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Circulation and Distribution: *Nashville Christian Family* is free and available at targeted, high traffic locations throughout the Nashville Metro Area and surrounding counties, Williamson, Wilson, Davidson, Cheatham, Sumner, Rutherford and Maury. Copies are available by subscription, \$100 for one year (12 issues). To subscribe, e-mail publisher@nashchristian.com

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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

Christ Born of the Virgin Mary



“And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Glory in the Highest

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And [c]behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a [d]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, goodwill toward men!” Luke 2: 1 – 14 NKJV

In the midst of this bustling holiday season, let's set aside moments to 'be still and know that He is God' and to direct our hearts and minds toward Jesus. Gather your loved ones to read the Christmas Story from the Scriptures together. Let's honor the true essence of Christmas—the birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and Savior.

Nashville Christian Family extends to you and your family our warmest wishes for a Blessed, Peaceful, Merry Christmas and a Prosperous and Happy New Year!

Robert Stringfellow, Publisher, 615-815-8765
publisher@nashchristian.com





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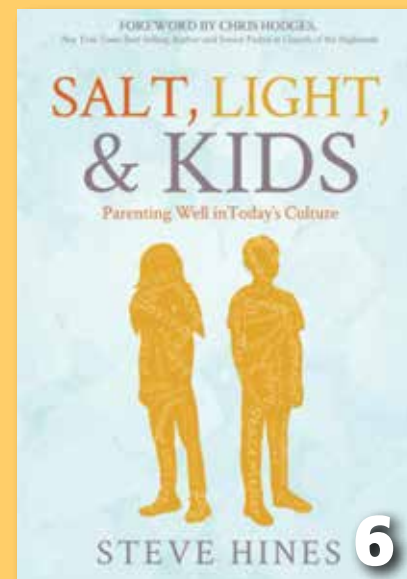
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This Christmas Season, Remember You Are Not Alone.

In middle school, I wasn't the coolest kid on the block. When you aren't cool yourself, your best chance of survival is to get a cool kid to like you, acceptance by association. For me, the cool kid was Justin. Justin always had the latest games, the latest music, the latest clothes, and he was a rebel, which added to his cool 'lore'. Justin was on my bus route, and he was also a big Gameboy player, so I quickly learned that I could 'earn' Justin's attention by letting him borrow my Gameboy games. Thus, a friendship was born.



One afternoon, Justin and I were hanging out at a construction site of a new home being built, being kids. We were taking the glass bottles left behind by construction workers and breaking them on the concrete foundation ... until a policeman drove by. As he pulled into the dirt lot where the home was being built, I froze. Justin ran. He ran like the wind. In fact, he ran several miles, all the way back to his house, while I stood in that dusty lot dealing with the consequences of my poor choice, alone.

Have you ever felt abandoned in your decisions? That your decisions left you standing alone with no one by your side? Or even that God was no longer by your side? You may have heard the story of a guy named Jonah. God had given Jonah direct orders that he chose to not follow through on. As a result, he ultimately found himself tossed overboard from the ship he was sailing on, amidst some perilous waters alone. God wasn't going to allow disobedient

Jonah to just die, alone, in the waters. If you've read the story, you know God sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, and spare him from the waters, before spitting him up on a beach three days later. He still had a plan for him. Despite his disobedience, God stuck with Jonah.

That is the beauty of the Christmas season. Despite our own brokenness, the Creator is committed to His creation. We are not alone in this broken world, rather Jesus stepped into it to rescue us from it.

1 John 4:9 reminds us; "*God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him.*" It's not because of us; rather despite us.

This Christmas season, remember you are not alone. God is with us.

Merry Christmas from your friends at Lee Company; we are grateful for the opportunity to serve this community; and pray God's best over you heading into the new year.

— Kyle Froman, Lee Company Chaplain
www.leecompany.com



Merry Christmas

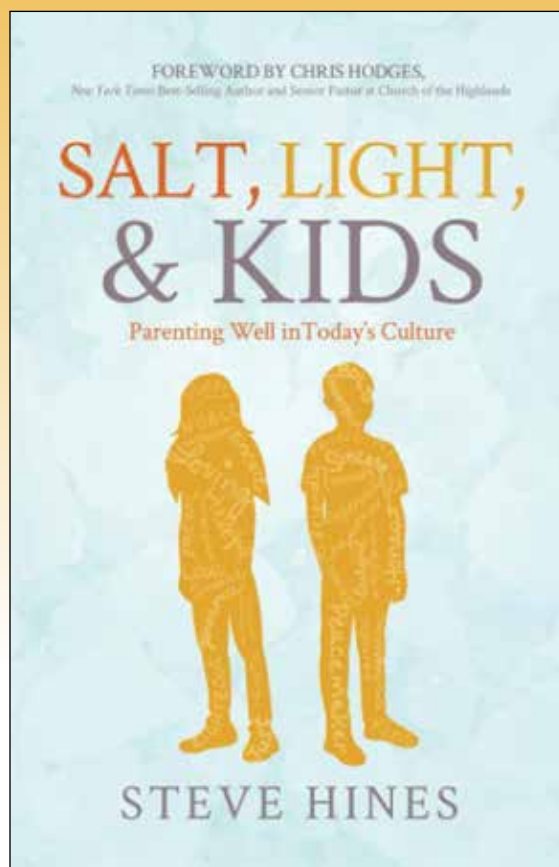
and Happy New Year

From the *Christian Television Network*

ctntv.org

BEST BOOKS

Salt, Light, & Kids (Parenting Well in Today's Culture)



Steve Hines lives with his wife, Leigh Ann, in Nashville, Tennessee. He is a life-long entrepreneur, a former C.P.A., a film producer, a high school lacrosse coach, and an independent recording artist.

Would you like to have more influence on your children than today's culture has on them? Is it important to you for your children to have a strong faith in God? Would you like to raise kids who are responsible, honest, hard-working, and servant-hearted? If so, then the new book by author Steve Hines of Nashville, *Salt, Light, & Kids (Parenting Well in Today's Culture)*, is for you.

The name *Salt, Light, & Kids* speaks to the contents of this book. Using many stories from both the ups and downs of Steve and his wife of 36 years Leigh Ann's own parenting journey, the book teaches parents how to raise up 'salt of the earth' kids who are trustworthy, hard-working, dependable, kind, and selfless. More importantly, it shows parents how to bring up their children to be the salt of the earth and light of the world as Jesus talks about in Matthew chapter 5. As the world today works hard to teach children (and parents) to be more and more self-centered and entitled, *Salt, Light, & Kids (Parenting Well in Today's Culture)* helps parents lead their kids to become better people and to become more like Jesus.

The book offers applicable and relatable tools and Biblically based solutions that help with issues such as: leading a simple life, teaching children responsibility, the influence of friends, boyfriends and girlfriends, technology and social media, drugs and alcohol, discipline, money, narcissism, and the proper hierarchy of relationships. It also offers some challenges for parents regarding their own actions, as Steve feels children today are looking for authenticity in their parents more than ever.

He also speaks to what it means to 'parent well' rather than to just parent. Steve believes that parenting well requires a consistently high level of attention and priority, since children are gifts that God has entrusted to parents. He encourages parents to take comfort, even in the face of inevitable mistakes, in the fact that they are giving 100% effort.

In the book, Steve shares that having two married children and two young granddaughters (with a grandson on the way) contributes to his passion for exposing how culture and the enemy are trying to sabotage the efforts of today's parents. Steve and Leigh Ann have taught and disciplined many younger parents over the last few decades. However, Steve believes that the current challenges presented to parents are more difficult to navigate than in previous years.

According to Steve, "Satan has very effectively used technology, social media, the education system,



Leigh Ann and Steve Hines

and other means over the last decade in trying to win the hearts and minds of our kids at earlier and earlier ages, and parents have to be aware of his schemes."

Steve's friend and *New York Times* best-selling author and Church of the Highlands Founding Pastor Chris Hodges wrote the foreword for the book. In it, Pastor Hodges says, "Whether you're expecting your first child or in the frontlines of the teen years, you will discover *Salt, Light, & Kids (Parenting Well in Today's Culture)* to be an invaluable resource for your parenting journey. With Steve as your guide and God's word as your lamp, you will return to this book again and again." The book is also included in the preferred curriculum for Church of the Highlands small groups.

Whether you are a parent of young children, or teenagers, or even if you are a grandparent, *Salt, Light, & Kids (Parenting Well in Today's Culture)* is an excellent resource for raising wholesome, Godly children who have a heart to make a difference in the world. It's available on Amazon and other online platforms in paperback, Kindle, and Audible.

For more info, go to www.saltlightandkids.com. Connect with the author on Instagram, Facebook, and TT @saltlightandkids.

— C. Johnson



**Scan this code to purchase
*Salt, Light, & Kids; Parenting
Well in Today's Culture***

SPECIAL FEATURE

Brought to you by: **Blue Umbrella Medical Center**
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Unlocking the Secrets of Fatigue

Explained Fatigue vs. Unexplained Fatigue

Feeling constantly drained and exhausted? Fatigue comes in two distinct flavors: explained and unexplained. Let's demystify these terms and explore how they impact your overall wellness.

Explained Fatigue: The Clear Culprits

Explained fatigue occurs when you can trace the root causes of your weariness. Picture this: too much on your plate, not enough sleep, or stress levels soaring off the charts. In these situations, the triggers behind your fatigue are in plain sight, and actionable solutions are within reach.

For example, a jam-packed schedule can push your body to the limit, leaving you feeling drained. Depriving yourself of quality sleep is another surefire way to drain your energy tank. And let's not forget the toll that excessive stress can take on your vitality.

The antidote? A two-pronged approach. First, tackle the underlying causes head-on. This could involve reevaluating commitments, honing time management skills, and adopting healthy stress management techniques. Second, fuel your body right with a balanced diet and proper hydration. Remarkably, many high-achievers have learned to fine-tune their physical well-being. By leveraging exploratory panels, they've pinpointed deficiencies and optimized their lifestyle to perform at their peak without succumbing to burnout.

Unexplained Fatigue: Cracking the Code

Unexplained fatigue is a trickier puzzle. It's that relentless tiredness without an overt trigger like insufficient sleep or stress. Imagine a burst water pipe at the main source – suddenly, you're left with a mere trickle. Similarly, hidden health issues can silently sap your energy, leaving you fatigued despite no apparent cause.

To conquer unexplained fatigue, you need to play detective. Just as a plumber fixes a leaking pipe, you must identify and address the source of your energy drain. This is where exploratory panels shine. By delving into your body's internal mechanisms, these panels uncover lurking health problems that might be siphoning your vitality. Armed with these insights, you can craft a targeted plan to kick exhaustion to the curb and reclaim your pep.

Taking Charge Today: Your Path to Rejuvenation

Whether grappling with explained or unexplained fatigue, there's a light at the end of the tunnel. Embrace a proactive stance and decode the factors influencing your energy levels. Exploratory panels are your passport to the inner workings of your body, enabling informed decisions about your well-being. Don't let fatigue dictate your life – seize the day by ordering your exploratory panel now and embarking on a journey toward boundless energy and wellness.

In a world where demands never cease, safeguarding your health takes center stage. By acknowledging fatigue's sources and tackling them head-on, you can achieve equilibrium and lead a fulfilling life. Remember, the power to recharge your energy and embrace life to the fullest lies in your hands.

For more insights and guidance on holistic health, visit Blue Umbrella Medical Center, where we're dedicated to helping you unlock your full health potential. Your well-being deserves nothing less.



— Dr. Jae Hitson, Clinical Director of Blue Umbrella Medical Center,
Murfreesboro Tenn., www.blueumbrellamedical.com

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Finding God in Grief

I prayed for Louise before she came to the studio. She has a story that no parent wants. She lost her daughter Rebekah in a fatal car accident. Louise and her family know the kind of grief that few people experience.

Rebekah lingered for five weeks in the hospital. The doctors and nurses tried everything they could to save her. Louise and her family, along with friends prayed relentlessly. Every time Rebecca would take a step forward, she would take a step back. Somehow, in all of this, Louise and her husband held on to their faith.

I Don't Want my Daughter to Die

At one point a neurologist was telling Louise that he thought they could save Rebekah. Louise responded with please understand - I do not want my daughter to die, but if she does, I know where she will go. She will go to heaven. The neurologist ended up asking Louise, may I ask what you believe?

Without delay, Louise and her husband sat down with the neurologist and unashamedly shared their faith in Jesus Christ. The Dr did not respond, but a seed was planted. Throughout the hospital stay, there were many opportunities for Louise to

share her faith.

As a mom she was understandably consumed with grief. Yet she was intentional about finding God in her grief. Louise says she found God in her grief in many ways. There was the conversation with the neurologist who asked about her faith. Then, there was the nurse considering an abortion that allowed Louise to pray for her. There were several such incidents during the hospital stay.

Grief so Thick it is Hard to See God

Louise and her husband were in the most sorrowful season of their life – yet they looked for ways to share their faith and God met them right where they were.

Most of us have found ourselves in the thick of grief where it can be hard to see the goodness of God. Yet Louise and her husband determined they would not be angry with God. Instead, they purposed to see God even in their grief. Louise was quick to share that all people grieve differently. Understanding that grief is expressed in numerous ways can help us stay close to others – rather than draw away. It is also helpful to recognize that God is close to the brokenhearted and those crushed in spirit. God is not far away or aloof because we are experiencing grief. Rather, He invites us to draw

near to Him so He can comfort us in our time of need. *“He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.”* 2 Corinthians 1:4 NLT

As Louise shared in the studio losing someone, especially a child, is heartbreaking. Such losses can cause us to doubt God – and blame Him. Yet, if we dare to trust Him, we will find the beauty and comfort of His grace in our darkest seasons.

Today's Secret from the Studio: When we hold on to our faith, we will find the beauty and comfort of His grace even in our deepest grief.

— Monica Schmelter enjoys sharing the secrets she has learned in the studio. As the host of CTN's Bridges show Monica talks with the famous, and the girl next door. She says, “I've learned something significant from every guest.” You can watch Bridges TV show or hear the Bridges podcasts on demand at www.bridgeswithmonica.com



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Why The Fate of Israel Matters

A dear friend of mine in Paris, France recently bemoaned what she described as the constant drone by the modern news media on events unfolding in Israel. “It has nothing to do with us. Why is the media so obsessed with what’s happening in Israel?” Her criticism may well echo those of a broad cross-section of people across the world who question the seemingly irrelevant and misplaced fascination with happenings in the Middle East. At the same time, it displays a myopic view of the pivotal role the nation of Israel plays in the unfolding of eschatology, concerning expectations of the end of the present age, human history, or the world itself.

Still others are dismissive of events surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because of the historically complex nature of this struggle. After all, this small strip of land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea has been a focal point of unrest for over two thousand years. It was conquered by Arab Muslims in the seventh century. It was host to the Crusades between 1050-1300. It was conquered by the Ottoman empire in the sixteenth century. It still is revered to this day as “holy land” by three major world religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Following the horrors of the Holocaust, in 1948, the State of Israel was established. Then, during and immediately after the Six-Day War of 1967,

over 250,000 Palestinians fled from the West Bank and Gaza when these territories were captured by the Israelis. Despite several local skirmishes since then, Jewish occupation of Israel remained stable until 1973 when, during the Yom Kippur War, she was attacked by Egypt, Syria and other Arab nations. The most recent terrorist attack by Hamas against Israel in October of 2023, exposed once again the vulnerability of the Jewish people to the ongoing threat of annihilation. At the same time, this atrocity has revealed some rather interesting stage-setting facts from a biblical viewpoint.

Students of bible prophecy may recognize the current attacks on Israel as yet one more domino in the foreshadowing of what is to come in terms of the end times. In Ezekiel 37 and 38, we are told that after the regathering of Israel, the nation would fall under attack by a large force to the north called Magog. Some have identified Magog as Russia. While no one can say with absolute certainty, the same passage of scripture announces that one of its allies, Persia, will march with it against Israel. Persia is the ancient name for modern Iran.

The recent war in Ukraine has fundamentally changed the Russian-Iranian relationship. Many



say the level of cooperation between these two countries has now reached unprecedented levels, and that there has been a significant increase in shared military capability and weaponry.

Today, Iran has been designated by the U.S. government as the “foremost state sponsor of terrorism.” It is the largest financial supporter of Hamas, and its chief supplier of the rockets and funding needed to launch the recent attacks upon Israel from its base in Gaza.

In a poll conducted in 2018 by Christian research organization LifeWay Research, a staggering 80 percent of evangelicals agreed with the statement that the creation of the modern state of Israel was a “fulfillment of Bible prophecy that shows we are getting closer to the return of Jesus Christ.”

Why should what’s happening today in Israel matter? Because it represents the clearest indication of the unfolding of biblical prophecy. While it is the humanitarian crisis that has drawn the news media’s attention to this war, these events portend of a far greater significance for those with a biblical understanding of end times.

— *Larry L. Crain*
www.crainlaw.legal



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Taking God at His Word

Over the last couple of months, I have written about the power of our tongue and how our speech is an overflow of what is in our heart. In the Christmas season, it is a good time to zero in on Mary, the mother of Jesus and her confession.

We cannot discuss the important message Mary received without mentioning the messenger that brought it to her. We are familiar with the beginning of the Christmas story where Gabriel comes to Mary and tells her that she will conceive a child and proclaims that God’s Word will become flesh.

Gabriel is one of God’s mighty angels that we know by name, and he shows up both in the Old Testament and New Testament. Gabriel means “Strength of God” or “Man of God”. He is one of the prominent figures we always see in the nativity scenes. In Luke, Gabriel states he is an angel who “stands in the presence of God, and he has been sent to bring the good news” (Luke 1:19). He must have been a sight to behold because whenever he shows up, the first words out of his mouth are, “do not be afraid”.

Mary does not doubt what Gabriel tells her; she asks for more clarification. When he tells her, she ponders this in her heart. In other words, she allows this seed to take residence as she mediates on what had been spoken. She agrees with what was spoken and takes God at His Word. Luke 1:38, “And Mary said, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.’ And the angel departed from her”. We know that Mary believed God’s Word because upon receiving the news, she visits Elizabeth and shares, meaning she speaks what is on the inside of her heart -the good news. Her speech reflected what she believed in her heart.

Before this incidence of Gabriel coming to Mary, he visits Elizabeth’s husband Zacharias, and tells him that he and Elizabeth will bear a son. However, Zacharias does not ask for clarification, but instead he doubts what has been spoken. Rather than believing and taking God at His word, Zach-



arias gives all the reasons why it will not work. Ultimately, he focuses on his circumstances instead of God’s Word. This is why God shut his mouth for nine months so he could not speak anymore. God did not want Zacharias’ speech to undo his miracle. Both stories have God’s messenger Gabriel revealing God’s plan – however, Mary believed and confessed it to others while Zacharias doubted and temporarily lost his ability to speak.

May our confessions this Season be closer to Mary’s response of believing in miracles instead of doubt and unbelief like Zacharias. God’s Word is full of His promises and truth, may we take Him at His Word.

Merry Christmas!

— *Rhonda L. Smart, rhondalsmart@gmail.com*

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Are You Ready for WAR?

You try and try, but sometimes your goal seems to get farther away. Maybe it's a project at work, remodeling a house, or getting in shape. Every time you seem to make progress something kills your momentum. You might say, "I feel like I take two steps forward and one step backwards."

There are many whose Christian walk is that way. They get in a groove walking with the Lord and are moving forward in grace and maturity, and then...WHAM! Something knocks them backwards. Often it is past failures or a particular sin. Satan pounces and convinces Christians they are not worthy of God's grace. He recalls those sins and whispers to our souls, "If people knew what you've done, you'd be exposed as a hypocrite."

Once that thought is planted in your mind you often drift back into guilt and struggle to understand why Jesus would forgive you of anything. That's when it's time to make W.A.R.!

- Wash in the blood of Christ.
- Armor up for the fight.
- Refill with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Too often Christians think that when they come to Christ it is a "one-and-done" kind of decision. But think about it. You don't take one bath or shower and think you're clean for the rest of your life, do you? Jesus said to take up your cross daily. He knew the fight against the fleshly desires of this world would require daily confession of sin; daily recognition of our dependence on Him; daily committing our lives to walk in obedience to His commands.

The way we succeed in all these things is to go back to the saving, healing, cleansing blood of Christ that was shed on the cross to liberate us from the slavery of sin and death. Remember? "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Kill Satan's whispers by washing in the blood!

And then armor up. We cannot expect to win a spiritual battle using the conventional weapons of religious activity. We need the supernatural weapons provided by God in Ephesians 6:10-18 if we are to "stand against the schemes



of the devil." We are in a fight. Don't get lulled to sleep by an easy life. Armor up!

And finally, you've got to refill with the power of the Holy Spirit. War is exhausting and can wear you down. You may have been washed in the blood and be dressed for battle, but if you forget the Lord and fight in your own power, you will lose. Stay "charged" by frequent prayer and Bible reading. Those are the two primary means through which the Holy Spirit keeps you fresh. Even when the struggle is unbearable, prayer and Scripture will sustain you in the fight.

So are you a "two steps forward and one step back" kind of Christian? Don't be. Wake up every day and get ready for WAR!

— Mark W. Koch is an Author, inspirational and sought after speaker, and Hollywood film producer. To order a Free Copy of, "The First Hour" for Men 30-Day Journey, Visit www.thefirsthour.com and use promo code NCF



A Message From The Author For Men:

The Bible tells us that God wants to bless our lives in ways that we cannot imagine. As our Heavenly Father, He wants to fulfill His dream for our lives. So many times we miss God's best because we don't give Him the opportunity to guide and direct us on a daily basis. Giving God an opportunity to fulfill His dream for our lives is what The First Hour for Men is all about.

Marriages are being healed, relationships with children are being restored, financial burdens are being lifted, miracles are happening. God is showing up and showing off in all areas of the lives of the men who are earnestly seeking Him and spending their first hour with God daily. God promises to answer the prayers of the righteous who diligently seek him. I challenge you to find out for yourself!

May God begin to abundantly bless you!

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Here's what one of our advertisers has to say about their experience with *Nashville Christian Family*.

My wife and I are 2nd generation owners of Molly Maid of South Davidson, Williamson and Maury counties. We offer residential and light commercial cleaning services. We have been working with Robert Stringfellow for many years and have really enjoyed getting to know him, he has worked closely with us to meet our marketing needs in Nashville Christian Family Magazine. The content and articles in the magazine have been very informative and uplifting and they always have a great message and provide hope and inspiration.

— Daron and Maricela Farrar, Owners



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



Cherise made a few wrong choices that ended her experiencing homelessness. While she was living on the street someone said this name, “Salvation Army”, which lead Cherise to our Gap Housing program. Cherise says “It was really a relief to have somewhere to stay. They helped me to find housing in the area, with support groups, with food...they made me feel like a family, like I had support here. They helped me to get my own place. They help with the deposit. They also let me know when I move out that they will help me for up to a year.

As a part of our LIFNAV program, our retention staff stays in touch and follows up with our residents even after they are successfully living in their own homes. “That continued support, I’m very thankful to the Salvation Army. I feel like they saved my life and my children’s life. I have kids, so they’re helping me to rebuild that part of my life. Anybody that needs help or you feel like you’re hopeless, The Salvation Army is the place that you can go and get help.”

— Misty Ratcliff, Development and Communications Manager,
The Salvation Army Nashville Area Command, uss.salvationarmy.org

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Hair Health: Factors to Consider!

For many, hair loss is more than just a cosmetic inconvenience; it's a puzzle that demands solving, carrying both emotional weight and reflections of one's health. With a tapestry of potential causes, each strand of lost hair could be a clue leading to one of the numerous underlying conditions affecting millions worldwide. While there are myriad reasons one might experience hair loss, three predominant factors frequently emerge at the core of this issue. Whether it's a matter of genetics or an indicator of an autoimmune disorder, the journey to uncovering the source of hair thinning requires careful consideration and often, a multidisciplinary approach.

In the intricate dance of bodily functions where each player performs a critical role, hair health can be a telling sign of a broader narrative unfolding within. From the silent whispers of genetic codes to the overt signs of autoimmune battles, understanding the nuances of hair loss is a step towards not only aesthetic restoration but also holistic well-being. As we delve into the common causes of hair loss, it becomes evident that a personalized diagnosis is not just beneficial but necessary for effective treatment and recovery.

Genetic Factors:

Genetics is a common thread in hair loss for both men and women, often manifesting as a receding hairline, thinning at the temples, or loss at the crown. To determine if genetics plays a part, a DNA test or a specialized analysis such as the TrichoTest™ may be necessary. This test can provide insights into your genetic predisposition to hair loss and help tailor a personalized treatment plan.



Scalp Conditions:

Scalp diseases such as eczema and psoriasis are not just skin-deep issues; they can also cause hair to thin. A careful examination of the scalp and a consultation with a hair loss specialist or dermatologist are essential steps for an accurate diagnosis. Since conditions like psoriasis can be autoimmune in nature, early treatment is vital to prevent the potential development of additional autoimmune disorders.

Underlying Health Conditions:

A comprehensive lab test is a gateway to uncovering hidden health issues that may contribute to hair loss. Many people overlook these tests, but they are instrumental in detecting deficiencies in vital nutrients like iron, ferritin, and



vitamin D, all of which are crucial for hair growth and follicle health. These nutrients need to be at optimal levels, as even normal ranges on the lower end may not suffice to prevent hair loss. In cases of severe deficiency, particularly with vitamin D, more intensive treatments like IV infusions or high-dose supplements might be prescribed before transitioning to a maintenance regimen.

Traction Alopecia (stress hair loss):

This form of hair loss stems from constant stress on hair strands, whether from habitual twirling or pulling or from hairstyles that tightly pull the hair like ponytails, braids, or weaves. Recognizing and addressing traction alopecia early is critical since prolonged tension can lead to irreversible damage to hair follicles.

Armed with an understanding of these factors, it's imperative to transition from awareness to action. A tailored approach, grounded in thorough diagnostic work, ensures that the hair treatment plan addresses the specific needs of each individual. From precise DNA testing to comprehensive blood panels that assess thyroid function and nutritional levels, the tools at our disposal can illuminate the path to identifying the root cause of your hair loss.

If you find yourself among the many grappling with hair loss, remember that you are not alone, and solutions are within reach. We encourage you to seek expert advice and take a proactive stance on your hair health. At HPIHair Partners, our dedicated hair loss specialists, equipped with the latest in diagnostic technology and treatment methods, stand ready to assist you in your journey towards hair restoration and holistic health.

Don't let uncertainty dictate your hair's future. Contact HPIHair Partners today, and let us guide you through a personalized path to hair recovery and well-being.

If you are experiencing any of the causes listed above or are concerned about your hair, contact HPIHair Partners today to meet with a Trichologist. www.HPIHairPartners.com, 615-662-8722 or info@hpihairpartners.com

— Kimberly Vaughn, Advanced Trichologist, Hair Loss Coach and Certified Nutritional Coach, www.hpihairpartners.com



Derma-scopy view of the scalp. Left image is before micro needling treatment. Right image shows the new hair growth after 6 professional micro needling sessions.

SPECIAL FEATURE

“Santa, I’m Not a Reindeer!”

Reflections on 40 Years in the Red Suit

Visiting Santa Claus is a cherished tradition that creates enduring memories for families and the man in the red suit alike. While photographs capture these moments for most, Santa often relies on the power of memory. In the tapestry of recollections from nearly 40 years donning the iconic attire, certain encounters stand out, each revealing the depth of human connection and the impact of the red-suited figure on people's lives.



Among the many memories, one particular moment involving a spirited 5-year-old named Kaitlyn stands out. Adorned with a reindeer antler headband, Kaitlyn approached Santa's workshop with all the innocence of childhood. Before she even reached the festive setting, Santa, prompted by his mischievous elf helpers, declared, "There's Santa's reindeer, Kaitlyn!" To this, Kaitlyn, hands on hips, retorted, "Santa, I'm not a reindeer, I'm just a kid!" Her correction, delivered with the unwavering confidence of a child, led to laughter and a delightful conversation about Christmas and Santa's reindeer. Today, as Kaitlyn likely enters her mid-twenties, Santa wonders if she remembers that magical encounter that left an indelible mark on his heart.

The Unspoken Messages: Reflecting on Kaitlyn's innocence, Santa realizes a profound truth: what we say may not always align with what others hear or understand. In the mind of this child, Santa saw her as a reindeer, and this misinterpretation prompts contemplation about the unintended messages we convey.

Heartwarming Connections: Santa's memories extend beyond the whimsical encounters, delving into deeper, heartwarming connections. From bonding with a specially-abled friend and her elderly father to comforting a first-grader rescued from an abusive home, the red-suited figure becomes a symbol of comfort, understanding, and compassion.

Santa's red suit becomes a conduit for impactful conversations, such as the young man whose plea for his father to quit smoking led to a life-changing dialogue. On hearing this young man's trembling voice, concerned that his father may die from cancer as his grandfather did, Santa told the father. Two weeks later, the father reported that he had quit that very day of our conversation.

The joy and privilege of serving in the red suit lie not just in the presents and drawings but in the opportunity to share meaningful conversations and prayers with those who cross Santa's path. Amidst the ornaments, drawings, and cookies, Santa often poses a crucial question to the children: "What's the most important part of Christmas?" The joy that fills Santa's heart comes from the heartfelt responses, especially when children declare "JESUS," reinforcing the true meaning of the holiday. As Santa reflects on almost four decades of spreading joy and love during the Christmas season, the memories of Kaitlyn and countless others linger in his heart. The red suit becomes a vessel for connections, conversations, and shared moments that transcend the surface of holiday festivities. Santa finds joy not just in the traditions and gifts but in the enduring relationships formed with families who return year after year, becoming an extended family of their own. Each encounter, whether whimsical or profound, contributes to the rich tapestry of Santa's memories, reminding us all of the magic that Christmas holds in the hearts of those who believe. Above all, Santa wants to remind everyone that the greatest gift lies in the Love of Christ.

— 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 phone 615.496.1368

ASK THE EXPERT

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Special Needs Trust Funds – What Is Allowed?

Q: My wife has a special needs trust. We'd like to use some of her money to pay for catering for a Holiday party this year. We want to invite about 75 people. Because of her disability, she cannot do the cooking on her own. She needs assistance. We found a caterer who can provide the food, serve, and clean-up for \$2,500. Is this an allowable expense to be paid by her trust?



A: I wish I could say yes, but I cannot. The law states that the money in the special needs trust can only be used for the sole benefit of the beneficiary – your wife. May I suggest you continue with your plans for the Holiday party but make it a potluck. This will reduce the time your family spends preparing a meal and everyone will take their dishes home after the party.

— Darlene A. Kemp, MPH, MBA-HCM,
Executive Director, Vista Points Special Needs Trusts
www.vistapoints.org
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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 helped 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.

— Doug Griffin

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



FAMILY FLICKS

Brought to you by: **Wang Vision Institute** • www.DrMingWang.com



Churches And Hosts Needed: For Free "Sight" Film Show In Your City And State

The film "Sight" (based on Dr. Ming Wang's autobiography "From Darkness to Sight") has won the top prize (best picture) at the 50th ICVM International Christian Film Award, and a top prize (Best Narrative Feature Premiere) at Heartland International Film Festival.



If you know a church in middle Tennessee, or a host outside middle Tenn. who is interested in bringing the free "Sight" film show to his/her city, please contact Dr. Ming Wang, 615-525-3314, drwang@wangvisioninstitute.com, www.drmingwang.com

Just like the recent film "Sound of Freedom", another film about freedom and faith, which was not released by Hollywood for 5 years, "Sight" is facing the same fate. We want to show the film to as folks as possible, so we can gather the data of attendees and show Hollywood that Americans do care about freedom and faith and seeking of common ground in today's unprecedented polarized nation!

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.

About Dr. Ming Wang, MD, PhD

Dr. Ming Wang, Harvard & MIT (MD, magna cum laude); PhD (laser physics), is a world-renowned laser eye surgeon, philanthropist, and a co-founder of the non-profit Common Ground Network.

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.

The 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 throughout the world in nearly every nation, and millions 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.

To reach Dr. Ming Wang:
drwang@wangvisioninstitute.com,
www.drmingwang.com, 615-525-3314

— Leona Walthorn

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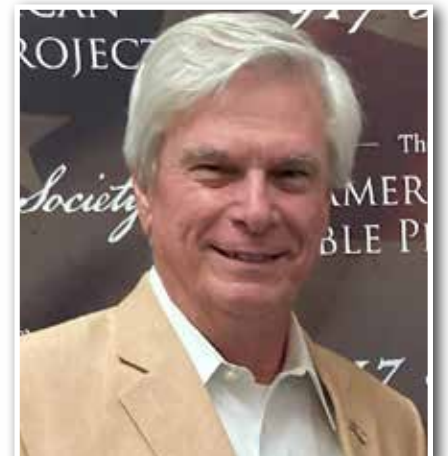
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Christmas Books for the Whole Family

We can make a big difference in home discipleship by finding and reading wholesome but well-written Christmas books for the whole family. Below are some recommendations, many of which are written by local authors. Move over music industry, for some talented and best-selling authors live right here in the Nashville area.

For the Little Ones

My Advent Nativity by Tama Fortner

Each day of Advent, the parent reads a small portion of the Christmas story, and the child adds one or two pieces to create the Nativity scene. These solid figures are perfect for little hands.

Sounding Joy by Ellie Holcomb

Amidst the bustle and fun of the Christmas season, this picture book creates a moment for families to ponder the beauty and hope of Christmas that always gives us a reason to sing.

Brown Baby Jesus by Dorena Williamson

Like the colorful threads that make up a beautiful cloth, Brown Baby Jesus brings together the characters and stories leading to Jesus—showing how God included many races and nations in the story we celebrate each year.

Night Night, Angel: A Sleepy Christmas Celebration by Amy Parker

This delightful read-aloud for preschoolers and toddlers gives families a fun way to say goodnight during the Advent season.

Devotionals

Simply Christmas Devotional by Tama Fortner

This thirty-one-day undated devotional brings a bit of calm to each day through a short reflection and Scripture, together with points to ponder and fun ideas for simplifying your Christmas traditions.

How Great is Our God by Louis Giglio (with Tama Fortner)

This is not a Christmas devotional but an excellent gift for your six to ten-year-old. Kids will discover the awe-inspiring connection between the natural world and the God who created it.

The Christmas Devotional: Hope and Humor for the Holidays by Michelle Medlock Adams and Andy Clapp

Joy and humor are threaded like little white Christmas lights throughout the devotional. This is the perfect recipe to slow the craziness, warm your heart, and satisfy your soul with the true light of the season—Jesus.

Fiction Books

Christmas at Carnton by Tamera Alexander

Set against the backdrop and history of the Carnton Plantation in Franklin, Tennessee, Christmas at Carnton is a story of hope renewed and faith restored at Christmas.

A Baxter Family Christmas by Karen Kingsbury

This heartwarming story brings together two families in the midst of tragedy and loss, all with the help of one very special child. Get cozy and read this life-changing holiday tale of love and hope after tragedy.

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

This classic is a must-read, even if your family has seen the movie. Just under 150 pages, consider reading this together as a family.

— Sally Cressman writes about faith, family, and home on her website, www.sallycressman.com. You'll receive FREE "Christmas Devotions for the Family" when you sign up. Connect with her on Instagram @sacressman.

MOMENTS FOR MOMS

The Greatest Gift

I don't know about you, but my son Charlie is one of the greatest gifts that I have ever received. The fact that the Lord chose ME, to be his mom still brings me to tears. The love that I have for him is unconditional. No matter if he is being his sweet, charming self or if he is really showing his "toddler" side, my love does not change for him.



If we stop and think about the fact that the Lord loves our children even more than we do, it is overwhelming. And you know what mama, He loves YOU that much as well. He loves you when you are at your very best and he loves you when you are at your worst. He loves you when you are feeling fulfilled in your journey of motherhood, and He loves you when you are crying in your closet because you feel so alone.

He sees you, He knows you, and He loves you. Somehow this journey of motherhood that we are on can be the most fulfilling and the absolute hardest job all at the same time. I don't know about you but there are so many days that I feel so lonely, even though I am never alone... literally NEVER. Can you relate?

The beauty in it all is that we have the greatest gift ever to turn to and that is the love of the Lord and the strength of the Lord that can carry us through. To know that He is with us every moment of our days and loves us no matter what, is the greatest gift. Even when we feel alone, we can turn to Him. When we feel selfish for wanting to be alone, even for just ONE shower, we can turn to Him.

A mama's job is never ending. Whether you work out of the house or inside your home, our job never ends. We are constantly pouring out, giving, cooking, doing laundry, and the list goes on and on... we need to be filled up as well. I don't know about you, but in this season of life with a toddler, my quiet time looks so different than it used to. Some days I feel good to just get a verse in before my little guy wakes up! But that time with the Lord, is the only time that can really fill us up.

No matter if you just have 2 minutes or 2 hours to spend with the Lord, just do it. Take whatever time you have and turn to Him and talk to Him throughout your day. It is so easy to let the enemy distract us or make us feel guilty for not spending "enough" time with the Lord. Do not believe that lie. Turn to the Lord, let Him fill you up and pour His never-ending, never-changing, unconditional love on you. It truly is the greatest gift that we can receive.

— Ashley McClain is a Wife to Bobby, Mom to Charlie, General Manager of CTN-WHTN Nashville and Host of What If? Moments for Moms airing nationally on the Christian Television Network. Currently surviving on Grace and Coffee... lots and lots of Coffee.



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Find a Need and Fill It

They were the words no parent wants to hear from the doctor: “Your son has 20 minutes to live... In fact, with all his complications and physical challenges, if by some miracle he does live, your son will never function as a normal person and will likely be severely handicapped his entire life.” Those were the words Milton and Eunice Barfoot heard on that cold, rainy day in 1955 in Seattle, Washington.

What happened next is an absolute miracle that God performed in the weak and struggling 8 month old little body of Phil Barfoot. By the time his parents Rev. and Mrs. Barfoot arrived at the hospital, Phil was completely and totally healed! An extraordinary story that is well-documented in the “day-timer” of Milton Barfoot. Phil calls it “God’s favor.” “I never cease to be amazed at the favor of God. It’s something I talk about and celebrate every day,” Phil says with a sense of awe and wonder.

Since that dark, overcast day in Seattle, Washington, God’s favor has followed Phil and his family every step of the way. A true Christian entrepreneur, Phil attributes much of his success to a phrase he learned from Robert Schuller while doing his internship at the Crystal Cathedral: “The secret to success is to find a need and fill it, find a hurt and heal it; find a problem and solve it.”

Phil has spent his entire career doing exactly that. After serving as Minister of Music in a large southern California church during his freshman year at Southern California College (now Vanguard University), he got a call from the Dean, who told him that the Chairman of the Choral Department had just resigned and the University would like Phil to run the department until they found a replacement. So, as a 19 year old student, Phil “filled a need” and helped the University while learning more that special year than any year of his life!

In his early 20’s, while a Minister of Music in Alhambra, California, the church was in need of a worship musical that was contemporary in style and that featured the choir as worship leaders.

Phil wrote a ground-breaking musical called *In His Presence* that was published by Manna Music and broke all sales records for the company as churches around the world embraced it, filling a need for authentic, celebrative worship.

In the mid-80’s, churches needed a more effective and efficient method of showing lyrics to the congregation of the new, popular worship songs that were becoming staples in the worship of thousands of churches. In true Barfoot fashion, Phil jumped in and provided full-color pictorial worship slides that “filled a need” and were used in churches all around the world. Phil says with passion: “Win-win are two words that describe any and all actions of our companies. It is very important to us that everything we do is a win-win for all parties.”



Sheri and Phil Barfoot

In 1995, Phil sold both Phil Barfoot Music Company and SilverSpring Music Group to the Benson Company in Nashville. As part of the sale, Phil became Vice President of Benson for 3 years. Desperately missing the challenges and daily excitement of running an entrepreneurial company, Phil then sensed a need to inspire and equip growing Music Ministries around the globe and created *The Ultimate Idea Book for Music Ministry*, which contained 500 great ideas for Music Ministries from churches around the country.



Phil and Sheri have three children, Amy, Aaron and Adam, and two grandchildren, Ellie and Austin. The photo on the left shows Adam (left) with his wife, Jamie, and Aaron (right). The photo on the right is Amy and her husband, Steve and their children, Ellie and Austin.

This concept flourished and soon the brand expanded to include dozens of *Ultimate Idea Seminars*, *The Ultimate Idea Tape Club*, and *The Ultimate Idea Book for Music Ministry Volume 2*, a 9 ½ pound exhaustive manual, which included 1104 great ideas for Music Ministry from churches across America.

Phil has always had a passion to get the choir “outside the walls of the local church” in ministry around the world. To further realize this vision, Phil formed Christian Copyright Alliance, a company that recorded over 100 local church choirs per year, expanding the ministry of local church choirs literally around the globe.

In 2010, Phil and Sheri were asked to put a Holy Land trip together. After calling a few friends, that first trip resulted in over 250 travelers experiencing the Holy Land and performing Christmas concerts right in the heart of Bethlehem.

Again, sensing the need to expand the ministries of the local church choir, Phil and Sheri then started Celebration Concert Tours International, which has taken over 20,000 travelers on the following trips around the world: *Christmas in New York* at Carnegie Hall – 14 years, *Celebrate America* at Kennedy Center – 7 years, *Music City Celebration* at the Ryman Auditorium – 4 years, the *Branson PraiseFest* at the Mansion Theater – 3 years, *Worship in the Holy Land* – 10 trips per year, *The Best of Italy* – 7 years, *Music and Ministry in Eastern Europe* – 5 years, *Discover Spain and Portugal* – 1 year, *Experience Britain and France* – 3 years, *The Best of Scotland and Ireland* – 3 years, *Footsteps of Paul Greece Tour* – 1 year, numerous cruises with artists such as Sandi Patty, Phillips, Craig and Dean, Geron Davis and Kindred Souls, among many others.

In late 2019, Phil and Sheri noticed there was a huge need in the Christian Community to provide a staffing company that matched great ministry talent with churches in a timely, efficient and effective manner.

Thus, Celebration Ministry Staffing was born. CMS has quickly become one of the fastest growing church staffing companies in America. The concept is unique, in that the company is built on long-term relationships and a team of advisors that represent some of the finest Worship Pastors, Pastors and Executive Pastors in America, all joining forces to help each church find the finest staff members for their positions.

From 2006 to 2021, Phil served as a Composer and Consultant for Lifeway Worship in Nashville, Tennessee. In 2021, when Lifeway and most major Christian Music publishers closed their church music publishing operations, Phil and Sheri saw the obvious need to fill the major gap left by the exit of these companies. Thus, CCT Music was born to continue to provide quality choral music for the local church choir. CCT Music has partnered with Semsen Music as their major distributor to the church market.

2023 has seen huge growth in this company as they released a Christmas Collection titled *The Best of Christmas*, along with 25 choir anthems under the new label “NewWorship Community”, featuring 25 arrangements per year of the best and finest new worship songs being sung by churches around the world.

For years, Phil and Sheri and business partner, Daewoo Kim, saw the need for a state-of-the-art, premium quality recording studio in Nashville. In September of 2021, Phil and Sheri purchased a top-of-the-line Carl Tatz-designed studio they named Studio 78 (the periodic table number for platinum), which has quickly become one of the most sought-after recording facilities in Nashville. Much of the choral and instrumental music released to the church market is recorded there. Located on the first floor of the Barfoot’s home in Brentwood, Tenn., the byline of Studio 78 is “a world-class studio with a hometown feel.”

Phil recently completed his fourth devotional book which features 365 daily devotionals written by 240 premiere Worship Pastors from all across America. The fourth book is titled *Enter His Gates*, which sold over 8,000 copies the first day of release.

Every once in a while, Phil still comes home and proclaims to Sheri, “I have a great idea!” Sheri then rolls up her sleeves and holds on for the ride. Sheri puts it all in perspective... “Find a need and fill it,” “Win-win,” and “God’s favor” are concepts that live every day in the walls of our home.”



The Celebration Concert Tours (CCT) Team: Joey Guarino, Ken Barker, Ben Griffin, Brian Powers, Daewoo Kim, Clay McBroom, Shannon Rollins, Brandy Donoho (not pictured – Scott Lee)



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They now anxiously await the next chapter on the journey.

— Benjamin Lee Griffin

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Christmas At Grandma's

Christmas is when a child's fantasies are rewarded for a few fleeting moments of one magic morning. It opens with that indescribable thrill of waking up and realizing it is THE DAY. And then the wonder and excitement to find in the living room that HE had indeed come.

My childhood Christmases were even more magical because of where we spent them. My father's parents were deceased, and the "home place" of my mother's parents was relatively close, though out in "the country" in Hickman County, Tennessee (over Duck River from Shady Grove, and just over the hills from Primm Springs). So, every December 24th, my mom and dad and us five young 'uns trekked to Jones Valley by Leatherwood Creek for Christmas with my grandma and grandpa. (Properly pronounced gra'ma and gra'pa in Southern vernacular.)

My grandparents' home was huge to me then. It had existed from eternity past on the side of the grassy hill framed by two towering maple trees that spanned the chert drive. Holding back the edge of the yard was an ancient wall of stacked limestone running along the dusty country lane. The house was full of shelves, nooks, and closets with interesting artifacts like chamberpots and my grandfather's army uniform.

It was homespun and worn compared to our suburban house in Nashville, yet more able to handle wear. Its painted brown floors, the kitchen linoleum, and colorful rugs accepted the scuffs of a farmer's boots. On its walls hung simple pastoral framings that proved the home was loved. The pot-bellied stove in the main room, rusty yet black and surrounded by crumbs of inky-shiny coal and errant ashes, swallowed the muffled roar of burning carbon. A gentle warmth radiated throughout the room.

To the left of the stove in the corner, stood the faded white refrigerator with the round edges; old as Edison. Inside was the mason jar with the brass top that held the precious yellow-white nectar called boiled custard. To this day, it's just not Christmas without boiled custard and coconut cake.

Grandma and Grandpa had cedar Christmas trees cut from the woods behind the house. Their tree was always tall and tubby with glass balls, tinsel, plastic icicles, and strings of those large colored light bulbs. Cedar doesn't have the perfect cone shape and spreading boughs of the spruce trees in Christmas cards or on TV. Funny how I so wanted a "pretty" tree back then, but now I miss the cedar tree at Grandma's.

The kids slept upstairs in creaky iron beds piled with homemade quilts. The sheets were ice cold when we first got in because the only heat upstairs was what leaked up from below. But soon the beds became a toasty womb. No



rest this side of heaven matches the pleasant dreams of a child on a cold Christmas night tucked beneath Grandma's quilts.

Grandma's cooking filled the long heavy dining room table. Christmas Eve dinner combined a fresh fried hen from the chicken coop out back, dressing or potatoes (or both) with gravy, a half dozen vegetables and desserts, and cornbread sticks. Christmas morning breakfast included eggs scrambled with milk, sausage patties, and silver-dollar size biscuits perfect for grandma's canned blackberry preserves from jars with paraffin on top. Grandma served "Donald Duck" brand orange juice that was so tart it left your lips pursed.

One Christmas after we opened presents, Dad asked if I heard something from the "front" room. There I found my K&B electric train humming along its circuit of track. Unquestionably, the best toy I ever received.

Only one ingredient could possibly increase a child's Christmas joy: snow! But typically the snows of middle Tennessee didn't coincide with Yuletide. However, one fantastic year it snowed on Christmas Eve! The surprise snowstorm forced Mom to stop at a gas station and have chains put on the tires before we even left Nashville. That particular year, Dad came separately in the company truck to bring a clothes dryer for Grandma.



The snowfall was heavy and deep. The view from the house was like a smooth white sheet spread down the front yard, over the stone wall, and across the road. It leaped over the dark rushing waters of Leatherwood Creek into the dry cornfields beyond. Nightfall came and Dad's headlights illuminated the falling flakes in a swirling halo as he crossed the wooden bridge over the creek and pushed through the drifts up and into the yard. Now the Christmas story was complete!

Grandma's house for Christmas—even now many decades later I close my eyes and see it, and almost catch a whiff of biscuits baking. Thank you, Grandma and Grandpa Boehms, for these rich memories from a lifetime ago. Enable me, Father God, to give my own grandchildren memories they will treasure throughout their days.

— William Boehms Norton (author of *Sojourn on the Veld, a memoir of South Africa*)





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The Communion of Saints

The word “saint” has slightly different connotations in the Catholic Church. A saint is anyone who has earned a spot in Heaven. These souls form the “great cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1). Those who the Church recognizes as having an exceptional degree of holiness, likeness, or closeness to God are given the title of “Saint”. The title denotes a person who has been formally canonized—that is, who after their earthly death, is officially and authoritatively declared a Saint, by the church as a holder of the “Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven”, and is therefore believed to be in Heaven by the grace of God. The first canonized Saint was by a pope was St. Ulrich of Augsburg. Pope John XV formally canonized him in the year 993. Prior to that, Saints were proclaimed by Bishops, based on “vox populi” the voice of the people, and the exact number of saints remains difficult to quantify, with some estimates exceeding 10,000. However, we do believe the first Saint to grace the gold gates of Heaven was St. Stephen, the first martyr of Jesus’ Church.

The completed prayer, “The Apostle’s Creed” dates back to the third century with the earliest drafts being written in 150 to 180 AD. This prayer was originally used as a verbal testimony of what the followers of Christ believed. The early church fol-

lowers were a compilation of converted Jews, pagans, and various religious sects, all having their own beliefs. For about a thousand years, the Church was united under this written belief system. Today, Christianity is once again made up of various beliefs. For the focus of this writing, we will consider the final paragraph, that speaks to the power of prayer and who can pray for us.

“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen!”

The early Christians felt it was important to affirm certain beliefs found in the teachings of Jesus. His documented teachings were vastly different than other religions of the time; emphasizing love and forgiveness for all; thus, the word catholic, meaning universal. Before and after his teaching sessions, it is recorded that he commonly went off alone to pray.



Most of the previous paragraph is comprised of messages Jesus spoke about repeatedly, however one phrase was not talked about; instead, it was lived out. Though there is no written record of Jesus mentioning the phrase “communion of Saints”, he did provide us positive proof that the Saints and Prophets who came before him are still alive and worthy of being consulted with.

Here on earth, just as we ask our earthly family and friends to pray for us, we can do the same to those who are no longer with us. We can also pray for those who died, asking the living Christ to pardon their past sins and to bring them into His heavenly home.

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

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PARENTING POINTS

Giving Kids of Divorce the Greatest Gift Of All... Emotional Freedom to Love Everyone

When kids live through the dissolution of their parents' marriage, they experience what we call the "loyalty bind" that often makes it hard to be honest about their feelings. When kids are with their mom, they may not feel they can talk about their dad and when they are with their dad, they can't talk about their mom. Often, they pick up emotional "cues" from each parent when they get upset or say something harsh about the other parent. Kids will internalize the words they hear about each other and if they are negative, they really feel the sting of those words. Handoffs are hard on everyone – the time that bio parents meet to exchange the kids and quite often these are met with emotional triggers for everyone.



Here are a few ideas to help the children have a stress-free experience:

1. Bring a friend or fun family member with you to the handoff so that when you wave goodbye to your children, you have someone to go to dinner with or see a movie. Waving goodbye is an on-going experience for coparents, but it is especially difficult during the holidays; having a third party along for the ride can be a positive distraction for everyone.
2. When you say goodbye to the kids, don't say "I am going to miss you" – instead, say "I know you will have fun and I look forward to seeing you when you come back." The second phrase is much easier for kids to experience without feeling guilty about being away from their parents.
3. Plan to do something meaningful each day of the week when your kids are at the other parent's home. Being intentional with your time will not only make it easier on you, but it will also be fun to share with your kids when you speak by phone. *Kids don't need emotional stress worrying about their other parent being alone – that is not their job.
4. Consider how you can serve others when the kids are away. Many non-profits have a variety of ways you can volunteer during the holidays to serve others. Try to serve each year, with and without your kids. Not only is that a great distraction from the alone time, but it makes an important difference for other people.
5. Make a "fun plan" for the actual holiday – consider opening your home to other single parents or older adults who may not have any family nearby. A day of eating, playing board games and maybe even enjoying a holiday movie together is a wonderful way to create connections with others in a similar season of life.
6. Enjoy celebrating each holiday with your kids, even if they are on other days of the week. Kids love the experience of the holidays and quite honestly, kids don't care if the gifts come to them on Christmas Day or on December 20th or Jan 2nd –

Be creative and intentional to allow your shared children to enjoy BOTH sides of their family. Use words of affirmation and encouragement to be positive about all the experiences they will have at the "other house" – they will appreciate the freedom to love everyone... that is THE best gift for children of divorced homes.

— Tammy Daughtry, MMFT / Founder,
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The 5 Best 10-Minute Cleaning Routines

Cleaning in one big push once a week can feel overwhelming. Breaking down your chores into five manageable lists for each weekday makes cleaning easier to tackle—plus, you leave your weekends free! Ready to change up your cleaning routine? Here's how to clean your house in 10 minutes a day for a clean house by Friday.

Monday: Bathrooms

Truth be told, cleaning the bathroom may take longer than 10 minutes, especially if you have more than one. To speed things up, assign your kids to clean their own bathrooms once a week (if they're old enough). Here's how to clean the bathroom quickly and efficiently:

- Clear off the counters.
- Dust the light fixtures, towel racks, shelves, baseboards, and other surfaces.
- Spray cleaner into the shower/bathtub and let it soak.
- In the meantime, clean the counter, sink, mirror, and outside of the toilet.
- Wipe down the shower/bathtub.
- Scrub the toilet.

Tuesday: Dusting

Make Tuesday dusting day! Here are some tips to save time while dusting:

- Dust before you vacuum so you can suck up fallen debris from the floor afterward.
- Work from top to bottom.

• Focus on the main surfaces so you can complete this chore quickly. Save more thorough dusting for deep cleaning days.

• Dust with a microfiber cloth. Mist it lightly with water from a spray bottle so it can pick up dust without leaving moisture streaks behind.

Wednesday: Vacuum

This chore is best done after dusting, so be sure to keep these two in order! Make your cleaning endeavors go smoothly with these vacuuming tips:

- Prepare the room by picking up loose items off the floor and moving furniture and rugs as needed.
- Invest in versatile vacuum options. Either choose an upright vacuum with handheld attachments or buy a smaller vacuum for tackling the stairs and upholstery.
- Maintain your vacuum. If it loses suction or becomes difficult to push, check for a worn or stretched belt. Replace it as needed to get many more years out of your vacuum.

Thursday: Sweep and Mop

By cleaning your hardwood, vinyl, or tile floors once a week, you prevent them from ever becoming a time-consuming "project." Follow these floor cleaning tips for the best success:

- Always remove loose dirt and debris with a broom, vacuum, or dust mop before damp mopping.



- Mop hard floors with warm water and all-purpose floor cleaner. Be sure to wring out the mop well so it doesn't leave puddles of water behind.
- Start at the far side of the room and move back toward the entrance to avoid mopping yourself into a corner.

Friday: Kitchen

Cleaning the kitchen is a major chore. Prevent it from getting out of hand by doing some light cleaning once a week:

- Load the dishwasher and rinse out the sink.
- Wipe down appliances.
- Disinfect the counters.
- Wipe up sticky spots on the floor with a damp rag.
- Trade out your dish towels for fresh ones.
- Throw away expired food.
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— Ashley Farrar

FAITH UNDER FIRE

In the Face of Rising Antisemitism, Jews Must Be Able to Defend Themselves

Many Jews no longer feel safe in America. Since the Hamas massacre in Israel, Americans have seen a 388% increase in antisemitic acts of harassment, vandalism, and assault. Antisemites vandalized the building across from a media company headed by a prominent Jewish journalist with hateful graffiti. In a show of support for Hamas, it has become a trend across our country and the world for people to rip down posters of Israelis held hostage. As a result of the spike in antisemitism around the country, Jews are rightfully buying firearms and taking firearms classes.

The right to bear arms has never been more important for our nation's Jewish community. I have always been a fierce defender of the Second Amendment because people must have the capacity to defend themselves when the government cannot. I have fought for our veterans to maintain the right to bear arms without being subject to arbitrary regulations, and this past March, I led 30 of my congressional colleagues in filing an amicus brief challenging the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' (ATF) pistol brace rule. Unfortunately, in their rush to enact overarching

and ineffective gun control rules, Democrats have ignored the reality that police often cannot be there in time to protect citizens. At a time when Jews are facing widespread threats, the last thing we should be doing is making it more difficult for them to defend themselves.

Democrats continue to advocate for more gun control even when they know their policies will only disarm law-abiding citizens while allowing criminals to commit crimes with abandon. Left-wing lawmakers continue to push for a ban on "assault weapons" and high capacity magazines, a gift to criminals. In the current atmosphere of pervasive antisemitism, it is essential that we stand for Americans' Second Amendment rights.

One immediate step our government can take to crush the threat to Jews in America is to call out the virulent antisemitism festering at home and abroad. Democrat leadership must condemn this age-old hatred that is spreading throughout the country. For the first time, more Democrats now sympathize with the Palestinians than the Israelis, demonstrating just how much Democrats have bought into

the anti-Israel slander propagated by leftists. For far too long, Democrats have shielded antisemites within their own party, arguing that they are only anti-Israel, not antisemitic. However, anti-Zionism is the modern form of antisemitism, full stop. And if Democrat politicians cannot admit that reality after witnessing the pervasive genocidal calls to obliterate Israel by radical leftists, they are part of the problem. Hatred of Israel translates to hatred of Jews, and as a result, many Jews do not feel safe.

41% of Jewish Americans say their status in the U.S. is less secure than it was a year ago. This is simply unacceptable. Jews must be able to do everything possible to defend themselves and their families. Safeguarding our Jewish community means protecting our Second Amendment rights.

— Tennessee United States Senator Marsha Blackburn and her husband Chuck live in Williamson County, Tennessee. They have two children, Mary Morgan (Paul) Ketchel and Chad (Hillary) Blackburn, two grandsons, and a granddaughter.

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HEALTHY LIVING

How to Stay Consistent in your Health this Holiday Season

For most of us, the holiday season is the hardest season to stay consistent in our health. In this season of hope, we feel hopeless when it comes to our health. We get consistent in our healthy habits, lose it all during the holidays, feel guilty, and then try and make these crazy changes for the new year, and they don't stick. It's a vicious cycle. I'm here to tell you that doesn't have to be your reality in this season. There is hope! You don't have to lose ground.

Staying consistent is not about just doing the right things. It is about having the right mindset. If we have a mindset of hope rather than a mindset of defeat, we can walk in a healthy balance while still enjoying the holiday season. The mentality of fasting and feasting is vital for this season. There are times for fasting and times for feasting. The problem is, we continuously feast and never fast. This creates an imbalance that causes us to lose ground. The holiday season is a great time of feasting! Being released to feast during the holidays brings us great joy and peace. But if we do not balance out the feasting with fasting, we will feel guilty when we do feast. Fasting releases us to feast. If we know that we have fasted, we will be confident that we can feast at the right times.

Applying the Biblical principle of fasting to your health can be helpful. I'm not talking about starv-

ing yourself or not eating for weeks. I'm talking about implementing intermittent fasting regularly. Regularly doing intermittent fasting gives our bodies a rest from all of the feasting we will do. It allows our body to use up some of the energy we have stored when we feast. I will not go into the details of how to fast in this article as I have others that go into more detail. If you feel unclear on how to fast correctly, please read those. They will help you with practical steps to take.

Other than fasting, here are some practical ways to not lose ground this holiday season.

1. Throw it away!

We know that after each party we go to or host there will be tons of leftover food. Most of the time, we keep those leftovers and eat them throughout the week. Stop this at once! Again, there are times to feast (at the party) and times to fast (during your typical week). Don't bring the leftovers from your feast into your fasting time. Then you will just be feasting constantly. Instead, give them away and choose healthier options throughout the week.

2. Make healthier desserts.

The desserts we eat do not always have to be packed with processed sugars and carbs. Yes, you will have these types of foods during the holidays,



but try incorporating some healthier options for desserts once in a while.

3. Use a smaller plate.

I'm sure you have heard this one before, but it is super helpful. If you choose a smaller plate and load that one up, you will feel like you have had a lot more food than you have.

4. Have someone keep you accountable.

Have someone at the events you go to keep you accountable. Talk about your limits before you go to the party and have them help you stick to it. If you do not have a plan, you will fail. If you have a plan and have a partner in that plan, you will succeed.

You do not have to lose ground! If you implement these four simple tips, you will go from discouraged and alone, to confident and hopeful this holiday season. You can do it!

— Ashton Tate, Founder, Glory to Glory Fitness
615-636-3370, glorytogloryfitness.com
atate@glorytogloryfitness.com

OUR HOUSE

Do I Really Need Pest Control During the Winter?

Insects are a constant problem in the Spring and Summer. Ant mounds can pop up in your yard, mosquitoes begin to swarm, and yellow jackets begin their assault on your patio. Because these pests make their presence known, the need for pest control is obvious. But during the colder months, when bugs aren't apparent, you may find yourself asking the question, "do I really need pest control in the winter?"

During the colder months of the year, many assume bugs die or can't survive in below freezing temps. You may be surprised to learn, during the winter, most bugs don't die. Rather, they adapt to the cold by either hiding or hibernating. Insects spend winter simply surviving. This means they are more than ready to invade your home during the winter. Controlling these unseen pests in the colder months is just as important as it is in the warmer months. Waynes treats your property on a quarterly cycle, so pests can't invade your home even in winter.

Where are Bugs During the Winter?

Termites and ants are colony insects that hide during winter. These pests can conserve heat and remain active that way. They spend the final days of fall storing food which means a very hungry emergence in spring. You can prevent these insects from starting in your yard with winter pest control. Ticks have perhaps the most creative approach to winter: they focus on specific hosts. These bloodsuckers take all comers in spring and summer, but they focus on large, active prey in winter like deer. As a result, they have a large food source with plenty of heat. Winter pest control will make your yard an un-



welcome spot when ticks become less selective. Cockroaches are perhaps the worst because they find shelter in your house. They remain active by seeking warm places with plenty of food. These pests are the easiest to spot because you'll see them run across your floor or scurry out from under boxes and furniture.

Hibernating Bugs

Other insects, like yellow jackets, mosquitoes, and beetles, prefer to hibernate or overwinter. They are still alive, but they dramatically reduce their activity and eating. These pests find warm places to spend winter, and they try to ride it out.

Waynes Smartpest Services aim specifically at hibernating insects in winter. Almost 95% of all home pest problems begin outside. Our main concern is to keep the pests outside. We will treat up to 10 feet away from your home, so bugs won't be able to get close. Winter pest control is a great way to stop pests before they get active. Waynes services are available all year. And winter pest control will give you the best start for preventing real problems come spring. If you haven't scheduled regular pest control or have let your service lapse, call 866.WAYNES1 or visit us at callwaynes.com!

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

OUR HOUSE

How to Prepare Your House for Cold Season

Summer has passed, and fall is finally here! We've waited so long for the hot weather to slowly transition into cooler days. Who doesn't love fall? It's a great time for walks in the woods while appreciating trees turning their colors to red and orange or taking your grandchildren to a pumpkin patch at your favorite local farm. Hot apple cider, chili, pumpkin bread, mums, pumpkin carving — you name it!



The fall is a great season to start slowing down and refocus from outdoor activities that we did during summer and start putting attention to indoor projects. The nights get chilly, and with low temperatures, we can immediately feel the need to wear socks while walking around the house. It's because the wind and cold air can get in the crawl space and house through the tiniest little cracks. If you're not sure where to start, here's a checklist for you:

- Turn on the heat to make sure it works, so you won't have any unpleasant surprises when the temperatures drop to freezing point.
- Inspect and seal around the windows and doors.
- If your house has hardwood floors, you may want to consider laying down rugs or runners in the most frequent areas where you feel cold air getting through.
- Check the vents on the walls of your crawl space. They are probably open after the summertime. You want to close them to control the cold airflow from getting in the crawl space area because that cold air will move up into the main area of the house.
- Make sure the insulation in your crawl space is in place and tightly secured between the floor joists. If you find wet or rotten insulation, replace it with a new layer.

If you feel like this is too much work and you are tired of checking all these steps every year, then Frontier Foundation & Crawl Space Repair has a permanent solution for you! With just a few easy fixes, we can turn your crawl space or basement into a permanently sealed-off, healthy space. Here's what we do:

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Each house is different, so for the best results, schedule a free, no-obligation inspection with one of our design specialists, who will thoroughly inspect your crawl space or basement and present you with the best solution that works for you!

— Devon Bagwell, Marketing Manager,
Frontier Foundation and Crawl Space Repair, www.trustfrontier.com

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PTSD/Trauma Treatment for Adolescents

The CDC states that at least one in five Americans struggles with serious mental health issues every year and recently the agency noted that the number one emotional problem, especially among our youngest citizens, is unresolved trauma/PTSD. Additionally, suicide rates in Tennessee continue to increase each year!

On any given day hospitals throughout the US face, but usually not acknowledge, the reality that most of their patients are primarily suffering from emotional, mental, or addictive issues in addition to their current medical crisis.

One of my professors, Dr. van der Kolk, is an internationally recognized researcher of Harvard University, estimates that 67.8% of US children have at least one serious childhood trauma that has not been addressed. Currently, worldwide, it can vividly be witnessed in Ukraine and the Middle East, as over 1 billion children are traumatized every year!

Fortunately, there is an effective treatment available to address the ever-increasing number of traumatized people: Energy Psychology, also called acupuncture without needles.

An associate of mine in the field of EP, Dr. Carolyn Sakai established a team of psychologists in 2006 to provide treatment for survivors in Rwanda. They discovered that there were 400 orphans living in the devastated facility of whom 188 lost their families during the ethnic cleansing. Many had witnessed their parents being brutally slaughtered and they were still having severe symptoms of PTSD, including difficulty concentrating, flashbacks, nightmares, bedwetting, and numerous traumatic behaviors. This team of psychologists primarily focused on 50 teenagers who were experiencing the greatest amount of trauma; all 50 rated very high on a standardized trauma symptom inventory and all were diagnosed with PTSD.

This small team of psychologists provided a single treatment of energy psychology (acupuncture without needles) tapping sessions that lasted from 20 to 60 minutes combined with a few minutes of relaxation training. After the treatments 47 of the 50 adolescents fell below the PTSD range of trauma and now, more than a decade since the tragic events, none of the 50 are diagnosed with PTSD. Similar treatments in different parts of the world have seen no more than 6% return of any signs of trauma.

I personally have witnessed the effectiveness of this healing method in participating in over a dozen missionary trips to Guatemala, which, with its 300 orphanages, has been the destination point for the Hendersonville Rotary club medical missionary teams for numerous years.

I taught graduate psychologists at three universities in Guatemala. About eight years ago I formulated a template of 21 steps in trauma treatment which is now a United States trademark entitled: GUTT... Guatemala Urgent Trauma Treatment, which I have provided to all those who desire to learn and utilize this treatment protocol. This trauma treatment template has also been translated into Spanish.



Too good to be true?

The discovery of Otzi the Iceman in the early 90s in the Otztal Alps in Switzerland, a well-preserved natural mummy who lived around 3300 BC, provided the catalyst for our

understanding of ourselves as holistic people with intrinsic connections of mind, body, soul, and emotions. The frozen body was extremely well preserved and was found meticulously marked throughout with acupoints and meridian pathways that were commonly used to treat diseases of all types, such as arthritis, which require the management of pain.

This discovery greatly motivated many experts in the fields of psychology and science to intensely study medicine from a holistic perspective, further documenting the numerous acupuncture points throughout the human body (over 360 along with 14 meridians and several chakras).

This research allowed us to really understand the complexity of abuse/trauma in such a way that we have been able to develop powerful and effective treatment protocols, often referred to as “acupuncture without needles,” which has been so effective in providing profound healing for so many truly needy people of all ages. We are always cognizant of the fact that we are holistic people and if our emotions are badly damaged as they are with trauma/ PTSD our whole spirit including our mind, our soul, as well as our body, are greatly suffering. We are intimately, intricately, and wholly connected as a created human being!

The healing of our emotions is generally referred to as energy psychology (EP); the most recognized EP technique is called EFT (emotional freedom technique). Through the stimulation of the acupoints on the skin, the trauma signal in the brain which arouses the amygdala (the myriad of feelings in the brain) is almost immediately neutralized, thus commenting the experience. This often, leads to neuroplasticity (the creation of new brain cells in the hippocampus of the brain) and results now in a mild memory of the past and no longer a trauma!

It is not necessary to relive all the trauma/PTSD because the tapping sequence focuses on the different emotions; the energy within the meridians, which is now neutralized, reframes the experience of the patient’s Suds (subjective units of disturbance) which then quickly move the trauma from its highest number 10 often down to one or two and sometimes zero, with even a single therapeutic intervention!

I believe this rather newly discovered ancient treatment will truly become the “new emotional penicillin” and will dramatically change our world with healing for tens of thousands of untreated and traumatized adults and children.

— Tim Lynch PhD Licensed Clinical Psychologist,
Fellow and Diplomat of the American Board of Medical Psychotherapist,
Diplomat Comprehensive Energy Psychology



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How to Uncover your God-Given Gifts in this Unlikely Way

We have to pray and ask God to reveal our spiritual gifts to us. Have you ever stopped to consider which spiritual gifting God has given you, or why these gifts matter?

Maybe you haven't because you don't consider yourself to be an "advanced" Christian. You might think these gifts are only reserved for people who seem to have life all figured out.

But you should never discount yourself this way. Whether you consider yourself a devout Christian or not, be careful not to underestimate God's calling on your life. He created every person with a special assignment in mind, and spiritual gifts are a part of that.

Discovering which gifts God has uniquely placed in you is an exciting journey I believe everyone should pursue. To begin this search we must first ask: What are the spiritual gifts?

The Apostle Paul explained the nature of God's spiritual gifts in great detail in several New Testament letters, but Romans 12 is a great place to start. He writes in verses 6-8, "We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully."

If after reading this list you feel at a loss, I'd point you to 1 Corinthians 12:27 where Paul again writes about spiritual gifts saying, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

There you have it! Every believer is meant to play a role and use their God-given gifts. Though Paul was writing to the first Christians who lived more than 2,000 years ago, the Spiritual gifts he describes are just as real, accessible and relevant today as they were then. So the question then becomes for each of us, "Where do I fit into all of this?"

I had to ask myself this question not long ago when I took a class on leadership through my church, C3 NYC. During one of our sessions, the group leader asked us to try to remember a time when we were hurt or rubbed the wrong way by an experience at church. Not your every-day prompt! Her next point amazed me.

She shared that oftentimes, as they relate to the church, the things that annoy or upset us should actually be treated as guideposts pointing us to our innate passions. In other words, we are bothered by the things we care about the most. She went on to explain that the passions often serve as signs of our spiritual gifts.

For example, a person who is frequently frustrated by a lack of substance in their church's sermons could possess the spiritual gift of teaching. In another sense, a person who feels neglected by their church community could possess the spiritual gift of encouragement.

Though this is a counterintuitive method, we should keep in mind that many things about God's kingdom are in fact counterintuitive due to the broken state of our sin-filled world.



Why can we gain insight into our spiritual gifts by considering areas of our spiritual walk where we feel either hurt or inadequate? Because the enemy often uses not just our weaknesses, but our strengths against us.

Jesus warned us, "the enemy comes to kill, steal and destroy;" (John 10:10). The areas where God plans triumph for His Kingdom are the same areas in which the enemy will try to tear down--and we are a part of that equation. That is precisely why God gives us Spiritual gifts, to develop our individual spiritual journeys and to advance His Kingdom.

Ultimately, we have to pray about these things and ask God to reveal our spiritual gifts to us because, just like any other gift, they were not ours first. Most importantly, they are called "gifts" because they are not earned. As Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 3:7 "So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow."

God is gracious and His love for us is beyond our comprehension. Every good thing comes from Him, and though we don't deserve them, we receive them by faith alone.

Our spiritual gifts are a way for us to more richly experience God's love and to empower us to contribute to His greater plans. Jesus said later in John 10:10 that He came to "give us life, and to give it to the fullest."

That is why He not only saves us but gives us an opportunity to partner with Him and participate in His beautiful plans. No gift is greater than that! "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work" (1 Corinthians 12: 4-6).

— Christen Limbaugh Bloom is the creator of *Haplous*, a Christian blog for women seeking peace in a stressful world. Her writing focuses on practical "baby steps" individuals can take when pursuing a relationship with God. You can follow Christen's blog on Instagram at @haplous_official and her website at www.haplousofficial.com.

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Spiritual Goal For December

Isaiah 49
KNOW...God hears us.

Look around. Know that the Lord sees and hears everything...though our natural eyes cannot see...or our ears do not hear His voice audibly. In the quietness of our soul...we hear the voice of God. Know that I, the Lord, am Your Savior...Your Redeemer...and the Mighty One.

It is absolutely true. We can count on it. We know what the Lord promised about us "living and breathing through Him". And we are reminded also that He is as close as a breath...will never forget us...created us for His purpose. Let's concentrate on those promises and be assured.

Prayer: *Lord, thank You for today's reminder. It is wonderful to wake each day and know that we know that we know...You are holding the world in the palm of Your hands...that You will never leave or forsake us. Thank You for the honor. Life is worth living because of You.*

Lord Jesus, we love the spiritual ONENESS with You. THANK YOU. 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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