China’s license to kill—for organs

THE NOT-SO-GREAT AND POWERFUL CAUSE
Big media exaggerate the stature of Munchkin-sized pro-abortion companies

White nationalists who changed
Fighting rural drug addiction
The K-pop wave sweeps ashore
CONQUER SERIES Volume 1 is a 6-disc DVD set that lays out the battle plan for purity. It teaches men proven strategies and practical tools to walk in freedom.

We recently updated the Conquer Series into a powerful 2 Volume set. It’s packed with a lot of new content, powerful new tools, real practical strategies and insights from new experts. Overall, this is a much more powerful and effective Conquer Series.

If you’re struggling with porn, or know someone who is, then order the Conquer Series. Use it in your men’s small group. If you think it wasn’t worth the investment, then send it back within 14 days and you’ll get your money back. There’s no risk. Doing nothing is a far greater risk.

Jeremy Wiles is the CEO of KingdomWorks Studios and the Film Director of the Conquer Series.

HOW TO FIX A BRAIN HOOKED ON PORN

I had spent 8 years traveling the world filming Ark Hunter, a documentary on my search for Noah’s Ark, when I decided to put it on the shelf and shift my attention to porn. Yes, porn. I was at church one Sunday morning when my pastor reported that nearly 70% of Christian men are hooked on porn. I leaned over to my wife and said, “This is serious! We’ve got to do something about this.”

Over the next several months, my wife and I researched why so many Christian men who love God can’t stop watching porn. What we discovered was astounding.

Because Gray Matter Matters

Watching porn impairs the prefrontal cortex part of the brain where moral decisions and executive reasoning are made. Over time, the prefrontal cortex, along with other brain regions, develop “holes”, causing one to lose brain power.

What starts out as a moral failing, quickly becomes a brain problem. Trying to fix your porn problem by yourself is like trying to do brain surgery on yourself.

Over the next two years, we embarked on a mission to produce the Conquer Series – a tool we believed would help men find freedom from porn addiction. We met with Dr. Lawrence Tucker who specializes in brain SPECT imaging.

He showed us brain scans of a healthy brain, a cocaine addict’s brain and a porn addict’s brain. The porn addict’s brain looked like Swiss cheese - almost identical to that of the cocaine addict.

There was obvious deactivation and loss of activity in the prefrontal cortex. So, watching porn is like snorting digital cocaine - it becomes highly addictive.

Right there, it dawned on us why the Church hasn’t been able to effectively help men in this area.

It’s a Brain Problem

For years, the Church has been treating the problem as a moral issue. Well-meaning church leaders would tell men to try harder - pray more, read your Bible more and just “stop it.” They didn’t understand how watching porn changes the physical structure of the brain. These men need a process.

Not A Quick Fix

We had a single goal with the Conquer Series: to effectively help men find freedom. So far, over 1 million men in 80+ countries have been helped. Praise God! The key is the renewal of the mind, which is a process. There’s no quick fix. It’s hard work.

Dr. Ted Roberts, who has led thousands of men to freedom, lays out an effective process in the Conquer Series. He shows men how to transform their minds and find lasting freedom.

We have a sexual addiction screening test on our website to determine if you’re a sex addict. It was developed by world renowned sex addiction expert, Dr. Patrick Carnes. You don’t need to register or sign up to take it. Just go to our website ConquerSeries.com/SAST

ORDER TODAY AT CONQUERSERIES.COM
CALL (561) 681-9990

RECEIVE 15% OFF YOUR DVD SET
Use coupon code: WORLDWIDE19
Expires: October 31, 2019
FEATURES

32 Pulling back the curtain
The great and powerful Oz? Big media help pro-abortion executives seem much larger than life

38 A fatal harvest
Evidence points to China forcing prisoners of conscience into organ donation, and some countries have banned medical tourism to China as a result. Will the United States do the same?

42 Leaving hate behind
Our culture sometimes uses the labels “white supremacist” and “racist” carelessly, but they are serious belief systems that still exist today—and those who have left the most violent and extreme forms of racism have much to tell us

46 Small town, big addictions
Families in rural Sioux Center, Iowa, have discovered they aren’t immune from the drug scourge, but some locals are fighting back

50 Crazy for K-pop
A Korean pop culture wave has spread around the world, and now young Americans are swooning to the music

DISPATCHES

7 News Analysis • Human Race
Quotables • Quick Takes

CULTURE

19 Movies & TV • Books
Children’s Books • Q&A • Music

NOTEBOOK

55 Lifestyle • Religion
Science • Technology

VOICES

5 Joel Belz
16 Janie B. Cheaney
30 Mindy Belz
61 Mailbag
63 Andrée Seu Peterson
64 Marvin Olasky

ON THE COVER: Illustration by Krieg Barrie
If you’re called to preach the Bible, you need to know the Bible.
That’s why Southern Seminary requires more biblical studies, not less. Here, you’ll choose from more than 50 courses in Greek, Hebrew, Old Testament, New Testament, and hermeneutics — all taught by leading scholars in the field of biblical studies. In our M.Div. program, we create space for deep, careful study of the biblical text and have all the resources you’ll need to know your Bible inside and out.

SBTS.EDU/MDIV
Notes from the CEO

Just over five years ago, I made one of the best deals of my tenure as WORLD’s CEO—and it wasn’t my idea.

Joel Belz came to me with a proposal. “Let’s assume I can be productive for 10 more years,” he said. “But let’s also assume that WORLD will become less and less reliant on me during that time.” He went on to propose that we cut his pay each year by one tenth that first year, and he would reduce his hours accordingly, so at the end of 10 years we would be paying him nothing, and he would not be committed to work any hours.

At the time, the idea that Joel was essentially suggesting a 10-year cap on his time at WORLD was hard for me to accept. But the proposal was a prudent one, and we agreed that, barring God’s intervention, we would carry it out as Joel proposed. With our new fiscal year that began on July 1, we begin our sixth year of the agreement.

But it has been an extraordinarily good deal for WORLD because, as I should have expected from Joel, he has given much more than he’d committed. Although it is true that Joel’s office hours are shorter than they were five years ago, he is still nearly a 24/7 guy, as he always has been.

Also, the contributions Joel makes to WORLD can’t really be measured by hours and minutes, nor dollars and cents, nor even word count. By the measure of his presence in the office—he’s encouragement, wisdom, humor, eagerness to share time with every person who stops by, and his inclination always to direct our attention to our trustworthy Savior—Joel isn’t giving us any less of these things.

As I said, it’s one of the best deals I’ve ever made.
The shape of fraud
GERRYMANDERING IS A MORAL BLOT ON AMERICAN POLITICS

Among all the abuses of the democratic process in America, none is more arrogant than the gerrymander. I argued that point here 25 years ago, but the danger is more acute now.

In case you missed your eighth grade civics lesson on gerrymandering, the term refers to the process of reshaping a political district so it includes just the right number of people who can be predicted to vote a certain way. Then—voila!—those people responsible for the artful shaping of that district can bring about almost any political end they want and claim it was what the people in that district voted for.

The abuse has been going on for generations, and Republicans and Democrats are equal opportunity offenders. So this is a nonpartisan complaint.

The issue of gerrymandering is important over the next couple of years for several reasons. One is that an official census of the United States is scheduled over that time (the process has already begun), and the very design of a successful gerrymander—for better or for worse—depends on a faithful and accurate count of who lives where.

A second reason the issue is currently important is that 2020 is another election year. Public attention will almost certainly be focused on the presidential and congressional elections—but just as critical will be the tilt of the legislatures of all 50 states. Those legislatures typically have significant influence in the design of congressional districts—a design that continues for the next decade. Republicans have dominated that process over the last couple of decades. But if Democrats do as well in 2020 as they did in 2018, they will hold some strategic advantages for years to come.

And a third reason for paying attention is that the U.S. Supreme Court—in spite of its recent hands-off posture—will almost certainly send down some sort of ruling on the matter in the next year or two.

Those of us who live in North Carolina have sometimes witnessed gerrymandering at its worst. In the early 1990s, we were handed one of the most egregious examples of gerrymandering in American history. The designers had the obvious goal of carving out two districts meant to assure the election of two African American congressmen—and, incidentally, two white congressmen in districts left safe for them.

Wily politicians worked overtime to design two of the most tortured-looking geographical entities you ever laid eyes on. One district snaked along I-85 for 150 miles, picking up every urban area and African American voter it could find along the way. The other district twisted and stretched and yawned from the Virginia border on the north to the South Carolina line on the south.

Such blatant reshaping of the political landscape couldn’t last long—and was indeed sent packing by the courts. But those courts have been readier to declare what won’t pass muster than they are to tell states what will be permitted. In the process, I was moved from a district that was always up for grabs to one that is “reliably Republican”—suggesting that my part in the process is virtually meaningless.

Repeated efforts to “redistrict” big chunks of the populace in North Carolina and other states have received thumbs-down signals from a variety of courts. And that’s partly because those courts, to be consistent, want to say that no one—not even they—is smart enough to shape perfectly fair districts.

Justice is best served when state legislatures, and ultimately the court system as well, remove themselves from the redistricting process. The temptation to play games is just too strong.

What seems to work best, with fewest complaints, is an approach sometimes referred to as the “Iowa model.” In effect for most of the last three decades, the Iowa model rests on an independent commission of nonpolitical participants, appointed every 10 years. That body draws up a redistricting plan that goes next to the state legislature for an up-or-down vote; no tinkering allowed!

Such arms-length delegation has been proposed in swing states like Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, but so far without success. Citizens committed to Biblical equity in the voting booth should explore what steps they can take in their own states to nudge greedy politicians away from such voter fraud.
A brand new podcast from WORLD Radio is here. It's called The Olasky Interview. WORLD has given us the privilege of sitting in, and I am very grateful. These interviews are well worth your time.”—iTunes reviewer

There’s always been more to the interviews you’ve read in the magazine and heard on The World and Everything in It.

Now, you have full access. The new podcast is in. Season 1 guests include Charles Murray, Ron Sider, Lauren Green, Bill Bennett, and others.

Listen anywhere you typically enjoy podcasts.
Here and there
Children play on a seesaw installed on the border fence that divides Mexico from the United States in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. On July 26, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Trump administration could use military funds to begin construction on additional border barriers as litigation on the matter continues.

CHRISTIAN CHAVEZ/AP
American singer Frank Sinatra once joined a long list of musicians crooning about a love for Paris year-round: “I love Paris in the winter when it drizzles. ... I love Paris in the summer when it sizzles.”

But Sinatra might not have loved this much sizzle: French meteorologists reported the temperature in Paris soared to 108.6 degrees on July 25—the city’s hottest day on record.

A summer heat wave broke records across Europe, and it even baked Alaska: The temperature in Anchorage hit 90 degrees in July.

Climate change? Perhaps, but Fort Yukon in eastern Alaska hit 100 degrees—in 1915. The previous record for Paris was 104.7 degrees, set in 1947.

What about Sinatra’s beloved “New York, New York”? It sizzled there too, but Mayor Bill de Blasio’s response might have been more political stunt than practical solution: The mayor ordered workers in high-rise office buildings to set thermostats to 78 degrees during the heat wave to conserve energy. Nicole Gelinas of the Manhattan Institute noted that thermostat settings don’t have a major effect on the power grid and likely wouldn’t prevent outages.

While de Blasio was fiddling with thermostats, other leaders were worried about bigger threats.

Army Lt. Gen. Robert Ashley, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told a group at the Aspen Security Forum he’s concerned about cyberattacks that could disrupt power grids, water, electricity, banking, and transportation for millions of Americans: “That’s kind of the one that keeps me up at night.”

Back in Washington, D.C., if the prospect of Robert Mueller’s testimony before Congress had been keeping any politicians up at night, the former special counsel’s appearance on July 24 offered more fizzle than sizzle. Democrats hoping for Mueller’s hot takes about President Donald Trump met a much cooler response: “The report is my testimony.” The report was the 448-page document produced by Mueller and at least 40 investigators examining Russian interference in the 2016 elections and whether Trump colluded with Russians. Some House Democrats had hoped Mueller’s testimony would provide kindling for potential impeachment efforts.

But Mueller’s clipped answers and sometimes-halting responses likely dampened the flames—at least for some. Mueller’s most forceful moment may have been his warning about Russia’s ongoing attempts at election meddling: “They are doing it while we sit here.” A few days later, the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released a report saying Russians likely had targeted election systems in all 50 states during the 2016 presidential election. That’s a fire worth combating before 2020 contests are in full blaze.

Meanwhile, it wasn’t surprising to see the flames of a contentious political atmosphere grow hotter, as the president responded to criticisms from U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., about the situation on the U.S. border. Trump tweeted that Cummings should focus on his home district in Baltimore and called the district “a disgusting, rat and rodent infected mess.”

Perhaps a better approach: Lament some of the terrible conditions for Americans living in neighborhoods that need help and also ask, How can government promote decent
education, safe streets, and stable families, while churches and other nonprofits do the long-term work of tending to bodies and souls?

At least one former Baltimore physician may have more time to contemplate such questions: Leana Wen announced Planned Parenthood had fired her after less than a year on the job. Wen said the board of the nation’s largest abortion facilitator terminated her employment while she was still in negotiations to step down.

Why such a short stint? It appears Wen wasn’t political enough. She said she believed the best way to “protect abortion” is “to be clear it’s a health care issue and not a political one.”

Cue the fizzle. A decade ago, former Planned Parenthood President Cecile Richards set a standard the organization appears unwilling to let go: “We aim to be the nation’s largest, kick-butt political organization.” Abortion advocacy appears to be the tip of that political spear.

Also ousted from a big job: the governor of Puerto Rico. Tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans poured into the streets of San Juan in late July, demanding the resignation of Gov. Ricardo Rosselló.

The massive protests came after two high-ranking officials were indicted on corruption charges and after the leak of a trove of offensive messages sent between the governor and other officials.

Rosselló became the first governor in the history of Puerto Rico to resign, but replacing him may not be easy: Rosselló nominated Pedro Pierluisi as his successor on July 31, but it was unclear whether Puerto Rican lawmakers would confirm the pick.

Another apparently unpopular job: astronaut. Even as the United States celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, a poll of American children ranked “astronaut” as their least preferred job from a list of five potential occupations.

The most popular? Becoming a famous YouTube personality.

Maybe parents can slide a little Frank Sinatra into their kids’ YouTube viewing during the waning days of summer. It’s probably best to skip “My Way” and go straight for “Fly Me to the Moon.”

---

**By the Numbers**

15.8 million

The number of girls eliminated in India through abortion and other forms of prenatal sex selection since 1990, according to a July report from the Population Research Institute.

56.88

The seconds it took Britain’s Adam Peaty to swim the 100-meter breaststroke during the World Swimming Championships in South Korea on July 21—a world record time.

945,711

The backlog of cases waiting to be heard in U.S. immigration courts as of June.

2,082

The number of violent crimes in St. Louis per 100,000 residents, according to the most recent FBI Uniform Crime Report. It is the highest crime rate for any major U.S. city.

$3 million

The prize that 16-year-old video gamer Kyle Giersdorf won for taking first place at the Fortnite World Cup held at Arthur Ashe Stadium in New York on July 28.
Renounced

Josh Harris, former celebrity pastor and author of the 1997 bestseller I Kissed Dating Goodbye, announced on Instagram that he and his wife were separating and, then, a few days later announced that he was not a Christian. “By all the measurements that I have for defining a Christian, I am not a Christian,” he wrote. He also apologized to the “LGBTQ+ community” for his past stance against same-sex marriage and for having not affirmed the LGBTQ+ lifestyles. With I Kissed Dating Goodbye, Harris helped launch the “purity culture” within American evangelicalism that promoted courtship and promised specific blessings to those who followed that model and refrained from sexual sin.

Ordered

After 16 years, the federal government has resumed executing death-row inmates. Attorney General William Barr issued a statement saying he has authorized five executions for December 2019 and January 2020. The inmates involved were convicted in federal courts of murder or rape of children and the elderly. The last federally ordered execution was in 2003 with the death of Louis Jones Jr., the murderer of 19-year-old Tracie McBride. The gap since has been an informal moratorium that did not affect any state-directed executions.

Located

A private dive team found a warship lost for 75 years, since its sinking during World War II. The Navy initially ruled that a boiler room explosion caused the sinking of the USS Eagle PE-56, even though surviving sailors reported spotting a German submarine. The Navy reversed its account after declassified German documents revealed that the ship had indeed been torpedoed. The Eagle was not found until after a dive team, led by Ryan King, according to BBC, spent four years searching. The team found the ship 5 miles off the coast of Maine, 300 feet down. The team spent a summer exploring the ship, along with a Navy archaeological expert, and confirmed it was the Eagle. The Smithsonian Channel will be airing Hunt for Eagle 56, celebrating their discovery.

Died

Li Peng, Chinese premier nicknamed the “Butcher of Beijing,” died on July 22 at age 90. Li was trained as a hydroelectric engineer in Soviet Russia and returned to China to manage the municipal public energy supply for the city of Beijing. In 1981, after Mao Zedong’s death, Li became the national minister of power industries and then a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the center of power in China. Six years later he became acting prime minister of China, and he was in that office when thousands of students swarmed Tiananmen Square in 1989, protesting in favor of free speech and democracy. Li claimed he was not the one who ordered troops to fire on the protesters, but he was the one to take the blame. When the office of general party secretary came open, the highest office in China, Li didn’t get the job.

Died

L. Bruce Laingen, senior hostage during the 1979 Iran crisis, died on July 15 at age 96. Laingen had been part of the Foreign Service since his first posting to Germany in 1950. He was called to Iran in 1979 as an experienced diplomat capable of negotiating with the post-revolutionary government after the Iranians overthrew the American-supported shah. Laingen, assigned as the ambassador, worked for several months before the hostage crisis. He was captured and held separate from the other 60-plus hostages. Laingen continued to act as a point of contact with the outside world throughout his imprisonment. After the release of the hostages, Laingen became the vice president of the National Defense University. He retired in 1987 to write several books on political issues.
AN EDUCATION WORTHY OF YOUR CALLING

For Christ, His Gospel, & His Church
LEARN MORE AT WSCAL.EDU/ACADEMICS
‘Republicans can’t keep continuing to talk about monitoring our spending and still continuing to vote for every spending bill that comes down the pipe.’

U.S. Rep. MARK WALKER R-N.C., on the two-year budget deal the White House and congressional leaders reached on July 22. The agreement increases spending by $320 billion, lifts the federal debt limit, and permanently rolls back the budget cuts known as “sequestration,” which both parties agreed to in the 2011 Budget Control Act.

‘If you’re 3 years old ... I just think it’s dangerous as a parent to make this determination then.’

Actor MARIO LOPEZ, in an interview for The Candice Owens Show, on the decision of actress Charlize Theron to allow her son to begin identifying as a girl when he was a toddler. His statement received strong opposition on social media.

‘The Lord gave me the best pitch in baseball: the cut fastball.’

Former New York Yankees relief pitcher MARIANO RIVERA upon his induction into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

‘Deliver, unite, and defeat” was not the perfect acronym for an election campaign, since unfortunately it spells “Dud,” but they forgot the final “E,” my friends: E for “energize.”... Dude, we are going to energize the country.’

New U.K. Prime Minister BORIS JOHNSON on his campaign to deliver Brexit, unite Britain, defeat the Labor Party, and energize the country.
That car is history

For some it was a landmark. For some it was an eyesore. But finally the 1971 Cadillac parked on a Brooklyn, N.Y., side street for decades has been towed. Residents of the Windsor Park neighborhood expressed shock to the New York Daily News when they learned the car had been towed. After all, the rusted vehicle hadn’t moved since 1994 and appeared packed to its ceiling with coffee cups, old newspapers, and other trash. A street cleaner finally ticketed the car in July, and authorities towed it to the Erie Basin Auto Pound.

Glowing report

Most traffic stops don’t require police to call in a private company, but a lot was new for Guthrie, Okla., police when they pulled over Stephen Jennings and a passenger on June 26 after noticing they had an expired tag. The open container of Kentucky Deluxe and the unregistered firearm would have been bad enough, but police also found a rattlesnake in the backseat. Learning the car had been stolen, the officers searched a bit harder. That’s when they allegedly turned up a canister of powdered uranium. Both driver and passenger were taken into custody, and police had to call a private company to safely retrieve the radioactive canister from the car. Authorities say they don’t know why the couple was transporting the radioactive material.

Her favorite numbers

A lot of babies were born on July 11, and a small number of them would have been born at either 7:11 a.m. or 7:11 p.m. But how many were born on July 11 at 7:11 p.m. and weighed seven pounds, 11 ounces? At least one girl was, J’Aime Brown, born to Rachel Langford in St. Louis. Upon hearing the news, the convenience chain 7-Eleven pledged $7,111 to J’Aime’s college fund.

Off pitch?

Just one week into the “robot umpire” era in baseball, an angry coach was ejected from a game for arguing balls and strikes in the first inning. The dispute occurred in the Atlantic League, an independent minor league that recently began using an automated system called TrackMan. The system uses cameras to determine balls from strikes. Former Cy Young Award winner and current High Point Rockers pitching coach Frank Viola disagreed with the judgment of the system and began shouting at the home plate umpire to overrule the robotic judgment. He was ejected from the game when he left the dugout. Viola’s wife, Kathy, confessed on Twitter that it “does not surprise me” that her husband was the first ejection of the TrackMan era.
**The walking dead**

A Chicago resident made the entrance of a lifetime when he returned home from a trip just in time to interrupt his own memorial barbecue. A case of mistaken identity led the family of Alfonso Bennett to believe he had died when in reality he had merely been out of town. Using an old mug shot, police believed a severely injured and unconscious man they found in May was Bennett. Family members say they hesitated to confirm the identification, but that police pressured them into agreeing with their assessment. The man died soon thereafter, and while Bennett’s family and friends held a memorial barbecue ahead of the funeral, Bennett arrived to the shock of the guests. Authorities later identified the dead man as Elisha Brittman.

**A tall order**

A Welsh town has pilfered the title of world’s steepest street from a New Zealand city after recognition from Guinness World Records. Local architectural historian Gwyn Headley led the campaign for recognition after his car slid down Fford Pen Llech street in Harlech, Wales, even after applying the parking brake. To win the record, residents of Harlech had to prove to Guinness that their street had a gradient greater than 35 degrees—that of the previous record holder in Dunedin, New Zealand. In July, Guinness verified that Fford Pen Llech had a gradient in excess of 37 degrees, good enough to be named steepest in the world.

**Eating the profits**

Zoo officials in Nigeria are blaming a gorilla for making off with a month’s worth of gate fees. According to police, the equivalent of $19,000 in Nigerian currency has gone missing from the Kano Zoological Garden. Zoo officials have said the animal ate the cash, including the revenue from the popular Eid-ul-Fitr festival in May. Perhaps skeptical, Kano state Gov. Abdullahi Ganduje ordered his anti-corruption commission to investigate the issue.

**Postcard from the past**

Something strange arrived in Kim Draper’s mailbox on July 8. It was a postcard sent to her address from Hong Kong featuring fishing boats but addressed to a couple she did not know. Deepening the mystery, the mail bore a 1993 Hong Kong postmark. The 26-year-old postcard includes a personal message about life in Hong Kong and is signed “Dad.” Postal officials can’t say why the letter took so long to arrive at the address. Draper said she plans to track down one of the addressees and make final delivery.

**Give it back**

To anyone who found bags of cash alongside a metro Atlanta interstate highway: Authorities would like to have them back. According to police, the door of an armored car transporting hundreds of thousands of dollars flew open while it drove on I-285 in Dunwoody, Ga., on July 9. About $175,000 in currency flew from the back of the truck and fluttered onto the shoulder. Motorists in the Atlanta suburb quickly began pulling over and scooping up cash. Authorities were only able to recover about $200 from the ground. About $2,000 of cash was turned in to the Dunwoody Police Department. A police spokesman said that motorists who picked up cash could turn it in at the police station without fear of charges.
Selected specks
SMALL DOESN'T MEAN INSIGNIFICANT IN THIS VAST UNIVERSE

July’s 50th-anniversary commemoration of the Apollo moon landing struck a few sour notes about where we were then and what we’ve done since. A great achievement, for sure, but it didn’t open a Star-Trekkian world of possibility for exploring “the Final Frontier.” Going to the moon looked like a great leap, but compared to the inconceivable size of space, a modern cynic might compare it to a puddle jump.

The universe seemed big enough even to ancients who knew nothing about it. All agreed on one thing: Looking up on a cloudless, moonless night, when the sky is pierced with stars like an overturned colander, invariably makes one feel small. “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man, that you are mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:3-4).

As knowledge expands, so does the universe, and our place in it grows correspondingly small. Our Earth, literally the center of the old Ptolemaic system, is only a particle of dust in the great scheme of things. It’s a middling satellite of an insignificant star on an arm of a massive spiral inside a galaxy that’s merely one of countless other...

Is your head popping yet? Are put-down words like only, merely, one of many, etc. making you feel like nothing much? You’re not alone. “I’m a speck on a speck orbiting a speck among other specks among still other specks in the middle of specklessness! I suck!” That’s Bill Nye the Science Guy, perhaps not the brainiest of brains, but top physicists with impeccable credentials express the same basic sentiment.

But think about it: Why are we so impressed by size?

Within the last hundred years, smallness has come to seem equally impressive. Atoms were once assumed the bedrock of matter, until their protons, neutrons, and electrons gave way to particles and subparticles and quarks, and we’re still not to the end of it. Weaving it all together is the “God particle,” long speculated, supposedly discovered, never actually seen. In spite of the nickname, God as an actual entity is not necessarily assumed. It’s all “specks.”

Materialist science can’t find God in space or time. But if God is who He says He is, He made space. And time. Bigness and smallness are works of His hands.

What if, in presenting us with unthinkable size, He’s making a point backed up by Scripture? “The last shall be first.” “You must become like a little child.” “God rejects the proud, but exalts the humble.”

Within the massive vault of space stands a speck of a creature, the only known creature in the entire universe who can observe and think about it. At one point in time, the Creator opened a door in space and walked in, humbling Himself still further to become a particle of dust within His own creation—with an aim to redeem it all.

I don’t know what redemption will look like, but here’s my speculative, very unscientific picture of the cosmos. We’ve learned that the universe is expanding, like ripples on a pond. What if it’s more like a balloon, so big its curve looks flat? It expands by the breath of God, but He keeps His eye on one speck of dust on the surface of space: our tiny planet with its tiny souls.

One day, there will be no more days. Perhaps the cosmos will pop at a single prick, revealing the holy city with open gates that glow like pearl, filled with “innumerable angels in festal gathering and the assembly of the firstborn.” Or perhaps it will shrink again, all its glory gathered up, in the blink of an eye, to shine on the new creation.

What will really happen is beyond imagination. But I know this: Size won’t matter a whit. It doesn’t matter now. As you consider the heavens, God is considering you, and it’s not according to your bigness or smallness, but His vast and abiding love. 😊
YOU CAN MAKE AMERICA PRO-LIFE RIGHT NOW.

www.LiveAction.org
GROW IN
FAITH,
LEARNING
& LIFE

MY FATHER’S
World

Complete Christian Homeschool Curriculum
Where God’s Word is Always Central

File Netflix’s latest original film, The Red Sea Diving Resort, in the truth-is-stranger-than-fiction category. Inspired by recently declassified events that occurred in 1980, the film follows a wild Israeli operation to smuggle Ethiopian Jews out of Sudan and relocate them to Israel.

Similar to 2012’s Argo, which centered on the CIA’s fake film production used to extract hostages from Iran, this operation involves a group of Mossad agents acting as seaside hoteliers.

Shortly after arriving at an abandoned, dilapidated resort in the middle of war-torn Sudan, the group finds its best-laid plans running awry in the most providential fashion. When a busload of German holiday-makers stumbles across the resort’s fake brochure and shows up expecting real accommodations, renegade leader Ari Levinson (Chris Evans) realizes the best thing to do is lean into the camouflage that tourists offer. Soon, he and his team are teaching tai chi and snorkeling lessons by day and attempting to smuggle refugees past roadblocks and warlords by night.

Within the confines of this often funny, madcap adventure, the movie gets at serious themes. Like the Jews, Christians too must reflect on the Biblical mandate to welcome the stranger and consider what lengths we should go to in order to obey. Working with local rebel leader Kabede (Michael K. Williams), Levinson believes his obligation is to risk his own life rescuing those who share his faith, if not his country of birth.

From the other side of the political equation, however, the film illustrates why playing politics with refugees—say, by widening the definition to include nearly any migrant—does a disservice to those who face violent persecution. The United States should perhaps change its policies...
CULTURE | Movies & TV


toward those seeking better economic opportunities than their home countries provide. That is something we can fairly debate. But, as this film ably illustrates, destroying the distinctions between immigrant groups risks flooding the system and leaving true asylum-seekers in the hands of their oppressors.

These are difficult outcomes to weigh, yet Christians are obligated to do so lovingly and prayerfully.

Purely from an entertainment standpoint, you’d be hard-pressed to find a more rip-roaring spy escapade. Evans brings the charisma we've come to expect from him and has strong chemistry with the rest of his team, even—or maybe especially—when they’re at odds over how to proceed. This makes it all the more disappointing that the movie includes so much dopey profanity and distracting near-nudity (and, in the case of one male character, brief backside nudity).

Though technically films, Netflix movies aren’t rated by the Motion Picture Association of America the way standard theatrical releases are. And there are still a lot of misperceptions over how the television ratings apply. To dispel any confusion, you should treat The Red Sea Diving Resort as if it were rated R.

Frequent F-bombs and other foul language don’t feel as if they’re included to capture something about a specific character or to authentically reflect a particular subculture. Likewise, the pointless inclusion of two anonymous women who, but for a fraction of a turn toward the camera, we’d see topless, is textbook gratuitous.

This isn’t just a moral gripe. A profile shot of an unclothed Evans, vital bits concealed by a strategically bent leg, cheapens the seriousness of the story. Sure, we want you to feel bad about the refugees, but in the meantime, check out what low body-fat percentage Captain America has! The juxtaposition of these scenes against those showing women and children being summarily executed couldn’t be in worse taste.

It’s popular these days to discuss the “privilege” various demographic groups enjoy at the expense of others in American culture. I’d like to add to that list good-looking celebrities whose hot bods were apparently deemed more worthy of our attention than further exploring the experiences of the Ethiopians.

---

**Box Office Top 10**

FOR THE WEEKEND OF JULY 26-28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Lion King* PG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Once Upon a Time in Hollywood R</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Spider-Man: Far From Home* PG-13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Toy Story 4* G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Crawl R</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yesterday PG-13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Aladdin* PG</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Stuber R</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Annabelle Comes Home R</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Farewell PG</td>
<td>not rated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(CAUTIONS: Quantity of sexual (S), violent (V), and foul-language (L) content on a 0-to-scale, with 10 high, from kids-in-mind.com)

---

**Movie**

**Good Sam**

Netflix is spending billions of dollars this year to produce original movies and series for its subscribers. Regrettably, many of these shows are awash in objectionable content. A quick scan of newer original releases on the streaming network shows that much of this content is rated for “mature” audiences. Are Netflix executives also willing to finance family-friendly fare?

The PG-rated Good Sam is one of these efforts. New York City television reporter Kate Bradley (Tiyá Sircar) is getting tired of the “bummer beat”—reporting on fires, car accidents, and robberies. She’s skeptical there are any good-news stories worth telling in the Big Apple.

When an anonymous donor starts giving bags of $100,000 in cash to needy citizens, Kate finally has an assignment that seems to be only good news, and she digs through clues to uncover the identity of this good Samaritan (“Good Sam” for short). Gift recipients seem eager to share their newfound wealth, finding creative ways to help others even more needy than themselves.

It all seems too good to be true, and Kate’s instincts tell her something is not quite right with this mystery hero: Could anyone really be giving, with no ulterior motives? She is determined to get to the bottom of the story and expose whatever she finds.

The plot of Good Sam is a bit thin, maybe even predictable, but the show remains worthwhile, lighthearted entertainment. And it is refreshing to find Netflix funding movies that are reasonably family friendly. (While the film portrays no sexual situations or violence, it regretfully includes some blasphemy in a couple of scenes.)

It’s also enjoyable to see a film portraying immigrant characters in a way that feels natural, without pandering to cultural stereotypes. Kate’s family moved to the USA from India, and they do not hide their ethnicity, but are proud to be contributing as Americans in their new homeland.

—by MARTY VANDRIEL
Documentary

The Great Hack

It must be hard to make a documentary about a topic the rest of the media has already covered ad nauseam.

Last year, Congress questioned Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and others about whether the British political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica had misused 87 million Facebook users’ data during the 2016 election. The Great Hack further explores the dealings of this now-defunct consulting firm, focusing on a former employee and an American who tried to sue the company for his own data.

But the film offers little new info: It follows its main characters around the world for various interviews and hearings—and then as they check their phones. Between these scenes, for pizzazz, video graphics illustrate what it means to “scrape” Facebook data.

The documentarians try to compile a fuller picture of what Cambridge Analytica did: identify undecided voters (not a new phenomenon in politics) and influence them, sometimes by questionable methods.

That picture involves some odd characters. Former Cambridge Analytica employee Brittany Kaiser, for example, is way more excited to see her name in print than she probably should be. She worked first for Amnesty International and then for the Obama campaign’s social media team before switching to Cambridge Analytica, which she now speaks out against.

If you finish the documentary still fuzzy on whether this British company broke any laws while performing work for the Trump and Brexit campaigns, know that more than one government is still figuring that out right now too. Facebook was recently fined for its role in the scandal, and Cambridge Analytica pleaded guilty to not providing user data in a lawsuit by a particular date—but overall, the laws are still catching up to the technology.

But breaking the law is not the same thing as breaching an ethical boundary, which is what Cambridge Analytica probably did. Still, another former executive at the company, Julian Wheatland, summed up how this kind of data mining is the new normal for politics and advertising: “This is not about one company. This technology is going on unabated and will continue to go on.”

Documentary

Who Killed Garrett Phillips?

“We got a 12-year-old that’s lost his life. ... We gotta lock somebody up.” Those words, spoken by a New York State Police officer, sum up the attitude of law enforcement in HBO’s new documentary Who Killed Garrett Phillips? Sadly, the people involved with prosecuting the case don’t seem overly concerned with ensuring they’ve gotten the right “somebody.”

Garrett Phillips was strangled in his apartment in Potsdam, N.Y., not long after he returned home from school on Oct. 24, 2011. From the start, the police focused their investigation on Oral “Nick” Phillips, the ex-boyfriend of Garrett’s mother, Tandy Cyrus. The case might not have attracted national attention if Hillary hadn’t been one of the few black men living in this upstate New York community.

The documentary exposes some racism in the handling of Hillary’s case, but more than anything it depicts the incompetence of a small town’s police department and district attorney’s office. In their quest to “lock somebody up,” they stop asking who killed Garrett Phillips and simply assume Hillary did.

But the more we watch, the less we seem to know, and by the end it seems impossible to know who killed Garrett. The documentary shows how slim the evidence was against Hillary and the lengths officials went to in their attempt to convict him anyway. It shows the difficulty of finding justice: Nick Phillips was railroaded—does that mean this kind of thing is happening all over the country? Could there be others like Hillary whose cases don’t receive national attention because they lack a racial element?

Rated TV-MA, Who Killed Garrett Phillips? isn’t easy to watch. We see accusers talk about Hillary with the foulest of language. We see police strip-search Hillary in an apparent attempt to humiliate him. We see the emotional toll the Potsdam tragedy exacts from everyone involved.

But Christians should consider how to work toward improving justice in our communities, and should remember to trust ultimately in God, whose justice will resolve all our unanswered questions.

—by COLLIN GARBARINO
The road to Smurfdom
ARE WE AT THE MERCY OF THE MOB? by Marvin Olasky

Kevin Williamson’s just-published *The Smallest Minority: Independent Thinking in the Age of Mob Politics* (Regnery) includes excellent insights. Williamson recognizes that social media are primarily “a means of seeking human connection, not communication but communion.” He sees that those who have absorbed Darwinism need to distract themselves from their “eternal insignificance.”

Williamson achieved notoriety last year when *The Atlantic* hired him to build ideological diversity in its liberal staff, only to fire him when liberals criticized his ideas. Williamson sees socialism and fascism as twins, not opposites. Adolf Hitler knew he didn’t have to seize companies to work his will: When asked if he would nationalize German industries, Hitler apparently said, “I shall nationalize the people.” In the United States, the left can win by “recruiting the aggregate power of American employers into the program of intellectual repression”—sometimes by force, sometimes by offering padded servility.

Williamson eloquently attacks “ochlocracy—periodic and desultory mob rule effected through the exploitation and domination of both public and private centers of power.” He sees how left and right populists “agree in broad terms about censorship in principle: They disagree about whom to censor.” They get control by defining danger down, suppressing free speech by saying it will create a thunderstorm, although only wispy clouds are visible at the moment.

Williamson rightly sees “the disciplinary corporation” as the front line of cultural battles: The corporation is “a place where values get refined and expressed, a source of social norms, and the main theater of social action for a large class of people… Our houses are where we sleep. Corporations are where we live. Corporations are our homes.”

That’s why firings of dissidents are important: “The point of the exercise is to bend the corporation to the will of the mob, repurposing the corporation as an instrument of political and intellectual suppression.” When churches are sidelined and government suspect, the corporation becomes “a welder of wills… dedicated not only to the pursuit of particular secular business goals but to a transcendent and all encompassing mode of life.”

So Williamson is well worth reading, and his criticism of Donald Trump is apt: He “inspires his enemies to imitate him.” But Williamson falls into that trap when he describes our current period as the “Golden Age of Fame Whores” and viciously attacks several celebrities. Better to do unto others what they should have done unto him.

BOOKMARKS

Tyler Cowen’s *Big Business: A Love Letter to an American Anti-Hero* (St. Martin’s, 2019) makes a case even for Big Tech: Seems to me the power of the biggest should set into motion the gears of anti-trust action. David Bahnsen argues *The Case for Dividend Growth* (Post Hill, 2019).

*On the Edge of Infinity* (Ignatius, 2019) is Clemens Cavallin’s biography of a great Canadian writer, Michael O’Brien. Cavallin describes O’Brien’s conversion experience at age 21 and his crisis at age 34. He also shows the background to O’Brien’s greatest work, *Island of the World*, and the development of his Father Elijah novels, which feature a Jewish-turned-Christian protagonist and a cultured Antichrist. Speaking of great literature, Anthony Verity’s new translation of Homer’s *The Odyssey* (Oxford, 2016) makes it come alive.

Mike Chase’s *How to Become a Federal Criminal* (Atria, 2019) is an amusing look at the enormous volume of laws of which we might run afoul. Among the potential routes to jail: wearing a postal uniform if you aren’t a postal worker, threatening a clown, mailing a miniature spoon, running a mail-order dentures business, shooting a Canada goose from a sailboat if the sails are unfurled, importing a pregnant polar bear, selling a 24-pound can of spinach containing more than 12 millimeters of caterpillar, selling a bottle of wine with “zombie” in its name, gesturing to a horse in a national park in a way a “reasonably prudent” person would not, moving a table on federal land, or giving your boat to a pirate. —M.O.
Books on marriage
reviewed by Charissa Koh

LETTERS TO A ROMANTIC: ON ENGAGEMENT
Sean Perron & Spencer Harmon
In short, conversational chapters, Biblical counselor Sean Perron and Pastor Spencer Harmon offer advice to engaged couples. Chapters cover practical matters such as how much to spend on a ring and deciding which church to attend. The authors write with warmth and wisdom, following the same format as their previous book, Letters to a Romantic: On Dating. They are quick to share from their own experiences but just as quick to distinguish between personal advice and Scriptural wisdom. This book would make a great gift to a newly engaged couple.

READY OR KNOT? 12 CONVERSATIONS EVERY COUPLE NEEDS TO HAVE BEFORE MARRIAGE
Scott Kedersha
Many couples could avoid future divorce by taking time to discuss their differences before marriage, writes Kedersha, the director of marriage ministry at Watermark Community Church in Dallas. Chapters include stories of couples and how particular decisions affected their marriages. Kedersha also gives big-picture tips and discussion questions. The book covers important topics—money, communication, and sexual purity—in a general way and could be helpful for a couple thinking through these things for the first time. But those who’ve grown up in church will find little new or challenging in its pages.

CATCHING FOXES: A GOSPEL-GUIDED JOURNEY TO MARRIAGE
John Henderson
Henderson, a Biblical counselor and pastor, helps couples manage their expectations as they prepare for marriage. He begins with the Biblical picture of marriage, then moves to how that looks in real life. Topics include the roles of husbands and wives, conflict, communication, sex, and finances. He builds these upon a careful foundation of the glory of God, the centrality of the gospel, and inner workings of the heart. The emphasis is more on concepts and theology rather than the practical side of marriage, and while it can be redundant, the content is solid. Discussion questions for couples included.

DEFENDING YOUR MARRIAGE: THE REALITY OF SPIRITUAL BATTLE
Tim Muehlhoff
Muehlhoff reminds us that the devil targets marriages for spiritual warfare. He uses interesting examples and applications but doesn’t always back up his statements with Scripture, leaving room for some disagreement with his assertions. In Chapter 3, “How Can I Tell if This Is Spiritual Warfare?” his answers include “no longer believing the best about God” alongside “violent dreams.” As sources, Muehlhoff cites friends and psychologists as well as Scripture. This book can help a couple realize the presence of spiritual warfare in marriage, but they should discern experiential advice from Biblical counsel.

AFTERWORD
Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling is written for pastors counseling married couples, but couples who read and apply it could improve their marriage before issues arise. Starting in the first chapter, author Jonathan Holmes reminds pastors that they are counselors and the Bible contains all they need to do faithful marriage counseling. Holmes discusses practical questions, such as how much time a pastor should spend on counseling versus other duties, then goes into a theological foundation. Next he moves to the basics of counseling (how to begin, when to end, what to do when stuck). Finally, he goes through some common marriage issues and a Biblical response to each. Holmes gets wordy and each chapter gives lots of information, but the format is readable and he includes plenty of illustrative stories. This book is a great resource for new pastors or for veteran counselors who want a refresher on the basics and a good reference guide. —C.K.
Other worlds
FANTASY AND SCI-FI FOR TEENS reviewed by Emily Whitten

SKYWARD Brandon Sanderson
Reminiscent of Star Wars and Ender’s Game, Skyward is a rollicking tale that will keep teens turning pages. The plot follows Spensa, a brash, aspiring fighter pilot, as she seeks to redeem her father’s legacy and save her planet from an evil alien race. But to succeed, she’ll have to overcome her own fears and the prejudice of others in her community. Sanderson’s Mormon background guides his clean storytelling, and both boys and girls can enjoy the skillful world-building, the authentic camaraderie of Spensa’s classmates, and several characters’ snarky quips. Overall, a strong beginning to a new sci-fi series. (Ages 12 & up)

A TOUCH OF GOLD Annie Sullivan
In this updated tale of King Midas, Princess Kora must embrace her hidden magical powers to save her father and secure their kingdom against foreign pirates and domestic saboteurs. Sullivan’s plot offers well-paced storytelling, likable characters, and several entertaining plot twists. Parents will appreciate the clean language and lack of explicit sexual content but should note that sensual language (related to mild kissing and touching) is used to describe several romances throughout the book. A Touch of Gold is an improvement on most modern fairy tales written for this age group, but Christian families should still proceed with caution. (Ages 13 & up)

THE FORK, THE WITCH, AND THE WORM: TALES FROM ALAGAÆSIA Christopher Paolini
Fans of Paolini’s Inheritance Cycle series will likely devour his most recent release featuring the return of main character Eragon. The Fork, the Witch, and the Worm includes two short stories and a novella set within Paolini’s entertaining (if unoriginal) world of elves, dwarves, humans, and dragons. Although the author’s evolutionary worldview plays a role in the plot, Christian teens can appreciate the book’s imaginative storytelling, clean language, and action without graphic violence. These shorter tales don’t reach the dramatic power of Paolini’s earlier work, but they merit further installments in this Tales from Alagaesia series. (Ages 12 & up)

SNOW & ROSE Emily Winfield Martin
Artist and author Emily Winfield Martin, best known for the picture book The Wonderful Things You Will Be, shifts gears in Snow & Rose to offer tweens and teens a satisfying retelling of the Grimm brothers’ fairy tale “Snow-White and Rose-Red.” When their father disappears, Rose and Snow must unlock the secrets of the enchanted forest to restore their family and friends. This whimsical tale explores natural, everyday delights (keeping a nature journal, cuddling kittens, helping their mother make gooseberry jam) all while unfolding a fantastic tale of magic and redemption. Delicate paintings throughout add to the cozy, artistic feel. (Ages 10-14)

AFTERWORD
In Growing in Godliness (Crossway, 2019) Lindsey Carlson offers teen girls a guide to maturing in their faith. Carlson doesn’t shy away from challenging words like sanctification, but she serves them up in short chapters and incorporates quotes and stories teens are likely to find inspiring. Covering topics like prayer and emotions, Carlson equips teens to seek spiritual maturity and, quoting Ephesians 4:15, to “grow up in every way... into Christ.”

Pressure Points (New Growth Press, 2019) by Shelby Abbott offers young adults straightforward, relatable advice on issues like dating, social media use, church membership, and more. Abbott spent nearly two decades ministering to college students through Cru, and in Pressure Points he encourages young adults to apply Biblical wisdom while navigating the stresses they face. Although geared for college students, this thin book could also serve as a good conversation starter with older high-school students. —E.W.
museum of the Bible

“Technological Marvel”
—TripAdvisor

Washington, DC

museumoftheBible.org
Daniel Darling is vice president for communications at the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, the public affairs wing of the Southern Baptist Convention. He’s been a pastor in Chicago and Nashville and is the author of *The Dignity Revolution*. Here are edited segments of our Q&A.

Former Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy used the word *dignity* nine times in his decision that overturned the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. How do you use the word, and how are you perhaps trying to reclaim it? Human dignity is not self-determined. We have dignity as human beings because a Creator made us in His own image. We don’t find our meaning and purpose within, but without, from God—and the One who created us knows what’s best for us.

Say you’re discussing same-sex marriage with a “woke” LGBTQ person who says, “We must be on the same side, because you’ve written *The Dignity Revolution*.” Where would you go in that conversation? I would say to people who are LGBTQ that your dignity is not defined by the way people think of you nor how they affirm you. Your dignity is given to you by your Creator, whether you acknowledge that or not.

A lot of LGBTQ folks would say, I’m doing fine. How’s that working out on a larger societal scale? As Christians, we’re always countercultural. We’re always pointing the world to a better story, a bigger plan, something much higher and much grander than what we can design for ourselves. But I wouldn’t get into a long, protracted argument. We should show by the way we treat people that we’re willing to live in a civil society among people who disagree with us.

And what do we say? What we should have always been saying: “I hear where you’re coming from, but let me just tell you what the Bible says about the world—that it was created good and something happened that has corrupted the world.” Even people who are not believers get that. They know the world is somehow messed up. We all know there are dark parts of our hearts that we wouldn’t want to be public. We are all sinners. Everyone acknowledges that the world is messed up. Part of the answer to the sexual revolution, whether it’s LGBTQ or other deviations from the Biblical idea, is to say that what God has for us is always better than we can envision for ourselves.

In *The Dignity Revolution* you say a gospel proclamation divorced from acts of mercy becomes an impoverished witness. Could you unpack that? Christians sometimes feel pressure to choose between salvation and social action, acts of mercy. Jesus does not let us make that choice. In Mark 6 the message is “Repent!”—but Jesus also...
says He is the fulfillment of Isaiah’s words: When the Messiah comes, that’s good news for the poor. Whenever the church both proclaims the gospel of individual salvation and lives that out by works of mercy, we’re showing the world a glimpse of what the kingdom will look like in full when Jesus returns.

**Have you seen examples of that?**
A lot of the people you profile in your Hope Awards. Look around the world and think of all the most difficult areas in the world: war, famine, natural disaster. Inevitably you will find Christians there, serving people. Not because they’re making a name for themselves, not because they found a hashtag that they like, but because the gospel compels them to be there.

**You have a chapter about racial reconciliation and the importance of conversations. I’ve seen reconciliation on sports teams, where if one person succeeds, the whole team succeeds.**
**Athletes don’t sit around the locker room talking about race: They work together for a common objective.** Yes, people serving together side by side, having that cohesion. I do think it’s incumbent, particularly for people in the white majority, to have some humility and listen to our minority brothers and sisters talk about their plight and what they have gone through, experiences that we have not had to go through.

**How does “dignity” affect our national debate about abortion, which is much more prevalent per capita in African American communities?**
Justice Anthony Kennedy kept _Roe v. Wade_ alive, even though he emphasized “dignity” and wrote in 2000, “The fetus in many cases dies just as a human adult or child would. It bleeds to death as it is torn from limb to limb.”
The pro-choice movement, the abortion industry, has moved from saying, “This is a hard and tragic choice that nevertheless needs to be available and legal,” to almost celebrating death in a really grotesque way. This is a natural progression when you, for so long, have catechized yourself into believing that the person is not human, or when you’ve justified what you’re doing. But pro-life people have introduced into the culture this moral vocabulary that the most vulnerable among us are human beings with dignity and worth.

But since that understanding is not general, in what way do we have a dignity revolution? I talk about a quiet revolution of ordinary people seeing what our eyes don’t want us to see, seeing the humanity of people we are tempted to walk past on our roads to Jericho. One reason you see this hardening of abortion positions is that we just don’t want to see what is there.

**The word dignity has also been used a lot regarding euthanasia, euphemistically called “death with dignity.” How should we fight the idea that killing old people is a way to accord them dignity?**
The “death with dignity” movement preys on the vulnerable. We need to show the world that elderly populations have dignity by the way that we treat them. For instance, do we have churches that are only marketed to the young and the hip? Do we treat well our own elderly relatives?

**NOTE:** Daniel Darling mentioned WORLD’s Hope Awards. One of the five ministries we profiled in our last issue will receive the $10,000 first-place award, plus publicity that brings in more volunteers and donations. If you have not already done so, please go to wng.org/compassion and vote for whichever ministry moves you the most. WORLD reporters have researched and eyeballed all five, so they all help needy people and glorify God.
One overriding impression emerges from Rhino's new 10-disc Woodstock: Back to the Garden, 50th Anniversary Experience.

It isn’t that the music has aged badly. Those parts that seem to have weren’t considered all that good to begin with. Besides, there were mitigating circumstances: the era’s outdoor-concert technology, for example, and the fact that many of the performers, like much of the crowd, weren’t entirely sober.

Happenstance also played a role. Richie Havens meandered (at one point do-be-doo-dooing his way through “With a Little Help From My Friends” as he didn’t know the words) because the delayed arrival of the band Sweetwater required him to play twice as long as he’d planned. John Sebastian meandered too, but he wasn’t supposed to play at all: Having been asked to improvise an acoustic set until the rain-drenched stage could be electrocution proofed, he complied.

The box’s overriding impression also isn’t that a lot of the music sounds surprisingly good considering the aforementioned obstacles. Not so much the folky first day and a half—there’s a reason that Woodstock is remembered as a rock festival. But once bands started plugging in, they delivered the visceral, Dionysian thrills that the hippie hordes were gladly enduring rain, humidity, mud, hunger, and bad sanitation to experience.

Even acts that’d been signed simply because their relative obscurity made them affordable to promoters who’d already paid a fortune for Creedence Clearwater Revival, Jefferson Airplane, the Who, and Jimi Hendrix—acts such as the then little-known Mountain and the still-unknown Keef Hartley Band—achieved cruising altitude at one point or another.

The overriding impression isn’t even that the more things change the more they stay the same, although the emcee Edward “Chip” Monck’s increasingly exasperated requests for festivalgoers to get off the scaffolding make him sound like a schoolteacher overseeing unruly students on a field trip. “If your determination [to climb down] was the same as your selfishness,” he says at one point, “we’d be able to have gatherings like this every week.”

No. The overriding impression is that what was once limited to a long weekend on Max Yasgur’s 600-acre dairy farm now runs rampant throughout much of the United States 24/7. Despite half a century of epitaphs bemoaning its demise, in other words, the Woodstock generation has won.

Exhibit A: profanity. Country Joe MacDonald’s anti–Vietnam War “Fish Cheer,” Abbie Hoffman’s pleas on behalf of John Sinclair, and Janis Joplin’s ‘tween-song patter sent a clear message: Only the uptight are bothered by bad language. Vulgarity is now the lingua franca.

Exhibit B: no walls. Woodstock organizers expected 200,000 attendees. More than twice that amount, most of them without tickets, showed up. They trampled the fences—defied border security as it were—and were granted immediate “citizenship.”

Exhibit C: free everything. Most of Woodstock’s food, medical care, and recreational drugs were provided gratis. A growing portion of the populace thinks that they—and everything else—can and should be free as well. “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” and all that.

Exhibit D: “One sometimes gets the impression,” wrote George Orwell in The Road to Wigan Pier, “that the mere words ‘Socialism’ and ‘Communism’ draw towards them ... every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, ‘Nature Cure’ quack, pacifist and feminist in England.” With the possible exception of the Quakers, Orwell described the Woodstock crowd to a T. It’s a crowd known nowadays as “special-interest groups.” And, tail though they may be, they wag the dog. ©
New classical CDs
reviewed by Arsenio Orteza

ALVIN LUCIER: ORPHEUS VARIATIONS
Charles Curtis, SEM Ensemble
In 2015, after decades of being “haunted” (his word) by the “sonority” (ditto) of a seven-note chord in Stravinsky’s ballet Orpheus, Lucier took 103 of the notes’ 5,040 possible permutations and sequenced them into a 31-minute piece “For Cello and Seven Wind Instruments” (the subtitle). Whether such an approach qualifies as “composition” is an interesting if not necessarily fascinating question. Hearing what Curtis (the cellist) and the Petr Kotik–conducted SEM Ensemble (the winds) do with Lucier’s variations makes for fascinating if not necessarily interesting listening.

ON THE WINGS OF THE WIND
John Hackett & Marco Lo Muscio Duo
This album’s stated raison d’être is to commemorate the Hackett–Lo Muscio Duo’s first decade of concertizing. Its unstated purpose, however, seems to be to lure progressive-rock fans into the classical lair by adding lovely organ-and-flute or piano-and-flute covers of songs by King Crimson, Genesis, and John’s brother Steve to a repertoire mixing Telemann, Gluck, and Ravel with similarly euphonious Hackett or Lo Muscio originals. Cameos by King Crimson and Van der Graaf Generator alumni and John’s brother Steve give the game away.

JOHN CASKEN: THE DREAM OF THE ROOD
The Hilliard Ensemble
Even condensed (by approximately 70 percent) and “freely adapted” (into modern English from the Anglo-Saxon) as it is on this 2014 recording, The Dream of the Rood (circa A.D. 900) remains a powerfully imaginative meditation on Christ’s crucifixion. And the Hilliard Ensemble (now disbanded) were just the men for the job of reproducing John Casken’s elongated, repeated, and intricately interwoven vocal lines. Listeners will need to follow along to the libretto at first—and maybe at second, third, and fourth. But they’ll be glad that they did.

TO A CAMIA: PIANO MUSIC FROM ROMANTIC MANILA
Sally Pinkas
The word “Romantic” in the subtitle has two meanings. One is the mood out of which many of these lilting pieces grew. The other is that many of them were composed between the late 18th and the early 19th century. The Israeli-born Pinkas is sensitive to both connotations as well as to the stylistic requirements of the subgenres. Her outsider’s sense of appreciation and discovery is as evident in the songs of “Civic Pride” as it is in the “Waltzes,” the “Romances,” and the “Danzas Filipinas.”

ENCORE
“Taking into account… her origin, youth, sex, illiteracy, early environment, and the obstructing conditions under which she exploited her high gifts… she is easily… the most extraordinary person the human race has ever produced.” So wrote Mark Twain of Joan of Arc. But if Twain’s 1896 novel Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc ultimately fails to capture its heroine’s compelling singularity, Arthur Honegger and Paul Claudel’s richly variegated 1938 oratorio Jeanne d’Arc au bûcher (Joan of Arc at the Stake) does not.

In a new live recording by Amsterdam’s Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (Stéphane Denève, conductor), the Maid of Orleans’ final moments and the plot-advancing flashbacks that she experiences during them take on a vibrant intensity. Every component—the choirs, the soloists, the musicians—acquits itself well. Special credit, however, belongs to Judith Chemla in the lead role. There are few moments in 20th-century musical drama more shattering than Joan’s “Je ne veux pas mourir!” And Chemla nails it. –A.O.
Walk the talk
MIKE POMPEO OPENS AN IMPORTANT CONVERSATION ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Divine inspiration isn’t often highlighted in American diplomacy. Yet in his office Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has a framed index card with words from Psalm 126: “The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.”

The handwritten note was slipped into Pompeo’s hand, he said, by three Americans—Kim Dong-chul, Kim Hak-song, and Tony Kim—after they were freed by North Korea last May. Pompeo, who secured their release in Pyongyang then escorted them home, called it “one of the most joyful moments of my life.” The note hangs in his office, he said, “because it reminds me of the power of faith in even the most trying times.”

In ways both subtle and sublime Pompeo, 55, is opening a new front in American foreign policy by making religious freedom a central theme and his own Christian faith a regular part of the conversation. Both were on display during last month’s Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, which he hosted in Washington.

The three-day gathering drew 1,000 people representing 106 countries and multiple faith groups. It featured top diplomats, former heads of state, and Vice President Mike Pence all appearing alongside survivors of religious persecution and related violence.

Underscoring the relevance was its opening panel of speakers: Jewish Rabbi Jeffrey Myers from the Pittsburgh synagogue where a mass shooter killed 11 people last October; Muslim Farid Ahmed from the New Zealand mosque where 51 people, including his wife, were massacred in March; and Christian Yamina Ravindran from the churches in Sri Lanka where more than 300 people died in Easter Sunday bombings.

Each recalled headline news, but also signaled an emphasis in this year’s ministerial—that persecution affects all faiths around the globe.

The second such event, this ministerial was a determined effort by Pompeo, Ambassador Sam Brownback, and others to make the gathering a fixture. The 2018 inaugural event was hastily pulled together and had more the feel of the Trump administration playing to its domestic political base. This year’s event consciously drew from all faiths across all continents—and carried a grueling schedule. Besides in-depth breakout sessions on three tracks, one listing of side events I received ran 63 pages long.

For an administration not seen as conciliatory, the sight of political and religious opponents sitting down to an overflow auditorium was striking and largely unnoted by U.S. media.

One panel featured D.C.-area Imam Mohamed Magid with Texas megachurch pastor Bob Roberts. Another had Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi sitting down with former Republican lawmaker Frank Wolf.

There was also unusual buy-in from European leaders, including addresses by the EU’s special envoy Ján Figel’, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and House of Lords parliamentarian David Alton.

Despite avid pledges from dozens of countries to do more to battle religious persecution, news of the week underscored the difficulty of turning so much talk into action.

Dignitaries from leading persecutors like Saudi Arabia, China, Turkey, Iran, and North Korea were notably absent.

Reports emerged the Trump administration may set next year’s refugee cap at zero. In an ironic twist, those featured at the ministerial for the persecution they’ve endured abroad aren’t likely to be granted safe haven in the United States.

U.S. faith-based groups, including participants at the ministerial, oppose the move. Calling the refugee resettlement program “a lifeline” for persecuted Christians and others, World Relief President Scott Arbeiter told me it is “on a track toward being largely dismantled.” Arbeiter said he hoped President Trump would return to historic norms with ceilings of 75,000 or more.

Pompeo told me, “These people would much prefer to stay in their home country … so our mission set has been to drive better outcomes for them where they are.” Yet American-led rebuilding efforts in Iraq for those displaced by ISIS, numerous delegates at the event attested, have been notably sluggish.

With this new emphasis in foreign policy, let’s be bold and hopeful we may see words transformed into action.

For more from the 2019 ministerial visit state.gov/2019-ministerial-to-advance-religious-freedom
It’s about time the whole family had access to news from a biblical perspective.

We all need to stay informed and educated, but it’s often overwhelming to even try. WORLD produces facts-based, biblically objective journalism. Because truth-seeking resources must reference the ultimate authority on truth.

With annual memberships covering every life stage, your family can remain in the world but not of the world.

Get the right WORLD for everyone at gwnews.com.
PULLING THE CURTAIN

The great and powerful Oz? Big media help pro-abortion executives seem much larger than life
Kristin Hull, CEO of the Nia Impact Capital investment firm, was sitting at her computer reading emails when she received a notification about a pro-abortion ad that would take up a full page in *The New York Times*. “I thought, ‘Oh this is so fantastic.’” Almost immediately, she decided to add her signature to the growing list, because “it was very clear to me that this was the right thing to do.”

Nina Faulhaber, co-founder and co-CEO of the capsule clothing brand Aday, had a similar reaction. “We didn’t even have to think about it,” she wrote to me. “As a women-founded, women-led company believing in gender equality and equal opportunity for all people, it was so clear to us which stance we would be taking in this discussion.”

Alexandra Fine, CEO of the sex toy company Dame Products, said her decision to sign was equally clear: “These laws are putting women in harm’s way. I feel that these rules and regulations are the antithesis of our mission—which is to close the pleasure gap.”

Fine was referring to the pro-life laws recently passed in states including Georgia, Missouri, Alabama, and Ohio. “Don’t Ban Equality”—a full-page *New York Times* ad on June 10 signed by 50 business executives—was a reaction to this legislation. Hull, Faulhaber, and Fine were among the original signers.

The ad announced: “It’s time for companies to stand up for reproductive health care. … Restricting access to comprehensive reproductive care, including abortion, threatens the health, independence and economic stability of our employees and customers. Simply put, it goes against our values, and is bad for business.”

The day of the ad’s release, USA Today ran the headline: “‘Bad for business’: Executives from major companies sign joint letter against abortion bans.” This article and other media coverage of the ad highlighted the more recognizable brands on the list, such as Yelp, H&M, and Ben & Jerry’s. They also spotlighted the big-name CEOs like Twitter’s Jack Dorsey (who signed the ad under...
his lesser-known company Square Inc.) and Diane von Fürstenberg.

This press coverage implied that corporate America was taking a liberal position on abortion just as it had on LGBTQ rights. But not a single CEO of the Fortune 500—the largest American corporations—signed. With a few exceptions, the signers of the pro-abortion ad are CEOs of small, privately held startups. Many of the businesses have fewer than 50 employees and some are sole proprietorships. Most are headquartered on the coasts, where they are unaffected by the recent pro-life laws.

Aug. 25 marks a big movie anniversary. On that day in 1939 moviegoers across the United States watched in Technicolor as the fearsome Wizard of Oz, flanked by columns of fire, snarled at a scarecrow, a tin man, a cowardly lion, and Dorothy Gale of Kansas. But Dorothy’s dog Toto sniffed out the truth: The great and powerful wizard was really an unimpressive con man pulling levers. Eighty years later, Big Media and abortion advocates are similarly making abortion-promoting CEOs seem wizardry. Don’t Ban Equality signer Susan McPherson is CEO of the New York–based communications firm McPherson Strategies, founded in 2013. The group’s website calls McPherson “the consummate connector” and “one of the best connected people in the social good world.” Her firm edited the ad for its client, NARAL Pro-Choice America, and sponsors Planned Parenthood, the ACLU, and the Center for Reproductive Rights.

The ad’s messaging aligns closely with McPherson’s personal values. She told me, “Companies in the United States are put in perilous situations because they will not be able to treat men and women equally... It’s much easier to hire a man than to have to deal with [pregnancy].”

McPherson connected Aday’s Faulhaber to the ad. Faulhaber co-founded her New York– and London-based clothing brand in 2015. She met McPherson at a dinner organized by Shiza Shahid, a young and influential female CEO who sought to bring together like-minded business owners.

Kristin Hull, who founded her Oakland-based investment firm in 2013, also identified McPherson as a primary figure in making the ad happen. Hull belongs to a group of female CEOs who decided to sign together. Hull said bluntly, “Why should we have businesses in states that are doing terrible things?” She did not see any downside to signing. Even if there is a “backlash of some kind,” she said, her firm wouldn’t want to
“work with those people” if they don’t share her values.

Unlike Hull’s firm, other businesses on the list sell directly to consumers, and many share a similar market. The New York–based sex toy company Dame Products—founded in 2014—is one of these direct-to-consumer businesses. CEO Alexandra Fine learned about the ad through fellow signer Meika Hollender, CEO of the women’s hygiene product company Sustain Natural.

In May, Hollender, Fine, and five other CEOs from underwear, skin care, sex education, and feminine hygiene product companies signed an earlier *New York Times* ad addressing the abortion issue. Under the headline “Abortion Is,” this May 21 ad listed nine qualities of abortion, including that it is “a constitutional right” and “not up for debate.” It read, “Today, we loudly and boldly declare that we will not be silent in defense of fundamental human rights and we challenge our peers in the business community to do the same.”

Six of the seven CEOs who signed the May ad also endorsed the “Don’t Ban Equality” ad published less than three weeks later. These six run private California- or New York–based brands that started in or after 2013. The business of the nonsigning CEO is based in Nashville, Tenn.

Many of the ad-signing CEOs share personal or professional connections. Some meet annually at the “stunningly serene” Learning Lab of Eileen Fisher (an ad signer). Another business on the list is Rebellious PR & Consulting, a “boutique PR agency” in Portland, Ore., that started in 2016 and manages public relations for at least six of the other signers.
preconceived judgment about your proper place. We take you for you.” Among &pizza’s listed benefits: free pizza and tattoos.

Great and powerful influencers? When the Don’t Ban Equality ad came out on June 10, a related website listed 187 companies said to employ 108,000 workers. By July 10, the number of signers had nearly doubled, but the employee count had only increased to 129,000—an average of fewer than 400 employees per business. (One signer, the Swedish company H&M, has almost 600 U.S. stores, and that pulls up the average number.)

Why didn’t any Fortune 500 CEOs sign the pro-abortion ad? I asked representatives of nine of their companies why their corporate names were on an ad advocating LGBTQ positions but not one promoting abortion. Only Amazon.com responded: “These are lists/letters on two different issues so I’m not sure I understand the connection you are trying to make.”

Thomas Strobhar, an investment adviser and chairman of Life Decisions International, has been pushing back on corporate support of abortion for three decades. He suggested that Fortune 500 companies didn’t sign “Don’t Ban Equality” because they realize the sensitivity of the abortion issue and don’t want to touch it. As public companies, they—in contrast to the mostly small, private businesses that signed—have more to lose by alienating a portion of their customer base.

Looking at the companies that do appear on the list, Strobhar said, “These are not economic heavyweights here, folks.” Most of them, he said, are unrecognizable in the business world. Investment company CEO Kristin Hull acknowledged that large companies may have business reasons for not signing the abortion ad. Still, she said, “There’s no excuse for them not to sign.” In her case, she said, her business is small, she can do what she wants, and signing barely required a thought.

In some ways the failure of the ad to attract big corporate buy-in was a defeat, but the press—like Oz’s flame-throwing apparatus—turned it into a spectacle. Among the outlets reporting the purported breakthrough: CBS, CNBC, CNN, HuffPost, Forbes, Fortune, The Week, and Adweek. The Daily Caller was typical in reporting how “business leaders banded together.” It quoted the now-fired CEO of Planned Parenthood, Leana Wen: “We are grateful and inspired to have so many business leaders standing with us proudly and publicly.”

Leah Hickman is a World Journalism Institute graduate

Pressuring women

National and regional pro-life groups have long heard activists meld abortion and women’s professional success. Attorney Katie Glenn of Americans United for Life (AUL) said this misconception stems from a tendency to “define equality on men’s terms.” As she explained, fatherhood rarely interrupts a man’s career, and abortion purportedly gives that freedom to women.

Glenn criticizes this perspective: “If we’re talking about choice, what about the choice to have a family?” She said the “Don’t Ban Equality” ad shows abortions, rather than being helpful to women, are “a benefit for employers who find employees with families inconvenient.”

If the signing CEOs are truly pro-choice, their companies should offer generous benefits for pregnant and nursing mothers. Federal law already requires businesses with 50 or more employees to give a mother 12 weeks unpaid leave and, once she returns to work, an acceptable location and time off to pump milk.

A business that prioritizes choice will surpass these requirements.

I contacted 44 of the “Don’t Ban Equality” businesses to see how their maternity benefits measure up. Eighteen replied, but 11 of those declined to comment. Amanda Jacobsmeyer, the public relations representative of “gender-neutral underwear” company TomboyX, said, “Their main concern is that WORLD Magazine appears to be more conservative leaning. … A conservative Christian pub probably doesn’t have the right audience reading to make it high priority to carve out time for.”

The seven companies that did respond all claimed to provide paid parental leave with durations ranging from six to 16 weeks. (All but two have headquarters in California and New York, states that include pregnancy as a disability and fund short-term payment of disability insurance.) Some of the businesses also mentioned nursing rooms, flexible hours, or remote work policies that can ease the back-to-work transition for new mothers.

Glenn says the ad sends a message to female employees: Abortion is the solution to the problems women face in the workplace. Putting herself in the shoes of a young working woman ready to start a family, Glenn said she would be “very uncomfortable” to see her employer’s name on the ad. —L.H.
Dai Ying, a middle-aged Chinese woman, has fake front teeth. She says she lost her real ones when guards at a Chinese prison forced her to end a hunger strike by ramming a screwdriver between her clenched teeth. Her fingers are also deformed. She says that’s because the guards forced her and other prisoners to make leather shoes each day from 7:30 a.m. to midnight. She’s also blind in her left eye, a result of guards repeatedly shocking her with electric prods.

Her crime? Refusing to recant her belief in Falun Gong, a banned spiritual movement in China based on Buddhism and qigong exercises.

Dai calmly described these experiences from her stay in a Chinese prison from 2000 to 2005 as she sat in front of the China Tribunal in London last December. Headed by Sir Geoffrey Nice, a prosecutor at the UN criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the China Tribunal was initiated by the International Coalition to End Transplant Abuse in China.

One part of Dai’s testimony was of particular interest to the panel: Dai recalled that in April 2004 prison guards brought all the Falun Gong practitioners to the labor camp clinic where doctors drew large amounts of blood, performed X-rays and electrocardiograms, and pressed on their kidneys. None of the other prisoners at the camp received the tests. Afterward, Dai said, some of the Falun Gong members disappeared, perhaps transferred to other camps, and she never heard from them again.

Why give these tests when Dai’s torture clearly revealed that authorities did not care about her well-being? One chilling possibility: to create a giant organ bank where Falun Gong practitioners are killed to order for organ transplants.

At the same time that Chinese authorities were rounding up hundreds of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners like Dai, China’s organ transplant industry began to take off, as people around the world came to China for transplants due to the extremely short wait times. The Chinese government poured money into the building of large transplant hospitals and the
training of doctors. Yet without a history of organ donation and an insufficient number of executed prisoners, the Chinese government had no plausible explanation for where the organs came from.

The seven-person panel of the China Tribunal listened to hours of testimony from Falun Gong practitioners, detained Uighurs, researchers, human rights activists, and doctors and read thousands of pages of reports.

It is impossible to speak with victims of organ harvesting, as the extraction process kills them. Other evidence is difficult to come by as victims’ bodies are cremated. Some Falun Gong activists are guilty of exaggeration, yet the combination of multiple witness testimonies, the short wait times for organs, and the data on the mismatch of transplant numbers and eligible voluntary donors led the panel members to say in an interim judgment in December 2018 that they “are certain—unanimously, and sure beyond reasonable doubt—that in China forced organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience has been practiced for a substantial period of time involving a very substantial number of victims.”

This contradicts the government’s claim in 2015 that it no longer used the organs of executed prisoners for transplants, only voluntary donors. (The Chinese government has never admitted that it used the organs of prisoners of conscience.)

In its final report on June 17, the tribunal also stated that it feared Uighurs, an ethnic minority in China’s western Xinjiang region, were at high risk of organ harvesting as Chinese officials began blood and DNA testing the population in 2016 and placed more than 1 million in massive concentration camps. The tribunal determined that the Chinese government’s actions against Falun Gong adherents and Uighurs constituted crimes against humanity and asked other international groups to determine whether they also qualify as genocide.
Suspicions about forced organ harvesting in China have been around for years. In 2005 a patient with severe heart failure told Dr. Jacob Lavee of Tel Aviv that he was tired of waiting for a heart transplant in Israel and that his insurance company had helped him set up an appointment to have a heart transplant in two weeks’ time in China. Lavee was shocked: In order for a transplant to succeed, the donor has to die less than 24 hours beforehand, and at the time China had no voluntary donor system. How could they ensure the exact date of someone’s death?

Lavee’s patient was the first Israeli to undergo a heart transplant in China, fully reimbursed by his insurance company, and indeed had the surgery on the date promised. Nine more Israeli patients would go to China for transplants; four of them would die in China.

Lavee, who also testified at the China Tribunal, said he then began to research organ transplantation in China and discovered the Chinese government was harvesting the organs of executed prisoners as well as Falun Gong practitioners without their consent. Angered, he began campaigning for the Israeli government to ban its citizens from going to China for transplants.

In 2008 Israel’s parliament passed the Organ Transplant Law that stopped Israelis from going to China for transplants and banned insurance companies from reimbursing the operations.

By this time China had become a popular destination for patients in need of an organ transplant due to its short wait times: In 2003 one transplant hospital in China advertised that it would take one week to one month to procure a kidney, and if the kidney turned out not to be a suitable match, the hospital could try a transplant with a different kidney one week later, according to a 2006 report by Canadian human rights lawyers David Matas and David Kilgour. In Canada the median waiting time for a kidney in 2003 was 32.5 months.

Chinese officials claim the country performs 10,000 transplants each year. But Matas, Kilgour, and U.S. journalist Ethan Gutmann examined the transplant programs of hundreds of hospitals in China—analyzing bed counts, hospital revenue, surgical personnel, and so forth—and found the number was actually between 60,000 and 100,000. That raises the question: Where do those organs come from?

After the publication of the 2006 report, Chinese officials claimed the organs came from executed prisoners. Then in 2013 it started a nationwide voluntary donor system and by 2015 claimed that it had completely stopped using the organs of executed prisoners.

Lavee said he felt he had scored a victory after Israel’s Organ Transplant Law passed in 2008. For a time, he was able to convince medical professionals to boycott academic events put on by Chinese transplant doctors. But when Huang Jiefu, head of the China National Organ Donation and Transplantation Committee, announced in late 2014 that China had reformed its system, everything changed. Even the Vatican welcomed China back with open arms. “That unfortunately has totally changed the attitude of the international transplant community because now... we see all the Chinese transplant surgeons and physicians coming to international meetings and their papers being published,” Lavee said at the tribunal.

Yet finding holes in the Chinese government’s claims is as simple as looking at the numbers from each possible organ source. First, executed prisoners. Although China’s execution rate is a state secret, the number of executions has decreased after the Chinese government allowed the Supreme People’s Court to review all death sentences in 2007. Dui Hua Foundation, an NGO focused on prisoners in China, estimated that China executed 6,500 people in 2007, versus 2,400 in 2013. If executed prisoners were the only source of organs, the number of transplants would have also gone down.

Furthermore, researcher Matthew Robinson pointed out some prisoners have hepatitis B or blood-borne illnesses that make their organs ineligible for transplantation. Prisoners sentenced to death are executed seven days later, so again there’s no way to have enough “on-demand” organs strictly from prisoners.

The other organ source beginning in 2013 is from voluntary donors. In 2010 China first started a pilot program in 19 provinces, but it only resulted in a total of 207 donations. But it claimed that when the system expanded nationwide in 2013, voluntary donations made up 23 percent of transplants. Just one year later that jumped to 80 percent, and by 2015 China claimed that all organ transplants are from donations.

Again the numbers don’t add up. While Americans had 140 million registered organ donors in 2017, only 10,284 were eligible—meaning they died and had usable organs—according to a report by Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting (DAFOH). That’s less than 0.008 percent of the total pool. In contrast,
China claimed 375,000 registered donors that year, and from that, 5,146 were eligible donors, a rate of 1.4 percent. To imagine that China’s donor rate is 140 times greater than the rates of the United States and other countries that have mature voluntary donor programs is implausible.

The other possible source is prisoners of conscience, namely Falun Gong practitioners. In 1999, one year before China’s push toward organ transplantation, authorities cracked down on the spiritual group as they felt threatened by the group’s size and independence from the state. Authorities threw hundreds of thousands into extrajudicial detention where they faced torture, forced labor, and, for some, death.

Some family members of Falun Gong practitioners who died in detention say they found their loved ones’ bodies beaten and bruised, with rough stitching on the torsos. Authorities then cremated the bodies without consent.

Uighurs, a largely Muslim ethnic minority living in the oil-rich western region of Xinjiang, may become another victim of forced organ harvesting. A Uighur separatist movement launched scattered terrorist attacks in the past, and the Chinese government has used counterterrorism as an excuse to transform the region into a surveillance state, sending more than 1 million Uighurs into reeducation camps and tracking the movements of every citizen.

In 2017 Human Rights Watch reported that authorities have done blood and DNA testing on all Uighurs between the ages of 12 and 65 in Xinjiang, but none of the Han majority. Released Uighur detainees recalled that inside the camps they received similar medical tests as the Falun Gong practitioners.

Gulbahar Jelilova, a Uighur from Kazakhstan, told the panel that in May 2017 authorities arrested her on accusations that she transferred money to a Turkish organization, which she denies. She was held in three detention centers before being released in September 2018 due to pressure from the Kazakh government. On the night of her arrival, guards stripped her naked and took blood and urine samples. A week later, she said, the guards placed black hoods over the heads of her and other prisoners and again took blood samples and ultrasounds. These continued at the other prisons where she was held.

Radio Free Asia reported in 2018 that authorities in Xinjiang were rapidly constructing crematoriums in the area even though traditional Uighur customs require burials complete with a religious ceremony. The Uighur diaspora believes this is an effort to wipe out Uighur culture as well as destroy any evidence for mistreatment inside the camps—or possibly missing organs.

This may not be the first time Uighurs have been targeted for organ harvesting. Enver Tohti, a Uighur doctor, told the panel that while he was working as a surgeon at an Ürümqi hospital in 1995, his two chief surgeons told him to drive to an execution ground and extract the liver and two kidneys of a prisoner who had just been shot by a firing squad. Tohti says he was shocked to find when he cut him open with a scalpel that he was not yet dead, yet his superiors forced him to continue extracting his organs. He says the chief surgeon told him not to tell anyone what had happened.

The tribunal said in its report that it did not have enough evidence to conclude that the government was harvesting the organs of Uighurs, but “the vulnerability of the Uighurs to being used as a bank of organs is also obvious.” China declined to participate in the tribunal and claims that it follows international medical standards in transplantation. Ahead of the final judgment, the Chinese Embassy called organ harvesting a “rumor,” according to The Guardian.

After the tribunal released its findings, DAFOH called on Congress to launch a formal investigation into China’s practices and whether they constitute genocide. While countries such as Norway, Israel, and Spain have banned medical tourism to China, the United States and the United Kingdom have not. In 2016 the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution condemning organ harvesting in China and calling on the State Department to investigate further, yet State officials have not yet done so.

“It’s time for the U.S. government to not just pass a resolution, not just say ‘this is horrible,’ but to take action now,” said Ann Corson, spokeswoman at DAFOH. She would also like to see the international medical community disengage from the Chinese transplant community.

U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., also called on the State Department to conduct a more detailed analysis on forced organ harvesting in its human rights report and deny entry visas to doctors involved in organ harvesting.

“There is mounting and credible evidence that a corrupt organ transplant system has operated in China, targeting prisoners and detained Falun Gong,” Smith said in a statement. “We must find ways to stop the black market in organs globally, including by curtailing the practice of transplant tourism to China, as other countries have done.”
Tom Tarrants first questioned his extremist ideology while serving a 35-year sentence in prison for attempting to bomb a Jewish businessman’s residence. Previously, Tarrants had avoided any literature that didn’t support his white supremacist views. But with nothing to do in his tiny cell except think and read, he began devouring books about philosophy, history, and ethics. For the first time, Tarrants was forced to reexamine his beliefs—and he realized then how much he had been a slave to his ideology.

His hunger for truth prompted him to reopen his Bible one summer night in 1970. At the time, asking God for forgiveness wasn’t on his mind. Tarrants grew up in Alabama attending church every Sunday with his family. He had assumed he was saved. Even as he plotted terrorism, he had believed he was fighting for God and country.

But reading Matthew 16:26 shook him awake: “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” How utterly blind and foolish he had been to sell his soul in exchange for self-glory within the far-right movement! His hard heart cracked open, and he knelt on the concrete floor and asked Jesus Christ to forgive him.

Tarrants is one of many former extremists (or “formers”) who managed to walk away from a life of hate and violence—with a price. Many formers avoid referencing their past due to shame, guilt, and fear of judgment, and some still struggle with racial prejudices. For Tarrants, he didn’t just need to let go of bad ideas and switch ideologies—he was now a new creation in Christ, and he sought to live out his new identity.

Life in prison meant Tarrants had to engage constantly with nonwhites. These interactions crushed his racist stereotypes, but reading the Bible convicted him that it wasn’t enough to simply not hate nonwhites: God had commanded him to love others, even his enemies.

Many were suspicious, but some people believed Tarrants had a true conversion: Chaplains, pastors, lawyers, civil rights activists, FBI agents, and prison officers took a chance on him. One chaplain invited him to his home for dinner with his family, and a superintendent allowed him to live in a garage apartment behind his home and work as a clerk in the chaplain’s office.

After eight years in prison, thanks to a federal court-ordered work-release program and numerous people who advocated for his early release, Tarrants became a free man in 1976. Now 72, Tarrants is president of the C.S. Lewis Institute, a Washington, D.C.–based discipleship organization. Over the years, he has co-pastored a multiracial church, served as interim pastor for an Asian American church, and participated in racial reconciliation events in the city.

There’s always “someone” in a former’s story. That “someone” awakens the former from years of
indoctrination and ignorance—and it’s always through unexpected kindness and empathy. For Tarrants, the “someones” were nonwhite inmates who befriended him; it was the Jewish attorney who vouched for him; it was the chaplains who brought him Christian books and tapes; it was the prayer group women who regularly interceded for him.

That’s why many formers who are now active in condemning hate also warn against hating members of hate groups. TM Garret, a former Klan leader and now an activist against racist violence in Mississippi, makes it his mission to humanize former white supremacists, whom he says deserve compassion: “It’s OK to dislike their ideology, but never, ever hate the human being.”

Garret has helped dozens of formers leave extremist groups by introducing them to black churches and civil rights museums. He remembers taking one third-generation Klansman to a museum in Memphis that showcases African American accomplishments. Later, that man told Garret, “I just feel so small and dumb and uneducated. I had no idea anything like this existed. I feel like my dad lied to me all my life.”

Garret was born in 1975 as Achim Schmid in Mosbach, Germany, to a marriage that was already breaking apart. When he was 8, his father died of lung cancer. His mother, who never remarried, would grab a bottle of alcohol after work and lock herself in her room all night. Given his family’s reputation, other children’s parents didn’t allow them to play with Garret. Kids bullied him in school. Then one day, he heard schoolmates laughing over anti-Semitic jokes, and he began dropping those jokes too, hoping to score laughs.

In post-war Germany, the mere mention of Hitler or national pride drew giggles and gasps. Garret liked that attention. By age 13, people were calling him “the Nazi kid,” but anything was better than being the bullied kid: “Suddenly, I had an identity. I was not a nobody anymore.”

As a young teenager, Garret fell in love with far-right skinhead bands that sang about nationalism and feeling misunderstood and that raged against authority, Jews, blacks, and immigrants. At 19, he began performing in a skinhead band that traveled across Europe.

In 1998, Garret joined a Klan group in Germany and later opened his own chapter. The age of the internet was also booming. Garret met American Klansmen online who identified as Christians, and he peppered them with questions: How can you be anti-Semitic yet pray to Jesus, a Jew? They said Jesus was not Jewish, but white. They claimed that black people are “beasts of the field,” that Jesus was blond, that enslaving or exterminating nonwhites would hasten Christ’s second coming.

That sounded ridiculous to Garret, so he pored through the Bible and found the opposite: The Bible teaches that all human beings are created in the image of God. It talks about welcoming foreigners and treating them with empathy and justice. Jesus was kind and compassionate to the Samaritan woman, who was part of an ethnic group the Jews abhorred.

Garret began wondering: What if nothing made sense because his beliefs were wrong? What most people don’t realize is that “everyone in hate groups have doubts,” Garret said. But whenever he expressed doubts, other Klansmen shushed him: The Jew-controlled media’s tricking you. Satan’s deceiving you. “It’s like standing on quicksand,” Garret recalled. “The more you try to get out, the deeper you sink in.”

By then, police were raiding his house, digging for evidence of domestic terrorism and hate crimes. That spooked him. In 2002, he resigned as grand dragon of his Klan group and moved with his family 100 miles away to another town, where he rented the only affordable house available. Problem was, his landlord was a Muslim immigrant from Turkey. That man turned out to be Garret’s “someone.”

One night, the landlord invited him to dinner with his wife and two children. As a penny-strapped stranger in a new town, Garret felt forced to accept. His inner conflict exacerbated into a full-out internal warfare when the landlord’s wife placed a steaming bowl of Turkish fish soup before him. He had heard that rejecting these people’s food is a grave insult. But if he ate...
this soup—he was quite convinced that he might vomit before his hosts.

Finally, Garret blurted out, “I’m sorry. I don’t like fish soup.” And then he held his breath, but the landlord’s wife simply smiled and took the soup away. For the rest of the night, they were just as nice and gracious. Garret walked away that night in tears: “Everything I had expected did not happen. I felt so small and wrong.”

Garret had always thought his ideology was based on love: love for his race, his family, country, heritage, and culture. But the more he met people of other races and ethnicities, the more he realized how much he had lived in ignorant hate: “We went to bed with hate, we woke up with hate.”

That hate is all-consuming: It seeps into every part of that person’s life and identity. That’s why it’s so hard for some to separate themselves from their ideology—without it, who are they?

Decades after denouncing white supremacism, Tim Zaal still battles guilt, shame, and self-hatred. Born and raised in a majority-white suburban neighborhood in Los Angeles, Zaal was mostly home alone while both his parents worked. The loud, crazed, violent punk music scene of the 1980s pumped him out of his boredom and loneliness. He had always felt out of place in school—but the punk rockers? That was his tribe.

Once all his punk rocker friends left town for college or military service, Zaal went searching for another tribe. He drove 200 miles down to San Diego to visit Tom Metzger, leader of White Aryan Resistance (WAR), a neo-Nazi group. He began reading literature such as The White Man’s Bible, The Turner Diaries, and monthly WAR newsletters: “I became a true believer. I believed that the white race was in decline, and in order to save the white race, I had to do whatever it took.”

So he beat up gay men. He harassed minorities. He plastered Nazi flyers in Jewish neighborhoods. Once, he terrified a little black Girl Scout by chasing her down the beach. Then on Memorial Day of 1989, he and some other buddies attacked an Iranian couple pushing a baby stroller at a supermarket parking lot. They had mistakenly identified them as Jews.

The incident splashed headlines across Southern California and sent Zaal to jail for a year. During trial, seeing the hate on his opponents’ faces further radicalized him: “It was scary. I thought all these powerful Jews were out there to get me. So I kicked [the hate] up a few gears.”

But over time, that constant hate became exhausting. When his then-wife told him she’d kill their own son if he had a single drop of nonwhite blood in him, Zaal realized how fanatical they had become. Then one day, when his son loudly called a black man a racial slur in a supermarket, Zaal felt his zealotry wither under the nasty stares. At the time, he was also working on construction sites alongside nonwhites who treated him with friendliness and respect. How could these nice people be his enemies? “It just didn’t make sense to me anymore.”

Today Zaal is a soft-spoken, mellow 6-foot-3 giant who works with students with disabilities. It’s almost impossible to envision Zaal as a drunk neo-Nazi who once kicked people with razor-blade-studded boots. He’s been married to a Jewish woman for 20 years and is relieved that his son didn’t follow in his extremist footsteps.

But he worries for the next generation. When masses of white young men marched with tiki torches in Charlottesville, Va., chanting, “Jews will not replace us,” Zaal recalled his younger self, but these folks looked different. They were clean-cut “ordinary Americans” in pressed khakis and polo shirts; they didn’t wear white robes or carry Nazi flags or shave their heads; they didn’t burn crosses and U.S. flags; yet they were repeating the same hate and conspiracy theories Zaal once did.

That’s why Tarrants says it isn’t enough to advocate against hate and racism. He grew up under similar social and political currents in the 1980s and ’90s. At the time, communism was a serious threat, and the country he knew was changing faster than he could understand it. When public schools no longer allowed prayer and Bible reading, and forced students to desegregate, Tarrants was scared, angry, and confused. So when propaganda newsletters on campus presented simplistic answers to his questions, he got sucked in—all the way to terrorism and prison.

The biggest difference between Tarrants’ time and today, however, is that people are much better connected. Decades ago, extremist groups recruited members through flyers and mail-order VHS tapes, which limited their reach. But with the emergence of social media and gaming platforms, anyone with a device can tap into an unlimited pool of radical ideas. These online echo chambers affirm people’s twisted worldviews, and those who once suppressed budding prejudices can now voice them online, grooming each other into violence.

Not even church members are immune to such influences. The 19-year-old shooter who attacked a synagogue in San Diego was a member of a conservative evangelical church.

“There’s no way to avoid it,” Tarrants said, arguing that how the Church responds can change the tide. “The Church needs to stand and be seen as a body in society where people love one another across all these barriers that divide us—race, economics, culture, politics. If we do that, that’s a powerful witness of light to the darkness in this world.”
Families in rural Sioux Center, Iowa, have discovered they aren’t immune from the drug scourge, but some locals are fighting back

by HANNAH HARRIS in Sioux Center, Iowa
HEAVEN GASKINS, dressed in a bright orange prison jumpsuit, broke down in tears in a courtroom in northwest Iowa. “I was so grateful,” she remembers, after the judge sent her to drug court instead of prison.

Three months earlier, wearing dressy black attire and a gray scarf, she was crying in the same courtroom, but for a different reason. In February 2016 she received a five-year prison sentence for robbing a bank. As an officer led the 19-year-old away in handcuffs, Gaskins cried out to her family, “I love you so much.”

Gaskins started using meth in 2015, the year after she graduated from high school. She couldn’t keep a job or attend college. She lived to get high, looking for her next fix: “I knew it was ruining my life.” She needed money to buy meth, so she and a friend stole $10,000 from the Sioux City bank where Gaskins worked. The two girls faked a bank heist: Gaskins, a bank teller, handed over the money and pretended to faint. But Gaskins’ friend had locked her keys in the car and couldn’t get away with the money.

Drug crimes happen all over the United States. Media reports often focus on drug use in poor inner-city areas or decaying Rust Belt towns. But prosperous agricultural areas also struggle with substance abuse.

Visitors to northwest Iowa “come through here and they see beautiful, manicured lawns and it’s a beautiful town,” says Rod DeKruyf, a 25-year resident of Sioux Center, a small farming town in northwest Iowa.

Residents of small, tight-knit communities often hesitate to talk about addiction. When substance abuse comes to light, the tight, local bond can become a noose of shame. Addicts in large cities can be mostly anonymous during their rehabilitations, but privacy in small towns is rare. It’s hard to live down a bad reputation.

**TREVOR STARKWEATHER’S** addiction began when he was in high school. He started smoking pot and moved on to prescription drugs and alcohol. Trevor’s dad, Scott, had made a deal with about 10 other parents: They would let Scott know if they heard his kids were drinking or doing drugs. But no parent ever breathed a word to the Starkweathers. They didn’t know about their son’s growing addiction until he started college.

By the time Trevor was 25, he had flunked out of three different colleges, been to jail for burglary, and was addicted to alcohol and marijuana. His long arrest record shows the court system dismissed most charges or gave him probation.

Once Trevor’s addiction became public knowledge, the Starkweather family became the subject of small-town gossip. Trevor’s dad, Scott, plummeted into what he now recognizes as a season of depression: “So many people gave us the Sioux County Stare.” Many long-standing friends walked out of their lives.

Throughout his son’s addiction, Starkweather pursued as many treatment options as he could find in northwest Iowa. He thought if he worked hard enough, he would fix his son’s problems. During a visit to a treatment facility, Starkweather found himself sitting across from a fourth-generation alcoholic who could have walked out of *Duck Dynasty*. The man said he overcame his addiction when his wife stopped trying to fix him and started to walk alongside him. After hearing the man’s story, Starkweather stopped trying to fix Trevor’s addiction.

Over Memorial Day weekend, Scott and Trevor went fishing with a group of friends. Afterward, Trevor told his dad, “Wouldn’t it be fun to go to church with those people?” Before Trevor’s addiction, Scott would have judged these tattooed fishing friends who didn’t fit the mold of a clean-cut churchgoer. Now he’s excited that his son associates church with fellowship.

Starkweather loves his colleagues, his church, and his neighbors. But since Trevor’s addiction, he’s seen a new dimension of his community. He says Sioux County’s addiction problem differs from most urban areas because vaping, smoking pot, and drinking are not popular activities. Since substance abuse is shameful and unpopular, it slips by unnoticed. Starkweather says many people in Sioux County don’t realize their students encounter drugs and alcohol as much as students in urban areas do.

**DEREK DREISE KNOWS** drug use is prevalent in northwest Iowa. He’s a certified drug recognition expert, but more often he’s simply known as “the drug guy,” which he says he’s OK with. Dreise stands 6 feet, 5 inches tall, 240 pounds. He carries a stun gun, several knives, a police baton, and a .40-caliber firearm. Dreise analyzes drivers who have been caught under the influence of drugs or alcohol. He carries Narcan with him—a nasal spray that combats an opioid overdose. There is no treatment for meth overdose.

In this rural farming community, Dreise sees hardworking farmers who have become drug addicts. Without enough time to care for their crops and animals, they turn to meth or opioids for an energy boost and pain stiffer. Once started, these drugs are “a tough thing to kick,” Dreise says. The first step toward recovery is admitting an addiction, which he says is hard to do in a small community.

Josh Knaack, the only drug court probation officer in Plymouth and Sioux counties, speaks of “desperate situations out there, right in our own backyard.” He’s swamped by the number of cases he handles. While the opioid crisis has been getting significant national attention, meth use is a bigger problem in northwest Iowa. The number of rural Iowa drug users who say meth is their primary drug of choice has more than doubled since 2010, from 1,325 to 3,088 in 2018, the Iowa Department of Public Health reports.

“It’s an awful, awful substance. I wish we could disinvent meth,” says Knaack.

He remembers seeing a naked 3-year-old scampering down the street, his parents gone on a meth run. Knaack knows why those situations keep happening: Drug addiction hijacks the brain so an addict’s only thoughts are of how to get the next hit. A volatile home environment causes trauma, which rewires the brain to avoid pain and punishment at all costs. Trauma victims are likely to turn to pain-numbing drugs.

Knaack, who is pursuing a clinical psychology degree, believes treatment, not time in prison, is the best way to stop drug addiction. When addicts get out of prison, they often relapse.

He works for a community drug court, where offenders complete a mandatory, court-supervised addiction recovery program staffed by volunteers rather than judges.
(Those who don’t comply with the program rules risk a probation violation.) Jean Huff has volunteered on Sioux City’s drug court since it began in 1999: “It’s my faith that tells me I can’t be all about myself. ... I want to go. I can listen.” She says some of her local friends don’t want to hear about Iowa’s drug addictions: “It’s not pleasant to think our community has a drug problem, but we do.”

Knaack says the community drug court provides personal accountability for addicts and saves money. About 50 percent of participants graduate from it. Of those graduates, 70 percent will stay clean. He says isolation is a particular problem for recovering addicts in rural areas. Even in their hometowns, they don’t feel at home. Knaack requires addicts to move from their small towns to Sioux City for the first stages of treatment. The city of 80,000 offers support groups and recovery programs that smaller towns don’t have—and sometimes hearing a recovered addict’s success story can change another addict’s life.

TERI QUINTANA GREETS people walking into Sunnybrook Community Church. As the worship band practices and the smell of Chick-fil-A wafts through the building, Quintana shakes hands and catches up on lives. It’s a Thursday evening, not a Sunday morning. Visitors are here for Celebrate Recovery, a Biblically based 12-step program. Quintana co-leads the program in Sioux City to give addicts what she gained—hope.

Seven years ago Quintana attended her first Celebrate Recovery meeting. The worship band played. People sang. Quintana cried. She doesn’t remember what song they sang. She does remember what she now knows was the work of the Holy Spirit: “Hope was filling me up.”

Quintana tried meth for the first time when she was 16. She tried it again and again: when her high-school boyfriend died in a car accident, when her former husband abused her, when another boyfriend hung himself while in jail for dealing drugs. Quintana wanted to end her addiction but couldn’t. At 33, she enrolled at a treatment facility where she heard about Celebrate Recovery and learned “Jesus made all the difference in recovery.”

She’s been clean for seven years: “God healed my obsession.... I know it’s because of my faith.”

Back in Sioux Center, 45 miles down the road, Roger Broek and his wife, Linda, started a Celebrate Recovery group in 2016 at the request of a local pastor. Many churches don’t have their own recovery programs, so they refer addicts to programs like Celebrate Recovery. Broek says the program’s leaders, unlike most pastors, have struggled with addiction: “You really can’t understand recovery unless they’ve been there.”

Broek attended a Celebrate Recovery group in 2003 when alcoholism made him suicidal. He says the Christ-centered focus of the program “was just what I needed”—and when addicts hear he’s a recovered alcoholic, they tend to trust him more. He’s encouraged local pastors to attend Celebrate Recovery to see what it’s like. So far no one has taken him up on the offer, which he says is disappointing.

AFTER A JUDGE sentenced Heaven Gaskins to five years in prison, he gave her the chance to turn her life around by assigning her to drug court. She took two years to complete the program, and when she graduated, that same judge was there to tell her he was proud of her.

Gaskins’ journey to recovery wasn’t free of stumbles. The stigma of addiction made her feel ostracized: “Everyone knows you and your business.” She struggled to find friends who weren’t doing drugs. The court revoked her driver’s license, so someone else had to drive her to three or four probation appointments each week.

The hardest part of her recovery was staying clean when the rest of life was going badly and she wanted something to numb her emotions. Gaskins relapsed in August 2016 and spent five days behind bars after smoking marijuana at a music festival.

She says a different parole officer, who was “empathetic and compassionate ... didn’t treat me like a drug addict or criminal, but like a human being.” She’s been clean ever since.

When she was tempted to relapse, Gaskins would call her probation officer, a family member, or a friend from her Narcotics Anonymous group. She would “play the tape forward” and think about the consequences of doing drugs again: “If I do this, I could go straight back to prison.”

Now Gaskins is married, has two children, and is pursuing a master’s degree in psychology. She works at a mental health institute and leads drug court alumni meetings: “My life is just filled with a lot more meaning.”

—Hannah Harris is a graduate of the World Journalism Institute; with reporting by Belle Mitchell, Kathryn Lewis, Justine Lookenott, and Rebekah Ferris
A KOREAN POP CULTURE WAVE HAS SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD, AND NOW YOUNG AMERICANS ARE SWOONING TO THE MUSIC

BY EMILY BELZ in New York | PHOTOS COURTESY OF KCON USA
As fans awaited the beginning of a Korean pop concert on a summer night at Madison Square Garden, concert promoters played a video on proper etiquette. Screaming or jumping around too much, it warned, could ruin the show for others.

The video had no effect. The screams from U.S. fans never stopped or dulled in intensity as Seventeen, one of the top bands in South Korea and around the world, performed for the first time at MSG. The teenage girl next to me screamed hoarsely at the band (and into my ear), “I love you!” as she filmed with her smartphone in one hand and grasped a light stick indicating her band allegiance with the other.

Seventeen showcased the magic that pulls people into Korean pop music: effortless choreography, sugary bops, and cool fashion. The crowd was young and ethnically diverse: Asian, white, Hispanic, Arab, black, and Orthodox Jewish. Many of those I met were from the Midwest and had traveled to New York for a rare chance to see their favorite Korean bands.

“It’s a good exposure to a different culture,” said Caitlin Quirk from Cleveland, Ohio, who was on her way into the Seventeen concert with her somewhat reluctant mother and a friend, Angela Sciarappa. K-pop songs are mostly sung in Korean, sometimes with English sprinkled in, and Quirk and Sciarappa, who are in their 20s, said they have learned some...
Korean and can recognize “very small words” in songs now. “And, it’s just really fun,” added Sciarappa.

The concert was the culmination of KCON New York, a convention for Korean culture with a focus on pop music. (K-pop technically refers to bubblegum pop bands, but can be shorthand for any Korean music.) When KCON held its first East Coast convention just outside New York in 2015, it had 17,000 attendees. This year it drew 55,000, having grown so fast that the Korean entertainment company organizing it had to change locations this year to host the dance competitions, concerts, and panels in the cavernous Javits Center in Midtown Manhattan and Madison Square Garden.

“Just a few years ago, it was almost unheard of to sell 5,000-plus tickets for a K-pop show in North America,” Derek Lee, CEO of K-pop promoter SubKulture Entertainment, recently told Forbes. “However, it now happens with regularity.”

The so-called Korean Wave (often known as Hallyu) has swept ashore all over the world, from Iraq to Indonesia. Korean television dramas are the rage in China, and Korean pop dominates music charts in Thailand. Algerian fans have begun incorporating Korean into their everyday speech and text messages. But the United States has been slow to catch on. That appears to be changing now, thanks to social media and to American pop culture’s increasingly global tastes.

Most teens and young adults I interviewed at MSG had discovered K-pop through YouTube or other social media, bypassing U.S. entertainment companies and public relations machines. Venus Nguyen, a 16-year-old from Massachusetts, said she followed her sister into the world of K-pop primarily through YouTube and Twitter. It was Venus’ first time at KCON, and she said she’d made real-life friends through their shared love of Korean pop culture.

“[American] media is confused why it’s so popular,” laughed Nick Gabriel, 23, who came to the K-pop show at MSG from his home in Long Island, along with two of his cousins. Sarah Gabriel, 16, offered evidence of how deeply Korean music has penetrated Long Island: Her parents know about BTS, the Korean pop band that has drawn comparison to the Beatles and that (like the Beatles and the Monkees) charted three No. 1 albums in less than a year.

As Korean pop culture gains a stronger foothold in the United States, longtime Korean culture watchers have ideas on the good and bad trends it could bring to the United States. Among the good things: It introduces Americans to a new culture that tends to be less sexualized and violent than American pop culture. Among the bad things: K-pop comes with a fandom beyond even that of American pop culture. The extreme fandom can make both fans and their pop idols miserable, showcased in some high-profile suicides of Korean celebrities.

Outside of Madison Square Garden before the Seventeen concert, the new K-pop fans swarmed. A gaggle of cameras appeared and began clicking away as a swank band made up of Korean teens—in high fashion and with perfect hair styling—walked down the sidewalk and into the arena. People on the street began screaming and running toward them with their phone cameras on, but the serious K-pop fans I was interviewing nearby immediately knew this band wasn’t famous and gave it no notice. The group turned out to be a band in training that would be introduced at MSG later that evening.

Despite the screaming during the concert, the American teenagers I interviewed outside MSG weren’t rabid. They seemed like normal fans. They liked the positive themes of K-pop and the high-quality, story-based Korean music videos. They didn’t care about the language barrier, and they were drawn into Korean entertainment companies’ masterful use of social media, where bands stream their dance practices or trips to get takeout food.

The teenagers’ parents liked that the stars don’t swear. As a country with a significant Christian population, Korea tends to be more culturally conservative. The conservatism of Korean pop culture is perhaps why it appeals to so many countries internationally, and why I saw Muslims and Orthodox Jews attending the KCON concert.

Journalist Jason Yu has covered the Korean pop culture industry for a decade in Korea and the United States. He said Korean pop music has become more sexualized, but Korean television has recently banned a slew of music videos it deemed overly sexual. Korean television dramas still eschew violence, sex, and bad language.
Korean celebrities are also much more comfortable embracing a Christian identity than their American counterparts are. K-pop bands will perform worship songs at shows or show up to perform or lead prayer at megachurch worship services. Yu said some celebrities purposefully emphasize their faith because it communicates to audiences that they’re pure and serve the community.

“To a Korean it’s a bonus point,” he said.

Going to concerts and doing interviews and sitting through auditions, Yu has had a front-row seat in the industry as the K-wave hit the globe. In the late 2000s, he recalled, the Korean entertainment company JYP tried to break into the U.S. market. JYP sent its band Wonder Girls, hugely popular in Korea at the time, on a 45-day tour with the Jonas Brothers. But Wonder Girls didn’t take off here.

“The American public wasn’t ready,” Yu said. “[JYP] was 10 years too early.”

Flash forward to 2019, when BTS had a sold-out stadium tour in the United States and became the first Korean band to perform on Saturday Night Live. The YouTube video of that performance has 21 million views, compared with the usual 3 million to 6 million views big U.S. pop stars pull on SNL.

According to Yu, BTS found success because its members did things differently: They stayed in Korea during the first part of their career, didn’t force a promotion tour, and grew organically through the power of social media. They have millions of followers on Instagram and YouTube. When BTS broke out and started winning awards in the United States and climbing charts, American producers asked, “Why haven’t we heard of them before?” Yu said.

Netflix was one of the first American entertainment companies to catch on to the K-wave. The streaming service has acquired and produced Korean television and film, and this year it began releasing episodes of the hugely popular Korean fantasy drama Arthdal Chronicles in the United States at the same time episodes came out in Korea. The streaming service has also done crossover promotion shorts, having stars from its hit show Stranger Things learn choreography from K-pop band Exo, for example.

Another tech company capitalizing on the growing U.S. appetite for Korean pop culture is Viki, a relatively young streaming app for Asian television with English subtitles. With about 40 million active users, the app offers the option of incorporating social media into the TV viewing experience, allowing commentary from users as they watch. Viki noticed that fans were often commenting in real time on Korean fashion and beauty trends in the show and linking to products—a business boon. The app also offers an option to teach users Korean while they watch shows.

Yu has observed these rapid cultural changes up close. In his teenage years, when he lived in Japan, the only way to get Korean music was to ship tapes or CDs from Korea, he remembered. Now, that music is available online in an instant. When he is in boba tea cafés in Sacramento, where he currently lives, he hears teenagers talking about BTS.

The BTS phenomenon shows one unhealthy side of K-pop: the extreme fandom. When the band booked a performance in New York’s Central Park this spring, devoted fans camped out for days in freezing rain to get a spot at the show. The band members put out messages on social media urging fans to go inside for their health, to no avail.

K-pop’s extreme fandom amplifies the good and bad: creativity and connection as well as bullying and nasty comments. Before Yu posted a video on his YouTube channel analyzing BTS, he spent two weeks researching it because he knew the group’s fans would come after him if he got anything slightly wrong.

“It’s one of the harshest pop culture industries I’ve been in,” he said. “In K-pop it’s always this thing—’I’m a better fan than you.’ … I never heard that with American fandom.”

Yu wants K-pop to go deeper than “idol worship,” and he’s a big fan of Korean indie and R&B music, which is also starting to make waves in the United States. One of those R&B artists, Dean, has collaborated with big U.S. stars like Anderson Paak, while Korean indie band Hyukoh had a U.S. tour last year.

Despite its drawbacks, the K-wave has encouraged Yu as an Asian. He remembered in college riding in a car with three friends when someone popped in a CD of Korean music. The others in the car shouted to turn the music off because they hated it. Years later, those same friends became fans of Korean groups.

“Before K-pop became big, it wasn’t seen as music to a lot of people. … Now the Western media is taking Asian music more seriously,” he said. “To me that means a lot. We’re not always the nerdy kid, the kung fu expert, or the doctor. That’s cool.”
Watch inspirational, faith & family movies, TV shows, and uplifting originals with no language, sex, or violence surprises!

Start Your FREE Month
pureflix.com
Many older Christians wonder how to communicate their beliefs about God to children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Charlotte resident Ernesta Wood, 88, has found a way.

Wood’s home displays photos of her 53 descendants, nearly all Christians. Once a week for the past 16 years, she has sent them letters—777 in all, as of July 1—filled with stories. Some are dramatic: Her blind grandmother miraculously saw Wood’s grandfather minutes before he died. Other stories cultivate a sense of God’s presence in less dramatic moments: Once, her parents’ pet birds escaped but returned to their cage before dark, just as her mother had prayed. Another letter told of how Wood stayed safe and her car remained intact as she was driving 65 mph down the highway without realizing she had a flat tire.

The letters testify about tragedies as well. Wood’s first husband, Clyde, was a pastor and a pilot in training. He died in a plane crash when he was 54. Wood remembers sending her children to school that morning and praying, “Lord, help us to accept whatever happens to us today as from your hands.” Then came a phone call: The plane was down, and one of the pilot’s legs had burned. She assumed the other pilot was hurt and drove to the hospital to pick up her husband. There she learned he was dead. Wood stayed calm and wrote about the comfort of knowing her early morning prayer had been answered amid the family tragedy.

After her husband’s death, Wood moved in with her parents, then traveled as a teacher with the Jesus Film Project. She lived in Russia for a year and wrote to her grandchildren that the exact amount of money needed for her to live overseas that year, $27,000, miraculously came the
day it was due. She wrote about new converts, prayers answered, and joy. Wood also visited Mongolia, Cambodia, South Africa, Croatia, and other countries. She hated flying, especially after her husband’s death, but she embraced the adventures and chronicled stories of God’s worldwide work.

In 2007, Wood, then 76, married Cliff Wood, 80, five months after their first date. More than 700 guests attended their wedding, and two grandsons served as the officiating pastors. The Woods have known grief since their marriage. Cliff’s son, Barry, died three years ago from ALS. For Cliff’s 90th birthday, Barry could only move his eyes but had prerecorded a letter to his father. Two of Ernie’s grandsons, Geoffrey and Luke, became blind at young ages. Less than two years ago, Geoffrey committed suicide.

While giving a tour of the grandchildren’s photos hanging on the walls, Wood laughs at a photo of her and Cliff, two octogenarians, rolling by the White House on Segways. She remembers blowing past another elderly lady in a wheelchair who shouted, “You go, girl!” That could be Wood’s refrain, as each of her weekly letters quotes Psalm 118:17: “I will not die, but live, and tell of the works of the Lord.”

—Kathryn Lewis is a World Journalism Institute graduate

**Religion**

**Back to basics**

**A CHURCH TRIES A RADICAL APPROACH TO YOUTH MINISTRY**

*by Kathryn Lewis in Ann Arbor, Mich.*

The Christian fraternity house at the University of Michigan looks like a stone castle with two towers and an arched entryway. During the last week of June, 21 high-school students lived here along with six staff members from Knox Presbyterian Church. Their goal: to advance Christ’s kingdom in their hometown of Ann Arbor, Mich.

American youth ministries often follow an entertainment-driven model. Youth ministry as a distinct arm of the church did not emerge until the 1970s, and when it did, churches copied the paradigm of Young Life and Youth for Christ. The goal of these ministries was to reach youth by making church relevant and fun, whether it be with youth pastors who swallow live goldfish or bands with lights and smoke.

The bleak statistics of American youth leaving the church raise questions about the merits of this model. While statistics vary based on studies, LifeWay Research pegs 70 percent of American youth as leaving the church after high school. Even though it found that about 35 percent of those eventually return, it also found that by age 30, 1 in 4 had permanently left the church.

Knox Presbyterian’s youth ministry once followed this mainstream model and had an annual budget of $100,000 that created a programming machine. Several years ago, the senior pastor asked Josh Boehr, the youth pastor, “What would you do if we took away your entire youth ministry budget?” Boehr’s response was, “That would excite me because youth ministry wouldn’t be about programs. It would be about relationships and Christ.” Now Boehr’s annual budget is $20,000, and he’s eliminated almost every single event and mission trip that the ministry once scheduled.

Knox’s Ann Arbor mission trip keeps costs low by staying local while training students to pursue Christ in their own city. “We didn’t have a lot to show for it by the end of the week,” said Boehr. “We couldn’t come back to the congregation and say that we dug six wells or distributed shoes for 10,000 people.” Instead, these students grappled with their understanding of the gospel as they shared it with their neighbors. They visited a Sikh temple and a mosque. They rode on public transportation instead of church buses. They initiated conversations about Christ with people on the streets.

In the evenings, they worshipped and read through passage after passage where Christ talks about His kingdom. Boehr does not want his students to know a Jesus who therapeutically answers prayers and gives...
peace on a needed basis. Instead, he desires to see Jesus reigning as King in students’ lives.

Toward the end of the week, Boehr and two students, Lydia and Anna, visited a plaza in downtown Ann Arbor frequented by the city’s homeless. They sat by a woman named Melissa whose clothes were tattered and eyes were bruised—effects, she said, from someone breaking into her hotel room and beating her. Melissa’s vision had been compromised from the fight, and they offered to take her to the hospital. She resisted that offer, and so instead, they bought her a glass of water. She started crying, thanking them over and over for the water.

Then Melissa suddenly became aggressive. She moved closer to their faces, yelling that they didn’t understand what it’s like to have six abusive stepdads, to be left in a dumpster, and to be homeless and alone. A security guard in the plaza noticed and started moving toward them. Her aggressive demeanor stopped, and she started to cry again.

Anna, a high-school junior in a Christian family, and Melissa, a bruised and beaten woman on the streets, embraced, and Anna also cried. The girls prayed for Melissa, asking for healing for both eyes and soul.

Anna had struggled all week with the fact that this mission trip had little to show for their efforts and nothing to make the students feel good about themselves. But now she understood that following Jesus that day meant pushing past discomfort with a hug and a glass of water.

Parents still complain to Boehr about the changes he’s made at Knox. The day I interviewed him, a parent asked Boehr why he had to take the fun out of church. His ministry has shrunk in size because many students don’t want to go into uncomfortable situations for the sake of advancing God’s kingdom. But his vision for ministry is not to make students happy. It’s to bring them under submission to King Jesus.

President Donald Trump highlighted the opioid crisis during his 2016 campaign. Now, for the first time in three decades, deaths from overdose of opioid painkillers in the United States have dropped by nearly 5 percent, according to government estimates for 2018.

Some regions of the country boast even more impressive statistics. In Pennsylvania, overdose deaths fell by an estimated 18 percent. In Ohio’s Hamilton County, which includes the city of Cincinnati, opioid overdose deaths plummeted 34 percent, emergency room visits due to opioid overdose fell 36 percent, and patients entering treatment for opioid addiction rose 50 percent, according to the Providers Clinical Support System (PCSS), a coalition of 20 national healthcare organizations working to address the epidemic.

“Lives are being saved,” Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Alex M. Azar II said in a tweet, “and we’re beginning to win the fight against this crisis.” He attributes the promising statistics to “America’s united efforts to curb opioid use disorder.”

In 2017 HHS launched a five-point strategy to combat the crisis. The strategy includes improving addiction prevention, treatment, and recovery services; improving pain management; supporting more timely health data and reporting; and increasing research on pain and addiction. President Trump’s 2019 budget includes $74 million in new investments to increase availability of overdose-reversing drugs.

States and communities across the country are employing these strategies. Some cities have allowed emergency rooms, syringe exchange sites, and walk-in clinics easier access to methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone, FDA-approved medications that help to suppress cravings and ease symptoms of withdrawal. Last month New Jersey began allowing paramedics to administer buprenorphine as soon as they have revived an overdose victim.

Hamilton County, Ohio, has made naloxone readily available through syringe exchange programs, schools, universities, libraries, and religious organizations. The county has also streamlined the intake process so patients who previously had to wait
four to eight weeks before they could gain admission to a treatment facility can now forgo the waiting list and secure treatment on demand.

But, experts warn, America has a long way to go before it can declare victory over the opioid epidemic. The crisis developed over two decades, and we cannot solve it overnight, Azar noted.

Despite the significant decline in mortality rates, an estimated 68,000 people died of opioid overdose in 2018. HHS will not release the final death toll until later this year, and the number could rise if examiners deem overdoses responsible for some of the deaths still under investigation.

The statistics also do not include non-overdose deaths related to opioid use, such as deaths from infectious diseases, like hepatitis C and endocarditis related to intravenous drug use.

Further complicating the picture, statistics vary widely by state and region. Some Western states are seeing a rise in overdose deaths, as are several mid-Atlantic states, including New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland.

Some worry that the fight against the opioid epidemic may lose its momentum when the $3.3 billion the federal government issued in grants to states over the past two years runs out. But, although it may be too soon to say we are turning the corner, we are making progress, White House drug czar Jim Carroll told Politico: “We are making a difference. We just need to continue to push hard.”

Jim McAndrew drives up in a Tesla Model 3. He parks the shiny white car on the side of the quiet street in Austin, facing orange construction barrels. Those barrels and the dust raised by heavy machinery are the only evidence of highway construction visible from his car. McAndrew has come to take aerial footage of the construction, but he’s not getting any closer: Thanks to the latest drone technology, he can do it all while sitting in his car.

McAndrew’s first exposure to drones was in 2014, when he bought himself a drone for fun. Growing up, his interests included action sports and cinematography. Later, he worked as a private pilot. As he put it, drones were “the nexus of all of those interests.”

This hobby-level interest in drones helped him recognize gaps in drone technology. Back then, little software existed for drones, and pilots could only fly them manually. Capturing good footage required rare skill with the remote control, making drone piloting an inaccessible task to average people. McAndrew had something the average person did not: a background in software and app development. So he set out to create an app that would simplify the job for drone pilots.

Five years later, McAndrew is still looking for ways to improve his
already successful drone software and to make drone usage more hands- and hassle-free. His latest app is the one he’ll use to film the construction site.

Sitting in the driver’s seat of the Tesla’s immaculate interior, McAndrew pulls out a Mac laptop and an iPad. On the laptop, he opens the software for planning the drone’s flight over the highway construction. Although he’s dragging and dropping points onto a 2D map, added features in the new app allow him to preview the shots that the drone’s camera will capture while following that route. The preview resembles Google Street View, except the perspective is from the air. Using this rough footage for reference, he increases the planned speed of the drone to 20 miles per hour and adds another point onto the map. He opens the app on his iPad and locates the mission. Now it’s time to fly.

McAndrew reaches out of the window and places the drone—a gray contraption with four retractable rotor arms—on his Texas-tinted sunroof. From the drone’s camera, a live feed of the blue Toyota Camry parked ahead appears on the iPad, which is connected to the remote control and will provide the drone with the information it needs to capture the construction site. With a single touch on the iPad, the drone rises from the sunroof, buzzing like an oversized bee. As the drone heads toward the cloud of dust, Jim holds the remote control. He’s not using it, though. “I’m not doing anything,” he says. “This is all 100 percent automatic.”

There’s little to see through the windshield now, but the iPad on the center console shows a crisp, smooth video of the construction site—live feed from the drone. It resembles the view from an airplane window. “So now you drink your latte and let the drone make you money,” McAndrew jokes.

But maybe it’s not quite a joke. He’s hoping that this software will make it easier and faster for drone pilots to gather useful data that will benefit industries including construction, real estate, and cinematography. The software stores each component of every mission, allowing users to reuse the same flight patterns and instructions later. Whether it’s locating equipment in a construction site for project managers, capturing the condition of a golf course green, or assessing the damage on a tower for cell phone providers, getting the necessary data won’t be such a pain.

In the meantime, though, drones face some opposition. “Like any new technology,” McAndrew says, “there’s the potential for people to be hysterical about it.” To him, concerns about privacy are the most legitimate. He acknowledges that drones, like any other technology, can be misused to take advantage of others—but he hopes social norms will prevent people from flying their drones into neighbors’ backyards or disrupting natural landscapes.

McAndrew’s neighbors used to complain when he tested drones in his backyard. Some approached him with their concerns, and McAndrew sensed that face-to-face conversations helped them realize he wasn’t spying on them. In his words, “I’m just a normal guy with a wife and three kids who lives in the suburbs, and I film a construction site every now and again.”

A little over five minutes later, the drone returns to the Tesla. McAndrew uses his remote control for the first time to land the drone on the glass roof. And, just like that, he has filmed a whole construction site without leaving his air-conditioned car.
CHILD COMING HOME

A PRODIGAL’S JOURNEY TO PARENTHOOD

Told through rap, Scripture settings, acapella, and original songs

Available at lordsycamore.com
Voices / Mailbag

Reading for refreshment

[June 29, p. 34] As a longtime reader, I especially enjoy your book reviews and was thrilled to see you included Randy Alcorn’s decades-old novels. Readers who enjoy C.S. Lewis may also enjoy Alcorn’s Lord Foulgrin’s Letters, which is similar to The Screwtape Letters.

—STEVE McCULLY / Auburn, Wash.

‘We want the truth, wherever that leads’

[June 29, p. 50] The story of Kayla Mueller, held hostage and announced dead by ISIS but later reported alive, and her parents has deeply affected me. I have six sons and four daughters, all grown. I keep opening the magazine to Kayla’s picture. May the Lord bless and comfort Carl and Marsha Mueller.

—ANDREW K. KING / Honey Brook, Pa.

I pray that this family will finally uncover the truth and that it is mercifully less horrific than they imagine.

—MELISSA HODGES on Facebook

This sentence in Mindy Belz’s column (“Freeing captives,” June 29, p. 32) really hit me: that even a 1 percent chance a child is still alive “might as well be 100 percent. There can be no rest.” She found words to express what God plants within the hearts of parents.

—GEORGE WHITTEN JR. / Greenwood, Miss.

A mess on the shelves

[June 29, p. 87] I am a youth librarian and agree that the LGBTQ presence is strong in the library community. But not all of our public libraries should be forsaken like a sinking ship. Searching “Max Lucado” produces 138 results in our online catalog, and my branch has monthly programming for homeschool families.

—DARLA DYKSTRA / Kansas City, Mo.

As a public-school librarian, I see what a mess the LGBTQ agenda is causing. It is very hard to find a book that doesn’t have at least one character that fits into the agenda.

—I AM A LIBRARIAN AND WEED CONSTAN­TLY TO MAKE SPACE FOR NEW BOOKS. I AGREE THAT PUSHING POLITICAL AND LIBERAL AGENDAS ON OUR KIDS IS WRONG, BUT I’M NOT SURE THE ABSENCE OF A MAX LUCADO BOOK IS AS OMINOUS AS PETERSON SUSPECTS.

—MIRIAM HUBBARD / Yakima, Wash.

I am a librarian, and we weed constantly to make space for new books. I agree that pushing political and liberal agendas on our kids is wrong, but I’m not sure the absence of a Max Lucado book is as ominous as Peterson suspects.

—TESSA FAITH REYNOLDS on Facebook

As a professional librarian, I understand the feeling that libraries have left their first love. But public libraries reflect demand, and many people with a Biblical worldview have checked out. Withdrawing from the fight is a losing strategy. Ask for good materials, use them often, and get involved.

—WILLIAM JOHNSON on wng.org

As a mother, I was so discouraged by the LGBTQ books in our local library. Childhood should be innocent of such content.

—KIMBERLY SNELL / Dawsonville, Ga.

When the fog lifts

[June 29, p. 40] Thank you for this story about the redemption of cult leader and murderer Jacques Robidoux. It was such an encourage­ment to see how what was so ugly has turned into a story of God’s transformation.

—MARTIN FRANKE on wng.org

Such a tragic story. I grew up in a cult and experienced the mind control, manipulation, and fear tactics that take place in such groups. I’m still unlearning false beliefs and ways of thinking. I grieve for the baby and am glad the father is finding freedom.

—ANNE ATWOOD on Facebook

A ‘positive good’?

[June 29, p. 16] Abortions are child sacrifices to the gods of this age. The more the culture embraces the gods, the more it celebrates the sacrifice.

—RICH ASPER on wng.org

How like Israel we are. Twenty years until the showdown sounds about right.

—DORIS HEYNS / Whiting, N.J.

A new old reality

[June 29, p. 56] Sophia Lee’s article about the rise of anti-Semitism in America highlights how far we have fallen from being a truly Christian nation. Perhaps we never were, or perhaps our pretense has caught the eye of God. It seems we are headed toward a most difficult future.

—PAUL GOELLER on wng.org

Gospel hospitality

[June 29, p. 26] I really admire Rosaria Butterfield. She and her husband are teaching me how to relate to all kinds of people and yet share gospel truth lovingly.

—PAM SCHROEDER on Facebook

Built-in advantage

[June 29, p. 79] After reading the article about the first biologically male NCAA women’s track and field
champion and Democratic support for the “Equality Act,” I thought, “This is funny. Who could believe this?” But the fact that so many people do is frightening.

—BILL RUSSELL / Brighton, Mich.

Way too punk
[June 29, p. 70] Great article. I never thought I’d see a Christian metalcore band mentioned in WORLD. There is a lot of excellent but challenging Christian music out there, but it remains unpopular. It seems non-Christians don’t like anything remotely “preachy,” but Christians won’t try anything beyond the depressingly bland offerings on radio.

—ANDREW ROYAPPA on wng.org

Long obedience
[June 29, p. 82] A beautiful follow-up. Too often I live in moments of obedience; how much better to live in long obedience. This morning I prayed for the Cooneys and praised God for His faithfulness.

—CONNI GARDNER on Facebook

Not forgotten
[June 8, p. 38] Every issue is a feast for the eyes. Your cover image of an elderly man losing puzzle pieces of his brain compelled me to read the article on dementia. Thank you for the careful illumination of your carefully researched stories.

—DOUG WEEKS / Syracuse, N.Y.

When Jesus said, “I was sick and you did not visit Me,” He could have been talking about patients with dementia. It is difficult, and becomes more thankless the longer it goes on, but it is a task the church must undertake.

—CLARKE McINTOSH on wng.org

Correction
The name of John and Pocahontas Rolfe’s son was Thomas (“March 22, 1622,” July 20, p. 64).

Clarification
Rolling cigarettes is not an official job assignment for Watered Gardens program residents (“Forge fires and watered gardens,” Aug. 3, p. 48).

LETTERS and COMMENTS
Email mailbag@wng.org
Mail WORLD Mailbag, PO Box 20002, Asheville, NC 28802-9998
Website wng.org
Facebook facebook.com/WORLD.magazine
Twitter @WORLD_mag

Please include full name and address. Letters may be edited to yield brevity and clarity.

Worldviews change.
Cultures change.
God’s Word stands forever.

Help us empower kids for Bring Your Bible To School Day:

Sign up your family to participate and be entered to win a trip for four to the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C.!
You're sending Johnny off to college and keeping your fingers crossed. You've heard the statistics about kids losing their faith at university; you believe the price tag is way out of proportion to the product; you know he'll be paying loans off till he's 40. But it's a testimony to the power of tradition and cultural inertia that you're going ahead with it anyway.

If that's how it is to be, let's at least be prepared for his Thanksgiving visit home, when he'll remark over turkey that America's a genocidal country that deserves to be destroyed. Or his Christmas visit, when he'll educate you to say “Happy holidays” and not “Merry Christmas.” Or spring vacation, when he'll declare his true Mother to be Earth.

Between the day you drove off campus waving bye-bye in late August and the chilly autumn morning he showed up on your doorstep packing the freshman 15, here's what academia pumped into his brain as you were busy writing checks:

Once upon a time people were ignorant and gullible and had a Faith in God and Church. That was called the Middle Ages, and good riddance to them. Then came the Enlightenment, so-called, because people believed in Reason now, and traded faith in God for faith in man's ability to seek and find true knowledge. But now we know better, that there is no truth, that there are only truths, and that your truth is yours and my truth is mine, so let's just “coexist.” (Bookstore bumper stickers are half off today!)

They'll throw around some names that you'd do well to be boned up on for Thanksgiving. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) are the main ones. They were late Enlightenment turning points when it began to dawn on mankind (sorry, human kind) that reason reaches contradictory conclusions (Kant), so if we want to keep our faith in God in spite of that, we have to make a “leap to the absurd” (Kierkegaard). Better yet, just face the fact that “God is dead” (Nietzsche).

As God cannot be killed without a consequence, it wasn't long till Modernism gave way to Postmodernism, where despair and skepticism were complete. The sons of Kant and Nietzsche talked like this: “All propositions of logic say the same thing. That is, nothing” (Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1889-1951); “In metaphysics, including all value and normative theory, logical analysis yields the negative result that the alleged statements in this domain are entirely meaningless” (Rudolf Carnap, 1891-1970).

These were the first generation of Postmodernist professors to hit the university—the pure and undiluted first-cold-press of this new wine. It was the 1950s. Then they died, and the professors who replaced them in the 1970s were their students, somewhat lesser men in academic rigor. Presently, we're in the third or fourth dip of the tea bag in the water. What our kids sit under is not just bad philosophy but watered down, to boot. It's like the row of queens in The Magician's Nephew who, as you walk the line from start to end, diminish by degree. Dumbed-down Derrida and Foucault is the worst.

But here's the curious thing: These Postmodernists, for all their insistence on the impossibility of truth and the absence of a philosophical basis for morals and values, are leftists. Jean-François Lyotard (1924-1998): neo-Marxist; Michel Foucault (1926-1984): French Communist Party, later Maoist. Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) offers his deconstructionism in the service of Marxism. Claiming philosophically that we can know nothing at all, they turn around and claim to know that class power struggle is the driving engine of history. Claiming that language has no correspondence to the empirical world, they inconsistently make didactic statements about right and wrong and social justice. Truth is subjective—but my view is right and yours is wrong. Values are impossible—but fight racism and sexism. America is evil—but it's unjust to keep anyone out. Technology is ruinous—but it's not fair that poorer people in the world don't have it. Tolerance is good—but Christianity is intolerable.

Then dust off Johnny's Bible and review in 1 Corinthians what God has said about the wisdom of this world.
From micro to macro

WHY CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS SEE SO DIFFERENTLY THE RESULTS OF WELFARE REFORM

In our last issue, we profiled five Hope Awards finalists that help people leave poverty. Please go to wng.org/compassion and vote for whichever of those local ministries moves you the most. But I regularly get letters asking about the big, national picture: Do we need to reform the U.S. welfare system, and if so, how?

Some history: On Aug. 22, 1996, President Bill Clinton signed into law a welfare reform bill designed to move most recipients toward work. That was a good step, because all of us are human beings made in God’s image and able to do some kind of creative work. Critics, though, predicted that any get-a-job pressure on parents would lead to starvation of children.

What’s happened in the 23 years since? It’s hard to get accurate information regarding controversial issues when both sides search for stats to support their views—but the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality recently provided evidence that seems reliable. “Leaver studies” that have tracked families who left the welfare rolls during the 1990s show 53-70 percent of them gained and kept jobs. More than half of them worked at least 30 hours per week. Their incomes rose. Employment rates of never-married mothers climbed.

But what about the 30-47 percent of those who did not gain and keep jobs? Some single moms ended up worse off. The deep poverty rate (the percentage of families with income less than 50 percent of the poverty line) changed little. Some victimized themselves with drug use. Others lost jobs during the great recession.

Welfare reform did not change some troubling cultural trends, including the growth of cohabitation rather than marriage. For those with at least a college degree, cohabitation can be emotionally scarring but not economically disastrous: About one-fourth of cohabiting couples transition to marriage each year. But in any given year, only 1 out of 10 cohabiters with less than a high-school degree makes the jump to marriage, down from 3 out of 10 in the early 1990s. Couples without legal ties often create children without engaged dads.

How we interpreted the poverty statistics depended on ideology. Conservatives emphasized the winners, those who left welfare behind. Liberals focused on the losers, poor people who became even poorer. The Christian calling is to help the losers to their feet and show them hope through Christ.

Ideology also ruled appraisal of other reforms, but two programs received general approval. The earned income tax credit made work more rewarding. The Children’s Health Insurance Program improved outcomes for poor pregnant women and children. On health, a large mortality gap remains between rich and poor middle-aged Americans, but that gap largely reflects earlier health history along with drug and alcohol use.

Happily, the percentage of U.S. eighth graders using alcohol has fallen by 50 percent since 1996. Smoking by 12th graders has fallen by a third. Teen pregnancy and abortion rates have dropped sharply. Obesity remains a problem, as I saw recently during a visit to a Golden Corral restaurant that offered an all-you-can-eat-buffet for $15: The waistlines of many rotund customers showed their unwillingness to waste any money. But recent national surveys suggest that obesity among children 11 and younger may be falling.

Articles at the end of the Stanford report by former state-level administrators offered good suggestions for next steps. Tennessee’s Raquel Hatter stressed the need to reduce bureaucracy, simplify Temporary Assistance for Needy Families rules, eliminate fiscal cliffs where earnings increases prematurely reduce benefits, and embrace a two-generation strategy that delivers high-quality education for children and postsecondary training for parents.

Clearly, the fundamental things—strong families and schools that teach good values and embrace a two-generation strategy that delivers high-quality education for children and postsecondary training for parents.

Christians should not be the caboose on either the liberal or conservative train. It’s three decades since I started writing about poverty and interviewing many homeless individuals, and it’s still the same old story: Government can provide a safety net, but the Christian calling is to offer trampolines.
Our HS advisor, Noelle Brennan, is here to help you!
765-998-4131    nlbrennan@taylor.edu

START ONLINE COLLEGE COURSES NOW

Get a head start on college
Save time & money
Choose from 50+ courses
Select your start date
Work at your own pace
Complete a course in 4 months

taylor.edu/online
For the last twenty-five years, Samaritan Ministries members have been sharing medical costs while praying for and encouraging one another — all without health insurance. Faithful. Affordable. Biblical.

**Monthly costs**
Ranges based on age, household size, and membership level

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>$100–$220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Person</td>
<td>$200–$440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ People</td>
<td>$250–$495</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

samaritanministries.org/world • (877) 578-6787