, the Gospel Graffiti Crew hopes to share their calling to use legal graffiti art as a means through which to seek and reach out to lost souls. At times, they will paint words like “Truth” or “Glorify” in artful, personalized calligraphy on designated properties. Other graffiti of theirs displays paintings of Jesus as Savior or baskets of fruit to imply the fruits of the spirit. They depict various images that they believe may resonate with the surrounding community. This team of fifteen artists finds locations all over the globe where they can create legal graffiti that artistically communicates the Gospel of Christ. Each member has a nickname that he or she goes by, some of which being Fasm, Camer1, Amp1.


Each individual crew member has a unique testimony that has brought about both a commitment to his faith and an appreciation for gospel graffiti. Whether coming from God-fearing households or rough home situations, these artists have ultimately been united in their calling to use art as an expression of their faith and a means of starting conversations with others about what it means to follow Christ.

Fasm is the head of the Gospel Graffiti Crew and he has been doing spray paint art since the early 1990s. After realizing that fame is not a worthy pursuit for a person who has an eternal perspective, his approach to his art was forever changed; now, he wants to use his artistic ability to point his viewers towards eternity. For Fasm, the best way to use his art in this way was to begin depicting images of eternal significance that communicate the Gospel and biblical truth in an artful way. In starting this group of Christian graffiti artists, he sought to live out this vision in his own life while also encouraging other artists to consider using art in this powerful way.

The popularization and expansion of urban culture in recent years has led the Gospel Graffiti Crew to greater public recognition. Particularly in the United

Whether coming from God-fearing households or rough home situations, these artists have ultimately been united in their calling to use art as an expression of their faith and a means of starting conversations with others about what it means to follow Christ.

States, society has become increasingly attentive to urban life, with younger generations often retreating to the city in search of self and purpose. This has naturally drawn more attention to the the Gospel Graffiti Crew's distinctive graffiti in urban settings all over the world. Because this has been the case, the crew has been particularly intentional about keeping Christ's glory at the center of their mission; their mission and vision statements keep them accountable to this striving for selflessness in their art.

This group is having an astounding impact in urban communities all over the world by making the Gospel message readily available to all. Their art is displayed on various approved properties all over the world. Whether impacting believers or nonbelievers, their art moves people to see the God of salvation and of hope in an unexpected but beautiful place. To find out more about the Gospel Graffiti Crew or to see some of their art, visit ggcrew.org 



7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE CHRISTIANS

*How to be a Christian in a non-
Christian world*

Photo © Sodanie Chea | Flickr (CC)



DELBERT TEACHOUT

Delbert Teachout has been married for 37 years. He is currently retired from military and civilian careers. Ordained into ministry in 2002, Delbert is now pursuing freelance writing as a ministry. You can read his blog at dteachout.wordpress.com. You can also read more about his Christian quest in his ebook *The Christian Adventure* available at b&n.com.

As believers we have a new identity in Christ. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Cor 5:17 NIV). The problem we face is how to live out that new identity in a world where everything concerning Christianity seems to be under attack. Many churches have classes for new believers where they teach how we are generally expected to live the Christian life. The new believer classes emphasize such things as obedience to God’s commands, correct doctrine, and religious experiences. I agree that God’s commands are to be obeyed, correct doctrine is important, and religious experiences do occur. The problem I see with such teaching is that we still do not know how to be a Christian. Too often we let negative emotions such as fear, jealousy, and anger get us off track and we go into a negative downward spiral. This article is for believers who are seeking answers to the question of how to live out their new identity in Christ.

How can we become highly effective Christians? In other words, how do we emulate Christ more in secular settings and be “on mission” as believers to share our love of Jesus with others? Let’s look at the Bible and see whether we have any examples with whom to emulate. Daniel lived in a foreign land and kept his practices. Job trusted God despite his loss of everything. Paul was faithful unto his death. I propose that rather than trying to obey commands or practice learned doctrines, they developed certain habits which

sustained them. Paul wrote about these habits in chapter twelve of Romans and chapter five of Ephesians: do not be proud but maintain a contrite heart, be joyful patient and faithful, keep up spiritual fervor, share with those in need, love sincerely, hate evil but cling to good, and live in harmony with other believers. These habits can make living in the world but not of the world as natural as breathing.

First Habit

The first habit is to not be proud but maintain a contrite heart, have genuine sorrow for the wrong we’ve done. When I write about pride I’m talking about the pride of life, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes. Adam and Eve suffered from this type of pride and it caused them to disobey God. Adam and Eve sought their own will instead of God’s will. They believed the devil when he said, “You won’t really die.” Today, many well intentioned people are guilty of the same sin. We have been tricked into believing what God calls evil is a matter of freedom of choice, in the same way Adam and Eve were tricked. We believe the devil when he says, “It’s not really a sin.” The first habit we need to practice is to get rid of our pride and obey God. The second part of that habit is to maintain a humble heart. Christianity cannot exist without a humble heart.

When we have done something to cause unintentional harm to someone we tend to feel terrible about it and wish we could undo the behavior. We feel badly in our hearts for hurting someone. That feeling

is what I call a contrite heart.

For example the wise men told Herod about the birth of a king. Herod had all male babies less than two years of age in Bethlehem killed. Had the wise men heard about the murders

they would have had contrite hearts. When we realize that our sin put Jesus on the cross and he died in our place, he went to the cross where we should have gone (Rom 5:8); it becomes easy to feel contrite. With a contrite heart we become willing never to cause more harm and will live for Jesus because the only way to appease the feeling is to do right to the one we’ve hurt.

Christianity cannot exist without a humble heart.

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Second Habit

Another habit is to be faithful in prayer. The past year has seen unusual and catastrophic events of nature. I found it interesting to watch people being interviewed who suffered such events. Some of the people were thanking God to be alive and trusting him to provide for them. Other people were cursing the government because handouts were not coming fast enough. Eventually the damage will be repaired. Christians know that good and bad things happen to everyone. Highly effective Christians remain joyful, patient, and faithful despite their circumstances. Our witness to others and our testimony will be revealed by how we respond. What Christian wants God to hear him or her cursing the government because nature destroyed our homes?

Third Habit

Paul wrote that we should never lack in zeal but keep our eagerness while serving the Lord. Last year a local pastor was shot in the head by some youth who were trying to forcefully enter a teen center he supervised. He survived the shooting, returned to the youth center, and resumed his duties. A near fatal gunshot wound would be enough to cause many people to quit, but this pastor maintained his strong desire to serve God. Today, his message to the youth is that if he cared enough for them to risk his life, they should care enough for themselves to risk their own lives in trying to change.

In chapter seven of the book of Acts, Stephen was persecuted but never lost his zeal even up to his death. Compare a shooting star with the North Star in the Northern Hemisphere. A shooting star receives attention but is soon gone. The North Star doesn't receive much attention but can be counted on to always be there. People who maintain their spiritual eagerness are like the North Star. People can count on them and so can God.

*We should walk in love by
being imitators of God.*

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Fourth Habit

We are daily tempted to place value on things that don't matter. What matters is how we can make a difference in the lives of other people. Share with those in need, practice hospitality until they become our next habit. Opportunities to share can come unexpectedly. Sometimes we are so busy we do not recognize them. Instead of viewing them as an inconvenience, we need to take advantage of those opportunities when they happen.

From April 2001 to March 2008 I served as the program director for a rescue mission. The mission provided free food and shelter to homeless men and also operated a substance abuse rehabilitation program for homeless addicts.

Normally my day ended at 5 pm. However, one time I received an unusual phone call at 4:45 pm. The man on the phone had come to town that morning to look for work and had run out of gas. For some reason the local police did not refer him to the Salvation Army or one of many non-profit agencies in town whose mission was to minister to families. Some of the over two hundred churches in town had benevolence funds set aside to help people in distress. One of them might have been able to help. But for some reason they referred him to a rescue mission.

At first I doubted whether the police had referred him because I had never received a call like that before. But after listening to his story, I believed him, though I was still puzzled why he was referred to the mission. During the seven years I worked at the mission I never received another call from a stranded motorist.

At first my mind made up several "good" reasons why I should not help. I tried to explain to him that the mission does not have money on hand to purchase gas whenever someone runs out. Then I had the excuses that he was way across town, it was rush hour, he was on one of the busiest streets in town, it would take forty-five minutes to get to him. I did not feel

like driving in the heavy traffic to get to him. Besides he was not a homeless man.

Remembering the story of the Good Samaritan, and being observed by several of the homeless men, I decided to help this man. Jesus said if we meet someone who has a need, and we do not help, it is like not helping Jesus. The men staying at the mission were able to collect about ten dollars to help the man, possibly enough for gas for the man to get home.

When I found him I discovered that that his vehicle was stopped in a driveway to a parking lot for a busy strip mall and everyone was driving around him without offering any help. To make it worse, his wife was with him, they were diabetics, they had not eaten since breakfast, and they were broke.

The man explained they were Christians—perhaps why he was referred to the mission, and had come to town looking for work. They spent all their money to get there, believing God would help them get home. After pouring a gallon of gasoline into his tank, I followed him to a gas station quick stop about a block away.

The Holy Spirit filled me with compassion and concern because they had not eaten; reminding me of Jesus having compassion on the 5000 he fed. I gave them the ten dollars to get something to eat at the quick stop while I used my debit card to fill his tank with gasoline. I could have used the ten dollars to pay for the gas, and let them find their own food. But I knew God expected more than that.

I did what God does for us—gave him more abundantly than what he asked.

This story was not about me putting gasoline into someone's car or helping someone get something to eat. This was about obedience. Jesus said to love your neighbor as yourself. If I had denied help to this man, I would have been like the priest and the rabbi in the story of the Good Samaritan.

There was only one reason why I should help. Jesus went to the cross for me. All I was doing was going

to a gas station for the man. In light of what Jesus did for me, it was no inconvenience. We never know when God will make these appointments for us.

Fifth Habit

The next habit should be easy but for some reason it takes a long time to develop. Love must be sincere, be devoted to each other in brotherly love. You may have heard about the Greek words for different types of love. *Eros*, romantic love; *storge*, family love; *agape*, Godly love; *philos*, love of everything else, sometimes called friendship love (philosophy is love of wisdom, philharmonic is love of harmony, audiophiles love music). Love

“always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Cor 13: 7 NIV).

Many of us would like to show brotherly love. Little acts of caring, doing what is right just because it is what Jesus would do, can show love in a big way. A few years ago I cashed my paycheck at the local credit union as usual. When I got home I discovered I had an extra hundred dollars.

I recounted the money. Then I checked the receipt. The teller had entered the correct amount on the transaction but had inadvertently given me an extra hundred dollars. There is no way anyone would know that I had received an extra hundred dollars.

Instead of feeling joy, I felt fear. Not fear that I might be accused of stealing, but fear for the teller. I knew she was someone God loved, and at the end of her shift she would be short a hundred dollars. I returned to the credit union and waited in line to go back to the same teller. When I got to the counter I showed her the receipt and returned the money.

In Ephesians chapter five Paul says we should walk in love by being imitators of God. We need to love other people as much as God loves them. By demonstrating God-directed love for the teller, and

Many of us would like to show brotherly love. Little acts of caring, doing what is right just because it is what Jesus would do, can show love in a big way.

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We need to let Jesus teach us to see him more clearly, know him more intimately, long after him more deeply, and praise him more sincerely. We cannot let anything deter us from our quest to come closer to the heart of God.

returning what was not mine, I may have prevented her from losing her job. Little acts of God-directed feelings can go a long way to bless others.

Sixth Habit

Do not repay evil for evil. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good. This habit is explained in Ephesians chapter five as walking in wisdom. Realizing we are filled with the Spirit we can avoid behaviors such as drunkenness, filthy language and coarse joking. Christians simply cannot drink excessively with their non Christian buddies, and engage in coarse conversation with them. We will never be a good witness of Christ in that way. Instead they may mock us behind our backs and be repelled from Christ. We have a mission to make disciples, and sitting in a bar or other environment getting drunk and telling coarse stories will not accomplish that mission. I had a close friend who when he wasn't talking about how much he loved Jesus was always using profanity and telling gross stories. When confronted on this dichotomy he exploded into coarse epithets.


Seventh Habit

The last habit for effective Christians is live in harmony with each other. When we are fully developed spiritually we can see beyond ourselves and consider

how what we do may affect other people. The Bible says we can tell who Christians are by our love. We need to walk in unity. Unity does not mean we all agree on everything but it does mean we walk in lowliness toward each other, considering the worth of the other person. We need to be longsuffering, or patient. If we have to forgive someone seventy-times seven on the same day, what is wrong with that? Jesus would do the same for us. We need to have a gentle spirit toward other people. Jesus is a great example. He is God but always put others first. One day while I was at the

post office a customer in front of me was confused on what she wanted to do. The postal worker spent several minutes patiently trying to help the person. That postal worker was gentle and longsuffering.

Instead of trying to learn obedience to God's commands, memorize correct doctrine, and practice religious experiences, we do better by developing the habits listed above. Everything will seem strange as long as we live in a sinful world. Our own flesh is one of our enemies but we can overcome the flesh by developing habitual behaviors.

We need to let Jesus teach us to see him more clearly, know him more intimately, long after him more deeply, and praise him more sincerely. We cannot let anything deter us from our quest to come closer to the heart of God. 

*We need to walk in unity.
Unity does not mean we
all agree on everything
but it does mean we walk
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other, considering the
worth of the other person.*

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How artists reveal their faith through works


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REDEEMING THE HEART OF HIP HOP
EARTHBOUND: STEWARDSHIP OF THE PLANET



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MAGAZINE



Dear God,
Thank you for the opportunity to
read the stories of what you are
doing in the lives of others. I desire to
know you more and find my purpose
and identity in you. I want to take my
first steps by simply coming to you
and asking you to forgive me for all
the things that have kept me from
you. Jesus, I recognize that my sins
are forgiven because you cleared
all my wrongs on the cross. May you
cleanse me and make me new.
Holy Spirit, guide me in all truth and
give me the strength to follow in your
ways.

In Jesus' name, Amen