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after loss of both parents
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Publishers' Note

The response from last month's inaugural issue of Refreshed was amazing and very encouraging.

The one thing that was most fascinating was the wide age demographic that we were able to reach. We had readers from the 20s to the 80s who responded with how much they enjoyed the magazine with its variety of stories.

This month's cover story is the inspirational account of five talented siblings who lost both parents to cancer when the oldest was just 21. Read how, despite their pain and loss, they rallied together around their music and their faith.

As a relevant tie-in, columnist John Stonestreet answers a question that never goes away: "What is God up to—or not—in a world of such tragedy and pain?"

Your feedback desired

Tell us what you think. Visit www.refreshedmag.com/survey.html and complete the reader survey. Your feedback on this issue will help us as we plan future issues.

Your stories wanted

Do you know someone who has endured deeply challenging life situations and, through faith, has persevered through their hardship? Tell us about it by sending an email to info@refreshedmag.com.

Lamar & Theresa Keener
Publishers

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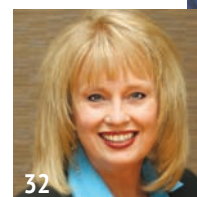
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Pay attention: Our stories are best told in the details

It's not difficult to spot Garrison Keillor in a crowd. He's 6-feet 3-inches tall, his hair is usually a little wild, his glasses are distinctly round, his eyebrows look like owls have built their nests there, his face looks like he is pondering a deep thought, and he wears red tennis shoes. So when I went to the airport to pick him



...his hair is usually a little wild, his glasses are distinctly round, his eyebrows look like owls have built their nests there...

up for a writer's event at my school, I was confident I could find him without much effort.

Sure enough, he came down the escalator, and I walked over to introduce myself.

He's a pretty quiet guy, unlike the persona he has on his program "A Prairie Home Companion" which started on public radio 40 years ago. He's written several best-selling books, and appears on stage throughout the country telling stories and jokes, leading the audience in singing. He's a combination of Will Rogers and Mark Twain. But in person, he seems a little shy.

We small-talked in the car. I'm from Minnesota and so is he. We have some mutual friends. We talked about writ-

ing, about books, about home. Or, I should say, *I* talked about those things. He stayed quiet. I brought him to our campus to show him around, and we walked through it for about 30 or 40 minutes. I told him about the history of the Point Loma Nazarene University campus—how it was once the site of the Theosophical Society, a religious group that tried to create a utopian society through natural beauty and the arts. I told him how the Navy needed the land on the peninsula of Point Loma during World War II, and how the area became the campus of Cal Western University, and how it became a Nazarene school when Pasadena College moved to Point Loma in 1973.

It felt like I was talking to myself—similar to some classes I teach! He didn't really ask anything or even appear to be that interested. Then I took him to his hotel where he stayed until it was time for his evening performance of storytelling.

In front of the sold-out audience, he was lively and hilarious right from the start. Then he started telling a long, complicated story, and I felt my jaw fall open. His story was about the Point Loma area—he talked about the Theosophical Society, the Navy taking over the area, the Nazarenes coming down from Pasadena. Everything I had told him during our little walking tour—my monologue—was part of a larger story that he was telling in that moment.

At one point he walked to the edge of the stage, looked down at me in the front row, and raised those massive eyebrows at me, as if to say, "See? You thought I wasn't paying attention, didn't you? You thought I was ignoring

your little history lesson, didn't you?" Then he went back to his astonishingly funny story.

Afterward, people came up to me shaking their heads, amazed at his ability to keep the crowd spellbound and laughing for two hours as he paced through the auditorium, never looking at a note.

"He must have a huge staff of researchers," the fans said. "He knew us so well, right down to the details!"

I just shook my head, amazed at what I had just witnessed.

"You have no idea," I said.

I learned something from that experience. As a writer, I learned that great writers always take in the details around them—dialogue, weather, major and minor characters, assuming that they can be used at some point for a bigger purpose. Everything is potential material for a story.

It's true about our lives, too. Everything around us, everyone around us, from the big event to the small one, from the greatest achievement to the worst failure, the places we've lived, the pain we have caused and endured, the joy we have experienced, all are part of our Big Story. That story is constantly being revised. How is your Story coming along? Pay attention to the details. Those might be the best parts.



Dean Nelson is the founder and director of the journalism program at Point Loma Nazarene University where he directs the annual Writer's Symposium By

the Sea. This year's event, Feb. 20 to 28, features Jeannette Walls, author of *The Glass Castle*, Anne Lamott, Donald Miller, and Samuel Freedman. Learn more at www.pointloma.edu/writers.



Orphaned

Siblings cling to faith, music after loss of both parents to cancer

by LORI ARNOLD

Keren Bunnell was an unlikely candidate to be standing before the judge. The oldest of five, she showed early signs of being momma's helper. The daughter of a Navy Lt. Commander, Keren was raised in a strong Christian home, her mother a symphony conductor of sorts who meticulously orchestrated all aspects of her children's lives: homeschool, music lessons and family outings.

Yet there the 21-year-old stood before

the bench, her attorney at her side. She noticed the judge carefully scrutinizing her as the attorney issued a plea on her behalf. The counselor ended his remarks. The judge sat silent, pondering his decision.

"I was very nervous and had no idea what to expect," Keren said. "The courtroom and the judge were both very intimidating, and if our lawyer hadn't done all the talking I probably would have squeaked and stammered my way through the whole thing."

As the judge spoke, the courtroom fell silent. Even a fussy baby held back her

cries.

"My breath caught in my throat and stayed there," Keren said.

After watching a parade of bitter, angry defendants inside the courtroom and the judge's blunt and impartial responses leading up to her case, Keren was surprised when the judge modified his tone for her, praising her courage and strength.

"I grant your petition and I wholeheartedly wish you good fortune in your lives," the judge said as the gavel slammed to the bench.

Karen turned toward the gallery and was mobbed by her three sisters and brother, ages 15 to 19. She was now their legal guardians.

Only a few weeks earlier, the Bunnell siblings found themselves orphaned teens after their mother, Julie, died of colon cancer, her diagnosis coming just a year after their father, James's protracted battle with melanoma. Throughout the process, the siblings, already tight because of their upbringing, wedged a formidable bond. Still, there was uncertainty about their future, something Keren was cognizant of as she approached family court that morning.

"Standing in a huddle before the imposing, red-brick building, I realized that for the past month, the five of us had wandered like sheep without shepherds, confused and bewildered," the young matriarch said. "After years of living in a safe, secure, homeschooled environment, we suddenly found ourselves quite alone in the world."

With their parents gone, the responsibility natural fell to Keren, now 25.

"She is the bravest, strongest, and most amazing woman ever," said Corrie, 22, the middle child. "She took care of all the legal

and financial stuff and met with our lawyer and financial adviser on a regular basis for months and months after our mother's death. ... She became almost like a mother to all of us. We brought all of our problems to her. Even now, we still go to her for advice on practically every topic."

The tight-knit family lived in Eastlake, where their disciplinarian mom taught them at home and ensured they were trained on the violin, while their prankster dad, a veteran of Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom, infused the home with humor.

When the children were smaller and dad was stationed in Pensacola, Fla., he warned his children to be careful around the region's large mosquitoes, which he dubbed "fluzzadillos," saying they feasted on small children. His teasing made them giggle.

James also demonstrated how to be kind, faithful, hard working, responsible and reliable, but was cherished for the lighter diversions he brought to their structured home.

"Whenever we watch the movies we watched as kids, I can remember every part my dad used to laugh at and in my mind I can still hear his laughter," Keren said.



Meet Keren, 25

The group's violist, Keren is graduating later this year with an accounting degree from San Diego State University. As the leader of the Bunnell siblings she organizes household chores, pays the bills and polices "the pantry and fridge."

"I am the oldest, but not necessarily the bossiest," she said. "I enjoy having responsibilities and taking care of my siblings—to the extent that they'll let me."

She loves reading, running, biking and working out in the gym. Keren will be married in a double wedding this summer with her sister, Kimberly. The sisters are engaged to best friends Jeff and Michael.

On her siblings: "I had and still have lots of fears, some of them ridiculous. I feared being the one in charge in case of any emergency. I imagined house fires, burglaries, my siblings falling sick, car accidents, you name it. I feared being the one who would have to take charge and protect my sisters and brother in case of danger. I'd always felt so safe knowing that mom or dad was there and that I could rely on them to handle anything that might happen."

On her grief: "Grief pops up at odd times. It may come suddenly when I'm watching my cousins (who are right around our ages) cook with their mom or joke with their dad. Or when I think about my upcoming wedding and realize my dad won't be there to walk me down the aisle, and I don't need to look through the mother-of-the-bride dresses that the lady from the bridal boutique displays for me. Although grief lessens as time goes by, it never fully disappears."

Meet Kimberly, 23

Kimberly is a cello performance and public administration major at San Diego State University and is the family cook and baker.

"My siblings say I'm not too shabby at it," Kimberly said. "I'm happy to say the kitchen disasters are becoming few and far between—although the dishes aren't."

She admits to a strong competitive drive with Keren that resulted in her mother switching her from violin to cello to tone down the sibling rivalry.

She enjoys Ultimate Frisbee, mountain biking, backpacking, rockclimbing, running and reading.

On her siblings: "Growing up, we did everything together, and music continues to keep my siblings and I close. Our schedules get hectic and varied and music brings us back to a feeling of unity and camaraderie. I believe the heart of music is different for every person and my heart of music is my siblings. Music doesn't mean as much or bring as much joy without them."

On her grief: "Grief is one of those subjects our society seems to avoid and largely doesn't know how to handle. People try to make you feel better with



'You're OK' or 'The grief will go away soon' or 'They are in heaven now, you should be happy.' But you're not OK. The grief won't go away. And yes, they are in heaven and I am extremely thankful for that, but for many years even that hurt because they were rejoicing and out of pain and our tears and hurt kept flowing. There is no cookie cutter for grief and I realize it can be very difficult to know what to do when someone you know is grieving. Try to let that person grieve the way he or she needs to, whether or not it might be the way you think it should be."

Because of the typical military commitments of duty days, deployments, and long work days, their father was rarely home.

"But when he was, 'oh my gosh,' Corrie said. "All of us fought over who got to go to Home Depot with him, who got to go out on the daddy-daughter dates, who was gonna make him breakfast."

As the only son in the home, Ross, now 18, said his father's 6-foot, 5-inch stature "always made me look up to him with all the more respect.

"I only spent my younger years with him and unfortunately I don't remember a lot of things but I do remember him as a loving and caring father who was always willing to help me with school or baseball," Ross said.

When their dad was diagnosed with skin cancer in 2004, their parents worked hard to shield the children from the experience.

"I was pretty young, maybe 9, so I wasn't very aware of what was going on, said Cara, now 20. "Mom simply told us that dad was sick, and whenever dad did something weird, she said it was his medicine."

It wasn't until he was hospitalized after a seizure that Keren began to understand just how sick he had become.

"He and mom were both crying—something they had never, ever done in front of us before," Keren said. "It was a very traumatic moment for me because I couldn't imagine life without my dad."

Three years after his diagnosis James passed away.

"I remember it being a tense time, and things changed, as we didn't do as many activities together then," Ross said of his



father's illness and death.

A year later, as they were still processing their grief, their mother developed colon cancer.

"When dad had cancer, Mom talked with him, took care of him, brought him to appointments, and basically did everything," Keren said. "This time, she had no one to lean on but us. We saw everything, knew about everything, took care of everything. I would say that those were the hardest years of my life."

The home that had been filled with music took on a different tune.

"My entire teenage years were filled with the word cancer and the pain that word would come to mean to my dad, my

mom, my siblings and myself," said Kimberly, now 23. "When our mom was sick, it never occurred to me that God would take her home as well. To me, that was the impossible. We couldn't survive without her. When He did take her home, it was very unexpected to all of us."

Before her death, Julie worked with her oldest daughter to ensure the children could keep the family home, training her on how to take care of the bills.

"Even after her death, we learned more about her and what she had sacrificed for us that it is sometimes beyond believable," Corrie said. "I only hope I can someday be half the mother she was."

With their financial security in place,

Meet Ross, 18

Ross is a management information systems and political science major at SDSU who is considering honoring his father's calling by enlisting in the Navy. Living with four women, Ross has become the family fixer.

He plays double bass, taking it up after tiring of following in his sisters' footsteps. In fact, he's spent most of his life trying to protect himself from his sisters' incursions into his life.

"I was born into a family of four girls who thought it was impossible that I wasn't a girl, so they dressed me up in a dress and bonnet and attempted to take me to a ladies' banquet when I was 3. Their plan might have worked, but Dad came home from work and made



them take off the clothes and the red nail polish they had on me."

On his siblings: "Family is the most important thing ever. Stay close with

your family. Family is a thousand times better than friends. Your siblings can help you and mentor you in ways other people can't, no matter how much wisdom they have. A lot of what I do is as a group with my sisters, but at the same time I am kind of a loner. I keep to myself most of the time and sometimes I am off in my own world just thinking of random stuff."

On his grief: "Movies have cannibalized what grief is, in my opinion. They portray it as lashing out at people, becoming antisocial or doing poorly in school. So you almost believe that that is how you need to act when grieving. In my experience grief is what you make it out to be. Everybody has their own forms for grieving."

thanks to their parents and the judge, the siblings turned to their faith and their common interests as they tackled their grief.

"We had very few close friends and no nearby relatives, so we depended on each other for advice, moral support, and comedic relief," Keren said.

They backpacked sections of the Pacific Crest Trail from Mexico to the Anza-Borrego Desert and trained to run a marathon, but it was their music, as the performance ensemble The Bunnell Strings, that kept them in harmony. Last year they toured the East Coast and in August they will take their act to Norway.

"Music was one of the factors that kept us close together and brought us opportunities that we would never have had otherwise: music scholarships, tours in different states," Keren said. "But if I had been an only child, I'm not sure how I would have survived."

Ross agreed, saying music served as a centering point for him.

"Music helps take my mind off of problems that I am dealing with and lets me just have fun and enjoy the time I get to play with my siblings," Ross said. "It also, surprisingly, helps me remember things or

brings to mind things I need to address in my life."

Even with the music, Kimberly admits the journey has not been easy.

"Bitterness creeps up very easily inside from the grief and pain and I have to constantly remind myself of the many blessings God has given me through my mom and dad," Kimberly said. "I would be completely lost without God and there is no way I could live without Him."

And while there were moments of real-world uncertainty, each of the Bunnell children stood firm on the biblical foundations instilled by the parents and their personal relationships with Jesus.

Invariably, the double tragedy of losing their parents shaped their teen and young adults years, yet they refused to let it corrode their faith.

"Why in the world, in a time when you need God so much more, would you turn your back on him and blame him for everything that is happening?" Corrie offered. "God knew exactly what was going to happen from the start and he orchestrated everything." ■

Learn more at www.bunnellstrings.com.



Meet Cara, 20

Cara, who also plays the violin, is a journalism and media studies major at SDSU who calls herself "weird, imaginative, pensive, intuitive, and mostly happy."

"My siblings call me emotional, my teachers think I'm on a different planet, and I think I'm perfectly normal," she said. "All things considered, you should get to know me before making any assumptions."

The self-described daddy's girl admits to being distracted from her schoolwork, preferring doodling over note-taking.

"I tend to scribble all over my notebooks," she said. "I wind up feeling pretty stupid at the end of the semester when all the other kids in class have notebooks filled with useful information and all I have to study are some drawings. Pretty bad ones, at that."

Even as a small child, Cara always knew what she wanted to be when she grew up, a question posed to her by an elderly relative after a 5-year-old Cara performed a violin solo for her.

"Thinking that the answer was obvious, I replied, 'A great violinist.'"

On her siblings: "I think it's easier for people who have a group they are a part of to help them know themselves. Much of what people do and think is influenced by others, whether or not it's on purpose. It's good to know the people who are influencing you, and understand why they influence you."

On her grief: "Everyone has to figure it out for themselves. There is no secret formula, magic words or healing love. All of it is horrible and you just have to learn your own personal way of getting through it. Actually, I'm not totally convinced that I found a way of getting through it. Life just sort of moves on without you, even if you're not ready."

Meet Corrie, 22

Corrie, a violinist, is a music composition major at SDSU and writes most of the music performed by the Bunnell Strings.

"I think I've found my role in the family by writing and arranging most of the music we play together," Corrie said. "I get to run the rehearsals and have my moment of leadership through that. And I love being able to have something that I'm responsible for."

When not working on her music, Corrie enjoys being the middle child.

"I can be either a responsible adult with the 'big kids' or I can be all crazy and have fun with the 'younger kids,'" she said.

Her hobbies are shopping and decorating, which keeps her siblings off guard as she moves furniture around the house at will. She also loves beach time with her cocker spaniel, Roy, and rollerblading on the Mission Beach boardwalk.

On her siblings: "When big issues come up, I always wish I had parents to run to for advice. But I've learned to rely on my family and God to steer me

in the right direction. They are the most awesomest siblings ever. Together, we can conquer the world."

On her grief: "Grief is real. It can consume your life. It can drag you under. It can make you so low. But you can't let it. There is always a light at the end of the tunnel. The grief will only last as long as you let it. They say grief is good, that it's good to cry. Sure it is! But come on, if you're going off the deep end in grief and it's still consuming you long after, it's kinda time to get over yourself and start thinking about someone else."



JOHN STONESTREET

The question that never goes away: Evil, suffering and Jesus Christ

What should Christians say about all the suffering in the world?

Philip Yancey is one of those rare Christians writers who are not afraid to ask the hard questions and is never content with pat answers.

Before becoming a famous and successful author for books like “What’s So Amazing about Grace,” he wrote those “drama in real life” articles for Reader’s Digest. And in his new book, “The Question That Never Goes Away,” Philip says that many of the people he wrote about, who had survived one tragedy or another, complained that too many Christians tried to minimize or explain away their suffering with comments such as, “God is punishing you,” or, “No, it’s Satan,” or “In time it will make sense,” or “You’ve been specially selected to demonstrate faith,” or “God needed them more than you do.”

Such well-intended comments only worsen the pain of those suffering. But Yancey is also not advocating that we run away from those hurting and suffering. I think “The Question that Never



dead, plus the mother of the shooter.

It was the last incident, at Sandy Hook Elementary, that affected him most directly, Yancey said.

“You kiss your daughter or son good-bye,” Philip told me, “you put them on the school bus, and then the next thing you hear is this message that no parent ever wants to hear.” Yancey spoke to grieving people at all three places and came away convinced that Christians must do a better job answering the perennial question, “What is God up to—or not—in a world of such tragedy and pain?”

After all, it is Christians, not the so-called New Atheists such as Richard Dawkins, that have an open door to help ... if we will walk through

it sensitively. “If Richard Dawkins were consistent,” Yancey told me, “and if he were asked to speak to Newtown, he would say ... this universe is a place of blind cosmic indifference. It’s a pitiless place. ... That doesn’t do much for parents who’ve just lost their six-year-old child.”

But Christians are able to genuinely offer hurting people compassion and hope, because Jesus offered both in his words and his actions. As Yancey pointed out in the interview, God Him-

self joined us in this world of suffering. “The Message” paraphrase of the Bible puts it this way: “The word became flesh and blood and moved into our neighborhood.”

And don’t forget which neighborhood: Bethlehem, a neighborhood under Roman occupation, and the location of a slaughter of innocents ordered by an arrogant, tyrannical and paranoid king. The neighborhood Jesus freely moved into experienced shortly thereafter a carnage similar to Newtown. No, this doesn’t answer all of our questions in the face of a tragedy. But it does tell us a bit about who God is, that He is committed to us ... and He understands.

Yancey also reminded me that you don’t need to be a theologian to offer comfort and hope to hurting friends, family, and neighbors. “When I ask people, who helped you most,” he said, “not one time have they said, oh it was this Ph.D. in philosophy, or a graduate of a seminary, or a pastor.”

No, they say, it was someone like a grandmother who would sit by the bed, do simple tasks, and simply be available. “It’s the practical acts of mercy,” said Yancey, “where we actually become the body of Christ and demonstrate that kind of care and attention, that mean the most to someone trying to recover.”

This is the kind of apologetics we all can do. We all must do.

“What is God up to—or not—in a world of such tragedy and pain?”

Goes Away” can make us all better at reaching out to those who are suffering.

I talked with Yancey about “The Question That Never Goes Away.”

The book is centered on Yancey’s visits to the sites of three horrific tragedies—the war in Sarajevo in the former Yugoslavia, where more than ten thousand people died; the tsunami in Japan, where nearly twenty thousand people died; and the mass shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, which left twenty school children and six staff members



John Stonestreet is the director of Strategic Partnerships for the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview and is heard on Breakpoint, a radio commentary (www.breakpoint.org) that is broadcast on 400 stations with an audience of eight million.

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Haven on a Shoestring



After-school program seeks to instill character, the value of community involvement and life skills to children

by MARY KAY MOODY

Forty-five young children, faces upturned, lean forward and lock their eyes on Miss Mari. Her voice nearly a whisper, she says, “He was asleep on his bed and a voice woke him. ‘Samuel. Samuel.’ He looked around and saw no one.” Mari’s eyes grow big; the children mimic her and hold their breath.

Not a wiggle or chatter emanates as Mari Rothman tells the Sonshine Club the story of God’s call to young Samuel. The children, ages 6 to 12, sit cross-legged on the classroom floor in a San Diego County middle school. After a six-hour school day, their calm and focus as they listen, then

discuss, the story are surprising.

The volunteers move to the last activity before dispensing snacks and good-byes: choosing the Awesome Student of the Day. It’s a bit of a misnomer, since every volunteer on the team chooses a student; so today there are five who select a prize from the tabletop of choices. As an 8-year-old boy walks forward, murmurs float around him.

“Way to go!” “Good job.”

None of the typical child-centered remarks such as, “What about me?” “Pick me!” were heard. The atmosphere of encouragement and camaraderie among the small children is unexpected. What

accounts for the cheery incongruity?

Miss Mari and God’s love.

Twenty-plus years ago Mari Rothman and her friend, Louise Conway, routinely power walked before Conway headed off to teach school and full-time-mom Rothman returned home, feeling a bit underproductive—her busy days of being chauffeur, field-trip chaperone, cookie lady, or confidante to her four kids were winding down. Her friend often talked of the daunting challenges some of her students faced: poverty, neglect, crowded homes, no supervision, parents on drugs. Endless problems made the children’s lives challenging and the school atmosphere difficult.



photo by GAIL ROMAINE

Sonshine Haven founder Mari Rothman leads an after-school club.

One chilly fall morning, as Rothman listened to Conway's heart-wrenching stories, she knew with crystal clear certainty that these kids *could* have a different future than their failing grades would indicate.

"What can I do?"

Conway shook her head.

"I wish these families could get themselves together," the teacher said. "The kids need so much. They're fighting an uphill battle by themselves."

Rothman rested a hand on Conway's arm.

"I mean it. What can I do?"

The women stared at each other a few moments, then began walking again.

"Pray, for sure. I don't know what else you could do," Conway said.

But the question opened doors of imagination and dreaming until Sonshine Haven was born.

Offering life skills

Initially Rothman tapped her friends, and a group of five volunteers went to the school each week and met with children who needed extra attention. They taught a one-on-one life skills class focused on specific needs they *could* impact.

To emphasize nutrition, they provided healthy snacks. To promote personal hygiene they helped with hair styling and worked to eliminate lice. To encourage giving, they taught the children how to make handmade gifts so they could attend parties and exchange presents on holidays.

But mostly they listened and poured love into the students. As they nibbled fruit, braided hair or cut and colored,

they asked about the kids' ideas, dreams, hopes, fears, even their heroes. The children cherished the attention lavished on them and asked their own questions. So the ladies related their own dreams and efforts to achieve them. They shared their fears, concerns and the faith that guided them everyday.

The life skills class became popular so quickly teachers had difficulty sending just one student. Rothman moved to an after-school format where the school provided use of a room. The Sonshine Club added singing and Bible stories about principles kids could apply to their lives, such as honesty and obedience.

Adults saw positive changes in the kids who attended, and the club grew. During summer vacations Sonshine Haven sent as many kids as possible to camp. Rothman contacted the San Diego Padres. Players donated tickets, and families attended games.

Royal treatment

Over the years the warmth of Miss Mari and her volunteers, and the joy in the classes drew the mothers, too—so much, in fact, that time and attention for the kids was being diverted. Sonshine Haven expanded, inviting the mothers to Mom's Night Out, a monthly evening just for them.

Mom's Night Out has been running for more than 15 years. Smiles reign as women greet each other with hugs, then share a meal prepared by volunteers. The women bubble with joy as they recount how Rothman and Sonshine Haven "saved my life," "restored my family," "gave me hope,"

"loved me back to sanity and sobriety," "introduced me to Jesus."

Additionally, Sonshine Haven blesses their financially strapped families with food baskets for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

"God always provides... but just enough," Rothman said.

One of the ministry's most popular outreaches is the Cinderella and Cinderella parties for students entering junior high. The annual event pairs eligible adolescents with a mother-daughter or father-son volunteer team for a shopping spree. Afterward, they're treated to haircuts, styling, make-up and manicures at a local salon. Everyone returns to the host location to enjoy a pizza party, don their new duds and take photos. The event has such a positive impact on the self-esteem of students that many of their parents say their children no longer dread school.

Community assistance

Rothman said Sonshine Haven and its Sonshine Clubs are still "a shoestring op-

Sonshine Haven at a glance

Sonshine Haven: After-school clubs at elementary campuses

Higher Ground: After-school programs at middle schools

Founder: Mari Rothman

What: Reaches out to children and mothers through after school programs, life skills classes and outreaches for moms.

Mom's Night Out: monthly fellowship meal and meeting, drawing an average of 60 moms a month.

Cinderella/Cinderella: Annual pampering event for boys and girls.

Waiting list: Sonshine Haven needs at least three adult volunteers to operate each club. Requests have come from parents of schools on a waiting list, but more volunteers are needed before clubs can be started. The waiting list includes Avocado, Rancho San Diego, Kempton, La Presa, Audubon, and Casa de Oro elementary schools and Spring Valley Middle School.

Address: 772 S Johnson Ave., El Cajon, CA 92020

Phone: (619) 440-1221

Web: www.sonshinehaven.org



Teaching life skills to young children is one of the purposes of Sonshine Haven. The children learn new skills in cooking, sewing, computers, fitness, art, nature, dance, and music.

eration.” But over time the shoestring has grown, although it still barrels along just on the good side of black and red ink. The Haven receives food donations from the San Diego Food Bank, and hosts an annual fundraising banquet and auction. Local churches cover costs for some clubs, the Padres players still donate tickets, monetary donations trickle in, and volunteers do most of the work. This little-engine-that-could organization appears to stretch every penny and accomplishes much with little.

Last year, they had clubs in 47 schools reaching 2,200-plus kids countywide, with at least seven more schools on a waiting list to get their own programs. The ministry has provided thousands of bags of groceries, its Awesome Student prizes and camp tuitions. . Beyond the financial and material gifts, Sonshine Haven has also provided tools to help thousands of students succeed and find purpose for their lives. There have also been hundreds of stories of families being reunited, pulled back from the brink of divorce, and victories over anger, worthlessness, substance abuse and homelessness, all tempered by the ministry’s mantra of abundant, joyful love.

One of those on the receiving end was Lynette, a bright, but angry girl who had few friends or positive experiences at school. Responding to the resources provided by the Sonshine Club, Lynette began



applying herself, earning good grades, and winning one contest or award after another. At the end of the school year, Rothman invited her to lunch—anywhere Lynette wanted to go—to celebrate her achievement. When Rothman arrived for their lunch date, Lynette was all dressed up and swinging her Bible. Her choice for her celebration feast: lunch at Rothman’s home and a private Bible study session.

Over the years, former students have often taken time to thank Rothman and her team for investing in their lives. One young man named Randy called to tell Rothman he was in college in Michigan, where he earned a scholarship.

“It wouldn’t have happened without you,” he told a teary-eyed Rothman, who took the call even as she was driving to a club meeting, still pouring love into these children.

Divine provision

Beyond these success stories from years past, God’s exquisite guidance and

provision are evident daily.

One chilly fall afternoon, Rothman said, a young man came to their center for groceries. He used to live in the area, had moved away, fallen on hard times, and just recently returned. He was in a job-training program, struggling to pay rent and car expenses while awaiting his first paycheck. At The Haven he received food, smiles, encouragement—and a shock.

As he prepared to leave, he stopped to watch an older gentleman walking up the long driveway. The older man plodded up the front steps and entered. The young man watched him nod at Janice, the receptionist, and request food. Before Janice could leave to pack a bag of groceries for him, the younger man offered him a ride.

“That’s awful nice of you to give him a ride,” she said. “Do you guys know each other?”

The young man looked at her a moment.

“That’s my dad,” he said. “I haven’t seen him in over 10 years.”

Another day a young woman stopped by The Haven with her newborn daughter, hoping to obtain a few articles of baby clothing. While Sonshine Haven maintained a clothes pantry in the past, space constraints eliminated that program, although they sometimes had some emergency outfits on hand.

Janice scoured the tiny storage closet but found no baby clothes. They were brainstorming other sources when a woman new to The Haven arrived with a huge black bag. Janice greeted her and asked how she could help.

The woman gave a nervous smile.

“I wonder if you can use these,” she said. “I heard about you a couple years ago, and now my daughter has outgrown them, but I don’t know if you take clothing donations.”

Janice, growing accustomed to seeing God doing surprising things, held back a smile.

“What sizes?” Janice queried.

“Baby clothes,” the donor replied.

Tears flowed freely as Janice shared the story, and all three delighted at God’s timing.

Three weeks later that new mother attended her first Mom’s Night Out and shared with everyone the awe of a God who cares so deeply that He pays attention to even the smallest details of our lives.

“I love how God arranges just what we need,” Rothman said. ■

Local pastor named to national council

SPRING VALLEY — A.B. Vines, senior pastor of New Seasons Church, has been named to the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission's Leadership Network Council.

The national council is a collection of Southern Baptist pastors and leaders who serve as an advisory council for the network, which is a movement of men and women—leaders, pastors, and lay people—who desire to join the commission's efforts to apply the gospel of the kingdom to major cultural issues.

Those serving on the council receive "intentional investment" from the ERLC team. While serving their annual term, council members participate in conference calls and events while providing direction for the network and occasional content for its website.

The advisory council represents churches from coast to coast, representing everything from mega to country churches, from a variety of backgrounds and cross sections of evangelicalism.

Vines has studied at Point Loma University, Andersonville Theological Seminary and the Southern California School of Ministry. He holds a bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's degree in pastoral counseling and a divinity degree. Dr. Vines and his wife Karen have four children.

Learn more at www.erc.com.

South Bay women meet at golf course

CHULA VISTA — The South Bay Christian Women's Connection monthly luncheon will be held at 11:30 a.m. Feb. 19 at the Chula Vista Golf Course.

The \$17 registration fee includes a buffet lunch, guest speaker and music, as well as hobbies and crafts. Reservations are required.

The country club is located at 4475 Bonita Road.

To learn more call (619) 479-4141.

Networking lunch in Mission Valley

SAN DIEGO — The Professional Women's Fellowship will host the founders of Daily Disciples for its Feb. 27 luncheon

meeting. The event will be held from noon to 1:30 p.m. at the Handlery Hotel.

Tonilee Adamson and Bobbye Brooks, co-founders of Daily Disciples, have written 21 Bible studies, three books and more than 400 devotionals. They also host a call-in radio program at 10 a.m. each Sunday on KPRZ 1210AM. The topic for their presentation will be released at a later date.

The monthly faith-based fellowship, which alternates between breakfast and lunch meetings, is designed to provide an outlet to develop professional relationships, receive personal challenges, gain insight, be encouraged and network.

Registration is \$25 for fellowship members and \$35 for guests. Walk-in tickets are \$35 for all seats.

Learn more at www.pwfsd.org.

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Rx for active living

Walk Batiquitos Lagoon trail with a friend

by CAROL LEBEAU



Batiquitos Lagoon offers quite an easy trail that is perfect for a hike or leisurely stroll with a friend.

Staying in touch with old friends and co-workers is important to me. But coordinating busy schedules to meet for a leisurely lunch can sometimes be a challenge.

My good pal and former 10News colleague Janine Nakama and I have come up with a way to stay connected by skipping a lengthy lunch. These days, we multiply our time by combining our monthly gabfest with a workout—in our case, a nice long walk.

Over the years, Janine and I have walked and talked our way along most of San Diego's most popular walking spots...from Coronado and Mission Bay to Lake Murray and Del Mar.

But just when I thought we'd walked it all, Janine recently suggested a new walking spot. ... Carlsbad's Batiquitos Lagoon. Like many of you, I've driven past the lagoon for years, with the peaceful piece of coastal wetland visible from

Interstate 5. I had no idea there was a hidden treasure you can't see from the freeway, a heavenly haven for runners, walkers and naturalists.

But Janine—knower of all things North County—knew exactly how to access the Batiquitos Trail system. We parked in one of five public parking lots providing entry points to a wonderful two-mile walking trail from which the north side of the lagoon can be seen and experienced.

I say "experienced" because the coastal wetland is home to many plants, birds and fish. Our "walk and talk" was often interrupted by flying fish, forests of giant cattails, and shore birds of every variety.

A stone's throw from the freeway and bustle of city life, this peaceful trail is like a rural oasis, a perfect spot to reconnect with a friend for power walking and aerobic visiting!

It's beautiful, yes. But the Batiquitos

IF YOU GO

- The public walking and hiking trail starts just east of Interstate 5 at the end of Gabbiano Lane.
- The Nature Center is open 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday to Friday and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekends.
- Five public parking lots offer access to the trail, four are on Batiquitos Drive, the other at the Nature Center.
- Dogs on a leash are allowed. Horses and bicycles are not.
- The trail is wheelchair and stroller friendly in general. Access via the Gabbiano Lane and Four Seasons Golf Course trailheads are the recommended entryways, since several others—East End, Aviara Cove, Bella Lago—feature steep hills.
- To learn more or to download trail maps, see www.batiquitosfoundation.org.

Facts about Batiquitos Lagoon

- The exact meaning of the name is not known, though the book "California's Spanish Place Names" translates it "little 'well' dug in the sand."
- The lagoon is a part of a 610-acre protected habitat located 28 miles north of San Diego, north of Leucadia at the southern edge of Carlsbad, next to Carlsbad State Beach.
- About 185 species of birds—shore birds, waders, waterfowl, flying and divers, raptors and some land birds—have been seen at Batiquitos Lagoon at different times of the year.
- Since the 1990s dredging operation added coastal water flow into the lagoon, the number of fish species has increased from just five to nearly 70.
- The entire drainage basin is about 55,000 acres, with the watershed basin extending into the cities of Carlsbad, San Marcos and Encinitas.
- The Port of Los Angeles, as part of an environmental mitigation project to restore coastal wetlands, conducted an ongoing dredging operation at the lagoon during the 1990s, reversing a natural phenomenon that was filling the lagoon with silt.

Lagoon is also important to our local environment as one of the few remaining tidal wetlands in Southern California. The area is run and meticulously maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game as a nature reserve.

If you're a runner or walker tired of the same old route, or just looking for a low-cal option to lunch with a friend, check out what you can't see from the freeway...at Batiquitos Lagoon.



Carol LeBeau is a former 10News anchor, Staying Healthy reporter and current Health Champion for Palomar Health, avid runner, bicyclist and ranked, rough water swimmer. Learn more at www.carollebeau.com.

Hiking around the county

From the coast to the mountains, San Diego has hundreds of trails for every skill level and taste. Here are few easier trails that would be perfect for family outdoor adventures.

Guy Fleming Trail, Torrey Pines State Reserve

A 2/3-mile loop, the Guy Fleming Trail is the easiest of numerous hikes in the reserve. It is relatively level, with drinking water and nature markers. It is diverse in its scenery, with pine forests, ocean vistas, sandstone formations and spring wildflowers. In the winter, hikers have been known to see gray whales and bottlenose dolphins.

Learn more at www.torreypine.org.

William Heise County Park

This county-operated park near Julian offers nearly 11 miles of trails for hiking, equestrian and nature walking. The park sits at more than 4,000 feet and hikers can enjoy a wide range of elements within the 929 acres. The skill level varies from easy to difficult, and those using the trails can experience oak, pine and cedar forests, meadow, winter snow, spring wildflowers, mule deer and the occasional bobcat and mountain lion.

Learn more at www.sdcounty.ca.gov/parks/camping/heise.html.

Dust Devil Nature Trail - San Dieguito River Park

The trail, featuring three loops totaling 1.7 miles, was formerly known as the Mesa Loop Trail. It's described as an easy, flat trail that works well for children, those with limited mobility and for leashed dog walking. The trailhead is located on El Camino Real, east of Interstate 5 and south of Via de la Valle. Hikers will enjoy wildlife viewing on the rails.

Learn more at www.sdrp.org/trails.htm.

Sunset Cliffs

For ocean lovers, the 3.7-mile hike along the western shore of the Point Loma peninsula, the Sunset Cliffs hike is tailor-made for late afternoon as the sun prepares to dip into the sea. Located within the 68-acre Sunset Cliffs Natural Park, the trail offers glimpses of birds and sea life. The stunning cliffs are home to dramatic formations, caves and intertidal species. Part of the route is in the midst of a native habitat restoration project. The trail can be accessed at Ocean Front Street and Sunset Boulevard.

Learn more at www.sunsetcliffs.info.

Balboa Park

San Diego's magnificent urban green belt, Balboa Park, has 19 trails totaling 65 miles. The trails vary in length and scenery. One of the easiest is a 1.5-mile concrete path along a tree-lined walkway that winds through the north end of the West Mesa area. The trail is one of five located on the northwest side of the park, part of the Sixth and Upas Trails Getaway.

Learn more at www.balboapark.org/in-the-park/hiking-and-biking-trails.



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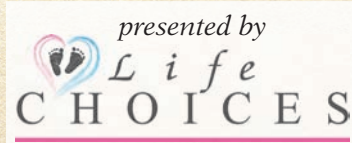
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Actor Diogo Morgado stars in a scene from "Son of God," which releases Feb. 28. It is co-produced by husband-and-wife team Mark Burnett and Roma Downey.

Epic 'Son of God' to hit theaters Feb. 28

In a move fitting of a film about Jesus, the people behind "The Bible: Miniseries" have resurrected scenes from their 10-hour History Channel hit biopic to create "Son of God," a new theatrical release focusing on the Messiah.

The 20th Century Fox film debuts Feb. 28 and stars Portuguese actor Diogo Morgado, who portrayed Christ in the blockbuster cable broadcast on the History Channel nearly a year ago. The TV series depicted the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, while "Son of God" narrows the lens to follow the life of Jesus from birth to resurrection.

Although some scenes will be recast from "The Bible" for the new film, producers Mark Burnett and Roma Downey will add scenes that were left on the cutting room floor for the original production, which included exotic filming locales such as Morocco. Running two hours and 15 minutes, "Son of God" will highlight the teachings of Jesus, his miracles, the crucifixion and resurrection.

It is the first full-length theatrical feature on Christ since Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," which was released 10 years ago this spring.

In keeping with the quality of "The Bible," its offspring "Son of God" offers epic quality acting, stunning visual effects and a powerful orchestral score from Oscar-winner Hans Zimmer.

Morgado, whose credits are well-known in his native Portugal, recently wrapped up leading roles in two independent films in the United States, where he lives part time.

The film also stars co-producer Downey, best known for her role as Monica in the popular '90s TV show "Touched by an Angel," as well as Amber Rose Revah, Louise Delamere and Darwin Shaw.

The film is directed by Christopher Spencer, who co-wrote the screenplay with Richard Bedser, Colin Swash and Nic Young.

In recent years Burnett, a prominent reality show creator, and Downey have made a name for themselves with faith-based programming. Late last year the power couple announced plans for the CBS miniseries "The Dovekeepers." They are also working on "A.D.: Beyond the Bible," a sequel to "The Bible," which will air on NBC in 2015. The 12-hour miniseries will pick up at the crucifixion and show the impact of Christ's resurrection on his followers, his mother and the authorities.

www.sonofgodmovie.com

'Mercy Rule'

Actor-director Kirk Cameron, who has spent the past few years focusing on documentaries including "Unstoppable," announced Jan. 13 that he has a feature film that's about to release. The baseball flick, "Mercy Rule: There's no quit in family," will star Cameron, Chelsea Noble, his wife of 23 years, and comedian Tim Hawkins.

Cameron took to Facebook to make the announcement and asked fans which release format they preferred: theatrical, DVD or digital download.

"Tell me, tell me!! I will be reading

your responses tonight," he said.

They did, with 60,000 people registering opinions and nearly five million shares, by the next day. He vowed to post a trailer on his page. Stay tuned.

www.facebook.com/kirkcameron

'Seasons of Gray'

"Seasons of Gray: A Modern Day Joseph Story," which chronicles the story of a widowed rancher's son who is betrayed by his brothers, is now available on DVD. Originally released in theaters in October, the family-friendly movie shares a timely response to the age-old question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

The film was a collaborative effort with EchoLight Studios and Watermark Community Church in Dallas.

"Seasons of Gray" is an inspiring story that proves that through the good and bad times in your life, God is with you," said Rick Santorum, CEO of the Dallas-based EchoLight Studios. "Losing everything is what made Joseph who he was. Despite encountering extreme hardships, he remained faithful to God and his family. In the 'me-centered' culture in which we live, the film powerfully shares this vital message."

www.seasonsofgray.com

'Grace Unplugged'

"Grace Unplugged," the Lionsgate Entertainment film that released in October enters its second life with a Feb. 11 DVD release. The movie follows 18-year-old Grace Trey, who leaves behind her father, a worship leader, and her church to follow her musical dreams in Los Angeles. Her journey will test her values. It stars AJ Michalka, Kelly Thiebaud and James Denton, and is directed by Brad J. Silverman, who also wrote the screenplay.

www.graceunplugged.com



AJ Michalka stars as a Christian singer finding her way in Los Angeles in "Grace Unplugged."

Surfing mishap forces postponement of Switchfoot release party

Local music legends Switchfoot had to postpone their hometown record release concert celebrating “Fading West,” their surf-themed album and movie after lead singer Jon Foreman suffered a face injury—while surfing.

“You travel all around the world making a movie and record built around surfing, and really push yourself to ride some really challenging waves,” Foreman said. “So it’s more than a bit ironic to get injured in your own backyard!”

The concert was scheduled for Jan. 14 at The Casbah, but was rescheduled to Feb. 3 because a cut along Foreman’s nose and mouth prevented him from singing for a few days. Although the concert was canceled, his bandmates—brother Tim, Chad Butler, Drew Shirley and Jerome Fontamillas—continued with the meet and greet and signed copies of the album.

While he spent a few days recuperating, Foreman could bask in the knowledge that the band’s single, “Fading West,” was holding the No. 1 slot on iTunes the week of the album’s release

www.switchfoot.com

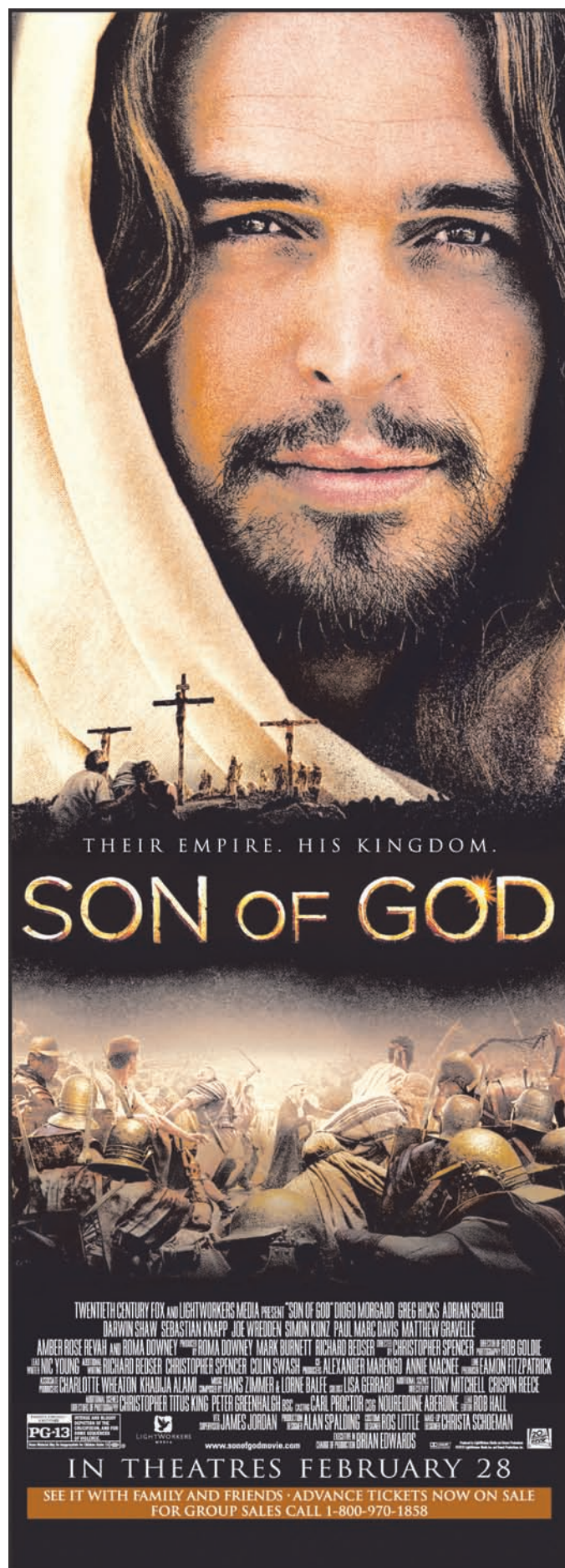
Battistelli performs at Grand Ole Opry

Francesca Battistelli, who brought home Dove Awards for “Artist of the Year” and “Female Vocalist of the Year” in 2013, is starting this year out on another high, performing on the historic Grand Ole Opry stage for the first time. During her milestone Jan. 4 performance, Battistelli sang Grammy-nominated song “Free To Be Me” and her hit song “This Is the Stuff.” The vocalist is scheduled to release her third studio album, *If We’re Honest*, on April 22. The album features her latest single, “Write Your Story,” which was the most added song at Christian radio on Jan 6. On Feb. 7, she was set to join Sanctus Real for the “Hands of God Tour” followed by “The Bible: Son of God Tour 2014” in March and April. The Bible tour, also featuring Sidewalk Prophets, Natalie Grant, Chris August, Meredith Andrews and Jason Gray, is stopping at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif. on March 20.

www.francescamusic.com



Francesca Battistelli, the 2013 Dove Award Artist of the Year, will release her third studio album in April.



Push Back

Disabled mentor honored for
26 years of youth ministry

by LORI ARNOLD



To mark Don Talley's 26th anniversary with Youth for Christ, a team of eight former students, created the Run with Don campaign in which they pushed their former youth leader in a wheelchair along the 26.2-miles of the Carlsbad Marathon on Jan. 19. Talley started his work with the North County Youth for Christ in 1988, which was his neighborhood as a child growing up at Emmanuel Faith Community Church where his dad served on staff. He later served as executive director of YFC's North San Diego chapter, serving the communities of Poway, Rancho Bernardo and Solano Beach, among others.

Don Talley, still in the early days of ministry with Youth for Christ, stood on the stage where he had just shared his story. The church's youth pastor joined him there and, as he stood next to Talley's frail 5-foot, 11-inch, 100-pound frame, the pastor asked permission to pray for the ministry leader.

Talley—weak in physical strength, but strong in Spirit—readily accepted the offer.

“He began to pray and the next thing I know I’ve got 40 high school teenagers kind of surrounding me on the stage and they were all praying,” the youth worker said. “They were all praying for God to heal me.”

Ever since he was diagnosed with a rare neuromuscular disorder as a tod-

dler, prayers for healing were a routine part of Talley's life. Raised in the church with his youth pastor father and mother, Talley was rarely outside the covering of prayer by the adults in his life. As a young teen, when he adopted his parents' faith as his own, the prayers only intensified.

So there he stood, yet again, his head bowed awaiting his gift from God.

“I thought, really God, is this it? Is this *the* moment that the struggle is going to be taken away and I will be able



to do so much more? Is this the moment where it changes for me?"

His spirit was buoyed by expectation.

"I kid you not, I hear this small voice in my soul that says, 'Yeah, I'm going to heal you. I'm going to heal you from the need of being healed.'"

The reality, Talley learned that day, is that healing comes in all forms and rarely how we expect it.

"It was that moment that I just began to say 'OK.' God will give me so much more and His design for my life is so much more than I could ever imagine. Can He heal me? Absolutely, but do I need to pursue that? No, I don't.

"That was a moment when I realized that God wanted to do so much more in me and through me in the midst of the circumstance that I was in. When I began to embrace all of that and embrace the weakness and embrace the struggle, I think is really when my availability and willingness to put myself out there for the sake of Christ, that it really began to take off."

...

Like his father, Talley had a heart for youth, but he was also realistic. Diagnosed with non-progressive congenital fiber-type disproportion as a child, Talley's muscles were extraordinarily weak. His chest muscles were so deteriorated that his lung capacity was routinely recorded at just 48 percent, making him vulnerable to lung ailments. Pneumonia, for instance, could prove fatal.

"I was told that would be it," Talley said of a possible pneumonia diagnosis. "I would never be able to come back from that."

A trademark of the disorder is low weight. He also lives in constant, but varied, pain. His voice, at times, registers barely above a whisper.

His symptoms were hardly a recipe for keeping up with active, boisterous teens.

"I didn't feel like I was that typical youth worker who could go and meet some kids and go skiing or snowboarding or play volleyball and be as active as they are," Talley said. "So I was really concerned that I wouldn't be able to connect with kids very well.

"I began to see that having those abilities would be one way to connect, but just serving and loving kids and being with them and creating memories with them (is another) way. I think was God showing me that He can use even



Don Talley, with his wife Crissie, and daughters, Taylor and Madison.

our weaknesses and our struggle and even the things we want to change in ourselves. In my case, those are the very things he wanted me to use."

Talley started his work with the North County Youth for Christ in 1988, which was his neighborhood as a child growing up at Emmanuel Faith Community Church where his dad served on staff. Within three years he was promoted to executive director of YFC's North San Diego chapter, serving the communities of Poway, Rancho Bernardo and Solano Beach, among others.

As he followed the Lord's leading, the students responded. Prowess on the ski slopes and waves, he discovered, was not necessarily a prerequisite to youth ministry in Southern California.

"He engaged us and talked to us on a very personal level," said Brad Ashwell, a former student who later worked alongside Talley for YFC. "But he was never the guy to get down on us. When we messed up or we made a mistake he was always there. He never scolded us or anything but just talked to us like a per-

son. It was through all those years of interacting with him that the mentor part became more like a friend.

"You see past the physical ailments that he was born with and you don't see that anymore, just because he's that personable, that approachable. The disabilities just disappear."

Ashwell said Talley's self-deprecating humor and calm demeanor spoke to him even when he wasn't willing to accept his mentor's evangelistic messages.

"I was actually one of the kids that when he started to talk about a relationship with God I would tune him out," he said. "I would say, 'OK, that's not for me, that's not for me.'"

Over time, Ashwell dropped his guardedness and, after his mother was diagnosed with cancer, Ashwell eventually claimed Talley's faith as his own.

"That's when it really started appealing to me; it was those personal struggles in my life and knowing and hearing him in the past talk (about how) you can have this open relationship with God. That's when it all started coming together."



Don Talley speaks from the stage during one of his many speaking engagements in the United States.

Two decades later, Talley, the father of two daughters, is still inspiring youth as he travels the United States and abroad as senior director of ministry expansion for YFC, a role in which he mobilizes, trains, speaks to and coaches young people and leaders of young people.

From his home in Castle Rock, Colo., near the ministry's national headquarters, Talley traveled 70,000 miles on behalf of YFC last year.

...

Talley earned more frequent flier miles the weekend of Jan. 18, when he returned home to San Diego for a marathon benefiting his ministry.

To mark Talley's 26th anniversary with Youth for Christ, a team of eight former students, including Ashwell, created the Run with Don campaign in which they pushed their former youth leader in a wheelchair along the 26.2-miles of the Carlsbad Marathon, held Jan. 19.

"He pushed us and now it's time for us to push back," said Ashwell, saying the goal was to raise money and awareness for YFC.

"In high school he pushed us and he challenged us to live for God and to live a lifestyle that focused on our character, our confidence, our responsibility and our faith. He challenged us as high school kids, he pushed us to become better. This is our chance to push back and to help him further his ministry to keep providing opportunities for high school kids like he did for us."

Talley said that he was surprised by the gesture, but not by the heart behind it.

"These are people who are now wanting to invest back into the ministry so that kids in different parts of the country

would have leaders like me who would invest in them," their mentor said.

Talley arrived in San Diego several days in advance of the marathon to rest and prepare, and planned to travel back to Colorado after giving his body a day to recover. His schedule included trips to Chicago and Baltimore over the two weeks following the marathon.

Despite his busy schedule, there was never a doubt Talley would participate.

"Let's bring visibility to the fact that there are thousands of YFC leaders, volunteers and employed staff, around this country that are intentionally investing in kids, just like I did with them," he said. "My role in the movement today is to inspire and to equip more leaders to work with more kids than they ever have before.

"It's more about us pushing the mission of Youth for Christ forward, to raise a little bit of money for YFC to equip more leaders. I don't think I would want to put myself through this physically if it was just about a tribute."

Before the race there was no way of knowing how Talley's body would respond to the demands of the marathon. Though he rode in the wheelchair, there

is little doubt his bones and compromised muscles absorbed each jarring bump along the course. But playing it safe, though, has never been a viable option for a man who routinely sacrifices his body to reach teens.

When he waivers in that conviction, Talley said he clings to the "mystery of the 52 percent"—that portion of his lung capacity that is now lost and without which his astonished doctors can't fathom how he not only lives, but also thrives.

Tally relies heavily on Acts 17:25 which says God "himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else."

"I think with every breath, God brings the other 52," he said. "That is so true with every part of our lives. When you really think about it, how can we ever out-bring, outdo, out-give God? He will always ask me to bring everything I can to the table: how he has crafted me, my gifts and my abilities and my strength—and my weaknesses. He wants everything on the table, but when you count it all out it's just 48 percent and He will *always* bring more." ■

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Looking to get married? Try a Christian college

by KATHERINE BURGESS

When Dordt College graduates Jordan Harmelink and Rachel Tennant said “I do” at their July wedding, they joined the masses of graduates who meet their spouse at private Christian colleges.

According to an analysis by Facebook, of the top 25 colleges where men are most likely to meet their spouse, all are private Christian institutions. For women, more than half (64 percent) of the top 25 colleges where they’re likely to find a husband are religious schools.

The 12 schools that appear on both lists: They’re all Christian colleges.

“There’s a Lutheran boy for every Lutheran girl,” said Jeff Schone, vice president for student life at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minn. “I’m being lighthearted when I say that. But it seems to be true.”

The analysis by Sofus Macskassy and Lada Adamic of Facebook’s data science team compared users’ profiles and looked at couples who were listed as being married to each other and who attended the same college. The study only considered four-year schools with at least 1,000 married alumni.

The study found that among Facebook users who were married college graduates and over the age of 25, about one in four (28 per-

cent) had attended the same college.

(There were several caveats, such as not including people who didn’t list their college in their Facebook profile, or being unable to say whether the romance bloomed before, during or after college).

Either way, the study left one thing clear: If you’re looking for a spouse, start on a Christian campus.

Edward Blews Jr., president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, said he was not surprised that the majority of schools listed were Christian schools since the students at Christian colleges often have shared values.

“There’s also the view that young people are sent in part to Christian colleges by their parents and families to find a good Christian spouse,” Blews said. “Perhaps at the Christian college there may be a bit more pressure on students to find that good Christian spouse before they finish their four years and go out into a very different and diverse world.”

Schone said students at religious schools often come from similar backgrounds and have similar plans for the future, and per-



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haps marriage is more highly valued by Christians, resulting in higher rates among young people.

Blews also met his wife while the two studied at Seattle Pacific University in the 1970s.

"For me it was love, pretty much at first sight," Blews said. "I was just fascinated by this beautiful young woman who was very smart and very outspoken and very articulate."

"We keenly understood the theological perspective that we shared, the culture in which we grew up. For us that really did

lead us to become soul mates. And for us we have no question that God ordained that we should come together in a lifelong marriage."

While many marry at Christian colleges, Blews said schools must be careful not to demean singleness. The single life, Blews said, is "also an important and valued spiritual expression to be respected and celebrated."

Harmelink said his classmates often laughed about the marriage culture at Dordt, joking that women on the campus in Sioux Center, Iowa, were in search of their

"MRS degree."

Shortly before Harmelink arrived on campus, people at Dordt promoted the slogan "get engaged," Harmelink said, meaning students should "get engaged with God."

Students didn't take it quite that way.

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Refreshed publishers Lamar and Theresa Keener fit this profile. They met while attending Liberty University. In fact, Lamar was the very first person Theresa met when she arrived on campus.



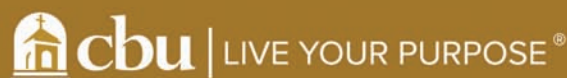
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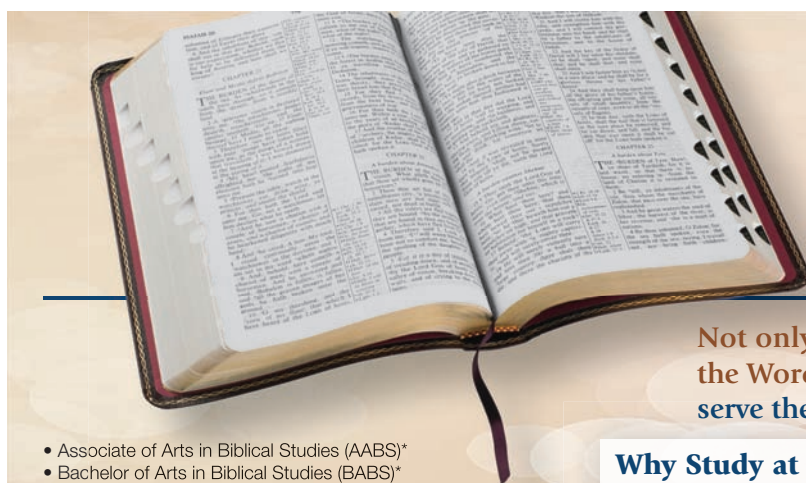


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MARK LARSON

Doorways often offer peek into life's jams

Do you ever get the feeling that “Let’s Make A Deal” isn’t just a TV game show?

Everyone’s day is filled with negotiations and give and take, with plenty of agreements that can be positive. More often than not, the process doesn’t end successfully (like trying to persuade kids to go to bed on time), but building on things that didn’t work at first can lead to a big win next time.

A newer version of the television classic “Let’s Make A Deal” is a hit all over again with Wayne Brady as host, but I still prefer the original with Monte Hall and announcer Jay Stewart. And who can forget Carol Merrill pointing out all the displays so elegantly on the stage?

The game always boiled down to the big question: Is the big prize behind door number one, two or three? People would go to great lengths to have a shot at that defining moment, smuggling odd items into the studio in case host Hall asked something like, “Who has a tongue depressor, a cheese wheel and ball-peen hammer in their purse? I’ll give you 50 bucks!”

Contestants would also have no problem dressing up in cold cuts and assorted produce long before Lady Gaga began making millions for such antics. Anything for a chance to check out those mysterious doors.

Often, fabulous prizes went home with participants who chose wisely, but usually it seemed that the chosen door would reveal a treasure like a potted plant or live goat.

Some viewers at home would mutter how dumb a bad choice was, or heave a sigh of relief that they weren’t on

camera for such notoriety, being seen in public as a loser.

Isn’t life like that? Every moment there are “doors” around us. Some close occasionally, while others open up. It’s



all about how we react to what we find.

When a door closes or another opens revealing something we don’t want or anticipate, we have a choice. We can keep at it, hoping for the best... or quit.

I thought about a lot about doors a few weeks ago, when I ended up experiencing an unscheduled hospital visit. I’ll spare you most of the details, but let’s just say Dr. Heimlich’s Maneuver didn’t work on me. So the chunk-of-chicken-removal-procedure had to be done by professionals, followed by a lovely three-night stay to make sure there were no complications (like “Oops, we punctured your esophagus”).

As I wandered up and down the hallway, in those not-at-all-fashionable hospital gowns (feeling very humble because of that), dragging my IV tower with me, I would find myself glancing into the doorways of other rooms as I passed by.

At first I felt uncomfortable. In one room there was a patient who had bro-

ken bones, but would be OK. In another, there was a 97-year-old man who had taken a fall. He was a World War II veteran, still rugged and in pretty good shape, but he would often yell out due

to his onset of dementia.

In other rooms there would be families huddled around a dying loved one’s bed, wondering when it was “time.” It was quite an emotional rollercoaster.

After a couple of walking circuits I was struck by how much those doorways are like life. Not all doors open to what we want. And the doors that seem to open easiest can be disappointing. Then there are occasions when it feels like God has changed the locks on us (often for good reason, to keep us from going

where we shouldn’t go).

There are also doors that allow us to see what appears to be bleak—for the moment. Later, a return to the same place brings happiness as things have taken a turn for the better.

And many times we are blessed with doors that open to opportunities beyond our wildest dreams. If we choose to take a risk and see what’s on the other side, that is. When this truth is recognized, it’s easier to face those doors yet unopened, and in all situations find something inspirational for each day.



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.

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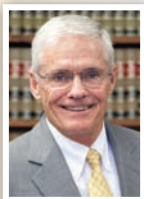
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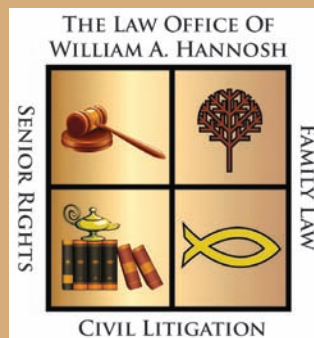
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JANICE THOMPSON

Power up principle: The power of a paradigm shift

The Great Recession of 2008 was like the tide retreating from the shoreline and exposing the good, the bad and the ugly underneath. While not minimizing the extraordinary pain and gripping fear of the unknown that seized our nation, I have been encouraged by a number of positive changes that I have observed the past several years. Here are 10 positive paradigm shifts:

- There is a greater understanding of the truth that real estate and stock markets *do not* always go up. Recessions are a normal part of economic cycles, though admittedly, this one was extraordinary. There is no one perfect investment or pain-free solution to weathering a crisis like this. There are, however, fundamental principles that can help you weather the storm.

- Home ownership has become a possibility once again as values and mortgage terms became more affordable. I seriously questioned whether our children would ever become homeowners here in Southern California. While the Great Recession saw many highly leveraged homeowners lose their real estate, it also provided opportunity for others like my son and his wife to purchase their first home.

- Learning to live within our means is now more acceptable. It takes discipline and a long-term focus to maintain this commitment, but the payoff comes with being better equipped to withstand the ups and downs of uncertain economic conditions.

- Budgeting is no longer a negative, but a *necessity* with recognized value. Think in terms of a “spending plan.” Begin with the income sources you have available to allocate each month. Next, list your non-discretionary items such as your mortgage, loans, taxes, etc. Once deducted, determine how much you have left to allocate among

discretionary lifestyle items. Suggestion: make giving and saving non-discretionary instead of squeezing them out of the leftovers.

- It is no longer the norm to be content with escalating debt—or ignoring it altogether. In my opinion there is a distinguishing difference between obligation and debt. Obligation is making systematic payments on an appreciating asset that can potentially be sold for more than is owed.

Example: A prudently structured home mortgage would be considered an obligation rather than a debt. On the other hand, debt is making systematic payments on a depreciating asset, or being delinquent on an obligation. Carrying a balance on your credit cards with interest is a classic example of debt. How much of yesterday’s “fun” are you financing with tomorrow’s dollars? Gratefully, this has been on the decline the past several years.

- Savings in the household-spending plan has moved up on the priority list. If saving or “paying yourself first” isn’t a top spending plan priority, it should be! It is often a wake-up call when we quantify the savings necessary to retire from a paycheck to a portfolio distribution check. Saving is important at every age.

- Priorities have now aligned to more closely reflect what is truly important in our lives. Bigger isn’t necessarily better and less can actually be *more* as we try to simplify our lives. Surrounding ourselves with more “stuff” just complicates our life as we work hard to maintain and protect it.

- It is not just assets on a balance sheet that are valued, but rather *bal-*

anced lives and healthy relationships. We are redefining the term net worth to encompass much more than just assets and liabilities. What is your legacy going to be? Does it include a plan to transfer your wisdom along with your wealth?

...put aside anxiety for a moment and understand that nothing that touches your life takes God by surprise. He has a plan and is always in control.

- We now understand that there is very little we can control and the only thing certain is uncertainty. The importance of a long-term financial plan—with accountability—can help keep us focused and less inclined to make emotional rather than purposeful decisions.

- “It’s not all about me!” What a blessing it has been to see people extending their reach to share their time, skills and resources with those in need.

We will always face economic uncertainty. Let me encourage you to put aside anxiety for a moment and understand that nothing that touches your life takes God by surprise. He has a plan and is always in control! Be encouraged that by getting your house in order and keeping your priorities straight, you are better prepared for whatever lies ahead.



Janice Thompson is a certified financial planner and founder of Strategic Financial Solutions Inc. A frequent speaker in financial topics and mentor for financial

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

7 ways to trick your children into loving books

What's your favorite picture of you as a child? Is it the black-and-white picture of you in 1970s plaid pants, or the '80s snapshot with you and a big head of hair? (I'm guilty of both.)

I'm not entirely sure what picture of my own children is my favorite, but the leading contender likely is one I snapped several months back, with all



three of them—ages 5, 2 and 2—on the couch, each of them looking at a different book.

As a parent, those moments when you see the fruit of your labor are precious, aren't they? You spend hours and hours teaching them something and think it's never going to sink in, and then all of a sudden, God gives you a gift that makes it all worthwhile. It's as if He was telling me, "Keep giving books to your kids."

Reading, though, isn't as popular in the U.S. as it once was. The latest data from 2013 shows American teens rank 17th in the world in reading—a tragic stat because reading forms the core of nearly every other type of learning. Perhaps that failure begins at home: Only one in three parents of children 8 and under read to their kids each night, ac-

cording to a 2013 survey by Reading is Fundamental and Macy's.

Looking back on the past few years, I can see what my wife and I did right in raising children who like books—and what we could have done better. Of course, children learn to read at different paces, but even kids who can't read can enjoy books. Here are seven tips to

raising kids who like books:

1. Read to them, and then read to them some more. There may be nothing sweeter than a clean baby, a clean diaper, and a book in your lap. We started reading to our first child well before he turned 1—and he tried to eat the

pages. He eventually learned better.

2. When it's safe, place board books in the child's toy area and crib. Here's what happens: Children begin seeing books as toys, as something fun (which a book is). Soon, they may even choose a book over a ball. Gradually, you can give them books *instead of* toys. Make sure the books aren't out of their reach. Tip: Don't stress out if they tear apart some of the books. It's going to happen. Used kids' books are cheap, anyway.

3. Keep books in your car. Our 2-year-old twins enjoy looking at books while riding down the road, as does their older brother. The attention span of a toddler on a book often is only a minute or two, but it nevertheless will help build a good trait.

4. As they grow, buy them books that match their interest—and use them as

rewards in place of toys and suckers. When our son had an interest in yard squirrels, I got him a board book ("The Busy Little Squirrel") about them. Over the next few years, I did the same thing when he became fascinated with planets, then bears, then dinosaurs, and then modern-day animals. Amazon.com is a great place to learn what's out there. Half.com has inexpensive books. Also, buy cheap books at a used bookstore or a salvage store.

5. Visit a library—often. Libraries are like that restaurant buffet that has a bit of something for everyone, including the one food that gets you most excited. I won't ever forget my son's first trip to the library with me. He couldn't believe all the books he had never seen. When I told him we could take some of them home, he was giddy.

6. Limit media usage. Experts recommend no screen time for children under 2, and very little screen time for kids over 2. The more TV shows our children watch and video games they play, the less likely it is they'll want to read a book. Half of the parents in that Reading is Fundamental survey referenced earlier said their children spend more time watching TV and playing video games than they do reading.

7. Set the example. If our children see us reading, they'll be more likely to read, too. Some of my best conversations with my oldest son have taken place when he saw me reading and asked what my book was about. "God," I often said.

It's hard to beat that.



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

KIMBERLY RUBY

Your journey to vibrant health

Latest health findings may improve future wellness outcomes

When I was in junior high, my brothers and I would pull the manhole covers off the sewers in our City Heights neighborhood, ascend into the dark, cool abyss and joyfully round up king-sized cockroaches. The echo of the water beneath us, coupled with our screams of delight as we cupped our hands over these skittish insects, was challenging.

So why did we go to all the trouble for bugs?

These prized delicacies were the favorite food of the prickly European hedgehogs my mom and our family had hand-carried from Germany to donate to the San Diego Zoo.

The way our sleepy hedgehogs went after these giant roaches, it seemed as though they were starved, but our pampered pets were well fed. So why were these crunchy morsels their preferred meal? Years later, it turns out science is telling us eating bugs may be good for us! When it comes to water beetles, for instance, they contain more protein than a kidney bean. Caterpillars actually contain more protein and fat, gram for gram, than a turkey leg. When smoked, caterpillars can be stored for three months. Crickets, a common menu item in Asian countries, boast high amounts of calcium.

In 2013, the United Nations released a report, "Edible Insects," that suggests we follow the lead of Africa, Thailand, Asia and Latin America and use insects to feed the estimated nine billion people expected to inhabit the earth by 2050.

In case you're not leaning toward any of these new culinary suggestions for enhancing your dietary patterns, let's explore some other interesting scientific findings from 2013 that may contribute to improved health. The approaches may be a bit more practical than millipede muffins or grasshopper green beans.

Joint Health: Last April, researchers reported in the *International Journal of Preventive Medicine* that acupuncture and isometric exercise, a form of strength training, significantly improved symptoms of osteoarthritis of the knees.

Brain and Memory: Cognitive performance improves after stretching and flexibility exercise, according to *The Journal of Physical Activity and Health*. The study, involving 30 college-aged students, showed that cognitive performance, reaction time and accuracy improved significantly after the exercise session. Additionally, *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* reported nearly a year ago that DHA, a component of fish body oils, supports memory and reaction time.

Strength and Balance: Pilates exercise improved balance and strength in older adults, according to a study published in August 2013. Pilates is a resistance exercise system focused on improving flexibility, strength and body awareness. The subjects included 30 older ambulatory adults with an average age of 69 years. The benefits from participating in the study lasted for at least a year.

Cancer, Type 2 Diabetes and Heart Disease: British researchers at The Institute of Food Research in the UK obtained the first evidence from human studies of how diets rich in "glucoraphanin" a newly discovered compound found in broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts and other cruciferous vegetables, can actually re-tune metabolism and cellular processes as we age.

Heart Disease and Carbohydrate Intake: In September, *The American Journal of Epidemiology* reported that high carbohydrate intake is associated with increased risk in coronary

heart disease. Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States in both men and women of every major ethnic group. The investigators determined that 117,000 Asian participants—without a history of diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke or cancer—that had the highest intake of "refined grains" had an 80 percent increased risk of developing coronary artery disease compared to the subjects with the lowest intake. Similarly, the subjects with the highest "glycemic load" a calculation of food impact on blood sugar, had a whopping 87 percent increased risk in developing coronary artery disease compared to the subjects with the lowest glycemic load.

These are exciting times and what we do with the research data can have a significant impact on our daily lives. John Maxwell, a former San Diego pastor and author now focused on leadership, has come up with four types of individual behavior when facing necessary change: There are the copouts, those who deny change is needed; the holdouts, those afraid of change; the dropouts, those who quit when change is too painful; and, the all-outs, those who set goals and pay the price to reach them.

How are you doing with your New Year's resolutions? As long as you have life, you have hope. Fight the good fight!



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.

A marriage makeover – in 4 minutes?

Here's the thing: If you and your spouse could get away for two weeks in the islands—Hawaii, Bahamas, Aruba—all expenses paid, wouldn't that juice your union right where it helps? In fact, wouldn't it be the perfect cure for those marriage blues you've been soaking in all winter long?

Warm sunshine. Tropical beaches. No kids, no phones, no worries.

Say you win the lottery, or your rich uncle in England finally dies, or better yet you invent the next big social network—then sell it for a gazillion dollars to someone over at Google or Microsoft. Ka-ching!

Get outta here.

Island time. Just you and your lover. Two weeks in coconut paradise.

Why not?

Okay, now we return to reality.

Remember your actual life?

The car engine never cools off because you're always driving someone to something, somewhere. The credit card bill never calms down because, well, the car needs gas, among other things. You and your spouse see each other occasionally, mostly to argue about the kids or the money or the schedule.

Friday night fights.

Sound familiar?

It only happens to everybody—and only while they're alive.

But what if there is a cheap (OK, free) marriage makeover that only requires four minutes a day? Literally and truly: four minutes.

What if you try the makeover and it starts working for you in a big way?

What if your relationship starts to have more sizzle than fizzle?

Hey this is not a mirage or an illusion—it's a new reality.

While we're on the reality thing, you probably don't have a rich uncle over in

England anyway—or if you do, he's in perfect health. Go ahead and scratch off that lottery ticket—it will make a nice bookmark.

Meanwhile back on Planet Real, here's the recipe for that makeover.

Take two people. Add four minutes, daily.

Stir ingredients as follows:

Two people, who are in the same place at the same time, praying quick, simple prayers for each other—out loud. Optional add-in: Hold hands while you pray.

Repeat daily.

Take two people. Add four minutes.

Pray out loud.

Some couples that try this find it

change.

Find the time (make the effort).

Find the place (make the effort).

Like adding any other new habit into your life, it will seem difficult at first, then get easier and more natural with additional repetitions.

Spoiler alert: This could be a game-changer.

We know actual couples that started with four minutes a day, then got so hooked that they ramped up the time a little bit. Good things started happening.

We know a couple in Canada who started this way, seemingly so innocent, but they started seeing so much positive change that now they get up a half-hour early every day to pray for their

kids. They're busy raising three teens. Need we say more?

They are starting to see some positive changes in their kids.

They were already seeing positive changes in their relationship.

They tell us the four-minute marriage makeover is changing their lives.

What will it do for your relationship?

You've got the recipe.

Tape it to your fridge until it's actually happening.

Two people. Four minutes. Repeat daily.

Like adding any other new habit into your life, it will seem difficult at first, then get easier and more natural with additional repetitions.

awkward at first. Many tell us that in their entire relationship—dating to engaged to married with children—they have never prayed for each other as a couple—out loud, while together in the same place.

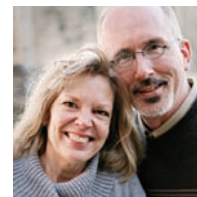
It is—for some couples—a radical idea!

It is also a pathway to meaningful change in your relationship.

Let's say you decide to find the time. Now you can't find the space and privacy you need?

So you lock yourselves in the bathroom. It works for teens; it should work for parents too. Give it a shot.

Go out to the garage or carport and sit in the car. Pray there. God knows a lot of other stuff happens in parked cars, doesn't it? Prayer seems like a nice



Dr. David and Lisa Frisbie serve together as executive directors of The Center for Marriage and Family Studies in Del Mar. They are the authors of dozens of

articles and 25 books about marriage and family life, including their recent book "The Soul-Mate Marriage: The Spiritual Journey of Becoming One" (Harvest House Publishers).

SHAWN MITCHELL

Super Bowl Sunday: Why we do it

This month America arrived at another Super Bowl—you know, that BIG game in New Jersey. Despite threats of blackouts, controversy over the trademarked use of “Super Bowl,” and the Chargers’ close call that has so many fans still crying in their salsa, one thing is for sure: We were watching.

But what is it that draws so many, so faithfully, for so long?

Super Bowl Sunday in America is now considered the nation’s top unofficial holiday. Many tune in as much for the commercial ads and halftime show, as for the game.

It’s been said that “football is a game played by 22 men in desperate need of

rest... and watched by 60,000 people in desperate need of exercise.”

True? Probably. Especially the part that “football is... *watched*.”

During any given NFL season, the top 10 watched shows of that year will be NFL games broadcast in homes and on smart phones, on tablets and iPads; tens of millions of rabid fans cheering on their favorite team, all of it leading up to the greatest of them all—the Super Bowl.

By the time it is all said and done, chances are you watched too, and most likely not alone, as the Big Game is the No. 1 “at-home event of the year” with 125 million viewers. No wonder 30-second commercial ads now cost \$4 million. There is a lot at stake. Not only for the two teams on the field, but for the corporate advertisers who want to attract your attention—and your wallet.

In fact, nationwide, the average “population” of a Super Bowl gathering will be 17. With an estimated consumption of 15,000 tons of chips, 4,000 tons of popcorn and 12 million pounds of avocados (that’s a *lot* of guacamole!), it’s no wonder there will be a 20 percent increase in the amount of antacids sold the day after the game.

Why do we do it? Why the popularity?

Three reasons: Community, activity and escape.

Community: When God said that “It is not good for man to be alone...” (Genesis 2:18), He was not only referring to the institution of marriage, but also our day-to-day interaction with each other. We do better together!

I can surely attest to this. After working with professional athletes over the past 34 years, when the players eventually turn in their playbooks and call it a career, the top thing they say they miss most is not the paydays (I wouldn’t mind one of those) or even the competing, but rather the camaraderie, togetherness and sense of team. Community. Athletes are wired for it. And so are you.

Activity: People gather, go out, celebrate and party to get involved with something that they *want* to do to help get them through all the things that they DON’T want to do! We get excited about having something to look forward to.

Maybe this is why the Bible speaks so often about things to come. For every prophecy that speaks about Jesus’ first coming, there are at least seven that speak about his second coming. The Super Bowl is an American attraction viewed by millions. However, the Bible speaks of a global occurrence that will simultaneously capture the fascination of the entire world: The second coming of Jesus Christ. “Look, He is coming... Every eye will see Him.” (Revelation 1:7)

Escape: From time to time all of us look for things to get our minds off of everyday life. The devil wants us to look for those things in the wrong places. However, God says, “I have given all things richly to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17). The greatest escape I have found from the world’s stresses, trials and attacks is unequivocally found in Him. Whether it’s a ball game, child rearing or any fascination of life, He provides a fulfillment that assures, no matter what the outcome of your personal situation, we can always have a confidence that we win—in Him.

As the great Green Bay Packers’ Reggie White was fond of saying, “I don’t want to prepare for the Super Bowl ... and miss heaven.” He had his priorities right. I pray you do, too.



Shawn Mitchell is the founding and senior pastor of New Venture Christian Fellowship & Schools in Oceanside. He also serves as a Pro Sport Chaplain speaking

to various teams in the National Football League. He is a sought after speaker, and has ministered the gospel of Jesus Christ in over 20 countries.

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Napping: The Olympics newest sport

I've never been known for my athletic abilities, but after watching the 2010 Winter Olympic Games, I went into training with the hope that my favorite sport would be added in time for the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, Russia.

Known as extreme napping, this highly technical event mixes skill and determination to honor the competitor with the ability to sleep the longest and most soundly amid the greatest number of distractions.

Alas, my pleas to the Olympic Committee have gone unanswered. I don't know why. Extreme napping is as thrilling a sport

cooperating, so it's important for an extreme napper to train in a variety of environments. That way, when the chips are down, she can keep her eyes closed and her breathing in check to take home the gold for her local Mommy and Me group.

To prepare, try napping during business meetings, in line at the grocery store, and while your 7-year-old is poking you in the head to tell you the cat has finished his spin cycle in the washing machine.

The right equipment

In order to block out distractions, an extreme napper should always have at her disposal a pair of earplugs and an eye mask. Practice using your earplugs in a variety of situations, like when your husband is trying to explain why

To prepare, try napping during business meetings, in line at the grocery store, and while your 7-year-old is poking you in the head to tell you the cat has finished his spin cycle in the washing machine.

as, say, golf. In fact, from 1912 to 1948, Olympic medals were awarded in the fields of architecture, literature, music, painting and sculpture. If you could watercolor your way to a gold medal, why not nap?

Think you've got what it takes to be an extreme napper? Then start training! Here are some things you'll need to ensure success:

The right environment

Skiers can't ski when the snow is slushy and ice dancers can't dance when the ice is bumpy. Likewise, extreme nappers can't nap when the couch is lumpy.

The best napping conditions include a dark, quiet room and a comfortable sofa or bed. But as we all know, during competition the fans are yelling, the sportscasters are commenting and the weather is not

People magazine isn't a legitimate grocery expense in the family budget.

An extreme napper also needs a warm blankie and a fluffy pillow. The more you practice, the more proficient you'll become, so always carry your blankie and pillow with you in order to take advantage of every napping opportunity, like while waiting in line at the DMV or watching golf.

The right outfit

Olympic athletes have outfits designed not just for function but for fashion, reflecting both the spirit of the sport and the personality of the competitor.

While ice skaters have taken costumes into the realm of haute couture, your napping outfit should be designed for comfort first and ideally include a T-shirt, pants with an elastic waistband and a pair of

warm slippers. But if you need sequins or feathers to get into the napping mood, by all means, glitter away.

The right story

During Olympic coverage, the commentators share heart-wrenching profiles of athletes who have overcome obstacles on their way to the podium, so it's never too early to start building your back story.

Keep a journal chronicling the ups and downs of your extreme napping career; include entries like, "Dozed off while driving; ended up in Canada" and "Fell asleep in church; husband said snoring drowned out choir." Be sure to include earlier competition failures, like, "Originally tried out for women's curling team but didn't know how to use a broom." If you can connect with viewers on an emotional level, your face may end up on a cereal box even if you don't take home a gold medal.

And remember, if you can also manage to get your spouse and kids dressed in clean clothes and waving flags that aren't made from items in your lingerie drawer, the TV network will be more likely to broadcast their smiling faces around the globe.

I'm admittedly disappointed that extreme napping didn't make the cut for the 2014 Games, but maybe the sport can be adapted for the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro. If housework can be turned into an Olympic sport like curling, I figure nothing's impossible.



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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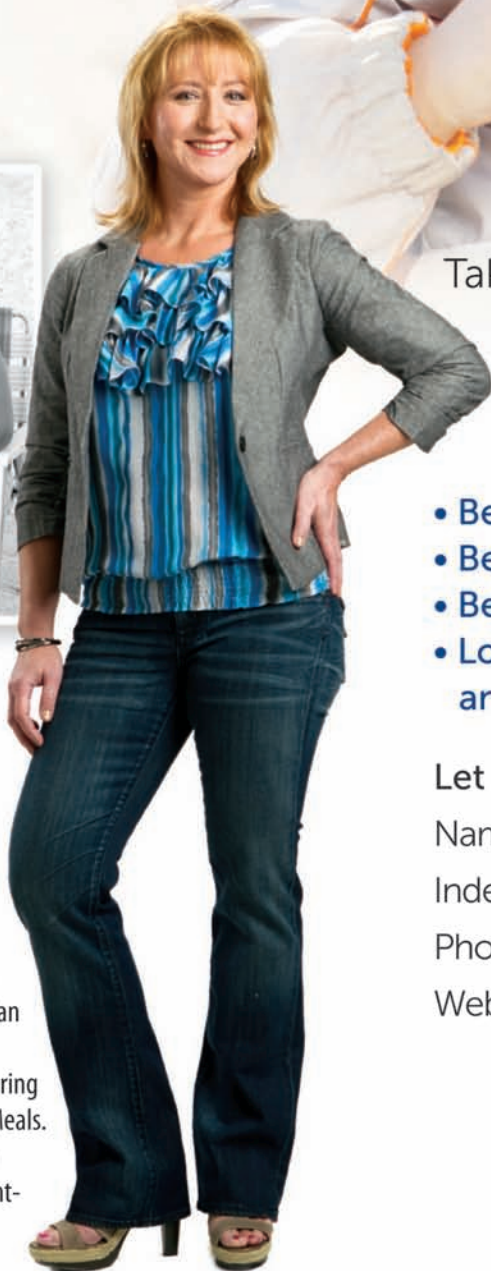
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