

August 2024

COMPLIMENTARY

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Maintenance
Tips*

**Back
to School**

Jeff Allen
Comedian, Actor, Author

FREE Good News



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Helping Hands

TENNESSEE ACTION COUNCIL HELPING HANDS

Before Helping Hands began, Tennessee children placed their personal effects into disposable garbage bags when they moved to a foster home. TAC Helping Hands provides new, durable, attractive duffle bags to DCS for each child's personal items to let these children know they are valued.

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www.ProjectLife4TN.org

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You are Invited to the
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Imagine duffle bags not trash bags for every child in Tennessee moving into foster care!

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6:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Tickets \$150
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Dinner and Entertainment
by Christian Artists

"UNSPOKEN"

Centricity Music recording artist, Unspoken, has received over 350 million on-demand streams, 80 million YouTube video views and released two No. 1 radio songs as well as 11 Top 15 hits. With music as distinct as its roots, the band's soulful, pop-flavored songs are led by the Adam Levine-esque vocals of Chad Mattson. Fueled by Mattson's transparency as a songwriter who battled addiction, now with two decades of sobriety, performing alongside Jon Lowry (bass), Ariel Munoz (drums), Zach Smith (guitars) and Matthew Callaway (keys). Whether backed by a horn section, gospel choir or hip-hop rhythms, Unspoken has no fear of mixing it up.



with Guest Speakers
**Brent and Anna Morgan of
Bridge Family Ministries**



We are pleased to introduce Brent and Anna Morgan, founders of the Bridge Family Ministries. As a family of nine they were inspired by scripture to create a ministry surrounding foster children and their foster families. The ministry has been blessed to actively serve over 75 families and they have also adopted a child in the foster care system.

NASHVILLE CHRISTIAN FAMILY®

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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

Reflecting on a New Season

Even though the hot and humid “dog days” of summer are upon us, I am eagerly anticipating the start of another thrilling college football season. Sports are a passion of mine, but college football stands out as my favorite.

As a dedicated University of Alabama Crimson Tide fan, my allegiance runs deep. My father attended and taught at the university for many years, my mother was on the staff, and I also attended, along with my son. My father was a lifelong college football fan, following Bear Bryant’s storied career at Alabama. Until his passing at 96, my dad derived great joy from watching college football and cheering for “our” team. It’s no surprise that friends and family consider me a devoted fan.

Each new season prompts me to reflect on a couple of important questions: In God’s plan for my life and His desire for me to exemplify a follower of Jesus, is a football game truly that significant? Does my fervor for my team overshadow my example as a Believer and my efforts to spread the Gospel? Do I feel the same excitement when the Lord provides an opportunity to witness to a non-believer about Jesus as I do for a big game?

While college football or other sports may not be your particular passion, whatever we prioritize over serving God as a witness should be reconsidered. We must ask ourselves these questions, especially during the football season.

I believe the most crucial task for us as Believers is to spread the Gospel and the Good News of Jesus Christ with the utmost excitement and enthusiasm. Remember, the Lord not only provides the opportunity but also gives us the words we need to say.

“*Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*” Romans 12:11 (NIV)



Robert Stringfellow, Publisher, 615-815-8765
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SENIOR SCENE

Don't Go It Alone When Choosing Senior Care

The phone rings at work, and you learn from your brother that mom is at the hospital again. Thankfully, she has avoided breaking anything from this recent fall, but she needs therapy. After a few weeks, the social worker at her rehab informs you that her doctor is recommending assisted living instead of going home. You have less than a week to find, choose, and move your mother before she is discharged.

You start by calling the community that the rehab recommends, but no one calls you back. You drive across town to tour a facility that a friend at church suggests, only to find that they are above your budget. Another 2 hours wasted, and the clock is ticking. Your brother looked online and has a "list" of places to go tour. The first place you go has no availability; the second assisted living is nice but can't manage your mother's insulin. Your phone is now ringing off the hook from sales people! How did they get your cell number? You are feeling overwhelmed, the social worker just left you a message asking for a decision, and you panic as you realize that you forgot to pick your daughter up after school!

With all the decisions that you have made in your lifetime – choosing a college, job opportunities, buying a house, nothing has prepared you for finding care for a parent. You feel completely alone, BUT you are not. A senior care consulting agency, like Senior Provisions LLC, believes that you should not be alone on this journey. Our local advisors are knowledgeable of all care options, costs and only recommend communities that match your family's personal circumstances. We believe that your privacy is important and will never share your contact information with sales people without your permission. Our local advisors know every community, their track record of care, strengths and weaknesses and can provide references from families that



have lived there. We can also recommend trusted providers to come to your home and provide supportive care. The wonderful truth is that our services and care management is at NO COST to families.

Your local senior care advisor for Greater Nashville is Amy Davis. Amy grew up at the base of Pikes Peak in Colorado. After meeting her husband during Freshman year at the University of Arizona, together they raised their two children in a quaint suburb of Chicago. Amy and her husband have opened their home to many vulnerable children through the Safe Families for Children ministry. Amy worked in Pastoral Care for her church for several years and then worked in the hospital setting alongside families who were facing the tragic loss of a loved one helping to coordinate their life saving gifts as organ donors. Her passion to serve others is where she feels God has called her to be. It is truly her honor to work with families who are facing difficult seasons and help them on that journey to find hope. Now residing in the Nashville area, Amy is delighted to partner with Senior Provisions as an advisor to families who are seeking a trusted advocate during a transitional time in their lives. Don't go it alone, you don't need to.

— Amy Davis, Senior Care Advisor, Senior Provisions, 615-278-5080,
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MISSION MAKERS

Join us for Greenhouse Ministries Annual Fundraising Event, Live in the 'Boro!

We are thrilled to invite you to Greenhouse Ministries' signature fundraising event, Live in the 'Boro 2024, taking place on September 10th, 2024, at MTSU Student Union Ballroom in Murfreesboro, TN!

Event Details:

- Date: September 10th, 2024
- Time: 6pm
- Location: MTSU Student Union Ballroom, 1768 MTSU Blvd, Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Why Attend?

Live in the 'Boro is more than just an event; it is an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of individuals and families in our community. By joining us, you directly support Greenhouse Ministries' mission to provide essential resources and empower those in need.

Greenhouse Ministries through local volunteers, provides relational ministries that are designed to inspire, give hope, and change lives.

Table Purchase Opportunity:

We invite businesses and organizations to showcase their commitment to community impact by purchasing a table for Live in the 'Boro 2024. For just \$2,500, each table includes:

- 10 tickets to Live in the 'Boro, ensuring you and your guests enjoy a full plated buffet dinner.
 - The creative freedom to decorate your table with company swag or themed decorations.
 - Prominent recognition with your name/logo featured in event advertisements and on screens throughout the night.
 - Automatic entry into the Best Decorated Table 2024 competition, where your creativity could earn you recognition as the best of the evening!
- Don't miss this chance to network with fellow community leaders, enjoy fantastic entertainment, and support a cause that changes lives. Visit our website at liveintheboro.org to reserve your table!

Individual Tickets:

For those unable to join us with a full table, individual tickets are available for \$50 each. Secure your spot today by visiting our website at liveintheboro.org.

How You Can Help

Your participation in Live in the 'Boro 2024 directly contributes to Greenhouse Ministries' ability to serve our community with vital programs and resources. Together, we can create lasting change.

For more information and to purchase tickets or tables, please visit liveintheboro.org or contact us at info@greenhousemin.org. We look forward to seeing you at Live in the 'Boro 2024!

— Makayla Sanford, Public Relations and Marketing Coordinator, Greenhouse Ministries, www.greenhousemin.org, 615-494-0499

PARENT WITH PURPOSE

Master Healthy School Lunches

A healthy back-to-school lunch is as important as a good night's sleep. The CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) discovered key findings about students making higher grades: They ate breakfast daily, ate 1-2 servings of fruits and vegetables per day, and drank milk or water instead of soda or pop. These eating habits help with immediate focus and alertness and contribute to your kids' overall health and academic performance. Dietician Abby Cressman specializes in pediatric nutrition and has some advice on mastering those school lunches.

Creating a balanced school lunch is more straightforward than it may seem. Every school lunch should include a complex carbohydrate, protein, and fiber. Visualize a plate where half is covered in fruits and veggies, one quarter is a protein, and the other quarter a carbohydrate, and you have a balanced meal. Cressman says, "This combination helps with satiety and blood sugar balance to keep them alert to learn."



Carbohydrates provide long-lasting energy throughout the day. Focus on complex carbohydrates, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, brown rice, nuts, and quinoa.

Proteins keep one full until the after-school snack. Consider meats, eggs, peanut or almond butter, beans, dairy (cheese, yogurt), or seafood. Packing a thermos or carton of milk will add dairy and protein to the meal.

Fiber in fruits and vegetables provides the needed vitamins and minerals a growing child needs. High-fiber foods include beans, nuts, fruits or dried fruits, vegetables, oats, whole-grain breads, and popcorn.

Variety in color and types of food will prevent boredom and offer essential vitamins and minerals without your child knowing it. Instead of using bread for every lunch, consider a bagel, wrap, or English muffin. Use a colorful variety of vegetables and fruits in season (much cheaper).

Preparing food on the weekends can save you headaches and stress. Boil eggs, cook pasta, and cut veggies on Sunday so the food is ready to toss on the weekdays. Get your shopping done ahead so you're not left making a sandwich with both heels of the loaf on a Monday morning. I did that and still hear about it years later from my son.

What are some things not to pack? Processed foods (foods with a long storage life) have little nutritional value. Think natural colors, avoiding items with added food coloring. While an occasional sweet treat is fine, watch for hidden or added sugar in other foods. Adding an inspirational note or a joke to your child's lunch bag once a week is a nice touch. These notes feed your child's spiritual and emotional being and let the child know you are thinking of them. That note may be just the word they need to hear to get them through a rough day.

— Sally Cressman is the author of "The Dance of Easter." She writes about faith, family, and home on her website, www.sallycressman.com. You can also connect with her on Instagram or Facebook.

Tennessee Action Council Helps Women and Saves Lives

Tennessee Action Council: Ministry for At-Risk Children is a 501c3 nonprofit organization, partnering with pregnancy centers, and is comprised of two divisions: Helping Hands and Project Life, both focused on children and families. Jacquelin McDonald, Tennessee Action Council Board President, comments: “Being involved with this ministry, knowing my efforts are truly helping women in need, saving the lives of innocent children, surrounding and helping families stay together, and maintaining the dignity and worth of traumatized children is truly God honoring work. Please join TAC in serving our community.”

Helping Hands

Tom Thompson, Tennessee Action Council Board member and Chairman of Voices for the Unspoken, a dinner event benefiting Helping Hands, says, “Helping Hands: It’s why God gave them to us.” Tom and supporters of this organization take action to demonstrate compassion to at-risk children.



Helping Hands provides

- New, attractive, duffel bags placed in the hands of children entering the foster care system via the

Department of Children's Services

- Duffel bags help with the child’s transition during traumatic times

Children in Tennessee—9,100 of them—in the foster care system typically enter a traumatic and emotional experience when they leave their homes and go into foster care. Helping Hands meets the needs of families with children at risk of being removed from their homes by protecting the dignity of the children and respect for their personal belongings. No longer must children drag around in black garbage bags the little they have. The goal? Help children feel they and their belongings are valued, not thrown into garbage bags like trash. Children feel more normal and stable—having something of their own, sometimes for the first time in their lives—when they come into custody and later if they move from one placement to another. The attractive, new, compartmentalized duffel helps them better transition to their next opportunity and placement and confirms appreciation for their developing lives.

Project Life provides

- Specialized mobile clinics for convenient prenatal testing and counseling
- Unique partnerships with pregnancy centers to meet community needs for testing and education
- Service to multiple geographies



The goal of Project Life—see a life, save a life—is to lease ultrasound units (costing more than \$250,000 each) to existing pregnancy centers throughout the country. Project Life provides free prenatal testing, ultrasounds, education, and counseling in specialized mobile clinics to help women make informed choices about the life of their baby. Ultrasound technology helps these centers more effectively show women with unintended pregnancies that they have far more positive choices for their future and the future of their child than they might think.



How You Can Support: Adults and older teens help Project Life and Helping Hands through golf tournaments, encouraging their churches or other civic organizations to conduct baby bottle drives, or making donations throughout the year. Helping Hands can be supported by attending or sponsoring the annual fall dinner event, Voices for the Unspoken, on September 19, Old Natchez Country Club, Franklin, Tenn.

— Sheila E. Moss

GREENHOUSE MINISTRIES
— 25 —
YEARS OF PLANTING HOPE IN THE BORO

GreenhouseMin.org

Greenhouse Ministries’ Signature Fundraising Event
September 10, 2024
6:00 PM

MTSU Student Union Ballroom
1768 MTSU Blvd | Murfreesboro, TN

For more information and to purchase tickets or tables, please visit liveintheboro.org or contact us at info@greenhousemin.org

Live in the ‘Boro is more than just an event; it is an opportunity to **make a real difference** in the lives of individuals and families in our community. By joining us, you **directly support Greenhouse Ministries’** mission to **provide essential resources and empower those in need**. Greenhouse Ministries through local volunteers, provides relational ministries that are designed to **inspire, give hope, and change lives**.



The Olympics: The Call for World Unity Amid Anti-Christian Mockery

The irony could not be more pronounced. The divisive degradation of Christianity during the 2024 opening ceremony has led to widespread criticism from Catholics and Protestant leaders around the world, including several church leaders within France. The

“And I looked, and beheld a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.” Rev. 6:8.

The hooded rider and torch bearer who led the procession ashore from the Seine River at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Olympics rode a pale horse. Given the events leading up to this equestrian saunter, it is apparent that the color horse selected for the initiation of the Olympics was not accidental. The symbolism followed a string of satanic rituals culminating in a grotesque parody of Leonardo Da Vinci’s “The Last Supper” mural of Jesus and his apostles composed of drag queens who struck poses behind a long table astride a crowned transgender goddess.



French Bishops' Conference released a statement saying "this ceremony unfortunately included scenes of mockery and derision of Christianity, which we deeply regret. We would like to thank the members of other religious denominations who have expressed their solidarity with us."

Regrettably, these views are not shared by the highest-ranking members of the French government. French President Emmanuel Macron defended the controversial opening ceremonies saying "Thanks to Thomas Jolly (the openly gay organizer of the ceremony) and his

creative genius for this grandiose ceremony. Thank you to the artists for this unique and magical moment."

The Lord's Supper, as described in Luke 22:19-20 is one of the holiest moments in Christianity. It is when Jesus instituted the eucharist and spoke of his coming sacrifice. The depiction of this scene by Da Vinci is among the most revered, sacred images to Christians around the world. If the theme of the Olympics is a call for world unity, why would the French Olympic organizers choose such a divisive depiction as a centerpiece for the opening ceremony to be displayed on a world stage?

Dr. David Filson, Interim Pastor at Christ Presbyterian Church summed it up this way. "Domination, not toleration, has always been the goal. Christians should not be surprised by this. That this happened there is at least consistent with the trajectories of Sartre, de Beauvoir, Lyotard, and Foucault. And, I appreciate the fact that they are so clearly naming their perception of the enemy of critical theory ideology - Christianity?"

The first modern Olympics were held in Athens, Greece, in 1896. The man responsible for its rebirth was a Frenchman named Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who presented the idea in 1894. The Charter of the Olympics state that: "The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity." Olympic Charter at p. 8.

As Pastor Filson points out, the modern culture's attack on Christianity should come as no surprise. In Matthew 5:10-11, Jesus said: "Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." We are reminded also in 1 John 3:13: "Do not marvel if the world hates you." Evil has a jealous hatred for good. As a constitutional attorney defending religious liberty, I have witnessed this in courtrooms across the country when representing those arrested and persecuted for their faith in Christ.

The Olympics, tarnished as this institution may be from this spectacle, still represents the highest in human ideals. It serves these ideals by providing a unique opportunity for people of all races, colors, religions and cultures to lay aside their differences and contribute to building a peaceful and better world through competitive sports without discrimination.

— *Larry L. Crain, Crain Law Group, www.crainlaw.legal*



MUSIC NOTES

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Opportunities in the Music Industry Abound for Trevecca Students

Trevecca students and graduates have found themselves near the epicenter of the Nashville music scene in recent years, not only gaining hands-on experience but working with some of the biggest artists in Christian and country music as they've built connections, learned new skills and prepared for promising futures.

- Trevecca's worship choir, Testify, has had numerous opportunities to record with Christian artists. Most recently this has included collaborations with Rebekah White, the writer of the song "Rest on Us," which has 10 million downloads; Tasha Layton, one of 2020's Billboard Top Five female Christian artists; and the Newsboys on their 2024 single "Heaven on Earth." Testify members, including those who had never been in a choir before, can be heard on the Newsboys song that has been streamed more than a million times.
- Members of the Grammy-nominated band We The Kingdom visited with students in a music business class and shared stories about their experience as an up and coming Christian band. The group has completed multiple headline tours, and they shared insights about the reality of touring

and performing and answered student questions in an informal classroom setting.

- Trevecca students had the opportunity to participate in a unique cinematic experience when a scene for the movie "It's Christmas Again" was filmed on campus. One Trevecca music student, Darby Cappillino, even had a role in the film. The movie was shown in Regal Cinemas throughout the country.
- Trevecca student Ty Thompson played the drums for a crowd of 10,000 at Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado. Thompson's connections have also given him opportunities in country music, where he has played the CMA Fest with artist Angie K and opened up for Morgan Wallen at the Faster Horses Festival in Michigan. He has also opened for Brian Kelley from Florida Georgia Line, while drumming with Noah Hicks.

Students have opportunities behind the scenes as well. Clayton Lepley, a 2020 graduate, is now the lighting director for Grammy award-winning singer Zach Williams. He is responsible for loading equipment and making sure the shows run

smoothly. Previously, Lepley went on tour with TobyMac and later Casting Crowns. Even before graduating, he was honing his skills, traveling on tour with the support of Trevecca faculty.

"My dean was willing to work with my schedule when I had the opportunity to go on tour during the fall semester," Lepley said. "My professors knew this was what I wanted to do and they were willing to go the extra mile to make it happen." Trevecca faculty understands the value of real world experiences, and is always ready to provide students with opportunities in the classroom and in Music City. "These are just some of many opportunities students have when they study music at Trevecca," said Craig Adams, executive director of Trevecca's Center For Commercial Music. "Attending college here is a chance for students to press into the heartbeat of Nashville as an entertainment capital."

— *Rebekah Warren - Senior Copywriter Office of Marketing and Communications Trevecca Nazarene University, www.trevecca.edu*

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Solace Oral Surgery and Implant Center Named Center of Excellence: Discover a New Smile in Nashville

Nashville, the heart of Tennessee, is renowned for its vibrant culture and music, but now it also stands out as a hub for advanced oral surgery. We are proud to announce that Solace Oral Surgery and Implant Center, under the expert guidance of Dr. Romero, has been named an All-on-4 Center of Excellence by Nobel Biocare. This prestigious recognition highlights our unwavering commitment to providing world-class solutions, especially for those seeking an alternative to traditional dentures.

A Legacy of Excellence

Dr. Romero has been a cornerstone of the oral surgery community for over a decade. Recognized as a top specialist in his field for more than ten years, including a nod in 2024, Dr. Romero has also been named a top dentist in his specialty by Nashville Lifestyles for over ten years. His expertise and dedication have set a high standard for excellence in oral surgery and implantology. Known affectionately as the "Smile Savior," Dr. Romero has earned this title for his remarkable ability to transform smiles and lives. In addition to his clinical skills, Dr. Romero speaks Spanish, making it easier for Spanish-speaking patients to communicate their needs and feel comfortable during their visits.

Beyond his professional life, Dr. Romero enjoys spending quality time with his family and traveling during his free time. His passion for both his profession and personal interests brings a unique perspective to his work, enhancing his ability to connect with and care for his patients.

Compassionate Care and a Dedicated Team

At Solace Oral Surgery and Implant Center, we believe that every patient deserves personalized and empathetic care. Our team is not just highly skilled but also deeply compassionate. From the moment you enter our clinic, you will be welcomed into a warm and supportive environment. We understand that oral surgery can be daunting, and we are committed to making your experience as comfortable and reassuring as possible. Our team's dedication to patient well-being is evident in every interaction, ensuring that you receive the best care tailored to your unique needs.

A Commitment to Community

Our dedication to the Nashville community extends beyond the walls of our clinic. Dr. Romero and Eva Angelina Romero are actively involved in various charitable initiatives, partnering with organizations such as Hope Smiles and Interfaith Dental Clinic. Through these partnerships, we provide essential oral surgery care to underserved populations, helping to bridge the gap in access to quality services. This community-focused approach reflects our belief in giving back and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a healthy, beautiful smile.

All-on-4 Treatment: A Revolutionary Solution

For many, the discomfort and inconvenience of dentures are a daily reality. The All-on-4 treatment offers a groundbreaking solution, providing a permanent and aesthetically pleasing alternative. As a recognized Center of



Solace Oral Surgery and Implant Center, under the expert guidance of Dr. Romero, has been named an All-on-4 Center of Excellence by Nobel Biocare. The All-on-4 treatment is a transformative approach to implants and is ideal for those who are tired of dealing with the discomfort of dentures.

Excellence, Solace Oral Surgery and Implant Center specializes in this innovative procedure. The All-on-4 treatment involves placing four strategically positioned implants to support a full set of replacement teeth. Many of our patients can receive a new smile in just one day, restoring full functionality and delivering a natural-looking result. This transformative approach is ideal for those who are tired of dealing with the limitations and discomfort of dentures.

Why Choose Solace Oral Surgery and Implant Center?

Choosing an oral surgery care provider is a critical decision, and at Solace Oral Surgery and Implant Center, we strive to make that choice clear. Our state-of-the-art facility is equipped with the latest technology, ensuring precise and effective treatments. Dr. Romero's extensive experience, coupled with our team's unwavering commitment to excellence, guarantees top-tier care for all our patients.

We pride ourselves on creating personalized treatment plans that cater to the specific needs and goals of each individual, ensuring optimal outcomes in a compassionate and caring environment.

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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

God, 3 Distinct Persons

The Holy Trinity, one God, three unique persons combined into one Deity. This is one of the hardest dogmas of the Christian faith. It's kind of surprising that there are only nine, out of thousands of Christian religions, that choose not share that belief.

In a personal attempt to better understand this doctrine, it helps when I write out my thoughts. The first time I read through the Bible, I experienced multiple "Awakenings". For those not familiar with my writings: an awakening is an event given to us by God for the purpose of revealing the path he wants us to take. It is totally up to us if we choose to act on this guidance.

One of these awakenings was the obvious messaging that helps us understand the distinct natures, personalities, and human-like quirks between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. I say the word, obvious, only because I was looking for them. Prior to this, I had read parts of the Bible many times, but never cover to cover.

In the Old Testament, God the Father is prominent and dominate, and in more ways than as the sole Deity. Time and again, we hear that our God

is a jealous God, he helped armies kill thousands of His people's opponents. Noah witnessed first-hand His wrath, when He flooded the land to start building back His flock with new people. The Father is the one that gave Moses the Ten Commandments, and they were not offered in a sugar coated, loving manner; they were indeed commands; the dos and don't that must be followed or else.

Then comes Jesus, the person of the loving Son, the Word made flesh in the Good News! The Gospels are filled with the love and mercy of God. Jesus speaks with the children and the poor; the Father, spoke directly to Kings and warriors. Jesus forgave sinners, God the Father, punished the wicked. Jesus turned the other cheek, while God went toe to toe with the Gods of Egypt and the pharaoh. Even with Jesus' abundant mercy, there is only one sin that cannot be forgiven, the speaking against and the denial of the Holy Spirit, the Protector.



After Jesus' ascension into heaven, He leaves for us third person of God, the Holy Spirit. It is only after Jesus' Passion, Death, and Resurrection, through the power of Holy Spirit, that humanity can fully understand the extent of God's love and the price paid

for our forgiveness. It is through the fruits of the Holy Spirit that we are made capable of continuing God's work on earth. It is the Holy Spirit that gives us the strength of God in discerning right from wrong. It is only when we refuse to except God's forgiveness that we cannot be saved. It is Jesus who makes this crystal clear: "Whoever says a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age, or in the ages to come. (Matthew 12:31-32)

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

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Cancel Culture Is Not Civil Disobedience, Nor Is It Productive

Cancel culture is dangerous, stifles free speech

Just weeks before the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case involving the abortion pill, abortion advocates have “canceled” peer-reviewed science (and the scientists) that disagree with their abortion-on-demand worldview. The facts, which highlight real risks to real women, matter less to the abortion advocates than the opportunity to silence their opponents. It’s not a stretch to say this latest episode of cancel culture might kill innocent women.



The more our society (and mainstream media) normalizes this attitude of bullying toward differing points of view, it’s important to distinguish between the constructive nature of civil disobedience and the destructive tendencies inherent in cancel culture.

Civil disobedience, at its core, is a principled stand against authority or actions that goes against our conscience or, in the case of Christians, against God’s Word. Like a boycott, it’s a way to express disagreement respectfully, without adopting an attitude of hatred toward the opposing perspective. History bears witness to the effectiveness of civil disobedience, such as the Montgomery bus boycott and the Anti-Apartheid Movement, in bringing about meaningful change. However, boycotts are often not successful or sustainable.

Cancel culture deviates from this form of dissent dramatically. Unlike a boycott, cancel culture is not geared towards constructive change but rather seeks to punish those with whom one disagrees. The targets often include individuals or businesses based on their thoughts or past actions, leading to consequences that can be disproportionate and long-lasting.

Take, for instance, the case of comedian Kevin Hart, who faced the wrath of cancel culture for past tweets. Despite expressing remorse and a commitment to change, Hart felt immense pressure to withdraw from hosting the Oscars in 2018. Cancel culture even extends beyond individuals to powerful tech companies, exemplified by the suppression of conservative satire site Babylon Bee on social media platforms following their statement that “a man is not a woman.”

Whether someone is canceled because they supported a certain candidate or because they were bold in standing for biblical values or they were against the COVID-19 vaccine, no matter the issue, it really boils down to this: it’s not the little guy trying to stop the bully, but the celebration of the bully winning. Cancel culture is dangerous; it stifles free speech and discourages the open exchange of ideas.

The effect on public debate is undeniable. People are hesitant to voice opinions that may challenge popular narratives, hampering the discovery of biblical truth or the productive exchange of diverse ideas. People who may have great ideas, ones that could literally save someone else, may not want to risk their reputations and livelihood to speak out against popular opinion. Conservative Christians, in particular, have become increasingly tempted to shy away from the convictions of their faith because of societal backlash. It’s undeniable that along with this epidemic of cancel culture, people who uphold biblical values are often characterized as aggressive, unbending and

uncaring toward progressive and liberal perspectives.

It’s important to acknowledge that free speech has its limits. No one should be allowed to call for the extermination of the LGBT community nor call for genocide of Jews. All speech is not free, but the free expression of ideas should be allowed without fear of retribution. Cancel culture, with its tendency to silence dissent, threatens the very essence of democratic dialogue.

I wonder why some people have an intense need for canceling if they truly believe their ideas are genuinely superior? In a society that values intellectual diversity, the onus should be on engaging in meaningful conversation rather than stifling opposing viewpoints. Consider the relatively recent conservative boycott against Bud Light. It highlighted the need for alternative avenues of expression that foster dialogue rather than division.

As we navigate the complexities of today’s world, it is important to preserve the sanctity of civil disobedience while rejecting the pitfalls of cancel culture. There’s a critical need to have purposeful discussions on topics such as God’s love, disagreement does not equal hate, the dangers of remaining silent and how fear can be a driving force in action. Only through open dialogue and a commitment to respectful expression can we hope to maintain a society that thrives on the exchange of diverse ideas and perspectives and preserves our foundation as a God-fearing nation.

—Peter Demos is the author of “On the Duty of Christian Civil Disobedience” and the host of “Uncommon Sense in Current Times.” A Christian business leader from Tennessee, Demos uses his biblical perspective and insight gained from his own struggles to lead others to truth and authenticity in a broken world. To learn more, visit peterdemos.org.

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The Importance of Regular Dryer Vent Cleaning for Fire Safety

Throwing a load of laundry into the dryer seems like a simple task. Most homeowners don't give much thought to their dryer vents, assuming they will expel the hot, moist air without issue. However, your dryer vent could be quietly accumulating lint and debris, setting the stage for a dangerous fire. With nearly 16,000 home fires caused by clothes dryers each year, the risk is real, and the consequences can be devastating. Let's ensure our dryers aren't just another statistic but well-maintained appliances that serve your family safely for years.

Understanding the Risks of Clogged Dryer Vents

Lint is the primary culprit in dryer fires. Every time you use your dryer, tiny fibers from your clothes break off and get trapped in the lint trap. While most of this debris gets caught there, some can escape into the dryer vent over time. The dryer vent, a narrow pathway leading from your dryer to the outside of your home, can become clogged with lint and other debris. This restricts airflow and can lead to heat buildup. Excess heat can ignite a fire, and since dryer vents are often hidden, homeowners don't usually notice until it's too late.



According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), dryer fires make up 4% of all home fires, with 32% attributed to not cleaning the dryer vent. So, if you walk away with one piece of information, it should be this: regular dryer vent cleaning is crucial for preventing a fire in your home.

Other Benefits of Regular Dryer Vent Cleaning

In addition to reducing the risk of fire, regular dryer vent cleaning offers other benefits:

Improved Energy Efficiency: When your dryer vent is clogged, it takes longer for clothes to dry, resulting in higher energy bills. With clothes

dryers consuming 5.8% of residential electricity, keeping vents clean can save both time and money.

Longer Appliance Lifespan: Overheating due to a clogged dryer vent causes components to wear out quickly, leading to costly repairs or replacement. Regular dryer vent cleaning can help extend the life of your appliance.

Improved Indoor Air Quality: A clogged dryer vent can impact air quality in your home. Regular cleaning means fewer pollutants in the air.

Signs of a Clogged Dryer Vent

If you can't easily see or access your dryer vent, look out for these warning signs:

- Clothes take longer to dry
- Burning smell when using the dryer
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You Just Need to Let Go

I learned a lot from a recent Bridges guest named Donna. She had two adult children that were battling substance abuse. As a concerned mom she wanted to jump in and get her adult children back on the right road. Donna tried everything she knew. She prayed. She talked with Christian counselors. She talked with her children. There were many conversations, arguments, and conflicts yet nothing Donna did yielded a positive result (at least as far as Donna could see).

You Just Need to Let Go

One day Donna decided to go to the altar for prayer. As she explained her situation the pastor prayed and then he said, "You just need to let go". Donna was irritated by the comment. She also wondered what exactly it means to "let go and let God". The "let go" comment catapulted Donna into finding out how she could let go of her children who were clearly in serious trouble. Donna joined Nar-Anon. A 12-step group for friends and families of people struggling with addiction. It was this group that helped Donna understand that letting go was about trusting and leaving all the things that are outside of our responsibility/control into the

loving hands of our Heavenly Father.

She said No to Requests for Money

Donna had to stop enabling. She had to say no to any requests for money. She drew boundaries and stuck with them. This was hard and she second guessed herself a lot. Thankfully, she stayed the course. Once she let go of what she couldn't control she was better able to recognize what she could do. She found that she could show her children love and support while being clear that she would not condone substance abuse. She also prayed and reached out to other trusted friends to join her in prayer. Donna learned that letting go isn't an "I don't care attitude" or "just let things be" Instead, letting go is an active state of trust that requires faith and bravery.

As Donna started to live from trust, faith, and bravery she started to grow closer to God. She was learning lessons from her very challenging situation. She shared with me that it was the journey with her children that really helped her see how much love God has for all of us. Donna was clear as I talked with her that there was no easy fix. When her two adult children were in active addiction, she was understandably very

concerned and prayerful. For Donna learning to let go meant that she no longer allowed the addiction to control her life. She stopped rescuing her children and instead leaned on God to comfort her and reach her children. It took years before Donna saw the prayers for her children answered. Many prayers, many tears, and many trials. But God proved faithful, and Donna now enjoys a healthy relationship with her children. Donna recently became a grandmother, and she says that is her greatest joy. I asked Donna if she could share one thing with parents in similar circumstances. Donna paused...a long pause...and she said you just need let go and let God.

Today's Secret from the Studio: If it's something outside of your control – Let Go and Let God.

— *Monica Schmelter is the host of Bridges on Christian Television Network. She is the recipient of the Women in Film and Television, Industry Cornerstone Award. When she's not in the studio she enjoys spending time with her family. You can watch Bridges on demand by visiting bridgeswithmonica.com.*



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The Importance of Men and Fathers Fostering a Close Relationship with the Lord

In a society increasingly marked by secularization and moral ambiguity, the role of men and fathers in embodying Christian values cannot be overstated. Today, more than ever, there is a dire need for men to cultivate a deep, enriching relationship with the Lord. This connection goes beyond routine church attendance or hollow utterances of faith; it's about an authentic relationship with God that penetrates every facet of life—from the family home to the workplace and the broader community.

Leading by Example

The first, and perhaps most obvious, benefit of a strong relationship with the Lord is the ability to lead by example. Fathers are often the de facto spiritual leaders of their households, and the depth of their faith can have a significant impact on their children and spouse. Whether it's nightly prayers, Bible studies, or simply living out the teachings of Christ in everyday interactions, fathers who walk closely with the Lord serve as living testimonials of faith to their families.

Providing Moral and Ethical Foundations

As society's norms and values continue to shift, it becomes all the more essential for men to have a strong ethical compass. An intimate relationship with God provides this, offering a sturdy framework grounded in Biblical teachings. In an era where relativism often trumps absolute truths, a God-centered life can serve as an unwavering guidepost, helping men and fathers make decisions that are not only beneficial for them but also ethically sound.

Emotional and Spiritual Support

Life is fraught with challenges—professional struggles, familial discord, and personal dilemmas are unavoidable realities. In these times of strife, a close relationship with God serves as an irreplaceable source of comfort and guidance. The Lord is not just a distant deity but a loving Father who desires to be involved in the intricate details of our lives. The assurance that comes from a deep, personal relationship with God can be the bedrock on which men build resilience and mental fortitude.

Impact on Society

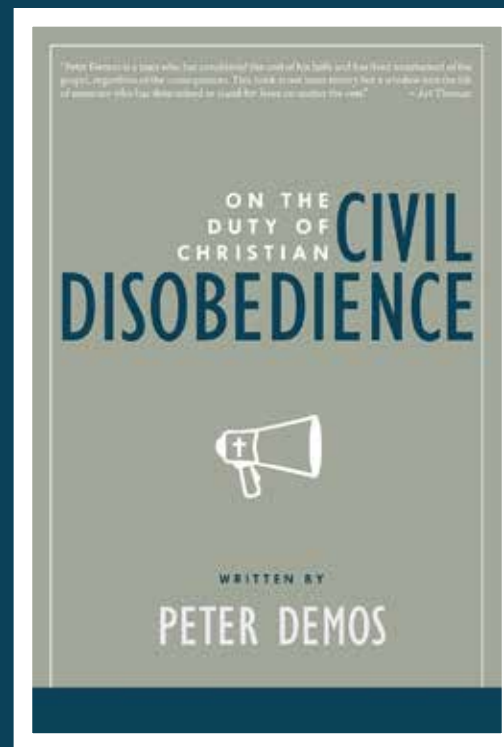
Finally, let's not forget the ripple effect that a strong spiritual life can have on society at large. Men and fathers who are rooted in Christian principles are more likely to engage in charitable acts, uphold justice, and advocate for the marginalized and oppressed. They also serve as counter-narratives to the stereotypes of toxic masculinity that often plague discussions around male behavior.

For men and fathers striving to make a lasting impact, the first step is to nurture an intimate relationship with the Lord. This relationship is not merely a personal choice; it is a commitment that has far-reaching implications for families and communities. Cultivating a deep connection with the Lord is more than a religious obligation; it's a lifelong journey that promises eternal rewards and lasting legacies. In order to have an intimate relationship with the Lord, adhering to a daily devotional time spent in Bible reading and prayer is paramount.

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— Mark W. Koch is an Author, Inspirational 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.



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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Wisdom

Wisdom is in short supply but in high demand. Wisdom has been defined as, “The soundness of an action or a decision possessing good judgement or knowledge”. Wisdom has the ability to simplify an idea and yet, raise value to a situation. Wisdom can help avoid negative consequences and apply well-seasoned discretion. Wisdom is a skill of applying knowledge correctly.

Throughout the ages, people have always valued wisdom. There are many books and courses supposedly offering the promise to grant wisdom after reading or being “enlightened” by the contents. The Bible makes it clear, “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom”. (Proverbs 9:10). If one desires wisdom, he or she must fear God. Fearing or revering God is just the beginning of the journey of wisdom. A person cannot possess true wisdom apart from knowing God. There are several other verses throughout the Bible that repeat the sentiment of having esteem or an awe of God equals the beginning of wisdom.

The fear in these verses do not mean being terrified or frightened of God, but rather possessing delight, amazement, or adoration, because one is in the presence of greatness. It holds respect and honor.

Solomon was the wisest king in the Bible. Solomon pursued God and therefore, wisdom became a byproduct of his relationship with the Almighty. To recall the story, God asked Solomon for anything that he desired. Solomon asked for wisdom so he could be an effective leader. Because God was pleased with Solomon’s request, he also made him the richest man in the



world. Wisdom is worth pursuing and yet, it is not completely up to us on our own. The point is that if we lack wisdom, which we all do, we can ask God for it. (James 1:5-8). Through having a relationship with God, wisdom will follow. We begin to see the world through the lens of God which is filtered through His wisdom. As we approach God with esteem and adoration, it allows us to put Him first and everything else becomes secondary. We operate from wisdom and knowledge.

Lastly, intellect and wisdom are not the same thing. In the world’s foolishness for their quest for knowledge, many have mistaken acumen for wisdom and therefore have made many blunders.

To be wise begins with knowing God. The more we want to know Him, the more get to know Him. The more we get to know Him – the more wisdom we possess.

Let’s take advice that still holds true today, from the wisest king found in Proverbs 2, “*My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. Tune your ears to wisdom and concentrate on understanding. Cry out for insight and ask for understanding. Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God. For the Lord grants wisdom!*”

— Rhonda L Smart
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Jeff Allen

Comedian, Actor, and Author

*Jeff Allen isn't there yet, but he's well on his way.
It's been a long journey, but he isn't walking it alone now.*

Are We There Yet? brings Allen's journey into the light and demonstrates comedy from agony. He isn't merely telling a sad story. His hilarious comedy drives home the humor in everyday family life, the ups and downs of marriage, the challenge of rearing children, and the joys of being a grandparent. He laughs and jokes and sometimes gets emotional relating devastating hardships. Allen brings family audiences along with him—in a rip-roaring way. He puts out good, clean humor with a great message to boot.

In *Are We There Yet?*, Allen's comedy has become a tour worthy of family entertainment. Now in his fifth decade as a working comedian, Allen's show first features his brilliant standup comedy, which has garnered hundreds of millions of fans around the globe. The second part is based on his book, *Are We There Yet? My Journey from a Messed up to Meaningful Life* (released 2023) which tears down all walls and shows Jeff's journey from very dark times, to recovery, to restoration, and ultimately to redemption through Jesus Christ.

For those inspired by Jeff's arc, his show opening invites people to support local (or other) charities. Among them is APParel clothing line where all proceeds go to support counter-human trafficking operations (Antipredator-project.org and Getapparel.org). His goal is "to make a difference that outlives the tour ... that outlives me." Allen's rapid-fire humor is a hit with all ages. A live comedy favorite, at times both gut-wrenching and sidesplitting, Jeff's *Are We There Yet?* tour offers a unique glimpse into his crazy world.

Exactly what makes Jeff Allen special? His comedy is relatable; the sublime craftsmanship in his act is flawless; he can spend 90 minutes on stage and not say anything you wouldn't want your granddaughter to hear—not a single nasty word.

Allen enjoys performing at early hours to draw parents and older audiences to his shows. "I'll get parents home before their babysitter has time ... to get caught in an embarrassing situation," he jokes. "Really, it's that my audience doesn't go out much after 8, so we started asking clubs to let me do 5 or 5:30 on Saturdays, and they quickly sold out."

In both the book and tour, *Are we There Yet?*, Jeff Allen takes audiences on the rollercoaster ride that his life and career took before he found redemption. Allen drastically reworked what had been an angry act filled with foul and hateful language. His comedy was reinvented: he became a smiling, happy comic who works clean. He admits that non-clean material still pops into his head, but he works it into fami-



ly-friendly shape or dismisses the jokes he simply cannot do to his other comic friends. "I had a heart change. It was interesting because the comedy material didn't change much. It was just how it was delivered—the vessel changed. There were times my wife would come into a club, hear me talk about our marriage, and leave in tears. She'd say, 'You must hate me!' I'd say, 'It's comedy! Comedy is anger!' Anyway, my heart changed."

Pursuing a Moronic Lazy Atheist

While that's all true, perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Jeff Allen can be measured in consistent "laughs per minute." He shares the inspirational and at times laugh-out-loud story of how God rescued him from drunken alcoholism and cocaine and despair through the book of Ecclesiastes that begins exactly how he felt. He started listening to three taped sermons a day about all aspects of the Bible, including Jesus.

Before redemption Jeff describes himself as "a shallow, empty, vacuous man filled with anger; a jaded, bitter, foul-mouthed cynical man—definitely, not a nice man—with a very large ego." Long before he knew or believed there is a God, that same God used an ancient poem, *The Hound of Heaven* by Francis Thompson, a little known English poet (1859-1907), to pull him into a different reality. Allen saw himself in the poem. Through symbolism, *Hound of Heaven* pictures God ever-pursuing a deviant, depressed man while he runs. God so follows the fleeing soul by His Divine grace that the soul feels the pressure to turn to Him alone in that never-ending pursuit.

God chased Jeff Allen in another rather odd way through a friend he had met at a golf course. This man had done well in business, and Allen began asking him about ways to make money. Phil explained, "You don't want a lot of money." "I don't?" "No, you can't handle what little you have. To enjoy the creation, you must

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have a relationship with the One who created it. When you can handle a little, you will be entrusted to handle a lot.”

“Phil got me thinking about life in a way I never had before. I didn’t know it at the time, but Jesus got people to open up by asking questions. The problem? Great wealth was my mighty goal.”

Allen hadn’t counted on the friend being a Christian—calling his atheism “simple moronic laziness,” an atheist who couldn’t come up with anything he disagreed with in the Bible because he had never read it. Thus began the friend’s mailing him tape after tape of the whole Bible preached by Tommy Nelson. Of course, Allen threw the tapes in any ole drawer or closet until years later when his marriage was all but gone and his stage appearances were failing—nose bleeds from cocaine use weren’t appealing to audiences. Neither was dirty, drunken alcoholism. Neither was horrific anger eruptions. Neither was marriage according to a wife who sought solace elsewhere. For years he had been taking his rage out on his wife and those around him by verbally berating them and making nasty jokes.

“I had started a journey where I explored all kinds of philosophies. After seven or eight years of recovery and self-help and New Age and Buddhism, I realized that there was no point to this life. My beautiful wife who loved me was so frustrated with me. I had children that were healthy, I had a job I loved, but there was no point to it. Can you imagine being married to someone like that? “When I was 14, my father told me there is no God, and I believed him. There is no God. My father probably had one of the best vocabularies of anybody I’ve ever known, but he cussed like a lunatic! He told me that swearing is the ‘crutch of the lazy.’”

Eventually, I went into a 12-step program, and they said, “Pray,” and I said “To what?” They said “Well, something bigger than you in this universe.” It’s interesting how arrogant a drunk can be. I said, “Is there anything larger than me in the universe? Are you kidding me? I am the center of the universe!” Allen sought help in almost everything. Eventually, he found the tossed aside tapes and listened to three tapes a day of Bible sermons. Ecclesiastes (1:1) spoke his language of hopelessness. “When I heard ‘meaningless, meaningless, all in life is meaningless,’ I agreed. That was my conclusion, too—nothing mattered. I was a full-blown nihilist; nothing mattered. What I really got out of that first sermon tape was life without God will have no meaning, and without meaning, there’s no purpose—and in a life without purpose, suicide. That summed up my eight-year search. I personally couldn’t find anything that gave me lasting peace or joy. That’s why I’m so concerned about today’s Millennials who choose these same thought patterns and are their own gods. “I kept listening. Jesus said, ‘Don’t worry about this life, I’ll give you a new counselor in the form of the Holy Spirit.’ That was a new way of viewing of the world. It ushered in the proverbial ‘come-to-Jesus’ meeting.”

The Hound of Heaven was still pursuing this lazy moronic atheist through His Word. “I got on my knees and when my friend who was leading me to Jesus asked, ‘Can you admit you’re a sinner? I said, well, let’s not go overboard . . . yeah...I know what I am. I know what I am.’”

Besides Jeff, wife Tami (Mishler) and two children had much repair work to



do. The divorce papers remained unfiled, children had to come to terms with all of it and are still doing so. To his son who said he didn’t really remember much of the angry early life, Jeff responded, “You may not remember what I poured into you, but one day your wife will draw it out of you.” Wise counsel.

Breast cancer challenged Tami’s life. After her thirty-first radiation treatment and their living with a third-party controlling monster in their home—cancer—she declared that she was not going to be defined by cancer. “When I performed at HBO’s US Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen, Colorado, Tami served as the bald “vanilla cream” between two bald black men (actors) in an Oreo-type picture, laughing all the way!”

These days Jeff Allen is involved with One Church Home in Fairview, Tenn., and sometimes leads men’s groups. Often, he performs comedy routines as fund raisers in communities and for corporations. A summer delight each year is two dedicated weeks with the grandkids, bringing the two in Montana together with the two in Tennessee.

God brought Jeff Allen into His kingdom, rescuing him from addictions and despair; praise to the Father that Jeff Allen is thirty-one years alcohol and drug free and is helping clean up comedy one bleep at a time. The Hound of Heaven, through Ecclesiastes, captured the heart of the raucous comedian who



cleaned up his act. Jeff walks with the Hound now. “*When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this: fear God and keep His commands because this is for all humankind*” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

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



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When Your Company Asks You To Do Something Unethical

Every now and then, almost every professional runs into a situation where he/she is expected to do something that violates their conscience – something unethical. How do you handle that? I was in the third year in a very fulfilling and lucrative sales position. I was good at it, was well-respected in the market and inside the company, and was enjoying an excellent income.

The company I worked for, however, had a reputation for being short-term focused and occasionally taking shortcuts. They came out with a new product and gave every salesperson a quota for selling it. The quota was prefaced by the announcement that the company had invested greatly in the development of this new product and needed to get its investment back. Therefore, the quota wasn't optional. It wasn't a "Here's what we'd like to see you sell" approach. Instead, it was "If you don't sell this, your job is in jeopardy."

After a few sales, it became clear that the product did not work as advertised. If I continued to sell it, I'd actually damage my customers and create a black spot on my reputation as well as the company's. Further, as a Christian, I saw that continuing to sell it was promoting a lie.

I was faced with a major ethical conflict: Follow the company's direction, or follow my conscience?

I suspect that many other Christian professionals have been, or will be, faced with a similar conflict. How do you handle a situation where your employer wants you to do something that violates your conscience? I've gained experience with this over the years.

Here are five thoughts to consider.

First

If you are a Christian, you start every one of these matters with a great deal of prayer. Bring the issue to God as clearly and specifically as you can and do so on several occasions. You should have the sense that God is involved in this situation because you invited him in.

Second

Make sure it really is unethical. It could be that your perspective is a bit off. Maybe you interpreted something incorrectly or your views are skewed in ways that distort reality. So, first, make sure the thing your employer is asking you do to is really unethical.

Find a couple of experienced Christian men and women who are older, more experienced, and wiser, and run it by them. Try to be as objective as possible when you tell them your story, so it isn't tainted by your viewpoint.

If they agree that the action you're being expected to take is unethical, then move on to the next step. If not, if it's you and not the company that is the issue, then you don't have a conflict. Instead, you need to educate your conscience a bit.

Third

Create an alternative action. In other words, instead of doing the unethical thing the company wants you to do, offer an alternative plan. Is there some



other way to achieve the company's objectives, other than acting unethically?

Offer that plan to your supervisor. That way, the situation is not seen, from your employer's point of view, as a refusal to do what you are asked to do, but rather a discussion of alternate ways of accomplishing the same goal. This will take the personal egos out of the situation and show your manager that you are creative and on the company's side. You avoid a contest of wills by reframing the situation from a "Yes" or "No" situation and a being viewed as defiant, to a discussion of alternative approaches.

There is a great biblical example of this from the life of Daniel. You'll remember that he and his friends were expected to eat the food prepared by the king's servants. Daniel felt that violated his ethics, and, instead of just refusing, Daniel offered an alternative plan. (See Daniel, chapter one.) The supervisor agreed to try it, and Daniel avoided a confrontation.

Fourth

Try not to let the event jeopardize the relationship. Hopefully, you have nurtured a relationship with your manager such that he/she sees you as a valuable employee, enjoys your company, and respects your opinions. If that's the case, your proposal will be far more likely to be seriously considered than if you've been a fault-finding, nitpicky complainer.

Fifth

If you've done all that and are unable to convince the company to ease up on its unethical demands of you, then you have a choice: to leave, or to stay and violate your conscience. Before you make this difficult decision, bring the decision to God and ask for his direction and guidance. Then, expect that He will guide you, and follow the direction He gives you.

It may be that this incident puts you into a better place. Remember, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Back to my story. How did that work out? The company saw that it had a problem with the product and backed off of the quota a bit. My manager left the company for personal reasons, and the demand to sell the product just faded away. A short time later, I resigned.

— Dave Kahle has been a Bible teacher, elder, house church leader, short-term missionary and Christian executive roundtable leader. For 30 years, he has been an authority on sales and sales systems, having spoken in 47 states and eleven countries. He has authored 13 books, including *The Good Book on Business*.

His books have been translated into eight-plus languages and are available in over 20 countries. He holds a B. of ED from the University of Toledo, and MA in Teaching from Bowling Green University. He and his wife Coleen split their time between Grand Rapids, Michigan and Sarasota, Florida. He is a father, foster father, adoptive father and grandfather to 14 children.

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Kudzu Bugs: The Unwelcome Houseguests You Didn't Invite

Ah, kudzu bugs! If you live in the southeastern United States, you might have already had a run-in with these tiny nuisances. Known scientifically as *Megacopta cribraria*, these little bugs are not only a menace to gardens and crops but also to our homes. Let's dive into what kudzu bugs are, how to identify them, what damage they cause to your home, and most importantly, how to prevent them from becoming your unwanted roommates.

What Are Kudzu Bugs?

Kudzu bugs, also known as bean plataspid or globular stink bugs, are native to Asia and first appeared in the U.S. around 2009. These small, brownish-green bugs are infamous for infesting kudzu—a rapidly growing vine that's also an invasive species. Unfortunately, their pestering doesn't stop at kudzu; they love invading homes too.

How to Identify Kudzu Bugs

Spotting a kudzu bug isn't too tricky once you know what to look for:

- **Size and Shape:** Kudzu bugs are small, about 4 to 6 millimeters long, and have a rounded, almost boxy shape.
- **Color:** They're usually brownish green but can appear more bronze or olive colored.
- **Wings:** They have short, stubby wings covering only part of their abdomen.

- **Smell:** When threatened or squished, kudzu bugs emit a foul odor. Think of it as their way of saying, "Back off!"

The Nuisance Kudzu Bugs Cause

While kudzu bugs can damage plants, their true nuisance lies in their penchant for invading homes:

- **Home Invaders:** As temperatures drop, kudzu bugs seek shelter indoors. They're not dangerous to humans, but their presence can be highly annoying. Plus, that foul smell can be quite unpleasant.
- **Unightly Swarms:** Kudzu bugs often gather in large numbers, especially on sunny exterior walls, which can be unsightly and overwhelming.
- **Staining:** These bugs can leave behind unsightly stains on walls, curtains, and furniture.

How to Prevent Kudzu Bugs

Prevention is key when it comes to kudzu bugs. Here are some practical tips to keep these pests at bay:

1. **Seal Entry Points**
Inspect your home for any cracks or gaps, especially around windows, doors, and the foundation. Use caulk or weatherstripping to seal these entry points. Check screens on doors and windows for any holes or tears and repair them promptly.
2. **Remove Kudzu Vines:**
Since kudzu bugs are attracted to kudzu plants,

removing these vines from your property can help reduce their numbers. Be diligent, as kudzu grows rapidly and can quickly take over an area.

3. Vacuum Them Up:

Instead of squishing kudzu bugs, which release their unpleasant odor, vacuum them up and dispose of them. This method keeps your home smelling fresh.

4. Regular Monitoring:

Keep an eye on your home and yard for any signs of kudzu bugs. Early detection can help you act before the infestation becomes a major problem.

Need Professional Help?

Kudzu bugs may be small, but they're a force to be reckoned with. Taking proactive steps to identify, prevent, and manage these pests can protect your home from their unwelcome advances. But you don't have to do it alone! Waynes Pest Control is here to help. Our team of experts knows just how to handle these pesky invaders, so you can get back to enjoying your home without the worry. Don't let kudzu bugs take over your space. Give Waynes Pest Control a call today and let us handle the rest!

— Meredith Boyd, Brand Marketing Specialist for Waynes, www.callwaynes.com



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10 Steps On How To Clean a Bathroom Fast and Efficiently

Nobody looks forward to cleaning a dirty bathroom. It can be a daunting task. Fortunately, our cleaning pros are here to share the wisdom we've gleaned from years of experience providing bathroom cleaning services. Now you don't have to tackle this unpleasant task alone.

Tips for Cleaning Your Bathroom

Breaking a bathroom cleaning job down into parts and attacking each one with the right tools and techniques can make the process a whole lot easier. Here are our 10 steps to a fresher, cleaner bathroom.

1. Clear off surfaces.

Grab your shampoo, conditioner, and any other products from the shower or tub. Remove items from the sink. Take the trash can, towels, and rugs to the hallway.

2. Dust the room.

Get dust, dirt, and cobwebs out of corners and off overlooked spots like blinds and around windows. Don't forget the baseboards.

3. Scrub and rinse the shower or tub.

Use a shower/tub cleaner or an all-purpose solution to gently scrub dirt and grime from the shower or tub surfaces and rinse. If you have a glass door, wipe it down with a glass cleaner.

4. Clean the sink and counter/vanity space.

Spray the all-purpose cleaner on the faucets, basin, and countertops, and wipe clean with a cloth. If there is some buildup in the soap dish and sink, scrub and then wipe. Wipe the mirror with a glass cleaner.

5. Make the toilet sparkle.

Squirt toilet cleaner inside the rim and toilet bowl. If you scrub inside your toilet regularly, an all-purpose cleaner should work fine. Scrub with a toilet brush and flush. Spray the all-purpose cleaner on the rest of the toilet and wipe with a clean cloth.

6. Take a multilevel approach to cleaning the bathroom floors.

- First, pick up items such as baskets, towels, and toilet plungers.
- Second, sweep up dust that has gathered on the floor, particularly in the corners of the room.
- Third, use a vacuum to pick up any debris that's left.
- Fourth, combine an all-purpose cleaner with warm water in a bucket. Run the mop over the floor, and when finished, keep the bathroom free of people long enough to allow the floor to dry.



7. Organize and wipe down items before putting them back.

Go through any baskets you removed from surfaces and quickly tidy up the items inside. Clean off products such as shampoo and conditioner bottles.

8. Neatly arrange items where they belong.

Line up bottles, baskets, and other items neatly in the shower or tub, on the sink/vanity, or on the shelves where they belong. If you come across products or items you haven't used in a long time, put them in a cabinet or throw them away. No need to keep unused containers around, crowding the tub or sink area.

9. Take preventative measures against stains and marks.

To fend off stains on a daily basis, lift up containers periodically and wipe the surfaces they were sitting on. Using a drain cover can help prevent rings caused by slow-draining water, and wiping down the tub/shower walls after each use can help keep them free of streaks.

10. Implement routine practices to keep the bathroom clean.

Put things away as you use them. Place smaller items in bins and baskets to prevent clutter. Sweep up hair, dust, and dirt from the floor daily.

Bathroom Cleaning Services

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The Benefits of Bathroom Cleaning Services

Professional bathroom cleaning services come with many benefits. For starters, they save you valuable time and energy, allowing you to focus on other things. Our team of experienced pros has the expertise and tools to thoroughly clean your bathroom, ensuring a hygienic environment. We can tackle tough stains and eliminate hidden germs, promoting a healthier living space. A well-maintained bathroom enhances the overall appearance of your home, creating a welcoming atmosphere for residents and guests. Schedule Bathroom Cleaning Services Today While cleaning your bathroom on a regular basis is not something you look forward to, it is essential for maintaining a healthy home environment.



If you'd rather not tackle the bathroom cleaning yourself, call the experts at Molly Maid today to schedule an appointment at 615-794-0200 or 615-603-3766 or scan this qr code!

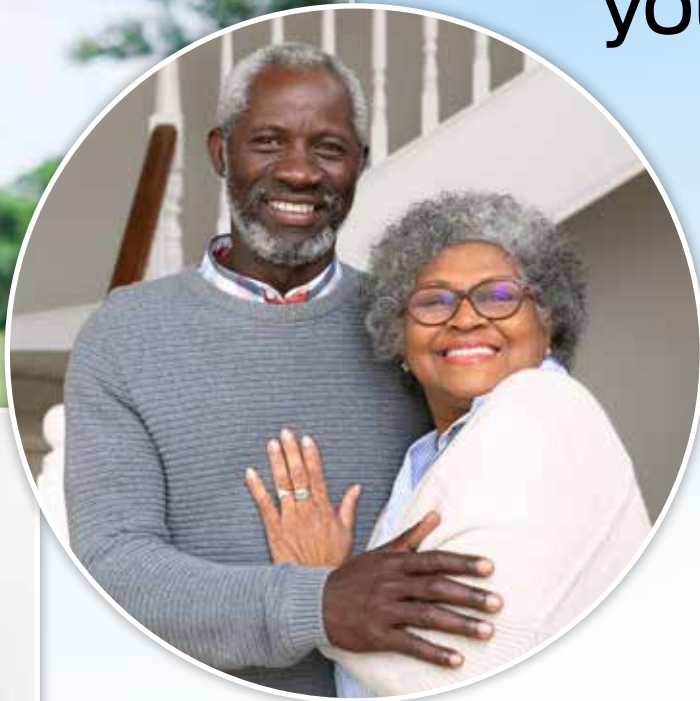
— Daron and Maricela Farrar



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Making a Living as a Christian Artist: Navigating Faith and Creativity in the Marketplace

... and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— 32 to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, 33 to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of artistic crafts. Exodus 35:31-33 (NIV)

The pursuit of a career as a Christian artist can be both a fulfilling expression of your faith and a practical endeavor to sustain your livelihood. While the journey may present challenges unique to the intersection of art and faith, it is certainly possible to thrive as a Christian artist in today's diverse and dynamic creative landscape. Here's are some things to consider as you work to make a living as a Christian artist:

1. Cultivate Your Craft:

A strong foundation in your chosen artistic medium is essential. Continuously hone your skills through practice, workshops, and learning opportunities. This commitment to excellence will set you apart in a competitive market and allow your art to speak with greater impact.

2. Define Your Niche:

Identify your artistic niche within the Christian context. Whether it's fine art, music, writing, design, or other creative disciplines, clarifying your niche will help you target your audience and market effectively.

3. Align with Your Faith:

Integrate your faith with your artistry. Your Christian beliefs can infuse your work with authenticity and depth. Create art that reflects your relationship with God and communicates biblical truths, providing viewers with a meaningful connection to their faith.

4. Build a Strong Portfolio:

Curate a portfolio that showcases the breadth and depth of your creative abilities. Highlight your best work that aligns with your Christian perspective. A well-organized portfolio will be your most powerful marketing tool.

5. Network and Collaborate:

Connect with fellow Christian artists, creative communities, and organizations. Networking can open doors to collaborations, exhibitions, and opportunities for exposure. Engage with like-minded individuals who share your vision.

6. Embrace Entrepreneurship:

Being a Christian artist often involves entrepreneurship. Learn about marketing, branding, and

business management to promote your work effectively and make informed decisions about pricing, distribution, and sales strategies.

7. Utilize Online Platforms:

Leverage digital platforms to showcase and sell your work. Create a professional website or online portfolio where potential clients and buyers can explore your art. Social media is a powerful tool for reaching a global audience.

8. Seek Out and Work with Mentors:

Connect with established Christian artists who can offer guidance and mentorship. Learning from those who have walked similar paths can provide valuable insights and encouragement.

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9. Diversify Income Streams:

Consider multiple income streams to sustain your artistic career. These can include selling original artwork, prints, merchandise, commissioned pieces, teaching workshops, speaking engagements, and collaborations.

10. Participate in Exhibitions:

Exhibitions provide exposure and credibility. Participate in Christian and secular art shows, galleries, and events to showcase your work and connect with potential clients and buyers.

11. Offer Workshops and Classes:

Share your expertise by offering workshops or classes that teach your artistic techniques or explore the intersection of faith and art. Teaching can supplement your income while fostering connections within your creative community.

12. Establish Your Brand:

Develop a brand identity that communicates your style, values, and the message behind your art. A consistent and recognizable brand will help you stand out and make a lasting impression.

13. Be Mindful of Ethical Considerations:

As a Christian artist, you may encounter ethical considerations, such as the themes you portray, the messages you convey, and the clients you work with. Ensure your artistic choices align with your faith and values.



14. Pursue Excellence and Humility:

Strive for excellence while maintaining a humble attitude. Recognize that growth is a journey and be open to constructive criticism that helps you refine your craft.

15. Trust God's Guidance:

Above all, trust God's guidance in your artistic journey. Seek His wisdom in every decision and allow Him to direct your path as you navigate the complexities of the art world.

Making a living as a Christian artist requires a combination of artistic prowess, entrepreneurial spirit, and a strong connection to your faith. By cultivating your craft, you can carve out a meaningful and sustainable career that reflects your Christian values. And remember, your art has the power to impact lives and glorify God through its beauty, message, and transformative potential.

How Can ACT International Help?

If you've been called to an arts-based ministry you should be doing the work you're best at, not worrying about paperwork and bookkeeping. ACT comes alongside over 700 Christians ministers, artists, speakers, and musicians, providing the support they need to do the work they are called to. We can help get your nonprofit set up, equip you for fundraising, and provide all the back-office support, bookkeeping, tax preparation ... and more.

Get freed up to do the work God is calling you to. Talk with one of our ministry specialists to see how ACT can help, visit www.actinternational.org/act-ministry-inquiry.

— Dr. Byron L. Spradlin, Founder and President,
Artists In Christian Testimony
www.actinternational.org

PARENTING POINTS

Divorced Parents – Getting Ready for “Back to School”

For divorced parents or those in a blended family, getting ready for the first day of school can be a bit more complicated due to shared parenting time and multiple households being involved. There are many things to consider for making it as easy on the kids as possible – here are a few tips:



1. Schedule a “co-parent meeting” to discuss the upcoming fall schedule. Discuss at least 30 days prior to school starting details such as:

- a. How will school supplies be handled – who will purchase them? Will the kids be involved in selecting them? If there is a specific list of supplies for each child, be sure all the adults have a copy (biological parents, stepparents, grandparents if they help with school). Consider rotating which family buys the “new backpacks and lunch boxes” each year so that both parents are allowed to participate in the shopping process equally.
- b. Who will be listed on the contact info sheet at school? Are there any phone, email or address changes that need to be updated for accuracy?
- c. Are there any concerns for the children going back in the fall (tutoring, summer reading projects, etc.) if so, what are some ideas that can be shared to support your children and help them succeed?
- d. Be sure all adults understand what needs to be taken to school the first day and who is providing it.
- e. Open House – Share date and time - try to attend together and show a respectful united front as you go room to room and help the children get acclimated to what they will need to know.
- f. Meeting the Teachers – attend together and be respectful. Don't try to “outshine” the other parent, be pleasant and give each side of the family time to ask questions and be involved. **I believe if there are stepparents in the shared children's lives that they should be invited to attend these events as well; it can be their decision to join or not, but if they live with the children and help with homework, school projects, etc. it is ideal for them to know what the overall expectations are and be part of supporting the kids.

2. No matter where the child is sleeping the night prior to the first day, it is a nice thing to offer that all parents be part of the “first day” experience. Consider some of these ideas:

- a. Meet at McDonald's early before school and have breakfast together.
- b. Meet in the parking lot of the school and walk in together at a specific time.
- c. Offer to take a photo of your child with their other parent and stepparent if applicable
- d. If you plan fun activities on the first day “after school” include the other parent if possible (Don't try to be the “favorite” or the “fun” parent – invite everyone). If this can't be done together, be intentional to rotate each year so even if it is not in the parenting plan, each parent gets to participate over time.
- e. Some families will choose to meet after school and have ice cream together and let the shared children talk about their first day with everyone present – this can be a powerful sign of showing “unity” between families.
- f. If both parents can't walk the child in, consider an extra Facetime call so the child gets to talk with the other parent as well, even though this is probably out of the normal call schedule

Remember that coparenting is NOT a competition of favorites – try to look for positive ways to support your children as parents together, even when you live apart. Kids thrive when they have one whole heart, in two healthy homes.

— Tammy Daughtry, Founder of CoParenting International.
For more free resources please see
www.CoParentingInternational.com





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Now More Than Ever, America Needs Robust, Bipartisan, and Respectful Debate

Our nation narrowly avoided a catastrophe with the failed assassination of President Donald Trump in Butler, Pennsylvania on Saturday. In the wake of this disturbing attack, I am grateful that President Trump is safe and recovering and join my fellow Tennesseans and Americans in praying for the two victims who were critically injured and in mourning the loss of Corey Comperatore, a rally attendee who was killed while heroically protecting his wife and daughters from gunfire. As we make sense of this shocking act of political violence, it is imperative that we reflect on how we reached this point.

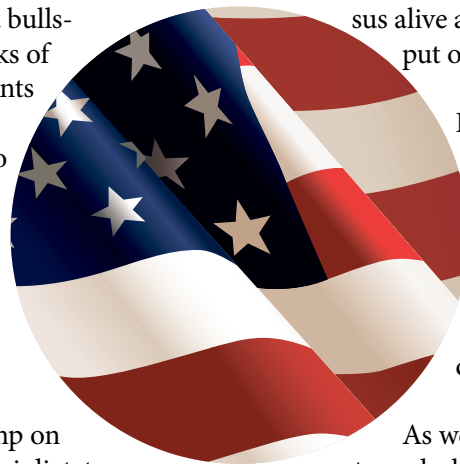
For 248 years, robust, bipartisan, and respectful debate has been the hallmark of our nation's political process, empowering us to defend our freedoms and build consensus around lasting legislation that serves the American people. While debates can often be contentious, only through open deliberation can we freely express our beliefs, challenge others' viewpoints, and figure out the best path forward for our country. Yet, more and more, we have seen this process break down as respectful debate gives way to vitriolic attacks.

Just days before the assassination attempt on President Trump, President Joe Biden told supporters

that "it's time to put Trump in a bulls-eye." That remark followed weeks of increasingly hyperbolic comments from Biden, who called President Trump a "genuine threat to this nation" who "really could become a dictator."

Following President Biden's cues, the media have echoed this reckless language, with one popular left-wing magazine recently depicting President Trump on its cover with the features of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler. Even after the tragedy on Saturday, some in the media went as far as insinuating that President Trump is partly to blame for the assassination attempt on his own life. Make no mistake: This sort of rhetoric has no place in our public life.

To be sure, many political debates—especially those in Washington—are inevitably heated and combative. Our nation faces serious challenges, and on many issues it is difficult to find common ground. But no matter our differences, Americans of all political stripes must communicate with each other with a sense of respect and decorum. Only then can we keep the possibility of consen-



sus alive and work toward solutions that put our country on a better path.

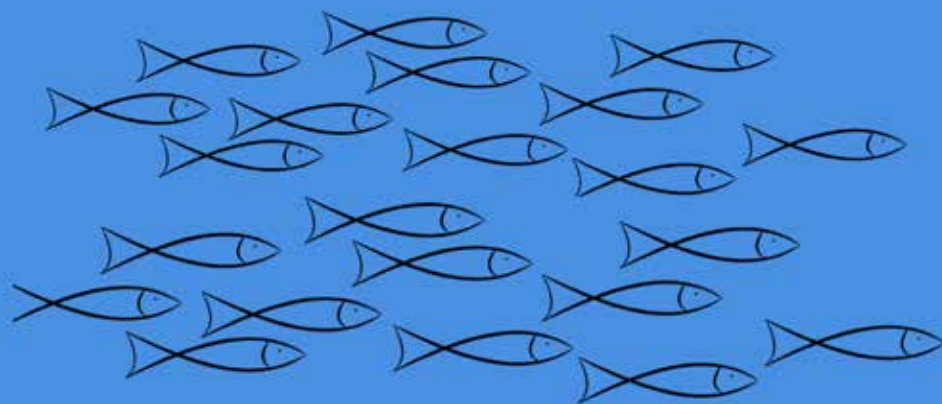
In so many ways, the assassination attempt on President Trump is a powerful reminder of what can happen when Americans abandon the possibility of working together and choose to settle political differences with violence.

As we move forward from this tragedy, let's recommit to our cherished democratic process—and the robust, bipartisan, and respectful debate that sustains it—to ensure that America will continue to thrive for generations to come.

— 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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"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." (Hebrews 10: 24-25 NLT)

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8 Ways Water Can Enter a Crawl Space

Crawl spaces, though often overlooked, play a crucial role in the structural integrity and climate control of your home. However, these areas can become vulnerable to water intrusion, leading to significant issues such as mold growth, wood rot, and compromised structural elements. Here's a comprehensive look at the common ways water can infiltrate a crawl space and what you can do to prevent it.

1. Inadequate Grading and Drainage

Poor grading around your home's foundation can cause water to pool and seep into the crawl space. If the ground slopes towards the foundation rather than away from it, rainwater and surface runoff can collect near the crawl space entrance.

2. Foundation Cracks and Gaps

Cracks in foundation walls or floors can let water into the crawl space. These cracks may be caused by soil settling, temperature changes, or construction issues. Over time, shifting ground, expanding and contracting materials, and poor workmanship can all lead to cracks, allowing moisture to enter and potentially causing more damage.

3. Poor Ventilation

A lack of proper ventilation in the crawl space can lead to high humidity levels, which may result in

condensation and eventual water accumulation. This issue is particularly problematic in humid climates.

4. Plumbing Leaks

Leaking pipes or fixtures within the crawl space can gradually introduce water over an extended period. Even seemingly minor leaks, if not addressed promptly, have the potential to cause significant damage such as mold growth, wood rot, and structural weakening.

5. Sump Pump Malfunctions

A sump pump is designed to remove excess water from a sump basin, typically found in the crawl space or basement. If the sump pump fails or is overwhelmed, water can accumulate and lead to flooding.

6. Roof Leaks

Water from a damaged or leaking roof can enter the crawl space through walls or the foundation. Compromised roofs allow rainwater or melting snow to pool around the base of the building. When the roofline is near the foundation, water runoff can more easily seep into the crawl space through gaps or vulnerabilities.

7. Surface Water Runoff

Heavy rain or melting snow can cause surface water runoff to enter the crawl space if drainage systems

are inadequate or missing. Without proper drainage solutions like gutters and graded landscaping, excess water can accumulate around the foundation and seep into the crawl space.

8. Improper Landscaping

Landscaping elements like shrubs, trees, and garden beds planted too close to the foundation can direct water towards the crawl space, increasing the risk of water intrusion. These elements can block proper water runoff, trap moisture, and lead to soil erosion, which may result in water seeping into the crawl space. Proper placement of landscaping features is essential to ensure water is directed away from the foundation and to prevent potential damage.

Conclusion: Water Can Cause Serious Damage

Water intrusion in a crawl space can lead to significant issues, from structural damage to health hazards. Regular inspections, proper grading and drainage, and timely repairs are essential to preventing water-related problems and ensuring the longevity of your home's crawl space.

— Hannah Moulton, Content Marketing Specialist
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Seeking Answers From God



Have You Ever Been Caught In A Standstill With God? When faced with an important decision, most Christians turn to God for direction, and when we don't receive a clear-cut answer, sometimes we mistake that as a "no" from Him. But there's more to consider before we jump to that conclusion.

When seeking God's guidance, it's crucial for us not only to pray, but to turn to His Word. The books of Psalms and Proverbs are excellent places to start looking for wisdom. But if we are honest with ourselves, we've probably all had instances when even our Bibles did not give us absolute clarity on a pressing matter.

So what are we to make of this? Does God simply not care as much about these decisions where He appears to fall silent?

The short answer is – of course, He cares! But in order to fully understand why God refrains from giving us simple answers to some of our questions, we must take a deeper look at His character.

Proverbs 3:5-6 gives us three directions that provide insight into our dilemma: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." For emphasis, I'll begin with the third charge and work my way back. In verse 6, God tells us that in order to make our paths straight, we must fully submit to Him. Practically, this means we have to come to a place where we can say, "Lord, even if the best decision is the one I'd rather not take, I will do that if it's what you want for me." This is not an easy prayer to pray, but is absolutely necessary in order for God's perfect plans to play out in our lives.

God gives us free will and does not want to control us like puppets. Instead, He gives us opportunities to share experiences with Him, which make the outcomes of our decisions that much more meaningful and enjoyable. That is why sometimes, God will wait for us to let go of our own way before He gives us peace about which direction to take. "Lean not on your own understanding." This is where the waters can get murkier, because while it's true that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, it's also true

that there will be much trouble in this world. Not only that – God also allows us to experience pain at times for our own benefit, as a loving parent disciplines a child who needs to be corrected (Psalm 94:12).

So we must keep this in mind when we're trying to make difficult decisions that can potentially bring suffering because, yes, God will sometimes allow our suffering if it ultimately leads to a deepening of our character and faith. Understanding that brings us to the final, and perhaps most important aspect of this passage: "Trust in the

Lord with all your heart." It seems simple enough. But what if we actually do totally trust God, yet still don't know or understand what He wants us to do?

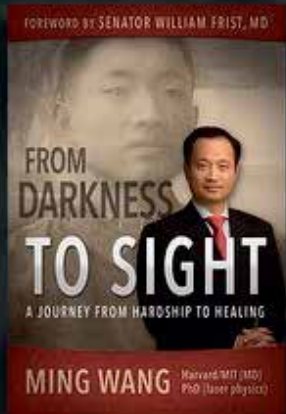
In my experience, God has waited to give me full clarity or confirmation on some of the most important decisions of my life until AFTER I've taken a step forward in a certain direction. And in every case, He did this as a way to test my faith in a deeper way. I think it's easy for humans to put God in a box and assume He'll give us cookie-cutter methods on how we should approach our lives. But it's actually an extreme example of His radical love that He does not.

There is a certain aspect of mystery to all of our lives, and God is gracious enough not to give us all the answers, but instead to allow us to experience life as a beautiful adventure with Him. Though God may allow you to learn a hard lesson or two as you try to navigate life, if you are genuinely seeking His will in your life, He will never abandon you. Remember, as a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit living inside of you Who will convict your heart when you should absolutely refrain from certain paths. But for those decisions where you're not completely sure, take a leap of faith and ask God to be with you in your decision. And in doing that, He will ultimately carry you to the path you need to be.

— *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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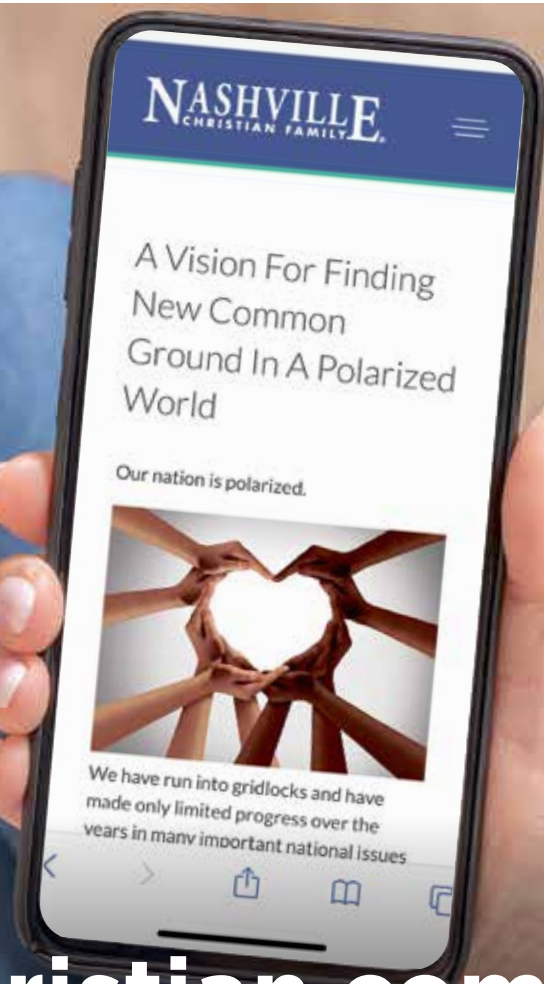


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The Normalization of Debt: How It Happened and Why It's Keeping You Broke

Here are some not-so-fun facts for you to noodle on: Almost 8 in 10 Americans live paycheck to paycheck.¹ And according to a study by Ramsey Solutions, just over half of Americans have had difficulty paying their bills in the past three months, and 1 in 3 have no savings to speak of.

Now, I don't know about you, but all of this gets me thinking: If we live in the most advanced society in history, why does it seem like we have less time and less money than ever before? Well, I have a theory about what's causing this mess. And spoiler alert: The financial advice you've trusted your whole life is the main culprit.

You see, a lot of us weren't really taught financial literacy in school or at home. Our main teacher was cultural messaging mixed with a whole lot of monkey see, monkey do. And what did we learn from our parents and ads from credit card companies? That we need other people's money to achieve what we want in life.

So, when it came time for college, we took on boatloads of student loans as an "investment" in the future—never mind the coming decades of debt and stress. Then we were told a good credit score was crucial for financial success as an adult, so we opened a credit card or two . . . or 10. Pretty soon, we "needed" nicer wheels and tacked on a car loan to the tab. And at Thanksgiving, Uncle Terry wouldn't let up about how renting is "throwing away" money, so we decided to get a mortgage for Christmas. Why not?

This is how debt becomes normal in our lives and eventually begins to rob us of financial margin and ultimately freedom. And to make matters worse, the financial systems we trusted benefit from our money struggles—meaning they're more than happy to keep us dependent on debt and asking for more.

Take the credit score, for example. Most of us have been led to believe that a good credit score is a sign you're doing well financially. But in reality, a high credit score just means you're crushing it with debt management, not money management. Think about this:

- Why do we want a credit score? To go into debt.
- Why do we want to go into debt? For a higher credit score.
- Why do we want a higher credit score? To have more access to debt.
- Why do we want more access to debt? For a higher credit score.

The only way to achieve and maintain a high credit score is to go into debt, stay in debt, and continually pay your debt accounts "perfectly," without adding too much debt or paying too much off too soon.

Are you getting the theme here? It's all about debt. The credit score is just an ingenious way for lenders to profit by luring you deeper into debt while convincing you you're doing great with money. In fact, according to a Fin-Health Spend Report, in 2020 alone, credit card companies made \$106 billion off interest. Starting to make sense why they want you hooked on your plastic and obsessed with your credit score?

So, if what we've been taught about money is a load of—pardon my French—bologna, then what should we be doing with money? Well, after falling for all the traps, I finally figured out that financial success is about what you have in



the bank, not what you owe to the bank. And that when you're ready to take control of your money and get rid of debt for good, you'll find margin, peace and joy. I know paying off debt can feel impossible, but data shows that most people can do it in under two years using the proven method I personally used to get out of debt—the debt snowball.

Hear me say this: You'll never win with money if you hang on to your debt. So, do you want to keep letting debt rob you of freedom and wealth? Or will you do the hard work to take control of the money that's rightfully yours?

If you're still on the fence, here's one last question: What could you do if you didn't have any debt payments?

Answer: Anything you want!

— George Kamel is a Ramsey personality and personal finance expert. Following Ramsey's proven money plan, George went from negative net worth to a millionaire in under 10 years. Since 2013, he has served on the Ramsey team, speaking across the country, hosting top-ranked Ramsey Network podcasts, like *The Fine Print* and *Borrowed Future*, and frequently co-hosting *The Ramsey Show*. His goal is to help people spend less, save more, and avoid money traps so they can live a life with more margin, options and freedom. Follow George on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, or online at georgekamel.com.

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Spiritual Goal For August

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"What if they don't believe? Will their lack of faith make the faith of God no effect?" (Romans 3:3)

There will always be critics and naysayers in life. It's not what's said about you that affects your life, but what you say and believe about yourself. Has the opinions of other people caused you to water down your dreams? One of the most important things you can learn is that other people don't have to believe in you in order for your dreams to come to pass. Other people don't set the limits for your life-you do.

In Romans 3:3, the Apostle Paul is saying, "It doesn't matter if other people don't believe. Their unbelief is not going to keep me from believing in my dreams." When God puts a promise in your heart, it's not up to other people to bring it to pass, it's up to you! You don't need everyone to validate you. You have to follow the voice of God for yourself and allow Him to order your steps.

God sees the hidden treasures that you've had buried on the inside of you. He wants to bring those treasures out and make your dreams reality! As you get rid of old, defeated thoughts and replace them with what God says about you, you will remove the limits and live the abundant life God has in store for you!

A Prayer for Today

Heavenly Father, thank You for another day to see Your goodness in my life. Help me to see myself the way You see me. Help me to see the plans You have for me so that I can be empowered by You to fulfill my destiny. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

— Mark Koch

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.

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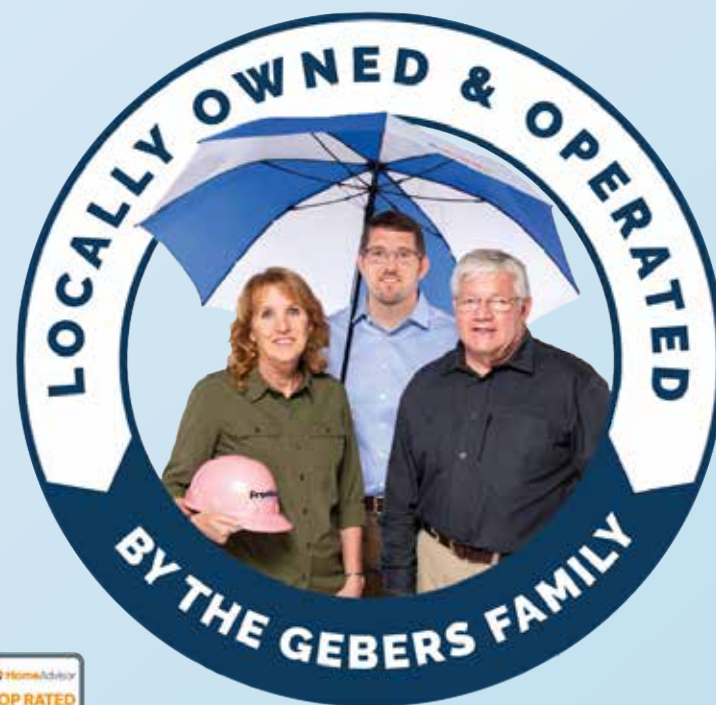
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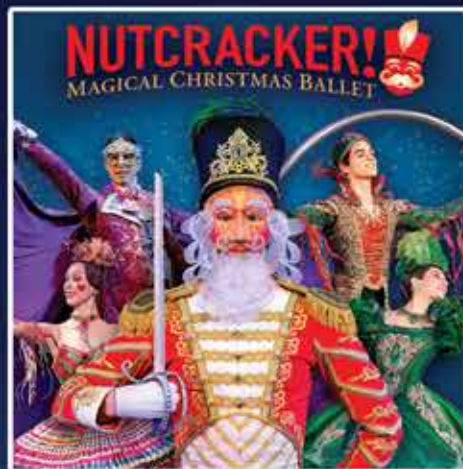
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