

December 2022

COMPLIMENTARY

NASHVILLE

CHRISTIAN FAMILY

The
REASON
For The
Season

*Holiday
TIPS*

Megan Alexander

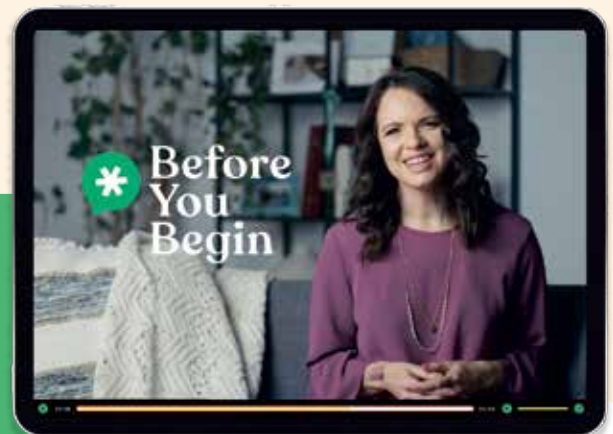
Celebrates Small Town Christmas

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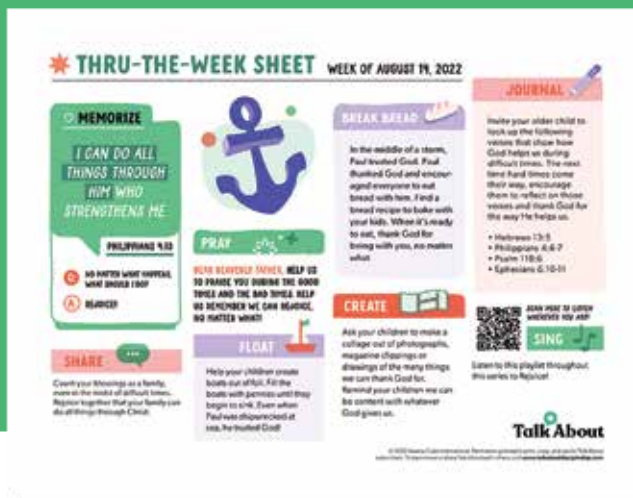


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OUR MISSION



Nashville Christian Family® exists to provide Christians and the community at large with ways to strengthen and grow as a part of the Middle Tennessee Christian Family. This local monthly publication is designed to promote positive living by sharing with readers of all ages relevant and timely news and information related to health, faith, parenting, youth, finances, Christian entertainment, missions, church leaders, and much more GOOD NEWS!

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Celebrating the REAL Reason for the Season

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.



And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward me.”

Luke 2:1 – 14, King James Version

Amid all of the hustle and bustle of the season, think about allotting some time for an opportunity to “be still and know that He is God” and to focus our hearts and minds on Jesus. Get your family together and read the Christmas Story from the Bible. Celebrate the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Nashville Christian Family wishes for you and yours a Blessed, Peaceful and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!

Robert Stringfellow, Publisher, 615-815-8765
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ON THE COVER 20

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Happy New Year!



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GOD BLESS THE USA BIBLE

Easy-to-read, large print and slim design, this Bible invites you to explore God's Word anywhere, any time. This bible has been designed so that it delivers an easy reading experience in the trusted King James Version translation. This large print Bible will be perfect to take to church, a bible study, to work, travel, etc.

FEATURES

- Handwritten chorus to "God Bless The USA" by Lee Greenwood
- Easy to read
- Two column format
- Presentation page
- Gold ribbon marker
- Words of Jesus in red
- This bible lays flat when open
- "Readable" founding USA documents that include: The Pledge of Allegiance, The US Constitution, The Declaration of Independence, The Bill of Rights



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Jesus, Santa, and Me

Christmastime is here! It's time for Charlie Brown, Frosty and all the other classic TV shows we love. Then, of course "It's a Wonderful Life", "Home Alone" and our favorite Santa movies will be on multiple video platforms. So, what are we, as Christians to make of all this?

Talk to 20 people and you'll probably get 30 answers!

For many, any mention of Santa Claus leads to controversy. I was practically thrown out of a church daycare once at the mere mention of Santa! I've (Santa) also been a guest at churches and even stood in pulpits to share the story of St. Nicholas/Santa.

I've had faithful Christians tell me "We don't do Santa" yet when I walk into their den I see Elsa from Frozen, Mater from Cars and numerous other characters our children love. We see photos of children with Mickey, Minnie, Elsa and other fantasy characters. I know a couple of young ladies that have photos with multiple Elsa performers and each of these were THE Elsa to those children. I'll leave all those characters to others and just address Christmas here.

So, what do we make of Santa? Can Santa be a part of a Christ centered home?

Of course, that is a personal preference, but I'd like to share a bit of my story. As a child, we did visit Santa and he did leave us gifts, but it wasn't our primary focus. Christ was always the center of our Christmas celebrations. I remember when I figured it all out, but I don't think there was ever a real conversation with my parents. It was just a simple acceptance of facts. When my sons were born, we visited Santa, then I became Santa!

My transition started as a necessity. I was the photographer and at a school to take photos of the children with Santa. But..... where's Santa? He didn't show up that day so I put on the suit and beard.

Little did I know that God had a plan and this was just the beginning! After that day, I began to serve as the one in the red suit. I'll never forget the day the son of our friends sat on my knee. We were visiting his school and I saw him approaching. I just knew Tyler was going to recognize who was behind the beard! Whew, I got past that secret. Then one day after Christmas, his mom told me Tyler was looking at the photo on the refrigerator and exclaimed "Mom, that's Mr. Durward!" The other challenge was visiting my son's school! I knew most of the children there and expected someone to blow the whistle. But, my secret remained safe.

As each year passed and I got more involved, I began to realize a greater purpose in wearing the red suit. My venue grew to serving in a mall with other brothers in red and then to nursing homes, church events and many other occasions. Each step of the way, I simply prayed for God to use me in some way but it took many years for me to realize this was a path HE had been steering me in long before I put on the red suit.

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus
I Thessalonians 5:16-18



Durward Blanks has been portraying Santa Claus/St. Nicholas for over 30 years.

There have been instances where children were placed in foster care when Santa recognized a problem. Families in need sometimes confide in Santa when they won't anyone else. With these revelations, help can be summoned as needed. There are also times when Santa lends an ear to a parent that is facing emotional challenges.

Publicly, Santa is supposed to be "politically sensitive". But this Santa can often be seen praying with children and families. To others looking on, it may just appear as a conversation, but prayers are voiced when God prompts the need. Tears are often shed with and by Santa. Many times, Santa has had to take a brief break to mentally prepare to see the next child. Thankfully, no one waiting in line has ever complained about a brief time-out for Santa to compose himself.

When God calls one to a mission, He always provides the right tools. For several years Ben Nye white makeup was used to cover the red beard. Then, it seems as if almost overnight, my hair and beard was white. In the years prior to this near sudden change, I always shared God's love and when possible, the story of St Nicholas but with the advent of a naturally white beard I recognized the fact that this was a calling into a unique mission field. From a start in Mississippi to Tennessee, Kentucky and for the last 11 seasons in Texas we have been able to share God's love through the character of Santa Claus. When we were called to The Woodlands, Texas, we didn't know anyone here and were reluctant to take the position. With much discussion and prayer we accepted the call with the understanding that Santa could reach out to hospitals and the "specially abled" population.

We have been blessed to serve so many in such unique situations. The honor of playing with a child in a wheelchair and having mom say "she hasn't smiled like this in a long time", then praying with that family is an experience. Then, a few years later to have that same little girl run to Santa's arms brought tears of joy. There have been many instances of sharing the story of St. Nicholas and his transition to being called

Santa Claus. It would take a book to share all what God has allowed this Santa to experience. My prayer is that I can continue to serve in the red suit as long as possible. I've never seen a 100 year old Santa. My goal is to be one.

So, can Jesus & Santa coexist in a Christian home? I believe so. May you have a joyous and blessed Christmas Season!

— Durward Blanks has been a professional Santa Claus/ St. Nicholas for over thirty years. He is a motivational speaker and writer and enjoys sharing his many life experiences with others. As a follower of Christ, his mission is to share God's love with as many as possible. You may contact Santa Durward at DurBlanks@gmail.com or 615.496.1368

First-Generation College Student to Assistant Professor: Meet Trevecca's Ariell Tillman

Ariell Tillman overcame obstacles to become the first in her family to graduate college. And she didn't stop there. After earning a degree in social work as an undergraduate, she worked in the field and began teaching college classes herself. Now she's a full-time faculty member at Trevecca as well as a doctoral candidate. Even as a youth, she didn't let the absence of college experience in her family background stop her from setting big goals. "When it came time to consider college, I knew I wanted to change the narrative for my family," Tillman said. "They spoke college into my life from a very young age and as I got older and started recognizing family patterns, I saw a lot of my family go into the military or start working after high school. That said, my community in St. Louis was very college-driven, and I knew that was what I wanted to pursue."



up in Nashville at Tennessee State," Tillman said. "My family didn't understand all of the extra things that came along with preparing for college, but they were very willing to learn. They did a lot of research to prepare me even though they didn't always understand the process."

Tillman's experience in college was a stressful time; she worked two jobs on top of work study to make sure her tuition payments would be met. Despite this, she seized every opportunity to get involved with the school community, joining the gospel choir and a Christian-based organization. Through it all she kept her focus on getting a degree. "I had to learn to prioritize and say to myself, 'You're here to finish school. You're going to become a social worker,'" Tillman said. "It was stressful but it gave me the motivation to work hard and be the first person in my family to obtain a degree."

The application process for college presented its own share of challenges for Tillman, even with the support of her family, especially when she decided to leave Missouri. "The only idea or thought I had about college was what I saw on TV, but I knew I wanted to leave the Midwest. So I ended

After graduation, she worked in social work and eventually secured a spot as an adjunct professor at Trevecca. Now she is a full-time faculty member, serving as an assistant professor and director of field education in the social work program.

She's also extending her education as a student in Trevecca's Ed.D. program in leadership. "I never in a million years would've thought that I would become a college professor," Tillman said. "Coming from a family that had never experienced college to becoming a first-generation college graduate to teaching and pursuing a doctoral degree, it is mind blowing."

One of the inspirations for Tillman to begin her Ed.D. was her nephew. She hopes to serve as an inspiration to him as he grows and pursues his own education. "I want him to see that someone else in his family did it. I tell him he's going to be a doctor as well. This is part of the legacy I am creating for my family," Tillman said. Her advice for students considering being the first in their families to go to college is hard work and trusting in God's higher plan. "You're going to have some stressful times and some good times," Tillman said. "But I look back on my journey of coming to Nashville and I know God ordained that. If it is in God's will, it will happen for you. Put in the work and you will definitely reap the benefits."

You can learn more about Trevecca's undergraduate and graduate programs at trevecca.edu.

— Rebekah Warren

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Shame to Shine

Over the years I've listened to a lot of stories on the Bridges set. While each story is unique, most of them include challenges and ultimately lead to the hope we have in Jesus Christ. My guest on the Bridges set this particular day was a petite, natural beauty, with gorgeous hair. I'm going to protect her privacy here so for the sake of this article we will call her Christy.

There was no Blame Shifting

Christy's story includes a divorce that left her a single mom. As I listened carefully to Christy's story what stood out to me was that she owned her mistakes. There was no blame shifting or attempts at besmirching her ex-husband. Instead, her story was about acknowledging her sin, and the freedom she found in Christ. I could see that through Christy's honest confession and repentance she found grace. The kind of grace that frees us from all condemnation and gives us a new start. The kind of grace that can only be found in Jesus Christ.

Sin Doesn't Have to Define Us

These are the kinds of stories I want to feature on Bridges. I want everybody to know that our sin doesn't have to define us. When we repent and trust Christ, we are given a brand-new start – and a new identity in Christ. Sharing Christ and the redemption He provides is what Christian Television Network is all about. For over 40 years CTN has been sharing the gospel 24/7. Here is some more good news, we are not about to stop – in fact we are expanding to include all types of media – from Christian Films to streaming platforms. There is no greater season to celebrate this expansion than the Christmas season where we celebrate the birth and life of Jesus Christ. Our Nashville studio received an incredible and unexpected gift that provided the means for us to complete a studio makeover. We have new sets – new cameras – new lights. The gift wasn't just about new gear. The gift is about sharing new life in Christ. I told the team at WHTN that God didn't do all that just so we could have a new studio. God provided the gift because He has life giving plans for our studio.

In With the Outcasts

In our beautiful new studio, we will be filming quality Christian shows for every age group. We are stepping into uncharted territory where we will be producing shows for children, teens and adults. This has been my prayer for many years and to seeing it come to fulfillment now is beyond words. We just started filming *In with the Outcasts* – a children's show with Nedy and Cheryl. Stay tuned and we will provide all the ways to watch very soon. As I reflect on my conversation with Christy, I recall both the simplicity and substance of the gospel. The simplicity of coming to Christ where you are and just being honest about everything. Then, the substantive power of Christ – His blood that cleanses our sins and makes us brand new. In our brand-new studio, we will continue sharing the simplicity and substance of the gospel. The message of Christ is timeless. What's new is WHTN's ability to be more creative – and create quality content that spans every demographic – with the truth, grace, and love of Christ. **Today's Secret from the Studio:** When we repent and trust Christ, sin loses its power to define our lives.

— *Monica Schmelter enjoys sharing the secrets she's learned in the studio. "I've learned something significant from each and every Bridges guest and it's my honor to share what I've learned." Bridges is a daily show that airs in over 50 million homes on Christian Television Network. Monica serves as the General Manager of WHTN/CTN.*

MISSION MAKERS

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www.salvationarmynashville.org



Lives Changed Through the Programs of The Salvation Army: Meet Karen

Karen's journey to The Salvation Army was unique. She had an apartment and stable living situation. Then her health issues started getting worse. The cause...mold in her apartment. Her doctor told her she needed to move immediately in order to keep herself from becoming critically ill...but with the lack of attainable housing in Nashville, she was forced to choose between her home or her health. She chose her health and started living in her car.



That's when she found the Salvation Army. "I felt hopeless, and they just welcomed me in with open arms. That meant the world to me," said Karen.

While she went through the supportive housing program, she was provided meals, rides to her doctor's appointments, and a home. "It gave me hope. It gave me structure. It restored me. They made me feel like a person. They treated me like family."

During her stay with The Salvation Army, she underwent a hip replacement, but her case manager continued to work on her behalf to achieve Karen's ultimate goal. "The day I was discharged from the hospital, I moved into my new apartment," she says.

Karen continued, "I am grateful that they gave me the motivation to keep going. And, despite my downfalls and obstacles that were in my way, they were right there – every step of the way – encouraging me. Salvation Army gave me a lot of hope. They restored my dignity. The key word here is Salvation. For me, it was Salvation...and that's what I got."

— *Misty Ratcliff, Development and Communications Manager, The Salvation Army, www.salvationarmynashville.org*

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BODY & SOUL

Why Self Care Matters in this Holiday Season

As we approach Christmas and New Year's, we know that people begin to experience new stressors and struggles. For some, it's the pressure of hosting, buying gifts, making special memories, and managing calendars due to lots of holiday events and expectations. For others, this is a lonelier time or even a time that reminds us of the brokenness in our families, among our friends, and even in our inability to accomplish our own expectations. While the holidays are fun and filled with good, they are also layered with unanticipated situations, stress, and disappointments. We all wish we could push these things aside to focus on our spiritual experience of Christmas, but we are also having a human experience which is imperfect and broken.

So, TN Voices would like to offer some thoughts on flourishing this season. Our best advice to you is to take care of yourself and prioritize your own mental wellbeing so you can flourish this Christmas. Flourishing is defined as "growing or developing in a healthy way, especially as a result of a favorable environment; to develop successfully; thriving." The opposite of flourishing is languishing, which is defined as, "suffering from being forced to remain in an unpleasant place or situation for a prolonged period; lose or lack vitality; failure to make progress or be successful." Languishing for too long can lead to: foggy thinking, lack of motivation, low enthusiasm, feeling empty, not highly engaged in work or school, grief, loneliness, feeling joyless and without purpose, blah, moods that are not too high or too low, feeling unmotivated, feeling unsettled but not highly anxious.

How then can you move from languishing to flourishing? Create a self-care plan that includes these four domains: physical, mental, spiritual, and social. Here are a few ideas of self care activities in each domain.

MENTAL

- Cultivate meaning through small daily achievements
- Seek counseling
- Talk kindly to yourself
- Practice gratitude
- Decrease use of social media
- Name and discuss your feelings with people in your support system
- If you work from home, refresh/redecorate your space or try occasionally working in a different location
- Attend a grief group
- Stay organized
- Practice relaxation
- Appeal to your senses
- Turn off the TV – limit intake of news & media
- Practice deep breathing
- Avoid social comparisons
- Identify and manage triggers
- Do something you are good at
- Take in the sunlight

SOCIAL

- Volunteer to help others
- Connect to others through video
- Regular face-to-face connections
- Make a list of your support system, be intentional in reaching out to them
- Set a plan to increase your relationships
- Engage in things you used to enjoy (concerts, festivals, dining, social gatherings)
- Join a social group that meets regularly



SPIRITUAL

- Mindfulness practices
 - Prayer and meditation
 - Breathing exercises
 - Walks in nature (leisurely)
- Be active in your faith community
- Journal
- Study your faith
- Explore creativity
- Volunteer for community service or engage with a non-profit
- Listen to inspiring and positive music
- Make time for inspiration daily
- Connect to your purpose, your passions, and your interests
- Create a vision board
- Read/memorize meaningful literature

PHYSICAL

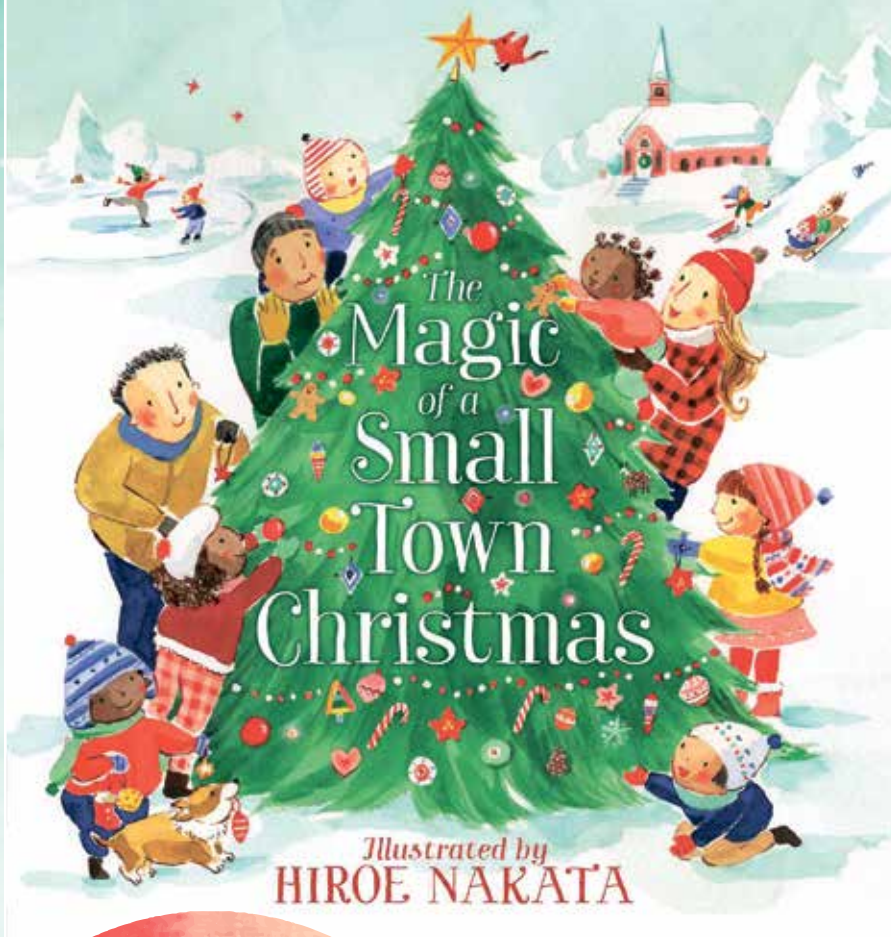
- Exercise regularly
- Move more
- Annual physicals
- Participate in community fitness
- Learn a new physical skill(s)
- Regularly choose good nutrition
- Chiropractic care
- Get 7-8 hours of sleep each night
- Keep a sleep routine/schedule
- Limit or eliminate alcohol
- Avoid tobacco and vaping
- Routine dental care

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— Rikki Harris, CEO, Tn Voices
www.tnvoices.org



MEGAN ALEXANDER
Host of the UPTV series *Small Town Christmas*



From *Inside Edition*'s national correspondent
Megan Alexander

comes a sweet picture book celebrating the joys, wonders, and traditions of a small-town Christmas in the spirit of her UPTV show, *Small Town Christmas*, which will be airing a second season this fall!

In the town of Heartbeat Falls, where skies are crystal clear, the magic of Christmas is celebrated in many different ways: from picking the perfect tree to decorating it with glittering ornaments; from ice skating to eating yummy gingerbread cookies; from hanging handmade stockings to sharing a homecooked meal. Here, the residents know the beauty of a small town doesn't come from its size, but from the love shared by its people, shining brightly in their eyes.

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Megan Alexander is a national news correspondent, host, emcee, speaker, producer, and actress. Megan created and hosts the tv show *Small Town Christmas* seen every Sunday night in December on the cable channel UPTV. She can be seen every evening as a correspondent on the top-rated national news magazine television show *Inside Edition*. She was born and raised in Seattle, Washington, and graduated from Westmont College. Megan splits time between New York City and Nashville, Tennessee. She and her husband have two sons and one daughter.

God Bless The USA:

Lee Greenwood Hit Inspires A Limited Edition Bible Releasing At A Time Most Needed

“I’m proud to be an American” are words that still ring, bringing instant recognition of Lee Greenwood’s signature song, *God Bless The USA*—the patriotic tribute that’s been called “America’s Second National Anthem.”

Never in our generation has patriotism and the reality of our need to keep God central in America been more in the forefront of struggle than in the times and culture in which we now live. The conflict of non-Christian influence shouts loudly from every format and avenue of discourse—America is a nation besieged by struggles in politics, culture, media, entertainment, communications, and education.

We are faced with two serious realities as 2023 dawns:

- **Christianity is under attack.** God and the Bible are no longer welcome in public education in America. Church attendance is on the wane as witnessed in all polling data. COVID 19 has brought even more sinister implication of religious persecution intensifying in the near future.

- **Patriotism is under attack.** Civics and American history are no longer part of the typical classroom landscape. With no instructional appreciation of God’s place in our founding, no education on the Founding Fathers and the magnificent plan they planted in America, we face the dire circumstance of losing America’s next generation of patriots, Patriotism is not passed in the bloodline, It is taught from generation to generation. We must insure its’ safe harbor in the fabric of America and God’s continual grace upon new generations. During these challenging times, God and patriotism must be preserved.



Lee Greenwood, writer and singer of the beloved song that has captured the nation’s heart over five decades, has helped oversee the launch release of the “God Bless The USA Bible,” -- a limited edition that features the King James translation of the Bible with the additional inclusion of America’s “founding documents”—The Constitution, Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, and Pledge of Allegiance. Additionally, it includes the handwritten lyrics of “God Bless The USA” penned by Greenwood.



The GBUSA Bible release comes at a time when, according to top Christian publishers and online book sellers, Bible sales have set a record high over the past two years of COVID threats and uncertainties. As Fox News recently reported, “people seemingly are looking for answers.” A spokesperson for the release notes: “It is presented in limited edition as a “thinline” edition measuring 7”x10”x 1” with easy-read large print and bound in embossed bonded leather. It is intended to be an heirloom that parents and grandparents can pass down.” It can be ordered online for Christmas gift giving at www.godblesstheusabible.com. Patriotic additions of The Constitution, Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, and Pledge of Alliance bring together God and country as Americans search for hope.

For Greenwood, his interest in patriotism and supporting America’s military has been a lifetime commitment. He noted in a recent interview: “My father joined the Navy after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It was a tough time for Americans. By the time I was 14 or 15, I was playing with my band at airbases near our home in California—McClellan Air Force Base and Beale Air Force Base. That was there that my appreciation of the military and the sacrifice they make for our freedom really took root.” Amid a career of frequent opportunities to sing before Presidents and high level opportunities to show his support, most recently he has lent his name and energies to the “Helping A Hero” project to build and gift homes for wounded vets. .

Of the new bible release he notes: “I’m grateful for the impact ‘God Bless the USA,’ has had over the past four decades and hopeful that this new opportunity will bring continued encouragement and hope to Americans everywhere. The need for God and patriotism in America has never been greater because the forces now pushing against God and patriotism have never been more intense.”

Former President Ronald Reagan perhaps said it best: “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream, it must be fought for, protected and handed to them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.”

— Jackie Monaghan, Sr. Media Advisor, (615) 390-0792
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Merry Christmas

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A Legal Look at the Birth of Jesus

As we look ahead to this special time of year, the humble origins of this celebration often are obscured like the hidden celestial grandeur of a star-light night overshadowed by the haze of urban city lights. The historical record of Jesus’ birth, as portrayed in Luke’s second chapter of his gospel account of this spectacular event, pulls back the curtain on the stark events which punctuated the timing of Jesus’ arrival.



As a lawyer, I have often marveled at the legal setting surrounding the Savior’s birth.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city.

Perhaps the closest distant cousin to a “decree” that we in America have experienced in recent years was the issuance by our President of a national COVID-19 vaccine requirement. This so-called “mandate” aroused the angst of many across the nation, and led to the filing of dozens of lawsuits challenging the President’s authority to impose such a broadscale requirement for keeping one’s job.

But in 2 A.D., there was no court challenge available to a “decree” from Augustus Caesar. There were no religious exemptions. There were no medical accommodations due to pregnancy. There were no constitutional arguments. When Caesar said go register for the census – you went. The penalty for non-compliance was not losing your job; it was death.

Caesar Augustus’ mandate declaring that the entire Empire must register at designated locations was centered less on taxation and more on identification. Concerning the word “taxed” in verse 1 of Luke’s account, W.E. Vine in An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, explains that it is translated from the Greek word apographo, meaning “to write out, enroll, inscribe, and in register.”

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the lineage of David). To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

God used the decree of Caesar to bring Joseph and his young, pregnant wife to Bethlehem, so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled that the Messiah would be born

in this obscure, whistlestop town on the road to Jerusalem. This demonstrates the providence of God, who used the arrogance of Augustus (the name means “Revered One”) to rebuild the throne of David. It is an interesting

study to see how providence paved the way for his ascension to power at the time of Christ’s birth.

In the half century before the birth of our Savior, there had been political turmoil within the Roman republic. The Senate had become divided and paralyzed and Pompey and Julius Caesar waged a civil war. After Pompey was assassinated in Egypt, Julius Caesar was the unquestioned emperor until he too was murdered by members of the Senate

in 44 B.C. He was succeeded by his 19-year old adopted son Octavius Caesar who rose to political and military glory under the acclaimed title “Caesar Augustus” while tyrannically consolidating his power. Within the Roman Empire he was exalted as a god.

To make matters worse, Augustus Caesar and Herod, the governor of Judea, were close friends and had been companions since their youth. When rumors began to circulate that a messiah would soon be born in Judea, Herod had the full support of Rome to impose his cruel sanctions – including mass genocide of male born Jews. Legally, Herod had unlimited power at his disposal to eliminate any potential pretenders to the throne in order to ensure his longevity.

God is a master of irony. In the midst of such abject tyranny there would be born the personification of freedom. A light that shone into the darkness would become the only path to liberation from sin and death. This is indeed cause for celebration, but more than that, adoration. “O come, let us adore Him. Christ the Lord.

— Larry L. Crain, Crain Law Center, www.crainlaw.legal





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Stay Merry!

You've heard it said that laughter is the best medicine. Proverbs 17:22, "A merry heart doth good like medicine." There is really nothing better than a good, hearty, belly laugh ... especially considering the abundance of negativity that surrounds us day in and day out.

Laughter can change the atmosphere instantly moreover; the health benefits start to go to work immediately! Because God has created us so perfectly and equipped us with everything we need for a healthy and happy life, just a minute of laughter can clear one's mind and begin to relieve stress and anxiety. Our body begins to produce highly sought-after hormones in the brain like, endorphins, dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin.

Endorphins are our bodies natural painkillers. They are released by the hypothalamus and pituitary gland in response to pain or stress, this group of peptide hormones both relieves pain and creates a general feeling of well-being. (Harvard Health Publishing, Harvard Medical School, July 20, 2021).

Both dopamine and serotonin are known as the "feel good" hormone. Dopamine can help with motivation, excitement, and learning while low levels of dopamine have been associated with depression, being tired and moody.

Serotonin regulates our mood as well and helps us feel more focused, more stable, calmer and an overall sense of happiness. Lastly, oxytocin is often re-



ferred to as the "love hormone" or the "empathy hormone." When this chemical is released during a good laughter, we relate better to others and our walls come down. In addition to the release of these hormones in our brains, our heart rate and blood pressure decrease and any tension in our body begins to relax. Our mood overall improves!

The next time you are feeling stressed, confused, upset or just "off" – seek a positive experience that will make you laugh. Take a minute to laugh! Turn on a comedy show. Find a joke book.

This is the season especially, to be merry! Your body will benefit greatly as you stay merry!

— Rhonda L. Smart, rhondalsmart@gmail.com

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How to De-Stress Your Holidays

The holidays are upon us. Twinkling lights and evergreen garlands drape the stores, holiday music fills the airwaves, and the ugly Christmas sweater reappears. Whether you love the celebrations or want to move straight to 2023, this season always brings an added layer of stress. We might not have control over all our plans; however, there is plenty we can do to de-stress our Christmas.



Pull away from the hustle and bustle during this hectic time to allow time to pause and breathe. Maybe it's spending time with a friend who can talk us off the merry-go-round. Maybe you need to walk away from a conversation that dredges up old wounds. Perhaps you need time to refresh your soul. This pulling away could look like a few quiet minutes in the bedroom, a walk around the block, or time in God's Word. It might mean saying no to people and invitations. Free yourself from guilt when asking for this time for yourself.

Put away perfection and strive to bless rather than impress your family and company. This might take some thought. What do your guests need? If we can identify the felt needs of those coming, we can better serve them. Consider how your child could participate. Also, a smile or hug at the door, a scented candle, a roaring fire in the fireplace, and leftovers for departing guests say, "We see you, and you are welcome here."

Pass on some invitations this month. Pass on Elf on the Shelf. Pass on negative thoughts. Pass on whatever is wearing you down. It doesn't mean it's a permanent pass, but a pass for this season. You can always revisit the person or event next year. Maybe you don't need to cook everything but could delegate meal preparation or support a local entrepreneur in preparing some foods. You get to choose what to do or not do. While we're at it, let's pass on the daily sweets. Experts agree that excess sugar is unhealthy, so delay eating the fudge and candies until Christmas. Your body will thank you.

Ponder the miracle and significance of this season. We race through December and arrive at Christmas Day exhausted. What if we set boundaries once a week for a Sabbath moment to reflect on Jesus' birth? Let's shift focus from our wearied world and ponder God's promises: I am with you. I will help you. I will comfort you. Let's recall the reason God sent his Son to earth—to provide peace and hope through the forgiveness of sins.

We can do this! We can pull away when needed, put away perfection, pass on things that wear us down, and ponder what is important during this season.

— Sally Cressman. Sally is offering FREE Advent Devotions for Families on her website at www.sallycressman.com. She and her husband enjoy an easy rhythm in their empty nest.



Focusing on the 'Castle' on Main Street this Christmas

Several years ago, our family found ourselves standing in the middle of Main Street, U.S.A. inside Magic Kingdom Park on Christmas Day. Bustling people. Strollers. Photographers. Balloons. Vendors. Shops. We were easily overwhelmed by the orchestra of chaos all around us. It is easy to get lost in an environment like that. Amidst the mayhem we were able to lift our eyes to the end of the street where Cinderella's Castle stood. Draped in Christmas lights, the castle invoked a sense of wonder and calm amidst the frenzied atmosphere.

It was a reminder of why we were enduring the crowd that was pressing around. This sounds a bit like the Christmas season, doesn't it? It is easy for us to get lost amidst the cooking, decorating, traveling, socializing, and shopping, forgetting why we're doing all this in the first place. I wonder if it wouldn't help us all to have our own 'Cinderella's Castle' to gaze at along the way.



I love Christmas, but amidst the business of the season I need to remind myself of why I love it. I fully understand that the decorations, gifts, music, consumerism, and Santa Claus are not a part of what we are celebrating. I understand there are arguments about the pagan ties to our modern celebrations. I get that Jesus' birth likely wasn't when we celebrate. To me these things don't matter, they are all my "Cinderella's Castle" reminding me of the One we celebrate.

When I see Christmas lights ... I think of Him.

When someone says "Happy Holidays" ... I think of Him.

When I listen to Christmas music ... I think of Him.

When I see stores bustling with people buying gifts ... I think of Him.

When I sit with my family around the Christmas tree ... I think of Him.

To me, all of it points to Jesus. The good. The bad. All of it.

Everything that is Christmas is being redeemed by who He is and what His birth meant for us. It reminds me of the greatest gift humanity has ever received. They fill me with anticipation and hope, joy, and peace. They are our 'castle' on Main Street this Christmas; helping us to reflect on the beauty and wonder of what it is we celebrate. We hope that the reminder of the truth of what we celebrate will become your 'castle', too.

Just as our Lee Company team endeavors to be a reminder of the beauty of the season through our service and investment into the community; we hope that you, too, will be a luminary of the reason for the season to others in our community.

— Kyle Froman, Lee Company Chaplain

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Ergonomics For Working Seniors

Ergonomics is a science or study of designing equipment and its usage to provide comfort and efficiency. This is particularly important with repetitive motion activities, such as using the computer that I am working on right now. Posture and proper positioning of computer equipment helps us to avoid aches and pains. The same holds true if we are drafting or writing or painting or sculpting—anything that can be done at a desk. Aches and pains are natural in the aging process. We do not need to sit at a desk, like a raptor in Jurassic Park, adding to the stiffness in our bodies. Release the raptor inside of you, and let it go chase scientists in the park.



Ergonomic Chair

Presumably you're sitting as you read this article. How is your posture? Is your chair so low that your knees are above your waistline? Do your toes touch the floor? Are you slouching forward, or backward, with your lower back in an uncomfortable position? These are but a few of the physical positions that leave a residual tightness in the shoulders and lower back, aching hips, and stress in the neck. Beyond that, it makes one prone to grumpiness and a bad attitude. Yeah, you might think, but I've gotten used to it. Well, Dear Reader, consider that a couple of simple adjustments might leave your body feeling better.

These adjustments will have you feeling better during the time when you are not even at your desk. An ergonomically correct chair keeps the knees at a 50-degree angle and the feet flat on the floor. If the height of the chair is such that your arms are not at 50-degree angles to the desk, that is another reason to make an adjustment. It will keep wrists and forearms from getting uncomfortable. If need be, and if your budget allows, take some measurements of desk height, and go shopping for a new chair. You can also make simple modifications without spending a penny. I took a firm throw pillow off my couch and put it under my behind. Worked for me, allowing my knees and arms to be at 50 degrees while I type.

Standing Desk

An alternative to sitting at our desks for hours at a stretch exists. We could, of course, get up and take the pooch for a walk if working from home. Or we can look into various desk designs currently available that allow us to stand vs. sit. These ergonomic desks can be raised and lowered giving us the opportunity to sit for a while, ergonomically of course, and then stand for a while. These height-adjustable desks can be either manually or electrically raised and lowered. Budget will probably dictate which design—manual or electric—is feasible for you. Standing while working at a desk allows much better blood flow helping our brain functionality. It also helps fluids in our bodies to keep moving as they are designed to move. Productivity is reportedly increased, as well as mood, energy level and comfort. Who hasn't sat for so long that our backsides get a bit numb? Our bodies are not designed to be sedentary for long periods of time, particularly in a sitting position. Even while sleeping, most of us move around, perhaps chasing something or another in our dreams, perhaps even looking for our youthful idealism. As we get older, it is really important to listen to what our bodies are telling us. If your butt is numb from sitting.....listen to it and get off of it.

Positioning of Computer Monitor

As you are reading this, what angle are your eyes directed at? If you are looking down, at perhaps as much as a 45-degree angle, bring your attention to how your neck feels. Is it curved forward and down? Enough time sitting with our necks curved forward and down, chances are we will someday be unable to see beyond the tops of our feet. Computer monitors should be elevated so that we look straight ahead at it. Some reports suggest that the monitor be tilted back 20 degrees, depending on the individual's visual acuity. No need to spend a bunch of dough to raise the height of your computer screen. Simply set your monitor on a stack of books or buy one of the inexpensive risers from your nearest office supply. I use a large plastic container that holds flower seeds for my garden. I'm a bachelor and doing things this way does not bother me. I think you will find adjusting the height of your monitor to be an immediate benefit to how your neck and shoulders feel.

Ergonomic Mouse

Prolonged use of a computer mouse can cause pain and discomfort in the wrist, forearm, and fingers. Several different ergonomic mouse designs are available (Vertical Mouse and Trackball Mouse). If you are having issues with your mouse-hand, you may want to try a different design. I would first suggest that you examine the ergonomics of the height of your desk, your chair and your posture.

I hope this information was useful and informative. Being a leader in the Senior Care industry over the past eight years in Nashville has taught me a great deal about topics like this. If you desire to learn more or have any questions, feel free to reach out to me directly at Amada Senior Care at 615-933-7494. We are here to help!

— Kevin B. Fehr, CSA, CDP, President & CEO
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Inside Edition's
Megan Alexander:
Celebrating Small Towns at
Christmas

part of her life. That wasn't enough in middle school. She asked herself what she believed apart from familiarity. Was the road to Jesus Christ really for her? Was something called a "personal relationship with Him" even possible? Ultimately, she chose the path less traveled, and that has made all the difference: the difference that helps Alexander as a long-time Christian stay true to her beliefs in a secular industry, to discern when it is appropriate to share her beliefs in a professional setting. Alexander married her husband, Brian, and they have two sons- Chace and Catcher- and one daughter- Capri. The boys love baseball, and weekends are often filled with ballpark activities

or taking day hikes in surrounding areas. Another favorite family treat is strolling through Gaylord Opryland's botanical gardens, locally called "the jungle." The family attends Bethel World Outreach Church in Brentwood, Tenn. where Alexander volunteers with Meals on Wheels. "I fell in love with Nashville when I first moved here in the fall of 2002. My college roommate was from Nashville, and I came home with her that spring. I instantly knew this is where I wanted to work and raise my family someday. My very first night in Nashville I slept in my car parked in the parking lot of the Grand Ole Opry- just so I could say I did. That seemed like the perfect introduction to a life of excitement in Nashville. My Mom was appalled! After a detour to Texas and NYC, I finally got back here ten years ago."

Earning a Seat. Alexander formulated a life philosophy centered around "table"—earning a seat at the table, the table that allows her a voice in influencing society. Toward Jesus' standards of love and accountability. She has long wanted to be known for good work first, for gaining the respect of colleagues, letting them see that she will deliver for them, that she is a team player and will get the job done. She thinks of this as earning her seat at the table. She enjoys working in television, turning a story, and making deadlines. She is convinced that doing good work gains people a seat at the table where they then can have a platform to share. During rare travels, Alexander spends enough time with colleagues, whether it's breaking news or when they're covering the Super Bowl, that sharing many of life's ups and downs- births to deaths- occurs. "When opportunities arise [I can] share how to get through life and what comforts- living out faith in Jesus with others."

Faith in the Spotlight. Earning a seat at the table

comes in various ways, and for Alexander one way is through writing. Her book, *Faith in the Spotlight: Thriving in Your Career While Staying True to Your Beliefs* (2016) expounds on principles of faith in Jesus. She speaks to the issue of how Christians can thrive in a secular world rather than merely complain about not being represented in the media or being silenced in popular culture. She writes about the importance of mentors, coping with rejection, handling high-pressure situations, and the ways being a Christian fulfills her role in a superficial society. She knows how difficult it can be for Christian

Who Could Know? When a baby girl was born on February 15, 1980, in Seattle, Wash., no one on this earth knew where this girl would go or what she would do, or who would ultimately direct her life. No one could know she would be gifted with such honors as Emmy-nominated national news correspondent, host, emcee, speaker, wife, mother, producer, actress, and author. No one knew faith in Jesus Christ and standing true to His principles would solidify her worldview or that this faith would affect her family and career and even society. No one on this earth knew, but her Heavenly Father emceed it all (Proverbs 16:9).

Megan Alexander credits her mom and dad with wisdom that helped her maneuver through life's hard messes. Her dad's treating people of all walks of life with dignity and respect- whether the building's security guard or the company's CEO- modeled invaluable life skills. Her mom's sage advice for forming friendships proved priceless: be open to new relationships; when you feel left out at school, keep your eyes open for others who might feel left out, too. God can use us when we allow ourselves to be available to Him and seek out new friendships and new people.

Crucial Relationship. However, Alexander came to a crossroads. Through Christian school, her parents, and her church, God had always been



Megan Alexander is a national news correspondent, host, emcee, speaker, producer, author and actress.

women to get ahead in their careers and simultaneously navigate their roles at home and in their faith. She offers a fresh millennial-centered perspective on how to build a successful career while being married and focusing on family. She gives inspiring, real-life examples of why women can- and should- lead in the workplace. Alexander reminds Christians that God's Spirit will tell us what to say, where to go, and what to do when we look to Him for guidance. Believers in all walks of life are sent by Jesus into the world to make a difference for Him- to take their seats at the table, raise their hands, and offer another viewpoint.

One More Hug. Continuing to define her seat at the table, Alexander wrote a children's picture book undergirding family, *One More Hug* (2019). For children ages four to eight and their parents as well, *One More Hug* was inspired by her eldest son when his getting on that big, frightening school bus for kindergarten was an opportunity for her to provide confidence through hug after hug. There's always time for one more hug and unconditional love to help a child navigate life, even when it's time to go off to college.

The Table Expands. Alexander presents another glimpse into her career and wide experiences as she navigates Christmas across the country through her UPTV series, *Small Town Christmas*, and her latest children's picture book, *The Magic of a Small Town Christmas*. The book is a beautiful rendition of family values, heart, and the joy of the holiday season in the spirit of her TV show. "I believe our small towns are the heartbeat of America. And they come to life in magical ways during the holidays. Whether it's the large Christmas tree located in the center of the town square, the kids laughing at the local ice-skating rink, a church filled with Christmas music, eating yummy gingerbread cookies, hanging handmade stockings, sharing a home-cooked meal, or the glow of candles in the windows- these small-town scenes are heartwarming to see



Megan's new book celebrating the joys, wonders, and traditions of a small-town Christmas is available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Books a Million.



and experience. I have traveled the country for my TV show and have experienced how so many small towns and their people celebrate Christmas in special ways. From longtime local traditions to classic Christmas sights and sounds, I tried to capture an element of each of these towns and incorporate them into this book. I hope to write more books." Heartbeat Falls may be an imaginary town, but Alexander hopes that when you turn the pages, you will see a little of your hometown, your

local holiday traditions, and your neighbors in the words and illustrations, just as she does when she celebrates with her own family.

Hosted by executive producer Megan Alexander, the second season of UPTV's docu-series, *Small Town Christmas*, airs on December 4, 11, and 18 at 8 p.m. central time. Each televised episode spotlights a different small town around the country to show how its people ring in the Christmas season. The series focuses on local businesses and towns that make the holiday season special in their unique way. The residents of these towns know the beauty of a small town doesn't merely come from its size but from the love shared by its people. Viewers experience small town foods, drinks, entertainment, and faith highlighted in local businesses. "I'm producing and hosting the Christmas show because I want to contribute positive content to the world. I want to be able to read [books] and watch [programs] with my kids. My full-time job is mom of three and author and owner of my own production company. We are working on producing movies, and I would love to film one in Middle Tenn. I believe in the people."

— *Sheila E. Moss is the author of Living to Matter: Mothers, Singles, and the Weary and Broken; Interrupting Women: Ten Conversations with Jesus; and international publications derived from teaching Bible and Christian ethics in Africa, Ukraine, Venezuela, and England; teacher of Bible classes for 35+ years; mother of five adult children and grandmother to 11.*

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Be Happy, Be Healthy, Be Whole

A monthly column on diet, exercise and my weight loss journey.



It's the most wonderful time of the year – and now – let's talk about weight loss. Tough transition isn't it? You know, all of us need a cheat day, every now and then, during dieting – and it just so happens that this month has a lot of them.

But for the days, we aren't cheating – here's a few things to remember to help you avoid the gluttony and the guilt that follows.

- ▲ Before you eat, ask yourself if you are truly hungry. If not, do something else. If you're bored, take a walk or exercise.
- ▲ Eat slowly, socialize and enjoy when you eat.
- ▲ Remember, all foods can fit, but moderation is the key.
- ▲ Be realistic: if you eat a lot of snacks, the following meal should be lighter.
- ▲ Focus on family and friends, not on the menu.
- ▲ Take a daily walk to burn calories and reduce stress.
- ▲ Modify recipes to be more healthy.
- ▲ Take small portions of food; wait before you go back for seconds.
- ▲ Remember, you are in control.

And with that, I wish you a very Merry Christmas and remember, if you need help on your weight loss journey, connect with the professionals that help me, Dr. Lodge and the staff at Cool Springs MD.

This monthly column is a two-way street. I would love to hear from you. What has helped you lose weight? Any tips you would like to share? I welcome your feedback, thoughts and ideas and look forward to sharing them in a future article. You can email me at Doug@94FMTheFish.net or feel free to call me during my live radio show – weekdays between 3 pm – 7 pm on 94 FM The Fish. (800) 826-3637

— *Doug Griffin*

You can email me at

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Creating Sustainable Resolutions in Health

If you are one of the many people who struggle to maintain your healthy lifestyle change in the new year this one simple change could be a game changer! See, I was once someone who would decide I was fed up with the way I looked and felt and would make changes only to slowly revert back to my old way of living. And in the back of my head no matter how badly I wanted to change I would know that It wouldn't last. It was a horrible cycle. But when I finally gained freedom from this I started helping others build habits and do the same. So in this article, I will share with you one simple way to ensure you end this harmful resolution cycle.

Once I lost over 100 lbs I started helping others to get healthy and actually sustain their progress. And I noticed one thing that would help people take even greater ownership of their health. And it was so simple! They brought their family and kids along for the journey. They weren't just doing it for themselves, but they were doing it for and with their family. Being an example for your kids when they are always looking up to you is a GREAT motivator. Notice I said this was simple, not always easy.

So after years of seeing this trend, we decided to take a different approach to training that could impact the whole family. We created The F.O.R.M. Curriculum which has animated videos and practical ways for kids to build healthy habits at a young age. Kids love it and the parents we partner with love it even more because it gives them simple lessons to teach their kids and it forces them to be the example they always have wanted to be. Whether or not you use our program, you can still take advantage of the same principle.



Help your kids build simple habits in 4 main areas. Movement, create a simple routine for you and your kids to move at least 4 times per week. Nutrition, help your kids develop a love for whole, natural, and nutrient-dense foods. Rest and recovery, help your kids get enough sleep and have a routine for stretching and recovering their bodies. Maintenance, build your lifestyle and schedule where it is easy for the whole family to have these healthy practices. I will

also add that you want them to have a biblical approach to their health as well. Transformation comes by the renewing of the mind. To ensure lasting results you and your family must think rightly about how God made your body to help you serve others and live out everything He has called you to.

If you have biblical principles and a simple routine for each of those 4 areas you are much more likely to maintain the progress you gain each year in your health. If you ever need further help just reach out. At Glory to Glory Fitness we believe you were created to be healthy and we are here to partner with you along the way!

— Ashton Tate is the founder of Glory to Glory Fitness in Franklin, Tenn., and the creator of The F.O.R.M. Curriculum, a turnkey, biblically based health curriculum for schools and families.

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The Heavens Rejoice

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him"
(Matt. 2:1-2)

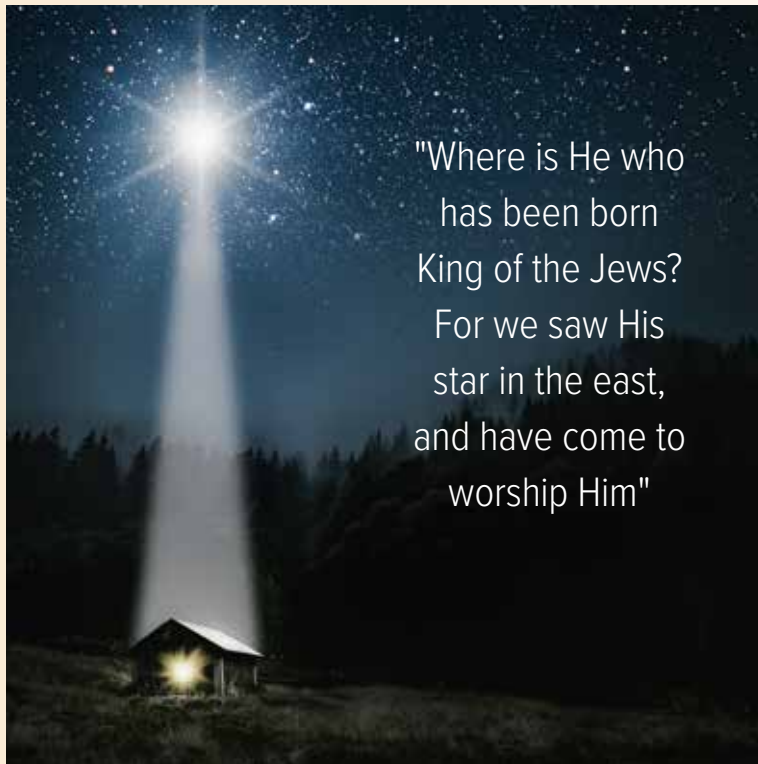
For over 2000 years, Christians world-wide, have been celebrating the infant birth of the Son of God...the Christ...the Messiah. Remarkably, even in those ancient times, this birth was proclaimed throughout the known world; not by newspapers, televisions, or the internet but this historic event was broadcasted through the use of the celestial bodies.

Astronomer Michael Molnar, after analyzing the above biblical passage points out that "in the east" is a literal translation of the Greek phrase *en te anatole*, which was a technical term used in Greek mathematical astrology 2,000 years ago. It described, very specifically, a planet that would rise above the eastern horizon just before the sun would appear. Then, just moments after the planet rises, it disappears in the bright glare of the sun in the morning sky. Except for a brief moment, no one can see this "star in the east."

If you are like me, you might need a little bit of astronomy background here to better understand the true meaning of the phrase. In a human lifetime, virtually all the stars remain fixed in their places; the stars "rise and set" every night, but they do not move relative to each other. As an example, the stars in the Big Dipper appear year after year always in the same place in relationship to where you are. But the planets wander through the fixed stars; in fact, the word "planet" comes from the Greek word for wandering star. Though the planets move along approximately the same path through the background stars, they travel at different speeds, so they often lap each other in relationship to our earthly view. When our sun catches up with a planet, we cannot see the planet, but when the sun passes far enough beyond it, the planet reappears.

Now, with your astronomy lesson under your belt, you might benefit from a bit of astrology knowledge. When a planet reappears, again for the first time in one's lifetime, and rises in the morning sky just moments before the sun, for the first time in many months after having been hidden in the sun's glare, that moment is known to astrologers as a heliacal rising. A heliacal rising, that special first reappearance of a planet, is what *en te anatole* referred to in ancient Greek astrology. In particular, the reappearance of the planet Jupiter was thought, by Greek astrologers, to be symbolically significant for anyone born on that day.

Thus, the "star in the east" refers to an astronomical event with supposed astrological significance in the context of ancient Greek astrology. Together, a rare combination of astrological events (the right planet rising before the sun; the sun being in the right constellation of the zodiac; plus, a few other combinations of planetary positions considered important by



"Where is He who
has been born
King of the Jews?
For we saw His
star in the east,
and have come to
worship Him"

astrologers) would have suggested to ancient astrologers a regal horoscope and a royal birth.

These very wise and mathematically adept astrologers of the time also knew about the Old Testament prophecy that a new king would be born of the family of David. Most likely, they had been watching the heavens for years, waiting for alignments that would foretell the birth of this king. When they identified a powerful set of astrological portents, they decided the time was right to set out to find the prophesied leader.

If Matthew's wise men undertook a journey to search for a newborn king, the bright star didn't guide them; it only told them when to set out; the prophesy would have told them where to look. Also, they would not have found an infant swaddled in a manger. After all, the baby would have most likely been eight months old by the time they decoded

the astrological message they believed predicted the birth of a future king. The portent in question likely began on April 17 of 6 BC (with the heliacal rising of Jupiter that morning, followed, at noon, by its lunar occultation in the constellation Aries) and lasted until December 19 of 6 BC (when Jupiter stopped moving to the west, stood still briefly, and began moving to the east, as compared with the fixed background stars). By the earliest time the men could have arrived in Bethlehem, the baby Jesus would likely have been at least a toddler.

As a Solutionary and someone intrigued by the Power of the Wisdom of Three (Three meaning Unified Perfection); I find it extremely fascinating that the birth of God's son, the Savior of the world, was announced to the world through a heavenly event that lasted nine months. In biblical terms, the number nine represents finality. Then consider how a human pregnancy ends after nine months; three, three-month trimesters. The Savior, would grow and complete His earthly mission thirty-three years later in the ninth hour (3pm) of the day in the first month of the Jewish calendar, Nisan. The day, time and place which would also be broadcasted by the heavens in the form of a total eclipse of the sun. Think of the image of the earth shaded by the moon positioned between the sun and the earth. Three heavenly bodies in a straight-line hovering over the crucified Christ.

To further escalate the Power of the Wisdom of Three; the creator used the third planet from the sun to solve the problem of sustainment human life.

If this is my last post, I want all to know there was only one purpose for all that I have written; to have made a positive difference in the lives of others.

— Anthony "Tony" Boquet, the author of "The Bloodline of Wisdom, The Awakening of a Modern Solutionary"



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How to Clean Your House for Pet Allergies

Sneezing, a stuffy nose and watery eyes are all common symptoms for people who have allergies. Although dealing with allergies can be a real bummer, dealing with allergies associated with your pet can be an even bigger downer. Our pets are like family. But for people who suffer from pet allergies, living with a furry little friend can create a real problem...ah-choo!

If someone in your home, maybe even one of your kids, suffers from pet allergies you'll want to continue reading. In this article we offer recommendations on how you can make some household changes and take regular cleaning steps that can help reduce the effects of pet allergies and cut down on the number of stuffy noses and watery eyes.



Changes that Can Make a Difference

To start with, you will need to embrace the idea of change. Making changes to the way you live and how you do things around your house can have a significant impact on how you and a loved one respond to these recommendations. Here are some changes that can make a real difference:

- Remove your pet's favorite furniture. Fido may not be happy about losing his bed, but your allergy-sufferer will appreciate removing the presence of a constant allergen.
- Cover bedroom vents with dense filtering material such as cheesecloth. Forced-air heating and air-conditioning can spread allergens throughout the house. Filtering out as much of those allergens as possible will help you sleep and should lessen the spread and effect of allergens, which should help you wake up feeling a little more refreshed.
- Add an air cleaner with a HEPA filter to central heating and air conditioning. Doing so can help remove pet allergens from the air. Use the air cleaner at least four hours per day.
- Remove wall-to-wall carpet, if possible, and replace with tile or wood. Tile and wood floors don't hold dander and other allergen like carpet. And they are easier to clean.

If removing the carpet is not an option. Then, you'll need to vacuum a little more often. We recommend at least twice per week. More if you have multiple pets. If the allergy-sufferer is the one who performs this cleaning task, they should wear a mask to avoid inhaling allergens that get stirred up during the cleaning process. It's also recommended to use a vacuum with a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter. This will help trap and contain more dust and allergens, keeping them out of the air you breath. Finally, a good steam cleaning of your carpet at least once every six months will do wonders to help reduce the amount of allergens that build up over weeks and months.

Make Regular Cleaning a Regular Thing

Once you've completed the above changes, it's time to take things a step further.

- Keep your floors clean – read our Keeping Floors Clean with Pets article for more information.
- Keep all surfaces throughout your home clean and uncluttered.
- Use throw rugs and wash them in hot water once per week.
- Give your pet(s) a nice bath every week. This should help reduce airborne allergens.
- Wash your sheets weekly, especially if your pet(s) join you in bed.
- Brush your pet(s) outside on a weekly basis to remove dander and loose fur.
- Clean the litter box or cage outside once per week.
- Scrub your walls and woodwork once per month.
- Check and vacuum under furniture to eliminate any fur that may have accumulated.
- Vacuum upholstery on a weekly basis. Steam clean fabric upholstery on a monthly basis.

Professional Cleaning Help

Maintaining this regime can prove to be a daunting and difficult task for a busy family. The cleaning pros at Molly Maid can customize a regular cleaning plan that fits your schedule and help reduce pet allergies in your home. And a cleaner home with less pet allergens means everyone can breathe a little easier. Whether you'd like a one-time cleaning or a weekly recurring cleaning plan, our custom cleaning plans are designed to work around your schedule and budget. Contact your local Molly Maid, 615-794-0200 or 615-603-3766, today to discuss a cleaning plan that's right for you. www.mollymaid.com/s-davidson-williamson-maury-counties

— Ashley Farrar

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A portion of Molly Maid's sales support victims of domestic violence in the communities we serve. To date, Ms. Molly has proudly raised more than \$3 million – and we are not slowing down! This non-profit organization aims to increase public awareness of domestic violence and to provide victims with support. We believe everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes. The Ms. Molly Foundation strives to empower communities to end the cycle of violence in the home. It's our goal to help give victims of domestic violence a second chance at happiness

FAMILY MATTERS

Why Family Discipleship in America is Critical to the Church at Large

Strengthen the Family Leaders for healthy spiritual growth.

While evangelism has accomplished the good and important work of bringing people to Christ, there now exists a significant gap between the staggering number of new Christians and the number of spiritually mature parental leaders in the home. Family discipleship is critical to developing an intimate relationship with Christ, and to being equipped to stand firm in the face of the counterculture our children are facing today. Christians families domestically and globally need more transformational resources to train and deepen the faith of their children who will grow mature and raise families of their own. Ill-equipped households with fewer spiritually mature parents will result in biblically illiterate children of the faith. Parents desire to do the right thing but feel inadequate to train and instruct their children in the Lord. They need equipping and coaching to develop deeper spiritual roots.

65% of Christian parents have expressed a feeling of inadequacy in teaching their children biblical principles. At Victorious Family, we are on mission to equip and empower parents to disciple their children. Equipping a Generation, to Reach a Generation.

Imagine a generation of your family who knows God with intimate familiarity. Kids who can tell you what they believe and why it matters. Teenagers who handle adversity with the resilient joy of Godly wisdom.



A family who prays together and worships together and passes these practices along to the next generation. When disciplined well, children's unique insights into Scripture can teach parents how to best apply scripture to their daily family lives and better revealed characteristics of God through his Word.

Home must become the center of discipleship. Parents must no longer abdicate the responsibility of discipleship of their children primarily to the church, Christian school, and or Christian camp. Discipleship must start at home and be supported by the church.

By building up Christians Parents and helping equip them for deeper discipleship, homes and parents will be well prepared to in turn disciple the next generation of believers and carry forth the mission of God's people.

Would you consider strengthening your home with proven discipleship materials and training if offered? Want to continue in your journey of discipling your children with greater impact? Interested in becoming a partner in the growth that's already happening in family discipleship? For more information, visit www.victoriousfamily.org.

— Terence Chatmon, President and CEO of Victorious Family



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PARENTING POINTS

Hurting or Helping the Children At Christmas?

With holidays upon us there are many opportunities for divorced parents to either hurt or help their shared children. Many co-parents fight and argue over who gets to have the kids on Christmas Eve or fight for Christmas morning... unfortunately, they forget that the emotional experience is quite daunting for their children.

Kids of divorce have one heart and yet they share their lifetime between two homes. When a parent (who may be hurting or upset from the divorce) continues to create difficult experiences for the other parent, the result is they are actually hurting their own child.

I know of a young lady who has spent almost every Christmas Day of her life (since age 2, now 16) "split in half" and feels like it's hard on her because she can never relax and enjoy the family she's with because everybody is always watching the clock. Her parents always insist it be "exactly even" and her grandparents have joined the predictable argument... "If you spend 3 hours over there, at the other grandparents' house, then you have to spend 3 hours here at our house, otherwise it's unfair."

My advice to divorced co-parents is to be intentional to reduce the amount of transitions during the big holidays. Consider rotating instead of splitting them. Kids often don't express their feelings, but trying to put their peace of mind as the main priority is a powerful gift! Put your "have to have" mentality aside and consider how you would feel if you were with 5-10 people you like and love (cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents) and they were having fun, watching football, eating and playing board games and just as the next fun activity was about to start, "Poof!" you were taken away from them. You may feel sadness, frustration or a longing to stay and not miss out on the laughter and fun.



Even if you have grumpy family members who aren't necessarily fun, it may still feel awkward to leave while everyone else is staying.

The additional benefits are that if and when you re-couple (talking to the parents here) and want to travel or see your new spouse's family or go skiing or spend time at the ocean, then you will have the freedom to do that. One year you can take your children with you the whole time and the

other year you can support your children enjoying time with the other parent.

The most important gifts that children need, when parents live apart, is the freedom to love each family member, the protection from being caught in the middle and to know they they are NOT on anyone's time clock or have to worry about the adult's anger. To believe that their parents are still their parents and have a deeply vested commitment to work together for their benefit, not against each other...that is the best "gift" a child in a divided family could ever receive. And giving that gift 365 days a year is the best way to help, not hurt the children loving with one heart, in two homes.

— Tammy Daughtry, MMFT, Founder, Coparenting International
Author, speaker, adult child of divorce, national trainer and advocate for children.



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NOAH, THE FLOOD, REBUILDING, AND TRIBALISM

This month, Jews around the world read the Torah portion about Noah (Genesis 6:9-10). Noah is fascinating. God doesn't say he was a great guy. What happens after the ark comes to rest, after the flood waters subside, planting a vineyard and getting drunk, is a great example.

The Torah says he was righteous in his generation which means he was better than others, deserving of being saved along with his family, and reliable enough to gather every species of animal to repopulate the world.

Even though God made a covenant never to destroy the world again, at least with a flood like He did then, I always wonder whether I'd be considered righteous enough to be saved along with my family and be given the responsibility to restore and rebuild the world.

As I was thinking about the Torah reading this week, I thought of my Christian friends in Pakistan. How an Orthodox Israeli Jew has developed warm friendships with Christians in Pakistan, knowing that for the foreseeable future we will never have the opportunity to meet. As inhospitable as Pakistan is to Christians, it'd be outright life-threatening for me to ever go there, assuming Pakistan would even let me. And my friends can't come to Israel because Pakistan actually prints that its passports are not valid for travel to Israel. But that is another story.

I was thinking about my Pakistani Christian friends because of the unprecedented flooding that devastated Pakistan three months ago. Unprecedented at least since the Biblical flood. Since Noah, there has never been a flood as devastating as that which devastated Pakistan, leaving a third of the country and tens of millions of people flooded out of their homes and livelihoods. While the entire world was not flooded again and God did keep His promise, for Christians in Pakistan, in many cases their entire world has been flooded.

For years I've understood that life for Christians in Pakistan is very hard. On a good day, they are second-class citizens. They are persecuted globally and individually. A friend once shared that he cannot find a stable job because he's always fired for being a Christian, that's when he can even find work. Another friend once asked if she could join a webinar I was hosting to be able to pray for Israel. I was touched but worried for her safety. Christians have been persecuted, including being lynched and burned alive, for much less. I've seen

horrific videos and don't want to do anything that would threaten my friends, even as they passionately affirm their faith and love for Israel and the Jewish people. I felt awkward, not encouraging them to deny their faith, but not encouraging them to affirm it because of the risk it might bring.

As much as Christians were persecuted before the recent flood, what I've heard since is heartbreaking. Moslems have preyed on Christians in horrific ways. Christians are being forced to deny their faith for promises of food which, after they do so, they are mocked, and the food never appears. Christian women and girls are suffering rape and other sexual abuse as if they are the property of Moslem men, and as if abusing other human beings in the wake of a national disaster is normal. Christian children are being kidnapped and their organs harvested, leaving corpses and grieving families with no recourse.

And if all that weren't horrific enough, Christians are never first online to receive urgent aid from national relief efforts. Even if they are not persecuted as second-class citizens in an extremist Islamic country, that's just how things are.

That's what led me to establish an unprecedented relief effort as an Orthodox Israeli Jew, to be a blessing to Christians in Pakistan. We've done a lot, but there's so much more to do. Three months after the flood waters have subsided - just like in biblical account - rebuilding is critical. Noah faced challenges for sure, but he didn't face disease and persecution. It breaks my heart to tell my Christian friends that we have sent all the money we have, and that there's nothing more I can do. It breaks my heart because I want to do more, much more.

And it breaks my heart because as much as they appreciate everything we have done, and the generosity of everyone who has donated, they also understand that thousands or more Christians have not stepped up to participate. They feel persecuted in the larger Islamic society in which they live, and forgotten by fellow Christians.

Last month I was discussing this all with a Christian friend here in Jerusalem. From a Jewish perspective I look at things tribally. As diverse and dispersed as we are, I always consider us as one people. That tribalism is not pervasive among Christians around the world. Despite sharing their faith and relationship with God and Jesus, I bemoaned to my friend here how I don't understand

why it seems that when one Christian community suffers, all Christians are not in pain. I shared that I don't understand how 100,000 Christians have not run to donate at least \$10 for this urgent relief effort, and to share it with just ten others.

Yes, Israel is called to be a blessing to the families of the world. The same way I think about all Jews being one entity, being a blessing to others is part of my, and our, orientation. It's part of the reason that whenever there is a natural disaster in almost any part of the world, Israel leads the world in emergency rescue and humanitarian relief. With Pakistan that's harder, so I launched my initiative virtually and under the radar enough so as not to put my friends in further risk. As much as Christian friends of Israel join us in celebrating Israel's first-in-line response around the world, I wish more would internalize the tribalism and sense of mutual responsibility we have to one another, and to join efforts like that which I launched, to bring Jews and Christians together, and help Israel fulfill its role as a blessing to the families of the world.

My Christian Pakistani friends are inspiring. As they and their families suffer, they are using the money I have sent to bless and support others. Of course they are supporting other Christians, but they are also showing their Christian love of all people by helping Moslems too. If Noah was only righteous in his generation and merited being saved along with his family, I look at my Christian friends as doing something even more incredible. They have built a virtual ark through their ministries and, unlike Noah who left everyone else behind, they are sustaining many others as well.

I always say that Jews and Christians have lots to learn from one another. I've never been more proud of a project I've initiated than this, bringing Jews and Christians together to provide critical relief in Pakistan. I pray that more Christians would emulate our tribalism and step up to partner with us, as Jews and Christians together.

100,000 gifts of just \$10 would go a long way, still just scratching the surface, but a great start. Just as Noah sent birds out to see if there was dry land with the first bird coming back exhausted from flying above the flooded earth, then a second bird bringing back a branch from a tree, and a third bird flying off and never returning, I pray that we will be privileged to see our Pakistani friends soar beyond their flood.

— Jonathan Feldstein



Sight Musical Suite

The music of the film “Sight” is about the common ground between the East and the West

The movie *Sight* is based on my autobiography *From Darkness to Sight* and co-stars Greg Kinnear. It will be released in 2023. Below is the IMDB site description of the movie:



Sight, starring Oscar-nominated and Emmy-winning Greg Kinnear and Terry Chen (*Almost Famous*, *Falling*), is based on the true story of Dr. Ming Wang, a poor Chinese immigrant, who defies all odds to become a world-renowned eye surgeon in the United States. Set in 1970's rural China, a young Ming faces persecution and despair at every turn, but through the support of his dedicated family and his own unwavering determination, he finds his way to America, attends Harvard and MIT and helps develop an innovative technology that restores sight in millions. Taking on the seemingly impossible challenge of helping a blind orphan, the resilient Dr. Wang must reconcile with his own traumatic past and face the harsh reality that the strength of his own will can only go so far.

The messages of the film “Sight” are:

- The present is made possible by the past. We need to find peace with the past, so we can embrace the present;
- Don't be limited by the present circumstance, imagine and believe tomorrow, persevere, and help make the world a better place.

“Sight Musical Suite” has been composed and performed by the Warner Brother’s film studio in Hollywood, CA. The suite consists of three movements:

1st movement: “The East” (with mostly Chinese traditional music instruments featuring erhu): An ancient culture, its tradition, introspectiveness and sensitivity, love, tragedy, and fight;

2nd movement: “The West” (with all Western music instruments): Freedom, opportunity, optimistic, powerful, creative, failing and pulling oneself back up!

3rd movement: “The East and the West” (with BOTH Eastern and Western

music instruments): It shows that the melodies are in fact the most beautiful, when played by BOTH the East and the West music instruments! If we are all willing to learn from each other, to seek common ground, based on our shared humanity, then our lives will all be much better, and human race will have hope and a future!

About Dr. Ming Wang, MD, PhD: Dr. Ming Wang, a Harvard & MIT graduate (MD, magna cum laude), is one of the few laser eye surgeons in the world today who hold a doctorate degree in laser physics. He is co-founder of the non-profit Common Ground Network. The film “Sight” is based on Dr. Wang’s autobiography “From Darkness to Sight”, co-starring Greg Kinnear. Dr. Wang’s life has also inspired the role of the Chinese student in the movie “God’s not Dead”.

As a teenager, Ming fought valiantly to escape China’s Cultural Revolution – during which millions of innocent youth were deported to remote areas to face a life sentence of hard labor and poverty. He came to America with only \$50 and earned two doctorate degrees, one in laser physics and one in medicine, and graduated with the highest honors from Harvard Medical School and MIT.

Amniotic membrane contact lens, which Dr. Wang has invented and holds two U.S. patents, has been used by tens of thousands of eye doctors in nearly every nation throughout the world, and millions of patients have had their eyesight restored.

Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration has helped patients from over 40 states in the U.S. and 55 countries, with all sight restoration surgeries performed free-of-charge. Dr. Wang was named the Kiwanis Nashvillian of the Year for his lifelong dedication to help blind orphaned children from around the world.

— *Ming Wang, MD, PhD, Director, Wang Vision Institute, Founder, Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration, Co-founder, Tennessee Immigrant and Minority Business Group. Dr. Wang can be reached at drwang@wangvisioninstitute.com, www.drmingwang.com, 615-321-8881.*



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“We are extremely glad to have such a wonderful partnership with Robert and the Nashville Christian Family team! Our approach to marketing as a nonprofit organization involves creating partnerships that give us room to grow into a larger media buy down the road. Robert and his team’s attention to service and establishing a meaningful relationship, along with the distribution, make it hard not to want to be in the publication.”

Harold Witherspoon, III
Executive Director of Development
The Salvation Army
Nashville Area Command



Misty Ratcliff
Development & Communications Manager
The Salvation Army
Nashville Area Command



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Tips on Keeping Uninvited Pests Out of Hotels

The temperature is lowering, the leaves are turning orange, and everyone is gearing up for Thanksgiving holiday. Hello, fall! With the holiday seasons approaching, that means traveling, and traveling means hotel stays. You want to make sure you keep your guest cozy, welcome, and safe during their stay—human guests that is. You definitely don't want uninvited pests as guest.

Top 3 Fall Pests in Hotels

Bed bugs – Bed bugs are the biggest hitchhikers in the pest world. With traveling hiking up, it's no question that bedbugs will show up. Bed bugs feed on blood and are attracted to any place where they can find a meal quickly and easily. Additionally, hotels experience a high turnover, so guests are constantly coming in and out of rooms.

Bed bugs can cause a stain on your hotel's reputation. Once one room gets them, it can spread to many rooms. It's often better to train your staff on preventative measures. This can include incorporating bed bug inspections into daily responsibilities, create a protocol for responding to bed bug activity, and report bed bug activity. For more information on identifying and getting rid of bed bugs, check out this blog!

Cockroaches – Colder weather can cause certain cockroach species to crawl into your hotel looking for food and warmth, while others can travel through luggage and shipments. Cockroaches are notoriously nocturnal, so you may not even realize they are there. If you notice one roach, that means there are often many nearby.

In addition to disgusting your guests, cockroaches can be vectors for harmful bacteria and trigger allergies in some people. These uninvited pests tend to live, breed, and feed in materials found in hotels, and can crawl through even the tinniest cracks, luggage and bags. For more information on how cockroaches can affect your business, check out this blog!

Rodents – Rats and mice also look for warmer spaces the colder it gets, and they can also get in through cracks and holes the size of a dime. They are known to carry bacteria and diseases, especially in their droppings. Not to mention they are unsightly; you definitely don't want a guest to find a



rat in their room! Whether it's a hallway, room, dining area, or lobby, a rodent sighting can be upsetting and unsettling for your guests.

How Can a Commercial Pest Control Plan Help?

Good news, a professional, trained commercial pest company trained in treating hotels can help with all your fall pest control needs. At Waynes, we have multistep protocols for bedbugs, cockroaches, and rodents. As well as treating, we can also prevent these issues for all seasons!

By the time common fall hotel pests become problems for your guests, infestations can be large and difficult to control. Don't let pests bother your guests this fall. Contact us today or call us at 866.WAYNES1 and we would be happy to give you a free estimate.

— Meredith Boyd, Social Media & Marketing Coordinator, www.callwaynes.com

MERRY
Christmas



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Wishing you and your family
a happy and healthy Christmas Season!

Spiritual Goal For The Month

Job: 1

TRUST...through all.

We know that life has highs...lows...celebrations...disappointments...victories and defeats...with much more in between. Chapter One of Job...and the entire Book reminds us. We find it difficult to comprehend what Job endured...but in the end...his friends were silenced...but God was not.

Through it all...with questions, frustrations and conclusions...Job learned that Believers have a Rock, a Refuge, a Heavenly Friend Who can be depended on. After all,...God created everything for His purpose...keeps the universe working moment-by-moment... and has promised us an eternity with Him. We were never promised a rose garden...but a life that has meaning when we “trust through it all.”

Prayer: *Lord, You know we have questions...just like Job. Please help us to grow our spiritual roots deeper and stronger through it all...as we depend on Your Word...and Your Spirit to guide us until we see You face-to-face. Thank You for Your faithfulness. We depend on You today...knowing You are as close as a breath. Thank You for this time...as we pray in Your Name Lord Jesus. Amen.*

— Ralph E. Vaughn

PLAN OF SALVATION

Has something in the magazine or something you have discussed with someone or some thoughts that you have had or something that you have heard, brought you to a point of realizing that you want and need to know Christ in the truest and personal sense?

If so, below is a simple outline for someone of any age who is not a Believer to act on their desire to accept Jesus Christ into their heart as their Savior.

God's Plan of Salvation

God created us to honor and serve Him

Revelation 4:11: “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist[b] and were created

Each of us has sinned against God

Romans 3:10: As it is written, “There is none righteous, no, not one”
Romans 3:23: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The penalty for sin is eternal separation from God and Heaven

Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Good works cannot ever earn God's forgiveness and Salvation

Titus 3:5: not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.

God loves each of us

John 3:16: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Jesus Christ died on the cross in our place, paying the penalty for our sin

Romans 5:8: But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We each must accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior

Romans 10:9: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:13: For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

To accept Christ into your heart and life, pray a simple prayer along these lines -

“Dear God, I know that I am a sinner and I am sorry for my sins. I know that Jesus died for my sins and the sins of the world. Right now, I ask Jesus into my heart and receive Him as my personal Savior. Forgive me of my sins, thank you for saving me through the blood of Jesus. Please Lord, help me live for you. In Jesus name, amen.”

All scriptures are taken from The New King James Version of the Holy Bible.

If you do not have your own Bible, email publisher@nashchristian.com and we will make sure you receive one.

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