



Kansas City's best calendar of family
events, concerts and more!

African Children's Choir: PAGE 13



CELEBRATING FAITH, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN KANSAS CITY

VOLUME 26 • NUMBER 2

February 2015

FREE-TAKE ONE!

College & K-12 Education Expo Feb. 28



The 17th Annual Midwest Christian Education and College Expo will be Saturday, Feb. 28, from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Colonial Presbyterian Church.

The free Expo also features 50 Christian universities from 15 states, the area's top-rated Christian K-12 schools, homeschooling resources and free mini-seminars on homeschooling, K-12 panel discussion and college financial aid.

"Parents of younger students want to know: what curriculum is used? What is the worldview of the school? Is there an established fine arts program? What testing measure is used? What about sports and extracurricular activities? and, of course, can I afford it?" she stated. The area's best Christian private K-12 schools have booths and faculty and administrators will be ready to answer questions.

This year promises to be the biggest event ever with new colleges and local K-12 schools attending. This year, curriculum providers such as Mardel will have booths. For more information visit our website at www.metrovoicenews.com.



"WOLVES CAN'T FLY"

KC Wolf shares lessons learned through accident, recovery

By Alan Goforth | Metro Voice

Before the Apostle Paul could write a substantial portion of the New Testament, God had to get his attention in a dramatic way on the road to Damascus. And although writing a book had been on Dan Meers' bucket list for some time, a life-changing experience was the catalyst for his new book.

"Wolves Can't Fly" is the story of his 25 years as KC Wolf, the mascot of the Kansas City Chiefs,

and the accident that nearly ended his career.

"I never in my wildest dreams thought I would write a book," Meers said. "I was too busy working and raising three active kids. I never thought about it until I got hurt. Then I decided that if I was ever going to do it, this was the time. I realized I had an opportunity to share not only about being a mascot but about how faithful God is."

■ See "WOLVES CAN'T FLY" page 23

The Do's and Don'ts of Social Media

WE'RE NOW KNOWN BY OUR ONLINE PRESENCE—WHAT WITNESS DOES IT SHOW?

by Suzie Hawkins

DALLAS (BP) -- Social media has radically altered the cultural landscape. We have an unparalleled opportunity via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. to contribute to the good of our church, family and community. But as in everything, social media also can cause great harm.

It's wise to step back occasionally and evaluate how we are leveraging our leadership platform through these connections. Here are four things to remember -- the "DO"s of social media:

■ DO #shareyourlife (appropriately, of course). Social media offers a place for us to share our interests, family news, photos and our life in general. These posts enable our church family and com-



munity to identify with us and discover who we are. Conversely, it makes us aware of what is happening in the lives of others.

■ DO #useyourplatform to engage in meaningful conversations. This is one of the primary advantages of social

■ See SOCIAL page 23



EDUCATION EXPO 80 Booths!

Christian Colleges from 17 States
The Area's BEST K-12 Schools
Homeschooling Resources
Free Seminars!
Saturday, Feb. 28, 9:30-2pm
Colonial Presbyterian Church
www.metrovoicenews.com

WHAT'S BECOME OF CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY?

by **Bob Carpenter**

HOLT, Mich. (BP) — I wish I could remember the name of the brother who greeted me and my family when we worshipped with Shadow Hills Church in Las Vegas.

Many years later, I keenly remember the warm, enthusiastic way he took us under his care to find the worship center, receive bulletins and meet a few others before the musicians signaled the beginning of the service. Most surprising was his enthusiastic offer, “Can you join my family for dinner after worship?”

I am certain it was apparent that we were just tourists and a family already practicing the faith, yet he still gave us the best welcome I have ever received from a church. I think of him often. He lived Christian hospitality.

Here's the question: “What's become of Christian hospitality?” Before you dis-

miss the question with the usual, “Times have changed,” “We're all too busy,” “We've become impersonal,” or “It's not safe to bring strangers into your home,” consider that hospitality is a command from God's Word:

Romans 12:13b — “... practicing hospitality ...”

Hebrews 13:2a — “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers ...”

1 Peter 4:9 — “Be hospitable to one another without complaint.”

The word translated “hospitable” or “hospitality” comes from two words, which together mean “love of a guest/stranger.” Hospitality is one of the commands we inherited from the Jewish roots of our faith and had very practical applications in the early church — as well as God's church today.

The reasons (excuses?) we cite for not being hospitable might apply in random instances, but they do not explain the

wholesale neglect of hospitality that often marks contemporary church life. That neglect weakens God's church as we lose the warmth and vitality that follows obeying our Lord and the natural connections believers find in “showing love” to one another in our homes.

Hospitality imprints an authenticity on our faith that ministers to those outside the Kingdom. Longtime Colorado pastor Alexander Strauch, in his book “The Hospitality Commands,” writes, “We need a fresh vision of hospitality's potential for strengthening our churches and for reaching our neighbors and friends with the gospel.”

There is great synergy with the two rewards Strauch notes regarding biblical hospitality. Hospitality to fellow believers fosters a depth of love in the church that is inviting to lost people. Hospitality to “strangers” is a disarming tool for sharing the Gospel. Together they are pow-



erful in God's purpose to use churches to save sinners.

What to do? Organize a church-wide event in which we open our homes to one another; with a little coordinating, we can foster invitations between believers who do not yet know each other. For a personal approach, set aside one Sunday a month for inviting a family from

church or a Sunday morning guest (or one each!) to share dinner with you after worship. Ask your pastor to suggest some new people you might host for a snack or meal. Invite a few folks for an impromptu ice cream sundae after Sunday evening worship.

The late expository preacher Stephen

■ See HOSPITALITY page 3

Do Kansas school administrators' academic results match up with their pay?

by **Megan Mertz**

KANSAS CITY — A lot of public school districts have top-heavy administrations, with groups of elite administrators making a great deal of money.

There is constant debate about top administrators getting top compensation.

Some say it's necessary to pay high salaries to attract top talent, while others believe the wealth should be spread

more evenly among the school staff.

But there is one concept most reasonable people can agree on: The top administrators in any school district are ultimately responsible for the academic performance of the students. Big salaries call for big results.

But it doesn't always work out that way.

EAGnews recently researched the top 10 salaries in five public school districts in Kansas, then looked for stu-

dent performance data in those districts, to determine if the big salaries paid to top administrators were warranted.

In most cases, it's hard to argue that the money was well spent. The proof is in state test results for students in grades 3-8 and 11 in the 2012-13 school year.

Let's start with the Kansas City district, where the superintendent, Cynthia Lane, had a total compensation package of \$234,971 in 2013-14. The total amount spent on compensation packages for the 10 highest paid employees was \$1.5 million. That's enough to pay a lot of extra teachers.

Yet students in Kansas City did not come close to meeting state averages in reading, math or science tests.

“In most cases, it's hard to argue that the money was well spent. The proof is in state test results for students in grades 3-8 and 11 in the 2012-13 school year.”

In reading, 84.7 percent of students across the state were in the “met expectations,” “exceeded expectations” or “exemplary” categories. In Kansas City the total was 46.3 percent.

Results were similar in math (Kansas City 41.5 percent; state 78.3 percent) and science (43.6/85).

In the Wichita school district, Superintendent John Allison had highest compensation, with a package worth \$257,234. The 10 highest paid employees had packages worth a com-

bined \$1.4 million.

In test scores, Wichita also fell below state averages in all three categories — reading (71/84.7), math (65.1/78.3) and science (80/85).

In the Topeka district, Superintendent Julia Ford had a more modest \$165,300 compensation package, while the top 10 combined made \$1.2 million.

Topeka students also fell short in all three categories — reading (68.6/84.7), math (65.1/78.3) and science (69.8/85).

In the Salina district, Superintendent William Hall had a total compensation package worth \$173,783 and the 10 highest paid employees had compensation worth a total of \$1.2 million.

Salina students did better than the other three districts, actually beating the state average in science (85.9/85) but falling short in reading (81.8/84.7) and math (67.1/78.3).

At least those students were the same ballpark with their peers around the state.

The final district, Lawrence, has the second-lowest paid superintendent of the five (Richard Doll, \$167,788) and the least-expensive combined compensation for the highest paid 10 employees (\$1.1 million).

Yet students in the Lawrence district performed the best of all five districts, beating the state average in all three categories.

In reading, 90.1 percent of Lawrence students made the grade, compared to 84.7 percent in the state; 83.5 percent at least met standards in math, compared to 78.3 percent in the state; and 88.7 percent at least met standards in science, compared to 85 percent in the state.

Those are numbers Lawrence administrators can point to with pride when defending their salaries.

Kansans may be looking more closely in the future when other districts come calling with hands out.

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“Dig Quest: Israel” is first archaeology app for kids

If you'd like to see your children playing with something a little more educationally valuable than Nintendo, try Dig Quest: Israel, the first archeology app for children.

In December, the Israel Antiquities Authority launched the app featuring a host, Gabe, who looks like Indiana Jones.

The app is loaded with archeological games and puzzles for children and is available for free download on iPhone and iPad devices from the

Apple app store.

Dig Quest: Israel introduces children, ages 7-11, to archeology with unique games featuring artifacts from the national treasures of the Israel Antiquities Authority. The app includes more than 30 levels in two games; more than 50 images of historical artifacts; historical and archeological facts; translated and spoken excerpts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and a collection box to store artifacts and discoveries.

Players select between two dig sites: Lod or Qumran. At Lod, the player has to clear dirt to uncover an ancient Roman mosaic of the zodiac and then identify and classify the animals and objects on the mosaic in a fast-paced quiz game.

In the Qumran caves, the player pieces together fragments of the 2,000-year-old Dead Sea Scrolls in a puzzle game. The scrolls can then be scanned to reveal their text more clearly, (mirroring the spectral imaging process ex-

ecuted by the Israel Antiquities Authority team) and clips of the script can be heard read in the original Hebrew with subtitles.

The game is already catching on around the world as a fun and interactive way to learn about the Bible and the modern discoveries that bring it to light.

i moreinformation

For more information about travel to Israel, visit www.goisrael.com.

Mother's Refuge holds grand re-opening

It's an “extraordinary home.”

A local shelter for homeless, pregnant and parenting young women and babies has something to celebrate. Mother's Refuge held a grand re-opening in December to commemorate the completion of a total renovation and expansion of their home after it suffered a devastating fire more than two years ago.

Independence Mayor Eileen Weir cut the ribbon with other guests including The short “Welcome Home” will include a ribbon cutting by the mayor and a luncheon.

Robert Zornes, Executive Director, said, “We are tremendously grateful for the community effort that has helped us rebuild. I knew we would receive support from the community, but I have been overwhelmed with the generosity from so many companies and individuals. They have helped us make our home much more beautiful than we ever expected. On the outside it may look like an ordinary house, but on the inside, it's an extraordinary home for young moms and babies that truly need a place of refuge.”

Mother's Refuge has been a safe haven for more than 1,450 young mothers and their babies since 1987. Even during the rebuilding process, Mother's Refuge continued to provide housing from a temporary location at the Gathering Place Conference



Independence Mayor Eileen Weir cuts the ribbon at the Mother's Refuge grand re-opening celebration.

Center, located in Independence.

The need for housing for young mother's in Kansas City continues to be significant, with many of the mothers homeless and without resources. The home has been expanded to include a large basement for storage and recreational use, a computer lab and laundry on the main floor. For info visit mothersrefuge.org.



FUN FAIR

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Tammy Faye's grave one of Kansas' most interesting

WALDRON, KAN.— On the edge of Kansas' wind-swept prairie, near a non-descript grave, sits the most recent token of affection.

It's a tube of lip gloss.

Since her death on July 20, 2007, fans and friends of Tammy Faye Bakker Messner occasionally make pilgrimages to where the ashes of the Christian television celebrity were laid to rest. There, they leave the types of cosmetic items — lipstick, mascara — that helped give Tammy Faye her distinctive look.

In a Harper County cemetery, remote and unmarked, Tammy Faye's gravestone is far away from the glamour, controversy and cameras that followed the woman who helped build three Christian television networks: the Christian Broadcasting Network with Pat Robertson; the Trinity Broadcasting Network with Paul Crouch; and Praise The Lord ministry — and ultimately the ill-fated Christian theme and water park Her-

itage USA in Fort Mill, S.C., with Jim Bakker, her first husband.

"I took her down there and showed her Waldron, she thought it was a quaint little community," said her husband,

Roe Messner, a megachurch builder who for decades was based in the Wichita area and in more recent years lives in the Kansas City area.

"She was glad to see where I grew up and all. She thought it was kind of neat."

Waldron is a throwback in time. Houses, storefronts and garages are in varying degrees of

neglect along the dirt-covered streets that lie quiet until a passing vehicle stirs up rooster tails of dust.

It was once a thriving town with a railroad, two banks and two newspapers. Its population is now 10.

"It is a nice quiet place to live," said Mayor Shirley Nelson. "Most people here are second and third generation, raised here or very close by."

It is a tight-knit community where



Messner's grave.

neighbors watch out for one another and are both protective and proud of their town's most famous celebrity.

Roe Messner grew up in Waldron. He buried Tammy Faye's ashes next to his mother, Nellie. When it is his time, Messner — who is in his eighth decade — said he will be buried next to Tammy Faye.

"That's our family plot," Roe Messner said. "I buried her next to my dad and mother. My little brother is buried there."

"The press never did know Tammy. It is a shame what the press had to say. She was not anything at all about what has been written."

Harold Waldschmidt, the cemetery sexton, said he's seen the lipstick and mascara when he mows.

"I don't bother it," he said. "I feel like that is a personal thing."

In the late stages of the failing Heritage USA and PTL empire, Tammy Faye was often portrayed on TV in tears, mascara running down her cheeks. She divorced Jim Bakker in 1992 while he was in prison for defrauding millions of his followers and after his widely publicized infidelity with Jessica Hahn.

In the meantime, Messner — who had been the chief builder of the Heritage USA theme park — was convicted of bankruptcy fraud and spent two years in prison.

Tammy Faye married Messner in 1993. In 2004, she appeared on the reality show "The Surreal Life" and re-emerged as a television and cult personality.

Her faith never wavered through controversy or failing health.

"You wouldn't believe when Tammy passed away, you know those big mail sacks?" Messner asked. "I got 12 mail sacks the week she died. It was literally thousands and thousands of sympathy cards."

"She was the most common, down-to-earth person you ever saw. The press always made her out to be some nitwit type of person. She was totally different. Her IQ was 165. She was so sharp and different than everybody thought she was."

Even now, he said, people will sometimes write and say they have visited her graveside.

"I was down there this summer, and I could see several people there had left stuff," he said.

Getting to Waldron, which is about



Tammy Faye Messner

95 miles southwest of Wichita and nearly on top of the Oklahoma state line, requires back-roads determination.

Washboard roads slow SUVs to covered wagon speeds. There are seldom any road signs, and cell phone coverage is spotty.

"You have to be kind of familiar with the area," Nelson, the town's mayor, acknowledged. "Some roads you can't take all the way."

She pointed recent visitors down the road and to the right, to the unmarked cemetery.

"I'm tickled to death," Nelson said of people who come to visit.

"I never did meet Tammy Faye, but I always heard stories about her," Nelson said.

—Reprinted from the Wichita Eagle

ANNUAL KANSANS FOR LIFE Valentine Banquet Tuesday, Feb. 10 (4 days before Valentines!)



Special Speaker
Collin Raye

Nominated several times as Country Male Vocalist of the Year, Collin will be sharing his pro-life testimony and feature some of his most popular, beautiful songs. Although recognized for his issue-oriented music and tireless charity work, what many don't know is that he has important pro-life testimonies related to both the beginning and end of life. In 2011 he released his first inspirational album, His Love Remains, which quickly shot to #1 on Amazon.

Ritz-Charles, 137th & Antioch, Overland Park
5 p.m. Silent Auction & Social Time
6:30 Seating
7 p.m. Banquet & Program
Free-Will Offering

RSVP REQUIRED: by seat, small group or table of 10. Tables of 10, or smaller group can be reserved under one name now with number in party, but you must report names of all in party by Feb. 3 to insure seats via 913-642-5433 or kansansforlife@aol.com.

RSVP by Feb. 3 at 913-642-5433 or kansansforlife@aol.com

**Sold-out Crowd Expected!
Reserve Your Seats Early!**

Missouri lawmaker gets angry response after efforts to protect Christian college groups

A Missouri state representative says he's been getting angry messages on social media over a bill he's filed.

Representative Elijah Haahr (R-Springfield) filed a bill that would protect student organizations from being forced by university administrations to admit or elect leaders who don't share their beliefs.

He says the University of California system had adopted such a so-called "all comers" policy.

"As they adopted it they de-recog-

nized InterVarsity Christian Athletics Program, primarily because they were violating this rule. They were saying, 'If you want to be in leadership in the InterVarsity Christian Athletics, you have to adhere to certain Biblical tenets'" Haahr said. In some instances Christian groups were being told they must allow atheists to be in leadership to conform to the new policy.

Haahr says he wants to protect religious freedom and the freedom of as-

■ See HAAHR page 4



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Ministries

1 in 3 women need a safe, confidential place to share the pain and loss abortion has caused in their life.

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Faith leaders challenge candidates

by **World Magazine**

A coalition of 100 Christian faith leaders, looking to raise hunger and poverty as a prominent issue in the 2016 election cycle, is urging all potential 2016 presidential candidates to post videos stating how they plan to alleviate poverty and hunger in the United States and abroad.

The group, which represents a wide array of Christian denominations, churches, universities, seminaries and agencies, was convened by Circle of Protection, a group committed to advocating for programs that help ease the hunger and poverty of the indigent. The coalition asks potential candidates to make three-minute videos explaining how each of them will provide "help" and "opportunity" to needy people throughout the world.

Along with the many Christian schools, churches and other localized Christian groups who've had representatives sign onto this movement are national organizations such as the National Association for Evangelicals, American Bible Society, Bread for the World, Catholic Theological Union, Jesuit Conference, National Latino Evangelical Coalition, and Catholic Charities USA.

"We are praying for a president who will make ending hunger and poverty a top priority of his or her administration. Are you that leader?" a statement from the group asks. "We will be calling on people of faith to examine presidential candidates to see if they have a heart for poor and hungry people. We want to know how each candidate proposes to fulfill the mandate to those who govern to 'give deliverance to the needy,' (Psalm 72)."

As over 45 million Americans and 14 million children are living in poverty in the U.S., Rev. David Beckmann, presi-



Speakers from various Christian organizations speak at a press conference in Washington, D.C. on Thursday, January 15, 2015, announcing a coalition of 100 faith leaders who are urging 2016 presidential candidates to post videos stating how they will help alleviate hunger and poverty.

dent of Bread for the World, a Christian organization that seeks to end hunger, said that America has done a poor job recently of fulfilling God's call to provide for the needy. In fact, poverty is at a level not seen since the great depression.

"There is a broad consensus among faith leaders that our country has been culpably neglectful of poverty, especially in our own country," Beckmann said in the release.

Galen Carey, vice president for government relations at the National Association for Evangelicals, warned candidates that "silence on poverty is inexcusable."

"There are different ways to address the needs of poor and vulnerable people — some more effective than others," Carey explained. "Christians who believe government leaders are called to share God's concern for the poor and vulnerable want to know how presidential candidates would approach this essential responsibility."

In the midst of the 2012 election, both President Barack Obama and Republican challenger Mitt Romney answered the group's call and submitted videos to the Circle of Protection on how they would work to help improve the impoverished conditions in America.

newsbriefs

Metro Lutheran Ministry to host Brian Zahnd

Brian Zahnd, founder and lead pastor of Word of Life Church, will be the featured speaker Feb. 20 for the 2015 Dykman Lecture Series. The event, sponsored by Metro Lutheran Ministry, will begin at 7:30 p.m. in Atonement Lutheran Church, 9948 Metcalf, Overland Park, Ks. Word of Life Church is located in St. Joseph. For 31 years, Zahnd and his wife, Peri, have sought an authentic expression of the Kingdom of Jesus in a modern world. He is the author of several



ZAHND

books, including "Unconditional? The Call of Jesus to Radical Forgiveness." The annual Dykman Lecture Series is named in honor of former board president Lloyd W. Dykman. Although admission is free, seating is limited. For more information or to reserve seats, call Steven Tucker at (816) 285-3145 or steventucker@mlmkc.org.

Mops Meetings Announced

Linden Baptist Church, 611 NE 69th St., Gladstone, announces several MOPS meetings.

MOPS stands for Mothers of Preschoolers and is run by moms and is welcoming to every mom at every stage of her spiritual and life journey.

9:30 - 11:30 am Feb. 19, 2015

9:30 - 11:30 am March 19, April 16, May 21

6:30 - 8:00 pm March 19, April 16, May 21

For information, contact Evelyn Mercer, MOPS@lindenbc.com or visit our Facebook page at MOPS Linden Baptist Church.

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www.storlingdance.org

HAAHR

continued from page 4

sociation.

"An all-comers policy, while well intended, what it ends up doing is destroying minority viewpoints," said Haahr.

Haahr says in response to that bill he has gotten messages that have suggested he is a Nazi, is secretly an ashamed homosexual, or is a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

In what he identified as "Definitely the worst one," the sender told Haahr, "I will cheer ISIS when they cut off your [expletive] no-brain head."

Haahr said of sharing a "sampling" of the messages he's received, "I am posting this to show the disintegration of discourse in the current political arena. It's my hope that shining light on these people and [messages] will remind people of the need for civility in debate."

Liberal advocacy group Progress Missouri opposes the legislation, saying on its website the bill, "would allow religious groups on college campuses to discriminate while still enjoying the benefits of being a sanctioned student



Representative Elijah Haahr

group, which may include the use of campus space and university funding. Because public institutions have nondiscrimination rules, groups that refuse certain persons' membership are not sanctioned."

No action has been taken on the legislation since it was filed.

The same language has been filed in the state Senate by Kurt Schaefer (R-Columbia).



If you are in the process of planning a men's retreat you probably are wondering what theme you should use. Here we provide a list of 40 great men's retreat themes all backed up by Bible verses to help get your mind - and heart - working in the right direction. In all things, seek the Lords' advice in prayer before deciding.

- 1 Taking Charge:** You Will Part the Waters - Exodus 14:16
- 2 The Challenge:** Fear Not, Stand Firm - Exodus 14:13
- 3 Do You Really Trust Him?** The Lord Goes Before You Always - Deuteronomy 9:1-3
- 4 Be Joshua:** Lead your People - Joshua 1:1-6
- 5 The Straight Path of the Strong** - Josh. 1:7-9
- 6 Spiritual Combat:** Do Not Lower the Lance - Joshua 8:18-19
- 7 Listening to God:** He Calls You to His Presence - Samuel 3:1-20
- 8 By the Hand of God,** Beat Down Goliath - 1 Samuel 17
- 9 For Those who Seek the Lord:** Victory and Peace - 2 Chronicles 14:6
- 10 God Has a Plan, Let Him Show You** - Jeremiah 29:11
- 11 Did You Know?** You are a Blessed Man - Psalm 34:8
- 12 Get Up and Get Going: On Eagles Wings** - Isaiah 40:31
- 13 Are You Man Enough to be Christlike?** - John 15:13
- 14 Strength in God:** Nothing Can Stand Against You - Romans 8:31
- 15 The Christian Man Goes the Distance** - Romans 5:3-4

- 16 Defeating Evil in Your Life:** Finding Truth - Romans 12:21
- 17 Cleaning Your House:** How to Move On - Ephesians 4:31-32
- 18 Lean on God and Go Forward** - Prov. 3:5-6
- 19 Assurance:** The Confident Man of God - Deuteronomy 31:6
- 20 The Free Man in Christ** - Galatians 5:13
- 21 God is Your Infinite Strength** - Ps. 46
- 22 Getting Serious About God:** Giving All to Him - Romans 12:1-2
- 23 Rejoice in Your Christlikeness** - Philippians 4:4-7
- 24 Your Greatest Strength** - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
- 25 Service:** The Authority of Christ - Mark 4:37-41
- 26 The Dignified Man** - Romans 10:9-11
- 27 Struggle and Victory:** Climbing Out of the Pit - Genesis 37:43
- 28 The Riches of the Prayerful Man** - Luke 11:1-13
- 29 How to Have Faith Like Iron** - John 14:12-14
- 30 Confidence in God's Promises** - 2 Samuel 22:31
- 31 The Sanctified Man:** God's Finished Work - 1 Chronicles 28:20
- 32 The Clean Man is the Strong Man** - Job 17:9
- 33 Jesus: Rock, Fortress, Savior** - Psalm 18:1-2
- 34 Get Closer:** Trust in Him - Nahum 1:7
- 35 No Worries** - Matthew 6:25-27
- 36 Fear Nothing when You Fear God** - Matthew 10:28
- 37 The Impossible Now** - Mark 9:23
- 38 In Him and With Him:** You Bear Fruit - John 15:4-9
- 39 God Given Character** - Romans 5:3-4
- 40 Courage:** Keep Your Guard Up! - 1 Corinthians 16:13

Increase your ladies retreat attendance

by **Christian Retreats Network**

Ladies retreats are important events organized for adult women by the Church with the purpose to refresh, renew and restore. These are generally weekend events aimed at providing a refreshing and relaxing experience with lots of fun, great food and opportunity to connect with others and God. It's an important event on the Church calendar and requires planning to make it successful and well attended.

Choose the right location

Retreats are generally planned at large or small off-campus locations depending on the expected number of participants. Finding the right retreat location is a key factor influencing the cost as well as the ease of attending the event by participants. The event can be planned in unique locations, such as ranch with horseback rides and sleeping out in the open under stars or in a resort location close to a lake with facilities for swimming and boating. Where the retreat is planned is the probably the most important factor deciding the kind of attendance your event will receive.

Choose the right speaker

Selecting the speakers for the event is also an important decision. While it may be most cost-effective to invite local speakers, flying in someone who is well recognized from another location can be expensive but it may create an exciting at-



mosphere around the event and greatly

improve attendance. It's important to keep in mind that inviting such nationally recognized faces may require in-depth planning, because they are often booked for more than a year or two in advance for different events planned at different locations.

Check calendar first

While it may be important to hold the

■ See **WOMEN'S RETREAT** page 8

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CHECKLIST FOR RETREAT PLANNING

Let's have a retreat! Sounds like a good idea.

Why?

A retreat is a chance for encounter with self, with God, with other people, with creation, with issues. A retreat is, literally, a "strategic withdrawal." When we retreat, it is not for the purpose of just getting away and staying away. Everything involved in getting away, and all that is done while away, involves coming back. We go to the mountains not to see mountains, but to see the valleys in new perspective.

On a retreat we hope to deepen our relationship with God, to look at our

lives — deliberately focusing on issues and questions through reflection and meditation, and discussion and dialogue with others — in order to come back with a renewed sense of direction for living.

Jesus modeled this pattern of engagement and withdrawal and it is instructive for contemporary disciples as well.

Retreats deepen the fellowship of a community through shared experiences and can helpfully focus the energy of a group, whether your purpose is to do planning, problem solving, or team building, or to tackle a topic of

interest or concern.

Who is the retreat for? Are you planning for:

- Members of the church only?
- Members of your church and their invited guests?
- Members of several churches in your area?
- Any interested persons in your community?

Remember, people attend what they help to plan, so if you're looking to reach a larger audience than just your established group, involve others ... invite them to assist in planning for

the retreat as well. Don't just invite them once all the planning is done!

When can we go? Make sure to check school calendars for concerts, big games, tests, etc., that would affect the attendance of your particular audience. Look also at times when in-service days or other days off might allow for a possible new pattern — like a Thursday evening through Saturday, for instance, or a Sunday afternoon through Monday night. Some adult groups have found that creating an alternative of interest to some people while others are involved in a major cultural event (the Super Bowl, Mother's Day, prom, a big tourist event in your town), is a worthwhile and much appreciated ministry.

As you plan for your retreat, there

are many things to keep in mind. You'll find helpful input from your conference camp/retreat ministry leaders — don't hesitate to ask for ideas that work well or considerations that are especially helpful at the site you are using. Many people have asked us for a checklist to guide their planning. Here is a topical list, then a timeline, and finally some tips from experienced leaders — offered to assist you.

Planning checklist

- ___ Reasons for having a retreat
- ___ Goals for this retreat
- ___ Theme
- ___ Dates
- ___ Location

■ See CHECKLIST page 9

Seven questions to ask before booking

Whether you are facing the first event or you already have some experience, planning a retreat requires a lot of work and attention to detail. However, it's not as "scary" as it may seem and we're here to help! God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. To help with planning a restful event, we have created this list of seven questions to ask your retreat venues before booking.

What types of events do you host?

This should be the starting point. It may not seem like a big thing, but it needs to be asked. There are retreat venues that only cater to adults and will not host a youth camp, for example. This question also needs to be asked if your event is one less commonly associated with a christian retreat venue (e.g. company meetings).

What size group can venue accommodate?

This is another important aspect, because some smaller venues can only accommodate a few tens of people. It's also good to ask what the lodging situation is, since most venues have different types of lodgings. Large groups may have to be housed in buildings with differing amenities and rates.



Keep in mind that some venues may require a minimum number of attendees for a reservation.

What is your policy on deposits?

Budgeting is a very important part of event planning, so ask if the venue requires a deposit, how much of a deposit and when it would be due. Some venues require a deposit based on the size of the group. Also, ask what the policy for returning the deposit is.

Can I change the details of my reservation?

Expect the unexpected. After you make a reservation, some people may become unable to attend. Ask your retreat venue if you can alter the number of rooms reserved. The venue may have a time limit on changes or charge you for these changes.

What facilities/activities do you offer?

Retreat venues offer all kinds of activities and it's important to know what they are. Not only to be able to plan activities suited for your group, but also because you will probably be required to schedule them with the venue, in advance. Ask which activities are included in the package and which cost extra. Also, if you plan on holding seminars, ask about the availability of a conference hall and if that hall comes with its own audio/video equipment.

■ See QUESTIONS page 22

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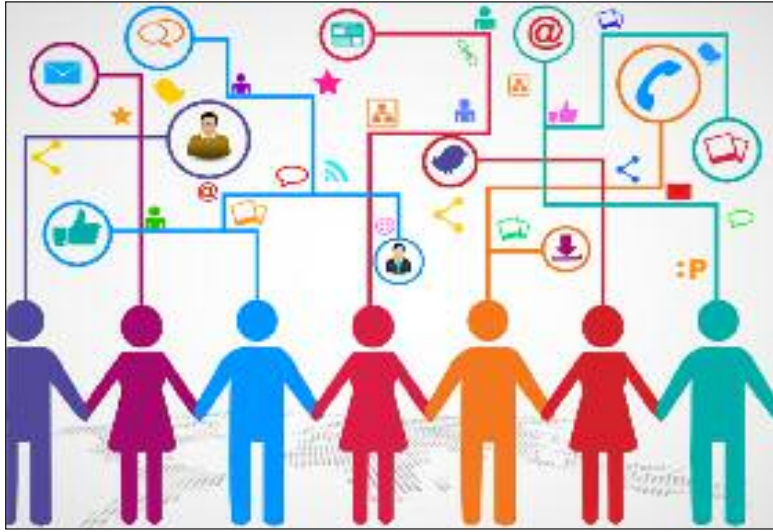
WOMEN'S RETREAT

continued from page 8

event at around same time every year in order to maintain continuity and not miss permanent and regular participants, it may help a great deal if the dates on which the event is held are kept a little flexible. One may check different calendars, such as holiday calendar, sports calendar, spring break calendar, community calendar, school calendar as well as the master church calendar, and accordingly make some changes, if required to the retreat schedule so as to avoid any clash with other important interests people may have on certain dates.

Offer a sign-up incentive

There are many people who are interested to be part of the retreat but keep delaying their decision till the last minute for no apparent reason and many a times they have to cancel their program because of reasons such as non-availability of flight tickets, etc. Such drop-outs can be minimized by providing early sign-up incentives. One can have a tiered registration fee offering discounts for those registering early.



Don't forget social media

It is important to let the word out about the event using different tools. Announcing the event in a big way using social media tools is not difficult. A Facebook page may be created for the event inviting all the friends of the church.

These people may in turn be requested to invite their friends and share the Face-

book page with others. One can also take advantage of other social media tools such as Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram. Don't forget to always include a budget for promotion, especially if you want to draw from outside your church or organization. Consider using traditional marketing strategies such as placing flyers in local grocery stores, business establishments, colleges, or an advertisement in local Christian magazines.

Recover your life

by **Jamie Roach**

When it comes to the Christian formation of our families, what matters most is not what we do for our kids (take them to a youth program, give them good advice or push them to make good grades) but who we *are* for our kids. The number one indicator of how our children will turn out is the condition of our *own* souls. If we, as parents, live life stressed out, anxious, and fearful as we strive to “get ahead” then we can expect our children to grow up to be stressed, anxious and fearful as they to “hustle for their worthiness”. However there is a better way. It is the way of Jesus. Jesus admonishes in Matthew 11:27, “Are you tired? Worn out?.... Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. (The Message).”

Going on a retreat with your family and friends is a wonderful way to accept Jesus' invitation to “Come to me. Get away with me and recover your life.” One place nearby that offers such retreats for families is Youthfront LaCygne and others in this guide.

Imagine the following: You show up on 600 acres of beautiful prairie with trees, rivers and bluffs, all made easy to see via the many trails. What to expect: This retreat with your friends and family is not going to be filled with sessions you feel obligated to attend. Rather, you will have unhurried time to play with your kids, take a walk through the autumn leaves, hang out in the snack shop with friends, tell stories around the campfire and pray together. You will be encouraged to slow down and connect with

■ See RECOVER page 22

Five Strategies to a better church retreat

by **Sarah Greere**

Planning a church retreat is hard work, and there are challenges every time you think you have a handle on things. But it really doesn't have to be that way. One thing is for certain, it will take time and a lot of due diligence on your behalf. Just remember that a poorly planned and poorly executed retreat is worse than having no retreat at all. The following is a list of helpful tips for planning a successful church retreat.

Tip #1 - Why have a retreat?

Ask yourself some pertinent questions like “Who is this retreat for?” or “What are their interests, needs and wants?” Make sure that what is being offered in the retreat will hold everyone's interest. Don't assume that since it is interesting to you that it will be to everyone else. Ask people in the congregation/fellowship what their interests are. Get a feel for what is needed by everyone.

■ See TIPS page 22

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CHECKLIST

continued from page 7



- ___ Leaders
- ___ Activities and program components
- ___ Contingency plans
- ___ Meals
- ___ Finances
- ___ Schedule
- ___ Transportation
- ___ Snacks
- ___ Policies
- ___ Publicity
- ___ Registration
- ___ Evaluation
- ___ Other:
- ___ Other:

A retreat is an intentional time apart to experience a new awareness of the presence of God. It is an opportunity to get some distance and see things in perspective. It requires a pace that is unhurried and conducive to rest and relaxation in order to come back with a renewed sense of living as disciples of Christ.

Steps to take

6-12 months ahead

Determine the reason for this retreat.

Appoint a coordinator and form a retreat-planning team.

Pray for guidance, direction, and purpose.

Write down the objectives for the group sponsoring the retreat.

Choose a theme based upon the purpose of retreat.

Write down the specific objectives for the actual retreat.

Write down the major blocks of time and activities.

Include food preparation, if needed.

Check these against objectives.

Look at your church calendar for when a retreat could best be held; choose the best time considering other schedules as well.

Choose the best facility for your purpose; make sure deposit is paid; confirm reservations.

Choose leader(s) or resource person(s) for your theme.

OR

You can let a specific person choose topics, based on your objectives.

Decide honorarium based on fees and expenses if a visiting leader is chosen.

Begin promotion — communicate excitement about objectives, dates, schedule as known.

2-3 months ahead

n Saturate all aspects of planning with prayer!

■ Keep promoting via bulletins, news, mailings, handouts, and word of mouth.

■ You will need to communicate the following:

1. specific information, including objectives;

2. registration fees and deadlines (consider collecting registration with a deposit so participants will commit to the time away and you'll have funds to pay facility deposit or program supplies ahead of time);

3. itinerary with the time schedule.

■ Visit the site, if possible, to familiarize yourself, particularly if you haven't been there before.

1 month ahead

■ Keep praying.

■ Keep publicizing through bulletins, news, mailings, handouts, and word of mouth.

■ Assign specific tasks to teams.

■ Orient, train, and motivate leaders/teams.

■ Give clear job expectations to leaders.

■ Be clear with leaders about time commitments.

■ Follow up with individuals regarding their progress on tasks assigned.

■ Familiarize your leaders with the facility use agreement and relevant policies.

2-3 weeks ahead

■ Continue to pray.

■ Keep publicizing, ESPECIALLY by word of mouth.

■ If cooking food, plan meals based on registrations.

■ Hand out itinerary and things to bring.

■ Check in with leaders about progress with their areas.

1 week ahead

■ Pray some more!

■ If you need to, meet with planning committee once more to finalize.

Retreat

■ Enjoy!

■ Have a time for reflection and feedback with participants.

■ Hand out evaluations before closing program.

Post-retreat

■ Meet with planning committee to go over evaluations.

■ Make note of what worked and what didn't for the next time.

■ Follow up with individuals to continue meeting your objectives.

■ Note: The Christian Camping International publication "Seven Steps for Effective Retreats" (part of their Focus series) is quite good. I recommend it highly. You can reach CCI at www.cciusa.org.

Tips from experienced retreat leaders

■ Personal contact via word of mouth is the BEST promotion!

■ Choose at least three people to invite people individually.

■ When deciding price, give scholarships instead of lowering price.

■ Budget for a positive balance (i.e., charge \$5 extra to cover unexpected expenses).

■ Usually 24-48 hours is typical for length of retreat — but it can be more or less.

■ Be sure to allow for flexibility, spontaneity. Be open to the Spirit!

■ Over-plan (plan for more than you'll actually include in any one event) so there are no lapses, but allow for flexibility.

■ Allow time for worship, unstructured time, input, reflection, and reaction.

■ Individual sessions should be 90 minutes maximum.

■ Always plan optional strategies in case of a change of circumstances (i.e., weather factors).

■ Choose a site that is not too far away and not too close — it's good to have a sense of being apart from your usual setting.

■ The site should match your objectives for gathering.

■ Be able to specify what kind of space you need (spaces for gathering the whole group together, as well as breakout spaces for small group activities, for example).

■ Consider the number of people desirable for your particular objectives. Bigger is not necessarily better.

■ Touch base with your planning committee at least once during the retreat to review schedule and process, and make any adjustments required.

If appropriate, offer classes or groups for follow-up after the retreat.

—Provided by the The United Methodist Church, Discipleship Ministries

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Was Jesus a hippie?



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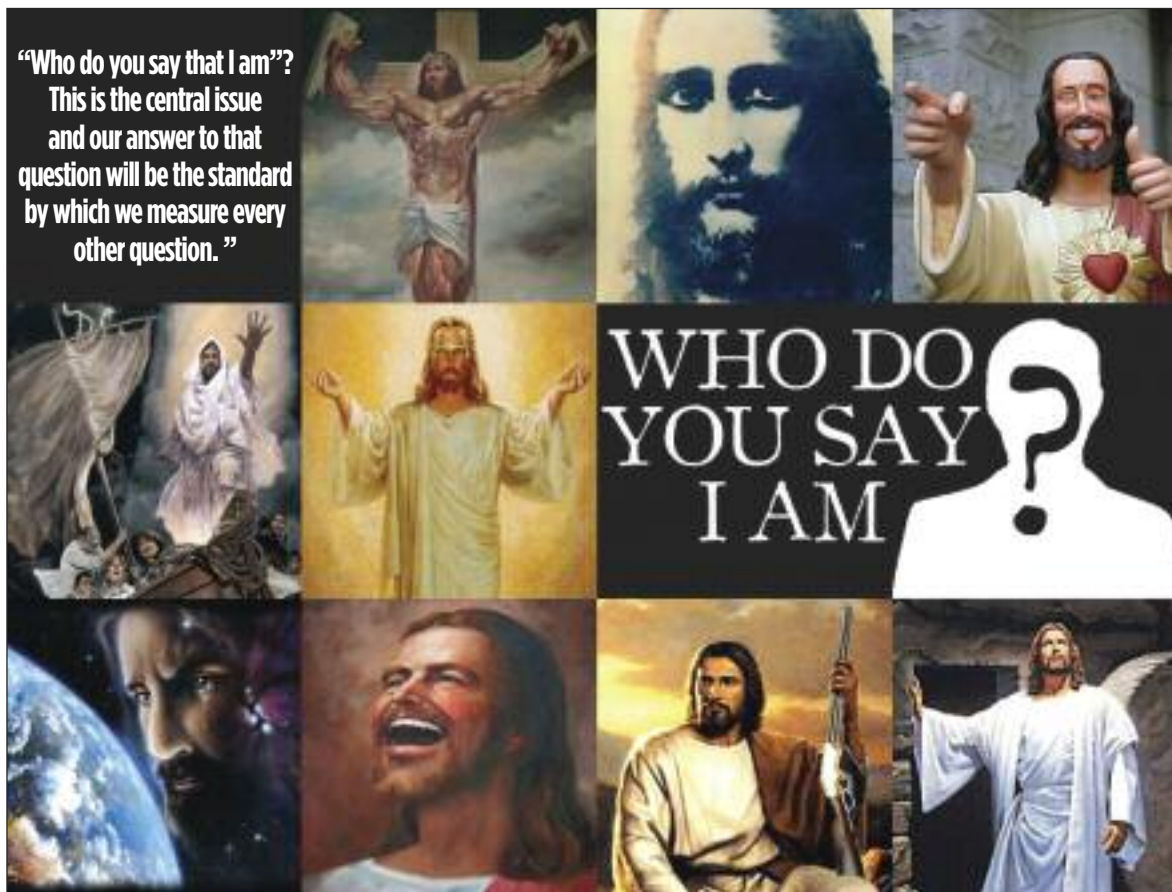
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The world tries to make him who they want him to be

The question "Was Jesus a hippie pacifist?" may seem to be a thought given to frivolity, but this attempt to self-identify with the Nazarene is pervasive in many different and varying ideologies. What is it exactly which makes us want to identify with him? It seems that Jesus can be whatever we want him to be. Black Jesus? White Jesus? Hipster Jesus? Conservative Jesus? Liberal Jesus? The quandary which lies before us is this; if we make Him what we want Him to be, we will diminish the man and his message. Is this what Jesus would want? This need to make Jesus what we want him to be, make him correspond to our way of seeing the world is nothing but self-aggrandizing ego-centrism. Do we want the real Jesus, or shall we remain in Jesus denial?

In order to get an accurate picture, we have to be willing to look past the catch phrases and attempt to look beyond our own prejudices. We must put aside the de-

"Who do you say that I am?"
This is the central issue
and our answer to that
question will be the standard
by which we measure every
other question."



sire to put Jesus in a modern context and try to put him in his own historical/cultural context. Statements like "Jesus was not an American" or "Jesus did not speak English" are very odd. One has to wonder with regard to the motive of these statements because any cultural milieu we place Jesus in, other than his own is most certainly anachronistic.

Why do we evoke Jesus? To what do we own his indelible impression? The expression "No one ever spoke like this man" (John 7:46) is in reference to the fact that Jesus spoke with a unique authority. When rabbis taught they would often quote

other rabbis as their authorities. This was not the case with Jesus. Jesus actually spoke with an authority that was based upon his own autonomy; that is, his authority was within himself. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5) is a predominant example. Jesus said "You have heard it said..." "But I say to you..." His listeners knew there was something in his words, and we still know it today, something cries out within us for a mutual correspondence with Him.

A Revolutionary? Jesus was not a revolutionary. He made it quite clear that his kingdom was not of this world, (John

18:36). The disciples were the ones who truly anticipated a revolution. They expected the promised Messiah to set the Hebrews free from Roman captivity. Revolution was not what Jesus was after. Instead, he taught that his purpose was to restore mankind to God, and this would come through his own death and resurrection (John 12:32).

Anti-Wealth? Was Jesus anti-wealth? No. The Bible does not condemn those who are rich. If one were to actually read a Bible cover to cover they would discover that God blessed several of His servants in

■ See **WAS JESUS A HIPPIE?** page 11

WHAT IS TRUE LOVE?



**CLINT
DECKER**
President and
Evangelist with
Great
Awakenings, Inc.

hopefortoday

Clay Center, Kan. – What is love? One search engine on the Internet indicated over one billion searches have been made for that question. The music group Foreigner hit number one on the charts several years ago with their song "I Want to Know What Love Is". No matter if we are single or married, or young or old, we want to know what love is.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as "a feeling of a strong or constant affection for a person". What if that feeling slips away over time? What if that feeling is for more than one person, es-

pecially after we are married, then what?

The Scriptures say, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised" (Song of Solomon 8:7). God speaks of love in this particular context as a strong romantic affection between a man and a woman. It might be when you think about and want to be with that person, and are mysteriously drawn to him or her. Let us call this desire.

There is good desire (or affection) and bad. When we have this desire for someone outside of marriage, it is bad. It should be kept within the boundary of the husband-and-wife relationship. When desire turns into immoral lust, it is bad. We know it is lust (and not true love) when we are driven by our insatiable dreams and our physical obsession for another person. The test of bad desire is, "I want for me." The test of good desire is, "I want so I can serve and bless another person."



How can we find real love? It starts with the author of love Himself, God. He created the first man and woman, brought them together and presided over their marriage. The Scriptures say "God is love" (1 John 4:8). How did He demonstrate that love? When He sent His Son, Jesus, to suffer and die upon a cross for you and me that we might call upon Him for the forgiveness of our sins, it was real love.

Genuine love starts at affection then

moves on to sacrificial service. It is not about what I am getting, but what I am giving. It is not if I am saying the right words, but if I am listening with the right heart. It is not about what I am feeling, but how I am serving.

May God be your hope for today as you seek for and live out true love.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR WORLD’S PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS



JOHN STONESTREET
Speaker and Fellow of the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview.

viewpoint

While in 2014 the days of throwing Christians to wild beasts in the arena may be behind us, the persecution of Christians around the world isn't. In fact, the number of our brothers and sisters subjected to imprisonment, torture and death for their faith in just the last twelve months dwarfs the number who suffered during the entire tenure of Nero.

As a new report from a leading ministry to the persecuted church shows, last year was one of the most violent on record for believers worldwide—and 2015 could be worse.

Open Doors International released its World Watch List earlier this month, ranking the top 50 most dangerous and difficult countries for Christians to live in. Here are the results:

For the 13th year in a row, North Korea ranked as the worst persecutor of Christians. Amid executing relatives and presiding over the disappearances of his political rivals, North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un has reserved his special wrath for Christians.

Open Doors estimates that 70,000 believers are currently imprisoned for their faith in this hermit kingdom. And considering North Koreans outside of jail live in a state of semi-starvation, I shudder to think what it's like behind bars.

Executions for crimes of owning Bibles or evangelizing are commonplace. News agencies reported last year that Kim Jong-un personally sentenced 33 church planters to death.

“Christians,” explains Open Doors president David Curry, “are the No. 1 enemy of the state in North Korea.”

And that's just one frontier in the battle between the Gospel and modern Neros.

In west-central Africa, the Islamist group Boko Haram has just leveled several towns, with Christians as their new target of choice. Militants have ambushed worshippers in at least a half a dozen churches on Sunday mornings, and human rights groups report a Christian body count of over 3,000 in Nigeria alone.

And then there's the Middle East. From Iraq and Syria to Pakistan and



Afghanistan, Christians are suffering for their faith on a scale not seen in living memory. Some of the world's most ancient church communities have been wiped out or displaced by the rise of ISIS, and tens of thousands of Christians have fled the Islamic State's onslaught—most likely never to return home.

“We have seen the sharpest jump in violent attacks against Christians in the modern era,” says Curry, estimating that

upwards of 100 million Christians worldwide are suffering persecution as we speak.

“[And] while the year 2014 will go down in history for having the highest level of global persecution of Christians in the modern era,”

Open Doors elaborated, “current conditions suggest the worst is yet to come.”

Now I know it's easy to shrug and say, “Well, what can I do about this?” But we're not helpless—not by a long shot.

Christians in America have options for extending help to our hard-pressed brethren by supporting organizations devoted to serving the persecuted church and pleading her cause—organizations like Open Doors, Voice of the Martyrs,

■ sidenote

by Dwight Widaman

Congress is about to let an important religious freedom commission dissolve. As of this writing, the U.S. Senate has yet to reauthorize The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

The commission was created in 2011 by a bi-partisan vote and signed into law by President Obama. It champions the cases of individuals around the world who face discrimination, harassment, and severe persecution for their faith.

It is the first of its kind in the world, dedicated to defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad. The commission reviews the facts and circumstances of religious freedom violations, and ultimately makes policy recommendations based on this information to the president, the secretary of state, and Congress.

SO WHY NOW?

At a time when international religious freedom is more threatened than ever before - think again of ISIS terrorizing re-

ligious minorities in Iraq, and radical Islamist groups overtaking churches in Syria, as just two examples of encroachments on religious freedom worldwide - the reauthorization of this crucial commission is more important than ever before.

Without this commission, the US government will not have a specific body dedicated to addressing religious persecution and making crucial recommendations. Without the commission's recommendations, religious freedom won't be addressed as frequently or comprehensively in US policy.

TAKE ACTION

Time is running out for the commission and its crucial role in calling the U.S. government to address the growing impact of persecution around the world. That's why it's so important for each of us to raise our voices for religious freedom, and speak out for reauthorization of USCIRF.

You can act on this crucial issue by contacting your Missouri or Kansas senator and asking them to support the passage of the House-passed bill, H.R. 4653, The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Reauthorization Act of 2014.

■ WAS JESUS A HIPPIE?

continued from page 10

great abundance. Abraham and Job were all fantastically wealthy, yet they were regarded as righteous servants of God. The parable of the talents is paramount in this (Matthew 25:14-30). The point of the parable was not to condemn anyone who

is rich, but rather to not allow riches to become a form of idolatry. Jesus makes it clear that nothing should come between ourselves and our relationship with him.

Anti-Gay? A reading of the Bible indicates that Jesus did regard homosexuality as sin. Jesus defined marriage as between a man and a woman. (Matthew 19:1-8). The way to see what Jesus thought about

homosexuality is to understand Jesus' perspective on the Old Testament. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, until heaven and earth pass away not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” (Matthew 5:17-18) The

Old Testament explicitly states that sex between two men is an abomination (Leviticus 20:13). Since Jesus maintained that the Old Testament was the word of God, he could not believe that homosexuality was not sin and maintain his view of the Old Testament.

The question before us should not be one of secondary issues, but rather the

question Jesus would pose to us. “Who do you say that I am”? This is the central issue and our answer to that question will be the standard by which we measure every other question.

As for me, I am in agreement with Thomas, Jesus is my Lord and my God (John 20:28).

Trusting God for our finances



BILL BRIGHT

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stewardship

Changing economic conditions exemplify the instability of finances throughout the world. Instead of placing their trust in the Lord, who promised to meet all of their needs, most Christians trust in their investments, savings, and retirement plans to ensure security and happiness - only to find their hopes dashed when financial reverses deplete their assets. Many are wasting their lives trying to achieve financial security in a volatile world.

Our heavenly Father, on the other hand, wants us to enjoy a full, abundant life free from the cares and stresses brought about by confidence in money and other material possessions. Rather than trusting in a worldly system that cannot assure our welfare or relying on our own weak capabilities to provide for our needs, He calls us to depend entirely on Him.

Permit me to suggest a plan that will

help you release your faith in God and develop your trust in Him for your finances.

Recognize That God Is Worthy of Our Trust

1. Read Psalm 12:6. How much can we trust God?
2. What will happen if you make God's promises the foundation of your financial security (Proverbs 3:5-6)?
3. List the financial areas that are hardest for you to put into God's hands. Prayerfully dedicate them to Him.

Realize That God Wants You to Live a Full and Abundant Life

1. Read John 10:10. How does this promise apply to financial freedom?
2. Does abundant life mean having all the money or possessions you want? Why or why not?
3. Do you feel you have abundant life right now? If not, what is keeping you from it?

Substitute Faith for Fear

1. How does fear interfere with your trust in God?
2. Read 2 Timothy 1:7. Contrast the two kinds of spirits mentioned.
3. Write down the financial areas that make you fearful. Surrender these to the

Lord.

Ask God to Supply Your Needs

1. What is the difference between needs and wants? Be specific.
2. Why do we lack good things? (James 4:2-3, John 15:7)
3. Faith requires action. According to 1 John 5:14-15, as an act of your will, ask God to supply your needs and expect Him, as an expression of your faith, to provide for your needs.

Keep Your Heart and Motives Pure

1. What wrong motives do we sometimes display in prayer (James 4:3)? What is the result?
2. Write down the wrong motives that you have. Then, confess them to God and claim the power of the Holy Spirit to help you rely on Him to supply your needs.

Take a Step of Faith

1. What is essential to your Christian walk (Hebrews 11:6)?
2. One way to enlarge your faith is to make a "faith promise" -- one that is greater than you are capable of fulfilling according to your present income. It is not a pledge that must be paid. Rather, it is a voluntary "promise" based on your faith in God's ability to supply out



of His resources what you cannot give out of your own. You give as God supplies.

3. Describe a time in which God led you to give above your means. What was the result?

4. If you have never made a faith promise, you may want to do so now after prayerfully considering various worthwhile investments you can make for God. Keep a careful record of your giving and how God supplied your needs in a special way.

verse apply to financial freedom?

2. Suppose a new Christian confides in you that he is afraid to give God control over his checkbook. How would you advise him?

3. Review the steps to trusting God for your finances. Which of these steps are weak areas in your life? Why do you find them difficult? What could you do to strengthen them?

Prayerfully consider a faith promise God would have you make. Write out that promise.

Life Application

1. Read Luke 6:38. How does this

Let me make the *best* of your time.

Alan R. Jones, CPA

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The vehicle need not run, but it must be whole and have four inflated tires so it can be towed. Donors are requested to describe the condition of their vehicles. In the rare event that the costs of transport and processing exceeds the auction value of the car, we cannot accept the donation.

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All vehicle donations are processed as quickly as possible. Typically, a donated vehicle is picked up within 2 or 3 days after the title is received by our process center. Online donations speed up the process and special arrangements can be made if a vehicle needs to be picked up more quickly.

What documents do I need to donate my car to Heartland Habitat?
The online Donation Wizard will tell you what documents are required in your state. Most states require that you have a clear title to the vehicle; some states also require a notarized signature to transfer a vehicle.

What are the tax benefits of donating my car?
Habitat for Humanity is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. If you itemize your deductions on your income tax return, you may be entitled to deduct the gross sales value of your donated vehicle. Donors will receive appropriate receipts and should consult their tax advisor and/or the IRS to determine benefits.



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Administrative Offices
1401 Fairfax Parkway 323D, Kansas City, KS 66116
913-342-3047 or 816-466-7190
FAX: 913-342-4483

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PLEASE NOTE: Your item must be in by the 3rd Wednesday of each month for following month's issue.

Family Events, Christian Concerts, Theatre, Youth Events, Meetings, Clubs, Bible Studies, Family Fun, Speakers and More!



FEB 4 SHINE BRIGHT BABY AND LOFTLAND - 7:00 P.M. AT THE FIRE ESCAPE COFFEEHOUSE, 126 W. MAIN, CHANUTE, KS. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 620-431-5815.

591-1020.

CLASSES, SEMINARS, CONFERENCES

DIVORCECARE PROGRAM. Beginning January 29, 6:30 pm. Timothy Lutheran Ministries, North Campus, 425 RD Mize Rd, Blue Springs, MO. 13 week DivorceCare features dynamic DVD seminars featuring 32 renowned experts on divorce and recovery. Participants become part of a small support group of people who are also experiencing separation and divorce. A program for children whose parents are separated or divorced will also be offered through DivorceCare for Kids (DC4K). Children between the ages of 5 and 12 find healing and encouragement while acquiring coping skills for this challenging time. 816-228-5300.

ACQUIRE THE FIRE. Feb. 13 - 14, 2015. Municipal Auditorium, 301 W 13th St., Kansas City, MO 64105. Featuring: The Afters, Manic Drive, All Things New and Austin Asamec. Sponsored by Teen Mania. 800-329-3473.

FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY COURSE. Begins February 1, 2:00 pm. Pisgah Baptist Church, 112 Pisgah Drive, Excelsior Springs, MO 64024. Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University 9-week video course. 2:00-3:00 pm Sunday's beginning February 1, 2015. Cost \$95 per person or per married couple for materials. 816-630-5121.

TAPPING YOUR POWER TO CREATE SOCIAL CHANGE. February 3, 7:30 pm. William Jewell College, 500 College Hill, Liberty, MO. Derreck Kayongo, founder of Global Soap Project, a native of Uganda and humanitarian relief expert, Kayongo is the co-founder of Global Soap Project that recycles partially-used and discarded soap from hotels and distributes millions of new bars to underserved communities. 816-415-5223

"WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES" FEATURING AUTHOR HAYLEY DIMARCO. February 6, 6:30-8:30 pm & February 7, 9:30 am-2:30 pm. Deerbrook Covenant Church, 200 NE Tudor Rd, Lee's Summit, MO 64086. Women of all ages welcome. 816-246-9337.

PURE JOY. February 6, 7:00 pm. February 7, 9:00 am. Woods Chapel Church, 4725 NE Lakewood Way, Lee's Summit, MO 64064. \$25 for both days includes box lunch, \$20 for Friday only. Friday doors open at 6:00 pm; Salad Bar available. Saturday doors open at 8:00 am sweet rolls, fruit and coffee available. Wor-



FEBRUARY 20&21 VISIONARY MARRIAGE CONFERENCE AT THE GRACE FAMILY FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, 125 N. ARMSTRONG, PLEASANT HILL, MO. 816-540-5872.

ship and Breakfast sessions featuring Tammy Trent and other Special Speakers. 816-795-8848.

IF: WICHITA SIMULCAST. February 6, 3:00-10:00 pm & February 7, 9:00 am-5:00 pm. Central Christian Church, 2900 N Rock Rd., Wichita, KS 67226. Messages from Jennie Allen, Jen Hatmaker and Ann Voskamp. It is a simulcast women's conference combined with the relationship aspect of a small group. IF bring women together from around the world to wrestle with belief that God is real, the places in our lives where we are struggling with unbelief, how can we overcome unbelief and then what God can do with

our belief. 316-688-4400.

A WEEKEND OF "HOMETOWN MARRIAGE UPGRADE." February 6, 6:30-9:30 pm & February 7, 9:00 am-2:30 pm. Faith Ministries Community Church, 12222 Blue Ridge Blvd., Grandview, MO 64030. Live speakers: Dennis & Denise Capra, Andrew & Andrea Black others via video including Dave & Bonnie Duell and Dan & Nancy Thompson. 816-965-7141.

GOOD NEWS CLUB TEAM ORIENTATION TRAINING (FOR NEW OR UNTRAINED VOLUNTEERS-ADULTS AND TEENS) February 7, 9:00 am-4:00 pm. Second Baptist Church, 2324 Ruby Ave., Kansas City,

CONCERTS

SHINE BRIGHT BABY AND LOFTLAND. February 4, 7:00 pm. FireEscape Coffeehouse, 126 W. Main, Chantute, KS. 620-431-5815 or www.fireescape.net.

LESTER ESTELLE. February 6, 7:30-9:30 pm. Homer's Coffee House, 7126 W. 80th St., Overland Park, KS. 913-381-6022.

AN EVENING WITH MICHAEL W. SMITH. February 14, 7:00 pm. Calvary Baptist Church, 600 E. 50th St., Joplin, MO 64804. A Special VIP dessert preshow will be offered at an additional cost.

PAM AND PHIL MORGAN. February 15, 6:00 pm. Antioch Southern Baptist, 2601 E. Mechanic, Harrisonville, MO. 816-884-5324.

NEWSBOYS WITH SPECIAL GUESTS AUDIO ADRENALINE AND FINDING FAVOUR. February 17, 7:00 pm. Light of the World Christian Center, 3301 SW Gage Blvd., Topeka, KS 66614. 785-271-1010.

SWEET SPIRIT MUSIC OUTREACH. February 21, 6:00 pm. Moment of Truth Baptist Church, 310 Randolph Rd., Claycomo, MO 64119. Surprise music outreach with giveaways and more. Come on by and bring a friend.... You'll have a great time. 816-452-4426.

MOKAN JAM. February 27, Pot luck at 6:30 pm and music starts at 7:00 pm. Northland Christian Church, 6120 NE 48th St., Kansas City, MO. Events are open mic and open to anyone that wants to join us. Our theme is God's love.

4 HIS LOVE BENEFIT CONCERT FOR DALTON HANNA. February 28, 7:00 pm. First Christian Church, 2151 S. Jefferson, Kearney, MO.

THE FAIR FAMILY-LIVE FROM BRANSON AND JAM. FOURTH FRIDAY (except for Nov. & Dec. when we meet on the 3rd Fri.). Northland Christian Church, 6120 NE 48th St., KCMO. 913-432-0359.

SOUTHERN GOSPEL (CALL FOR GROUPS)

ALPHA OMEGA CHRISTIAN MUSIC ASSOCIATION MONTHLY MEETING, PRAYER, DEVOTION, POTLUCK AND JAM. FIRST FRIDAY, 7pm. 10035 E. Westport Rd., Indep., MO 64052.

MO-KAN GOSPEL MUSIC ASSOCIATION POTLUCK AND JAM. FOURTH FRIDAY (except for Nov. & Dec. when we meet on the 3rd Fri.). Northland Christian Church, 6120 NE 48th St., KCMO. 913-432-0359.

PENTECOSTAL TABERNACLE CHURCH. SECOND SATURDAY, 6pm. 341 S. 72nd St., Kansas City, KS 66111. Praise and Worship songs of Zion. 913-334-1009.

CGMA NW MO CHAPTER MEETING, GOSPEL MUSIC AND POTLUCK. SECOND SATURDAY. Faith Assembly of God Church, South 13 Hwy, Polo, MO. Travel North on I-35 North, go North of Liberty to the Polo/Lathrop Exit. Turn right onto 116 Hwy. Go 12 miles to 13 Hwy. Turn left and go ¼ mile. pegcia@msn.com.

MOMENT OF TRUTH BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH. THIRD SATURDAY in January, May, September & October, 7pm. 310 Randolph Rd, Claycomo, MO. Gospel music sing. 816-452-4426.

RADIANT LIFE ASSEMBLY OF GOD. LAST SUNDAY, 6:30 p.m. Hwy. 33, Kearney, MO. Open mike. Gospel sing.

GOSPEL JAMBOREE. SECOND THURSDAY, 7 p.m. Life Christian Center, 1650 E Langsford Road, Lee's Summit, MO. 816-878-4694.

PARADISE BAPTIST CHURCH. SECOND SUNDAY, 6 p.m. Pot luck dinner at 5 p.m. Paradise Missouri. 816-

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IF: GATHERING KANSAS CITY. February 6&7. Liberty United Methodist Church, 1001 Sunset Ave., Liberty, MO 64068. Women of all faith and life stages are welcome! 4 live web streamed messages featuring speakers, Jennie Allen, Jen Hatmaker, and Ann Voskamp will consist of teaching, storytelling, prayer, worship, and time for conversation, reflection and application. Call 816-781-4554.

THE PATH FORWARD. February 7, 7:00 pm. The Culture House, 14808 W. 117th St., Olathe, KS. Dr. Luke Bobo. 913-393-3141.

AVOID PROBATE SEMINARS. February 10, 7:00 pm. Lewis Living Trust Center, 700 M.E. Langsford, Lee's Summit, MO 64063. Free. 816-524-3200.

COFFEE CONNECT. February 11, 7:00 pm. International House of Prayer University (IHOPU), 12901 S. US Highway 71, Room 109, Grandview, MO 64030. 816-763-0200 ext. 2173.

XO: A GLOBAL MARRIAGE SIMULCAST. February 13, 7:00-9:00 pm and February 14, 9:00-11:00 am. Sheffield Family Life Center, 5700 Winner Rd, Kansas City, MO 64127. 816-241-4831.

VISIONARY MARRIAGE CONFERENCE. February 20, 6:00-9:00 pm and February 21, 8:15 am-4:30 pm. Grace Family Fellowship Church, 125 N. Armstrong, Pleasant Hill, MO 64080. Facilitated by Author



FEB 10 KANSANS FOR LIFE VALENTINE BANQUET, FEATURING COLLIN RAYE. 5:00 P.M. AT THE RITZ-CHARLES, 137TH & ANTIOCH, OVERLAND PARK, KS. FREE-WILL GIVING.

Speaker and Pastor Dr. Rob Rienow from Visionary Family Ministries. Dr. Rienow is a leading voice for marriage and family. FREE childcare offered both days! 816-540-5872.

INFORMATIONAL MEETING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY. February 21, 9:00-10:15 am. Deerbrook Covenant Church, 200 NE Tudor Rd., Lee's Summit, MO 64086. Sponsored by If Not For Grace Ministries. info.org

ADPTION INFORMATION MEETING. February 26, 6:30-8:00 pm. Sponsored by Holt International Adoption Agency. Contact Kyla, she will provide you with further details on the location and directions. 816-878-7864.

AVOID PROBATE SEMINARS. February 26, 7:00 pm. Lewis Living Trust Center, 700 M.E. Langsford, Lee's Summit, MO 64063. Free. 816-524-3200.

SAT 7 MINISTRY UPDATE. February 26, 6:30-8:30 pm. Colonial Presbyterian Church, Wornall Campus Fellowship Hall, 9500 Wornall Rd, Kansas City, MO 64114. Features Ray & Sue Henain, Church Connections-Music & Testimony, and guest speaker Nancy Stafford, Honorary Leadership Chair, SAT-7 Women for Middle East HOPE, Actress, Author. 866-744-7287.

2015 BRANSON VICTORY CAMPAIGN WITH KENNETH COPELAND. February 26-February 28. Faith Life Church, 3701 W. Hwy. 76, Branson, MO 65616. FREE. 1-417-334-9233.

17th MIDWEST CHRISTIAN EDUCATION EXPO. February 28, 9:30 am-2:00 pm. Colonial Presbyterian Church, 9500 Wornall, Kansas City, MO. FREE. 50 Christian Colleges from 15 states, 25 K-12 Schools from Metro KC area, and MO & KS Homeschool Organizations. Preparing for College; Finding the Most Financial Aid; History, Mission, and Vision of

Homeschooling; Homeschooling 101 and the Law; K-12 Options: Parent Panel Discussion a.m. 816-524-4522.

DARE 2 SHARE'S 2015 STUDENT CONFERENCE - THE FEARLESS TOUR. March 20, 6:00 pm doors open & March 21, 8:00 am doors open. First Baptist Church Raytown, 10500 E. State Route 350, Kansas City, MO 64138. \$55 until 03/06/15, \$59 at door. Speakers: Greg Stier, Zane Black, The Digital Age, Esteban Shedd, and Alert312. 1-866-448-0272.

THE BOOK OF ACTS. March 2- April 11. Kansas City College and Bible School. Earn free undergraduate credit hours at Kansas City College and Bible School by signing up for our next free class! 913-722-0272.

GOOD NEWS CONFERENCE. March 17 - 19. Faith Ministries Community Church, 12222 Blue Ridge Exit, Grandview MO 64030. Speakers Allen & Janice Speegle, Dave & Bonnie Duell, and more. Leadership conference. www.faithministrieskc.com (816) 965-7141

IF NOT FOR GRACE MINISTRIES/RECONCILIATION WEEKEND. March 20-22. Early Bird Registration starts January 23, 2015. Are you looking for spiritual and emotional peace after experiencing abortion? We are here to help, contact Jama at jedlund@inf.org or 816-847-2911.

2015 WATCHMEN ON THE WALL BRIEFING. May 20-22. Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C. Speaker include: Lt. General (ret.) William Boykin, Senator Ted Cruz, Ambassador Ron Dermer, Dr. David Jeremiah, Pastor Greg Laurie, Dr. Erwin Lutzer, Tony Perkins, and other. www.frc.org.

SPECIAL CHURCH EVENTS

MIDWEST MARCH FOR LIFE AND RALLY. January 31, 8:00 am. Events begin at 8:00 am Capital Steps, Jefferson City, MO, with prayer; 8:30 am inside Capital Rotunda-Life Affirming booths and Big Screen Presentation; begin to gather at 9:45 am at Governor's Mansion; march begins 10:00 am; rally begins 10:45 am Abby Johnson keynote speaker. Pro-Life Luncheon, St. Peter's Catholic Church Selinger Center, 216 Broadway, Jefferson City, MO. RSVP needed for luncheon. Speakers: Coalition for Life St. Louis; Steve Rupp, President of Missouri Right to Life; Ron Kelsey, Respect Life Director Kansas City Kansas; Julia Pritchett, Program Coordinator, Sidewalk Advocates for Life. 573-340-8444.

HELP HUMANE SOCIETY. February 7, 4:30 pm. Grandview Assembly of God Church, 12400 Grandview Rd, Grandview, MO 64030. \$6 per person, family of 4 is \$20, under 3 free. Family quiz game includes pre game characters, vendors, raffle, concessions. We have special guest members the Pure Dog Listener, Belton Animal Clinic. 816-348-7889.

VALENTINE BANQUET. February 10, 5:00 pm. Ritz-Charles, 137th & Antioch, Overland Park, KS. Free-will giving. Special speaker Collin Raye. 5:00 pm Silent Auction, 6:30 pm Seating, 7:00 pm Banquet. RSVP by February 3, 913-642-5433 kansansforlife@aol.com.

CALVARY WARRIOR MEN'S HOME BASKETBALL GAME. February 10, 5:30 pm against Ozark Christian College and February 14, 4:00 pm against Faith Baptist College. Calvary Bible College, 15800 Calvary Rd., Kansas City, MO 64147.

CALVARY WARRIOR WOMEN'S HOME BASKETBALL GAME. February 10, 7:30 pm against Ozark Christian College and February 14, 2:00 pm against Faith Baptist College. Calvary Bible College, 15800 Calvary Rd., Kansas City, MO 64147.

VALENTINE'S DAY DINNER AND DANCE. February 13, 6:00 pm. Truman Memorial Building, 416 West Maple Avenue, Independence, MO 64050. \$12.50 per person. Sponsored by Independence First United Methodist Church. Enjoy a lovely meal with your loved one(s), time with others and dancing with a DJ. 816-863-4662.

MOVIE IN THE MUG. February 13, 7:00 pm. Faith Ministries Community Church, 12222 Blue Ridge Blvd., Grandview, MO 64030. 816-965-7141.

LOVE'S OUTREACH COMMUNITY FOOD DISTRIBUTION. February 14, 10:00-11:00 am. Church on the Rock Outreach Center, 1700 SW Market St., Lee's Summit, MO. Free food for families in need. Valid ID and proof of residency needed to participate. 816-246-7625.

AFRICAN CHILDREN'S CHOIR. February 15, 10:00 am. New Life Assembly of God Church, 801 SW 1st St., Oak Grove, MO. 816-690-3514.

AFRICAN CHILDREN'S CHOIR. February 15, 6:30 pm. First Baptist Raytown Church, 10500 E State Route 350, Raytown, MO. 816-353-1994.

FAMILY FILM COURAGEOUS SHOWING. February 15, 5:00 pm. Kansas City First Church, 11811 State Line Rd., Kansas City, MO 64114. Special, free, showing of the film Courageous. Honor Begins at Home for couples and friends. Children's activities provided for families during the movie. Showing includes opportunities to purchase concessions and meal.

AFRICAN CHILDREN'S CHOIR. February 20, 7:00 pm. Harrisonville Mennonite Church, 1606 Chapel Dr., Harrisonville, MO 64701. 816-884-2431.

BRINNON & MARKS MUSICAL COMEDY. February 20, 7:00 pm. Abundant Life Church, 414 SW Persels,

Lee's Summit, MO 64081. Advance tickets \$12.50, proceeds benefit the Alliance for Life. Brannon & Mark appeals to people of all ages from all walks of life, clean musical comedy Branson/Vegas style. www.alliance-forlifemissouri.com

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION. February 21, 9:00 am. Crown Pointe Church, Lee's Summit, MO. If Not For Grace Ministries (an abortion recovery ministry. Contact Jama at jedlund@inf.org.

KINDERGARTEN PREVIEW. Feb. 24, 8:45-9:45. Maranatha Christian Academy, 15000 W. 63rd St., Shawnee, KS 66216. Interested families, who want to know more about Maranatha Christian Academy's Kindergarten program.

CELEBRATE PURIM WITH OR HAOLAM! March 1, 3:00-6:30 pm. Or HaOlam Messianic Congregation, 7029 W 74th St., Overland Park, KS (just east of Met-calf). 3:00-4:30: Carnival Games, 4:30-5:00: Costume Parade, 5:00-5:30: The Telling of Purim, 5:30-6:00: Congregational Rejoicing and Dance, 6:00: Let's Eat 913-383-8448.

PRO-LIFE ACTION DAY. March 10, 9:00 am. Jefferson City, 1st Floor Rotunda. Selinger Center 9:00 am; 1st Floor Rotunda 10:30 am; 12:00-12:30 Rally. An opportunity to lobby your legislators for the passage of the abortion clinic inspection bill and other important pro-life legislation. 53-635-5110.

FINE ARTS

AN ILIAD. Through February 15. Spencer Theatre, 4949 Cherry Street, Kansas City, MO 64110. This retelling of Homer's epic poem illuminates an ancient classic by taking a harrowing look at the human cost of war. 816-235-2700.

THE MIRACULOUS JOURNEY OF EDWARD TULANE. Through March 1. Coterie Theatre Crown Center, 2450 Grand Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64108. Edward Tulane is a three-foot tall toy rabbit and despite being much loved, he doesn't love anyone but himself. Edward the china rabbit discovers that even a heart of the most breakable kind can learn to love, to lose, and to love again. 816-474-6552.

AMERICAN SOLDIER. Through June 21. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 4525 Oak St., Kansas City, MO 64111. 816-751-1321.

WORLD WAR I AND THE RISE OF MODERNISM. Through July 19. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 4525 Oak St., Kansas City, MO 64111. Paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, photographs, and decorative arts by many of the most esteemed European and American modernists are exhibited. 816-751-1321

STARRING ABE LINCOLN. February 3-14. H & R Block City Stage Union Station, 30 W. Pershing Rd., Kansas City, MO 64108. 816-460-2083.

KANSAS CITY BALLET PRESENTS "NEW MOVES." February 6-14. Todd Bolender Center for Dance & Creativity, 500 W. Pershing Rd., Kansas City, MO 64108. New Moves is a chance for audiences to see the next big choreographer before they are considered the next big choreographer. 816-931-2232.

RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN'S CINDERELLA. February 12, 10:00 am School Day Performance; February 12, 7:00 pm; February 13 7:00 pm; February 14, 2:00 & 7:00 pm; February 15, 2:00 pm. Bell Cultural Events Center Mid-America Nazarene, 2030 East College Way, Olathe, KS 66062. www.cytkc.org

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF. February 19, 7:00 pm; February 20, 10:00 am School Day Performance; February 20, 7:00 pm; February 21, 2:00 pm & 7:00 pm; February 22, 2:00 pm. Bell Cultural Events Center Mid-America Nazarene, 2030 East College Way, Olathe, KS, 66062. www.cytkc.org.

MASTER'S PIANO RECITAL-BEIBEI LIN. February 20, 7:30 pm. Liberty Chapel at Calvary Bible College, 15790 Elmwood, Kansas City, MO 64147. 816-425-6129.

SILENT NIGHT. February 21, 25, 27, March 1. 7:30 pm (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday) 2:00 pm (Sunday). Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, 1601 Broadway Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64108. Enemies find friendship if only for one day. Silent Night is a story based on real events that took place during World War I, when the Scottish, French and Germans came together in agreement to ceasefire, truce and brotherhood on Christmas Eve. 816-471-4933.

PETER AND THE WOLF, LIVE! February 22. Helzberg Hall, 1601 Broadway Blvd., Kansas City, MO. Prokofiev's timeless musical tale of boy vs. wolf comes to life through music and comedy in this unique production featuring mascots from local professional sports teams and universities. Wear your favorite team gear and cheer on your favorite "character" - the wolf, the bird, the cat! 816-471-0400.

UNDERGROUND. March 6, 7:30 pm. Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, 1601 Broadway, Kansas City, MO. \$72, \$35, \$20. Presented by Stirling Dance Theater. For tickets call Kauffman Center 816-994-7222 or www.storlingdance.org.

FAMILY OUTINGS

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT: THE MGM YEARS. Through February 15. Quality Hill Playhouse, 303 W.

■ calendar continued on next page

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Wornall Campus Fellowship Hall
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Call 866-744-7287 or email usa@sat7.org to register.
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MAR 6 **UNDERGROUND, 7:30 P.M. AT THE KAUFFMAN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, 1601 BROADWAY, KANSAS CITY, MO. FOR TICKETS OR INFORMATION, CALL 816-994-7222.**

10th St., Kansas City, MO. An original cabaret revue dedicated to songs made famous by the movies of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. 816-421-1700.

FOOD COLLECTION AT THE ICE. Through February 17. The Ice at Park Place, 11551 Ash St., Leawood, KS. Offering \$1 off admission when you bring a canned or non-perishable food item for the JFS Food Pantry. www.parkplaceleawood.com 913-451-4600.

WAR & ART. Through February, 18. National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial, 100 W. 26th Street, Kansas City, MO 64108. During the First World War even Italy's historical and artistic heritage became powerful propaganda tool for the country affected by the war. The art and beauty destroyed during air raids or land battles were further proof of the "enemy's barbarity". 816-888-8100.

DESERT IN BLOOM CONSERVATORY EXHIBIT. Through February 22. Powell Gardens, 1609 NW U.S. Highway 50, Kingsville, MO 64061. This fascinating exhibit features cacti and succulents from plant families ranging from the daisy, lily, and milkweed families to orchids and beyond. 816-697-2600.

REMODEL+GARDEN SHOW. February 6, 10:00 am-9:00 pm; February 7, 10:00 am-9:00 pm; and February 8, 10:00 am-6:00 pm. The American Royal Center, 1701 American Royal Court (18th & Genessee), Kansas City, MO 64102. Adults \$10, Adults (online) \$8, Children Ages 12 & under Free. www.americanroyal.com.

JIM BRICKMAN WITH THE KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY. February 13-14. Helzberg Hall Kauffman Center, 1601 Broadway, Kansas City, MO 64108. 816-471-0400

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST PUPPET SHOW. February 14 & 16, 11:00 am. Puppetry Arts Institute, 11025 E Winner Rd., Independence, MO 64052. A timeless classic told with marionettes. 11:00 and 2:00 showings both Saturday and Monday. 816-833-9777.

CELTIC THUNDER ANNOUNCES. February 20, 7:30 pm. Midland Theatre, 1228 Main St., Kansas City, MO.

WINTER ON THE FARM. February 21, 10:00 am. Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop & Farm, 1200 Kansas City Road, Olathe, KS 66061. Living history admission applies, \$6/adults, \$4/children ages 5-11. Olathe residents receive \$1/off admission. 1860's winter living history activities may include sawing wood, sausage making, blacksmith & cookstove demonstrations and stagecoach rides (weather and ground conditions permitting). No registration required. 913-971-5111.

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN. February 27-March 15. The Barn Players, 6219 Martway, Mission, KS. Friday evenings February 27, March 6 and 13 at 7:30 pm. Saturday evenings February 28, March 7 and 14, at 7:30 pm. Sunday matinees March 1, 8, and 15 at 2:00 pm. This high-flying musical follows the adventures of Frank Abagnale, Jr., a teenager who ran away from home in search of the good life. Rated PG. 913-432-9100.

CARMEN, OR DON'T CRY FOR ME MARTIN. February 28-May 3. Martin City Melodrama, 20700 W 151st St., Kansas City, MO. 913-642-7576.

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS SQUARE DANCE LESSONS. March 4, 7:00 pm. Countryside Christian Church, 1601 Nall Ave., Mission, KS. The flying squares are looking for Youthful, highly energetic Couples, Singles and Families for fast pace square dance lessons. Lessons will last 10 weeks. Dance to modern music in a smoke free, alcohol free and family friendly environment. 816-836-7496.

OUT OF THE BLUE: MORPHOS IN MARCH. March 7-31, 10:00 am-4:00 pm. Powell Gardens, 1609 NW US Hwy 50, Kingsville, MO 64061. Admission is \$10/adults, \$4/children ages 5-12 and free for Friends of Powell Gardens. Timed to coincide with spring breaks across the area, the exhibit also will include hands-on learning about rainforest and butterfly conservation both locally and around the world. 816-697-2600.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

BUILDING BETTER MOMS. The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, 13720 Roe Ave., Leawood, KS. For local mothers of children in early childhood, elementary school, middle school, high school, and for single moms, with both day and evening meeting

times available at the Leawood campus. www.cor.org 913-897-0120.

WEEKLY - CHRISTIAN BUSINESS MEN'S COMMITTEE meets weekly in various parts of the city. Call Jim Mathis, 913-269-6709, for time and location.

WEEKLY - FAITH BASED 12-STEP PROGRAM OF RECOVERY FROM COMPULSIVE OVEREATING. Call Overeater's Anonymous 913-383-5933 or visit www.kansascityoa.org for more information and to access the schedule of various meetings in the metro area.

MONTHLY - MISSOURI RIGHT TO LIFE CHAPTERS 816-353-4113; KANSANS FOR LIFE CHAPTERS 913-268-8486.

DIVORCECARE AND DIVORCECARE4KIDS. Sundays, 6-7:30 p.m. Help for those going through or having gone through divorce. Timothy Lutheran Church, 425 NW RD Mize Road, Blue Springs, MO. 816-228-5300.

2ND & 4TH SUN. - METRO CITIZEN'S COALITION. 2:30 pm. Trails West Library, 11401 E. 23rd, Independence, MO. Free. Open to public. Rear parking & entrance. 816-781-6394.

3RD SUNDAY. CANCER SUPPORT GROUP. 6:30-8:00 pm. Beacon Free Baptist Church, 10825 E. 79th Street, Raytown, MO 64138. Connect with others who share your journey, you are not alone. 816-353-7447.

MON. - JOB TERMINATION SUPPORT GROUP. 7PM. Christ's Church, 5500 W. 91st St., (91st & Nall), OPKS. If you've been laid off or terminated and are looking for peer support please join us. We pray for each other and are doing readings from "Battlefield of the Mind". 913-648-2271.

1ST MON. - CHRISTIAN BUSINESS CONNECTIONS NETWORK. 9am. Country Club Café, 21911 W. 66th St., Shawnee, KS 66226. 913-441-2444.

2ND & 4TH MON. - MOPS. 9:30 a.m. MOPS. First Baptist Raytown, 10500 E 350 Highway, Raytown, MO Support groups for mothers of preschool-aged children. Offers creative activities, social events & learning opportunities. 816-353-1994.

2ND & 4TH MON. - JOB LOSS SUPPORT. 9-10am. Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 7851 W. 119th St., OPKS. 913-381-1285.

TUES. - FEAR NOT SUPPORT GROUP. 7pm. New Summit Presbyterian Church, 1800 NE Independence Ave., Lee's Summit, MO. Support group for anxiety and depression.

TUES. - CELEBRATE RECOVERY. 7pm. Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 7851 W. 119th St., OPKS. Christ centered 12-step program for anyone with addictions, compulsions, dysfunctional behaviors and other needs. Contact Craig Hauser, 913-449-7265.

TUES. - HURT, HABIT OR HANG-UP. 7pm. Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 7851 W. 119th St., OPKS. 913-449-7265.

TUES. - CHRISTIAN MUSIC NIGHT. 7 - 9 pm. Skate World, I-35 & Shawnee Mission Parkway, Mission, KS.

913-262-0711.

1ST TUES. - CREATION SCIENCE ASSN. FOR MID-AMERICA. 7 p.m., Westbrooke Church, 9777 Antioch, OPKS. Nursery available for fee. "Creation Safari's". www.csama.org for more info. Res. req. 816-618-3610.

1ST & 3RD TUESDAY. - GRIEF SHARE. 7-8:30pm. Timothy Lutheran Ministries, 425 NW RD Mize Rd., Blue Springs, MO. 816-228-5300.

1ST & 3RD TUESDAY. MOPS & MOMS NEXT. 10am. Roanoke Baptist Church, 3950 Wyoming St., KCMO. Call or email Bo Price for info. pastor@roanokebaptist.org or 816-561-4932.

2ND TUES. - CHRISTIAN BUSINESS CONNECTIONS NETWORK. 1:30pm. East Side Baptist Church, 19901 E. 78 Hwy, Indep., MO 64057. 816-796-0955.

2ND TUESDAY, MOPS. 6:30 p.m. Emmanuel Baptist Church, 10100 Metcalf Ave., OPKS. 913-649-0900.

2ND TUESDAY - EQUIPPING BELIEVERS MID-WEST. 7:00 pm. Blue Spring, La Quinta Inn, 3402 NW Jefferson St., Blue Springs, MO 64015. Free Prayer for healing and freedom from addiction, Free training to heal the sick, evangelize the lost, set the oppressed free. 913-488-6749.

2ND & 4TH TUESDAY. "WINGS OF HOPE." Blue Springs Christian Church, 7920 S. 7 Hwy, Blue Springs, MO. A Christian based ministry to provide support for families grieving loss through miscarriage or infant death, because every life matters. Email: wingsofhope@bscc.org 816-210-4594.

2ND & 4TH TUESDAY, MOPS. 9 a.m. Emmanuel Baptist Church, 10100 Metcalf Ave., OPKS. 913-649-0900

3RD TUESDAY, LUNCH & LEARN. 12:00 pm. KC First Church of Nazarene, 11811 State Line Rd. Kansas City, MO 64114. Each session will focus on a different geographical area or skill set. Please bring your own sack lunch; desserts and beverages will be provided. 816-942-9022.

TUESDAY AND THURSDAY, LIFE PERKS COFFEE HOUSE, 7:30-11:30AM, inside First Baptist Church, 125 N. Armstrong, Pleasant Hill, MO. 816-540-5872.

WEEKLY - LIVING FREE, CHRIST-CENTERED 12 STEP PROGRAM. Every Wednesday, Room 6, 6:30-8:15. Abundant Life Baptist Church, 414 SW Persels, LS, MO. 816-554-8181.

WEDNESDAYS - GRIEF SHARE. 6:30pm. Summit Woods Baptist Church, 2501 SE Shenandoah Dr., Lee's Summit, MO 64063. A ministry that assists those who have suffered loss through the death of a loved one. 816-525-8215.

WEDNESDAYS - BREAK TIME CLUB. 9:30am-2:30pm. Timothy Lutheran Church, 425 NW R.D. Mize Rd., Blue Springs, MO 64014. Enriching environment for older adults with mental and/or physical limitation. \$10 donation. 816-228-5300.

WEDNESDAYS - AL-ANON FAMILY GROUP. 11:30am-12:30pm. 601 E. Oak St., Pleasant Hill, MO (please use North basement entrance off Myrtle Street). Are you troubled by someone else's drinking?

WEDNESDAYS - CELEBRATE RECOVERY. 6:30 p.m. at First Baptist Raytown, 100500 E. 350 Hwy., Raytown, MO. Please enter through the rock entrance. Meet in room B-116. For info call: 816-778-1156 or www.firstbaptistraytown.com

WEDNESDAYS - CATCH THE FIRE SOAKING PRAYER CENTER. 7-9pm. 816-804-8283.

WEDNESDAYS - DELIVERANCE - BREAKING CURSES WORKSHOP. First Love Ministries Church, 4747 Hadley St., Overland Park. 7 p.m. 913-403-9644. Call Tues. - Fri. after 1 p.m.

2ND WED. - LEE'S SUMMIT WOMEN'S PRAYER CONNECTION. 9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. In a comfortable setting, we get to know each other better and take time to pray (silently or audibly) for our nation, families, Lee's Summit Women's Connection, and our na-

■ calendar continued on next page

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tional organization. Call Millie Mathews for meeting location: 816-537-9898.

2ND WED. COFFEE CONNECT. 6:30 pm. IHOPU, 12901 S. US Highway, Grandview, MO 64030. An informal gathering with believers from different spheres of influence. www.ihopekc.org/josephcompany.

3RD WED. - CHRISTIAN BUSINESS CONNECTIONS NETWORK. 3pm. Gusto! Coffee, 3390 SW Fascination Dr., Lee's Summit, MO 64081. 816-767-1100.

4TH WED - SOUTH KANSAS CITY AGLOW. 9:30 a.m. Grandview Assembly of God Church, 12400 Grandview Rd., Grandview, MO. 816-761-5739.

LAST WED. CHRISTIAN LEGAL SOCIETY LUNCHEON. Noon. Levy & Craig, 1301 Oak, KCMO. First time guest free. \$10. 816-559-2173.

THURS. - HEALING SERVICES. 7 p.m. Christian Assembly of God Church, 17310 E 40 Hwy., Independence, MO. Spon. by Royal Priesthood Global

Ministries. 816-220-1914. If you need encouragement or prayer, you are welcome!

THURSDAYS. PARENTS OF PRODIGALS. 7pm. Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, I-35 & 291, Liberty, MO. Free and open to the community. Support group for parents of children of any age who have strayed from God and/or family. 816-781-5959.

THURSDAYS. DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, BIPOLAR SUPPORT GROUP. 7pm. Pleasant Valley Baptist, 1600 N. 291 Hwy, Liberty, MO. 816-781-5959.

THURSDAYS. CELEBRATE RECOVERY MEETING. 7-9pm. Life Church, 16111 S. Lone Elm Rd., Olathe, KS 66062. 913-829-7511.

THURSDAYS. REAL MEN ROCK. 7-8:30pm. Vineyard Church, 9777 Antioch Rd., OPKS. We will have a sign with a phone # on the front door if you arrive after 7pm. www.ourchurch.com/member/r/REAL_Men_Rock/. 913-636-1862.

THURSDAYS. ENCOUNTER. 7:30 pm. KC First Church of the Nazarene, 11811 State Line Rd., Kansas City, MO 64114. College students and young adults meet at KC First Church of the Nazarene for a time of prayer, reflection, Bible study, and fellowship. Contact Pastor Audrey Landers for more information at alanders@kfcf.org. 816-942-9022.

1ST THURS. - MOMS IN ACTION. Abundant Life Baptist Church, Room 1, 414 SW Persles Rd., Lee's Summit, MO. A group of encouraging Moms getting together to grow and serve Christ. 7-9pm. albcmomsinaction@gmail.com.

1ST THURS. - CITYWIDE PRAYER MOVEMENT. Colonial Presbyterian Church, 9500 Wornall Rd., KCMO, 7:00 a.m. 816-217-5679.

1ST THURS. - HEART OF AMERICA CHRISTIAN WRITERS' NETWORK (HACWN). Evangel Temple, 1414 E 103rd St., KCMO. \$3 members, \$5 nonmembers. Evangel Temple-816-942-1414.

1ST & 3RD THURS. - NEW HOPE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP. 6:30-8:30pm. Liberty Manor Baptist Church, Birmingham Rd., Liberty, MO. This group offers a safe and confidential environment to share your



FEB 21

WINTER ON THE FARM. 10:00 AM. MAHAFFIE STAGECOACH STOP & FARM, 1200 KANSAS CITY ROAD, OLATHE, KS. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL 913-971-5111.

hope, struggles, and feelings of your cancer journey with others who understand. 816-217-5813.

2ND THURS. - FIBROMYALGIA SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS. Countryside Christian Church, 6101 Nall Ave., Mission, KS. Meeting have been canceled. Seeking support group leader. Call 913-384-4673.

2ND & 4TH THURS. MOPS. 9 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. (Mothers of Preschoolers) Overland Park First Assembly of God, 7700 W 75th Street, OP, KS. A relaxed time of fellowship, encouragement, and support for mothers of children from infants to kindergarten. Childcare provided. Brunch served. RSVP apprec. 913-432-3281 or opagmops@gmail.com

2ND & 4TH THURS. - ARCHDIOCESAN CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP, 7:30 pm at Cure of Ars, Vianney Center, 9401 Mission Rd, Leawood. Fellowship follows. 913-649-2026.

3RD THURS. - AFTERCARE PROGRAM, Life Group meetings. All past participants are encouraged to at-

tend for a time of fellowship. For more information or if you would like to volunteer to help please contact Lori, 816-847-2911. Spon. by If Not For GRACE Ministries. Committed to healing after an abortion.

3RD THURS. - HEALING MASS, Council for Charismatic Renewal, 7:30 pm, Cure of Ars Church, Father Burak Room, 9401 Mission Rd, Leawood. 913-649-2026.

3RD THURS.- NKC WOMEN'S CONNECTION. Maple Woods Community College- Campus Center Building. 2601 NE Barry Rd, KCMO. 6 p.m. \$10. Free Nursery. By Reservation Only. Call Judy: 816-222-4493.

3RD THURS. - GLUTEN FREE GROUP. 7pm. Fireplace Room, Timothy Lutheran Church, 425 NW R.D. Mize Rd., Blue Springs, MO. 816-228-5300.

3RD THURSDAY - FOOD DISTRIBUTION BY HARVESTER'S. 4:00 pm. Fort Osage Church of the Nazarene, 19333 E. 24 Hwy, Independence, MO 64056. 816-796-5879.

4TH THURS. - CHRISTIAN BUSINESS CONNECTIONS NETWORK. 1:30pm. Panera Bread, 151st & I-35, 20120 W. 153rd St., Olathe, KS. 913-397-8383.

LAST THURS. - TRANSPLANT SUPPORT GROUP, 6:30pm. Osawatomie Wesleyan Church, 406 4th St., Osawatomie, KS. For anyone who has had an organ transplant or their family members, anyone awaiting a transplant, anyone who has been a donor, or anyone who is the relative a deceased donor. 913-755-3453.

FRIDAYS - CELEBRATE RECOVERY MEETINGS. 7:00 pm. New Hope Church of the Nazarene, 4330 N. Oak Trafficway, Kansas City, MO 64116. 12 steps program for all life's hurts, hang-ups and habits.

FRIDAYS - BIZZBIZ CONNECT, 8:30am. City Union Mission's Chambers Room, 1100 E. 11th St., KCMO 64106. Enter through the double glass doors on the far right. www.biz2bizconnect.com. 816-474-9380.

FRIDAYS - REFORMERS UNANIMOUS, 7PM. 901 E. 23rd St., Indep., MO. Faith based addictions program (any and all addictions). 816-252-3268.

FRIDAYS - CELEBRATE RECOVERY, A CHRIST CENTERED RECOVERY MINISTRY. 7-9 p.m. Crossroads Christian Church, 5855 Renner Road, Shawnee, KS. Childcare prov. 913-669-2088.

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(from left) Jim Daly, Focus On The Family; Chuck Swindoll, Insight For Living; John MacArthur, Grace To You; June Hunt, Hope In The Night; Alistair Begg, Truth For Life; Tony Evans, The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans; James MacDonald, Walk In The Word; David Jeremiah, Turning Point; Adrian Rogers, Love Worth Finding; Crawford Loritts, Legacy Moment; And More! Visit BBN Online for Program Schedule.

Food for Thought: Four rules to get you through your health and fitness journey

It's February.

That means you're either one month into your new year's resolution of losing that weight for good or you're on the brink of giving up – if you haven't already.

Well, I've been there more times than I like to admit.

Like you, I resolved to shed the extra pounds and nix the empty calories in trade for fruits, veggies and lean meats.

While I'm nowhere near perfect in my practice of getting down to my goal weight, I've learned a few secrets that I'm pretty sure are going to carry me through the finish line.

RULE #1: Recognize that this journey is spiritual.

From the beginning of time, food has been the issue pertaining to humanity's purpose and fulfillment of God's will.

Think about it.

The entire downfall of man came by – wait for it – an apple? I like to think Adam and Eve didn't sacrifice immortality for such a simple fruit, so let's just say it was something a bit more exotic. Like a mango. Or pomegranate. Papaya, even.

Fast forward to the wilderness where the Israelites wandered for nearly half a century.

One of the biggest lessons in self-control came through the use of food. God rained down manna from heaven, instructing them to gather only enough for that day. Except for Saturdays. Then, they could gather enough for two days.

We're all familiar with the Daniel's fast – a strict diet God used to propel Daniel into his high place at the palace.

The list goes on, you know, and includes Jesus Himself.

But, here, we have three very key figures whose purpose, will power and obedience was tested by food.

So, what makes you think food isn't going to be the very thing that is used to test you?

RULE #2: The Religion/Relationship Paradigm

Nicki, my personal trainer, was very clear: if I don't eat right, working out is ir-



KHARISSA FORTE
Metro Voice

sisterskeeper

relevant and my workouts will be based on my diet.

In other words, I am in persistent practice of what will bring me the physical results I desire as it's based upon my relationship with food.

And, it's like that in our personal walks with Christ, too.

As believers, we should be in persistent practice of what will bring us the spiritual results we desire as it's based upon our relationship with the Bread of Life.

Just like working out without eating healthy doesn't make us fit, we can get so caught up in the day-to-day habitual activity of religion that our relationship falls to the wayside.

We have to remember that it's relationship first, religion second. Food first. Workouts second.

RULE #3: Don't lift more than God intended!

It was strength training day. God knows I hate strength training days, but for some reason Nicki believed it was necessary. Following her ACSM certified expertise, I submitted.

We didn't use any dumbbells or equipment. My strength training was solely based on my own body weight.

By the end of the workout, I was spent! I remember Nicki looking at me and saying, "See, Kharissa, you can use your own weight and get the results you want."

Sometimes, we pick up more weight than God intended for us to when we can use the weight He's already given us to grow.

Have you ever seen a woman who seemed so super have breakdown? Maybe you've been that girl that has put so much weight on her bar that eventually her arms just can't handle all the pressure anymore.

This is when I tell you that it's okay to say, "No."

It's not about not going the extra mile or not being there for someone in need. It's about handling the weight that God gave you. By lifting more weight than He intended, we get burned out, suffer unnecessary injuries, and find ourselves nursing muscle tears that He never planned for us to endure.

Once we get a good balance and strengthen different muscles in life to a certain point, the time will come where we can add on some weight by taking on additional responsibilities or work out a new muscle group all together.

But, all of that has to be on God's timing and say so. Not ours.

RULE #4: Discover your own plan.

At the beginning of last year, my brother-in-law went on a juice cleanse. And he lost 60 pounds. Sixty!

Quite naturally, I was like, "Sign me up! Get me the book! Where do I join?"

Despite multiple attempts, I failed time after time.

After Nicki started training me, I shared the details of the cleanse with her. She thought it was great and was super excited for my brother-in-law, but she had a different plan for me.



Guess what? The plan actually worked. I remember thinking, Why am I so dedicated to this plan, but couldn't do my brother-in-law's?

The answer lied in my question: my plan was my plan.

So often, we get caught up in looking at everyone else's plan that we fail to realize what our personal trainer has created just for us.

Next thing you know, we're not just looking at everyone else's plan, we're trying them out, too. In doing so, we find ourselves battling bitterness, resentment and jealousy because what worked for them isn't working for us.

If we can just keep our eyes focused on Christ, we can all reach our goals successfully.

It doesn't matter if you're a single mom,

homemaker or working wife. So long as you're walking in God's purpose, it's silly to try to mimic the design God created for someone else.

Likewise, it's just as silly to try to convince our sisters-in-Christ that they need to do what we're doing. There is a huge difference between offering advice and deterring others from God's plan.

Another silly thing we do: accusing each other of being copy cats. I wonder if Beth Moore ever told Priscilla Shirer, "I already write books for Christian women."

Or if Matthew West told Chris Tomlin, "Hey, I've got this contemporary praise thing on lock, thanks."

Just because the plan God has for our lives falls into the same genre, it doesn't mean that our purpose isn't individualized. Besides, the goal is the same: give the gospel, bring Him glory.

So, in your own journey – be it physical or spiritual – remember to stay focused on the plan God gave you. Not what everyone else is doing.

Not what everyone else says you should be doing.

Follow these four rules and I'm certain you'll be beach body ready come summer.

Stay strong!

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'AMERICAN SNIPER' FAITH EVIDENT IN BOOK

THERE'S FAITH IN THE 'AMERICAN SNIPER' YOU WON'T SEE FULLY IN THE FILM

entertainment

by Sarah Pulliam Bailey

Chris Kyle, often described as the most lethal sniper in U.S. military history, wrote in his autobiography that he prioritized his life in the following order: God, country, family.

But God doesn't make a central appearance in the film "American Sniper,"

which broke long-standing box office

records when it opened in wide release Jan. 16. The film offers a few similarities to "Unbroken," Angelina Jolie's recent World War II epic about POW Louis Zamperini.

Both stories focus on the dramatic stories of warriors who were later regarded as American war heroes. Both "American Sniper" and "Unbroken" include an early scene of their families sitting in church. Both men struggle with substance abuse after returning from war.

And while both films have been applauded in and out of the faith community, they both largely skirt the faith that Kyle and Zamperini said were key to their identity — and their survival.

As a Navy SEAL, Kyle recorded 160 kill shots during his four tours in Iraq. His story drew national attention after the release of his 2012 autobiography "American Sniper: The Autobiography of the Most Lethal Sniper in U.S. Military History," which enjoyed a 37-week run on The New York Times' best-seller list.

The Clint Eastwood-directed biopic starring Bradley Cooper debuted with a limited release on Christmas Day, the same day "Unbroken" opened nationwide.

Kyle opened his book by probing the ethics of combat as he wrote about his first sniper shot, when he had to kill an Iraqi woman holding a grenade.

"My shots saved several Americans, whose lives were clearly worth more than that woman's twisted soul," he wrote. "I can stand before God with a clear conscience about doing my

job. But I truly, deeply hated the evil that woman possessed. I hate it to this day."

In the film adaptation, Kyle is visibly moved by his first shot and later mentions meeting his maker and justifying each shot he took.

He writes that he spent a lot of time praying during difficult times.

Kyle was no straight-laced believer. His book (and now movie) is filled with the profanities common in military culture and the stories of his family struggles. Both are gritty and realistic accounts of human behavior. But faith is nonetheless woven throughout the book.

"I was raised with, and still believe in, the Christian faith. If I had to order my priorities, they would be God, country, family," Kyle wrote. "There might be some debate on where those last two fall — these days I've come around to believe that Family may, under some circumstances, outrank country. But it's a close race."

The God, country, family line is mentioned in passing in the film after another soldier asks Kyle if he believes in God. "There's evil," Cooper says. "We've seen it."

In the film, Kyle is shown putting his Bible in the pocket of his uniform.

"I'm not the kind of person who makes a big show out of religion," Kyle writes in the book. "I believe, but I don't necessarily get down on my knees or sing real loud in church. But I find some comfort in faith, and I found it in those days after my friends had been shot up. Ever since I had gone through BUD/S (SEAL training), I'd carried a Bible with me. I hadn't read it all that much, but it had always been with me. Now I opened it and read some of the passages. I skipped around, read a bit, skipped around some more. With all hell breaking loose around me, it felt better to know I was part of something bigger."



In his book, Kyle wrote about how his family shaped his faith during his upbringing.

"My family had a deep faith in God. My dad was a deacon, and my mom taught Sunday school," Kyle wrote. "I remember a stretch when I was young when we would go to church every Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday evening. Still we didn't consider ourselves overly religious, just good people who believed in God and were involved in our church. Truth is, back then, I didn't like going a lot of the time."

Islam is mentioned a few times in his book, though the faith doesn't have a starring role in the film except when Kyle is asked to defend a shot after a wife claimed the victim was carrying a Quran. In his book, Kyle writes that he told an Army colonel: "I don't shoot people with Korans. I'd like to, but I don't."

The Muslim call to prayer appears twice in the film, but it doesn't probe the differences between Sunnis and Shiites the way Kyle does in his book.

A 2013 New Yorker profile mentions Kyle's faith as a deep motivator in his work: "Like many soldiers, Kyle was

deeply religious and saw the Iraq War through that prism," journalist Nicholas Schmidle wrote.

"He tattooed one of his arms with a red crusader's cross, wanting 'everyone to know I was a Christian.'"

Stories of Kyle's shootings earned him the nickname "Legend."

"I don't spend a lot of time philosophizing about killing people. I have a clear conscience about my role in the war. I am a strong Christian. Not a perfect one — not close."

"But I strongly believe in God, Jesus, and the Bible. When I die, God is going to hold me accountable for everything I've done on earth. He may hold me back until last and run everybody else through the line, because it will take so long to go over all my sins."

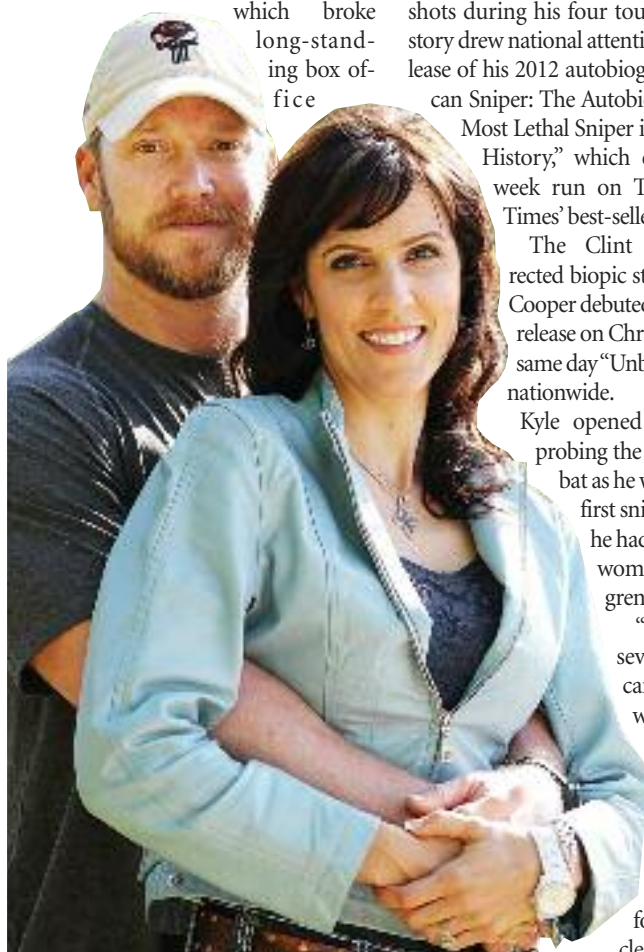
Kyle also wrote that he didn't know what would happen on Judgment Day.

"But what I lean toward is that you know all of your sins, and God knows them all, and shame comes over you at the reality that He knows. I believe the fact that I've accepted Jesus as my savior will be my salvation," he wrote.

"But in that backroom or whatever it is when God confronts me with my sins, I do not believe any of the kills I had during the war will be among them. Everyone I shot was evil. I had good cause on every shot. They all deserved to die."

"I believe the fact that I've accepted Jesus as my Savior will be my salvation."

Chris Kyle



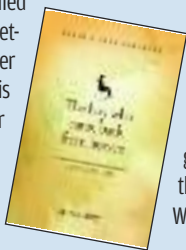
The real life Chris Kyle with wife Taya.

entertainmentbriefs

TYNDALE HOUSE AGREES TO PULL BOOK AFTER ADMISSION

(WNS)—After Alex Malarkey, the so-called "boy who went to heaven," issued a public letter this week recanting his story, his publisher announced it will take the book based on his experience out of print. Christian publisher Tyndale House confirmed the decision last month in a statement to The Washington Post. Lifeway, the Christian retailer owned by the Southern Baptist Convention, made a similar move earlier, agreeing to pull the book from its shelves at the request of Malarkey and his mother, Beth.

The Boy Who Came Back From Heaven was published in 2010 and claims to tell the true story of Alex Malarkey's visit to heaven while in a coma following an accident that left him paralyzed from the neck down. He was 6 years old at the time. Malarkey's father, Kevin, wrote the book and shares a byline



with his son, who is now 16 years old. In his brief letter, posted on the Pulpit and Pen, Alex Malarkey said he made his claims about heaven because he wanted to get attention.

STARS LINE UP FOR SERIES

Actors from several big Hollywood productions and TV shows, including "Star Wars," "Lord of the Rings," "The Chronicles of Narnia," and "Downton Abbey" have come together in a children's audio theater series looking to examine the Christian beliefs of 14th century Scottish hero William Wallace, made famous by Mel Gibson's 1995 "Braveheart" film.

"Everything in our world is sort of sterilized and secularized, and the faith of the men has been taken out of textbooks in America and around the world," said executive producer Bill Heid in a press release. "These projects are all about putting Christ back into history."

The stars attached to the project, titled "In Freedom's Cause," include Golden Globe winner Joanne Froggatt (Anna Bates of "Downton Abbey"), Billy Boyd (Pippin of "The

Lord Of The Rings"), Skandar Keynes (Edmund of "The Chronicles of Narnia" series), James Cosmo (Campbell, Father Christmas of "Braveheart" and "The Chronicles of Narnia," respectively) and Brian Blessed (Boss Nass and Clayton in "Star Wars: The Phantom Menace" and "Tarzan," respectively).

KENTUCKY SINKS NOAH'S ARK TOURISM TAX INCENTIVES

(WNS)—Kentucky officials withdrew a state tax incentive package in December for a Christian nonprofit building a replica of Noah's ark, claiming the rebate violated the principle of church-state separation.

Answers in Genesis (AIG), an apologetics ministry, plans to build an 800-acre theme park centered around a life-sized Noah's ark in Williamstown, Ky.

The organization also runs the Creation Museum near Petersburg, Ky., located 20 miles west of Cincinnati, Ohio. Almost 2.3 million people have visited the museum since it opened in

2007. Due in part to its success, AIG started construction earlier this year on the Ark Encounter theme park, which is expected to bring hundreds of jobs to the area. The project also will feature an ancient city, live animals, and a Tower of Babel replica. AIG sought approval to participate in Kentucky's tax-incentive program designed to draw tourism to the Bluegrass State.

The program allows tourist attractions to recover up to 25 percent of their development costs by refunding the sales tax they collect for the first 10 years of operation. In 2011, AIG received initial approval from the Kentucky Tourism



Man awakens after 12 years in coma, says he was aware of 'everything'

Book shares story of his mind being "trapped" in his body

by **Laurice Chavez**



Martin at 14 before he entered complete coma for 12 years.

For over a decade, Martin Pistorius was locked in his body, unable to move, communicate, or even make eye contact. Doctors expected that he would die.

But after 12 years in a coma, Pistorius miraculously came back. Now 39 years old and married, he said he was "aware of everything just like any normal person" almost the whole time that he seemed dead to the world.

"Yes, I was there, not from the very beginning, but about two years into my vegetative state, I began to wake up," said Pistorius, who now lives in Harlow, England, NPR reports.

But although he was mentally pres-

ent, he could not move and give any indications that he was there.

"Everyone was so used to me not being there that they didn't notice when I began to be present again," he said. "The stark reality hit me that I was going to spend the rest of my life like that—totally alone."

In 1987 when he was a typical 12-year-old in South Africa, Pistorius contracted an illness that baffled doctors. He slipped into a mysterious coma that was suspected to be due to cryptococcal meningitis.

According to his website, he first "lost his voice and stopped eating," and then "within eighteen months he was mute and wheelchair-bound." Doctors told his parents that "an unknown degenerative disease had left him with the mind of a baby and with a poor prognosis for survival."

But though he was in a vegetative state for so long, his parents did not cease to care for him.

His father Rodney would get up at 5 every morning to dress him and bring him to the care center, where oftentimes he would be placed in front of the television all day to watch Barney reruns.

"I cannot even express to you how much I hated Barney," Martin admitted.

At the end of the day, his father would bathe him, feed him, and tuck

■ See BOOK page 21

Matt Maher on music, fatherhood, and Christ

Popular contemporary Christian musician talks about how becoming a dad changed his view of the gospel

by **Warren Cole Smith**

(WNS)--Matt Maher was born and raised in Canada. He is a practicing Roman Catholic who has seen widespread acceptance in evangelical circles, receiving three Dove Award nominations and one win. His first major label album, *Empty & Beautiful*, came out in 2008. That album and all three subsequent albums have made the Billboard Top 200 secular album chart, making him one of the few Christian artists ever to accomplish that. I had this conversation with him recently before while he was preparing to perform at Pregnancy Resource Center's annual banquet.

You're a Canadian. You were born in Newfoundland. You came down here to the United States to go to college, right? My parents got separated, and I moved to Arizona to finish my degree in music. I wanted to go to Los Angeles and do film scoring at UCLA, but I ended up going to church instead and got involved in ministry.

You did get a degree in music. I got a degree in jazz performance in piano.

Were you, from the beginning, playing praise and worship music? Not at all. I grew up playing keyboards in a rock band. We played in bars, and we played covers and wrote originals. It was very contemporary rock music. When I moved to Arizona and picked up a guitar, I was learning how to play songs for youth groups and playing at coffee houses, but I was writing songs about girls and love and relationships. In 1999, I graduated from college, and I got offered a full-time job at this Catholic parish, St. Timothy's in Mesa, Ariz. I saw part of my job being that I wanted to write songs. Obviously, being somebody who loves modern music, that influences your songwriting. Then, in particular, I heard the music of Delirious? in the late '90s, and that and the music of Passion. I was the same age as those guys. It made me realize that it was possible.

I didn't know how this was all going to work. Out of a sense of service—that I was working at a church and I was trying to write songs that helped articulate my faith and the faith of the young people I was serving—I started writing songs.

How's has marriage changed your life? Marriage and parenthood have fundamentally changed my understanding of the gospel. It's rooted in a greater sense of what commitment and unconditional love really, practically looks like.

Case in point: My wife has a cold, so I put our kids down last night, thought I cleaned up the kitchen, and left the house and went to bus call. She had sent me a text saying, "Hey, can you be sure



and let the dog out before you leave?" I didn't do that. There were dishes left in the sink.

I was telling my band, "One of those days you just feel like, man, I totally failed today as dad, as a member of my team called my family," but that's the thing. She said, "It's okay. You have a lot on your mind and it's a lot to deal with." Then my kids—knowing my son's ability to be so thoughtfully present to some things and couldn't care less about other things has taught me a lot, much more about God's affection for me, I think, than anything else.

By that you mean that you can sometimes be thoughtfully present and sometimes really un-present with God? Absolutely. I think more so probably the second. I just love to hang out with my son and watch him just play. He's not doing anything meaningful. It's not like he's over there at 3 years old trying to discover the cure for cancer. He's just being a 3-year-old. I'm not saying that's an excuse for me as a 40-year-old man to act like a 3-year-old. It's more me saying that, whatever I'm doing in life, I think God's design is for us to be fully present and fully alive in those moments and to know that He takes joy in that. I think that my capacity for loving my kids, for extending grace to my kids, has taught me much more about the infinite love of God.

People say the problem with contemporary Christian music is that it's taken on too much of the trappings of the world. You have to be young and sexy to be in that world, and yet, here you are, Matt. How do you explain that? God has a great sense of humor. I was really inspired a couple of years ago. I actually was on tour with Don Moen, and he was a guy, what a legacy.

Don Moen founded Integrity Records, which was one of the earliest Christian music labels, and he's been at this for what, 40 years, 50 years? Yeah, it's been a long time. We were on a flight from Winnipeg to Vancouver. I was waiting on a flight, and one of the movies Air Canada had as part of it's free, on-demand service was a PBS documentary on the life of Frank Lloyd Wright. I watched it, and it was one of

the most inspiring things I'd watched in a long time. Most people don't realize that all the major contributions he made, he made in the back half of his life. When he did the Guggenheim he was, like, 91 years old or something.

What that spoke to me was volumes of this notion that if there's any place in the world where we should treasure and value the contributions of our elder statesmen, it's the church. You're right, in a sense, that there is some real tension right now. We're basically trying to put all our efforts into younger, more attractive, a little bit flashier. ... You know, we need the energy of the young and the wisdom of the old. That's really what we need, the church needs.

“ I think that my capacity for loving my kids, for extending grace to my kids, has taught me much more about the infinite love of God. ”

Tell me about your songwriting process. How do you write a song? Words first, then music? There's no rhyme or reason. I can't really tell my muse, "Only inspire me this way, please." My preferred way is getting a conceptual

idea. It's a lot like country music. Country music typically revolves around some sort of mechanism or lyrical twist, where the song's doing this, and there's this ironic turn.

In terms of writing worship music, I think, typically, there's always some idea or phrase. There's a little window of revelation. The song, "White Flag," which I wrote with a bunch of people, came with this image of looking at a white flag being a sign of surrender and thinking about how the cross, ultimately, is our sign of surrender. Yet, it's in that surrender that we find victory. For me, a big part of writing that song when I did was looking at this constant use of the phrase, "culture wars," and, "it's us versus them," and I'm just being exhausted and sick of it.

I don't want to fight my neighbor anymore, regardless of what they believe. Obviously, I want to stand for the right in a free society to have a Christian belief. Jesus said, "Love your neighbor." He didn't say, "Argue with your neighbor until you're right." I think that song was very much saying, our line in the sand is the cross and it's Jesus laying down his life and us finding victory in that defeat. That resurrection comes through a certain sense of resignation, and it's actually a healthy thing.

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The Rock & Worship Roadshow 2015 featuring MercyMe, Crowder, Matt Maher, Jamie Grace, Tedashii, Group 1 Crew, guest speaker Shaun Groves, and introducing I Am They and Jon Guerra will be coming to Springfield, Mo. on February 19. For only \$10, this is a great opportunity to hear some incredible music and spend a grand evening in worship and reflection.

The concert will be performed at the JQH Arena, 685 S. John Q. Hammons Parkway, Springfield MO. For more information, visit theroadshowtour.com.

Speaking of great entertainment, Crowder recently enjoyed his first, ever No. 1 hit single, "Come As You Are"! The song currently holds the top spot on the Christian Adult Contemporary (AC) Indicator chart, as well as a Top 10 spot on the National Christian Audience chart. "Come As You Are" has also been nominated for the Contemporary Christian Music Performance/Song category in the Grammy Awards, which means you may be seeing him at the 57th Grammy Awards, which he plans to attend.

The Grammy-nominated artist has

also decided to extend his Neon Steeple Tour this April to 13 more cities (as noted above, he'll be in Springfield on February 19th).

Rock band Hawk Nelson will be releasing their seventh studio album, Diamonds, on March 17. Released on Fair Trade Services, this is the second album released with the label, as well as with newest frontman, Jon Steingard. Announcing the release on their Facebook page, the band also introduced new members guitarist Micah Kuiper and drummer David Niagaris to the fold.

Their first single, "Drops In the Ocean," has gotten some good buzz from radio charts, including landing on the Billboard Christian National Christian Audience (NCA) chart at No. 21 and the Hot Adult Contemporary/Contemporary Hits Radio (AC/CHR) at No. 10 shortly after its release. "Drops In the Ocean" is also available for download, right now, on iTunes and Amazon.

Their second song unveiled, "Just Getting Started," has garnered attention after being used in promotion for American Idol during the 2014 World Series.

It was recently noted Warner Bros. had pulled the Christian music documentary "Hillsong – Let Hope Rise" from its April 1 slot. Speculation arose among fans and the media about why it was pulled. Originally scheduled to open worldwide on the pre-Easter date, when Alcon Entertainment bought rights to the movie, but was later stalled.



Warner Bros. has distributed Alcon's motion pictures for quite some time, according to Variety.com, "through the companies' long-term output distribution agreement."

The Australia-based band Christian worship band has sold more than 16 million albums, and a large following of fans worldwide. Directed by Michael John Warren and produced by Michael Weaver

of MediaWeaver Entertainment and Jonathan Bock of Grace Hill Media, the film follows the band as they tour five different continents and documents their sold-out performances across the world.

"It's a little weird and a lot humbling to have a movie made about us," singer/founder Joel Houston said about the project, "but we didn't say 'yes' to this to draw attention to ourselves. It's our hope that by sharing an up-close and unvarnished look inside our music and lives, we can shatter pre-conceived notions of what it means to follow Jesus in today's modern world."

Recently, a representative for Alcon said that the company was unable to close the rights deal for the movie. Hopefully, these issues can be resolved and the production will be seen by many in the not-too-distant future!

Last, Chris Tomlin will be coming to town, March 27, at the Independence Events Center, on his Love Ran Red Tour, promoting his tenth album. Joining Tomlin on tour will be Tenth Avenue North and Rend Collective.

The album features songs including "Waterfall," "Jesus Loves Me," and "At the Cross (Love Ran Red)," and has garnered much attention since being released.



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BOOK

continued from page 19

him to bed.

His parents also set the alarm to go off every 2 hours so they would be reminded to turn his body to help their son avoid getting bed sores.

At one point, after years of seeing her once-healthy son lie unmoving and unresponsive, his mother Joan desperately wished that he would die.

"The rest of the world felt so far away when she said those words," Martin said.

"I never felt angry with my parents as I knew they loved me and they did the best they could," he added. "But I felt furious about the situation. There were many times when I cried inside. I reached a point where I essentially gave up."

But after getting fed up with his situation and feeling "doomed," Pistorius decided to teach himself to control and reorient his thoughts. Later on, his body began to respond and make the tiniest movements.

According to Thought Catalog, his aromatherapist, Virna van der Walt, was able to detect his "virtually imperceptible smiles, gazes and nods" when he was 25.

He made his leap to progress when his parents brought him a computer with a software that allowed him to communicate.

Against all odds, the child who was no more than a vegetable



Martin with his wife Joanna

for years eventually graduated from college and was able to find employment in 2003. He married his girlfriend Joanna in 2009.

Speaking of his wife, Pistorius said, "It was she who has taught me to understand the true meaning of the Bible passage we were having read at the service: 'There are three things that will endure — faith, hope and love — and the greatest of these is love.'"

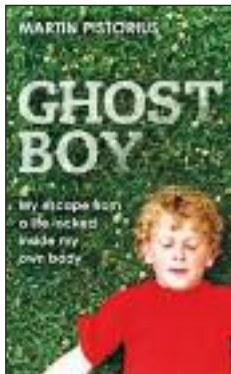
"My life has encompassed all three and I know the greatest of all is indeed love, in all its forms. I'd experienced it as a boy and

man, as a son, brother, grandson and friend, I'd seen it between others and I know it could sustain us through the darkest of times."

Pistorius's story is told in detail in NPR's program on human behaviour, Invisibilia, and in his book entitled Ghost Boy: My Escape from a Life Locked Inside My Own Body.

i moreinformation

www.martinpistorius.com



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QUESTIONS

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Are there any special policies/ rules/restrictions?

All venues will have a code of conduct, rules of admission, medical policies and other things you need to know about. For example, venues may forbid smoking anywhere on their grounds, may not allow pets or may impose curfews.

What is the food like?

Always ask whether or not food is provided and what the typical menu consists of. If there are people with special nutritional needs in the group, you have to know if the retreat venue can cater to those needs.

Some venues may have the answers to these questions on their websites, others may ask you to call one of their counselors. It helps to always plan well ahead: make the reservations as early as possible and communicate all your needs to the venue's staff before you arrive.

Special thanks to Lake Williamson of the Christian Retreats Network for sponsoring this article.

RECOVER

continued from page 8

those you love most. We often move at such a fast pace we fail to fully realize the wonder and beauty that confronts us on a daily basis. We often find ourselves feeling very tired, anxious and unable to love those around us like we want to. We were all created for connection and when these connections to our Creator and one another become frayed we are often left feeling like not enough butter spread over too much bread. In order to live the full (rather than just busy) lives God intends for us we need to regularly pause, slow down and allow our hearts to be refreshed.

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pace we fail to fully realize the wonder and beauty that confronts us on a daily basis. We often find ourselves feeling very tired, anxious and unable to love those around us like we want to. We were all created for connection and when these connections to our Creator and one another become frayed we are often left feeling like not enough butter spread over too much bread. In order to live the full (rather than just busy) lives God intends for us we need to regularly pause, slow down and allow our hearts to be refreshed.

Jamie Roach is Director of Christian Formation at Youthfront

STRATEGIES

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Tip #2 - Choose the right facility

Find out from potential participants in the retreat what type of facilities that they are expecting. Several questions to ask are the following:

■ What kind of accommodations do we want --- dorm rooms, motel type or "rustic" cabins with no plumbing or heat?

■ Do we want to cook for ourselves or have the meals provided? If we do our own cooking, is there an extra charge?

■ Do we want bathrooms in the cabins or are outside shower houses okay?

■ Do we want "roast beef" or a "tuna surprise"? In other words are we particular about the quality of the evening meal?

■ How much money do we want to spend, and more importantly, what is the group as a whole willing to spend?

Tip #3 - Plan a program to hold all interests

Plan a program inclusive of entertainment, musicians, and speakers. Make sure what you are planning fills interests and wants of the people that will be in attendance. Keep up with current trends and don't rely on those who tell you "this is the way we've always done it." Your first reaction to that would be to say "Well maybe that's why no one shows up anymore" (and make sure you have that sarcastic grin on your face if it goes to that extent).

Tip #4 - Money matters

Make sure that you have a sound budget for all this before presenting it to the board for approval. The first thing you want to do is figure out all your costs --- food, lodging, leasing the facility, fees for musicians and speakers, etc. Once you have this calculated, add another 20% to that to cover incidentals and anything that pops up later. When you are determining the cost per person to help cover all these expenses, work the numbers in reverse. In other words, let's say that the expenses will be \$10,000 and you are expecting 100 people. Normally that would equate to \$100 per person. Take that \$10,000 and divide it by 80 instead of 100, because for every 100 people that say they will show up, 20% of them won't. So now, you will advertise the retreat at \$125 per person instead of \$100 per person.

Tip #5 - Promote, promote, promote

Start advertising the retreat 3-4 months before hand. Have flyers printed for handouts and make sure they are in the foyer every time there is a service. Post bulletins on all the church ground bulletin boards and make sure that every bulletin that is printed has a blurb about the retreat. Here's another tip --- offer a discount on the price for early sign-ups. If you wind up losing another \$25 per person but instead of 80 people who sign up and attend it turns out to be 120 (@ \$100 each), that's \$12,000. The bill is paid and anything over and above can go into the church fund for activities and expenses down the road.

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■ "WOLVES CAN'T FLY"

continued from page 1

The first 5,000 copies of "Wolves Can't Fly" sold out quickly, and another 10,000 have been printed. All profits go to the ministry Character That Counts (www.characterthatcountsgs.org).

Before the accident, Meers had a colorful career as a mascot for nearly 30 years. After growing up in St. Charles, Mo., he attended the University of Missouri. As Truman Tiger, he was selected the No. 1 college mascot in the nation in 1989. He also had a stint as a backup Fredbird the Redbird before joining the Chiefs.

Game days are only a small part of his workload. Meers has made more than 8,000 public appearances over the years. He has long been known for his pregame antics at Arrowhead and decided to take them to the next level for Military Appreciation Day during the 2013 season.

"The plan for my pregame entrance was to have KC Wolf, dressed in Army fatigues, jump out of the lights at the top of the stadium and zip line down to the field," he said. "The zip line attached to the lights above the press box on the south side of the stadium. It then stretched all the way across the field to the north side and connected to the huge steel beams that connected another bank of lights. The zip line hung 260 feet above the field."

As if that weren't enough of a challenge,

he decided to begin the entrance by jumping off the lights on a 20-foot bungee cord. Meers practiced the stunt on the crisp Saturday afternoon of Nov. 23. As soon as he jumped, he knew something was wrong.

"I was supposed to free fall about 20 feet, and then the bungee cord would bounce me back up and I would begin so zip line out over the football field," he said. "However, instead of falling 20 feet, I fell 75 feet. I hit the seats so hard that I knocked two of them out of the concrete where they were mounted. The bungee pulled me back up, and I traveled 200 feet above the field, hanging from the bungee cord."

Needless to say, the injuries were extensive and rehabilitation has been a long, painful journey. Meers decided to make something of the unexpected time off.

"When you are going through pain, it's easy to become self-focused," he said. "A self-focused world becomes very small, and your problems seem a lot bigger. When you take your eyes off yourself and look around, you realize the world is a lot bigger than just you."

With nothing but time on his hands, God reminded him about the book.

"Coming off the pain medications really messed up my sleep schedule," he said. "I was getting maybe four hours of sleep a night and waking up at 2 or 3 in the morning with nothing to do. That's when I decided to write the book."

As he thought and wrote in the dead of night, he gained valuable insights into the problem of pain.

"One lesson I learned is that God does have a purpose behind the pain in our lives," Meers said. "Everyone goes through pain, even if it's not physical. But he doesn't allow to go through needless pain."

He sums up this healing and growing process in two lessons:

• **Be a shiner, not a whiner.** "Nobody enjoys listening to me complain about my problems and pains. Laugh, and the world laughs with you. Complain, and you live alone."

• **Take off the mask.** "I was finally able



to take off my mask when I realized God loves me just the way I am right now. Even with all of my faults and failures, His love for me will never end."

Remarkably, Meers was back in costume and on the field for the Chiefs' home opener last season (minus the aerial stunts). He also shares his story wherever he finds an audience.

"I am starting to get feedback about how much people enjoyed the book," he said. "They are not only entertained but also challenged to live out their faith."

Perhaps most importantly, he has

learned to count each day a blessing and an opportunity to make a difference.

"While I was driving to the stadium during rehab, I heard a pastor on the radio," Meers said. "He said that every morning, you wake up and have something to complain about and something to be thankful for. It's up to you to choose."

"*Wolves Can't Fly*" is available at the website www.characterthatcounts.org. Dan Meers is available for speaking engagements, which can be arranged by contacting Rod Handley through the same website.

■ SOCIAL

continued from page 3

media—a spiritual leader can address current/cultural events immediately and help others process them through a biblical lens. Using social media for purposeful conversations is effective, helpful and contributes to a strong presence online.

■ **DO #thinkstrategically.** How can you add the most value to the issues that interest you? Posting links to good articles, promoting organizations/ causes that are in line with your ministry and just generally edifying others is when social media is at its best. At the same time, people who share a mix of their personal life, cultural trends, interesting quotes and good insights keep me scrolling until I find their posts.

■ **DO #setboundaries.** Social media can easily hijack your time and mental energy, becoming a major distraction. As someone said, "When you've got five minutes to fill, Twitter is a great way to fill 35." Consider an occasional "technology sabbath." The general rule seems to be this: If you can't go an hour without checking Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, you need to face up to your fixation and do something fast. Call it Social Media Maintenance and be vigilant about it.

You can't have the "do"s without the "don't"s.

Our posts sometimes carry more weight than we realize and if they are negative or perceived as mean-spirited,

they can compromise our witness and effectiveness.

Here are four "don'ts of social media. Of course there are many more, but these will get you started down the path of good sense, spiritual discernment and wise discretion:

■ **Don't post when #angryandirritated.** Rants and inflammatory language used against others never cause you to come off looking good -- it's a very poor witness. Not only that, there is a signifi-



cant chance you will regret something you said in anger. Even if you go back and delete, it was posted and was public. "Don't say anything online that you wouldn't want plastered on a billboard with your face on it" (digital

marketer/technology journalist Erin Bury). That thought should give all of us pause.

■ **Don't be #rude.** There are times when negative observations, warnings or hard truths need to be stated, especially as the church seeks to be counter-cultural in our post-Christian world. But that is never a reason to use harsh, unkind language. Online rudeness is no different than face-to-face rudeness. Remember, the written word does not communicate your body language or tone of voice, which could be used to offset anything offensive. Always use Ephesians 4:32 as your guideline.

■ **Don't #selfpromote.** Just don't. Distinguish between recommending a good resource you provide rather than promoting yourself.

■ **Don't #flirt** (unless it's with your husband). Online romances and inappropriate emotional connections through social media are rampant, even among believers. Facebook in particular offers endless opportunities for temptation, especially as it relates to former romances. An unhappy marriage is often the catalyst for a Facebook fling. This is a road we cannot go down simply because this temptation itself has a power no other temptation has. C.S. Lewis brilliantly observed, "All the sexual vices have this unfair advantage -- that the very temptation is itself pleasurable: whereas

the temptations, say, to anger or cowardice, are in themselves unpleasant." Undoubtedly that is why the apostle Paul says to "flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). This temptation cannot be reasoned with, it's too seductive. If you find yourself in this place, you

need to "flee," meaning "close" immediately. Shut it down.

Susie Hawkins has been active in ministry as a pastor's wife, teacher and volunteer.

■ HOSPITALITY

continued from page 2

F. Olford once wrote, "No one can ever predict what eternal reward will be awaiting us for Christian hospitality. But even now there is a compensation in store for us. Hospitality is a thrilling adventure and brings wonderful re-

turns."

Remember what Jesus said in a parable about inviting the stranger into your home: "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40).

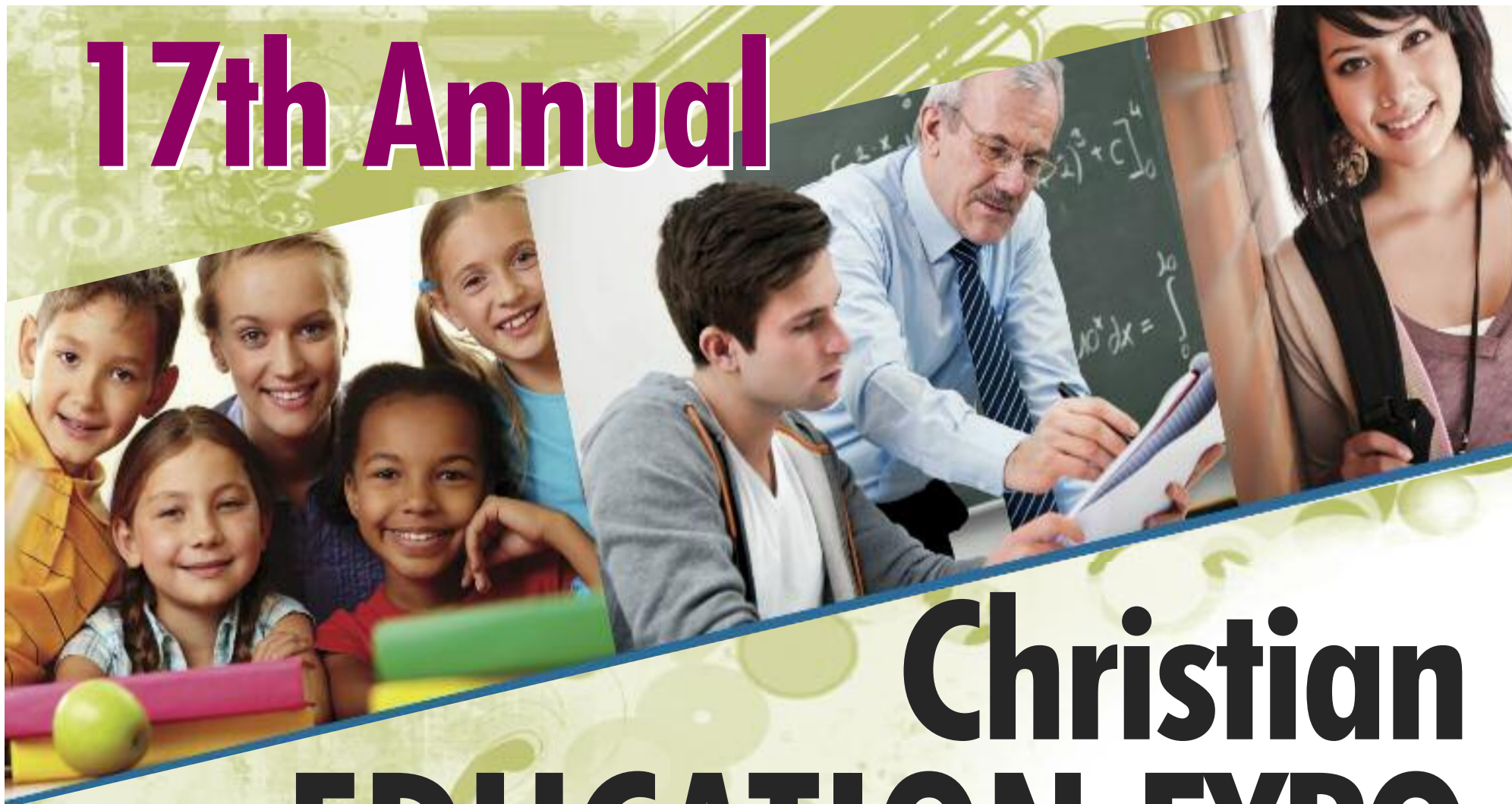
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