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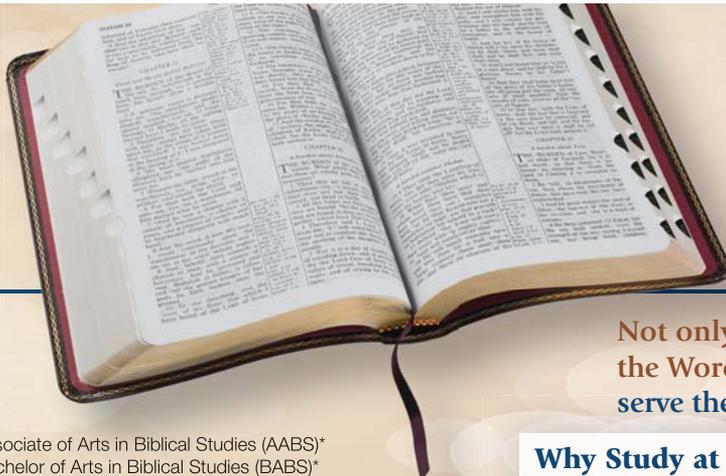
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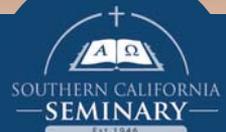
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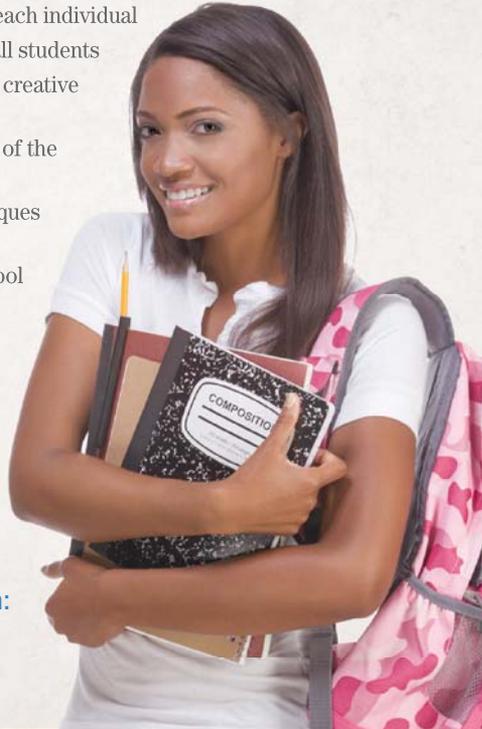
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DEAN NELSON

It starts with water

There are lots of good reasons to go to church. For you it might be the sermons, the music, the community, the celebration of the sacraments, the participation in something believers have been doing for thousands of years, the children's program, the sense of transcendence—of being part of something bigger than yourselves.

But what if the reason you went to church is that it saved your life?

I don't mean figuratively.

I mean literally.

Recently I was in a little town called Chiquimulilla in southern Guatemala, almost to the El Salvador border. The church is growing like crazy, and is planting churches in even more rural areas. Other pastors are taking note, and are considering adopting similar methods.

What's drawing people to this church?

Water.

Clean, inexpensive, life-giving water.

Like many regions in the world, the water in much of Guatemala is contaminated. Even the municipal water supply in many cities isn't safe to drink, because of a lack of proper sanitation. Out in the harder-to-reach areas like Chiquimulilla, it's even worse. The leading cause of death for children in the developing world is sickness due to diarrhea. More kids die of diarrhea-related diseases than of AIDS, malaria and measles combined, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And it's all because of contaminated water, unsafe sanitation and hygiene.

So people are left with two choices: they can boil the water, which is prohibitive because of the cost of fuel, or they can buy clean water from companies that take advantage of the scarcity and gouge the customers. For many people the choice is buying food or water. Not both.

But the local church is changing this.

It teamed up with a Denver organization called Healing Waters International, which has been putting water filtration systems in churches for more than 10 years. Healing Waters started out working with churches in the Dominican Republic, and is now in Haiti, throughout Central America and in parts of Africa. The success in the partnership is that people come to the church for clean, inexpensive water. Healing Waters installed 38 systems in 2013.

What's different about the Chiquimulilla church is that, in addition to providing education in proper hygiene and safe health practices for the customers and parishioners, along with the affordable clean water, members of the church are taking water to areas that are even harder to reach. Some are even planting new churches in those areas.

But it starts with the water. And a vision from the pastor.

"Pastor Salomon came to us and said 'Help me achieve what I think God is trying to do in my community,'" said Ed Anderson, CEO of Healing Waters. "He didn't ask us for money. He asked us to participate in what he sensed God was already doing."

The Healing Waters staff in Guatemala met with Pastor Salomon and saw that the church was ready to serve its community in significant ways.

"We made sure he understood that we weren't interested in doing something with short-term solutions," Anderson said. "The health of the people in his community is a long-term problem, and he made it clear that his church was committed to saving lives as well as saving souls."

Now, on any given day of the week, people line up with their blue 5-gallon

bottles, and receive water for 5 quetzal, or less than \$1 U.S. The commercial water suppliers charge up to 18 Q, or more than \$2 U.S. People line up at the church, at Pastor Salomon's home, and at eight other locations in the community. Everyone knows where the water is coming from.

"This has transformed my church," he told me. "It has given our people a way to reach others, to build relationships. The water is turning our people into evangelists."

Ed Anderson says that the Chiquimulilla system, like all other Healing Waters systems, is designed to not only transform the church, but also the community. It's a system that can provide safe, affordable drinking water for decades, that trains and equips people in the community to serve one another, that provides health and hygiene education—particularly for women and children, and that has a business model that is sustainable for the long term.

In John, chapter 4, Jesus says to the woman at the well, "Give me something to drink." In Matthew 25 Jesus makes it clear that if you give thirsty people a drink, it's the same as giving it to Jesus.

And then there's Revelation 22 that says, in my paraphrase, "Come, everyone who is thirsty. Drink freely from the water of life."



Dean Nelson directs the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University. His book "God Hides in Plain Sight: Seeing the Sacred in a Chaotic World," is

published by Brazos Press.



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Jesus' name is Alecia? Really??

My young daughter Ruby and I were going for a long stroll in our neighborhood where we were intentionally practicing missional living as leaders of NieuCommunities church. We did so as my wife, Janny, put in one of her last long days of work before going on maternity leave for the birth of our second daughter, Rosie. Knowing that our time as a family of three was quickly coming to a close, I walked hand in hand with my little gal with a bit more sacredness.

She stopped regularly to smell flowers; she sang songs; and she was convinced it was her mommy's birthday, so she made sure to pick the perfect bouquet of flowers (most of which were just pretty weeds) to surprise her when we got home.

As we stopped yet again on the sidewalk, stalled by another "distraction"—this time it was the plants growing out of the dirt in the cracks of the concrete—I saw an older woman walking toward us with two shopping carts full of all sorts of useful contents. As she got closer to us I noticed that she had to push one about 20 yards and then walk all the way back to the other and pull it up even with the first. This happened over and over and over. It was her reality. There was nothing strange about it to her, it was just one of life's necessities.

With Ruby still captivated by these mini-gardens sprouting from the concrete road, I said hello and we shared a smile. Ruby then looked up and said hello as well. Ruby and I were in no rush (clearly!), so I asked if I could pull one of her carts for her as she slowly made her way to her destination. She didn't hesitate for a second, smiling as she nodded.

The woman pushed one cart, I pushed the other cart, and Ruby pushed the stroller as we slowly moved down the streets of our shared neighborhood. She didn't speak English, but quickly asked if I spoke Spanish. I knew enough to tell her that I didn't know it well, but would love to give it a shot. As we walked, we stumbled through a conversation that ranged from what I do for work to how old her six kids are and where they live. Ruby never seemed to flinch at the surprise interaction and remained focused on her new and important responsibility of pushing her stroller.

Pulling up in front of one of our neighborhood coffee shops, I told the woman that Ruby and I were going to head in and I asked if she'd like a drink. Extending a

beautiful, almost transcendent smile, she shook her head and we began to part ways. Mustering up my best Spanish skills, I asked her name and formerly introduced myself and Ruby. Her name is Alecia.

Alecia, Ruby and I all share a neighborhood. In many ways, we share life together even if we don't often realize it. As Ruby and I sat in the coffee shop, I realized the significance of knowing our neighbors'

It is learning the many names of Jesus that we choose to engage or ignore in our everyday coming and going.

names. For some, it is an act of being known. For others, it is an act of assigning dignity to one that may otherwise not have much offered to them based on their race or socio-economic reality. It is what it means to see all people through a shared humanity. A humanity illumined by the image of God resting within each one of us.

It is sacred ground. It is Kingdom ground. It is learning the many names of Jesus that we choose to engage or ignore in our everyday coming and going.

I started a note in my phone called "Names to Remember" after our interaction. Because next time Jesus walks up to me with one-too-many carts to push on his own, I want to be able to call him by name and celebrate our time together.

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Jon Huckins is the co-founding director of The Global Immersion Project, Missional Leadership Coach with Thresholds, family man, speaker and author of "Thin Places" and

"Teaching Through the Art of Storytelling." Follow his blog at www.jonhuckins.net.

After missing two Mother's Days due to her incarceration, Shannon Brown treasures the special day with her two daughters.



Reconciled

A mother finds redemption through prison experience

by LORI ARNOLD

It is inevitable that the annual rite of Mother's Day changes some when children fly the coop and Mom is faced with an empty nest. It is so much more so when Mom leaves her full nest for a season in the barred digs of a federal prison.

"We did things as mothers for ourselves," said El Cajon resident Shannon Brown, who, after her conviction on a drug-related crime, served 18 months at the 10-story Federal Detention Center, SeaTac in Washington state.

"We would make cards for each other and for our own moms. For Mother's Day it was just all about each other. We looked after each other as fellow in-

mates. We spent time together, looked at each other's pictures of our kids, shared stories and cried with each other."

An addict for 17 years, Brown found herself in a federal lock-up in San Diego just a few days after Mother's Day in 2009. Her children were just 11 and 3.

Charged with drug importation, Brown faced 10 years but found favor with a judge who sentenced her to 24 months in October of that year.

"Standing before the judge, I felt very scared," she said.

Two months later, just weeks before Christmas, Brown turned herself in to serve her sentence. While Brown spent two Mother's Days behind bars, her chil-

dren stayed with various family members.

"My fears during my incarceration were, of course, my kids' well-being," their mother said. "I have to tell you, I was more worried about them in the world than I was about myself. I was under lock and key, but anything can happen when you're out and about."

Regular phone calls home eased some of the tension, but also served as a constant reminder of their emotional and physical separation.

"I called and talked to them every day, and missed them more than words can say," she said. "But I had no other choice than to trust in the Lord that they would be OK."



Shannon Brown's mother, Kathy Redden, never doubted her daughter's ability to battle past her addictions and the stigma of incarceration. She saw the prison sentence as more of a blessing than a hindrance.

"I didn't really question God why this was happening, I knew this was the only way that I would ever be able to be the mother and person that I needed to be. I knew God had a plan for me. That's why He saved me."

During her incarceration, Brown said she stayed busy taking personal development classes and attending chapel.

"You don't want to be in there with idle time, cause then you just go stir crazy," Brown, 37, said.

A mandated drug education program helped Brown dig deep into the patterns that fostered her addiction.

"We focused on what led up to that point and how we are going to have to rebuild our relationships once we got out," she said. "So we got to really look at ourselves, step aside from ourselves, and look deep into who we were. At that point I had no idea who I was. I had totally lost sight of who Shannon was."

Letting go of the past

In a strange way, Brown's confinement managed to heal childhood wounds as she bonded with women who had similar experiences.

"As a kid, when I was growing up, I was very unpopular, I didn't have any

friends," she said. "I was an outcast. I didn't fit in anywhere. I was kind of like an oddball. When I was in (prison) I made friends with everybody. Nobody judged me in there like when I was a kid."

Although much of her time was structured, there was no escaping the reality of being confined. In those moments when she was biding time in her cell, Brown loved to glance through the slotted external windows that cast the only natural light inside a prison that had no outside access for roommates.

"I was in there a year and half and I never got to go outside," she said. "I could see outside until they covered the windows."

Prison officials were forced to frost the windows, she said, to keep the women from communicating with the nearby men's block.

Of all the activities and diversions, Brown said it was chapel that ultimately made most the most influence on her broken soul. Although Brown, her mother and kids began regularly attending The Salvation Army Church at the El Cajon Corps office two years before her arrest, she admitted her longstanding addiction to drugs proved to be a persistent deterrent to cleaning up her life.

"I never knew that the Salvation Army was a church," the former inmate said. "For the longest time I thought it was a thrift store."

"I had wanted to quit using, but I didn't know how. I know now and I knew when I was arrested that God was saving me from myself. He literally snatched me out of the grips of death. Being sent to prison was a blessing. I learned how to be clean and sober, I learned who I was, I learned how what I was doing was not only affecting me, but more so my kids and the ones I love."

Rebuilding relationships

In the dark days of separation from her children, Brown acknowledged she also wrestled with her actions as a daughter. Even though her childhood was heavily influenced by her parents' rocky relationship, Brown and her mother were always tight.

"My mom was so sad and broken that I was in prison," she said. "I had to keep reassuring her that I was OK. She was so worried about me."

With good behavior credits, Brown was released from prison six months early. Just days after Mother's Day 2011, Brown took her first breath of fresh air in 18 months. With her addiction to drugs behind her, the repentant mom began looking for work.

"When I first got out it was so hard," she said. "I mean, I put in applications everywhere and nobody would give me a break. I would do interviews and then my being just released from prison would come out and they would turn me down. They wouldn't say that was the reason why, but I never heard from them again."

In the meantime, she headed back to her home church where she began volunteering and working on earning back her family's trust.

"My mom was deeply affected by me

“Getting to be with my kids and being the mom that they needed and they deserved all this time is very special to me.”

going to prison, and rebuilding my relationship with her and my kids took some time, and a great deal of tears,” she said. “My mom and I have always been very close, and the pain I caused her and my kids —still to this day—makes me feel awful.”

Over time, and without any solid job prospects, Brown volunteered her way into various paid jobs with the El Cajon Salvation Army, which earlier this year offered her a job with the center’s after-school program.

“Of course, I jumped on that because any opportunity to be at the church was where I wanted to be,” she said. “I had been saying that all along. ‘This is where I want to work, this is where I want to work.’ I’m there and I’m just so thankful that, ‘Wow, I’ve achieved something here.’”

A new outlook

Since her release, Brown acknowledges that the meaning of Mother’s Day has shifted as she works to repair her once-broken relationships.

“For me, it’s all about my mom because she stood by me the whole time,” she said. “She was so heartbroken and devastated that I was in there and she has been such a blessing to me. She never lost faith or hope. (She knew I was not) going to go back to my old ways.”

Her mother, Kathy Redden, said she never really doubted her daughter’s ability to battle past her addictions and the stigma of incarceration. Truthfully, she saw the prison sentence as more of a blessing than a hindrance.

“In a way I was relieved because I thought, ‘Well, now she is going to have to pay the price,’” Redden said. “I was scared for her. I was afraid she would get beat up. I was afraid she would beat somebody else up and get a longer term or something like that. I prayed and I



prayed and I prayed.”

Despite warnings from friends that Brown was likely to falter again, her mother firmly believed her daughter had learned her lesson.

“She had her children taken away from her,” Redden said. “She had her life taken away from her. I knew that this would not happen again. I knew that this is what it took to make her realize that you can’t do something like this and not go through the consequences; but I knew she would learn from it because she’s smart.

“And now I just can’t believe how wonderful, how beautiful, how straight forward, how honest, how concerned she is with everything. She is, by the definition of the word, the most changed person but yet, at the same time, the same.”

A special gift

While tradition has it that children shower their moms with gifts, Brown said she is focused on gifting her children with a whole and healthy mom.

“Getting to be with my kids and being the mom that they needed and they deserved all this time is very special to me,” she said.

Even so, there are still challenging

moments for her oldest daughter who is still working through her bitterness and disappointment.

“My teenager, she was really broken and we are still working on our relationship. She still has quite a wall built up so being a mom to her and showing her that I’m sorry for what I did (is my focus).”

Even now, nearly three years removed from her prison stint, Brown considers how far she has come and the plight of some of the hard-core women she left behind in Seattle.

“Some of the women in there, they had kids and some of them were never going to see their kids again because of the crimes they had committed and they didn’t seem to care,” Brown recalled. “Some of the women in there were just so ...like, using the place like a revolving door. They were just going to go back out there and do it all over again because they were making so much money doing whatever they doing.

“I thought, ‘Wow, but not me. You will never see me in here again. Never.’”

“I am doing everything in my power not to go there again. It was the most eye-opening experience I’ve ever had in my life.” ■

Caring for Riley

Child's journey of suffering teaches family about grace and patience

by LORI ARNOLD

Laurie Spiering was well-versed in the behavior of boys by the time her fifth son, Riley, arrived, so years later when the kindergartener came home from school and began taking afternoon naps, she became suspicious.

"I found a bump behind his ear which felt like a cyst," she said. "We were doing a staycation in San Diego and one thing led to another. With the Lord's prompting we took him to the pediatrician immediately."

The doctor's body language and his order of an emergency blood test confirmed their fears.

"When the call came in from the doctor that next morning I promptly put the phone down and ran for my husband," she said. "I normally would have spoken to him but I just knew in my gut this call had to be for my husband."

Not only was her husband, Robin, an internal medicine physician, he was a two-time cancer survivor. Riley, the doctor announced, had acute myeloid leukemia.

"Hearing the news that your young-



est son of age 6 has cancer is devastating and shocking," Laurie said. "I knew what was coming.

"In a way my caregiving experience with my husband helped me to know from experience that chemo will be harsh, but for a greater good. In lots of ways, I realized later, the hard chemo journey with my husband was preparation for what was to come with my sweet, young 6-year-old. I was stronger to handle the first chemo bag being hung in the ICU the first night we arrived for Riley."

Although well-seasoned when it

came to the procedural expectations of cancer, the emotional reality of a 6-year-old coping with a life-threatening disease created an unexpected fog.

"During the early stages of diagnosis it felt like we had been in an accident and stuck in the hospital for weeks," she said. "It is the dazed phase as I felt unable to focus on life that was swirling around us, and ours had just hit a Mack truck head-on, unable to move. After a few years it didn't get any easier, but the Lord provided the strength to get through each step and hard hurdle that Riley had to

Her biggest fear was not the possibility of losing Riley, but having to witness his perpetual suffering.

get over.”

Her biggest fear was not the possibility of losing Riley, but having to witness his perpetual suffering.

“I didn’t fear death for him, although my mother’s heart felt we didn’t have much time with him early on in the journey,” she said. “Man gave him a 50 percent chance, but my husband (told) us that with God it is 100 percent, here or in Heaven.”

Young grace

Even though her son’s body was constantly under attack—if not by the disease then by the treatment designed to suppress it—Laurie said it was often Riley who gave them support.

“He always took the suffering with such grace and did not have a spirit of complaining in any way,” she said. “He was an example to us all.”

Leave it to a pain-plagued child to teach his mom about patience in the midst of suffering.

“(He had) great faith and trust in His Savior,” Laurie said. “Riley said, ‘I have no anxiety at all! I am joyous to be here with you or in Heaven.’”

Riley’s illness also taught his mom to trust her instincts when it came to advocating on his behalf. Throughout the ordeal, she carefully maintained journals which provided beneficial not only to herself, but to the doctors and nurses.

In addition to the medical staff at Children’s Hospital, the Spierings were often blessed by a large network of people who chipped in as needed.

“When Riley was first diagnosed the other boys were 15, 13, 11 and 9, tender ages that needed a lot of attention,” she said. “We had an incredible Christian school body that supported us in every area. The teachers helped meet the boys’ needs at school and anything else we needed done. Two of the teachers made lunches for our kids for two years straight.”

Even with their help, Laurie admits that she often struggled with the tensions of serving her large family and meeting Riley’s persistent medical needs.

“I was torn inside when so much time was needed to spend on all of Riley’s care and that the other boys were not getting

my full attention,” she said. “It is hard enough to spread yourself with five boys under normal circumstances.”

Accepting help

Laurie admits that accepting help was not always easy.

“Let others help you when they offer,” she said. “I can’t do everything myself and it’s OK to let others help you. I myself am a great helper and those kinds of



“...I pleaded with God to please take him home or heal him completely so he would not suffer anymore.”

personalities have a hard time when the tables are reversed, (when they're) receiving the help.”

A much easier proposition for her Laurie, she said, was trusting God, especially when it came to the intangible elements of their journey.

“Without a relationship and trust in our Lord and Savior to see you through and give you strength I don't see how 'getting through' would've worked out on our own strength,” she said. “With God ALL things are possible and He provides strength in the exact dose He sees fit to dispense it to you, daily and moment by moment.”

It was that trust, she added, that allowed her to turn Riley's fate over to his

Maker.

“Near the end stages, when he was suffering quite a bit, daily I pleaded with God to please take him home or heal him completely so he would not suffer anymore,” his mom said. “God chose to heal him in Heaven.”

He answered her prayer in August 2010 when the disease finally took his life at age 12.

Just as they had done as they fought together for Riley's life, the Spierings turned to each other in their grief. A key to working through that pain was developing a plan to honor Riley. While many families turn to scholarships or foundations to keep their loved one's memory alive, the Spierings developed a unique,

but symbolic approach by launching RileyCare Ambulance Services.

Much of their attention in the almost four years since Riley's death has been focused on the business enterprise, which donates 10 percent of its profits to pediatric cancer research and other foundations committed to patients with life-threatening diseases. While it has helped with the grief, Laurie acknowledges that is a long process that they are working through together.

“Grief can't be scheduled and given a time slot,” she said. “Grief comes at unexpected times and is brought on by a smell, song, or touch of a loved one who is also grieving. Each family member grieves in the stages at different times and each one cannot judge the other for being in a certain stage or not. Riley enriched each one of our lives greatly.” ■

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EOE

Honoring Riley

Grieving family honors lost child with ambulance service

by LORI ARNOLD

Robin and Laurie Spiering walked out of the mortuary after signing the final paperwork for their 12-year-old son Riley, whom they lost to leukemia. As with most mourning moms, Laurie's heart was focused on the past and the six emotion-numbing years of leukemia treatments, tempered by sporadic spells of good news.

On the cusp of grief, the future seemed a long way off.



Laurie Spiering, left, is the administrator and CFO of RileyCare Ambulance Services. Her son Richard is the CEO.



But Robin was already looking ahead. Though the ink had barely dried on the paperwork, Laurie listened as her husband—a physician with his own private practice—proposed launching an ambulance service as a way to pay tribute to their youngest child.

“I was not a risk taker and was extremely tired from six years of caregiving,” Laurie said. “For my husband and boys it was fuel to deal with the grief. For me it was stress, too many unknowns.”

But the idea for the ambulance service seemed like a perfect fit for the family. In addition to the medical expertise Robin offered, their four surviving boys, then 21, 19, 17 and 15, all had interest in the medical field. Oldest sons Roumayne and Richard were both emergency medical technicians, while the two younger sons, Ryan and Robert, had dreams of becoming doctors.

Starting the company, the men in her

family believed, was a way to honor Riley by helping others with medical needs. It would also provide a way for them to help fund pediatric cancer research by designating 10 percent of all profits toward the cause.

Despite her initial reservations, Laurie quickly embraced the vision and offered up the name: RileyCare Ambulance Service. In October 2012, a little more than two years after her son's passing, white ambulances boasting a bright purple stripe, a nod to Riley's favorite color, began transporting patients. Today, the company has four ambulances—each bearing the name of a child who died of cancer.

The El Cajon-based company handles about 200 calls a month, providing basic life support services as well as long-distance transports, critical-care transports and special-event management.

Richard, now 23, serves as chief of op-

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EMTs load an empty stretcher into one of the four ambulances operated by RileyCare.

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erations, while Laurie is chief financial officer. In keeping with the family tradition, Laurie completed EMT training so she can assist with patient care. While those two focus on the day-to-day operations of RileyCare, Roumayne, 25, is a firefighter-paramedic. Their two youngest sons are both in college, with Ryan, 21, planning on becoming a surgeon, while Robert, 19, envisions becoming a pediatric oncologist.

The boys' dedication to the medical field echoes the same passion they shared in caring for their younger brother, who Laurie described as highly intelligent.

“He loved to be funny, loved reading, singing, playing the piano by ear and interacting with adults,” she said, “He was a terrific student and loved to learn. His four older brothers loved to spoil him from the day he was born to the day he went home to be with his Lord. Riley had his oldest brother’s ability to talk non-stop, his second oldest brother’s sense of humor, his third oldest brother’s black-and-white approach to the Scripture and logical reasoning, and his fourth-oldest brother’s tender heart.”

Two of the brothers donated bone marrow in hopes of curing Riley’s can-

cer. As the boys grew older and Riley’s battle waged on, the siblings would often drive to the hospital to bring their mom something as she cared for Riley.

“Our children—boys, young men of God—were amazing from day one. Self-sacrificing of friends, time, activities, anything for their youngest brother. They remain resolved, strong men of faith who had to grow up fast in the midst of a turbulent journey we all were on.”

That commitment to care for others serves as the foundation for RileyCare, which has become known for its stuffed Riley Bears that are offered to each patient they transport.

“We wanted to make a difference in our patients’ experience as they are transported,” she said. “Many are elderly and, oh, how they adore the bears. We have seen these bears make an impact on these older adults and brighten their day. Often when we stroll through the nursing homes at different times we will see the bears in rooms on their bed or dresser. That’s special.” ■

Learn more at www.rileycareambulance.com.

Creative forces at work with KidsFest

KidsFest San Diego, billed as the county's largest hands-on creative festival for children, returns to the Naval Training Center's Ingram Plaza on May 17 and 18. An estimated 7,000 people are expected for the event.

Each year, the family-inspired event turns 100,000 square feet of Point Loma real estate into a "wonderland of play, with activities designed to stimulate and celebrate the imagination."

The two-day playfest is hosted by the Chloe Nichols Foundation, named for the 8-year-old girl whose "spirit and determination inspires others to reach for and achieve their goals. Chloe was a fiercely determined girl who never backed down from a challenge. She was a very imaginative and creative child who loved stories, art and all things 'girly.'"

Chloe passed away in August 2009 from drug-related complications from a prescription she was taking for mild epilepsy. In keeping with her creative nature, the foundation raises scholarships for students interested in the arts. Pro-



IF YOU GO

WHAT: KidsFest San Diego
WHEN: May 17 - 18
WHERE: Naval Training Center's Ingram Plaza
FEATURES: Messy Zone, Creation Station, Green Thumb Market, Build It Square, Dress-Up Alley, Gumball Alley, Bubble Zone, Snack Shack, Raise the Roof
Tickets: kidsfestsandiego.com

ceeds from the event will benefit Chloe's foundation and other children's charities, including the Jenna Druck Center.

New to this year's festival is an appearance by Hullabaloo, a popular folk, funk and rock band for children.

Other activities include the Messy Zone, filled with mud, muck and messy fun; Creation Station, a make-and-take crafts station; Green Thumb Market, a creative space for "budding" gardeners; Build It Construction Square, where young guests can construct a castle, design a reading nook, or just play and create; Dress-Up Alley for kids who like to get red-carpet ready;



Gumball Alley and Bubble Zone, where kids can kick, bang, ram and bam hundreds of jumbo "gumballs"; Snack Shack for young chefs; Shake, Rattle and Roll, for aspiring musicians to make their own take-home instruments; and Raise the Roof, a 70- by 70-foot "roof" made out of 100,000 yards of colorful elastic for those who want to have crazy, hands-on, tangled, twisted fun.

Other offerings include a Food Truck Lunch Room, where families can purchase a variety of eats, the VIP Stroller Valet, and complimentary parking. A vendor area will also be on-site.



A photograph of Nathan and Jessica Threlkeld sitting outdoors. Nathan is on the left, wearing a blue plaid shirt and grey pants, smiling. Jessica is on the right, wearing a black top and blue jeans, also smiling. The background is a blurred natural setting.

Unplugged adventure

Summer camp experience transforms young man's calling

by LORI ARNOLD

Nathan and Jessica Threlkeld return to Indian Hills Camp this summer as part of the program staff. The couple met while volunteering for the teen Team Program.

Growing up in Ramona, a rural playground of 84,000-plus acres, many of them ringed by mountains, and dotted with trails and expansive open space, Nathan Threlkeld never felt a pressing need to attend summer camp, a staple for many kids raised in Christian homes.

"Camp ministry had never been on my radar," he said. "I didn't go to camp as a kid, I didn't live near a camp and as a result I certainly didn't think about camp as a way to spend my summer."

He got his first taste of the concept,

though, during spring break of his sophomore year when officials at his high school asked him to serve as a middle school camp counselor. By the end of the weeklong session, he was already being groomed for the summer.

"I had awesome plans in store for that summer," Threlkeld, 25, said. "It would be my first summer with my own vehicle and license. I had a job lined up with a mountain bike shop that I was super jazzed about.

"In my heart, however, I felt that tug telling me I needed to go to camp. God was asking me what was most important, a job and a good time, or seeking and serving Him?"

The high-schooler responded to the inner voice and put his plans for the summer job on hiatus while he volunteered for Indian Hills Camp in Jamul.

"Camp is where I made the decision to really own my faith and live my life for Christ," he said. "Little did I know that camp would be such a significant part of my future."

Over the course of three more summers, Threlkeld continued to grow, becoming more comfortable in working with impressionable youth.

"Full-time ministry always seemed like something for more righteous, spiritual people," he said. "It never really occurred to me that I could wind up doing



Nathan Threlkeld first came to Indian Hills as a teenager. Later he interned as an outdoor education teacher.

ministry beyond teaching Sunday school or helping with youth group.”

But by the time he shed his teens, Threlkeld said it was time to move on and begin thinking about what he would do for a living.

“It was time to get a real job and a real life,” he said.

By then he was working at a commercial air-conditioning company and going to trade school at night.

“One night after work I opened a letter from Indian Hills Camp inviting me to join a team headed to Eastern Europe for five weeks to serve at a couple of camp startups,” he said. “It was like God’s finger was pointing out of that letter and telling me to go. Never have I been so overwhelmed by God’s ‘voice.’”

Threlkeld responded again, this time walking away from a \$16-an-hour job knowing that by the end of the summer, he would once again be looking for a way to support himself.

“Throughout that summer people repeatedly approached me about the idea of me doing camping ministry as a career,” he said. “I had always seen camp as a season, and never a career, let alone an obtainable one.”

But camp opportunities continued to come, including an internship with housing at Indian Hills.

“God used Indian Hills to reveal His calling on my life to serve in camping ministry,” Threlkeld said. “Since then everywhere I have lived and during every season I’ve been in, I have somehow found myself involved with a camp.”

Building relationships

In addition to building relationships with the young campers, many of the staffers at Indian Hills become close as they work side by side for months at a time. It was there that Threlkeld met his future bride, Jessica. Like Nathan, Jessica enjoyed San Diego’s outdoor offerings as a child. The two became fast friends throughout the summer; anything more



was prohibited by Indian Hills’ strict “no dating” policy.

“The whole summer we could have assured you that we certainly were *not* interested in the other, and maybe believed it, too,” Threlkeld said. “Obviously, that was bunk.”

After camp ended the two officially began dating.

“To our credit though, we waited a full three months after camp ended to start dating,” he said.

They married three years ago. Their first child, Breanna, is now 9 months old.

“Camp was the perfect place for us to meet each other,” he said. “My wife and I are dramatically different people. Outside of camp I don’t think we would’ve found each other, actually. But we both share a love for people and for seeing people make life-changing decisions for Christ, and for the significant personal relationships that camp promotes.”

Today, the couple lives in Prescott, Ariz., where Threlkeld works for a mostly secular-based adventure company called Tierra Wild.

“We seek opportunities to model and to share Christ through the personal relationships we have with our participants,” he said of the Arizona job.

Back to his roots

Even so, the couple plans to return shortly to Indian Hills where he will take a new position as assistant program director. They will arrive as soon as they are able to raise missionary support to fund his salary.

“It is a perfect fit since it allows me both administrative and supervisory duties, as well as the chance to work with the campers through teaching and running program,” he said.

Threlkeld said he believes Christian camps are so formational because of the intimate sense of community that is established when all of the normal distractions are miles away.

“You are all on this same adventure sharing the same experience while living, playing, eating and sleeping together day in and day out,” he said. “This removal and this community, combined, are a powerful mix. They allow an openness and intimacy in relationships that you don’t get from other programs.

“I love the outdoors. I am passionate about sharing the majesty and beauty of God’s creation with others. Ultimately however, camp is about building relationships. The outdoors just happens to be the perfect place for that.” ■



High octane FUN

Overnight camps provide great summer options for ages 8 to 18

by LORI ARNOLD

For decades, summer camps have proven to be an effective ministry tool to get children out of their regular surroundings—including the 24/7 distractions of cell phones, social media and gaming—and into the midst of God’s creation. The

combination of the great outdoors, coupled with God’s Word and passionate counselors have helped to shape millions of young people. Following is a sampling of Christian camp opportunities in San Diego and surrounding counties.



Students who enroll at Hume San Diego summer camps are treated to a variety of outdoor sports games designed for fun and to build relationships with their peers. Held at Point Loma Nazarene University, the camps offer stunning views and beach access as part of the tailor-made outdoor experience for junior and high school students.

The dirt track at Indian Hills Camp provides children with the chance to play on wheels—and get dirty.

CAMPS AT A GLANCE

Indian Hills Camp

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(619) 669-6498
www.indianhillscamp.com

Hume San Diego Camp

Point Loma Nazarene University
3900 Lomaland Drive
San Diego, CA 92106
(559) 305-7770
www.humelake.org/youth

Palomar Christian Conference Center

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Palomar Mountain, CA 92060
(760) 742-3400
www.pccc.org

Pine Valley Bible Conference

8668 Pine Creek Road
Pine Valley, CA 91962
(619) 473-8879
www.pvbc.net

Alpine Camp & Conference Center

415 Club House Drive
Blue Jay, CA 92317
1-800-350-6289
www.alpine-cc.org

Angeles Crest Christian Camps

HC1 Box 22
La Canada, CA 91011
(714) 870-9190
www.angelescrest.com

Forest Home Christian Conference Center

40000 Valley of the Falls Drive
Forest Falls, CA 92339
(909) 389-2300
www.foresthome.org



Indian Hills Camp

Located in Jamul, Indian Hills offers summer camps for children who will enter the fall school year in the second to fifth grades. The camp, which runs Sundays to Fridays, starts June 22.

This year's theme is "Tombstone." Against the backdrop of legendary gun fighters and pioneers, campers will learn a bit about the Bible's own "Legends of Faith," their part in the story of God and the amazing things they did.

The Wild West-themed camp, complete with covered wagons and teepees, offers an animal farmyard, hiking trails, giant playground, obstacle course, BMX bike track, softball, soccer, volleyball, basketball and swimming pools.

Additional activities, including ziplines, animal antics and one instilling survivor activities, are also available.

Indian Hills has developed a stellar reputation for its summer Team Program. High school-aged teens help in

the general aspect of maintaining the facilities and grounds and assisting in the program activities. Along with the experience and discipline they gain in working various projects, a daily discipleship program helps them mature in their Christian faith. Many of the teens that complete this program later become camp counselors and some are sent to foreign countries to assist or train others how to put on Christian camps.

Pine Valley Bible Conference Center

The camp offers its annual Ascent High School Service & Discipleship Camp, a two-week program for high school students. During their stay, campers will assist full-time and seasonal staff in ministering to other guest groups at the facility. The discipleship component includes morning devotions, team discussions and prayer, campfire worship, and other discipleship exercises led by Pine Valley staff. The camp will be

offered June 9 to 20; June 23 to July 4; July 7 to 18 and July 21 to Aug. 1.

Church groups can book their own camp using the resources offered through the Expedition Outback Adventure. Camp staff provide the day-time activities while church counselors provide the night program. On-site activities include paintball, ropes course, team building course, inflatables, disc golf, sand volleyball, lighted basketball court, horseshoes, sports field, camp fires, tire swing, archery, slip 'n' slide, rappelling, hiking, crafts, game room, Elevation Gift Shop, Altitude Coffee Shop and guided hikes.

Palomar Christian Conference Center

Families looking for unique camping experiences will find several options at this North County facility, ranging from a girls' horse camp to a wilderness-oriented experience for boys.

The girls' horse camp is divided into two age groups: junior high for 9- to 13-year-olds, and high school for 13- to 18-year-olds. (Thirteen-year-olds may select which camp they wish to attend.) Junior high horse camp will be June 22 to 28, June 29 to July 5, July 13 to 19, and July 20 to July 26. Senior high camp is offered June 15 to 21, July 6 to 12, July 27 to Aug. 2, and Aug. 3 to Aug. 9.

Wrangler in Training, for girls who are experienced riders and are at least 16 or have completed 10th grade, is offered for campers wishing to put their own skills to work helping the staff assist Horse Camp guests. In addition to aiding staff, the teen assistants will also participate in spiritual development activities.

Adventure Camp is a program designed for boys and includes backpacking in the great outdoors with trained counselors. Campers will receive different wilderness lessons such as knife throwing, shelter building, land navigation, and fishing, while main camp activities will include paintball, skeet shooting, and zip line. Camps for 11- to 14-year-olds are offered from June 15 to 21, July 6 to 12, July 13 to 19, and July 20 to 26. A camp for teens 15 to 18 will be

held June 22 to 28.

New this year is Base Camp, a co-ed experience for junior high boys and girls who are going into the sixth through ninth grades. The boys and girls will be on separate teams as they travel around to different activities and learn how to work and grow together. Base Camp—offered June 1 to 7, June 8 to 14, and June 15 to 21—will have nightly Summit worship services, devotions, and cabin time with counselors. Each evening will offer a special theme.

Hume San Diego Summer Camp

One of the state's premier camps, Hume Lake outside of Fresno, has brought its summer experience south through Hume SD, described as a seamless blend of Hume Lake and San Diego. Tapping into urban missions and beachfront activities available at the home base at Point Loma Nazarene University, Hume SD provides powerful corporate worship, compelling teaching and full-throttle recreation for both junior highers, grades six to eight, and high schoolers, grades nine to 12. This year's theme is "Axe."

Each camp offers a featured speaker, and numerous service opportunities in partnership with local urban and international mission organizations. Through those partnerships, Hume SD provides campers and counselors with safe, supervised opportunities to serve people in immediate, tangible ways. Built into each day's programming is an hour of recreational time, plus such on-campus diversions as disk golf, basketball, ping-pong, billiards, foosball, volleyball and a mechanical bull. Those signing an off-campus release may take advantage of a variety of nearby water sports.

Junior high camp is scheduled for June 15 to 20 and July 6 to 11.

High school camp is scheduled for June 22 to 27 and June 29 to July 4.

Alpine Camp & Conference Center

Makuala Village is a resident camp for fourth- to sixth-graders that runs July 13 to 18; July 20 to 25 and July 27 to Aug. 1.



Campers have a variety of outdoor climbing options, including an obstacle course.

The camp and conference center has also scheduled two junior high camps for July 20 to 25 and July 27 to Aug. 1. A single high school camp is offered from July 13 to 18.

New this year is a junior and high school combo camp for grades six to 12. It runs from Aug. 3 to 8.



Campers at Pine Valley Bible Conference play a version of dodge ball called Gaga Ball.



Campers enjoy the western theme of Indian Hills from the elevated platform of a fort.

Angeles Crest Christian Camp

The facility will offer three different age-appropriate camps, all sharing this year's theme of "Heroes: They Walk Among Us."

In addition to traditional camp accommodations, activities at Angeles Crest includes canoeing, paintball target range, basketball, sand volleyball, digglers, (a cross between a BMX bike & a scooter), archery, a climbing wall, trampoline, hiking trails, a game room, Frisbee golf, Isaiah's Perch, the zip line, Zaccheus' Tree House, and The Hut, a local hangout and snack bar.

The first offering of the year, the Junior Camp for children in the third through sixth grades, will run from July 6 to 11. The Youth Camp, for junior high and high school ages, is set for Aug 3 to 8. Junior Weekend, also for third-through sixth-graders, is an abbreviated camp that is offered Aug. 8 to 10.

Forest Home Christian Conference Center

Forest Home Christian Conference Center offers weekly, age-appropriate camps from June 15 to Aug. 14. Its primary-age camps have at least one designated week with special rates.

The Village Summer Camp, for third- to fifth-graders, offers special rates from June 15 to 20. The theme is "Strong and Mighty."

Adventure Mountain Summer Camp, for fifth to sixth graders, is offering special rates for June 15 to 20 and Aug. 10 to 15. The theme is "Wild Kingdom."

The theme for the Junior High Summer Camp at Creekside, for sixth- to eighth-graders, is "The Eternal Summer."

The High School Summer Camp at Lakeview, for students in grades nine through 12, will explore the theme "Thrive: Life Amidst Decay." ■

Music benefits the 'storks'

Artist Garden Entertainment singer-songwriter Holly Starr has wrapped up a 23-city tour with national youth speaker Bob Lenz, where she performed her latest single "God Is."

Starr said the song offers a clear view of God's characteristics.

"It is a deep desire of mine to simply share with others the character of God, to be a voice of en-



couragement to the church, and a voice to share about who God is with those who might not know Him," she said. "He is our promise. Our refuge. Our strength."

Her recently completed "Save the Storks" tour raised money for and awareness of local pregnancy resource centers.

Starr is known for her loyal online fan base. The music videos for Starr's previous singles "Don't Have Love" and "Through My Father's Eyes" have collectively exceeded 1 million YouTube views to date.

Gospel Festival returns to Del Mar Fair

The San Diego County Fair's 10th Annual Gospel Festival, a daylong tribute using five stages, will be held June 28 at the Del Mar Fairgrounds.

The Grandstand Stage headliner will be award-winning gospel artist Fred Hammond. A singer, songwriter, bassist and producer, Hammond earned a 2008 Grammy Award for Best Contemporary R&B Gospel Album for "Free to Worship."

He has also earned six Dove Awards, including Urban Album, Contemporary Gospel Album, Contemporary Gospel Song and Inspirational Album, and four Stellar Awards for Producer and Male Vocalist of the Year. Three of his albums—Love Unstoppable (2009), God, Love & Romance (2012) and United Tenors (2013)—reached No. 1 on the Top Gospel Album chart.

Other gospel groups and solo acts will be added in the coming weeks.

The Grandstand show is free with



Fred Hammond will headline the Gospel Festival at the 2014 San Diego County Fair.

fair admission for unreserved seats, but reserved seats may be purchased for an additional fee.

Writing her own story

Francesca Battistelli, whose single "Write Your Story" peaked at No. 4 on Billboard's Hot Christian Songs list after her live performance earlier this year on

"Good Morning America," is hoping for a similar outcome for her studio album, *If We're Honest*, which was scheduled for release April 22.

Advance publicity for the project, produced by her longtime collaborator Ian Eskelin, a Grammy-nominated and Dove Award-winning producer, says the album "reveals her most intimate and accomplished musical statement yet and showcases her trademark pop and soul-infused sound."

Battistelli's two previous albums, debut release *My Paper Heart* and sophomore project *Hundred More Years*, hit No. 1 on Billboard's Christian Album chart. With her most recent release in 2011, she garnered Artist of the Year, Female Vocalist of the Year and Pop/Recorded Song of the Year at the Dove Awards.



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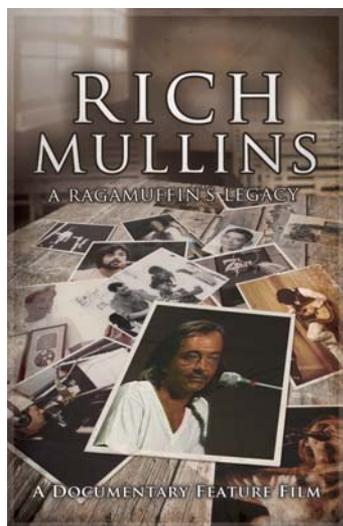
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EXPEDITION OUTBACK

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Dual film projects chronicle spiritual journey of the late Rich Mullins

A new documentary film chronicling the life of the late Rich Mullins, the Christian musician who wrote the wildly popular song “Awesome God,” has been released even as a movie on his life will be released in limited theaters across the country.

“Rich Mullins: A Ragamuffin’s Legacy,” features behind-the-scenes footage as well as exclusive interviews with friends and family garnered during the research phase for the feature film, “Ragamuffin: The True Story of Rich Mullins.” Mullins released eight albums and a musical before being killed in a 1997 automobile crash on his way to a benefit concert. His final album, *The Jesus Record*, featuring cuts he made on a mini-recorder, was released posthumously.

In his later years, Mullins shunned what he believed to be an ineffective church, preferring instead to spend his time with the poor. He lived for a time on a Navajo Indian reservation and his musical, “Canticle of the Plains,” was a modern tribute to St. Francis of Assisi, one of his spiritual influences.

He was posthumously honored by his peers with three Gospel Music Association Awards for Artist of the Year, Song of the Year and Songwriter of the Year.

The full-length movie, produced by Color Green Films, is scheduled for a May 2 release in 30 U.S. cities, including Irvine. A testimony on overcoming brokenness, the

film chronicles Mullin’s journey, beginning as a young child.

“This is a story of redemption,” Mullins’ longtime friend Kathy Sprinkle told Assist News Service. “Hard things can happen to us in our lives, but if we’re willing to face them down, understand, or to seek help from other people, God can redeem those things.”

Sprinkle acknowledged Mullins was not the type of person who would be comfortable with the focus so squarely on him.

But she said, “I think if Rich saw the truth and redemption in the movie, and if he thought it would help even one person, relationship-wise, he would say, ‘Have at it.’ I think he would appreciate the healing part of this movie.”

For more information on the feature film, visit www.ragamuffinthemovie.com.

‘Irreplaceable’

The role of the family takes center stage in “Irreplaceable,” a new documentary by Fathom Events, Focus on the Family and Pine Creek Entertainment. The film was set to debut May 6.

“Irreplaceable” follows Tim Sisarich, executive director of Focus on the Family New Zealand, as he explores the answers to two critical questions: “What is family?” and “Does family still matter in today’s society?” Transversing the globe, “Irreplaceable” attempts to answer these central questions by spotlighting cultural, historical and religious experiences.

According to the documentary’s producers, half of all American children will witness the breakup of a parent’s marriage;



Tim Sisarich, executive director of Focus on the Family New Zealand, narrates the documentary “Irreplaceable,” which explores the role of family against the backdrop of cultural, historical and religious experiences.

approximately onethird of U.S. children live without their fathers; 85 percent of all youths in prison come from fatherless homes and 80 percent of youth gang members come out of fatherless homes

“The film lifts up God’s design for the family and brings to the culture an aspirational view of why God’s design for the family is still the best design, and how people of faith can preserve family values,” the film’s publicists said.



‘The Nut Job’

The animated, action-packed comedy “The Nut Job,” starring Will Arnett (“Despicable Me,” “Ratatouille”), has released on Blu-ray, DVD and Digital HD. The inspiring adventure is also available on demand from Universal Studios Home Entertainment.

Arnett plays Surly, a mischievous and selfish squirrel, who is on a mission: to find—and then hoard—the tastiest nuts for winter. When he discovers a whole store filled with his favorite food, he plans a heist of nutrageous proportions. But the place turns out to be owned by ruthless bank robbers so it’s up to Surly and his furry friends to stop the nearby bank heist and save the town. Along the way Surly learns about commitment, sacrifice and what it means to be a true friend.

The film, which drew stellar reviews from Focus on the Family, the Dove Foundation, Movieguide and Catholic News Service, also stars Brendan Fraser (“The Mummy,” “Gimme Shelter”), Liam Neeson (“Non-Stop,” “The Grey”) and Katherine Heigl (“The Love Series,” “27 Dresses”).

‘Moms’ Night Out:’ A hilarious celebration of motherhood

by MICHAEL FOUST

This month there will be lots of moms walking out of theaters from coast to coast proclaiming, “That’s the best movie I’ve ever seen.” Seconds later they may add, “And the funniest.”

The film, which opens May 9, is called “Moms’ Night Out,” and it’s the latest movie from the brother/director duo who brought us the successful 2012 faith-based film “October Baby.” While that one would be best described as “good,” their latest endeavor easily deserves the label of “great.”

It’s faith-based, mainstream, inspirational and hilarious—so much so that I watched it twice. It does for moms what “Courageous” did for dads—that is, affirm, inspire and encourage them, making them want to become better at their God-given role. If they begin the movie feeling beaten down, they’ll end it lifted up. And laughing. And likely crying.

“Moms’ Night Out” spotlights a stressed-out young mom, Allyson (Sarah Drew), who wants a night away from the house with two of her friends at a nice restaurant. With the dads watching the kids, nothing can go wrong, right? The mommy trio soon discovers that an evening of fun can turn into an evening of disaster in a snap, and before you know it, they’re at a bowling alley, then a tattoo parlor and then ... well, I’ll let you find out.

It’s one of the funniest movies I’ve ever seen. It’s also one of the most moving. I cried ... several times.

It stars such mainstream actors as Drew (“Grey’s Anatomy”), Sean Astin (“The Lord of The Rings,” Rudy”) and Patricia Heaton (“Everybody Loves Raymond”) but also such faith-based staples as Robert Amaya (“Courageous”) and Alex Kendrick (“Courageous,” “Facing the Giants”). Singer Trace Adkins also



PHOTO CREDIT: SAEED ADYANI

Izzy (Andrea Logan White), Allyson (Sarah Drew), Sondra (Patricia Heaton) and Zoe (Sammi Hanratty) share good news with the search-and-rescue party in MOMS’ NIGHT OUT, the new family comedy from Sony Affirm and Provident Films, in theaters May 9.

has a major role.

Faith-based films have taken gigantic leaps in recent years, and “Moms’ Night Out” easily continues that trend. It also breaks new ground. No faith-based comedy has ever had such a large budget or theatrical release. Thankfully, because of “Moms’ Night Out,” there probably will be more like it. It’s a hilarious movie, and oh yeah, it’s clean.

Andrew Erwin, co-director along with his brother Jon, told Refreshed that they were able to do something few directors

achieve: get their first choices in actors and actresses.

“That rarely happens,” he said.

The talent level is evident on screen. Heaton, Drew, Astin and the others are, as Erwin put it, “naturally funny people.”

Erwin called “Moms’ Night Out” a “celebration of motherhood.”

“People will be able to relate to it. It’s about parenting and about kids and about all those things we love,” he said.

Learn more at momsnightoutmovie.com.

Music summit and concert

SAN DIEGO — Urban Network Digital will hold its “Back to Basics: The Music and Entertainment Summit” conference beginning at 5 p.m. May 1 at Four Points by Sheraton.

The networking conference kick-off features the “Ultimate Gospel Celebration” concert.

Special guests include Brent Jones and Jessica Reedy.

Tickets for the concert are \$10.

The hotel is located at 8110 Aero Drive.

For more information, call (858) 650-3190.

CYT lets its hair down with ‘Rapunzel’

PACIFIC BEACH — The Central branch of the Christian Youth Theater will present “Rapunzel” beginning at 7 p.m. May 16 at Pacific Beach Middle School.

Additional performances will be held at 7 p.m. May 17, 23 and 24 and at 2 p.m. May 18 and 24.

Tickets are \$15 online and \$18 at the door.

Additional shows are being produced at other regional branches, including “Peter Pan,” May 16 to 25 at Greenfield Middle School; “The Little Mermaid,” May 16 to 25 at Mater Dei High School; “Aladdin,” May 24 to June 1 at the Star Theatre; “Thoroughly Modern Millie,” June 13 to 22 at American Spirit Theater.

Learn more at www.cytsandiego.org.

Church honors its pastor emeritus

SAN DIEGO — Paradise Hills Southern Baptist Church will honor its Pastor Emeritus Dr. Aaron W. Eurich during a special service and luncheon fellowship on May 4.

Eurich, who served the congregation

for 38 years, was named Pastor Emeritus upon his May 30, 2011 retirement.

The church was launched in July 1956 as a mission plant of Highland Avenue Baptist Church in National City. A core group of seven or eight families worked to grow the new mission and the first service was held on July 21, 1956.

Under Eurich’s guidance, the church opened the Children’s Paradise Preschool in 1975 and in March 1983 the congregation made its last payment on the Cumberland Street property and the church became debt-free.

Learn more at www.phsbc.net or by calling (619) 479-4111.

Church gets green light after zoning battle

GUATAY — A rural East County church has won a six-year zoning battle with the County of San Diego after securing a Minor Deviation Permit that will allow them to continue meeting in a former country-western barn.

“We’re extremely pleased with this positive outcome,” said Brad Dacus, president of Pacific Justice Institute.

One of the institute’s affiliate attorneys, Pete Lepisco, represented the church.

“Our nation needs more churches, and governments not standing in their way,” Dacus said.

According to the church’s attorneys, Guatay Christian Fellowship operated at the site for 25 years when the county told them they were violating local ordinances and had to apply for a costly Major Use Permit. They were ordered to shut down or face \$2,500 in daily civil fines, plus criminal penalties.

The church shut down for six weeks until Lepisco was able to secure an injunction. The less-intensive Minor Deviation Permit now allows them to operate without having to endure the protracted process of securing a Major Use Permit.

Learn more at www.guataychurch.com.

Navigating bitterness, anxiety

SAN MARCOS — “Love That Look” is the theme of the San Marcos–Vista

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Liberty Bible College & Seminary

Christian Women’s Club luncheon set for 11:30 a.m. May 19 at the St. Mark Golf Club, the former Lake San Marcos Country Club.

The guest speaker will be Carrie Payne, an Orange County traffic supervisor and an inspirational and motivational speaker, who will discuss how to overcome anger, bitterness and anxiety in the quest to find real peace.

The luncheon will also host the “Fashions Forever” fashion show by Placentia-based Eileen Gerber.

Reservations are requested by May 15, although walk-ins are welcome.

The luncheon is sponsored by Stonecroft Ministries/Christian Women’s Club

The cost of the luncheon is \$18.

The country club is located at 1750 San Pablo Drive.

Learn more at www.Stonecroft.org or call (760) 432-0772.

Food Network star to speak at luncheon

SAN DIEGO — First United Methodist Church of San Diego will hold its Spring Fling for Women at 11 a.m. May 10. The guest speaker for the event will be Food Network celebrity chef Melissa d’Arabian.



d’Arabian is the host of “Ten Dollar

Dinners,” a show she earned as the winner of “The Next Food Network Star.” She is also a *New York Times* best-selling cookbook author. She will present an inspirational and motivational message based on her personal journey of faith through family, work and life’s challenges.

The emcee and maitre d’ for the day will be 10News weathercaster Pat Brown. Mike Farmer will deejay, while Christian vocalist Deanna Ramsey will perform.

Admission, which includes door prize drawings, is \$20.

The church is located at 2111 Camino del Rio South.

Learn more at www.fumcsd.org/springfling or by calling (619) 297-4366.

Sean McDowell to host youth Summit conference

LA MIRADA — Sean McDowell, a nationally recognized apologist who has ministered to young people for two decades, will host Summit Ministries’ inaugural California conference from June 15 to 27.

McDowell, the son of evangelist and apologist Josh McDowell, has served on the faculty for Summit conferences in Colorado and Tennessee and helped to bring the intensive training camp to Biola, where he serves as an assistant professor for the university’s Master of Arts Program in Christian Apologetics.

“When I was a teen, my dad encouraged me to go to Summit,” McDowell said. “What I learned at Summit was in-

tegral to me holding on to my faith. Summit provided a safe place for me to ask questions and find legitimate answers.”

The 12-day conference gives students ages 16 to 22 the chance to be mentored by Christian leaders in academia, public policy and business. Students are taught to analyze cultural messages they encounter every day. Topics include conversational apologetics, biblical marriage and other cultural issues.

Also participating in the event as youth were Ryan Dobson, son of Dr. James Dobson, who now works alongside his famous father at Family Talk, and Lila Rose, a prominent pro-life advocate who founded Live Action.

Founded in 1962, Summit’s mission is to train up rising leaders in biblical worldviews.

“If it wasn’t for the Summit Conference, I might have turned to the wrong source for my questions and wouldn’t be

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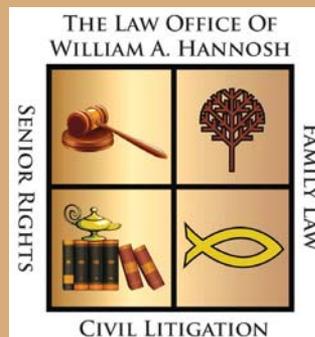
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speaking about the very issues I wrestled with,” McDowell said. “When young adults attend one of the conferences, they will increase their likelihood of staying strong in their faith. With Summit’s new California conference at Biola, we can help train even more young leaders to champion a biblical worldview. I’m thrilled to be a part of this.”

Learn more at www.summit.org/the-Summit.

Kirk Cameron to keynote homeschool convention

The Golden State’s biggest homeschool event, the 31st Annual Christian Home Educators Association Convention, will be held May 29 to 31 at the Disneyland Hotel.

Actor and director Kirk Cameron, homeschool dad and CHEA member, will deliver the keynote address Friday and host a free screening of his movie,

“Mercy Rule.”

A new feature this year is a free mini-conference, set for May 29 with keynote speaker Dr. Brian Ray, whose topic is “Just the Facts, Ma’am: Homeschooling Works.” Ray is the founder and president of the National Home Education Research Institute.

After the keynote session, a free seminar, “Introduction to Home Education,” will be offered from 6:35 to 8 p.m., with free entry to the Exhibit Hall Preview from 8 to 9 p.m.

Other planned events include a high school graduation ceremony, the Themes in Focus feature, the annual Support Network Leadership Conference for homeschool group leaders, a Children’s Convention, the popular Teen Convention, a Homeschool Mock Trial Tournament and a used curriculum exchange. Themes in Focus highlights subjects that attendees have indicated are most important, and will include begin-

ning homeschooling, special needs, high school and beyond, preschool, family life and finances and worldview issues. In all, nearly 70 workshops for both beginners and veterans are scheduled.

One of the perennial favorites of the convention is the Exhibit Hall, with nearly 200 vendor booths offering curriculum, college prep, information on colleges, ministry, and teaching resources.

Other speakers include Steve and Annette Economides, America’s Money-Smart Family, and Andrew Pudewa of the Institute for Excellence in Writing.

The convention is hosted by the 32-year-old Christian Home Educators Association of California, the only statewide Christian homeschool advocacy organization that works year-round on behalf of the state’s homeschooling community.

Registration information is available at www.cheaofca.org.

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Tension at 35,000 feet

God has such a wonderful sense of humor.

No sooner had I written last month's column about the need to get out of our "comfort zones," I had a chance to test my own philosophy. In the article, I suggested we reach out to others, even when it's uncomfortable.

That's before I ran into the guy sitting in seat 3-A on a flight from New York to San Diego. More about him in a moment.

A few years ago I was speaking at a conference in Atlanta. As I welcomed the crowd, setting the tone for the day, it was time to introduce Adm. Vern Clark, former chief of U.S. Naval Operations.

In opening remarks I lamented that maybe our country was getting a little jaded after years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. I cited my flight into Georgia, when a flight attendant did an announcement that several active duty men and women were on board... and no one paid attention. Well, barely. Just a smattering of applause.

I then challenged attendees to make it a point to greet *anyone we see in uniform*, thanking them for their service, always. Later that day, I walked over to a nearby Atlanta mall food court. There, suddenly, was a sea of military personnel, probably 100 men and women.

God's sense of humor indeed. I quickly understood that it's not always as easy as it sounds to do something that makes a difference. However it is important to start *somewhere*, even if everything or everyone can't be covered.

Back to the guy in Seat 3-A.

After a whirlwind business trip to New York, I was flying home. It had been a busy couple of days, so I was ready to relax. As I settled in to seat 3-B, I noticed the older man in 3-A seemed fidgety and irritable. He was also a little

large for the seat, even in first class.

From the first words uttered, it was evident he sounded like he had been cast as a stereotypical New Yorker... anything he said had a "Hey, whatta you lookin' at?" tone.

Other than a courtesy "hello" I didn't feel like yakking with someone surly, the entire flight. So I immersed myself in emails and reading, while Mr. 3-A spewed his first greeting to the flight attendant:

"Hey! Got any wattuh?"

Yes, she did, and he took it from her without a thank you. Then, on went his noise-reduction headphones (for him, not anyone else).

The barking of orders continued,

There wasn't a person within earshot of The Guy in 3-A who didn't feel uncomfortable.

then eventually there was the over-loud chomping of food that would drive Miss Manners up a wall or two.

"I'll have the chicken."

"Ya gotta a fork?"

"Got any salt?"

Not long after the initial rudeness, the pleasant, upbeat flight attendant dropped a tray full of glasses in the adjacent galley. It was clear the guy had gotten to her, and it was going to be a long flight.

I decided to move forward and visit the lavatory. On the way, I took the flight attendant aside and whispered something, letting her know I was concerned about the passenger. She replied, "Yes! He really rattled me." It was all over her face: Thanks for caring. I noted that she only broke a couple of glasses, no one got hurt, all was well, overall.

There wasn't a person within earshot of The Guy in 3-A who didn't feel uncomfortable. And the louder and more boorish he was, the more it made others fidgety.

So I committed to going a little overboard for rest of the flight. When I asked for something, it was back to "please and thank you" basics. But I laid it on a little thicker, every time I had a chance.

After another hour, the results became noticeable. My seatmate began to say "please" more often, with an occasional "thank you VERY much."

He still wasn't very sociable, and with headphones use it was clear he didn't want to chat, either. But as he became more civil, the tension decreased in the cabin.

Once we left the plane (or as airlines call it, amusingly, "de-plane-ing") the man was on the cell phone with his

wife on the East Coast, apparently continuing whatever wound him up before takeoff.

I know we can't solve everyone's problems, nor is it always possible to start a conversation. But we can always find the right words—pleasant things to say—that can improve situations and change the immediate atmosphere around us.



Mark Larson is a veteran Southern California radio/television personality and media consultant. His voice is heard on KPRZ 1210AM, and his weekday talk

show airs mornings 6-9 on KCBQ 1170AM. Learn more at www.marklarson.com.

KIMBERLY RUBY

To detox or not: Is 'internal' spring cleaning a must?

The ad reads “Liver Detox Program’ delivered to your door, only \$39 per day.”

As a nutritionist with a busy practice, I’m always amazed at the new spins, twists and wallet-tugs from companies trying to “re-invent” health, whether it’s fear-based, fad-based or just trying to get you the consumer so dissatisfied with your body and life, you will leap at anything.

Let me prove a point; have you ever seen so many references to “going green?”

Green carpet cleaning, green fuel emissions, green solar and my favorite, green hamster bedding. As a society, we are all “going” green.

To be sure, I’m all for being good stewards of our earth and our temples, but when a young college student approaches me and tells me she is having a daily colon-cleansing “green drink” from a local juice joint but can’t seem to shed weight and feels queasy, that’s where I have to question the ingredients and claims of these seductive “healthy” beverages.

Investigating the \$6 juice on their website, I’m taken aback at the total calories of this snappy-named concoction: 420 calories and 78 grams of sugar! Remembering that 4 grams is equal to one teaspoon of sugar (or one sugar cube), I quickly realize she’s starting her day with a whopping 19.5 teaspoons of natural “green” sugar.

“Stop drinking your calories,” I tell her.

Let me fortify my claim and say I do believe there is a place for fasting and detox regimens. I’ve even designed several cleanses with undeniable results. I tell my patients, using wisdom and science will determine the success of a short, well-planned purifying program.

Elson Haas, M.D., author of the best-

selling book “The Detox Diet,” whom I have met on several occasions, describes detoxification as the process of “clearing or neutralizing toxins from the body which can help in reducing excess acidity, mucus, inflammation and congestion.”

Because bad habits undermine our health, the primary action of radically changing our diets for a time is that we are putting on the “brakes” to eliminate destructive behavior as we examine more healthful choices. Think of detoxification as a “thought-shift.”

Healthy bodies are created to endure both internal and external toxins. But when excesses occur, such as exposure to pesticides, toxins, ingestion of large amounts of alcohol, poor diets and long-term nutrient deficiencies (to mention a few), over time these excesses may result in disease. I have seen dietary cleanses relieve constipation, heartburn, nasal congestion, fatigue, metabolic disease and even depressed moods.

How do I start?

There are several ranges of dietary detoxification levels; consuming only raw (uncooked) foods for a time, reducing or eliminating all added sugar, caffeine, soda and added fats or concentrating on programs that are more liquid in nature, such as green juicing, very moderate fruit juicing and vegetable broths. Resources abound in your local libraries and bookstores on healthful fasting and cleansing options.

Length of cleanses and fasts can be anywhere from 24 hours to several days. I always recommend seeking approval from your family physicians first, as they know your health history best.

Spiritual fasting

Biblical fasting is still relevant and intended for believers today. There are



many references to fasting in both the Old and New Testaments; Jesus and His followers prayed and fasted. (Luke 5:35, Matthew 6:16, Matthew 9:14, Acts: 9:9) They didn’t fast from eating Mediterranean chocolate or watching their favorite chariot games; they fasted from eating. The emphasis in fasting is always focusing on spiritual matters over fleshly concerns.

Author Marilyn Hickey seems to best summarize biblical fasting as this: “Fasting and prayer put you in the best possible position for a spiritual breakthrough.” In other words, hungering for God—and Him alone—to satisfy!

As you can see, there is a time and season for detoxing the body, the spirit and the mind. Bad dietary choices along with negative thinking patterns keep us from realizing every good thing God has intended for our growth and vitality. Serving Him and others is the most honorable form of worship and doing it with bodies that are prepared and well-tuned allow us to experience peace at even a higher level, a level that brings all glory to Him.

I invite you to email me at kim@ucprx.com if you have any suggestions for future articles or if you would like to comment on this one. Peace and health to you, my friend!



Kimberly Ruby, certified nutritionist at University Compounding Pharmacy, has been in the wellness industry for more than 20 years. She has been facilitating one of the

longest running weight management support groups in the nation, meeting weekly in the North County for 10 years. Her health segments have appeared on local news channels.

The power of ONE can realign our financial priorities

One stroke...

Last January, my husband and I were watching the Farmers Open held at Torrey Pines. On the back nine, there were six players, any of whom could have won that tournament. Scott Stallings was one of them. He needed a birdie to pull this off and he did just that, shutting out the five other players, all of whom were just one stroke behind him. My husband shouted, "One stroke, Jan, can you believe it, he won it by one stroke!" While watching the tournament it struck me how significant the number one can be. Just when it looked like a playoff might be inevitable, Scott clinched the tournament and walked away with one million dollars.

One focus...

Rather than set New Year's Resolutions this year, I decided to focus on one word that had the potential to significantly help me achieve some much needed lifestyle changes this year. My one word for 2014 is *health*. I want to be more physically fit and be living a more balanced life by this time next year. After identifying areas of my life that were out of alignment, I began asking myself with each daily choice that presented itself, "*Is this healthy?*" Is eating the entire box of Godiva chocolates a client graciously gave me healthy? Is working six or seven days a week healthy? While I am passionate about my profession, I knew this was not a balanced way to live. Interestingly, evaluating choices through this filter for the past four months has recalibrated my

focus and is bringing about changes I have struggled with for years.

One degree...

On a recent 15-hour flight from Los Angeles to Sydney, Australia I had the strange impulse to figure out where we might land if our pilot was just one degree off course. I was stunned to learn there was a high probability we would have experienced a water landing—definitely not our intended destination! If you think about that over a lifetime, one degree off course makes a significant difference.

Let me draw a parallel to your financial life. Just as a carefully calibrated GPS can help you land within 25 feet of just about any intended destination, a carefully calibrated financial plan can

help you chart a course that truly reflects the desires of your heart and creates a more meaningful legacy for your heirs. Often, however, given the choice between lifestyle today and financial freedom tomorrow, many people opt to live for today, an action that incrementally draws them farther off course as time goes by.

We have all been given gifts of time, talent, treasure and relationships to help bring meaning and purpose to our lives and make a difference in the lives around us. Money is *not* the end goal. It is a tool—granted, a very important one—to help us realize this purpose.

Can you identify areas in your financial life that you could apply my "*Is this*

healthy" concept? Here are some starting points: Are you thinking long-term and preparing for retirement? Have you defined your financial finish line? If God has blessed you with excess, are you ensuring it is a *blessing and not a curse* to those you are leaving it to? How are you preparing your heirs to be wise stewards?

For some it may begin with a focus on cash flow planning or a consistent pattern of saving. For others, it may be establishing a comprehensive estate plan or intentionally disciplining your heirs. Everyone has a unique course they are traveling and the longer this important one-degree concept is ignored, the greater the chance of a "water landing."

One stroke ...One focus...One degree...they all have the potential to make a big difference as time goes by! What one focus will help you be in a different financial place one year, 10 years, 30 years from now? There are 360 degrees and every one of them matters. Pick just "one degree" today that will focus your financial life on long-term impact and start thinking about tomorrow, today!

A side note: I believe in this concept so much that my company has just merged with another like-minded firm and we are now operating under our new company name: One Degree Advisors, Inc.



Janice Thompson is a certified financial planner and co-founder/CEO of One Degree Advisors, Inc. A frequent speaker on financial topics and mentor for financial

professionals, she also serves on the board of directors for Kingdom Advisors. Learn more at www.onedegreeadvisors.com.

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DAVID & LISA FRISBIE

R-E-S-P-E-C-T: That is what he needs from her

After speaking for a week at a beautiful mountain conference center in the eastern United States, we were getting to know the other speakers fairly well. Some of them were nationally known and comparatively “famous” and it was fun to discover that they were normal people, humble and approachable and open. We enjoyed our chance to share meals with them; we loved swapping travel stories backstage in the green room, while we all waited to go out and present our material.

At the end of a busy week of speaking and presenting, one of the speakers asked for a brief counseling appointment with us. His name recognition is at least national and in some ways global: He could legitimately claim to be a famous person. He’s also one of the most fun and funniest speakers we’ve met along our journey.

About 10 minutes into our session together, here’s what he told us:

“I feel like I’m respected all over the world,” he said with a quiet sigh. “Everyone respects me, everywhere I go. Then I get home from a long trip like this, and I walk in my front door.”

About 20 minutes into our session he was in tears, literally. As he unpacked the baggage of a frustrating and damaged relationship, he wept for the loss of a genuine, supportive friendship with the woman he married. He confided that the one place in the world where he didn’t get compliments, encouragement or useful and supportive feedback—was at home with his wife.

“In the place where it matters to me the most,” he told us, his voice trembling with raw emotion, “it often feels like I am respected the least.”

His secrets are safe with us, yet his story is in no way unique.

One of the most frequent laments we hear from today’s husbands is that they don’t feel respected, valued, admired or supported by their wives—although they may be succeeding in their careers or be widely respected elsewhere. Some of these husbands admit to us that they *are* receiving positive feedback from other women, sometimes a co-worker or perhaps even a woman at church. After a while, a discouraged husband may notice the contrast between high respect elsewhere and lack of respect at home—and

RESPECT

this contrast may become a factor in infidelity or the end of a marriage union.

The lack of respect at home does not excuse a straying husband’s behavior but it may predict it, or in some ways explain how it happened in the first place.

So with that said, wives, here is what your husbands need from you:

R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

Although respect can be shown and demonstrated in a lot of ways, for this article we’ll center on verbal feedback. Writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul advises all of us to “use helpful words” and to “avoid harmful words.” (Ephesians 4:28). Paul’s inspired wisdom is universal and meant for all of us, but it fits beautifully within the context of the relationship between a husband and a wife.

When you avoid harmful words, you stay away from comments or statements that tear down or belittle

your husband. Comedienne Roseanne Barr is hilarious in many ways, but she’s also an excellent role model for how *not* to talk to your husband. She’s also a great example of how not to talk *about* your husband with others. When you belittle your husband when sharing with others, even “confidentially”—you may tear down the respect that others have for him. Sometimes this damage is irreversible.

Instilling confidence

By contrast, when you build up your husband with your words—supporting and encouraging him on a regular basis—his confidence grows and his optimism soars. He feels more capable and more successful—feelings that are important for all males. And when you speak positively about

your husband to others—you increase the respect that others—his friends and family—already have for him. Positive feedback has a way of leading to positive outcomes: for yourself and for your marriage.

If you can’t be perfect at this (and who can?) you can at least do better. Resolve today to say fewer harmful words, and to use more helpful words, when interacting with your husband or when talking about him with others. Start making the small changes that can lead to a big difference in the quality of your relationship.



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25 books about marriage and family life, including their recent book “Becoming Your Husband’s Best Friend” (Harvest House Publishers)

8 stress-reducing steps to a happier family

When you're at the hospital preparing to take home that 7-pound bundle of joy, the nurses don't provide any advice on dealing with stress. They don't even hand you a book.

I was thinking about stress recently when my wife called me at work and said, in a tone of voice that matched the circumstance: "There's water in our basement!"

We already had a garbage disposal that wasn't working, a dishwasher that was leaking and a clothes drier that wasn't drying. With three small children, clean clothes and dishes are a necessity. Things weren't looking good, but God soon provided. The basement leak slowed, and we pinpointed the problem. We fixed the drier (lint blockage) and then discovered that the dishwasher leak was linked to the broken garbage disposal.

Through it all, we told one another: Don't stress out, this is small potatoes. In other words: Keep things in perspective.

Everyone deals with stress differently, but when you're surrounded by (sweet but) demanding children who have needs, it becomes essential to learn to cope with it.

Here are eight ways that have helped me cope with stress that just might benefit you, too, especially if you're a parent:

1. Keep an eternal perspective. In other words, understand that all the "stuff" we're consumed with at the moment—that casserole in the oven, that sporting event on TV, that home improvement project—is meaningless in the long run. James tells us that our life is like a "mist" (James 4:14) that soon will disappear, and Paul urges us to keep our eyes on the prize (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Paul's not talking about money. Our primary responsibility as

parents is to transform our children and teenagers into Christ-followers, but too often we get distracted. The "stuff" really doesn't matter.

2. Keep a life-long perspective. That moment that raised your blood pressure last week? You'll be laughing about it in a few years, perhaps already. And you'll look back at today's events fondly. That's how we are: Today's stressful moments turn into tomorrow's precious, funny memories. When my oldest son grows up I'll tell him about the time when we all went on a hike and he threw a fit right there on the trail—two miles from the car. He refused to move. I was frustrated with him, but days later laughing about it. After all, he was only 3.

3. Simplify your life. Look at your daily schedule. Do you struggle to find time to eat? Learn to say "no" to friends and family—and even to your church—if that will lessen your stress and improve your family life. Realize that everything does not have to be done today. Prioritize what's important.

4. Take a break. Just as our bodies need a night of rest each day, our minds and souls need a break, too. That includes time alone with God. It also could include a book or a TV show or a hobby or a conversation with a friend. It just needs to be relaxing.

5. Take a breath. Experts say that breathing helps during moments of stress, and they're right. When my three children are all crying in a chorus of high-pitched screams, I'll often take a

deep breath, and then perhaps another, and then I'm fine.

6. Look at old pictures. And videos. Taking a trip down memory lane will help remind you that you really *do* have a sweet family and that all the frustration really *is* worth it. An evening looking at old videos probably is funnier than the latest TV sitcom, anyway.



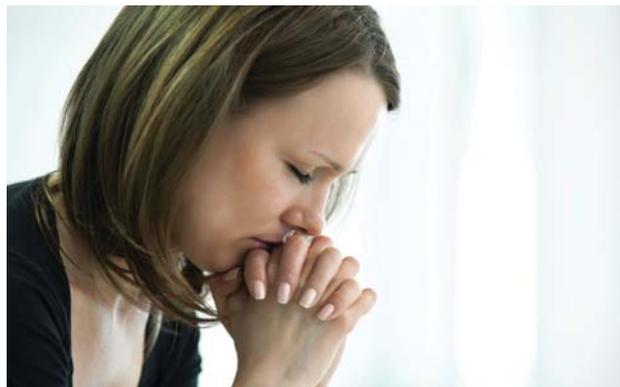
7. Listen to music—and sing. It's no accident that infants often stop crying when they hear music. It's because we were *made* to enjoy music—and it's relaxing. If that doesn't work, then ...

8. Go outside. It's called fresh air for a reason. Blue skies and green grass beat white walls and brown carpet any day, right? If you have time, take a hike. Yelp.com and AllTrails.com have a great listing of hikes in the San Diego County area. Go to a local park. Or even better, pack a lunch, get in the car ... and just go to the beach.



Michael Foust is the father of three small children, a writer and editor, and blogs about parenting at www.michaelfoust.com.

Finding good in the bad



Have you ever worried about wearing out Romans 8:28? It's one of the greatest promises in the Bible: *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."*

"All" makes it universal—not just some, but all things work together for good. No matter what happens, God finds good in bad and transforms burdens into blessings. Romans 8:28 covers all contingencies—like a blank check for the Christian, good at any time, drawn on the bank of God's infinite wisdom and power.

How do we cash this check and find good in the bad?

Perhaps someone reading these words is facing tragic or complicated circumstances. Afflictions come—but God's powerful promise in Romans 8:28 can overcome.

Claim this promise and capitalize on its truth.

Give the burden to the Lord

First, give your burden to the Lord. Remember Psalm 55:22: *"Cast your burden on the Lord...He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved."* Lay your burden on the altar. If it crawls off, put it back on the altar.

You could have a "turning over" time—a ceremony where you "officially" give your problem to the Lord: *"casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you"* (1 Peter 5:7).

Latch on to God's promises

Turning your burden over to God leaves a vacancy in your heart that God's promises can fill. Learn the vital art of recording God's promises on your heart—cleave to them, be saturated by their power.

Find a promise, put your name on

it, write it in the flyleaf of your Bible, or post it under the glass on your desk. And lay hold of its penetrating power.

Practice a platitude

Third, practice the great old platitudes. Adopt one or two as an expression of your philosophy. Here's a sampling:

- Christians live by promises, not explanations.
 - Every problem has a purpose.
 - God won't give us more than we can bear.
 - When you can't trace God's hand, you can trust His heart.
 - God doesn't waste suffering. If He plows, it's because He purposes a crop.
- Preaching to ourselves is less offensive than listening to others toss platitudes at our pain.

Rest

It's also important to find ways of getting a good night's sleep during painful periods in life. When we're tired, we worry more, grieve more, hurt more deeply, feel more hopeless. During Elijah's depression, God gave him rest and refreshment (1 Kings 19).

The Bible says that God gives His beloved sleep.

Look for opportunities in the crisis

Finally, look for opportunities in the crisis. In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were flogged. After hours of hurting, they began praying and singing, witnessing and winning even their jailer.

Evelyn Hersey, a missionary in Japan, sought for years to win a certain man to Christ. She eventually returned to America with terminal cancer. As she was dying, she called her Japanese friend and said, "Don't worry

about me; I'm bound for heaven. I just want you to know we love you and I'll be praying for you."

Soon afterward, the man became a Christian. "How could I fail to trust a Savior," he said, "who gave my friend the kindness and love to pray for me even while she was sick and dying?"

It's not always possible to instantly see good results from bad circum-

Turning your burden over to God leaves a vacancy in your heart that God's promises can fill.

stances. Blessings are not like jack-in-the-boxes that shoot up suddenly when the crank is turned. It often takes months and years for things to work together for good. God has all eternity at His disposal, and He isn't in a hurry.

Faith is choosing to trust God's ability to fulfill Romans 8:28 even when the answers are not immediately apparent. That's why the Bible tells us to "wait on the Lord." The great hymnist, Henry Lyte, expressed it this way in his wonderful hymn, "Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken:"

*I have called Thee "Abba, Father,"
I have set my heart on Thee.
Storms may howl and clouds may gather,
All must work for good to me.*



Dr. David Jeremiah is the senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon and the founder of Turning Point for God radio and television ministry. Learn

more at www.davidjeremiah.org.



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JOANNE BROKAW

The insanity of motherhood

I was talking with a friend recently about parenting or, more specifically, how mothers throughout history have managed to maintain their sanity while raising children to become, if not the president, at least adults who don't call their co-workers "Poopy Head."

We were at a picnic and my friend's 2-year-old had just warned me with a smile that he was going to bite me, while her 3-year-old was determined to shake the table until everyone's plates were either in their laps or on the ground. She desperately tried to maintain her composure while reprimanding them, but I could see it in her eyes: she wanted to throw them both in the trunk of the car until the party was over.

Someone sitting at another table leaned over and suggested that if she ignored her kids they'd stop acting up. While that might be true in theory, any mother knows that it's impossible to ignore a child banging a spoon on a glass table, and not just because you're worried that someone will get hurt. It's the judgmental "tsk-tsking" and unsolicited advice from onlookers that motivates a mother to yank little Jimmy by the arm and hiss through clenched teeth, "If I have to tell you one more time..."

You know," I said, catching my glass of lemonade as it was about to tip over, "I was shopping yesterday and this woman came up the greeting card aisle with three kids who were clearly driving her crazy. I know because she told them that if they didn't cut it out she was going to take off her flip-flop and beat them with it."

The kids, I explained, had found the section with cards that, when opened,



played music. While they were opening card after card and dancing to snippets of disco songs, their mother was calling down threats upon their heads that involved everything from banishment to their rooms to getting "it" (which, I assumed, was something worse than a beating with a flip-flop).

As a shopper, I wasn't really disturbed by the kids. Just minutes before, I had been opening those same cards and giggling. If they were that amusing to an adult, imagine how tempting they were to a trio of 8- and 9-year-olds.

I was more bothered by their mother's threats of bodily harm—until I remembered that when my own daughter was young it seemed as if her goal in life was to slowly drive me insane, mostly by asking the question "What is that?" 200 times an hour. There were moments when I wondered if either one of us would make it through her childhood alive.

I told my friend that I understood how a steady stream of innocent irritations could build up until a mother is forced to the brink of insanity, where

whacking her children with a rubber sandal actually begins to sound like a good idea.

That's when I saw something in her eyes, a glimmer of hope that she wasn't the only mother who had considered boxing up her children and shipping them to Siberia.

Almost every mother alive would tell you that it's a gift to be able to raise children who go on to become productive members of society, people who can change the world. But it's not easy to spend every waking moment in the company of humans who eat their own boogers and who can pluck a cat bald in less than three minutes.

Most mothers won't even admit that it's a blow to the ego to know they can control an entire boardroom of executives but can't make a 4-year-old put on clean underwear. They need to know they're not alone.

And so, on this Mother's Day, here's a message to my friend and all the other mothers of small children: If all you did today was read "Goodnight Moon" 42 times and keep your kids from flushing the goldfish down the toilet, you did a great job.

Even if your kids still call each other "Poopy Head."



Award-winning freelance writer Joanne Brokaw spends her days dreaming of things she'd like to do but probably never will—like swimming with dolphins, cleaning

the attic and someday overcoming the trauma of elementary school picture day. She lives with two dogs, a cat, six chickens and one very patient husband. Learn more at www.joannebrokaw.com.

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