

NATIVE MISSIONARIES | EQUALLY YOKED | TATTOOS & FAITH | WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

God in focus. World in scope.

new identity

Summer 2009

MAGAZINE

Breaking Bread & Breaking Barriers

OVERCOMING
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Deciphering Bible Translations

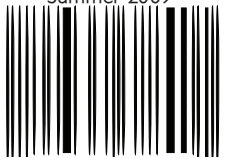
FINDING THE BEST BIBLE
FOR YOUR NEEDS

God Values Your Health

A BIBLICAL LOOK INTO
LIVING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Surfing and Serving in Panama

Summer 2009



ISSN 1946-5939

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God-Given Gifts

When I entered college, I had a hodgepodge of gifts and an undeclared major. I was a jack-of-all-trades; a good-at-everything, great-at-nothing type of person. I could do geometry and paint a portrait; I could execute a science experiment and sing harmony, but I didn't feel that I excelled in any one area above the rest. I knew that I loved being creative, but that

didn't help me identify what my career ought to be, since creativity can be applied to nearly any area.

After running out of time to declare a major, I chose something broad out of desperation to choose *something*—Business with an emphasis in Marketing (my Dad's suggestion). Even after my declaration, I still didn't know how all my gifts went together or what calling or career would truly harness them.

If you have gifts and you're not sure how they fit in or what to do with them, know that God can give you an answer and an outlet. Every gift can be used by God and be much more fulfilling.

After I graduated and the Creative Advertising path I had planned on didn't materialize, I was yet again without direction. Not coincidentally, it was at that time that God breathed into me the idea to start a magazine, something I'd always been passionate about. As I began to pursue that idea, I read a book called *The Editor in Chief: A Management Guide for Magazine Editors* by Benton Rain Patterson & Coleman E. P. Patterson. The book outlined helpful skills to have as a magazine editor and, lo and behold, there it was—a list that was made for me! The authors mention the following skills or abilities a magazine editor needs: Be something of a writer; Be a wordsmith; Have an eye for illustration and design; Understand the audience; Show enthusiasm; Apply tact in directing others; Be articulate; Have common sense; and Be (or become) a manager as well as an editor. I know for sure that I'm not always the best I can be in all areas on the list, but the list is, to me, representative of my gift mix. I remember feeling so overjoyed when I discovered this that it brought tears to my eyes. I know now that God had put the pieces together all along. My grab bag of gifts were tailored to fit the specific duty and calling of editing a magazine, even before I was aware of it.

Maybe you have a gift that God has been wanting to bring out in you. Perhaps it's been there all along, but you're just now learning how to put it to God's use. In this issue, we hope to encourage you through the stories of others who are sharing God and serving others with their gifts and their lives. You, too, can use your gifts for God; whether it's in your career that you are used to bless others, or through something you simply love to do on the side that can become a catalyst for community. (See *Surfing Panama* pg. 25)

God doesn't make mistakes with the gifts we're given, but sometimes we need a little help to find our way in using them.

Cailin

CAILIN BRIODY HENSON
Editor-in-Chief

The Elements of New Identity Magazine:

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

COMMUNITY

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

CULTURE

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

WORLD

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

ENVIRONMENT

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

WRITE TO US:

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



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FITNESS

Reaching Goals

If you're looking for motivation to help reach your goals of gaining better nutrition, healthier lives or incorporating fitness into your daily routine – SparkPeople may help. An online resource that helps you track exercise and calories incurred from each meal, with SparkPeople you can easily keep track of your goals. There is also a supportive online community, containing different common threads including the 100,000-member Christian Living message board. Individuals at all different levels, with a variety of health goals, encourage each other through discussion and faith support. Check it out at www.sparkpeople.com



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GLOBAL OUTREACH

Walking On Water

Walking On Water is a nonprofit Christian organization that hopes to spread the Gospel and share God throughout the world, through surfing. Formed in 1995, Walking On Water has since produced many films and held surf camps and other outreaches. The organization was started by Brian Jennings, a professional surfer, who desired to find a way to share his Christian faith through his passion for surfing. For more information on the films and opportunities they offer visit www.walkingonwater.org

GREEN COMMUNITIES

Sustainability

With a mission statement that says, “We teach, we plant, we create enterprise and we share the Gospel,” Floresta transforms the lives of rural families in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Mexico. The organization’s mission is to reverse the effects of deforestation and fight poverty by teaching farmers how to best use the resources available to them through sustainable farming techniques. Through the relationships that are built, discipleship is encouraged, and faith grows alongside the flora. For more information about what Floresta does for communities around the world, visit www.floresta.org



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LIVING SUSTENANCE

Time With God

If you're struggling to find time, or not sure what to read next in your Bible, RBC Ministries offers online daily devotionals that help you on your journey. Full of many resources, RBC ministries hopes to encourage and inspire people around the world to read the Bible. They have a desire to reach all nations on their mission “to make the life-changing wisdom of the Bible understandable and accessible to all.” For more visit www.rbc.org



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Summer 2009

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 3

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

God in focus. World in Scope.

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New Identity Magazine (ISSN 1946-5939, Vol. 1, No. 3) is published quarterly, four times a year by New Identity Magazine, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, P.O. Box 375, Torrance, CA 90508, United States.

♻️ New Identity Magazine is printed on FSC certified, 50% recycled paper - 10% post-consumer and 40% pre-consumer waste.

new identity
MAGAZINE

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MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

REFERENCING THE BIBLE:

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

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Angel Food Ministries

Angel Food Ministries is one of the leading ministries providing nutritious meals to families who would otherwise be in need.

We don't have to look far to find an inspirational ministry with open arms and opportunities to give to others in need—Angel Food Ministries is right around the corner. Angel Food Ministries is one of the leading ministries providing nutritious meals for anyone who needs them. This ministry started in 1994 on the back porch of Joe and Linda Wingo's farm in Monroe, Georgia. At that time, local factories were closing, leaving the Wingos' friends and others in their community struggling financially to meet basic needs. Joe and Linda recognized the need, and Angel Food Ministries was born.

Starting humbly with two people with open arms and an inspiration to change lives, Angel Food Ministries has seen tremendous growth in the past 15 years. The ministry now provides support for people in 36 U.S. states, feeding over 500,000 families each month. They also assist over six million individuals annually—including singles, seniors, and those on disability—to meet their basic needs.

According to their website, Angel Food Ministries provides “restaurant grade” meats, frozen vegetables, fruits, and other items which they acquire through purchasing arrangements with the “best producers/vendors of high quality, ‘name brand’ foods.” Through the relationships they have established

with these vendors, they have buying power, which allows them to purchase items at costs unavailable to the general public and pass the savings on to people in need. The ministry is able to provide food items at about half price, enabling people to get what they need affordably. There are no pre-qualifications for receiving assistance, assuring that anyone in need can quickly benefit from Angel Food's programs.

Angel Food Ministries now helps individuals in 36 states and feeds over 500,000 families each month. All because of two individuals with open arms and an inspiration to change lives.

Angel Food Ministries reports that hunger affects over 37 million Americans each year. Even having a job does not guarantee that people will be able to provide enough food for themselves and their families; four out of ten people who need help are employed. With the global economic woes, an increasing number of individuals are struggling to make ends meet.

Joe and Linda started with a simple idea—to help these individuals in need—and opened their arms with what they had at the time. Then, they simply took the next step in making their vision come to life. Millions of lives

have changed as a result of their inspiration to take that next step. We too can be a part of this influential ministry. Angel Food Ministries has opportunities for churches to become host sites; individuals can also volunteer at those host sites. For more details on how you or your church can join Joe and Linda in making a difference, one meal at a time, please visit www.angel-foodministries.com —Jeanne Henry



Derrick Engoy

Spoken word

I am accustomed to coffeehouses, bars and clubs. As a writer, I frequent local coffeehouses to share my latest spoken word pieces, usually carrying the messages of hope for injustice and choosing to live a life that focuses on change that has eternal implications. As a member of the secular hip-hop band Elements of the Outer Realm, I also take the stage at bars and clubs in the Los Angeles area to deliver the same messages of hope and change.

Surprisingly for most, I am also a pastor at a local church in Harbor City, California.

Writing and music have always been a part of my life, even long before I chose to follow Jesus. The difference between then and now is that today I utilize my writing gift to poetically preach and musically magnify the message of Christ in environments that usually slam the door shut on the religious community. I choose to share my music and poetry in these venues, as opposed to church settings, because the people who usually gravitate toward the club scene are the very people who need to hear God's message of love, hope and change. Without condescension, I transform the stage into my pulpit and the audience becomes the congregation. And, because my writing style is filled with imagery and metaphors, those who normally would not be caught dead inside the walls of a church easily digest the spiritually-charged poems and songs.

God has given each one of us a gift. From writing to wrestling, or from music to miming, each talent we possess has the sole purpose of blessing the overall progress of humanity. I believe that when we use these gifts outside the realm of edifying others, we fall into the perpetual downward spiral of selfishness. And because I am so passionate and spiritually driven to do what I do with the pen and microphone, I further believe that it is essential to the human story that followers of Jesus continually look for opportunities to put their gifts into practice.

I have been following Jesus for over 15 years, and one observation I have made seems to be something most new and veteran Christians share—most find it difficult to share their love for God and their faith in Jesus with others. The fear of coming off as too pushy usually becomes the silencing factor for many Christians. However, I have discovered that by utilizing natural gifts and talents to share the Gospel, the opposite effect occurs. Rather than leav-

ing a sour taste in the mouths of my audiences, most are left with a whetted palate for deeper conversations about faith and spirituality. Although words are the driving force behind my evangelizing vehicle, using your own God-given gifts and talents can share the Gospel in a loving way, rather than shoving it down people's throats.

Simply put, when you are doing what you love, backed by the power of God, the journey of sharing your faith becomes a lot less complicated and far from being a rehearsed speech that outlines the four steps to salvation.

With that said, as fun and as exciting as it is to evangelize in this way, I have certainly had my share of challenges. The band I play for is a mixed bunch. Although more than half of the band does follow Jesus in one way or another, a couple of the other members adhere to the Buddhist faith or polytheism. Because of barriers like this with band members and with the audiences we perform for, I have had to make an extra effort to build trust in these relationships. However, through the course of many religious discussions, trust has been built over time, and our friendship has only deepened. In addition, because of our shared journey, the Buddhist and the polytheist are more open to the message of Jesus than in previous years.

Another challenge I face when performing in different venues is the temptation to conform to my surroundings. I am constantly challenged to be light in areas of darkness and to not let the darkness consume me. Even as a pastor, and having all the theological training and spiritual experience that comes with the job, I can easily succumb to the environment if I am not careful. Prayer, being immersed in God's Word, and daily accountability become more vital. These practices not only help in tough environments, but help bring out the simple reality that God wants to live and breathe in every single human being. We just need to let Him in.

Either way, challenges or victories, I love what I do. When I grab the microphone and jump onto the stage, there is a beautiful collision of God's spirit and the willingness of a fallen man to be used that produces a magnetic message that even the world's staunchest atheist would find hard to resist. —Derrick Engoy 🎤

To read or hear some of Derrick Engoy's works you can visit www.derrickengoy.com, or keep up with his band at www.elementsofthe-outerrealm.com



Equally Yoked

What does it mean to be “equally yoked?” And why is it important to your Christian walk?

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers [do not make mismatched alliances with them or come under a different yoke with them, inconsistent with your faith]. For what partnership have right living and right standing with God with iniquity and lawlessness? Or how can light have fellowship with darkness?

What harmony can there be between Christ and Belial [the devil]? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

What agreement [can there be between] a temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in and with and among them and will walk in and with and among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. – 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 (Amplified Bible)

Though Paul was speaking less about marriage and more specifically about community issues as a whole in 2 Corinthians 6 (though it would likely apply to marriage as well), this passage has instead come to popularly represent the bonding of Christian faith in couples. The popularity and usage of 2 Corinthians 6 as indicative of a marriage relationship and the importance of having a shared faith is extremely common. In fact, this passage has given rise to a buzz phrase which describes a marriage or dating relationship with a fellow believer as being “equally yoked.”

“Equally yoked” may be a peculiar phrase for those unfamiliar with the Christian faith. However, for those who have decided to live their lives dedicated to Jesus, the phrase has a very special meaning and influence in their lives.

For California State University Fullerton student Jeremiah Dobruck, being equally yoked is something that carries great weight on who he is and who he will become. “It means to be with someone and that you both are heading in the direction

of being the same person; [growing to be more Christ-like],” he says. “Both of you are dedicated to the same way of life. That will make things a lot easier.”

For Christians, those who are equally yoked are like-minded individuals who are dedicated to living their lives by the teachings of Jesus Christ. Nancy Thyme, publisher of The Lomita-Harbor Connection, explains her interpretation of the phrase: “If you have two oxen pulling the plow and one is stronger than the other, things won’t get done right. It is two people [pulling equal weight] toward the same direction.”

The task of finding such a partner is easier said than done, even with the large Christian communities that exist. To facilitate the search, websites such as www.EquallyYoked.com were created. According to its website, Equally Yoked is a “personal service [providing] a safe Christian environment for like-minded Christian singles to flourish and develop successful relationships.” Unlike typical online dating services, the website does not set out or promise to find its subscribers romantic relationships. Rather, the service aims to connect single Christians with others that share their

values and beliefs, with the understanding that relationships may very well blossom if both partners are equally yoked and share a commitment to Jesus.

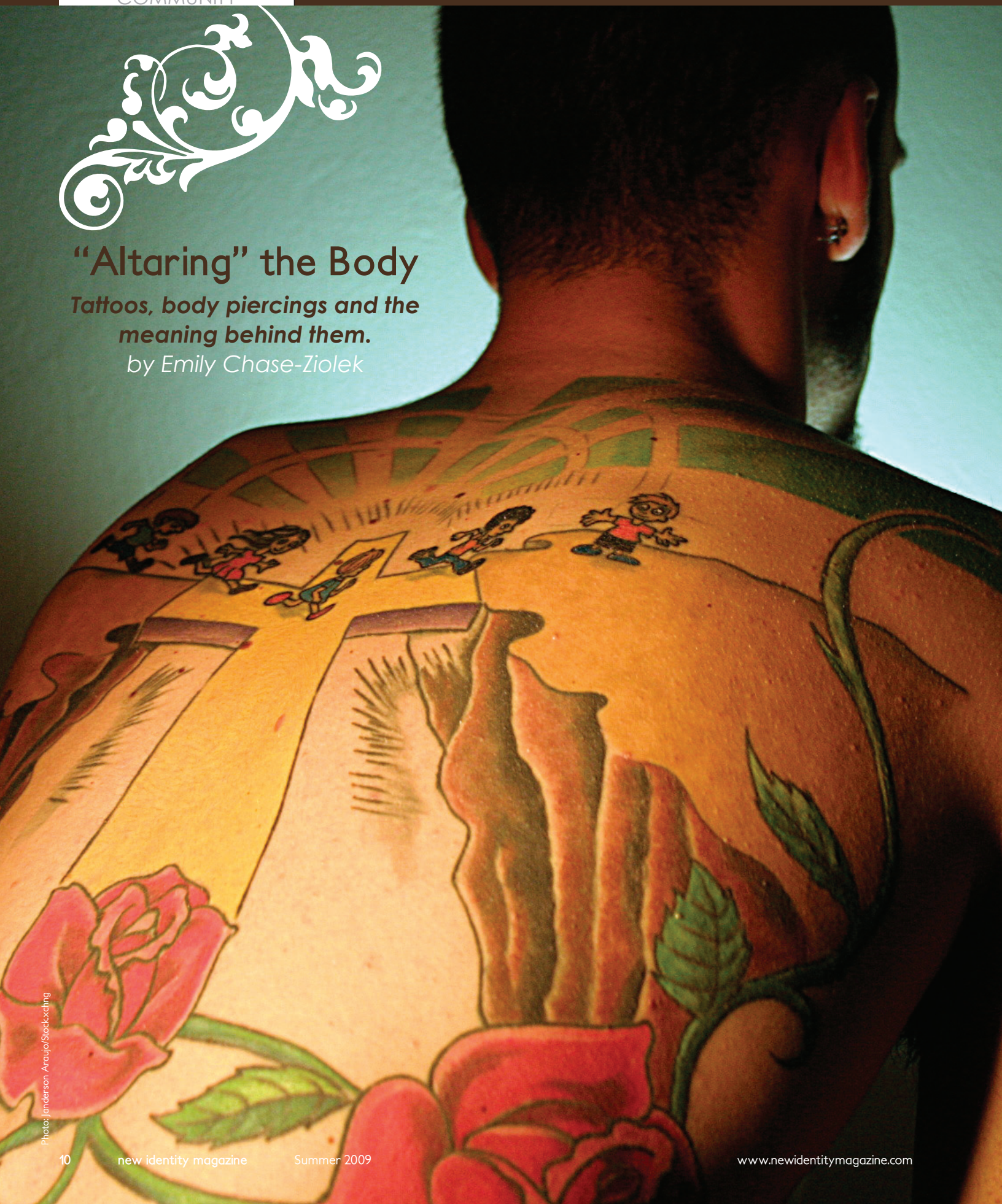
For people like Dobruck, being equally yoked is the difference between pursuing a long-term relationship with a person and simply stepping away. “For me, it’s totally a requirement,” he says. “In a romantic relationship, we are talking about marriage, in which two people are becoming one person. My life is dedicated to following Jesus. If someone else is not dedicated in that same way, we will butt heads and head in the opposite direction eventually.” —Cristian Vasquez



“Altaring” the Body

Tattoos, body piercings and the meaning behind them.

by Emily Chase-Ziolek



T

heresa Peters's parents told her that she didn't need any more holes in her head. With two earrings in each earlobe and her cartilage pierced, she had already exceeded the typical teenage freedom to alter her body. So when Theresa, now 23, who hails from Greendale, Wisconsin, came home with a new stud on her nose, her parents questioned her decision—and her motives. Contrary to her parents' assumptions, those motives, Theresa explains, had less to do with rebellion and more to do with her faith.

Faith motivates many Christians who choose to pierce and tattoo their bodies. Some choose symbols that are outwardly Christian, like a crown of thorns or an ichthus, a symbol resembling a fish that early Christians used to identify themselves to each other. Others choose tattoos or piercings that have symbolic meanings not exclusively associated with the Christian faith, but still carrying deep personal significance. Their tattoos and piercings represent significant events, spiritual awakenings, or commemorate influential people in their lives.

Faith motivates many Christians who choose to pierce and tattoo their bodies. Some choose symbols that are outwardly Christian, like a crown of thorns or an ichthus, a symbol resembling a fish that early Christians used to identify themselves to each other. Others choose tattoos or piercings that have symbolic meanings not exclusively associated with the Christian faith, but still carrying deep personal significance. Their tattoos and piercings represent significant events, spiritual awakenings, or commemorate influential people in their lives.

Paul Huck, 21, from Elmhurst, Illinois, got his first tattoo after his grandfather died. He thought extensively about the decision. "I didn't want to get a tattoo just for getting a tattoo," he says. At the same time, his grandfather's death had shaken Paul and he wanted to do something in response. For Paul, the tattoo he had etched into his side is "like a memorial" to his grandfather. Paul's tattoo is in the shape of a shamrock. "It's supposed to represent a bagpipe," says Paul. "At the funeral they played the bagpipes. It was so cool," he says, smiling at the memory. At the bottom of the image is the date of his grandfather's death. Though Paul's memorial may lack the grandeur of a granite statue, it too will remain, printed in his skin, always with him.

In the book of Joshua, God tells His forgetful people to remind themselves of what He has done. As they are walking through dry land across the Jordan River, because God has miraculously made a path for them, He tells them to pick up stones to remind themselves and their children of the things He has done. Physical reminders can help those who tend to forget the faithfulness of God. Similarly, those who mark their bodies can use their physical markings to recall what is important.

After a life-changing summer, Amber May, 22 from Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, never wanted to forget what God had done for her. "I was learning who God wanted me to be," she says, "it was like a transformation." Amber realized that she had been hurtful to others and saw God change her in remarkable ways. "I realized I needed to change my life to honor God," she says. After two years of contemplation, Amber chose a butterfly tattoo for her back to represent her drastic change. To Amber, the butterfly symbolized something ugly being completely made over into something beautiful.

In the book of Joshua, God tells His forgetful people to remind themselves of what He has done. He tells them to pick up stones to remind themselves and their children of the things He has done. Physical reminders help those who tend to forget the faithfulness of God. It is the same for those who mark their bodies to recall what is important.

Though Amber knew the significance of her tattoo long before she got it, sometimes the meaning of tattoos and piercings comes after the fact. Ashley Schindel, 23, of Seattle, Washington, got her tragus (a part of the ear) pierced because she liked how the piercing looked. "It was kind of cool, something different," she recalls, and since her friends were going to get piercings she decided to do likewise. "We all said, 'Hey, let's go get piercings,'" Ashley says. Now, when she reflects back on her piercing, she associates it with a meaning that was not originally intended. "It's kind of like, I'm finally completely on my own," she says, "I don't have anything holding me back." She adds, "I'm hopefully living what God wants me to do rather than [following] my own objectives."

While the meaning of some tattoos and piercings are fluid, others have intentional and obvious spiritual significance. Theresa's nose ring that surprised her parents was a physical expression of her faith. The idea of her piercing was born as two friends sat together

sipping bubble tea—a popular Thai milk tea with tapioca—and discussing life. "I was really unsure about my future," says Theresa, "I knew God had a plan for me, I was just really unsure what it was." When the topic changed and Theresa mentioned that she had always wanted a nose ring, her friend told her the story of Rebekah, found in Genesis, chapter 24.

The basic story is this: Rebekah is chosen to be a wife for Isaac, which means that she will have to leave her life, home and family as she knows it. Theresa

explains, "at this point Rebekah is facing a huge decision. Do you say yes to that? That's a big deal. She decides to just let go of any fear she has about the situation and let God be in control." Like Rebekah, Theresa decided to let God be in control of her future, uncertain as it seemed.

A nose ring was one of the gifts that Rebekah received when she decided to leave home and become Isaac's wife. "You can say it's a stretch," Theresa admits, "my mother told me it's a stretch." But the significance of the nose ring is no stretch for Theresa. "I know in the end I'm going where God wants me to go," she says, "I may have to leave everything to do what God wants me to do but I'm going to follow Him."

While the potential spiritual significance of tattoos and piercings is obvious, the question remains, why choose something so permanent? People commemorate significant things all the time with haircuts, new clothes or jewelry, among other things. The answer is that tattoos and piercings are appealing because of the very fact that they are permanent. "A tattoo stays with you forever and is a reminder," says Amber, "it's not changing; it's always there."

The permanence of tattoos means that in a sense they are unavoidable. "In my experience it's so easy for me to hide my faith if I want to," says Paul. "Some people wear crosses, some people wear bracelets, but I wanted something that I didn't have the option to

"In my experience it's so easy for me to hide my faith if I want to. Some people wear crosses, some people wear bracelets, I wanted something that I didn't have the option to take off." –Paul Huck



Photo: Janderson Araujo/Stockxchng


take off." Paul got his second tattoo, a cross with the Hebrew characters for the word "servant", as a reminder of how God changes the way he lives his life. "It just serves as a reminder of what I need to be looking for and looking towards each day," he says. In situations where he might be reluctant to share his faith, Paul says, "you've got two options: (A) stand up for your faith, or (B) back down, because you're embarrassed, ashamed, or you just don't want to deal with the drama." For Paul, having a visible tattoo means that he is more likely to choose option A and stand up for his faith.

Despite the spiritual basis for some tattoos and piercings, these permanent body markings can also be seen as antithetical to the Christian faith. Often cited is 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...Therefore honor God with your body." The difference between these two perspectives lies in how one conceptualizes a temple. Paul Huck argues that "temples and synagogues and churches are all decorated with crosses and pictures and symbols." He sees tattooing his body as similar to putting a stained glass window in a church—not necessarily a bad thing. Decorations in places of worship, as well as tattoos and piercings, could be beautiful and meaningful; they could honor God instead of disregarding Him.

Another common argument against tattoos can be found in the Old Testament when Moses gives a long list of regulations to the people of Israel including Leviticus 19:28, "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD." There is continued debate among Christians whether this regulation was due to the significance tattoos held in Moses' time (such as being

used in religious practices that had to do with other gods) or if it's meant to be a lasting commandment.

Body art, in the hearts and minds of Christians who practice it, harmonizes with the Christian faith. "I wouldn't get a tattoo that didn't have meaning to me," says Amber, "I want my life to be honoring to the Lord." Theresa notes that "a lot of people tend to associate body modification with rebellion...maybe they just automatically assume that one leads to the other." She adds, "It's really, to me, about the intent behind the action...we're all wired differently. We all have different ways of dressing, talking and reminding ourselves of God's presence."

For those who have them, tattoos and piercings can serve as reminders. Paul says his tattoo is "a reminder that I'll see everyday, no matter what." Theresa says, "It's not something I think of every time I look in the mirror, [but] if I'm just sitting around worrying about life and playing with my nose ring I'll be like, oh yeah, I have this." In one way or another, permanent markings on the body serve as reminders that might not otherwise exist. For Christians who have tattoos and piercings and have found meaning in them, these symbols signify something far deeper than what meets the eye. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily Chase-Ziolek grew up in the city of Chicago but currently loves the countryside of Wisconsin where she gets to teach kids outdoor education at a Christian camp. She loves to express herself through art and dance (though she is not particularly talented at either one) and hopes that wherever God leads her she will be impacting people's lives in a way that helps them to know who Jesus is.

DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES, Part 3

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

To some extent, Christian denominations can be seen as ways to “do church” differently. Usually, what sets denominations apart is their take on certain biblical subjects, beliefs, interpretations, and practices. Variations on a recipe, if you will. In some denominations, the style of the church gathering is different; others have different perspectives on topics such as the meaning of baptism or the proper response to contemporary cultural issues. In the last issue, we highlighted the Methodist and Presbyterian denominations and tried to sum up some of the differences, for a quick overview. This issue we highlight the Seventh-day Adventist and Anglican/Episcopalian denominations. Remember, only you and God can decide the denomination in which you best fit, but it's important to know what different denominations believe and practice.

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Notable Distinction: The Seventh-day Adventist Church denomination, considered a branch of Protestant Christianity, came out of the 19th-century “Millerite movement”. William Miller, a Christian convert, was convinced that the Bible contained information regarding the timing of the Second Coming of Jesus and he tried to predict this date. Though his specific predictions were incorrect, his followers continued with the belief that Christ would return very soon and called themselves Adventists. The Adventists later gained a member regarded as a prophet, Ellen G. White, whose teachings inspired growth in the church. She emphasized education and health and was an advocate of vegetarianism. In addition to their view that the end time is near, the Adventists also observe the Sabbath on the seventh day, Saturday. This distinction led to the group later being known as the Seventh-day Adventists.

In addition to their Adventism and focus on the teachings of Ellen G. White, the Seventh-day Adventists also believe that after death, a person has no conscious form of existence and must wait until the resurrection, otherwise known as the Second Coming of Jesus or the end of time, before they arrive in heaven or hell.

Written Statements of Beliefs: The Seventh-day Adventists support that “the Bible is the standard that all teachings and experience must be tested.” (Adventist.org)

Baptism: “Seventh-day Adventists practice adult baptism by full immersion in a similar manner to the Baptists. Infants are dedicated rather than baptized, as it is argued that baptism requires consent and moral responsibility.” (Adventist.org)

Notable Seventh-Day Adventists: Paul Rusesabagina (hotel manager who saved many from genocide in Rwanda), Magic Johnson (professional basketball player), Brian McKnight (R&B singer)

For more information about the Seventh-day Adventist denomination or to find a church near you, visit www.adventist.org

ANGLICANS or EPISCOPALIANS

Notable Distinction: Anglicans, often referred also as Episcopalians, can be described as halfway between Catholicism and Protestantism. Based on the tradition of the Church of England, Anglicans are not dependent on the Pope and are in most areas Protestant, but retain many Catholic forms of worship and hierarchy. Within the church, there is much freedom and diversity with regards to reason, tradition, and scripture. For some, the spectrum of differences within the denomination can lay the ground for a distinction between Anglicans and Episcopalians, but there remains no defined or official separation in the denomination with regard to which name is used.

Written Statements of Beliefs: “We understand the Apostles’ creed as the baptismal symbol, and the Nicene creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.” (AnglicansOnline.com)

Primarily, the Book of Common Prayer is used in ritual, but there continues to be much diversity and many different prayer books are available today. Anglicans regard the Bible as truth and use the Apocrypha (a set of religious texts that does not appear in the Protestant Bible) only for edification.

Baptism: Supports infant baptism as “marking the start of a journey of faith, which involves turning away from the darkness of self-centeredness, turning towards Christ and becoming a member of the local and worldwide Christian family.” (COFE)

Notable Anglicans or Episcopalians: William Butler Yeats (Irish poet), C.S. Lewis (essayist and novelist), George Washington (first U.S. president), John Wesley (founder of the Methodist movement)

For more information about the Anglican or Episcopalian denomination or to find a church near you, check out The Church of England at www.cofe.anglican.org

Sources: ReligionFacts.com, Adherents.com

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"J

herefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; per-

severance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the

Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

- Romans 5:1-5 (NIV)

In his home country of Japan, Yasushi Mikami was a traditional hardworking Japanese man. He was focused solely on his professional and school work, and he didn't believe in or even think

of God. As an atheist, Yasushi never believed anything unless there was physical proof that he could see with his own eyes. His least favorite subject to study or talk about was history, and his only concern was today, and maybe tomorrow. Although he would think of his friends and family every once in a while, most days and nights Yasushi was consumed by his work; though had no clue what all his hard work was for. Slowly, he realized that a paycheck might not be the sole source of his satisfaction, and that there might be more to

life than just work.

Inspired by his favorite singer, Cindy Lauper, Yasushi decided to move to Los Angeles on his birthday, April 5, 2006. Settling in to his new environment, he reached out and quickly made many friends, some of whom were Christians. Over the next two years, he began to investigate God and made time in his busy work schedule to attend a church regularly, listen to sermons and wonder about God. After hearing an inspirational teaching by one of the pastors, Yasushi felt the Holy Spirit move for the first time, and felt led to accept God into his heart and follow God. Finally, in June 2008, Yasushi was baptized.

In his home country of Japan, Yasushi Mikami was a traditional hardworking Japanese man. His life was consumed by his work. He didn't believe in or even think of God.

With God, Yasushi's life is different. He is the first Christian in his family, and now his family and friends are constantly in his heart. As a part of a close community of Christians, Yasushi loves to discuss Jesus with everyone. God's hope and peace inspire him, as does his favorite book of the Bible, Romans. Yasushi even likes to read and

discuss history—particularly the history of the Middle East—and is currently studying the Hebrew language. One of his passions is to think of new ways to bring atheists to Christ, and though he is still a hard worker, Yasushi knows he has something important to work for. Having experienced God personally, Yasushi Mikami can truly attest that we don't always have to be able to see – to believe. —Jena Campion



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IN PERSPECTIVE

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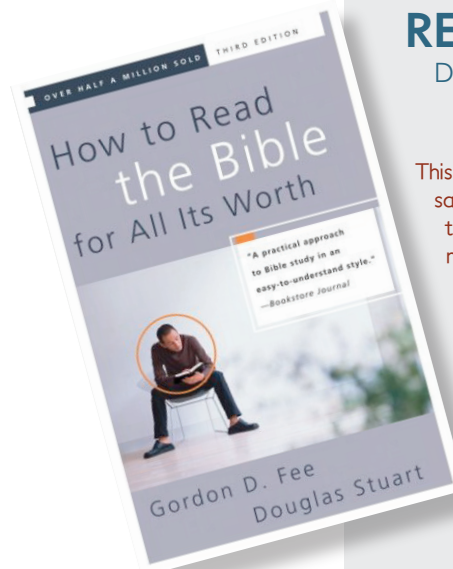


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TThere are numerous translations of the Bible out there, and finding the best choice for yourself can sometimes be overwhelming. We tried to sum up a few of the most popular versions out there to help you navigate a version to try, whether a more literal or a more interpretive translation. You should try to find one with a vocabulary and style that suits you. It is, however, best to refer to multiple translations to get the full breadth of what is being said in the Bible as both a literal (word-for-word) translation and interpretive

(thought-for-thought) translation each have different pros and cons. Having variety also helps highlight some of the tricky spots translators wrestle with. If there are crucial differences in certain words or phrases between translations, it can show you where the original language was especially difficult or controversial and give you insight into what was really meant when it was written, without having to know the original languages (Hebrew or Greek) yourself. We hope you'll gather knowledge from many translations and can find one or a few that will help you learn God's Word

and grow in your faith on a regular basis. —Cailin Henson



The King James Version (KJV)

Translation: A word-for-word translation, in 17th-century language. Most difficult to read for some, using "thee", "thou" and other Old English words.

Best For: Good for reference and study. The King James translation has been around for centuries and is considered by some to be a classic. However, the foreign-sounding vocabulary and word order can make it a challenge to read for those brand new to reading the Bible. In addition, knowledge of the language found in the original texts has grown over the years since the King James Version was first translated, so much of the vocabulary has become dated.

Example: (Colossians 2:1-3): For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

RESOURCE

DISCOVER FOR YOURSELF

This is just a representative sample of different Bible translations and is not meant to be extensive. For help with reading your Bible, an excellent resource for further discovery is *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart.

The Bible is a harp with a thousand strings. Play on one to the exclusion of its relationship to the others, and you will develop discord. Play on all of them, keeping them in their places in the divine scale, and you will hear heavenly music all the time. –William P. White

The Amplified Bible (AMP)

Translation: Amplified word meanings in addition to word-for-word translation that helps describe words in more understandable ways.

Best For: Deeper understanding. This heavily interpretive version offers some unique insight into the text that can be valuable. However, it can be better to read this version in addition to a different translation to help you come away with your own interpretation, instead of relying solely on the interpretations of other people, no matter how wise and versed in scripture they are.

Example: (Colossians 2:1-3): For I want you to know how great is my solicitude for you [how severe an inward struggle I am engaged in for you] and for those [believers] at Laodicea, and for all who [like yourselves] have never seen my face and known me personally. [For my concern is] that their hearts may be braced (comforted, cheered, and encouraged) as they are knit together in love, that they may come to have all the abounding wealth and blessings of assured conviction of understanding, and that they may become progressively more intimately acquainted with and may know more definitely and accurately and thoroughly that mystic secret of God, [which is] Christ (the Anointed One). In Him all the treasures of [divine] wisdom (comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God) and [all the riches of spiritual] knowledge and enlightenment are stored up and lie hidden.

The New American Standard Bible (NASB)

Translation: Word-for-word translation, in formal modern English style.

Best For: Good for study with reliable representation of literal meanings, but it is not gender-inclusive and can be awkward at times because of its simple straightforwardness.

Example: (Colossians 2:1-3): For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The New International Version (NIV)

Translation: An easy-to read modern English version that blends word-for-word and thought-for-thought translations.

Best For: A good all-purpose version, more accurate than other thought-for-thought translations, but less eloquent than other word-for-word translations. This version offers many the best of both worlds, but still needs to be read alongside other translations.

Example: (Colossians 2:1-3): I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

New Living Translation (NLT)

Translation: A thought-for-thought translation using common everyday language.

Best For: A revision of The Living Bible, the NLT is good for getting fresh insight into the text. However, some argue that the thought-for-thought translation can lead to some inaccuracies, and it is best read in addition to a more literal translation.

Example: (Colossians 2:1-3): I want you to know how much I have agonized for you and for the church at Laodicea, and for many other believers who have never met me personally. I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

English Standard Version (ESV)

Translation: A word-for-word translation that tries to be more mindful of style and readability.

Best For: Essentially a modern English version of the King James Version, the ESV offers a word-for-word translation with improved readability by balancing a little added style with its literal translation.

Example: (Colossians 2:1-3): For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The Message (The Message)

Translation: A paraphrased version that uses modern language and is as much interpretation as it is translation.

Best For: Getting overall understanding of events and ideas. Not recommended for studying in depth because the translators take great liberty in using modern, more culturally relevant language that was not available when the Bible was written. This version is an easy read, which can help you get a good handle on principles that you can later study more fully.

Example: (Colossians 2:1-3): I want you to realize that I continue to work as hard as I know how for you, and also for the Christians over at Laodicea. Not many of you have met me face-to-face, but that doesn't make any difference. Know that I'm on your side, right alongside you. You're not in this alone. I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God. Then you will have minds confident and at rest, focused on Christ, God's great mystery. All the richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are embedded in that mystery and nowhere else. And we've been shown the mystery! I'm telling you this because I don't want anyone leading you off on some wild-goose chase, after other so-called mysteries, or "the Secret."

culture

Christian Perceptions

HYPOCRITICAL

TOO FOCUSED ON GETTING CONVERTS

ANTIHOMOSEXUAL

SHELTERED

TOO POLITICAL

JUDGEMENTAL

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

We decided to get your feedback on the validity of such perceptions and asked you, in the second of this series, are Christians too focused on getting converts?

Next we'll take a look at Christians being "anti-homosexual." Write to us and share your thoughts, opinions and experiences regarding the Christian "anti-homosexual" perception at letters@newidentitymagazine.com

"Personally I don't think they're too aggressive. Of the handful of born-again Christians that I know, none of them try to push their beliefs on me. They just tell me, 'this is what I believe.' The same with Christians that were raised in the faith, they express what they believe but respect what my beliefs are." - Robert Sanchez

"In my experience, yes they are pretty aggressive. The born-again Christians that I have met have always tried to convert me. With Christians who grew up in the faith, I haven't had that experience. I used to date a guy whose dad was a pastor and his family was very relaxed about it." - Joana Gutierrez

"I think that it depends on the person, but on the whole, I've never felt too uncomfortably hassled. In the past I've had a couple people make comments that relate to how they feel personally. Someone will say something like, 'Just don't get pregnant before you are married.' Or maybe I'll get a strange look because I've taken the Lord's name in vain. But mostly it's a non-issue. Because I'm a singer, I've worked in many churches, and for the last four years I've cantored at Corpus Christi Catholic Church. Despite the fact that I'm not Catholic, I've been accepted into the community and am a respected and honored part of the church. No one asks if I'm Catholic. No one pressures me into taking communion. Mutual love and understanding on both sides makes everybody happy." - Savitri Labesart

ARE CHRISTIANS TOO FOCUSED ON GE

"It is my belief that the way many modern Christians have gone about the process of converting non-believers to Christianity, is unfortunately backwards. Throughout my youth I was exposed to various different religious, spiritual and philosophical perspectives. If you had asked me what I thought about attending a Bible study group or a 'Christian youth group' I might have made a comment about 'Bible thumpers.' There is a reason for this and there is a reason why I now consider myself 'religious' instead of 'spiritual.'

"Spiritual' has become the trendy term for knowing that you believe in a higher power but you don't want to deal with the pressure, guilt and all that comes with actually belonging to a church and Christian community. It's fashionable to be spiritual, and not to be religious. There are unfortunately a misguided few in the world who have gone out and through a hell, fire and brimstone approach have frightened off many who still consider themselves to be Christian; but who aren't practicing Christians, or those who like myself once, considered themselves to be spiritual. These are the folks I would refer to as 'Bible thumpers.'

"I don't care what denomination you belong to, I'm convinced the way one converts a non-religious individual to Christianity is through kindness, compassion and service. I decided to become Catholic because I was 'converted' in one of the sneakiest ways possible. I was told that I was needed! The most wonderful woman I know happens to be the chapel choir director at the University of Portland, a Catholic school in Portland, Oregon. She, knowing I was a singer in the music department at the university, asked me to come and help out in the choir because they needed a strong women's section for the Easter service. Time after time, she would run into me, give me the hugest hug, and tell me they needed me in the choir. The thing about singing in the choir at church is that...you have to be at church service to do it! After graduation, I started to reflect upon what was missing from my life, that I was no longer doing, but that had made me feel complete while I was a student. It was going to Mass! I started going again, and immediately began feeling fulfilled again. I decided at that point, it was time for me to really commit. I joined the RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) at the University and was baptized and confirmed the following Easter.

"I firmly believe the way to convert others is through the true Christian way, by helping others, and being an ambassador to our faith. One should never be made to feel that they need to defend their beliefs, or lack thereof, but be given opportunities to explore Christianity in a more profound way; to be able to ask questions, debate and become involved without the pressure of conversion." - Lara McGee-Williams

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Surfer
Comic
Cyclist
Vegetarian
Composer
Teacher
Poet
Chef
Golfer
Carpenter
Dancer
Hiker
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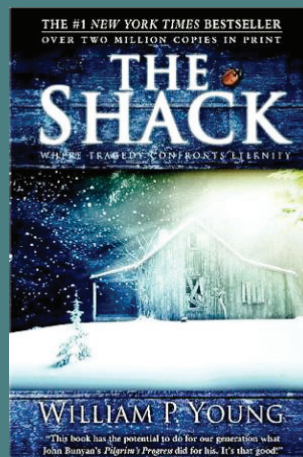
With the popularity of portable MP3 players and the easy access to high-speed internet connections, podcasting has quickly integrated into various aspects of our everyday lives. Podcasts can be found for different topics, from entertainment to news and information. Fortunately, the Christian community is taking full advantage of this on-the-go audio trend. In addition to iTunes, popular sites such as Godcast1000.com and PodBean.com offer thousands of Christian podcasts covering a variety of topics. Some popular podcasts include *A New Beginning with Greg Laurie* at Harvest.org, *Joel Osteen's Weekly Audio Podcast* at JoelOsteen.com, and *Joyce Meyer's Today's Podcasts* at JoyceMeyer.org.

One of the best-kept secrets in Christian podcasting is *Missionary Talks* at MissionaryTalks.com. The podcast focuses on helping those considering missions work to realize that missionaries from around the world are "normal people fulfilling God's will in their lives." It strives to be a source of encouragement to missionaries as well as an inspiration to others as they discover how God is working around the world. *Missionary Talks* is an innovative and inspirational podcast offering personal glimpses into reaching others internationally. —Jeanne Henry

BOOKS FOR NOVEL READERS

THE SHACK BY WILLIAM P. YOUNG

Review by Jena Campion



"All I am telling you is that reconciliation is a two way street, and I have done my part, totally, completely, finally. It is not the nature of love to force a relationship but it is the nature of love to open the way." - God (*The Shack*, p. 192)

At heart, *The Shack* is a love story between God and the main character, Mack. Mack, a devoted family man, takes his children on a family vacation with expectations of fun and relaxation. However, he is soon faced with a horror beyond comprehension. His youngest

daughter, Missy, is kidnapped and brutally murdered, and Mack struggles to return to his normal life without her. Soon after, what he calls "The Great Sadness" sets in. However, through all Mack's hardship, God has not left him. Mack receives a mysterious note from God, gently challenging him to return to the titular cabin—the scene of the crime. He obeys God's calling with reservations, and Mack spends the weekend that follows in profound intimacy with God.

William P. Young's thoughtful story, and the underlying philosophy of God, speaks directly to the soul. Through the various experiences and discussions Mack has with God during his weekend at the shack, Young addresses different sensitive and thought-provoking issues in Christianity. The plot is suspenseful yet sensitive; some sentences can make you simultaneously laugh and cry. Experiencing Mack's journey with God at the shack inspires us to take pause and spend a weekend with the Lord.—Jena Campion

JARGONBORN AGAIN

DICTIONARY OF CHRISTIAN JARGON FOR THE ORDINARY PERSON

Have you ever been lost and realized the whole time that you were driving the wrong way? I remember getting up on the morning of my wedding day with my best man and hopping on the freeway. Little did I know that I was in for the most embarrassing driving moment I have ever experienced. We had been in the car for about an hour just outside Columbus, Ohio when it became apparent that I did not recognize any of the landmarks or signs on the road. It was really embarrassing because I had told my wife the night before that I knew the way and I didn't need any help getting to her alma mater, where we would soon be married. Once I figured out that we were going the wrong way I had a choice to make. I could keep going and act like nothing was wrong with the direction I was headed in, or I could turn around and get back on the right track.

This is the meaning of repentance. It comes from the Greek word *metanoia*, which means "a change of mind." This change is something that affects our whole lives as we go from one direction—away from God—to another—towards Him and His Kingdom. It was because of my pride and self-sufficiency that I started off in the wrong direction on my wedding day and that is usually how it happens in our spiritual lives. The only way I could get back in the right direction was to make a U-turn. Sometimes this can be embarrassing. In our spiritual life, this can be so drastic that it leads us to tears and mourning because we are so ashamed of the fact that we had been headed in the wrong direction for so long. The main thing is that we turn around—with or without any tears or mourning—and that's repentance. —Ramon Mayo

Photo by Galin Henson



DANIEL LIRA

From the flowing prairie to the ebbing waves; this pastoral intern talks about his gifts and calling.

Interviewed by Jena Campion

What is your occupation?

I am a Service Technician at California State University, Long Beach.

Do you have any hobbies?

In Illinois [my home state], it was fixing cars, and enjoying the pleasure of cars. In California, in these times, it's too expensive, so I am trying a new hobby, surfing.

What is your average day like?

I wake up, spend some time in prayer, go to work, after working at my part time job I come home, eat lunch, study VLI (Vineyard Leadership Institute), set up my small group teaching and other church type activities, eat dinner, more studying, and finally go to bed.

Vineyard Leadership Institute is a two-year seminary (a college that prepares students to be pastors or ministers) program aimed at and catered to those who have jobs, bills to pay, and families. It counts as one official year of seminary, but takes two

years to complete. It's almost like part-time seminary.

Why did you choose to become a Christian?

I was Christian longer than I remember. I was raised in a Christian family. I first started walking with Jesus around 16 years old. Why? Because you know, you are a teenager with a lot of stresses going on like college prep, jobs, and friends. You think things are bad, so you turn to God. In my emptiness and hardship, I turned to God, and He met me there.

It wasn't easy though. Actually, it was very difficult for the first three years. It was a complete roller coaster. It had a lot of ups and downs. Then after three years, God brought a lot of stability and growth to my life through making Christian friends. In the second year of college, I started to get more Christian friends and I was like, "Whoa, this is what Christian people are like." I thought they were really dorky. I didn't trust Christians. Once I saw the value of being around Christian friends, God moving from one place to the next, God always brought me to a higher level. God had me move out to California, for example, the purpose of which I still don't know yet. God always leads me and provides for me, and here I am.

What are your gifts? Where do you think you are being called in ministry?

I believe something to do with teaching. I am naturally talented in that area. Certainly by the gift and grace of God. Basically teaching or preaching, maybe both. And more recently in the past six months, I have been having a burden for lost people. Somehow reaching out and investing in the lost people who don't know Jesus. But for right now, more in depth in the area of teaching/preaching and possibly evangelism.

I also have a passion for prayer, healing and prophecy. My first experience of prayer was pretty miraculous in my old church in Southern Illinois, Vine Community Church, at a conference. It actually was really scary. It was my first month going to the church, and I was the first person they called on to get prayed over and had a prophetic word for. Someone told me what God was doing in my life and they were correct. It scared me. I didn't believe them at first.

So I took about eight months to investigate spiritual gifting, especially prophecy. I aligned it with the Bible and felt compelled to understand it and use the gifting. When used correctly, it is very helpful with people getting to know Jesus and receive healing. I had a friend in college that was having a very rough time and I wanted to pray for him. I went to my small group and asked the group to pray for him and to help me be able to pray for him. Ever since then, I have been able to pray for people. I would love to be used, if it's God's will, to have a big impact regarding the gift of prayer and having a Jesus-centered focus.

What is your favorite scripture or character of the Bible?

I don't have any favorite scriptures; I really like the whole Bible. But when I first started walking with God, I liked Jeremiah 29:11 a lot, which is basically "don't be anxious about anything." I don't really have a life scripture, where the person's whole life is based around that scripture. My favorite character, by far, is Joseph, in Genesis. I really like Joseph's story because there are many powerful truths illustrated in his story. For example, we can see how someone can do everything right and still have it hard in life. We see how doing the right thing doesn't always yield positive results. The fact that "the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper" is hard to swallow but it is true many times; Joseph's story shows us this. However, God is still going to have His way in people's lives. No one can thwart His ultimate plans. He can even take the bad things that have happened to us (abuse, pain, and other wounds) and use it for good: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good."

What the hardest thing to discuss, like the most fearful, taboo

topic to talk about with non-believers or new believers?

For me, the most difficult topic is to talk about God's justice. Many people who read the Bible will see God as mean. They see God of the Old Testament as different than God of the New Testament. In trying to explain things in the Bible to people, such as Sodom and Gomorrah and the Flood. People think, "If God is a God of love then why did that happen?" Trying to explain that to those people is a difficult task to do. You are trying to show the overall picture, but they only see things in a small way. They don't see why God would do that. It's like a parent with a kid; the parent disciplines the kid but it's out of love, not wrath.

What do you like and dislike about the Christian faith?

The thing I like most about the Christian faith is love. Love is in many places. Christians look so happy and seem to love each other. The thing I don't like about Christians is just the opposite. You see a lot of judgment of other people and legalistic behaviors

and thoughts.

What would be your encouraging or warning advice for new believers?

A warning is "Welcome to the battlefield!" As a Christian, you will be experiencing the most hardships of your life, with basically a target painted on your back. There is an enemy out there named Satan, who wants to hit that target. Life will be harder—not worse, but harder. You are living in a cosmic battle. An encouragement is God will always love you and not leave you.

Any concluding thoughts?

To the non-believer, no matter where you are in life, God wants to be a part of that through Jesus Christ. Get to know Jesus. Meet Christian friends and ask them for their testimonies. For the Christians, never give up. It's too easy to stop walking with God, but keep at what you started doing. Give him every part of your life—he wants to be a part of it. 🙏

Photo: Wen-Yan King/Flickr (CC)



GOSPEL FOR ASIA

by Leila Evangelista

He was only a teenager when he answered God's calling. Feeling an overwhelming, unconditional love for the physically and spiritually impoverished population of India, he stood on an elevated rock amongst a bustling Bangalore bus station. He was only 16 years old, skinny, too young to even be part of the mission teams that proselytized in Northern India, and painfully shy. Yet he still stood on that mound, responding to the distinctive voice of God. He sang a familiar children's chorus and then began preaching to a crowd of strangers, allowing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to fall from his lips like cool water to a thirsty desert. This same teenager later studied under a scholarship at the Criswell Bible Institute in Texas

and became pastor of a small Dallas church at the age of 23. But working amongst the wealth and affluence of America's population led K.P. Yohannan back to his original call—to serve India and the desperate needs of Asia. His pastoral experience in the U.S. provided wholeness to his vision, focusing on the local church to take the forefront in God's master plan for worldwide evangelism.

K.P. Yohannan and his wife Gisela founded Gospel for Asia (GFA) in 1979. GFA is a Christian missionary organization that shares the Gospel with those living in the 10/40 Window, a region containing the largest population of people still unreached by the Gospel in the world. As a pastor, Yohannan realized the missing link in mobile missions was permanence. These regions



Photo: Kristina/Flickr (CC)

needed church planters to tend to the seeds of faith and help them take root, flourish, and bear fruit. Inspired by God's clear voice, the young couple began funding the missionary movement out of their own pocket, completely changing their lifestyle to save funds for the movement. Eventually, Yohannan developed a missionary sponsorship program and began single-handedly touring the country to raise funds for his cause. Through continuous prayer and perseverance from Yohannan and Gisela, the native missionaries, and mission supporters, the organization has expanded and grown.

There are currently 67 Bible colleges in South Asia, training and instilling in 9,000 men and women the goals of GFA and the skills to spread the Gospel to the unreached. The three-year training course, set directly in the mission field and taught in the local language, lends plenty of on-the-job training with church planting and outreach. Studying in the field gives students the opportunity to experience the more difficult truths about missionary life: persecution and hardships. The students are trained for a commitment to the reality of this ministry, while maintaining the spiritual nourishment and encouragement of experienced missionaries.

The uniqueness of GFA's approach is its focus on using native missionaries to evangelize. The ties of missionaries within history have placed a general cloud of negativity that can overshadow the many accomplishments. The affiliation of Christian ministries with the Western world, colonization, or even abusive religious leaders in the past has created suspicion and resistance within unreached populations. GFA found that native missionaries could better overcome these negative perceptions and work more effectively for outreach and church planting. The 10/40 Window, a term coined by Christian missionary strategist Luis Bush, is a region in the eastern hemisphere located between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator. The 10/40 Window includes Northern and Saharan Africa, as well as much of Asia. Though many diverse peoples live in the region, the area in general is characterized by limited resources, widespread religious persecution, little religious freedom, and a multitude of socioeconomic challenges; all of these hinder the spread of the Christian message. K.P. Yohannan has focused GFA's efforts on this area.

The advantage that native missionaries have over Western missionaries is immeasurable. Living and knowing the

social customs and language, or at least having a more heightened awareness of them, allows native missionaries to assimilate and communicate more easily within regions in this Window. When Western missionaries come to work in foreign lands, there are usually extra costs to provide some semblance of Western lifestyle they are accustomed to and for language learning, as well as a higher cost for travel. Native missionaries are not only cost-effective, allowing more resources to go elsewhere in the ministry, but they live and breathe at the level of those that they serve, eliminating the social barriers that Western missionaries often face. Currently, GFA reaches populations in India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.


Gospel for Asia was the result of divine intervention, complete obedience to God's plan, as well as familial and communal support. However, the ministry continues to need help, and there are many ways to offer support. Check out www.gfa.org for ideas on how to be involved in this important mission. Some of these ideas include:

- Becoming part of GFA's prayer team which sends e-mails on monthly prayer points along with emergency prayers. Even without signing up, simply keep GFA in your prayers.

- Become part of the GFA's Volunteer Network and encourage in-country support for the native missionaries abroad.

- Become a GFA intern, staff member, or enter their School of Discipleship in Texas, working as an essential link to missionaries and partners around the world.

- Build awareness in your own communities and churches by informing others of GFA's sponsorship programs, fundraising activities, and gift collections including, Bridge of Hope, Push the Pedal, and Harvest Foundation. K.P. Yohannan's book *Revolution in World Missions* is easily accessed online and is free for distribution. Also, if you have a website, you can add Gospel for Asia as one of your links.

Simply put, if we were to harness the ideals of Gospel for Asia, one of the great things we can do to support the mission is to be a native missionary in our own city. Share with the spiritually starved wherever you are and serve those that lie in your "window". 

The affiliation of Christian ministries with the Western world, colonization, or even abusive religious leaders in the past has created suspicion and resistance within unreached populations. GFA found that native missionaries could better overcome these negative perceptions and worked more effectively for outreach and church planting.

SURFING AND SERVING IN PANAMA

by Todd Greco



It all started with a revelation, a vision that exceeded the previous capacity of my heart. I sat on my board, waist high in water, facing the horizon as the sun descended into its perfect setting, as if to acknowledge my thoughts. I was seeking, perhaps convicted of my past habit of seeking inwardly instead of outwardly.

I was growing tired of using surfing as a comfortable tool to only further my own relationship with our loving Creator. I wanted something more. I wanted the global opportunity to combine the passions of my heart that could possibly be the gateway to leading others to Christ through the means of surfing. The ocean covers almost 80% of this earth, and I began to again look out into the vastness of its entirety. There was such a presence in the water that evening. I began to notice the auspicious advantages that surfing possessed and the way in which it could be utilized as a mechanism for ministering to others.

Such thoughts gave birth to Da G Surf Ministry, a specialized team of surfers willing to bring together their desires for both God and surfing to extend the kingdom of heaven into a worldwide serving ministry. Unlike on our previous surf trips, where we only soaked in the good surf and amazing sunsets the exotic destinations offered us, we now had a passion to serve the communities whose waves we were only borrowing. We wanted to lend a hand to show how grateful we were for the creation God so diligently made for us.

Our first team consisted of four wild personalities: myself, Mark Chu, Steve Ettlin, and Michelle Gleason. Having assembled a team, we now needed a destination. Through prayer, God connected us with the Sunrise Surf Lodge, a ministry already established in Panama by Huntington Beach surfer Aaron Wilkins.

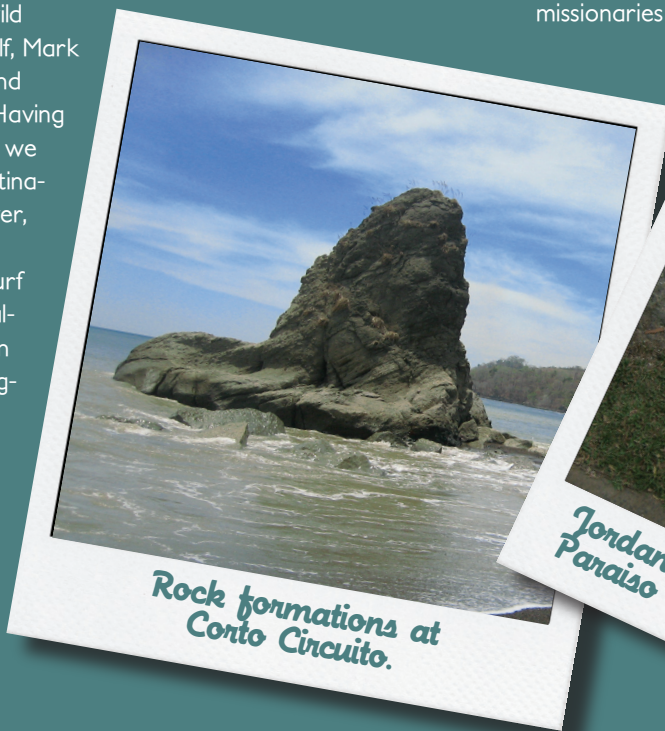
Bags packed and tropical wax in hand, we boarded a plane to Panama City, where we were greeted

with everything we had hoped for: warm weather, beautiful scenery, and friendly Panamanian faces that we felt we had already known for years. We wasted little time getting acquainted with the country as we quickly loaded our car for the first surf excursion of the trip. On the six-hour drive to Cambutal, we quickly found that the chemistry of our ministry team was going to be extremely dynamic, an essential quality to any type of serving. Everyone got along well, and we all recognized that we shared a common goal—loving and living for a God that gave to us first.

By the end of our weekend trip, my skin was a good indicator of how much we had surfed. Thanks to the combination of good surf, warm water, and blistering sun, I developed an irritating sunburn. Though it angered me at times, the sunburn was a small price to pay for experiences I would have on the trip.

Monday arrived, and we were anxious to see what God had prepared for us. I don't think any of us were quite ready for what would lie ahead of us. Early that morning, I was introduced to what would become one of my best friends of the trip—a shovel.

We labored in the hot sun for hours every day of the week on a project that Aaron had put so much of his faith into. In the beautiful community of Paraiso, Aaron and his collaborator George, one of Panama's most well-known architects and who happened to be a believer, shared their vision of saving an old house from demolition. With the help of the accompanying work of short-term missionaries like ourselves, and full-time missionaries like Jordan and Lindsay, a couple who



Rock formations at Canto Circuito.



Jordan repairing surfboards in Paraiso before a surf weekend.

SURFING AND SERVING IN PANAMA

by Todd Greco



Todd, Steve, and Mark in Corto Circuito

Photo by Michelle Gleason

moved to Panama from North Carolina earlier in the year, Aaron and George hoped to transform it into a home base for Christian surfers and ministries coming through Panama.

It was a big dream with big tasks that would require an incredible amount of work. However, we could not have guessed that this project would soon provide the foundation for our humility to be challenged. I can't say that I've met too many people who enjoy toiling in the scorching sun. Furthermore, I know with 100% certainty that I have never met a surfer who enjoys it, especially when perfect offshore waves are constantly whispering your name from a distance. None of us had ever experienced such laborious tasks as installing plumbing, mudding, cementing and shoveling, all in the unbearable heat.

The labor turned out to be a blessing. As a group, we immersed ourselves in prayer, daily devotionals and encouraging each other, through scripture, to get through the hard work. In our journey, we had somehow forgotten that we were servants before surfers, and we constantly pleaded with Jesus to remind us of this daily.

Near the end of our trip, we got the relief of getting off work early to attend one of the first meetings of Christian Surfers Panama. We contributed our advice on building its chapter



Photo by Steve Ettlin

Michelle in Corto Circuito with a Greco surfboard in tow.

MISSIONS WORLD

It was touching to hear His praises being sung and spoken in so many different languages, revealing how precious His diversity truly is. God is truly not confined to the bubble we regretfully and subconsciously place Him in. His work manifests itself everywhere, in every language, every country, every city and every small town.

and even had the privilege of playing worship for them. At this meeting, I was blown away by God's divine appointments. He spoke to us through the broken, heavily-accented English of an El Salvadorian professional surfer named Christian. Christian read from Paul's letter to the Corinthians reminding them that we run this race in anticipation of our prize, an eternal prize. Although we were seeking that prize in the form of waves in a more demanding contemporary mindset, God showed us that even though the race might be long and hard, we have eternity to look forward to. We all felt God's presence that night. It was touching to hear His praises being sung and spoken in so many different languages, revealing how precious His diversity truly is. God is truly not confined to the bubble we regretfully and subconsciously place Him in. His work manifests itself everywhere, in every language, every country, every city and every small town. It was quite emotional to be conscious of that.

The next day was our last day of work, and it no longer felt like merely labor, but a rewarding project. At the end of the day, we were able to take a step back, peek in at the house we helped build and thank God for using us as a missionary tool to help further build His kingdom here on earth.

Our hard work complete, we closed out our trip at one of the best surf spots in all of Panama, a place called Santa Catalina. It was here that we realized that our trip was complete. It merited every sense of the word "creation." The people, places, and sights we had seen came together as a masterpiece God so magically put together. As if to graciously thank us for our diligence in Him, He again blessed us with near perfect ten-foot offshore waves that would make any surfer glow.

We boarded the plane the next day with a whole new perspective on missionary work. We were grateful once again that, although sometimes life plans may not go the way we had envisioned them, we don't dictate our own agendas. Thankfully, we have a loving God who so divinely takes care of us and the plans He has for us.

Looking back on our ten days in Panama, we saw the kingdom of God advance in great numbers, and also saw the growing maturity of our relationship with Christ. We will continue to pray for such a great nation that played host to what was, for some of us, the first surf missionary trip of our lives. We are pleased to say *gracias por todo, Panama.* 🇵🇷



Photo by Michelle Gleason

Jordan and Aaron repairing boards in Paraiso.



Photo by Todd Greco

Michelle and Lindsay working on the missionary base in Paraiso.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Todd Greco is a 24 year old owner and shaper of Greco Surfboards. He started "Da G Surf Ministry" because not only does he enjoy traveling the world surfing, he felt that surfing could be used as a communicative tool to minister to people globally about the good news of Jesus Christ. A fun fact about Todd that nobody knows is that he plays professional baseball in Italy 6 months out of the year.

world



Photo: Bug-e-Lug (c)/Flickr (CC)

SOUTH AFRICA

Breaking Bread and Breaking Barriers

by Leila Evangelista

my arrival in Durban, South Africa was a very particular brand of disorientation. Nothing seemed familiar. Rand. Paranoia. Koombis. Xhosa. The remnants of apartheid. Humidity. Food-stealing monkeys. All of it felt foreign. I decided to study abroad for one year in college to get some field research experience in another country. But underneath the academic pretense, the truth was I'd never spent any real time away from home. An avid reader of news and travel magazines, and having aspirations of working in international development, I only knew the outside world through the words of others. This trip was my opportunity to palpably change my worldview; I hoped to broaden not only my horizons, but my heart—to let a place change me.

But no matter how excited I was about this trip, I could not help but feel lost and uprooted. The unfamiliarity was overwhelming and my own memories of home seemed to slip away. I craved something familiar and comforting. This longing for a sense of home was not fulfilled until I attended my first Mass service. Still unaccustomed to deciphering the South African accents, I pathetically and unsuccessfully understood the Bible readings or homily. Then came the universal Mass parts that were the same no matter what country I visited. The songs and prayers were said in Zulu or Xhosa, but I knew that while they were singing Baba Wethu, we were all actually saying the Our Father; different words, same reverent prayer. This was my first feeling of home. It was a clear collision of familiarity and unfamiliarity, meeting to move my soul in a new-old experience.

Navigating eventually became easier. The foreignness and differences began to melt away, and the clarity of God's united world rested my mind and heart. But a couple of weeks into the trip, another hunger pang came over me—specific, unrelenting, and unexplainable. I was enjoying the delicious fare of Durban cuisine: spicy Indian curries, briyani, and rotis; stewed meats, samp, and vegetables coupled with some form of mash maize like phutu; biltong, koeksisters, and bunny chow. But still, there was a gnawing void inside, begging for only one thing: a big bowl of pho with a warm French baguette. This popular Vietnamese noodle soup of rich broth, flavored with cilantro, lime, and chilies is not from my childhood, nor does it trigger profound memories. I grew up eating a mix of Filipino and American dishes, a cross between Dinty Moore Beef Stew alongside pinacbet and rice. But this bowl of soup inexplicably puts me at ease.

An avid reader of news and travel magazines, and having aspirations of working in international development, I only knew the outside world through the words of others. This trip was my opportunity to palpably change my worldview; I hoped to broaden not only my horizons, but my heart—to let a place change me.

Unfortunately, the dish's popularity had not yet reached Durban. I allowed the idea of this luxury to wane, hoping that it would go away, until finally, I had a fantastic idea—I would make my own bowl of pho.

Internet recipes were plentiful, but finding certain ingredients proved challenging, and I had to improvise substitutions. Nevertheless, there was a giddiness surrounding this meal, a call for celebration. I decided to invite the others from my floor to share in the feast. My floor was a diverse mix of local students; international students from Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and Kenya; and myself, a Filipino-American. I worked on the soup for hours. Unexpectedly, the others decided to join in the cooking frenzy. One of the women taught me the art of cooking phutu—only a wooden spoon can be used to mix it. Another boiled some madumbes, while still another made her favorites: baked beans and popcorn.

Before this, I had only attempted short conversations with my floormates in an attempt to cross language and cultural barriers. But in that kitchen, I began to know them despite those barriers. We casually lounged around the communal space, swapping stories of home, unfolding our lives starting with the simple comfort of the foods before us. This was one of my favorite moments during that year in South Africa. The pho itself did not come out very well. But what could have been merely a culinary failure opened the door to many more fellowships that would follow.

During my time abroad, I had many memorable experiences. I went ponytrekking through the beautiful country of Lesotho, rafting at Victoria Falls, and toured the entire coast of South Africa. While these moments were undoubtedly exhilarating, it was my experience fellowshiping and cooking in my floor's kitchen that I felt most at home. 🍲



Breaking Bread

Great bread recipes to make and enjoy with others.

Matebelekwane

Sweet steamed Zulu bread is served with meat stews, greens, and/or potatoes.

2 cups bread flour
2 tsp dry yeast
2 tsp sugar
1 tsp salt
1/2 cup lukewarm water

Sift flour and combine with the other dry ingredients in a large bowl. Create a well in the center and pour a small amount of lukewarm water into the well. Knead for about 10 minutes until the dough is elastic. While kneading, continue to add lukewarm water as needed. Once dough has reached the right consistency, cover with a clean towel and leave in a warm place to rise. After dough has doubled in bulk, place in a greased loaf pan and cover tightly with cling wrap and leave for another 30 minutes. Then, steam for 2 to 2.5 hours in a covered pot.

Chapati

Popular in South Asia and East Africa, this unleavened bread is a staple in Kenyan and Indian meals. Serve with curries or saucy vegetable dishes.

2 cups white flour
1/2 tsp salt
1 tbsp vegetable oil
Water

Combine flour and salt and mix well. Add 1 tablespoon oil to flour mixture. Begin to mix with your hands until flour feels grainy. Continue to mix and knead the dough while adding enough water until dough is stiff and elastic.

Roll out dough into a circle on a floured, flat surface. Spread a little oil onto the dough. Roll the circle up like a jelly roll, then roll it out into a circle again. Repeat this rolling process 2 or 3 times. Then, roll the circle into a jelly roll once more, but this time, after it is rolled up in a tube-like shape, use a knife to divide it into 4 or 5 sections. Roll out each section into a thin circle and use a little flour to dry out the dough.

After heating a frying pan over moderate heat, cook the chapatis on one side until bubbles are visible, then turn over. Do not push down the bubbles to ensure fluffiness. Cook on the other side until golden brown.

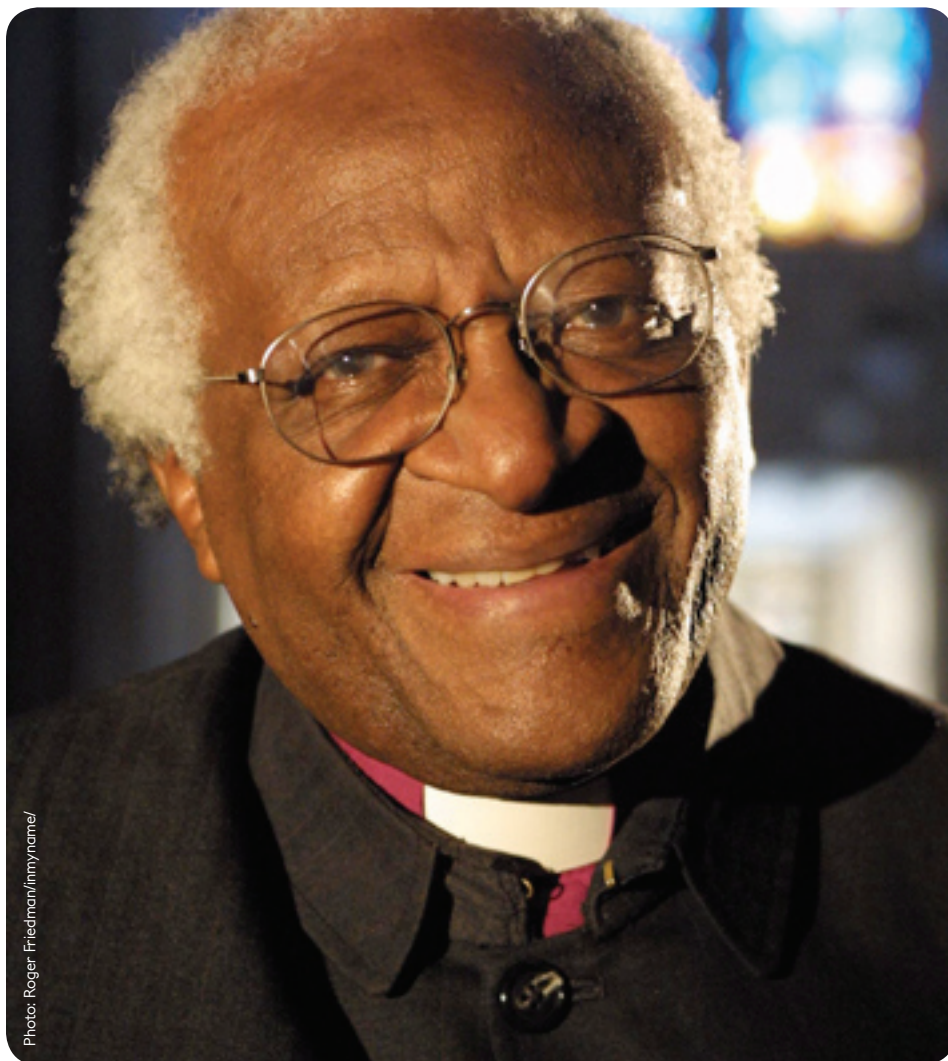


Photo: Roger Friedman/inmyname/

DESMOND TUTU

A HISTORIC LEADER OF FAITH

by Cristian Vasquez

Do your little bit of good where you are; its those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.
—Desmond Tutu

Desmond Mpilo Tutu was born in Klerksdorp, Transvaal, an area in northern South Africa, on October 7, 1931. At age 12, he moved with his family to Johannesburg. Although Tutu aspired to be a physician, his family could not afford to send him to medical school. God had a different plan for his life; his dreams of becoming a physician would soon be overshadowed by his passion to fight for justice. Growing up, Tutu was part of a society that did not extend the full rights of a citizen to black South Africans. When the National Party rose to power in 1948, it was with the promise to institute an apartheid—the complete separation of the races.

Under apartheid, interracial marriage were banned, passports were required to travel within the country, and black South Africans were barred from certain jobs and from forming labor unions. When the government, still ruled by the National Party, ordered inferior education systems for black students, Tutu refused to cooperate. As the son of a teacher and an educator himself, he knew the importance of a good education. Determined to help those being marginalized, but unwilling to teach

under a policy he vehemently opposed, Tutu began studying for priesthood in the South African Anglican church.

In 1960, when Tutu was ordained a priest, the South African government began its relocation and deportation of blacks and Asians away from the new “white areas” and back to their “homelands.” South Africans were assigned a race and forced to live under conditions government officials deemed appropriate for that race. Voting rights were only given to whites, while blacks could only be represented in the governments of their “tribal homelands”.


In 1966, Tutu earned his Master's degree in theology from King's College London, and he would dedicate the next five years to teaching theology in South Africa. Between 1972 and 1978, he held several prominent positions. He served as the assistant director of the World Council of Churches in London, then returned to South Africa as the first black African to serve as Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral in Johannesburg. Tutu then served as Bishop of Lesotho two years, and in 1978, he became the first black General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches.

In his position as General Secretary, Tutu finally obtained the necessary platform to denounce apartheid. He labeled the system "evil and unchristian" and called for equal rights for all South Africans along with a common system of education. Tutu also demanded abolition of South Africa's passport laws and the end of forced deportations of Africans to their "homelands". Tutu strongly believed in a nonviolent movement and encouraged peaceful resistance to the oppressive regime of apartheid.

One of the primary means of resistance he encouraged was economic boycotts. As such, he strongly opposed Ronald Reagan's policy of "constructive engagement," in which economic incentives were used to encourage South Africa to move away from apartheid. Rather, Tutu believed "disinvestment" would have a greater impact on bringing an end to apartheid. He stood by this belief, even if it meant the poor would be hit the hardest, and more blacks would be out of work. His commitment to this nonviolent resistance succeeded after the value of national currency, the Rand, dropped substantially, forcing the government to push for reform.

However, Tutu's resistance did not come without struggle. The government twice revoked his passport to prevent him from traveling and speaking abroad, and he was also arrested during his nonviolent demonstrations. As his voice grew louder and his message stronger, the South African government began to worry about his influence, but refrained from violent response due to international pressures.

In 1984, Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize as a gesture of support to him, the South African Council of Churches, and to the people of South Africa fighting for equality. However, it was only in 1991, after African National Congress member Nelson Mandela was released from prison, that the South African government began its reform efforts. 1994 marked the end of apartheid and the first interracial elections in over 35 years. Mandela, who had been elected president, appointed Bishop Tutu to be the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, whose mission was to investigate the human rights violations of the previous three and a half decades.

Despite the various hardship and injustices Tutu endured, he never spoke of revenge. He always has and continues to preach love, forgiveness and cooperation through his numerous writings and public appearances. Although he retired as Archbishop of Cape Town in 1996, he continues to speak for social and environmental justice to this day. 

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environment

Christians and

*Two environmental Christian
the Global Warming
common*

A polar bear is shown from the back, standing on a dark, wet rock in the water. The bear's thick white fur is highlighted by bright sunlight coming from the left, creating a strong silhouette effect. The background is dark and out of focus, showing more rocks and water.

Climate Change

groups on opposing sides of
argument find some
ground.

by Cristian Vasquez

G

Increased droughts, floods, and blizzards are just some of the phenomena making news around the world. It seems like these drastic weather changes are occurring more frequently in areas they previously did not. The cause of these changes in weather patterns is the

subject of great debate.

Scientists have shown that carbon emissions have a negative impact on the earth's atmosphere and environment, an effect known as global warming. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that "increased greenhouse gas concentrations are very likely to raise the Earth's average temperature, influence precipitation and some storm patterns as well as raise sea levels."

Complicating the situation, scientists have also confirmed that the earth does change climate on its own, leading some to conclude that the incidents of extreme weather are caused not by humans, but the earth's natural tendency to shift climates. Again, the EPA cites research that the earth has gone "from glacial periods (or 'ice ages'), where ice covered significant portions of the Earth, to interglacial periods where ice retreated to the poles or melted entirely; the climate has continuously changed."

The debate over global warming has gone from the dining room table, to scientific journals, through the halls of Congress, and has now spilled into the beliefs of those living lives of faith. Within the Christian community, groups have formed in support of both sides. Those who believe that global warming is real argue that God created the earth; and as humans, we have the responsibility to care for God's creation. On the other hand, those that argue against global warming believe that God created the earth for humanity to grow to its fullest capacity, and climate change is simply a result of that growth.

One group opposed to the idea of global warming is the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation. Their agenda, available in its entirety at www.cornwallalliance.org, states that "environmental policies should harness human creative potential by expanding political and economic freedom, instead of imposing draconian restrictions or seeking to reduce the 'human burden' on the natural world."

The agenda also states that rather than trying to impose restrictions on speculative problems, there should instead be a focus "on well-understood and well-argued evidence." The Cornwall Alliance is not opposed to protecting the earth's resources. Rather, their aim is to help people understand that the earth's resources were created to aid creation, and restrictions should be applied only where there is clear evidence of harm.




Photo: jay/stock.xchng

The debate over global warming has gone from the dining room table, to scientific journals, through the halls of Congress, and has now spilled into the beliefs of those living lives of faith.

A different organization is the Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI), an online organization dedicated to educating both believers and non-believers about the impact humans have made on the earth's climate and what can be done to minimize future impact. The ECI's website, www.christiansandclimate.org, asserts that "pollution from vehicles, power plants, and industry is already having a dramatic effect on the earth's climate...[and if] left unchecked, global warming will lead to more severe droughts, more intense storms, and more devastating floods, resulting in millions of deaths in this century. Prudence and compassion require us to act."

The Cornwall Alliance and the ECI both agree that people should make personal choices as to how they use the resources God has made available to them on Earth. However, the ECI firmly believes that Christians need to make better personal choices in order to bring about change. The organization seeks to influence policymakers to make "moral and wise choices to protect God's world and its people."

Neither side denies that the earth changes climates on its own, and both sides agree that human activity does have an impact on the environment. Both sides also agree that human activity has an impact on the environment. The debate begins over the root cause of these changes and whether anything can or should be done to mitigate them. As Christians, we have scientific and scriptural support for both sides of the debate. Through prayer and a closer study of God's Word, we can determine which side to take a stand for. 

God in focus. World in scope.

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MAGAZINE

Winter 2008/09

PREMIER
ISSUE

Art To Glorify

How artists reveal their faith through works



S:
S:
A:

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



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1. Eat the Foods God
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2. Don't alter God's
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3. Don't Let Any Food or
Drink Become Your God

Dr. Rex Russell's three
principles of healthy
eating as presented in
his book, *What the Bible
Says About
Healthy Living*
(Regal, 2006)

GOD VALUES YOUR

A BIBLICAL LOOK INTO LIVING



HEALTH

A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

by Katharine Sullivan

I grew up going to church, listening to sermons and scriptures being spoken, but I really struggled when I tried to read the Bible myself. I actually felt condemned and a burden of expectation whenever I tried to read a passage. Five years ago, after a very difficult loss—the birth and death of our daughter

Angelina Noel—a neighbor asked me to attend a Beth Moore Bible study at her church. Slowly, as I allowed the study, the discussions, the questions, and God’s Word to sink in and help me through the loss, the Holy Spirit lifted the condemnation I felt. When I read and study God’s Word now, I find such clarity, comfort, and even joyful laughter when I let God speak to me through the Bible. I really do believe it is “God breathed”—and that He breathes new life into me every time I pray, read, and reflect.

One of the things God has breathed into me is knowledge about the importance of nutrition. I’ve always been an active person, whether just playing with friends or in a variety of competitive sports, primarily gymnastics from elementary school on into college. I could always eat whatever I wanted to because I was so active, and thankfully my Mom raised me on pretty nutritious foods. In college, I stopped being so active, and started eating less healthful foods, and weight and fitness suddenly became more of a challenge. I went through times of great struggle with eating right, and trying to balance being active with how much and what I ate, and it took a toll on how I felt about myself. I have great compassion for those who struggle with eating and weight issues or eating disorders. It can become a very distracting cycle—physically, mentally and emotionally—and can often lead to a more destructive habit that requires counseling and intervention. I sense that there’s a very strong link to a sense of spiritual hunger and thirst with what we sometimes feel as physical hunger and thirst.

I truly believe that the spiritual “food” we gain from having a one-on-one relationship with God fills that something in us that we often so desperately try to fill with food and drink, or other comforts like shopping, music, electronics, socialization, watching TV, general busyness or whatever our “thing” is. I found it to be so empty and such an endless cycle of trying to fill the missing piece of the puzzle which was made for Jesus with some other substitute. It has become a passion of mine to connect this spiritual nutrition and bodily nutrition—both for myself and others.

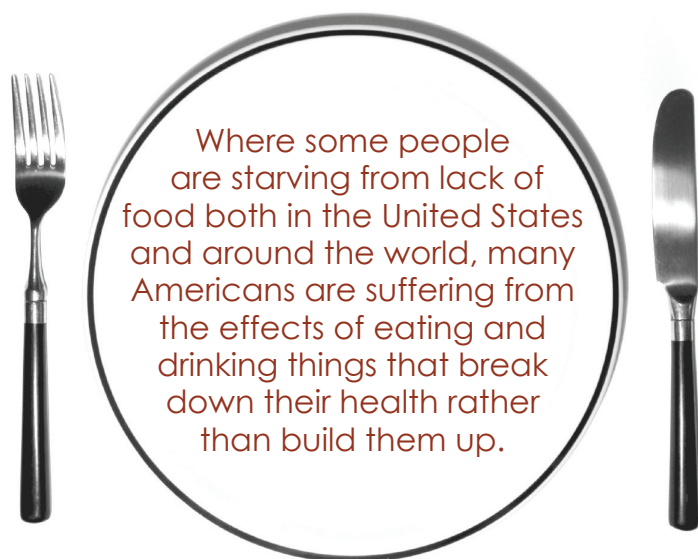
I am not a registered dietician, nor am I anywhere close to a Biblical scholar. I am simply someone who really loves welcoming God to change me and use both my strengths and weaknesses for His good! I’m honored and humbled to share about health and well-being and God’s Word. I share a real life health approach with people through interactive workshops on nutrition and fitness,

through informal conversations, and through my role as a distributor of JuicePlus+ (www.NjoyJuicePlus.com), a whole food nutrition capsule/chewable that my family and I have found to be a key nutritional foundation for the past four and a half years.

In these workshops, I speak from my personal experience with nutrition, eating issues, and fitness, as well as information from medical findings and nutritional studies. If I speak with a group of Christians, I like to begin or end with prayer and talk about how God created the foods that best serve our bodies and so best allow us to serve him. We talk about real life health: how to simplify good nutrition and fitness, how to weave it into the daily routine, and how to use and save money wisely on food and exercise. My intention is to offer encouragement, hope and options for individuals to improve their lives and their family's lives.

refreshed, we are more equipped and able to carry out His good purpose for our lives. In other words, we are more able to say yes to what God calls us to do when our bodies are nourished, just as Abraham was eager to help provide sustenance and service for some visitors that came his way, saying "Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant." (Genesis 18:5, NIV)

In today's fast-paced life we often find ourselves drawn to drive-thrus, coffeehouses, processed packaged foods, and quick microwavable dinners. Where some people are starving from lack of food both around the world and even in the United States, many Americans are suffering from the effects of eating and drinking things that break down their health rather than build them up. Advertising, recommendations from friends, and peer pressure



With my young kids, ages three and six, the struggle is "I want what Johnny gets in his lunch" or simply that the food served at school, birthday parties, or even church, are foods that don't help build up their bodies or their sense of what best fuels them. My six-year-old has struggled with chronic ear and respiratory infections, and was on recurring antibiotics. Our pediatrician recommended JuicePlus+ as a way to get more concentrated good food into his body to help build his immune system and it has since made a great impact on our whole family's health.

I always pray that God would use me to encourage and offer hope to people with similar difficulties in building healthy habits or having balanced nutrition; to help Him lift the heavy burden of the challenges of nutrition and fitness in people's lives and that they may be truly fit for God's beautiful call on their lives and be used for His purposes; and to bring people closer to Him and His Truth.

What we eat is a big part of our lives, both for enjoyment, and in order that our bodies would be strong for serving God and others. Ecclesiastes 5:18 says, "Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot." When our bodies are healthier and


tune our minds to less than ideal food choices. Many of us know what's best for our bodies, like the fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans, seeds, legumes, and whole grains God gave us in abundance to eat. In Genesis 1:29-30, God says, "Behold, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit that has seed in it. They will be yours for food...I give every green plant for food." These are the foundation of our best nutrition and health. God also gave us fish and animals. "...upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything." (Genesis 9:2-3, NIV)

Some people have chosen a vegetarian diet, and receive all nourishment from a plant based diet, as Daniel did to honor God when he was staying with King Nebuchadnezzar in his palace. Daniel refused to eat the king's meat that honored the king, and presumably the king's gods, and instead ate vegetables and water. He did this to show that God was supreme and also much greater than the king and his gods. (Daniel 1) This shows us that perhaps a Christian diet should be a diet that is influenced by God and God's ways, rather than one that simply falls in line with that of the world around us.

For each more healthful option, there are at least twice as many less-than-ideal choices competing for our attention. Many of these options become more temptations than treats; they may be what simply our taste buds crave, what our habits have taught us to consume, or what time constraints force us to choose. Our cravings can be for a quick energy boost, brightly-colored sweets, or salt-laden fried foods. These foods and drinks, though flavorful, can leave us feeling lethargic and weighed down or give us a temporary jolt of energy, then a crash that often leads to an endless cycle of needing another jolt to keep up stamina. Medical research confirms the relationship between nutrition and disease prevention and optimal health; these findings in a way confirm God's call to care for our temples and make better choices in what we consume. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

This isn't to say that we shouldn't enjoy treats now and then; rather, it's the frequency that's usually the problem. After a long season of hard work rebuilding the wall in Jerusalem, Nehemiah and the people were encouraged to indulge in honor of God. In Nehemiah 8:10, Nehemiah says, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." This indulgence was in honor, a truly special occasion, a sacred day—not an everyday affair.

If you struggle with eating right or are trying to will yourself to good nutrition and fitness like I have, perhaps you too have felt a sense of failure or defeat and are a bit overwhelmed at how to go from the way you currently eat to keeping more with God's wise counsel for our well-being. Christ offers us a beautiful gift, saying, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:29-30) I feel like I've just breathed a huge sigh of relief when I read these words. Christ wants to help us in every aspect of our lives, including nutrition.

I see the Bible as God's love letter to us; He is the perfect parent who gives the perfect advice for our best life possible. Knowledge is key in our choices and it is clear that God's Word, combined with the wisdom He has given medical professionals, provides that for us. God also gave us free will in making our decisions. The missing puzzle piece in gaining better nutrition, fitness, and well-being is seeking Christ's power in our weakness. Reaching out to Him is our first step toward success. By connecting with Him and daily welcoming Him in to take an active, powerful and loving role in our lives, we rely on His strength rather than our own. We were created to be in relationship with Him and that sense of emptiness or longing in all of us is there for Him—not food, drink, or other distractions—to fill. Let's treasure the bodies God gave us to enjoy and respect. Let's enjoy the food and drink God gave us while keeping Him first. Let's enjoy life to the fullest by following His lead. 

STEPS TOWARDS BETTER NUTRITION

As with any aspect of our lives where we desire to change and grow, start with prayer and with small doable steps.

1. You may want to begin with prayer. For example:

Loving God, please guide me through Your Word to truths about what You want me to know about nutrition and fitness and how to apply that to my life. You know me inside and out. You know my motivations, my choices, my habits, everything about me. I want to be the best I can be for You. Please help me make good choices with food and drink that build up my temple rather than tear it down. You have a great plan for doing good through me, and I want to say yes to you! I welcome Your great peace and encouragement as I continue to grow, change and learn from You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

2. Choose scriptures that speak to you and write them on your mirror, fridge, in your car, on your screensaver, desktop wallpaper, or phone, as powerful, supportive reminders.

3. Use a topical index to look up scriptures that give you the encouragement you need in the moment. (e.g., strength, hope, hunger, joy, thirst, love, etc.)

4. Pay attention to how you feel during and after eating or drinking certain things. Keep a journal, if that's helpful.

5. Begin changes simply, one at a time, for a week or two and then build upon them:

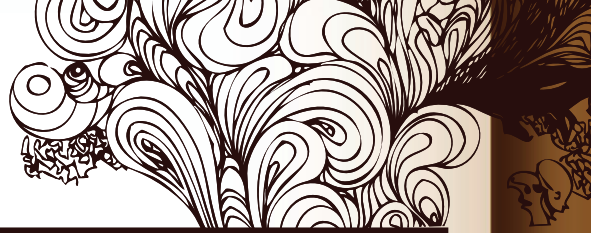
- a. Try drinking plenty of water except for one other beverage each day
- b. Choose to eat two more fresh fruits or vegetables each day
- c. Add a healthful fish like wild salmon
- d. Try some vegetarian proteins like beans or tofu
- e. Choose whole grains for pasta, tortillas or bread
- f. Choose one treat each day and take time to really appreciate it
- g. Pray before meals, asking God to help it build up your body and health
- h. Ask God to help you with drink and food choices and portion size
- i. Ask God to help motivate you to fun movement and exercise

6. Listen to encouraging Christian music in your favorite genre to help you stay motivated. The words you hear may help keep your mind on God, be pumped up about your progress or help you push through a struggling time.

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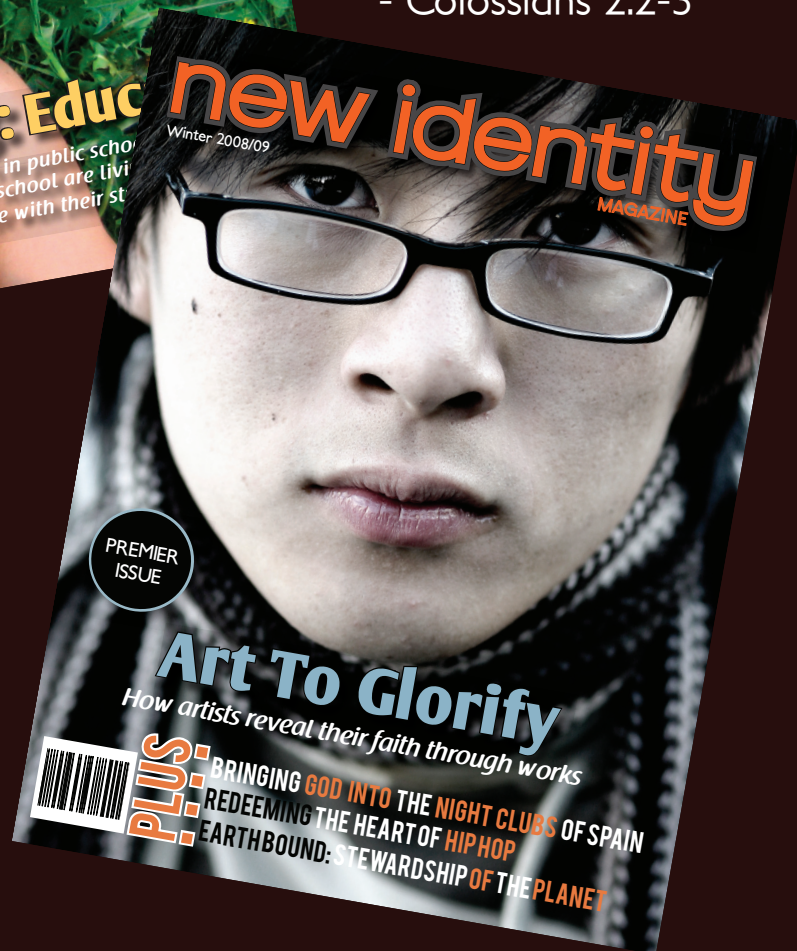
[Our] purpose is that they [new believers] may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
- Colossians 2:2-3

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Whether you're in the sun at the beach or where it's cold and shedding summer rain, pray this season that God would show you how you can use your gifts for His purposes, that He would reveal to you how you can share what you have been given with those around you.

Pray for the global community—that Christians throughout the world would continue to come together in united efforts to glorify God.

Pray for the native missionaries across the globe—that their labors are fruitful, that people's hearts are open to hearing what they have to say and that God's touch progresses.

SUMMER 2009 Prayer Plan



Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

– 1 Peter 3:13-17 (NIV)