

new identity

God in focus. World in scope.

MAGAZINE

CHOOSING WISELY

Weighing the
influence of culture
and Christ

MORE THAN A FACEBOOK FRIEND

How to have deeper
biblical friendships

STUDYING STEWARDSHIP

The meaning of a sustainable lifestyle



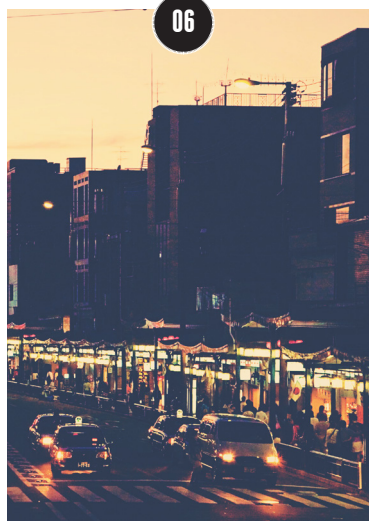
NEW IDENTITY MAGAZINE.COM

*A forgetful
people: a for-
giving God
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RELYING ON CHRIST FOR OUR CALM AMIDST THE TENSION

Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.. -Psalm 9:10

I'm getting ready to move to a new house in a new city. There are boxes everywhere and chaos all around me. It is an uncomfortable place to be. I marvel at how I accumulated so much stuff and how hard it is to let go of. How did I get here? Living in a tainted, sinful world, it's easy to be in a disagreeable place or position (and many much worse than mine), so how do we get through it?

You might say our faith is splendid in it's simplicity: We need to trust in Jesus above all else. I need to trust that God will provide future deep friendships in our new place that will help me leave behind the ones I love where I'm at. (See *More Than A Facebook Friend* by Steven Butwell on page 18 about how Jesus models friendship and how we can have the deepest ones.) I need to trust that what I do or don't pack has no bearing on my worth before God and I'm not doing the wrong thing if I donate what others would keep. (See *Choosing Wisely* by Lindsey A. Frederick on page 6 on whether we are captivated by Christ or culture.) I need to trust that in this awkward place of living in the in-between, Jesus will grow me in maturity and deepen my love for him.

We easily get caught up in the world and don't rely on Christ for our calm amidst the tension, but we need to. Christ is the only one who knows us from birth (Jer 1:5) and can count the hairs on our head (Mat 10:30). I will do my best to place any transitional worry on his shoulders. I hope you will too. Enjoy the new issue!

Trusting in Jesus,

Cailin

CAILIN BRIODY HENSON
Editor-in-Chief

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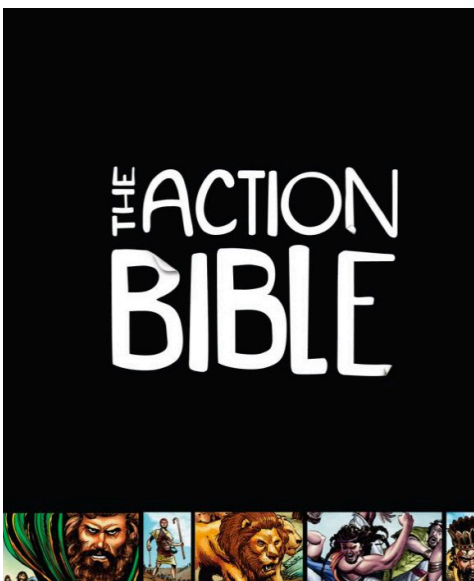
Ravi Zacharias

Ravi Zacharias is an Indian, Canadian, American defender of the Christian faith. He is the founder and president of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries and has publicly spoken at numerous political assemblies and universities in numerous countries. Zacharias hosts multiple radio programs as well, some of which can also be found in podcast form for free. One of these programs, “Let My People Think,” is a weekly half-hour show that explores issues such as life’s meaning, the credibility of the Christian message and the Bible, the weakness of modern intellectual movements, and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. You can subscribe on iTunes and hear the past ten episodes, as well as weekly new ones, or you can find all of the episodes [online](http://www.rzim.org). Learn more about Ravi Zacharias and the amazing things his ministry is doing at www.rzim.org



Royal Family KIDS Inc.

Summer camp is a shining light to most kids during their summer vacations. They wait all year to spend 5 days in the woods with their counselors. Diving in lakes, munching on popsicles, and making new friends create invaluable memories. For Wayne and Diane Tesch, summer camp takes on a whole new meaning. In 1990, they quit their jobs to work full time on a string of camps that would be later called Royal Family KIDS. Their goal: to invite abused, neglected, and abandoned children to a loving Christian environment for a week of summer camp. Their endeavor began with just one camp and has now expanded to over 160 camps in over 35 states and 11 countries. Over 80,000 children have been enrolled in Royal Family KIDS camps since then. Their hard work has provided these abused children a safe haven. Visit their site and learn more about these camps at royalfamilykids.org



The Action Bible

Want an interesting and extra fun way to read the Bible this summer? Try comic book style. *The Action Bible: God’s Redemption Story* by David C. Cook, Doug Mauss, and Sergio Cariello is a fully illustrated abridged Bible that showcases some of the most compelling narratives in history. The chronological order makes it easy to follow and brings 215 Bible stories to life through comics. There is no age limit to enjoying this epic artistic expression of God’s amazing story. To get a hard copy or digital edition, please visit Amazon.com.

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New Identity Magazine's mission is to provide diverse, Bible-centered content to help lead new believers and seekers to a fuller understanding of the Christian faith.

Tip

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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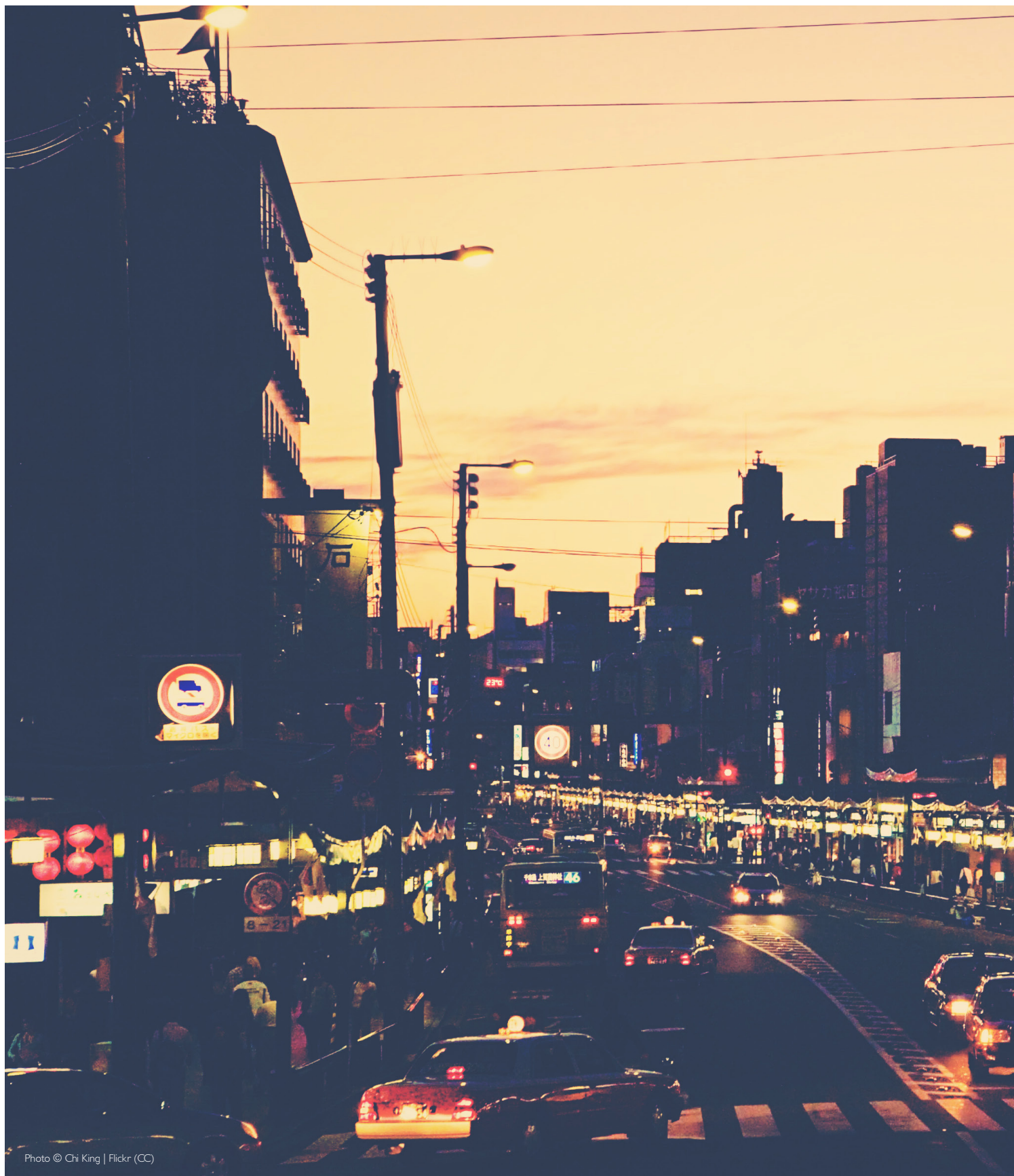


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Choosing Wisely

Weighing the influence of culture and Christ in our everyday decisions

by LINDSEY A. FREDERICK

I was 15 minutes early for my hair appointment and had some time to kill when a handsome mall salesman lured me over to his kiosk with the promise of a free gift. I instinctively reached for the little packet he waved in front of my face, prepared to snatch it and dart away. But 30 seconds later I was sitting in his salon chair as he demonstrated a high-end hair straightener on my tired, Monday locks.

“Are you prepared to be amazed?” asked Eli. I knew the routine: Salesman demonstrates beauty product. I ooh and ahh despite myself. Salesman quotes an exorbitant amount. I act disinterested. Salesman throws in free gift. I shrug. Salesman drops price. I arch a brow. We continue this game until the salesman reaches his target price and I feel like I got a good deal. But I wasn’t buying.

And then he placed in my lap a box with the shiny, pink, magic hair-wand, perched royally on a velvet cushion. My resolve withered. I mean, my hair looked awesome! But I knew I could not afford this purchase. So first I tried to barter, “I’ll write you a promotional article about this product if you give it to me for free.” Eli smiled.

“You a famous writer?” he said in his Brazilian-Italian lisp.

“Perhaps.” I shrugged. What was the harm in massaging his perception?

“You have to look good for the public? This product

Our cultural influences, whether actively or passively, are always on the ready to lure us into conformity with the promise of some really cool stuff: financial status, physical pleasure, fancy watches, and—yes—even a shiny, pink hair straightener.

is an investment in your image!” Good try, but no deal. Next, I considered what my financial icon Dave Ramsey would say, which reminded me it was budget night. I knew what I had to do.

“Eli,” I said, “This is a great product. I would love to own it, but I didn’t come here to spend any extra money; it’s just not in my budget this month.” He couldn’t argue. Pulling the budget card with a salesman is like pulling the God card during a break up—which would have been my next tactic. If not for a healthy dose of skepticism and a financial guiding principle, my pocketbook would have felt the squeeze of an unwise and impulsive decision.



The same is true for a lot of decisions we make in life. Like the salesman, our cultural influences, whether actively or passively, are always on the ready to lure us into conformity with the promise of some really cool stuff: financial status, physical pleasure, fancy watches, and—yes—even a shiny, pink hair straightener. These things aren't inherently bad, but enjoyed out of the proper context or obtained without a healthy, grounded perspective, they could be damaging to both our pocketbooks and our souls.

Cultural Sway vs. Biblical Guidance

The Bible tells us to live in the world, but not to become like it. The New Living Translation puts it this way, “Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think” (Rom. 12:2a). Some have interpreted this as an instruction to reject anything that isn't explicitly Christian. But I don't think that's what this verse is getting at. I think it means much more.

I am always amazed that something as simple and tiny as a grain of sand can create enough influence for an oyster to adapt to its environment. The grain slips into the oyster shell, causing an irritation in the oyster's soft tissues. The oyster responds by coating the irritant with the same protective substance it uses to coat its shell—a pearl is formed. The oyster doesn't stop being an oyster and change into a grain of sand, and it doesn't kick the sand out if its environment. It interacts with the stranger, adapts to its presence, and cultivates something rare and beautiful.

I think we're called to similarly participate in our culture—to recognize its presence, to realize its potential influence on us, and then to interact with it in a way that allows God to transform it into something rare and beautiful. If we segregate ourselves from culture for fear of negatively affecting our faith, how can we influence and connect with its people? How can we test our faith, understand God's will, and experience the awe and exhilaration that follows practiced trust?

Cultural influence is only part of the problem. We also have to consider our guiding point of reference. It might be time to ask yourself which influence is greater in your life—Culture? Or Christ?

Some might argue that letting culture influence our faith is to take an egocentric and pluralistic approach—just a dash of moral relativism, a pinch of materialism, and a sprinkle of entitlement and, viola! a recipe for a belief system made in our own image. That is a very real concern, but cultural influence is only part of the problem. We also have to consider our guiding point of reference. It might be time to ask yourself which influence is greater in your life—Culture? Or Christ?

Renewed Perspective


Eli the salesman tested my financial resolve by preying on my vanity and public image. He stroked my ego with a little shameless flirting and a peppering of compliments, but he ultimately didn't influence my decision-making. Because I've lately been immersed in literature on healthy financial habits and have a monthly action plan, my perspective on money is different—renewed even. This made discerning the right choice for me clear and easy. I might dream about what could have been if I'd given in—oh, the flawlessly smooth and shiny tresses!—but my tummy isn't grumbling and my landlord isn't beating down my door for rent.

We can approach every area of our lives the same way: using the Bible to both help us recognize opposing cultural influences and to make good choices that are in line with God's will for our lives.

Not all choices are as simple as this hair dilemma, however. God gives us tremendous freedom, but sometimes that freedom means wading through difficult decisions with few clear answers. What does the Bible say about finances? Relationships? Work?

Emotional health? Sex? You may not discover a black and white answer for every area, but in studying the Bible you'll learn guiding principles. 1 Corinthians 10:23 is a great one, "You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'—but not everything is good for you. You say, 'I am allowed to do anything'—but not everything is beneficial. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others." When faced with a gray-area decision, it's helpful to ask these 4 questions:

1. Does God command against it?
2. Is it physically, emotionally, relationally, and/or spiritually beneficial for me?
3. Is it physically, emotionally, relationally, and/or spiritually beneficial for others in my life?
4. Does it please or bring honor to God?

You'll still find yourself in tough and tempting situations, and I'll still want to grasp for the shiny, pink hair straightener that I really can't afford, but our new and strengthened perspective will help us straighten things out. 



LINDSEY A. FREDERICK

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Art To Glorify

How artists reveal their faith through works

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



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A Forgetful People: A Forgiving God

The benefits of Scripture memorization

by SARAH MARIANO

College gets romanticized as a time for parties and lifelong memories, and while for some that may hold true, my college experience could not be further from that lifestyle. I decided to attend a school way outside of my budget. Because of this choice, I needed to accelerate my graduation to afford such expensive schooling. Unfortunately, for some semesters this meant 20+ units, working a job, maintaining some sort of social life, working at a church, and participating in a campus ministry. Keeping up this sort of lifestyle left me exhausted and utilitarian in my approach to my faith, and because of this, it became very easy for me to justify “better using” time I had set aside for scripture memorization or recollection of the verses I had already committed to memory. Scripture should have been what I clung to in those hectic days, and I’m sure my heart and mind would have been different had I committed the words of God to my heart each day, but, in my blind self-sufficiency, I believed I did not need it.

People often quote Psalm 119 when talking about the importance of committing scripture to memory, citing the psalmist’s many promises to “store up God’s word in one’s heart” (v. 11) or to delight in God’s word (v. 16, 35). Plus, Jesus Christ, our example for perfectly righteous living, quoted scripture in all circumstances: for instance, in the wilderness while Satan tempted him. This implies that Jesus in his human life had memorized scripture. The Bible makes it clear that scripture is important, yet many of us do not find time to think about scripture, let alone memorize it. However, the Bible does not suggest this practice for nothing: there

The Holy Spirit inspired people across generations to write the words of God so that God’s people could have his words to guide them and lead them.

are real, spiritual benefits for a life and mind steeped in scripture.

Scripture is God’s word. The Holy Spirit inspired people across generations to write the words of God so that God’s people could have his words to guide them and lead them. Considering that all people have sinned and therefore deserve death, this is a pretty radical, generous gift.

Romans 10:8 says that the word is in our hearts and in our mouths. This near proximity for believers is partly due to the fact that the Bible says all believers will have the Holy Spirit living inside of them (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14), but there are other factors. There is also general revelation, the evidence of God available to all people (Rom. 1:18), that may be the explanation for how the word can be in us. However, there is another explanation that works with these other two: we can memorize scripture and effectively “hide” it in our hearts.

Scripture memorization can be abused—it can easily become a way to shame new believers, pressure performance, and overemphasize head knowledge of God. A few weeks ago, I witnessed a man quizzing one of my coworkers on certain verses, and she walked away frazzled and embarrassed because she hadn't grown up in a Christian home and didn't know even the "common" verses. Despite this, memorization of scripture is one of the most powerful ways to encounter God. In moments when we feel that we, or other people, are abusing the memorization of scripture to focus on works rather than on God's grace to us in giving his word, we must remind ourselves that the misuse of good things doesn't make those good things bad. These are his words we are learning, not the words of a lunatic or a ritualistic religious fanatic. God's words tell us how to follow him. Scripture is so important to our Christian lives that we are told, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn. 1:1 ESV). Since Jesus is God, then he is also the Word. We can assume that any words God gives us should be precious to us. We cannot ignore something so foundational to our very existence, even if we are juggling a busy schedule.

We may look at the ease with which our technology can access the Bible as an excuse not to work on scripture memorization. After all, when do we ever leave our phones at home? However, the effect of scripture in our minds is unparalleled by technology. In times of trouble, your phone will not send you a text saying, "You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again" (Psalm 71:20 ESV), but when scripture is in your heart, it will show up when you need it. God's word is living and active (Heb. 4:12), and you can be sure that it will have relevance for your needs, even the daily, mundane needs you do not think God would care about.

I have found that when I want to memorize scripture, it is helpful to read the whole passage that the verse is from first, in order to understand the context of the verse. In that way, we can avoid making scripture mean something it doesn't. Then, I find it helpful to read the verse at least three times straight through; that way I can get a feel for the rhythm of the verse.

Though we may have neglected scripture memorization, we can take comfort in the fact that God has grace for us when we are weak, and he has made us with his word written in our hearts.

This helps in recollection of the verse later, because if you can remember the general rhythm of the sentence, the words are much easier to recall. After that, I find it helpful to start with a few words of the sentence, writing them down and saying them aloud in order to incorporate both visual and auditory learning. Once I've mastered one small section of words, I add the next few words on and say the entire sentence thus far so that I can continue to learn the previous section in congruence with the new section. Each person's learning style is different, but these tips can help you approach the discipline of memorizing scripture.

Looking back on my college career, I see moments when scripture was a balm to me, an instruction, a joy, a fear, a struggle, a chore, a conviction, and a blessing. Though we may have neglected scripture memorization, we can take comfort in the fact that God has grace for us when we are weak, and he has made us with his word written in our hearts. Still, we should not let our busyness be an excuse to neglect scripture memorization; God has given us this incredible tool for knowing him better. 📖



SARAH MARIANO

Sarah Mariano is an English major at Biola University. She seeks to glorify God by communicating his truths through writing. She also leads worship and works in junior high ministries, hoping to let the Spirit work through her to create disciples. Her interests include baking, tea, good books, and spending time with her family.



WITNESS

by RAMON MAYO

What does it mean to be a witness? What does it mean to be a witness for Jesus? Many have defined witnessing for Jesus as being bold and sharing your faith. It may mean having a fish bumper sticker on your car or taking a stand on a hot-button issue. If you listen to some Christians, witnessing sounds like a covert word for being obnoxious and pushy. It sounds like doing a lot of talking and arguing and not a lot of listening. For those who are beginners in the faith or outside the church, this doesn't make sense. How can these things make you a witness for Jesus? How can you be a witness for Jesus if you haven't seen him and you weren't there when he walked the earth? What exactly is witnessing?

The word witness in the New Testament comes from a word used for those who would testify in court and place their lives on the line. They stood in court to testify and die for what they said. If they were found speaking falsely then, they were put to death. Jesus uses this word for the role the disciples would play after he ascended to heaven. In Acts 1:8, he says they will be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. They would speak truth about him even if it cost them their lives. And for all except one (the apostle John, who was thrown in a pot of boiling

oil and exiled to a deserted island), it did. They were martyred in various ways on different continents for their faith in Christ.

From this we understand being a witness as telling the truth about what we have seen or experienced of Jesus. It's about being true to who Jesus is and what he has done in our lives. It's not something you do to another person. It's more than just giving out some literature or putting a bumper sticker on your car or posting a scripture to your Facebook status. It's not just about announcing to the world you are a Christian. Being a witness for Jesus is about your life, and that may include being vocal. It is about representing Jesus with integrity wherever you are, whether you're in China or Chicago. To represent Christ is to imitate him and show his love to the world. It is when we become servants like he was. It could be something as simple as mowing your neighbor's yard when they are bedridden and sick. You can represent him by being welcoming to the new person at work. The place doesn't matter as much as the person. Some people can be poor witnesses. They speak a lot about Christ, but the way they do it is arrogant, and their lives are unChristlike. Maybe you've seen the guy on the college campus with the bullhorn calling people derogatory names and condemning them to hell. That is a poor witness. If you want to test out whether you are a poor witness or

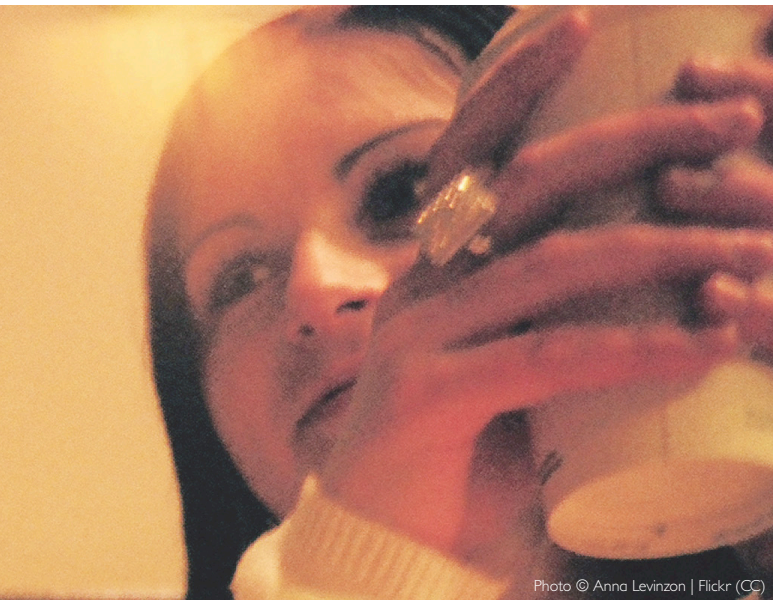



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not, just think, “Would Christ be doing this if he were on the earth today?” If not, then you probably are being a poor witness.

So it's more about who you are than what you say. It's more of a noun than a verb. The action of witnessing flows from a person's identity as a witness. That being said, it's about your whole life and not just one moment. Those who follow Jesus are his witnesses 24/7 in everything they say and do. We are called to be witnesses in our work and our recreation. Witnessing means to love others the way Jesus would. It means to give extravagantly. It means to humble ourselves and serve the poor and downtrodden—not for our own altruistic motives, but because we are apprentices and followers of Jesus. In every area of life, our actions and speech must point to who Jesus is and what he has done. 



RAMON MAYO

Ramon Mayo is an author and speaker. He resides in Matteson, IL with his wife Yvette and his three children Kaydon, Syenna, and MercyAnna. He recently published his first book, a Christian Black History Devotional, titled *His Story, Our Story*. You can check it out at Amazon.com. Also check out his blog at RamonMayo.com

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MORE THAN A FACEBOOK FRIEND

How to build deeper biblical friendships

by STEVEN BUTWELL and dedicated to ANTHONY "CLIFF" PRANTERA

Growing up, I had a best friend named Anthony. Anthony wasn't always my friend though. In fact, Anthony and I began our association as two high school kids who wanted to fight one another. Anthony used to make fun of me at football practice and would rally other guys to sing degrading songs about my last name. This went on for some time, and it was embarrassing and very hurtful. After an extended period of harassment, I remember the dynamic switching in Spanish class. I used to make everyone laugh, including him, by making a fool out of myself. The real turnaround happened when I let him cheat off my test. After that he liked me and eventually invested the time to get to know me. Unfortunately, I am not able to laugh with Anthony about this now because he passed away nearly 4 years ago. Writing this produces tears because I can't reminisce with him about how we loathed one another and then ended up becoming kindred spirits. It wasn't until we both stopped judging from a distance and started

speaking up close, spending time with one another, that we grew to be the closest of friends. It was a wild, adventurous, and a hilarious friendship. Now he is gone, and I miss my friend. It seems that it is much easier to make an assessment about someone from a distance before you truly can get to know them. The same can be said about walking with the Lord Jesus. Anyone can look at Jesus from a distance and say whatever they will, but it isn't until you get up close and personal that you truly can discover who he is. Listen to what God says: "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). The notion of not passing judgement based on outward appearances has always been with me. From my youth, my mother always did say: "Steven, don't judge a book by it's cover." I see her wisdom came from God first.

The interpretation of both appearance and heart affect how we treat our friends and they treat us. If I am honest, I often see first the wrong in how people have mistreated me in “friendships,” yet I fail to reflect on how I may have mistreated them. Sadly, my heart posture parallels a warning Jesus gives: “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Matthew 7:3-5). My actions often reflect an inward bitterness, resentment, and downright selfishness. Despite all this time spent pointing out the imperfections of others, I was not seeing the deficiencies in my own heart. I hold all of my friends to an expectation that I myself fall short of. If Jesus is our model for all perfect, pure behavior, then we need to look at how Jesus would treat his friends: he never leaves them or forsakes them. He speaks the truth to them in love, with gentleness and respect. He would, and did, lay down his life for us. Jesus washed their feet and fed them. Am I willing to be this way, do these things, to all my friends at all times? I don’t always choose to be, but Jesus does. Is it fair to place the expectations of perfect friendship on imperfect people?

Loyalty/Non-desertion

Placing two imperfect people together in a friendship will have its share of flaws. The perfect friendship is defined by the perfect God. The perfect friend is defined in the person of Jesus; he is selfless, he looks to your best interest before his own, he will never leave you, he is always compassionate, he will always intercede on your behalf and he always takes care of you. My pre-Jesus definition of a “perfect” friend was someone who never held me accountable and would allow me continuance to hurt myself, and others, with alcohol and drugs, they would even join me in the debauchery. My pre-Jesus friendships were based more on what I could get out of the friendship not so much as to what I could put in. A more selfish motive than selfless. Having walked with Jesus a decade I see in hindsight where I was wrong, and where I

THE PERFECT FRIEND IS DEFINED
IN THE PERSON OF JESUS; HE IS
SELFLESS, HE LOOKS TO YOUR BEST
INTEREST BEFORE HIS OWN, HE WILL
NEVER LEAVE YOU, HE IS ALWAYS
COMPASSIONATE, HE WILL ALWAYS
INTERCEDE ON YOUR BEHALF AND HE
ALWAYS TAKES CARE OF YOU.

had wronged others. I wasn’t a Jesus-like friend to my friends. Jesus calls us friends and assures us, “I will never leave you. Surely, I am with you until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). I can count on Jesus for anything, at anytime, anywhere. I’ve encountered countless people, yet only a select few individuals stood by and for me during important moments in my life leaving the impression of a “friend” who looked like, acted like, and loved like Jesus. Therein lies a problem: Jesus is perfect; our friends are not. Even if we want to be like Jesus to everyone we know and love, we cannot do this perfectly because only Jesus himself is perfect. The Holy Spirit has shown me that if I expect my friends to be perfect, I will always be disappointed. No human is perfect; only God is perfect. If we expect our friends to always answer, love, or act like Jesus, we are setting an unrealistic expectation, and where expectations are unmet, the chance of frustration is likely, if not certain.

Self-sacrifice/selflessness

Jesus said, “Greater love has no man than this: that he would lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). This is God’s standard for the greatest act of love we can show our friends. The ultimate way to show a true act of friendship would be to lay down your very life for your friends. The perfect model of a true friend is Christ because he himself demonstrated this act of love by laying down his life for us. By dying on the cross, he calls us friends. Honestly, there are probably only a few friends I would lay down my life for. Here’s a more pressing question: would I lay my life down for a complete stranger? God never considered you or I strangers, but “while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). What the Bible means by “ungodly” is that humans are rebellious and not inclined to act in a way that is pleasing to God. As a matter of fact, we are more selfish in our thoughts and actions than we are God-honoring. This means we need help, not from another ungodly person but from the person who was both God and man.


Vulnerability/Willingness To Be Known

Jesus had twelve disciples, but often took aside three, Peter, James, and John, to experience more intimate events. Two examples of this in Scripture are Matthew 17 (The Transfiguration) and Matthew 26 (Jesus praying in Gethsemane). In both accounts, Jesus was both vulnerable and forthcoming with Peter, James and John. Why model this? In Matthew 17 Jesus transforms his figure and is seen speaking with Moses and Elijah, he even tells them not to speak of the vision until after he rises from the dead. Jesus shared this privileged information and experience not with everyone, but with three. In Matthew 26 Jesus took aside Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (James and John), he began to be sorrowful and troubled. He said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me” (Mt 26:38). And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (Mt 26:39). Jesus didn’t express

NO HUMAN IS PERFECT; ONLY GOD IS PERFECT.

his sorrow, troubles and tears of blood from agony (Luke 22:44) with twelve disciples, but with three. Vulnerability with everyone is not safe. Some of us may want to bear all before everyone and may not have a problem doing so, but it is not a healthy practice. In the past I had the tendency to be vulnerable with too many people, and in many of these cases these people had no idea or context of where I was coming from. They simply didn’t know or couldn’t handle the real Steven Butwell, and that frightened them. Could you imagine if Jesus was transformed before all people, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light (Matthew 17:2)? Or overwhelmed with sorrow, prayed more earnestly that there might be another way to save us rather than death on a cross; and in agony his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:41-44) in front of anyone and everyone? People wouldn’t know what to do with themselves; they would have no idea what was happening. Jesus had his inner circle of Peter, James and John because Jesus understood the importance of expressing vulnerability with close friends. Not everyone is going to understand where you are coming from or what you are feeling unless you allow them to. Jesus allowed Peter, James and John to see his raw emotions exposed.

A relationship with the freedom of vulnerability can be established through the investment of time. Reach out to friends before they have opportunity to reach out to you. Let’s follow Jesus’ example: “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Isn’t this reminiscent of how we became so close with Jesus? Didn’t we get to know him more intimately through spending time reading his love letter, the Bible? By being in constant communication with him, through prayer? Not only speaking to him, but allowing him to speak back to us through the quiet times and scriptures? A genuine relationship is an investment; you get out of it what you put in. Relationships take sacrifice. They are a time-consuming work in progress. A strong friendship isn’t



RELATIONSHIPS TAKE
SACRIFICE. THEY ARE A
TIME-CONSUMING WORK
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built overnight, but the payoff is ten-fold. Trust is one of the hardest things to gain and one of the easiest things to lose, and at the center of any successful relationship is trust and vulnerability. Even our Lord Jesus was not immune from broken trust. Everyone he loved and called “friend” abandoned him in his greatest hour of need. Peter denied three times that he even knew Jesus. Judas, whom he walked with for three years—sharing meals, time, conversations, and life—betrayed him by handing him over to be arrested. Jesus experienced sorrow and is no stranger to heartbreak; he felt it, experienced it, lived it. Yet, Jesus was never deterred by heartbreak; his greatest heartbreak would have been to lose us forever, and that’s why he chose to die on the cross.

Forgiveness


Peter and Judas experienced remorse after their decisions to betray Jesus, yet both men chose different paths to reconcile their decisions. Peter embraced repentance and forgiveness; Judas clutched guilt and condemnation. Peter went on to be a patriarch of the early church; Judas went on to hang himself. Perhaps you, like either Peter or Judas, are at a crossroads concerning how to respond to betrayal. The Bible teaches us that “a brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city; disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel” (Proverbs 18:19). If I have wronged someone it is easier to breach a fortified city wall than reconcile, and resolution in the matter would be met with resistance like the gates of a fortress. If an offense is not resolved, there can be bitter consequences. Jesus teaches: “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). In laymen’s terms: forgive the offenses of friends. Make the first move and attempt reconciliation; be honest and share your heart. If an attempt was made, with no return response, then you have made a God-honoring attempt and all you can do is pray that God moves in that person’s heart. Let Jesus carry the burden; hand it over to him through prayer. Jesus will do the fighting on your behalf, and this will be through your

vigilant prayers for both the other person's and your own heart's conditions. Jesus instructs us to settle matters of anger in the heart quickly for a reason. If left unchecked, these feelings of resentment, hurt, rejection, or betrayal can lead to feelings of immense hatred or hardness of heart towards these people. You will become cold, calloused, and not caring or loving towards your friends. This is not how Jesus intended us to live with one another; on the contrary, Jesus says, "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). The Lord says, "In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:26-27 NIV). Satan can get a strong grasp on our minds and hearts if we continue to hold onto anger towards others. We cannot live the way God intends if bitterness is in our heart towards another person. If we harbor anger towards another it needs to be reconciled immediately. Through Jesus, our mediator, we can confront the issues and speak the truth in love to one another with gentleness and respect.

Genuine Friendship

Jonathan said to David in 1 Samuel 20:4, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you." It is a beautiful statement of unconditional love that only a true friend could make. An expression like this will never originate from a place of obligation. These words of commitment, acts of defending, and vows of trust flow from our genuine love for our friends and, ultimately, Jesus. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Our capacity as people to love other human beings the way Christ does comes only from Jesus having loved us first. "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:12-13 NIV). And isn't this the same act of unconditional love that Jesus demonstrated to mankind through his death on the cross? It's a flawless expression of unconditional I-love-you-no-matter-what love! Jesus lived the life that God intended for us. His is the way to God, the truth of God, and the life of God. Jonathan loved David as he loved himself. In short, anything Jonathan would have done to care for his own well-being would also have been done for David as his brother in Christ. In doing

what Jesus commands, we show that our love and devotion to him and to our friends are authentic and not something forged.

My best friend Anthony started out as an enemy. At first, I wanted nothing but the worst to happen to him. Yet, in hindsight I cannot picture my life without the impact he had on it. Anthony and I invested the time to get to know one another, developing a friendship I wager either of us wouldn't trade. We quarreled, laughed, had troubles, had fun, shared tears, and caused trouble, but within our friendship was a special bond that enabled quick, wholehearted reconciliation. Onlookers would point this out to us as well. We rarely disagreed or fought, but if we did, the quarrel ceased soon after and we were back to laughing again about how stupid the argument was. I've never had another friend quite like Anthony. I always wanted to be around him; he always made me laugh, and rarely did we not see eye to eye. I miss him and wish I could tell him today how grateful I am for the impact he had on my life and how much I cherished the time we had together. I would tell him how grateful I was that I could be vulnerable with him like Jesus was with Peter. I would tell him how I never felt betrayed by him as Jesus did by Judas. I would remind him that I could say to him with no reservations: Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you. Like Jonathan loved David, I loved my friend Anthony as I loved myself, and I would have done just about anything for him. Cherish the friendships you have today because they could be gone tomorrow. Anthony passed away unexpectedly, and I never had the chance to say goodbye to him. While we have the opportunity, let's tell the friends we have how much we appreciate them and love them, through both our actions and our words, motivated by Jesus Christ as our greatest example of a friend. 



STEVEN BUTWELL

As a pastor and missionary, Steven is zealous to share the gospel of Jesus to anyone and everyone he sees or knows. Steven is a former atheist who encountered Jesus face to face at age 19 in a vision. Since meeting Jesus, Steven has devoted his life to serving him. Steven's passions include: being a husband to his lovely wife Jamie, reading the Bible, writing, traveling, and public speaking.



MY JOURNEY WITH JESUS

Steady progress along a winding path

Written by **PETER DEHAAN**
Procured by **DELBERT TEACHOUT**

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For some, the conversion story is dramatic: a rebellious existence far from God when he rescued them and turned their life around. For others, their testimony is beautiful in its simplicity: “I was three years old when I asked Jesus into my heart.” For still others, a normal childhood in a Christian home took a detour during their teenage or college years, with a later course correction to get back on track.

My story contains none of these typical elements, lacking rebellion, simplicity, and detour. Instead, it’s steady progress along a winding path.

From my earliest memories, my parents told me that God loved me and that I’d go to heaven when I died. I believed them; I accepted this as truth. Just as I knew beyond any doubt that they were my parents, I knew my right standing with God and my eternal future with him. It is for this reason that some will say they were a Christian their entire life, and I understand why.

Growing up, I loved to read. My grandmother kept me supplied with books written from a Christian perspective. In every book, someone got “saved,” that is, they decided to become a Christian. I didn’t have a story like that, but it didn’t bother me too much – at least not at first. Yet after reading an article in *Campus Life* magazine, I began to wonder. I asked for more information and devoured what they sent. Though I forget the details, I followed their steps to make my relationship with God official – and hopefully remove my doubts.

A few years later I came across a little blue booklet written by Campus Crusade for Christ founder Bill Bright called *The Four Spiritual Laws*, which was more concise than the other material. I studied it and then prayed as they suggested – just to be sure. Then came a follow-up booklet about living the spirit-filled life. I poured over it, rushing through to reach the end. I surrendered control of my life to Jesus and invited his Holy Spirit – the part of God that lives in us – to fill me.

The warm whoosh of God's love engulfed me. Immediately, everything made sense; I possessed total clarity. It seemed I walked without my feet touching the ground. Life was grand. God became more real, vibrant, and present than ever before. However, after a few days my spiritual bliss evaporated. I returned to this tiny book to repeat the experience, but nothing happened. My spirit-filled euphoria was gone. I tossed the booklet aside and soon forgot it.


As a young adult, I spent time with a church where being able to recount the moment of conversion was critical to them. Some even insisted I know the date of when I prayed to become a Christian. Wanting to fit in, I simplified my story. "I became a Christian after reading an article in Campus Life magazine." To make everyone happy, I even embellished it a bit: "I was thirteen; it was July." They accepted this and mostly accepted me, but later I found that this particular church put Jesus in a box that excluded most of his other followers. After a while, because of this view that I disagreed with, I left in search of a more inclusive community.

Years later I began meeting with a group of believers who were more pursuant of intimacy with the Holy Spirit – God's essence that lives within us – than other churches I had been a part of. With expectation I devoured their materials. We discussed how the Holy Spirit could revolutionize our faith and church. With my friends gathered around me, I asked God's Holy Spirit to be permanently present within me, to take over my life and envelop me. They stretched out their hands and prayed for me – and nothing happened.

Disappointed, I wondered what went wrong. Only later did I realize I'd done this many years before, that the Holy Spirit had been active in my life, but I didn't realize it. I thought the supernatural insights and promptings I sometimes received were normal for all Christians. God's Holy Spirit had resided in me for years without my awareness. Now that I understood, I became intentional about listening to his whispers and following his instructions.

As my circle of faith friends widened, it grew to embrace Christians of various kinds, charismatic and unconventional, conservative and traditional, and those in between. Just as one church wanted precise details of when I became a Christian, another expected me to speak in tongues – that is, to supernaturally talk in other languages – as proof of God's spirit living in me. To their dismay, I lacked this ability, something they considered essential. Though through his indwelling presence, I often receive supernatural insight over what to pray, say, or do, I've yet to speak in languages I've never learned. As a result, some members of this group dismissed me, erecting a wall that kept me out. It's a barrier Jesus opposed when he prayed in John 17:20-23 that his followers would all be united.

More recently I studied what the Bible says about salvation, eternal life, and the kingdom of God. When people sought Jesus, he told them to do different things, but one of his most common instructions was simply to follow him. I can do that; I am doing that. I follow Jesus, unashamed and with deep passion. I love and embrace his Father, my Heavenly Father. The Holy Spirit they sent as my spiritual guide enralls me. I praise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: my Papa, Savior, and Guide.

My journey with Jesus has been long and winding. Though I'm not sure of how or when I became a Christian, I'm following Jesus, and that's what counts. 

Jesus-follower and wordsmith Peter DeHaan blogs about biblical spirituality at www.peterdehaan.com, where you can download his free e-book, sign up for his newsletter, and learn about his other writing projects.



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 pre-order his new book *The Hittite Warrior* available from Tate Publishing and released on July 29, 2014.

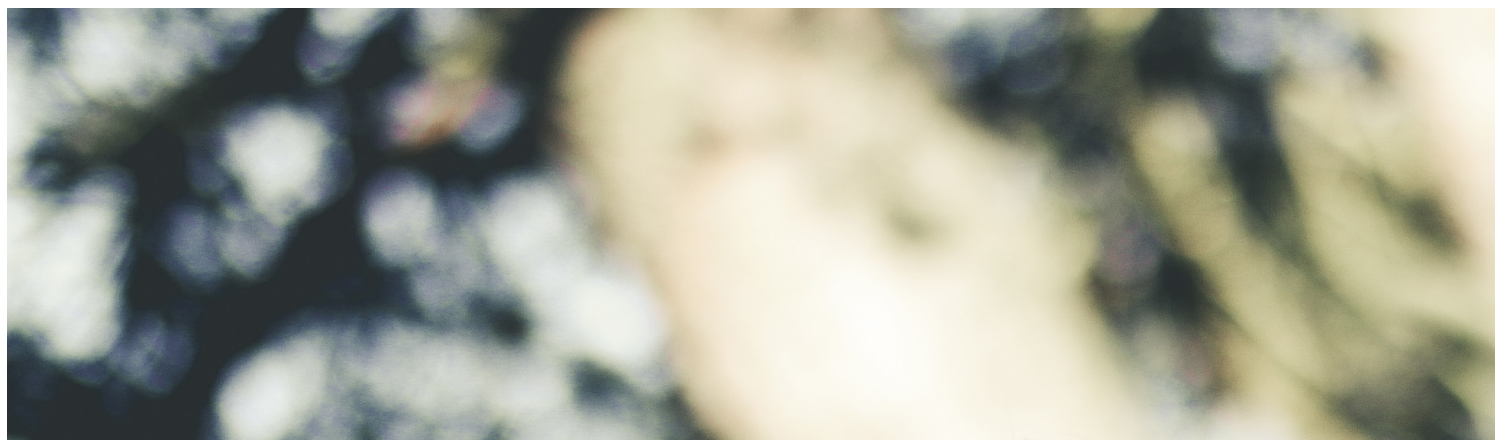


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Easter Week: What's Up With Holy Monday?

Making each day of the Easter week special

by MATTHEW HAMILTON



With this past Easter, millions around the world partook in traditions both light-hearted (Easter egg hunts, pictures with the Easter bunny) and the profoundly sacred (stations of the cross, Ash Wednesday). It is the time of year that has significance for both those that regularly attend services and those that choose Easter as one of their two visits per year along with Christmas. Christmas is an easier holiday to celebrate, as its religious aspects are comforting and relatable to everyone. It's not a challenge to give each other gifts as a gesture to a symbolic baby shower for the Christ child. Easter is a tougher sell. It is about intolerance, injustice, betrayal and death. We as a society have tried our best to make this holy time a bit more palatable with pastel colors, eggs to dye and to eat, and even crosses made out of chocolate.

Much focus is placed on the major days of Holy Week—from Palm Sunday to Good Friday to Easter Sunday—but it is important to remember that Jesus also was alive during those four days between riding triumphantly into Jerusalem and being crucified on Golgotha. It is also important for us to have the impact of those events over 2000 years ago stay with us throughout Holy week as well.

There is very little fanfare about Holy Monday. It is just a daily mass service that is held by Roman Catholic churches. This is mainly because what most consider the major events mentioned in scripture are near the end of the week with the last supper taking place on Maundy Thursday, the Crucifixion on Good Friday, and

the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, but that doesn't mean that nothing of significance happened on that Monday. In Matthew 21 there are two stories about Christ that demonstrates that even though he knew that he would be completely and physically broken just four days later, he was determined to show authority on earth to all that could see him do so.

"Early the next morning Jesus was returning to the city. He was hungry. Seeing a lone fig tree alongside the road, he approached it anticipating a breakfast of figs. When he got to the tree, there was nothing but fig leaves. He said, 'No more figs from this tree—ever!' The fig tree withered on the spot, a dry stick. The disciples saw it happen. They rubbed their eyes, saying, 'Did we really see this? A leafy tree one minute, a dry stick the next?' But Jesus was matter-of-fact: 'Yes—and if you embrace this kingdom life and don't doubt God, you'll not only do minor feats like I did to the fig tree, but also triumph over huge obstacles. This mountain, for instance, you'll tell, "Go jump in the lake," and it will jump. Absolutely everything, ranging from small to large, as you make it a part of your believing prayer, gets included as you lay hold of God'" (Matt. 21:18-22 The Message).

In this first morning after coming into Jerusalem, Jesus encounters an example of the things that can go wrong in our fallen world. What should have been a tree with leaves and fruit upon closer look had no fruit. This gives Jesus a chance to illustrate how something that does not do us good, i.e. provide nourishment, is something that can take away from things that do



us good. He could have seen the barren tree and passed by, but he used it as an example to us to take initiative to remove those things in our lives that do not nourish us and make us better. In this case it was literal nourishment, but all of us have things that prevent us from being more than what we currently are. Christ had the imperative because his time was limited on this earth. Our time may feel unlimited, but it will end eventually. If there are things that we spend time on that are not making us better, we also have the power and the choice to use our time for better things.

Another aspect to consider when learning about Jesus' reaction to this tree is to go back to what happened just the day before. This particular tree had leaves with no fruit. From afar, this tree would appear to be a healthy plant providing both shade and substance. Upon closer inspection, however, Christ shows that appearances can be deceiving, and what may appear to have purpose and substance may actually have neither. This illustration is from someone that rode into town to great pomp and circumstance with crowds bowing before him and laying down palms so that he and his animal would not have to touch the dirty ground. Even though Christ was honored upon entry, he was crucified just days later. During the parade the crowd appeared to be praising Christ, but just as the fig tree, this appearance was deceiving because they abruptly turned him over to be killed.

After this event with the fig tree, Christ made his way over to the temple. What he saw there was something that upset him greatly. "Going into the Temple he

"There is very little fanfare about Holy Monday mainly because what most consider the major events mentioned in scripture are near the end of the week."

began to throw out everyone who had set up shop, selling everything and anything. He said, 'It's written in Scripture, My house is a house of prayer; You have turned it into a religious bazaar.' From then on he taught each day in the Temple. The high priests, religion scholars, and the leaders of the people were trying their best to find a way to get rid of him. But with the people hanging on every word he spoke, they couldn't come up with anything" (Luke 19:45-48 The Message).

While this event is more well known than the cursing of the fig tree, both show how time is of the essence. Upon arriving, Jesus knew that what he was seeing was not how it should be. He saw a house of worship that was full of distractions. It was occupied by those leaders that should have been helping people to appreciate a sacred place and to draw closer to God. Instead, worshipers encountered a holy marketplace of crookedness. It really is amazing to think that these distractions that are put in place of worship are nothing new. Christ was present to make it known that what was going on was getting in the way of true

worship. It makes you wonder what distractions he sees in the way we celebrate the holy week today. The Monday during holy week does not have a special rite or ritual or even notation on the calendar like Palm Sunday or Good Friday, but the actions of Jesus on this day teach us valuable lessons. We can take the experiences he had on Monday and still apply them to our lives in new ways today. Here are some ways to make the Monday of Holy Week more meaningful next year:

Cleansing Time

We all hate spring cleaning, but it has to be done. Even Jesus did a bit of spring cleaning on Holy Monday: he cleansed the Temple. If we take our spring cleaning and do it in remembrance of Jesus' throwing out of the money changers, then we worship as we work. What is better than worshipping through our daily tasks? So grab those rubber gloves and get to purging. Get rid of the clutter and remember that Christ's example was to throw out what interferes with what really matters: our relationship with him. If you purge some useful things, take the time to donate or participate in a clothing drive.

Figs & Real Faith

Even though figs aren't in season yet around Easter, they do begin to bud. In Jesus' time, immature figs were often eaten by passerbys as a tasty snack. Any productive fig tree would have been growing tiny figs when it's leaves were in full bloom, but this wasn't the case for this particular tree that Jesus ran across. Many interpret Jesus' reaction to people who appear to be a follower of Christ, but whose life shows no sign of it. Reread the story of the fig tree and talk about how you are being changed by the Lord and how you see others being changed. What are some ways your faith may be visible to those around you and how can you be more intentionally loving others? To enjoy during your time of prayer and reflection, why don't you make some [Honey & Fig Scones](#):

Makes 12 scones

Ingredients:

2/3 cup rolled oats
1 cup all purpose flour
1/2 cup whole wheat flour
1 cup diced dried figs
1 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp cinnamon
1 tbsp sugar
6 tablespoons cold butter
3/4 cup yogurt
1/4 cup honey

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350°.

Mix all dry ingredients in a bowl.

Cut in butter with a pastry cutter until the butter pieces are no larger than peas. Or you can use a food processor and pulse the butter into smaller pieces.

Add yogurt and honey to bowl.

Stir until the mix comes together. Divide dough and shape each into a large round. Then cut each round into six wedges. Separate wedges on a baking sheet. Bake at 350° for about 20-25 minutes or until scones are golden brown and a toothpick comes out clean.

Grabbing The Gospel

Choose a different gospel every year and read it starting on Holy Monday and read throughout the week until Saturday night, then light a candle in honor of Jesus' sacrifice. Come Sunday morning, you'll have a deeper appreciation for the resurrection having walked with Jesus through Scripture during the entire week. 🕯️



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.



FREEDOM & FASHION

One organization that is helping
to decrease the exploitation of
garment workers

by **CAILIN HENSON**

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Bonnie Kim, founder and CEO of Freedom and Fashion, is passionate about ending sex trafficking and child labor in Los Angeles and around the world. She realized during her volunteer time at the organization Nightlight in Bangkok, Thailand in 2008 that many organizations who were dedicated to working to this end lack much of the resources, both material, and financial to make a meaningful impact.

Through prayer and guidance from the Lord, Kim realized that she could use her passion for art and fashion by helping to market and financially support organizations like Nightlight. Kim wanted to find a way to bring constant support to those battling the issue head on through “building a powerful multi-platform network and resourcing existing frontline organizations with service and support systems that are crucial and unique to its mission.”

To help support underserved and disadvantaged women and children, Kim also wanted to “create strategic arts-focused empowerment projects that seek to transform society to choose lifestyles that heal, empower, and liberate women and children.” That’s where the fashion comes in. As well as being a conduit for businesses and organizations with a

desire to end sex trafficking and child labor, Kim thought that she could feature cause-oriented and fair trade fashion shows to “generate awareness about human rights issues, assist groups in recruiting new volunteers, and redirection consumer purchasing power.”

One of the current projects that Freedom and Fashion is fundraising for is their “Daughter of Love” sewing and mentorship program that is partnering with AVIVA Family and Child Service Center in Los Angeles to teach 36 young women to sew and explore issues surrounding women in society. Also, Freedom and Fashion is raising money to start a resource website called “Access and Impact” to help local women’s shelters meet their sudden and immediate needs, such as extra beds, through networking with companies or sponsors who have donated so they can meet the need as quickly as possible.

If you are interested in supporting Freedom and Fashion and learning more about all their events and fundraisers that help other organizations fight sex trafficking and child labor, please visit FreedomandFashion.com 

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Equally Yoked

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE
"EQUALLY YOKED?"

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THE LOVER OF THE UNLOVABLE

Pastor Lee and the Baby Drop Box

by **STEPHANIE BAKER**

Picture this: you're walking down a semi-abandoned street. It's dark, and there are a couple of closed stores on the street. There's also a garbage bin overflowing with trash. As you walk by, you notice a lumpy blanket on the ground next to it. Curious as to why someone would throw away a perfectly good blanket, you bend down to check it out. That's when you notice the baby wrapped in the blanket.

Child abandonment comes in many different forms. In America, we often see it in the form of abortion, but in other countries, unwanted babies are left on the street or thrown away with the trash. The outcome is the same: the helpless baby dies. While many people would agree that this is a terrible issue that needs to be prevented, not many people are willing to actually do something about it. For one man, though, it has become his life's mission to care for and love as many of these children as he can.

Pastor Lee Jong-rak lives in Seoul, South Korea, in a modest, three-bedroom home with his wife. Their home appears normal, but attached to the side of the house is a drop box. It is lined with a soft blanket, heated, and has a bell that rings when the door is opened. It was designed for unwanted babies to be placed inside. Pastor Lee and his wife have two biological children, but they can have up to twenty children, most disabled in some way, in their home at any given time. In a country where perfection is admired and honored above all else, disabled children are seen as a disgrace and a shame; they are unloved and abandoned. Pastor Lee created his baby drop box

to give parents an alternative to killing their children. Unlike many orphanages, though, Pastor Lee and his wife treat the children as their own and have even adopted some of them.

Pastor Lee's journey began in 1987 when his son, Eun-Man, was born with cerebral palsy. He was told his son wouldn't live long. Pastor Lee and his family basically lived at the hospital for the next fourteen years, praying that their son would live. Eventually, Eun-Man was able to live at home, under the tender loving care of his father, but Pastor Lee's reputation as the "lover of the unlovable" was already fixed. Because of his reputation, an elderly woman asked him to adopt her own disabled granddaughter. He agreed, and soon he was taking in several orphans from the hospital. Then, one day, a disabled baby was left outside his house in the freezing night. Thus, the drop box idea was born.

Since that time, the Jusrang ("God's Love") Community has taken in nearly three dozen children—most disabled and all unwanted—and shown them the love of Christ. Their ministry proves that every single life is valuable and has a purpose. However, Pastor Lee does not think that this baby drop box is the final answer to this problem. He envisions a world that does not need these boxes. According to his website, the drop box is a "symbol of the value of every single solitary life." Arbella Studios is currently creating a documentary about Jusrang Community, called *The Drop Box*, in order to spread the word about this problem and hopefully aid in coming to a solution. If you would like to donate to this cause or learn more about them, you can check out kindredimage.org and arbellaudios.com/the-drop-box. Maybe one day we will all be able to see the value in every single life, just as Pastor Lee does. 🏠



STEPHANIE BAKER

Stephanie Baker is in her fourth year at Biola University, studying English with a minor in music. She hopes to pursue a career in writing, influencing others with the love of Christ through her work. Hailing from Georgia, she loves all things southern, including fried food, sweet tea, and her black Labrador Abby.



Studying Stewardship

The Meaning of a Sustainable Lifestyle

JESSICA DUNCAN

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Once, when I was about fourteen, I asked my mom why we didn't recycle at home. She looked at me slightly confused and answered with a question: "Because no one does that here?" Alaskans are many things: subsistence live-ers, friendly neighbors, hard workers. But one thing I was never taught growing up in Alaska was sustainable living.

Before you quit reading because you read "sustainable living," just know that I'm not talking cold 2-minute showers and a vegan diet. There is a way to live that

helps you live better, your wallet live fuller, and the world around you live longer.

I recently visited Marymount California University in Rancho Palos Verdes, California. The beautiful campus sits high on a hill overlooking the beaches of Southern California. It provides a spectacular view of God's wonderful creation. I met up with Mrs. Kathleen Talbot, the sustainability officer for Marymount. She invited me to see what she has been working on since she began working at Marymount about two years ago.

She began with a task oriented list—recycling program,

efficient automatic lights, and reusable take-out boxes for the cafeteria—to make the campus more friendly towards the environment. Talbot told me that most students had little to no experience with even a simple chore like recycling. Sadly, I admitted I was one of those students. Making an option for recycling opened up real discussion on campus about sustainable living and its benefits. Talbot said that if churches, campuses, or companies have any interest in pursuing a more sustainable lifestyle, they should begin with education. Teaching and learning are the key factors in living sustainably. If people don't know what to do, show them. Talbot says that on campus they have times in classes where she or others on the sustainability team are able to come in and talk about just what this type of lifestyle looks like and how it can be used effectively.

This hits on the first of what Talbot calls the three “C”s: Curriculum, Campus, and Community. She believes wholeheartedly that having sustainable lifestyle choices presented within the classroom context will be a further benefit compared to just making initiatives across campus. Teaching a young person to live sustainably will spread further than just a team of

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faculty on one campus ever could.

The second “C” refers to the practice of this sustainable lifestyle—Campus. Talbot has been able to accomplish much more in a year and a half than I expected. She has made a campus-wide water initiative. The water



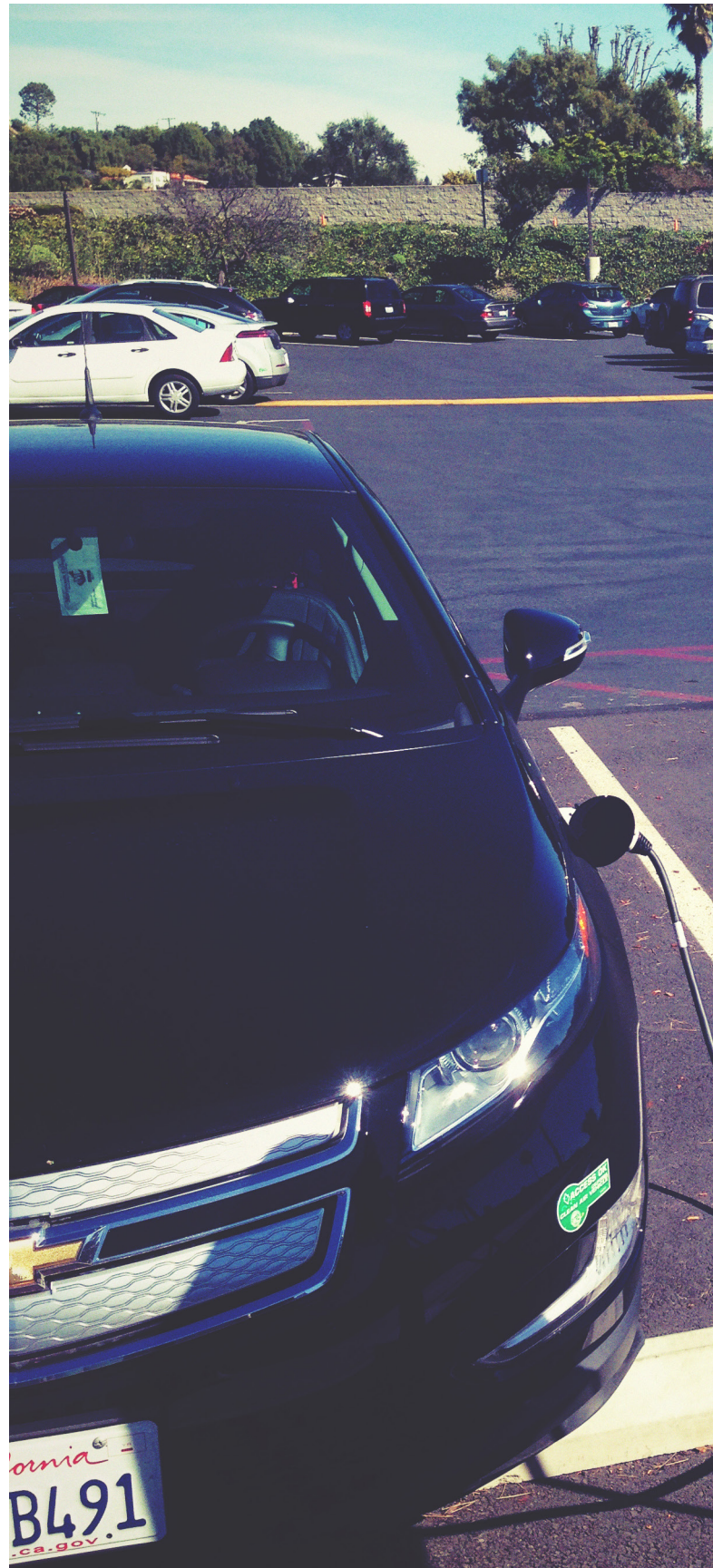
This space is the beginning of the GROW project and will in the future contain a campus garden.

fountains on campus have been updated to allow for easier water refills of refrigerated, filtered water for reusable water bottles like Nalgene. By doing this, the campus has saved around 59,000 plastic bottles as of January 2014.

A second initiative on campus is the electric car charging stations. Because Marymount is on the top of a rather large hill, gas for faculty and students often cost more than desired. To help with the consumption of gas as well as the pollution it gives off, Talbot installed a few charging stations for electric cars. She told me that several faculty have bought and used these electric cars and have saved money, time, and reduced a whole lot of pollution. Because she knew students would be less likely to have electric cars, she arranged for shuttles to and from the off-campus dorms for students. She says it has greatly reduced the amount of cars on the main campus.

The last “C”—Community—was specifically endearing to me. Talbot focused mainly on the community around the campus when she started the “Plant Operations.” This initiative affected campus life, and the rest of Rancho Palos Verdes. She began by taking out the plants around campus that were not native to the land of Southern California. Delicate flowers and rainforest-looking grass were replaced with succulents and hardy grass that Southern California is accustomed to. No, this did not make the campus look brown and dingy. Rather, it provided a bit of culture to the campus. Knowing the land and agriculture of the area you are in provides an insight to the culture that lives there. Replacing these plants resulted in a lower water bill and gave workers a break as they weren’t ripping out dead flowers every other week.

Talbot’s mentality spread to the last graduating class, whose senior gift was the beginnings of a campus garden. The garden project commenced last August when students dug up the large sand hill. All the gravel dug up was donated to the city to be used in local public improvement projects. The garden began what is called the GROW project on campus. The project is designed to 1) demonstrate more sustainable agricultural production practices, 2) connect the campus community with each other and with their food system through service and educational programming, 3) provide a space for reflection and relaxation on



Many faculty have already taken advantage of t



Photo by Jessica Duncan

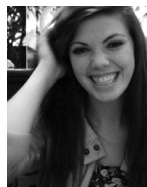
these new car charging stations around campus.

campus and, 4) donate harvest to people who are in need. This GROW project has become a campus-wide and now city-wide endeavor.

As another part of the “Plant Operations,” Talbot noticed that once a year a large hillside of campus would be contracted out and mowed by large mowers that were very noisy, messy, and caused a lot of pollution. She knew that local neighbors of the university were less than thrilled at the annual mowing so she took action to correct the issue. This past year she had the campus hire a goat farmer to bring in 300 goats to eat the grass on the hillside. Not only was this efficient and eco-friendly, but the students, faculty, and community adjacent enjoyed the spectacle. There have already been requests for the same goats to come back next year.

It is very appropriate that Talbot and the Sustainability Office’s moto is “Meeting Our Needs Now and in the Future.” The campus has learned to be more aware and active in the conversation because of the work of the Sustainability committee. Although Talbot says she has not completely transformed her community, she is on a fast track to doing so.

As a Christian, what is our responsibility in this area? Talbot says that stewardship reaches further than just our backyard. Saving energy and water saves our budget and saves up for the future. She encourages her students to think more future-mindedly. What will the next generation look like if we don’t recycle? What legacy are we leaving our children? What are we saying about God’s world through our lifestyles? Because Talbot questions and provokes these thoughts in the Marymount students, they have begun to shift their lifestyles to savor God’s creation and pass it down to the next freshman class. 🎧



JESSICA DUNCAN

Jessica Duncan is currently a student at Biola University earning a degree in Humanities-English and minoring in both History and Biblical Studies. She is passionate about writing with the purpose of reaching out to the broken and burdened. Along with her studies, she freelance writes short fictional stories.

new identity

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