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Enough... *for today*

by TIM WALKER

An expensive night at the ER.
A car that's in the shop for yet another repair.
Looming big expenses in the next few months that I'm just not sure where the money will come from.

I'm a pretty good budgeter. I squirrel away funds.
But these things are beyond my acorn pile.

And in the midst of it all, while the lingering question is "where is that going to come from?" God is constantly whispering something to me.

"I will give you what you need, when you need it. Not before. Not after."

And He has. Time and time again, God has provided for what we need when we need. Nothing more. Nothing less.

As I was listening to a new song, "Enough" by singer/songwriter Sara Groves, the following lyrics impacted me:

*Really we don't need much
Just strength to believe
There's honey in the rock,
There's more than we see
In these patches of joy
These stretches of sorrow
There's enough for today
There will be enough tomorrow.*

I always think of God's provision as providing money—money for some bill or unexpected expense.
But I don't just need money.

I need other things too.
Sometimes my life requires more from me than I think I can give.
People need emotional support, understanding.
Or they need my knowledge.
Or my physical help with something.
People need stuff from me, from you. And sometimes, we just don't have it to give.
We don't have it in us.

Sometimes the most costly thing from every day life isn't measured in currency, but in emotional toil. Life drains us out.
And we're not sure if we have what it takes to keep going. To keep giving. To keep doing.

But God can provide that too.
He can be our enough, when we just don't have it in us.

God's been showing me that He's enough for what I need to be the husband, dad, co-worker, whatever role I fill. Whatever requires something from me.
Whatever overwhelms me.
Wherever I know I have a "limit."

He can give me what I need, when I need it. No more. No less.

He can give me the ability to do that one more thing in an already busy day.
He can provide time for someone hurting or in need, when there just isn't a spare minute.
He can provide a solution for a problem that comes up that overwhelms me.

God is so much more than a monetary Provider, yet I've so limited Him to that — being content to accept my own limitations.
emotionally, physically, spiritually.
He's bigger than that.
His mercies are new every morning.

He provides what I need for today when I need it. No more. No less.
And He can do the same for tomorrow—whatever that entails.

God be my Provider. Because I just can't do this. I can't solve this. I can't make it happen.
God be my Enough. ■



Tim Walker is a husband/father/writer who is navigating faith, marriage, parenthood and mid-life. Follow his blog at www.timswords.com.

Second chance

Marine who lost legs in IED blast finds purpose on the slopes

by LORI ARNOLD

Sgt. Joshua Elliott and his wife had just been transferred to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina after serving in Japan, Iraq and San Diego. Elliott had barely checked into his new unit when a friend asked him to take a squad leader position with a platoon he was leading in Iraq.

As a combat engineer, Elliott's job was to serve as point man for the platoon, using a metal detector to find and mark improvised explosive devices, clearing the way for the his team members as they followed him into various neighborhoods.

In April 2011, three months after landing in Afghanistan, Elliott and his team entered a corner building that would become their staging post and point of safety. Several guardian angels—soldiers who used large guns to cover their team from rooftops—were preparing to take their positions.

Elliott escorted the guardian angels to their perches.

"As I was walking back off the roof of this building, seemingly on the same path we all just previously walked on, I stepped directly on an IED," Elliott said.

It took a few moments for the sergeant

to realize that he was the one who had detonated the bomb.

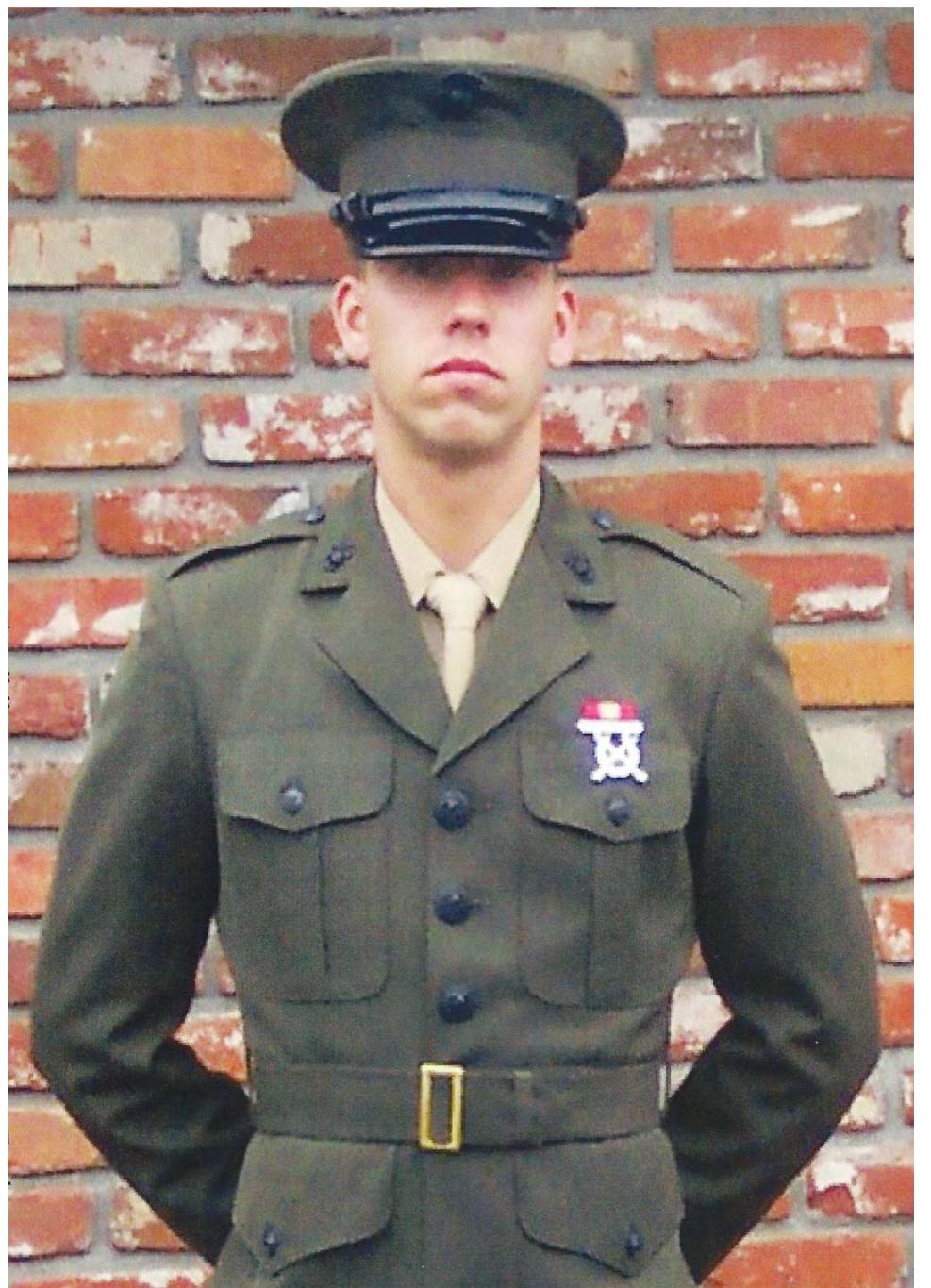
"I remember being mad at the person who set it off," he said. In the seconds that followed, as he catapulted through the air, Elliott said he entered the "five-minute flight."

"Time doesn't really slow down," he said, but it feels like it because the brain shifts into overdrive, passing more information than usual from short-term to long-term memory.

"Around the pinnacle of flying through the air it dawned on me that I might have been the one to set off the IED," he recalled. "As I fell out of the sky I distinctly recall watching the roof of the building go by as I fell through the hole the bomb had just made."

The force of the bomb thrust him straight up in the air, and then straight back down through the hole. He landed in a sitting position on the rubble of what just a few seconds earlier had been a roof.

"Sitting, bleeding out on this mound, breathing in the dirt and smoke after the blast, I knew that if I didn't make some



Marine Corps Sergeant Josh Elliott survived a bomb explosion in Afghanistan in 2011 but lost both of his legs.

kind of noise, if I didn't call out in the dark, I didn't know if anyone would have found me in time. From an outsider's view, there was a big explosion, then Sgt. Elliott was gone."

He thought of his friends looking for him in pink mist, the slang term war veterans use when a body is vaporized and there is little to look for or find.

"Truthfully I believe I would have been pink mist had that bomb been in the ground versus the roof. Because it was in the roof and I was a heavier force, much of the blast went down into the room below.

Two of his fellow Marines found Elliott and the unit began a series of tasks to try to save him. A Navy corpsman put tourniquets on both legs on the left arm.

The patrol leader called in an evacuation helicopter. Others cleared a landing area. Some provided security or assembled a makeshift gurney. They kept talking to the sergeant to keep him awake.

Everyone on site knew that if Elliott had any chance of survival, the evacuation helicopter needed to make a prompt rescue. It didn't seem fast enough.

"The helicopter that landed was run by the British, and they waited to leave the base until they had all the information they could about my injury, location, blood type, and such," Elliott, now 34, said. "They landed with doctors, nurses, and everything they needed to start trauma surgery on the helicopter—in a sense, bringing the hospital to me."

It was on the helicopter that Elliott—who was placed into a drug-induced coma so that the medical team could treat life-

threatening wounds to both lungs, his intestines, and three of his four limbs—had a vision that would change his life.

He describes seeing an orange-like fog that was "thick and almost granular," followed by a "truly empty realm."

"At this point I know I was no longer dreaming," he said. "My sense of things had returned. My cognitive decision-making was back. I began to look around trying to make some sense of where I was. There was no up or down. It wasn't light, nor was it dark. I could try to describe it as being in space, but without stars or planets or anything."

In a moment, he said, he sensed a "turning and finding something that wasn't there before in front of me.

"I was face to face with a light," Elliott said. "As I stood there, things started to become clear. Imagine staring at a lamp coming in from a dark room. At first all you can see is the light, but as your eyes adjust you begin to see things take shape."

The light, he said, was bright like the sun but without burning the eyes.

"I was looking at a being of light and beauty seated on a throne...I felt euphoric emotions mixed with a feeling of being so small. I went to my knees not so much by choice as by knowing what was proper and right. Then He spoke: 'Are you ready?' The words weren't heard with my ears as much as felt in my heart, but as clear as me talking, or words on paper."

Elliott said he was acutely aware of the Creator judging his life.

"God, seated on the throne, ready to look into my life and see my deeds," he



Josh Elliott relied heavily on his wife, Samantha, throughout his recovery.



It took a month of surgeries at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, before Josh Elliott could be transferred to the Navy Medical Center in San Diego.

said. “Good things, rebellion, misfortune, hate, peace, love. All the good and all the sin in my whole life was a moment from being completely exposed. Like a child ashamed of what he had done, I answered God, ‘No.’”

As soon as Elliott said no to God, he awoke from his surgery, the first of many he would have in the coming weeks. Ultimately doctors amputated both of his legs.

“When I was face to face with the throne I felt so small, so little and so weak, and all the worldly things seemed so benign, so lame,” he recalled. “The one thing I didn’t want to do was to lose that memory.... To lose that would mean I wouldn’t be fulfilling the purpose He sent me back for.”

With the vision came a new perspective.

“I don’t live by faith anymore,” Elliott said. “I live by knowing.”

“I’ve been there. I’ve seen God, I’ve seen judgment and I don’t ever want to be back there and say ‘no’ again. Next time I’m

there I want to be ready. You never know when you are going to die, ...when your time is up.”

In the foggy days that followed Elliott recalled a prayer he had asked God after watching an evangelist speak to his youth group. A former inmate, the speaker spent 45 minutes regaling the kids about his past, but made only a fleeting mention of Jesus and his redemptive power.

Although disappointed with the speech, the young teen suddenly realized that at least the man had a testimony. A Christian all his life, Elliott believed he lacked his own dramatic story to share with others. So he prayed for God to give him his own testimony.

“God revealed to me this prayer in the hospital and He said, ‘I’ve given you a glimpse of me. Look what I’ve given you through this incident.’ ... That gave (me) purpose. Not having legs, I can deal with that, but it became so much more, because not having legs became the end to talking about Jesus and talking about God.”

“It’s a weird answer to prayer to have God take my legs, but it’s OK. I’m happy where I am. That’s kind of a tough one to swallow. Even though it was the enemy who put the bomb in the building, it was God who brought me to the place were I am now.”

After spending several days in Afghanistan, he was flown to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, where surgeons spent nearly a week on additional procedures to prepare Elliott for the long flight to National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. At Bethesda Elliott underwent surgeries almost every other day, as doctors continued to remove tissue that was destroyed by shrapnel or the resulting infections.

“It was those nights and days where I was trying to figure life out again and starting rehabilitation that I questioned God,” he said. “I knew I had a purpose. I understood that. There was a reason I was sent back but I didn’t quite understand it and I didn’t know what it was. It was through my parents, and through my wife, and prayer it started to be revealed to me the divinity of the entire thing.”

He admits that he relied heavily on his wife, Samantha, and his parents through-



Josh Elliott masters the adaptive equipment that allows him to compete in monoskiing.

out the long recovery process.

“I was always the strong one” ... Elliott said. “But she needed to be strong for me. It was a big role reversal.”

A month after arriving to Bethesda, when his wounds were clean enough to suture for good, Elliott asked to be transferred to Naval Medical Center San Diego, where he had attended boot camp.

For 18 months, Elliott’s work orders were to heal. That meant routine trips to recreational, occupational and physical therapists, plus seeing doctors who specialized in prosthetics, plastic surgery, dermatology and tissue.

It was through recreational therapy that Elliott discovered monoskiing, which uses a wide ski with boot mounts that face forward. Because the ski can easily be adapted with a seat, many paralympic athletes have become competitive racers. Elliott, an avid snowboarder as a teen, has earned a place

on the U.S. Paralympic Alpine National Team and hopes to compete in the 2018 Winter Paralympic Games. In February he earned a silver medal in the giant slalom at the IPC Alpine Skiing World Cup Finals in Aspen, where he trains every winter.

“It was as much an equalizer and confidence booster as it was a therapy,” said Elliott.

Although he feels the call of the mountain slopes of Aspen, the retired Marine said he knows God is calling him to much, much more.

“The battle isn’t fought on the mountaintop; it’s fought in the valley.... You can’t sit on the mountain,” he said. “You’ve got to fight in the valley. That’s the hardest time because that’s where temptation is; all the things that want to drag you down. That’s where you are farthest from God, when you are fighting in the valley.” ■

Sky high challenge and victory

Sgt. Joshua Elliott, wearing prosthetics on both of his legs, rode the lift heavenward as he worked to regain his form as a snowboarder, a hobby he enjoyed for 15 years. Elliott was in Colorado for a multi-day adaptive camp sponsored by Disabled Sports USA.

As he prepared for the trip, Elliott’s recreational therapist warned him of the difficulties he would likely face on a snowboard. She recommended he try monoskiing, which uses a single, wide ski that can be adapted for amputees.

“I will try it but I won’t like it,” he responded. He opted to start with the snowboard style he had always used.

It was high on the slopes in Breckenridge that the Marine realized that will and might do not always win the day.

“After snowboarding for 15 years it was like I was beginner all over again,” the San Diego County resident said. “I couldn’t do what I wanted to do. I came off the hill in tears every day. I was just broken.”

On the last day of the camp Elliott honored his promise to the recreational therapist and switched out his gear for the monoski. Within hours a new passion emerged in the purity of the white powder.



Josh Elliott challenges the slopes at Oregon’s Mount Hood.

“I realized this is made for me,” he said. “I can still be on the snow, just in a different way, a little modified.”

Elliott began signing up for every ski trip made available to him, most of them through Disabled Sports USA.

“Once I was comfortable with it and starting to play around with it, it wasn’t a new freedom, but it was an equalizer,” he said.

Toward the end of that first snow season, Elliott and a friend attended a race ski camp in Mammoth. As the

two alternated playful and challenging runs, they caught the attention of a coach from the Aspen Valley Ski and Snowboard Club.

“I wasn’t a racer,” he said. “I was barely even a skier.”

Still, his competitive nature emerged and at the end of one of the runs, Elliott couldn’t help asking the coach what he thought about his efforts.

“He simply said, ‘You could be the best.’ They were such cleverly placed words. It sparked something in me. I had kind of been searching for my purpose, searching for something to do, knocking on doors and trying to figure out where God wanted me. That door kind of flung wide open.”

Less than a year after first putting on a monoski, Elliott was invited by the organizers of an adaptive paralympic development team in Aspen to compete on their team.

“The last four years I’ve been living and training six months out of the year in Aspen.”

This season Elliott was named to the U.S. Paralympic Alpine National Team and brought home a silver medal at the World Cup Finals.

“The best from every country was there,” he said, adding he’s hoping to make the official 2018 Paralympic team.

Holy Glory Batman, these geeks love Jesus!

by LORI ARNOLD

Joe Queen was well into his 20s when he began collecting Star Wars toys and other franchise memorabilia. The futuristic film, it seems, captured a key part of his past.

"I grew up with Star Wars, which was released when I was 5," said Queen, who attends the Church at Rancho Bernardo with his wife Magen and two children. "I also loved Batman since watching replays of the classic show with Adam West."

Not long after entering his third decade, Queen attended his first Star Wars convention. In 2007, after moving to San Diego from his native Washington state, Queen attended Comic Con.

"I never really thought of myself as a geek until the late 1990s," the 44-year-old North County resident said.

Four years ago, while serving in the Awana program at Church at Rancho Bernardo, Queen said he began conversations with various people in the congregation who also enjoyed pop culture and super heroes, a movement he calls traditional geek fandom.

"I felt God calling me to start this ministry," the probation officer said. "If you look at most churches, there is not a ministry or a group to connect with the geek culture. Many geeks are introverts and feel awkward in social settings. I felt this is a community of people that I am a part of and love; and wanted to see them get to know and love Jesus and grow in their walk with Him."

"I also think that if we can introduce Jesus to the ones who don't know Him, some would grow to be as passionate about Him as they are about their favorite character, comic book, TV show."

Queen teamed up with his friend Kevin Hicok, a fan of Green Lantern and Iron Man, to present the ministry idea to the small groups coordinator at CRB.

Birth of the Geeky Guys

After getting the green light Geeky Guys 4 God was born. Queen describes the ministry as a hybrid that focuses on truth, fellowship and service.

"We wanted to have a regular Bible study,

serve together at CRB and fellowship by going to blockbuster movies together," he said. "At our first meeting, we talked about serving at the church and an idea was presented for a monthly food collection called Bumper Crop."

Each Sunday church members leave donated bags of groceries by the bumper of their cars.

"Then, my team will collect, count and store them at the church and a few days later they will be picked up by one of our local food banks to help feed the needy of our community," he said.

The ministry outreach has collected nearly 7,000 bags of groceries, more than 30 bags a week and probably enough to fill hundreds of telephone booths—an effort that would no doubt impress Captain America.

To meet their fellowship goals, the ministry plans about six super hero movie events a year.

"The events are open to everyone, and it is a great way for fellow Christians to hang out and enjoy each other's company—and movies—as a group."

The truth component comes through regular Bible studies that usually draw about 15 men. Last year their reach expanded with the launch of Geeky Gals 4 God under the direction of Nicole Edmonds. As many as 10 women participate weekly.

"The Bible studies usually have a theme," Queen said. "The guys are currently participating in a study called Jedi for Jesus and the gals recently did a study to correlate with the new Captain America movie."

Capped crusaders

To create another high-profile spin to the ministry, the group added a costuming element two years ago after Hicok's wife Heidi, CRB's children's pastor, wanted to offer a Super Hero theme month in Sunday School. It's now an annual tradition. Each week one of the Geeky Guys dresses as a Super Hero for the children's services and students are also invited to wear their own costumes.

"Some of the adults have been more excited to see the heroes than their kids," he said. "Since Super Hero Month began, we have



The Geeky Guys 4 God team conducts an outreach at last year's Miramar Family Spooktacular. From left, Ryan Tran, Tyler Tran, Lucas Queen, Dan Moyer and Joe Queen.

been invited to participate in other events inside and outside the church."

The outreach events include a project with the Boy Scouts, Spooktacular, a Halloween military family gathering at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, and the Awana Club's Grand Prix event.

"Costumes give us another way as Christians to bless someone, put a smile on their face," he said. "It also lets others know that we can be Christians, dress up, have fun."

The group's most intensive outreach effort is at Comic Con, the largest super hero convention in the United States. Each year Comic Con draws about 130,000 people, many dressed in costumes. Tickets typically sell out within hours. Similar conventions have popped up across the country.

"Since San Diego is essentially the Super Bowl of Comic Cons it made sense to represent Jesus in a positive light there," Queen said. "We wanted to show a message about the love of Jesus to Con attendees and let them know you can love Jesus and go to Comic Con."

Geeky Guys 4 God have passed out sunblock packets, bagels and water, as well as

serving as ushers at the convention's worship service. Last year they participated in two convention panels, one supporting the Christian Comic Arts Society. Each year the Rancho Bernardo church hosts a post-convention worship service featuring costumed ushers and a "Super Hero" message by one of the pastors.

"The greatest (thing) is seeing the development of relationships between group members and seeing the personal growth in their walks with Jesus," Queen said. "These are the best moments for me."

"The difficult times were early on in the ministry when our Bible study had little participation and had me sometimes questioning if this was what I was called to do."

That doubt ebbed, though, when his son, then a middle-schooler, begged to be included in the high-school-and-up ministry.

"I finally gave in and said, 'Let's go,'" Dad said. "He has grown a lot and been a valuable member of the team since. He is essentially the Robin to my Batman in all aspects of the ministry." ■

Learn more at www.geekyguysforgod.com.



Joe Queen, as Green Arrow, speaks at a post-Comic Con church service at the Church at Rancho Bernardo.

Bringing hope to those journeying with cancer

by STEPHEN R. CLARK

Over 12 million people in the U.S. have been diagnosed with cancer, according to the American Cancer Society. Each year 1.5 million more are added to this grim statistic.

Is your church equipped to minister to this growing need?

CANCER. A word so terrible it describes a disease and is a synonym for “pernicious, spreading evil” (*The American Heritage Dictionary*).

For many diagnosed with cancer, that’s exactly what it feels like. Pernicious evil.

According to The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), “Cancer isn’t a single disease. The term cancer encompasses more than 200 diseases all characterized by the uncontrolled proliferation of cells.”

While cancer is not a single disease, it tends to have a singular impact on our psyches and souls. Something usually akin to terror and helplessness.

Just as the person stricken with cancer is befuddled and overwhelmed, often, so are those nearby.

In church, we hear a prayer request related to cancer and our Holy Spirit honed instinct is to do something, to extend help, to be the living body of Christ.

But do *what?* Help *how?*

Beyond offering prayers—friends, family members, fellow congregants—we’re at a loss where to begin.

Responding biblically to stand in the gap

In 2003, Pastors Percy McCray and Michael Langham were chaplains for Cancer Treatment Centers of America® (CTCA). Ministering alongside doctors and nurses, they discerned a common thread of frustration while caring for patients and their families.

Medical care addressed physical needs, but when it came to spiritual and practical support outside the hospital walls, there was a gap. As the stricken turned to their churches for support, help was virtually non-existent. While there was no lack of desire to help, there was a lack of information and structure for doing so.



Our Journey of Hope co-founder Percy McCray, right, prays with a cancer patient.

Over time, wrestling with this need, McCray and Langham birthed what has become Our Journey of Hope®, a biblically-based cancer care ministry sponsored and supported by CTCA.

The program offers two days of training hosted at CTCA regional hospitals. The training, which includes meals and one night’s lodging, is free of charge for up to two pastor-approved representatives from a church.

According to Rev. Dr. Drew Angus, Director of Spiritual Outreach based out of CTCA in Philadelphia, the program initially involved chaplains going to churches to give talks and do cancer care-related training. The response was incredibly positive but soon became overwhelming.

“As the program grew,” said Angus, “we realized we could be more effective bringing the church representatives to our facilities. Here, it’s easier to draw together oncologists, surgeons, clinicians, nutritionists, dieticians, and others to present the training.”

Equipping and empowering with knowledge

Over the two days participants are equipped with helpful information on cancer, its side effects and possible treatments, as well as guidance on how to extend support.

Topics covered include why cancer care is unique, identifying those in need, un-

derstanding spiritual and emotional needs, effectively communicating with those impacted by cancer, the kinds of cancers, and much more.

“What we provide is an information-infused framework that will allow each church, small or large, to customize support to their congregation’s unique needs,” said Angus.

“Timely information is essential. For example, a huge issue is that many patients succumb to malnutrition because it’s hard to eat during treatment. It’s vital to be aware of this and other side effects that influence quality of life.”

The goal is to equip caregivers to walk alongside patients and families, offering just the right kind of support.

“This could mean one person on a care team drives Jane, the patient, to doctor appointments,” said Angus. “Another may take her husband out for a round of golf. And another team member will help their children with homework.”

Applying God’s love through practical action

Connie Hulsey, director of the cancer care ministry for the First Baptist Church of Montgomery, Alabama affirms, “Each person handles their journey differently and so they need different approaches.”

Hulsey says of their 60 volunteers, they have team members who send flow-

Our Journey of Hope statistics of success

Since 2013...

- 795 churches who have gone through training
- 1,223 people have attended the training
- 299 churches have developed active cancer care ministries

ers weekly to those fighting cancer, others provide encouragement through cards and letters, and still others knit shawls and blankets.

“People are just amazed that we take time to share God’s love for them in such practical ways,” said Hulsey.

When considering starting a cancer care ministry, Hulsey advises: “First, spend time in prayer seeking wisdom, direction, and guidance. Second, confirm support within the congregation. Third, begin recruiting volunteers. Finally, attend the Our Journey of Hope training to ensure a strong foundation.”

In addition to the training received at the event, attendees are sent home with an eight-week DVD based training program to equip their team in the church.

“There is no fear in love,” declares 1 John 4:18, “but perfect love casts out fear” (ESV).

When it comes to caring for those with cancer, fear is quelled, hope is sparked, and love perfected through practical care offered within the living, breathing body of Christ—the church. ■

To learn what churches in Southern California have been trained and now offer active care support, or for more information or to register for training, contact the Cancer Treatment Centers of America’s Western Regional Medical Center in Phoenix, AZ, (918) 286-5000. Churches interested in the training may register at www.ourjourneyofhope.com.

Stephen R. Clark is an award-winning writer and communications professional. Learn more at www.cleversmithwriting.com.

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Needtobreathe to perform at SDSU

Needtobreathe will bring its second Tour de Compadres to the CalCoast Credit Union Open Air Theatre on the campus of San Diego State University on Sept. 11. The tour will also stop in Los Angeles, Paso Robles and San Jose.

Tickets for the show, which also features Mat Kearney, John Mark McMillan and Welshly Arms, are already on sale. The concert starts at 7 p.m.

Launched last year by rock 'n' rollers Needtobreathe, Tour de Compadres made stops in 40 cities nationwide and featured Ben Rector, Switchfoot, Drew Holcomb & the Neighbors and Colony House.

After selling out the world famous Red Rocks Amphitheater, Greek Theatre, Ascend Amphitheatre and others coast to coast, the band expanded this year's tour to 53 markets. The tour will promote *Hard Love*, its sixth studio album through Atlantic Records. The album releases July 15. Tickets to the concert are \$26 to \$46.

New offering from All About Worship

All About Worship, a community of wor-



ship leaders and songwriters, has released *My Pursuit*, a new 10-track album, through Integrity Music.

All About Worship, which is dedicated to equipping, encouraging and inspiring worship leaders, worship teams and songwriters, will be sharing songs from the new album during a late April worship conference in Franklin, Tennessee. It is the first of two AAW conferences this year, with a second event planned for Phoenix, Arizona Nov. 3-5.

"These are songs that we have wrestled through and prayed for," said Michael Farren, a producer, vocalist, and songwriter, and the president of AAW. "They are songs that are prayer conversations... songs that we hope will help worship leaders to be better shepherds and pastors."

Lady Antebellum's Hillary Scott releases faith-based album

Hillary Scott of Lady Antebellum has just released the first single, "Thy Will," from her upcoming faith-based album, *Love Remains*.

"I wanted to make this album to share more of who I am. These songs, and many like them, are the cry of my heart," Scott said.

The album features her mother, Lin-



Lady Antebellum's Hillary Scott has just released the first single off her new faith-based album "Love Remains."

da Davis, her father, Lang Scott and her younger sister Rylee Scott. Together they perform as Hillary Scott and the Scott Family.

Scott said she wrote "Thy Will" after a "recent experience that left me broken-hearted, asking why, and facing some of the my most difficult days. This song is my letter to God. As I ask some really hard questions, I hold onto the truth that there is so much to the story of my life that I can't see, but that I still choose to trust Him."

Lee's latest album reflects difficult year

Worship artist Mike Lee, whose latest album, *All I Need*, was recently named as one of the Top 10 Albums of 2015 by CCM Magazine, is about to release five new sin-

gles.

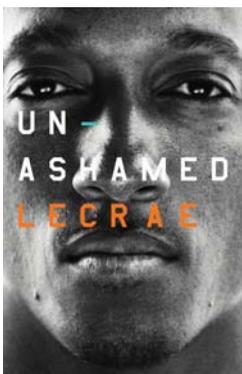
His success comes after a tumultuous year filled with life changes and challenges. That journey is evident in *All I Need*, which captures the quiet moments from a difficult season for Lee. For a year and a half, while balancing family, recording, touring and leading worship at his home church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Lee helped walk his father through an extended fight against lung cancer. His father died in July.

"I started playing guitar to be like my dad," Lee said. "When I encountered Jesus, I found a reason to sing. This project is a memorial to someone that I lost, a reflection of something that was shared, an outlet for pain that's enduring, and an expectation of a world restored. These are the best songs I've written, dedicated to the best man I ever knew, for the only God who is forever."

outtakes

Rapper Lecrae featured in documentary

"Unashamed World," a new documentary following Lecrae, one of the hottest names in hip hop, will open in selected theaters beginning June 1. The Christian rapper, a two-time Grammy Award and seven-time Dove winner who got his start in a tiny garage, has released seven studio albums. The 85-minute film also features past and present members of the hip hop group 116 Clique, including Trip Lee, Tedashii, Andy Mineo, Sho Baraka, KB, Derek Minor, and DJ Official. Lecrae leads the group.



The documentary is produced and directed by Art Hooker, who also wrote the script. He told Rapzilla, an online Christian hip hop magazine, that he handled 1,000 hours of video for the project while interviewing hundreds of people. In addition to following Lecrae, the film also explores Christian hip hop's value within global culture, Rapzilla reported.

The project includes interviews with pastors John Piper, Louie Giglio, Matt Chandler and Eric Mason.

The interviews are augmented with concert montages and fan videos.

Footballer's journey captured on big screen

"Greater," which chronicles the real-

life story of football player Brandon Burlsworth (Christopher Severio), will open in theaters across the country this summer. Burlsworth, a committed Christian, was a walk-on hopeful for the Arizona Razorbacks. Because his long-time dream was to play for Arkansas, Burlsworth turned down scholarships at smaller universities to try out for the team. Known for his distinctive black horn-rimmed glasses, the small-town Burlsworth wasn't considered good enough to play Division I football, partially because of his 300-pound frame. He earned the respect of teammates, coaches and fans for his hard work, a work ethic that landed him on the All-American team. Bleacher Report also named Burlsworth as the No. 1 Greatest Walk-On of the Bowl Championship Series Era.

A guard, Burlsworth was drafted in the third round by the Indianapolis Colts, but was killed 11 days later in a traffic accident.

Along with Severio, the film stars Neal McDonough, Leslie Easterbrook, Michael Parks and Nick Searcy. "Greater" is produced by Brian Reindl and directed by David Hunt, who co-wrote the script. It is presented by Hammond Entertainment and Greater Productions.

Film interprets Christ's desert temptation

Secular filmmaker Rodrigo Garcia explores one of the most prominent stories in the life and ministry of Jesus in what

he calls an "invented chapter" on Christ's desert experience. The result is "Last Days in the Desert," which depicts Jesus toward the end of his 40 days in the desert. The film, presented by American Zoetrope, Aspiration Media, Division Films, Ironwood Entertainment and Mockingbird Pictures, opens May 13.

The storyline, also created by Garcia, explores, through a happenstance encounter with a family in crisis, how Jesus might have handled the father/son relationship. In an interview with Christianity Today, the director said he views his project more as an art film than a historical account.

"We're not trying to make a biblical sto-

ry," he told the magazine.

He also said he understood the delicate nature of creating a storyline that is not contained in the Holy Scriptures.

"By choosing Jesus, I know what the end is," the magazine quoted Garcia as saying. "I have some freedoms because it's an invented chapter, but I have to obey the origin and obey the destiny."

The film stars Ewan McGregor, who also doubles as Satan.

"I've never felt like a film was as important as this one for a long, long time," McGregor said. "I was so moved by it, and so immediately passionate and connected to it."



Secular filmmaker Rodrigo Garcia creates interpretative film about Christ's desert temptation using a what-if scenario involving a family in crisis.



Pulse founder and evangelist Nick Hall is the visionary voice of Together 2016, a national event taking place in Washington D.C. on July 16.

Massive prayer and worship event expected to draw huge crowd to national mall in July

Together 2016 to include 12,000 service projects

by CHRIS MAXWELL

WASHINGTON D.C. — Crowds will gather in Washington DC this summer. The sound will hit high volume. But this event won't be a ball game, a superstar's performance, a political protest, or a presidential debate. Those who travel to the nation's capital won't be there for pleasure or rebellion or politics.

They will come together and pray. They are seeking to worship together. They are hoping to experience God's love together.

On July 16, 2016, in the National Mall of Washington DC, followers of Christ from around the world will meet for Together 2016. Their plans? To pray for a new revival to come.

Well-known artists and leaders like Hillsong United, Lecrae, Francis Chan, David Crowder, Kirk Franklin, Ravi Zacharias, Christine Caine, Matthew West, Casting Crowns, Josh McDowell, Luis Palau, Mark Batterson, Tasha Cobbs, Michael W. Smith, and many others plan to help guide this gathering. Youth groups and ministry organizations will team up to meet together, pray together, and serve together.

Nick Hall, the visionary voice of Together 2016, believes now is the time and DC is the place.

"Something powerful happens when we come together," said Hall, who is the founder of the student-led evangelism movement PULSE. "In today's live-stream generation, in the time where it is possible to be everywhere all at once, it is also possible to be nowhere ever. Though we can be everywhere at once, we are also prone to never really be anywhere. So, there is something about getting together in person. It matters to God when we show up in person, when we gather together. That is what we plan to see in Together 2016."

But there is more going on than gathering together. Organizers seek more than large numbers and excitement. Their four goals are to pray, learn, share, and love. How do they plan to share the love they learn about and pray for? By viewing this event as America's Mission Trip, Together 2016 is planning 12,000 service projects. This summer event isn't ending with a thrill of the moment.

Hall believes that prayer and service come together. They hope to sing about love and learn how to live this life, all while

showing the reality of what they believe. With a yearning to see God's people move from competition and division to unity and revival, Hall hears the 18-30 somethings crying out, "We're doing this."

The Together 2016 team is determined to dive in and see this large vision become a reality.

"Through history there have been historical moments of revival where the masses could assemble together," Hall said, remembering Explo 72, Promise Keepers, and the many crusades led by Rev. Billy Graham. "These were significant events where people united to seek God. Culture was changed."

Hall sees the need for something similar but different in the present.

"This generation is rising up to lead toward a historic event that will shift our culture," said Hall. "This young generation has people struggling with depression, self-harm, suicide, and addiction at frightening rates. But Jesus is calling us to gather together and see our generation changed forever."

During this political season, can people unite in Washington DC to unite, to pray, to worship, to serve? Not only does Hall and the Together 2016 team believe this will occur and be considered a success, they also believe this is just the beginning of the nation and world entering a new season of spiritual awakening. Five thousand prayer groups believe it is possible. Leaders from around the world believe it is possible.

Hall sees it as not only possible, but also essential: "Each of us needs a reset, and Jesus offers everyone a supernatural reset. We believe Jesus can do unprecedented things in our time. Our dream is for more than one million people from all backgrounds to be part of this generation-defining day. We have so much at our fingertips. We can't miss this opportunity." ■

Learn more at www.reset2016.com. Follow Together 2016 on Twitter: @JesusIsTheReset.

Chris Maxwell, campus pastor for Emmanuel College, is an international speaker about life with epilepsy and the author of seven books, including his latest, "Pause with Jesus: Encountering His Story in Everyday Life."

Real families overcome real problems in new 'Parent Compass' series

by MICHAEL FOUST

The social media age has helped families build relationships with new friends and re-establish contacts with old ones, but it also has had an interesting side effect: Everyone's life on Facebook and other platforms seems, well, *perfect*.

It is rare, indeed, to read about a person's struggles at work or at home. Instead, we see pictures of smiling parents and happy children, living their seemingly seamless lives.

It is enough to make families wonder: Does anyone else share our struggles?

A new 12-episode Christian family series seeks to break through the façade, showing real families facing real challenges in life – all of them talking candidly about not only their moments in the valleys but also how they overcame their struggles.

Called "Parent Compass," the free series launches May 20 on ParentCompass.TV and covers a multiple of life-changing moments, from the loss of a job to the loss of a child. Along the way it spotlights 12 couples – of various races and backgrounds -- whose relationship with Christ (the "compass") brought them through their darkest moments.

A workbook, downloadable through the website, also will be available for use in small groups or at-home study.

The idea for the not-for-profit series came from executive producer Natalie Jones, who said she began seeing the need for such a series eight years ago at a Christian conference. Three years later, she felt led to launch the project.

"So a prayer group started and they have been praying ever since," she said. "We asked God to write these episodes."

Nathan Todd Sims of Fusion Productions directed all 12 episodes, the first of which won two Telly Awards, which are given to the best in film and video.

"The whole point of this series is this: The way to manage life, family and to parent is to follow Jesus Christ," Jones said. "Every episode begins with a verse and ends with a verse, and is brought alive through the epi-

sode. There's a variety of issues, backgrounds and family sizes. What's the same is their compass, and the compass is Christ."

Among the families and issues covered in the episodes:

- A family whose child suffered from a disease and was healed.
- A family whose child suffered from cancer and died.
- A wife who was assaulted.
- A husband who lost his job.
- A mother who grew up with an absent father who was addicted to drugs.
- A single mother who had scheduled an abortion three times.

One of the couples featured is Jonathan and Wynter Pitts, who discuss the challenges of raising their four girls. Jonathan said the online format will naturally attract young couples – a target audience. In fact, he said he and his wife got hooked one night watching an episode about another family.

"We literally don't have cable at our house," he said. "We don't have satellite. We watch TV on our phone or on our laptop. That's how our generation watches. We may subscribe to ESPN or NBC online or whatever. But it being online and being able to share that through social media, that's the best way to do it."

(The Pitts' daughter, Alena, incidentally, is the jump-roping child star of the hit movie "War Room.")

Jones said the goal of the series is for parents to see God at work in the lives of the families and be empowered to ask for "more of God" in theirs. She also hopes parents who are moved by the series will tell others about it; word of mouth, she said, is key to the project impacting lives.

"No one has to parent alone," Jones added. "God is waiting for us to ask for help." ■

For more information, visit ParentCompass.TV.

Michael Foust is an award-winning freelance writer and father of four small children. He blogs about parenting at michaelfoust.com.



Jonathan and Wynter Pitts, and their girls, are one of the families featured in the new ParentCompass.TV 12-episode series which debuts May 20. The Pitts' daughter, Alena, was the jump-roping child star of the hit movie "War Room."

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San Diego County fair to host two Christian festivals and a concert

DEL MAR — The San Diego County Fair, which is known for its diverse offering of rides, food and entertainment, should score big points this year with faith-based attendees by offering three major Christian concerts at the Del Mar Fairgrounds.

Switchfoot concert

First on the schedule is San Diego-based Switchfoot, taking the grandstand stage at 7:30 p.m. June 3, which is opening night.

Switchfoot's fair appearance comes a month before the release of the group's

tenth album. The album will hit the streets the same week as the Switchfoot Bro-Am surfing event. In addition to the beachside gathering, the band will also hold a record release party, concert and several other events as part of its first-ever Summer Get-away, July 5 to 9.

Reserved tickets for Switchfoot, including fair admission, range from \$25 to \$37. A concert-only option for reserved seats is available from \$16 to \$22. Free, non-reserved concert seats are available on certain levels with paid admission to the fair.

Spirit West Coast-Del Mar

Second on the schedule is Spirit West Coast—Del Mar, a music festival featuring the Newsboys, Hawk Nelson, Blanca, We Are Messengers, I Am They and Citizen Way. The June 23 festival will be presented at two fair venues, including the main stage. In addition to the music, a message will be presented by evangelist Reid Saunders.

Doors open at 4 p.m., with the first concert starting at 5 p.m.

Several VIP packages are available and include prime reserved seats and access to autograph signing. The Platinum package also includes an exclusive reception at the Turf Club room, along with an event hat and tote bag.

Tickets range from \$20 to \$150. Tick-



Hawk Nelson will join Newsboys, Blanca, We Are Messengers, I Am They and Citizen Way as part of the June 23 Spirit West Coast—Del Mar festival.

ets purchased online include fair admission. Those already holding fair admission should purchase concert tickets through the Del Mar Fairgrounds Box Office.

Gospel Festival

The 12th Annual Gospel Festival is set for June 25. Although the lineup has yet to be finalized, the event concludes with the Toyota Summer Concert Series performance of Shirley Caesar, set for 7 p.m. at the grandstand. Known as the First Lady of Gospel Music, Caesar has won 11 Grammy Awards and seven Dove Awards. She has

released 40 albums since launching her career at age 12.

Details on the other performers will be announced later in May. The artists, including solo acts and gospel choirs, will perform on five stages.

Guests for all three concert events are encouraged to arrive at least 90 minutes early to ensure time for navigating slow traffic and finding parking spaces.

Learn more at www.sdfair.com, www.switchfoot.com or transparentproductions.com.



The 12th Annual Gospel Festival is set for June 25 at the San Diego County Fair. Gospel legend Shirley Caesar will headline the Toyota Summer Concert Series performance.

Two U.S. missionaries slain in Jamaica

by ONIZE OHIKERE

MACUNGIE, Pa. (WNS) — Jamaican police are still looking for clues in the murder of two U.S. missionaries whose bodies were found the last weekend in April in the Caribbean island's rural north coast area.

Harold Nichols, 53, and Randy Hentzel, 48, worked with the mission group Teams for Medical Missions, which offers free medical care in Jamaica along with community outreach and sharing the gospel. Both men were on their way to check an ongoing house-building project when they were killed. Local authorities found one body and two motorbikes in bushes along a rural road before finding the other body a day later.

Nichols and his wife, Teri, served for 12 years as Teams for Medical Missions' first full-time missionaries in Jamaica. Teri hosts a Bible club in her basement every Wednesday that welcomes more than 100 children. Nichols learned how to build homes for needy families and became the organization's building co-

ordinator.

"Harold truly became a Jamaican," said Anne Clay, a medical coordinator with Teams for Medical Missions, which is based in Macungie, Pa. "If a hurricane removed the roof off your home, he was the first person to show up with a tarp."

Hentzel and his wife, Sara, who have five children, worked as full-time missionaries with the group for six years. The couple had earlier gone through the Bible Training Center curriculum, a three-year program that equips people to be pastors and lay leaders in churches. The Hentzels started the training program in Jamaica, where it continues to grow.

"That was Randy's passion," Clay said. "He started his first class four years ago and they graduated in October. Now there are five separate classes going on."

Jamaican police on May 2 said they have no suspects and are searching for a motive for the murders. But Jamaica is plagued with high violent crime rates. The island of about 2.7 million people suffered 1,200 killings in 2015, a roughly 20 percent increase from the previous year.

"I can tell you we're working assiduously to bring resolution to this matter," said Assistant Police Commissioner Ealan Powell. "But the motive is still very unclear."

U.S. Embassy public affairs counselor Joshua Polacheck said the staff was in contact with the victims' families and the ambassador had contacted the highest levels of Jamaica's security forces.

The Teams for Medical Missions Facebook page is flooded with promises of prayers as well as people in Jamaica offering assistance. Clay described the



Slain missionaries Harold Nichols, left, and Randy Hentzel served with Teams for Medical Missions in Jamaica.

public response and support as unprecedented.

"My first heart's cry was, 'Lord, bring



revival to Jamaica,'" Clay said. "That where we are right now. We've felt the outpour and the love, and it's unbelievable."

Evangelism is focus of Global Outreach Day

The fifth annual Global Outreach Day, a collaborative effort to share the gospel around the world, will be held May 28. The vision of the Global Outreach Day is to build up a network of Christians worldwide, equipping and mobilizing them to share the Gospel to over 200 nations on one single day.

Last year alone, the G.O.D. effort resulted in the distribution of 43.2 million gospel tracts, with 4.1 million training booklets printed. The ministry said it recorded 1.7 million conversions in 2015.

While a collaborative effort, the concept behind Global Outreach Day belongs to Werner Nachtigal, who envisioned it while working with pastors in Africa. By establishing the global effort, not only are people being exposed to the life-changing power of Jesus but his followers are also becoming equipped to be part of the process.

"Although many Christians want to reach people with the Gospel they feel limited and inadequate, sometimes not even called to do

it," the ministry website says about its motivation in offering spiritual and practical evangelism training. "You don't need to be a 'super-evangelist' with a 'super-budget.' There are thousands of ideas and creative ways to lead someone to Jesus Christ."

Among the many partnering organizations are Mission America Coalition, Global Day of Prayer, The Call, Generals International, Voice in the City, Christ for All Nations, Youth With a Mission, Life Without Limbs, Cru, Metro Ministries, International House of Prayer, Alpha International, Word of Life Fellowship, Jews for Jesus, Global Media Outreach, World Evangelical Alliance and Every Home for Christ.

Since its inception, more than 8 million Christian believers, thousands of churches, and numerous global networks have already joined the Global Outreach Day movement.

Learn more at www.globaloutreachday.com.



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Community picnic

LAKESIDE — Lakeside Community Presbyterian Church will hold a neighborhood picnic from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. May 21 on the front lawn.

The event will include a live band, bounce houses, carnival games and bingo.

The church is located at 9908 Channel Road.

Learn more at www.lakesidepc.org or call (619) 443-1021.

Academy “Top Ten” Goes Bowling

SAN DIEGO — Hope Leadership Foundation treated its top performing students to a bowling outing in April.

Students were selected for the event after being named to the “Top Ten” point earners for their respective grades. Points were awarded for daily attendance, completing homework, and displaying positive leadership and service characteristics by going above and beyond.

In addition to the Top Ten, the ministry was able to bring along three extra students after being blessed with “spare” passes. Ten of the 13 children were bowling for the first time.

After bowling there was ice cream for the students and a walk around the Embarcadero.

The foundation reaches out to at-risk students by offering learning opportunities, after-school enhancements, mentoring and sports activities.

Learn more at www.hopeleadership-foundation.org.

Creation and Earth History ‘Taste’ fundraiser

SANTEE — The Creation and Earth History Museum will hold its second annual Taste of Creation and Silent Auction on Saturday, June 4, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the Santee museum.

Event guests will have an opportunity to walk through the history exhibits and experience themed foods for each display. Museum President Tom Cantor will also speak.

In addition to offsetting annual operating expenses, money raised at the event is used to enhance the museum’s exhibits and provide community educational programs.

Last year’s event was a sellout.

Tickets are \$40 each or \$65 per couple. The museum is located at 10946 Woodside Ave. N.

Learn more at www.creationsd.org or call (619) 599-1104.

Hoehn to speak at church’s business breakfast

ESCONDIDO — Emmanuel Faith Community Church will hold a Faith@Work breakfast from 7:30 to 9 a.m. June 4 at the congregation’s Holy Grounds Café.

The speaker will be Bill Hoehn, president of Hoehn Motors. Hoehn’s topic will be “Wealth, Success and Ambition from a

Biblical Perspective.” The North County businessman will also be sharing his faith journey, his heart for human flourishing, and the chaplaincy program at Hoehn Motors.

The breakfast is part of the new Faith@Work ministry launched by Emmanuel Faith to help develop a more integrated approach to faith, work and life.

The church is located at 639 E. 17th Ave. Learn more at www.efcc.org or call (760) 745-2541.

‘My Therapist Sez...’

LA MESA — Skyline Church will host its monthly “My Therapist Sez...” program at 6:45 p.m. June 7 in the Worship Center Auditorium.

A panel of trained therapists will respond to questions on important life topics in a session moderated by Dr. Don Welch.

The meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month. Childcare is available with an email RSVP to esnelson@skylinechurch.org.

The church is located at 11330 Campo Road.

For more information, call (619) 660-5000.

Rejuvenate with worship

EL CAJON — Narratives Church will host Rejuvenate Worship, a night of worship and praise music at 7 p.m. June 10.

Worship Pastor Josh Gates and the Narratives worship team will lead the night’s musical session.

The evening will include a short devotional.

The church is located at 450 Fletcher Parkway, Suite 224.

For more information, call (619) 249-6386.

Tomlinson 5K and fun run

POINT LOMA — The 4th Annual LaDainian Tomlinson 5K & One Mile Kids Fun Run will be held June 11 at NTC Park at Liberty Station. Registration begins at 7 a.m.

Start time for the 5K is 8 a.m. for runners, while the kids fun run, now in its third year, is slated for 8:30 a.m.

Proceeds from the race, produced by Integrated Sports Marketing, will benefit Tomlinson’s Touching Lives Foundation, which engages in a number of programs designed to promote educational, social and cultural awareness and positive self-esteem to enhance the lives of children, families and communities.

In addition to the race, the family-friendly event will include music, bounce houses, games, contests and other activities, along with a free food court. Registered runners and walkers will also have access to an autograph booth featuring current and former Chargers players and local celebrities.

Those who register for the walk/run will receive a commemorative LaDainian Tomlinson event finisher medal and an event T-shirt.

The event is sponsored by EDCO.

Learn more at www.lt5k.com.

Original play takes the stage

SAN DIEGO — Local resident Tamera Hill will present her original play “The Soul Mate Experiment,” a romantic comedy about a couple who meets and falls in love at a friend’s anniversary celebration, on June 17 and 18 at the Lyceum Space. The shows will be presented at 8 p.m. Friday and 5 p.m. Saturday.

The show, offered through Tamera Hill Productions, will be in San Diego as part of the company’s West Coast Summer Love tour. The play will return to the region for an Aug. 27 show at the Star Theater in Oceanside.

The modern-day tale follows the couple as they fall in love with the idea of marriage and, certain they have found “the one,” they decide to get married, never considering what the consequences of “happily ever after” might mean.

The play, which contains adult topics, stars Lester Barrie, Andrea Jones and Scott A. Williams.

Hill has written and produced several plays that explore faith. She attends City of Hope International.

Tickets to the play range from \$35 to \$75.

Learn more at www.tamerahillplays.com.

Switchfoot frontman to appear at Future Quest

EL CAJON — Future Quest, the annual youth training conference sponsored by Foothills Christian Fellowship, will be held from June 29 to July 1. The conference is open to students in grades 7 through 12.

This year’s theme is “One Lord. One Church. One Purpose.”

Featured speakers include Clayton Jennings, an author and filmmaker; Bill Wilson, founder and pastor of the Metro World Child Ministries in Brooklyn, New York; Danny Eslinger, high school pastor at Foothills; and Mark Hoffman, founding co-pastor at Foothills and executive director of Youth Venture Teen Centers and Higher Ground After-School Bible Clubs.

Musical guests include Jon Foreman, lead singer of Switchfoot and Florida-based hip hop artist KB.

The conference includes 50-minute workshops on topics of importance to teens.

Numerous service projects—at the beach and inner-city communities—are a key element of the conference.

In addition to the worship and workshops, the event offers an airsoft arena, scooter park, prayer tent, game lounge, DJ lounge, inflatables, a BMX course, bowling and access to a nearby amusement center.

The early registration fee is \$38 per person before June 20. After that deadline, the rate is \$45. Those wishing to attend for one day will be admitted for \$20.

The church is located at 365 W. Bradley Ave.

Learn more at www.futurequest.tv or call (619) 442-1467.

Dutch Sheets

Jon & Jolene Hamill

Fri July 1 | 7PM & Sat July 2 | 9AM-12PM

REVOLUTION SAN DIEGO

TURNAROUND TOUR

The Glory Train

www.glorytrain.us | Skyline Church | Contact: esnelson@skylinechurch.org

ONLINE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more Community News and an online Calendar of Events for San Diego County, please visit www.refreshedsandiego.com.

Courage to take the risk

“Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.”
—T. S. Eliot

Susan, a good friend of mine, caught me off guard when she revealed that she might have cancer. She openly said, “I’m really worried about these lumps I found under my skin.” I quickly inquired, “When do you have an appointment with your doctor to get them checked?”

“Oh, I’m not going to the doctor,” Susan said. “He might tell me that these lumps really are cancer.”

“What!? You’ve got to be kidding me! The earlier you get this checked out the better,” I insisted.

She looked me in the eye and with all seriousness said, “If I go to my doctor and he tells me it’s cancer then it’s real. Right now it’s just something I’m worried about.”

Not only was Susan trying to avoid the risk of knowing the truth, she was also content to merely worry rather than do something about the problem.

Life is full of risks and some people are able to face risks squarely by dealing with

problems as they arise. Others prefer to avoid perceived risks by distorting reality with a common defense mechanism called *denial*.

This illustrates an interesting paradox about avoiding risks. The greatest risk we can take in life is to try to avoid taking risks. For example, by avoiding the risk of hearing bad news Susan increases the chance that she will die from cancer.

Think of life as a series of choices and each choice we make can be pegged on a scale from low risk to high risk. Living life at either extreme is fraught with danger. Choosing to live as an adrenaline junkie is definitely dangerous, but avoiding risks at all costs can be dangerous too—and it is guaranteed to fail. Finding balance and managing risk appropriately is the key to healthy living.

What makes someone as risk avoidant as Susan? This is a complex question with many influential factors. Here are just a few:

Nature/nurture: Some of us are genetically predisposed to being cautious and averse to risk. Anyone who has had children knows that even babies have unique

personalities with different levels of risk aversion and shyness.

Susan reports that she was a quiet, inhibited child in elementary school. She was never one to raise her hand in class to answer a question from the teacher, and she hated being called upon to be a team leader for any sport or activity.

Early attachment: Healthy bonding also sets the stage for later willingness to take risks. Insecure attachments in the early years can create lasting insecurity in later relationships.

Susan’s parents divorced when she was a young child and she recalls feeling horrible separation anxiety when not in the presence of her mother. This insecure attachment in her first relationship may help to explain why subsequent relationships are characterized by a deep fear of rejection. Although lonely, she would prefer to be alone than risk the pain of another broken heart.

Trauma: Unresolved trauma can create a generalized anxious apprehension that influences one’s willingness to take risks.

After witnessing her parents fight repeatedly when she was a child, Susan worries that her most important relationships will end in unresolved conflict as well. She strives to please everyone and feels emotionally triggered and responsible if someone is not happy, even when their unhappiness has nothing to do with her.

If you can relate to Susan in some of these influencing factors, or with some of her symptoms, then you might wonder what you can do about your aversion to risk.

Counseling for early attachment issues or trauma will help with aversion to risk. Good counselors don’t make decisions for you but help you weigh pros and cons of decisions that involve risk. Therapy helps people get off the fence by facing choices and their consequences.

Immobilizing fears can be irrational and are frequently based on “what if” thinking of worst-case scenarios. Therapy helps people figure out what is rational and what is irrational in order to make courageous decisions even when fear is present.

Fortunately, our Savior did not let fear stop him from facing one of the most horrific deaths imaginable. When we keep Jesus as our example, then we can endure all opposition and face our fears courageously (Hebrews 12:1-3).

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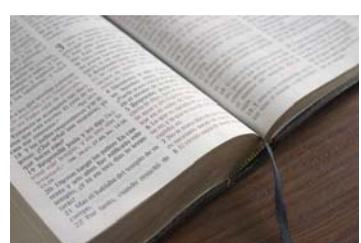
Daniel Jenkins, Ph.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist at Lighthouse Psychological Services in Mission Valley. He is also a professor of psychology at Point Loma Nazarene University. Learn more at www.lighthousepsy.com.

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3 things Christian parents should tell their kids about 'Star Wars'

In the past few months, my home has been transformed into, well, a Jedi training institute.

That's what happens when a father (that's me) momentarily loses his mind and buys his two young sons toy light sabers—the type that collapse into the handle and then “shoot out” with just a slight flick of the wrist. And so they have light saber battles at morning and at night, assuming they've done their chores.

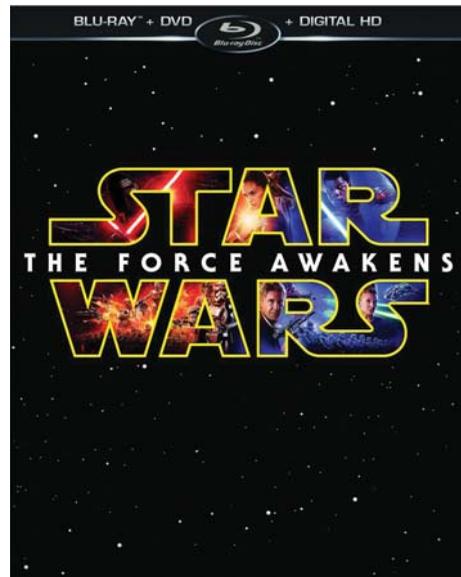
All of this is not surprising, considering that I was a “Star Wars” fan growing up and that a new film in the series, “The Force Awakens,” was released in theaters last year and was recently released on digital, DVD and Blu-ray. Yes, I was at the theater on opening night, and yes, soon thereafter I took my 7-year-old son to watch it.

Still, I'd rather my kids not grow up *fantasizing* about “Star Wars.” And I also don't want them to become like those crazy people in Great Britain who pencil in “The Force” as their religion on census forms. And, finally, I don't want them confusing anything in the “Star Wars” universe for anything in the Bible.

Some may scoff at my concern, but I also know that my kids—like most kids—are incredibly impressionable and lack discernment. And I also know that my kids—like most kids—can be clueless with weightier matters.

God commands parents to teach their children His commandments (Deuteronomy 6:7) throughout the day and to “train” them and prepare them for adulthood (Proverbs 22:6). Why would I hand that responsibility and privilege over to Hollywood and assume they can separate fact from fiction?

Besides, let's be honest: “Star Wars” is a movie about a religion. Sure, it's a



fictitious religion, but it's one that has elements borrowed from many real-world religions—as George Lucas himself acknowledged during a 1999 interview with Bill Moyers.

So, can we Christian parents use “Star Wars” to teach our children biblical truth? I think so. This is what I've told my kids

about the series:

1 There is a moral worldview (if you just look). The good guys in the newest film are truly good, and the bad guys are really, *really*, bad. Unlike so many other popular movies today, we see the on-screen results of bad actions—and evil is ultimately defeated. We even have a main character who turns bad and then seeks “redemption” by turning good. My oldest son once asked me: “Dad, why did Anakin choose the dark side?” Soon, we were talking about real-world temptation and sin, and I was left amazed that a science fiction movie had led us there.

2 There is an unbiblical worldview (and it's not hard to find). There is no personal God in “Star Wars,” and there definitely is no heaven or hell. Instead, there is an impersonal Force that is “created by all living things.” It “surrounds us” and “binds the galaxy together.” That sounds a lot like pantheism, the unbiblical belief that teaches that everything and everyone is “god.” The Bible teaches that God *made* the universe and is separate from it. My son once asked, “Dad, wouldn't it be cool if the Force was

real?” To which I replied, “I guess, but not as cool as personally knowing the God of the universe. And besides, the power we have as Christians is *more powerful* than the Force.” I won him over.

3 There is a lot of fun to be had (if we keep the right perspective). Movies are the “worldview language” of the culture, and I enjoy using them to teach my kids biblical truth, when possible. Perhaps modern-day parenting would be easier if my boys instead played “cops and robbers,” but “Star Wars”—with its vast universe filled with spaceships and light sabers—just seems more fun. The Apostle Peter urged Christians of his day to “always be prepared” to give an answer about matters of faith (1 Peter 3:15). He certainly didn't have in mind Jedi knights and theatrical blockbusters, but as a parent living in the 21st century, I must.



Michael Foust is the father of four small children and blogs about parenting at michaelfoust.com.



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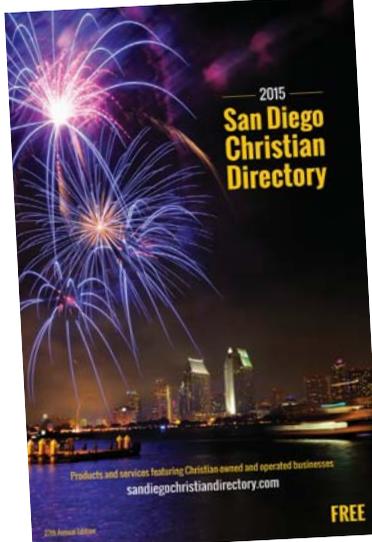
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Radioactive faith

I woke up on a recent morning—before my eyes were fully engaged with the morning light—thinking about radioactive faith. I have no idea where this thought came from. My mind doesn't think scientifically. In fact, come Monday mornings my mind is mindless—I just don't think. So, to wake up to the buzzing sound of the phrase spiritual radiation, no doubt from the Holy Spirit, is a miracle worthy of sharing.

Webster's dictionary defines radioactive as *having or producing a powerful and dangerous form of energy (called radiation)*. Scriptural faith is defined, according to Hebrews 11:1 as *"the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."* Combine these two definitions and you have radioactive faith, which, by Mark Miller's definition, is the *power of the Gospel being emitted/released into the kingdom of darkness and utterly destroying a decaying power.*

How is radioactive faith illustrated in Scripture? Take a good look at the Hall of Faith in Hebrews Chapter 11:

3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God,

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain... And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see

7 By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household.

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.

9 By faith he went to live in the land of promise.

11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son.

20 By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

21 By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship

over the head of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

24 By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

29 By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.

31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient.

39 And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised,

40 since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

The above examples radiate with

a list of people who—by faith—took hold of the promises of God. And, if you read the entire text of Chapter 11 in detail, there are positive consequences for the people of God—faith is imparted—and a radioactive consequence for the enemies of God—decay and destruction.

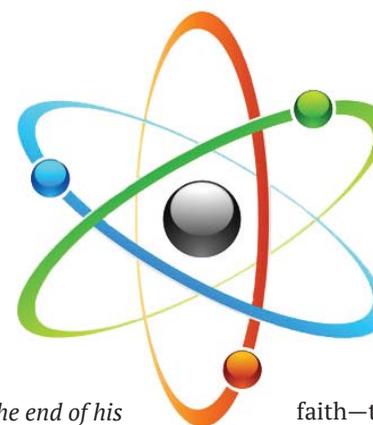
Christians who embrace this kind of faith know that Christ is our vision. It is through Him that we fulfill our calling as individuals, and corporately through the church. When we choose to make Him known through our own God-anointed giftings, we cross the line of faith and choose to do radioactive damage to the kingdom of darkness by serving others.

There is no turning back!



Mark Miller is pastor of Narratives Church in El Cajon and is a doctoral candidate in Organic Organizational Leadership at Bethel Seminary.

Under his leadership, the congregation is sponsoring Apostolos School of Leadership and Church Planting, with its first B.A. program launching in the fall.



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I awoke slowly, a tiny ray of light peeking through the curtains as I tried to open my eyes. The dog was breathing in my face, his wet nose crammed into my right eyeball. My eyes hurt, but I didn't think it was from dog slobber. They felt itchy and irritated, and when I finally hauled myself out of bed and looked in the mirror, I could see they were also red. I panicked.

Uh oh. Do I have pink eye again?

I'd recently gotten back from the Erma Bombeck Writers Workshop in Dayton, Ohio, where I spent four days socializing and eating dessert before dinner. The sessions were instructional, the keynote speakers inspirational, and the message one of encouragement and embracing one's mission. We all left feeling empowered.

And for some, nauseated.

What do you get when 350 women and 9 men check into a hotel for a weekend-long humor writing conference featuring top-notch guest speakers, dessert with every meal, and more fun than a barrel of monkeys?

You get the flu, that's what you get.

Prior to the conference, most of us had joined the Erma Attendees Facebook group, taking time to learn each other's names, discuss packing lists, and admit fears about attending the premier workshop for humorists.

After the conference? The talk was all about who caught what from whom and when.

Patient Zero clearly brought the dreaded virus to Ohio, because a few attendees were struck down the first night and didn't recover until it was time to head home. A few others got sick over the weekend; as I left the hotel on Sunday morning, I saw

several people who looked like they might not make it out the door.

And then as people returned home to their corners of the country, like a giant domino chain of nausea and fever, one



by one
others fell.

Someone even started a Facebook poll to track who was sick, since so many people were posting "Me, too" in the comment sections of other people's posts.

Me? I got lucky. My stomach was upset, but that could have been from all the cheesecake; I don't usually have dessert at every meal. I checked my temperature every hour, just in case I was burning up and didn't know it. Nope, no flu here. But my

eyes were killing me, and I was afraid that in addition to my business cards maybe I'd also passed out pink eye. If the next discussion thread was about who caused the painful temporary blindness, all fingers would point to me.

Not how I want to be remembered.

A quick trip to the doctor proved that I didn't have pink eye. Phew. Nothing contagious. Just dry, irritated eyes probably caused from a weekend of crying with laughter—and self-discovery, as fears melted away to be replaced by creative power and inspiration. And maybe some chlorine from the hotel whirlpool where I'd spent an hour soaking with friends while we skipped the last session.

While I was at the doctor, I also had him look at what I thought was a persistent blister on my toe. It took just a few seconds to diagnose my eyes and I figured as long as I had his attention I'd get my money's worth from my co-pay. Turns out it wasn't a blister, it was a wart. Eew! He froze it off, and now in addition to my itchy eyes, I had a painful toe.

Clearly none of this is in the same

league as what some of my fellow attendees were dealing with. A dozen or more people were out of commission for several days, bedridden with fevers and vomiting and other not very fun mementos of the conference. At least one person ended up in the hospital. This was no laughing matter.

But as Judy Carter said in her session on The Message of You, "If no aspect of your life sucks, you have nothing to write about."

I'd say the Erma flu victims will have enough material to last until the next workshop in 2018. My itchy eyes and painful toe? I've exhausted that experience in one column.



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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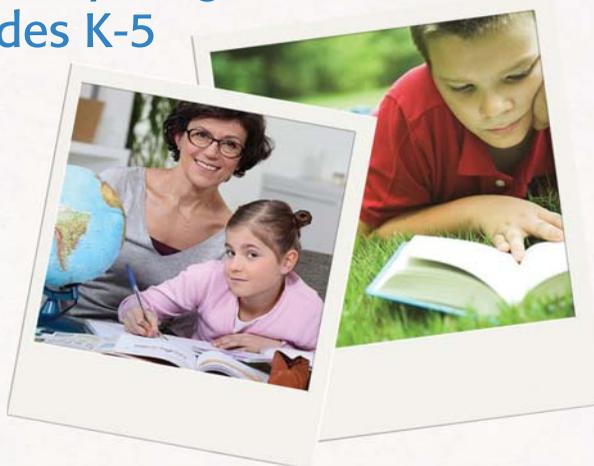
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