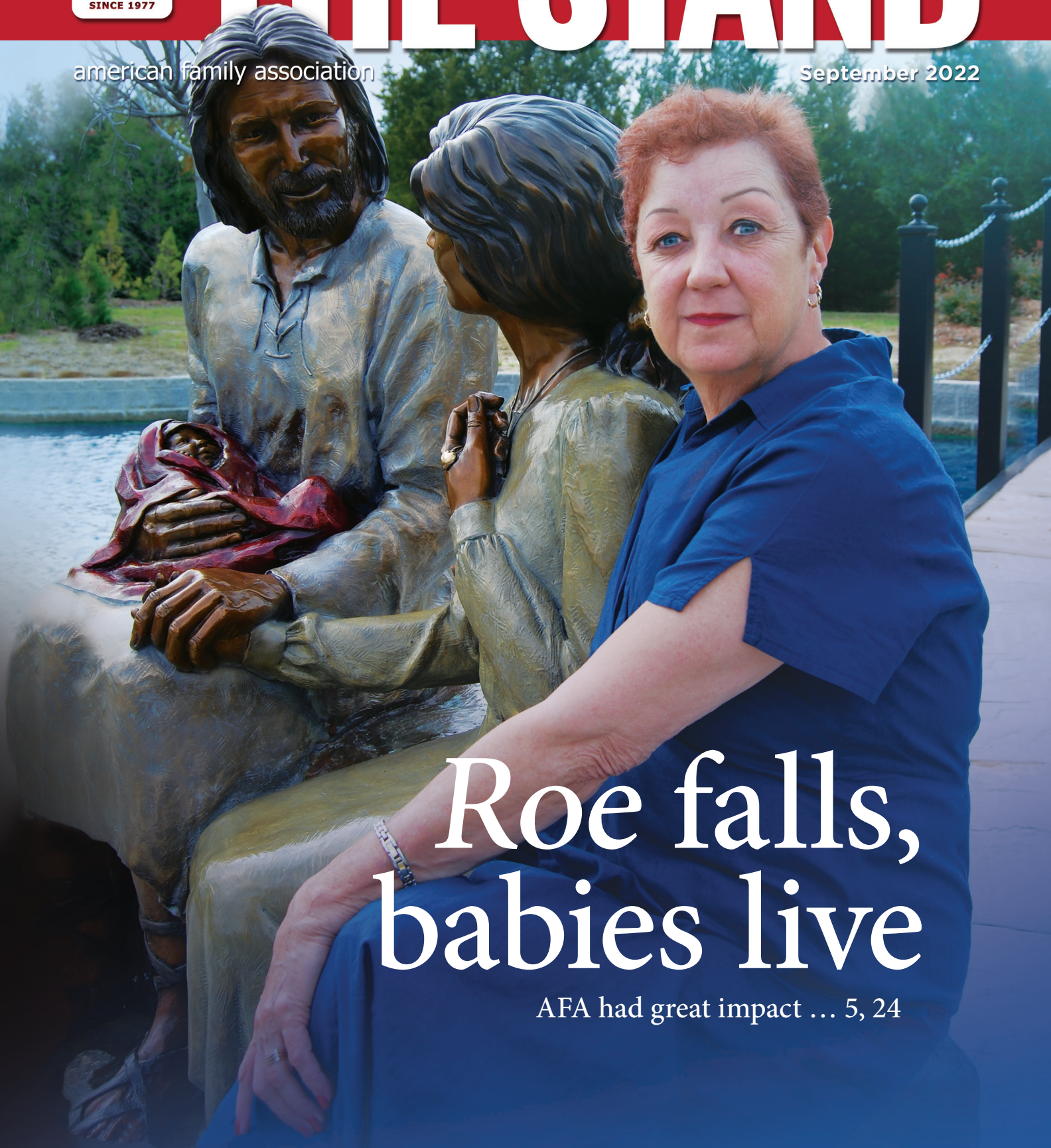




THE STAND

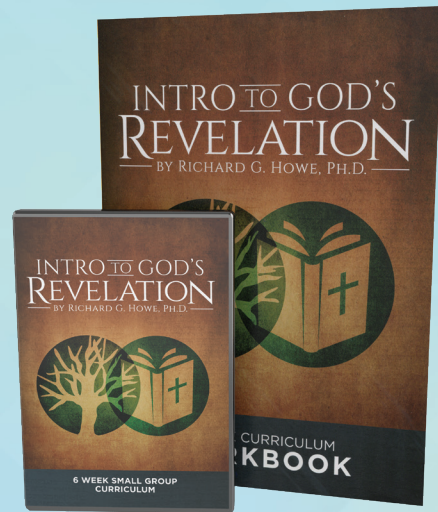
american family association

September 2022



Roe falls, babies live

AFA had great impact ... 5, 24



Intro to God's Revelation
6-Week Curriculum Set
by Dr. Richard Howe

In this six-week study, respected philosopher and apologist Richard G. Howe teaches Christians the fundamentals of how to approach and understand their Bible in an age of skepticism. Each session contains a lecture from Dr. Howe and a short wrap-up with interview contributions from other Christian thinkers.

Set includes: Video curriculum set and one workbook.

Suggested donation **\$34.99**

Suggested donation **\$24.99**

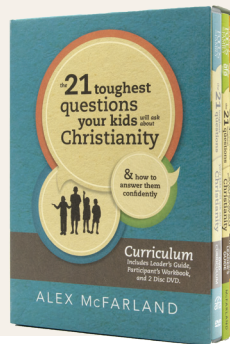
Love Sings: The Artistry of Marriage DVD Set
with Barbi and Terry Franklin



Like a good song, marriage requires the right balance of melody, harmony, and rhythm. In **Love Sings: The Artistry of Marriage**, Christian recording artists Barbi and Terry Franklin share personal stories from decades of marriage and ministry. Combining a strong biblical foundation with honesty and humor, **Love Sings: The Artistry of Marriage** will become a favorite resource for couples of all ages.

The 21 Toughest Questions DVD Set with Alex McFarland

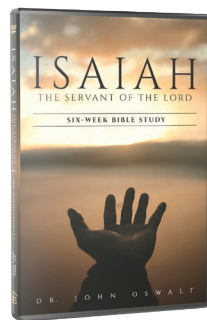
Kids have questions. In fact, they have some of the toughest questions we may ever be asked. What do we do when they ask us, "Why does God allow suffering?" "Can we trust the Bible?" or "What is a Christian worldview anyway?" Alex McFarland provides parents with much-needed guidance in **The 21 Toughest Questions Your Kids Will Ask About Christianity & How to Answer Them Confidently**.



Suggested donation **\$39.99**

Suggested donation **\$39.99**

Isaiah: The Servant of the Lord DVD Set
with Dr. John Oswalt



Every book of the Bible is full of transcendent truth and the book of Isaiah is certainly no exception. However, many Christians find themselves intimidated by the length, complexity, and mystery of this great prophetic work. In this six-week study, Dr. John Oswalt helps us understand the big picture of Isaiah and the relevant truths God intends to communicate to His people through it.

THE STAND

VOLUME 46, NO. 8
THE STAND magazine is published monthly by American Family Association except for a combined January/February issue. AFA's mission is to inform, equip, and activate individuals and families to transform American culture and to give aid to the church, here and abroad, in its calling to fulfill the Great Commission.

P. O. Drawer 2440
Tupelo, MS 38803
Voice 662.844.5036 x224
Fax 662.821.2044
Email randall@afa.net
FOUNDING EDITOR Donald E. Wildmon
AFA PRESIDENT Tim Wildmon
EDITOR Randall Murphree
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Rebecca Davis
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS Morgan Jetton
ADMIN ASSISTANT Carly McGee
STAFF WRITERS Joy Lucius

Robert Youngblood
Matthew White
Hannah Meador
Lauren Black Bragg
Jordan Chamblee

INTERN Adam Borcicky
ADVERTISING Carly McGee
AFR RADIO NETWORK
662.844.8888
INTERNET
afa.net
afr.net
afa.net/thestand
engagemagazine.net
afn.net

onemillionmoms.com
afafoundation.net

► NO UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS
► INDIVIDUAL SUBSCRIPTION
\$25 per year suggested contribution
► CHURCH GROUP PLAN

- Minimum of 10 subscribers
- \$7.50 per person for one year
- May be mailed in bulk to the church or to each subscriber.
- Send one check or M.O. with church name and legible mailing address(es).
- U.S. addresses only

► COPIES OF THIS ISSUE \$25 for 50
call 662.844.5036 x211



Advertisements do not necessarily imply endorsement by AFA.

SEPTEMBER 2022

COVER FEATURE

24 Roe falls, more victories secured
AFA role had impact on the issue

CULTURE

14 Pagan sexuality makes comeback
Christianity gave true sexual revolution

26 'I'm afraid grandpa's going to die ...'
Ukraine native leads Christian outreach

28 Faithful stand for morality
LGBTQ invades local town library

ENGAGE

29 Pursuing relevance
God, sin, and repentance

30 Call of all Christians
Encourage, equip, evangelize

32 How to witness with impact
Seize the moment, share, pray

FAITH

16 The Word for the world
New iBible videos faithful to Bible

18 Get down to business
Businessman talks of life legacies

22 Lyrics touch hearts with hope, healing
Music ministers in all life's challenges

FAMILY

19 Pray.com - family safe place
Invaluable resource for spiritual growth

20 No time to waste
Grandparents can build legacy of faith

35 Lifeline of hope
Help for those troubled by suicide

24



26

16



20

4 **COLUMN:**
33 **Tim Wildmon**
REVIEWS

To order, visit **RESOURCES.AFA.NET**
or call 877.927.4917



BY TIM WILDMON
AFA PRESIDENT

Sen. Elizabeth Warren: Pro-life centers ‘torture’ women

I doubted whether or not *Roe* would ever be overturned. ... But thanks to Christians who helped Donald Trump defeat Hillary Clinton, three Supreme Court seats opened up in a four-year period.

The looney Left has lost its collective mind. Really. If this were a scene from **The Wizard of Oz**, the Wicked Witch of the West – otherwise known as the “progressive” movement – is having a meltdown. Primarily because the Supreme Court of the United States poured a bucket of cold water on her with several recently announced decisions, the big one being reversal of the infamous 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. (See p. 24 for how AFA aided in this 49-year drama.)

Quite frankly, I doubted whether or not *Roe* would ever be overturned. It seemed entrenched despite the best efforts of pro-life Americans to elect pro-life politicians over the nearly five decades. But thanks to Christians who helped Donald Trump defeat Hillary Clinton, three Supreme Court seats opened up in a four-year period, and President Trump kept his word to appoint pro-life justices, and look what happened!

Praise the Lord God Almighty!

By the way, in light of this great pro-life victory, which will save the lives of millions of unborn babies – where are all the Christian leaders who trashed their brothers and sisters for voting for Trump over Clinton? Many well-known evangelical leaders said we who voted for Trump were compromising our faith. Which was not true.

Ironically, these same people never said voting for Hillary Clinton would have also been compromising the faith. I don’t want to revive that conflict here, but if you recall at the time (2016), we were left with two candidates, one of whom would be our president.

And when you looked at their beliefs about the role of the federal government, it was obvious that Trump was the better choice. Had he not won, the Supreme Court would have been lost to the secular progressives for a generation.

What became even more clear after the Court’s decision to overturn *Roe*, was how vile the left-wing pundits, celebrities, and politicians have become. These people show no shame in openly

celebrating abortion on demand through the full nine months of pregnancy.

In a public address, Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) said of pro-life pregnancy centers: “We need to shut them down here in Massachusetts, and we need to shut them down all around the country. You should not be able to torture a pregnant person like that.”

Torture? These are places run and supported almost exclusively by Christians who help girls and women (for free) who are in unplanned pregnancy situations – with health care, diapers, clothing, baby supplies, parenting training, and countless other services.

Another big case that went our way was the decision to allow people to practice their faith even when they are on public property or employed by the government. Coach Joe Kennedy of Bremer-ton, Washington, won his case after he was fired by his high school for simply going to midfield to kneel and pray after each game and after his players were released. The Supreme Court said that was wrong and Coach Kennedy had every right to pray. Thanks to our friends at First Liberty Institute for representing Coach Kennedy pro bono.

We Christians must not give up our fight, to save our constitutional republic homeland. Yes, it’s hard work. Yes, there are ups and downs, setbacks, and advances. But there is simply nowhere else for us to sail to and start a new country. We must save our country for our children and our grandchildren.

My son Wesley, AFA vice president of outreach, is a Little League baseball coach. One of the things he often says to the 6- and 7-year-old boys is: “Let’s go!” It’s a shorthand way of saying, “I’m pumped! We are ready! We are confident, and we can do this!!”

As I look ahead to the coming battles in politics and government, proclaiming truth, and reaching more and more Americans with the gospel of Jesus Christ, I can’t help but say, “I’m pumped! We can do this! Let’s go!” ☐

Issues@Hand

AFA initiatives • Christian activism • News briefs

AHG honors AFA with award



Wesley Wildmon (left) and Walker Wildmon (right) accept the Community Partner Award from AHG founder Patti Garibay.

American Heritage Girls (AHG) recently named its national award recipients for 2021-22, and AFA received AHG’s Community Partner Award. The award is given to a ministry or person who has had great impact in raising awareness of the mission of AHG.

AFA was recognized for supporting AHG across its many platforms, including airing the **Raising Godly Girls Minute** on the AFR radio network. AFA has also had AHG founder and executive director Patti Garibay speak at conferences, join podcasts and interviews, and honored her on the AFA 40 Faithful list in the July 2017 *AFA Journal*.

“We appreciate this award and are grateful for our partnership with AHG,” said Walker Wildmon, AFA vice president of operations. “We believe in and support AHG’s mission of ‘building women of integrity through service to God, family, community, and country.’”



‘Lightyear’ fails to lift off at box office

Thanks, in part, to boycott efforts of AFA, Disney Pixar’s **Lightyear** didn’t hold up to its successful **Toy Story** reputation of going “to infinity and beyond” on the big screen.

In fact, **Lightyear**’s domestic box office debut was a lackluster \$51 million. Anticipated box office would have netted closer to \$70-85 million.

Secular critics blamed the disappointing debut on COVID and the typical struggles that spinoffs often face.

However, “the truth of the matter is simple: **Lightyear** pushed an immoral and unbiblical agenda that went directly against the narrative the original movies so beautifully told,” reported **MovieGuide**.

Strangely, Buzz Lightyear isn’t even

the film’s hero, but his lesbian friend who marries another woman is clearly the intended hero.

“What’s even sadder is that Disney and Pixar refuse to consider the fact that millions of Americans are strongly opposed to woke ideology, especially in content aimed at their children,” added Ed Vitagliano, AFA executive vice president. “That will continue to cost these companies at the box office.”

To sign AFA’s Boycott **Lightyear** petition, visit afa.net/activism/action-alerts/.



Roe reversal mirrored in sculpture

The Stand’s cover photo features the late Norma McCorvey, plaintiff “Jane Roe” in *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark case which opened the nation’s doors wide to abortion in 1973. McCorvey, who later turned pro-life, is posed seated on a replica of a monument titled Hope by sculptor Beverly Paddleford (hopemonument.com). The photo was taken at Parkgate Pregnancy Clinic in Tupelo, Mississippi, when McCorvey visited AFA in 2008. (See afajournal.org, 1/08.)

UPCOMING EVENTS

AFA Town Hall

October 24, 6-8 p.m.

Rogers, Arkansas
Register at afa.net/events.

AFA Fishbowl Retreat for Pastors and Wives

October 18-20

Linden, Tennessee
Register at repairingthefoundations.net
or 662.844.5036 x297.

Contact elected officials

► The President

The White House
Washington, DC 20500
Salutation: Dear Mr. President
Comment line: 202.456.1111
whitehouse.gov/contact

► The Vice President - same as above

► U. S. House of Representatives

The Honorable _____
Washington, DC 20515
Salutation: Dear Congressman (or
Congresswoman) _____

► U.S. Senate

The Honorable _____
Washington, DC 20510
Salutation: Dear Senator _____

► Washington switchboard: 877.762.8762

► afaaction.net/contact-officials

Links to contact information for federal and state officials

Stay involved, informed

► afa.net - Sign up to join AFA Alert email list and stay informed on issues that affect the family.

► afn.net - Find up-to-the-minute news at AFA's online news service.

► afr.net - American Family Radio broadcasts on about 180 stations in three formats - AFR talk, AFR inspiration (music), and AFR Hybrid.

► afa.net/thestand - AFA's official blog addressing culture, faith, and family.

► onemillionmoms.com - Take action to protect children from objectionable elements in entertainment outlets.

► afajournal.org - An archive of past issues of *AFA Journal* (1994-2021).

► engagemagazine.net - A theology and worldview resource for young adult Christians.

► americanfamilystudios.net - Videos feature insight and information on cultural and family issues.

► afa.net/bydesign - An initiative to restore biblical marriage in the culture.

► streaming.afa.net - An online platform that hosts all AFA-produced video content.

Survey: Women unaware of adoption options

In January 2022, the Opt Institute (OI) commissioned Dr. George Barna and the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University to conduct a national survey of women ages 15-44. Titled "Adoption & Its Competitors," the survey randomly polled 1,091 women of childbearing age on perceptions and expectations surrounding adoption.

Asked if they should ever face an unplanned pregnancy, 35% said they would have an abortion, while only 16% said they would place the baby for adoption. But half of those choosing abortion confessed that a lack of knowledge on the concepts and varied benefits of adoption drove their bias against adoption.

Most of the women did not know that birth mothers could receive emotional counseling, continue their education or job without losing benefits, or possibly remain a part of their child's life after adoption.

"This important research helps to understand why women rarely choose adoption," said OI founder John Knox. "Adoption practices have improved considerably over the last few decades."

christianheadlines.com, 6/10/22



Middle school students investigated for misusing pronouns

Kiel Middle School in Kiel, Wisconsin, received a sexual harassment charge against three 13-year-old schoolboys and filed a Title IX complaint against the students. Their offense - incorrect pronoun usage against another student.

According to the Kiel Area School District, it "prohibits all forms of bullying and harassment in accordance with all laws, including Title IX. [It will] continue to support ALL students regardless of sex (including transgender status, change of sex, or gender identity)."

School administrators eventually dropped the charges against the three boys and are in the process of revising the district's policy on sexual identity.

wtaq.com, 6/28/22; foxnews.com, 6/28/22



Pastor's criminal charges dismissed

Determined to hold church services regardless of the cost, Anthony Spell, pastor of Life Tabernacle Church in Louisiana, defied Gov. John Bel Edwards' (D) executive order early in the pandemic that limited gatherings, first to 50 people, then to only 10.

As a result of his defiance, police issued Spell a summons, and he was charged with six misdemeanor counts.

On May 13, the Louisiana Supreme Court issued a decision in Spell's favor, dismissing the criminal charges and stating that the governor's executive orders violated religious freedom. The court's 5-2 ruling overruled lower courts, citing restrictions on gatherings and stay-home mandates as unconstitutional.

First Liberty supported Spell by filing a friend-of-the-court brief earlier in the year, reminding Louisiana's highest court that the U.S. Supreme Court already ruled that "even in a pandemic, the Constitution cannot be put away or forgotten."

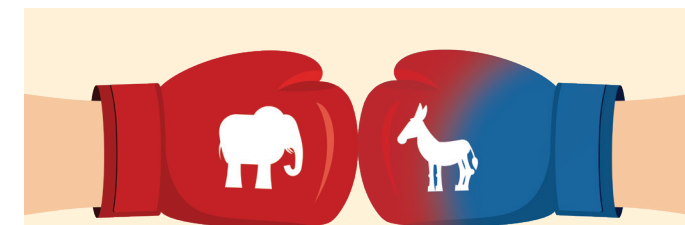
shreveporttimes.com, 5/13/22; firstliberty.org, 5/27/22



Mennonites affirm gay marriage

The pressures of the radical LGBTQ mafia have finally invaded the Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA). Previously, MCUSA had guidelines that ensured pastors were allowed to perform only biblically based marriages. Recently, they voted 404-84 to remove these guidelines and openly embrace the LGBTQ movement. The new resolution recognizes the "spiritual gifts" of the LGBTQ philosophy and states that its theology will be adapted to conform to and affirm the LGBTQ lifestyle. In addition, the MCUSA has adopted other liberal views as well, including a congregational curriculum on defunding the police and promoting an anti-Israel agenda.

juicyecumenism.com, 6/3/22



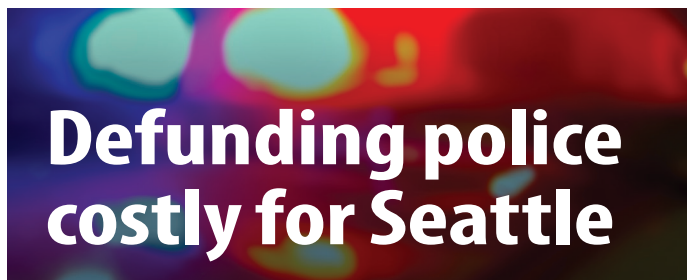
Democrats go red

Recent radical Democratic politicians' policies are driving their own to defect and abandon the party. A typical example, South Carolina's Harriot Holman has changed parties because she believes Democratic leaders are adopting poor policies.

"I'm speaking to my friends [as] they are shifting over right now," Holman said. "We are going to continue to leave the Democratic Party because their policies are not working for all Americans. You know, when you've got to pay all these extreme high gas prices just to get to work - that is not going to work for the American people."

According to the New York Post, in the past year, 1 million voters have switched to the Republican Party. Meanwhile, only 630,000 people have joined the Democratic Party.

nypost.com, 6/27/22; foxnews.com, 6/28/22



Joining the "defund the police" movement does not appear to be a profitable endeavor for Seattle, Washington. To join the movement in 2020, Seattle City Council voted to cut the police budget by 17%, far short of its final goal of 50%.

To make the cuts, the city transferred duties that law enforcement would normally handle to city agencies. For example, parking enforcement, impoundments, and car towing were carried out by civilian parking enforcement officers rather than police.

Legally, however, civilians do not have the authority to make such decisions and issue tickets. Therefore, it appears the city will be forced to refund roughly \$5 million illegally collected from 100,000 parking tickets. More refunds will likely be necessary as people begin to contest their unauthorized tows and impoundments as well.

dailysignal.com, 6/6/22

Army doctor warns of vaccines

Former Army physician Pete Chambers was tasked to give COVID-19 vaccines to his assigned task force. Over time, he noticed vaccine injuries among soldiers. Chambers himself reacted to the Moderna vaccine and is suffering from demyelination, a condition affecting the central nervous system. He decided that it was his duty to inform every soldier he treats about the vaccination's side effects. Sadly, the Army dishonorably discharged Chambers and replaced him with a doctor willing to offer the vaccine.

"In my opinion," Chambers said, "we're purging the military of critical thinkers like me who had to stand up and say, 'No, sir – that's an unlawful order. I will continue to give my informed consent.' That's the regulation." He added that the Department of Defense is covering up the shot-related injuries among troops.

Chambers now practices medicine in Oklahoma as a civilian and has made it his life mission to warn Americans about the dangerous injections.

afn.net, 6/28/22



Christian women trafficked, then disappear

Open Doors USA reported that Pakistani Christian girls are being trafficked through marriage. Based on a policy brief from the Brookings Institution, Open Doors discovered that Christian girls and teenagers are being coerced to marry Chinese men with promises of financial gain for their families. But once they arrive in China, they are abused, prostituted, and forced to become pregnant. It is not a new issue, and the problem is rampant.

"Nowadays, there are at least two cases of disappearing Christian women and girls each day," said Open Doors ministry partner, Hana.* "There is so much injustice in this world, but we must cling to the promise of Psalm 136 – that Christ's love endures forever, and like Psalm 3 tells us, He is our shield, our glory, and the lifter of our heads."

Hana and Open Doors encourage believers to "pray fervently for Christian girls and women" in Pakistan.

*last name withheld for safety

opendoorsusa.com, 5/4/22

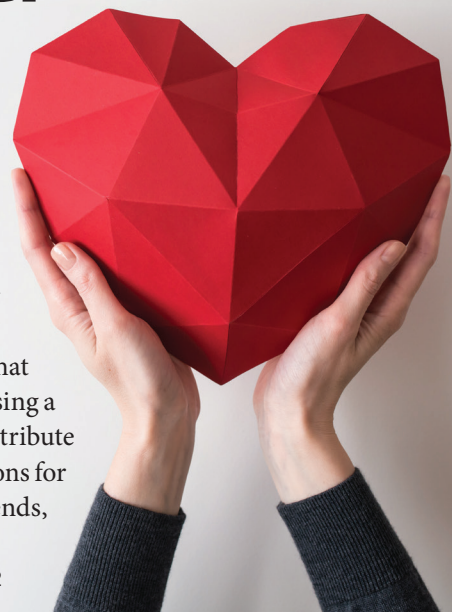
Christians urged to consider faith-based charities

A recent study by Grey Matter Research and Infinity Concepts found that 84% of evangelicals prefer to support Christian organizations after giving to their home churches. The study also found that less than half support a faith-based charity.

"Of [evangelical donors'] 19 most commonly favored individual organizations, 12 are also the favorites of American donors in general," said Grey Matter's Ron Sellers.

Sellers explained that part of the reason evangelicals give to secular charities is that there are not any Christian alternatives serving their same concerns. When choosing a charity, evangelicals should be discerning, as some secular companies secretly contribute to woke agendas. American Family News compiled a list of faith-based organizations for individuals to consider supporting. They included: Samaritan's Purse, Joni & Friends, Eight Days of Hope, Slavic Gospel Association, and Convoy of Hope.

afn.net, 5/9/22



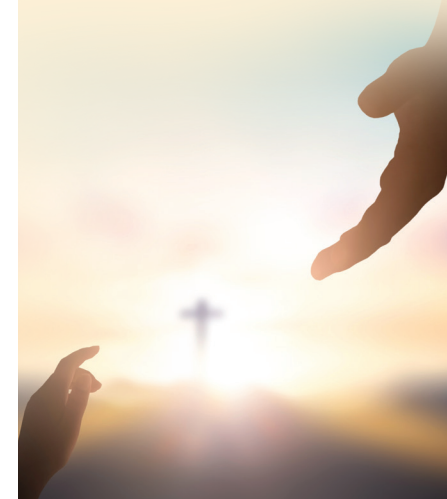
New life in Christ

Salvation is God's free gift to all who repent of sin and call on Him:

1. Perceive your need, and turn to God in prayer (Romans 3:23).
2. Believe in Christ's power to save, and repent of your sins (Mark 1:15).
3. Receive His salvation, and begin your new life (Romans 10:9).

For more insight or counsel:

- Visit needhim.org, email info@needhim.org, or call 888.633.3446. This online ministry was initiated by Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and other ministries.
- Contact Pastor Joseph Parker, AFA director of outreach and intercession, at jparker@afa.net or 662.844.5036 x381.



NYC councilwoman pulls donation due to antisemitism

Until recently, New York City councilwoman Inna Vernikov (R) was among the largest funders for the City University of New York School of Law (CUNY Law). A Ukrainian-born Jew, Vernikov withdrew her \$50,000 gift when the faculty of CUNY Law formally endorsed an anti-Israel resolution on May 12 in support of the pro-Palestinian BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanction) movement.

In part, the resolution disputed the Israeli occupation of land thought to belong solely to Palestine, including territories in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

After redirecting her support to New York City Legal Services, the councilwoman remarked that antisemitism seems to be the only politically acceptable form of racism still in existence.

"During a time when anti-semitic hate crimes are up by 300%," Vernikov said, "it is incumbent upon our academic institutions to do everything in their power to protect their Jewish and pro-Israel students, not pass resolutions which directly place them in harm's way."

campusreform.org, 6/21/22; nypost.com, 6/29/22



Men cut from women's swim events

In June the International Swimming Federation, (FINA), which is recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for administering international aquatic competitions, adopted a new policy that will restrict males identifying as females from competing in female swimming competitions. FINA members voted 71.5% in favor of the new policy.

The exception will be males who have had their "male puberty suppressed beginning at Tanner Stage 2 or before age 12, whichever is later," and have continuously maintained low testosterone levels.

Commenting on the new policy, which went into effect June 20, FINA president Husain Al-Musallam said, "We have to protect the rights of our athletes to compete, but we also have to protect competitive fairness at our events, especially the women's category at FINA competitions."

dailywire.com, 6/19/22; fina.org, 6/19/22



PTC helps parents control streaming

Gone are the days of “be kind, rewind,” taking care not to scratch the shiny side of a DVD, or skimming a *TV Guide* to find exactly when and on what channel your favorite show would air. These are the days of online streaming, and it is a jungle to navigate.

That’s why Parents Television and Media Council (PTC) has created a guide to streaming services for parents who want to protect the minds and



hearts of their families. The guide is available for download on the PTC website and provides an overview of the most popular streaming services, from Amazon and Netflix to Roku and Apple TV. This guide offers in-depth insight into how each platform works, the rating systems it uses, and how parents can utilize parental controls to better curate the media that enters their homes.

parentstv.org

NFL starter leaves the game

Khari Willis, a safety for the Indianapolis Colts, recently ended his contract with the National Football League (NFL) to pursue his call to ministry. He left behind a base salary of \$850,000. However, Willis has no regrets as he is eager to follow the Lord.



“With much prayer and deliberation,” Willis said, “I have elected to officially retire from the NFL as I endeavor to devote the remainder of my life to the further advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Willis had full support from his family, friends, teammates, and coaches. Head coach Frank Reich expressed his gratitude and offered his prayers as Willis makes this big leap.

dailywire.com, 6/28/22



In June, Texas representative Bryan Slaton (R) vowed to prevent bars from allowing children to take part in drag shows after he learned of minors attending one at a Dallas bar called Mr. Misster. The bar publicly invited children to a drag show.

The children were allowed to participate by walking the catwalk with drag queens as adults cheered. Slaton called it horrifying and intends to initiate legislation to end this “disturbing trend in which perverted adults are obsessed with sexualizing young children.”

christianpost.com, 6/7/22

Blame the white man

In May, Washington, D.C.’s Metropolitan Area Transit Authority launched a new campaign pledging to make passengers safer by reducing harassment of transgender passengers.

Most of the ads featured a white man yelling at a transgender while an onlooker reports the “hate crime” to a Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) hotline.

Interestingly, the Washington Free Beacon analyzed MTPD’s public crime data and found that such incidents as portrayed in the ad rarely occur.

In fact, MTPD reported only one anti-transgender incident in 2020, and not a single incident of harassment or violence based on race or gender in 2021 or 2022.

The Beacon further reported, “In the 28 anti-transgender hate crimes in D.C. logged by the FBI in 2020, none of the offenders were white.” Over the past 10 years, FBI statistics reveal that whites committed fewer than 1% (2 out of 217) of the city’s recorded anti-transgender hate crimes.

freebeacon.com, 6/9/22; afn.net, 6/13/22



Once a trans, now a bride

Before finding her faith in Christ, Laura Perry lived nine years as “Jake,” a transgender male. When she was young, she felt mistreated by men, and she couldn’t identify with women. Perry decided to make the transition to male by taking hormones. After breast removal surgery, she began to doubt her decision and realized that she still was not a man.

Through this process, the Lord worked on Perry’s heart as she designed a Bible study website for her mom. Perry ended up giving her life to the Lord and then went through the process of de-transitioning.

“It’s such a messy process,” Perry states. “It was such a painful, difficult journey. I can’t even describe what I went through.”

Perry recently married Perry Smalts. She works at First Stone Ministries (firststone.org) ministering to others who face the same situation she did. She also played a role in the American Family Association documentary *In His Image*.

cbn.com, 6/20/22



A Biblical solution to health care

Samaritan members care for one another spiritually and financially when a medical need arises.

Samaritan™ MINISTRIES

SamaritanMinistries.org/AFA · 877.584.8657

Gregg and Courtney, members since 2014

Waitress donates \$777 tip to her church

A customer stunned a New Orleans waitress with a \$777 tip on his \$63 restaurant bill.

Before Ava Guan, the 45-year-old Christian waitress, went to her night shift at HoShun Restaurant, she spent time in prayer at her church. She specifically asked God to send the church the help it needed to repair the building and the air conditioning system.

So when she received the generous tip that night, she knew the money was a divine gift from God and that it belonged to the church.

“This is not my money,” Guan said. “The gentleman [who gave the tip] is the angel for me.” The tipper was Abdul Hamideh, a young businessman who had opened a new IHOP restaurant the day before.

“I had something good happen to me in this world,” he said. “I wanted to pay it forward.”

christianpost.com, 6/8/22



100-year-old WWII nurse takes leap

At 98, World War II veteran nurse Raymonde Sullivan told her friends and family that if she reached 100, she would mark skydiving off her bucket list. Sullivan served in the Royal Army Medical Corps treating wounded British forces.

And in early May, Sullivan marked the big leap off her list after a 10,000-foot dive over Port St. Lucie, Florida.

Sullivan said, “I’ve done a lot of things in 100 years, so I thought I must do it while I can.”

Many of Sullivan’s four children, ten grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren watched from the tarmac as she jumped.

dailymail.com.uk, 5/6/22;
foxnews.com, 5/12/22



Cardinal arrested in Hong Kong

The Communist Party in China recently arrested 90-year-old Roman Catholic Cardinal Joseph Zen, who is very vocal about his beliefs in democracy and religious freedom. As a trustee in a humanitarian relief fund that helps protesters and democracy activists pay their legal fees, Zen and other trustees have been under attack since John Lee, Hong Kong’s new pro-China chief executive, came into power. While the fund was closed and the trustees released on bond, they are in danger of facing charges for conspiring with foreign forces.

“Cardinal Zen and four of these other trustees were arrested pretty much immediately,” said Jonathan Dinger from ChinaAid. “His help providing some funds for these protesters and advocates is really what put him in hot water.”

afn.net, 5/19/22



Pelosi flaunts ignoring Catholic faith

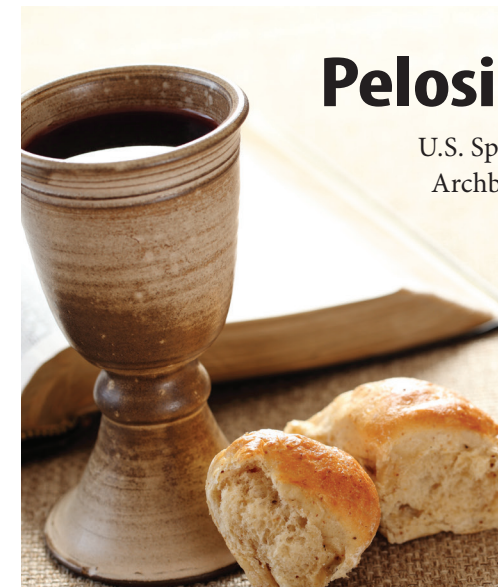
U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi was denied Holy Communion by San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone because of her strident abortion advocacy.

Although she has supported abortion for years, Pelosi’s opinions have become more aggressive. Cordileone warned Pelosi that this would happen if her stance did not change or she stayed public about her Catholic faith.

Some U.S. bishops had denied her receiving the sacraments to help ease confusion among the Catholic faithful who hold to the fact that abortion takes an innocent life.

Unfortunately, Pelosi insists on furthering the confusion. After a visit to the Vatican, she received communion at St. Peter’s Basilica in a service at which Pope Francis was present.

afn.net, 5/23/22; nytimes.com, 6/29/22; juicyecumenism.com, 7/1/22



Freedom from LGBTQ lifestyle found in Christ

The annual Freedom March in Washington, D.C., on June 11, featured former members of the LGBTQ community testifying about the forgiving power of Christ. This year, the march was livestreamed so viewers could witness the music and testimonies of those who now identify themselves in Christ.

Luis Javier Ruiz, a co-founder of the march, was excited to see the multitude of people that came and celebrated Christ – no matter what denomination they were in. They

also saw the Lord working as the meeting place they chose was booked alongside an LGBTQ pride group called the Foundation for Creative Cultural Expression.

“A group of overcomers, free from the LGBTQ identity, now coming into a place where everybody here was for gay pride, I just love seeing the hand of God,” Ruiz reported. “Sometimes church is just too churchy. This is part of evangelism, to bring people out so everyone can hear the gospel.”

movieguide.org, 6/17/22



BUILD YOUR LEGACY WITH MANY HAPPY RETURNS

OUR CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY GIVES YOU PAYMENTS EVERY YEAR FOR AS LONG AS YOU LIVE

When you fund a charitable gift annuity, we agree to send you payments for as long as you live, based on your funding amount and your age at the time of funding. The payment amount never changes. In addition:

- You may also receive an income tax deduction this year for part of the funding amount.
- If you fund it by transferring stock, some of your capital gains are eliminated, some spread over a number of years.
- After a lifetime of payments to you, any remaining funds automatically support our mission in your name.

Copyright © 2021 Crescendo Interactive, Inc. Used by permission. 20AB93

Call or email us to learn what your payment rate and tax benefits will be. When you do, ask about deferred charitable gift annuities and other options that may give you greater payments and tax benefits.



P.O. Box 3933, Tupelo, MS 38803 | 800.326.4543 x345
foundation@afa.net | afafoundation.net



Pagan sexuality makes a comeback

Christianity produced the true sexual revolution.

BY ED VITAGLIANO,
AFA EXECUTIVE VP

In America, during the middle of the last century, what was called the sexual revolution took root like kudzu, a large-leafed, fast-growing, invasive vine that threatens to kill all other vegetation. This revolution has grown so quickly that hardly any part of the cultural landscape has survived.

Appallingly, this encouragement to sexual hedonism has made its way down to school-age children. The new *National Sex Education Standards* (NSES) document being pushed in numerous public schools in America is an example of this. The NSES applies to students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

For example, according to the NSES, by the time students are in the eighth grade, they must be able to define and describe various sex acts, *including sodomy*. The standards describe this to 11- to 13-year-old children as “sexual behavior involving penetration of the anus by a penis or sex toy.” As one might expect, pro-homosexual and transgender ideologies appear throughout the standards.

The NSES quotes figures from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stating that more than 41% of public school districts in the U.S. have adopted the new sexual standards.

Happily, many parents seem to be finally snapping awake to what is going on in classrooms across the country. However, it’s not enough for parents – especially *Christian* parents – to be uncomfortable with the perversions being taught to children. Such parental

reaction will only be temporary and ultimately avail little unless the root of the sex revolution vine be severed.

The power of eros

In the pre-Christian world, the pagan view of what we might refer to as “romantic love” was called *eros*. This word represented love as a power that simply seized people and irresistibly drew them together like a force of nature, leading to sexual coupling. In fact, the word *erotic* comes from *eros*.

Pope Benedict XVI described eros as “[t]hat love between man and woman which is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings.”

Moreover, he stated, the ancient Greeks viewed eros “principally as a kind of intoxication, the overpowering of reason by a ‘divine madness.’” Like any other kind of intoxicant, eros was enjoyed as a way to escape the monotony of one’s mundane existence.

Today, such an ancient view of eros continues to control many people’s views of love and sex. Everywhere one looks and listens, whether its movies, television, streaming platforms, music, or the various levels of the educational establishment, love and sexual desire are portrayed as a fire that cannot be resisted. After all, the heart wants what the heart wants. End of story.

Of course, Christianity puts forth a rightful place for erotic feelings. In the Bible, the Song of Solomon is a tribute to the beauty of erotic love, but it is the power of *eros* confined to the bond of marriage. In fact, biblically speaking, the act of sex not only expresses the love of husband and wife, it deepens it, as it welds together the souls of those who physically join themselves together.

As it says in Genesis 2:24, a man leaves

his parents and is “joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” The word *join* means to cleave or stick to the spouse. It is the sex act that joins them and makes them one. This is why the apostle Paul warned the church at Corinth against fornication with prostitutes, because the act of sex joined the man to the prostitute in a way God intended only for a man and a wife (1 Corinthians 6:16).

[T]he sexual revolution took root like kudzu, a large-leafed, fast-growing, invasive vine that threatens to kill all other vegetation. ... [H]ardly any part of the cultural landscape has survived.

However, as it is defined, *eros* – the overpowering force of nature that controls a person – is not a Christian idea. As Bible commentators have often noted, of the three Greek cultural words for love – *eros*, *philia*, and *agape* – the New Testament *never* uses *eros* in its discussions of Christian love.

Instead, Christianity revolutionized the concept of *eros* altogether. In the Judeo-Christian worldview, man is not simply a passive agent *acted upon* by *eros*. The expectation was that husbands and wives, within the institution of marriage, would be the masters, not the servants, of such romantic and erotic feelings.

Redemption of sexuality

Like every other aspect of human

nature, however, the fall of mankind led to the perversion of sexuality. The word *perversion* means something that has been twisted or turned around until it is different from what it was originally intended to be. To pervert something means to corrupt it.

God’s answer to the corruption of this powerful gift – indeed, His answer to every human problem – was to call people to Himself. When He formed the nation of Israel, God gave to them His laws. Starting at that point in human history, His people were called to model for the pagan world what human sexuality, among other things, was intended to be and how it was to be experienced.

Because biblical sexuality represented a wholesale change from pagan practices – i.e., people controlled by eros – it was the Judeo-Christian view of sexuality that was truly revolutionary.

This is not to suggest that pagan cultures had no cultural restrictions on sexuality. All of them did, although there were some distinctions as to what the regulations were. As C.S. Lewis said in *Mere Christianity*, “Men have differed as to whether you should have one wife or four. But they have always agreed that you must not simply have any woman you liked.”

However, it is true that most pagan

cultures reserved the strictest regulations for the *women* among them. This probably wasn’t the result of hypocrisy or even sexism so much as it was pragmatism. For virtually every society that has ever existed, it has been critical that a man’s posterity be readily identifiable; for that, women had to remain faithful to their husbands. After all, most of human history was lived prior to the invention of the birth control pill. The only way for a woman to be sure she would not get pregnant by someone who was not her husband was, well, to have sex only with her husband. The consequences of breaking this rule could be catastrophic for the tribe or the nation.

When Christianity began influencing ancient culture within the Roman Empire, the biblical sexual ethic challenged the prevailing pagan view by insisting that not only must women honor the marriage bed, so must the men.

Therefore, what has been transpiring in the West regarding sexuality is not truly a revolution, regardless of what sociologists call it. What we are seeing is a fairly straightforward reversal of the Christian ethic.

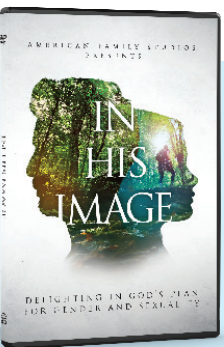
However, the current rejection of all sexual restraint is actually worse than a simple return to pagan sexuality. Now, not only are *men* encouraged to misbehave sexually, but so are the *women*. And not only are women told to be as debauched as they want, now the purveyors of perversion even encourage the *children* to sin sexually.

This wickedness exceeds the sexual laxity of most non-Christian cultures throughout history and is nothing less than an embrace of the sexual ethic that was usually found in *decaying* pagan cultures.

It is time for the church once again to press the case for a true sexual revolution – one that calls all human beings to channel the fire of sexuality in a manner that honors God’s purpose for it. ☐

More insights

- ▶ Watch for Part 2, “Sex as idolatry,” next month.
- ▶ Order *In His Image: Delighting in God’s Plan for Gender and Sexuality*, a DVD production of American Family Studios, at resources.afa.net.



The Word for the world

This mission-minded visionary plans to spread the Bible story to all people.

BY MATTHEW WHITE

Probably best known for producing the animated version of John Bunyan's **The Pilgrim's Progress**, Steve Cleary was an unlikely candidate to become the producer and public face of a film production team, let alone start a media company with a goal of putting the Word into the hands of the world.

"If I started listing dream jobs, possible professions, things I wanted to do, and someone suggested filmmaking, I would have said absolutely not," Cleary told *The Stand*.

"I grew up very insecure as a result of a speech impediment, and I never would have picked something that would be so easy to publicly fail at," Cleary explained. "I would have picked something behind the scenes."

He confides that for most of his life, he did work behind the scenes, out of the public eye, protected from being embarrassed by his speech challenge.

No comfortable path

Cleary's entry to the film industry was unconventional – and uncomfortable – to say the least.

In the first film he worked on, Cleary was tasked with hiring a production company to do the project. The company submitted a script, which he "absolutely hated." With the budget gone and no money left to hire another production company, Cleary had no choice but to write a new script himself.

"I actually made this mistake in my life multiple times," Cleary joked. "As a means of stretching the budget, I'd volunteer to work on the script, be on set, or do things that we didn't have

money for. So I ended up working on these different projects and started getting into film by default."

The pattern repeated itself in the filming of **The Pilgrim's Progress**.

"I tried to hire somebody to be the public face of the production," he recalled.

With the promotion of that film, Cleary knew there would be interviews and public appearances, a job he thought would be better suited for a publicist. But no one would take the job. Facing tight budgets again, Cleary was encouraged by the team to be the face.

"I said 'I can't. I have a speech impediment, I'm just going to embarrass myself and the team,'" Cleary remembered. "But I prayed about it and prayed about it, and I finally surrendered and said, 'OK, God, if I make a fool of myself, at least I'm being obedient to what I believe You want me to do.'"

No small miracle

"And when I did my very first interview over the phone, my speech impediment started to go away," he said. Over

We have Bible stories, sermons, devotions, but nobody's actually said 'OK, starting from the beginning, what's the narrative? ... How do all these stories connect from Genesis to Revelation?'

STEVE CLEARY

our films to the mission field," Cleary said. "We wanted **The Pilgrim's Progress** to be viewed for free, and we wanted to allow it to be translated into languages of the world."

During the filming of **The Pilgrim's Progress**, Cleary recalled the team had a vision for another project – an animated Bible, available digitally through phones and tablets.

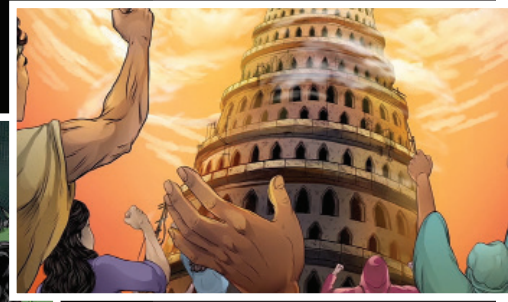
The vision to animate the Bible was something God placed on Cleary's heart over time, a project he knew would change his life and impact the mission field greatly. Thus was born the **iBible**.

"I was reading an article on the importance of the biblical narrative, the fact the Bible is one cohesive story of redemption and restoration from begin-

time, Cleary began to realize the impact of film on the mission field, which fueled his desire to work on animation that actually had meaning and would make a difference in viewers' lives.

That was the impetus for founding RevelationMedia.

"We started RevelationMedia and we committed, as much as possible, to take



ning to end," Cleary explained.

"As I searched, I realized that no one has written out a narrative extracted from the Scripture. We have Bible stories, sermons, devotions, but nobody's actually said 'OK, starting from the beginning, what's the narrative? What is the story? How do all these stories connect from Genesis to Revelation?'"

No easy challenge

Cleary's excitement grew, and he knew what God was leading him to do. But again, being one to avoid the spotlight, he hoped to find someone else to be the front man.

"We started searching for somebody with ministry experience, somebody that had a good name, and we made offers to a couple of different people," Cleary said. "But as those people prayed about it, they declined because they didn't feel that was what God had for them."

Once again, those around him urged Cleary to assume the role.

"I didn't want to do it. I didn't feel called to be the leader, I wanted to be the behind-the-scenes guy," Cleary said. "I realize now that God was closing the doors [for others]. This was something He had for me to do. And that would become more clear as time went on."

Cleary still had his reservations. Why him? Why not a Bible society or a mission group? He felt surely there must be people more qualified, with more funding, better education, and sufficient resources to tackle such an undertaking.

"Again, I just had to be obedient," Cleary said. "I decided this is what I'm going to dedicate my life to – producing a narrative. And I knew because I had become a filmmaker, I needed to create a visual narrative."

A number of reasons compelled him in that direction: "I knew that the majority of unreached people can't read at all. I knew that the next generation reads the Bible less and less all the time. The Bible doesn't even exist in many languages. So that really became the call of **iBible**."

Cleary is not naïve about the task of creating a visual representation of the biblical narrative from Genesis through Revelation.

"It's a big project," he affirmed.

"We estimate a million man-hours to do all the artwork. Everything must be unique to us, because we have to be free to give it to all the mission groups in all the languages. Our goal is to reach the world with this and make it free and accessible."

In no way does Cleary insinuate the **iBible** should serve as a replacement for the Bible, but with 7,000 languages in the world, with about half of those only spoken, he realizes the **iBible** could serve as a resource while waiting to get the Bible translated into more languages.

"It can take 10 years and millions of dollars to translate a Bible, while the **iBible** can be translated for a fraction of the cost, just to get the narrative out there," Cleary said. "That's not to say we don't need the Bible translated, but having the Bible in every language in our lifetime is an impossibility. Having **iBible** in every language is a possibility. It is attainable. It is affordable."

"We want people, after watching **iBible**, to want to read the Bible," Cleary concluded. "So we lay it out like a book. It has text on the screen and page turns. It's like a book that comes to life. Ultimately our goal is that they study the Bible. This is a precursor to getting people fully engaged in Scripture." □



Follow the progress

Steve Cleary anticipates that **iBible** will require 150-200 episodes. Visit behind the scenes and view the first six chapters of Genesis at ibible.net.

Steve Cleary's **The Pilgrim's Progress** is available at resources.afa.net, 877.927.4917, or revelationmedia.com.

See a review of **iBible** episodes on p.34.

Get down to business

Take time to build a legacy worth leaving for others.

BY JOY LUCIUS

Always address the oft-ignored grocery store bagger by name and say, “Thank you.”

Christian author and entrepreneur Mike Fransen says that’s an example of one small tool for constructing a legacy worth leaving. Furthermore, he believes that kind of legacy should be top priority for every Christian.

Fransen suggested to *The Stand* that, like it or not, everyone is in the legacy-building business. That concept led him to leave his position as chief operations officer of a large real estate company and reassess his priorities as husband and father.

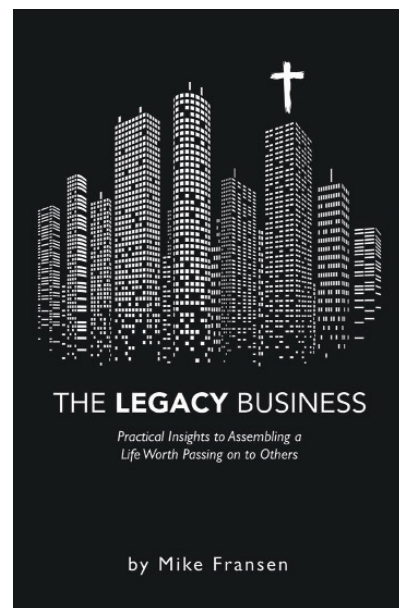
He quickly discovered the type of legacy one leaves behind depends on the relationships being built. First with God, then with people.

“The closer I have gotten to Him,” said Fransen, “the easier I find it is to love people, be more patient, show more empathy, and hopefully develop more of these Jesus-like traits.”

It’s obvious that shifting priorities and building better relationships impacted Fransen deeply. Consequently, his love for Jesus permeates his every word and draws readers to his passion for living.

Consistent excellence

The Legacy Business, Fransen’s new book, is his personal, heartfelt



invitation for readers to consider his exciting discoveries. He outlines a practical plan that starts with relationships at home, then quickly expands to the work world. Surprisingly, Fransen uses Jesus the businessman as his legacy-building model.

“I love the notion that Jesus was a carpenter while He was here on Earth,” said Fransen. “I have a feeling His work and the way He went about it would have made for a must-see HGTV series.”

“It is hard to imagine that His ministry in and around His own community would have taken off the way it did if His reputation as a carpenter didn’t reflect hard work and excellence.”

Though Fransen’s take on Jesus as a businessman is anything but conventional, He builds a solid case for making the Carpenter’s day-to-day work ethic the reasonable foundation of everyone’s legacy business. After all, when people in the world witness someone’s hard work and commitment to excellence, it becomes easier to bring faith into conversations.

Sincere encouragement

Fransen also advises adding sincere

encouragement to this Christ-centered foundation of excellence and hard work. Sincere encouragement breeds trust, and trust grows best in relationships when people know others are “for them.” And trust makes it easier to speak hard truths in love.

“I have heard a few sermons and talks lately,” stated Fransen, “... about the tension we are called to as Christians between truth and love. We see many examples of one without the other today, but to me, encouragement is the sweet spot where those are in balance with those people closest to us.”

Intentional gratitude

“I have found that when I’m consistent with expressing gratitude to others, it is very difficult to get consumed by selfish and me-focused thoughts.”

Granted, building a lasting positive legacy requires striving for excellence, sincere encouragement, and intentional gratitude. And Fransen’s personal practice adds a joyful commitment to loving others without reservation.

“That is the difficulty for us in today’s world of immediacy and instant gratification,” he cautioned, “to be OK with a life of consistent, godly living without necessarily seeing results this side of heaven.” ☐

Building your own blueprint

In *The Legacy Business: Practical Insights to Assembling a Life Worth Passing on to Others*, Mike Fransen digs deep to help others seek God first as they draw their blueprint for a positive legacy.

What can you do to find more purpose and fulfillment in life? How can you let the Lord into your heart to do your work? Fransen offers some solid answers based on his personal journey through the process. Available at christianbook.com.

A family safe place for inspiration, information

Pray.com is an invaluable resource for spiritual growth.

BY ADAM BORCICKY

In today’s culture, families are largely deprived of Christian inspiration in mainstream media. They can hardly watch TV, listen to radio, or go online without having sinful influences thrown in the mix.

Is there a safe place – an app or website – that helps families grow spiritually? Pray.com may be the answer.

Co-founder Matt Potter told *The Stand* that pray.com is a Christian site whose mission is “to allow everyone to leave a legacy of helping others. ... What we’re doing is enabling a platform for churches and pastors and media ministries to share their content.”

The website is a collection of sermons, podcasts, study helps, Bible reading, and much more. The organization also recently released a streaming service on Apple TV called PrayTV.

Born in mourning

Pray.com was founded in 2016 by four men: Potter, Steve Gatena, Mike Lynn, and Ryan Beck. Gatena was the first to propose the idea of a website where Christians can go to listen to sermons and teaching, meditate on biblical truths, and learn more about the Bible. He did not grow up religious, though his grandmother “dragged me to church for Christmas and Easter when I was young.”

In 2015, Gatena lost his best friend and business partner in a tragic plane crash. Grieved, he began to look for answers in the church. A buddy of his introduced him to a sermon that moved Gatena to want to help others have access to sermons, Scriptures, and other inspi-

ration, just as he did. Thus, the idea of pray.com was born.

Through a series of events, Gatena crossed paths with the other founders, and they began to discuss his ideas. All four of these men have entrepreneurial backgrounds.

Blessed in ministry

With their business expertise, their calling, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, pray.com came into existence. Since the website’s launch in 2017, it has become a world-renowned resource for Christian inspiration.

“We have 12 million downloads of the app,” said Potter. “We’ve hit number one on the app store in 125 countries around the world, and we’ve had over 72 million shares of content.”

Because it is a Christian service, the founders carefully validate all ministries allowed on their website.

“They all have their own statements of faith,” Potter explained, “and we have a set of policies and guidelines that we created in conjunction with our legal team and a trusted third party that has over 40 years in the Christian space.”

The leadership team uses those guidelines to test and approve any content that appears on the site. This helps them prevent any heresy or secular influence from being posted. Subsequently, everything shared on pray.com remains Christ-centered.

Who’s on pray.com?

Pray.com features sermons and teaching from many Christian voices regularly aired on American Family Radio including Pastor Jeff Schreve’s *From His Heart*, Dr. Ed Young’s *The Winning Walk*, and Dr. James Dobson’s *Family Talk*.

With a subscription, listeners may also choose other favorite voices such as James Earl Jones reading the Scriptures. Christian artists inspire with music for any occasion.

Access pray.com anywhere there is Internet and on any device. For mobile devices, download the app via Google Play or the Apple App Store.

So-called family-friendly media content still often reflects evil motives and references not suitable, especially for children. Parents try to shelter their family, but sometimes it seems to be an overwhelming challenge. Pray.com may be a solution. ☐

No time to waste



The Legacy Imperative urges grandparents to forge a future of faith for America.

BY JOY LUCIUS

“If youth wasted on the young is sad, then age wasted on the old is tragic,” said co-founder and president of The Legacy Imperative (TLI), Dr. Robert A. Petterson.

Petterson and the TLI staff are determined to prevent that tragedy by inspiring the nation’s oldest generation of Christians to leave a legacy of faith to the youngest generation.

With headquarters in Naples, Florida, TLI is a nondenominational Christian ministry focused on equipping and mobilizing older American Christians – especially grandparents – to evangelize and disciple their Millennial and Generation Z grandchildren.

Bridging the gap

“We’ve inherited a legacy of faith from those before us,” Petterson explained to *The Stand*, “but we’re losing this next generation of young people, those we call natives of Digital Land.”

Petterson’s latest project, **The Legacy Imperative: Reaching Digital Land**, is a film series that details TLI’s mission to evangelize the young people of America’s most savvy technological generations. As citizens of Petterson’s so-called Digital Land, these young people are also one of the largest unreached people groups in the world.

With over 150 million Millennials and GenZers who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, Petterson

acknowledges the difficulty in bridging the generational faith gap between grandparents and their grandchildren.

Accordingly, TLI offers grandparents unique tools, including reading materials, podcasts, a hot-button issues video series, a 10-session grandparents’ summit, and faith-centered travel tours for grandparents to book with their grandchildren.

Those tools are rooted in various surveys indicating that grandparents are the favorite individuals in the lives of many young people. One study even showed that Millennials would prefer to vacation with grandparents over parents.

Petterson wants grandparents to recognize and utilize this strategic advantage wisely. “This is a nonreligious generation, with only one in five attending church,” he said. “More than 15 million of them identify as atheists, and a large majority also embrace moral, sexual, gender, and family fluidity.”

Even so, the TLI team is undaunted. They believe grandparents and their peers are the greatest untapped resource in most congregations nationwide, with more than 60% of today’s church members over the age of 50.

Utilizing the potential

Petterson discovered this reservoir of potential during the two decades he pastored and helped build one of Naples’ largest and most dynamic congregations. The current 2,000+ members of Covenant Presbyterian Church began with only 120 congregants.

When Petterson and his wife first assumed leadership of the Naples congregation, the prospects for growth were disheartening since the original 120 members were mostly older, retired people. Petterson soon realized he was sitting on a gold mine of potential.

“I call them PIP’s, Previously Important People,” Petterson explained. “They were once on the school board or were the head of the company or were someone important in the work world.

“Now, they’ve gotten older, they’re no longer out there anymore, and people have forgotten who they were,” Petterson added, “There is as much of an identity crisis with older people as there is with younger people.”

Like most older people, these PIPs had worked hard, raised families, and contributed to the community. They achieved success and earned respect at home, work, and church. Retirement offered no real challenges, meaning, purpose, or identity. Many PIPs were left questioning what to do with the rest of their lives.

Petterson and TLI have a ready answer to that question. They tell older Christians that their true identity will be found in the

same place it has always been – in God and in His calling to build their homes and raise their children according to His words.

“I tell older people that America is not what it used to be,” said Petterson. “You’re living in Babylon. You used to live in Jerusalem, now you’re living in Babylon. You want to go back to Jerusalem, but God has put you in Babylon right now for a time like this.”

Reaching the lost

In fact, Petterson believes these are the greatest days ever for sharing the gospel because young people are not pretending anymore; they openly admit to not being Christian.

Christian grandparents are well aware of this sad fact because statistics show that one or more of their adult children have walked away from the church and possibly even the faith. To make matters worse, two or more of their grandchildren have walked away from church, have never been in church, or have no semblance of faith.

“We’re losing the next generation,” Petterson stated. “There’s still time, but the time is in our hands as grandparents. So it’s imperative to be involved in the lives of our grandchildren. We are the ones best positioned to reach this generation. We have an identity, and our identity is the story, the legacy of our faith.

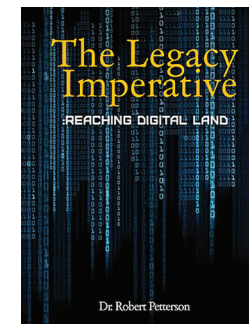
“But we’re the last generation that remembers. We still remember the gospel. We still remember the stories of family and faith ... the stories of the faith that have built people in the past. That’s why we’re called Legacy Imperative.”

Truly, this mission field is ripe for harvest, but Christian grandparents must attend to the harvest now if they want to leave a legacy of faith for generations to come.

There’s no time to waste. ☐

We’re losing the next generation. ... So it’s imperative to be involved in the lives of our grandchildren.

DR. ROBERT PETTERSON



More resources, more success

Visit legacyimperative.org for more information about varied resources on how grandparents can help forge a Christ-centered future for the next generations. Dr. Robert Petterson’s videos, including **The Legacy Imperative: Reaching Digital Land**, are also available for purchase under the “Toolbox” tab at the top of the TLI website.

Browse resources.afa.net for family-friendly resources offered by American Family Association, including two products by Tom Gilson: *Critical Conversations: A Christian Parents' Guide to Discussing Homosexuality with Teens* and *Preparing Your Child for the Transgender Revolution*, an AFS Cultural Institute DVD.

Lyrics touch hearts with hope and healing

Songwriter Steve Siler shares the powerful impact music can have on the soul.

BY HANNAH MEADOR

“We sing into people’s hearts messages that they may not hear in any other way,” said Music for the Soul founder Steve Siler. “One of the key messages we’re always trying to get through to people is that when Jesus was on the cross, He was not there shaming us. That’s the place we come from. Christ was broken to bless us. He loves us. This [ministry] is all about grace, mercy, hope, restoration, and wholeness.”

In many scenarios, simple notes strung together speak to the soul in ways words alone cannot do. As a songwriter, Siler deeply understands the powerful impact a composition can have on individuals. Throughout his career, he has learned how to speak eloquently the language of music to those who most need to hear it.

For 20 years, Siler and his team of talented musicians at Music for the Soul (MFTS) have created beautiful melodies that tell heart-wrenching stories trauma survivors need to hear. MFTS has over 200 song recordings covering 80 topics such as abortion recovery, pornography addiction, PTSD, eating disorders, and more. But without God’s constant persuading and provision in Siler’s life, MFTS would not be the ministry it is today.

Finding direction

As a child, Siler became intrigued by music when he saw The Beatles perform on **The Ed Sullivan Show**. Wanting to be like his heroes, he asked his father for

a guitar and began writing music at 10 years old. And while those early songs didn’t become No. 1 singles, Siler quickly realized that God had given him something special.

“As I listened back to the songs I wrote when I was very young,” Siler told *The Stand*, “it was clear from the beginning that God had given me a gift for melody.”

However, it took years before he understood exactly what God wanted him to do with that gift. After working many odd jobs throughout his teens and early 20s, Siler

found employment in the music industry. He was hired by A&M Records for a marketing position. There, he spent time promoting secular artists. But Siler knew he was made for more than marketing.

He soon found himself late one night at a church questioning God’s plan for his life. A few weeks later, someone who had visited Siler’s church called and asked if he could help him write songs for **I Can’t Talk About It**, a project designed to minister to children who had been sexually abused. Later, he began writing songs for the pop music market. But after hearing one of his songs on the radio, Siler knew that was not what he was supposed to be doing.

Fulfilling a call

After relocating his family from Los Angeles, California, to Nashville, Tennessee, Siler began working as a contemporary Christian music staff writer. He wrote many hits, won a Dove Award, and worked with well-known artists.

In 1994, Siler’s song “Not Too Far from Here” was recorded by artist Kim Boyce. It soon became a No. 1 single. One morning soon after, his family was stunned as they heard that song performed on **Good Morning America**. On the television, a young

girl named Mikaila Enriquez sang Siler’s lyrics as images from the 1995 Oklahoma bombing flashed before his eyes.

“I felt like it showed me that God had me where I needed to be,” Siler continued, “and that I didn’t need to worry so much that I was out of place or doing the wrong thing. I just needed to respond to the opportunities right in front of me.”

That wasn’t the only time Siler connected tragedy to his music. In 1999, he wrote “I Will Follow Christ.” During the Gospel Music Association Week that year, he found himself on cloud nine as Bob Carlisle, Clay Crosse, and BeBe Winans sang it, and the crowd went wild. The next morning, he heard that Cassie

Bernall was shot and killed at Columbine High School for following Christ.

“I’m thinking OK, so I say *I* will follow Christ and get a standing ovation,” Siler explained. “That song wound up winning a Dove Award. So it’s like I got all these accolades, and this other person who said the same thing gets a bullet. That was what really got me thinking it’s time for me to seriously put my money where my mouth is.”

Founding a ministry

In December 2001, MFTS was incorporated. Since then, the ministry has continued to bless many through its beautiful sounds and healing messages. Over the years, the team has produced 20 full-length projects with the help of trained medical professionals, pastors, and survivors. Their testimonies enhance the impact of every MFTS project.

“I am not a licensed therapist or an ordained pastor. Even though, I’ve been accused of being both of those things,” Siler said with a smile. “What I am, is a songwriter who has the ability to craft songs and who has a heart for people in trauma and recovery. God has uniquely gifted me with a network of friends who are therapists, pastors, or survivors of these issues. [They] speak honestly and deeply to help us create content.”

On some albums, listeners will hear brief testimonies from survivors, e.g. “After the Storm” features a survivor of Hurricane Katrina, and “Tell Me What You See” has an eating disorder victim sharing her story.

Due to the intended impact of each project, MFTS designs the segments – music and spoken word – to be heard and absorbed in sequence. They present the problem,

steps of healing, release, and freedom.

“I feel like people will not trust you with their hope until you demonstrate that you understand their pain,” Siler continued. “That requires writing songs that get inside the head of the person who’s in the problem. ...We write songs that say ‘we get you’ and ‘we know what this feels like.’ And because we know

what this feels like, they can trust us on how to get out of this.

“And to me, if you want to talk about introducing Jesus into somebody’s life, how about helping save them from being in a life that’s going to lead to death, spiritually and physically?” □

Finding help, healing, freedom

“I think there are unexpected, unanticipated joys and challenges in doing ministry,” Steve Siler explained. “But for me, one of the unexpected joys has been getting to see God work in each and every project in miraculous ways.”

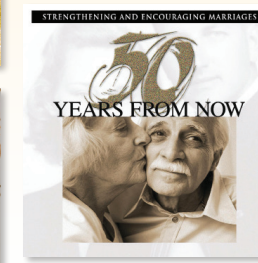
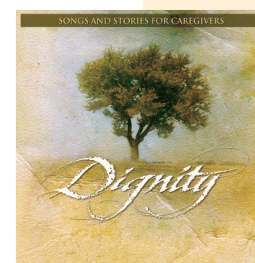
Siler has been called the “Father of the healing Christian music movement.” He has written 9 No. 1 contemporary Christian songs, 45 Top 10 singles, and is an author of multiple works. This fall, Siler and the team will release **The Music for the Soul** podcast on their website and other podcast platforms.

In addition to issues cited in the story above, Music for the Soul’s 80 recordings and videos offer encouragement and hope for those who struggle with these issues and many more:

Cancer
Grief
Self-harm
Suicide
Shame
Trauma
Racism
Depression

Abandonment
Sex trafficking
Alzheimer's
Breast cancer
Marriage issues
Adoption

Miscarriage
Caregiving
Sexual abuse



For all Music for the Soul recordings and related print and devotional resources, visit musicforthesoul.org.

See a review of Siler’s devotional book *Twenty-Three*, based on the 23rd Psalm, on p. 34.

Roe falls, religious victories secured

AFA's political action arm played a pivotal role in defending life.



BY MATTHEW WHITE

“The pathway leading to the monumental decision of reversing nearly a half-century of bad precedent set by *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 was not mere happenstance,” said Rob Chambers, executive vice president of AFA Action. “It was a long, hard road, with each step planned carefully and prayerfully to ensure the end result was a victory for life.”

AFA Action, AFA's political and public policy arm, played a larger role

than many would expect.

“AFA Action's goal is to advance a biblical worldview through elections, legislation, and judicial nominations,” Chambers told *The Stand*. “One of our core values is the sanctity of life, and with that, of course, was a desire to overturn or reverse *Roe v. Wade*.”

Chambers does not drive AFA Action's multifaceted approach alone. He oversees iVoterGuide with a focus on getting the best candidates elected. He is joined

by Dr. Jameson Taylor, director of AFA Action Government Affairs, and Phillip Jauregui, senior counsel and director of the group's Center for Judicial Renewal.

Taylor's aim is at crafting legislation that will help strengthen families and churches, while Jauregui's work centers on researching and recommending constitutionalist judges to the bench.

Together this team was instrumental, working for years laying the groundwork for what would become a watershed moment in American history – the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) overturning *Roe v. Wade*, among other important religious liberty decisions in its 2022 session.

In their own words, the AFA Action team shared some of their individual roles, and how God brought it all together.

Rob Chambers:

After Donald Trump announced his bid for the presidency in 2015, I noticed that his America First agenda of limited government, border security, and job creation resonated with blue-collar workers and grassroots conservatives. What he seemed to lack early on, however, was evangelical support.

AFA Action co-sponsored an event in New York to give Trump the opportunity to meet with evangelical leaders and share his plans should he become president. In the meeting, he made bold commitments to religious liberty, sanctity of life, and appointing conservative judges. Still, evangelicals remained divided between the two front-runner candidates – Trump and Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX).

When Trump won the GOP nomination, I transitioned into an intense educational campaign revealing the stark contrasts between him and Hillary Clinton. With Clinton, I knew the core values of sanctity of life, religious liberty, and judicial restraint were on the chopping block.

Clinton was rabidly pro-abortion and would have filled any SCOTUS vacancy with a committed pro-abortion justice. Trump appeared to be the antithesis.

To help AFA Action make the biggest impact in the 2016 election, I distributed our online voter guide (iVoterGuide), political party comparison guide, and church election resources to our grassroots network in targeted swing states.

AFA Action proved to be integral to AFA being recognized by the George Barna Group to be among the top six most influential organizations in getting out the vote in 2016. Among Christian activist groups, AFA was No. 1.

I believe securing the evangelical vote was a critical component that led to the election of Trump, who according to election statistics, received 81% of the evangelical vote in 2016 – a 3% increase over the previous three presidential elections.

President Trump went on to appoint to the high court three justices, all of whom would vote to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Jameson Taylor:

I helped draft and spearheaded the coalition to pass the *Dobbs* legislation, Mississippi's 2018 law banning abortion after 15 weeks – the case ultimately taken up by the Supreme Court that led to *Roe's* reversal.

I expected the law would elicit a legal challenge, but the goal was not per se to go to the Supreme Court. The goal was to pass pro-life protections for women and children in Mississippi.

I prayed the law would pass, and I prayed the case would go all the way to the Supreme Court and that we would win, but I wouldn't say I anticipated overturning *Roe* because that was out of my hands. I just did the work God wanted me to do and left the outcome to Him. I am very humbled God invited me to collaborate with His plan. All I did was provide a few loaves and fishes.

In God's divine providence, others such as President Trump, the new Supreme Court justices, and Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch worked to do something even more remarkable – reverse *Roe v. Wade*. So many people played a part in this victory it is clear only God could orchestrate it.

AFA Action was instrumental in following the leading of the Lord in securing the key confirmation of Justice Amy Coney Barrett.

PHILLIP JAUREGUI

Phillip Jauregui:

AFA Action had the insight to prepare for a Supreme Court vacancy in June of 2020 – nearly three months before a vacancy occurred.

Working alongside about 10 other groups on a research project to identify the best prospects, we identified the best female prospect as Judge Amy Coney Barrett.

Our research led us to believe that she had the spiritual, moral, mental, familial, and academic strength necessary to articulate the pro-life, constitutional position, and to provide strength to the majority to take the final step to overrule *Roe*.

We had legitimate questions about Barrett but continually found confidence in her legal writings, her multiple pro-life connections and statements, and her intellectual strength that would give her the ability to defend her positions among even the most senior members of the Supreme Court. We saw that no one on the Court would be able to intimidate Barrett mentally on the pro-life issue.

When Justice Ginsburg passed away, Barrett was the top prospect of three potential candidates being mentioned in D.C. circles.

She attained that level in no small measure because of the work of AFA Action.

However, within two days, one of the other names moved ahead of Barrett's. Other politicians were attempting to push additional candidates to the top of the discussions.

We immediately began distributing key research that detailed the clear weaknesses of other contenders. Barrett was reestablished as the front-runner, soon introduced by President Trump as his nominee, and later confirmed.

AFA Action was instrumental in following the leading of the Lord in securing the key confirmation of Justice Barrett to the Supreme Court. Had either of the other two top contenders made it to the bench, *Roe* would not have been overturned. ☐

Where pro-life activism begins

Learn more about AFA Action's mission “to inform and mobilize individuals to strengthen the biblical foundations of America,” at afaaction.net.

Visit [iVoterGuide.com](https://ivoterguide.com) to register to vote, find your polling location, see important dates about fall elections in your state, view your ballot, and review candidates' political records.

In an AFA Action Alert issued June 28, AFA president Tim Wildmon encouraged a day of praise to God for the “the great religious victories in our nation.”

Wildmon was referencing three specific decisions handed down in June by the Supreme Court of the United States.

- *Carson v. Makin* – ruled that religious schools must not be excluded from a state-offered tuition program. State vouchers can be used to enroll students in Christian schools.
- *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District* – ruled that coach Joe Kennedy was unjustly fired from praying on the field after football games. Private religious expression, including public prayer, is constitutional.
- *Dobbs v. Jackson* – upheld Mississippi's 2018 law banning abortion after 15 weeks reversing *Roe v. Wade* and sending abortion laws back to the states.

'I'm afraid my grandpa's going to die'

Ukraine native heads long-standing Christian outreach.

BY RANDALL MURPHREE

Born in eastern Ukraine when it was a part of the Soviet Union, young Sergey Rakhuba grew up no stranger to life under communism.

"Our family experienced persecution by a communist regime set on eliminating Christianity from society," he told *The Stand*. Later Rakhuba lived many years in Moscow, Russia.

Eventually, he came to the States to major in international ministries and evangelism at Moody Bible Institute. Today he maintains a family home stateside and travels frequently to oversee ministry as president of Mission Eurasia (ME), a multiple-pronged, creative Christian outreach to people in the former Soviet Union.

They took all of our evangelistic literature and Bibles and burned the warehouse.

SERGEY RAKHUBA

"We're in 13 countries which were in the Soviet Union," Rakhuba said, "plus Israel."

ME was founded in 1991 soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Its goal was to "react quickly and decisively to new opportunities for evangelism and church planting in this former communist empire."

Russia's February 24 military invasion of Ukraine has strengthened Rakhuba's commitment to ministry in his native land. ME cites four emphases that umbrella its varied ministries: church planting, leadership training, international evangelism, and humanitarian outreach.

On the way to new ministry

Following Russia's military onslaught, ME began immediately to reinforce its outreach to the people of the region. Rakhuba cited one such humanitarian initiative.

"I commissioned Don Parsons, our director of unreached people groups initiative, to go to Poland," he explained.

Parsons chuckled in sharing with *The Stand*: "He called me and asked if I could go to Warsaw."

Parsons answered. "When?"

"Tomorrow!" Rakhuba answered.

At their homebase in Detroit, Michigan, the Parsons family was stunned, startled out of their comfort zone.

Flash back for a moment to trace Parsons' path to missions. Though a New Jersey native, his heart's tie to Ukraine is a personal one.

In college, he and a co-ed named Esther were friends at Philadelphia College of the Bible, and he was hoping the friendship would grow deeper. However, after a campus speaker gave an address titled "Planning to Go, Willing to Stay," his call to the mission

field was clear and certain.

He dreaded telling Esther. But he knew he must.

Her response? "Me too!"

Subsequently, in the early 1990s, when doors began to open in former Soviet bloc nations, Parsons went first with a men's quartet to evangelize for a month in Ukraine. They showed *The Jesus Film*, and great numbers came to faith in Christ.

In 1997, Don and Esther, by then husband and wife, moved to Kyiv, Ukraine's capital city, where he pastored a Ukrainian church until the early 2000s. He also facilitated church planting and equipped and mobilized Ukrainians to cross borders, evangelize the lost, and disciple other nations.

In 2020, the Parsons family joined the ME team.

And now, back to the present – this year, Parsons was abruptly called back to the Eurasian mission field.

"One of our sons," Parsons told Fox2 Detroit television, "was struck by the reality that there are explosions happening just down the street from where we lived in Kyiv."

On the ground in Warsaw

Within days of Rakhuba's phone call, Parsons was back in Eurasia, fully engaged in outreach and support of



Mission Eurasia president Sergey Rakhuba (left) and Russia director Pavel Tokarchuk at the ministry's Irpin, Ukraine, field headquarters, which were destroyed early in the war.

in Sunday worship. It may now have as many as 500." God is calling people to Himself, as the war leads people to seek help through the church.

Schools Without Walls (SWW) is one of ME's longstanding and highly effective arms. Rakhuba called it a "flagship ministry, an informal approach to training young leaders in their churches to go beyond their churches."

SWW illustrates one of ME's major visions – raising up a generation to take the gospel to the nations. ME provides SWW with resources, materials, and finances to mobilize and commission Christians for gospel outreach.

Rakhuba reiterated how the crisis of war is motivating Christians "to take their faith outside the walls, helping people in their communities while preaching the gospel and meeting humanitarian needs."

"We are shaken," Rakhuba acknowledged. "But not broken!"

grandpa's going to die in Ukraine!"

In ministering to the mothers and children, ME shares the gospel, discipled believers, and feeds the hungry. Professional Christian counselors help dispel fear and depression.

"A psychologist may engage a child with Play-Doh," Parsons explained. "If he'll begin to play with the soft clay, he relaxes and is likely to begin talking about the trauma that has held him mute for days." Then healing begins.

On the move in wartime

Across the entire region, every day is marked by uncertainty, by ever present pain, fear, and challenge. In more ways than one, ME has been a direct victim of the war. First, there is the acute shortage of supplies, food, and personnel.

Second is damage to facilities. ME's field ministry headquarters in Irpin, just outside Kyiv, were destroyed within weeks of the onset of war.

"They took all of our evangelistic literature and Bibles and burned the warehouse," Rakhuba said.

Yet, ironically, there is hope. There are indisputable evidences of God's presence in Ukraine and in surrounding nations. Both Rakhuba and Parsons point to unanticipated signs of the gospel's impact *because* of the reality of war.

"For example," Parsons said, "one Baptist church in Krakow used to average about 70 people

thousands of refugees.

Russia's military advance has created inhumane and unconscionable civilian crises on many tracks – hunger, death, homelessness, health, hopelessness. Displaced and persecuted Ukrainian citizens headed west to Poland and other nations seeking refuge.

Parsons said Poland quickly became host for the greatest numbers of refugees. Consequently, food and supplies are inadequate. Living quarters are crowded. Fear and despair are rampant. It's a field ready for harvest, and Parsons is there to work with refugee moms and children in summer church camps.

"Working with refugees can be an emotional journey," he acknowledged. "Meeting these moms and kids, you get a taste of the trauma they have gone through."

Parsons' voice trembled as he shared the gripping incident of a tearful young lad, hardly older than a toddler, who approached him crying big tears, garbling his words, and gasping for breath. His words were indecipherable.

After a few repetitions, Parsons finally understood: "I'm afraid my

On the agenda in Ukraine

Sergey Rakhuba, president of Mission Eurasia, helps implement the ministry's vision to transform the spiritual landscape of 13 countries in Eurasia. He has helped establish 52 Evangelism and Church Planting Centers in strategic regions. These centers have been instrumental in planting more than 1,000 churches.

In the context of war, the ministry needs more resources than ever before. Learn more, and sponsor one of Mission Eurasia's outreach projects listed below. Visit missioneurasia.org or email info@eurasia.org.

- "I Care" Refugee Assistance
- Ukraine Emergency Relief
- School Without Walls Leadership Training
- Children's Bible Camps
- Gift of Hope Christmas Outreach
- Scripture and Christian Publishing
- Unreached People Groups Initiative

Faithfully taking a stand

One family stands for moral values, common sense.

BY HANNAH MEADOR

When LGBTQ invaded the Craighead County Jonesboro (Arkansas) Library, Mark Nichols was alarmed at the Left's blatant attempt to entrap young readers. He and his wife Stephanie are parents of five young children.

So when Mark accepted a position on the library board, he was grateful for the platform to defend children's innocence. But little did he know that stand would change his family's world forever.

In June 2021, Mark became aware of a Facebook post from a local mother. On a trip to the library, she noticed a 33-book display that promoted the LGBTQ agenda to children. Next to the books, there was also a sign informing young readers of flags affirming different gender identities.

When one of Nichols' children saw the disturbing material enticingly displayed to celebrate Gay Pride Month in the children's section, Stephanie checked out some books herself. They contained sickening illustrations further promoting the LGBTQ lifestyle. There were even sexually-oriented board books marketed to children ages 2 to 5.

Stephanie was completely stunned. But she could hardly believe her eyes when she opened the pages of *It's Perfectly Normal*, recommended for children ages 10 and up. She was bombarded with graphic cartoons depicting nude

images of straight, lesbian, and gay couples involved in sexual intercourse. In later pages, cartoons of children masturbating were shown.

Conquering the darkness

Mark and Stephanie knew they had to do something to protect children from exposure to such perverse graphic content. Mark prayerfully prepared for his next board meeting.

"I knew that I had to speak truth and to interject the truth of God's Word into the situation," Mark told American Family Studios (AFS), "but I had to do it in a loving manner."

Unfortunately, at the meeting, both sides clashed in a contentious debate for more than three hours. Wanting to help calm the situation, Mark made a motion to simply move the books to the adult section, but to no avail. Even that motion failed.

Courageously making a difference

Controversy continued to build. In an attempt to share scriptural truth and God's plan for sexuality, Mark handed out copies of the AFS documentary **In His Image**. In response to this, his family endured backlash, hate mail, and constant attacks on his

character. But when asked if it was worth it, Mark gave a tearful "yes."

"If the price of your peace is bought with silence," Stephanie continued, "it is too high a price to pay. ... It would've been so much easier for Mark to be silent and not share the gospel. But he cares about souls."

Since the initial 2021 incident, Mark has continued to propose policies to protect children's innocence. Although none have passed, he and his family continue to press on and be a light for Jesus in their community. ☐

Pride Month marches on

The Mark Nichols Story DVD is the first installment in The Impact Series from American Family Studios. It is available August 20 at resources.afa.net.

Pride Month 2022 revealed how thoroughly the LGBTQ machine is infiltrating the culture. From fast food to government institutions to churches, here's a sampling of recent examples:

- The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., hosted Pride Family Day with an "age appropriate" drag show for children.
- Taco Bell presented a "drag brunch experience" in select cities for adults ages 18 and up.
- Wingate United Methodist Church in North Carolina organized a Pride Children's Drag Story Hour and Crafts Party.
- Pizza Hut promoted a drag book to children in its summer reading program.



ENGAGE

PURSUING RELEVANCE

BY JORDAN CHAMBLEE

A concept the modern church has been concerned with during the last few decades is relevance. Young Christians have been particularly affected by this concern for relevance. No one wants to be perceived as archaic, left behind by the changing world, or out of touch with the current cultural trends. Especially when our primary objective as Christians in a lost world – sharing the gospel – depends heavily on communication. We want to be understood, and we want to be seen as "relevant."

Yes, relevance is important. But have we been slapping the relevant label on things that are irrelevant, while ignoring the things that make Christianity truly relevant?

I fear that oftentimes we've been mistaking cultural acclimatization with true relevance.

When a church strives to be more relevant, it often slowly begins to take its cues from the culture around it, adjusting its view of God to accommodate the culture and its problems. God is taken out of the driver's seat and replaced by the culture.

This is not actual relevance. This is reducing Christianity to a thermometer, constantly changing according to the world around it. Getting this wrong does great damage to the reputation of God and the witness of the church.

If something is relevant, it is applicable or pertinent. It carries weight within its context. It is not something to be ignored. Merely being sensitive to

culture is not the same as being relevant. We must exercise the tools God has already given us to engage culture. What are the most relevant things the church has to offer?

MERELY BEING SENSITIVE TO CULTURE IS NOT THE SAME AS BEING RELEVANT.

THE REVELATION OF GOD

This is of primary importance. This world did not come into existence on its own accord. It was created by and for a holy, omnipotent, infinite God. It cannot exist apart from this God, nor can it shake off God's hold. God Himself is truly the context in which this world exists. God reveals Himself primarily through the Scriptures, which were entrusted to us, the church. As young Christians, one of the most relevant things we can do is engage our culture with the truth of who God says He is in the Scriptures.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN

Sin defines the state of our culture. Everywhere we look, there it is. Media is saturated with it, politicians are enchanted by it, celebrities are famous for it, and children are instructed in it. Sin is an offense

against an infinite God; therefore, it is an infinite offense. God has promised countless times in the Scriptures that He will judge the sins of the world (Psalm 110:6) and that He will punish sinners (Proverbs 11:21). What could be more relevant to our culture than this?

THE INVITATION TO REPENTANCE

Hand in hand with the message of sin is the message of repentance. We do not leave our culture lacking a solution to the problem. Show them Christ! Show them the irresistible grace of God in the work, life, and sacrifice of His Son. Catchy music will not allure them to salvation. Fun activities will bore them. Palatable preaching will not satisfy them. Christ and the salvation obtained through Him are the most relevant message we can give to the world around us. In our lives and in the things we say, this great truth must be clear: We are helpless souls thrust upon the arms of an almighty Savior, and the same Savior has invited us into His family.

Clearly, the relevance of Christianity is found in the gospel, in its timeless truths brought to bear on an ever-fluctuating world and culture, revealed by a timeless, infinite God who rules over the hearts of every man, woman, and child. Our concern must be centered on this gospel, how our own hearts reflect it, and how we can go out into our own circles to live lives flavored by it. ☐



The Call of All Christians

BY ADAM BORCICKY

Stagnant! Ignorant! No Good! These words are normally spoken in a negative tone. They are thrown around when someone tries to share what they believe without proper knowledge. The sad truth is that's how many Christians are described in today's culture. Once many accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, their church hands them a Bible and tells them to go and share the gospel. Yes, Christians must go and be witnesses of Christ's work in their lives, but they often need help from other Christians. God has called every one of His followers not only to "go" but also to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:19) through the words of Jesus Christ. But what does Christian discipleship look like?

While I was in youth group, my pastor did a three-week sermon series titled E3 Christianity. Each week consisted of

one of three "E" words to explain the call Christians have to unify, edify, and grow the church. Let us look at these three "E" words to understand our role as Christians and to avoid being stagnant, ignorant, and no good.

CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO ENCOURAGE

The apostle Paul writes, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called" (Ephesians 4:1, NKJV.) According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, *beseech* is defined as "to beg for urgently or anxiously." Paul uses the Greek word *parakaleo* meaning "to call near or call for." Beseeching is exactly what Paul does here. He begs Christians to walk in their calling of God. He encourages them not to be lazy in their walk with Christ.

How can Christians walk in their calling? Paul addresses this question by reminding his audience about the spiritual gifts given through the Spirit. He writes, "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4:7). When someone accepts Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells inside them along with certain gifts, each of whom God uses to grow the church. Verse 11 expresses, "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." There is a broader list of gifts in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12. However, everyone is different.

Christians are under constant attack from the devil. He will try to cause Christians to doubt their salvation and be discouraged when it comes to using their gifts. This is certain, He will attack us. He knows how to push every single button of ours to upset us and tempt us into sin. This is where fellowship comes into play. Christians should encourage one another by reminding them of their call and the gifts they have received.

Lastly, we all need to be encouraged by the promises of God. God's Word is full of promises God has for His people. When the devil distorts the Word of God in others' minds, we must direct them back to the Bible to know the truth. 1 John 4:1 commands, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." We test the spirits by God's Word and promises. Therefore, we must encourage by sharing the Word.

CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO EQUIP

The next call God gives Christians is that we are to equip others as Ephesians 4:12 states, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry." Equipping is more than placing a Bible in a Christian's hand. It is more than a daily Bible verse. Equipping is training, teaching, and leading. Equipping is discipleship. I had a co-worker once tell me that discipleship is evangelism for Christians. His words are true in the frame that discipleship is teaching other Christians a deeper, more thorough knowledge of God.

Equipping the saints includes Sunday school lessons, Sunday preaching and worship, children and youth camps, and other forms of fellowship. Christians need to go to church for this very reason. They need to learn all they can from more mature Christians. Throughout the Bible, we see that mentor-mentee relationship: Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and the disciples, Paul, and Timothy.

Discipleship is a form of training. Christians should allow other Christians to have responsibilities in the church. They should be allowed to serve the Lord. These opportunities include teaching Sunday school, local or

international mission work, singing in the choir, etc. With every gift, there is a role to play. Christians simply need a mentor and opportunity. They need to grow so that they may finally go and share with nonbelievers.

CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO EVANGELIZE


Lastly, we are to evangelize. All of the knowledge and growth Christians receive is not meant to be held inside, but to share. Evangelism, like discipleship, is the sharing of knowledge, but with the intent of bringing non-Christians to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes, "By which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16b). How can the church grow if nothing or no one is added to the family? If Christians become too lazy to go out and share the gospel, they may grow in knowledge, but it is all meaningless if none of it is shared with all nations.

EVANGELISM IS MORE THAN JUST ORGANIZED MISSION TRIPS. IT IS PERSONAL AS WELL. EVERY TIME YOU TELL SOMEONE ABOUT JESUS, YOU ARE EVANGELIZING. EVERY ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATION IS EVANGELISM.

Jesus' words in Acts 1:8 encourage us to "be His witnesses." Witnesses are not to keep stories to themselves, but to testify to what they know. For this reason, Christians are to go on mission trips. The verse later reads, "in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Go to your hometown. Go to surrounding cities, states, or nations. Go all over the world. It is not a suggestion but a command.

Evangelism is more than just organized mission trips. It is personal as well. Every time you tell someone about Jesus, you are evangelizing. Every one-on-one conversation is evangelism.

Think about it. How often could you share the gospel with someone? Maybe it is the cashier at the store. Maybe it is your server at the restaurant. Everyone needs to hear the gospel. Pray that the Spirit leads you in evangelism.

Christians are not meant to go dry in our faith. We are not to remain stagnant. Stop trying to do everything on your own. Fellowship in the call you have received to encourage, equip, and evangelize. Be obedient to God and see Him grow you and the church in mighty ways. 

How to be a Witness without Breaking Your Relationship with Unbelievers

BY CHRIS WOODWARD

This nation prides itself in being the United States of America. Unfortunately, America is too often these days a divided country. Seriously. Think of a topic. Any topic. Someone, somewhere, is having a heated conversation over it on social media. This is not necessarily new to human existence. It is in our sin nature to be prideful and argue and debate. Still, that does not mean we abandon our beliefs, especially when it comes to discussions about our faith, and not even when your spouse or relatives show no interest in God. The question then becomes “How do we witness to them without breaking our relationship?”

BE A WITNESS

People that believe in God are not going to win anyone over by pretending God does not exist. If your spouse, relative, or friend is not a believer, you need to live out your faith in front of that individual. As the saying goes, “You are the only Bible some people ever see.” If you are not showing your faith, the unfaithful will not see that there is something different about you. In Acts 16, a jailer has questions about salvation. Who did he ask? The imprisoned Christians who had been singing at midnight after being arrested for teaching and preaching about Jesus. Would the jailer have asked Christians that were quiet and fearful?

SEIZE THE MOMENT


When you are spending time with unbelievers, use those environments to bring things up for discussion. For example, do not just move on to another episode or film when you are watching television together and the program ends. Talk about the plot. Discuss the characters. Was the story immoral or righteous? Were the characters good or flawed? It is within those moments that you can mention people or themes in the

Bible that teach us how to act, how to think, etc.

In Acts 17, Paul is moving through an area and doing some people watching when he notices that the locals have placed things in town to honor various gods. “For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription: ‘To an Unknown God’ Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:23, KJV). From this point forward, Paul shares the true God with unbelievers. Some people made fun of Paul. Others decided they would hear more from Paul. But a few chose to believe. How did this happen? Because a believer seized the moment.

SHARE SCRIPTURES AND OFFER PRAYERS

Did your pastor’s last sermon speak to you? Was there something in a recent Bible reading that you know could help unbelievers that you are friends with or follow on social media? Share those messages. Instead of just hitting share and going about your social media business, type something in the post to go along with the Scripture or church service video. After, pray that the unbelievers you know will not only see the post but that it will speak to them. Meanwhile, tell unbelievers that you will be praying for them when they mention a health issue or need. When you pray, spend time in that prayer, be descriptive and thoughtful, and keep praying. “Pray without ceasing,” the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

People may be offended or mock you for your stance on God. If this happens, stand your ground, and continue being a witness. Take that opportunity to tell them you love them and that you are just trying to help. Moreover, keep praying for that person. It could be that your witness to them will be something they recall later when things fall to pieces, and they come looking for help. 

REVIEWS

Family entertainment • Documentaries • Resources for families • Books

iBible featured on RedeemTV

RedeemTV offers parents, educators, and Sunday School teachers an array of free media resources that are not only appropriate for children but entertaining and educational as well. **iBible** is a set of short videos allowing young viewers to interact directly with Scripture. With colorful animation, vivid sound effects, and dramatic narration, each video lasts less than 10 minutes. As verses scroll across the screen for young learners to read, viewers of all ages get a cohesive look into biblical accounts of the creation, the fall, the great flood, and even the faith of Job. Touted as the world’s first visual and interactive Bible, so far, two seasons of iBible are available for viewing.



Revelation Media, 10 minutes or less
redeemtv.com

Joy Lucius

Our God is Bigger Than That

*God’s greater than your greatest fear.
He knows just where you’re at.
No matter what you face in life –
Our God is bigger than that!*

This verse is repeated all through Michelle Medlock Adams and Eva



Marie Everson’s book, *Our God is Bigger Than That*. In this beautifully illustrated book, farm animals are

faced with their different fears and anxieties. The book ends with the farmer’s daughter being scared of the dark, but as in all

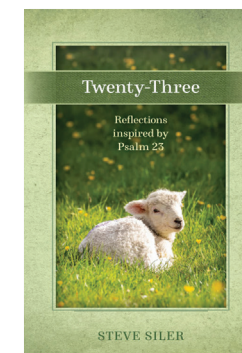
situations, she is reminded that God is much bigger than her fears. This book is a beautiful reminder for both children and adults to place their worries and anxieties on the One who cares for them.

End Game Press, 32 pages
christianbook.com

Carly McGee

Twenty-Three

In this 21-day devotional, songwriter Steve Siler digs deep into Psalm 23. Each day, Siler introduces a new phrase from the passage and includes commentary, Scripture, and a prayer. As the founder of Music for the Soul (*See page*



22.), Siler also incorporates the help of other musicians as they reflect on how the comforting psalm affected them. The devotional also includes three downloadable songs and a reading of the text. Credo House Publishers, 96 pages

musicforthesoul.org

Hannah Meador

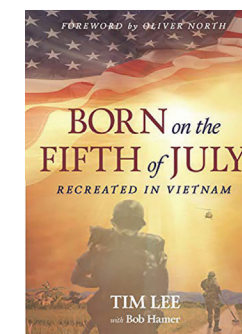
Born on the Fifth of July

In his inspiring autobiography, *Born on the Fifth of July: Recreated in Vietnam*, Marine veteran Tim Lee tells his story of rebellion, restoration, remission, and redemption. Growing up as a pastor’s child, Lee knew the Scripture and God’s plan for his life. But it wasn’t until his service overseas that the Lord became real to Lee.

Two weeks before he would be rotating home, Lee’s legs were shattered by an explosion that left him a paraplegic facing a lengthy, life-threatening recovery. In this powerful story, readers will see God’s grace and provision as He used the Marine’s experience to mold Lee’s heart into serving Him.

AE Academic Publishing, 230 pages,
aeacademicpublishing.com

Hannah Meador



Kingdom Values

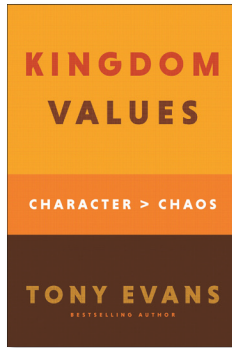
In his latest book, *Kingdom Values: Character Over Chaos*, Dr. Tony Evans clearly conveys one of today’s most needed messages. With his usual candor and scripturally based wisdom, Evans begins by issuing a clarion call for Christians to return to the biblical roots of truth, honor, and righteousness.

He writes that mere virtue-signaling

will never be enough to rescue our culture from its current moral chaos. Instead, believers must develop and demonstrate true biblical character in every avenue of life.

Using the Beatitudes and other teachings of Christ, Evans examines the foundation and components of true biblical character. Finally, Evans challenges Christians to emulate their Father's character by being a peacemaker and a vessel of love and kindness during these dark and troubling times.

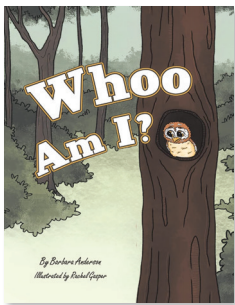
Bethany House, 201 pages
christianbook.com



Joy Lucius

Who Am I?

Baby Owl lives high in a tree with his family, but he is curious about the world outside. After a fall to the forest floor, he is excited to discover his sudden freedom. However, he soon realizes it's much harder being on his own than he thought. *Who Am I?* by Barbara Anderson tells a heartwarming story about the love of a family and



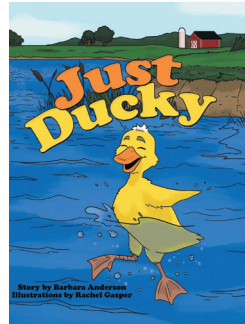
includes fun facts about owls as well as owl jokes for children to share with family and friends.

Archway Publishing,
48 pages
Online booksellers
Carly McGee

Just Ducky

In a time when children are being taught confusing messages about identity, Barbara Anderson shows young children the value of being who they were created to be. In *Just Ducky*, Little Ducky wants to be someone else. But Wise Old Duck helps him see he is exactly who he is supposed to be with unique interests and abilities. The author also includes fun duck jokes that young readers will enjoy.

Archway Publishing, 38 pages,
Online booksellers
Carly McGee



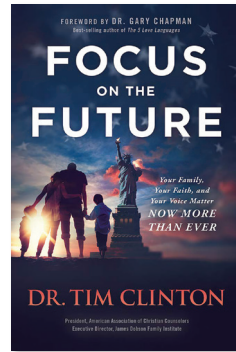
Focus on the Future

As co-host of **Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk**, Dr. Tim Clinton is a recognized authority on issues concerning the family. Also president of the American Association of Christian Counselors, he has a unique perspective on issues impacting the mental health and well-being of people.

In his new book, *Focus on the Future: Your Family, Your Faith, and Your Voice Matter Now More Than Ever*, Clinton explains that this particular moment in history is a time of reprieve for Americans, a moment to take stock of their past with a purposeful eye on the future. Chapter by chapter, he outlines a biblical battle plan for American Christians to return the nation to the biblical values and Christian faith of the Founding Fathers.

FrontLine, 197 pages
christianbook.com

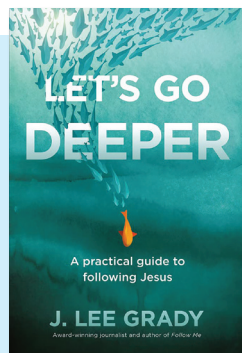
Joy Lucius



Let's Go Deeper can be effective for personal study, but its impact is certain to be enhanced when read with a friend or a small group.

Charisma House, 223 pages
christianbook.com

Randall Murphree



A lifeline of hope

The Light of the World calls Christians to extend hope to the hurting.

BY ROBERT YOUNGBLOOD

Deliver those who are drawn toward death, And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter (Proverbs 24:11, NKJV).

Lifelines aren't always for those drowning in water. Sometimes they are for friends or family or even a complete stranger considering suicide because they hide great despair and frustration behind a façade.

Dr. Matthew Sleeth, a former ER physician and chief of medical staff, created the *Hope Always* book and the five-part **Hope Always** video series and study guide to help individuals and churches stop suicides. (See sidebar.)

Sleeth honors the sanctity of life by helping people before they end up in the ER or worse from suicide attempts. "Suicide," Sleeth said, "is the one disease for which prevention is the only cure."

Be real

Suicide affects all ages and ethnicities all around the world.

"The person who struggles with suicide needs to have someone they can be real with in life," Sleeth said. "The worst thing to do is to say nothing." Instead, reaching out in love without judgment can be the lifeline they need.

The **Hope Always** video series weaves the strands together for a strong lifeline through four sessions and includes a study guide for group discussion.

Session 1, "The Problem of Suicide," shares statistics and information as a foundation for the other sessions.

"Modern medicine changes the stats," Sleeth said. Hidden in today's numbers of suicide is the fact modern

medicine is more successful in helping people near the point of death. So while the numbers have risen, when compared to numbers from the 1930s, they may be much, much higher.

Be faithful

The second session is tilted "The Biblical Worldview." It covers interesting evidence that committed Christians are four to six times less likely to commit suicide – a fact proven again and again.

Ironically, the 62-page Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) report on suicide has removed all mention of faith as a factor affecting suicide.

"Christians," Sleeth said, "think about suicide at the same rate as others, but they are less likely to act on them." Studies indicate that those who overcome suicide do so because, first, they are afraid of what God would do after they die. Second, they are concerned about those who would survive them.

Be light

The third session is "Talking to a Loved One." Here, Sleeth shares how studies indicate that asking a troubled friend one simple question – "Are you having thoughts of hurting yourself?" – actually lowers the person's desire to do so. He walks listeners through the process of what to do if the answer is yes or no.

In addition, he teaches a system check called HALT, which all can use to quickly

determine if personal needs are being met. HALT includes such questions as "Am I hungry? Angry? Lonely? Tired?"

Session four is "Offering Hope." Sleeth shares the nine most important things one needs to do to maintain mental health. While going through each one, he shares briefly how he or others adopted the step and the improvements the step made. He connects many of the steps to various Scripture.

"In general, life is being discounted by society," said Sleeth. "It is being chipped away at along every edge. We are the guardians of it."

The devil whispers lies that lead to death. God declares Jesus as the true lifeline, who said:

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly (John 10:10, NKJV). ☐

Resources of Hope

- ▶ **Hope Always** video series is available at matthewsleethmd.com.
- ▶ Suicide Prevention Hotline: 800.273.8255
- ▶ American Association of Christian Counselors: aacc.net
- ▶ Christian Medical & Dental Associations: cmda.org

THE STAND

P.O. Drawer 2440
Tupelo, Mississippi 38803

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1102
Bolingbrook, IL

WALK WHERE HE WALKED



Tim Wildmon

Join AFA president Tim Wildmon on a nine-day trip to the Holy Land. Retrace the steps of our Lord and experience the places and events of the Bible including:

- A boat ride on the Sea of Galilee
- Baptisms in the Jordan River
- The cities of Nazareth, Cana, Bethlehem, Tiberias, Jericho, and others
- The Old City of Jerusalem

- Qumran (site of Dead Sea Scrolls)
 - The Dead Sea and Masada
 - The Western Wall
 - The Mount of Olives, Temple Mount, Garden of Gethsemane, and Garden Tomb
 - The Church of the Nativity, and more
- Fun, fellowship, and new friends are always highlights on Tim's tours. This trip will be his 26th.

For more information contact:

E-mail: twildmon@afa.net
Phone: 662.844.5036 x227
Website: twholyland.com

Mail: Holy Land Tour
P. O. Drawer 2440
Tupelo, MS 38803

Departs from JFK airport, March 16, 2023
Returns to JFK airport, March 24, 2023
Cost: \$4595 (all inclusive except lunches)



As of March 2022, there is no COVID shot required to visit Israel.

TO REGISTER, VISIT:
WWW.TWHOLYLAND.COM

