

September 2026

COMPLIMENTARY

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Season*

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Stronger Families**

Eva Romero

Faith in All Seasons of Life

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Candy Christmas



Candy Christmas

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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

Seeing the Creator in the Changing Seasons

My wife and I love September. It's one of our favorite months because it signals that fall—the season we cherish most—is just around the corner. With the kids back in school and Labor Day marking the unofficial close of summer, life seems to settle into a new rhythm.

The days grow shorter, flocks of geese begin their journey south, and football season gets underway, bringing with it a familiar sense of excitement and anticipation. You can almost feel autumn in the air. For me, there is a renewed energy that comes with knowing the brilliant transformation of the leaves is just weeks away.

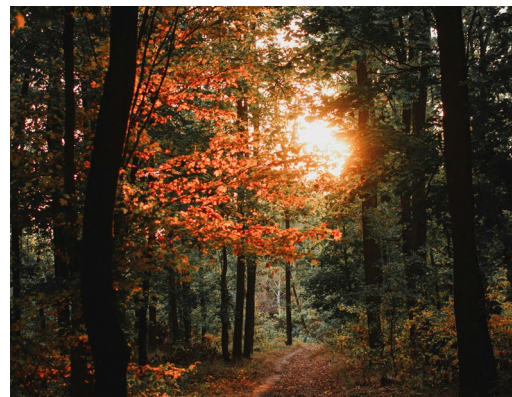
In the midst of the chaos and uncertainty we see across our country and around the world, the steady rhythm of the seasons reminds us of something greater: God is still in control. His handiwork in creation reflects order, beauty, purpose, and majesty—unchanging truths in a world that can often feel anything but certain.

Yet it is easy to become so caught up in the busyness of life that we overlook the wonder all around us. Over the coming weeks, I encourage you and your family to slow down and intentionally take notice. Watch as the trees change. Feel the crispness of the morning air. Take a walk. Look at the beauty of creation and give thanks to the Creator who designed it all.

As a biblical reminder, spend some time reading and reflecting on Psalm 104 and Genesis 1. Both passages direct our attention to the One who spoke creation into existence and continues to sustain it by His power. And then consider God's crowning creation—man. Psalm 139:13-14 says: “*You formed my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*”

The changing seasons remind us that God's creation is intentional and purposeful. The trees, the skies, the changing weather, and even the rhythm of our lives all point us back to the Creator. But among all He has made, He created us uniquely in His image, with purpose and value.

So, as September arrives and we anticipate the beauty of fall, perhaps we should pause long enough to truly see it. In a world filled with noise and uncertainty, the changing seasons offer a quiet reminder that God remains faithful, His creation remains magnificent, and His purposes remain sure.



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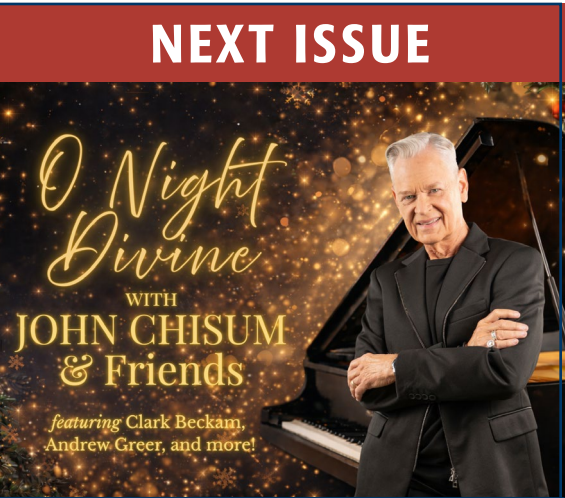


ON THE COVER 20

Nashville-area businesswoman and community leader Eva Romero shares how faith has carried her through every season of life—from a difficult childhood and young motherhood to entrepreneurship, advocacy, and public service. She reflects on finding her voice, helping others feel seen and heard, and using her experiences to serve families and strengthen the community she now calls home. See page 20 to learn more.

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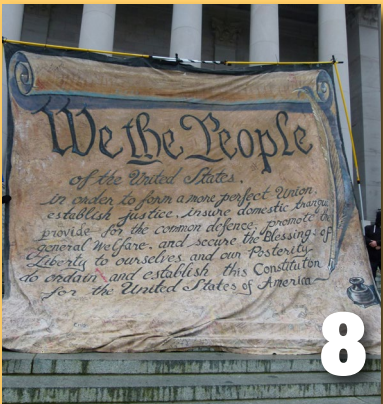
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don’t even know
to ask.”



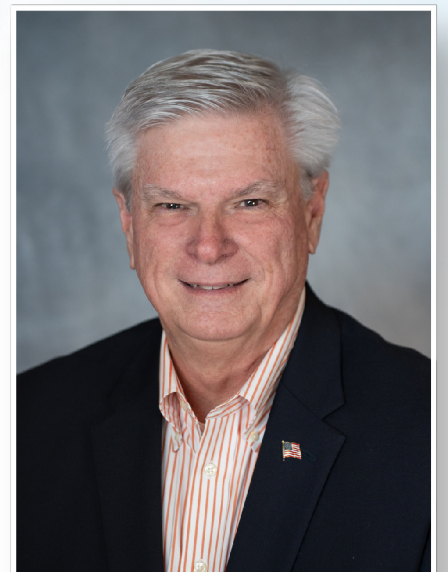
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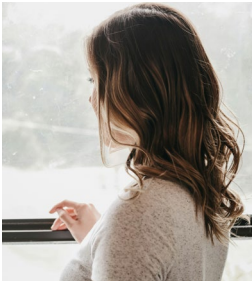
“helping you know which way to go”



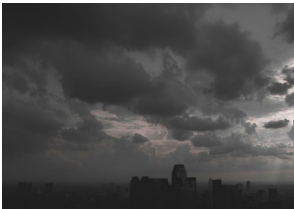


When the World Feels Uncertain, Christians Can Be Certain

Uncertainty has a way of settling into the air we breathe. You feel it in headlines about wars and rumors of wars. You see it in the strain on families trying to stretch paychecks that no longer stretch far enough. You sense it every time you scroll through a feed full of fear, outrage, and predictions of collapse. It's easy to feel like the world is shaking. But God's people have lived through shaking seasons before.



The early church faced persecution. Believers throughout history have endured plagues, political chaos, and global conflict. In every generation, Christians have had to answer the same questions. How do we respond when everyone else is anxious? Do we panic, do we argue, or do we become people of peace?



Jesus never said the world would feel stable. What He did say was, "In this world you will have trouble.

But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) He also warned, "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed." (Matthew 24:6)

He didn't promise calm circumstances. He promised His presence. And that changes everything.

When uncertainty rises, Christians have a choice. We can absorb the fear around us, or we can reflect the faith within us.

- **We anchor ourselves in God's sovereignty.** The world may shake, but God does not. Our confidence isn't tied to markets, governments, or global peace. It's tied to a God who has never once lost control.
- **We guard our hearts from fear-based narratives.** Not every voice deserves our attention. When fear fills the feed, believers filter it through truth. Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." (John 14:1)
- **We become people of peace,** not passive peace but active peace, the kind that steadies conversations, calms households, and reminds others that hope isn't fragile. Jesus told His followers, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I

give you." (John 14:27)

- **We choose unity over argument.** Uncertain times tempt people to fight, blame, and divide. The Church is called to humility, gentleness, and a love that refuses to fracture.

That kind of certainty is a practice as much as a belief. A few ways to live it out when the world feels unstable:

Pray first, since prayer re-centers our hearts and reminds us who is truly in charge. Stay rooted in Scripture, which becomes a stabilizing force when everything else feels fluid. Serve intentionally. Fear turns people inward, faith turns people outward. Speak hope, because our words either echo the world's anxiety or announce God's peace. And stay connected to the church. Isolation magnifies fear. Community multiplies strength.

Christians aren't immune to uncertainty, but we aren't defined by it either. Our certainty doesn't come from circumstances. It comes from Christ, and He never changes.

—Katherine Stewart - Custom Representative, Swanson Christian Products
– www.swansoninc.com



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enough children.”



REST IN PEACE

Dolly Parton

1946-2026





Faith and Freedom: Why the Constitution Matters More Than Ever

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” — 2 Corinthians 3:17



On September 17, 1787, thirty-nine men signed a document that would change the course of human history. They didn’t just create a government — they established a framework for self-governance rooted in a simple but radical idea: that our rights come not from government, but from God.

The Declaration of Independence had already made this clear four years earlier: “We are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights.” The Constitution was the blueprint for protecting those God-given rights. That is why faith and freedom cannot be separated. They never could be.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Liberty — true freedom — is not a human invention. It is a spiritual reality, gifted by God and protected by the framework He enabled men of faith to build.

Our Founders understood this. John Adams

wrote, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” They didn’t see faith as a private hobby and government as a secular machine. They saw liberty as a gift from God — and the Constitution as the guardrail designed to protect it.

When faith retreats from public life, freedom doesn’t just shrink. It loses its foundation. When we forget that rights are God-given, we start believing they’re government-issued. And what government gives, government can take away.

That is why The 917 Society exists. Every year, we put a free pocket Constitution into the hands of 8th graders across all 50 states. Not because a piece of paper will save us — but because a generation that doesn’t know its rights won’t know when they’re being taken.

And it’s why we launched God and Country — a program that equips churches to reengage with their civic responsibility. Through County Outreach Ambassadors in 28 counties across six states, we’re working with pastors and congregations to encourage prayer for our nation, voter registration, and the simple but powerful act of voting your values.

We’re not telling anyone how to vote. We’re telling Christians they should vote. We’re reminding the Church that silence in the public square isn’t neutrality — it’s surrender. On this Constitution Day, September 17, I’d ask you to do three things.

First, pray. Pray for our nation, our leaders, and those who will be elected. Pray that God would raise up leaders who honor Him. Second, read the Constitution. It takes about thirty minutes. If you’ve never read it — or it’s been years — pick one up. We’ll send you one. Third, vote. Vote your values. Understand who you’re voting for. Show up.

The same God who inspired the signers of the Declaration is the God who sustains us today. The Constitution they crafted was designed to protect the freedom He gave us. If we want to keep that freedom, we have to fight for it — not with swords, but with prayer, education, and the ballot.

Faith and freedom. Together. Inseparable. That’s the American story. And it’s not over yet.

—Joni Bryan is the founder and executive director of The 917 Society. Learn more at 917society.org.



swansoninc.com



On Advice of Counsel

“On the advice of counsel” means a person is taking an action—or refusing to take one—because their lawyer told them to do so. We hear this phrase often used during Congressional hearings or police interrogations. But it can also be used as a part of a legal defense strategy to show that a person is acting in good faith.



When a person is charged with a criminal offence, but sought legal advice prior to taking the alleged criminal action, they may be able to argue that they lacked the required criminal intent because they acted in good-faith reliance on legal advice.

Most crimes require the state to prove that the accused acted “knowingly, willfully or with the intent to commit the criminal act.” But if they took the action only after consulting with an attorney and with full disclosure to the attorney, then they can defeat the intent element of the crime. In order to use this defense, the accused must be able to prove four facts:

First: They gave their lawyer a full and honest report of all the facts regarding their planned activity. Second: They asked their lawyer for legal advice

on what to do. Third: The lawyer told them the action was legal. Fourth: They acted in good-faith reliance and followed the lawyer’s advice honestly and reasonably.

There are a couple of important consequences to invoking this defense. First, if you say that you took the action “on advice of counsel”, you have effectively waived the attorney-client privilege as to communications between you and the lawyer whose advice you sought. Once the defense is asserted, the prosecution is entitled to obtain communications between the defendant and his attorney – communications that would otherwise be protected as confidential.

When delving into one’s communications with their lawyer, the prosecution will often try and argue that the client did not make a full disclosure, or that he received inconsistent advice, or that the client was selective in his reliance on that advice.

Still, the defense is important because it reflects a core principle of fairness in our criminal justice system. Individuals should not be punished for acting in good-faith reliance on their attorney’s advice, especially when the circumstances involve complex laws.

Oftentimes, during a Congressional hearing we hear an individual refuse to respond to a question “on advice of counsel” and then explain that they are pleading the Fifth. Typically, the response they provide is: “On the advice of counsel, I invoke my fifth amendment privilege against self-incrimination and respectfully decline to answer your question.” But invoking the Fifth Amendment privilege is much different than asserting the “on advice of counsel” defense. It is rooted instead on the constitutional principle that a person cannot be compelled to offer incriminating evidence against themselves. They may, for example, on the advice of their defense lawyer, refuse to take the witness stand in a criminal trial. Their failure to testify cannot be used against them when the jury deliberates over their guilt or innocence.

—Larry L. Crain - www.crainlaw.legal



MIRACLE MOMENTS

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

Dolly Parton and Her Eye Surgeon Dr. Ming Wang Made Music Together

Dr. Ming Wang, an internationally renowned laser eye surgeon and a Harvard & MIT graduate (MD, magna cum laude) recalls his fond memories with Dolly Parton, who passed away recently. Dr. Wang performed Dolly’s LASIK surgery many years ago, and they have remained good friend since. Dr. Wang showed a video in which Dolly made fun of her LASIK surgery (“Dr. Wang’s LASIK surgery has made my hair pink!”)



“Dolly and I even made music together”, Dr. Wang recalls fondly how he and Dolly collaborated in a music project, in which Dolly sang an old country song “The Cruel War” and Dr. Wang played the Chinese violin erhu. Their song made it Dolly’s album “Those were the days”!

“It was an ultimate joint venture between the East and the West”, Dr. Wang said. “On the album, there are names of many famous including Dolly, Allison Krause and others, and then ‘Ming Wang’, then people asked: ‘Who is that?’” Dr. Wang beamed.

“When we finished recording, Dolly and I did something impromptu”. I started playing “Danny Boy” with my erhu, and Dolly joined singing! It was beautiful and memorable! Here is a video of how Dolly collaborated with Dr. Wang in producing “The Cruel War” and how they sang and played together “Danny Boy”.

“Dolly’s charity work has inspired me to found a sight foundation which to date has helped blind orphan children from around the world, and the Angel Studios’ film “Sight” (FREE link: sight.drmingwang.com) tells the story of these children. Dolly lives in our hearts forever”, the world-renowned eye surgeon said.

The Angel Studios’ film “Sight” (FREE link: sight.drmingwang.com), based on Dr. Wang’s autobiography “From Darkness to Sight”. has won the Best Picture at ICVM International Christian Film Award. Dr. Wang’s faith journey is also featured in the award-winning Christina film “God’s Not Dead”.



About Dr. Ming Wang, MD, PhD

As a teenager, Ming fought hardship in his childhood and came to America with only \$50 and earned two doctorate degrees, one in laser physics and one in medicine, and graduated with the highest honors from Harvard Medical School and MIT. Dr. Wang has performed over 55,000 laser vision surgeries, including on over 4,000 doctors. The amniotic membrane contact lens, which Dr. Wang has invented (and holds two U.S. patents), has been used by tens of thousands of eye doctors throughout the world in nearly every nation, and millions have had their eyesight restored.

Wang Foundation for Sight Restoration has helped patients from over 40 states and 55 countries, with all sight restoration surgeries performed free-of-charge. Dr. Wang was named the Kiwanis Nashvillian of the Year for his lifelong dedication to help blind orphans from around the world. The film “Sight” (FREE link: sight.drmingwang.com) , distributed by Angel Studios, is based on Dr. Wang’s autobiography “From Darkness to Sight” and co-stars Terry Chen and Greg Kinnear.

—Leona Walthorn



SPECIAL FEATURE

Brought to you by: **Wallin, Hargis, & Colquette Wealth Advisors** • www.whcwealth.com



The Top 8 Beneficiary Mistakes to Avoid: Protecting Your Legacy and Loved Ones

As Christian families, we are called to be good stewards of the blessings God has entrusted to us. Part of that stewardship is ensuring our loved ones are provided for after we're gone. One of the most overlooked aspects of estate planning is designating beneficiaries. Simple mistakes can lead to confusion, unintended outcomes, or even family discord. Here are the top eight mistakes to avoid when naming beneficiaries—and how to safeguard your legacy.



1. Not Taking an Accounting of All Your Assets. Before naming beneficiaries, it's vital to account for every asset—bank accounts, retirement plans, life insurance policies, real estate, and even digital assets. Overlooking an asset could mean it gets distributed by default according to state law, not your wishes. Create a thorough inventory to ensure every blessing is properly allocated.

2. Not Having a Plan: Be Specific. Many families fall into the trap of assuming their assets will “just go” to their spouse or children. However, without a clear plan, your wishes may not be honored. Specify exactly who should receive each asset, as ambiguity can cause disputes or delays.

3. Failing to Set Conditions or Requirements. Sometimes, it's wise to place conditions on inheritances. For example, you may want a beneficiary to reach a certain age, complete their education, or demonstrate responsibility before receiving their inheritance. Clearly communicate any conditions in your legal documents to avoid misunderstandings.

4. Not Understanding Contract Law vs. State Law. Many people mistakenly think their Will or Trust alone determines asset distribution. However, assets like IRAs, life insurance, and retirement accounts are governed by contract law—meaning the beneficiary form controls, not your Will. Review beneficiary designations on each account and ensure they align with your overall estate plan.

5. Forgetting to Review Beneficiaries Periodically. Life changes—marriages, births, deaths, divorces—mean you should review your beneficiary choices regularly. Set a reminder each year or after major life events to update your designations so no one is accidentally omitted or included.

6. Overlooking Maturity and Responsibility. Ask yourself: Is my beneficiary mature enough to handle an inheritance? If not, consider options like trusts or staggered distributions to protect them from poor decisions and outside influences.

7. Not Keeping Your Own Records. Don't rely solely on financial institutions to keep track of your beneficiary forms. Keep copies of your own records in a safe, accessible place. This protects against administrative errors or lost files and helps ensure your wishes are honored.

8. Naming the Wrong Beneficiary (e.g., Minor Children). Naming a minor child as a beneficiary can create legal hurdles, as children cannot legally inherit assets directly. Instead, consider establishing a trust or naming a responsible adult to manage the inheritance until the child comes of age. By avoiding these common mistakes, you can ensure your legacy is passed on faithfully, with love and wisdom. Thoughtful planning not only honors your family but also glorifies God, the ultimate giver of every good gift.

If you need help planning your distribution plan, reviewing or updating your beneficiary designations, or determining whether you need a Trust to carry out your final wishes, we encourage you to call our office to speak with one of our seasoned advisers.

—Michael Wallin, Certified Financial Planner™. For more information, please visit whcwealth.com or call 615-236-2220.



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SPECIAL FEATURE

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Trevecca’s Affordability Underscored in Money.com’s 2026 Best Colleges List

Trevecca Nazarene University has been named to the list of America’s best colleges for 2026 by Money.com. Money.com’s Best Colleges list is built on factors like graduation rates, costs, financial aid, student debt and alumni salaries. The recognition highlights schools that deliver strong value for students and families.



In Money.com’s data, Trevecca stands out as an area leader in affordability, with the lowest estimated costs among all Middle Tennessee private institutions and among all Nazarene institutions included on the list. The list compares both

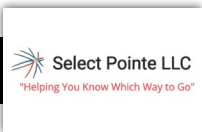
the estimated full price and the estimated price after average financial aid for institutions. Money.com also shows Trevecca’s costs as the second-lowest among all private schools in Tennessee, for both estimated full price and estimated price after average financial aid. The site notes that 100 percent of Trevecca undergraduates receive financial aid. “Families are asking important questions about value and affordability when they consider a college education,” said Dr. Tom Middendorf, Trevecca provost and senior vice president. “This recognition reflects Trevecca’s continued commitment to providing a Christ-centered education that is both academically strong and financially accessible for students and families.”

The Money.com recognition follows a string of national rankings and honors for Trevecca. The University was rated the top Christian university in Middle Tennessee and the top-ranked Nazarene university in the U.S. in the 2026 Wall Street Journal College Pulse rankings. Together, the rankings point to Trevecca’s continued momentum in providing students with a strong academic experience rooted in building servant leaders. The 2026 Best Colleges list from Money.com can be viewed at money.com/best-colleges.

—Teron Fairchild, Marketing Communications Writer, www.trevecca.edu

SENIOR SCENE

Brought to you by: Ben Davis • www.selectpointebd.com



Medicare Open Enrollment Starts Soon

It’s almost Fall y’all so it will soon be time for Medicare Open enrollment. So, let’s look at what Medicare Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) is all about. If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan or a prescription drug plan (PDP) this is the time of year you get to review how those plans have done for you. You will be receiving from your plan’s carrier toward the middle of September a letter called the ANOC letter (annual notice of change). It will tell you what the changes in your plan will be for 2026. Remember to open this letter from your carrier!



If you don’t do mail, then hop on your computer beginning October 1st; you will be able to log on to Medicare.gov and check out your plan there. You may also see your plans info in the 2027 Medicare&You that will be mailed to you. It’s available on their website but does not have local information on plans/carriers. The open enrollment period is October 15th through December 7th. If you decide to make any changes, your new plan will start January 1, 2027. If you don’t make any changes then your current plan will roll into 2027, and you don’t have to do anything! Suggestion – call your Medicare Rep and discuss next year’s plan with him or her! Every year we must get recertified with Medicare and the Carri-

ers to be able to offer suggestions as to what would be the best route for you in 2027. We are blessed to have such a great healthcare system in middle TN and that attracts many companies that want to do business here. Remember this is about your healthcare coverage for next year. It’s worth taking a look! And this time next year – we get to do it all over again! —H. Ben Davis, III CSA SelectPointe, LLC 615-584-4946 ben.davis@selectpointe.com www.selectpointebd.com



Contact us today to see how we can help you
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GROW YOUR BUSINESS in 2026!
615-815-8765

Here’s what these awesome partners have to say about their experience with Nashville Christian Family:

“Nashville Christian Family Publication meets such a need in our community. We also get a great response to the ads we place in the publication. We are thankful to be partnering with such a quality Christian publication that’s so well read and respected.”

—Monica Schmelter, Director of Station Managers, Christian Television Network

Your Membership Can Strengthen More Than Your Household



Over the past two months, we have explored two reasons families of faith may want to rethink where they bank, borrow, and build their financial future.

First, we considered purpose. Your financial choices do more than affect a balance sheet. They determine where the benefit of your hard-earned money ultimately goes. At Koin Credit Union, we were built to serve our members and the Kingdom, not to maximize profits for distant shareholders.

Second, we looked at stewardship in practical terms. Faithful financial management requires tools that help families make wise decisions, whether that means lowering the cost of an auto loan, avoiding unnecessary fees, or helping a young adult begin with a fair financial foundation.

This month, we come to the third reason: Your financial relationships should strengthen the community around you.

Most of us think about banking as a private matter. We open an account, make a payment, save for a goal, or borrow when a need arises. Those are personal decisions, and they should be handled with care. But they are not only personal decisions. The institutions we choose also shape the kind of communities that are strengthened by our everyday financial activity.

A traditional bank is designed to generate returns for its shareholders. Its reach may be national or even global, but its priorities are ultimately set far

from the families and communities it serves. The relationship can become transactional. You are one account among many, and the local impact of your business is rarely the point.

Koin is different by design. As a member-owned credit union, we exist to serve the people who bank with us. That changes the nature of the relationship. You are not simply a customer purchasing a financial product. You are part of a cooperative with a shared interest in helping families make progress and helping our community remain strong.

This is why local relationships matter to us. We are proud to stand alongside ministries and organizations serving real needs in our region, including Men of Valor and One Generation Away. These partnerships reflect a simple belief: financial institutions should not be detached from the people they serve. They should be present, attentive, and willing to contribute to the health of the community.



That kind of impact is not always dramatic. Often, it looks like a family keeping more of its monthly income because a loan was structured fairly. It looks like a young person beginning to

build credit without being trapped by an unreasonable rate. It looks like a member referring a friend or family member to a financial partner they can trust. Over time, those individual decisions create a stronger network of households

equipped to provide, give, serve, and respond when needs arise.

This is one of the quiet strengths of a credit union. When more families choose to bank together around shared values, the benefit does not disappear into a distant system. It stays connected to the people and places that matter most.

At Koin, we believe membership is more than access to an account or a loan. It is an opportunity to build a more intentional financial life and to be part of an institution committed to the well-being of its members and their community.



If you are looking for a financial partner that sees more than a transaction, we invite you to learn about Koin Credit Union. Consider becoming a member, moving a loan, or simply sharing the difference with someone who may need a better place to bank. Together, we can make everyday financial decisions serve a greater purpose.

Visit www.koincu.org to learn more.

“Don’t neglect to do what is good and to share, for God is pleased with such sacrifices.” — Hebrews 13:16 (CSB)

—Doug Clinton, President | CEO, Koin Credit Union. Mr. Clinton has been the President and CEO of Koin Credit Union in Brentwood, TN, since 2018.



Doug has devoted over 30 years to credit union senior leadership roles. Doug’s expertise is underscored by his Certified Chief Executive designation, which he earned in 2019, and his graduation from the CUNA Management School in Madison, WI, in 2005.

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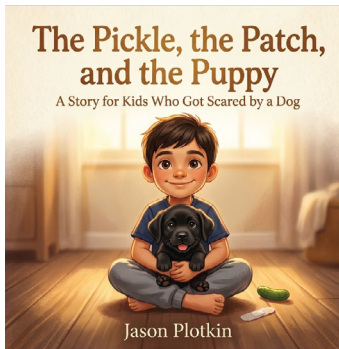


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A Boy, a Bite, and the Small Brave Steps that Bring a Child Back

Every parent of a bitten child knows the moment the stitches come out and everyone exhales. Fewer are warned about what comes three months later, when the scar has faded and the child still won't go in the backyard.



The Pickle, the Patch, and the Puppy.

That gap — between the wound that heals and the fear that lingers — is where Jason Plotkin's new picture book lives.

The Pickle, the Patch, and the Puppy follows Stevie, a boy whose pickle-loving, backyard-running childhood is interrupted by a frightening encounter with a dog named Bo. The bite heals. The fear takes longer. With his parents beside him and a tool called the Bravery Ladder, Stevie learns that courage isn't the absence of fear but the decision to move anyway.

Plotkin writes from both sides of it. He was bitten by a dog at age five. "The wound healed in a couple

of weeks," he says. "The fear took years. I crossed the street when I saw a leash. Nobody meant to overlook it — life just moved on, and I didn't have words for what stayed behind."

He found them as a personal injury attorney representing families whose children have been hurt in dog bite incidents. He is Chief Executive Officer and Managing Attorney of The Pinder Plotkin Legal Team in Baltimore, Maryland, and the best-selling author of *Crash Course: To Recovery and Beyond*.

"Parents come in focused on the medical bills and the scar, which is exactly where a parent's mind should go first," Plotkin says. "Then a few months later they mention it almost apologetically — he used to love our neighbor's golden retriever and now he won't look at it. That's the injury nobody photographs. I've seen it in family after family, and I lived it myself."

The Bravery Ladder at the center of the story is a real strategy, not a storybook device. Rather than asking a child to "get over it," a family builds it together, one rung at a time: look at a photo of a dog. Watch one across the park. Stand near a calm, leashed dog with a parent's hand on your shoulder.

"Each rung is small enough to survive and big

enough to matter," says Plotkin. "Kids who climb it aren't just recovering from a dog bite. They're learning something about fear that serves them the rest of their lives."

Families of faith, he adds, bring something to that climb he has watched carry children through. "The prayer at the bedside, the church folks who show up and stay an hour — that's part of the healing, not separate from it. A child needs to know they aren't alone in the dark."

His message to parents in the middle of it is simple. "Your child's fear is normal, and it's treatable. You don't have to rush them. Small brave steps count."

Scan the QR code to download a free printable Bravery Journal for your family.



Learn more at www.pickleandthepuppy.com.

—Jason Plotkin is a Maryland attorney and the author of *The Pickle, the Patch, and the Puppy*, a picture book born from his own childhood dog bite and written for families helping a scared child find the way back to brave."

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How to Raise Biblically Grounded Kids in a Politically Divided World

How Do You Help Your Kids Make Sense of Our Divided Country?

It can be challenging to explain to-day's political climate to our children. They're hearing heated arguments at family gatherings, seeing angry posts on social media, and noticing the tension all around us. They're picking up on whispered conversations between adults, and watching news alerts flash across screens. With midterm elections just around the corner, the noise is only going to get louder, the campaign ads more frequent, and the dinner table conversations more charged. Even at school, the divide can creep into friendships and classroom discussions, leaving our kids confused and unsettled. As Christian parents, we want to guide them through this minefield without adding to the division or compromising our faith. So how do we do it?



How to Keep God Above Politics

Start by reminding your kids that we don't wear political jerseys, but we wear the name of Christ. Yes, we have opinions and convictions, but our identity is Christian, first and foremost.

I've found it helpful to tell my children that good, Bible-believing people can disagree about how best to serve our country. Your liberal neighbor or family member who votes differently from you? They're still made in God's image and deserve our respect and love.

Teach Principles, Not Just Politics

Instead of telling our kids who to vote for someday, we can teach them how to think biblically about the issues that matter. Help them to become critical thinkers who make wise decisions on their own. Discuss what Scripture says about protecting the vulnerable, caring for the poor, stewarding our resources, valuing all human life, and serving sacrificially.

Micah 6:8 is beautiful in its simplicity: *"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

When political topics come up at dinner, ask, "What does the Bible say about this?" rather than "What does our party say?" It's amazing how this shifts the conversation from tribalism to truth-seeking.

Show Them How to Disagree Well

My mother used to say, and I bet yours's did too, "If you have nothing to say, say nothing at all."

If we're posting angry rants online or speaking contemptuously about "those people" on the other side, that's what our children hear and learn. But if we can hold firm convictions while still treating others kindly, we're teaching them something powerful.

James 1:19 reminds us: *"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."*

I've had to catch myself more than once when discussing political figures or

policies I disagree with. Our dinner table isn't a place for mockery or harsh words—it's where we practice speaking truth with grace.

Help Them Think for Themselves

We're not raising parrots; we're raising disciples. That means equipping our kids to think critically about everything they hear, from political ads, news sources, and yes, even from us. Ask: "Is this true according to Scripture? Does this help people flourish? What would Jesus think about this approach?"

Proverbs 2:6 promises: *"For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding."*

When my now adult kids face confusing issues, we pray together for wisdom and dig into God's Word. Sometimes we don't find easy answers, but we find direction.

Make It a Game: Learning Through Play

Sometimes the best classroom is the living room floor. Games and activities can bring these big concepts down to a child's level in a way that sticks.

Try a "Headlines vs. Scripture" challenge where kids find a news story and then race to find a Bible verse that speaks to the issue. Who can find the most relevant passage wins!

Play "Agree to Disagree" at dinner, where family members respectfully argue opposite sides of a made-up scenario, then practice responding with kindness. Afterward, ask: "Did we listen well? Did we speak with grace?"

For younger children, role-playing games that practice sharing, fairness, and standing up for a friend build the same muscles they'll need later for civic life.

Proverbs 22:6 reminds us to *"train up a child in the way he should go."* Sometimes that training looks like laughter, friendly competition, and a board game spread across the kitchen table.

Prayer is the Best Tool

At the end of the day, I want my children to know that no president, no party, and no political movement is going to save us. Our hope isn't in Washington; it's in our Lord and Savior. Pray with your children for those who keep us safe and for godly wisdom for our elected officials. And pray for the body of Christ and those who are lost and need salvation!

By anchoring our kids in God's unchanging Word, we're giving them a compass that won't shift with every political wind. They'll learn to engage with wisdom, stand for truth, and love like Jesus, even when the world around them can't seem to agree on anything.

—Lee Ann Mancini is the author of *Raising Kids to Follow Christ: Instilling a Lifelong Trust in God*, founder of *Raising Christian Kids*, adjunct professor at South Florida Bible College & Theological Seminary, and executive producer of the animated series *Sea Kids on Right Now Media*, *Pure Flix*, *Answers.tv*, *Minno*, and *Yippee*



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NEW Fall Family Adventures at The Wonders Center & Science Museum

Looking for a family destination where learning, adventure, science, and faith come together? The Wonders Center & Science Museum in Dickson, Tennessee, is the largest faith and family attraction in the state of Tennessee. The family-friendly science and history museum inspires wonder through interactive exhibits and real-world discoveries presented from a biblical worldview. Located just a short drive from Nashville, the museum offers something for every generation, from curious children to parents and grandparents who enjoy discovering something new together. And this fall, there are even more reasons to visit!



Dinosaurs Come to Life

Dinosaurs have long been a favorite at the Wonders Center, and now visitors can experience them in an entirely new way with the addition of life-size animatronic dinosaurs. These impressive prehistoric creatures bring a new level of excitement to the museum experience, allowing visitors to see dinosaurs come to life while learning about the ancient world.

For children, it can feel like stepping into another world. For parents and grandparents, it creates a fun opportunity to explore, learn, and make memories together.



September \$10 Tuesdays!

September is a great time to plan a visit because the Wonders Center is offering \$10 Tuesdays for museum admission all month long, making it an affordable opportunity for all ages: families, school groups, church groups, and grandparents. The promotion runs on September 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29. It's the perfect excuse to make Tuesday your family's day for dinosaurs, science, history, and discovery. Purchase now at Wonderscenter.org under events to get ahead of the crowd.

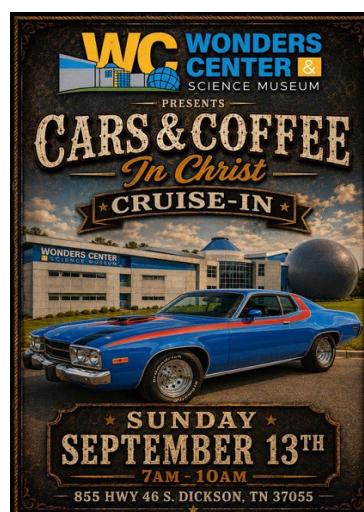


Extended Thursday Hours Begin September 3rd

Starting Thursday, September 3rd, the Wonders Center will offer extended Thursday hours from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., giving families another opportunity to visit after school or work. The extended schedule makes it easier to enjoy an afternoon or evening at the museum.

Cars & Coffee in Christ, September 13th

Car enthusiasts, families, and those looking for a meaningful Sunday morning gathering are invited to Cars & Coffee in Christ, a free event at the Wonders Center & Science Museum on Sunday, September 13, from 7 to 10 a.m. Visitors can bring their classics, exotics, rat rods, or motorcycles, or simply come out to see the cars and enjoy the morning.



The event will feature gourmet coffee, along with a short worship session and a short message inside the Wonders Center. It's designed to be a relaxed morning with plenty of time for attendees to make a service afterwards or stay and visit the Wonders Center. The Wonders Center will open early on the 13th, from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., allowing visitors to head straight inside and enjoy the museum after the car show. Car owners who would like to participate can register their vehicles for prizes at the door. For details and registration information, visit WondersCenter.org/car-show.

Coming October 18th: HARD RESET

On October 18, 2026, the Wonders Center will open HARD RESET, an immersive, four-room escape game and the first of its kind in the greater Nashville area. The 60-minute thriller centers around a rogue artificial intelligence that has seized control of the nation's defenses. Players must move through four fully built environments, restore a crippled spacecraft, outsmart the machine, and determine who they can trust before time runs out.

Each game is limited to eight people and is perfect for teens and young adults. Unlike a typical single room escape game, the experience takes players through four connected rooms. "We wanted to build something that would genuinely surprise people," said David Rives, founder and director of the Wonders Center & Science Museum. "Everyone's talking about what machines can do. HARD RESET is a reminder that human creativity, instinct, and teamwork can still outmatch the smartest computer in the room. The only thing it can't hack is you." Located inside the Wonders Center, HARD RESET can be paired with a museum visit or planetarium show, and guests can grab coffee at the on-site Java Man Café before the game begins.



Something for Every Generation

One of the things that makes the Wonders Center special is that it isn't just for kids. Adults and children alike can enjoy exploring alongside each other. Families can make fun memories together while discovering the wonders of God's creation. Ages five and under are always FREE! This fall is a great time to discover or rediscover the Wonders Center & Science Museum for all ages. It's also a perfect time for school or church groups.

Visit WondersCenter.org to plan your visit, purchase tickets, or get more information about group discounts. To learn more about David Rives, visit DavidRivesMinistries.org.

Visit: wonderscenter.org

Visit: davidrivesministries.org



Our Hours
Monday-Friday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Saturday: Closed
Sunday: 1 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

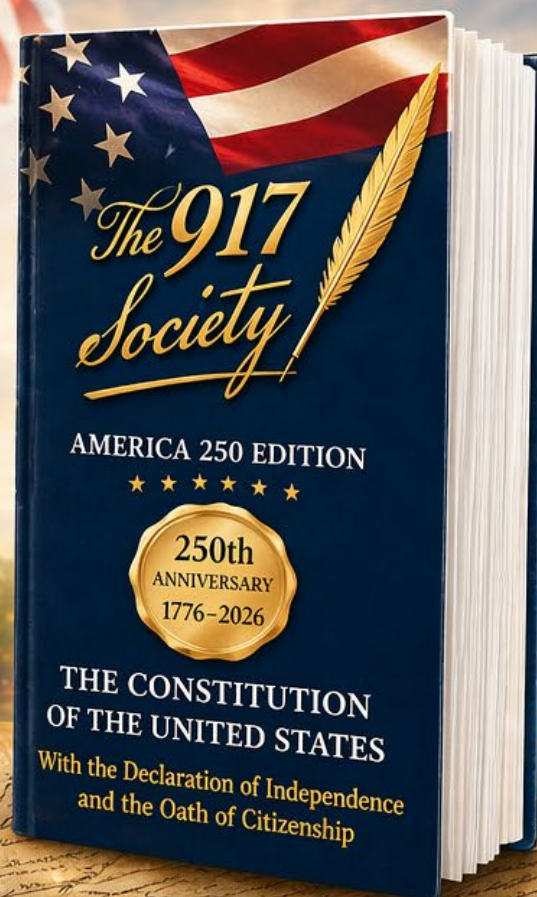


—Christine Johnson is a writer and Director of Public Relations at the Wonders Center & Science Museum



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Eva Romero

Faith in All Seasons of Life

For Eva Angelina Romero, service has never been confined to one job, one organization or one season of life. The Nashville-area businesswoman has spent years building a career in real estate, serving in community organizations, advocating for homeownership and helping others find opportunities that once seemed far beyond her own reach. Through each new role, however, Romero said the foundation has remained the same: her Christian faith and a belief that her experiences—both the difficult and the rewarding ones—can be used to help other people. It is a perspective shaped by a life that looks dramatically different today than it did during her childhood.



An outdoor family moment reflects the home-and-family life woven throughout this story.

Born to Mexican immigrants and raised in Los Angeles, Romero grew up as one of five girls in a home headed by a single mother. Her childhood included hardship, instability and abuse, and at 14, her mother arranged for her to marry a man 12 years older than she was. By 16, Romero was a mother herself. She would eventually become the first in her family to graduate from high school and attend college, work as a teacher and build a successful career in real estate. But those accomplishments tell only part of the story. For Romero, the greater transformation has been learning to see herself differently—and discovering that the difficult chapters of her life could give her a unique ability to see and serve others. That idea has even inspired the working title of a book she is writing: *From Unseen to Unstoppable*. It is a phrase that describes her own journey, but also the message she hopes to share through her professional life, community service and newest endeavor: a campaign for the Tennessee House of Representatives. “I’ve really felt called to do this in my season of life right now,” Romero said. “I want to provide strong leadership and to be a strong voice. I’ve served in a lot of different ways in different capacities, but this is a different level of service.”

Finding Your Voice

Romero’s decision to seek office in Tennessee House District 60, which includes Old Hickory, Hermitage and Donelson, is the latest chapter in a much longer story of finding her own voice—and encouraging others to find theirs. “I want to encourage people to know they have a voice,”



The District 60 campaign marks what the story describes as a new season of service and leadership.

she said. “I spent many years where I didn’t have my own voice, so I know from my own experience that we all have one.”

The campaign has given Romero an opportunity to spend more time talking directly with people throughout the community. Although she has scaled back some of her other service commitments to make room for the campaign, she continues to serve with organizations including the American Red Cross and the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals. She also continues her work as a commissioner with the Tennessee Housing Development Agency, an appointment she received from Tennessee Governor Bill Lee.

For someone who has served on boards, worked with nonprofits and spent much of her professional career interacting with families, Romero said some of the most meaningful moments of the campaign have been simple conversations. “I love this journey because people just want to be seen and heard,” she said. “Talking to people in the community has helped me see that.” She wants others to understand the importance of participating in their communities—including through voting. “If you don’t vote, you can’t be seen or heard,” she said. “It’s important to be part of the process.”

Stepping toward Faith

Long before Romero stepped into public and community leadership, however, she had to navigate struggles within her own life. After becoming a wife and mother at such a young age, she experienced depression and struggled with questions about her identity and purpose. She had been raised Catholic and always considered faith important, but during one of the most difficult seasons of her life, she began searching for a more personal relationship with God. A visit to her uncle’s Pentecostal church became a turning point. “I had reached a level of depression that I felt really lost. I was desperate to feel something other than the sadness,” she said, “I knew that there had to be something more.”

She remembers sitting in church and sobbing, then experiencing a sense that the pain was beginning to leave her. It was the beginning of a spiritual transformation that continued over the years. “In 1997, I was born again and baptized,” she said. “It changed my life, and helped me focus on something other than myself. I knew that something was bigger than me, something was bigger than my pain. I reconnected with God, and have learned so much on this journey.”

Romero began reading Christian books and Scripture and surrounding herself with a Christian community. Jeremiah 29:11—the familiar passage about God’s plans for hope and a future—became particularly meaningful. That faith also changed the way she viewed success. Rather than seeing her career and accomplishments only in terms of personal achievement, she began to see them as opportunities for service.

“God is super faithful,” she said. “A lot of the things I visualized in my mind have become a reality. Years ago, I never thought I was worthy, but God took care of me.” God brought Romero to Nashville, where she began her professional journey as well.

After college, she became a teacher in Los Angeles. When her first marriage began deteriorating, she found herself facing another major transition as a mother trying to establish an independent future. Real estate unexpectedly became part of that future.

While she was involved in selling a property to first time home buyers, a real estate agent recognized her potential and encouraged her to learn more about the industry. Romero began shadowing him and saw firsthand the need for a bilingual agent who could work with Spanish-speaking clients. She entered the profession in 2007, just as the country was approaching a major housing and financial crisis.

From the beginning, however, Romero saw real estate as something more than transactions. “I was really inspired by the work he was doing,” she said. “It wasn’t just sales. He was helping people, especially first-generation owners.”

That passion remains central to her work today. Romero is broker/owner of Century 21 Capital Properties and is also co-owner, with her husband, Dr. Jaime Romero, of Solace Oral Surgery and Implant Center. After the couple moved to Middle Tennessee, they built their businesses while also raising their family.



Romero with members of her family

Her years in real estate have given her an up-close look at both the promise of homeownership and the obstacles that can make it difficult. “I strongly believe in homeownership, and there are things we can do to make it better,” she said.

That professional experience is also influencing the issues she is discussing during her campaign. Among her stated priorities is property-tax reform, including freezing property taxes for homeowners over age 65 and placing limits on future property-tax increases. She sees such measures as connected to a larger concern she has carried throughout her real estate career: helping people obtain—and remain in—the homes they have worked to build.

Her experience as an entrepreneur has similarly shaped her interest in the needs of small-business owners. She knows firsthand the challenges involved in creating a business, employing people and serving customers while navigating the responsibilities that come with ownership. Yet whether the setting is a real estate office, a nonprofit boardroom or a conversation with someone in the community, Romero returns to the same principle: people matter.

A Love of Nashville

When Romero and her husband first visited Tennessee in 2010, they quickly felt an attachment to the area. “We both fell in love with it,” she recalled. “We felt like it was home.” Moving meant starting over professionally. Romero earned her Tennessee broker license, while Jaime opened Solace in 2013. Eva went on to become the first Latina franchise owner with Century 21, while expanding her involvement in Nashville-area community organizations.



Eva Romero with her husband, Dr. Jaime Romero, and members of their family in Middle Tennessee, where they have built their businesses, community ties and family life.

She became the founding president of the Nashville chapter of the National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals and has served at the national level as well. Her other leadership and service experiences have included Greater Nashville REALTORS (current Board member), the American

Red Cross, ELLA, the TLAF Foundation and the Tennessee Housing Development Agency. She has also participated in Stanford University’s Latino Business Action Network Executive Program and now an Alumni of Leadership Nashville. The list is long, but Romero’s motivation is more personal than a résumé of organizations and titles might suggest.

Romero believes that service can sometimes be as simple as recognizing someone who feels overlooked. It is one reason the idea of moving from “unseen” to “unstoppable” resonates so deeply with her. Romero’s life today in Nashville is full. Along with her professional responsibilities and public service, she and her husband continue to center their family in the life they have built in Tennessee.

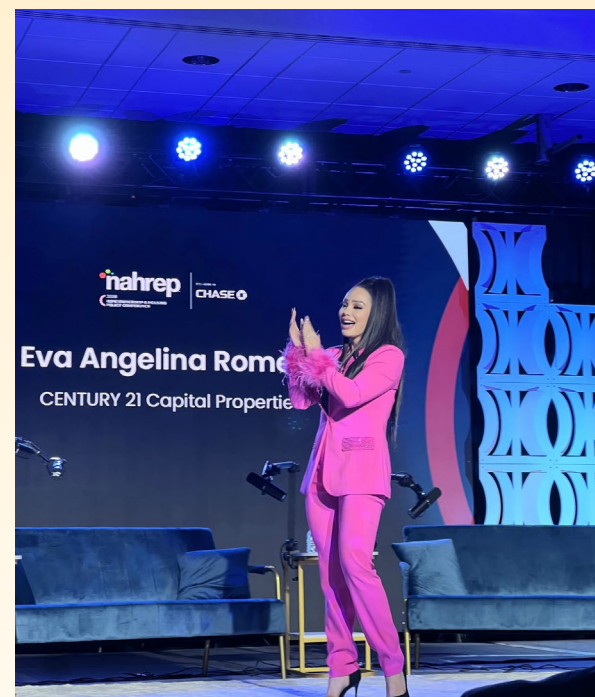
But the woman who once struggled to recognize her own worth now views her influence as something to be stewarded rather than simply enjoyed. That does not mean every season looks the same. At this point in her life, she has intentionally stepped back from some commitments to make room for new ones. The form of her service may change, but she says the calling behind it does not.



Eva and Dr. Jaime Romero enjoy time with a young member of their family in the Nashville area, the community they came to call home.

feels like to have little control over the direction of her life. Becoming a young mother taught her responsibility long before most teenagers encounter it. Divorce and single motherhood forced her to rebuild. Entrepreneurship taught her persistence. And faith gave those experiences a larger purpose. “My faith has kept me moving through all these seasons,” she said.

—Cheryl Wray - cherylsgray@gmail.com,
Author, Freelance Writer, Speaker



Romero appears at a National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals event, reflecting years of leadership and service within the real estate community.

As she continues her businesses and community service, and travels throughout District 60 meeting residents, Romero hopes her story communicates something larger than any particular professional achievement or leadership position.

Her own childhood taught her what it feels like to live without stability. Her early marriage taught her what it

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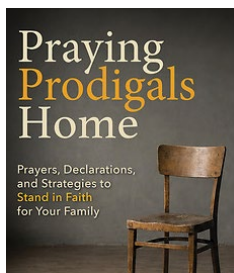
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BEST BOOKS

Praying Prodigals Home

Bring Your Family and Friends Home to Jesus. Do you lie awake whispering a name that hasn't come home yet? Have you prayed until the words ran out, wondering if anything you've said has made it past the ceiling? Are you tired of watching someone you love disappear into a far country while you stand helpless at the door? You are not helpless. You are not forgotten. And not one prayer you have ever prayed has been wasted. Through years of ministry under bridges, in altars, and on her knees in her own kitchen, Pastor Candy Christmas discovered what persistent, authority-filled prayer actually does -- and what it costs. She prayed for her own son for fourteen years before Heaven moved. What she learned in that long wait is what she places in your hands now.



In *Praying Prodigals Home*, you'll discover how to:

- Stand in genuine spiritual authority over the principalities targeting your family -- without fighting the people
- Identify the specific lie the enemy has spoken into your loved one's mind and bind it by name in Jesus' name

- Loose truth, conviction, and holy hunger over a prodigal no matter how far they have wandered
- Follow a 30-day guided prayer journey that builds spiritual momentum and keeps faith alive through the long wait
- Build your home into a House of Return -- a place where your prodigal senses the Father's welcome before they ever reach the door

The enemy wants you to believe the distance is too great, the years too many, and the silence too final. He is lying. The Shepherd never loses a sheep. The Father is still watching down the road, preparing for a moment when the miracle runs toward home.

Key Revelations Include:

- Why your prayers are a spiritual weapon, not just an emotional release -- and how to use them with precision
- The difference between intercession and control, and why releasing your grip is the most powerful thing you can do
- How binding and loosing works in practical, daily intercession for a prodigal
- Why persistent prayer accumulates in Heaven and why the long wait is not the same as no answer
- What a House of Return is and how to build

one in your home and your church

Perfect For:

- Parents and grandparents who have been praying for a prodigal child for months or years
- Intercessors and prayer leaders looking for a practical warfare framework for family restoration
- Pastors who need a resource to place in the hands of brokenhearted congregation members
- Small groups and women's ministries ready to stand in corporate agreement for prodigal families
- Anyone who has ever carried a name in their heart and refused to stop believing

From the kitchen floor to the altar, from the midnight prayer to the fourteen-year wait, this book meets you exactly where you are and hands you weapons you did not know you had. You are not at the end of the story. Grace is still running. The bowl is still filling. "Your prayers are not bouncing off the ceiling -- they are rising like incense before the throne of God. Every 'Amen' echoes in Heaven." Pastor Candy Christmas

—Burton Gaar

FAITH AT WORK

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Hope Is Contagious: The Strength of Praying Together in Uncertain Times

If you've felt a little unsettled lately, you're in good company. Life has a way of throwing curveballs. Unexpected news, rising costs, stressful headlines, and those moments when you think, "Really? Today?"



In times like these, prayer isn't just a spiritual practice. It's the most important conversation of your day. And prayer doesn't stay in the car or by the laundry pile. It grows stronger when we pray together.

Jesus said, "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18:19-20) That's a promise straight from Jesus about praying in agreement with someone else. When two or three come together and ask, our Father in heaven hears them, and Christ himself is present in the room.

Praying doesn't have to be complicated. We sometimes picture it as formal or intense, but in

uncertain times, prayer can be simple and woven right into the day. It can sound like: "Lord, help us today." "God, give us peace." "Jesus, be near."

Pray those same words with someone else, and they carry more weight. They steady us and remind us we're not walking through uncertainty alone.

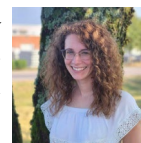
Faith doesn't have to look dramatic to be real. Think of the last time a friend mentioned a prayer request in passing, and instead of saying "I'll be praying for you," you stopped right there and prayed with them on the spot. Something shifts in those moments. The Holy Spirit meets you both right there, sometimes with a word of encouragement that lands so specifically it brings your friend to tears. That's not a coincidence. That's exactly what we're called to as the body of Christ, praying for one another the way Paul urged the church in Ephesus, praying in the Spirit on every occasion, staying alert, and always praying for God's people (Ephesians 6:18). Moments like that become turning points, because hope is contagious. Everyone is carrying something. Some carry fear, some carry discouragement. Followers of Christ get to carry hope instead, and hand it to whoever needs it next.

You don't need a microphone or a ministry title to live this out. A few simple ways to start:

- **Pray for your neighbors.** No long list needed. Whisper a quick prayer as you drive by their house or see them out walking the dog.
- **Encourage someone.** A text, a smile, a "hey, you're doing great." These small things matter more than we realize.
- **Invite someone to church.** No pressure, just warmth. "Come sit with me Sunday" can be exactly what someone needs to hear.
- **Carry your faith steadily.** Not loud, just consistent enough that people notice without you announcing it.
- **Look for the opening.** Hope gets shared through words, through listening, through simply showing up.

So this month, pray simply, pray together, and carry hope wherever you go. You never know who might catch it.

—Katherine Stewart
Custom Representative
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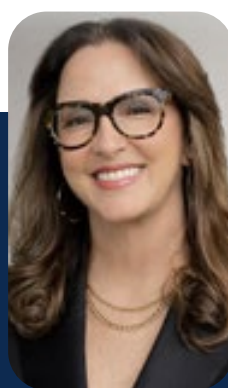


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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

The Wisdom Woven Into Human Creation

God designed humanity with divine purpose and all with disciplined order, for our sole benefit! Every part of His work reflects truths that are not only undeniable, but lovingly intentional. Nowhere is that more visible than in the way new life is meant to be welcomed, formed, and raised. Humanity was created to flourish within a structure; a design that protects us, strengthens us, and guides us toward our highest good.



Human children thrive when they grow up in an environment shaped by love, stability, and the steady presence of committed parents. This is why God, through His words in Scripture and His Church, defends the sacred bond of family and the covenant of marriage. These teachings are not restrictions; they are safeguards. They exist to protect what helps us flourish, to preserve the environment where virtue, identity, and emotional strength can naturally grow.

When we step outside God’s design, we often step into struggle. Not because God withdraws His grace, but because we have wandered away from the structure He gave us for our benefit. God’s order is not a cage to deny our freedom; it is a shelter to celebrate what righteous freedom brings. Yes, a single parent can raise a remarkable child. Yes, God’s grace fills every gap with tenderness and power. But the journey becomes harder, the load becomes heavier, and the risks grow when we try to rewrite the wisdom built into creation.

So why do we struggle with this? Because of what I call “selfish whispers.” That inner voice that says, “I want what I want, when I want it, and no one should tell me otherwise.” I know that voice. I’ve heard it myself. We all have. But real love doesn’t whisper lies that way. Real love looks ahead. Real love considers the child first. Real love honors the order God gave us so families can thrive, not merely survive.

If we want stronger homes, stronger communities, and stronger futures, we must return to the virtues that make them possible. It takes Humility to accept God’s design. It takes Responsibility to live it. And it takes Selflessness to put others, especially our children, first. Choosing God’s wisdom over our impulses does not reduce our freedom. It expands it. It leads us toward joy, stability, and lasting peace, the kind of life that grows from living in harmony with truth.

There are three choices we should teach our children, and model within our own lives:

- 1. Choose the path that builds, even when it’s difficult.
- 2. Choose the love that sacrifices, because true love is passion, a willingness to suffer for the ones you cherish.
- 3. Choose the decisions that protect the next generation, because their future depends on our courage today.

When we honor God’s design, we don’t just strengthen our families, we strengthen the world our children will inherit. If this is my last post, I want all to know there was only one purpose for all that I have written; to have made a positive difference in the lives of others.

—Anthony “Tony” Boquet, *Solutionary*, author of “The Bloodline of Wisdom, The Awakening of a Modern Solutionary” and “The Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, A Devotional Timeline”



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SPECIAL FEATURE

Who Am I!, Part Two

Two years later, mom and dad went back to Catholic Charities to start the process of adopting another child. Mom was going through all the tests, and they came back and said that they were not eligible to adopt another child at that time. Tears flowed, emotions took over, and after mom and dad settled down, they asked “why”? The response came, “because you are pregnant!” And from there, Colleen Lynch entered the picture, ruining Tim Jr’s chances of being spoiled in life as an only child!



Many years later, Tim and Colleen both married and started their own families. Tim had some genetic issues that he had to battle through his life. He is a shorter guy, who was exceptional in the martial arts, and excelled in EVERYTHING he did, from his career in medical sales, to becoming a private pilot. He excelled at the challenges that life threw at him. His wife, Stefanie decided one day to get a DNA kit from “23 and Me” to see what other health issues might be lingering genetically, as when he was adopted, they didn’t really know much about where I came from, other than my biological benefactors were both in college, got pregnant, but were not married. She decided to give the baby up for adoption, as she knew she would not be able to provide the life that the baby needed. That is really the only information that they were given. About 6 weeks or so later, my DNA test results came back. And I could not believe what the results were! In the space that mentioned where my blood line comes from, it said Ireland.... Sneem and Cahrseveign!!! Yes....I have the same lineage as my parents, grandparents on my father’s side, and great grandparents on my mother’s side!



In life, we all go through struggles. We have major setbacks, challenges, heart breaks, hurt, failures, major successes, trials, tribulations, etc. Sometimes we never know why we exist, and we start challenging these thoughts. It is often said, and my mom (Lorraine) said this all the time...“If you want to hear God laugh, tell him what your plans are!” This is a perfect example of two individuals, who struggled with their identity in the world, thinking they wanted one direction for themselves independent of each other, going two different directions, then coming back together again in a different capacity. Both extremely stoic in their faith in God, and put complete trust in Him, that he would lead them wherever He needed them to be, passing that faith on to my sister and me!

Sometimes in life, it is very difficult to see the “roadmap” of where life is taking us, through the struggles, the hard times, the good times, the successes and failures. They ALL happen for a reason. God leads us down paths and roads that we question “why are you doing this to me?” The book of Job is a prime example of some of those questions, challenges, questioning God, being angry with God, asking “why are you doing this to me?” However, if



we slow down, take a few steps back and look at the paths one has been brought down, you can see exactly where God leads us, and the reasons why! It is never wrong to be angry with God or question Him or ask Him why. The very notion of those instances reinforces the fact that you believe he exists, that you talk to him, that he is there...even though sometimes quiet. He is holding us and guiding us, even though we may not notice.

God was directing mom and dad (Tim and Lorraine) LONG before they ever knew each other. He was helping them solidify their faith in Him, training them for a task that He needed them to fulfil, the task of adopting a 2 week old baby boy who was only an image in His eye at that time, who would be leaving a home where he could not be cared for, to be put into a home built on faith and love, and was taught to put that faith and love into a greater being, God and His Son, Jesus Christ, to be a successful man with his own family, who also adopted Delilah Lynch out of a horrible situation....much like the children who were discarded, not wanted and put in a home on the corner of Poplar and McClean in Memphis, Tennessee.



God has a plan! We never know what that is! But, put faith in the fact that He is there guiding you through this life through all the unknowns. Don’t be afraid to talk to him. Don’t be afraid to question Him, to ask for answers, to be upset or angry with Him. He is right there the whole time!! Have faith that He will guide you, and one day when you least expect it, that road map that you questioned in your life, will suddenly make sense!



—Tim Lynch, Jr.



Maintenance Cleaning vs. Deep Cleaning: What’s the Difference?

Keeping your home clean isn’t about choosing between maintenance cleaning and deep cleaning, it’s about knowing when each approach is most effective. Maintenance cleaning covers recurring tasks such as dusting, vacuuming, mopping, tidying, and bathroom cleaning to keep everyday messes under control. Deep cleaning addresses accumulated grease, soap scum, dust, and grime in areas that receive less frequent attention, including baseboards, fixtures, cabinet fronts, and areas around appliances. Most homes benefit from both: routine cleaning to maintain everyday cleanliness and periodic deep cleaning to restore areas where buildup has developed.



- Wiping kitchen countertops and appliance exteriors
- Emptying trash bins
- Tidying bedrooms and living spaces
- Cleaning mirrors and sinks

Many households perform these tasks weekly, although the right schedule depends on factors such as household size, pets, children, cooking habits, allergies, and how quickly dirt and clutter accumulate. If you’re looking for help organizing recurring chores, Molly Maid’s House Cleaning Checklist offers practical guidance for building a cleaning schedule that fits your home.

What Is Deep Cleaning? Deep cleaning is a more detailed cleaning process that removes accumulated dirt, dust, grease, soap scum, and grime from areas that aren’t typically addressed during routine maintenance cleaning. While maintenance cleaning helps preserve the condition of your home, deep cleaning restores areas that collect buildup over time.

Examples of deep cleaning tasks include:

- Cleaning baseboards and door frames
- Washing or spot-cleaning walls
- Dusting ceiling fans, vents, and light fixtures
- Cleaning blinds and window sills
- Removing grease from cabinet fronts
- Cleaning beneath lightweight furniture that can be safely moved
- Removing soap scum and hard-water buildup from bathrooms
- Cleaning accessible areas around appliances

- Detailing trim, corners, and other overlooked areas

Deep cleaning is generally performed periodically rather than weekly. It may be useful seasonally, before holidays, after certain home projects, or whenever visible buildup remains after routine cleaning. The appropriate timing depends on the home’s condition, how it is used, and which areas require additional attention.

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Failing To Take Action Is Taking Action

Here are five celebrities who reportedly did not complete their legal documents before passing away and the impact this left on their heirs.



Prince: Died in 2016 with an estimated \$156 million fortune and no will. His estate faced years of public probate, multi-million dollar tax evaluations, and fights among his siblings.

Aretha Franklin: The “Queen of Soul” left behind multiple conflicting handwritten wills tucked between couch cushions, causing a lengthy family dispute over which document was valid.

Michael Jackson: Though he created a trust, his estate executors failed to fund it properly—meaning major assets like his name, likeness, and catalog were never legally transferred into the trust before he died.

Heath Ledger: Left behind an outdated will writ-

ten before the birth of his daughter, Matilda. This accidentally omitted her from the original document, requiring family cooperation to redirect the funds properly.

Chadwick Boseman: Passed away without a will, forcing his surviving spouse through a complex and public probate process to administer his modest estate.

Each of these individuals had ample professional support during their lifetime to plan the distribution of their estate properly. Whether because of procrastination or simply not knowing the distribution rules, each of these celebrities left an emotional and financial burden on their loved ones.

Key Lessons to Avoid These Mistakes

- Draft a Will or Trust: Dying intestate (without a will) means state laws decide who gets your assets.
- Fund Your Trust: Creating a trust is not enough; you must legally retitle your assets

and property into the trust’s name.

- Update After Life Events: Review your documents after marriage, divorce, or the birth of children to ensure you don’t accidentally leave out any beneficiaries.
- Review the beneficiary designations on your retirement accounts, annuities, life insurance, and bank accounts.
- Know the difference between contract law and state law and which one prevails in each circumstance.

If this is something you need to to, but you just don’t know how to get started then give our office a call. One of our seasoned professionals will walk you through the steps to create a plan for your heirs and peace of mind for you.

—Michael Wallin, Certified Financial Planner™. For more information, please visit whcwealth.com or call 615-236-2220.





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TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Off the Page and into the Heart

The Bible is not meant to merely be a book that sits on the coffee table or a book we finish and then put away. It is the living word of God and meant to transform us. One of the greatest treasures we can possess is when the Word of God comes alive in our hearts.

Psalms 37:4 tells us to “*delight ourselves in the Lord*”. There is enjoyment, refreshment, and nourishment we can enjoy when we spend time in God’s word, thus getting to know the heart of God.



God’s word is never old or dead. It is relevant to our lives today. It is living and active, sharper than a two-edged sword that cuts between the bone and marrow (Hebrews 4:12). Meaning, the Word of God penetrates deeply into our being, dividing our soul from our spirit.



If we allow it to, the Word can speak directly to our circumstances. The Word can provide encouragement, wisdom, correction, or strength just when we need it. Because it is living, it is also timely. The Word provides answers, direction, and guidance.

We can trust God’s Word because we can trust the author. God truly has our best interest. He loves us and wants us to enhance us and allow us to live our best life. The Bible is an amazing gift that will help us achieve this.



Whether we realize it or not – we get our ideas and our input from sources all around us. The news we listen to, the shows we watch, the Instagram streams, and so forth. Why not go to the ultimate source ... the owner’s manual, so to speak, and get the utmost guidance. As Jeremiah stated in 20:9 b, “*But His word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones*”.



When we spend time in God’s Word, It cannot help but make a difference! Allow the word of God to move from printing on a page to come alive inside. You will be better for it!

—Rhonda L Smart, rhondalsmart@gmail.com

FAMILY MATTERS

Sabbath for the Family



School has started, which means schedules are set and full. We can let our kids’ activities take over our schedules, or we can set boundaries around our time, especially on Sundays. The Sabbath should be a time for restoration—restoration from what is broken, lost, or sick. If you took an inventory of your family’s health, would any of these three conditions appear?

Importance of the Sabbath

We can view the Sabbath from three perspectives: physical, mental, and spiritual. The first perspective focuses on our family’s health. Is your family run down, always sick or tired? God designed rest for our good. We were not meant to work seven days a week. Rest is important for regaining our energy and strength.

Mental health is a major concern these days. Stress and anxiety arise when the mind cannot rest. Your teenagers experience this after studying for a major exam. When this happens, they need something that does not require so much internal processing. If they do not allow the mind to rest, anxiety will flare up.

Sports and other competitions can bleed over into Sundays, the one day that used to be set aside for rest. If you’re visiting another city or state, consider attending church there or reading a Psalm and praying with your family. Your tween or teen might rebel, but do not give up. You are planting seeds that will reap reward later down the road. When we implement these three types of rest—physical, mental, and spiritual—the body can start the week refreshed, energized, and restored.

Practical Ways to Implement the Sabbath in Your Family

Rest is not passive but active. As adults, we’ll need to take ownership and set boundaries for our family’s time and days. Keep certain nights or days off-limits to outside activities. Decide what refreshes or drains your family’s energy, then take steps to make changes. We don’t want to be legalistic about it. My family had many rules growing up about what we couldn’t do. Those rules didn’t restore our family; they made me want to rebel instead. Find what works for your family, take small steps, try it, and remember you can always adjust along the way.

Biblical Examples

Elijah was physically exhausted after the showdown at Mount Carmel and after running for miles to escape the evil Jezebel (1 Kings 19). What did God tell him to do? Rest. God then provided freshly baked bread and water. Jesus’ days were filled with healing, teaching, and crowds, yet He took time to step away to His Father and rest. Refreshed and restored, He stepped right back into ministry. Jesus invites us to do the same. “*Come all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28).

—Sally Cressman, 615-480-7662 - sallyacress@gmail.com
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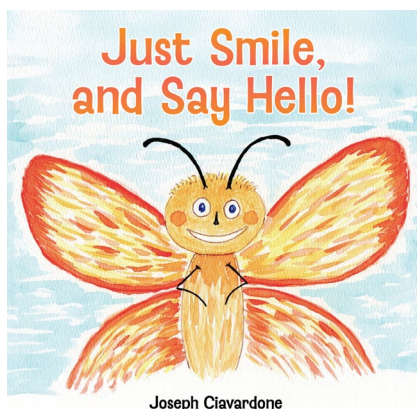
Also, connect with Sally through her email list and receive “31 Prayers for Grandchildren.”

BEST BOOKS

“God’s Little Sprouts” Book Series: Endearing Characters Bring God-Enriching Messages For Children and The Adults Who Love Them

Fall 2026 heralds the arrival of an endearing new world of inspirational and educational books for children as the “God’s Little Sprouts” book series launches with the introduction of a trio of little characters that prove God can bring His message through the humblest of His creation.

The first three arrivals in the world of “Sprouts” from creator Joseph Ciavardone are: Abigail (the acorn who searches for her purpose but despairs on her journey to become a mighty oak tree), Giovanni, (the grape who doesn’t want to be “just one of the bunch”), and Bella, (the caterpillar destined to bring joy and light into the world upon becoming Bellissima, the butterfly). Each has a story of God’s purpose and goodness in their life, and each has the inclusion of a “life lesson” that will encourage both children and adults.



Subjects such as purpose, identity, seeking God’s will, depression, rebellion, forgiveness, the reality of God’s love, and the transformative power of prayer are brought to life through the journeys of the “sprouts.” The goal of equipping kids to face and overcome the challenges of the world around them by building a meaningful relationship with God is evident throughout the pages of all three books.

Titles in the series include:

- Who Is Abigail? An Acorn’s Journey
- But I Don’t Want To Be A Grape!
- Just Smile, and Say Hello!

Each book contains scripture and a content-rich back section of “Author’s Notes” that serve to add value and context to the characters and the development of their ministry value. It’s a bonus that will be of particular interest to adults hoping to use the books as a spiritual resource for their children. Bright and engaging color illustrations created by the author populate the cover and pages of each book. The author’s vision for the series: “A world where every child knows the security of God’s love, and bases their identity, purpose and value in Him.” Towards that end, more books are soon coming in the “God’s Little Sprouts” series.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

The birth of “God’s Little Sprouts,” came in the midst of a time of great personal crisis in the life of first-time author and illustrator, Joseph Ciavardone. An engineering professional for nearly three decades, Joseph obeyed God’s call to leave his career. He stepped out in faith and was led to concentrate on books that held spiritual value for children. He is excited to offer the first three books in the series — Who Is Abigail? An Acorn’s Journey, But I Don’t Want To Be A Grape!, and Just Smile, And Say Hello!. With the Word of God as his compass, Joseph uses personal experiences and hard-learned lessons in his walk with the Lord Jesus to serve as a witness to the goodness of God in his own life and bring messages of hope and encouragement to others.



—Jackie Monaghan –Morningstar PR-Nashville
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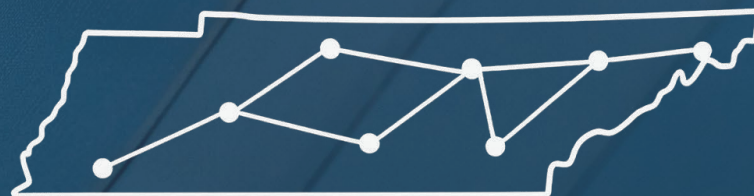
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The Twelfth



In September of 2001 I was in the eighth grade. We knew something was happening. You could feel it move through the building the way weather moves through a house before anyone says a word out loud. Three of the other teachers in our cohort rolled the televisions in. Ours refused.

I don't know what her real reasoning was. Maybe she thought she was protecting us. But I know she claimed it was more important that we do our English lessons. She was wrong, school doesn't trump societal changes. Nor does it trump family, and certainly not faith. But I'll be honest with you: I've never quite gotten over it. Something enormous happened to my country while I sat in a room where we were told to keep working, and by the time I understood what it was, I had already missed the moment nearly everyone else my age can point to. To this day, I am not much of a fan of that teacher. Ten years later, on September 12, 2011, I walked into a Navy recruiter's office for the first time.

I picked that date on purpose, mostly because September 11, 2011 was a Sunday. It's the day after. That has always been the part that stuck with me. Not the eleventh, when the thing was done to us, but the twelfth, when a whole lot of ordinary people got up and decided what they were going to do about it. Firefighters went back into the pile. Strangers lined up at blood banks in cities that hadn't been touched. Generations of men went looking for a recruiter's office. The eleventh is the day we were attacked. The twelfth is the day we answered.

I spent my career as a Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician. It's the job where, when everyone else is told to move back, you're the one who walks forward. Part of me thinks I waited too long, but I have recognized that was just the part I had laid out before me. I did have the absolute honor to learn and to serve alongside the people who were there day one. Their standard of courage is something I am still trying to live up to. I ended my Navy career on September 16, 2019. My life keeps getting bracketed by that month, and after a while you stop calling it coincidence.



I'm aware that the twenty-five years since that morning are contested ground. People argue about the wars: whether they should have been fought, how they were fought, how they ended. I'm not going to settle any of that in an article, and I'm not going to pretend I don't have my own complicated feelings about some of it. But I've never once been sorry that I served. I'm grateful I was able to contribute something. That gratitude and those complications live in the same man without much trouble, and I'd guess that's true for most veterans you know.

What I'd ask people to sit with this Patriot Day is what all that service and sacrifice actually did to this country, because it runs deeper than the parts you can see. Some of it is easy to see. The way we fly. The memorials. The ceremonies every September.

Some of it happened behind the scenes and never made the news. Marriages that bent under repeat deployments, and the ones that held. Children raised largely by one parent for stretches at a time. Careers set down and never picked back up. Whole families who reorganized their lives around a war most of the country was able to forget about between headlines. And some of it is a struggle people will carry for the rest of their lives. The injuries you can see and the ones you can't. The friends who came home and are still, in some real sense, not all the way home. Those men and women are in your church, in your neighborhood, in the truck next to you on whichever Pike you drive. Twenty-five years is a long time to be at war, and the bill for it has not stopped arriving.



I don't have a tidy explanation for any of it. What I have is faith that there is a plan for all of it, even the parts that look like failure from where I'm standing. That's a thing I have to remind myself of on purpose. The other thing I try to keep in front of me is this: our enemies are not only of this world. Scripture is plain about it. I spent a career dealing with the flesh-and-blood kind of threat, the kind you can put your hands on and render safe. It took me longer to understand that it was never the whole fight. There's a war underneath the one on the news, and it doesn't demobilize.

There's a generation in our country now that was born after all of this. To them September 11 is a chapter, the way Pearl Harbor was a chapter to me. That's not their fault; that's just how time works. But if you get the chance to tell them something this year, tell them about the twelfth. Tell them about the people who got up the next morning and went toward it. That's the part worth inheriting.



—Austin Holmes is a Navy EOD veteran who lives in South Nashville



BODY & SOUL

Restoration in the Hills of Hickman County: Bringing Hope to Light at Recovery Fest Hickman

In 2020, Stephanie Beard lost her son, Booker Dalton, to a fatal overdose, which led the family to form the Booker D. Foundation. For years, Kristi Tinin-Hodge has experienced the throws of active addiction as her own son navigates the dark, isolating valley of addiction, which inspired Hope in Recovery, a recovery ministry of Hope Church in Hickman County. Driven by a shared call to bring healing out of heartbreak, these two families, blood and church, have turned personal pain into a ministry of purpose—creating a space where lives can be restored through community and an introduction to Christ and people are met without shame or judgment.



On Saturday, September 19, 2026, that mission comes alive at Hideaway Farm in Bon Aqua, Tennessee, as Booker D. foundation and Hope in Recovery co-host Recovery Fest Hickman for the second year. Set on the historic property once owned by Johnny Cash—a man who spoke openly about his own struggles and God's grace—the gathering is designed to shatter the stigma surrounding addiction, offer tangible treatment resources, and lift up the power of community in mental health and substance abuse recovery. "Addiction affects the whole community, and recovery should, too." —Kristi Tinin-Hodge, Hope in Recovery

Event Highlights

Live; Love; Walk: Kicking off the morning at 9:00 AM on a beautiful path around the grounds of Hideaway Farm. A time to honor loved ones lost to overdose and suicide, as well as education for prevention.



Family Festival & Fellowship: Starting at 10:00 AM the festival opens with FREE admission, featuring local music and artists, powerful testimonies of freedom from substance abuse disorder, food vendors, and fun activities for kids and adults alike (bounce houses / foam pit & more). **Resources & Ministry Outreach:** Dozens of recovery groups, prevention advocates, and local ministries standing ready to connect individuals and families with real help.

Scripture reminds us in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that *"if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* Recovery Fest Hickman is more than a community festival—it is a living testimony that no life is beyond the reach of redemption.

Whether you are walking your own journey of healing, praying for a loved one still in the dark, or remembering someone dearly missed, all are welcome to come stand in the light of hope on September 19th. For more information, be sure and follow the event on social media, Recovery Fest Hickman, or email hopeinrecoveryhickman@gmail.com.

—Kristi Tinin-Hodge, Hope in Recovery Liaison
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The Great “Movie Makeover”



These days, the Southeastern U.S. is famous for all of its ‘home makeover’ TV shows, but the Kendrick Brothers (producers of *Courageous*, *Fireproof*, *War Room*, *The Forge*, etc..) just got a chance to do a ‘makeover’ on their first film, *Flywheel*. And it will be in Portuguese!

Stephen Kendrick explains how it came about. “When we were promoting *The Forge*, I was invited to come speak at a church in Brazil, Recreio Church in Rio. They had a creative pastor, Gustavo Faleiro who invited me up on the stage. And he said, ‘I speak English and I speak Portuguese. I can translate for you.’ So I sat down next to him. And he turned to me and he said, ‘We will support this new movie, *The Forge*.’ He said, ‘I haven’t seen it yet, but our church trusts you.’ And that meant so much to me because I’m in a foreign country, and he said, ‘God has used your previous films in our lives, and we will support this one.’”

“When we first talked to Ygor Siqueira, at 360 WayUp, who was our contact who had helped us promote and release our previous films that were dubbed in Portuguese,” Alex adds. “And he said, ‘Hey, would you consider coming down here and shooting a film and training some of our young Christian filmmakers that would love to make feature films in a way that glorifies the Lord?’ And he said, ‘What if you re-shot your original *Flywheel* movie that really didn’t have a theatrical release?’ And Stephen and I started praying about that and instantly we had a peace and we called and we said, ‘Okay, we’re willing to at least take a step in that direction. We’ll have to pray and ask the Lord to provide.’”

Stephen adds, “We go to Sony and we share with Sony and Sony says ‘We’ll fund it.’ And so we were like, ‘Wow, that was a quick yes! So we went down there, met with Ygor. He put the word out, and instantly people started showing up that were the cast and the crew that we needed, and believers. We did a week long boot camp, sharing with them how we operate, and saying, ‘This is not a Hollywood movie. We do it differently, but we want the same level of excellence in production.’”



The brothers did a casting call, and God seemed to be orchestrating every detail. Alex adds, “We had 130, I think, show up at that. And then we started shooting the movie, we cast, and man, the Lord brought the cast we needed. We shot all over Rio de Janeiro and the surrounding regions,” Alex adds. “There were between 150 to 200 pastors that came and met with us, prayed over us. At the end of one of the

pastor’s meetings, a guy walks up to us and says ‘My family has been in the car business for 60 years. You can use my car lot for your movie,’ he says.

When asked how *Flywheel: Ignition of the Soul* compares to the original *Flywheel*, both brothers laugh. “Oh, it’s many times better. I’m so grateful that it’s such a better (production) quality movie. The actors are also better than when we made the first movie,” Stephen says.

“We were shocked at the life God



gave that first film, released over 20 years ago. It sold over a million DVDs. It has been on multiple television networks. And it’s weird how many people said they when started watching it, they were not impressed with it at all. But once they got 10 minutes in, they couldn’t turn it off. “

When asked if there were many script changes from the original, Stephen says, “We got together with some Brazilian Christian writers, went through the whole script, updated where it needed to be updated, used different jokes, different expressions. So we would update the script that way and make sure that it fit the Brazilian and Portuguese culture”



Flywheel: Ignition of the Soul stars Brazilian actors Mario Bregieira and Perola Faria in the lead roles, and will be released in the U.S. on October 16th.

—Randy Rudder has worked as a producer for CBN Nashville, a college English professor, author, and entertainment journalist

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 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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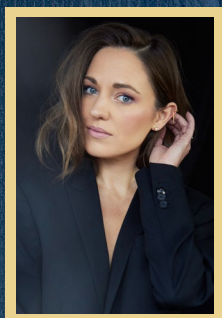
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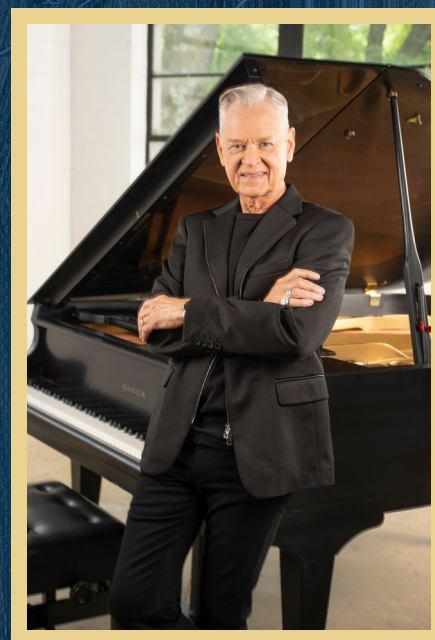


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